



# MASCULINITY, INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND SON PREFERENCE IN INDIA – FINDINGS FROM PUNJAB & HARYANA\*

## INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade there have been many efforts to understand the underlying reasons for extreme gender inequality and its outcomes. In particular, research evidence on the role of men and masculinity has reinforced that men's attitudes and more broadly, masculinity, perpetuate son preference and to some extent, intimate partner violence (IPV) in Asia<sup>1</sup>. Studies have also shown that men and boys must be an integral part of efforts to promote gender equality. The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), in collaboration with UNFPA, adapted the International Men and Gender Equality Survey methodology to understand the intrinsic relationship between masculinity, son preference and intimate partner violence in seven states<sup>#</sup> of India<sup>2</sup>. The aggregate level results show that masculinity is a key determinant of IPV and son preference in India. This research brief presents and discusses the findings of this study for the state of Punjab and Haryana. Given that Punjab and Haryana represent contiguous areas with cultural overlaps, they were considered as one unit for this study.

## STATE PROFILE

Punjab and Haryana together have a population of 53.1 million and account for 4.4% of the total population of India<sup>4</sup>. Table 1 presents some of the key demographic indicators for both states. The overall sex ratio at birth (girls per 1,000 boys) in Punjab and Haryana has increased over the years but continues to be far lower than the national average of 909 (2011-13)<sup>3</sup>. The overall literacy and female literacy rates have also improved, with overall literacy in both states being 76% – higher than the national average of 74%<sup>4</sup>. Female literacy has advanced in both states with Haryana exceeding the national average of 65%. Similarly male literacy in Punjab has experienced slight improvement and continues to be higher than the national average<sup>4</sup>.

Some of the socio-demographic indicators in Punjab and Haryana are better than the national average. For instance, the percentage of ever-married women who have experienced physical and sexual violence is lower (27% in Haryana; 25% in Punjab) compared to women who have had the same experience in the country as a whole (37%)<sup>5</sup>. Yet in both Punjab and Haryana there are also some indicators that are very low with regard to the status of women. A higher proportion of girls continue to marry before the legal age of 18 in Haryana. According to the National Family Health Survey-3 (NFHS-3), 41%

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Table 1: Demographics of Punjab and Haryana at a Glance

Indicators- Punjab	Estimates (Year)	
	Sex ratio at birth <sup>3</sup> (SRB: girls per 1,000 boys)	836 (2006-08)
Literacy rate <sup>4</sup>	70 (2001)	76 (2011)
Male literacy rate <sup>4</sup>	79 (2001)	80 (2011)
Female literacy rate <sup>4</sup>	60 (2001)	63 (2011)
Indicators- Haryana	Estimates (Year)	
	Sex ratio at birth <sup>3</sup> (SRB: girls per 1,000 boys)	847 (2006-08)
Literacy rate <sup>4</sup>	68 (2001)	76 (2011)
Male literacy rate <sup>4</sup>	76 (2001)	84 (2011)
Female literacy rate <sup>4</sup>	56 (2001)	67 (2011)

# Seven states: Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra



of women ages 20-24 in Haryana got married before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. The prevalence of early marriage is greater in rural areas where 45% of women ages 20-24 married before age 18 and 14% married before age 15. Only 43-47% of girls ages 15-17 are currently in school in Haryana-Punjab and almost 56-54% of girls discontinue their schooling in rural areas. According to Census 2011, the female work participation rate in Punjab and Haryana combined is very low (16%) and varies widely across the districts.

Some of these development indicators on the age of marriage, school discontinuation and sex ratio at birth reflect the low status of women and girls in the state. Given this backdrop, the study aimed to understand men's attitudes and behaviors to recommend how they can be engaged in efforts to address gender inequality.

## OBJECTIVE

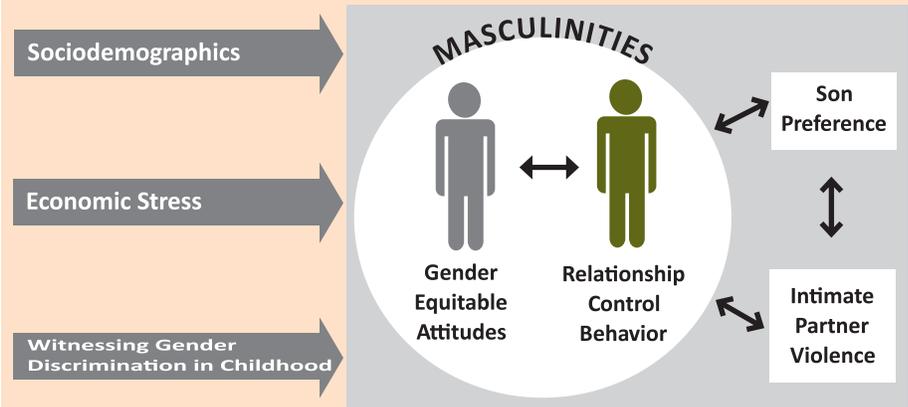
The primary objective of the study was to examine the dimensions and determinants of men's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors on issues related to gender equality, son preference and IPV. The specific objectives were to:

