



UNIDIR

# Best Practices for Gender Equality in Conventional Arms Control: Survey Results

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## Notes

This report presents quotes from survey participants. The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The views expressed in the publication are the sole responsibility of the individual authors. They do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the United Nations, UNIDIR, its staff members or sponsors.

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## About UNIDIR

UNIDIR is a voluntarily funded, autonomous institute within the United Nations. One of the few policy institutes worldwide focusing on disarmament, UNIDIR generates knowledge and promotes dialogue and action on disarmament and security. Based in Geneva, UNIDIR assists the international community to develop the practical, innovative ideas needed to find solutions to critical security problems.

## About the Gender and Disarmament Programme

The Gender and Disarmament Programme seeks to contribute to the strategic goals of achieving gender equality in disarmament forums and effectively applying gender perspectives in disarmament processes. It encompasses original research, outreach activities and resource tools to support disarmament stakeholders in translating gender awareness into practical action.

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Gender diversity is not achieved by replacing a man for a woman representative to read the same statement at a conference; it is about promoting a diversity of voices and that can only be achieved if the scope is purposefully broadened to include new voices.

# Executive Summary

While gender has become an established topic for consideration across all areas of arms control and disarmament, what does that mean in practice? To understand how discussions on gender equality in arms control are informing action on the ground, UNIDIR presents in this report the key findings it gathered from a survey of a diverse group of representatives of 40 organizations dealing with various aspects of arms control and disarmament around the world including national authorities, international and regional/subregional organizations, civil society and think tanks.

## Key findings and recommendations

- Survey results show a significant contingent of women working in organizations that cover conventional arms control and disarmament. In fact, women are the majority in entry-level positions, comprising approximately 63% of the personnel within the organizations that participated in this survey.
- Yet, the share of women professionals drops to 48% at middle level, and drop further at 42% at senior levels, demonstrating that there is an inverse relationship between seniority and women's representation.
- Survey respondents provided details regarding international, regional and national policies and commitments driving change in public administration, trickling down to the organizational-level through the implementation of gender-related policies with SMART goals and indicators.
- The most common measures to improve diversity in the workplace were flexible work arrangements (53%), gender awareness training (53%), and trainings related to gender-based violence and harassment prevention (44%). Less common measures were dedicated budgets for gender-related activities (35%), adequate physical infrastructure (32%), mentoring programmes (24%), and breastfeeding rooms (15%).
- The most common measures to improve gender diversity in meetings, events and capacity-building initiatives were gender-related targets for attendance in meetings (74%), followed by adequate physical infrastructure for women participants (65%), and specific processes to address gender-based violence, discrimination, sexual harassment or other potential complaints (65%). Other common measures were specific language on gender in communication material (61%), and gender trainings for meeting facilitators/organizers (58%).

- When asked to assess the impact of those measures in achieving greater gender diversity in meetings, events, capacity-building efforts, and technical trainings, the majority of respondents indicated that such data was not available or did not respond. This lack of monitoring points to a missed opportunity to measure the impact of an organization's policies, activities and efforts aimed at promoting gender equality.
- Eight out of ten of the surveyed organizations have policies against discrimination and sexual harassment and six out of ten have a strategy, action plan or policy to promote gender diversity. Only three out of ten have specific budget for gender-related initiatives.
- The most common motivations for adopting a gender strategy, action plan or policy to promote gender diversity were internal processes and management policies, followed by international commitments and national policy. Donor requirement appeared to be the least important factor in this process.
- Half of the surveyed organizations deliver technical trainings, such as on physical stockpile and security management, explosive ordinance disposal, and marking and tracing record-keeping. The most common actions taken to improve gender diversity in technical trainings were the use of specific language or communication tools or outreach strategies (74%), followed by gender-related targets for attendance in technical training (68%), adequate physical infrastructure for women participants (58%), training-specific processes to address gender-based violence, discrimination, sexual harassment or other potential complaints (58%), and gender trainings for meeting facilitators/organizers (52%).
- The survey demonstrated the sparseness of data and information available about trans-gender and non-binary people working in conventional arms control and disarmament, as only one instance of a transgender employee was recorded among the 6,148 professionals working at surveyed organizations. The sparseness of such data could be related to constraints on data collection within organizations, as well as stigma and discrimination.
- Even if respondents were able to share examples of the impact of these policies in their organization, it appears that most organizations do not collect data that would allow for a systematic assessment of the results achieved.
- Ensuring that organizations remain accountable to their gender equality policies and plans is still a challenge. This underscores the importance of collecting gender-disaggregated data and tracking progress within organizations.
- Further research is needed in order to get a more complete picture of gender mainstreaming in the field of arms control and disarmament. In this regard, Member States could request international or regional organizations to develop a comprehensive survey for national agencies working on conventional arms control and disarmament.



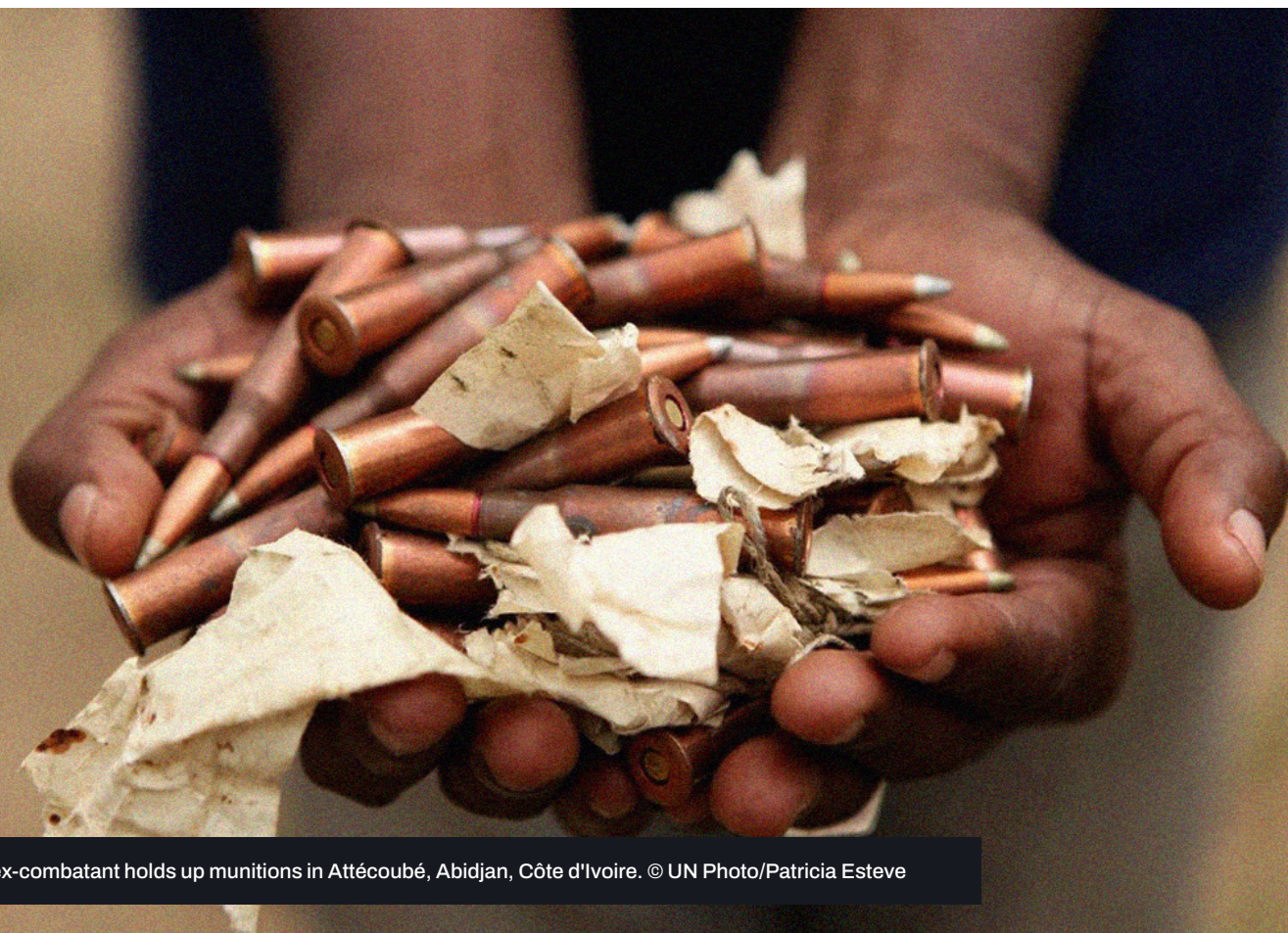
# 1. Introduction

Conventional arms control and disarmament as a professional field has undergone significant change in the past decades. Once a realm reserved for national governments and militaries, it now encompasses a broad range of organizations that provide technical expertise and capacity-building. This broadening of actors has been accompanied by specific efforts to tackle the gender imbalance and the lack of diversity affecting this area of work. In 2018, for example, the Secretary-General committed to achieving gender parity on all panels, boards, expert groups and other bodies established under his auspices in the field of disarmament”.<sup>1</sup>

National governments and international leaders have expressed their willingness to include under-represented groups in the negotiation and implementation of arms control measures—for example, by boosting the participation of women, as well supporting outreach programmes directed at youth. This includes workshops for women technical ammunition specialists carried out under the auspices of the UN SaferGuard programme and fellowships offered by Mines Action Canada to young people involved in mine action, among other initiatives.

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1 United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, 2018, <https://www.un.org/disarmament/publications/more/securing-our-common-future/>.



An ex-combatant holds up munitions in Attécoubé, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. © UN Photo/Patricia Esteve

These efforts towards greater inclusivity have been accompanied by attempts to link arms control and wider policy issues. This is evident in multilateral conferences on arms control and disarmament, where side events on gender equality, conflict resolution, sustainable development and human rights are taking place on a regular basis.

In order to understand how these developments are informing action on the ground, UNIDIR conducted an online survey. The questionnaire comprised a set of 43 questions, including multiple choice and open-ended questions about the organization and its staff, as well as specific policies and practices to ensure women's participation and gender diversity, equality and inclusion in the workplace.

