

Gender balance in the security sector

This statistical brief presents key findings on women's and men's representation in decision-making positions in the security sector of the European Union (EU). Data cover organisations/bodies convened at the international, EU and Member State levels, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

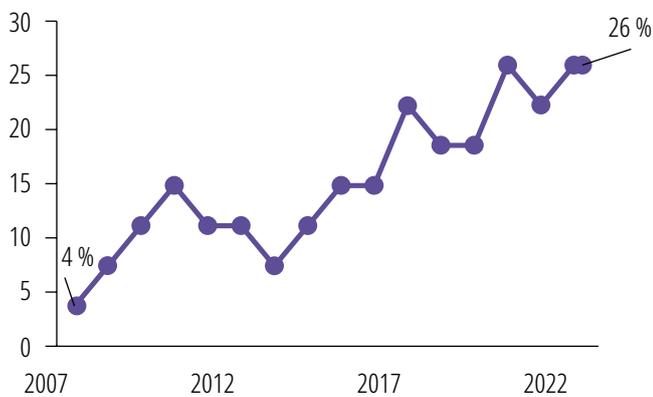
(NATO) as a major international organisation working in the area. Despite formal commitments to address gender inequality in leadership positions in the security sector ⁽¹⁾, the findings show that progress has been limited and women remain significantly under-represented.

National governments: defence and border control ⁽²⁾

Three out of four senior defence ministers are men

All EU Member States have a senior minister (one with a seat on the cabinet) either dedicated to defence or dealing with defence as part of a wider portfolio. As of March 2023, the senior defence ministers are women in 7 of the 27 Member States (26%): Belgium, Czechia, Spain, Latvia, the Netherlands, Austria and Portugal. Although the proportion of women has more than doubled over the past decade, men still hold 3 of the 4 senior ministerial posts with responsibilities for defence issues (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Share of women amongst senior ministers of defence, EU-27, November 2007–March 2023

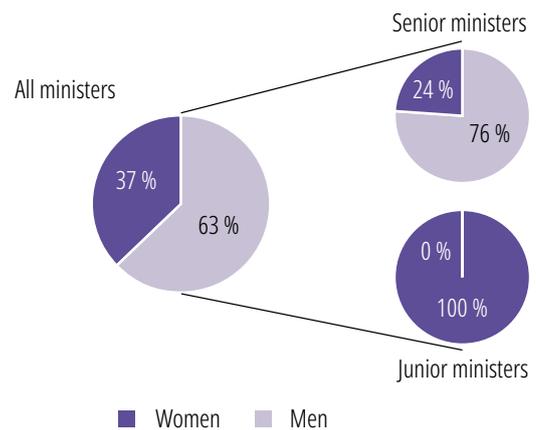


Source: EIGE, gender statistics database (unpublished microdata).
NB: Data refer to Q4 of each year except for 2023 (Q1).

Women account for a third of migration and border control ministers

Not all Member States have a senior (cabinet level) minister with responsibility for migration and border control ⁽³⁾, so to take into account all countries it is necessary to consider junior ministers as well. In March 2023, a third of all ministers (11 of 30) with responsibility for migration and border control in the EU were women (Figure 2). However, when broken down by level of authority, women account for 24% of senior ministers (6 of 25) responsible for migration and border control, whilst all five junior ministers working on migration (Belgium, Greece, Spain, Malta and Portugal) are women.

Figure 2. Share of women and men amongst senior and junior ministers responsible for migration and border control, EU-27, March 2023



Source: EIGE, gender statistics database (unpublished microdata).

