

Security Facts for Humanitarian Aid Agencies

Aid, Gender and Security: The Gendered Nature of Security Events Affecting Aid Workers and Aid Delivery

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Starting the discussion

Do men and women experience different types of security events? Are there differences in the attitudes within humanitarian agencies towards the same type of events affecting men or women? In this paper, using the Security in Numbers Database (SiND), we analyze the differences and similarities in men's and women's experiences of security events to help agencies think about the potential gender implications of security management. The data analysed here reflect information on 1,361 staff members affected in 615 security incidents contained within the database.¹ The description of the "six Ws" – who did what, to whom, where, when and with what weapon – used in this document are compiled from aid agency reports (47.7% of the total reports) and from media and other public sources over a period of 30 months, between 1 July 2008 and 31 December 2010.

The European Interagency Security Forum (EISF) identified gender as an important but overlooked issue in the humanitarian security debate, and highlighted it at the EISF bi-annual meeting in March 2011. EISF asked Insecurity Insight to analyse gender using the SiND data. Christina Wille and Larissa Fast thank Oliver Behn and Madeleine Kingston for their valuable input in the preparation of this paper.

What kind of data do we have to analyse the gendered nature of security events?

The short answer to this question is very little, since information on gender is not systematically available in relation to violence affecting aid workers and aid delivery. The SiND includes information on a victim's sex whenever mentioned in a report, but for 42.8% of all affected people (583 of 1,361 individuals) the event description did not include the victim's sex. In comparison, information about the victim's international or national staff status is missing in only 8.9% of cases. The scarcity with which information on victims' sex is made public is likely a result of a general lack of awareness of the importance of gender analysis and concern for the privacy of affected staff. As a result, most NGOs deliberately do not reveal any personal information on the victim, including information about the victim's sex, in event descriptions reported in the media, or via NGO information sharing mechanisms, such as ANSO in Afghanistan. Another factor is the large number of English language reports used in the database, as the gender neutrality of English does not reveal a victim's sex through grammatical structures, as would be the case in other languages.

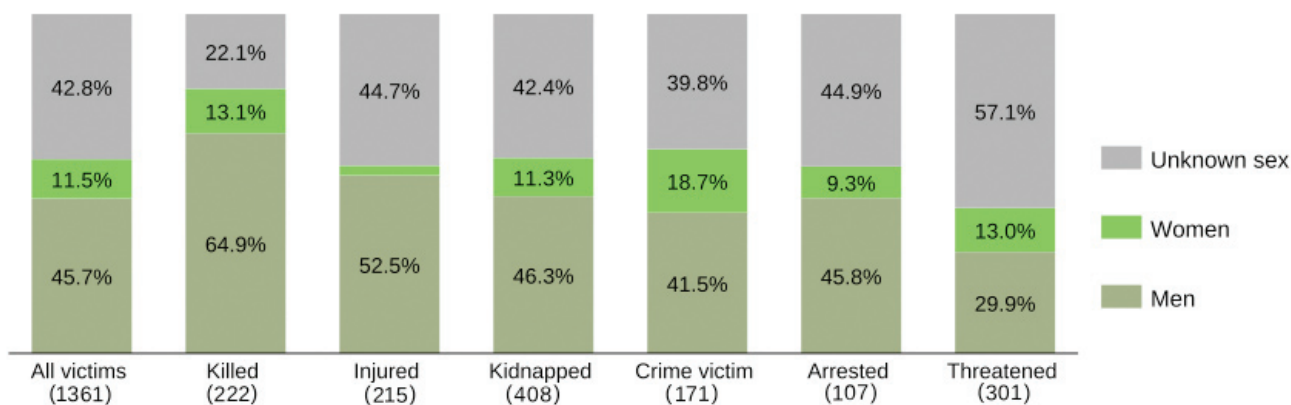
Interpreting the data:

Are men more affected by security events than women?

Security event descriptions mention men as victims more frequently than women. As of 31 December 2010, the SiND contained reference to 420 male victims and 202 'most likely male' victimsⁱⁱ (622, or 45.7%), and 151 female victims and 5 'most likely female' victimsⁱⁱⁱ (156, or 11.5%). Graph 1 highlights the proportion of victims identified as men or women and those victims for whom no information on the sex is available for 'all affected victims' and for victims of six different categories of security events. Men comprise between 29.9% (for threats) to 64.9% (for fatalities) of victims. The same graph also shows the large but variable proportion of victims about whom we have no information regarding their sex. The extent of missing information influences the overall proportions of the different types of security events affecting men and women. For example, the relatively low rate of unknown sex for fatalities (22.1%) and the high rate of unknown sex victims for threat events (57.1%) influences the proportion of affected men, which therefore appears high for fatalities (64.9%) and low for threats (29.9%). As a result, we do not use the absolute proportion of men and women victims of a particular type of security event as a definitive indicator suggesting that certain types of security events affect more men or more women.

