

The State Of Play For Women's Safety Risks Across The Globe

The Progression And Regression Of Women's Rights In 2024

The landscape for women's safety risks and rights is always changing. In many parts of the world, the changes are still predominantly negative. In fact, in September 2023, the United Nations stated that the world is failing girls and women as there is a constant shortfall in achieving gender equality.

As a global travel risk management provider, we have always put women's safety while travelling at the forefront of its operations. Before International Women's Day 2024, and to help organisations keep their female employees safe while travelling overseas, we compiled a list of the countries that have seen progression in their stance on women's rights, and safety, and the countries where women's rights have deteriorated.

Regression

- Femicide is on the rise in countries such as Austria, India, Somalia, and Italy, which puts female travellers at risk. In Vienna earlier this year, five women were killed in the span of 24 hours by men. In India, femicide is considered an epidemic within the country, as women are often killed by their partners or by their families. There have been protests erupting in Somalia as femicide rates rise exponentially. In Italy, there were over 100 femicide victims in 2023 who were either killed by their partners or through a random attack
- The United States has been in the spotlight this year as new legislations are proposed which constantly compromise women's reproductive rights and safety. Most recently the Alabama State Court ruled that frozen embryos should be considered children which will infringe on a women's right to undergo IVF treatment. Women's reproductive care is also not widely available in many states which continues to put women at risk
- El Salvador has fully criminalised abortion and currently has one of the highest femicide rates in the world. Women travelling to El Salvador should be on high alert and always remain in a group
- MENA states such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and Lebanon still restrict women's rights to movement as many women require permission from a man, or a male escort, to leave the house. Women are also not allowed to obtain a passport or travel abroad freely

- Iran is still enforcing punitive measures against women who defy compulsory hijab laws and businesses that do not enforce them on their premises. Female travellers should be aware of these laws and follow them accordingly if spending time in Iran
- Attacks on women within the United Kingdom are increasing. Female travellers should exercise caution if travelling alone, especially at night. Recently, a woman and her two daughters were attacked with a chemical substance by a male known to them which highlights an ongoing threat to women's safety.

Progression

- Australia has increased support for women's rights globally and continues to be a safe place for women
- Brazil's supreme court is one step closer to decriminalising abortion which is a major move in the right direction for achieving equality and equity within Brazil
- The European Union advances on a treaty to end violence and harassment at work. The treaty lays out international legal standards for preventing and responding to violence and harassment in the workplace. It ensures governments have comprehensive national laws against harassment and violence at work and ensures there is proper support for survivors. This treaty would ensure a safer working environment for women in the future.

Quotes on how to keep female employees safe while travelling overseas, from Raquel Recuero, Regional Security Manager (Asia Pacific), Healix

Before travel: "Before deploying female members of staff overseas, risk managers at organisations should seek expert advice on local laws and customs regarding women's rights regarding dress codes and cultural and other regulations that may apply exclusively to women. Compliance with local laws and customs will avoid potentially heavy penalties and mitigate the risk of being targeted".

Female health and hygiene overseas: "Risk managers need to consider the availability of access to female healthcare and hygiene products and ensure plans are in place to provide quick and safe access to female employees, in the case of an emergency. In some countries, access to certain medication – such as emergency contraception – and sanitary products, can

be difficult. This is especially true in remote areas or areas where menstruation is a taboo issue.

If a female member of staff is pregnant while travelling for work, she should carry a copy of all maternity notes along with details of any pre-existing conditions, and her blood-type. Ideally, all notes are translated into the language of the country she is travelling to – removing any barriers to communication and, therefore, treatment. She should completely avoid any non-essential travel to areas with ongoing high-risk of Zika virus transmission, malaria, and yellow fever".

Staying safe during the trip: "Risk managers should encourage female members of staff to remain alert while socialising or consuming alcohol overseas. Unfortunately, the use of drugs in sexual assaults is becoming increasingly common and women are at higher risk of experiencing unwanted attention in the form of aggressive, threatening, or inappropriate language, or even physical contact. Look up the numbers of the local police, hospital, or embassy in the area, so they have this information to hand should something go wrong.

Many hotels also now have different safety strategies in place, particularly for lone females, such as safer room allocations, women-only floors with female security, escorts and more. Talk to the hotel where your female employees will be staying, to see what they have in place".

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As a Regional Security Manager at Healix, Raquel oversees the security operations and the delivery of consultancy for clients in the Asia Pacific region. She has more than five years of experience in the security industry, working as an Associate Consultant and a Senior Regional Security Coordinator at Healix before taking on her current role.

Raquel has a Master of Arts in Intelligence Analysis from Universidad Rey Juan Carlos and a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, with a minor in International Cooperation. She has also completed several certifications in structured analytic techniques and social project management for NGOs and CSOs.

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