



The Words Matter research project examines how gender, women, and girls are represented—or excluded—within the language of UN Security Council resolutions and presidential statements. Grounded in the feminist principle that “what is named counts, and what is not named is politically erased,” this research evaluates whether women are portrayed as political actors and leaders or primarily as vulnerable populations requiring protection. Using quantitative keyword analysis, this 2015, 2020, and 2025 data analysis of UN Security Council documents reveals themes including conflict, peacebuilding, sanctions, and human rights. Comparing the frequency of gender-related language appears to mean it is incorporated into Security Council discourse. In 2015, 2020, and 2025 show changes in how often gender language appears, with language more closely aligned with the Security Council’s (WPS) agenda and a comparatively higher number of documents explicitly addressing women’s underrepresentation. Approximately 49% of 2015 documents referenced women’s underrepresentation. However, women were only explicitly acknowledged in 51% of documents. While the research demonstrates that women’s underrepresentation is still reflected in the language of UN Security Council resolutions and presidential statements across decades, the findings also reveal a concerning regression. The 2025 findings reveal a concerning regression, with gender references in early or preambular sections rather than in central operative clauses, signaling a return to the peripheral role of gender in UN discourse. The 2025 findings reveal a concerning regression, with gender references in early or preambular sections rather than in central operative clauses, signaling a return to the peripheral role of gender in UN discourse. The 2025 findings reveal a concerning regression, with gender references in early or preambular sections rather than in central operative clauses, signaling a return to the peripheral role of gender in UN discourse.

Words Matter

Tracking Gender, Women, and Leadership in UN Security Council Resolutions

and how meaningfully it is incorporated in

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We also extend our sincere appreciation to the faculty of The New School's Graduate Program in International Affairs for fostering an academic environment that encourages critical inquiry, interdisciplinary collaboration, and public engagement.

This publication was developed through **HER TURN**, GWL Voices' intergenerational leadership initiative, which seeks to connect emerging leaders with experienced practitioners to strengthen more representative and inclusive multilateral institutions. We are deeply grateful to the founders, leadership, and management of **GWL Voices** for their continued support of this initiative and for their commitment to creating opportunities for young researchers to contribute meaningfully to global policy conversations.

Finally, we thank everyone who contributed to this project and to the broader HER TURN community. We hope **Words Matter** encourages continued reflection on how language shapes representation, legitimacy, and the future of global governance.

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Foreword

Words shape the way we understand the world. In multilateral diplomacy, they also shape the way we govern it.

Every resolution adopted by the United Nations Security Council does more than respond to a crisis. It defines priorities, confers legitimacy, and signals whose perspectives, experiences, and leadership are considered essential to international peace and security. The language of multilateralism is therefore never neutral. It reflects the values of the institutions that produce it and influences the policies that follow.

For many years, we have assumed that progress toward gender equality within the multilateral system would continue, however gradually, in one direction. The findings presented in *Words Matter* invite us to pause and reconsider that assumption.

Developed through GWL Voices' HER TURN initiative in partnership with graduate students from The New School, this report examines a decade of Security Council resolutions and reveals a concerning trend: references to women and gender are becoming not only less frequent, but also less substantive and less operational.

This matters because language shapes political priorities. It influences whom institutions recognize as actors, whose perspectives are considered, and which solutions become possible. The question is not simply whether women are mentioned, but how they are represented. Are they recognized as leaders and decision-makers, or primarily as beneficiaries of protection? Representative multilateralism requires moving beyond symbolic recognition toward meaningful political agency.

These findings come at a pivotal moment, as the United Nations reflects on its future and prepares for a new generation of leadership. Around the world, women are already negotiating peace, leading governments, advancing climate action, strengthening health systems, and responding to increasingly interconnected global challenges. Our multilateral institutions should reflect that reality.

At **GWL Voices**, we believe that representative leadership is fundamental to the legitimacy and effectiveness of international cooperation. This publication is an invitation to pay closer attention to the language we use, because words shape priorities, institutions, and ultimately the future of multilateralism.



