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Regional Observatory on VAWG
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REGIONAL REPORT

2024 Regional Index on VAWG

REGIONAL OBSERVATORY ON VAWG IN THE SOUTH MEDITERRANEAN
EuroMed Feminist Initiative

Contents

Acronyms	2
Acknowledgements	3
Introduction	4
Regional Analysis	5
❖ <i>First Category: Legal Framework</i>	6
❖ <i>Second Category: Standard procedures and guidelines</i>	9
❖ <i>Third Category: Provision of services funded by the State</i>	11
❖ <i>Fourth Category: Data systems and statistics</i>	13
❖ <i>Fifth Category: Preventive programs and measures</i>	15
❖ <i>Sixth Category: Professional capacity of first respondents</i>	17
❖ <i>Seventh Category: National coordination and regional cooperation</i>	19
Conclusions	21
Recommendations	22
Annex Level of achievements for each country	23

Acronyms

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
EFI	EuroMed Feminist Initiative
HCWD	High Council for Women and Development
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organizations
KR-I	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NCW	National Council for Women (Egypt)
NCLW	National Commission for Lebanese Women
UfM	Union for the Mediterranean
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
WPSA	Women, Peace, and Security Agenda

Acknowledgements

The 2024 Regional Index edition on Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) builds on the foundations laid in previous 2021 edition, while reflecting an updated structure and expanded scope.

All indicators and sub-indicators were reviewed and revised to accommodate the inclusion of new countries and to reflect emerging forms and patterns of VAWG in the region. This review was conducted through a Regional Experts Roundtable held on 27–28 November 2024 in Baghdad.

This report presents an in-depth analysis of each thematic category, drawing on national data, policy documents, and expert's input. It highlights both progress and persisting challenges across the region, such as lack of comprehensive legislation, weak coordination mechanisms, and insufficient implementation of preventive and support services.

EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI) and the Regional Observatory on VAWG extend their sincere appreciation to the governmental institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), and individual experts who contributed to the development and finalization of the 2024 Regional Index.

We extend our special gratitude to the Department of Women's Affairs in the Presidency of Republic of Iraq for their partnership and commitment to the process, for hosting the Regional Experts Roundtable in November 2024 and the Launching Conference of the 2024 Regional Index on VAWG held on 22-23 September 2025.

Introduction

The Regional Observatory on VAWG is an independent mechanism to follow up and support the implementation of laws, policies, and measures related to combating VAWG in the Middle East and North Africa Region (MENA), specifically in the area of combating all forms of VAWG and advancing the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda (WPSA).

Hosted by the EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI) in Amman, the Observatory aims to contribute to the elimination of VAWG, to strengthen the integration of women's rights into policy discourse, and to promote the recognition of women as key actors in sustaining peace and security. In pursuit of this mission, the Observatory offers a regional lens through which the status of laws, policies, and actions addressing VAWG in MENA can be analysed.

To support this goal, the Observatory developed the Regional Index on VAWG, a tool designed for ongoing monitoring and data collection on relevant legislation, public policies, and practices. The first two editions of the Index (2020 and 2021) covered seven MENA countries. In the 2023–2024 edition, Syria and Iraq joined the Index, bringing the total number of participating countries to nine: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia.

The primary objective of the Regional Index is to provide comprehensive documentation of national frameworks—laws, policies, and services—related to VAWG. It enables assessment of the legal and institutional measures in place and helps identify gaps and opportunities for reform. The Index presents complex data in a digestible format, supporting evidence-based policymaking and accountability at the national level. Furthermore, it serves as a vital tool for women's rights organizations to conduct targeted advocacy, and it offers the international community a clear overview of each country's progress in addressing VAWG.

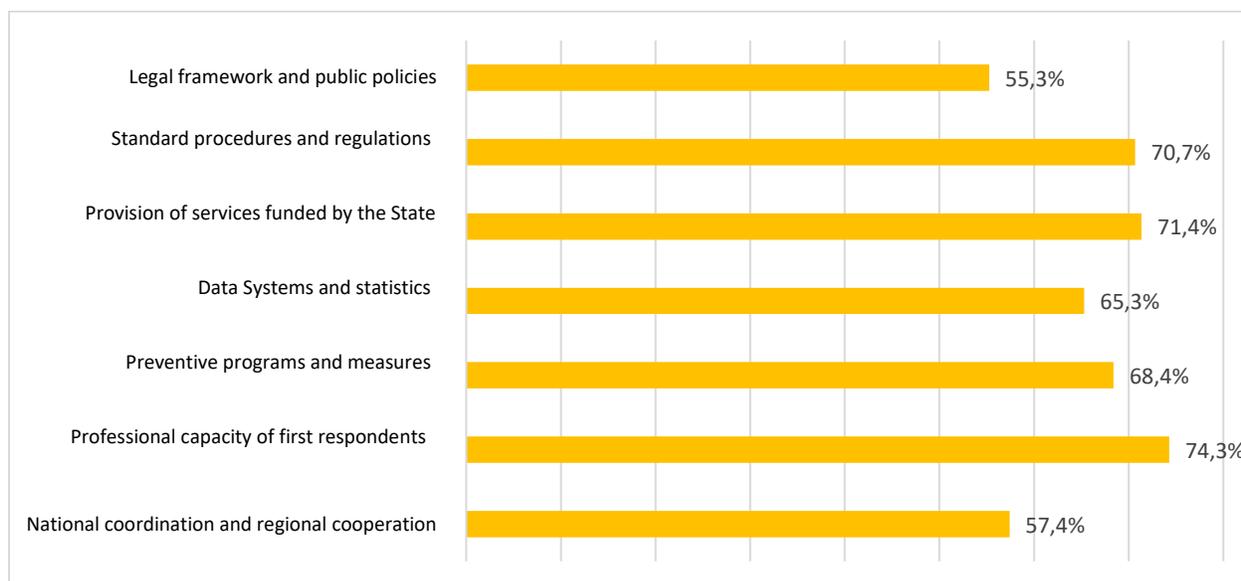
The Index adopts a composite indicator methodology, combining various indicators into a single, cohesive scoring system. This approach enables multi-dimensional analysis and comparison between countries. Each main indicator is divided into sub-indicators, allowing for detailed measurement of specific aspects of national responses to VAWG. Scoring ranges from 1% to 100%, 100% indicating the full presence of effective laws, policies, and services. A score of 50%, for example, suggests a substantial, however partial progress toward comprehensive measures to combat VAWG.

This report presents the regional status of legal frameworks, policies, and services addressing VAWG and is organized according to the Index's thematic categories. It reflects not only the progress made, but also the critical gaps. It calls for stronger legislation, greater coordination, improved data collection, and sustained investment in preventive and support mechanisms to effectively combat VAWG in the region.

This process was supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) as part of the programme “Strengthening Participation, Peaceful Coexistence and Equality in Iraq” (SPACE), funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Regional Analysis

Figure 1: Regional level of achievement per category¹



By 2024, the Index reflects a more **consolidated landscape of policy commitments**. More countries adopted strategies, specialised services, and structured data system. While the 2024 Index shows modest but important progress compared to 2021, gaps still remain, most notably the absence of comprehensive, specific VAWG legislation in most countries, weak preventive programs, and limited data quality and coordination mechanisms. Combating VAWG still faces structural obstacles.

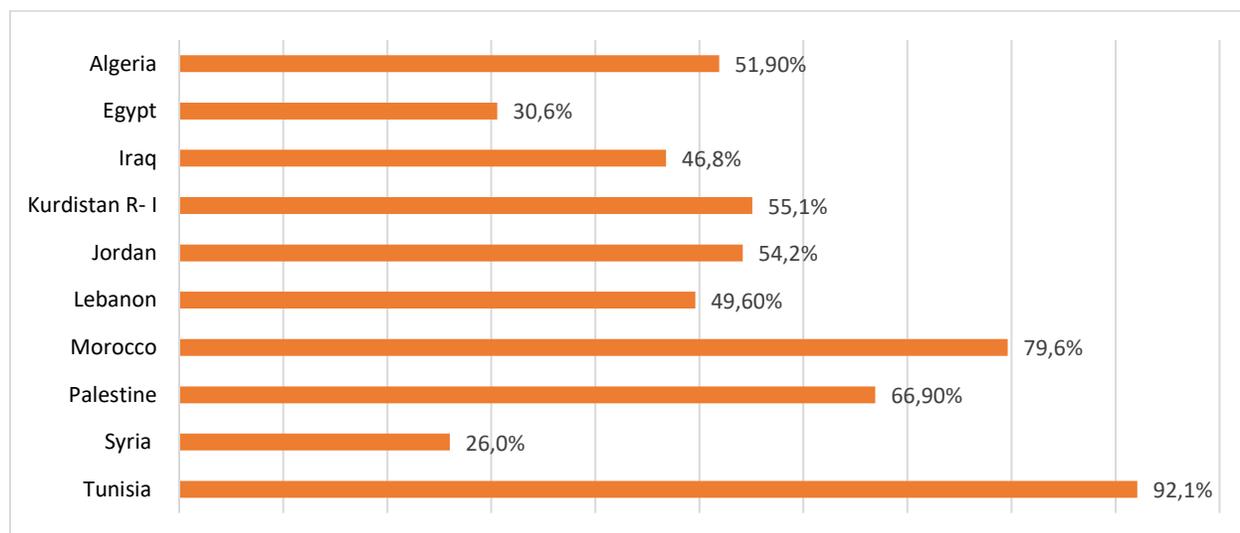
Achieving meaningful change requires **comprehensive legal reforms, sustainable funding through budgeting responsive** to the needs of women and men, **robust and disaggregated data collection**, and **inclusive national and regional coordination and cooperation with the CSOs**. Only through these steps the States can effectively address and ultimately eliminate all forms of VAWG.

The Regional Index remains a critical tool in this **process**, enabling governments and civil society alike to monitor progress, identify challenges, and implement effective and evidence-based interventions.

¹ The regional level of achievement for each category represents the average of category scores for all countries. The category score for any country represents the result achieved for the category out of the category weight.

❖ First Category: Legal Framework

Figure 2: Legal framework and public policies



The first category examines the legal framework and public policies on women's rights, and their conformity with international standards, in particular Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). It addresses laws specifically designed to combat VAWG, where such laws exist. It also concerns public policies, including budget policies, and national strategies to combat VAWG. 14 indicators and 96 sub-indicators are included under this category.

