

# INTERNATIONAL MEN & GENDER EQUALITY SURVEY (IMAGES)

A GLOBAL REPORT  
IN 15 HEADLINES



**IMAGES** International  
Men and Gender  
Equality Survey

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# INTRODUCTION

## The International Men and Gender Equality Survey

### WHERE ARE MEN ON GENDER EQUALITY?

More than 25 years since the landmark World Conference on Women in Beijing and the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, the world is further from achieving gender equality than it should be. Global data tracking progress on Sustainable Development Goal 5 show us that only 57 percent of women report making their own decisions about sexual and reproductive health and rights, with only three of every four women able to say no to sex – an essential dimension of bodily autonomy – and deciding about their own health care.<sup>1</sup> Contraceptive methods used by men or that require their cooperation make up only 25 percent of global contraceptive use, a rate virtually unchanged in the past few decades.<sup>2</sup>

Globally, women perform three to ten times as much unpaid care and domestic work<sup>3</sup> as men.<sup>4</sup> They also make up 70 percent of the global paid care workforce but represent only 25 percent of senior roles in that system<sup>5</sup>. At the current rate of change, the world is at least 91 years away from achieving equality in unpaid care work between men and women,<sup>6</sup> as the traditional gendered division of tasks between paid work and reproductive labor persists. Women's political participation – a key indicator of women's full equality – has also stalled. As of March 2022, women constituted only 26 percent of parliamentarians globally.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, the World Health Organization estimates that between 24 and 30 percent of women have experienced some form of violence perpetrated by a man, most often a male partner, with little evidence of decline in recent

decades.<sup>8</sup> Data from 142 studies in 44 countries point to an alarming increase in men's violence against women during COVID-19.<sup>9</sup>

Behind all of these trends is the ongoing inequitable power, privilege, and gender norms related to men and masculinities. Indeed, women's economic, social, and political inequality is inequality relative to men, whether it be men who hold political and economic power or men in their households and intimate lives. As such, the need for policies to support changing masculinities and men's attitudes and behaviors is as urgent as ever. Furthermore, evidence shows that men and boys' lives are also shaped by the gendered violence they experience in their homes, schools, communities, and male peer groups. And numerous studies have affirmed how men's health and well-being are negatively affected by restrictive norms related to masculinity.<sup>10</sup>

In the past two years of COVID-19 and the resulting global economic decline, the progress toward full equality for women and girls has been sharply set back.<sup>11</sup> COVID-19 lockdowns have also thrown care inequalities into stark relief. Women have continued to do the lion's share of care work around the world under the pandemic, and the increase in unpaid care work – combined with a surge in domestic violence, as well as job losses and economic stress – has meant added strain on mental health, particularly among women.<sup>12</sup>

In this context, where progress has stalled or even reversed, it is imperative to ask: Where are men on gender equality? What are their attitudes and day-to-day lived experiences? Are men buying into or resisting the idea of gender equality? How are these issues

similar or different by country and cultural setting? How are men's own lives affected by salient norms related to masculinities and other factors that shape their lived experiences? And importantly, how can the evidence that answers these questions be used to drive progress toward more equitable, caring, and nonviolent versions of manhood for the benefit of all? These are questions that the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) global data set can begin to answer.

## WHAT IS IMAGES, AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Led and created by Equimundo (previously Promundo-US, in partnership with Instituto Promundo in Brazil) and the International Center for Research on Women, IMAGES is one of the most comprehensive studies ever to explore men's practices and attitudes related to gender equality alongside women's. Using a wide variety of measures, IMAGES questionnaires investigate gender-based violence, health and health-related practices, household division of labor, men's participation in caregiving and as fathers, men's and women's attitudes about gender and gender-related policies, transactional sex, men's reports of criminal behavior, and quality of life. Details on the IMAGES surveys are presented in Appendix A.

