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OPEN LETTER

REVISED Gender mainstreaming and gender-disaggregated data on migrant women: WEMov's Open Letter

[version 2; peer review: 2 approved, 1 approved with reservations]

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Abstract

The European Union (EU) stands as a mosaic of diversity, enriched by a substantial migrant population, where women play a vital role. Migrant women face vulnerabilities, often disproportionate to their male counterparts. Yet, they also make significant economic and social contributions as entrepreneurs, professionals, caregivers, activists, and members of their communities. This open letter is a brief that argues that gender mainstreaming and the utilization of gender-disaggregated data are crucial tools for addressing gender disparities and ensuring effective policymaking.

Keywords

gender, migration, data, mainstreaming, policy

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Open Peer Review

Approval Status ? ✓ ✓

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Any reports and responses or comments on the article can be found at the end of the article.

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REVISED **Amendments from Version 1**

The revised version of the GDD policy brief differs significantly from the original in response to reviewers' comments, particularly through the deepening of its intersectional, ethical, and conceptual dimensions. Initially focused on the need for gender-disaggregated data, the revised text now emphasizes that gender alone is insufficient and must be considered alongside other intersecting factors such as ethnicity, legal status, education, sexual orientation, and motherhood. This shift responds directly to the call for more nuanced, intersectional analysis and acknowledges the complexity of migrant women's experiences.

Conceptually, the distinction between sex- and gender-disaggregated data has been clarified. Whereas the original version treated the terms somewhat interchangeably, the updated brief explicitly defines sex as biological and gender as socially constructed, reflecting unequal power relations. This clarification highlights the political nature of data categories and the importance of capturing lived experiences rather than relying on binary classifications.

The revised version also expands its scope to include LGBTQI+ migrants, underlining the need for inclusive data collection and tailored policy responses. The ethical dimension of data collection is considerably strengthened: the brief now discusses the risks of sharing sensitive information, such as data on sexual and reproductive health or gender identity, particularly in contexts where it may lead to discrimination, detention, or deportation.

Additionally, the policy recommendations have been expanded to incorporate safeguards for confidentiality, promote inclusive sampling frameworks, and emphasize the transformative potential of data when used responsibly. Finally, the revised version integrates WEMov's contributions more prominently, demonstrating how the project has helped challenge dominant, gender-blind data frameworks and propose more meaningful categories.

Overall, the revised brief offers a clearer, more ethically grounded, and politically aware discussion of gender-disaggregated data, responding to reviewer insights while enhancing both analytical depth and practical relevance.

Any further responses from the reviewers can be found at the end of the article

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Introduction

Gender mainstreaming is the systematic integration of a gender perspective into all policies, ensuring that migration policies consider the specific needs and lived realities of women (EIGE, 2024). Gender-disaggregated data, collected and analysed separately for men and women, reveals these disparities and empowers evidence-based policy decisions.

This open letter draws on the expertise of the COST Action Women on the Move (CA19112) to examine the current state of gender mainstreaming and disaggregated data collection for migrant women in the EU. It identifies key challenges, proposes recommendations, and emphasizes the need for collaborative efforts and a cross-country perspective. The letter concludes with recommendations for policymakers, urging them to prioritize the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data on migrant women at the right level of granularity, encompassing various aspects like employment, healthcare, education, and their contributions to the local economies, while integrate a gender perspective into all stages of policy development, ensuring women's needs and challenges are addressed. The brief furthermore concludes the outmost importance of allocating resources for capacity building to raise awareness of gender-specific issues and equip policymakers with the necessary skills to utilize gender mainstreaming and disaggregated data effectively.

Through prioritizing gender-disaggregated data collection and implementing gender mainstreaming across EU policies, the EU can create a framework to achieve gender equality in migration and beyond, which will foster more inclusive and equitable societies and economies for all.

I. Challenges identified by WEMov

This open letter draws upon the current research questions and issues:

Data Collection Challenges:

1. What challenges exist in collecting consistent and reliable gender-disaggregated data on women's migration across European countries, and how do privacy concerns impact data sharing among EU member states?

2. In what ways do variations in data collection methodologies hinder the development of a standardized approach to gender-disaggregated data on women's migration, and how can the EU promote such standardization? What would be the benefits of standardized gender disaggregated data at EU level? Who would benefit from gender-disaggregated data?

3. Which EU countries do not yet include gender-disaggregated data? Why?

4. A key challenge lies in collecting gender-disaggregated data at a granular level, such as the neighbourhood level, which is crucial for designing targeted policies and accurately analysing the socio-economic impact of migrant women on local communities.

5. The importance of distinguishing between sex and gender-disaggregated data as to include gender-disaggregated data that overcome the non-binary classification of gender

Policy Implementation and Gender Mainstreaming:

6. What are the key challenges in implementing gender mainstreaming practices in migration and linked policies, including economic, health and social across different European countries, and how can the EU enhance collaboration for better gender integration in women's migration policies?

