

Mapping Gender Data Gaps in Human Security

INTRODUCTION

When women feel unsafe, their choices, mobility, and opportunities are restricted, preventing them from fully participating in public life and community development. Yet systematic and reliable data for many indicators of women's human security are unavailable due to the unique challenges of data collection in conflict-affected environments and on sensitive and illicit activities like violence and human trafficking.

In 2019, the most pressing gender data gaps for human security are:

- war-related mortality and morbidity;
- forcible displacement;
- conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence;
- women's participation in peace and security processes;
- safety in public spaces and on transit;
- violence against children; and
- human trafficking

WHERE WERE THE GENDER DATA GAPS IN 2014?

The MDGs made no reference to human security or the gender aspects of conflict, peace, and security. In 2014, Data2X identified sex-disaggregated data on war-related mortality and morbidity, forcible displacement, adaptive responses to conflict, conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, and women's participation in peace and security processes as the most pressing gender data gaps in this area.

GENDER DATA AND HUMAN SECURITY IN THE SDG ERA

Under the SDGs, human security is addressed under Goal 5 on gender equality, Goal 10 on reduced inequalities, Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities, and Goal 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions. In total, there are 16 gender-relevant human security indicators within the SDGs (full list available in appendix).

We now have better research and data collection taking place on women's adaptive responses to conflict compared to 2014 (though multiple disaggregation is lacking) but much work remains to close other data gaps in human security.

In the 2014 mapping exercise, the domain of human security exclusively focused on the gender aspects of conflict, peace, and security. This time around, we adopt an expanded view of human security and incorporate data on women's and girls' safety and security outside of conflict. With this expanded view in mind, additional gender data gaps have been identified, including gender data on women's safety in public spaces and on transit, violence against children, and human trafficking.

Conflict-Related Mortality and Morbidity

Sex-disaggregated data on conflict-related mortality and morbidity is difficult to collect and not widely available due to the unique challenges of data collection in extremely insecure environments. In situations of armed conflict, a large share of deaths, illness, and disability may not be reported because normal administrative reporting and CRVS systems are disrupted. Survey research also poses challenges to both respondents and researchers in environments plagued by damaged infrastructure, displaced populations, political constraints, and fear of speaking freely. Additionally, actors on both sides of a conflict may have incentives for misreporting, deflating, or inflating casualties.



Forcible Displacement

The availability of sex-disaggregated data on forcible displacement — including the numbers and ratios of women refugees and internally displaced people — varies considerably from one country to another depending on the capacity of national authorities and statistical offices to produce this data and on the level of monitoring by civil society groups and international organizations. In many countries, the collection and publication of statistics on forcible displacement is undertaken by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on behalf of the government until the country has the capacity to produce its own statistics (European Union and the United Nations 2018). Otherwise, national authorities and statistical offices are responsible for registration and data collection.

The quality of published statistics on forcible displacement is challenged by the lack of standard terminology and methods of data collection across countries; the difficulty of collecting data on mobile and potentially persecuted individuals; and the extreme sensitivity and confidentiality of data on displaced individuals, which may limit the access to information from administrative systems (European Union and the United Nations 2018). In 2018, 131 countries reported at least some sex-disaggregated data on internal displacement and refugees to UNHCR but this number is down from previous years (UNHCR 2019).

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Including During Conflict

Data on sexual and gender-based violence is inherently difficult to collect due to underreporting and its sensitive nature; this is exacerbated during conflict. Since 1995, only some 40 countries have conducted more than one survey on violence against women, and many surveys do not collect data on non-intimate partner violence (UNSD 2017). Most knowledge on violence comes from DHS data, which is narrow in definition and sampling. Data collection efforts should be broadened to capture a larger sample of women and a wider spectrum of violent behaviors and their impact on women, including psychological effects. For

example, robust measures do not currently exist to capture how the fear of violence itself can influence a woman's behavior, mobility or decision-making, including during conflict.

Women's Participation in Peace and Security Processes

Compared to 2014, we now have better data on the number of women participating formally in peace and security processes and on barriers to their participation. The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations tracks the number of men and women serving in UN-led peacekeeping operations and increasingly, national governments and international organizations are also collecting sex-disaggregated data on participation. However, this information is still not tracked consistently by any official body, and nuanced data on women's participation broken down by rank and region remains scarce, as does data on the participation and experience of disabled and LGBTQIA+ populations. Additional gaps include data about the number of women police, mediators, negotiators, signatories, witnesses, and technical advisers, as well as the composition of negotiating delegations and the number of women in leadership roles.

