ACLED

FAQs*: Political Violence Targeting Women* (PVTW), *Demonstrations Featuring Women* (DFW), and *Political Violence Targeting Women in Politics* (PVTWIP)

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About ACLED's gendered coverage

Q: When did ACLED introduce a gendered component to coverage, and how has this evolved over time?
A: In May 2019, ACLED first introduced gendered *associated actors* in the data, and [an accompanying report](#), in partnership with the [Robert Strauss Center for International Security and Law at the University of Texas at Austin](#). This initial launch introduced 'women' as an *associated actor* in ACLED data*,* allowing users to capture 'political violence targeting women' and 'demonstrations featuring women' across four geographic regions (*more on those below*). Since the end of the project with the Strauss Center, ACLED coverage has expanded to include nearly every other region of the world, in line with ACLED's concurrent geographic expansions.[1] In December 2021, ACLED introduced stylized tags capturing the identity types of targeted women, specifically 'women in politics', alongside an [accompanying report](#), allowing users to capture 'political violence targeting women in politics' (*more on that below*).

Q: What does 'political violence targeting women' mean?
A: Women are coded as the main victims only in events when the victim(s) are composed entirely of women/girls, majority women/girls, or if the primary target was a woman/girl (e.g. a woman politician attacked alongside two men bodyguards). These events refer to cases of direct targeting, and are coded under the *event type* 'Violence against civilians' with *sub-event type* 'Attack', 'Abduction/forced disappearance', or 'Sexual violence', or under *event type* 'Riots' with *sub-event type* 'Mob violence'. Events in which women are killed alongside men, for example, are not categorized as such. In cases of women being targeted through 'Explosions/Remote violence', when targeting has the potential of being more random, this rule is applied more conservatively. Cases such as an airstrike killing 3 women and 1 man would therefore not be coded as having 'targeted women'. However, such events where the targeting is clearly directed at women/girls are included (e.g. a remote explosive targeting a girls' school, or a grenade thrown at a woman politician). These are cases in which we assume that women have been targeted because of their gender.

Q: What does 'political violence targeting women in politics' mean?
A: This refers to events of 'political violence targeting women' in which 'women in politics' are specifically targeted. 'Women in politics' refer to women who are directly or indirectly engaging in political processes: women candidates for office, politicians, political party supporters, voters, government officials, and activists/human rights defenders/social leaders.

Q: What does 'demonstrations featuring women' mean?
A: Demonstrations featuring women are those where demonstrators are made up entirely by women or a majority of women (e.g. a gathering of mothers of prisoners), a women's group (e.g. Women of Zimbabwe Arise [WOZA]), or are organized around women's rights or issues specifically

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[1] ACLED currently covers the entire world, with the exception of Canada and Oceania. Data for these remaining regions will be released in early 2022, bringing ACLED to full global coverage. See our current list of country and time period coverage [here](#).

(e.g. women's reproductive rights, or policies around women's clothing). Events in which women are simply demonstrating alongside men, for example, are not categorized as such.

Q: Do these data capture all types of violence that women face?
A: No. Only political/public violence is included. Domestic, interpersonal, or intimate partner violence is excluded. Additionally, only physical violence (or an attempt at physical violence, such as a failed assassination attempt) is included; this includes sexual violence (*for more, see this methodology primer*). Threats of physical violence or intimidation are excluded (such as psycho-social violence, or online violence). **The totality of all violence women face stretches far beyond the subset of violence captured in the data here.**

Q: Does 'political violence' refer to 'people in politics'?
A: Not necessarily. ACLED defines 'political violence' as "the use of force by a group with a political purpose or motivation" (*see the ACLED Codebook*). While this can include violence that involves or targets those 'in politics' — like politicians — it does not always nor need to involve such agents.

Q: Does ACLED disaggregate events by gender?
A: No. This is not a gender disaggregation of the ACLED dataset. It should not be assumed that events in which women are not coded as an *associated actor* did not involve women; those can be events in which reports do not note the gender of the victim(s), or may be events in which women were killed alongside men.

