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SECURITY IN CROWDED SPACES:

A gender perspective



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CONTEXT

Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have made considerable progress in recent years in adopting laws and policies to protect and advance the rights of women and the LGBTQI+ population.¹ However, challenges remain throughout society, including in the security sector. This report—developed as part of an international program focused on the protection of crowded spaces—focuses on the need for a comprehensive gender perspective in security matters. It addresses a range of issues, from the barriers women face in law enforcement to the potential for violence and discrimination against members of the LGBTQI+ community at public events.

Unsurprisingly, given the region's diverse and multicultural population, gender discrimination and gender-based violence manifest in different ways in the security sector. To address these problems, it is crucial for law enforcement to establish inclusive policies. These should encompass such aspects as the incorporation of more women and LGBTQI+ people into law enforcement, prevention of gender-based violence, and greater access by underrepresented groups to decision-making and political representation, to name a few (Medina-Hernández et al., 2021).

The Organization of American States' Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (OAS/CICTE) and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) have partnered on these issues, as part of a wider joint effort called the Crowded Spaces Program. (The program's full name is Improving Crime Prevention Policies and International Cooperation for the Protection of Crowded Spaces and other Vulnerable Targets.)

In general terms, the Crowded Spaces Program aims to strengthen policies and foster cooperation to protect large public events such as international sports competitions. These types of events have the potential to inspire and unite people from different backgrounds, breaking down barriers and building solidarity. At the same time, they can become targets of security threats. By applying a gender lens to the security situation, law enforcement can strengthen safeguards for people who are sometimes targets of violence and discrimination, including women and the LGBTQI+ community. In that context, the Crowded Spaces Program conducted a series of training sessions on gender, and this report distills the essential findings and recommendations from that process.

¹ LGBTQI+ is an umbrella term that includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning, and intersex people, among others. The use of this acronym is intended to be inclusive and not to exclude anyone who may self-identify using other variations of the term.

It is important to note from the outset that a person's gender is not the same as a person's sex. Gender refers to the whole set of socially constructed norms, roles, behaviors, expressions, and identities that help shape how girls, boys, women, men, and gender-diverse people perceive themselves and interact in a society. Navigating the complexities surrounding this issue requires a comprehensive approach that recognizes and takes into account the interconnected, or intersectional, nature of the challenges faced by diverse groups. In other words, gender should not be considered in a vacuum, without also looking at other social factors such as race or class. It is important to promote equal rights and protections for all individuals, implement inclusive practices and affirmative action for underrepresented groups, and confront the systemic inequality that perpetuates gender-based violence and discrimination.



The relationship between gender and security covers a range of topics, such as gender diversity in leadership, gender expectations and biases in the development of security strategies, and the creation of policies and guidelines on gender diversity and the inclusion of women and other underrepresented groups (Persaud, 2012). According to the Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit developed by several international organizations,² integrating gender issues into reforms of the security sector yields clear benefits. It enhances effectiveness, improves accountability, increases legitimacy, strengthens human rights, fosters inclusivity, and contributes to sustainable peace and security. By recognizing and addressing gender disparities, security institutions can create a fairer and more inclusive environment, ultimately leading to a safer and more equitable society.

From a security standpoint, a gender perspective improves everyone's safety. This is especially the case in public spaces, such as sports arenas, where targeted violence can jeopardize the safety not only of a particular person or group but of the crowd. Adopting effective strategies and practices makes it possible to prevent and address security threats targeting women or the LGBTQI+ population (Myrntinen, 2011). Beyond the safety considerations, such settings offer an opportunity for law enforcement to model good practices, such as by providing people privacy and dignity during security screening procedures. This type of relatively small step can raise public awareness and spark conversations that can lead to larger changes.

² The toolkit was developed by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW), and the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF).

METHODOLOGY



The Crowded Spaces Program has tailored its training sessions to cater to the needs and context of each country or subregion. The program conducted five gender training sessions:

- (1) Caribbean Subregional Workshop on the Security of Major Sporting Events;
- (2) National Workshop on Tourism Security – Ecuador;
- (3) Security Planning of Major Sporting Events – El Salvador and Costa Rica;
- (4) Security of Major Events – Costa Rica; and
- (5) South America Subregional Workshop on the Security of Major Sporting Events.

