

## **2** Masculinities and women's empowerment in the economic and political spheres

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This chapter presents five norms of restrictive masculinities that directly affect women's and girls' empowerment and well-being in the economic and political spheres. The norms in these spheres dictate that a "real" man should: i) be the breadwinner, ii) be financially dominant, iii) work in "manly" jobs, iv) be the "ideal worker" and v) be a "manly" leader. As such, these norms emphasise men's economic and leadership roles in society, which in turn promote the devaluation of women's contribution to these spheres. Even so, in some places, the masculine norms that characterise the political and economic spheres are not fully restrictive, demonstrating a growing acceptance of gender-equitable masculinities.

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## Introduction

**Historically, patriarchal norms have defined the economic and political spheres as the domain of men.** Across cultures, the traditional image of a powerful man was that of a public figure holding both political and economic power. Until the start of the 21st century, most positions of political leadership were occupied by men, including heads of states. By 2021, only 21 out of 195 countries<sup>1</sup> and territories listed by the United Nations (UN) are led by female heads of state or government (IPU Parline, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>). Similarly, leadership positions in business are dominated by men: in 2014, female chief executive officers (CEOs) led 5% of private sector companies in Africa, 2% in Latin America, 3% in Europe and 4% in Asia (McKinsey & Co, 2016<sup>[2]</sup>).

**Political and economic power are pivotal in the social construction of restrictive masculinities.** Ideals of dominance and power over both women and men are deeply embedded within restrictive masculinities (Connell, 1987<sup>[3]</sup>). Acquiring and maintaining political and economic power is a fundamental strategy to control other people – but resist being controlled by others – creating hierarchies among men and eliciting deference (Ezzell, 2016<sup>[4]</sup>; Schrock and Schwalbe, 2009<sup>[5]</sup>). On the one hand, political leadership comes with power and is premised on submission. On the other hand, financial dominance, competition and the projection of “success” are inherent to a dominant model of masculinity (Berdahl et al., 2018<sup>[6]</sup>; Bertrand, Kamenica and Pan, 2015<sup>[7]</sup>; Simpson, 2004<sup>[8]</sup>). This chapter discusses five norms of restrictive masculinities in the economic and political spheres that dictate that “real” men should: i) be the breadwinner, ii) be financially dominant, iii) work in “manly” jobs, iv) be the “ideal worker” and v) be a “manly” leader (Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2.1. Defining norms of restrictive masculinities in the economic and political spheres**



Source: Authors' elaboration.

**Norms of restrictive masculinities in the economic and political spheres are detrimental to women’s empowerment and well-being in various ways.** First, social acceptance of such norms leaves little room for women’s empowerment, as it confines women to their reproductive and caring roles and relies on the dominance of men in political and economic activities. This restricts women’s participation in politics and in the labour market, justifies discriminatory practices towards working mothers, and limits the possibility of their (political and professional) career development and progression. Second, norms of restrictive masculinities may ascribe sons a higher economic value than daughters. In this regard, they reinforce the harmful and discriminatory practices embedded in son preference, leading to potentially lower investment in girls’ education, unequal inheritance rights and missing women.<sup>2</sup> Third, restrictive masculinities spurn and downgrade what is feminine and what women value most. Thus, women ought to emulate men and conform to restrictive masculinities in order to succeed in political and economic activities. Finally, restrictive masculinities also put women at risk of violence at home, at work and in public spaces. Violence and sexual harassment can emerge when men sense a threat to their masculinity and a shift in the status quo that has favoured them in the past.

**Gender-equitable masculinities that are supportive of women’s political and economic empowerment are gaining prominence.** Social change has started: legal reforms and gender-transformative programmes and policies are challenging the structures, beliefs, practices and institutions that used to sustain male privilege and dominance over women in the economic and political spheres (OECD, 2019<sup>[9]</sup>). For example, more and more women and men around the world are eager to see men participating more in childcare and domestic activities, and men themselves see the benefit of doing so. Similarly, acceptance of dual-earner couples as an alternative to the breadwinner/housekeeper model is more widespread, supporting a greater economic role for women. Finally, the value of diverse workplaces is gaining greater recognition in terms of financial returns, staff retention and job satisfaction, and more employers are taking steps to promote inclusive work environments (UN Women, 2019<sup>[10]</sup>).

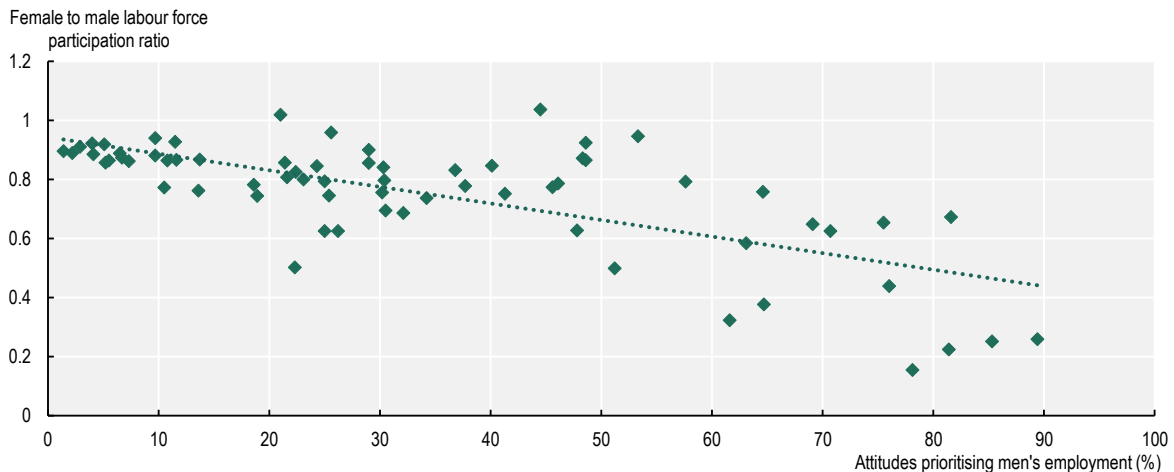
**This chapter is structured around five defining features of restrictive masculinities in the economic and political spheres.** For each of these five defining features, this chapter investigates their consequences for women’s empowerment and provides evidence of gender-equitable alternatives.

