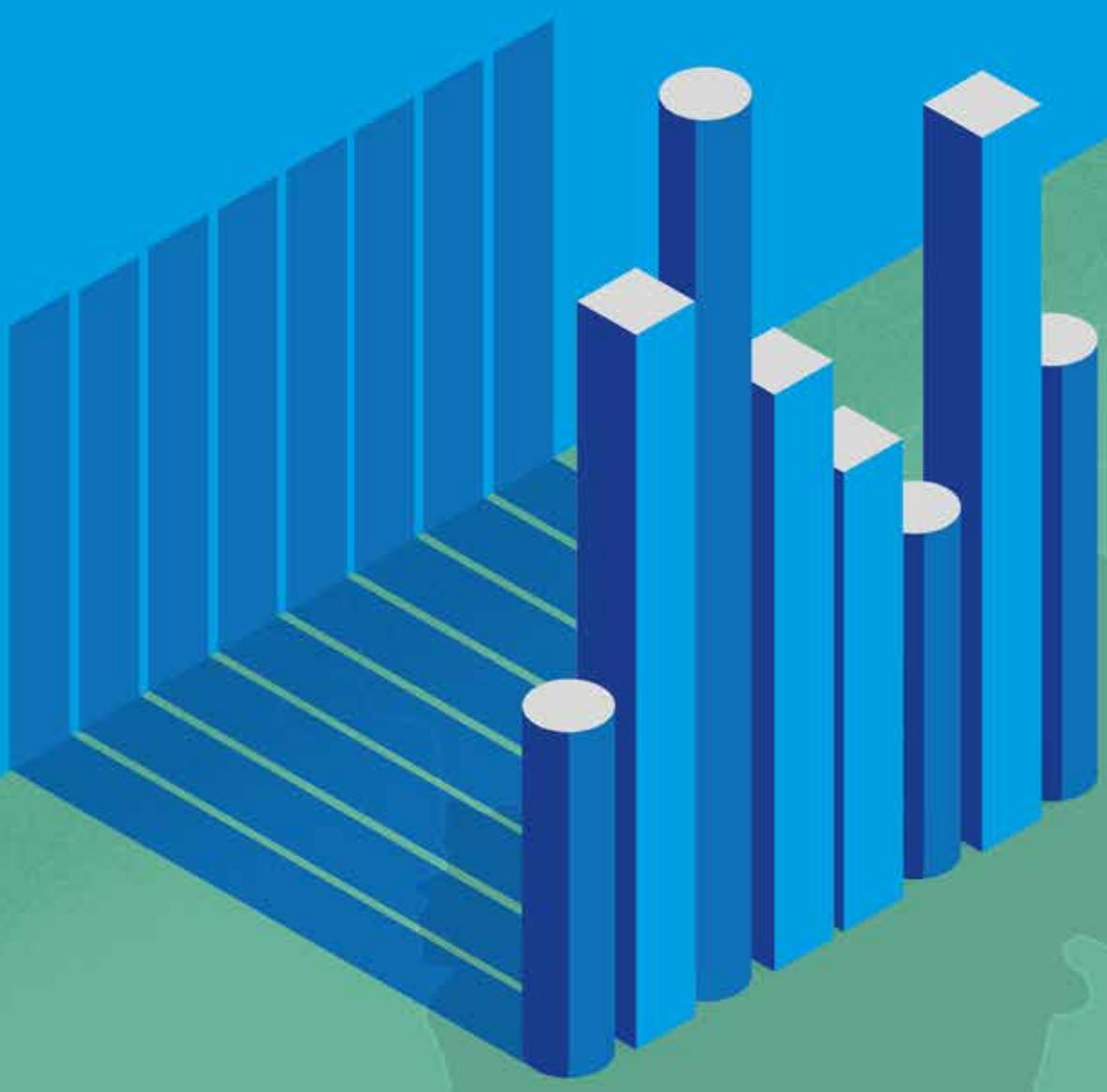


REFLECTIONS ON GENDER, PATRIARCHY, AND PEACE

Results from the International Men and
Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) in Afghanistan



About This Study

The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) in Afghanistan includes quantitative and qualitative research with men and women aged 18 to 59. The nationwide study and its dissemination were coordinated by Promundo and UN Women, with financial support from UN Women and Global Affairs Canada.

About IMAGES

The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) is a comprehensive, multi-country study on gender norms, gender-equality policies, household dynamics, caregiving, fatherhood, intimate partner violence, sexual diversity, health, economic stress, and many other topics, including men's and women's attitudes, practices, and realities alongside each other. Promundo and the International Center for Research on Women created IMAGES in 2008. As of 2018, IMAGES and IMAGES-inspired studies have been carried out in more than 40 countries, with more studies planned or underway. IMAGES is designed for male and female respondents aged 18 to 59 and is carried out together with qualitative research to map masculinities, contextualize the survey results, and provide detailed life histories that illuminate quantitative findings. The questionnaire is adapted for each country and region, with approximately two-thirds of the questions being standard across settings. For more information, see: www.promundoglobal.org/images.

Promundo

Founded in Brazil in 1997, Promundo works to promote gender equality and create a world free from violence by engaging men and boys in partnership with women and girls. Promundo is a global consortium with members in the United States, Brazil, Portugal, and Democratic Republic of the Congo that collaborate to achieve this mission by conducting cutting-edge research that builds the knowledge base on masculinities and gender equality; developing, evaluating, and scaling up high-impact gender-transformative interventions and programs; and carrying out national and international campaigns and advocacy initiatives to prevent violence and promote gender justice. For more information, see: www.promundoglobal.org.

UN Women

UN Women is the United Nations organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. UN Women supports United Nations member states as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and it works with governments and civil society to design the laws, policies, programs, and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the United Nations system's work in advancing gender equality. For more information, see: www.unwomen.org.

Global Affairs Canada

Global Affairs Canada manages Canada's diplomatic and consular relations, promotes the country's international trade, and leads Canada's international development and humanitarian assistance. For more information, see: www.international.gc.ca.

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REFLECTIONS ON GENDER, PATRIARCHY, AND PEACE

Results from the International Men and
Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) in Afghanistan



FOREWORD

When Executive Director of UN Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, visited Afghanistan in 2016, she remarked, “Violence against women has become an epidemic that must be stopped.” Studies show that up to 87 per cent of women experience violence in their lifetime. Responding to the challenge of preventing violence against women and supporting survivors of violence who seek safety, healing, and realization of their human rights requires investment in evidence-based strategies; with the spirit of the Afghan people and the commitments of the Afghan Government and civil society, effective prevention of violence and provision of comprehensive services for survivors is within reach.

The Afghan Government in partnership with civil society, donor partners, and United Nations agencies have made efforts to address and prevent violence experienced by women. The lessons of these ongoing efforts point to the need for a broader coalition to bring about transformative change in the pursuit of ending violence against women and achieving gender equality in Afghanistan. This is particularly pertinent for transforming the harmful social norms supporting the differential power of men and boys – the primary beneficiaries of patriarchy and gender inequality, and the group with disproportionate power in Afghan society. The “primary prevention” of violence against women must involve transforming the harmful social norms held by all of society, including men and boys. An important precursor to program efforts to transform the harmful social norms which drive violence against women is research to understand these beliefs and attitudes, or “norms.” One of the foundational steps in this process is understanding men’s diverse experiences and perspectives of masculinity in Afghanistan.

This report is the result of a multi-year collaboration between UN Women, Promundo, and Global Affairs Canada, and makes a significant contribution to understanding masculinity in Afghanistan. Drawing upon a rigorous nationwide sample of 1,000 men and 1,000 women in 14 provinces, the findings of the study assist in identifying entry points for developing evidence-based program approaches for transforming the harmful social norms which drive violence against women. The results will enable evidence-informed efforts for the prevention of violence against women, and other priorities of the Afghan Government and civil society.

We trust that this first-ever IMAGES study in Afghanistan will catalyze and inform actions leading to fundamental transformations of harmful social norms to achieve equality of all women, men, girls, and boys in Afghanistan.

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Representative

UN Women Afghanistan

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ACRONYMS

AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
EVAW Law	Elimination of Violence against Women Law
GEM Scale	Gender Equitable Men Scale
IMAGES	International Men and Gender Equality Survey
IMAGES MENA	International Men and Gender Equality Survey – Middle East and North Africa
NAPWA	National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PDA	Personal digital assistant
P4P	Partners for Prevention
ORCA	Opinion Research Center of Afghanistan
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Afghanistan has a deep and remarkable cultural legacy spanning more than 4,000 years, but recent decades of war and civil unrest have created broad challenges that touch every aspect of Afghan society. This complicated narrative includes definitions of masculinities and femininities, as well as with patriarchal power at all levels of society, presenting persistent and multifaceted threats to Afghan women: intimate partner violence, honor killings, and other harmful cultural practices such as *baad* (giving away women to settle family or tribal feuds) and *badal* (families exchanging women and girls), among many others. These threats sit alongside women's and girls' limited access to education, financial independence, and political participation – as well as ongoing security challenges limiting mobility and broader participation in public life – all of which heavily constrain the lives of Afghan women.

Against this backdrop – of a rich legacy alongside strict patriarchy, of brave legislative advocacy alongside persistent conflict – arrives the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) Afghanistan, an innovative countrywide survey intended to provide a comprehensive baseline from which to assess potential shifts related to masculinities, gender equality, and violence against women and girls. IMAGES Afghanistan is a wide-ranging effort combining three methods of data collection: (1) a nationally representative household survey involving 1,000 male and 1,000 female participants; (2) life story interviews with men recognized as demonstrating more gender-equitable forms of masculinity; and (3) focus group discussions with both men and women across the country. The survey includes a core set of questions drawn from the international IMAGES questionnaire, as well as questions specifically adapted for Afghanistan.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Overall, IMAGES Afghanistan findings paint a picture of simultaneous conflict and courage, tradition and resistance, all leading to a varied landscape of gender-equality attitudes and practices.

The data show complex relationships between demographic and experiential factors and views on gender roles and norms (and gender equality). In most cases, however, women's views are meaningfully more equitable than men's. For example, two-thirds of men surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the idea that "women

in Afghanistan have too many rights”; nearly a third of women agreed with this idea as well. A great many men, and some women, uphold rigid ideas about gender roles, violence, women’s public lives, and masculinity. Notably, 72 per cent of women in the survey agreed that “a married woman should have the same rights to work outside the home as her husband,” as compared to only 15 per cent of men.

IMAGES Afghanistan data also show that older men demonstrate greater gender equality than younger men, even when accounting for the influence of other key demographic and childhood influences. Young men in Afghanistan face a particular confluence of threats to their sense of identity, particularly their sense of achieving socially recognized manhood. In a time of high financial insecurity, young men struggle to achieve the social expectation that they provide economically for their families. In a time of ongoing political instability and insurgency, young men likewise struggle to achieve the role of “protector” of their families. IMAGES evidence suggests that young men, facing these challenges to their rigidly defined masculine identity, may be grabbing hold of rigid gender divisions in other spaces in their lives.

Additionally, women and men broadly disagree about women’s suitability to be public leaders, although men’s and women’s notions about *which* public roles are most acceptable for women mirror one another. As with other topics in the survey, women held much more gender-equitable attitudes than men. Fully 65 per cent of men agreed, for instance, that “because women are too emotional, they cannot be leaders,” as compared to only 29 per cent of women. Women’s and men’s responses did broadly reflect one another, however, when it came to identifying which public roles are least suitable for women. All respondents were particularly unlikely to support the idea of women in the roles of police officers, judges, soldiers, and religious leaders. In the focus groups, participants painted a picture of a society in which women are broadly discouraged from working outside the home, or from leaving the home at all. Women also described how they must adhere strictly to community traditions to make working outside the home viable. As one young woman from Kandahar province put it, “She must be covered while going outside the house, and no one should hear her laughing.”

In order to shift this mixed landscape of social norms about gender equality and women’s rights, policymakers and programmers should:

- Complement legislative progress on women’s rights and gender equality with public-awareness campaigns to help men understand why such changes are necessary and to help them see the benefits to themselves – and to everyone.
- Introduce discussions about more equitable masculinity into religious-training and secular-education curricula alike, as well as into progressive religious media and other avenues of religious education, to help men and women better understand the possibilities for gender equality that are inherent to Islam.
- Identify and engage with progressive religious figures to challenge gender stereotypes and promote gender equality at all levels of society.

- Support the creation of youth-led campaigns and activism targeting young men and young women to promote gender equality in the country.
- Build on existing literature, art, and cultural expressions that already include messages of equality and positive masculinities, and partner with mass media, social media, children and youth media producers, and other artistic producers to include messages about changing norms related to gender and masculinity.

2

When it comes to the inner workings of domestic life, parenthood, and childcare, IMAGES respondents in Afghanistan show a mixture of rigid beliefs alongside more progressive ones.

Reflecting on their fathers' role in childcare, respondents were likely to recall a figure who played with them and looked after them in general terms, but not someone routinely involved in washing, cleaning, cooking, and helping with homework. No more than 5 per cent of respondents reported that their fathers sometimes or often washed clothes or cleaned the sitting rooms, for instance, while approximately 80 per cent reported that their fathers played with them. Respondents also recalled childhood homes in which fathers or brothers reigned supreme in terms of financial decisions.

Not unlike the dynamics in their childhood homes, household work in respondents' marital homes tends to be divided on a strictly gendered basis. Women do the vast majority of household work in Afghanistan. The division of household work was highly mixed in the qualitative research. On one hand, many men said that they see domestic work as integral to being a good wife and that they do not have time for any housework because their focus is on supporting their families financially. On the other hand, many men also said they "pitch in" sometimes with housework, even while ultimately viewing it as their wives' responsibility. All respondents agreed that men who do domestic work are commonly viewed as dishonorable. More gender-equitable practices can pass from one generation to the next, however, and IMAGES data from around the world have demonstrated how children who grow up in more gender-equitable homes – with a father involved in household work and childcare – are more likely to emulate these behaviors as adults.

In order to more fully and rapidly realize true equality in unpaid care work and domestic work, policymakers and programmers should:

- Challenge and eliminate gender stereotypes regarding the social, political, and economic roles of men and women in school texts and curricula, as well as implement school-based gender-transformative education for boys and girls. Implement campaigns and school-based efforts to reach boys and girls at younger ages about sharing care and domestic work.

- Create protocols and train health providers to engage men as more involved fathers in the public health system, the workplace, and early childhood development programs.
- Build on existing evidence-based parent-training programs to encourage and support parents – both mothers and fathers – in raising sons and daughters equally, in practicing nonviolent childrearing, and in advocating for legislation that bans all forms of violence against children.
- Engage men in programs and platforms that are informed and driven by United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5, to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.” This includes working with men proactively, as well as holding them accountable for their roles in accomplishing this goal; in eliminating all forms of discrimination, violence, and harmful practices against all women and girls; and in supporting women and girls’ full social, economic, and political equality.

3

Marriages in Afghanistan can be marked by men’s controlling behaviors and intimate partner violence, as shown by the very high prevalence of economic, emotional, physical, and sexual violence in these relationships.

The vast majority of ever-married respondents in the study reported controlling dynamics in their relationships, whereby the husband needs to know where his wife is at all times and is the sole decision-maker of when she can leave the house. Additionally, 80 per cent of women reported ever experiencing one or more forms of physical intimate partner violence included in the study, and nearly one in five women reported being subjected to sexual violence by her husband. While women were more likely to report experiencing all forms of violence than men were to report perpetrating them, men were not shy about sharing the various forms of violence they use against their wives. These data demonstrate the unidirectional, prevalent, and multifaceted nature of men’s use of intimate partner violence against their wives in Afghanistan.

At the same time, attitudes rejecting intimate partner violence were common among qualitative research participants. Some men reject violence in relatively paternalistic terms, suggesting that women need men’s protection rather than abuse. Others offered more positive, aspirational ideas, calling on husbands and wives to discuss conflicts together peacefully. In addition to raising their voices against violence, many shared ideas for solutions. Participants spoke to the

importance of teaching society the rights of women. Women in particular voiced that laws on domestic violence must be implemented more effectively. Other solutions focused on education, women's economic participation, and involvement of religious leaders. Some participants mentioned that men do not trust violence-prevention messages from non-Islamic sources, like United Nations agencies. Instead, they said, eliminating violence should be taught through an Islamic lens.

IMAGES also documents respondents' views on harmful practices such as honor killings and *bacha-bazi*, the practice of keeping young boys for sexually exploitative purposes. About one in 10 respondents were aware of a case in which a woman was killed for being perceived to bring shame to the family just within the last year (i.e. honor killing). Nearly a quarter of men and women in the study believed that most people in their community would approve of such a killing; 20 per cent of men and 16 per cent of women approved of this practice themselves. While this demonstrates that a significant majority of the population rejects the practice of honor killing, the levels of approval are still noteworthy. Additionally, even as IMAGES respondents reported low levels of approval for *bacha-bazi*, significant proportions of men shared direct knowledge of this practice occurring in their community. For example, 159 of 1,000 men in the quantitative study shared that *bacha-bazi* had occurred within their community in the last year alone.

In order to better prevent and respond to all forms of intimate partner violence and harmful practices, policymakers and programmers should:

- Invest in and scale up community-based interventions that change violence-supportive norms, as well as engage community and religious leaders in both preventing intimate partner violence and holding men who use this violence accountable.
- Pilot-test and evaluate integrated violence-prevention efforts, such as those that promote women's rights (including women's economic empowerment) together with sensitization activities for their husbands and other male relatives.
- Implement curricula on the prevention of gender-based violence for young men and young women, employers, and teachers in schools and workplaces.
- Provide psychosocial – and other forms of – support for children and youth who witness or experience violence in their homes.

4

Additionally, IMAGES results affirm the extreme traumas, risks, and challenges of daily life in Afghanistan and also the resiliency of the country's people.

A preponderance of respondents, both male and female, reported various adverse experiences directly linked to the many years of invasion, insurgency, conflict, and war in the country. Experiences such as living as an internally displaced person or refugee, facing bombardment, being robbed, and witnessing beatings are among the most common such experiences among study participants – with, for example, 41 per cent of men and 37 per cent of women reporting that they had been an internally displaced person or refugee due to conflict.

However, facing the extreme hardships and constraints of life in Afghanistan, respondents' views of their own health and well-being underscore their resilience. Vast majorities of both men and women rated their own physical health and well-being as "good" or "very good" compared to others of the same sex and age. Only 5 per cent of men and 10 per cent of women reported that their physical health is "bad" or "very bad" in comparison with peers their age. The study also measures more informal sources of support, particularly focused on mental health concerns such as sadness, disappointment, and frustration. In Afghanistan, many respondents reported that they do not seek out this help; indeed, only 68 per cent of men and 54 per cent of women said that they had done so, leaving 32 per cent of men and 46 per cent of women seeming to bear their sadness and frustration on their own.

A swift end to all violent insurgency and political conflict in Afghanistan is an unwavering goal. Until this goal is realized, in order to help mitigate the broad effects of ongoing conflict, policymakers and programmers should:

- Screen men and women for mental health concerns and exposure to violence and trauma and provide gender-specific psychosocial and trauma support for men and women, including group, individual, and community-based therapy, building in particular on existing coping strategies.
- Build on the potential of men's connections to their children and involvement as fathers to mitigate the effects of conflict, displacement, and insecurity.
- Engage those men who show positive coping skills and who are "voices of resistance" to conflict and violence, including gender-based violence, as mentors and peer promoters for other men and boys.

LOOKING FORWARD

By examining rigid gender norms, men's disproportionate power and control, and an array of violent behaviors toward women and girls in Afghanistan – all with an awareness of the contextual complexities of this particular country – IMAGES Afghanistan seeks to inform new waves of violence-prevention and gender-equality advocacy and programming.

The recommendations provided in the report align with existing government commitments and strategies, as well as with a vision for a world free of violence and gender-based inequalities. At the same time, the voices amplified in this study demonstrate that the vision of a more equal, less violent world is neither impossible in Afghanistan nor externally imposed. Instead, the seeds for this future exist within the people of Afghanistan, their positive interpretations of their own traditions and culture, and their courage to seek – and realize – a transformed future for the coming generations.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

This report presents results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) conducted in Afghanistan.

1.1 Background: Men, Women, and Gender Equality in Afghanistan

Despite its frequent portrayal in the media as a country under constant threat of war and civil unrest, Afghanistan has a much deeper and more remarkable cultural legacy as a seat of empires, a migratory crossroads, and a trading center for more than 4,000 years. This rich legacy existed before – and will extend beyond – any invasion. Within this complicated story, to be sure, is evidence of rigid definitions of masculinities and femininities, often marked by men's disproportionate power and control at the relationship, family, community, and institutional levels. Patriarchal power at all levels of society in Afghanistan presents persistent and multifaceted threats to Afghan women, including intimate partner violence, honor killings (defined in this study as the act of killing a woman perceived as bringing shame to the family), and other harmful practices. Customs including *baad* (giving away women to settle family or tribal feuds) and *badal* (families exchanging women and girls), as well as forced compliance with religiously imposed dress codes, sit alongside shortcomings in access to education, financial independence, and political participation in shaping the heavily constrained lives of Afghan women. Ongoing security challenges also play a role in limiting mobility and broader participation in public life for Afghan women.

New data on the intersecting dynamics of masculine norms, violence, and women's rights in Afghanistan are becoming available, and this study seeks to expand this growing knowledge base. For example, the 2015 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) estimated that 56 per cent of ever-married women in Afghanistan had experienced physical, emotional, or sexual violence in the previous 12 months alone, when the perpetrator was the husband.¹ The growing body of research on gender in Afghanistan underscores men's disproportionate power and control over women's lives. In a groundbreaking 2016 report on masculinities in Afghanistan, authors from the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) showed that family-level norms, tribal codes, and other social influences often contravene Islamic teachings that guarantee women the right to education and to work.² The study also shed light on a restrictive normative environment for men in Afghanistan who may want to work toward gender equality. When a man helps a woman with housework or otherwise transgresses strict gendered scripts, the study's authors observed, community members may label him as “*zuncho*” or “*narshazai*,” insulting expressions used to deny these men their sense of manhood. A 2018 brief published by the United States Institute of Peace echoed these themes, identifying the core role of violence in Afghans' social and cultural

- 1 Central Statistics Organization (Afghanistan), Ministry of Public Health Afghanistan, & ICF. (2017). *Afghanistan Demographic and Health Survey 2015*. Kabul: Central Statistics Organization. Retrieved from <http://www.dhsprogram.com/publications/publication-FR323-DHS-Final-Reports.cfm>
- 2 Echavez, C. R., Mosawi, S., & Pilongo, L. W. (2016). *The other side of gender inequality: Men and masculinities in Afghanistan*. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit.

norms of masculinity and calling for increased and expanded programming to teach tolerance, “peaceful masculinity,” and peacebuilding skills.³

Cultural expectations related to manhood in Afghanistan, in addition to these many negative aspects, also include some positive elements: creating bonds between families and clans, upholding agreements, encouraging men to be responsible for and protect their families, and uniting groups of men against a perceived common enemy. While achieving women’s rights and reducing violence require questioning some aspects of manhood in Afghanistan, as with anywhere in the world, any efforts to achieve this social change must include awareness of how these understandings of manhood have endured and how they are perceived in positive ways by some segments of society.

Any discussion of masculinities in Afghanistan must also include an understanding of how nearly four decades of conflict and war have shaped ideas of manhood.

Any discussion of masculinities in Afghanistan must also include an understanding of how nearly four decades of conflict and war have shaped ideas of manhood. In addition to the resulting death, disability, and divided families, factors such as the build-up of the armed forces, armed insurgent groups’ vying for young men as combatants, and foreign military presence have all had a deep impact on men’s place in Afghan society. Men’s limited ability to fulfill the role of protector, breadwinner, and head of family means that many men perceive their sense of manhood as threatened. Additionally, while much attention has rightly gone to the dire situation of women in Afghanistan during conflict and under the Taliban, it is important to note that many Afghan men also face violence from the Taliban and other elements involved in armed conflicts. The normality of public violence and violence at home is another factor that must be included in any discussion of manhood in the country. Indeed, some researchers have argued that in Afghanistan – as in other countries affected by humanitarian crises and conflict – violence against other men and against women and girls has become a method by which some men seek to reclaim the status they feel they have lost, or to reassert threatened roles.⁴ This in no way excuses individual men’s use of violence or abuse, but rather contextualizes how and why it may happen.

Adding to the complexities of pursuing gender and social equality in Afghanistan is its decades-long struggle with domestic and foreign insurgent and terrorist networks, including the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. This ongoing struggle poses a serious challenge to achieving peace and democracy in the country, the individual-level effects of which this report presents in detail. The stresses of ongoing conflict and their concomitant economic challenges hinder advancement in human rights, particularly in terms of Afghanistan’s priority goal of boosting the level of gender equality in the country. Furthermore, since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, the Afghan government has faced serious challenges to reconstructing the country socially and materially, with ongoing political turmoil, instability, corruption, and conflict all impeding the efficacy of the democratically elected government.

3 Ahmadi, B., & Stanikzai, R. (2018). *Redefining masculinity in Afghanistan*. (Peace Brief 243). Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace. Retrieved from <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/pb243-redefining-masculinity-in-afghanistan.pdf>

4 Gilani, S. (2008). “Reconstituting Manhood: Examining Post-Conflict Remasculinisation and its Effects on Women and Women’s Rights in Afghanistan.” *In-Spire: Journal of Law, Politics and Societies* Vol 3, no. 2.

“From heaven to hell”

For IMAGES study participants of a certain generation, asking about childhood experiences necessarily recalls a much different era in Afghanistan’s history. Participants such as the taxi driver below seem to fondly remember a past that has been utterly transformed by decades of tumult, invasion, and insurgency in Afghanistan:

Interviewer: How can you compare when you were a child and now?

It is like I came from heaven to hell. Now we can see how people have replaced kindness, compassion, and love with violence, discrimination, and war. The culture that we had about 40 years ago, you would not be able to find 5 per cent of it. In case you are able to find it, it certainly would be among those people who lived in Kabul about 40 years ago; they are the people who feel sorry. They saw their Kabul 40 years ago – it was very clean, no dust, and everyone had a kind of feeling for their city. Even a person selling bananas had a dustbin with him and would store the peels in it. But now it is more than 200 per cent different from that time. People in the current era are not so respectful. They eat a banana and then throw the peel right on the street. The roads are dirty, the air is polluted, and the people are lowbrow, impolite, and uncivil.

Man, 58, Kabul province, taxi driver

As part of its national development strategy since the early 2000s, the Afghan government has articulated goals to eliminate discrimination against women, develop women’s human capital, and promote women’s leadership. All of these aims envision a future in which women can have full and equal participation in all aspects of life. With the support of international organizations, the country has begun to show some positive development socially and economically, and it has been able to show progress toward some gender-equality and women’s rights goals. Afghanistan has ratified various relevant international instruments related to women’s rights, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (without reservations). The country also has a clear commitment to address and eradicate gender-based violence, among other forms of violence, so every person can have a secure life and enjoy the rights and liberties conducive to sustainable development.