7. How effective are existing legal frameworks, such as the TFEU and the Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, in

promoting gender-disaggregated data collection and gender mainstreaming in migration policies, and what mechanisms can ensure compliance across EU member states?

Knowledge Transfer:

8. What initiatives can be introduced to enhance the capacity of EU member states in collecting, analyzing, and utilizing gender-disaggregated data on women's migration, and how can the EU facilitate knowledge transfer and best practice sharing for improved gender mainstreaming efforts?

9. What use can we make of gender disaggregated data, in what context should they be used and how gender-disaggregated data can inform targeted interventions for specific migrant communities? What's the role of the media in this context? And civil society organizations? Should gender-disaggregated data be used to nuance macro-discourses on migration?

These questions and issues provide a framework for examining the complexities and challenges associated with gender-disaggregated data and gender mainstreaming in the context of women's migration in Europe, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts and a cross-country perspective.

II. General framework

Clarifying the term "gender" is essential to avoid conflation with "women." Gender is a social construct that encompasses roles, identities, and power relations beyond the male-female binary. Inclusive data systems must reflect this complexity. LGBTQI+ migrants, particularly trans and non-binary individuals, face disproportionate risks in detention and reception contexts, including denial of gender-affirming care and placement in facilities that contradict their identities (ILGA-Europe, 2023). Incorporating these realities into both data and policy design requires inclusive sampling, sensitive indicators, and ethical safeguards. Policies that overlook the needs of LGBTQI+ migrants risk compounding marginalisation and reproducing gendered violence.

According to the latest statistics from the EU Commission in 2021, the European Union is home to 446.7 million people, with 23.8 million being non-EU citizens, constituting 5.3% of the total population. Additionally, as of mid-2020, women slightly outnumbered men among international migrants in Europe, accounting for 51.6% of the total (UN DESA, 2020). Hence, the representation of women in international migration is similar to that of men, yet conventional migration scholarship has largely overlooked their presence (Boyd & Grieco (2003). This oversight is incongruent with the actual dynamics of international migration, thereby constraining our comprehension of its gender dimension (Bircan & Yilmaz, 2023). One significant contributing factor to migrant women's invisibility is the prevalence of gender-blind approaches within migration theories and data collection practices (Hennebry & Petrozziello, 2019). These approaches neglect the unique realities experienced by male and female migrants, resulting in a restricted understanding of how gender intricately influences the entire migration process from pre-departure decisions to arrival, integration and thriving within local EU economies and societies and possible return.

Compounding this issue is the inadequacy and inconsistency evident in available quantitative migration data, but also in data sets related to key areas impacted by migration, such as labour markets, healthcare systems, and education systems. These descriptive statistic data suffer from notable limitations, such as insufficient information on the motives driving migration, incomplete coverage of various geographical regions and migrant demographics, and a failure to adequately address the gender dimension. For instance:

1. Motives for migration such as economic opportunities, education, family reunification, or escaping gender-based violence, are often lacking. Understanding these motivations is crucial for formulating targeted policies that address the diverse needs of women migrants;

2. Intersectionality, meaning the interconnected forms of discrimination and privilege that shape women's migration experiences;

3. Socio-economic impacts such as their contributions to the labour market, entrepreneurship, and overall societal development, as well as any challenges they face in accessing opportunities and resources in the host and origin countries;

4. Unique health challenges faced by migrant women, such as maternal healthcare and reproductive rights;

5. Legal and policy barriers such as gender equality in migration policies and gender gaps and discrimination in the host and origin countries;

6. Violence and exploitation. These shortcomings make it difficult to unravel and analyse the intricate role of gender in international migration data (Benería *et al.*, 2012).

As a matter of fact, some gender-disaggregated data is available at UN level, World Bank, OECD, IOM and EU levels but the methodology to collect data is scattered. For instance, the World Bank's migration and remittances data (https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic), lack a gender-specific breakdown, providing limited insight into the comparative data of international remittances sent by migrant females and males and hence undermining the role of migrant women in improving the economic development and living conditions of people in migrants' countries of origin (Guallar Ariño, 2023). And, the OECD International Migration Outlooks routinely release comprehensive statistics on total immigration and emigration flows for member countries, without providing a breakdown by gender (OECD, 2023). Eurostat, instead, offers gender-specific totals for various European countries within their bilateral migration flow datasets. However, the data from or to each country may not align with a uniform definition of

migration flow, as reporting practices vary based on national government needs and the design of migration statistical systems. Moreover, only Immigration by country of previous residence and emigration by country of next residence from 1989 to 2019 is the available Eurostat Data sources on total migration flows by sex (Abel & Cohen, 2022).