Graph 1

Proportion of reported male and female victims and victims of unknown sex for all victims, victims of fatalities, injuries, kidnapping, crime, arrest and threats % of total victims

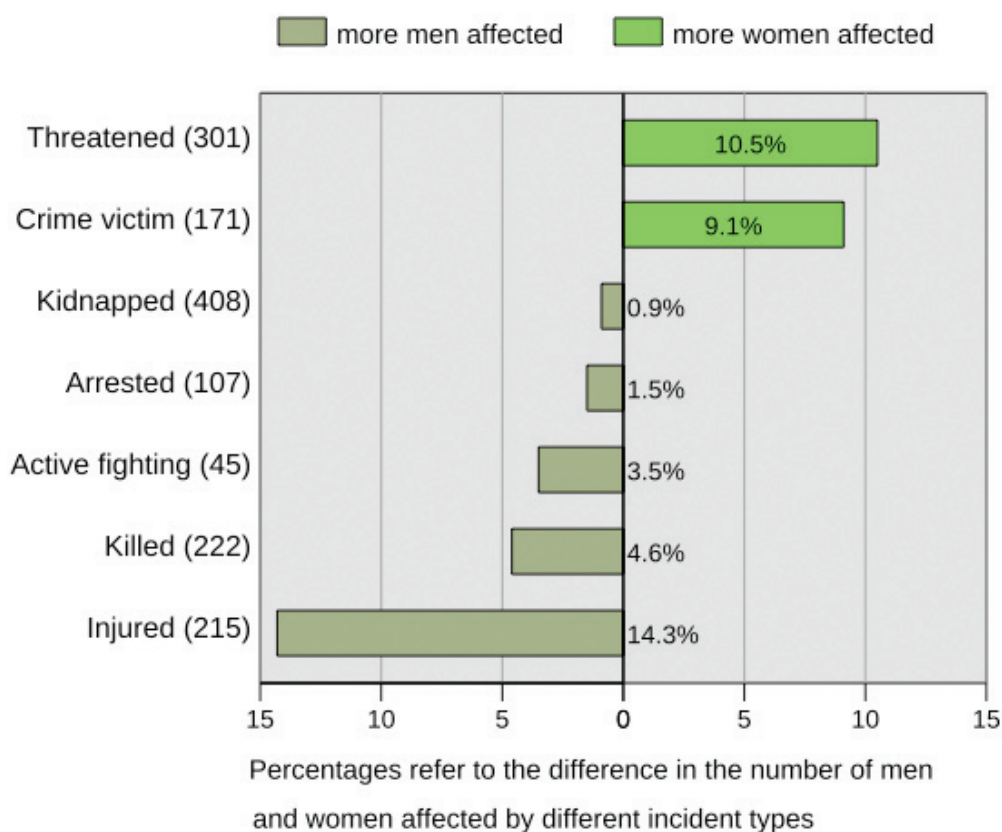


Moreover, the higher rate of reported male victims should not be interpreted as indicating that men are necessarily at a higher risk *per se*. Other factors could explain the finding. For example, the total number of affected male victims would be higher if aid agencies employ more men in the field, if more men work in highly dangerous environments, or if men are assigned to more risky occupations. Unfortunately, there are no data available about the sex (or number) of all staff whom humanitarian agencies employ or the type of occupations they hold, both of which would permit an assessment of the relative danger for men and women. In the absence of such data, we do not draw conclusions about the absolute level of risk that men or women face. Instead, we examine the data to highlight differences in the proportions of different types of incidents that affect men and women as a way to describe the similarities and differences in how security events affect men and women, and report on only those factors for which the proportions are different.

Graph 2 shows Insecurity Insight’s approach to security event analysis in the face of incomplete data. The chart identifies the **different proportions** of male and female victims for particular characteristics or types of security events **in relation to the proportion of all reported male and female victims, respectively**. For example, of the 156 women who experienced security events, 39 were threatened (25%), while 90 of the 622 men who experienced security events were threatened (14.5%). We would expect the proportion of all men and women who experienced threats to be the same if the risk of being threatened was the same for both men and women. The difference of 10.5 percent between the rate to which men and women experienced threats suggests that women experience proportionally more threat events than men.

