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Visualizing Peace: Data-Driven Insights into UN SDG 16

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Abstract:

This paper explores the intricate dynamics of Sustainable Development Goal 16, which focuses on promoting global peace and justice. It looks into indicators such as intentional homicides, violence, and human rights issues to reveal the significant disparities across different regions. By examining the prevalence of violence, corruption, and the effectiveness of legal frameworks, the study highlights the challenges in realizing the objectives of SDG 16. The methodology uses a range of data visualization techniques to meticulously analyze these indicators, highlighting their profound impact on societal safety and the robustness of institutions. The findings illustrate clear regional variations, emphasizing the hurdles in achieving widespread peace and justice. The paper concludes by advocating for targeted policy interventions and international cooperation to address the root causes of violence and injustice to fulfill Sustainable Development Goal 16. This study underscores the critical role of data visualization in informing policy decisions and advancing global peace and justice initiatives.

Keywords: SDG 16 Analysis; Data Visualization of SDG 16; Peace; Justice; Secondary Data Analysis

Introduction

The concept of sustainable development emerged as a response to the growing understanding of the complex interconnections between economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity. Among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015, Goal 16 - "Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions" - stands out as a foundational pillar. This goal emphasizes the importance of fostering peaceful, inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels (Kumar & Roy, 2018).

The variables selected from the UN SDGs Data Portal are focused on various aspects of peace, justice, and institutional strength. These datasets provide a comprehensive view of multiple dimensions of peace, justice, and institutional strength, which are integral to understanding and achieving SDG 16. Analyzing these

variables offers valuable insights into the challenges and progress in these areas across different regions and countries.

Literature Review

The transition from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) introduced significant shifts in the international development agenda, notably with the inclusion of SDG 16, which focuses on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels. This goal recognizes the foundational role that governance and institutional integrity play in the broader sustainable development framework (Milton, 2021).

Significant research, such as that conducted by Hooi (2021), points out that SDG 16 not only addresses peace and justice but links to democratic governance. In contexts like Malaysia, the relationship between authoritarian and democratic elements within the political system poses unique challenges and opportunities for advancing SDG 16. Hooi's study suggests that addressing issues of corruption and governance could significantly strengthen efforts towards achieving SDG 16, thereby facilitating broader development goals.

Furthermore, studies focusing on Nigeria, like those by Anenene and Oyewole (2020), emphasize the role of archives in governance. The authors argue that maintaining detailed and accessible governmental archives is crucial for enhancing transparency and accountability, which are essential for combating corruption and injustice, thereby advancing SDG 16. Their research underscores the necessity of robust institutional frameworks to ensure that governance mechanisms are both transparent and accountable.

Further analysis by Milton (2021) in fragile and conflict-affected contexts highlights how higher education institutions can contribute to SDG 16. By fostering research and dialogue on peace and justice, universities in these settings play a pivotal role in shaping policies and educating future leaders about governance and institutional accountability. This perspective is crucial, considering that educational institutions often serve as beacons of stability and reform in otherwise turbulent environments.

However, the literature also identifies substantial challenges in measuring progress towards SDG 16. Issues with data availability and the complexity of synthesizing various indicators to track progress are recurrent themes across multiple studies. For instance, the OECD's report "Achieving the Impossible: Can We Be SDG 16 Believers?" highlights the difficulties in aggregating trends across diverse indicators, complicating the assessment of global progress towards this goal.

Additionally, Kumar and Roy (2018) present a critique of SDG 16, highlighting its aspirational nature and the challenges in measuring and implementing its broad targets effectively. They note the significant issue that with only 12 years left until 2030, the 2018 Global Peace Index revealed a continuous decline in global peacefulness, marking the fourth consecutive year of deterioration. This reality highlights the increased political instability worldwide and questions the global commitment to achieving the SDGs. Their critique emphasizes the need for a more grounded approach in international cooperation and realistic goal setting to ensure that SDG 16 does not remain merely an idealistic aspiration but leads to tangible improvements in global peace and justice.

Another paper identifies major obstacles to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) in Arab regions affected by conflict. It discusses how ongoing conflicts disrupt peace efforts and how fragmented governments struggle to implement consistent policies. Additionally, rising authoritarianism limits reforms

aimed at peace and justice. The paper also highlights difficulties in data collection and weak statistical capacities, which make it hard to track progress. Moreover, multiple crises, like economic and health challenges, divert attention and resources away from achieving this goal, making the situation even more complex (Milton & Alhamawi, 2024).

Moreover, the interdependencies between SDG 16 and other SDGs are both a strength and a challenge. While governance improvements can potentially accelerate progress across all development goals, the lack of clear causal pathways and the intricacies of implementing governance reforms pose significant barriers (Milton, 2021). For instance, improving judicial systems and police services can directly impact the enforcement of laws and the protection of human rights, indirectly facilitating advancements in education, health, and economic stability.

While SDG 16 is central to the success of the entire SDG framework, its broad and interconnected objectives present unique challenges. Effective implementation requires a multifaceted approach that includes strengthening institutions, enhancing transparency, promoting inclusive governance, and leveraging the educational sector to foster a deeper understanding of justice and peace. The comprehensive integration of these elements is essential to realize the ambitious goals set forth under SDG 16, ultimately contributing to a more just, inclusive, and peaceful global society.

Material and Methods

The data for the analysis on “Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions” is taken from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Data Portal. This portal provides a comprehensive database for the SDGs, including Goal 16. It is maintained by the United Nations Statistics Division and offers a robust framework of indicators and statistical data to monitor progress, inform policy, and ensure accountability. This platform integrates authoritative SDG data and insights from across the UN System into a public repository with advanced search functionality.

Using data analysis in R, this study seeks to explore different facets of peace, justice, and strong institutions, evaluating their status, advancements, and obstacles in various regions and nations. R is chosen for its powerful statistical and graphical features, which are perfect for managing extensive data and intricate analysis.