The survey was circulated among a diverse group of stakeholders, in all regions, that work on weapons governance issues including national authorities, international organizations, civil society and think tanks.<sup>2</sup> UNIDIR received a large number of responses, but only responses with a high degree of completion (at least 80% of questions answered) were considered for analysis. This led to 40 responses being analysed and systematized, comprising 40 organizations, with presence in 42 countries and territories.<sup>3</sup>

Out of participating organizations, 15 were national authorities, encompassing units such as ministries of defence or foreign affairs, export/import authority border agencies, national coordination mechanisms on conventional arms and ammunition. International civil society and international organizations denoted the second and third largest groups, with eight and six representatives respectively. Think tank and academia represented three responses, while regional and subregional organizations comprised two, as did national civil society. Four organizations did not select any of the options, as shown in Chart 3.

Given the topic of the survey, organizations with established gender focal points and gender equality policies may have been more likely to participate in this research than organizations that have not undertaken any initiative on gender matters. This may have led to a self-selection bias, which is common in studies with volunteer sampling.<sup>4</sup> In view of this, the results presented in the report should not be used to make generalizations about the field of arms control and disarmament. Nevertheless, the analysis presented in the following sections provides a helpful indication of trends and developments in this field.

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2 The survey was circulated and open to responses from May to September 2022. The survey questionnaire was made available in English, French, and Spanish. Respondents had the option to fill out the survey online or in a print version and mail it to UNIDIR. For the complete version of the survey, see <https://unidir.org/BestPracticesGenderSurvey>

3 These were Afghanistan, Albania, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, the Central African Republic, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Germany, Ghana, Iraq, Ireland, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Mexico, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Palestine, Peru, the Philippines, Serbia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, the United States of America, Western Sahara, and Yemen. For a list of participating organizations, see Annex 1.

4 Bethlehem, Jake. 2010. Selection bias in web surveys. *International Statistical Review*, 78(2), 161–188. doi:10.1111/j.1751-5823.2010.00112.x.

## Box 1.

# Key Terms

### → Gender diversity

Recognizes that peoples' preferences and self-expression can go beyond the gender binary.

### → Gender equality

Refers to the equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys and transgender, non-binary and gender-fluid persons. Equality means that a person's rights, responsibilities, and opportunities do not depend on gender identity. It implies that the interests, needs, and priorities of — men, women, girls, boys, transgender, non-binary or gender-fluid persons — are considered, recognizing the diversity of different groups.<sup>5</sup>

### → Gender mainstreaming

Is the process of assessing the implications for women and men, girls and boys, as well as non-binary and gender-fluid persons of any planned action, including legislation, policies and programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a way to make everyone's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that all persons benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated.<sup>6</sup>

### → Gender parity

Is another term for equal representation in a given area. Working toward gender parity (equal representation) is a key part of achieving gender equality.

### → Women's participation

Refers to the level of participation of people who identify themselves as women.

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5 This is an expanded definition based on UN-Women Training Centre, "Gender Equality", *Gender Equality Glossary*, <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/showentry.php?eid=54>.

6 This is an expanded definition based on UN-Women Training Centre, "Gender Mainstreaming", *Gender Equality Glossary*, <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/showentry.php?eid=61>.

7 Unless explicitly mentioned, all proportions refer to the totality of the sample, i.e. 40 sets of responses.



“

Allowing people to be  
themselves without imposing  
views on others.



# 2. Overview of Results

## 2.1 Respondents

The initial section of the survey focused on the profile of respondents taking part in this initiative on behalf of their organizations. They were asked, among other things, whether or not they were the gender focal point of their organization. In total, 20 people indicated that they were a gender focal point, while 12 indicated that they were not. The remaining six respondents stated that there was no such focal point in their organizations and two did not answer. Moreover, 15 of the 20 gender focal points were women, which could suggest that this role tends to be taken by or assigned to women. Regarding the overall gender distribution of respondents, 24 were women, 12 men, 1 chose the option 'not listed', 1 opted for 'I prefer not to say', and 2 skipped the question. The questionnaire also offered the options 'non-binary' and "other", although these answers were not selected by any respondent (**Chart 1**).

The majority of respondents, nearly a third, reported between 5 and 10 years of experience in arms control and disarmament. Ten people reported less than 5 years of experience in this field, eight reported between 10 and 15 years of experience, three reported more than 20 years of work in this area, and two reported between 15 and 20 years of experience (**Chart 2**).

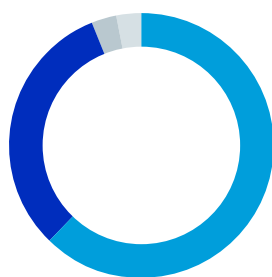


CHART 1.

### Respondents by Gender

N = 38

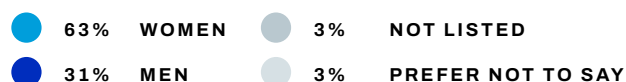
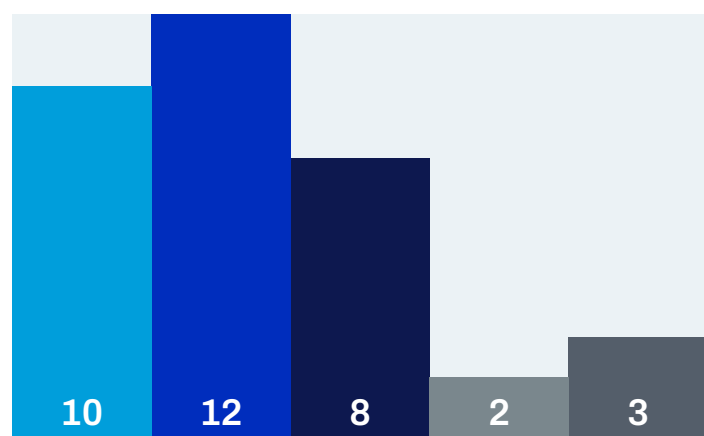


CHART 2.

### Years of Experience in Arms Control and Disarmament

N = 35



## 2.2 Organizations

Respondents were asked to provide information about their organization, including its main fields of work. Out of 40 organizations, 15 were national authorities, encompassing units such as ministries of defence or foreign affairs, export/import authority border agencies, national coordination mechanisms on conventional arms and ammunition. International civil society and international organizations represented the second and third largest groups, with eight and six representatives respectively. Think tank and academia represented three responses, while regional and subregional organizations comprised two, as did national civil society. It should be noted that four respondents skipped this question (**Chart 3**).

Organizations represented in the responses varied in size. Over half of these organizations had between 1 and 50 employees. A quarter of responses came from organizations with over 100 employees, and a sixth had between 50 and 100 employees (**Chart 4**).

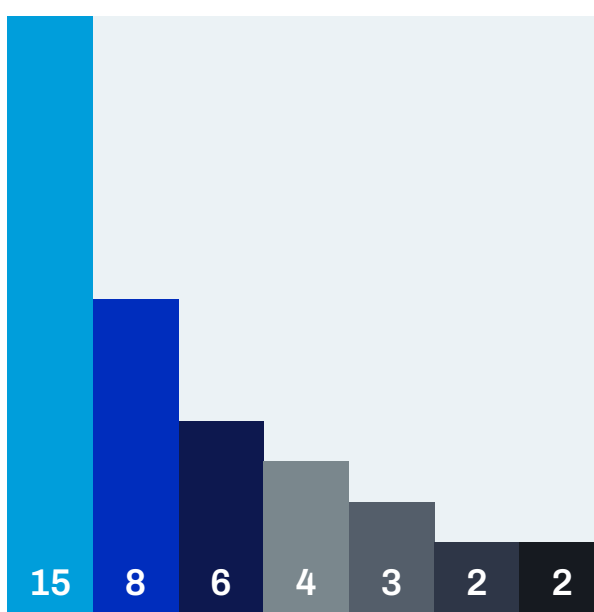
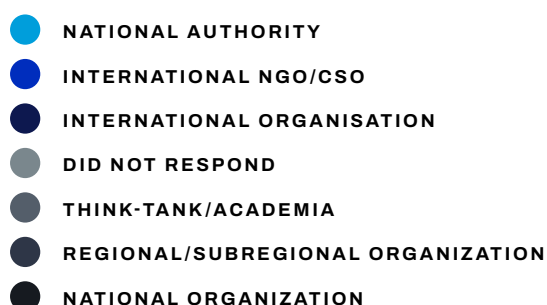
Three quarters of the organizations stated that arms control and disarmament were among their main fields of work. Additionally, nearly a third stated that they were active in international peace and security, and over a quarter conducted work in the field of national security. Nearly a quarter of organizations were active in peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The less common field of work was academia/knowledge production, with one in six organizations active in this area. Other areas of work included export controls, internal and international trade, tourism, and telecommunications (**Chart 5**).

Each respondent organization dealt with one or more types of conventional arms control, most of them focusing on issues related to small arms, light weapons, and conventional ammunition.<sup>8</sup> Nearly half work on all types of conventional arms as defined by the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, explosive weapons are also covered by nearly half of the survey's

CHART 3.

### Organization Type

N = 40



sample. Over a third of organizations work with anti-personnel landmines, most of which also cover cluster munitions. One third works on large-calibre artillery. Other areas of work listed by respondents included missile technology, nuclear policy and autonomous weapons (**Chart 6**).

CHART 4.

## Organization Size

N=36

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

- UNDER 10
- 10 TO 50
- 50 TO 100
- OVER 100

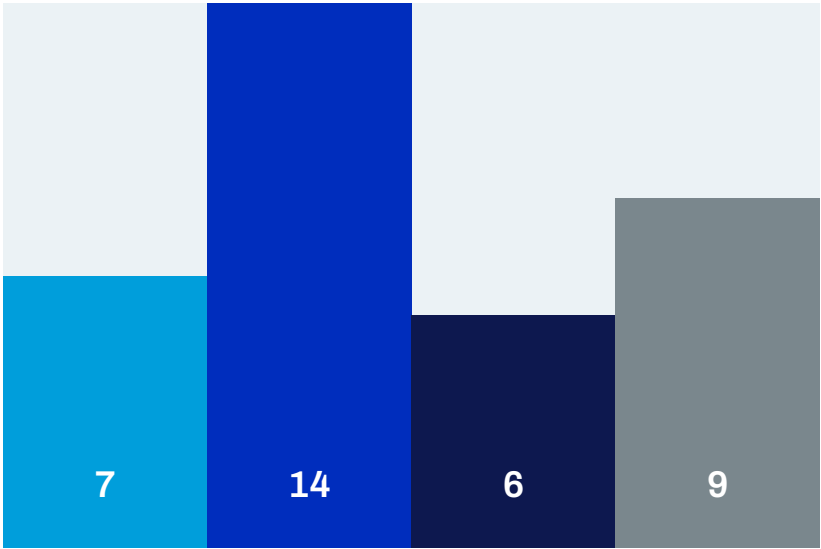
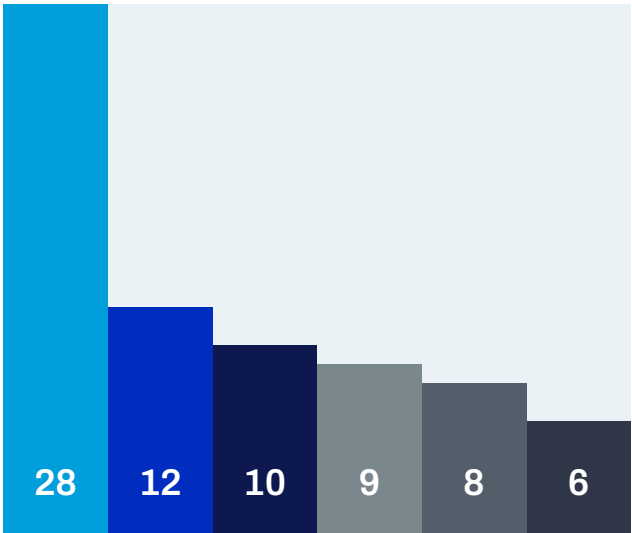


CHART 5.

