

Tracking sustainable peace  
through inclusion, justice,  
and security for women



# Women Peace and Security Index 2023/24

 **GIWPS** Georgetown Institute for  
Women, Peace and Security

 | PRIO Centre on  
Gender, Peace  
and Security

## Countries and index scores by rank, 2023/24 WPS Index

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE
1	Denmark	0.932	60	Sri Lanka	0.743	121	Philippines	0.612
2	Switzerland	0.928	61	Kuwait	0.742	122	Honduras	0.610
3	Sweden	0.926	63	Cyprus	0.739	122	Libya	0.610
4	Finland	0.924	64	Cabo Verde	0.738	122	Namibia	0.610
4	Iceland	0.924	64	Fiji	0.738	125	Lesotho	0.605
4	Luxembourg	0.924	64	Malaysia	0.738	126	Zimbabwe	0.604
7	Norway	0.920	67	Saudi Arabia	0.737	127	Angola	0.598
8	Austria	0.911	68	Chile	0.736	128	India	0.595
9	Netherlands	0.908	69	Belarus	0.733	128	Lebanon	0.595
10	New Zealand	0.904	70	Kazakhstan	0.729	128	Togo	0.595
11	Australia	0.902	71	Trinidad and Tobago	0.721	131	Bangladesh	0.593
11	Belgium	0.902	72	Maldives	0.720	131	Gabon	0.593
13	Estonia	0.892	73	Nicaragua	0.717	132	Colombia	0.582
13	Ireland	0.892	73	Peru	0.717	134	Mozambique	0.580
15	Singapore	0.887	75	Oman	0.715	135	Gambia	0.575
16	Lithuania	0.886	76	Samoa	0.711	136	Côte d'Ivoire	0.573
17	Canada	0.885	77	Jamaica	0.710	137	Guatemala	0.569
18	Czechia	0.884	78	Viet Nam	0.707	138	Benin	0.566
19	Portugal	0.877	79	Lao PDR	0.704	138	El Salvador	0.566
20	Latvia	0.872	80	Israel	0.703	140	Iran	0.557
21	Germany	0.871	80	Qatar	0.703	141	Zambia	0.556
22	United Arab Emirates	0.868	82	Bhutan	0.700	142	Mexico	0.551
23	Japan	0.866	82	China	0.700	143	Uganda	0.544
24	France	0.864	82	Indonesia	0.700	144	Sierra Leone	0.543
25	Croatia	0.862	85	Tonga	0.697	145	Guinea	0.539
26	United Kingdom	0.860	86	Bolivia	0.696	146	Ethiopia	0.521
27	Poland	0.859	87	Suriname	0.694	146	Malawi	0.521
27	Spain	0.859	88	Puerto Rico	0.692	148	Comoros	0.519
29	Slovakia	0.856	89	Paraguay	0.691	149	Kenya	0.511
30	South Korea	0.848	90	Tajikistan	0.690	150	Congo	0.507
31	Malta	0.846	91	South Africa	0.688	151	Mauritania	0.506
32	Hungary	0.835	92	Jordan	0.679	152	Madagascar	0.505
32	Serbia	0.835	93	Mauritius	0.678	153	Djibouti	0.504
34	Italy	0.827	94	Uzbekistan	0.674	154	Liberia	0.500
35	Bulgaria	0.826	95	Kyrgyzstan	0.673	155	Papua New Guinea	0.487
36	Slovenia	0.824	96	Tunisia	0.669	156	Guinea-Bissau	0.483
37	United States	0.823	97	Azerbaijan	0.667	156	Palestine	0.483
38	Taiwan	0.818	98	Dominican Republic	0.666	158	Burkina Faso	0.481
39	Georgia	0.812	99	Türkiye	0.665	158	Mali	0.481
39	Hong Kong	0.812	100	Kosovo	0.664	158	Pakistan	0.481
41	Montenegro	0.808	100	Solomon Islands	0.664	161	Cameroon	0.466
42	Romania	0.800	100	Timor-Leste	0.664	162	Nigeria	0.465
43	Seychelles	0.799	103	Rwanda	0.663	163	Chad	0.462
44	North Macedonia	0.798	104	Botswana	0.659	164	Sudan	0.460
45	Albania	0.796	105	Belize	0.657	165	Myanmar	0.451
46	Mongolia	0.794	106	Ecuador	0.655	166	Niger	0.442
47	Barbados	0.779	107	Tanzania	0.652	167	Haiti	0.431
48	Armenia	0.772	108	Ghana	0.651	168	Iraq	0.424
49	Guyana	0.769	109	Sao Tome and Principe	0.648	169	Somalia	0.417
50	Argentina	0.768	110	Cambodia	0.645	170	Eswatini	0.415
51	Greece	0.766	110	Egypt	0.645	171	Syrian Arab Republic	0.407
52	Thailand	0.764	112	Nepal	0.644	172	Burundi	0.394
53	Moldova	0.758	112	Vanuatu	0.644	173	South Sudan	0.388
54	Panama	0.757	114	Morocco	0.637	174	Democratic Republic of the Congo	0.384
55	Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.754	115	Brazil	0.630	175	Central African Republic	0.378
56	Bahrain	0.752	116	Venezuela	0.628	176	Yemen	0.287
56	Russian Federation	0.752	117	Ukraine	0.626	177	Afghanistan	0.286
58	Turkmenistan	0.750	118	Algeria	0.622			
59	Uruguay	0.748	119	Equatorial Guinea	0.619			
60	Costa Rica	0.743	119	Senegal	0.619			

Possible scores range from a low of 0 to a high of 1.  
Please see the inside back cover for an alphabetical  
list of countries and ranks.

**Georgetown University’s Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS)** seeks to promote a more stable, peaceful, and just world by focusing on the important role women play in preventing conflict and building peace, growing economies, and addressing global threats like climate change and violent extremism. The institute pursues this mission through research that is accessible to practitioners and policy-makers, global convenings, strategic partnerships, and nurturing of the next generation of leaders. Melanne Verveer, the first U.S. ambassador for global women’s issues, is the Institute’s executive director. Hillary Rodham Clinton is the institute’s honorary founding chair.

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# Foreword

**T**his fourth edition of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Index ranks and scores 177 countries on women’s status. Our results show that countries where women are doing well are also more peaceful, democratic, prosperous, and better prepared to adapt to the impacts of climate change. In fact, these impacts are more strongly correlated with women’s status than they are with GDP.

Bridging insights from gender and development with those from peace and security, the WPS Index distills performance across 13 indicators into a single comparable measure across countries. It stands alone in considering diverse pillars of women’s status—ranging from economic participation, to health, to risks of violence. For example, it brings together education and perceptions of safety, parliamentary representation and maternal mortality, and legal protection and proximity to armed conflict.

With its scores, rankings, and robust data, the WPS Index offers a valuable tool for people working on issues of women, peace, and security. Policymakers can use it to pinpoint where resources are needed. Academics can use it to study trends within indicators and across regions. Journalists can use it to give context and perspective to their stories. And activists can use it to hold governments accountable for their promises on advancing the status of women.

The world today is grappling with the climate emergency, the rise of authoritarian and antidemocratic forces, large-scale forced displacement, devastating armed conflicts, and the multiple consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. These compounding and multilayered crises undermine the status of women and threaten to roll back decades of progress. The WPS Index reinforces prioritizing investment in women as essential to protecting the security and well-being of everyone in society.

The well-being of women and the well-being of nations go hand in hand. We hope that the WPS Index will advance a shared global agenda for women’s inclusion, justice, and security.

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## Report team and acknowledgments

**T**his report on the Women, Peace, and Security Index was created in collaboration between the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS) and the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO).

The work on the index and report was conducted by a team led by Elena Ortiz, WPS Index Research Manager and Lead Author (GIWPS). The report team comprised Milorad Kovacevic (consultant) with Michael Gottschalk (International Monetary Fund), who were responsible for construction of the index, and Lexah Caraluzzi, Ava Kawamura, and Ziwen Lu (GIWPS), who provided extensive research analysis, writing, and support. GIWPS partnered with Siri Aas Rustad and Anna Marie Obermeier (PRIO), who conducted significant research and analysis and wrote parts of the report. Work on the report was facilitated by the excellent communications and administrative support of Sarah Rutherford and Melissa Shields (GIWPS).

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# Overview

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**As the only index to combine indicators of women's inclusion, justice, and security, the WPS Index can be used to track trends, guide policymaking, and hold governments accountable for promises to advance women's rights and opportunities**

**T**he Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Index 2023/24, the fourth since the inaugural 2017/18 index, ranks 177 countries and economies on women's status (see box 1). As the only index to bring together indicators of women's inclusion, justice, and security, the WPS Index is a valuable measure of women's status that can be used to track trends, guide policymaking, and hold governments accountable for their promises to advance women's rights and opportunities.

The WPS Index reveals glaring disparities around the world. All countries on the index have room for improvement, and many perform considerably better or worse on some indicators of women's status than on others. These cases underline the importance of measuring women's status in its many dimensions. Societies where women are doing well are also more peaceful, democratic, prosperous, and better prepared to adapt to the impacts of climate change, according to correlations between our WPS Index and other global indices. The outcomes on these global indices are more strongly correlated with women's status than they are with national income, underlining the importance of investing in women.

The structure of the 2023/24 WPS Index has been updated. Four indicators are new or different in this edition: access to justice, maternal mortality, political violence targeting women (PVTW), and proximity to conflict. The index structure, as well as these changes, are described in box 1.

## **Global rankings and major patterns**

The range of scores on the WPS Index is vast, with Denmark at the top scoring more than three times higher than Afghanistan at the bottom (figure 1). All of the top dozen countries are in the Developed Country group, and notably, all five Nordic countries rank among the top seven. All countries in the top quintile are in the Developed Countries group or the Central and Eastern Europe and Central

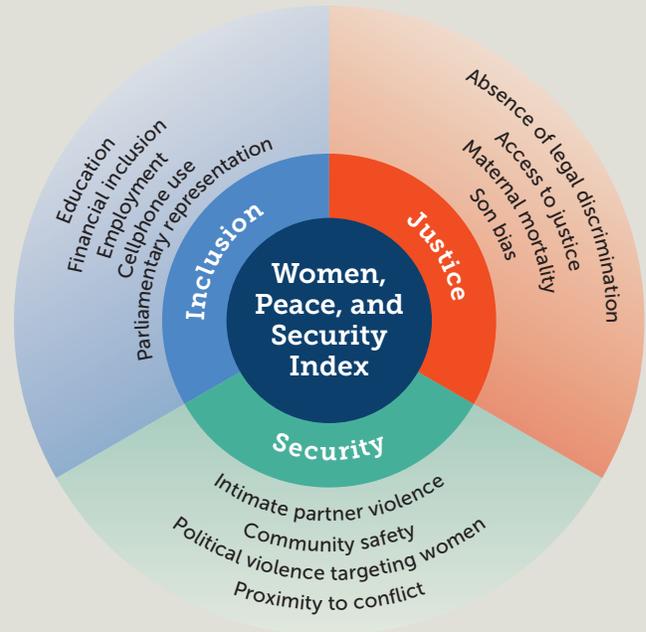
### BOX 1 The structure of the WPS Index

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Index captures 13 indicators of women’s status classified under three dimensions: inclusion (economic, social, political); justice (formal and informal discrimination); and security (at the individual, community, and societal levels) (see figure). It combines performance across indicators and dimensions to generate a country’s score, between 0 and 1, and establish its ranking.<sup>1</sup> The data come from recent and highly reputable sources—UN agencies, the World Bank, the Gallup World Poll, and more. Table 1.1 in chapter 1 and statistical table 1 at the end of the report provide detailed definitions and source information. While all indicators represent the most recent values available, data collection cannot keep pace with evolving global events, so the impacts of current crises and conflicts may not be consistently accounted for across our data.

Four indicators are new or different in this edition. In the justice dimension, these include access to justice (a measure of women’s ability to exercise their rights in practice, which replaces our former indicator of discriminatory gender norms) and maternal mortality. In the security dimension, these include political violence targeting women (capturing the number of events per 100,000 women) and proximity to conflict (estimating the share of women who live within 50 kilometers of armed conflict, which replaces our former indicator of organized violence, which estimated the number of battle-related deaths per 100,000 people).

Some of these changes were made because previous indicators are no longer being updated, while others respond to the emergence of better indicators since 2017, when the WPS Index was initially designed.

### The WPS Index captures 13 indicators of women’s status classified under three dimensions



Note: See table 1.1 for indicator definitions and statistical table 1 for main data sources.

Source: Authors.

The 2023/24 WPS Index also ranks seven new countries and economies: Guinea-Bissau, Puerto Rico, Samoa, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, Taiwan, and Vanuatu.

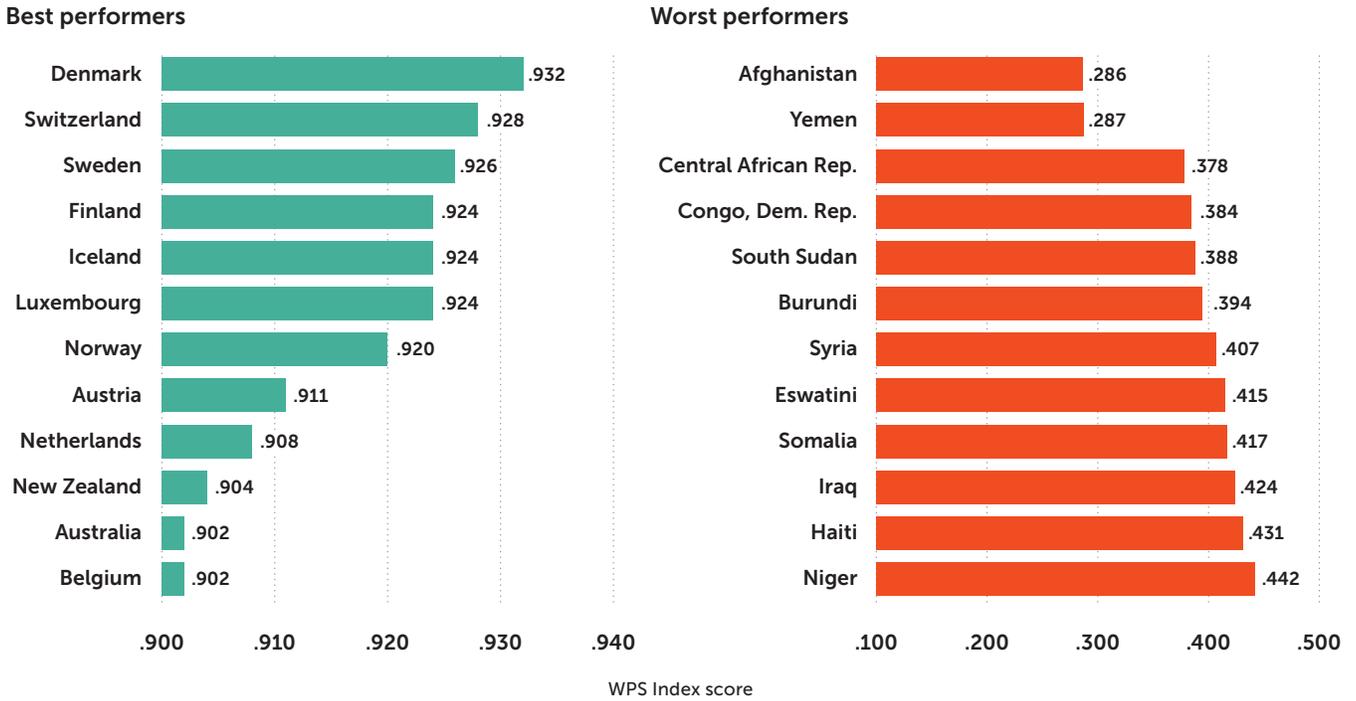
#### Note

1. See appendix 1 for discussion of the methodology.

Asia region except for the United Arab Emirates, in the Middle East and North Africa region, which ranks 22nd. At the other end of the rankings, 11 of the bottom dozen countries—all except Eswatini—are classified as Fragile States, and 7 are in Sub-Saharan Africa. Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen have been among the bottom dozen countries since the inaugural 2017/18 WPS Index.

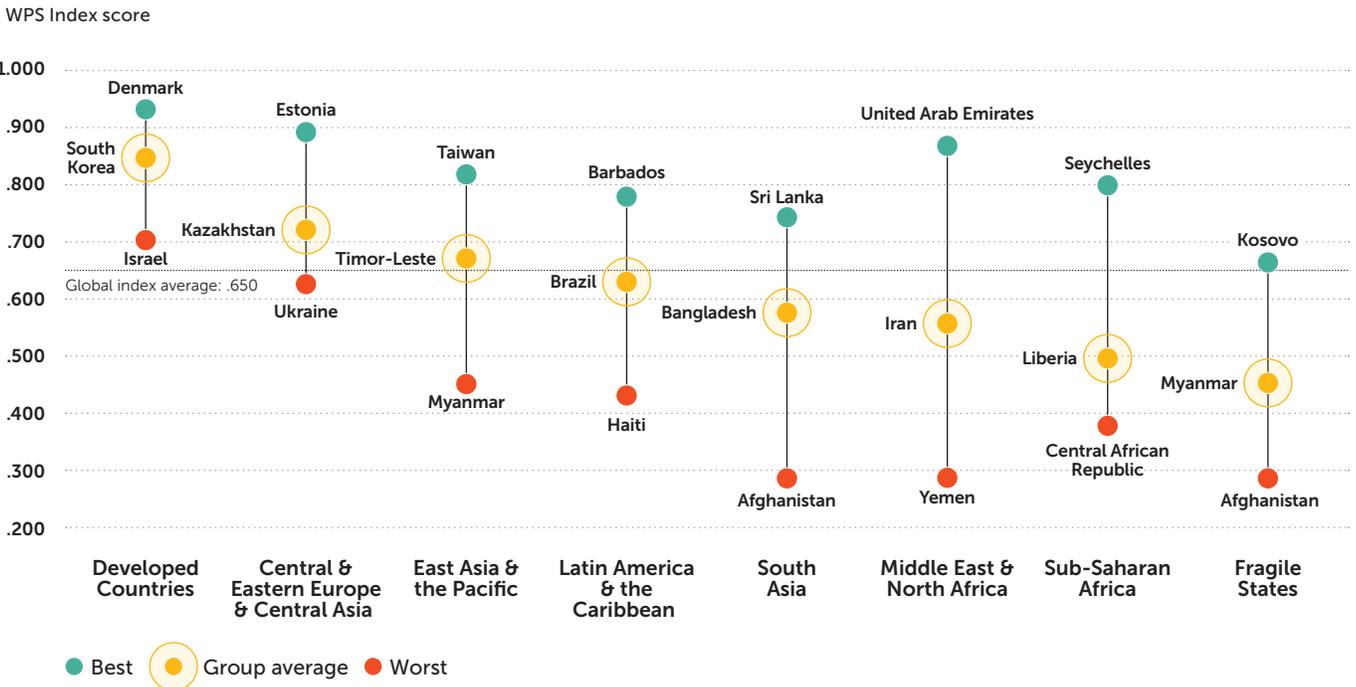
Of all country groups and regions, the Fragile States group performs worst (figure 2). On average in these countries, 1 woman in 5 has experienced recent intimate partner violence, 6 women in 10 live in proximity to conflict, and maternal deaths stand at approximately 540 per 100,000 live births, more than double the global average of 212. Sub-Saharan Africa performs only slightly better overall than the Fragile States group. The Middle East and North Africa region performs third-worst overall but has the widest range of performance, with the United Arab Emirates ranking 22nd and Yemen 176th. The Developed Countries group does best, performing considerably better than the global average on all 13 indicators.

**FIGURE 1** The dozen best and worst performers on the WPS Index



Note: Possible index scores range from a low of 0 to a high of 1. See statistical table 1 for data sources, detailed scores, and date ranges.  
 Source: Authors' estimates.

**FIGURE 2** A wide range of performance on the WPS Index across and within country groups and regions



Note: Possible index scores range from a low of 0 to a high of 1. The countries near the yellow dots have a WPS Index score that is closest to the average for the country group or region. See statistical table 1 for data sources and scores and appendix 2 for countries in each group and region. Countries in the Fragile States group are also included in their regional group.  
 Source: Authors' estimates.

Rates of women’s financial inclusion exceed 95 percent in 30 countries but plunge to 10 percent or lower in 8 countries

**Mixed performance across dimensions**

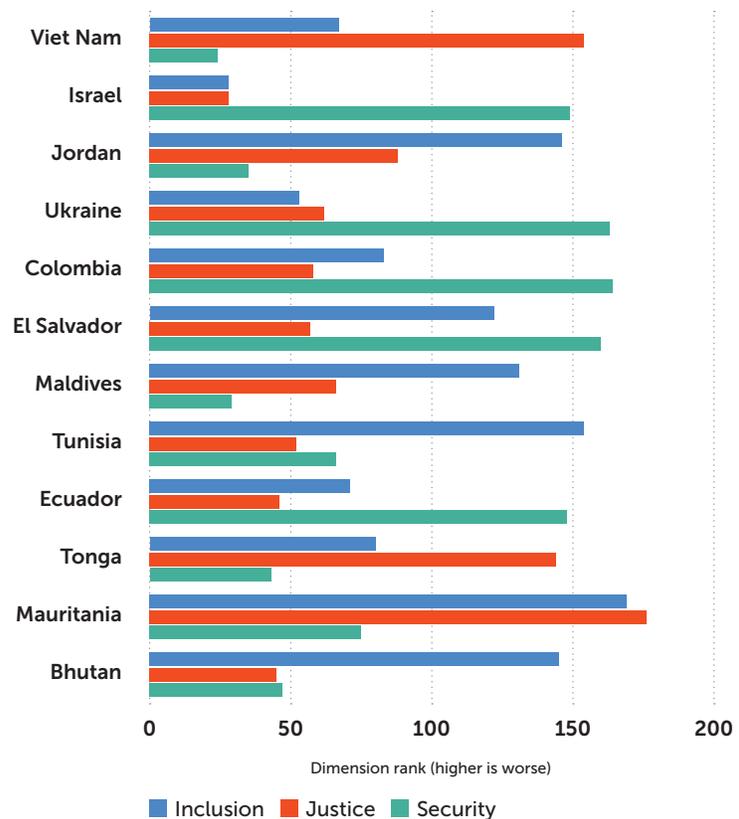
A country’s overall WPS Index score is determined by averaging its scores on the inclusion, justice, and security dimensions. Unpacking scores on each dimension reveals that some countries perform relatively better or worse on certain dimensions (figure 3). Viet Nam has the greatest variation across the three dimensions, ranking relatively well (24th) on security due to strong perceptions of community safety but falling to 154th on justice due to high levels of son bias and maternal mortality.

**Wide disparities in indicators of women’s inclusion**

Within the inclusion dimension, disparities are especially stark for women’s employment and financial inclusion. Although women’s employment—both formal and informal—averages 53 percent globally, it ranges from 90 percent in Madagascar, Solomon Islands, and Burundi to just 6 percent in Yemen. Of the top 10 countries on this indicator, 5 are in Sub-Saharan Africa.

On women’s financial inclusion, rates exceed 95 percent in 30 countries but plunge to 10 percent or lower in 8 countries. In Afghanistan and South Sudan, fewer than 5 percent of women have access to their own bank account. Globally, women’s financial inclusion is on the rise, expanding from 56 percent in 2014 to 71 percent as of the most recent data for 2021.<sup>1</sup> Over the same period, 50 countries have seen increases of at least 10 percentage points in financial inclusion, led by

**FIGURE 3 Countries with the most variation in rank across dimensions of the WPS Index**



Note: Ranks range from 1 to 177, and higher is worse. Countries are ordered by highest average rank difference between dimensions. See statistical table 1 for data sources, detailed scores, and date ranges. Source: Authors’ estimates.

Lesotho and Moldova, whose rates rose from less than 20 percent to more than 60 percent (figure 4). Contributing to this rise in financial inclusion is the proliferation of digital finance platforms that enable women to manage their money remotely and independently.<sup>2</sup> Financial inclusion is critical to women’s empowerment and agency, as women without their own bank account are constrained in making decisions about their livelihoods, accessing critical resources, and leaving abusive relationships.<sup>3</sup>

**Justice for women: Informal and formal barriers**

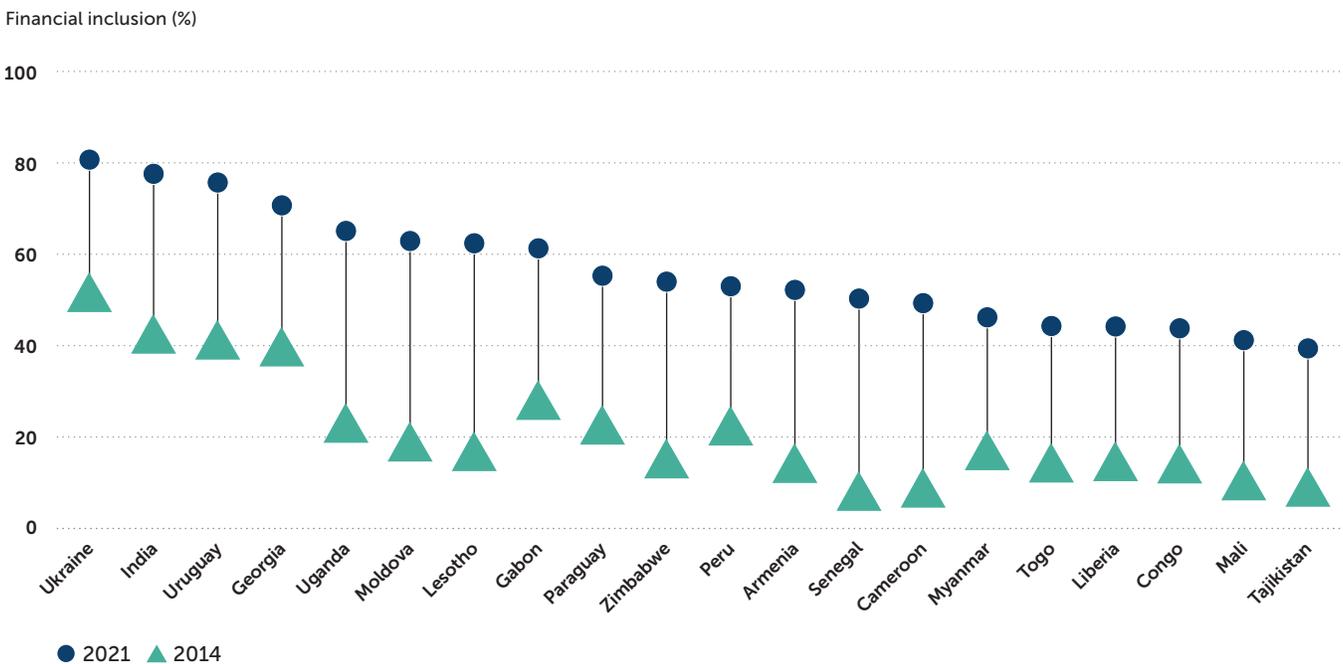
The current index includes two new indicators within the justice dimension—women’s access to justice (replacing the discriminatory norms indicator) and maternal mortality—and both reveal a wide range of performance across countries. On a scale of 0 to 4, the access to justice indicator scores countries on the extent to which women have secure and effective paths toward justice, including the ability to bring cases to court, participate in fair trials, and seek proper redress and defense measures when their rights are violated.<sup>4</sup>

No country has a perfect score on access to justice, though Denmark scores highest at 3.96. Afghanistan scores lowest on this indicator, with its score of 0.37 driven by the Taliban’s oppressive regime that has severely restricted women’s ability to safely and fairly pursue justice. Of the country groups and regions, the Developed Countries group scores highest overall in access to justice, at 3.53, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa, at 2.21 (figure 5).

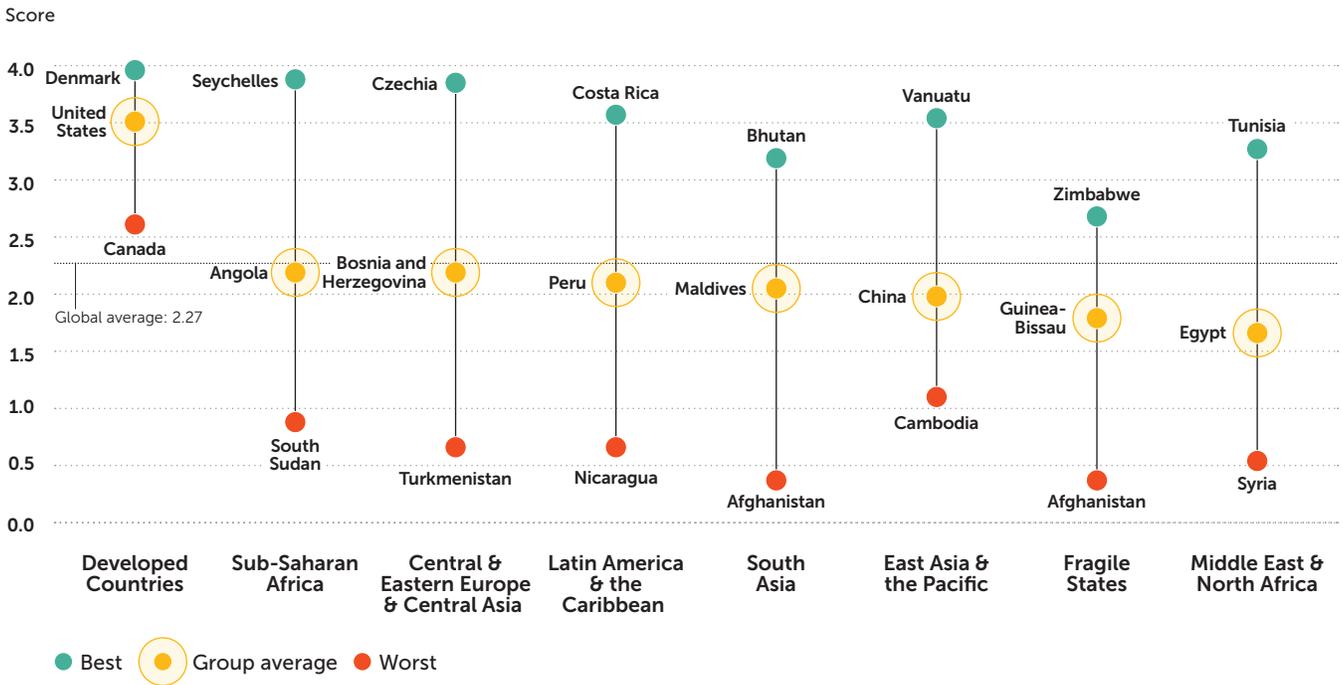
While the access to justice indicator captures whether women can exercise their rights in practice, the absence of legal discrimination indicator assesses barriers in the law. Unsurprisingly, these two indicators, which together account for both informal and structural barriers to women’s justice, are strongly connected: countries with weak formal protections tend to be countries where women are unable

The 2023/24 WPS Index includes two new indicators in the justice dimension (women’s access to justice and maternal mortality), and both reveal a wide range of performance across countries

**FIGURE 4 Countries with the greatest improvement in women’s financial inclusion from 2014 to 2021**



Note: Countries are ordered according to highest financial inclusion rates in 2021. See statistical table 1 for data sources, detailed scores, and date ranges. Source: Authors’ estimates based on World Bank (2022).

**FIGURE 5 Women’s access to justice varies greatly within country groups and regions**

Note: Possible scores range from a low of 0 to a high of 4. The countries near the yellow dots have a WPS Index score that is closest to the average for the country group or region. See statistical table 1 for data sources, detailed scores, and date ranges and appendix 2 for countries in each group and region. Countries in the Fragile States group are also included in their regional group.

Source: Authors’ estimates.

to seek adequate, safe, and fair paths to justice. Nine of the dozen worst-performing countries in access to justice also score below the global average on absence of legal discrimination. At the other end of the spectrum, 13 of the 14 countries with fully equal legal codes for women and men score higher than 3 points out of 4 on access to justice.

Of the country groups and regions, the Middle East and North Africa performs worst on both legal discrimination and access to justice. Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Palestine, Qatar, Syria, and Yemen have no criminal penalties for sexual harassment in the workplace.<sup>5</sup> In 10 countries in the region, women are legally required to obey their husbands.

However, there are notable country exceptions to linked performance on the two indicators. For example, Nicaragua has relatively strong legal protections for women, scoring in the second quintile on absence of legal discrimination, but its performance on access to justice is the fourth worst in the world. Contributing to the poor performance on access to justice is Nicaragua’s recent elimination of special police stations and courts serving women, as well as legal changes that now subject perpetrators of violence against women to family counseling rather than legal sanctions, fostering an environment of impunity and dissuading women from reporting crimes and pursuing justice.<sup>6</sup> A similar contrast is evident in Hong Kong, Lao PDR, and Mexico, underlining that laws on paper cannot ensure justice for women if systems of legal accountability and accessibility are weak.

#### **Women’s security: At home, in the community, and across society**

The security dimension considers risks to women’s safety at the household, community, and societal levels. Intimate partner violence, which captures violence

**Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of women worldwide report feeling safe walking alone in their neighborhood at night**

within the home, ranges from 45 percent of ever-partnered women in Iraq to 2 percent in Singapore and Switzerland. However, the most recent national estimates are several years old, last compiled by the World Health Organization and UN Women in 2018, before the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated intimate partner violence around the world.<sup>7</sup> In addition, intimate partner violence is often underestimated because of barriers to reporting, such as lack of trust in authorities and fear of shame or victim blaming.<sup>8</sup>

The community safety indicator captures women’s perceptions of security in their neighborhood. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of women worldwide report feeling safe walking alone in their neighborhood at night, though rates vary considerably in both directions. In Kuwait, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, China, and Turkmenistan, rates exceed 90 percent. In Gambia, Eswatini, and Lesotho, rates drop to about a quarter or less. At the regional level, women in East Asia and the Pacific report the highest perceptions of community safety, at 83 percent, while Latin America and the Caribbean has the lowest, at 40 percent. Notably, this region also has the highest rates of PVTW events and the second-highest share of women living in proximity to conflict (after the Fragile States group), highlighting the connection between instability at the societal level and feelings of safety at the neighborhood level.

### ***Strong correlations between women’s status and peace, democracy, climate resilience, and justice***

Women’s inclusion, justice, and security are vital in building resilient, peaceful, and sustainable societies and thus matter for everyone. As the only global index that brings together issues of women’s inclusion, justice, and security, the WPS Index is a critical tool for making an empirical case for links between these dimensions and the overall well-being of society.

This is evident in the strong correlations between the WPS Index and other widely recognized global indices measuring outcomes that may seem distinct from “women’s issues,” ranging from human development to climate change resilience, peace, and fragility. Notably, these outcomes are more strongly correlated with women’s status than they are with GDP, underlining the importance of investing in women.<sup>9</sup>

The strongest correlations with the WPS Index are found for the Human Development Index (.900; figure 6), the University of Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index (ND-GAIN, .900) of climate change preparedness, and the Fragile States Index (.898).

### **Political violence against women: Escalating risks and repercussions**

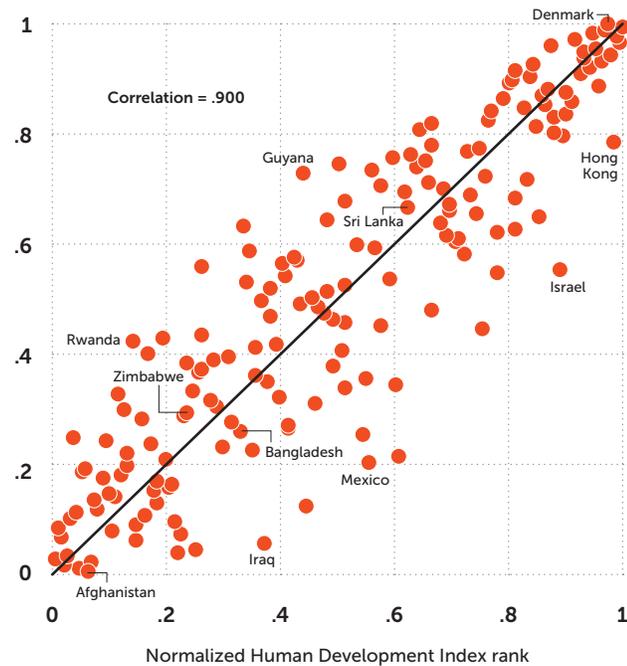
Women’s rights are the backbone of resilient, peaceful, and democratic societies. While women’s leadership and participation in government, pro-democracy movements, and human rights campaigns have grown in recent decades, escalating risks of political violence threaten to stall and even roll back progress. Meanwhile, new and emerging threats, such as the rapid proliferation of artificial intelligence, introduce unprecedented and often incalculable gendered impacts that multiply these risks.

Political violence takes many forms, from the physical and sexual to the digital. Political violence can target women who actively participate in politics—civil servants, journalists, activists, demonstrators, and voters—as well as women who are not engaged in politics but who are attacked by political actors.

**FIGURE 6** Strong correlations between rank on the WPS Index and rank on indices of human development and climate change preparedness

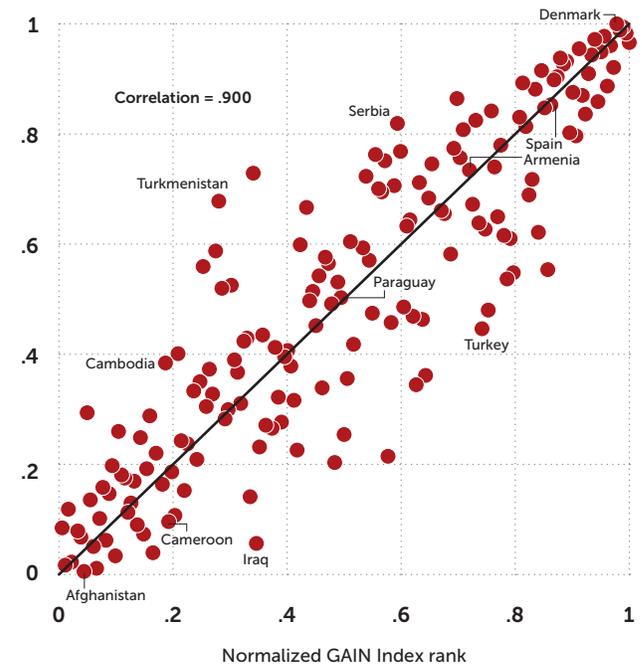
### Human Development Index

Normalized WPS Index rank



### ND-GAIN Index of Climate Adaptation

Normalized WPS Index rank



Note: The axes refer to country ranks, not index scores. Since the indices cover different numbers of countries, the ranks are adjusted for the total number of countries in the index. On both axes, 0 represents the worst-performing country and 1 the best for the respective index.

Source: Authors' estimates based on data from UNDP (2022) and ND-GAIN (2023).

### ***Physical and sexual political violence against women***

Physical political violence against women encompasses attacks that inflict bodily harm. These attacks can be nonsexual (gun violence, beatings, murders, abductions, mob violence) or sexual (rape, sexual harassment, forced sterilization, forced abortion). Physical attacks are often intended to scare, shame, or silence women who are participating in civic spaces.

### ***Nonsexual physical violence: Perpetrators, forms, and targets***

Perpetrators of nonsexual physical violence against women include state and non-state actors, ranging from government officials to armed rebel groups and individuals, all pursuing their own politically motivated agendas.

Physical political violence often targets women who are not actively involved in politics. In June 2023, members of the Barrio 18 gang murdered 41 inmates in a Honduran women's prison.<sup>10</sup> Also in 2023, a group of armed suspected jihadists with ties to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State kidnapped more than 40 women in Burkina Faso who were searching for food.<sup>11</sup> Attacks such as these generally attempt to instill fear and portray governments as unable to protect their citizens.<sup>12</sup>

Women participating in politics are also vulnerable to violence specifically because of their political activities and the causes or policies they support. For example:

- In 2023, two male colleagues harassed and beat Senegalese lawmaker Amy Ndiaye Gniy after she criticized an opposition religious figure. Ndiaye was

pregnant at the time, and the attackers kicked her in the belly, resulting in injuries requiring her hospitalization.<sup>13</sup>

- In 2023, an unknown assailant threw acid in the face of Lilia Patricia Cardozo, a Colombian women’s rights defender. Cardozo is the director of Plataforma Feminista Boyacense, a nongovernmental organization concerned with domestic and gender-based violence.<sup>14</sup>
- In 2022, Taliban forces abducted, beat, and tortured Afghan women’s rights defenders Parwana Ibrahimkhel, Tamana Zaryab Paryani, and three of Paryani’s sisters who participated in a protest for women’s rights to education, work, and freedom near Kabul University.<sup>15</sup>

#### *Sexual violence: Threats within and outside conflict settings*

Sexual violence, another instrument of physical political violence against women, occurs both within and outside conflict settings. While sexual violence is perpetrated against people of all genders, women are disproportionately targeted.

Conflict-related sexual violence—when armed actors within a conflict perpetrate sexual violence to assert political dominance and instill fear in opposition groups<sup>16</sup>—is a tactic of intimidation, results in lasting trauma, and amplifies violent patriarchal dominance in militarized conflicts, enabling ongoing violence against women.<sup>17</sup> In Colombia, women activists exposed the wartime use of sexual violence by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) to punish outspoken, politically engaged women.<sup>18</sup> In the second quarter of 2021 alone, the Colombian attorney general received 43,493 reports of sexual violence, 86 percent of them perpetrated against women.<sup>19</sup> Today, Colombian women face continued risk of violence as conflict persists between the government and rebel forces.<sup>20</sup> In Myanmar, thousands of Rohingya women have been raped by members of the military as part of a broader campaign of ethnic cleansing, also highlighting how ethnic discrimination can amplify the risk of conflict-related sexual violence against women.<sup>21</sup>

Sexual political violence occurs in diverse political settings, including many that are unrelated to conflict. In a survey of politicians, political candidates, and party supporters participating in Uganda’s 2016 and 2018 councilor elections, 80 percent of women reported having experienced rape or unwanted sexual contact compared with 20 percent of men.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Kenya has seen rampant sexual violence against women politicians during election cycles. In 2022, three women presidential candidates were the targets of sexual harassment, online and offline, intended to dissuade them from running.<sup>23</sup> Many attacks were part of a coordinated propaganda campaign in support of the Islamic State and al-Shabaab.<sup>24</sup>

Restrictions on women’s reproductive autonomy is another form of political violence and can be embedded within political agendas to control population demographics. For example, the Chinese government continues to forcibly sterilize Uyghur women, with reported plans to target at least 80 percent of interned Uyghur women.<sup>25</sup> Since 2013, the Nigerian government has forced more than 10,000 women impregnated by members of Boko Haram to have an abortion.<sup>26</sup>

#### *Digital threats: Evolving forms and risk of political violence against women online*

The spread of digital technologies has expanded the scope of political violence beyond the physical domain. Technology-facilitated gender-based violence is distinct from digital violence in that it targets people specifically because of their gender, especially women.<sup>27</sup> Attacks on women are often politically motivated; perpetrators identify women as targets because of the policies they advocate, the content they publish, the campaigns they pioneer, or the leadership positions they pursue.

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**Sexual violence as an instrument of physical political violence occurs both within and outside conflict settings and disproportionately targets women**

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**Political violence against women has direct implications for the international Women, Peace, and Security Agenda: when women are not protected from political violence they cannot participate in peace processes or in relief and recovery efforts**

Instances of online political violence are increasing. In a 2020 global survey of more than 700 women journalists by the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 73 percent of respondents reported suffering technology-facilitated gender-based violence during their career.<sup>28</sup> In another global survey of journalists, editors, and other news workers in 125 countries conducted by Columbia University and the ICFJ after the COVID-19 lockdowns and the subsequent rise in the use of digital platforms, 20 percent of respondents reported worsening trends in violence.<sup>29</sup>

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence is also increasing at the regional and national levels. In a 2020 survey of 100 East African women journalists, two-thirds of them reported experiencing worse online attacks during the COVID-19 pandemic than before it.<sup>30</sup> Between 2019 and 2020, the number of attacks targeting politicians in Quebec, Canada, rose 450 percent, with women enduring more targeted abuse than men.<sup>31</sup>

### ***Political violence against women and the WPS Agenda***

Political violence against women has direct implications for the international Women, Peace, and Security Agenda (WPS Agenda). The agenda is grounded in four pillars—protection, prevention, participation, and relief and recovery<sup>32</sup>—all of which are undermined by political violence. As political violence against women increasingly shapes modern conflicts, and the consequences proliferate, addressing political violence against women must be embedded in all efforts to implement the WPS Agenda. When women are not protected from political violence and when political violence is not prevented, women cannot participate in peace processes or in relief and recovery efforts.

*Protection* underlines the importance of guarding women and girls from violence, while *prevention* emphasizes strengthening strategies that reduce women’s vulnerability to conflict-related violence, such as bolstering legal protections and supporting women peacebuilders. These pillars must also account for the impacts of political violence against women, which can undermine prospects for peace by amplifying security risks. For example, armed groups specifically target women peacebuilders and human rights defenders, undercutting the goals of both protection and prevention. In Libya, armed rebels murdered lawyer and human rights activist Hanan Al-Barassi for her activism against the sexual violence perpetrated by armed groups.<sup>33</sup>

*Participation* requires women’s meaningful inclusion in peace and security decision making. Implementing the WPS Agenda depends on women’s active engagement and leadership in formal institutions, politics, and civil society. Women’s participation in reaching peace agreements is associated with fuller implementation of agreed measures and greater durability of peace.<sup>34</sup> Freedom from political violence is essential to these outcomes.

*Relief and recovery* consider the specific needs of women following conflict and the active role that women must play in guiding humanitarian and reconstruction efforts. Inclusive reconstruction efforts and institution building require women to be able to safely contribute and lead, which political violence renders impossible. For example, in early 2021, four women aid workers supporting women’s vocational training were murdered in Pakistan by suspected members of the Pakistani Taliban.<sup>35</sup> In Afghanistan in April 2023, the Taliban banned women aid workers,<sup>36</sup> who have since faced harassment, intimidation, and detention.

Political violence against women undermines progress on critical global agendas yet is notably absent in the language of many international frameworks.

Policymakers must view political violence as a peace and security issue, as a sustainable development issue, as an environmental justice issue, and as a human rights issue.

No single actor can eliminate political violence against women. The constantly expanding reach and ever-evolving forms of such violence demand systemic, multipronged approaches that ensure women's immediate safety and tackle the underlying inequalities that condition and give rise to gendered risks for women. Key priorities for policymakers include:

- Deepening international cooperation on addressing political violence against women.
- Criminalizing all forms of political violence against women.
- Expanding monitoring and reporting.
- Training government officials, election management authorities, and community organizers on how to identify, report, and respond to political violence against women.
- Holding private social media companies accountable for preventing technology-facilitated gender-based violence.
- Scaling up support for survivors.

### Women exposed to armed conflict in 2022

The year 2022 was the deadliest in terms of battle-related deaths from armed conflict since 1994, the year of the Rwandan genocide. Living in proximity to conflict-affected areas undermines women's inclusion, justice, and security. Multiple studies have shown that armed conflict increases maternal deaths,<sup>37</sup> amplifies risks of gender-based violence,<sup>38</sup> leads to disproportionate levels of school dropouts for girls,<sup>39</sup> and creates barriers to women's livelihood opportunities.<sup>40</sup> These consequences, among many others, threaten women's immediate safety while reducing their long-term prosperity and opportunities, thus widening gender gaps and preventing gender-equitable recovery.