Q: Does ACLED disaggregate fatalities by gender?
A: No. This is not a gender disaggregation of the ACLED dataset. It should not be assumed that all fatalities in events categorized as violence targeting women were necessarily women. Women may be targeted and killed alongside men; for example, a case in which a woman politician is killed alongside two of her men bodyguards would be categorized as 'violence targeting women' and would be coded with three fatalities, even though not all three of those fatalities are women. In turn, it should also not be assumed that all fatalities in events *not* categorized as 'political violence targeting women' are men victims. Women can be killed alongside men, such as by an airstrike or as a result of live fire targeting labor demonstrators. Hence, some of the fatalities from such events can indeed also be women. Furthermore, it is important to remember that fatality numbers are frequently the most biased and poorly reported component of conflict data. (*For more on ACLED methodology around the coding of fatalities, see this primer.*)

The scope of the data

Q: Women can be perpetrators of violence too and not just victims. Is this captured in these data?
A: No. Within this initiative, only political violence in which women are *targeted* is included. Perpetrators of violence that involve women, such as the Free Women's Units of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK-YJA STAR), are not coded with an *associated actor* category denoting 'women' as part of this coding structure. This means that suicide bombings *by women*, for example, are not

included as 'political violence *targeting* women'; in such an example, a suicide bomber's *targets* are what determines whether an attack is categorized as such or not.

Q: Can these data help me understand how much violence women face?
A: No. The data here capture political violence *targeting* women — which is not equivalent to all political violence *against* women. For example, an airstrike on a town may kill both men and women; the women in this case were not specifically targeted over the men, rather civilians more generally were targeted. Such a case would not be specifically categorized as 'political violence targeting women' here. A number of other types of violence that women face — such as private, domestic, interpersonal, or intimate partner violence, as well as criminal violence, and non-physical violence (e.g. psycho-social, threats, intimidation, etc.) — are also not included here (*for more on that, see below*). Furthermore, it is important to note that underreporting of violence targeting women by victims is common due to backlash or normative concerns and this should be considered when drawing conclusions from the data. As is the same for all datasets, coverage within the ACLED dataset is limited to what has been reported in some capacity. **As such, these data should *not* be used to understand *all* violence women face; that is a much larger set of information.**

Q: Can these data tell me how many women have been targeted?
A: No. ACLED is an event-based dataset, meaning that each entry in the dataset is an 'event'; events are denoted by the involvement of designated actors, occurring in a specific named location and on a specific day. When recording 'political violence targeting women', an event can involve one to many victims: three women killed by a soldier in a specific town on a certain day is collected as a single event; a girls' school attacked in a specific town on a certain day is coded the same way. The number of *events* should therefore not be conflated with the number of *victims* – in the same way that the number of violent events in the ACLED dataset should not be conflated with the number of fatalities. These capture different trends.

Q: Can these data help me understand how often women demonstrate?
A: No. The data here capture demonstrations *featuring* women or women's issues — these are not equivalent to demonstrations *involving* women. Demonstrations featuring women are those in which the demonstrators are made up entirely by women or a majority of women (e.g. a gathering of mothers of prisoners), a women's group (e.g. Women of Zimbabwe Arise [WOZA]), or organized around women's rights specifically (e.g. women's reproductive rights, or policies around women's clothing). Demonstrations which would not be categorized as 'featuring women' might include, for example, a protest around labor rights involving both men and women; the women in this case were not necessarily a majority, nor were they advocating for 'women's rights' in particular. **These data should *not* be used to understand the *full* involvement of women in social movements; that is a much larger set of information.**

The targets of violence

Q: Who can the targets of 'political violence targeting women' be?
A: Women (including trans-women,[2] when reported) and girls are included as victims. This means that 'women in politics' are coded, as are other categories of women (*for more on these categories, see below*). Women are coded as an *associated actor* when their gender is a salient identity in their targeting. Gender will not be the salient identity in every instance of political violence against women. Salient identities are not fixed in time and space; the intersectional nature of identities means that different aspects of one's identity may be salient at different times, places, and contexts.