## 1. Norms of restrictive masculinities dictate that a “real” man should be the breadwinner

**Across time, space and cultures, one of the most salient characteristics of being a “real” man lies in his role as a breadwinner and financial provider.** Whether men bring food to the family table through paid employment, fishing or hunting, societies expect men to actively fulfil their families’ fundamental needs. Consequently, masculinities are strongly associated with carrying out work and financially supporting their household (Mehta and Dementieva, 2017<sup>[11]</sup>; Zuo and Tang, 2000<sup>[12]</sup>). In Azerbaijan in 2016, for example, 53% and 48% of men and women, respectively, declared that a man who does not have an income is of no value (UNFPA/SCFWCA, 2018<sup>[13]</sup>). In Burkina Faso in 2017, 93% of the respondents declared that men should provide for their families in order to be perceived as “real” men (OECD, 2018<sup>[14]</sup>). In Ethiopia and Zimbabwe in 2020, 22% and 36% of the respondents, respectively, declared that men, not women, should really be the ones to bring home money to provide for the family (Haerpfer et al., 2020<sup>[15]</sup>). In the United States in 2017, almost three-quarters (71%) of respondents declared that men should support their family financially in order to be good husbands/partners. By comparison, only one-third (32%) of respondents had the same expectations of women (Parker and Stepler, 2017<sup>[16]</sup>). In 2017, across all 28 European Union (EU-28) countries, 43% of the respondents declared that the most important role of a man is to earn money, and up to 80% said the same in Bulgaria (Eurobarometer, 2017<sup>[17]</sup>).

## Figure 2.2. Attitudes prioritising men's employment over women's are related to wide gaps in labour force participation

Female to male labour force participation ratio by the percentage of the population declaring that men should have more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce



Note: Attitudes prioritising men's employment are measured as the percentage of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement "When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women".  $R^2 = 0.4965$ .

Source: (Haerper et al., 2020<sup>[15]</sup>), World Values Survey: Round Seven – Country-Pooled Datafile, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV7.jsp>; (ILOstat, 2021<sup>[18]</sup>), Statistics on the working-age population and labour force, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/population-and-labour-force/>.

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**If providing for the family is a man's prerogative according to restrictive masculinities, women have no critical role to play in the labour market.** Social expectations towards men's role as breadwinners and financial providers restrict women's labour force participation and outcomes. In times of limited employment opportunities, such as those brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, patriarchal social norms favour men's employment over women's. Indeed when lockdowns were imposed in Jordan, employers sent women employees home first to complete their domestic duties, and reports have shown that some companies have started to cut women's wages and/or benefits first (OECD, 2020<sup>[19]</sup>). Furthermore, in the 49 countries where data are available for the 2017-20 period, one in three respondents (33%) declared that men should have more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce, reaching more than three in four (75%) respondents in Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Myanmar and Pakistan (Haerper et al., 2020<sup>[15]</sup>). Moreover, in Burkina Faso in 2017, for example, seven out of ten respondents declared that it is more difficult for women to find a formal job, because of her gender (OECD, 2018<sup>[14]</sup>). One of the consequences of women's limited opportunities to join the labour market is that, very often, one of the only available entry points is the informal sector which offers lower pay and less social protection. Indeed, widespread support for patriarchal gender roles is correlated with lower female labour force participation and employment rates (Figure 2.2). In 2019 at the global level, 47% of women of working-age were in the labour force and 45% were employed, compared with 74% and 70% of men, respectively (ILOSTAT, 2020<sup>[20]</sup>). This norm of restrictive masculinities is also correlated with other gender gaps in labour market outcomes, such as higher rates of informal labour and vulnerability of women's employment, lower female earnings, and both vertical and horizontal gender segregation at work.<sup>3</sup>

**Expectations towards men’s role as breadwinner and financial provider are reflected in the perceived higher economic value of sons.** In some contexts, men are expected to financially support their family, not only as husbands and partners but also as sons; in such settings, a son's wealth matters more to households than a daughter's, explaining the higher economic value associated with sons (Gill and Mitra-Kahn, 2009<sup>[21]</sup>). This is especially the case in some patriarchal rural societies, where adult sons are expected to provide for their parents, and this expectation is particularly strong where access to pensions and social protection is limited. Indeed, evidence from India shows that greater acceptance of the norms of restrictive masculinities is related to a greater preference for sons over daughters (Nanda et al., 2014<sup>[22]</sup>). The impact of beliefs of a son’s greater economic value, tied to the view that “real” men are breadwinners, adversely affects women’s opportunities, especially in education.

**The greater economic role of sons can negatively affect girls’ access to education.** When resources are scarce, the higher economic value associated with sons might lead to lower investment in daughters’ education as parents believe they do not directly benefit from daughters’ returns on schooling (Foster and Rosenzweig, 1999<sup>[23]</sup>). In the 17 countries where data are available for 2019, between 7% of female respondents in New Zealand and Tunisia and 30% in India declared having had difficulty accessing education and professional training as compared with their male peers/ or relatives (Focus 2030 and Women Deliver, 2021<sup>[24]</sup>). Attitudes are also an important factor guiding whether, and to what extent, girls are encouraged to pursue educational opportunities and are supported in doing so. In this regard, many people still think higher education is less important for girls than boys. In the 49 countries where data are available for the 2017-20 period, on average almost one in five (20%) respondents declared that university is more important for boys than for girls, and more than one in three (33%) did so in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran (hereafter “Iran”), Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines and Tajikistan (Haerper et al., 2020<sup>[15]</sup>).

