



Ipsos Public Affairs

IPSOS VIEWS

UNDERSTANDING SOCIETY



A WOMAN'S WORLD

Editorial:

Alex Bollen
 Jessica Bruce
 Anne Esser
 Olivia Ryan

Information

www.ipsos-mori.com
 Lucy.Tallentire@ipsos.com

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Welcome to A Woman's World, the latest edition of Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute's Understanding Society.

Gender equality benefits everyone, not just women; it's the necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.

But to work towards achieving equality, we need to truly understand the realities of women's lives. In this edition of Understanding Society we therefore bring together a collection of articles, based on our research with a diverse range of women all around the world, including those who have been displaced because of conflict, those who struggle to get to work due to domestic violence, and those at the very top of business and public life.

We are delighted to have contributions from trailblazing women: Julia Gillard, Australia's first woman Prime Minister and now Chair of the Global Institute for Women's Leadership, and Megha Mohan, the BBC's first ever Gender and Identity Correspondent. We have articles from experts in their fields: Nigina Abaszadeh, who works in Gender and Human Rights for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and Nata Duvvury and Stacey Scriver, leading academics specialising in gender and economic participation from NUI Galway. And Darrell Bricker, Ipsos's Global CEO for Public Affairs, discusses how the changing roles of women will shape the future of global population growth.

Here at Ipsos, we don't just contribute to important debates, but shape them through the collection and interpretation of evidence that stands up to scrutiny and challenges the status quo. We hope that this edition of Understanding Society does just this by shining a light on the diversity of women's experiences across the globe, and demonstrating how

good data can contribute to policies and programmes that make a tangible difference to women's lives. There's much more that needs to be done, but we should be inspired by what's possible to provide a platform so that women's voices can be heard and we can achieve a more prosperous and equal society for all.

We are committed to understanding society through the social and economic research we conduct in the belief that this leads to better politics, policy and practice. If you would like to discuss any of the research here, please get in touch. We'd love to hear from you.

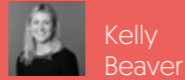
Kelly Beaver

Managing Director
 Ipsos MORI
 Social Research Institute

 @KellyIpsosMORI

Leading change

An interview with the Hon Julia Gillard, former Prime Minister of Australia and Chair of the Global Institute for Women’s Leadership



Kelly Beaver



Julia Gillard is the first woman ever to serve as Australia’s Prime Minister or Deputy Prime Minister. She was the 27th Prime Minister of Australia from 2010-2013 and Deputy Prime Minister from 2007-2010. During her time in office, Gillard was central to the successful management of Australia’s economy during the global economic crisis, and she reformed Australia’s education at every level from early childhood to higher education. In 2012, she received worldwide attention for her speech in Parliament on the treatment of women in professional and public life.

Gillard is the chair of the Global Partnership for Education, a leading organisation dedicated to expanding access and quality education worldwide. She serves as Patron of Camfed, the Campaign for Female Education, which tackles poverty and inequality by supporting girls to go to school and succeed, and empowering young women to step up as leaders of change. She is the Chair of Beyond Blue, Australia’s leading mental health awareness body.

In April 2018, Gillard was appointed Inaugural Chair of the Global Institute for Women’s Leadership at Kings College, London.

KB: You’ve established the Global Institute for Women’s Leadership at King’s College. Could you tell me about your vision for the institute and what you hope to achieve?

I truly hope that the Global Institute for Women’s Leadership at King’s College can make a difference to the evidence base about what works to clear the obstacles out of the way for women who are aspiring to leadership and making sure, when they are leaders, that they are fairly evaluated not through the prism of gender.

I’m very enthusiastic about this role because it frustrates me – when we’ve got so much to do to achieve a gender-equal world – that people are investing in things that aren’t evidence-based and don’t work. Indeed, sometimes investing in things that are counterproductive.

We want to deepen the global evidence base, and we want to make sure that the information about what will best make a difference gets into the hands of people who can use it and will really put it to work.

KB: You are well-renowned for your work on education. Do you see education as the biggest issue in achieving gender equality?

I think there’s a bit of a differential picture around the world. I chair the Global Partnership for Education, and we work with the 67 poorest countries in the world. In those countries, we see more than 260 million children who aren’t in school. When we get behind that number, we disproportionately see that the children who are missing out are girls. If you don’t ever get to go to school, or if you don’t ever finish primary school, then that disadvantage

will clearly be with you for the rest of your life. We do know that a girl who gets an education is more likely to marry later in life; she’ll choose to have fewer children; her children will be more likely to survive infancy, more likely to be vaccinated, more likely to go to school.

In countries like the UK and Australia, we’ve sort of moved past the educational equality issue. When you look at who comes out of universities, it tends to be disproportionately women. Now, that doesn’t mean that there aren’t any issues, because when we’re talking about science, engineering, maths and technology, it can still be quite gendered. But really, it’s not the numbers in schooling or university that is the critical issue now for women’s equality; it’s what happens to them in their work lives and the artificial barriers that get put in their way.

KB: Thinking about your time in politics, when you became Prime Minister in 2010, you were subject to a great deal of sexist and misogynistic comments. In your opinion, what was the hardest thing about being a woman in politics?

I think the hardest thing is the sense of frustration which comes with knowing that air time is being taken not by the important messages that you are trying to convey to the community, but really silly things like what you’re wearing, or what your hair’s doing that day, or commentary about whether or not you’ve got children, what your family structure is.

I also think that for many women too, there’s a real sense of hurt. Social media particularly can be incredibly cruel to women politicians. I experienced a bit of that. I think it’s turbo-charged in the years since.

KB: In 2012, you made a famous speech in Parliament where you commented vigorously on misogyny and sexism. How do you think that changed public perceptions of you as a female leader?

There was a real difference between how that speech was seen and reported in Australia compared with around the world. Around the world, it was immediately noted as a “go-girl” moment and was celebrated. In Australia, it came with the penalty that many women experience when they call out sexism; I was accused of playing the gender card, of starting a gender war. So actually, politically, I don’t think it assisted me in any way in Australia. Now with the benefit of a few years removed, I think it’s looked back on as saying something that was important in Australian politics.

KB: In your autobiography, you touch on the importance of female leaders having resilience. Can you tell me a little more about what you mean by resilience and why that’s so important to help women achieve gender equality?

I think all leaders need to be resilient. Whether you’re at the top of business or politics or the law or the news media, it can be a tough life. But I think because there’s still this gender bit – women need a special form of resilience.

For me, it comes down to having a sense of self that isn’t hostage to the swings and roundabouts of the media reporting or social media. I’d had the experience as a younger politician watching some of the then more senior female figures, and you could see for some of them that if it was a good news

day and there were great headlines about them, there was a spring in their step, and they were happy. If it was a bad news day, they were really physically drawn into themselves. I remember thinking then you can’t get on that rollercoaster; you have got to have a sense of self that is not riding those waves.

KB: There are several latent stereotypes about women who are business leaders that label them as unlikeable, playing hardball or masculine in their approach. How can women overcome the challenges of these stereotypes?

Whether it’s politics or business, if a woman has got to the top, there are unconscious biases that come to the fore – she’s got to be pretty ruthless, pretty tough, pretty hardball. In some ways, I think the best way to overcome those stereotypes isn’t for the female business leader or politician to do something different but for those around to actually call out that sort of stereotyping and get people to think about it. Is there anything that she has actually done that justifies it? Or are we just automatically doing it and we should cease doing it?

KB: Last year on International Women’s Day, you wrote that “In spite of the truly remarkable social, economic and political strides for women around the world over the last generation, we’re far from the goal of full gender equality.” In your opinion, what should be the priorities over the next five years to achieve this goal?

I do want to see us make real progress in the next five years. I get very

dismayed when you see very learned bodies come out with statistics that tell us that we won’t be in a gender equal world for 150 years or 200 years – we’ve got to do better than that.

In terms of the top interventions, in some ways that relates to the research that we’re doing at the Global Institute for Women’s Leadership. But if I could say one thing, I’d say that leaders need to genuinely engage. We won’t change this if in businesses, it’s parked in the human resources department and the CEO, the Chair of the Board and Directors on the Board never really engage. In politics, it won’t get fixed unless leading figures like Prime Ministers and Leaders of the Opposition engage.

It’s looking for that and turning all of the talk into effective action through leadership engagement and making sure that what is changing is truly measured so that we can see the difference. That should be the agenda for the next five years.

In conversation with Kelly Beaver Managing Director Ipsos MORI Public Affairs

Mind the gender gap

From rhetoric to reality



Katherine Shipton



In 2018, we celebrated 100 years of women's suffrage in the UK. While the centenary milestone was celebrated, the media has been dominated by stories of gender inequality both in and outside of the workplace. Artificial barriers are preventing women from progressing in their work lives, and we know from Ipsos research that equal pay is a key concern for women in the UK. The government has recently taken steps to address this through requiring reporting on equal pay, and social movements such as #pressforprogress may be having an effect too. But is this enough to smash the glass ceiling?

In this year's annual Captains of Industry survey, Ipsos spoke to 100 of the top business leaders in the UK about their views on diversity in the boardroom.

Women and diversity in the boardroom

Considering the focus in the media, the increase in Captains saying that they actively promote and champion

diversity and inclusion in their companies seems unsurprising. Over nine in ten Captains now say that they agree with this statement, with 65% stating that they strongly agree, up from 44% in 2016. Three in four Captains (77%) agree that they are actively trying to increase the number of women on their main board, reflecting commitment to gender diversity and the heightened profile of gender equality. The number that strongly agree has also nearly doubled since 2016.