A monitoring and evaluation strategy was developed to measure the impact of these sessions and ensure improvements and feedback. Data collection was done using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Participants completed questionnaires before and after the training courses, covering their profile, knowledge of gender concepts, perception of gender, and overall knowledge of existing institutional measures. The results were compared to assess the program's impact and generate evidence-based programs and recommendations.



Not all participants completed both questionnaires; 158 individuals responded to the pre-survey and 110 to the post-survey. Follow-up evaluations were conducted six months after each workshop to measure the long-term impact of the training and identify any strategies implemented by participants or their managers in their respective workplaces. The Crowded Spaces Program also conducted "Train the Trainer" sessions to ensure an ongoing comprehensive approach.

Below are the key findings and recommendations that came out of this process. Some are more general and call for action by governments, while others apply to the culture and practices of law enforcement agencies. The third category covers recommendations on how to design security policies with a gender perspective.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



1. RAISING GENERAL AWARENESS



Strengthen legal frameworks



Countries must bolster their legal frameworks by enacting robust legislation that safeguards gender and diversity. This includes introducing laws explicitly addressing gender-based discrimination and violence while promoting equal opportunities for all individuals, especially those who belong to vulnerable minorities. By establishing comprehensive legal protections, countries can foster an inclusive society where individuals are free from discrimination and violence and have equal access to opportunities. Such legislation is crucial for advancing gender and diversity rights and creating a more equitable and just society (Denney, 2020).



Focus on education

Inclusive and comprehensive education programs are essential to address gender and diversity issues. Governments, educational institutions, and organizations should develop and implement educational initiatives that promote gender equality, challenge stereotypes, and foster a culture of respect for diversity. Providing people with the knowledge and skills to understand and appreciate different perspectives can cultivate a more inclusive society that values and respects the rights and experiences of all individuals (OECD, 2013). Moreover, investments in education programs are investments in the future. Young people who grow up in more inclusive, diverse environments can go on to help close gender gaps and reduce inequality.





Conduct public awareness campaigns



Public awareness campaigns can challenge popular stereotypes and biases related to gender. Campaigns can take various forms, including billboards, television advertisements, TV and radio programs, online promotional efforts, mobile telephone alerts, and community events such as dialogues and workshops (Denney, 2020). Police can play a valuable role in these types of campaigns, both because of their leadership in communities and because of the stereotypical idea of law enforcement as a masculine occupation. A police officer who challenges the stereotypes can help shift the narrative and become a positive messenger for change.



Enhance institutional capacity

Public institutions should strengthen their capacity at all levels to address gender and diversity issues effectively. This includes developing training programs for public officials, law enforcement, and judiciary personnel to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to handle cases involving gender-based violence and discrimination (Myrntinen, 2011). Given the hierarchical nature of government institutions, information on gender and diversity will be more effective if it is adapted and tailored to the needs of personnel in different departments and at different levels. Training sessions should pay special attention to each person's functions and responsibilities, so that participants can understand how gender issues apply to their role in the institution.



Foster inclusion and representation



Institutions should also seek to ensure the meaningful participation and representation of women, the LGBTQI+ community, and other underrepresented groups in decision-making. This can be achieved by implementing affirmative action measures, creating safe spaces for dialogue, and supporting leadership development. Greater diversity benefits not only those at the table but the institution itself, by ensuring that its decisions take into account different perspectives and consider different angles.

F Engage men and boys

The active engagement of men and boys plays an important role in advancing gender equality and challenging harmful stereotypes. Men and boys should be encouraged to become allies and advocates for gender equality, through inclusive programs and campaigns to promote their involvement. Male allies can often be effective in promoting constructive dialogue regarding masculinity, violence, and the need for transformation of attitudes and behaviors. Law enforcement agencies can contribute to this positive shift and help prevent gender-based violence (Denney, 2020).



G Strengthen support services



Gender equality touches on many aspects of people's lives, and governments can make a difference by establishing policies and programs conducive to strong support services. This includes policies on such key issues as child care, flexible work hours, and parental leave.