Susana Malcorra

Co-Founder and President, GWL Voices

Executive Summary

The **Words Matter** research project examines how gender, women, and girls are represented—or excluded—within the language of United Nations Security Council resolutions and presidential statements. Grounded in the feminist principle that “what is named counts, and what is not named is politically erased,” this research evaluates whether women are framed as political actors and leaders or primarily as vulnerable populations requiring protection. Using quantitative keyword tracking alongside qualitative feminist discourse analysis, this 2015, 2020, and 2025 dataset analyzed over 120 Security Council documents across themes including conflict, peacebuilding, sanctions, peacekeeping, and human rights.

Comparisons across 2015, 2020, and 2025 show changes in how often gender-related language appears and how meaningfully it is incorporated into Security Council discourse. In 2015, women and gender language appeared more frequently overall, with language more closely aligned with the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda¹ and a comparatively higher number of documents explicitly addressing women’s leadership and structural underrepresentation. **Approximately 49% of 2015 documents referenced women in leadership roles, while 51% explicitly acknowledged women’s underrepresentation. However, women were still often framed through victimhood or vulnerability, and while rhetorical inclusion was relatively strong, most commitments remained non-binding.** 2015 demonstrated the strongest overall institutional attention to gender but still reflected substantial gaps between discourse and agendas on one hand and resources and enforceable action on the other.

By 2020, the dataset reflects a notable shift. Women’s inclusion remained widespread across Security Council discourse, and leadership references increased significantly, appearing in approximately 83% of analyzed documents. References to women and gender were more often placed in operative or later

¹ The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda was established through [UN Security Council Resolution 1325](#) (2000) and focused on women’s participation, protection, and leadership in peace and security processes.

sections of resolutions, indicating that these issues were more visibly integrated into core policy language. Yet, this apparent progress was undermined by shrinking structural analysis: only 10% of documents explicitly acknowledged women's underrepresentation. Furthermore, roughly 95% of gender-related language remained non-binding, relying on recommendations rather than enforceable obligations. This indicates that while women's visibility in Security Council language became more normalized, institutional commitments remained overwhelmingly symbolic and toothless rather than operational.

The 2025 findings reveal a concerning regression. Compared to both 2015 and 2020, women's representation declined in both frequency and overall policy integration. More than half of 2025 documents positioned gender references in early or preambular sections rather than in central operative clauses, signaling a return to more peripheral rhetorical placement. Only one out of nineteen analyzed documents employed binding language regarding women or gender, while 95% remained non-binding. Leadership references dropped sharply to approximately 21%, though acknowledgment of underrepresentation rose somewhat to 47%, suggesting that while structural inequalities were more often named, women were less frequently positioned as significant political actors. **Overall, 2025 demonstrates a troubling decline in the visibility and strength of gender discourse within Security Council governance.**

Across the decade, several major trends emerge:

- 1. Rhetorical inclusion of women does not consistently translate into meaningful political inclusion.**
- 2. While women's representation as leaders peaked in 2020, binding commitments remained persistently weak across all three periods.**
- 3. Year 2025 suggests a broader decline in the Security Council's prioritization of women's agency, with gender increasingly limited to symbolic or marginal references.**

Finally, thematic patterns demonstrate that women are most consistently included in peacekeeping and peacebuilding discourse, while sanctions, conflict management, and security-specific resolutions frequently marginalize or omit them altogether.

Taken together, the findings suggest **that despite formal progress since the adoption of the WPS agenda, the Security Council's treatment of women, girls, and gender remains deeply inconsistent and politically constrained.** Over the past decade, women's presence in Security Council discourse has not followed a linear

path toward greater empowerment; rather, it reflects cycles of rhetorical inclusion, symbolic recognition, and periodic regression. The persistent dominance of non-binding language underscores a fundamental gap between acknowledgment and meaningful institutional transformation.