## Main Fields of Work

N=37

- ARMS CONTROL & DISARMAMENT
- INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY
- NATIONAL SECURITY
- PEACEKEEPING/PEACEBUILDING
- NOT LISTED
- ACADEMIA/KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION



- Small arms are, broadly speaking, weapons designed for individual use. They include revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, submachine guns, assault rifles and light machine guns. Light weapons are, broadly speaking, weapons designed for use by two or three persons serving as a crew, although some may be carried and used by a single person. They include heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems, portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems, and mortars of a calibre of less than 100 millimetres. See International Tracing Instrument, 2005, <https://www.unodc.org/documents/organized-crime/Firearms/ITI.pdf>.
- The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms covers the following categories of conventional arms: battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large-calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft and unmanned combat aerial vehicles, attack helicopters, warships, missiles and missile launchers; see <https://www.unroca.org/categories>.

“

Empathy, effective  
communication, speaking  
with examples and feeling the  
pain that others are going through  
because of discriminations  
and injustice.



Organizations represented in this survey undertake a wide range of activities related to arms control and disarmament. Policy development is the most common, as nearly three quarters of 37 organizations are active in this area. This is followed by advocacy, organization and advisory services, research activities, technical arms control/weapons and ammunition management – all activities shared by more than half of the sample. A less common activity was humanitarian demining and clearance, carried out by a quarter of organizations. Other activities included regulation of cross-border trade of conventional weapons, security sector reform, and socioeconomic and political empowerment activities (Chart 7).

CHART 6.

## Types of Conventional Arms Control

N=36

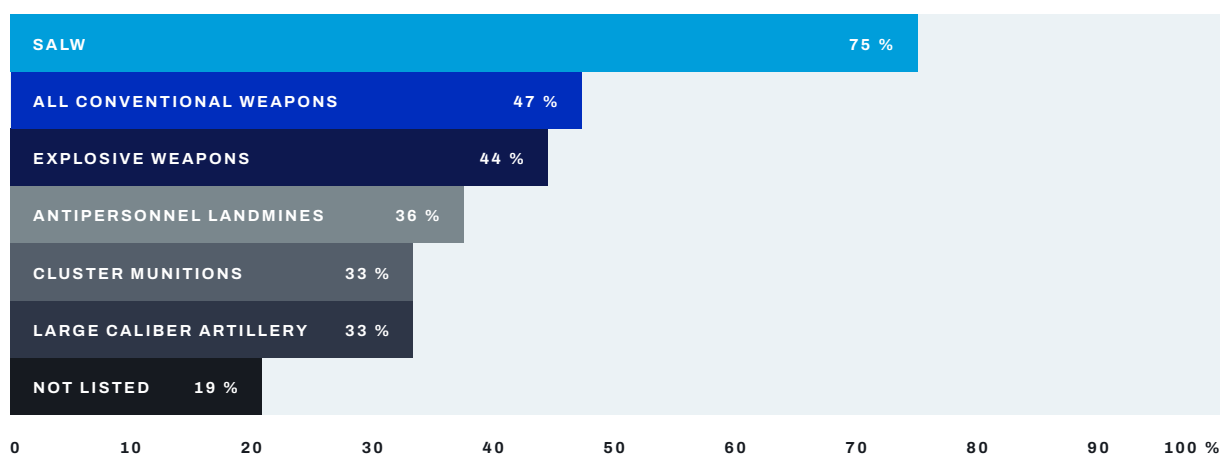
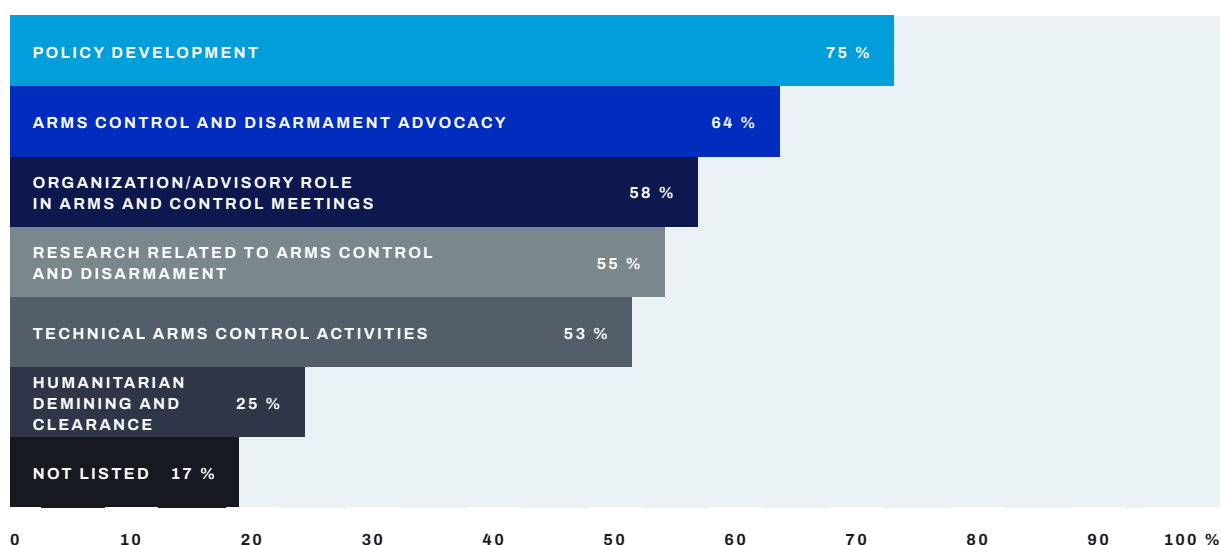


CHART 7.

## Main Activities

N=36

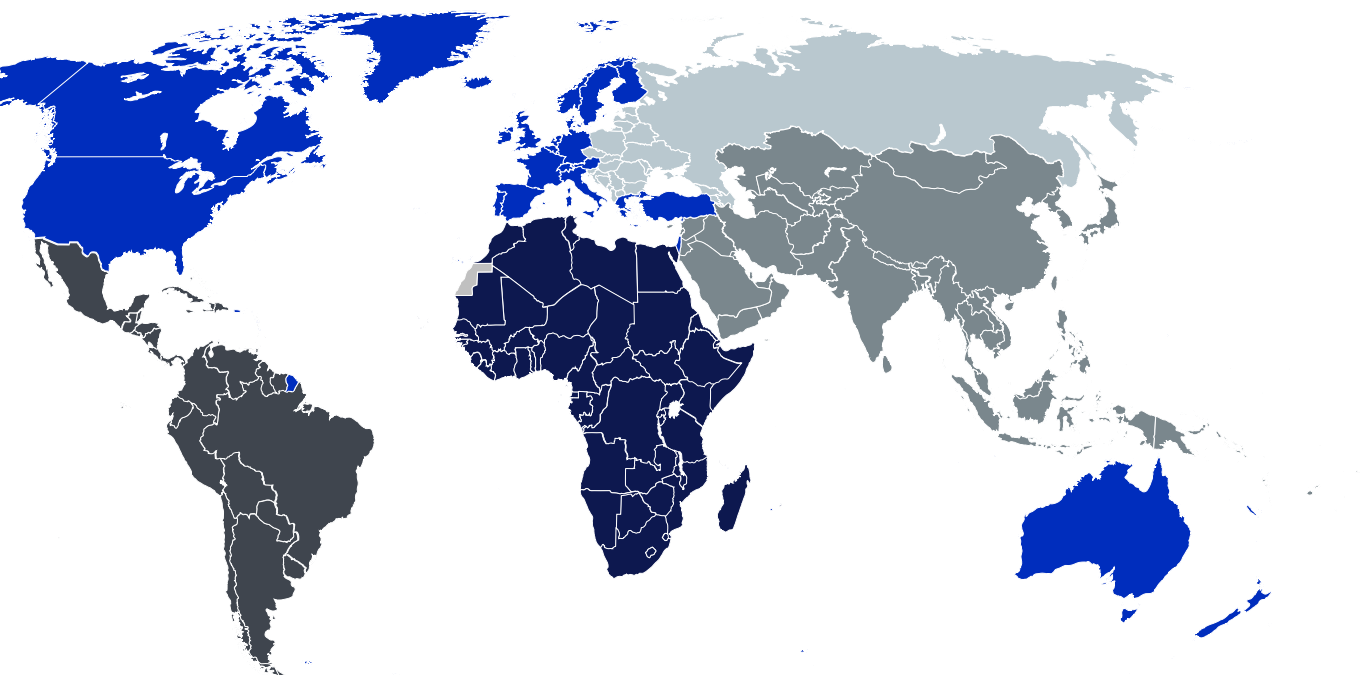


Regarding regional distribution of the 40 organizations, nearly a third of responses came from Western European and Others Group (WEOG). The group of African States comprised over a fifth of received responses, and Latin American and Caribbean States represented one in six responses. Asia-Pacific States and Eastern European states represented 7.5% and 5% of submissions, respectively. The remaining one fifth of responses came from international organizations (**Chart 8**).<sup>10</sup>

CHART 8.

