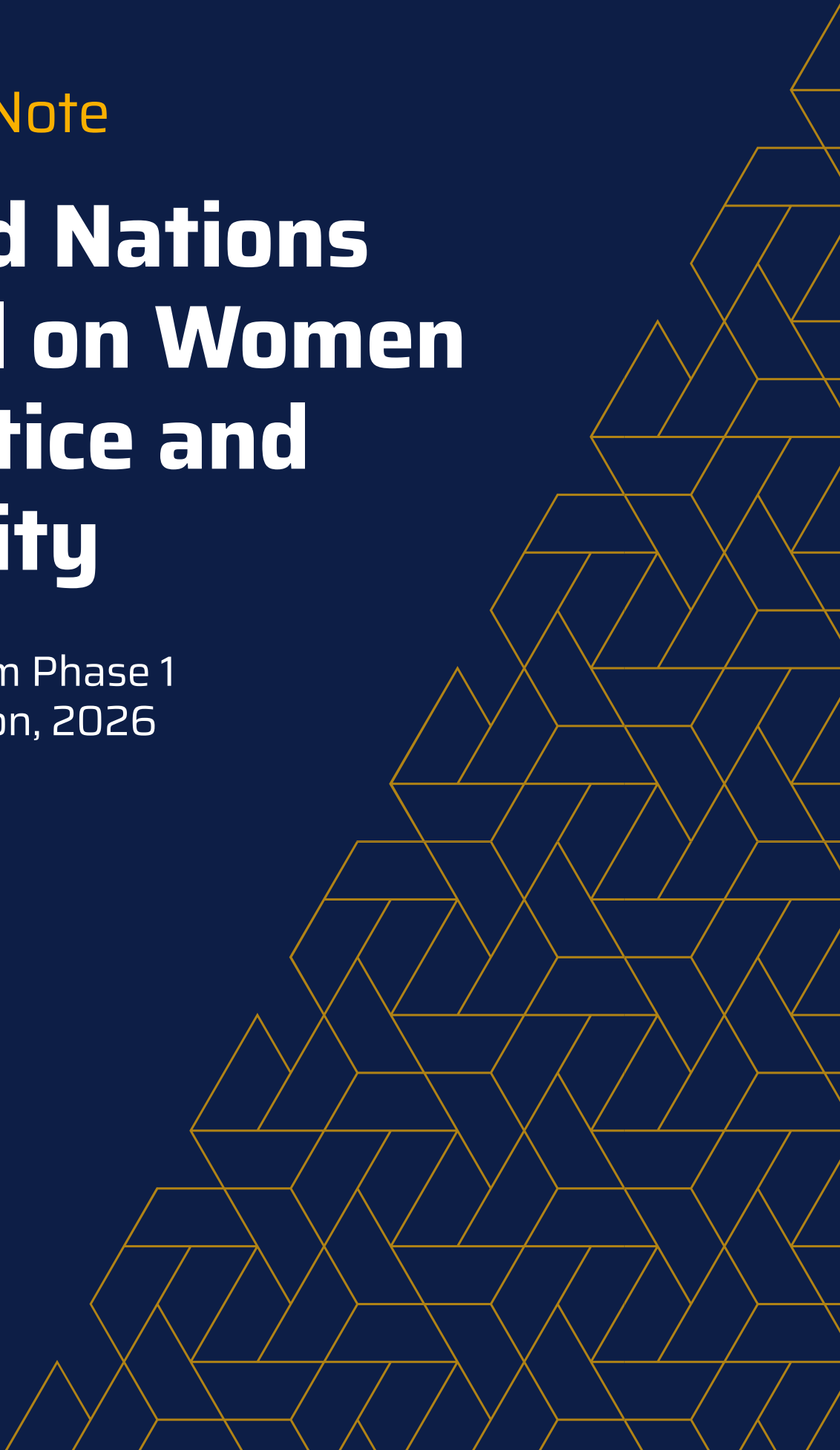


Briefing Note

United Nations Portal on Women in Justice and Security

Findings from Phase 1
data collection, 2026



About DCAF

DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance is dedicated to improving the security of states and their people within a framework of democratic governance, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and gender equality. Since its founding in 2000, DCAF has contributed to making peace and development more sustainable by assisting partner states, and international actors supporting these states, to improve the governance of their security sector through inclusive and participatory reforms. It creates innovative knowledge products, promotes norms and good practices, provides legal and policy advice, and supports capacity-building of both state and non-state security sector stakeholders.

