


# MOWIP Methodology Explainer 3

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## Asking sensitive questions



*In this Explainer, we address some of the questions from the MOWIP survey data collection tool that may be considered as sensitive, either by respondents or by the security institution. We also propose strategies that can be employed during the localization process to adapt and/or rephrase questions in order to maintain the integrity of the survey and its consistency across contexts, while making it more appropriate to the national audience. Please refer to Section 3.1.3 “Implementing the survey” of the MOWIP methodology document for more information on the survey. If you are working with the Cornell GSS Lab, please email [gsslab@cornell.edu](mailto:gsslab@cornell.edu) to check for updates to the survey and to get further advice regarding the localization of the survey.*

### Sensitive Questions

Sensitive questions are questions that, depending on the context in which the survey is applied, may be perceived as inappropriate, politically charged, or intrusive. While survey questions carry no judgement or bias, they could elicit a negative reaction from respondents that would limit the effectiveness of the survey.

To prevent this from occurring, the assessment team should use the localization process to work with the security institution to try and identify any potential issues and reframe or reword the questions accordingly. The assessment team should first use the MOWIP Indicator Form<sup>1</sup> to identify the indicator which the “sensitive” question is aiming to measure. They should then aim to write an alternative question that will allow the team to capture the data the original question was meant to capture, and to assess whether this indicator constitutes a barrier or an opportunity for women’s meaningful participation.

The assessment team should avoid removing questions altogether, as removing questions will limit the possibility of accurately measuring the set of indicators for the issue area in question and of assessing whether this issue area constitutes a barrier to women’s meaningful participation. This could hinder the effectiveness of subsequent recommendations and limit the possibility for future cross-country trends analysis.

There are several techniques the assessment team can use to localize, adapt, and reword questions:

- First, ask the respondent the question indirectly: instead of asking about the respondent themselves, ask how they think a “friend”, “coworker”, “community member”, or “anyone else you know” might respond.
- Second, try to change the wording to remove direct references to the sensitive topic. This may include using euphemisms or using less severe or problematic, but similar examples.
- Third, if a respondent seems uncomfortable with a question and wants to answer privately, the enumerator can hand the device to the respondent and they can select their answer directly and proceed to the next question before handing the device back to the enumerator.

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<sup>1</sup> Please refer to Template 8 of the online MOWIP Toolbox available here: <https://www.dcaf.ch/mowip>.

The table below includes examples of “sensitive questions” in the survey and suggests some alternative wording for these questions. Assessment teams should use the alternative version that is the closest to the original question, tailoring the terminology to their context, and translating the questions to the language of use.

### Rewording sensitive questions

**Issue area 3: Deployment selection.** *The questions aim to assess whether women have equal access to employment opportunities in security institutions, including a variety of roles. These questions allow us to probe whether women have equal access to information about peace operations deployment opportunities, whether the process is unfair, and whether the process itself is inhibitive for women.*

#### Original Question:

Have you ever exchanged a favor to try to deploy to a peace operation? (unopportunities2)

Have you ever witnessed or experienced a colleague being favored because of any of the following factors WHILE DEPLOYED to ANY UN peace operation? (pkfavor)

**Indicator 3.30:** Do 50% or more personnel in the sample think that "no one" is favored for deployment?

This measures whether personnel perceive that recruitment and selection processes are fair/free. The question should capture whether the respondent is aware of favoritism in deployment selection processes, and/or whether such favoritism is normalized.

#### Alternative Wording Options:

- Have you heard of people exchanging favors to be selected for peace operations?
- How much do you agree with this statement: If your superior selects you for a peace operation, you owe them a favor?
- Have you heard of supervisors offering peacekeeping deployments in exchange for personal or professional benefits?

