

**“Sexual violence in conflict is a serious, present-day atrocity affecting millions of people, primarily women and girls....  
The most common form of violence experienced by women globally is physical violence inflicted by an intimate partner, with women beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused.”**

United Nations Secretary-General's  
UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign  
(<http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/situation.shtml>)



## CHAPTER 3

# Why Security is Important

**T**he inclusion of security is a major innovation of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Index, captured at several levels that are crucial for women's well-being: the home and family, the community, and society. This focus reflects the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the global consensus that concerted efforts are needed to eliminate all forms of violence against women at a time when the goal of sustaining peace has moved to the top of the international agenda. All of this motivates a closer look at the indicators that make up the security dimension—intimate partner violence, safety in the community, and organized violence—in this third and final chapter.

### **The family—intimate partner violence**

Intimate partner violence is the most common form of violence experienced by women globally, in both conflict and non-conflict settings. Intimate partner violence causes physical, sexual, and psychological harm within an intimate relationship, such as marriage, cohabiting partnership, or other sexual relationship.<sup>29</sup> Here we examine patterns of intimate partner violence, with a focus on fragile and conflict settings. Evidence about sexual violence in conflict, committed by a broad range of perpetrators, from militias and government soldiers to peacekeeping forces, is addressed in the section below about organized violence.

The incidence of intimate partner violence is high around the world; about 30 percent of women who have been in a relationship have experienced violence from their intimate

partner.<sup>30</sup> In the European Union, one in five women 15 years or older have experienced physical or sexual violence by a partner.<sup>31</sup> One paradox is that the Nordic countries are both the most gender-equal countries in the world and have high rates of intimate partner violence: Denmark's reported lifetime rate is 32 percent, Finland's is 30 percent, and Sweden's is 28 percent. Investigations into why these rates are so high suggest that Nordic women might be suffering from a backlash effect as traditional definitions of manhood and womanhood are challenged.<sup>32</sup> The high rates might also reflect greater awareness of intimate partner violence and greater willingness of victims to self-identify in population surveys.

Wherever intimate partner violence occurs, it has multiple harmful repercussions for women's well-being, as well as major direct and indirect economic costs.<sup>33</sup> Direct costs include healthcare, social services, police deployment, court, and incarceration expenses. There are also indirect costs, such as time lost from paid work and volunteer labor, and second-generation effects of violence on children. The World Bank estimates the economic costs at 3–5 percent of GDP—more than what many developing country governments spend on primary education.<sup>34</sup> In addition, there is the inestimable cost in pain and suffering and lost lives. It is well documented that intimate partner violence can lead to severe physical, reproductive, and mental health complications.<sup>35</sup>

In conflict and disaster settings, these repercussions can be exacerbated by lack of access to medical care and widespread infectious disease, stress, and malnutrition.<sup>36</sup> Very high rates

of intimate partner violence have been reported in a range of conflict settings (box 3.1). A multicountry study found that living in a fragile or conflict-affected state (following the World Bank's definition) was associated with a 35 percent higher risk of intimate partner violence than living in other developing countries in the sample.<sup>37</sup>

There are several reasons why conflict might worsen intimate partner violence. These factors, which are not mutually

exclusive, include the disruption of gender norms and a crisis of male identity, post-traumatic stress, increased depression and alcohol use among men, loss of support from families and social networks, changes in marriage practices, an increased culture of impunity as law enforcement breaks down, and increased normalization of violence in general. There is some evidence to support each of these hypotheses, as recounted in box 3.1.

### BOX 3.1 Country evidence on intimate partner violence in conflict-affected states

High rates of intimate partner violence have been documented in conflict settings. A study of the Asia and Pacific region found particularly high rates in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, and Jayapura, Indonesia, both post-conflict communities (Fulu et al. 2013). A study of local variations in violence in Colombia in the mid-2000s found that proximity of conflict was associated with much higher rates of intimate partner violence (32 percent versus 20 percent; Rieckmann 2015). A study in neighboring Peru reported that women who were exposed to fighting and conflict in their late childhood and adolescence were more likely to be victims of domestic violence in later life (Gallegos and Gutierrez 2016).

Several studies associate conflict with a higher risk of both male perpetration and female experience of intimate partner violence:

- A 2010 study in northern Uganda found that women's lifetime exposure to war-related events was the risk factor most highly correlated with severe intimate partner violence (Saile et al. 2013). Childhood maltreatment was also a significant risk factor.
- Palestinian women whose husbands had experienced political violence and its economic effects had an 89 percent higher chance of reporting physical violence and a 123 percent higher chance of reporting sexual violence by their partner than other women (Clark et al. 2010).
- Factors found to be predictors of intimate partner violence during a resurgence in conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo that began in 2012 included binge drinking, inequitable gender attitudes, and experience of childhood violence. While variations in intimate partner violence rates were not correlated with the presence of conflict, researchers suggested that this result was due to high rates of intimate partner violence pre-dating the conflict (Sleggh, Barker, and Levtoev 2014).
- An investigation of partner abuse in 17 Sub-Saharan countries using Demographic and Health Surveys found that the intensity of conflict in the home region

has a significant effect on women's risk of intimate partner violence even after controlling for childhood exposure to parent violence and husband's alcohol consumption (Østby 2016).