Results and Discussion

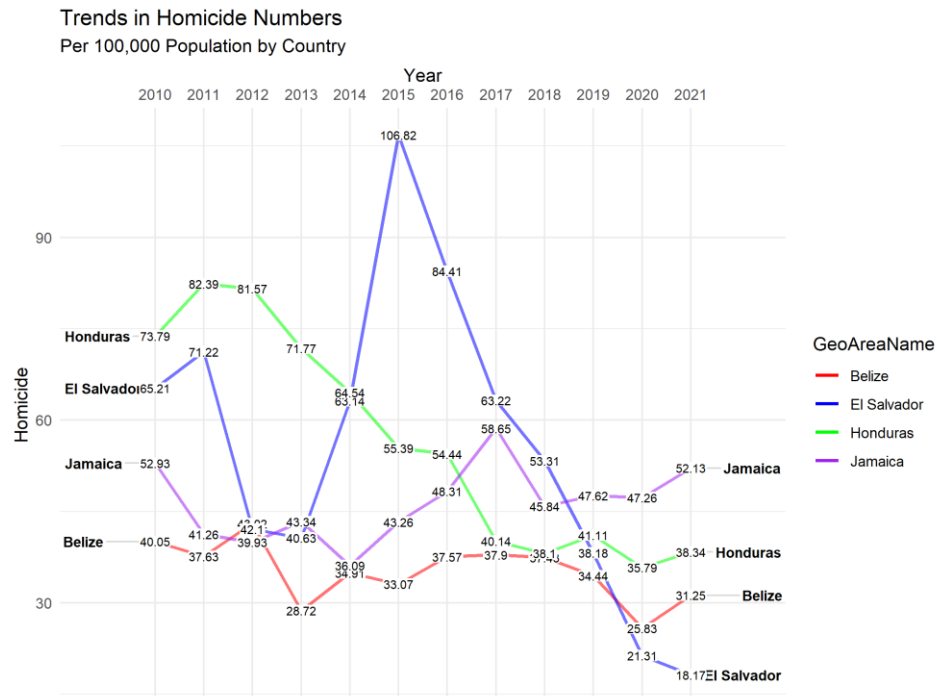


Figure 1. Slope graph for the top 4 countries with highest total homicides from 2010-2021

The dataset, extracted from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Data Portal, details the number of victims of intentional homicides per 100,000 population, disaggregated by sex across various countries. The data includes years from 2010 to 2021, providing a longitudinal view of homicide rates which is essential in understanding trends and patterns in societal violence and safety. An analysis was conducted to identify and visualize the changes in homicide rates for the top four geographic areas with the highest total homicides over the study period.

The resulting slope graph portrays a temporal journey of homicide rates for Honduras, El Salvador, Jamaica, and Belize. El Salvador experienced a peak in homicides around 2015, which has since seen a declining trend. This could reflect the implementation of successful security policies or international aid in crime prevention. Honduras, similarly, shows a marked decrease in recent years, potentially signaling effective interventions in response to the previously high violence rates.

Jamaica’s line shows a relatively stable trend, suggesting consistent rates of homicide without significant fluctuations. Belize, while demonstrating some year-to-year variability, also reveals an overall decrease in homicide rates.

While the reduction in homicide rates in these regions is promising, it is imperative to maintain focus on long-term strategies that address the underlying issues of violence. Continuous investment in community programs, strengthening of justice systems, and international cooperation are essential to sustain these improvements and ensure the safety and security of populations (Hoelscher & Nussio, 2016). This will not

only help in achieving SDG 16 but also contribute to the holistic development of societies, fostering environments where peace and justice prevail.

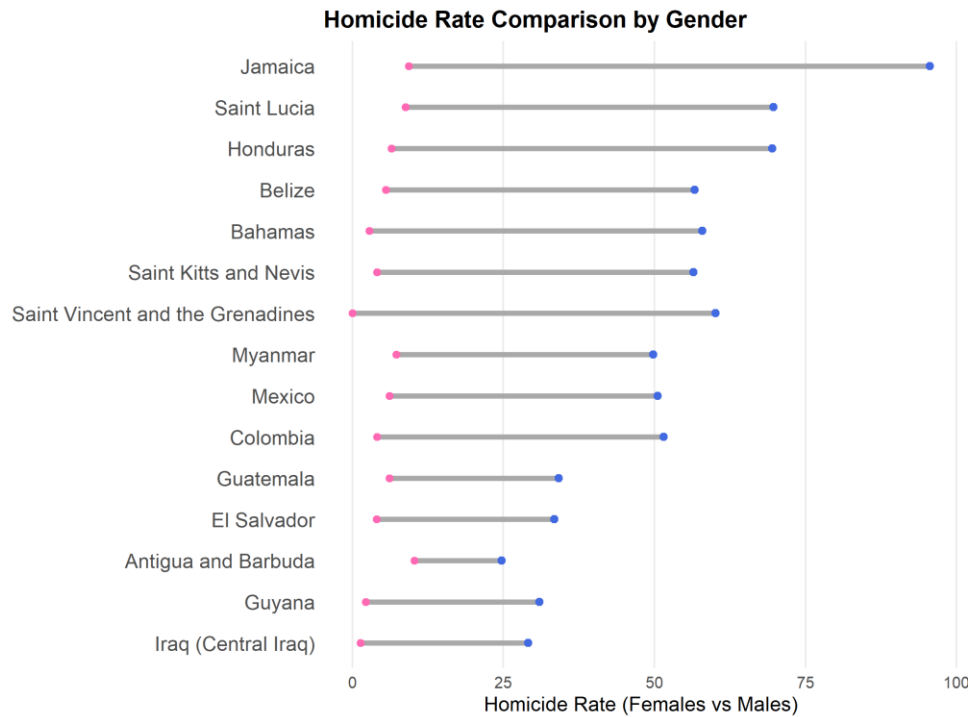


Figure 2. Dumbbell plot for showing gender disparities in homicide numbers

The provided visualization offers a portrayal of gender disparities in homicide rates across various countries for the year 2021. The dumbbell plot encapsulates the magnitude of the difference between male and female homicide rates. In this plot, the leftmost points represent the homicide rate for females (pink), the rightmost points for males (blue), and the horizontal lines connect the two to highlight the disparity.

A noticeable trend is the significantly higher homicide rates for males compared to females across all listed countries. This disparity is pronounced in countries like Jamaica, El Salvador, Honduras, and Belize, where the male homicide rate is several-fold higher than that of females. Such a gap may reflect gender-specific vulnerabilities, societal roles, and possibly the involvement of males in situations or behaviors that increase their risk of falling victim to homicide.

The utilization of the dumbbell plot here is effective as it not only quantifies the rates but also visually anchors the comparison, allowing for immediate and impactful observations. This analysis and visualization highlight the importance of considering gender as a critical factor in understanding and addressing violent crimes. As policymakers and researchers delve into the nuances of homicide statistics, such insights can help shape a more equitable and safe society for both men and women (Bennett et al., 2005).

