



Federal Ministry
of Defence



Results of the Barrier Study

Summary of the assessment of barriers standing in the way of greater participation of female military Bundeswehr personnel in United Nations peace operations



BUNDESWEHR

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Female service personnel from all over the world are making an essential contribution to peace operations across the world. It is Germany’s declared objective to increase the proportion of women in United Nations operations and contribute to the existing goals of the United Nations with its own military forces.

During our membership in the United Nations Security Council in 2019-2020, Germany decided to take the initiative and assess existing barriers standing in the way of greater participation of female military Bundeswehr personnel in peace operations. It is a matter of personal importance to me that female soldiers have the same opportunities as their male counterparts.

Within the scope of the “Barrier Study”, surveys were conducted with 765 servicemen and women and 34 experts were interviewed under COVID-19 conditions. In the study, we relied on an internationally used methodology that allows comparison to surveys conducted by other United Nations member states.

The results have also shown where there is still room for improvement. This includes, for instance, doing a better job providing information on United Nations operations and more training offers for UN military observers or UN staff officers. We now plan to implement measures to remove existing barriers and to further strengthen women in peacekeeping.

I would be very pleased if the Federal Ministry of Defence and Germany as a troop-contributing country to United Nations peacekeeping could make a contribution to the international discourse. I would also like to encourage other member states of the United Nations to conduct such assessments. As one of the first countries to conduct a barrier assessment, we remain committed to championing the issue and are available to exchange lessons learned.

Sincerely,

Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer

Federal Minister of Defence

1. Executive Summary

Even 20 years after the adoption of United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security, there is still much to do regarding women in peace operations. Though the UN have launched several initiatives to boost the proportion of women in UN peace operations, their proportion is only slowly increasing. In July 2021, the proportion of women in UN operations was at 17.91% for staff officers and military observers and at 5.27% for force contingents (troops).

Germany has not yet met the UN targets for female military observers and UN staff officers or for female service personnel in force contingents in UN operations. Since 2001, all Bundeswehr careers have been open to women. Considering the important contribution women make to fulfilling the mandate of UN peace operations and in light of principles of equality, Germany is deeply committed to empowering women and to increasing the proportion of women in peacekeeping. In the spring of 2019, the Federal Minister of Defence announced several relevant measures in the UN Security Council, including a national assessment on which barriers stand in the way of stronger participation by female German military personnel in UN operations (Barrier Study).

The Barrier Study developed by an external study contractor identified 12 barriers to an increased deployment of female Bundeswehr service personnel to UN peace operations and on this basis prepared possible recommendations for action. From the beginning, the goal was to share the results with the UN and its member states in order to contribute to the international discourse on women in peacekeeping. For this reason, the barrier assessment utilised the internationally recognised Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) methodology of the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) to ensure comparability. Within the scope of the study, an online survey was conducted among 765 male and female soldiers with and without experience on UN operations. In addition, 34 experts were interviewed.

The following barriers for female Bundeswehr military personnel in UN operations were identified within the scope of MOWIP:

1. Eligible pool of female service personnel:
The number of trained female UN military observers and UN staff officers is too low.
2. Insufficient provision of information on UN peace operations and a lack of opportunities for exchanging experiences.
3. The perception that selection decisions for deployment are partially non-transparent or biased.
4. Long absence from the private environment.
5. Negative experiences during deployment, such as discrimination, unfair treatment, joking or sexual harassment.
6. Negative reporting on operations, e.g. on sexual assault.
7. No career benefit from participation in UN operations.
8. UN operations are given low priority by superiors.
9. Not enough widely known and effective national initiatives to increase the number of women in UN operations.
10. The perception that female military personnel must first convince their superiors and other service personnel of their capability to perform.
11. Partially stereotypical special tasks for female military personnel on operations.
12. Discriminatory images of women among members of armed forces of other nations in peace operations or of the host country's armed forces sometimes affect the perception of the capabilities of female military personnel.