Afghanistan demonstrated advancements in many of the Millennium Development Goals, including those related to the enrollment of girls in schools, youth literacy, and infant and maternal mortality.⁵ Afghanistan has also adopted the Sustainable Development Goals and is putting in place systems to measure progress against the indicators at the national level. These changes, however modest, demonstrate the country’s commitment to move in a positive direction on gender equality and women’s rights. At the same time, when compared to the widespread optimism immediately following the ouster

5 Ministry of Economy Afghanistan. (2015). *A decade of opportunities: Afghanistan Millennium Development Goals 10 years report (2005-2015)*. Retrieved from [http://moec.gov.af/Content/files/MDG%20Final%20Report%20v6-2\(1\).pdf](http://moec.gov.af/Content/files/MDG%20Final%20Report%20v6-2(1).pdf)

of the Taliban, as Human Rights Watch and others have reported, real progress toward Afghanistan's various treaty commitments is underwhelming to date.^{6,7}

In addition to these advancements, the Government of Afghanistan continues to develop national bodies and action plans in pursuit of its gender-equality goals. The Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (2017-2021), for instance, sets out a five-pillar "gender strategy" calling for programs to eliminate domestic violence and ensure full access to education, among other objectives.⁸ The National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA), whose implementation is monitored by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, has also served as the main instrument for implementing policies and commitments on women's empowerment and gender equality, emphasizing access to education and healthcare services, economic security, political participation, and the elimination of violence against women.⁹ Afghanistan's efforts to advance the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda (coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) fall within this action plan as well.¹⁰ Simultaneously, the Ministry of Public Health has also developed a National Gender Strategy aiming to promote gender mainstreaming across various policies and government budgets.¹¹ The establishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs in 2001 has been another important milestone for women in Afghanistan, as is the Afghan constitution approved in early 2004, which guarantees women's and men's equal rights, makes discrimination on the basis of gender illegal, and provides quotas for women in both houses of Parliament and in the provincial councils.¹²

Government instruments, plans, and frameworks toward gender equality have also been accompanied by legislative changes, even beyond the new constitution. New legislation, the Law on Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW), has been developed to protect Afghan women's right to live free of violence, for instance.¹³ This law, drafted by lawmakers with the support of prominent Afghan women's rights activists and members of civil society groups, became law by presidential order in 2009 and is enforced as such, though it has not yet been ratified by

- 6 Barr, H. (2013, July 11). Commitments to protect women's rights. *Human Rights Watch*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/07/11/afghanistan-failing-commitments-protect-womens-rights>
- 7 Other relevant policy frameworks include the Afghanistan Compact (2006) and the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (2012), which are among the key development documents that set out policies, outcomes, and benchmarks for accountability on the progress of Afghan women. They also include the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, established in 1985 and including gender initiatives, and the Strategy of the Ministries of Interior and National Defense, aiming to assure a minimum 20 per cent increase in women's representation in their respective ministries over the next 10 years as well as create opportunities for women within the police force.
- 8 Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. (2016). *Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF): 2017 to 2021*. Retrieved from: <http://policymof.gov.af/afghanistan-national-peace-and-development-framework-anpdf/>
- 9 Ministry of Women's Affairs Afghanistan. *The 1392 Analytical Report on the Implementation of NAPWA*. Retrieved from: <http://mowa.gov.af/Content/files/Report%20on%20the%20Implementation%20of%20NAPWA%20-%20English%20Translation%201392%20-%20Final%20Revised.pdf>
- 10 Ministry of Foreign Affairs Afghanistan. (2015). *Afghanistan's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 Women, Peace and Security 2015-2022*. Retrieved from: https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/wps-afghanistan_national_action_plan_1325_0.pdf
- 11 Ministry of Public Health Afghanistan. (2012). *National Gender Strategy 2012-2016*. Retrieved from: http://moph.gov.af/Content/Media/Documents/MoPH_National_Gender_Strategy_Final_English_2012164201212934246553325325.pdf
- 12 Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. (2004). *The Constitution of Afghanistan*. Retrieved from: <http://www.afghanembassy.com.pl/afg/images/pliki/TheConstitution.pdf>
- 13 Ministry of Women's Affairs Afghanistan. *Strategy and National Action Plan on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, 2016-2020*. Retrieved from: http://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2017/01/aco_evawstrategy_jan17_email-r2.pdf?la=en&vs=1821

Parliament. The recently updated Penal Code also addresses several violations of women's human rights, and efforts are in place to ensure that the measures related to the EAW Law remain enforced through the law, the Penal Code, or both.¹⁴ At the same time, additional legislative avenues to advance women's rights remain: Afghanistan's electoral law sets a quota for women's political participation,¹⁵ for instance, while the Juvenile Code sets the legal age of adulthood for both girls and boys at 18 despite previous laws considering the onset of puberty to be the beginning of adulthood.¹⁶ The new Anti-Sexual Harassment Regulation is also a noteworthy achievement, taking into consideration evidence that the majority of women in public places in Afghanistan face sexual harassment.¹⁷

These new laws in service of gender equality still exist alongside older, more regressive legislation. Significant legal barriers to gender-equality goals exist within, for instance, the Civil Code (enforced from 1977, laying out unequal right to divorce and inheritance)¹⁸ and Shiite Personal Status Law (enforced from 2009, including a clause under which women cannot refuse sex to their husbands).¹⁹ In addition to the aforementioned update to the Penal Code, a draft of a revised Family Law is under development, an encouraging next step in eradicating regressive legislation in the country.²⁰

By and large, Afghanistan's customary laws presume and reinforce patriarchal power and the subjugation of women.

More importantly, regardless of legislative protections, women's rights violations are rarely investigated and penalized by the public-security sector and courts. These cases instead tend to be resolved by – predominantly male – community-level leaders. Many Afghans, especially those in rural settings, abide by customary laws, unofficial rules and principles that are nonetheless adhered to by a significant part of Afghanistan's population. Relevant customary laws regulate matters such as murder, kidnapping, rape, adultery, and inheritance. By and large, Afghanistan's customary laws presume and reinforce patriarchal power and the subjugation of women. Even if this legislation seeks to achieve justice, women of Afghanistan may rightly ask, "Justice for whom?"

14 Attorney General's Office, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, "Criminal Support of Women in Afghanistan: Past, Present and Future - Attorney General's Office," May 6, 2018, <http://ago.gov.af/en/news/437423>

15 Ministry of Justice Afghanistan. (2016). *Election Law: Official Gazette No. 1226*. Retrieved from: http://moj.gov.af/content/files/OfficialGazette/01201/OG_01226_English.pdf

16 Ministry of Justice Afghanistan. (2005). *Juvenile Code: Official Gazette No. 846*. Retrieved from: <http://www.asianlii.org/af/legis/laws/jlcogn846p2005032313840103a495/>

17 Women and Children Legal Research Foundation. (2015). *Research on sexual harassment against women in public places, workplace and educational institutions of Afghanistan*. Kabul: Women and Children Legal Research Foundation. Retrieved from <http://harassmap.af/wp-content/uploads/Research%20on%20sexual%20harassment%20against%20women.pdf>

18 Ministry of Justice Afghanistan. (1977). *Civil Law of the Republic of Afghanistan: Official Gazette No. 353*. Retrieved from: <https://www-cdn.law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Civil-Code-of-Afghanistan-ALEP-Translation.pdf>

19 Afghanistan Rule of Law Project, United States Agency for International Development. (2009). *English Translation: Shiite Personal Status Law*. Retrieved from: <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4a24ed5b2.pdf>

20 Ministry of Justice Afghanistan. (2017). "Ministry of Justice convenes a Scientific and Research Seminar on Draft of Family Law." Retrieved from: <http://moj.gov.af/en/news/290225>

Against this backdrop – of a rich legacy alongside strict patriarchy, of brave legislative advocacy alongside persistent conflict – this report presents a more comprehensive baseline from which to assess potential shifts related to masculinities, gender equality, and violence against women and girls in Afghanistan. By examining rigid gender norms, particularly norms related to masculinity, as well as men's disproportionate power and control and an array of violent behaviors toward women in Afghanistan, IMAGES Afghanistan aims to inform new violence-prevention and gender-equality advocacy and programming, in line with existing government commitments and strategies and in line with a vision for a world free of violence and gender-based inequalities. Furthermore, the voices presented in this study demonstrate that the vision of a more equal, less violent world is neither impossible in Afghanistan nor externally imposed. Instead, the seeds and sunlight needed for this future exist within the people of Afghanistan, their open-minded interpretations of their own traditions and culture, and their courage to seek – and realize – a transformed future for the coming generations.

1.2 About IMAGES

IMAGES was created in 2008 by Promundo and the International Center for Research on Women. It is a multi-year, multi-country effort to build the evidence base on the ways that public institutions and policies can better foster gender equality and to raise awareness, among policymakers and program planners, on the need to involve men in health, development, and gender-equality issues. It includes a questionnaire for men and for women, and it has both a core set of questions and new questions adapted for each country or region to include key and emerging context-specific issues in gender equality, gender relations, and women's empowerment.

As of 2018, IMAGES and IMAGES-inspired studies have been carried out in more than 40 countries. IMAGES served as the basis for household surveys carried out by Partners for Prevention (P4P, the United Nations regional joint program for the prevention of violence against women and girls in Asia and the Pacific) and other United Nations programs on men, gender, and gender-based violence. Similarly, in other countries, IMAGES has often been carried out in partnership with UN Women as part of developing national strategies to engage men as allies in achieving gender equality. The original IMAGES questionnaire is based in part on the Norwegian Gender Equality and Quality of Life survey carried out in 1986 and in 2006.²¹ The IMAGES questionnaire was designed to include questions addressing the major issues relevant to gender relations, with an emphasis on men and women in heterosexual-partnered relations, as well as the gendered vulnerabilities of men and women.²²

21 Holter, Svare, and Egeland. (2009). "Gender Equality and Quality of Life: A Norwegian Perspective." The Nordic Gender Institute (NIKK).

22 While the IMAGES questionnaire is primarily designed to assess partner relations among men and women who are in heterosexual intimate partnerships, it also asks about same-sex relationships when local contexts permit and about attitudes toward sexual minorities, understanding homophobia as a key component of how masculinities are socially constructed. In Afghanistan, these topics are very sensitive and needed to be excluded from the questionnaire to secure government approval and to ensure the safety of data collectors.

Specific topics include:

- Use of, and attitudes related to, gender-based violence;
- Health and health-related practices, including sexual and reproductive health;
- Household decision-making and division of labor;
- Men's participation in caregiving and as fathers;
- Men's and women's attitudes about gender and gender-related policies;
- Men's reports of transactional sex and paying for sex;
- Men's reports of criminal behavior, delinquency, and childhood experiences of violence; and
- Happiness and quality of life.

IMAGES around the world

The IMAGES study in Afghanistan was conceived and carried out during a similar timeframe to studies in four countries: Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, and Palestine (IMAGES – Middle East and North Africa, or IMAGES MENA). The questionnaires used in Afghanistan were tailored specifically for the Afghan context but also drew inspiration and guidance from the efforts of colleagues in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, and Palestine. The authors and researchers of IMAGES Afghanistan thank these partners for their efforts and encourage interested readers to read the full IMAGES MENA report at: www.imagesmena.org.

Additional IMAGES single-country and multi-country studies are available at: www.promundoglobal.org/images

The overall research questions that inspired IMAGES in Afghanistan include:

- In light of the gains in and challenges to women's rights and empowerment in Afghanistan, how do men's and women's attitudes and practices related to gender equality compare? Are men internalizing messages and policies calling for greater equality for girls and women in education, income and work, political participation, and health?
- How do women perceive men's response to gender equality and women's empowerment and rights? What are remaining barriers to women's empowerment?
- What are men's attitudes and practices related to their own health and interpersonal relationships? How much are men participating in the care of children and other domestic activities? How do men's care practices compare to women's?

- How common is men's use of intimate partner violence and other forms of violence? What factors are associated with this violence? What do men think about existing laws on gender-based violence and other policies designed to promote gender equality?
- Among men who take on more equitable, flexible, and nonviolent versions of masculinity, what changes or improvements in their lives can they report?

Norms, attitudes, and practices related to gender are reinforced in families, social institutions, the media, and national laws and policies, and they are internalized by girls and boys, women and men alike.

The theoretical framework for IMAGES emerges from a social-constructionist approach to gender and gender relations, and specifically masculinities. This approach posits that norms, attitudes, and practices related to gender are reinforced in families, social institutions, the media, and national laws and policies, and that they are internalized by girls and boys, women and men alike. IMAGES is also informed by a life-cycle approach, particularly the idea that gender norms are internalized from childhood experiences and evolve over the course of a lifetime through interactions with key social institutions and relationships. Accordingly, IMAGES assesses relationships between attitudes, childhood experiences and relationship factors, and current relationship practices and life outcomes. Multivariate and bivariate analyses test these associations in the quantitative data, while the accompanying qualitative data collection adds context and nuance to the conclusions drawn.

The gender attitude questions that are employed include those from the Gender Equitable Men Scale (GEM Scale),²³ which assesses men's and women's beliefs toward a set of equitable or inequitable norms (see Chapter 2 for more details). The GEM Scale was originally developed by Promundo and the Population Council and is now widely adapted to suit specific cultural contexts, used globally as both a population assessment tool and as an evaluation instrument. Prior to fielding, the IMAGES questionnaire is always adapted to local settings to include contextual issues and considerations, as was done in Afghanistan. Additional topics included in IMAGES Afghanistan relate to respondents' experiences – and the specific effects – of conflict and insecurity.

This report proceeds with a detailed description of the study methodology in the following section, with findings presented theme by theme thereafter.

²³ Pulerwitz, J., & Barker, G. (2008). Measuring attitudes toward gender norms among young men in Brazil: Development and psychometric evaluation of the GEM scale. *Men and Masculinities*, 10(3), 322-338. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X06298778>

Chapter 2

METHODOLOGY



METHODOLOGY

2.1 Overview

IMAGES Afghanistan combines three methods of data collection: (1) a household survey, (2) life story interviews, and (3) focus group discussions. Details about data collection for all three methods are included below. As the centerpiece of the study, a nationally representative household survey was conducted in 14 provinces of Afghanistan, with a total completed sample of 1,000 male and 1,000 female respondents aged 18 to 59 (see Table 2.1a).

Table 2.1a Survey sample and coverage for IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

Survey sample size, men	1,000
Response rate,²⁴ men	70.5%
Survey sample size, women	1,000
Response rate, women	76.1%
Total sample	2,000
Age group	18-59
Geographic representation	Representative of major regions and of the ethnic diversity of Afghanistan, with data collected in 14 provinces: Badghis, Baghlan, Balkh, Daikundi, Ghazni, Herat, Jowzjan, Kabul, Kandahar, Laghman, Nangarhar, Paktia, Parwan, and Takhar
Questionnaire application process	Paper-and-pencil face-to-face interviews

2.2 Survey

2.2.1 Sample Frame

To draw the sample for IMAGES, the study's quantitative research partner, the Opinion Research Center of Afghanistan (ORCA), drew from the Central Statistics Organization's "Estimated settled population by civil division, urban, rural, and sex – 2016-2017" data.²⁵ The sample was selected using a multi-stage process, selecting, in turn: regions, provinces, *nahias*/districts, villages, households, and respondents. All seven regions in the country were included, with two provinces²⁶ selected in

24 "Response rate" refers to the proportion of individuals selected by the survey's random sampling process who successfully completed the questionnaire.

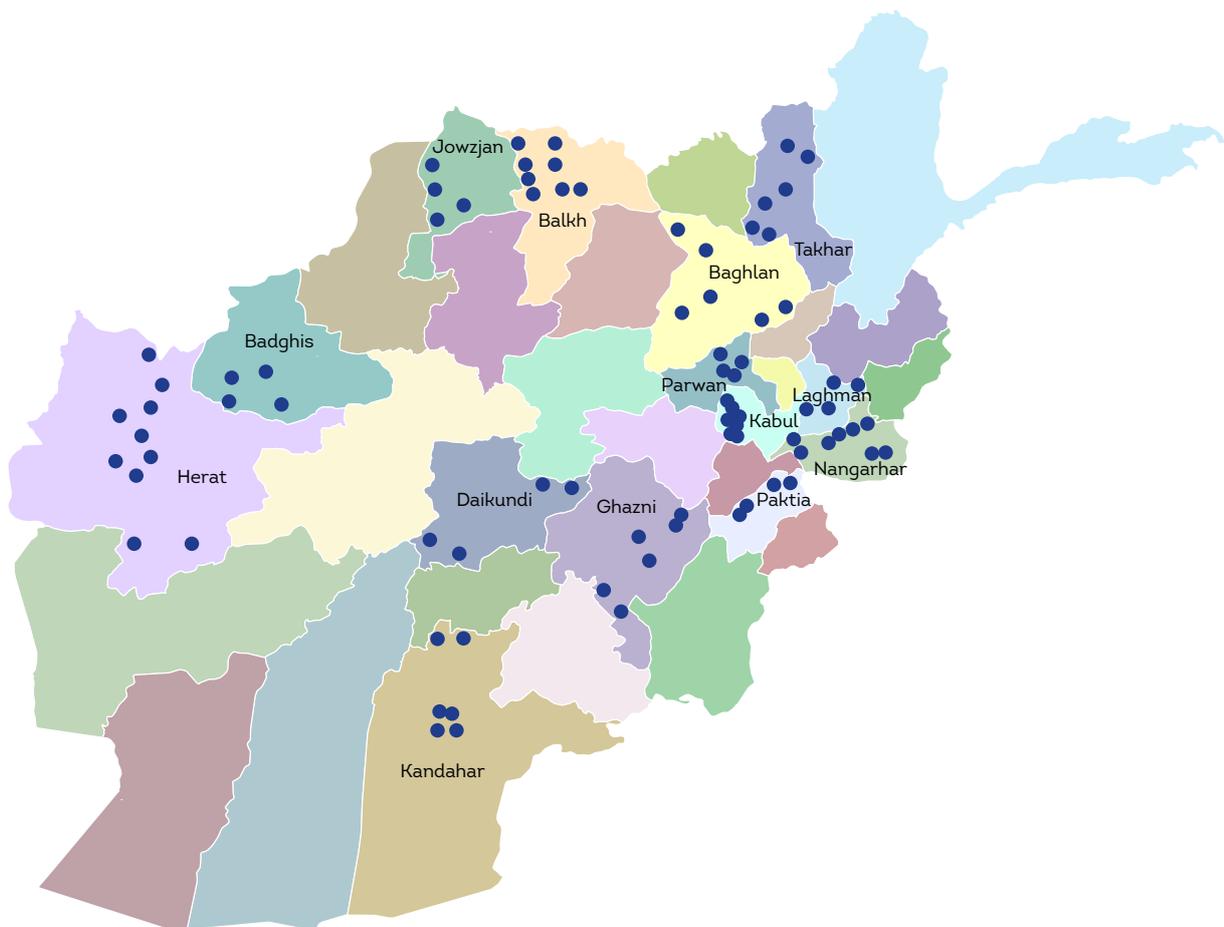
25 Central Statistics Organization Afghanistan. "Estimated settled population by civil division, urban, rural, and sex – 2016-2017." Retrieved from: <http://cso.gov.af/en/page/demography-and-socile-statistics/demograph-statistics/3897111>

26 Afghanistan is made up of 34 provinces. The provinces of Afghanistan are the primary administrative divisions, and each province encompasses a number of districts, ranging from three to 28.

each region using the probability proportional to size technique. This approach ensures that the probability of selecting a province is random and proportional to the size of its population (therefore, Afghanistan's most populous provinces had a much higher probability of selection into the sample than its least populous). The provinces and districts where the survey was conducted, selected by this process, are presented in Figure 2.2.1a.

Each region, province, and further strata were allocated an equal number of male and female sampling points while strictly guaranteeing that male and female data collection never took place in the same households. In a small number of cases, insurgent activities and frequent fighting in some provinces caused sampling points to be adjusted out of safety concerns for data collectors and participants. In these cases, the originally sampled districts or villages were replaced with an alternative that was not already in the sampling plan and that had similar population characteristics. The ORCA general field manager, in consultation with the field supervisor, made replacement decisions. All replacements were documented along with their justification. Afghanistan's nomadic population (estimated by Afghanistan's Central Statistics Organization at 1.5 million²⁷) was excluded from the sample.

Figure 2.2.1a Map of Afghanistan with randomly selected study sites marked



27 Central Statistics Organization (Afghanistan). (2015). "Analysis of Population Projections 2016-2017." Accessed May 13, 2018. <http://cso.gov.af/en/page/demography-and-socile-statistics/demograph-statistics/3897111>

2.2.2 Questionnaire Source, Adaptation, and Translation

IMAGES questions are taken from a number of standardized instruments on gender-based violence, gender attitudes, childhood experiences, the HIV/sexual and reproductive health field, and Promundo's and the International Center for Research on Women's experiences researching men and masculinities. Questions developed specifically for the Afghan context were constructed, revised, and finalized collaboratively by ORCA, AREU, UN Women, and Promundo in the months preceding fieldwork. In Afghanistan, the men's questionnaire had 232 items and the women's questionnaire had 228 items.

A multi-stage process was put into place to ensure the quality of the translations. First, the survey questionnaire was translated into Dari and Pashto. Second, the translated questionnaires were back-translated into English by other independent translators who had never seen the original English questionnaire. Other language experts then reviewed back-translations for fluency and accuracy. Thereafter, a reconciliation meeting was held among all translators to decide on necessary modifications to the translations.

2.2.3 Ethical Considerations and Institutional Review Board Approval

Interviewers obtained each study participant's informed consent before conducting the interviews. Participants were notified of the purpose of the study, the risks and benefits of participating, that participation was voluntary, that consent could be withdrawn at any time during the study, and that there were no consequences for withdrawing.

Various precautions were taken to minimize any risks of participation in the study.

Various precautions were taken to minimize any risks of participation in the study. Risk of distress among participants was reduced by the use of trained, gender-matched interviewers and by guaranteeing the privacy of data collection conversations. In the event that any participants became anxious, depressed, sad, or angry due to the questionnaire topics, interviewers were trained to pause or terminate the interview, or to otherwise respond in supportive, ethical, accommodating ways. To further ensure the safety of participants, only one person per household was selected as a participant, and separate sub-clusters of men and of women were sampled such that in any one immediate community, only men or only women were interviewed. This approach helps ensure that the interview content remains confidential. The study was described to the community in general terms – as being a study focusing on gender issues and family life – to avoid highlighting sensitive or potentially controversial topics like sexual behavior or violence.

Final questionnaires in all three languages were submitted to the Afghanistan National Public Health Institute's Institutional Review Board, along with data collection and methodological details, for approval. This board suggested certain modifications, including omitting a selection of questions that were considered too sensitive in the context of Afghanistan (certain questions on same-sex relationships, sexual violence experienced during childhood, and sexual harassment in public places). With these modifications in place, the study and questionnaires received institutional review board approval.

2.2.4 Data Collection Process

The survey was conducted face to face with a randomly selected sample of 2,000 participants in the selected areas using paper-and-pencil interviews. (Personal digital assistants, or PDAs, were deemed impractical given the suspicion they can generate in the context of armed conflict.) All male respondents were interviewed by male data collectors, and all female respondents were interviewed by female data collectors. Interviews each took between 40 and 73 minutes. Fourteen provincial field supervisors and 42 quality-control staff were involved, conducting field-level checks to verify that each interview took place, that the sampling methodology was applied accurately, that the skip patterns had been followed correctly, and that each data collector had maintained other professional and ethical standards of data collection.

In the case of non-response of any sampled household, two additional attempts were made on different hours/days, at least one of which was on another day of the week. After three attempts, the household to the immediate right of the originally sampled household was used for the survey. If this household also failed, the household to the immediate left of the originally selected household was used.

2.2.5 Response Rates in Detail

Response rates were generally high, with a nationwide average response rate of approximately 76 per cent for women and 71 per cent for men. Reasons for refusal or non-response (i.e. kinds of refusal) included: refusal to open the door to data collectors; refusal by the household or respondent to participate after being introduced to the study; unavailability of respondents (e.g., out of the village or not at home during the entire period of fieldwork); and premature termination of the survey for various reasons, including the sensitivity of questions.

Table 2.2.5a Survey response rates by province

Province	MEN			WOMEN		
	Eligible men (N)	Eligible men interviewed (N)	Eligible men response rate (%)	Eligible women (N)	Eligible women interviewed (N)	Eligible women response rate (%)
Badghis	57	40	70.2	56	40	71.4
Baghlan	86	60	69.8	78	60	76.9
Balkh	115	80	69.6	112	80	71.4
Daikundi	56	40	71.4	50	40	80.0
Ghazni	84	60	71.4	81	60	74.1
Herat	147	100	68.0	128	100	78.1
Jowzjan	55	40	72.7	53	40	75.5

Table 2.2.5a Continued Survey response rates by province

Province	MEN			WOMEN		
	Eligible men (N)	Eligible men interviewed (N)	Eligible men response rate (%)	Eligible women (N)	Eligible women interviewed (N)	Eligible women response rate (%)
Kabul	367	260	70.8	337	260	77.2
Kandahar	81	60	74.1	81	60	74.1
Laghman	56	40	71.4	51	40	78.4
Nangarhar	115	80	69.6	106	80	75.5
Paktia	57	40	70.2	52	40	76.9
Parwan	54	40	74.1	49	40	81.6
Takhar	88	60	68.2	80	60	75.0
Total	1,418	1,000	70.5	1,314	1,000	76.1

2.2.6 Data Entry, Coding, and Analysis

After data collection, all completed questionnaires were transported securely to ORCA's offices in Kabul. There, they underwent visual checks and verification for coherence and completeness. They were then forwarded to the data-entry department, where they were entered into a data-entry program designed for this survey's questionnaire with 100 per cent keying verification. For maximum quality control and data validation, 20 per cent of each data entry operator's output was entered by a different operator and compared with the original data.

After the completion of data entry into the data-analysis software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), the data were cleaned to remove any errors. Data were then analyzed using SPSS, generating descriptive tables and figures. Data analysts applied t-tests, chi-squared tests, and regression analysis methods to test associations between variables of interest.

2.3 Life Story Interviews

IMAGES is designed to be a multi-method study, and as such, survey research is always carried out alongside – and triangulated with – qualitative research that further explores issues related to gender and masculinities. Qualitative data collection in Afghanistan took place in two waves, each with a distinct objective. The first wave of qualitative data collection involved conducting in-depth life story interviews with 18 adult men who had been recognized by their peers, family members, civil society organizations, or research partners as demonstrating more gender-equitable forms of masculinity. Interviewees included headmasters of educational institutions for girls; non-governmental organization (NGO) staff members; male-identifying gender-equality activists; and a stay-at-home father, among others. All participants in the life story interviews came from in or near Kabul.

In each life story interview, interviewees were asked to recount their:

- Experiences of gender equality or inequality in their childhood homes;
- Earliest professional experiences;
- Current professional experiences, with particular attention to working alongside women;
- Attitudes and beliefs related to relations – and equality – between men and women;
- Experiences of war, conflict, or instability and how these affected their lives;
- Experiences of all forms of gender-based violence across the lifecycle; and
- Rationale and motivation for living a lifestyle that might be considered more gender-equitable, in their own words.

Participants offered their informed consent prior to commencing interviews, and all qualitative data presented in this report are identified only by the gender, age, profession, and location of the respondents to protect their privacy. Life story interviews were conducted by AREU staff from July to November 2017 and transmitted to Promundo staff for analysis using the Dedoose qualitative analysis platform.

2.4 Focus Group Discussions

A second wave of qualitative data collection took place from February to March 2018, comprising seven focus groups with women and seven focus groups with men, drawing from the same 14 provinces where IMAGES data were collected. ORCA collected focus group data using trained interviewers who were also involved with the survey research. ORCA's field supervisors and interviewers assisted in the recruitment process for focus group participants. To ensure the heterogeneous composition of the groups, efforts were made to recruit participants with different educational, employment, and ethnic backgrounds. In addition, participants also represented both rural and urban areas of the provinces. Only those who were recruited by ORCA's field teams were able to participate in the focus groups; participants were asked not to bring any friends or relatives if this person had not been previously screened by recruiters. An average of 12 to 15 individuals were recruited for each group to guarantee a minimum of eight to 10 participants. Focus group data were collected between February 19 and March 25, 2018, with more details presented in Table 2.4a.

Table 2.4a Location, gender makeup, language, and age category of focus groups

Focus group #	Province	Gender	Language	Age category
1	Kabul	Female	Dari	35+
2	Parwan	Male	Dari	35+
3	Baghlan	Female	Dari	18-35
4	Balkh	Male	Dari	18-35
5	Jowzjan	Female	Dari	35+
6	Takhar	Male	Dari	18-35
7	Nangarhar	Female	Pashto	35+
8	Laghman	Male	Pashto	35+
9	Ghazni	Female	Dari	18-35
10	Paktia	Male	Pashto	35+
11	Herat	Female	Dari	18-35
12	Badghis	Male	Dari	18-35
13	Kandahar	Female	Pashto	18-35
14	Daikundi	Male	Dari	35+

The themes included in the focus group discussions were designed both to best illuminate the survey findings and to speak specifically to Afghanistan's gender-related policy priorities, including:

- Health and nutrition (including gender-based disparities in access to health services);
- Sexual and reproductive health (including recommendations for improving access to high-quality sex education and health services);
- Education (including challenges to the enrollment and retention of girls in educational systems);
- Women's economic empowerment (including identifying local mechanisms and the potential changes to social norms needed to improve women's economic empowerment); and
- Women, peace, and security (including how conflict impacts the relations between men and women and how to mitigate the effects of conflict).