Findings indicate significant legal gaps, with the average score for this category standing at 55.3%. Country scores range from 26% (**Syria**) to 92% (**Tunisia**), reflecting varying degrees of legal and policy reform. Key areas requiring improvement include the enactment of comprehensive VAWG legislation, full ratification of CEDAW and the revision of discriminatory national laws.

All Index countries have either entered reservations or maintained declarations to certain CEDAW articles, with the exceptions of **Palestine** (14 out of 21) and **Tunisia** (19.3 out of 21). **Morocco** (16.7 out of 21) retains declarations to Articles 2 and 15. Furthermore, all countries except **Jordan**, **Tunisia**, and **Palestine** have reservations to Article 29, concerning the administration and arbitration of the Convention. Notably, **Algeria** (10.9), **Egypt** (6.4), **Jordan** (11.4), **Iraq** (9.8), and **Lebanon** (10.4) maintain reservations to Article 16(1), which addresses equality in marriage and family relations. **Jordan** and **Lebanon** also retain reservations to Article 9(2), which pertains to a woman's right to confer nationality to her children.

At the constitutional level, **Egypt** mandates a minimum quota of 25% for women's representation in local councils and parliament. **Iraq** has a minimum quota of 25% for women's representation in the parliament. The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) has set the quota at 30%, however, it is not constitutionalised. **Algeria**, **Egypt**, **Iraq**, **Morocco**, **Palestine**, and **Tunisia** prohibit sex-based discrimination in their constitutions, whereas **Jordan** and **Lebanon** have yet to include such explicit provisions. However, recent constitutional reforms in **Jordan** (2022) introduced a

new paragraph (6 of Article 6), stating that “the State shall guarantee the empowerment and support of women to play an active role in building society... and protect them from all forms of violence and discrimination.” Similarly, Article 68 of **Algeria's** Constitution guarantees equality between women and men in the labour market and encourages the appointment of women to leadership roles.

In terms of national legislation, only **Tunisia** and **Morocco** have enacted comprehensive laws to combat VAWG, earning full marks on Indicator 4. These laws provide explicit definitions of VAWG and cover the four essential pillars of response: prevention, protection, prosecution, and support. Governments bear the primary responsibility for legislating, raising public legal awareness, and ensuring harmonization with international obligations. Given the multifaceted and systemic nature of VAWG, its recognition as a human rights violation necessitates the adoption of explicit, stand-alone legislation addressing all its forms, beyond the provisions of penal codes. In other words, legal frameworks must also be reformed to eliminate discriminatory articles.

Noteworthy legal reforms include **Algeria** amendments to the penal code to strengthen penalties against perpetrators of VAWG, **Lebanon** 2020 enactment of a law against sexual harassment, and **Jordan's** existing law on domestic violence protection. Additionally, progress has been made across all countries in abolishing penal code provisions that previously exonerated rapists who married their victims. Some States have also introduced laws addressing sexual harassment in the workplace, with **Lebanon** criminalizing all forms of such behaviour in its 2020 law.

Concerning "honour crimes", most countries now criminalize such acts without allowing sentence reductions based on so-called "honour" motives. However, in **Iraq**, still Article 409 of the Iraqi Penal Code states: “Anyone who surprises his wife or one of his relatives in the act of adultery, or is in the same bed with a partner, and immediately kills her or one of them, or assaults them in a manner that leads to death, shall be punished with imprisonment for a period not exceeding three years.” This provision was suspended in the **KR-I** under Law No. 3 of 2015. In **Egypt**, Article 237 of the Penal Code provides that a husband who kills his wife benefits from mitigating circumstances if his wife was caught in sexual act out of marriage.

In **Syria**, Article 548 - which permitted leniency for men who killed spouses caught in adultery- was repealed in 2020. Nonetheless, Articles 192 and 242 of the Penal Code still allow for mitigating circumstances in cases of emotional outrage resulting from wrongful acts, thereby undermining accountability.

Reforms in nationality laws have been observed in **Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco**, enabling women to transfer nationality to their children. However, **Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria** continue to enforce laws that discriminate against women in this regard.

The most substantial legal gaps remain in family law and penal codes. Women continue to face legal inequality in areas such as property ownership, inheritance, child custody, and divorce. Male guardianship systems persist in many family laws, granting men authority over female relatives. Moreover, in most of the countries reviewed, marital rape is not criminalized.

Despite legal minimum age requirements of 18 for marriage, judicial exceptions still allow for early marriages in all countries under review. Definitions of harassment are vague or absent; for

instance, Jordanian and Palestinian penal codes refer to “non-consensual sexual intercourse,” while Algerian and Egyptian laws link it to “public indecency.”

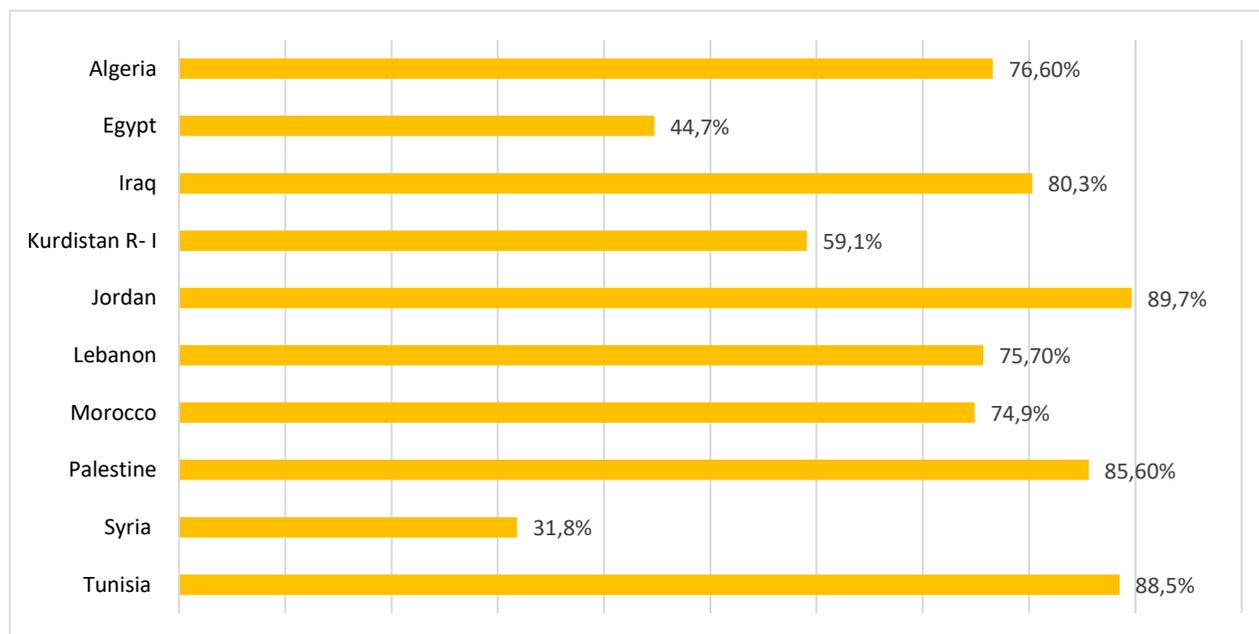
Public policies serve as essential instruments for addressing VAWG and must be consistently implemented. All countries should maintain active national strategies to prevent and combat VAWG. The Index reveals that while several countries have adopted such strategies, some have concluded, while others remain active. For example, **Lebanon**’s National Strategy for Combating Violence Against Women (2019–2029) is ongoing. **Iraq**’s National Strategy (2018–2030), developed by the National Department of Iraqi Women of the Council of Ministers, is also in effect. Additionally, the Supreme Council for Women of the **KR-I** has enacted a strategy covering 2017–2027. In **Egypt**, the National Council for Women developed the "National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030", which includes measures to address VAWG. **Morocco**’s Ministry of Solidarity, Social Development, Equality and Family adopted the "National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women (2020–2030)", aligning with legal reforms and international obligations.

In the 2021 Index, the legal framework category scored only 46%, reflecting widespread gaps in legislation. Only **Tunisia** and **Morocco** had adopted comprehensive laws on combating VAWG, although both laws had shortcomings, such as the absence of an explicit criminalisation of marital rape and the lack of dedicated budgets. Other countries introduced partial reforms: Algeria tightened penalties in its penal code, Lebanon criminalised sexual harassment in 2020. Strategies also emerged, including a national strategy on combating violence against women (2015-2020) and Palestine’s referral system for women survivors.

Between 2021 and 2024, there was incremental progress in the legal framework category (46% → 55.3%). **Tunisia** and **Morocco** remain the only countries with comprehensive VAWG laws, but some constitutional reforms (e.g., **Jordan** 2022 amendment) and strengthened penal provisions (e.g., **Algeria**) show positive steps. However, persistent gaps in family law, marital rape, nationality rights, and inconsistent harassment definitions as well as the lack of budget allocations to implement the laws and national strategies continue to undermine protection and equality

❖ *Second Category: Standard procedures and guidelines*

Figure 3: Standard procedures and guidelines



The second category deals with standard procedures and guidelines. The police and judicial procedures put in place, whether in terms of the opportunities for victims to report offences or the obligation to inform the authorities of such offences by persons who are aware of them and legal aid or the existence of a guide for professionals, in order to unify and simplify procedures.

This category, which consists of 13 indicators, and 56 sub-indicators, received an average achievement score of 70.7%. Among the top-performing countries is **Jordan**, which scored **11.7 out of 13 points**. **Jordan's** 2017 Law on Protection from Domestic Violence (Article 4) mandates all healthcare, education, and social service providers - both public and private -to report any incidents of domestic violence involving individuals who are incapacitated or lack legal competence. Additionally, **Jordan** has established the Family Protection and Juvenile Department under the Public Security Directorate, which specialises in handling cases of domestic violence.

In all countries, there remains a critical need for dedicated police units focused on VAWG and for specialised procedures within the justice system to ensure that survivors - especially women- receive protection, justice, and support. Victim-centred approaches are essential. Civil and criminal courts play an important role not only in enforcing VAWG laws but also in providing survivors with protection, compensation, and legal redress. This legal response is fundamental to prevention efforts.