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UN Peacebuilding Support Office

The Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) within the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs works to enhance coherence and collaboration across the UN system, and with partners, to support nationally owned efforts to build sustainable peace. It draws together expertise to advance impactful action, policies, and guidance and fosters an integrated and inclusive approach to prevention and sustaining peace.

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About the UN Portal on Women in Justice and Security

➤ The UN Portal on Women in Justice and Security is a new centralized source of comparable data on women's participation in police, justice and corrections institutions, and military justice and mine action bodies.

It builds on the UN's 2024 dataset on women in the defence sector and extends that approach to other rule of law and security institutions. The Portal supports data-driven policymaking and institutional reform.

It enables Member States, the UN, and regional organizations to:

- **track** women's participation from 2014 to 2024, by sector, seniority, and function;
- **compare** institutions' reports on barriers and the measures they have adopted;
- **explore** the data through interactive visualizations; and
- **identify** good practices that can be adapted to other national contexts.

In Phase 1, 19 Member States responded to the police survey, 15 to the justice survey, and 16 to the corrections survey. Respondents span Europe; Latin America; the Middle East and North Africa; Sub-Saharan Africa; Central, South and Southeast Asia; and Oceania. The following key findings are therefore indicative rather than globally representative.



Key findings

Women's participation is increasing in all three sectors. Among institutions reporting for both 2014 and 2024, the average percentage of female personnel rose from 28% to 32.7%. The largest gain was in corrections (5.7 percentage points), followed by the police (4.5), and justice (3.8).

Levels vary considerably by sector. The justice sector is close to parity, with women making up 51.6% of personnel on average, including half of judges and prosecutors. Women make up 27.4% of corrections personnel and 21% of police personnel, although the figures in individual police services range from 5% to 53%.

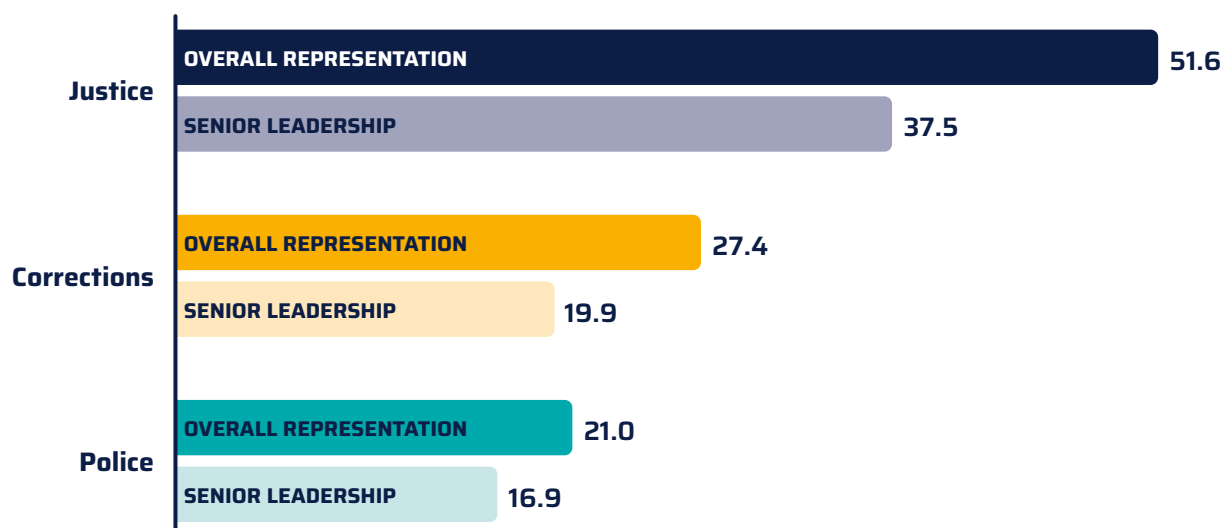
Women remain under-represented in leadership in every sector. Women's share of senior posts is lower than their overall share in police, corrections, and justice (Figure 1). The gap is widest in justice, where women hold just 37.5% of senior posts despite near-parity overall. Only a handful of institutions have women in leadership in proportion to their overall representation.

Women are often concentrated in particular roles. In corrections, women hold close to half of welfare and medical posts but under a quarter of security posts. In policing, women make up around half of personnel in units dealing with violence against women, but under 2% of rapid response units in most reporting institutions. Figures for female police personnel are above average, however, in anti-corruption, environmental crime, and drug enforcement units, showing they are not confined to so-called 'softer' roles.