All focus group participants gave informed consent prior to commencing the discussions. Promundo staff coordinated data analysis using the Dedoose qualitative analysis platform, with additional analysis contributions by ORCA staff.

Chapter 3

FINDINGS



FINDINGS

This section comprises the majority of the report and presents IMAGES findings under the following thematic categories:

3.1. Sample Characteristics

3.2. Attitudes Related to Gender

3.3. Gender Dynamics in Childhood

3.4. Gender Dynamics of Marital Life

3.5. Parenthood

3.6. Conflict, War, and Family Security

3.7. Intimate Partner Violence and Harmful Practices

3.8. Health

Reporting below focuses on results from the IMAGES quantitative survey. Qualitative findings from the life story interviews and focus group discussions appear throughout to illuminate the results of the survey.

Who was surveyed? Sample characteristics at a glance

- Survey respondents included 1,000 men and 1,000 women aged 18 to 59 from 14 provinces in seven regions of Afghanistan.
- About a quarter of respondents live in urban areas.
- Men are about three times as likely to have completed secondary or high school as women are.
- One-third of men are currently employed for a wage; 95 per cent of women in the study reported not currently working for a wage.
- More than half of men and nearly two-thirds of women reported a monthly household income at or below AFN10,000 (approximately US\$135 at the time of writing).
- Some 68 per cent of men and 80 per cent of women have ever been married, with an additional 4 per cent of both men and women engaged to be married at the time of completing the survey; only around 1 per cent of men and less than 1 per cent of women are divorced.
- The average age of marriage of respondents was 22 for men and 18 for women.

3.1 Sample Characteristics

3.1.1 Demographics

The study population is marked by its relative youth, by the limited incomes of participants, and by discrepancies in employment and education between men and women. The sample characteristics display important trends related to age, educational level, marital status, parenthood, employment, and income (see Table 3.1.1a). Headlines include the following:

- **The sample – and the national population – is young.** With a high fertility rate and low life expectancy, the population of Afghanistan is very young, as reflected in the IMAGES sample. The average age of study respondents is 33 for men and 32 for women, drawing from an overall age range of 18 to 59. Fully 35 per cent of male participants and 31 per cent of female participants are between 18 and 24.
- **The sample includes significant rural and urban cohorts.** The study's sampling design, which included data collection in 14 provinces in an effort to represent the geographic breadth of Afghanistan, has produced a sample including urban, small city, and rural locations. Some 56 per cent of study respondents come from rural locations, with the remaining 44 per cent coming from small cities, suburbs, or big cities. Section 2.2.5 provides the province-by-province sample sizes.
- **Women are almost twice as likely as men are to report no formal education.** Fully 69 per cent of female respondents reported never attending school. Even among men, higher education is rare in the sample, with only 12 per cent reporting any post-secondary education.
- **Unemployment and relative poverty are the norm.** Only 33 per cent of men and 4 per cent of women reported being currently employed for a wage (when asked about the last three months). Majorities of both men and women reported monthly incomes at or below AFN10,000 (approximately US\$135 at the time of writing).
- **Respondents are predominantly married, and divorce is exceedingly rare.** Some 68 per cent of men in the sample have ever been married, compared to 80 per cent of women. An additional 4 per cent of men and women reported being engaged to be married at the time of the survey. The average age of first marriage is 22 for men and 18 for women. Only one man and two women reported being divorced and remarried in the entire sample, and only one man and three women reported being divorced and unmarried.

Table 3.1.1a Demographic characteristics of the sample

Percentage of all respondents who reported various demographic characteristics, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

	MEN		WOMEN	
	N	%	N	%
Type of settlement²⁸				
Rural area or on a farm	560	56.0	560	56.0
Small city or village	140	14.0	140	14.0
Suburb of big city	20	2.0	20	2.0
Big city	280	28.0	280	28.0
Age group				
18-24	349	34.9	310	31.0
25-34	236	23.6	317	31.7
35-49	256	25.6	282	28.2
50-59	159	15.9	91	9.1
Average age	33.2 years		31.7 years	
Education				
No formal schooling	361	36.1	693	69.3
Mosque or madrasa	55	5.5	49	4.9
Some or completed primary school	105	10.5	83	8.3
Some or completed secondary school/high school/vocational training	357	35.7	129	12.9
Some or completed college/university/higher education	122	12.2	46	4.6
Employment status (in the last three months)				
Currently employed for wage	334	33.4	37	3.7
Working in own family farm/business	382	38.2	4	0.4
Not employed	220	22.0	954	95.4
Student	64	6.4	5	0.5
Reported household income				
AFN0-AFN10,000	577	57.7	655	65.5
AFN10,001-AFN24,999	406	40.6	317	31.7
AFN25,000 or more	17	1.7	28	2.8
Marital status				
Never married	320	32.0	205	20.5
Ever married	680	68.0	795	79.5
Age at first marriage	22.4 years		18.3 years	
Total (N)	1,000		1,000	

28 See Table 2.2.5a for a more detailed presentation of respondent distribution by province.

3.1.2 Migration

Nearly one-third of men and fewer than 10 per cent of women reported migrating out of Afghanistan for an extended period of time. Among men who reported such an experience, they were predominantly drawn by job, income, or educational opportunities in other countries (see Table 3.1.2a). Among women, migration is more often caused by political instability or other characteristics of poor living conditions within Afghanistan. Unlike in other IMAGES study locations, particularly those in the Middle East, those who migrate away from Afghanistan are relatively unlikely to return, at least as long as political instability remains a feature of daily life. As such, the numbers in Table 3.1.2a may be somewhat low since (by definition) those who have migrated out of Afghanistan and not returned were unable to participate in the study.

Table 3.1.2a Men and women in motion: reasons for migration

Percentage of all respondents who reported migration and the reasons for migration among this subset,* IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

	MEN		WOMEN	
	N	%	N	%
Ever traveled to another country to work/study/live for more than six consecutive months	318	31.8	86	8.6
Main reason for migration (among those who have migrated)				
Lack of job opportunities at home	69	21.7	2	2.3
Incomes are higher elsewhere	84	26.4	4	4.7
Poor living conditions at home	52	16.4	33	38.4
Political and security conditions at home	65	20.4	43	50.0
Natural disasters	2	0.6	1	1.2
Education better elsewhere	10	3.1	0	0.0
To help my family	20	6.3	0	0.0
To save money (for marriage or investments)	6	1.8	0	0.0
To expand my experience of the world	2	0.6	0	0.0
Other	8	2.5	3	3.5

*Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

“A man is a person who doesn’t allow his family to feel poor”

Both male and female focus group participants emphasized the primacy of the income-earning role for men in Afghanistan. This role and expectation is a particular challenge in Afghanistan, where unemployment is high and a preponderance of families experience other economic insecurity.

“Man” means a person who can provide all needs of his family, including food, clothes, and education expenses of his children. Also, “man” means a person who can provide a good living for his family.

Woman, 23, Herat province, university student

A person who feels really responsible toward his family and job is called a “good man.” A man shouldn’t do work that makes his family dishonored. A man should do work through which he could earn halal [legal] food for his family and allow his children to be educated.

Woman, 41, Kabul province, university student

A man is a person who tackles all problems of the family, particularly economic problems. Currently, most of the people have economic problems, so a man is a person who can tackle all the economic problems of the family and manage his family properly. A man is a person who sends his sons and daughters to school. Finally, a man is a person who is like an umbrella toward all problems of the family. A man is a person who doesn’t allow his family to feel poor.

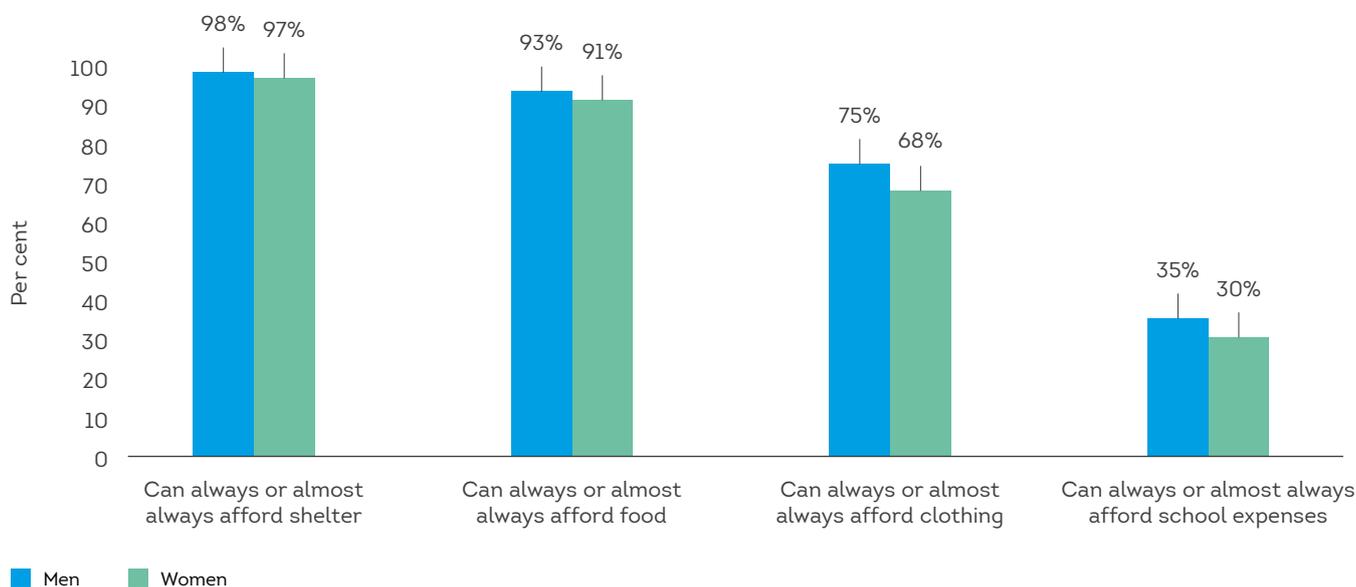
Man, 27, Balkh province, teacher

3.1.3 Impact of Poverty and Lack of Work

Respondents struggle to afford clothing and schooling. As Figure 3.1.3a shows, the vast majority of study respondents reported usually being able to afford food and shelter. These proportions decline somewhat when it comes to clothing, and dramatically when it comes to schooling. Only 35 per cent of men and 30 per cent of women reported that they could always or almost always afford school expenses (e.g., books, notebooks, and uniforms) at their current level of income.

Figure 3.1.3a Ability to pay for life necessities

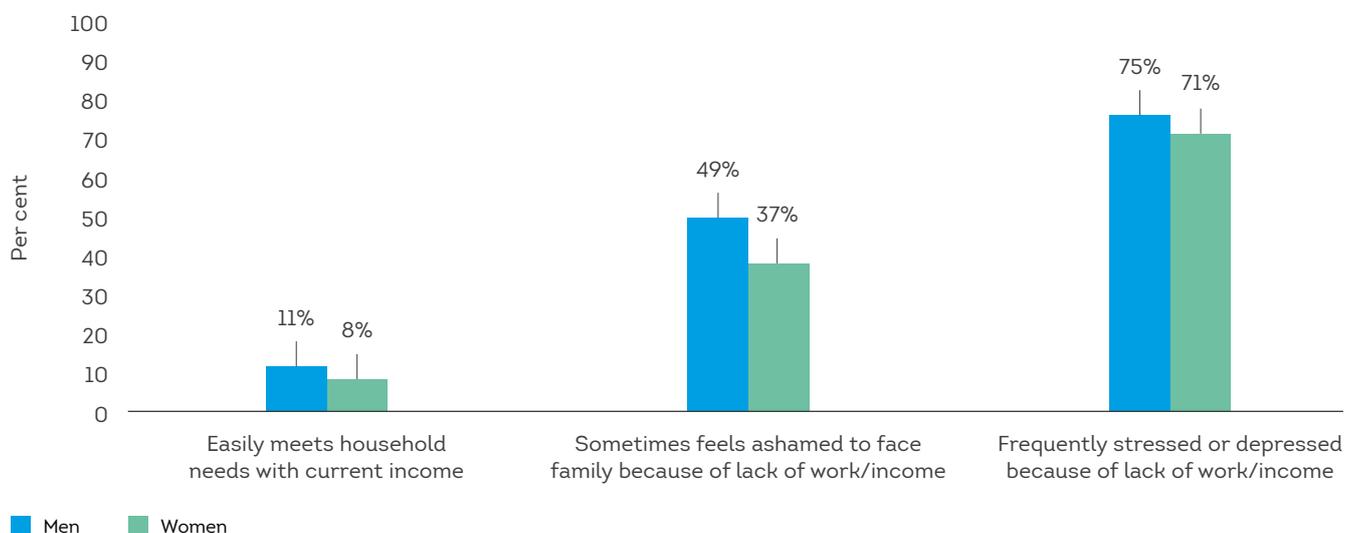
Percentage of all respondents who reported that they can “always” or “almost always” meet certain household expenses, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017



Financial insecurity produces significant life stresses, with a mental health toll on men in the study. Seventy-five per cent of men in the study reported that they are frequently stressed or depressed because of a lack of work or income, and 71 per cent of women (asked about their husbands) agreed with this statement. Likewise, nearly half of men reported that they are ashamed to face their family because of a lack of work or income (see Figure 3.1.3b).

Figure 3.1.3b Men’s work-related stress

Percentage of all men and ever-married women who agreed or strongly agreed with statements about household needs and the husband’s work-related stress,* IMAGES Afghanistan 2017



*For the second and third items in this figure, men were asked about their own feelings while women were asked whether they agree or disagree that their husbands experience such feelings.

3.2 Attitudes Related to Gender

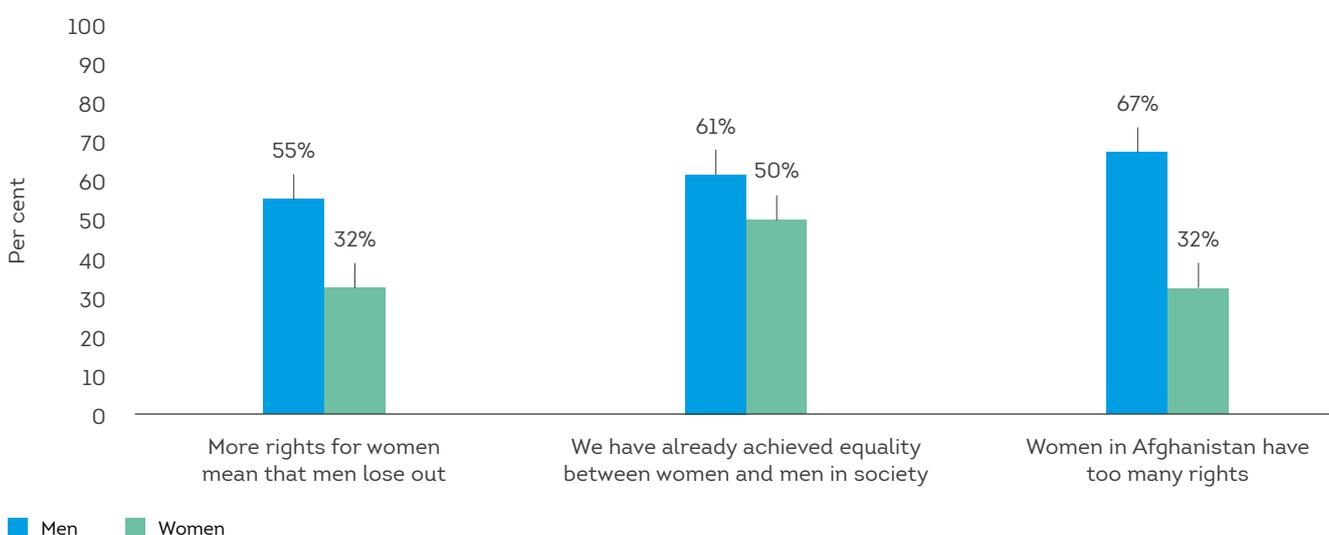
This section shows the extent to which IMAGES participants in Afghanistan agree or disagree with various social norms, messages, stereotypes, and expectations related to gender.

3.2.1 Gender Equality in Society

Men are far more likely than women to hold attitudes resisting gender equality at the societal level. Two-thirds of men agreed or strongly agreed with the idea that “women in Afghanistan have too many rights,” as Figure 3.2.1a demonstrates. Nearly a third of women agreed with this statement as well. Sixty-one per cent of men and 50 per cent of women agreed or strongly agreed that Afghanistan has already achieved gender equality, when asked in broad terms. While the picture is complex, it appears that the majority of men and a fair – though much smaller – proportion of women in Afghanistan think the gender-equality agenda has already come far enough.

Figure 3.2.1a Beliefs about gender equality at the societal level

Percentage of all respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with statements about societal gender equality, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017



Men in the qualitative research shared nuanced perspectives related to gender equality at the societal and household levels. Many men felt that they had achieved some measure of equality by “allowing” their wives to work outside the home. Many participants also spoke about indicators of equality in their families, such as women being fully involved in the family decision-making, more flexible roles in domestic work, and the provision of equal opportunities to daughters and sons. Looking outside the bounds of the household, participants identified women’s rights to pursue education, to work outside the home, and to be elected to political office as salient measures of gender equality.

I believe in the talent of my daughters, and I am sure that when my daughters graduate from university they can help me with my responsibilities. And after they get married, they can be supporters of their husbands. I really want them to study because I know they are very talented. My second oldest daughter ... was always first in her class.

Man, 43, Kabul province, teacher and shopkeeper

While some men embrace the idea that women can do the same paid work as men, others believe equality means men and women holding different roles, each serving society symbiotically.

Men cannot deliver babies, and women cannot be fathers. The rest, every other role that you can see, either a man or a woman can perform. ... Unfortunately, in our society, some roles are gendered, and I believe that it should not be that way.

Man, 68, Kabul province, retired government employee

According to Islamic values, men and women are equal. ... Equality between men and women does not mean that women should do whatever a man does. ... If a man is doing heavy construction work, his wife should help him through preparing food for him. I think that is equality.

Man, 29, Kabul province, teacher at military training center

Many men spoke in support of women filling certain important public or social roles, but their emphasis was on the smooth functioning of a gender-segregated society rather than on equality. For these men, it is important that there are female professionals to serve the needs of women, and vice versa, based on the sense that it would be improper for women to engage with men professionally. They argued that female professionals ensure that women have access to services like healthcare and education.

We need female doctors to help our women, we need female police officers who can go and search the houses of women. Therefore, without women, a society cannot survive, and women need to work with men jointly as counterparts. ... Women are very talented, and they can lead and manage very well. Currently, the management of my institution is in the hands of women, and they are teachers, finance officers, and administrators.

Man, 35, Kabul province, director of teacher training institute

3.2.2 Gender Attitudes Overall: The GEM Scale

Women’s attitudes – as measured by the GEM Scale – are much more gender-equitable than those of men, and older men, more educated men, and men in urban areas showed more equitable attitudes. The GEM Scale in Afghanistan is a set of 11 attitude statements related to multiple gender-related domains and ideas in respondents’ lives. For each statement, respondents are asked to strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. These four possible answers are given a score of 0, 1, 2, or 3, with the highest score corresponding with the most gender-equitable response (in most cases, “strongly disagree”). The GEM Scale score is calculated by taking an average response score across all 11 items. The GEM Scale score is 0.0 if a respondent has the most inequitable attitude possible about all 11 items, and 3.0 if a respondent has the most equitable attitude possible about all 11 items. As presented in Table 3.2.2a, the average GEM Scale score in Afghanistan for men was 1.28, as compared to 1.70 for women.

Table 3.2.2a GEM Scale scores

Average GEM Scale score (combining 11 gender attitude statements) among different demographic groups, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

		MEN	WOMEN
Overall average score		1.28	1.70
Household income	AFN0-AFN10,000	1.29	1.66
	AFN10,001-AFN24,999	1.26	1.78
	AFN25,000 or more	1.50	1.98
Education	No formal schooling	1.22	1.64
	Mosque or madrasa	1.16	1.71
	Some or completed primary school	1.35	1.77
	Some or completed secondary school/high school/vocational training	1.30	1.82
	Some or completed college/university/higher education	1.34	2.03
Marital status	Currently married	1.30	1.68
	Not currently married	1.23	1.74
Location	Rural area or on a farm	1.25	1.64
	Small city or village	1.23	1.63
	Suburb of big city	1.30	1.62
	Big city	1.35	1.83
Age	18-24	1.22	1.71
	25-34	1.31	1.71
	35-49	1.29	1.67
	50-59	1.32	1.71

Multivariate regression analyses were undertaken for men's and women's standardized GEM Scale scores, including nine independent variables under two main categories:

- *Demographic variables:* age, education level, marital status, employment status, urban/rural setting, and standardized financial security.²⁹
- *Childhood factors:* father's involvement in "traditionally feminine" household work, having witnessed physical intimate partner violence against one's mother, and whether one's mother worked for pay.

For men, holding the remainder of these other variables constant, results demonstrate three statistically significant links: older men, men with higher educational attainment, and men in more urban settings exhibit higher (more equitable) GEM Scale scores. For women, data show four statistically significant relationships: women with greater educational attainment, women who are currently working for pay, women in more urban settings, and women with greater financial security exhibit higher GEM Scale scores.

Focus on youth

IMAGES Afghanistan data demonstrate a statistically significant relationship whereby older men have higher gender-equality scores (using the GEM Scale) than younger men, even when accounting for the influence of eight other demographic and childhood influences. These data demonstrate that the oldest men in Afghanistan, those of prior generations, actually believe in a more gender-equal world than the youngest men. This finding seems to contradict a common social assumption that younger generations tend to be more accepting of social change and increased equality.

Young men in Afghanistan face a particular confluence of threats to their sense of identity, particularly their sense of achieving socially recognized manhood. In a time of high financial insecurity, young men struggle to achieve the social expectation that they provide economically for their families. In a time of ongoing political instability and insurgency, young men likewise struggle to achieve the role of "protector" of their families, as no sole man possesses the power to effectively eradicate the geopolitical tensions underlying the ongoing violence in Afghanistan.

IMAGES evidence suggests that young men, facing these challenges to some elements of their masculine identity, may be grabbing hold of rigid gender divisions in other spaces in their lives. This finding calls for increased research and programming to help young men in Afghanistan take pride in a masculine identity based on equality, collaboration, and peace. It is also possible that this generation of younger men been most affected in their attitudes by the deliberate promotion of conservative interpretations of Islam, including those of the Taliban.

²⁹ "Standardized financial security" is a variable constructed from respondents' answers to five questions about their relative financial security. The questions include: (1) If you consider your current household income, how easily are you and your household able to make ends meet? (2) How often can your household afford food? (3) How often can your household afford shelter? (4) How often can your household afford clothing? (5) How often can your household afford school expenses? Combined and standardized responses provide a more responsive measure than reported income alone.

3.2.3 Individual Attitudes

Many men, and some women, uphold rigid ideas about gender roles, violence, women’s public lives, and masculinity. As Table 3.2.3a demonstrates, women and men have vastly different views about the gendered ordering of society. In most cases, as reflected in the GEM Scale scores, women’s views are meaningfully more equitable than men’s. Notably, 72 per cent of women agreed that “a married woman should have the same rights to work outside the home as her husband,” as compared to only 15 per cent of men. Similarly, a majority of men agreed that “there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten,” more than double the rate of agreement among women. On only one attitude statement did women display more rigid views than men: “Changing diapers, giving baths to children, and feeding children should all be the mother’s responsibility.” Additional results are presented in Table 3.2.3a.

Table 3.2.3a Attitudes on gender roles, violence, women’s public lives, and masculinity

Percentage of all respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with statements about gender roles,*
IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

	MEN	WOMEN
	%	%
Rigid gender roles		
A woman’s most important role is to take care of the home and cook for the family	84.9	41.1
A man should have the final word about decisions in the home	69.8	36.7
Changing diapers, giving baths to children, and feeding children should all be the mother’s responsibility	65.9	86.1
It is shameful when men engage in caring for children or other domestic work	26.5	25.8
Boys are responsible for punishing the bad behavior of their sisters, even if they are younger than their sisters	61.1	27.2
Violence		
There are times when a woman deserves to be beaten	57.0	26.8
A woman should tolerate violence to keep the family together	21.2	18.2
Women’s lives outside the home		
A married woman should have the same rights to work outside the home as her husband	14.6	72.4
If financial resources are scarce, it is more important to educate sons than daughters	49.6	31.3
Women who work outside of the home cannot also be good wives or mothers	47.1	21.4
Masculinity and toughness		
To be a man, you need to be tough	75.5	56.6

* The items included in the table are the 11 attitude statements that, when combined, form the GEM Scale scores for Afghanistan presented in Section 3.2.2.

3.2.4 Attitudes on Public Life and Leadership

Women and men also broadly disagree about women’s suitability to be public leaders, although men’s and women’s notions about which public roles are most acceptable for women mirror one another. Table 3.2.4a presents survey responses related to public life and leadership. As in prior attitude sections of the survey, women reported much more gender-equitable attitudes than men did. Approximately 65 per cent of men agreed, for instance, that “because women are too emotional, they cannot be leaders,” while only 29 per cent of women agreed with this idea. A vast majority of women – 77 per cent – agreed that “a woman with the same qualifications can do as good a job as a man as a political leader.” Women’s and men’s responses did broadly reflect one another, however, when it came to identifying which public roles are least suitable for women. All respondents were particularly unlikely to support the idea of women in the roles of police officers, judges, soldiers, and religious leaders.

Table 3.2.4a Public life and leadership roles

Percentage of all respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with statements about women in public life, and percentage of all respondents who reported approving of/accepting women in various professional roles, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

	MEN	WOMEN
	%	%
Respondents who agree or strongly agree that...		
Because women are too emotional, they cannot be leaders	64.8	29.0
Women who participate in politics or leadership positions cannot also be good wives or mothers	49.6	26.0
A woman with the same qualifications can do as good a job as a man as a political leader	58.2	76.8
Respondents who approve of...		
Women as members of parliaments/assemblies	77.6	90.6
Women as voters	89.5	97.0
Women as police officers	16.5	23.6
Women as leaders of business	56.3	64.0
Women as judges	22.8	33.6
Women as soldiers or combatants in the military or armed forces	10.2	12.6
Women as teachers	88.8	96.3
Women as religious leaders	19.7	27.9
Women as doctors	92.1	97.1
Women as engineers	63.3	70.2
Respondents who accept...		
Working with women as colleagues at the same level	65.5	<i>Not included</i>
Having a female boss	50.4	<i>Not included</i>

In-depth interviews and focus-group discussions affirm that women should not work outside the home, let alone hold public leadership roles. At the same time, research uncovered several stories of husbands supporting their wives and daughters in leadership roles and of male employees praising their female coworkers and bosses. Some expressed the idea that women are better leaders because they are less corrupt than men.

Unfortunately, there is a general perception that women cannot lead or manage. The majority of roles assigned to women are low-paying roles or minor tasks. For example, they assign women as typists or receptionists because they perceive that women are not capable of leadership and management. I believe that whenever women have the management role, they can even manage better than men. Women are less corrupt, and they don't usually discriminate.

Man, 40, Kabul province, entrepreneur

I believe that if the president of the country was a female, I believe that she could manage the country better.

Man, 58, Kabul province, NGO director

My husband was supportive of me during the entire time I was employed. My husband never questioned my job or my behavior. ... I frequently gave presentations and conferences in front of men. ... He told me that two people who participated from our village told him in the mosque that his wife stood up in front of the men in a conference. ... They provoked my husband so that he wouldn't allow me to work anymore, but my husband didn't say any such thing to me.

Woman, 28, Baghlan province, unemployed

“No one should hear her laughing” – Women in public and at work

Many focus group discussions, both those comprising men and those comprising women, included lengthy discussions of restrictions on women's mobility and involvement in the labor force. Participants painted a picture of a society in which women are broadly discouraged from working outside the home, or from leaving the home at all, including this extreme example:

In Kabul, we had a neighbor who was very strict toward the female members of his family. His daughter and wife were not allowed to go outside for studying or for any other purpose. He didn't allow his daughters to go to school. He had a negative view about men, and he was thinking that all men are like him. Therefore, when he was going out of the house, he used to lock the door from outside so that his daughters and wife could not go outside. And if he wasn't there, no one was allowed to go to his house. ... That really impacted me a lot, and I decided to not be like him. Once, I received a call on my mobile from my neighbor, asking me to bring bread for them, because they were locked in and they could not go outside to buy bread. I bought bread for them and gave it to them through the window. That impacted me a lot.