The IMAGES questionnaire incorporates items from existing survey instruments on gender, quality of life, childhood antecedents of violence (including observing gender-based violence), health, sexuality, family gender dynamics, and fatherhood, as well as new items created specifically for the survey. It builds on the Gender Equality and Quality of Life Survey (GEQ Survey) first fielded in Norway, as well as widely used instruments such as the Gender Equitable Men (GEM) Scale and standardized questions from the multicountry surveys on violence against women developed in partnership with the World Health Organization. Wherever quantitative data collection and analysis have occurred using the IMAGES survey, research partners also have conducted

## THE OVERARCHING GOAL OF IMAGES IS TO BUILD UNDERSTANDING OF MEN'S AND WOMEN'S PRACTICES AND ATTITUDES RELATED TO GENDER EQUALITY IN ORDER TO INFORM, DRIVE, AND MONITOR EFFORTS TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY, PARTICULARLY AT THE GOVERNMENT POLICY LEVEL.

complementary qualitative studies in the same settings, seeking to document in depth the lived realities of gender inequalities, notions of masculinity and femininity, and participants' perspectives on efforts to promote gender equality. IMAGES data make it possible to:

- Explore men's experience on topics usually explored with women only;
- Triangulate results across men's and women's experiences;
- Generate a baseline on gendered attitudes and practices in a setting, such that progress toward the equality agenda can be contrasted with it in the future; and
- Contribute to a global effort to improve the evidence base on men and masculinities and on gender equality.

It is important to acknowledge that IMAGES is designed to focus on gender dynamics primarily in the households of heterosexual-identifying adult partners. The questionnaire asks respondents about their sexual orientation and sexual practices, including current or ever cohabitation with a same-sex partner and if they are heterosexual. Given the high prevalence of homophobic policies, laws, and social norms in the countries surveyed, it seems

likely that the percentage reporting a sexual orientation other than heterosexual has been lower than is actually the case. Several IMAGES studies have measured homophobic attitudes, but these modules have not been fielded in every study location due to government restrictions, safety risks to respondents or data collectors, and/or advice from local LGBTQIA+ and women's rights advocates that these topics were too culturally sensitive or politically dangerous to ask. In all locations, researchers have encountered the challenge of seeking to make diverse sexual orientations visible and honored, while also recognizing the unintended harm that may accrue from widely publicizing how commonplace homophobic attitudes are. IMAGES has not yet included questions about nonbinary gender identity. Future IMAGES surveys should continue to explore sexual orientation and begin to explore gender identity, going deeper in these much-neglected areas in ways that adhere to the needs and priorities of local LGBTQIA+ movement organizing.

IMAGES findings have been widely disseminated to inform policy and programming across multiple sectors. At the national level, IMAGES data have informed policy and action in a variety of ways, including inspiring men's health initiatives in Brazil, starting discussions with the Ministry of Health in Chile around engaging men in childbirth, promoting new and progressive sexuality education policies in Croatia, and initiating sexual and gender-based violence prevention activities with men in Tanzania and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. At the global level, IMAGES data were the foundation for creating the global MenCare campaign, a 50-plus-country initiative to promote men's involvement as equitable, nonviolent caregivers. IMAGES data have also been consistently featured in State of the World's Fathers, a biennial global report on men's participation in caregiving (see [www.stateoftheworldsfathers.org](http://www.stateoftheworldsfathers.org)). IMAGES studies in many settings have been carried out by, and often funded in part by, the United Nations Population Fund, as well as UN Women. IMAGES also informed the multicountry Partners for Prevention (P4P) studies on men's violence against women carried out in the Asia-Pacific region by multiple United Nations agencies.

The infographics here make use of a sample of 67,202 respondents across 32 countries. Of these respondents, 50,373 are male (from 32 countries) and 16,829 are female (from 21 countries), all of whom were interviewed face to face.<sup>13</sup> For 12 studies, only men's data were collected and/or made available for the present analysis. The decision to include men alone in some locations reflected funding priorities or other local considerations. This was the least preferred option and relatively rare overall, as most studies followed the practice of asking similar questions of women and men. A focus on men and masculinities, including in sample construction, reflects the intended "value-add" of IMAGES within a prior body of evidence in which studies of violence, health, and family life generally included fewer questions for men, fewer men, or a subset of men who were sampled because of their relationships to women (i.e., husbands). IMAGES has addressed this limitation directly by focusing on men.

Figures 2 and 3 presents the sample size (and proportion of the global sample) for each study, organized by region. Figure 3 presents how the samples of men and women are distributed by age (18 to 24, 25 to 34, 35 to 49, and 50-plus), education (using global standard categories), and employment status at the time of the survey. Note that the totals may on occasion not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. Overall, the age distributions of men and women are comparable, with slightly fewer women sampled in the 18 to 24 and 35 to 49 age categories and a few more women in the oldest age group (50-plus) compared to men. With regard to education, men are more concentrated in the primary and lower/upper secondary categories, while women are more concentrated in the below primary and postsecondary categories. As for employment, the sample shows nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of men were currently employed at the time of the survey, while the opposite was true for women, with nearly three-quarters not currently employed (71 percent).