Physical Violence by Sex in 2021

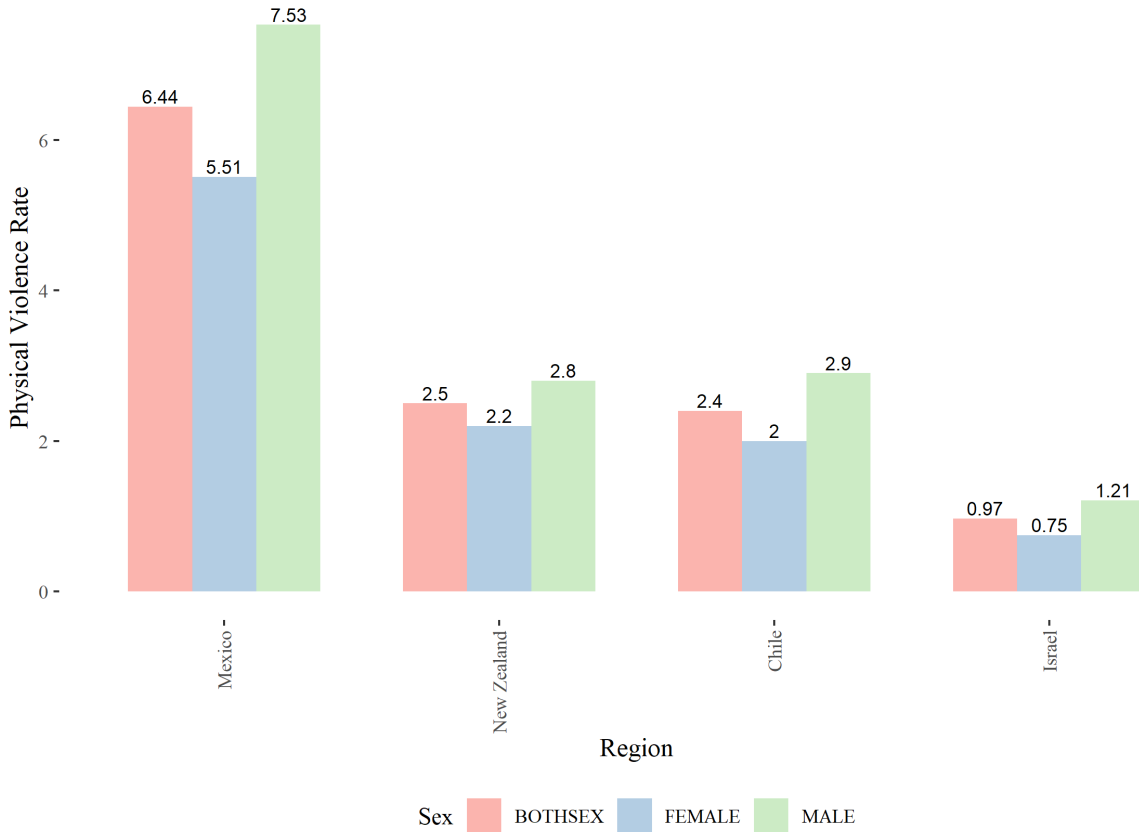


Figure 3. Bar graph for physical violence rate segregated by sex for the year 2021

The bar chart depicts reported cases of physical violence by sex for the year 2021 across different regions. The visualization highlights both the absolute numbers and the comparative differences in physical violence cases between males, females, and combined (both sexes).

From the chart, it's apparent that for all regions, the reported cases of physical violence are markedly higher among males than females, with the combined figures leaning closer to the male statistics. This suggests that males in these regions are more frequently reported victims of physical violence. Conversely, in New Zealand, the rates of reported physical violence are more balanced between the genders, indicating a different societal or reporting dynamic.

The chart also shows that in Israel, the reported cases of physical violence are relatively low for both sexes compared to other regions. The visual distinction between the number of cases for males and females across the regions shows the importance of gender-specific approaches to addressing and preventing physical violence (Ouedraogo et al., 2021). Understanding these differences is crucial for developing targeted interventions that can effectively reduce violence and promote the well-being of all individuals in society.

Proportion of Police Reporting by Sex in 2021

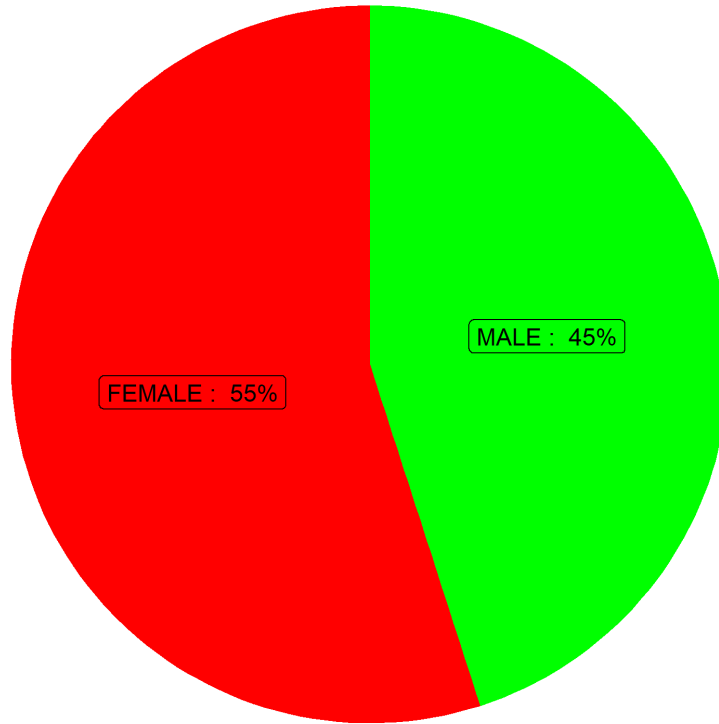


Figure 4. Pie chart for police reporting rate for physical assault by sex

The pie chart visualizes the proportion of public assistance from the police by sex for physical violence cases reported in the year 2021. The chart shows a near parity in police assistance between genders, with females at 55% and males at 45%. This suggests that the rate at which each gender reports incidents and seeks police assistance is relatively balanced, with a slightly higher reporting rate from females.