Furthermore, the neglect of intersectionality, meaning the interconnected and cumulative impact of various forms of discrimination that significantly influence the everyday experiences of individuals, with a particular emphasis on women, and especially women of colour (Crenshaw, 1991) in existing theories and data exacerbates the problem. Overlooking the interconnected factors influencing migration and the diverse nature of migrant groups creates a knowledge gap, impeding the development of gender-responsive migration governance and hindering the formulation of policies tailored to the specific needs and experiences of diverse migrant populations (Ahmad-Yar & Bircan, 2021). Moreover, the skill-mining not only guarantees a more effective reception and integration process but also accentuates the valuable contributions of women migrants to receiving nations, thereby introducing nuance to and dispelling xenophobic fears surrounding migration. Henceforth, addressing these gaps is crucial to develop comprehensive and inclusive migration policies that consider the diverse experiences of both male and female migrants as well as people who identify with other genders.

With reference to the legal framework, the EU has shown commitment to gender equality through various legal frameworks, also abiding by the 2030 Agenda SDG, for example at target 17.18 which calls to increase the availability of "high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity and migratory status", including the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and the Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025. The EU also monitors the situation per country thanks to the EIGE (European Institute for Gender Equality). EIGE uses gender mainstreaming, intended as the application of "a gender equality perspective in each phase of the policy-making cycle as well as all areas within policies and processes such as procurement or budgeting."

Specifically for migrant women it remains clear that collecting gender disaggregated data is still a non-shared EU practice, for instance among EU Mediterranean countries that face migrants arrival by sea, until 2024 Spain's official data on sex ratio is not available (Guallar Ariño, 2023) whereas it is in Italy and Malta, as well as mainstreaming gender in policy practices on the topic.

Finally, the landscape of gender-disaggregated data and gender mainstreaming in women's migration policies within the European Union (EU) is continually evolving. This state-of-the-art analysis explores the current challenges, advancements, and future prospects in understanding and addressing the complex intersection of gender, migration, and policy across European countries.

III. Data collection

Despite the EU's commitment to gender equality, challenges persist in collecting consistent and reliable gender-disaggregated data on women's migration (Decataldo & Ruspini, 2016). Privacy concerns and variations in methodologies hinder the development of a standardized approach across member states. This is conspicuous in countries like France that do not harmonize gender-disaggregated data and mention the countries of origin for return migration. Moreover, Germany and the UK, both hosting a considerable number of migrants, either fail to collect or omit the reporting of sex-disaggregated data to Eurostat. Additionally, the inconsistent presence of sex-disaggregated data for residence permits poses a challenge, notably for Croatia during 2009–2012, the Czech Republic, France, and Switzerland in 2010–2011, the Netherlands in 2010 and 2013–2015, and Luxembourg in 2010 and 2012–2013 (Bircan & Yilmaz, 2023). This discrepancy can be attributed to the diverse reporting preferences of these countries, which emphasizes that it is unrealistic to assume the non-existence of sex-disaggregated data for residence permits across all EU member states. Consequently, this poses a significant impediment to the availability and accessibility of cross-country data, particularly for comparative research endeavours. As based on WEMov's experience, we believe that addressing these challenges is essential to build a comprehensive understanding of migrant women's experiences.

Intersectional data collection goes beyond binary gender categories to encompass the interplay of ethnicity, migration status, language, disability, age, and sexual orientation, each shaping migrant women's access to resources, rights, and representation. Without accounting for these intersecting dimensions, even gender-disaggregated data risk rendering invisible the experiences of those most vulnerable. As Rodriguez and Saini (2021) note, data that omits dimensions like race and legal status inadvertently reinforces dominant norms and excludes migrant women at the intersections of multiple marginalisation. The European Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA, 2021) similarly calls for layered data frameworks that capture overlapping axes of disadvantage to inform inclusive policy planning. Standardisation must thus be paired with an intersectional lens to ensure that the multiplicity of women migrants' realities are documented and addressed.

IV. Policy implementation and gender mainstreaming

Progress has been made in integrating gender mainstreaming into migration policies, but implementation remains uneven across EU member states. There is a need for a cohesive approach to recognize and address the diverse experiences and vulnerabilities of migrant women and their impact on local economies the societies/communities.

Moreover, gender statistics are vital for social research and policy development, as they document the diverse influences of social norms and institutions on the experiences of both migrant women and men, resulting in gender inequalities. The collection of gender-sensitive statistical information is essential, driven by a growing demand from various sources such

as society, institutions, and official agencies (Decataldo & Ruspini, 2016).

As for specific laws and policy measures, the TFEU and the Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 serve as foundational legal frameworks for promoting gender equality, but their impact on the consistent collection of gender-disaggregated data needs further examination. Ensuring compliance and enforcement of gender mainstreaming practices across member states remains a critical area of focus.

In detail, the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 emphasizes the need for gender mainstreaming in all EU policies, including migration. This strategy encourages member states to collect and utilize gender-disaggregated data to address the specific needs of migrant women. However, enforcement and standardization of gender mainstreaming practices are areas that require further attention.

