

Executive Summary

Women are at the heart of efforts to achieve sustainable peace through inclusion, justice, and security. This notion is explicit in the 2000 agenda established by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The agenda urged all actors to increase women’s participation and incorporate gender perspectives in UN peace and security efforts and called for women’s empowerment and inclusion in preventing and resolving conflict and building peace (see box 1.1 in chapter 1). In 2016, the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Security Council adopted resolutions on “Sustaining Peace,” which mark a transformative shift from peacebuilding to sustaining peace as “a goal and a process to build a common vision of society.”

The Sustaining Peace Agenda complements the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which recognizes the need to build inclusive, just, and peaceful societies for all. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 lays out gender equality and the empowerment of all women as critical goals. SDG 5 is a keystone goal; the other SDGs cannot be met without the empowerment of women. SDG 16 commits to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provision of access to justice for all, and building of effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions. The normative framework on Women, Peace and Security is critical to both agendas, recognizing that women’s rights are vital to achieving peace and justice so that all people can fulfill their potential in dignity and equality. Such efforts build on

the platform established at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, which incorporated dialogue on women’s political and economic participation, freedom from violence, and role in armed conflict.

Global indices are a way to assess and compare national progress against such goals, by distilling an array of complex information into a single number and ranking. But while there are a growing number of global indices, none has brought together the three critical dimensions of women’s inclusion, justice, and security. Gender indices are typically limited to indicators of inclusion, such as whether women complete secondary school or are in paid work. These aspects of inclusion are undoubtedly important, but they are incomplete in the absence of aspects of justice and security. It is surely misleading to focus on girls’ schooling where girls are not safe in their home or community. Likewise, traditional measures of security include an array of conflict indicators and assessments but invariably ignore systematic bias and discrimination against women and girls.

The new Women, Peace, and Security Index

The global Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Index introduced in this report bridges insights from gender and development indices with those from peace and security indices in a way that is simple and transparent and that reflects women’s autonomy and empowerment as agents at home, in the community, and in society. The index is structured around three basic dimensions of well-being: inclusion (economic, social,

political); justice (formal laws and informal discrimination); and security (at the family, community, and societal levels). It captures and quantifies these three dimensions through 11 indicators and presents a comprehensive measure of women's well-being (figure 1). The index ranks 153 countries—covering more than 98 percent of the world's population—along these three dimensions in a way that focuses attention on key achievements and major shortcomings.

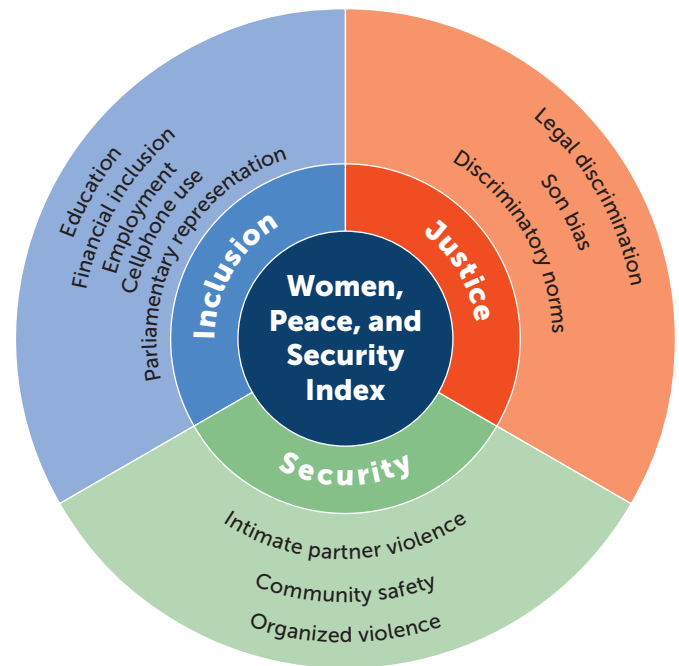
While the framework laid out in Security Council Resolution 1325 is structured around four pillars—Prevention, Protection, Participation, and Relief and Recovery—our index takes a broader, more encompassing approach. We argue that the condition of women and the denial of their rights are an early indicator of future instability and conflict. Key dimensions of the well-being of women and girls—whether they are fully included in economic, social, and political opportunities; whether they experience formal and informal discrimination; and whether they are free of violence—have intrinsic importance and are integral to peace and security. As the U.S. National Security Strategy underlined in 2010, “Experience shows that countries are more peaceful and prosperous when women are accorded full and equal rights and opportunity.” We capture the three dimensions under the headings of inclusion in economic, social, and political spheres; justice, including the associated legal protections and the absence of key markers of gender discrimination; and the freedom from violence represented in security at the household, community, and societal levels. And we call for more and better data to enable fuller assessments and monitor progress.