## Regional Distribution of Organizations

N=40



<sup>10</sup> The regional classification follows the UN Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, <https://www.un.org/dgacm/en/content/regional-groups>.

## 2.3 Overall gender balance in the organization

The survey contained questions regarding the number of employees and their gender distribution. Across the 37 organizations that provided such data, there were a total of 6,148 employees, out of which 3,422 (56%) employees were men, 2,725 (44%) were women and 1 employee that identified as transgender, non-binary or other (**Chart 9**). The data shows that, within this sample, men still make up the majority of professionals working in organizations that deal with conventional arms control, although the share of women is coming close to parity. The results also show that it is rare for employees to identify themselves beyond the binary, although this may be related to constraints on data collection in the workplace, as well as stigma and discrimination.

In addition to general numbers, the survey also inquired about gender balance in the various segments of the organization: senior leadership, middle management, and entry level positions. The results show that women are the majority in entry-level positions within the 35 organizations that shared this data. However, the proportion of women declines as the seniority of the role increases, following a pattern described as the ‘law of increasing disproportion’, according to which the proportion of women drops for every upward step in the hierarchy.<sup>11</sup> As **Chart 9** shows, at entry-level, 63% of employees are women, 37% are men. When it comes to mid-level positions in the organizations, the proportion of women drops to 48%. At leadership level, 42% of senior roles are occupied by women—that is, below the overall proportion of women employees (44%).

Five organizations, all of which had less than 50 employees in total, reported that there are no women in mid-level positions. Similarly, eight organizations reported having no women in senior roles. Out of these organizations, six shared a common factor: fewer than 50 employees in total. This may indicate a bigger challenge for small organizations to retain women professionals at the middle and senior levels of the workforce.

Out of the total respondents, 27 organizations provided information about their governance board, although only 24 shared the data disaggregated by gender. Within this sample, board size varied from 2 to 52 members. The data disaggregated by gender showed that men account for 56% of board members, while women represented 44%.

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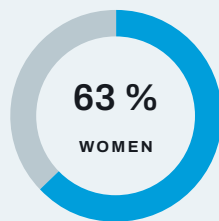
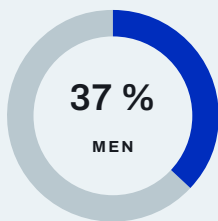
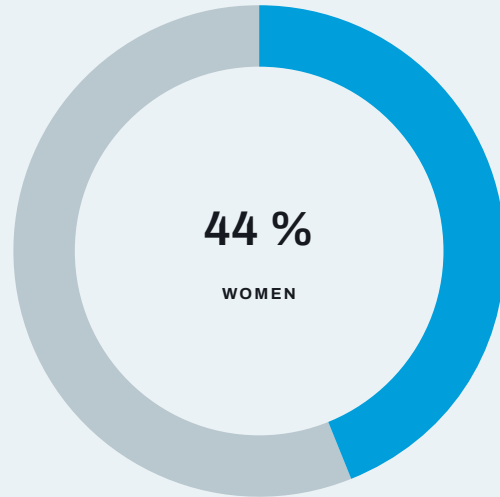
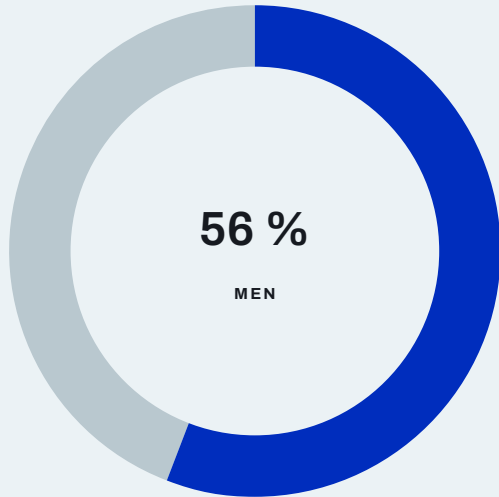
11 Putnam, Robert D. 1976. *The Comparative Study of Political Elites*, Prentice-Hall, p. 33.

CHART 9.

## Gender balance in organizations

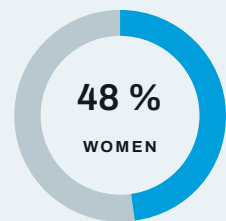
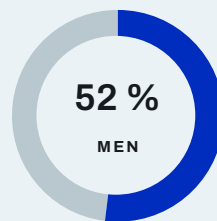
Total Employees

N=6148



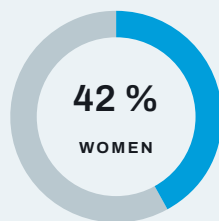
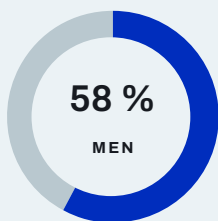
Junior Positions

N=1917



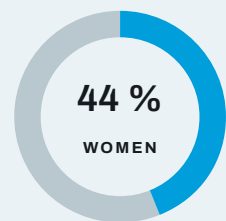
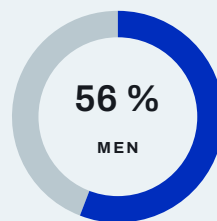
Mid-Level Management

N=1090



Senior Leadership

N=348



Governance Board

N=342



## 2.4 Workplace policies

The survey included questions about workplace policies that relate to gender equality. The overall majority of respondents, four fifths, stated that their organization had policies against discrimination and sexual harassment. The remaining one-fifth reported that their organization did not have such policies; it should be noted that most of these (6 out of 8) were organizations with fewer than 50 employees. Additionally, five of these eight organizations were national authorities, i.e. governmental organizations.

When it came to a workplace strategy, action plan or policy to promote gender diversity, over two thirds of respondents reported that their organization had such frameworks in place, while less than one third reported that the organization did not. This may indicate that more organizations have taken action to deal with negative effects of inequalities, such as discrimination and harassment, than to actively promote gender diversity in the workplace.



Military officers attend training in Western Balkans. © UNDP SEESAC

“

Women with public visibility  
demolished stereotypes about  
the role of women in society  
and put into question the  
ideas of domestic spaces  
as eminently feminine.

Out of the 13 organizations that did not have a strategy, action plan or policy to promote gender diversity, 8 had fewer than 50 employees and 7 were national authorities. This may point to challenges faced by small organizations and small governmental departments, which may have fewer resources to dedicate to the development and implementation of such plans. At the same time, the organization's size must not be seen as an unsurmountable obstacle for adopting policies towards gender diversity, given that the majority (13 out of 21) of small organizations indicated having this type of framework in place.

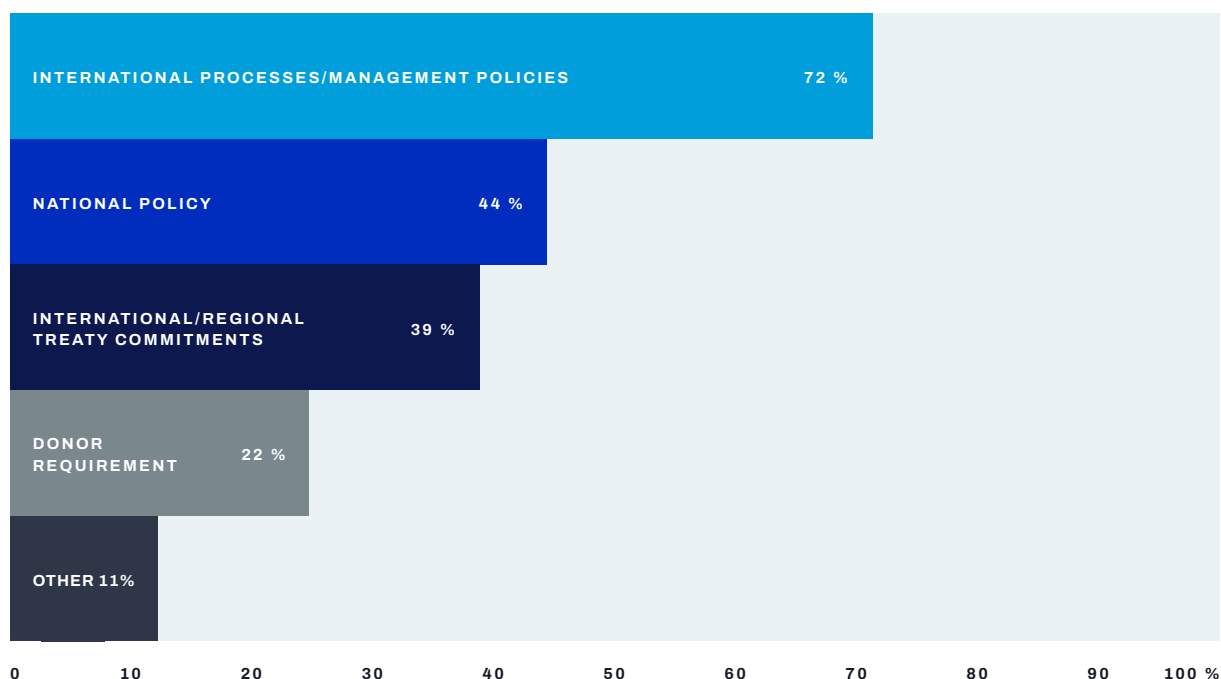
It is worth highlighting that all international and regional organizations participating in this survey reported having a non-discrimination and anti-sexual harassment policy, as well as a strategy, action plan, or policy to promote gender diversity. This is a positive result, which shows that such organizations are taking efforts to “walk the talk”.

In total, 18 respondents shared information about the motivations and drivers that led their organizations to the adoption of the gender strategy, action plan or policy. In this multiple-choice question, the most common drivers, which applied to over a third of respondents, were: internal processes and management policies, followed by international commitments and national policy. Donor requirements appear to be the least important factor in this process, with less than a quarter of respondents selecting this option (**Chart 10**). When asked to provide details about the implementation of such policies, 18 respondents shared at least one example of the impact of these policies in their organization.

CHART 10.

## Motivations for Adopting a Gender Strategy, Action Plan or Policy

N=18



## Best Practice: International, regional and national directives driving change in public administration

International and regional commitments can feed into national policies on gender equality. Many of the gender-related policies reported by respondents made reference to regional and multilateral agreements on gender equality.

In the case of Mexico, for example, the 1994 Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women informed the development of a national protocol dealing with the prevention, care and punishment of sexual harassment.<sup>12</sup> Since the protocol was adopted in 2020, governmental agencies dealing with arms control and disarmament in Mexico have put measures in place to implement the new protocol. As a respondent noted, these actions are seen as a way to overcome a culture of silence and to strengthen the culture of reporting.