H Collaborate and share best practices

Governments, civil society organizations, and international organizations should work together and share best practices on gender and diversity issues. This includes exchanging knowledge, experiences, and successful strategies to accelerate progress and avoid duplication of efforts. On an international level, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean can collaborate with each other and with international partners to pool resources and expertise so as to accelerate progress and promote regional solidarity.



2. MAKING GENDER PART OF THE CULTURE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT



Implement measurable, specialized, and continuous training on security from a gender perspective



Raising awareness and providing education and training on gender-related security issues is essential to create a gender-responsive environment (Tönnisson Kleppe, 2008). Training law enforcement and security personnel in gender-sensitive approaches enhances their understanding of how to apply a gender and diversity focus to today's security challenges. It also fosters inclusive leadership and community engagement within security agencies. The training must be continuous, measurable, and delivered by an expert (Tönnisson Kleppe, 2008). Results from the pre- and post-surveys done through the Crowded Spaces Program showed that individuals who had undergone gender training demonstrated a much deeper understanding of gender concepts than their peers who did not participate. They also were less likely to hold onto preconceived notions regarding traditional gender roles.

By imparting knowledge and raising awareness, gender training enables individuals to critically examine societal expectations and biases associated with being male, female, trans, or non-binary. Such training equips people with the knowledge and tools to question and challenge gender stereotypes, ultimately promoting a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of gender dynamics. Gender training can thus play a pivotal role in changing norms and fostering a greater recognition of diverse gender identities and expressions. This is a topic of growing interest: Approximately 70 percent of the participants in the training offered through the Crowded Spaces Program said they were motivated to participate by their own interest in learning more about the topic.

B Train the trainer

Ongoing “Train the Trainer” sessions help to implement a gender mainstreaming approach and incorporate a gender perspective into all training courses and activities for law enforcement experts. It is important to ensure that these programs are free from stereotypes and aligned with principles of equality and nondiscrimination, and to regularly review and update the content of the courses. Most of the trainers who participated in the Crowded Spaces Program were pleased with the gender and diversity training, and most said that this was the first time they had received this type of training. The training gave them valuable insights and tools to include a gender perspective in the topics they cover in their training activities, with the goal of creating a crosscutting gender and diversity strategy.



C Increase women’s participation



Gender initiatives should be embedded in security and justice institutions to ensure that women are well represented at every level. To be their most effective, these institutions must reflect society, which means they need to strive for a balanced, diverse workforce that not only incorporates women but takes into account ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and other factors. This does not happen automatically; institutions need to ensure that they include women in leadership roles and provide staff with gender sensitivity training (Barnes & Albrecht, 2008; Valasek, 2008; Tönnisson Kleppe, 2008).

There are significant disparities in the representation of women in the security sector; this was reflected in the relatively low participation by women—only about 20 percent—in the training activities carried out by the Crowded Spaces Program. The survey findings also indicate that women are significantly underrepresented in various roles. Only about 5 percent of the women participants reported occupying positions of decision-making authority, while 30 percent of men held such positions. This notable discrepancy underscores the existing gender imbalance and highlights the need for comprehensive measures to address this systemic issue. By implementing targeted strategies to promote gender equality and enhance the representation of women in leadership roles, the security sector can foster a more inclusive and equitable environment that harnesses the full potential of diverse talent.

Promoting gender equality in law enforcement goes beyond simply increasing the number of women in the ranks or implementing measures to address gender-based violence. It requires transforming an agency's entire mindset to embrace diversity and inclusion across gender, race, ethnicity, and other identities (Myrntinen, 2011).

D Foster gender diversity and participation of minorities

Participants in the training sessions demonstrated keen interest in the topic of gender diversity and security, including strategies and best practices to promote a safer and more inclusive environment. Their insightful discussions pointed to the need for an increased focus on research, education, and training to enhance understanding and equip security personnel with practical tools for addressing gender diversity.



Further initiatives are necessary to bridge the knowledge gap and promote a culture that values and respects gender diversity in law enforcement in general and in the context of security in crowded spaces specifically. Diversity-related information must continue to be included in training workshops and then implemented. Continued efforts to make diversity-focused information part of law enforcement training will help drive meaningful change.