The WPS Index is the first gender index to be developed in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all UN member states in September 2015. It is firmly grounded in the goals, targets, and indicators associated with this agenda. It can inform and strengthen the analytical capacity of a range of stakeholders, from the UN system and member states to civil society, to better understand and monitor the root causes of conflict.

In this inaugural report, we rank the 153 countries for which sufficient data are available based on their WPS Index score, which theoretically ranges from zero (the worst possible performance) to one (the best possible score). The index's three dimensions—inclusion, justice, and security—are measured using publicly available data. Inclusion is measured by women's achievements in education, employment, and parliamentary representation, as well as access to cellphones and financial services. Justice is captured in both formal and informal aspects through indicators that measure the extent of discrimination in the legal system, alongside any bias in favor of sons and exposure to discriminatory norms. Security is measured at three levels—family, community, and society.

The results are presented on a geographic basis for seven regions and a Developed Country group, as well as a Fragile States group, which cuts across several regions but with a majority of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.¹

FIGURE 1 The Women, Peace, and Security Index consists of 3 dimensions and 11 indicators



Note: See notes to statistical table 1 for definitions of indicators.
Source: Authors.

What are the headlines?

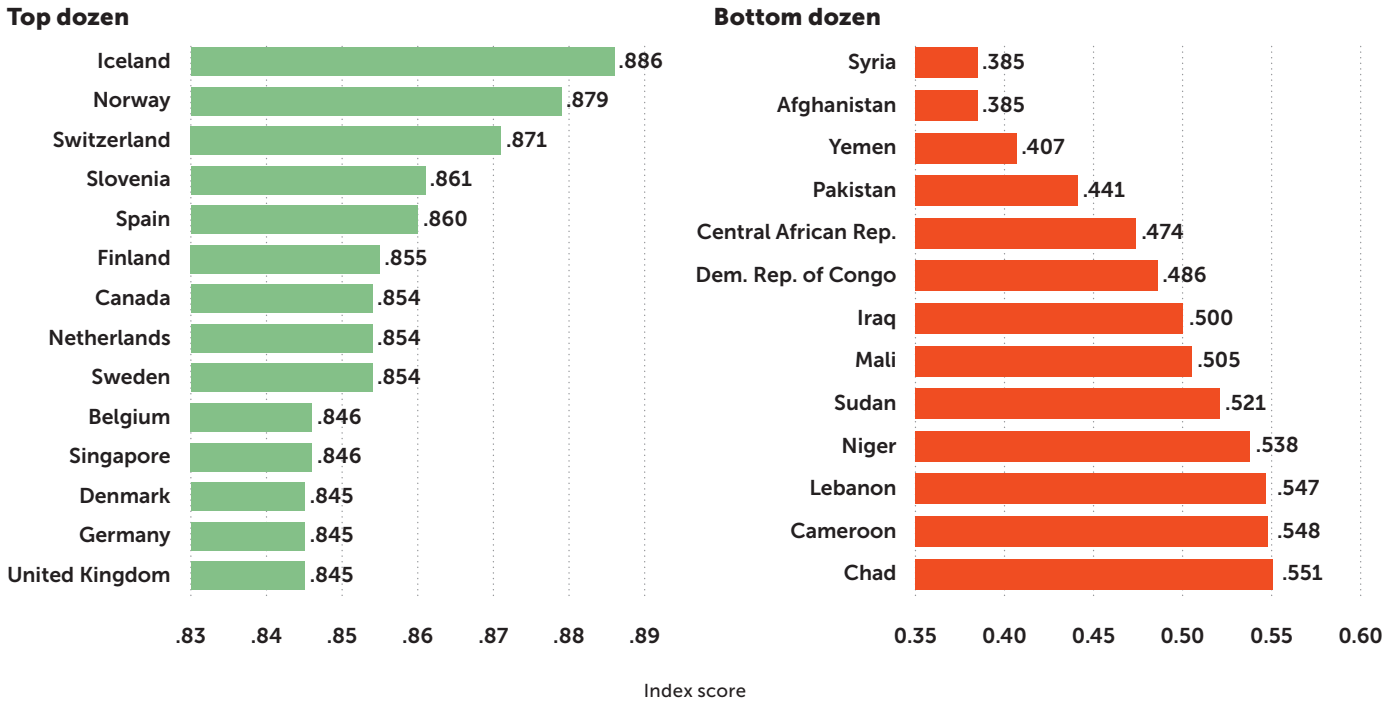
Overall, the index values range from a high of .886 for Iceland, which leads the world in this first edition of the WPS Index, down to .385 for Afghanistan and Syria, the bottom ranked countries in a tie for last place. The top and bottom dozen rankings on the WPS Index are shown in figure 2. Analysis of the index results reveals several key insights.