In addition to gender equality frameworks, multilateral and regional agreements on arms control have propelled organizations to take action on gender equality. A mine action operator shared that the Oslo Action Plan of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Lausanne Action Plan of the Convention on Cluster Munitions were important drivers behind the adoption of gender-related policies at the organizational level.<sup>13</sup>

Another example is the 2018 Roadmap for small arms and light weapons (SALW) control in the Western Balkans, which calls for full integration of gender and age concerns in control policies and the meaningful participation of women. The Roadmap has informed the development of gender-responsive control strategies in the region, including in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia.<sup>14</sup> Among relevant actions, one can highlight North Macedonia's commitment to the establishment of a mechanism for engagement of civil society organizations working on gender equality and gender-based violence in the development of policies on SALW control.<sup>15</sup>





Weapons in Colombia are marked prior to being destroyed as Part of Peace Agreement. © UN Photo/Renata Ruiz

The survey also offered the opportunity for respondents to explain why their organizations did not have a gender strategy, action plan or policy. The most common responses highlighted a need to sensitize leadership, as well as lack of human resources and organizational capacity to develop this type of policies. One respondent explained the lack of such a policy by noting “it is not prescribed by law”, which underscores the importance of legal measures to advance gender equality in the workplace.

When asked what kind of capacity and support the organization would need to draft and implement a gender policy, the most common responses indicated gender awareness workshops/trainings, especially for managers; laws mandating such strategy; dedicated financial and human resources.

12 Adopted January 2020, the protocol outlines definitions, prohibits sexual harassment, establishes mechanisms to guide and provide specialized support to those who denounce them to avoid their revictimization and guarantee their access to justice. Likewise, it indicates the entities in charge of reporting, investigating or sanctioning these conducts of sexual violence; see [https://dof.gob.mx/nota\\_detalle.php?codigo=5583420&fecha=03/01/2020](https://dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5583420&fecha=03/01/2020).

13 Adopted in 2019, the Oslo Action Plan of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention requires States to mainstream gender considerations in mine action programming, including mine risk education and victim assistance. When reporting on these programmes, States Parties have to present data disaggregated by gender and age. Adopted in 2021, the Lausanne Action Plan of the Convention on Cluster Munitions directs States Parties to collect and analyse gender, age and disability disaggregated data in relation to a number of cross-cutting actions, such as surveying and clearance of cluster munition remnants, risk education, victim assistance and the development of laws, policies and programmes. Through these actions, State Parties commit to ensure that the different needs, vulnerabilities and perspectives of women, girls, boys and men from diverse populations and all ages are considered and inform the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

14 See Government of Albania. Decision No. 754, Dated 9/12/2021 on the Approval of the Action Plan 2022–2024 of the Small Arms, Light Weapons, their Ammunition and Explosives Control Strategy 2019–2024, [https://www.seesac.org/f/docs/Strategic-Documents\\_1/Albanian-Action-Plan-9-Dec-2021-ENG.pdf](https://www.seesac.org/f/docs/Strategic-Documents_1/Albanian-Action-Plan-9-Dec-2021-ENG.pdf); Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina. 2020. Small Arms and Light Weapons Strategy in Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2021–2024, [https://www.seesac.org/f/docs/Strategic-Documents\\_1/sarajevo-strategy-action-plan-2021-2024.pdf](https://www.seesac.org/f/docs/Strategic-Documents_1/sarajevo-strategy-action-plan-2021-2024.pdf); Government of North Macedonia. National Strategy For Small Arms And Light Weapons (SALW) Control And National Action Plan (2022–2024), [https://www.seesac.org/f/docs/Strategic-Documents\\_1/Makedonska\\_strategija\\_za\\_kontrolu\\_SALW\\_ENG\\_nacrt.pdf](https://www.seesac.org/f/docs/Strategic-Documents_1/Makedonska_strategija_za_kontrolu_SALW_ENG_nacrt.pdf).

15 Government of North Macedonia, *ibid.*, p. 20.

## Best Practice: SMART goals and indicators

In order to translate policy into reality, organizations usually undertake action plan and strategies with measurable goals. Nearly two-thirds of respondents from organizations with a gender policy stated that these include specific metrics and indicators. Nevertheless, a significant number of organizations working on arms control and disarmament lack such mechanisms to measure progress towards the commitments they have made in their action plans or policies for gender equality.

In that regard, it is useful to showcase some of the SMART goals and indicators that were present in the gender equality policies received via the survey.<sup>16</sup>

- All staff to participate in at least one meeting or public event per year on gender and its relationship to a field relevant to their work.<sup>17</sup>
- All managers are required to include a goal related to contributing to gender equality and parity in their performance workplans and, in turn, there is an assessment of the staff members' performance on the subject.<sup>18</sup>
- Develop a toolkit for all of its programs offering workable strategies on how to incorporate a gender perspective in activities and project deliverables.<sup>19</sup>
- Have a fully gender-balanced Management Board by 2025.<sup>20</sup>
- Support gender coaching for heads and/or high ranked members of SALW commissions over a longer period.<sup>21</sup>
- Regularly conduct a gender audit every two years to assess and review the differential impact of working methods and working conditions on men and women, to encourage work-life balance, and to review the institutionalization of gender equality in the policies, programmes, structures, and interactions of the mission.<sup>22</sup>
- Allocate 85% of project funding on a gender-sensitive basis and 8% on a gender-transformative basis by 2025, taking the OECD criteria as a guide.<sup>23</sup>

These SMART commitments can ensure that organizations remain accountable to their commitments on gender equality.



Tackling the deadly legacy of unexploded ordnance in Vientiane, Lao. © UNDP Lao PDR

- 16 SMART stands for specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. For a compilation of gender-related policies, strategies and action plans shared by respondents, see Annex 2.
- 17 UNIDIR Gender and Diversity Action Plan 2023–2024, [https://unidir.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/UNIDIR\\_Gender\\_Action\\_Plan\\_2023-2024.pdf](https://unidir.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/UNIDIR_Gender_Action_Plan_2023-2024.pdf)
- 18 UNODA Gender Policy 2021–2025, <https://www.un.org/disarmament/unoda-gender-policy-2021-2025/>.
- 19 Stimson Center, “Diversity, Equity & Inclusion”, <https://www.stimson.org/about/transparency/diversity-equity-inclusion/>.
- 20 Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, “Our Commitment to Equality and Diversity”, <https://www.dfa.ie/about-us/equality-diversity/>.
- 21 SEESAC Strategy for Integrating the Gender perspective in SALW control (Updated 2017), document shared with the authors.
- 22 Canada, “Permanent Mission of Canada to the UN Gender Pledge” (September 2021), [https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international\\_relations-relations\\_internationales/un-onu/new-york-gender-pledge-engagement-egalite.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/un-onu/new-york-gender-pledge-engagement-egalite.aspx?lang=eng).
- 23 German Federal Foreign Office. 2023. *Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy*. <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/2585076/4d2d295dad8fb1c41c6271d2c1a41d75/ffp-leitlinien-data.pdf>.



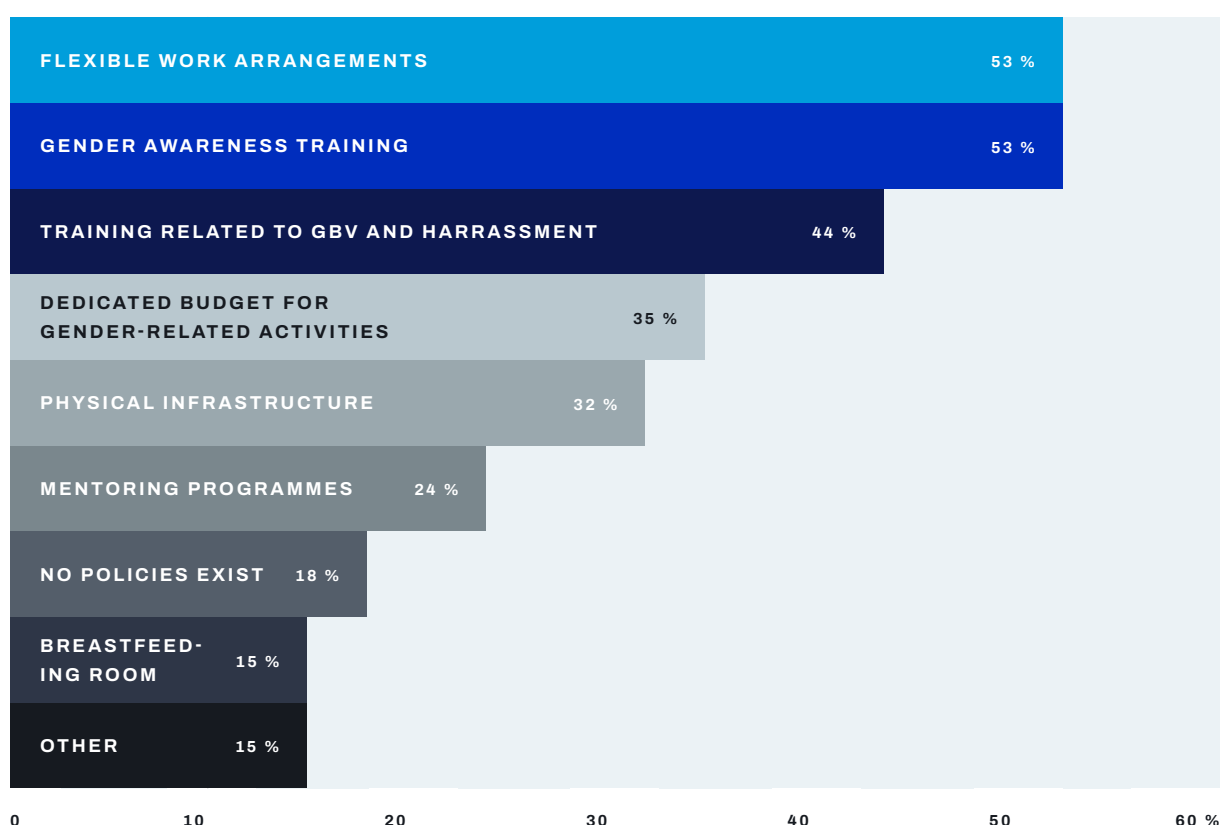
## 2.5 Workplace practices

Going beyond policy documents, the survey included questions about specific practices, training and infrastructure that can support gender equality in the workplace.<sup>24</sup> Among the thirty-four respondents answered this question, the most common practices were flexible work arrangements (53%), gender awareness training (53%), and trainings related to gender-based violence and harassment prevention (44%). Less common practices were a dedicated budget for gender-related activities (35%), adequate physical infrastructure (32%), mentoring programmes (24%), and breastfeeding rooms (15%). Additional measures reported included maternity and paternity leave, supports to trans-gender colleagues, and gender-sensitive sessions across programmes and activities. No organization reported offering childcare support or a creche on premises (**Chart 11**).