1. Assess men's current behaviors and attitudes on intimate partner violence.
2. Assess men's knowledge and attitudes towards son preference and gender equality.
3. Explore contributing factors that can be attributed to men's attitudes and behaviors related to IPV and son preference.
4. Explore factors that may explain variation in men's behaviors in their family lives and intimate and sexual relationships, including childhood experiences of violence, gender norms in their family of origin, stress and unemployment, among others.

## FRAMEWORK

The study was conceptualized to examine the role of masculinity as a determinant of son preference and IPV. It also looks at the underlying determinants of masculinity, particularly economic stress and experience of childhood discrimination, and the role that those factors play in understanding son preference and IPV.

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



**Methodology:** The study was carried out in the following seven states of India: Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. These selected states were not only fairly large in terms of population and geographical spread but also had diverse sex ratio at birth. To achieve a representative sample at the state level the sample size was fixed at 1,500 men and 500 women, ages 18-49 in each state.

A multistage cluster sampling approach was adopted to select the samples. Each state was divided into regions and samples were allocated in proportion to the size of the regions. To have representation of both rural and urban areas, samples were further distributed in the ratio of 60 to 40, respectively between rural and urban primary sample units. The primary sampling unit in urban areas was census enumeration blocks and in rural areas it was villages or a group of villages (in case of small linked villages). Appropriate weights were calculated at the state and aggregate level and applied during analysis.

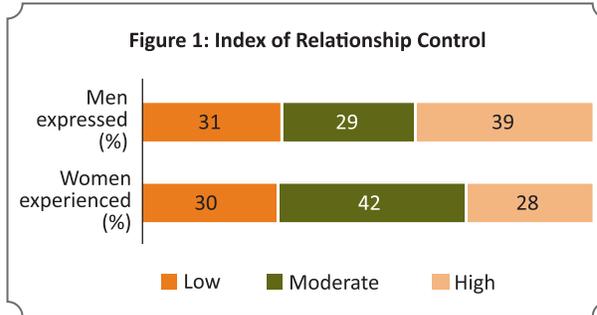
Sample Size	Total All State	Punjab and Haryana
Men	9,205	1,484
Women	3,158	538

## BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS IN PUNJAB & HARYANA

The mean age of the male respondents was 30 and for females it was 29 in the Punjab and Haryana study. Three-fifths (61%) of the women and little less (59%) of the men in the sample were from rural areas. Less than one-fifth (19%) of the women in Punjab and Haryana were illiterate while only 8% of the men had no education. A small proportion of respondents (13% of men and 8% of women) reported attaining higher education (graduation and above). Nearly two-fifths of the men (37%) and one-fifth (21%) of the women in the sample were not married at the time of the survey. Among those who were married, more than two-thirds of men (65%) and more than three-fourths of the women (79%) reported that their marriage was arranged and they had agreed willingly to the proposed match. Interestingly, 30% of the women reported that they had chosen their partners and elders had consented; while only 6% of men reported doing so. More than a quarter of men reported that their marriage was arranged and they had to agree, while only 17% of women reported such a scenario.

**MASCULINITY**

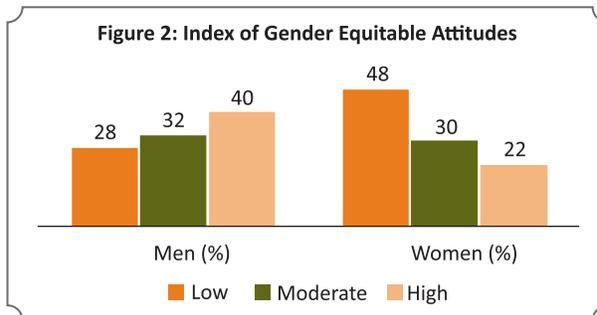
Masculinity is a set of socially constructed attributes, behaviors and roles particularly ascribed to boys and men. How masculinity plays out varies based on location and context, and is influenced by a variety of societal and cultural factors that create attributes of what it means to be a “real man”, although there are characteristics that may be similar across contexts. Women, too, possess attributes of masculinity, which tend to be expressed in their own attitudes towards gender equality as well as how much control is exerted over them - by an intimate partner or others - in their lives. In this study, it was defined by two aspects: “relationship control” as a behavioral dimension and “attitudes towards gender norms” as an underlying value. Nine statements such as “I want to know where my wife/partner is all the time”; and “My husband/partner won’t let me wear certain things,” that captured men’s expressions and women’s experiences of relationship control were



combined and a summarized score was used to develop an index of relationship control. In Punjab and Haryana, we found that two-fifths of men expressed excessive control over their partner/wife, whereas 31% were considered equitable, meaning that they treated their partner/wife as their equals. Among women, a little more than one-fourth (28%) reported being highly controlled by their partners, whereas a third experienced equitable behavior. The discordance between men and women’s reports on relationship control is striking in the data, though comparable with average trend across the states.