First, the index demonstrates that good things often go together. Around 30 countries score in the top third for all three dimensions, with achievements in each dimension reinforcing progress more broadly. Among country groups, positive mutual reinforcement is seen most notably for the Developed Country group, Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and East Asia and the Pacific (figure 3).

Second, however, such favorable synergies are not a given, as patterns of unbalanced achievement across dimensions are also common. For example, Latin America does well on justice but performs unimpressively on inclusion—a dimension on which several other regions also perform poorly, most notably the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa (see figure 3).

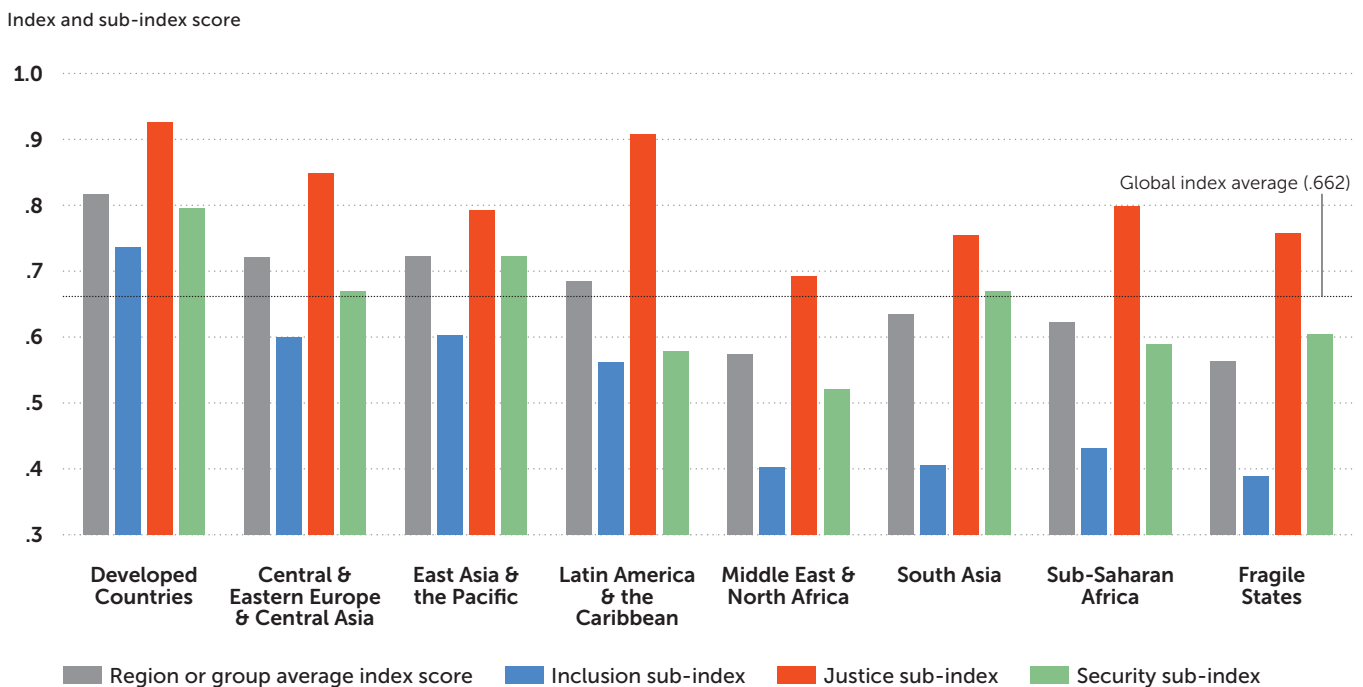
Third, while there are clear regional patterns in performance, there are also major differences within regions, illustrating that improvements are feasible in order to reach the standards of neighbors (figure 4). Thus, although the Middle East and North Africa is the bottom-ranked region on the WPS Index, which can be traced largely to high levels