Specialised courts tend to be more responsive and effective in dealing with VAWG. So far, only **Tunisia** (11.5/13), **Palestine** (11.1/13), **Lebanon** (9.8/13), and **Jordan** have reported the existence of such specialised courts for women survivors. In many other countries, mediation remains a

standard part of the legal process, where cases are referred to reconciliation and mediation services. While most Index countries have established procedures and referral systems for survivors, monitoring their actual implementation remains a major challenge due to the lack of dedicated monitoring mechanisms.

Clear guidelines and standard operating procedures should be in place to ensure quality and comprehensive services for survivors. These protocols must guide frontline responders to identify, support, refer and mobilise resources for women and girls survivors of violence.

Reporting VAWG to the police is often the first formal step, as law enforcement is responsible for investigating these crimes and holding perpetrators accountable. This calls for specialised police units with sufficient resources and training. Only **Egypt, Tunisia, and KR-I** have established specialised police units dedicated to VAWG. In **KR-I**, the Ministry of Interior oversees the General Directorate for Combating Violence Against Women. In **Palestine**, the Family and Juvenile Protection Units within the police deal with domestic violence and sexual assault. **Iraq**, which scored **10.4/13**, has a Directorate for the Protection of Family and Children from Domestic Violence.

The health sector also plays a critical role in early detection of VAWG cases, offering medico-legal services and facilitating referrals to the relevant authorities. In addition to emergency medical care, it can provide psychological support and long-term rehabilitation. Most countries assessed have established focal points or units within their Ministries of Health to coordinate a health-sector response to VAWG. All Index countries, except Syria and Lebanon, have a special coordination unit within the Ministry of Health.

A strong example of good practice is **Egypt** (5.8/13), where the government has developed national guidelines and protocols such as the Medical Protocol for the Management of Victims of Violence. In the **KR-I**, Law No. 8 on Domestic Violence (2011) mandates healthcare providers to assist and report cases. In **Iraq** more generally, instructions oblige emergency hospitals to file reports and refer suspected cases of violence to the police. However, these procedures are not tailored specifically to women survivors.

In the education sector, schools, colleges, and universities are also places where VAWG can occur, but they also hold the potential to challenge harmful social norms. Education institutions can foster long-term change by integrating awareness about VAWG into school curricula and teacher trainings.

However, many countries scored poorly on indicators related to policies that prevent sexual harassment in youth centres, sports clubs, and recreational spaces. While sexual harassment is criminalised in public settings in all Index countries, few countries (**Algeria, Jordan**) have developed dedicated systems or regulations for preventing it in youth spaces—or for enabling girls to report abuse safely in these environments. Nonetheless, no country adopted mechanism to monitor the application of these procedures.

On a positive note, all Index countries provide free and compulsory basic education for both girls and boys, however none of them has established specific monitoring mechanisms for the quality

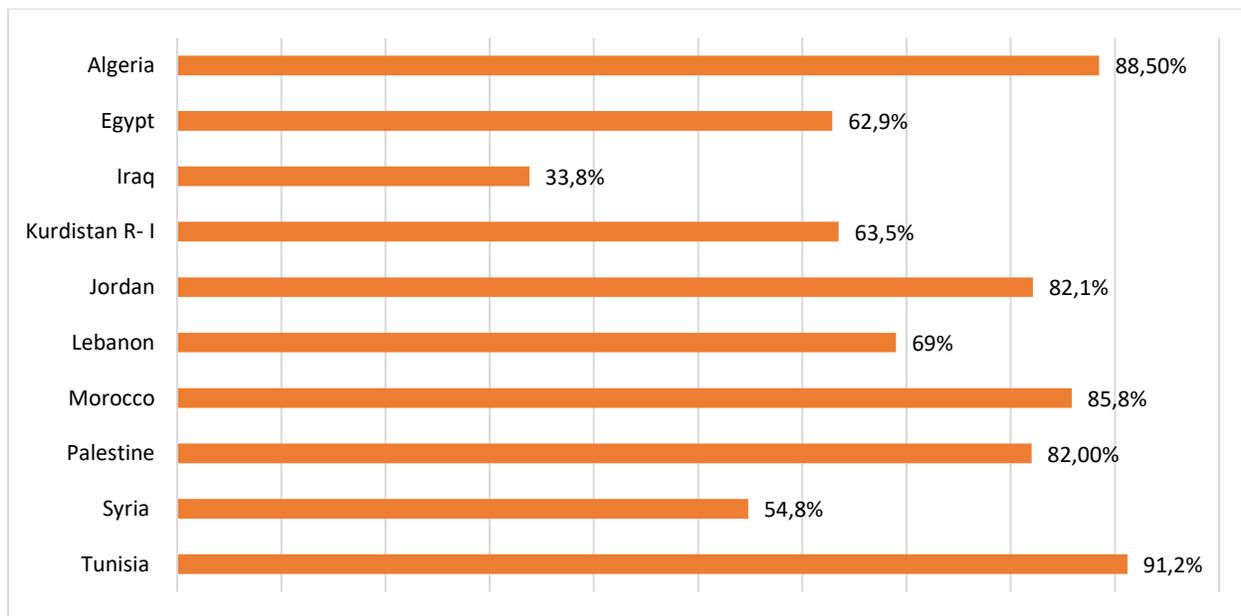
or delivery of education for girls, which is a critical gap when considering girls' need of broader access to rights, protection, and empowerment.

In **2021 Index**, this category recorded a low achievement level of 46%, revealing significant shortcomings in procedures and justice sector responses to VAWG. While some countries had frameworks in place, monitoring mechanisms were largely absent, and existing court procedures were insufficient to protect victims or hold perpetrators accountable. Specialised police units were limited: only **Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia** had dedicated VAWG units, while **Jordan, Palestine**, operated specialised units for domestic violence. In **Lebanon**, the law mandated a unit, but it had not been created, and **Algeria** lacked one entirely.

Between 2021 and 2024, the category of **Standard Procedures and Guidelines** improved significantly (46% → 70.7%). The region made advances in establishing specialised police and health units, integrating victim-centred procedures, and introducing specialised courts. However, challenges persist in monitoring implementation, affordability of justice, and coverage in education/youth settings.

❖ *Third Category: Provision of services funded by the State*

Figure 4: Provision of services funded by the State



The third category refers to services provided by the government to survivors of VAWG. This category includes 5 indicators and 26 sub-indicators that address both the survivors themselves, their physical and psychological care, and the caregivers, who must be specially trained to treat women subjected to all types of VAWG, applying a survivor-centred approach. Addressing VAWG goes hand-in-hand with ensuring efficient public services provided for women survivors of VAWG. Ensuring access means improving the availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of medical, psychological treatment and legal aid, as well as economic support for survivors of VAWG.

This category ranked second overall, with an average achievement level of 71.4%. **Tunisia** led the region with a score of 13.7 out of 15. The Ministry of Women, Family, Childhood, and the Elderly has committed to providing at least one shelter in every governorate by the end of 2024 and currently supports ten State-run shelters. In 2023, the Ministry also launched the first listening and orientation centre for women survivors of violence—a significant step toward accessible and survivor-centred services.

The emergence of holistic service models across the region signals a growing recognition by States of their responsibility to address VAWG in a comprehensive manner. **Algeria** followed **Tunisia** with a score of 13.3 out of 15, dedicating public funding to two State-run shelters and five temporary accommodation centres for women survivors.

Lebanon scored 10.6 out of 15. While the government works in partnership with CSOs to offer shelter services across the country, these shelters remain heavily dependent on non-governmental and non-State actors for both funding and operation, which limits sustainability and scale.

All Index countries offer some form of counselling and psychological support for women survivors, typically provided within shelters. Free psychological hotlines are available in countries like **Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia**, offering immediate emotional support.

Another contributing factor to the relatively high scores in this category is the availability of legal assistance, which is offered in all Index countries to some degree. In **Jordan, Tunisia, and Morocco**, legal aid is provided through the Ministry of Justice. In other contexts, services are delivered through a combination of actors. For example, in **Egypt**, shelters play a key role in offering legal support, while in **Morocco**, both the Ministry of Justice and the Royal Prosecutor are involved. In **Tunisia**, legal aid is jointly provided by the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Women, Family, Childhood, and the Elderly. **In Iraq, a unified, toll-free hotline operated by the Ministry of Interior, number (911), is available for general emergency situations and operates 24 hours a day. Posters and awareness cards have been distributed, and workshops have been organized for awareness-raising. The Family and Child Protection Directorate has also set up a dedicated webpage, with specialized staff responding to legal inquiries free of charge. The government provides legal counselling to women survivors of violence through security or legal entities. The Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) of the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KR-I) provides counselling and legal assistance to women survivors of violence through the shelters, as well as through the Directorates and Offices for Combating Violence against Women and the Family. These services are offered free of charge.**

Despite the availability of legal services, the cost of legal procedures remains a significant barrier—particularly for poor and marginalised women. Although free legal services exist, they are not tailored specifically to the needs of women survivors of VAWG. There is a pressing need for specialised support for women facing multiple layers of vulnerability—such as those belonging to minority groups, or women who are refugees or migrants. However, none of the countries assessed offer dedicated services for migrant women, despite their heightened risk of violence and marginalisation.

Meanwhile, while most countries have made efforts to establish and finance shelters, their number and geographic distribution remain insufficient. Many women - especially those in rural or remote areas - still face significant barriers in accessing safe, supportive accommodation.