Man, 29, Kabul province, teacher at military training center

Many participants reported believing that Islam prescribes that men provide for their wives and children and that honorable women stay at home. Some respondents described how deviating from these roles reflects negatively on men's and women's reputations in their communities.

The position that Allah granted to women is staying at home. ... There is a proverb that says, "Property for life, and life for honor." Therefore, in our country ... religious zeal and Islamic pride don't allow men to let their wives work outside the home. You might have seen some men who don't allow their wives to uncover their faces in front of strangers, and if they do, they beat them. We grant extra honor and grace to women.

Man, 40, Parwan province, imam

People say ... if you allow your wife to work today, then in the future your wife will sneer at you and will tell you that she was working and earning food for you.

Man, 30, Balkh province, metal worker

A woman must stay either at home or in the grave.

Man, 58, Laghman province, doctor

Many in the focus groups said that it is shameful for women to work in the same spaces as men. As such, some men would hypothetically allow their wives to work outside the home, but only if there were more gender-segregated workspaces. Others said that they would only allow their wives to be teachers, since it is considered inappropriate for girls to be taught by men. Indeed, many men stated that women would engage in immoral acts if they worked with men or would be pressured by their male coworkers.

Here in the Pashtun community ... even if a woman receives millions in her salary, still no one accepts that she should work jointly with a man. It is possible to work in an office, but their offices should be separate from men, their schools and universities should be separated.

Man, 36, Paktia province, teacher

Women described how they must adhere strictly to community traditions to make working outside the home viable. Many women in the focus group discussions mentioned the range of reactions from their fellow community members when and if they work outside the home. Some mentioned that even if their husband, father, or brother supports them working outside the home, they must be discreet with others.

If [women] try to work outside the home, then people start talking badly and using bad words about them. Personally, when I go to my work, I don't tell my neighbors that I am going to my job. I just tell them that I am going to school or to a course. I only tell my father that I go to my job, as he is so important to me.

Woman, 21, Herat province, university student

The women should obey the rule and customs and traditions of the community, and they should wear the Islamic hijab when they go outside the home. Men don't like them to wear the clothes which are opposite of our customs and traditions. Women should think to themselves – how to get out of the home, how to walk on the road, and how to talk with drivers and other people so that no one will see them doing wrong things outside the house. So, they should do everything which their men want and like.

Woman, 21, Kandahar province, unemployed

She must be covered while going outside the house, and no one should hear her laughing.

Woman, 18, Kandahar province, unemployed

3.2.5 Attitudes on Laws and Policies

Women outpace men in showing support for specific gender-equality legislation, although a meaningful proportion of men support such legislation as well. As shown in Table 3.2.5a, IMAGES assesses respondents' support for legislation on topics such as equal inheritance, marital rape, and honor killings. Majorities of both men and women agreed that crimes committed in the name of honor (i.e. honor killings) should be treated like any other murder, while men and women tended to disagree about allowing equal inheritance, among other proposed legislation.

Table 3.2.5a Support for gender-equality legislation

Percentage of all respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with statements about hypothetical new legislation, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

	MEN	WOMEN
	%	%
Respondents who agree or strongly agree that there should be a law...		
Allowing equal inheritance	37.8	67.4
Allowing women to pass their nationality to husbands and children	36.2	43.1
Criminalizing marital rape	40.5	54.7
Penalizing sexual harassment in public spaces	80.1	85.0
Treating honor killings like any other murder	67.2	78.3

Calls for penalization of sexual harassment in public spaces were nearly unanimous, with over 80 per cent of both women and men supporting this legislation. Participants in the qualitative research added depth to this finding, emphasizing a cycle of shame that keeps women from speaking up when they are sexually harassed.

Some girls, if they have an experience of someone asking them something immoral outside the home, then they cannot share it at home. If they share this at home, then their families won't allow them to go outside the home. It is really miserable that girls complete their education with lots of difficulties, but they are being asked for sex in order to get job.

Woman, 18, Herat province, unemployed

We cannot say that immoral activities or sexual harassment don't exist in the government, training centers, or private organizations. We hear in the media and by word of mouth from friends and relatives that girls and women are sexually abused. So, it is really hard for a person who loves his honor to allow his wife to work outside the home. Some people say that they trust their wives, thus they allow them to work outside the home. It is good that they trust them, but we cannot trust the environment, the society, or different people with different backgrounds.

Man, 27, Balkh province, teacher

3.3 Gender Dynamics in Childhood

This section presents findings related to various elements of respondents' childhood homes, including the division of domestic work and childcare, perceived differences in freedoms between girls and boys, and adverse childhood experiences.

I believe that my family was my "character school," where I learned and shaped my character. If we look at the society at that time, if I were born in another family, I would have become an uneducated and untalented person. Whatever I am today is because of my family and their teachings.

Man, 29, Kabul province, teacher

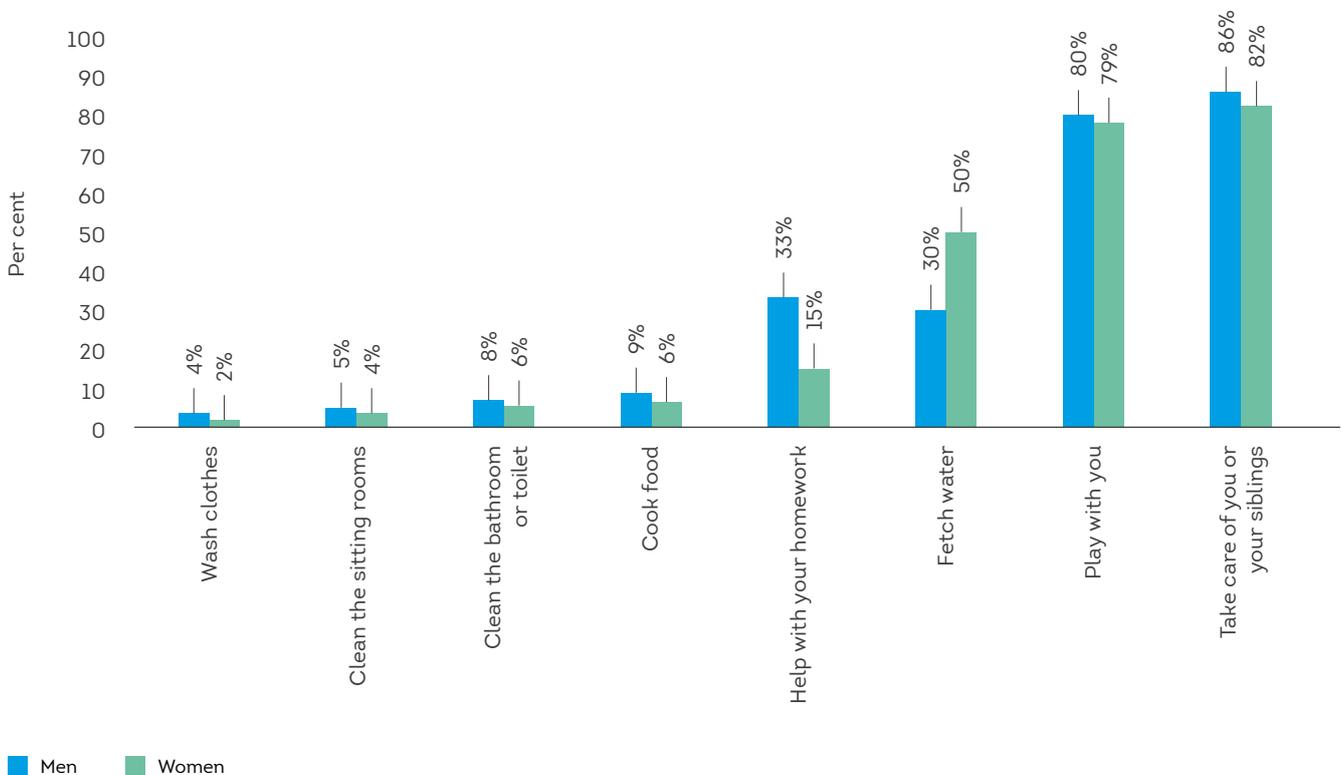
3.3.1 Parents' Division of Housework, Childcare, and Decision-Making Authority

Reflecting on their fathers' role in childcare, respondents were likely to recall a figure who played with them and looked after them in general terms, but not someone routinely involved in washing, cleaning, cooking, and helping with homework. Figure 3.3.1a presents the proportion of male and female respondents

who reported that their father participated in various forms of household work and childcare when the respondents were children. No more than 5 per cent of respondents reported that their father sometimes or often washed clothes or cleaned the sitting rooms, for instance, while approximately 80 per cent of all respondents reported that their father played with them. Men and women had significantly different recollections when it came to their father helping with homework and fetching water, with men much more likely to recall a father helping with homework and women more likely to recall a father fetching water.

Figure 3.3.1a Father’s participation in housework and childcare

Percentage of all respondents who reported that their fathers did the following tasks “sometimes” or “often” when the respondents were children or teenagers, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017



In the qualitative research, most participants recalled their mother being largely responsible for housework in their childhood home. Many participants’ fathers worked long hours outside the home but contributed to some small domestic tasks when they were home. Some recalled their father cooking occasional meals or playing with the children while their wife performed other tasks. While many men noted that their father did not participate in housework because it was a “woman’s role,” some remembered their mother actually not allowing their father to help her with domestic work, believing it was her responsibility and that his help would reflect poorly on her as a woman and a wife. Many participants noted that, in times of need, their parents’ division of housework became more fluid. Times of illness, economic hardship, or living in another country were sometimes the first time participants became aware of gender-divided roles.

As [my father] was always busy working outside, he was not able to help my mother in her work every day. However, on Fridays when he was at home, he used to make breakfast for us. But he was not helping with the cleaning and washing clothes. I never remember my father cleaning the house. ... Whenever my father was at home, he used to take care of my little brothers when my mother was busy with other chores. He was feeding my brothers and even giving them a bath, but he never changed the diapers because he did not know how to do it.

Man, 35, Kabul province, school principal

When my mother was very sick, then my father, in addition to working outside, was also cooking at home for us. ... This was only during times when my mother was sick, and she was not able to cook or work at home. It was very interesting to me seeing that my father can cook while it is a woman's role.

Man, 29, Kabul province, women's rights advocate

Participants disagreed on education's role in shifting women's decision-making power in families. While some believed that their mother's level of education helped elevate her influence in the family, others remembered their mother's education merely helping her understand decisions made by their father.

My father himself accepted that my mother is someone who never makes a wrong decision; therefore, he was not arguing with my mother regarding decision-making. It was mainly my mother who made decisions at home. ... I can say that my father was not an obstacle to the decisions of my mother. ... I think that education gives us power. ... As my father was uneducated and my mother was educated, therefore, she had this power.

Man, 58, Kabul province, NGO director

Whenever my mother had any disagreement with my father, he used to make her understand in a very logical way and give her reasons. When he was making her understand in a logical way, as my mother is also an educated woman, she would understand and then agree with him.

Man, 29, Kabul province, teacher and administrator

Who was the most significant figure in your childhood?

Participants in the qualitative research shared many stories about their own childhoods, reflecting on whether their father, their mother, or other adults exerted particular influence on their upbringing.

Father's influence:

I want to tell you a story: There was a situation when my father got imprisoned. I don't want to go into detail on why he was detained, but when he was imprisoned, I was in the second year of university. My mind was very disturbed at that time, and our lessons were also very difficult. I was so disturbed that I was not able to concentrate on my studies because I had problems at home and my father was imprisoned. I met my father, and I told him that "I want to leave the university and I want to work to provide for the family." He was very mad at me when he heard that, and he told me, ... "A man faces lots of problems in his life, but it does not mean that you should stop pursuing your goals." He told me to go and concentrate on my studies. He said that "the difficult time would pass, and your education will be your asset in life." I always remember his advice. I resumed my studies, and despite being disturbed and having family problems, I managed to pass my exams and finished the four years of university. Therefore, I can say that my father had a significant role in shaping my career by encouraging me all the time to study.

Man, 68, Kabul province, retired government employee

Mother's influence:

I can say 60 per cent it was my mother who had an impact on me, to shape me into the man I am today, and it was 40 per cent my father's role ... because from childhood till now I have spent more time with my mother, and it was my mother who had the greatest role in my upbringing and building my personality. My father was out of the house most of the time; therefore I think my mother had the major role.

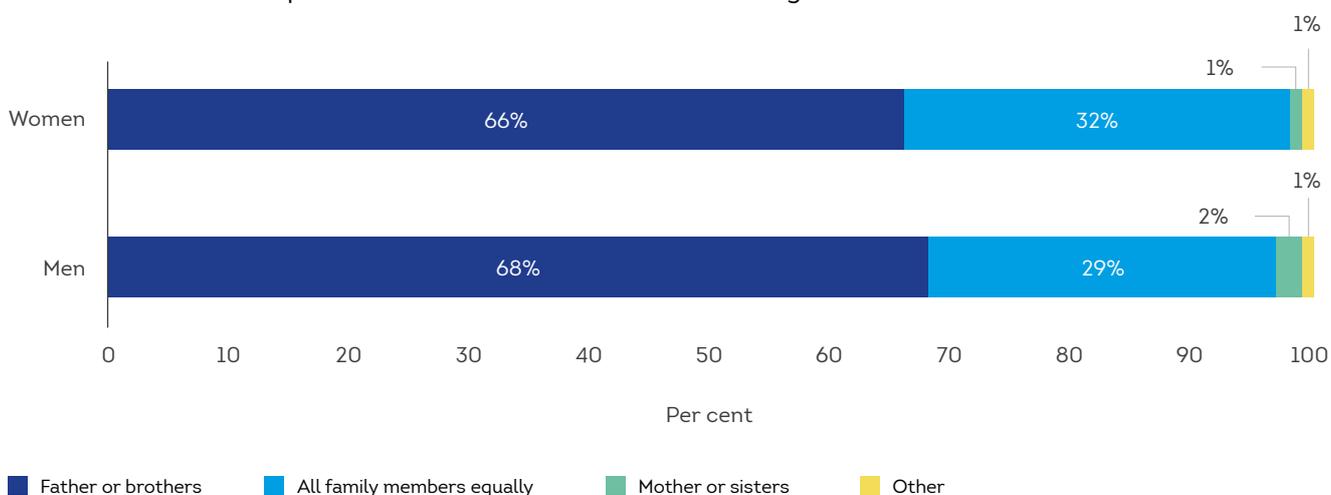
Man, 29, Kabul province, teacher at military training center

Survey respondents recalled childhood homes in which fathers or brothers reigned supreme in terms of financial decisions.

When asked who had the final say on large investments in their childhood home, about two-thirds of men and women reported that it was their father or brothers (see Figure 3.3.1b). Around 30 per cent of men and women felt that such decisions were made more collaboratively, with all family members having equal say. In only a negligible number of households did respondents feel that their mother or sisters had the final say on large financial investments.

Figure 3.3.1b Decision-making on large investments in the childhood home

Percentage of respondents who reported that certain family members had the “final say” on large investments in the respondents’ childhood homes, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017



Findings from the life story interviews support the quantitative findings on decision-making authority in respondents’ childhood homes. Most participants remembered their father or other male relatives consulting with their mother before making household decisions, but still having the final say. Some men shared that their father held on tightly to household spending decisions because he assumed his wife would spend the money frivolously. Others reported that their father imposed more restrictions on their mother’s spending decisions when the family’s economic situation was poorer and that their mother had more power when financial situations improved.

When a person supports his family members financially, he also considers that he is the key player and he should make the final decisions. ... We have a proverb in Dari, “Aan ki naan dehad, farman dehad.” It means, “He who is the breadwinner gives the orders.”

Man, 57, Kabul province, teacher and education activist

There were several times that my father’s decision was not correct, but we did not dare to interfere. That was because fathers, especially in rural areas, are like dictators, and they don’t allow other family members to interfere in their decisions. ... Now, I consult with my children about even small issues. I have a son in second grade at school, and I consult with him about some small decisions at home. It doesn’t mean that he can give me good advice, but I want him to have the courage in the future to express his opinions. I also consult with my daughters and, of course, my wife about every decision at home.

Man, 40, Kabul province, entrepreneur

3.3.2 Children’s Participation in Domestic Work

IMAGES data show that children are expected to contribute to domestic work once they reach the age of 13, although the expected contributions of boys and girls are very different. Figures 3.3.2a and 3.3.2b present the survey results related to respondents’ memories of participating in domestic work and childcare from ages 13 to 18. Figure 3.3.2a shows the household tasks for which male respondents were much more likely to recall involvement, including grocery shopping, attending community meetings, paying bills, and repairing broken household items.

Figure 3.3.2a Childhood involvement in household work: higher boys’ participation

Percentage of all respondents who reported that they “sometimes” or “often” participated in various household tasks when they were aged 13 to 18, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

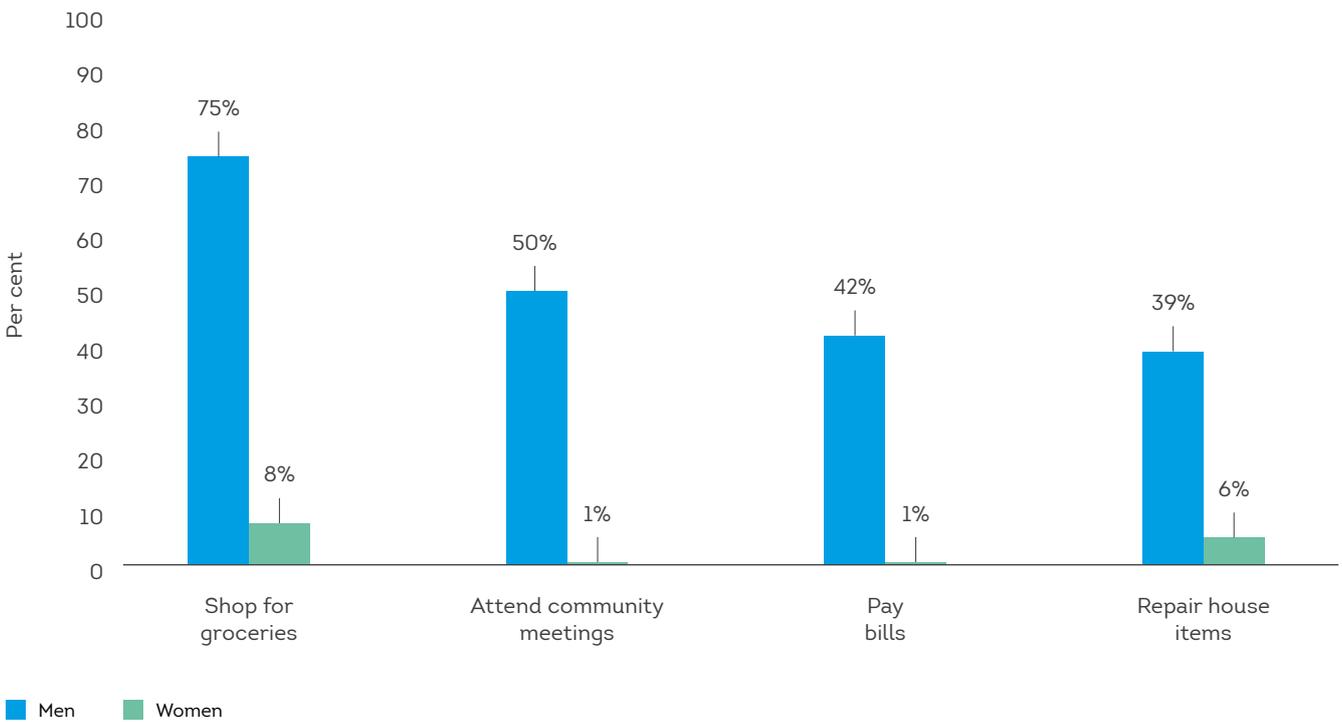
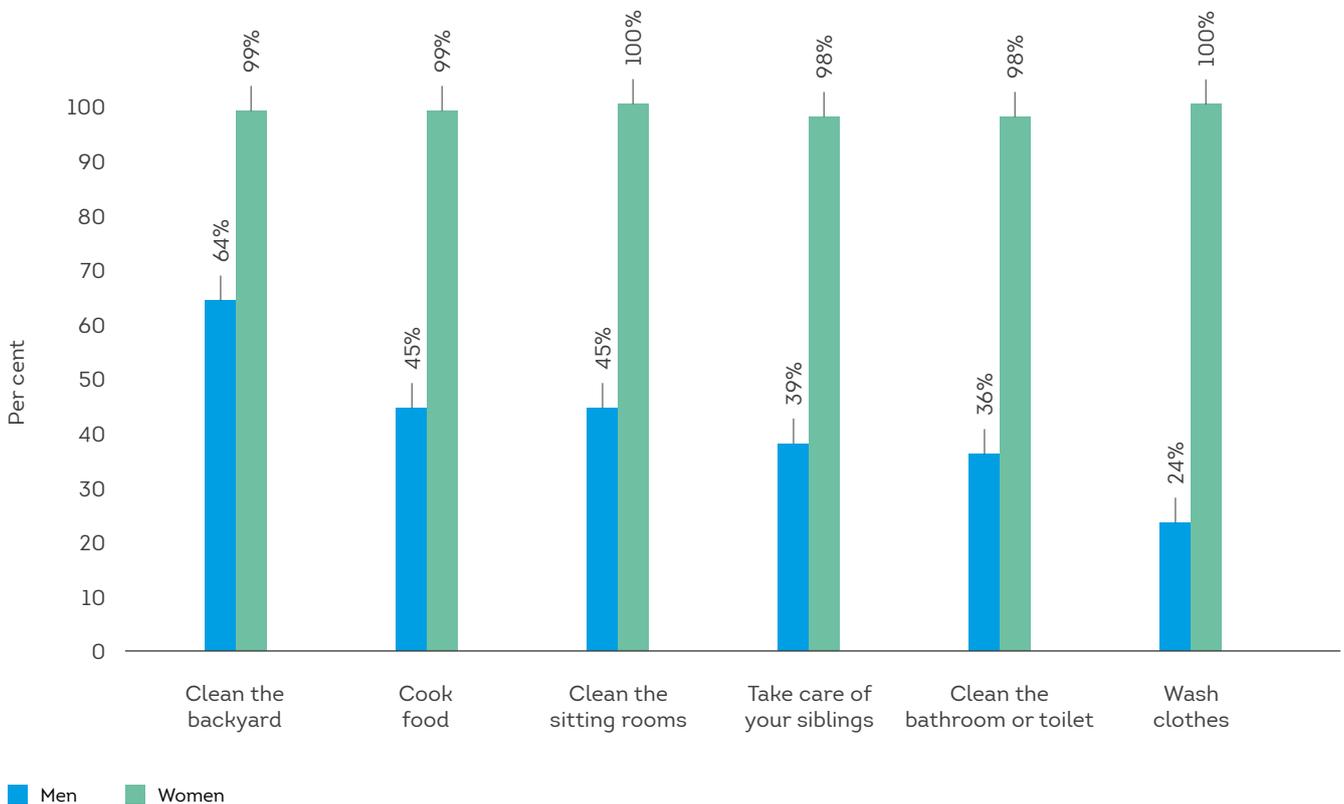


Figure 3.3.2b presents the household tasks for which female respondents were much more likely to recall being involved. For all six items included – cleaning the backyard, cooking food, cleaning the sitting rooms, taking care of siblings, cleaning the bathroom or toilet, and washing clothes – no fewer than 98 per cent of women recalled participating as children, while no greater than 64 per cent of men participated. For five of these six items – the five that take place inside the physical home – fewer than half of male respondents reported involvement between ages 13 and 18.

Figure 3.3.2b Childhood involvement in household work: higher girls’ participation

Percentage of all respondents who reported that they “sometimes” or “often” participated in various household tasks when they were aged 13 to 18, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017



Life story interviews support the quantitative findings on children's participation in household chores. Participants said that from a young age, their sisters were expected to help their mother with work in the home. Some participants recalled that their sisters were expected to do chores for their brothers such as ironing their clothes and cooking meals. Others described how boys were never asked to do "women's" chores but sometimes contributed when they saw that assistance was needed. Some participants recalled that boys performed domestic work only under particular circumstances, such as when there were not many women in the family or when the mother was sick. Some men recalled feeling shame when they participated in chores around the home.

My parents went to Pakistan for a funeral. I stayed with my other brothers and sister. ... Our relatives came to our house, and when they entered I was baking bread. Suddenly, I stood up and started to pretend that my younger sister was baking the bread. I felt shame while working on house chores. I was about 15 or 16 years old. But now it is normal for me.

Man, 35, Kabul province, school principal

I remember that it was the end of the Taliban regime; [at that time,] my mother was very sick and she was paralyzed for a few months. ... All the men in the family were contributing to some chores. ... My responsibility was to cook, and my brother's was washing the clothes. My mother was unhappy because her sons were performing her duties at home; at the same time, she was thankful that she taught everything to her sons so that now they can do everything at home.

Man, 29, Kabul province, teacher

3.3.3 Freedoms and Preferential Treatment According to Gender

Women and men in Afghanistan largely agreed that boys were granted more freedoms than girls in their childhood home. Table 3.3.3a presents several related items. Results show broad alignment among all survey participants; all respondents, regardless of gender, were very likely to agree that "it was easier for boys/brothers to go outside the home" compared to girls, that "boys/brothers had more free time because they were not expected to do housework," and that "boys were more celebrated when they were born." On the other hand, only approximately 16 per cent of male and female respondents felt that boys/brothers received better food than girls/sisters.

Table 3.3.3a Preferential treatment during childhood

Percentage of all respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with statements about childhood freedoms, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

	MEN	WOMEN
	%	%
Before I reached age 18...		
Boys/brothers got better food	16.6	16.1
It was easier for boys/brothers to go outside the home	69.8	68.5
Boys/brothers had more free time because they were not expected to do housework like girls/sisters	84.8	79.7
Boys/brothers had less free time because they were expected to earn money for our family	15.2	20.5
Boys were more celebrated when they were born than girls	84.5	82.3

“Should I tell your father?”

Patterns of physical discipline in qualitative participants’ homes varied, but the threat or reality of beatings or other forms of corporal punishment were common, with both fathers and mothers taking this disciplinary approach.

In our family, my mother was managing everything, such as how to organize the house, what should be bought. Similarly, my mother was the main person who was taking care of our school and homework. She was asking questions on our school subjects, she was checking our homework. Whenever we had any kind of mistake, my mother would not beat us; she would only say, “Should I tell your father?” It was a kind of warning, and it was enough for us.

Man, 58, Kabul province, taxi driver

My brothers and I had a friendly relationship with my father, but at the same time, if we made any mistake, to teach us a lesson my father would beat us and get angry with us. For example, we had several sheep at that time, and he instructed me to graze them, [but] I went swimming with my friends and I forgot to feed the animals. When I came back, he was so angry at me, and he wanted to beat me, but I escaped. So, I can say that generally, our relationship was very friendly with my father, but sometimes it is also necessary to be strict with the children to teach them a lesson; that was how my father was with us.

Man, 68, Kabul province, retired government employee

The influence [that experiences of violence in childhood] had was to normalize the violence for me. After committing violence or witnessing violence, the main influence it can have is that it becomes normal and you begin to accept it as a regular part of life.

Man, 29, Kabul province, women’s rights advocate

3.3.4 Adverse Experiences in Childhood

Physical punishment by parents, teachers, and/or religious figures was nearly universal. Table 3.3.4a shows respondents' experiences of childhood neglect, punishment, and abuse. The findings show that various forms of physical punishment, discipline, abuse, and intimidation were very common in all respondents' childhoods, including at home, at school, and in the community. Approximately 99 per cent of men and women reported ever being spanked or slapped by their parents in the home, although far fewer shared that they were beaten with a belt, stick, whip, or another hard object, or that the beating was so hard that it left a mark or bruise. Seventy-four per cent of women and 86 per cent of men reported that they had ever been beaten or physically punished by an authority figure at a school, madrasa, or mosque. Likewise, a large proportion of respondents – 83 per cent of men and 52 per cent of women – reported that as children, they were “repeatedly made fun of, teased, intimidated, threatened, or physically abused by other children” in their school or community, demonstrating that bullying, among other forms of violence, is a highly prevalent experience for children in Afghanistan.

