

METHODOLOGY

Indicator Selection and Conceptual Framework

The Gender Equality in Foreign Policy (GEFP) Index builds on the conceptual and methodological foundations of the 2023 Feminist Foreign Policy Index. Indicator selection was updated using a review of academic literature, policy frameworks, multilateral agreements, and civil society contributions related to feminist foreign policy and gender-responsive governance. Sources included academic research, government policy documents, multilateral datasets, and global indices, as well as outputs from feminist advocacy networks and international organizations.

Indicators were selected based on three core criteria: (i) conceptual relevance to feminist foreign policy principles; (ii) data quality, coverage, and comparability across countries; and (iii) internal consistency, assessed through statistical correlations to ensure that indicators within each pillar capture related dimensions without redundancy. The Index incorporates both quantitative indicators (e.g., financial flows, representation) and qualitative or policy-based indicators (e.g., treaty ratification, National Action Plans), allowing for a more comprehensive assessment of how governments operationalize gender equality in foreign policy.

The 2026 Index retains the seven priority areas established in the 2023 framework: (1) peace and militarization; (2) official development assistance; (3) migration for employment; (4) labor protections; (5) economic justice; (6) institutional commitments to gender equality; and (7) climate governance. Within each pillar, indicators capture both contributions to structural inequalities and policy efforts to mitigate them.

Data Structure, Collection, and Updates

The Index relies on the most recent publicly available and comparable cross-country data. Data for this iteration were updated through early 2025, with most indicators covering 2024. Appendix A in the report provides more information on each indicator. Note that qualitative variables—such as treaty ratification, policy commitments, and action plans—were coded using ordinal scales reflecting levels of commitment. For example:

- Treaty ratification variables were coded as 0 (no signature), 0.5 (signature without ratification or with reservations), and 1 (full ratification/accession).
- Policy frameworks such as National Action Plans and climate commitments were coded on expanded ordinal scales to capture variation in depth and quality (e.g., presence of budget allocations, internal analysis, or gender-responsiveness).

Missing data were not frequent. No missing values were identified for official development assistance, labor protections, institutional commitments, or climate governance. Missing values were present in peace and militarization, migration for employment, and economic justice, and these were addressed using a consistent, hierarchical approach. Where possible, the most recent available data point was used (e.g., applying 2019 values for the Migrant Integration Policy Index [MIPEX] indicator). When this was not feasible, values were imputed based on regional averages as calculated through the original data source. If regional data were insufficient, country group averages were constructed using countries with similar geographic, income, and Human Development Index profiles.

For example, in the MIPEX indicator, there were very few countries with available data that were classified as part of sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, for countries in our Index missing data and classified as sub-Saharan Africa, we imputed values by using comparator countries from the Middle East and North Africa region with similar income and Human Development Index levels. This approach aimed to preserve cross-country comparability while minimizing bias introduced by missing data. Nevertheless, imputations remained a last resort, and our aim was to find data for the countries of interest.

Index Construction

The Index was constructed through a multi-step aggregation process. First, indicators were grouped into their respective priority areas, and every indicator carried equal weight. Within each pillar, indicators were standardized and normalized to ensure comparability across countries and scales. This involved per capita calculations, reversing directions where appropriate so that higher values reflect stronger alignment with gender equality objectives, and then normalization to a 0-to-1 scale. Following this, country scores were calculated using the geometric mean of the 0-to-1 normalized score of indicators. The geometric mean was used to reduce sensitivity to extreme values and to ensure that low performance on one indicator could not be fully offset by high performance on another. The overall GEF Index score for each country was then calculated as the arithmetic mean of the seven pillar scores, assigning equal weight to each pillar. As in the 2023 Index, internal consistency checks—including pairwise correlations and reliability testing—were conducted to validate the structure of the Index.

Limitations

As with most cross-country indices, data availability and comparability constrain indicator selection for the GEF Index. Global datasets are more likely to capture formal commitments—such as treaty ratification or policy adoption—than actual implementation, enforcement, or impact. Similarly, measures of representation do not capture differences in power, influence, or decision-making authority. In addition, as with most global indices, our



analysis does not fully capture intersectional dimensions of inequality, including those related to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Some indicators rely on proxy measures or qualitative coding frameworks, which, while systematic, involve interpretive judgment. Efforts were made to ensure consistency and transparency in coding decisions, particularly for indicators assessing policy content.

Finally, while data are generally available across indicators, significant lags in reporting limit the Index's ability to capture rapidly evolving policy landscapes. As such, the Index should be interpreted as a comparative snapshot rather than a real-time assessment. For example, Official Development Assistance data are available through 2024, and greenhouse gas emissions data through 2023; however, even a one-year lag can obscure substantial shifts, particularly with rapidly changing development finance priorities and escalating global crises influencing factors such as aid flows and emissions. Reductions in funding for aid and research may lead to longer delays in data publication and, in some cases, the discontinuation of key datasets. At the same time, the already limited availability of disaggregated data—particularly by gender and other intersecting dimensions—is expected to decline further. Together, these challenges underscore the need for sustained investment in timely, high-quality, and disaggregated global data systems.

Despite these limitations, the GEF Index provides a systematic and comparable framework for assessing how governments translate commitments to gender equality into foreign policy practice. It is intended as a tool to identify patterns, highlight gaps, and support further research and advocacy.