

Among these, around 7 % hold officer positions, reflecting a growing presence of women in leadership roles within the military hierarchy. Notably, these figures align closely with NATO armies' statistics, underscoring Ukraine's commitment to fostering gender diversity and inclusivity within its armed forces.

Remarkably, Ukraine surpasses several NATO member states in terms of military gender equality, with better representation compared to countries such as Norway (7 %) and the United Kingdom (9 %). While the number of female high-ranking officers remains relatively low, comprising 2.9% of the total, recent milestones signify progress. In October 2018, Ukraine achieved a historic moment with the appointment of its first female general, marking a significant milestone in breaking gender barriers within the military leadership.

In 2018, Ukraine took a decisive step towards promoting gender equality in the military by enacting legislation that grants military women equal rights with their male counterparts. This legislative reform underscores the government's commitment to addressing gender disparities and ensuring equitable opportunities for all service members, irrespective of gender [4].

Contractual military service represents a significant portion of women in the Ukrainian armed forces, accounting for almost 44% of female personnel. However, this trend is closely linked to the socioeconomic factors, including the comparatively low salary associated with such positions. Despite the challenges, women continue to accept and fulfill contractual military roles, highlighting their dedication and sense of duty towards national defense.

To support servicewomen, initiatives such as providing woman-only apartments near military bases and offering extended maternity leave demonstrate Ukraine's commitment to accommodating the unique needs of female personnel. The provision of extended maternity leave, allowing female officers to take up to three years off without losing their position, reflects a progressive approach to supporting work-life balance and family responsibilities among military women.

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## WOMEN IN ARMED FORCES: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Women have served in the military in various roles and jurisdictions throughout human history. With the expansion of women's rights, their presence in the armed forces of countries worldwide is growing, and access to military positions is being legalized. Women volunteers for military service were often forced to resort to cross-dressing, cutting their hair, and adopting male pseudonyms (making it difficult to historically assess their actual numbers). Exposed volunteers (most often through hospitalization due to injuries) were punished by dismissal from the military and repatriation home, sometimes with honors [1].

The number and variety of positions available to women in the West expanded after 1914. In the 1970s, most Western armies began to open up all military branches to women. In 2006, eight countries called women to military service: China, Eritrea, Israel, Libya, Malaysia, North Korea, Peru, and Taiwan. In 2013, Norway became the first NATO country to call women (and the first in the world under the same formal conditions as men). In 2017, Sweden created similar conditions, and in 2018, the Netherlands (although the Netherlands does not have active peacetime conscription). Legislation in other countries allows for the conscription of women into the armed forces with differences (prohibited positions, service term limits, etc.). In 2021, the Nigerian army deployed 300 female soldiers to guard the Kaduna-Abuja expressway [3, p. 75].

Several countries officially allow female soldiers to serve on certain combat weapons. Others exclude them for various reasons, such as physical requirements and confidentiality policies. In the mid-1970s, women in NATO countries had the opportunity to obtain military status in the following countries: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Countries without conscription, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, have achieved the highest levels of female military presence [4]. Canada has been particularly progressive in early gender equality initiatives. The increasing need for equality alongside the decline of able-bodied men willing to enlist prompted the global community to reform policies on women's military recruitment. With the opening of submarine service in 2000, women gained access to voluntary enlistment in any military service [1].

With the start of the Russian war against Ukraine in 2014, Ukrainian women faced restrictions on military service. At that time, female soldiers still could not hold combat positions, and upon joining the service, they were required to register for positions that did not correspond to their actual duties. To change this, significant legislative work was carried out, including by members of the Interfactional Association «Equal Opportunities» in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine [3].

As a result of active legislative and advocacy work, in 2016, the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine expanded the list of enlisted and sergeant positions. In 2017, it allowed female officers to serve on ships and submarines, and in 2020, restrictions on appointing women to officer positions in specialized military units were lifted. Moreover, in 2019, the Ministry of Defense allowed girls to study in military lyceums [2].

Throughout history, women have played significant roles in military service across the globe. From ancient warrior societies to modern armed forces, women have demonstrated their capabilities, bravery, and dedication in various military roles.

In recent decades, many countries have made strides in expanding opportunities for women in the military. Traditionally, military service was predominantly male-dominated, with women often limited to support roles such as nursing, administration, and logistics. However, changing societal attitudes towards gender equality and advancements in military technology have paved the way for greater inclusion of women in combat and leadership positions.

One notable example is the United States, where the roles of women in the military have evolved significantly over the years. Women have served in every major conflict since the American Revolutionary War, initially as nurses, cooks, and laundresses. During World War II, the Women's Army Corps (WAC) was established, marking the first time women were officially integrated into the U.S. Army. Since then, women have gained access to a wider range of military occupations and combat roles, including fighter pilots, infantry officers, and submarine crew members [4].

In Israel, mandatory military service applies to both men and women, with women comprising a significant portion of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Women in the IDF serve in combat units, intelligence, and various specialized roles, contributing to the country's defense and security. Scandinavian countries such as Norway and Sweden have also been at the forefront of gender integration in their armed forces. Norway, for instance, was one of the first countries to introduce conscription for women in 2016, allowing them to serve in all military branches on equal terms with men. Sweden has similarly expanded opportunities for women in the military, with women serving in combat units and holding high-ranking positions within the armed forces [2, p. 16].

In countries like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, women have long been involved in military service, with increasing numbers entering combat roles in recent years. These countries have implemented policies to promote gender diversity and inclusivity in their armed forces, recognizing the valuable contributions women make to national defense [4].

Despite progress, challenges remain in achieving full gender equality in the military. Gender stereotypes, cultural norms, and institutional barriers can hinder women's advancement and integration into combat roles. Addressing these challenges requires continued efforts to eliminate gender bias, provide equal opportunities for training and advancement, and foster a supportive and inclusive environment for all military personnel.

Women in military service around the world have made significant strides in breaking barriers and challenging stereotypes. Their contributions strengthen armed forces, enhance operational effectiveness, and contribute to greater diversity and inclusivity in defense institutions. As societies continue to evolve, the role of women in the military will undoubtedly continue to expand, shaping the future of defense and security on a global scale.

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## EXPANDING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE MILITARY SPHERE

Throughout the history of human civilization, women have repeatedly participated in various military campaigns alongside men. Mostly, they organized the daily life of military personnel, ensuring their physical and emotional well-being by performing domestic or medical tasks (cooking, laundry, sewing, nursing). Only a small number of women directly participated in military actions alongside men [1].

Often, for this purpose, as well as for their own safety, women disguised themselves and often dressed in men's clothing. Therefore, for many centuries, providing special conditions for women serving in the armed forces was not given significant importance. Only after the Second World War, in which women participated massively, even in combat, did the issue of normative-legal consolidation of the status of women in the military and their participation in military actions begin to be considered at the international level.

For example, the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War of 1949 stipulate that female prisoners of war should be treated with the same respect and benevolence as male prisoners (Article 14); any camps housing female prisoners of war should have separate sanitary facilities (paragraph 2 of Article 29); female prisoners of war subjected to punishment by judicial process should be kept in separate quarters under the supervision of female staff (Article 108) [3].

It should be noted that alongside the provisions of international conventions on the laws and customs of war, the principle of equality between men and women and the prohibition of any discrimination against women have also been enshrined in many other international legal instruments. For example, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women provides for equal political, economic, social, cultural, and civil rights regardless