Men’s and women’s attitudes and experiences related to
gender-equality and health: Preliminary frequencies from
a household survey in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Prepared by Christine Ricardo, Márcio Segundo, and Marcos Nascimento

From January to April of 2009, Promundo conducted a survey with 749 men and 448 women ages 18 to 59 in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The aim was to investigate men’s and women’s attitudes toward gender-equality, and their behavior and attitudes related to sexual and reproductive health, maternal and child health, fatherhood, and gender-based violence. The survey forms part of the Men and Gender Equality Policy Project (MGEPP), an international three-year effort to leverage policy analysis, qualitative and quantitative data to raise awareness among policy-makers and program planners of the need to involve men and a broader gender perspective in health and development agendas.

Promundo and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) coordinate MGEPP with local partner organizations in a growing number of countries, including Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, Croatia, India, Mexico, South Africa and Tanzania. The unprecedented comparative data that is being generated by this project will contribute greatly to shaping policy and program interventions that can catalyze positive change in a timely and cost-effective manner, and to supporting global efforts to achieve gender equality.

International Men and Gender Equality Survey

This document features the initial findings of a research study called the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES). IMAGES is a comprehensive survey instrument on men, and gender equality that builds on the most recent survey instruments on gender quality of life, childhood antecedents of violence, health indicators, gender-based violence, family gender dynamics, and fatherhood. The preliminary results in this report focus on men’s and women’s attitudes about gender-equality and gender roles, experiences related to intimate relationships, fatherhood, and gender-based violence, and their opinions on a selection of laws and policies.

The sample

The survey was administered by fieldworkers who conducted face-to-face interviews with 749 men and 448 women ages 18-59 from a low-income community and a middle-income community in the metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro. We carried out a stratified proportional household sample in each of the communities with a confidence interval of 95% and a margin of error of 3%.

Who was involved?

Generous funding from the Ford Foundation and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs made the research possible.

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Research assistance: Rafael Machado

The profile of the respondents

• The age of male and female respondents ranged from 18 to 59 years, with an average of 36.2 years for men and 37.6 years for women.

• Approximately half of the respondents – 50% of the men and 45% of the women – self-identified as Pardo, or of mixed race ancestry. 28% of the men and 37% of the women self-identified as White and 19% of the men and 16% of the women self-identified as Black. 3% of the men and 2% of the women self-identified as Asian or Indigenous.

• A large proportion of the respondents had not completed primary school – 41% among the men and 45% among the women. Between 11 and 13% of the men and women had completed primary school. Approximately 16% of men and 17% of women had completed high school and only 12% of the men and 7% of the women had either started or completed college. The vast majority of the respondents who had not completed primary school were from the low-income community whereas the majority of men who had completed college were from the middle-income community.

• Of all the respondents, 48% of the men and 72% of the women reported that they actively practice a religion. The majority of respondents were either Catholic (61% men and 53% women) or Protestant/Evangelical (31% men and 41% women).

• Among the men, 46% were engaged in formal employment and 24% in informal employment. Among the women, 19% were engaged in formal employment and 21% in informal employment. Rates of unemployment were high among the respondents – among men 17% and among women 41%. It is worth highlighting that the rate of unemployment among the middle-income respondents was less than 10%.

• Approximately 72% of the men reported that they had a stable partner – of these, 79% lived with their partner. Among the women, 68% reported having a stable partner, 82% of whom lived with their partner.
Attitudes about gender-equality and gender roles

A number of questions in the survey asked about respondent’s attitudes on gender-equality in general as well as gender roles in the home and intimate relationships, including in relation to child-care, contraception and violence. The percentages in the tables refer to the number of men/women who completely or partially agreed or were in favor with the statement.

**Gender-Equality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Low-income Community (n=686)</th>
<th>Low-income Community (n=408)</th>
<th>Middle-income Community (n=63)</th>
<th>Middle-income Community (n=40)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>men</td>
<td>women</td>
<td>men</td>
<td>women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights for women signify men losing their rights.</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efforts to achieve gender equality, for the large part, benefit the rich.</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I am in favor of) the quota system which guarantees a fixed proportion of places for women in government</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I am in favor of) the quota system which guarantees a fixed proportion of places for women in executive positions.</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Only a small proportion of respondents agreed with the statement that “rights for women signify men losing their rights” although the percentage was slightly higher among respondents in the low-income community than in the middle-income community and slightly higher among men than women. In the low-income community 11% of men and 7.4% of women agreed with the statement. In the middle-income community, 5% of men and 2.5% of women agreed with the statement.

