SNAPS 2024

Social Norms, Attitudes, and Practices Survey

Understanding gender norms across **Indonesia**, **Malaysia**, **The Philippines** & **Vietnam**

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Executive summary

Despite notable progress in recent decades, gender inequality remains one of the most persistent global challenges. While the magnitude and nature of gender disparities vary across countries, gender norms that limit women are pervasive across all societies.

These deeply rooted and often unspoken social expectations shape perceptions of men's and women's roles and influence decisions in the households, the labour market, and public life. Understanding how gender norms emerge, persist, and evolve over time is crucial. This understanding highlights the societal progress toward a more inclusive society and informs interventions aimed at effectively promoting gender-equal practices.

With the goal of advancing gender equality in Southeast Asia, this report presents a cross-country analysis of gender attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Grounded in Bicchieri's theory on social norms as the primary conceptual foundation and complemented by Investing in Women (IW)'s Women's Economic Equality (WEE) framework, the analysis provides a comprehensive lens to examine individual attitudes and behaviours and the social expectations that sustain or challenge gender norms. Central to the analysis is the application of empirical expectations, or the belief of what others do, and normative expectations, or the beliefs in what other people approve of. This study also provides a more granular analysis by examining two sub-themes: Caregiving and Domestic roles, and Economic roles.

Research objectives

This study addresses four key research objectives.

1. To investigate the prevalence of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy and to compare these patterns with individuals' normative and empirical expectations.

This comparison enables the identification of potential pluralistic ignorance, or misperceptions about prevailing social expectations and behaviours.

2. To analyse the key socio-demographic characteristics associated with gender-equal support and practices, and to explore the interconnections between attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy.

It specifically assesses the associations between attitudes, social expectations, and actions, and whether supportive attitudes and behaviours can translate into active advocacy.

3. To explore the structural and contextual factors that influence individuals' engagement with gender equality.

Reference networks are identified as a key component of these factors, shaping how people perceive and act on gender norms. The analysis also examines the enablers and barriers that affect the translation of gender equality attitudes into both public and private advocacy.

4. To assess how gender norms have evolved over time.

Drawing on comparisons with past survey waves and situating these norms within broader societal and global transformations.

Research methods

To address these objectives, this study employed a mixed methods design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches.

The quantitative component drew on the SNAPS survey of **8,000 urban participants** aged 18–40 across Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam in 2024. This is a biannual survey that has been running since 2018. Analyses include multivariate regressions, difference-of-means tests, and latent profile analysis.

The qualitative component comprised **121 participants**, including members of the general public, experts, and stakeholders through interviews, focus groups and validation workshops between November 2024 and August 2025.

Thematic coding and triangulation with secondary literature were used to provide deeper insights into the socio-cultural drivers and evolving dynamics of gender norms, enriching the quantitative findings with contextual nuance and lived perspectives.

Key findings

This study highlights four main findings:

1. Women consistently demonstrate stronger support for gender equality than men

2. Gender-equal attitudes and advocacy are significantly associated across all domains – particularly among women, but associations are not always evident between attitudes and behaviours

3. Qualitative analysis further illuminates the intricate system of enablers and barriers to gender equality

4. Gendered expectations are evolving over time, showing potential future change

1. Women consistently demonstrate stronger support for gender equality than men

Overall, attitudes and aspirations toward equal sharing of both caregiving and economic responsibilities are high, with most indicators exceeding 70 percent across all countries.

Vietnam stands out, showing over 80 percent support for gender equality across all domains. In contrast, support for women's equal contribution to the family income is the lowest at around 50 percent in Indonesia and Malaysia, reflecting the persistence of male-breadwinner norms. However, gender-equal behaviours and advocacy vary considerably across countries and domains and are generally lower than attitudes and aspirations. This gap suggests that supportive beliefs do not always translate into action.

Misperceptions of gender-equal attitudes and practices are also widespread. Comparing individuals' perceived levels of gender equality with actual practices reveals that women tend to underestimate the support for gender equality. While men likewise underestimate, they are more likely to overestimate than women, assuming the gender-equal attitudes and practices to be more prevalent than it is, particularly in Childcare, Housework, Job Suitability, and Earning Family Income domains. These gaps suggest that pluralistic ignorance might suppress the open expression of support for equality, while also pointing to opportunities to encourage more gender-equal practices through correcting these misperceptions.

2. Gender-equal attitudes and advocacy are significantly associated across all domains – particularly among women, but associations are not always evident between attitudes and behaviours

Quantitative analysis shows that gender-equal attitudes and advocacy are significantly associated across all domains, particularly among women, whereas such associations are not always evident between attitudes and behaviours. Moreover, expectations about what others do (or empirical expectations) tend to have a

stronger relationship with behaviour than expectations about what others approve of (or normative expectations). However, neither type of social expectation appears to be linked to advocacy for gender equality.

The misalignment between attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy, combined with the salience of empirical expectations underscores the importance of showcasing norm-breaking behaviours, reducing perceived social sanctions, and leveraging collective shifts. In all four countries, gender-equal behaviours were also positively associated with a more gender-equal upbringing and media exposure, though the association appears more often for women.

Latent profile analysis further sheds light on the complex interplay of attitudes and practices by classifying the sample into distinct profiles of gender-equal attitudes and practices by domain and by gender. Notably, profiles depicting strong gender-equality supporters, who were characterised by high attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy, consistently appear across all domains for both women and men. At the same time, the analysis reveals a wide diversity of other profiles, including gender-equal moderates, weak supporters, passive supporters, and inconsistent supporters, among others. These findings highlighted the need for context-specific and target-group interventions.

3. Qualitative analysis further illuminates the intricate system of enablers and barriers to gender equality

Traditional gender norms and pervasive stereotypes, such as the male breadwinner model and the belief that women are naturally caregiving, remain pervasive across Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. These norms influence behaviour through imparting social expectations and associated sanctions, limiting women's opportunities and reinforcing caregiving burdens.

Several factors, in contrast, enable positive deviance from these traditional norms. At the structural level, institutional supports facilitate a more balanced sharing of responsibilities. At the individual level,

education, career experience, access to domestic support and flexible work, a supportive reference network, critical consciousness of gender norms and personal values aligned with gender equality can enable women to negotiate shared responsibilities or allocate tasks based on skills, preferences, or availability rather than gender.

Contextual circumstances, including economic necessity, singlehood, or unexpected shocks such as illness, business collapse, or the COVID-19 pandemic, can also temporarily disrupt norms, prompting deviations from conventional gender expectations even when traditional attitudes persist.

Among these factors, men's conditional preferences toward shared responsibilities, whether supportive or unsupportive, emerge as a key moderating factor in whether women can adopt gender-equal practices in everyday life. The findings suggest the need to shift men's perception of domestic work from "helping women" to constituting an "equal" contribution, grounded in relational equality and ensuring women's dignity. Reference networks were influential in setting conditional preferences; family and elders anchored baseline normative and empirical expectations, which were often reinforced or challenged by friends, peers and colleagues in later life. Media, political leaders, religion, and culture also helped shape broader societal norms.

Overall, the findings indicate that empirical expectations are shifting due to structural and contextual factors. However, while behaviours may change temporarily in response to structural enablers or necessity, lasting change requires adjustments in normative expectations. Interventions are most effective when combining structural supports with strategies that challenge entrenched norms and foster supportive household and community environments.

4. Gendered expectations are evolving over time, showing potential future change

Overall, households are sharing domestic and economic duties more equally, though the

magnitude of change varies across countries. More remarkably, while actual behaviours show progress toward more gender-equal households, aspirations among unmarried, unpartnered individuals and those without children for equality regressed in some instances between 2022 and 2024.

Both women and men report higher expectations for the other to take on more responsibilities in childcare duties and family income contribution. Significant perception gaps also arise between women and men. While women report doing less childcare than men perceive, men also report bearing less financial responsibility than women observe. These behavioural shifts may reflect sampling differences, or broader national economic and social changes.

The Southeast Asian region, like much of the world, is navigating overlapping global challenges including climate shocks, economic disruptions, rapid technological change, and political and demographic shifts. These transformations simultaneously challenge and reinforce traditional gender norms, creating both risks and opportunities for gender equality.

Without bold action, comprehensive policies, and practical implementation that promote equal economic participation and shared caregiving responsibilities, these shifts risk deepening gender disparities. Coordinated efforts across governments, communities, and private institutions will be essential to turn these pressures into opportunities for more inclusive and equitable outcomes.

1. Introduction

Gender inequality remains a global challenge, though the nature and extent of the gender gap vary widely across countries.

Across contexts, gender norms continue to pose major obstacles to achieving gender equality. These norms are deeply entrenched and slow to change, influencing how individuals perceive roles, make decisions, and participate in economic and social life. Understanding the nature, strength, and pervasiveness of these norms is therefore essential to identify where a society stands and what types of interventions may effectively promote more gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy.

To strengthen the evidence base on gender norms, Investing in Women (IW), an initiative of the Australian Government, has conducted the Social Norms, Attitudes, and Practices Survey (SNAPS) since 2018. Designed with the aim of enhancing women's economic empowerment, SNAPS is a part of Workstream 3 (W3), which focuses on addressing the informal gender norms that persist within households, among peer and workplace relationships, religion, the media, and other structural domains.

SNAPS operates within the broader IW program, which encompasses four interconnected workstreams. These include raising awareness among private sector employers to promote workplace gender equality policies (W1); supporting government policy reforms, particularly in the care economy (W2); and advancing Gender Lens Investing (W4). While all workstreams address gender norms to varying degrees, W3 uniquely targets informal institutional barriers, playing a critical role in deepening understanding of the subtle yet persistent social dynamics that hinder gender equality.

Recognising that lasting change often targets structural factors supporting gender equality, W3 adopts a sustainable and low-maintenance approach. This approach builds on the examples set by early adopters of gender-equal attitudes and behaviours to encourage broader societal shifts. To this end, the ongoing SNAPS survey initiative not only contributes to knowledge building but also generates evidence to inform high-quality, context-specific interventions that foster more gender-equal practices. In 2024, the Global Institute for Women's Leadership (GIWL), IW's lead research partner, conducted the fourth wave of the SNAPS study (SNAPS 2024). Building on previous iterations, SNAPS 2024 introduced updated and reframed survey questions to reflect evolving contexts and enable more nuanced and sophisticated analyses.

SNAPS 2024 was implemented as an online survey of 8,000 participants aged 18 to 40 living in urban areas across Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam (the primary focus countries of IW), with Malaysia included for the first time in 2024. Across these four countries, these populations were chosen because they are more likely to be exposed to examples of gender equality through media, daily interactions, and access to economic opportunities. These are the factors that can catalyse the renegotiation of traditional caregiving and economic roles. This demographic also aligns closely with IW's core target audience, ensuring that SNAPS continues to generate insights directly relevant to IW's programming and policy influence.

The research also included (a) in-depth interviews with members of the public to explore the nuances behind their attitudes and behaviours, and (b) expert interviews to better understand the broader context and factors shaping gender norms in the country. The research was further strengthened through (c) in-country validation workshops attended by gender equality experts and practitioners, to enhance an understanding of the factors shaping advocacy efforts in gender equality and help refine the findings

and the nuanced explanations behind them.

This study sought to understand how gender-equal norms are shifting with a focus on the following norms: **Caregiving & domestic roles,** and **Economic roles**.

For each of these norms, the SNAPS 2024 online survey measured participants' behaviours, attitudes, empirical expectations (what they see others do), and normative expectations (what they think others approve of). These are drawn from Cristina Bicchieri's[1] social norms framework, expanded upon on in the **Gender indicators factsheet** on the next page.

Caregiving & domestic roles

- **Childcare –** Caregiving responsibilities for children should be equally shared between partners.

- **Dependent adult care –** Caregiving responsibilities for dependent adult should be equally shared between partners.

- **Housework –** Caregiving and housework responsibilities should be equally shared between partners.

Economic roles

- **Earning family income –** Earning responsibilities for the family should be equally shared between partners.

- **Job suitability –** Gender should not determine a person's ability to perform a particular job.

- **Women in leadership –** Gender should not determine a person's ability to be a good leader.

1 Bicchieri 2017

Gender indicators Factsheet*

Indonesia

Global gender gap score /1.00

0.692 **97**th Global ranking

Educational attainment score/1.00

0.972 **103**rd Global ranking

Women's political empowerment score/1.00

0.153 **103**rd Global ranking

"When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women" **75.6%** agreed in the World Values survey questionnaire

Workforce participation
53% 82%

Time spent on domestic work
Women: 4.44 hrs Men: 2.1 hrs

Malaysia

Global gender gap score /1.00

0.681 **108**th Global ranking

Educational attainment score/1.00

0.996 **59**th Global ranking

Women's political empowerment score/1.00

0.079 **128**th Global ranking

"When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women" **47.8%** agreed in the World Values survey questionnaire

Workforce participation
56% 82%

Time spent on domestic work
Women: 4.44 hrs Men: 1.56 hrs

Philippines

Global gender gap score /1.00

0.781 — **20th** Global ranking

Educational attainment score/1.00

0.988 — **87th** Global ranking

Women's political empowerment score/1.00

0.377 — **30th** Global ranking

"When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women"

69.1% agreed in the World Values survey questionnaire

Workforce participation

50%   72%

Time spent on domestic work

Women: 4.5 hrs   Men: 1.7 hrs

Vietnam

Global gender gap score /1.00

0.713 — **74th** Global ranking

Educational attainment score/1.00

0.972 — **109th** Global ranking

Women's political empowerment score/1.00

0.173 — **95th** Global ranking

"When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women"

52% agreed in the World Values survey questionnaire

Workforce participation

68%   77%

Time spent on domestic work

Women: 3.77hrs   Men: 2.28 hrs

2. Contextual background

Despite significant progress in education and political representation across the four countries, persistent gender disparities remain to varying degrees.

This section draws on comparative indicators from the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2025[2] and complementary datasets (more details in the box to the right) to provide an overview of gender equality in six dimensions:

Overall gender equality performance

Education

Women's economic rights

Unpaid domestic work

Women's political participation

Labor force participation

*Gender indicators factsheet key

The factsheet draws on the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2025[3] and complementary data sets. Full details below:

- **Global gender gap score & rank:** The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2025[4]

- **Educational attainment:** The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2025[5]

- **Labour force participation (%):** Based on World Bank's World Development Indicators. The labour force participation rate is a percentage of population in each gender aged 15 and above based on modelled ILO estimate[6]

- **Time spent on domestic work (2023, in hours):** Forecasting Time Spent in Unpaid Care and Domestic Work, World Economic Forum[7]

- **Women's political empowerment:** The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2025[8]

- **% agreeing to the World Values Survey question – 'when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women':** World Values Survey Wave 7 (2017-2022) Cross-National Data-Set[9]

2 World Economic Forum 2025
3 World Economic Forum 2025
4 World Economic Forum 2025
5 World Economic Forum 2025
6 World Bank Open Data 2025a
7 Hanna et al. 2023a
8 World Economic Forum 2025
9 Haerpfer et al. 2024

2.1 Understanding gender equality contexts across countries

Indonesia: Steady gains amid conservative norms

Indonesia ranks **97th globally** with a gender gap score of **0.692**, revealing moderate progress over recent years whilst gender disparities remain.[10] The country has achieved strong educational parity (score **0.978**).[11] However, women's labour force participation rate stands at **53%**, compared to **82%** among men,[12] which is a substantial gap suggesting structural and social obstacles to women's employment.

Time-use data shows that Indonesian women spend **4.44 hours** daily on unpaid domestic work, more than double men's **2.1 hours**,[13] reinforcing traditional caregiving expectations. Women's political empowerment score (**0.153**, **103rd** globally) also indicates their limited representation in politics.[14]

Entrenched cultural attitudes continue to constrain gender equality; according to the World Values Survey, **75.5%** of respondents agreed that men should have priority over women when jobs are scarce, also the highest proportion among the four countries.[15] However, the gradual rise of women in senior roles and ministerial positions signals emerging pathways for change, indicating slow but tangible progress toward more equitable labour force participation.

Malaysia: Falling behind in gender equality despite strong education

Malaysia, ranked **108th** globally with a gender gap score of **0.681**, maintains one of the region's largest gender disparities.[16] Women have achieved near-full parity in education (score **0.996**, **59th** globally),[17] yet this progress has not translated into broader gender equality. Women's labour force participation remains low at **56%**, compared with **82%** for men,[18] and they shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid care work, **4.44 hours** daily compared with **1.56 hours** for men,[19] highlighting persistent gendered divisions of domestic responsibility. Malaysia also performs poorly in political empowerment score of **0.079** (**128th** globally),[20] the lowest among the four countries, reflecting systemic barriers to women's political representation and influence. Traditional norms are also evident: nearly half (**47.8%**) of respondents in the World

10 World Economic Forum 2025
11 World Economic Forum 2025
12 World Bank Open Data 2025a
13 Hanna et al. 2023a
14 World Economic Forum 2025
15 Haerpfer et al. 2024
16 World Economic Forum 2025
17 World Economic Forum 2025
18 World Bank Open Data 2025a
19 Hanna et al. 2023a
20 World Economic Forum 2025

Values Survey agreed that men should have priority for jobs during periods of scarcity.[21] Despite strong educational achievements, deeply entrenched social and cultural norms continue to constrain women's participation in both formal politics and the labour market.

The Philippines: Regional leader in gender equality, but women's economic participation stalls

The Philippines ranks **20th globally** in the 2025 Global Gender Gap Report, the highest in the region, with a gender gap score of **0.781**.[22] The country has achieved near-complete parity in educational attainment (score **0.988**) and continues to stand out for its long history of women in political leadership, reflected in its comparatively leading political empowerment score of **0.377** (**30th** globally – although no country has come close to the full parity score of 1).[23] These trends indicate robust institutional and social recognition of women's capacity for leadership and decision-making.

Despite this strong foundation, gender parity has not fully translated into the labour market. Women's labour force participation remains at **50%**, compared to **72%** for men,[24] which has changed little over the past three decades. Women also carry a disproportionate share of unpaid domestic work, spending **4.5 hours** daily on household tasks compared to **1.7 hours** for men.[25] These caregiving responsibilities constrain employment trajectories and limit women's time for paid work. Moreover, **69.1%** of respondents in the World Values Survey agreed that men have more right to a job when jobs are scarce,[26] reflecting persistent social norms that continue to undermine gender-equal labour outcomes despite progressive institutional frameworks.

Vietnam: A long history of high participation in the labour force by women but limited influence

Vietnam presents a complex picture where women participate actively in the economy, yet gender equality is still a long way from being achieved. Ranked **74th** globally with a gender gap score of **0.713**,[27] the country demonstrates strong educational parity (**0.972**)[28] and one of the region's consistently highest labour force participation rates, with women at **68%**, compared with **77%** for men.[29] This reflects women's long-standing economic contributions.

However, high participation does not necessarily translate into equality in opportunity or influence. Vietnamese women continue to shoulder a heavier domestic workload than men, spending **3.77 hours** per day on unpaid household duties compared with **2.28 hours** for men,[30] though this gap is the smallest among all countries. Representation in leadership remains limited, with a political empowerment score of just **0.173** (**95th** globally),[31] highlighting persistent barriers to decision-making roles. Cultural norms are still present and reinforce inequality. **52%** of respondents to the World Values Survey agreed that men should have priority for jobs during periods of scarcity.[32] Together, this data suggests that while Vietnamese women are highly represented in terms of numbers in the economy, they continue to face significant constraints on their power and influence.

21 Haerpfer et al. 2024
22 World Economic Forum 2025
23 World Economic Forum 2025
24 World Bank Open Data 2025a
25 Hanna et al. 2023a
26 Haerpfer et al. 2024
27 World Economic Forum 2025
28 World Economic Forum 2025
29 World Bank Open Data 2025a
30 Hanna et al. 2023a
31 World Economic Forum 2025
32 Haerpfer et al. 2024

2.2 Understanding social norms

This research examines gender norms as one of the underlying foundations of gender inequality.

Following the framework described by philosopher Cristina Bicchieri,[33] social norms can be understood as "a rule of behaviour such that individuals prefer to conform to it", primarily due to the influence of their reference network, or the people whose behaviours and beliefs matter to them.[34] Bicchieri's[35] work is used extensively by Investing in Women (IW) and other leading development organisations (e.g., the United Nations)[36] to inform their approach to influencing gender norms.

According to Bicchieri,[37] while recurring collective behaviours can signal the presence of a social norm, not all such behaviours necessarily constitute a social norm.

A collective behavioural rule, *R*, which is being followed by a substantially large subset of the populations, *P*, is deemed to be conforming to a social norm only when it meets all following three criteria:

1. **Contingency:** It is common knowledge for most of the reference group that exists, to the extent that most people will deliberately comply with the norm

2. **Empirical expectations:** Everyone (or almost everyone) expects others to behave similarly to the norm (empirical expectations)

3. **Normative expectations:** People expect that everyone (or almost everyone) expects that they should behave according to the norm (normative expectations)

The latter two criteria, *empirical expectations* (beliefs about what others do) and normative expectations (beliefs about what others think they should do) combine to form *conditional preferences*, which motivate people to follow or not follow *R*, as shown in **Figure 1**.

As individuals follow norms conditional on the fulfillment of their empirical expectations (what they believe others do) and normative expectations (what they believe others think they should do), a social norm does not require the entire population to comply in order to be recognised.

Figure 1 The impacts of social norm on choices (adapted from Bicchieri's model)[38]

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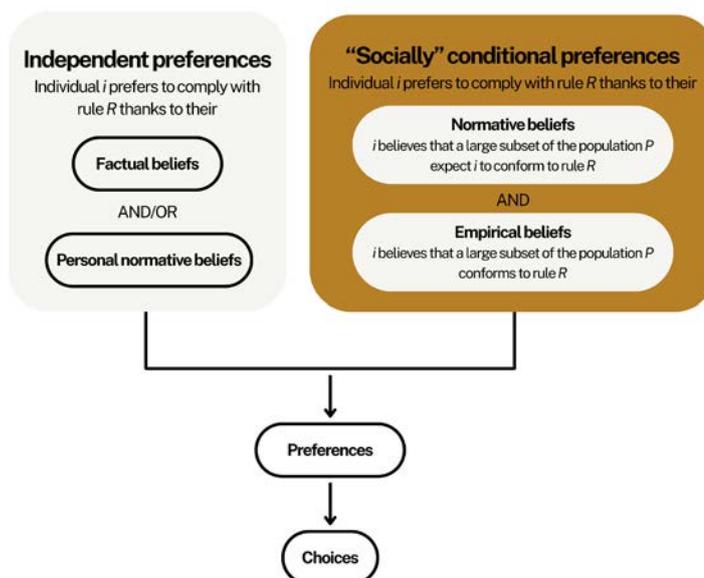
33 Bicchieri 2017
34 Bicchieri and Dimant 2022
35 Bicchieri and Dimant 2022
36 United Nations Population Fund 2021
37 Bicchieri and Dimant 2022
38 Bicchieri 2017

Moreover, the perceived proportion of followers need not be consistent across individuals. People hold different empirical expectations and personal thresholds for what they consider a "substantially large" portion of the population. These variations can give rise to pluralistic ignorance, which is a situation in which people misperceive others' beliefs or behaviours, and will be discussed in the subsequent section.

Although this report focuses on how social norms influence people's behaviour, it is important to note that Bicchieri's model operates within a broader conceptual framework, as illustrated in **Figure 2**. In this model, behaviours are classified as either independent or interdependent. The focus on social norms represents a specific outcome within the model, not the model itself. The distinction between independent or interdependent behaviours and the identification of their elements allows for a more precise understanding of why people act as they do, and in turn, supports the design of more effective behavioural change programs or policies.

Independent behaviours (or unconditional preferences) are those guided by individual customs or moral rules which lead people to behave in certain ways regardless of

Figure 2 Flowchart of behavioural change modelled by Bicchieri[39]
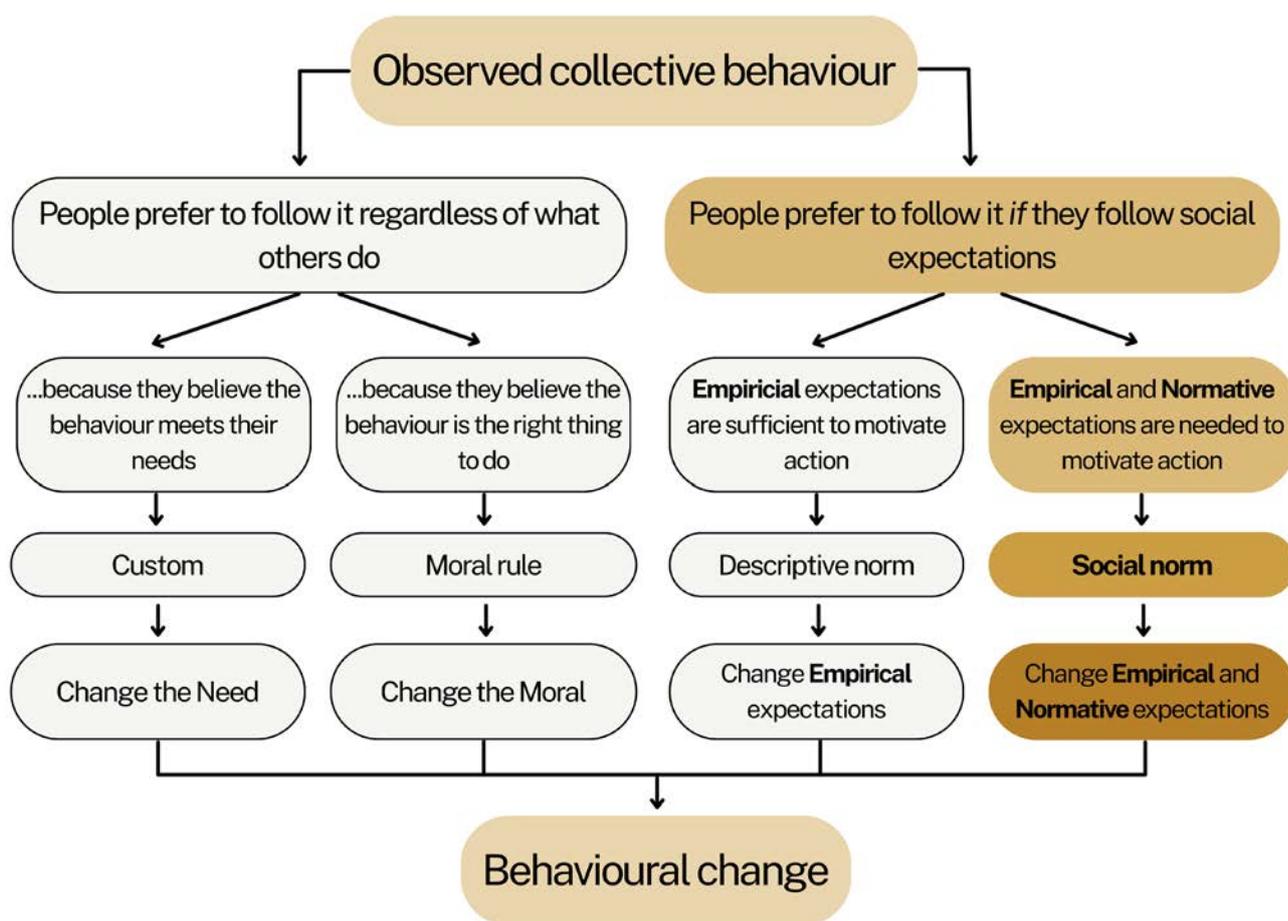
39 Bicchieri 2017

what others do or think. Interdependent behaviours, on the other hand, depend on social expectations. These include descriptive norms, where behaviour is shaped solely by *empirical expectations*, and social norms, where behaviour is influenced by both *empirical* and *normative expectations*. The key difference between two norms lies in whether a behaviour is conducted based on the desire to fulfill other people's expectations (or *normative expectations*).

2.3 Understanding gender norms and their influence on caregiving and economic roles

Gender norms are a subset of social norms that arise from both empirical and normative expectations related to gender roles. For example, under traditional gender norms, it may be expected that men earn a family's income while women manage the household (empirical expectation), and that the community approves of this arrangement (normative expectation).

Such expectations shape attitudes and behaviours, influencing how people perceive gender roles and their willingness to challenge inequality. When left unchallenged, potentially harmful gender norms persist through collective behaviours and become embedded in institutions, everyday practices, and even policy frameworks. They define what is considered acceptable, respectable, or aspirational, reinforcing inequalities and constraining inclusive social and economic participation.

These gendered expectations also lead to tangible consequences. In Southeast Asia, for instance, more than one in five people hold negative views of women working outside the home,[40] reflecting the enduring norm that women are caregivers and men are breadwinners. This expectation drives occupational segregation, clustering women in 'caring' roles such as childcare or teaching, and perpetuating the perception that women are inherently better suited to such work. Over

time, this entrenches gendered divisions of labour and contributes to the undervaluation of women's work and lower pay in female-dominated sectors.

Addressing these gender norms requires broader systemic transformation toward gender equality, as recognised by the Rao–Kelleher matrix and reflected in IW's[41] Women's Economic Equality (WEE) framework. Within this framework, progress is required along two key axes: from informal to formal domains, and from individual to structural and organisational levels. Within this matrix, norms, beliefs, practices, resources and policies and processes should be considered as interrelated factors.

In the IW WEE framework, gender norms are informal and largely structural, as illustrated in **Figure 3.** They differ from personal beliefs, which exist at the individual level, and from legal rules, policies and processes, which operate through formal enforcement and sanction. Yet, gender norms are maintained through informal social sanctions and are both public and widely shared. Importantly, these dimensions are interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

Changes in personal beliefs can influence the practice of gender norms, while the interaction between gender norms and law is reciprocal: laws and policies can shape norms, and prevailing norms can influence legal practices and policy implementation, as well as resources. Over time, evolving gender norms can expand women's access to resources and opportunities, which in turn can further shift societal expectations toward equality.

Together, the multidimensional nature of women's economic equality emphasises that lasting progress depends on both transforming systems and institutions and empowering women in their everyday economic lives. The framework, thus, serves as a foundation for engaging stakeholders, including companies, investors, governments, and communities, to clarify their roles and recognise the determinants of progress toward gender equality.

40 OECD 2021
41 Rao and Kelleher 2005

Figure 3 Gender Norms in the IW WEE framework
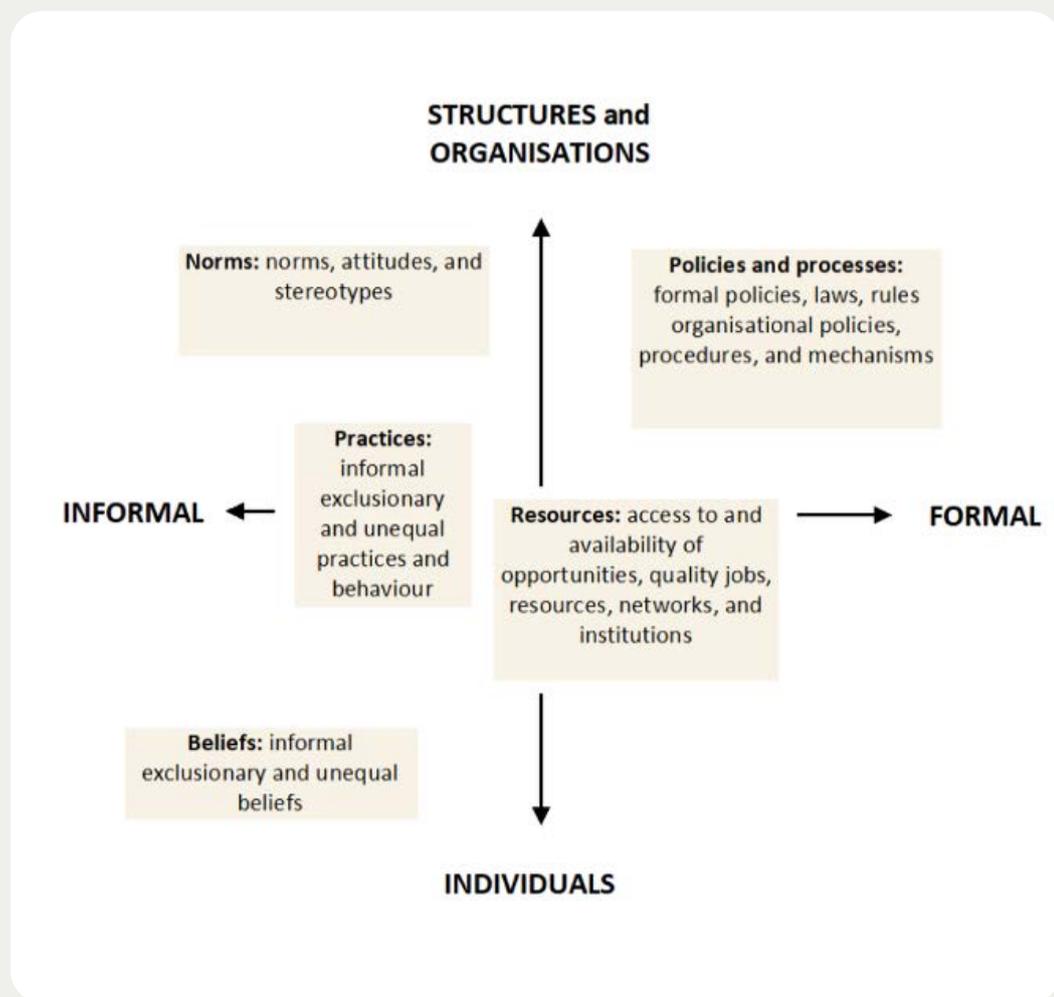
2.4 Understanding how norms change

According to Bicchieri,[42] a social norm can change through the abandonment of old norms and the creation of new ones. When a norm produces potentially harmful consequences, interventions can promote behavioural change by altering both normative and empirical expectations. To facilitate shifts in gender norms, this report adopts the Positive Deviance Approach (PDA). *Deviance* refers to attitudes and behaviours of individuals in a community that differ from the prevailing norm, either positively or negatively. *Positive deviance* refers to movements away from traditional norms in the direction aspired to by the intervention (i.e. more gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy in this case).

Unlike the traditional 'needs-based' development approaches, which focus on identifying community deficiencies and meeting those needs through external support, PDA is "asset-based" which identifies existing community strengths and seeks ways to leverage internal advantages.[43] By addressing two key challenges of the "needs-based" approach which are the limited access to external resources and the sustainability of change once external support is withdrawn, PDA has three key strengths compared to the 'needs-based' approach:[44][45]

1. Being **cost-effective**

2. Being **sustainable**

3. Being **internally owned** and **easily managed**

Specifically, PDA distinguishes "positive deviance" and analyses how these

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42 Bicchieri 2017
43 Sternin 2002
44 Sternin 2002
45 Nel 2018

Figure 4 The positive deviance approach
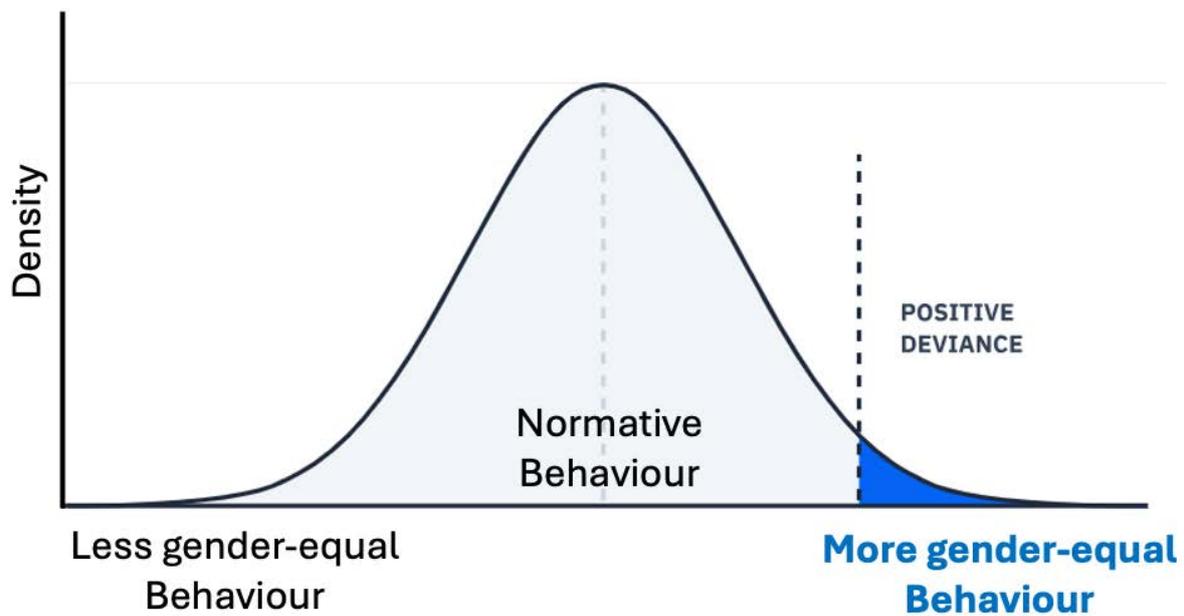
individuals, with the same resources, capacities, and socio-economic conditions, manage to deviate from prevailing norms, as illustrated in **Figure 4**. Once these factors are determined, the next step involves ensuring that the wider community gains access to the same enabling conditions as the individuals showing positive deviance and that these successful examples are made visible within the community.