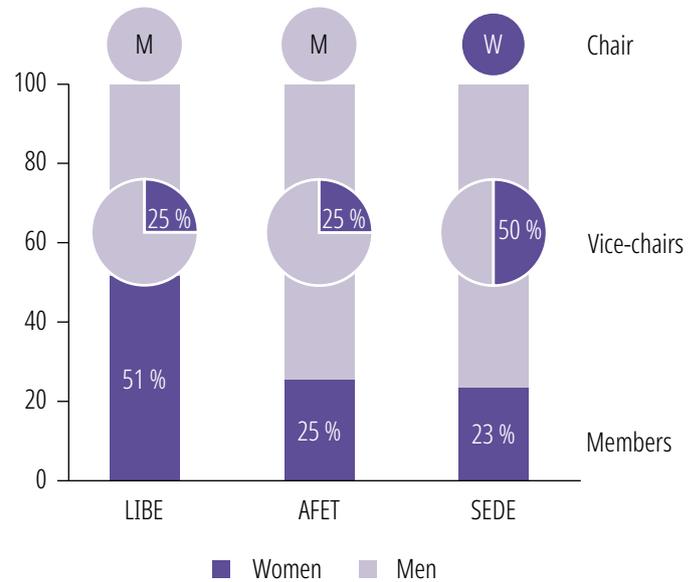
- ⁽¹⁾ EU-level commitments include the 2020–2025 EU gender equality strategy and its objective of achieving gender balance in decision-making, the EU's strategic approach to the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda and its action plan (2019–2024) with women's leadership and participation as a main pillar. NATO is also committed to 'women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all aspects of peace and stability' as part of the WPS agenda. The international framework on WPS is composed of 10 United Nations Security Council resolutions (UNSCR) on women, peace and security (starting with UNSCR 1325 adopted in 2000). These commitments are in line with 'Area E: Women and Armed Conflict' of the Beijing Platform for Action and more recently with the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, including stand-alone goals on gender equality (sustainable development goal (SDG) 5) and peaceful and inclusive societies (SDG16).
- ⁽²⁾ The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) collects quarterly data for all Member States on gender balance amongst ministers in national governments, available here: https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/wmidm_pol_gov_wmid_natgov_minis/bar. Whilst the data are published with a breakdown by broad function of government (basic, economic, infrastructure, socio-cultural), the underlying microdata allow for a more detailed breakdown of specific portfolios, such as defence and border control.
- ⁽³⁾ Belgium and Portugal do not have a (cabinet level) minister with a portfolio that includes competences related to migration and border control but do have a junior minister responsible for migration issues. Greece, Spain and Malta have both a senior and a junior minister with relevant responsibilities.

EU institutions and agencies dealing with security fields

European Parliament committees - parity in LIBE but women under-represented in AFET and SEDE

- The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) is responsible for the majority of legislation and the oversight of policies that enable the EU to offer its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice. LIBE is chaired by a man and 1 of the 4 vice-presidents is a woman. There is however gender parity (51 % women) amongst the 68 members of the committee (Figure 3).
- The Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) also has responsibilities related to security and defence. AFET is chaired by a man and again, only 1 of the 4 vice-chairs is a woman. There are 75 members in the committee, of which 19 are women (25 %).
- The Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE) is a subcommittee of AFET. Less than a quarter of the 30 SEDE members are women (23 %), though 2 of the 4 vice-chairs are women and the chair is also a woman.

Figure 3. Share of women and men amongst chairs, vice-chairs and members of European Parliament committees dealing with security, March 2023



Source: EIGE, direct data collection from European Parliament website.

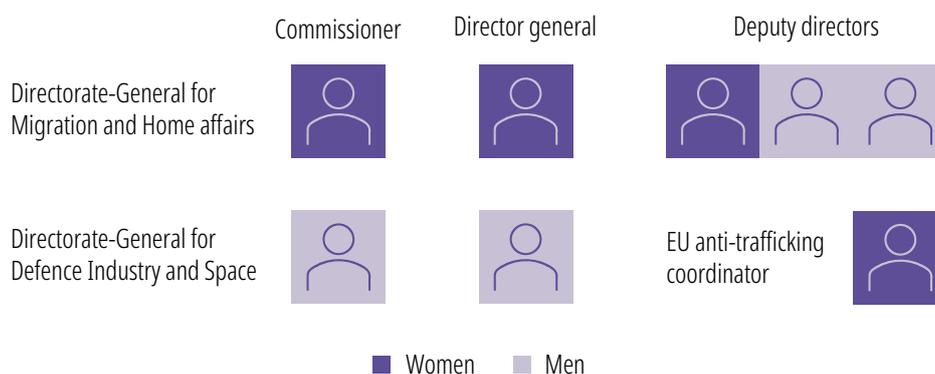
Top roles in the European Commission dealing with security and defence split evenly between women and men

- The Directorate-General (DG) for Migration and Home affairs is in charge of internal security, border management and migration. The commissioner and director general are women, while 2 of 3 deputy directors are men.
- The DG for Defence Industry and Space leads the European Commission's activities in defence and space sectors. The

roles of commissioner and director general (currently also acting as deputy director general) are both held by men.

- The EU anti-trafficking coordinator based in the European Commission is responsible for improving coordination and coherence among EU institutions, EU agencies, Member States and international actors, and for developing existing and new EU policies to address trafficking in human beings. The current EU anti-trafficking coordinator is a woman.