- A sizeable proportion of respondents (48% of men and 39.3% of women) believed that “efforts to achieve gender equality, for the large part, benefit the rich”. The proportion of men who agreed with this statement was notably higher in the low-income community (49%) than in the middle-income community (30%). Among the women, however, there was not a difference in the proportion of women who agreed with the statement in the two communities (39.2% in the low-income community and 40% in the middle-income community).

- Interestingly, a significantly larger proportion of men than women reported that they were in favor of quotas for women in government and business. 64% of men versus 44% of women were in favor of quotas for women in government. There were also notable differences between the proportion of women in the low-income community who were in favor of such quotas (45.6%) and the proportion of women in the middle-income community were also in favor (27.5%). The same patterns were evident in the responses for quotas for leadership positions in business - 65.3% of men versus 50.2% of women reported being in favor of such quotas. Among the women, there was again a significant difference among the classes: 52.5% of women in the lower-income community versus 27.5% of the women in the middle-class community reported being in favor of quotas for women in leadership positions in businesses.

**Household/domestic roles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>men</td>
<td>women</td>
<td>men</td>
<td>women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A woman's most important role is to take care of the home and cook for her family.</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing diapers and bathing and feeding the children are only a mother's responsibility</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When decisions need to be made at home, it is the man who should have the last word.</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important for a father to be present in the lives of his children, even if he is no longer with the woman.</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- In the low-income community, more men (57%) than women (38.2%) agreed with the statement that “a woman’s most important role is to take care of the home and cook for her family.” This pattern is reversed in the middle-income community, where only 17.5% of men agreed with the statement versus 27% of the women.

- Among the women, there was a significant difference between the classes in terms of the proportion who agreed with the statement that “changing diapers and bathing and feeding the children are only a mother’s responsibility” – 27.9% of the women in the low-income community agreed with this statement versus only 5% in the middle-income community. Within the low-income community, there was also a larger difference between the proportions of men and women who agreed with this statement – 10% of men...
versus 27.9% of women. The proportion of men in the two communities who agreed with this statement was comparable—10% in the low-income community and 8% in the middle-income community.

• In the low-income community, a significantly higher proportion of men (45%) than women (29%) agreed with the statement that “when decisions need to be made at home, it is the man who should have the last word.” In the middle-income community, however, the proportions were comparable—18% for men and 20% for women.

• Among both men and women in both classes, there was near universal agreement with the statement that “it is important for a father to be present in the lives of his children, even if he is no longer with the woman.”

### Sexuality and Prevention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low-income Community (n=686)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>men</td>
<td>women</td>
<td>men</td>
<td>women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men need sex more than women do.</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is the women who should take precautions to prevent pregnancy.</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>72.8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The man and the woman should decide together which type of contraception they will use.</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It would be an outrage if my wife asked me to use a condom.</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a sexual relationship, it is important to know what your partner likes</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>89.7%</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• In both communities, a large proportion of men and women agreed with the statement that “men need sex more than women do.” The proportions were slightly higher in the lower-income community but there were not notable differences between the proportions between men and women in each community.

• In both the low-income community and the middle-income community, a significantly larger number of women (72.8% and 47.5%, respectively) agreed with the statement that it is “women who should take precautions to prevent pregnancy”. In the low-income community, 38% of the men agreed with the statement—nearly half the proportion of women who had agreed with the statement. In the middle-income community, only 9% of the men agreed with the statement—significantly less than the men in the low-income community and five times less than the women in the middle-income community.

• The proportions of men and women in the low-income community who thought that “the man and women should decide together which type of contraception they will use” were nearly the same—74% and 73% respectively. In the middle-income community, however, there was a sizeable difference in the proportions of men and women who agreed with this statement—33% among men and 80% among women.

• Among the men, 22% in the low-income community and 5% in the middle-income community agreed that “it would be an outrage if my wife asked me to use a condom.” Among the women, the proportions who agreed with this statement were lower—10% in the low-income community and nobody in the middle-income community.

• Significantly high proportions of men and women in both communities agreed that “in a sexual relationship, it is important to know what you partner likes”. 98% of the men in the low-income community, 99% of the men in the middle-income community, 89.7% of the women in the low-income community and 95% of the women in the middle-income community.

### Sexual Diversity

<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>men</td>
<td>women</td>
<td>men</td>
<td>women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would never have a gay friend.</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel ashamed when I see a man act in an effeminate way.</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A real man only has sex with women.</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>86.5%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• In the low-income community, 21% of the men and 14.9% of the women affirmed that they “would never have a gay friend”. These proportions were noticeably lower in the middle-income community where only 6% of the men and 2.5% of the women agreed with the statement.