Index of Relationship Control: Average across the states		
Relationship Control Index	Men	Women
Low	30	37
Moderate	34	39
High	37	23

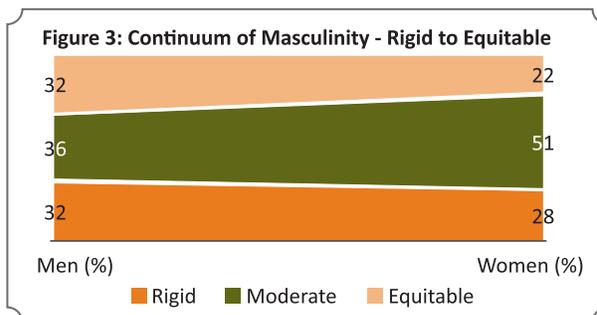
To determine the attitudinal dimension of masculinity, 27 attitudinal statements capturing perceptions and attitudes on key gender norms were posed to respondents. Among the statements were, for example, “Women’s most important role is to take care of her home and cook for her family”; and “A woman should tolerate domestic violence in order to keep her family together.” These were used to form an index of “gender equitable attitudes.” The distribution of men and women’s responses on these statements were quite different; men in Punjab and Haryana seem to hold more equitable attitudes towards gender equality than women. Nearly two-fifths of the men held positive attitudes while this was true for less than one-fourth of the women. More than three-fourths of women had moderate or low equitable attitudes. Among men, a little more than one-fourth exhibited inequitable attitudes. In fact, this data for Punjab and Haryana is exactly the reverse of the average trend wherein 38% of men had low gender equitable attitudes.



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Index of Gender Equitable Attitude: Average across the states		
Gender Equitable Attitude	Men	Women
Low	38	39
Moderate	32	32
High	30	29

The combined scores of “relationship control” and “attitudes towards gender norms” provided different



Continuum of Masculinity: Average across the states		
Masculinity Index	Men	Women
Rigid	32	21
Moderate	45	52
Equitable	23	27

Table 2: Odds of Equitable Men and Women		
Determinants	Odds for men	Odds for women
<b>Type of residence</b>		
Rural (R)		
Urban	0.98	1.24
<b>Current age</b>		
18-24 years (R)		
25-34 years	1.03	0.90
35-49 years	1.34	0.81
<b>Level of education</b>		
Up to Primary (0-5 class) (R)		
Up to higher secondary (6-12 class)	1.68	1.51
Graduate and above	3.48*	3.21*
<b>Type of family</b>		
Nuclear (R)		
Non-Nuclear	1.29	1.31
<b>Wealth Index</b>		
Low (R)		
Middle	0.75	0.58
High	1.10	0.94
<b>Economic stress</b>		
Yes (R)		
No	1.01	
<b>Decision making in family</b>		
Father (R)		
Both Together	1.55	1.17
<b>Witnessing male participation in household chores</b>		
Yes (R)		
No	1.51	0.44
<b>Witnessed/Experienced discrimination/harassment during childhood</b>		
Yes (R)		
No	0.56*	2.37*

Across the states men's perpetration of any form of violence in the past 12 months is 34% while reported experience of any form of violence by women is 31%.