However, the number that are actively trying to increase the representation of ethnic minorities is far lower, with just

half of Captains agreeing. What is most remarkable about this finding is that this means the nine in ten Captains who say they are actively promoting and championing diversity and inclusion in their companies may only be doing this because of the heightened rhetoric around women and gender equality, potentially as a result of #MeToo movements and initiatives such as the gender pay gap reporting.

Equal pay and the gender pay gap reporting

As our research for International Women's Day shows, equal pay is the most important issue facing women in Britain, with 29% of people citing it as an issue⁴. But nearly half (48%) of Captains say that they have not taken any action as a result of the reporting requirement aside from reporting it. While rhetoric may be improving, there is less evidence of real change at the top.

Of the 9,961 companies that filed by the deadline of 4th April, the hourly median gender pay gap reported is 9.6% – no significant improvement from 9.7% last year.⁵ Additionally, over four in ten private companies that have published their latest gender pay gap are reporting wider gaps than they did last year. One challenge facing employers is the fact that some measures designed to lower the gender pay gap in the long term could increase the gap in the short term – such as hiring more young women. According to the CBI, 24% report they are placing a greater focus on improving gender diversity in entry-level recruitment.

Are we making progress?

To take stock, last year, research shows that there were more people called Dave leading FTSE 100 companies than there were women or people from ethnic minority group. There were nine called Dave, five from a minority ethnic background and six female chief executives of FTSE 100 companies. Of these six women, five were appointed in the last five years.

Optimistic perceptions of reality and potential for progress have a complicated relationship. We need to think that things have got better to believe that we can further improve them. But we cannot let optimism make us complacent. The general public's perceptions of women in business leadership and equal pay may, therefore, be a double-edged sword. However, the reality is that women in the workplace and the boardroom have not seen much of an improvement, and we have even further to go to address gaps in ethnic diversity. To ensure women succeed, business leaders need to take a critical look at what is impacting progression and performance of women in the workplace, including burdens from outside the workplace. Hopefully, bosses' apparent commitment to boardroom diversity is a sign of better things to come.

The 9 in 10 Captains of Industry who say they are actively promoting and championing diversity and inclusion in their companies may only be doing this because of the heightened rhetoric around women and gender equality

Violence against women

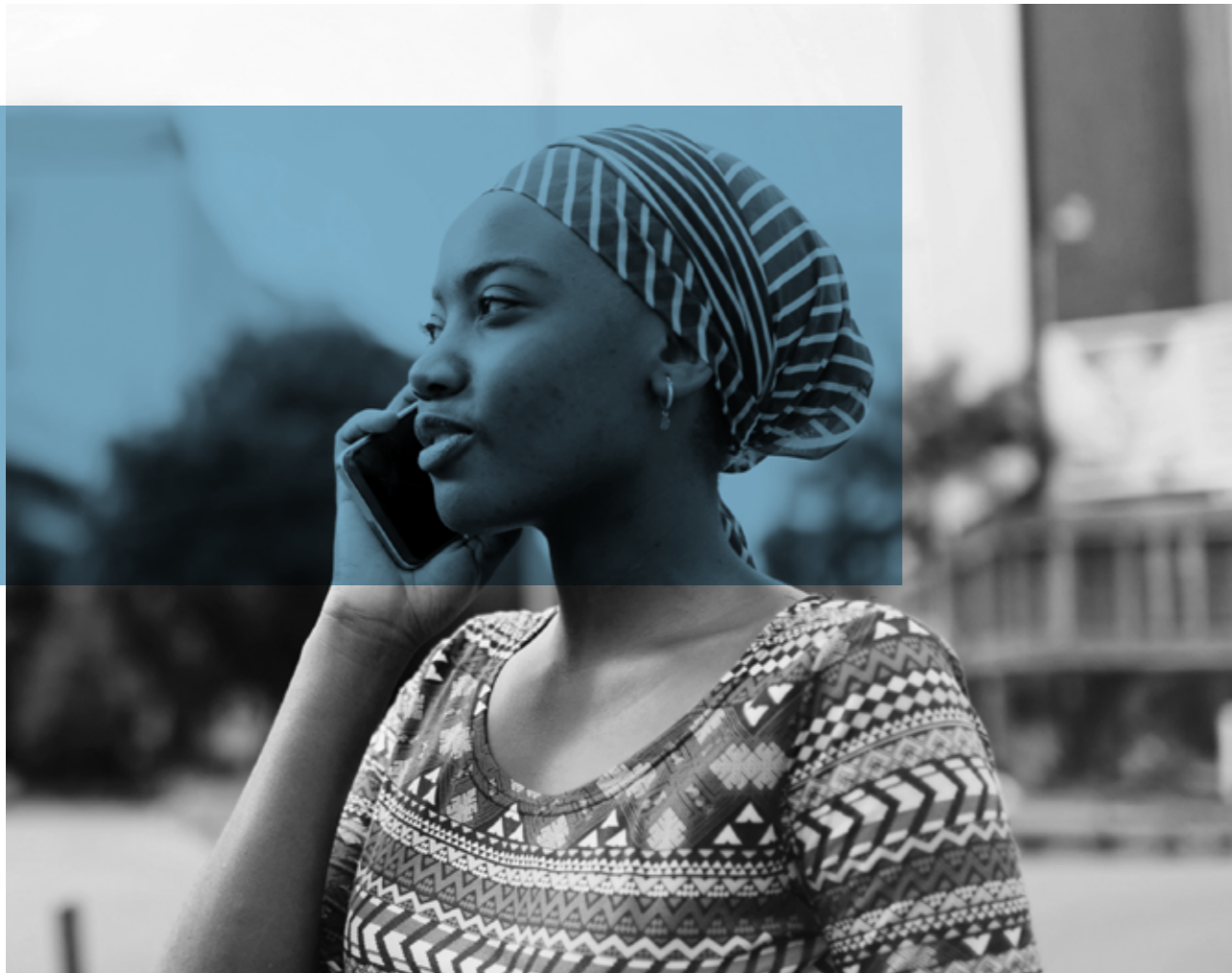
The cost on economic participation



Nata Duvvury



Stacey Scriver



Achieving equality

Equality is the foundation for the sustainable development of societies. To achieve it, the unequal gender power balance has to be addressed. The overarching global framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 sets out how this unequal power

balance needs to be systematically and comprehensively tackled to advance gender equality and empower women.

One of the key targets of the gender equality SDG is the elimination of violence against women and girls (VAWG). VAWG includes intimate partner violence, family violence, and violence in schools, workplaces and public spaces. It is widely acknowledged as a fundamental human rights violation that is fuelled by an unequal gender power balance.

Another key SDG gender equality target is ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. The achievement of this target is measured by the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local government, as well the proportion of women in managerial positions.

Violence is an overlooked barrier to women's economic participation

There is a wide body of literature on how unequal gender power dynamics and explicit discriminatory practices prevent women from accessing higher managerial positions within institutions, businesses in particular. Yet, the impact of violence has often been overlooked as a potential barrier to participation and opportunity for women in economic life.

This is changing. Within the last year, #MeToo movement has turned a spotlight on the pervasive culture of sexual harassment and sexual violence in sectors such as entertainment, IT and global finance that has explicitly limited women's opportunities and promotion to the higher echelons of decision-making. However, the ripple effects of intimate partner violence on women's participation in the business world has received less attention. Deepening understanding of this barrier, and the means to adequately address it, is an important step in achieving gender equality.

Researching the impact of violence

NUI Galway, in partnership the International Center for Research on Women and Ipsos MORI, has carried out a study on the economic and social impacts of violence against women and girls, which highlights the challenges VAWG creates for employment mobility and attainment of managerial positions. The study, which received funding from the UK Department for International Development, surveyed approximately 100 businesses in key economic sectors in the main industrial cities in Ghana, Pakistan and South Sudan. Female employees surveyed included 391 women in Ghana, 268 in Pakistan and 323 in South Sudan.

Across all three countries, a significant proportion of women have experienced intimate partner violence by a current or former partner in the previous 12 months – 27% in Ghana, 14% in Pakistan and 35% in South Sudan. Women were asked about the consequences of intimate partner violence on their productivity in terms of absenteeism (missing work), tardiness (being late) and presenteeism (being less productive). A significant proportion of female employees were absent, late and less productive as a result of intimate partner violence. In Ghana and South Sudan, the proportions were particularly high, with more than half of women who were subjected to intimate partner violence experiencing these impacts.

Women were asked how many working days they lost in the previous 12 months due to absenteeism, tardiness or presenteeism due to intimate partner violence. The average was equivalent to half a working month: 14 days in Ghana, 10 days in South Sudan and 17 days in Pakistan.