Bicchieri also notes that recognising and showcasing departures from traditional gender norms can shift empirical expectations and, over time, contribute to broader normative change, thereby fostering new social norms. With culturally informed initiatives, such interventions can be replicated and scaled across countries and regions.[46] For the scope of this report,

PDA provides a framework to encourage positive change in gendered practices by identifying and strengthening existing gender-equal attitudes and behaviours within the communities.

To support the expansion of more gender-equal practices, this report also addresses pluralistic ignorance, or the misperceptions about others' beliefs and behaviours as illustrated in **Figure 5**. Pluralistic ignorance can be uncovered by comparing perceived gender norms with actual attitudes or behaviours. When individuals' perceptions align with actual norms, they hold accurate beliefs about gender-equal practices, and interventions may focus on challenging existing gender norms.

Conversely, when a gap exists between perceived and actual norms, pluralistic ignorance is present.[47] For example, women may avoid using childcare services due to a perceived sense of community disapproval, even though their community may, in fact, support such practices. This **belief trap** can cause individuals to conform to norms they privately reject or to avoid following norms they privately support. In such cases, the solution lies in correcting these misperceptions of social norms, which can often be achieved more easily than altering the entrenched norms.

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46   Bicchieri 2017
47   Mendes et al. 2017

Figure 5 The process of Pluralistic Ignorance identification

Individuals' perceived gender norm → Social comparison	**Perceived = Actual** → There is no ignorance → **Intervention:** Challenge existing gender norm	
	Perceived < Actual → Underestimation → Pluralistic ignorance → **Intervention:** Correct the norms misperceptions	
	Perceived > Actual → Overestimation → Not the focus of this report	
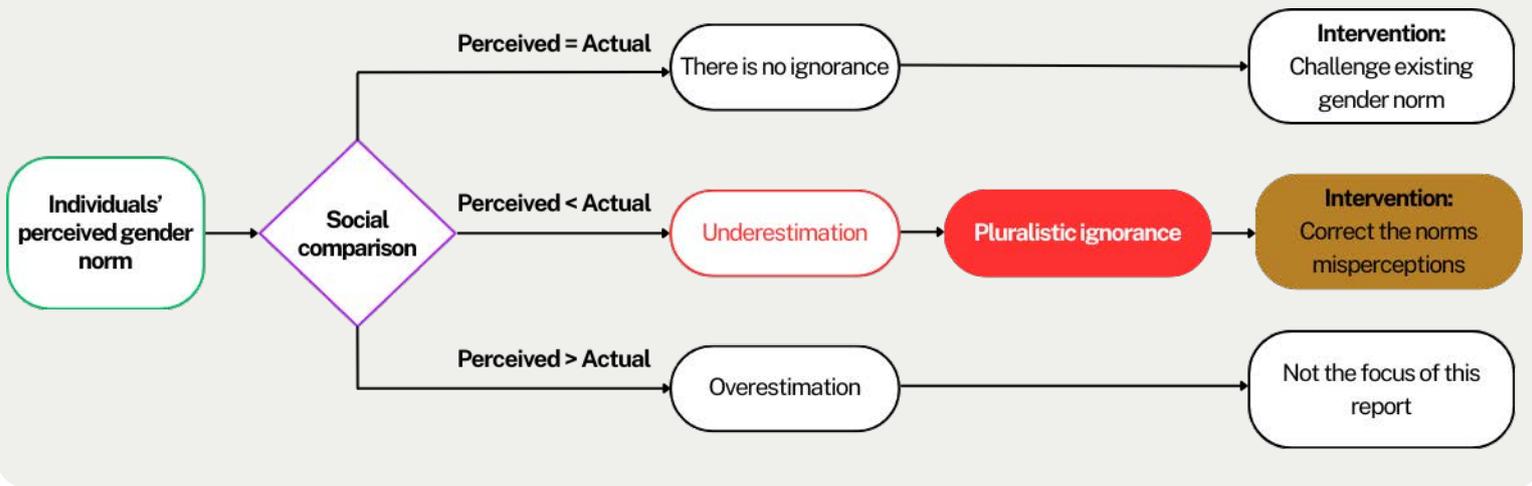
It is also noteworthy that pluralistic ignorance is a neutral concept: individuals may either underestimate or overestimate the extent to which gender equality is supported or practiced within their community. In this report, the primary concern in this study is with *underestimation*, when individuals believe that gender-equal attitudes or behaviours are weaker or less common than in reality.

Finally, as already highlighted in the report, exogenous shocks, formal policies and legislation, and other structural or organisational enablers can support behaviour change, even outside normative change. As such, the conceptual framework and analysis considers where this occurs in this study, to more holistically identify the circumstances under which behaviours may shift (even if attitudes do not) and vice versa.

3. Conceptual framework

This research examines how gender norms shape attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy.

It does this by applying Bicchieri's social norms theory[48] as the core analytical lens, expanded through integration with IW's Women's Economic Equality (WEE) framework, and theories of pluralistic ignorance and positive deviance as shown in **Figure 6**.

The analysis focuses on two sub-themes

1 Caregiving & domestic roles

2 Economic roles

Figure 6 Conceptual framework of SNAPS 2024

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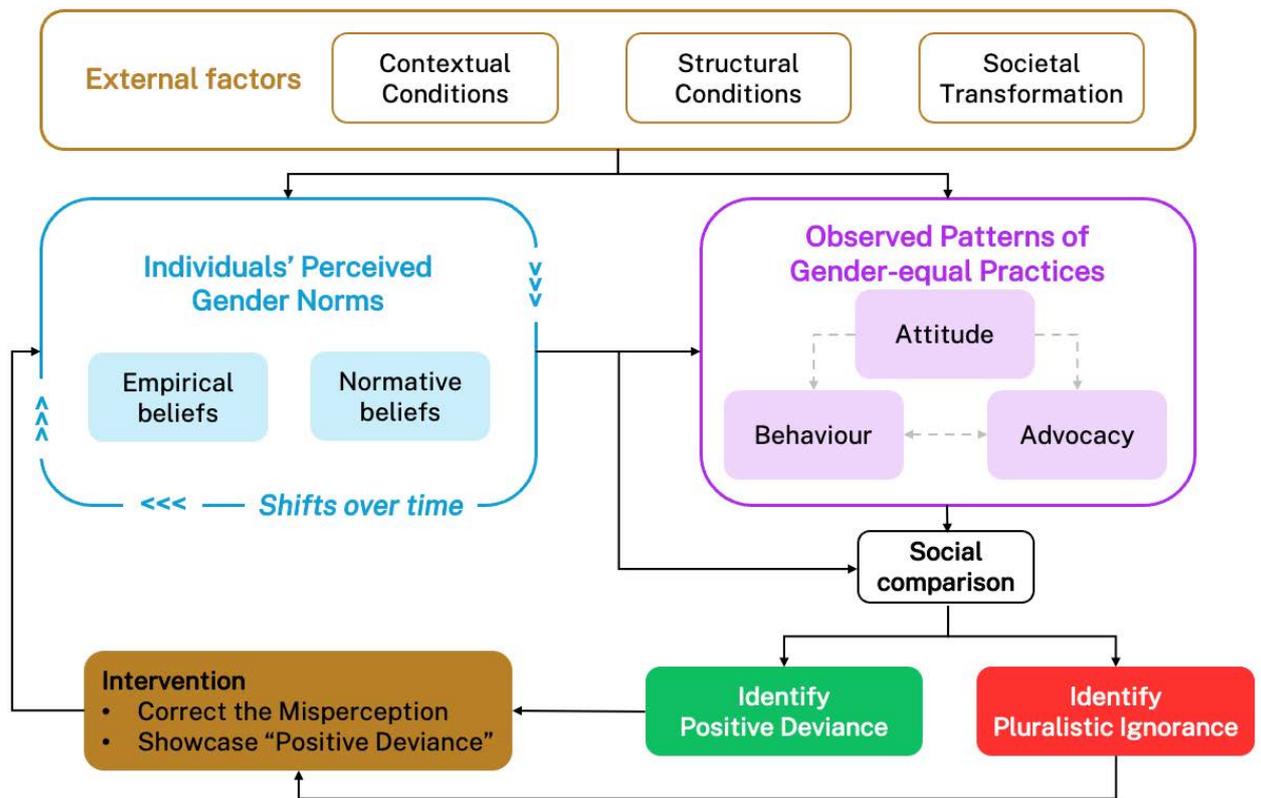
48   Bicchier's theory aligns with the internal Workstream 3 strategy, which includes the SNAPS initiative. Additionally, the program   and activities that IW implements in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam are closely linked to Bicchieri's concepts of normative and empirical expectations.

Gender norms emerge from individuals' social expectations, specifically from their empirical and normative beliefs about gender roles. Together with personal beliefs, these perceived norms guide gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy. Attitudes and behaviours often show a weak correlation; attitudes can weakly influence behavioural expression and advocacy efforts. As such, analysis of other contextual and structural factors remains important. When gender-equal practices are observed at the population level, they form collective patterns that allow for comparison with perceived norms.

Comparison serves two analytical purposes:

1. Identifying mismatches between perceived norms and observed gender-equal practices, revealing the presence of pluralistic ignorance and

2. Pinpointing positive deviance, or individuals demonstrating the most progressive practices and their defining characteristics.

These insights inform the design of targeted interventions aimed at correcting misperceptions of socially approved practices and showcasing successful deviations from traditional gender norms.

Our conceptual framework extends Bicchieri's model to capture the broader structural and contextual drivers of behaviour change. It recognises that while gender norms manifest at individual/group levels, they are embedded within larger systems of demographic conditions, institutional structures, and societal transformations. Contextual factors such as policy settings (e.g. flexible work arrangement, leave entitlements, pay transparency), accessibility of these supports, and resource availability (e.g. financial means, family support) critically shape the expression of gender norms.

This structural approach also aligns closely with the WEE framework, which underscores the role of policy, legislative, and institutional enablers in advancing gender equality. Adopting this approach strengthens cross-country analysis by explaining why individuals with similar characteristics may exhibit different gender-equality practices. As such, it highlights whether certain institutional or contextual factors shape individual preferences and enable or constrain those gender-equal practices.

4. Research design and methodology

This study used a mixed qualitative and quantitative approach to research to address the following research questions...

1. Gender-equal attitudes and practices

a. **Quantitative analysis:** What percentage of the target population holds gender-equal attitudes and behaviours, and advocates for gender equality?

b. **Quantitative analysis:** What is the gap between participants' perceptions and the observed prevalence of gender equality support and gender-equal behaviours?

2. Characteristics associated with gender-equal attitudes and practices

a. **Quantitative analysis:** What are the key socio-demographic differences among these groups?

b. **Quantitative analysis:** What factors influence attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy towards gender equality?

c. **Quantitative analysis:** To what extent does witnessing shifts in gender norms, through observed behaviours and changing expectations, encourage the translation of gender-equal attitudes into behaviours and advocacy?

3. Factors influencing gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and social norms

a. **Qualitative analysis:** What factors influence attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy towards gender equality?

b. **Qualitative analysis:** To what extent does witnessing shifts in gender norms, through observed behaviours and changing expectations, encourage the translation of gender-equal attitudes into behaviours and advocacy?

4. Shifts in gender norms

a. **Quantitative analysis:** To what extent have gender norms changed over time, as reflected in SNAPS data across waves?

b. **Qualitative analysis:** What societal shifts, either current or anticipated, are accompanying changes in gender norms, and how might these transformations affect individuals, communities, and power dynamics within society?

Additionally, each research question explored the two sub-themes and their three complementary domains:

Caregiving & domestic roles

- **Childcare –** Caregiving responsibilities for children should be equally shared between partners.

- **Dependent adult care –** Caregiving responsibilities for dependent adult should be equally shared between partners.

- **Housework –** Caregiving and housework responsibilities should be equally shared between partners.

Economic roles

- **Earning family income –** Earning responsibilities for the family should be equally shared between partners.

- **Job suitability –** Gender should not determine a person's ability to perform a particular job.

- **Women in leadership –** Gender should not determine a person's ability to be a good leader.

The analysis also distinguished between aspirational and actual behaviours. A detailed explanation of how behaviours were captured can be found in **Note 3 – Annex 1.**

4.1 Quantitative data collection and analysis

Quantitative data was collected through an online survey of **8,000 participants** (2,000 in each country) **aged 18–40** residing in urban areas of **Indonesia**, **Malaysia**, the **Philippines**, and **Vietnam** between October and November 2024.

This demographic was specifically targeted by IW to provide insights into a core working-age population located in areas aligned with the initiative's policy and programming priorities. The data collection was designed to achieve a gender quota (roughly **50% women** and **50% men**, but also inclusive of genders beyond the binary), and other demographic quotas based on age and regional location to closely reflect the demographic compositions.[49] Note 7 in **Annex 1** shows the demographic characteristics of the online participants.

The online survey asked questions about participants' behaviours, attitudes, advocacy, and empirical and normative expectations related to gender equality, along with their demographic characteristics. A complete list of survey questions can be found at **Annex 4**, including the variable constructions.[50][51][52][53]

The following analyses have been conducted:

- **Descriptive analysis:** For each gender norm, we examined the percentage of participants who demonstrated gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and identified as engaging in advocacy.[50] All descriptive statistics were calculated accounting for survey weights.[51]

- **Difference of means tests:** For each domain, we compared participants' perceptions of, and actual, gender-equal attitudes and behaviours.

- **Latent profile (segmentation) analysis (see Note 4 - Annex 1 for further methodological notes):** We conducted segmentation analysis to identify distinct participant profiles based on their attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy across each sub-theme. We also examined expectations and socio-demographic factors associated with each profile.

- **Multivariate regression analysis (see Note 5 - Annex 1 for further methodological notes):** For each gender norm, we explored key characteristics[52] associated with gender-equal behaviours and advocacy for gender equality.[53]

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49   The representativeness quota on age group and regional location was based on the most updated population census for each country available via open sources, as proposed by the online data collection partner, Ipsos. We also included additional quotas such as an even mix (50:50) of broad binary quotas on marital status (i.e. married/partnered and not married/partnered) and a minimum of 100 participants working as entrepreneurs (i.e. 5% quota) for each country. The sample generally met the imposed demographic quotas.

50   Advocacy refers to supporting a cause, either publicly (e.g., signing an online petition, attending a demonstration or a rally, or joining a gender equality committee at work) or privately (e.g., personal discussions about gender differences, and what can be done about it).

51   The online survey partner, Ipsos, applied a random iterative method (commonly known as "rake weighting") to construct the survey weighting scheme. This approach adjusted the survey sample to align with the demographic profile of urban residents aged 18–40 in each country, based on age, gender, and regional location. The weighting scheme for each country only needed 6 iterations for Indonesia and Malaysia respectively, 7 for the Philippines, and 4 for Vietnam (compared to the system's limit of 50). This implies that the initial sample was already well-balanced and representative of the target population.

52   Gender-equal behaviours were defined as equal sharing of responsibilities or role reversals challenging traditional gender norms, such as men taking on more childcare responsibilities or women taking more responsibilities in earning family income.

53   All regressions were estimated using robust standard errors.

4.2 Qualitative data collection and analysis

While the quantitative component revealed the prevalence of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy, and associated socio-demographic characteristics, the qualitative component offered a more nuanced understanding of mediating factors.

In-depth interviews with the public and consultations with experts and stakeholders helped explore how and why these views form and vary. Qualitative insights served to contextualise survey results, test hypotheses, and strengthened data triangulation.

From November 2024 to August 2025, a total of **42** members of the public were interviewed (15 in Indonesia, 9 in Malaysia, 7 in the Philippines, and 11 in Vietnam). Additionally, **19 interviews** were conducted with experts across the four countries.

Interviews were followed by in-country validation workshops and focus groups to present preliminary findings and collect further insights from partners and stakeholders. **60 participants** were involved in validation workshops across three countries of Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam in May 2025 (note that Malaysia was not included, as it was not within the original scope of this project). This results in a total qualitative participant sample of **121**.

This multi-layered approach ensured both bottom-up and top-down perspectives on gender norms and the factors shaping them across Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam.

We used thematic coding to analyse the qualitative data, using a combination of predefined and emergent themes. We then triangulated the findings with secondary sources from the literature to enhance the robustness and depth of the analysis.

We also undertook literature reviews to inform the Contextual Background and Societal Transformations sections. The literature reviews concentrated predominantly on understanding context and social transformations in the case countries analysed, however global literature was also perused on trends where country-specific data was limited or to gain a broader context for the analysis.

We focused predominantly on peer-reviewed academic literature and supplemented this with grey literature from UN-level or other reputable international and local authors where appropriate.

More detail on the qualitative sample and methodology is available in **Annex 2**.
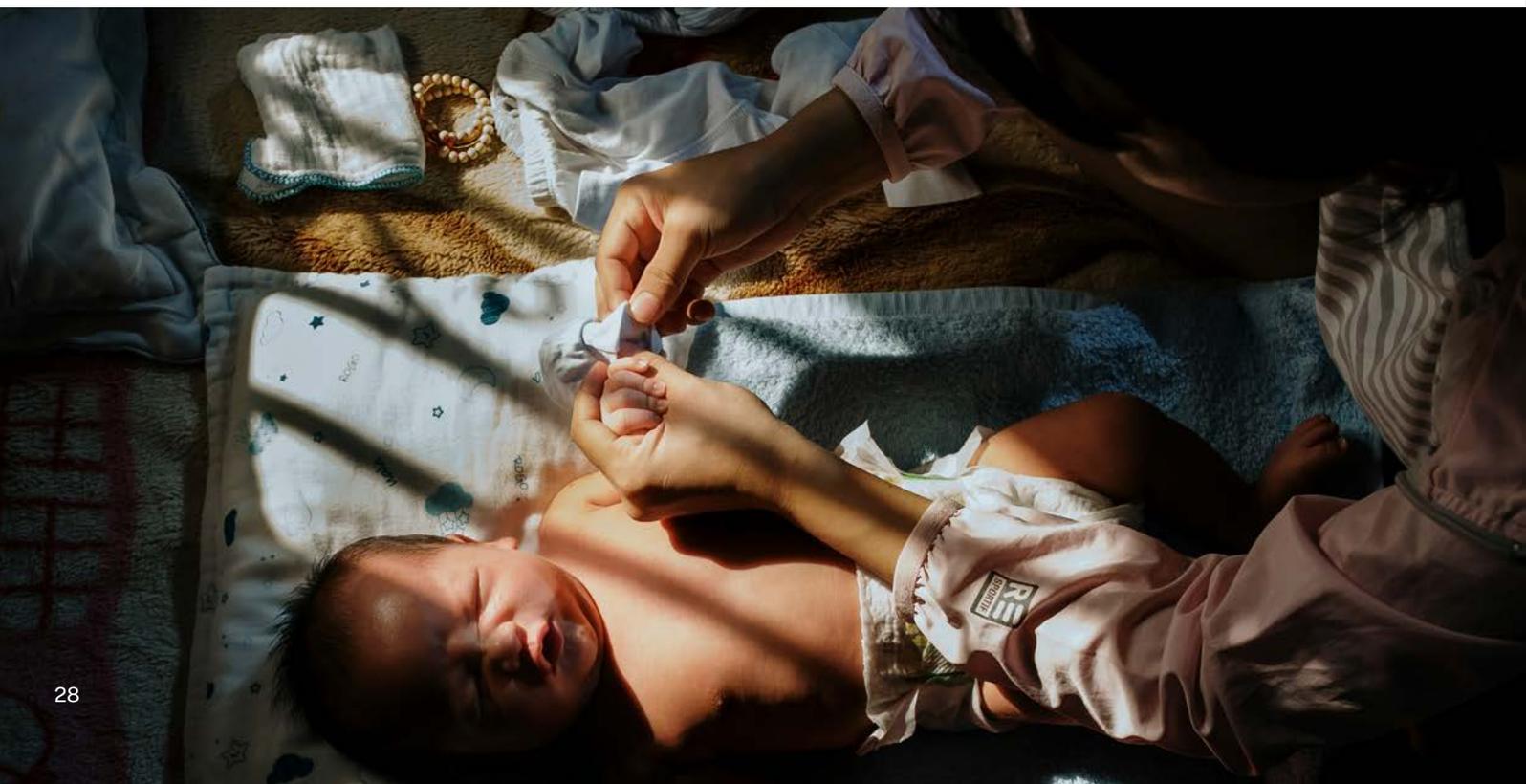
5. Cross-country analysis

5.1 Gender-equal attitudes and practices

This section responds to the following research questions:

- What percentage of the target population holds gender-equal attitudes and behaviours, and advocates for gender equality?

- What is the gap between participants' perceptions and the observed prevalence of gender equality attitudes and gender-equal behaviours?

To answer these questions, we examined the percentage of survey participants who held gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and engaged in advocacy related to caregiving and domestic, and economic roles (**section 5.1.1**).

We further compared the difference in means between participants perceived versus actual gender-equal support and gender-equal behaviour to identify pluralistic ignorance (**section 5.1.2**).

5.1.1 Prevalence of gender-equal attitudes and practices

This section presents survey results and compares the four countries in terms of the prevalence of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours (reported as actual or aspirational), and advocacy.

A detailed explanation of how behaviours were captured can be found in **Note 3 – Annex 1**. For more in-depth analysis and country-specific illustrations, please refer to the respective country sections.

Note: Figure 7 presents the percentage of gender-equal responses regarding Caregiving and Domestic roles among women and men, aggregated across four countries. The analysis covers the domains of Childcare, Dependent Adult Care, and Housework, based on SNAPS survey data in 2024. A more detailed explanation of how behaviours were captured can be found in Note 3 – Annex 1. For detailed analysis and country-specific illustrations, please refer to the respective country sections.

Caregiving & domestic roles

Key takeaways

- **Strong gender-equal attitudes existed across all countries:** but these were stronger for women than for men, as was the likelihood of engaging in gender-equal advocacy around Caregiving and Domestic roles.

- **There remains gap between gender-equal attitudes and actual behaviours, though behaviour varied across domain:** Actual behaviour varied by domain with Dependent Adult Care being the most equally shared across all countries, followed by Childcare and Housework. This pattern aligns with the qualitative findings, which similarly suggested that men were more likely to take on tasks such as childcare or cooking than cleaning or housework.

Figure 7 Gender-equal attitudes and practices in Caregiving and Domestic roles

	Women	Attitude	Men
	86%	Childcare	80%
	81%	Dependent Adult Care	74%
	86%	Housework	79%

Aspirational Behaviour

Women		Men
92%	Childcare	75%
95%	Dependent Adult Care	80%
93%	Housework	71%

Actual Behaviour

Women		Men
67%	Childcare	65%
80%	Dependent Adult Care	71%
68%	Housework	62%

Advocacy

Women		Men
79%	Childcare	68%
80%	Dependent Adult Care	70%
81%	Housework	69%
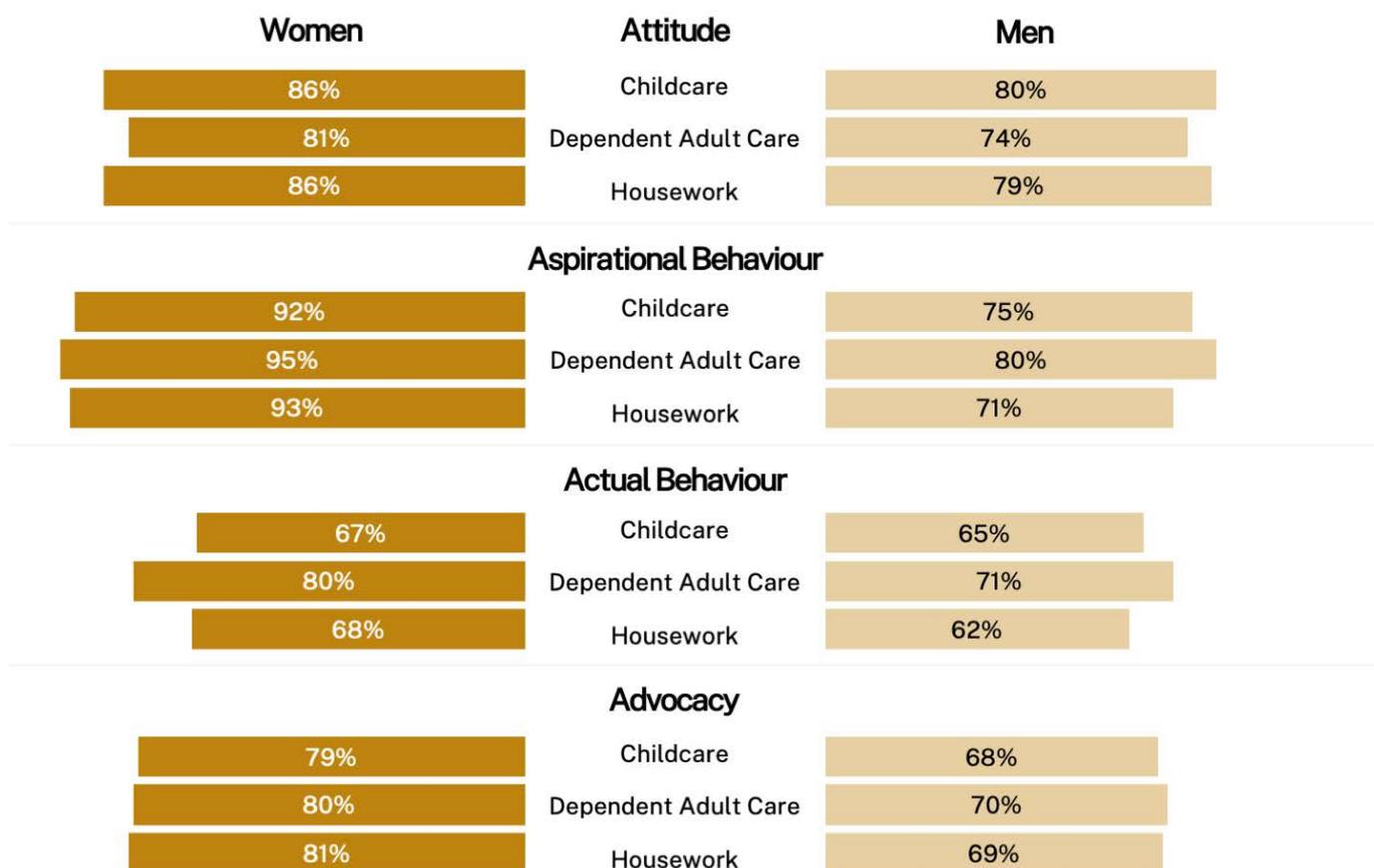
Cross-country analysis

- **Strong gender-equal attitudes towards Caregiving and Domestic roles were present across all countries:** Around 72–92% of women and 63–88% of men reported gender-equal attitudes in Childcare, Dependent Adult Care, and Housework. Men expressed relatively lower levels of support for gender-equal sharing in Caregiving and Domestic roles compared to women.

- **Actual behaviour in Caregiving and Domestic roles varied across domains:** While attitudes were strongly gender-equal, actual behaviour was lower, showing an attitude–behaviour gap that may reflect the influence of social expectations from partners, family, and the community.

- **Dependent Adult Care was the most equally shared across countries:** the majority reported gender-balanced responsibilities (59–69% shared; women 14–31% do more, men 4–23% do more). This is consistent with the literature which highlights that, compared to other domains, there is a greater expectation of more gender-equal adult care across collectivist cultural settings.[54][55][56][57]

- **Childcare was moderately equally shared** at 47% to 61%, but women still took on much of the work. Among those who do more, 31-43% were women compared with only 6-14% men.

- **Housework was the least equally shared** at 46 to 56%, with women most likely to report carrying the extra load (32-48% women doing more compared with 6-20% men doing more).

- **Advocacy for gender equality in Caregiving and Domestic roles was weaker among men:** Within each country and domain, women were more likely than men to identify as advocates. The gender gap ranges from 6 to 18 percentage points. The gender gap in advocacy for Childcare was largest in Indonesia (59% of men compared with 77% of women) and smallest in Vietnam (81% of men compared with 88% of women) and the Philippines (76% of men compared with 82% of women). Men's advocacy in Indonesia (59%-65%) and Malaysia (56%-60%) is consistently lower than in the Philippines (74%-76%) and Vietnam (79%-81%). Men's lower advocacy might reflect the higher social costs and possible sanctions they face for challenging traditional norms.

- **Among participants who have not married or do not have children, women's aspirations for gender-equal behaviours closely mirrored their gender-equal attitudes for Caregiving and Domestic roles:** A large majority across countries expressed aspirations for gender-equal sharing of these responsibilities, with women consistently more supportive than men (72–84% of women compared with 55–78% of men). While gender-equal sharing is the most common aspiration among women, the next most common preference is for men to do more. Among men, gender-equal sharing is also the most common aspiration, followed by a preference for women to do more. In addition, the gap between aspirations and actual behaviours may reflect a suppressed demand for equality, which can potentially be driven by social norms, expectations, or structural barriers, which calls for further investigation to inform effective interventions.

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54 Estioko et al. 2023
55 Grosse 2025
56 Makhtar et al. 2023
57 Eeuwijk 2006

Economic roles

This section compares survey results across the four countries looking at the prevalence of gender-equal attitudes, aspirations, actual behaviours and advocacy.

A detailed explanation of how behaviours were captured can be found in **Note 3 – Annex 1.**

Key takeaways

- **Attitudes towards economic roles were mostly gender-equal,** but in all countries, this was lowest in the Earning Family Income domain, reflective of the persistent male breadwinner norm. This was also highlighted in the qualitative interviews, where participants often acknowledged that though gender norms were evolving there was nonetheless, an enduring expectation of the husband-breadwinner/wife-caregiver role divide.

- **Economic attitudes often did not translate to behaviours:** Women were the main or equal earner in half of households studied. Qualitative findings noted that households with women as the primary earner may reflect an economic necessity for dual income households, rather than a genuine shift in normative expectations favouring gender equality, reflecting behavioural convergence without gender norms change. This was expressed by Participant 4 (Philippines), a professional woman, who said: "The running joke at home is, 'Unless you're tech-conglomerate-founder rich, can you really afford not to work in this economy?' Part of it is financial insecurity."

- **Economic advocacy showed a consistent gender gap:** This was mirrored in the validation workshops, where participants reflected that though important, advocacy is often seen by men as 'women's work' and can attract stigmatisation.

Figure 8 Gender-equal attitudes and practices in Economic roles

	Women	Attitude	Men
	73%	Earning Family Income	65%
	88%	Job Suitability	80%
	90%	Leadership	83%

	Women	Aspirational Behaviour	Men
	69%	Earning Family Income	75%
	69%	Job Suitability	64%
	89%	Leadership	

	Women	Actual Behaviour	Men
	60%	Earning Family Income	68%
	62%	Job Suitability	63%
	50%	Leadership	

	Women	Advocacy	Men
	78%	Earning Family Income	72%
	82%	Job Suitability	74%
	82%	Leadership	73%
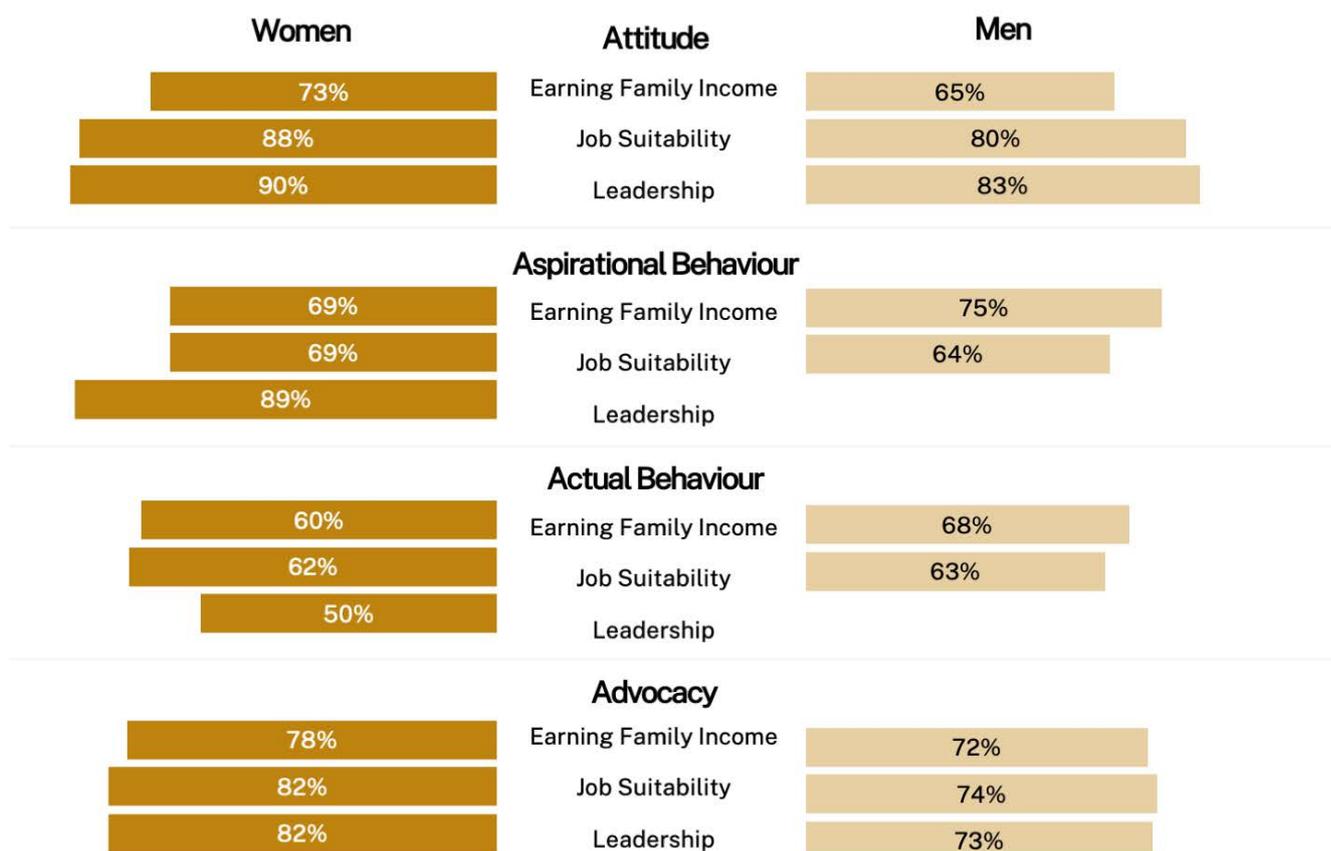
Cross-country analysis

- **Economic attitudes were strongly gender-equal in most domains: Across three domains - Earning Family Income, Job Suitability, and Leadership - support** for equality was generally high (**86–96%** among women and **72–87%** among men). However, support was lower for Earning Family Income (**63%** among women and as low as **50%** among men in Indonesia). High support elsewhere indicates strong personal normative beliefs, but breadwinner expectations reveal residual empirical expectations and structural factors privileging men as primary earners.