**Similarly, biased expectations towards sons’ roles as providers can have wide consequences on girls’ empowerment and well-being.** This includes unequal inheritance rights between boys and girls as well as discriminatory social practices governing the inheritance of land and non-land assets (Bhalotra, Brulé and Roy, 2017<sup>[25]</sup>; OECD, 2019<sup>[9]</sup>). Property, and in particular land, is a critical determinant of economic and social status in many places. This is especially true when sons tend to co-reside with parents and work on the land, contribute to wealth creation as well as old-age security, and subsequently inherit the land (Bhalotra, Brulé and Roy, 2017<sup>[25]</sup>; Botticini and Siow, 2003<sup>[26]</sup>). Son preference and daughter devaluation can also manifest in sex-selective abortions and multiple forms of neglect, including breastfeeding duration, immunisation and nutrition (Jayachandran and Kuziemko, 2011<sup>[27]</sup>; Oster, 2009<sup>[28]</sup>). One of the most striking illustrations of son preference is the “missing women” phenomenon: the shortfall in the number of women relative to the expected number of women in a region or country (Miller, 1981<sup>[29]</sup>; Sen, 1990<sup>[30]</sup>).

**The greater inclusion of women in the labour force is challenging restrictive expectations towards men’s role as breadwinners.** In both developed and developing countries, women’s employment rates have increased over the last decades and fewer households have an economic model relying on a single earner, traditionally the man (ILO, 2018<sup>[31]</sup>). In most Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries, for example, fewer than one in three couples with at least one child have a man working 40 or more hours per week and a woman not engaging in paid work; this figure drops to one in ten couples in Belgium, Denmark, France, Norway and Sweden (OECD, 2016<sup>[32]</sup>). Norms of masculinities are evolving to be more gender equitable alongside economic needs (Bolzendahl and Myers, 2004<sup>[33]</sup>; Brewster and Padavic, 2000<sup>[34]</sup>; Waismel-Manor, Levanon and Tolbert, 2016<sup>[35]</sup>). Data show a wider acceptance of men having an economically active wife. Similarly, men seem to be “allowed” not to be the breadwinner and still be considered “real” men. In the United States, for example, acceptance of working mothers, equal roles for women in the workplace, dual-income families, and fathers working half-time or stay-at-home dads has increased between the 1970s and the 2010s (Donnelly et al., 2015<sup>[36]</sup>). Indeed, support for a husband working half-time and stay-at-home dads has more than doubled from the

1970s to the 2010s – from 25% to 66% and 17% to 41%, respectively (Donnelly et al., 2015<sup>[36]</sup>) Similarly, fewer respondents supported the single, male-earner structure (29% in the 2010s compared with 40% in the 1970s), while more supported the dual-earner structure (77% in the 2010s compared with 62% in the 1970s) (Donnelly et al., 2015<sup>[36]</sup>).

**Gender-equitable masculinities acknowledge women’s economic contribution and therefore support their greater access to education and the labour market, as employees and entrepreneurs.**

Worldwide, 83% of women and 77% of men declared that it is perfectly acceptable for any woman in their family to have a paid job outside the home if she wants one (Gallup, 2017<sup>[37]</sup>). As a result of women’s greater inclusion in the labour market, more and more households are becoming financially dependent on women (Zuo and Tang, 2000<sup>[12]</sup>). In the United States in 1970, the male partner contributed more than 60% of the couple’s earnings in three-quarters of families with a dual-earner economic structure (Raley, Mattingly and Bianchi, 2006<sup>[38]</sup>). In 2000, almost one-half of dual-earner couples were equal earners, with each partner contributing between 40% and 60% of total household income, or had the female partner as the primary earner (Raley, Mattingly and Bianchi, 2006<sup>[38]</sup>).

## 2. Norms of restrictive masculinities dictate that a “real” man should be financially dominant

**With the increasing number of dual-earner couples, women’s improving economic status may be viewed as a challenge to male dominance in the economic and public spheres.** As indicated previously, women’s increasing political and economic empowerment has eroded the foundation of at least one norm of restrictive masculinities: that men be the breadwinners and financial providers for their households (Bernard, 1993<sup>[39]</sup>; Goode, 1994<sup>[40]</sup>). Meanwhile, women’s access to political and economic leadership roles showcases their ability to exercise power over men and other women. In this context, financial dominance may emerge as fundamental for re-establishing male dominance.

**Financial dominance, in which men earn more than women, is demonstrated in practice through gender pay gaps.** In 2017, the global gender pay gap was 22% (ILO, 2018<sup>[41]</sup>). Furthermore progress to close the gender pay gap has been slow and uneven. For example, among the 19 G20 countries, the gender pay gap narrowed in only six countries between 2017 and 2019 (OECD, 2020<sup>[42]</sup>). Moreover, in the 17 countries where data are available for 2019, a range of between 13% of female respondents in Tunisia and 37% in Switzerland declared that they were not being paid as much as their male colleagues (Focus 2030 and Women Deliver, 2021<sup>[24]</sup>). The view that “real” men are financially dominant is tied to acceptance of pay gaps. In India in 2019 for example, 35% of respondents found it acceptable that women earn less than men for the same work. Most importantly, this support for gender inequalities does not vary between women and men and is higher among the working-age population (25-49 years: 40%) than among older respondents (60 years and older: 11%) (Focus 2030 and Women Deliver, 2021<sup>[24]</sup>).

**The belief that “real” men are financially dominant is related to pay discrimination.** First, restrictive gender norms are internalised by both women and men. Among women, this may lead some to unconsciously limit themselves and their aspirations, moreover it may drive the conscious decision not to negotiate their pay or ask for a raise (Barron, 2003<sup>[43]</sup>). Meanwhile among men, the belief that “real” men are financially dominant may have the opposite effect, encouraging them to ask for raises and negotiate their pay. These norms are also internalised by decision makers in the workplace and inform both the conscious and unconscious biases of employers. For example, an employer who has internalised the view that men are the breadwinners and should be financially dominant may also view women’s wages as supplementary to the household. This may in turn lead them to favour men and discriminate against women when it comes to pay or positions. While ways these norms inform men’s and women’s experiences and choices are not enough to explain persistently wide gender pay gaps, they may help to illuminate the part

of the gender pay gap that is not well explained by widely recognised factors such as vertical and horizontal labour force segregation.