Based on this analysis, Graph 2 highlights that men are more vulnerable to injuries, death, direct effects of active fighting by conflict parties, and arrests, while women experience proportionally more threat and crime events. The difference in vulnerability of kidnappings between men and women is very small (-0.9%).

Graph 2
Differences in proportion of events affecting men and women by type (threats, crime, kidnappings, arrests, active fighting, violent deaths or injuries).



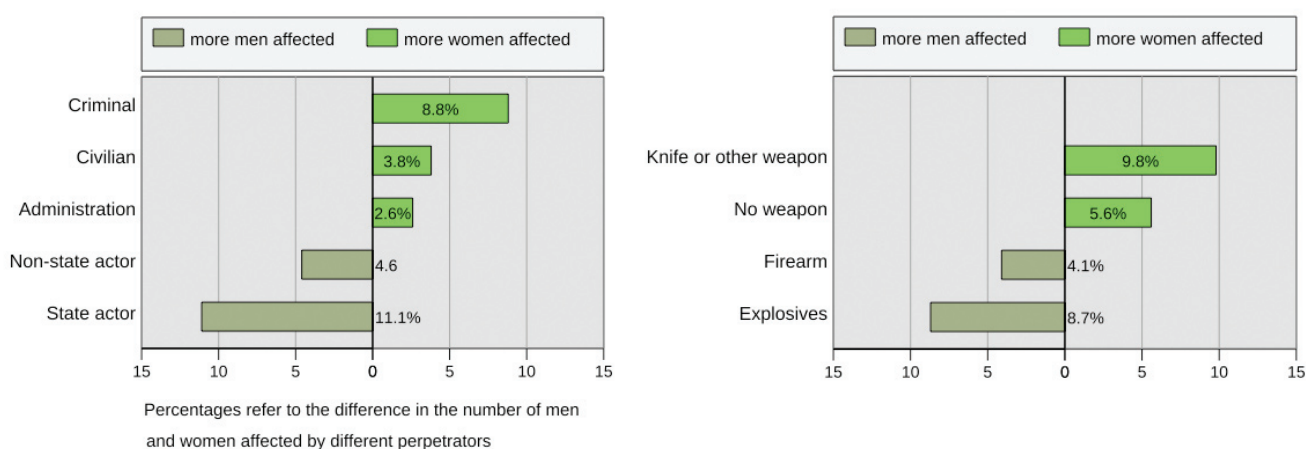
Perpetrators of security events and their weapons

Are there perpetrators who target proportionally more women or men? Are there differences in the weapons used against men and women? Graph 3 shows the differences in the proportion of violent acts against men and women by perpetrator (state military, non-state actors, law enforcement bodies, officials, and civilians) and the weapons they use (firearms, explosives, easily accessible weapons, or no weapons at all). The findings suggest that women are particularly vulnerable to security events perpetrated by criminals and civilians (including employees, former employees or beneficiaries of programmes) and administrative decisions by the host authorities that affect the agency's ability to continue its work unhindered. Those perpetrators who use weapons against women make greater use of easily accessible weapons (such as knives or sticks), but many perpetrators of violence against female aid workers use no weapons at all.

Men bear the brunt of security events for which state militaries are responsible and are proportionally more often the target of non-state actors. They are also proportionally more often present during events in which explosives or firearms affect an aid agency. These findings likely explain why male victims experience the higher rates of injury and death, as shown in **graph 2**.

Graphs 3a and b

Differences in proportion of perpetrator categories targeting men and women and the weapon types used in security events against men and women

