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1 in 3 Singaporean men believe feminism does more harm than good and that traditional masculinity is under threat [Ipsos report]

Singapore, 7th March 2022 (For International Women's Day) – A NEW global study carried out in Singapore and 29 other countries, by Ipsos in collaboration with the Global Institute for Women's Leadership at King's College London for International Women's Day shows that:

- A quarter of Singaporeans (24%) deny the existence of gender inequality, and that feminism does more harm than good.
- Victim-blaming attitudes exist, with a fifth of Singaporeans (19%) agreeing that violence against women is often provoked by the victim.
- Concerns about online abuse remain, with around one in seven Singaporean men (15%) saying it's acceptable to send someone unrequested explicit images and nearly twice the proportion of men (39%) believe many women overreact.

Recognition of Gender Inequality

Despite evidence that gender inequality globally has increased since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic¹, just slightly less than half of Singaporeans (43%) recognise that gender inequality exists. Another quarter (24%) of Singaporeans believe that gender inequality doesn't really exist.

Singaporeans are additionally sceptical about the benefits of feminism. A sentiment shared more strongly by men than women:

¹ <https://unctad.org/news/covid-19-threatens-four-lost-decades-gender-equality>

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- A third of men think feminism does more harm than good (33%) and believe that traditional masculinity is under threat (33%).
- Women are less likely to agree, with only 14% agreeing feminism does more harm than good and a fifth thinking traditional masculinity is under threat today (20%).
- A fifth of Singaporeans think that feminism has resulted in men losing out in terms of economic or political power or socially (22%), with men more likely to agree than women (28% vs 15%).

Significant victim-blaming attitudes toward violence against women exist

Just slightly less than half of Singaporeans (45%) disagree that violence against women is often provoked by the victim, and 2 in 5 Singaporeans (38%) disagree that women who say they are abused often make up or exaggerate claims of abuse or rape.

A minority expressed concerning views in relation to violence against women:

- A fifth of Singaporeans (19%) say violence against women is often provoked by the victim, including 14% of women. Nearly the same proportion say that women who report being abused often make up or exaggerate claims (17%, with 27% of men and 8% of women agreeing).
- While 62% of Singaporeans disagree that it's a woman's obligation to have sex with her boyfriend or husband even if she doesn't feel like it, 14% agree. With 19% of men and 10% of women agreeing.
- Young adult Gen Zs are more likely to agree with all three sentiments. For example, around a third of Gen Z agree that violence against women is often provoked by the victim. (29%, compared to 16% of Gen X and 14% of Baby Boomers).

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Gen Zs are more likely to receive online harassment and to feel affected by it

Harmful and misogynistic content is prevalent online:

- Two in five Singaporeans (40%) say they have experienced online abuse or seen sexist content in the past two years.
- Of the examples of harmful content surveyed, the two most commonly viewed forms are comments or images suggesting men are superior to women (14%) or suggesting that women cause many of the problems faced by men (12%).
- Gen Zs were more likely to say they had noticed both these messages. (28% of Gen Z vs 19% of Millennials and 7% of Gen Xs, and 22% of Gen Zs vs 18% of Millennials and 7% of Gen Xs).
- In terms of online harassment, Gen Zs are more likely to have received sexual harassment. Two in five (19%) have had sexist or misogynistic language directed at them (vs 6% of Millennials and 4% of Gen Xs), and one in seven (15%) have been sent unrequested, sexually explicit images (vs 10% of Millennials and 7% of Gen Xs).

Impact of Online Harassment

Among those who have viewed comments or images online which suggest men are superior to women, or that women cause many of the problems facing men, are more likely to report that they have stopped saying what they think online (30%), experienced lower self-esteem or self-confidence (28%) and experienced panic attacks, anxiety or stress (13%) as a result of online abuse.

The majority of Singaporeans agree that women should not have to put up with online abuse (71%). Agreement is lower amongst men (63% vs 79% of women). However, people are split as to whether the best way for women to deal with online abuse is to ignore it, with 39% agreeing and 34% disagreeing.

People are less likely to agree than disagree that men are mainly to blame for online abuse

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(25% agree and 33% disagree), and more likely to agree that many women overreact to things that people send them or say to them online (33% agree and 25% disagree), and agreement is higher amongst men (39% vs 27% of women).

Acceptable vs unacceptable online behaviour

When asked about various forms of online abuse, the vast majority find them unacceptable. However:

- A quarter think sending unrequested comments or compliments to someone on their physical appearance is acceptable (27%), with men more likely to agree than women (30% vs 24%).
- Around one in 10 think the following forms of online contact are acceptable. Men are more likely to find all these forms of online contact acceptable.
 - using generally abusive language (14%)
 - homophobic or transphobic comments (10%)
 - sexist or misogynistic language (12%)
 - Impersonating someone else online without their permission or 'catfishing' (11%)
 - Sharing intimate images of someone online without their consent (10%)
 - racist language (10%)
 - sending unrequested sexually explicit images (10%)
 - posting someone's personal details online (9%)
- Younger people tend to be more likely to find harmful online behaviour acceptable than older generations. For example, 16% of Gen Z find sending someone unrequested, sexually explicit images acceptable, compared to 9% of Millennials and 10% of Gen Xs.

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Melanie Ng, Director of Public Affairs at Ipsos in Singapore said, “International Women’s Day was first celebrated more than 100 years ago, and globalisation has brought it to our shores in recent years. Despite the increased discussions around gender inequality in media and various public forums, Singaporeans are not entirely cognizant of the gender inequality that exists in our communities and in the world. A quarter of Singaporeans say gender inequality doesn’t really exist. For some, this could be a positive reflection that they have not personally encountered or witnessed any discriminatory behaviour themselves. But the study also revealed that certain unsavoury online behaviours are found acceptable by some 10% of Singaporeans which indicates the lack of understanding of what is inappropriate social behaviour.

As our lives get increasingly intertwined in digital media, there is some level of anonymity that makes discerning the propriety of such behaviour, less straightforward. It is worrying that the new generation of Singaporean adults are exposed to more harmful and misogynistic content than their seniors, likely due to easy accessibility to such content via social media. The education around gender equality goes beyond driving equal career opportunities or recognising that a woman is more than a wife or mother. At its core, it is about recognising that everyone deserves respect and due consideration of their self-worth and not solely by the role that they play.”

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Note to Editors

About the study

- These are the results from a 30-country survey conducted by Ipsos on its Global Advisor online platform. Ipsos interviewed a total of 501 adults aged 21 – 74 in

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Singapore. The survey was conducted online between 21 January and 4 February 2022, among a nationally representative sample of Singaporean Citizens.

- The data is weighted so that the sample composition best reflects the demographic profile of the adult population according to the most recent census data.
- The precision of online surveys is measured using a credible interval. In this case, the results reported are accurate to +/- 5.0 percentage points of the views and perspectives of all Singaporeans aged 21 and above. Credible intervals are wider among subsets of the population.

To view the **30-country global report**, please visit <https://www.ipsos.com/en/one-three-men-believe-feminism-does-more-harm-good>

For further information or to set up further interviews with opinion leaders cited in this article, please contact

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