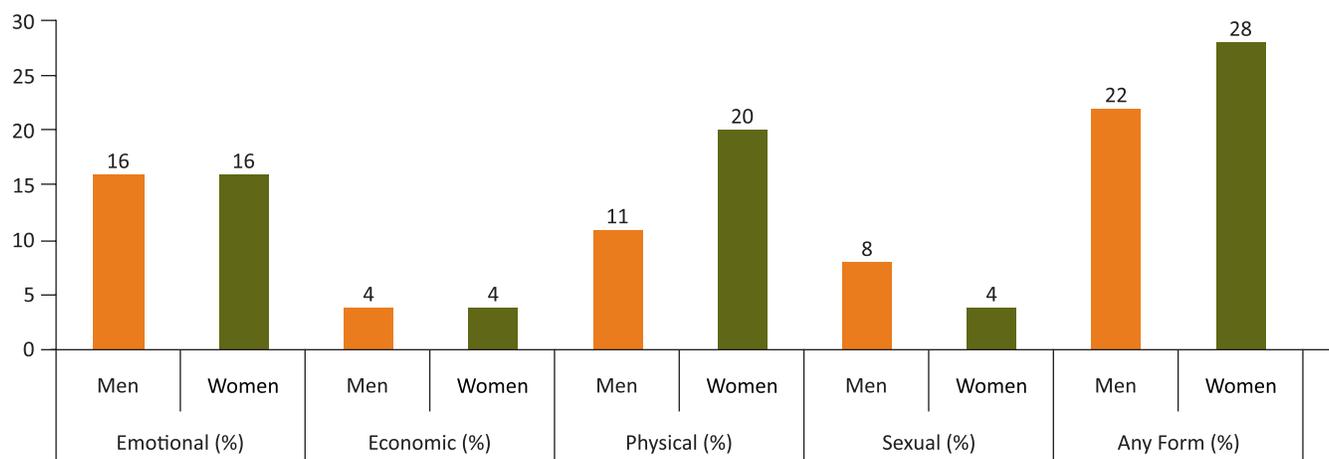
categories of men and women, which were further trichomatized into three categories – rigid, moderate and equitable. Rigid men are those who not only exercised excessive control in their intimate relationships but also held negative attitudes about gender norms. On the other hand, men who are less controlling in their intimate relationship and believed in gender equality were considered as equitable. In our sample for Punjab and Haryana, “rigid masculinity” was manifested and enacted by nearly one in three men and interestingly, an equal proportion exhibited equitable masculinity. The proportion of rigidly masculine men was the same in Punjab and Haryana but the proportion of equitable men (32%) was higher in these two states, than the average across all study states (23%). Among women, little more than one-fourth (28%) were in a relationship dominated by “rigidly masculine” men and had gender inequitable attitudes; whereas 22% had more equitable relationships with their husbands/partners. The distribution of women on the continuum of masculinity in the state of Punjab and Haryana is quite similar to what was observed across the other sample states.

The multivariate analysis used to decide key determinants of equitable men reveals that as men's educational level increases, they are more likely to have equitable attitudes and behaviors. Men who have completed a college education or graduation were 3.5 times more likely to be equitable. Education also had a similar positive effect among women in Punjab and Haryana. Additionally, women who had lived in non-nuclear families and witnessed joint decision-making while growing up were likely to have a more gender-equitable, less controlling relationship with their spouse. Witnessing or experiencing gender-stratified roles in their childhood household had a direct influence on men and women's development of rigid masculinity. Women in our sample who had not witnessed or experienced discrimination/harassment during childhood were 2.4 times more likely to be equitable and report less controlling behavior by intimate partners. Interestingly, among men the results were significantly in the reverse direction; men who did not witness discrimination were less likely to be equitable, which is contrary to expectations, pointing to perhaps greater influence of other factors such as education and economic class than experience of discrimination.

### INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND MASCULINITY

In this study, both men and women who have or ever had a spouse were asked a

Figure 4: Perpetration by Men and Experience by Women of IPV (in the past 12 months)



series of questions to assess the prevalence of intimate partner violence. The questions covered acts of emotional, economic, physical and sexual violence. The sample of men and women were independent of each other. The response to the series of questions for each form of violence was taken into account and a composite variable for each form of violence was created.