Women experiencing intimate partner violence lose half a working month per year as a consequence

An obstacle to advancement

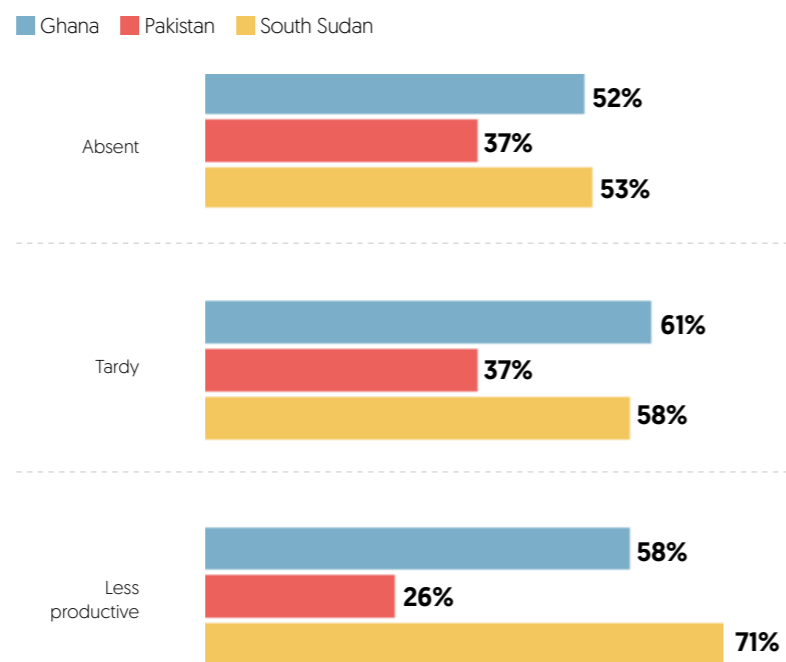
In addition to the direct economic costs of these lost working days, these impacts have serious consequences for women's advancement potential. For example, a US-based study found that women were less likely to work full-time in the year after an episode of intimate partner violence, impacting on their ability to take up opportunities of training or upgrading skills, limiting their promotion opportunities.⁶

Failure to understand the impact of violence in the private sphere on women's public and economic lives may lead employers to view women's lost days as evidence of a poor work ethic, insufficient commitment to the organisation, or lack of ability. Women burdened by violence may thus be less likely to be perceived as candidates for advancement to managerial positions. These are the dynamics by which violence by intimate partners can obstruct the achievement of the gender equality target of the SDGs.

The costs of violence against women in terms of their working lives and potential to advance must be recognised. Improving knowledge among businesses about VAWG is an important step. Identifying the role of businesses and other organisations in addressing intimate partner violence, through for instance workplace prevention programmes and interventions, is also critical. Such action needs to be taken to achieve the equality of opportunity necessary for women's leadership in economic life.

The impact of intimate partner violence on work performance

Figure 01: % Women who experienced intimate partner violence by a current or former partner in the past 12 months



It's a business problem

Intimate partner violence and the Turkish workforce



Nuray Özbay

A widespread problem

The experience of intimate partner violence is unfortunately all too common among women working in the Turkish private sector. According to a study that Ipsos has been conducting for Sabanci University Corporate Governance Forum's Business Against Domestic Violence Project since 2014,⁷ three-quarters (75%) of white collar working women have experienced at least one type of violent behavior from their intimate partners in the last five years. Psychological and emotional violence is most common (64%), followed by social violence which includes acts such as becoming angry when talking with other men and controlling where the woman goes and whom she meets (52%), physical violence (23%), and economic violence (23%).⁸ As Nata Duvvury and Stacey Scriver point out in their article, the effects of violence can be limiting for women's career advancement. However, the effects of violence also cost employers money through staff absences and poor performance. Intimate partner violence is an issue for both the public and the private sector.

Women do not seek help from the workplace

According to our study, almost all (91%) working men and women think that intimate partner violence impacts work



There are a myriad of things the private sector can do to combat intimate partner violence

life either considerably or completely. However, companies or employers are not seen as a source of support in cases of violence, as only 8% of men and women would consider seeking support from someone in the workplace, like managers, human resources staff, or colleagues. Almost half of the women surveyed (45%) stated that they would be embarrassed to share their experience of violence with their managers.

Companies have a role to play

Although most people do not see the workplace as part of the solution, there are a myriad of things the private sector can do to combat intimate partner violence and minimise its adverse effects on survivors. The Business Against Domestic Violence (BADV) Project is an example of an initiative that implements support mechanisms in the workplace, while providing tools, methods and best practices to companies. To date, 51 companies have created a Domestic Violence Policy for their employees. The BADV project's recommended approaches include developing training programs that target all employees in order to create awareness around the definition and the perception of violence, defining psychological counselling as a part of the health benefit plans of the employees, offering employees who are at risk the option of relocation to a different work place, and closely monitoring and penalising cases of workplace violence. Last but not least, there are measures companies can take to prevent the perpetration of violence

within working hours or the facilities of the company.⁹

Violence against women is a multifaceted issue which pervades all aspects of life, including the home, work and social spheres. Solutions, therefore, must be holistic, drawing in a wide range of actors. Intimate partner violence is a business problem, and private sector companies have a crucial role to play in tackling it. And as the research presented in these two articles suggests, it makes business sense for companies to do so.

Women and work



Kathrina Phan



Jessica Elgood

Closing the gap in Australia



Down under

Australia is slipping down the world rankings for closing the gender gap. In 2006, the World Economic Forum described Australia as a "leader,"¹⁰ ranking it 15th out of 115 countries. Over a decade later, progress has stagnated; Australia now comes in at 39th.¹¹ The Australian Human Rights Commission reports that men's average weekly pay is over \$250 higher than women's.¹² The gender pay gap is currently 15% and has remained largely flat for the last two decades.¹³

There are other signs of gender inequality in the workforce as well. Despite women making up 47% of the employment market,¹⁴ women continue to be overrepresented in part-time and casual labour markets and spend almost twice as many hours performing unpaid care work as men.¹⁵

Ipsos Public Affairs, Sydney was commissioned by the University of Sydney to explore what work life looks like for young working Australian women and what they need to be supported in their future working lives. Here we share four of the key learnings from our Women and the Future of Work report.

Respect

Above all, working women value being treated with respect at work and job security. Almost all women said this matters to them, and, for four in five (80%), these two aspects "matter a lot". In discussion groups, women highlighted the value in creating strong, supportive relationships with their employers and the enjoyment derived from a mutual sense of commitment.

However, this is not the reality experienced by every woman, as two-

Above all, working women value being treated with respect at work and job security, but only two-thirds agreed their manager treats them with respect

thirds (68%) agreed their manager treats them with respect, and 59% agree that their job is secure. Only around half said they receive adequate recognition at work and feel valued (48% and 56%, respectively).

Managing work and family life

The prospect of having to juggle their working lives with caring responsibilities weighs heavily on young women. Many talked about grappling with this dilemma early on – would they have to sacrifice their careers (or accept a pause), or would they decide that work fulfilment was more important than becoming a mother?

“It seems really hard for me to get my head around it – to have children and maintain the job that I’m doing. So ... I have kind of told myself that I don’t want to have them. But sometimes I question that – If I would actually like to, or if it is too hard.”

Brisbane, working woman

Women dealt with these predicaments in different ways. For some, the decision was easy, but the “how” was yet to be determined. Several spoke about an expectation that as mothers, they need to go to greater lengths to shape their working lives around their caring responsibilities.

While all working women mentioned the struggle in achieving a good work-life balance, this was most marked for mothers. Although some mothers welcomed the mental stimulation of work, the high cost of childcare meant

that some could not justify working “against the day care bill.”

Discrimination and harassment

Just three in five Australian women (61%) agreed that women and men are treated equally in their workplace. Women gave examples of the subtle and not so subtle ways in which they experienced gender discrimination. Less overt forms of discrimination included being spoken over, not being taken seriously and having to present themselves differently to receive the same level of respect as their male counterparts.

“I have noticed a difference depending on how I wear my hair and how I dress. If I wear my hair up, if it is short and, in a bob, and I know this is ridiculous, I get a lot more equality when dealing with men.”

Brisbane, higher skill/pay working woman

Some women described incidents of harassment, particularly in male-dominated industries. Indeed, one in ten (10%) said that they currently experience sexual harassment at work. In extreme cases, women described how they had been effectively silenced from speaking out:

“If you do say something, you basically just have to cop it on the chin ... otherwise [they say] ‘you’re going to get upset by something so small?’ ... ‘how were you going to cope in a job like this?’”

Parramatta, working mother

Flexibility and training matter

Nine in ten women believe having the right skills and qualifications (92%), and access to the flexibility they need (90%) will be important to their career success. However, in practice just two in five (40%) can access free or affordable training, while 61% have the flexibility they need. Our research shines a light on the gap between what women need and what is actually available to them.

Flexibility was a top-of-mind issue for many working women in the qualitative research, particularly for those with children or who are contemplating starting a family. Access to flexible work arrangements was a crucial factor for these women when considering a role. Many women could not envisage how to perform their jobs without support to accommodate the demands of family life.

Four-fifths of working women (80%) in the survey agree that having a partner to share responsibility for childcare and household domestic work is important to their success at work.

It’s not just a question of men stepping up though. Ipsos research on behalf of the Global Institute for Women’s Leadership and International Women’s Day shows that most Australians agree that employers should make it easier for men to combine childcare with work (76%, slightly higher than the global average of 73%). And just under half of Australians (44%) believe that not enough is being done to encourage equality in regard to looking after children and the home¹⁶.

Employers must also listen to what women say they need to succeed in their working lives and provide both training and flexibility. Otherwise the gap between what women need and what is on offer in the workplace will remain, and Australia will continue to lag behind.

Closing the gap

Despite all of this, women are fairly optimistic about future gender equality in the Australian workforce – half (53%) believe it will improve. Reflecting on their workplaces, many felt that men were oblivious to gender inequalities, but that most would be onside to correct this, if made aware.

While women and men share some common workplace values, the desire for support at work and home is arguably more pronounced for women. But the pressure to balance career and family should not just fall on women’s shoulders.