The **Words Matter** project, therefore, concludes that while women may increasingly be named within global governance discourse, this has not translated into fundamental changes in behavior or outcomes. Without stronger operational commitments, explicit recognition of structural barriers, and enforceable leadership mechanisms, gender inclusion risks functioning primarily as symbolic legitimacy rather than substantive political change.

Introduction

Women's participation in peace negotiations is not only a matter of equity. It is a proven driver of more sustainable outcomes. Peace agreements are 64% less likely to fail and 35% more likely to endure when women are meaningfully involved. Yet despite this evidence, women remain significantly underrepresented, accounting for just 16% of negotiators in the United Nations-led processes in 2022.

This persistent gap raises a critical question: beyond formal commitments to gender equality, how are women actually represented in the core institutions that shape global peace and security?

Grounded in the feminist insight that “what is named counts, and what is not named is politically erased,” the Words Matter research project, developed by the Graduate Program in International Affairs in partnership with GWL Voices, examines how gender, women, and girls are represented, or excluded, in the language of United Nations Security Council resolutions. As the principal body responsible for maintaining international peace and security, the Security Council has the authority to enforce its resolutions, including by deploying the use of force, and this necessarily gives the organ power to define priorities, legitimize actors, and shape the boundaries of political agency.

Do these resolutions portray women as leaders, decision-makers, and agents of change? Or are they primarily reduced to victims and vulnerable populations in need of protection?

To answer these questions, this study combines quantitative keyword analysis with qualitative feminist discourse methods to examine 214 Security Council resolutions adopted in 2015, 2020, and 2025. This timeframe allowed us to examine a decade-long window. Due to limitations of time and resources, the

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analysis considered the first year, the year of the adoption and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (2015); a mid-term year baseline, 2020, which was also when COVID-19 hit the world; and, finally, the last full year, 2025. Through this comparative approach, it assesses not only the visibility of women in Security Council discourse but also the roles and levels of agency attributed to them.

Ultimately, this research interrogates whether the language of one of the United Nations' most powerful bodies reflects a genuine shift toward women's political inclusion or whether it continues to reproduce patterns of symbolic recognition without substantive transformation.

Context

The past decade has exposed deep fractures in the international system, as escalating conflicts and geopolitical rivalries challenge the capacity of multilateral institutions to respond effectively. High-profile crises, including Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the war in Gaza, and protracted conflicts in Sudan, Yemen, and Syria, have not only intensified humanitarian needs but also revealed persistent gaps in representation and inclusion within global decision-making processes. At the same time, these dynamics underscore the importance of examining the role of women in multilateral decision-making and peace and security processes.

As the principal organ tasked with maintaining international peace and security, the United Nations Security Council plays a central role in shaping both the narrative and policy responses to these crises. Its resolutions define whose voices matter, whose roles are acknowledged, and whose agency is rendered visible or invisible.

Across the three reference years, there are also notable shifts in both the volume of Security Council resolutions and the extent to which they incorporate gender perspectives. In 2015, 57 out of 91 resolutions (62.6%) referenced women, gender, or girls. This proportion remained relatively stable in 2020, with 44 out of 71 resolutions (61.9%). However, by 2025, both the total number of resolutions and the share referencing gender declined significantly, with only 19 out of 52 resolutions (36.5%) including such references.

The following section outlines the state of women in peace and security alongside key global developments, including ongoing wars and armed conflicts, for each year analyzed.

2015

Despite growing global recognition of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, women remained significantly underrepresented in UN peacekeeping, comprising only about 3% to 4% of military personnel and roughly 10% of police personnel in missions, according to a [UN Women policy brief](#). While official targets aimed for 30% women in senior leadership (P5 and above) by 2014, actual representation in 2015 remained below 20% in many field missions.

A major milestone in global governance was the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September, which established gender equality as a cross-cutting priority.