- **Economic behaviours trailed attitudes and varied by domain:** The majority of women (**54–81%**) worked outside the home. In terms of income, more gender-equal households – where women are equal or main earners – made up around half or more of households (**47–79%**), making households where men were the sole or main earners less common (**21–53%**). Engagement in non-traditional jobs was less common among women in Vietnam (**43%**) but more widespread in the other three countries (**60–81%**).

  Among men, such engagement was generally higher, although it remained lowest in Vietnam (**53–79%**). However, Leadership remained uneven, with employed women holding fewer leadership roles (**37–55%**) compared to men (**43–66%**), and Vietnam evidencing the lowest proportion of leaders for both women and men. The misalignment between the high workforce participation by women, the prevalence of gender-equal earning arrangements and low observed women's leadership suggested structural bottlenecks (policies, organisational gatekeeping, network access) alongside remaining normative expectations around women's authority.

- **Advocacy for economic equality showed a consistent gender gap:** In every country and domain, women were always more likely than men to identify as advocates (**66–89%** of women compared with **61–83%** of men). The smallest gaps appeared in Earning Family Income (**4 percent points**), where support was lowest overall (women **66–85%**, men **62–79%**). The largest gaps were in Leadership (**12 percent points**), which is also the strongest domain of advocacy (women **73–88%**, men **61–82%**). This widening gap was driven by women's advocacy climbing higher in Leadership, while men's levels remained comparatively steady across countries and domains. Rising women's advocacy in Leadership, combined with comparatively steady advocacy from men, is consistent with role-incongruity sanctions for men and slower update of normative expectations within men's reference networks.

- **Economic aspirations were more gender-equal than behaviours, but gaps varied by domain:** For Earning Family Income, aspirations for equality were well ahead of actual behaviour. In Job Suitability, aspirations and behaviours were closely aligned. But in Leadership, aspirations for equality remained high while women's actual representation lags, leaving the largest workplace gap. These gaps are likely driven by interdependent pressures (empirical/normative expectations) and structural frictions (maternity/paternity leave design, flexible work, promotion criteria).

5.1.2 Misperception of gender-equal attitudes and behaviours

This section explores the gap between participants' perceptions and the actual prevalence of gender-equal attitudes and behaviours for gender equality.

It focuses on whether individuals tend to underestimate how widely gender equality is supported and practiced in their communities (i.e. 'pluralistic ignorance' as per the conceptual framework). Understanding this perception gap helps identify areas where social norms may be misaligned with actual behaviours, shedding light on potential opportunities to correct the misperceptions and promote gender-equal practices. Given the study's focus on individuals aged 18–40 living in urban areas, questions on perceptions specifically asked participants to assess gender-equal attitudes and behaviours among 18–40-year-olds in urban areas of their country.

Caregiving & domestic roles

Key takeaways

- **Misperception of the gender-equal attitudes and behaviours, or pluralistic ignorance, existed and varied by country, gender and domain:** This suggests a potential opportunity to correct misperceived norms and accelerate progress toward gender equality.

- **Individuals tended to underestimate gender-equal practices more in Caregiving and Domestic roles than in Economic roles, particularly for attitudes rather than behaviours:** This suggests that while progress in sharing economic responsibilities is more visible, shifts in private or traditionally "feminine" domains remain less recognised, possibly due to enduring gendered stereotypes and the limited visibility of men's contributions in Caregiving and Domestic work.

- **Overall, women were more likely to underestimate the gender-equal attitudes and behaviours than men:** Notably, women underestimated gender-equal practices across most domains, except in Vietnam, where they slightly overestimated gender-equal behaviours in the Childcare domain. This may reflect women's lower normative expectations for gender equality, or a heightened sensitivity to lingering gender bias. Therefore, efforts to communicate progress and shift perceptions could help strengthen women's confidence in the pace of social change and collective support for equality.

Cross-country analysis

- **Both women and men in all four countries tend to underestimate gender-equal attitudes and behaviours in Childcare domain, indicating the consistent presence of pluralistic ignorance:** The extent of underestimation varied across countries and was generally stronger among women than men. Notably, only women in Vietnam slightly overestimated gender-equal behaviours in the Childcare domain, whereas men tended to overestimate such behaviours more broadly, suggesting that men may perceive progress toward equality as more advanced than it actually is.

- **Underestimations were weakest in Dependent Adult Care behaviours for women and men in all countries:** This may not necessarily be a deliberately gender-equal norm but rather could be indicative of existing cultural norms and gender-equal practices coinciding. This could be a "quick win" leveraged for interventions in terms of showing what gender equality in domestic settings looks like in practice. It is also consistent with existing cultural norms and has existing support (as some may already be doing it).

- **There is also room to address women's misperceptions towards gender-equal attitude and behaviours toward sharing Housework duties:** In the Housework domain, women in all countries underestimated, most prominently for attitudes rather than behaviours. Contrastingly, men were more likely to underestimate gender-equal attitudes, and overestimated gender-equal behaviours in all countries, except for Malaysia. Enduring social expectations around Housework likely persist.

- **The underestimation of the prevalence of both gender-equal attitudes and behaviours can be corrected by highlighting visible positive deviance in proximate reference networks:** For example, showcasing fathers who actively parent in the same kelurahan/barangay[58] can update empirical expectations for women, while careful normative cues (e.g., acceptance by respected men) can recalibrate men's perceived approval. Interventions should combine descriptive correction (what peers do) with normative reframing (credible approval from partners/elders) and structural supports (outsourced services, equitable scheduling) to convert beliefs into feasible practice. Interventions should also differentiate messaging between countries, genders, attitudes and behaviours.

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58 Kelurahan and Barangay refer to the village level in Indonesia and the Philippines, respectively.

Figure 9 Women's misperception in gender-equal attitudes and behaviours – Caregiving and Domestic roles

Note: This graph illustrates the difference between perceived and actual levels of gender equality by domain (Childcare, Dependent Adult Care, and Housework) and dimension (attitudes and behaviours) for women across four countries, based on 2024 SNAPS survey data. The black dashed diagonal line represents the 45-degree reference line. Data points along the line indicate alignment between perception and actual gender-equal attitudes and behaviours. Points to the left represent an underestimation of gender equality, where people perceive less equality than it actually exists. Points to the right indicate an overestimation, where perceived equality exceeds actual equality.

Figure 10 Men's misperception in gender-equal attitudes and behaviours – Caregiving and Domestic roles

Note: This graph illustrates the difference between perceived and actual levels of gender equality by domain (Childcare, Dependent Adult Care, and Housework) and dimension (attitudes and behaviours) for men across four countries, based on 2024 SNAPS survey data. The black dashed diagonal line represents the 45-degree reference line. Data points along the line indicate alignment between perception and actual gender-equal attitudes and behaviours. Points to the left represent an underestimation of gender equality, where people perceive less equality than it actually exists. Points to the right indicate an overestimation, where perceived equality exceeds actual equality.

Economic roles

Key takeaways

- **Both women and men underestimated the prevalence of gender-equal attitudes and behaviours in Economic roles:** The misperceptions varied significantly by domain and country. Compared to the Caregiving and Domestic role, overestimation of gender-equality in Economic roles is more pronounced.

- **Women were more likely to underestimate gender-equal attitudes than gender-equal behaviours:** Specifically, women tended to overestimate gender-equal behaviours, only except in Job Suitability for those in Indonesia and Earning Family Income for those in Vietnam.

- **Men tended to underestimate gender-equal attitudes in Leadership and Job Suitability across all four countries:** The perception in Earnings Family Income were more mixed with both underestimation and overestimation.

Cross-country analysis

- **Indonesia and Malaysia showed similar patterns:** Women in both countries had relatively accurate estimations of gender-equal attitudes toward Earning Family Income but tended to overestimate gender-equal behaviours. Men in Indonesia and Malaysia particularly overestimated both gender-equal attitudes and behaviours in the Earning Family Income domain.

- **Results were also similar in the Philippines and Vietnam:** Meanwhile, in the Philippines and Vietnam, gender-equal attitudes in this domain were underestimated by women and men (though this was only minimal for men in the Philippines). Gender-equal behaviours were similarly underestimated, except among women in the Philippines.

- **Underestimations of gender-equal attitudes in Job Suitability and Leadership domains were widespread:** While women consistently underestimated gender-equal attitudes in these domains, men showed a mix of under-and overestimation. This may partly reflect women's perception of the challenges faced by women in leadership and non-traditional work roles, which could contribute to the impression that public support for women in these roles is limited.

- **Overestimations in gender-equal behaviours towards Leadership and Job Suitability were pervasive, except in Indonesia where both women and men underestimated the gender-equal behaviours towards Job Suitability:** Positive deviance in Leadership and Job Suitability may contribute to the overestimation of gender-equal behaviours, as exceptional cases of women's success in these domains could create the perception that gender equality is more widespread than it actually is. This effect may be reinforced when such successes are more visible or publicly recognised, leading both women and men to generalise from these outliers.

Figure 11 Women's misperception in gender-equal attitudes and behaviours – Economic roles

Women - Economic roles

Note: This graph illustrates the difference between perceived and actual levels of gender equality by domain (Earning Family Income, Job Suitability and Leadership status) and dimension (attitudes and behaviours) for women across four countries, based on 2024 SNAPS survey data. The black dashed diagonal line represents the 45-degree reference line. Data points along the line indicate alignment between perception and actual gender-equal attitudes and behaviours. Points to the left represent an underestimation of gender equality, where people perceive less equality than it actually exists. Points to the right indicate an overestimation, where perceived equality exceeds actual equality.

Figure 12 Men's misperception in gender-equal attitudes and behaviours – Economic roles

Men - Economic roles

Note: This graph illustrates the difference between perceived and actual levels of gender equality by domain (Earning Family Income, Job Suitability and Leadership status) and dimension (attitudes and behaviours) for men across four countries, based on 2024 SNAPS survey data. The black dashed diagonal line represents the 45-degree reference line. Data points along the line indicate alignment between perception and actual gender-equal attitudes and behaviours. Points to the left represent an underestimation of gender equality, where people perceive less equality than it actually exists. Points to the right indicate an overestimation, where perceived equality exceeds actual equality.

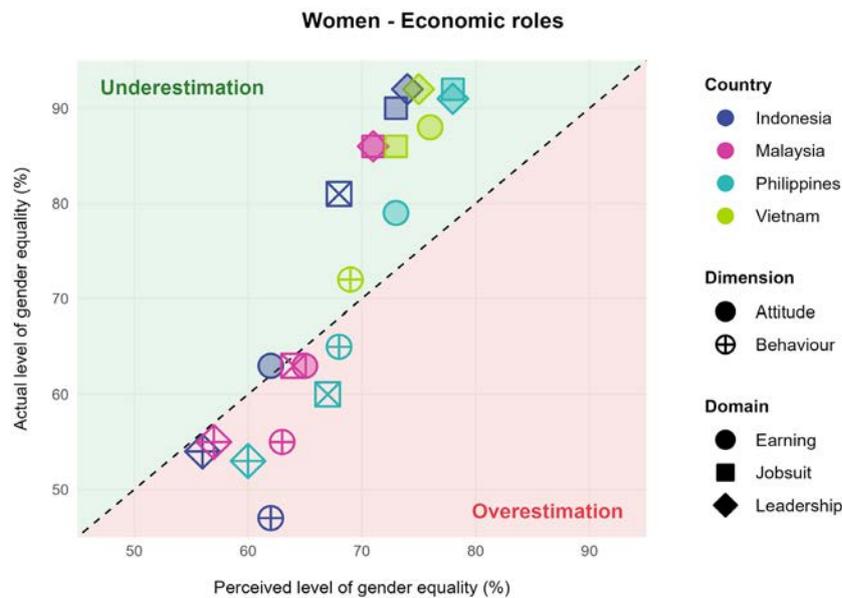## 5.2 Characteristics associated with gender-equal attitudes and practices

In this section, we explore the interconnectedness between gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy – and the characteristics associated with these practices - through regression and then segmentation analysis.

This section helps answer the following research questions:

- **What are the key socio-demographic differences among people who model gender-equal behaviours and advocate for gender equality?**

- **What factors influence attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy towards gender equality?**

- **To what extent does witnessing shifts in gender norms, through observed behaviours and changing expectations, encourage the translation of gender-equal attitudes into behaviours and advocacy?**

5.2.1 Key characteristics associated with gender-equal practices

In this section, we examined the socio-demographic differences associated with individuals who model gender-equal behaviours or act as gender equality advocates, using regression analysis. Given the cross-sectional nature of the data, the results should be interpreted as associations rather than causal relationships. See further methodological notes in **Annex 1**.

This analysis highlighted myriad implications for gender equality interventions, including that:

- **Norm-breaking behaviours** could be highlighted and made more visible, contributing to wider social acceptance. This might include highlighting descriptive normative change (such as "many families now share caregiving equally").

- Interventions could also look to **reducing perceived social sanctions for gender-equal behaviours** and encouraging **collective shifts**, not just individual advocacy.

- **Specific reference and demographic groups could also be targeted for interventions**, ensuring change is visible and accepted within groups that matter to the individual an intervention seeks to change.

> **Key takeaways**
>
> - **Consistent with Bicchieri's[59] work, attitudes were more likely to be associated with advocacy than behaviours:** The validation workshops with gender equality stakeholders highlighted that while gender-equal attitude-holders may be gender equality advocates, it nonetheless remains a challenge for them to model gender-equal behaviours in their personal lives due to stigmatisation or pushback, including not wanting to cause friction or disrupt personal relationships, particularly in the private sphere.
>
> - **Gender-equal empirical expectations influenced women's behaviours positively, but the link was sometimes negative for men:** Gender-equal normative expectations appear to have weaker association with behaviour than empirical ones.

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59 Bicchieri 2017

Caregiving & domestic roles

Key takeaways

- **Attitudes were consistently associated with advocacy but not corresponding behaviours:** This suggested there was not a linear progression between attitudes, behaviours and advocacy. During validation workshops, public advocacy (as opposed to private advocacy within the home) was seen as a means to signal support for gender-equal values without risking penalties for challenging entrenched norms through requesting or modelling gender-equal behaviour within the household.

- **Gender-equal empirical expectations were positively associated with women's gender-equal behaviours, but for men the link was sometimes negative:** For men, this could be due to differences in reference networks that are more conservative or traditional, for instance. For women, this finding suggests that when women observe others engaging in gender-equal practices they feel more able to do the same. The findings, triangulated across qualitative and quantitative data points, suggest that at least some women are tending to be more influenced by peers who are already navigating gender-equal roles, whilst men may be more embedded in networks where traditional roles are still the norm, and deviation is socially penalised. The same empirical reality may therefore be interpreted differently depending on whom individuals observe and whose approval they seek.

- **Overall, empirical expectations tend to have statistically significant connection with gender-equal caregiving and domestic role behaviours than normative expectations:** This is consistent with Bicchieri's[60] argument that behavioural change is often driven by empirical expectations, and may be particularly relevant where norms are contested, people are uncertain about what is socially approved (something that may vary across countries depending on context, religion etc.) and there is a gap between public acceptance and private practice. Additionally, expectations are not associated with advocacy, which may suggest that advocacy is more driven by an overlapping combination of tokenistic compliance or individual moral preferences. This reinforces that advocacy alone is insufficient for normative change unless it is also accompanied by visible behavioural shifts and changes in empirical expectations within reference networks.

- **Socio-demographic factors were often tied to gender:** Across all caregiving and domestic roles, women's gender-equal behaviours were consistently tied to gender-equal upbringing, gender-equal media exposure, and working status, while advocacy was universally tied to gender-equal attitudes. In contrast, men's behaviours were more shaped by local context and individual circumstances, such as age and having disability.

- **Positive factors for women can be negative for men:** Notably, while socialisation factors (gender-equal upbringing and media exposure), consistently promoted women's gender-equal behaviours, for men these same factors played either a weaker or a negative role, suggesting that men's engagement was more context-dependent. Qualitative work found one case to suggest that men may resist more gender-equal behaviours modelled in their upbringings where such behaviours were the result of necessity (i.e. single mothers raising sons with absent fathers, necessitating that mothers both work and care).

- **Ethnicity and regional location were frequently related to gender equality outcomes in countries:** For instance, those who identified as Malay or Chinese (Malaysia), or residing in Java (Indonesia) or Luzon (Philippines), or as Kinh (Vietnam) differed to others in their country when it came to attitudes and behaviours. This indicates that gender-equal behaviours and advocacy are shaped, at least partially, by broader cultural and political contexts

For more details including other socio-demographic characteristics, see individual country profiles.

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60 Bicchieri 2017

Figure 13 Key characteristics associated with gender-equal practices in Caregiving and Domestic roles

Childcare

	Behaviours		Advocacy	
Indonesia	GE Attitudes	M ↓	GE Attitudes	M ↑
	GE Empirical expectations	W ↑		W ↑
	GE Normative expectations	M ↓		
Malaysia			GE Attitudes	M ↑
				W ↑
Philippines	GE Attitudes	W ↑	GE Attitudes	W ↑
	GE Empirical expectations	W ↑		
Vietnam	GE Empirical expectations	W ↑	GE Attitudes	M ↑
				W ↑
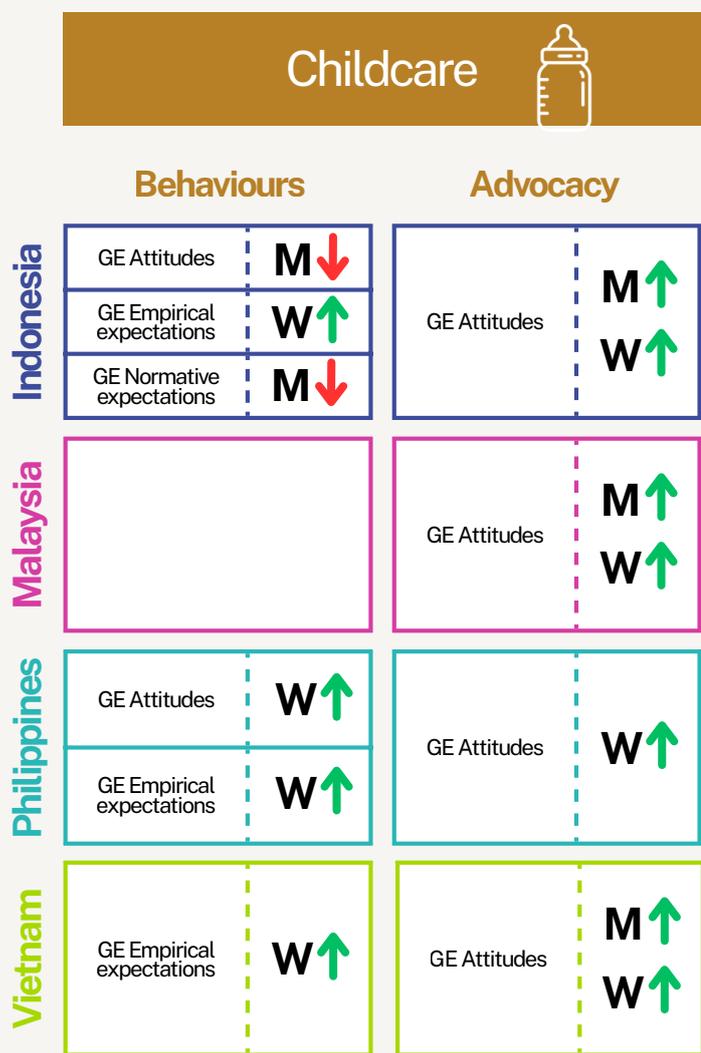
Note: ↓ indicates a negative association, ↑ indicates a positive association. Bolded font indicates that all four countries share a common factor. Blank cells indicate there was no statistically significant relationship at the 5% confidence level.

Dependent adult care

	Behaviours		Advocacy	
Indonesia	GE Empirical expectations	M ↓	GE Attitudes	M ↑
				W ↑
Malaysia			GE Attitudes	W ↑
Philippines			GE Attitudes	M ↑
				W ↑
Vietnam	GE Empirical expectations	M ↓	GE Attitudes	M ↑
		W ↑		W ↑

Housework

	Behaviours		Advocacy	
Indonesia	GE Empirical expectations	W ↑	GE Attitudes	M ↑
				W ↑
Malaysia	GE Empirical expectations	W ↑	GE Attitudes	M ↑
				W ↑
Philippines	GE Empirical expectations	W ↑	GE Attitudes	W ↑
	GE Normative expectations	W ↓		
Vietnam	GE Empirical expectations	W ↑	GE Attitudes	M ↑
	GE Normative expectations			W ↑

Economic roles

Key takeaways

- **Among women, attitudes consistently show significant association with advocacy** but translated into behaviour only in specific domains like Job Suitability, suggesting a misalignment between personal beliefs and social expectations (and conflicts with other systemic factors driving behaviours).

  This finding is supported in the qualitative work which suggested barriers to women's workforce participation included partners' lack of support for their partners' employment (overruling or more commonly, not participating in care), insufficient access to care services and a lack of gender-responsive work arrangements (i.e. flexible work), among others. In contrast, men showed a stronger alignment between attitudes and behaviour, enabling both advocacy and action across domains.

- **Gender-equal empirical expectations around Job Suitability were related to gender-equal behaviour across countries and genders:** In other domains, this relationship was context-specific, emerging only in Vietnam and Malaysia.

- **Across Economic roles, women's gender-equal behaviours were consistently associated with gender-equal upbringing, working status, and education, and in some cases, with gender-equal media exposure:** In contrast, men's behaviour depended on country-specific factors such as education, region, religion, or content-specific media exposure. For example, while media exposure to gender-equal depictions in caring professions (i.e., men shown in traditionally feminised roles such as nursing) was positively associated with men's gender-equal engagement, exposure to gender-equal depictions in STEM fields (i.e., women shown in science, engineering, technology or mathematics roles) was consistently associated with lower gender-equal engagement.

- **Similar to Caregiving and Domestic roles, socialisation had a greater effect on women than men:** For example, gender-equal upbringing and media exposure consistently promoted women's gender-equal behaviours, while for men these same factors showed weaker or in some cases negative correlations with behaviours. There are many possible explanations for these findings that warrant further research.

Figure 14 Key characteristics associated with gender-equal practices in Economic roles

Family income

	Behaviours	Advocacy
Indonesia	GE Attitudes — M↑	GE Attitudes — M↑ W↑
Malaysia	GE Attitudes — M↑ / GE Normative expectations — W↑	GE Attitudes — M↑ W↑
Philippines	(blank)	GE Attitudes — M↑ W↑
Vietnam	GE Attitudes — M↑ / GE Empirical expectations — M↑	GE Attitudes — M↑ W↑

Job suitability

	Behaviours	Advocacy
Indonesia	GE Attitudes — M↑ W↑ / GE Empirical expectations — M↑ W↑	GE Attitudes — M↑ W↑
Malaysia	GE Attitudes — M↑ W↑ / GE Empirical expectations — M↑ W↑	GE Attitudes — M↑ W↑
Philippines	GE Attitudes — M↑ / GE Empirical expectations — M↑ W↑	GE Attitudes — M↑ W↑
Vietnam	GE Attitudes — M↑ W↑ / GE Empirical expectations — M↑ W↑	GE Attitudes — M↑ W↑

Leadership

	Behaviours	Advocacy
Indonesia	(blank)	GE Attitudes — W↑
Malaysia	GE Empirical expectations — W↑	GE Attitudes — W↑
Philippines	(blank)	GE Attitudes — W↑
Vietnam	GE Empirical expectations — W↑ / Normative expectations — W↑	GE Attitudes — W↑

Note: ↓ indicates a negative association, ↑ indicates a positive association. Bolded font indicates that all four countries share a common factor. Blank cells indicate there was no statistically significant relationship at the 5% confidence level.

5.2.2 Interconnectedness between attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy

Segmentation analysis further classifies participants into distinct profiles of similar attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy for each domain within the two sub-themes of (1) caregiving and domestic and (2) economic roles.[61] The profiles distinguished between participants' strength of support for, or opposition to, gender equality (strong, moderate, and weak) and how actively or passively they supported gender equality through their behaviours and advocacy. Separate profiles were developed for women and men to reflect gender-specific differences within each sub-theme. In each case, profiles were labelled individually to reflect similarities and differences between the profiles within and between the genders, thus they are not directly comparable across the sub-themes.
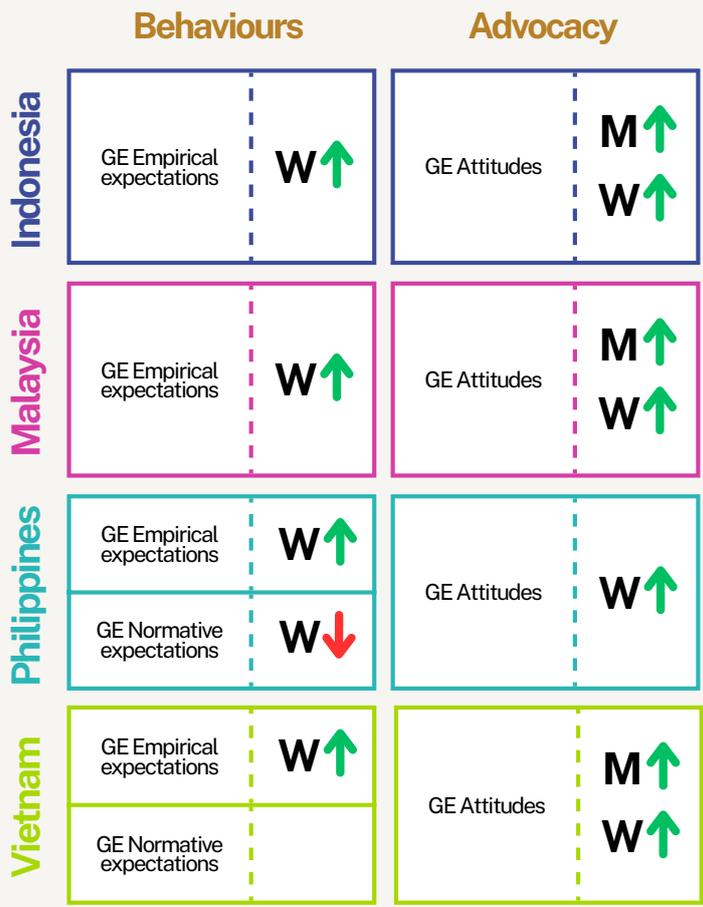
This analysis provides a more nuanced understanding of how attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy manifest across different segments of society. However, it relies on cross-sectional data (collected at a single point in time), which does not allow for directly testing how gender attitudes translate into behaviours and advocacy over time. The results should be interpreted with caution due to the use of pooled data across countries to ensure adequate sample sizes and more granular behaviours profiles. Further methodological notes can be found in Annex 1, and the limitations of this approach are also discussed in Section 6. To gain additional insights into how gender-equal attitudes can translate into behaviours and advocacy over time, the segmentation analysis findings were triangulated with insights from qualitative interviews, focus groups, and validation workshops.

It is noteworthy that the profiles were built relative to each domain and are consistent within each domain, separate for women and men (therefore cross-domain comparison is unachievable). The profiles for gender equality (GE) within the Childcare domain are relatively similar, but not identical, to the GE profiles in the Dependent Adult Care domain. Some profiles, such as **GE Opponents**, **Reluctant Leaders** and **Moderately strong GE supporters** profiles, appear as standalones because there is no closely matching profile in other domains. Domains with a greater diversity of combinations in gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy may result in a larger number of profiles.

The list of profiles identified in each domain is shown opposite.

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61   Note that the variable on advocacy within the job-suitability sub-theme was broadly framed in terms of advocacy for gender equality in the workplace, rather than specifically advocating that individuals of all genders are equally suited for any work role.

Figure 15 Profile composition across domains – Women

Childcare	69.5%	30.5%
Dependent Adult Care	54.0%	27.4% / 18.6%
Housework	37.8%	25.7% / 7.6% / 23.3% / 5.6%
Earning Family Income	65.7%	34.3%
Job Suitability	38.4%	24.1% / 12.2% / 21.3% / 4.0%
Leadership	58.9%	16.8% / 4.5% / 19.8%

■ Strong GE supporters　■ GE moderates　■ Passive GE supporters　Reluctant leaders　■ Weak GE supporters　■ Inconsistent GE supporters　■ GE opponent
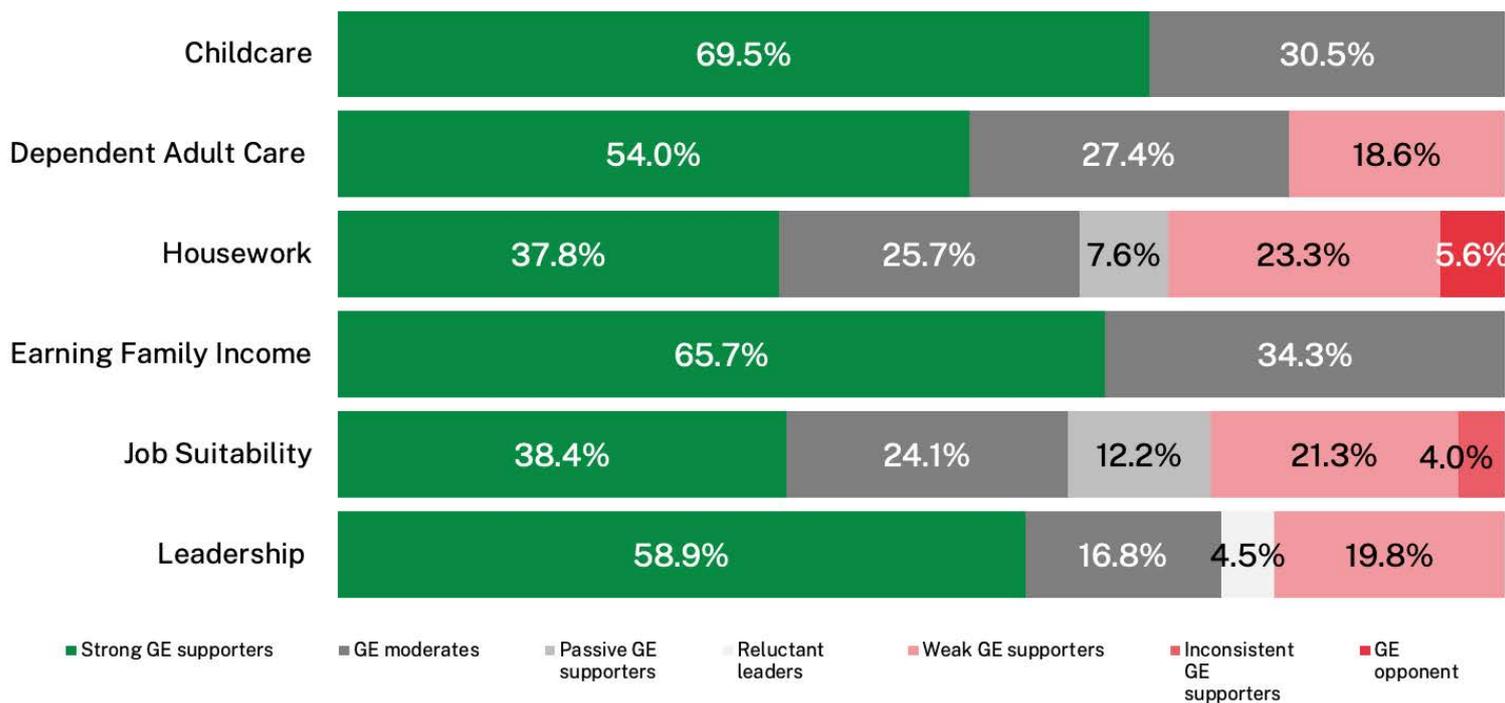
Figure 16 Profile composition across domains – Men

Childcare	66.5%	33.5%
Dependent Adult Care	37.4% / 5.1%	29.1% / 7.8% / 20.6%
Housework	26.4% / 17.4%	21.3% / 24.9% / 10.0%
Earning Family Income	53.9%	13.7% / 32.4%
Job Suitability	37.1%	13.5% / 12.4% / 30.9% / 6.0%

■ Strong GE supporters　■ Moderately strong GE supporters　■ GE Practitioners　■ GE moderates　■ Passive GE supporters　■ Weak GE supporters　■ Inconsistent GE supporters　■ GE opponent
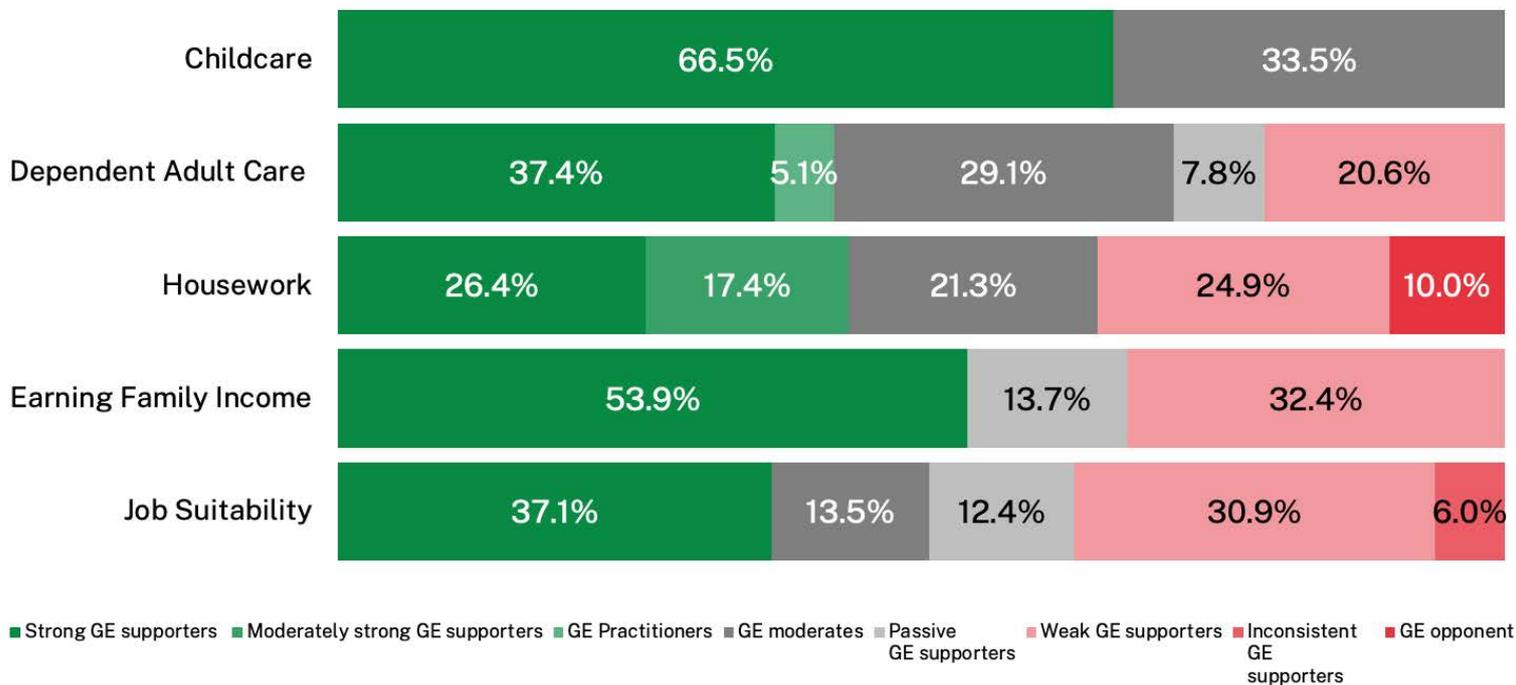
Note: These figures present the distinct profiles of participants identified within each domain for women and men. Profiles were determined through latent segmentation analysis based on participants' attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy, conducted separately for each domain. Analysis for the leadership domain is not available for men due to its irrelevance.