• A significant proportion of both men and women in both communities agreed that they “feel ashamed” when they “see a man act in an effeminate way” although the proportions were higher among the men than the women in both communities. 31% of the men in the low-income community
and 35% of the men in the middle-income community agreed with the statement versus 23.3% and 22.5% of the women in the low-income community and the middle-income community, respectively.

• Large proportions of both women and men agreed with the statement that “a real man only has sex with women.” In the low-income community, 74% of men and 73% of women agreed with the statement. In the middle-income community, 33% of the men and 80% of the women agreed with the statement.

**Violence against Women**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low-Income Community (n=686) men</th>
<th>Low-Income Community (n=408) women</th>
<th>Middle-Income Community (n=63) men</th>
<th>Middle-Income Community (n=40) women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are moments when a woman deserves to be hit.</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A woman should put up with her husband's violence in order to keep the family together.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If someone insults me, I will defend my honor with force if necessary</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>66.4%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• 21% of the men in the low-income community believed that “there are moments when a woman deserves to be hit.” The proportion of women in the same community who agreed with this statement was significantly lower, only 8.5%. This pattern was reversed, however, in the middle-income community where 15% of the women and only 5% of the men agreed with the statement.

• Low proportions of men and women in both communities agreed that “a woman should put up with her husband’s violence in order to keep the family together”: 5% of the men and 6% of the women in the low-income community and 0% of the men and 7.5% of the women in the middle-income community.

• More than half of the men and women in the low-income community agreed that “if someone insults me, I will defend my honor with force if necessary.” These proportions were lower in the middle-income community although nearly half of the women (47.5%) agreed with the statement versus only 29% of the men.

**Sexual Violence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low-Income Community (n=686) men</th>
<th>Low-Income Community (n=408) women</th>
<th>Middle-Income Community (n=63) men</th>
<th>Middle-Income Community (n=40) women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When a woman is raped, she usually did something careless to put herself in that situation</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a woman doesn’t physically fight back, you can’t really say it was rape</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In any rape case one would have to question whether the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• In the low-income community, 17% of the men and 15% of the women agreed with the statement that “when a woman is raped, she usually did something careless to put herself in that situation.” In the middle-income community, 6% of the men and 5% of the women agreed with the statement.

• A notable proportion of the men in the low-income community – 36% – agreed with the statement that “if a woman doesn’t physically fight back, you can’t really say it was rape.” The proportion of women from the low-income community who agreed with the statement was lower – 23%, yet still notable proportions of men and women in the middle-income community who agreed with the same statement were lower – 14% for men and 17.5% for women.

• A quarter, or 25%, of the men in the low-income community and the women in the middle-income community agreed with the statement that “in any rape case one would have to question whether the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation.” Among the women in the low-income community, 18.6% agreed with the statement and among the men in the middle-income community, only 8% agreed with the statement.
Intimate relationships

We also asked men and women about the dynamics of their intimate relationships, including the division of household chores, sexual satisfaction and communication.

**Division of household chores**

- Among the men in the low-income community, 42.9% reported that they and their partners equally shared household chores. 27% reported that their partners did a lot more household chores and 17% reported that they did a little more. Among the women, however, only 23.6% thought that they and their partners equally shared household chores. 32% thought that they actually did much more and 12.4% thought that their partners did much more. A large proportion of both men and women (68.2% and 56.9%, respectively) reported that they were satisfied with this division of household chores. Similar proportions (11% of men and 12% of women) reported that they were not satisfied at all with the division.

- Among the men in the middle-income community, a significant majority – 72.4% – believe that they and their partners equally shared household chores. Among the women, however, only 36% thought that they and their partners equally shared household chores. 28% of the women thought that they did a lot more household chores than their partners and another 28% actually thought that they did somewhat less household work than their partners. A large proportion of both the men and women (82.8% and 60% respectively) reported that they were very satisfied with this division of household chores although the proportion of men who were very satisfied was significantly higher.

**Satisfaction with sexual relationship**

- A large proportion of the men – 61.3% in the low-income community and 65% in the middle-income community – described their sexual relationship with their partner as very satisfactory. In comparison to the men in the low-income community, a significantly lower proportion of women (33%) described their sexual relationship with their partner as very satisfactory. The proportions of women and men in the middle-income community who described their sexual relationships with their partners as very satisfactory were comparable – 65% of the men and 60.7% of the women.