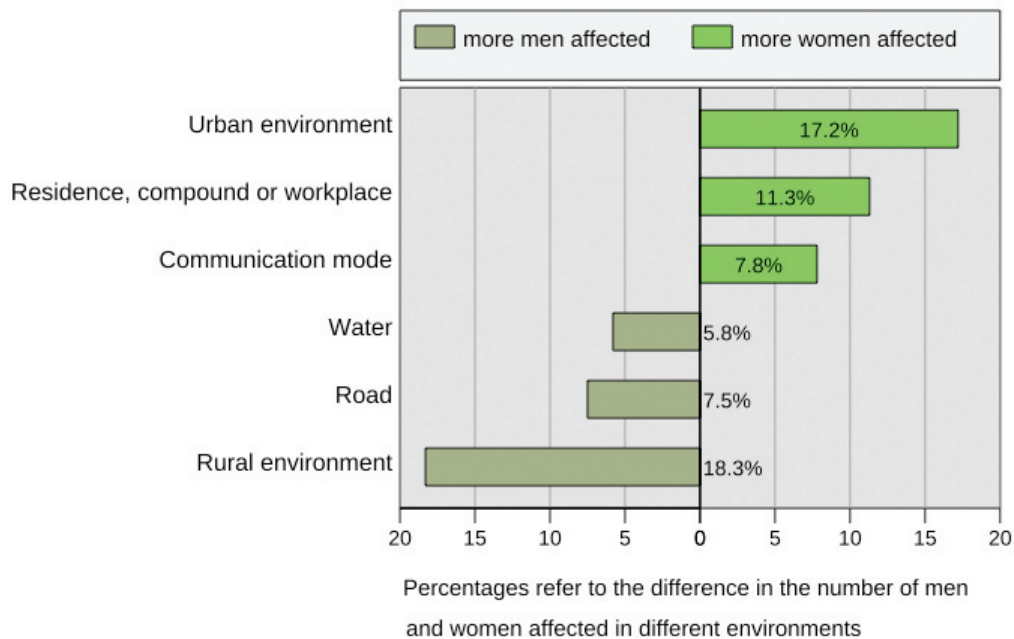


Environments in which security events take place

Are there locations where women are more frequently victimized during security events than men? **Graph 4** shows the differences in the proportion to which security events affect men or women by location (urban and rural areas, while traveling, or at workplace or residence) and via mode of communication. The graph indicates that women experience proportionally more security events in urban areas and at their residence, place of work (such as office or project site) or organizational compound. They also receive proportionally more threats via phone, SMS, email or by letter than men. Men, by contrast, are proportionally more frequently victimized in rural areas and while travelling on the road or on water.

Graph 4

Differences in proportion of security events affecting men and women in defined environments

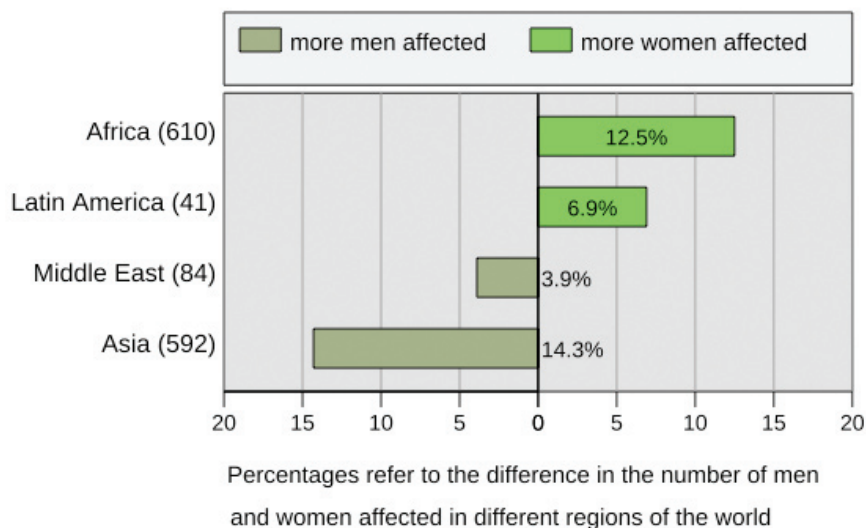


Regional differences

Are there regions in the world where more men are affected by security events than women? **Graph 5** shows regional groupings of security events and highlights that men are proportionally more affected by events in the Middle East^{iv} and Asia^v while women are proportionally more frequently affected in Africa^{vi} and Latin America^{vii}. Individually, however, countries show only very small differences to the extent to which men or women are affected by security events, with the exception of Afghanistan, where men appear to be more vulnerable.

Graph 5

Differences in proportion of security events affecting men and women in different regions of the world

