


MOWIP Methodology Explainer 3

Asking sensitive questions



In this Explainer, we address some of the questions from the MOWIP survey data collection tool that may be considered as sensitive, either by respondents or by the security institution. We also propose strategies that can be employed during the localization process to adapt and/or rephrase questions in order to maintain the integrity of the survey and its consistency across contexts, while making it more appropriate to the national audience.

Please refer to Section 3.1.3 “Implementing the survey” of the MOWIP methodology document for more information on the survey.

If you are working with the Cornell GSS Lab, please email Dr Sabrina Karim at smk349@cornell.edu to check for updates to the survey and to get further advice regarding the localization of the survey.

Sensitive Questions

Sensitive questions are questions that, depending on the context in which the survey is applied, may be perceived as inappropriate, politically charged, or intrusive. While survey questions carry no judgement or bias, they could elicit a negative reaction from respondents that would limit the effectiveness of the survey.

To prevent this from occurring, the assessment team should use the localization process to work with the security institution to try and identify any potential issues, and reframe or reword the questions accordingly. The assessment team should first use the MOWIP Indicator Form¹ to identify the indicator which the ‘sensitive’ question is aiming to measure. It should then aim to write an alternative question that will allow the team to capture the data the original question was mean to capture, and to assess whether this indicator constitutes a barrier or an opportunity for women’s meaningful participation.

The assessment team should avoid removing questions altogether, as removing questions will limit the possibility of accurately measuring the set of indicators for the issue area in question and of assessing whether this issue area constitutes a barrier to women’s meaningful participation. This could hinder the effectiveness of subsequent recommendations and limit the possibility for future cross-country trends analysis.

There are several techniques the assessment team can use to localize, adapt, and reword questions:

- First, try to change the wording to remove direct references to the sensitive topic. This may include using euphemisms or using less severe or problematic, but similar examples.
- Second, use indirect questions that ask the respondent to answer based on what they think a “friend”, “coworker”, “community member”, or “anyone else you know” might respond.
- Third, if a respondent seems uncomfortable with a question and wants to answer privately, the enumerator can hand the device to the respondent and they can select their answer directly and proceed to the next question before handing the device back to the enumerator (please refer to Explainer 2: How to use iSurvey for more instructions on doing so).

¹ Please refer to Template 8 of the online MOWIP Toolbox available here : <https://www.dcaf.ch/mowip>

The table below includes examples of “sensitive questions” in the survey and suggests some alternative wording for these questions. Assessment teams should use the alternative version that is most like the original question, tailoring the terminology to their context, and translating the questions to the language of use.

Rewording sensitive questions (standard survey²)

Issue area 3: Deployment selection. *The questions aim to assess whether women have equal access to employment opportunities in security institutions, including a variety of roles. These questions allow us to probe whether women have equal access to information about peace operations deployment opportunities, whether the process is unfair, and whether the process itself is inhibitive for women.*

Original Question: Have you ever exchanged a favor to try to deploy to a peace operation? (Q. 143)
Indicator: 3.26] This measures whether personnel perceive that recruitment and selection processes are fair/free in their country. Here we are looking to establish that personnel have not engaged in corruption or exchanged a favor.
Alternative Wording Options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you heard of people exchanging favors to be selected for peace operations? How much do you agree with this statement: If your superior selects you for a peace operation, you owe them a favor? Have you heard of supervisors offering peacekeeping deployments in exchange for personal or professional benefits?
Original Question: How fair do you think the recruitment process by the armed forces/ police/ gendarmerie into peace operations is in your country? (Q. 145)
Indicator: 3.26] This measures whether personnel believe that recruitment and selection processes are fair/free in their country.
Alternative Wording Options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you think everyone who wants to go on a peace operation is given a fair opportunity?

Issue area 10: Social exclusion. *These questions measure the degree to which cohesion and group identity are based on creating an in-group by excluding those who do not look or behave like the dominant group. They are meant to capture some of the practices that may be used to sustain in-group cohesion within and beyond the workforce, which may be exclusionary towards women.*

Original Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Women do not want to be married to men who cannot get an erection during sex. (Q. 281)
Indicator: 10.33] This measures the extent to which negative masculine beliefs dominate the culture of the security institution. Specifically, this question aims to assess whether negative masculine beliefs about virility are part of the culture of the security institution.
Alternative Wording Options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A man should be embarrassed if he cannot have children. A man should be embarrassed if he cannot get his wife pregnant/father children. A man should be embarrassed if he cannot satisfy his wife. A man should be embarrassed if he does not make enough money to support his family. It is important for women to make sure that a man is sexually potent before she agrees to marry him.
Original Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Men need more sex than women do. (Q. 282)
Indicator: 10.33] This measures the extent to which negative masculine beliefs dominate the culture of the security institution.

