



# WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW 2025

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## **MANUAL AND GUIDE**

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# Introduction

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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The World Bank’s *Women, Business and the Law* (WBL) is a global benchmarking project that provides comprehensive and comparable data on how laws, regulations, and policies affect women’s economic opportunities and private sector development in 190 economies. The project is housed in the World Bank’s Development Economics Global Indicators Group (DECIG).

*Women, Business and the Law* (WBL) data and research findings have been instrumental in informing policy dialogue on gender equality reform to drive global growth and productivity for more than 15 years. Introduced in 2010, the project has amassed a rigorous worldwide database and has produced ten annual reports, with data spanning more than 50 years, highlighting legal reforms affecting women’s economic participation from 1970 to the present. Initially focused on analyzing laws “on the books” (de jure), the WBL report has, in 2024, expanded its scope to assess the implementation of these laws in practice (de facto). It aims to do so by examining economies’ diverse policy and institutional frameworks in support of legal implementation and gauging experts’ perceptions on the enforcement of laws. This evolution marks a significant step in understanding not only the existence of laws but their practical impact on women’s access to jobs and markets. The WBL reports align with broader international development goals related to gender equality and sustainable growth as laid out in the World Bank Gender Strategy 2024–2030 and the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The *Women, Business and the Law* Manual and Guide (WBL M&G) describes the production and dissemination process for the WBL reports and underlying data. It serves as an official source of information for WBL Team members and interested stakeholders. It aims to depict, consolidate, and codify WBL rules and protocols in a comprehensive way. It builds on rules and practices developed by the WBL Team to inform the steps of the processes of data collection, data validation, report preparation, and report dissemination. This document also describes processes intended to shield the WBL Team from the undue influence of internal and external stakeholders, presenting information about resources available to report and address any such instances. It aims to ensure the transparency, quality, and integrity of WBL data and research. The WBL M&G is updated, as necessary, once a year, at the start of each data collection cycle, to ensure that the rules and protocols described are aligned with data integrity and transparency best practices and that they accurately describe the systems and procedures put in place by the WBL Team.

As World Bank Group (WBG) employees, WBL staff are subject to all applicable WBG Staff Rules and standards of conduct. Those rules take precedence over the content of this Manual and Guide. The WBL M&G provides supplemental guidance relevant to the WBL context. While striving to be comprehensive, the WBL M&G is written as a succinct summary of WBL processes due to the expansive nature of the areas covered.

The WBL report production cycle consists of five phases over a 12-month period, from the design of the questionnaire to the publication of the report and data. Each phase is broadly covered in the sections that follow, with a particular focus on the phases that touch on data collection and data validation (see Figure 1).

1. Questionnaire design and systems configuration (December–April). During this phase, the WBL team designs the questionnaires that will be used to collect data and partners with IT colleagues to configure the systems for survey distribution, contributor relationship management, and data management.

2. Data collection in 190 economies (April–September). During this phase, questionnaires are distributed to private sector Expert Contributors and public sector respondents, as well as World Bank Group staff.
3. Desk research, data validation, and data review (April–September). During this phase, the WBL team validates the responses received with the relevant law, regulation, or policy mechanism, accessed through desk research. The validated data go through several layers of review to ensure quality and accuracy.
4. Score computation, data analysis, and report drafting (September–January). During this phase, the WBL team computes the scores for each indicator, topic, and pillar index. The scores are then analyzed, and highlights are presented in the draft report. The final data set and report then undergo a process of Bank-wide Review.
5. Publication and dissemination (February–onward). Following Bank-wide Review, the report is finalized and prepared for publication along with the final data set. The WBL team then engages in dissemination activities to present the findings from the latest report and data set.

FIGURE 1.  
WBL Report Production Cycle







# Glossary and Abbreviations

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## 2 GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

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**Analyst** – A WBL team member working in a Topic Team, other than the Topic Leader. An Analyst may be any staff described in [Staff Directive 4.01](#), Section 2.01, including temporaries and consultants.

**Back-to-Office Report (BTOR)** – A written report prepared by the team that conducts a Data Collection Mission. The team prepares both External and Internal BTORs. The External BTOR, to be shared with the Country Management Unit (CMU) and the broader department, states the mission’s main purposes, key mission highlights, and next steps. It also specifies each public sector agency met by the team during the mission. The Internal BTOR, for circulation with the WBL Team, contains the names and contact information of all Expert Contributors met by the team members during the mission and their individual responses, as well as contextual information and the findings of the Data Collection Mission.

**Bank-wide Review (BWR)** – The stage when the draft WBL report is circulated internally within the World Bank Group for feedback. This institutional review process, which includes economy data tables and data sets, is initiated by Development Economics (DEC) Management.

**Board of Directors** – The World Bank Group Board of Directors refers to four separate Boards of Directors: namely, the Board of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD); the Board of the International Development Agency (IDA); the Board of the International Finance Corporation (IFC); and the Board of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA). Executive Directors are appointed or elected by the World Bank Group Governors. Separate elections are held for the IBRD and MIGA Board of Directors. IBRD Executive Directors serve ex officio as Directors for IFC and IDA. In line with the IBRD’s Articles of Agreement, the Executive Directors select the World Bank President, who is the Chairman of the Board of Directors.

**Chief Economist (Vice President of DEC)** – The Senior Vice President and Chief Economist of the World Bank Group, responsible for providing intellectual leadership and direction to the Bank’s overall international development strategy and economic research agenda at the global, regional, and country levels.

**Contributor Management Team (CMT)** – One of the WBL functional teams. Responsible for overseeing the process of maintaining and expanding the pool of WBL Expert Contributors, establishing rules for the communication between the WBL Team and these experts, guiding the data collection process, and monitoring compliance with established rules. The Contributor Management Team is also mandated to build and maintain partnerships with global and regional partners.

**Contributor Relationship Management (CRM) system** – Database containing contact information and questionnaire tracking information for the Expert Contributors who WBL engages in the data collection and dissemination process.

**Country Director/Country Manager/Division Director** – Depending on the size of the program and nature of the country relationship, the World Bank Country Offices are headed by either a Division Director (when multiple countries are covered by the CMU), Country Director, Country Manager, or Resident Representative.

**Country Management Units (CMU)** – World Bank offices located in the Bank’s client countries, often covering a group of countries. Each of the seven Regional Vice Presidencies within the World Bank— Eastern and Southern Africa, Western and Central Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, and South Asia—has several CMUs. Each CMU is responsible for World Bank dialogue with the country government and the preparation of the Country Partnership Framework, which is the basis for the Bank’s financial support to the country.

**Data Collection Mission** – WBL mission with the principal aim of collecting and confirming data with the private sector and specific public agencies.

**Data Management System (DMS)** – Main repository for data collected during each WBL cycle and coding decisions for each topic.

**Data Team** – One of the WBL functional teams. In charge of data quality and integrity and also manages the survey distribution and data production processes. The team ensures the maintenance, in collaboration with colleagues in the Information and Technology Solutions (ITS) Vice Presidency, of the three main systems used by WBL (CRM, ngSurvey, and DMS). Under the Data Team’s purview are several key databases, including the WBL data set, the Reforms Database, the Law Library, and the Contributor Relationship Management database. Finally, the team is the custodian of the processes and procedures contained in this Manual and Guide.

**Development Economics Vice Presidency (DEC)** – The Development Economics Vice Presidency (DEC) increases understanding of development policies and programs by providing intellectual leadership and analytical services to the Bank and the development community. It is the premier research and data arm of the World Bank.

**DECIG (Global Indicators Group)** – The Global Indicators Group of the Development Economics Vice Presidency of the World Bank Group.

**DECIG Director (Director)** – The Director in charge of DECIG. Reporting to the Chief Economist and supervising the flagship data and reports produced by the department, including *Women, Business and the Law, Enterprise Surveys*, Global and Subnational *Business Ready*.

**Dissemination, Relationships, Engagement, and Media (DREAM) Team** – One of the WBL functional teams. Responsible for communications, knowledge management, strategic outreach, and stakeholder engagement to encourage the uptake of WBL data and research within and outside the World Bank.

**Enforcement Perceptions (EP) Team:** The enforcement perceptions team is one of the WBL topic teams. It collects data and constructs an index that evaluates legal experts’ views on how effectively public authorities enforce laws and uphold rights assessed in the Women, Business and the Law legal frameworks.

**Ethics and Internal Justice Services (EIJ) Vice Presidency** – It was established on the recommendation of the Task Force on Workplace Culture. EIJ promotes the World Bank Group’s Core Values, and provides ethical advisory and conflict resolution services to staff. It integrates functions related to compliance with Staff Rules and addressing work-related concerns and grievances.

**Executive Directors (EDs)** – The Executive Directors who make up the Board of Directors of the World Bank Group. Includes alternates to Executive Directors, who have full power to act in the absence of their respective Executive Directors.



**Experts or Expert Contributors** – Experts from 190 economies who every year complete WBL questionnaires containing the questions on which the WBL report is based. Experts are sometimes referred to as contributors or respondents.

**Experts Manager** – WBL Team member who oversees the process of maintaining and expanding the pool of WBL Expert Contributors and supports relationships between the WBL Team and these Experts. The team member also coordinates with Information and Technology Solutions (ITS) counterparts on tasks, issues, and enhancements concerning the Contributor Relationship Management (CRM) system.

**External and Corporate Relations (ECR)** – The Vice Presidency that works with World Bank Group leadership to secure financial and political support for the WBG, enable the achievement of country outcomes, and strengthen its role as a global thought leader in development.

**Government Engagement Portal** – A dedicated section on the WBL website for governments to request bilateral workshops or meetings. These workshops are closed to the public and include project overviews, methodology presentations, Q&A, and economy-specific data discussions.

**Group Internal Audit (GIA)** – The unit within the World Bank Group that provides an independent view on whether processes for managing and controlling risks to achieve the WBG's goals, and overall governance of these processes, are adequately designed and functioning effectively. GIA works across all WBG institutions, covering all operational corporate functions as well as information technology (IT) systems and processes.

**Information and Technology Solutions (ITS)** – The Vice Presidency that provides transformative information and technology resources to WBG staff.

**Law and Implementation Library** – Internal repository of digital copies of current and historical laws, regulations and other supporting documentary evidence used as a reference during the coding phase.

**Manager (also WBL Manager)** – The Manager of the WBL Team. The final review and decision-making layer within the team.

**ngSurvey** – IT platform used for the WBL questionnaires as well as collecting information from the Government Engagement Portal. The ngSurvey is used for the generation, storage, and extraction of questionnaires.

**Production Leader** – WBL Team member who oversees the writing and production process of the annual *Women, Business and the Law* report, including coordination with the Publications Office or external editor and typesetter and compilation and response to feedback from the Bank-wide Review.

**Reform** – A new law or amendment that improves the score of *Women, Business and the Law* indicators.

**Reform Advisory** – Any activity that involves providing specific guidance on reforms that directly affect the WBL indicators, scores, or rankings. Colleagues involved in Reform Advisory activities are not involved in the production of the data or the report, to guarantee data integrity.

**Research Quality and Analysis Team** – One of the WBL functional teams. In charge of creating the economy-level WBL indexes and data sets, providing the reproducibility package for the WBL data and report, reviewing the quality of research outputs, and developing guidelines for data quality and integrity.

**Research Team** – One of the WBL functional teams. In charge of producing research and coordinating the WBL Team’s research activities. The research team’s objectives include background research to strengthen the overall WBL methodology, producing analysis and empirical research papers using WBL data to increase the project’s impact, supporting the overall WBL Team on empirical analysis used in reports and briefs, and increasing the awareness of WBL data sets among economists and academia through networks and conferences. The team works closely and collaboratively with the Data Team and Topic Teams.

**Supervisor** – Supervisors within the WBL Team play a crucial role in fostering a positive and productive work environment. First, they ensure that Topic Leaders and teams consistently, accurately, and punctually fulfill their tasks and responsibilities by following the directions set forth by the Manager and Director. Additionally, they provide valuable guidance to Topic Leaders, encompassing both subject matter expertise and practical implementation insights.

**Survey Team** – One of the WBL functional teams. In charge of setting up the process to design, generate, test, and distribute the WBL questionnaires in relevant languages (Arabic, English, French, Russian, and Spanish) and formats.

**Topic** – One of the ten topics analyzed by the WBL report following the life cycle of a woman’s working life: Safety, Mobility, Work, Pay, Marriage, Parenthood, Childcare, Entrepreneurship, Assets, and Pension.

**Topic Leader** – Senior member of the WBL Team who leads the team working on one or more topics of the *Women, Business and the Law* report.

**Topic Team** – A team working on one or more topics covered by the *Women, Business and the Law* report.

**Travel Request (TR)** – Pre-travel request that must be submitted and approved in the SAP database for authorization for WBG staff to travel.

**Verticals** – The units within the World Bank Group envisioned to be vertical pillars of technical expertise on their respective subject.

**World Bank Group (WBG)** – The five global institutions that make up the World Bank Group: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD); the International Development Association (IDA); the International Finance Corporation (IFC); the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA); and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID).

**WBG colleagues** – Staff within the World Bank Group, including all five global institutions, as well as Country Offices.

**WBL Management Team** – Team comprised of the WBL Manager and Supervisors.

**WBL Team** – Staff working on the WBL project, including temporaries and consultants working on the WBL report, as described in Staff Rule 4.01, Section 2.01.





# Data Integrity

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## 3 DATA INTEGRITY

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### 3.1 CORE VALUES AND CODE OF ETHICS

The WBG [Core Values](#)—Impact, Integrity, Respect, Teamwork, and Innovation—guide everything employees of the WBG do. WBL products have a great impact on client economies and other stakeholders. Doing WBG work with respect and integrity is essential to building and preserving trust among clients. The WBL Team strives to achieve the highest standards for responsibility, accountability, and quality of WBL products.

WBL Team members should be knowledgeable about the WBG [Code of Ethics](#), which articulates the WBG Core Values and the ethical norms and behaviors that the WBG expects from staff, that each of us should expect of ourselves, from one another, and from the institution. The Code of Ethics is complementary to the WBG Staff Rules that are the basis for determining misconduct and disciplinary sanctions. The [Staff Manual](#) contains the Principles of Staff Employment, the Staff Rules, and related procedures and guidance. WBL Team members should refer to the Code of Ethics as a resource that will help them incorporate the Core Values in what they do and to identify and speak up about conduct and behaviors that are inconsistent with the Core Values.

WBL staff complete mandatory e-learning on the [Code of Ethics and Core Values](#) and are encouraged to complete other available training offerings by the Ethics and Internal Justice Services Vice Presidency (EIJ).

WBL Team members are encouraged to refer to this document and to the EIJ resources described below for guidance on how to handle potential cases of undue pressure to manipulate the data (that is, alter the data disregarding the WBL methodology) from WBG Management, government officials, or any other internal or external counterpart.

### 3.2 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

WBL staff owe their duty exclusively to the WBG and maintain their independence by not accepting any instructions relating to the performance of their duties from any governments or other entities and persons external to the WBG (see Article V, Section 5(c) of the [IBRD Articles of Agreement](#)).

Given that working on WBL research involves interacting with stakeholders with varying interests, concerns about conflict of interest can arise when WBL staff receive instructions beyond the scope of the tasks under their assignments. Staff who need guidance on concerns about conflict of interest should consult directly with their Manager or Senior Management team. They can also seek guidance from the [Ethics Advisory](#) Team. EIJ will advise on applicable WBG Staff Rules and policies, work together with staff to assess the conflict-of-interest risk or reputation risk to the WBG, and provide guidance on how to proceed.

In the context of drafting or revising the WBL report, a conflict of interest consists of any situation in which the professional commitment of a WBL team member to provide the highest standards of integrity, independence, and competence is compromised because (1) it is in the personal interest of the team member not to do so, or (2) the team member believes it to be in their personal interest not to do so. Conflicts of interest can occur in many different situations. Should any WBL Team member feel that they find themselves in a conflict-of-interest situation, they are encouraged to discuss the specific circumstances with their Manager and if needed seek guidance from the EIJ Advisory Team.

### 3.2.1 EMPLOYMENT AND ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE WBL UNIT

Generally, WBG staff are restricted in the degree to which they may hold outside and concurrent employment. There is less restriction on outside employment activities with nonprofit entities provided that such activities are not paid and that they take place in the staff member's own time and without using WBG resources. Outside employment by full-time staff members in for-profit entities requires the approval of the Chief Ethics Officer, which is only granted in limited and exceptional circumstances.

Some WBL Team members, particularly short-term consultant (STC) team members, have concurrent employment or assignments both inside and outside of DEC. All WBL staff, including staff holding a Short Term Consultant (STC) or Short Term Temporary (STT) appointment, are required to inform their Manager of all other concurrent assignments, including other WBG assignments. For more information on outside employment and activities, see [Staff Rule 3.02](#) (Employment Outside the WBG) and consult with EIJ. The [Principles of Staff Employment](#) also apply (specifically Principle 3) and call for avoiding any type of conflict of interest.