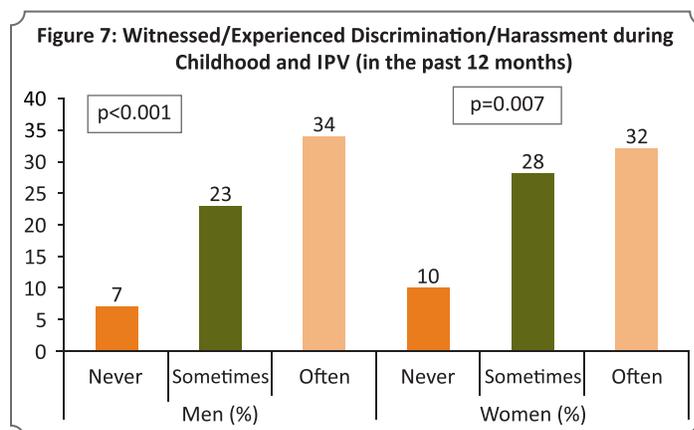
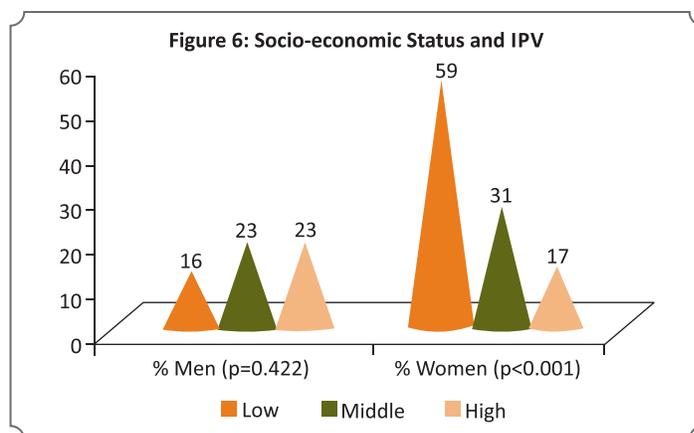
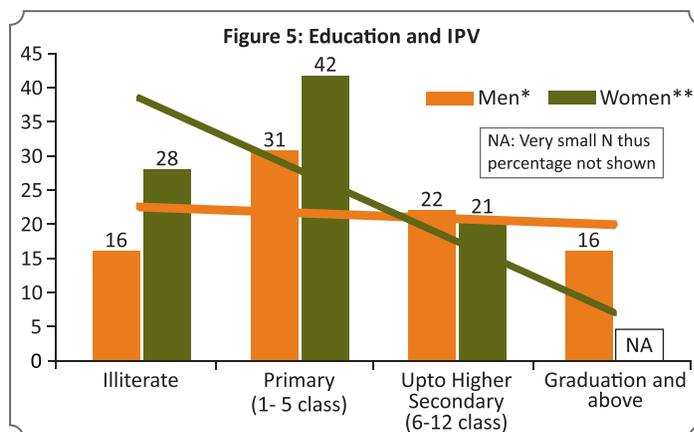
Two-fifths of men (43%) in Punjab/Haryana reported committing any form of violence in their lifetimes, while more than half of the women (55%) reported experiencing some type of violence in their lives. Only one-fifth of men reported perpetrating any form of violence in the past 12 months while more than one quarter of the women (28%) reported experiencing any form of violence in the same time frame. Most men (16%) reported being violent emotionally, followed by physically (11%). The number of women who had experienced different types of violence – with the exception of sexual violence - was either more than or equal to the number of men who said they perpetrated violence. Women most often experienced physical violence, followed by emotional abuse; while their reports of sexual and economic violence was considerably less. Only 4% women reported sexual violence possibly due to the stigma women might associate with sexual violence or the cultural understanding that non-consensual sex with the husband is part of a woman’s obligatory role as a wife.

The overall reporting on perpetration of violence by men, and experience of violence by women is lower than the average of all states in the study. This may be due to greater knowledge and awareness of laws about violence against women and its consequences in these two states.

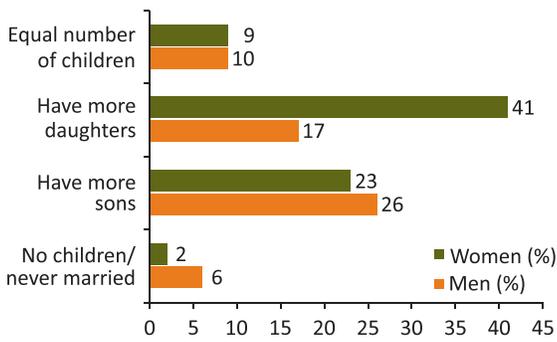
The key determinants of IPV include education, socio-economic status, economic stress, experiences of inequalities in childhood and masculinity. For men and women, it is evident that as education increases, men’s perpetration and women’s experience of violence reduces. Women with higher levels of education had fewer experiences with IPV. However, education did not have the same effect among men in terms of perpetrating fewer acts of violence. This was opposite of what occurred in other states of our study which had similar patterns of lower IPV at higher levels of education. The difference is statistically more significant for women than men. The socio-economic status of men and women shows a completely opposite trend, with men who are in middle or higher strata being more likely to commit violence compared to lower-income men. Meanwhile, women in higher economic strata are less likely to experience violence compared to those in lower economic stratas (OR: 0.20; CI-0.09-0.44). This relation between socio-economic status and IPV among women follows the same trend as observed in other states and at the aggregate level.

Violence and discrimination get construed as normal if children observe or experience it during their formative years. One-third of men and women in Punjab/Haryana who had such experiences during childhood reported that they had perpetrated or experienced violence in past 12 months, respectively. Specifically, men who had often witnessed/experienced discrimination were four times (CI: 2.3-8.0) more likely to be violent and women were 2.5 times more likely to experience violence.

