

IndependentWomen®

WOMEN *and the* WEST

Liberty, Tyranny, and True Liberal Values



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Independent Women's Center for American Safety and Security (CASS) serves as a trusted resource on national security and foreign policy issues with a unique focus on women's roles in these domains. CASS equips women to understand the value of America's role on the global stage as a champion for women's rights and liberty across the world.

CASS is committed to a vision of a strong America that adopts foreign and domestic policies that prioritize security and sovereignty and leads with moral clarity and military superiority. We analyze a broad range of consequential issues, including military effectiveness, border and immigration policies, and law enforcement on the domestic front, and global women's rights and foreign threats to American security on the international front.

Through the "Women and the West" report, CASS aims to fulfill its mission by exposing harmful policies that undermine true liberalism, which erodes women's rights and hinders their progress. The report proposes a way forward to maintain women's existing freedom and security in the Western world, and to advance women's prosperity in the places where it is absent.

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Female students at the Polytechnical University in Kabul, Afghanistan 1975.

FOREWORD

The fate of women has always been a measure of a civilization's moral strength and institutional integrity. Across history, societies that have upheld the rule of law, protected the vulnerable, and embraced the dignity of the individual have not only advanced women's rights—they have safeguarded their nations' stability and enabled greater human flourishing. Conversely, where order collapses, where ideology eclipses truth, and where courage gives way to appeasement, it is women who suffer first and most.

This report is a sober reckoning with that reality. It challenges the comfortable fiction that data alone can tell us all we need to know, that tolerance without guardrails is a virtue, and that progress is irreversible. It shows, with clarity and precision, that women thrive not under the hollow banner of performative liberalism, but within the disciplined structures of true liberalism—anchored in sovereignty, free expression, cultural cohesion, and the impartial enforcement of law.

From the streets of Stockholm to the war-torn provinces of Afghanistan, the contrasts are stark and instructive. The highest-ranking nations on the Women, Peace, and Security Index remind us that security, opportunity, and dignity are the products of deliberate choices. The lowest-ranking nations warn us of what follows when those choices are abandoned. And the struggles of the United States and Western Europe, caught between the erosion of their own principles and the importation of illiberal ideologies, show that decline is not inevitable, but neither is endurance guaranteed.

The findings here are not comfortable. They require confronting the distortion of data for political ends, the corrosion of free speech, and the seductive pull of “suicidal empathy”—a tolerance that undermines the very freedoms it claims to defend. They demand that we name the forces that subjugate women, without qualification or apology, and that we defend the institutions and values that have made the West a beacon for generations.

The stakes are nothing less than civilizational. If we lose the moral clarity to defend our principles, if we fail to preserve the social and legal structures that protect women, then we will have surrendered not only the safety of half our population but the very foundation of the free world.

This report is both a warning and a call to action. Its message is simple: Strength sustains freedom, and freedom safeguards women. To neglect either is to imperil both.



Female workers join the men on a march in Kabul, Afghanistan in 1979.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women deserve to live under legal and political systems that recognize them as equal citizens, deserving of equal opportunity, security, and the right to chart their own course. This report seeks to highlight the principles and governing systems that best make this reality, while also highlighting the risks posed for Western nations, to include the United States, where liberalism is increasingly at risk from a near tyranny of tolerance by which liberal values are replaced by ideological conformity, moral relativism, and an uncritical embrace of cultures and belief systems that undermine the very freedoms liberalism was designed to protect. When tolerance becomes untethered from truth, and inclusivity prioritized over integrity, it is women who too often bear the cost—through eroded rights, diminished safety, and the slow unraveling of hard-won gains.

This report considers the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Index as one means of demonstrating that women flourish under the conditions of true liberalism, defined by individual liberty, the rule of law, secure borders, cultural cohesion, and personal responsibility.

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Index, produced by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security in partnership with the PRIO Centre on Gender, Peace and Security and supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, evaluates and ranks 177 countries on women's inclusion, justice, and security.¹

While no country achieves a perfect score, the Index reveals stark disparities across countries, regions, and key indicators, helping identify where resources and accountability are most urgently needed to advance women's status.²

At the same time, we acknowledge the Index is one tool among many and is by no means a perfect indicator. Data across countries is often reported and measured differently. Moreover, quantitative measures can lag behind the lived realities of women on the ground and may not immediately capture the impact of emerging social movements or shifts in cultural norms. For the purposes



Muslim woman proudly displays her inked finger after voting in the first phase of Lok Sabha elections at a polling station in Agartala, Tripura, India.

of this report, it acts as scaffolding, but we do not believe it is the foundation of understanding women's experiences in these countries. Nations that consistently rank at the top of the WPS Index are Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, and Luxembourg, reflecting a connection between social order, individual freedom, and women's safety.

In contrast, bottom-ranked countries—Afghanistan, Yemen, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan—illustrate the devastating consequences of state collapse, tribalism, and institutional failure on women's security and prosperity.

This report pays particular attention to Western Europe, where a phenomenon described as “suicidal empathy” has emerged: A distortion of liberalism in which unrestrained tolerance for illiberal ideologies undermines women's rights.

This phenomenon combines unchecked tolerance of illiberal ideologies with institutional self-censorship and a growing crackdown on free speech. Authorities frequently suppress or manipulate data on migrant-perpetrated sexual violence, discourage public debate on demographic and security risks, and even penalize speech that challenges official narratives. This environment of fear and censorship erodes public trust, weakens democratic resilience, and ultimately undermines women's safety.

The United States, ranked 37th, faces similar tensions. Western Europe and the United States both must confront the erosion of free speech, inconsistent data collection and manipulation, and social cohesion if they are to preserve the values that distinguish liberal democracies from regimes that systematically oppress women.

This report calls for a renewed commitment to true liberalism through:

- ✦ **Vigorous defense of free expression** to enable honest public discourse;
- ✦ **Border enforcement and security measures** to prevent the importation of illiberal and violent practices;
- ✦ **Reaffirmed moral clarity** in distinguishing liberal democratic values from those that subjugate women; and
- ✦ **Championing biological reality** in which women's and girls' spaces are protected and preserved.

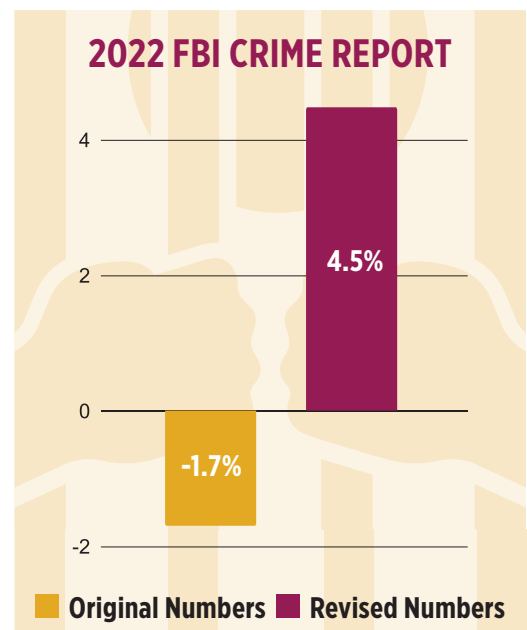
INTRODUCTION

The WPS Index referenced in this report is a work of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security; the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) Centre on Gender, Peace and Security; and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.³ This report uses the 2023 edition of the WPS Index,⁴ which ranks 177 countries based on 13 indicators of women’s progress classified under three dimensions: “inclusion, justice, and security.”⁵ The index then aggregates the performance of each indicator to generate a country score between 0 and 1, which establishes the country rankings.