- While not conducted in a conflict setting, two U.S. studies are informative. One finds that immigrant men who reported exposure to political violence before arrival were more than twice as likely to report having perpetrated partner violence (Gupta et al. 2009). Another study documented a tripling of intimate partner violence among displaced people in Mississippi in the year after Hurricane Katrina and elevated rates for two years after displacement (Anastario, Shehab, and Lawry 2009).

The normalization of violence in conflict settings can worsen cycles of violence, as when victims experience re-victimization or become perpetrators (Catani et al. 2008). Some researchers have suggested that when a society experiences extreme conflict, violence can become the normative mode of handling conflict, including at home (Gupta et al. 2009). Political violence, humiliation, and economic hardship may lead to increased rates of male depression and alcohol consumption, which are risk factors for the perpetuation of intimate partner violence (Clark et al. 2010; Hanmer and Klugman 2016).

A heightened sense of inadequacy among men who are unemployed, exacerbated by their partners pursuing economic opportunities, has also been associated with gender-based violence, as in Colombia and Syria (Wirtz et al. 2014; Lehmann et al. 2014). Likewise women in West Africa have noted a violent backlash from their husbands after taking on increased responsibilities during wartime (IRC 2012).

Changes in marriage practices associated with conflict-induced economic hardship may worsen rates of intimate partner violence. Some women in Colombia have noted that financial difficulties led them to successively marry violent partners (Wirtz et al. 2014). Women in Pakistan and Syria describe how financial need leads

*(continued)*

**BOX 3.1 Country evidence on intimate partner violence in conflict-affected states** *(continued)*

to an increase in early marriages and greater vulnerability to violence (IRC 2012). In the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, women explained that they were powerless to leave violent marriages because families were unable or unwilling to return their dowry.

Loss of support from family and social networks due to displacement has also been identified as a driver of violence. When women are physically separated from family, friends, and community services, perpetrators may more readily go unchallenged (UNHCR 2003). For example, Palestinian women cited the separation barrier in the West Bank as depriving them of contact with their families, who might otherwise intervene to prevent intimate partner violence (Clark et al. 2010). Women in the Kakuma refugee camp noted that following displacement

*Source:* Klugman et al. (forthcoming).

they no longer had access to a safe place to which to temporarily escape violent domestic situations (Horn 2010).

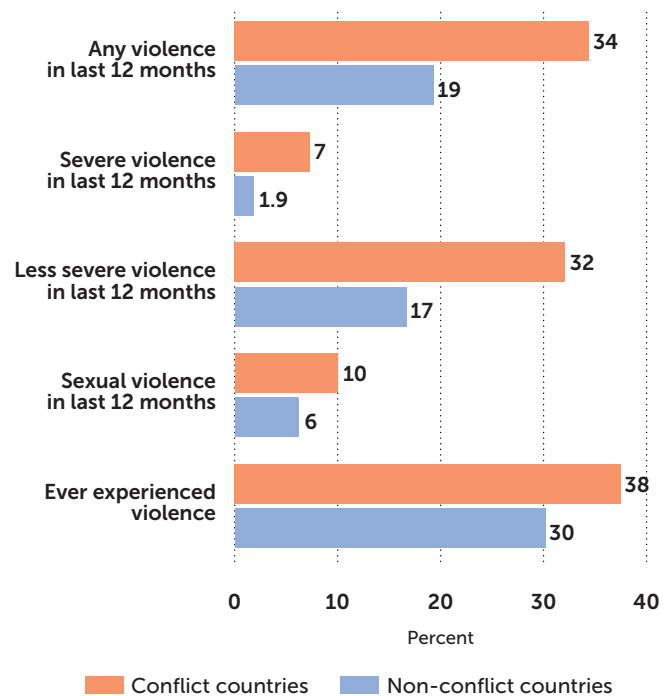
There are some promising interventions at the community level to reduce intimate partner violence in post-conflict settings. For example, the Living Peace program in the Democratic Republic of Congo is working with men and boys to transform norms that support violence. It has achieved an impressive program completion rate (95 percent) for the more than 1,000 participants in North and South Kivu, including members of the military and police and inhabitants of high-risk communities. Some 89 percent of participants reported improved relationships with their families, and 86 percent reported less traumatic responses, with similar rates of improvement for female partners (PROMUNDO 2016).