CHART 11.

### Workplace Practices in Support of Gender Equality

N=34



<sup>24</sup> In this context physical infrastructure may refer to separate toilets, showers and dormitories where personnel are required to be stationed overnight in field sites. This maybe more relevant for personnel working on technical implementation of arms control measures than in other areas, such as policy development, for example.

## Best Practice: Balancing professional and family life

Working on arms control often involves travel to participate in meetings and may require trainings in remote military bases. This can lead to difficulties in balancing work with family life. These are issues that affect all individuals, regardless of gender. However, because women tend to shoulder more household responsibilities than men, an unequal division of family tasks can place a heavier burden on women and hold them back in their careers.

Respondents highlighted a number of practices that have been put in place to better accommodate family life. Flexible working arrangements featured prominently among responses, with several participants noting that such arrangements allow working parents to accommodate nursery/school pick-up times and to work from home if a child is sick. Respondents pointed out that such practices have had a positive impact in encouraging more women to join their organizations. They also shared that, even though the possibility of working remotely has been available for some years, it became much more common with the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, at least one organization is actively encouraging men employees to speak about their experience with flexible work arrangements, to counter possible perceptions that such practices only apply to women.

A practice to support working mothers is the implementation of breastfeeding/pumping rooms. Although not so common, this type of infrastructure brings greater recognition of the rights of early childhood and nursing mothers, as one respondent observed. Additionally, respondents shared that parental leave was also important to support gender equality in the workplace.

“

In the course of my work,  
I witnessed the appointment  
of a woman chief justice, women  
elected to the Presidency and  
more women elected to Congress.  
It is a testament to a society that  
is more accepting of women  
as leaders, bringing about  
change and shaping the future  
of our country.



## 2.6 Meetings, events and capacity-building activities

The survey asked respondents to list measures their organizations had taken, if any, to support gender diversity in meetings, events, and capacity-building initiatives. Among the 31 participants that answered this question, the most common measures were gender-related targets for attendance in meetings (74%), followed by adequate physical infrastructure for women participants (65%), and specific processes to address gender-based violence, discrimination, sexual harassment or other potential complaints (65%). Other common measures were specific language on gender in communication material (61%), and gender trainings for meeting facilitators/organizers (58%) (**Chart 12**).

Despite the share of positive responses regarding the implementation of such measures, less than a third of survey participants reported that their organization had a specific budget for gender-related initiatives. The majority of those organizations (8 out of 12) are based in WEOG countries. Details on the size of such budgets were not provided, with the exception of one governmental organization.

When asked to assess the impact of these measures in achieving greater gender diversity in meetings, events, and capacity-building efforts, more than half of respondents either reported that such data was not available or skipped the question (**Chart 13**). Such responses suggest that gathering gender-disaggregated data regarding participation in meetings, events and capacity-building initiatives on arms control and disarmament may be overlooked or not seen as a priority. That would negatively impact the ability of an organization to assess the implementation of efforts and policies aimed at promoting gender equality.

Nine respondents reported that their organization has achieved a participation rate of between 30% and 50% of women, non-binary and transgender people in most of their meetings, events, and capacity-building activities. Five respondents stated that they had achieved a participation rate of 50% or more of women, non-binary and transgender people, while three stated that they had achieved a participation rate of less than 30%. Given the lack of data on non-binary and transgender people, these statistics should be understood to refer mostly to women's participation, rather than gender diversity in a broader sense.

CHART 12.

## Action Taken in Meetings, Events and Capacity-building

N=31

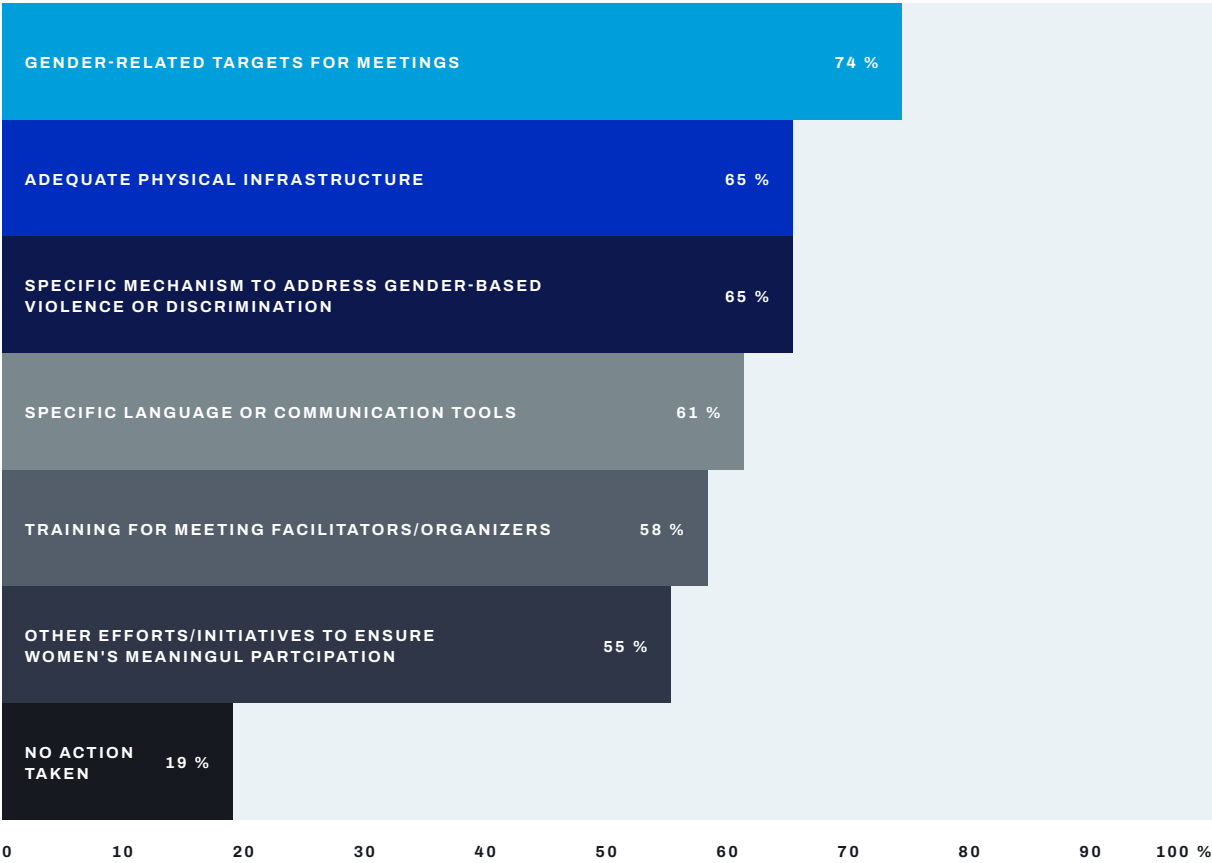
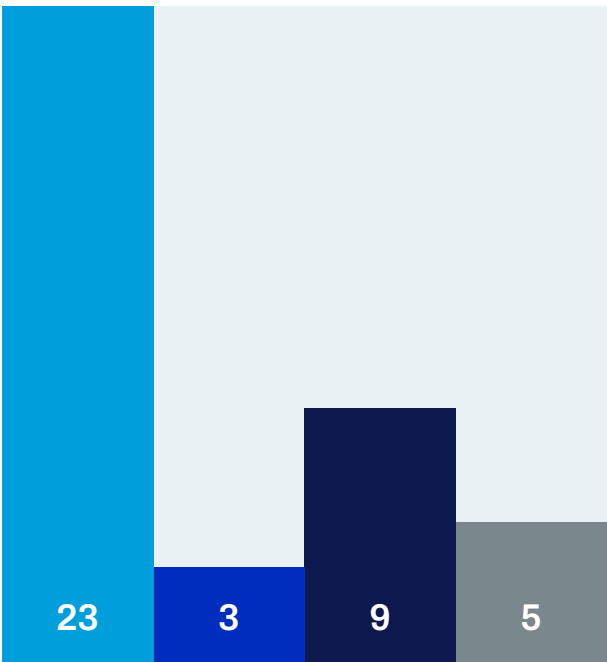


CHART 13.

## Level of Gender Diversity in Meetings, Events and Capacity-building

N=40

- DATA IS NOT AVAILABLE /DID NOT RESPOND
- LESS THAN 30 %
- 30 % TO 50 %
- OVER 50 %



## Best Practice: The power of panel parity pledges

Panel parity pledges are becoming increasingly common not only in academic settings, but also in the policy field. In its simplest form, the panel parity pledge is used to avoid all-male and/or single-sex panels in meetings. Several respondents highlighted the role of panel parity pledges in their organizations' approach to gender equality matters. Organizations may include specific targets regarding representation, as a respondent shared in the survey: "public events with more than 2 speakers, must include 1 woman. If there are 4 speakers or more, the goal for the panel is parity."

To implement such pledges, organizations working in arms control and disarmament often have to make specific efforts to ensure a fair level of representation for women, as well as transgender, non-binary and gender-fluid persons. This can include lists of resources and databases of diverse experts, tracking tools to report on panel participation, as well as internal guidance on how to decline invitations to single-sex panels.

Despite the variety of tools available, organizations may face challenges in adhering to a parity pledge, which can be related to broader issues, such as cultural perceptions. As a respondent noted: "the culture of men being considered experts or being quoted in the media hinders female scholarship. It is also hard when dealing across cultures and having to match seniority of speakers — gender parity ... is sometimes difficult". As has been pointed out elsewhere, women face specific challenges in arms control, where technical expertise has been associated with masculinized norms.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to panel composition, some respondents reported that organizations are encouraging men to participate in events which are traditionally perceived as being spaces for women, for instance, by participating as speakers in events that focus on gender issues.