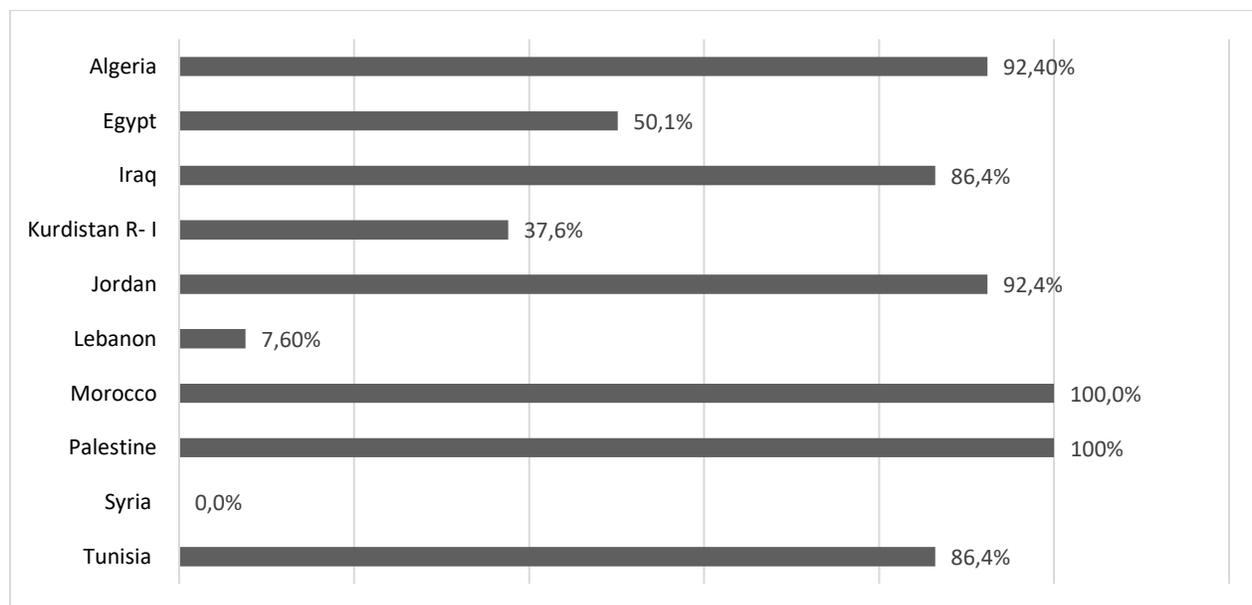
Addressing this gap is essential to ensuring that all survivors of violence can find refuge and support, regardless of where they live or their background.

In 2021, this category achieved the highest level of performance among all categories, at 63%, reflecting the region's growing commitment to service provision for VAWG survivors. **Lebanon** ranked highest (13.6/15), with strong cooperation between government and CSOs in operating shelters, although these shelters remained highly dependent on non-State actors. Across the region, all countries provided counselling and psychological support, often through shelters, and several established hotlines (e.g., **Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia**). Legal aid was widely available, though provided through different channels depending on the country—by Ministries of Justice, Ministries of Women's Affairs, or jointly by State actors and prosecutors. **Tunisia** represented a best practice by allocating public funds to CSOs to run shelters, showing a model of State-supported yet community-operated service provision.

Between 2021 and 2024 Indexes, this category showed steady progress (63% → 71.4%), reflecting governments' growing role in financing and institutionalising services for VAWG survivors. The centre of leadership shifted from Lebanon (2021) to **Tunisia** (2024), with **Tunisia's** publicly funded shelter system standing out as a regional best practice. However, structural gaps remain: insufficient coverage, and lack of tailored support for particularly vulnerable groups such as migrants and minorities.

❖ *Fourth Category: Data systems and statistics*

Figure 5: Data systems and statistics



The fourth category, which consists of 3 indicators and 14 sub-indicators, is linked to the collection and dissemination of statistics on VAWG and their classification by type of violence and frequency, but also in relation to whether or not they have been the subject of complaints and whether or not these complaints have led to convictions and lawsuits. Accurate and precise statistics on VAWG by type, severity and frequency are necessary not only for decision-makers,

which allows them to readjust laws and mechanisms based on the obtained results, but also for civil society actors because it allows them to make this violence more visible, and translate the data obtained into stories of broken lives and thus to make the necessary advocacy for change. Measuring prevalence and incidence of VAWG should form part of the functions and responsibilities of the National Institutions of Statistics.

This category achieved an average score of **65.3%**, reflecting moderate progress in the collection and publication of data related to VAWG. All countries included in the Index publish statistics on VAWG through their official government statistical agencies. However, the data often remain limited in scope, do not cover all forms of violence, and are not updated annually, making it difficult to assess the full extent of the problem.

One of the most pressing challenges across the region is the lack of reliable, consistent, and periodic assessment of the prevalence and incidence of VAWG. Without this information, it is difficult to track trends, identify risk factors, or design effective policy responses.

The best-performing countries in this category are **Morocco, Palestine, Algeria, Jordan, and Tunisia**. Both **Morocco and Palestine** scored the maximum **14 out of 14 points**. In **Morocco**, the Office of the Public Prosecutor plays a leading role in data transparency. It publishes annual reports detailing the implementation of criminal policy, including comprehensive statistics on crimes and offences committed against women—covering various forms of violence.

Algeria, scoring 12.9, provides VAWG-related data through the National Statistics Office and police departments. In **Tunisia** (12 out of 14), the Ministry of Women, Family, Childhood, the Elderly publishes regular reports in line with the country's comprehensive law on combating violence against women. **Jordan**, also scoring 12.9, issues annual statistical reports through the Department of Statistics, while the National Council for Family Affairs publishes dedicated reports on domestic violence cases.

Most countries still rely heavily on administrative data collected from police stations, courts, and justice institutions. While these datasets are useful, they only reflect reported cases and do not measure the true incidence or prevalence of VAWG. This means the real scale of violence remains hidden, particularly when many cases go unreported due to fear, stigma, or lack of access to support services.

To ensure evidence-based policy responses, countries need to invest in regular, comprehensive, and disaggregated data collection mechanisms that go beyond administrative reporting. Only then can the true magnitude of VAWG be understood and addressed effectively.

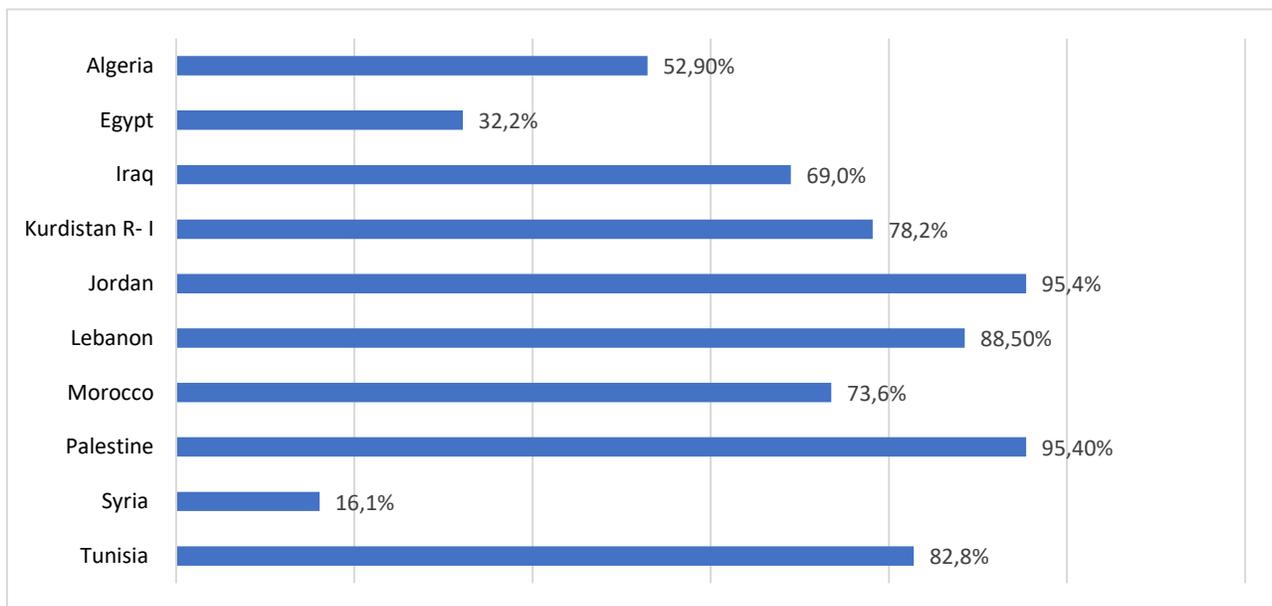
In 2021, this category reached an average score of 62%, showing moderate progress in data collection and publication on VAWG in 2024. All countries published statistics through official statistical agencies, but the data was often incomplete, failed to cover all forms of violence, and was not updated annually. The most significant challenge remained the absence of reliable, consistent, and periodic measurements of prevalence and incidence, making it difficult to fully capture the scope of VAWG. Instead, most countries relied heavily on administrative data from

police and courts, which reflected only reported cases and masked the larger number of unreported incidents due to stigma, fear, or lack of access to services.

Between 2021 and 2024, no significant measurable progress was recorded in this category. While some States maintained good practices in publishing data (**Morocco, Palestine, Algeria, Jordan, Tunisia**), the core weaknesses persisted: limited scope, reliance on police/court data, and absence of prevalence/incidence surveys. This stagnation highlights an urgent need for States to invest in systematic, disaggregated, and periodic data collection to inform policy and reveal the real scale of VAWG.

❖ **Fifth Category: Preventive programs and measures**

Figure 6: Preventive programs and measures



The fifth category looks at preventive programs and measures, including whether specific training programmes for teachers have been set up and whether curricula and handbooks for primary, secondary and university education have integrated issues related to VAWG. This category also looks at national awareness raising, and advocacy campaigns initiated by the governments to address VAWG. This category includes 4 indicators and 14 sub-indicators.

Preventive programs are necessary for addressing the rising rates of VAWG as well as existing social structures that cause it. Both government and civil society must adopt campaigns to address social tolerance to VAWG and harmful stereotypes. Preventive measures and programs are required at the national level and should be institutionalised in relevant ministries and institutions to combat VAWG, especially Ministry of Education.

This category recorded an average achievement score of **68.4%**, reflecting a moderate level of commitment across the region to prevention, awareness-raising, and education initiatives

aimed at addressing VAWG. However, **most countries still lack dedicated and comprehensive strategies** to guide public education campaigns, sensitisation efforts, and equality training.

The **lowest-scoring countries** in this category were **Syria (2.4 out of 15), Egypt (4.8), and Algeria (7.9)**—highlighting serious gaps in institutionalised prevention efforts.