Sexual Violence by Sex in 2021

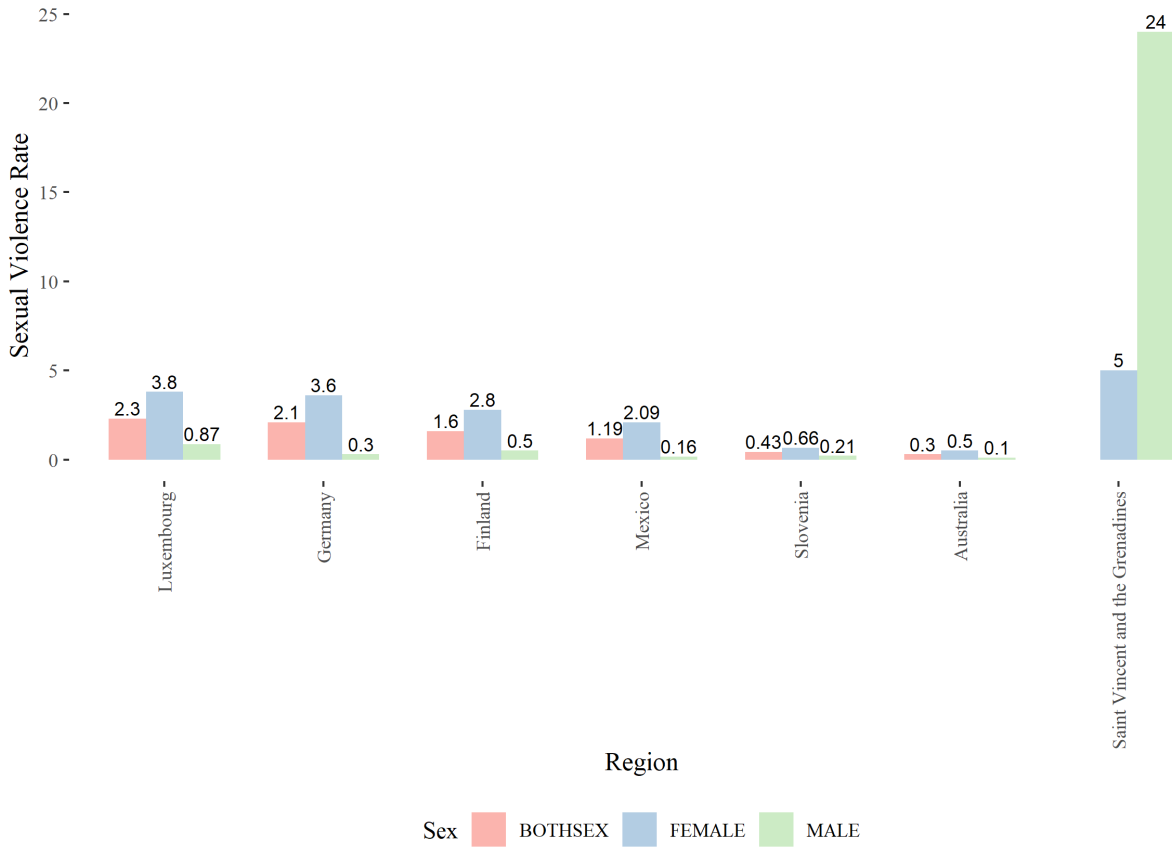


Figure 5. Bar graph for sexual violence rate segregated by sex for the year 2021

The bar chart highlights the distinct differences in sexual violence rates by sex across various regions in 2021. The chart indicates that in most regions, reported sexual violence rates are higher for females than for males, with the aggregated data for both sexes typically aligning closer to the female-reported rates.

In a sharp contrast, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines exhibit the highest disparity, with male-reported rates dramatically exceeding those of females. This visualization shows the gendered nature of sexual violence and highlights the need for targeted intervention and support services. It serves as a reminder of the persistent inequalities and risks that women and girls face, reinforcing the importance of robust policy measures and protective mechanisms to combat sexual violence (Spangaro et al., 2015).

Proportion of Police Reporting by Sex in 2021

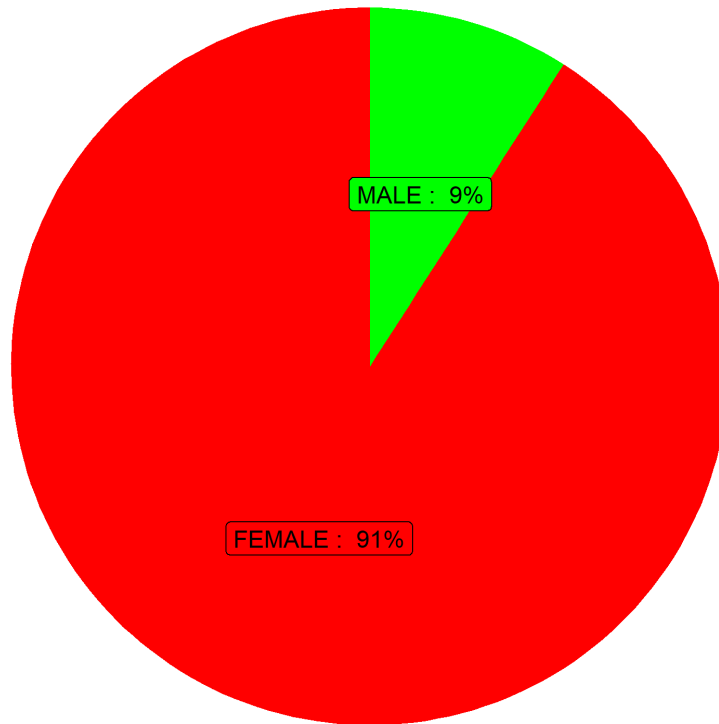


Figure 6. Pie chart for police reporting rate for sexual assault by sex

The pie chart presents a contrast in the proportion of police public assistance for cases of sexual assault by sex in the year 2021. It reveals that a vast majority, 91%, of those who received police assistance were female, while only 9% were male. This significant discrepancy highlights the gendered nature of sexual assault and the consequent gender disparity in the utilization of police support services. This visualization serves as a clear call to action for more targeted support and resources for female victims of sexual assault, as well as the need for continued efforts to prevent such crimes and support all survivors.



Figure 7. Bar graph for robbery rate segregated by sex for the year 2021

The bar chart depicts robbery cases by sex across various regions in 2021. The data portrays that in Peru and Chile, robbery rates are significantly higher, with the male and female rates being relatively close to each other, suggesting that robbery is a prevalent issue affecting both sexes almost equally. However, in Mexico, there is a noticeable disparity, with a considerably higher rate of robbery cases reported for males than for females. This could indicate different patterns of victimization or reporting between the genders in different regions. Overall, the visualization effectively highlights the variance in robbery cases by sex, suggesting differing underlying social and criminal dynamics across these regions.

Understanding these patterns is essential for developing targeted interventions. Policies focusing on reducing robbery rates could benefit from incorporating gender-sensitive approaches that address the specific needs and behaviors of both men and women. This includes community programs that educate about the impacts of crime, and law enforcement training that integrates gender awareness to improve the handling of robbery incidents (Rennison & Melde, 2014).