In 2022, approximately 600 million women—15 percent of women in the world—lived within 50 kilometers of armed conflict, more than double the levels in the 1990s.<sup>41</sup> Comparing countries' rates of proximity to conflict against their overall WPS Index score reveals two main takeaways (figure 7). First, there is a negative correlation between proximity to conflict and the WPS Index score, suggesting that countries where women are doing well tend to be countries where women are not exposed to armed conflict; the reverse is also true. Second, countries experiencing the two major conflicts of 2022—the civil war in Ethiopia and Russia's invasion of Ukraine—dominate in battle-related deaths, whereas other countries, including Afghanistan, Myanmar, Syria, and Yemen, experienced fewer battle-related deaths but had larger shares of women living in proximity to conflict. Russia's invasion of Ukraine resulted in more than 81,500 state-based battle-related deaths, while the civil war in Ethiopia, although receiving far less international attention, resulted in more than 100,000 battle-related deaths.<sup>42</sup> This is the highest number of state-based battle-related deaths in a single conflict year since the Iraqi government offensive in Kurdistan in 1988.<sup>43</sup>

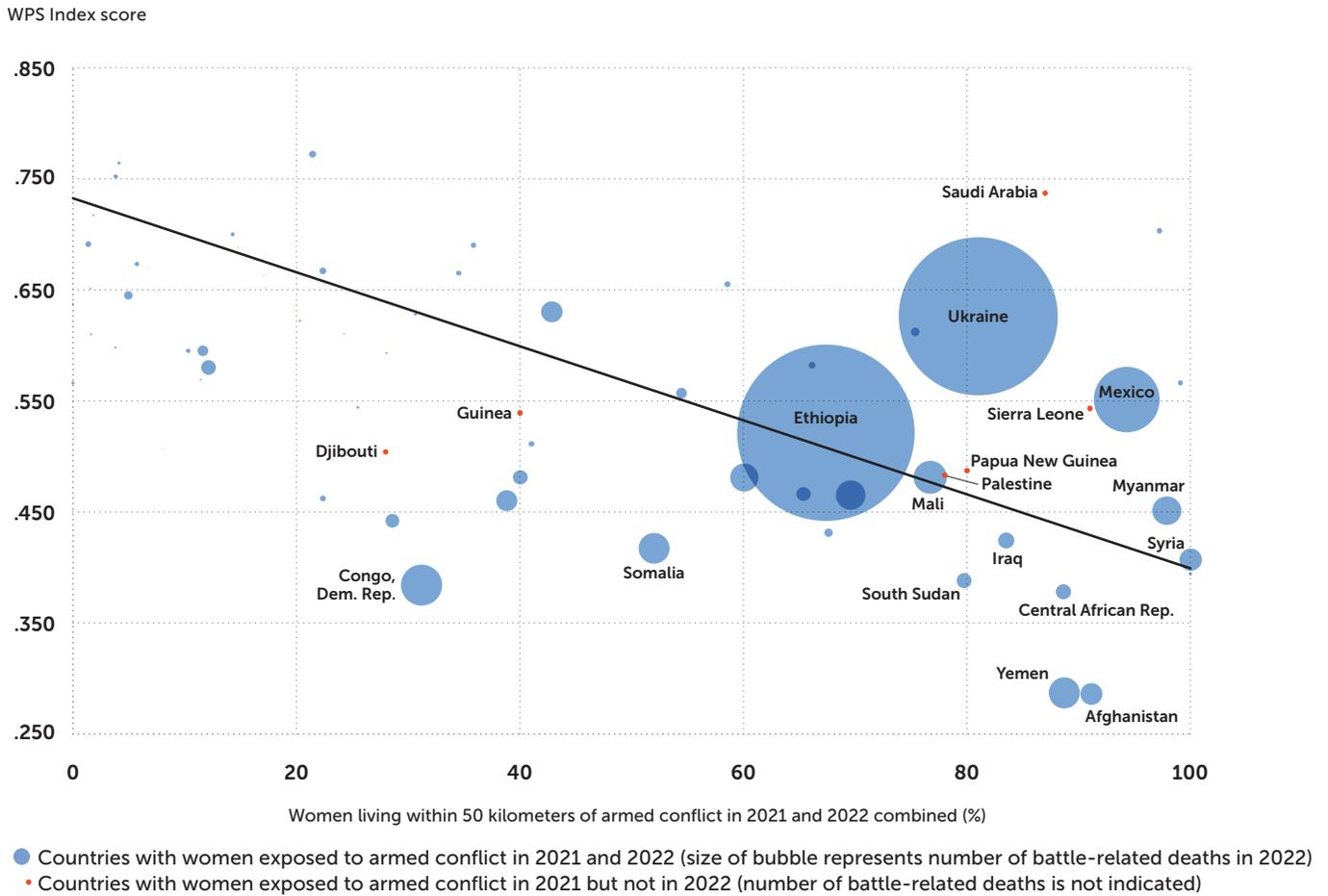
### Going beyond national borders: Subnational analyses of Colombia and Ethiopia

The WPS Index relies on national averages, which paint a broad picture of women's status across countries. But national averages conceal variation within country borders. This year, we explored the findings of subnational analyses for Colombia

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**The year 2022 was the deadliest in terms of battle-related deaths from armed conflict since 1994, the year of the Rwandan genocide, and approximately 600 million women (15 percent of all women) lived near armed conflict**

**FIGURE 7 WPS Index scores are related to proximity to conflict and battle-related deaths, 2021 and 2022**



Source: Authors' estimates based on data from UCDP (2023).

and Ethiopia, with subnational index scores that capture how women's inclusion, justice, and security vary by location within each country (33 departments in Colombia and 11 regions in Ethiopia). Colombia and Ethiopia were selected because both are conflict-affected countries with strong relevance to the WPS Agenda and because sufficient data were available for analysis at the subnational level. In both countries, women's status varies significantly according to their location. In Colombia, areas most affected by conflict and those with higher Indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations tend to score lower. In Ethiopia, scores are low across the board, and even the best-performing regions perform poorly on some indicators.

**Colombia: Decades of conflict threaten women's status**

More than 8.8 million people in Colombia—approximately 17 percent of the population—have been officially registered as victims of armed conflict, most of them forcibly displaced women and children.<sup>44</sup> Conflict has affected women's status and security in varying and often disproportionate ways, especially through increased risks of gender-based violence and displacement. More than two women in five in Colombia have experienced some form of gender-based violence related to the conflict, though such violence is likely underreported.<sup>45</sup>

Insecurity of women at the national level builds on insecurity at the community and household levels. Nearly two-thirds of women nationally report not

feeling safe walking alone in their neighborhood at night, while pervasive impunity, enabled by weak and corrupt law enforcement systems, has contributed to widespread domestic violence.<sup>46</sup> Conflict exacerbates this pattern.<sup>47</sup>

The range of subnational scores across Colombia's departments is wide, with top-ranking Santander scoring .783, and bottom-ranking Casanare scoring .534.<sup>48</sup> Santander's strong performance can be attributed to women's high rates of education, internet use, and financial inclusion, along with low rates of maternal mortality and proximity to conflict.

Casanare has the lowest life expectancy for women among departments<sup>49</sup> and is 1 of 11 departments with no female members in the House of Representatives. Casanare performs particularly poorly on the security dimension. It has the second-highest prevalence of intimate partner violence in the country, and 80 percent of women live within 50 kilometers of armed conflict.

### ***Ethiopia: Continuing conflict harms women in multiple ways***

Ethiopia's long history of conflict has disproportionately harmed women by restricting their access to education, creating livelihood barriers, and amplifying risks of gender-based violence. As of 2022, two-thirds of women in Ethiopia lived within 50 kilometers of armed conflict. In Tigray and Addis Ababa, every woman was exposed to armed conflict. While the subnational index does not fully account for the impacts of the recent civil war, it nonetheless identifies areas within the country where women's inclusion, justice, and security are most under threat and where more investment in improving women's status is urgently needed.

The Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region (SNNPR) was the best-performing region in the country, with a score of .541, and Afar was the worst performing, with a score of .389. SNNPR performs well on indicators related to employment and parliamentary representation, as well as those within the security dimension. In SNNPR, 52 percent of women are employed, and as of 2019, women made up 41 percent of SNNPR's members of the House of People's Representatives. Despite its high overall score, SNNPR performs poorly on indicators of education and financial inclusion.

Afar's low score reflects its poor performance on several indicators: on average, women have not completed even a year of school, only about one woman in four has access to her own bank account, and more than four women in five live within 50 kilometers of armed conflict. Low school completion is attributable largely to early pregnancy and to girls' disproportionate responsibility for domestic care duties. One girl in four ages 15–19 in Afar becomes pregnant,<sup>50</sup> and half of girls who marry while in school drop out.<sup>51</sup> Exacerbating the situation is women's proximity to conflict. In 2022, 84 percent of women lived within 50 kilometers of at least one conflict event.

### ***Need data disaggregated by sex and other characteristics***

Subnational index analysis offers a valuable tool for assessing and responding to disparities in women's status within national borders. Indeed, results from Colombia and Ethiopia show that the challenges facing women vary by geography and are often concealed by national averages. Data disaggregated by both sex and geography are required for subnational analysis and for guiding effective policy and programming—but are also extremely rare. Better, high-quality data disaggregated along these lines—as well as along others, such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status—are essential to identifying gaps and ensuring that no woman is left behind.

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**On average in Ethiopia's Afar region, women have not completed even a year of school, only about one woman in four has access to her own bank account, and more than four women in five live within 50 kilometers of armed conflict**



## CHAPTER 1

# Global, regional, and comparative findings

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**Of the 177 countries on the WPS Index, Denmark leads the 2023/24 rankings and performs more than three times better than bottom-ranked Afghanistan**

**T**his 2023/24 edition of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Index—ranking and scoring 177 countries on women’s status—reveals glaring disparities around the world, as evidenced in several striking findings. First, Denmark leads the 2023 rankings and performs more than three times better than Afghanistan, ranked at the bottom. At the regional and country group level, Developed Countries and Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia perform best on average, and Fragile States and Sub-Saharan Africa perform worst (see box 1.1 on country and regional groups and countries new to the index).

Second, countries in the Middle East and North Africa region exhibit the widest range of performance, with the United Arab Emirates ranking 22nd and Yemen 176th. Overall, the region has the highest levels of legal discrimination against women and performs lowest on women’s access to justice, reflecting both formal and informal barriers to women exercising their rights.

Third, all countries on the index have room for improvement, and many perform considerably better or worse on some indicators of women’s status than on others. For example, Viet Nam has among the highest rates globally of women’s perceptions of community safety but also has high levels of maternal mortality. El Salvador has strong legal protections for women, but 99 percent of women live in proximity to armed conflict, undermining their security. These cases, along with many others, underline the importance of measuring women’s status in its many dimensions.

Finally, societies where women are doing well are also more peaceful, democratic, prosperous, and better prepared to adapt to the impacts of climate change, according to correlations between our WPS Index and other global indices. These outcomes are more strongly correlated with women’s status than they are with national income (GDP). These findings confirm that women’s status matters for everyone in society.

### BOX 1.1 Country groups and regions

The 2023/24 WPS Index ranks 177 countries and economies, up from 170 in 2021/22 and 153 in the inaugural 2017/18 index. The seven new countries and economies are Guinea-Bissau, Puerto Rico, Samoa, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, Taiwan, and Vanuatu.

All 177 countries in the 2023/24 WPS Index belong to one of the following seven country groups or regions: Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Developed Countries, East Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, 33 countries in the index are classified by the World Bank as Fragile States. Those countries are also included in their regional group for analysis. Appendix 2 lists the countries included in each country group and region.

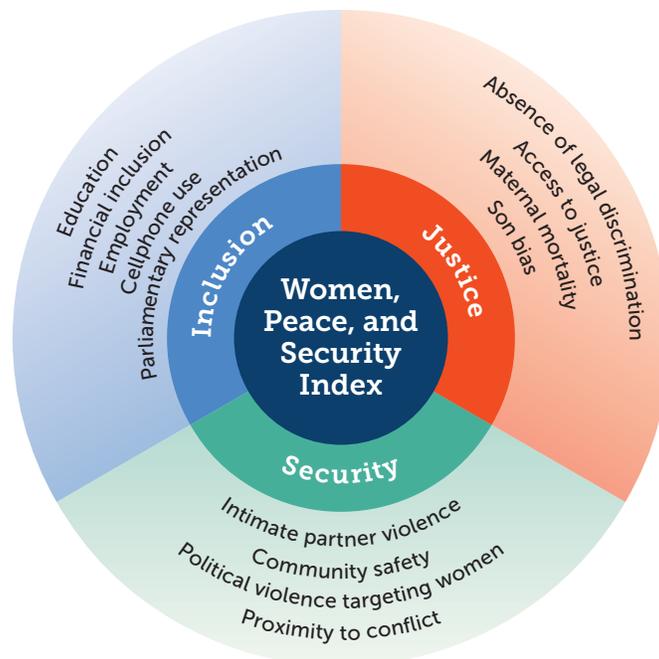
Current challenges facing women are complex, and new obstacles continue to arise. Chapter 2 explores the escalating threats of political violence against women—physically, sexually, and digitally. Chapter 3 examines the landscape of armed conflict and presents the results of subnational analyses for Colombia and Ethiopia, revealing that women’s status varies widely within national borders.

### The structure of the WPS Index

The WPS Index captures 13 indicators of women’s status classified under three dimensions; justice (formal and informal discrimination); and security (at the individual, community, and societal levels) (figure 1.1 and table 1.1). It combines performance across indicators and dimensions to generate a country’s score, between 0 and 1, and establish its ranking.<sup>1</sup> The data come from recent and highly reputable sources—UN agencies, the World Bank, the Gallup World Poll, and more.<sup>2</sup> While all indicators represent the most recent values available, data collection cannot keep pace with evolving global events, so the impacts of current crises and conflicts may not be consistently accounted for across our data.

The structure of the WPS Index has been updated. Four indicators are new or different in this edition: women’s access to justice, maternal mortality, political violence targeting women (PVTW), and proximity to conflict (described in box 1.2). These modifications are based on careful consideration of factors ranging from a discontinuation of data collection on some indicators to the emergence of better indicators since 2017, when the WPS Index was initially developed. **An important implication of these changes is that they preclude comparing 2023/24 index scores with scores from previous years.** To explore what effect the new and revised indicators would have had on the index, we recalculated the

**FIGURE 1.1** The WPS Index captures 13 indicators of women’s status classified under three dimensions



Note: See table 1.1 for indicator definitions and statistical table 1 for main data sources. Source: Authors.

**TABLE 1.1 WPS Index indicators, definitions, and rationales**

DIMENSION AND INDICATOR	DEFINITION	RATIONALE
<b>INCLUSION</b>		
Education	Average number of years of education of women ages 25 and older	Critical to women's opportunities, freedom from violence, and health (more precise measure than, for example, secondary school completion)
Financial inclusion	Percentage of women and girls ages 15 and older who report having an individual or joint account at a bank or other financial institution or who report using a mobile money service	Allows women to manage risk, invest in education and health, and start and expand a business
Employment	Female employment to population ratio: number of employed women ages 25–64 in the formal or informal workforce, expressed as a percentage of the total female population in that age group	Captures women's economic opportunities, which are central to realizing women's capabilities (preferred to labor force participation, which includes unemployment)
Cellphone use	Percentage of women and girls ages 15 and older who report having a mobile phone that they use to make and receive personal calls	Essential to women's opportunities to participate in the economy, society, and politics
Parliamentary representation	Percentage of total seats in lower and upper houses of the national parliament that are held by women	Critical to women's participation in high-level decision making
<b>JUSTICE</b>		
Absence of legal discrimination	Extent (on a scale of 0 to 100) to which laws and regulations differentiate between women and men or protect women's opportunities across 35 aspects of life and work <sup>a</sup>	Makes it easier for women to own property, open bank accounts, start a business, or take a job and enter a profession dominated by men
Access to justice	Extent (on a scale of 0 to 4) to which women are able to exercise justice by bringing cases before the courts without risk to their personal safety, participating in a fair trial, and seeking redress if public authorities violate their rights <sup>b</sup>	Critical to women's ability to exercise their rights under the law
Maternal mortality	Number of maternal deaths due to pregnancy-related causes per 100,000 live births	Reflects women's access to healthcare and the responsiveness of the healthcare system to their needs
Son bias	Extent to which the sex ratio at birth (ratio of number of boys born to number of girls born) exceeds the natural demographic rate of 1.05 (results are reported as the number of boys born for every 100 girls born)	Exposes deep discrimination against girls and women
<b>SECURITY</b>		
Intimate partner violence	Percentage of ever-partnered women who experienced physical or sexual violence committed by their intimate partner in the 12 months preceding the survey in which the information was gathered (current rate of intimate partner violence)	Reveals discrimination and violence that women face within the home
Community safety	Percentage of women and girls ages 15 and older who responded "Yes" to the Gallup World Poll question "Do you feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where you live?"	Affects women's mobility and opportunities outside the home
Political violence targeting women	Number of political violence events targeting women per 100,000 women <sup>c</sup>	Undermines women's ability to participate in civic activities and decision-making processes
Proximity to conflict	Percentage of women who lived within 50 kilometers of at least one armed conflict event during 2022	Affects women disproportionately through higher risks of gender-based violence and livelihood threats

a. Based on the Women, Business and the Law Database, a World Bank Group product that collects data on laws and regulations that constrain women's economic opportunities (World Bank 2023a). Our indicator aggregates 78 laws and regulations that differentiate between men and women across six categories (accessing institutions, using property, going to court, providing incentives to work, building credit, and getting a job), with greater weight given to six laws (requirement that married women obey their husband, mandate for paternity leave, equal remuneration for work of equal value, nondiscrimination based on gender in hiring, and prohibitions of dismissal of pregnant workers and of child or early marriage). The "accessing institutions" category includes several types of constitutional provisions for gender equality.

b. Based on Varieties of Democracy's aggregate expert judgments ranking countries on a scale of 0 (no access to justice for women) to 4 (secure and effective access to justice for women).

c. Estimates the number of political violence events that target women. It includes both women actively participating in politics—as civil servants, journalists, activists, demonstrators, or voters—and women not engaged in politics who are targeted by political actors.

Note: See statistical table 1 for data sources and appendix 1 for discussion of the index methodology.

Source: Authors.

## BOX 1.2 New and replacement indicators on the 2023/24 WPS Index

Regularly updated, nationally representative, sex-disaggregated data covering most countries around the world are required for the WPS Index. The publication schedules, availability, and coverage of these datasets are constantly evolving in ways beyond our control. Glaring gaps in sex-disaggregated data not only constrict the construction of tools such as the WPS Index but also lead to grave blind spots in policymaking. In spotlight 1.1 at the end of the chapter, we dive more into some of the issues surrounding the availability of gendered data and make the case for why these data are so important.

In response to the evolving landscape of gendered data, four indicators in the 2023/24 WPS Index differ from those in previous editions. Two indicators are new, and two replace previous indicators. Some of these changes were made because previously used indicators are no longer being updated, while others respond to the emergence of better indicators since 2017, when the WPS Index was initially designed. Rigorous feasibility testing of the four new and replacement indicators confirmed that each offers unique value to its respective dimension and that their addition or substitution for other indicators would not have dramatically altered the rankings in past editions of the WPS Index. Details on the methodology are in appendix 1.

Below we outline each new and replacement indicator and the value it brings to the WPS Index.

### New indicators

*Maternal mortality (justice dimension).* Women’s access to quality healthcare is a crucial pillar of women’s status and one that has been missing from previous editions of the WPS Index. Maternal mortality ratios represent the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in each country as estimated by the United Nations Population Fund and the World Health Organization. Of the many indicators of women’s health, this measure was chosen because it captures both the quality of healthcare systems and their level of gender discrimination, is regularly updated, and covers most countries around the world.<sup>1</sup>

*Political violence targeting women (security dimension).* For women to engage in civic spaces meaningfully and equally with men, they first must be able to participate safely. The political violence targeting women indicator, extracted from the Armed Conflict Location & Events Database project, estimates the number of political violence events that target women per

100,000 women in each country. This includes both women actively participating in politics—as civil servants, journalists, activists, demonstrators, or voters—and women not engaged in politics who are targeted by political actors. Chapter 2 explores the gendered dimensions of political violence, including a deeper analysis of this new indicator.

### Replacement indicators

*Access to justice (justice dimension).* Women’s rights expressed on paper do not always translate to women’s ability to exercise these rights in practice. The access to justice indicator from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) database scores countries on a scale of 0 to 4 based on women’s ability to exercise their rights in terms of “bringing cases before courts without risks to their personal safety, participating in a fair trial, and seeking redress if public authorities violate their rights.”<sup>2</sup> Access to justice replaces our former indicator of discriminatory gender norms, which estimated the share of men in each country who believed it was unacceptable for women to work outside the home. That indicator, published as a collaboration between the International Labour Organization and Gallup in 2017, is not being updated, making it increasingly difficult to justify recycling old values in new editions of the WPS Index. Given that an alternative indicator of gender norms with broad country coverage does not exist, we selected V-Dem’s access to justice indicator because it similarly captures informal discrimination against women.

*Proximity to conflict (security dimension).* Armed conflict disproportionately affects women’s livelihoods, risks of gender-based violence, and access to healthcare and essential services.<sup>3</sup> The proximity to conflict indicator, produced by the Peace Research Institute Oslo using data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, estimates the percentage of women in each country who live within 50 kilometers of armed conflict. This indicator replaces our former indicator of organized violence, which estimated the number of battle deaths per 100,000 people in each country. While that indicator offered a proxy for the general level of armed conflict affecting a country, the new proximity to conflict indicator more precisely measures women’s risk and vulnerability.

### Notes

1. WHO 2022.
2. Coppedge et al. 2022.
3. OHCHR n.d.

WPS Index scores and rankings for 2017/18, 2019/20, and 2021/22, incorporating these indicators. Detailed information on the analysis and findings is available on the GIWPS website (<https://giwps.georgetown.edu>).

The evolving landscape of gender data has significant implications for our measurement of women’s status around the world. The 2023/24 updates reflect changes to this ecosystem more broadly, paint a more detailed picture of women’s status, and enhance the value behind our ranks and scores. As the only index to bring together indicators of women’s inclusion, justice, and security, the WPS Index is a valuable measure of women’s status that can be used to track trends, guide policy-making, and hold governments accountable for their promises to advance women’s rights and opportunities.

**Global rankings and major patterns**

The range of scores on the WPS Index is vast (figure 1.2), with Denmark at the top scoring more than three times higher than Afghanistan at the bottom. All of the top dozen countries are in the Developed Country group, and notably, all five Nordic countries rank among the top seven (figure 1.3). All countries in the top quintile are in the Developed Countries group or the Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia region except for the United Arab Emirates, in the Middle East and North Africa region, which ranks 22nd.

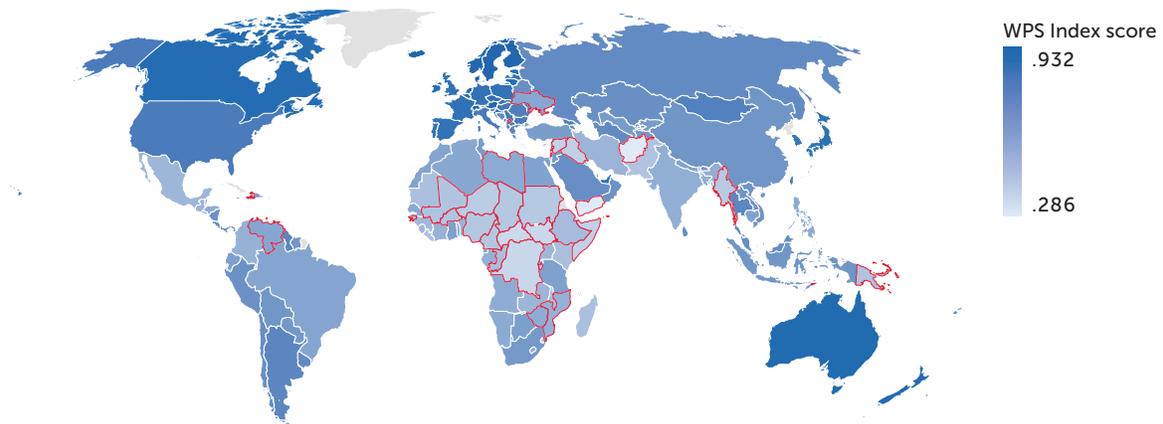
At the other end of the rankings, 11 of the bottom dozen countries—all except Eswatini—are classified as Fragile States, and 7 are in Sub-Saharan Africa. Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen have been among the bottom dozen countries since the inaugural 2017/18 WPS Index.

**A broad range of scores across and within country groups and regions**

Of all country groups and regions, the **Fragile States** group performs worst (figure 1.4). On average in these countries, 1 woman in 5 has experienced recent intimate partner violence, 6 women in 10 live in proximity to conflict, and maternal deaths stand at approximately 540 per 100,000 live births, more than double the global average of 212. Kosovo, Solomon Islands, and Timor-Leste lead the Fragile States group with a tied ranking of 100 and perform better than the global average

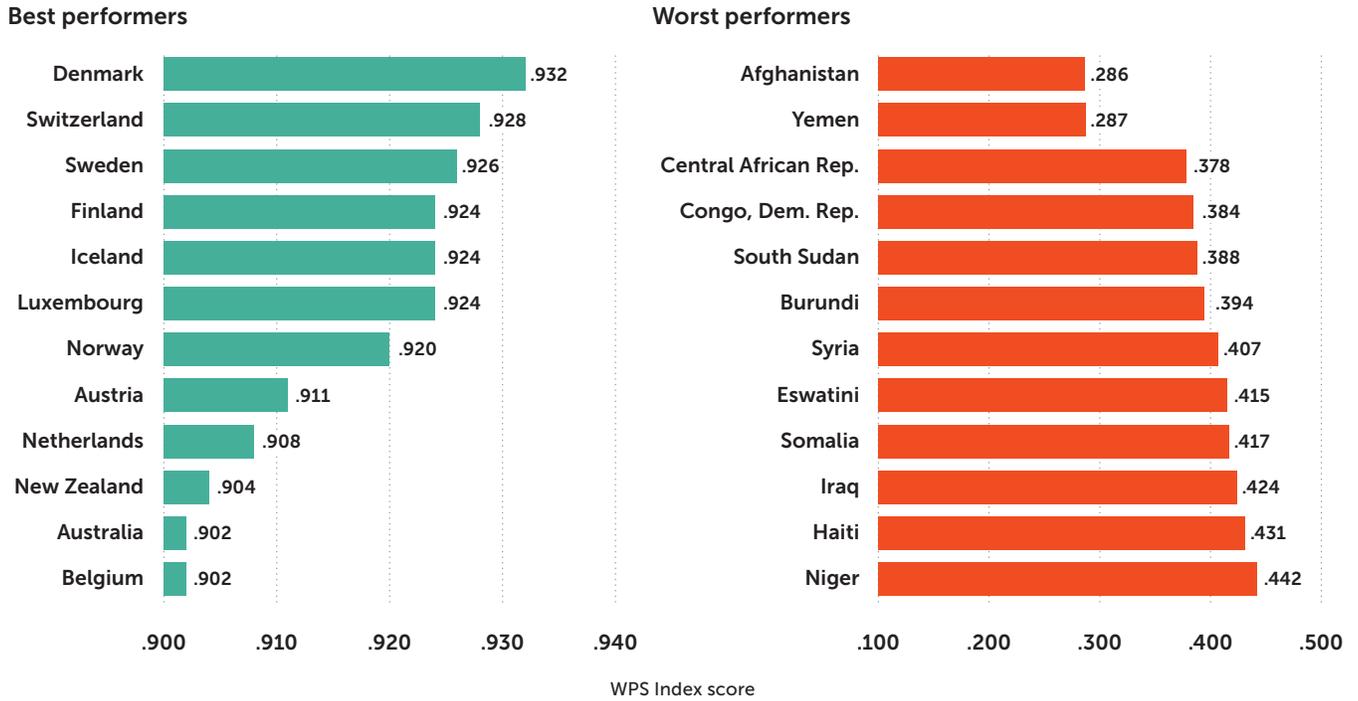
Of the dozen worst-performing countries, all but Eswatini are classified as Fragile States, and seven are in Sub-Saharan Africa

**FIGURE 1.2 WPS Index scores span from .932 to .286**



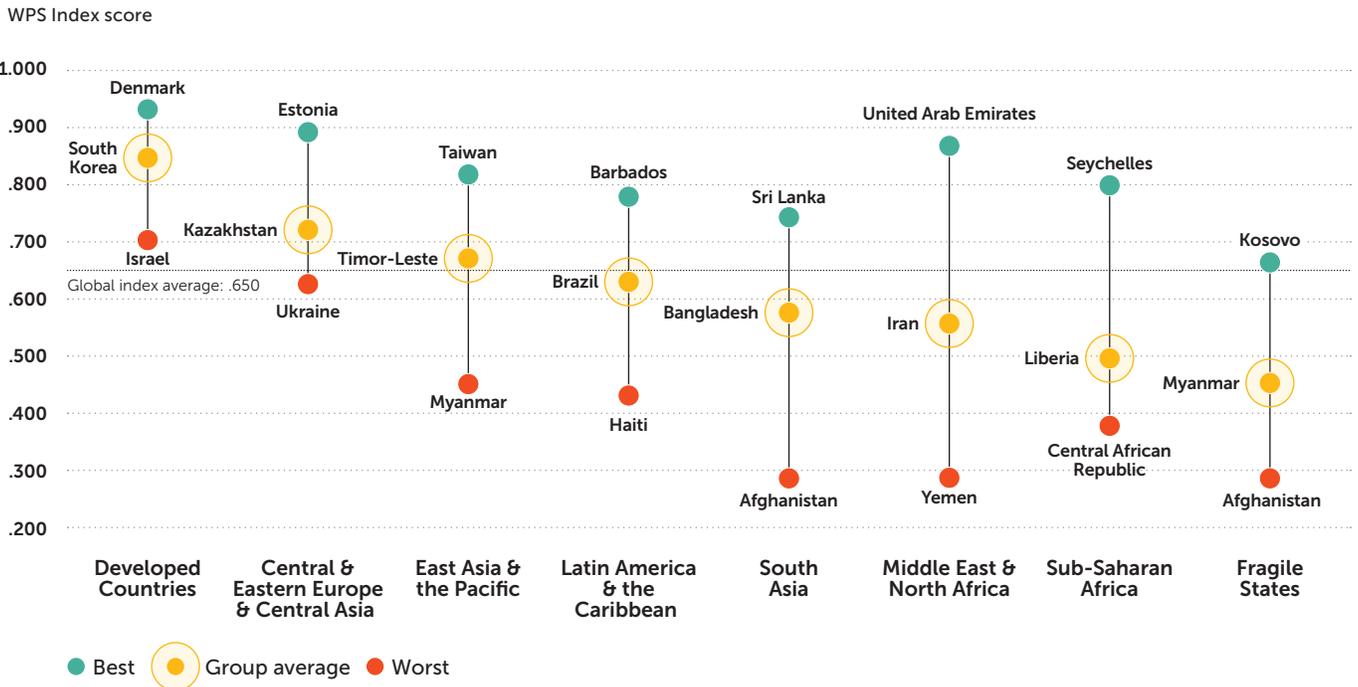
Note: Countries outlined in red are classified as Fragile States. Possible index scores range from a low of 0 to a high of 1. See statistical table 1 for data sources, detailed scores, and date ranges.  
 Source: Authors’ estimates.

**FIGURE 1.3** The dozen best and worst performers on the WPS Index



Note: Possible index scores range from a low of 0 to a high of 1. See statistical table 1 for data sources, detailed scores, and date ranges.  
 Source: Authors' estimates.

**FIGURE 1.4** A wide range of performance on the WPS Index across and within country groups and regions



Note: Possible index scores range from a low of 0 to a high of 1. The countries near the yellow dots have a WPS Index score that is closest to the average for the country group or region. See statistical table 1 for data sources and scores and appendix 2 for countries in each group and region. Countries in the Fragile States group are also included in their regional group.  
 Source: Authors' estimates.

index score of .650. Kosovo performs particularly well on the perception of community safety indicator, with its rate of 77 percent putting it in the top quintile globally. The Solomon Islands scores among the top three countries globally on women’s employment, with a rate of 90 percent, and Timor-Leste has the second-highest rate of women’s parliamentary representation in the Fragile States group, at 40 percent, just behind Mozambique, at 43 percent.

**Sub-Saharan Africa** performs only slightly better overall than the Fragile States group. Central African Republic performs worst in the region, at a rank of 175, and Seychelles performs best, at a rank of 43. On average, women in the region have gone to school for just five years, and less than half of women (48 percent) report feeling safe in their neighborhood at night. However, the region has improved considerably on certain indicators. For example, women’s financial inclusion has grown from 23 percent in 2014 to 41 percent as of 2021.<sup>3</sup> Contributing to this improvement is the expansion of financial digitization across Africa, which has lowered barriers to women’s financial account ownership by eliminating the need to travel to financial institutions, sidestepping potential gender discrimination from bank officials, and increasing women’s independent and direct control of their finances.<sup>4</sup>

Certain countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have also seen notable increases in women’s parliamentary representation. In Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, and Guinea, rates have risen at least 5 percentage points since the 2017/18 WPS Index. Rwanda has the highest share globally of women in parliament, at 55 percent, while the share exceeds 40 percent in Senegal, South Africa, Mozambique, and Cabo Verde.

The **Middle East and North Africa** (MENA) region performs third worst overall but has the widest range of performance, with the United Arab Emirates ranking 22nd and Yemen 176th. Of all regions and country groups, MENA reports the lowest averages for women’s employment (22 percent), parliamentary representation (15 percent), absence of legal discrimination (49 out of 100), and access to justice (1.69 out of 4). The United Arab Emirates is the only MENA country ranking among the top 50. Its strong performance is driven by 100 percent cellphone ownership, high perceptions of community safety (93 percent), no reported PVTW events, and no women living in proximity to armed conflict. It is also among only five countries where at least half of parliamentary representatives are women.

The **Developed Countries** group does best, performing considerably better than the global average on all 13 indicators. It is the only country group for which rates of current intimate partner violence, while likely underreported, are below 5 percent and where less than 1 percent of women live in proximity to conflict. It also performs exceptionally well on access to justice, with its score of 3.53 far surpassing the global average of 2.27. **Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia** follows Developed Countries, led by Estonia, which ranks 13th on the index. Estonia’s strong performance is driven by high levels of women’s education, an average of nearly 14 years—the third highest in the world—and a nearly perfect score on the absence of legal discrimination indicator.

### Mixed performance across dimensions

A country’s overall WPS Index score is determined by averaging its scores on the inclusion, justice, and security dimensions. Unpacking scores on each dimension reveals that some countries perform relatively better or worse on certain dimensions. **Viet Nam** has the greatest variation across the three dimensions, ranking relatively well (24th) on security but falling to 154th on justice (figure 1.5). Its

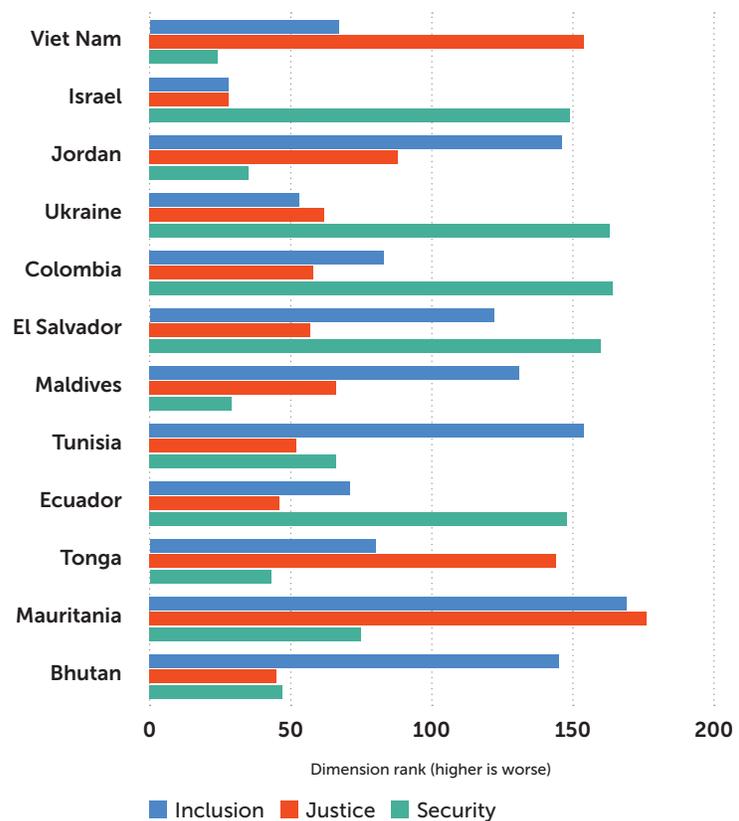
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The Middle East and North Africa region performs third worst overall but has the widest range of performance, with the United Arab Emirates ranking 22nd and Yemen 176th

strong performance on the security dimension is driven by high perceptions of community safety, with 79 percent of women feeling safe walking alone in their neighborhood at night, placing the country in the top quintile for that indicator. On justice, however, Viet Nam has the third-highest level of son bias in the world after Azerbaijan and China, with its ratio of 111.1 boys born for every 100 girls signaling a strong prejudice against raising daughters. Viet Nam also has high maternal mortality, at 124.3 deaths per 100,000 live births, far surpassing the average of 77.4 for the East Asia and the Pacific region.

In contrast to Viet Nam, **El Salvador** ranks significantly worse on security (160th) compared to justice (57th). Its high scores in the justice dimension are bolstered by its strong performance on the legal discrimination indicator, where the country scored 89 out of 100. Since 2021, El Salvador has expanded criminal penalties for violence against women in politics and has lifted the statute of limitations on femicide, reflecting expanded efforts to safeguard justice for women.<sup>5</sup> However, approximately 99 percent of women live within 50 kilometers of conflict areas, the fifth-highest rate in the world after Burundi, Eswatini, Palestine, and Syria, each at 100 percent. Also within the security dimension, El Salvador has one of the highest rates of PVTW events, at 0.482 event per 100,000 women, far above the global average of 0.080.

**FIGURE 1.5 Countries with the most variation in rank across dimensions of the WPS Index**



Note: Ranks range from 1 to 177, and higher is worse. Countries are ordered by highest average rank difference between dimensions. See statistical table 1 for data sources, detailed scores, and date ranges. Source: Authors' estimates.

Another example of mixed performance is **Mauritania**, ranked 151st overall. The country ranks 169th on inclusion but jumps to 75th on security. Only about a third of women are employed, and only 16 percent have their own bank account. However, low rates of PVTW events and of proximity to armed conflict boost the country's performance on security.

These examples highlight that countries may perform well on certain dimensions of women's status and poorly on others. From a policymaking standpoint, areas where women face the greatest disadvantages are clear targets and priority areas for investment and attention.

### Key findings for selected indicators

Within the three dimensions of the WPS Index, wide disparities also characterize performance at the indicator level. Table 1.2 displays the average, best, and worst values on each indicator by region or country group. The discussion below highlights key trends and findings for selected indicators and explores the driving forces behind countries' performance.

#### *Wide disparities within indicators of women's inclusion*

Within the inclusion dimension, disparities are especially stark for women's employment and financial inclusion. Although women's **employment**—both formal and informal—averages 53 percent globally, it ranges from 90 percent in Madagascar, Solomon Islands, and Burundi to just 6 percent in Yemen. Of the top 10 countries on this indicator, 5 are in Sub-Saharan Africa.

On women's **financial inclusion**, rates exceed 95 percent in 30 countries but plunge to 10 percent or lower in 8 countries. In Afghanistan and South Sudan, less than 5 percent of women have access to their own bank account. Globally, women's financial inclusion is on the rise, expanding from 56 percent in 2014 to 71 percent as of the most recent data for 2021.<sup>6</sup> Over the same period, 50 countries have seen increases of at least 10 percentage points in financial inclusion, led by Lesotho and Moldova, whose rates rose from less than 20 percent to more than 60 percent (figure 1.6). Contributing to this rise in financial inclusion is the proliferation of digital finance platforms that enable women to manage their money remotely and independently.<sup>7</sup> Financial inclusion is critical to women's empowerment and agency, as women without their own bank account are constrained in making decisions about their livelihoods, accessing critical resources, and leaving abusive relationships.<sup>8</sup>

#### *Justice for women: Informal and formal barriers*

The current index includes two new indicators within the justice dimension—women's access to justice and maternal mortality—and both reveal a wide range of performance across countries. On a scale of 0 to 4, the **access to justice** indicator scores countries on the extent to which women have secure and effective paths toward justice, including the ability to bring cases to court, participate in fair trials, and seek proper redress and defense measures when their rights are violated.<sup>9</sup>

No country has a perfect score on women's access to justice. Denmark scores highest, at 3.96, reflecting recent legal and policy changes that have boosted the country's performance. For example, in 2020, civil society advocacy led to legal reforms that expanded the definition of rape to be consent-based, replacing the previous language emphasizing an inability to resist.<sup>10</sup> Reforms like this make it easier to bring a case to court by recognizing that an absence of consent constitutes rape even when the victim does not physically resist. Afghanistan scores lowest

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Although women's employment averages 53 percent globally, it ranges from 90 percent in Madagascar, Solomon Islands, and Burundi to just 6 percent in Yemen

**TABLE 1.2** Average, best, and worst performing country scores for WPS Index indicators, globally and by country group and region

INDICATOR AND PERFORMANCE LEVEL	GLOBAL	DEVELOPED COUNTRIES	CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA	EAST ASIA & THE PACIFIC	LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN	MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA	SOUTH ASIA	SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA	FRAGILE STATES
<b>EDUCATION (MEAN YEARS OF SCHOOLING)</b>									
Average	8.3	12.9	11.6	7.6	9.0	8.6	6.0	5.0	5.4
Best country score	13.9 Canada, Iceland	13.9 Canada, Iceland	13.8 Estonia	11.8 Hong Kong, Samoa	11.7 Trinidad and Tobago	12.5 United Arab Emirates	10.8 Sri Lanka	10.3 Botswana	11.5 Ukraine
Worst country score	1.3 Guinea	9.6 Portugal	7.9 Turkey	4.1 Papua New Guinea	4.6 Haiti	2.9 Yemen	2.3 Afghanistan	1.3 Guinea	1.5 Chad
<b>FINANCIAL INCLUSION (%)</b>									
Average	70.5	98.1	77.1	78.4	63.4	41.2	65.8	40.8	34.3
Best country score	100.0 Multiple	100.0 Multiple	99.6 Estonia	99.0 Mongolia	86.6 Chile	86.7 United Arab Emirates	89.3 Sri Lanka	89.4 Mauritius	80.7 Ukraine
Worst country score	4.2 South Sudan	90.2 Portugal	35.5 Turkmenistan	32.5 Cambodia	21.6 Nicaragua	5.4 Yemen	4.7 Afghanistan	4.2 South Sudan	4.2 South Sudan
<b>EMPLOYMENT (%)</b>									
Average	53.1	71.3	62.4	59.0	55.7	21.6	34.1	62.5	53.5
Best country score	90.1 Madagascar	80.0 Sweden	79.3 Lithuania	90.0 Solomon Islands	76.1 Barbados	65.5 Qatar	78.9 Bhutan	90.1 Madagascar	90.0 Solomon Islands
Worst country score	5.5 Yemen	55.0 Greece	19.5 Kosovo	38.2 Timor-Leste	41.4 Guyana	5.5 Yemen	25.1 Afghanistan	16.0 Djibouti	5.5 Yemen
<b>CELLPHONE USE (%)</b>									
Average	80.4	94.2	93.1	95.0	86.1	80.5	54.9	65.6	64.6
Best country score	100.0 Multiple	100.0 Multiple	100.0 Multiple	100.0 Mongolia, China	97.0 Chile	100.0 Multiple	86.0 Nepal	89.0 Mauritius, South Africa	100.0 Ukraine, Libya
Worst country score	32.0 Pakistan	85.0 Canada	66.0 Tajikistan	71.0 Indonesia	72.0 Nicaragua	38.0 Yemen	32.0 Pakistan	37.0 Democratic Republic of Congo	37.0 Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo
<b>PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION (%)</b>									
Average	26.3	33.8	24.6	21.2	34.5	15.3	19.3	26.4	21.9
Best country score	54.7 Rwanda	50.0 New Zealand	42.5 North Macedonia	42.5 Taiwan	51.6 Nicaragua	50.0 United Arab Emirates	33.9 Nepal	54.7 Rwanda	43.2 Mozambique
Worst country score	0.3 Yemen	15.5 Japan	13.1 Hungary	1.7 Papua New Guinea	2.5 Haiti	0.3 Yemen	4.6 Maldives	4.2 Nigeria	0.3 Yemen
<b>ABSENCE OF LEGAL DISCRIMINATION (SCORE 0–100)</b>									
Average	75.7	92.9	81.0	76.9	85.1	48.8	69.2	71.7	62.2
Best country score	100.0 Multiple	100.0 Multiple	100.0 Latvia	91.9 Hong Kong	95.0 Peru	82.5 United Arab Emirates	80.6 Nepal	95.0 Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire	91.9 Kosovo
Worst country score	26.3 Palestine	78.8 Japan	70.6 Uzbekistan	50.0 Malaysia	61.3 Haiti	26.3 Palestine	31.9 Afghanistan	29.4 Sudan	26.3 Palestine
<b>ACCESS TO JUSTICE (SCORE 0–4)</b>									
Average	2.27	3.53	2.09	2.01	2.06	1.69	2.16	2.21	1.79
Best country score	3.96 Denmark	3.96 Denmark	3.85 Czechia	3.54 Vanuatu	3.57 Costa Rica	3.27 Tunisia	3.19 Bhutan	3.88 Seychelles	2.68 Zimbabwe
Worst country score	0.37 Afghanistan	2.61 Canada	0.66 Turkmenistan	1.10 Cambodia	0.66 Nicaragua	0.54 Syria	0.37 Afghanistan	0.88 South Sudan	0.37 Afghanistan
<b>MATERNAL MORTALITY (DEATHS PER 100,000 LIVE BIRTHS)</b>									
Average	212.0	11.9	17.3	77.4	85.0	53.8	135.3	506.9	539.7
Best country score	1.1 Belarus	1.7 Norway	1.1 Belarus	21.1 Malaysia	15.0 Chile	7.2 Kuwait	28.8 Sri Lanka	3.3 Seychelles	16.5 Ukraine
Worst country score	1223.0 South Sudan	21.1 United States of America	68.4 Cyprus	218.0 Cambodia	350.4 Haiti	183.4 Yemen	620.4 Afghanistan	1223.0 South Sudan	1223.0 South Sudan
<b>SON BIAS (NUMBER OF BOYS BORN PER 100 GIRLS)</b>									
Average	105.7	105.2	106.2	109.1	104.4	105.3	106.7	103.4	104.1
Best country score	101.1 Namibia, Zambia	104.8 Belgium, United States of America	105.1 Turkey	104.5 Mongolia	103.0 Haiti	103.9 Bahrain, Qatar	104.4 Sri Lanka	101.1 Namibia, Zambia	102.0 Mozambique
Worst country score	112.2 Azerbaijan	106.7 Malta	112.2 Azerbaijan	111.3 China	105.6 Uruguay	105.9 Yemen	107.5 India	105.5 Ethiopia	107.7 Papua New Guinea
<b>COMMUNITY SAFETY (%)</b>									
Average	64.3	67.2	57.5	82.9	39.5	65.5	58.6	47.6	49.1
Best country score	96.0 Kuwait	94.0 Singapore	91.0 Turkmenistan	91.0 China	72.0 El Salvador	96.0 Kuwait	71.0 Bangladesh	75.0 Mali, Rwanda	77.0 Kosovo
Worst country score	21.0 Lesotho	42.0 New Zealand	48.0 Turkey	32.0 Myanmar	27.0 Ecuador	41.0 Yemen	39.0 Afghanistan	21.0 Lesotho	32.0 Myanmar, Zimbabwe

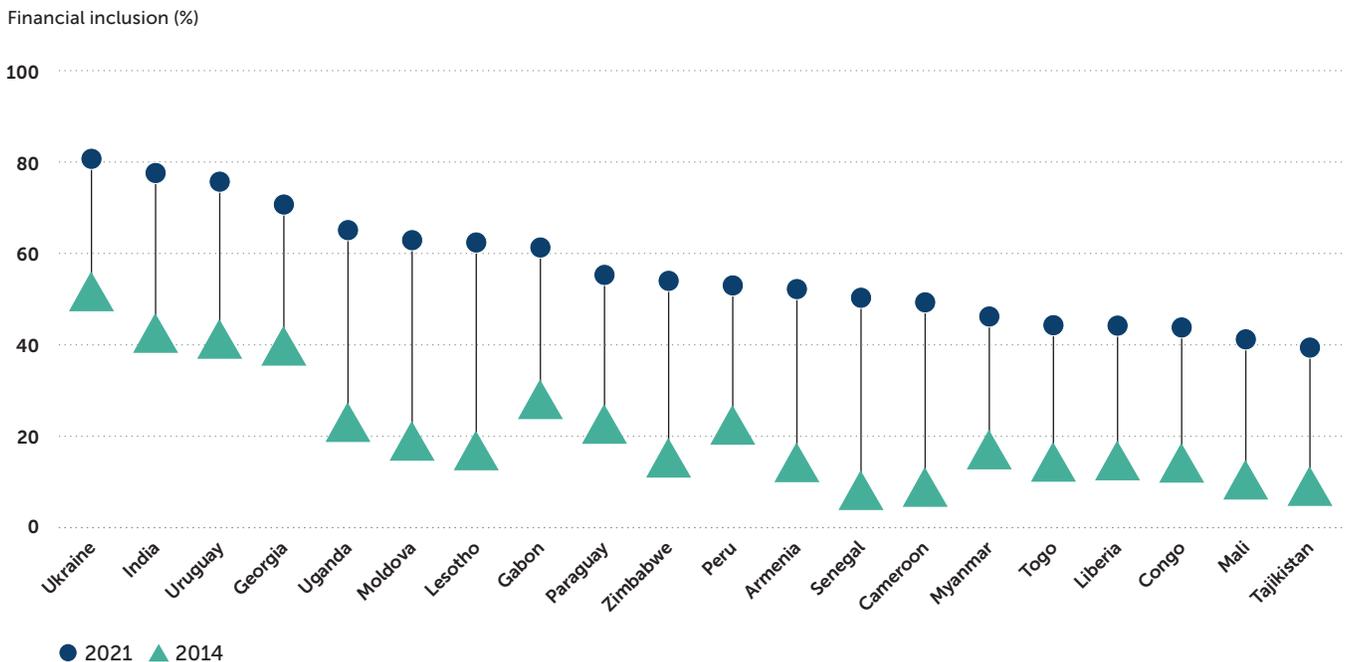
(continued)

**TABLE 1.2 Average, best, and worst performing country scores for WPS Index indicators, globally and by country group and region (continued)**

INDICATOR AND PERFORMANCE LEVEL	GLOBAL	DEVELOPED COUNTRIES	CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA	EAST ASIA & THE PACIFIC	LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN	MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA	SOUTH ASIA	SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA	FRAGILE STATES
<b>INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (%)</b>									
Average	12.9	4.8	7.3	8.5	8.0	18.3	18.3	20.5	20.8
Best country score	2.0 Singapore, Switzerland	2.0 Singapore, Switzerland	3.0 Multiple	3.0 Hong Kong	4.0 Uruguay, Argentina	8.9 Lebanon	4.0 Sri Lanka	8.0 Comoros	5.0 Kosovo
Worst country score	45.3 Iraq	8.0 Finland, Republic of Korea	14.0 Tajikistan	31.0 Papua New Guinea	27.0 Barbados	45.3 Iraq	35.0 Afghanistan	36.0 Democratic Republic of Congo	45.3 Iraq
<b>POLITICAL VIOLENCE TARGETING WOMEN (EVENTS PER 100,000 WOMEN)</b>									
Average	0.080	0.011	0.047	0.022	0.381	0.126	0.028	0.151	0.268
Best country score	0.000 Multiple	0.000 Multiple	0.000 Multiple	0.000 Multiple	0.000 Multiple	0.000 Multiple	0.000 Multiple	0.000 Multiple	0.000 Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste
Worst country score	1.180 South Sudan	0.066 Israel	0.480 Cyprus	0.467 Myanmar	1.146 Haiti	1.095 Syria	0.462 Afghanistan	1.180 South Sudan	1.180 South Sudan
<b>PROXIMITY TO CONFLICT (% OF WOMEN WITHIN 50 KILOMETERS OF CONFLICT)</b>									
Average	19.0	0.8	14.8	8.5	43.5	34.2	18.1	37.0	61.0
Best country score	0.0 Multiple	0.0 Multiple	0.0 Multiple	0.0 Multiple	0.0 Multiple	0.0 Multiple	0.0 Multiple	0.0 Multiple	0.0 Multiple
Worst country score	100.0 Multiple	97.2 Israel	81.0 Ukraine	97.9 Myanmar	99.1 El Salvador	100.0 Palestine, Syria	91.1 Afghanistan	100.0 Burundi	100.0 Multiple

Note: See statistical table 1 for data sources, detailed scores, and date ranges and appendix 2 for countries in each group and region. Countries in the Fragile States group are also included in their regional group.  
Source: Authors' estimates.

