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PRIO Centre on Gender, Peace and Security

RESEARCH BRIEF
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Trends in women's status over time: Key findings from revised WPS Index estimates for 2017-2023

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SUMMARY

Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda is strengthened by tools that track progress over time, identify where gaps persist, and hold decision-makers accountable. First developed in 2017, the WPS Index multi-dimensionally measures women's status in 177 countries and economies around the world. The structure of the WPS Index has been updated in 2023 to include four indicators that differ from the previous three editions. In order to examine trends in women's status over time, we have recalculated WPS Index estimates for 2017, 2019, and 2021 to incorporate and account for these structural changes. Analyzing trends over time reveals that women's status is modestly improving worldwide but that key gaps persist.

Between 2017 and 2023:

- The global average WPS Index score increased by three percent. Regionally, East Asia and the Pacific and the Middle East and North Africa saw the most improvement.
- At the country level, 20 countries saw score improvements of at least ten percent. Bahrain, Viet Nam, and Egypt experienced the largest increase.
- On the other hand, 13 countries saw score deterioration of at least ten percent, with Eswatini, El Salvador, and Burkina Faso demonstrating the largest declines.
- Across indicators, women's financial inclusion and absence of legal discrimination have advanced the most worldwide, while women's employment and proximity to conflict have seen the most significant regression.

These trends can be used to identify strategic priorities and guide data-driven policymaking. To strengthen implementation of the WPS Agenda and accelerate progress on gender equality, policymakers working on these issues should:

- Invest in women's employment and economic empowerment.
- Amplify women's voices and participation in peace processes.
- Incorporate efforts to address political violence against women into WPS-related policies, programs, and National Action Plans.
- Prioritize investments in women as investments in the wellbeing of everyone in society.
- Scale up the production of high-quality, regularly updated, sex-disaggregated data.
- Integrate measurable outcomes and corresponding metrics into WPS implementation plans.

Introduction

More than 20 years ago, the United Nations (UN) Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), which recognized the disproportionate impacts of armed conflict on women and the vital role of women in advancing peace and security. Despite nine additional UN resolutions to the WPS Agenda, more than 100 UN member states adopting National Action Plans on WPS, and ongoing advocacy from women's civil society groups, implementation is lacking.

Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda is strengthened by tools that track progress over time, identify where gaps persist, and hold decision-makers accountable. First developed in 2017, the WPS Index multi-dimensionally measures women's status in 177 countries and economies around the world. 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 commitments to advance women's rights and opportunities.

The structure of the WPS Index has been updated in 2023 to include four indicators that differ from the previous three editions of the index. These modifications have been made in part due to the discontinuation of select indicators and in part due to the emergence of better data since 2017. While these adjustments paint a more detailed picture of women's status and enhance the value of the index, their addition means that this year's ranks and scores are not directly comparable with those from previous years.

In order to examine trends in women's status over time, we have recalculated WPS Index scores for 2017, 2019, and 2021 to incorporate and account for these structural changes. In this research brief, we explore where and how women's status has improved and deteriorated most since 2017 at the country and indicator levels.

Overview of the WPS Index

The Women, Peace and Security Index ranks and scores 177 countries and economies in terms of women's status. The WPS Index captures 13 indicators of women's status, classified under the three dimensions of inclusion (economic, social, political), justice (formal and informal discrimination), and security (at the individual, community, and societal levels) (figure 1 and table 1). The data comes from recent and reputable sources, including UN agencies, the World Bank, the Gallup World Poll, and more. We combine performance across indicators and dimensions to generate a country's score, between zero and one, which is used to establish its ranking.

FIGURE 1. The WPS Index captures three dimensions of women's status in 13 indicators

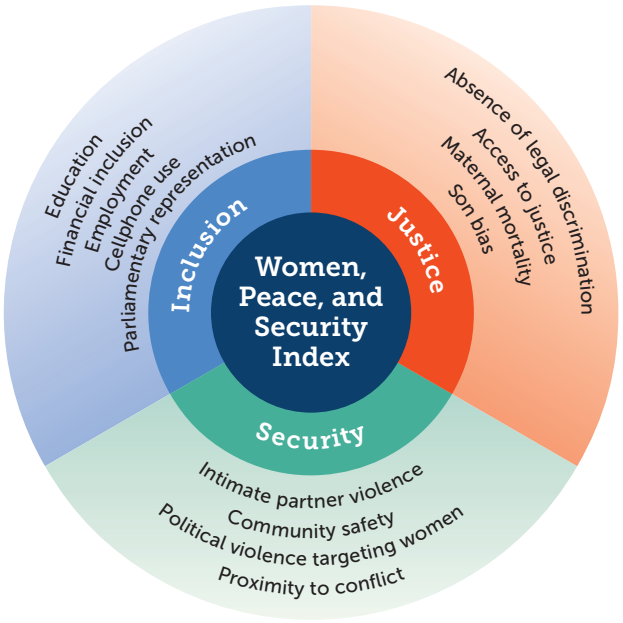


TABLE 1: WPS Index indicators, definitions, and rationales

DIMENSION AND INDICATOR	DEFINITION	RATIONALE
INCLUSION		
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
JUSTICE		
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[a]	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, particip Percentage of total seats in lower and upper houses of the national parliament that are held by womenating in a fair trial, and seeking redress if public authorities violate their rights[b]	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
SECURITY		
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[c]	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. 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.