Figure 4. Gender of the commissioner, director general and deputy directors in directorates-general of the European Commission dealing with security, and of the EU anti-trafficking coordinator, March 2023



Source: EIGE, direct data collection from the European Commission website.

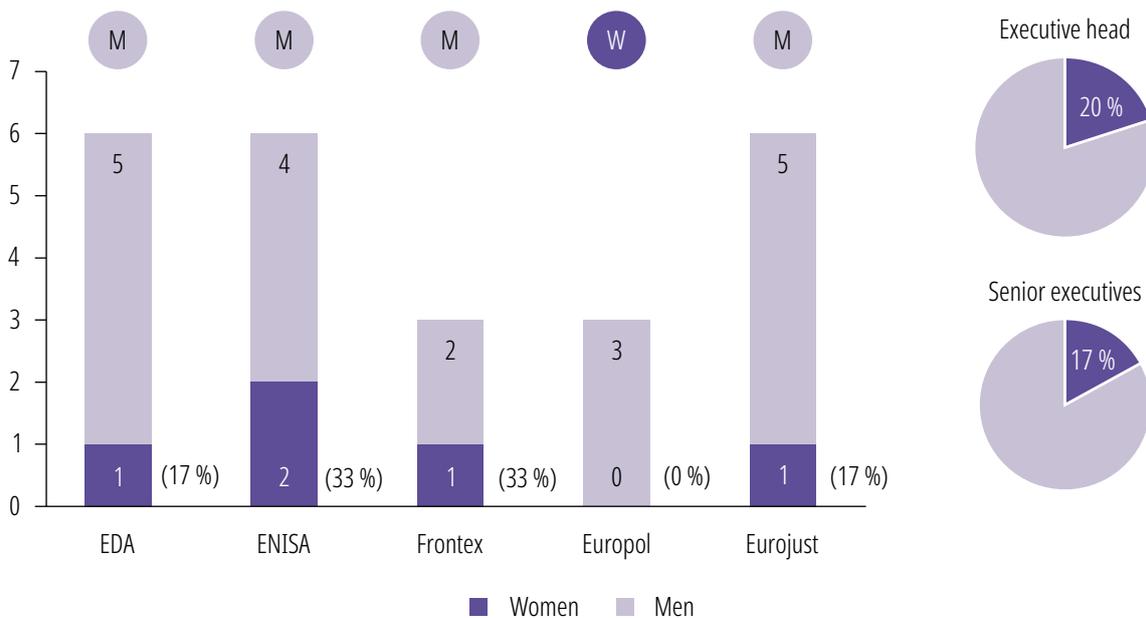
Women make up less than a fifth of senior executives in EU agencies dealing with security

- The head of the European Defence Agency (EDA), which forms part of the role of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission, is currently a man, as is the chief executive. Only 1 of the 6 members (17 %) of the management team is a woman.
- The executive director of the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) is a man, while 2 of 6 heads of units of the agency (33 %) are women.
- The executive director of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), responsible for border protection,

is a man, while 1 of the 3 deputy executive directors (33 %) is a woman.

- Day-to-day operations of the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) are managed by a woman executive director and three deputy directors (all men).
- The college of the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust) is comprised of one judge from each Member State, and 9 of the 27 national members (33 %) are women. The administrative director is a man and so are 5 of the 6 members of the executive board.
- Overall, women make up a fifth (20 %) of executive heads of the combined EU agencies dealing with security and just 1 in 6 (17 %) senior executives.

Figure 5. Number of women and men, and share of women amongst senior executives in EU agencies dealing with security, March 2023



Source: EIGE, direct data collection from the websites of relevant EU agencies.

NATO council of representatives, principal officials and leadership positions in civilian staff

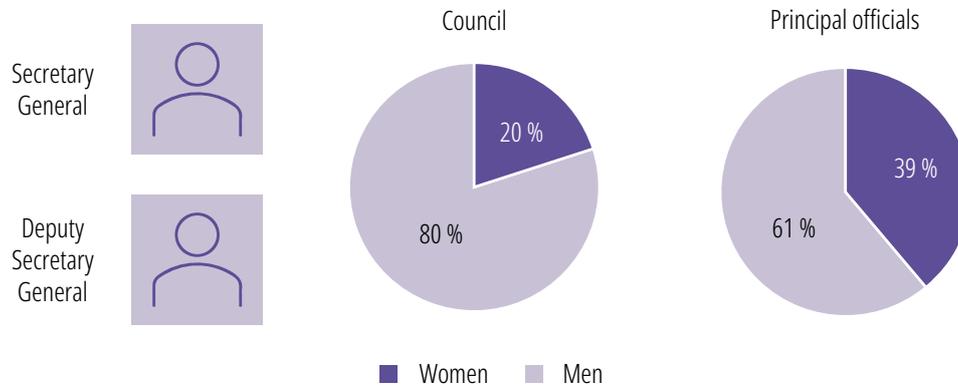
A fifth of representatives in the council are women, but there is gender balance amongst principal officials