It is also important to recognize and include the various dimensions of diversity, such as race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and disability. Law enforcement agencies can cultivate an environment that embraces and respects diversity by implementing inclusive policies and practices. This, in turn, will improve relations with the community, strengthen trust, and lead to more effective outcomes in policing efforts. One striking detail in this study was that no participants in the different training sessions mentioned their own sexual orientation or identity or indicated whether they were part of the LGBTQI+ population or another underrepresented group. This may indicate a potential gap in representation or a reluctance to share such information with their peers. It suggests the need to create a more inclusive environment for diversity and address structural barriers that may hinder entry into the security sector.



Identify systemic barriers to entering the security sector



To promote gender equality and inclusivity, institutions should undertake a comprehensive gender analysis to thoroughly examine and identify any formal or informal barriers that may hinder the entry of qualified women and LGBTQI+ people into the organization.

The underrepresentation of these individuals in the security sector is influenced by a range of factors, which can differ significantly between countries and institutions. Decision-makers across government and civil society should thoroughly assess how societal behaviors and institutional frameworks create disadvantages for women and gender diversity. This includes looking at such issues as caregiving responsibilities and work-life balance. It also requires challenging established norms and interactions with women and members of the LGBTQI+ community (OECD, 2016). Some of the most common barriers are the following:

Unpaid work

Across the globe, women are far more likely than men to engage in unpaid work, such as household chores and child care or elder care. This imbalance is one of the most significant obstacles to women's equality in the labor market. Encouraging equitable participation by men in unpaid work can offer women more opportunities beyond the confines of their households. The time allocated to unpaid household and care-related tasks has been identified as a critical factor contributing to the enduring differences in formal labor market outcomes (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022).

Gender stereotypes

Gender stereotypes and traditional gender roles often perpetuate restrictive expectations for men and women, limiting opportunities for women's involvement in traditionally masculine security roles. This is harmful not only to the women but to the institutions that are deprived of their skills and contributions. Additionally, the institutional culture within the security sector frequently mirrors conventional gender norms, fostering a work environment that may be unwelcoming or hostile to women and gender diversity. The lack of comprehensive policies on gender equality and nondiscrimination compounds these challenges.

Lack of role models

The scarcity of role models in leadership and influential positions in the security field also can discourage prospective entrants. Visible role models can inspire and empower younger people joining the profession while challenging prevailing assumptions regarding gender and sexual orientation.

Harassment

The persistent challenges of harassment and discrimination create a detrimental work environment for women and LGBTQI+ people within the security sector. These behaviors often make it difficult to retain talent, in addition to undermining the sector's overall effectiveness and cohesiveness.

To address these structural barriers, institutions must implement inclusive policies and practices, promote education and awareness about gender equality and diversity, and foster a cultural shift within the security sector. Recognizing and valuing the contributions of women and members of the LGBTQI+ community will enrich the diversity of perspectives and enhance the effectiveness and legitimacy of security institutions.

A thorough review of systemic barriers in recruitment policies is a fundamental step. This should be accompanied by more comprehensive changes aimed at nurturing an environment of safety, respect, and work-life balance. Such an approach aligns with the overarching objective of cultivating a security sector that reflects the diverse population it serves, fostering trust, efficacy, and inclusivity in the process (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022)



Conduct inclusive recruitment and selection

An inclusive recruitment and selection process should consider the unique characteristics of each country, region, and specific institution. That said, there are some general recommendations that apply to any effective recruitment effort.



1) Widely disseminate vacancy announcements through different media outlets, such as those with a significant female readership, to help reach a diverse range of candidates.

2) Review job advertisements and messaging for unintended language biases or gender stereotypes.

3) Encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds to apply.