These barriers translate to several recommendations for action for the Bundeswehr, the implementation of which could lead to an increase in the proportion of female military personnel in UN peace operations. This study suggests improving the provision of information and promoting the exchange of experiences on UN operations, among other measures. In addition, female service personnel should be deliberately approached regarding participation in a UN operation and increasingly trained as UN staff officers or military observers. Furthermore, gender perspectives and UN peace operations should be given greater importance in training courses for commanding personnel.

Categorisation of the identified barriers in the MOWIP methodology

Overall, the Barrier Study emphasises that the barriers standing in the way of greater participation of female military personnel are not insurmountable, if properly addressed. The survey identified barriers in Germany in MOWIP issue areas no. 1 (eligible pool), no. 3 (deployment selection), no. 4 (household constraints), no. 6 (peace operations experiences), no. 7 (career value), no. 8 (top-down leadership) and no. 9 (gender roles). On the positive side, no barriers were identified for Germany in MOWIP issue areas no. 2 (deployment criteria), no. 5 (peace operations infrastructure) and no. 10 (social exclusion).

Germany will share this summary with interested UN member states to support their efforts to increase the proportion of female service personnel in UN operations.



2. Initial Situation and Objective of the Study

October 2020 marks the 20th anniversary of the adoption of United Nations Security Council [Resolution 1325 \(2000\)](#) on Women, Peace and Security. The objective of the “Women, Peace, Security” (WPS) Agenda is to involve women in all phases of crisis prevention, conflict management and peacebuilding, to strengthen their role in peace processes and protect women and girls, but also boys and men, from sexualised and gender-specific violence in armed conflicts. The successive resolutions (1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2242, 2467 and 2493) further defined this issue and underline the importance of women’s involvement in peace operations.

The reform initiative [Action for Peacekeeping \(A4P\)](#) launched by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in 2018 and supported by Germany also calls for a higher share of women in peace operations. Within the framework of A4P, Germany is a committed WPS champion with regard to women in peacekeeping.

For the years of 2018-2028, the Department of Peace Operations in the UN Secretariat has defined specific targets for the development of the proportion of women in UN peacekeeping. The [Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy](#) specifies annually increasing targets for the participation of uniformed personnel and enforcement staff in UN peace operations.

UNSC Resolution 2538 (2020), presented by Indonesia and accepted unanimously, also includes a call upon member nations to identify and address barriers in the deployment of uniformed women peacekeepers.

In 2017, Canada initiated the Elsie Initiative. Germany also contributes to the initiative’s trust fund. In the context of studies financed by the Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women In Peace Operations, existing barriers are first identified and then purposefully reduced through appropriate projects and measures.

The conduct of a national assessment aiming to identify barriers in the participation of German women soldiers in UN peace operations was already announced by Dr Ursula von der Leyen, then Federal Minister of Defence, during the UN Security Council open debate in the UN Security Council on Women in Peacekeeping in April 2019, along with other measures aiming to strengthen women in peacekeeping.

So far, Germany has not succeeded in meeting the UN targets within the scope of its contribution to peace operations. While the proportion of female military personnel in the Bundeswehr is currently around 13%, the proportion of women in UN operations in July 2021 was 12.1% with regard to military observers and UN staff officers as well as 7.95% where force contingents (troops) are concerned. The Barrier Study identifies those barriers that prevent the deployment of more female Bundeswehr service personnel to UN peace operations in an evidence-based manner and aims to help derive specific measures to be implemented by the Federal Ministry of Defence (FMoD) and its subordinate agencies in order to strengthen women in peacekeeping.

3. Study Methodology

In order to be able to share comparable results with the UN and UN member nations, the Barrier Study relies on an early draft version of the Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations ([MOWIP](#)) methodology that was developed by the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) in cooperation with Cornell University in the framework of the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations. MOWIP was developed with financial support from Global Affairs Canada and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and tested in eight pilot countries (Bangladesh, Ghana, Jordan, Mongolia, Norway, Zambia, Senegal and Uruguay) with regard to police, gendarmerie and the armed forces.

Germany is one of the first countries to conduct a national survey of barriers in the deployment of more female military personnel to UN peace operations following the MOWIP methodology. In the context of the Barrier Study, 765 military personnel with or without UN training and UN operational experience were interviewed within the scope of an online survey (of these, 293 have UN operational experience and 449 do not; 23 are trained as UN staff officers/UN military observers).