Generally, STC staff members may hold concurrent outside employment provided:

- ▶ They are not employed by or contract with member governments or other entities to work on WBG-financed projects during their period of STC employment if the WBG-financed project and the concurrent STC work involve the same country.
- ▶ They are not an employee of another public entity, including but not limited to governments and other international organizations, unless that entity has approved its employee working at the WBG.
- ▶ They do not provide services to the WBG through a vendor.

To mitigate against conflict of interest and reputational risk to the WBG, WBL staff may not accept concurrent work assignments from other WBG units that involve providing WBL Reform Advisory work. In particular, WBL Team members may not provide information on current cycle coding status of economies' scores or whether newly introduced legislation or policies will affect economies' scores to anyone outside of the team. WBL team members cannot advise governments directly on legal drafting of laws that affect any of the WBL indicators.

WBL staff may, with approval by the Development Economics Women, Business and the Law (DECWL) Manager, undertake other cross-support assignments that are not related to a WBL Reform Advisory. The DECWL Manager is responsible for assessing potential conflicts of interest from proposed cross-support assignments.

Additionally, WBL staff may not perform services relating to WBL Reform Advisory activities that could affect the WBL data. For example, WBL team members cannot participate in projects (Reimbursable Advisory Services [RAS], loan programs, and so on) whose aim is to improve the WBL index scores, or rankings of an economy covered by the report (for example, by providing guidance on how to reform gender equality legislation in an economy).

A WBL staff member who receives a request from a client or other external entity to perform WBL Reform Advisory work must direct such request to their Manager or relevant Global Practice (GP). The staff member should inform the client or stakeholder via email (copying their Manager) that the request has been directed to the Manager or to the relevant GP.





All materials produced or acquired during WBL assignments—written, graphic, film, video recordings, or otherwise—remain the property of the WBG, and the WBG retains ownership and copyright, and the right to publish or disseminate reports, books, and documents arising from such materials in all languages. WBL staff may not personally use information acquired in the performance of their assignments with DECWL unless such use has been authorized in accordance with WBG Staff Rules. They should consult with EIJ or the External and Corporate Relations Vice Presidency (ECR) on the policy regarding using WBG information for personal writing and publication.

### 3.2.2 SUPPORT TO WORLD BANK OPERATIONAL TEAMS

The WBL team routinely receives requests to provide analytics or similar support to operational teams to identify critical gaps and inform project design (cross-support). These analytical products are meant to inform project design, specifically the development of objectives and identification of relevant interventions, rather than providing direct advice to client governments.

Examples of deliverables the team can produce include:

- ▶ Assessments and deep dives related to WBL data for specific economies, regions, or topics. These assessments present the WBL data, highlighting in particular gaps in the laws and policies at the national, regional, or topic area.
- ▶ Presentations, trainings, blogs, research papers, and other material related to WBL data.
- ▶ Methodology workshops and trainings.
- ▶ Ad hoc analytics, measuring the legal environment of an economy (beyond what is covered by WBL).
- ▶ Requests to review project concept notes, reports, working papers, white papers, and research articles.

#### *Receiving and reviewing cross-support requests*

Before agreeing to provide the cross-support, the WBL team member clarifies the following with the requesting team and the respective Topic Leader or Supervisor:

- ▶ *Scope of work.* Deliverables should fall in one of the categories listed above and focus primarily on WBL research and data.
- ▶ *Timeline.* Timeline should be feasible, given the priorities at the time. Changes in assignments to accommodate requests can be discussed with the Topic Leader.
- ▶ *Time estimate/cost.* Should be commensurate with what is being asked and the level of experience.

After receiving a request for cross-support, team members should discuss with their Topic Leader or Supervisor and then obtain clearance from the Manager. This should be documented in writing, with an email or terms of reference (TOR)/statement of work, presenting the deliverable, timeline, and estimate of time that will be spent working on this deliverable (along with how this cost will be shared).



### 3.3 DATA INTEGRITY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE DATA REVIEW, STORAGE, AND COMPUTATION PROCESS

The WBL team ensures data integrity by storing data in two restricted locations:

- ▶ Answers from Expert Contributors are stored securely in the survey tool. Once submitted, questionnaires are locked. If Expert Contributors need to amend their responses, they can request the WBL team to unlock their questionnaire. The WBL team will forward the request to the Information and Technology Solutions department (ITS), which will handle the unlocking process on the backend. Once unlocked, Expert Contributors are expected to make any necessary changes themselves before resubmitting the questionnaire to finalize their responses. While the survey tool does not restrict access based on user roles, any changes to the responses are recorded. WBL team members adhere strictly to survey integrity guidelines, which require them to not edit responses. Additionally, the WBL team will consider sending stand-alone questionnaires with a subset of questions (for example, on the availability of sex-disaggregated data) to a dedicated expert respondent base (for example, statistical offices) to increase the quality and accuracy of the data collected for legal and supportive frameworks. The data collected will only be used for validation purposes.
- ▶ Verified and validated data points for laws and policy mechanisms (supportive frameworks) are stored in the Data Management System (DMS). Any change to a data point is recorded by the system through an audit function. The author of the change, the time of the change, and the change itself are all recorded.

The data review process involves four layers of review to ensure accuracy and integrity of the data collected on the laws and policy mechanisms. The first three layers are carried out in the Data Management System and recorded through an audit function. By reviewing the laws, the review process will also address any discrepancies that may arise between Expert Contributors regarding the legal bases underlying their perceptions of enforcement.

1. The Topic Leader (level 1 review) verifies and validates the data as coded by the Analyst in accordance with the methodology.
2. An Internal Reviewer (level 2 review) checks for consistency and accuracy.
3. The Manager (level 3 review) focuses on data changes due to reforms or corrections (reviewing the justifications provided).
4. Finally, using the approved panel data (in .xlsx and .dta formats), the Data Team (level 4 review) carries out consistency and quality checks.

The Research Quality and Analysis Team carries out data computation, running formulas and scripts to aggregate data and calculate the indicator, topic, and index scores.



Perception-based data collected through the questionnaires undergo a different validation process, to ensure that perception-based data on the level of enforcement of laws are only scored when the relevant laws are in place.

- ▶ The collected quantitative data on perceptions are deidentified, then aggregated through data computation, using Stata software to construct the relevant scores and indexes of economies for the Enforcement Perceptions pillar.
- ▶ The coding scripts and other documentation used to construct indicators and to compute scores for each economy is made publicly available with the WBL report.
- ▶ The WBL Enforcement Perceptions team coordinates, prepares, and executes the appropriate scripts for the perception-based data. The final data set is reviewed and cleared by the Manager. The scored panel data, de-identified raw perception data used for scoring, and computational files are then published on the WBL website.

Final WBL data are approved by DECIG Management and shared with World Bank colleagues during the Bank-wide Review (BWR) process, as described in section 9, Clearance and Publication of the Report and Data. . Modifications following the BWR are subject to specific protocols and limitations. Any correction to the data related to laws and policies needs to be justified and supported by relevant documentation (laws in force or applicable policies). The review process is described in detail section 8, Data Management, Analysis, and Review.

Computational files to generate the final data sets, as well as the figures and tables included in WBL reports, are constructed in compliance with the [DIME Research Reproducibility Standards](#), and the team at [DIME Analytics](#) helps to review and verify the reproducibility package prepared by the Research Quality and Analysis Team. Once approved, the reproducibility package of WBL reports is published in the World Bank's [Reproducible Research Repository](#). This process ensures data quality and improves the transparency of the project, strengthening trust in the WBL data and report.

### 3.4 DEALING WITH UNDUE PRESSURE

For the purpose of the WBL activities, undue pressure is defined as any threat, intimidation, harassment, bullying, and/or shunning intended to force WBL team members to alter, omit, or disregard data without evidence that such data are flawed, or to include or rely on data that are known to be methodologically flawed or manipulated. Undue pressure can occur by omission as well as by commission.

A sudden change in work program or reporting line that is not justified by a clear need or a request from a WBL team member, and that follows a request to alter, omit, or disregard valid data or to include or rely upon invalid data, should be treated as potential undue pressure. Similarly, a gradual or sudden exclusion from professional meetings that a WBL team member at a given functional level would normally be expected to attend, or even from social activities that a WBL team member in the same situation would normally be invited to, will be reviewed as potential undue pressure when combined with a request to alter, ignore, or include data when the request lacks factual grounding.

The Ethics Advisory offers advice on ways to protect the project from undue influence from internal and external stakeholders and makes resources available to the WBL team to report any perceived undue influence.





Engagement with  
Expert Contributors

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## 4 ENGAGEMENT WITH EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS

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This chapter provides detailed information on how the *Women, Business and the Law* (WBL) project engages with Expert Contributors who submit the data for the WBL report, including the methods and criteria used to identify Expert Contributors. It describes the database that tracks all the information provided by Experts. It also provides the rules related to the WBL Team's interactions with Expert Contributors, Stakeholders, and World Bank Group colleagues.

### 4.1 DATA COLLECTION THROUGH EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS

The primary data collection method used by the WBL Team is questionnaire-based data collection. Expert Contributor data collection refers to data collected from professionals knowledgeable about the relevant legal and policy frameworks. Expert Contributors base their responses on their knowledge and experience with legal frameworks, regulatory frameworks, relevant public services, and implementation of regulations for their particular topic. The data are also obtained through data collection missions, desk research, and consultations with secondary sources such as government websites and legal databases.











WBL covers a wide range of topic areas following the life cycle of a working woman and her interaction with the law. Each year, three detailed questionnaires are sent to Expert Contributors in 190 economies on the following broad areas: family law and access to finance; labor law and childcare services; and violence against women legislation. The questionnaires include questions on the applicable laws and regulations; implementation mechanisms (policies and action plans, implementing institutions, access to justice, programs and services, data); and experts' perceptions on the enforcement of the laws and regulations. WBL identifies which of the three broad areas each Contributor has expertise in, as well as their geographic area of expertise, and invites Contributors to respond to those particular questionnaires.

WBL's contributor base comprises Expert Contributors in the private and public sectors. Private sector Expert Contributors include sole practitioners (for example, self-employed lawyers) and practitioners working in small, medium, and large firms, civil society organizations, academics, policy experts, and think tanks.

In addition, WBL collects data from the public sector. A public sector contributor is an individual who holds a position of authority or responsibility within a government agency, department, or entity. Public sector experts are elected or appointed to design or enforce policies and their work typically reflects the government's official stance on issues. The data provided by public sector Expert Contributors are used as a reference to validate the data collected on legal and supportive frameworks. Questionnaires completed by public sector Expert Contributors do not include enforcement perception questions. Please refer to section 5, Engagement with Governments for more information about public sector expert identification and selection, correspondence, and core interactions.

WBL recruits private sector contributors with varying areas of expertise based on the topic of questionnaire. Table 1 summarizes the different professionals and areas of expertise. Private sector Expert Contributors are required to be proficient only in their related areas of expertise (family law, access to finance, labor law, the provision of childcare services, and laws protecting women from violence).

**Table 1.**  
Professionals and Areas of Expertise for the Expert Contributors for Each WBL Survey

WBL Survey	Topic	Relevant Professions, Areas of Expertise
<b>Violence against women</b>	 Safety	Lawyers specializing in criminal and family law, gender experts, CSOs providing gender-based violence (GBV) services and programming.
	 Mobility	Lawyers specializing in family law, civil law, or corporate law; gender experts; notaries; national registration and identification systems specialists.
<b>Family law and access to finance</b>	 Marriage	Lawyers specialized in family law, gender equality advocates/members of civil society, and international development professionals who focus on women's rights and gender equality.
	 Entrepreneurship	Lawyers specialized in family, corporate, and civil law. Gender equality advocates/members of civil society, and international development professionals who focus on women's rights, gender equality, women's financial inclusion, and women's economic empowerment.
	 Assets	Lawyers specialized in family, corporate, and civil law. Gender equality advocates/members of civil society, land registries, and international development professionals who focus on women's rights, gender equality, and women's economic empowerment.
	 Work	Lawyers specializing in labor law, researchers and professors specializing in labor law, journalists focused on labor legislation, and human resource professionals knowledgeable about labor legislation.
<b>Labor law and childcare services</b>	 Pay	Lawyers specializing in labor law, researchers and professors specializing in labor law, journalists focused on labor legislation, and human resource professionals knowledgeable about labor legislation.
	 Parenthood	Lawyers specializing in labor law, researchers and professors specializing in labor law, journalists focused on labor legislation, and human resource professionals knowledgeable about labor legislation.
	 Childcare	Labor lawyers, professors, and public policy analysts with expertise in childcare policies and provision of childcare services and/or with the necessary research skills to identify relevant laws and policies. Also, academics, CSO representatives, and professionals working in multilateral organizations, such as UNICEF and UNESCO.
	 Pensions	Lawyers specializing in labor law, researchers and professors specializing in labor law, journalists focused on labor legislation, and human resource professionals knowledgeable about labor legislation.

Source: Women, Business and the Law team.

Note: CSOs = civil society organizations; UNESCO = United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization; UNICEF = United Nations Children's Fund.

## 4.2 SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT OF PRIVATE SECTOR EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS

Each Topic Team is responsible for selecting and managing its network of Expert Contributors and collecting the data. The Contributor Management Team oversees the process, facilitating the relationships between the WBL team and Expert Contributors.

The data collection process starts when the WBL team directly invites Expert Contributors in all measured economies to complete WBL questionnaires related to their areas of expertise, by distributing questionnaires through the survey software (ngSurvey). Additionally, the WBL team is considering distributing a stand-alone questionnaire with a subset of questions (focused on sex-disaggregated data) via Microsoft Forms. This additional questionnaire aims to enhance data quality by targeting contributors with specific expertise in sex-disaggregated data.

Using their legal knowledge as well as specific economy information and last cycle legal bases, Expert Contributors complete WBL questionnaires on a pro bono basis and submit their responses through the survey software (ngSurvey) and Microsoft Forms. In addition to indicating whether any updates to the information are needed or if there have been changes in the law, Expert Contributors also provide their perception on the level of enforcement of the laws and regulations. Expert Contributors have about three weeks to submit their responses to their topic questionnaires, with the possibility of a deadline extension.

### 4.2.1 PRIVATE SECTOR EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS SELECTION PROCESS

During each data collection cycle, the team recruits dozens of new Expert Contributors to answer the questionnaires. Expert Contributors are selected based on their expertise in the areas of law covered by each of the three main WBL questionnaires. Various methods are used to recruit new Expert Contributors, including through the WBL website sign-up page, LinkedIn, referrals, and desk-based research.

The Expert Contributors should only be contacted if they have the expertise required to be sent the questionnaire and participate in the research.

To identify private sector Expert Contributors, each Topic Team:

- ▶ Prepares a list of relevant professions with the relevant areas of expertise and experience.
- ▶ Identifies specific Expert Contributors who meet requirements and assess their expertise via an expertise assessment.

All Expert Contributors must abide by the following requirements.

- ▶ *Independence, impartiality and objectivity.* Expert Contributors should appear to be neutral, independent, and impartial with respect to the influence of public agencies and demonstrate an absence of bias toward any jurisdiction under review.
- ▶ *Knowledge.* Expert Contributors should be well-versed with regulations and practices related to the topic area they contribute to.
- ▶ *Language.* Expert Contributors should have effective communication skills in one of the core WBG languages. This requirement can be exempted under exceptional circumstances if there are no experts who can communicate effectively in the core languages.
- ▶ *Compliance.* During their engagement with WBL, Expert Contributors are expected to comply with all applicable national laws and codes of ethics relevant to their professions.
- ▶ *Proven ability.* Expert Contributors should commit to performing the assigned tasks within the indicated schedule and being available in case follow-ups are needed.



WBL requires Expert Contributors to meet the required standards following expertise assessment criteria. The criteria included in the assessment include professional background, educational qualifications, and years of relevant work experience.

Regarding professional background, contributors shall fall into one of the following professional categories:

- ▶ *Legal professionals.* These are lawyers, jurists, or attorneys working in a relevant field.
- ▶ *Academics.* These are professionals who hold or pursue a doctoral/postgraduate degree and/or are associated with a university, think tank, research center, or the like. They should also work in a relevant field.
- ▶ *Policy or development professionals.* These must be working in the field of women's rights with a reputable CSSO, NGO, or international organization.
- ▶ *Law graduate students (LLM, MA, or SJD (Ph.D.) candidates).* These are law graduate students who have prior legal education (LL. B, or JD) unless they are supervised by a professor. Also, graduate students must possess two years of relevant professional experience.
- ▶ *Public policy graduate students (MPP candidates).* These are public policy graduate students who have relevant degrees (such as gender studies) unless they are supervised by a professor. Also, graduate students must possess two years of relevant professional experience.
- ▶ *Retired professionals.* Retirees generally qualify as contributors if they used to work or have expertise in any of the above fields.

As part of the expertise assessment process, the WBL team also evaluates the Expert Contributors' educational qualifications. WBL prioritizes recruiting Expert Contributors who have pursued tertiary education, such as a law degree or a master's degree in a relevant field. WBL seeks individuals with a law degree or graduate degrees in relevant fields (master's or PhD).