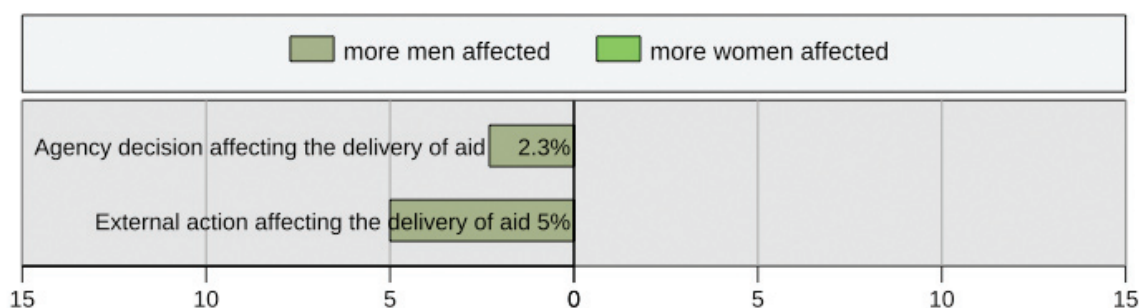


Security events and the impact on the delivery of aid

Are there differences in the operational consequences of security events that victimize men or women? Do humanitarian agencies make different operational decisions that affect the delivery of aid following security events that affect men or women? The initial data analysis suggests that security events that affect men have a greater impact on the delivery of aid than events that affect women. Agencies are more likely to make operational decisions, such as the restriction of staff movement, program closure or withdrawal, that negatively affect the delivery of aid following security events that affect men (2.3%). Security events that force agencies to close programs or withdraw, such as a forced closure of programs or extensive damage to facilities, are even more common after security events that affect men (5.0% more common).

Graph 6

Difference in proportion of security events affecting men and women that impact the delivery of aid



Percentages refer to the difference in the number of security events that affect men and women that led to changes in an agency's ability to deliver aid

What does this first look at the data tell us and what do the findings mean?

All types of security events clearly affect both men and women. Based on available data, however, a higher proportion of men face specific vulnerabilities that proportionally fewer women experience and vice versa. The analysis here suggests that women are more vulnerable to a range of lesser security events such as crime and threats, particularly those in urban areas and places where they ought to feel safe (such as residences and work spaces). Men, on the other hand, experience a higher proportion of two types of serious security events: those involving lethal weapons and those that occur frequently on the road, meaning they take place outside of a defined work environment, such as an office or compound. For kidnappings, little difference exists between men and women's vulnerability. Are these observed patterns primarily influenced by a victim's sex or could other factors contribute to the observed patterns? This question is impossible to answer without further information and analysis.

The initial finding that security events that affect men have a greater impact on the delivery of aid generates more questions than insight. Several explanations are possible. The finding could reflect the more serious nature of events affecting a greater proportion of men, such as violent deaths or the context of active fighting. It could potentially point to an attitude that sees women as naturally vulnerable and men's victimisation as an indication of serious risk for future work. It is also possible that reporting inconsistencies about the consequences of events on the delivery

of aid are responsible for this finding rather than actual differences in operational procedures or decisions. Again, better information and further analysis is necessary.

In thinking about gender and individual agency experiences, reporting practices, and security management, those responsible for security may want to consider the following questions:

- Does your agency systematically record whether the victim was a man or woman? Is this information available (e.g., to Insecurity Insight or via other information sharing mechanisms) for further analysis?
- Do the observed profiles discussed in this paper fit the overall pattern you observe for your organization? If not, where do you see differences?
- Do you see connections, such as expatriate status or particular job position, that could explain how particular types of security events affect women or men? Would your agency consider making more information available of the type of job held by a victim within the agency (e.g., within particular categories such as driver, guard, office worker, programme staff, head of office etc.) to facilitate this type of analysis?
- What other factors might influence vulnerabilities for men and women, in addition to gender?
- What are the types of security incidents that lead to operational decisions that affect service delivery? Do you see any reason why security events affecting men might be regarded as indicating higher risk to operations? What other structural contexts may explain this finding?

This paper presents a first look using incomplete data, and describes tentative findings intended as the beginning of a process of more comprehensive gender analysis of security events. Preliminary analysis suggests particular patterns for further examination, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. It is only in systematically collecting more complete information about gender that we will be better able to answer questions about the differential risks that men and women face in the field.

- ⁱ The database contains a total of 1,224 events but only 615 of these affected staff members (professional and support staff such as drivers) rather than infrastructure, operations or beneficiaries.
- ⁱⁱ A victim was classified as 'most likely male' based on a masculine first name or when the report specified that the victim worked as a security guard or driver, since these are male-dominated professions.
- ⁱⁱⁱ A victim was classified as 'most likely female' based on a feminine first name, the profession (e.g., midwife), the fact that the thief stole a 'handbag', or based on the tick-box information in a report submitted by a partner agency that a 'female was involved'.
- ^{iv} Included countries are: Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Occupied Palestinian Territories and Yemen.
- ^v Included countries are: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, East Timor, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Thailand.
- ^{vi} Included countries are: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Darfur, DRC, Ethiopia, Gambia, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, North Sudan, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe.
- ^{vii} Included countries are: Bolivia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Lima, Mexico and Nicaragua.