FIGURE 2 The best and worst performers on the index



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

FIGURE 3 Good performance across dimensions of the index for some country groups and unbalanced for others



Note: Possible Women, Peace, and Security Index scores range from a low of 0 to a high of 1. See statistical table 1 for detailed scores and date ranges and appendix 2 for region and country groups. Fragile States are also included in their regional group. Source: Authors' estimates. See statistical table 1 for data sources.

of organized violence and discriminatory laws alongside generally poor scores on inclusion, its within-region differences are also striking. For example, the United Arab Emirates ranks in the top third of countries on the WPS Index globally, despite especially poor performance on legal discrimination. The lowest scoring regions all have some countries whose score exceeds the global average of .662, including Nepal in South Asia, and Namibia, South Africa, Mauritius, Ghana, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe in Sub-Saharan Africa. The same is true for specific indicators. For example, the global average for girls' education is about seven years, and all regions except South Asia have countries that have surpassed that level.

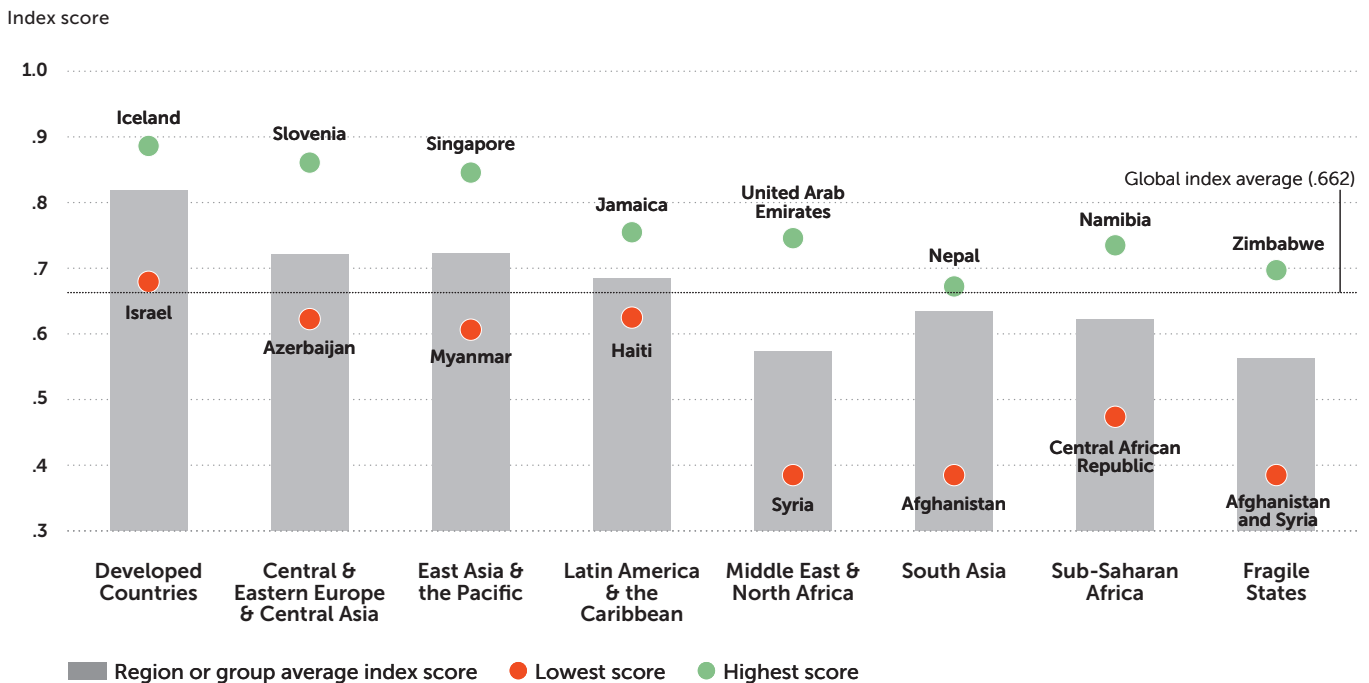
Likewise, it is striking that there is at least one country in every region that has surpassed the global mean rate of female cellphone use of about 78 percent. Access to cellphones is a critical tool for women in developing countries, especially given cellphones' increasing association with digital inclusion. Accumulating evidence demonstrates cellphones' importance for women's agency and self-confidence, safety, and access to markets and income earning opportunities. Almost 60 percent of female respondents to a recent survey across 11 developing countries reported that they felt more autonomous and independent while using a cellphone, almost 70 percent felt safer with a cellphone, while almost two-thirds of working women felt that cellphones improved