The qualifications of expert contributors are validated through thorough desk research conducted by the team. This process involves comprehensive verification and analysis of the contributors' credentials and expertise as indicated in open sources, including LinkedIn profiles, Google Scholar profiles, and information published on the firm's and personal websites. Additionally, Expert Contributors are requested to self-report their expertise and qualifications during data collection, ensuring that the information is accurate and up to date.

For topics covering multiple legal areas, the WBL team strives to identify contributors with broad expertise and practical experience. This allows for comprehensive insights across various topic aspects. If Expert Contributors tend to specialize in one area and are not familiar with a related topic, they are welcome to ask a qualified colleague to assist. In such cases, a colleague can participate as an additional Expert Contributor, and their name should be communicated to the WBL team.

The WBL team also follows a process to conduct credibility assessments. The general guidance for evaluating Expert Contributors consists of the following points:

- ▶ *Recent news.* For example, news articles about a lawyer's recent trials, work with clients or advocacy campaigns of a women's rights civil society organization.
- ▶ *Thought leadership.* Assessment of the recent blogs, guidebooks, articles, or papers they have written related to the topic.
- ▶ *Professional endorsements.* Review of a LinkedIn profile for skill endorsements or recommendations.





While conducting contributor credibility assessments, the WBL team strives to perform qualitative analysis of all available sources, such as news articles about a lawyer’s recent trials, work with clients or advocacy campaigns for a women’s rights civil society organization, in addition to reviewing LinkedIn profiles for skill endorsements or recommendations. As part of the credibility analysis, the team critically evaluates the quality of publications written by prospective Expert Contributors, considering only those published in peer-reviewed journals and referenced on Google Scholar.

#### 4.2.2 ENGAGING WITH GLOBAL LAW FIRMS

Global contributors are large law firms, broad-based networks, professional associations, and other organizations that coordinate the submission of multiple questionnaires across economies and topic areas through their subsidiaries in the relevant economies.

WBL has formed strong partnerships with global and regional law firms and networks of lawyers, whose members contribute their expertise to the WBL surveys. Global law firms and organizations that support *Women, Business and the Law* on a global scale are acknowledged on the *Women, Business and the Law* website in the Global Partners section.

The Contributor Management Team engages with a single focal point in the organization (pro bono coordinator), who coordinates the submission of questionnaires. At the start of the data collection process the Contributor Management team distributes invitations to pro bono coordinators to support WBL data collection. Pro bono coordinators solicit interest within their network of experts to complete WBL questionnaires. Once confirmed, the coordinator compiles a list of economies and topics the firm will contribute to and shares it with the Contributor Management Team, along with the proposed standard retention agreement outlining the terms of engagement.

The proposed terms of engagement must be reviewed by at least two WBL team members with legal background prior to signing. When the terms of the engagement are agreed upon, the Contributor Management Team returns signed engagement letter to pro bono coordinators and further oversees and coordinates submission of surveys by global contributors.

Upon completion of data collection, the Contributor Management Team generates a list of received contributions along with the contributors’ names for each global partner and shares with the respective pro bono coordinator for input on publication preferences.

#### 4.2.3 PROCESSING REFERRALS FROM CURRENT PRIVATE SECTOR EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS

WBL Expert Contributors are invited to refer the WBL team to professional who they believe may serve as experts. The WBL team conducts an expertise assessment and directly invites referred Expert Contributors to complete questionnaires related to their areas of expertise by sending an addressed survey link (a link uniquely generated for that Expert Contributor).

WBL Expert Contributors invited to respond to one or more topic questionnaires by the WBL team shall not pass along the addressed survey links to their colleagues. They may refer colleagues as potential experts to the WBL project and the WBL team will evaluate their eligibility to ensure the questionnaire is completed by a qualified Expert Contributor.



## 4.3 EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS DATABASE, PRIVACY PROTECTION, AND PUBLICATION OF DATA

WBL maintains a comprehensive database of Expert Contributors in the Contributor Relationship Management system (CRM) based on Microsoft Dynamics. This database contains information about the Expert Contributors and the team's interactions with them, such as which questionnaires they received and submitted. The team updates CRM records for the Expert Contributors, their professional affiliation, contact information, and the status of the questionnaires they were sent.

Expert Contributor data are collected, processed, and stored in a manner that is compatible with the purpose for which they were collected and in compliance with the [WBG Policy on Personal Data Privacy](#) and the [Bank Directive on Personal Data Privacy Request and Review Mechanisms](#).

### 4.3.1 MANAGING EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS' INFORMATION IN CRM

For every Expert Contributor identified by the WBL Team, a profile page must be added to CRM detailing the following information whenever possible:

- ▶ Full name
- ▶ Gender
- ▶ Age group
- ▶ Profession
- ▶ Educational qualification
- ▶ Years of experience
- ▶ Associated firm or if they are self-employed
- ▶ Affiliation with government, when applicable
- ▶ Phone number
- ▶ Email address
- ▶ Website
- ▶ Topics they contribute to or may contribute
- ▶ Gender

### 4.3.2 PUBLICATION OF EXPERT CONTRIBUTOR INFORMATION

Given that the WBL project relies on the generous contributions of pro bono Expert Contributors, WBL acknowledges them on its website under the [corresponding economy tab](#), if desired.

Expert Contributors may choose to have their name, firm, website, and/or phone number published on the WBL website or to keep any or all of their information anonymous. Each *Women, Business and the Law* questionnaire includes a section for Expert Contributors to provide their preferences regarding what information they wish to be published. The WBL Team records and reviews these privacy preferences in the CRM system. Expert Contributors may change their publication preferences at any time. Additionally, the WBL team members may contact Expert Contributors to confirm their preferences if there are discrepancies in publication preferences in different WBL data collection cycles. Any changes to the publication preferences must be made in writing via email, copying the shared email address corresponding to each Topic Team, in accordance with section 4.5, [Handling the Correspondence with Expert Contributors](#).



## 4.4 COMPLETION OF QUESTIONNAIRES BY EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS

Every Topic must use reasonable efforts to obtain completed questionnaires from at least three Expert Contributors, especially when a reform or change to the law has been identified. For the calculation of the Enforcement Perceptions Pillar scores, at least three responses from Expert Contributors for each of the perception questions are required.

If reforms or changes to the law are identified, through desk research or reported by the government/expert(s), the relevant Topic Team will validate the reform with Expert Contributors and against official sources. Data changes are always discussed with the Manager and flagged to the Director.

If a Topic Team does not obtain the minimum number of responses required to finalize the data in an economy, the particular circumstances will be discussed in a debrief meeting. During the debrief meeting, the Topic Leader, Supervisor, and DECWL Manager discuss the exceptions that can be granted for each economy based on its unique circumstances.

Preliminary data analysis can be started before this threshold is reached and it is based on the relevant law or regulation, accessed through desk research.

### 4.4.1 UPDATING QUESTIONNAIRE STATUS

Each Topic Team is responsible for updating the status of the topic questionnaire for each Expert Contributor in CRM. If a Topic Team contacts an Expert Contributor, they record the following information on the Expert Contributor's profile page:

- ▶ The Expert Contributor's confirmation or rejection for that particular WBL data collection cycle.
- ▶ Their request to be contacted again in the future or to never be contacted again.
- ▶ Their request for an extension of the deadline and the requested new deadline.
- ▶ The confirmation received that the expert will be completing the questionnaire and completion of the topic questionnaire, along with corresponding dates.
- ▶ Any notes regarding expertise assessment.

### 4.4.2 CRM TRACKING PROCESS

The Contributor Management Team, Data Team, and Enforcement Perceptions Team collaborate to distribute a weekly tracking report during the data collection cycle to monitor progress achieved. Tracking begins two weeks after the survey distribution date and ends when all teams have reached 100 percent completion. The weekly tracking table displays the total number and percentage of economies "received" across all topic areas, where "received" means that at least three responses for each enforcement perceptions question have been received from private sector Expert Contributors. Further, the tracking report showcases the progress achieved by each team.



## 4.5 HANDLING THE CORRESPONDENCE WITH EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS

All written correspondence with Expert Contributors must copy the shared email address for the respective Topic Team. The shared email inbox is structured with subfolders for each data collection cycle, which are further organized by economy to ensure systematic e-mail storage.

The proper storage of data is essential for WBL data governance. It is the responsibility of Analysts and Topic Leaders—according to the distribution of economies assigned at the beginning of the cycle—to store all the data received and used for coding.

Typically, these documents are:

- ▶ Emails containing follow-up responses from Expert Contributors. Emails are stored in the designated folder in the secure folder structure assigned to the WBL team, protected behind the World Bank’s firewall, and only accessible to current WBL team members.
- ▶ Attachments and supplemental information submitted by Expert Contributors. Expert Contributors often submit PDF copies of the applicable laws and regulations in their economies or other forms of supplemental information through email. These are also saved in the designated folder in the secure folder structure assigned to the WBL Team, protected behind the World Bank’s firewall, and only accessible to current WBL team members, as well as properly cataloged in the WBL Team’s Law Library.

After obtaining the topic questionnaire responses from the Expert Contributors and analyzing them, the Topic Team members conduct a final expertise assessment to evaluate whether the responses submitted by Expert Contributors meet the required quality standard and whether such Expert Contributors should be contacted in future cycles and record their assessment in CRM.

Following are examples of the various criteria taken into consideration for this assessment:

- ▶ *Recent knowledge.* Did the Expert Contributors share or not share information about reforms that are known to have been implemented?
- ▶ *Lack of accuracy.* Did the Expert Contributor provide information that is factually and verifiably incorrect? If yes, a note is made in General Notes fields on the Expert Contributor’s profile on CRM, and the Analyst informs the Topic Leader.
- ▶ *Thoroughness.* Did the Expert Contributor write thorough answers to the questions? A lack of thoroughness does not indicate a lack of expertise, but thoroughness can demonstrate strong expertise.
- ▶ *Potential plagiarism bias.* Are there the same spelling mistakes in more than two questionnaires for the same economy/topic? Is there similar wording or copy/pasted answers across multiple questionnaires?

### 4.5.1 CONTACTING EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS

The WBL Team manages the relationship with Expert Contributors exclusively. Communications are on a bilateral basis, and exchanges are separate from any stakeholder interactions with the WBL Team. All communications are handled through the relevant Topic Team shared mailbox or through the general [wbl@worldbank.org](mailto:wbl@worldbank.org) mailbox.



The WBL Team may contact Expert Contributors for a limited set of reasons:

- ▶ To request that they complete the questionnaire.
- ▶ If needed, remind them to complete the questionnaire.
- ▶ If needed, ask to respond to follow-up questions.
- ▶ If needed, confirm their contact information for acknowledgement purposes.

To maintain privacy and data independence, the WBL Team never shares which topic an expert participates in with anyone outside the WBL Team. Even if WBG colleagues ask about Expert Contributors, the WBL Team only refers them to publicly available information on the website.

#### 4.5.2 INTERACTIONS BETWEEN WBL, B-READY, AND OTHER DECIG TEAMS

WBL maintains a comprehensive database of Expert Contributors in CRM. The same platform is also used by Business Ready (B-READY) and Subnational Business Ready to maintain the contact information for their respective Expert Contributors.

For economies covered by both the B-READY and WBL projects, each team will contact its respective network of contributors. An overlap is possible (the same Expert Contributor contributing to both the Business Ready and the WBL projects), in which case the two teams coordinate and agree on the communication format and timeline.

The B-Ready team and WBL Team meet regularly to coordinate contributor outreach and management, align timelines, and share information about upcoming and ongoing contributor outreach and recruitment projects.

#### 4.5.3 INTERACTIONS BETWEEN PUBLIC OFFICIALS, WORLD BANK GROUP COLLEAGUES, AND WBL EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS

Public officials, World Bank staff, and other stakeholders must avoid any undue interference with Expert Contributors, and they should not directly or indirectly be involved in the data collection process if they are not WBL team members.

Activities that are or may be perceived as interference with *Women, Business and the Law* data collection include:

- ▶ Contacting Expert Contributors to influence their answers to Women, Business and the Law questionnaires.
- ▶ Providing suggested questionnaire responses to current and/or possible future Expert Contributors.
- ▶ Requesting information from Expert Contributors on responses provided in any year.
- ▶ Organizing meetings with Expert Contributors to discuss data.
- ▶ Requesting Expert Contributors to answer Women, Business and the Law questions in a certain way.
- ▶ Interfering with *Women, Business and the Law* data collection visits to an economy.
- ▶ Pressuring or coercing current and/or possible future Expert Contributors to participate in the *Women, Business and the Law* data collection process or to change their responses.



If the *Women, Business and the Law* team determines that stakeholders have engaged in activities that are or could be perceived as interference with the independence of potential experts in an economy, the *Women, Business and the Law* team, in consultation with Bank Management, may take steps to preserve the integrity of the data, including by not updating data for the economy in a given report cycle, as well as by excluding the economy's data entirely.

#### 4.6 DATA COLLECTION THROUGH WBG COLLEAGUES

The WBL Team may also invite WBG colleagues to fill out the WBL topic questionnaires during the WBL data collection cycle. Such questionnaires can be used for data validation purposes only. Colleagues must submit their responses within six (6) weeks from the time they receive the invitation from the WBL Team. The WBL Team does not publish information shared by WBG colleagues in their questionnaires.





# Engagement with Governments

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## 5 ENGAGEMENT WITH GOVERNMENTS

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This chapter contains the guiding principles and protocols related to the WBL Team's engagement with governments. The objective of such protocols is to ensure fairness and transparency in the WBL data collection process and in the dialogue with governments.

### 5.1 OVERVIEW AND PRINCIPLES

As explained in section 4.1, Data collection through Expert Contributors, at the beginning of each WBL cycle, the WBL Team invites representatives from the public sector to complete the WBL topic questionnaires and provide inputs for their economies. Such focal points may be representatives of relevant ministries, departments, agencies or other governmental bodies with expertise relevant to the WBL topics. Generally, government experts are from the following ministries or departments: (1) Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Family Affairs, Ministry of Social Development, Department of Civil Affairs, etc. (for the family law survey) (2) Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Employment, Ministry of Social Protection, Department of Workforce Development, (for the labor law survey) and (3) Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Gender Equality, Ministry of Justice, Department of Social Services (for the violence against women survey). Governments can also interact with WBL Team members in settings that may involve other parties, such as at launch events, methodology workshops, and dissemination events, including CSO engagements. In addition, governments may meet with WBL Team members during the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Group's Spring Meetings and Annual Meetings upon obtaining prior approval from the WBL Management Team. All such interactions follow strict rules, procedures, and timelines, as described in this chapter.

### 5.2 WBL CORE INTERACTIONS WITH GOVERNMENTS

#### 5.2.1 COMPLETION OF TOPIC QUESTIONNAIRES

At the beginning of each WBL cycle, economy focal points are identified in coordination with the relevant Executive Directors and WBG colleagues such as CMUs, in accordance with the procedure detailed in section 5.2.9, [General communication with the Board of Executive Directors](#). Focal points will be responsible for overseeing the completion of government surveys. They will receive all topic and stand-alone questionnaires. The questionnaires include all the questions related to the legal and supportive frameworks measured by WBL. The questionnaires do not include the enforcement perception questions.

Inviting representatives from the public sector to complete topic questionnaires enables them to share firsthand knowledge of the most recent legal and policy initiatives at the outset of the data collection phase. To streamline this effort, government agencies may designate a focal point to facilitate communication with the WBL Team. Governments have six weeks from the invitation date to submit their responses. Such responses can be used for data validation purposes only. WBL staff members should inform the WBL Manager of any communications not pertaining to the normal data collection process (for example, via WBL questionnaires) received from a government in relation to WBL data outside of the framework depicted in this section.



## 5.2.2 MANAGING EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS' INFORMATION IN CRM

Similarly to private sector Expert Contributors, information of public sector focal points and Expert Contributors is stored in CRM, under the following fields:

- ▶ Full name
- ▶ Profession
- ▶ Line ministry or public sector agency
- ▶ Phone number
- ▶ Address
- ▶ Email address
- ▶ Website
- ▶ Topics they contribute to or may contribute

Expert Contributor data are collected, processed, and stored in compliance with the World Bank Policy on [Personal Data Privacy](#) and the [Bank Directive on Personal Data Privacy Request and Review Mechanisms](#).

The contribution from public sector officials will be acknowledged on the WBL website, indicating the relevant line ministries or agencies involved in providing responses, under the relevant economy.

## 5.2.3 METHODOLOGY WORKSHOPS

The WBL Team may organize annual dedicated workshops to familiarize governments with each topic's methodology, describe the data collection and validation processes and safeguards, and conduct an in-depth discussion. These workshops are open forums that officials from one or multiple governments can attend. The WBL Team organizes these workshops directly, after informing, and often with the support of, the World Bank's Country Management Units (CMUs). In addition to government officials, private sector experts and civil society organizations (CSOs) can be invited to attend these events.