The domains

In this section we examine the distribution of profiles for women and men in six domains across countries, along with their characteristics in terms of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy.

The six domains are broken down across Caregiving & domestic roles and Economic roles:

Caregiving & domestic roles

1. **Childcare** – Caregiving responsibilities for children should be equally shared between partners.

2. **Dependent adult care** – Caregiving responsibilities for dependent adult should be equally shared between partners.

3. **Housework** – Caregiving and housework responsibilities should be equally shared between partners.

Economic roles

4. **Earning family income** – Earning responsibilities for the family should be equally shared between partners.

5. **Job suitability** – Gender should not determine a person's ability to perform a particular job.

6. **Women in leadership** – Gender should not determine a person's ability to be a good leader.

Caregiving & domestic roles

Key takeaways

- **Profiles were gendered:** Across Childcare, Dependent Adult Care, and Housework, men's profiles were shaped mainly by attitudes, while women's were driven by advocacy, which indicates that men's support for gender-equality in care roles reflects internal acknowledgement, whereas women's support is marked by a willingness to act publicly.

- **Profile membership was closely related to prevailing norms and other situational factors:** Gender-equal normative expectations consistently show relationship with profile membership across countries and domains, underscoring the importance of perceived peer/community approval. Yet contextual factors, including age, education, region, religion, employment/self-employment, parental status, and disability, also shaped profiles, showing that norms are not the only driver of more gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy. Structural opportunities and constraints continue to condition whether attitudes translate into behaviours and advocacy.

- **Norm translation had limits:** Not all profiles showed clear alignment between attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy across genders, suggesting that more gender-equal personal normative beliefs alone may not overcome situational constraints and social sanctions.

- **Support was widespread but varied across countries:** In all three domains (Childcare, Dependent Adult Care, and Housework), **Strong GE supporters** -individuals who reported strong gender-equal attitudes as well as high levels of equitable behaviour and advocacy, form the majority for both women and men. However, Vietnam and the Philippines consistently showed higher levels of support, while Malaysia lagged behind. For example, **Strong GE supporters** in the Childcare domain comprised of **84%** of women and **72%** of men in Vietnam, compared to only **50%** of participants in Malaysia.

- **Opposition was limited but persistent:** Explicit opposition was rare among women. However, among men small groups of **Weak GE supporters**, reporting high levels of equitable behaviour but low gender-equal attitudes and advocacy levels, remained visible, particularly in Malaysia and Indonesia. This suggests that while caregiving equality is broadly accepted, some resistance persists.

Childcare domain

As shown in **Figures 12** and **13** (below), most women and men could be classified as **Strong GE supporters** -individuals who have strong gender-equal attitudes and reported high levels of equitable behaviour and advocacy. Within this profile, women were somewhat more likely to report advocacy, while men were more likely to report equitable behaviours.

A minority of women and men could be classified as **GE Moderates** and **Weak GE supporters**, respectively. Women **GE Moderates** reported moderately gender-equal attitudes and behaviours but somewhat lower levels of advocacy. Men who were **Weak GE Supporters** reported high levels of equitable behaviour but low gender-equal attitudes and advocacy levels.

Figure 17 Profile distribution in the Childcare domain by gender
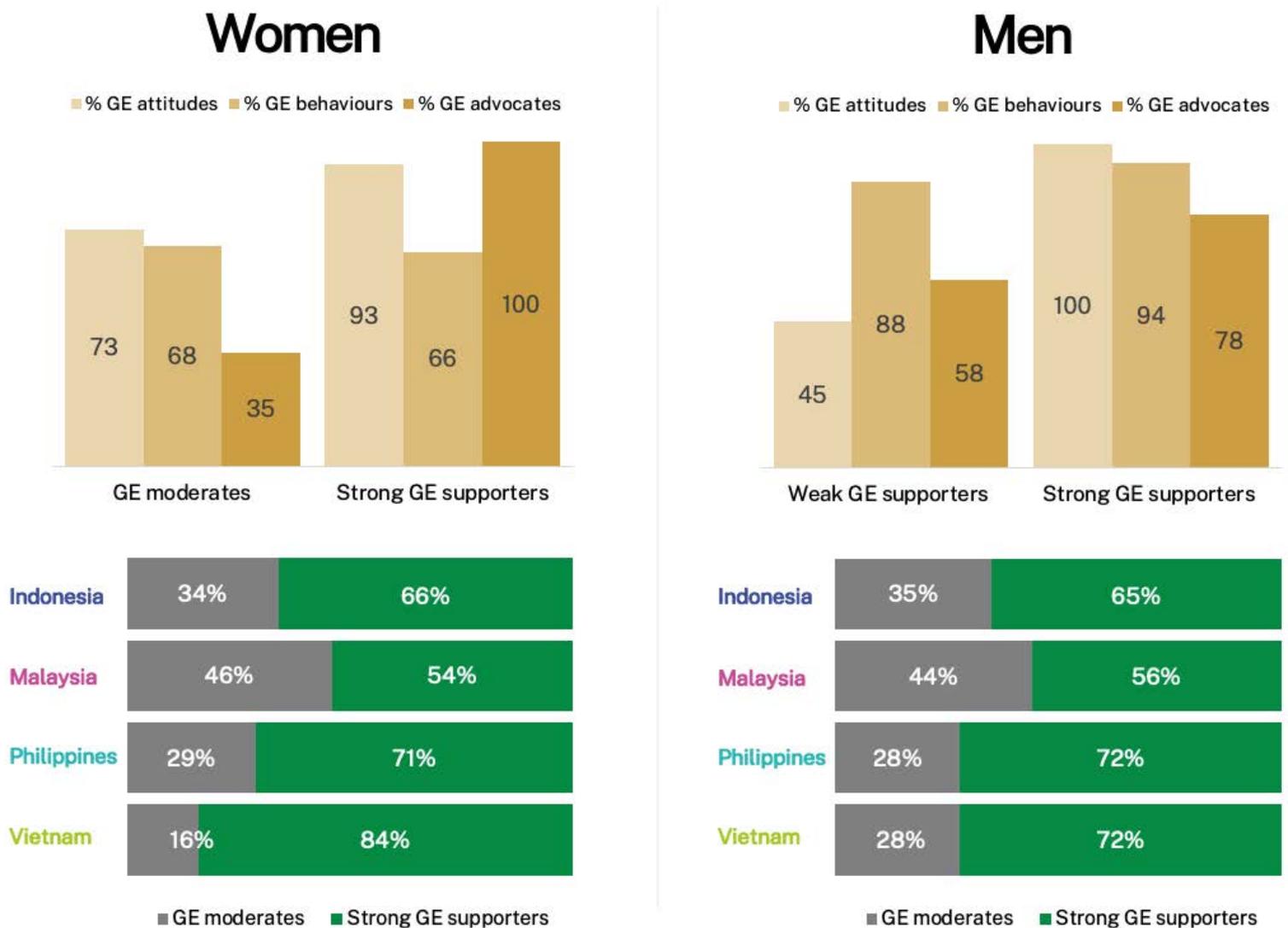
Note: This graph shows the distribution of profiles for women and men in the Childcare domain across countries, along with their characteristics in terms of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy. Refer to Figures 15 and 16 for the detailed profile decomposition.

Cross-country analysis

- **The majority of women and men can be classified as Strong GE supporters:** The size of this group was generally consistent across genders (except for Vietnam where more women than men fell into this profile). For both women and men this profile was largest in the Philippines and Vietnam, followed by Indonesia and Malaysia.

- **Behaviours were shaped more by situational factors than attitudes:** Childcare behaviours were similar across profiles and reported as more equal by men than women, even when attitudinal support was weaker. This suggests that situational demands or observed social expectations shape practice more than private conviction.

  Common situational constraints to gender-equal caregiving and economic work emerging from qualitative findings included a lack of access to childcare services, particularly when coupled with an unsupportive husband or unavailable extended families. This was illustrated by Participant 2 (Indonesia) who noted: "When I said I wanted to work again, my husband said, 'Think about it first, how much would you earn, how much would we have to pay a nanny, and would our child be comfortable with a caregiver?' But for now, my husband hasn't allowed me to work again because he prioritises our child. He said, 'Just stay at home, I'll be the one to work.' So for now, that's how it is."

- **For men, profiles were distinguished by attitudes, whereas for women by advocacy,** indicating that men's progression reflects internalised acceptance, while women's reflects a willingness to act publicly.

- **Normative expectations consistently show significant relationship with profile membership:** In all four countries, profile membership was associated with perceived peer/community approval, highlighting the central role of norms in shaping gender equality in Childcare. However, the presence of additional factors such as education, region, self-employment, religion, age indicated that structural opportunities and resources also continued to condition whether attitudes translate into behaviours and advocacy.

Dependent Adult Care domain

Women fell into three distinct profiles. Most could be classified as **Strong GE supporters**, characterised by strong gender-equal attitudes and high levels of equitable behaviour and advocacy. **GE Moderates** shared similar attitudes and behaviours but reported weaker advocacy. **Weak GE supporters** engaged in equitable behaviours and some advocacy but did not report gender-equal attitudes.

Five distinct profiles were identified for men, including three similar to those found among women and two unique groups: **Passive GE supporters**, who strongly reported strong gender-equal attitudes and engaged in advocacy but not equitable behaviour; and **GE Practitioners**, who reported gender-equal attitudes and practiced equitable behaviour but did not engage in advocacy.

Figure 18 Profile distribution in the Dependent Adult Care domain by gender
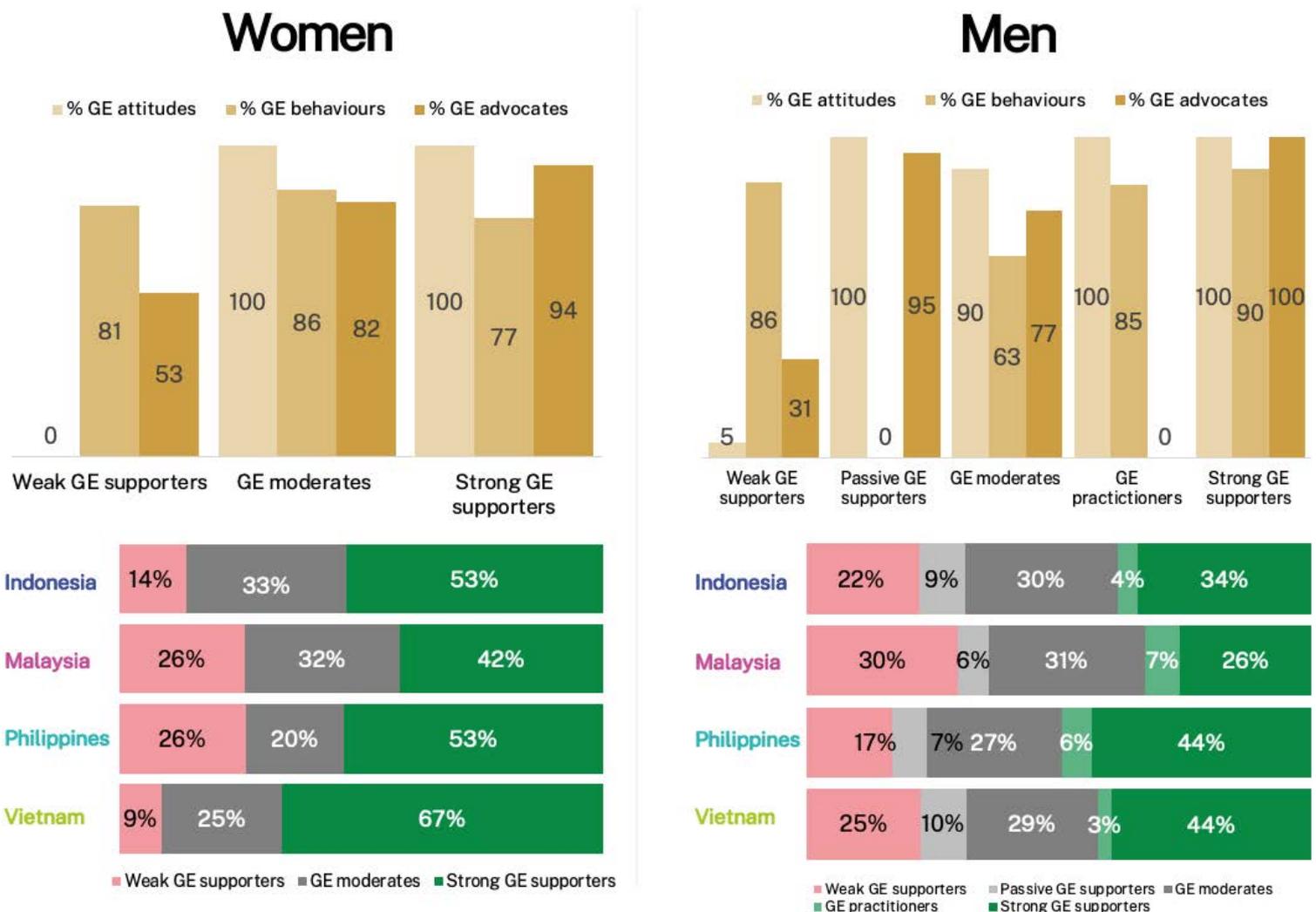
Note: This graph shows the distribution of profiles for women and men in the Dependent Adult Care domain across countries, along with their characteristics in terms of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy. Refer to Figures 15 and 16 for the detailed profile decomposition.

Cross-country analysis

- **Behaviours were more gender-equal than attitudes in some profiles:** For men, even in Weak GE supporter groups a large majority reported engaging in adult care even though almost no participants reported gender-equal attitudes. This suggests that practice was shaped more by situational demands and expectations than by private beliefs.

- **Gendered pathways of progression were evident:** Similar to the Childcare domain, the sharpest divide between GE Moderates and Strong GE supporters lay in attitudes for men, but in advocacy for women. This suggested that men's progression reflects internalised acceptance, while women's reflects willingness to act publicly.

- **Norms mattered, but inconsistencies highlighted their limitations:** Normative expectations were associated with men's profiles in the Philippines and Malaysia, and women's in Vietnam, showing the importance of perceived peer approval. Additionally, across all four countries, socio-demographic factors such as age, education, religion, region, work/self-employment, children, disability were also linked to the profile segmentation. These additional factors help explain why for some men (e.g., Passive GE Supporters, Practitioners), attitudes and advocacy might not align with behaviours. Where attitudes and advocacy did not consistently align with behaviours, structural barriers or uneven reinforcement can block the translation of belief into action.

- **Cross-country consistency with Malaysia lagging:** For both women and men, the proportion of Strong GE supporters was lowest in Malaysia and highest in the Philippines and Vietnam, with Indonesia in the middle. This mirrors the patterns observed for other domains.

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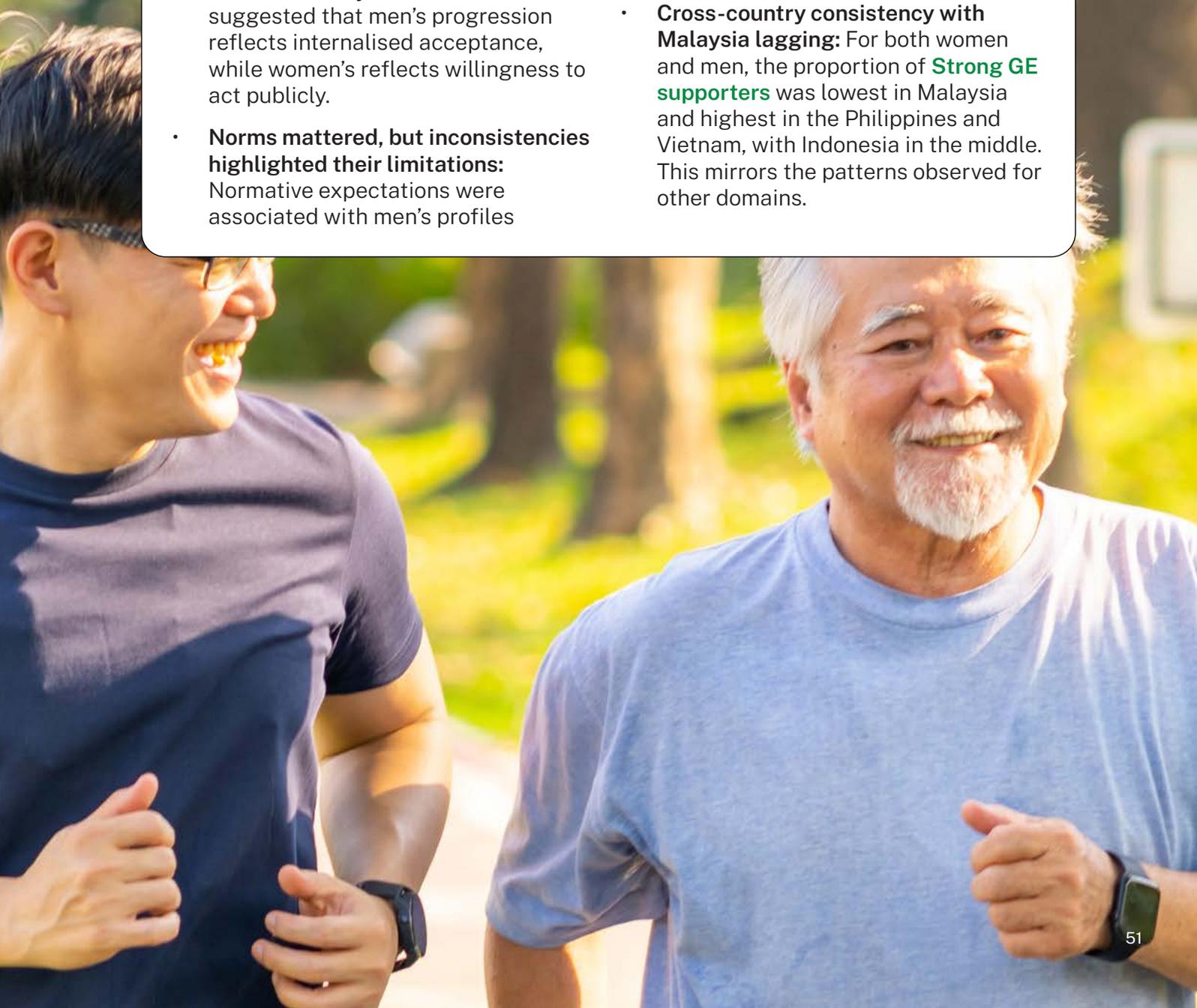
Housework domain

Women fell into two groups: **Strong GE supporters**, who reported strong gender-equal attitudes, practised equitable behaviour, and actively advocated for equality; and **GE Moderates**, who displayed similar behaviours but held weaker attitudes and engaged less in advocacy.

Men fell into three groups: **Strong GE supporters**, similar to women counterparts but somewhat less likely to advocate; **Weak GE supporters**, with consistently low gender-equal attitudes, behaviour, and advocacy; and **Passive GE supporters**, who accepted and advocated for gender equality but did not practise it in their own behaviour.

Figure 19 Profile distribution in the Housework domain by gender
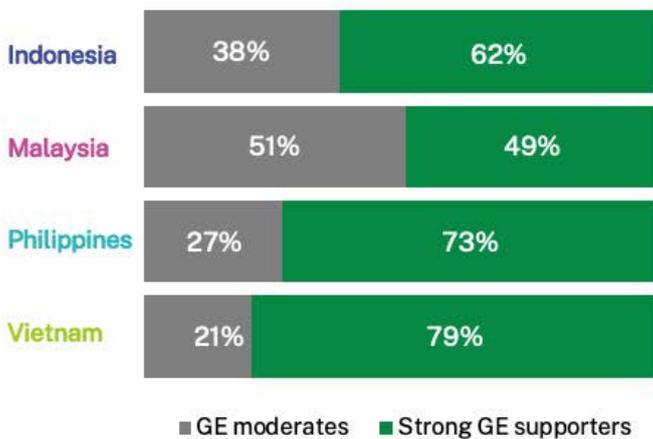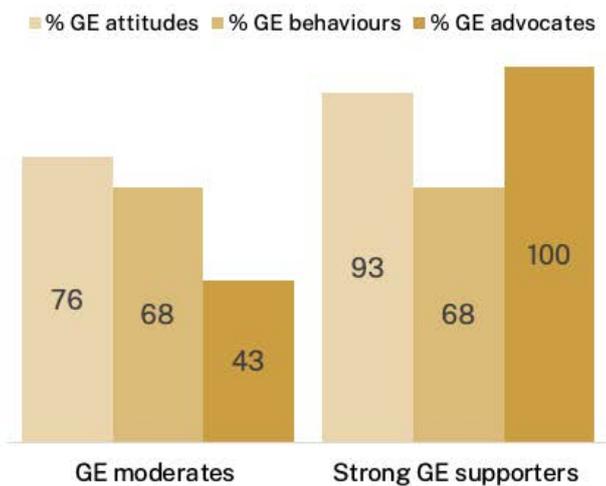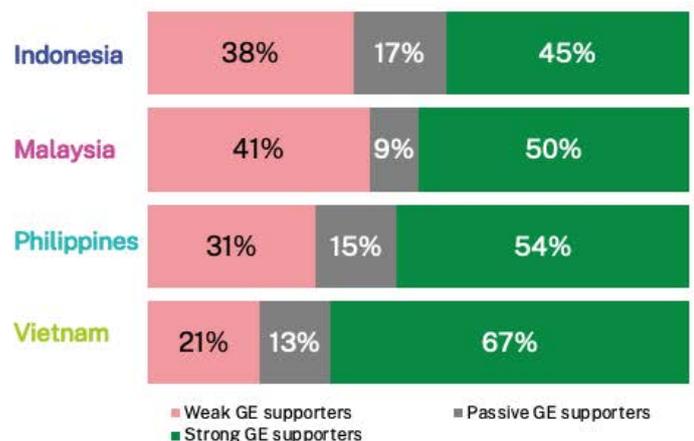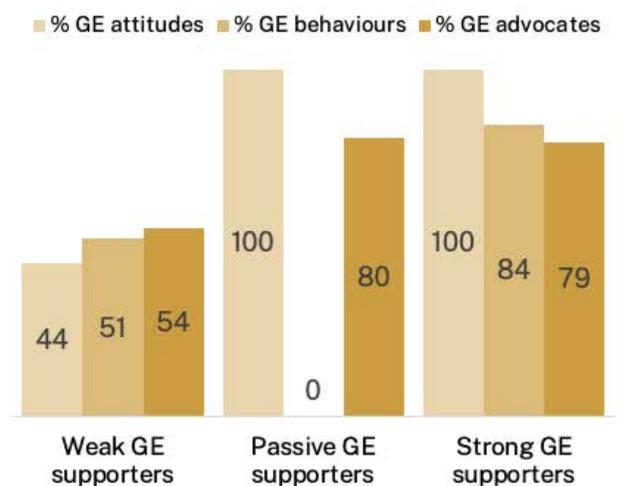
Note: This graph shows the distribution of profiles for women and men in the Housework domain across countries, along with their characteristics in terms of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy. Refer to Figures 15 and 16 for the detailed profile decomposition.

Cross-country analysis

- **Support was concentrated in women, though varied in magnitude between countries:** More than half of women and men could be classified as Strong GE supporters. Malaysia again showed the lowest share of Strong GE supporters and Vietnam as the highest.

- **Gendered pathways of progression were evident:** In addition to the Strong GE supporters profile shared by both genders, women displayed one additional profile, which is GE Moderates, characterised by highly gender-equal attitudes and behaviours but lower advocacy while men exhibited two additional profiles, Weak and Passive GE supporters, marked by lower levels of gender-equal attitudes and behaviours. This reinforces the cross-domain pattern: women's progression was defined by advocacy, while men's was marked by whether attitudes and advocacy translate into practice.

- **Norms and socio-demographics factors show strong association with profile membership:** Normative expectations show a strong relationship with women's profiles in the Philippines and Vietnam, and for men's in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines (with empirical expectations also emerging in Indonesia and Malaysia). In all cases, more gender-equal profiles reported higher gender-equal beliefs (normative expectations) and observations (empirical expectations). Yet socio-demographic factors, age, religion (Catholic, Muslim and Buddhist), education, work/self-employment, and disability, also shaped men's profiles across multiple contexts. These additional influences help explain the Passive GE supporters profile in men, where attitudes and advocacy were gender-equal in the absence of corresponding behaviours, suggesting that structural constraints or uneven reinforcement can block translation from belief to practice.

- Additionally, qualitative work underscored that **men's behaviours in the domestic domains were contingent upon having had an opportunity to learn these skills** (e.g. men who had experience living alone, or living abroad, developing cooking skills for instance).

Economic roles

Key takeaways

- **In all three domains, only some participant profiles showed clear alignment across attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy.** This highlighted that norms provide a foundation for acceptance but do not always translate into practice when structural or relational barriers intervene (e.g., limited opportunities, caregiving constraints).

- **Gendered drivers of profile membership were evident:** For men, profile differences were consistently related to gender-equal normative and empirical expectations, showing that expectations from peers and community are critical to shaping support for gender-equal economic roles.

  For women, profiles were more strongly shaped by household and caregiving responsibilities (marriage, children, dependent adults, disability), underscoring how women's lived domestic contexts constrain their economic roles. This was supported by qualitative work that found that a key barrier to women's workforce participation was an obligation to perform caring duties in the absence of sufficient outsourcing (i.e. to family, care facilities) or partner support. In households where domestic work is assigned to women, men's role as the main earner is reinforced.

- **Gender-equality support was concentrated in the Philippines and Vietnam:** Across Earning Family Income, Job Suitability, and Leadership domains, the highest shares of Strong GE supporters, those with high gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy, are consistently found in the Philippines and Vietnam.

- **Opposition persists in Indonesia and Malaysia:** While relatively small overall, some groups of men fully reject gender-equal attitudes and report engaging in limited equitable behaviours and advocacy. Among women, opposition is smaller but still present.

Earning Family Income domain

Most individuals were classified as **GE Moderates** or **Strong GE supporters** (or, in case of men, as **Moderately Strong GE supporters**), fully accepting gender-equal attitudes but differing in the extent to which they practised corresponding behaviours and engaged in advocacy.

Conversely, neither women nor men in **GE Opponents** and **Weak GE Supporters**, reported gender-equal attitudes, yet still reported engaging in equitable behaviours and advocacy to a varying extent. An additional profile was identified among women: **Passive GE Supporters,** who accepted and advocated for gender equality but did not reflect it in their own behaviour.

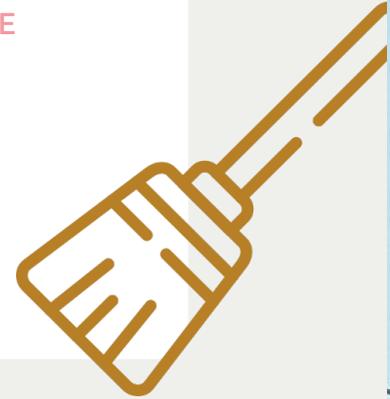**Figure 20** Profile distribution in the Earning Family Income domain by gender
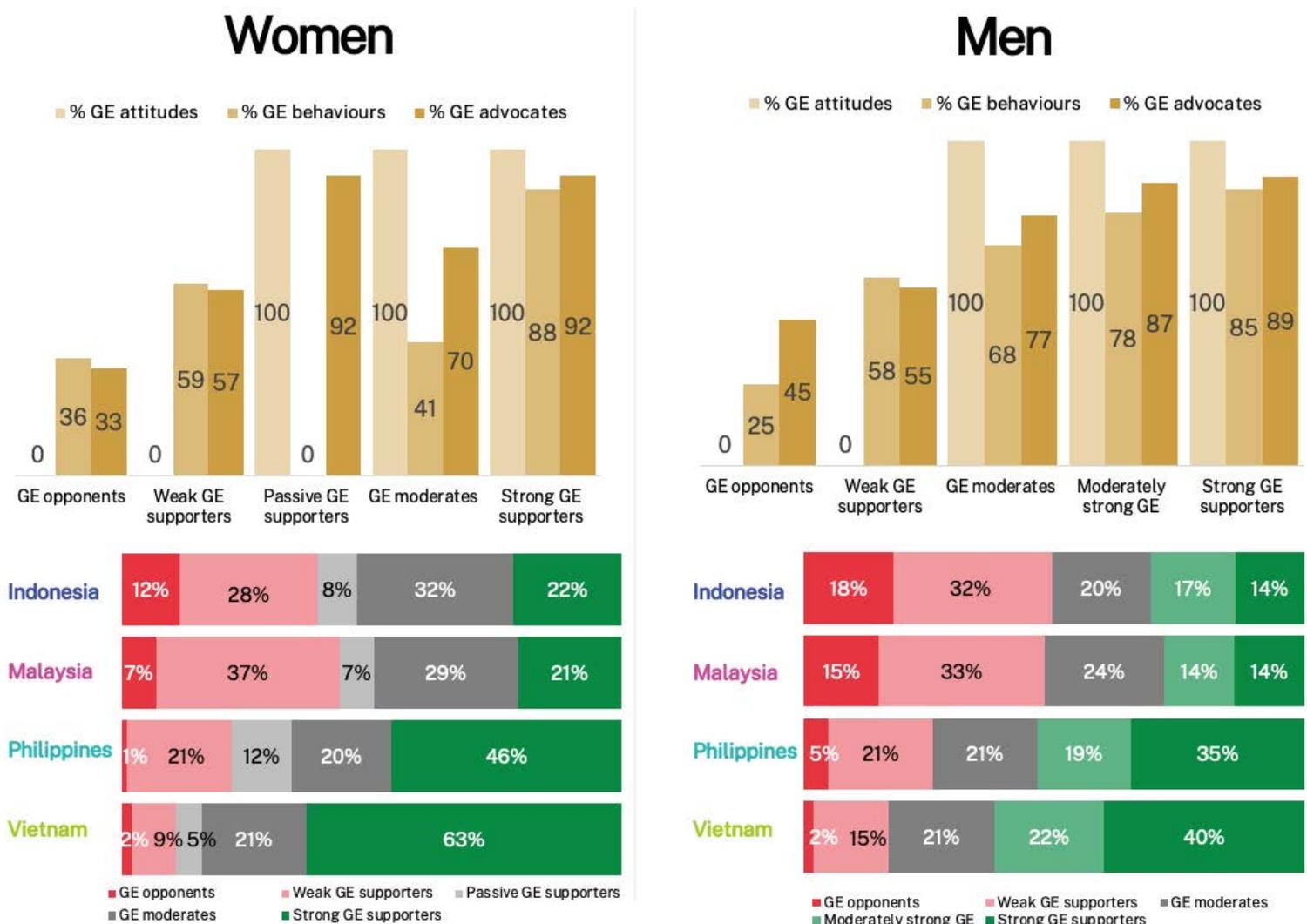
Note: This graph shows the distribution of profiles for women and men in the Earning Family Income domain across countries, along with their characteristics in terms of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy. Refer to Figures 15 and 16 for the detailed profile decomposition.

Cross-country analysis

- **The share of Strong GE supporter profiles was highest in Indonesia and the Philippines, reaching nearly 50%.**

- **Gender-equal behaviours were not backed by attitudes:** The presence of GE Opponents and Weak GE supporters suggests that for some individuals earning-related practices may be driven more by structural necessity or situational expectations rather than by personal conviction. While smaller than the GE supporter profiles overall, these profiles are relatively more prominent in the context of Indonesia and Malaysia.

  This emerged strongly in qualitative findings where the economic necessity for dual incomes was a core driver of shared earning responsibilities across all countries. Participant 5 (Malaysia) explains her view: "I would say most of them [other women] actually don't want to work, but because of the economy, they need to work. Like, it's very expensive for only one partner to work nowadays, considering the house rent, the bills, and the living expenses.".

- **Women may be Passive GE supporters due to barriers:** Between 5% and 12% women, depending on the country, could be classified as Passive GE supporters. This highlights that some women may face strong barriers preventing translation of beliefs into practice. Key barriers emerging from the qualitative work included a lack of access to childcare, men's opposition or unwillingness to take up the domestic load and social stigma from pertinent reference networks.

- **Gender-equal normative and empirical expectations were associated with profile membership:** Expectations played a consistently important but gendered role. Among women, gender-equal normative expectations show a strong relationship with profile membership in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Meanwhile, gender-equal empirical expectations were significant in all countries for men, with normative expectations also relevant in Malaysia. This suggests women's profile were more associated with social approval, while men's were more associated with what they see others doing or expect to contribute.

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Job suitability domain

Both women and men could be grouped into five comparable profiles (Inconsistent, Weak, Passive, Moderate, and Strong GE supporters). Most women and men can be classified as either moderate or strong supporters, fully accepting gender-equal attitudes but varying in the degree to which they exhibit corresponding behaviours and engage in advocacy.

Inconsistent GE supporters reported no gender-equal attitudes but some gender-equal behaviours and moderate to high advocacy, suggesting that some women and men performing work roles not traditionally associated with their gender believe that gender affects one's ability to perform a job. Finally, Passive GE supporters reported high gender-equal attitudes and engaged in advocacy but did not model behaviours.

Figure 21 Profile distribution in the Job Suitability domain by gender
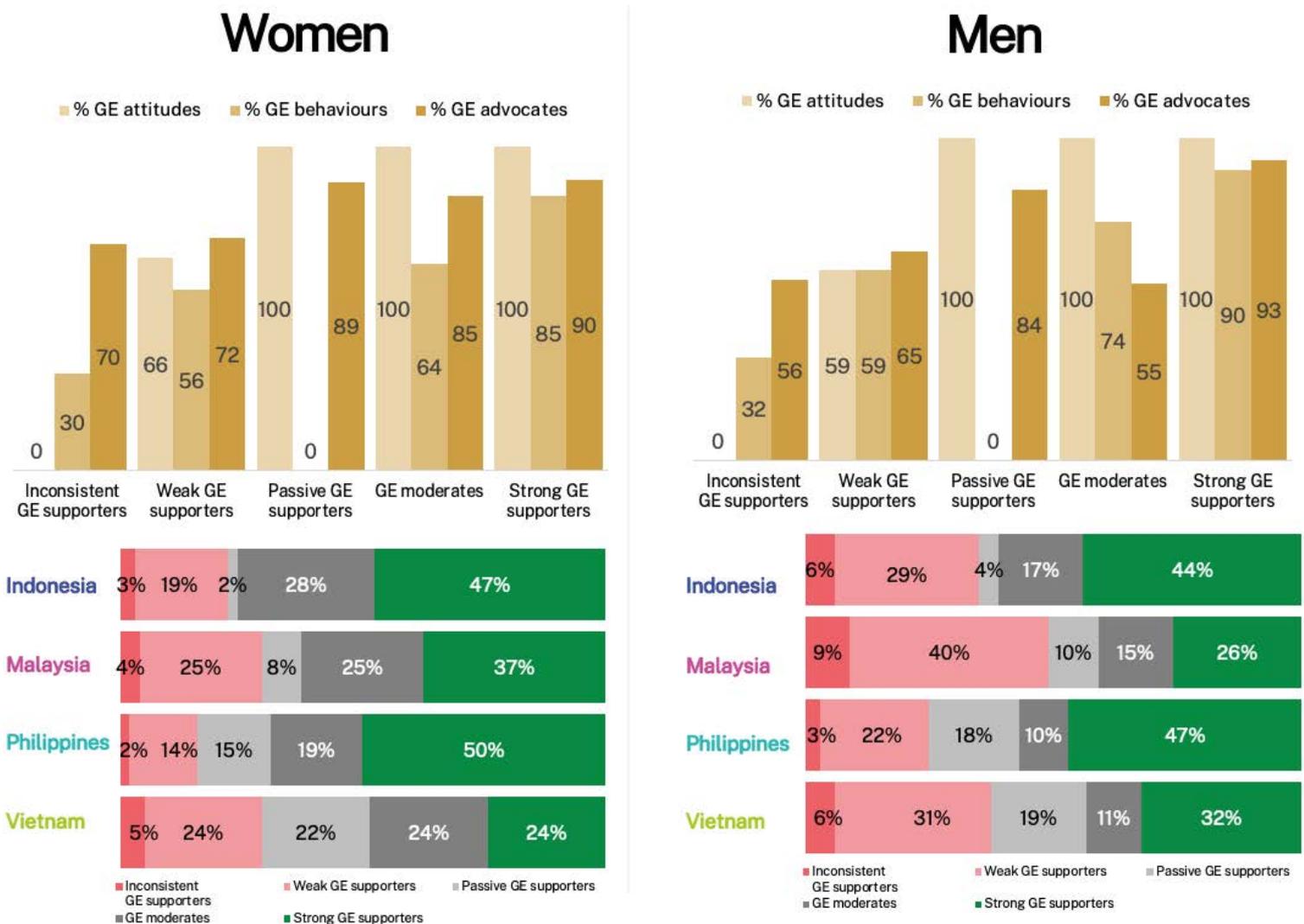
Note: This graph shows the distribution of profiles for women and men in the Earning Family Income domain across countries, along with their characteristics in terms of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy. Refer to Figures 15 and 16 for the detailed profile decomposition.