Safety in Public Spaces and on Transit

An important aspect of women's human security is their experiences and perceptions of safety while travelling in public spaces and on transit. SDG 16.1.4 on the proportion of the population that feels safe walking alone in their neighborhood is one attempt to track this, but reporting on this indicator is low and does not require sex-disaggregation. SDG indicators on access to public spaces (11.7.1) and public transportation (11.2.1) are also relevant, but they are both classified as Tier II indicators, meaning data are not widely available. In 2018, just 77 countries reported on access to public spaces and 78 reported on access to public transport, but not all country data was sex-disaggregated (UN ECOSOC 2019).

Violence Against Children

Violence against children can take many forms including psychological aggression, physical (or corporal) punishment, and sexual violence.



The SDGs monitor the use of violent discipline against children aged 17 and under (SDG 16.2.1). Household surveys such as MICS and DHS have been collecting data on this indicator in 84 mostly low- and middle-income countries since 2005. However, MICS do not collect data for adolescents aged 15-17 years, so data on the full age range for this indicator is not available. In some countries, data on other forms of violence against children are collected through specialized national household surveys but these data are not always internationally comparable or sex-disaggregated.

Human Trafficking

Due to its illicit and hidden nature, data on human trafficking is innately difficult to collect. As of 2016, 130 countries regularly produce data on the number of victims of trafficking detected by national authorities (UNSD 2016). Yet the number of reported incidents is not an accurate reflection of the actual rate of human trafficking in society, and changes in the numbers of detected victims of trafficking can be due to many factors including changes to law enforcement tactics, changes in legislation, or changes in victims' attitudes (UNSD 2016). Methodology to estimate the number of undetected victims of trafficking in persons is under development by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Regional and global aggregates of number of victims of trafficking are also currently not produced.

WHERE DOES GENDER DATA ON HUMAN SECURITY COME FROM?

The main sources of data on violence against women and girls are **dedicated national surveys** and Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), which include a module on violence against women.

Although **administrative data** from health, police, courts, and social services can provide information on the incidence of violence, it should not be considered an accurate source of prevalence data since many victims of abuse do not report. Similarly, data on detected victims of trafficking, typically provided by national authorities, law enforcement agencies, or services assisting victims, does not reflect the number of undetected victims. Methods

to estimate undetected victims of trafficking are currently being tested by UNODC, which publishes the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons every two years.

Big data generated from geospatial systems and cell phones can be combined with traditional sources to collect data on women's experiences and perceptions of safety in public spaces and on transit. For example, using data from student surveys, Google Maps, and cell phone applications, economist Girija Borker (World Bank and Brown University) studied [how safety concerns influence educational choices among women](#) in New Delhi, India (Borker 2019). She found that policies to increase safety of travel routes can have major impact on reducing gender gaps in school quality, transport costs, and commute time.

Some national authorities, as well as international organizations and UN agencies publish annual statistics on refugees, internally displaced peoples, and peace and security processes. Data on conflict-related deaths come from a variety of sources including hospital records, police and other law enforcement agencies, the UN and other international organizations, civil society organizations, eyewitnesses, and even detailed media reports. Where they are available, **population-based survey and census data** collected prior to the conflict serve as a natural baseline.

WHAT EFFORTS ARE UNDERWAY TO IMPROVE GENDER DATA ON HUMAN SECURITY?

Key actors providing guidance on gender data on human security:

- **UN-Habitat** is the custodian agency for all SDG 11 targets and indicators including accessible public spaces and public transportation, with the [United Nations Environment Programme \(UNEP\)](#) and the [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe \(UNECE\)](#) working as partner agencies on the latter.



- [UNODC](#) is the custodian agency for several SDG 16 indicators including 16.1.3 and 16.2.2 on the prevalence of violence and human trafficking, respectively.
- [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#) is the custodian agency for SDG 16.1.2 on conflict-related deaths and SDG 16.10.1 on killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, and torture.
- [UNICEF](#) is the custodian agency for SDG 5.3 on ending harmful practices like FGM and child marriage, SDG 16.2.3 on violence against young people, and 16.2.1 on violent child discipline.
- SDG 5.2 on violence against women and girls is monitored by several co-custodian agencies including [UN Women](#), [UNICEF](#), [UNSD](#), [WHO](#), and [UNFPA](#).
- [UNSD](#) provides national statistics offices with guidance on collecting, processing, disseminating, and analyzing data on violence against women.