**Communication**

- A large proportion of the men in both communities – approximately 65% – reported that they had recently (within the week) spoken with their partners about a problem they were facing. These proportions among the women were also high – 66.8% in the low-income community and 89.3% in the middle-income community.

**Fatherhood**

- Approximately half of the men who live with their children (n=407) took paid leave when their most recent child was born. Of those who did not take any days off, nearly 22% reported that they did not do so because their job did not allow them.

- Among men living with their children (biological, adopted or stepchildren) under the age of 13 (n=268), a large proportion in both communities – 47.1% in the low-income community and 55.6% in the middle-income community – reported that their partners had the ‘last word’ when it came to the health of their children. 39.4% of the men in the low-income community and 22.2% of the men in the middle-income community reported that they and their partners shared the last word. 11% of the men in both communities reported that they had the last word.

- Among men with children (biological, adopted or stepchildren) under the age of 13 (n=268), the majority in the low-income community – 77% – saw their role in child-care as mainly one of helper. A lower proportion of men in the middle-income community – 44.4% – had this perception.

**Men’s use of violence against women**

- 26% of the men in the low-income community and 6.3% of the men in the middle-income community reported having used some form of physical violence at least once against a partner. Among the women, 27.5% in the low-income community and the middle-income community reported having suffered physical violence at the hands of a partner at least once in their lifetimes.

- 36% of the men reported having a friend who used violence against his partner. Of these men, 45% said that they had already questioned their friend about his behavior.

- Approximately 28–30% of the men said they had talked to a boy (a son or other) about violence against women.

- 4.3% of the men reported having forced a girl or woman to have sex at least once in their lifetime.

footnote: 1. Questions about sexual violence and other highly sensitive issues were asked separately at the end of the interview as part of a self-administered survey. Of the 749 men who participated in the survey, 19 did not want to complete the survey. The n for the questions on sexual violence is therefore 730.
Men’s health-seeking behavior

• 76.7% of the men in the low-income community and 81% of the men in the middle-income community had sought out health services in the previous year.

• A large proportion of the men in the low-income community – 64.4% – said that they thought health services were friendly or receptive to men. In the middle-income community, only 33.3% of the men were of the same opinion.

Laws & Public Policies

• 60% of the men and 73.9% of the women reported that they were aware of a law related to paternity leave – of these respondents, a little more than half (54.4% of men and 58% of women) correctly identified the length of paternity leave as less than one week (federal law in Brazil provides for five days of paternity leave). Moreover, a significantly larger proportion of men (86.8%) than women (61.5%) believe that paternity leave should indeed be guaranteed by a law.

• Knowledge of maternity leave was significantly higher than knowledge about paternity leave. 84.2% of men and 91.1% of women correctly responded that there is maternity leave in Brazil - of these respondents, 68.3% of men and 86.8% of women correctly identified the length of maternity leave as between 4-6 months (federal law in Brazil provides for four months of maternity leave, however, this leave is often combined with the one month of paid vacation and, more recently, the government has provided tax incentives for employers who provide a sixth month).

• Nearly half of the men (49.1%) though that men and women have equal chances at custody in divorce cases. A slightly lower proportion (42.6%) of the women shared the same opinion. Similar proportions of men and women (41.4% and 45.8%, respectively), however, also believe that women actually have better chances at acquiring custody of the children in divorce cases.

• A significant majority of the men (77%) believe that laws regarding paternal establishment were good for both men and women. Only about half of the women (54%) agreed – 20% responded that they did not know and 14.8% responded that they thought such laws were unjust against men.

• Large proportions of men and women (69.6% and 67.2%, respectively) were in favor of laws that protected homosexuals from discrimination. Smaller, yet still substantial, proportions of men and women (45% and 58.3%, respectively) reported that they supposed laws which provided for civil unions or marriages between persons of the same sex. In terms of adoption, however, a sizeable proportion of both men and women (38% and 41%, respectively) did not believe that homosexual men should have the right to adopt children.

• In terms of violence against women, 80% of men thought that current laws make it “too easy” for a woman to denounce a man. 52% of men and 72% of women thought that current laws were not sufficient and 71% of men and 69% of women thought current laws did not provide sufficient protection for victims of violence.

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Founded in 1997, Promundo is a Brazilian NGO with international reach that seeks to promote gender equality and end violence against women, children and youth. Based in Rio de Janeiro, Promundo works locally, nationally and internationally to: (1) conduct formative research related to gender equality and health; (2) implement and evaluate innovative programs that promote positive changes in gender norms and behaviors among individuals, families and communities; and (3) advocate for the integration of these programs and a perspective of gender equality into public policies.

For more information, visit www.promundo.org.br