

IMAGES

The International Men & Gender Equality Survey



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Created and led by Promundo and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) in 2008, IMAGES is the most comprehensive survey carried out to date on men's attitudes and practices on a wide variety of topics related to gender equality – as well as gauging women's perspectives on such practices, and their opinions and reports of their own experiences.

From 2009 to 2014, household surveys were administered to more than 20,000 men and 8,000 women ages 18-59; an additional 10,000 interviews with men were carried out in Asia, as part of the Partners for Prevention (UN) multi-country study on men and violence, inspired by IMAGES. As of the end of 2014, IMAGES had been carried out in 12 countries, mostly in the global South: Norway, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Rwanda, DRC, Nigeria, Malawi, Croatia, Bosnia, Mali, and India.

IMAGES topics include fatherhood and caregiving; attitudes toward and awareness of gender equality policies; sexual and reproductive health; gender-based violence; men's own health and vulnerabilities, including mental health issues; and economic stress and employment patterns.

IMAGES has received recognition and support, including funding, from numerous international organizations, among them the World Bank, CARE, UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP, the Ford Foundation, DFID, SIDA and NORAD. Results have been shared at numerous national-level and international meetings, and widely disseminated to promote policy changes to engage men and boys in gender equality.

Starting in 2015, IMAGES will be implemented in the US (together with the Shriver Report), in Poland, in two additional settings in sub-Saharan Africa, in five countries in the Middle East and in Russia.

Attitudes and Policies related to Gender Equality

Overall we saw **positive but ambivalent attitudes towards gender equality on the part of men**. Younger men, urban men, men with more education and men who saw gender equality practiced by their fathers are more likely to accept and live gender equality. Qualitative research carried out together with IMAGES in some countries suggests confusion by some men about new gender norms and about their role as men.

*In some countries gender equality is seen as an **externally imposed agenda***: This was particularly the case in DRC, Mali, India and the Balkans. In these countries, with major variability, gender equality is seen as something the outside (the West) is trying to make them do. The perception by men is that women are the focus of the international agenda, and that they as men from these countries are perceived negatively by the West, by donors, and by the media.

Men in all the countries, with the exception of India and DRC, are generally supportive of gender equality with 87 percent to 90 percent saying that “men do not lose out when women’s rights are promoted.” Even when asked about specific policies – quotas for women in executive positions, in university enrollment or in government – men’s support for such policies is reasonably high, with 40 percent to 74 percent of men supporting such quotas.

Overall, men support gender equality as a vague idea, but higher numbers oppose it when we ask them to give something up (via a quota).

Gender equality leads to happier men. Men who show more equitable views are happier, and their wives and partners (in most countries) report better sex lives (with them) and better relationships with their husbands. **Men who have attitudes supportive of gender equality had fewer mental health problems, were less likely to be depressed, and less likely to contemplate suicide.**

In several countries, we carried out policy scans to look at how existing social welfare and gender equality policies included or considered men as part of the solution. Some countries are making progress – Brazil, South Africa, Mexico, among others – with policies that see men as part of gender equality as well as policies that focus on men’s health needs. The majority of the policy documents reviewed, however, suggest that men are more often seen as **obstacles, or as walking problems, or are not included at all in gender equality policies**.

Parenting and Involvement in Childbirth

Some men are doing more of the childcare than others. **Younger men, urban men, men whose wives/partners work are more likely to do the care work, as are men who have taken some paternity leave**. Men whose fathers were involved with them (participated more in caregiving) are less likely to be involved in fights, to suffer violence in their communities and schools.

Very high percentages of men go to prenatal visits although what they do when they get there is dependent on the context. Sometimes they are in the consultation room (for example, in Croatia and Chile); other times they are in the parking lot or the waiting room. **Chile stands out for its dramatic increases over time in men’s presence during childbirth as the result of a policy change**.

Close to half of fathers or men with children say they are involved in some daily caregiving. **Unemployed men are dramatically more likely to participate in the care of children than employed men**. For men with children under age four, play is the most common daily activity in which they participate (as affirmed by women and men).

We also carried out a qualitative study – called “Men Who Care” – which involved life history interviews with 83 “more involved fathers or caregivers” in India, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and South Africa. Those stories found that men mostly did the care work because life circumstances forced them to (out of work, their partner had a better job, they migrated, a spouse was ill or deceased). These “caregiving men” were confused about their roles and those who only provided care for children, and did not work, were the most depressed.