At the same time, the international system faced multiple crises. The refugee and migrant crisis in Europe saw thousands fleeing conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, testing regional cooperation and political cohesion. Terrorist attacks, including those against Charlie Hebdo and coordinated attacks in Paris, highlighted the global reach of the Islamic State and intensified international counterterrorism efforts.

Key diplomatic developments included the Iran nuclear deal and the normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba, while the Paris Agreement marked a significant moment in global climate governance. At the same time, Russia's military intervention in Syria further internationalized the conflict.

Key armed conflicts in 2015 included the following:

- Syrian Civil War
- Iraqi Civil War (2014–2017)
- Yemeni Civil War
- War in Afghanistan
- Conflict in eastern Ukraine
- Boko Haram insurgency
- Libyan Civil War
- South Sudanese Civil War

2020

Progress toward gender parity in peace operations remained uneven. Following the adoption of the UN Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy in 2018, modest gains were observed. The report *Women In Multilateral Peace Operations In 2020: What's The State Of Play?* Shows that by October 2020, women represented 10% of force commanders and 18% of military experts and staff officers in UN military operations. In UN policing, 43% of chief police officers were women, and 26% of heads of mission in peace operations were women. However, overall progress remained slow, reflecting persistent structural barriers to women's participation in peace and security.

The year was defined by the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted global systems and exacerbated existing inequalities. Geopolitical tensions also intensified, including the U.S. assassination of General Qasem Soleimani, ongoing U.S.–China tensions, and the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union (Brexit).

Additional shocks included the Beirut port explosion and the signing of the Abraham Accords, reshaping dynamics in the Middle East.

Key armed conflicts in 2020 included:

- Ongoing conflicts in Syria and Yemen
- The Nagorno-Karabakh war
- The outbreak of conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region
- Continued violence in Afghanistan
- The Libyan Civil War
- Various insurgencies, including in Mozambique and Iraq

2025

By 2025, progress toward gender parity in peace operations showed mixed results. According to UN Women, several targets under the United Nations Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy (2018–2028) had been met or exceeded, particularly in policing and justice sectors. However, representation remained uneven in military contingents, where women accounted for only 8%, below the 11% target.

Despite these gains, women continued to be largely excluded from formal peace processes. In 2024, women made up only 7% of negotiators and 14% of mediators globally, with many peace processes still including no women at all. These figures remain far below international parity targets and reflect persistent barriers to women's meaningful participation.

At the geopolitical level, 2025 was marked by renewed tensions and shifting power dynamics. The return of Donald Trump to the U.S. presidency signaled a continuation of “America First” policies, while U.S.–Iran tensions escalated through direct and proxy confrontations. Regional instability also intensified in Latin America and the Caribbean, alongside continued volatility in the Middle East, particularly in Gaza.

Key armed conflicts in 2025 included:

- The war in Ukraine
- The Israel–Gaza conflict and broader regional tensions
- The Sudanese civil war
- Escalating insurgencies in the Sahel
- Ongoing instability in Myanmar, Yemen, Somalia, and Haiti
- Rising tensions in South Asia and East Asia

Methodology

This study draws on official documents from the United Nations Security Council, focusing specifically on resolutions adopted in selected years – which are 2015, 2020 and 2025. The data were collected from the United Nations Digital Library, which provides full-text access to UN resolutions and decisions. The analysis combines quantitative content analysis with a qualitative feminist discourse approach, allowing for both measurement of patterns and interpretation of meaning.

To construct the dataset, resolutions were retrieved using the search query *fulltext: (gender OR wom*n OR girl)*. Results were then filtered according to three criteria:

- (1) resource type (resolutions and decisions)
- (2) UN body (Security Council), and
- (3) year of adoption.

The analysis focuses on three reference years as mentioned before – 2015, 2020, and 2025 – allowing for a comparison across a decade. The total number of resolutions analyzed in each year is as follows:

- 57 resolutions in 2015,
- 44 resolutions in 2020, and
- 19 resolutions in 2025

Each document was assigned a unique identifier based on its official resolution number (e.g., S/RES/XXXX), ensuring traceability and consistency throughout the analysis.