Table 3.3.4a Experiences of childhood neglect, punishment, and abuse

Percentage of all respondents who reported that they had certain experiences once or more as children, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

	MEN	WOMEN
	%	%
Before I reached age 18...		
There were times when I did not have enough to eat	11.1	8.4
I was insulted or humiliated by someone in my family in front of other people	12.6	15.2
I was spanked or slapped by my parents in the home	98.7	98.8
I was beaten at home with a belt, stick, whip, or another hard object	16.2	4.0
I was beaten so hard at home that it left a mark or bruise	2.2	1.3
I was beaten or physically punished at school by a teacher, a tutor, or a mullah in a madrasa or mosque	86.4	73.9
I was repeatedly made fun of, teased, intimidated, threatened, or physically abused by other children in my school or in my community	83.1	51.6

Participants in the life story interviews said that violence was a normal part of their lives but disagreed on whether this violence was acceptable. Participants reported both mothers and fathers taking a role in the physical discipline of their children. Some men said that violence was the best way for their parents to teach them what is right and wrong, but others believed that lessons and disputes of all kinds should be learned through conversations.

I was afraid of my mother more, because she was the one who made restrictions for us and she was also the one who punish[ed] us for our wrong actions. For example, when we used to go to play football before completing our homework, it was my mother who even came to the football field and [used to] take us back home forcefully to complete our homework. ... She was beating us sometimes for doing something bad, but she never beat us in front of other people or outside the house. After she beat us, she used to come to us and make us understand why she beat us. She used to tell us that "you have done this wrong thing, and that is why I punished you."

Man, 29, Kabul province, teacher at military training center

When we were studying with mullahs, the boys who could not memorize their lessons well, the mullah used to punish them. He used to take the headscarf of a girl to tie up the legs of a boy as a punishment, and then he used to tell the girl that "you don't have anything on your head, so share a headscarf with another girl and cover up your head."

Man, 29, Kabul province, women's rights advocate

Physical violence against women of all ages was also nearly universal, according to male and female respondents reflecting on their childhood homes. This violence happens within the family, with fathers, male relatives, mothers, and female relatives all reported as frequent perpetrators. The vast majority of men and women reported seeing or hearing their sisters being beaten by fathers, mothers, or other family members, a finding in line with the data in Figure 3.3.4a on experiences of childhood punishment. Respondents also shared that they saw or heard their mothers being beaten at notable levels, with 29 per cent of men and 25 per cent of women reporting seeing or hearing their mother being beaten by their father or another male relative, and 19 per cent of women and 16 per cent of men recalling that their mother had been beaten by her mother-in-law or another female relative. Further exploration on dynamics of violence against women in respondents' current marital lives and households will follow in Section 3.4.

Table 3.3.4b Physical violence against women and girls in the childhood home

Percentage of all respondents who reported that they had certain experiences once or more as children, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

	MEN	WOMEN
	%	%
Before I reached age 18...		
I saw or heard my sister being beaten by my father or another male relative	94.1	89.2
I saw or heard my mother being beaten by my father or another male relative	29.4	25.1
I saw or heard my sister being beaten by my mother or another female relative	92.7	96.9
I saw or heard my mother being beaten by her mother-in-law or another female relative	15.8	18.8

3.4 Gender Dynamics of Marital Life

Marriage is a landmark of adult life in Afghanistan, as it is in most countries. As presented earlier in this report, 68 per cent of men and nearly 80 per cent of women in the sample have ever been married, with the vast majority currently married. This section presents a wide range of IMAGES findings related to marriage and marital life in Afghanistan, often drawing specifically from the sub-sample of ever-married respondents (as specified).

3.4.1 Attitudes on Marriage

Dynamics of marriage and marital life are linked with and shaped by social norms; IMAGES respondents in Afghanistan hold tightly to several rigid ideas about marriage while rejecting others. Table 3.4.1a presents a wide range of attitude statements related to marriage, along with IMAGES respondents' rates of agreement. Respondents' views present a compelling, complex picture. On the one hand, respondents vastly reject the practices of *badal* and *baad*, with only 13 per cent of women and 20 per cent of men agreeing that "it is appropriate to exchange women instead of paying bride price." Likewise, almost three-quarters of respondents reject the marriage of very young girls, agreeing that "it is inappropriate for a girl to be married before the age of 16." On the other hand, some restrictive notions about marriage are widely accepted; for instance, fully 83 per cent of women and 89 per cent of men agreed that "marrying a younger wife is always better."

Table 3.4.1a Attitudes on marriage

Percentage of all respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with statements about marriage, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

Attitude statement	MEN	WOMEN
	%	%
If a man does not marry, he is not a real man	58.2	55.4
A man should not marry a woman who is more educated than he is	51.1	42.5
A man should not marry a woman who is older than he is	60.4	53.4
Ultimately it should be the couple's decision, not the family's decision, to get married to each other	50.1	73.1
Divorced women are less worthy of respect than those who are not divorced	57.2	34.1
A man should not allow his wife to work outside the house	47.4	27.7
Marrying a younger wife is always better	89.3	83.0
It is appropriate to exchange women (<i>badal</i>) instead of paying bride price	20.2	13.2
It is inappropriate to settle disputes by giving a woman in marriage (<i>baad</i>)	82.4	83.9
It is appropriate for a man to have multiple wives	65.5	21.3
It is inappropriate for a girl to be married before the age of 16	72.7	74.7

Women and men disagree when it comes to divorce, women's employment, and polygamy. As Table 3.4.1a shows, women's and men's ideas most diverge in relation to three items: "Divorced women are less worthy of respect than those who are not divorced," "A man should not allow his wife to work outside the home," and, "It is appropriate for a man to have multiple wives." In all cases, men were significantly more likely to agree with these restrictive ideas. In the same vein, women were significantly more likely than men to agree with the statement on equality in decision-making: "Ultimately it should be the couple's decision, not the family's decision, to get married to each other." Seventy-three per cent of women agreed with this idea, as compared to only 50 per cent of men.

Exploring norms around polygamy and child marriage

Focus group discussions revealed that men in Afghanistan are divided on the issue of **polygamy**. Some men who believed the practice is acceptable stated that Islam allows for marrying two or three wives as long as the husband treats them equally. Others felt that having more than one wife might be necessary if the first wife is unable to have children. While women interviewed were by and large opposed to their husbands having other wives, they noted that they are not usually involved in that decision. Women in the focus group discussions described the lengths to which some women go in preventing their husbands from having more wives.

Some people believe that if the husband becomes rich, he will marry another woman, so they advise their daughters or sisters to spend more: "If you have savings at home and your husband becomes rich, then he will marry another woman." That is why most of the women have lots of expenses in their husband's house and they don't want their husbands to become rich.

Woman, 21, Kandahar province, unemployed

Similar to the survey results, the vast majority of men and women in focus groups were opposed to **early and forced marriage**. Some retold tragic stories of girls as young as 7 years old getting married in their communities, believing that this was a clear violation of these girls' rights. Many opposed early marriages because they tend to stop girls from attending school or because the girls involved are too young to be a part of the decision. Others believed that young girls do not know how to perform domestic duties properly yet, so they should wait to get married until after they have learned. Especially in urban areas, many participants described how in their own families, people are moving away from marrying girls at a young age.

Marriage at younger ages was common in our family; my mother got married at a very young age. Now that my sisters are almost that age, my family is against their marriage, and they are not talking about their marriage at all. My mother, after completion of her school, did not pursue her higher education. But my sister cannot imagine not pursuing higher education after school. ... A girl should decide for herself, even sharia says that.

Man, 29, Kabul province, women's rights advocate

3.4.2 Arranging and Planning a Marriage

As mentioned, many men and women believe that a marriage should be the exclusive decision of the couple themselves; however, very few reported that this was actually the case in their own marriages. Table 3.2.4a shows respondents' recollections about who had the greatest say in arranging and planning their marriages. Only 21 men and 28 women in the entire sample felt that the couple themselves had the greatest mutual say. Instead, respondents were more likely to say that these decisions were managed by men from one or both families or, more equitably, by men and women from both families.

Table 3.4.2a Decision-making around arranging and planning a marriage

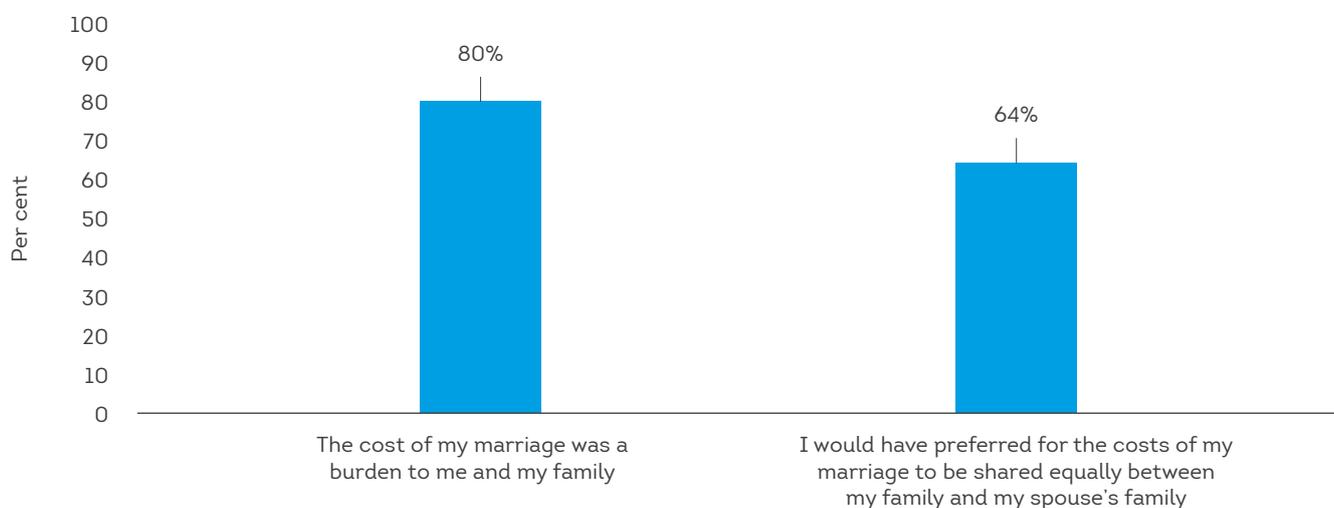
Percentage of ever-married respondents who reported various people had the greatest say in arranging and planning their marriage, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

	MEN		WOMEN	
	N	%	N	%
Who had the greatest say with regard to arranging and planning your marriage?				
Mostly husband ("me" for male respondents)	111	16.4	10	1.3
Mostly wife ("me" for female respondents)	2	0.3	4	0.5
Husband and wife together	21	3.1	28	3.7
One or more men from the husband's family	14	2.1	44	5.8
One or more women from the husband's family	1	0.1	5	0.7
Both men and women from the husband's family	9	1.3	23	3.0
One or more men from the wife's family	173	25.6	157	20.7
One or more women from the wife's family	13	1.9	15	2.0
Both men and women from the wife's family	31	4.6	83	10.9
Men from both families	114	16.9	168	22.2
Women from both families	8	1.2	7	0.9
Both men and women from both families	170	25.2	194	25.6
Someone else	8	1.2	2	0.3
Total (N)	675		758	

The costs of marriage are a burden for men, according to survey respondents. IMAGES asked male respondents specifically about the costs of arranging and planning their marriage. As presented in Figure 3.4.2b, 80 per cent of men felt that the cost of their marriage was a burden, and 64 per cent of men wished for more equal cost-sharing between the two involved families. When it comes to cost-sharing, at least, men seem to acknowledge that the more common mode of marriage arrangements could be changed for the better.

Figure 3.4.2b Men's reflections on the costs of marriage

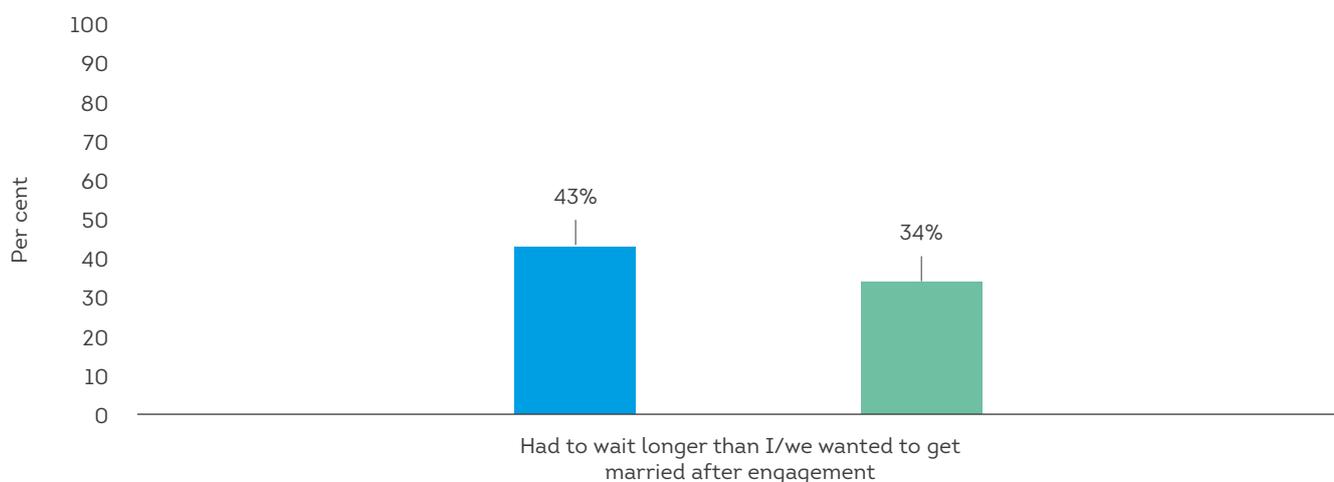
Percentage of ever-married male respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with statements about their marriage, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017



A substantial proportion of respondents reported that they had to wait longer than they wanted before the wedding day could take place. As shown in Figure 3.4.2c, 43 per cent of men and 34 per cent of women felt that this was the case.

Figure 3.4.2c Waiting for the wedding day

Percentage of ever-married respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with a statement about their engagement, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017



■ Men ■ Women

Victim of circumstance

Some qualitative research participants referenced the circumstances of engagement and marriage as causes of intimate partner violence. This was one of several ways qualitative participants explained and even justified men's use of violence against their wives. In the focus group discussion in Ghazni province, for instance, women brought up that the large bride fees expected from the groom's family lead to anger among husbands and in-laws and that this anger may lead to retaliatory violence. Many agreed that early marriages and arranged marriages with limited interactions before the wedding contribute to this problem.

It is common in my community that people take a huge amount of money as toyana [the money paid by the groom's family to the bride's family before marriage], so when the wife makes even a small mistake her husband beats her. The main reason of some violence cases is this huge amount of money. I have seen that people took about [AFN] 300,000 or 400,000 or 500,000 from the groom's family. This made the groom's family upset and angry, and after the marriage, the groom's family started beating the bride, justifying [it by saying], "Why did your family take a huge amount of money from us?"

Woman, 22, Ghazni province, unemployed

In my district, a woman doesn't have the right to see or talk with her husband before marriage. When girls turn 12, 13, or 14, their families marry them, sometimes even with old men who have two other wives. These young girls cannot do domestic work properly, so their husbands use violence against them. I have heard about a case where a girl was married to an older man. After the marriage, the family of her husband told her to cook bread in the oven. But the girl was too little and didn't have experience cooking bread in the oven, so she fell into the oven and got burned. Also, in some families, the mother-in-law is a dictator over their daughters-in-law, beating them over small issues, keeping them like a slave by giving them little or no food.

Woman, 23, Ghazni province, unemployed

I was in the hospital when a newly married bride was brought in. I asked her relatives what happened to her. They told me that she was married to her husband six days ago, but her husband didn't like her after the marriage, so he choked her.

Woman, 22, Ghazni province, unemployed

3.4.3 Division of Domestic Work and Decision-Making in Current Household

Not unlike the dynamics in their childhood homes, household work in respondents' marital homes tends to be divided on a strictly gendered basis. Figures 3.4.3a to 3.4.3c illustrate these patterns. The most male-dominated household work includes attending community meetings, controlling the daily budget, shopping for groceries, and paying bills. The majority of men in the study reported doing one or more of these tasks in the previous month, while far fewer women reported involvement. By contrast, the most female-dominated household tasks include cooking food, cleaning the bathroom/toilet, cleaning the sitting rooms, and washing clothes. Involvement in these elements of domestic work is nearly universal for women and relatively rare for men, as demonstrated in Figure 3.4.3c. The four elements of domestic work that seem more equitably shared are taking care of livestock, repairing household items, fetching water, and cleaning the backyard, though in no case did men's and women's involvement truly align; at a minimum, the study demonstrates an 8-percentage-point gap between women's and men's involvement in any task.

Figure 3.4.3a Division of domestic work: greater male involvement

Percentage of ever-married respondents who reported that they "sometimes," "often," or "very often" participated in various household tasks within the previous month, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

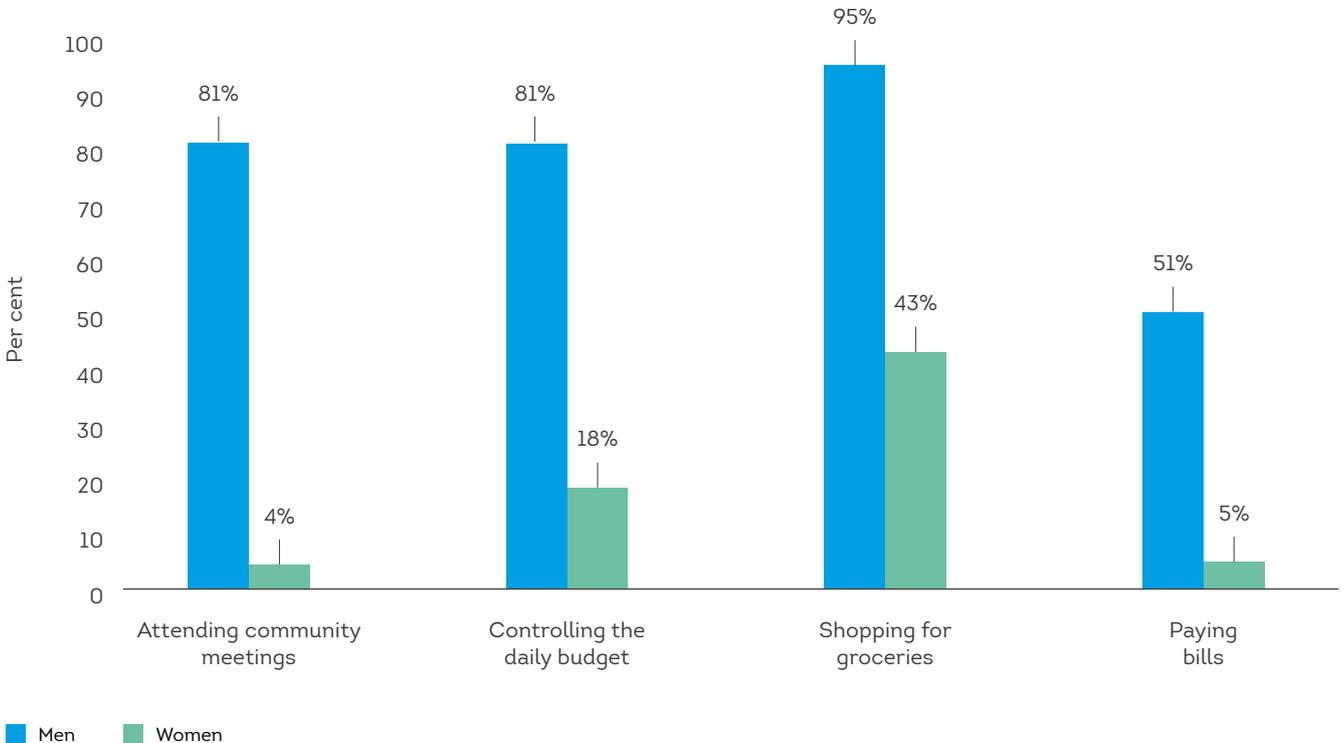


Figure 3.4.3b Division of domestic work: more equitable involvement

Percentage of ever-married respondents who reported that they “sometimes,” “often,” or “very often” participated in various household tasks within the previous month, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

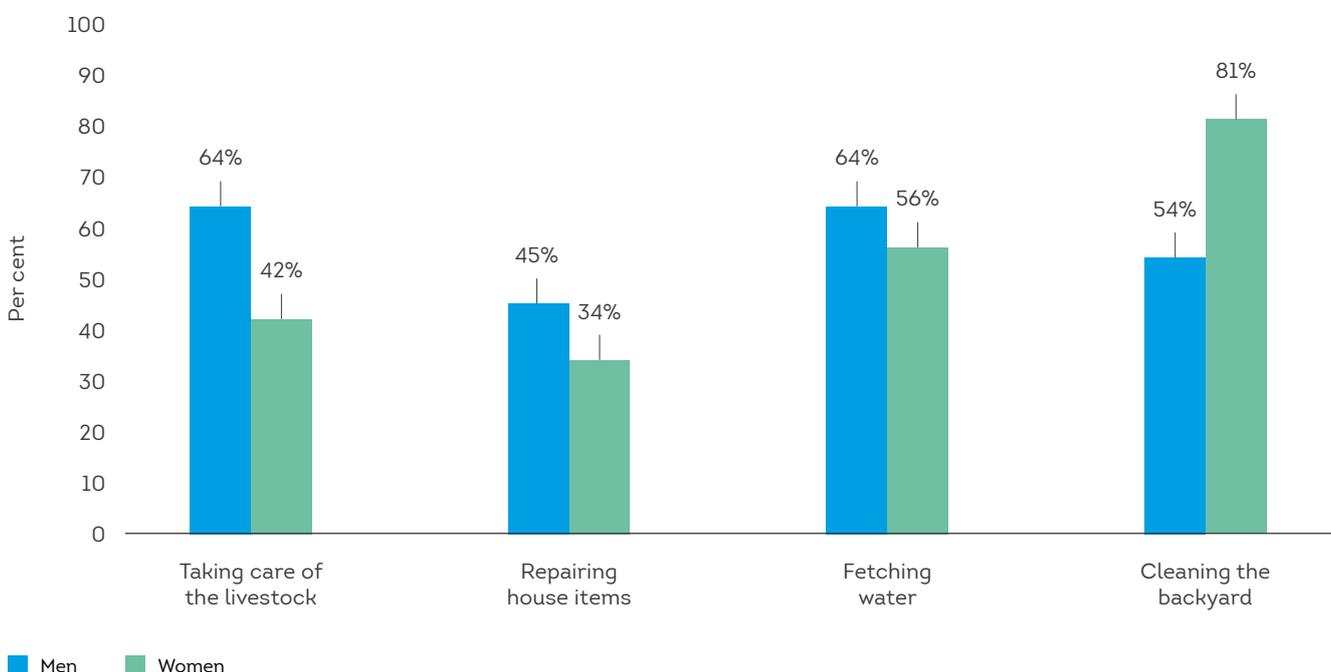
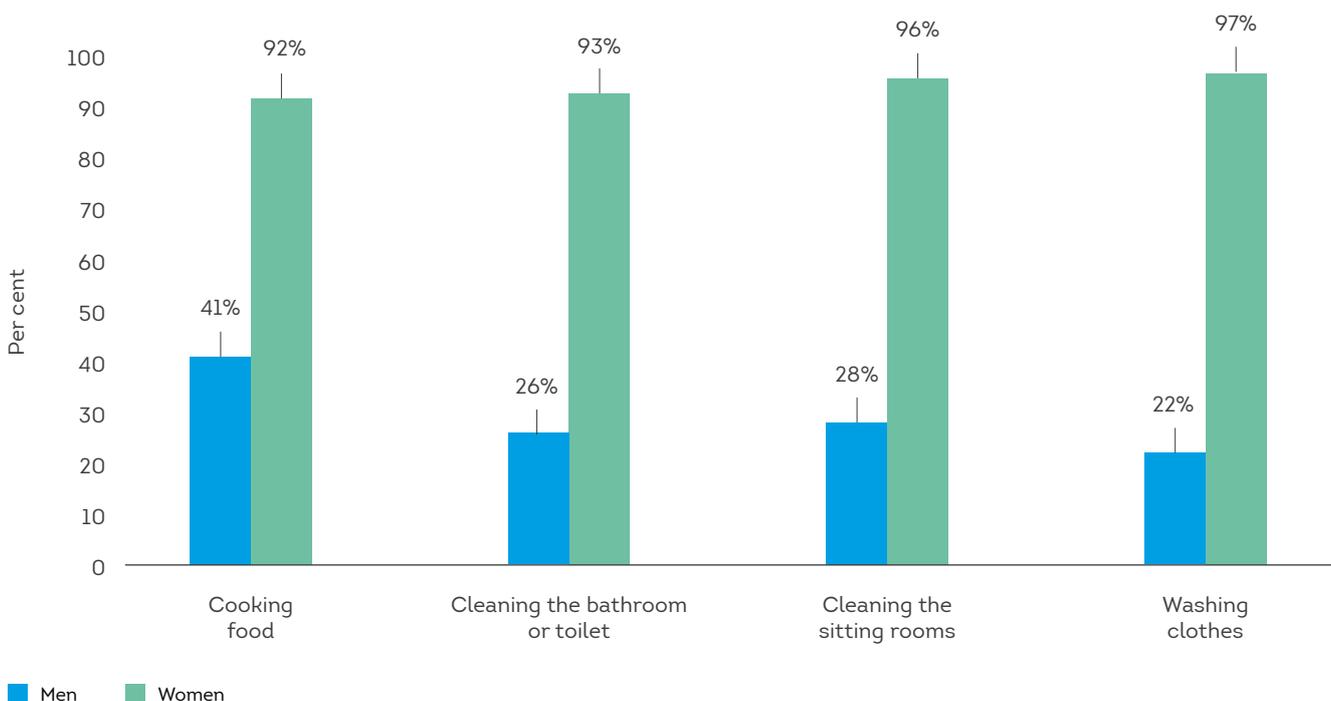


Figure 3.4.3c Division of domestic work: greater female involvement

Percentage of ever-married respondents who reported that they “sometimes,” “often,” or “very often” participated in various household tasks within the previous month, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017



The division of household work was highly mixed in the qualitative research. On one hand, many men said that they see domestic work as integral to being a good wife and that they do not have time for any housework because their focus is on supporting their families financially. Men and women alike felt that men commonly view other men who do domestic work as dishonorable. On the other hand, many men also said they “pitch in” sometimes with housework – even while ultimately viewing it as their wives’ responsibility. Many women noted that they wish their husbands would notice how much work there is to do and help them inside the home. Women also frequently argued that the Prophet Muhammad assisted his wives in domestic work and Afghan men should heed his example. Men tended to refute this justification, with some pointing to the story of the Prophet Ali (son-in-law of Muhammad) and his wife Fatimah, whose domestic and employment roles were divided along gendered lines.

No father can also do domestic work or take care of children, because he is doing all the works outside the home, earning income. He is busy working outside the home the entire day, and he comes back home at night. It is the mother who takes care of children, cooking, doing other domestic works like washing clothes. The man comes home at night and just plays with his children.

Man, 18, Badghis province, plaster worker

My husband is a person who, when he brings a bag of flour, he puts it close to the door. He doesn't even bring it into the kitchen. He says that it is his responsibility to bring flour to the house and it is my responsibility to take it inside the kitchen.

Woman, 36, Nangarhar province, reporter

Some men and women acknowledged that men partaking in domestic work is necessary for gender equality.

One month after my marriage, because we had lots of guests and people were coming to congratulate us, the carpets in the hall were so dusty. One day, I washed all those rugs from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., and my wife, despite being newly married, helped me with that. Even now, there are lots of times that I prepare breakfast for my wife; also, during weekends, I cook at home. I want to give a feeling to my family members that all the responsibilities are shared. This will connect a woman more with her family and will increase the love and bonding in the family. I remember that I colored my mother's hair several times, and I helped her with her shopping.