Cross-country analysis

- **The Strong GE supporters' profiles for both women and men were relatively larger in Indonesia and the Philippines:** Conversely, the GE Moderate profiles were consistently larger among women than men in all four countries.

- **The Inconsistent GE supporters' profile was the smallest overall:** This group was consistently stronger among men, and larger in Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam.

- **Passive GE profiles emerged for both women and men, combining universal attitudes and high advocacy with no corresponding behaviours:** While identified in all countries, this profile was more prominent in the Philippines and Vietnam, underscoring how situational barriers or limited opportunities can prevent the translation of gender-equal beliefs and advocacy into observable support, depending on the cultural contexts.

- **Gender-equal expectations were a foundation for profile membership but unevenly translated between genders:** Normative expectations is strongly associated with women's profiles in Vietnam and Malaysia, while both normative and empirical expectations is strongly associated with men's in Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam.

This shows men's progression is more consistently tied to expectations, whereas women's membership is shaped by household and relational factors (marriage, children, caregiving). Yet the persistence of Passive GE supporters profiles in both women and men highlighted the limits of norms alone: attitudes and advocacy did not always translate into behaviours when structural or relational constraints intervened.

Women's Leadership domain

Strong GE supporters are the largest group across countries, characterised by strong gender-equal attitudes, high advocacy, and clear leadership intentions. **GE Moderates** share similar attitudes but show lower levels of advocacy. **Reluctant leaders** demonstrate strong gender-equal attitudes and advocacy but have weaker leadership intentions. In contrast, **Weak GE supporters** exhibit strong leadership intentions but show low conviction that gender does not determine leadership ability, along with low levels of advocacy.
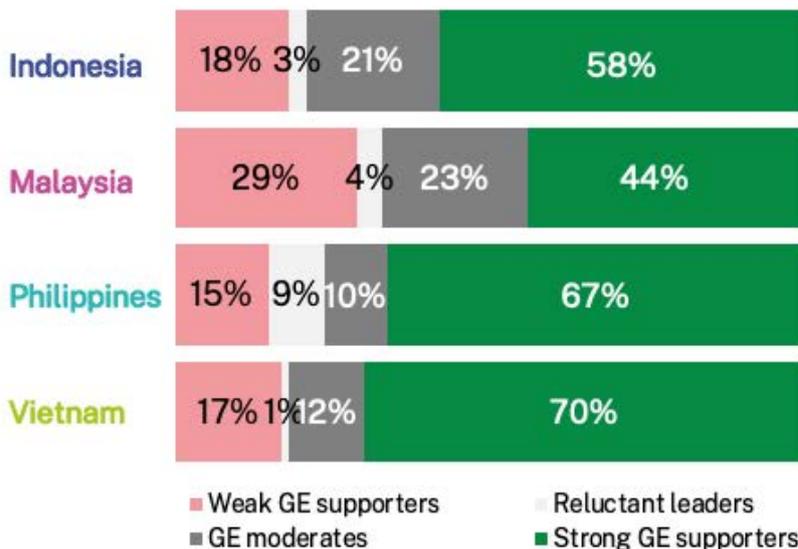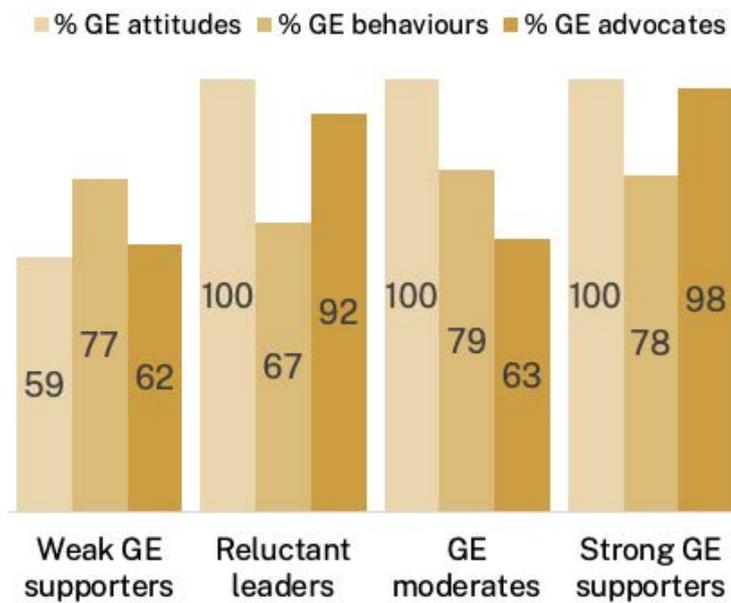
Figure 21 Profile distribution in the Job Suitability domain by gender

Women

% GE attitudes   % GE behaviours   % GE advocates

	Weak GE supporters	Reluctant leaders	GE moderates	Strong GE supporters
% GE attitudes	59	100	100	100
% GE behaviours	77	67	79	78
% GE advocates	62	92	63	98

	Weak GE supporters	Reluctant leaders	GE moderates	Strong GE supporters
Indonesia	18%	3%	21%	58%
Malaysia	29%	4%	23%	44%
Philippines	15%	9%	10%	67%
Vietnam	17%	1%	12%	70%

■ Weak GE supporters   Reluctant leaders
■ GE moderates   ■ Strong GE supporters

Note: This graph shows the distribution of profiles for women and men in the Earning Family Income domain across countries, along with their characteristics in terms of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy. Refer to Figures 15 and 16 for the detailed profile decomposition.

Cross-country analysis

- **Gender-equal attitudes are strong across most profiles, reaching 100%, and 59% for Weak GE supporters:** Gender-equal behaviours and advocacy, in contrast, were less consistent, and it is these dimensions that primarily determine profile segmentation.

- **Barriers were evident for Weak and Passive GE supporters profiles:** In Weak profiles, attitudes and advocacy were much lower despite moderate behaviours, while Passive GE profiles combined universal attitudes with high advocacy but lower behaviours. This suggested that situational or structural barriers (e.g., workplace constraints, limited opportunities) can block the translation of approval into action.

- **Household and structural roles have strong associations:** Profile membership was shaped by both gender-equal expectations and socio-demographic context. Gender-equal normative expectations is related to determining Leadership profiles in Indonesia and Malaysia, while gender-equal empirical expectations also mattered in Malaysia. Across all countries, profiles were also associated with socio-demographics, suggesting women's leadership support is conditioned by both normative reinforcement and their household or caregiving responsibilities.

- **Gender equality support was concentrated in Vietnam and the Philippines:** Strong GE supporters dominated in Vietnam (70%) and the Philippines (67%), compared with lower levels in Indonesia (58%) and especially Malaysia (44%). This placed Leadership alongside Earning Family Income as domains where gender-equal support is strongest in Philippines and Vietnam, but weaker in Indonesia and Malaysia.

- **Opposition persisted in Malaysia:** While Weak GE supporters were present in all four countries, they were most common in Malaysia (29%), followed by Indonesia (18%). By contrast, fewer participants fall into Weak GE in the Philippines (15%) and Vietnam (17%).

5.3 Characteristics associated with gender-equal attitudes and practices

This section seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What factors influence attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy towards gender equality?

- To what extent does witnessing shifts in gender norms, through observed behaviours and changing expectations, encourage the translation of gender-equal attitudes into behaviours and advocacy?

5.3.1 Structural, contextual and normative factors

Below we explore the key enablers and barriers to gender equality in caregiving and economic roles based on 42 interviews with members from the general audience from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. We coded interviews for common factors which appeared to enable or constrain gender-equal behaviours then analysed results through the Conceptual Framework (see Section 2). We identified eight key factors (along with sub-factors) that could act to either enable or constrain gender-equal attitudes and behaviours explored below.

Key takeaways

- **Entrenched traditional gender norms continue to shape behaviour through social expectations and fear of sanctions:** Across all four countries, caregiving and economic roles were constrained by persistent traditional normative expectations (e.g., men as providers, women as carers) and empirical expectations (e.g., observing others conforming to these roles).

- **However, there is evidence of the erosion or traditional gender norms particularly where wider structural and contextual enablers are conducive.**

- **Structural or contextual enablers (i.e. resources) or active resistance to traditional expectations were key factors influencing more gender-equal attitudes, behaviours,** often motivated by benefits of deviation (i.e. for women, higher income, personal fulfilment through paid work) and exposure to a more gender-equal reference networks.

- **Economic necessity enables norm deviation, even when attitudes remain unchanged:** In all countries, financial pressures created a context where dual-income households became the empirical norm, even if traditional normative expectations remained intact. This reflects contextual norm flexibility, where structural conditions (e.g., cost of living) override cultural prescriptions, legitimising individuals who deviate from traditional norms without necessarily challenging them ideologically. This can open space for normative change towards gender equality, or backlash as people are threatened by changing roles and power dynamics.

- **Structural and relational enablers shift conditional preferences and support norm change:** Access to resources (e.g., childcare, domestic help), partner support, and open communication were repeatedly cited as enabling more gender-equal caregiving and economic roles. These factors make deviation from traditional norms more feasible and socially supported. When individuals observe others successfully balancing roles, receive support from their reference networks or have other structural and contextual supports, they were more likely to adopt new behaviours, potentially leading to norm transformation over time.

- **Implications for interventions:** A dual focus on structural and contextual supports (resources, policies, etc.) as enablers of norm transformation may strongly augment normative interventions, rather than targeting attitudinal or behavioural change in isolation.

Cross-country analysis

Theme 1: Access to information, career experience, and education

Access to information, career experience, and education, appeared to be a key factor in setting normative and empirical expectations, particularly in the economic domain. Where present, these factors appeared to establish a precedent that women should, and would, be engaged in the labour force.

It was noted that women with a stable employment history often had improved financial security, confidence and negotiating skills, likely lowering perceived costs of non-conformity with traditional roles resulting in more gender-equal economic behaviours or aspirations. Alternatively, for some couples, knowledge of opportunities (particularly women's earning potential) appeared to propel more gender-equal behaviours in the economic domain as there was a tangible financial cost for adhering to traditional norms in the form of women's foregone earnings.

Additionally, participants' accounts suggested that women's career experience prior to partnering was associated with greater leveraging/negotiating power in their future relationships, promoting more gender-equal divisions of responsibilities. In some of these relationships, there appeared to be a normative expectation that women's renumerated work had significant value (i.e. personal fulfilment, additional income), such that these outweighed sanctions of conformity to traditional norms. Further research is needed to understand to what extent this may be mediated by partner selection – are women who are already working prior to partnering choosing partners who are supportive of their work, or is women's

work setting this normative expectation within the relationship?

Education (or its absence) was noted to shape normative and empirical expectations of women's economic work, either encouraging positive deviance or embedding traditional tropes. Opportunities to pursue higher education (and often, education internationally) was observed to cultivate reference networks where women's economic work was normalised and celebrated. This appeared to equip women with greater earning potential, again reducing costs of non-compliance with traditional norms for both women and men. Participants further reflected on how access to reference networks beyond an individual's typical sphere of influence (particularly through international study abroad) could create space to re-evaluate traditional gender roles as alternative models of behaviour were observed. Conversely, inadequate access to education, or education that did not challenge traditional models, was observed to constrain the cultivation of gender-equal attitudes and behaviours, through entrenching conventional gender norms.

Participants' access to information, networks, and education played a meaningful role in shaping particularly their economic decisions and aspirations. This theme highlighted how exposure to these opportunities, whether through work, peers, formal education or broader social networks, could open up new possibilities, create space to challenge conventional expectations and support more gender-equal behaviours. However, many of these accounts described only how career and education opportunities enabled women's increased workplace participation and spoke less to how this might impact men's caregiving behaviours.

Theme 2: Personal identity and status beliefs

This theme relates to participants' framings of their personal identity and values, and how this enabled or constrained them to move beyond traditional gender binaries. Identification with, and interpretations of, roles such as 'working woman', 'man' and 'mother' manifested differently, either reinforcing traditional divisions or allowing participants to overcome normative boundaries and model or push for greater equality. Such labels were often observed to be defined in the early life stages based on normative and empirical expectations set by the family and in upbringing.

Participants who displayed more gender-equal behaviours and attitudes often linked these to their personal sense of identity ('who they were'). This often resonated with the idea of 'fairness', conceptualised as sharing tasks between partners (regardless of traditional gender divisions) to demonstrate mutual respect. Participants did not necessarily espouse an ideological identification with, or commitment to, the principles of gender equality. However, this belief in (and definition of) 'fairness' encouraged participants to divide responsibilities based on individual preference or availability, resulting in a more balanced household division of labour. As such, as per Bicchieri's[62] typology of behaviour types, household behaviours became 'moral rules' rather than being conditionally tied to other's actions or approval.

For some women, identity was further linked to aspirations - for self-actualisation, financial security and autonomy. Importantly, for many of these women, there was a strong perception that the male breadwinner model failed to deliver security or personal fulfilment. As such, the perceived costs of conformity (i.e. potential dependence, vulnerability) to traditional gender norms were exceeded by benefits of deviation (i.e. security, agency). In these cases, a firm dedication to the achievement of goals beyond the domestic sphere also appeared to encourage women to surpass traditional normative expectations.

Highlighting the importance of interventions which recalibrate expectations such that these identities allow for fluidity beyond traditional gendered roles, identity was a salient theme across all countries.

Theme 3: Household communication and negotiation

Communication within relationships tended to emerge as an enabler of more gender-equal divisions of labour within relationships, conditional upon partner uptake (often, this related to the uptake of husbands'). While communication was not associated with a strictly gender-equal division of tasks, it was observed as a tool which helped facilitate more gender-even task allocation, often outside of traditional roles.

Rather than relying on traditional gender divisions, participants described how clarity, discussion, and regular check-ins helped partners consciously allocate responsibilities. This was often grounded in an idea of 'fairness' (similar to above). For these households, an intersecting series of personal normative beliefs appeared to prevail that 'task allocation should be openly negotiated' often 'based on availability or preference over prescribed gendered roles' to 'uphold fairness within the relationship'. This theme appeared salient in dual-income settings where traditional gendered assumptions that women will both work professionally and perform caregiving

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could easily lead to imbalance.

For this sample, communication acted as a tool to coordinate expectations: empirical and normative expectations of task allocation could be re-shaped within households when there was an openness to communicate personal capacity and needs, outside of conventional gendered divisions. Through dialogue, participants were able to realign expectations, articulate boundaries, and prevent unequal caregiving from becoming entrenched. We did not specifically investigate what mediating variables might predict or encourage an openness to communicate, however other qualitative insights suggested that a more gender-equal upbringing and reference network, access to education and outsourced care services, along with exposure to labour outside traditional gender roles may influence who is more likely to be open to role negotiation within relationships (though this list is not exhaustive).

Conversely, there was some suggestion that a belief that household responsibilities were being equitably divided through communication without an awareness of who is leading communications could entrench the mental load upon women. Similarly, in some cases, communication was approached with caution; one woman described defaulting to impression management techniques (i.e. 'strategic softening') to avoid backlash from men when requesting more equitable divisions of labour.

Overall, an openness to negotiate caregiving/domestic and economic roles, navigated through communication, was observed to enable participants to move beyond inherited gendered assumptions and create space for more balanced task allocations.

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Theme 4: Necessity and household economics

The financial necessity of dual incomes to meet household needs was a pertinent theme across all countries. This theme reflected a common empirical expectation that both partners must participate in the labour market to sustain a family in the current economic climate. Participants further pointed to rising costs of living, inflation, weak public support systems, educational expenses, and broader familial financial obligations (i.e. care for siblings) as structural forces that forced them to pursue dual-income arrangements. Here, women's participation in the workforce was not an ideological stance, but an economic imperative, accepted as a temporary or conditional requirement.

Often for these participants, costs of non-conformity to traditional male breadwinner norms took the direct monetary form of women's potential earnings, encouraging positive deviance, even where personal normative beliefs, or collective normative expectations, did not fully align. While necessity-driven behaviour may help to normalise women's presence in the workforce, it may not necessarily contribute to a broader shift in normative expectations regarding gender and economic roles. Critically, other studies have documented instances of backlash where women are compelled to work to make ends meet, but are met with backlash from their husband, particularly where women's earnings or authority exceeds their partners.[63]

Conversely, anecdotes suggested that an alternate definition of 'necessity' could also prompt a deviation from traditional norms. Many women across countries expressed an empirical expectation that the male breadwinner norm may fail to provide fulfilment, welfare and security. This suggests that positive deviance

was enabled as benefits of financial independence outweighed costs of non-conformity to traditional norms.

Alternatively, women's entrance into the labour force out of necessity was sometimes connected to exogenous shocks, rather than macroeconomic circumstances or a personal commitment to financial security. For some households, unexpected life events, such as illness, family business collapse, or the COVID-19 pandemic, emerged as a powerful force in shaping behaviours. Shocks were observed to have either a positive or negative effect on the gendered distribution of household and economic labour. In some cases, women were obliged to enter the labour force, take up higher paying jobs or become the primary earners. Alternatively, exogenous shocks necessitated that women exit the labour force to prioritise family caregiving. While again these changes were not always framed as ideological or intentional, exogenous shocks were a disruptor, either changing circumstances so penalties for conformity to traditional norms were outweighed or reinforcing traditional gender binaries.

Meanwhile, another form of necessity motivating more gender-equal behaviours was singlehood. Observed to catalyse men's engagement in caregiving and domestic responsibilities, some men described singlehood - whether pre-partnering, due to women's work abroad or during overseas study - as a period that demanded self-sufficiency. Meanwhile, a few women in the sample cited taking on full earning responsibility in the absence of a husband/partner. Without a partner or family member to default to, single participants reported taking full ownership of labour outside the conventional gender binaries. Singlehood, therefore, can operate as a temporary site of norm disruption, offering a space to reconfigure expectations of caregiving towards more equitable practices if

carried forward into future relationships.

Overall, necessity had the potential to either cement or disrupt traditional norms – whether due to economic circumstances, unexpected life events or men's singlehood. Further research is needed to understand how other normative and empirical expectations (i.e. towards men's domestic and caregiving work) might shift when women join the labour force, and in what circumstances.

Theme 5: Divisions of tasks based on skills, strengths, and/or preference

For some participants, personal normative expectation that task allocation was best determined by availability, skills and preference allowed individuals to move beyond traditional gender expectations. Critically, here, skills and preferences were not determined or influenced by traditional gender roles. By recognising what tasks they performed best, these participants were able to challenge rigid gender roles and create more balanced, practical arrangements for sharing responsibilities. While the division of labour may not have been strictly equal, the underlying value of shared responsibility for these participants created space to challenge conventional norms and support more collaborative partnerships.

Particularly for men, an awareness of 'strengths and weaknesses' in the domestic sphere was potentially contingent upon having the opportunity to develop domestic skills outside of traditional gender roles, as the basis for developing both capability and preference in the domestic sphere. Meanwhile for women in this sample, developing strong preferences for workforce participation (and indeed career success) appeared to be

predicated on having a supportive partner along with exposure to the workforce, education and/or reference networks which modelled examples of women's accomplishment outside the home. Note that other variables (i.e. available roles) may also mediate women's capacity to develop a preference for employment but did not arise within the data.

For participants who based task sharing on unconventional gender roles due to perceived strengths, conformity to traditional norms of gendered responsibilities would have resulted in less effective task execution, or self-denial of income and opportunity. As such, positive deviance was encouraged as penalties for deviation were outweighed by the benefits of acting on comparative advantage. Here, behaviour was not conditional upon others' approval, nor their empirical expectations, but instead was anchored to personal preference, availability and skill, thus constituting either 'customs' or 'moral rules' as per Bicchieri's[64] framings.

In contrast, though some participants framed their task division on skills-based discourses, we noted that some of these 'strengths' aligned with traditional gendered roles (i.e. men in charge of teaching children sports and women in charge of children's personal care), thus obscuring opportunities for genuinely strengths-based task division. The suggestion of task division based on capability without an acknowledgement of the normative systems that had created these capabilities to begin with demonstrated how narratives of 'strengths and weaknesses' could create false dichotomies.

Theme 6: Structural supports and time-use infrastructure

This theme reflected the role of structural supports that acted to either enable or constrain gender-equal household arrangements through shaping how couples could use and prioritise their time. Key structural and contextual supports included the availability of care services (private or relatives), accessibility of flexible work arrangements and broader national policy ecosystem that either enabled or constrained gender equality.

Access to care and domestic support

The accessibility of caregiving and domestic resources, such as childcare services, supportive partners, domestic workers and extended families, emerged as a central factor shaping how participants approached caregiving and domestic responsibilities. Often, the outsourcing of care beyond women was not necessarily linked to a conscious commitment to gender equality (particularly as women remain primary workers in the paid care workforce, too) but framed as necessary to allow both partners to work, or linked to the idea of 'fairness' within relationships, lowering the caregiving load upon each partner.

While women's employment was increasingly normalised in principle, in practice, their economic participation appeared to remain largely conditional on the availability of domestic support. For women with children especially, accessible caregiving and domestic support enabled participants to adopt more gender-equal practices as women could either maintain employment (with or without the double burden). When such support was unavailable (even for those with more gender-equal attitudes), participants reported that

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women were expected to reduce or cease their paid economic activities to fulfill caregiving responsibilities, contributing to less gender-equal household task division. These responses reflected the persistence of strong empirical and normative expectations: women observed that other women stayed home when support was unavailable, and they believed this an appropriate or necessary response. However, where outsourced care was available (from partners, families or privately), as care was sufficiently addressed, sanctions for being seen to 'not prioritise' the family (even though this is a false narrative) were reduced, enabling positive deviance (usually in the form of workplace participation or higher education).

Overall, while women often expressed a desire to work, structural and contextual conditions such as access to caregiving resources continued to operationalise gender-equal attitudes. These reflections illustrated how access to resources, whether material, financial, or relational, were central to shaping conditional preferences towards the pursuit of more balanced and gender-equal arrangements.

Flexible work

Access to flexible work arrangements often enabled by a broader workplace culture which respected caregiving demands was cited as a significant factor either enabling or constraining more gender-equal economic and caregiving behaviours. Participants described flexibility - such as remote work, freelancing, or flexible/hybrid schedules - not just as a lifestyle preference, but as a structural necessity for maintaining household balance. Concurrently, the absence of flexible working arrangements appeared to act as a barrier to women's economic participation and dually, men's shared caregiving.

When care demands were unable to be balanced or outsourced, rather than exiting the workforce entirely, women often managed (at times forfeiting more secure employment) by engaging in part-time, informal, or contract-based employment that allowed them to coordinate work hours around household obligations. Here, existing normative expectations about women's caregiving roles remained strong: women were expected to adapt their employment to meet caregiving demands, rather than the other way around.

Sometimes, flexibility facilitated an expression of agency in maintaining economic participation when structural conditions limited access to full-time employment. However, in other cases, flexibility functioned as a coping mechanism, enabling women to work while caring (potentially linked to the economic necessity for dual incomes or a lack of care services) rather than as an indicator of economic empowerment. Likewise, participants in the Indonesian validation workshops highlighted that flexible work policies could risk entrenching traditional gender roles, particularly if such entitlements are only made available to women so they can perform care. Flexible work could allow women to sustain a degree of financial independence (and men to partake in more domestic work/caregiving), but it could also inversely reinforce the expectation that caregiving remained women's responsibility.

Logistical barriers (i.e. work locations, commute times, relocations) emerged as contextual barriers which could reinforce traditional divisions of labour. Participants' reflections suggested norms that career women deny work relocations to stay with families, while men do not, reflecting discordance between the feasibility of career mobility between women and men (though norms may differ for overseas domestic

workers). Inversely, participants also suggested logistical barriers (often long commute times) that could be overcome, or mitigated, through more flexible work arrangements, or communication, sometimes leading to a rejection of opportunities that denied a balanced household.

While flexible employment could enable women's economic engagement and men's caregiving, the oppositive impact was also observed, constituting a key structural and contextual factor contributing to the gender balance of household responsibilities. Further research is needed to understand the impact of flexible working arrangements on expectations towards household responsibilities.

Broader policy ecosystem and settings

Beyond workplace flexibility, broader observations were made by participants on how macro-level government policy acted as a structural and contextual factor either enabling or constraining gender-equal behaviours. These observations were mostly commonly made by the Malaysian cohort, which was highly educated and internationalised (often holding PhDs or Masters degrees from universities abroad).

The availability of parental leave for men was noted by a few participants to either enable or encourage more gender-equal caregiving, thus potentially indicating the role of paternity leave in contributing to normative and empirical expectations that men can be caregivers. However, it was dually recognised that such leave policies could also entrench traditional gender norms (particularly where the number of days differed for women and men). An anecdote of men viewing parental leave as 'time off' was also shared, indicating an unsurprisingly a lag between policy change and normative update. Overall, gender-equal parental

leave uptake was suggested to enable more gender-equal household behaviours and conditional preference change, but was not a sufficient condition for doing so in the sample.

Similar observations were present in one participant from Malaysia's reflections on the family law system. The lack of enforceability of family law was posited to entrench traditional caregiving norms as, according to one participant from Malaysia, men were reported to refuse to pay alimonies or partake in shared custody arrangements. This was reflected to result from normative expectations that women are primary carers and men's participation in caregiving was option, leaving divorced single women with the double burden of work and care. The state's lack of family law enforcement could be attributed to the institutionalisation of such norms, in turn reflecting, reinforcing and legitimising unequal norms surrounding gender roles. These reflections are preliminary only and require further research to elucidate.

Overall, 'structural supports and time use infrastructure' thematically reflected how structural and contextual factors – whether care support, working arrangements or policy settings - shaped behaviours by influencing the options available to the household, along with the feasibility of positive deviance or necessity of normative adherence.

Theme 7: Resistance and reflection towards normative and empirical expectations

This theme captured how an active recognition of traditional gender roles -through observation and praxis - could encourage and enable participants to view such norms as not deterministic, but malleable. This framing supported participants to critically evaluate the suitability of traditional norms

in the context of their own personal circumstances and values, fostering positive deviance where costs of compliance were surpassed by benefits.

Resistance to traditional empirical expectations

In all countries, resistance to traditional empirical expectations on household and economic labour emerged as a recurring theme among participants modelling or aspiring to more gender-equal behaviours. This resistance was not merely theoretical; it was embedded in participants' lived experiences, values, and relational practices. Instead of passively conforming to social norms, participants displayed critical consciousness, actively negotiating, challenging, and deviating from norms that did not serve them or their families.

In many of these cases, the costs of diverging from traditional norms were outweighed by benefits of responsibility division based on skill, preference, values or availability, thus motivating positive deviance. Often resistance further stemmed from a belief that an unequal or gendered division of labour was 'unfair', indicating the presence of a personal normative belief that 'responsibilities should be equitably distributed, not determined by gender'. This belief encouraged household arrangements decoupled from traditional normative and empirical expectations. For these participants, access to domestic services, supportive reference networks, and gender-equal upbringings were noticeable contextual factors which appeared to support their deviation from traditional norms, likely through reducing sanctions for non-conformity.

Taken together, these accounts show that many participants were explicitly aware of the empirical expectations (particularly those surrounding care and domestic work) yet attempted to resist

replicating these. This represents an important step in social-norm change: when individuals question the suitability of 'what most others do' the validity of the normative expectation driving the behaviour is destabilised, hence encouraging the decoupling of behaviour from traditional social expectations and the formation of new more gender-equal norms.

Though the inverse phenomenon is also possible (i.e. resisting newer empirical expectations of more gender-equal behaviour) this was not present within the SNAPS survey (potentially attributable to the sample size).

Critical consciousness of normative expectations, and awareness of how these are evolving

Beyond empirical expectations, participants also explicitly called out traditional normative expectations driving behaviours, questioned these, and reflected on how such norms were evolving.

Some participants demonstrated a critical consciousness of gender norms -through recognising traditional gender roles, the structures that underpinned these and resulting outcomes. This critical awareness encouraged participants to see traditional household roles as malleable to their personal circumstances and values, in turn motivating deviation where benefits were found to outweigh costs.

Participants further reported navigating household labour divisions in a context of iterative cultural transition, often contrasting between generational experiences. While traditional gender norms sometimes influenced participants' perspectives, interviewees also reflected a layered understanding by recognising that normative and empirical expectations were evolving particularly amongst younger, educated generations

in urban areas. Unlike other themes, this dynamic played a more subtle role as a facilitator of more gender-equal behaviour by appearing to enable participants to situate their own choices within a wider collective trajectory of change. Narratives of collective normative change appeared to foster an implied sense that when struggles or attempts to resist traditional norms are shared and replicated by others and not an isolated quest, sanctions for deviation are reduced at a societal scale.

However, participants emphasised that 'resistance' to traditional normative expectations may stem from practicality over principle. Many participants highlighted that women were compelled to enter the labour force due to economic deterioration, rendering the sole male breadwinner model unsustainable. In contexts where empirical expectations are supporting a deviation from traditional norms out of necessity, but concurrent normative expectations are yet to update, the potential for backlash should be proactively addressed.

Taken together, these reflections illustrate how participants' awareness

of entrenched traditional norms and emerging counter-norms and how they navigated these reference points to reconcile their attitudes and behaviours in a period of normative transition. This dynamic reflects Bicchieri's[65] theory that norm change is often gradual and contingent: as empirical expectations shift within influential peer networks, normative expectations begin to adjust, even if broader societal adherence remains fragmented.

Theme 8: Underlying social norm structures and sanctioning beliefs

This theme relates to the underlying normative structure that inform beliefs and attitudes towards caregiving and domestic and economic roles. Core norms omnipresent across all countries included the male breadwinner /female homemaker expectation with downflow effects on who decides, who earns, who cares, who cleans, and who leads.

Traditional expectations that women must prioritise family caregiving

Two overlapping expectations emerged which constrained more gender-equal behaviours. These included the interlinked expectations that women's income-generating work outside the home should not affect their domestic role inside the home and that women must prioritise this domestic work. Participants described women forfeiting job opportunities, promotions, relocations, reducing work hours, accepting more tenuous conditions for greater flexibility to enable care, or even husbands' refusal of their work, such that women could provide domestically for the family. However, while these dynamics tended to reinforce traditional gender divisions - particularly for mothers - these were also framed as meaningful pursuits, often reflecting a deep devotion to family wellbeing.

Despite the increasing normalisation of women's economic participation, findings showed that caregiving continued to be regarded as a woman's primary obligation, remaining unchanged regardless of her involvement in work outside the home. These norms not only reinforced the normative and empirical expectations that women's primary role is in the home but also limited their opportunities for full participation in the labour market. This acted to maintain

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unequal distributions of economic and workplace power between women and men. Some accounts further reflected how these norms could be institutionalised (or challenged) by workplace policies (i.e. firms sending women who they suspect may become pregnant on unpaid leave so that they are forced to resign and the firm can avoid paying maternity leave).

Overall, a significant factor contributing to less gender-equal behaviours was the persistent expectation that women's participation in paid employment should not interfere with their caregiving or household responsibilities. Though the strength of this belief varied between participants, it nonetheless surfaced for women and men, and amongst employed and even highly educated women, reflecting a deep, though sometimes subtle, internalisation of traditional gender roles.

Ideas that one partner should be the primary provider (typically the man)

The traditional breadwinner norm remained an enduring expectation among both women and men. Often, this expectation (and its acceptance) was reinforced by the gender roles observed by participants in their reference networks and wider society embedding the male breadwinner as a social norm foundational to household behaviour and often personal identity.

This expectation remained powerful, even in Malaysia's sample characterised by high education levels and given Vietnam's long history of high women's labour force participation. Meanwhile in Indonesia and Malaysia, the male breadwinner norm was often linked to Islam, where mainstream Qur'anic interpretations propose that men's work is obligatory, while women's is optional, and conditional

upon her husband's agreement (though nuance surrounds this).[66] Interestingly a dynamic emerged in Vietnam where working women were not expected to contribute their earnings to shared family expenses (but kept for exclusive personal use) as these were provided for by men. In the Philippines, a few accounts suggested that eldest daughters were often responsible for providing part of the financial (and care) burden for their younger siblings (i.e. paying tuition fees), while eldest sons did not appear to face a comparable pressure. Further research is needed to understand these dynamics, which may be present in the other countries but were non-observational within this sample.

These reflections suggested that, while empirical expectations had often shifted to normalise women's economic participation (especially in trying economic circumstances), normative expectations around men's financial responsibility had not evolved concurrently. Instead, the male breadwinner model persisted among participants, inhibiting more gender-equal behaviours and entrenching women's role as caregivers (particularly where outsourced care was unavailable). For some participants, this was not simply a personal preference, but a long-standing cultural norm rooted in ideas about physical strength, household suitability, and traditional gender divisions.

Overall, the male breadwinner model reinforces the norm that men's paid employment is obligatory, while women's earnings are optional and conditional, thereby limiting the possibility of equal sharing of caregiving and earning responsibilities.

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Gender stereotypes and gendered expectations

Gendered stereotypes surfaced among participants reflections. These often-belied traditional beliefs on who was 'naturally' or purportedly biologically disposed to different social roles - including caregiving and paid work, its frequency, and form. These resulting stereotypes likely contributed to the emergence of a further theme present within accounts - gendered assumptions on who performs what tasks. Gendered assumptions were not always explicitly enforced but often persisted through quiet normalisation, which is embedded in habit, language, and inherited expectations. Here, the belief that 'different roles' were 'equal roles' also surfaced, limiting household's scope to reconsider role divisions through frames of equity and fairness. Even when participants expressed discontent or ambivalence, deeply rooted normative beliefs about gender-appropriate roles often continued to trump benefits of positive deviance, acting as a powerful barrier to more equitable behaviours.