Male-dominated institutional culture is the most significant barrier. This barrier received the highest average rating in the police and corrections, and the joint highest in justice. Other barriers include limited work-life balance, societal perceptions that the work is more suitable for men, and limited career development and mentoring. Overall, institutions rated most barriers as minor. Because these are self-assessments, the barriers that women experience may be understated.

Figure 1. Women in all personnel and in senior leadership, 2024

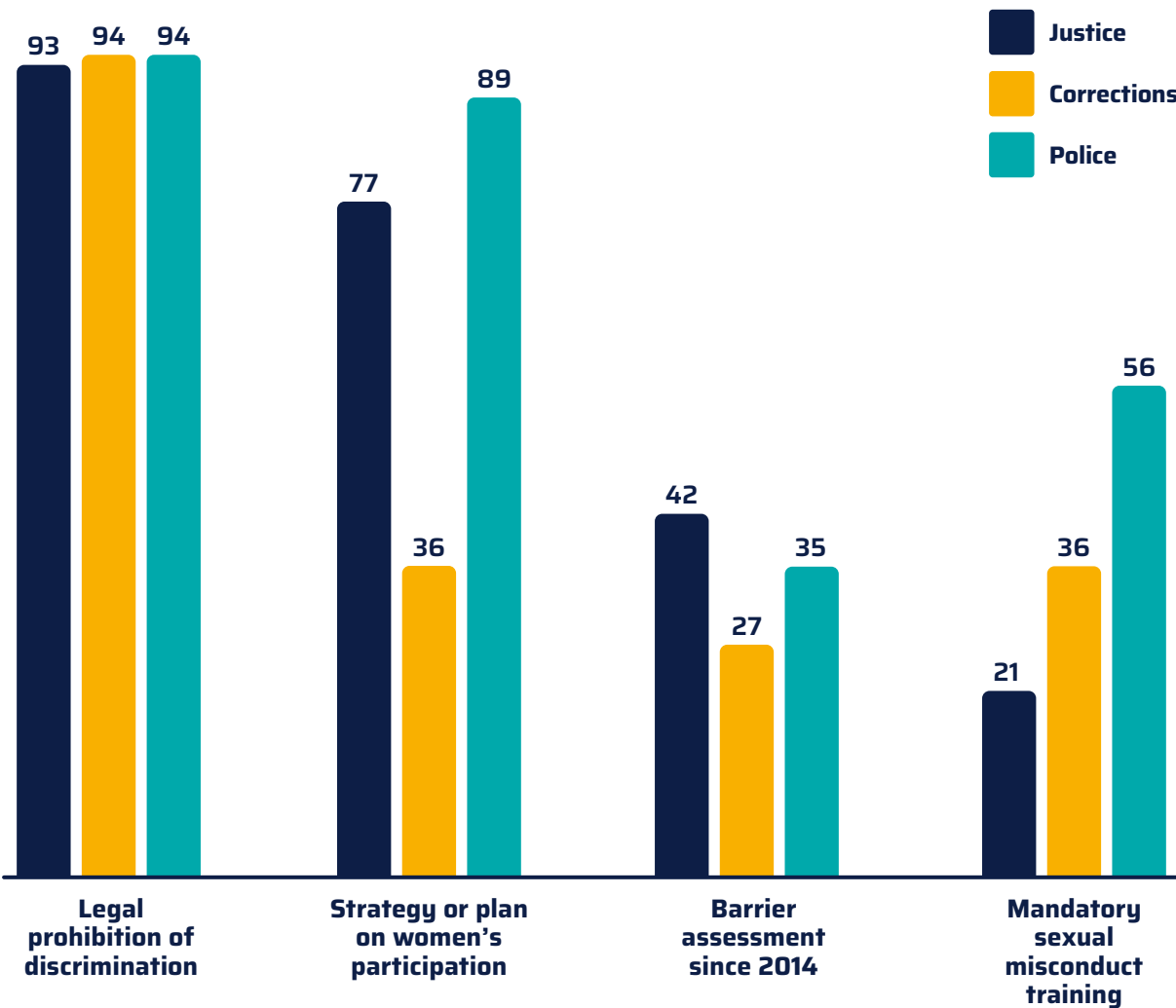
Average share of women, %



Policy commitments are not yet fully matched by implementation. Legal prohibition of sex discrimination is near-universal, and most police and justice institutions have a strategy or plan on women’s participation (Figure 2). However, since 2014, fewer than half of institutions in any sector have assessed the barriers women face. Dedicated mechanisms such as gender advisers, focal points, units, or budgets are often absent, even where a strategy exists. Frameworks on sexual misconduct are also incomplete: mandatory training was reported by 56% of police, 36% of corrections, and 21% of justice institutions.