Man, 29, Kabul province, teacher

Men and women agree on at least one thing: women do the majority of household work. Men are more satisfied with this arrangement than women are, perhaps unsurprisingly. Table 3.4.3d demonstrates that in no participating households do either men or women believe that men do more household work than women do. Ninety per cent of men and 92 per cent of women reported that women do more of the household work. All respondents, regardless of gender, seem to be broadly pleased with this inequitable division, however. Only 5 per cent of women said that they are unsatisfied with this division of household work. At the same time, men are much more likely than women to say that they are very satisfied with the gender imbalance of household work.

Table 3.4.3d Division of labor in the household

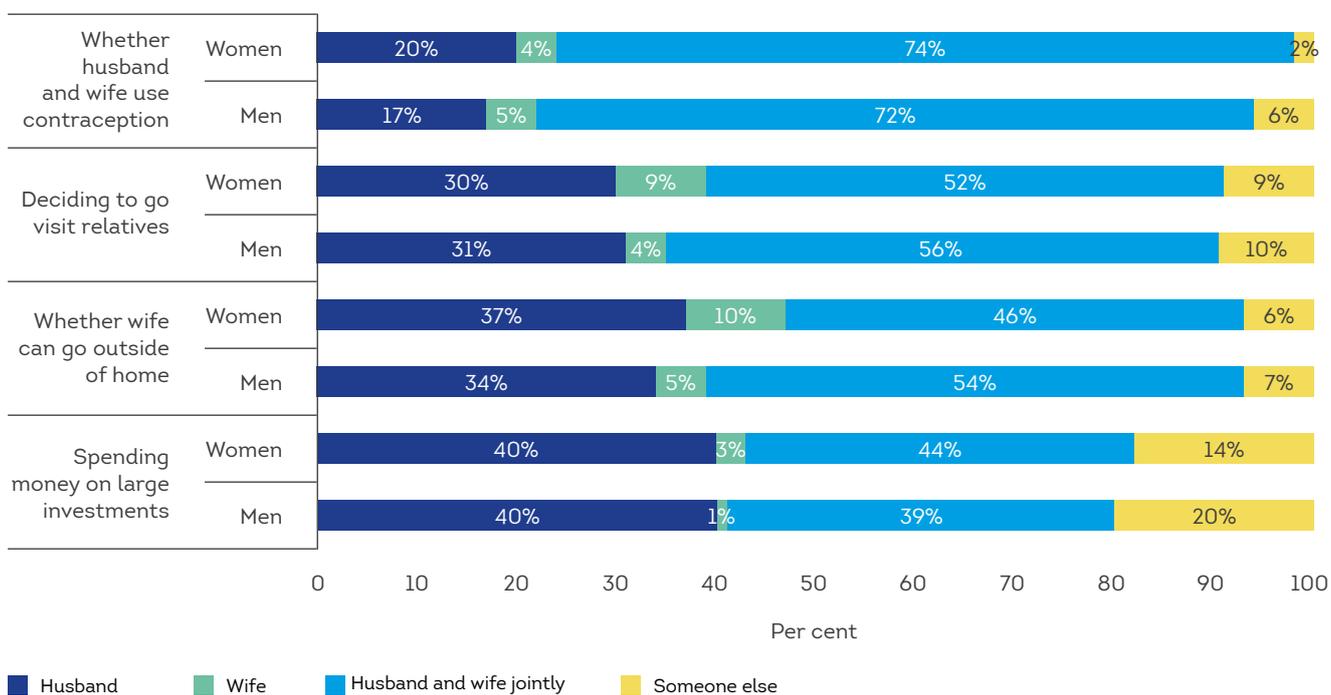
Percentage of ever-married respondents who reported various answers about the household division of labor, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

	MEN		WOMEN	
	N	%	N	%
Who does most household work?				
Man/husband does more work	0	0.0	0	0.0
Woman/wife does more work	605	89.6	699	92.2
Man/husband and woman/wife do equal amount of work	48	7.1	11	1.5
Somebody else does most household work	22	3.3	48	6.3
Satisfaction with division of household work				
Very satisfied	396	58.7	351	46.8
Satisfied to some extent	279	41.3	364	48.5
Unsatisfied	0	0.0	34	4.5

Many respondents of both genders reported sharing decision-making authority on various topics, even while men's exclusive decision-making authority is still very common and women's exclusive decision-making authority nearly nonexistent. IMAGES asked participants to reflect on how decisions are made within their house for four gender-related domains: using contraception, visiting relatives, deciding whether women can leave the home, and spending money on large investments. Respondents could choose whether the husband has sole authority, the wife has sole authority, the couple decides jointly, or someone else makes the decision. Men's and women's reports about these decisions are presented in Figure 3.4.3e. Seventy-four per cent of women and 72 per cent of men reported that contraceptive decisions are made jointly, a sign of relative gender equity on a sensitive relationship topic. At the same time, however, women's movements are heavily restricted, as the data show that only in very rare cases do women have sole decision-making authority over the ability to visit relatives or to leave the home.

Figure 3.4.3e Patterns of decision-making authority

Percentage of ever-married respondents who reported that a certain person or group has the “final say” on various decisions,* IMAGES Afghanistan 2017



*Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Decision-making on family planning

Qualitative findings suggest that men hold much of the decision-making power when it comes to preventing pregnancy. In many families, the wife is allowed to use contraception only if she gets permission from her husband. Women shared many reasons for wanting to prevent pregnancy, including concerns for their health or their ability to keep up with caregiving responsibilities. Some women said that their husbands not only decide whether they can use contraceptives but also which forms to use. Other women recalled their mothers-in-law having decision-making power over their reproductive decisions as well.

I have seen several women who have 14 children, but their husbands want them to give birth to more children. When these women told their husbands that they don't want to have more children, [the husbands] told them not to say that anymore "because Allah may be dissatisfied with us." ... Their husbands tell them, "We got married because of children, so you should have more children."

Woman, 28, Baghlan province, unemployed

When men go to the mosque for their prayers, mullahs tell them that preventing pregnancy is a sin and not allowed in our religion, so men accept this. When they come home, they tell their wives not to prevent pregnancy.

Woman, 18, Baghlan province, media outlet employee

What makes a man more likely to participate in “traditionally feminine” household work?

Promoting women’s economic opportunities and broader gender equality demands increased attention to women’s disproportionate burden of daily unpaid care work in the home. Any attempt to promote a woman’s engagement in the paid labor force will be held back so long as that woman is also still expected to perform the vast majority of domestic work within the home. Others – particularly men – need to contribute to unpaid domestic work at much higher levels if women are to achieve true economic equality. IMAGES data point toward solutions to reduce the inequitable distribution of unpaid care and to promote greater household and societal equality. A multivariate regression, consisting of eight possible influential variables from the IMAGES dataset, helps demonstrate which influences play the strongest role in predicting a man’s likelihood of being involved in “traditionally feminine” domestic work (defined as washing clothes, cleaning the sitting rooms, cleaning the bathroom or toilet, and/or cooking food). The possible influential variables included in the analysis are:

- *Demographic variables:* age, education level, employment status, urban/rural setting, and financial security;
- *Childhood factors:* father’s involvement in “traditionally feminine” household work and having witnessed physical intimate partner violence against one’s mother; and
- *Individual factor:* GEM Scale score.

Holding constant all other variables, results demonstrate two statistically significant links:

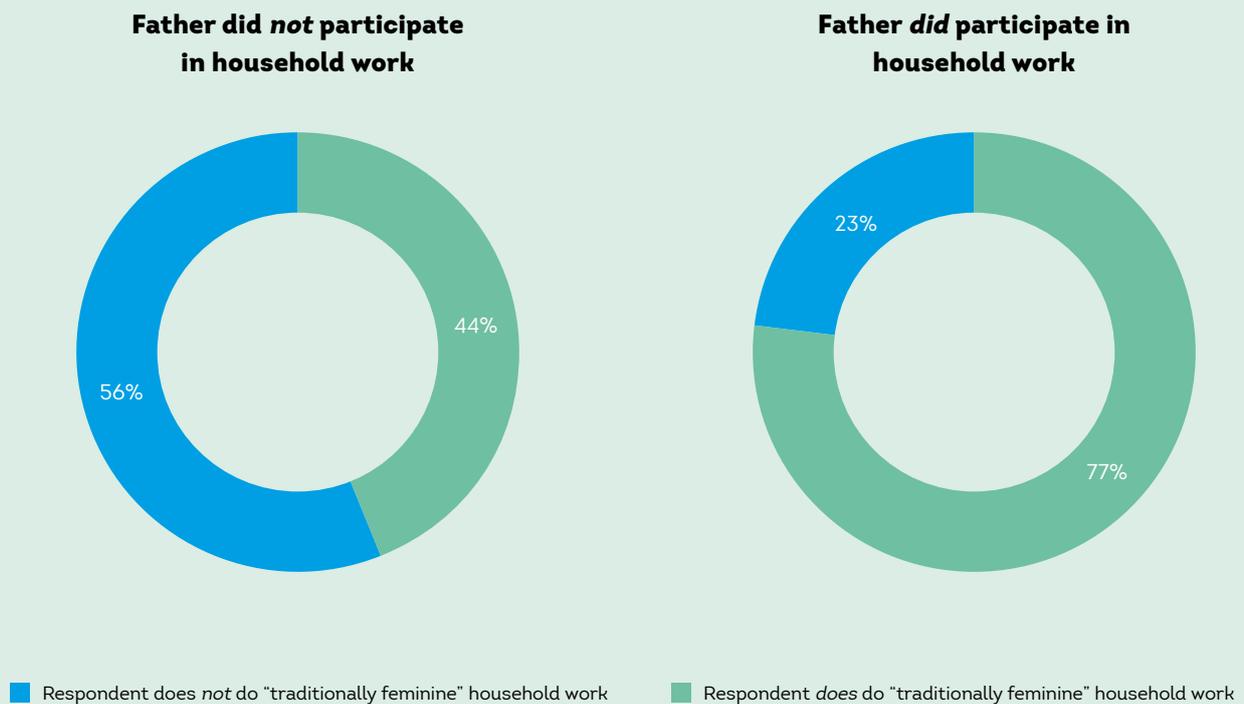
- Men whose fathers participated in household work are much more likely as adults to participate in this work themselves, as compared to men whose fathers were not involved in household work. In prior IMAGES reports that have shown the same relationship, this trend has been referred to as an intergenerational transmission or cycle of care work.³⁰
- Men in big-city and suburban settings are significantly more likely than their peers in rural locations to participate in “traditionally feminine” household work.

As in prior IMAGES studies, the results clearly show that men tend to emulate their fathers’ participation in household work. Data in Afghanistan show that men who, as children, witnessed their fathers participating in household work are significantly more likely to follow in their fathers’ footsteps and do this work in their own adult households. Figure 3.4.3f presents this relationship in a simple bivariate analysis; as previously stated, this relationship remains statistically strong even when accounting for eight other demographic, childhood, and individual factors. The pie chart on the left only includes men whose fathers never participated in any “traditionally feminine” household work. Of these men, the majority (56 per cent) do not do this work either. The pie chart on the right only presents men whose fathers participated in “traditionally feminine” household work. Here, the vast majority (77 per cent) also participate in this work. The link is clear: Men are statistically likely to emulate their father’s gender-equitable actions.

30 Additional IMAGES single-country and multi-country studies are available at: www.promundoglobal.org/images.

Figure 3.4.3f Intergenerational transmission of care work

Ever-married male respondents' household behaviors, broken into two charts based on whether their own fathers participated in "traditionally feminine" household work, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017



Digging more deeply into these regression results, using a slightly lower threshold for statistical significance (the $p < .10$ level), data reveal two additional relationships:

- Men with greater educational attainment are significantly more likely to participate in "traditionally feminine" household work; and
- Men with higher scores on the GEM Scale are also more likely to participate in this work.

We can conclude that, as men's educational attainment increases and as men embrace more gender-equitable ideas, their likelihood of participating more equally around the home also significantly increases.

3.5 Parenthood

If a person doesn't have children, it means that they've failed to reach their aspirations. A married man and woman always think that having children is their goal and aspiration. It is children that people get married for.

Man, 26, Badghis province, farmer

As the preceding quote exemplifies, parenthood is another important landmark of adult life in Afghanistan, as it is around the globe. This section presents a wide range of IMAGES findings related to parenthood and childcare in Afghanistan.

3.5.1 Biological Children

Upwards of 90 per cent of ever-married respondents have children living in their home, and these are nearly universally their biological children. Table 3.5.1a shows these data. On average, ever-married respondents have four children in their respective families.

Table 3.5.1a Parenthood by the numbers

Information on children provided by ever-married respondents, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

	MEN		WOMEN	
	N	%	N	%
Respondents with children living in the home	610	90.4	683	90.1
Number of children (mean, standard deviation)	4.12, 2.1		4.49, 2.4	
Average number of boys	2.2		2.3	
Average number of girls	1.9		2.2	
Sex of youngest child				
Male	322	52.8	342	50.1
Female	288	47.2	341	49.9
Respondent has any biological child (percentage of those with any child at home)	592	97.0	667	97.7

The dishonor of marriage without children

Qualitative participants roundly agreed: Children are essential to a successful marriage. When a couple is unable to have children, however, stigma and shame fall upon women, according to participants, and men in these situations often seek out additional wives. Many participants also said that not having children promotes conflict between spouses, leading to disagreements and violence. Some said that giving birth to sons is viewed as a woman's responsibility, and only bearing daughters can lead to violence from the husband.

After the marriage, I couldn't become a mother. So, I became a big victim. My husband married another woman, and now he doesn't care about me, he doesn't respect me, he ignores me. But still, since I am a brave woman, I keep his children like my own children.

Woman, 41, Nangarhar province, headmaster

Let me give you an example. [A woman I know] told me that her husband was beating her because she has given birth to eight daughters but no son. The woman was very anxious and said that "it is not my fault that I cannot give birth to a baby boy." In Ghazni province, it is a kind of culture that those women who cannot give birth to a boy are being beaten by their husbands.

Woman, 22, Ghazni province, unemployed

3.5.2 Antenatal Care

In Afghanistan, men's and women's recollections of men's participation antenatal care visits differ. As Table 3.5.2a demonstrates, both men and women agree that fathers tended to accompany mothers to an antenatal healthcare visit during the most recent pregnancy. Responses widely diverge on whether the father was permitted – and agreed – to join the mother inside the clinic, with the doctor, for the duration of the visit. Forty-seven per cent of male respondents with children reported accompanying the mother inside the clinic on at least one antenatal healthcare visit for their most recent child. Only 15 per cent of female respondents with children reported this involvement, however. Majorities of male and female respondents said that fathers were not allowed into antenatal healthcare clinics/visits. This could potentially point toward a policy change – to allow fathers into antenatal health clinics – that could promote fathers' deeper engagement in childcare from the earliest stages. This is a socially and culturally sensitive innovation in Afghanistan, but one worthy of consideration if cultural safeguards can be put in place due to the many positive potential outcomes of fathers' increased caregiving roles in their children's lives.

Table 3.5.2a Antenatal care

Information on antenatal care reported by all respondents who have ever been married and had one or more children, referring specifically to their most recent pregnancy, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

	MEN		WOMEN	
	N	%	N	%
Husband accompanied wife to an antenatal healthcare visit, including transporting her	515	87.0	500	80.6
Husband accompanied wife to antenatal visits and joined her in the clinic	241	46.8	75	15.0
Of husbands who reported not joining wife in the clinic, the reason was:				
Husband not allowed	195	59.5	256	62.0
Husband did not want to	109	33.2	92	22.3
Other	24	7.3	65	15.7
Received information/education during pregnancy	361	63.4	365	73.0

3.5.3 Childcare

Mothers and fathers share the aspiration that fathers would spend more time with their children, suggesting that a rigid division of childcare may not be universally popular. While IMAGES respondents' views of gender roles are varied, when it comes to the amount of time fathers are spending with their children, there is widespread agreement: everyone wishes that fathers would (be able to) spend more time with their children. Table 3.5.3a demonstrates that approximately 73 per cent of men and 80 per cent of women – among respondents with children – agreed that the husband “spends too little time with the children on account of his job or the time he spends looking for work.”

Table 3.5.3a Too little time with children

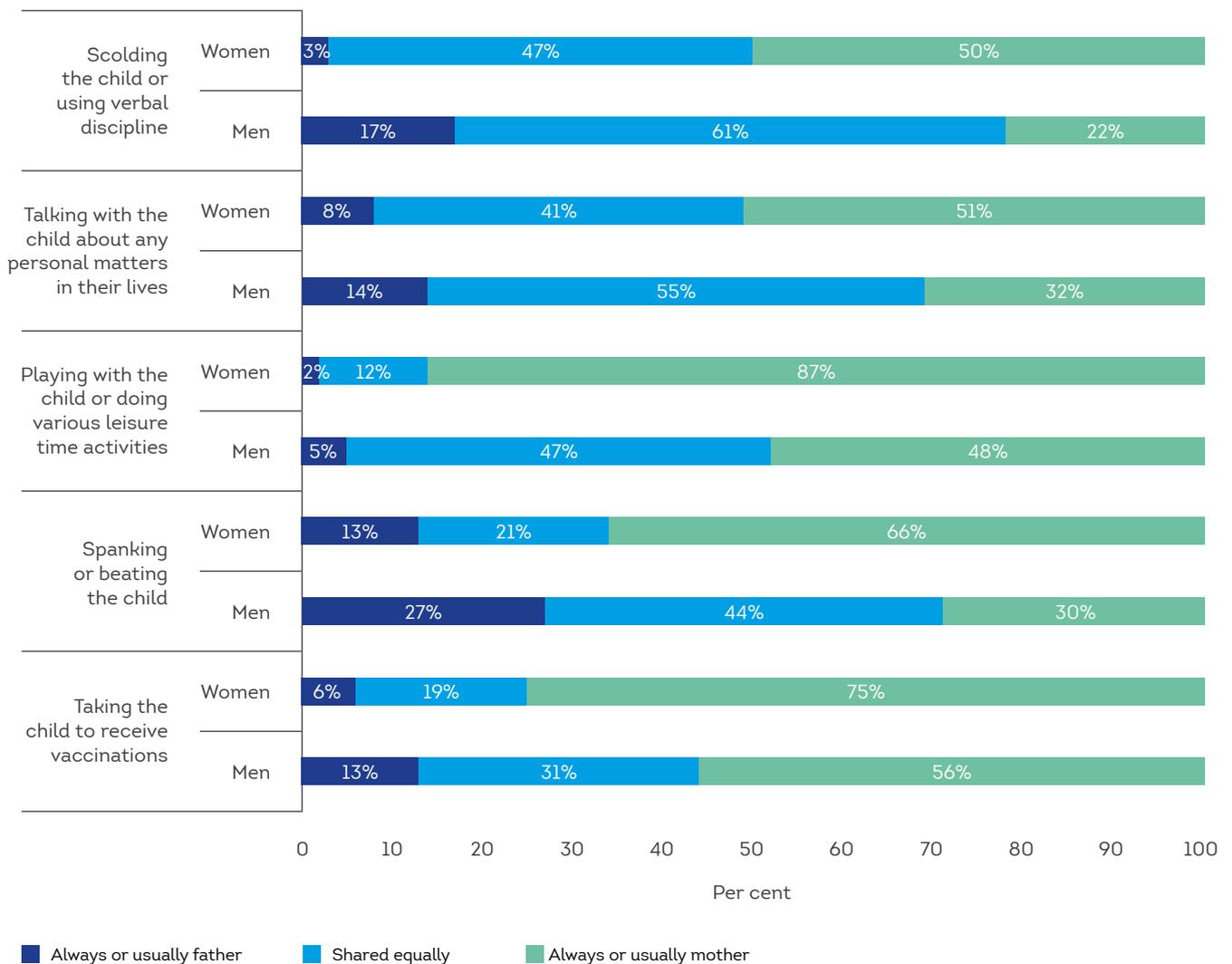
Percentage of ever-married respondents with children in the home who agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

Statement	MEN	WOMEN
	%	%
Husband spends too little time with the children in my home on account of his job or the time he spends looking for work	73.3	79.6

IMAGES data demonstrate that most forms of childcare are predominantly undertaken by women, with some moments of cooperation. Figures 3.5.3b and 3.5.3c present childcare-related responses from all study respondents who have children living in their homes. With only two exceptions, respondents are in broad agreement that women are much more likely than men to always or usually take care of all childcare tasks. That said, certain elements of childcare work were commonly reported to be shared equally between parents: scolding the child, talking with the child about personal matters, playing with the child, spanking the child, and taking the child to receive vaccinations (shown in Figure 3.5.3b).

Figure 3.5.3b Most gender-balanced childcare tasks

Percentage of ever-married respondents with children in the home who reported that the father, the mother, or both parents tend to do various childcare tasks,* IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

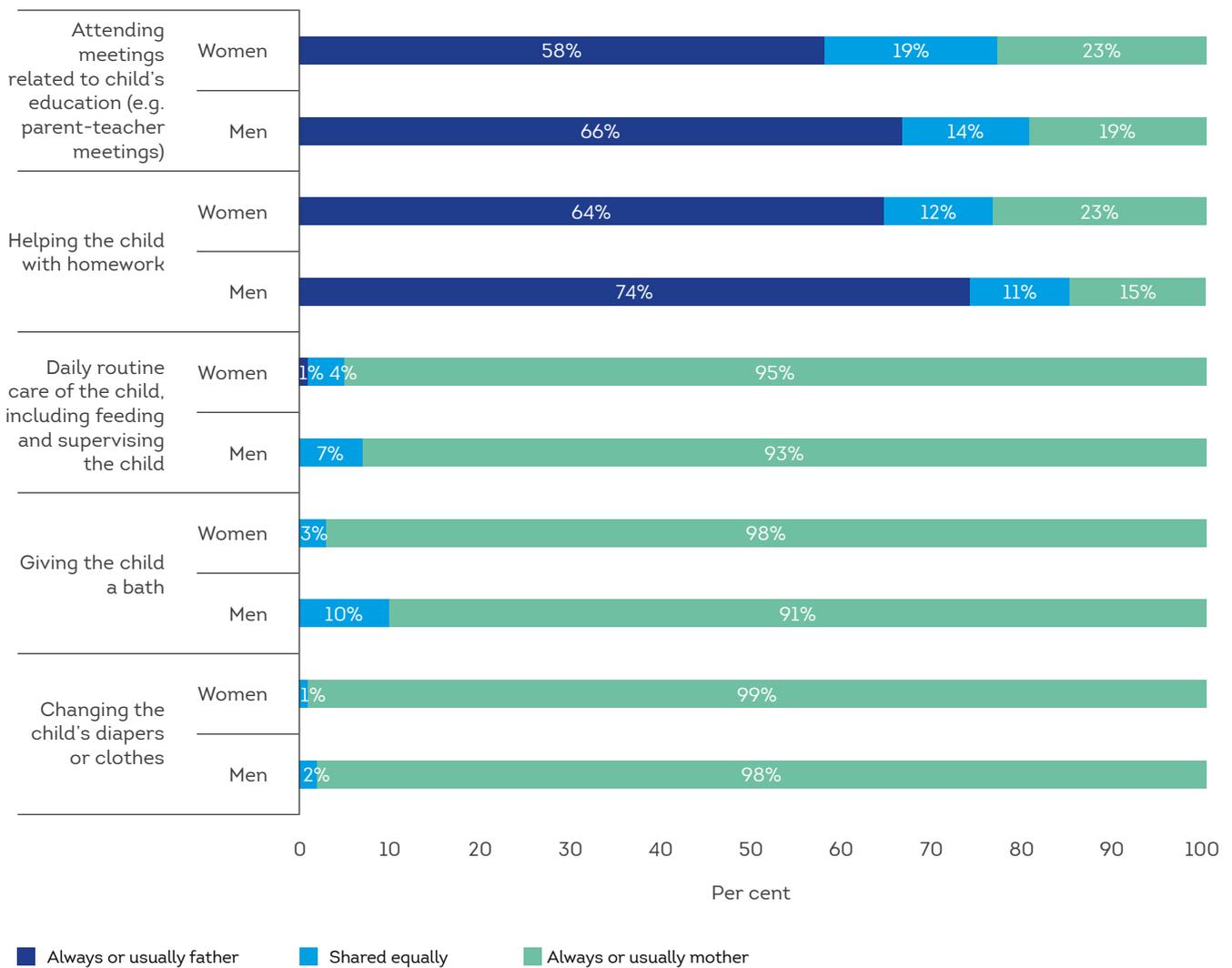


*Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Homework and meetings outside the home are the only two elements of childcare roundly agreed to be undertaken mostly (and independently) by fathers; conversely, all respondents agreed that men almost never feed, bathe, and change the diapers of children independently. These dynamics are presented in Figure 3.5.3c, showing the childcare elements with the starkest gender-based divisions.

Figure 3.5.3c Most gender-imbalanced childcare tasks

Percentage of ever-married respondents with children who reported that the father, the mother, or both parents tend to do various childcare tasks,* IMAGES Afghanistan 2017



*Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Reflecting the distribution of childcare tasks in the survey data, the majority of qualitative research participants said that they believe childcare should be primarily the responsibility of mothers. While this was the dominant view, many participants shared more equitable views about how childcare work should be distributed, often reflecting positively on their own father's involvement in this work.

No, a man can never be a woman. A man cannot take care of children like a woman. A man can bring food and other needs to the family, but he cannot take care of children.

Woman, 26, Ghazni province, housewife

People have different opinions. I think God has given me another chance to fulfill my childhood dreams. God gave me a daughter. I want to fulfill all her dreams. In terms of upbringing, I want to raise her the way my family raised me, I want to teach her the values we have in our family. As my family always taught me about the equality between men and women according to Islam, now I want to teach my daughter as well and make her feel that she is no less than a man.

Man, 29, Kabul province, teacher at military training center

Islam and gender equality

Study participants shared complex relationships with their Muslim faith. Many men find lessons and examples in favor of gender equality within Islamic teachings, particularly in the life and practices of the Prophet. Others shared experiences with religious leaders whose views, they felt, were too restrictive or gender-inequitable. Sometimes a single participant shared both reflections at once. In reading the interviews, it becomes clear that Islamic faith in Afghanistan provides fertile ground for those who want to preach equality, as well as for those who do not.

I was in the mosque, and the mullah was preaching. He said that God created Eve from the left ribs of Adam, and that like the shape of the ribs are lopsided, women are also lopsided and unbalanced. Therefore, to make women straight and right, it is important to beat them from time to time. After hearing this, I was agitated. ... I approached him. ... I told him that "after what you told these people today, it will give them a good justification to commit violence and beat their wives." ... He said, "I was joking," and then I told him that you should not fool or give wrong information to the people because they will accept what you tell them. ... If we truly follow our religion, there is no need that the West comes and teaches us about human rights and women's rights. We already have them in our religion. If we look at the life of our Prophet with his wife, and how he always supported them, or if we look at the life of companions of the Prophet and how they treated their wives, there was no violence among them. If we study the hadith of Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) we can see that he valued women. However, later on, people mixed culture with religion, and that is where the problem arises.

Man, 40, Kabul province, entrepreneur

Once, my wife told me that "people are talking about you, that you are not Muslim anymore and don't pray, too." And [she said that] our relatives won't be in touch with us like before. And I said to her, I don't care about that, and it is possible that our lifestyle might not be as the same as others. We have the right to choose our lifestyle. ... If I die one day, at that time, I will talk to God and know that He is so kind. I didn't steal anything or hurt people. It's just that I didn't follow the rule and belief of mullahs. Regarding work distribution, it is again related to culture and it is not actually religious. So, I am against such a culture, because I do work at the household level.

Man, 38, Kabul province, librarian and teacher

3.5.4 Disciplining Children

Study respondents reported using a range of disciplinary tactics, including physical violence. Men (63 per cent) were significantly more likely than women (17 per cent) to report using the method of explaining why the child's behavior was wrong. Women in the study reported higher rates of using all remaining forms of discipline, including physical discipline, a trend that derives in part from the disproportionate amount of time that women spend with children, as presented earlier in this report. Seventy-three per cent of women and 49 per cent of men reported having used at least one of two forms of discipline involving physical violence against a child when the child was between the ages of 3 and 14.