The WBL Team may also organize bilateral workshops. These workshops are organized upon request by governments and funded by relevant CMUs, Advisory Teams, or other World Bank colleagues. The purpose is to tailor methodology presentations to the specific needs of the stakeholders. Workshops are closed to the public and can be conducted virtually or in-person. They include a project overview session and topic sessions with methodology presentations and question and answer (Q&A) sessions. Economy-specific data discussions are included in the scope of these workshops.

## 5.2.4 WEBINARS

In lieu of or after the methodology workshops, the WBL Team may organize and conduct webinars or ad hoc meetings to provide responses to questions that governments may have. These are also open forums that officials from one or multiple governments can attend.

## 5.2.5 LAUNCH EVENTS

Every year following the publication and global launch of the WBL report, the WBL Team may organize economy-specific or regional launch events to present the results of the report. These events may be demand driven and change on a yearly basis. Governments are invited to attend them. More details on the dissemination strategy are available in section 10, Dissemination of the Report and Data.



## 5.2.6 OTHER INTERACTIONS

The Development Economics Global Indicators Group (DECIG) Director (in some cases jointly with the WBL Management Team) may, when appropriate, conduct additional interactions with high-level government representatives, especially during the IMF and World Bank's Spring and Annual Meetings. Meetings may also be conducted with WBG Board of Executive Directors (EDs) and/or their advisors. These discussions may cover general issues related to WBL.

Governments may be invited to participate to the kickoff and/or wrap-up meeting of data collection missions, as described in section 6.3, [WBL Data Collection Missions](#).

## 5.2.7 GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT PORTAL

There is a dedicated section on the WBL website for governments to request bilateral workshops or meetings. Bilateral workshops are tailored to specific needs. These workshops are closed to the public and can be conducted virtually or in person. They include project overviews, methodology presentations, Q&A, and economy-specific data discussions. The team may also conduct webinars or ad hoc meetings to address government questions.

## 5.2.8 PUBLICATION OF INTERACTIONS

The WBL Team regularly updates and publishes the schedule of all meetings requested through the Government Engagement Portal on its official website. The purpose is to maintain transparency and accessibility of information. The schedule is organized by topic and by economy. Responses to data update submissions are also made available on the website.

## 5.2.9 GENERAL COMMUNICATION WITH THE BOARD OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

The Development Economics Women, Business and the Law (DECWL) Manager prepares written communication to be sent via email to the Board of Executive Directors through the Corporate Secretariat announcing the start of data collection. The DECIG Director clears this email and sends it to DECVP for final decision. This communication includes information about cycle milestones, all the rules for government interactions, and any additional relevant updates. It is sent or blind copied to the following officers/units in the Bank: Executive Directors and their Alternates; Senior Advisors and Advisors to the Executive Directors; support staff of the Executive Directors; Vice President and World Bank Group Corporate Secretary; Corporate Secretariat (CORPSEC); Corporate Secretariat Vice Presidency (SECVP); Policy and Operations Department of the Corporate Secretariat (SECPO); Managing Director and Chief Administrative Officer; Managing Director, World Bank Group Chief Financial Officer; Chief Financial Officer Front Office (CFOFO); World Bank Managing Director of Operations; Managing Director of Development Policy and Partnerships; Managing Director and WBG Chief Administrative Officer (MDCAO); Development Economics Front Office (DECFO); International Finance Corporation (IFC) Managing Director and Executive Vice President; IFC Chief Executive Officer (CEO); and IFC CEO's Front Office.

The same email is sent to relevant counterparts within the WBG. Approximately one week before the published report is launched, the DECIG Director sends a written communication to the Board of Executive Directors with an embargoed version of the WBL report.



The DECWL Manager and DECIG Management have an open and permanent dialogue with the Board of Executive Directors throughout the year on general issues pertaining to the WBL report. If Executive Directors want to submit specific information for an economy they represent, they are expected to coordinate with the respective government and do so through the regular channels described above.





# Data Collection

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## 6 DATA COLLECTION

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### 6.1 SOURCE OF DATA

#### *Legal frameworks data*

*Women, Business and the Law* legal frameworks data are based on the in-force laws and regulations applicable in the main business city of a given economy. Copies or links to the laws and regulations, as well as information on the applicable legal bases underlying each of the 40 WBL 2.0 legal frameworks questions (as well as the previous set of 35 WBL 1.0 legal frameworks questions), are obtained through questionnaire-based data collection with Expert Contributors, data collection missions, desk research, and consultation with secondary sources such as government websites, legal databases, **research papers or blogs**. Expert Contributors may also be contacted for follow-up conversations (via email or telephone) where there is legal ambiguity or where questions about the applicable law remain.

#### *Supportive frameworks data*

*Women, Business and the Law* supportive frameworks data are based on the de facto status of policies and plans, programs, services, budgets, procedures, data, policy incentives, guidelines, access to justice, and implementing agencies or institutions (collectively referred to herein as policy mechanisms). Copies of documents that serve as evidence of policy mechanisms underpinning the supportive frameworks data are collected via the same mechanism as the legal frameworks data discussed above. Thus, they are obtained through questionnaire-based data collection with the same pool of experts, as well as data collection missions, desk research, and consultation with secondary sources such as government websites. Expert Contributors may also be contacted for follow-up conversations (via email or telephone) where ambiguity in interpretation remains.

#### *Enforcement perceptions data*

*Women, Business and the Law* enforcement perceptions data are based on a perception-based survey of Expert Contributors. The enforcement perceptions data are obtained through questionnaire-based data collection with the same pool of Expert Contributors used to collect legal data. For each legal frameworks question, there is a corresponding enforcement perceptions question. Experts are asked to rate their perception of enforcement of laws or the upholding of rights on a five-point scale (0–4).

- ▶ When the legal frameworks question refers to laws that guarantee women’s rights or provide benefits, enforcement perception questions ask about the level of enforcement (with 0 indicating no enforcement and 4 indicating full enforcement).
- ▶ When the legal frameworks question refers to lack of legal restrictions or laws that ensure equality between men and women, the enforcement perception question asks about the level of upholding of rights (with 0 indicating no upholding of rights and 4 indicating full upholding of rights).
- ▶ When the legal frameworks question refers to laws that restrict women’s equal participation, the enforcement perception question asks about the level of enforcement of the restrictive law (with 0 indicating full enforcement of the restriction and 4 indicating no enforcement).

The aggregated score should be interpreted in conjunction with the content of the referenced law or right. Finally, the enforcement perceptions section includes an open-ended question per topic, allowing Expert

Contributors to share any additional barriers or challenges they observe for the successful enforcement of a law or upholding of a right for women, in practice, in their specific area of expertise.

## 6.2 QUESTIONNAIRE-BASED DATA COLLECTION

Each year, detailed topic questionnaires are sent to Expert Contributors in 190 economies on the following areas: family law and access to finance, labor law and childcare services, and violence against women legislation. The questionnaires include questions on the applicable laws and regulations (legal frameworks); policy mechanisms (policies and action plans, implementing institutions, access to justice, programs and services, data); and experts' perceptions on the enforcement of the laws and regulations. For more on this, see section 4.1, Data collection through Expert Contributors. WBL uses case study assumptions outlined in the questionnaires to guide Expert Contributors in the identification of the applicable laws and policy mechanisms that pertain to the WBL index in each economy.

Using their legal expertise, policy knowledge, specific economic information, and data published in the previous year, Expert Contributors complete the questionnaire online on a pro bono basis. They provide an expert input on the applicable legal or policy text and its interpretation, indicating whether updates to the information are needed or if there have been changes in the law or policy mechanism.

Preliminary data collection is carried out by the WBL Team through desk research. This involves examining the latest text of the relevant law, regulation, or policy mechanism to identify any reforms or changes. This analysis for each question is then validated by comparing it with Expert Contributors' responses to confirm that the relevant law, regulation, or policy mechanism is the latest and that no reforms have occurred during the relevant period.

### 6.2.1 QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT AND CLEARANCE

Each questionnaire includes a standardized cover letter, fields for experts' contact information, case study assumptions, instructions for completing the questionnaire, a series of substantive questions, and a section for experts to share their feedback on the questionnaire.

Every year, topic questionnaires are reviewed and, after initial approval by the Topic Leader, forwarded to the WBL Manager for further approval. New questions may be added for research purposes or as a result of changes to the methodology. These changes are flagged to the WBL Manager and cleared before questionnaire generation.

Additionally, the WBL Team reaches out to the DEC Data Privacy Office to ensure compliance with data processing regulations. All correspondence related to clearance and approval is stored in the appropriate folder on the shared drive.

The Survey Team, composed of WBL Team members, supports the Topic Teams in translating the questionnaires into multiple languages (Arabic, French, Russian, and Spanish) and **designing the online questionnaires on the survey software**. It also develops standardized communication documents that complement the questionnaires, verifies the accuracy of prepopulated information from previous cycles, and conducts questionnaire and distribution testing.



## 6.2.2 QUESTIONNAIRE GENERATION

The questionnaire generation process is carried out through the ngSurvey software, which is integral to designing, collecting, and conducting preliminary analysis of questionnaires. Additionally, ngSurvey is utilized for distributing complementary email communications. It is seamlessly integrated with the other two major IT platforms used by the WBL Team—Data Management System (DMS) and Contributor Relationship Management (CRM).

DMS serves as the main repository for the WBL data, in particular the legal frameworks and supportive frameworks data collected during each WBL cycle, as well as the coding decisions made for each topic. In the questionnaire generation process, DMS is used to prepopulate online questionnaires with prior year economy-specific data, legal bases, or evidentiary support.

CRM, managed through Microsoft Dynamics, serves as the main repository for Expert Contributor information and it is also integrated into ngSurvey. In the questionnaire generation process, CRM is used to personalize the questionnaires and prepopulate them with expert's contact information, to help validate with contributors whether this information is still accurate. CRM also plays a crucial role in batch distributing questionnaires.

The Topic Leaders collaborate with the Survey Team to complete the required steps on DMS, CRM, and ngSurvey to generate questionnaires. The Survey Team provides guidance and cooperates with members of the Topic Team to rigorously test the accuracy of the final questionnaires before distribution. Topic Leaders are responsible for ensuring the final questionnaire quality and testing any unique needs emerging from new research topics included on an ad hoc basis.

## 6.2.3 QUESTIONNAIRE DISTRIBUTION

Distribution is the process whereby the questionnaires are distributed to experts, which include partner organizations and government focal points. The Survey Team provides standardized email text for each distribution language, which are approved by the Topic Leaders, and then runs a test distribution for each language/topic. Topic Leaders must sign off on the tests and approve the distribution.

The IT team, in conjunction with the CMT lead and Survey Team lead, distributes the questionnaires. This involves leveraging a mass distribution process to send personalized individual emails to each expert, by using CRM. Questionnaires are distributed from each Topic Team's corresponding WBL shared account email address ([WBLfamily@worldbank.org](mailto:WBLfamily@worldbank.org), [WBLlabor@worldbank.org](mailto:WBLlabor@worldbank.org), [WBLvaw@worldbank.org](mailto:WBLvaw@worldbank.org)).

Following the distribution of questionnaires, two standardized survey reminders are distributed through CRM to experts to gently remind them of the deadline and ensure timely submission of their responses. One reminder is sent two weeks before the questionnaire submission deadline, and another is sent one week before the deadline.

## 6.2.4 PROCESSING COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRES

All written correspondence with experts must copy the shared email address corresponding to each Topic Team. The shared email inbox contains subfolders for each data collection cycle. Each data collection cycle subfolder is organized by economy so that emails can be stored systematically.



The team also stores the information provided from experts (a PDF copy of Expert Contributor’s submitted questionnaire, PDFs of laws and other supporting evidence, emailed answers) and any information collected via desk research in the designated folder on the secure folder structure assigned to the WBL Team, protected behind the World Bank’s firewall, and only accessible to current WBL Team members. The proper storage of data is essential for WBL data governance. It is the responsibility of Analysts and Topic Leaders—according to the distribution of economies assigned at the beginning of the cycle—to store all the data received and used for coding. Typically, these documents are:

- ▶ *Emails* containing follow-up responses from Expert Contributors or governments. Emails are stored in the designated folder on the secure folder structure assigned to the WBL Team, protected behind the World Bank’s firewall, and only accessible to current WBL Team members.
- ▶ *Attachments and supplemental information submitted by Expert Contributors.* Experts often submit PDF copies of the applicable laws, regulations, and policy mechanisms in their economies or other forms of supplemental information. These are also saved in the designated folder on the secure folder structure assigned to the WBL Team, protected behind the World Bank’s firewall, and only accessible to current WBL team members, as well as properly catalogued in the WBL Team’s Law Library and Implementation Library.
- ▶ *Government-provided information* obtained through the team’s interactions with external stakeholders. Information relevant for coding is saved in the designated folder on the secure folder structure assigned to the WBL Team, protected behind the World Bank’s firewall, and only accessible to current WBL team members. If the documents are relevant for preparing engagements with governments, they can be saved in the corresponding folder designated by the Topic Leader.

After Expert Contributors submit the questionnaires, the responses relevant for legal frameworks and supportive frameworks questions are automatically extracted from ngSurvey and transferred to DMS for further analysis. Experts’ perception data (Enforcement Perceptions Pillar), however, are not extracted to DMS as their analysis follows a different process that does not require validation. Instead, enforcement perceptions responses are exported to Stata after their manual download from ngSurvey in Excel format.

To process Expert Contributor information, Analysts are responsible for reviewing the PDF copy of the Experts’ submitted questionnaire, identifying discrepancies in contributor information compared to the previous cycle, noting their publishing preferences, and updating CRM accordingly.

## 6.2.5 COMPLETION OF QUESTIONNAIRE-BASED DATA COLLECTION

Each Topic Team must obtain copies of the primary laws, regulations, and policy mechanisms underpinning the coding of each data point for each economy. These sources are saved in accordance with the process described in the [Law Library and Implementation Library](#) section.

As described in section 4.4, [Completion of Questionnaires by Expert Contributors](#), every Topic Team must use reasonable efforts to obtain completed topic questionnaires from at least three or more Expert Contributors. This will ensure that at least three responses for each of the enforcement perceptions questions are collected. Preliminary data validation for the legal and supportive framework indicators can be started before this threshold is reached and it is based on analysis of the relevant law, regulation, or policy mechanism, accessed through desk research. The preliminary data are then validated through the comparison with the responses received from both private sector experts and governments, confirming





that the relevant law, regulation, or policy mechanism is indeed the latest and no reforms have been recorded in the relevant period.

If reforms or changes to the law or policy mechanism are identified, through desk research or reported by the government/expert(s), the relevant Topic Team will assess whether the new instrument meets the applicable methodology (as described in the *Methodology Handbook*) and validate the change with experts and against official sources.

### 6.3 WBL DATA COLLECTION MISSIONS

To collect accurate information, verify supporting evidence and to recruit Expert Contributors, the WBL Team may visit several countries per year. Historically, the team traveled to countries that were newly added to establish baseline data and recruit experts. When the team travels for other purposes, such as dissemination or conferences, the mission is extended to also carry out data verification and recruitment of experts. The team may also validate data with the government counterparts and present the economy's data to interested authorities.

#### 6.3.1 IDENTIFICATION OF ECONOMIES FOR DATA COLLECTION MISSION

##### *Selection criteria*

The WBL Team conducts data collection missions to economies where data collection missions will be most beneficial and based on budget. The relevant criteria used by Topic Teams include the number of responses previously received, the existing expert pool, data challenges, ongoing reform programs, and the need to verify previously collected data.

##### *Consultations with CMUs*

Once selected, the WBL mission team members consult with the local Country Management Unit (CMU) to prepare the data collection mission. This consultation covers, among other topics, the dynamics of the data collection mission, mission dates, country clearance, expected engagements with government agencies to be held during the mission, expectations of the client, logistical assistance, and the source of funding. The team plans the mission accordingly and the local CMU clears the mission and the team members.

##### *Concurrent events and presentations*

Data collection meetings may also occur as the WBL Team is on mission to present and disseminate its findings in different economies. In such cases, the data collection mission can be supported financially either by WBL funding, a Region, a Global Practice (GP), or a CMU.

#### 6.3.2 NOTIFICATION PROTOCOL FOR AN UPCOMING MISSION

The WBL mission team members research the Country Office home page in the intranet or call the CMU for any country-specific travel requirements at least two weeks before mission departure. Should there be any specific requests or requirements, the team members inform the WBL Manager. The mission team prepares the mission memorandum and any country-specific documents to be sent to the local CMUs in advance of the mission.



The mission team members share with the Program Assistant the names of staff in the Country Office, CMU, and GP who need to be copied in the Statement of Mission Objectives (SMO) and the dates of the mission. When a mission covers two or more countries, the dates in each country must be specified accordingly.

Based on the information provided by the team members, the Program Assistant prepares and sends the draft notice to the WBL Manager and the Country Director or Country Manager for review/clearance at least two weeks before the mission, as well as any country-specific documents that may be necessary (for example, the mission announcement letter to the government).

For security reasons, the team members must send a copy of its itinerary to the Program Assistant before departing on mission. If this itinerary is modified during the trip, an updated version should also be shared.