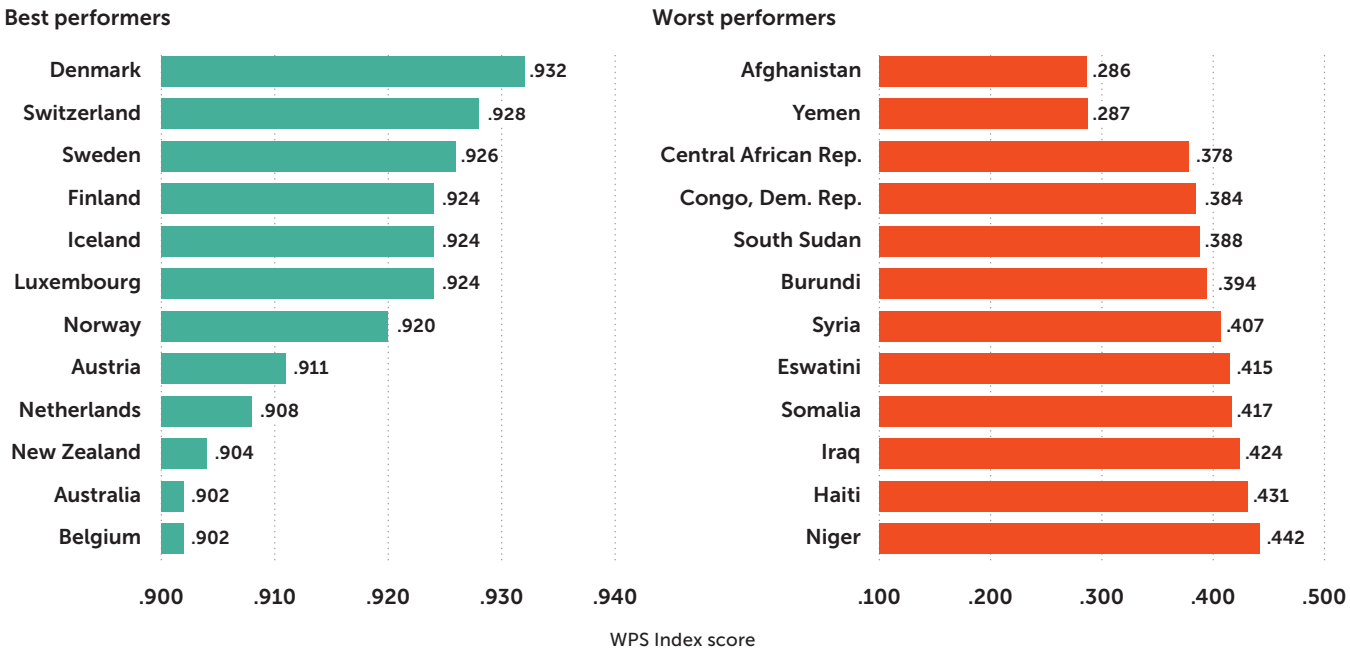
b. Based on Varieties of Democracy's aggregate expert judgments ranking countries on a scale of zero (no access to justice for women) to four (secure and effective access to justice for women).

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: Full data and data sources are available at giwps.georgetown.edu/the-index.