Table 3.5.4a Disciplining children aged 3 to 14

Percentage of ever-married respondents with children in the home who reported using various behaviors with their children when the children were aged 3 to 14, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

	MEN	WOMEN
	%	%
Explained why your child's behavior was wrong	63.4	16.5
Took away privileges, forbade something your child did, or did not allow your child to leave the house	47.0	58.1
Shouted, yelled at, or screamed at your child	48.7	74.5
Used physical discipline (one or more of the following two acts)	49.3	72.8
Spanked or slapped your child on any part of her/his body	47.7	70.1
Hit your child on the bottom or elsewhere on the body with something like a belt, stick, or other hard object	14.6	22.5

Many qualitative research participants said that corporal punishment was a common disciplinary tactic in their communities, even as they held conflicting personal views about the practice. Some respondents spoke of intervening with relatives in cases of such punishment, and even of changing their own attitudes and behaviors related to physical discipline.

I have seen a situation in the home of one of my relatives. The son, who was about 6 or 7 years old, took the mobile phone of his mother, but his father asked him, "Why did you take the mobile phone of your mother?" Then, the son put the phone back in the charger, but his father slapped him. But the mother said to the father, "May your hands break, why did you slap him?" The husband wanted to beat his wife, but we didn't allow him.

Woman, 35, Herat province, university student

Yes, sometimes I also committed violence. For example, when my first son was born, I feel deep very regret to say that I committed violence against him, I beat him, and I swore at him. But later I changed myself. ... After I had committed violence against my child, I felt regret, and after an hour maybe I went back and showed love.

Man, 58, Kabul province, NGO director

3.6 Conflict, War, and Family Security

This section shares details of IMAGES respondents' personal experiences of conflict and war, as well as their reflections on personal stresses due to the challenges of life in Afghanistan.

3.6.1 Experiences of Conflict and War

IMAGES respondents' lives testify to the extreme traumas, risks, and challenges of life during conflict in Afghanistan. A preponderance of respondents, both male and female, reported various adverse experiences directly linked to the many years of invasion, insurgency, conflict, and war in the country. Of the 14 such experiences asked about in the survey, as seen in Table 3.6.1a, 82 per cent of men and 73 per cent of women had experienced one or more. About one-third of men had experienced five or more of the items, as had over one-quarter of women in the study. The conflict- and war-related experiences are listed in Table 3.6.1a in order from the most frequently reported to the least frequently reported, meaning that experiences such as living as an internally displaced person or refugee, facing bombardment, being robbed, and witnessing beatings are among the most common such experiences among study participants. While no women in the study reported ever having been jailed, more than one in 10 men said that they had been jailed due to war or conflict, and even greater proportions said that a family member had been jailed. The true scope of the nationwide trauma brought about by decades of insecurity in the region is hard to estimate, but these findings provide a useful, albeit limited, picture.

Table 3.6.1a Experiences of conflict and war

Percentage of all respondents who reported various adverse experiences related to conflict and war, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

	MEN	WOMEN
	%	%
Have you ever...		
Lived as an internally displaced person or refugee due to war/conflict?	41.1	36.5
Experienced bombardment, missiles, or rockets (even if no one was hurt)?	43.0	25.7
Been robbed, lost land or property, or had your land or property destroyed during the war/conflict?	33.0	29.8
Witnessed beatings or torture of other people during the war/conflict?	39.4	23.0
Been forced to abandon school or work due to war/conflict?	38.6	21.7
Witnessed an explosion or seen victims of an explosion just after it happened?	34.1	20.0
Been separated from a family member due to war/conflict?	28.4	21.9
Had any member of your family die violently due to war/conflict?	17.9	23.7
Been beaten or tortured during the war/conflict?	24.3	10.7
Had any member of your family seriously physically injured from combat or an explosive device?	19.1	13.7
Had any member of your family put in jail due to war/conflict?	12.4	13.6
Had any member of your family disappear or be abducted due to war/conflict?	6.8	9.4
Been seriously physically injured from combat or an explosive device?	10.2	4.2
Been put in jail due to war/conflict?	10.6	0.0
Any one or more of the above	82.2	72.9
Any five or more of the above	32.9	26.6

Impact of Taliban rule on men's and women's lives, then and now

Life story interviews and focus group discussions often addressed the era of Taliban rule in Afghanistan, as well as the group's lasting influence on participants' lives. Stories point to desperate economic situations, ever-present anxiety, and frequent migration outside of the country, as in these examples:

Our migration began in the year 2000, almost one year before the U.S. attack on Afghanistan. It was because, during the Taliban regime, they forced families to send one of their male members as a soldier in the war in northern Afghanistan. At that time, I was the only son of my family, because my two elder brothers were out of the country. My father did not let me go to the war, and instead he was paying [AFN] 500,000 per year to the Taliban. This lasted as long as we had money; after some years, we were not able to pay that amount, and we had no other option but to migrate to Pakistan. Until the year 2003, we lived there as refugees.

Man, 40, Kabul province, supervisor

During the Taliban regime, we experienced a dark era. At that time, even the government employees did not have their salaries for months, and there was a lack of job opportunities at that time. Due to financial problems that we faced, we started weaving carpets at home to sell and sustain the family. At that time, I used to go to school from 7 till 11 a.m. After school, I used to do my homework, and then we were weaving carpets till 5 or 6 p.m. All my family members, including my parents, were weaving carpets. I think that was the darkest era in our life.

Man, 29, Kabul province, teacher

Participants also frequently spoke to the ongoing limitations imposed upon women and girls by the Taliban and other restrictive groups. Many discussed the often-violent consequences of not complying with the Taliban's restrictions.

In Badghis province, where we live, the situation is that when a girl reaches an older age, she is not allowed to attend school anymore because she will be threatened by the Taliban and other insurgent groups to stop attending school. Also, if women want to work in the government offices or other offices, the Taliban and other insurgent groups don't allow them. Therefore, their parents tell them not to care about their education, stay at home, and do housework.

Man, 34, Badghis province, mason

In [our village], most of the people are Taliban and the entire village is under the control of the Taliban. They don't allow girls to go to school. They even don't allow girls and women to leave the home; some women who go outside the home wear a very restrictive and unnecessary hijab.

Woman, 18, Baghlan province, media outlet employee

3.6.2 Stresses and Family Safety

In addition to the direct effects of Afghanistan's ongoing invasions and insurgencies, respondents reported other persistent stresses. Nearly universally, as Table 3.6.2a shows, male and female respondents reported being somewhat or very stressed about the security situation in Afghanistan in the past month. Only 3 per cent of respondents did not feel this way. Men feel less safe in their homes than women do, by a small margin, which may speak to men's abiding fears for their family's safety and/or women's relative comfort in the private domain. In line with prior findings in Afghanistan, such as the 2017 Survey of the Afghan People, a preponderance of study respondents recognize corruption as a major stressor in their lives.³¹ Majorities of both men and women also reported being somewhat or very stressed merely at the prospect of walking around outside of their homes.

Table 3.6.2a Stresses and safety

Percentage of all respondents who reported certain stresses, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

During the past month, how stressful has each of the following been to you?		Not at all	Somewhat	Very
Not feeling safe in your home	Men (%)	80.7	16.0	3.3
	Women (%)	85.3	13.9	0.8
Not feeling safe walking around outside of your home	Men (%)	47.9	38.2	13.9
	Women (%)	36.3	45.1	18.6
The security situation in Afghanistan	Men (%)	2.9	52.2	44.9
	Women (%)	3.2	67.1	29.7
Roadblocks	Men (%)	11.8	41.3	46.9
	Women (%)	9.9	44.6	45.5
Corruption	Men (%)	3.8	20.9	75.3
	Women (%)	5.1	27.5	67.4

31 Interestingly, according to *Afghanistan in 2017: A survey of the Afghan people* by the Asia Foundation (p. 100), 84 per cent of those surveyed reported believing that corruption was a major problem in their daily lives and 70 per cent in Afghanistan as a whole. The survey is available at: <https://asiafoundation.org/where-we-work/afghanistan/survey/>

3.6.3 Broad Effects of Conflict and Insecurity

War and conflict have deeply affected Afghanistan's economic and social fabric as conflict-related stress interrupts life's daily activities. Qualitative research participants reflected on the effects of ongoing conflict on employment opportunities and the ability to carry out work responsibilities. Many discussed the barriers to getting to work safely or threats to their security while at work. Consequently, feelings of stress, depression, and persistent unrest associated with insecurity were nearly universal among participants. Men and women discussed feeling daily fear when loved ones leave the house for work or school. Inside the home, women said that fears of insurgent attacks or dangers to those outside the home affect their ability to complete work inside the home. Participants also discussed their concerns about the emotional well-being of their children in times of ongoing insurgent violence.

Insurgency and war prevent people from doing any kind of work. ... When conflicts take place, we cannot do anything except come home and sit like a pregnant chicken. In these conditions, we just pray to Allah that he brings a light to our lives so we can do our work, earn income, and make a living for our family.

Man, 35, Badghis province, head of community council

One day, when my husband was outside the home, an explosion took place. I called him immediately, and the phone was answered automatically in his pocket, and I was hearing the background sounds and noises but he wasn't talking. This was really hard for me to tolerate, as I thought that he was injured and his phone was stolen. So, I was worrying and crying till night, I was dried up like wood, I couldn't do anything. When my husband arrived home at night and I saw him, I couldn't control myself and cried so much. He asked me, "Why are you crying? I am safe and sound."

Woman, 41, Kabul province, university student

A suicide attack took place at the Save the Children office, which was very close to my home. One of my children, who was only 5 years old, was shocked – he didn't become normal for many hours, so I took him to the doctor. He got sick, and after that time, he is feeling scared a lot. Whenever he is outside the home, he feels fear.

Women, 35, Nangarhar province, housewife

Interview respondents spoke to the necessity of preventing their children, especially daughters, from attending school due to insecurity. Among the conflict-associated factors preventing families from sending children to school, according to respondents, are fear due to trauma, lack of educational facilities, and past experiences of violence on the way to or during school. Although conflict and insecurity prevent the educational attainment of both boys and girls, participants more frequently discussed being forced to prevent their daughters from attending school due to fear for their safety and to educational restrictions on girls. Some worried about the futures of their children, and Afghan society, without proper education.

Most of the girls were prevented from going to school during the Mujahedeen time, and their houses might have burned if they didn't leave school. There were lots of security problems. Now, there are still security problems like planting mines and suicide bombings. Schools are also far from houses. These are the problems which prevent girls from attending schools.

Woman, 35, Kandahar province, housewife

Whenever there isn't security, there won't be proper lessons at school. ... In the end, this could lead our children to become uneducated and a burden to the society.

Man, 60, Parwan province, unemployed

Several participants discussed being forced to migrate to other cities and countries to seek refuge from the instability and insecurity in Afghanistan. Some women also mentioned that their desire to migrate created disagreements and conflicts in their relationships.

When a suicide attack or explosion takes place, I tell my husband that Afghanistan cannot be built, so let's leave Afghanistan. But my husband gets upset, becomes nervous, and says that there are about 36 million people who live in this country, so we have to live in this country like them. When I hear his response, I feel disappointed.

Woman, 26, Ghazni province, housewife

A wife got a divorce from her husband because the wife was insisting that he take her to Europe. But the husband was rejecting this and saying, "I have a good life here, I have money, a home." But the wife was saying, "I don't have security." So finally, the wife got a divorce. Insecurity is the main reason for conflicts and disputes between husbands and wives. If there was peace and security, then people would have happy and joyful lives with their husbands.

Woman, 20, Herat province, university student

3.7 Intimate Partner Violence and Harmful Practices

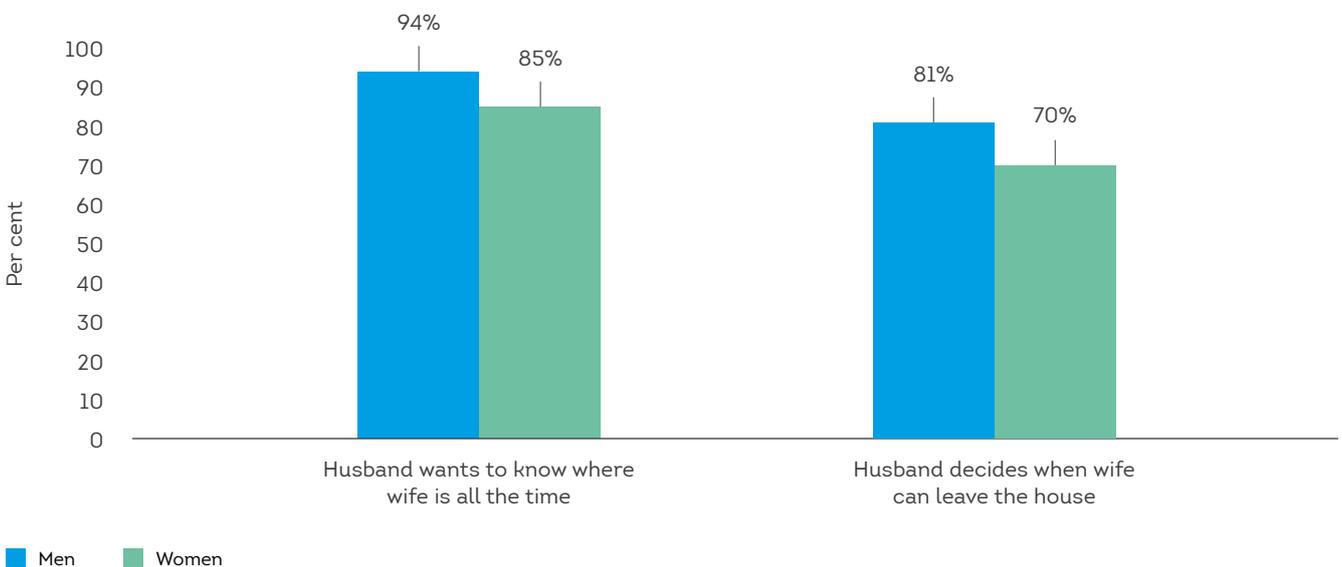
This section presents results related to intimate partner violence, street-based harassment, and the harmful practices of honor killings and *bacha-bazi*, the practice of keeping young boys for sexual exploitation.

3.7.1 Controlling Behaviors

The vast majority of ever-married respondents reported that men need to know where their wives are at all times and control when their wives can leave the house. The security situation in Afghanistan demands that all family members exercise extreme care related to the safety of their spouses and other relatives. Additionally, it may be that family members apart from the husband play a role in controlling the movements of women. However, controlling behaviors such as the ones in Figure 3.7.1a, when used by a husband against a wife, can also represent a component of, and precursor to other forms of, intimate partner violence. They also demonstrate yet another aspect of a heavily curtailed, controlled, and restricted lifestyle for women in Afghanistan.

Figure 3.7.1a Controlling behaviors

Percentage of ever-married respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with statements about their relationships, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017



What causes and justifies violence?

Qualitative research participants identified many perceived **causes of household violence**. Some viewed both husbands and wives as part of the problem, pointing to a lack of understanding and respect. Others stated that violence is a behavior that men learn from their fathers in a generational pattern of behavior. Some argued that a culture of violence is exacerbated in times of poverty. Many respondents also said, however, that violence is caused by wives “misbehaving.”

Men consider themselves as the leader and ruler of the family and tell their wives that they must obey them or otherwise they'll beat them. Sometimes, men beat their wives over very small issues.

Woman, 26, Ghazni province, housewife

Mostly, poverty and a weak economy are the main reasons violence occurs in the relationships and in the families. For example, a wife is interested in something or wants to have something or wants to purchase something from the market, but her husband doesn't have money and cannot afford it, so the wife enters into quarrels and disputes with her husband and finally the husband starts beating his wife.

Man, 18, Takhar province, farmer

My relative was beating his wife. Then when his son was grown up and married, he was beating his wife, too. So, all of our relatives were saying that this boy has learned violence from his father. There are some fathers who train their sons to hit their wives and tell them that those men who beat their wives are zealous and real men. Children learn these things from their fathers and mothers.

Woman, 21, Baghlan province, administrative employee

Men in the qualitative interviews who believed physical violence is acceptable tended to **justify their behavior** for similar reasons. Overwhelmingly, this subset of men said violence is necessary to stop women from disobeying their husbands and to keep women on an honorable, Islamic path. There is a wide range of actions that men stated would justify violence against their wives. Some mentioned not having dinner ready for them promptly, burning food, questioning finances, asking for household items that they cannot afford, or complaining when men get home from work.

Women should obey their husbands in order not to be beaten.

Man, 56, Daikundi province, shopkeeper

First, if a woman makes mistakes or defies you, you should talk with her. If she doesn't improve her problems, then you try to stay away from her, but if she still hasn't corrected herself, then you are allowed to beat her lightly. But you shouldn't beat her so harshly to make her injured. Also, you aren't allowed to hit your wife in the face. If your wife doesn't improve her problems, then you should discuss them with her family elders, and finally, you should divorce her.

Man, 46, Laghman province, teacher

If the woman is moving in a proper and good way and serves her family, no one has the right to beat her. But, God forbid, if a woman doesn't obey her husband, moves in the wrong direction, of course she should be beaten. One has the right to beat women who don't obey their husbands, doing bad things outside the home.

Man, 34, Badghis province, unemployed

Despite widespread accounts of violence, most men and women agreed that in principle, only minimal violence is acceptable and should only be used when discussion proves ineffective.

3.7.2 Intimate Partner Violence

Men and women alike reported extremely high rates of men's violence against their intimate partners in Afghanistan, including economic, emotional, physical, and sexual violence, as well as preventing women from seeking health services. While women are more likely to report experiencing all forms of violence than men are to report perpetrating them, men were not shy about sharing the various forms of violence they use against their wives. The data that follow demonstrate how unidirectional, prevalent, and multifaceted men's use of intimate partner violence against their wives is in Afghanistan.

With regard to **economic intimate partner violence**, 70 per cent of women reported that their husband had ever prohibited them from getting a job outside the home, and 47 per cent reported that their husband had ever taken her earnings against her will (see Table 3.7.2a). While many men felt that the question was "not applicable" to them, nearly 49 per cent of those who answered shared that they had prohibited their wife from getting a job outside the home.

Table 3.7.2a Economic intimate partner violence

Percentage of ever-married respondents who reported perpetrating (men) or experiencing (women) forms of economic intimate partner violence, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

Economic intimate partner violence	Men (perpetrated)			Women (experienced)		
	Ever (%)	Last 12 months (%)	N*	Ever (%)	Last 12 months (%)	N*
[Husband] has:						
Prohibited [wife] from getting a job (outside the home), going to work, trading, or earning money	48.7	18.4	152	69.7	27.0	185
Taken [wife's] earnings against her will	26.3	13.5	251	47.0	23.5	200
Kept money from his earnings for himself when he knew [wife] was finding it hard to afford the household expenses	12.4	5.9	660	19.4	10.0	758

*Number of total respondents to each particular item.

With regard to **emotional intimate partner violence**, including various threats and insults, the vast majority of women – 83 per cent – reported ever experiencing one or more forms of this violence, and nearly 76 per cent of men reported ever perpetrating this violence (see Table 3.7.2b). Fifty-nine per cent of women and 45 per cent of men shared that the husband had ever “done things to scare or intimidate [his wife] on purpose, for example, by the way he looked at her or by yelling and smashing things.”

Table 3.7.2b Emotional intimate partner violence

Percentage of ever-married respondents who reported perpetrating (men) or experiencing (women) forms of emotional intimate partner violence, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

Emotional intimate partner violence	Men (perpetrated)			Women (experienced)		
	Ever (%)	Last 12 months (%)	N*	Ever (%)	Last 12 months (%)	N*
[Husband] has:						
Insulted [wife] or deliberately made her feel bad about herself	27.1	12.2	665	47.6	24.7	740
Done things to scare or intimidate [wife] on purpose, for example, by the way he looked at her or by yelling and smashing things	45.3	19.2	667	58.6	32.0	744
Belittled or humiliated [wife] in front of other people	24.1	10.3	669	41.8	17.8	752
Threatened to hurt [wife] or someone who is important to her	26.8	12.1	669	42.9	24.9	746
Any form of emotional intimate partner violence	75.6	41.0	675	83.3	60.3	758

*Number of total respondents to each particular item.

The importance and prevalence of emotional forms of intimate partner violence were not lost on qualitative research participants, such as this life story.

Physical violence is not the only type of violence. If you don't accept the views of your wife, that is also violence. Not giving value to women's ideas and opinions is also a type of violence. Such acts of violence existed in my family. When my father was discussing something, and my mother wanted to give her opinion, he used to tell her, "You shut up, you don't know anything." This is also violence. Or, for instance, when my mother wanted to wear the clothes she wanted and my father didn't allow her, that was also a type of violence.

Man, 40, Kabul province, entrepreneur

Physical intimate partner violence is also tremendously prevalent, with 80 per cent of women reporting ever experiencing one or more of the forms of this violence included in the study (see Table 3.7.2c). Fully 65 per cent of men reported ever perpetrating one or more forms of physical intimate partner violence as well. This violence, not unlike the other forms included in the study, is relatively frequent, with half of ever-married women reporting experiencing physical intimate partner violence within the last 12 months alone and 35 per cent of men reporting perpetrating this form of violence in the same period.

Table 3.7.2c Physical intimate partner violence

Percentage of ever-married respondents who reported perpetrating (men) or experiencing (women) forms of physical intimate partner violence, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

Physical intimate partner violence	Men (perpetrated)			Women (experienced)		
	Ever (%)	Last 12 months (%)	N*	Ever (%)	Last 12 months (%)	N*
[Husband] has:						
Slapped [wife] or thrown something at her that could hurt her	44.6	23.0	662	64.2	33.4	748
Pushed [wife], cornered her, or pulled her hair	32.8	14.3	653	55.1	25.5	741
Hit [wife] with a fist or with something else that could hurt her	21.6	7.1	649	40.4	15.8	733
Kicked, dragged, or beat [wife]	17.0	5.8	634	36.8	13.7	744
Choked or burned [wife] on purpose	1.8	0.5	653	9.4	2.4	747
Threatened to use or actually used a gun, knife, or other weapon against [wife]	2.0	0.2	665	8.3	1.6	747
Any form of physical intimate partner violence	65.0	35.3	675	79.8	49.6	758

*Number of total respondents to each particular item.

Exploring patterns of intimate partner violence in Afghanistan

IMAGES findings build upon prior evidence that men's use of intimate partner violence is very prevalent in Afghanistan. 2015 DHS study data show that some 56 per cent of ever-married women aged 15 to 49 reported ever having experienced emotional, physical, or sexual violence from their spouse, with 52 per cent reporting that one or more of these forms of violence had occurred in the prior 12 months.³² Using a sample that includes an older age cohort of women (aged 18 to 59), and incorporating questions on additional forms of violence not included in the DHS survey, IMAGES data reveal prevalence rates for certain forms of violence that exceed those in the DHS study. Taken together, these two rigorous nationwide household survey datasets present undeniable evidence of the scope of intimate partner violence in Afghanistan.

Unlike the DHS study, IMAGES also asks men to report their perpetration of various forms of violence against their wives. These results are also telling: Significant majorities of ever-married men in the study reported using one or more forms of emotional or physical violence against their wives. Multivariate analysis adds complexity to this result. Physical intimate partner violence is so prevalent in Afghanistan that when exploring 11 possible influences on men's likelihood to perpetrate this form of violence simultaneously in a multivariate regression model, no influence remained statistically significant.

What this means is that physical intimate partner violence is ubiquitous in Afghanistan, cutting across all social groups, characteristics, and life experiences. Qualitative research participants tended to share a belief that less educated, rural populations would display significantly greater levels of violence, but the survey data do not bear this out. No group stands out as particularly at risk, precisely because all groups are at such great risk.

This is not to suggest, however, that the root causes of men's use of intimate partner violence cannot be pinpointed. Men's use of violence against their wives is rooted in gender-based inequality in the distribution of power and resources in the home and at all levels of society, and the widespread discrimination against women that comes with this inequality.³³ As emphasized in survey results and qualitative excerpts throughout this report, IMAGES Afghanistan demonstrates that these very forms of inequality and discrimination are commonplace in Afghanistan. When men's lives and needs are given priority over those of women, and when men assume the right to wield power over women, intimate partner violence against women is almost certain to follow. As such, one of the foremost implications of DHS and IMAGES research results is the need for more intensive work to transform and eradicate the social norms that underlie intimate partner violence and all forms of discrimination against women.

32 Central Statistics Organization (Afghanistan), Ministry of Public Health Afghanistan, & ICF. (2017). *Afghanistan Demographic and Health Survey 2015*. Kabul: Central Statistics Organization. Retrieved from <http://www.dhsprogram.com/publications/publication-FR323-DHS-Final-Reports.cfm>

33 Fulu, E., et al. (2016). "Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls Through Social Norm Change: Learning Paper from the Asia-Pacific Forum on Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls." UN Women, UNFPA, & DFAT. <http://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2016/11/social-norm-report-25-nov.pdf?la=en&vs=2312>

While the survey did not ask men about their perpetration of **sexual intimate partner violence**, out of concerns for security of the interviewers, the study did ask women to share whether their husbands had ever forced them to have sex when they did not want to. Eighteen per cent of women shared this had ever happened, meaning that nearly one in five women in Afghanistan has been subjected to sexual violence by her husband. More than one in 10 women shared this had happened in the prior year (see Table 3.7.2d). With regard to **health-services-related intimate partner violence**, approximately 19 per cent of women reported that their husband had, at some point, prevented them from seeking health services when they needed to. Eight per cent of men reported that they had ever done this. Only a negligible number of men and 6 per cent of women shared that a woman had ever carried out **physical violence against her husband** (that was not retaliatory in nature to the man's violence against her).

Table 3.7.2d Sexual and other intimate partner violence

Percentage of ever-married respondents who reported perpetrating or experiencing forms of sexual or other intimate partner violence, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

Sexual and other intimate partner violence	Men (perpetrated)			Women (experienced)		
	Ever (%)	Last 12 months (%)	N*	Ever (%)	Last 12 months (%)	N*
<i>Sexual intimate partner violence: [Husband] forced [wife] to have sex with him when she did not want to</i>	**	**	**	18.2	11.2	729
<i>Health-services-related intimate partner violence: [Husband prevented] [wife] from going to seek health service when she needed to</i>	7.5	3.5	675	18.6	9.1	758
<i>Non-mutual physical intimate partner violence by women against men: [Wife] hit [husband] when he was not hitting her or had not hit her first</i>	1.7	0.2	675	6.1	2.3	743

*Number of total respondents to each particular item.

**Men were not asked about their perpetration of sexual intimate partner violence for safety and sensitivity reasons.

“Intervening” or “interfering” – What would you do?

Some focus group discussions among men tackled bystander invention – essentially, asking the men to discuss whether it is feasible or appropriate to intervene when one knows that another man is using violence against his wife or against another woman. In one such conversation in Badghis province, the conversation proceeded as follows:

Facilitator: What would you do if you saw a man using violence against a woman?

We cannot do anything in this regard, because if we interfere, they would tell us that “it’s our family and a private matter.” If we see such a case in our brother’s family, though, we can interfere.

Man, 34, Badghis province, mason

We cannot interfere in such cases in the rural and remote areas because people would not allow us.

Man, 22, Badghis province, unemployed

We have seen families that used violence and other people interfered, but they said that “it’s our personal issue and matter and none of your business.”

Man, 34, Badghis province, unemployed

Even if you interfere in your brother’s family ... they might fight with you and, as a result, you might be killed.

Man, 18, Badghis province, plaster worker

If a man beats his wife but another person interferes, then the man will think that this person is his wife’s boyfriend because he is supporting her.

Man, 34, Badghis province, unemployed

Both women and men in focus groups shared strong support for laws against domestic violence in Afghanistan. In rural areas, many participants were not aware of such laws. Among those who were aware of laws on domestic violence, many spoke to the shame, dishonor, and fear of retaliation they might face if they were to actually use the law to register a complaint. These fears cause many women, even those who are aware of their legal rights, to never report the violence they experience.