Most Member States (with the exception of Cyprus) are part of NATO either as member nations or as partner nations⁽⁴⁾. Each NATO member nation is represented in the North At-

lantic Council by a permanent representative or ambassador. Among the permanent representatives, 6 of 30 (20 %) are women, while 11 of 18 principal officials (61 %) are men. The secretary general and the deputy secretary general are also both men.

⁽⁴⁾ As of April 2023, 22 Member States are also NATO member nations (Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Finland). Four Member States are NATO partner nations (Ireland, Malta, Austria and Sweden).

Figure 6. Share of women and men amongst members of the North Atlantic Council and principal officials of NATO, March 2023

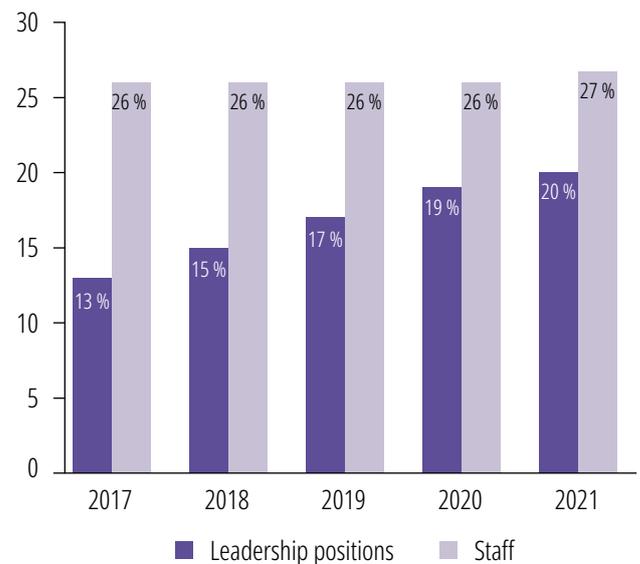


Source: EIGE, direct data collection from the NATO website.

Women hold one in five leadership positions amongst civilian staff

In 2021, women accounted for 27 % of people employed in civilian staff posts within NATO, a figure that has hardly changed since 2017 ⁽⁵⁾. Women were even further under-represented in senior leadership positions, holding a fifth (20 %) of key civilian staff posts, though this does represent an increase from 13 % in 2017 (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Percentage of women in senior leadership positions among civilian staff, NATO-wide, 2017–2021



Source: NATO, annual diversity and inclusion reports.

Armed forces: full-time members and highest-ranking officers

Armed forces see gender recruitment gap

The latest data on gender balance in the armed forces from 2020 ⁽⁶⁾ show that women are heavily under-represented in the armed forces in Member States that are either members or partner nations of NATO. Women account for less than 1 in 5 full-time members of the armed forces in all cases, and for less

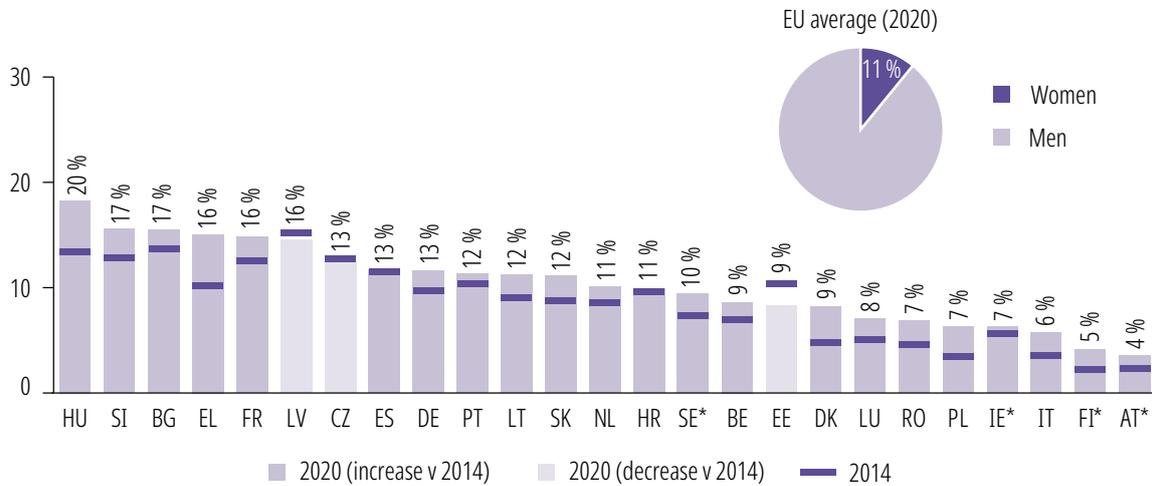
than 1 in 10 full-time members in ten cases ⁽⁷⁾ (Figure 8). The majority of countries have seen a small increase in the proportion of women since 2014, with the largest increase seen in Hungary (+ 5 percentage points from 15 % to 20 %). There are 3 exceptions in which the share of women declined (Latvia, Czechia and Estonia).