Using the WPS Index as a baseline, this report then analyzes the trends in conditions across the top five and lowest five ranked countries to highlight the policies and values that either promote or hinder women’s progress, and shed additional light on trends in the top-performing countries that may not be reflected in the WPS Index. The data used in the WPS Index for this report comes from various sources—including the World Bank, the Gallup World Poll, and UN agencies—offering a snapshot of women’s safety and status.

While global indices like the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Index offer a snapshot of women’s safety and status, all data should be judged with caution—particularly when they are being collected using different reporting systems and countries have incentives to hide the real extent of issues, including crime. Usually, reporting issues are associated with less transparent and developed countries; however, today, it is increasingly clear that some developed nations also distort data to serve political agendas and outward appearances solely in service of hyper-politicized narratives.

Public officials’ desire for their countries to appear safe, secure, and prosperous often leads to distortions of data to exert control or to reflect better outcomes than the reality on the ground. In the United States, we saw this with crime rates and COVID-19 data designed to control school openings under the Biden administration. One of the most prominent instances of this intentional data distortion was the discrepancy with the FBI’s annual Crime in the Nation report that showed an estimated 1.7% decrease in violent crime in 2022, which was later quietly revised to show a 4.5% increase



in violent crime that year.⁶ The initial report failed to account for 80,029 violent crimes—including 1,699 murders, 7,780 rapes, 33,459 robberies, and 37,091 aggravated assaults, according to the initial findings by RealClear Investigations.⁷

Data is also often distorted through deceptive reporting methodology. In the case of the violent crime reporting discrepancies, the FBI moved to a different data collection system in 2021, the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS).⁸ While this change was not intended to manipulate crime rate data, municipalities failed to adjust to the new system, and reporting dropped to below 70% in 2021—the lowest in two decades—which distorted the data on violent crime as many local agencies were unaccounted for.⁹

In the case of COVID-19 data under the Biden administration, scientific reports and CDC guidance believed to be authoritative public health resources, touting the effectiveness of school closures and mask mandates, used faulty methodology to promote the administration’s desired narrative. In 2022, the CDC admitted to overcounting deaths from COVID-19 due to a faulty algorithm in the mortality tracking data, which exaggerated the severity of the disease.¹⁰ Data was also manipulated to mislead the public about the effectiveness of school closures through a CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, based on a study on public schools in Arizona with notably flawed methodology that failed to control for vaccination coverage and differing school year calendars, and even accounted for virtual schools in the data.¹¹ It was later uncovered that a prominent teacher’s union, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), influenced the CDC guidance to align it with the Biden administration.¹²

In parts of Europe, political sensitivities and cultural taboos have distorted both data collection and public perception, especially on issues of immigrant-related sexual violence and free speech. In the United Kingdom, foreign nationals were three times more likely to be arrested for sexual offenses than British citizens in 2024, with police logging more than 9,000 such arrests in just the first ten months.¹³ Yet successive governments have been accused of

suppressing migrant crime statistics, echoing the decades-long cover-up of grooming gangs, where thousands of girls were raped by predominantly Pakistani Muslim men, a scandal described as the largest peacetime child protection failure in British history.¹⁴

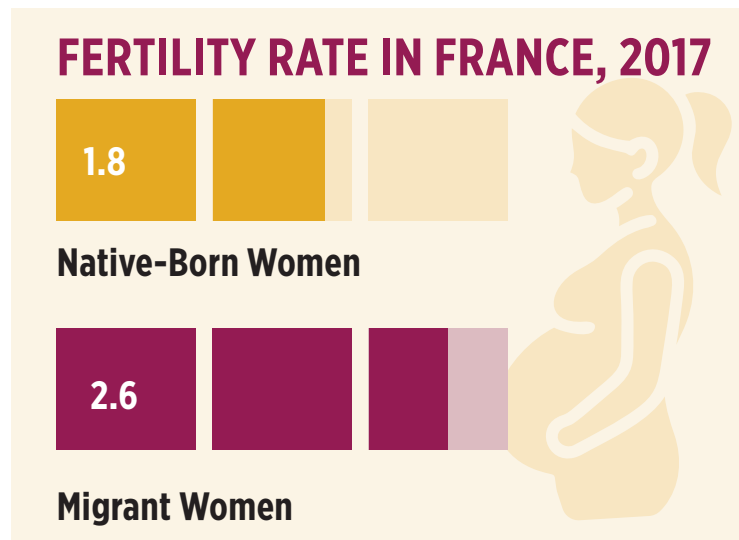
FOREIGN NATIONALS 3X MORE LIKELY TO BE ARRESTED FOR SEX OFFENSES THAN BRITISH CITIZENS



■ **British Citizens**
■ **Foreign Nationals**



Sweden faces a similar pattern: Nearly two-thirds of convicted rapists are migrants or foreign-born, and sexual violence rose following the 2015 refugee crisis, despite changes in reporting methodology.¹⁵ Meanwhile, Europe's birth statistics are increasingly shaped by immigration. Migrant women's higher fertility rates,¹⁶ for example, 2.6 vs. 1.8 for native-born in France in 2017,¹⁷ mask native population decline and create tempo distortions in demographic data.



Unfortunately, efforts by citizens to call attention to the disconnect between data and reality is often met with scorn in the U.S., and more severe legal consequences in other countries like the UK and Germany.

In principle, data is meant to illuminate. It is designed to serve as a neutral instrument through which governments understand their people, and through which citizens gauge institutional performance. But, too often, data is used to distort perceptions to fit prevailing narratives, thus contributing to the broader decline of trust in media and institutions.

Declining confidence in official statistics is not without justification. The American Statistical Association released a report that acknowledged the growing unreliability of benchmark surveys due to historically low response rates.¹⁸ Pew data shows a consistent majority of Americans are deeply uneasy about how their personal data is collected and used.¹⁹ And when statistics are weaponized to enforce ideological conformity—particularly around issues of sex, crime, and health—citizens quickly realize the numbers are not neutral.

In the United States, the consequences for those who speak out are social rather than legal, but no less real. Academics face sanctions. Journalists are ostracized. Ordinary citizens are ridiculed. Dissent is not censored, but it is delegitimized.

Nowhere is this more evident in the U.S. than in higher education, where in elite academic institutions such as Harvard, only one-third of seniors and 17% of conservatives reported feeling comfortable speaking their mind in class.²⁰ Most concerning is that 30-40% of Americans identify as

HARVARD STUDENTS NOT COMFORTABLE SPEAKING THEIR MINDS



**one-third
of seniors**



**17% of
conservatives**

conservative, but only 10% of professors are conservative, producing echochambers and ideological isolation in the institutions that form the backbone of a functioning democracy.²¹

From academia, this “cancel culture” of viewpoint discrimination and ideological supremacy manifests in corporations, K-12 schools, and media, but some social media platforms are aiming to reverse course from this liberal backsliding. Mark Zuckerberg recently criticised the Biden administration’s push to censor COVID-19 content and to promote false 2016 election narratives on Facebook.²² This year, Meta loosened its content moderation policies and third-party fact-checking features and shut down its DEI programs in an effort to mend the infringements on free speech that started to resemble the extreme content moderation policies of Europe.²³

While Meta’s recent shifts highlight the potential for countries to reverse democratic backsliding as it happens, the situation in Europe, however, remains bleak.