Analysis of Demographic and Health Survey data for 37 developing countries finds that rates of current intimate partner violence (experienced in the preceding 12 months) are more than one-third higher in conflict countries than in non-conflict countries—34 percent, compared with 19 percent (figure 3.1).<sup>38</sup> The largest differences are reported for cases of severe violence, which are substantially higher in conflict countries (7.3 percent) than in non-conflict countries (1.9 percent). Lifetime rates of intimate partner violence (whether women have ever experienced intimate partner violence, the indicator used in the WPS Index), are also much higher in conflict countries (38 percent) than in non-conflict countries (30 percent). The differences between conflict and non-conflict countries are much larger for current violence than for lifetime rates (78 percent versus 24 percent relative difference), suggesting that the recency of conflict affects the current likelihood of violence in conflict countries.

When institutional systems are disrupted or destroyed, individuals and communities have fewer means to prevent and respond to intimate partner violence,<sup>39</sup> and women's access to justice, already typically low,<sup>40</sup> may be especially restricted. Actions by law enforcement agencies can break down or be unavailable, and in the wake of conflict, victims may not know where to turn for help. Weak police forces and judicial infrastructure have been cited as reasons for high rates of intimate partner violence in conflict-affected countries in West Africa,<sup>41</sup> and Pakistan's police culture and legal structure are given as reasons that Afghan refugees struggle to seek justice in cases of intimate partner violence.<sup>42</sup>

Victim reporting and institutional responses are often weak outside conflict settings, too. A 2014 survey found that

**FIGURE 3.1 Rates of intimate partner violence are worse in conflict-affected countries**



*Note:* The sample includes 6 conflict-affected countries with available data (Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Nepal, Pakistan, and Rwanda) and 31 low- and middle-income non-conflict countries.

*Source:* Source: Klugman et al. (forthcoming) estimates based on Demographic and Health Surveys (various). For more details see <http://dhsprogram.com>.

in the 28 countries of the European Union, victims reported the most serious incidents of partner violence to the police in only 14 percent of cases. For about a quarter of victims, feeling ashamed or embarrassed about what had happened inhibited them from reporting the most serious incidents of sexual violence.<sup>43</sup>

Many countries have not criminalized marital rape—103 according to the World Bank's *Women, Business, and the Law*.<sup>44</sup> Provisions criminalizing marital rape are more common in Latin America and the Caribbean and in countries in the Developed Country group. No countries in the Middle East criminalize marital rape. In Sri Lanka, marital rape is recognized as a crime only when the spouses are judicially separated. India criminalizes marital rape only when the wife is younger than 15, and Bangladesh does so only when the wife is younger than 13.<sup>45</sup>

Laws protecting women from intimate partner violence have even been rolled back in some countries, as in the Russian Federation, where President Putin signed a law in February 2017 partially decriminalizing some types of domestic violence. Even before this rollback, according to the Gallup World Poll, only 20 percent of Russian women felt that the government was doing enough to combat domestic violence.<sup>46</sup>

Having laws on the books is not enough, of course, to end intimate partner violence. Enforcement is critical and depends on a range of factors, from community norms around violence to the skills, capacity, and attitudes of police and legal personnel. Evidence suggests that legislative reforms coupled with investments in the justice system can improve women's access to justice. Papua New Guinea, for example, introduced a Family Protection Bill in 2013 after extensive consultations with the community and stakeholders. The reform was accompanied by support for victims and training for service providers, prosecutors, and legal staff. The results are promising, although progress has been uneven and there is still a long way to go.<sup>47</sup> A recent evaluation concluded that the reforms have been a catalyst for change, even though changes in practice and attitude have been at the individual rather than the organizational level and are inconsistent across police stations and provinces.<sup>48</sup>

### The community—safety in the neighborhood

The feeling that one can walk alone at night anywhere near one's home without fear is a basic indicator of security. This sense is also correlated with other measures of well-being, such as good health.<sup>49</sup>

Globally, about two of three adults feel safe walking alone at night, and the gender gap is about 7 percentage points (figure 3.2). The share among women drops to 1 in 10 in Venezuela, which is the lowest score on record for the Gallup World Poll. Fewer than one in three women feel safe in their community in several Latin American countries, including Argentina, Brazil, Dominican Republic, and El Salvador. Only 31 percent of Liberian and Malaysian women reported feeling safe in their neighborhood, and less than 30 percent in Botswana, Gabon, South Africa, and Syria. At the other end

of the spectrum, countries where women report a high sense of safety include Singapore, Somalia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Rwanda, and Bangladesh, as well as Norway and Spain, where perceptions of community safety are at least 80 percent.

There are also large differences in perceptions of community safety within countries. In the United States, for example, alongside the 20 percentage point difference between men (46 percent) and women (26 percent) in being afraid to walk alone, almost half of Americans with a family income below \$20,000 expressed such fear, compared with 26 percent of those with incomes exceeding \$75,000.<sup>50</sup>

Trends in perceptions about community safety over the past decade are mixed. The Gallup data, which have been tracking trends since 2007/08, suggest substantial improvements in a number of countries, including Czech Republic, Lithuania, and Russia in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia; Finland, Spain, and the United Kingdom among Developed Countries; and Chad and Zimbabwe (albeit both from low bases) in Sub-Saharan Africa. The most marked negative trends over the decade are reported for Cambodia and Malaysia in East Asia and the Pacific, Mexico and Venezuela in Latin America and the Caribbean, and Central African Republic, Mauritania, and Senegal in Sub-Saharan Africa.