**FIGURE 1.6 Countries with the greatest improvement in women's financial inclusion from 2014 to 2021**



Note: Countries are ordered according to highest financial inclusion rates in 2021. See statistical table 1 for data sources, detailed scores, and date ranges.  
Source: Authors' estimates based on World Bank (2022).

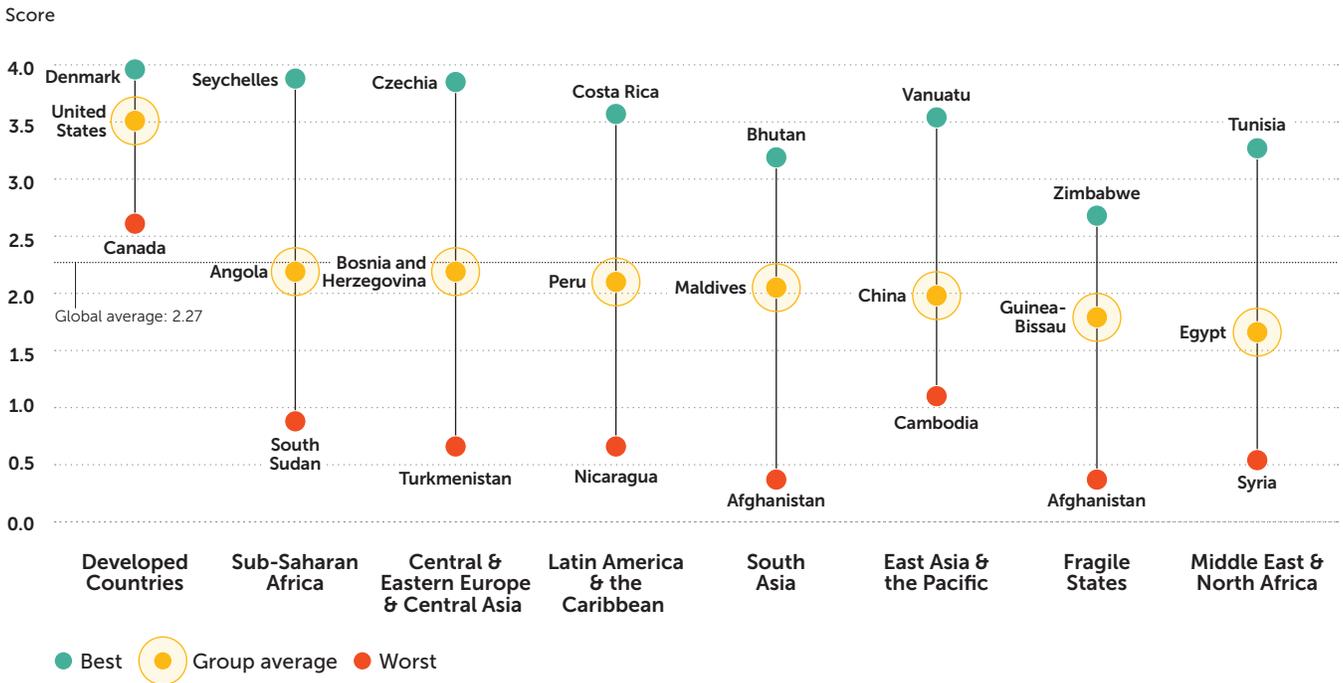
on women's access to justice, with its score of 0.37 driven by the Taliban's oppressive regime that has severely restricted women's ability to safely and fairly pursue justice. When the Taliban took control in August 2021, they released thousands of convicted domestic abusers from prison and closed shelters for survivors.<sup>11</sup> The regime dissolved courts addressing violence against women and removed female

judges from their positions, further blocking women’s access to justice processes.<sup>12</sup> Taliban courts have also urged women to resolve domestic abuse cases within the home.<sup>13</sup> Afghan police, who are almost exclusively men, reportedly discourage women from filing cases, deterring survivors from pursuing formal justice.<sup>14</sup> And even when women manage to report violent incidents, police often fail to arrest their accused assailants, circumventing justice processes.<sup>15</sup>

Globally, the Developed Countries group scores highest overall in access to justice, at 3.53, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa, at 2.21 (figure 1.7). In recent years, several countries, including Rwanda and South Africa, have established designated support centers and justice services with trained medical and security personnel for victims of gender-based violence, encouraging survivors to report crimes and seek justice.<sup>16</sup> Mozambique has countered discriminatory customs that dispossess women of their land rights with justice programs that educate, inform, and legally aid women in formally obtaining land ownership.<sup>17</sup>

While the access to justice indicator captures whether women can exercise their rights in practice, the **absence of legal discrimination** indicator assesses barriers in the law. Unsurprisingly, these two indicators, which together account for both informal and structural barriers to women’s justice, are strongly connected: countries with weak formal protections tend to be countries where women are unable to seek adequate, safe, and fair paths to justice. Nine of the dozen worst-performing countries on access to justice also score below the global average on absence of legal discrimination. At the other end of the spectrum, 13 of the 14 countries with fully equal legal codes for women and men score higher than 3 points out of 4 on access to justice.

**FIGURE 1.7 Women’s access to justice varies greatly within country groups and regions**



Note: Possible scores range from a low of 0 to a high of 4. The countries near the yellow dots have a WPS Index score that is closest to the average for the country group or region. See statistical table 1 for data sources, detailed scores, and date ranges and appendix 2 for countries in each group and region. Countries in the Fragile States group are also included in their regional group. Source: Authors’ estimates.

Of the country groups and regions, MENA performs worst on both legal discrimination and access to justice. Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Palestine, Qatar, Syria, and Yemen have no criminal penalties for sexual harassment in the workplace.<sup>18</sup> In 10 countries in the region, women are legally required to obey their husbands. On top of this, strong patriarchal norms often prevent women from seeking justice. In Syria, for example, women and girls who experience gender-based violence are often deterred from reporting their abusers by a fear of being disowned or killed for “bringing shame” to their families.<sup>19</sup>

However, there are notable country exceptions to linked performance on the two indicators. For example, Nicaragua has relatively strong legal protections for women, scoring in the second quintile on absence of legal discrimination, but its performance on access to justice is the fourth worst in the world. A contributing factor is Nicaragua’s recent elimination of special police stations and courts serving women, as well as legal changes that now subject perpetrators of violence against women to family counseling rather than legal sanctions, fostering an environment of impunity and dissuading women from reporting crimes and pursuing justice.<sup>20</sup> A similar contrast is evident in Hong Kong, Lao PDR, and Mexico, underlining that laws on paper cannot ensure justice for women if systems of legal accountability and accessibility are weak.

**Maternal mortality** is another important metric of justice for women. It captures both the quality of healthcare systems and their degree of gender discrimination.<sup>21</sup> Maternal deaths range from 1.1 per 100,000 live births in Belarus to 1,223 per 100,000 live births in South Sudan. The Developed Countries group has the lowest maternal mortality ratio, at 11.9 deaths per 100,000 live births. Of the 50 best-performing countries, more than half are in the Developed Countries group. Of the 25 countries with the highest maternal mortality ratios, 24 are in Sub-Saharan Africa. Contributing to the high maternal mortality ratio in Sub-Saharan Africa is the high adolescent fertility rate of 100 births per 1,000 girls, which is twice the global average.<sup>22</sup> Limited access to contraception and reproductive health education drives up adolescent fertility rates.<sup>23</sup> Young girls are more vulnerable to pregnancy-related complications and have less agency over healthcare decisions, compounding their risk of maternal mortality.<sup>24</sup> Another contributing factor is child marriage, which ranges from 17 percent in Rwanda to as high as 82 percent in Niger.<sup>25</sup>

Overall, the Fragile States group has the highest average maternal mortality ratio, at 539.7 deaths per 100,000 live births, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa, at 506.9. The five countries with the highest maternal mortality ratios—South Sudan, Chad, Nigeria, Central African Republic, and Guinea-Bissau—are all classified as Fragile States. Conflict and fragility often magnify risks of maternal mortality by increasing women’s exposure to violence, provoking forced displacement, and amplifying disease transmission, all of which impair women’s healthcare access.<sup>26</sup> A global study of armed conflict between 2000 and 2019 found that it was associated with an increase of nearly 37 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.<sup>27</sup> In Sudan, the eruption of violent conflict has rendered hospitals and maternal care facilities inaccessible or unsafe for pregnant women, leaving them to give birth at home with little support.<sup>28</sup> A 2020 study in Afghanistan found that provinces severely affected by conflict had significantly higher maternal mortality ratios.<sup>29</sup> Since the Taliban’s takeover in 2021, risks of maternal mortality have increased further as poverty worsened and donors withdrew international aid, weakening the healthcare sector and often forcing mothers to give birth at home rather than in hospital delivery rooms.<sup>30</sup> Afghanistan’s maternal mortality ratio stands at 620.4 deaths per 100,000 live births, the eighth-highest rate in the world.

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**Overall, the Fragile States group has the highest average maternal mortality ratio, at 539.7 deaths per 100,000 live births, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa, at 506.9**

Other crises, such as pandemics, also undermine women’s health. For example, COVID-19 overwhelmed healthcare facilities around the world, impeding women’s ability to access maternal and reproductive health services.<sup>31</sup> Overall, global estimates of the pandemic’s indirect impacts reveal a 39 percent increase in maternal mortality.<sup>32</sup>

**Women’s security: At home, in the community, and across society**

The security dimension considers risks to women’s safety at the household, community, and societal levels. **Intimate partner violence**, which captures violence within the home, ranges from 45 percent of ever-partnered women in Iraq to 2 percent in Singapore and Switzerland. However, the most recent national estimates are several years old, last compiled by the World Health Organization and UN Women in 2018, before the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated intimate partner violence around the world.<sup>33</sup> In addition, intimate partner violence is often underestimated because of barriers to reporting, such as lack of trust in authorities and fear of shame or victim blaming.<sup>34</sup> (Spotlight 1.1 at the end of the chapter discusses the implications of gaps and limitations of sex-disaggregated data.)

The **community safety** indicator captures women’s perceptions of security in their neighborhood. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of women worldwide report feeling safe walking alone in their neighborhood at night, though rates vary considerably in both directions. In China, Kuwait, Singapore, Turkmenistan, and the United Arab Emirates, rates exceed 90 percent. In Gambia, Eswatini, and Lesotho, rates drop to about a quarter or less. At the regional level, women in East Asia and the Pacific report the highest perceptions of community safety, at 83 percent, while Latin America and the Caribbean has the lowest, at 40 percent. Notably, this region also has the highest rates of PVTW events and the second-highest share of women living in proximity to conflict (after the Fragile States group), highlighting the connection between instability at the societal level and feelings of safety at the neighborhood level. Chapters 2 and 3 delve more deeply into trends in PVTW and proximity to conflict.

**Correlation of the WPS Index with other national outcomes**

Women’s inclusion, justice, and security are not just women’s issues. Women’s status matters for everyone and is vital in building resilient, peaceful, and sustainable societies. The WPS Index—the only global index that brings together issues of women’s inclusion, justice, and security—is a critical tool in making the empirical case for the links between women’s status and the overall well-being of society. This is evident in the strong correlations between the WPS Index and other widely recognized global indices measuring outcomes that seem distinct from “women’s issues,” ranging from human development to climate change resilience, peace, and fragility (table 1.3). Notably, these outcomes are more strongly correlated with women’s status than they are with GDP, underlining the importance of investing in women.<sup>35</sup>

**Strong correlations between women’s status and development, climate resilience, peace, and justice**

The WPS Index is strongly correlated with 11 other national outcomes related to peace, resilience, development, and justice, making the case for policymakers to prioritize investment in women. The correlations average .826 overall (with 0 indicating no relationship and 1 perfect correlation). The strongest correlations are found for the Human Development Index, the University of Notre Dame Global

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The WPS Index is strongly correlated with 11 other indices related to peace, resilience, development, and justice, making the case for policymakers to prioritize investment in women

**TABLE 1.3** The WPS Index is strongly correlated with other global indices

INDEX	SOURCE	WHAT IT MEASURES	CORRELATION WITH WPS INDEX
Human Development Index	United Nations Development Programme	Levels of health, education, and income	.900
ND-GAIN Index	Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative	Vulnerability and readiness for climate disruptions	.900
Fragile States Index	Fund for Peace	Domestic instability and violence	.898
Positive Peace Index	Institute for Economics and Peace	Attitudes, institutions, and structures that create and sustain peace	.897
State Resilience Index	Fund for Peace	Anticipation, management, and recovery from crises	.888
Rule of Law Index	World Justice Project	Domestic rule of law	.852
Corruption Perceptions Index	Transparency International	Public sector corruption	.808
Global Peace Index	Institute for Economics and Peace	Peacefulness of society	.779
Early Warning Project Statistical Risk Assessment	US Holocaust Memorial Museum	Risk of genocide and mass killing	.772
Environment Performance Index	Yale and Columbia Universities	Protection of environmental health and ecosystem vitality	.717
Freedom House Global Freedom Score	Freedom House	Political rights and civil liberties	.670

Note: Higher correlation values indicate greater convergence.  
 Source: Authors.

**The trajectory of sustainable and inclusive development is stymied when half of the population is held back by systemic barriers to resources, opportunities, and agency because of their gender**

Adaptation Index (ND-GAIN) of climate change preparedness, and the Fragile States Index. The weakest (though still strong) correlations are found for the Environmental Performance Index and the Freedom House Global Freedom Score.

Figure 1.8 visualizes the relationship between the WPS Index and four of these indices. Countries close to the diagonal line rank similarly on both indices, while those above or below the line rank better or worse on one relative to the other.

With a correlation coefficient of .900, the WPS Index is highly correlated with the **Human Development Index**, demonstrating that countries where women are doing well tend to be countries with strong dimensions of development, captured by health, education, and standard of living.<sup>36</sup> When half of the population is held back by systemic barriers to resources, opportunities, and agency because of their gender, the trajectory of sustainable and inclusive development is stymied. Achieving consistent and enduring international development requires recognizing and responding to social, political, and economic inequalities facing women today.

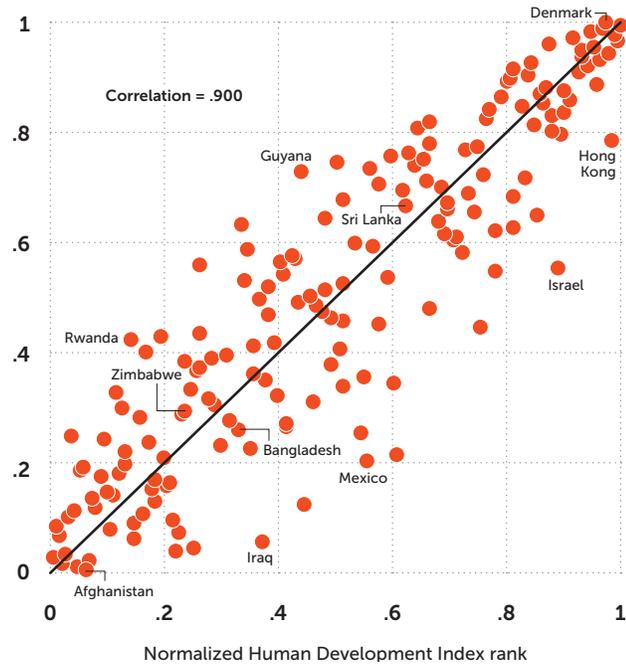
The **ND-GAIN Index** captures preparedness for climate change by measuring a country’s vulnerability to climate impacts—in terms of resources, ecosystems, and infrastructure—along with its readiness to respond, including through economic, social, and government investments.<sup>37</sup> The strong correlation (.900) with the WPS Index confirms that women’s status matters for climate change resilience. Women are on the front lines of the climate crisis, not only as victims but also as change makers. Women’s perspectives and experiences are vital in developing sustainable, innovative solutions to climate change, and women’s meaningful participation in decision making is key to strengthening institutional capacities.<sup>38</sup>

The WPS Index is also strongly correlated (.888) with the **State Resilience Index**, which measures countries’ ability to adapt and respond to sudden conflicts or other crises—from armed conflict to economic shocks and climate disasters.<sup>39</sup>

**FIGURE 1.8** Strong correlations between rank on the WPS Index and rank on indices of human development, climate change preparedness, state resilience, and governance

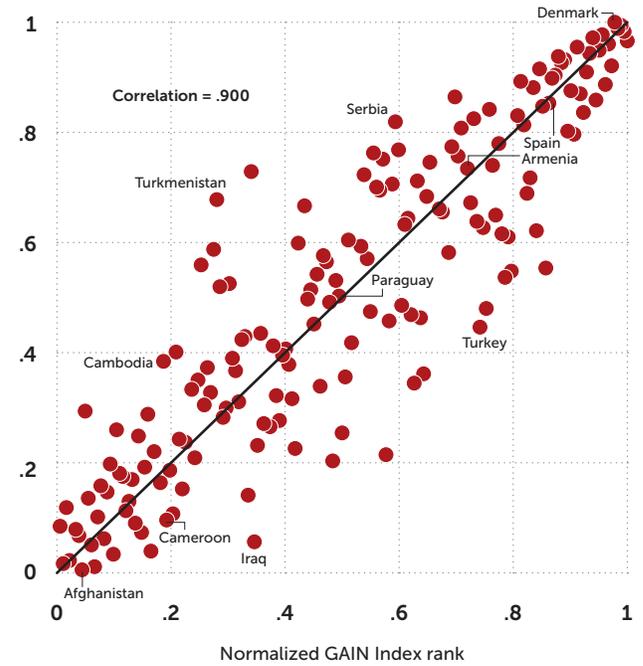
**a. Human Development Index**

Normalized WPS Index rank



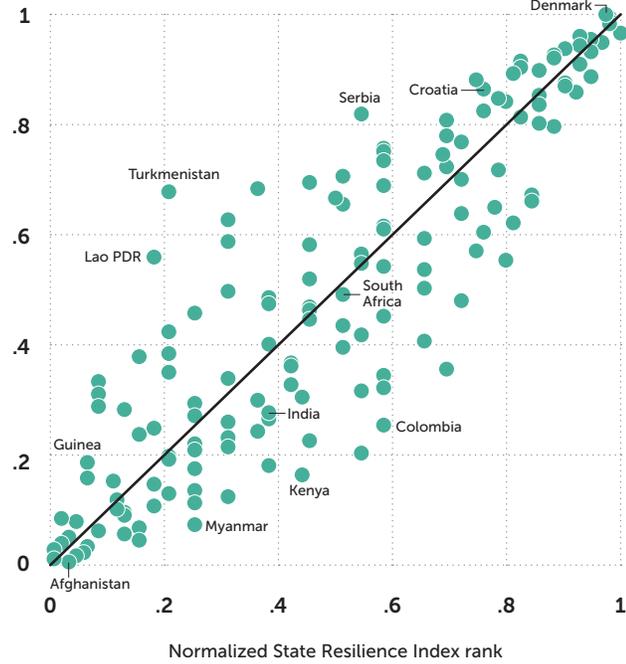
**b. ND-GAIN Index of Climate Adaptation**

Normalized WPS Index rank



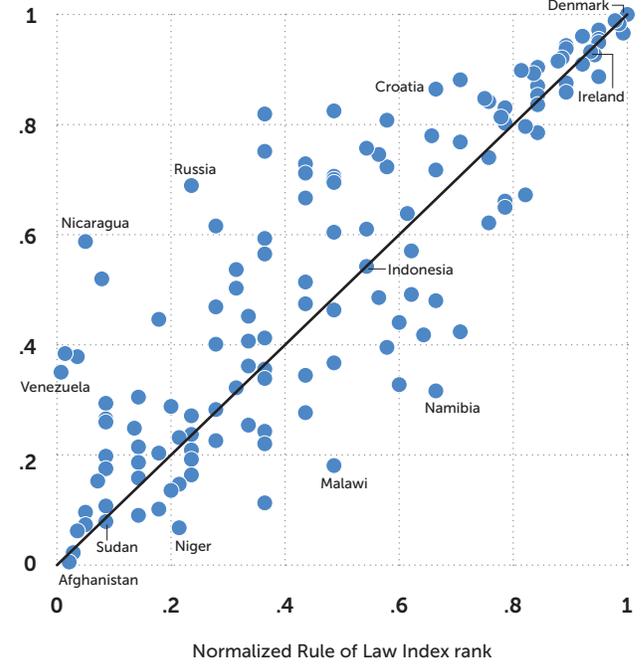
**c. State Resilience Index**

Normalized WPS Index rank



**d. Rule of Law Index**

Normalized WPS Index rank



Note: The axes refer to country ranks, not index scores. Since the indices cover different numbers of countries, the ranks are adjusted for the total number of countries in the respective index. On both axes, 0 represents the worst-performing country and 1 the best for the respective index.

Source: Authors' estimates based on data from UNDP (2022), ND-GAIN (2023), Fund for Peace (2023), and World Justice Project (2023).

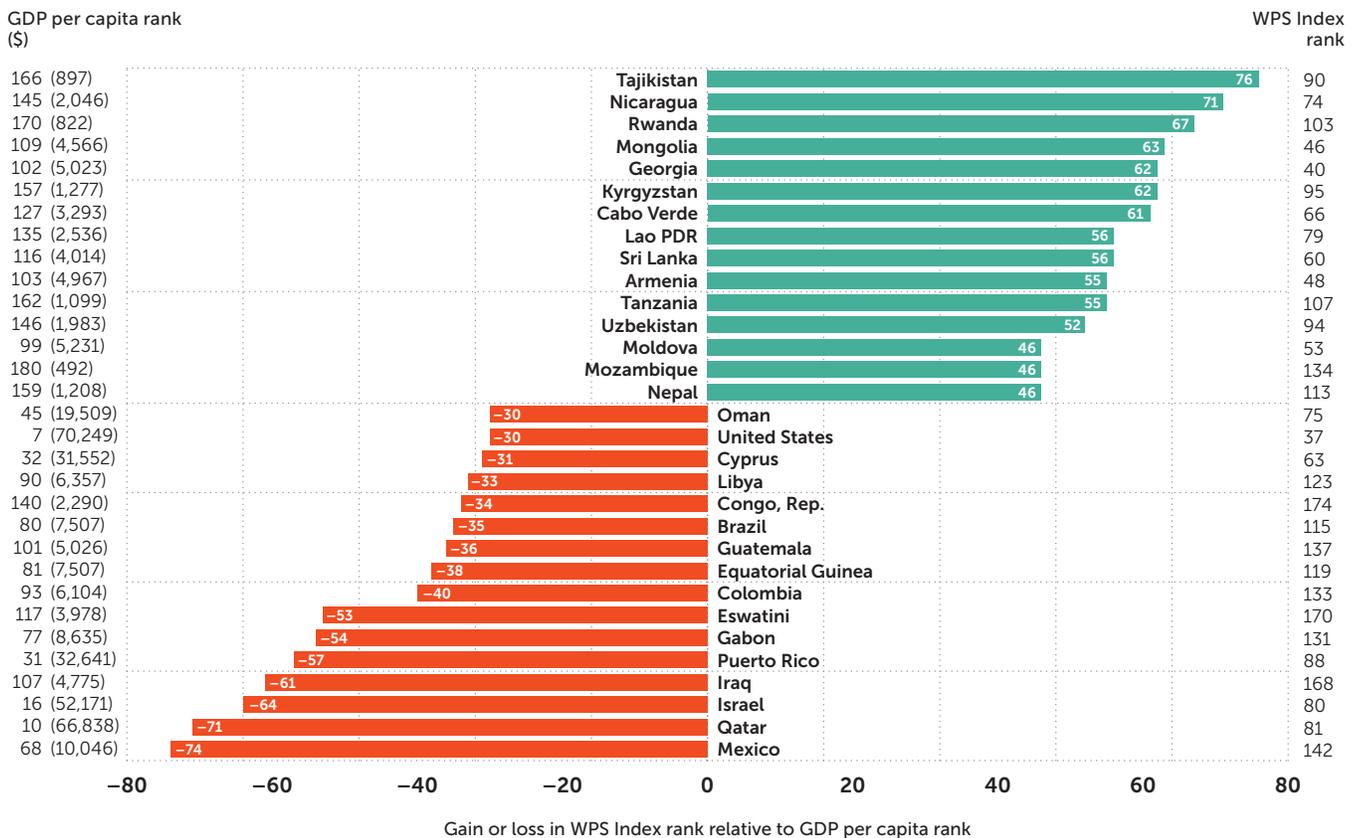
Resilience is measured across seven pillars (inclusion, social cohesion, state capacity, individual capabilities, environment/ecology, economy, and civic space) that enable countries to survive and even thrive in the face of unexpected challenges. Gender discrimination disrupts multiple pillars. When women are marginalized and blocked from opportunities and positions of power, state institutions are weaker and less inclusive. Because all kinds of crises disproportionately affect women, incorporating women’s voices and diverse perspectives in decision making is critical to building state resilience.

The strong correlation between the WPS Index and the **Rule of Law Index** (.852) illustrates the robust link between women’s status and a just legal system. The Rule of Law Index measures countries’ commitment to justice, accountability, and human rights according to eight core factors, ranging from order and security to fundamental rights.<sup>40</sup> Rule of law is inherently a women’s rights issue, as gender-based discrimination and unequal treatment under the law contravene the establishment of a free and fair society.

Several other indices focus on conflict and weak institutions within countries, including the Fragile States Index, Positive Peace Index, Corruption Perceptions Index, Global Peace Index, and Early Warning Project Statistical Risk Assessment. Strong correlations with these indices highlight that women’s status goes hand in hand with peace, justice, and atrocity prevention.

The strong correlations of these other indices with the WPS Index underline that when women do well, everyone in society does well. Although correlation

**FIGURE 1.9 Many countries gain or lose rank on the WPS Index compared with their GDP per capita rank**



Note: Green indicates a country’s gain in the WPS Index rank relative to its GDP per capita rank; red indicates a loss. Source: Authors’ estimates based on data from statistical table 1 and World Bank (2022) for GDP data.

cannot prove causation, these relationships emphasize that advancing women's status is central to building and maintaining state development, climate resilience, peace, and justice

***No strong link between the WPS Index and national income***

Although national income may play a role in country rankings, it is not driving performance on the WPS Index. Many countries rank significantly better or worse on the WPS Index than on per capita income (figure 1.9). For example, 25 countries rank at least 40 places higher on the WPS Index than on per capita GDP,<sup>41</sup> led by Tajikistan and Nicaragua, where the difference exceeds 70 places. At the other end, 16 countries rank at least 30 places lower on the WPS Index than on per capita GDP. Mexico, Qatar, Israel, and Iraq have the widest gaps in this direction, with a per capita GDP ranking more than 60 places higher than their WPS Index ranking. These cases show that countries can be wealthy and still perform poorly on women's status, and vice versa, emphasizing that advancing women's status requires solutions much more complex than simply boosting national income.

## SPOTLIGHT 1.1

### Glaring gaps in sex-disaggregated data

Advancing women's status and gender equality requires accurately monitoring progress and identifying gaps to guide effective programming and policymaking. This begins with regularly updated, high quality sex-disaggregated data with global coverage.

The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a widely recognized blueprint for advancing women's rights, calls on governments to routinely collect sex-disaggregated data on indicators of poverty, economic participation, healthcare access, and other critical issues.<sup>1</sup> In 2013, the UN Statistical Commission established the Minimum Set of Gender Indicators, a collection of 52 quantitative and 11 qualitative indicators covering dimensions such as education, legal equality, health, and decision making that are meant to guide the national production and international compilation of gender statistics.<sup>2</sup> These indicators informed the creation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) framework comprising 231 indicators, 51 of which are intended to be sex-disaggregated.<sup>3</sup>

Despite these frameworks, glaring gaps persist in the collection and availability of nationally representative sex-disaggregated data. On the SDGs, for example, only 42 percent of required gender data is available, revealing huge gaps that span 80 percent of gender equality indicators across the 2030 framework.<sup>4</sup> Without sex-disaggregated data, blind spots will persist in policymaking, hindering efforts to address gender inequalities.

Below we highlight selected topics with wide deficits in gender data, just scratching the surface of a persistent challenge affecting the advancement of women's rights across the board.

- **Gender norms.** Attitudes and perceptions around women's rights and roles are at the root of inequalities. Gender norms shape women's access to power and resources across social, economic, and political spheres and often restrict women's agency, opportunities, and mobility.<sup>5</sup> However, internationally comparable and nationally representative data capturing gender norms are spotty, inconsistent, and severely limited. Instruments such as the World Values Survey, Gallup World Poll, and the US Agency for International Development's Demographic Health Surveys include questions on gender norms, but the results are often vague, limited in country coverage, and not easily comparable over time. Included in the justice dimension of the WPS Index, son bias (ratio of number of boys born for every 100 girls)—captures sex-selective abortion and preference for male children. This reflects certain forms of discrimination but does not speak to the daily experiences of gender discrimination that women endure, especially in the vast majority of countries where birth ratios fall within the natural range.

Furthermore, gender norms and stereotypes are shaped by other forms of marginalization along the lines of race, class, ability, and sexual orientation, amplifying discrimination faced by certain groups of women.<sup>6</sup> In light of this, survey and interview data on gender norms must collect detailed information on respondents' identities and demographics to clearly capture how multiple forms of discrimination overlap.

- **Health.** The standard global indicator for women's health is maternal mortality, which is regularly updated, covers most countries, and offers important insights into the quality and prioritization of women's health within countries.<sup>7</sup> However, data on other important markers of women's health are not as readily available. For example, data on contraceptive use and healthcare decision making are limited in country coverage and update frequency. Global health data disaggregated by both sex and other identities such as race, socioeconomic status, and ability are scarce, masking the disadvantages facing certain groups of marginalized women in accessing healthcare. Women's health is not only a marker of physical well-being but also emblematic of the extent to which social norms, gender-based violence, and discriminatory cultural practices restrict women's ability to obtain fundamental care. Thus, it is critical to expand the geographic reach of data collection and to adopt diverse and comprehensive metrics that capture women's healthcare access and quality.<sup>8</sup>
- **Labor.** The International Labour Organization regularly publishes sex-disaggregated data on basic employment and unemployment statistics for almost every country in the world.<sup>9</sup> While these estimates offer baseline insights into economic participation levels, they do not speak to the quality or experiences of women's work. For example, data on informal sector work, social protection coverage, wage gaps, and unpaid care work are scarce.

(continued)

**SPOTLIGHT 1.1** (continued)

- *Violence against women.* Violence against women takes many forms, from physical to psychological to digital. Data on indicators of violence against women such as intimate partner violence are collected mainly by governments, meaning that even when compiled by organizations such as UN Women and the World Health Organization, the data are not fully comparable and the time period covered varies.<sup>10</sup> Data on child marriage—also collected through multiple survey instruments—are limited to 24 countries.<sup>11</sup> Online violence against women, such as internet threats and disinformation campaigns, is especially difficult to track and trace, leaving the full magnitude of these attacks unknown.

The sensitive nature of the survey questions and the reporting barriers women face, such as a lack of trust in authorities and fear of shame or victim blaming, add to the difficulties of collecting data.<sup>12</sup> Responsible data collection requires highly specialized teams trained to protect the dignity and safety of survivors.

Additionally, data on violence against women must account for the aggravating impacts of intersectional discrimination.<sup>13</sup> Current data studies that focus on women tend to exclude categories pertaining to women’s race, ethnicity, ability, or other identities. Women in minority racial or ethnic groups, in LGBTQ+ communities, or with disabilities face more frequent and severe violence, underscoring the need for intersectional data collection.<sup>14</sup>

Despite these gaps, ambitious efforts are under way to accelerate the collection of gendered data. Initiatives such as Data2X and Global Health 5050 track and compile sex-disaggregated data while also holding governments and international organizations accountable by exposing gaps in sex-disaggregated data.<sup>15</sup> Platforms such as the World Bank’s Gender Data Portal consolidate and centralize gender statistics to facilitate comparison and analysis,<sup>16</sup> while organizations such as UN Women and WHO publish issue-specific methodology guidance on collecting gender data, such as their joint technical guide on responsibly gathering data on violence against women.<sup>17</sup>

Improving the quality and availability of data requires greater investment and collaboration between national statistics offices and multilateral data collection organizations to harmonize indicators and ensure that they are comparable. To prevent overlooking transgender and nonbinary populations, data collection efforts should move away from male–female binary categories and include categories for transgender and nonbinary people. Without more and better data, monitoring progress on women’s status will fall short, marginalized groups will be overlooked, and blind spots in programming and policymaking will persist, hindering global efforts to advance gender equality.

**Notes**

1. UN Women 2014.
2. UNDESA 2022.
3. UN Women 2022.
4. Encarnacion, Seck, and Emandi 2022; UN Women Data Hub 2023.
5. Weber et al. 2021.
6. Miller 2016.
7. WHO 2023.
8. Kendall 2015.
9. ILOSTAT 2023.
10. World Health Organization 2021.
11. Sustainable Development Goals Dashboard 2023.
12. UN Press 2021; UN Women and WHO 2022.
13. UN Women 2019.
14. Our Watch n.d.
15. Data2X 2022; Global Health 50/50 2022.
16. World Bank 2023b.
17. UN Women and WHO 2022.



## CHAPTER 2

# Political violence against women: Escalating risks and repercussions

**W**omen's rights are the backbone of resilient, peaceful, and democratic societies. While women's leadership and participation in government, pro-democracy movements, and human rights campaigns have grown in recent decades, escalating risks of political violence threaten to stall and even roll back progress. Meanwhile, new and emerging threats, such as the rapid proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI), introduce unprecedented and often incalculable gendered impacts that multiply these risks.

Women's free, full, and equal ability to participate in public spaces and in decision-making roles is required for building resilient democracies, advancing sustainable development, and safeguarding prospects for peace. For women to meaningfully participate in public spaces and decision making, they must first be able to do so without risk of violence. Political violence against women occurs when women are specifically targeted as part of a politically motivated agenda.<sup>1</sup> This form of violence can be a tactic to silence women's voices, inhibit women's participation, and marginalize women away from positions of power. It is often embedded within broader patterns of democratic backsliding that jeopardize the freedom and prosperity of everyone in society.<sup>2</sup>

Political violence against women also undermines progress on critical global agendas. For example, achieving the goals of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda (WPS Agenda), the Sustainable Development Goals, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on gender equality all require women's safe and meaningful participation in decision making, which can be achieved only with freedom from political violence. Policymakers working to advance these goals must view political violence against women as a peace and security issue, as a sustainable development issue, as an environmental justice issue, and as a human rights issue.

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**Political violence can be a tactic to silence women's voices, inhibit their participation, and marginalize women away from positions of power**

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**Recognizing the severe implications of political violence, we have added political violence targeting women (PVTW) as an indicator in the security dimension of the WPS Index**

Recognizing the severe implications of political violence, we have added political violence targeting women (PVTW) as an indicator in the security dimension of the WPS Index. Data for tracking PVTW events (defined as politically motivated physical attacks that specifically target women and girls) are drawn from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) project.<sup>3</sup> Our PVTW indicator quantifies the number of PVTW events per 100,000 women in each country in 2022. While the indicator does not encompass all forms of political violence against women, it does capture important trends surrounding violence against women in everyday civic spaces.

This chapter explores the broader landscape of the physical, sexual, and digital manifestations of political violence against women today. It then presents current data for our new PVTW indicator, discusses the effect that political violence has on women's lives, and considers the implications for society and the WPS Agenda. The chapter charts a path forward and outlines steps that policymakers can take to address political violence against women and deliver justice for survivors.

### **The landscape of risk and challenges**

Political violence can target women who actively participate in politics—civil servants, journalists, activists, demonstrators, and voters—as well as women who are not engaged in political activity but who are targeted by political actors. Political violence takes many forms, from the physical and sexual to the digital (figure 2.1).

#### ***Physical and sexual political violence against women***

Physical political violence against women encompasses attacks that inflict bodily harm. These attacks can be nonsexual (gun violence, beatings, murders, abductions, mob violence) or sexual (rape, sexual harassment, forced sterilization, forced abortion). Physical attacks are often intended to scare, shame, or silence women who are participating in civic spaces.

#### ***Nonsexual physical violence: Perpetrators, forms, and targets***

Perpetrators of nonsexual physical violence against women include state and non-state actors, ranging from government officials to armed rebel groups and individuals, all pursuing their own politically motivated agendas.

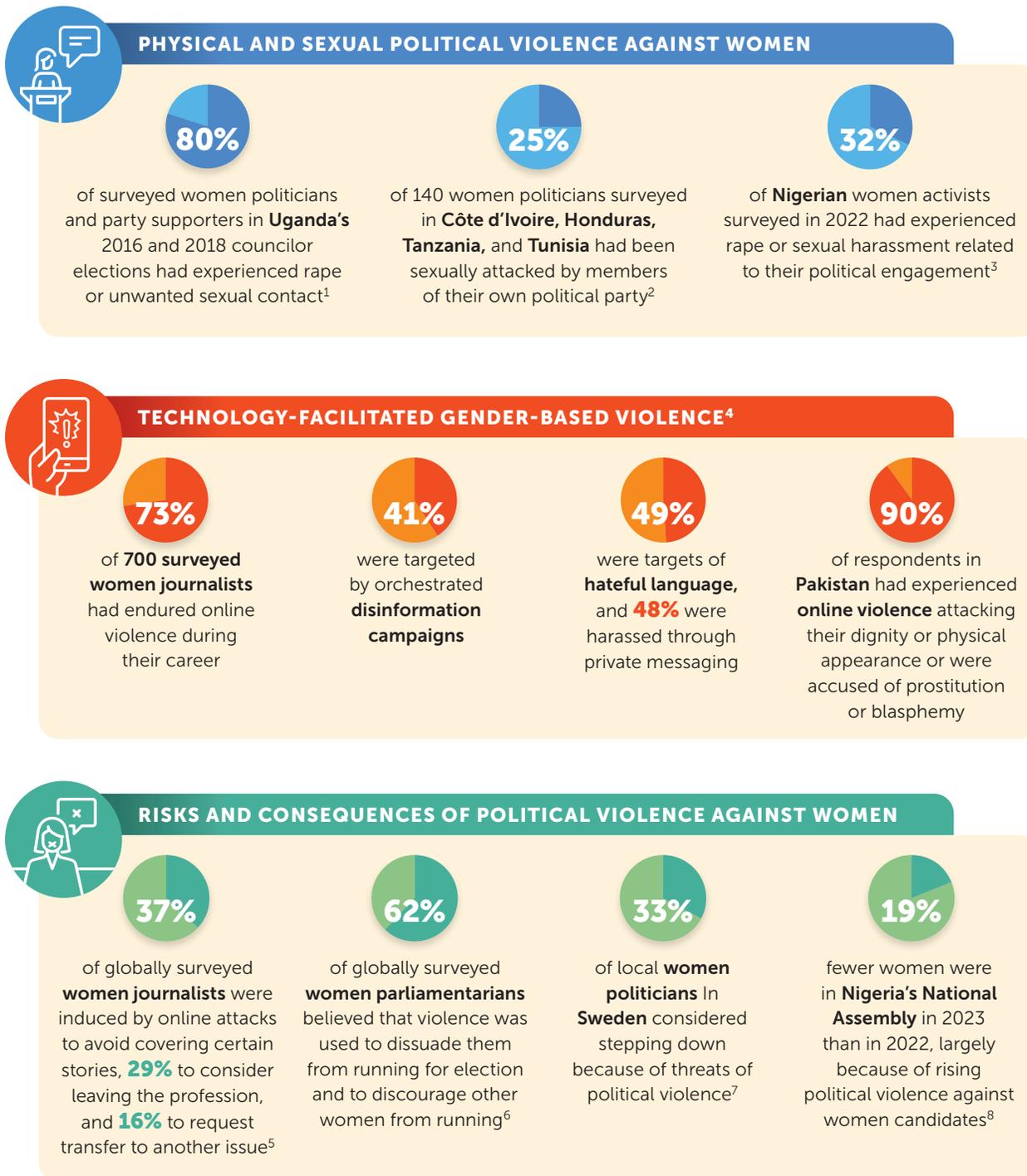
Physical political violence often targets women who are not actively involved in politics. In June 2023, members of the Barrio 18 gang murdered 41 inmates in a **Honduran** women's prison.<sup>4</sup> Also in 2023, a group of armed suspected jihadists with ties to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State kidnapped more than 40 women in **Burkina Faso** who were searching for food.<sup>5</sup> Attacks such as these generally attempt to instill fear in people, pressure governments into making concessions, and portray governments as unable to protect their citizens.<sup>6</sup>

Women participating in politics are also vulnerable to violence specifically because of their political activities and the causes or policies they support. For example:

- In 2023, two male colleagues harassed and beat **Senegalese** lawmaker Amy Ndiaye Gniy after she criticized an opposition religious figure. Ndiaye was pregnant at the time, and the attackers kicked her in the belly, requiring her hospitalization.<sup>7</sup>
- In 2023, during a women's rights demonstration in **Uganda**, police forces assaulted and tear-gassed parliamentarian Susan Mugabi Nakaziba. Ten other women opposition lawmakers were similarly attacked in the streets.<sup>8</sup>

FIGURE 2.1

**To participate meaningfully in decision making, women must be able to do so without risk of violence**



Notes:

1. Schneider 2023. 2. Krook and Hubbard 2018. 3. Stand to End Rape 2022. 4. Posetti and Shabbir 2022. 5. Ferrier and Lees Munoz 2018. 6. IPU 2016. 7. NDI 2017. 8. Nkereuwem 2023.

- In 2023, an unknown assailant threw acid in the face of Lilia Patricia Cardozo, a **Colombian** women’s rights defender. Cardozo is the director of Plataforma Feminista Boyacense, a nongovernmental organization concerned with domestic and gender-based violence.<sup>9</sup>
- In 2022, Taliban forces abducted, beat, and tortured **Afghan** women’s rights defenders Parwana Ibrahimkhel, Tamana Zaryab Paryani, and three of Paryani’s sisters who participated in a protest for women’s rights to education, work, and freedom near Kabul University.<sup>10</sup>
- In 2022, a group of men physically and verbally assaulted Hannah Kenny, a woman candidate for **Northern Ireland**’s Assembly, while she was distributing election materials.<sup>11</sup> Her attackers revealed that she had long been identified as a target due to her advocacy for workers’ rights.<sup>12</sup>
- In 2021, #MeToo activist Huang (Sophia) Xueqin went missing in **China** after state police detained and charged her with “subversion of state power.”<sup>13</sup>
- In 2018, **Iraqi** human rights activist Su’ad al-Ali was shot and killed. As the head of the organization al-Weed al-Alaiami for Human Rights, al-Ali was an outspoken dissident and advocate for women’s rights who had organized and participated in antigovernment demonstrations.<sup>14</sup>
- In 2016, a far-right extremist attacked and killed Jo Cox, a member of the **UK** parliament, because of her defense of refugees and stance against Brexit.<sup>15</sup>

#### *Sexual violence: Threats within and outside conflict settings*

Sexual violence, another instrument of physical political violence against women, occurs both within and outside conflict settings. While sexual violence is perpetrated against people of all genders, women are disproportionately targeted.