² The survey question numbers correspond to the numbering of the standard survey of the MOWIP Toolbox.

Specifically, this question aims to assess whether negative masculine beliefs about **virility** are part of the culture of the security institution.

Alternative Wording Options:

- Men have a higher biological need for sex than women.
- If a man is unsatisfied with his wife, it is okay for him to be intimate with other women.
- If a man is unsatisfied with his wife, it is okay to visit a brothel/go to a strip club/watch porn.
- If a woman is unsatisfied with her husband, it is okay for her to be intimate with other men.
- Men need more attention from women.
- If a man is unsatisfied with his wife, it is okay to divorce her.
- If a man is unsatisfied with his wife, it is okay to marry another wife (depends on the cultural context).
- Men should seek a second wife if their first wife is unattractive (depends on the cultural context).
- Men should seek a second wife if their first wife cannot have children (depends on the cultural context).

Original Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: It is ok for a husband to have sex with his wife even if she does not want to have sex (Q. 287)

Indicator: 10.33] This measures the extent to which negative masculine beliefs dominate the culture of the security institution. Specifically, this question aims to assess whether negative masculine beliefs about **domination** are part of the culture of the security institution.

Alternative Wording Options:

- It is okay for a husband to take his wife's clothes off/kiss his wife even if she does not want to.
- A woman should be intimate with her husband even if she doesn't want to.
- A woman should please her husband/do things for her husband even if she is unhappy/feeling sick.
- A woman should dress up for her husband even when she is too busy.
- A woman should act happy around her husband even when she is sad or mad.

Original Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: It is important for a man to be respected by other men (Q. 278)

Indicator: 10.33] This measures the extent to which negative masculine beliefs dominate the culture of the security institution. Specifically, this question aims to assess whether negative masculine beliefs about **honor** are part of the culture of the security institution.

Alternative Wording Options:

- It is important for men to earn the respect of male elders.
- It is important for a man to have other men listen to him and obey him.
- Men respect men who are aggressive/assertive.
- Men respect men who are courageous.
- Men respect men who are willing to use violence.

Original Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Witnessing a man kiss another man (Q. 284) or a woman kiss another woman (Q. 289) would make me feel uncomfortable.

Indicator: 10.33] This measures the extent to which negative masculine beliefs dominate the culture of the security institution. Specifically, this question aims to assess whether negative **exclusionary** masculine beliefs are part of the culture of the security institution. (Although same-sex relationships may be forbidden in a given institution or TPCC, there are people of diverse sexual orientation and gender diversity in all peacekeeping missions and host populations, hence the need to measure tolerance for difference.)

Alternative Wording Options:

- If you visit another country and see a man/woman kissing another man/woman, how uncomfortable would this make you feel?
- “Watching a movie and witnessing women having inappropriate relations with other women makes me feel uncomfortable.”
- If you visit another country and see two men/two women holding hands/hugging/etc. (*depends on cultural practices*) how uncomfortable would this make you feel?
- In some countries, homosexuals can serve openly in the armed forces/police/gendarmerie. Would you feel comfortable serving alongside a homosexual peacekeeper from another country?
- Do you think the average person in your community is uncomfortable with same-sex relationships?
- Do people in the armed forces/police/gendarmerie use terms related to homosexuality to make fun of people, things or actions? (e.g. “That’s gay” or “don’t be a homo”)

Original Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: A woman should remain a virgin before her marriage (Q.276)

Indicator: 10.33] This measures the extent to which negative masculine beliefs dominate the culture of the security institution. Specifically, this question aims to assess whether negative masculine beliefs about **domination and honor** are part of the culture of the security institution.

Alternative Wording Options:

- A woman should abstain from physical relationships before marriage.
- A woman should not have sex before marriage.
- A woman should remain chaste before marriage.
- Do you think the average person in your community encourages women to remain abstinent before marriage?
- It is better for women to get married while they are young.

Original Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: When women get raped it is because they dressed promiscuously. (Q. 285)

Indicator: 10.33] This measures the extent to which negative masculine beliefs dominate the culture of the security institution. Specifically, this question aims to assess whether negative masculine beliefs about **rape culture** are part of the culture of the security institution.

- Women should dress modestly to shield themselves from being raped.
- Women should always dress modestly.
- Women should not catch the gaze of men who are not related to them.
- Women should avoid drugs and alcohol to avoid being raped.
- If a woman dresses provocatively, she should expect to be taken advantage of by men.
- Women who dress provocatively are asking for trouble/cannot complain when men flirt with them.

Original Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Women often lie about being raped (Q. 288)

Indicator: 10.33] This measures the extent to which negative masculine beliefs dominate the culture of the security institution. Specifically, this question aims to assess whether negative masculine beliefs about **rape culture** are part of the culture of the security institution.