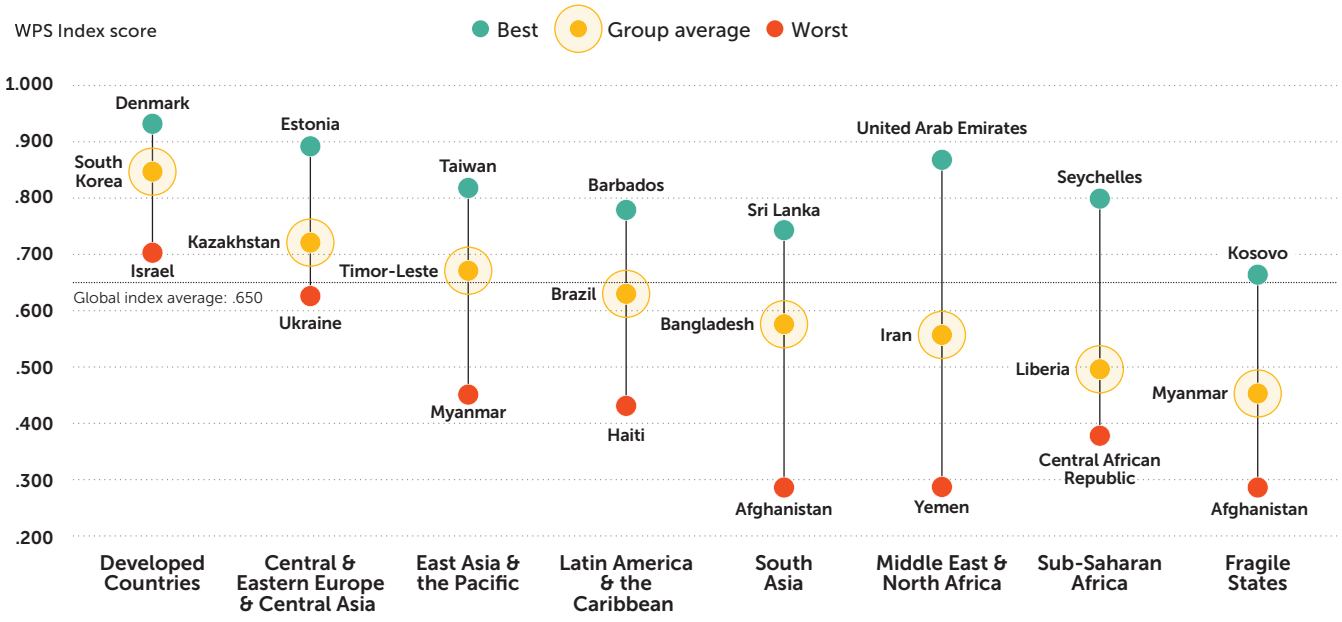
The 2023/24 edition of the WPS Index—the fourth since the inaugural 2017/18 index—reveals glaring disparities around the world. Denmark leads the rankings, scoring more than three times better than Afghanistan, ranked at the bottom (figure 2). At the regional and country group level, Developed Countries and Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia perform best on average, with Fragile States and Sub-Saharan Africa performing poorest (figure 3). Notably, all 20 bottom-ranked countries have experienced armed conflict since 2021.

FIGURE 2. The dozen best and worst performers on the WPS Index



Note: Possible index scores range from zero to one.

FIGURE 3. A wide range of performance across and within regions



Note: Countries in the Fragile States group are also included in their regional group.

Structural Updates in 2023

In response to the evolving landscape of gender 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. 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. As estimated by the UN Population Fund and the World Health Organization, maternal mortality ratios represent the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in each country. 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.
- **Political violence targeting women (PVTW) (security dimension)**. For women to engage in civic spaces meaningfully and equally with men, they first must be able to participate safely. The PVTW indicator estimates the number of political violence events that target women per 100,000 women in each country and is based on data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) Project. PVTW 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.

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 zero to four 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."[1] 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 but is no longer being updated. 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, risk of gender-based violence, and access to healthcare and essential services. 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.

We have also modified our metric of women's employment. In the 2017, 2019, and 2021 editions, this was captured as the employment-to-population ratio for women ages 25+. In 2023, we have modified the age range to 25 to 64, to capture working-age women specifically. This avoids skewed values in countries with a large proportion of senior citizens.

Rigorous feasibility testing of the four new and replacement indicators confirmed that each brings 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.

Women's Status Over Time: Key Findings at the Country Level

Recalculation of WPS Index scores for previous years reveals that the global average WPS Index score has increased by three percent since 2017, signaling an improvement in women's status overall, but at a modest rate.

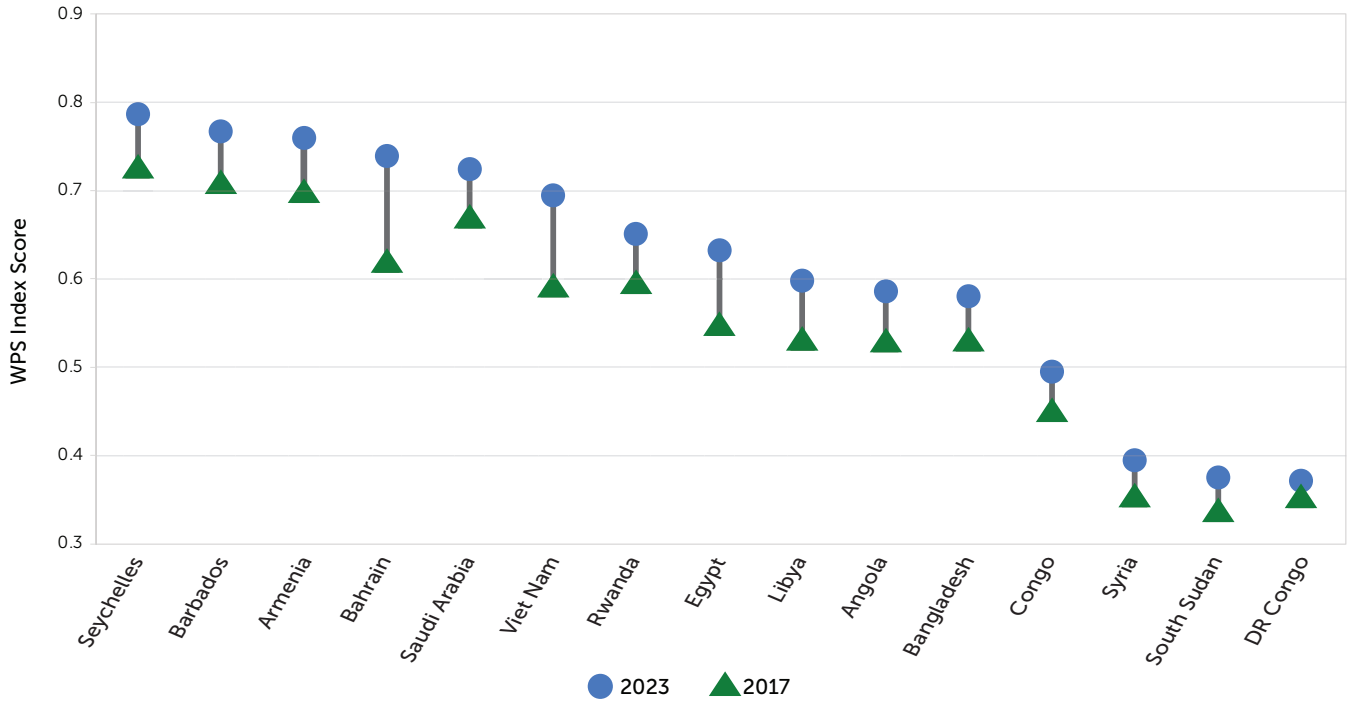
Encouraging improvements in women's status