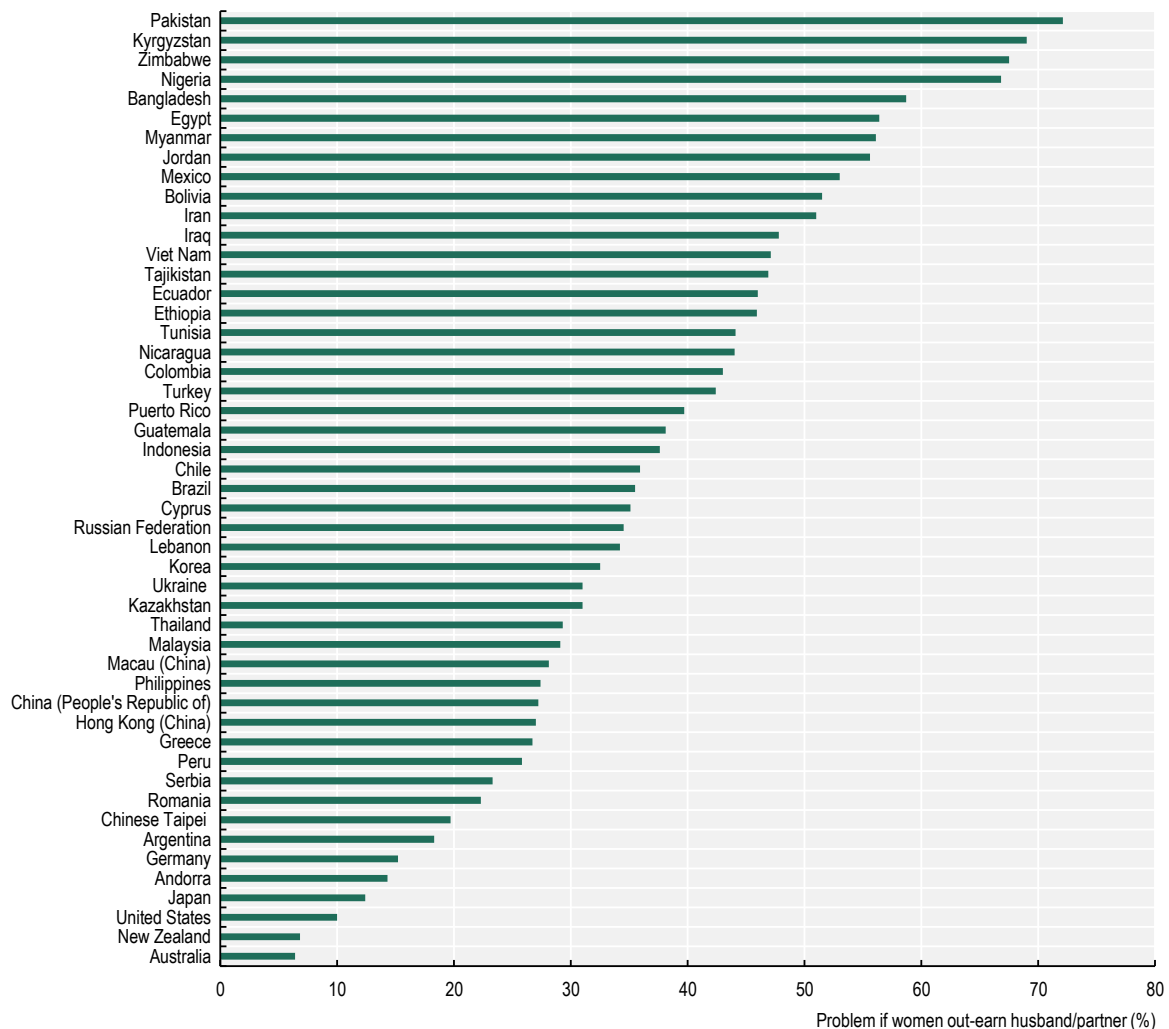
**Women’s greater educational outcomes and gender-equitable policies alone are not enough to fix the gender imbalances at the top levels of business or gender pay gaps.** In 2017, women were better educated than ever and were surpassing men in tertiary education in all regions but Africa, representing 53% of the world’s tertiary graduates, from 48% in Africa to 59% in the Americas (UNESCO, 2018<sup>[44]</sup>). Moreover, almost 75% of enterprises worldwide have equal opportunity or diversity and inclusion policies in place (ILO, 2019<sup>[45]</sup>). However, women’s representation in top positions in business still lags behind that of men and gender wage gaps are pervasive. Between 1991 and 2018, women held from 36% of management positions in North American countries to 10% in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region (ILO, 2019<sup>[46]</sup>). Globally in 2017, 13% of companies had no women on their boards, 30% of them had less than 10% of women board members, and 21% had between 11% and 29% of women board members (ILO, 2018<sup>[31]</sup>). Furthermore, the gender pay gap does not disappear when women are promoted to managerial roles: in 43 of the 93 countries for which data are available, the gender pay gap was indeed higher for managers than for all employees in 2019 (ILO, 2020<sup>[47]</sup>).<sup>4</sup>

**Financial dominance as a norm of restrictive masculinities is also evident in the home.** A powerful part of this restrictive norm is that “a man should earn more than his wife” (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000<sup>[48]</sup>). This notably translates into high aversion to the situation in which a wife out-earns her husband (Bertrand, Kamenica and Pan, 2015<sup>[7]</sup>). In the 49 countries where data are available for the 2017-20 period, nearly 37% of respondents declared that if a woman earns more money than her husband, it is almost certain to cause problems, surpassing 50% in Bangladesh, Plurinational State of Bolivia (hereafter “Bolivia”), Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan and Zimbabwe (Figure 2.3) (Haerper et al., 2020<sup>[15]</sup>). Furthermore, in Ukraine, 37% of men declared that a man who earns less than his wife is of no value, demonstrating the strength of the aversion to this situation and the way in which it is viewed as emasculating (UNFPA Ukraine, 2018<sup>[49]</sup>).