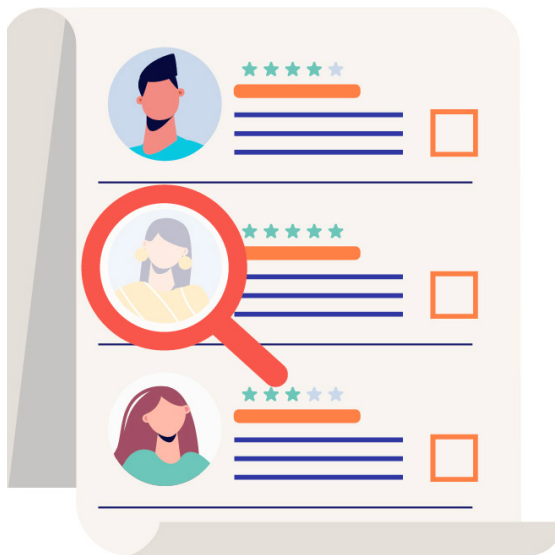
4) Eliminate any restrictive practices that impede the recruitment of highly qualified people, including women and minorities, and ensure that selection committees have a diverse pool of applicants.

5) Establish and implement a comprehensive policy to achieve gender parity in leadership positions by creating a detailed set of guidelines and strategies to ensure equal

representation. The policy should outline steps, initiatives, and measures to address gender disparities and create a balanced and inclusive leadership composition.

6) Engage women and LGBTQI+ individuals in recruitment activities, such as school visits, job fairs, roundtable discussions, and open-house events. By participating and sharing their experiences, they can inspire and encourage potential candidates, fostering greater interest and representation.

7) Undertake targeted recruitment efforts to attract and retain more women and LGBTQI+ individuals in security roles. This includes actively reaching out to these candidates through diverse channels, conducting outreach programs in educational institutions, and highlighting the benefits and opportunities available within the security sector.



Finally, in some situations, strategies to recruit and promote individuals from underrepresented groups may benefit from short-term affirmative action measures. Affirmative action can be an effective tool to address historical disadvantages and establish a level playing field for groups that have been underrepresented in the security sector, particularly women. However, it is worth noting that 50 percent of participants in this study opposed affirmative action. This indicates the need to raise awareness on this topic and at the same time implement strategies and interventions designed to address barriers to inclusive recruitment and selection.



Promote integration and retention



Women and LGBTQI+ individuals who join the security sector often end up leaving due to systemic barriers and challenges, including gender bias, discrimination, lack of support, work-life balance difficulties, gender-based violence, and limited career advancement. Ensuring the long-term presence and promotion of these underrepresented segments of society in the security sector is not only a matter of gender equality but a crucial factor in the effectiveness of security operations.

As with recruitment and selection strategies, it is important to understand the potential differences between countries, sectors, and institutions and to tailor any measures accordingly. A customized approach ensures that strategies are designed to address the unique challenges and possibilities in each context. This strengthens the potential for meaningful change that aligns with the circumstances of each region or institution. Some general recommendations:

- 1) Establish mentoring and professional development programs tailored to women and underrepresented groups. These programs can provide guidance, support, and opportunities for skill development, enabling women to overcome challenges and reach their full potential within the security sector.
- 2) Create networks and affinity groups for women and underrepresented groups. These networks can offer a platform for knowledge-sharing, mentorship, and collective advocacy. A supportive community can help people in the security sector find guidance and opportunities for collaboration, ultimately promoting their inclusion and retention. It is important to note that while these networks can serve as a valuable support system, their efficacy as a catalyst for change is contingent on their access to senior management. When these networks and affinity groups establish a direct channel to decision-makers, they have the potential to communicate their insights, concerns, and suggestions, which amplifies their influence and drives meaningful change.
- 3) Ensure equal pay in the security sector. In one of the training sessions, the survey showed that only half of the participants believed women should earn the same salary for the same work as men. This underscores the need for greater awareness of the importance of pay equality.

4) Adapt equipment and uniforms to accommodate gender diversity. One size does not fit all. Law enforcement agencies should ensure that the tools, gear, and attire available to personnel are appropriate to meet needs across gender identities. This could include adjustments to design, sizing, and functionality to reflect diverse physical attributes and personal preferences. By addressing this aspect, organizations can provide a supportive and respectful environment for all individuals, irrespective of their gender identity, and help develop a more inclusive workplace.