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25 Salama, Hana and Bjertén-Günther, Emma. 2021. *Women Managing Weapons: Perspectives for Increasing Women's Meaningful Participation in Weapons and Ammunition Management*. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. <https://doi.org/10.37559/GEN/2021/02>.

“

Generate spaces for reflection and awareness to break with the alleged naturalization and ‘biologization’ of the roles of men and women. In this way, access to spaces, places, knowledge, and work is not limited by gender, but is related to the abilities of the people seeking to enter.

## 2.7 Technical trainings

Delivering technical trainings is an important part of the field of conventional arms control.

Half of the reporting organizations implement this type of activity. The most common type of training offered by them is physical stockpile and security management, followed by explosive ordinance disposal, and marking, tracing and record-keeping (**see Chart 14**). Other types of trainings listed by respondents included prevention and control of SALW diversion and trafficking, end-user risk assessment, small arms identification training, Arms Trade Treaty implementation, ammunition technical training, ballistic forensics, and mine risk education.

In total, 19 respondents provided information about measures to enhance gender diversity in technical trainings. The most common measures, all of which were implemented by more than half of organizations, were: specific language on gender or communication tools or outreach strategies (74%), gender-related targets for technical trainings (68%), adequate physical infrastructure for women participants (58%), training-specific processes to address gender-based violence, discrimination, sexual harassment or other potential complaints (58%), and gender trainings for meeting facilitators/organizers (52%). (**Chart 15**). Additionally, respondents reported other measures taken, such as ensuring that women participate as trainers/speakers in such trainings. Only five respondents stated that their organization had a specific budget for gender-related initiatives, but none reported any details of these budgets.

Out of the 20 organizations offering technical trainings, half reported that they did not know the level of gender diversity achieved in such trainings or skipped the question (**Chart 16**). This may indicate challenges in prioritizing gender-disaggregated data collection within organizations, which can impact their ability to effectively assess efforts to promote gender equality in technical trainings.

Five respondents stated that their organization had a participation rate of less than 30% of women, non-binary and transgender people. Three respondents reported a participation rate of between 30% and 50%, while only two reported a participation rate of 50% or more. However, given the lack of data on non-binary and transgender people, these responses should be considered as referring mostly to women's participation, rather than gender diversity in a broader sense.



CHART 14.

## Types of Technical Trainings Offered

N=20

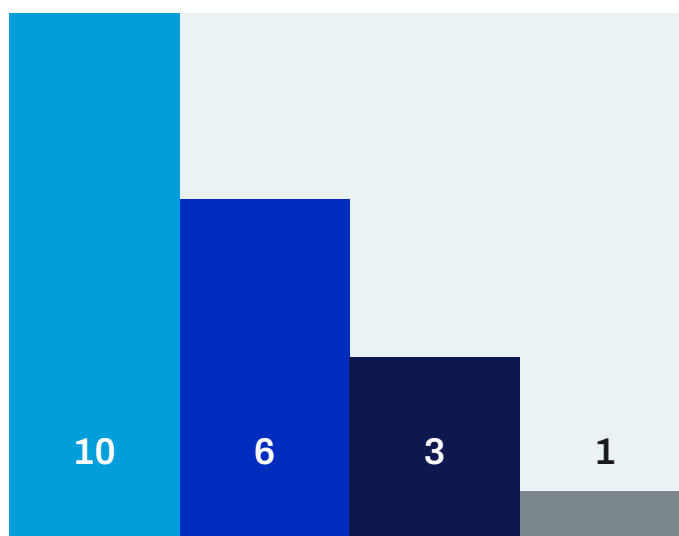
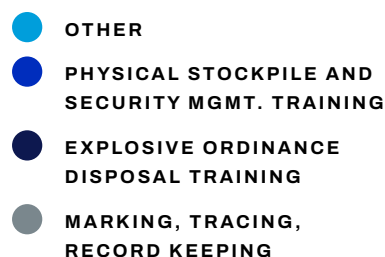


CHART 15.

## Action Taken in Technical Trainings

N=19

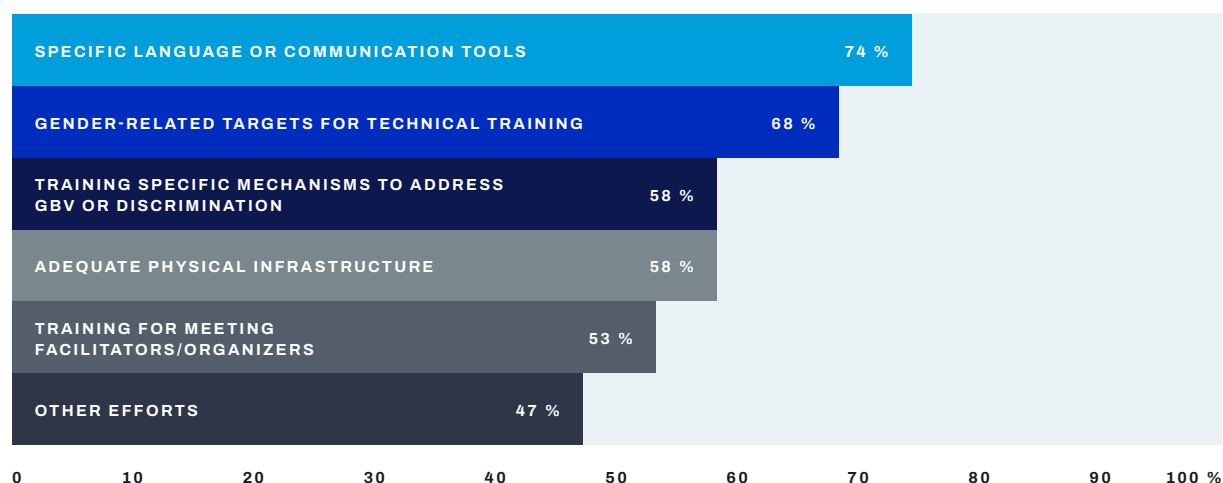
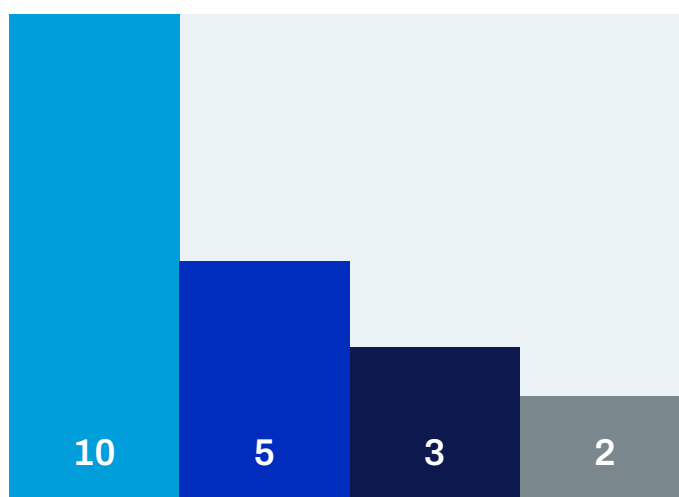
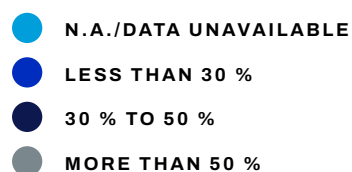


CHART 16.

## Level of gender diversity in technical trainings

N=20



## Best Practice: Gender-sensitive communication to realize equality

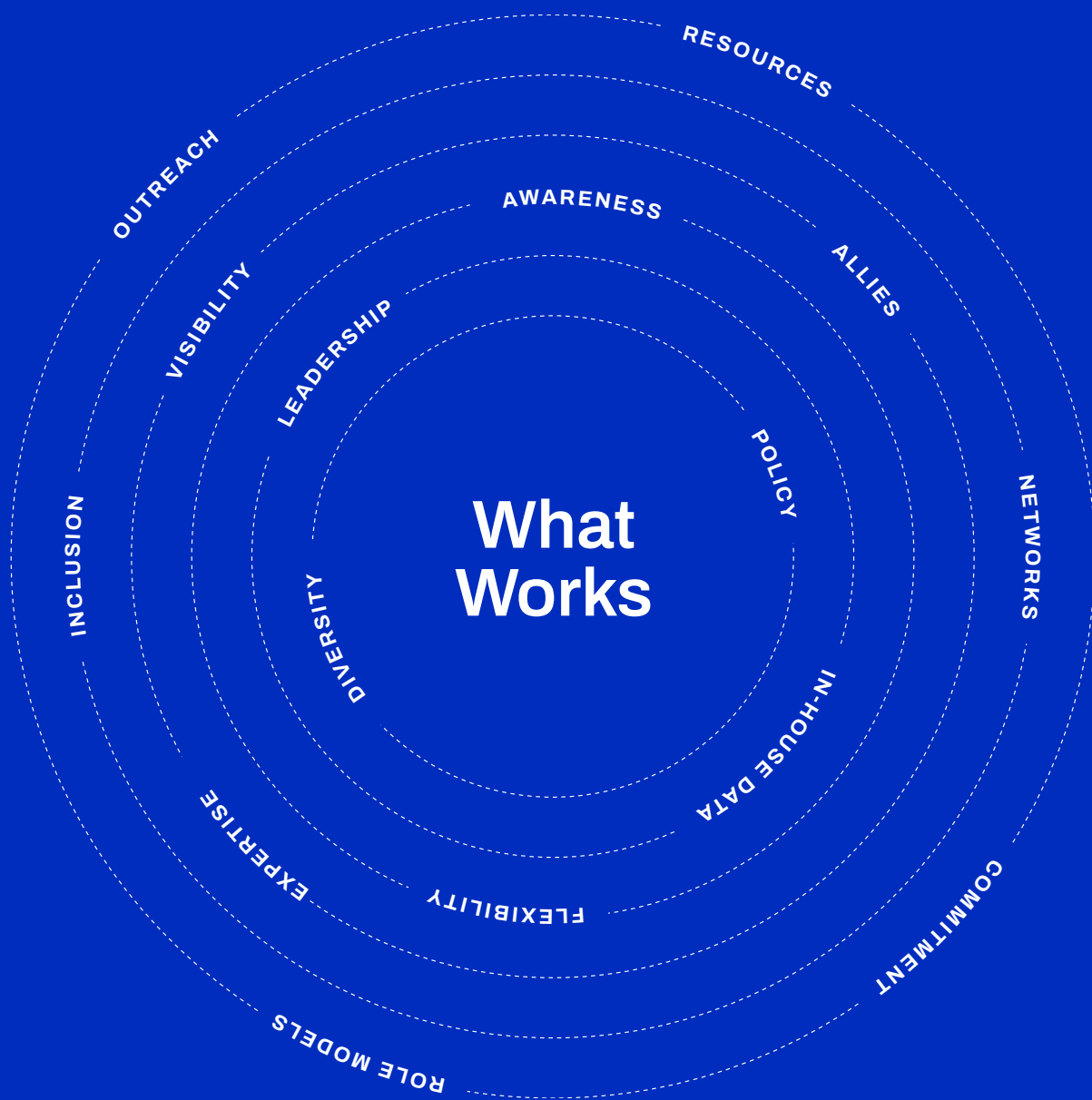
Organizations that deliver technical trainings have noticed that women tend to be underrepresented in their pool of applicants. In view of that, many institutions decided to carry out specific communication campaigns and outreach efforts directed at women professionals, with some even establishing specific targets (i.e. 30%) for participation rates in their trainings. To achieve that goal, invitation letters have been adapted to explicitly mention that women candidates are encouraged to apply or to be nominated by their governments. Including this specific call is important to highlight that women belong in this field. In order to be more inclusive, organizations could also state explicitly that applicants of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions are also welcome to apply or to be nominated.