On the other hand, **Palestine and Jordan** demonstrated strong performance, each achieving **14.3 out of 15 points**. In **Palestine**, the Ministry of Education, in partnership with international NGOs, trained 600 teachers in 2023 to promote equality between women and men and challenge harmful stereotypes within the national school curriculum. Similarly, Jordan Ministry of Education has developed a "Training Manual for Integrating Gender into Education and the School Environment". The Ministry's Gender Unit, in collaboration with the Policies and Training Unit, organises regular workshops and training sessions for teachers and education supervisors on gender equality and gender mainstreaming in schools.

Tunisia and **Morocco** also achieved high scores, with 12 and 11 out of 15, respectively, due to their efforts in integrating women's perspectives in education and public awareness campaigns.

In **Iraq** (scoring 10.3), while national education curricula do not yet explicitly address VAWG or equality between women and men, human rights education has been introduced in both universities and schools starting from fifth grade, representing an entry point for further reform.

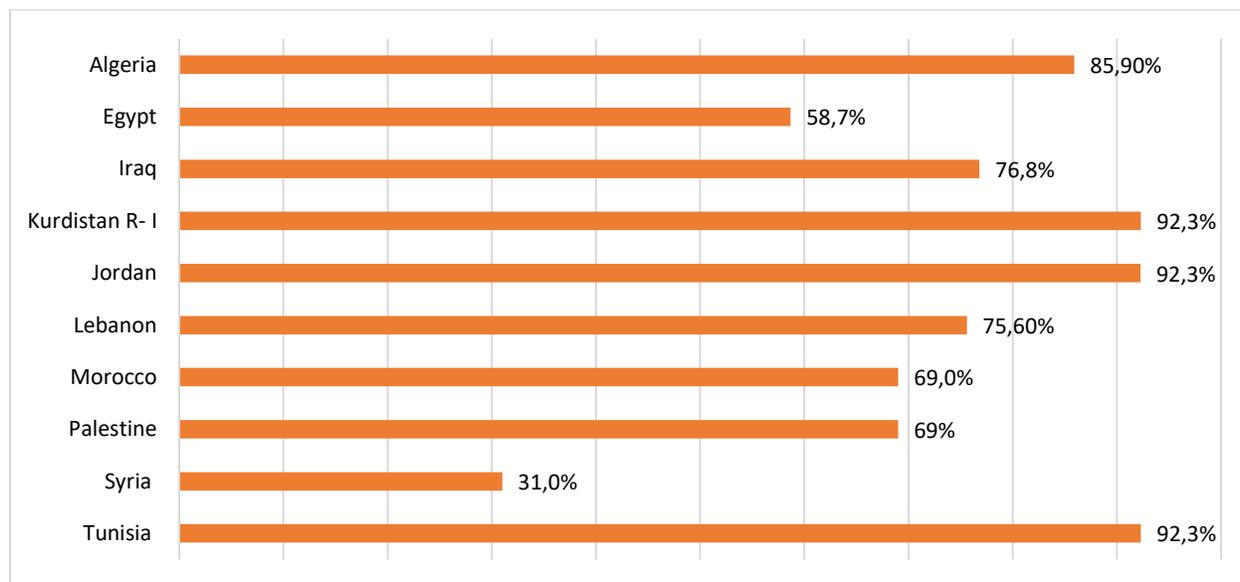
In the **KR-I**, which scored 11.7, the Ministry of Education developed a Teacher Training Strategy (2023–2030) and a corresponding training guide for educators. While this strategy does not explicitly mention training teachers on VAWG, it does include modules on human rights, children's rights, and domestic violence, which collectively contribute to education on violence prevention, including violence against girls.

Despite promising practices in some countries, prevention and awareness efforts remain fragmented and under-resourced across much of the region. Most countries do not have sufficient strategies in place to guide long-term, systemic efforts in education, media, and community engagement- sectors that are critical to changing harmful discriminatory norms and building a culture of non-violence and equality.

In **2021**, this category achieved 47%, reflecting progress in prevention and awareness-raising efforts. Between 2021 and 2024, this category showed improvement (47% → 68.4%), but prevention remained underdeveloped compared to other categories of the Index. **Syria** and **Iraq** launch a 16 – day to combat violence against women every year. Progress was most visible in education-focused initiatives in **Palestine** and **Jordan**, while several countries lagged behind. The lack of comprehensive, institutionalised preventive programmes continues to undermine long-term efforts to reduce VAWG.

❖ *Sixth Category: Professional capacity of first respondents*

Figure 7: Professional capacity of first respondents



The sixth category addresses the professional capacity of first respondents. It covers institutional training for policemen and policewomen and court staff who deal directly with survivors of VAWG as well as the institutionalization of these trainings. This category consists of 3 indicators and 13 sub-indicators. Trainings in most countries do not cover all areas and are not institutionalised. The lack of training of court judges and staff on women’s rights issues and VAWG means that they often have limited understanding of recent developments in the law that affect women.

This category achieved the highest average score among all categories, with 74.3%, reflecting encouraging efforts across the region to train government officials on how to respond to and prevent VAWG. The analysis of country responses to sub-indicators shows that various ministries across Index countries have partnered with civil society and international organisations to provide training for police, justice sector staff, and other public service professionals.

Tunisia, Jordan, and KR-I led this category with top scores of 12 out of 13. In **Tunisia**, the Ministry of Women, Family, Childhood, the Elderly conducts specialised training for police officers focused on implementing the 2017 law on eliminating violence against women. The same law also mandates the integration of VAWG-related content into university curricula for medical and nursing students—demonstrating a systemic approach to institutional education.

In **Jordan**, the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, and the National Centre for Human Rights offer training programmes for police officers, judges, and court personnel. These trainings aim to strengthen institutional capacity to identify, respond to, and prevent VAWG in line with national and international human rights standards.

In **Iraq**, the Ministry of Health has prepared a **Strategic Plan to Combat Violence (2022-2026)** which is considered the main basis for providing therapeutic, preventive, and psychological services to women survivors.

In **KR-I**, training activities are carried out in close cooperation between government institutions, UN agencies, and CSOs. Participants include judicial investigators, shelter social workers and psychologists (under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs), police officers from anti-domestic violence units and staff from anti-human trafficking departments. These multisectoral trainings reflect a broad-based approach to institutional strengthening. **Algeria** ranked next with a score of **11.2 out of 13**. The police, in partnership with the Ministry of National Solidarity, Family, and Women's Affairs, conduct workshops and training sessions on how to effectively support women survivors of violence.

In **Palestine**, the executive plan for the National Referral System designated the Ministry of Women Affairs to identify the training needs for service providers who deal with women survivors of VAWG, to prepare a training guide, and measure the impact of trainings.

in **Egypt** (scoring **6.6**), a Department for Combating Violence Against Women has been established, and notable efforts have been made to increase the recruitment of women into the police force. In addition, 1,000 judges have received specialised training through a protocol between the Ministry of Justice and the National Council for Women (NCW), highlighting a targeted approach to building judicial capacity.

Syria (scoring 4 out of 13) lags behind other countries, with limited training opportunities provided to police officers and lawyers. These are mainly supported by international organisations and remain fragmented and small in scale.

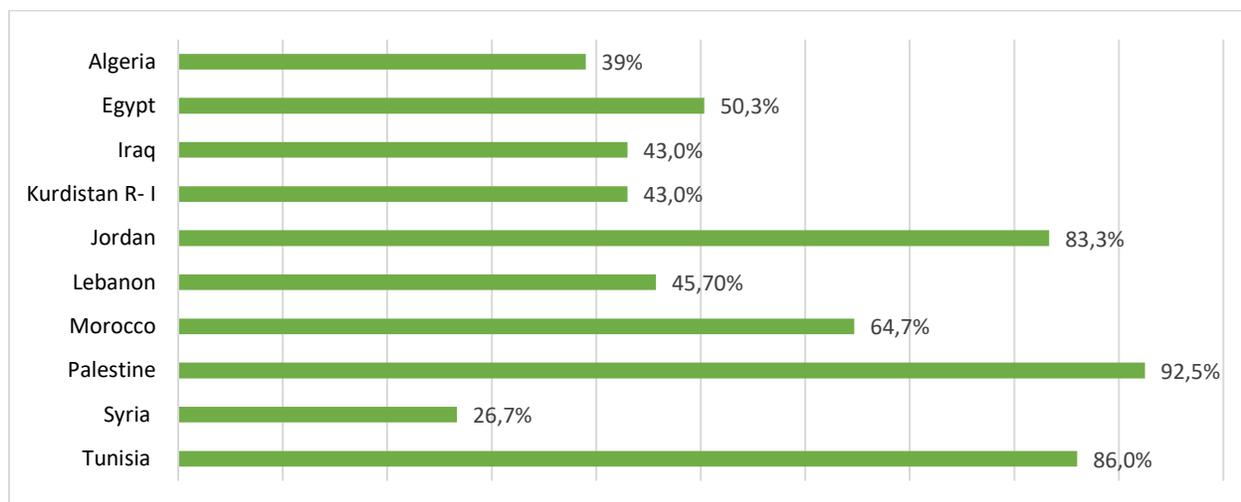
While these initiatives represent important steps forward, training efforts in many countries remain ad hoc, limited in scale, and heavily dependent on donor support. To ensure long-term impact, trainings must be institutionalised, regularly updated, and embedded within national strategies and professional development frameworks. Additionally, training should go beyond technical knowledge and address underlying harmful norms, survivor-centred approaches, and the root causes of violence against women.

In 2021, this category recorded a **54% level of achievement**, reflecting partial progress in training the first respondents on VAWG. Different ministries across the region provided training in cooperation with CSOs and International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), but these were not institutionalised as official policy or strategy. **Palestine** (13/13) and **Tunisia** (9/13) led the category. In **Palestine**, the executive plan for the National Transfer System empowered the Ministry of Women Affairs to identify training needs, prepare training guides, and measure the impact of programmes. **Tunisia** required special training for police officers under its 2017 law on eliminating violence against women, and integrated related modules into medical and nursing curricula.

Between 2021 and 2024, this category showed the biggest improvement of all (**54% → 74.3%**). Training moved from being fragmented and ad hoc to becoming more systematic and institutionalised, especially in **Tunisia, Jordan, and Kurdistan-Iraq**. However, gaps remain in countries like **Egypt, Syria and Iraq**, where training is still limited, to ensure judicial staff receive consistent capacity-building.