Proportion of Police Reporting by Sex in 2021

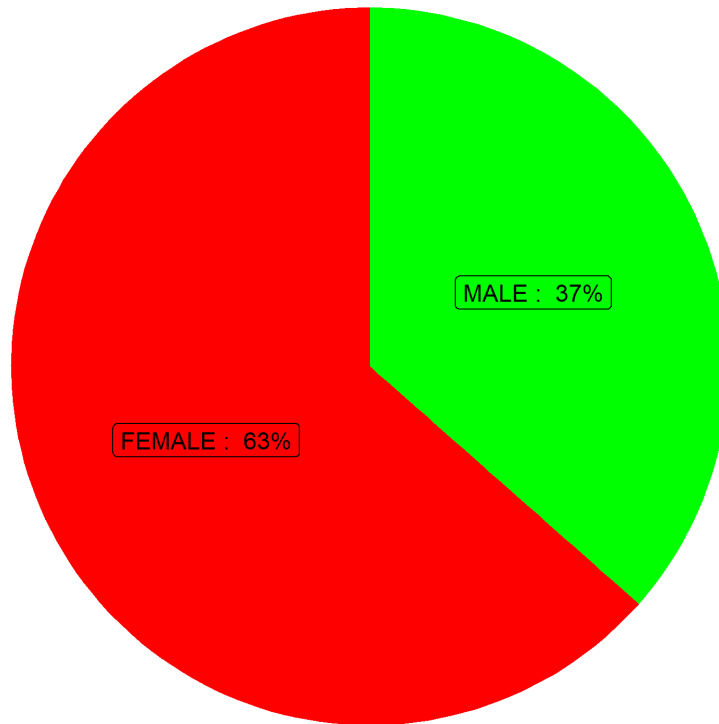


Figure 8. Pie chart for police reporting rate for robbery by sex

The pie chart illustrates the division of police reporting for robbery cases by sex in the year 2021. It indicates that females received a majority of the police assistance at 63%, with males receiving 37%. This distribution may suggest that females are more likely to seek or receive police assistance in the event of a robbery, or it may reflect a higher rate of victimization among females in the contexts measured.

Average Human Rights-Related Killings (2015-2021) by Sex

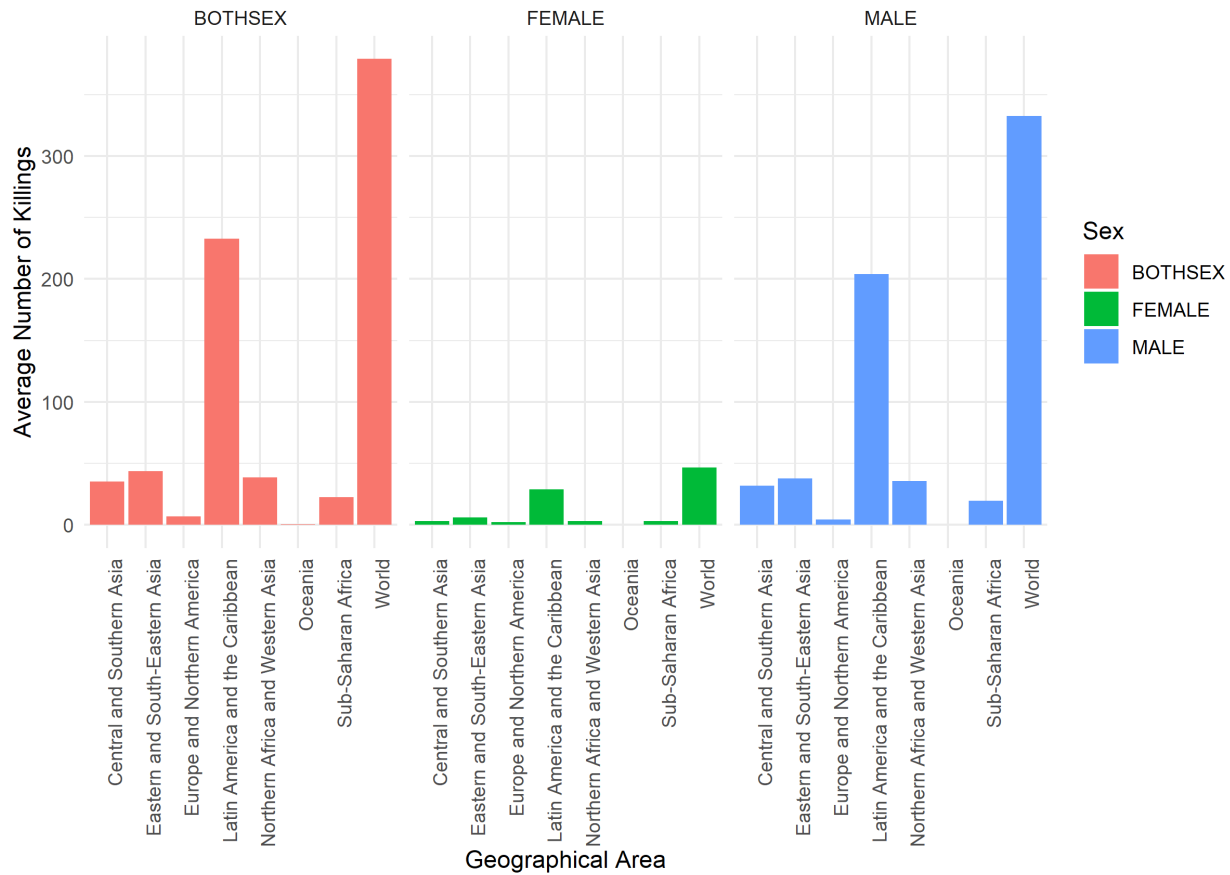


Figure 9. Bar chart faceted by sex for average number of killings of human rights defenders

The visual data presented reflects an alarming indicator relevant to Sustainable Development Goal 16, which advocates for peace, justice, and strong institutions. The bar chart illustrates the average number of killings of human rights defenders, journalists, and trade unionists across different geographical areas, disaggregated by sex between 2015 and 2021. This metric serves as a grim testament to the perils faced by individuals advocating for human rights and the essential freedoms of expression and assembly across the globe.