### Figure 2.3. In many countries there is significant aversion to women out-earning their husband

Percentage of respondents declaring that it is almost certain to cause problems if a woman earns more money than her husband



Note: Problem if women out-earn husband/partner refers to the percentage of respondents declaring that it is almost certain to cause problems if a woman out-earns her husband.

Source: (Haerperfer et al., 2020<sup>[15]</sup>), World Values Survey: Round Seven – Country-Pooled Datafile, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV7.jsp>.

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**Norms of restrictive masculinities related to men's financial dominance induce consequences for women in the private sphere.** Being financially dominant might lead to unequal bargaining and decision-making power within the household, to the disadvantage of women (Browning and Chiappori, 1998<sup>[50]</sup>; Lundberg and Pollak, 2008<sup>[51]</sup>)(see Chapter 3, Section 2). Moreover, some strategies that are obstructive to gender equality may be implemented to re-establish male dominance at home and compensate for deviance from restrictive norms of masculinities. When wives out-earn their husbands, the men-breadwinner/women-homemaker gender norm is violated, creating tensions between spouses and pressure to compensate for such deviance by enacting a more traditional division of household labour



(Waismel-Manor, Levanon and Tolbert, 2016<sup>[35]</sup>). Men living with partners who earn higher wages than they do, tend to reduce the time they allocate to household chores as a response to this “gender deviance” (Bertrand, Kamenica and Pan, 2015<sup>[7]</sup>) (see Chapter 3, Section 1).

**Restrictive masculinities promote the view that men who lack income and work are not “real” men, which threatens the well-being of men themselves and can lead to violence against women.** The emphasis on men’s financial dominance promotes the idea that a man’s worth is directly associated with his economic status. This emphasis is a source of stress for many men and can drive them to migrate for work, and can lead to feelings of shame and frustration in times of economic hardship including periods of unemployment or underemployment. For example, research in India revealed that in 2009 nearly 28% of surveyed men reported feeling stressed or depressed because they did not have enough work, and 30% said they felt ashamed to face their families due to their employment status (Barker et al., 2010<sup>[52]</sup>). Moreover, evidence shows that economic stress can increase the prevalence of violence among men, both towards themselves through self-harm and violence against others, especially female partners (Barker et al., 2011<sup>[53]</sup>). Indeed the men who reported work related stress and shame, in the aforementioned survey, were 50% more likely to have committed violence against their female partners than men who did not report having such emotions (Barker et al., 2010<sup>[52]</sup>).

**Violence can emerge as a reaction to shifting status quos that have previously favoured men and reinforced male dominance, especially in the economic sphere.** Despite an increasing awareness that women’s empowerment benefits both women and men, some people continue to view it as a synonym of men’s disempowerment (Silberschmidt, 2001<sup>[54]</sup>). Some men who perceive women’s empowerment as a threat to masculinity may adopt strategies and behaviours that harm women in order to re-establish male dominance and power. In the workplace and in public spaces, this might include sexual harassment and physically aggressive displays (Berdahl, 2007<sup>[55]</sup>; Bosson et al., 2009<sup>[56]</sup>; McLaughlin, Uggen and Blackstone, 2012<sup>[57]</sup>). In the home, domestic violence may also be perceived as a strategy to restore gender status when it has been threatened, leading to increased incidence and prevalence of intimate partner violence (Atkinson, Greenstein and Lang, 2005<sup>[58]</sup>; Bhattacharya, 2015<sup>[59]</sup>; Caridad Bueno and Henderson, 2017<sup>[60]</sup>; Finnoff, 2012<sup>[61]</sup>).

**Policies and discourses promoting equal pay for equal work open new avenues for gender-equitable norms of masculinities.** The International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 100, establishing the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value, has been translated into national legal frameworks. Of the 180 countries covered by the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) 2019, 166 have ratified the Convention and 148 have introduced legislation on equal remuneration for work of equal value; 27 countries legally require companies to report on how they pay women and men and 20 impose penalties for companies in cases of gender discrimination in recruitment and promotions (OECD, 2019<sup>[9]</sup>). Under the 2008 Swedish Discrimination Act, for example, employers must conduct remuneration surveys every three years and companies with more than 25 employees are obliged to draw up an action plan for equal pay for equal work on the basis of the surveys (OECD, 2019<sup>[9]</sup>). In addition, both men and women support gender equality in pay. In the EU-28 in 2017, for example, 90% of the population thought it was unacceptable that in some circumstances a woman would be paid less than a male colleague for the same job; this figure grows to more than 95% in France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden (Eurobarometer, 2017<sup>[17]</sup>).

### 3. Norms of restrictive masculinities dictate that a “real” man should work in “manly” jobs

**“Real” men work in “manly” jobs.** Another important dimension of restrictive masculinities in the economic sphere is related to the type of work men should engage in. Gender norms play a crucial role in promoting and sustaining the social definition of tasks as either “men’s work” or “women’s work” (Simpson,

2004<sup>[61]</sup>). These social definitions not only correspond to which gender typically does these jobs, but also to gendered associations about the traits that make one suited for the work (Buscatto and Fusulier, 2014<sup>[62]</sup>). For example, some jobs are viewed as more suitable for men, such as fishers, heavy truck drivers, masons and carpenters, and may be linked to the belief that physical strength is a masculine trait, while others are seen as more appropriate for women, such as midwives, nurses and housekeepers, as being caring and attentive of others is typically viewed as a feminine trait. As such, working in “manly” jobs allows men to express their manhood, while working in “feminine” jobs is seen as an infringement of their dominant masculine identity. The man who moves into “women’s work” risks compromising the perception that he is a “real” man and attracting suspicion and stigmatisation, even though he may also benefit professionally based on his gender relative to women in the same job (Buscatto and Fusulier, 2014<sup>[62]</sup>).

