



FACT SHEET

Recommendations for Advancing Gender Equality at Home and Abroad by Leveraging Women, Peace, and Security

By Carolyn Kenney August 4, 2021

In its governmentwide strategy to advance gender equity and equality in U.S. domestic and foreign policy, the newly established White House Gender Policy Council should ensure that the government's existing women, peace, and security (WPS) implementation architecture is expanded and better institutionalized throughout the federal government's national security and foreign policy processes and workforce, and that it is better aligned with U.S. domestic policy. In particular, the council should make clear to federal departments and agencies what their roles are in advancing gender equity and equality and lay out clear guidance for how they should fulfill these roles. Without doing so, the council runs the risk of some departments and agencies treating gender equity and equality as a box-checking exercise and doing the bare minimum. In order to achieve this, the council's strategy should include the following recommendations.



See also: "[Advancing Gender Equality at Home and Abroad by Leveraging Women, Peace, and Security](#)" by Carolyn Kenney

Reorient U.S. WPS implementation

- Include internal metrics for issues such as women's meaningful participation in decision-making, recruitment and retention, reasons for attrition, gender and racial wage gaps, and prevalence of sexual harassment and assault in agency and department progress reports on WPS implementation.
- Publish annual WPS implementation progress reports inclusive of these metrics so that lawmakers, civil society, and partner nations can track how implementing agencies are progressing on their own commitments to gender inclusivity.
- Push for legislation expanding the WPS Act and enshrining the policies laid out in a series of executive orders and memoranda¹ to explicitly link and advance diversity, inclusion, and equity in the federal workforce.

Invest in and institutionalize WPS activities and programs

- WPS implementing departments and agencies should include WPS in their own budget submissions to Congress.
- Request that Congress provide WPS-specific funding to all four implementing departments and agencies.

Integrate gender into foreign policy strategies and discourse

- Require council department and agency representatives and council co-chairs to designate subject matter experts to help draft, review, and clear the national security strategies for which they are responsible.
- Consult and include gender experts in National Security Council meetings beyond those focused solely on WPS.
- Require that senior leaders—and not just women senior leaders—be briefed on the gendered implications of any matters on which they are testifying to Congress.
- Require that individuals designated to represent cabinet members in council meetings provide, at a minimum, two briefings annually to the cabinet members about the council's and their specific department's or agency's efforts to advance gender equity and equality.

Ensure gender analysis informs decision-making

- Require that all decision memos and action memos going to the president and cabinet secretaries include a gender analysis.
- Recommend that the national intelligence officer for gender equality ensure that the intelligence community, at a minimum, collects sex-disaggregated data and prioritizes gender considerations in its information collection as part of the intelligence cycle.
- Require national security personnel, particularly those serving as intelligence analysts and action officers across the national security workforce, receive training on how to conduct a gender analysis and communicate its findings.

The Biden administration's elevation of the Gender Policy Council and its prioritization of mainstreaming gender in the federal government's work represents a major step forward for the advancement of gender equity and equality at home and abroad. While there is certainly much work to be done to set the U.S. government on a path toward fully realizing the vision laid out in the executive order establishing the council, not all of it must start from scratch. Leveraging the government's existing WPS mandate and architecture and making some necessary changes to better institutionalize it and realize its stated goals provides the council with a path forward in its foreign policy to achieve even greater gains in gender equity and equality around the world.

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Endnotes

1 The Obama White House, "Executive Order 13583-- Establishing a Coordinated Government-wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce," Press release, August 18, 2011, available at <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/08/18/executive-order-13583-establishing-coordinated-government-wide-initiative>; The Obama White House, "Presidential Memorandum -- Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in the National Security Workforce," Press release, October 5, 2016, available at <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/10/05/presidential-memorandum-promoting-diversity-and-inclusion-national>; The Obama White House,

"Executive Order on Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation," January 20, 2021, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-preventing-and-combating-discrimination-on-basis-of-gender-identity-or-sexual-orientation/>; The White House, "Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government," January 20, 2021, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal>

government; The White House, "Memorandum on Revitalizing America's Foreign Policy and National Security Workforce, Institutions, and Partnerships," February 4, 2021, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/02/04/memorandum-revitalizing-america-foreign-policy-and-national-security-workforce-institutions-and-partnerships/>; The White House, "Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce," June 25, 2021, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/06/25/executive-order-on-diversity-equity-inclusion-and-accessibility-in-the-federal-workforce/>.