In addition to being explicit in the request, course organizers also take the responsibility of ensuring overall gender balance. When stakeholders or States must nominate their own representative to attend, they are usually men. As a respondent noted, “this may also be due to the fact that not many women work on a technical level in the narrow field of [physical security and stockpile management]”.

This difficulty points to a long-term change that is needed in terms of perceptions and social attitudes. As a respondent noted, it is important to use photos and images that depict a diversity of roles for people of different genders and geographical backgrounds, as well as to avoid stereotypes. In some cases, inclusive and non-sexist language and images are not only a matter of good sense, but also part of the organization’s official policies.



Officers participate in training, UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic. © MINUSCA



## 2.8 Further observations

The final section of the survey comprised open-ended questions, asking respondents to share their views on what works well and what more could be done to support women's participation and gender equality in arms control and disarmament. This section compiles the responses received.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Submissions have been edited for concision and clarity.

## Practices

- Childcare, adequate maternity leave, flexible working arrangements, access to technical training, adequate working infrastructure.
- Trainings/facilitations by gender experts that engage all staff.
- Targeted projects and e-learning aimed at increasing meaningful participation of women in arms control and disarmament.
- Educational strategies aimed at disseminating the disarmament field to a broader audience and tackling taboos and gender stereotypes.
- Keeping people and organizations accountable by monitoring efforts to promote gender equality, including on social media.
- Mentorship programmes.
- Long-term engagement is essential to ensure sustainability of results. As clearly demonstrated during the COVID-19 crisis, gender equality gains are not irreversible.
- Systematic data collection/statistics on diversity and participation.
- Dedicated budget lines with specific targets, outputs and outcomes for gender and diversity mainstreaming
- Develop trainings for women officers on technical aspects of arms control and also create opportunities to address masculinities in the field of weapons and ammunition management and arms control, more broadly.

## Policies and regulations

- Written policy that ensures women's participation and inclusion in all areas of work.
- Development of internal guidance documents that support gender mainstreaming.
- National laws and regulations on gender equality.
- Panel parity pledges.
- Women's meaningful participation of political processes and peace negotiations.

“

Women in publicly visible,  
high-level positions is one  
of the most impactful measures.  
Seeing women Heads of State,  
leading governments means  
the world to me.



# 3. Conclusions and avenues for further research

It is fair to say that gender has become an established topic for consideration across all areas of arms control and disarmament. However, what does that mean in practice? This survey addressed this question by reaching out to organizations implementing arms control and disarmament. Despite the limitations of the survey format and the sample, the results provide important indications about the current state of gender issues in the field.

From the responses received, it is possible to see a good level of interest and awareness on gender equality matters among organizations active in this field. Distinct practices are being implemented to improve gender balance and to transform the working environment to make it more inclusive. However, even if respondents were able to share examples of the impact of these policies in their organization, it appears that most organizations do not collect data that would allow for a systematic assessment of the results achieved.

In terms of challenges, small organizations appear to face a greater burden in terms of putting in place policies to support gender equality and retain women at the middle and senior levels of the workforce. To address this gap, donors could provide core funding to small organizations or offer specialized consultancies to support them in developing adequate policies and practices.

Ensuring that organizations remain accountable to their gender equality policies and plans is still a challenge. Going forward, the importance of collecting gender-disaggregated data should be emphasized and regular reporting on progress using SMART indicators and goals should be established as a standard practice.

The survey responses also demonstrate the sparseness of data and information available about transgender and non-binary people working in the field, which could be explained by limitations of data collection in the workplace, as well as stigma and discrimination. Looking ahead, it seems important to expand the scope of gender-related initiatives to also address the experiences of people of different genders. An intersectional gender approach could help to reframe the ongoing conversation about diversity in the arms control and disarmament field.

In order to get a more complete picture of gender mainstreaming in the field of arms control and disarmament, further research should be undertaken. In particular, Member States could request international or regional organizations to develop a comprehensive, possibly mandatory, survey for national agencies working on conventional arms control and disarmament. This could overcome the constraints of the present study, generating representative data and strengthening the culture of reporting and accountability in this area. All of this is needed to promote more inclusive workplace cultures.



## Annex 1.

# List of participating organizations

- Ammunition Management Advisory Team, Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)
- Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies (BICC)
- Contel Arms Control Depot, Mexico
- Control Arms
- Customs and Excise Division, Trinidad and Tobago
- Danish Refugee Council
- Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland
- Economic Committee of West African States Commission
- Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control/Pathfinders
- Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP)
- Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)
- Global Affairs Canada—Non-Proliferation, Arms Control, and Disarmament (NACD)
- Implementation Support Unit, United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Saint Kitts and Nevis
- Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications, Serbia
- National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Ghana
- National Commission to Combat the Proliferation and Illicit Circulation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Benin
- National Commission to Combat the Proliferation and Illicit Circulation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Côte d'Ivoire





- National Commission to Combat the Proliferation and Illicit Circulation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Togo
- National Focal Point on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Uganda
- National Guard, Mexico
- Norwegian People's Aid
- Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)—Secretariat/Conflict Prevention Centre/Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC) Support Unit and Communications and Technology Unit
- Permanent Mission of Colombia to the United Nations Office at Geneva
- Permanent Secretariat of the National Arms Control Commission, Burkina Faso
- Presidential Advisory Group for Comprehensive Action against Antipersonnel Mines (AICMA), Colombia
- Small Arms Survey (SAS)
- State Export Control Authority (AKSHE), Republic of Albania
- Stimson Center
- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)
- Strategic Trade Management Office, Department of Trade and Industry, Philippines
- United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs
- United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)
- United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)
- United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD)
- United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC)
- UNDP SEESAC: South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons
- Women for Peace and Democracy, Nepal
- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Cameroon

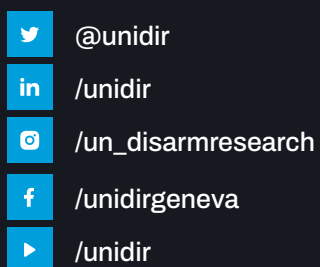
## Annex 2.

# Compilation of gender-related policies, strategies and action plans shared by respondents

ORGANIZATION	NAME OF THE DOCUMENT	YEAR OF PUBLICATION
ECOWAS	Mainstreaming Gender into the ECOWAS Peace and Security Infrastructure	2021
Government of Albania	<a href="#">Action Plan 2022-2024 of the Small Arms, Light Weapons, their Ammunition And Explosives Control Strategy 2019–2024</a>	2021
Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina	<a href="#">Small Arms and Light Weapons Strategy in Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2021–2024</a>	2020
Government of Canada	<a href="#">Policy on Gender Equality</a>	2017
Government of Canada	<a href="#">Federal Gender Equality Laws</a>	N/A
Government of Colombia	<a href="#">Presidential Directive 3 of 2022</a>	2022
Government of Ireland, Department of Foreign Affairs	Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) Action Plan (2022–2025)	2022
Government of Mexico	<a href="#">Feminist Foreign Policy of the Government of Mexico</a>	2020
Government of Mexico	<a href="#">National Development Plan 2019–2024</a>	2019
Government of Mexico	<a href="#">Outline of National Development Plan 2019–2024</a>	2019
Government of Mexico	<a href="#">Statement on SRE being First Agency to Implement the Protocol for the Attention, Prevention, and Punishment of Sexual Harassment</a>	2020
Government of Mexico	<a href="#">Federal Law to Prevent and Eliminate Discrimination</a>	2023
Government of North Macedonia	<a href="#">National Strategy For Small Arms And Light Weapons (SALW) Control And National Action Plan (2022–2024)</a>	2022

ORGANIZATION	NAME OF THE DOCUMENT	YEAR OF PUBLICATION
Government of the Philippines	<a href="#">Republic Act No. 11313</a>	2019
Government of the Philippines	<a href="#">Republic Act No. 7877</a>	1995
Norwegian People's Aid	<a href="#">Gender Equality Policy</a>	2018
Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, Colombia	<a href="#">Guidelines for the Gender Mainstreaming Approach</a>	2021
OSCE	<a href="#">2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality</a>	2004
The Graduate Institute Geneva	<a href="#">Sexual Harassment Policy</a>	2013
The Stimson Center	<a href="#">Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion [Website]</a>	2022
UNDP	<a href="#">UNDP Gender Equality Strategy, 2022–2025</a>	2022
UNDP	<a href="#">Policy on Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Discrimination, and Abuse of Authority</a>	2018
UNDP SEESAC	<a href="#">SEESAC Strategy for Gender Issues in SALW Control and Armed Violence Prevention Programmes and Projects (AVPP) Activities</a>	2007
UNIDIR	<a href="#">Gender and Diversity Action Plan 2023–2024</a>	2023
UNIDIR	<a href="#">Gender and Diversity Policy</a>	2017
United Nations	<a href="#">System Wide Strategy on Gender Parity</a>	2017
United Nations	<a href="#">Review of the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women</a>	2019
United Nations	<a href="#">UN System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment</a>	2018
UNODA	<a href="#">UNODA Gender Policy 2021 – 2025</a>	2021
Western Balkans	<a href="#">Roadmap for a Sustainable Solution to the Illegal Possession, Misuse and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)/Firearms and their Ammunition in the Western Balkans</a>	2018





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