Finally, masculinity is a strong predictor of IPV for women. In



**Figure 8: Actual Family Size and High Desire for Sons**

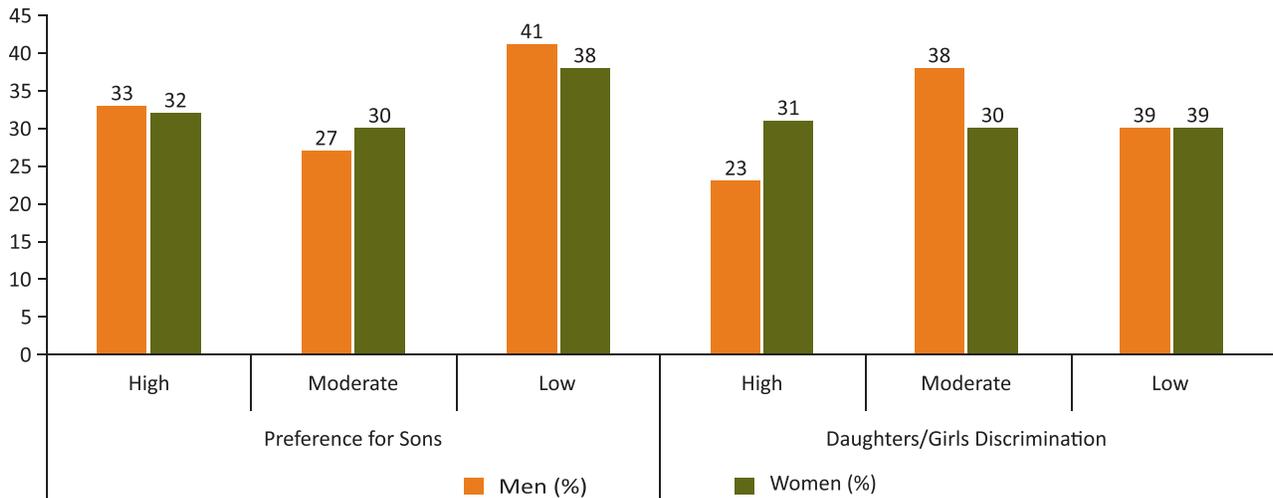


the study, nearly half of the women (48%) who had gender inequitable attitudes and experienced high control by their partner said that they had been victim of some form of violence in the past 12 months. However, only a fourth of women who had highly equitable attitudes and relationships said that they had experienced violence. Among men no significant association was observed between masculinity and IPV. The proportion of IPV is about 22% overall amongst men and also very similar across the three groups of masculinity which is possibly why this relation was not significant for men.

**SON PREFERENCE AND MASCULINITY**

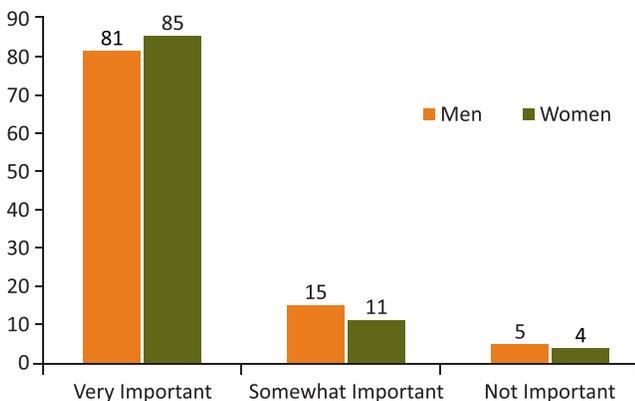
At a national level, son preference is strongly correlated with the actual number of sons a couple has. Across Punjab and Haryana, men having more sons in family expressed strong desire for sons. More than a quarter (26%) of the men who had more sons than daughters expressed a desire for additional sons compared to 17% of men who had more daughters. However, the desire for sons

**Figure 9: Attitude towards Preference for Sons and Discrimination against Daughters/Girls**



was stronger among women who already had more daughters (41%) as opposed to those who had more sons and wanted even more (23%). Among those who had equal number of sons and daughters, women showed a slightly higher desire for sons than men.

**Figure 10: Importance of having at least One Son**



In the study we also used attitudinal statements to measure son preference and assess men and women’s attitudes towards daughters. Nearly one-third of the men and women showed a high preference for sons. The proportion of women who preferred sons and held highly discriminatory attitudes towards daughters/girls was the same. The proportion of women who felt this way about daughters/girls was higher than that of men; less than a quarter of men held such discriminatory attitudes.