5) Address pregnancy-related needs. Law enforcement organizations should implement policies and practices that promote pregnant employees' physical and emotional health, offering necessary accommodations and fostering an environment that encourages their professional growth and contribution. By recognizing and responding to the unique challenges of pregnancy in the security sector, they can create a supportive framework that benefits the individuals themselves and strengthens the overall efficacy of the organization (Denney, 2020).

6) Acknowledge that certain roles in the security sector may not be suitable for pregnant women due to health and safety considerations. For instance, tasks involving crowd control might pose challenges and risks. Organizations should have clear policies in place to address this issue comprehensively and take into account specific considerations and accommodations.

To create a more diverse, inclusive workplace, law enforcement agencies must pay attention not only to recruitment but to retention. They should employ a range of customized strategies, such as mentoring programs, networks, equal pay, gender-sensitive equipment, pregnancy support, and role-specific considerations. In other words, this effort should be comprehensive.



Adopt flexible policies and accommodations

Work-life balance is relevant for everyone. Law enforcement agencies should ensure that all staff have the support they need to advance their careers while attending to their personal responsibilities outside the workplace, including caregiving duties (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022).



Tailored, flexible policies and accommodations must be implemented to support the diverse needs of security personnel. Policies must be adapted to each country, institution, or context to take into account specific circumstances and foster more effective outcomes.

However, some general recommendations apply:

Where possible, offer alternative work arrangements, such as telecommuting or flexible scheduling, to promote work-life balance and accommodate individual preferences. Providing accommodations for people with disabilities, such as accessible work stations and assistive technologies, also contributes to a more inclusive environment.

Acknowledge security personnel's caregiving challenges by implementing tailored policies that allow them to meet their professional and personal obligations. Parental leave is one area for consideration. Policies that afford appropriate periods of leave for new parents facilitate work-life balance and send a message that childcare duties are a shared responsibility. This not only fosters gender equality but also enables women to continue thriving and advancing in their careers while effectively managing their caregiving roles.

Provide designated lactation rooms to facilitate breastfeeding. These spaces should be equipped with comfortable seating, electrical outlets for breast pumps, and refrigeration for storing milk.

Ideally, an organization should conduct an internal survey before introducing new policies and accommodations, to assess the alignment between the proposed policies and people's actual needs. By seeking input from those who would be affected, an organization can ensure that the policies are designed to address their specific needs and concerns. Taking this step improves the likelihood of successful implementation and fosters a sense of ownership among personnel.

3. DESIGNING SECURITY POLICIES FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE



Develop gender-responsive policies and guidelines



Law enforcement agencies should establish clear policies and guidelines that promote gender equality, nondiscrimination, and inclusivity in all aspects of security operations. They should ensure that these policies are widely communicated, understood, and enforced within the organization. The results of this study suggest that such efforts would be received positively; most respondents said they had a favorable view of internal processes and policies on gender and human rights. This reflects progress in promoting gender equality and creating a supportive work environment.

Furthermore, almost 90 percent of the participants stated that their superiors would support gender equality initiatives, highlighting the potential for further advancements. This presents an opportunity to strengthen efforts and implement additional strategies and programs to address the specific challenges faced by the security sector.

Raising awareness about these issues is crucial to better understand gender-related problems within the security sector. By harnessing this momentum and leveraging support from leaders in an organization, it becomes possible to drive meaningful change and foster a culture of gender awareness and equality.

Examples of change can already be found in the region. A training session participant from Uruguay explained that his agency had established a dedicated department staffed by a group of experts responsible for policies related to gender and security. This arrangement enabled a panel of experts to oversee and formulate a comprehensive strategy.

Chile's work around this topic is another example of how countries are implementing new strategies on women and gender diversity. As it prepared to host the Pan American and Parapan American Games 2023, Chile created a protocol to prevent and punish gender-based violence in the context of sports. The policy aims to protect athletes from any form of violence, abuse, and discriminatory behavior.





Implement gender-sensitive security screening measures

Gender-inclusive security screening aims to ensure safety and respect for all individuals, including those who identify as transgender or non-binary. Screening measures should acknowledge and respect gender diversity, such as by affording individuals the choice of screening process, be it a pat-down or a body scan, and the option to be screened by an officer of a certain sex. Preserving people's privacy and dignity during screenings is critical, and individuals should never be subjected to insensitive or unnecessarily invasive procedures.