The stereotype that caregiving work was 'naturally' better performed by women remained particularly pervasive, embedding traditional normative and empirical expectations that caregiving should be primarily or solely performed by women. This was shown to manifest in the assumption that women were primarily responsible for household labour, even when employed full time, resulting in a double burden. This appeared even amongst the Malaysian sample which was characterised by a particularly high level of education, access to resources and generally gender-equitable outlook, and the Vietnamese sample with its history of high labour force participation of women, demonstrating the slow pace of normative change. Where gender norms are treated as innate facts rather than socially determined rules, they are both less likely to be challenged and contribute to an empirical expectation that inequality is 'natural'. This may fix behaviours to traditional social norms, inhibiting the creation of new norms by embedding gendered normative and empirical expectations.

Even amongst nominally more gender-equal participants, gender stereotypes and assumptions were shown to inhibit the practice of more gender-equal behaviours and limit broader normative update. However, as explored in the theme 'resistance and reflection to normative expectations' when participants gained a critical consciousness of gender norms (along with the factors that supported this awareness) they were better able to challenge, evaluate and deviate from proscriptive norms.

Unsupportive versus supportive partners

Whether a woman's partner was supportive or passive/hostile towards a more gender-equal household arrangement emerged as a key factor moderating behaviours. A necessary condition for partnered-women's capacity to act on or operationalise more gender-equal attitudes was often their partner's support. As such this factor either enabled or constrained gender-equal behaviours. Noticeably, this appeared to be a unidirectional theme - the sample did not include an indication that men advocated for gender equality but had requests refused by their partners.

Support from partners dually acted as a key structural factor enabling more gender-equal behaviours while simultaneously lowering sanctions for deviation from traditional roles. In these households, personal normative beliefs (i.e. 'women's work is socially and/or financially valuable', 'fairness necessitates role sharing') tended

towards more gender-equal, enabling more balanced household arrangements.

However, in some cases partner resistance - stemming from embedded traditional expectations - roadblocked or undermined women's attempts to realise more gender-equal partnerships. Partner's lack of support included weaponised incompetency, vetoing women's paid work, failing to act upon requests for support or refusal to engage in negotiations of household responsibilities in both the caregiving and economic domains. This lack of support inhibited gender-equal role sharing between couples, often confining women to the household or carrying the mental load or double burden.

These anecdotes indicated a series of overlapping normative expectations (particularly that men often do not perceive caregiving as a role they are inherently obligated to fulfil, but as a favour they extend when prompted) underpinning men's resistance to more gender-equal arrangements. As such, men's conditional preferences towards gender roles played a key moderating factor in whether women could realise more gender-equal attitudes within their everyday lives.

5.3.2 Reference networks

This section explores the key reference networks that influence how participants consider and navigate caregiving and economic responsibilities.

Reference networks are the people or social sources participants look to for guidance, validation, or comparison, shaping their behaviours and attitudes, either by reinforcing traditional roles or by providing models for more gender-equal ones. Examining reference networks can inform policy and program design by identifying which communities influence normative and empirical expectations.

Key takeaways

- Reference networks shaped how participants viewed sanctions and established normative and empirical expectations either at the household or societal scale.

- Family often set baseline normative and empirical expectations that were later moderated by peer-level reference networks (i.e. colleagues, friends) and broader societal influences which shaped these reference networks themselves (media, politics).

Cross-country analysis

Reference networks are the social sources people use as points of guidance, validation, or comparison, directly or indirectly informing behaviours and attitudes. Across the sample, eight reference networks were identified including family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, religion, politics, and media.

One of the most frequently referenced groups in all countries, familial influence was a key determinant of how participants understood and enacted caregiving and economic responsibilities. Participants emphasised the role of parents, grandparents, and extended family in transmitting behavioural expectations, whether by modelling traditional roles or demonstrating more equitable alternatives. These early experiences deeply informed current behaviours and attitudes but were not a necessary condition to role deviation nor adherence. Participants often diverged from their families' expectations, instead preferring to align behaviours with expectations set in new reference networks (i.e. friends), macro-economic conditions or with personal values.

Nonetheless, family set an initial baseline of conditional preferences, which could later be re-evaluated or replicated in adult life.

Outside the family, friends, neighbours, and colleagues emerged as a meaningful peer-level influence on participants' normative and empirical expectation towards earning and caring. While not as foundational as family, these social circles offered a space for observation, comparison, and reflection, shaping how participants assessed what was normal, fair, or possible within their own relationships. Either at work, in the community or as friends-peer networks appeared to both entrench traditional norms (by signalling sanctions for alternative behaviours), shaping conditional preferences towards career, care and household responsibilities.

Larger macro-level influences also emerged within participants accounts. These included the media, culture, and ethnicity (in Malaysia), religion (most prominently in Indonesia then Malaysia) and politics (in the Philippines and Malaysia). While there was some suggestion of emerging country-level

trends surrounding specific reference networks, further research is needed to elucidate these dynamics.

Religion emerged as a central reference point within the Indonesian sample and appeared subtly in the Malaysian sample, providing a moral (and sometimes institutional) framework that guided decisions within the household for some participants. Depending on interpretation, both more gender-equal or traditional households justified their behaviour through a religious lens (most commonly Islam). Religious authorities and teachings appeared to define normative expectations with high credibility, simultaneously influencing empirical expectations among believers, thereby steering conditional preferences and shaping caring and earning behaviours. Culture and ethnicity further emerged as an influence on reference networks in Malaysia, as did the regional North/South divide in Vietnam, with different demographics noted to have unique normative traditions.

Beyond culture, the broader political sphere - national leadership and policy settings - was referenced as a high-level influence shaping normative and empirical expectations. In particular, a few women in the Philippine's sample cited the influence of women in political leadership in shaping their expectations of who can, and should, lead, work, and care. Alternatively, rather than looking to leaders for inspiration, women in the Malaysian sample frequently commented on how structural decisions in law and policy maintained or relaxed gendered expectations. Here, political levers were observed to adjust normative expectations (signals of what ought to be), with downstream effects on practice. When political signals and material conditions aligned with gender equality, they relaxed anticipated sanctions and

contribute to translation of attitudes into behaviour. Though not observed in this sample, alternatively, when political conditions - felt through legislation, policy and regulatory change - are not conducive with gender equality, the perceived costs of norm deviation are raised. Overall, politics appeared to act as a distant but consequential influence on participants reference networks through shaping lived realities and public discourse.

The media was a further prominent reference group within all countries and as dually attributed to reinforcing traditional stereotypes and offering aspirational counter-narratives. While not as frequently referenced as family or friends, both traditional and (more often) content on social media played an important role in exposing participants to alternative viewpoints, normalising evolving norms or reinforcing gendered expectations. Participants described how television, online platforms, religious content, and social media discourses contributed to their understanding of what was possible, desirable, or acceptable in balancing work and family life. Media appeared to contribute to population-level empirical expectations and cue normative expectations, shaping conditional preferences. Within validation workshops, social media was further seen as a tool through which sanctions could be imposed for norm deviation or support spread for alternative practice.

Overall reference networks were highly influential, iteratively shaping conditional preferences to reinforce traditional narratives or offer more gender-equal alternatives. Further research is needed to understand country-specific dynamics, how and when reference networks supersede each other (i.e. family's influence outweighed by friends) and under what circumstances.

5.3.3 Enablers and barriers for advocacy

The following analysis synthesises cross-country findings on the enablers and barriers to gender equality advocacy.

We draw on structural and individual-level insights from validation workshops with in-country stakeholders held in Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam as well as general audience interview from Malaysia. Interviews and workshops revealed that normative and structural dynamics vary across countries but reveal common patterns in how support, resistance, and agency influence engagement in, and the efficacy of, advocacy.

Key takeaways

- **Structural support for advocacy varies in strength and visibility:** Indonesia and Vietnam benefit from government and policy-level integration of gender equality, while the Philippines and Malaysia show strength in grassroots networks and advocacy platforms. However, fear of backlash and political conservatism are common structural barriers across all four countries.

- **Individual attitudes towards advocacy and agency are critical but uneven:** Individual characteristics and circumstances can support gender-equality advocacy. For instance, awareness of care and work distribution (Indonesia), confidence in negotiating gender roles (Philippines), a sense of personal justice (Vietnam), and desire to make improvements for future generations (Malaysia), all help enable gender-equal behaviours. At the same time, peer pressure, economic dependency, and limited time or knowledge can constrain individual engagement in advocacy, particularly among women.

- **Advocacy differs by gender:** Women disproportionately carried the burden of advocacy, often facing stigmatisation or a lack of support. As men take part less in advocacy, it can be burdensome for women to both challenge norms and actively promote change.

These factors are explored in **Figure 23** on the next page. Such factors may co-occur within countries but were not necessarily observed.

Figure 23 Cross-country comparison of enablers and barriers for advocacy

Indonesia

Key enabling factors	Key hindering factors
Structural factors	
• Multi-level government promotion of gender equality • Gender-aware media • Men's support for women's organisations • Positive role models in the workplace, private spheres, and on social media	• Fear of backlash in both private and public spheres • Rise in political conservatism
Individual factors	
• Parental awareness of care and work distribution • Perceptions of positive attitudes towards gender advocacy in the private sphere	• Negative attitudes toward gender advocacy in the private sphere • Peer pressure to confirm to traditional gender roles in social circles dominated by men

Malaysia

Key enabling factors	Key hindering factors
Structural factors	
• Supportive and inclusive networks • Visible gender advocacy in the media	• Backlash or conflict from opposing communities • Unsupportive government and sociopolitical environment • Absence of men as strong allies
Individual factors	
• Deep understanding of gendered issues • Strong sense of self • Motivation to advocate for future generations	• Limited opportunities to join accessible public advocacy

Philippines

Key enabling factors	Key hindering factors
Structural factors	
• Supportive and inclusive networks • Access to safe advocacy platforms • Opportunities for skill-building to support advocacy efforts	• Backlash or conflict from opposing communities • Concerns about combative media environment and cancel culture • Common perception that gender equality is an issue that only women need to address
Individual factors	
• Confidence in negotiating gender roles • Access to time and resources	• Lack of time and energy • Fear of offending others • Limited awareness of how to join unions and advocacy organisations

Vietnam

Key enabling factors	Key hindering factors
Structural factors	
• Presence of allies in public and private spaces • Political context enabling integration of gender equality goals into broader national policy goals	• Fear of backlash in both private and public spheres • Perceived suspicion toward gender equality in public and private settings • Lack of advocacy in public leadership • Disproportionate advocacy burden on women to engage in advocacy in comparison to men
Individual factors	
• A strong personal sense of justice	• Unequal power dynamics, economic dependency and cultural norms of obedience to older generations • A belief that advocacy efforts will not be heard or effect change

Translating gender equality attitudes to public and private advocacy

It was identified across all four countries that there is not always a linear transition between holding gender-equal attitudes and translating those attitudes into behaviours and advocacy. In particular, it was found that individuals who possess both gender-equal attitudes and gender-equal behaviours do not necessarily engage in gender advocacy due to both structural and individual barriers. Similarly, some individuals who hold gender-equal attitudes and engage in gender equality advocacy do not necessarily exhibit gender-equal behaviours. This disconnection between gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy was prevalent when participants across all four countries spoke of the choices they make between engaging in public and private advocacy. Choosing to engage with one form of advocacy over the another often meant that participants were able to engage in advocacy in one area whilst avoiding backlash in another.

Participants in the Philippines and Indonesia identified that private advocacy was more challenging to engage with than public advocacy. Some of the barriers to translating gender-equal beliefs into private advocacy across both countries included: a desire to avoid conflict between partners and preserve family harmony, the belief among family members that men's domestic work is still seen as exceptional and not as a normalised, shared responsibility, a desire to uphold traditional family expectations, and a fear of hurting men's feelings or egos.

In both Indonesia and the Philippines, participants described that engaging in public advocacy offered an outlet to express their gender-equal attitudes when the barriers for doing so in their private lives were too high. For example, participants in Indonesia identified that the persistence of patriarchal culture and traditional family norms acts as motivation for women in particular to engage in public advocacy but remains a barrier to advocating for change in their private lives.

Contrastingly, participants in Malaysia described that acts of private advocacy, such as having a difficult conversation with a family member or colleague, provided an avenue through which to act on gender-equal attitudes when the opportunities to engage in public advocacy to address larger structural problems were limited, too burdensome or not safe.

Effective public and private advocacy

In conjunction to identifying factors which enable and hinder an individual's likelihood of engaging in advocacy, participants across all four countries identified what effective public and private advocacy strategies look like.

Participants in Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines identified the importance of positive role models and gender equality education on both a public and private level for effective advocacy. In Vietnam, participants identified that the credibility and targeted nature of advocacy campaigns were particularly important for their success.

Participants in Indonesia and Malaysia also identified the importance of providing safe spaces for women's autonomous advocacy and upskilling men to take on domestic work for effective advocacy. More detail relevant to each country is provided in the specific country profiles.

What is private advocacy?

Private advocacy includes actions within an individual's immediate circle, such as encouraging equal sharing of housework and caregiving between partners, or challenging sexist remarks from family members. In contrast, public advocacy involves efforts outside of close personal networks such as posting about gender equality on social media, joining workplace committees for the promotion of women leaders or participating in public campaigns.

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5.4 Shifts in gender norms

This section considers the extent to which, and why, gender norms change.

First, we present a comparison of how gender norms have evolved over time, using indicators collected across the various waves of SNAPS, where data allows. Second, we explore broader societal transformations that have influenced changes in gender norms. This helps address the following questions:

- To what extent have gender norms changed over time, as reflected in SNAPS data across waves?

- What societal shifts, either current or anticipated, are accompanying changes in gender norms, and how might these transformations affect individuals, communities, and power dynamics within society?

5.4.1 SNAPS surveys over time

SNAPS has been implemented as part of the Investing in Women (IW) program to examine the social norms, attitudes, and practices that shape gender dynamics at home and at work. The survey has been conducted in four waves: SNAPS 2018, SNAPS 2020, SNAPS 2022, and SNAPS 2024. Malaysia was first included in the survey in 2024, as such, this section will not include Malaysian results.

Across the four waves, the SNAPS questionnaire has evolved in response to the program's shifting priorities. Due to these changes, only questions on Childcare and Earning Family Income in SNAPS 2020, 2022 and 2024 were directly comparable. The detailed questions are listed and compared in **Note 6 - Annex 1**.

Key takeaways

- **Mixed acceptance and resistance:** While there were shifts toward gender equality –particularly in earning-related behaviours –since 2022, both women and men often wanted each other to take on more responsibility. This reflects a mix of both acceptance and resistance to traditional gender norms, a pattern consistent with contested normative expectations within couples and families. Before 2022, this pattern was only visible in Indonesia.

- **Ambivalent change among men:** Among men, there was a simultaneous increase in those who expected their partners to take primary responsibility for Childcare while also expecting their partner to contribute significantly to Earning Family Income. This signals a poignant emerging risk that women may increasingly be expected to take on the double burden of care and work. It is unclear whether this indicates a complex shift, which is valuing women's economic roles while maintaining traditional views on caregiving, as highlighted in qualitative findings, or the emergence of distinct subgroups of men with differing views. Conditional preferences may still be tethering choices to traditional expectations, especially when structures (e.g. time, childcare services, leave, wages) are misaligned.

Childcare domain

- **More women expected men to be primary carers:** In all countries women's aspirations for gender-equal division of Childcare declined. This contrasts with previous SNAPS waves where aspirations remained stable, except for a slight increase observed in Indonesia. This was mostly due to increased expectations that men would take on primary responsibility, with only a small increase of women wanting to take the primary responsibility themselves. This could signal that women are embracing more flexible gender roles.

- **However, less men have aspirations to share Childcare responsibilities equally with their partners:** Compared to SNAPS 2020 in all countries, men expected their partners to take on the primary responsibility for childcare, which potentially reflects the broader global backlash against gender equality. This regressive change was most prominent in Vietnam. Diverging aspirations suggest asymmetric normative expectations across genders: women potentially infer greater approval for men's caregiving within their networks, whereas men anticipate higher audience costs for approving of equal sharing. This points to a social norm that remains stronger in men's reference networks.

- **Women reported more equal sharing of Childcare responsibilities:** The proportion of women who reported being primarily responsible for childcare declined, while reports of their partners taking on greater responsibility increased. Notably, the share of women reporting an equal division of childcare duties also rose. This suggests a positive shift, following a period of stagnation between 2020 and 2022. However, the causes of this shift remain unclear. Qualitative analysis reveals that trends towards more gender-equal behaviours may be driven not only by changes in normative and empirical expectations but also by economic necessity. Specifically, women are increasingly required to engage in paid work to support the household and men may consequently share more of the domestic workload. This dual-income model, though might have been adopted reluctantly, can be seen as a step toward gender equality, as normative expectations may shift within key reference networks.

- **Among men surveyed, changes in Childcare arrangements appear mixed and inconclusive:** On average, men reported a less gender-equal share of childcare responsibilities over time, except in Vietnam, where more gender-equal sharing was reported. In Indonesia and the Philippines, the proportion of men indicating that their wives/partners took primary responsibility for childcare increased slightly. Overall, changes in men's responses were smaller in magnitude and less gender-equal than those observed among women.

- **Responses among women and men, as well as between aspirational and actual behaviours, show differing trends:** The reporting gap between women and men may reflect a social desirability bias or differences in subjective perception, such as varying reference points or the salience of specific tasks. Based on the survey responses, aspirations and actual behaviours are not aligned. This suggests that, even if men do not aspire to take on a larger share of childcare, external factors, such as work schedules or economic pressures, that require women to participate in paid work, may lead men to undertake greater childcare responsibilities.

Figure 24 Changes in behaviours towards Childcare

Chilcare domain

Women - Aspirational

		2022-2024 Gap
Equal sharing (%)	75% — 93%	-18 p.p.
Men doing more (%)	3% — 16%	+13 p.p.
Women doing more (%)	5% — 9%	+4 p.p.

Women - Actual

		2022-2024 Gap
Equal sharing (%)	47% — 51%	+4 p.p.
Men doing more (%)	1% — 16%	+15 p.p.
Women doing more (%)	32% — 52%	-19 p.p.

Men - Aspirational

		2022-2024 Gap
Equal sharing (%)	67% — 86%	-19 p.p.
Men doing more (%)	6% — 8%	+2 p.p.
Women doing more (%)	8% — 25%	+17 p.p.

Men - Actual

		2022-2024 Gap
Equal sharing (%)	55% — 65%	-11 p.p.
Men doing more (%)	7% — 8%	-1 p.p.
Women doing more (%)	27% — 38%	+11 p.p.

● SNAPS 2022   ◆ SNAPS 2024

Note: This graph compares changes in behaviours related to Childcare between SNAPS 2022 (blue circle markers) and SNAPS 2024 (gold diamond markers) for women and men separately. Each marker represents the share of respondents who prefer one of three behavioural categories: "Equal sharing", "Men doing more", or "Women doing more." The horizontal lines connecting the 2022 and 2024 markers indicate the magnitude of change over the two-year period. The 2022–2024 Gap highlights the direction of change: green values indicate movement towards greater gender equality, while red values indicate movement away from gender equality. A detailed description of how behaviours were measured is provided in Note 3 – Annex 1. For in-depth analysis and country-specific examples, please refer to the respective country sections

Figure 25 Changes in behaviours towards Earning Family income

Earning Family Income domain

Women - Aspirational

		2022-2024 Gap
Equal sharing (%)	67% — 72%	-5 p.p.
Men doing more (%)	20% — 30%	+10 p.p.
Women doing more (%)	2% — 8%	-6 p.p.

Women - Actual

		2022-2024 Gap
Equal sharing (%)	41% — 51%	+11 p.p.
Men doing more (%)	39% — 45%	-6 p.p.
Women doing more (%)	10% — 14%	-4 p.p.

Men - Aspirational

		2022-2024 Gap
Equal sharing (%)	51% — 53%	+2 p.p.
Men doing more (%)	24% — 44%	-20 p.p.
Women doing more (%)	4% — 23%	+19 p.p.

Men - Actual

		2022-2024 Gap
Equal sharing (%)	37% — 50%	+13 p.p.
Men doing more (%)	29% — 54%	-25 p.p.
Women doing more (%)	8% — 21%	+13 p.p.

● SNAPS 2022   ◆ SNAPS 2024

Note: This graph compares changes in behaviours related to Earning Family Income between SNAPS 2022 (blue circle markers) and SNAPS 2024 (gold diamond markers) for women and men separately. Each marker represents the share of respondents who prefer one of three behavioural categories: "Equal sharing", "Men doing more", or "Women doing more." The horizontal lines connecting the 2022 and 2024 markers indicate the magnitude of change over the two-year period. The 2022–2024 Gap highlights the direction of change: green values indicate movement towards greater gender equality, while red values indicate movement away from gender equality. A detailed description of how behaviours were measured is provided in Note 3 – Annex 1. For in-depth analysis and country-specific examples, please refer to the respective country sections.

Earning Family Income domain

- **Overall, women and men became more divided on their aspirations for Earning Family Income:** In all countries, the proportion of women who expected their partners to take primary responsibility for Earning Family Income increased, marking a shift from a stable trend observed since 2020. Meanwhile, the proportion of women who wanted to take on more responsibility themselves slightly decreased or remained unchanged since 2022.

- **Women consistently showed stronger gender equality attitudes than men:** As such, the increase since 2022 in women expecting men to be primary earners may reflect a resistance to the double burden of care, as alluded to in the qualitative interviews. Alternatively, it could signal a return to more traditional gender norms, in response to neoliberal job market and the rise of increasing conservatism and gender backlash.

- **Contrastingly, men's aspirational behaviours became more gender-equal:** This trend was most evident in Vietnam, where there was a nearly 30 percentage point decline in men expecting they will take women primary responsibility for earning the household income, and a corresponding increase in men supporting their partner to take the lead. Such a reversal marks a break from regressive trend in attitudes in this domain observed in Vietnam and Indonesia between 2020 and 2022.

  Whether these more gender-equal aspirations are due to economic necessity or evolving normative and empirical expectations due to positive deviance exposure is likely to be highly contextual – as underscored by the qualitative interviews. Notably, men's expectations of more gender-equal income sharing was stronger than women's in 2024.

- **Trends in aspirational behaviours are mostly reflected in actual behaviours:** Among women, reported gender-equal income sharing increased in the Philippines and Vietnam between 2018 and 2020, plateaued in 2022, and declined slightly (by 3–7 percentage points) in 2024. However, in Indonesia, a decline has been observed among women since 2020. Men's reported behaviours in Vietnam and the Philippines followed a similar trajectory, while Indonesian men's responses remained static since 2018. However, 2024 marked a turning point, with men in all three countries showing an uptick in gender-equal behaviours.

5.4.2 Societal transformations

The following analysis synthesises cross-country findings on the enablers and barriers to gender equality advocacy.

It draws on structural and individual-level insights from validation workshops with in-country stakeholders held in Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam as well as general audience interview from Malaysia. Interviews and workshops revealed that normative and structural dynamics vary across countries but reveal common patterns in how support, resistance, and agency influence engagement in, and the efficacy of, advocacy.

Key takeaways

- **Key shifts are coinciding, spanning the climate crisis, economic transitions, technological disruption, demographic change and an evolving political landscape:** These have the potential to disrupt or entrench traditional gender norms.

- **Different countries are adopting a variety of measures in attempt to address these shifts:** If implemented successfully these may encourage gender-equality

Cross-country analysis

Countries across the world are witnessing a suite of societal transformations that are inevitably influencing and interacting with gender norms – and the region of Southeast Asia is no exception to this. The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence and social media ubiquity is enabling the proliferation of misogynistic ideology and content, reinforcing conservative gender norms about women's roles in social, economic, and domestic spheres. The resurgence of right-wing authoritarian politics and rollbacks of gender-equal policies are galvanising anti-feminist movements and threatening hard-won gender equality gains. The climate crisis threatens to add to women's mounting unpaid care burden. At the same time, rising cost of living, growth in the digital gig economy, increasing demand for care, and international and national action on gender equality provide opportunities to challenge traditional ideas about who should perform care and who should earn income in the family. However, the impact of these shifts on gender norms is not always straightforward – in many cases, they hold both the risk of entrenching traditional gender norms and the potential to challenge and reshape them.

The climate crisis

The world is currently in a climate crisis and Southeast Asia is at high risk of its impacts.[67] Climate-induced disasters are increasing in frequency and magnitude, with significant and harmful consequences for biodiversity, human health and livelihoods, infrastructure, and the economy.[68]

Research from across the four countries highlights how climate change can entrench or challenge gender norms. Research has noted that climate change is intensifying resource scarcity, reducing crop yields and decreasing reliability of fuel, water, and other essential resources.[69] Climate change, by making these activities longer and more difficult, increases the time that women spend on such unpaid household resource management – sometimes at the cost of employment or educational opportunities or safety.[70] Experts in Indonesia further noted that economic insecurity (exacerbated by climate change impacts) may also increase underage marriages and gender-based violence, with concurrent impacts on women and their children's health and education. Similarly in Malaysia, research has found women farmers experience greater emotional and physical violence following low crop yields.[71]

In Vietnam, prevailing social norms that women should hold primary responsibility for household maintenance, the aftermath of flooding disaster have intensified the impacts of climate-related disaster. In the Mekong Delta region, where flooding is recurrent, these norms place a disproportionate burden on women, both physically and financially, in the aftermath of disasters.[72] These instances highlight how climate change can reduce women's access to opportunities that likely increase their agency and wellbeing (i.e. education, employment, health care), often exacerbating sanctions and costs of positive deviance from traditional gender norms. However, research also notes women in play a pivotal and irreplaceable role in resilience, adaptations and mitigation strategies. Though often more vulnerable than men, women are not merely victims of climate change, but rather, key agents of change who must be involved in decision making processes.[73] Nonetheless, climate change coincides with gender norms, often shaping the gendered impacts of resulting crises and entrenching traditional roles.

The rising cost of living

The climate crisis, along with other factors, have seen a largely global increase in the cost of living. Experts across countries highlighted that cost of living pressures are necessitating dual income households, forcing both partners to work and encouraging women into employment alongside their partners. While this shift may be precipitated by economic necessity as opposed to genuine intentions to challenge traditional gender roles, it may still help to shift normative and empirical expectations around women's participation and leadership in the workforce.

However, as documented in the Philippines, there is potential for backlash to occur when women begin to challenge economic norms that position men as primary breadwinners.[74] One expert from the Philippines also noted that this shift had often seen women adopt the double burden of care and work. Similarly, in Vietnam, experts pointed to the role of the Women's Union who promote the slogan slogan "giỏi việc nước, đảm việc nhà" ("good at public work, good at home life").

The climate crisis, along with other factors, has seen a global increase in the cost of living. Experts in all countries noted that cost of living pressures are increasingly necessitating dual incomes within households, forcing both partners to work.

67   Overland et al. 2021
68   United Nations 2025a
69   United Nations, n.d.-a
70   United Nations Women 2025
71   Klima Action Malaysia 2025
72   Dang 2024
73   Biswas and Barua 2025
74   Emily Christi A. Cabegin and Gaddi 2019

While this shift may be precipitated by economic necessity as opposed to genuine intentions to challenge traditional gender roles, it may still help to shift normative and empirical expectations around women's participation and leadership in the workforce.

Rising living costs are also deterring or delaying couples' decisions to have children, given concerns about the affordability of childrearing. For example, recent report by UNFPA found that 39% of the Indonesians cited financial limitations as the primary factor leading them to have fewer children. A potential impact of delayed parenting choices may be that women enter and stay in the labour force longer, challenging norms that relegate women to the domestic sphere alone.[75] However, the normative lag that can occur between when women commence work and societal-scale normative update supporting their workforce participation has been observed to create intra-household tensions. One expert noted that men in Indonesia were often uncomfortable with wives out-earning them, furthering risk of household conflict with similar dynamics reported in the Philippines.[76]

More positively in Vietnam, dual expectations that women prioritise care (grounded in Confucian values) and contribute financially (long embedded in Vietnam's socialist history) have prompted many women to reassess the value of marriage. As a result, in Vietnam delaying marriage has become a strategy to pursue career advancement and maintain autonomy from caregiving and domestic responsibilities.[77] Here, updated norms are allowing women more freedom to pursue pathways according to personal values, over prescriptive roles.

Overall, experts across countries noted that affordable, high-quality childcare, along with updating patriarchal norms and increasing flexible working arrangements were key to enabling women's workforce participation amidst cost-of-living pressures.

Political shifts

The world is experiencing a rising "global wave of autocratisation".[78] Of the global population, 40% is estimated to live in countries where democracy is declining,[79] a trend which threatens historic progress on gender equality. Governments worldwide have brought in a suite of changes that oppose gender equality, including cutting workplace diversity and inclusion initiatives and repealing anti-discrimination and equality legislation.[80, 81] In combination with world leaders vocally promoting traditional gender norms[82] this trend is also galvanising right-wing movements among the general populace, enabling a resurgence and public airing of discriminatory attitudes, including misogynistic views.[83] Authoritarian and anti-feminist governments also constrain women's participation in politics and leadership, including through framing women as unfit to hold positions of power,[84] which serves to further shut down challenges to traditional gender norms and the status quo.

Experts in Indonesia and the Philippines spoke on the lasting impacts of woeful leadership on gender equality. In the Philippines, many experts spoke about the negative impact of the President's Duterte's six-year tenure from 2016 to 2022 on gender norms and women's rights. The former President's overt misogyny including sexualising comments, combined with the lack of formal condemnation of this misogyny, was noted by experts to encourage and permit sexist attitudes and behaviours in society – the legacy of which is "still haunting" the Philippines. Experts in Indonesia spoke

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75   United Nations Population Fund 2025
76   Emily Christi A. Cabegin and Gaddi 2019
77   Tran 2025
78   Nord et al. 2025
79   Nord et al. 2025
80   Juan-Torres et al. 2025
81   Brechenmacher 2025
82   Juan-Torres et al. 2025
83   Khan et al. 2023
84   Nord et al. 2025

of the hangover of the Suharto government's emphasis upon women's traditional roles. In particular, experts criticised the Suharto governments' funding for women's organisations which they said promote traditional gender roles, rather than progressing transformative reform. These cases from the Philippines and Indonesia highlight how the perpetuation of traditional norms, even decades ago, can have an enduring impact today.

Policy initiatives to increase women's political representation have been made by all four countries, but substantiative impacts of this descriptive representation are yet unclear. For example, experts in the Philippines noted that though the Philippines has had long-term women presidents and political representation, this has often been descriptive rather than substantiative. Experts noted elected women in the Philippines are often from dynastic families and sometimes act as "benchwarmers" for their male relatives (who cannot serve consecutive terms) until they are able to be elected again. Similarly, literature has pointed out that while women's descriptive representation has increased in Indonesia, substantiative representation is lacking.[85] Likewise, women's representation at the national level has declined in Malaysia from its 15% high in 2021[86] to 13.4% in early 2024.[87] More positively, Vietnam recently elected its first female Deputy Prime Minister, creating an opportunity to champion gender equality. Considerable work is needed to increase and maintain women's political representation and its quality, to ensure women are not just 'benchwarmers', but are empowered to enact meaningful change.

Increasing internet access, the digital economy and social media adoption

The world is becoming increasingly digitalised through the adoption of digital technologies, internet connectivity, and social media.[88] Both emerging and latent technologies have the potential to entrench or challenge traditional gender norms, acting as spaces of contestation where gendered perspectives can be observed and challenged.

The impact of social media on gender norms is not fixed but holds both the potential to challenge traditional gender norms and the risk of entrenching them, depending on the context of use.[89] Interviews with experts reflected this dual potential. Experts highlighted how social media has been used to highlight women's achievements, celebrate wins for gender equality, coordinate gender-equality advocacy, provide role models to counter gender stereotypes and increase awareness about gender equality. Such endorsement could provide a new reference network for social media users and establish supportive online communities, thus encouraging positive deviance and reducing perceived sanctions for deviating from traditional norms.

Experts also pointed to how social media content could undermine hard won gains in progressing gender equality. In Indonesia, accounts such as @Indonesiatanpafeminis. id (Indonesia without feminists) and @lawanfeminisme promote biologically determined views of gender, taking the perspective that feminism is a western concept and following such ideals is un-Islamic.[90] Similarly in Malaysia, experts spoke to how social media has increased the spaces to air anti-feminist backlash. Meanwhile in Vietnam, social media has been observed to create a new space where women are pressured to maintain idealised beauty standards, in addition to excelling in career and family domains. The study further women were inhibited from challenging gendered views that they disagreed with due to social norms prioritising social harmony.[91]

85 Prihatini 2022
86 Inter-Parliamentary Union Parline 2024
87 UN Women, n.d.
88 World Bank 2024a
89 Khan et al. 2023
90 Nisa 2023
91 T.-N. Nguyen et al. 2020

More positively, social media also appeared to be a practical tool for challenging traditional norms (if indirectly). In Malaysia, experts noted that social media was pivotal to coordinating gender equality advocacy movements. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, in the absence of flexible working arrangements and amid norms that prioritise women's place in the home, social media has also been used by women to promote and run home-based businesses enabling dual caregiving and earning.[92] Similarly in the Philippines, another expert highlighted the rise of 'mompreneurs' influencers–women who manage both family and business. While social media may create new opportunities for women's work and advocacy, such content may inadvertently reinforce and even enable the expectation that women simultaneously excel at both work and at caregiving.

Beyond social media, experts noted that the internet more broadly was both shaped by and actively shaping gender norms. Experts in Indonesia noted that flexible working arrangements (enabled by digital connectivity) were facilitating more flexible working practices (though such arrangements were often noted as being nascent only, and not the norm). Experts further recalled that multinational companies in Indonesia (whose transnational work is enabled by the internet) promoted diversity and inclusion initiatives increasing women's workplace representation and starting conversations about gender equality, challenging norms that relegate women to the domestic sphere.

The digitalisation of markets and the proliferation of e-commerce platforms are also providing women with opportunities to earn. Indeed, women make up sizeable portions of the gig economy in all countries; Vietnam (56%), Malaysia (46%), Philippines (45%) and Indonesia (19%).[93] Interviews with mothers working in the gig economy in the Philippines found that mothers opted for gig economy work for its flexible nature, helping them to balance childcare earning.[94]

Similarly, one expert pointed to the growth in the number of women joining platforms such as Grab, a popular ride-hailing platform in Malaysia, as another example of women's growing participation in the gig economy. There has been a 156% increase in the number of women drivers joining the platform since 2021 following deliberate company-led efforts to engage women.[95] Alternatively, women are using informal e-commerce networks to reduce the domestic load – for example, WhatsApp groups are used by some Jakartan women to coordinate grocery deliveries.[96] While the gig economy and e-commerce can offer opportunities for more flexible work and care, potentially eroding norms that confine women to the home, it is far from a panacea. Women in the gig economy continue to earn less than men, with wage gaps mirroring those present in the traditional labour force[97] and gendered industry segregation persists.[98] Such divisions both reflect and legitimise normative bias about the relative value of women and men's labour.

Overall, the digitisation of society, from social media to e-commerce offer opportunities to either recalibrate or embed traditional norms in Southeast Asia.

The growth of artificial intelligence

The rapid development and adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) is one of the most significant transformations humanity is currently living through. AI technologies are evolving at breakneck speed and fundamentally reshaping norms across all spheres of life, both personal and professional.

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92 Dwityas et al. 2025
93 Hernando and Calizo Jr. 2024
94 Potestades 2024
95 "Grab Malaysia Expands #SisBoleh Programme to Empower More Women" 2024
96 Dwityas et al. 2025
97 Rani et al. 2022
98 Bhagavathi and Kumar 2025

Gender bias is widely recognised to be embedded within AI's training data, resulting in outputs that perpetuate harmful gendered stereotypes, entrenching traditional gender norms.[99] Gender bias embedded in training data has resulted in AI outputs which focus predominantly on men's health information, depict and select genders according to traditional role divisions, provide gender-biased financial advice or credit scores and fail to moderate misogynistic content.[100] Similarly, image recognition systems are reported to be less effective when presented with images of women, particularly women of colour, that do present stereotyped feminine features or with disability.[101] Likewise, the use of AI to perpetuate image based abuse (particularly deepfakes in a pornographic context) has implications for women's online, emotional and physical safety.[102]

AI may reduce women's overall employment rates and entrench gendered occupational segregation. The ILO finds that 4.7% of women's jobs are at high risk of automation compared to 2.4% of men's.[103] The gender bias and neglect of gendered safety considerations by AI companies is partially attributable to the workforce demographics of these companies – women represent only 20% of employees in major machine learning companies.[104] Such bias risks entrenching, if not exacerbating traditional norms.