❖ *Seventh Category: National coordination and regional cooperation*

Figure 7: National coordination and regional cooperation



The seventh category focuses on national and regional coordination mechanisms. It includes 3 indicators for cooperation mechanisms between police, shelters, hospitals, courts/judiciaries, ministries and civil society on national level, and 2 indicators for regional or international cooperation mechanisms. The category consists of 13 sub-indicators.

Effective coordination across government ministries and agencies is essential for a comprehensive response to VAWG. Cross-sectoral planning helps ensure that prevention, protection, and response services are integrated, survivor-centred, and accessible. At the same time, CSOs—especially women’s rights groups—are indispensable partners in both prevention efforts and in reaching affected communities. For national strategies to be effective, governments must foster structured collaboration with civil society and institutionalise mechanisms for joint planning and monitoring.

Additionally, as VAWG is a universal issue, addressing it requires strong cooperation not only within countries, but also at regional and international levels. Despite these critical needs, this category scored a low percentage, with a level of achievement of just **57.4%**. A major reason for this low score is the absence of - budgeting responsive to the needs of women across all Index countries. None of the countries has established a dedicated budget line within their national budgets to finance actions or institutions specifically focused on combating VAWG. Without targeted funding, coordination efforts risk being under-resourced and unsustainable.

Palestine performed the strongest in this category, with a score of 9.3 out of 10. It has a well-established coordination mechanism under the National Referral System, which facilitates collaboration between the police and other governmental institutions. The Family Protection Department, housed within the police, is responsible for responding to domestic violence and coordinating interventions across sectors. Additionally, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs leads inter-ministerial coordination efforts. In **Lebanon** (5.5 out of 10), the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) plays a central coordinating role. Under Law 720/1998, the NCLW was

officially mandated to advise the government on women's issues and to facilitate coordination between ministries and public institutions on equality between women and men and VAWG.

Tunisia (6 out of 10) has also made strides in coordination through its multi-sectoral protocols, which are signed by key ministries and outline shared responsibilities in protecting women survivors of violence. In **Algeria** (3.9 out of 10), coordination is led by the Ministry of National Solidarity, Family, and Women's Affairs, but the overall mechanisms remain limited in scope and implementation.

In Federal **Iraq** (4.3 out of 10), the National Department for Iraqi Women, affiliated with the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, oversees coordination between ministries in combating VAWG. In **KR-I** (4.3 out of 10), there is the High Council for Women and Development (HCWD) which supervises coordination between ministries in combating VAWG

On the regional level, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is one of the platforms for collaboration, noting that Iraq is not a member State of UfM. The Arab League has played a significant role through the Arab Women Committee, which launched a five-year regional strategy in 2020 based on the priorities identified during the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995). This strategy aims to guide Arab countries in setting national agendas on equality between women and men and combating violence. Except for the Regional Index on VAWG, there is no other regional monitoring mechanism on VAWG. Members of the UfM follow up on the implementation of the 5th Ministerial Declaration on Women's Rights (2022, Madrid) where the Ministers of the UfM States showed willingness to "Pay particular attention to well-functioning monitoring processes in the four priority areas of the Cairo Declaration well as to the quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the impact of actions undertaken."

To move forward, countries must strengthen inter-ministerial coordination, ensure dedicated financing, and create permanent platforms for civil society participation. Regionally, greater inclusivity and cooperation can help countries build on each other's progress, address shared challenges, and accelerate the elimination of VAWG across the Arab region.

In 2021, this category recorded a **48% achievement level**, highlighting weak but emerging coordination mechanisms across the region. Some countries had more systematic arrangements: in **Egypt** (5.3/10), coordination was embedded within the National Strategy for Combating VAWG, while in **Tunisia** (6/10), it was established through multi-sectoral protocols signed by relevant ministries. In **Algeria** (5.6/10) and **Morocco** (5.6/10), coordination was supervised by ministries responsible for solidarity, family, and women's affairs. However, a critical gap was the absence of responsive budgets to the needs of women in all countries, meaning no dedicated funding was allocated in national budgets for VAWG coordination mechanisms or tools.

Between **2021 and 2024**, this category improved modestly (**48% → 57.4%**). Progress was clearest in **Palestine**, which established stronger referral and coordination systems, while countries like **Tunisia** and **Lebanon** maintained moderate frameworks. However, the absence of responsive budgeting to the needs of both women and men remained a persistent structural gap across the region.

Conclusions

The 2024 Regional Index on VAWG reaffirms both the urgency and complexity of eliminating VAWG across the MENA region. The Index scored results are meant to provide a global picture of the States' actions towards combating VAWG and to identify the achievements and gaps within each State, in order to support informed decisions in the Index countries. The inclusion of **Iraq and Syria** in this edition marks a significant expansion of the Index's reach, enriching its comparative perspective and underlining the regional commitment to addressing VAWG.

The findings demonstrate that reform efforts in the MENA region have generated progress in **three key areas: ratification of international conventions, reform of criminal codes, and development and expansion of services for women survivors of VAWG.**

Nonetheless, while notable progress has been made - particularly in legal reforms, service provision, and the professional capacity of first responders - substantial gaps persist. The lack of alignment between ratified international agreements, legal instruments and policies, along with the weakness of statistics, preventive programs, coordination mechanisms represent major aspects that hinder the performances of the Index countries with a result of 66.1% for the regional percentage of achievement.

The Index highlights that the absence of comprehensive, specific legislation on VAWG in most countries impedes effective policy enforcement and accountability. One of the important issues that did not receive enough attention of the policy makers is the adoption of preventive programs and measures. Reforms efforts confirm that legal change is the beginning. Ratifying women's rights agreements has not led to full alignment at the national level, and where amendments exist, they are frequently weakly implemented

As a main conclusion, enacting a comprehensive law on VAWG represents a major step towards combating all forms of VAWG. Other than ensuring multisectoral approach in combating VAWG, adoption of specific law on VAWG, like in **Morocco** and **Tunisia**, ensures better collection of information, follow up on the implementation of policies and regulations and questions the persistent social tolerance for VAWG.

Awareness-raising campaigns are critical to expose and convey the unacceptability of VAWG. They should convey the message of **Zero Tolerance for VAWG**. The findings also highlight the importance of multi-sectoral, survivor-centred approaches that incorporate education, health, police, justice, and civil society.

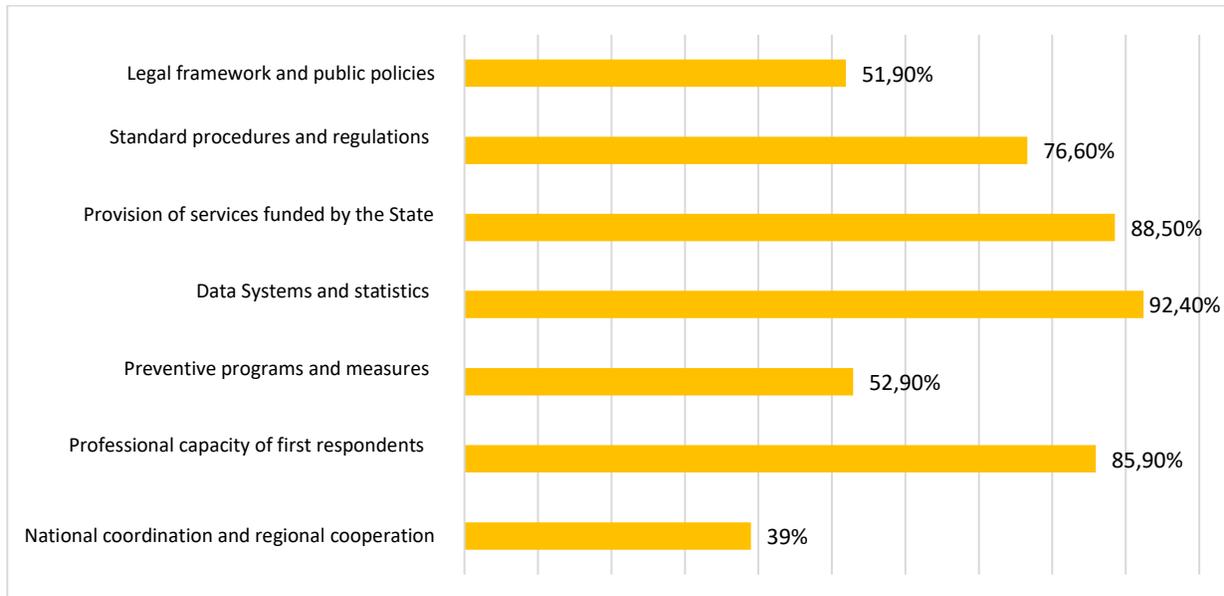
Recommendations

To effectively combat all forms of VAWG in the region, the following priority recommendations are provided:

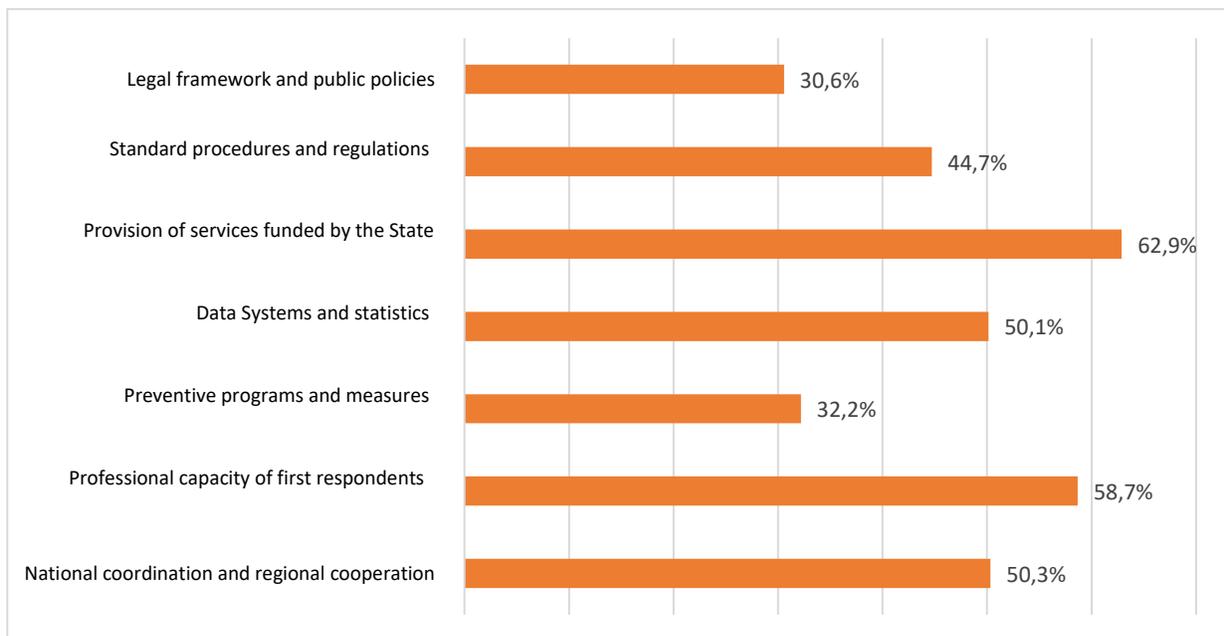
- Harmonize national laws with ratified international conventions and ensure their full implementation through regulatory frameworks.
- Repeal discriminatory legal provisions against women in penal, personal status, and nationality laws that perpetuate inequality between women and men.
- Adopt specific laws on combating VAWG that provide a definition of VAWG, explicitly mention and criminalize all its forms, include all dimensions related to addressing VAWG: prevention, protection, persecution and provision of support services for the victim as well as resources and mechanisms to monitor laws' implementation.
- Allocate specific budget lines within national budgets for combatting VAWG and ensure transparent reporting on expenditure.
- Institutionalize regular reporting and evaluation mechanisms to track progress in line with the Regional Index indicators.
- Increase the number and geographic coverage of shelters and support centres, especially in rural and underserved areas.
- Provide specialized services for vulnerable groups, including refugees, migrants, minorities, and women with disabilities, and guarantee universal access to essential, State-funded services for survivors of VAWG, including shelters, legal aid, psychosocial support, and medical care.
- Institutionalize mandatory and training programs on VAWG and survivor-centred practices for first responders, including police, judiciary, healthcare professionals, and educators.
- Establish national data systems that regularly collect, disaggregate, and publish statistics on all forms of VAWG.
- Integrate VAWG prevention and topics of equality between men and women into national school curricula and teacher training programs.
- Launch sustained national awareness campaigns to shift public attitudes, challenge harmful norms and promote zero tolerance for VAWG.
- Establish multi-sectoral national committees including representatives from government, women's rights organizations, and experts to coordinate, monitor and evaluate the progress in VAWG responses in the different sectors of the Regional Index.
- Apply regularly the Regional Index on VAWG as a monitoring and advocacy tool to harmonize and elevate regional efforts and commitments.
- Establish the issue of VAWG and its consequences as part of teachers' training and of education systems.

Annex Level of achievements for each country

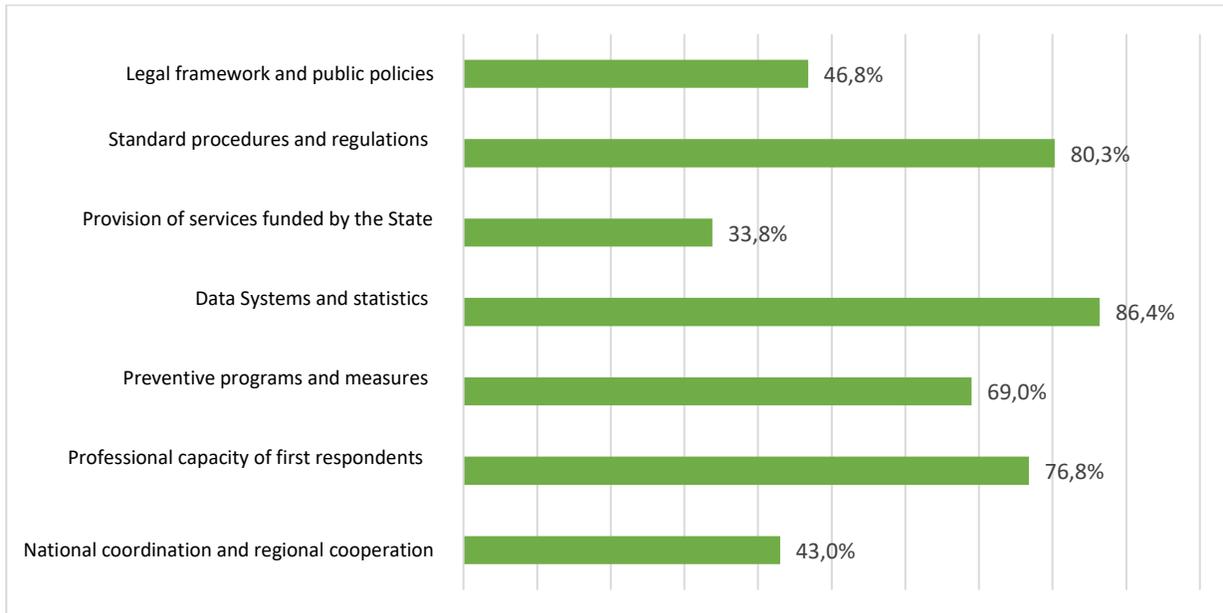
Algeria – Percentage of achievement level