Conflict-related sexual violence—when armed actors within a conflict perpetrate sexual violence to assert political dominance and instill fear in opposition groups<sup>16</sup>—is a tactic of intimidation, results in lasting trauma, and amplifies violent patriarchal dominance in militarized conflicts, enabling ongoing violence against women.<sup>17</sup> In **Colombia**, women activists exposed the wartime use of sexual violence by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) to punish outspoken, politically engaged women.<sup>18</sup> In the second quarter of 2021 alone, the Colombian attorney general received 43,493 reports of sexual violence, 86 percent of them perpetrated against women.<sup>19</sup> Today, Colombian women face continued risk of violence as conflict persists between the government and rebel forces.<sup>20</sup> In **Myanmar**, thousands of Rohingya women have been raped by members of the military as part of a broader campaign of ethnic cleansing, also highlighting how ethnic discrimination can amplify the risk of conflict-related sexual violence against women.<sup>21</sup> Since 2021, when the military junta that was originally responsible for these atrocities regained power after a coup against elected officials, junta security forces have subjected Rohingya civilians and other ethnic minorities to sexual violence and torture.<sup>22</sup> After conflict broke out in **Sudan** in early 2023, women’s organizations reported increased physical and sexual violence perpetrated by armed forces.<sup>23</sup>

Rebel and gang violence is also often associated with gender-based violence and used to further political agendas. In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, where armed rebels and militias—including the Rwandan-backed March 23 Movement—have fought since the mid-1990s, Congolese soldiers and members of armed opposition parties have committed crimes of sexual torture and physical assaults both within and around active conflict zones in the country. More than half of Congolese women over age 15 have experienced physical violence, and more than a quarter are survivors of sexual abuse.<sup>24</sup> In **Haiti**, nearly 980 women

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**Conflict-related sexual violence is a tactic of intimidation, results in lasting trauma, and amplifies violent patriarchal dominance in militarized conflicts, enabling ongoing violence against women**

**In a 2022 survey of women activists in Nigeria, 32 percent reported experiencing rape or sexual harassment related to their political engagement**

reported cases of sexual violence in 2021 during a surge in rapes linked to gang wars.<sup>25</sup> As of late 2022, Port-au-Prince was controlled by nearly 200 gangs, inciting territorial conflicts that often magnify risk of gender-based violence.<sup>26</sup>

Sexual political violence occurs in diverse political settings, including many that are unrelated to conflict. In a survey of politicians, political candidates, and party supporters participating in **Uganda's** 2016 and 2018 councilor elections, 80 percent of women reported having experienced rape or unwanted sexual contact compared with 20 percent of men.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, **Kenya** has seen rampant sexual violence against women politicians during election cycles. In 2022, three women presidential candidates were the targets of sexual harassment, online and offline, intended to dissuade them from running.<sup>28</sup> Many attacks were part of a coordinated propaganda campaign in support of the Islamic State and al-Shabaab.<sup>29</sup>

In some cases, fellow politicians perpetrate sexual violence. In a 2018 survey of 140 women politicians in **Côte d'Ivoire, Honduras, Tanzania, and Tunisia**, 25 percent of women reported sexual attacks from members of their own political party.<sup>30</sup> In other cases, sexual forms of political violence are perpetrated to suppress the voices of activists. In a 2022 survey of women activists in **Nigeria**, 32 percent reported experiencing rape or sexual harassment related to their political engagement.<sup>31</sup>

Restrictions on women's reproductive autonomy is another form of political violence and can be embedded within political agendas to control population demographics. For example, the **Chinese** government continues to forcibly sterilize Uyghur women, with reported plans to target at least 80 percent of interned Uyghur women.<sup>32</sup> Since 2013, the **Nigerian** government has forced more than 10,000 women impregnated by members of Boko Haram to have an abortion.<sup>33</sup>

#### ***Digital threats: Evolving forms and risk of political violence against women online***

The spread of digital technologies has expanded the scope of political violence beyond the physical domain. Technology-facilitated gender-based violence is distinct from digital violence in that it specifically targets people because of their gender, especially women.<sup>34</sup> Attacks on women are often politically motivated; perpetrators identify women as targets because of the policies they advocate for, the content they publish, the campaigns they pioneer, or the leadership positions they occupy or pursue.

#### ***Proliferation of online political violence against women***

Instances of online political violence are increasing. In a 2020 global survey of more than 700 women journalists by the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 73 percent of respondents reported suffering technology-facilitated gender-based violence during their career.<sup>35</sup> In another global survey of women journalists, editors, and other news workers in 125 countries conducted by Columbia University and the ICFJ after the COVID-19 lockdowns and the subsequent rise in the use of digital platforms, 20 percent of respondents reported worsening trends in violence.<sup>36</sup>

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence is also increasing at the regional and national levels. In a 2020 survey of 100 East African women journalists, two-thirds of them reported experiencing worse online attacks during the COVID-19 pandemic than before it.<sup>37</sup> Between 2019 and 2020, the number of attacks targeting politicians in Quebec, **Canada**, rose 450 percent, with women enduring more targeted abuse than men.<sup>38</sup>

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In a global survey of women journalists, 20 percent reported physical attacks that were connected to prior online threats

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence introduces unique and amplified risks due to the larger reach, anonymity, and challenges to law enforcement and prosecution associated with online platforms. Perpetrators have access to a range of social media outlets—such as Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), WhatsApp, YouTube, and more recently, TikTok—that transcend geography and multiply audiences.<sup>39</sup> These platforms also make it harder for women to protect their identity, exposing them to doxing (publishing a victim’s personal information online).<sup>40</sup> In **Russia**, outspoken feminist activist Daria Serenko endured threats of physical harm after her personal information and family members’ addresses were leaked.<sup>41</sup> Serenko also reported that she had been followed in real life, demonstrating how online threats can escalate into dangerous offline harassment. Physical forms of political violence against women are often preceded by online harassment. The ICFJ and UNESCO global survey found that 20 percent of the 700 women journalists surveyed reported physical attacks that were connected to prior online threats.<sup>42</sup>

Publishing hateful content online generally requires fewer resources and poses less risk of being caught than physical harassment or violence, offering perpetrators lower-cost methods of attack while undermining victims’ safety and security.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, online anonymity emboldens perpetrators, resulting in more malicious harassment and abuse that are often difficult—or even impossible—to trace and prosecute. Also important, online threats can escalate to physical assaults: the ICFJ and UNESCO global survey found that 20 percent of women journalists reported physical attacks that were connected to prior online threats.<sup>44</sup>

#### *Forms and perpetrators of online political violence against women*

Politically motivated technology-facilitated gender-based violence takes many forms and enables diverse methods of abuse. Among the most common manifestations are disinformation campaigns that aim to discredit women or spread false narratives about them. Disinformation and its effects can vary according to the target. Many journalists report attacks on their reputation and credibility. In the ICFJ and UNESCO global survey, 41 percent of women journalists reported being targeted by orchestrated disinformation campaigns.<sup>45</sup> Many of the journalists were targets of “fake news” or discrediting schemes intended to undermine the accuracy and reliability of their reporting.

Women politicians endure similar character assassination attempts.<sup>46</sup> While most attacks against men in politics critique their policies, online aggression toward women tends to target their character or oversexualize their behaviors. Ágnes Kunhalmi, a member of the **Hungarian** Nationalist Party, was accused of being under the influence of drugs and alcohol during a press conference, a tactic used to undermine her outspoken condemnation of Prime Minister Viktor Mihály Orbán.<sup>47</sup> In **Rwanda**, Diane Rwigara was disqualified from the 2017 presidential election after fabricated nude photos of her were disseminated online. Rwigara, who had recently announced her candidacy against incumbent President Paul Kagame, was the only woman in the race.<sup>48</sup> In 2022, when a video of **Finnish** Prime Minister Sanna Marin dancing at a party went viral, opposition leaders cast a “shadow of doubt” on her competency and demanded that she take a drug test.<sup>49</sup> Attacks like these silence women, discourage their participation in politics, and inhibit them from seeking positions of power.<sup>50</sup> Online disinformation campaigns are difficult to reverse and often spread quickly because they reinforce existing sexist beliefs about women leaders.

Another common form of technology-facilitated gender-based violence is threats and insults, usually physical or sexual, aimed at women. Such incidents

often target women politicians, activists, and journalists in the public spotlight and range from attacks on their physical appearance to harassing commentary about their personal and private relationships, creating psychological distress and fear of physical or sexual violence. In **Pakistan**, 90 percent of surveyed women journalists reported experiencing online violence that targeted their dignity, attacked their physical appearance, or accused them of prostitution or blasphemy.<sup>51</sup> Hateful remarks can also target broader groups of women civilians; for example, white supremacist organizations in the **United States** have used X and other social media platforms to launch “trolling” campaigns, posting racist and sexist insults against women and minority groups.<sup>52</sup>

A third form of technology-facilitated gender-based violence is targeted harassment through direct messaging, manifested as threatening comments or sexualized attacks. A case study examining abusive Tweets directed at 21 **Finnish** ministers found that the five most-targeted figures were women. Prime Minister Sanna Marin endured the greatest number of attacks, followed by Interior Minister Maria Ohisalo. Both received explicit messages calling them vulgar names or insulting their appearance. Tweets disproportionately labeled women politicians incompetent, calling for their removal from office or, in extreme cases, death.<sup>53</sup>

In the ICFJ and UNESCO global survey of 700 women journalists, 49 percent experienced hateful language and 48 percent were harassed through private messaging.<sup>54</sup> The International Press Institute notes that stories about feminism, sexual assault, and reproductive rights lead to heightened aggression and violence against women journalists, with news reports in support of feminist matters or rights for individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or another sexual minority (LGBTQ+) at the forefront of backlash.<sup>55</sup>

Online algorithms and AI accelerate the spread of harmful content. Perpetrators wield AI’s power to spread false and misleading images or information by launching fake news campaigns and generating harmful deep fake images that undermine women’s online safety and damage their credibility.<sup>56</sup> Prior to being elected, **Indian** parliamentarian Chandrani Murmu was targeted by attackers who used AI to edit her face into pornographic videos.<sup>57</sup> Alarming, 95 percent of AI-generated deep fakes on the internet involve obscene depictions of women.<sup>58</sup> While AI’s full potential remains unknown, early warning signs foreshadow its incalculable potential to proliferate violence and discrimination against women.

In some cases, individuals or small groups perpetrate politically driven technology-facilitated gender-based violence, while in others, authoritarian regimes engineer the abuse. Around the world, authoritarian regimes have disseminated gendered disinformation to undermine opposition, consolidate power, and suppress the voices of outspoken women leaders.<sup>59</sup> For example, **Indian** Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his party have been accused of operating an online “troll party,” launching explicit sexual harassment and abuse attacks on X against women activists who have accused Modi of corruption.<sup>60</sup> In 2021, a **Brazilian** court ordered former president Jair Bolsonaro to pay “moral damages” to journalist Patrícia Campos Mello for spreading rumors that she had traded sexual favors for negative information about him.<sup>61</sup>

Despite the risks, women are leading freedom and democracy movements against authoritarian regimes. For example, in **Sudan**, women spearheaded the movement that ultimately led to the overthrow of dictator Omar Al-Bashir in 2019.<sup>62</sup> Today, as civil conflict rages between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, women are heading the humanitarian response efforts.<sup>63</sup> In **Ukraine**, women are playing a leading role in the country’s freedom movement by

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**Authoritarian regimes have disseminated gendered disinformation to undermine opposition, consolidate power, and suppress the voices of outspoken women leaders**

documenting war crimes perpetrated by the **Russian** army and coordinating the distribution of aid.<sup>64</sup> Democracy movements led by women are often targeted by authoritarian leaders, resulting in political violence at the highest, state-sanctioned level. The cases of **Belarus**, **Iran**, and **Myanmar** represent recent examples, as portrayed in spotlight 2.1 at the end of the chapter.

### Tracking political violence against women: What country and regional data tell us

To reflect the grave and growing threats that political violence poses to women, the security dimension of the 2023/24 WPS Index includes the new PVTW indicator sourced from ACLED. For the WPS Index, this indicator is calculated as the number of events of political violence targeting women per 100,000 women per year in a country (box 2.1).

The security dimension also captures threats of violence at home (intimate partner violence), community safety in the neighborhood, and proximity to conflict nationwide. Both PVTW and proximity to conflict capture threats at the societal level, but PVTW is not limited to countries experiencing armed conflict. PVTW affects the daily lives of women everywhere, though levels are substantially higher in some countries than in others (figure 2.2).

In 2022, the five countries with the most PVTW events were **Mexico**, **Brazil**, **Nigeria**, the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, and **Myanmar** (figure 2.3). These five countries far surpassed the global average of 16 PVTW events in 2022, and together they accounted for 43 percent of PVTW events worldwide.

**Mexico** (537 PVTW events) and **Brazil** (327 events) had the highest numbers of PVTW events, with two to three times as many as the next closest countries. In both countries, PVTW is predominantly nonsexual, and more than 73 percent of events were perpetrated by unidentified gangs, unidentified armed groups, or political militias.<sup>65</sup>

In 2022, Mexico, Brazil, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Myanmar had the highest number of PVTW events

#### BOX 2.1 Measuring political violence targeting women

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project’s (ACLED) measure of political violence targeting women (PVTW) refers to political violence that specifically *targets* women or girls—events in which the main victims are all women or girls, a majority of victims are women or girls, or the primary target is a woman or girl. In short, this represents violent targeting “in which a woman’s gender is the salient identity for which she is targeted.”<sup>1</sup> PVTW events include sexual violence, nonsexual attacks, abductions, mob violence, and explosions targeting women. PVTW data from ACLED also include other event markers such as the type of perpetrator, form of attack, and specific location.

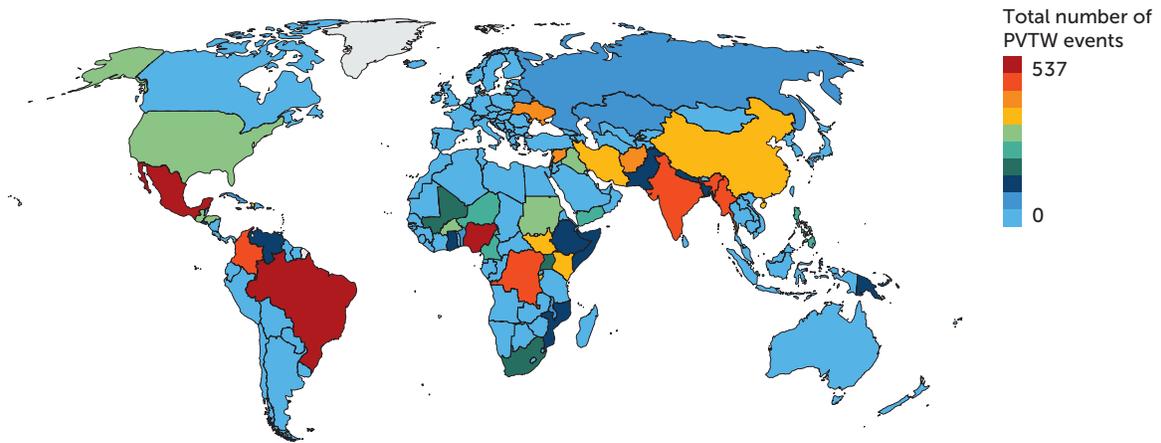
The PVTW indicator includes women targeted from all walks of life, regardless of the level of their engagement in politics. The PVTW dataset represents a subset of all civilian targeting (political violence that targets civilians at large). It should be equated neither to all political violence in which women or girls may have been *affected* or *impacted* nor to a gender disaggregation of *all* political violence.

It is important to note that ACLED data capture only *political/public* manifestations of violence, meaning that domestic, interpersonal, and intimate partner violence are not included in its measure of PVTW. (Such violence is captured in the WPS Index by other variables.) Additionally, ACLED data capture only physical manifestations of violence in real life, meaning that threats (both online and offline) and intimidation are not included. (This is an important point to consider, as it implies that much of the risk that women face, such as that posed by technology-facilitated gender-based violence, is not captured by this variable.) Lastly, PVTW should not be equated to political violence that targets *women in politics* alone, such as politicians or voters. PVTW that targets *women in politics* represents but a small subset of all PVTW events.<sup>2</sup>

#### Notes

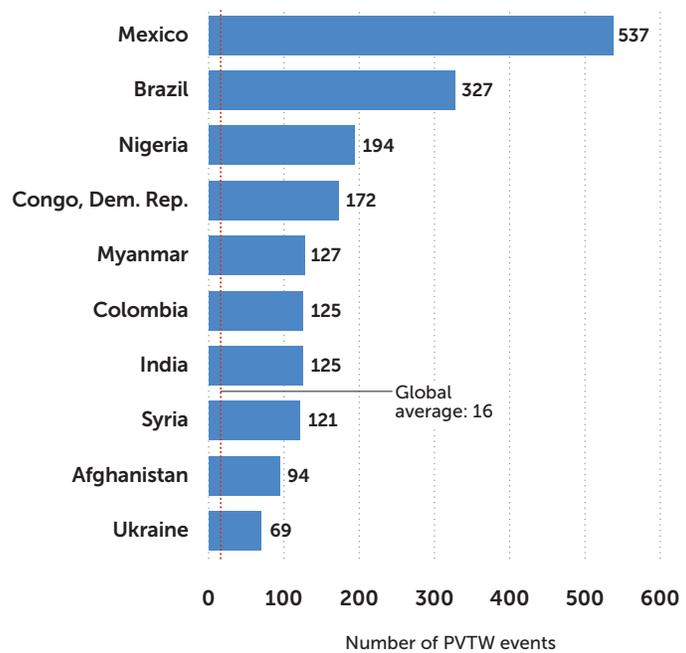
1. Kishi 2021.
2. Kishi 2021.

**FIGURE 2.2 Political violence targeting women (PVTW) around the world, 2022**



Source: Authors' estimates based on data from ACLED (2023).

**FIGURE 2.3 The 10 countries with the most political violence targeting women (PVTW) events in 2022**



Source: Authors' estimates based on data from ACLED (2023).

**Nigeria** had the third-highest number of PVTW events (194), most of them perpetrated by anonymous armed groups and identity militias, such as the Fulani ethnic militias and the Zamfara and Katsina communal militias. Together, these militias were responsible for more than 25 percent of the PVTW events in the country.<sup>66</sup> These nonstate actors emerged during long-standing conflicts between local communities and between religious and ethnic groups.<sup>67</sup> Communal militias in Nigeria have reportedly used violence against women to retaliate against and humiliate opposing communities.<sup>68</sup> Apart from identity militias, 9 percent of PVTW events in Nigeria are perpetrated by rebel groups, such as Boko Haram,

Myanmar had the highest number of PVTW events by far among countries in East Asia and the Pacific, with almost two and a half times as many as China, its closest regional counterpart

seeking to overthrow the national government.<sup>69</sup> Among political violence events, women are the targets of abductions two times more often than all civilians in the country and the targets of sexual attacks 12 times more often.<sup>70</sup>

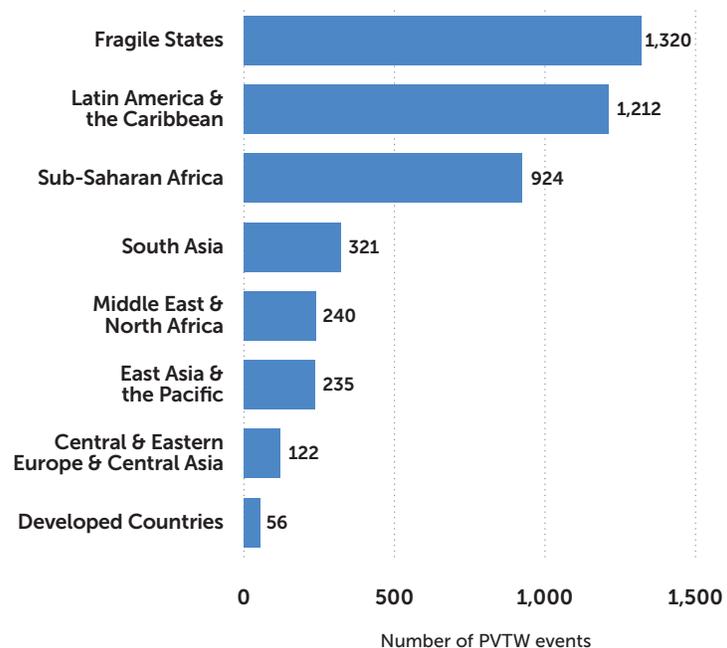
In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, with the fourth-highest PVTW event count (172), the leading perpetrators were unidentified armed groups, political militias, and rebel groups.<sup>71</sup> Sexual violence is especially prevalent in the country, accounting for 37 percent of PVTW events.<sup>72</sup>

**Myanmar** had the fifth-highest number of PVTW events (127), most of them perpetrated by state military forces.<sup>73</sup> Myanmar had the most PVTW events by far among countries in East Asia and the Pacific, with almost two and a half times as many events as its closest regional counterpart, **China** (54). Myanmar has a long history of military-perpetrated genocide, ethnic cleansing, and violence against the Rohingya people, which has included the mass abuse, rape, torture, and forced displacement of Rohingya women.<sup>74</sup>

Of the 177 countries ranked on the WPS Index, 79 reported no PVTW events in 2022. This includes 20 countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 19 in the Developed Countries group, and 11 in Sub-Saharan Africa. Only three countries in the Fragile States group reported no PVTW events in 2022: **Gambia**, **Lao People's Democratic Republic**, and **Timor-Leste**. However, this is likely due to underreporting, which is especially common in closed media environments.<sup>75</sup>

In 2022, the Fragile States group recorded the most PVTW events (1,320), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (1,212) and Sub-Saharan Africa (924) (figure 2.4). Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (122) and the Developed Countries group (56) reported the fewest events.

**FIGURE 2.4** The Fragile States group and Latin America and the Caribbean had the most political violence targeting women (PVTW) events in 2022



Source: Authors' estimates based on data from ACLED (2023).

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In Sub-Saharan Africa, sexual violence accounted for 24 percent of PVTW events in 2022—surpassing the global average of 20 percent—and occurred most frequently within a context of armed conflict

In **Latin America and the Caribbean**, 84 percent of PVTW events are non-sexual.<sup>76</sup> The most common nonsexual attacks are shootings and other physical assaults. In the first four months of 2023, unidentified armed groups in **Mexico** shot nine off-duty policewomen, eight of them fatally.<sup>77</sup> In 2022, political militias—a category that includes gangs that operate with political motivation—were responsible for 93 percent of PVTW events in the region.<sup>78</sup> In **Colombia** in 2022, gangs with suspected ties to drug trafficking, illegal mining, and contraband killed 215 human rights activists.<sup>79</sup> Many of these activists had advocated for women’s and Indigenous groups’ rights. In June 2022, Clara Isabel Samudio Perafán, a 34-year-old activist fighting for farmers’ rights, was killed in Cauca.<sup>80</sup> In the same month, armed assailants murdered Jesusita Moreno, a well-known Afro-Colombian community leader and human rights activist, in front of her family.<sup>81</sup> Across the region, politically active Indigenous women and women of color face disproportionate risks (box 2.2).

**Sub-Saharan Africa** reported 924 PVTW events in 2022, the third-highest among country groups and regions. Nonsexual attacks accounted for 40 percent of them.<sup>82</sup> Sexual violence accounted for almost one-fourth (24 percent), surpassing the global average of 20 percent, and most frequently occurred within the context of armed conflicts.<sup>83</sup> In armed clashes with **South Sudanese** government troops, rebel forces committed 131 documented cases of rape across 28 villages in early 2022, following decades of civil war and armed conflict.<sup>84</sup> Today, continued ethno-political violence between government-aligned and opposition armed groups has assailed local communities, with reports of sexual violence and attacks against displaced civilians.<sup>85</sup> In 2021, anonymous or unidentified armed groups perpetrated a third of PVTW events in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>86</sup> Rebel groups are reportedly behind another 10 percent of PVTW events.<sup>87</sup> For example, Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa perpetrate gender-based violence against women and girls through forced marriages, sexual slavery, rape, and mass kidnappings targeting school-age girls.<sup>88</sup> Many of these attacks are intended to advance extremist ideology, including attempts to intimidate and disrupt the government and to prevent girls from attending schools.<sup>89</sup>

The **Middle East and North Africa** reported 240 PVTW events in 2022. Nonsexual attacks accounted for 61 percent of those events.<sup>90</sup> The most common perpetrators were political militias, who were responsible for 46 percent of all events, followed by rebel groups, who were responsible for 34 percent, four times the global rate of 8 percent.<sup>91</sup> In **Yemen**, where 14 percent of regional PVTW events occurred in 2022, Houthi forces have waged a terror campaign against human and women’s rights activists.<sup>92</sup> Houthi forces were responsible for nearly 2,000 cases of abduction, torture, and rape of women between 2017 and 2022.<sup>93</sup> In July 2022, Houthi forces kidnapped Fatima Saleh Al-Arwali, the head of the Yemen Office of the Union of Women Leaders, for criticizing child recruitment and their treatment of women.<sup>94</sup>

In **South Asia**, state forces are the largest source of political violence targeting women, at 32 percent as of 2022.<sup>95</sup> In the region, **India** had the most events (125), many of which targeted women leaders in *panchayats* (local village governments).<sup>96</sup> **Afghanistan** had the second-highest number (94). Since seizing power in 2021, the Taliban has issued a series of repressive policies to subjugate women and carried out revenge killings and forced disappearances of women activists who oppose the changes.<sup>97</sup> Amnesty International calls the Taliban’s systematic exclusion of women a “war against women,” and the International Criminal Court classifies their violence as gender persecution and a crime against

## BOX 2.2 Intersectional risks of violence in Latin America and the Caribbean

As is the case universally, Indigenous women and women of color in Latin America and the Caribbean face heightened risks of discrimination and political violence.<sup>1</sup>

In **Brazil**, a woman is raped every 10 minutes, and a femicide (the deliberate murder of a woman because of her gender) is committed every seven hours.<sup>2</sup> Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous women face heightened risks.<sup>3</sup> In 2022, nearly 700 women were victims of femicide in Brazil, 62 percent of them Afro-Brazilian women.<sup>4</sup> Violence against Afro-Brazilian women is often politically motivated. In June 2023, a military police officer who supported Jair Bolsonaro assaulted an Afro-Brazilian woman after she expressed support for the opposition.<sup>5</sup> Indigenous women also face heightened risks. Many Indigenous women in Brazil who have engaged in environmental activism to protect Indigenous territories have faced violent backlash from illegal farmers and miners.<sup>6</sup> In December 2022, a group of militant ranchers shot and killed Nhandesy Estela Verá, the 67-year-old spiritual leader of the Guarani-Kaiowá people.<sup>7</sup> Verá had been outspoken against the ranchers and farmers who illegally occupied Yvy Katu, an Indigenous territory, and was targeted as a part of a series of arson attacks on sacred Indigenous places, such as prayer houses.<sup>8</sup> Political violence against Indigenous women and girls in the context of environmental conflicts has targeted women who are not politically active as well. In May 2022, a 12-year-old girl died after being raped by illegal miners in the Yanomami reservation.<sup>9</sup> The attack occurred days after groups of illegal miners set fire to the Yanomami village and abducted Yanomami leaders.

In **Guatemala**, which has the third-highest rate of femicide in the world, the most common type of crime is violence against women, and the risk is higher for Indigenous women.<sup>10</sup> The government's campaign of genocide against Mayan people, which formally ended in 1996, has left an enduring legacy of discrimination and oppression of Indigenous people, especially women.<sup>11</sup> In 2022, more than 10,000 cases of sexual violence against Indigenous women were reported, 2,134 of them targeting Indigenous girls under age 14.<sup>12</sup> Indigenous women are also killed at higher rates than other women, and perpetrators are rarely brought to justice (impunity is estimated at more than 95 percent).<sup>13</sup> Indigenous women activists and community leaders also face heightened risks. In July 2022, a Mayan transgender woman and human rights activist was murdered because

of her sexual orientation and gender identity.<sup>14</sup> A few weeks later, a member of the Barrio 18 gang shot and killed the woman leader of an organization working to help Mayan Indigenous communities develop clean water systems.<sup>15</sup> In late 2021, a police officer assaulted and injured a Mayan woman human rights defender participating in a demonstration as a member of a fishers union.<sup>16</sup> Fishers unions have long fought for government protection of the fishing industry, which is vital to the livelihoods and food security of hundreds of Mayan families and has been increasingly threatened by environmental destruction perpetrated by private corporations.<sup>17</sup>

The Tumaco region of **Colombia**, populated predominantly by Afro-Colombian and Indigenous people, recorded the highest levels of sexual violence in the country's registry of victims of wartime abuses.<sup>18</sup> Even after the 2016 Peace Accords between the government and rebel groups, minority and Indigenous women face magnified risks. In October 2022, an armed group opened fire on the vehicle of Indigenous Senator Aida Quilcué, who reported having received violent threats for years.<sup>19</sup> In the same month, Yeimi Chocué Camayo, an Indigenous women's rights activist, community leader, and treasurer for the Chimborazo reservation, was attacked and killed while returning to her home in north Cauca, a region where Indigenous communities face notably high rates of violence.<sup>20</sup>

These examples, alongside countless others, highlight how gender, race, and indigeneity compound to magnify vulnerability to political violence.

### Notes

1. Bedoya 2021.
2. OHCHR 2022c.
3. Ceratti 2017.
4. Amnesty International 2022b.
5. ACLED 2023.
6. Rainforest Foundation Norway n.d.
7. Gilona 2022.
8. Cultural Survival 2023.
9. Business and Human Rights Resource Center 2022.
10. Peace Brigades International 2022.
11. Rogg and Pezzia 2023.
12. Peace Brigades International 2022.
13. Rogg and Pezzia 2023.
14. ACLED 2023.
15. ACLED 2023.
16. ACLED 2023.
17. Cuffe 2022.
18. Goldscheid 2020.
19. Justice for Colombia 2022.
20. Justice for Colombia 2022.

humanity.<sup>98</sup> **Nepal** has also seen political violence target women along party lines, with the majority of attacks committed against women in politics, especially party members and voters.<sup>99</sup> In May 2022, six high-ranking officials in the Communist Party of Nepal assaulted a woman for not casting her vote in their favor in a recent election.<sup>100</sup>

### Consequences for politically active women: Immediate and long-term dangers

The consequences of political violence against women extend beyond the immediate harm to victims. Recurring incidents and cultures of political violence can deter women from political engagement and drive women out of political office. For example, Manuela d'Ávila, a former lawmaker in the Communist Party of Brazil, lost the 2020 Porto Alegre mayoral election following fake news stories about her prioritizing luxury shopping over politics. D'Ávila also recounted numerous instances of hate speech and threats of rape directed to her and her young daughter.<sup>101</sup> She announced that she would not run for political office in 2022, due largely to the online harassment against her and her family.

Women journalists also report leaving their job due to threat of violence. In a global survey of nearly 600 women journalists, 37 percent avoided covering certain stories, 29 percent considered leaving the profession, and 16 percent requested a transfer to another issue due to online attacks.<sup>102</sup>

Nearly 62 percent of women parliamentarians surveyed by the Inter-Parliamentary Union believed that violence directed at them was meant to dissuade them from running for political office and to discourage other women from entering the political sphere.<sup>103</sup> In Sweden, a third of local woman politicians reported having considered stepping down from their role due to threats of political violence.<sup>104</sup> In Nigeria, women's representation in the National Assembly fell by 19 percent in 2023, attributed largely to growing political violence against women in the country that inhibited women's candidacy.<sup>105</sup>

Women in politics are not a homogeneous population. They embody diverse, overlapping identities related to their race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, disability, and sexual orientation. When women's gender intersects with other marginalized identities, the risk of political violence is often amplified. For example:

- Women of color running for congressional office during the 2020 elections in the **United States** were twice as likely as other candidates to be targeted by disinformation campaigns.<sup>106</sup> Rates of sexist and racist online abuse were similarly augmented, with women of color experiencing incidents at four times the rate that white candidates did and twice the rate that men of color did.<sup>107</sup>
- Cécile Kyenge, **Italy's** first Black minister, was the victim of verbal and physical attacks, with strong sexist and racist undertones. An Italian senator compared Kyenge to an orangutan, and during a rally, someone threw bananas at her. She later suffered threats of rape from an opposing party councilor.<sup>108</sup>
- Councilwoman Marielle Franco's assassination in **Brazil** in 2018 followed similar targeting that was both gendered and racially motivated. An outspoken activist against racial and sexual discrimination, Franco was the only Black woman representative in Rio de Janeiro's city council and was a member of the LGBTQ+ community.<sup>109</sup>

These examples underline how gender intersects with other marginalized identities to amplify women's risks of violence in politics, in physical and online spaces.

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Nearly 62 percent of surveyed women parliamentarians believed that violence was directed at them to dissuade them from running for office and to discourage other women from running

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Because politically active women pose a threat to authoritarian rule, suppressing and silencing women's voices are deliberate tactics of authoritarianism, accelerating the deterioration of democratic governance

### Implications for gender equality, civic space, and democracy

When women do not have safe, free, and full access to public spaces, communities also suffer. Persistent political violence against women poses far-reaching consequences for civic space and representative democracy that ripple across society.

First, persistent political violence against women contracts civic space, or the fora through which citizens exercise their rights to organize, express themselves, access information, and participate in the governance of their community or country.<sup>110</sup> Accessible civic spaces are critical venues for women's organizing and advocacy efforts. When these spaces are unsafe or restricted, women's civil society groups cannot engage in advocacy, undermining critical avenues for government accountability, responsiveness, and transparency more broadly.<sup>111</sup>

Second, political violence undermines women's representation in decision making by creating an unsafe environment for women to participate meaningfully. Women introduce diverse perspectives to policymaking, a prerequisite for effective and sustainable governance, and they must be able to advocate for their rights at all levels.<sup>112</sup> Women's representation in government is associated with policies that promote gender equality, social inclusion, and development.<sup>113</sup> Designing policies that reflect the priorities, interests, and insights of all people is impossible when half the population is systematically excluded.

Third, patriarchal norms and misogyny fuel gender inequality and exclude women from political and social life. Normalizing male dominance reinforces structural and cultural marginalization. Structures of patriarchal power increasingly enable all forms of violence and discrimination against women and further entrench gender inequalities across the board. Due to underlying patriarchal norms and structures, women's increased political participation can lead to backlash and heightened political violence. A study of women politicians in **Kenya** from 1997 to 2019 found that every additional parliamentary seat held by a woman corresponded to a 21 percent increase in the number of violent political attacks against women.<sup>114</sup>

Fourth, the rollback of women's rights, including through political violence, is often embedded within larger autocratic movements to repress civil liberties. When women participate in social movements, those movements are more likely to achieve egalitarian outcomes (box 2.3).<sup>115</sup> Because politically active, free women pose a direct threat to authoritarian rule, suppressing and silencing women's voices are deliberate tactics of authoritarianism, accelerating the deterioration of democratic governance. **Tunisia** had historically upheld policies that encouraged women's rights to political participation, such as a 2011 law that mandated gender parity among political candidates. In 2022, however, President Kais Saied ushered in a new constitution that eliminated these policies as part of his broader crusade against democracy.<sup>116</sup>

### Implications of political violence against women for the WPS Agenda

Political violence against women has direct implications for the WPS Agenda. Formalized in 2000 through UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and now comprising nine additional resolutions, the WPS Agenda recognizes that conflict disproportionately affects women and that women's meaningful participation is crucial to all aspects of conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding.<sup>117</sup> The WPS Agenda is grounded in four pillars—protection, prevention, participation, and relief and recovery<sup>118</sup>—all of which are undermined by political violence. When women are not protected from political violence and when political violence is not prevented, women cannot participate in peace processes or in relief and recovery.

### BOX 2.3 Women’s status and democracy

Organized efforts to roll back women’s rights are happening alongside the acceleration of anti-democratic forces. The simultaneity of these trends is not a coincidence. Our recent analysis finds that empowering women and building resilient democracies go hand in hand.<sup>1</sup>

Women’s status, as measured by the WPS Index, is strongly correlated with three critical pillars of democracy:

- **Contestation:** the degree to which genuine competition exists in a political system. We measure this using the Varieties of Democracy’s Clean Elections Index, which accounts for the autonomy and capacity of the election management body; the incidence of electoral irregularities, intimidation, and violence; and the general perception that the election was free and fair.<sup>2</sup>
- **Freedom of association and assembly:** the degree to which civic groups are able to organize independently of the state. We measure this using the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance’s (International IDEA) Freedom of Association and Assembly Index, which captures civil society’s autonomy, freedom of association and assembly for citizens and citizen groups, and workers’ rights.<sup>3</sup>
- **Checks and balances:** the degree to which different institutions hold power that enables them to limit one another, provide oversight, and ensure accountability. We measure this using International IDEA’s Checks on Government Index.<sup>4</sup>

Across a sample of 96 countries classified as free or partly free by Freedom House, our analysis quantitatively

compared these three pillars of democracy with overall performance on the WPS Index.<sup>5</sup>

While the results do not indicate causality, countries where women are doing well tend to be countries with free and fair elections, strong civil society autonomy, and high government accountability (see table).

Building resilient democracies requires the meaningful participation of everyone in society, including women. As these results underscore, policymakers should view investment in women as investment in strong democratic governance.

#### Correlation between WPS Index scores and indicators of democracy

	Clean Elections Index score	Freedom of Association and Assembly Index score	Checks on Government Index score
WPS Index score	.64	.42	.52

Note: The analysis considers Spearman’s rank-order correlation, which measures the strength and direction of monotonic association between two ranked variables. Values closer to 1 indicate a stronger relationship. All correlations are significant at  $p < .01$ .

Source: Authors’ estimates; Coppedge et al. 2022; International IDEA 2022.

#### Notes

1. Ortiz et al. 2023.
2. Coppedge et al. 2022.
3. Tufis and Hudson 2022.
4. Tufis and Hudson 2022.
5. The analysis excludes nonfree states because it is difficult to capture democracy levels in nondemocratic states. For example, it is impossible to measure electoral integrity in a country with no electoral processes.

*Protection* underlines the importance of guarding women and girls from violence, while *prevention* emphasizes strengthening strategies that reduce women’s vulnerability to conflict-related violence, such as bolstering legal protections and supporting women peacebuilders. These two pillars must also account for the impacts of political violence against women, which can undermine prospects for peace by amplifying security risks. For example, armed groups specifically target women peacebuilders and human rights defenders seeking to protect women’s rights, undercutting both protection and prevention. In **Libya**, armed rebels murdered lawyer and human rights activist Hanan Al-Barassi for her activism against the sexual violence perpetrated by armed groups.<sup>119</sup> Protecting women from violence requires preventing violence, including political violence.

*Participation* requires women’s meaningful inclusion in peace and security decision making. Women’s participation in reaching peace agreements is associated with fuller implementation of agreed measures and greater durability of peace.<sup>120</sup> Implementing the WPS Agenda depends on women’s active engagement and leadership in formal institutions, politics, and civil society. At the 2016 peace

The WPS Agenda cannot be realized when political violence jeopardizes women’s meaningful participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding and intensifies security risks for women peacebuilders and human rights defenders

talks following decades of conflict between the government of **Colombia** and the FARC, women made up 20 percent of state negotiators and 43 percent of FARC delegates.<sup>121</sup> Their influential input throughout the peacebuilding process led to the inclusion of gender-sensitive provisions in the peace agreement and the convening of a gender subcommittee to address conflict-related sexual violence against women.<sup>122</sup> In contrast, women in **Afghanistan** were largely excluded from the 2020 Doha peace talks between the United States and the Taliban.<sup>123</sup> UNSCR 2467 (2019), the most recent addition to the WPS Agenda, recognizes that “women’s protection and participation are inextricably linked and mutually-reinforcing.”<sup>124</sup> Freedom from political violence is essential to these outcomes—for women to meaningfully participate, they must be able to do so without risk of violence.

*Relief and recovery* consider the specific needs of women following conflict and the active role that women must play in guiding humanitarian and reconstruction efforts. Women in post-war **Sierra Leone** mobilized to rebuild and restore schools for children, especially young girls.<sup>125</sup> In northern **Uganda**, women have engaged in nongovernmental organizations, such as the Village Savings and Loans Associations, to strengthen local communities’ economic infrastructure following the country’s entanglement in neighboring civil wars.<sup>126</sup> Inclusive reconstruction efforts and institution building require women to be able to safely contribute and lead, which political violence renders impossible. For example, in early 2021, four women aid workers supporting women’s vocational training were murdered in **Pakistan** by suspected members of the Pakistani Taliban.<sup>127</sup> In **Afghanistan** in April 2023, the Taliban banned women aid workers.<sup>128</sup> They have since faced harassment, intimidation, and detention.

Addressing political violence against women is critical across all four pillars of the WPS Agenda. As political violence against women increasingly shapes modern conflicts and the consequences proliferate, those implementing the WPS Agenda must embed efforts to address political violence against women in their work. Box 2.4 highlights promising examples of international, national, and local actors fighting to protect women from political violence.

### Emerging conclusions and the path forward

Political violence against women undermines progress on critical global agendas yet is notably absent in the language of many international frameworks. Existing agendas and frameworks can be strengthened by accounting for the consequences of political violence against women and identifying pathways to address it.

- The WPS Agenda cannot be realized when political violence jeopardizes women’s meaningful participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding and intensifies security risks for women peacebuilders and human rights defenders.
- Recognizing that sustainable development is impossible when half the population is denied their full human rights and opportunities, progress on Agenda 2030—beyond Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality—requires addressing political violence that discourages women’s free and full participation in public spaces and decision making.
- Inclusive and equitable climate action is impossible when the voices of women activists and land defenders are silenced by political violence, obstructing progress on goals established through the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- Political violence against women is often embedded in authoritarian agendas to restrict civic space, roll back civil liberties, and erode democratic structures. Addressing political violence against women is critical to strengthening democracy worldwide.

## BOX 2.4 Promising efforts to prevent and respond to political violence against women

*International frameworks and agreements.* While there is as yet no global convention dedicated to addressing all forms of political violence against women, several international organizations have called for specific protections.

- In 2013, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 68/181 on protecting women human rights defenders.<sup>1</sup> The resolution calls on Member States to prevent online and physical threats to women human rights defenders, train law enforcement officials responding to political violence against women, and hold all perpetrators accountable through formal systems of justice.
- In 2022, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, in conjunction with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights, and the United Nations, announced the Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and Gender Justice, which recognizes the growing prevalence of technology-facilitated gender-based violence.<sup>2</sup> The declaration calls on states to combat gender discrimination and to require social media platforms to play a more active role in restricting abusive content.

*National legislation.* A growing number of countries have passed laws criminalizing political violence against women, including online political violence, establishing official systems for reporting incidents and persecuting perpetrators.

- In 2021, **Brazil** passed legislation to prevent, suppress, and combat violence against women that hinders their political participation. The law aims to tackle gender-based discrimination, including the dissemination of false information online, and to dismantle physical barriers to political spaces and activities.<sup>3</sup>
- In Latin America and the Caribbean, **Bolivia, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Peru** have passed laws criminalizing violence and harassment against women political actors, while eight other countries have recognized violence against women politicians in legislation that focuses on electoral processes or violence against women.<sup>4</sup> **Mexico's** 2020 Digital Violence Act criminalizes online violence against women.
- In 2015, **Canada** adopted the Code of Conduct on Sexual Harassment for elected members of parliament. The code was extended to all federal employees in 2018.<sup>5</sup>

*Efforts to secure political spaces.* Election management bodies and local authorities are key actors in preventing and responding to political violence against women. Several countries have bolstered such officials' capacity to make civic spaces safer for women.

- Ahead of the 2021 national elections in **Iraq**, the United Nations worked with government officials

to implement a new electoral code of conduct that addresses gender-based violence targeting women candidates and criminalizes online violence against women. The initiative also set up hotlines and designated judges to address violations.<sup>6</sup>

- In **Sierra Leone**, the national police organized countrywide trainings on gender, elections, and security ahead of the 2018 general elections. The trainings, jointly supported by UN agencies, drew participants from multiple political bodies, including the national Correctional Services and Fire Force, City Council Police, Chiefdom Police, and Road Safety Corps.<sup>7</sup>

*Expanded data collection and monitoring systems.* Effectively countering political violence against women requires detailed information on the frequency, types, and targets of abuse.

- In 2017, **Zimbabwe's** Gender Commission established a gender observatory in collaboration with parliament, security agencies, civil society organizations, and academic institutions to collect data and analyze trends in women's political participation, disseminate electoral information across social media, refer cases to court, and hold political parties accountable to their codes of conduct.<sup>8</sup>

*Grassroots initiatives to spread awareness and protect local communities.* Local civil society organizations are often best positioned to identify, assess, and respond to early warning signs of political violence against women at the community level.

- In the **United States**, organizations such as Right to Be offer bystander intervention training to educate people on how to diffuse and stop harassment they witness in public spaces.<sup>9</sup>
- In **Canada**, a group of women computer scientists invented ParityBOT, a machine learning system developed to counter technology-facilitated gender-based violence on Twitter. For every abusive tweet targeting women in politics, the artificial intelligence model automatically sends a positive tweet to drown out hate speech and spread awareness of political violence online.<sup>10</sup>

### Notes

1. UNGA 2013.
2. OSCE 2022.
3. Soares 2021.
4. Bjarnegård, Zetterberg, and Restrepo Sanín 2023.
5. Collier and Raney 2018.
6. UNSC 2022.
7. Bjarnegård et al. 2023.
8. Bjarnegård et al. 2023.
9. Right to Be 2022.
10. Cuthbertson et al. 2019.

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**Policymakers must view political violence as a peace and security issue, as a sustainable development issue, as an environmental justice issue, and as a human rights issue**

- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and the Istanbul Convention all call for eliminating violence against women, which includes political violence.

Policymakers must view political violence as a peace and security issue, as a sustainable development issue, as an environmental justice issue, and as a human rights issue.

No single actor can eliminate political violence against women. The constantly expanding reach and ever-evolving forms of such violence demand systemic, multipronged approaches that ensure women's immediate safety and tackle the underlying inequalities that condition and give rise to gendered risks for women. Key priorities for policymakers include:

- ***Deepening international cooperation on addressing political violence against women.*** Political violence against women is a transnational threat that demands transnational responses. International frameworks and global agendas must explicitly call for action on political violence against women. Efforts to confront technology-facilitated gender-based violence are also urgently needed. Current cooperation surrounding digital threats is limited mostly to financial cybercrime, attacks on information systems, and child sexual exploitation.<sup>129</sup> Greater priority must be given to addressing political violence against women in all its forms.
- ***Explicitly criminalizing all forms of political violence against women.*** Laws must protect women against physical, sexual, psychological, and online forms of political violence while incorporating specific protocols to deliver justice in such cases. Current legislation falls especially short for online political violence. Many policies on political violence do not explicitly protect women from online violence, while policies focusing on digital protections often overlook gendered risks. For example, Kenya's Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act of 2018 addresses online abuse but lacks gender-specific guidance and response measures.<sup>130</sup> Fully protecting women from online abuse requires tackling the issue from the perspective of both violence against women and digital security.
- ***Expanding monitoring and reporting.*** Governments must be active and transparent in protecting women from political violence. International frameworks such as the Istanbul Convention and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women require states to report on efforts to eliminate discrimination and violence against women but do not explicitly recognize political violence. To ensure accountability, frameworks such as these must include criteria for addressing and reporting on efforts to stop political violence targeting women. To identify where threats persist and to evaluate the success of policies, governments must prioritize the collection of high-quality, sex-disaggregated data on the forms, frequency, and impacts of political violence.
- ***Training government officials, election management authorities, and community organizers on how to identify, report, and respond to political violence against women.*** This includes establishing clear protocols for reporting and handling cases and ensuring that politically active women are aware of their rights and the support resources available to them. In line with the WPS Agenda, women must be equally represented among the ranks of security and government personnel in order to include diverse perspectives and make it safer for women to report injustices.
- ***Holding private social media companies accountable for preventing technology-facilitated gender-based violence.*** Strong regulatory frameworks that require

online platforms to prohibit and take down abusive content are essential for stopping online harassment and the spread of disinformation. Legislation must also include serious consequences for violations.