How do the patterns in community safety relate to patterns of intimate partner violence? Our analysis suggests that women who feel unsafe in their community are also generally more likely to feel unsafe at home. A simple correlation between community safety and the absence of intimate partner violence shows a positive association (figure 3.3).

### Society—organized violence

Security at the societal level is captured in the WPS Index using battle-death data for organized violence from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP).<sup>51</sup> This measure includes three types of conflict, with a threshold of 25 deaths per 100,000 annually. *State-based conflict* refers to "armed conflict," either between two states or between a state and a rebel group—for example, armed conflict between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) or armed conflict between Syria and the Islamic State. *Non-state* conflicts, which do not involve a state combatant, include, for instance, fighting between rebel groups and militias. Examples include the Lord's Resistance Army against the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in the late 1990s and early 2000s or between groups with a common identification along ethnic, clan, or religious lines, as in Hindu-Muslim violence in India and Buddhist-Muslim conflicts in Myanmar. The most common type of non-state conflict is between organized groups, such as the conflict among different rebel groups in Syria. *One-sided* violence is defined as the use of armed force by the government or by a formally organized group against civilians, the Rwandan genocide being the most horrific case.

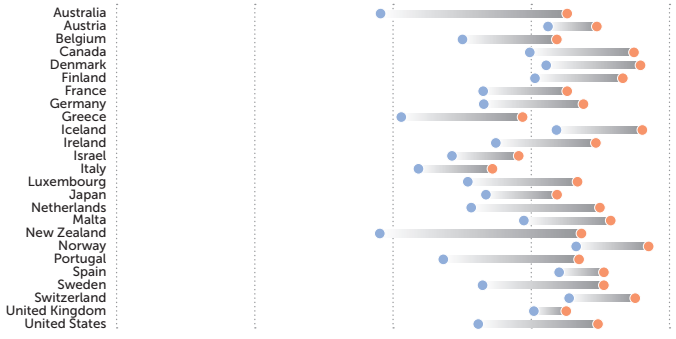
Kenya illustrates the diversity of conflict. Since the 1980s, no state-based violence has been recorded, yet there has been

**FIGURE 3.2 The global gender gap in feeling safe walking alone at night is about 7 percentage points**

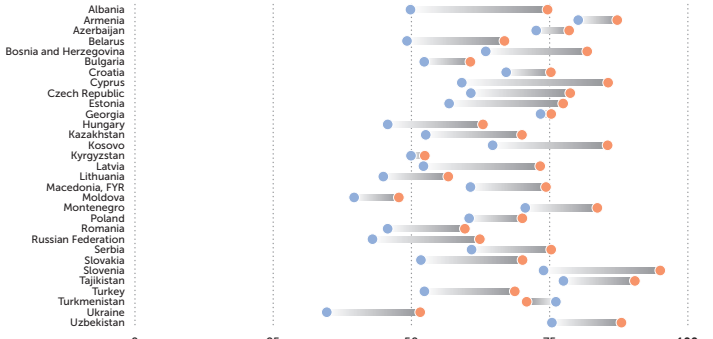
Percent

● Male ● Female

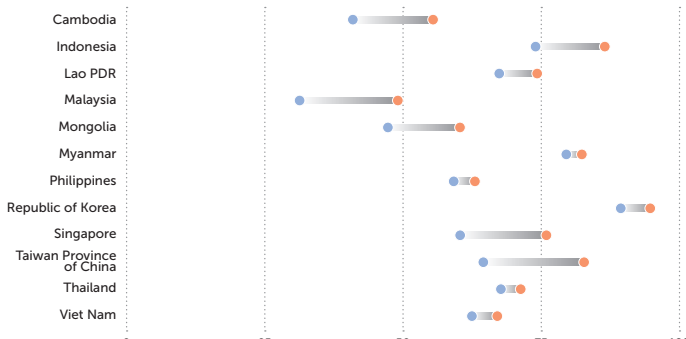
**Developed Countries**



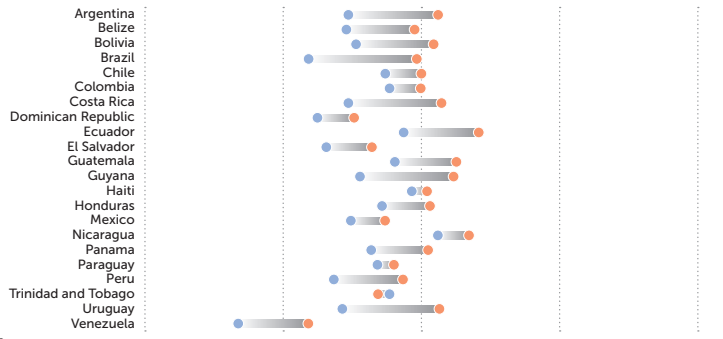
**Central & Eastern Europe & Central Asia**