The first stage consists of a frequency-based analysis of gender-related terms. For each resolution, the number of occurrences of the following keywords was recorded: *gender*, *women*, *woman*, and *girls*. These terms serve as baseline indicators of whether and to what extent gender is explicitly referenced in Security Council discourse.

This study draws on official documents from the United Nations Security Council, focusing specifically on resolutions adopted in selected years, which are 2015, 2020 and 2025. The data were collected from the United Nations Digital Library, which provides full-text access to UN resolutions and decisions.

In addition, a second group of terms associated with leadership and representation - such as *leadership, participation, representation, decision-making, inclusion, and equality* - was used to identify whether women are framed as active political agents. The results were systematically recorded in a coding sheet, including cases where no references to women or gender were found, which constitute an important empirical finding in themselves.

While frequency counts provide an overview of visibility, they do not capture how women are represented. To address this limitation, the second stage applies a qualitative analysis focusing on the context in which women and girls are mentioned.

For each relevant paragraph, the analysis evaluates three key dimensions: (1) who is being referred to, (2) the role attributed to them, and (3) the degree of agency implied in the language. Based on this assessment, references to women are coded into distinct categories of role framing:

- **Victim framing:** women are primarily portrayed as vulnerable and in need of protection
- **Beneficiary framing:** women are included as recipients of aid or policy outcomes, without active agency
- **Leadership framing:** women are depicted as decision-makers, mediators, or political actors
- **Mixed framing:** multiple roles are present within the same resolution

In parallel, the analysis captures whether resolutions explicitly reference women's leadership or participation in decision-making processes, as well as whether they acknowledge structural underrepresentation.

Each resolution was also classified according to its primary thematic focus, including the following categories: Conflict, Peace and Security, Peacekeeping, Sanctions, and Human Rights.

To complement both the quantitative and qualitative dimensions, the study incorporates a distributional analysis of where references to women and gender appear with the structure of each resolution. Specifically, the analysis examines whether such mentions are located in central or peripheral sections of the text. This is operationalized through two forms of categorization:

- (1) Mentions in early versus later sections of the Resolutions;
- (2) Mentions in preambular versus operative paragraphs;

This distinction is analytically relevant, as operative paragraphs are more directly linked to decision-making and policy implementation.

Additional examination assesses the strength of the language used in relation to women and gender by distinguishing between binding and non-binding formulations. Binding language typically appears in paragraphs introduced by terms such as “decides,” indicating formal commitments, whereas non-binding language is associated with expressions such as “urges,” “invites,” or “calls upon,” which signal weaker or more symbolic forms of engagement.

Finally, the study distinguishes between two types of policy language:

- (1) Symbolic language, characterized by broad or normative commitments without concrete mechanisms, and
- (2) Operational language, which includes specific measures, responsibilities, or targets.

This distinction allows the analysis to assess whether women are included in Security Council discourse, and the extent to which such inclusion translates into actionable commitments.

Findings and Conclusion

This study presents several limitations that should be acknowledged before diving into the findings. First, the analysis focuses on three reference years (2015, 2020, and 2025), which, while allowing for a comparative perspective across a decade, do not capture the full evolution of gender discourse within the Security Council. Expanding the dataset to include additional years would provide a more comprehensive understanding of long-term trends and fluctuations.

Second, the scope of this research is limited to United Nations Security Council resolutions. While this reflects the Council's central role in international peace and security, it does not account for how gender is framed and gender programming is resourced across other principal UN organs. A comparative analysis with United Nations General Assembly resolutions, Human Rights Council resolutions, and Voluntary National Reviews to the High-Level Political Forum, for instance, could offer valuable insights into whether and how representations of women differ across institutional contexts.

Finally, the depth of qualitative analysis was constrained by time and resource limitations. A broader research team or longer timeframe would allow for a more expansive dataset and deeper discourse analysis, potentially capturing more nuanced patterns of representation and variation across thematic areas.