**Legal frameworks may reinforce common understandings of which jobs are “manly” jobs.** For example, by restricting women’s access to some jobs and sectors – because they are deemed too dangerous or inappropriate for women – laws reinforce the gender binary and norms of restrictive masculinities. Among the 180 countries covered by the SIGI in 2019, 88 had legal frameworks prohibiting women from entering certain professions, while in 51 countries women could not legally work the same night hours as men (OECD, 2019<sup>[9]</sup>).

**The gender binary and the related dichotomous definitions of jobs reinforce gender segregation and gaps in labour and educational outcomes.** This partially explains both vertical and horizontal gender segregation at work – notably men’s under-representation in “feminine” jobs (Figure 2.4) – and gender wage gaps, as “manly” jobs are also more remunerative. Moreover, it can lead to lower participation of women and girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education programmes, for example. Norms of masculinities not only influence boys’ choices but also those of girls, by defining what is appropriate for girls to do and through a role model effect (OECD, 2019<sup>[63]</sup>; OECD, 2015<sup>[64]</sup>; UNESCO, 2017<sup>[65]</sup>). The OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 reveals that students aged 15 years have likely already internalised social messages about gender and jobs. For example, across all 79 countries surveyed, only 1% of girls reported wanting to work in information and communication technology (ICT) compared with 8% of boys (OECD, 2019<sup>[63]</sup>). Furthermore, among the high-achieving students in science and mathematics in 22 countries, the gender gap in expectations of working as an engineer was significant, standing higher than 15 percentage points (OECD, 2019<sup>[63]</sup>).

**Figure 2.4. Gender segregation by occupation is significant**

Percentage of employment by sex and occupation



Note: Classification of occupations follows the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) 08 at the 2-digit level. Data are calculated as the weighted average for 121 countries using the latest year available.

Source: (ILOSTAT, 2020<sup>[20]</sup>), Labour statistics on women, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/women/>.

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**Women working in “manly” jobs and sectors may face a greater risk of violence.** While it may be easier for women to enter into “manly” jobs than vice versa as working in “manly” jobs is still reconcilable with feminine identity, women who do so may find themselves at greater risk of gender-based violence (Simpson, 2004<sup>[8]</sup>; Williams, 1993<sup>[66]</sup>). As indicated previously, psychological, physical and sexual violence may be a way for some men to react to perceived threats to their masculine identity (Cross and Bagilhole, 2002<sup>[67]</sup>; Simpson, 2004<sup>[8]</sup>). This could notably be the case when women’s job growth is influenced by employment in male-dominated fields. Women working in “manly” jobs may be subjected to moral and sexual harassment, as well as physical and sexual violence (Dahl, Vescio and Weaver, 2015<sup>[68]</sup>). Moreover, some women are increasingly perceived to have traditionally “manly” characteristics, such as being

competitive, daring, adventurous and aggressive (Diekmann and Eagly, 2000<sup>[69]</sup>). Some men might perceive such erosion of gender differences in work attitudes and behaviours as threats to their masculinity, and react aggressively (Dahl, Vescio and Weaver, 2015<sup>[68]</sup>).

#### 4. Norms of restrictive masculinities dictate that a “real” man should be the “ideal worker”

**Restrictive masculinities at work can be expressed through contests among men to prove themselves to be “real” men** (Berdahl et al., 2018<sup>[6]</sup>). The workplace is a major site for the construction and reconstruction of what it means to be a man, as a crucial part of gender socialisation (Morgan, 1992<sup>[70]</sup>). As such, the workplace can constitute a place in which men attempt to secure their manhood and dominance over women and other men. Dominance over others is notably achieved by having relative control over valued physical, social and economic resources, including money and influence (Fiske and Berdahl, 2007<sup>[71]</sup>). Traditional business cultures foster restrictive norms of masculinities by rewarding “real” men with status and resources (Berdahl et al., 2018<sup>[6]</sup>). Indeed, in 2019, among the four countries with available data, nearly one-half of all men (49%) reported believing that being “manly/masculine” can help them get or keep a job, while 43% said it can help them get a pay rise (Ipsos, 2019<sup>[72]</sup>).

**Characteristics of the “ideal worker” overlap with norms of restrictive masculinities.** Being “feminine” is the antithesis of the “ideal worker” who should show no weakness, demonstrate strength and put work first (Mahalik et al., 2003<sup>[73]</sup>; Levant et al., 2010<sup>[74]</sup>). The latter notably means that the “ideal worker” is available to work long hours, travel and relocate (Heppner, 2013<sup>[75]</sup>). Moreover, the “ideal worker” allows nothing to come before their work commitments, including family responsibilities (Williams, Blair-Loy and Berdahl, 2013<sup>[76]</sup>). Whatever one’s gender, in such settings success requires conforming to extreme masculine stereotypes. It includes being dominant, aggressively competitive, dedicated (i.e. being available continuously and full-time, and prioritising work over private life) and successful, and exhibiting toughness and avoiding “soft” or feminine emotions and behaviour (Mahalik et al., 2003<sup>[73]</sup>; Levant et al., 2010<sup>[74]</sup>; Heppner, 2013<sup>[75]</sup>).

**Family-work and parental leave policies reflect restrictive masculinities.** The lack of family-work policies and the failure to recognise the benefits of other forms of child-related leave than maternity leave reinforce the perception that men should behave as the “ideal worker”. Only 91 of the 180 countries covered by the SIGI in 2019 offer paid paternity leave (OECD, 2019<sup>[9]</sup>). Moreover, even when paternity or parental leave schemes exist, few men take leave and the length of leave for mothers and fathers replicates traditional gender roles (OECD, 2019<sup>[9]</sup>) (see Chapter 3, Section 1). In the OECD, for example, women may benefit on average from 55.4 weeks of paid maternity or parental leave. This figure drops to eight weeks for father-specific leave (OECD, 2016<sup>[77]</sup>).