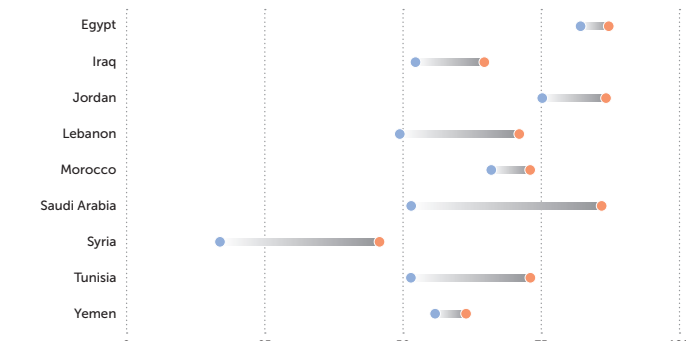
**East Asia & the Pacific**



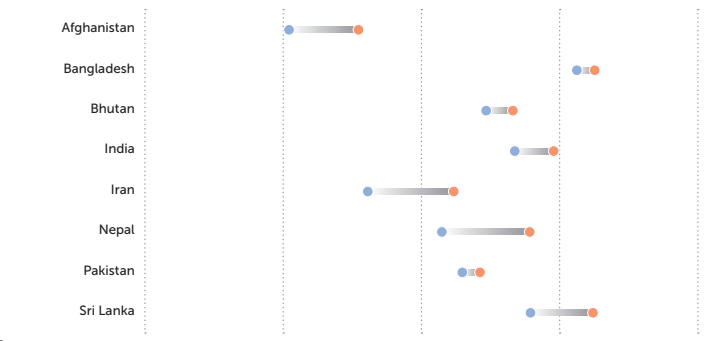
**Latin America & the Caribbean**



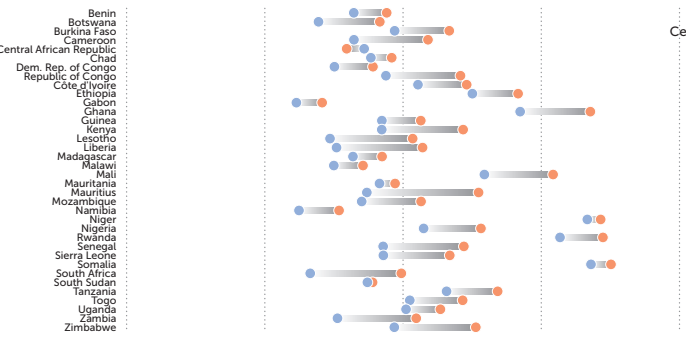
**Middle East & North Africa**



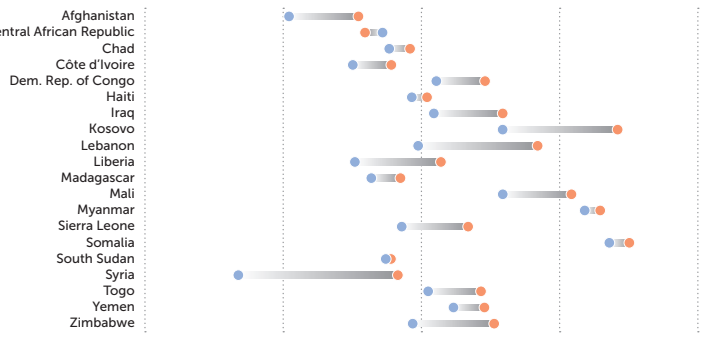
**South Asia**



**Sub-Saharan Africa**



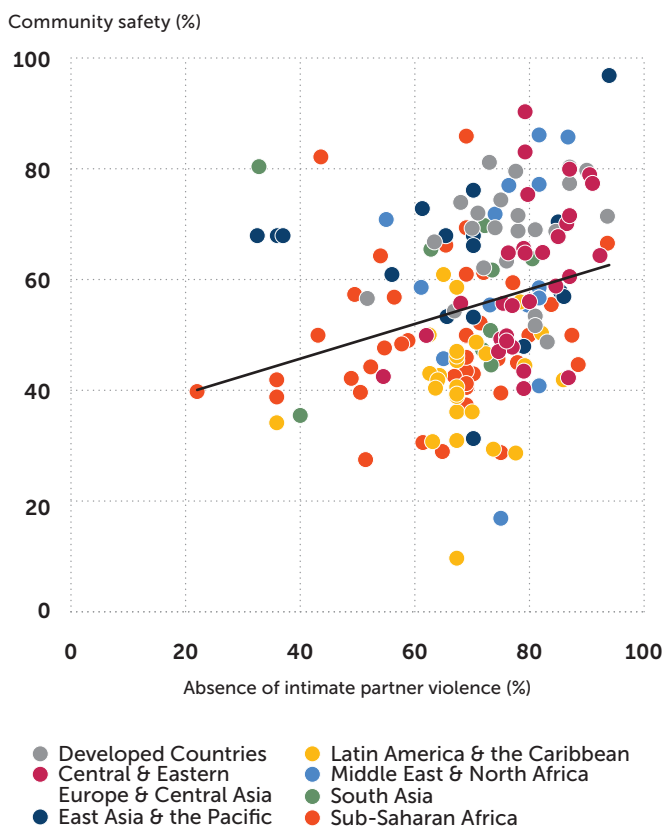
**Fragile States**



Note: Data are most recent for 2010–16.