In the breakdown by sex, it is evident that the average killings for both sexes combined are significantly higher in certain regions, such as Latin America and Caribbean, indicating a pervasive risk to human rights advocates in these areas. The data also shows a notable disparity when segmented into male and female, with male victims representing a higher average in regions like Eastern and South-Eastern Asia. This disparity underscores not only the regional dangers faced by those fighting for human rights but also suggests that male defenders are particularly at risk in these regions. The visualization is a call to action, highlighting the need for international focus on protecting those who stand on the front lines of human rights advocacy (Bennett et al., 2015).

Trend of Unsentenced Detainees (2015-2021)

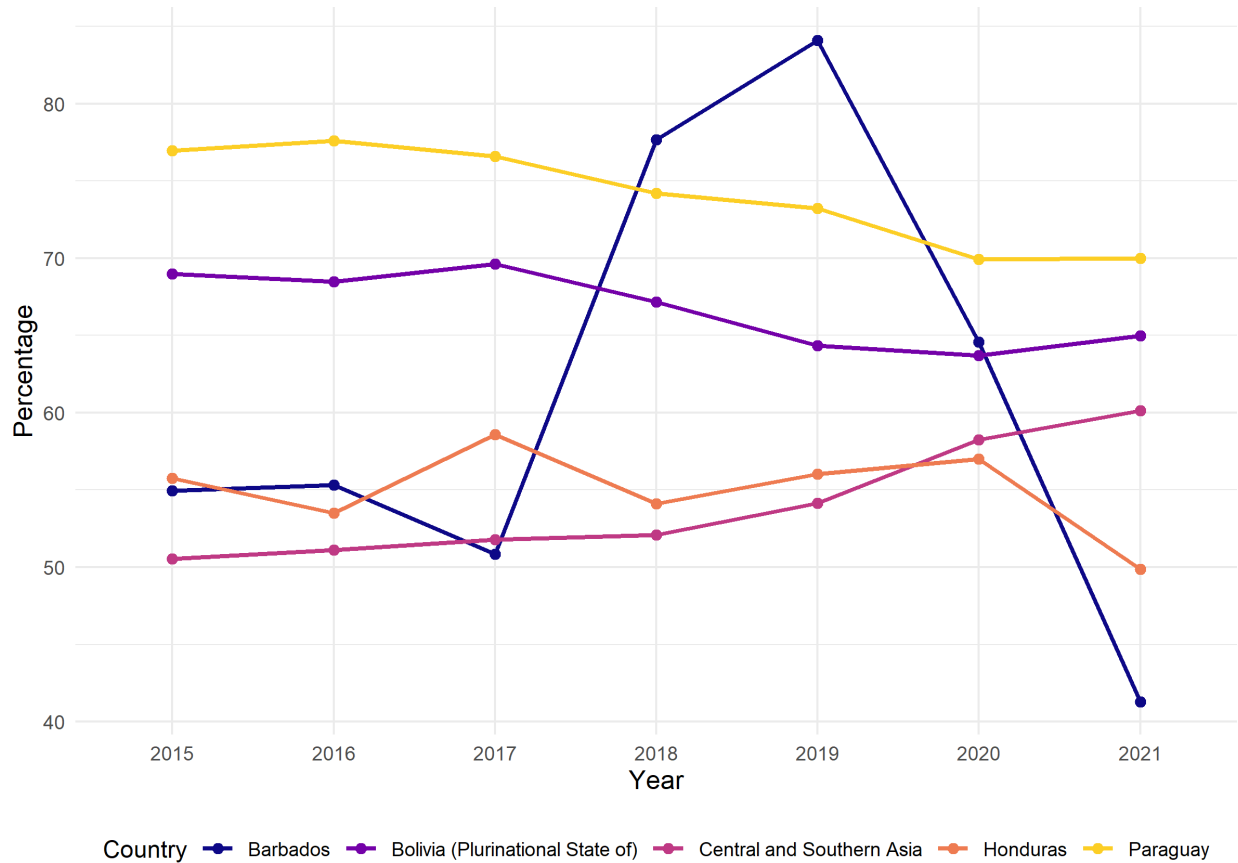


Figure 10. Line graph for top 5 regions with highest average unsentenced detainees (2015-2021)

The line graph presents an analysis of the proportion of unsentenced detainees within the overall prison population for top 5 regions with highest average from 2015 to 2021, an important indicator for assessing the efficiency and fairness of judicial systems under Sustainable Development Goal 16. The trend lines for each region reveal significant fluctuations over the seven-year period, indicating variability in pretrial detention practices and possibly changes in legal frameworks or enforcement policies within these regions.

For instance, the sharp rise and subsequent fall in the line representing Barbados could indicate a temporary change in detention policies or shifts in the region’s political or social landscape affecting the justice system. Conversely, the relatively stable line for Bolivia suggests a consistent approach to pretrial detention over the years. It is noteworthy that some regions, like Honduras, exhibit a decline in the later years, which might reflect reforms in judicial processing or a conscious effort to reduce the number of individuals detained without sentence. These trends underscore the importance of ongoing monitoring and reform to ensure that justice systems worldwide align with the principles of fairness and the presumption of innocence until proven guilty (Garrett et al., 2021).