- ***Scaling up support for survivors.*** Targets of political violence may experience severe trauma and professional setbacks in addition to facing difficult legal battles. Indeed, in the ICFJ and UNESCO global survey of 700 women journalists, only 20 percent of women journalists targeted by political violence had access to gender-sensitive support and networks, and 17 percent had access to legal assistance.<sup>131</sup> Training programs on navigating and countering political violence must be accessible for women working in political spheres. The Beijing Platform for Action on gender equality underlines the importance of designating psychosocial and other support resources for survivors of gender-based violence. These resources must also be available to survivors of political violence.

**SPOTLIGHT 2.1****State-sanctioned political violence against women in Belarus, Iran, and Myanmar**

Political violence against women can be used by adversaries to advance political agendas at all levels, from the individual to the institutional. State-led political violence against women is often a response to women’s growing leadership and influence. Belarus, Iran, and Myanmar exemplify the institutional use of political violence against women at the highest state-sanctioned level to prop up oppressive regimes and suppress women-led resistance movements. Knowing that politically active, vocal women threaten their power, authoritarian leaders choreograph campaigns of political violence to silence women.<sup>1</sup>

In all three countries, state authorities have retaliated against women’s fight for fundamental rights and freedoms with harsh crackdowns and systematic violence. These attacks demonstrate the ways that multiple forms of political violence—physical, sexual, and digital—manifest and converge from positions of power to marginalize women.

***Women in White: Demands for democracy in Belarus***

In response to dictator and incumbent Belarusian president Aleksandr Lukashenko’s fraudulent claim of victory in the August 2020 election, women have emerged as the vanguard of the pro-democracy movement across the country.<sup>2</sup> Ahead of the election, all three opposition candidates—Viktar Babaryka, Valery Tsapkalov, and Syarhey Tsikhanouski—were either arrested or forced to flee the country. In their place, three women emerged to lead the opposition: Maria Kolesnikova, Veronika Tsepkalo, and Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya.

Believing that women did not pose a serious threat to the regime, Lukashenko allowed Tsikhanouskaya to run for president—a decision that emboldened Belarus’s growing democratic movement. Despite estimates that Tsikhanouskaya had earned 60–70 percent of the vote, official reports claimed she had won just 10 percent.<sup>3</sup> In response, thousands of Belarusian citizens took to the streets dressed in red and white—the colors of the Belarusian flag of independence from over a century ago that was banned by Lukashenko. Women led the protests, calling for free elections, gender equality, and an end to Lukashenko’s authoritarian regime.

Protestors and other opponents of the regime, especially women, have faced inhumane crackdowns, intimidation, and violence at the hands of Belarusian authorities. More than 40,000 protestors have been jailed, many enduring solitary confinement, forced labor, and sexual violence while detained.<sup>4</sup> On the WPS Index, Belarus ranks seventh lowest in women’s access to justice, with a score of 0.85 out of 4, indicating that women are unable to seek proper legal redress for human rights violations.<sup>5</sup> To quash women’s dissent, Lukashenko’s regime has threatened the families of opponents, vowing to remove children from families involved in anti-government activities.<sup>6</sup> The government has also outlawed civil society organizations, restricted internet access, and arrested journalists en masse to control the spread of information. Belarus is among the 10 countries with the highest number of imprisoned journalists, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.<sup>7</sup> Despite brutal backlash, outright violence, and blatant impunity for perpetrators, Belarusian women continue to defend democracy.

***Woman, life, freedom: The fight for justice in Iran***

In September 2022, Iran captured international headlines when its morality police arrested, tortured, and murdered Mahsa Amini for wearing her hijab “improperly.” Her death triggered nationwide protests led by women demanding justice for Amini, more freedom for women, and the end of the Islamic Republic. As part of the resistance, Iranian women are removing their headscarves, cutting their hair, and organizing online campaigns to galvanize international solidarity.<sup>8</sup> Between September and December 2022, more than 1,600 protests were recorded across the country.<sup>9</sup>

The uproar against Amini’s death is part of a larger call for women’s justice in Iran, which the regime has systematically and deliberately dismantled. On the WPS Index, Iran has the fifth-most discriminatory legal code based on gender, behind

*(continued)*

“Lukashenko miscalculated because he couldn’t imagine that our resistance, our uprising, would continue. Those who fled Belarus, they continue to fight from exile.”

—Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya,  
Belarusian political activist

**SPOTLIGHT 2.1** (continued)

Palestine, Yemen, Sudan, and Qatar. Under Iranian law, women must abide by a strict dress code in public, lack equal access to the same jobs as men, and must obtain their husband's permission to apply for a passport or travel outside the country.<sup>10</sup>

Only 14 percent of Iranian working-age women are employed, the third lowest in the world. And although more than half of Iran's university graduates are women, the unemployment rate for women is more than double that for men.<sup>11</sup>

Iranian officials employ diverse forms of political violence to silence women's resistance and uphold the existing regime of misogyny, including severe crackdowns. More than 20,000 protestors and journalists have been detained, many enduring torture and sexual violence at the hands of authorities.<sup>12</sup> The government has closed hundreds of restaurants and other small businesses for not enforcing the mandatory hijab law for customers, economically punishing opponents of the regime, and has banned independent political parties and civil society organizations to suppress dissent.<sup>13</sup> Authorities have also installed cameras in public places to spy on the population and identify unveiled women.<sup>14</sup> In some cases, violence has extended beyond national borders; in 2022, three men with ties to the Iranian regime were arrested in New York City for plotting the murder of Masih Alinejad, an activist and outspoken critic of the regime's oppression of women.<sup>15</sup>

Despite harsh measures of suppression and ongoing threats to their safety, women in Iran continue to resist and represent a growing movement in support of freedom, democracy, and justice for all.

**Women rise up against oppression: Leading the resistance against the military junta in Myanmar**

Since the military coup that overturned the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021, women have been at the forefront of the anti-junta resistance movement in Myanmar. Fueling their resistance are the junta's persistent human rights abuses—including indiscriminate killings of civilians, aid blockages, arbitrary detentions, and torture, much of it involving gender-based violence and disproportionate suffering for women.<sup>16</sup> The United Nations has branded these acts war crimes and crimes against humanity.<sup>17</sup> In contrast to the period of democratic expansion and progress on gender equality under Suu Kyi's government in the mid-2010s, the junta vowed to crack down on women's rights and severely restrict access to civic space, thus obstructing women's participation in all levels of decision making.<sup>18</sup> Resistance forces, grassroots activists, and women civil society leaders are fighting for an end to military control and the restoration of democratic governance, in addition to demanding women's protection and inclusion.

Women have resisted through multiple channels.<sup>19</sup> In the city of Sagaing, women students, teachers, farmers, and white-collar workers formed the first women-only anti-junta militia. In Rakhine State, more women joined the Arakan Army, which was already fighting Myanmar's military for autonomy.<sup>20</sup> Within the government, women civil servants were among the first to denounce the coup and take to the streets. The ministries of health and education, staffed mainly by women, immediately went on strike, inspiring other ministries to follow.<sup>21</sup> Around the country, women human rights defenders and women-led civil society organizations are organizing advocacy networks, sheltering other protestors, and providing aid to internally displaced persons.<sup>22</sup> Many have faced harassment, forced detention, and gender-based violence as a result.<sup>23</sup>

Thousands of civilian women protestors—roughly 60 percent of them young women—have taken to the streets.<sup>24</sup> As part of large-scale marches and demonstrations, women across the country lined the streets with barriers constructed of women's sarongs and undergarments—a rebellious gesture against the traditional belief that walking under women's garments brought bad luck and shame to men.<sup>25</sup>

In response, the military junta has waged a campaign of terror and violence against women protestors and their allies. Between 2021 and May 2023, the military killed more than 500 women protestors and arrested more than 4,400, roughly

(continued)

*"The revolution ignited by Mahsa's death is like a train that has left the station. This train doesn't intend to stop, and its last destination is the fall of the regime."*

*—Shirin Ebadi, Nobel laureate and human rights activist*

*"As women, we are the most at risk under the military, but however large or small, our place is in the revolution."*

*—Daisy, Burmese activist*

**SPOTLIGHT 2.1** (continued)

3,400 of whom are still being detained.<sup>26</sup> Overall, 15 women have been sentenced to death for their pro-democracy efforts.<sup>27</sup> Widespread reports recount seeing soldiers shooting at crowds of peaceful protestors, unlawfully arresting women, and sexually assaulting detained women.<sup>28</sup> The military has also mobilized *dalans*—local residents forced to spy on neighbors—many of whom target women living alone through looting and harassment.<sup>29</sup>

Organized efforts to suppress women’s resistance have spread to online spaces. Coup leader Min Aung Hlaing has circulated photos of women protesters across social media platforms, shaming women for wearing “indecent clothes” and portraying modern women as enemies of Myanmar’s traditional culture.<sup>30</sup> Pro-military social media accounts have published revenge porn, spread sexual disinformation, and released the personal information of women protestors<sup>31</sup>—placing them at a higher risk of attack and discouraging women’s participation more broadly. On the WPS Index, Myanmar ranks among the 20 countries with the highest rates of political violence targeting women, at 0.467 event per 100,000 women, more than five times the global average of 0.080. Myanmar is the sixth-worst-performing country on the security dimension, after Syria, Iraq, Burundi, Eswatini, and Afghanistan.

The crackdown on women protestors is part of a larger campaign of violence against women waged for decades by the Burmese military.<sup>32</sup> An analysis of hundreds of cases of sexual and gender-based violence across the country between 1998 and 2015 revealed that 85 percent of perpetrators were men in uniform.<sup>33</sup> Today, the military is committing mass sexual violence against Rohingya women in Myanmar’s Rakhine State to advance its agenda of ethnic cleansing.<sup>34</sup> The military also continues to use sexual violence to intimidate its political opposition, including women political prisoners and human rights defenders.<sup>35</sup>

**Notes**

1. Chenoweth and Marks 2022.
2. Serhan 2020.
3. Samrow 2021.
4. Kordina 2022.
5. OHCHR 2021a.
6. Kutsevol and Vysotskaia 2023.
7. Committee to Protect Journalists 2022.
8. Kazemi 2022.
9. Parent and Habibiadzad 2022.
10. Begum 2023.
11. Begum 2023.
12. Amidi 2023.
13. Alliance of Iranian Women 2023.
14. BBC News 2023.
15. Weiser and Thrush 2023.
16. Kuenhast and Sagun 2021.
17. UN 2022.
18. International Crisis Group 2023.
19. Hser Hser 2023.
20. Xie 2022.
21. Xie 2022.
22. Hser Hser 2023.
23. Norway in the UN 2023.
24. Eckert 2021.
25. Khan 2021.
26. Assistance Association for Political Prisoners 2023.
27. Hser Hser 2023.
28. Owen and Aung 2021.
29. Khan 2021.
30. International Crisis Group 2023.
31. International Crisis Group 2023.
32. Hser Hser 2023.
33. Davies and True 2017.
34. Kuehnast and Sagun 2021.
35. Naing 2023.



## CHAPTER 3

# Women and conflict: Global trends in 2022 and subnational analyses of Colombia and Ethiopia

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**In 2022, 600 million women  
(15 percent of all women)  
lived near armed conflict**

**T**he year 2022 saw the largest number of battle-related deaths from armed conflict since the Rwandan genocide in 1994. In 2022, approximately 600 million women—15 percent of women in the world—lived in proximity to armed conflict, more than double the levels in the 1990s.<sup>1</sup> Living near conflict sparks far-reaching and deeply gendered consequences for civilian populations. While men tend to be more directly involved in fighting and battle,<sup>2</sup> women disproportionately suffer the indirect consequences of conflict, including livelihood disruptions, gender-based violence, malnutrition, worsening education systems, and poor mental health and sexual and reproductive health.<sup>3</sup>

The 2023/24 WPS Index introduces a new indicator to the security dimension, proximity to conflict, which estimates the share of women in a country who live within 50 kilometers of at least one armed conflict. Countries where women are exposed to armed conflict tend to perform poorly on the global WPS Index: the bottom 20 countries on the index all experienced armed conflict between 2021 and 2022, and in most of these countries, more than half of women lived in proximity to armed conflict. And the share of women exposed to armed conflict is generally rising. While a few conflicts still account for a majority of global battle-related deaths, an increase in low-intensity conflicts (conflicts with fewer than 1,000 battle-related deaths per year) has led to broader exposure to conflict globally, posing severe risks to women's immediate well-being and long-term opportunities.

Subnational analyses conducted for this edition of the WPS Index examined two countries recently wracked by armed conflict, Colombia and Ethiopia, and provide a more fine-grained view of the impact of conflict on women. While the global WPS Index relies on national averages, subnational analyses explore variation in women's status within national borders by generating index scores at a

**Fatalities from armed conflict reached 237,000 worldwide in 2022, the highest annual levels since 1994, the year of the Rwandan genocide**

provincial level. In both countries, women’s status varies significantly according to where they live. In Colombia, areas most affected by conflict and those with higher Indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations tend to score lower overall on the subnational index. In Ethiopia, scores are low across the board, and even the best performing regions perform poorly on some indicators. For example, the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region (SNNPR) ranks highest on Ethiopia’s subnational index, but women there have an average of only 2.1 years of schooling and about a third have access to their own bank account.

At both macro and micro levels, this chapter illuminates the devastating and deeply gendered consequences of armed conflict. It is important to note, however, that the findings in the chapter capture deaths related to armed conflict, not deaths related to all forms of violence.

## The landscape of armed conflict: Conditions and trends

### High levels of armed conflict in 2022

The year 2022 was devastating for populations affected by armed conflict (see box 3.1 for key definitions related to conflict). Fatalities from armed conflict—state-based, nonstate, and one-sided violence—reached 237,000 worldwide, the highest annual levels since 1994, the year of the Rwandan genocide.

In 2022, 55 state-based conflicts (those in which at least one party was a state) were recorded across 38 countries.<sup>4</sup> Of these 55 conflicts, 8 were classified as wars.

### BOX 3.1 Key definitions related to armed conflict

*Battle-related deaths:* Fatalities caused by warring parties that can be directly related to combat, including civilian losses.

*Conflict event:* An incident in which armed force was used by an organized actor against another organized actor or against civilians, resulting in at least one direct death at a specific location and on a specific date.

*Low-intensity conflict:* Conflicts with fewer than 1,000 battle-related deaths per year.

*Types of armed conflict:*

- *Nonstate conflict:* The use of armed force between organized groups, none of which is the government of a state, resulting in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year.
- *One-sided violence:* The use of armed force against civilians by the government of a state or by a formally organized group that results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year. Extrajudicial killings in custody are excluded.
- *State-based conflict:* A contested conflict over government or territory, where at least one party is a state and the use of armed force results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year.

*War:* A conflict that reaches at least 1,000 battle-related deaths in a calendar year.

Source: Högbladh 2023.

**Two wars alone contributed to more than 88 percent of the 204,000 state-based battle-related deaths in 2022: Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and the civil war in Ethiopia**

Two wars alone contributed to more than 88 percent of the 204,000 state-based battle-related deaths in 2022. Russia’s invasion of **Ukraine** resulted in more than 81,500 state-based battle-related deaths, while the civil war in **Ethiopia**, although receiving far less international attention, resulted in more than 100,000 battle-related deaths.<sup>5</sup> This is the highest number of state-based battle-related deaths in a single conflict year since the Iraqi government offensive in Kurdistan in 1988.<sup>6</sup>

In 2022, 82 nonstate conflicts resulted in approximately 20,800 battle-related deaths. One-sided violence accounted for more than 11,800 fatalities across 30 countries by 45 recorded actors (both state and nonstate groups). These levels were basically unchanged since 2021.

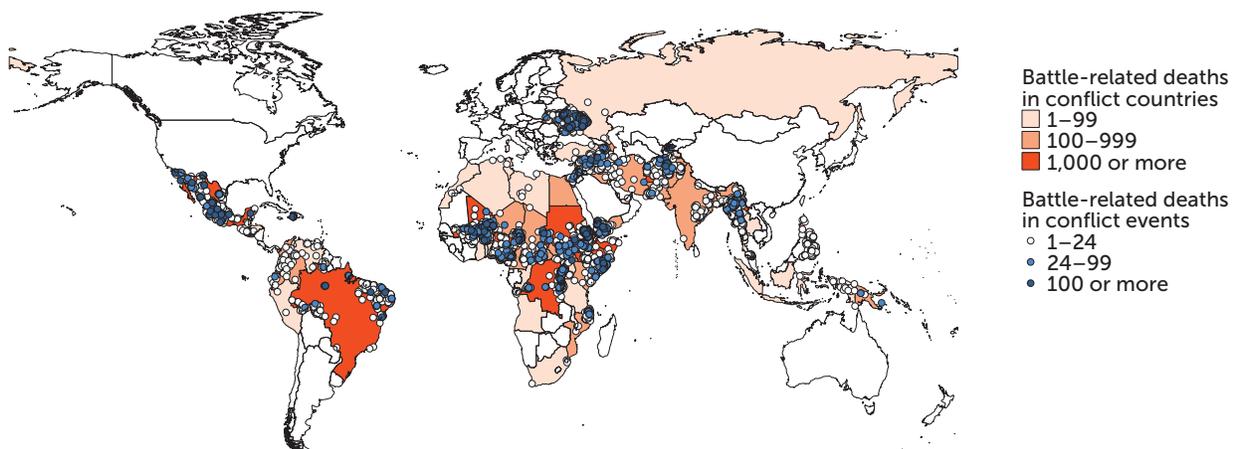
Conflict is often geographically concentrated. Most conflicts are low intensity, yet they can still be very damaging to local communities. Figure 3.1 shows conflict-affected countries by the location and intensity of conflict. Some conflicts affect only a small portion of the population or specific areas of the country. For example, most areas in the **Philippines** are affected by conflict, though the conflicts have consistently been low intensity. By contrast, the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** is among the countries with the highest level of fatalities in 2022, even though the conflict has been concentrated in the eastern part of the country.

**Rising number of armed conflicts in recent years**

There were more battle-related deaths in the past decade (2013–2022) than in the previous two decades (figure 3.2). Specific conflicts account for the peaks in 2014 (the war in Syria) and 2022 (the Ethiopian civil war in 2020–2022 and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022). Since 2011, there has been a sharp increase in the number of conflicts for all three types of armed conflict (state-based, nonstate, and one-sided violence; figure 3.3). The 182 conflicts worldwide in 2022 set a record for the highest number since the data were first coded in 1989.

The striking number of armed conflicts in 2022 reflects several factors. First, since 2014, the Islamic State (ISIS) has become involved in numerous conflicts around the world, including 15 in 2022 alone. Second, the overall increase is driven by a sharp rise in nonstate conflicts. However, a majority of these conflicts are low intensity. Thus, while a few conflicts still account for a majority of battle-related deaths, the

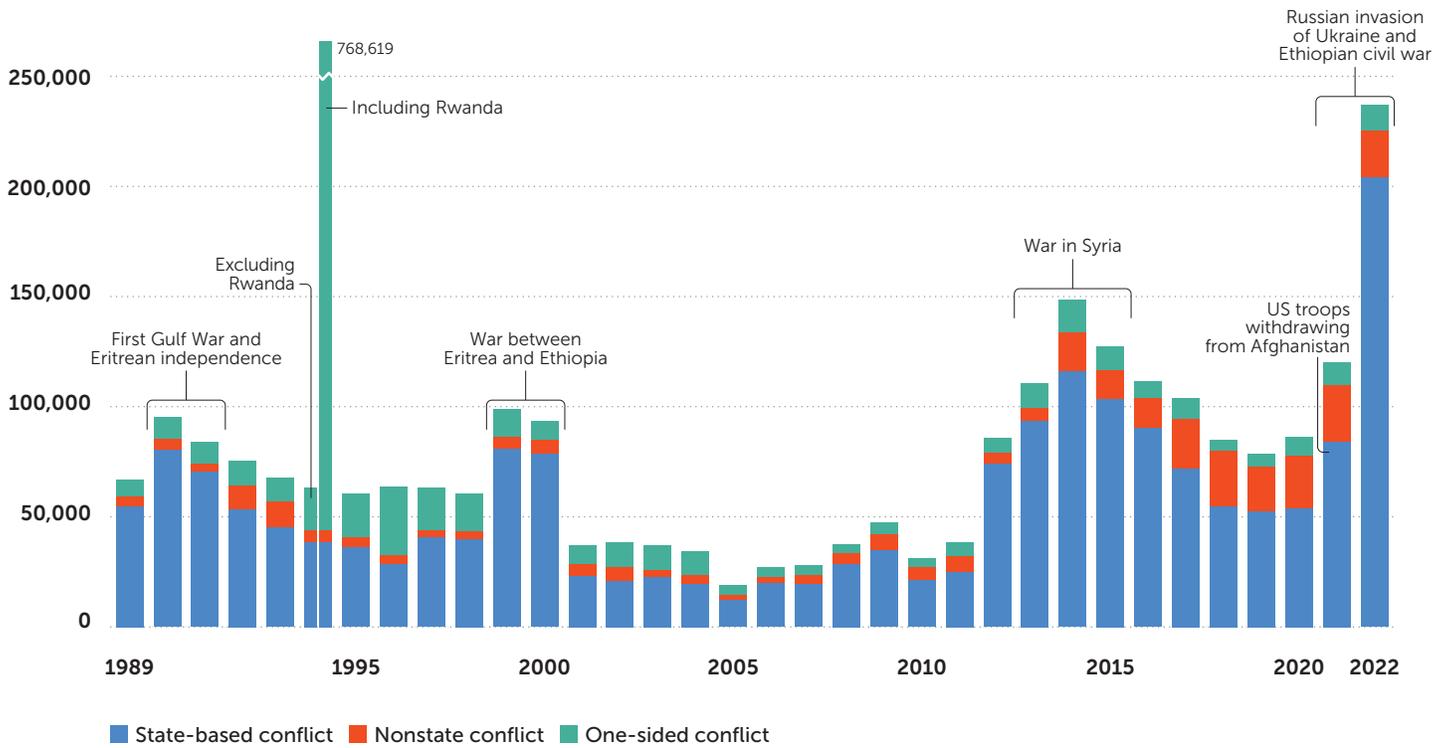
**FIGURE 3.1 Conflict-affected countries and conflict intensity around the world, 2022**



Source: Authors’ estimates based on data from UCDP (2023).

**FIGURE 3.2 More battle-related deaths in the past decade than in the previous two decades, by type of conflict, 1989–2022**

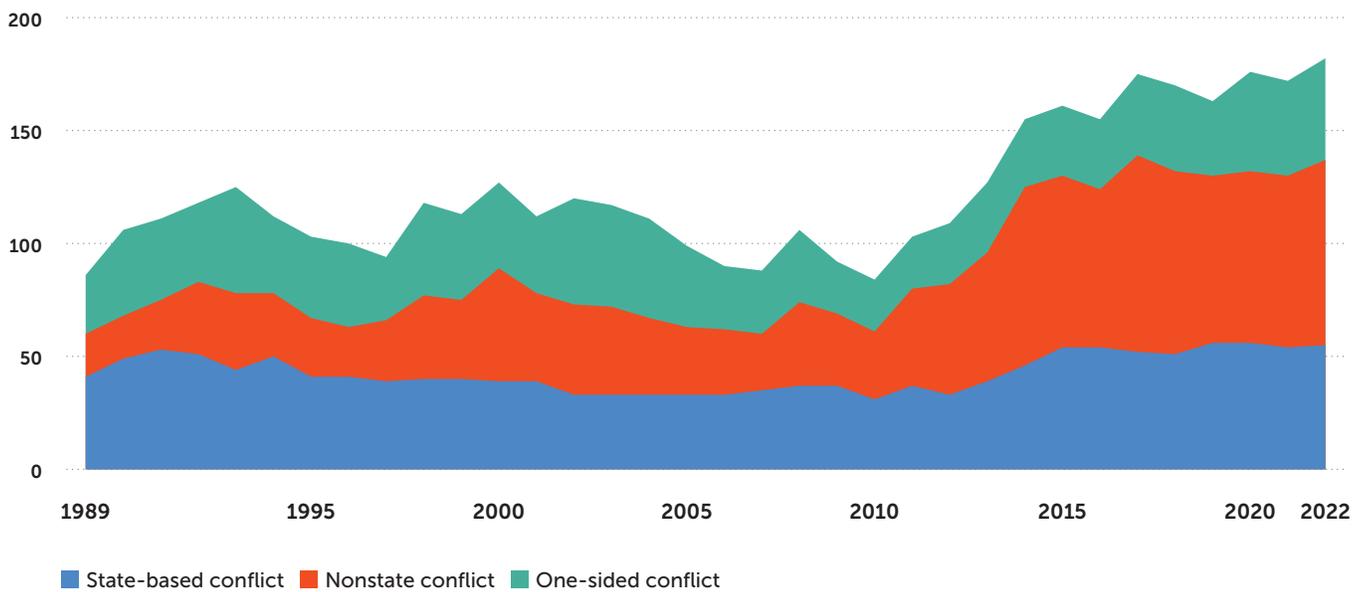
Annual battle-related deaths



Source: Authors' estimates based on data from UCDP (2023).

**FIGURE 3.3 Sharp increase since 2011 in the number of conflicts for all three types of armed conflict, 1989–2022**

Annual number of armed conflicts



Source: Authors' estimates based on data from UCDP (2023).

increase in low-intensity conflicts has resulted in broader exposure to conflict globally. Before battle-related deaths spiked in 2022, the trend had been a simultaneous decrease in the number of battle-related deaths and increase in the number of armed conflicts, again signaling the proliferation of low-intensity conflicts.

### ***The gender dimensions of proximity to conflict***

Living in proximity to conflict-affected areas undermines women’s inclusion, justice, and security. Multiple studies have shown that armed conflict increases maternal deaths,<sup>7</sup> amplifies risks of gender-based violence,<sup>8</sup> leads to disproportionate school dropout for girls,<sup>9</sup> and creates barriers to women’s livelihood opportunities.<sup>10</sup> These consequences, among many others, threaten women’s immediate safety while reducing their long-term prosperity and opportunities, thus widening gender gaps and preventing gender-equitable recovery.

The security dimension of the WPS Index captures risks to women’s safety at the household, community, and societal levels. As an indicator of societal-level insecurity, previous editions of the WPS Index used organized violence, which estimates the number of battle-related deaths per 100,000 people. While a reasonable proxy for the scale and severity of armed conflict, which disproportionately affects women, this indicator does not directly capture the number or share of women at risk. This year, we replaced organized violence with proximity to conflict, a more precise measure of women’s risk and vulnerability that estimates the share of women in each country who lived within 50 kilometers of at least one conflict event in 2021 or 2022. Using data on conflict locations and overlaying this with population data, the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) calculated the number of women living in proximity to conflict each year between 1990 and 2022. Box 3.2 describes the calculations in more detail.

In 2022, approximately 2.4 billion women were living in countries that experienced at least one fatal conflict event, and 600 million of these women lived within 50 kilometers of conflict areas. Comparing countries’ rates of proximity to conflict against their overall WPS Index score reveals two main takeaways (figure 3.4). First, there is a negative correlation between proximity to conflict and the WPS Index score, suggesting that countries where women are doing well tend to be countries where women are not exposed to armed conflict; the reverse is also true. Second, the countries experiencing the two major conflicts of 2022—the civil war in Ethiopia and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine—dominate in battle-related deaths, whereas other countries, including Afghanistan, Myanmar, Syria, and Yemen, experienced fewer battle-related deaths but had larger shares of women living in proximity to conflict.

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**The negative correlation between proximity to conflict and the WPS Index score suggests that countries where women are doing well tend to be countries where women are not exposed to armed conflict**

These cases show that although the larger and more violent conflicts may attract more attention, exposure to conflict and the effects of exposure can be as bad or worse in countries with lower levels of violent conflict. For example, the effects of armed conflict on education and healthcare are strongly linked to proximity to conflict, and the impacts of conflict outlast the conflict itself. Damage to education and medical infrastructure takes years to repair, leaving affected populations underserved and vulnerable even after armed conflict formally ends. In many cases, simmering low-level conflict may have longer-term, more insidious impacts than shorter-term, high-intensity conflicts.

While this discussion focuses on how women are affected by living in proximity to armed conflict, it is important to note that women are not just victims of conflict. Women play critical frontline roles as combatants, peacebuilders, aid workers, decision makers, and civil society leaders, actively shaping and responding to conflict.

### BOX 3.2 Calculating proximity to conflict

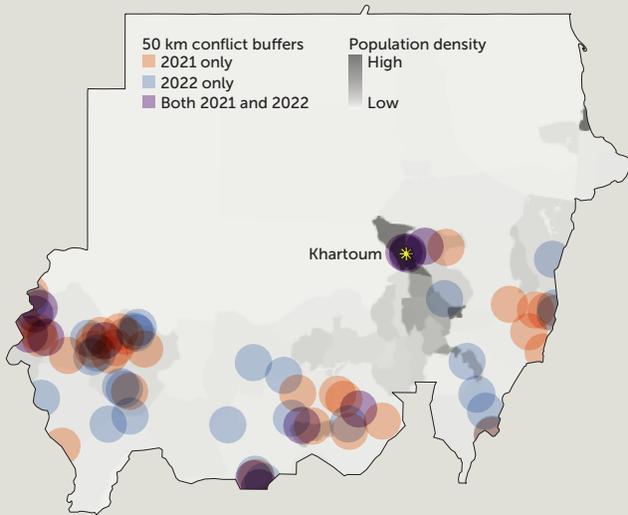
The new proximity to conflict indicator is based on the Uppsala Conflict Data Program Georeferenced Event Dataset, which codes the location and severity of all armed conflict events between 1989 and 2022. To calculate proximity to conflict, we created 50-kilometer buffer zones around each conflict event and calculated the number of people living within these zones. We then used UN population data to calculate the share of women in each country and used this as a basis to calculate the number of women living within the identified conflict buffer zones. The proximity to conflict indicator measures the percentage of women in a country’s population who lived within 50 kilometers of at least one conflict event in 2021 or 2022. Both years are included to account for the longer-term impacts of conflict.

To demonstrate how the indicator is calculated, consider the case of **Sudan**, a country ensnared in violent conflict for decades, especially since autocratic leader Omar al-Bashir’s rise to power in the 1990s. Circles on the map

below demarcate 50-kilometer zones around armed conflict events, with red indicating that the conflict events occurred in just 2021, blue indicating that they occurred in just 2022, and purple indicating that they occurred in both years. The conflict-proximity zones are overlaid with a population map, with shades of gray indicating population densities in 2021 and 2022.

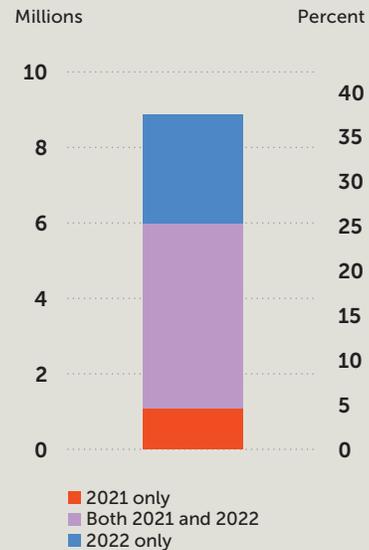
We used these data to calculate how many women lived within the outlined 50-kilometer zones in 2021 and 2022. The map shows that in 2021, 2022, or both years, nearly 9 million women in Sudan—almost 40 percent of women in the country—lived in proximity to conflict. More than half of these women (approximately 5 million) lived near armed conflict in both years. Over 1 million experienced conflict in 2021 only, and roughly 3 million in 2022 only. Armed conflict in Sudan continued into 2023, which will be captured in future editions of the WPS Index.

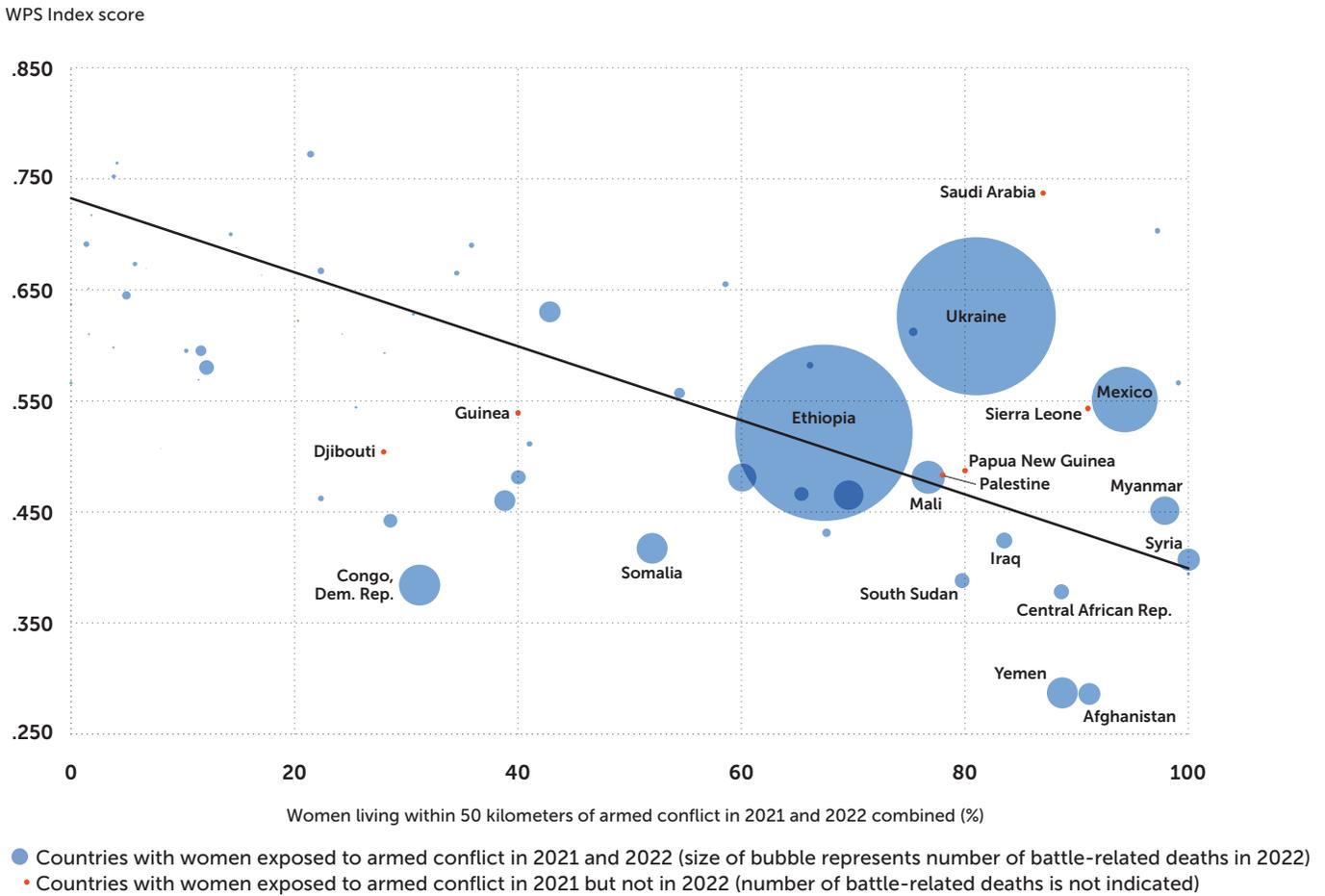
**Estimating proximity to conflict in Sudan, 2021 and 2022**



Source: Authors’ estimates based on data from UCDP (2023).

**Women living within 50 km of a conflict event in Sudan, 2021 and 2022**



**FIGURE 3.4** WPS Index scores are related to proximity to conflict and battle-related deaths, 2021 and 2022

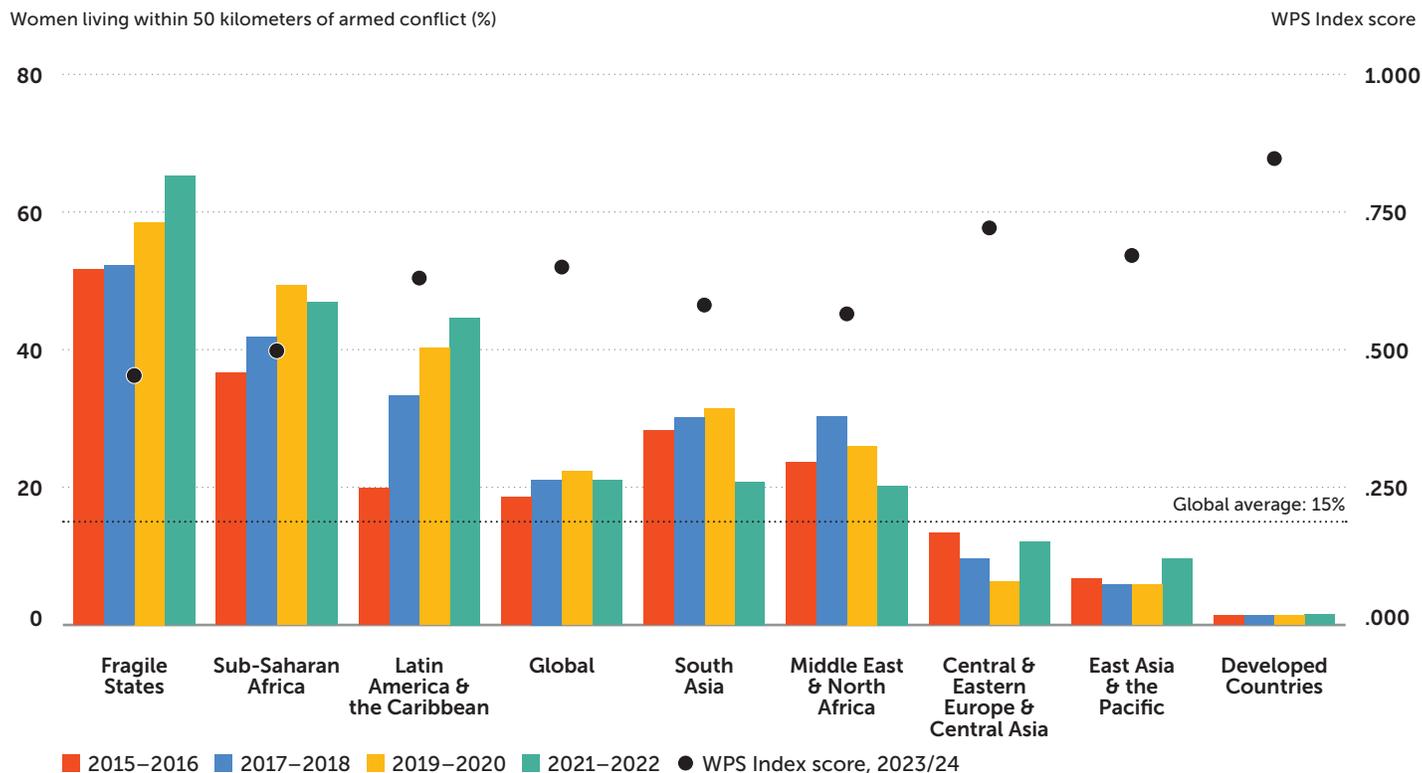
Source: Authors' estimates based on data from UCDP (2023).

### *Where women are most at risk*

Globally, about one woman in five has been exposed to armed conflict at least once in the last two years, but exposure has varied by country group and region and over time in recent years (figure 3.5). The share of women living within 50 kilometers of conflict ranges from less than 1 percent in Developed Countries—driven entirely by Israel—to 61 percent in Fragile States. The next highest exposure is in Latin America and the Caribbean, at 44 percent, and in Sub-Saharan Africa, at 37 percent.

The largest increase in women's exposure to conflict, rising 14 percentage points between 2015–2016 and 2021–2022, was among the Fragile States group. Some 90 million women in those countries have been affected—approximately two women in three. Increases were also high in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean in this period. In Sub-Saharan Africa, rising extremism and insurgency have fueled armed conflict, with nonstate armed groups fighting both national governments and other nonstate actors.<sup>11</sup> In Latin America and the Caribbean, armed conflict is tied primarily to drug cartels and gang violence, particularly in El Salvador, Haiti, and Mexico. Chapter 2 examined trends in the region through the lens of political violence against women, exploring how high levels of violence occur outside conventional conflict or war.

Women's exposure to armed conflict declined considerably in South Asia and in the Middle East and North Africa in 2021 and 2022. But while conflict intensity

**FIGURE 3.5 Women’s proximity to conflict varies by country group and region and over time, 2015–2022**

Note: See appendix 2 for countries in each group and region. Countries in the Fragile States group are also included in their regional group.  
Source: Authors’ estimates based on data from UCDP (2023).

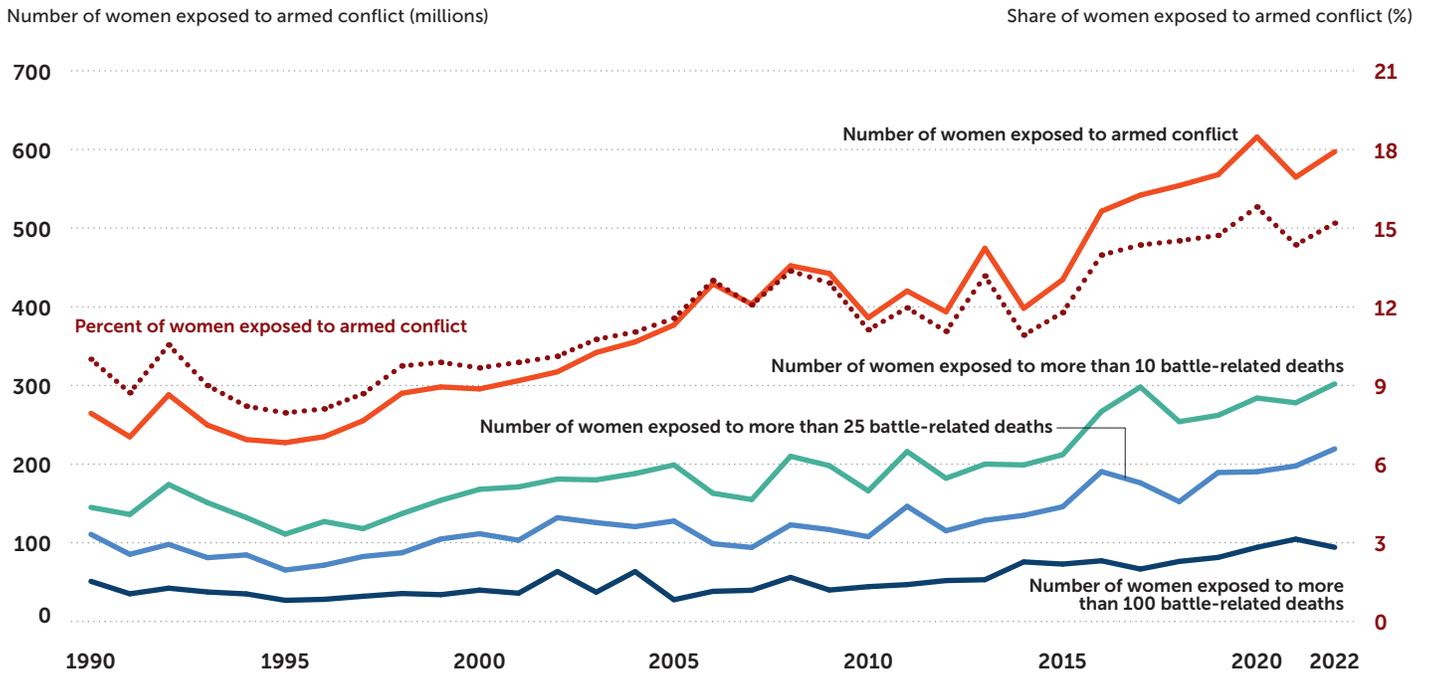
has lessened in Syria, for example, the share of women exposed to armed conflict has not declined equally because armed conflict persists across the country.

#### *More women in proximity to conflict*

The number of women in proximity to conflict more than doubled between 1990 and 2022, rising from approximately 260 million to 600 million. While population growth is partly responsible for the absolute increase, the share of women exposed to armed conflict has also risen, from 10 percent to 15 percent of women in the world. Figure 3.6 shows that most of this increase has been driven by exposure to armed conflicts with fewer than 10 battle-related deaths, reflecting the growing prevalence of lower-intensity conflicts and the association between lower-intensity conflicts and increased exposure to conflict.

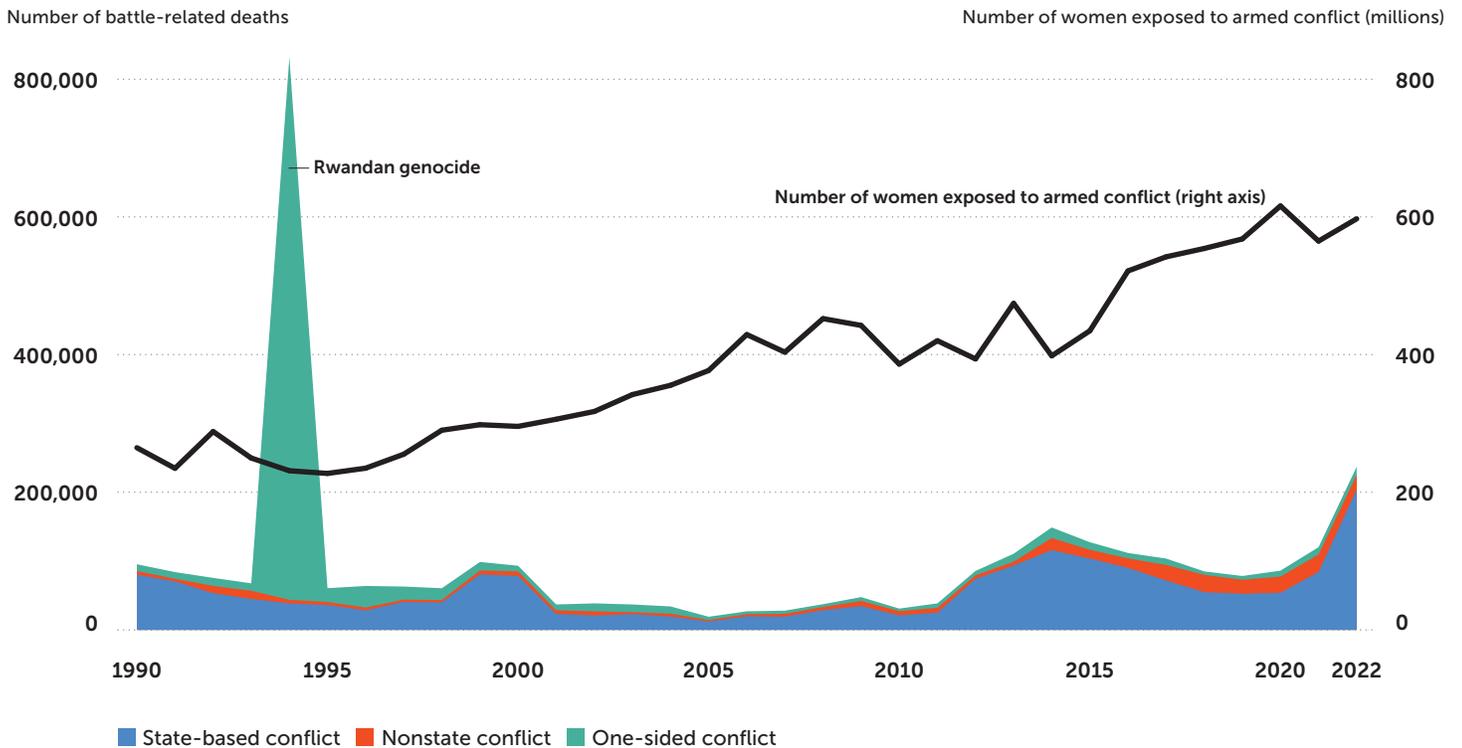
Figure 3.7 sheds more light on this association. While both battle-related deaths and women’s exposure to armed conflict have risen sharply since 2010, women’s exposure increased relatively more between 2014 and 2020, as shown by the widening gap between the number of women exposed to armed conflict and the number of battle-related deaths. For example, in **Syria**, the outbreak of smaller nonstate conflicts following the peak of civil war in 2013–2014 exposed a greater number of women to conflict despite the lower intensity of conflict. In 2022, different trends were evident. Battle-related deaths rose rapidly as a consequence of the war in **Ukraine** and the civil war in **Ethiopia** but without a proportionately large increase in the number of women exposed to armed conflict, reflecting the concentration of high-intensity conflict in specific areas.