Source: Authors' estimates. See statistical table 1 for data sources.

**FIGURE 3.3 Women who feel unsafe in their community are also more likely to be unsafe at home**



Note: See statistical table 1 for detailed scores and date ranges and appendix 2 for region and country groups.

Source: Authors' estimates. See statistical table 1 for data sources.

ongoing fighting among ethnic groups (non-state conflicts) and the security forces, while militias and rebel groups have killed hundreds of civilians (one-sided violence). The measure of organized violence better captures these different contemporary types of conflict.<sup>52</sup>

This is now the gold standard in statistical analysis of armed conflict and widely used by policy-makers and academics. Unfortunately, deaths are not disaggregated by sex. Nor does the UCDP measure capture the broader negative repercussions of conflict, which differ by sex, as recognized by the UN Security Council and the international community and explored further below. Mary Kaldor argues that the UCDP concept of conflict misses the nuances of contemporary war, which is characterized by transnational violence or persistent low-intensity fighting that may fall below the UCDP threshold.<sup>53</sup> Most important for the WPS Index, as Jacqui True has pointed out, the battle death measure fails to account for sexual and gender-based violence or any form of interpersonal violence, which often disproportionately affects women.<sup>54</sup>

Right now, however, the UCDP measure provides the country coverage and transparency needed for the WPS

Index, based on a clear and widely accepted definition of armed conflict with rigorous and independent coding criteria.<sup>55</sup> While case studies have examined gender differences in conflict zones based on surveys, reliable data are not available at the global level for conflict mortality disaggregated by sex.<sup>56</sup> There are no micro-level datasets with comparable data for most of the countries included in our index. To help offset the partiality of the battle-death measure, it is complemented by two additional indicators of security that are most important to women—intimate partner violence and safety in the community—which together better reflect the personal security of women than battle deaths alone.

The data on organized violence underline several prominent facts about the global pattern of armed conflict, many of them well known: civil war is the most frequent form of armed conflict; the lethality of war has declined, albeit unevenly, since the peak in World War II; and deaths from organized violence are now concentrated in a few countries.<sup>57</sup> Specifically, since 1989, fewer than 10 countries have accounted for at least two-thirds of deaths from organized violence, and in the past few years, just three countries—Afghanistan, Central African Republic, and Syria—have accounted for two-thirds of the total.

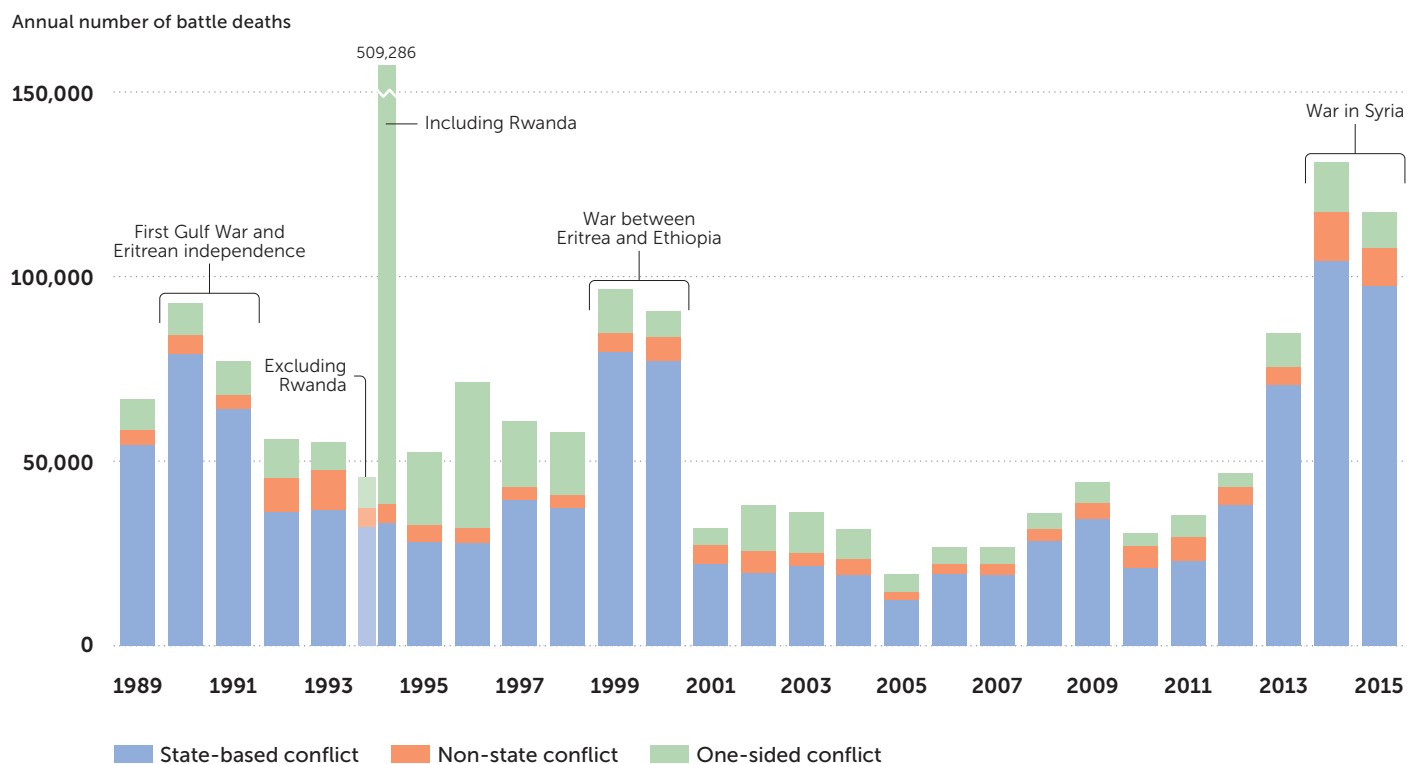
The good news is that most countries do not reach the threshold of 25 deaths per 100,000 annually, and for 113 of the 153 countries in the WPS Index the observed value for 2010–15 was zero. Yet for some countries, civil conflict has become chronic. About half the countries that attained peace after civil conflict later experienced a relapse into conflict, even after several years of peace.<sup>58</sup>