Alternative Wording Options:

- Women often lie about being raped to prevent getting in trouble with their family and friends.
- Women often falsely claim to have been assaulted.
- Women often make false rape charges as revenge against their boyfriends/husbands.
- Women often lie about sexual harassment/rape to get attention.

- Women should consider how rape claims hurt the lives of the man and his family.
- Rape charges too often hurt the bright futures of young men.

Original Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: It is acceptable for a colleague to tell a woman (Q. 279)/man (Q. 286) that she/he is attractive

Indicator: 10.33] This measures the extent to which negative masculine beliefs dominate the culture of the security institution. Specifically, this question aims to assess the **level of acceptance of sexual harassment** behaviors in the culture of the security institution.

Alternative Wording Options:

- It is okay/normal for a colleague to compliment a male/female colleague's body/physique/strength/beauty.
- Have you or a colleague ever been told you are or he/she is attractive by a coworker?

Original Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: It is acceptable to deploy a man (Q. 283)/woman (Q. 275) on a peace operation if he/she has a past history of strongly disciplining his wife/her husband.

Indicator: 10.33] This measures the extent to which negative masculine beliefs dominate the culture of the security institution. Specifically, this question aims to assess whether negative masculine beliefs about **domination and the level of acceptance of domestic violence** are part of the culture of the security institution.

Alternative Wording Options:

- Men/women who have previously been accused of hurting their wives/husbands should not be allowed to deploy to UN peace operations.
- How a man/woman treats his/her spouse should be considered before deploying on a peace operation
- Previous records of abuse between spouses should be considered when selecting peacekeepers.
- It is justifiable for a husband/wife to hit his/her wife/husband if she/he disobeys him/her.
- What happens in the home/between a husband and wife is a private matter, even if it becomes violent.

Original Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: It is a man's duty to protect his family's dignity by watching over the purity of women in his family (Q. 278)

Indicator: 10.33] This measures the extent to which negative masculine beliefs dominate the culture of the security institution. Specifically, this question aims to assess whether negative masculine beliefs about **virility** are part of the culture of the security institution.

Alternative Wording Options:

- A man should protect the chastity of women in his family.
- A man should feel ashamed if his female relative becomes pregnant outside of marriage/marries without her family's consent.
- A man should feel ashamed if his female relative gets divorced.
- A man should feel ashamed if his female relative is raped.
- Men are responsible for protecting their female relatives from men.
- The honor of my female relatives should always be defended and with violence if necessary.

Original Question: Do police officers/soldiers spend time visiting brothels together when not at work? (Q. 270)

Indicator: 10.29] This measures whether it is the norm for members of the institution to go to brothels together outside of work. Specifically, this question is an example of negative bonding that often leads to **exclusionary** behaviors towards women. Since brothels may not be common across contexts, this can be replaced by another example of negative bonding that may exclude women.

Alternative Wording Options:

- Do officers/soldiers watch videos of women together?

- Do officers/soldiers look at pictures of women together?
- Do officers/soldiers watch or talk about pornography together?
- When visiting another country, did you ever hear of a colleague visiting a brothel?
- Do police officers/soldiers [*enter a social activity that usually only men participate in. Examples may include smoking shisha, going to bars, going to clubs, playing cards, etc.*] together?
- While deployed, in some countries, some police officers/soldiers visit brothels together. How acceptable do you think this behavior is?

Original Question: Do police officers/soldiers brag to their colleagues about having sex? (Q. 271)

Indicator: 10.28] This measures whether talking about sex between colleagues is a norm in the security institution.

As this question is designed to measure **domination**, it can be replaced by any question that assesses the level of objectification of women [or men's entitlement to dominance] by personnel of the security institution.

Alternative Wording Options:

- Do police officers/soldiers brag about their romantic lives?
- Do police officers/soldiers brag about how many romantic partners they have had?
- Do police officers/soldiers brag about the beauty of their wives/girlfriends?
- Do police officers/soldiers brag about how attractive their spouses are?

Original Question: Do you avoid socializing with the opposite sex because you are worried about sexual harassment complaints being filed against you? (Q. 269)

Indicator: 10.30] This measures whether men within the security institution are worried about being accused of sexual harassment.

This question is designed to measure if **domination** over or **exclusion** of women is the norm in men's lives. It can be replaced by another question assessing whether men in the institution are confident that they understand behaviors that are / aren't sexual harassment, and are able to avoid inadvertently committing sexual harassment.

Alternative Wording Options:

- How much do you agree with this statement: I worry that my compliments will be misinterpreted as sexual harassment?
- How much do you agree with this statement: I or one of my colleagues avoid one-on-one meetings with members of the opposite sex to avoid being accused of sexual harassment?
- I try to avoid being alone with women/men.