**FIGURE 3.6 Both the number and share of women exposed to armed conflict have increased for all conflict intensity levels, 1990–2022**



Source: Authors' estimates based on data from UCDP (2023).

**FIGURE 3.7 No one-for-one correspondence between battle-related deaths and exposure to conflict, 1990–2022**



Source: Authors' estimates based on data from UCDP (2023).

Overall, the intensity of conflict as measured by battle-related deaths is generally declining, but the share of women affected is rising.

### Going beyond national borders: Subnational analyses of Colombia and Ethiopia

Subnational analyses for Colombia and Ethiopia capture the variation in women's inclusion, justice, and security by location in each country

The WPS Index relies on national averages, which paint a broad picture of women's status across countries. But national averages conceal variation within country borders. Here, we explore the findings of subnational analyses for Colombia and Ethiopia, with subnational index scores that capture how women's inclusion, justice, and security vary by location within each country (departments in Colombia and regions in Ethiopia). We introduced subnational analysis in the 2019/20 WPS Index report, with a focus on China, India, and Nigeria; the 2021/22 edition included subnational analyses for Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the United States. Colombia and Ethiopia were selected this year because both are conflict-affected countries with strong relevance for the WPS Agenda and because sufficient data were available for analysis at the subnational level.

The range of subnational scores across Colombia's departments is wide, with a score of .783 for top-ranking Santander and .534 for bottom-ranking Casanare.<sup>12</sup> Departments that are most affected by conflict and those with larger Indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations tend to score lower. In Ethiopia, the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region (SNNPR) was the best-performing region, with a score of .541, and Afar was the worst performing, with a score of .389. Within both countries, the wide range of performance across indicators reveals wide disparities in women's status, underscoring the importance of looking behind national averages and the value of multidimensionally measuring women's status at the subnational level.

#### *Subnational index indicators differ slightly from WPS Index indicators*

Colombia's subnational index ranks and scores women's status in the country's 32 departments plus the capital city of Bogotá (a total of 33 subnational units). In Ethiopia, scores and ranks were generated for the country's 11 regions, which include the capital city of Addis Ababa (total of 11 subnational units).

For Colombia, most data are from the National Administrative Department of Statistics and were collected between 2021 and 2022. Data for Ethiopia's regions are slightly older, mostly collected between 2016 and 2021 in government reports and Demographic and Health Surveys. This means that most scores on the subnational index for Ethiopia do not fully account for the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic or for the civil war between the government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in 2020–2022. The only indicator that accounts for the impact of the recent civil war is proximity to conflict, which is estimated for 2022.

We constructed these indices to mirror the global WPS Index as closely as possible, but data deficiencies meant that we had to make some adjustments. Subnational index estimates require data disaggregated by both sex and province, and such disaggregations are rare. Colombia and Ethiopia's subnational indices were calculated based on performance across 10 indicators (table 3.1) rather than the 13 in the global WPS Index, and some of the indicator definitions differ from those in the WPS Index.

In addition, some indicators are measured slightly differently across the two countries. For example, maternal mortality reports the number of pregnancy-related deaths per 100,000 live births in Colombia but the number of maternal deaths per 1,000 women in Ethiopia. Full data, sources, and years for both countries are available in the [online appendix](#).

**TABLE 3.1 Colombia and Ethiopia subnational WPS Index: indicators and definitions**

DIMENSION AND INDICATOR	DEFINITION	
	COLOMBIA	ETHIOPIA
<b>INCLUSION</b>		
Education	Mean years of schooling completed, women ages 24–35	Median years of schooling completed, girls and women ages 15–49
Financial Inclusion	Percentage of women with their own financial (banking or credit) accounts	Percentage of women who use a bank account
Employment	Ratio of female employment to female population	
Internet or cellphone use	Percentage of girls and women ages 5 and older who use the internet	Percentage of women who own a mobile phone
Parliamentary representation	Percentage of each departmental allotment of representative seats in the House of Representatives that is filled by women	Percentage of women members of the House of People's Representatives from each region
<b>JUSTICE</b>		
Discriminatory norms	Percentage of men who agree or strongly agree that a woman's main goal should be to marry and have children	Percentage of boys and men ages 14–49 who agree that a husband is justified in beating his wife for at least one of the following reasons: burns his food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children, refuses to have sex with him
Maternal mortality	Maternal deaths per 100,000 live births	Maternal deaths per 1,000 women
Son bias	Number of boys for every 100 girls ages 0–4	
<b>SECURITY</b>		
Intimate partner violence	Number of incidents of nonlethal violence committed against women by their current or former intimate partner per 100,000 women in 2021	Percentage of girls and women ages 15–49 who have experienced physical or sexual violence from a spouse or intimate partner in the 12 months prior to data collection
Proximity to conflict	Share of female population living within 50 kilometers of armed conflict	

Note: See the [online appendix](#) for full data, sources, and years.

Source: Authors.

### ***Colombia: Decades of conflict threatening women's status***

Colombia ranks 132nd overall on the global WPS Index, scoring fifth lowest in Latin America and the Caribbean, above Guatemala (137th), El Salvador (138th), Mexico (142nd), and Haiti (167th). Ongoing conflicts have contributed to the country's low national ranking. Much of the disparity in women's status subnationally is linked to the legacy of armed conflict.

#### ***Long-running conflict and a historic peace agreement***

Conflict between the Colombian government and rebel groups—the largest being the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)—is one of the longest-running in history, spanning more than six decades. Terrorism, drug trafficking, widespread violence against civilians, and government-perpetrated crimes against humanity have created humanitarian crises on an enormous scale and led to massive displacements of civilians, exacerbated by a huge influx of Venezuelan refugees.<sup>13</sup> As of 2022, 7.7 million Colombians were in need of humanitarian assistance, and 4.8 million were internally displaced.<sup>14</sup> Despite a historic peace agreement and ceasefire between the government and the FARC in 2016, conflict continues as armed groups remain active.

In 2012, the Santos government began formal peace talks with the FARC, which culminated in a peace accord in 2016. Provisions covered ending violence,

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**The 2016 Colombian peace accord with the FARC contained 100 provisions related to women’s rights, including calls to increase women’s participation in implementation of the accord, in politics, and in decision making**

increasing the FARC’s representation in government, and establishing systems of transitional justice for victims.<sup>15</sup> The accord’s gender-sensitive content and focus on women’s inclusion have drawn praise from WPS advocates in the international community.<sup>16</sup>

The peace accord included 100 provisions related to women’s rights,<sup>17</sup> including calls to increase women’s participation in implementation of the accord, in politics, and in decision-making roles more broadly.<sup>18</sup> Talks emphasized the need for a gender-sensitive approach to transitional justice and reconciliation, including reparations and resources for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

In the seven years since the accord’s signing, however, many provisions remain unfulfilled. As of 2021, the Colombian government had spent only 65 percent of the funds allocated for the five-year implementation plan.<sup>19</sup> While in power, former President Iván Duque openly campaigned against key pillars of the peace accord—such as rural reforms, drug policies, and political participation of former FARC leaders—and stalled their implementation.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, armed groups linked to FARC remain active in 15 percent of Colombia’s municipalities. Violence against local leaders, activists, and ex-combatants persists, and other rebel groups, such as the National Liberation Army, remain in armed conflict with the Colombian government.<sup>21</sup> Ongoing conflict disproportionately affects marginalized communities, including women, children, and Indigenous populations.<sup>22</sup> At least 12 women signatories to the accord have been murdered since the accord was finalized in 2016.<sup>23</sup>

#### *The gender dimensions of conflict in Colombia*

More than 8.8 million people in Colombia—approximately 17 percent of the population—have been officially registered as victims of armed conflict, most of them forcibly displaced women and children.<sup>24</sup> Conflict has affected women’s status and security in multiple, often disproportionate ways, especially through increased risks of gender-based violence and displacement. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development reports that 16 percent of women displaced by conflict in Colombia are victims of sexual violence.<sup>25</sup>

More than two women in five in Colombia have experienced some form of gender-based violence related to armed conflict, though such violence is likely underreported.<sup>26</sup> Armed actors have perpetrated large-scale sexual violence against women to intimidate them or to punish them (such as for having intimate relationships with members of the opposing faction).<sup>27</sup> Colombians who are poor, Indigenous, Black, or identify as LGBTQ+ suffer higher rates of conflict-related sexual violence than others, revealing intersectional risks.<sup>28</sup> Colombia’s Victims Registry recorded the highest levels of conflict-related sexual violence in Tumaco, a region of predominantly Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.<sup>29</sup> Some 52 percent of Indigenous women and 41 percent of Afro-Colombian women have been declared victims of conflict, and large percentages of women in each group have also been displaced.<sup>30</sup>

Insecurity of women at the national level builds on insecurity at the community and household levels. Nearly two-thirds of women nationally report not feeling safe walking alone in their neighborhood at night, while pervasive impunity, enabled by weak and corrupt law enforcement, has contributed to widespread domestic violence.<sup>31</sup> Conflict exacerbates this pattern. Forcibly displaced women in Colombia are 40 percent more likely to experience intimate partner violence than other women in the country, according to recent World Bank analysis.<sup>32</sup>

Women in Colombia are not only victims of violence, however. They also have assumed frontline roles in the conflict. At the time of the peace accord,

**Santander, in north-central Colombia, performed best on the subnational index, with a score of .783, and Casanare, in east-central Colombia, performed worst, at .534**

approximately 40 percent of FARC members were women,<sup>33</sup> holding positions as diverse as soldiers, medical personnel, cooks, and cleaners.<sup>34</sup> Women have also contributed at all levels of the peace process. They constituted 20 percent of government peace negotiators and 43 percent of FARC delegates and have also worked for peace through civil society channels.<sup>35</sup>

#### *The best and worst performing departments*

Located in the Andes Mountains in north-central Colombia, Santander is the best performer on the subnational index, with a score of .783 (figure 3.8). Its strong performance can be attributed to women's high rates of education, internet use, and financial inclusion, along with low rates of maternal mortality and proximity to conflict. On average, women in Santander have 12.3 years of schooling, the third-highest in the country behind Bogotá and San Andrés. However, some education environments remain unsafe. In 2016, the United Nations observed a pattern of sexual violence perpetrated against schoolgirls; a former principal and police inspector were charged in incidents of sexual violence against female students.<sup>36</sup> Santander has the sixth-lowest subnational rate of maternal mortality, at 21.9 deaths per 100,000 live births. Still, a majority of maternal deaths are preventable and result from delayed access to medical care.<sup>37</sup> Class divides exacerbate the situation; in Bucaramanga, the capital of Santander, one woman in three, often from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds, has experienced delayed prenatal care.<sup>38</sup>

Casanare, in east-central Colombia, is the lowest-ranking department, with a score of .534. It has the lowest life expectancy for women among departments, at 74 years—compared with a high of 80 years in Bogotá.<sup>39</sup> Casanare performs particularly poorly on the security dimension. The department has the second-highest prevalence of intimate partner violence in the country, at 254 reported cases per 100,000 women, behind only Amazonas (273 cases). Actual rates are likely even higher as not all incidents are reported. In addition to high rates of intimate partner violence, exposure to armed conflict is extremely high, amplifying risks to women's safety: 80 percent of women live within 50 kilometers of armed conflict. During the conflict with the FARC, Casanare had one of the highest percentages of women subjected to conflict-related sexual violence in the country.<sup>40</sup>

Casanare also performs poorly on women's parliamentary representation. It is 1 of 11 departments in Colombia where no women hold a seat in the House of Representatives.

Although Santander and Casanare are the best- and worst-performing departments in Colombia, they differ significantly on only three subnational index indicators: parliamentary representation, intimate partner violence, and proximity to conflict (figure 3.9).

#### *Conflict and demographic disparities across departments*

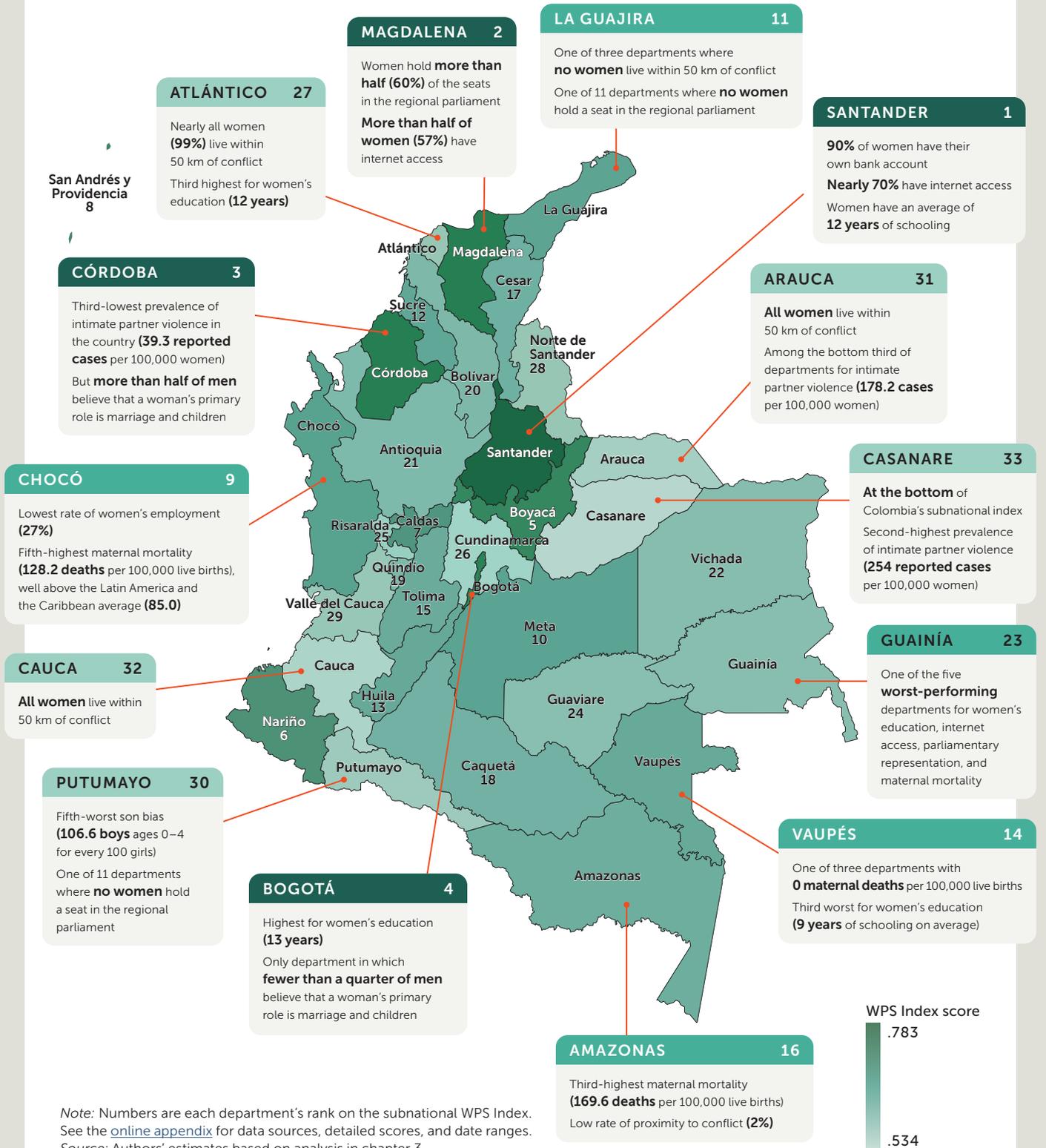
Colombian departments that have been most affected by armed conflict, as well as those that have larger Indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations, tend to rank lower on the subnational index.

Violence has affected all of Colombia, but as of 2022, six departments were most affected by humanitarian crisis and conflict: Antioquia, Arauca, Chocó, Nariño, Norte de Santander, and Valle del Cauca.<sup>41</sup> In Antioquia, Arauca, Norte de Santander, and Valle del Cauca, more than 90 percent of women live within 50 kilometers of conflict.

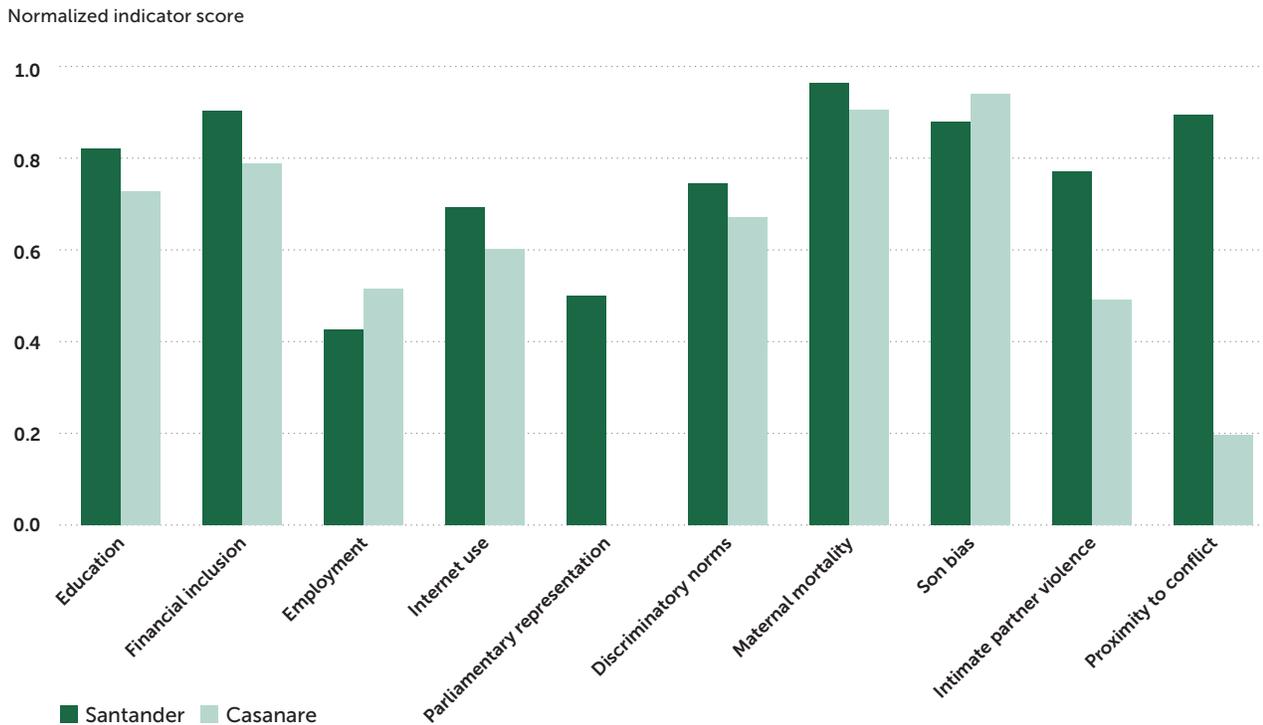
Colombia is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for human rights defenders and leaders. In 2022, at least 215 human rights defenders were killed;

FIGURE 3.8

Performance on the subnational WPS Index varies widely across Colombia's departments



Note: Numbers are each department's rank on the subnational WPS Index. See the [online appendix](#) for data sources, detailed scores, and date ranges. Source: Authors' estimates based on analysis in chapter 3.

**FIGURE 3.9 Santander and Casanare, the best- and worst-performing departments in Colombia, differ significantly on only three subnational WPS Index indicators**

Note: See the [online appendix](#) for data sources, detailed scores, and date ranges. Casanare's normalized indicator score for parliamentary representation is 0. See appendix 1 for a discussion of score normalization.

Source: Authors' estimates.

many of them resided in Indigenous or Afro-Colombian communities.<sup>42</sup> In 2022, Cauca (rank 32nd), Valle del Cauca (29th), and Norte de Santander (28th) saw a notable number of political attacks against women civil society leaders, many of whom were working to reduce violence and criminal activity in the region.<sup>43</sup>

Armed clashes are especially high in rural areas involved in profitable coca crop production, including Putumayo (rank 30th), which has suffered from territorial conflicts involving the FARC, drug-trafficking groups, and armed forces.<sup>44</sup> In early 2022, fighting broke out in Arauca (31st) between the FARC and the National Liberation Army, a Marxist guerilla group.<sup>45</sup> Arauca and neighboring Venezuela have suffered an uptick in border violence in recent years involving groups from both countries that has displaced civilians on both sides.

Colombia has one of the largest Indigenous and Black populations in Latin America and the Caribbean, just behind Brazil.<sup>46</sup> The departments of Cauca, La Guajira, and Nariño are home to the largest Indigenous populations,<sup>47</sup> and Antioquia, Bolívar, Chocó, and Valle del Cauca have the largest Afro-Colombian populations.<sup>48</sup> Cauca (rank 32nd), Antioquia (21st), and Bolívar (20th) are in the bottom half of the subnational rankings, while others fall behind on certain indicators. For example, Cauca and La Guajira have no women in the House of Representatives. In Bolívar and La Guajira, more than half of men believe that a woman's primary role is to marry and have children. In Chocó, just over a quarter of women are employed, and nearly two-thirds of women live within 50 kilometers of conflict. Across Colombia, Indigenous and Afro-Colombian women are historically at a higher risk of poverty, displacement, and political exclusion, an important feature of gender inequality in the region.<sup>49</sup> While Afro-Colombians make up roughly a

quarter of the country's population, they make up three-quarters of the poor population and earn 34 percent less than other Colombians.<sup>50</sup>

Conflict in Colombia has also disproportionately affected Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. Indigenous and Afro-Colombian women face heightened threats of sexual and gender-based violence and displacement.<sup>51</sup> News reports and widespread protests exposed years of sexual abuse perpetrated by armed forces against young women and girls of ethnic minority backgrounds, groups that have historically been more vulnerable to such attacks.<sup>52</sup> For example, armed groups have raped, tortured, and killed Afro-Colombian women for decades in Buenaventura, a port city in Valle del Cauca, to assert territorial power over rival groups.<sup>53</sup>

#### *A closer look at the indicators*

A wide range of performance at the subnational level is also evident within indicators. Below we explore trends for selected indicators.

#### **Education: How conflict infiltrates the classroom**

Mean years of schooling for women ages 24–35 range from 7 to 13 years across departments. The average is more than 12 years in Atlántico, Bogotá, Caldas, Cundinamarca, San Andrés, and Santander. Regional divides are pronounced, and education facilities in rural areas tend to have fewer resources.<sup>54</sup> Vichada stands out as far below average, with women receiving just seven years of schooling on average. Located in the east of the country and bordering Venezuela, Vichada is home to a large Indigenous population that faces particular hardships. In 2009, people in Vichada's El Trompillo community were displaced from their native territory and forced into makeshift dwellings 30 kilometers away, where overcrowded and impoverished living conditions make education access difficult.<sup>55</sup>

In 2005, Colombia set a goal of eliminating gender gaps in schools by the end of 2015, in line with the UN Millennium Development Goals.<sup>56</sup> Progress has been made at the primary school level, but the gender gap has widened for secondary school and higher education. Girls who live in a household governed by patriarchal norms or who have family and household care responsibilities are particularly likely to drop out of school.<sup>57</sup>

Civilians are often caught in the clash of conflict events in Colombia, which severely curtails their access to education.<sup>58</sup> Girls face an increased risk of violence during conflict, especially while traveling to and from school, increasing the likelihood that they will drop out.<sup>59</sup> Children who have been displaced have lower educational attainment than their peers, and displaced girls are more likely to drop out than displaced boys.<sup>60</sup> Armed groups have also sent death threats to teachers, most of whom are women.<sup>61</sup>

#### **Employment: Advancements and disparities in women's work**

In Colombia, 53 percent of women are employed in the formal or informal sector, slightly behind the 56 percent regional average for Latin America and the Caribbean. Women disproportionately shoulder responsibility for household tasks and family caregiving. Those responsibilities increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, as did women's unemployment, which rose almost 8 percentage points while men's unemployment rose 3 percentage points.<sup>62</sup> At the end of 2020, 21 percent of Colombian women were unemployed—a rate almost 9 percentage points higher than that for men.<sup>63</sup> In addition to higher unemployment rates, women earned on average 12 percent less than men for the same work.<sup>64</sup>

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**Across departments in  
Colombia, schooling  
among women ages 24–35  
averages 7 to 13 years**

Similar to the case for other indicators, there is considerable subnational variation in women’s employment, which ranges from just 27 percent in the coastal department of Chocó to 60 percent in Nariño. Unsurprisingly, Bogotá has the second-highest rate of women’s employment, though it is still low, at 53 percent. Overall, Colombian women in towns and cities are twice as likely to be employed as women in nonurban areas, fueling urban–rural economic disparities.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, in rural areas, more than one woman in three is impoverished, compared with one in four in cities.<sup>66</sup>

Somewhat surprisingly, Vichada, the department with the lowest mean years of education, has one of the highest rates of women’s employment, at 52 percent, likely due to widespread informal sector work. Informal work in Colombia can include domestic work, selling food on the street, and operating an unlicensed business.<sup>67</sup>

#### Internet use: Heightened threats of digital exclusion and violence

Access to the internet is expanding in Colombia.<sup>68</sup> For girls and women ages 5 and older, internet access ranges from 6 percent in Vichada to 83 percent in Bogotá. Bogotá leads by a wide margin: Valle de Cauca, which has the second-highest rate of internet access (74 percent), is 9 percentage points behind Bogotá.

Only 9 percent of the country is covered by cellular 3G networks, and internet infrastructure is much more limited in rural areas than elsewhere.<sup>69</sup> For example, \$30 a month can purchase 15 times more data in Bogotá than in rural areas, where the diversity of the terrain, population sparsity, and political neglect create obstacles to expanding internet coverage.<sup>70</sup> The urban–rural divide is exacerbated by the presence of armed groups in some rural areas, which has made it difficult to expand internet access. In addition, there is a stark socioeconomic divide in internet use. Fewer than half of people with lower income have access to the internet compared with three-quarters of people with higher income.<sup>71</sup> Additionally, a third of women who do not use the internet are Indigenous women, according to a study by the Colombian Ministry of Telecommunications.<sup>72</sup>

Internet access and use are key indicators of women’s inclusion and have implications for other indicators, including education, employment, financial inclusion, and access to healthcare. The United Nations cites the internet as a vital resource in increasing women’s roles as “agents of change,” especially where women are formally excluded from decision-making processes.<sup>73</sup> Internet use can increase women’s political participation.<sup>74</sup> However, online abuse also presents a significant risk, as 15 percent of women in Colombia have experienced some form of online threat of violence.<sup>75</sup>

#### Discriminatory norms: Entrenched patriarchal views on women’s roles

Patriarchal norms and attitudes have deep roots in Colombia, especially in rural areas. Machismo culture in Colombia and across Latin America upholds patriarchal power structures, demands “purity” and obedience from women, and endorses violent behavior from men.<sup>76</sup> On average, 33 percent of Colombian men report that they agree or strongly agree that a woman’s primary role is to marry and have children. Once again, however, there are regional differences, ranging from 14 percent of men agreeing with the statement in Bogotá to 54 percent in San Andrés. Education can shape and reshape gender norms, especially where women have also endorsed and upheld harmful, patriarchal ideologies. For example, 10 percent of women without an education believe that wife beating is justified, compared with 1 percent of women with a higher education.<sup>77</sup>

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**On average, 33 percent of Colombian men agree or strongly agree that a woman’s primary role is to marry and have children, but rates vary across regions from 14 percent in Bogotá to 54 percent in San Andrés**

**Maternal mortality in Colombia, at 75 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births per year, is below the Latin America and the Caribbean regional average of 85 and the global average of 212**

Strong patriarchal norms also shape gender roles. Studies have found a positive correlation between inclusive social norms and women’s participation in the labor force in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>78</sup> For example, when asked if women should work only when men do not make enough money, rates of disagreement were high among respondents in countries in the region with high rates of female labor force participation.<sup>79</sup> Gender norms can also dictate gender divisions of responsibility for care work. Women spend more than seven hours a day on average on unpaid housework and family care, while men spend just three.<sup>80</sup> This norm remains despite Colombia being the first country in the region to formally acknowledge the economic impact of unpaid care work with the passage of legislation in 2010 that requires time-use surveys to account for the care economy.<sup>81</sup>

#### **Maternal mortality: Inconsistent access to adequate healthcare**

At a national rate of 75 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births per year, maternal mortality in Colombia is below the Latin America and the Caribbean regional average of 85 and the global average of 212. At the department level, maternal mortality ratios in the country range from as low as 0 in Quindío, San Andrés, and Vaupés to more than 300 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births per year in Guainía and Vichada.<sup>82</sup> Rates of maternal mortality are also high in Chocó, where socioeconomic and cultural factors and other barriers to adequate healthcare are higher for Afro-Colombian and Indigenous women.<sup>83</sup>

Recent studies have found that maternal mortality ratios in Colombia rose during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>84</sup> The reallocation of healthcare resources to COVID-19 patients meant fewer resources for maternal and prenatal care services, especially in rural areas.<sup>85</sup> During the pandemic, maternal mortality ratios were higher in lower-income areas of Colombia.<sup>86</sup>

Despite these setbacks, Colombia has made substantial progress in maternal health over the past two decades. The maternal mortality ratio dropped by a quarter between 2005 and 2014.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, the number of births attended by a skilled healthcare worker increased from 86 percent in 2000 to 96 percent in 2015.<sup>88</sup> However, large gaps persist across departments, often attributable to differences in health spending and health insurance schemes at the departmental level, as well as differences in the quality and accessibility of medical and prenatal care.<sup>89</sup>

Maternal mortality in Colombia is heavily influenced by education and socioeconomic factors. While nearly all women with postgraduate degrees can access and afford prenatal care, less than 10 percent of the country’s poorest women obtain care.<sup>90</sup>

#### **Intimate partner violence: Women silenced, shamed, and ignored**

Intimate partner violence—the number of incidents of nonlethal violence committed against women by a current or former intimate partner per 100,000 women—varies widely across the country. In Amazonas, 273 incidents of intimate partner violence were reported per 100,000 women compared with 24 incidents in Vichada.

Displaced women in Colombia are up to 55 percent more likely than other women to experience intimate partner violence, according to a World Bank study.<sup>91</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated intimate partner violence and other gender-based violence as people were stuck inside their homes, especially in Colombia, where lockdowns were particularly strict.<sup>92</sup> Studies also demonstrate that women in Colombia who have less education are more vulnerable to intimate partner violence, again highlighting the multiple disadvantages faced by women of poorer socioeconomic backgrounds.<sup>93</sup>

Many instances of intimate partner violence and other sexual violence are underreported because of social norms that instill shame and fear in survivors. A lack of medical and psychological support further dissuades women from reporting incidents in Colombia, and communities tend to regard domestic violence as a private matter.<sup>94</sup> Intimate partner violence is exacerbated by the widespread machismo culture, which endorses patriarchal household structures and husbands' control over wives' agency and person.<sup>95</sup>

Colombian law prohibits domestic violence, but weak enforcement and leniency for violent spouses persist.<sup>96</sup> For example, anyone convicted of violent sexual assault who is not the victim's spouse typically receives a prison sentence of 8–30 years, compared with 6 months to 2 years for spousal sexual violence.<sup>97</sup> Colombia has the fifth-highest prevalence of intimate partner violence in Latin America and the Caribbean, highlighting the need for stronger prevention and protection measures for women in Colombia.<sup>98</sup>

### ***Ethiopia: Continuing conflict harms women in multiple ways***

Ethiopia ranks 146th on the WPS Index, scoring around the same as Comoros and Malawi, and ranks 26th among the 48 ranked countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

#### *Decades of conflict*

Ethiopia has endured decades of conflict, including war with Eritrea in the 1990s, border conflicts with Somalia, and most recently the civil war between the government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which began in 2020. Parties agreed to a cessation of hostilities in November 2022. The civil war has resulted in a large-scale humanitarian crisis with the internal displacement of 2.6 million Ethiopians.<sup>99</sup> At more than 100,000 battle-related deaths, the war represents the single deadliest conflict in any year since the Iraqi government offensive in Kurdistan in 1988—and this number does not account for indirect deaths from famine, lack of access to medical care, or disease.<sup>100</sup>

Additionally, the TPLF, the government of Ethiopia, and militias aligned with the government have engaged in widespread human rights violations. During the early stages of the war, the government orchestrated the longest internet shutdown ever recorded anywhere, cutting off civilian access to essential services, information, mobile banking, and electronic communication.<sup>101</sup> Even after a peace agreement was signed in 2022, extreme tensions persisted between the government and the TPLF, threatening to halt recovery efforts and reignite armed conflict.<sup>102</sup> Other conflicts, such as that between the Ethiopian government and the Oromo Liberation Front along the Somali border, are ongoing.

Ethiopia's long history of conflict has disproportionately harmed women in multiple ways, restricting their access to education, creating livelihood barriers, and amplifying risks of gender-based violence. As of 2022, two-thirds of women in Ethiopia lived within 50 kilometers of armed conflict. In Tigray and Addis Ababa, every woman was exposed to armed conflict.

As in Colombia, women in Ethiopia have had important frontline roles in the conflict, especially in the TPLF, as educators, activists, medical personnel, and soldiers. However, these roles have been made largely invisible, as the 2022 peace agreement does not acknowledge the combatant and frontline roles of women.<sup>103</sup>

While the subnational index does not fully account for the impacts of the recent civil war, it nonetheless identifies areas within the country where women's inclusion, justice, and security are most under threat and where more investment in improving women's status is urgently needed.

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**In 2022, two-thirds of women in Ethiopia lived within 50 kilometers of armed conflict; the country's long history of conflict has disproportionately harmed women—restricting their access to education, creating livelihood barriers, and amplifying risks of gender-based violence**

### *The best and worst performing regions*

Of Ethiopia's 11 regions, the SNNPR performs best, with a score of .541 (figure 3.10). SNNPR performs well on indicators related to employment and parliamentary representation, as well as indicators within the security dimension (figure 3.11). In SNNPR, 52 percent of women are employed, placing it third highest after Benishangul-Gumuz, at 69 percent, and Tigray, at 67 percent. As of 2019, women made up 41 percent of SNNPR's members of the House of People's Representatives, the third-highest after Somali (61 percent) and Benishangul-Gumuz (44 percent). Despite its high overall score, SNNPR performs relatively poorly on indicators of education and financial inclusion. Women have an average of just 2.1 years of schooling, and less than a third of women have access to a bank account, leaving 5.5 million women without access.

Afar, bordering Tigray, Eritrea, and Djibouti in the northeast, is at the lowest end of the performance range, with an index score of .389. Afar's score is also lower than that of other Sub-Saharan African countries except South Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Central African Republic. Its low score reflects its poor performance on several indicators: on average, women have not completed even a year of school, only about one woman in four has access to her own bank account, and more than four women in five live within 50 kilometers of armed conflict. Low school completion is attributable largely to girls' disproportionate responsibility for domestic care duties and early pregnancy. One girl in four ages 15–19 in Afar becomes pregnant, the highest rate in the country,<sup>104</sup> and half of girls who marry while in school drop out because of family responsibilities, pressure from their husbands, or other reasons.<sup>105</sup>

Exacerbating the situation for women in Afar is their proximity to conflict. In 2022, 84 percent of women lived within 50 kilometers of at least one conflict event. Between August and November 2022 alone, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program estimates that at least 100,000 people in Amhara and Tigray were direct casualties of the war between the government and the TPLF.<sup>106</sup> Much of the conflict in Tigray has spilled over into neighboring Afar, damaging villages, while government blockades of Tigray have caused severe food and health supply shortages.<sup>107</sup> Afar was already struggling economically, with 28 percent of people living below the poverty line in 2016.<sup>108</sup> Armed conflict and climate crisis are thought to have dramatically worsened these conditions.

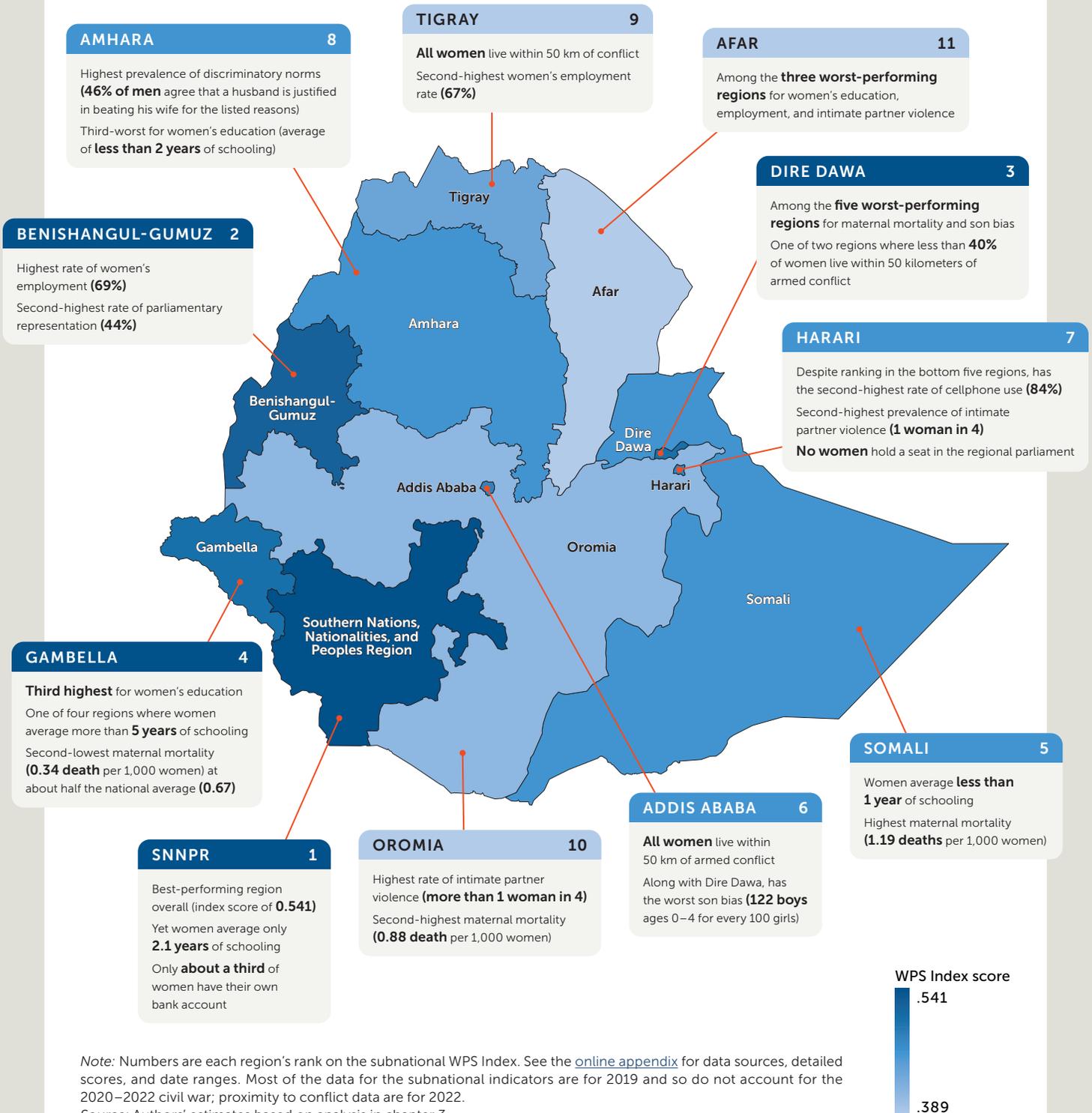
Afar, like other regions of Ethiopia, is governed by patriarchal norms. In particular, under a system called *adda*, elderly men make important societal decisions and bar women from participating in decision making, engaging in community relations, or receiving entitlements to wealth. Son bias is extremely high, at 118 boys ages 0–4 for every 100 girls the same age, far above the natural ratio of 105 boys and suggesting sex-selective abortions and other forms of discrimination against girls.

Somali has the widest-ranging performance on the subnational index across dimensions and indicators. It has the highest security dimension score among regions but the third-lowest justice dimension score; only Dire Dawa and Afar have a lower justice dimension score. While less than one woman in five lives within 50 kilometers of armed conflict and less than 6 percent of women report having suffered intimate partner violence, son bias is severe (118 boys per 100 girls, the same as Afar, the lowest ranking region), and maternal mortality is the highest in the country (1.19 maternal deaths per 1,000 women, translating to roughly 3,700 deaths annually). Somali performs inconsistently on the inclusion dimension. It is the highest-performing region for parliamentary representation, with women

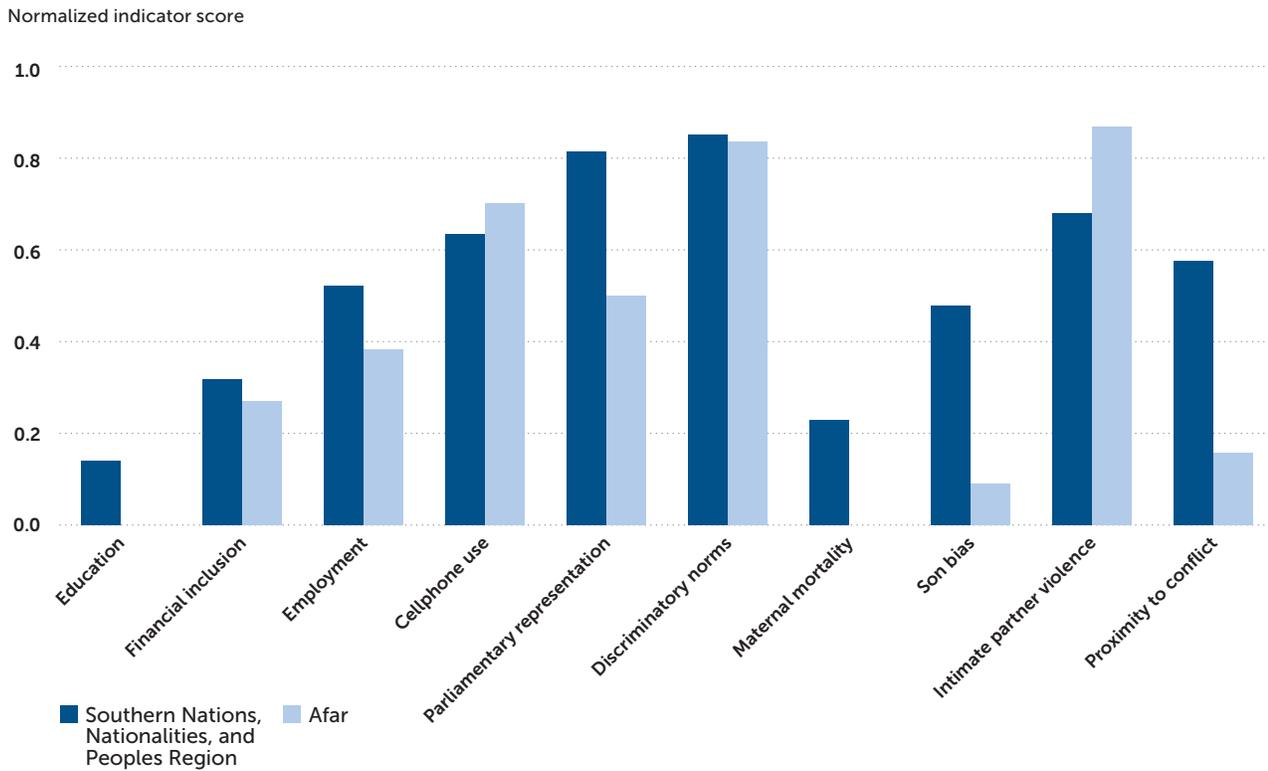
**Afar, bordering Tigray, Eritrea, and Djibouti, is at the lowest end of the performance range of Ethiopian regions, and its index score of .389 is lower than that of most Sub-Saharan African countries**

FIGURE 3.10

Performance on the subnational WPS Index varies less in Ethiopia than in Colombia



**FIGURE 3.11** Of Ethiopia’s 11 regions, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region performs best and Afar performs worst



Note: See the [online appendix](#) for data sources, detailed scores, and date ranges. Data on education and maternal mortality are missing for Afar. Most of the data for the subnational indicators do not account for the 2020–2022 civil war; proximity to conflict data are for 2022. Source: Authors’ estimates.

making up 61 percent of delegates to the House of People’s Representatives. However, on average, girls and women ages 15–49 have not completed even one year of schooling, only 38 percent of women are employed, and just 10 percent have a bank account.

Addis Ababa, the country’s capital, also performs unevenly on the indicators. Ranking sixth overall, Addis Ababa performs best on five indicators: education (8.6 years), cellphone use (98 percent), financial inclusion (92 percent), discriminatory norms (7 percent), and maternal mortality (0.31 maternal death per 1,000 women). However, the region’s overall score is driven down by poor performance on parliamentary representation, son bias, and proximity to conflict. In Addis Ababa, no women serve in regional parliaments, 122 boys are born for every 100 girls, and 100 percent of women live within 50 kilometers of conflict.

*A closer look at the indicators*

A wide range of subnational performance is also evident within indicators. Below we explore trends for selected indicators.

**Ethiopian women’s median years of schooling range from zero in Afar and Somali to nearly nine in Addis Ababa**

**Education: Inaccessible for many young girls**

Levels of education vary greatly across Ethiopia’s regions. Women’s median years of schooling range from zero in Afar and Somali to nearly nine in Addis Ababa. Education remains inaccessible to Afar and Somali’s largely nomadic populations, whose remote location and physical distance from schools puts education out of

reach for many children.<sup>109</sup> Another barrier is the language of instruction, which is not in their native language.<sup>110</sup> In the Amhara region, the third-worst performing region in Ethiopia for women’s median years of schooling (1.8 years), approximately 600,000 girls are out of school.<sup>111</sup>

Across Ethiopia, nearly half of girls who start first grade do not make it to fifth grade, narrowing their future economic opportunities.<sup>112</sup> When families cannot afford to send all of their children to school, boys are often given priority,<sup>113</sup> while girls are assigned primary responsibility for domestic work and are expected to bring a bride price to their family through early marriage.<sup>114</sup> Across the country, 40 percent of girls are married before the age of 18, and 68 percent of girls without an education are child brides.<sup>115</sup> Even when girls are able to go to school, they face additional barriers of cost, quality, and safety. For example, many schools lack water and sanitation facilities and fail to protect girls from gender-based violence.<sup>116</sup>

The civil war in Tigray, through infrastructure destruction, ongoing trauma,<sup>117</sup> and recruitment of adolescents by armed groups,<sup>118</sup> has worsened education prospects in the country, leaving 3.6 million children out of school.<sup>119</sup> Students in Tigray now have to walk 7.3 kilometers on average to school, compared with 2.5 kilometers before the war, because of the destruction of school facilities.<sup>120</sup>

Once girls leave school, they are unlikely to return, especially when economic or social conditions have deteriorated. One study found that parents and caregivers in Ethiopia did not want girls to return to school because of security concerns.<sup>121</sup> The same study found that some displaced girls were forced into survival sex, exchanging sex for money, food, or other necessities. And when girls in conflict areas of Ethiopia are able to attend school, they often face an increased risk of conflict-related sexual violence while commuting to school.<sup>122</sup> Students who must travel far to attend school often drop out because of rising costs, including transportation costs, following the outbreak of conflict.<sup>123</sup> Prolonged insecurity and poor access to schools in conflict settings constrict women’s long-term economic and livelihood opportunities, perpetuating gender gaps and creating substantial obstacles to the empowerment of women and girls in Ethiopia.