Some significant large-scale efforts are under way to collect, analyze, and disseminate sex-disaggregated human security data:

- The [World Values Surveys](#) and [Global Barometer Surveys](#) cover citizens' self-reporting of victimization and perceptions of security disaggregated by sex.
- The [Women, Peace and Security Program \(WPS\) at the International Peace Institute](#) is developing a suite of qualitative and quantitative research on national-level police and military women eligible to deploy to or are deployed in UN peacekeeping operations, including a survey designed to gather longitudinal information about women peacekeepers' experiences.
- The [Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance \(DCAF\)](#) is systematically gathering, analyzing, and categorizing the barriers for deployment of uniformed women in peacekeeping operations.

- The [Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations](#) is a multilateral pilot project launched in 2017 by Global Affairs Canada to develop, apply, and test a combination of approaches to increase women's meaningful participation in peace operations. One of the first studies commissioned by Elsie was a DCAF published global baseline study on women's participation in military and police roles in UN peacekeeping operations.

Other organizations are calling for, supporting, or using gender data on human security:

- The [Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced People Statistics \(EGRIS\)](#) provides recommendations that countries and international organizations can use to harmonize and improve the overall quality and disaggregation of statistics on forcibly displaced populations.
- [Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security \(GIWPS\)](#) engages in research and hosts global convenings on the important role women play in preventing conflict and building peace, growing economies, and addressing global threats like climate change and violent extremism.

International efforts to compile existing sex-disaggregated data on human security include:

- The [WomanStats Project Database](#) is a cross-national compilation of data, statistics, and maps on the situation and security of women worldwide. Organized by country, the database has over 350 variables for 176 countries.
- The [Women, Peace and Security Index](#) offers a comprehensive measure of women's wellbeing and empowerment, drawing on recognized international data sources to rank 153 countries on peace, security, and women's inclusion and justice.
- The [Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project \(ACLED\)](#) is a disaggregated conflict analysis and crisis mapping resource.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Recent global movements like #MeToo and #TimesUp have triggered a growing awareness around sexual harassment and violence against women both in and outside of conflict settings. The international community should continue to coalesce around this agenda.

To address gender data gaps in human security, greater investment could be geared towards developing innovative, robust, and internationally comparable measures of safety, violence, and harassment. Women's safety may be difficult to measure but could be captured in part from accident and crime statistics. The collection of data on violence against women and girls ideally requires dedicated surveys. For such sensitive and underreported health problems, cell phone (SMS, social media, or app-based) surveys are a useful tool for anonymous reporting and can be combined with geospatial data to track individuals' perceptions of safety in different areas and while using public transportation.

Remote sensing and crowdsourcing information about the locations of victims in conflict-affected settings can be an important source of information on displaced persons, as well as estimates of mortality and morbidity — granted that digital communications lines remain functional.

On forcible displacement, there is a need to maximize the use of available data sources (e.g. by integrating questions on migration and refugee status into censuses and existing survey instruments) while simultaneously developing new sources to capture real-time data (e.g. geospatial data and cell phone data) (European Union and United Nations 2018, p. 16).

For women's participation in peace and security processes, data collected by national authorities, international organizations, and UN agencies needs to be broken down by rank and region and disaggregated to capture information on disabled women and LGBTQIA+ individuals.

This brief is part of "Mapping Gender Data Gaps: An SDG Era Update." The full report can be accessed here: data2x.org/MappingGenderDataGaps.



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Appendix: Gender-Relevant SDG Human Security Indicators (16 total)

- 5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age (Tier II)
- 5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence (Tier II)
- 5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18 (Tier I)
- 5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15–49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age (Tier I)
- 11.2.1 Proportion of population that has convenient access to public transport, by sex, age and persons with disabilities (Tier II)
- 11.7.1 Average share of the built-up area of cities that is open space for public use for all, by sex, age and persons with disabilities (Tier II)
- 16.1.1 Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age (Tier I)
- 16.1.2 Conflict-related deaths per 100,000 population, by sex, age and cause (Tier II)
- 16.1.3 Proportion of population subjected to (a) physical violence, (b) psychological violence and (c) sexual violence in the previous 12 months (Tier II)
- 16.1.4 Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live (Tier II)
- 16.2.1 Proportion of children aged 1–17 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month (Tier II)
- 16.2.2 Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation (Tier II)
- 16.2.3 Proportion of young women and men aged 18–29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18 (Tier II)
- 16.3.1 Proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms (Tier II)
- 16.3.2 Unsentenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population (Tier I)
- 16.10.1 Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months (Tier I)