Interviewees included male and female senior non-commissioned officers, officers and staff officers of all age groups from the FMoD and subordinate major military organisational elements (ranks OR-8 to OF-5). In addition, 34 experts and executive personnel from the FMoD, Federal Foreign Office and Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community areas of responsibility were interviewed.

This summary addresses the findings in the FMoD area of responsibility. The study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which in parts led to fewer replies to the survey (15% response rate). For the 449 servicemen and women without UN operational experience, a confidence level of 95% could be ensured with a 7% margin of error. The surveys and interviews were conducted following the MOWIP guidelines as closely as possible. For the German Barrier Study however, in-person interviews were replaced by an online tool due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, responses were not broken down by region as would have been typical for the MOWIP methodology. This approach promised no added value for the survey results in the German context.

4. Barriers According to MOWIP Methodology

The MOWIP methodology defines ten criteria (referred to as issue areas) for the deployment of female military personnel to UN peace operations. Based on these criteria, 12 specific barriers can be identified for Germany. The following overview shows how the individual MOWIP issue areas are relevant to the FMoD area of responsibility and which specific barriers were identified in the study. Subsequently, each subject area will be addressed in detail.



Chart: MOWIP issue areas and barriers analysed in the FMoD area of responsibility

| MOWIP-Issue Areas | Barriers analysed in the FMoD area of responsibility | |
|------------------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| 1. Eligible Pool | Barrier 1: Not enough female service personnel trained as UN staff officers or UN military observers | Pre-deployment stage |
| 2. Deployment Criteria | No barriers identified | |
| 3. Deployment Selection | Barrier 2: Information deficit Barrier 3: Partially non-transparent or biased selection decisions | |
| 4. Houshold Constraints | Barrier 4: Long absence | Deployment stage |
| 5. Peace Operations Infrastructure | No barriers identified | |
| 6. Peace Operations Experiences | Barrier 5: Discrimination during deployment Barrier 6: Negative reporting | Post-deployment stage |
| 7. Career Value | Barrier 7: No career benefit from participation in UN missions | |
| 8. Top-Down Leadership | Barrier 8: UN missions are given low priority by superiors Barrier 9: Not enough initiatives to increase the proportion of women | All phases |
| 9. Gender Roles | Barrier 10: Convincing others of capability to perform Barrier 11: Special tasks for female military personnel during deployment Barrier 12: Effect of other nations' or the mission country's image of women | Cross-cutting issues |
| 10. Social Exclusion | No barriers identified | |

4.1 Eligible Pool

The first MOWIP issue area, “eligible pool of female service personnel”, manifests in **barrier 1, “not enough female service personnel trained as UN staff officers or UN military observers”**. Consequently, the political goal of increasing deployment of female German military personnel as military observers or UN staff officers to UN peace operations is in conflict with the currently still very low number of appropriately trained female service personnel.

As of May 2021, the Bundeswehr only had 12 female military personnel trained as military observers and 30 female service personnel trained as staff officers; another 3 have completed both trainings. Although there are generally enough female military personnel in the Bundeswehr, the small percentage of those with relevant training will not be enough to meet the targets of the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy in the short and medium term.

4.2 Deployment Criteria

The second MOWIP issue area, “deployment criteria”, does not constitute a barrier with regard to Germany deploying more female service personnel to UN missions. This is a result of the comprehensive training in the Bundeswehr: With their officer’s training complete, German service personnel can already meet the greater part of the deployment criteria (e.g. language skills). Thanks to the high quality of their training as UN staff officers at the Bundeswehr Command and Staff College or as UN military observers at the Bundeswehr UN Training Centre, German service personnel possess all the capabilities required for UN missions.

4.3 Deployment Selection

For the third MOWIP issue area, “deployment selection”, two barriers were identified in the FMoD area of responsibility.

Barrier 2, “information deficit” refers to a lack of access to information about UN peace operations and a lack of opportunities to exchange experiences.

90% of female participants without mission-related experience and 80% of female service personnel with mission-related experience were not aware of existing

information offered on UN missions. In the Bundeswehr, there are hardly any information events on participation in UN peace operations. Female service personnel have to obtain the information required in each case on their own initiative.