The EU Asylum and Migration Pact, though primarily focused on asylum and migration issues, has the potential to incorporate a gender-sensitive approach. It calls for the collection of data on the vulnerability of asylum seekers, which should include gender-disaggregated data. This is a step in the right direction but needs to be consistently implemented across the EU. Finally, the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive recognizes the gender-specific aspects of human trafficking and mandates the protection of victims, many of whom are migrant women. This directive underscores the importance of gender mainstreaming in policies related to human trafficking but should be extended to other migration-related areas.

These instruments emphasize the importance of integrating gender perspectives into all areas of policy-making throughout the complete policy cycle. However, implementation remains uneven across member states and sectors.

V. Knowledge transfer

While disaggregated data is vital for evidence-based policymaking, it is not a neutral tool. Its collection, categorisation, and interpretation are always embedded in political, cultural, and epistemological frameworks. As D'Ignazio and Klein (2020) argue, data is never "raw", it is shaped by the systems that produce it and can inadvertently reinforce inequalities if not critically examined. For example, data categories that overlook non-binary gender identities or collapse complex migration pathways into narrow administrative codes may obscure rather than illuminate realities. It is therefore essential that gender-disaggregated data be interpreted through participatory, ethical, and gendered methodologies that include the voices of migrant women themselves.

Initiatives to enhance the capacity of member states in collecting and utilizing gender-disaggregated data are essential. Knowledge transfer mechanisms should be implemented to share best practices, fostering a collective effort to improve gender mainstreaming in migration policies.

Establishing a robust monitoring and evaluation framework is crucial for assessing the effectiveness of gender-disaggregated data collection and gender mainstreaming initiatives. Identifying indicators and benchmarks for progress is imperative for guiding future policy development.

Collaboration among governmental agencies (i.e. national statistical offices), non-governmental organizations (i.e. NGOs), and international bodies (i.e. UN, IOM, COE) is key to developing inclusive and effective policies. Strategies to engage diverse stakeholders, for instance NGOs and other organizations from the civil societies, should be explored to ensure comprehensive perspectives in the policymaking process and avoiding double collection of data where data is already available.

In conclusion, to the present time gender-disaggregated data and gender mainstreaming in women's migration policies across Europe reflect some challenges. Addressing methodological variations, improving policy implementation, recognizing intersectionality, strengthening legal frameworks, enhancing capacity, implementing effective monitoring, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders are critical steps forward. This analysis provides a foundation for future research and policy initiatives to advance gender equality in the context of women's migration in the EU.

VI. WEMov's approach

The collection and use of gender-sensitive migration data must be governed by clear ethical standards to avoid misuse or harm. As emphasized by the IOM (2021), data related to sexual orientation, reproductive health, and legal status must be anonymized and protected with consent-based protocols. Cases have been documented where sensitive data shared with migration authorities contributed to discrimination or deportation, particularly in hostile political contexts (Tanczer, 2022). Transparent governance, civil society oversight, and secure digital infrastructures are critical to prevent such abuses. Furthermore, migrant communities must be involved in defining data priorities and uses, affirming the principle of "nothing about us without us."

COST Action network (WEMov) has been actively engaged in projects aimed at enhancing the visibility of migrant women across Europe. As part of its initiatives, WEMov has collected national, regional (EU) and international available and open-access datasets from European and COST member countries that specifically focus on women's migration. We have also addressed the dearth of data on women's migration through primary sources, which enable to showcase women's migration across countries and centuries, thus helping comparative analysis (https://www.womenonthemove.eu/primary-sources/#repository). Besides, we have included landmarks that mostly show women migrants' artists or politician, which has demonstrated the presence of migrant women in Europe, despite only well-known, maybe not for their migrant status, elite women (https://www.womenonthemove.eu/landmarks-exhibitions/). At the same time, we have created a timeline and

a map with the most important migrant women events from the 16th century to nowadays, facing remarkable problems in demonstrating their existence and their specific migration patterns because most of the statistics were not available.

As a matter of fact, we have encountered challenges due to the absence of common methodologies of collection of data based on the definitions of migrant, the sex and the gender connotation as well as the time availability of some data compared to other, for instance data from the end of the cold war is more available, difficulties in data accessibility, and a lack of comprehensive data in certain countries.

In our commitment to knowledge exchange, we have organized cross-national seminars addressing various research topics and issues among COST members, students, and stakeholders. During these seminars, the critical importance of gender mainstreaming and the need for gender-disaggregated data have emerged as vital considerations.

As part of our multifaceted approach, we are in the process of creating a documentary that explores the diverse perceptions of migrant women in Europe, both from EU and non-EU countries. Through interviews, it has become evident that a prevailing focus on portraying women solely as vulnerable individuals migrating for family reasons or to reunite with male partners is impeding the development of more comprehensive policies. Some interviewees have highlighted the need for a shift towards policies that leverage networks of assistance and provide training support for women, facilitating their integration into new countries. Additionally, concerns have been raised about the limitations of humanitarian migration policies in addressing the broader needs of migrant women and advocate for more inclusive and effective policies for migrant women across Europe.