In the UK, content moderation has moved from scorn to sanction. Under the 2023 Online Safety Act, platforms are required to remove content deemed “harmful,” including speech that challenges government narratives on public health, immigration, or gender.²⁴ While marketed as a tool against disinformation, the law’s vague definitions risk sweeping legitimate skepticism—especially when voiced by women—into the same category as foreign propaganda.

This is more than a theoretical concern. In practice, questioning gender ideology, highlighting migrant crime statistics, or scrutinizing health data during COVID has already triggered takedowns and investigations. British women who point out rising rates of assault in areas with large unintegrated populations are often accused of bigotry rather than believed.

In November 2024, for example, Daily Telegraph writer Allison Pearson was investigated for breaching “hate laws” on social media from an X post the year prior in response to the October 7th Hamas attacks in Israel, which she quickly took down.²⁵ Although her post originally contained a factual error, the substance of her post—that Hamas seeks the destruction of Israel and the eradication of the Jewish people—is an established fact. Despite reports confirming the sexual violence committed by Hamas militants that day, Pearson’s post was one of many pursued by British police for the “hate crime” of calling out radical Islamism for its evil.



“There are concrete life and death consequences to wild unplanned immigration. Girls and women harassed, beaten and gang raped. War zone type crimes unfolding in every Western country with open borders and governments watching as social cohesion breaks down.”

Ayaan Hirsi Ali

This thought policing of valid observations of evil deemed to be “hate speech” leads to institutional failure down the road for justice systems. The grooming-gangs scandal in the UK is a hallmark example of the fallout from silencing truth for political correctness, as police forces neglected to investigate the predominantly Asian grooming gangs due to the fear of appearing racist.²⁶

Ayaan Hirsi Ali has warned that in Britain, bureaucrats now “own the data narrative,” selectively choosing which numbers to elevate and which to ignore.²⁷ More often, it’s not just about what is measured, it’s about who gets to define what counts.

And the EU offers a different flavor of control—less about silencing dissent, more about locking down the data itself. Here, the legacy of the Stasi and Gestapo has produced an intense focus on privacy and data regulation. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) prioritizes individual rights over public interest to such a degree that researchers and journalists often struggle to access even basic demographic data.²⁸

In Germany, when citizens or academics challenge official narratives, particularly around immigration or gender, they risk real penalties. Social media content is subject to takedown under the NetzDG law, and fines for companies failing to remove “harmful” posts can be severe.²⁹ The fear of misstepping has a chilling effect. The result: Self-censorship replaces inquiry, and public debate narrows.

At the heart of this crisis lies a profound epistemological question: *Who gets to define reality?*

When women say they feel unsafe walking home but are told by official figures that crime is down, when mothers worry about their daughters in locker rooms and are accused of bigotry for doing so, when female academics raise questions about sex-based rights and face career-ending retribution—these are not fringe anecdotes. They are the symptoms of a society in denial.

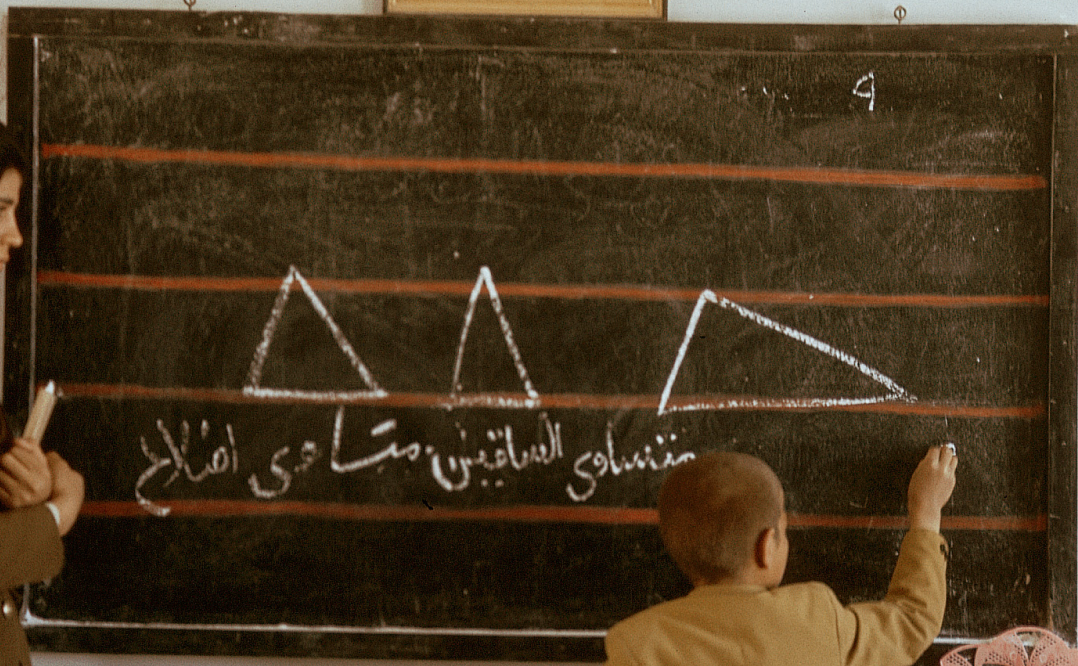
The “Women and the West” report contends that the success of women is not sustained through slogans or selective metrics, but through the integrity of the systems that measure—and respond to—their needs. Liberal democracies are meant to be accountable not just to data, but to the people behind the numbers. When those institutions no longer permit questioning, no longer tolerate challenge, and no longer reflect reality, they lose the moral and practical legitimacy that distinguishes them from authoritarian regimes.

What makes the West exceptional is not perfection. It is the freedom to confront imperfection. If we abandon that freedom—if we shame, silence, or prosecute those who highlight the cracks—then we

will have forfeited the very principles that made our civilization a beacon for women across the world. The solution is not to ignore data, but to demand better data—more transparent, more disaggregated, and more grounded in the material realities of women’s lives. We must restore a culture of inquiry, not enforcement. One that honors discomfort, prizes truth, and resists the technocratic instinct to manipulate metrics in service of narrative.

Because women do not live abstract lives. We live real ones. And those lives deserve to be seen, counted, and defended.





Iran in the 1960s.

REJECTING SUICIDAL EMPATHY

These trends discussed above frighteningly reflect the dangers of suicidal empathy, a willingness to tolerate or excuse illiberal practices that directly erode women's security.³⁰ Left unaddressed, they undermine public trust, fuel social fragmentation, and compromise the integrity of the very liberalism that once safeguarded women's rights.

True liberalism, grounded in equality before the law, sovereignty, and social cohesion, remains the essential condition for women to thrive. This report argues that the United States and Western Europe must unite to confront data distortion, reject self-destructive tolerance, and reassert the core principles that distinguish free societies from those that systematically subjugate women. The European Union and the United Kingdom have long been places where women thrive, sustained by strong legal protections, cultural cohesion, and a commitment to individual freedom. Women comprise 51% of the EU workforce and hold 32% of parliamentary seats as of 2025, evidence of a region historically dedicated to equality and empowerment.³¹



Protesters line the pavement with placards outside The Bell Hotel, believed to be housing asylum seekers, in Epping, northeast of London, on July 20, 2025, after police charged an asylum-seeker with sexual offences earlier this month.