### 6.3.3 DATA COLLECTION TRAVEL REQUESTS (TR)

Topic Teams prepare a TR for each data collection mission economy. TRs contain the specific questions and data points that the team members need to focus on during the mission. Those documents should also include a list of potential Expert Contributors that the mission team should schedule meetings with and the minimum number of experts from which the travel team should collect information from during the mission. In principle and depending on mission priorities, TRs should not contain the entire topic questionnaire and instead focus on key data points.

### 6.3.4 RULES OF ENGAGEMENT WITH CMUS DURING MISSION

#### *Kickoff meeting*

At the beginning of the data collection mission, the WBL mission team members meet with the CMU to discuss the main purpose of the mission and the public agencies with which the team has scheduled meetings. The World Bank staff in charge of private sector development reforms, the Country Director, Country Manager, or Resident Representative are usually present at this meeting. The CMU can also organize a second kickoff meeting with government officials present.

#### *Logistical assistance*

When necessary, WBL Team members may request logistical assistance from the CMU during the mission. This assistance may be in the form of booking rental cars, organizing transportation to and from the airport, preparing meeting rooms at CMU offices, or arranging interpretation services. Additionally, the CMU may assist the team in scheduling meetings with public agencies. Depending on the local circumstances, WBL Team members can also request assistance to schedule meetings with the private sector.

#### *Wrap-up meeting*

At the end of the data collection mission and at the request of the CMU, WBL team members organize a wrap-up meeting to explain the key mission highlights and the next steps. Government officials may take part in this meeting. The team does not share any information regarding the results of the mission, or the data collected.



### 6.3.5 RULES OF ENGAGEMENT WITH PUBLIC AUTHORITIES DURING MISSION

#### *Public meetings protocol*

At the government's request, WBL team members may participate in a kickoff meeting with high-level government officials (a minister, for example) or the team in charge of the reform committee of the economy. In these cases, the team meets with public agencies involved in each topic where information is collected (for example, gender equality agencies, tribunals, land registries, business registries, municipalities, and so on), depending on the request of the Topic Teams. Public sector meetings are preferably scheduled at the beginning of the data collection mission. If the agenda allows it, all WBL Team members composing the data collection mission attend the public sector meetings. CMU staff and staff from the World Bank Reform Advisory Team can be present during these meetings. Generally, public agencies present the reforms undertaken, if any, and the legislative agenda.

#### *Rules on gifts*

WBL Team abides by the rules set out in the [Staff Rule 3.01](#), Standards of Professional Conduct. WBL Team members may not accept gifts, regardless of value, which could reasonably be perceived as intending to influence their work decisions, or that could cause reputational harm to the World Bank Group. WBL Team members may accept a gift under certain circumstances: if the gift is presented in a public forum and refusal would cause offense or embarrassment to the giver, or the gift is directly associated with the demands of work (for example, working meals). In these cases, WBG staff may accept the gift on the WBG's behalf rather than in a personal capacity. If valued at more than US\$100, the gift must be declared and surrendered to the Asset Management Unit, Global Corporate Solutions (GCS).

The cumulative value of all gifts from the same individual or entity cannot exceed US\$100 in a 12-month period. Any personal benefit or value, such as free or discounted services, favors, entertainment, or hospitality (meals or accommodations), are also considered gifts.

### 6.3.6 RULES OF ENGAGEMENT WITH EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS DURING MISSION

WBL Team members can meet with public and private sector Expert Contributors that they consider relevant for the data collection. CMU staff, other World Bank colleagues, and public sector officials do not typically participate in meetings with private sector experts. Should World Bank colleagues express an interest in participating in these meetings, the mission team should contact the mission manager, copying the WBL Manager, who would directly reach out to the relevant WBG Country Office to clarify the rules of engagement outlined in this Manual.

#### *Hospitality with experts*

If an expert is particularly helpful, it is acceptable to invite the expert for a meal and cover their expenses. Having a professional lunch or dinner with one or more experts is an expense eligible for reimbursement. The event might happen either while one is on mission and needs additional information or when an expert is visiting the Washington, DC area.

Before taking action, the staff must write to the WBL Manager requesting authorization to incur the expense. In an email, the staff should explain the rationale for the expense and provide the number of Expert Contributors they expect to invite. Depending on the explanation, the WBL Manager can either approve or disapprove the expense or ask for more details and set an expense limit.



Whether an expenditure was made on mission or not, when claiming reimbursement, in addition to an Excel file detailing basic information—the name, city, and county of the restaurant; the host name; the number of participants; the date of the event—staff must submit the following supporting documents: a list of the participants who were present at the event, including their title, agency, and contact details, the restaurant receipt with proof of payment, and the WBL Manager’s email authorization.

### 6.3.7 POST-MISSION DELIVERABLES

#### *External Back-to-Office Report (BTOR)*

Upon the mission team’s return, and no later than three weeks after completing the mission, the mission team sends a BTOR to the same recipients who received the upcoming mission notification. The BTOR states the main purposes of the mission, the key mission highlights, and the next steps. It also indicates each public sector agency met by the team during the mission. Before sending it out, the mission team requests the clearance and comments of the WBL Manager, and in some cases, the CMU/GP Manager.

#### *Internal back-to-office report*

The mission team also prepares an internal WBL BTOR and shares it with each Topic Team. The WBL BTOR is drafted for each topic based on the Travel Reports prepared by the Topic Teams. It contains the names and contact information of all experts met by the team members during the mission and their individual responses, as well as contextual information and the findings of the data collection mission. The WBL BTOR is intended for the exclusive use of DECWL staff and is not meant to be shared outside the unit without the WBL Manager’s clearance.

The WBL BTOR, which is always saved on the team’s shared network drive in a designated folder, should be delivered to the team within three weeks of returning from a data collection mission. The WBL BTOR delivery deadline is agreed with the WBL Manager, depending on the scope or timing of the mission (earlier or later in the cycle).

#### *Updating CRM with new contact information*

The mission team is responsible for updating CRM with the contact information of newly recruited Expert Contributors. If they agree, they are recognized in the current cycle’s report and included on the distribution list for future questionnaires.





# Data Coding and Analysis

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## 7 DATA CODING AND ANALYSIS

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Coding is the process whereby the WBL Team analyzes the laws, regulations, and policy mechanisms of a given economy based on its rigorous methodology to answer and score the indicators in the WBL index, based on responses received through the topic questionnaires. All answers are validated against documentary evidence in the form of codified laws and regulations, and evidence of policy mechanisms. Responses from experts are analyzed in conjunction with these sources and other relevant secondary sources to ensure accuracy. The coding process is carried out in the Data Management System (DMS).

### 7.1 DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (DMS)

The WBL Team uses a custom-built Data Management System to code and store its data. DMS is designed to ensure:

- ▶ *Data confidentiality.* The system is accessible online only when connected to the World Bank's network and requires a username and password to sign in. Access is granted individually by a Product Administrator (DMS Focal Point), who creates profiles for users with designated roles (such as Analyst, Topic Leader, product manager, guest) and grants access only to the topics they are assigned to work on.
- ▶ *Efficient processing of information.* DMS, which is integrated with ngSurvey, allows users to compare answers from the last cycle of data collection with experts' responses to each question included in the questionnaire.
- ▶ *A log/record of data changes.* Any changes in data are recorded with the date and the name of users who made the change to ensure traceability.
- ▶ *All corrections and reforms are flagged.* DMS requires an extensive justification for any change to indicator-level data points. If a justification is not provided, DMS will prevent the data from being submitted for the next level of review.
- ▶ *Efficient reporting of data, corrections, and reforms.* A number of Excel reports can be downloaded, to compile lists of corrections, reforms, or historical data. Data can also be downloaded to Excel from DMS for individual or multiple cycles.
- ▶ *Multilevel review processes* (see section 8, Data Management, Analysis, and Review for more details). The coding platform is set up with three layers of review, to be completed in the first instance by the Topic Leader, followed by the Data Reviewer, and lastly by the WBL Manager.
- ▶ *Protection and storage of data.* All historical data are "locked" in DMS, meaning they cannot be altered by a user unless a correction is entered in the system, with an accompanying justification. Current cycle data are locked at each level of review unless they are rejected or recalled from review.

Before coding, each Topic Team prepares a coding sheet following the structure of the questionnaire, in line with the *Methodology Handbook* and built on the coding template provided by the IT team. The Topic Team then codes values for answers, legal bases, URLs, and comments in DMS by reviewing the applicable legal instruments and policy mechanisms. These values are cross-checked with experts' answers and other secondary sources to ensure accuracy.

WBL coordinates closely with the IT team to monitor the functioning of the DMS system, test and implement enhancements that further strengthen the points listed above and keep up to date with the technology developments in the field.

## 7.2 LAW LIBRARY AND IMPLEMENTATION LIBRARY

The WBL Law Library encompasses a comprehensive collection of legal instruments for 190 economies, including laws, decrees, regulations, and court decisions that establish the legal framework for addressing WBL legal framework questions. The Implementation Library consists of non-legal documents such as national plans, policies, strategies, guidelines, and procedures that support the WBL supportive framework questions. These libraries serve as valuable resources for WBL Analysts seeking information and guidance on legal bases and supporting evidence.

During each data collection and coding cycle, Analysts catalog and save newly received legal and non-legal instruments in designated folders. WBL Record Managers then review the catalogued entries to ensure accuracy and consistency with prevailing guidelines. Record Managers perform a regular quality check of the database.

During the coding process, these libraries play several critical roles:

- ▶ *Standardization.* Analysts check the legal bases or supporting evidence entered into DMS against the standard naming conventions in the libraries to ensure a standard format and data consistency.
- ▶ *Link validation.* Analysts obtain valid URLs from the libraries if the links entered in DMS are no longer accessible.
- ▶ *Verification.* Analysts verify reforms or data corrections entered in DMS by consulting the content in the libraries.
- ▶ *Reference and cross-checking.* Analysts use the libraries to cross-check data against authoritative sources, ensuring accuracy and reliability.
- ▶ *Research support.* The libraries provide a wealth of information that can support ongoing research and analysis by offering comprehensive legal and policy documents.

These functions ensure that the data entered in DMS is accurate, consistent, and reliable, supporting the overall quality and integrity of the WBL coding process.

## 7.3 TOPIC LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to setting up the coding process and ensuring data points are formatted correctly in DMS, Topic Leaders are responsible for training Analysts on the WBL methodology and providing guidance during the coding process. Every cycle, Topic Leaders share the *Methodology Handbook* and detailed coding rules with their respective teams. The *Methodology Handbook* provides practical guidance to all WBL Team members on how data points are coded and scored, while the coding rules include examples of different observed variations and how to treat each case to ensure the highest degree of comparability.

During the data coding cycle, Topic Leaders are responsible for ensuring data quality and integrity by carrying out a first round of rigorous data review, as described in section 8, Data Management, Analysis, and Review.



## 7.4 ANALYST RESPONSIBILITIES

Each Analyst is responsible for coding a subset of economies, based on language skills and knowledge of regional/economy context. For each data point for each economy assigned, Analysts are responsible for inputting into DMS the current cycle answers; applicable legal basis or policy mechanism; URLs to laws or policy mechanisms; and explanatory comments. Values are determined by reviewing and analyzing the applicable legal basis or policy mechanism in conjunction with the last cycle values, the information provided by Expert Contributors, and any other secondary sources.

Analysts must ensure consistent application of the methodology. This entails evaluating whether any changes to the data should be made due to corrections or reforms.

## 7.5 DATA CHANGES

During the coding cycle, the main priority for each Topic Team is to identify any changes to the latest or past scored data, due to newly adopted legislation, policy mechanisms, or corrections.

- ▶ *Corrections* affect the panel data set and entail changing data for past years. These may be the result of changes in the laws that the team did not identify at the time, misinterpretation of the text of the law, or inaccuracies in the application of the methodology.
- ▶ *Data changes* refer to changes in the data for the current cycle, due to newly adopted laws, amendments, or policy mechanisms (collectively referred to as reforms).

Any change to the scored data—whether affecting the current cycle or past cycles (correction)—requires an extensive justification to be entered in the system. This includes documenting all newly identified legal bases or sources in the Law Library and the Implementation Library, ensuring that they follow the agreed upon naming conventions. For corrections, the Analyst, upon approval by the Topic Leader, must correct the incorrect values for all years affected. This process is called *back-calculation*.

To justify a change, the Analyst should include the following detailed information in the justification in DMS:

- ▶ *Dates:*
  - *For legal frameworks:*
    - *Date of enactment.* The enactment date is the date that a bill officially becomes law. Unless explicitly stated otherwise, this is also considered the date of enforcement.
    - *Date of entry into force and/or implementation of provision.* The date of entry into force or implementation of the legal provision is the date the legal provision takes effect. WBL uses this date as the date of data change (also relevant for the documentation of legal reforms).
  - *Relevant dates for supportive frameworks.* These can be dates of adoption of policies, publication dates of guidelines, or publication dates of data.
  - *Past cycles affected.* In the case of a correction to past data, the Analyst should also clarify the relevant year of the WBL report, data collection cycle, and/or data set affected by the data change or correction and whether any data needs to be back-calculated (specifying the range of back-calculation).
- ▶ *Relevant context:*
  - *Information on who implemented what new measures.*
  - *Information on what has been repealed and/or what has changed.*





- *For historical data corrections*, include applicable methodology, identified issue with the data, how the coding should be corrected, and any other useful information (such as applicable legal basis or whether a historical reform should be adjusted/removed).
- *Any other useful details*. This may include government websites, legislative history, news articles, and other secondary sources or information.

## 7.6 SUBMITTING DATA FOR REVIEW

Once the Analyst finishes coding the data for an economy, they submit the completed data for the economy for review in DMS. The submission locks the data for that particular economy in DMS. If the Topic Team needs to update any indicator-level data point for this economy, the Topic Team recalls the economy from review in DMS, updates the data, and resubmits it for review.

## 7.7 IT FLAGS FOR PROPER DATA PRODUCTION

WBL works closely with the IT team to address any technical issues that may arise in DMS during the coding cycle. Team members must log tickets with information about any IT issues encountered in the ITS ticketing system (Azure DevOps). The tickets are addressed promptly, and any pending tickets are discussed on a weekly basis by representatives from WBL and IT. This ensures the accuracy and integrity of the WBL data.





Data Management,  
Analysis, and Review

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## 8 DATA MANAGEMENT, ANALYSIS, AND REVIEW

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*Women, Business and the Law* employs two distinct approaches for data management to ensure data integrity and reliability. For legal frameworks and supportive frameworks data, the team combines survey results with desk research, following a three-layer DMS review process and internal Data Team review. For enforcement perceptions data, the team relies solely on the respondents' answers to perception questions during scoring and construction of the index, and follows a three-layer review and an internal Data Team review. In the last phase, the combined data set involving scored legal frameworks, supportive frameworks, and enforcement perceptions data goes through a two-layer review process before it is published.

The rest of this section provides a detailed outline of the steps involved in analyzing and reviewing each type of data and the comprehensive review process for the final complete data set.

### 8.1 CODING STANDARDS FOR LEGAL AND SUPPORTIVE FRAMEWORKS DATA

The legal frameworks and supportive frameworks data for all economies across all topics is subject to a three-layer review and approval process in DMS by the Topic Leader (level 1), Supervisor (level 2), and WBL Manager (level 3). This is followed by an internal Data Team Review (level 4).

The three-layer DMS review and approval are recorded at the economy level for each topic in DMS, including comments by the reviewers at each level, when applicable. For a smooth review of the data, at each layer, all the following must be met:

- ▶ Coding decisions are based on applicable laws and regulations, answers provided by Expert Contributors, and the applicable coding rules as described in the *Methodology Handbook*.
- ▶ The coding is in English. Additional information and the text of legal provisions can be included in the original language, followed by an English translation in the comments section. Legal bases and sources for Spanish- and French-speaking economies are entered in the original language.
- ▶ The methodology and coding rules for each of the indicators should be applied consistently across economies during coding.
- ▶ Any change to previously published data should be well justified and supported by applicable law or verifiable sources, so the Topic Leader, Data Reviewer, and Manager can understand the rationale behind the coding decision.

Coding that does not meet the standards outlined in this section is rejected and sent back to the Analyst. The Analyst then revises the coding, provides comments where applicable, and resubmits the data for the economy (henceforth we will only refer to the economy) for further review and subsequent approval.

The Topic Leader, Supervisor, and Manager provide review comments throughout the coding sheet and through the review log comment box. When the reviewer rejects an economy, the grounds for rejection and the recommended action should be clearly documented in the comment box. When the reviewer approves an economy, a review summary can be provided to facilitate the next layer of review. If a reviewer has a question about the coding that does not require rejecting the economy in DMS, the reviewer can follow up with the team outside DMS and should summarize the discussion in the review comments.

If the Topic Team recalls an economy from review and revises the coding, changes made after the previous reviews should be clearly explained in the comment box when the Topic Team resubmits the economy.