**IMPORTANCE OF HAVING AT LEAST ONE SON**

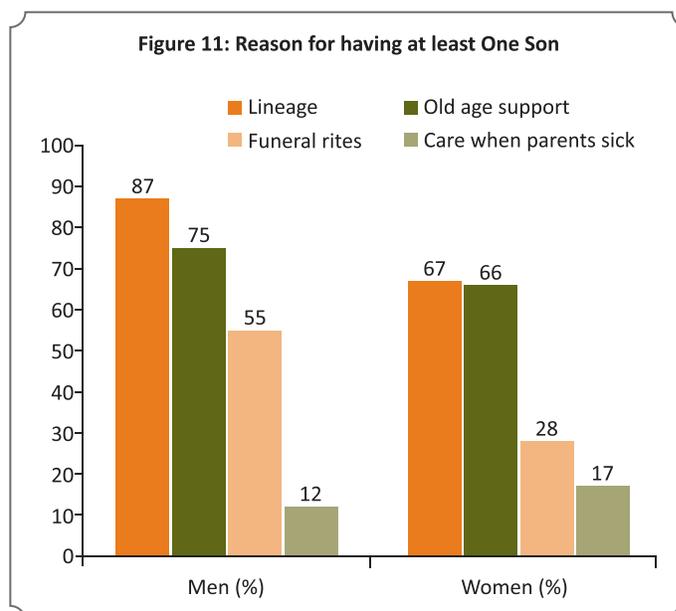
The overwhelming majority of men and women considered it very important to have at least one son in their family and only a small proportion did not feel it was important to have a son. In fact, the share of women (85%) who felt that it is important to have a son was higher than men (81%). Men and women were

also asked how important it is to have at least one daughter in the family. A majority of men (84%) said it was very important, while only 73% women thought the same.

### REASONS FOR HAVING AT LEAST ONE SON

Both men and women agreed that the two most important reasons for having a son were the need to carry on the family name and for providing support in their old age, although the proportion of men (87%) citing lineage as a reason was far higher than that of women (67%). The third most important reason to have sons was for their role in the performance of funeral rites (55% of men; 28% of women).

As for having daughters, more than three-fourths of the men (77%) and three-fifths of the women (60%) surveyed said that it is important to have at least one daughter to perform rituals such as *kanyadan/rakshabandhan*. The next most important reason to have a daughter as reported by men (40%) and 47% women, was to look after parents in times of ill health. Daughters were also regarded vital for sharing the household workload for more than half of the women and 13% of the men surveyed in Punjab/Haryana.



### DETERMINANTS OF HIGH SON-PREFERRING ATTITUDES

Age is one of the strong predictors of a high preference for sons with three-fifths of young men (40%) in the study showing a preference for sons. This, however, decreased as they aged; 35-49 years old men were 0.40 times (CI: 0.20-0.79) less likely to have a high preference for sons than their younger counterparts. A similar association was observed among women, although the difference was less in comparison to men.

As for other determinants of son preference, the study found that among those who are poor, almost two-fifths of men (38%) and three-fifths of women (61%) had high son preferring attitudes, compared to 30% of men and 22% of women in the higher wealth tertile. Men who are rigidly masculine were six times more likely to have a high preference for sons (54%) compared to men who are highly gender equitable (10%). This pattern was also true for women respondents; women who have less gender-equitable attitudes and who are controlled by their intimate partners were five times (CI: 1.94 – 11.26) more likely to have high son-preferring attitude than women in more equitable relationships.

### REFLECTIONS

The study in Punjab and Haryana reveals that close to a third of the surveyed men displayed rigid masculine attitudes and 36% are moderately masculine. For women experiencing relationship control and gender unequal attitudes, the proportion was lower than men at 28%. The fact that rigid masculinity is not that high as expected could be associated with the long term effects that are visible around forced bachelorhood and interstate marriages. This is also evident in the research which is indicative of the proportions of unmarried and/unemployed men in the states of Punjab and Haryana who experience anxiety with regard to their masculinities<sup>6</sup>.

Socio-Demographic Factors	Men (%)	Women (%)
<b>Education</b>		
18-24 years	40.1	34.6
25-34 years	31.1	31.0
35-49 years	27.2	31.5
<b>p-value</b>	<b>&lt;0.001</b>	<b>0.005</b>
<b>Residence</b>		
Rural	36.4	33.8
Urban	27.9	29.8
<b>p-value</b>	<b>0.001</b>	<b>0.427</b>
<b>Wealth Index</b>		
Low	37.9	61.3
Middle	36.6	35.3
High	30.2	21.5
<b>p-value</b>	<b>&lt;0.001</b>	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
<b>Masculinity Index (Gender Attitude and Relationship Control)</b>		
Equitable	9.8	12.0
Moderate	29.6	25.8
Rigid	54.0	58.0
<b>p-value</b>	<b>&lt;0.001</b>	<b>&lt;0.001</b>