Over 90% of surveyed female military personnel were also not aware of any opportunities to exchange experiences from UN missions. Considering the already limited opportunities for exchanging experiences from UN peace operations within the Bundeswehr, there are no such exchange forums for (and by) women.

The **third identified barrier, “partially non-transparent or biased selection decisions”**, was identified based on the responses of almost 30% of surveyed female service personnel without mission-related experience and almost 20% of surveyed female service personnel with mission-related experience. According to the survey, they could not understand the selection decision for a UN mission or perceived it as biased.

4.4 Household Constraints

For the fourth MOWIP issue area, “household onstraints”, **barrier 4, “long absence”**, was identified. For many female military personnel, the long absence from their private environment was a potential reason for not participating in a UN peace operation. This was, for instance, the reason most female service personnel (55%) gave for not participating in a mission again.

4.5 Peace Operations Infrastructure

Apart from some potential for improvement in the “privacy” aspect, respondents were generally satisfied with the fifth MOWIP issue area, “peace operations infrastructure”. It must be considered that infrastructure planning and design depends on the specific UN mission. For German contingents, infrastructure is provided predominantly by Germany according to national standards; for the detachment of individuals as military observers (e.g. on multi-day patrols), infrastructure is the responsibility of the UN and standards can vary widely.



4.6 Peace Operations Experiences

The sixth MOWIP issue area, “peace operations experiences”, becomes apparent in **barrier 5, “discrimination”**. Of the surveyed female service personnel with UN mission-related experience, some individuals also reported incidents of sexist jokes, unfair treatment, personal discrimination or sexual harassment.

Awareness of such negative experiences during deployment has been a reason for female German service personnel not to participate in UN peace operations (**barrier 6, “negative reporting”**). For instance, around one quarter of female service personnel stated that reports of sexual assault affected their willingness to participate in a UN mission.

4.7 Career Value

The seventh MOWIP issue area, “career value”, manifests in **barrier 7, “no career benefits”**. In the online survey, one in three female military personnel reported that participation in a UN peace operation had not offered any advantages regarding their career prospects. The lengthy absence from the respective parent unit due to an individual detachment to a UN mission can negatively impact evaluations by superiors. In addition, around 28% of surveyed female military personnel expressed the opinion that while their superiors were interested in their UN deployment and positively acknowledged it, they sometimes placed more value on other Bundeswehr operations, for instance in the framework of NATO or the EU.

4.8 Top-Down Leadership

For the eighth MOWIP issue area, “top-down leadership”, two barriers could be identified.

Barrier 8, “low prioritisation of UN missions by superiors”, suggests that most of the time, disciplinary superiors give lower priority to UN peace operations than they do to other Bundeswehr operations, standby commitments and daytime duty and therefore less often grant temporary release for these. Almost 80% of female service personnel are not informed of a potential assignment as UN military observers or UN staff officers by their superiors. Most female service personnel were only granted a temporary release for a UN mission if this did not conflict with other operational commitments and current tasks. For the same reasons, there were also few temporary releases granted for UN training courses.

The **ninth barrier, “lack of initiatives”**, refers to the fact that effective initiatives for raising the proportion of women in UN peace operations are not yet widely known among female Bundeswehr service personnel.

More than 80% of surveyed female service personnel were not aware of any initiatives contributing to a higher proportion of women in UN peace operations. During the expert interviews, the order of the day by the Chief of Defence of 16 August 2019 was the only initiative that was mentioned. In it, the Chief of Defence called on all interested female service personnel to volunteer for UN training courses and instructed all superiors to support their female military personnel.



5. Lessons Learned and Good Practices

Based on the experience of developing the Barrier Study, we can identify some lessons learned and best practices.

The study's announcement in the UN Security Council at the ministerial level contributed to in-house support for the project. The time requirement for the preparation and conduct of the barrier assessment should not be underestimated and should be calculated with sufficient margins. In Germany, the process took more than 18 months, though it must be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the delays.

The use of the MOWIP Methodology has proven to be expedient and practical. The system of ten issue areas is very viable for surveys and ensures results that are internationally comparable.