VII. Challenges

Inconsistent Data Collection: The collection of gender-disaggregated data remains inconsistent across EU member states, hindering the development of effective policies.

Limited Gender Mainstreaming: While the concept of gender mainstreaming is well-established, its consistent implementation in migration policies is lacking.

Intersectional Considerations: Policies often overlook the intersectionality of factors affecting migrant women, leading to incomplete support and giving emphasis only on vulnerabilities instead of women's agency and resources.

VIII. Recommendations

Create a standardized Data Collection: The EU should establish standardized methodologies for collecting gender-disaggregated data in the context of migration and create a group of experts to monitor the collection, write reports and visit different countries to monitor collection practices on an annual basis.

Create an EU database based on a standardized data collection: This will foster the understanding of researchers and policymakers on a cross-country level. This database should be made available online and usable to all.

Strengthen Gender Mainstreaming: Member states must prioritize the integration of gender mainstreaming into all migration-related policies and programs. This commitment should be fortified by adherence to EU guidance, which can be effectively enforced through the establishment of a peer-review system involving three EU countries' experts. The first country expert in this system would be responsible for crafting the initial policy or piece of legislation. The second country expert would assume the role of reviewing the policy, providing crucial insights and perspectives. Finally, the third country expert would engage in a debate role, overseeing the adherence to gender mainstreaming practices and ensuring their effective implementation. This structured peer-review process aims to enhance the quality and inclusivity of migration policies across the EU, fostering a comprehensive and gender-sensitive approach.

Evaluate gender-mainstreaming implementation at the national level: The European Union ought to establish a dedicated expert body comprising three members from each country, representing distinct perspectives: one from a top-down institution, such as a ministry; another from a non-governmental organization (NGO); and the third from the realm of researchers. This body, situated within the EU, would play a crucial role in monitoring the integration of gender considerations into migration policies across the member states.

Policy frameworks must mandate ethical protocols for sensitive data collection, ensuring informed consent, anonymisation, and opt-out mechanisms—particularly in relation to LGBTQI+ identities and reproductive health. A binding EU-wide data governance code, aligned with GDPR but tailored to migration contexts, would strengthen safeguards. Moreover, national statistical offices should integrate intersectional variables and non-binary gender options in population and migration surveys, following models already in use in Canada and New Zealand. Only by aligning technical standards with human rights principles can the EU ensure that gender-disaggregated data empower rather than endanger those they seek to represent.

Data availability statement

No data are associated with this article.

Acknowledgment

We extend our sincere gratitude to Fatime Barbara Hegyi (COST Science Officer), and Cristiana di Pietro (LUMSA University, Rome, Italy) for their invaluable contributions as reviewers of this brief open letter. Their insightful comments and constructive feedback greatly improved the quality of our work. We sincerely appreciate their dedication and expertise.

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Open Peer Review

Current Peer Review Status: ? ✓ ✓

Version 2

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✓ **Hari KC**
Toronto Metropolitan University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

I am pleased to note that the authors have thoughtfully addressed the concerns I raised, particularly with respect to the conceptual distinction between sex- and gender-disaggregated data, the political dimensions of data categorization, and the importance of foregrounding the WEMov project's contributions. The revised brief has enhanced clarity and depth.

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Gender and migration; global migration governance; labour migration in Asia

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard.

Reviewer Report 16 July 2025

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✓ **andrea spehar**
University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Västra Götaland County, Sweden

I would like to let you know that the revisions made to the article are appropriate. I have no objections to the current version and consider it ready to proceed.

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Comparative migration and migrant integration policy analysis

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard.

Version 1

Reviewer Report 08 November 2024

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The brief provides a critical assessment of the current efforts being undertaken by the EU member states pertaining to gender mainstreaming of migration policies and gender-disaggregated data on women migrants.

It also highlight the key gaps and challenges that remain and are yet to be addressed when it comes to adopting and implementing a gender equality principle in migration policies and data and proposes some excellent recommendations to address the lacuna.

Despite these strengths of the brief, here are some comments and suggestions that could help add to its clarity and methodological rigour.

In the first place, though the authors state that there is a need of making a distinction between sex-disaggregated and gender-disaggregated data, there still seems to be some conflation and obfuscation of these terms. Related to this, the authors rightly stress on the need to collect and analyze gender-disaggregated data about women migrants but it is important to go beyond if we consider gender as a social-political construct and it relates to unequal power relations. What this means is that it is critically important to produce gender-disaggregated data (not mere collect based on gender biased or gender blind categories) by creating new categories -- the categories that can speak to and capture the gendered experiences and outcomes. The authors mention about such approaches they have taken in the Women on the Move project but this research which informs the brief needs to be foregrounded. Gender-disaggregation of migration data is not thus a mere technical issue but a deeply political one as discussed in this piece available at https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/Gender-and-Migration-Data.pdf.