Recalculation of WPS Index scores for previous years reveals that the global average WPS Index score has increased by three percent since 2017, signaling an improvement in women's status overall, but at a modest rate. Improvement in the global average is driven by East Asia and the Pacific and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), whose regional averages improved by approximately seven percent across the same period. At the country level, 20 countries saw score improvements of at least ten percent.

Figure 4 displays the top ten countries in terms of score improvement, five of which are in Sub-Saharan Africa and four of which are from the MENA region. Bahrain, Viet Nam, and Egypt saw the most improvement to their WPS Index score between 2017 and 2023, which we profile more in depth below.

Bahrain has seen the most improvement on the WPS Index since 2017, with a 24 percent increase in its overall index score and a corresponding rank increase from 119th to 56th.[2] The main indicators driving this change are financial inclusion and parliamentary representation, both within the inclusion dimension. The proportion of women with access to their own bank accounts rose from 67 percent in 2017 to 75 percent in 2023. Compared to other countries in the MENA region, Bahrain is one of few—the others being Lebanon and Tunisia—where women have equal rights in terms of opening bank accounts and accumulating credit[3] Bahrain also encompasses the highest rate of women's business participation in the MENA region, creating opportunities for women leaders to expand their use of financial institutions and technology to promote their companies.[4]

FIGURE 4: The ten countries improving most in terms of women's status, 2017-2023



Note: Countries are ordered in terms of highest WPS Index score in 2023.

Between 2017 and 2023, the share of women parliamentarians in Bahrain increased from 15 to 23 percent. In its recent 2022 elections, the country elected eight women to its parliament, setting a record high.[5] Nearly one in four candidates were women, marking another record for the country and indicating an upward trend toward gender parity and representation.

Closely following Bahrain, **Viet Nam** has recorded a 22 percent rise in its overall score since 2017 and has jumped in the rankings from 126th to 78th. Over this period, women's financial inclusion has skyrocketed from 32 percent to 53 percent. A number of factors have driven this improvement, including the expansion of local educational initiatives on financial literacy[6] and increased digitization of wage payments, leading to more efficient and reliable banking.[7] Moreover, the expansion of women-led entrepreneurialism in Viet Nam has led to more women opening up business accounts and seeking capital through investment from banks.[8]

The absence of legal discrimination against women has also improved in Viet Nam. In 2017, the country scored 38 out of 100 overall on this indicator, reflecting widespread structural inequities. However, in the last six years, Viet Nam's performance more than doubled, to 88 out of 100. Recently, the country's government has shifted focus toward revising its labor laws to eliminate codified discrimination against women. For example, Viet Nam adopted a new Labour Code in 2019 that opened up industrial jobs for women, while also addressing matters of unequal pay and sexual harassment in the workplace.[9]

Egypt represents the third largest improver, recording a 21 percent increase in its score and climbing the ranks from 141st to 108th. The country saw notable improvements across multiple indicators, including education, financial inclusion, parliamentary representation, and proximity to conflict. Compared to an average of five years of schooling in 2017, women in Egypt today have attended school for nearly ten years. A number of international and domestic initiatives have driven this change, including the country's Education Enhancement Program, intended to increase the number of girls in rural schools through awareness campaigns and reeducation projects for those who had dropped out previously.[10]

Similar to other improved countries, Egypt saw dramatic improvements in terms of women's financial inclusion, from nine percent in 2017 to roughly 24 percent today. Contributing to this has been the country's expansion of digital financing and lending, as the Central Bank of Egypt reported a 99 percent increase in the number of mobile transactions between 2021 and 2022 alone.[11] The Egyptian government has also taken steps to provide gender-specific programs that assist women in fully accessing financial services, including a 2019 gender-inclusive consumer protection regulation. Other initiatives include awareness and education sessions run by banks and organizations, especially focused on informing rural communities about agricultural financing and household purchases.