**Original Question:** How fair do you think the recruitment process into UN peace operations conducted by the [Country] Armed / Police Forces is in your country? (fairrecruit)

**Indicator 3.24:** Is the process fair/free and/or personnel have not engaged in corruption/exchanged a favor? (Survey threshold is 75% or more personnel in the sample)

This measures whether respondents perceive the recruitment and selection process as fair, or whether they have observed corruption in exchange for deployment selection. The question should capture whether the respondent believes that recruitment is fair.

#### Alternative Wording Options:

- Do you think everyone who wants to go on a peace operation is given a fair opportunity?

**Issue area 8: Top-down leadership.** The questions assess the degree to which there is a national framework in place for valuing and encouraging women's meaningful participation. They also aim to measure whether there is political will among influential representatives at the national level as well as the mid-career level to implement change.

**Original Question:** In your opinion, sometimes when national security is at risk, it is ok to refuse orders from senior civilian government officials? (srgovofficials)

**Indicator:** Since both the government and security institutions are central actors for achieving the institutional changes necessary for ensuring that women are included in peace operations, this question measures whether there is a healthy coordination and a relationship of trust between leadership on both sides.

**Alternative Wording Options:**

- Police officers / gendarmes / armed forces personnel know more about security than civilian government officials.
- Police officers / gendarmes / armed forces personnel who have deployed on peacekeeping missions know more about security than civilian government officials.
- Civilian leaders turn to the police / gendarmerie / armed forces for advice on security.
- Civilian leaders turn to the police / gendarmerie / armed forces with experience in peacekeeping missions for advice on security.
- Government officials are more likely to listen to security officials with peacekeeping experience over police officers / members of the gendarmerie / armed forces that don't have any.
- Government officials will seek the advice of female police officers.

**Original Question:** In your opinion, politicians listen to and respond to the needs and requests of the [Country] Armed / Police Forces? (politicsmil)

**Indicator:** It is an indicator for whether the needs and demands of security sector personnel are prioritized by political leaders.

**Alternative Wording Options:**

- Politicians listen to and respond to female police officers.
- Politicians listen to and respond to the needs and requests of female police officers.
- When the police want to make changes, the government responds.
- When the police/gendarmerie want to institute gender reforms, the government will support them.

**Original Question:** In your opinion, politicians listen to and respond to the demands of protestors? (politicsprotest)

**Indicator:** It is an indicator of whether there are ways to integrate women's demands into policy priority as well as how responsive a country's leadership is to a given set of demands expressed through informal channels of communication.

**Alternative Wording Options:**

- Politicians listen to and respond to the people.
- Politicians listen to and respond to the needs of civil society.
- Politicians listen to and respond to the requests of women's groups.

### Issue area 9: Gender roles

**Original Question:** A man should have the final word about decisions in his home. (malehome)

**Indicator:** This is an indicator for issue area 9, gender roles. The indicator captures whether the respondent subscribes to more rigid views of gender roles that entail a more authoritarian, hierarchical gender hierarchy.

**Alternative Wording Options:**

- A man should make most of the decisions about important things.
- Most important household decisions should be left up to the man.
- A man should be the head of his household.

**Original Question:** A good wife should listen to her husband despite disagreeing with him. (wifeobey)

**Indicator:** This is also an indicator for issue area 9, gender roles. This indicator explores respondents' views of gender roles and gender hierarchy.

**Alternative Wording Options:**

- Women should follow the lead of their husbands, even if they don't agree.
- Women should listen to their husbands' decisions, even if they don't agree.
- Women should listen to their husbands, even if they don't always agree.
- Some women these days don't listen to their husbands enough.

**Issue area 10: Social exclusion.** These questions measure the degree to which cohesion and group identity are based on creating an in-group by excluding those who do not look or behave like the dominant group. They are meant to capture some of the practices that may be used to sustain in-group cohesion within and beyond the workforce, which may be exclusionary towards women.

**Original Question:** To what extent do you agree with the following statement: It is ok for a husband to have sex with his wife even if she does not want to have sex? (maritalrape)

**Indicator 10.41:** 75% or more strongly disagree or disagree that it is okay for a husband to have sex with his wife even if she does not want to have sex.