Q: What about men? Are they included as an *associated actor* when they are targeted?
A: Men are included as an *associated actor* when their gender is a salient identity in their targeting — this means when they are the victims of sexual violence specifically and can be included as *associated actor* in those events.

Q: Do these data capture political violence targeting '*women in politics*'?
A: 'Political violence targeting women' (PVTW) is not limited to just 'women in politics'. All political/public physical violence targeting women is included, regardless of the specific occupation of the victim. However, the subset of events referred to as 'political violence targeting women in politics' specifically refers to the subset of PVTW which targets 'women in politics'; this includes women candidates for office, politicians, political party supporters, voters, government officials, and activists/human rights defenders/social leaders. Users can identify the relevant events in which such women are targeted by using stylized tags — such as "[women targeted: politicians]" — which appears at the end of the event summary in the *Notes* column. These categories/tags are not mutually exclusive; when multiple identity categories apply, all relevant tags will be included. For example, if a political party supporter is attacked while casting her vote, the event will be tagged as "[women targeted: political party supporters] [women targeted: voters]". A list of these six identity types, their definitions, and the format of the stylized tag in the *Notes* column in the data can be found below:

- Candidates for office *[women targeted: candidates for office]*
  - Women who are running in an election to hold a publicly elected government position; this position can be in local, regional, or national government. This includes, but is not limited to, incumbent candidates.
- Politicians *[women targeted: politicians]*
  - Women who currently serve in an elected position in government, regardless of whether that government is at the local, regional, or national level.
- Political party supporters *[women targeted: political party supporters]*
  - Women who contribute to, endorse, and/or act in support of a political party or candidate that extends outside of voting, via membership, participation in party events, monetary donations, or other forms of support. This also includes women

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[2] ACLED includes an LGBT identity category, when salient and reported, along the same lines outlined here.

who refuse to act, endorse, or support a specific political party or candidate, regardless of whether or not their preferred party or candidate is listed.

- Voters *[women targeted: voters]*
    - Women who are actively participating in, have actively participated in, or attempt to actively participate in local, state/regional, and/or national elections or referendums. Active participation refers specifically to registering to vote or casting a ballot in an election.
- Government officials *[women targeted: government officials]*
    - Women who work for the local, regional, or national government in a non-partisan capacity. This includes public/civil servants, local authorities, or non-partisan political appointments, such as judges. This also includes women who work to support the proper functioning of elections; electoral assistance groups include independent and/or non-partisan poll workers or poll monitors.
- Activists/human rights defenders/social leaders *[women targeted: activists/human rights defenders/social leaders]*
    - Women who peacefully advocate for a specific social cause and/or actively promote the expansion or protection of human rights. These rights can include women's rights, civic rights, environmental rights, and more. This also includes social leaders, who are often prominent, local activists known for their community advocacy.

Q: What other identity types of targeted women are captured, beyond 'women in politics'?
A: In addition to six categories of 'women in politics' outlined above, other identity types are also captured. Three of these identity types are captured as stylized tags — such as "[women targeted: relatives of targeted groups or persons]" — which appear at the end of the event summary in the *Notes* column. A list of these three identity types, their definitions, and the format of the stylized tag in the *Notes* column in the data can be found below.

- Relatives of targeted groups or persons *[women targeted: relatives of targeted groups or persons]*
    - Women who are subject to violence as a result of who they are married to, the daughter of, related to, or are otherwise personally connected to (e.g. candidates, politicians, social leaders, armed actors, voters, party supporters, etc.).
- Accused of witchcraft/sorcery *[women targeted: accused of witchcraft/sorcery]*
    - Women accused of witchcraft or sorcery, or other mystical or spiritual practices that are typically considered taboo or dangerous within some societies (excluding women who serve as religious leaders in religious structures that are typically not viewed as taboo or dangerous, such as nuns, female priests, or shamans).
- Girls *[women targeted: girls]*
    - Girls who are under the age of 18; they may be specifically referred to by age or explicitly referred to as a child/girl.