The country also saw improvements in terms of proximity to conflict. While roughly 33 percent of women in Egypt were living within 50 kilometers of conflict in 2017, that number has dropped to five percent in 2023. However, conflict continues to persist, and mounting instability in the region—along with fluctuating military operations in North Sinai between the Egyptian army and the Islamic State—has resulted in the destruction and displacement of countless families.[12]

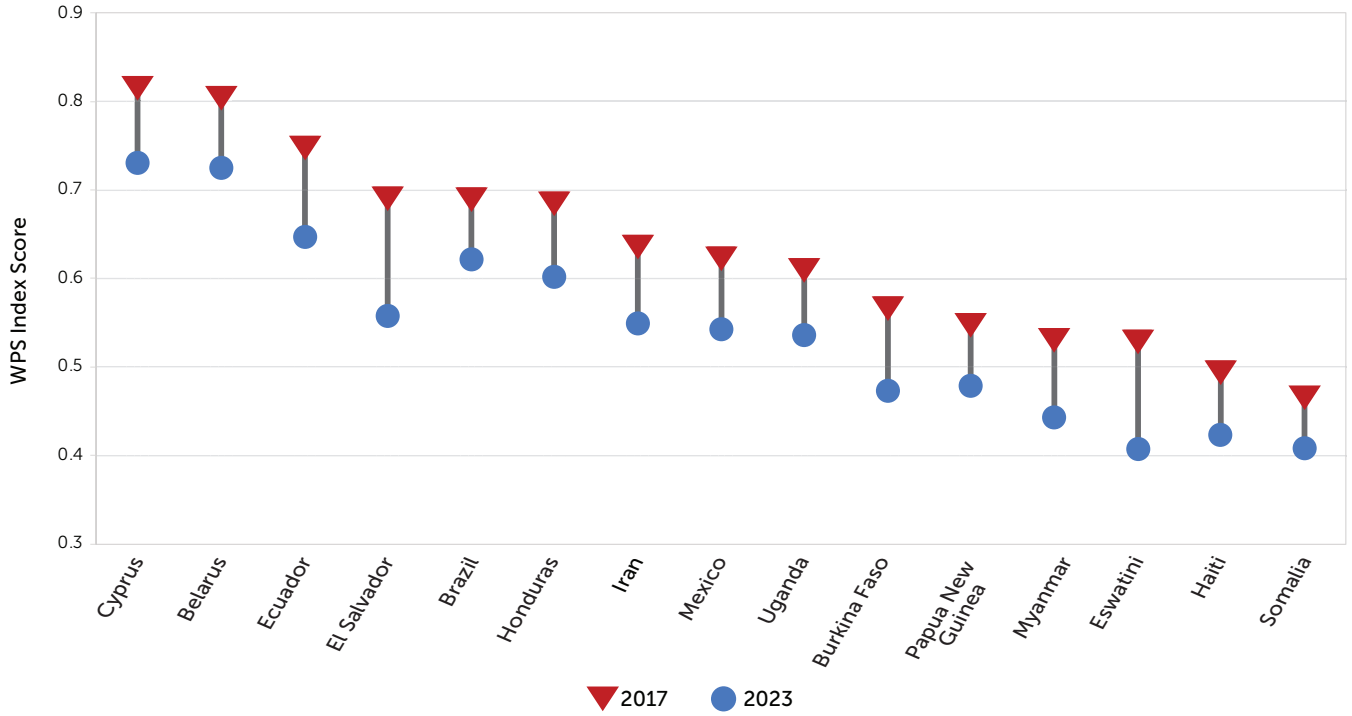
Bahrain has seen the most improvement on the WPS Index since 2017, with a 24 percent increase in its overall index score and a corresponding rank increase from 119th to 56th.

Alarming declines in women's status

Globally, 13 countries saw a deterioration in their WPS Index score by at least ten percent since 2017. Figure 5 shows the ten countries with the most decline, half of which are from Latin America and the Caribbean. The average score for this region has dropped more than ten percent since 2017, and it is the only region demonstrating significant deterioration. In Latin America and the Caribbean, downward trends are mostly concentrated within the security dimension. The share of women living in close proximity to conflict has more than doubled, from 19 percent in 2017 to 44 percent as of data from 2022, and levels of PVTW are higher than in any other region.

Between 2017 and 2023, **Eswatini** saw a 22 percent decline in index performance, along with a drop in rank from 142nd to 165th. Deterioration is concentrated in the security dimension and is especially visible in women's proximity to conflict, which has risen from zero to 100 percent since 2017. In 2020, the UN found that nearly

FIGURE 5: The ten countries deteriorating most in terms of women's status, 2017-2023



Note: Countries are ordered in terms of highest WPS Index score in 2023.

half of women and girls in the country have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime, both within and beyond their homes.[13] Eswatini reports the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence in the world, fueled by widespread sexual and gender-based violence that pervades communities and undermines women's safety.[14] Recently, the country has seen a notable rise in pro-democracy protests against the existing monarchy, which has banned political parties and faces countless corruption allegations.[15] However, protests have led to state-sanctioned military crackdowns and detentions, threatening the lives of activists and civilians.