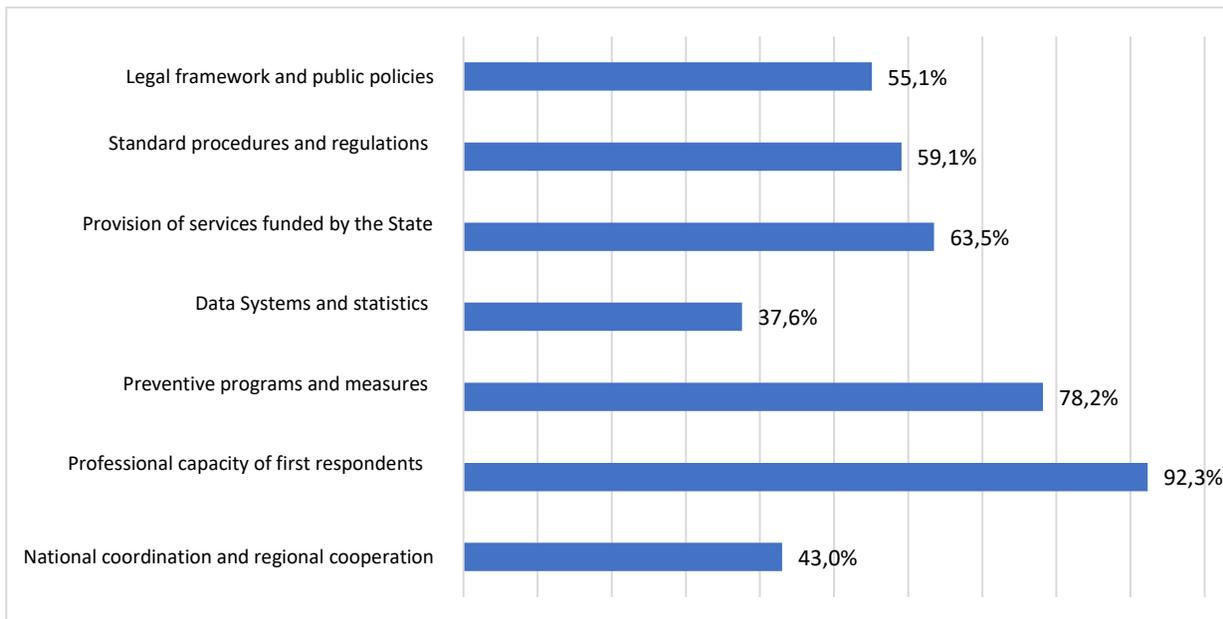
Egypt- Percentage of achievement level



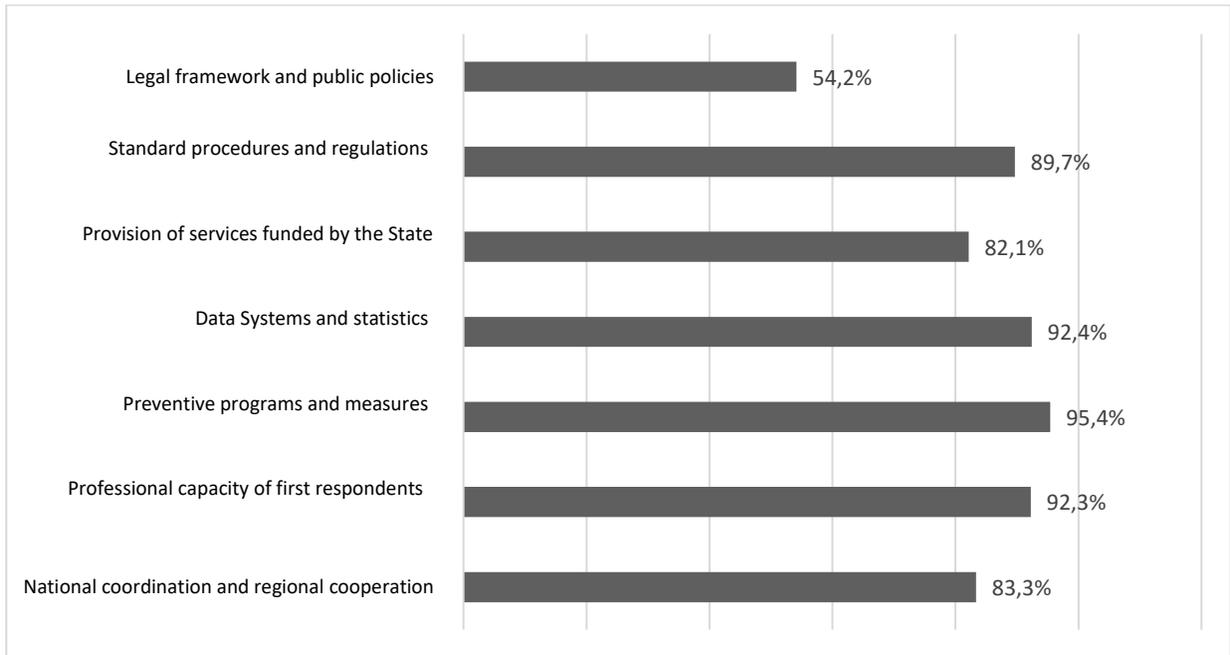
Iraq - Percentage of achievement level



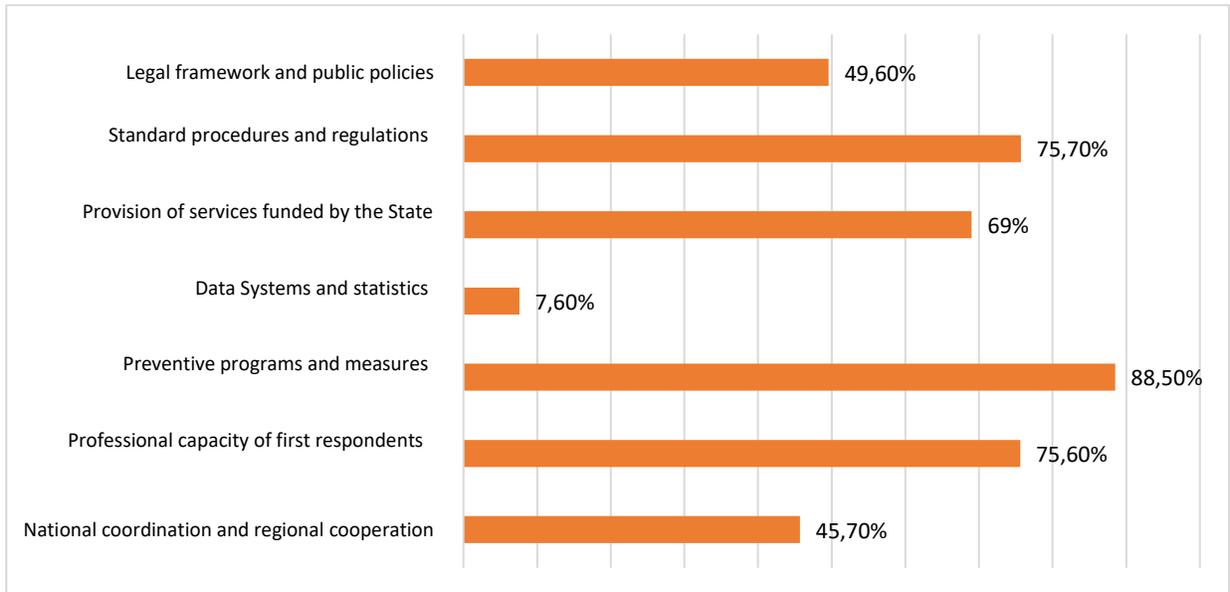
Kurdistan R -I - Percentage of achievement level



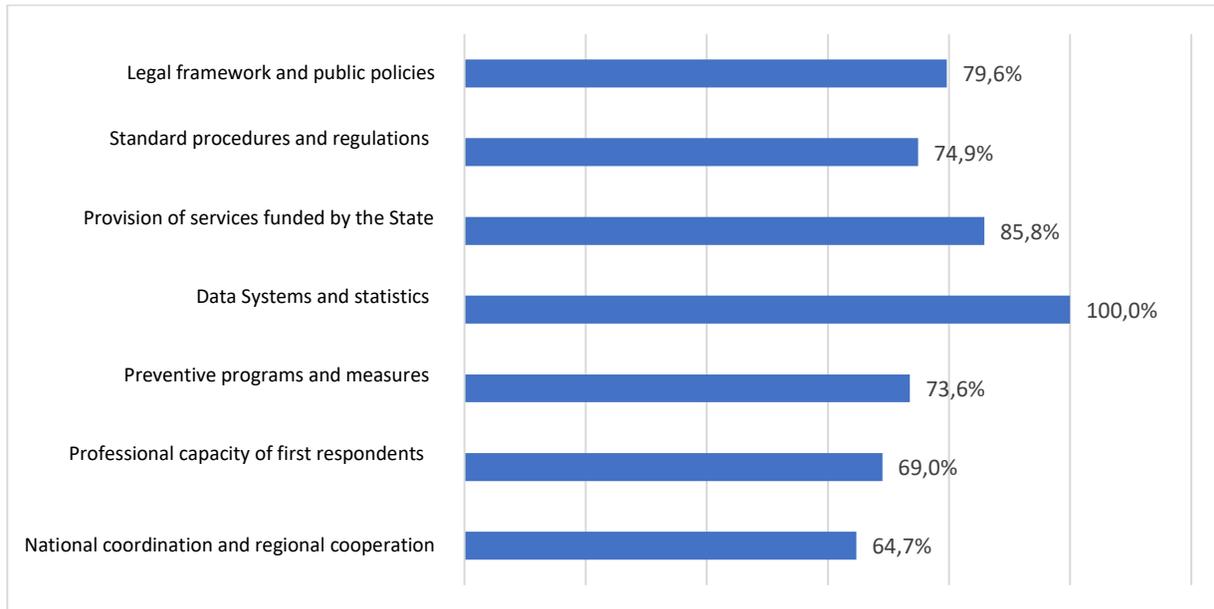
Jordan - Percentage of achievement level



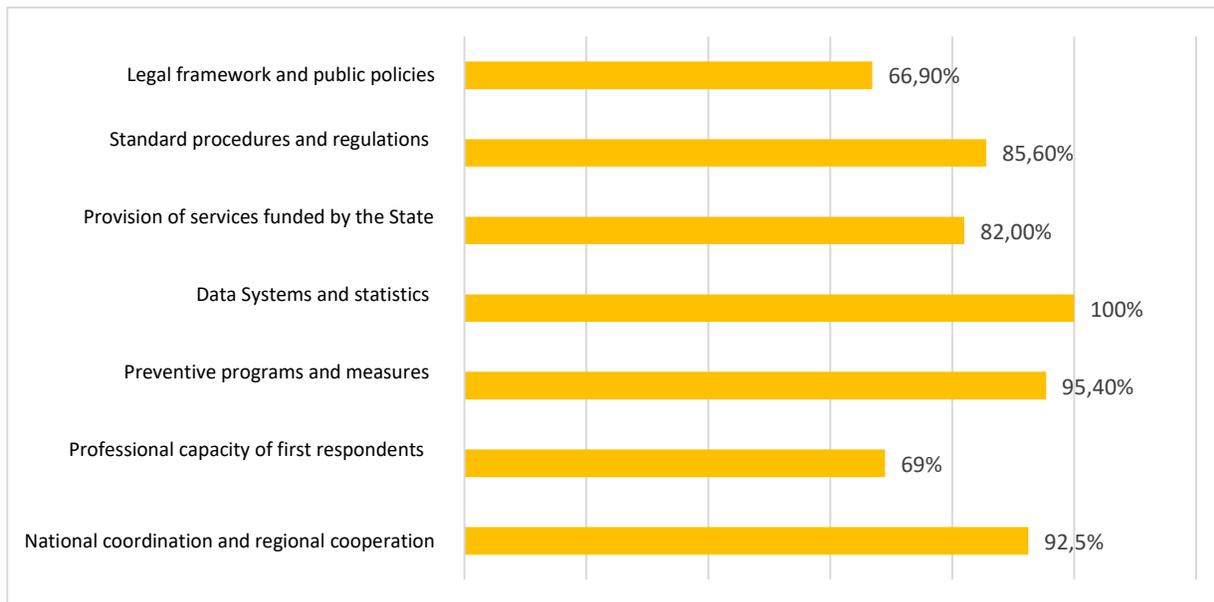
Lebanon - Percentage of achievement level



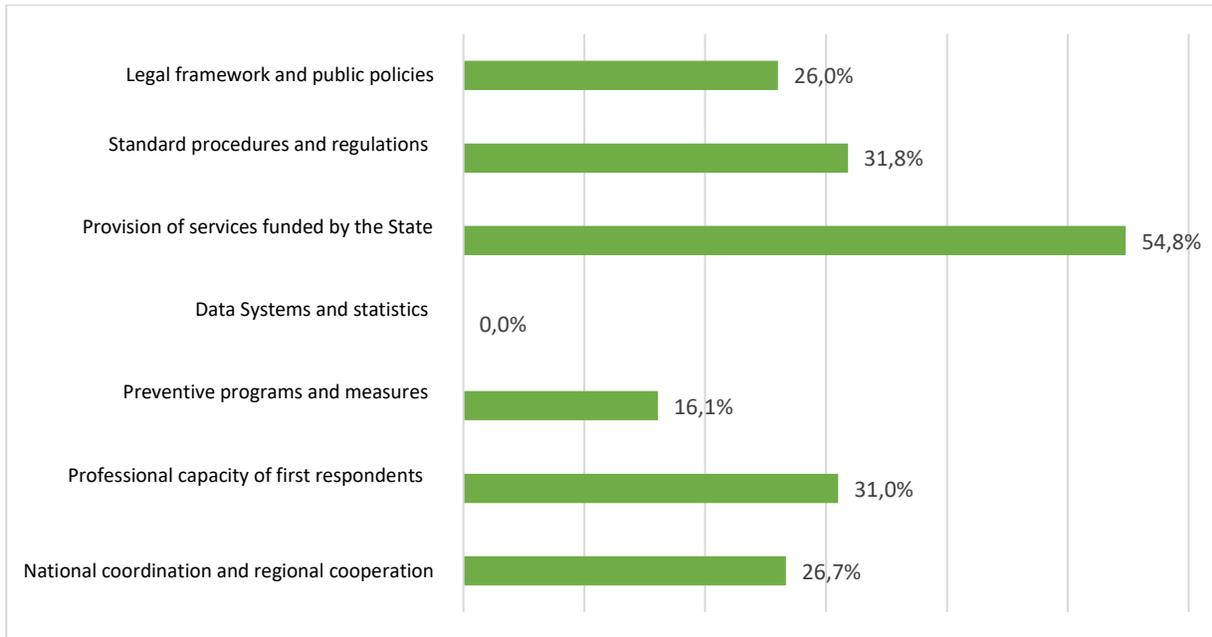
Morocco - Percentage of achievement level



Palestine - Percentage of achievement level



Syria - Percentage of achievement level



Tunisia - Percentage of achievement level