Armed conflicts vary enormously in their severity, as measured by battle-related deaths. Total deaths globally tend to be driven by especially severe individual conflicts. This is reflected in the several peaks in figure 3.4: in 1990–91, during the first Gulf War and Eritrea's fight for independence from Ethiopia; a huge spike in 1994, due to the genocide in Rwanda; in 1999, with the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia; and, most recently, in 2014–15, due to the war in Syria, which accounted for about half of all battle-related deaths.

In all but 2 of the 10 most conflict-affected countries, as measured by total number of battle deaths, state-based conflicts have dominated (table 3.1, left panel). Since 1989, the exceptions have been Rwanda (one-sided conflict) and Democratic Republic of Congo (largely one-sided). However, in the decade 2005–2015, in 4 of the 10 most conflict-affected countries, state-based violence accounted for less than 60 percent of deaths (not shown in table 3.1), as non-state and one-sided conflict became more prevalent. This emerging pattern underlines the value of a broader measure of organized violence.

Of course, the human cost of war extends beyond those killed in violent events, as major losses of life and harmful health effects may follow for a long time after the conflict.<sup>59</sup>

The unique impacts of conflict on women and girls has been recognized in a series of resolutions adopted by the UN

**FIGURE 3.4 Global fatalities from organized violence are driven by especially severe individual conflicts, 1989–2015**

Note: The sample is global and is not restricted to countries in the Women, Peace, and Security Index. *State-based conflict* is armed conflict between two states or between a state and a rebel group. *Non-state conflict* is fighting between rebel groups or militias or between groups with different ethnic, clan, or religious identification. *One-sided violence* is the use of armed force by the government or a formally organized group against civilians.

Source: Authors' estimates based on the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) dataset available at <http://ucdp.uu.se/#/>.

**TABLE 3.1 The 10 most conflict-affected countries, by battle deaths, 1989–2015**

Country	Total number of battle deaths	Percent of total			Country	Number of battle deaths per 100,000 people
		State-based	Non-state	One-sided		
Rwanda	522,078	1.4	0.02	98.5	Rwanda	8,670
Syria	187,624	90.1	6.0	3.9	Eritrea	4,092
Afghanistan	162,291	92.9	1.6	5.5	Syria	989
Eritrea	137,987	99.4	0.0	0.6	Liberia	933
Dem. Rep. of Congo	99,312	22.0	12.1	66.0	South Sudan	811
Iraq	95,858	82.0	3.0	15.1	Afghanistan	754
Sri Lanka	58,862	93.6	1.0	5.5	Bosnia and Herzegovina	645
Ethiopia	54,242	84.8	12.0	3.2	Dem. Rep. of Congo	536
South Sudan	53,759	58.1	25.4	16.5	Sierra Leone	534
India	52,935	68.5	9.8	21.8	Somalia	528

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding. *State-based conflict* is armed conflict between two states or between a state and a rebel group. *Non-state conflict* is fighting between rebel groups or militias or between groups with different ethnic, clan, or religious identification. *One-sided violence* is the use of armed force by the government or a formally organized group against civilians. The analysis reported in this table is based on data for current borders and therefore the results may differ from those of Melander, Petterson, and Themnér (2016).