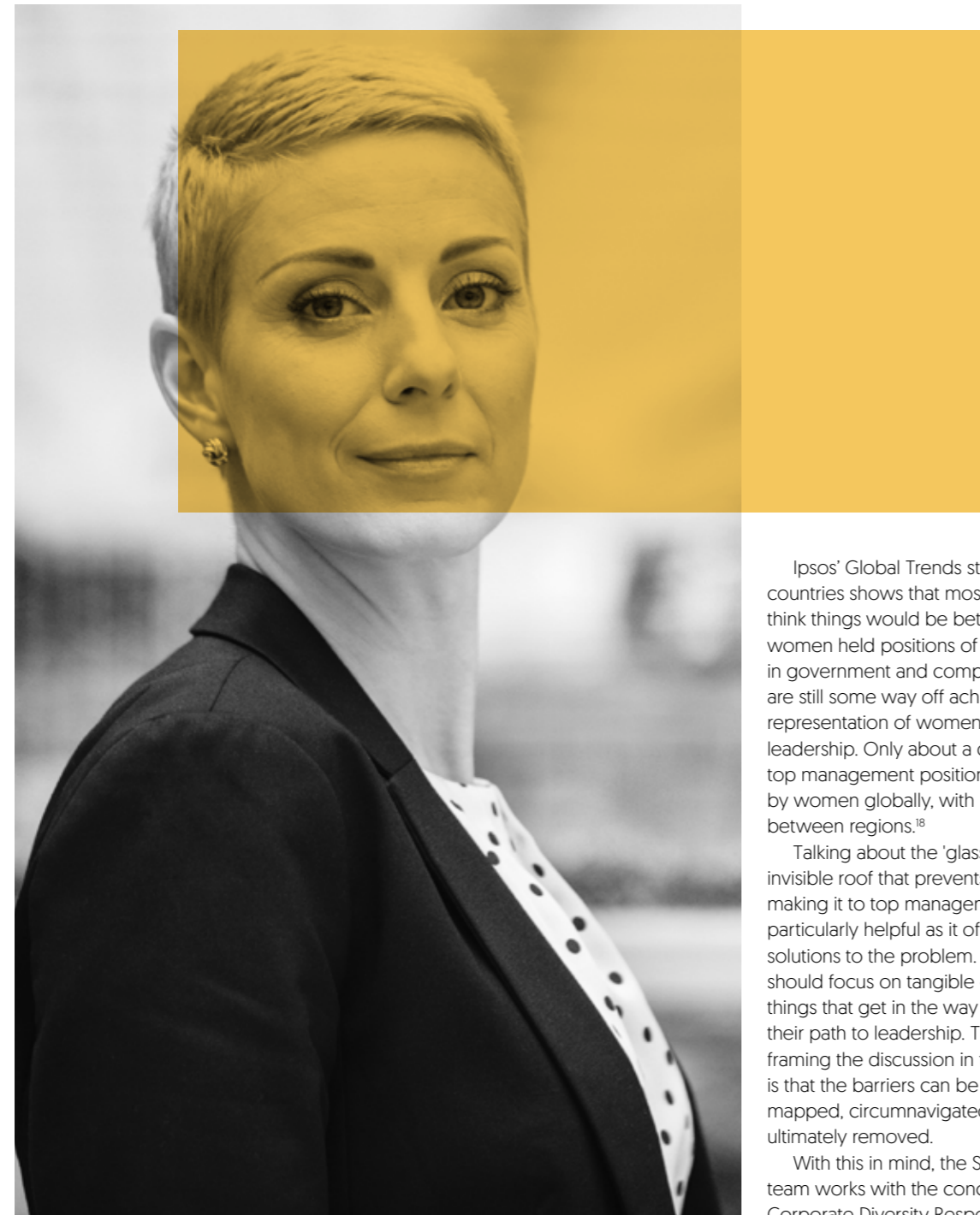
Just three in five Australian women (61%) agreed that women and men are treated equally in their workplace

Corporate Diversity Responsibility

Building better businesses



Benja Stig Fagerland



Ipsos' Global Trends study of 22 countries shows that most people think things would be better if more women held positions of responsibility in government and companies.¹⁷ But we are still some way off achieving better representation of women in business leadership. Only about a quarter of top management positions are filled by women globally, with little variation between regions.¹⁸

Talking about the 'glass ceiling,' the invisible roof that prevents women making it to top management, is not particularly helpful as it offers no practical solutions to the problem. Instead, we should focus on tangible obstacles – the things that get in the way of women on their path to leadership. The benefit of framing the discussion in these terms is that the barriers can be identified, mapped, circumnavigated, and ultimately removed.

With this in mind, the SHEconomy team works with the concept of Corporate Diversity Responsibility [CDR].

CDR builds on the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility; its aim is to achieve better utilisation of human resources within business, which will in turn lead to a more sustainable, robust organisation. CDR is not about the number of women in managerial positions, but rather how organisations encourage female leadership and indeed diversity of all sorts. Having greater diversity in leadership is a business advantage which can strengthen corporate culture and improve managerial decision making; it can produce more and wider innovation, better resilience and deeper trust within

the business and among its customers and stakeholders.

CDR is about how an entire corporate culture changes to achieve diverse sustainability. It's about how companies take their female talent seriously, by focusing on what women actually want and need in 2019, rather than being guided by assumptions and stereotypical perceptions. Our hope is that CDR will be seen as a new way of looking at sustainable economic growth for business, and a means to balance organisational performance across profits, people, and planet.

SHEconomy's CDR approach has the potential to benefit business in multiple ways:

- 1 It helps to identify and strengthen broader narrative about the business case for diversity, with a common and shared goal.
- 2 It reflects people's intersectional complexity and different identities instead of focusing on only one specific aspect of social or demographic characteristic.
- 3 A focus on cognitive diversity recognises that demographic equality – rather than being its own end – is useful as a visible indicator of progression toward diversity of thinking.

Only about a quarter of top management positions are filled by women globally, with little variation between regions

Reporting identity

An interview with Megha Mohan, BBC World Service's Gender & Identity Correspondent



Fiona O'Connor



Before her appointment as the BBC's first Gender and Identity Correspondent, Megha was a senior multimedia staff reporter at the BBC's Digital Current Affairs department. There, she told stories on subcultures across Asia, Africa, the US and Europe, with a focus on gender. She is also a founding member of The Second Source, which was created by a group of female journalists to tackle harassment and create an alternative network for women in the media.

FO'C: You were hired as the BBC's very first Gender and Identity Correspondent in September 2018. I'd like to start with your take on the context for your appointment.

There is this whole scope of stories from the human experience that we haven't touched as journalists and as story tellers. So, I think that's a context of this appointment. Being part of the BBC World Service means that I've got this unique opportunity. I want to be looking at the conversations that are happening with women all over the world.

I had a story coming out about how millennial lesbians in Burundi use secret memes to communicate with each other because it is illegal to be gay there. I

was doing an interview with the African breakfast show here, and they were saying that when it comes to reporting in Burundi, we've traditionally reported on these ethnic tensions between the Tutsis and the Hutus. As an international reporter, I want to look at breaking down country stereotypes.

That is the beauty of the World Service, that our stories are multi-dimensional and reach multiple platforms. It's a 43-language service. We think about how we reach those underserved audiences.

The media bubble in London doesn't matter to me. This has to mean something to the girl in Tanzania and the girl in Hull and the boy in Nairobi and the guy in Alaska. It has to mean something to all of those people, otherwise I have failed.

FO'C: What has excited you most about your first six months in the role?

We've got this unique opportunity in terms of galvanising global perspective to show the whole prism of human experience. One thing that has really excited me about this role is that I feel that gender reporting so far has either lionised women to be these, like, badass, trailblazing women or they're destitute women. The whole experience in between is lost. You don't really have that when it comes to men; you really do have all those grey spots in between which give it a much more rounded impression of the male experience.

FO'C: And what have been the challenges?

The biggest challenge when you do gender and identity stories is there is so much sensitive language around what people want to define themselves as.

So, for example, today I had an e-mail from somebody saying, "why did you say in your headline that it was 'the secret language of lesbian love'? Why didn't you say it was the secret language of love?" And she added, "love is love, and it is bigoted to suggest otherwise."

I understand where she is coming from. Having said that, when you speak to a woman in Burundi and she uses the term homosexual or lesbian because it doesn't matter to her as much as the woman sitting in London who is much more savvy to all these terms as a micro aggression, you have to reflect that in the reporting by using her language. Language that someone in the West who discusses gender and identity in a very academic way may find problematic. That is really hard because you want to please everyone when you're doing stories about the underrepresented.

FO'C: How can we try to unpick what gender and identity mean?

One aspect that I'm going to be looking at is the notion of safe spaces. There are arguments on what gender means and the difference between gender and sex and these subjects are emotive. Nepal has a really old transgender community, and they call it "third gender". It's a traditional, old identity. In Kathmandu, trans women use female bathrooms, and no one bats an eyelid. However, in more rural areas, they have what they call a third gender bathroom. That comes with its own set of challenges because a lot of trans women get harassed. We can look to other societies outside our immediate filter bubble and see that there are lessons or insights or experiences that we can learn from.

I'm not an advocate and I'm not an activist. I'm here to tell people's stories and challenge people when I need to

FO'C: Your work so far has covered several situations where women are being silenced by society. How do you grapple with what needs to be said but is often repressed?

When you become a journalist who has a beat, the stories come to you in a way. People will let you know what they want covered. The way some journalists have operated is to call up an NGO and ask for access, and then you get access through the NGO. That is really not how we want to work in the specialist unit. We're immersing ourselves in worlds where people are coming and telling us: "these are the needs of the communities".

Once we file these stories, we have to think about how we reach the silenced communities. Media reviews for a piece which has got some lovely graphics for the front page of the BBC are great, but I need the women in rural Burundi to also know that this piece has gone out.

FO'C: It must be very difficult to divorce yourself and your feelings from what you're reporting and to not bring your lens to bear on a story.