It is stated that there are some gender-disaggregated data on women migrants collected by some international organizations (e.g., World Bank) - it would be helpful to explain how how those data are gender=disaggregated. Also, about the two terms discussed in the brief (gender mainstreaming and gender-disaggregated data) – it would help if some discussion is provided as to how these the two can/should inform one another highlighting the interplay between gender mainstreaming of migration policies and gender disaggregated data on women migrants. Lastly, it is true that conventional migration scholarship has largely overlooked the presence of women migrants (Boyd & Grieco (2003), but there has been a plethora of scholarship on gender and migration since 2003.

Is the rationale for the Open Letter provided in sufficient detail? (Please consider whether existing challenges in the field are outlined clearly and whether the purpose of the letter is explained)
Yes

Does the article adequately reference differing views and opinions?
Partly

Are all factual statements correct, and are statements and arguments made adequately supported by citations?
Yes

Is the Open Letter written in accessible language? (Please consider whether all subject-specific terms, concepts and abbreviations are explained)
Partly

Where applicable, are recommendations and next steps explained clearly for others to follow? (Please consider whether others in the research community would be able to implement guidelines or recommendations and/or constructively engage in the debate)
Yes

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Gender and migration; global migration governance; labour migration in Asia

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.

Author Response 02 May 2025

Marie-José Ruiz

We thank the reviewer for their generous appraisal of the policy brief and their constructive comments aimed at strengthening its clarity and conceptual depth. We are particularly grateful for the insights on terminology and the political dimensions of data collection.
1. Clarifying the Distinction Between Sex- and Gender-Disaggregated Data We agree

that the distinction between **sex-disaggregated** (biological differences) and **gender-disaggregated** (socially constructed roles, expectations, and power relations) data must be clearly articulated. **Gender-disaggregated data must be generated in ways that capture lived experiences and social positioning**, not just binary or surface-level categorization. **Gendered data collection is not merely technical but political**, reflecting whose experiences are made visible or invisible.

2. Foregrounding WEMov's Contribution and the Political Nature of Data Categories We appreciate the reviewer's suggestion to foreground the **research conducted within the COST Action Women on the Move (WEMov)**. We highlight our efforts to uncover under-documented aspects of women's migration through historical and qualitative data ; the **challenges we faced in sourcing intersectional and gender-aware data** ; how WEMov's work contributes to **challenging gender-blind or biased categories** in mainstream migration data systems. We have **created new, meaningful categories** that reflect the gendered and intersectional realities of migrants, which is essential. We state explicitly that **data production itself is shaped by power relations**, and thus, gender-disaggregation must be part of a transformative agenda, not only an analytical tool.

3. Expanding on How Existing International Data Sets Are Gender-Disaggregated We thank the reviewer for encouraging greater specificity. We have elaborated on how gender is (or is not) represented in the data produced clarifying where gender variables exist, what they actually measure ; where gaps persist (e.g., lack of data on motives for migration, reproductive health, or remittances by gender) ; the limitations of these data sets in capturing **nuanced, intersectional gender dynamics**.

4. Interplay Between Gender Mainstreaming and Gender-Disaggregated Data We fully agree with the importance of articulating the **interdependence between gender-disaggregated data and gender mainstreaming**. **Gender-disaggregated data is foundational to gender mainstreaming** as it allows for evidence-based design, implementation, and evaluation of gender-sensitive policies. **Gender mainstreaming**, in turn, can **drive better data collection** by pushing institutions to recognize whose experiences need to be made visible in policymaking.

5. Acknowledging Broader Gender and Migration Scholarship We appreciate the reviewer's important reminder that gender and migration scholarship has grown substantially since the early 2000s. **Additional Edits**

- All technical terms and abbreviations are **accessible to a broad audience**.
- The recommendations section reflects the **interplay of data, ethics, and policy** and explicitly notes the **need for gender-aware data frameworks** that go beyond binaries or administrative convenience.

We sincerely thank the reviewer for highlighting these important areas in the brief's argument and practical value.
Stellamarina Donato & Marie Ruiz

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Report 24 October 2024

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The open letter makes a significant contribution by positing that gender mainstreaming and the utilisation of gender-disaggregated data are pivotal tools for addressing gender disparities and ensuring evidence-based policymaking in relation to international migration. It elucidates the policy implications of missing or incomplete gender-disaggregated data in relation to international migration.

I would encourage the authors to address additional aspects to reinforce their core arguments and policy recommendations.

The article presents a compelling argument for the necessity of disaggregated gender data in order to shed light on the existing inequalities faced by women and girls in the context of migration processes. It is, however, important to emphasise that the concept of gender is not to be confused with the term 'women'. The term 'gender' encompasses women, men and other gender groups, and the unequal relations between them. Discussions on gender frequently concentrate on women, as they are the group most affected by gender inequality. While there is a substantial body of research on migration, return and reintegration that focuses on women, there is a paucity of research examining the experiences of LGBTQI+ people. The disaggregation of data by gender should facilitate the identification of specific vulnerabilities and needs, thereby enhancing the design, implementation and evaluation of reintegration support programmes for returnees of all genders and intersecting identities based on race, religion, caste, colour, etc. This also necessitates the reconsideration of sampling frames and methodological designs, in addition to the expansion of variables and indicators to more accurately assess the lived experiences of migrants of all genders.