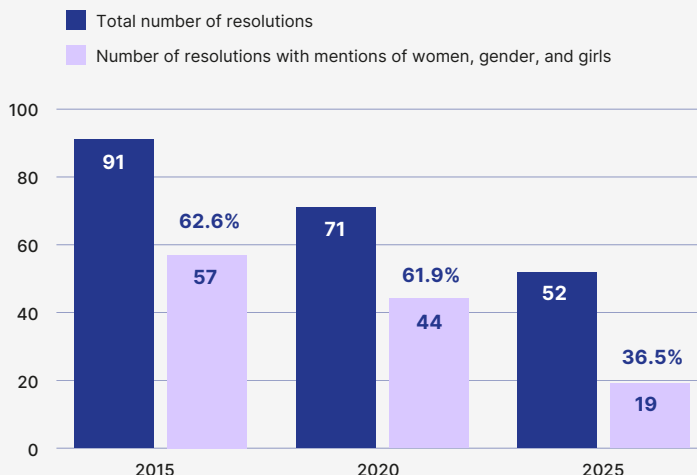
The total number of UN Security Council resolutions per year:

- * **2015** = 91 resolutions
- * **2020** = 71 resolutions
- * **2025** = 52 resolutions

The percentage of resolutions per year that include mentions of "women," "gender," and "girls":

- * **2015** = 57 out of 91 (62.6%)
- * **2020** = 44 out of 71 (61.9%)
- * **2025** = 19 out of 52 (36.5%)

FINDINGS



Findings graph: The columns (in pairs) produce the displayed percentages of UN Security Council resolutions that included mentions of women, gender, and girls across the years 2015, 2020, and 2025.

Source: Developed by the research team based on data from United Nations Security-Council resolutions from 2015, 2020, and 2025.

While the percentage has stayed consistent from 2015 to 2020, there has been a rather sharp decline of resolutions that mention “women,” “gender,” and “girls” by 2025.

The resolutions in our dataset pertained to one or more of the following themes:

- Conflict
- Peace and Security
- Peacekeeping
- Sanctions
- Human Rights

The data gathered was analyzed against a few different metrics to determine if, and how, the language around women and gender has varied in the decade between 2015 and 2025.

DISTRIBUTION ANALYSIS

First, examining whether mentions of women and gender appear towards the central sections of the resolutions, or their peripheries. This took the following forms of categorization:

- Mentions in “Early” versus “Later” sections
- Mentions in “Preambular” versus “Operative” sections

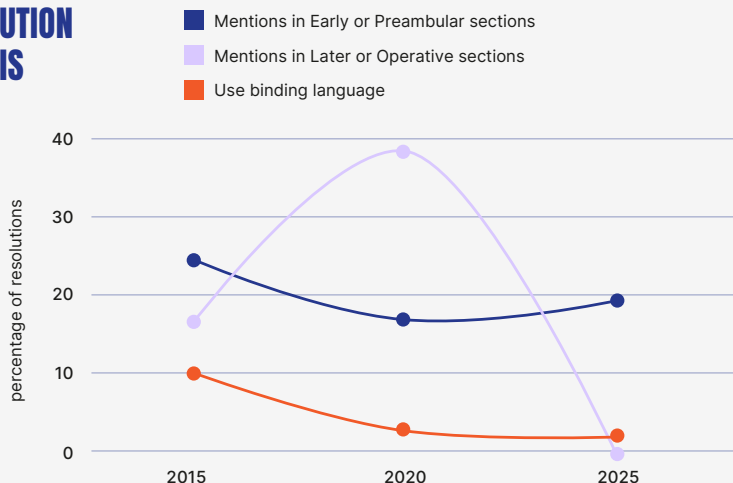
Given that the early sections of a resolution tend to be preambulatory in nature, while the later sections usually contain the operative components, the findings were combined as presented below.