**Women cannot be the “ideal worker”, even if they conform to restrictive masculinities.** The gender binary drives the assumption that female workers are less performant than men due to the mismatch between feminine attributes and those of the “ideal worker”, especially in masculine gender-typed positions and roles. Employers’ beliefs are strongly embedded in both descriptive gender stereotypes – what women and men are like – and prescriptive gender stereotypes – what women and men should be like – whatever their own gender (Heilman, 2012<sup>[78]</sup>). Many employers assume that male candidates are more likely to prioritise work over family life. They also expect women to take primary responsibility for childcare and the other needs of maintaining a home for their families. Gender stereotypes give rise to biased judgements and decisions, reinforcing the glass ceiling and impeding women’s advancement and career progression due to gender-based discrimination in the recruitment process (Heilman, 2012<sup>[78]</sup>). In the 17 countries where data are available for 2019, a range of between 14% of female respondents in Tunisia and 39% in South Africa declared not having the same access to promotional opportunities in their job as their male peers (Focus 2030 and Women Deliver, 2021<sup>[24]</sup>). Whatever her marital status, a female worker is often

perceived as less than “ideal”, as it is assumed that at some point in her life family will take precedence over work (Williams, 2001<sup>[79]</sup>).

## 5. Norms of restrictive masculinities dictate that a “real” man should be a “manly” leader

**Societies worldwide often associate leadership with restrictive masculinities** (Holmes, 2006<sup>[80]</sup>). Not only are men expected to be (political and economic) leaders but also to lead in a “manly” way (Dahl, Vescio and Weaver, 2015<sup>[83]</sup>). Indeed, in many places, male leaders are often accused of not being “manly” enough. “Manly” leadership is characterised as competitive, tough, aggressive and space occupying (Poynting and Donaldson, 2005<sup>[81]</sup>). Such social expectations prompt “real” men to compete, to dominate others in the economic and public spheres and to face down opponents in situations of conflict, while also defining social understandings of what it means to be strong (Connell et al., 1982<sup>[82]</sup>). In Norway, for example, interviews with business students show that the male business leaders of tomorrow upheld traditional business masculinities while expressing more gender-equitable attitudes when societal issues were at stake (Halvorsen and Ljunggren, 2020<sup>[83]</sup>).

**Legal reforms are necessary but are not sufficient on their own to foster social change.** In all countries<sup>5</sup> but one ranked in the SIGI in 2019, women have the same rights as men to hold public and political office in the parliament, the public administration and the government (OECD, 2019<sup>[9]</sup>). To promote women’s political empowerment and shift gender norms, 111 countries have also instituted measures to promote women’s political participation, such as quotas or incentives for political parties to include women on candidate lists (OECD, 2019<sup>[9]</sup>). Nevertheless, social norms questioning women’s ability to lead are still widespread and women are still under-represented in leadership positions (OECD, 2019<sup>[9]</sup>).

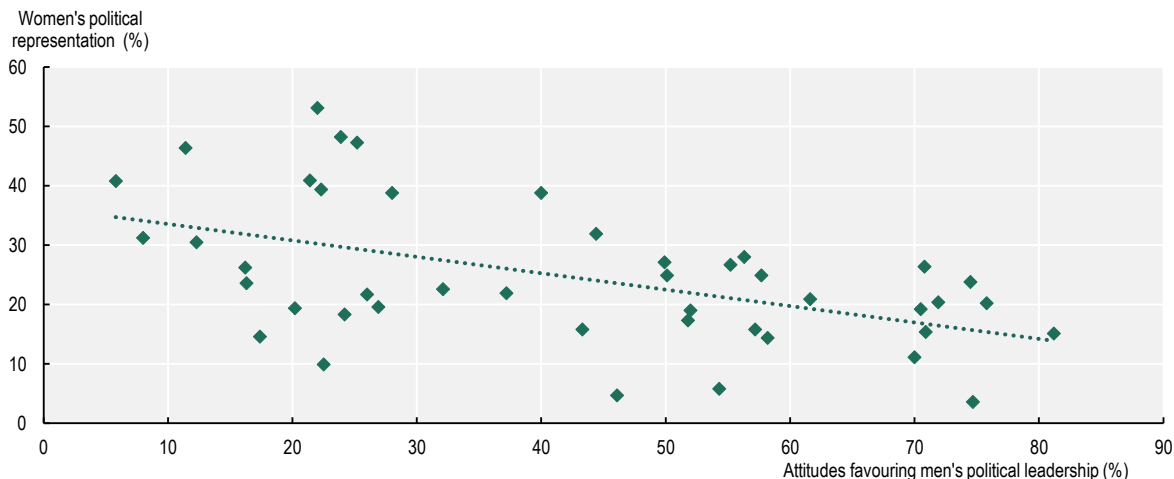
**Men are often considered natural leaders, to the disadvantage of women** (Eagly, 2004<sup>[84]</sup>). According to the expression “Think manager – think male”, women are not expected to make effective leaders (Schein et al., 1996<sup>[85]</sup>). Throughout history, gender norms have promoted the idea that women are too kind and caring to be leaders (Ibarra and Obodaru, 2009<sup>[86]</sup>). For example, in the People’s Republic of China (hereafter “China”), Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States, business students associated male managers with successful management (Schein, 2007<sup>[87]</sup>). In countries where data are available, 36% of respondents declared that men make better business executives, while 41% stated that men make better political leaders than women do (Haerpfer et al., 2020<sup>[15]</sup>). Such support for restrictive understandings of masculinities limits women’s access to both political and economic leadership. A higher share of the population supporting restrictive gender roles is associated with lower representation of women in both political and economic leadership (Figure 2.5).