Other identity types (e.g. journalists, ethnic identity, religious identity, students, etc.) can be found in the *associated actor* column alongside the 'Women (COUNTRY)' *associated actor*. (*For more on* associated actors*, see the* [ACLED Codebook](#)*.*)

Coverage in both time and space

Q: What countries and regions are covered in these data?
A: All countries covered by ACLED are included *(please reference [ACLED's coverage list](#) for the latest information).*

Q: Can I do regional comparisons of 'political violence targeting women' or 'demonstrations featuring women'?
A: Yes, with certain caveats. It is important to note that ACLED's coverage of regions over time is not uniform. ACLED began as an African data project and data covering the African continent span back the farthest. Geographic expansions since then extend coverage for new regions back in time only to a certain point, as resources allow. It is imperative to keep this in mind when reviewing trends across regions over time so as not to introduce an artificial spike into the data with the introduction of new regions into the timeline *(please reference [ACLED's coverage list](#) for further information).* It is important for the user to ensure they are comparing countries across periods of time that are equally covered (e.g. do not compare trends from 1997 to present between Burundi, where coverage extends back to 1997, and Syria, where coverage extends back to 2017).

Q: What time period is covered in these data?
A: Temporal coverage across regions of ACLED coverage varies (*see above*). Once ACLED begins coverage of a country, it is continuously covered — regardless of whether it is a war-time context or election period specifically.

Data accessibility

Q: How do I determine which ACLED events are 'political violence targeting women', or 'demonstrations featuring women', or 'political violence targeting women in politics'?
A: 'Political violence targeting women' events are denoted with 'Women (COUNTRY)' as an *associated actor* to civilians (i.e. appearing in the *Associated Actor 1* or *Associated Actor 2* columns in the data). Of these, 'political violence targeting women in politics' refer to those events in which one of the respective stylized tags (e.g. [women targeted: candidates for office], [women targeted: politicians], [women targeted: political party supporters], [women targeted: voters], [women targeted: government officials], or [women targeted: activists/human rights defenders/social leaders]) appears in the *Notes* column in the data. 'Demonstrations featuring women' events are denoted with 'Women (COUNTRY)' as an *associated actor* to protesters or rioters (i.e. appearing in the *Associated Actor 1* or *Associated Actor 2* columns in the data). Each week, all such events are disaggregated into a [curated data file](#) that can be accessed more easily for those interested in working with only that subset of data.

Q: How can I access these data?
A: These new data are publicly accessible via ACLED's website — both through the data export tool as well as via a curated data file — and also via the API on a weekly basis, allowing users to monitor these trends in near-real-time for analysis, programming, early warning, advocacy, and more. For more on accessibility and relevant stipulations, please see ACLED's Terms of Use & Attribution Policy. To access the data, users will need to first register for a free account; steps are spelled out in this guide, with frequently asked questions covered in this FAQ document.

Q: How often are data updated?
A: These new data are updated on a weekly basis in conjunction with ACLED's weekly data release schedule (with new data published every Monday/Tuesday covering the Saturday through Friday prior). ACLED works to maintain a 'living dataset', meaning that in addition to weekly releases of new data covering the week prior, supplementation of historic periods is also ongoing with information from new sources, targeted research, and new partnerships being integrated.

Q: How do I cite these data?
A: Please see ACLED's Terms of Use & Attribution Policy.

Other

Q: How can I help improve ACLED's coverage of political violence targeting women and/or demonstrations featuring women?
A: If you are an organization collecting information on political violence targeting women, including women in politics, or demonstrations featuring women, and are interested in a partnership with ACLED to help extend coverage of these threats to women further, please reach out to us at admin@acleddata.com.