Yet, this legacy is increasingly threatened by the misguided prioritization of unrestrained inclusivity and cultural sensitivity over women's safety and fundamental rights. In practice, it is the refusal to confront illiberal ideologies, those that excuse or even endorse violence, antisemitism, and the subjugation of women, out of fear of appearing intolerant. This self-defeating posture erodes the very foundations of liberal societies, leaving women less free and less safe.

The effects are visible. Across the EU and UK, gender-based violence, sexual assaults, and honor-based abuse increasingly emanate from unintegrated communities where extremist beliefs persist.

For instance, a 2021 EU Agency for Fundamental Rights report noted that 33% of women in the EU experienced physical or sexual violence, with urban areas reporting higher rates where integration policies have faltered.³² In the UK, police recorded over 2,500 honor-based abuse cases in 2023, frequently tied to cultural practices that clash with Western norms.³³



Berlin Pro-Palestine Demonstration

The October 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel was a stark reminder of the potential of societies and what happens when ideologies that glorify violence and dehumanize women feel empowered. Systematic sexual violence, including rape and mutilation, was not an aberration but a feature of that worldview. Disturbingly, echoes of this ideology appeared within Western cities, where pro-Hamas demonstrations and antisemitic incidents surged, and some rallies openly celebrated terror. These were not mere political expressions; they signaled a willingness to excuse the same violent ideologies that endanger women abroad and corrode safety at home.

This pattern is not confined to a single event. Wherever illiberal ideologies are accommodated, whether in Afghanistan under the Taliban, or in parts of the EU and UK where informal Sharia councils undermine women's legal rights, women's dignity and security decline. Suicidal empathy allows these practices to take root under the guise of tolerance, normalizing the subjugation of women and minority groups within the community and endangering the freedoms that make liberal societies exceptional.

To preserve women's safety and the moral authority of the West, suicidal empathy must be rejected. True liberalism demands moral clarity, enforcement of the rule of law, and the courage to defend equality without apology.

THE BOTTOM FIVE: A Cautionary Tale of Collapse

While we will examine how the Nordic and Alpine nations mostly exemplify how women flourish when societies are stable, lawful, and oriented around individual dignity, the five lowest-ranking countries—Afghanistan, Yemen, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan—stand as sobering reminders of what becomes of women when the foundations of civilization disintegrate.

These nations are not monolithic in culture, religion, or geography. Yet they share a common condition: the near-total breakdown of institutional order, social cohesion, and national purpose. In each, women face extraordinary levels of violence, economic exclusion, and legal disenfranchisement—not simply because of local tradition, but because of the vacuum left when the state no longer upholds justice, the rule of law, or a coherent moral framework.

What emerges in that vacuum is often a toxic blend of ideological extremism, clan-based power structures, and coercive cultural norms. It is not Islam, Christianity, or any other particular religion per se that drives these outcomes—but the distortion of belief into instruments of control. Where ideology becomes untethered from human dignity and unmoored from institutional restraint, women become the first casualties.

This is the inverse of what we see in the strongest-performing nations: There, women tend to thrive not because culture is perfect, but because systems mostly function. Women are considered equal citizens. Law is enforced. Rights are recognized. Security is prioritized. When states fail to protect these fundamentals, women are stripped of agency, safety, and status.

The lesson is clear: Civilizations do not crumble all at once—they unravel at the margins. And women are often the earliest indicators of that unraveling. In the world's worst-performing countries, the suffering of women is not incidental. It is systemic. It is what happens when no one is accountable, and nothing holds.

Anarchy Is a Woman's Greatest Enemy

Across the bottom-ranked nations of the WPS Index—Afghanistan, Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, and South Sudan—violence against women is not episodic but systemic, woven into the fabric of daily life.

In the absence of functioning legal systems, effective law enforcement, or national security forces, rape, abduction, and murder become instruments of power and tactics of war. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, sexual violence is deployed deliberately to terrorize communities and drive displacement.³⁴

TOP 5 LOWEST RANKED

Country	Ranking	WPS Index Score
Afghanistan	177 / 177	0.286
Yemen	176 / 177	0.287
Central African Republic	175 / 177	0.378
Democratic Republic of the Congo	174 / 177	0.384
South Sudan	173 / 177	0.388



A group of Afghan women demonstrate in Parliament Square demanding education and freedom for women in Afghanistan on January 14th 2023 in London, United Kingdom.

In South Sudan, militias traffic and enslave women as a tool of coercion and control.³⁵ In Afghanistan, the Taliban's ideological rule strips women of education, employment, and even physical freedom, reducing them to objects of social subjugation.³⁶ This is not merely a failure of policy; it represents the total collapse of civilizational safeguards, where the very structures that should protect women have disintegrated, leaving them exposed to predation as a condition of survival.

Tribalism and Sectarianism Destroy the National Fabric

These nations are not united societies but patchworks of militias, ethnic factions, and sectarian interests, where the rule of the strongest prevails. There is no common good, no shared responsibility, only survival under coercion.

Women, deprived of both protection and a collective voice, are systematically dehumanized under warlordism and radical ideology. In Yemen, Houthi authorities impose severe restrictions on women's travel, education, and dress, erasing their public presence.³⁷ In the Central African Republic, tribal

conflicts displace and terrorize rural populations, with women enduring the brunt of violence and exploitation.³⁸ Where there is no sovereign nation, citizenship dissolves into submission, and women's lives are reduced to the mercy of those who wield force.

The Collapse of the Family Leaves Women Isolated

The family is the first institution of protection. When war, famine, or forced migration shatters family units, women are left isolated and exposed, raising children without support, vulnerable to predation, and with no recourse to justice. In these environments, child marriage and maternal mortality rates soar, driven not only by entrenched traditions but by the collapse of familial and communal safety nets. These are more than humanitarian tragedies; they are the predictable consequences of a world without fathers, without laws, and without order, where the foundational structures that once shielded women have been stripped away.

Aid Is Not a Substitute for Civilization

Despite billions in foreign assistance, these nations remain fragile. Humanitarian aid cannot compensate for the lack of legitimate governance, moral norms, or civic responsibility. In fact, chronic dependency on foreign aid often breeds corruption, passivity, and black-market exploitation.

Women in these nations are often used as symbols for donor dollars, even as their actual conditions worsen in the absence of structural reform. This is because not all civilizations or ruling systems view women as equal, and this fundamental difference shapes how societies function, especially in times of crisis. The status of women is a litmus test for a society's values, revealing whether it prioritizes individual dignity and agency or enforces systemic subjugation. In the West, women's rights are enshrined in law, culture, and social norms, fostering an environment where women can thrive as leaders, professionals, and equal partners. This stands in stark contrast to ideologies or systems that codify women's subordination, often justified by tradition, religion, or authoritarian control.

In the West, women's rights are enshrined in law, culture, and social norms, fostering an environment where women can thrive as leaders, professionals, and equal partners. This stands in stark contrast to ideologies or systems that codify women's subordination, often justified by tradition, religion, or authoritarian control.

For example, in conflict zones like Ukraine, despite the chaos of war and the immense strain on society, with men fighting on the front lines, women's rights remain intact. Ukrainian women continue to hold

positions of influence, contribute to the war effort, and maintain their legal and social standing. While Russian forces have committed documented atrocities against women, including sexual violence, these acts are condemned as war crimes, not normalized by Ukrainian society.³⁹ This resilience reflects a cultural and legal commitment to gender equality, even under existential threats.