I try really, really hard not to do that, because it's just not what I'm paid to do. I'm not an advocate and I'm not an activist. I'm here to tell people's stories and challenge people when I need to. That's what we're supposed to do. I am an advocate for journalism, I think that more than ever, good journalism is really needed now. We need more women in this profession as well.

FO'C: There are known initiatives, like the women in journalism and your own Second Source, to support and establish women working in the media.

I think any aspect of getting people together in professions, or any environment where you have a shared goal or a shared experience is only a good thing. It would be nice in journalism if more of an effort was made to be more inclusive of everybody. It's very hard when you're starting out in journalism and you want to go to certain events and they cost a lot of money, or you don't feel self-represented. I think that these initiatives are all a great thing. We're really trying in the Second Source to be so mindful when it comes to sexuality, when it comes to race, when it comes to socio-economic backgrounds, because all of those things so far have been barriers to people feeling that they can be represented. I think it would be really wonderful if more voices from all those backgrounds were actively looked for.

FO'C: Finally, how can journalism best communicate issues of gender identity and equality to the public?

I think, fundamentally, journalists should be vessels for other people's stories and literally know them. I don't think we're the story. I don't believe we should ever be the story. It's a really privileged job. It's a ringside seat to history and seeing how we all interact with each other. If you disappear and you become a conduit for the story, that's the best thing. The thorny issue with gender is that because language is so sensitive, you're in danger of upsetting a lot of people. It may sound trite, but I'm going to be as sensitive as I can to the culture that I'm in. Hopefully, people will understand that we're doing the best we can.

Invisible barriers

The challenges faced by Muslim women in Malaysia



Lars Erik Lie



Nik Tasha Nik Kamaruddin



Malaysians are optimistic about the future of gender equality. Ipsos research found that most women (54%) in Malaysia believe that gender equality will be achieved in their lifetime, among the highest of the 27 countries surveyed (the figure was just 24% in Japan).¹⁹ And globally, Malaysians are among the least likely to say there are more advantages today to being a man than a woman.²⁰

But there is arguably a long way to go. A recent study by Ipsos on behalf of Sisters in Islam – a Malaysian civil society organisation that aims to promote the rights of women – looked at what equality means to Muslim Malaysian women, and how the intersecting identities of gender and religion impact on equality.

With a population of 32 million²³, Malaysia is a diverse country; 69% of the population belongs to the Malay ethnic group as of 2018, 23% are Chinese, and 7% Indian.²⁴ The majority of the country (61%) practices Islam, while 20% practice Buddhism, 9% practice Christianity, and 6% Hinduism.²⁵

Although the official religion of Malaysia is Islam, and this is practiced by the majority (61%), Islamic law applies only to Muslims. Civil law applies to the rest of the country, who practice Buddhism, Christianity, and Hinduism.²¹ This means that different laws are in place between Muslim and non-Muslim women in areas such as divorce, inheritance and custody of children. Yet, in general, Muslim women who participated in the Ipsos study

considered that Malaysia is just and equal in providing basic opportunities to all members of society, such as opportunities in education, employment and voting.

“My definition of equality is something that is balanced or even. If in Malaysia, you can take education as an example. Everyone, regardless of race, gender has a right to education.”

Liberal Malaysian Muslim woman

Instead, Muslim Malaysian women pointed to the importance of cultural biases and stereotyping as barriers to women's equality. This starts early; expectations tend to be different for women and girls than for men and boys. Growing up, girls have less room to define their personal lives, with stricter rules with regards to curfews and ways of dressing. The family's respectability can be judged by the actions of the women of the family, whether it's in terms of physical appearance or their behaviour in public. Both in private and public life, women feel a pressure to present the image of a “Proper Muslim girl”, carrying the weight of the family's image and reputation.

“Daughters need to always watch what they do as they carry their parents' and the family's image. Girls are usually watched by society, so their movements are limited, and they always have to say the right thing so that they look just right.”

Strict Malaysian Muslim woman

Cultural biases against women in the workplace impact on equality as well. For Muslim women, expectations of their role in the home may conflict with pursuing a career. This can have real impacts on women's economic participation. With 55% female economic participation in 2016, Malaysia ranks behind regional peers such as Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.²²

Even women in employment are affected by this stereotype; Muslim women described feeling that they must work extra hard to prove that they can manage commitments both at home and at work. Muslim women can feel they have to project a high degree of professionalism at work, while male colleagues will be taken seriously without having to put in the same effort.

“My behaviour with the male staff is more pronounced and stricter so that they'll accept my opinion and I can't be left behind.”

Liberal Malaysian Muslim woman

But are these issues unique to Muslim women in Malaysia? Many pointed to equality being a key tenant of Islam. While there is a strong emphasis on the outward manifestations of Islam, many women felt that religion was sometimes manipulated to support unfair treatment.

“The concept of equality from an Islamic point of view is in faith and piety. Islam judges men and women from their levels of faith. The amount of good one carries out doesn't depend on what organ they have between their legs, rather the actions they have done.”

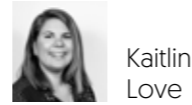
Strict Malaysian Muslim woman

While Islamic law and these outward traditions create unique barriers for Muslim women in Malaysia, gender stereotypes that transcend religious and national identities were therefore the most salient examples of inequality to women in the study. Muslim women in Malaysia face unique issues, but they may find common cause with women of other religious identities and elsewhere – and that's something we can all be optimistic about.

Women must work extra hard to prove that they can manage commitments both at home and at work

No place like home

Empowering women in displacement



Kaitlin Love



According to UNHCR, the world is experiencing the largest refugee crisis since the end of the second World War.²⁶ Millions of people are fleeing man-made and natural disasters to seek a better life. Recent Ipsos studies conducted with Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq show that within an already challenging context, gender inequality and discrimination lead to particular suffering among displaced women and girls who bear disproportionate economic costs and are at heightened risk of violence and exploitation.

Displaced women often take on extra roles and responsibilities within and outside of their homes. This may be because there is no adult male provider present, or because economic hardship means a heightened need for

women to contribute financially to the household. While this may be viewed as empowering, some view it not as a choice, but as hardship required for the survival of their families.

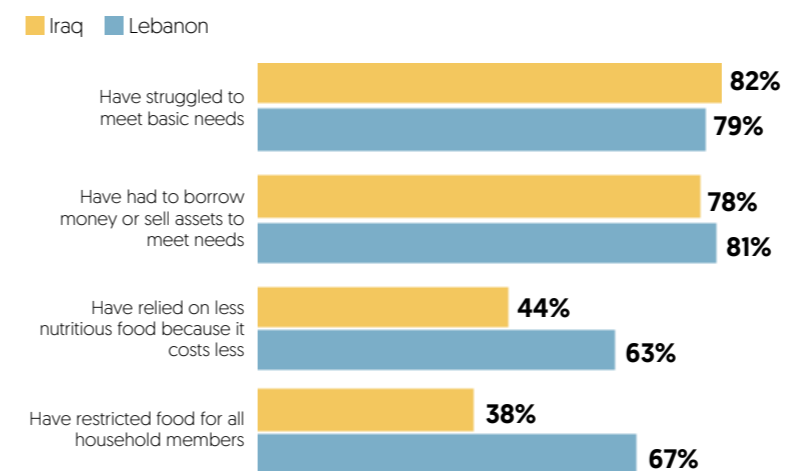
"I know many women whose husbands are not working because the opportunities for men here are very, very limited, so women are the ones who work. This causes huge mental stress."
Mona, 50, Amman, Jordan

Coping with economic hardship

As a result of limited financial resources, four-fifths of women have struggled to meet their family's basic needs. While few women work formally because of legal restrictions, some have been forced to work informally, typically in traditionally female roles: cleaning houses, mending clothes, watching or tutoring children, and cooking for neighbours or friends. At least 80% rely on negative coping mechanisms to deal with their economic hardship by borrowing money or selling assets, restricting food intake, or sometimes withdrawing children from school – boys so that they can contribute to household income and girls to enter into an arranged marriage.

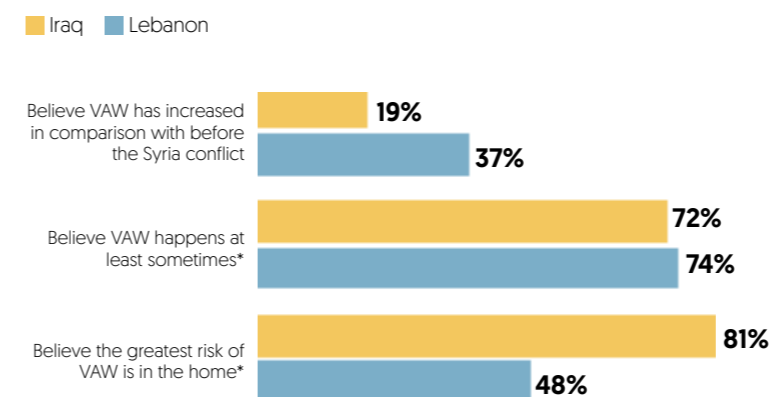
Coping mechanisms of Syrian refugee women

Figure 02: % of Syrian refugee women or their households who...



Violence against Syrian women in host countries

Figure 03: % of Syrian refugee women who...



The risk of violence

Our research shows that displaced women are also more vulnerable to violence. Almost 30% of women said that violence towards them has increased compared to before the Syria crisis, and many felt that they have limited options for respite or justice, believing that it is unlikely that authorities in displacement will respond positively or adequately.