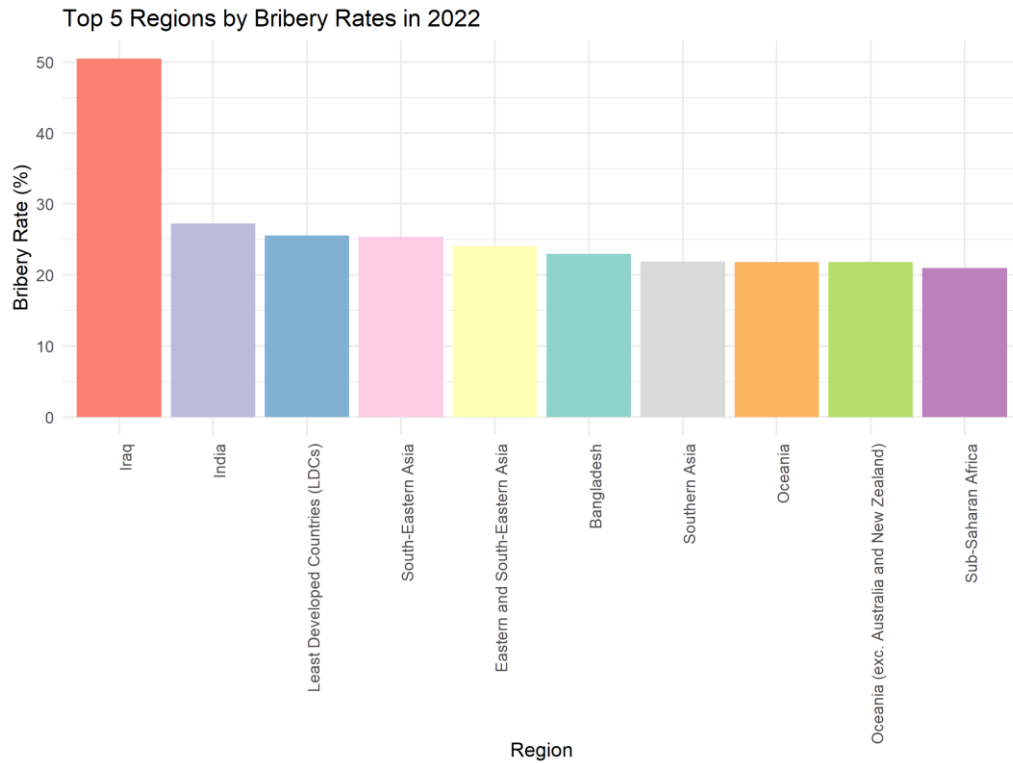


Figure 11. Bar graph for top 10 regions with highest bribery incidence rates

The bar graph presents the bribery incidence rates for 2022, measuring the percentage of firms that experienced at least one request for bribe payments across various countries and regions. Regions like Iraq and India show a high prevalence of bribery, suggesting systemic issues with corruption within their institutions. However, the chart also shows a near parity in bribery rates among developed regions like Oceania and developing regions like Bangladesh. This suggests that bribery is a complex issue irrespective of a nation's development status. This data is indicative of the challenges faced in promoting transparent and accountable governance in certain areas, a key objective of Sustainable Development Goal 16. The visual highlights the need for robust anti-corruption measures and the strengthening of institutions to ensure justice and sustainable development (Chen et al., 2023).

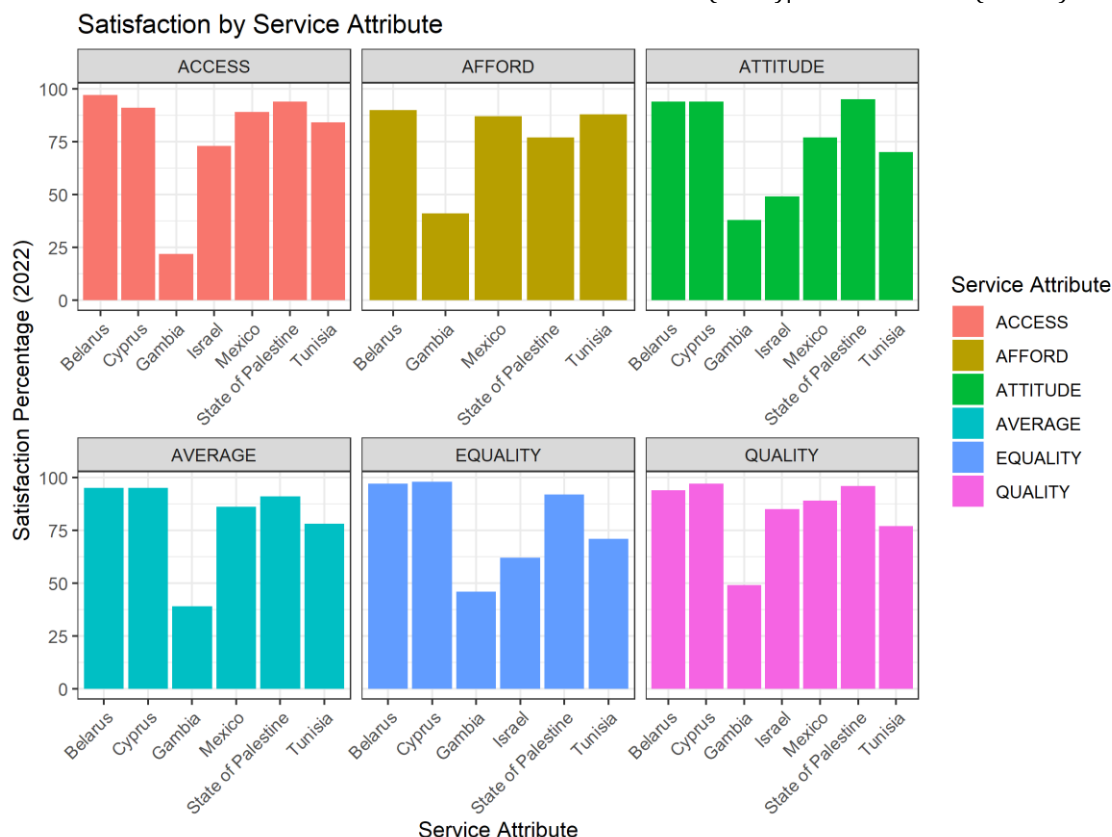


Figure 12. Bar chart faceted by service attribute showing people's satisfaction with government services

The graph shows how satisfied people are with public and government services in various countries, focusing on six service attributes. ‘Access’ represents how easy it is for people to get to the service locations. Here, Belarus stands out with the highest satisfaction levels, while Gambia has the lowest. ‘Affordability’ indicates whether people can pay for the services, with Belarus showing high affordability and Gambia showing the least. ‘Attitude’ reflects staff behavior, where State of Palestine has the highest percentage.

The ‘Average’ satisfaction is a combined measure of positive responses, with Belarus and Cyprus leading and Gambia lagging. ‘Equality’ looks at whether services are provided without discrimination. Belarus again shows high equality, whereas Israel and Gambia show less. Lastly, ‘Quality’ checks for clean facilities in good condition, and here State of Palestine performs well along with Cyprus. The data presented in the graph reveals distinct satisfaction levels across different service attributes, suggesting that citizen satisfaction is not only influenced by the availability and quality of services but also significantly shaped by the socioeconomic and cultural contexts of each country. For instance, the high satisfaction scores in Belarus across all attributes might reflect effective public service systems or possibly lower expectations among the populace. On the contrary, the lower scores in Gambia could be indicative of infrastructural challenges or higher citizen expectations not being met.

Overall, this data suggests that public service satisfaction varies by attribute and country, with some countries consistently scoring higher across multiple attributes. It is clear that public satisfaction is closely linked to factors such as compliance with rules, responsiveness of service providers, and the absence of hassles and corruption in service delivery. Improving these factors could lead to higher satisfaction levels, emphasizing

the need for governments to tailor their service delivery models according to the specific demands and conditions of their citizenry. By aligning public services more closely with the expectations and needs of citizens, countries can enhance their governance models and achieve greater public satisfaction, thereby encouraging a more trusting and engaged citizenry (Lamsal & Gupta, 2022).