⁽⁵⁾ NATO, 2021, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/9/pdf/2021-annual-diversity_inclusion_report.pdf; NATO, 2018, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/7/pdf/2018-annual-diversity_inclusion_report.pdf.

⁽⁶⁾ NATO published reports with data on representation of women and men in the armed forces between 2014 and 2020. The reports cover all Member States except Cyprus, which is not a NATO partner nation, and Malta, which does not seem to have provided data for any report. The reports are available here: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_132342.htm.

⁽⁷⁾ Belgium, Estonia, Denmark, Luxembourg, Romania, Poland, Ireland, Italy, Finland and Austria.

Figure 8. Percentage of women full-time members of national armed forces of Member States, member and partner nations of NATO, 2014–2020



Source: NATO, 2020. For Romania and Poland: NATO, 2019.

NB: Data cover 25 EU Member States: data for Malta are not available while Cyprus is neither a member nor a partner nation of NATO. The 2020 figures refer to 2018 for Romania and 2019 for Poland as more recent data have not been disclosed.

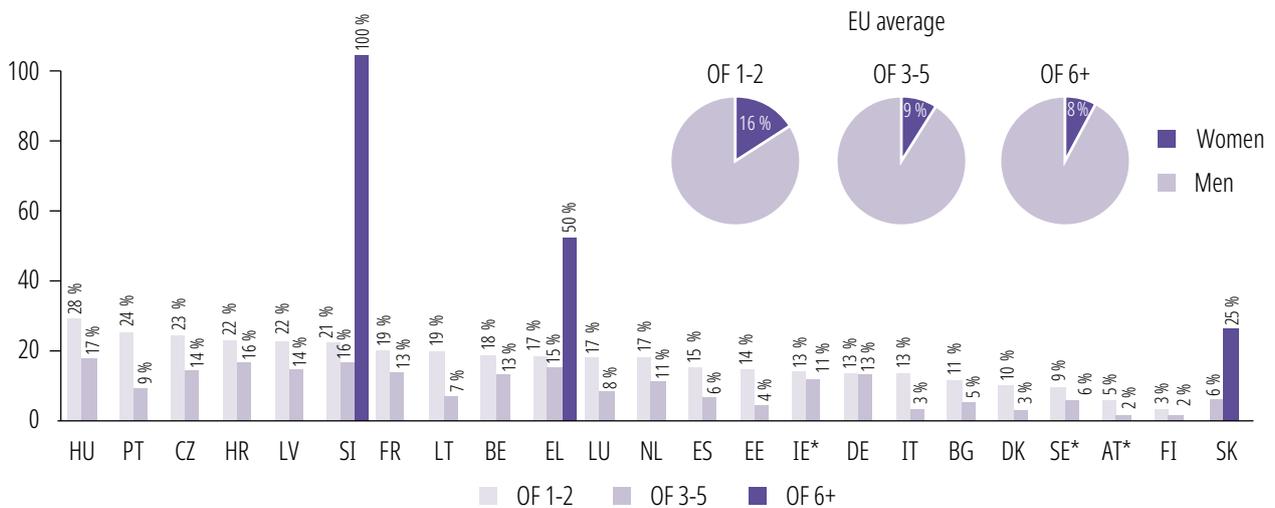
(*) NATO partner nations.