Syrian refugees who participated in Ipsos' study spoke about experiencing violence in the public sphere, including unwanted attention and harassment. There were instances of attempted exploitation of Syrian refugee women, including among humanitarian service providers. Women who were the heads of their households, or living without an adult male present, were most vulnerable. For some women, fear of the unknown and for their safety in displacement has led to them having far less interaction with the outside world than before.

"In Jordan, the violence rates have increased towards women. People think Syrian women are in need and they will do anything to get help."

Ghosoun, 54, Irbid, Jordan

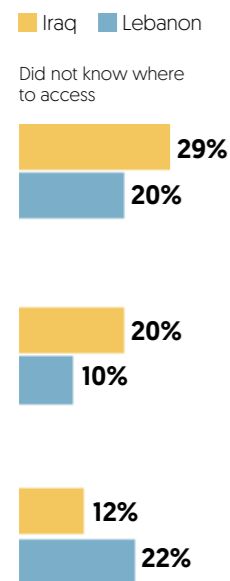
Accessing help

Despite the breadth and depth of their needs, in the qualitative research, we found the majority of displaced women find the humanitarian assistance they receive to be insufficient and inconsistent, making them even more

susceptible to exploitation. A major barrier to accessing assistance is awareness – many women reported not understanding the aid system, not being aware of what services exist, and not understanding how or where to access them.

Barriers to accessing services

Figure 04: Q: Why were you unable to access these services?



Empowering women in displacement

The findings from our studies confirm that women suffer the consequences of displacement particularly acutely. Therefore, it is essential to develop gender-sensitive programming that can mitigate the risks faced by women in displacement and that will empower them to meet both their daily and long-term needs. With this in mind, Ipsos has proposed the following guidelines for best practice when working with women in displacement:

1. Prioritise women’s access to services and women’s empowerment through gender-mainstreamed programming (which ensures that gender perspectives and the goal of gender equality are central).
2. Increase access to employment services and financial resources for female refugees, actively targeting them for livelihoods programming.
3. Support interactive, safe spaces for female refugees to meet, network and socialise, including availability of psychosocial support services.
4. Improve information sharing and awareness raising of available services.
5. Promote accountability for violence against women, particularly within the refugee community.
6. Recognise the positive correlation between the strength of women’s movements and organisations and gender-equal societies, and invest in women-led organisations.

Gender equality

It matters for men too



Nigina Abaszadeh



The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is the United Nations’ sexual and reproductive health agency. Their mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe, and every young person’s potential is fulfilled.

Dr. Nigina Abaszadeh is UNFPA’s Regional Technical Adviser on Gender and Human Rights for Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Challenging times for gender equality

Eastern Europe and Central Asia are culturally and socially very diverse, but all countries have a strong gender divide and traditional gender norms. In parallel to the consequences of the economic crisis, there has been a rise in conservatism and a backlash against women’s rights. Both factors have pushed governments to adopt austerity measures which result in a growing reliance on women’s unpaid work.

In addition, the elderly population is increasing in the region, and middle-aged women have become part of the so-called “sandwich generation.”

A narrow concept of masculinity does not give men the freedom to live their lives as they might want to

Low quality public childcare means that women provide unpaid care for older people, look after one or more dependent children, and, at the same time, try to combine paid employment and meet their career aspirations. Although women in the region generally have a high level of education, the unpaid care responsibilities assigned to them by strict gender roles do not allow them to follow their career aspirations.

Rigid gender roles impact on men, women, and their children as well. The gender divide restricts men's role only to a breadwinner function and ties women's primary value to their reproductive role, maternal care and the private sphere of home.

Understanding masculinity

UNFPA has supported a number of studies exploring the concept of masculinity in the region, looking specifically at gender attitudes, gender norms and notions of masculinity. For instance, The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) was conducted in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Serbia, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine. The findings show that men are more likely to agree with rigid or traditional notions of gender roles compared to women. Masculinity is strongly associated with a man's ability to financially support his family, for instance agreement with statements like "a man who does not have an income is of no value." And men continue to dominate decision-making power in intimate relationships.

The survey has shown that men who have witnessed or suffered from

physical violence in their childhood are more likely to be perpetrators of intimate partner violence in their adulthood. They also show a greater tendency toward less equitable gender attitudes and endorse statements about intimate partner violence such as "women should tolerate violence to keep the family together" or "in some cases women deserve to be beaten." These findings illustrate the intergenerational transmission of violence.

Yet younger generations are more receptive to change and to challenging traditional gender roles and notions of masculinities. Men acknowledge that strict gender norms restrict men as caring personalities and as fathers. By expanding the definition of fatherhood for men beyond being sole financial provider and protector for the family, space is created for men to connect with others in relationships of greater emotional honesty and empathy. Fathers who are more involved also have female partners who report greater relationship satisfaction and stronger feelings of support.

A narrow concept of masculinity does not give men the freedom to live their lives as they might want to. Specific notions about harmful masculinity vary across cultures, age groups and ethnicities, but the common points are anti-femininity, achievement, avoidance of the appearance of weakness, and adventure, risk and violence.

Allies, not opponents

For decades, gender equality has been considered a women's issue, and gender equality policies have been

contextualised mainly as a women's issue as well. We at UNFPA strongly believe that men are an important ally and should be motivated by the positive impact of gender equality for them and the well-being of society as a whole rather than by fear, shame or guilt.

There are a number of myths that create obstacles to men and boys to advocate gender equality. Firstly, gender inequality might be dismissed by men as invalid, as privilege becomes a norm and is invisible to those who own it. Understanding masculinities is important.

Secondly, men might see gender inequality as a women's issue rather than an issue that has implications for everybody. Therefore, it is important to show men how gender stereotypes limit their choices as well.

Thirdly, gender equality might be resisted by men out of concern that it will limit their own opportunities. The common misperception is that when women win, men lose. Helping men to see that gender equality benefits all helps to reduce this resistance and make them part of the change. Men need to understand that gender equality does not mean they "get less of the pie," but that the pie gets bigger.

Fourthly, men might feel like they are blamed for gender inequality. UNFPA tries to avoid any labels such as "good man" and "bad man". It is not about shaming or blaming men but treating them as strong allies with a common goal.

Fifthly, gender inequality can be seen as an abstract business problem rather than something that creates a disadvantage for women and girls, men and boys. Sharing the stories of women (and men) who have suffered from gender bias, harassment or discrimination is a powerful technique for invoking empathy and engaging men in the gender debate on an emotional

rather than an intellectual level. Studies show that the emotional brain is a more effective motivator than the rational brain.

Sixthly, many men actually do not oppose gender equality, but they don't know how to help. If this is the case, the best approach is to show them and explain concretely what they could do as an individual, in groups and within institutions. Transferring strategies to men for advancing women can help men "walk the talk."

From data to dialogue

UNFPA advocates gender equality at different policy levels, focusing in particular on long-term benefits. This can be sensitive because gender equality is often perceived as something that is imposed from outside. Therefore, it is important to package it in a culturally sensitive way and use different entry points for interventions. Data from studies such as IMAGES help to define compelling arguments for a dialogue.

UNFPA works in several streams. One of them is gender-responsive family policies which offer a balanced combination of fertility and career aspirations, as well as addressing unpaid care work which is often considered a secondary issue. This allows men to be further engaged with sexual, reproductive and family planning related issues and to become more engaged as fathers. At the same time, it allows women to combine their motherhood intentions, while building their career path as well.

Addressing harmful social norms is another very critical area that we focus on. One approach we are taking is

working with adolescent boys and girls, because the transition into adolescence is especially central in shaping and maintaining masculinity norms.

Programmes focusing on peer-to-peer education or challenging masculinity norms of young people can have a significant impact on gender equality.

We look at the community level and work with gate keepers, the media and sports clubs, but also with more traditional bodies like faith-based organisations. On the country level, we try to look at different entry points which are more appropriate for the specific country. In Tajikistan, for instance, we work with sports clubs like taekwondo to involve sports figures in the gender equality movement. In Turkey and Ukraine, we work more with the private sector to involve men in paternity and care.

Through our partnerships at different levels with governments, among civil society, academia, research institutions and individual experts we upscale and institutionalise gender transformative approaches, so they can have a wider impact. By working together, implementing projects, conducting research, bringing and exchanging global and regional expertise and experiences, good practice and lessons learnt we can make a difference on the ground to policy making and behaviour change with a long-term impact on people's lives.

Let's talk about sex!

...but only if you're married



Sunny Sharma



Contraceptive myths

A tall glass of lime and soda - a refreshing drink for sure, but an effective form of contraception?

Last year, I was in Lagos conducting a study into the family planning needs of women, when my counterpart from Ipsos Nigeria told me that this was a common method used by unmarried

teenage girls. "Finishing the deed and jumping out of bed quickly" was another cited method which caught my attention. These contraceptive myths may induce a smile for their innocence, but their prevalence is a real concern.

According to the latest UNFPA data, effective contraceptive use remains low whilst teenage pregnancies continue to be high in Nigeria.²⁷ This is especially problematic because an unplanned pregnancy is almost always a catastrophic event for an unmarried adolescent girl or young woman

The prevalence of contraceptive myths is a real concern

in Nigeria. In conservative Nigerian society, pregnancy or childbirth out of wedlock is frowned upon, leading to social marginalisation, being forced to drop out of school and, in many cases, being unable to achieve financial empowerment. Further, in a country where abortion is largely illegal, many women are forced into risky and unsafe abortions. Two-thirds of all abortions in Nigeria last year were categorised as being in the least safe criteria (i.e. outside health facilities and not using appropriate medication), and the majority of abortions were among those ages 20-24.²⁸

So why, in a country like Nigeria where modern methods like implants, injections and pills are widely available, are they not filtering down to these young women who need them? The answer lies within the health system.