Issue Area 10 measures the extent to which negative or toxically masculine beliefs dominate the culture of the security institution. This helps us explore whether women may be socially excluded in the culture of the security institution, which could be a barrier for participation. Specifically, this question aims to assess whether negative masculine beliefs about **domination** are part of the culture of the security institution.

**Alternative Wording Options:**

- It is okay for a husband to take his wife's clothes off / kiss his wife even if she does not want to.
- A woman should be intimate with her husband even if she doesn't want to.
- A woman should please her husband / do things for her husband even if she is unhappy/feeling sick.
- A woman should dress up for her husband even when she is too busy.
- A woman should act happy around her husband even when she is sad or mad.

**Original Question:** To what extent do you agree with the following statement: When women get raped it is because they dressed promiscuously? (femraped)

**Indicator 10.43:** 75% or more strongly disagree or disagree that women get raped it is because they dress promiscuously.

Issue Area 10 measures the extent to which negative masculine beliefs dominate the culture of the security institution. This helps us explore whether women may be socially excluded in the culture of the security institution, which could be a barrier for participation. Specifically, this question aims to assess whether negative masculine beliefs about **rape culture** are part of the culture of the security institution.

- Women should dress modestly to shield themselves from being raped.
- Women should always dress modestly.
- Women should not catch the gaze of men who are not related to them.
- Women should avoid drugs and alcohol to avoid being raped.
- If a woman dresses provocatively, she should expect to be taken advantage of by men.
- Women who dress provocatively are asking for trouble/cannot complain when men flirt with them.

**Original Question:** To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Women often lie about being raped? (rapelie)

**Indicator 10.42:** 75% or more strongly disagree or disagree that women often lie about being raped.

Issue Area 10 measures the extent to which negative masculine beliefs dominate the culture of the security institution. This helps us explore whether women may be socially excluded in the culture of the security institution, which could be a barrier for participation. Specifically, this question aims to assess whether negative masculine beliefs about **rape culture** are part of the culture of the security institution.

**Alternative Wording Options:**

- Women often lie about being raped to prevent getting in trouble with their family and friends.
- Women often falsely claim to have been assaulted.
- Women often make false rape charges as revenge against their boyfriends/husbands.
- Women often lie about sexual harassment / rape to get attention.
- Women should consider how rape claims hurt the lives of the man and his family.
- Rape charges too often hurt the bright futures of young men.

**Original Question:** To what extent do you agree with the following statement: It is acceptable to deploy a person on a peace operation if they have a past history of committing violence in the household? (husbdiscipline)

**Indicator 10.39:** 75% or more strongly disagree or disagree that it is acceptable to deploy a person on a peace operation if they have a past history of committing violence in the household.

Issue Area 10 measures the extent to which negative masculine beliefs dominate the culture of the security institution. This helps us explore whether women may be socially excluded in the culture of the security institution, which could be a barrier for participation. Specifically, this question aims to assess whether negative masculine beliefs about **domination and the level of acceptance of domestic violence** are part of the culture of the security institution.

**Alternative Wording Options:**

- Men/women who have previously been accused of hurting their wives/husbands should not be allowed to deploy to UN peace operations.
- How a man/woman treats his/her spouse should be considered before deploying on a peace operation.
- Previous records of abuse between spouses should be considered when selecting peacekeepers.
- It is justifiable for a husband/wife to hit his/her wife/husband if she/he disobeys him/her.
- What happens in the home / between a husband and wife is a private matter, even if it becomes violent.

**Original Question:** To what extent do you agree with the following statement: It is a man's duty to protect his family's dignity by watching over the purity of women in his family? (emchastityman)

**Indicator 10.40:** 75% or more strongly disagree or disagree that it is a man's duty to protect his family's dignity by watching over the purity and chastity of women in his family.