The four countries have taken policy action in attempt to both leverage and regulate AI. In the Philippines, the Department of Trade and Industry launched its first National AI Strategy Roadmap in 2021, then followed by a second roadmap in 2024. However, across both roadmaps, there is no significant mention of gender or gender considerations in AI policy making.[105] Similarly, Indonesia's ambitious' National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence has only one reference to the gendered impacts of AI in its 194-pages.[106] In Vietnam, the Ministry of Science and Technology is drafting the Law on Artificial Intelligence (2025), it is unclear whether the law will include gender considerations. In Malaysia, the government established a National Artificial Intelligence Office (NAIO) in late 2024 which is set to launch a National AI Action Plan for 2026-2030.[107] Positively, Malaysia has demonstrated some efforts to address the gendered impacts of AI through initiatives such as Women in AI and gender-inclusive AI leadership programs.[108] The impacts of these policies on gender norms is yet unclear, but the lack of gender sensitivity is an early warning sign that more work is needed to address AI's potential entrenchment of gender norms.

As an emerging policy trend, it is yet unclear how AI will influence gender norms across Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam, but concerted policy action is needed to proactively address gendered bias and impacts that might embed traditional norms.

International and national action on gender equality

From the establishment of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995 to the recent Political Declaration to mark its 30th anniversary in 2025, there has been a strong and consistent global push by international bodies to advance gender equality and secure commitments from governments to do the same – particularly in

99   UNESCO 2024
100   UNESCO 2024
101   Buolamwini and Gebru 2018
102   UK Council for Internet Safety 2019
103   "Work Transformed" 2025
104   UNESCO 2024
105   Department of Trade and Industry 2025
106   This observation draws on keyword searches for "wanita" (woman), "perempuan" (female/woman), and "jenis kelamin" (gender/sex).
107   Ministry of Digital 2025
108   UNESCO 2025

the advent of aforementioned shifts that may threaten historical hard-won gains.[109]

Government across Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines have been acting on gender issues with a particular focus on increasing women's labour force participation which will also help realise economic gains for each country. Each government has set a future target for women's labour force participation. In Indonesia, this figure is 70% by 2045,[110] up from 53% in 2024.[111] In Malaysia, the government is aiming for 60% by 2030,[112] from a current figure of 56% in 2025.[113] In the Philippines, the goal is 52-54% by 2028 from 50% in 2024.[114, 115] In Vietnam, women's labour force participation already sits at a comparatively high rate of 68% in 2025[116] and the government's efforts are focused on supporting women to balance economic and domestic work.

Nevertheless, all four government have introduced policies to support women to join and stay in the workforce such as flexible working arrangements, anti-discrimination laws, and hiring incentives. All four countries have introduced or strengthened formal policies related to flexible working arrangements, which may support women into the workforce by enabling balance between work and caregiving responsibilities. In 2022, the Malaysian government added a clause to the Employment Act 1995, its main labour law, that allowed both women and men employees to request flexible working arrangements from their employers.[117] In the same year, the Philippines' Department of Labor and Employment introduced enhanced protections to the previously established Telecommuting Act of 2018 which had formalised flexible working arrangements in the private sector. The Philippines' Trabaho Para sa Bayan (TPB) 10-Year Labor Market Development Plan (2025–2034) also extends these arrangements to the public sector.[118] In Indonesia, flexible work arrangements for government employees have been gradually formalised since 2021 and a recent ministerial regulation in 2025 further defined flexible work times and locations as a key tool to achieve the government's performance goals.[119] Vietnam's Labour Code encourages employers to offer flexible working hours for both women and men employees, although these arrangements are not mandated.[120]

All four countries have also introduced anti-discrimination and anti-harassment laws to make the workplace safer and more accessible for women. Between 2019 and 2024, all four countries established legislation defining or clarifying the definition of sexual harassment and outlining guidelines for workplaces to prevent and respond to sexual harassment.[121, 122, 123, 124] Malaysia additionally introduced anti-discrimination protections for pregnant employees to prevent unlawful termination by employers as part of the 2022 amendment to the Employment Act.[125]

109   United Nations 2025b
110   Government of Indonesia 2024
111   Based on World Bank's World Development Indicators. The labour force participation rate is as percentage of population in each gender aged 15 and above based on modelled ILO estimate (World Bank Open Data 2025
112   Ministry of Economy 2025)
113   Department of Statistics Malaysia 2025a
114   Philippine Government 2023
115   World Bank 2025b
116   Based on World Bank's World Development Indicators. The labour force participation rate is as percentage of population in each gender aged 15 and above based on modelled ILO estimate (World Bank Open Data 2025a)
117   Employment Act 1955 as at 1 January 2023 2023
118   Department of Economy, Planning, and Development 2025
119   Susanto 2025
120   Merdikawati et al. 2024
121   Gender Equity Unit 2023
122   Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development, n.d.
123   Philippine Commission on Women 2024
124   International Labour Organisation 2022
125   Ministry of Human Resources 2023

Experts from Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines also noted the increasing rates of women's educational attainment as a shift that has been occurring, such that women are outpacing men. For instance, in Indonesia, women outnumber men in tertiary enrolments in Indonesia by 10%.[126] In Malaysia, women's enrolment rates are higher than men's at all levels of education.[127] In the Philippines, 63% of working-age women had completed at least high school compared to 56% of men, and 18% of working-age women had completed at least college compared to 14% of men.[128] However, experts and the literature show that this has not necessarily translated into greater attachment to the workforce for women.[129] This suggests that higher educational attainment alone has not been sufficient to move the dial on traditional caregiving and economic gender norms.

Furthermore, experts highlighted that shifting economic norms without equal efforts to also challenge caregiving norms risks reinforcing a double burden on women to perform both paid and unpaid work. In Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, maternity leave entitlements have increased since 2019, while Vietnam's have remained at a generous six months.[130] Malaysia's 2022 amendment to its Employment Act extended maternity leave from 60 to 98 days and introduced seven days of paid parental leave for men where none existed previously.[131] The most recent revision to parental leave in the Philippines was the Republic Act 11210 in 2019, which extended paid maternity leave from 60 to 105 days and allowed for up to seven days of this leave to be transferred to fathers, on top of the seven days already legislated under the Paternity Leave Act of 1996. However, there have been no revisions since 2019. Similarly, in Vietnam, paternity

leave entitlements have remained at five to 14 state-funded days since 2016, with no revisions since. In Indonesia, the 2024 Mother and Child Welfare Bill extended maternity leave from three to six months. However, paternity leave entitlements remain at only two days, funded by the employer – a limitation that remains unaddressed even following the introduction of the country's new care roadmap and action plan.[132]

These increases in maternity leave and supportive workforce policies may support women to remain attached to the workforce alongside caring duties. However, the lack of simultaneous increases in paternity leave discourages men's involvement in caregiving, reinforcing traditional gender norms which position women as primary caregivers and men as breadwinners.

Increasing demand for care

The demand for care – particularly for children, older people, and persons with disability – is growing, driven by a range of demographic and economic transitions. Demand for childcare is growing as women continue to enter the labour force. The need for older adult care is increasing across all four countries, with Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam already classified as ageing societies while the Philippines is projected to reach this status by 2030.[133,134,135,136] This growing deficit is further exacerbated by urbanisation trends where younger people migrate from rural to urban areas for economic opportunities and disrupt traditional models of family-based care for their older parents. The demand for care for persons with disability is also growing as disability prevalence increases, due to higher likelihood of disability as people age as well

126   World Bank Open Data 2025a
127   Department of Statistics Malaysia 2024b
128   World Bank 2021c
129   Salleh and Mansor 2022
130   Merdikawati, et al. 2025
131   Department of Labour Peninsular Malaysia 2022
132   Merdikawati, et al. 2025
133   Basrowi, Rahayu, Khoe, et al. 2021
134   Department of Statistics Malaysia 2025b
135   Cruz et al. 2025
136   Bales et al. 2021

as greater awareness and earlier diagnoses of disabilities in childhood.[137]

Women already bear a disproportionate burden of informal and unpaid care. Across the four countries, women spend between 1.5 and 2.8 hours more than men per day on unpaid care and domestic work.[138] As care demand increases, traditional economic and caregiving gender norms may be further entrenched. Furthermore, women who are engaged in the workforce may increasingly take on a 'double burden' – having to perform labour both inside and outside of the home.[139] Thus, even though women may share earning responsibilities with their partners, they may continue to bear the burden of domestic duties if traditional caregiving norms are left unaddressed.

To avoid this governments and other stakeholders must respond with investments in formal care infrastructure and supportive policies that encourage redistribution of caregiving responsibilities. There are government efforts to meet this shift, though the extent and gender-responsiveness of these efforts varies across the four countries. In Indonesia, the government introduced both a Care Economy Roadmap and accompanying National Action Plan in 2024. This roadmap and plan recognise the urgency of investing in care infrastructure and policies to meet rising care demands, including formally

recognising care workers and investing in early childhood education facilities – efforts that, if implemented successfully, have the potential to support positive norm shifts about the value of care work and who performs it. In the Philippines, the Philippine Commission on Women is currently leading the development of a National Care Economy Policy Framework in partnership with Oxfam Pilipinas.[140] However, as of August 2025, the framework is still pending approval, and an

accompanying action plan is lacking. Vietnam currently lacks an integrated framework for the care economy. Instead, the government has introduced separate action plans that focus on specific population groups, such as the 2021 National Program of Action on Older Persons. Malaysia similarly lacks a comprehensive and integrated strategy to respond to rising care demand.[141]

Without an integrated framework to systemically address rising care demand, these countries risk adding to women's unpaid care burden and entrenching gender-unequal caregiving norms.

Cultural shifts

In addition to the above shifts, experts highlighted other trends including the enduring role of religion in upholding traditional gender norms across Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. In Indonesia and Malaysia, experts spoke of the growth in religious fundamentalism and conservative interpretations of Islam that promote traditional gender roles. However, they also spoke of activist organisations that promote more gender-equal readings of the Quran and challenge traditional norms. Meanwhile, in the Philippines, the only Christian country in Southeast Asia, experts noted that conservative Catholic values continue to impact people's enactment of gender roles. In Vietnam, Confucian values similarly continue to influence caregiving norms.[142] Although the most traditional interpretations have largely faded, some research suggests that districts in Vietnam with a stronger Confucian legacy tend to have lower gender equality in economic participation and fewer women in leadership positions.[143]

Experts also called out specific trends in each of their countries. In Indonesia, experts spoke of a continuing tension

137 Merdikawati, et al. 2025
138 Hanna et al. 2023a
139 Merdikawati, et al. 2025
140 Merdikawati, et al. 2025
141 Merdikawati, et al. 2025
142 Vu 2019
143 Vu and Yamada 2024

between international and local norms and resistance to 'western ideas' of women's workforce participation. As such, promoting interpretations of Islam and messages from credible leaders (particularly regional leaders outside of Jakarta) were conducive with gender-equality were highlighted by experts as key to creating grassroots support for gender-equality. In the Philippines, experts referenced the fragmentation of feminist movements and how increasing division between older and younger feminists may be limiting the strength of movements to shift traditional gender norms. In Malaysia, experts suggested that increasing divorce rates in the country are necessitating women's economic independence and thus increasing women's participation in the workforce.

Overall, Southeast Asia stands at a poignant juncture where polycrises, spanning climate change and economic pressures to technological disruption and political shifts, are simultaneously challenging and reinforcing traditional gender norms. Rising education levels, changing labour markets and digital connectivity create opportunities for progress. However, the looming impacts of democratic backslide, online misogyny, religious fundamentalism and AI-embedded biases threaten hard won gains in equality and road-block progress. Without concerted and ambitious policy action that broaches economic participation and caregiving responsibilities in tandem, these transformations will likely (and are actively) deepening women's double burden.

6. Limitations & future research directions

In terms of limitations and avenues for future research, this study was limited to a specific demographic, which is the urban population aged 18 to 40 to reflect Investing in Women's target cohorts.

While we observed promising gradual shifts toward more gender-equal attitudes and behaviours within this group, the findings may not reflect the perspectives of other significant segments of the population. In particular, rural communities, older generations, and individuals from minoritised backgrounds, including those outside of the gender binary were underrepresented, or excluded from the sample.[144] As all data was self-reported, social desirability bias may be present though surveys were anonymised to mitigates this.

In the quantitative analysis, the results in this study should be interpreted with caution as they reflect associations rather than causal relationships. We also acknowledge that pooling data from different countries in the segmentation analysis requires careful interpretation for several reasons. However, disaggregating the findings by multiple identity factors (such as age, gender identity, or education) would lead to small sample sizes that do not enable robust conclusions.

First, pooling may obscure important cultural, social, and structural differences that influence attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy within each country, thereby limiting the ability to capture context-specific patterns. While pooling enhances statistical reliability, it may also mask country-specific drivers.

Second, this approach tends to highlight patterns common across countries, which may result in smaller or unique national segments being merged into broader profiles. This reduces granularity and may overlook distinct subgroups. As noted earlier, identifying such smaller profiles within individual countries is not feasible given the current sample sizes.

Third, findings derived from pooled profiles primarily represent broader regional trends rather than within-country variability, which restricted their generalisability. Therefore, insights from this analysis should be interpreted with caution and validated against local contexts, particularly when informing country-level interventions, policies, or programmes.

In addition, although the study surveyed and interviewed individuals across genders, future research could benefit from interviewing couples separately to explore intra-household dynamics and reduce potential response bias regarding partners' contributions. This approach could provide a clearer understanding of how partners perceive and report responsibilities across caregiving, domestic, and economic roles. For example, it could reveal whether women tend to over-report men's contributions or portray household caregiving arrangements as more gender-equal than they are. These issues that are difficult to fully capture through individual responses alone.

Beyond the quantitative analysis, the qualitative work also had limitations. The qualitative sample size did not allow for in-depth analysis of trends between countries (see **Annex 2** for details). Sample compositions also varied in make-up (i.e. the Malaysian sample were mostly post-graduate educated while other countries were not), limiting comparability. Interviews in Indonesia

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144   As of 2020, 46% of the Philippine population resided in rural barangays, and 27% were aged 40 and above (Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) 2022b; 2022a).

and Vietnam were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and Vietnamese respectively, meaning some nuance may have been lost during translation.

This research also opens many other exciting avenues for further research. In particular, there is scope to deepen understanding of when and how reference networks supersede one another. For instance, under what conditions family expectations are outweighed by those of friends or other social circles. Future work could also explore in greater depth the influence of in-laws, neighbours, media, politics, religion, regionality, culture, and ethnicity. The findings also suggest that men may be more willing to perform certain household tasks over others, such as cooking rather than cleaning, or helping with homework rather than providing personal care for children. Cultural context may shape which tasks are viewed as 'enjoyable,' presenting an interesting pathway for promoting more gender-equal task sharing. Additionally, there were surprising cases where individuals appeared to advocate gender equality despite not personally holding such views, and instances where men's exposure to gender-equal expectations, media, or upbringings was negatively associated with gender-equal behaviours. These findings point to important areas for further research.

While this report focused on addressing the core research questions, the richness of the data offers numerous possibilities for further exploration.

7. Concluding remarks

Understanding gender norms is crucial for promoting inclusive and equitable development. These norms are shaped by cultural, social, and institutional factors and deeply influence individual choices, opportunities, and outcomes.

This report presented a comprehensive cross-country analysis of gender norms, behaviours, and advocacy across Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, drawing on survey data from **8,000** individuals and qualitative insights from **121** interviews and validation workshops. Using Bicchieri's theories on social norms alongside IW's Women's Economic Equality (WEE) framework, this study explored how gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy are shaped by empirical and normative expectations, conditional preferences, and structural factors.

Findings reveal that while gender-equal attitudes are widespread, particularly among women, these attitudes do not consistently translate into behaviours. Advocacy is more closely linked to attitudes than to action, highlighting the need to address the social and structural barriers that inhibit behavioural change. Across all countries, caregiving and economic roles remain deeply gendered, with the male breadwinner norm persisting, especially among unmarried men. Yet, there are signs of transformation: economic pressures, shifting family structures, and exposure to gender-equal role models are reshaping empirical expectations, particularly for women.

Many findings reinforce that empirical expectations, or what people observe others doing, show stronger association with behaviour than normative expectations, or what people believe others expect of them. This suggests that interventions could focus on making gender-equal behaviours more visible and socially accepted, especially within key reference networks such as peers, partners, and community leaders. For men, conflicting associations between attitudes and behaviours point to the need for targeted, gender-sensitive interventions that engage networks where men participate and challenge norm-justifying beliefs like "separate but equal." The report also highlights the importance of positive deviance: visible, local, credible examples of gender-equal behaviour can shift empirical expectations and reduce the perceived social cost of norm-breaking.

Structural enablers, such as flexible work arrangements, affordable care services, and supportive partners, are decisive in converting attitudes into action. Without these, time scarcity and the double burden continue to constrain women's ability to engage equally in both caregiving and economic roles. Additionally, changes in gender norms since 2022 reflect both progress and resistance. While dual earning and shared caregiving are becoming more common, normative scripts around maternal duty and men's financial responsibility remain entrenched. The increasing demand for care, alongside broader societal shifts including from politics, social media, and climate disruption offers both risks and opportunities for gender norm transformation. Future interventions must be responsive to these dynamics, leveraging structural change and social influence to foster genuine gender equality.

We hope these insights provide crucial evidence informing the development of more responsive, context-specific policies and interventions for promote gender-equality in the region.

Country profiles overview

This section reports more in-depth results from the survey and analysis for each country. It presents detailed findings for **Indonesia**, **Malaysia**, the **Philippines**, and **Vietnam**.

Our analysis of individual countries revealed common key areas for targeting interventions, including:

- **Bridging the gender gap in attitudes:** While most participants express gender-equal attitudes, women consistently do so more than men. Interventions should focus on engaging men more deeply in gender equality across caregiving and domestic and economic domains.

- **Shifting reference group perceptions to enable norm change:** Many individuals hold gender-equal beliefs but hesitate to act due to concerns about how others in their social circles might respond. Interventions should make gender-equal behaviours more visible and socially accepted, helping reshape both empirical and normative expectations within key reference networks.

- **Challenging persistent gender norms like the male-breadwinner model:** Despite changing attitudes, the expectation that men should bear greater financial responsibility remains strong, especially among unmarried participants. Targeted messaging and role model visibility can help disrupt this norm and promote more equitable financial and caregiving roles (particularly among men).

- **Broader changes to policy, legislation and workplace practices:** Behavioural change depends not only on norms but also on structural and contextual factors – which limit the options available to an individual. Key structural influences on behaviour, not captured by norms, but stills significant in the findings included: sufficient time and resources to enable advocacy or outsource care (particularly accessible childcare), flexible working arrangements, and rhetorical support for gender equality within an individual's reference networks-such as national governments or workplace colleagues.

Therefore, interventions aiming to influence behaviour should consider the broader socio-environmental conditions shaped by policy, legislation and workplace practices.

Indonesia

1. Contextual background

This section provides an overview of gender equality progress in Indonesia. Overall trends are captured by gender gap report rankings. Indonesia ranked 97th out of 148 countries in the 2025 Global Gender Gap Index.[145] This ranking highlights the ongoing impact of persistent gender inequalities and gender norms in areas such as labour force participation and caregiving responsibilities despite progress in other areas such as education.

1.1 Education-employment paradox

Indonesia has made significant strides in closing the gender gap in educational attainment, with women now surpassing men in several levels of education, including post-secondary education.[146] With regards to **women in tertiary education** specifically, the ratio of enrolment in tertiary education was 50% for women compared with **40%** for men as of 2023.[147] At a gender parity ratio of **1.2** in the same year, Indonesian women are currently more likely than men to pursue higher education, suggesting a reversal in historical trends.[148]

However, higher educational attainment has not led to equivalent improvements in women's economic participation. **Women's labour force participation** has remained stagnant for the past three decades, at **53%** in 2024.[149] In contrast, men's labour force participation has consistently remained above 80% (e.g., **82%** in 2024). This persistent gap reflects a complex interplay of religious norms, family responsibilities at different life stages, and socioeconomic status, each shaping women's labour force participation in distinct ways.

1.2 Norms influencing labour force participation gap

Women's labour force participation varies significantly across regions. Data from 2016 showed that participation rates were lower in more Islamically conservative provinces such as Aceh (47%).[150] In contrast, rates reached around 60% among predominantly Christian Batak and Minangkabau populations in North Sumatera. These differences underscore the influence of religious and cultural norms on women's employment decisions.[151]

Family responsibilities also play a major role in shaping women's participation. Marriage and childbearing continue to reduce women's likelihood of remaining in the labour force. Cohort analysis from 1996 to 2013 found that many women left formal employment during their childbearing years due to expectations around caregiving and domestic duties.[152] The same analysis found that age also plays a critical role. Labour force participation is highest among younger, urban, and

145   World Economic Forum 2024
146   Dong and Merdikawati 2023
147   World Bank Open Data, n.d.-b
148   World Bank Open Data, n.d.-a
149   Based on World Bank's World Development Indicators. The labour force participation rate is as percentage of population in each gender aged 15 and above based on modelled ILO estimate (World Bank Open Data 2025a
150   Cameron 2023
151   Cameron 2023
152   Cameron et al. 2019

educated women.[153] However, participation often declines in women's late twenties, coinciding with marriage and childbearing. This trend suggests that family formation remains a critical juncture in women's work trajectories.[154]

Indeed, a survey conducted in 2023 of urban young adults aged 18 to 40 found that family responsibilities together with structural factors continue to be the major constraints affected women's labour market participation. It argued that gender discriminatory social norms restrict women's economic opportunities and typecast women's capabilities in the labour market.[155]

Socioeconomic status shapes participation in different ways. Data from 1990 to 2011 showed that Indonesian women from poorer households often engaged in work out of financial necessity, whereas women from wealthier households were more likely to participate to gain better access to attractive, well-paid opportunities.[156] Education intersects with these factors. From 1995 to 2017, women with post-secondary education had higher rates of labour force entry and were more likely to remain employed through their childbearing years. This trend highlights education's protective effect against labour market dropout.[157]

1.3 Employment patterns and pay gap

Most women are concentrated in **low paying sectors**, and occupational gender segregation remains widespread. Data from 2000 to 2017 showed that women were overrepresented in sectors such as retail trade, hospitality, and food services, while men dominated higher-productivity sectors like finance, business services, and utilities.[158] Women are also more likely than men to be concentrated in **the informal sector**. In 2023, **64%** of employed women worked informally compared with **56%** of men.[159] During the same period, **59%** of total employment in Indonesia was informal, making this gender gap substantial and significant for income security and access to social protections.[160]

This concentration in informal and lower-paying sectors is closely linked to women's life-course employment patterns. Many women who re-enter the workforce after childbearing tend to do so in informal or non-wage roles, often as unpaid family workers or through self-employment, rather than in formal wage employment. The decline in labour force participation after childbirth is less pronounced in rural areas, where women can more easily balance work and childcare thanks to greater extended-family support and shorter commuting distances.[161]

These labour market patterns contribute to a significant **gender pay gap**. On average, Indonesian women earned **23%** less than men in 2020.[162] This pay gap persists across all levels of educational attainment.[163] **High-paying and leadership positions** remain largely held by men. In 2020, women held only **25%** of these positions, and even in such roles, they earned less than men in the same position.[164] Recent research suggests that gender discrimination, rather than gender differences in productivity or qualifications, drives much of the gender pay gap.[165]

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153   Cameron et al. 2019
154   Dong and Merdikawati 2023
155   Setyonaluri et al. 2021
156   Schaner and Das 2016
157   Dong and Merdikawati 2023
158   World Bank 2020a
159   BPS-Statistics Indonesia 2023
160   BPS-Statistics Indonesia 2023
161   Dong and Merdikawati 2023
162   UN Women and International Labour Organisation 2020
163   UN Women and International Labour Organisation 2020
164   International Labour Organisation 2020
165   Schaner and Das 2016

1.4 Leadership, political representation and access to capital

Women's participation in national political leadership and decision-making in Indonesia remains limited. Indonesia introduced a **30%** quota to reserve candidacies for women and a zipper system requiring a woman be the candidate in every third position on party lists.[166] Despite these measures, only **21%** of elected representatives in the 2019 national parliament (People's Representative Council, or Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, DPR) were women.[167] This falls short of the **30%** target set by the Beijing Platform for Action, despite women making up **40%** of the candidates nominated by political parties in that election. Gender disparity was also evident in public administration, where men occupied around **70%** of the highest echelon positions in the national government in 2016.[168] Even in the education sector, where women hold the majority of roles,[169] men continue to hold most leadership positions.[170]

Women's participation in regional leadership is similarly low. The 2014 Village Law required women's inclusion in Village Council (Badan Permusyawaratan Desa, BPD) membership. Yet by 2018, **40%** of villages still had no women representatives.[171] Several factors contribute to this persistent underrepresentation. Deep-rooted patriarchal traditions, which have shaped social structures for centuries, continue to influence perceptions of gender roles. Literature suggests that in recent years, a resurgence of conservative religious ideologies has further reinforced social barriers to women's leadership, making it more challenging for women to be accepted

in public decision-making roles within their communities.[172] Despite some progress, women's political empowerment in Indonesia remains relatively weak, ranking **103rd** globally in 2024.[173]

In the private sector, Indonesia has a large pool of women entrepreneurs. However, the majority operate micro, informal, and home-based businesses. These enterprises often have limited growth potential due to structural barriers, including gendered inequalities in **women's access to capital, lending and loans**.[174] Women typically have less access to assets that can be used as collateral, which hinders their ability to secure financing. In addition, some lending procedures still reflect gender bias. Women are often required to obtain their husband's or another related man's co-signature to access loans.[175]

1.5 Gender norms and the care economy

Underlying these persistent inequalities are social norms that continue to shape expectations of women's roles in both paid and unpaid work. In particular, these can manifest through normative expectations vis-à-vis **men's perceptions of women's work**. According to ILO survey data, as of 2016 **43%** of Indonesian men believed that women should not engage in paid work outside the home.[176] Moreover, attitudes have grown more conservative over time. Data from the World Values Survey revealed a rising share of both women and men who agreed that "men have more right to a job than women." In 2018, **76%** of Indonesian men and **74%** of women held this view, compared with **65%** and **42%** respectively in 2006.[177]

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166   Hillman 2018
167   Wardani and Subekti 2021
168   World Bank 2018
169   Afkar et al. 2020
170   Afkar et al. 2020
171   World Bank 2020b
172   Oktaviani 2024
173   World Economic Forum 2024
174   World Bank 2020a
175   Hanna et al. 2023a
176   Gallup and ILO 2017
177   Haerpfer et al. 2024; Ingelhart et al. 2014

Indonesia
Factsheet

Global gender gap score /1.00

0.692

97th
Global ranking

Educational attainment score/1.00

0.978

103rd
Global ranking

Women's political empowerment score/1.00

0.153

103rd
Global ranking

Workforce participation

53%

82%

Time spent on domestic work

Women: 4.44 hrs

Men: 2.1 hrs
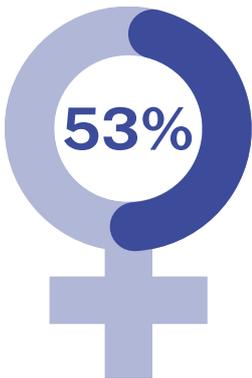
"When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women"

75.6%
agreed in the World Values survey questionnaire

In Indonesia, the institutionalisation of Muslim family law and the ongoing Islamic revival have reinforced traditional gender norms, particularly men's authority and role as breadwinners. However, rising women's educational attainment and career aspirations, along with growing gender-equal Islamic discourses, have made it more acceptable for women to pursue higher education and paid work while maintaining their femininity, religious identity, and household harmony. As a result, recent analysis suggests that how Muslim couples discuss marriage and domestic roles has become a key means to negotiate modern gender identities in a shifting social landscape.[178]

These norms also shape patterns of labour, particularly **time spent on domestic care**. Indonesian women spend more than twice as much time on unpaid care and domestic work as men, which is **4.4 hours** per day on average in 2023, compared to **2.1 hours** for men.[179] Social expectations continue to place caregiving responsibilities primarily on women, and the lack of accessible, affordable childcare services significantly influences their decisions around labour force participation. Even when women are employed, their time spent on care and domestic duties remains largely unchanged, resulting in a double burden of paid and unpaid work.[180]

Many women rely on extended family or childcare support. Urban data from 2000–2014 showed that women with elderly household members returned to pre-pregnancy employment levels within two years of childbirth. For those without such support, the return took twice as long. A lack of **access to childcare** compounds these challenges. Informal and un-waged care arrangements dominate childcare for children aged 0 to 6 in Indonesia. Public investment in early childhood development and childcare services remains low, which was only **0.04%** of GDP in 2017, well below the recommended **1%**.[181] Recent state expansion of pre-school services for children aged 4 to 6 has increased mothers' employment by **9.1%**.[182] However, most of this rise reflects growth in unpaid family work, such as mothers joining family farms or businesses. These activities are still counted as employment in household surveys. This pattern is partly explained by limited childcare services, which typically operate for only three hours per day, much shorter than a full workday.[183]

178   Rinaldo 2019
179   Hanna et al. 2023a
180   World Bank 2024c
181   O'Donnell et al. 2022
182   Halim et al. 2022
183   Merdikawati, et al. 2025

2. Findings & discussion

2.1 Gender-equal attitudes and practices

2.1.1 Prevalence of gender-equal attitudes and practices

This section examines the prevalence of gender-equal attitudes and behaviours, as well as the extent to which individuals actively advocate for gender equality as reported in SNAPS 2024.

It provides an overview of how widely gender-equal perspectives are held within the target population and the extent to which these attitudes translate into behaviours and advocacy that promotes equality, focussing on:

Key takeaways

- **Most Indonesian women and men held gender-equal attitudes in relation to both Caregiving and Domestic roles and Economic roles,** although women more likely to do so than men across domains. This indicates overall supportive attitudes for gender equality.

- **Shifting attitudes alone appeared insufficient to motivate behaviour change:** Although many women and men supported gender-equal sharing of caregiving responsibilities, gender-equal behaviours remained far less common. Meaningful change might depend on shifting empirical and normative expectations within key reference networks.

- **Gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy is the least prevalent in the Earning Family Income domain:** This aligns with more gender-equal expectations in public or role-based contexts, such as Leadership and Job Suitability and more traditional expectations governing household earnings. Another contributing factor may be the enduring 'male breadwinner' norm: among unmarried or unpartnered participants, nearly half still expected men to take greater financial responsibility for both partners, highlighting a strong normative expectation that sustains unequal roles.

- **In several cases, women and men reported women's economic contributions differently and misperceived peers' support and practices:** This points to gaps in empirical expectations (what is typical) and, at times, normative expectations (what is approved).

Caregiving & domestic roles

Key takeaways

- **Overall, gender-equal sharing in Caregiving and Domestic roles are widely supported, though men's support was weaker than women's:** The majority of participants reported an equal distribution of these responsibilities, as reflected in aggregated attitudes and aspirational behaviours. However, men's support was consistently around **10 percentage points** lower than women's across all categories, and men were more likely to expect that women should assume greater responsibility for caregiving and domestic work.

- **Aspirational and actual behaviours differed substantially:** Despite holding largely gender-equal attitudes and aspirations, fewer participants reported sharing tasks equally with their partners, particularly in Childcare and Housework domains. Around **32%-36%** women and **42%-46%** men reported that women did more in Childcare and Housework than men. This attitude-behaviour gap highlights the difficulty of translating gender-equal attitudes into practice, reflecting tensions between personal normative beliefs and prevailing collective expectations.

- **Gendered stereotypes likely reinforce the disconnect between personal attitudes, aspirations, and prevailing social norms:** According to Bicchieri's model, translating personal normative beliefs into social norms depends on both individual attitudes and perceived social expectations within one's reference networks. This helps explain why attitudinal change alone is often insufficient to motivate behavioural change.[184] This helps explain why attitudinal change alone is insufficient to motivate behavioural change. Qualitative interviews underscored the persistence of gender role stereotypes and expectations, with one participant noting, "Most of the people I meet still believe, 'Why have a wife if you still have to make your own coffee?'" (Participant 9, Indonesia). Further key barriers to translating attitudes into practice, identified in the qualitative work, included the availability of outsourced care and domestic support (from relatives or private services) and husbands' reluctance to take on household tasks. Other barriers included jobs with limited flexibility, logistical challenges such as long commute times, and social stigma associated with deviating from traditional roles.

- **Women were stronger advocates for gender equality in Caregiving and Domestic roles:** Although most participants reported advocating for gender equality in these areas, women were 1**2–18 percentage points** more likely than men to do so. Validation workshops indicated that advocacy for gender equality is still largely perceived as a "women's issue" and that women are often more motivated to address and rebalance the power dynamics that disadvantage them.

- **Both women and men reported higher rates of advocacy for equality than actual equal behaviours:** Findings from the qualitative data suggests that stigma and opposition in the private sphere undermine social norm change, meaning advocacy efforts are blocked from being translated into behaviours. As such, reference-group pressures remain powerful barriers despite shifting personal normative beliefs.

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184   Bicchieri 2017

Figure ID 1 Gender-equal attitudes and practices in Caregiving and Domestic roles[185]
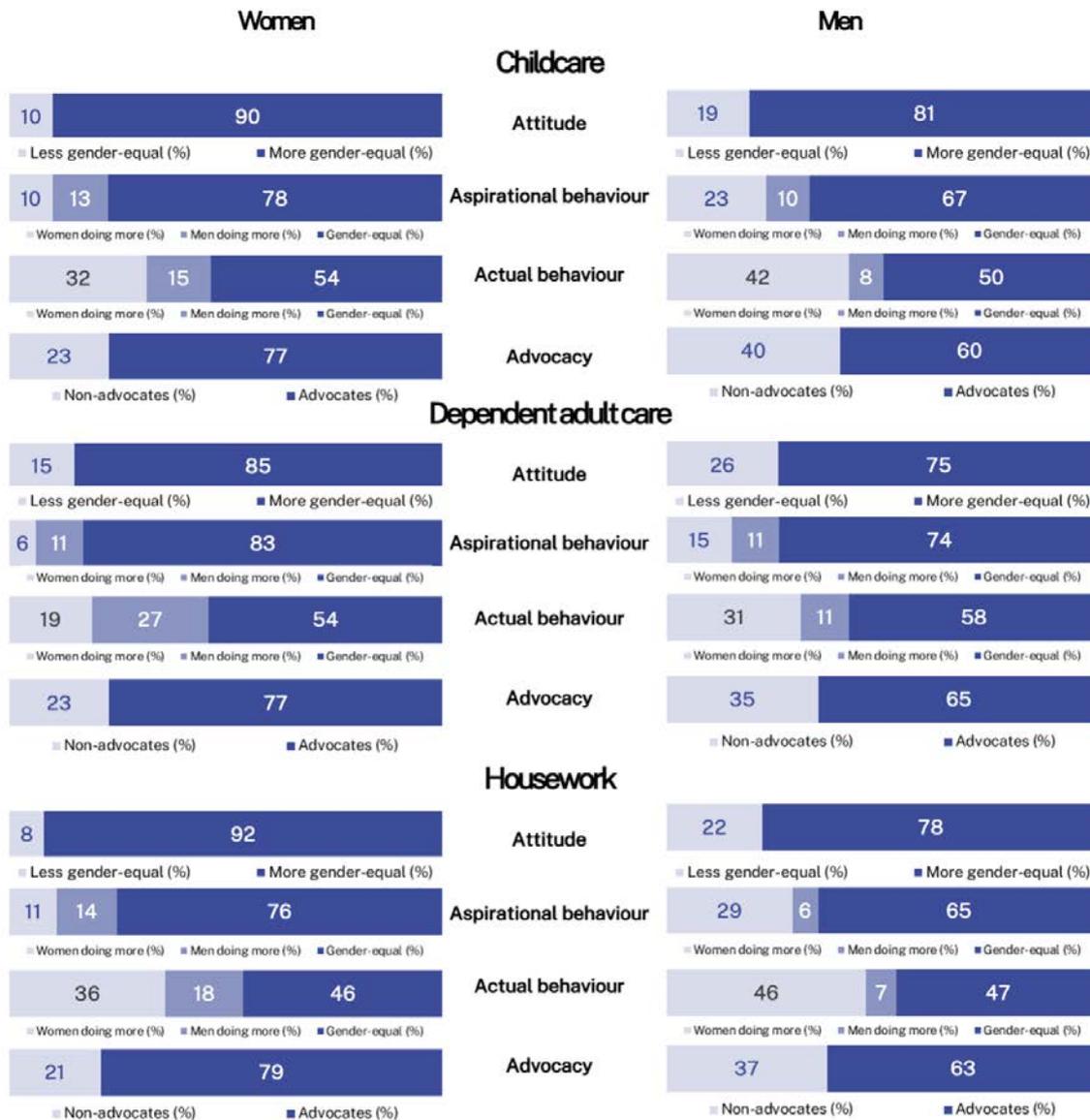
Note: This graph presents the proportion of responses by women and men. The analysis covers the domains of Childcare, Dependent Adult Care, and Housework, based on 2024 SNAPS survey data. A detailed explanation of how behaviours were captured can be found in **Note 3 – Annex 1**.