Samples were chosen to be representative of the specific geographic areas where the surveys were carried out and generally represented at least two major urban areas. Budgetary limitations

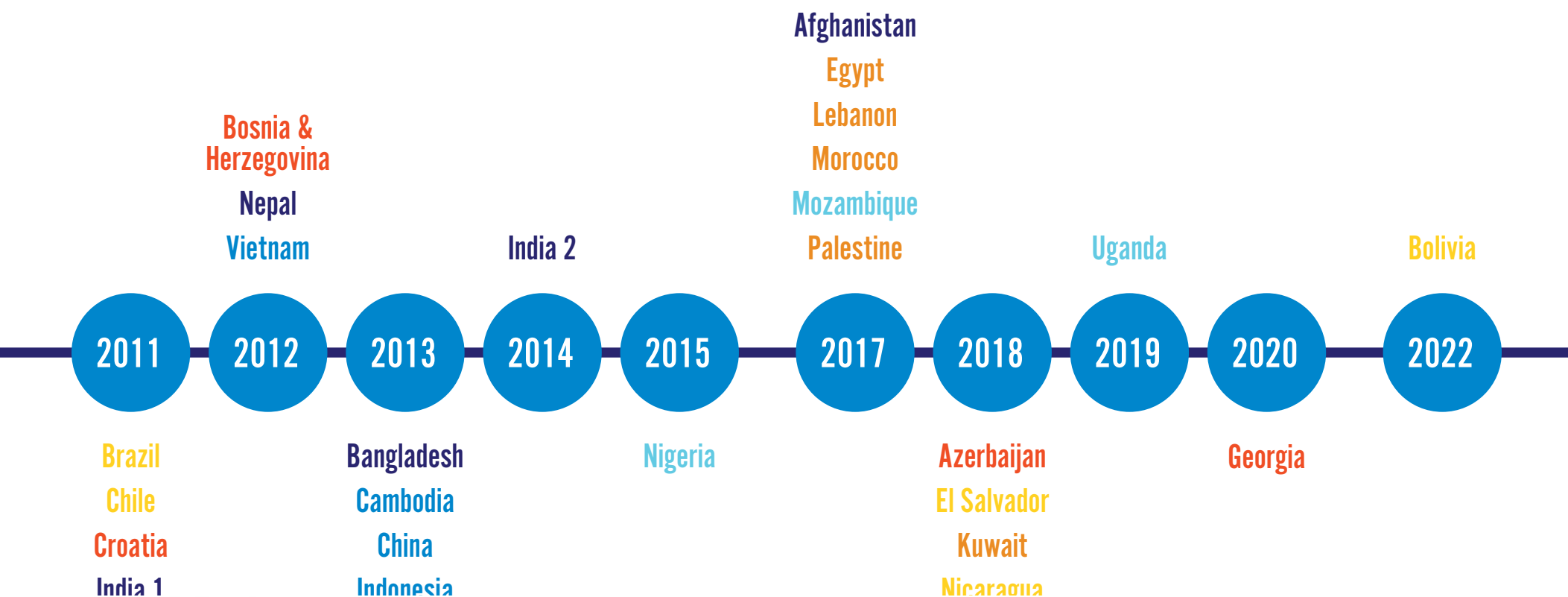
meant that only some, not all, IMAGES studies achieved national representativeness in the manner of larger national initiatives, such as the Demographic and Health Surveys. Nonetheless, all samples followed best practice household sampling approaches, with samples drawn by national statistical bureaus, local census listings, and nationally recognized research firms or organizations.

When displaying comparisons among subsets of respondents (whether by sex, country, region,<sup>14</sup> or other characteristics), only findings that are statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level are included.

It is important to be cautious when making longitudinal comparisons given that data was collected over 14 years in different settings. Nevertheless, IMAGES continues to provide a unique snapshot into a global picture of gendered attitudes and behaviors. While 32 countries were harmonized in the first round, efforts in the future will be to harmonize and analyze IMAGES data collected from other countries.

FIGURE 1

## IMAGES OVER THE YEARS



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