their access to business and employment opportunities.² Rigorous micro-level studies confirm these findings.³

Fourth, attainments in too many countries are well below global averages. In the inclusion dimension, for example, parliamentary representation of women ranges from a global high of 56 percent in Rwanda to zero in Qatar to single digits in nearly two dozen countries. On women's employment, behind a global average of about 50 percent, Syria is the lowest at 12 percent, and in five of eight country groups the regional average is less than half the global average of 50 percent. In the justice dimension, legal discrimination is extensive in the worst-scoring countries in all regions. Among the countries that maintain widespread legal discrimination, the most notable are Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen in the Middle East and North Africa; Iran and Afghanistan in South Asia; and Sudan, Swaziland, and Mauritania in Sub-Saharan Africa. The share of men who do not think it is acceptable for women to work outside the home (discriminatory norms) is likewise high in several country groups, averaging one-fourth of men in the fragile states group and one-third in South Asia and ranging as high as 37 percent in the Middle East and North Africa.

Fifth, in too many countries, even those that have made partial progress, women face serious justice and security constraints. In Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia, for example, a raft of legal constraints and prejudices against women in paid

FIGURE 4 Some countries perform much better—and some much worse—than their regional average on the index



Note: Possible Women, Peace, and Security Index scores range from a low of 0 to a high of 1. See statistical table 1 for detailed scores and date ranges and appendix 2 for region and country groups. Fragile States are also included in their regional group. Source: Authors' estimates. See statistical table 1 for data sources.

work conspire against overall progress in women’s well-being. The countries in which more than half of men do not accept women working include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, and Yemen, and rates range as high as 73 percent in Pakistan; in contrast, disapproval rates are in single digits in such countries as Botswana, Colombia, Ghana, Latvia, and Venezuela, as well as in most countries in the Developed Country group.

Finally, money matters, but many countries do far better on the WPS Index—or far worse—than their per capita income rank. Fifty-seven countries rank at least 10 places better on the WPS Index than on their global income ranking—most notably Zimbabwe,⁴ Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), and Nicaragua—while more than 50 countries do much worse: Saudi Arabia, for example, drops a stunning 89 places on the WPS Index relative to its per capita income.

A global snapshot for policy and advocacy

The global rankings on women’s inclusion, justice, and security offer multiple insights. They:

- Highlight priority areas in which policy reforms and investments are needed to accelerate progress, especially in countries that are performing poorly or where achievements are unbalanced across dimensions.
- Show that few countries perform uniformly well across key indicators of inclusion, justice, and security.
- Inform and contribute to an evidence-based narrative that inspires political action and social movements and helps ensure accountability.

- Build an integrated picture, highlighting data and evidence gaps, and promote consensus around actions to address those gaps.

The index offers broad groups of stakeholders and the international community a comprehensive picture of achievements and gaps across a critical range of fronts, including areas where greater attention and investments are needed. While the index reveals a snapshot showing that no country attains perfect scores on women’s inclusion, justice, and security, the country spotlights provide a fuller sense of progress and constraints over time.

We plan to update the index every two years. It can track progress on women’s inclusion, justice, and security ahead of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2019 and the 20th anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2020, providing a platform for scaling up efforts toward meeting the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recently agreed by 193 governments.

We hope that these results and analyses provide opportunities for stakeholders to come together to discuss challenges and identify major opportunities for transformative change. Our work aims to accelerate progress on the Women, Peace and Security agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, bringing together partners around an agenda for women’s inclusion, justice, and security.