Security personnel must be trained to understand the unique needs and concerns of gender-diverse individuals and to communicate with them in a manner that is respectful and inclusive. Encouraging staff diversity is also essential to accommodate individual preferences. A diverse team of security personnel can help create a more inclusive and supportive environment during the screening process.



Ensure accessible and inclusive infrastructure



The infrastructure of a building, whether a police station or a sports arena, should take into account people with disabilities, pregnant women, older people, and others with diverse needs. Aisles, entrances and exits, seating areas, and restrooms should be fully accessible to everyone.

In a public space, access can become a law enforcement matter, as evidenced by controversies over access to restrooms. Security personnel need to understand, for example, that transgender individuals must be able to use the restroom that corresponds to their gender identity. Clear policies and training on gender and diversity should be implemented to ensure that police respect people's privacy and human rights.

Send a public message



Public messaging campaigns—whether delivered through posters, billboards, public address systems, or social media—can be used effectively to promote gender and diversity awareness and communicate clearly that violence and discrimination are not acceptable. Messages should use gender-neutral language and inclusive terminology, and visual materials should reflect the diversity of the general public.

In a venue that handles large events, public messaging can help alert the public about potential risks and educate people about what to do in an emergency. It is important to provide information on how to report crimes to law enforcement or security personnel and where to find support for victims of violence. Such messaging campaigns can raise awareness, empower individuals, and foster a safe and inclusive environment for everyone.

Engage in continuous learning

To ensure inclusive security, law enforcement personnel should stay informed about current research and best practices on gender and diversity issues and be aware of evolving dynamics in this field. They should regularly assess and adapt their security measures to address new challenges. Embracing a proactive and responsive approach will help create safer and more inclusive environments for everyone.



In Argentina, for example, the Ministry of Security created a certification program focused on the intersection of gender and sports. The program aims to educate individuals in the security sector about the challenges women and LGBTQI+ individuals face. It provides a deeper understanding of the impacts of gender-related stereotypes and discrimination and encourages a more inclusive mindset. Argentina invited participants in the regional training session to engage in the certification process. Initiatives such as this certification program can help break down structural barriers and create a more equitable and diverse security sector. They also highlight the importance of collaboration between government entities, educational institutions, and civil society to drive positive change and enhance the representation and participation of women and LGBTQI+ individuals in traditionally male-dominated fields.

Another example of a gender-related initiative can be found in Mexico City, where the Secretariat for Citizen Security created a certification program for law enforcement called “Police Action and Victim Support with a Gender Perspective.” As these examples show, gender and diversity training for law enforcement can take different forms and cover different aspects, depending on the local needs and circumstances.

CONCLUSION



Gender and diversity awareness should be integrated throughout society—including, and perhaps especially, in law enforcement. Countries and regions can benefit from working with organizations specializing in these issues, such as the OAS/CICTE and UNICRI.

The involvement of these and other international organizations can strengthen national efforts and bring more resources to bear to address this issue. Gender equality and inclusion should be considered across all action areas, from formulating national policy to implementing local programs. Expert organizations in this field can provide guidance, technical assistance, and best practices to help make law enforcement initiatives more effective.

Partnerships with international organizations and experts enable law enforcement agencies to comprehensively address the challenges related to gender and diversity. This includes promoting awareness, conducting training, doing research, and collecting data to support informed decision-making.

Every individual who is qualified should have an equal right to be part of any workplace environment, including law enforcement settings.

The principles of equality and nondiscrimination contribute to a fair recruitment and selection process and foster a work environment where everyone can thrive and make a meaningful contribution.

The inclusion of gender and diversity as a crosscutting strategy in security also leads to more effective and sustainable practices. It promotes gender equality, enhances diversity and inclusion, improves policies and programs, and strengthens accountability and monitoring mechanisms. Ultimately, it creates a more equitable and respectful society for all individuals—and makes people safer.



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SECURITY IN CROWDED SPACES:

A gender perspective