Measures focus on retention more than recruitment and advancement. Maternity leave and basic facilities for women are almost universal. Measures that widen the pipeline of women entering the security sector, or support their progression to leadership, are much less common. Only 41% of police institutions have recruitment targets or quotas for women. In every sector, fewer than half have mentoring, promotion targets, or new career paths for women. This pattern is consistent with the leadership gap observed across all three sectors.

Figure 2. Commitments and implementation, by sector
% of responding institutions



Promising practices reported by Member States

- **Latvia (police):** women make up 53% of police personnel, an increase of 15.4 percentage points since 2014, supported by strong gender equality legislation, a UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan, and measures for equal opportunities in recruitment, career development, and working conditions. Mandatory gender equality training, mentoring, and a female police officers' network further support an inclusive organizational culture.
 - **Zambia (police):** women make up 32% of Zambia's police personnel. This is backed by leadership training and mentoring; a 50/50 target for recruitment, training, and promotion; retention measures, including parental leave, adapted uniforms and equipment, women's networks, and dedicated gender positions and infrastructure such as 40 rooms and a day-care facility, funded by the Elsie Initiative, that enable mothers of young children to attend peacekeeping training.
 - **Guatemala (judiciary):** Guatemala's judiciary offers a childcare benefit for staff with children under seven, an Association of Women Judges, and a Secretariat for Women and Gender Analysis. Gender training is institutionalized for all personnel alongside gender-responsive career pathways and measures against sexist culture, including awareness campaigns and harassment protocols.
 - **Kuwait (judiciary):** the country is expanding women's participation in the justice sector through leadership programmes, international training, and judicial exchanges, alongside new career pathways, including senior legal advisory and international cooperation roles.
- Women's networks and capacity-building initiatives also provide peer support and mentoring.
- **Spain (judiciary):** women make up 62% of justice sector personnel, backed by the Judiciary's Equality Commission and Plan, which promote training on equality, the use of non-sexist language, and analysis of barriers to women's career progression. The SERÉ Scholarship Programme further widens access to judicial and prosecutorial careers, while childcare facilities in new Justice City complexes and family benefits support work-life balance.
 - **Chile (corrections):** the country's correctional services integrate gender equality into their People Management and Development Policy, which covers equal opportunities, bias in recruitment and careers, and the prevention of harassment and gender-based violence. A barrier assessment using focus groups and workforce data has informed targeted interventions, alongside gender equality training, equipment and facilities specifically for women, and wider legislation against workplace violence and harassment.
 - **Algeria (corrections):** women account for 13% of Algeria's corrections personnel, promoted by budget allocations for recruitment and mentorship for new recruits, women-only facilities, adapted equipment, and flexible arrangements, including extended maternity leave, family leave, and breastfeeding accommodations.

Opportunities for progress

- **Assess barriers regularly**, using established tools such as DCAF's Gender Self-Assessment Guide, the Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) methodology, and the ILO Participatory Gender Audit.
- **Back strategies with structures and resources**, including gender expertise, clear responsibilities, targets, dedicated financial planning, and budget allocations, underpinned by support from leadership.

- **Address institutional culture and sexual misconduct**, including through mandatory training and complete prevention and response frameworks.
- **Widen the pipeline and support advancement** through targeted recruitment, mentoring, and leadership development for women.
- **Treat work-life balance as a shared responsibility**, including by supporting men to take up caring roles.
- **Strengthen national data systems**, particularly data disaggregated by seniority and function, and historical data.

Next steps: engaging with the UN Portal

➤ The Portal's value as a global evidence base will grow with every Member State that takes part. Member States are invited to:

- **complete** the police, justice, corrections, military justice, and mine action surveys, if they have not yet done so;
- **draw** on Portal data when developing national policies, WPS national action plans, and security sector reform programmes; and
- **share** their experience and good practices with other Member States and with regional and subregional organizations.

Note on the data: Member State responses were submitted in 2026, covering reference years 2014–2024. Averages are means of country percentages, and sample sizes vary by indicator. Data was self-reported by institutions.

More detailed analysis is available: UN Portal on Women in Justice and Security, Findings from Phase 1 data collection (DCAF, 2026).

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#WomenPortal #WomeninJustice #WomeninSecurity