### 8.1.1 TOPIC LEADER REVIEW (LEVEL 1)

The Topic Leader leads a team of Analysts in charge of collecting and coding the data for one or multiple topics. The Topic Leader performs coding for a set of economies, reviews the data coded by the Analysts of the topic(s), and approves the coded data for all economies under the topic(s) in DMS.

Topic Leaders are responsible for ensuring the consistent application of the methodology and coding rules for all economies. They pay particular attention to data changes and the coding for new/research questions, for which no baseline data exist. In cases where the assessment in coding differs between the Topic Leader and the Analyst, the Topic Leader makes the final coding decision based on the available information collected and compiled by the Analyst, and the consistent application of the methodology.

### 8.1.2 SUPERVISOR REVIEW (LEVEL 2)

The Supervisor is a senior member of the WBL Team working closely with the Topic Leaders to ensure that their teams consistently, accurately, and punctually fulfill their tasks and responsibilities by following the directions set forth by the Manager and Director. Additionally, they provide valuable guidance to Topic Leaders, encompassing both subject matter expertise and practical insights about implementation.

Supervisors are responsible for reviewing with particular attention internal comments that explain coding decisions and data change justifications for clarity and accuracy. They can also review formatting consistency for the legal bases and sources.

### 8.1.3 MANAGER REVIEW (LEVEL 3)

The Manager reviews the coded data for a set of topics already reviewed and approved by the respective Topic Leaders and Supervisors. The Manager performs the final approval in DMS for the coded data for all topics and all economies.

### 8.1.4 DATA TEAM REVIEW (LEVEL 4)

During the review phase, once all economies have at least gone through the first layer of review, the Data Team starts producing a *decomposition file*. The file includes the approved indicators and aggregated scores for all economies under all topics in the current year and previous years, as well as the changes to WBL scores between the current year and the past year due to reforms, corrections, and methodology updates (if applicable). Topic Leaders, Supervisors and the WBL Manager regularly review updated versions of the decomposition file to identify and track data changes, in order to ensure there are no inconsistencies between the data logged in DMS and recorded changes in the file. This also helps to ensure that there is sufficient documentation to approve and justify the changes.

Once all economies for a topic receive the three-layer approval in DMS for legal and supportive frameworks data, the Data Team downloads the final approved data and uses the decomposition file to



cross-check the changes in data and scores against the reforms and corrections logged in DMS. Discrepancies are analyzed by the Topic Leaders, Data Reviewers, and the Manager, and recorded in DMS.

The Data Team shares the raw data files from DMS and decomposition file with the Research Quality and Analysis Team. The raw data are imported into Stata for the calculation of legal and supportive frameworks scores and indexes, which are then compared with the decomposition file. The Stata files produced by the Research Quality and Analysis Team to construct the economy-level scores and indexes (.do and .dta files) are part of the Reproducibility package and contribute to the validation of the correct implementation of the scoring rules across the three types of data (legal frameworks, supportive frameworks, and enforcement perception data).

Each decomposition file, including the final file produced after the third layer of review (Manager review) is locked: only the Data Team and the Manager have editing rights, while the Topic Leaders and Supervisors have reading rights (and may be allowed to copy the data to a new spreadsheet for analysis). Each version of the file is dated and saved in a designated folder in the network drive. The final decomposition file is prepared two business days before the data review meetings.

## 8.2 ENFORCEMENT PERCEPTIONS DATA MANAGEMENT PROCESS

The collected data are first reviewed and validated by the Enforcement Perceptions Team and then analyzed by the Research Quality and Analysis Team. Specifically:

The Enforcement Perception Team is responsible for the following steps:

- ▶ Extracting raw data from ngSurvey in Excel format and importing it into Stata for cleaning and checks.
- ▶ Performing high-frequency, semi-automated checks in Stata, identifying invalid submissions, and generating descriptive statistics of the collected data on the responses for each question and economy. Perception-based responses from non-public sector respondents about relevant laws that are in place—as confirmed through the coding process for the legal frameworks pillar—are considered valid submissions. All other responses are considered invalid submissions.
- ▶ Sharing the statistics on the collected data and closed economies regularly with the rest of the WBL Team.

The Research Quality and Analysis Team is responsible for the following steps:

- ▶ Calculating the enforcement perceptions scores and index at economy level, once data collection has been concluded. Data collection concludes when there are at least three valid responses for each enforcement perceptions question.
- ▶ Sharing the de-identified raw data at expert level, the economy-level data set including the enforcement perceptions index and indicator scores, and the total number of submissions with the Data Team in the Excel and Stata .dta file formats, including the .do files.

The enforcement perceptions data for all economies is subject to a four-layer review and approval process by the Topic Leader (level 1), Supervisor (level 2), Data Team (level 3), and WBL Manager (level 4).



## 8.2.1 TOPIC LEADER REVIEW (LEVEL 1)

The Topic Leader reviews specifically the invalid submissions identified by the Enforcement Perception Team to ensure the validation criteria have been applied accurately and no valid responses are excluded from the analysis. Valid submissions are perception-based responses from non-public sector respondents about relevant laws that are in place, as confirmed through the coding process for the legal frameworks pillar.

## 8.2.2 SUPERVISOR REVIEW (LEVEL 2)

The Supervisor reviews the creation of the data sets and checks the implementation of the scoring rules for the enforcement perceptions responses, and communicates any identified issues with the Enforcement Perceptions Team and Research Quality Team. After resolving the discrepancies, the Enforcement Perceptions Team shares the file for review by the Data Team.

## 8.2.3 DATA TEAM REVIEW (LEVEL 3)

Once the enforcement perceptions index for all economies is calculated using the methodology described in the *Methodology Handbook*, it is shared with the Data Team. The Data Team then compares the raw data with that in ngSurvey and reviews the score calculations. Discrepancies are analyzed by the Enforcement Perceptions Team. After resolving the discrepancies, the Enforcement Perceptions Team shares the file for review by the Manager.

## 8.2.4 MANAGER REVIEW (LEVEL 4)

The Manager reviews the final files and performs the final approval for the enforcement perceptions data for all economies.

## 8.3 REVIEW OF THE FINAL FULL DATA SET

Two additional layers of review are conducted for the final full data set combining the legal frameworks and supportive frameworks data with enforcement perceptions data. These layers of review consist of DECIG Management Review and a Bank-wide Review (BWR). The Production Leader coordinates the review processes for each report cycle.

### 8.3.1 DECIG MANAGEMENT REVIEW

The approved data are reviewed by the DECIG Director with the Topic Leaders, Enforcement Perceptions Team, Data Reviewers, and Manager in a documented data review meeting. The Topic Teams take the minutes of the data review meetings, documenting what has been discussed and agreed and what are the next steps if the Topic Team is required to perform additional data verification. The minutes of these meetings are saved in the Topic Teams' designated folders on the network drive.

Following the meeting, the Topic Team performs additional data verification—if the Manager and DECIG Director provide additional comments—and confirms or updates the data as required. Any changes made to the data are subject to three-layer approval again in DMS. The Data Team then downloads the latest



approved data, updates the final decomposition file, and prepares a master data file for use in Bank Wide Review.

### 8.3.2 PREPARING FOR BANK-WIDE REVIEW (BWR)

In collaboration with the Manager, the Topic Leaders perform a thorough review and validation check of the final master file. The Manager clears the BWR version of the master file, which is circulated to the DECWL function leads, including those for data analysis and production.

The Data Team prepares the BWR version of the economy tables in Excel. The BWR economy tables are circulated back to the Topic Teams, which confirm that the data in the file match their BWR data in DMS. The next section, on [Clearance and Publication of the Report and Data](#), describes the BWR process in more detail.

If a Topic Team needs to make a change to its data in DMS after the BWR economy tables are circulated internally to the WBL Team, the Topic Team recalls the relevant economies and performs the necessary changes, which are subject to three-layer approval again in DMS. The WBL Team repeats the steps described in the beginning of this section. The revised BWR economy tables are recirculated only to the specific Topic Teams with changes for a recheck.

In collaboration with the Manager, the Topic Leaders communicate the date and time for which DMS is locked for BWR to the WBL Team as a whole. During the BWR, no data changes are allowed on DMS. Also, no data extractions from received questionnaires are permitted during the same period.





# Clearance and Publication of the Report and Data

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## 9 CLEARANCE AND PUBLICATION OF THE REPORT AND DATA

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The *Women, Business and the Law* report and data are produced as part of an Advisory Services and Analytics (ASA) project. The general WBG Accountability and Decision-Making (ADM) framework for ASA applies to the WBL review and clearance processes. The sections that follow provide additional specific details relevant to WBL.

### 9.1 PROCESS FOR OBTAINING APPROVAL FOR BWR CIRCULATION

1. The WBL Manager sends chapters of the draft report to peer reviewers from other DECIG and DEC units for comments. The WBL Team incorporates comments into the BWR version of the report.
2. The Production Leader sends an email to the Manager, copying the Data Team, to seek concurrence on the final BWR version of the report and annexes (Excel file with the data). The Production Leader also uploads the BWR report and annexes to the SharePoint site.
3. The WBL Manager concurs and submits the BWR report and annexes to the DECIG Director for written approval for BWR circulation, copying the Data Team and Production Leader.
4. The DECIG Director clears the BWR report and annexes for circulation by email.
5. Upon written request by the DECIG Director, the WBG Chief Economist circulates the BWR report and annexes for Bank-wide Review (BWR).
6. All Practice Groups and relevant stakeholders within the World Bank Group receive a digital copy of the draft report and have two (2) weeks to provide written comments to be incorporated in the final report.

### 9.2 ARCHIVING OF BWR VERSION OF THE DATA AND APPROVAL FOR BWR CIRCULATION

The Production Leader archives the BWR version of the data in the Production folder of the network drive. The Production Leader archives the approval for BWR circulation by the DECIG Director in the Production folder of the network drive.

### 9.3 PREPARING FOR THE BWR MEETING

The Manager and DECIG Director review the comments received during Bank-wide Review in a meeting with the Data Team, report authors, Topic Leaders, and Production Leader. BWR comments are categorized as general comments and economy-specific comments (comments on specific data points pertaining to an economy). General comments are circulated to the same distribution lists who received the original request to provide comments, prior to the BWR meeting.

### 9.4 PROCESS FOR RESPONDING TO ECONOMY-SPECIFIC COMMENTS

The WBL Team responds to the economy-specific comments in a separate communication after the BWR meeting. The Production Leader coordinates the process.

## 9.5 ARCHIVING OF BWR COMMENTS RECEIVED

The Production Leader archives emails received with BWR comments in the Production folder of the network drive.

## 9.6 DATA CHANGES AFTER BANK-WIDE REVIEW

The full data set (current and historical) is circulated during Bank-wide Review in the form of an Excel file—hereinafter called “BWR data.” After data are circulated for Bank-wide Review, the WBL Team will only make additional changes to incorporate BWR comments, if warranted, or (exceptionally) to correct errors that may be found after circulation for Bank-wide Review.

The process for clearing data changes is as follows:

1. All suggested data revisions received during the BWR process are verified by the Topic Teams.
2. If a Topic Team decides to make a change to the BWR data (“*post-BWR data change*”), the Topic Team sends an email to the respective Supervisor to provide justification and seek approval for the change, with a copy to the Data Team and Production Leader.
3. The Supervisor reviews the change and approves it by email.
4. The Manager reviews the change and approves it by email.
5. Upon the Manager’s approval, the Topic Leader recalls the specific economy in DMS for the Topic Team to make the approved data change. All changes made to the BWR data are subjected to three-layer approval again in DMS.
6. The Data Team saves the request and approval emails in the network drive and logs the request and approval.
7. The Manager concurs and submits the post-BWR data changes, in the form of an updated Excel with a dedicated tab describing the individual changes and impact on scores (if any), to the DECIG Director for written approval, with a copy to the Data Team and Production Leader.
8. The DECIG Director clears the post-BWR data changes by email.
9. Upon approval, the DECIG Director recirculates the final data in the BWR format (Excel file, with an additional tab describing the changes) to the same distribution lists who received the original request to provide comments at least two weeks before publication of the report.

## 9.7 APPROVAL OF FINAL DATA

The process of approval of final data is as follows:

1. The Manager reviews the Coding Status report, which is generated by DMS and provides an overview of the status of the review process in DMS, to ensure 100 percent compliance with the three-layer approval in DMS for final publication.
2. The Data Team confirms with Topic Leaders that all post-BWR changes have been implemented in DMS and that data can be considered final for publication. The Data Team communicates the date and time for which the data are to be considered final and downloads these final data from DMS to prepare the data files for publication.
3. The Data Team performs a thorough review and validation check of the final data files, which include an Excel with the full data set, hereinafter referred to as “*Master data file*”.



4. The Manager clears the publication version of the Master data file, which is circulated to the DECWL Topic Leaders, DECWL function leads, including the Production Leader and the Dissemination Team lead.
5. The Manager submits the Master data file for publication to the DECIG Director.
6. The Production Leader prepares the final reform count file and sends it to the Data Team.

### 9.7.1 ARCHIVING FINAL DATA AND APPROVALS

The Production Leader archives the final data in the Production folder of the network drive. The Production Leader archives the approval for post-BWR data changes by the DECIG Director in the Production folder of the network drive. The Production Leader archives the approval for final data by the DECIG Director in the Production folder of the network drive.

## 9.8 FINAL CLEARANCE OF REPORT FOR PUBLICATION

### 9.8.1 PROCESS FOR PREPARING THE FINAL REPORT

1. The Production Leader sends the PDF layout version of each chapter to the respective authors, who review and clear that the PDF layout matches the approved underlying final Word chapter.
2. Upon clearance by the authors, the Production Leader sends the PDF layout chapters to WBG Publications and receives the final eBook of the report (“final report”) in PDF layout from WBG Publications.
3. The Production Leader sends an email to the Manager, copying the Data Team and Topic Leaders, to seek concurrence on the final report, confirming that all Topic Teams have confirmed that the PDF layout version of the economy tables matches the approved underlying data file.
4. The Manager concurs and submits the final report to the DECIG Director for written approval for publication, with a copy to the Data Team and Production Leader.
5. The DECIG Director clears the final report for publication by email.
6. Upon written request of the DECIG Director, the DEC Senior VP and WBG Chief Economist decides on the final publication of the report and data.
7. Upon approval, the Production Leader refers the clearance of the final report to WBG Publications. The cleared files are converted into electronic formats for dissemination, including the World Bank’s Open Knowledge Repository and eLibrary.
8. The DECIG Director sends the embargoed final report to the DEC Senior VP and WBG Chief Economist and other WBG Senior Management.
9. The DECIG Director sends the embargoed final report to the Executive Directors.
10. If a paper copy of the final report is required, the Production Leader sends the final files to the WBG Publications print coordinator for printing.

### 9.8.2 ARCHIVING APPROVAL FOR FINAL REPORT

The Production Leader archives the DECIG Director’s approval for the final report in the Production folder of the network drive.



## 9.9 PREPARATION AND PUBLICATION OF DATA PRODUCTS

The Data Team and the Website Team collaborate for the production and publication of data products using the final data approved following the steps described in section 9.7, [Approval of Final Data](#). The Data Team prepares the following data products, and in each case, Topic Teams validate the consistency with final data as approved in DMS:

- ▶ *Data for website tables.* The Data Team populates pre-agreed templates to be shared with the World Bank IT team to create data tables on the WBL website.
- ▶ *Downloadable Excel files.* The Data Team prepares static Excel files with final data to facilitate download from the WBL website.
- ▶ *Stata files.* The Data Team coordinates the preparation of the final Stata files for download from the WBL website.
- ▶ *Economy snapshots.* The Data Team generates 190 PDF economy snapshots to summarize economy-level data and information for legal frameworks, supportive frameworks, and enforcement perceptions.
- ▶ *Data visualizations.* The Website Team collaborates with the DEC Data Group to provide data for the generation of Tableau visualizations and Flourish visualizations.
- ▶ *Data for the Gender Data Portal.* The Data Team prepares the data and metadata for publication on the Gender Data Portal. This includes WBL index averages for each regional grouping and income level grouping.
- ▶ *Data for the Development Data Hub.* The Data Team prepares the data assets to be uploaded to the Development Data Hub.

## 9.10 PUBLICATION OF REPORT

The Production Leader requests a publication landing page with pregenerated links to the documents to be published from the World Bank Open Knowledge Repository (OKR) before the report launch. Upon receipt, the Production Leader shares the links with the Website Team. Following final approval, the Production Leader directs OKR to make the report publicly available as of a pre-agreed launch time and date.

## 9.11 CONSTRUCTION OF THE PANEL DATA SET

Over time, the data collected, validated, reviewed and cleared for the legal and supportive frameworks indicators will result in a rich panel data set, allowing researchers to explore the impact of laws on economic outcomes as well as enabling control for time-invariant country characteristics. Comparability over time is achieved by minimizing as much as possible the changes to the methodology.

When a new methodology is adopted, retroactive adjustments will be applied. This is the case for the WBL 1.0 legal frameworks panel data set, which is currently being recalculated on the basis of the new methodology and will be published alongside future versions of the report. The recalculation is carried out through a combination of desk research (for newly added indicators) and formulas (for existing indicators that will be henceforth partially scored).