Despite these declines, the country saw vast improvements in terms of women's financial inclusion. The rate of women who have access to their own bank accounts more than doubled, from 27 percent in 2017 to 69 percent in 2023. However, the World Bank finds that women still face regular discrimination when opening bank accounts and have unequal inheritance rights, indicating room for improvement.[16]

El Salvador follows Eswatini as the country with the second largest score decline, at 19 percent, also dropping from a rank of 76th in 2017 to 135th in 2023. El Salvador represents the worst-performing country in the Latin America and Caribbean region in terms of proximity to conflict: around 99 percent of women in El Salvador live within 50 kilometers of armed conflict, compared to zero percent in 2017. Likely driving this trend are gang violence and stringent patriarchal norms that threaten women's safety and contribute to high rates of sexual abuse.[17] Since the end of the country's civil war in the 1990s, El Salvador has struggled to contain rampant gang violence, much of which is attributed to the Barrio 18 and MS-13 gangs. Today, El Salvador has one of the highest femicide rates globally.[18]

Within the inclusion dimension, women's financial inclusion and parliamentary representation remain low. The share of women with access to their own bank account has stagnated at 29 percent, in part due to women's large contributions to informal sectors, which hinder their ability to access formal financial services.[19] Women's representation in parliament dropped from 32 percent in 2017 to 27 percent in 2023, signaling a long road toward gender parity and gender-inclusive decision-making.

Burkina Faso saw a 16 percent decline in its index score and dropped from a rank of 130th to 153rd between 2017 and 2023. Driving this decline is the country's poor performance within the index's security dimension. Rates of PVTW are more than five times higher than the global

average, and attacks are primarily perpetrated by armed rebel groups operating across West Africa.[20] Similarly, roughly 60 percent of women in Burkina Faso live in close proximity to conflict, up from only 21 percent in 2017. Rebel groups, including the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin, made up nearly 60 percent of all recorded violent events targeting women between 2010 and 2020. This violence has displaced countless more women and undermines women's overall security.[21]

Key Trends at the Indicator Level

Women's financial inclusion and absence of legal discrimination represent the indicators with the most improvement globally since 2017, while women's employment and proximity to conflict have worsened the most.

Significant improvements in financial inclusion and legal rights for women

Globally, women's **financial inclusion** is on the rise and represents the indicator on the WPS Index with the most improvement. In 2023, 71 percent of women around the world have access to their own bank account, representing a significant increase from 56 percent in 2017. MENA saw the greatest improvement regionally, rising from 28 percent to 41 percent over the period. At the country level, Viet Nam, the Republic of Congo, and Armenia saw the most expansion in this indicator, rising 23, 23, and 11 percentage points, respectively. 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.[22]

In recent years, the proliferation of digital banking and financial services has allowed women to overcome mobility and time constraints that previously hindered their financial inclusion through reliable, rapid transactions.[23] Digital finance also enables women to manage their assets privately and independently, increasing women's agency and autonomy. As of the most recent data from 2021, for example, one in five women in 15 Sub-Saharan African countries rely completely on mobile money accounts.[24] Driving financial inclusion through digital banking depends on cell phone access, which is still characterized by glaring gender gaps. In low- and middle-income countries, women are seven percent less likely to own a mobile phone than men, with the largest barriers being affordability, literacy, and lack of digital skills.[25] Expanding women's access to mobile phones is a critical first step in ensuring that the revolution of online banking does not widen gender gaps and leave women behind.

The **absence of legal discrimination** indicator represents a score that captures the level of gender discrimination in the law, with 100 signaling full equality. Since 2017, the global average score for this indicator has increased from 71 to 76, suggesting that legal codes are generally expanding women's rights. At the regional level, Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia improved the most, rising from 74 to 81 out of 100. Globally, Ukraine, Viet Nam, and Gabon saw the most improvement. In 2022, Ukraine enacted policies that allow men and women to retire with the same pension benefits.[26] Gabon has made significant moves in 2022 and 2023 to expand women's mobility, passing reforms that allow women to choose where they live and apply for their own passports.[27] The country also worked to address discrimination within the household, removing restrictions that prevented women from becoming head of household and that required them to obey their husbands.[28] While rates of intimate partner violence are fairly high at 22 percent, Gabon also introduced new provisions in 2022 that specifically address domestic violence.[29]

Since 2017, countries like Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, and Iraq have passed reforms that enhance women's access to employment and economic opportunities, including protections for victims of workplace harassment and elimination of barriers to credit.[30] Other countries have focused on tackling legal discrimination in terms of women's mobility, such as Uganda's 2022 amendment that allows women to freely choose where they live.[31]

Worsening employment rates and exposure to conflict for women

Since 2017, women's employment has slightly dropped worldwide, decreasing from 55 percent to 53 percent. Several of the index's most-declined countries saw significant deterioration within this indicator, including