Additional examination revealed if the language used in relation to women and gender was “Binding” or “Non-binding.” Paragraphs deploying binding language often start with imperatives such as “decides,” while those with non-binding language tend to use terms such as “urges,” “invites,” “calls upon,” and so on instead.

Findings

	2015	2020	2025
Mentions in Early or Preambular sections	22 out of 91 (24.2%)	12 out of 71 (16.9%)	10 out of 52 (19.2%)
Mentions in Later or Operative sections	15 out of 91 (16.4%)	27 out of 71 (38%)	0
Note: The remaining resolutions included mentions of women in both sections, and were codified into a third “Mixed” category.			
Used binding language	9 out of 91 (9.8%)	2 out of 71 (2.8%)	1 out of 52 (1.9%)

DISTRIBUTION ANALYSIS



Distribution Analysis: This graph examines precisely where the mentions of women, gender, and girls are located in the resolutions. Mentions in later sections often hold more operative connotations as opposed to mentions in early sections. Additionally, the use of imperatives are taken to signify binding language.

Source: Developed by the research team based on data from United Nations Security-Council resolutions from 2015, 2020, and 2025.

Analysing the placement of the language in conjunction with whether it is operational or symbolic in nature better illustrates not only if gender is present, but also how prominently it is positioned.

In terms of language placement, 2015 was not too promising, with about 16.4% of resolutions mentioning women exclusively in later or operative sections, while 2020 saw a significant increase to 38%. Unfortunately, this progress was undone by 2025 with 19.2% of mentions being in early or preambular sections and none exclusively in later or operative sections.

The nature of language used, however, paints a slightly different picture. Though a very small percentage to begin with, 9.8% of resolutions in 2015 used binding language in relation to women's struggles. A number that dropped to a mere 2.8% in 2020, and saw a further decrease to 1.9% in 2025.

CO-OCCURRENCE ANALYSIS

Second, investigating the contexts in which women and gender are mentioned, by looking at the words that appear alongside them within the same paragraph or sub-resolution.

Specific attention was paid to the following questions:

- Role framing: How are women represented in the resolution?
- Leadership reference: Is there an explicit mention(s) of women in leadership or decision-making positions?
- Acknowledgement of underrepresentation: Is the lack of women’s representation noted?

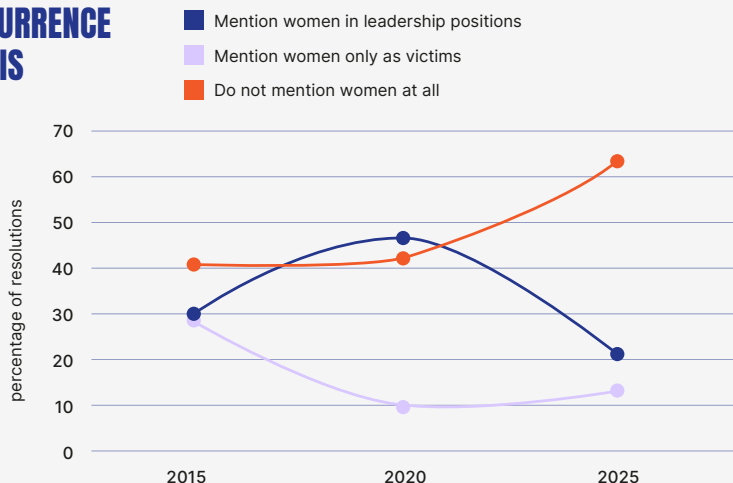
Through this analysis, it emerged that women are often relegated to one or more of the following archetypes:

- Victims (or Vulnerable Groups)
- Leaders
- Beneficiaries
- Important Actors

Findings

	2015	2020	2025
Reference women in leadership positions	28 out of 91 (30.7%)	33 out of 71 (46.5%)	4 out of 52 (21%)
Acknowledge the underrepresentation of women	29 out of 91 (31.8%)	12 out of 71 (16.9%)	9 out of 52 (47.3%)
Don't mention women at all	37 out of 91 (40.6%)	30 out of 71 (42.2%)	33 out of 52 (63.4%)
Mention women only as victims or vulnerable groups	27 out of 91 (29.6%)	7 out of 71 (9.8%)	7 out of 52 (13.4%)
Note: The remaining resolutions that referenced women as victims or vulnerable groups, also referred to them as leaders/beneficiaries/important actors, and so were codified separately.			