Annual revisions, to the data set, are carried out to ensure data quality and accuracy. These are published in a revisions file that details the changes and individual data points affected. All past data sets used by the WBL Team to produce past reports are also made available on the website.





# Dissemination of the Report and Data

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## 10 DISSEMINATION OF THE REPORT AND DATA

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Dissemination of the *Women, Business and the Law* report and data is led by the Dissemination, Relationships, Engagement, and Media (DREAM) Team under the guidance of the DECWL Manager and DECIG Front Office, and in close collaboration with the World Bank’s External Corporate Relations (ECR) team. The sections that follow provide specific details relevant to the dissemination and engagement activities undertaken by WBL.

### 10.1 DREAM TEAM FUNCTIONS

The DREAM Team is one of the WBL functional teams. It is responsible for communications, knowledge management, strategic outreach, and stakeholder engagement to encourage the uptake of WBL data and research within and outside the World Bank. Specifically, the team is responsible for developing and executing the following:

- ▶ Dissemination and outreach strategy
- ▶ Event coordination and planning
  - Planning WBL events
  - Maintaining a team calendar of events
  - Mapping future events
  - Conducting post-event analysis
- ▶ Knowledge management and outreach tools
  - Organization of knowledge management documents
  - Production of dissemination tools, including Master PowerPoint Presentations, legal and policy good practices document, data visualizations and infographics, videos
  - Coordination of presentations, talking points, and blogs
  - Tracking of WBL key performance metrics (media mentions, report downloads, “our data out there”)
- ▶ Networks and partnerships
  - Coordination of internal and external strategic outreach
  - WBL networking and distribution lists
  - Liaison with Development Economics External and Corporate Relations and Development Economics Indicator Groups communications teams
- ▶ Communications
  - Website update and maintenance
  - Social media engagement (LinkedIn and Facebook)
  - Production of presentations and talking points
  - Quarterly newsletter

In the context of this discussion (Section 10), stakeholder engagement does not include engagement with governments. Such engagements are conducted according to the guiding principles and protocols laid out in Section 5 of this *Manual and Guide*.



## 10.2 DISSEMINATION AND OUTREACH STRATEGY

The DREAM Team develops the WBL dissemination and outreach strategy in collaboration with the Communications Officer in the DECIG Front Office and the WBG ECR team, under the guidance of the DECWL Manager and the DECIG Director. The dissemination and outreach strategy serves as a roadmap for sharing the WBL reports' data and findings. It outlines key activities, priorities, and target audiences, while identifying stakeholders, potential impact, and optimal dissemination channels. The strategy also defines goals, sets targets, and details the resources needed to execute these activities effectively.

## 10.3 EVENT COORDINATION AND PLANNING

The DREAM Team plans and executes the launch of WBL annual reports. The Team is responsible for coordinating event logistics, including drafting the Concept Note, identifying and securing a venue, identifying and inviting speakers, and coordinating attendance.

The DREAM Team also organizes various other events throughout the year, both independently and in collaboration with partners. Engagements include prominent forums such as the United Nation's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and General Assembly, Generation Equality, Fundamental Rights Forum, Her Power Summit, Women Deliver, Cannes Lions, World Bank Spring and Annual Meetings, Reykjavík Global Forum, and the World Economic Forum Annual Meetings.

The DREAM Team also coordinates and facilitates the participation of WBL and DECIG Front Office members in events globally through the preparation of event materials, including concept notes, presentations, talking points, and logistics support.

The Team tracks the WBL Team's ongoing engagements and impact and identifies future opportunities for broader outreach. This involves maintaining a calendar of events, mapping out future engagement opportunities, and conducting post-event analyses—such as attendance rates and demographics, panel composition, and insights about logistics—to refine strategies and expand outreach.

## 10.4 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND OUTREACH TOOLS

The DREAM Team is responsible for coordinating and producing knowledge management and other outreach tools to disseminate WBL data and engage strategic partners.

Key documents and outreach tools include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ▶ Internal dissemination and communications strategy developed in cooperation with the World Bank's Corporate Communications (ECR) team.
- ▶ Press releases.
- ▶ Blogs discussing WBL findings and other topics related to WBL data and women's economic empowerment.
- ▶ Presentations, data visualizations and infographics, fact sheets, social media messages, and videos.
- ▶ Economy Snapshots, produced in collaboration with the Data Team, that summarize the WBL data for each of the 190 economies covered by the research.



To streamline and harmonize knowledge management outputs produced by WBL Team members, the DREAM Team also creates internal reference documents and templates to guide the drafting of presentations, talking points, and blogs. These internal documents include, among others:

- ▶ An annual Master PowerPoint Presentation with global, regional, and topic-level findings.
- ▶ Regional and topic-specific fact sheets.
- ▶ Templates for methodology and economy-level deep dives, including good legal practices identified by WBL data.
- ▶ Stakeholder engagement toolkits for contributor recruitment and facilitation of joint events (produced jointly with the CMT).
- ▶ Blog drafting guidelines and template.

#### *Gender Data Portal*

WBL data also feeds into the publicly available WBG Gender Data Portal, which compiles the latest gender statistics to improve the understanding of gender data and facilitate analyses that inform policy choices. WBG teams have used WBL data available in the Gender Data Portal to provide technical support to economies and facilitate legal reform, such as in Azerbaijan and Sierra Leone. WBL data are also used by external organizations, such as Our World in Data, which create visualizations of WBL data to increase awareness of global gender gaps.

#### *Writing and publishing blogs*

To enhance the dissemination of research conducted by *Women, Business and the Law*, team members are encouraged to contribute by writing and publishing blogs on the World Bank Blogs page. The process of drafting and publishing blogs adheres to a structured set of procedures set out by the WBG Corporate Communications team to ensure adherence to WBG writing style, consistency of messaging, and accuracy of data.

#### *Tracking key performance metrics*

*Women, Business and the Law* employs a comprehensive approach to track the impact and reach of its data and reports. The team systematically monitors media mentions, citations in reports and academic papers, use of WBL data by external organizations (that is, “our data out there”), and downloads of the WBL reports to gauge influence and engagement. This involves leveraging analytic tools to capture and analyze data, ensuring accurate and up-to-date metrics on the project's visibility and impact.

#### *Dissemination files*

All files and documents related to the dissemination of WBL data and findings are saved in a dedicated internal SharePoint folder, and final versions of documents are stored in a dedicated internal folder in the O Drive.





## 10.5 NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS

### *Sector-specific collaboration within the World Bank Group*

Key partners of the WBL Team within the World Bank Group are colleagues working on the WBL Reform Advisory Team, as well as the following development themes: Education; Gender; Social Development; Institutions; Finance, Competitiveness and Investment; and Social Protection. The team actively engages with the Gender Group, and other operational teams and supports WB Learning Weeks. Other key partners include colleagues working on women's economic empowerment at the IFC and MIGA, as well as IMF.

WBL works in close collaboration with the WBG Corporate Communications teams, as well as with other projects within the Development Economics Global Indicators Group, such as Business Ready, Enterprise Surveys, and Global Indicator Briefs.

### *Regional engagement*

WBL Team members are designated as Regional Focal Points and actively engage with each region's Chief Economist Offices, Gender Innovation Labs, and Regional Gender Coordination teams. The goals of such interactions are to:

- ▶ Identify relevant gender-related topics being discussed in the regions.
- ▶ Showcase WBL data and materials that can be useful to World Bank Country Offices and task teams.
- ▶ Explore opportunities for collaboration and dissemination of the WBL data and materials.
- ▶ Strengthen the relationship with colleagues in the region to increase the reach and impact of the WBL report year-round.

### *Key external partners*

The WBL Team has established strong partnerships with leading civil society organizations, law firms, foundations, and other private sector representatives, academic institutions, development agencies, and multilateral organizations committed to advancing women's economic participation. These partnerships involve regular meetings and consultations, joint events and conferences, co-authorships of publications and collaboration on research initiatives, distribution of WBL questionnaires, and contributor recruitment.

### *Continued network expansion*

The team will make concerted efforts to engage audiences that have not been previously reached. This will include expanding its outreach to individuals with significant decision-making authority on these reforms, even if their primary focus is not specifically on gender.



## 10.6 COMMUNICATIONS

### *Website*

The *Women, Business and the Law* [website](#) serves as the primary public-facing repository of the team's data, reports, and other information resources. It is updated as needed on a regular basis, with major changes implemented ahead of each report launch date.

Concurrently with report production, the Website Team collaborates with the Data Team to prepare the [data](#) available for download in Excel and Stata file formats. Upon the final clearance of the report and data for a new cycle (see Section 9 above), the Website Team collaborates with World Bank Data Group and IT team to update the website downloadable data, browsable data, and visualizations. The OKR report links are added to the website after provided by the Production Leader. New data and explanatory content are made available on the *Women, Business and the Law* website concurrently with the launch date of each new *Women, Business and the Law* report.

### *Social media presence*

*Women, Business and the Law* maintains an active presence on social media, managed by the DREAM Team through [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#). These platforms are used to spotlight topics related to women's economic empowerment, share updates on recent blogs, research and publications, conference participation, data collection missions, and methodology workshops. LinkedIn, in particular, facilitates engagement with partners to amplify their activities and update them on the WBL Team's ongoing activities. Additionally, social media is leveraged to identify potential new experts to contribute to WBL questionnaires and to connect with current contributors.

### *"Our data out there"*

WBL data are used by the World Bank and external organizations to promote dialogue on women's empowerment, such as Arizona State University, the Atlantic Council, the Center for Global Development, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security, Equality Now, Our World in Data, the Millenium Challenge Corporation, the World Economic Forum, and the UN Foundation. WBL, UN Women, and the OECD Development Centre collectively serve as co-custodians for SDG Indicator 5.1.1 (whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex).

### *Quarterly newsletter*

The WBL Team produces a quarterly [newsletter](#) that provides subscribers with the latest updates on research findings, events, and key initiatives related to women's economic empowerment. This newsletter is sent exclusively to contacts who have directly subscribed and opted in, reflecting our strong commitment to data privacy. No emails are sent to individuals who have not expressly chosen to receive updates, maintaining a high standard of respect for subscribers' preferences and privacy.





Research

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# 11 RESEARCH

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The WBL Research Team is in charge of producing research and coordinating the WBL Team research activities. Every year the WBL Research Team sets forth clear objectives for the upcoming cycle, closely aligned with the WBL agenda. The latest efforts of the team have focused on:

- ▶ Background research underpinning the methodology refinement, including a literature review that summarizes the publications relevant for the 10 topic areas covered by the index.
- ▶ Empirical research papers that showcase the versatility of WBL’s panel data.
- ▶ Disseminating the team’s research in academic venues to increase the network of (academic) Expert Contributors who use, and are familiar with, the WBL data.

## 11.1 RESEARCH GUIDELINES

The *Women, Business and the Law* (WBL) Research Team welcomes proposals from any WBL Team member and external researchers. Proposals must focus on either:

- ▶ Economic arguments for laws on gender equality
- ▶ Refinement of the WBL Index and exploration of indicators
- ▶ Intersectional topics

The sections that follow provide an overview of the research processes and guidelines for proposing new ideas.

### 11.1.1 THE RESEARCH PRODUCTION PROCESS

The process of producing research is often neither linear nor straightforward. Various factors influence each project's dimensions. Procedurally, the most important aspect is to set expectations from the outset with the group leader and maintain open lines of communication as the project evolves. Research products are predominantly tied to either a grant received by WBL or related to the WBL data.

- ▶ *Types of output.* There are a variety of outlets for economic research, but some typical ones are documents, reports, and papers intended for submission to peer-reviewed economic journals, books, or reports. The finished product does not have to be limited to one, but the team should agree on the deliverables for at least the first stage of any project at the outset.
- ▶ *Components.* Most studies are composed of a research question (and its motivation—why do we care?); a targeted literature review that speaks directly to the study (what do we already know about this research question?); methodology (how will we analyze?); data and analysis (what are the results?); and implications and conclusion (what have we learned and what is left for the future?).
- ▶ *Division of labor.* The division of labor for the components of a study vary based on the content of the study, skillsets of researchers, and other resources. The division of labor is another key area to discuss with the Topic Leader and WBL Manager at the beginning of any project. As elaborated in the next section, co-authorship is also dependent on contributions to and ownership over a significant number of components.

## 11.1.2 GUIDELINES TO PROPOSE RESEARCH IDEAS

Staff must prepare a one-to-two-page document consisting of the following sections:

- ▶ Type of output proposed: document, report, research paper, or the like.
- ▶ Motivation and research question(s)
- ▶ Brief literature review
- ▶ Research methodology
- ▶ Timeline
- ▶ Collaborators
- ▶ Dissemination/intended publication
- ▶ Explanation of required resources.

The proposal should then be shared with the Research Team for a preliminary review. The final research proposal needs to be approved by the WBL Manager.

## 11.1.3 GUIDELINES ON CO-AUTHORSHIP FOR RESEARCH PAPERS

Every co-author contributes evenly in terms of quantity and intensity, considered over the entirety of the production process, until the final research output is delivered.

Studies targeting economic journals (and World Bank working paper series) have a relatively stringent standard of methodology, such as economic modeling, econometric, qualitative analysis, or mixed methods. While not all researchers will be leading the methodological sections, all researchers are expected to have training to at least be a sophisticated user of those methods.

Co-authorship is ultimately decided case by case, but generally a co-author would need to work on *at least three of the five* stages of the research listed below:

1. Study design/concept note/research proposal
2. Scouting of literature and writing of literature review
3. Data collection, data cleaning, and data processing
4. Analysis
5. Paper writing





Changes Affecting the  
*Women, Business and  
the Law* Index

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# 12 CHANGES AFFECTING THE WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW INDEX

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## 12.1 CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS

Each topic and each indicator has a methodology that is published in the *Methodology Handbook* that accompanies the *Women, Business and the Law* report and on a dedicated section of the WBL website. The methodology establishes how the data are collected, the assumptions used to ensure comparability in the data, the scoring methodology (including the scoring criteria for every indicator and subquestion, and methods of aggregation), and the definition for categorizing data changes as reforms.

WBL aims to balance two core objectives: (1) maintaining the relevance of the methodology by updating it as necessary; and (2) preserving comparability over time by only reviewing the methodology at regular medium-term intervals.

Methodological changes occur in two phases. In the first phase, the “design phase,” the WBL Team conducts thorough research and discusses the suitability of the proposed change internally. In the second phase, the “approval phase,” the WBL Team presents the suggested change to internal and external stakeholders to assess the suitability of incorporating the change to the WBL methodology.

## 12.2 DESIGN PHASE

It is the Topic Leader’s responsibility to design any methodological change that could affect the WBL scores. At the initial stage, the Topic Leader must ensure that thorough economic and topic-specific research has been conducted to justify the change. The Topic Leader should then prepare a concept note detailing at a minimum:

- ▶ Research objectives
- ▶ Suggested changes to the previous methodology or new additions
- ▶ Implementation methods (such as desk research, new data collection, and so on)
- ▶ Timeline to implement these changes
- ▶ Final reporting instrument (report, Excel spreadsheet, presentation, and so on).

The concept note is reviewed by the WBL Manager to ensure that the changes meet the research objectives and standards of the *Women, Business and the Law* report. The concept note is also peer-reviewed by WBG staff who specialize in the thematic area. The approved concept note is shared with the DECIG Director. The DECIG Director decides whether the suggested methodological change is substantial.

Whenever feasible, the suggested change should be tested in a subset of representative economies. A specific data collection exercise can be initiated to pilot new changes.

The design phase ends when the Topic Team has collected sufficient data from a representative set of economies to test the new changes. At that time, the Topic Leader prepares a final report consistent with what is described in the concept note. The report is then shared with the WBL Manager for approval. Finally, the report is sent to the DECIG Director for authorization to begin the approval phase.

If the methodological change introduces a new indicator or a new topic, the design phase typically lasts two to three years after the WBL Team announced the piloting of that indicator or topic.

## 12.3 APPROVAL PHASE

Two types of changes can be proposed during the approval phase: (1) methodological changes, and (2) other indicator changes.

### 12.3.1 METHODOLOGICAL CHANGES

A methodological change is any modification to the way the methodology is applied across WBL indicators from one edition to another. Methodological changes include any addition or removal of individual existing *Women, Business and the Law* indicators, changes in the weights of individual indicators in the computation of the topics or the index, or the inclusion of additional cities in the calculation of the index. For example, a methodological change could be the removal or inclusion of an additional indicator to an existing topic, or the inclusion of a completely new topic on climate and gender.

Methodological changes are made after consultation with internal and external stakeholders. All methodological changes (including proposed changes) must be disclosed in the WBL report and undergo Bank-wide Review. The WBL Team commits to provide sufficient notice about upcoming methodological changes. They must be discussed with and approved by the DEC Senior VP and WBG Chief Economist.

### 12.3.2 OTHER INDICATOR CHANGES

Other changes include methodology refinement applied at the indicator level (such as clarifications to individual coding rules), and the inclusion of additional economies in the calculation of indicators. These changes can happen on an annual basis. They must be discussed with and approved by the DECIG Director.