Burkina Faso (from 63 percent to 45 percent), Uganda (76 percent to 40 percent), and Honduras (52 percent to 49 percent). Fragile States experienced the greatest decline since 2017, dropping from 60 percent to 54 percent in 2023. Women's employment is critical to enabling their financial independence and opening up greater opportunities for mobility, education, and more. However, ongoing geopolitical crises and conflicts—paired with the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and disruptions to global supply chains—have exacerbated the gender employment gap.[32] Gender unemployment ratios are especially high in the MENA region, where more than twice as many women are unemployed as men. Obstacles to formal employment continue to hinder women's ability to access safe and equitable working conditions; in fact, four out of five jobs created for women globally are in the informal sector, which often lacks suitable legal protections, benefits, and safety standards.[33]

The year 2022 was the deadliest in terms of battle deaths from armed conflict since 1994, the year of the Rwandan genocide, reflecting escalating threats of violence and instability. Women's **proximity to conflict** has risen globally since 2017, with the share of women living within 50 kilometers increasing from 17 percent to 19 percent. This rise is especially pronounced among countries with the greatest declines in overall index score, including Myanmar (23 percent to 98 percent), Iran (six percent to 55 percent), and Mexico (41 percent to 94 percent), underscoring how exposure to armed conflict strongly affects women's status. Regionally, Latin America and the Caribbean experienced the largest rise in proximity to conflict, with the rate of women at risk more than doubling from 19 percent to 44 percent since 2017.

Globally, this rise in violence is largely attributed to the growth of political militias and terrorist organizations, all of which threaten state stability and displace civilian populations.[34] Other factors contributing to conflict include organized crime and gang violence, especially against political leaders, journalists, and marginalized groups. For example, more than 99 percent of terrorist-related deaths worldwide occur within countries experiencing violent conflict, particularly in the MENA and Sub-Saharan Africa regions.[35] Conflict triggers heightened risks of gender-based violence and sexual violence and threatens women's access to reliable healthcare or educational infrastructures, actively hindering progress on women's status and peace and security more broadly.[36]

Conclusions and the Path Forward

While global trends show that women's status is improving, progress remains slow and uneven. Regionally, East Asia and the Pacific and MENA have seen the most improvement since 2017 on average, while Latin America and the Caribbean represents the only region demonstrating a decline in women's status. Five of the ten countries with the most deterioration globally are from this region, and downward trends are mostly driven by escalating levels of PVTW and exposure to armed conflict. At the indicator level, women's financial inclusion and legal protections have expanded the most globally, while women's employment and proximity to conflict have worsened the most.

To strengthen implementation of the WPS Agenda and accelerate progress on gender equality, policymakers working on these issues should:

- **Invest in women's employment and economic empowerment.** Declining rates of women's employment globally jeopardizes women's financial security, agency, livelihoods, and access to social protections. Ensuring that women have full and equal opportunities in the workforce benefits women's families, communities, and the broader economy by boosting national output, productivity, and prosperity for all.
- **Amplify women's voices and participation in peace processes.** As armed conflicts escalate and the share of women exposed increases, it is more important than ever to ensure that women are meaningfully included in peace processes. Women introduce diverse perspectives and unique issues into decision-making, which are essential to ensuring durable peace and inclusive recovery efforts.
- **Incorporate efforts to address political violence against women into WPS-related policies, programs, and National Action Plans.** Political violence against women threatens the goals of the WPS Agenda by undermining women's full and meaningful participation in decision-making and accelerating the erosion of democratic institutions and civic space. Addressing the escalating risks

of political violence against women is critical to protecting women, upholding democracy, and preventing conflict and instability.

- **Prioritize investments in women as investments in the wellbeing of everyone in society.** Countries where women are doing well tend to be more prosperous, democratic, peaceful, and better prepared to respond to the impacts of climate change. These relationships demonstrate that the benefits of targeted investments in women multiply across a range of policy outcomes.
- **Scale up the production of high-quality, regularly updated, sex-disaggregated data.** Tracking progress over time is critical to advancing the WPS Agenda and moving the needle on gender equality. A stronger evidence base will allow policymakers and practitioners to identify gaps and better prioritize interventions.
- **Integrate measurable outcomes and corresponding metrics into WPS implementation plans.** Tools like the WPS Index can be leveraged in WPS National Action Plans and relevant monitoring frameworks as mechanisms to tangibly track progress and promote accountability for implementation.

Countries where women are doing well tend to be more prosperous, democratic, peaceful, and better prepared to respond to the impacts of climate change. These relationships demonstrate that the benefits of targeted investments in women multiply across a range of policy outcomes.