**Women leaders suffer from being women.** First, women ought to emulate men to succeed as leaders because successful managers are understood to possess characteristics more commonly ascribed to men (Booyesen and Nkomo, 2007<sup>[88]</sup>). In the 27 countries where data are available, 17% of respondents declared that they would feel uncomfortable if their boss were a woman (Ipsos, 2019<sup>[89]</sup>). Moreover, in Burkina Faso, 59% of respondents declared it easier to work under the supervision of a male rather than a female boss (OECD, 2018<sup>[14]</sup>). Second, as identified earlier, there are more men in top corporate positions than women, which makes them the standard while women remain the exception. Being perceived as an exception or a token makes women stand out, and all of their actions are scrutinised and analysed much more frequently, increasing the pressure they bear at work (Oakley, 2000<sup>[90]</sup>). Not only do women have to conform to restrictive masculinities to prove themselves but they also have to do twice as much as men do for the same recognition. In the United States, for example, about 40% of respondents point to a double standard for women seeking to climb to the highest levels of either politics or business, where they have to do more than men to prove themselves (Pew Research Center, 2015<sup>[91]</sup>). Third, women political and economic leaders have to endure prejudiced comments ranging from (moral and sexual) harassment to personal

insults – often associated with stereotypes and motherhood (Hryniewicz and Vianna, 2018<sup>[92]</sup>). Finally, women entrepreneurs may face difficulties in hiring employees. In Burkina Faso, for example, about 70% of respondents declared it easier to recruit for male employers than for female employers (OECD, 2018<sup>[14]</sup>).

### Figure 2.5. Women’s political representation is negatively correlated with attitudes indicating a wide acceptance of restrictive masculinities related to political leadership

Women’s representation in parliaments by percentage of the population declaring that men make better political leaders than women do, 2020



Note: Women's political representation refers to the percentage of women parliamentarians/representatives within the single/lower house of parliament/legislature. Attitudes favouring the political leadership of men refers to the percentage of respondents that agree/strongly agree that "on the whole, men make better political leaders than women do".  $R^2=0.264$ .

Source: (Haerpfer et al., 2020<sup>[15]</sup>), World Values Survey: Round Seven – Country-Pooled Datafile, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV7.jsp>; (IPU Parline, 2020<sup>[11]</sup>), Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments, <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=7&year=2020> (accessed on 4 February 2021).

StatLink  <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934230452>

**Given the widespread belief that leadership is a masculine attribute, some women underestimate their own leadership abilities.** On the supply side, the correlation between women’s under-representation in leadership positions and norms of restrictive masculinities may be explained by the fact that women refrain from applying for and pursuing leadership positions. Women and girls may internalise discriminatory beliefs, which shape their own identity, aspirations and behaviours. For example, in the United Kingdom in 2018, more than one-half of girls aged 7-10 years wanted to be leaders in their chosen job, but the numbers fell among those aged 11-21 years (Girlguiding, 2018<sup>[93]</sup>). One reason for this could be a reluctance to face the same challenges they see current women leaders facing. One in three girls puts off going into politics because of the way female politicians are treated, while one in four believed there are fewer women business leaders because women are treated less fairly than men (Girlguiding, 2018<sup>[93]</sup>).

**Recruitment processes are also influenced by norms of restrictive masculinities.** On the demand side, employers and voters also make their choices based on beliefs that may include that men make better leaders. They may therefore be less likely to choose or elect women into economic and political leadership positions, whatever their own gender. These conscious and unconscious biases lead to decisions in favour of men and to the detriment of women, and naturally creep into the economic and public spheres (McCormick-Huhn, Kim and Shields, 2019<sup>[94]</sup>; Wynn and Correll, 2018<sup>[95]</sup>). Even female and male



scientists at Yale University, who are trained to reject the subjective, were more likely to hire men, rank them higher in competency than women, and pay them USD 4 000 more per year than women (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012<sup>[96]</sup>).

**Increasing evidence of successful women leaders is promoting more gender-neutral perceptions of leadership.** Observation has unconscious effects on perception (Halász and Cunnington, 2012<sup>[97]</sup>). The behaviour observed in some current leaders – who demonstrate humility, discipline, concentration and good communication; are not egocentric; and have a discreet personality – goes against the traditional idea of an efficient leader who is charismatic, selfish, strong-willed and also a man (Williams, 2005<sup>[98]</sup>). This shows that a leader can be successful without being a man or conforming to restrictive masculinities. As a result, social expectations of leadership are evolving “from the all-male leadership concept to a mix of male and female behaviours that can form a better leader” (Hryniewicz and Vianna, 2018<sup>[92]</sup>). Indeed, in 2020, each G7 country saw an increase in the percentage of the population reporting that they would feel very comfortable with a woman being the head of government or CEO of a major company in their country compared with 2019 (Kantar, 2020<sup>[99]</sup>).

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For a list of countries/territories included in all surveys referenced in this publication, please see the Annex.

<sup>2</sup> The term "missing women" indicates a shortfall in the number of women relative to the expected number of women in a region or country.

<sup>3</sup> Vertical segregation describes men's domination of the highest status jobs in both traditionally masculine and traditionally feminine occupations, while horizontal segregation refers to differences in the number of people of each gender present across occupations (see Chapter 2, Section 3).

<sup>4</sup> The variation of the gender pay gap between managers and all employees may reflect various issues, including occupational segregation in the labour market and management position; the overall proportion of women in management positions compared with their labour force participation; the structure of the economy in terms of industries and occupations where men and women are concentrated; gender-equitable government policies and their implementation; and social norms.

<sup>5</sup> All countries provide women with the same rights as men to hold public and political office in the legislature and all countries except Oman provide women with the same rights as men to hold public and political office in the executive branch.





**From:**  
**Man Enough? Measuring Masculine Norms to Promote Women's Empowerment**

**Access the complete publication at:**

<https://doi.org/10.1787/6ffd1936-en>

**Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD (2021), "Masculinities and women's empowerment in the economic and political spheres", in *Man Enough? Measuring Masculine Norms to Promote Women's Empowerment*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/a59eaf71-en>

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