Issue Area 10 measures the extent to which negative masculine beliefs dominate the culture of the security institution. This helps us explore whether women may be socially excluded in the culture of the security institution, which could be a barrier for participation. Specifically, this question aims to assess whether negative masculine beliefs about **virility** are part of the culture of the security institution.

**Alternative Wording Options:**

- A man should protect the chastity of women in his family.
- A man should feel ashamed if his female relative becomes pregnant outside of marriage / marries without her family's consent.
- A man should feel ashamed if his female relative gets divorced.
- A man should feel ashamed if his female relative is raped.
- Men are responsible for protecting their female relatives from men.
- The honor of my female relatives should always be defended and with violence if necessary.

**Original Question:** Do members of the [Country] Armed / Police Forces spend time engaging in adult entertainment such as bars and strip clubs together when not at work? (owsocadulent)

**Indicator 10.33:** Have less than 20% of members of the institutions have engaged in adult entertainment together (e.g. bar strip clubs)?

This measures whether it is the norm for members of the institution to go to brothels together outside of work. This helps us understand the role of masculinity in the culture of the security institution. Specifically, this question is an example of negative bonding that often leads to **exclusionary** behaviors towards women. Since brothels may not be common across contexts, this can be replaced by another example of negative bonding that may exclude women.

**Alternative Wording Options:**

- Do officers/soldiers watch videos of women together?
- Do officers/soldiers look at pictures of women together?
- Do officers/soldiers watch or talk about pornography together?
- When visiting another country, did you ever hear of a colleague visiting a brothel?
- Do police officers/soldiers [*enter a social activity that usually only men participate in. Examples may include smoking shisha, going to bars, going to clubs, playing cards, etc.*] together?
- While deployed, in some countries, some police officers/soldiers visit brothels together. How acceptable do you think this behavior is?

**Original Question:** Do members of the [Country] Armed / Police Forces brag to their colleagues about having sex? (bragsex)

**Indicator 10.31:** Talking about sex between colleagues is not a norm (Survey: 20% or less of personnel in the sample say that colleagues talk about sex).

This measures whether talking about sex between colleagues is a norm in the security institution. This helps us understand the role of masculinity in the culture of the security institution. As this question is designed to measure **domination**, it can be

replaced by any question that assesses the level of objectification of women [or men's entitlement to dominance] by personnel of the security institution.

**Alternative Wording Options:**

- Do police officers/soldiers brag about their romantic lives?
- Do police officers/soldiers brag about how many romantic partners they have had?
- Do police officers/soldiers brag about the beauty of their wives/girlfriends?
- Do police officers/soldiers brag about how attractive their spouses are?

**Original Question:** Do you avoid socializing with the opposite sex because you are worried about sexual harassment complaints being filed against you? (Worryaccused2)

**Indicator 10.34:** Men are not worried about being accused of sexual harassment. (Survey: 10% or less personnel in the sample are worried)

This measures whether men within the security institution are worried about being accused of sexual harassment. This question is designed to measure if **domination** over or **exclusion** of women is the norm in men's lives. It can be replaced by another question assessing whether men in the institution are confident that they understand behaviors that are / aren't sexual harassment, and are able to avoid inadvertently committing sexual harassment.

**Alternative Wording Options:**

- How much do you agree with this statement: I worry that my compliments will be misinterpreted as sexual harassment?
- How much do you agree with this statement: I or one of my colleagues avoid one-on-one meetings with members of the opposite sex to avoid being accused of sexual harassment?
- I try to avoid being alone with women/men.

**Original Question:** A woman should tolerate violence to keep her family together. (vsurvwife)

**Indicator:** This is an indicator for issue area 10, social exclusion. It captures the respondent's views of both gender roles and the acceptability of violence.

**Alternative Wording Options:**

- Sometimes a woman has to accept a hard time in the household to keep her family together.
- It's important for a woman to keep her family together, even if her husband gives her a hard time.
- Sometimes a woman has to deal with unfair treatment in order to keep her family together.