Compare this to a place like Afghanistan, where the Taliban's return to power in 2021 led to the systematic erasure of women's rights. Women were barred from education,⁴⁰ employment,⁴¹ and public life,⁴² with restrictions enforced through violence and fear. Here, the loss of women's rights is not merely a byproduct of war but a deliberate ideological choice rooted in a patriarchal interpretation of governance. The distinction is critical: In some societies, war may challenge but not dismantle women's rights; in others, the ruling ideology itself is the primary threat to women's equality.



A woman holds placard during rally against law that restricts independence of anti-corruption institutions on July 22, 2025 in Kyiv, Ukraine.



Afghan burqa-clad women walk along a roadside at a sunset in Fayzabad district of Badakhshan Province on October 24, 2023.

If we care about women's well-being globally, our response cannot be limited to aid, quotas, or awareness campaigns. We must insist on governance rooted in legitimacy, security enforced by the rule of law, families that are stable and respected, and cultural frameworks that recognize and uphold the dignity of women.

The lesson from the world's most dangerous countries for women is not that they need more programs. It's that they need order, nationhood, and values that recognize women as worthy of human rights. Without those pillars, there is no protection, only survival.

THE TOP FIVE

The countries that rank highest on the WPS Index—Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, and Luxembourg—offer important lessons. They reflect societies that, in many respects, have upheld the core pillars of true liberalism: rule of law, gender equality, economic opportunity, and democratic stability. These achievements should not be dismissed.

Yet, as discussed previously, their elevated status on paper often conceals a growing set of vulnerabilities. From rising migrant crime and deteriorating social cohesion to increasing restrictions on free speech and public discourse, these countries risk trading long-term safety for short-term political comfort.⁴³ The data, while impressive, can mask the creeping consequences of policies that fail to confront cultural clashes or ideological extremism.

A closer look at these top performers reveals a more complicated picture, one that reinforces the central thesis of this report: that women are safest not under a veneer of liberalism, but when liberalism is practiced with moral clarity, institutional honesty, and national confidence.

In today's global debate over what creates safe, prosperous, and stable societies for women, countries like Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, and Luxembourg demonstrate that women thrive where national sovereignty, cultural cohesion, and personal responsibility are strong.

These nations combine market economies with civic-mindedness, enforce laws effectively, and prioritize security and order, all factors that disproportionately benefit women.

TOP 5 HIGHEST RANKED		
Country	Ranking	WPS Index Score
Denmark	1 / 177	0.932
Switzerland	2 / 177	0.928
Sweden	3 / 177	0.926
Finland	4 / 177	0.924
Luxembourg	5 / 177	0.924

In the Nordic and Alpine nations, women enjoy lives that are longer, healthier, and more prosperous than almost anywhere else in the world.⁴⁴ Educational opportunity is virtually universal—women not only complete secondary school at near-total rates, they now surpass men in tertiary attainment. In Norway, nearly 65% of women in their twenties and thirties hold a university degree,⁴⁵ and in Sweden,



women account for more than 60% of students pursuing higher education or international study.⁴⁶

These countries have designed their systems to ensure that academic potential translates into economic opportunity. Roughly three-quarters of working-age women in the Nordic region are in the labor force.⁴⁷ Life expectancy for women routinely exceeds 83–85 years,⁴⁸ and maternal mortality is extremely low.⁴⁹

The result is a lived experience that reflects what good societies can offer their women: freedom to learn, to work, to raise families without sacrificing security, and to grow old in health and dignity. It is a picture not just of the absence of violence, but of the presence of opportunity, wealth, and longevity—a blueprint for what it means to thrive.

They remind us that when a country is strong, cohesive, and self-reliant, women are safer, freer, and more respected.

While these Nordic countries are built on Western values of equality, rule of law, civic responsibility, and individual liberty, the integration of cultures in opposition to these values in the name of tolerance threatens to erode their standing. Recent political and cultural shifts throughout Europe in favor of nationalism and strict border policies highlight that inclusivity backfires when it welcomes cultures that promote violence and oppression.

Numerous accounts of concerning trends across Europe highlight that for much of the world that lies between the top five and bottom five countries, Western democratic values that enable women to thrive have to be safeguarded against the infiltration of opposing ideologies that explicitly reject women's equality and diminish women's quality of life.

Across Europe, instances of free speech crackdowns, terror attacks, and religious extremism serve as sobering reminders that unprotected liberal democratic values are at risk of compromise when tolerance supersedes truth.

Immigration Policy & Political Polarization

Immigration policies that welcome asylum seekers and others who seek a better life often have noble intentions and can strengthen countries, when a country also ensures that newcomers are integrated into society and required to embrace social norms, including respect for the rule of law and tolerance for women and other minority groups. Additionally, for immigration systems to succeed, native populations must feel that their public safety net systems are not being jeopardized or abused. Newcomers must not only have the opportunity to work and support themselves; that must be the expectation. Otherwise, resentment and conflict become inevitable.

Unchecked immigration in the name of multiculturalism has fueled support for far-right political movements in Europe as discontented voters aim to overcorrect the failures of the past. While many point to far-right extremism as the sole catalyst behind immigration reform, the source of the rise in nationalist rhetoric across Europe must be understood as a consequence of broad public sentiment shifts across the political spectrum. After bearing witness to the effects of unfettered migration in their communities, Europeans are disillusioned with the results.

The above-mentioned Scandinavian countries are often hailed as liberal utopias, but shifts in immigration policy throughout these countries and the broader European continent highlight the limitations of progressive policies that are not always reflected in socioeconomic data.⁵⁰ Denmark, most notably, set the stage for stricter immigration policy following the influx of Syrians, Iraqis, Afghans, and others into Europe in 2015 following the onset of the Syrian Civil War and broad instability throughout the Middle East.⁵¹ Now, according to Eurostat population data from 2024, 29.0 million citizens of non-EU member countries (6.4% of the EU population) were residing in an EU country, and 44.7 million persons (9.9% of the EU population) were born outside the EU.⁵² As refugees have flooded into Europe, escaping the turmoil in their homelands, anti-immigration sentiment in historically internationalist, open countries like Sweden and Denmark has risen. Now, the highest proportions of residents born in non-EU countries are in Malta (20.9%), Luxembourg (17.2%), and Ireland, Sweden, and Estonia at 15.2% each.⁵³ Today, 4.9% of Sweden's population is a citizen of non-EU countries, and in Denmark, 9.4% of the population was born in a non-EU country, with 6.3% of the population being citizens of a non-EU country.