The open letter would be enhanced by the inclusion of a discussion of the challenges associated with transparency, accountability and ethics in the context of migration data. It can be reasonably argued that a dearth of sex- or gender-disaggregated migration data may have the effect of undermining the engagement of civil society organisations (CSOs) and the provision of services for migrants. Concurrently, there are ethical challenges inherent to the availability of such data. The provision of sensitive information pertaining to gender and international migration can exacerbate the precarious and vulnerable circumstances of certain groups. To illustrate, the collection and dissemination of data pertaining to sexual and reproductive health among migrant workers (such as pregnancy test results) on tied work permits can exacerbate the precarious situation of women migrant workers in the event that the confidentiality of such information is not guaranteed. Furthermore, the sharing of data on diverse gender identities and sexual orientations

with officials in certain contexts may result in migrants being subjected to discriminatory practices, abuse, detention, or deportation.

Is the rationale for the Open Letter provided in sufficient detail? (Please consider whether existing challenges in the field are outlined clearly and whether the purpose of the letter is explained)
Yes

Does the article adequately reference differing views and opinions?
Partly

Are all factual statements correct, and are statements and arguments made adequately supported by citations?
Yes

Is the Open Letter written in accessible language? (Please consider whether all subject-specific terms, concepts and abbreviations are explained)
Yes

Where applicable, are recommendations and next steps explained clearly for others to follow? (Please consider whether others in the research community would be able to implement guidelines or recommendations and/or constructively engage in the debate)
Yes

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Comparative migration and migrant integration policy analysis

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.

Author Response 02 May 2025

Marie-José Ruiz

We appreciate the reviewer's thoughtful and constructive feedback, which has provided valuable insight for enhancing the policy brief. We are grateful for the recognition of the importance of gender mainstreaming and gender-disaggregated data in the context of migration policy. **1. Clarifying the Concept of Gender** We acknowledge the reviewer's point that the term "gender" should not be conflated with "women" alone, as gender encompasses women, men, and other gender identities, as well as the unequal relations between them. **Gender** is considered as a broader social construct and **women** as a specific group most affected by gender inequality. A **discussion of LGBTQI+ migrants** emphasizes the need for intersectional approaches in both **data collection** and **policy design**, and highlights the **specific vulnerabilities** and needs of LGBTQI+ migrants, as well as the **importance of disaggregated data** in designing inclusive and equitable reintegration

programs for all genders. We suggests **reconsidering sampling frames** and **methodological designs** to ensure the inclusion of a broader spectrum of gender identities and intersecting factors such as **race, religion, caste, and color**. **2. Transparency, Accountability, and Ethics in Migration Data** We greatly appreciate the reviewer's point about the **ethical challenges** surrounding the collection and dissemination of sensitive migration data. We discuss how the **confidentiality of sensitive data** (e.g., sexual and reproductive health, gender identity) is critical to avoid exposing migrants to further **vulnerability, abuse, or discrimination**. This is necessary for **ethical safeguards** when collecting, sharing, and disseminating data. Specifically, we explore how data on **gender and sexual orientation** should be handled with the utmost care to prevent harm. We have included **examples** of how the sharing of such data, especially in **work-permit contexts**, could result in **discriminatory practices** or **detention** and **deportation** in certain environments. We also stress the need for **transparent data practices** that guarantee **privacy and security** for vulnerable populations. **3. Expanding the Policy Recommendations** There is a need for strengthened policies around **data disaggregation**, the inclusion of **LGBTQI+ migrants**, and the **ethical challenges** associated with gender-sensitive data collection. We address the importance of including **LGBTQI+ migrants** in data collection and policy design ; the necessity of using **intersectional data** to better understand the **complexities** faced by migrants of different genders and backgrounds ; the critical need to establish **ethical standards** for the collection and sharing of sensitive migration data, including data on sexual and reproductive health and gender identities, with a clear emphasis on safeguarding **privacy** and **confidentiality**. **Additional Adjustments There are differing views and ppinions**, particularly in relation to how **gender-disaggregated data** intersects with other factors like **race**, **ethnicity**, and **sexual orientation**. All **subject-specific concepts** are well-explained and accessible to a wider audience. We thank the reviewer again for their invaluable feedback and look forward to the continued development of this work. **Stellamarina Donato & Marie Ruiz**

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Report 17 October 2024

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The open letter addresses an important topic, is well written, and makes concrete recommendations.

Two points need to be revised and addressed first.

