

Gender and Nuclear Weapons

Sex-specific and gendered impacts

- While the detonation of one or more nuclear weapons would cause massive death and injury to all, [studies with survivors](#) show that women and girls have a higher risk of developing cancer, heart disease and stroke from radiation over the course of their lives than men and boys.
- Ionizing radiation can cause [specific harms](#) to pregnant women and babies, heightening the risk of stillbirth and birth defects.
- Children are especially vulnerable to harm from radiation exposure. They face a significantly [higher risk](#) of developing cancer over their lifetime compared to adults exposed at the same rates.
- [Girls aged 0–5](#) are the group with the highest lifetime risk of health consequences. Their lifetime risk of cancer incidence is higher than that of boys exposed at the same age.
- Gender can shape different experiences of [stigma and discrimination](#). Fear of stigma can dissuade survivors from seeking medical care, worsening long-term health conditions.
- Gender roles can lead to different experiences of mental health conditions and psychosocial problems. The stress of [caregiving responsibilities](#), most often shouldered by women, can compound other stress factors related to radiation exposure.

Why it matters



Knowledge of sex-specific and gendered impacts can inform public health protocols, including medical screening and treatment.



Awareness of sex-specific differences and gendered dynamics can lead to more effective assistance, including specific actions to minimize stigma and support survivors.



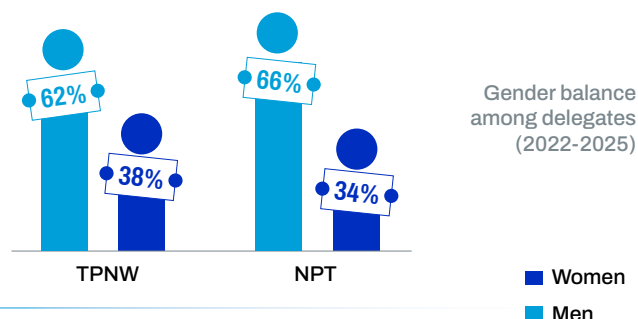
Understanding and acknowledging the health impacts of ionizing radiation is an important aspect of achieving nuclear justice for survivors. It can also strengthen the humanitarian rationale for nuclear disarmament.

Relevance to multilateral regimes

- Gendered impacts of nuclear weapons have been discussed in side events, working papers and statements delivered during the meetings of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).
- The preamble of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) acknowledges that nuclear weapons have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, including as a result of ionizing radiation.
- Article 6 of the TPNW directs States Parties to provide age- and gender-sensitive assistance to individuals under its jurisdiction who are affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons, including medical care, rehabilitation and psychological support, as well as provide for their social and economic inclusion.
- TPNW States Parties established the role of Gender Focal Point to support the implementation of the gender-related provisions of the Treaty.

Gender balance in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament

- Following a recurrent pattern in arms control and disarmament diplomacy, women are underrepresented in official meetings of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), comprising 34% and 38% of accredited diplomats, respectively.



- Gender imbalance is even more pronounced in leadership positions. For instance, out of 11 Review Conferences of the NPT, only 2 were presided by women.



Gender balance among Presidents of NPT Review Conferences

- Women's underrepresentation can reinforce stereotypes that devalue women's expertise and lead to a vicious cycle where perspectives and knowledge of large segments of the population continue to be excluded.
- Promoting gender equality is not about undermining merit but about giving more people the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and to participate in meritocracy.
- Improving gender balance is desirable, as it has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of Treaty processes and their outcomes. [Diverse teams](#) are better at problem solving, take more sustainable decisions and are more effective in resolving impasses.
- Women and men have an equal right to participate meaningfully in negotiations and shape the decisions that affect their lives.

Ideas for action

Promoting gender equality

- Keep** gender as a criterion in the sponsorship programme for delegations and capacity-building initiatives.
- Ensure** a gender-balanced bureau during the review cycle of relevant treaties, featuring both women and men at the highest level.
- Collect, track and publish** disaggregated data and gender statistics on delegation composition and participation as speakers and heads of delegation.
- Foster** collaboration between disarmament diplomats and gender experts through joint side events and other activities.

Addressing gendered impacts

- Fund and support** research on the differentiated impacts of ionizing radiation, including intergenerational and intersectional harms.
- Provide** gender-responsive and age-sensitive assistance to survivors and affected communities, including medical and psychological support, trauma-informed counselling and livelihood recovery programmes.
- Support** the meaningful participation of survivors and affected communities in national, regional and multilateral discussions on nuclear weapons.
- Ensure** that radiation protection standards deliver protection for all by taking into account the needs of those most at risk.