Women say that if we register a complaint case, we are trying to dishonor our father and brother. So, in order to keep the honor of their fathers and brothers, they accept violence. Women accept any violence, tyranny, and oppression. ... Also, some other women don't register complaints because of fear of their husbands. Therefore, the law is not implemented in Afghanistan.

Woman, 52, Kabul province, social worker

If women go to the human rights commission in order to register a complaint case against their husbands but their cases are not processed, then their husbands will beat them more and more.

Woman, 38, Kabul province, housewife

3.7.3 Harmful Practices: Honor Killings and Bacha-Bazi³⁴

About one in 10 respondents was aware of at least one case in their community in which a woman was killed for “bringing shame to the family” within the past year. As Table 3.7.3a shows, nearly one-quarter of men and women in the study believed that most people in their community would approve of such a killing; 20 per cent of men and 16 per cent of women reported that they approve of this practice themselves. While this demonstrates that a significant majority of the population rejects the practice of honor killing, the levels of approval are still noteworthy.

Table 3.7.3a Reports of and beliefs about harmful practices

Percentage of all respondents who shared various answers related to harmful cultural practices, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

	MEN	WOMEN
Honor killings		
Reports that within the last year, one or more women or girls were killed for “family honor” in their community (<i>referring in the IMAGES questionnaire to “killing a woman for bringing shame to the family by behaving inappropriately”</i>)	95 respondents / 1,000	94 respondents / 1,000
Believes that most people in their community would approve of such an action (a woman or girl being killed for family honor)	23.1%	23.3%
Personally approves of such an action (a woman or girl being killed for family honor)	19.5%	15.9%

34 In Afghanistan, *bacha-bazi* includes a variety of activities, including paying young boys (aged 7 to 18) to wear women’s clothes and makeup to dance and entertain older, powerful, armed, and wealthy men. In most cases, the boy is forced to engage in sexual relations with the person who is considered his “owner” and with his “owner’s” friends. Having a *bacha*, or young male escort, is a sign of social status in some communities. Sometimes, the pedophiles (*bacha baz*) hire their victims as their bodyguard, secretary, or apprentice. They have an expectation that these relationships will last until the victim is ready to get married.

Table 3.7.3a Continued Reports of and beliefs about harmful practices

Percentage of all respondents who shared various answers related to harmful cultural practices, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

	MEN	WOMEN
Bacha-bazi		
Reports that within the last year, one or more boys were treated like <i>bacha-bazi</i> in their community (referring in the IMAGES questionnaire to “the act where an individual keeps with them one or more boys, typically between 10 and 18 years old, for the purpose of <i>bacha-bazi</i> , generally associated with sexual exploitation and other forms of sexual harassment”)	159 respondents / 1,000	47 respondents / 1,000
Believes that most people in their community would approve of such an action (a boy being kept for this reason)	5.3%	2.5%
Personally approves of such an action (a boy being kept for this reason)	3.5%	1.1%
Reports personally knowing one or more boys who were treated as <i>bacha-bazi</i> , when the respondent was under age 18	186 respondents / 1,000	31 respondents / 1,000

Even as IMAGES respondents reported low levels of approval for *bacha-bazi*, significant proportions of men reported direct knowledge of this practice occurring in their community. A total of 159 men in the study shared that *bacha-bazi* had occurred within their community in the past year, and an even greater number reported that, as children, they personally knew one or more boys subjected to this practice. Only 1 per cent of women and about 4 per cent of men said that they personally approved of this practice, as shown in Table 3.7.3a.

Rejecting partner violence and finding solutions

Rejecting violence in principle was common among qualitative research participants, and their justifications fell into a few main categories. Some men reject violence in relatively paternalistic terms, suggesting that women need men's protection rather than abuse. Others offered more positive, aspirational ideas, calling on husbands and wives to discuss conflicts together peacefully. While many participants are nominally opposed to partner violence, very few discussed the gender inequality and power imbalances that fuel it.

When a husband uses violence against his wife, their children will become violent and aggressive in the future. When children become aggressive in a family, then the society will be aggressive, and when a society is aggressive, then the entire country will be aggressive. So, parents should try not to use violence in the family.

Man, 35, Daikundi province, unemployed

Whenever I hear about violence against women, it makes me cry. I say it should not happen to anyone or we should stop this violence because it is against sharia law. We are ignoring sharia law in this regard.

Man, 35, Kabul province, school principal

In addition to raising their voices against violence, many shared ideas for solutions. Participants spoke to the importance of teaching society about the rights of women. Women in particular voiced that laws on domestic violence must be implemented more effectively. Other solutions focused on education, Islamic education, and women's economic participation. Some participants mentioned that men do not trust violence-prevention messages from non-Islamic sources, like United Nations agencies. Instead, they said, eliminating violence should be taught through an Islamic lens.

There is no trust in the law, because the government has passed a law but not implemented it. When the government passes a law but doesn't implement it, then how can the public trust them? Women say that if we register a case in the human rights council or any other related organization, they might not address our case; so if they don't process our case, it is better not to register any case. Therefore, women say it is better to accept violence and not dishonor their husbands.

Woman, 36, Kabul province, teacher

Mullah and imams in the mosques have key roles. Men go to the mosque five times in a day in order to perform their prayers, so mullahs tell men five times in a day not to allow your wives and daughters to go outside the home, not to allow your wives and daughters to watch television. So mullahs should be informed about women's rights and should encourage at the mosques that men shouldn't hit their wives.

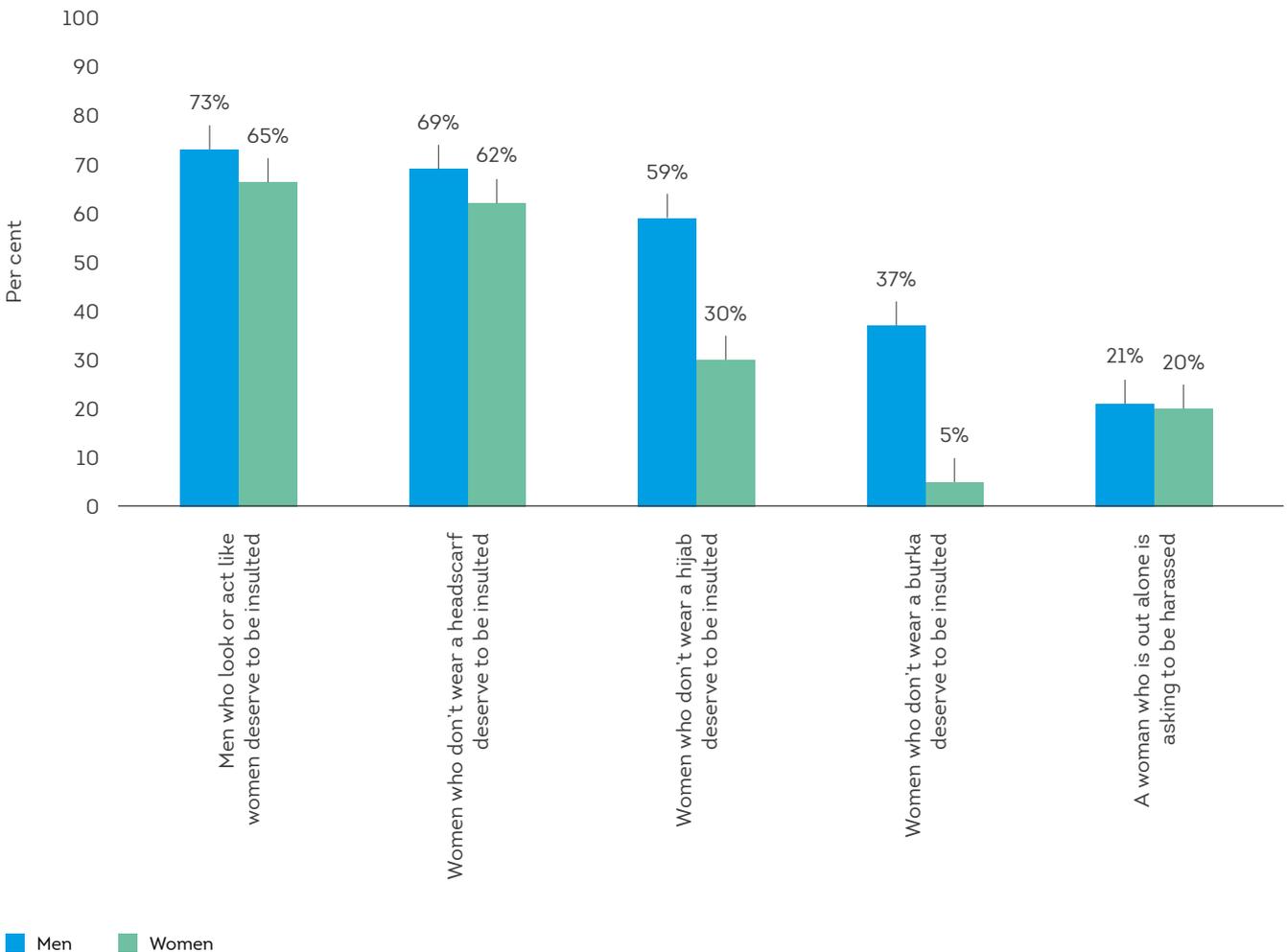
Woman, 28, Baghlan province, unemployed

3.7.4 Justification for Harassment

IMAGES respondents in Afghanistan feel that harassment and insults are justified in certain circumstances, with men being more likely to justify all forms of harassment than women. As Figure 3.7.4a demonstrates, majorities of both men and women agreed that “men who look or act like women deserve to be insulted” and “women who don’t wear a headscarf deserve to be insulted.” Men and women in the study disagreed significantly about whether women who do not wear a hijab deserve to be insulted, with 59 per cent of men agreeing compared to only 30 per cent of women. Only 5 per cent of women felt that women who do not wear a burka deserve to be insulted, as compared to 37 per cent of men. Finally, men and women share similar attitudes about women being out alone; approximately one in five male and female respondents agreed with the victim-blaming notion that these women are “asking to be harassed.”

Figure 3.7.4a Justification for harassment

Percentage of all respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with statements about harassment, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017



3.8 Health

This section shares study results related to respondents' reports of their own health and well-being, in addition to their health-seeking and help-seeking behaviors in both formal and informal spaces. It also includes an analysis of respondents' reported use of drugs and other intoxicants.

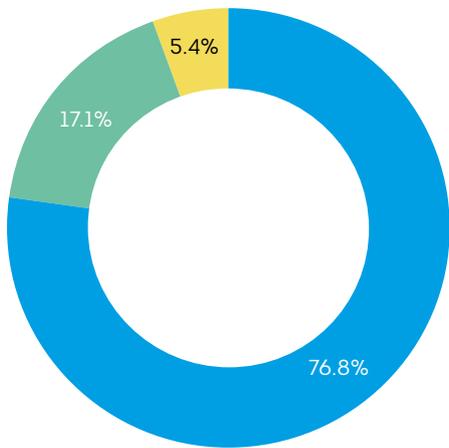
3.8.1 Health and Help-Seeking

Facing the extreme hardships and constraints of life in Afghanistan, as explored earlier in the report, respondents' views of their own health and well-being underscore their resilience. As Figure 3.8.1a shows, vast majorities of both men and women rated their own physical health and well-being as "good" or "very good" compared to others of the same sex and age. Only 5 per cent of men and 10 per cent of women reported that their physical health is "bad" or "very bad" in comparison with peers their age.

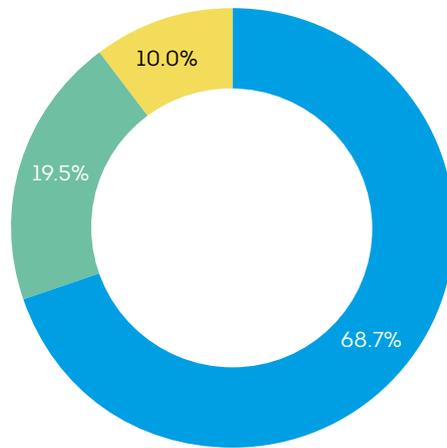
Figure 3.8.1a Self-ratings of health

Percentage of all respondents who rate their own health in certain categories, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

Men's ratings of their own health
(compared to others their age)



Women's ratings of their own health
(compared to others their age)



■ Good or very good ■ Moderate ■ Bad or very bad

Despite these high ratings of personal health, injuries and health concerns do arise; the vast majority of men and women reported seeking out health services within the last year. As Table 3.8.1b demonstrates, three-quarters or more of respondents have sought out health services within the last year, with more than half of these saying that they visited a doctor or clinic within the last three months. The most common reasons for such visits (not included in the table) were acute illnesses such as fever or nausea, with approximately half of all respondents identifying these illnesses as the impetus for their last clinic visit. About 16 per cent of women and 22 per cent of men said that a chronic illness such as high blood pressure or heart issues prompted the last visit.

Table 3.8.1b Seeking health services

Percentage of all respondents based on their last reported instance of seeking formal health services, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

	MEN %	WOMEN %
When was the last time you sought out health services for yourself at a clinic or hospital?		
Never	0.0	5.8
More than five years ago	5.6	1.7
Two to five years ago	14.1	7.7
Within the last year	24.6	18.8
Within the last three months	26.0	23.8
Within the last month	24.6	38.3
Don't remember	5.1	3.9

Many participants in the focus groups who sought health services shared negative opinions of healthcare providers. Participants tended to agree that the healthcare system is discriminatory against those who appear poor, who do not have personal contacts at the hospital, or who speak a different language than the doctors and nurses. Many mentioned how people from rural areas and poor economic conditions are ignored and turned away. Others pointed to the role of money in guaranteeing adequate healthcare. The perception of discrimination in the health system leads to multiple fears: fear that nurses will not offer them attention, fear that they will be denied access to healthcare, and fear that their safety could be threatened. Women discussed widespread fear that their babies would be kidnapped if they gave birth in a hospital, as many have heard stories of newborn boys being swapped with girls.

Once, my brother's wife was sick. I took her to the hospital; she needed to be kept in a bed for urgent medical treatment, but the doctors denied her a bed. I came back to my home and wore "Arabic" clothes and told my brother's wife to wear expensive clothes as well. So we went back to the hospital, and when the doctors saw us, they immediately put the patient in a bed.

Woman, 35, Herat province, unemployed

People who had given bribes to the doctors and midwives, their patients were treated properly. But those who come from the districts and don't have money to give are treated terribly. ... If women go to private clinics, they don't feel fear because they pay money and the health providers behave properly with them and provide them with good health services. But if they go to public clinics, they feel fear.

Woman, 22, Ghazni province, unemployed

I have even seen that they beat the patients. They tell patients that "goddamn you, why do you cry during childbirth, why do you give birth to too many children?" They misbehave and insult the pregnant women.

Woman, 41, Nangarhar province, headmaster

IMAGES also measures more informal sources of support, particularly focused on mental health concerns such as sadness, disappointment, and frustration. In Afghanistan, many respondents reported that they do not seek out this help; indeed, only 68 per cent of men and 54 per cent of women said that they had done so, leaving 32 per cent of men and 46 per cent of women seeming to bear their sadness and frustration on their own. Among those who do seek this informal support, they most commonly reach out to family members or relatives, with spouses and same-sex friends following in decreasing order. Reports of friendships with members of the opposite sex are all but nonexistent, as are reports of seeking professional counseling services for mental health issues.

Table 3.8.1c Informal help-seeking

Percentage of all respondents who reported seeking various sources of help, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

	MEN	WOMEN
	%	%
Sought help from others when feeling sad, disappointed, frustrated	68.1	54.2
If yes, from whom? (multiple answers were allowed)		
Family members or relatives	94.8	99.1
Spouse	25.6	33.6
Male friend	33.3	0.0
Female friend	1.0	25.3
Elder	7.6	3.7
Religious leader or mullah	3.7	0.2
Teacher	3.1	0.6
Health provider	1.8	0.7
Business associate/colleague	1.9	0.2
Professional counseling	1.5	0.2
Traditional healer	0.7	0.9
Other	0.0	1.3

“Soft reaction” – Investigating men’s friendships and social support

Many focus groups with men included a discussion on male friendship, asking participants to identify the traits of an ideal friendship, including examples of such friendships in their lives. These conversations were often very sincere and encouraging. Men of all ages spoke to the value they place in true friendships, including close emotional support, which tends to move against the most rigid ideas about what makes a “real man.”

I have shown a soft reaction to one of my friends who made a mistake; in return, he showed a softer reaction to my mistake, too, so I felt so close with him.

Man, 56, Daikundi province, shopkeeper

After sharing your sorrows and pains with your friend, you feel so calm and happy. Friendship makes you forget your sorrows and pains.

Man, 40, Parwan province, imam

I had a friend who was injured and needed blood, and we tried a lot to find blood that matched his blood type, but we couldn't. So, I called one of my other friends whose blood matched my friend's. I called him at midnight, and we traveled for two hours in order to reach the hospital and donate his blood to my friend. [He wasn't friends with my other friend, but he] donated blood because of me.

Man, 60, Parwan province, unemployed

Some men said they feel that it is nearly impossible to find a good friend, however, pointing to lack of trust and honesty. Others feel that too many of the friendships they experience exist because of benefits the friends can provide each other, like financial support.

It is really hard to know whether a friend is good or bad; it is only Allah that knows good and bad. In the current situation, one cannot trust his father or mother, so how can he find a trustable friend? We can select a person as a friend, but we cannot read his mind and heart. First, we should select Allah as a friend, and secondly a person who is honest. Friendship shouldn't be because a person gives us benefits and privileges.

Man, 49, Daikundi province, driver

3.8.2 Use of Drugs and Other Intoxicants

Men are more likely than women to report having ever used drugs and other intoxicants, but reported rates of any such substance use are very low across the sample. Results are shown in Table 3.8.2a. Some 3 per cent of men report ever using heroin, and approximately 1 per cent report ever using opium. This is broadly in line with other recent research in Afghanistan, with the 2015 DHS study showing that 22 per cent of men aged 15 to 49 smoke cigarettes, and only 3 per cent of men use other drugs.³⁵

Table 3.8.2a Use of drugs and other intoxicants

Percentage of all respondents' responses based on their reported use of drugs or other intoxicants, IMAGES Afghanistan 2017

	MEN	WOMEN
	%	%
Have you ever used any drugs or intoxicants?		
None/never	85.4	98.0
Heroin	2.9	0.2
Hashish	2.1	0.1
Opium	0.8	0.1
Alcohol	0.2	0.0
Other	7.4	0.5
How often have you used any of these drugs or intoxicants in last 12 months? (among the small percentage who have ever used any intoxicants)		
Every day	65.2	11.1
Multiple times per week	10.6	22.2
Once per week	3.0	0.0
Multiple times per month	3.0	11.1
Once per month	3.0	0.0
Less than once per month	3.0	0.0
Only one time	9.8	33.3

³⁵ Central Statistics Organization (Afghanistan), Ministry of Public Health Afghanistan, & ICF. (2017). *Afghanistan Demographic and Health Survey 2015*. Kabul: Central Statistics Organization. Retrieved from <http://www.dhsprogram.com/publications/publication-FR323-DHS-Final-Reports.cfm>

Participants in the focus groups were able to identify a harmful feedback loop for masculine norms, men's economic prospects, and substance abuse. If a man in Afghanistan is unable to provide financially for his family, as is expected of men (even in an ongoing situation of extreme economic insecurity), then he becomes more likely to turn to drugs, respondents said. This drug use both decreases men's employability and also potentially brings further shame upon him in gendered terms, as drug use is considered un-Islamic and not befitting a "real man."

The main reason why a person becomes addicted is unemployment. If there is work for people, then they will not resort to these bad habits. If a person is unemployed, he will resort to smoking, opium, and so on.

Woman, 41, Kabul province, university student

There was a person in our neighborhood. He was addicted to drugs. His wife and daughters were working hard in order to earn an income; they were asking the neighbors to give them something as well. Men should try not to become addicted; they should never smoke cigarettes, opium, drugs, et cetera. She felt very dishonored and ashamed for her husband being addicted. This kind of man is not a real man.

Woman, 52, Kabul province, social worker

Chapter 4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The voices amplified in this study demonstrate that the vision of a more equal, less violent world is neither impossible in Afghanistan nor externally imposed. Instead, the seeds for this future exist within the people of Afghanistan, their positive interpretations of their own traditions and culture, and their courage to seek – and realize – a transformed future for the coming generations.

GENDER-RELATED ATTITUDES

IMAGESAfghanistan findings paint a picture of simultaneous conflict and courage, tradition and resistance, all leading to a varied landscape of gender-equality indicators. Physical and financial insecurity produce significant life stresses for many participants in the study, with most respondents struggling to afford clothing and schooling for their children, while also facing several direct impacts of ongoing conflicts and war. While many respondents, including among younger age groups, hold tightly to more rigid views of gender, there are widespread differences between women and men on how men and women ought to live with one another in Afghanistan. Women's attitudes, as measured by the study, are much more gender-equitable than men's, while many men continue to push back against gender equality at the societal level. At the same time, the voices of various men who participated in the qualitative research show that gender-equitable men are not only possible but plentiful in Afghanistan. Additionally, contrary to what might often be perceived, many men pointed specifically to Islamic traditions as the source of their gender-equitable attitudes and practices.

*In order to shift this mixed landscape of **social norms about gender equality and women's rights**, policymakers and programmers should:*

- Complement legislative progress on women's rights and gender equality with public-awareness campaigns to help men understand why such changes are necessary and to see the benefits to themselves – and to everyone.
- Introduce discussions about more equitable masculinity into religious-training and secular-education curricula alike, as well as into progressive religious media and other avenues of religious education, to help men and women better understand the possibilities for gender equality that are inherent to Islam.
- Identify and engage with progressive religious figures to challenge gender stereotypes and promote gender equality at all levels of society.
- Support the creation of youth-led campaigns and activism to promote gender equality in the country.
- Build on existing literature, art, and cultural expressions that already include messages of equality and positive masculinities, and partner with mass media, social media, children and youth media producers, and other artistic producers to include messages about changing norms related to gender and masculinity.

DOMESTIC WORK AND CHILDCARE

When it comes to domestic life, parenthood, and childcare, IMAGES respondents in Afghanistan show a mixture of rigid beliefs alongside more progressive ones. Some also clearly perceived how conflict and the influence of the Taliban have pushed the country backward in terms of gender equality. When asked about their childhood homes, some respondents recalled a thriving Afghanistan prior to waves of invasions; many others shared a complicated, often gender-inequitable picture of their childhood family dynamics. Reflecting on their own father's role in childcare, respondents were likely to recall a figure who played with them and looked after them in general terms, but who also loomed as a distant disciplinarian. Very rarely did respondents recall fathers being routinely involved in washing, cleaning, cooking, and other “traditionally feminine” household work.

Not unlike the dynamics in their childhood homes, household work in respondents' marital homes tends to be divided on a strictly gendered basis. Women do the vast majority of household work in Afghanistan, although men are somewhat more satisfied with this arrangement than women are. More gender-equitable practices can pass from one generation to the next, however, and IMAGES data from around the world have demonstrated how children who grow up in more gender-equitable homes – with a father involved in household work and childcare – are more likely to emulate these behaviors later on. Nearly all ever-married study participants have children living at home, but mothers and fathers share the wish that fathers could spend more time with their children. This suggests that a rigid division of childcare may be less popular than commonly presumed, even as IMAGES data demonstrate that women predominantly undertake most forms of childcare.

*In order to more fully and rapidly realize true equality in **unpaid care work and domestic work**, policymakers and programmers should:*

- Challenge and eliminate gender stereotypes regarding the social, political, and economic roles of men and women in school texts and curricula, as well as implement school-based gender-transformative education for boys and girls. Implement campaigns and school-based efforts to reach boys and girls at younger ages about sharing care and domestic work.
- Create protocols and train health providers to engage men as more involved fathers in the public health system, the workplace, and early childhood development programs.
- Build on existing evidence-based parent-training programs to encourage and support parents – both mothers and fathers – in raising sons and daughters equally, in practicing nonviolent childrearing, and in advocating for legislation that bans all forms of violence against children.

- Engage men in programs and platforms that are informed and driven by United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5, to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.” This includes working with men proactively, as well as holding them accountable for their roles in accomplishing this goal; in eliminating all forms of discrimination, violence, and harmful practices against all women and girls; and in supporting women and girls’ full social, economic, and political equality.
- Advocate for the establishment of nationwide paternity leave alongside comprehensive family-friendly policies and support services for working parents, including subsidized childcare and longer maternity leave.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Marriages in Afghanistan can be marked by men’s controlling behaviors and intimate partner violence, as shown by the very high prevalence of economic, emotional, physical, and sexual intimate partner violence. The vast majority of ever-married respondents in the study reported controlling dynamics in their relationships, whereby the husband needs to know where his wife is at all times and is the sole decision-maker on when she can leave the house. Men and women alike reported very high rates of men’s violence against their intimate partners in Afghanistan, including economic, emotional, physical, and sexual violence, as well as preventing women from seeking health services. In terms of other harmful practices, about one in 10 respondents was aware of at least one case in which a woman was killed for “bringing shame to the family” within the past year, and even greater numbers of men shared direct knowledge of cases of *bacha-bazi*, the practice of keeping young boys for sexual exploitation, in their communities. That said, respondents roundly reject honor killing and *bacha-bazi*, with significant majorities saying that they do not approve of these practices.

In order to better prevent and respond to all forms of intimate partner violence and harmful practices, policymakers and programmers should:

- Invest in and scale up community-based interventions that change violence-supportive norms, as well as engage community and religious leaders in both preventing intimate partner violence and holding men who use this violence accountable.
- Pilot-test and evaluate integrated violence-prevention efforts, such as those that promote women’s rights (including women’s economic empowerment) together with sensitization activities for their husbands and other male relatives.
- Implement curricula on the prevention of gender-based violence for young men and young women, employers, and teachers in schools and workplaces.
- Provide psychosocial – and other forms of – support for children and youth who witness or experience violence in their homes.

CONFLICT-RELATED EXPERIENCES

IMAGES results affirm the extreme traumas, risks, and challenges of daily life in Afghanistan, and also the resiliency of the country's people. Even as approximately four in five respondents reported one or more direct experiences of conflict-related violence or hardship, respondents were also very likely to report high subjective levels of health and well-being. At the same time, many respondents reported that they do not seek help when facing sadness, disappointment, or frustration. Indeed, some 32 per cent of men and 46 per cent of women across the country seem to be bearing their sadness and frustration on their own.

*A swift end to all **violent insurgency and political conflict** in Afghanistan is an unwavering goal. Until this goal is realized, in order to help mitigate the broad effects of ongoing conflict, policymakers and programmers should:*

- Screen men and women for mental health concerns and exposure to violence and trauma and provide gender-specific psychosocial and trauma support for men and women, including group, individual, and community-based therapy, building in particular on existing coping strategies.
- Build on the potential of men's connections to their children and involvement as fathers to mitigate the effects of conflict, displacement, and insecurity.
- Engage those men who show positive coping skills and who are "voices of resistance" to conflict and violence, including gender-based violence, as mentors and peer promoters for other men and boys.

Men and women imagining an Afghanistan free of conflict

Qualitative research participants universally shared a hope for peace as soon as possible. Men and women associate peace with improved relationships with their partners and children, comfort and tranquility, better parenting, and opportunities to pursue educational and professional goals. Many participants feel a personal responsibility to replace violence and war with peace and love. Most expressed a hope that once the ongoing conflict concludes, they can move ahead with financial security and relaxation.

My life would be 100 per cent different. ... When there is peace and security, then you can make a good plan for your life and live your life with peace of mind and happiness. You would be satisfied with your life and your work, and also you can take care of your children properly.

Man, 35, Badghis province, head of community council

If there were no war and conflict, lots of people might have participated in my wedding party, and they never would have felt any concern. ... We might celebrate wedding ceremonies for a long time, till midnight!

Woman, 25, Kandahar province, midwife

If there was safety and security I wouldn't have gotten married. I would have accomplished my desires and ambitions [and would have] completed my education. I could have had a better life. Unfortunately, my desires and ambitions are not accomplished.

Woman, 36, Nangarhar province, unemployed

When there is peace and security, your mind will be calm, so you can prepare a good tea, and when your husband comes home, you bring him the tea with laughter and happiness. You can have a glass of tea with your husband, happily and with a laugh.

Woman, 52, Kabul province, social worker