The study also benefited from being developed by a diverse team in terms of age and gender, as the men and women from different age groups were able to contribute their different perspectives.

Additionally, they were able to contribute their own experience in the armed forces and had critical basic understanding of circumstances as well as working and communication culture in the Bundeswehr.

In addition to limitations and delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, concerns over phishing e-mails (as an external study contractor contacted the servicemen and women via an external e-mail address) were another reason why only 765 of the almost 5,000 invited service personnel participated in the online survey. Although information regarding the study was published on the Bundeswehr intranet beforehand and communicated to the major military organisational elements, information unfortunately did not reach all relevant agencies. The establishment of contact with an external entity within the scope of the study must therefore be planned in detail in order to succeed. Servicemen and women should also not be presented with too many surveys at the same time to participate in in addition to their demanding everyday work in order to avoid "survey fatigue".

4.9 Gender Roles

In the ninth MOWIP issue area, "gender roles", three barriers were identified in the FMoD area of responsibility. **Barrier 10, "convincing others of capability to perform"**, was included because 45% of female service personnel had the impression that they first had to convince their superiors and fellow soldiers of their military capabilities.

The **eleventh barrier, "stereotypical tasks"**, means that female service personnel are often relegated to stereotypically female roles during deployments. In principle, there is strong agreement among female service personnel that they are employed in UN peace operations according to their qualifications. However, 26% of female military personnel reported being assigned extra administrative office tasks, 38% reported additional social responsibilities and 43% reported additional care responsibilities.

Specifically, one in three surveyed female service personnel with UN mission-related experience was assigned additional tasks. Almost 30% of female military personnel were tasked with additional responsibilities

in the area of communication and support and in the area of leadership and training, respectively. These additional tasks could involve leadership responsibilities with career benefits as well as extra tasks that reinforce gender stereotypes that female military personnel have to perform in addition to their main duties.

According to **barrier 12, "international images of women"** also affect the work of female German service personnel on UN missions. Some female Bundeswehr military personnel feel that images of women on the part of other nations on operations or the host nation can affect the treatment of female military personnel and expectations placed on female service personnel during UN peace operations.

4.10 Social Exclusion

The tenth MOWIP issue area, "social exclusion", does not constitute a barrier in an increased deployment of female service personnel to UN missions for Germany. Female service personnel reported being respected during deployment and well integrated in mixed-gender teams.

6. Outlook

The Federal Government clearly stands by the goal of greater participation of women in UN peace operations. The FMoD is aware that we have not yet reached an adequate number of female military personnel participating in UN missions.

As deficits can only be eliminated if their causes are understood, this Barrier Study is an important step toward a more evidence-based exploration of measures to strengthen women in peace operations.

The study highlights: There are barriers in the Bundeswehr standing in the way of increasing the proportion of female military personnel in UN peace operations. However, it also shows how obstacles may be removed. It is also positive to note that at least some of the barriers discussed internationally are not a consideration in Germany.

One of the key findings of the German barrier assessment is that many identified findings and barriers are not just specific to female military personnel or UN peace operations. Male service personnel also desire better information offers and opportunities to exchange experiences on UN missions and relatively few of them were trained as UN military observers. Absence from home is not just a challenge in the context of UN missions, but applies to all Bundeswehr deployments abroad and standby commitments.

Germany will share the results of this study, which was methodologically designed for international comparability, as well as lessons learned from the study process with other nations. Germany will gladly be available to exchange lessons learned.

The FMoD is currently planning the implementation of measures for the reduction of identified barriers on the basis of the study findings. The provision of information regarding UN missions and UN staff officer or UN military observer training is considered the most urgent item. Besides the ongoing effort to raise awareness for basic gender issues, it is especially important to provide information regarding UN missions and their particularities. The order of the day by the Chief of Defence on the increased training of female Bundeswehr service personnel as UN military observers and UN staff officers could be renewed and put into more specific terms. We also plan to incorporate the results of the study into Bundeswehr courses and trainings.

The FMoD will address the subject area comprehensively, not least within the scope of the implementation of the Federal Government's third action plan for the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.



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