#### **Parliamentary representation: Political violence and threats against women in power**

The most recent data published in 2019 show that 39 percent of the members of Ethiopia’s House of People’s Representatives were women. Rates vary from 0 in Addis Ababa, Gambela, and Harari to 61 percent in Somali. Across Ethiopia, women candidates and voters disproportionately experience psychological abuse and violence.<sup>124</sup> Women running for office are also at a higher risk of being sexually harassed by members of their own political party.<sup>125</sup> The Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association has raised concerns that unsafe conditions at polling stations expose women to increased physical and verbal abuse.<sup>126</sup> Chapter 2 explores the consequences of political violence against women more in depth.

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**Ethiopia is one of the 30 worst countries for maternal mortality, with approximately 267 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, far exceeding the global average of 212**

#### **Maternal mortality: High risks countrywide**

Ethiopia is one of the 30 worst countries for maternal mortality, with approximately 267 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, far exceeding the global average of 212. As of 2019, expectant women were most at risk of maternal death in the Somali region, with 1.19 deaths annually per 1,000 women (3,700 maternal deaths). Maternal mortality ratios are also high in Oromia (0.88 death per 1,000 women) and Dire Dawa (0.82). The risk of maternal mortality is lowest in the western region of Gambella (0.34 death per 1,000 women) and in the country’s

capital, Addis Ababa (0.31). And risk varies by socioeconomic characteristics. Rates are 6 times higher for women with little or no education and 1.3 times higher for rural women and poor women.<sup>127</sup> There has also been some progress, however. Between 2000 and 2016, a woman's lifetime risk of dying as a result of pregnancy and childbirth fell by nearly half in Ethiopia.<sup>128</sup>

While not captured in our subnational indicator, risks of maternal mortality escalated during the civil war, because of fewer resources, destruction of infrastructure, closure of healthcare facilities, and the targeting of healthcare facilities by armed forces.<sup>129</sup> War also interrupts other critical health services, such as childhood vaccinations and support services for survivors of gender-based violence. A 2021 UN humanitarian assessment reported that only 29 of the approximately 230 health centers in Tigray were functional.<sup>130</sup> This has particular impacts for pregnant women and new mothers.

Many of the causes of maternal mortality are preventable, such as heavy bleeding after childbirth and lack of access to healthcare facilities. In Ethiopia, 65 percent of maternal deaths occur postpartum and result from medical causes such as hemorrhage or infection, limited knowledge of pregnancy-related complications, or resource constraints leading to shortages and delays in treatment.<sup>131</sup> Female genital mutilation and cutting, suffered by 65 percent of women in Ethiopia, can also lead to complications during childbirth.<sup>132</sup> Lack of confidence in the medical system and perceived corruption are also contributing factors.<sup>133</sup>

#### Son bias: A wide range of sex ratios at ages 0–4

Son bias (the ratio of boys to girls from birth to age 4) ranges widely in Ethiopia, from approximately 96 boys for every 100 girls in Gambella to 122 boys for every 100 girls in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa.

Skewed sex ratios reflect the effect of discriminatory norms on birth rates and health practices, as well as differential treatment of newborn sons and daughters. Most husbands lead decision making in the household, so men who want more boys pressure their wives to have more children until they have the desired number of sons.<sup>134</sup> The impacts on girls in the household are severe. In households with more siblings, fewer economic, education, and health-related resources are devoted to daughters than to sons.<sup>135</sup> In addition, strong son bias is intensified by the high rate of unintended pregnancy.<sup>136</sup> Newborn daughters resulting from unintended pregnancies are breastfed and vaccinated less often than sons, on average. As a result, the ratio of girls' to boys' childhood mortality in Ethiopia is one of the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>137</sup>

#### Intimate partner violence: The normalization of abuse

In all but two regions in Ethiopia, more than 1 woman in 10 reports having suffered violence at the hands of an intimate partner in the 12 months prior to survey data collection. In three regions, more than one woman in five reports experiencing such abuse: Gambella (23 percent), Harari (24 percent), and Oromia (25 percent). Rates of intimate partner violence are lowest in Somali (less than 6 percent). Somali's strong performance on this indicator and on the proximity to conflict indicator give it the highest score in the country on the security dimension.

While rape is a criminal offense in Ethiopia, the law does not address spousal rape, nor does the judiciary fully enforce rape laws.<sup>138</sup> Similarly, domestic violence is illegal, but enforcement is inconsistent due to the powerful sway of patriarchal gender norms. Across the country, one man in five believes that husbands are justified in beating their wife for at least one of the following reasons: burning the

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**In all but two regions in Ethiopia, more than 1 woman in 10 reports having suffered violence at the hands of an intimate partner in the 12 months prior to survey data collection**

food, arguing with him, going out without telling him, neglecting the children, or refusing to have sex with him. Such beliefs range from 7 percent of men in Afar to 46 percent in Amhara.

Outside the home, the civil war has amplified risks of gender-based violence against women, especially conflict-related sexual violence in Tigray.<sup>139</sup> During the first phase of the conflict, between November 2020 and June 2021, most acts of conflict-related sexual violence were committed against Tigrayans by Ethiopian and Eritrean national forces or their allies.<sup>140</sup> During the second phase of the conflict, between July 2021 and December 2021, the TPLF engaged in a campaign of “revenge rape” against civilians in Afar and Amhara who had ethnic ties to groups that had attacked them.<sup>141</sup> During the third phase of the conflict, between January 2021 and the ceasefire in November 2022, the government of Ethiopia set up humanitarian blockades, barring civilians and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence from accessing medical treatment and other essential support services. As of April 2021, Human Rights Watch reported that just 1 percent of health facilities in Tigray were equipped to provide comprehensive services to survivors of gender-based violence, leaving many survivors without essential physical and psychological health support.<sup>142</sup>

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**Data disaggregated by both sex and geography are needed for conducting subnational analyses and for guiding effective policy and programming—but are extremely rare**

***Need for data disaggregated by sex and other characteristics***

Subnational index analysis is a valuable tool for assessing and responding to disparities in women’s status within national borders. As the results for Colombia and Ethiopia show, the challenges facing women vary by geography and are often concealed by national averages. Data disaggregated by both sex and geography are needed for conducting subnational analyses and for guiding effective policy and programming—but are also extremely rare. Better, high-quality data disaggregated along these lines—as well as other characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status—are essential to identifying gaps and ensuring that no woman is left behind.



# Statistical table and appendixes

**STATISTICAL TABLE 1** Country performance and ranking on the Women, Peace, and Security Index and indicators

WPS Index rank	Country	WPS Index score	INCLUSION					JUSTICE				SECURITY			
			Education (years)	Financial inclusion (%)	Employment (%)	Cellphone use (%)	Parliamentary representation (%)	Absence of legal discrimination (score)	Access to justice (score)	Maternal mortality ratio (deaths per 100,000 live births)	Son bias (number of sons born per 100 girls)	Intimate partner violence (%)	Community safety (%)	Political violence targeting women (events per 100,000 women)	Proximity to conflict (%)
			2016–2021 <sup>a</sup>	2021	2018–2022 <sup>a</sup>	2022	2023	2023	2022	2020	2022	2018	2020–2022 <sup>a</sup>	2022	2021–2022
<b>TOP QUINTILE</b>															
1	Denmark	.932	13.2	100.0	77.0	100.0	43.6	100.0	3.960	4.7	105.7	3.0	78.0	0.000	0.0
2	Switzerland	.928	13.5	99.0	78.4	91.0	39.3	88.1	3.893	7.4	105.1	2.0	85.0	0.000	0.0
3	Sweden	.926	12.8	100.0	80.0	100.0	46.4	100.0	3.806	4.5	105.7	6.0	74.0	0.000	0.0
4	Finland	.924	13.0	99.1	77.7	100.0	45.5	97.5	3.419	8.3	105.2	8.0	78.0	0.000	0.0
4	Iceland	.924	13.9	100.0	78.6	100.0	47.6	100.0	3.344	2.7 <sup>b</sup>	106.1	3.0	74.0	0.000	0.0
4	Luxembourg	.924	13.0	98.2 <sup>c</sup>	73.0	94.0	35.0	100.0	3.856	6.5	105.2	4.0	88.0	0.000	0.0
7	Norway	.920	13.1	100.0	78.6	100.0	46.2	96.9	3.118	1.7 <sup>b</sup>	106.2	4.0	86.0	0.000	0.0
8	Austria	.911	12.0	100.0	72.2	95.0	40.6	96.9	3.397	5.2	105.5	4.0	82.0	0.000	0.0
9	Netherlands	.908	12.4	99.5	77.2	92.0	37.8	100.0	3.479	4.3	105.2	5.0	72.0	0.000	0.0
10	New Zealand	.904	12.9	99.2	78.2	96.0	50.0	97.5	3.583	7.0	105.3	4.0	42.0	0.000	0.0
11	Australia	.902	12.8	100.0	75.2	94.0	44.5	96.9	3.703	2.9 <sup>b</sup>	105.6	3.0	54.0	0.000	0.0
11	Belgium	.902	12.3	98.7	69.9	93.0	43.3	100.0	3.897	4.8	104.8	5.0	56.0	0.000	0.0
13	Estonia	.892	13.8	99.6	79.0	100.0	27.7	97.5	3.444	5.2	106.1	4.0	71.0	0.000	0.0
13	Ireland	.892	11.8	99.5	70.8	92.0	27.4	100.0	3.745	5.0	105.5	3.0	78.0	0.000	0.0
15	Singapore	.887	11.6	96.9	75.9	100.0	29.1	82.5	3.251	7.5	106.0	2.0	94.0	0.000	0.0
16	Lithuania	.886	13.6	90.4	79.3	95.0	28.4	93.8	3.721	8.7	105.2	5.0	61.0	0.000	0.0
17	Canada	.885	13.9	99.5	75.1	85.0	35.2	100.0	2.607	11.0	105.4	3.0	61.0	0.000	0.0
18	Czechia	.884	12.7	93.4	75.1	99.0	23.8	93.8	3.849	3.4 <sup>b</sup>	105.3	4.0	67.0	0.000	0.0
19	Portugal	.877	9.6	90.2	76.7	92.0	36.1	100.0	3.177	11.8	105.5	4.0	72.0	0.000	0.0
20	Latvia	.872	13.6	97.6	74.8	100.0	29.0	100.0	3.527	18.3	106.5	6.0	62.0	0.000	0.0
21	Germany	.871	13.8	100.0	76.9	88.0	35.5	100.0	3.901	4.4	105.6	3.0 <sup>d</sup>	71.0	0.007	0.0
22	United Arab Emirates	.868	12.5	86.7	55.7	100.0	50.0	82.5	2.107	9.3	104.6	17.9 <sup>e</sup>	93.0	0.000	0.0
23	Japan	.866	13.3	98.8	77.0	91.0	15.5	78.8	3.614	4.3	105.1	4.0	70.0	0.000	0.0
24	France	.864	11.4	100.0	72.7	88.0	36.8	100.0	3.436	7.9	104.9	5.0	69.0	0.003	0.0
25	Croatia	.862	11.9	90.0	66.1	89.0	31.8	93.8	3.323	4.8	106.0	4.0	71.0	0.000	0.0
26	United Kingdom	.860	13.4	99.9	75.4	92.0	31.5	97.5	3.265	9.8	105.5	4.0	74.0	0.006	0.0
27	Poland	.859	13.3	95.7	70.6	91.0	27.5	93.8	2.582	2.0 <sup>b</sup>	106.0	3.0	65.0	0.000	0.0
27	Spain	.859	10.5	97.5	64.8	96.0	41.0	100.0	3.796	3.4 <sup>b</sup>	106.3	3.0	78.0	0.004	0.0
29	Slovakia	.856	12.9	94.0	74.1	96.0	22.0	85.0	3.426	4.8	105.4	6.0	58.0	0.000	0.0
30	Republic of Korea	.848	11.9	98.7	65.2	98.0	19.1	85.0	3.396	8.1	105.8	8.0	75.0	0.000	0.0
31	Malta	.846	12.0	95.3	71.2	97.0	27.8	91.3	3.362	2.9 <sup>b</sup>	106.7	4.0	57.0	0.000	0.0
32	Hungary	.835	12.1	86.9	76.3	92.0	13.1	96.9	3.172	15.1	105.8	6.0	64.0	0.000	0.0
32	Serbia	.835	11.0	89.8	64.5	86.0	34.8	93.8	3.110	10.2	106.9	4.0	64.0	0.000	0.0
34	Italy	.827	10.6	97.1	55.7	97.0	33.0	97.5	3.751	4.6	105.9	4.0	64.0	0.007	0.0
35	Bulgaria	.826	11.5	84.3	72.5	89.0	24.2	90.6	3.088	7.1	106.0	6.0	54.0	0.000	0.0
<b>SECOND QUINTILE</b>															
36	Slovenia	.824	12.8	98.2	75.5	94.0	31.5	96.9	3.521	4.5	106.4	3.0	85.0	0.095	0.0
37	United States	.823	13.7	96.8	70.0	98.0	27.9	91.3	3.514	21.1	104.8	6.0	61.0	0.025	0.0
38	Taiwan	.818	10.2 <sup>f</sup>	93.6	65.6	95.0	42.5 <sup>g</sup>	91.3	3.411	44.8 <sup>f</sup>	106.9	7.0 <sup>f</sup>	81.0	0.009	0.0
39	Georgia	.812	12.9	70.7	60.9	94.0	18.4	88.1	2.986	27.6	106.7	3.0	74.0	0.000	0.0
39	Hong Kong	.812	11.8	98.2	66.9	97.0	17.1 <sup>h</sup>	91.9	1.967	34.8 <sup>f</sup>	107.7	3.0	86.0	0.000	0.0
41	Montenegro	.808	11.8	67.6 <sup>c</sup>	51.5	95.0	28.4	85.0	2.863	6.2	107.1	4.0	80.0	0.000	0.0
42	Romania	.800	11.0	65.7	59.5	93.0	18.9	90.6	2.811	10.1	105.5	7.0	58.0	0.000	0.0

WPS Index rank	Country	WPS Index score 2023	INCLUSION					JUSTICE				SECURITY			
			Education (years) 2016–2021 <sup>a</sup>	Financial inclusion (%) 2021	Employment (%) 2018–2022 <sup>a</sup>	Cellphone use (%) 2022	Parliamentary representation (%) 2023	Absence of legal discrimination (score) 2023	Access to justice (score) 2022	Maternal mortality ratio (deaths per 100,000 live births) 2020	Son bias (number of sons born per 100 girls) 2022	Intimate partner violence (%) 2018	Community safety (%) 2020–2022 <sup>a</sup>	Political violence targeting women (events per 100,000 women) 2022	Proximity to conflict (%) 2021–2022
			2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2022	2020	2022	2018	2020–2022 <sup>a</sup>	2022	2021–2022
43	Seychelles	.799	10.2	70.2 <sup>f</sup>	78.3	84.3 <sup>f</sup>	22.9	76.3	3.877	3.3 <sup>b</sup>	103.6	11.7 <sup>f</sup>	63.0 <sup>f</sup>	0.000	0.0
44	North Macedonia	.798	9.7	79.9	51.7	93.0	42.5	85.0	2.331	3.0 <sup>b</sup>	107.7	4.0	64.0	0.000	0.0
45	Albania	.796	11.7	45.7	63.6	92.0	35.7	91.3	3.150	8.3	107.2	6.0	57.0	0.000	0.0
46	Mongolia	.794	9.9	99.0	59.7	100.0	17.1	90.6	2.584	39.5	104.5	12.0	41.0	0.000	0.0
47	Barbados	.779	10.3	72.3 <sup>f</sup>	76.1	91.3 <sup>f</sup>	32.7	80.0	3.106	39.1	103.5	27.0 <sup>d</sup>	61.9 <sup>f</sup>	0.000	0.0
48	Armenia	.772	11.3	52.2	71.4	97.0	35.5	87.5	3.116	27.2	109.1	5.0	80.0	0.000	21.5
49	Guyana	.769	8.7	72.3 <sup>f</sup>	41.4	91.3 <sup>f</sup>	36.6	86.9	2.554	111.9	103.7	10.0	61.9 <sup>f</sup>	0.000	0.0
50	Argentina	.768	11.4	73.8	62.7	90.0	44.4	79.4	2.514	44.9	105.1	4.0	41.0	0.030	0.0
51	Greece	.766	11.1	93.4	55.0	93.0	21.0	100.0	3.365	7.7	106.4	5.0	56.0	0.038	0.0
52	Thailand	.764	8.6	92.7	74.6	94.0	14.4	78.1	1.709	28.6	106.4	9.0	54.0	0.000	4.1
53	Moldova	.758	11.9	62.9	79.1	86.0	38.6	87.5	2.754	12.3	106.3	9.0	59.0	0.058	0.0
54	Panama	.757	10.8	43.1	59.0	83.0	22.5	79.4	2.914	49.5	105.5	8.0	51.0	0.000	0.0
55	Bosnia and Herzegovina	.754	9.8	70.4	46.3	88.0	17.5	85.0	2.188	5.7	106.8	3.0	57.0	0.000	0.0
56	Bahrain	.752	10.8	75.4 <sup>c</sup>	48.4	99.8 <sup>i</sup>	22.5	68.1	1.399	15.9	103.9	18.1 <sup>e</sup>	65.2 <sup>f</sup>	0.000	0.0
56	Russian Federation	.752	12.8	90.1	73.8	96.0	17.8	73.1	1.624	13.7	105.7	6.0 <sup>d</sup>	50.0	0.015	3.8
58	Turkmenistan	.750	10.9	35.5 <sup>c</sup>	56.3 <sup>f</sup>	89.0 <sup>j</sup>	25.9	78.7 <sup>f</sup>	0.655	5.2	106.7	7.2 <sup>e</sup>	91.0 <sup>j</sup>	0.000	0.0
59	Uruguay	.748	9.3	75.7	71.1	95.0	26.9	88.8	3.229	18.6	105.6	4.0	41.0	0.057	0.0
60	Costa Rica	.743	8.9	61.1	52.2	95.0	47.4	91.9	3.572	22.0	104.5	7.0	36.0	0.077	0.0
60	Sri Lanka	.743	10.8	89.3	38.7	82.0	5.3	65.6	2.507	28.8	104.4	4.0	52.0	0.000	0.0
61	Kuwait	.742	8.1	73.5 <sup>c</sup>	52.4 <sup>f</sup>	100.0	6.3	35.0	2.676	7.2	104.8	18.1 <sup>e</sup>	96.0	0.000	0.0
63	Cyprus	.739	12.4	92.7	71.4	97.0	14.3	94.4	3.370	68.4	106.5	3.0	58.0	0.480	0.0
64	Cabo Verde	.738	6.0	55.0 <sup>f</sup>	58.4	65.6 <sup>f</sup>	41.7	86.3	2.318	42.2	103.3	11.0	54.9 <sup>f</sup>	0.000	0.0
64	Fiji	.738	11.0	77.3 <sup>f</sup>	44.4	94.3 <sup>f</sup>	10.9	82.5	2.661	38.1	107.1	23.0	76.5 <sup>f</sup>	0.000	0.0
64	Malaysia	.738	10.6	87.5	60.8	93.0	14.7	50.0	2.611	21.1	106.6	13.1 <sup>e</sup>	48.0	0.000	0.0
67	Saudi Arabia	.737	10.7	63.5	52.4 <sup>f</sup>	100.0	19.9	71.3	1.413	16.2	105.1	18.0 <sup>e</sup>	82.0	0.006	3.2
68	Chile	.736	10.8	86.6	56.6	97.0	32.7	80.0	3.283	15.0	104.2	6.0	28.0	0.061	0.0
69	Belarus	.733	12.2	81.3 <sup>c</sup>	79.1	88.0 <sup>j</sup>	34.7	75.6	0.846	1.1 <sup>b</sup>	105.8	6.0	56.0 <sup>j</sup>	0.194	0.0
70	Kazakhstan	.729	12.4	83.6	62.5 <sup>f</sup>	93.0	25.6	75.6	2.327	13.4	106.5	6.0	58.0	0.119	0.0
71	Trinidad and Tobago	.721	11.7	73.6 <sup>c</sup>	58.4	91.9 <sup>f</sup>	33.8	75.0	2.882	26.6	104.1	8.0	57.7 <sup>f</sup>	1.031	0.0
THIRD QUINTILE															
72	Maldives	.720	7.1	74.2 <sup>c</sup>	53.2	71.2 <sup>f</sup>	4.6	73.8	2.015	56.7	105.0	6.0	64.4 <sup>f</sup>	0.000	0.0
73	Nicaragua	.717	7.4	21.6	57.5	72.0	51.6 <sup>k</sup>	86.3	0.659	77.9	103.5	6.0	50.0	0.000	0.0
73	Peru	.717	9.3	53.0	69.4	81.0	38.8	95.0	2.101	68.5	104.1	11.0	37.0	0.017	1.8
75	Oman	.715	12.1	63.5 <sup>i</sup>	42.9	89.9 <sup>f</sup>	9.9	38.8	2.574	17.0	104.3	18.1 <sup>e</sup>	65.2 <sup>f</sup>	0.000	0.0
76	Samoa	.711	11.8	70.4 <sup>f</sup>	43.5	84.6 <sup>f</sup>	13.0	75.0	2.083 <sup>f</sup>	59.1	107.6	18.0	72.6 <sup>f</sup>	0.000	0.0
77	Jamaica	.710	9.7	71.6	69.9	93.0	31.0	74.4	3.299	98.9	103.9	7.0	60.0	1.123	0.0
78	Viet Nam	.707	8.0	52.8	82.0	94.0	30.3	88.1	1.748	124.3	111.1 <sup>m</sup>	10.0	79.0	0.000	0.0
79	Lao PDR	.704	5.0	37.9	61.7	81.0	22.0	88.1	1.683	126.1	105.3	8.0	53.0	0.000	0.0
80	Israel	.703	13.4	91.9	74.0	96.0	24.2	80.6	3.442	2.8 <sup>b</sup>	105.4	6.0	77.0	0.066	97.2
80	Qatar	.703	11.6	61.6 <sup>i</sup>	65.5	89.9 <sup>f</sup>	4.4	29.4	2.149	7.6	103.9	18.0 <sup>e</sup>	65.2 <sup>f</sup>	0.000	0.0
82	Bhutan	.700	4.5	27.7 <sup>n</sup>	78.9	61.8 <sup>f</sup>	16.9	75.0	3.189	60.0	104.8	9.0	58.7 <sup>f</sup>	0.000	0.0
82	China	.700	7.3	87.3	56.8 <sup>f</sup>	100.0 <sup>o</sup>	24.9	78.1	1.980	23.1	111.3 <sup>m</sup>	8.0	91.0	0.008	0.0
82	Indonesia	.700	8.2	52.3	58.7	71.0	21.6	70.6	2.281	172.9	106.1	9.0	73.0	0.000	14.3
85	Tonga	.697	11.5	77.3 <sup>f</sup>	64.4	94.3 <sup>f</sup>	7.1	58.8	2.017 <sup>f</sup>	125.6	108.1	17.0	76.5 <sup>f</sup>	0.000	0.0
86	Bolivia	.696	9.2	63.3	75.8	91.0	48.2	88.8	2.008	160.9	104.2	18.0	37.0	0.066	0.9
87	Suriname	.694	9.9	72.3 <sup>f</sup>	50.5	91.3 <sup>f</sup>	29.4	73.8	2.686	96.5	104.0	8.0	61.9 <sup>f</sup>	0.322	0.0

WPS Index rank	Country	WPS Index score 2023	INCLUSION					JUSTICE				SECURITY			
			Education (years) 2016–2021*	Financial inclusion (%) 2021	Employment (%) 2018–2022*	Cellphone use (%) 2022	Parliamentary representation (%) 2023	Absence of legal discrimination (score) 2023	Access to justice (score) 2022	Maternal mortality ratio (deaths per 100,000 live births) 2020	Son bias (number of sons born per 100 girls) 2022	Intimate partner violence (%) 2018	Community safety (%) 2020–2022*	Political violence targeting women (events per 100,000 women) 2022	Proximity to conflict (%) 2021–2022
			2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2022	2020	2022	2018	2022*	2022	2021–2022
88	Puerto Rico	.692	10.9 <sup>f</sup>	66.1	41.9	93.0	28.2 <sup>p</sup>	83.8	2.729 <sup>f</sup>	34.3	104.8 <sup>f</sup>	6.8 <sup>f</sup>	40.0	0.873	0.0
89	Paraguay	.691	8.9	55.3	65.2	91.0	16.8	94.4	2.349	71.1	105.0	6.0	42.0	0.118	1.4
90	Tajikistan	.690	10.9	39.4	36.4	66.0	26.6	78.8	0.851	16.6	106.3	14.0	90.0	0.000	35.8
91	South Africa	.688	9.7	86.2	46.0	89.0	46.1	88.1	3.292	126.8	104.0	13.0	27.0	0.078	14.8
92	Jordan	.679	10.1	34.1	14.2	86.0	13.3	46.9	2.510	41.3	104.9	13.0	75.0	0.000	0.0
93	Mauritius	.678	10.0	89.4	46.3	89.0	20.0	89.4	2.622	84.4	103.5	18.4 <sup>d</sup>	58.0	0.152	0.0
94	Uzbekistan	.674	11.7	38.8	44.7	79.0	30.0	70.6	1.810	30.2	108.0	7.3 <sup>e</sup>	79.0	0.029	0.0
95	Kyrgyzstan	.673	11.6	43.8	61.2	94.0	20.0	76.9	1.896	50.4	105.7	13.0	59.0	0.148	5.7
96	Tunisia	.669	6.9	28.7	25.9	84.0	16.2	64.4	3.266	36.6	105.2	10.0	49.0	0.000	6.8
97	Azerbaijan	.667	10.2	38.8	75.8	83.0	18.6	78.8	1.527	40.8	112.2 <sup>m</sup>	5.0	67.9 <sup>f</sup>	0.000	22.4
98	Dominican Republic	.666	9.6	49.0	58.3	86.0	25.7	86.3	2.273	107.3	104.4	10.0	32.0	0.071	0.0
99	Türkiye	.665	7.9	62.5	34.5	95.0	17.4	82.5	1.867	17.3	105.1	12.0	48.0	0.007	34.5
100	Kosovo	.664	8.3 <sup>f</sup>	47.4	19.5	94.0	35.8	91.9	2.327	201.9 <sup>f</sup>	106.9	5.0	77.0	0.120	0.0
100	Solomon Islands	.664	6.5 <sup>f</sup>	58.5 <sup>f</sup>	90.0	72.1 <sup>f</sup>	8.0	56.9	2.675	122.2	107.0	28.0	62.2 <sup>f</sup>	0.000	0.0
100	Timor-Leste	.664	4.7	58.5 <sup>f</sup>	38.2	72.1 <sup>f</sup>	40.0	86.3	1.972	203.9	107.1	28.0	62.2 <sup>f</sup>	0.000	0.0
103	Rwanda	.663	4.0	45.0 <sup>c</sup>	55.2	56.8 <sup>f</sup>	54.7 <sup>k</sup>	83.8	2.607	258.9	102.6	23.0	75.0 <sup>j</sup>	0.000	17.1
104	Botswana	.659	10.3	53.9	57.8	88.0	11.1	63.8	2.658	185.9	103.2	17.0	26.0	0.000	0.0
105	Belize	.657	9.0	52.3 <sup>n</sup>	50.5	81.9 <sup>f</sup>	23.9	79.4	2.091 <sup>f</sup>	129.8	105.2	8.0	56.1 <sup>f</sup>	0.496	0.0
106	Ecuador	.655	8.8	57.9	63.0	80.0	38.7	89.4	2.452	65.8	104.7	8.0	27.0	0.022	58.6
FOURTH QUINTILE															
107	Tanzania	.652	5.9	46.0	83.5	72.0	37.4	81.3	2.679	238.3	103.0	24.0	57.0	0.003	17.3
108	Ghana	.651	7.8	62.6	81.0	87.0	14.5	75.0	2.808	263.1	103.8	10.0	56.0	0.095	1.6
109	Sao Tome and Principe	.648	5.6	55.0 <sup>f</sup>	48.7 <sup>f</sup>	65.6 <sup>f</sup>	14.5	83.1	2.736	146.2	102.7	18.0	54.9 <sup>f</sup>	0.000	0.0
110	Cambodia	.645	4.4	32.5	80.0	79.0	19.3	81.3	1.103	218.0	105.2	9.0	56.0	0.012	0.0
110	Egypt	.645	9.8	24.2	17.7	80.0	22.9	50.6	1.659	16.8	105.4	15.0	80.0	0.005	5.0
112	Nepal	.644	4.2	49.9	30.5	86.0	33.9	80.6	2.793	174.4	105.0	11.0	55.0	0.088	4.0
112	Vanuatu	.644	7.0 <sup>f</sup>	67.6 <sup>f</sup>	45.1	75.2 <sup>f</sup>	1.9	55.6	3.543	94.4	107.0	29.0	66.8 <sup>f</sup>	0.000	0.0
114	Morocco	.637	5.0	32.7	25.6	88.0	21.4	75.6	3.032	71.9	104.7	10.0	59.0	0.032	0.0
115	Brazil	.630	8.3	80.9	54.5	91.0	17.7	85.0	2.209	72.2	104.5	6.0	39.0	0.298	42.9
116	Venezuela	.628	11.4	79.7	55.5	77.0	22.1 <sup>q</sup>	85.0	1.370	259.2	105.3	8.0	40.0	0.126	30.7
117	Ukraine	.626	11.5	80.7	67.7	100.0	20.4	85.0	2.532	16.5	106.3	9.0	55.0	0.321	81.0
118	Algeria	.622	7.7	31.2	17.8	91.0	6.8	57.5	2.120	77.7	104.6	9.4 <sup>d</sup>	46.0	0.000	20.3
119	Equatorial Guinea	.619	4.2	62.0 <sup>f</sup>	53.2 <sup>f</sup>	75.3 <sup>f</sup>	27.0	51.9	1.405	212.3	103.1	29.0	58.8 <sup>f</sup>	0.000	0.0
119	Senegal	.619	1.6	50.3	47.5	78.0	46.1	72.5	2.951	260.9	103.1	12.0	46.0	0.034	0.0
121	Philippines	.612	9.2	47.4	54.0	94.0	27.5	78.8	2.626	78.2	107.7	6.0	65.0	0.056	75.3
122	Honduras	.610	6.8	28.9	48.9	83.0	27.3	75.0	1.949	71.8	105.1	7.0	51.0	0.987	24.3
122	Libya	.610	8.5	59.6 <sup>c</sup>	36.1	100.0	16.5	50.0	0.734	72.1	105.7	18.3 <sup>e</sup>	57.0	0.119	1.6
122	Namibia	.610	7.5	69.3	60.1	80.0	35.6	86.3	2.917	214.6	101.1	16.0	31.0	0.075	0.0
125	Lesotho	.605	6.6	62.4	54.7	75.0	26.0	78.1	2.646	566.2 <sup>f</sup>	102.8	16.0	21.0	0.000	0.0
126	Zimbabwe	.604	8.3	54.0	64.8	81.0	33.6	86.9	2.678	356.8	102.4	18.0	32.0	0.046	0.0
127	Angola	.598	4.2	22.3 <sup>n</sup>	77.8	65.6 <sup>f</sup>	33.6	79.4	2.198	221.9	102.7	25.0	54.9 <sup>f</sup>	0.011	3.8
128	India	.595	6.3	77.6	34.6	55.0	14.7	74.4	2.396	102.7	107.5	18.0	58.0	0.018	11.6
128	Lebanon	.595	8.5	16.6	30.9	95.0	6.3	58.8	1.897	20.6	105.3	8.9 <sup>d</sup>	46.0	0.071	0.0
128	Togo	.595	3.4	44.3	69.3	70.0	19.8	81.9	1.540	399.0	102.8	13.0	48.0	0.000	10.3
131	Bangladesh	.593	6.8	43.5	40.5	75.0	20.9	49.4	1.433	123.0	105.0	23.0	71.0	0.022	28.1
131	Gabon	.593	7.8	61.3	56.5 <sup>f</sup>	84.0	17.6	95.0	2.978	226.6	102.1	22.0	33.0	0.085	0.0

WPS Index rank	Country	WPS Index score 2023	INCLUSION					JUSTICE				SECURITY			
			Education (years) 2016–2021 <sup>a</sup>	Financial inclusion (%) 2021	Employment (%) 2018–2022 <sup>a</sup>	Cellphone use (%) 2022	Parliamentary representation (%) 2023	Absence of legal discrimination (score) 2023	Access to justice (score) 2022	Maternal mortality ratio (deaths per 100,000 live births) 2020	Son bias (number of sons born per 100 girls) 2022	Intimate partner violence (%) 2018	Community safety (%) 2020–2022 <sup>a</sup>	Political violence targeting women (events per 100,000 women) 2022	Proximity to conflict (%) 2021–2022
			2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2022	2020	2022	2018	2020–2022 <sup>a</sup>	2022	2021–2022
132	Colombia	.582	9.0	56.2	53.3	89.0	29.4	84.4	2.430	74.8	104.5	12.0	36.0	0.475	66.1
134	Mozambique	.580	2.4	38.7	85.1	45.0	43.2	82.5	1.841	127.1	102.0	16.0	46.0	0.119	12.1
135	Gambia	.575	3.8	28.1	66.3	81.0	8.6	69.4	3.147	458.2	103.2	10.0	25.0	0.000	0.0
136	Côte d'Ivoire	.573	4.7	37.4	65.5	84.0	15.9	95.0	2.183	479.9	103.0	16.0	47.0	0.014	0.0
137	Guatemala	.569	5.2	34.3	43.0	74.0	19.4	73.8	1.433	95.5	103.9	7.0	47.0	0.510	11.4
138	Benin	.566	3.3	39.8	68.8	66.0	25.7	83.8	3.060	522.6 <sup>f</sup>	104.1	15.0	49.0	0.135	0.0
138	El Salvador	.566	6.8	29.2	54.1	80.0	27.4	88.8	1.558	42.8	104.8	6.0	72.0	0.482	99.1
140	Iran	.557	10.6	85.1	13.7	80.0	5.6	31.3	1.458	22.0	105.3	18.0	63.0	0.123	54.5
141	Zambia	.556	7.2	45.0	63.9	69.0	15.0	81.3	1.844	134.7	101.1	28.0	41.0	0.030	0.0
142	Mexico	.551	9.1	42.3	51.4	79.0	50.1 <sup>k</sup>	88.8	1.602	59.1	103.9	10.0	40.0	0.822	94.3
BOTTOM QUINTILE															
143	Uganda	.544	4.9	65.1	39.7	77.0	33.8	81.3	1.775	284.1	102.9	26.0	46.0	0.117	25.5
144	Sierra Leone	.543	3.5	24.8	62.6	55.0	13.0	72.5	3.069	442.8	103.3	20.0	47.0	0.000	23.0
145	Guinea	.539	1.3	24.0	49.8	79.0	29.6	73.8	1.317	553.4 <sup>f</sup>	104.5	21.0	57.0	0.014	5.3
146	Ethiopia	.521	2.2	38.7	62.3	46.0	38.8	76.9	2.537	266.7	105.5	27.0	49.0	0.031	67.4
146	Malawi	.521	4.1	38.1	71.3	57.0	20.7	80.0	2.800	380.7	101.4	17.0	41.0	0.095	0.0
148	Comoros	.519	4.0	29.3	52.8	56.0	16.7	65.0	0.964	217.0	103.2	8.0	51.0	0.480	0.0
149	Kenya	.511	6.1	75.4	75.3	81.0	24.6	80.6	2.515	530.0 <sup>f</sup>	102.2	23.0	43.0	0.209	41.0
150	Congo	.507	5.6	43.8	49.8 <sup>f</sup>	62.0	15.9	78.8	1.275	282.4	102.6	33.8 <sup>e</sup>	41.0	0.033	8.0
151	Mauritania	.506	4.6	16.1	33.9	68.0	20.3	48.1	1.072	463.8	103.3	19.7 <sup>e</sup>	49.0	0.000	0.0
152	Madagascar	.505	4.9	25.2	90.1	38.0	17.8	69.4	1.903	391.5	103.9	35.0 <sup>d</sup>	35.0	0.041	0.0
153	Djibouti	.504	4.3 <sup>f</sup>	8.8 <sup>l</sup>	16.0	56.8 <sup>f</sup>	23.1	71.3	2.230	234.5	103.7	26.9 <sup>e</sup>	48.4 <sup>f</sup>	0.000	54.4
154	Liberia	.500	3.9	44.2	52.3	61.0	9.7	81.3	2.672	652.3 <sup>f</sup>	103.9	27.0	29.0	0.038	0.0
155	Papua New Guinea	.487	4.1	58.5 <sup>f</sup>	50.0 <sup>f</sup>	72.1 <sup>f</sup>	1.7	60.0	2.274	191.8	107.7	31.0	62.2 <sup>f</sup>	0.346	22.6
156	Guinea-Bissau	.483	2.4	39.5 <sup>f</sup>	59.0	62.0 <sup>f</sup>	13.7	42.5	1.805	725.1 <sup>f</sup>	104.1	19.4 <sup>f</sup>	51.6 <sup>f</sup>	0.094	0.0
156	Palestine	.483	9.9	25.9	15.1	87.0	21.2 <sup>z</sup>	26.3	2.242	20.4	105.1	19.0	67.0	0.646	100.0
158	Burkina Faso	.481	1.6	30.7	44.9	70.0 <sup>o</sup>	16.9	82.5	2.147	263.8	104.1	11.0	45.0	0.440	60.1
158	Mali	.481	2.4	41.2	56.9	76.0	28.6	63.8	2.032	440.2	103.3	18.0	75.0	0.232	76.7
158	Pakistan	.481	3.9	13.5	25.3	32.0	20.1	58.8	1.527	154.2	105.5	16.0	56.0	0.013	40.0
161	Cameroon	.466	4.8	49.3	78.0	71.0	31.1	60.0	2.006	437.8	103.0	22.0	40.0	0.264	65.4
162	Nigeria	.465	6.1	35.0	58.9	76.0	4.2	66.3	2.526	1,047.0 <sup>f</sup>	103.8	13.0	52.0	0.179	69.6
163	Chad	.462	1.5	22.6	57.5	38.0	25.9	66.3	1.042	1,063.0 <sup>f</sup>	104.2	16.0	47.0	0.079	22.4
164	Sudan	.460	3.4	10.0 <sup>n</sup>	55.7 <sup>f</sup>	58.4 <sup>f</sup>	22.1 <sup>t</sup>	29.4	1.480	270.4	104.1	17.0	48.4 <sup>f</sup>	0.179	38.8
165	Myanmar	.451	6.1	46.2	52.7	90.0	15.0 <sup>u</sup>	58.8	1.128	178.7	106.6	11.0	32.0	0.467	97.9
166	Niger	.442	1.7	10.2	17.4	46.0	30.7	56.9	2.628	441.1	104.0	13.0	56.0	0.271	28.6
167	Haiti	.431	4.6	30.0 <sup>c</sup>	54.1 <sup>f</sup>	74.2 <sup>f</sup>	2.5 <sup>v</sup>	61.3	1.035	350.4	103.0	12.0	52.5 <sup>f</sup>	1.146	67.6
168	Iraq	.424	7.2	14.9	11.0	73.0	28.9	48.1	1.349	76.1	105.7	45.3 <sup>d</sup>	72.0	0.212	83.5
169	Somalia	.417	4.7 <sup>f</sup>	33.7 <sup>n</sup>	23.0	60.3 <sup>f</sup>	20.7	46.9	0.955	620.7 <sup>f</sup>	104.4	21.2 <sup>d</sup>	47.6 <sup>f</sup>	0.182	52.0
170	Eswatini	.415	5.7	69.2	50.2	88.0	22.1	46.3	1.627	239.6	103.0	18.0	25.0	0.826	99.9
171	Syrian Arab Republic	.407	4.6	19.6 <sup>l</sup>	41.7 <sup>f</sup>	65.0 <sup>f</sup>	10.8	40.0	0.540	29.9	105.2	23.0 <sup>d</sup>	54.8 <sup>f</sup>	1.095	100.0
172	Burundi	.394	2.5	6.7 <sup>n</sup>	89.9	58.4 <sup>f</sup>	38.9	76.3	1.420	494.4	102.5	22.0	48.4 <sup>f</sup>	0.755	100.0
173	South Sudan	.388	4.8	4.2	55.7 <sup>f</sup>	58.4 <sup>f</sup>	32.3	67.5	0.876	1,223.0 <sup>f</sup>	103.5	27.0	48.4 <sup>f</sup>	1.180	79.7
174	Congo, Dem. Rep.	.384	5.6	20.5	69.2	37.0	14.8	58.1	0.993	547.4 <sup>f</sup>	102.3	36.0	47.0	0.345	31.2
175	Central African Rep.	.378	3.1	9.7 <sup>c</sup>	55.7 <sup>f</sup>	58.4 <sup>f</sup>	12.9	76.9	1.510	835.3 <sup>f</sup>	103.3	21.0	48.4 <sup>f</sup>	0.251	88.6
176	Yemen	.287	2.9	5.4	5.5	38.0	0.3	26.9	0.795	183.4	105.9	18.2 <sup>e</sup>	41.0	0.234	88.7
177	Afghanistan	.286	2.3	4.7	25.1	37.0	27.2 <sup>w</sup>	31.9	0.372	620.4 <sup>f</sup>	105.2	35.0	39.0	0.462	91.1

Country and group	WPS Index score 2023	INCLUSION					JUSTICE				SECURITY			
		Education (years) 2016–2021*	Financial inclusion (%) 2021	Employment (%) 2018–2022*	Cellphone use (%) 2022	Parliamentary representation (%) 2023	Absence of legal discrimination (score) 2023	Access to justice (score) 2022	Maternal mortality ratio (deaths per 100,000 live births) 2020	Son bias (number of sons born per 100 girls) 2022	Intimate partner violence (%) 2018	Community safety (%) 2020–2022*	Political violence targeting women (events per 100,000 women) 2022	Proximity to conflict (%) 2021–2022
		2016–2021*	2021	2018–2022*	2022	2023	2023	2022	2020	2022	2018	2020–2022*	2022	2021–2022
OTHER COUNTRIES AND ECONOMIES NOT RANKED ON THE WPS INDEX														
Andorra	..	10.5	..	..	..	46.4	..	..	..	106.2	..	..	0.000	0.0
Antigua and Barbuda	..	..	..	..	..	22.9	66.3	..	21.3	103.2	..	..	0.000	0.0
Bahamas	..	12.7	..	..	..	20.0	81.3	..	77.1	102.8	..	..	0.000	0.0
Brunei Darussalam	..	9.2	..	64.6	..	8.8	53.1	..	44.2	107.7	..	..	0.000	0.0
Cuba	..	12.6	..	..	..	53.4	..	0.721	39.3	107.2	5.0	..	0.195	0.0
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	..	..	..	..	..	17.6	..	0.428	106.7	106.0	..	..	0.023	0.0
Dominica	..	..	..	..	..	37.5	62.5	..	..	103.6	..	..	0.000	0.0
Eritrea	..	..	..	..	..	..	69.4	0.473	321.6	103.2	..	..	0.000	6.9
Federated States of Micronesia	..	..	..	49.4	..	7.1	61.3	..	74.3	107.0	21.0	..	0.000	0.0
Grenada	..	..	..	..	..	31.0	80.6	..	21.1	104.0	8.0	..	0.000	0.0
Kiribati	..	..	..	44.1	..	6.7	76.3	..	76.3	107.1	25.0	..	0.000	0.0
Liechtenstein	..	..	..	68.6	..	28.0	..	..	..	116.3	..	..	0.000	0.0
Macao	..	..	..	77.1	..	..	..	..	..	108.0	..	..	..	0.0
Marshall Islands	..	10.7	..	33.3	..	6.1	65.6	..	..	107.0	19.0	..	0.000	0.0
Monaco	..	..	..	58.8	..	45.8	..	..	..	104.8	..	..	0.000	0.0
Nauru	..	..	..	57.4	..	10.5	..	..	..	107.2	20.0	..	0.000	0.0
Palau	..	..	..	74.5	..	6.9	56.3	..	..	107.7	14.0	..	0.000	0.0
Saint Kitts and Nevis	..	..	..	..	31.3	71.3	..	..	103.7	..	..	0.000	0.0	..
Saint Lucia	..	8.8	..	67.6	..	24.1	83.8	..	73.3	103.1	..	..	0.000	0.0
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	..	10.9	..	..	..	18.2	68.1	..	61.8	103.3	..	..	0.000	0.0
San Marino	..	10.9	..	88.4	..	33.3	80.0	..	..	106.6	..	..	0.000	0.0
Tuvalu	..	10.4	..	42.8	..	6.3	..	..	..	107.0	20.0	..	0.000	0.0
COUNTRY GROUPS AND REGIONS														
Developed Countries	.847	12.9	98.1	71.3	94.2	33.8	92.9	3.532	11.9	105.2	4.8	67.2	0.011	0.8
Central & Eastern Europe & Central Asia	.721	11.6	77.1	62.4	93.1	24.6	81.0	2.093	17.3	106.2	7.3	57.5	0.047	14.8
East Asia & the Pacific	.671	7.6	78.4	59.0	95.0	21.2	76.9	2.013	77.4	109.1	8.5	82.9	0.022	8.5
Latin America & the Caribbean	.630	9.0	63.4	55.7	86.1	34.5	85.1	2.061	85.0	104.4	8.0	39.5	0.381	43.5
Middle East & North Africa	.565	8.6	41.2	21.6	80.5	15.3	48.8	1.694	53.8	105.3	18.3	65.5	0.126	34.2
South Asia	.581	6.0	65.8	34.1	54.9	19.3	69.2	2.163	135.3	106.7	18.3	58.6	0.028	18.1
Sub-Saharan Africa	.498	5.0	40.8	62.5	65.6	26.4	71.7	2.205	506.9	103.4	20.5	47.6	0.151	37.0
Fragile States	.453	5.4	34.3	53.5	64.6	21.9	62.2	1.791	539.7	104.1	20.8	49.1	0.268	61.0
World	.650	8.3	70.5	53.1	80.4	26.3	75.7	2.267	212.0	105.7	12.9	64.3	0.080	19.0

### Notes to table

Because of updates to the structure of the WPS Index, scores for 2023/24 should not be compared with those for previous years.

- .. Not available or not complete.
- a. Data refer to the most recent year during the period specified.
- b. In calculating the WPS Index score, the maternal mortality ratio is floored at 4.
- c. Refers to 2017.
- d. Data are from the UN Women Global Database on Violence Against Women (<http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en>). Based on Demographic and Health Survey data.
- e. Modeled estimates by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (<http://ghdx.healthdata.org/record/ihme-data/global-sustainable-development-goals-sdg-intimate-partner-violence-indicator-1990-2019>).
- f. Imputed value, calculated as the mean of the regional and the income group averages.
- g. Based on the counts reported by the Taipei Times (<https://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2022/01/24/2003771965>).
- h. Refers to the 2016 election for the Legislative Council of Hong Kong. See Research Office Legislative Council Secretariat (2018).
- i. Refers to 2020.
- j. Refers to 2019.
- k. In calculating the WPS Index score, parliamentary representation is capped at 50 percent.
- l. Refers to 2011.
- m. In calculating the WPS Index score, son bias is capped at 1.10.
- n. Refers to 2014.
- o. Refers to 2021.
- p. Based on the counts reported for the House of Representatives at <https://www.camara.pr.gov/page-team/> and the counts reported for the Senate at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/27th\\_Senate\\_of\\_Puerto\\_Rico](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/27th_Senate_of_Puerto_Rico).
- q. Venezuela's Parliament elected 2015 was suspended in March 2017.
- r. In calculating the WPS Index score, the maternal mortality ratio is capped at 500.
- s. Represents the female share of seats in deliberative bodies of the local councils of the West Bank (SDG 5.5.1) and refers to 2018.
- t. Sudan's National Assembly (Parliament) elected in April 2015 was suspended in October 2019.
- u. Myanmar's Parliament elected in November 2020 was suspended in February 2021.
- v. Haiti's Parliament elected in October 2015 was dissolved in 2021.
- w. Afghanistan's Parliament elected in October 2018 was dissolved in August 2021.