Demonstrations Held Outside Migrant Accommodations Across The UK

Denmark’s proposed “zero” refugee policy,⁵⁴ which involves processing asylum requests in partner countries outside of Europe,⁵⁵ has become a desirable model for other European countries; EU officials are now proposing new rules that would send asylum seekers to third-party countries.⁵⁶ These dramatic policy shifts reflect the voter backlash in Europe against open immigration that has propelled nationalist, right-wing parties to power. In the case of Denmark, however, Mette Frederiksen’s Social Democrat party has been the leading force behind strict immigration reform, breaking from the party’s historic openness to migration—highlighting that progressive policies have their limitations—even in liberal Scandinavia.⁵⁷ Denmark’s generous welfare system is a major catalyst behind the support for immigration limitations, as the strain on public resources impacts Danish citizens’ access to welfare benefits, once again exposing the limitations of progressive economic and immigration policies.⁵⁸



Sweden offers another compelling case of right-leaning shifts following the mass immigration influxes of the past decade. Once hailed as a tolerant, open country for refugees, Sweden has since adopted a much more restrictive immigration policy following an overwhelming influx of asylum-seekers. In 2014, Sweden registered 81,301 asylum seekers,⁵⁹ and that number doubled to nearly 163,000 in 2016.⁶⁰ According to Eurostat data from January 2024, 15.3% of Sweden’s total population was born in non-EU countries—including Syria, Iraq, Iran, Somalia, and Afghanistan, among others—and the remaining 5.3% of the foreign-born population was born in another EU member state.⁶¹

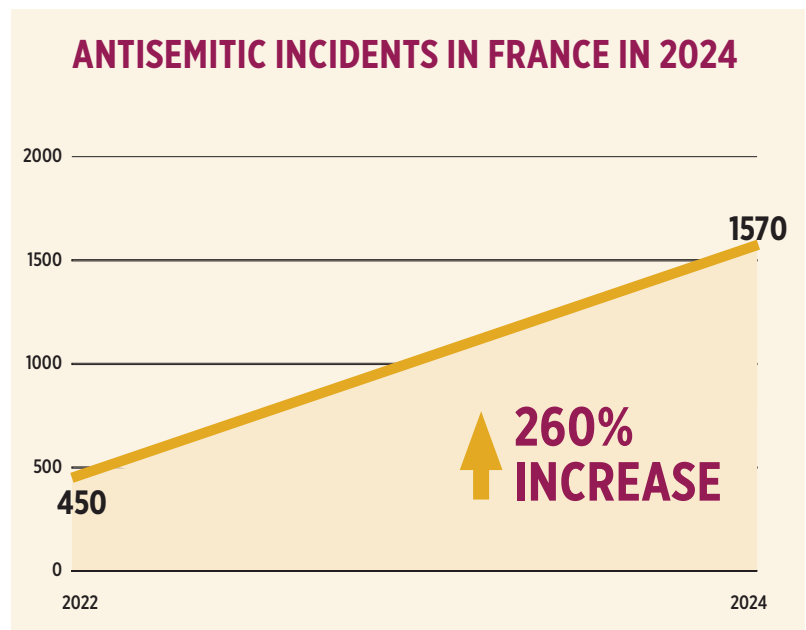
One of the consequences of relaxed immigration policies and undocumented migration surges is a rise in gang violence and organized crime in impoverished immigrant communities in Sweden.⁶² The “Foxtrot” gang, which has been sanctioned by the U.S. Department of State as a transnational criminal organization with backing from Iran,⁶³ was recruited to carry out attacks against Israeli targets in Sweden, Denmark, and Belgium, and is responsible for more than 20 murders in Sweden.⁶⁴ Rawa Majid, the leader of the Foxtrot Network, has direct ties to the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS), and he has been charged with multiple counts of narcotics and firearms trafficking in Sweden.⁶⁵ In 2024, teens affiliated with the Foxtrot Network attempted to organize attacks on the Israeli Embassy in Stockholm with backing from Iran,⁶⁶ as part of the uptick in violence and antisemitic attacks since October 7, 2023.⁶⁷

This is where socioeconomic data falls short. Progressive policies allowing unchecked migration threaten to erode Sweden’s public safety standards, and ultimately its status as a safe haven for women. For the first time in over 50 years,⁶⁸ Sweden now has net emigration since implementing strict reforms to limit migration into the country in an effort to crack down on the rise in crime from open border policies.⁶⁹ Denmark and Sweden may be able to maintain their status at the top of the WPS Index, but it has required a dramatic shift in social attitudes toward commonly progressive policies—like open borders—to maintain their stability.⁷⁰

Rising Antisemitism & Religious Extremism

The failure to stand up against violent, extremist Islamism in the name of multiculturalism has fueled insecurity and antisemitic incidents across the world, especially since the onset of the Israel-Hamas war on October 7, 2023.

In France, there were 1,570 antisemitic incidents in 2024—a 260% increase over 2022, according to a Tel Aviv University report.⁷¹ In Germany, the number of antisemitic incidents doubled to 5,671 in 2023, followed by 5,177 incidents in 2024.⁷² In Britain, antisemitic incidents in 2024 were 112% higher than in 2022.⁷³ These attacks against Jews and pro-Israel activists have been excused under the guise of political activism for the Palestinian cause, as terror organizations target Europe to gain global influence.



A recent report in France warned against Islamist “entryism” posing threats to national cohesion and values, presenting findings that the Muslim Brotherhood has targeted Europe with financial backing from Turkey and Qatar.⁷⁴ Religious and political extremism have been on the rise in Europe, and according to an official EU survey in 2023, “50% of the victims of antisemitic physical attacks in the EU reported that the perpetrators had Islamist extremist views, up from 30% in 2018. Another 22% had left-wing extremist views, while 17% had right-wing extremist views.”⁷⁵

Western Europe should serve as a warning to countries founded on liberal democratic principles, as the higher population of Muslim communities in Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Germany has led to surges in ethnically-targeted violence, especially against Jews.⁷⁶ While these countries were founded on principles of religious freedom and personal liberty, the acceptance of cultures that oppose these values is reaping negative consequences for security and quality of life. In Western Europe, a Berlin teacher was diagnosed with PTSD after two years of abuse by Muslim students for being gay.⁷⁷ In this district, 95% of the kids are reported to be of migrant origin.