Source: Authors' estimates based on the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) dataset available at <http://ucdp.uu.se/#/>.



Security Council on Women, Peace and Security, beginning with Resolution 1325 in 2000, which was the first to address the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women (see box 1.1 in chapter 1).

Conflict has different impacts on men and women because men typically account for the vast majority of combatants and are more likely to die in battle, while women and children may be more affected by the breakdown of health and other services.<sup>60</sup> One global study found that conflict is associated with a modest increase in maternal mortality, although this association was not significant once national income was controlled for.<sup>61</sup> At the same time, among the 25 countries with the highest maternal mortality ratio, all but one are also affected by organized violence.<sup>62</sup> For example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, despite the end of the second civil war in 2003, ongoing violence committed by different armed groups, continuing instability, and governance failure have aggravated already high rates of maternal mortality, which reportedly rose from 549 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2007 to 846 in 2013–14. This reversal stands in stark contrast to overall improvements in reproductive health in most of Sub-Saharan Africa, where regional rates of maternal mortality dropped more than 40 percent from 1990 to 2010.

Conflict-related sexual violence is a major cost of conflict that is disproportionately borne by women and girls. The violence ranges from sexual assault by strangers when women are collecting firewood in refugee camps<sup>63</sup> to rape as a weapon of war<sup>64</sup> and sexual abuse and exploitation by UN peacekeepers.<sup>65</sup> Recent literature on sexual violence by peacekeepers finds such abuse to be correlated with the number of peacekeepers and the occurrence of sexual violence by other perpetrators during the conflict.<sup>66</sup> The international community has made major commitments to end all forms of conflict-related sexual violence (as recounted in box 1.1), and major legal decisions have established the responsibility of states to prevent such violence.<sup>67</sup>

Conflict-related sexual violence is important but not included in the organized violence indicator because of data constraints. The best available evidence on conflict-related sexual violence is a new dataset covering 129 active armed conflicts over 1989–2009.<sup>68</sup> Overall, the dataset reveals that state militaries are more likely to be reported as perpetrators of sexual violence than are non-state actors such as rebel groups and militias: 42 percent of state forces were reported as perpetrators, compared with 24 percent of rebel groups and 17 percent of militias. Likewise in Africa, the majority of rebel groups in active conflict during 2000–2009 were not reported to be the primary perpetrators of such violence.

The data also show that sexual violence varies significantly by perpetrator, over time, and by region. While underreporting remains a problem in documenting sexual violence, we now know that this type of violence is not inevitable in war and that some armed groups have effectively prohibited its use—such as the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka and Sendero Luminoso in Peru.<sup>69</sup> Variations in the ideology and

institutional nature of armed groups, including the attitude or tolerance of leadership to civilian rape, emerge as important factors explaining patterns of violence, as in El Salvador.<sup>70</sup> There appears to be a correlation between sexual violence and forcible recruitment since gang rape may be used to build group cohesion.

Even in conflict settings, family members tend to be the main perpetrators of sexual violence. During the conflict in rural Côte d’Ivoire, for example, combatants constituted less than 10 percent of the perpetrators in reported cases of sexual and gender-based violence.<sup>71</sup> As noted previously, conflict settings appear to be associated with a higher risk of both individual male perpetration and female experience of intimate partner violence.

Finally, there may be some positive impacts in the aftermath of conflict, as the disruption of economic and political norms during conflict may upset traditional norms and expand opportunities for women. In countries as diverse as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Kosovo, Nepal, Tajikistan, and Timor-Leste, empirical analysis has found that while women’s responsibilities in the household increase during conflict, financial pressures and the absence of men can also boost women’s participation in work outside the home, although the jobs are often low skilled or low paid.<sup>72</sup>

There are cases where some of women’s gains have been legally secured after the conflict, as in the 1991 Colombian Constitution and the quotas introduced in the new Rwandan Constitution. But whether gains are sustained depends on whether traditional norms resurface after the conflict. The reemergence of old patterns has been reported among Guatemalan refugee women, for example, who had taken collective action to secure land rights in Mexico, but who lost their improved status when they returned to post-conflict Guatemala, where they faced hostility from men in patriarchal systems.<sup>73</sup> In Eritrea, many women who had taken up jobs as doctors, administrators, and teachers during the conflict with Ethiopia lost these positions after the conflict.<sup>74</sup>

\* \* \*

Security is integral to a global measure of women’s well-being. Too many governments are failing to ensure security for women at the family, community, and societal levels, although there is much to learn from gains and challenges at the country level, as illustrated in spotlights 1 and 2.

The WPS Index reveals priorities for action on security to enable the changes that are also needed to improve inclusion and justice for women. It is our hope that civil society and other advocates will use the results to argue for progressive reforms and investments and to track progress and hold governments accountable. And alongside much needed actions, this report aims to inspire further thought and analysis to advance understanding of the constraints and positive contributors to meeting the world’s goals and commitments to advance women and girls.