APPENDIX

Calculating Revised WPS Index Estimates for 2017, 2019, and 2021

TABLE A1: WPS Index 2017-2023: Reference years, main data sources, and access date

INDICATOR	REFERENCE YEARS				MAIN DATA SOURCE	ACCESS DATE
	2017	2019	2021	2023		
Education (years)	2013-2017	2014-2019	2015-2020	2016-2021	UNESCO Institute for Statistics. http://data.uis.unesco.org/	April 2023
Employment (%)	2013-2017	2015-2019	2017-2021	2018-2022	International Labour Organization (ILO) https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/employment	April 2023
Financial inclusion (%)	2017	2019	2021	2021	World Bank. Global Findex Database. https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/globalfindex	April 2023
Cellphone use (%)	2017	2019	2021	2022	Gallup. 2023 World Poll.	April 2023
Parliamentary representation (%)	2017	2019	2021	2023	Inter-Parliamentary Union. Monthly Ranking of Women in National Parliaments. https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking	April 2023
Absence of legal discrimination (aggregate score)	2017	2019	2021	2023	World Bank. Women, Business and the Law. https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/wbl	April 2023
Access to justice	2013-2017	2014-2019	2016-2021	2017-2022	V-Dem Dataset, version 1.3. https://www.v-dem.net/data/the-v-dem-dataset/	April 2023
Maternal mortality ratio	2017	2018	2019	2020	UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Indicators Database. Indicator 3.1.1. https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/database.	April 2023
Son bias (ratio)	2017	2019	2021	2022	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. World Population Prospects, 2022 Revision. https://population.un.org/wpp/	April 2023
Intimate partner violence (%)	2018	2018	2018	2018	UN SDG Indicators Database. Indicator 5.2.1. https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/database.	April 2023
Community safety (%)	2015-2017	2017-2019	2019-2021	2020-2022	Gallup. 2023 World Poll.	April 2023
Political violence targeting women	2017	2019	2021	2020	ACLED. https://acleddata.com/about-acled/	April 2023
Proximity to conflict	2015-2016	2017-2018	2019-2020	2021-2022	Peace Research Institute Oslo. https://www.prio.org/data	April 2023

To enable comparisons over time, we recalculated WPS Index estimates for 2017, 2019, and 2021 to incorporate structural updates made to the index in 2023. The full methodology for calculating the WPS Index, including notes on aggregation and normalization, is available in appendix 1 of the main 2023/24 WPS Index report, available here.

The 2023 WPS Index is based on 13 indicators, while the previous three editions, published in 2017, 2019, and 2021, were based on 11 indicators. Thus, WPS Index estimates published prior to 2023 **are not directly comparable** with those from 2023. In order to obtain the time series of comparable WPS Index values, the WPS Index was recalculated for 2017/18, 2019/20, and 2021/22 using the same 13 indicators used for the 2023/24 WPS Index. The data for all four years was available in the relevant international databases in 2023.

Table A1 outlines the reference years and the primary sources for the WPS Index for 2017 to 2023. For some indicators, reference intervals are instead shown, meaning values were observed for the most recent year within that period of years. Our indicator for intimate partner violence is only available for the year 2018, so we use those values for all four iterations of the WPS Index.

As summarized early on in this brief, four indicators on the 2023 WPS Index are different from previous years: maternal mortality, political violence targeting women, access to justice, and proximity to conflict. We have also narrowed the age range of the employment indicator from 25+ to 25 to 64, to better capture data on working-age women.

We accessed all relevant databases in April 2023. This means that the same edition of the corresponding database was used for the extraction of data for the computation of the WPS Index for all four years. This further means that the impact of revisions and methodological updates of data is eliminated from the comparison of the WPS Index for different years. In other words, the changes in values and ranks can be attributed exclusively to changes in achievements in the indicators.

Applying the same methodology for the computation of WPS Index scores for 2017 to 2023 has the following implications:

- the indicators cover the same three dimensions: inclusion, justice and security;
- the normalization of indicators was done using the same goalposts as for the 2023/24 WPS Index, described in appendix 1 of the full WPS Index report for 2023/24;
- the same type of imputation of missing values was done using available data from the alternative sources and using the averages of indicators for relevant regions and groups;
- the aggregation of the normalized indicators within the dimension at the country level was done using an arithmetic mean, and the aggregation of dimensional scores was done using a geometric mean;
- the regional (or group) WPS Index scores were obtained from the regional aggregates of the corresponding country indicators; and
- the regional aggregates were obtained as the weighted averages of the corresponding country indicators, where the weights are national female populations for specific age groups referring to the respective years.

Table A2 presents the number of countries covered by the WPS Index in 2017, 2019, 2021 and 2023.

Only 172 countries are included on the WPS Index for all four years. Because the WPS Index is calculated for a slightly different number of countries each year, in order to compare the changes in the WPS Index over time, the ranks are recalculated only for countries that had WPS Index scores in all four years. For analyzing changes in ranks over time, it is most accurate to use these ranks.

TABLE A2: Number of countries scored and ranked on the WPS Index, 2017-2023

INDEX YEAR	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES RANKED AND SCORED	COUNTRIES NOT RANKED AND SCORED[1]
2017	173	Comoros Guinea-Bissau Puerto Rico Vanuatu
2019	175	Puerto Rico Solomon Islands
2021	175	Puerto Rico Solomon Islands
2023	177	–

[1] These are countries that are ranked and scored in 2023 but are missing in other years

Endnotes

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