1. The article makes a good point when arguing that gender disaggregated data is needed. However, gender does not put all migrant women in the same situation. Gender interacts with ethnicity, education, employment, sexual orientation, nationality of origin and administrative situation (type of residence permit, irregular situation, etc.). An intersectional perspective is also needed when arguing for disaggregated data. In other words, we need data that allows us to take into account gender, motherhood, ethnicity, education, employment, sexual orientation, nationality of origin and administrative situation. Intersectionality could be introduced from the start when talking about granularity ("different aspects such as employment, health care, education and their contribution to the local economy").

2. A critical reflection on the use of disaggregated data is needed. Disaggregated data needs to be complemented by qualitative studies that allow to understand the lived impact of structural inequalities beyond statistics. On the unavailability and misuse of disaggregated data, see La Barbera M, Espinosa-Fajardo J, Caravantes P. Implementing Intersectionality in Public Policies: Key factors in the City of Madrid, Spain. Politics & Gender. 2023;19(3):675-702. doi:10.1017/S1743923X22000241

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1. La Barbera M, Espinosa-Fajardo J, Caravantes P: Implementing Intersectionality in Public Policies: Key Factors in the Madrid City Council, Spain. *Politics & Gender*. 2023; **19** (3): 675-702
Publisher Full Text

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Is the Open Letter written in accessible language? (Please consider whether all subject-specific terms, concepts and abbreviations are explained)

Yes

Where applicable, are recommendations and next steps explained clearly for others to follow? (Please consider whether others in the research community would be able to implement guidelines or recommendations and/or constructively engage in the debate)

Yes

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Intersectionality, gender discrimination, human rights, European Union, policy implementation

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.

Author Response 02 May 2025

Marie-José Ruiz

We thank the reviewer for their thoughtful and generous assessment of the policy brief, and for highlighting further developments.

1. Incorporating an Intersectional Perspective into Disaggregated Data

We appreciate the reviewer's observation that gender alone does not capture the full scope of migrant women's diverse experiences. We agree for generalised need for **intersectional data** outlining challenges in data collection. We emphasize that gender-disaggregated data must go beyond binary distinctions and integrate variables such as **ethnicity, education level, employment status, sexual orientation, nationality of origin, motherhood, and administrative status**. These dimensions interact to shape women migrants' vulnerabilities and agency, and they are crucial for producing more meaningful analyses and effective policy responses.

2. Critical Reflection on the Use of Disaggregated Data

We acknowledge the need to critically assess how disaggregated data is used and to underscore the limitations of statistical data alone to reflect on the potential misuse or overreliance on quantitative data in migration policy. The **complementary role of qualitative research** in revealing the lived experiences of structural inequalities cannot be fully captured by numerical indicators. We believe this brief ensures that gender-disaggregated data is not framed as a neutral or purely technical tool, but as a political and epistemological instrument that must be handled with care and accountability. We are grateful that the reviewer confirmed the clarity of the rationale, the factual accuracy of the statements, and the accessibility of the language used. Once again, we extend our sincere thanks to the reviewer for their important suggestions. **Marie Ruiz & Stellamarina Donato** COST Action CA19112 – Women on the Move **Andrea Spehar**, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Västra Götaland County, Sweden We appreciate the reviewer's thoughtful and constructive feedback, which has provided valuable insight for enhancing the policy brief. We are grateful for the recognition of the importance of gender mainstreaming and gender-disaggregated data in the context of migration policy.

1. Clarifying the Concept of Gender

We acknowledge the reviewer's point that the term "gender" should not be conflated with "women" alone, as gender encompasses women, men, and other gender identities, as well

as the unequal relations between them. **Gender** is considered as a broader social construct and **women** as a specific group most affected by gender inequality. A **discussion of LGBTQI+ migrants** emphasizes the need for intersectional approaches in both **data collection** and **policy design**, and highlights the **specific vulnerabilities** and needs of LGBTQI+ migrants, as well as the **importance of disaggregated data** in designing inclusive and equitable reintegration programs for all genders. We suggests **reconsidering sampling frames** and **methodological designs** to ensure the inclusion of a broader spectrum of gender identities and intersecting factors such as **race, religion, caste, and color**.

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We greatly appreciate the reviewer's point about the **ethical challenges** surrounding the collection and dissemination of sensitive migration data. We discuss how the **confidentiality of sensitive data** (e.g., sexual and reproductive health, gender identity) is critical to avoid exposing migrants to further **vulnerability, abuse, or discrimination**. This is necessary for **ethical safeguards** when collecting, sharing, and disseminating data. Specifically, we explore how data on **gender and sexual orientation** should be handled with the utmost care to prevent harm. We have included **examples** of how the sharing of such data, especially in **work-permit contexts**, could result in **discriminatory practices** or **detention** and **deportation** in certain environments. We also stress the need for **transparent data practices** that guarantee **privacy and security** for vulnerable populations.

3. Expanding the Policy Recommendations

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Stellamarina Donato & Marie Ruiz

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.