## 12.4 FINAL CLEARANCE PROCESS

Methodological changes are discussed in detail with the Manager and the DECIG Director. During these meetings, Topic Leaders present findings from their research or pilot data, highlighting implications on scores. Once the final proposal is agreed upon, the WBL Manager concurs with methodology change(s) and sends the final proposals to the DECIG Director. The DECIG Director approves the methodology change(s) and sends it/them to the WBG Chief Economist for decision. The final decision on whether to introduce a change or not rests ultimately with the WBG Chief Economist.

## 12.5 TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Decisions regarding all changes are made by the end of January of the previous year. For example, any changes that will affect the *Women, Business and the Law* report launched in February 2026 need to be approved by the end of January 2025.

These changes are communicated to Senior Management, the Board, and Country Offices by April 15 of the year preceding the publication of the *Women, Business and the Law* report.

Once methodological (or other) changes have been cleared by the Chief Economist of the World Bank Group and communicated to the Bank and the Board, the WBL Team will adhere to the agreed-upon process for the year. No further changes will be made.





When a new methodology is adopted, the team will consider producing two datasets, one based on the new methodology and one based on the old methodology. In addition, to ensure usability and accuracy of the panel data set, retroactive adjustments will be applied. This is the case for the WBL 1.0 legal frameworks panel data set, which is currently being recalculated and will be made available when ready. All data sets used by the WBL Team to produce past reports are also made available on the website.





# Fundraising

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## 13 FUNDRAISING

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The work of the *Women, Business and the Law* project, since its onset in 2009, would not have been possible without the generous support of several donors.

The *Women, Business and the Law* (WBL) report is a flagship report essential to advancing the World Bank's Gender Strategy 2024–2030 and informing projects across the World Bank Group on critical barriers to women's economic opportunities. Despite the pivotal insights WBL generates, the program has historically faced underinvestment. The WBL project is primarily externally funded, with only 20 percent of its budget coming from internal WBG sources. In the past, WBL has been able to secure additional funding through two main channels: by applying to World Bank Trust Fund programs, such as the Knowledge for Change Program, and by fundraising directly with external partners, such as foundations and development agencies.

To continue driving the global dialogue on the importance of equal rights in support of economic fulfillment of women, the WBL Team actively seeks partners willing to provide funding to four key areas of work:

- ▶ *Annual flagship report and data.* Support production of the annual flagship Women, Business and the Law report, including the publication of an updated data set measuring laws and implementing mechanisms that affect women's economic rights across 190 economies. This public good is a resource not only for the World Bank but also for several other institutions that use the WBL data to influence policy change, including the United Nations' SDG Indicator 5.1.1; the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security; the Millennium Challenge Corporation; and the World Economic Forum.
- ▶ *Evidence and research to inform policy reform.* Support production of foundational research and carry out pilot data collection efforts that continue to further establish the link between equal rights and women's economic empowerment, as well as highlight the many barriers faced by women in different domains. Linking women's legal rights to critical issues such as women's leadership, macroeconomic stability, social norms, climate, and technology is key to make a stronger case for increased investment in gender equality programs.
- ▶ *Engagement and dissemination.* Support high-profile events to disseminate the annual reports and influence policy discourse, within and outside the World Bank Group. These events bring together representatives from governments, financial institutions, the private sector, and civil society organizations to discuss WBL findings and methodology and the impact of laws and regulations on women's economic empowerment. WBL regularly organizes such engagements, especially with government counterparts and civil society, and they are often the starting point for a deeper dialogue on legal reform toward promoting gender equality. Over the years, the team has organized such engagement events in Benin, Botswana, Chile, Ecuador, Jordan, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Tanzania, Togo, and Uzbekistan. On an annual basis, the WBL Team has participated in more than 100 events organized within the World Bank, including during the Spring and Annual Meetings, and externally, in forums such as the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and General Assembly. The events are organized in partnership with organizations such as UN Women, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Columbia University, European Women Lawyers' Association, Women Political Leaders and Oliver Wyman Forum, and

Equality Now, among others to disseminate the methodology, framework, and data measuring the enabling environment for women's economic participation.

- ▶ *Increasing Uptake of the Data.* Increase impact and uptake of the data through stronger partnerships with government, private sector, civil society, international organizations, foundations, and donors.





Resources about  
workplace integrity,  
the integrity of WBL,  
and staff Well-Being

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# 14 RESOURCES ABOUT WORKPLACE INTEGRITY, THE INTEGRITY OF WBL, AND STAFF WELL-BEING

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## 14.1 CONCERNS ARISING IN THE WORKPLACE

Working on the WBL Team and conducting WBL research involves interactions with many colleagues and external stakeholders, which can sometimes be complex or difficult to navigate. Creating a respectful workplace that is free of harassment is a key aspiration for the WBG. Staff members can contribute to this goal as bystanders, colleagues, and managers to address concerns raised. The WBG provides staff with comprehensive services to confidentially support the resolution of their concerns, with assistance ranging from counseling to formal review and investigation of concerns to preserve fairness in the workspace. All staff, including former staff, managers, and consultants, can access EIJ resources. Common concerns that may arise in the workplace include:

- ▶ Employment and performance (contracts, performance evaluation)
- ▶ Interpersonal conflict with a colleague or colleagues
- ▶ Inappropriate behavior by colleagues and external counterparts
- ▶ Violations of WBG Staff Rules and policies
- ▶ Suspected fraud or corruption in WBG projects and activities
- ▶ Stress and mental well-being.

## 14.2 WHERE TO GO WITH CONCERNS (EIJ OPTIONS)

EIJ has created the [EIJ Navigator](#) which serves as a single point of entry to EIJ. Their role is to connect World Bank Group staff with EIJ services efficiently and confidentially. Their dedicated team will guide staff to the most appropriate EIJ service to help resolve any questions or concerns, and support staff throughout the entire process. Staff can refer to the table in section 14.10, Summary of Resources for Staff, for contact information and a summary of assistance available from the EIJ and related services.

## 14.3 ISSUES RELATING TO EMPLOYMENT (CONTRACTS, PERFORMANCE, AND SO ON)

[Administrative Review](#) (AR) is the first step of a two-tier process available to staff requesting a review of performance management decisions, including performance evaluation, salary increase rating, placement on an Opportunity to Improve (OTI) Plan, and terms of OTI Plans. A staff member may seek review of a performance management decision by requesting administrative review within 60 days of the decision. The second-tier step is a [Performance Management Review](#).

For other employment decisions, actions, or inactions (such as nonrenewal of contract), staff may submit a request to [Peer Review Services \(PRS\)](#) for an independent review within 120 days of the decision, action, or inaction. If staff are concerned that an employment or performance decision has been taken in retaliation, they may also contact the Ethics and Internal Justice Services Vice Presidency (EIJ) for further guidance.

Staff may also reach out to any Staff Association Counselor. A Staff Association Counselor can be an advocate on behalf of an individual. Colleagues do not have to be a member of the Staff Association to

[speak with a Staff Association Counselor](#). Some Employee Resource Groups also have mechanisms to support staff in difficult situations. For instance, LGBT+ staff can contact [GLOBE](#) if they feel discriminated against on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI).

#### 14.4 INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT WITH A COLLEAGUE OR COLLEAGUES

If staff have a concern that relates to an interpersonal conflict with a colleague, they should consider raising the issue informally and directly with the colleague. If they do not feel comfortable raising the issue directly with the colleague, they can discuss the concern with their Manager or consult this FAQ on [where to start](#) to help with taking the first step in using one of the EIJ offices. In general, staff prefer to start with one of the [Respectful Workplace Advisors](#) (RWA) or the [Ombuds Services](#). They have all the information to point staff in the right direction.

Staff can also consider speaking with an RWA, a specially trained volunteer colleague who is familiar with your work situations. The RWA's primary role is to be a confidential, trusted, and readily accessible resource that help staff with workplace problems when they feel uncomfortable seeking help from routine channels, such as their supervisors or HR staff, or want information about where to seek assistance.

The Ombuds unit additionally provides a confidential, impartial, and informal service independent from the WBG formal Management channels that facilitates the resolution of workplace issues. An ombudsperson helps staff analyze problems and assists in identifying options and can become involved in trying to resolve issues—but only if requested by the staff member.

If staff prefer to have an independent third party mediate the concern or conflict, they can further consider [Mediation Services](#). Mediation is an informal, confidential conflict resolution process in which an impartial third party helps two or more participants better understand their issues, interests, and needs and empowers them to bridge their difference through a voluntary agreement. Mediation is strictly confidential, both for the mediator and the participants. Participants have ultimate control and decision-making power over the outcome of the mediation.

#### 14.5 INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR BY COLLEAGUES OR EXTERNAL COUNTERPARTS

Inappropriate behavior is any behavior that is unprofessional or unwelcome that an individual finds offensive or humiliating. Inappropriate or unwelcome behavior may constitute harassment, which is a form of misconduct under WBG Staff Rules. For any concerns about inappropriate behavior, staff may speak to their Manager and/or contact EIJ.

Managers have a special responsibility as role models to regularly communicate with staff about the Core Values and the Code of Ethics and to ensure that staff have access to resources that support staff to live by the Code. Managers are also expected to provide a safe space for those who have questions and seek clarity and those who raise good faith concerns about potential harassment, abuse of authority, or other inappropriate behavior. The WBG will make every effort to protect staff from retaliation for reporting concerns in good faith.

The [Anti-Harassment Coordinator \(AHC\)](#), located within EIJ, is another resource available to those who are subjected to inappropriate and unwelcome behavior or feel intimidated in their work environment. Consultations with the AHC are fully confidential. The AHC can take action to address inappropriate behaviors through coaching and intervening with consultation with the offender and the offender's



Manager. The AHC may also refer the matter for misconduct investigation or to another EIJ-related service.

All WBL Team members are required to complete the mandatory course [What's Your Role? Preventing and Addressing Sexual Harassment at the World Bank Group](#).

## 14.6 GENERAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Many issues of professional ethics center either on conflicts of interest or interpersonal conflicts between colleagues. WBL staff members are encouraged to consult EIJ for confidential consultations and guidance to ensure that their personal and professional activities are in compliance with the WBG's Staff Rules and policies. Common topics EIJ advises on include:

- ▶ Writing and publishing material in a personal capacity
- ▶ Public statements (WBL staff speaking on WBG activities, including on social media)
- ▶ Holding concurrent employment outside the WBG
- ▶ Employment of relatives and relationships in the workplace
- ▶ Political activities
- ▶ Financial conflicts of interest.

## 14.7 VIOLATIONS OF WBG STAFF RULES AND POLICIES

Concerns about potential misconduct may include:

- ▶ Harassment/sexual harassment
- ▶ Abuse of authority (including pressuring a staff member to distort facts or break rules)
- ▶ Discrimination
- ▶ Actions or behavior that create a hostile work environment
- ▶ Retaliation.

Staff can contact EIJ if they wish to report suspected misconduct. Managers have an obligation to report suspected misconduct to EIJ. All staff are strongly encouraged to report suspected misconduct to EIJ. Staff may also report anonymously. WBL staff are encouraged to refer to the resources listed on the [Anti-Harassment page](#).

EIJ also investigates allegations relating to fraudulent claims for benefits, failure to meet personal legal obligations (for example, tax payments or court-ordered spousal or child support), and other violations of WBG rules and policies.

## 14.8 SUSPECTED FRAUD OR CORRUPTION IN WBG PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

All staff (including consultants) have a duty to report suspected fraud or corruption in WBG-financed projects or WBG business to the [Integrity Vice Presidency \(INT\)](#). INT handles allegations of misconduct involving WBG staff relating to misuse of WBG funds or other public funds, abuse of position, fraud, corruption, collusion, or coercion occurring in WBG-financed operations or in the administration of WBG business.





## 14.9 RESOURCES FOR STRESS AND MENTAL WELL-BEING

Workplace concerns can lead to added stress. The [Mental Health and Well-Being Unit](#) provides guidance on stress, personal, and work concerns to help staff manage stress and maintain a work-life balance. Staff who seek support to manage stress are encouraged to contact the Mental Health and Well-Being Unit for confidential counseling.

For more information or to make an appointment, call +1 (202) 458-4457 or DAMA 5220-84457. The main email address is [HSDCounseling@worldbankgroup.org](mailto:HSDCounseling@worldbankgroup.org). The Mental Health and Wellbeing Unit is located in MC 2-448. Consultation with staff in Country Offices is carried out by email, telephone and video-teleconference.

The World Bank Group Health and Safety Directorate's (HSD) Domestic Abuse Prevention Program (DAPP) provides confidential services to staff and spouses/partners who are being abused by a partner. These services include crisis management, advocacy, short-term counseling, legal consultations and referrals to outside attorneys, educational services, and other support when appropriate. Staff who need to speak with DAPP immediately may call the 24/7 DAPP hotline +1 (202) 458-5800 or email [daprevention@worldbank.org](mailto:daprevention@worldbank.org).

Additional resources included the following:

- ▶ Mental Health & Wellbeing Library
- ▶ Mental Health & Wellbeing Webinars (Archives)
- ▶ Natural Disasters & Traumatic Events
- ▶ Psychosocial Support Programs & Events
- ▶ Relaxation & Meditation Programs
- ▶ Stress Management
- ▶ WBG Mental Health & Well-being Strategy
- ▶ Wellbeing Platform & App



## 14.10 SUMMARY OF RESOURCES FOR STAFF

**Ombuds Services** is a confidential, impartial, and informal service that facilitates the resolution of workplace issues. It is independent from the World Bank Group's Management channels.  
[ombudsman@worldbank.org](mailto:ombudsman@worldbank.org)  
(202) 458-1056

**Respectful Workplace Advisors (RWAs)** are volunteer peers who serve as an informal and confidential sounding board and help colleagues identify options to address workplace concerns by providing information about available resources.  
[rwa@worldbank.org](mailto:rwa@worldbank.org)  
(202) 458-105831  
<http://rwa>

**Mediation Services (MEF)** offers mediation, facilitation, training, and team building. MEF has 23 mediators available to support staff and to provide these services.  
[mediation@worldbank.org](mailto:mediation@worldbank.org)  
(202) 458-0424  
<http://mediation>

**Staff Association (SA)** promotes and safeguards the rights, interests, and welfare of staff, and fosters a sense of common purpose among staff in promoting the aims and objectives of the World Bank Group.  
[staffassociation@worldbank.org](mailto:staffassociation@worldbank.org)  
(202) 473-9000 or walk-in MC1-700

**Mental Health and Well-Being Unit** provides guidance on stress, personal, and work concerns to help you manage stress and maintain balance in your life.  
[HSDCounseling@worldbankgroup.org](mailto:HSDCounseling@worldbankgroup.org)  
(202) 458-4457 or DAMA 5220-84457.

**Peer Review Services (PRS)** offers a confidential review of staff's employment-related concerns before an impartial and independent panel of peers.  
[peerreview@worldbank.org](mailto:peerreview@worldbank.org)  
(202) 473-5884

**Administrative Review (AR)** is the first step for requesting a review of a Performance Management Decision and must be exhausted before seeking PMR.  
[adminreview@worldbankgroup.org](mailto:adminreview@worldbankgroup.org)

**Performance Management Review (PMR)** is the second of a two-tier streamlined administrative review of performance evaluations, **Salary Review Increase (SRI)** ratings, and **Opportunity to Improve (OTI)** Plans.  
[Email](mailto:Email) or call  
(202) 473-5884

**The WBG Administrative Tribunal**  
The Tribunal is an independent judicial forum where staff can bring their grievances about their contract of employment or terms of appointment. Staff must lodge grievances within 120 days of the occurrence of the event giving rise to the complaint. Staff must exhaust internal remedies before filing an application unless the complaint relates to misconduct and termination of employment, where staff may come directly to the Tribunal. Typically, this would be the date of receipt of a decision from the Bank following a recommendation from PRS. Extensions can be requested. All cases are considered by the judges. The Tribunal issues final and binding decisions. More information can be found here  
<https://tribunal.worldbank.org/>

### **Ethics and Internal Justice Services Vice Presidency (EIJ)**

For questions or advice regarding ethical issues and conflicts of interest, or if you wish to report suspected misconduct, please contact:  
[AskEIJ@worldbankgroup.org](mailto:AskEIJ@worldbankgroup.org)  
World Bank Group staff can view all information by typing <https://EIJ> in their browser.

**The Anti-Harassment Coordinator** can provide a confidential discussion on harassment and sexual harassment. Fill out [a form](#) to report sexual misconduct anonymously, if necessary, or call the Ethics Helpline [ethics\\_helpline@worldbank.org](mailto:ethics_helpline@worldbank.org) or call 800-261-7497.

**Integrity Vice Presidency (INT)**  
Colleagues concerned about fraud or corruption in WBG-financed activities can contact the [Integrity Vice President](#) (INT). INT is an independent unit within the WBG whose core function is investigating fraud, corruption, collusion, coercion, and obstruction and pursuing sanctions related to these sanctionable offenses in WBG-financed activities.