Implicit bias at work

Many women in Nigeria first hear about the different methods available to them from nurses and other healthcare professionals. Over my career in health research, I've spoken to many nurses across Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia and generally found them to be highly motivated and dedicated professionals, often working in very challenging settings. Yet, like the rest of us, healthcare providers are not immune to implicit bias, in which we make unconscious judgements about someone. Marital status appears to be a key bias at play here.

When asked to recall details of family planning counselling with healthcare providers in both countries, it is evident that married women are experiencing

the health system differently to unmarried women. In Nigeria, 58% of married women who are using modern contraceptives report that they were informed about other potential options by the healthcare provider compared to just 31% of unmarried women. 52% of married women were informed about side effects of modern hormonal methods by the healthcare provider, compared to just 24% of unmarried women.

Married women are therefore being better informed by healthcare providers to select a contraceptive method which works for them. It is therefore not surprising to learn that unmarried women are much more likely to have experienced an unwanted pregnancy over the past five years, according to the PMA, a global family planning performance monitoring agency – 44% of unmarried compared to 29% of married women.²⁹

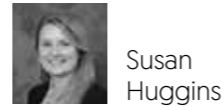
Supporting women

Healthcare workers are a vital source of information for women globally. In Nigeria and beyond, healthcare workers should be trained specifically to recognise implicit biases to better support unmarried women with their contraceptive choice.

Other channels and interventions such as MTV Shuga, an edutainment media platform targeted at younger audiences, should also be pursued to help educate younger women about contraception. And women should be advised to save the lime and soda for when they are thirsty!

Women's voices, women's vote

The 2018 Irish abortion referendum



Ireland's history of abortion

Abortion was first made illegal in Ireland in 1861 and became part of constitutional law in 1983, when Ireland voted overwhelmingly (67%) in favour of a constitutional ban on abortion.³¹

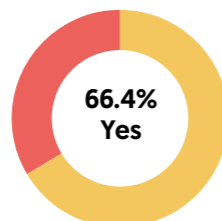
Since 1980, over 170,000 women and girls travelled from Ireland to access abortion services overseas,³² while others bought abortion pills online.

A quiet revolution

Leo Varadkar, the Irish Taoiseach, called the 2018 referendum vote to legalise abortion a "quiet revolution." Thirty-five years after 67% of the public voted in favour of a constitutional ban on abortion, the public reversed its decision, with 66% voting in favour of allowing abortion up to 12 weeks.

Official referendum result

Figure 05: Referendum to amend the constitution to permit legislation for the regulation of termination of pregnancy



Opinion on abortion was slow to change. Only five years previously, a poll by the Irish Times and Ipsos MRBI found that the Irish public were not in favour of abortion "when a woman deems it to be in her best interest." And a year before the referendum, an Ipsos MRBI poll found that while most people were in favour of significant changes to Ireland's abortion laws, when asked if abortion should be available "under any circumstances, i.e. available on request," 67% said no.

Support then grew but appeared to fall back again. An Ipsos MRBI poll for the Irish Times in April 2018 showed support at 63% in favour of legalising abortion, but one month later, only 10 days before the referendum, support had slipped to 58%.

The polls were telling us that this referendum was going to be close – so why the overwhelming result?

The power of voices

In part, the result was the outcome of a democratic process that put citizens at the centre of decision-making. A Citizens' Assembly was established in 2016 and tasked 99 ordinary Irish citizens to deliberate the constitutional ban on abortion. Voices – including expert testimony and submissions from the public – were heard, and the principles of fairness in treatment of differing voices and equality of voice among members were at the heart of the Assembly's debate. In the end, the Assembly was able to break through political deadlock and reach consensus, recommending to repeal and replace the constitutional provision on abortion.

In the era of #MeToo and social

movements in Ireland, the significance of the abortion vote was felt by the young women of Ireland. Irish women living overseas documented their journey home to Ireland to cast their vote. The #hometovote shared stories of Irish women coming from the US, Australia, and other countries.

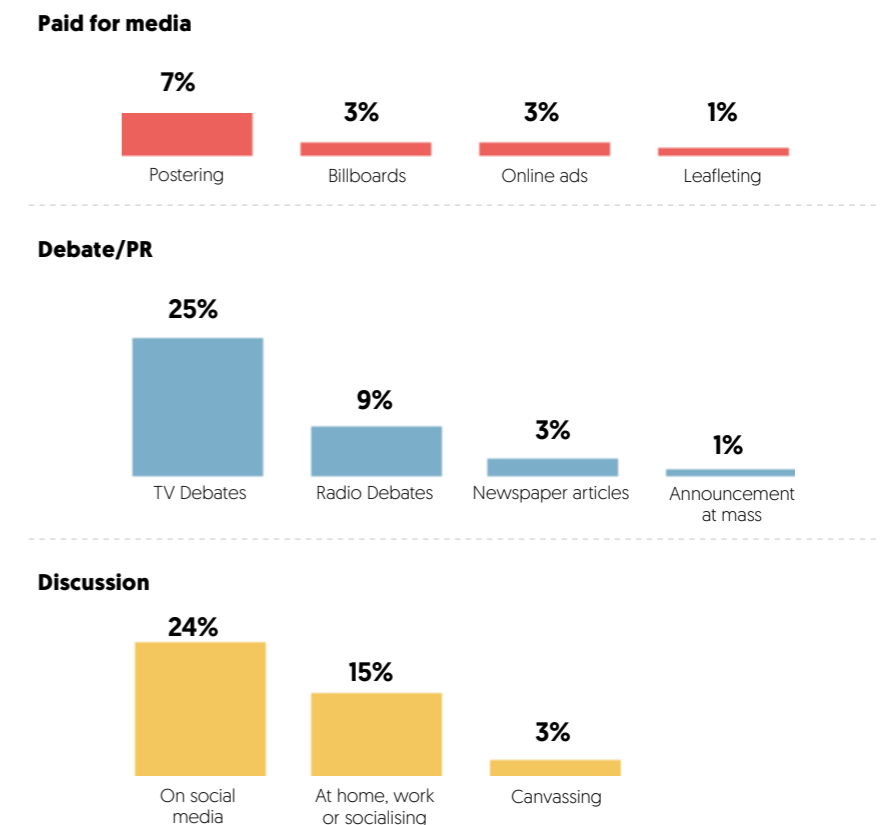
The referendum campaign took a big shift in the last few days as more and more women bravely shared their emotional accounts of travelling to Britain, alone, to terminate their pregnancies.

Stories were shared of girls as young as 16 taking abortion pills, alone, in their bedrooms.

In a post-referendum poll, Ipsos MRBI found that 39% of the general public felt discussion had the most influence on the outcome of the vote. Discussion on social media was mentioned by 24% – just behind televised debates at 25% – and discussion in pubs, at work or at home received 15% of mentions. Women's voices – amplified by social media – had a powerful impact on the result.

Most influential forms of communication

Figure 06: Q: Which way of communicating do you think had the most influence on how people voted in the end?



These stories also added to the emotional impact of the vote. Women came out in their thousands to vote in the abortion referendum. When compared to exit polling data from the 2017 general election, an Ipsos MRBI exit poll on behalf of the Irish Times showed that there was a 95% increase in female voters aged 18-24. This compares with a 1% decrease in male voters of the same age.³⁰ While young women came out in

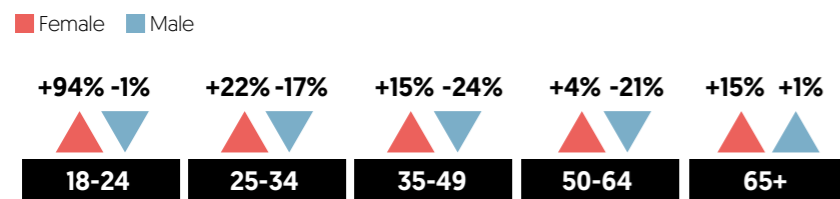
force, the magnitude of the vote was felt by women and men of all ages. Ipsos MRBI researchers observed how some women left the polling stations teary-eyed, overwhelmed by the significance of the vote.

Women of all ages, sisters, mothers, daughters spoke, and, the people of Ireland listened to the experiences of women. The revolution wasn't really so quiet after all.

While young women came out in force, the magnitude of the vote was felt by women and men of all ages

2018 referendum turnout compared to 2016 general election turnout

Figure 07: % change in turnout from 2016 general election to 2018 referendum by gender and age



This is a woman's world



Darrell Bricker



In February 1966 when James Brown, the Godfather of Soul, recorded his top 10 hit "It's a Man's Man's Man's World," he spoke the truth. In most ways that can be measured; societies worked better for men than women, especially from a cultural perspective. Culture creates the gender roles we are taught by our parents and reinforced by our institutions. It also creates the expectations about how to distribute economic and political power in a society. While one can bridle at the concept of an objective "patriarchy" – I certainly do – its undeniable that cultures set the

guidelines for how we live our lives. And, throughout history, those guidelines have mostly advantaged men.

The Godfather was also right about the demographic power of men. Although, in 1966, the world was pretty much equally divided between the number of men and women alive. Soon though, due to the explosion in global population [the world went from a population of 3.4 billion in 1966, to the 7.5 billion it is today], we had more men than women. This is because, if Mother Nature is left to her own devices, there are always more boys born than girls.

The ratio, according to the UN, is 102:100 in most countries. Although, other demographers have it as high as 105:100.