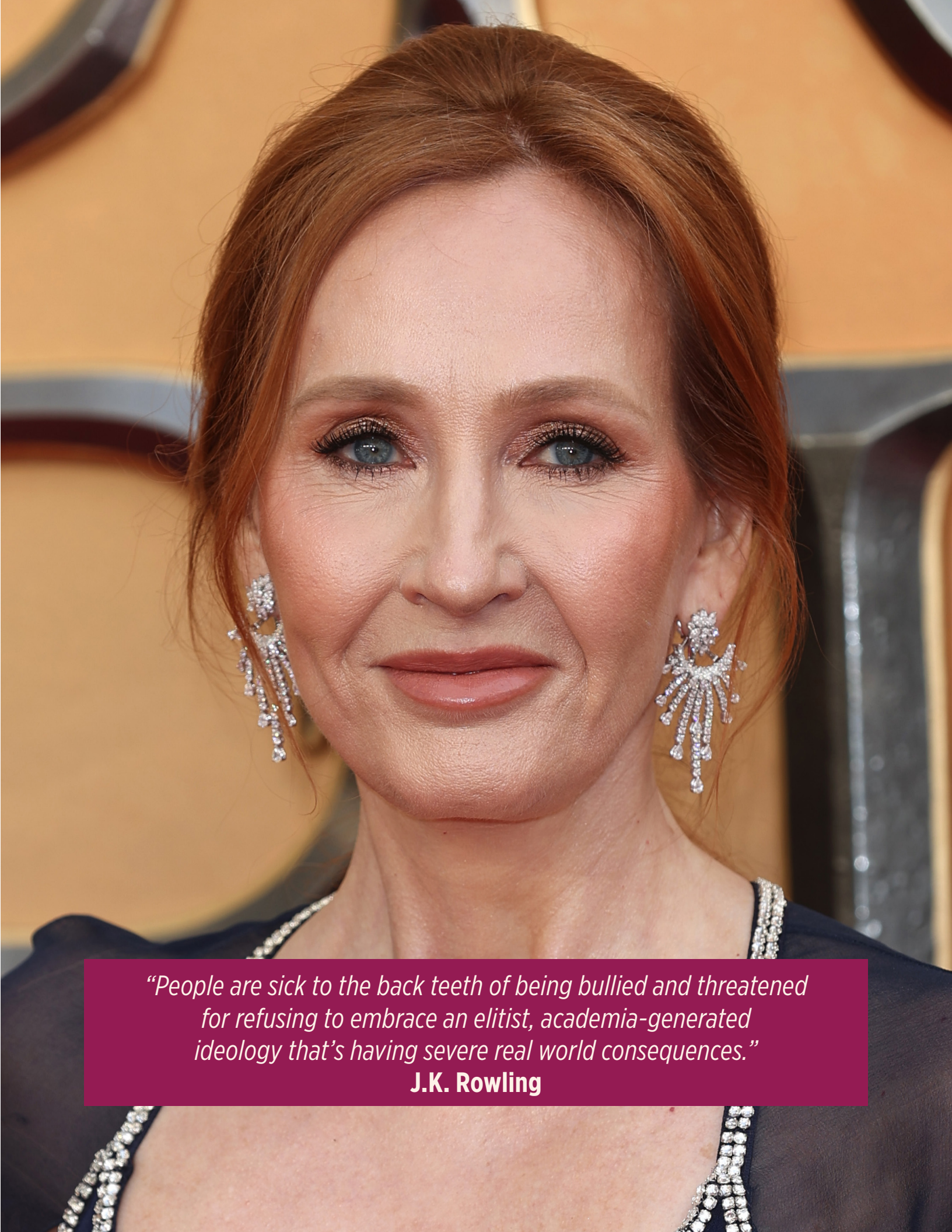
Politicization of Justice

In the United Kingdom (UK), growing restrictions on free speech serve as a warning against the politicization of the justice system against conservative views in the Western world.⁷⁸ Free speech is an English invention,⁷⁹ but it is under attack as the Labour government's Employment Rights Bill is currently under consideration.⁸⁰ This legislation is known as the "Banter Bill," and if it becomes law, it would allow prosecution for insulting remarks.⁸¹ The Banter Bill would hold employers accountable for harassment—defined as "creating an offensive environment" in some cases—endured by their employees while working.⁸² The law would also broadly apply to the public sphere in pubs, restaurants, and stadiums, constraining the exercise of free speech where Britons often "ridicule" one another.⁸³

The law would also broadly apply to the public sphere in pubs, restaurants, and stadiums, constraining the exercise of free speech where Britons often "ridicule" one another.

In 2022, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act—which applies to England and Wales—described a "non-crime hate incident" (NCHI) as an action which is "clearly motivated by intentional hostility or prejudice towards people with a particular characteristic."⁸⁴ Since 2023, police have been required to report these "non-crime hate incidents," and a similar law was implemented in Scotland—the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act.⁸⁵ While many agree that free speech has its limits, especially pertaining to the incitement of violence, there are concerning trends in Europe toward restricting speech that is merely offensive, which is in direct opposition to Western values of justice and freedom of expression.

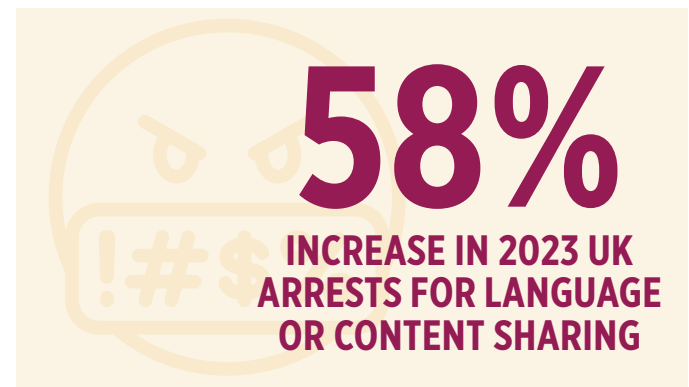
When law enforcement resources are allocated toward investigating and reporting these NCHIs, police have less bandwidth to investigate violent crimes and true public safety threats. An estimated 60,000 police hours per year are spent on NCHIs, and 13,200 complaints were filed by law enforcement officials in 2023 in protest of the allocation of resources to NCHIs.⁸⁶ These NCHI reports can also be used to intimidate those with viewpoints deemed to be "offensive," as



“People are sick to the back teeth of being bullied and threatened for refusing to embrace an elitist, academia-generated ideology that’s having severe real world consequences.”

J.K. Rowling

the subjectivity of the law gives police broad discretion, many of whom struggle to define what is “indecent or obscene.”⁸⁷ In 2023, there was a 58% increase in arrests under laws that prosecute “grossly offensive” language or the sharing of content deemed to be “indecent, obscene, or menacing”—an average of 33 arrests a day.⁸⁸



The most concerning implication of these laws is the potential for uneven application, which targets certain viewpoints and political ideologies. Now, populist sentiment among Europeans is growing in response to these speech laws, and more than 40% of Brits and Germans believe that people cannot say what they truly think.⁸⁹ Conservative viewpoints are often targeted in Europe, and according to a report in the Economist, officers in Britain spend hours on social media to find offensive posts, arresting 30 people a day on average.⁹⁰ Even in France, a conservative TV channel was fined \$112,000 for calling abortion the leading cause of death in the world—a common view held by religious communities and political conservatives.⁹¹

These crackdowns on free speech highlight the potential for liberal democratic values to be undermined by oppressive policies that are hidden under the guise of tolerance. Now, public discourse in much of Europe is regulated by arbitrary hate speech laws that give law enforcement broad discretion to discriminate against viewpoints found to be personally offensive. As free speech is the foundation of democratic societies, Europe serves as a warning that the Western world must remain vigilant to protect this value from progressive overreach.



Now, public discourse in much of Europe is regulated by arbitrary hate speech laws that give law enforcement broad discretion to discriminate against viewpoints found to be personally offensive.

Trump increases federal law enforcement presence, deploys National Guard in the nation's capital.



THE UNITED STATES

Despite being one of the world's wealthiest and freest nations, the United States currently ranks 37th out of 177 countries on global indices measuring women's well-being. This ranking defies conventional expectations and reveals a deeper problem: Wealth and legal equality alone are not sufficient to create a society in which women can truly thrive. A closer examination reveals that the U.S. is falling short not because of too little government intervention, but because of too little order, too little cohesion, and too few culturally grounded norms.

Safety Is Paramount

Public safety is the bedrock of women's flourishing. Without it, access to opportunity, education, and advancement is meaningless. Yet across the United States, women increasingly face rising rates of violent crime,⁹² deteriorating urban security,⁹³ and eroded trust in law enforcement.⁹⁴ While some nations with top-tier rankings (such as Denmark, Switzerland, and Finland) maintain robust public safety through disciplined policing and high social trust, many U.S. cities have pursued policies that weaken law enforcement, incentivize lawlessness, and abandon victims, particularly women and children.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION: Restore support for local law enforcement, strengthen sentencing for violent and sexual crimes, and invest in victim-centered community protection programs that reinforce public trust, not undermine it.