Women are under-represented amongst highest-ranking officers

Whilst the under-representation of women in the military services is a cause for concern, there is also evidence that women are even less likely to hold the highest-ranking positions. Only 3⁽⁸⁾ of the 23 Member States covered by the data published by NATO have any women amongst the small number of top-ranking positions (general officer) (Figure 9). Women are represent-

ed amongst mid-ranking officers (senior or field grade officer) in all countries covered but account for a maximum of 17% in Hungary and a minimum of 2% in Austria and Finland. Even in the lowest officer ranks (junior officers) it is only in Hungary (28%) that women account for more than 1 in 4 officers. On average across the 23 Member States covered, women occupy up to 8% of the very top ranks, 9% of the middle ranks and 15% of junior officer ranks.

Figure 9. Share of full-time women across officer ranks, member and partner nations of NATO from the EU, 2020



Source: EIGE’s own calculations based on data on the overall distribution of women and men by rank for each country published in NATO’s 2020 report. NB: Data sorted by highest to lowest share of women holding ‘OF 1–2’ position. ‘OF 1–2’ junior officer, ‘OF 3–5’ senior or field grade officer, ‘OF 6+’ general officer. Data for Malta, Poland and Romania are not available. Data for Bulgaria refers to 2019 (2020 data not available). Cyprus is neither a member nor a partner nation of NATO.

(*) NATO partner nations.

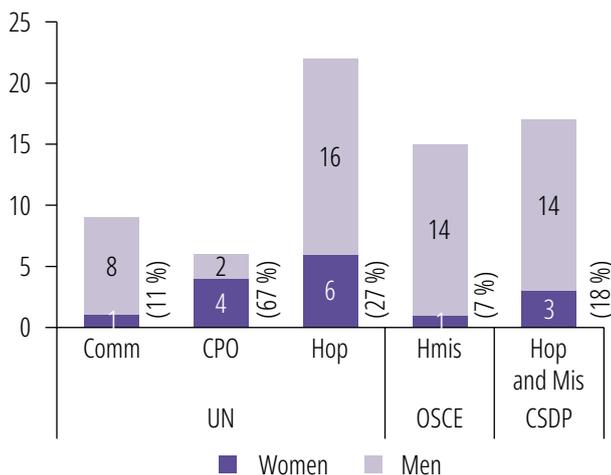
(8) Slovenia (100%), Greece (50%) and Slovakia (25%).

Multilateral peacekeeping operations

Gender gap in leadership positions

According to the latest available data on women in leadership positions in multilateral peacekeeping operations (June 2021), women account for 11 % of commanders in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations (1 of 9), 67 % of chief police officers of UN peace operations (4 of 6) and 27 % of UN heads of peace operations (6 of 22). The data also highlight that 7 % heads of mission of field operations of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (1 of 15) and 18 % of heads of missions and operations of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) (3 of 17) were women in 2021 ⁽⁹⁾.

Figure 10. Women and men in leadership positions in multilateral peacekeeping operations, 2021



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 2021.

NB: 'Comm' = commanders; 'CPO' = chief police officers; 'Hop' = heads of operations; 'Hmis' = heads of missions; 'Hop and Mis' = heads of operations and missions.

Ways forward to bridge the gaps

Member States, EU institutions and the broader international community have recognised the importance of involving women in decision-making at all levels in peacekeeping, conflict resolution operations and humanitarian efforts. The role of women and men from diverse backgrounds in furthering peace and gender equality and preventing conflict and violence has been acknowledged and important commitments have been adopted (see footnote 1) to improve the presence and representation of women in decision-making processes in relation to defence and security.

While some progress has been made, more efforts are needed to ensure that commitments are translated into action. The available data show that women remain heavily under-represented in key positions at the national, EU and international levels. Furthermore, important data gaps remain in the availability of reliable and comparable sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics in the security sector. This is a major obstacle for tracking progress towards gender-balanced representation and for integrating a gender perspective in the security and defence agenda.

Further information

If you want to learn more about the main gender inequalities in the area of security, and get a better understanding on why and how to mainstream a gender perspective in the policy area, check out EIGE's brief on gender and security, available here: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/policy-areas/security>.

For more data on women and men in decision-making, check out EIGE's gender statistics database as a one-stop source for all gender statistics at the EU and Member State levels, available here: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs>.

⁽⁹⁾ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 2021, *Women in Multilateral Peace Operations in 2021: What is the state of play?*, https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/women_in_multilateral_peace_operations_in_2021-what_is_the_state_of_play.pdf.

European Institute for Gender Equality

We are an independent centre and the primary source for information on gender equality in the European Union. We contribute to making the European Union become a Union of Equality, where women and men, girls and boys in all their diversity are free to pursue their chosen path in life, have equal opportunities to thrive, and can equally participate in and lead our societies.

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