Many of the “caregiving men” were worried that their children would not see them as “real men.” **The men who did more caregiving reported tremendous life satisfaction in caring for their children but were often confused about their new roles, depressed because they felt like “failed men” and worried about how others saw them.**

Men are taking few days of paid or unpaid paternity leave; in most countries they are offered little paid leave. Among men who took paternity leave, the duration ranged from an average of 3.36 to 11.49 days of paid leave and from an average of 3.8 to 10 days unpaid leave. Younger men and men with more education were more likely to take leave.

Health Practices and Vulnerabilities

Men around the world seldom take care of their own health. That data found very limited health-seeking behavior on the part of men in all countries surveyed. Between 20 percent and 80 percent of men had ever gone for HIV testing, roughly half the rates for women. Rwanda was the outlier where more than 80 percent of women and men had gone for HIV testing. **The main reason men report going to a primary health center for any health need is accompanying their female partner or wife for a prenatal visit.**

Men’s rates of regular abuse of alcohol – defined as having five or more drinks in one night on a once monthly or greater basis – vary from 23 percent in India to 69 percent in Brazil and are significantly higher than women’s reported alcohol abuse in all survey sites. In most sites, younger men and men with more inequitable gender attitudes are more likely to regularly abuse alcohol. **In other words: “real men” drink excessively.**

Economic stress and alcohol abuse are widespread and often go hand in hand. IMAGES includes questions on men’s perceptions of economic stress, which find that even in middle income settings, men spend much of their time looking for work, worried about work, and ashamed to face their families when they lack work and income. In post-conflict settings this is even more acute. **Men who are economically stressed are more likely to use violence against partners, to be involved in delinquency and in some settings to abuse alcohol.**

Men generally report high self-esteem, with the exceptions of Croatia and India; at the same time, men show relatively high levels of depression and suicidal ideation. The rates of experiencing depression at least once in the last month ranged from 9 percent in Brazil to a high of 33 percent in Croatia. The percentages of male respondents who reported having suicidal thoughts at least once in the last month ranged from 3 percent in Mexico to **15 percent in Croatia and similar rates in Bosnia.**

Violence and Criminal Practices

*High percentages of men report having used violence against a female partner: 24-55 percent of men surveyed ever carried out physical violence against a female partner. **The two strongest factors associated with men's use of intimate partner violence were witnessing their own fathers or another man use violence against their mothers, and being involved in fights as children/adolescents.** Alcohol abuse, economic stress and inequitable gender attitudes were also associated, but at lower levels and not as consistently across countries. Between 20-40 percent of men have witnessed GBV growing up. **Men who witnessed this violence are harmed men: they are more likely to abuse alcohol, to be depressed, to have suicidal thoughts and to be unhappy.***

*Men know about laws on gender-based violence (GBV) but generally oppose them or are resistant to them. Across the countries, men know about the laws on GBV but **the majority are opposed to such laws** saying they make it too easy to accuse men. Even men who don't support or use GBV view these laws negatively, in part because they understand how it has changed the rules on them: acts that used to be considered as "happening within 4 walls" are now subject to state intervention.*

*Relatively high percentages of men reported ever having participated in criminal or delinquent acts with between **6 percent and 29 percent of men report ever having been arrested.** In terms of factors associated with men's participation in criminal activity, firearm ownership and incarceration, men's socio-economic situation (economic stress) was the most significant. Men who owned firearms or carried out other violence or criminal behavior were also more likely to report having used violence against a female partner.*

***Between 16 percent and 56 percent of men in the sites surveyed say they have paid for sex at least once.** Men with lower educational attainment, less gender-equitable attitudes and men who reported less sexual satisfaction with their current partner are more likely to have paid for sex.*

*IMAGES includes specific questions about the effects of conflict, which were applied in Rwanda, DRC, Bosnia and are being applied in Mozambique. Economic stress is generally higher in countries affected by conflict. And in most conflict or post-conflict settings, men affected by conflict (either displaced, involved as combatants, injured) are more likely to report having used violence against a female partner. **In general men tend to cope less well than women in conflict settings, showing higher rates of depression, drinking and suicide ideation.***