Family Breakdown Harms Women Most

The data is clear: Women are more likely to experience poverty, burnout, and social vulnerability when the family unit collapses.⁹⁵ In many communities across the United States, the breakdown of marriage and the rise of fatherlessness have created cycles of instability and generational hardship. By contrast, many countries that rank higher in women's well-being combine modern economies with strong expectations around family formation, parental responsibility, and social cohesion.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION: Pursue policies that create opportunity and allow civil society to flourish. There is no easy policy solution for this deep cultural challenge, but it should be considered a priority at every stage of policymaking.

Cultural Clarity, Not Gender Chaos

Another defining feature of high-ranking nations is their willingness to uphold biological reality and sex-based distinctions, even while advancing gender equality. In the United States, radical gender ideology has eroded the legal and cultural boundaries that once protected women. From allowing biological males in women's sports and prisons to erasing sex-based data collection, these policies endanger women under the guise of inclusion.⁹⁶

POLICY RECOMMENDATION: Restore sex-based protections in law and policy, preserve single-sex spaces, and reject policies that conflate sex with self-declared gender identity, especially where women's safety or opportunity is at stake.

Sovereignty and Shared Identity Matter

Nations where women thrive tend to maintain strong borders, national sovereignty, and shared civic identity. Without these foundations, no policy, no matter how well-funded, can compensate for the loss of mutual obligation and cultural continuity. The U.S. is currently undergoing a crisis of identity, exacerbated by unchecked immigration, frayed institutions, and a relentless focus on group grievance over shared citizenship. Women feel this instability acutely, as they are often primary caregivers, educators, and stabilizers in the home and community.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION: Reassert national identity by securing borders, teaching American civic principles in schools, and restoring shared national rituals and narratives that bind citizens together.

RECLAIMING TRUE LIBERALISM FOR WOMEN'S ENDURING PROSPERITY

In an era where the ideals of liberty and equality are both celebrated and contested, this report illuminates a profound truth: Women thrive not in the shadow of ideological excess or institutional decay, but under the steadfast canopy of true liberalism—a philosophy anchored in individual freedom, the impartial rule of law, secure national sovereignty, cultural cohesion, and personal accountability.

The Women, Peace, and Security Index serves to showcase how nations like Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, and Luxembourg have, for now, upheld these pillars, fostering environments where women enjoy safety, opportunity, and dignity. Yet, even these exemplars are not immune to erosion; the creeping influence of “suicidal empathy”—an unchecked tolerance that accommodates illiberal ideologies, suppresses inconvenient truths, and fractures social bonds—threatens to unravel their achievements.

Conversely, the harrowing conditions in Afghanistan, Yemen, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan underscore the perils of their absence. In these fractured states—where anarchy supplants order, tribalism eclipses unity, and moral collapse engulfs the vulnerable—women bear the heaviest burden: Systemic violence, subjugation, and isolation become not anomalies but norms. These contrasts are not mere coincidences of geography or history; they are the inevitable outcomes of societal choices.

The United States, positioned at 37th, stands at a crossroads; its wealth and freedoms are tempered by rising insecurity, family fragmentation, and cultural disorientation—challenges that mirror Europe’s own struggles with unchecked migration, antisemitic surges, free speech curtailments, and the distortions of radical inclusivity.

The West's legacy as a beacon for women's advancement is not inevitable; it demands vigilant stewardship. If we are to preserve and extend this legacy, we must reject the self-destructive impulses that prioritize performative tolerance over principled defense.

True progress for women lies in reclaiming the moral clarity that distinguishes liberal democracies: affirming that not all cultures or ideologies are equal in their respect for human dignity, and that women's security is non-negotiable.



New Delhi, India–March 10: All India Mahila Congress (AIMC) President Alka Lamba along with supporters stage a protest demanding implementation of 33% women reservation in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies.

By confronting data suppression, ideological infiltration, and institutional timidity, the transatlantic alliance between the United States and Western Europe can forge a renewed path forward—one that honors the sacrifices of past generations and secures a flourishing future for those to come.

To this end, we propose the following recommendations, grounded in the report’s analysis and oriented toward actionable reform:

Defend Free Expression Unyieldingly: Champion policies that protect open discourse, dismantle hate speech laws prone to subjective abuse, and ensure law enforcement prioritizes genuine threats over perceived offenses. This will restore public trust, enable honest debates on migration and security, and prevent the silencing of voices that safeguard women’s rights.

Enforce Borders and Integrate with Integrity: Implement robust border controls to stem the importation of illiberal practices, while promoting assimilation policies that demand adherence to core liberal values. Drawing from Denmark’s and Sweden’s recent shifts, prioritize national cohesion over unchecked multiculturalism, ensuring that immigration enhances rather than undermines social stability and women’s safety.

Reaffirm Moral Clarity and Biological Reality: Distinguish unequivocally between liberal democratic values and those that subjugate women, rejecting excuses for violence or extremism under any guise. Protect sex-based spaces in sports, prisons, and public facilities; preserve accurate data collection on gender; and resist radical gender ideologies that erode women’s hard-won protections.

Foster Transatlantic Solidarity and Institutional Renewal: Strengthen U.S.-European partnerships through joint efforts on countering extremism, sharing best practices in law enforcement, and promoting civic education that instills shared values. Prioritize governance reforms that combat corruption, enhance aid effectiveness in fragile states, and hold leaders accountable for women’s security as a measure of civilizational health.

Unabashedly Support Women’s Rights and Equality: Women are human beings of equal value to men and deserve equal rights to express themselves, participate in all aspects of society, and pursue their own versions of happiness. Societies or customs that undermine these principles should be rejected publicly. Policy leaders must not shy away from discussing these issues openly and must show that women’s human rights are a priority for the West.

By embracing these imperatives, the West can exemplify a world where women are not merely survivors but architects of thriving societies.



CONCLUSION: Guarding the Good

It is clear Western liberalism—rooted in individual liberty, rule of law, equal justice, and ordered pluralism—remains the most effective and moral governing system ever devised. It is under this framework that women have flourished most fully: granted the space to pursue education, autonomy, security, and self-determined purpose. These values are not relics of the past; they are the engine of progress, the architecture of dignity, and the precondition for peace.

But liberalism is not self-sustaining. It must be defended—not just from the overt hostility of foreign adversaries, but from the internal corrosion of unmoored tolerance and moral relativism. When liberal societies lose the will to discern, when inclusion eclipses integrity, and when the defense of virtue is mistaken for vice, it is not progress that follows, but fragility.

Adversaries like Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea understand this well. They do not confront the West head-on; they manipulate its openness, exploit its empathy, and weaponize its freedoms against it. Through disinformation, coercive migration, cyber intrusion, and data exploitation, they seek to destabilize democratic institutions and provoke the very illiberal forces—on both the far left and far right—they claim to oppose. Their goal is chaos, cynicism, and collapse. Their strategy is to turn the West's strength into its undoing.

To preserve what makes us free, we must not abandon liberalism—we must mature it. That means restoring boundaries without abandoning compassion, upholding sovereignty without rejecting solidarity, and recommitting to first principles without retreating into fear. It also means recognizing that women's rights, societal stability, and national strength are intertwined—and that safeguarding them requires clarity, courage, and a willingness to name and resist those who seek to dismantle them.

Western values are worth defending, but they are not immune to misuse. Our task is to remain steadfast in purpose and clear-eyed in judgment—never so tolerant that we tolerate our own undoing, and never so open that we forget what we stand for.



Local residents return to Horenka despite the destruction in village and others [sic] difficulties of life during the Russian-Ukrainian war.

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its sons who rise to protect, then our
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