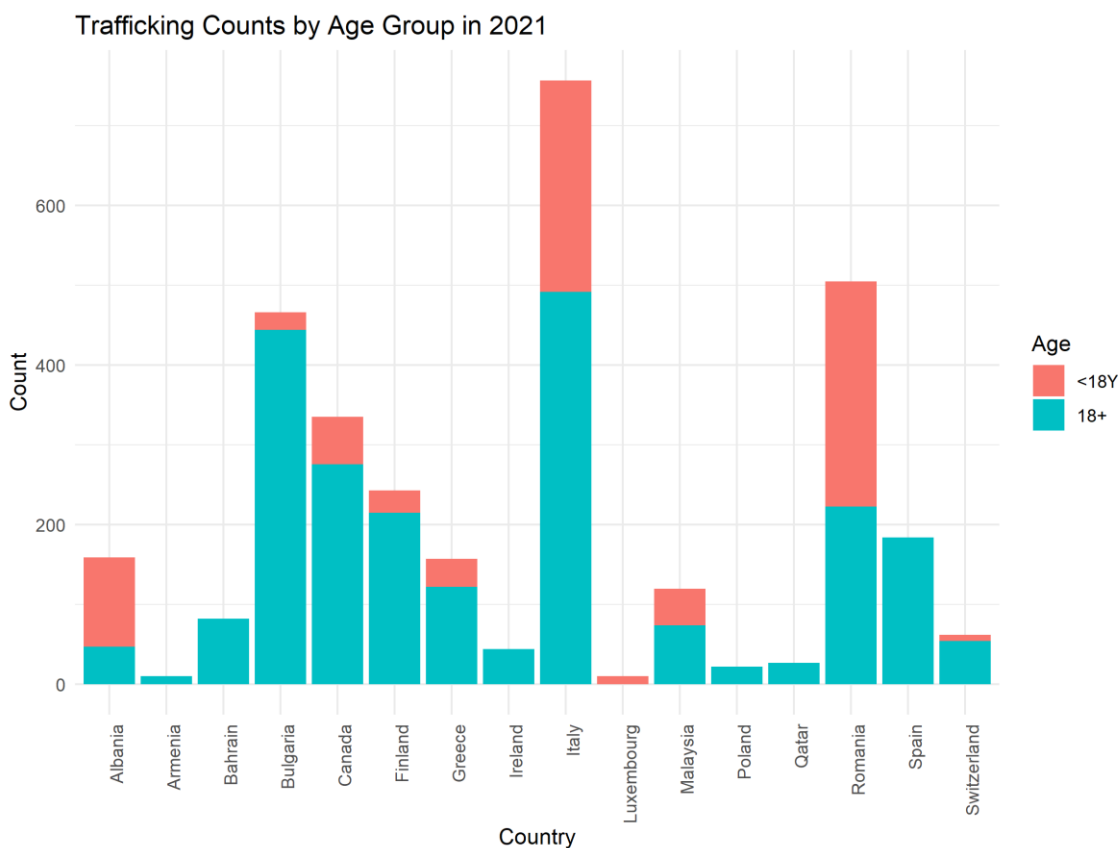


Figure 13. Stacked bar chart for human trafficking by age

The stacked bar chart distinctly categorizes the detected victims of human trafficking by age groups, providing a sharp visualization of the demographic vulnerability to forced labor, servitude, and slavery in various countries during the year 2021. The striking feature of this chart is the significant proportion of minors (under 18) affected, particularly in countries like Romania and Albania, where the count of minor victims far surpasses that of adults. The dominance of cases involving minors in these countries could be linked to various socio-economic factors including poverty, lack of education, and inadequate legal protections, which makes these demographics particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

In contrast, in nations like Bahrain and Bulgaria, the adult victims constitute a larger segment. This suggests different trafficking dynamics, potentially linked to labor exploitation and the migration of workers under deceptive conditions.

This disparity not only highlights the age-based risks associated with human trafficking but also emphasizes the need for tailored prevention and intervention strategies that address the specific vulnerabilities of different age groups within the global fight against modern slavery (Stöckl et al., 2021). Effective strategies to

combat trafficking must therefore not only focus on punitive measures but also on preventive steps such as education, economic opportunities, and robust legal frameworks that protect potential victims before they are ensnared by traffickers (Sweileh, 2018).

In summary, this paper focuses on the analysis of data related to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16, which aims at promoting peace, justice, and strong institutions. It evaluates several key factors affecting global peace and justice, such as the number of victims of intentional homicides, gender disparities in homicide rates, and the incidence of physical and sexual violence across different countries. The findings reveal significant disparities and challenges in achieving peace and justice, highlighting the importance of targeted interventions and policy actions to address these issues.

The paper also examines other critical aspects such as the rates of human trafficking, bribery incidence, and the efficiency of legal systems, as indicated by the proportion of unsentenced detainees. These elements are crucial in understanding the broader context of societal and institutional stability and their impact on peace and justice. The data on human rights-related killings further underscores the risks faced by individuals advocating for human rights and justice, emphasizing the need for international focus and protection.

The analysis underscores the complexity of achieving global peace and justice, pointing out systemic issues like corruption, violence, and legal inefficiencies that hinder progress. It suggests that improving safety, security, and legal fairness, along with addressing corruption and supporting human rights advocates, are essential steps towards realizing the goals of peace, justice, and strong institutions worldwide. This analysis highlights the importance of comprehensive and nuanced approaches to peacebuilding and justice reforms, tailored to the specific needs and challenges of different regions and communities.

Conclusion

The findings from this analysis underscore the intricate web of factors influencing peace, justice, and the strength of institutions globally. It is clear that societal safety and security, effective legal and judicial processes, and the eradication of corruption are paramount for fostering peaceful societies. The diverse indicators explored reveal both progress and persistent challenges, highlighting the importance of a nuanced approach to strengthening institutions and ensuring justice for all. The study affirms that achieving SDG 16 requires targeted, context-specific strategies that address the underlying causes of violence and instability.

In light of the study's findings, it is recommended that policymakers and international organizations prioritize holistic and integrated strategies to enhance peace and justice. Efforts should focus on strengthening legal and judicial systems, enhancing the efficiency and fairness of law enforcement and pretrial processes, combating corruption, and addressing the root causes of gender-based violence. Additionally, fostering international cooperation and sharing best practices are crucial for addressing the global disparities in peace and justice. Tailored interventions that consider the unique challenges faced by different regions and populations will be key to making significant strides toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16.

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