CO-OCCURRENCE ANALYSIS



Co-occurrence Analysis: This graph portrays the contexts in which women, gender, and girls were mentioned in the resolutions; specifically in relation to role framing, references to leadership, and acknowledgement of underrepresentation.

Source: Developed by the research team based on data from United Nations Security-Council resolutions from 2015, 2020, and 2025.

Considering the first two metrics in tandem, roughly 30% of the resolutions in 2015 both reference women in leadership roles and acknowledge their lack of representation. Meanwhile in 2020, by citing women as leaders and decision makers in 46.5% of resolutions, there are significantly lesser nods to their underrepresentation. 2025 fares the worst in referencing women as leaders, along with a decent acknowledgement of their underrepresentation. Strikingly, 63.4% of resolutions in 2025 do not mention women at all.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

A search of the United Nations Digital Library revealed that for the years in question, there were not many resolutions pertaining to critical themes – Women, Peace and Security, Climate, Gender-Based Violence – that included mentions of women.

Findings

	2015	2020	2025
Women, Peace and Security	12	2	1
Climate	0	0	0
Gender-Based Violence (GBV)	5	0	0

Gender inequality is not an issue of the past. Systems, whether economic, socio-cultural, political or legal, remain rooted in practices that disadvantage women and continue to pose barriers to their advancement.

The data may not chart a linearly negative path, but the trends identified across the five-year increments of 2015, 2020, and 2025 are still worrying, to say the least. They signal the decline, within a decade, of critical discussion surrounding women’s rights, struggles, and livelihood, in the landscape of UN Security Council resolutions. Although dependent on the specific context at hand, less space on paper can translate to less space for meaningful inclusion and dialogue as well as less opportunities for women to occupy positions of agency. If the very language around women and gender has not progressed, or has rather regressed, despite the sustained prevalence of gender-based violence, discrimination, and inequalities, what are the implications on the ground? And can the lack of progress be attributed to a genuine concern that striving towards gender equality is not a priority?

Afterword

Words are never the end of the story.

They are the very start to frame debates, shape expectations, and influence how institutions understand both problems and solutions. The true value of words lies in what they catalyse: decisions taken, partnerships forged, policies advanced, and leadership exercised.

Throughout this publication, we have explored how language reflects the priorities of our multilateral system. We have also seen that the words chosen—or omitted—carry consequences. They determine whose experiences are recognized, which challenges receive attention, and what futures become imaginable.

Yet the purpose of this report has never been simply to analyze discourse, but to encourage action. At a time when the international community faces increasingly complex and interconnected challenges, multilateralism must continue to evolve. More representative leadership, broader participation, and more inclusive narratives are not aspirations detached from institutional effectiveness; they are conditions for it. Institutions that better reflect the diversity of the people they serve are better equipped to understand emerging challenges, build trust, and develop lasting solutions.

This publication is therefore an invitation to look beyond the language itself and consider what it enables. Which voices are shaping global priorities? Which perspectives remain absent? How can our institutions better reflect the societies they represent?

Progress rarely comes from a single speech, report, or summit. It emerges through the steady accumulation of ideas translated into practice, commitments transformed into policies, and dialogue converted into collective action.

Words matter because they reveal our priorities. Leadership matters because it transforms those priorities into action. Together, words and leadership shape the multilateralism we hand over to future generations.

Aranha González-Laya

GWL Voices Member

Dean of the Paris School of International Affairs at Sciences Po