### Definitions

- Education:** Average number of years of education of women ages 25 and older.
- Financial inclusion:** Percentage of women and girls ages 15 and older who report having an individual or joint account at a bank or other financial institution or who report using a mobile money service.
- Employment:** Female employment to population ratio—that is, the number of employed women ages 25–64, expressed as a percentage of the total female population in that age group.
- Cellphone use:** Percentage of women and girls ages 15 and older who report having a mobile phone that they use to make and receive personal calls.
- Parliamentary representation:** Percentage of total seats in lower and upper houses of the national parliament that are held by women.
- Absence of legal discrimination:** Extent (on a scale of 0 to 100) to which laws and regulations differentiate between women and men or protect women's opportunities across 35 aspects of life and work.
- Access to justice:** Extent (on a scale of 0 to 4) to which women are able to exercise justice by bringing cases before the courts without risk to their personal safety, participating in a free trial, and seeking redress if public authorities violate their rights.
- Maternal mortality ratio:** Number of deaths due to pregnancy-related causes per 100,000 live births.
- Son bias:** Extent to which the sex ratio at birth (the ratio of the number of boys born to the number of girls born) exceeds the natural demographic rate of 1.05. The table reports the number of boys born for every 100 girls born, with 105 boys being the natural demographic rate.
- Intimate partner violence:** Percentage of ever-partnered women who experienced physical or sexual violence committed by their intimate partner in the 12 months preceding the survey in which the information was gathered.
- Community safety:** Percentage of women and girls ages 15 and older who responded "Yes" to the Gallup World Poll question "Do you feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where you live?"
- Political violence targeting women:** The number of civilian-targeting events in which women or girls are the primary target of the violence, expressed as the number of events per 100,000 women. A political violence event is assumed to be targeting women when the main victims are all women or girls, a majority of victims are women or girls, or the primary target is a woman or girl.
- Proximity to conflict:** Percentage of women who lived within 50 kilometers of at least one armed conflict event during the period specified.

**Main data sources**

**WPS Index value:** Calculated by the authors based on the methodology outlined in in appendix 1.

**WPS Index rank:** Based on WPS Index value.

**Education:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics (<http://data.uis.unesco.org/>). Accessed April 2023.

**Financial inclusion:** World Bank Global Findex Database (<https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/globalfindex>). Accessed April 2023.

**Employment:** International Labour Organization (ILO) (<https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/employment/>). Accessed April 2023.

**Cellphone use:** Gallup 2023 World Poll. Accessed April 2023.

**Parliamentary representation:** Inter-Parliamentary Union. Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments (<https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=3&year=2023>). Accessed April 2023.

**Absence of legal discrimination:** World Bank Women, Business and the Law database (<https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/wbl>). Accessed April 2023.

**Access to justice:** Varieties of Democracy dataset, version 1.3 (<https://www.v-dem.net/data/the-v-dem-dataset/>). Accessed April 2023.

**Maternal mortality ratio:** UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicator database, Indicator 3.1.1 (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/database>). Accessed April 2023.

**Son bias:** United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs World Population Prospects, 2022 Revision (<https://population.un.org/wpp/>). Accessed April 2022. The official name of the indicator is “sex ratio at birth.”

**Intimate partner violence:** UN SDG indicators database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/database>). Accessed April 2023.

**Perception of community safety:** Gallup 2023 World Poll. Accessed April 2023.

**Political violence targeting women:** Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project 2023.

**Proximity to conflict:** Uppsala Conflict Data Program Georeferenced Event Dataset, Global version 23.1. Accessed July 2023. Calculated by PRIO. See also Davies, Shawn, Therese Pettersson, and Magnus Öberg. 2023. “Organized Violence 1989–2022 and the Return of Conflicts between States?” *Journal of Peace Research* 60 (4) and Sundberg, Ralph, and Erik Melander. 2013. “Introducing the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset.” *Journal of Peace Research* 50 (4).

## APPENDIX 1

# Index methodology

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Index is a summary measure capturing changes in women’s status across three dimensions: inclusion, justice, and security. It is estimated as the geometric mean of the subindices computed for each of the three dimensions, while each subindex is the arithmetic mean of the normalized indicators for each dimension. WPS Index indicators, definitions, reference years, and primary sources for the 2023/24 WPS Index are presented in table A1.1.

### Structural updates to the WPS Index

The 2023/24 WPS Index is based on 13 indicators covering three dimensions of women’s status: inclusion, justice, and security. The 2023/24 WPS Index includes four indicators that are new or that replace a related indicator in previous editions of the index. The two new indicators are maternal mortality and political violence targeting women, and the two replacement indicators are access to justice (replaces discriminatory gender norms) and proximity to conflict (replaces organized violence).

The indicator for women’s employment has been updated. Previous editions of the WPS Index considered the employment-to-population ratio for women ages 25 and older. This edition uses the employment-to-population ratio for women ages 25–64, to better capture working-age women (see box A1.1 for an explanation of the calculation of the ratio).

The selection of indicators for the WPS Index was guided by conceptual relevance, reliability, consistency, and data availability, coverage, and timeliness. Indicators were assigned to one of the three dimensions based primarily on conceptual relevance.<sup>1</sup>

Results of a multivariate analysis confirm to a large extent that the assignment of indicators to dimensions is consistent with the actual data structure. Some results of the analysis are given below in the section on multidimensionality and internal consistency.

A feasibility study found that the new indicators introduced in the justice and security dimensions did not significantly change the top and bottom rankings on the 2023/24 WPS Index compared with the rankings on the 2021/22 WPS Index.<sup>2</sup> However, there are some significant changes in the middle of the table. For example, El Salvador, Israel, Mexico, Philippines, and Ukraine fell more than 40 ranks, while Malaysia, Panama, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam rose 30 or more ranks.

**TABLE A1.1 Indicators, definitions, reference years, and primary sources for the 2023/24 WPS Index**

DIMENSION AND INDICATOR	DEFINITION	REFERENCE YEAR	PRIMARY SOURCE	ACCESS DATE
<b>INCLUSION</b>				
Education (years)	Average number of years of education of women ages 25 and older	2016–2021	UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2023	April 2023
Financial inclusion (%)	Percentage of women and girls ages 15 and older who report having an individual or joint account at a bank or other financial institution or who report using a mobile money service	2021	World Bank 2022	April 2023
Employment (%)	Female employment to population ratio—that is, the number of employed women ages 25–64, expressed as a percentage of the total female population in that age group	2018–2022	ILO 2023	April 2023
Cellphone use (%)	Percentage of women and girls ages 15 and older who report having a mobile phone that they use to make and receive personal calls	2022	Gallup 2023	April 2023
Parliamentary representation (%)	Percentage of total seats in lower and upper houses of the national parliament that are held by women	2023	IPU 2023	April 2023
<b>JUSTICE</b>				
Absence of legal discrimination (score)	Extent (on a scale of 0–100) to which laws and regulations differentiate between women and men or protect women’s opportunities across 35 aspects of life and work	2023	World Bank 2023c	April 2023
Access to justice (score)	Extent (on a scale of 0–4) to which women are able to exercise justice by bringing cases before the courts without risk to their personal safety, participating in a free trial, and seeking redress if public authorities violate their rights	2022	V-Dem 2023	April 2023
Maternal mortality (ratio)	Number of maternal deaths due to pregnancy-related causes per 100,000 live births	2020	UN 2023a	April 2023
Son bias (ratio)	Extent to which the sex ratio at birth (ratio of number of boys born to number of girls born) exceeds the natural demographic rate of 1.05 <sup>a</sup> (results are reported as the number of boys born for every 100 girls born)	2022	UNDESA 2023	April 2023
<b>SECURITY</b>				
Intimate partner violence (%)	Percentage of ever-partnered women who experienced physical or sexual violence committed by their intimate partner in the 12 months preceding the survey in which the information was gathered	2018	UN 2023b	April 2023
Community safety (%)	Percentage of women and girls ages 15 and older who responded “Yes” to the Gallup World Poll question “Do you feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where you live?”	2020–2022	Gallup 2023	April 2023
Political violence targeting women (PVTW)	Number of civilian-targeting events in which women or girls are the primary target of the violence, expressed as the number of events per 100,000 women	2022	ACLED 2023	April 2023
Proximity to conflict (%)	Percentage of women who lived within 50 kilometers of at least one armed conflict event during the period 2021–2022	2021–2022	UCDP 2023; Davies, Pettersson, and Öberg 2023	July 2023

a. Demographers estimate a natural sex ratio at birth to be 1.05 male births per female birth. We estimate “missing girls” ( $G$ ) using the following formula:  $G = (X/F) \cdot M$ , where  $X$  is the difference between the number of boys and girls born in excess of 1.05,  $F$  is the total number of girls born, and  $M$  is the total number of boys born. We multiply this by 100 to estimate the number of boys born for every 100 girls.

Source: Authors.

### BOX A1.1 Calculation of the employment-to-population ratio for women ages 25–64

The employment indicator is based on estimates of employment from national labor force surveys, as compiled and reported by the International Labour Organization (ILO). ILO reports the employment-to-population ratio by sex for several age groups: 15–24, 15–64, 15+, and 25+ but not for the age group 15–64 used to compute WPS Index scores. We used the ILO data for these age bands and population estimates reported for 10-year age bands (25–34, 35–44,

45–54 and 55–64) to calculate the employment-to-population ratios for women ages 25–64. The employment-to-population ratio ( $E/P$ ) for women ages 25–64 ( $E/P_{25-64}$ ) is computed as:

$$E/P_{25-64} = 100 \cdot \frac{E_{25-34} + E_{35-44} + E_{45-54} + E_{55-64}}{P_{25-34} + P_{35-44} + P_{45-54} + P_{55-64}}$$

### Normalization and aggregation

Normalization and aggregation, the two steps required to estimate any index, are described below, along with a worked-through example. The policy and academic literature on composite indices provides a robust foundation for our approach.<sup>3</sup>

#### Normalization

Normalization makes data comparable across indicators so that the information can be combined in a meaningful way. All indicators need to be presented so that higher or lower values consistently mean that performance is better or worse. That means that some indicators need to be transformed. A typical approach is to rescale the set of values from 0 to 1 (or 0 to 100), with 0 denoting the worst performance and 1 (or 100) denoting the best. This is done for the Sustainable Development Goals Index developed by Schmidt-Traub et al. (2017), the Africa Gender Equality Index developed by the African Development Bank in 2015, and the Human Development Index published by the United Nations Development Programme annually since 1990, for example.

Many of the indicators for the WPS Index fall naturally between 0 and 100—notably, those presented as percentages (financial inclusion, employment, cellphone use, absence of legal discrimination, intimate partner violence, community safety, and proximity to conflict). Indicators with a broader range of observations create challenges. We use aspirational maximum values of 15 years for education (mean years of schooling), 50 percent for parliamentary representation, and 4 for access to justice. We use slightly augmented observed maximum values for intimate partner violence (50 percent) and political violence targeting women (1.2). The bounds are laid out in table A1.2.

Rescaling is sensitive to the choice of bounds and to extreme values (outliers) at both tails of the distribution. Where the observed data range for an indicator is wide, the indicator acquires a larger implicit weight that, together with the assigned explicit weight, defines the relative contribution of the indicator to the WPS Index. Setting upper and lower bounds can reduce spurious variability, although this needs to be done with care.

We used capping to avoid allowing outliers to have undue influence on the values of the subindices and the aggregate index. The maternal mortality ratio is capped at 500, meaning that any country whose ratio is equal to or greater than 500 gets the normalized score of this indicator equal to 0. There are 13 such countries (Afghanistan, Benin, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Nigeria, Somalia, and

South Sudan). At the other end of the distribution, any country with a maternal mortality ratio less than or equal to 4 gets the normalized score of 1. There are 11 such countries (Australia, Belarus, Czechia, Iceland, Israel, Malta, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Seychelles, and Spain). This two-sided capping means that all countries with 500 or more maternal deaths per 100,000 live births are considered to operate at the same level of negligence of maternal health and that a difference in maternal mortality below 4 is a random effect rather than the effect of a difference in healthcare systems. For parliamentary representation, the aspirational level of 50 percent of seats held by women is also a capping level for three countries (Mexico, Nicaragua, and Rwanda), where women have greater than 50 percent representation in parliament. In the case of son bias (sex ratio at birth), the cap is set at 1.10. Three countries (Azerbaijan, China, and Vietnam) with a sex ratio at birth greater than 1.10 get the normalized score equal to 0 for this indicator.

Unless otherwise indicated in the worked-through example of Germany below, indicators are normalized as:

$$\text{Normalized indicator score} = \frac{\text{Actual value} - \text{lower bound}}{\text{Upper bound} - \text{lower bound}}$$

### Aggregation

The dimensions and indicators of the WPS Index are considered integrated, indivisible, and equally important. We therefore assign equal weight to inclusion, justice, and security and equal weight to each indicator within these three dimensions.

Aggregation proceeded in two steps. First, the normalized indicators (scores) were aggregated for each dimension into a dimensional subindex (figure A1.1). Arithmetic means were used to aggregate indicator scores within each dimension because the indicators can be considered complementary. The relative weight of each indicator in a dimension is inversely proportional to the number of indicators in that dimension.

**TABLE A1.2 Lower and upper bounds for component indicators of the 2023/24 WPS Index**

DIMENSION AND INDICATOR	LOWER BOUND	UPPER BOUND
<b>INCLUSION</b>		
Education (years)	0	15
Employment (%)	0	100
Financial inclusion (%)	0	100
Cellphone use (%)	0	100
Parliamentary representation (%)	0	50
<b>JUSTICE</b>		
Absence of legal discrimination (score)	0	100
Access to justice (score)	0	4
Maternal mortality (maternal deaths per 100,000 live births)	4	500
Son bias (ratio)	1.10*	1.00
<b>SECURITY</b>		
Intimate partner violence (%)	50*	0
Community safety (%)	0	100
Political violence targeting women (PVTW events per 100,000 female population)	1.2*	0
Proximity to conflict (% of women within 50 km)	100*	0

\* Worst-case scenario (the smaller, the better).

Note: See statistical table 1 for definitions and data sources for the indicators.

Source: Authors.

- *Inclusion subindex* = (Education score + Financial inclusion score + Employment score + Cellphone use score + Parliamentary representation score) ÷ 5.
  - *Justice subindex* = (Absence of legal discrimination score + Access to justice score + Maternal mortality score + Son bias ) ÷ 4.
  - *Security subindex* = (Intimate partner violence score + Community safety score + Political violence targeting women score + Proximity to conflict score) ÷ 4.
- Then, the subindices were aggregated by geometric mean across all three dimensions into the WPS Index:
- $WPS\ Index = (Inclusion\ subindex)^{1/3} \times (Justice\ subindex)^{1/3} \times (Security\ subindex)^{1/3}$ .

The geometric mean reduces the degree of substitutability between dimensions and ensures, for example, that a 1 percent decline in the inclusion subindex has the same impact on the WPS Index as a 1 percent decline in the justice or security subindex. The geometric aggregation is more respectful of the intrinsic differences across the dimensions than a simple average, and in that way it captures the importance of performing well on all three dimensions.

In this edition, WPS Index scores rounded to three decimals are used to generate country rankings, so countries with the same score at three decimal places are listed with tied ranks. Countries with the same tied ranks are ordered alphabetically.

Statistical table 1 presents weighted aggregates for country groupings—Developed Countries and Fragile States—and developing country regions. Countries in the Fragile States group are also included in their regional group. The weights are population counts corresponding to the definition of each indicator. For example, for education, the weights are the female population ages 25 and older; for intimate partner violence, the weights are female population ages 15–49; for parliamentary representation, the weights are the total number of parliamentary seats (available from the International Parliamentary Union database); and so on.

#### ***A worked-through example: Germany***

We use Germany’s indicators and scores from statistical table 1 to illustrate the application of this method (table A1.3).

The arithmetic mean of the indicator scores within each dimension is used to aggregate the normalized indicator scores for the dimension, and then the geometric mean is used to aggregate the three subindices into the WPS Index, as follows:

#### ***Inclusion subindex***

- Education =  $(13.8 - 0) \div (15 - 0) = 0.920$
- Financial inclusion =  $(100.0 - 0) \div (100 - 0) = 1.000$
- Employment =  $(76.9 - 0) \div (100 - 0) = 0.769$
- Cellphone use =  $(88.0 - 0) \div (100 - 0) = 0.880$
- Parliamentary representation =  $(35.5 - 0) \div (50 - 0) = 0.710$

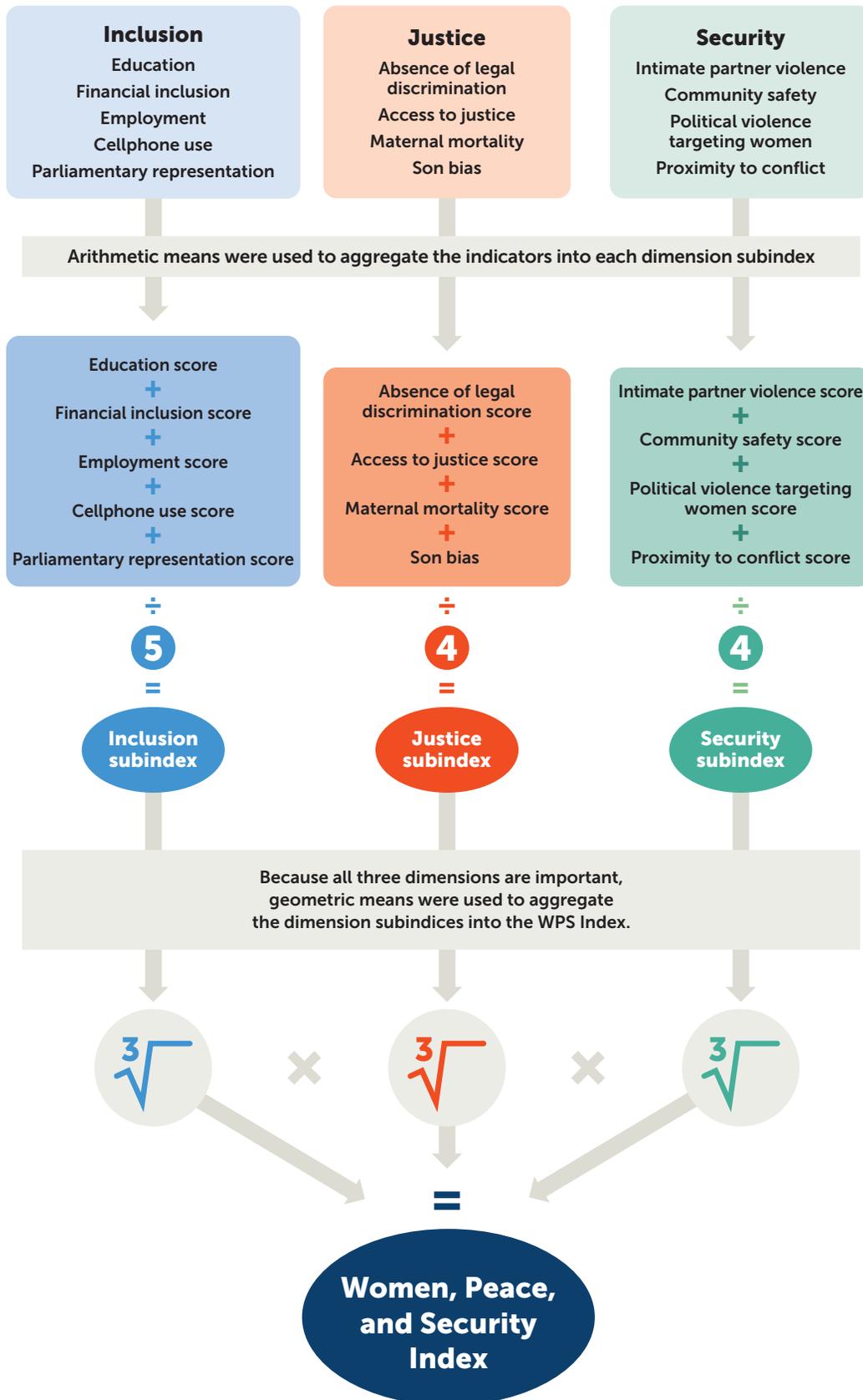
**Inclusion subindex score =  $(0.920 + 1.000 + 0.769 + 0.880 + 0.710) \div 5 = 0.856$**

#### ***Justice subindex***

- Absence of legal discrimination =  $(100.0 - 0) \div (100 - 0) = 1.000$
- Access to justice =  $(3.901 - 0) \div (4 - 0) = 0.975$
- Maternal mortality =  $(500 - 4.4) \div (500 - 4) = 0.999$
- Son bias =  $(110.0 - 105.6) \div (110 - 105) = 0.880$

**Justice subindex score =  $(1.000 + 0.975 + 0.999 + 0.880) \div 4 = 0.964$**

**FIGURE A1.1** Construction of the Women, Peace, and Security Index



Source: Authors.

**TABLE A1.3 Illustration of WPS Index aggregation using Germany as an example**

DIMENSION AND INDICATOR	VALUE
<b>INCLUSION</b>	
Education (years)	13.8
Financial inclusion (%)	100.0
Employment (%)	76.9
Cellphone use (%)	88.0
Parliamentary representation (%)	35.5
<b>JUSTICE</b>	
Absence of legal discrimination (score, 0–100)	100.0
Access to justice (score, 0–4)	3.901
Maternal mortality (deaths per 100,000 live births)	4.4
Son bias (ratio)	1.056
<b>SECURITY</b>	
Intimate partner violence (%)	3.0
Community safety (%)	71.0
Political violence targeting women (number of PVTW events per 100,000 women)	0.007
Proximity to conflict (%)	0.0

Note: See statistical table 1 for the definitions and sources of the indicators.  
Source: Authors.

#### Security subindex

- Intimate partner violence =  $(50 - 3) \div (50 - 0) = 0.940$
- Community safety =  $(71.0 - 0) \div (100 - 0) = 0.710$
- Political violence targeting women<sup>4</sup> (PVTW) =  $[1 - (0.007 \div 1.2)^{1/3}]^3 = 0.551$
- Proximity to conflict =  $1 - 0 \div 100 = 1.000$

**Security subindex score =  $(0.940 + 0.710 + 0.551 + 1.000) \div 4 = 0.800$**

**Germany's WPS Index score =  $(0.856 \times 0.964 \times 0.800)^{1/3} = 0.871$**

#### Treatment of missing values

Missing values are imputed using one of three methods:

- Taking data on the same indicator from an earlier period than the specified period, thus using a reference interval rather than a reference year; for example, employment data for 2018–2022 or education data for 2016–2021.
- Collecting data from alternative sources, such as the United Nations Development Programme's estimate of mean years of schooling for the adult population.
- Applying an average of the average values of an indicator for the country groups to the country with a missing value belongs, such as developing country region, income group, human development group, or fragile states group.

These approaches are widely considered to be transparent and easy to explain or replicate. Table A.1.4 provides a summary of imputations by method used in calculating the WPS Index:

#### Multidimensionality and internal consistency of the WPS Index data

It is important to examine whether the assignment of indicators to the three dimensions is consistent with the correlation structure of the WPS Index dataset. We computed Cronbach's alpha (CA), a measure of the internal consistency of

**TABLE A1.4 A summary of imputations of the WPS Index dataset**

DIMENSION AND INDICATOR	IMPUTED FROM AN EARLIER YEAR	ALTERNATIVE SOURCE	IMPUTED AVERAGES
<b>INCLUSION</b>			
Education			7
Financial inclusion	22		15
Employment			15
Cellphone use	5		31
Parliamentary representation	7	2	
<b>JUSTICE</b>			
Absence of legal discrimination			1
Access to justice			4
Maternal mortality			3
Son bias			1
<b>SECURITY</b>			
Intimate partner violence		24	4
Community safety	3		32
Political violence targeting women			
Proximity to conflict			

Source: Authors.

normalized indicators assigned to each dimension, both including all indicators in a dimension in the analysis and excluding individual indicators. When an indicator is excluded, a decrease in the CA value means that the indicator is well assigned to the dimension and contributes to the internal consistency of the dimensional dataset, while an increase in the CA value means that the indicator does not contribute to the internal consistency of the dimensional dataset and could perhaps be assigned to another dimension.

The results reveal that the inclusion dimension is the most (internally) consistent (CA = 0.775), followed by the security dimension (CA = 0.629), with moderately high consistency, and the justice dimension (CA = 0.541), with moderate consistency. The CA analysis found that the inclusion dimension is more (internally) consistent without parliamentary representation, the justice dimension is more consistent without son bias, and intimate partner violence neither increases nor reduces the internal consistency of the security dimension. The results of the CA analysis confirm that the structure of the WPS Index satisfies the basic requirements for internal consistency, especially given the limited availability of sex-disaggregated data with global coverage. Detailed results are available on request by emailing [giwps@georgetown.edu](mailto:giwps@georgetown.edu).

In addition to CA analysis, we conducted Principal Component Analysis (PCA) of the WPS Index dataset. Results show that the first three principal components (PCs) account for about 66 percent of the variation in all 13 WPS Index indicators. The number of PCs coincides with the number of dimensions to which the 13 indicators were assigned. Furthermore, the PCA confirmed the findings from the CA analysis that parliamentary representation and son bias are only weakly related to the corresponding PC and that the two new security indicators—political violence targeting women and proximity to conflict—seem to fit well within the measured concept of women’s status. Full details of the PCA analysis are available on request by emailing [giwps@georgetown.edu](mailto:giwps@georgetown.edu).

## APPENDIX 2

# Country groups and regions

### Developed Countries

Australia  
Austria  
Belgium  
Canada  
Denmark  
Finland  
France  
Germany  
Greece  
Iceland  
Ireland  
Israel  
Italy  
Japan  
Luxembourg  
Malta  
Netherlands  
New Zealand  
Norway  
Portugal  
Singapore  
South Korea  
Spain  
Sweden  
Switzerland  
United Kingdom  
United States of America

### Fragile States<sup>a</sup>

Afghanistan  
Afghanistan  
Burkina Faso  
Burundi  
Cameroon  
Central African Republic  
Chad  
Comoros  
Congo  
Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Ethiopia  
Guinea-Bissau  
Haiti  
Iraq  
Kosovo  
Lebanon  
Libya  
Mali  
Mozambique  
Myanmar  
Niger  
Nigeria  
Palestine  
Papua New Guinea  
Solomon Islands  
Somalia  
South Sudan

Sudan  
Syrian Arab Republic  
Timor-Leste  
Ukraine  
Venezuela  
Yemen  
Zimbabwe

### Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Albania  
Armenia  
Azerbaijan  
Belarus  
Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Bulgaria  
Croatia  
Cyprus  
Czechia  
Estonia  
Georgia  
Hungary  
Kazakhstan  
Kosovo  
Kyrgyzstan  
Latvia  
Lithuania  
Moldova  
Montenegro  
North Macedonia  
Poland  
Romania  
Russian Federation  
Serbia  
Slovakia  
Slovenia  
Tajikistan  
Türkiye  
Turkmenistan  
Ukraine  
Uzbekistan

### East Asia and the Pacific

Cambodia  
China  
China  
Fiji  
Hong Kong  
Indonesia  
Lao PDR  
Malaysia  
Mongolia  
Myanmar  
Papua New Guinea  
Philippines  
Samoa  
Solomon Islands  
Taiwan

Thailand  
Timor-Leste  
Tonga  
Vanuatu  
Viet Nam

### Latin America and the Caribbean

Argentina  
Barbados  
Belize  
Bolivia  
Brazil  
Chile  
Colombia  
Costa Rica  
Dominican Republic  
Ecuador  
El Salvador  
Guatemala  
Guyana  
Haiti  
Honduras  
Jamaica  
Mexico  
Nicaragua  
Panama  
Paraguay  
Peru  
Puerto Rico  
Suriname  
Trinidad and Tobago  
Uruguay  
Venezuela

### Middle East and North Africa

Algeria  
Bahrain  
Egypt  
Iran  
Iraq  
Jordan  
Kuwait  
Lebanon  
Libya  
Morocco  
Oman  
Palestine  
Qatar  
Saudi Arabia  
Syria  
Tunisia  
United Arab Emirates  
Yemen

### South Asia

Afghanistan

Bangladesh  
Bhutan  
India  
Maldives  
Nepal  
Pakistan  
Sri Lanka

### Sub-Saharan Africa

Angola  
Benin  
Botswana  
Burkina Faso  
Burundi  
Cabo Verde  
Cameroon  
Central African Republic  
Chad  
Comoros  
Congo  
Côte d'Ivoire  
Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Djibouti  
Equatorial Guinea  
Eswatini  
Ethiopia  
Gabon  
Gambia  
Ghana  
Guinea  
Guinea-Bissau  
Kenya  
Lesotho  
Liberia  
Madagascar  
Malawi  
Mali  
Mauritania  
Mauritius  
Mozambique  
Namibia  
Niger  
Nigeria  
Rwanda  
Sao Tome and Principe  
Senegal  
Seychelles  
Sierra Leone  
Somalia  
South Africa  
South Sudan  
Sudan  
Tanzania  
Togo  
Uganda  
Zambia  
Zimbabwe

a. Classified by the World Bank Group as fragile and conflict-affected; see definition here: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/harmonized-list-of-fragile-situations>.

Note: Only countries ranked on the index are included.



# Notes

1. World Bank 2022.
2. Klapper, Singer, and Ansar 2021.
3. Morgan, O'Donnell, and Buvinic 2023.
4. Coppedge et al. 2022.
5. World Bank 2023a.
6. OHCHR 2022a.
7. UN Women n.d.
8. UN Women and WHO 2022; UN Press 2021.
9. The finding is based on correlation analysis conducted by the authors using GDP data from the World Bank (<https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/search/dataset/0038130>).
10. Rodriguez Mega and Suazo 2023.
11. Rédaction Africanews 2023.
12. Mednick 2023.
13. Kuria 2023.
14. Athumani 2023.
15. Front Line Defenders 2022.
16. Kreft and Nagel 2023.
17. Kreft 2023.
18. Kreft and Nagel 2023.
19. OHCHR 2022b.
20. Human Rights Watch 2022.
21. Baaz and Stern 2023.
22. Schneider 2023.
23. Africanews 2022.
24. IRI and NDI 2022.
25. Reinsberg 2020.
26. Matfess and Nagel 2023.
27. UNFPA n.d.
28. Posetti and Shabbir 2022.
29. Posetti, Bell, and Brown 2020.
30. Posetti and Shabbir 2022.
31. Tenove and Tworek 2020.
32. U.S. Institute of Peace 2020.
33. Human Rights Watch 2020.
34. Krause, Krause, and Bränfors 2018.
35. Ur-Rehman 2021.
36. Kumar 2023.
37. Kotsadam and Østby 2019.
38. Ekhatior-Mobayode et al. 2020; Svallfors 2023.
39. OHCHR 2017.
40. Quek 2019.
41. UCDP 2023; Davies, Pettersson, and Öberg 2023; Sundberg and Melander 2013.
42. Pichon 2022. Conflict in 2022 was predominantly between the government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front, but it also involved armed groups from neighboring Ethiopian provinces and Eritrea.
43. Lacina and Gleditsch 2006; Davies, Pettersson, and Öberg 2023.
44. OECD 2017.
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46. Bouvier 2016.
47. Kelly et al. 2021.
48. In Colombia, subnational units are referred to as departments.
49. Rosero and Herrera Araujo 2018.
50. UNICEF n.d.
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## Chapter 1

1. See appendix 1 for a full discussion of the methodology.
2. See statistical table 1 for detailed definitions and data sources.
3. World Bank 2022.
4. UNECA 2021.
5. Méndez Dardón 2023; NDI 2022.
6. World Bank 2022.
7. Klapper, Singer, and Ansar 2021.
8. Morgan, O'Donnell, and Buvinic 2023.
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11. Safi n.d.
12. Abdelaziz and Kennedy 2022.
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14. Gossman 2021.
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  20. OHCHR 2022a.
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  23. Yakuba and Salisu 2018.
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  25. Yaya, Odusina, and Bishwajit 2019.
  26. Chong 2016.
  27. Jawad et al. 2021.
  28. Engelbrecht and Dahir 2023.
  29. Mirzazada et al. 2020.
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  31. Alabi et al. 2023.
  32. Alabi et al. 2023.
  33. UN Women n.d.
  34. UN Women and WHO 2022; UN Press 2021.
  35. The finding is based on correlation analysis conducted by the authors using GDP data from the World Bank (<https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/search/dataset/0038130>).
  36. UNDP 2022.
  37. ND-GAIN 2023.
  38. Schueman n.d.
  39. FFP 2023.
  40. World Justice Project 2022.
  41. GDP per capita represents a country's total income divided by the population. GDP data come from the World Bank (2023d).
- Chapter 2**
1. A political agenda refers to a set of issues, goals, and policies that a political party, organization, social group, or individual seeks to address or promote.
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  3. ACLED 2023.
  4. Rodriguez Mega and Suazo 2023.
  5. Rédaction Africanews 2023.
  6. Mednick 2023.
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  12. BBC News 2022.
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  25. Obert 2022.
  26. Associated Press 2022.
  27. Schneider 2023.
  28. Africanews 2022.
  29. IRI and NDI 2022.
  30. Krook and Hubbard 2018.
  31. Stand to End Rape 2022.
  32. Reinsberg 2020.
  33. Matfess and Nagel.
  34. UNFPA n.d.
  35. Posetti and Shabbir 2022.
  36. Posetti, Bell, and Brown 2020.
  37. Posetti and Shabbir 2022.
  38. Tenove and Tworek 2020.
  39. Shabbir et al. 2021.
  40. Simmons and Fourel 2022.
  41. Merkur'yeva and Coalson 2021.
  42. Shabbir et al. 2021.
  43. OSCE PA 2021.
  44. Shabbir et al. 2021.
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  46. Di Meco 2023.
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  49. Thomas 2022.
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  53. Van Sant, Fredheim, and Bergmanis-Koráts 2021.
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  57. Mackintosh and Gupta 2020.
  58. Powell and Dent 2023.
  59. Di Meco and Wilfore 2021.
  60. Mackintosh and Gupta 2020.
  61. Mendonca and Woodyatt 2021.
  62. Cooper 2020.
  63. UN Women 2023b.
  64. Seifert 2023.
  65. ACLED 2023.
  66. ACLED 2023.
  67. European Asylum Support Office 2021.
  68. International Crisis Group 2020.
  69. ACLED 2023.
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  73. ACLED 2023.
  74. BBC News 2020.
  75. Kishi, Pavlik, and Matfess 2019.
  76. Calculated using data from ACLED (2023).
  77. ACLED 2023.
  78. ACLED 2023.
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  80. Justice for Colombia 2022.
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  82. ACLED 2023. PVTW events include sexual violence, nonsexual attacks, abductions, mob violence, and explosions targeting women.
  83. ACLED 2023.
  84. OHCHR 2022d.
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  110. Cocom and Savage 2021.
  111. Ortiz et al. 2023.
  112. Barnhart et al. 2020.
  113. Tusalem 2022.
  114. Matfess, Kishi, and Berry 2023.
  115. Chenoweth and Marks 2022; Dahlum and Wig 2020.
  116. Said 2023.
  117. UN Peacemaker n.d.
  118. U.S. Institute of Peace 2020.
  119. Human Rights Watch 2020.
  120. Krause, Krause, and Bränfors 2018.
  121. Bigio and Vogelstein 2017.
  122. Nylander and Salvesen 2017.
  123. Rahmaty 2021.
  124. UNSC 2019.
  125. Kezie-Nwoha and Emelonye 2020.

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129. Bjarnegård, Zetterberg, and Bardall 2023.
130. Posetti and Shabbir 2022.
131. Posetti et al. 2020.
- Chapter 3**
1. Davies, Pettersson, and Öberg 2023; Sundberg and Melander 2013; UCDP 2023.
  2. Urdal and Che Chi 2013.
  3. Bendavid et al. 2021.
  4. Unless otherwise noted, analysis of conflict trends is drawn from Davies, Pettersson, and Öberg (2023) and Gleditsch et al. (2002).
  5. Pichon 2022. Conflict in 2022 was predominantly between the government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front, but it also involved armed groups from neighboring Ethiopian provinces and Eritrea.
  6. Davies, Pettersson, and Öberg 2023; Lacina and Gleditsch 2006.
  7. Kotsadam and Østby 2019.
  8. Ekhtor-Mobayode et al. 2020; Svallfors 2023.
  9. OHCHR 2017.
  10. Quek 2019.
  11. Davis 2020.
  12. In Colombia, subnational units are referred to as departments.
  13. Kelly et al. 2021.
  14. USAID 2022.
  15. Transitional justice refers to how societies respond to the legacies of massive and serious human rights violations to prevent recurrence. Isacson 2021.
  16. UN Women 2016.
  17. Goldscheid 2020.
  18. Mersky 2020.
  19. Isacson 2021.
  20. García Pinzón 2021.
  21. UN Press 2023.
  22. UN Press 2023.
  23. UN Press 2023.
  24. OECD 2017.
  25. OECD 2020.
  26. Inter-American Commission on Human Rights n.d.
  27. Inter-American Commission on Human Rights n.d.
  28. Bouvier 2016.
  29. Goldscheid 2020.
  30. OECD 2020.
  31. Bouvier 2016.
  32. Kelly et al. 2021.
  33. CFR 2017.
  34. CFR 2017.
  35. Bigio and Vogelstein 2017.
  36. Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack 2018.
  37. Alvarez-Sierra 2018.
  38. Cáceres Manrique and Ruiz-Rodríguez 2018.
  39. Rosero and Herrera Araujo 2018.
  40. Roth, Guberek, and Hoover Green 2011.
  41. ICRC 2023.
  42. Inter-American Commission on Human Rights n.d.
  43. Pellegrini n.d.
  44. González and García-Durán 2004.
  45. Human Rights Watch 2023c.
  46. Morrison n.d.
  47. IWGIA 2020.
  48. Minority Rights Group International n.d.
  49. Bouvier 2016.
  50. Morrison n.d.
  51. Bouvier 2016.
  52. Bitterly 2020.
  53. Tucker 2019.
  54. Olivieri and Muller n.d.
  55. Mongabay and Rutas del Conflicto 2022.
  56. Abadia and Bernal 2017.
  57. World Bank n.d.a.
  58. Norwegian Refugee Council 2018.
  59. Aguirre 2004.
  60. Valenti 2022.
  61. Aguirre 2004.
  62. Vallejo Zamudio 2021.
  63. ECLAC 2020.
  64. U.S. Department of State 2021.
  65. World Bank n.d.a.
  66. World Bank n.d.a.
  67. Guzman and Oviedo 2021.
  68. World Bank n.d.b.
  69. Erb 2019a.
  70. Erb 2019a.
  71. Ministry of Information and Communications Technologies 2021.
  72. Erb 2019b.
  73. UNCSW 2023.
  74. Erb 2019b.
  75. Erb 2019b.
  76. Encyclopædia Britannica n.d.
  77. World Bank n.d.a.
  78. World Bank n.d.a.
  79. World Bank n.d.a.
  80. OECD 2020.
  81. OECD 2017.
  82. Low or non-existent maternal mortality may be due in part to underreporting or limited data collection.
  83. Shaw et al. 2018.
  84. Castañeda-Orjuela et al. 2023.
  85. Castañeda-Orjuela et al. 2023.
  86. Castañeda-Orjuela et al. 2023.
  87. Rivillas, Devia-Rodriguez, and Inga-bire 2020.
  88. World Bank n.d.a.
  89. Rivillas, Devia-Rodriguez, and Inga-bire 2020.
  90. Shaw et al. 2018.
  91. Kelly et al. 2021.
  92. Ortega Pacheco and Martínez Rudas 2021.
  93. Camargo Freile et al. 2022.
  94. Amnesty International 2004.
  95. Sánchez-Esparza 2021.
  96. Advocates for Human Rights 2019.
  97. U.S. Department of State 2021.
  98. Advocates for Human Rights 2019.
  99. UNHCR 2022.
  100. Lacina, Gleditsch, and Russett 2006.
  101. Al Jazeera 2023a, 2023b.
  102. Crisis Watch Digest 2023.
  103. Palik 2023.
  104. UNICEF n.d.
  105. UNICEF n.d.
  106. UCDP n.d.
  107. Gerth-Niculescu 2022.
  108. UNICEF n.d.
  109. Presler-Marshall et al. 2022.
  110. Presler-Marshall et al. 2022.
  111. Malala Fund n.d.
  112. UNICEF 2018.
  113. UNICEF 2018.
  114. Basu and Dimova 2021.
  115. Girls Not Brides n.d.
  116. UNICEF 2018.
  117. Jones et al. 2022.
  118. Jones et al. 2022.
  119. Education Cannot Wait 2022.
  120. Anonymous 2023.
  121. Jones et al. 2022.
  122. UN Women 2015; Human Rights Watch 2021b.
  123. Jones et al. 2022.
  124. U.S. Department of State n.d.
  125. U.S. Department of State n.d.
  126. U.S. Department of State n.d.
  127. Tadesse Borde 2023.
  128. Tadesse Borde 2023.
  129. Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation 2022.

130. Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation 2022.
131. Tesfay et al. 2022.
132. UNICEF 2020; UN Women 2015.
133. Tadesse Borde et al. 2019.
134. Abrar Reshid 2017.
135. Anukriti, Bussolo, and Sinha 2021.
136. Idowu Ajayi 2022.
137. Abrar Reshid 2017.
138. U.S. Department of State n.d.
139. OHCHR 2021b.
140. The allies of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces include the Eritrean Defense Forces, Amhara Special Forces (ASF), Amhara militias loosely affiliated with the ASF, the Fano paramilitary group, and Somalian troops, aided by drones supplied by the United Arab Emirates and purchased from Turkey and Iran (Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation 2022).
141. Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation 2022.
142. Human Rights Watch 2021c.
3. Greco et al. 2019.
4. Because of the large number of observed zero values, the distribution of this indicator is skewed to the right. Normalization for this indicator is best done using the cubic norm transformation:

$$\text{Normalized indicator score} = \left( 1 - \left( \frac{\text{actual value}}{1.2} \right)^{1/3} \right)^3$$

where 1.2 is the upper bound.

### Appendix 1

1. Klugman, Rodríguez, and Choi 2011; OECD 2008; UNDP 2014.
2. More information on the analysis and results is available on the GIWPS



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## Alphabetical key to countries and ranks on the 2023/24 WPS Index

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE
177	Afghanistan	0.286	51	Greece	0.766	156	Palestine	0.483
45	Albania	0.796	137	Guatemala	0.569	54	Panama	0.757
118	Algeria	0.622	145	Guinea	0.539	155	Papua New Guinea	0.487
127	Angola	0.598	156	Guinea-Bissau	0.483	89	Paraguay	0.691
50	Argentina	0.768	49	Guyana	0.769	73	Peru	0.717
48	Armenia	0.772	167	Haiti	0.431	121	Philippines	0.612
11	Australia	0.902	122	Honduras	0.610	27	Poland	0.859
8	Austria	0.911	39	Hong Kong	0.812	19	Portugal	0.877
97	Azerbaijan	0.667	32	Hungary	0.835	88	Puerto Rico	0.692
56	Bahrain	0.752	4	Iceland	0.924	80	Qatar	0.703
131	Bangladesh	0.593	128	India	0.595	42	Romania	0.800
47	Barbados	0.779	82	Indonesia	0.700	56	Russian Federation	0.752
69	Belarus	0.733	140	Iran	0.557	103	Rwanda	0.663
11	Belgium	0.902	168	Iraq	0.424	76	Samoa	0.711
105	Belize	0.657	13	Ireland	0.892	109	Sao Tome and Principe	0.648
138	Benin	0.566	80	Israel	0.703	67	Saudi Arabia	0.737
82	Bhutan	0.700	34	Italy	0.827	119	Senegal	0.619
86	Bolivia	0.696	77	Jamaica	0.710	32	Serbia	0.835
55	Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.754	23	Japan	0.866	43	Seychelles	0.799
104	Botswana	0.659	92	Jordan	0.679	144	Sierra Leone	0.543
115	Brazil	0.630	70	Kazakhstan	0.729	15	Singapore	0.887
35	Bulgaria	0.826	149	Kenya	0.511	29	Slovakia	0.856
158	Burkina Faso	0.481	100	Kosovo	0.664	36	Slovenia	0.824
172	Burundi	0.394	61	Kuwait	0.742	100	Solomon Islands	0.664
64	Cabo Verde	0.738	95	Kyrgyzstan	0.673	169	Somalia	0.417
110	Cambodia	0.645	79	Lao PDR	0.704	91	South Africa	0.688
161	Cameroon	0.466	20	Latvia	0.872	30	South Korea	0.848
17	Canada	0.885	128	Lebanon	0.595	173	South Sudan	0.388
175	Central African Republic	0.378	125	Lesotho	0.605	27	Spain	0.859
163	Chad	0.462	154	Liberia	0.500	60	Sri Lanka	0.743
68	Chile	0.736	122	Libya	0.610	164	Sudan	0.460
82	China	0.700	16	Lithuania	0.886	87	Suriname	0.694
132	Colombia	0.582	4	Luxembourg	0.924	3	Sweden	0.926
148	Comoros	0.519	152	Madagascar	0.505	2	Switzerland	0.928
150	Congo	0.507	146	Malawi	0.521	171	Syrian Arab Republic	0.407
60	Costa Rica	0.743	64	Malaysia	0.738	38	Taiwan	0.818
136	Côte d'Ivoire	0.573	72	Maldives	0.720	90	Tajikistan	0.690
25	Croatia	0.862	158	Mali	0.481	107	Tanzania	0.652
63	Cyprus	0.739	31	Malta	0.846	52	Thailand	0.764
18	Czechia	0.884	151	Mauritania	0.506	100	Timor-Leste	0.664
174	Democratic Republic of the Congo	0.384	93	Mauritius	0.678	128	Togo	0.595
1	Denmark	0.932	142	Mexico	0.551	85	Tonga	0.697
153	Djibouti	0.504	53	Moldova	0.758	71	Trinidad and Tobago	0.721
98	Dominican Republic	0.666	46	Mongolia	0.794	96	Tunisia	0.669
106	Ecuador	0.655	41	Montenegro	0.808	99	Türkiye	0.665
110	Egypt	0.645	114	Morocco	0.637	58	Turkmenistan	0.750
138	El Salvador	0.566	134	Mozambique	0.580	143	Uganda	0.544
119	Equatorial Guinea	0.619	165	Myanmar	0.451	117	Ukraine	0.626
13	Estonia	0.892	122	Namibia	0.610	22	United Arab Emirates	0.868
170	Eswatini	0.415	112	Nepal	0.644	26	United Kingdom	0.860
146	Ethiopia	0.521	9	Netherlands	0.908	37	United States	0.823
64	Fiji	0.738	10	New Zealand	0.904	59	Uruguay	0.748
4	Finland	0.924	73	Nicaragua	0.717	94	Uzbekistan	0.674
24	France	0.864	166	Niger	0.442	112	Vanuatu	0.644
131	Gabon	0.593	162	Nigeria	0.465	116	Venezuela	0.628
135	Gambia	0.575	44	North Macedonia	0.798	78	Viet Nam	0.707
39	Georgia	0.812	7	Norway	0.920	176	Yemen	0.287
21	Germany	0.871	75	Oman	0.715	141	Zambia	0.556
108	Ghana	0.651	158	Pakistan	0.481	126	Zimbabwe	0.604

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Index 2023/24, the fourth since the inaugural 2017/18 index, ranks 177 countries and economies on women's status. As the only index to bring together indicators of women's inclusion, justice, and security, the WPS Index is a valuable measure of women's status that can be used to track trends, guide policymaking, and hold governments accountable for their promises to advance women's rights and opportunities.

The WPS Index reveals glaring disparities around the world. All countries on the index have room for improvement, and many perform considerably better or worse on some indicators of women's status than on others. These cases underline the importance of measuring women's status in its many dimensions. Societies where women are doing well are also more peaceful, democratic, prosperous, and better prepared to adapt to the impacts of climate change, according to correlations between our WPS Index and other global indices. The outcomes on these global indices are more strongly correlated with women's status than they are with national income, underlining the importance of investing in women.