<b>High</b>	<b>Uttar Pradesh</b>
<b>Son Preference, Intimate Partner Violence and Masculinity</b>	<b>Odisha</b>
	<b>Madhya Pradesh</b>
	<b>Punjab and Haryana</b>
	<b>Maharashtra</b>
<b>Low</b>	<b>Rajasthan</b>
<p><b>Note:</b> The states are arranged based on the aggregate ranking on prevalence of masculinity, son preference and intimate partner violence for both men and women combined.</p>	

The study reveals that 28% of women in the Punjab/Haryana region had experienced violence in the past 12 months and 55% had been victims of some form of violence at some point in their lives. Even though this proportion was lower in comparison to some of the other states where the study was conducted, Punjab and Haryana's recorded experience of violence in the lifetime was still considerably high. This reflects that policy initiatives to address sex selection may have looked at the problem only at the level of desirability of a girl and not addressed the contextual issues of gender inequality that also facilitates IPV. Programs need to be designed in a manner that promote women and men to engage in perspective building around core issues of gender equal norms as well as rights and entitlements. Men also need to be included as a category in policies that target women and girls and hold them accountable for engendering social change. These policies also need to strategically integrate women's empowerment concerns in men's engagement programs.

Given the role of community structures such as Khaps in Haryana, interventions and programs need to promote open community dialogue to pave the way for increased non-acceptance of intimate partner violence. Opportunities to foster higher work participation of women through skill based education and entrepreneurship to enhance their economic autonomy would also be important. Such investment in generating economic autonomy and agency of women would contribute and enhance the value of women and challenge the norms that perpetuate IPV in these states.

Evidence gathered from this study has shown that younger men have a higher preference for sons, as two-fifths of the men displayed a high preference while the proportions were lower among the elder men. Rigidly masculine men are six times more likely to have high preference for sons. With that, policy imperatives need to work with younger men; additionally, programs should target groups of elder men who belong to institutions such as caste panchayats that wield great influence and are in a position to influence more equitable norms. Thus there is a need for community-based programs to help elderly men and women and other key community members lead a change in how sons and daughters are valued.

Programs need to be designed in a manner that helps challenge existing perceptions about daughters as a burden and highlight the economic value associated with them. Conditional Cash Transfer programs for girls have been found to have an impact on their educational achievements<sup>7</sup>. While the continuation to build human capital of girls is an important strategy, alongside these, more needs to be done to amplify change in attitudes.

Attitude change interventions need to be designed in a manner that delivers critical messages that redefine norms of masculinity and encourage positive attitudes toward gender equality rather than talking only about the problem of sex ratios and son preference. In addition, these interventions also need to focus on creating platforms that encourage the equal participation of men and women of different ages and socio-economic groups – this can help bring some measure of representation of different mind sets and values to communities.

<sup>1</sup> Das Gupta, Monica., (2003) Why son preference is persistent in East and South Asia? A cross country study of China, India and Republic of Korea, *Journal of Development Studies*, 40(2), 153-187

<sup>2</sup> Nanda P, Gautam A, Verma R, Khanna A, Khan N, Brahme D, Boyle S, Kumar S (2014). "Study on Masculinity, Intimate Partner Violence and Son Preference in India". New Delhi, International Center for Research on Women (Available at: [www.icrw.org](http://www.icrw.org); [india.unfpa.org](http://india.unfpa.org))

<sup>3</sup> Sample Registration System, Office of Registrar General of India

<sup>4</sup> Census 2011, Office of Registrar General of India

<sup>5</sup> National Family Health Survey Round -2 and 3

<sup>6</sup> Chaudhary, Prem. "Crisis of Masculinity in Haryana." *Economic and Political Weekly* XL.49 (2005): 5189-198

<sup>7</sup> Nanda P, Datta N, Das P (2014) "Impact of Conditional Cash Transfers on Girls Education". New Delhi, International Center for Research on Women (Available at: [www.icrw.org](http://www.icrw.org); [http://www.icrw.org/files/publications/IMPACCT\\_Hires\\_FINAL\\_3\\_20.pdf](http://www.icrw.org/files/publications/IMPACCT_Hires_FINAL_3_20.pdf))

For any information please contact:

pnanda@icrw.org or agautam@icrw.org  
**ICRW**, Asia Regional Office, C-59 South Extension, Part II, New Delhi - 110049  
 Tel: 91-11-46643333  
 Website: [www.icrw.org](http://www.icrw.org)

**United Nations Population Fund – UNFPA**  
 55, Lodhi Estate,  
 New Delhi - 110003, India  
 Tel: 91-11-24628877  
 Website: [www.unfpa.org](http://www.unfpa.org) / [india.unfpa.org](http://india.unfpa.org)