Those countries in which the ratio isn't the average have cultural practices [female abortions to favour male births] that slant the birth ratio even further towards boys. That's certainly the case in the world's two largest countries, China and India. In China, the birth ratio today is 106:100; in India it's 107:100. Again, these ratios are optimistic. There are estimates that have the ratios as high as 115-120:100. They are certainly higher in rural communities in both countries.

Soon, every year, there will be more women alive than men

Young populations are male populations. That's the impact of more male births. The male advantage won't last, though. That's because even though more boys are born than girls, the longevity advantage goes to girls. Men are like mayflies. Lots are born but die quickly.

Why do women outlive men? Because almost everything that can cause a human being to die has an earlier effect on men than women. Of the top twenty causes of death, only three are more prevalent among women than men. Two of them, cervix uteri cancer and breast cancer are almost exclusive to women. The third, Alzheimer's, disproportionately impacts women because they live longer.

Another significant early killer of women has almost been eliminated from the lives of today's women. That's death due to the complications of childbirth. Part of the reason for this has been advancements in maternal healthcare. But, a significant contributor has also been women now choosing to have smaller families. The world's birth rate today is around 2.5, which is half of what it was in 1950. Fewer children means fewer chances to die due to the complications of childbirth.

Why will the future be a woman's world? Because soon, every year, there will be more women alive than men. And numbers count when it comes to culture. Japan is an example of where the world is headed. Japan is a low fertility country (birth rate 1.3), with a high life expectancy (85 years), and an older population (median age 48 years). Japan's population today is 51.2% female. And getting more female every day.

What will an older, more female humanity mean? Almost nobody is thinking about it. Politicians and commercial organisations are obsessed

with youth. When was the last time you saw a political party focus its campaign strategy on attracting the votes of older women? How about a major brand featuring an older woman in an advertisement? This must change. Because every year we are becoming a woman's world. Especially an older woman's world.

Final reflections on gender equality



Jessica Bruce



Olivia Ryan

How will we know when we get there?



It's 2019, and women's rights are in the spotlight. Perhaps the most visible expression of feminism's resurgence has been the rise of the #MeToo movement. And there are signs that this goes beyond digital activism. Ipsos data from 27 countries shows that globally, two-thirds of people (65%) say that achieving equality between men and women is important to them personally. There is also a sense, among some at least, that conditions for women are improving; half of people (50%) say that young women will have a better life than women from their parents' generation.³³

And yet, there's a long way to go. To take two examples, ILO data shows that just 39% of the total labour force is female.³⁴ The prevalence of violence against women and girls is often under-reported and under-represented, but even so, surveys show that one in three

women will experience violence.³⁵ Ipsos data shows that people across the globe identify sexual harassment (30%), sexual violence (27%) and physical violence (22%) as the top two or three important issues facing women in their country.³⁶

Where are we going?

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a framework for change and highlight many of the current challenges – as well as signs of progress – for women globally. The SDGs were developed by the 193 Member States of the United Nations and are a call for action by all countries to deliver change

that will lead to a more prosperous, peaceful and sustainable future for all by 2030.³⁷ They provide a lens through which we can analyse the multiple and interrelated areas of social, political and economic life where change must occur if we want to see a more equitable and just world.

Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls is one of the seventeen SDGs. And whilst the transformative potential of this one goal for the lives of women and girls should be powerful enough to incite action, it is important to note that gender equality cuts across the entire Sustainable Development Agenda. The SDGs recognise that gender equality is important for the economy, for the health and wellbeing of families and to build stronger institutions. In short, ending all discrimination against women and girls is not only a basic human right for women, it is critical for driving progress toward a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world for all.

The scope and ambition of the SDGs is admirable, but achieving gender equality and women's empowerment by 2030 will be no mean feat. There are millennia of patriarchal structures embedded into our cultures and institutions that need to be identified, contested, broken down and rebuilt. The concepts of gender, and what it means to be a woman, are also in flux.

As humans, we have a tendency to struggle to see the world beyond our own experiences. As researchers, we cannot afford to make this mistake, or we risk producing data and policies that reinforce inequalities, thereby falling foul to critiques that the SDGs are just a force for supporting existing power structures through other means. Our work needs to account for existing power inequalities in the world and the ways in which

these manifest in gendered ways.³⁸ Gender equality is not just about looking at gender; it is imperative that we also look at how gender intersects with race, disability, age, income and other social inequalities. The gender equality agenda needs to ensure that it gives voice to women – especially the most marginalised women – and leaves no one behind.

Charting the course with data

Data will help us chart our course and measure our progress. We need data on economic and political participation, particularly at leadership levels, data on the prevalence of violence against women and girls, data to demonstrate the economic value of unpaid care and domestic work and adequate legal frameworks at the national and international levels; data on every aspect of women's lives.

But globally, there is a gender data gap. Data2x [part of UN foundation] who campaign to improve the quality, availability and use of gender data highlights that data across these domains is lacking.³⁹ Caroline Criado Perez argues in her recently published book "Invisible Women" that the gender data gap is "both a cause and a consequence of the type of unthinking that conceives of humanity as almost exclusively male."⁴⁰ These gender data gaps pose real challenges to understanding gender inequalities and identifying solutions.

And we need many different types of data too. We need administrative data, data from independent sources

and data from social media, which give women platforms to voice their concerns and campaign for change, creating movements such as #MeToo and #EverydaySexism.

It's also not just about disaggregating data by gender but also about looking at how this interacts with factors such as ethnicity, class and disability to better understand the structural and cultural barriers against equality. "And it's important not just to look at the numbers: we must hear individual women's voices too. In this edition of Understanding Society, Susan Huggins' piece on the 2018 abortion referendum in Ireland shows us how women sharing their experiences can help drive change, while Fiona O'Connor's interview with Megha Mohan reminds us of the power of women's stories.

We need all of these different sources of data to challenge the way we do things, and especially to challenge institutions.

This isn't just about women

We need women on leadership boards, but we also need men on board too. However, people are split on whether too much is being expected of men to help the fight for equality. Overall, 43% agree that men are being expected to do too much to support women's equality in their country compared with 46% who disagree. Men [50%] are more likely than women [36%] to think too much is expected of men.⁴¹ So what can we do to encourage more willing support from men?

One approach has been to show how gender equality benefits everyone,

We need intersectional data to understand how gender, race, sexuality and age influence the different types of barriers and issues that women face so that we can design policies and interventions which move us towards equality for all women

and this has often been presented in economic terms. When women are in paid employment, economies grow. Estimates show that if women and men have an equal role in labour markets, global GDP could grow by 26%.⁴² This increases productivity, diversifies economic activity and reduces income inequality.⁴³ Given that unemployment [33%] and poverty / social inequality [34%] are two of the four major worries for global citizens⁴⁴ this has to be a good thing. And as Caroline Criado Perez argues "when we exclude half of humanity from the production of knowledge we lose out on potentially transformative insights."

Secondly, we can show men how masculinity itself confines men, as Nigina Abaszadeh argues in her article. Social constructions of gender identity [femininity and masculinity] are limiting for men and women and people who identify as non-binary. They create unconscious bias, which often becomes visible through acts and behaviours of stereotyping. For women, this can be seen in the scrutiny placed on female politicians, or female business leaders' appearance and behaviour, as Kelly Beaver's interview with Julia Gillard in this issue highlights. But also for men, deviations from the prescribed notion of gender identity can be met with aggression.

Encouragingly, there is evidence to suggest that attitudes towards gendered roles are changing for men as well as women. Three-quarters globally [75%] disagree that a man who stays at home to look after his children is less of a man, with just one in five [18%] agreeing.⁴⁵ And whilst this might go some way towards valuing unpaid care and domestic work and promoting shared responsibility within the household, a change in attitude does not always equate to a

change in practice, particularly when legal frameworks and company policies disincentivise paternity leave. There are also differences in beliefs across countries. For example, agreement with this statement rises to 76% in South Korea, but only 39% in India. In the long run, these attitudes will continue to limit possibilities for the transformation of gender relations.⁴⁶

From data to change

Policies, initiatives and campaigns to achieve gender equality in the realms of home, work and wider society need to be grounded in the realities of women's lives. We need intersectional data to understand how gender, race, sexuality and age influence the different types of barriers and issues that women face so that we can design policies and interventions which move us towards equality for all women. Kaitlin Love's piece on empowering women in displacement highlights the importance of understanding the specific challenges faced by marginalised women.

We also need to understand how issues interact with each other and the different levers that can be pulled. Take economic participation as an example. Globally, equal pay for the same work is the top action that people feel would help to achieve gender equality [36%]. Legislation is not enough, there needs to be transparency too. A study in the Harvard Business Review showed how compulsory company reporting of gender pay discrepancies resulted in improvements in women's employment and promotion.⁴⁷ But ending the gender pay gap is just one part of equality in

economic participation. As Nata Duvvury and Stacey Scriver highlight in their piece, violence against women can act as a barrier to women's participation in economic life. Kathrina Phan and Jessica Elgood discuss how gender discrimination and caring responsibilities can restrict women's opportunities in the workplace.

We hope that this edition of Understanding Society will contribute to the debate by highlighting the diversity of women's experiences across the globe and examples of how data is contributing to policies and programmes that can have a meaningful impact on women's lives. There is so much more that needs to be done, particularly to give voice to the most vulnerable women. But we should be inspired to collaborate to provide a platform for women's voices to be heard so we can achieve a more prosperous and equal society for all.

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Information

Ipsos MORI
3 Thomas More Square
London E1W 1YW

t: +44 (0)20 7347 3000
f: +44 (0)20 7347 3800

www.ipsos-mori.com
www.twitter.com/IpsosMORI 

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