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185   Note that of the sample 69% of women were employed compared to the national female labour force participation rate of 53% in 2025. Based on World Bank's World Development Indicators. The labour force participation rate is as percentage of population in each gender aged 15 and above based on modelled ILO estimate (World Bank Open Data 2025a)

Economic roles

Key takeaways

- **The 'male breadwinner' gender norm remained prevalent:** Although many participants declared gender-equal attitudes towards Earning Family Income (63% of women and 50% of men), support for gender equality in economic roles was significantly lower than in other domains. This likely reflects the persistent gender norms which view men as the primary breadwinners. For both actual and aspirational behaviours (i.e. among those not yet married or partnered) just under 1 in 2 men still either assumed or expected to assume greater responsibilities for income earning. Among women, less than half of women reported equally sharing responsibility for Earning Family Income, with a similar proportion reporting that men did more. These findings highlight the resilience of the male breadwinner norm, even in contexts with moderate labour force participation by women.

- **Women and men had different perceptions of women's economic contributions:** Notably, while only around 2% of women believed that women should have primary responsibility for earning the family income and 7% reported contributing more, 15% of men held this view and 20% of men reported women doing more to earn the family income. Though further research is needed to confirm, this asymmetry could reflect (i) different thresholds for what counts as "doing more" (e.g., contributing a greater share of cash income, paying key bills, or investing time), (ii) gaps in the novelty, visibility or perceived value of informal or joint earnings (such as family businesses or platform work), (iii) self-presentation pressures linked to the male breadwinner norm (with women potentially downplaying their contributions and some men exaggerating theirs to signal gender equality or to normalise dual-earning as necessity), and (iv) pluralistic ignorance within couples regarding each partner's actual approval of women as primary earners.

- **Behaviours and attitudes in Job Suitability and Leadership domains were, however, more gender-equal than those relating to Family Income:** Although participants had less supportive attitudes towards women as primary earners, most participants believed that both women and men can be effective leaders and perform well in any role. This indicates domain-specific expectations: public, role-based contexts (work/leadership) have more gender-equal empirical and normative expectations, reinforced by visible exemplars and institutional rules, while the private 'breadwinner' role remains governed by stronger empirical and normative expectations at home.

- **Women are stronger advocates for equality in economic roles:** Similar to Caregiving and Domestic roles, a higher percentage of women than men indicated advocacy for gender equality in Economic roles.

- **Reported advocacy for gender equality exceeds participants' attitudes, which is unexpected:** Peculiarly, for the Earning Family Income domain, men's and women's reported advocacy is 8-15 percentage points higher than their attitudes. This suggests that some individuals engage in gender advocacy even when they do not personally hold gender-equal beliefs. Such behaviour may be influenced by reference networks, including workplaces that expect leaders to promote gender equality or partners who encourage more equal sharing of roles due to economic necessity. Qualitative interviews highlight this conditionality: "If you ask most husbands, they would probably say it's better for their wives to stay home. But because of economic factors, it's now common for wives to work as well…" (Participant 9, Indonesia).

Figure ID 2 Gender-equal attitudes and practices in Economic roles
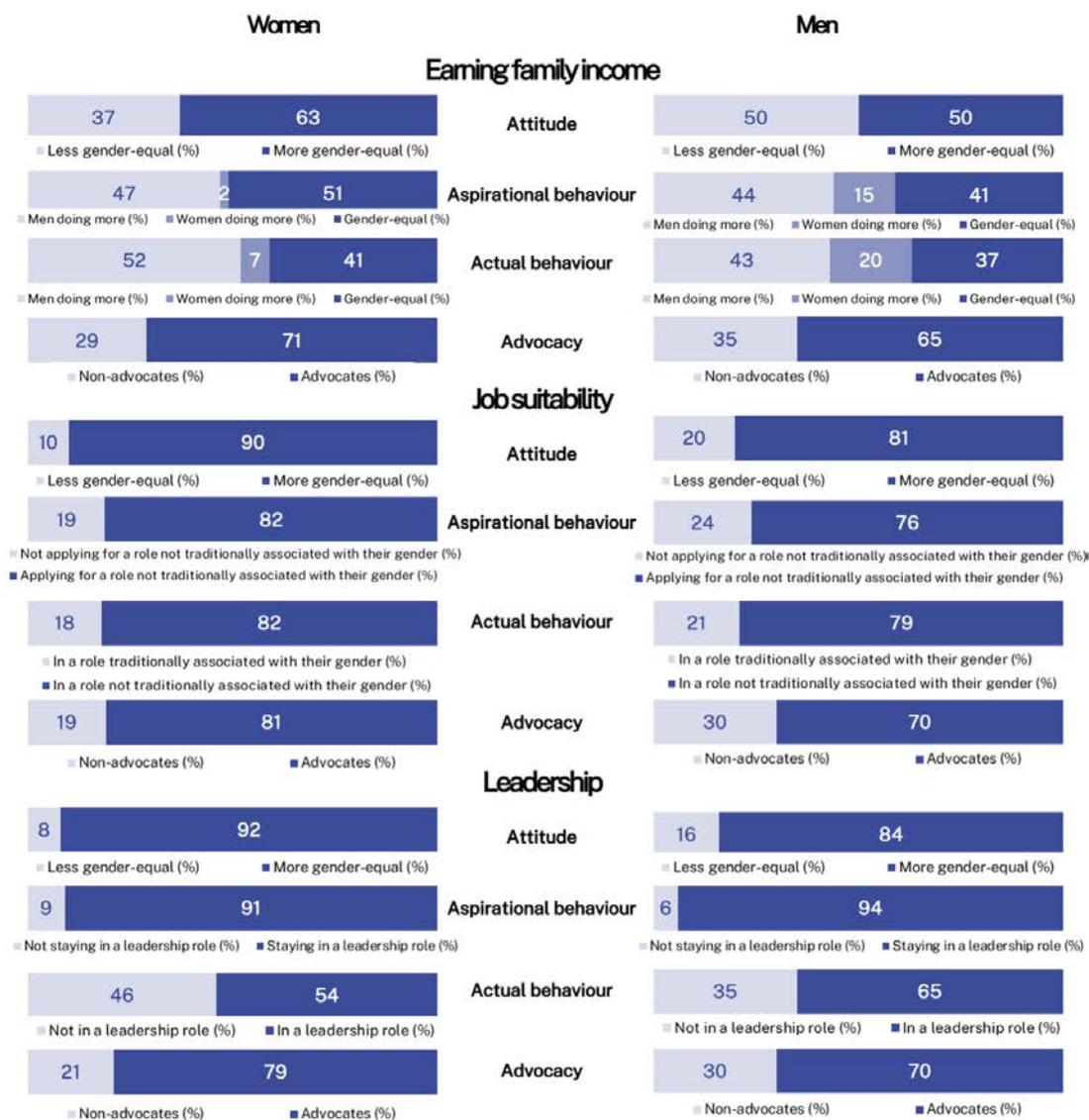
Note: This graph presents the percentage of gender-equal responses by women and men. The analysis covers the domains of Earning Family Income, Job Suitability and Women's Leadership, based on 2024 SNAPS survey data. A detailed explanation of how behaviours were captured can be found in **Note 3 – Annex 1**.

2.1.2 Misperception of gender-equal attitudes and behaviours

This section explores the gap between participants' perceptions and the prevalence of gender-equal attitudes and behaviours for gender equality.

It focuses on whether individuals tend to underestimate how widely gender equality is supported and practiced in their communities (i.e. 'pluralistic ignorance' as per the conceptual framework). Understanding this perception gap helps identify areas where social norms may be misaligned with actual behaviours, shedding light on potential opportunities to correct the misperceptions and promote gender-equal practices.

Key takeaways

- Both women and men **consistently underestimate** levels of support for gender equality and gender-equal behaviours among their peers.

- Across all domains, women show **higher levels of gender-equality support** and behaviours than men.

Table ID 2 Top three underestimations in gender-equal attitudes or behaviours

Caregiving & domestic roles	Economic roles
Women's GE behaviours in Dependent Adult Care (22 p.p. ***)	**Women's GE attitudes in Women's Leadership** (18 p.p. ***)
Women's GE behaviours in Childcare (21 p.p. ***)	**Women's GE attitudes in Job suitability** (17 p.p. ***)
Women's GE behaviours in Housework (20 p.p. ***)	**Women's GE attitudes in Women's Leadership & Job suitability** (13 p.p. ***)

Note: Difference between perceived and actual attitudes or behaviours are presented in percentage points. (***) denotes statistically significant results at 95% confidence level.

Caregiving & domestic roles

Key takeaways

- **Women consistently underestimated gender-equal attitudes and behaviour,** and in every domain, women underestimated gender-equal attitudes and behaviours among their peers (by 7-22 percentage points). This indicates potential to address misconceptions to enable the evolution of attitudes to behaviours by raising awareness of supportive attitudes within reference networks.

- **Men underestimated gender-equal behaviours particularly for the Dependent Adult Care domain:** More men were involved in this domain than other men believed, highlighting the potential to address misconceptions –low visibility of such behaviours kept men's empirical expectations lagging despite gender-equal behaviours being present.

- **Men also underestimated gender-equal attitudes (normative expectations) for Childcare and Housework:** However, men also tended to overestimate gender-equal behaviour (empirical expectations) in these domains. In other words, more people supported gender-equal sharing in these domains than men believed, but fewer people actually engaged in equal sharing of these responsibilities than men believed was typical. Bicchieri suggests that overestimations in favour of the desired behaviour change should not be alerted to the target cohort. Note that overestimations reported here were not statistically significant.

- **Men overestimated gender equality achievements:** Across all domains, women declared higher levels of gender-equality attitudes and behaviours than men. However, women's perceptions of gender-equal behaviours were lower than men's (while results for perceived attitudes varied and were insignificant). This potentially signals that (1) men overestimate the prevalence of gender-equal behaviours and (2) women and men have different understandings of what constitutes gender-equal behaviour. Qualitative work highlighted that men may equate secondary 'helping' or 'assisting' with equal sharing but still expect their wife/partner to take on the mental and caregiving loads.

Childcare

Perceived level   Actual level

Women's attitudes 69%
Men's attitudes 68%

Men's behaviour 62%

Women's behaviour 57%

90%
81%
69%
57%
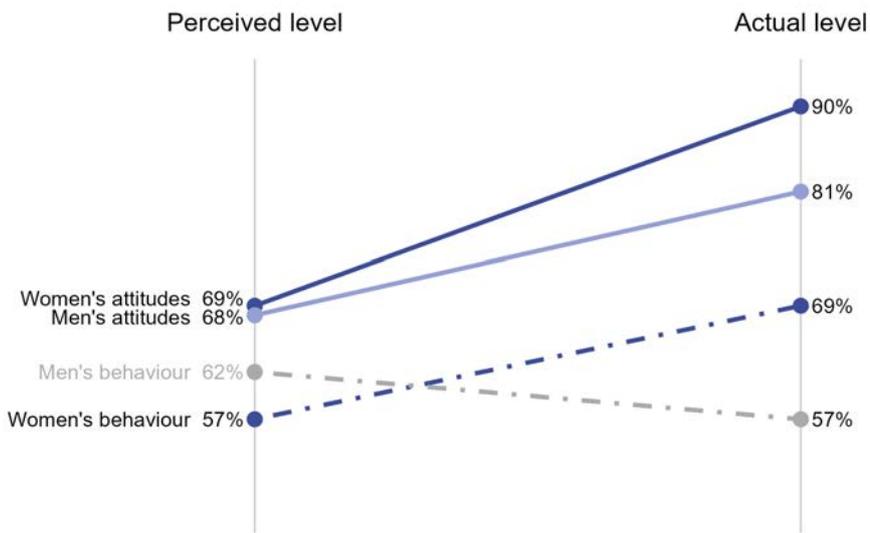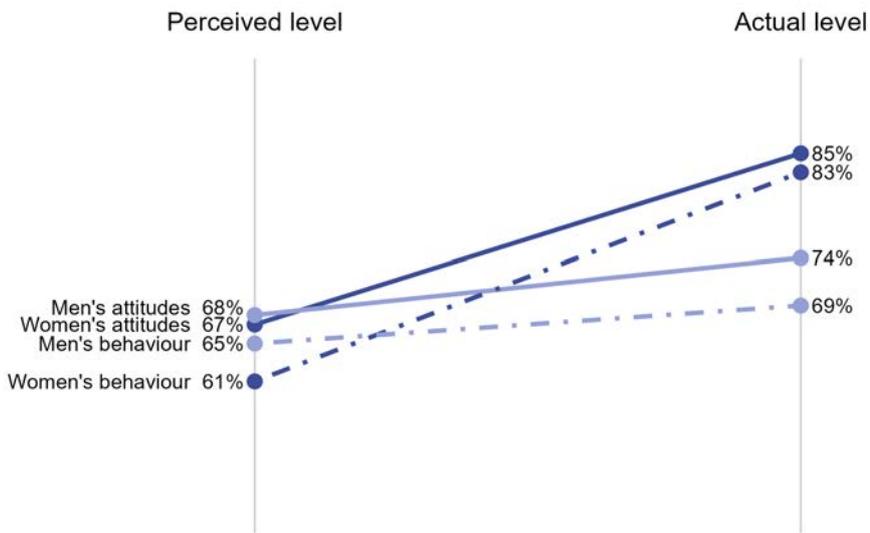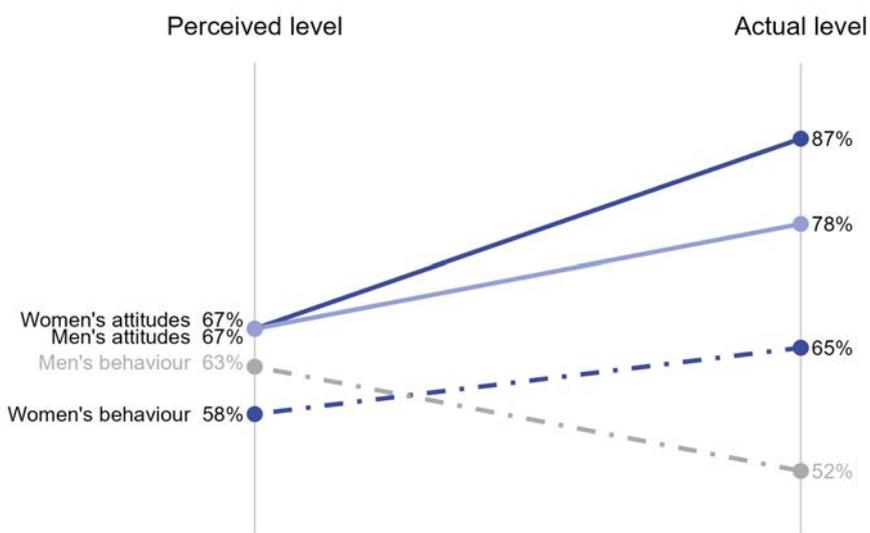
Figure ID 3
Misperception of gender equality in Caregiving and Domestic roles

Dependent Adult Care

Perceived level   Actual level

Men's attitudes 68%
Women's attitudes 67%
Men's behaviour 65%

Women's behaviour 61%

85%
83%
74%
69%

Housework

Perceived level   Actual level

Women's attitudes 67%
Men's attitudes 67%
Men's behaviour 63%

Women's behaviour 58%

87%
78%
65%
52%

Note: This graph illustrates the difference between perceived (left) and actual (right) levels of gender-equal attitudes (solid lines) and behaviours (dashed line) across domains (Childcare, Dependent Adult Care, and Housework). Results are shown separately for women (darker colour) and men (lighter colours). An upward slope indicates underestimation, where people perceive less equality than it actually exists, while a downward slope indicates overestimation, where perceived equality exceeds actual equality. Statistically significant differences at the 5% significance level are indicated by coloured lines. Statistically insignificant differences are indicated by the grey lines.

Economic roles

Key takeaways

- **Across all economic roles, underestimations were evident:** Both women and men tended to underestimate the level of gender-equal attitudes for women's economic participation. In other words, more people were supportive than participants believed, falsely depressing conditional preferences despite latent approval among reference networks.

- **This pattern is less pronounced in the earning family income category:** Men overestimated the proportion of their peers who supported or practiced equal responsibility sharing in this domain. Bicchieri's recommends not correcting favourable overestimations and instead reinforcing these with credible approval cues (e.g. promoting paternity leave, celebrating positive deviance).[186]

- **Underestimations were present for both women and men in Job-Suitability and women's Leadership:** Both women and men underestimated the proportion of their peers who supported and modelled gender-equal behaviours in the Job Suitability and Women's Leadership domains. This

suggests there is potential to correct these misperceptions and promote more equal workplace participation by all genders.

- **Noticeably, the proportion of women who perceived other women in leadership roles is higher than the number of women actually in these roles.** This could indicate the impact of women leaders as visible role models, creating an overestimation potentially positive for facilitating gender-equal empirical expectations. In communications intended to influence normative and empirical expectations, Bicchieri advises against noting inflated perceptions of supportive attitudes or behaviours.[187]

- **Women's perceptions of, and actual, levels of support for gender equality were higher than men's in all categories.** Men reported more actual gender-equal behaviours in the earning family income domain than women – signalling potentially different understandings on what constitutes equality between women and men. This reflected validation workshop findings where it was noted that men often equate descriptive with substantiative representation.

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186 Bicchieri 2017
187 Bicchieri 2017

Earning Family Income

Perceived level   Actual level

Women's attitudes 62%
Women's behaviour 62%   63%
Men's attitudes 60%
Men's behaviour 60%
                                                          57%

                                                          50%
                                                          47%
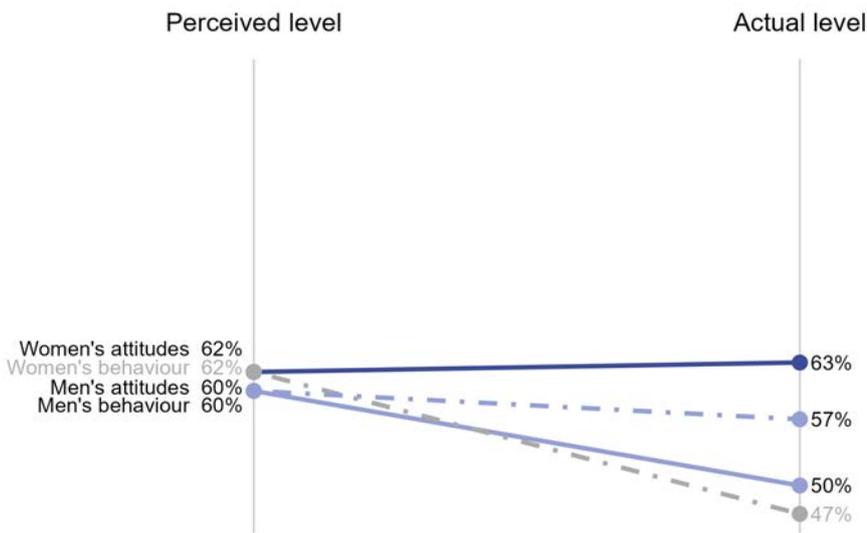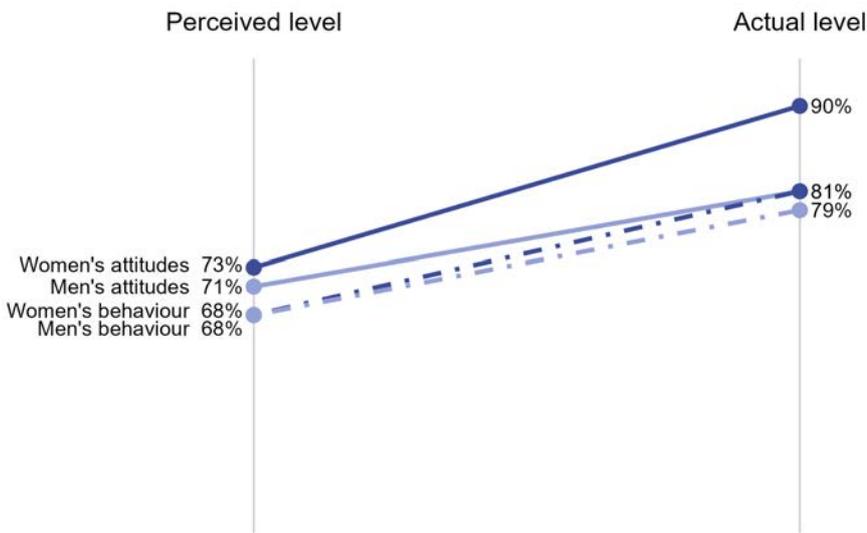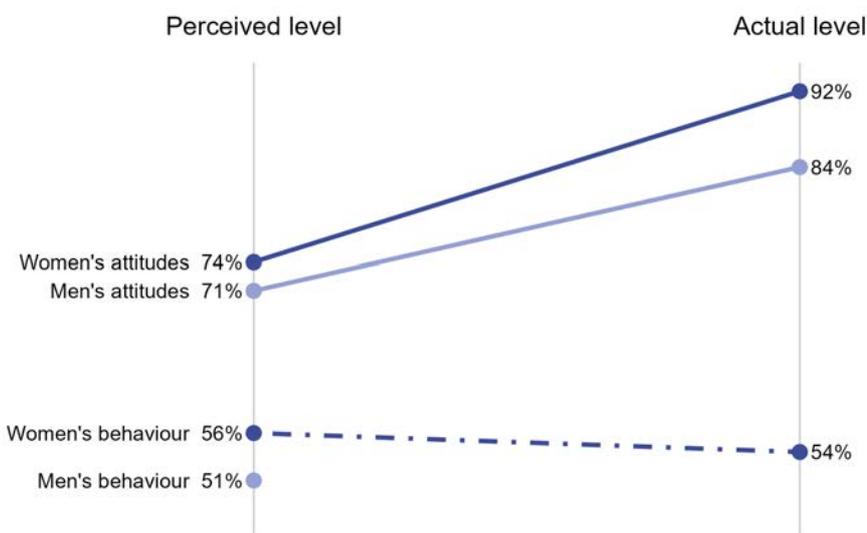
Figure ID 4
Misperception of gender equality in Economic roles

Job Suitability

Perceived level   Actual level

                                                          90%

                                                          81%
                                                          79%

Women's attitudes 73%
Men's attitudes 71%
Women's behaviour 68%
Men's behaviour 68%

Women's Leadership

Perceived level   Actual level

                                                          92%

                                                          84%

Women's attitudes 74%
Men's attitudes 71%

Women's behaviour 56%
                                                          54%
Men's behaviour 51%

Note: This graph illustrates the difference between perceived (left) and actual (right) levels of gender-equal attitudes (solid lines) and behaviours (dashed line) across domains (Earning Family Income, Job Suitability and Women's Leadership). Results are shown separately for women (darker colour) and men (lighter colours). An upward slope indicates underestimation, where people perceive less equality than it actually exists, while a downward slope indicates overestimation, where perceived equality exceeds actual equality. Statistically significant differences at the 5% significance level are indicated by coloured lines. Statistically insignificant differences are indicated by the grey lines.

2.2 Characteristics associated with gender-equal attitudes and practices

2.2.1 Characteristics associated with gender-equal practices

This section presents the quantitative analysis of socio-demographic factors associated with gender equality, such as age, ethnicity, and family structure.

It first explores key socio-demographic differences among groups with varying levels of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy. It then examines the factors that shape individuals' attitudes and practices related to gender equality, examining how upbringing, media exposure, and cultural determinants may influence how people perceive and practice equality in their daily lives.

Key takeaways

- **Positive role models were associated with gender-equal behaviours for women:** Exposure to gender-equal role models, whether in upbringing, media, or daily life, was associated with greater adoption of more gender-equal behaviours among women. These examples of positive deviance may help shift both empirical and normative expectations by signalling normative approval within salient reference networks.

- **Interventions must be gender-sensitive and context-specific:** Men's gender-equal behaviours show complex and sometimes contradictory associations, underscoring that women and men are embedded in different reference networks with different sanction structures. Tailoring messages to different contexts is key to moving conditional preferences.

- **Attitudes were consistently connected to advocacy, but not necessarily behaviour:** While gender-equal attitudes were strongly linked to advocacy across genders, they did not consistently translate into behavioural change, especially in private spheres. This underscored the importance of addressing social sanctions and reference group dynamics to enable norm shifts.

Caregiving & domestic roles

Key takeaways

- **Gender-equal empirical expectations embodied by positive role models during one's upbringing support women's gender-equal behaviours:** Seeing examples of couples who share Childcare and Housework more equally (or where men take on a larger share) was associated with women and men adopting these behaviours. Here, role-model visibility likely updates empirical expectations and reduces anticipated sanctions, making equal sharing a safer conditional preference.

- **Qualitative interviews supported this view:** Participant 14 (Indonesia, partnered woman) reflected: "From what I see, the role models are mainly influencers on social media, especially feminist influencers. They empower women to pursue education and careers instead of prioritising finding a life partner", though participants further suggested the media could also platform and legitimise gendered tropes. Media appeared to serve as a public signal that can reframe what is typical and approved in relevant reference networks, shaping conditional preferences towards being either more or less.

- **The picture is more nuanced for men with mixed signals evident:** Having a gender-equal upbringing was associated with gender-equal attitudes on Housework and Childcare, but whether these attitudes translate into behaviour depends on current reference-group expectations (partners, in-laws, peers) and perceived sanctions. Participant 9, a married man, reflected on the relationship between upbringing and gender-equal behaviours "I think the biggest influence came from what I observed growing up… When I was living with my parents, I saw that my father did a lot of the household chores. So, I grew up seeing that as normal, and it carried over into my own life".

- **Holding gender-equal empirical expectations were negatively associated with men's gender-equal behaviours in the Childcare and Dependent Adult Care domain:** Possible mechanisms include misalignment with local normative expectations ('it's common but not approved here'), observation of equality driven by necessity rather than acceptance (weak normative expectations of gender equality), or misidentified reference networks (men perceive equality among distant peers, but not among those whose opinions matter for them). Qualitative data revealed that women's workforce participation was often driven by necessity, suggesting that men's caregiving behaviours might have similar underpinnings.

- **Attitudes are linked to advocacy, but not behaviours:** Gender-equal attitudes were positively associated with engagement in advocacy for both women and men across all norms, but not consistent with behaviour. According to Bicchieri, attitudes do not always translate to behaviour, particularly when empirical/normative expectations and sanctions, along with structural/contextual factors, remain unchanged.

- **A key reflection emerging from qualitative interviews was the difficulty of advocating for behavioural change toward gender equality in the private sphere:** One validation workshop stakeholder recounted the story of a service user who established "a gender-focused community… Although their understanding of gender issues is advanced, they do not advocate within their family due to intense opposition". This quote further evidence how attitudes, behaviours and advocacy do not necessarily translate neatly to more gender-equal behaviours - a strong theme witnessed in validation workshops.

Figure ID 5 Factors associated with gender-equal practices in Caregiving and Domestic roles

Note: This figure shows factors associated with gender-equal behaviours and advocacy across Caregiving and Domestic roles in Indonesia. Only factors that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level are shown. Blank cells indicate that no factors were associated with a given practice.

Childcare

	Behaviours	**Advocacy**
Women	↑ Gender-equal empirical expectation ↑ Working ↑ Gender-equal upbringing	↑ Gender-equal attitude ↑ With people with disability
Men	↑ Gender-equal normative expectation ↑ Gender-equal upbringing ↓ Gender-equal empirical expectation	↑ Gender-equal attitude

Dependent adult care

	Behaviours	**Advocacy**
Women		↑ Gender-equal attitude ↑ With people with disability
Men	↓ Gender-equal empirical expectation ↓ Having disability	↑ Gender-equal attitude

Housework

	Behaviours	**Advocacy**
Women	↑ Gender-equal empirical expectation ↑ Gender-equal upbringing	↑ Gender-equal attitude ↑ With people with disability
Men	↑ Residing in Java ↑ Gender-equal upbringing ↓ Post-secondary education	↑ Gender-equal attitude ↑ With children ↑ Gender-equal upbringing

Economic roles

Key takeaways

- **Role models appeared to be associated with gender-equal behaviours among women:** Consistent with findings for Caregiving and Domestic roles, seeing examples of positive deviance from traditional norms, whether in the media, during upbringing or in everyday life, was associated with women demonstrating gender-equal economic behaviours. Visible exemplars likely act as public signals to update empirical expectations and expand perceived normative approval. This is supported by qualitative work; for instance, Participant 14 reflected on the role of gender-equal upbringing in shaping her views on gender norms, *"the reason I want to be the primary financial provider is because my mother was also the primary provider in my family. My mother and grandmother also supported their families financially...My biggest influence is my mother herself."*

- **Religion plays a nuanced role in norm maintenance:** Identifying as Muslim was the only consistent factor linked to less gender-equal behaviour or advocacy, though qualitative interviews revealed important nuance. Participant's 13 summarised that *"Religious factors may also play a role. In our belief, even though women and men are equal, there is still an order or hierarchy within the household. The man has the responsibility as the head of the family, even though in terms of position, they remain equal."* Here, the idea 'different in role but equal in value' facilitated a narrative that role differentiation does not preclude women's dignity. While for some participants religion reinforced traditional expectations, others interpreted their faith to support more gender-equal divisions of labour, indicating competing normative authorities across nominally similar reference networks and the importance of religious sensitivity within interventions.

- **Other background characteristics were also connected to gender-equal behaviours:** For women in the earning-family-income domain, factors such as living in Java, being employed, and having a gender-equal upbringing were positively associated with gender-equal behaviours. These factors appear to point to the opportunity structures and early socialisation that reduce penalties for progressing equality. In the leadership domain, women were often self-employed, caring for dependents/people with disabilities, and exposed to gender-equal media. Here, self-employment may have increased feasibility (flexibility) and visibility, thus legitimise updated expectations and supporting a shift in conditional preferences. Overall, these patterns support the need of audience segmentation in program design.

- **The link between attitudes, behaviours and advocacy is complex:** Gender-equal attitudes were positively associated with women's and men's advocacy for in all domains, while behaviours were only associated with advocacy in only did so for the Job Suitability domain. This suggests that in domains where empirical/normative expectations are already more gender-equal (e.g., Job Suitability), attitudes more readily convert to action; where expectations remain traditional (e.g., breadwinning), attitudes translate to advocacy rather than behaviour until costs and approval cues change.

Figure ID 6 Factors associated with gender-equal practices in Caregiving and Domestic roles

Note: This figure shows factors associated with gender-equal behaviours and advocacy across Caregiving and Domestic roles in Indonesia. Only factors that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level are shown. Blank cells indicate that no factors were associated with a given practice.

Job suitability

Behaviours

Women
- ↑ Gender equal attitude
- ↑ Gender-equal empirical expectation
- ↑ With children

Men
- ↑ Gender equal attitude
- ↑ Gender-equal empirical expectation
- ↑ Post-secondary education
- ↓ Gender-equal media exposure in STEM

Advocacy

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal behaviour
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude

Men
- ↑ Gender-equal behaviour
- ↑ Gender equal attitude
- ↑ Age 18-24
- ↑ Gender-equal media exposure in care sector

Leadership

Behaviours

Women
- ↑ Self-employed
- ↑ With dependent adult
- ↑ With people with disability
- ↑ Gender-equal media exposure

Men

Advocacy

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↑ Post-secondary education

Men

Family income

Behaviours

Women
- ↑ Residing in Java
- ↑ Working
- ↑ Gender-equal upbringing
- ↓ Self-employed

Men
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↑ Having disability
- ↑ Gender-equal upbringing
- ↑ Gender-equal media exposure
- ↓ Muslim

Advocacy

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↑ Javanese ethnic group
- ↑ Post-secondary education
- ↓ Muslim

Men
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude

2.2.2 Interconnectedness between attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy

Using latent profile analysis, the profiles below illustrate how attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy align within the population, highlighting patterns that range from low alignment to strong consistency in support for gender equality.

It is noteworthy that the profiles were built relative to each domain and are consistent within each domain, separate for women and men (therefore cross-domain comparison is unachievable). The profiles for gender equality (GE) within the Childcare domain are relatively similar, but not identical, to the GE profiles in the Dependent Adult Care domain.

Some profiles, such as **GE Opponents**, **Reluctant Leaders** and **Moderately strong GE supporters** profiles, appear as standalones because there is no closely matching profile in other domains. Domains with a greater diversity of combinations in gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy may result in a larger number of profiles.

The list of profiles identified in each domain is shown on the next page.

Key takeaways

- **Normative and empirical expectations are critical factors in determining men's profiles:** Across most domains, men's profiles were consistently associated with normative and empirical expectations, suggesting that men's support hinges strongly on perceived peer approval and observed practices. This was evident in Childcare, Housework, Job Suitability and Earning Family Income.

- **Women's profile segmentation are related to by household and structural roles:** For women, profile membership was often linked to marital and parental status, caregiving responsibilities, disability, and self-employment, especially in Dependent Adult Care, Job Suitability, Income, and Leadership. These contexts constrained translation of attitudes into behaviours and advocacy, explaining the presence of Passive profiles.

- **Leadership consensus is evident, but uneven in advocacy:** Women across three out of four identified profiles agreed that gender does not determine leadership capability, yet advocacy and attitudes lagged among Weak GE supporters. Importantly, leadership roles were equally distributed across profiles, suggesting that holding leadership positions does not automatically align with stronger gender-equal attitudes.

Figure ID 7.1 Profile composition across domains – Women

Domain				
Childcare	69.5%	30.5%		
Dependent Adult Care	54.0%	27.4%	18.6%	
Housework	37.8%	25.7%	7.6%	23.3%	5.6%
Earning Family Income	65.7%	34.3%		
Job Suitability	38.4%	24.1%	12.2%	21.3%	4.0%
Leadership	58.9%	16.8%	4.5%	19.8%	

■ Strong GE supporters ■ GE moderates ■ Passive GE supporters ■ Reluctant leaders ■ Weak GE supporters ■ Inconsistent GE supporters ■ GE opponent
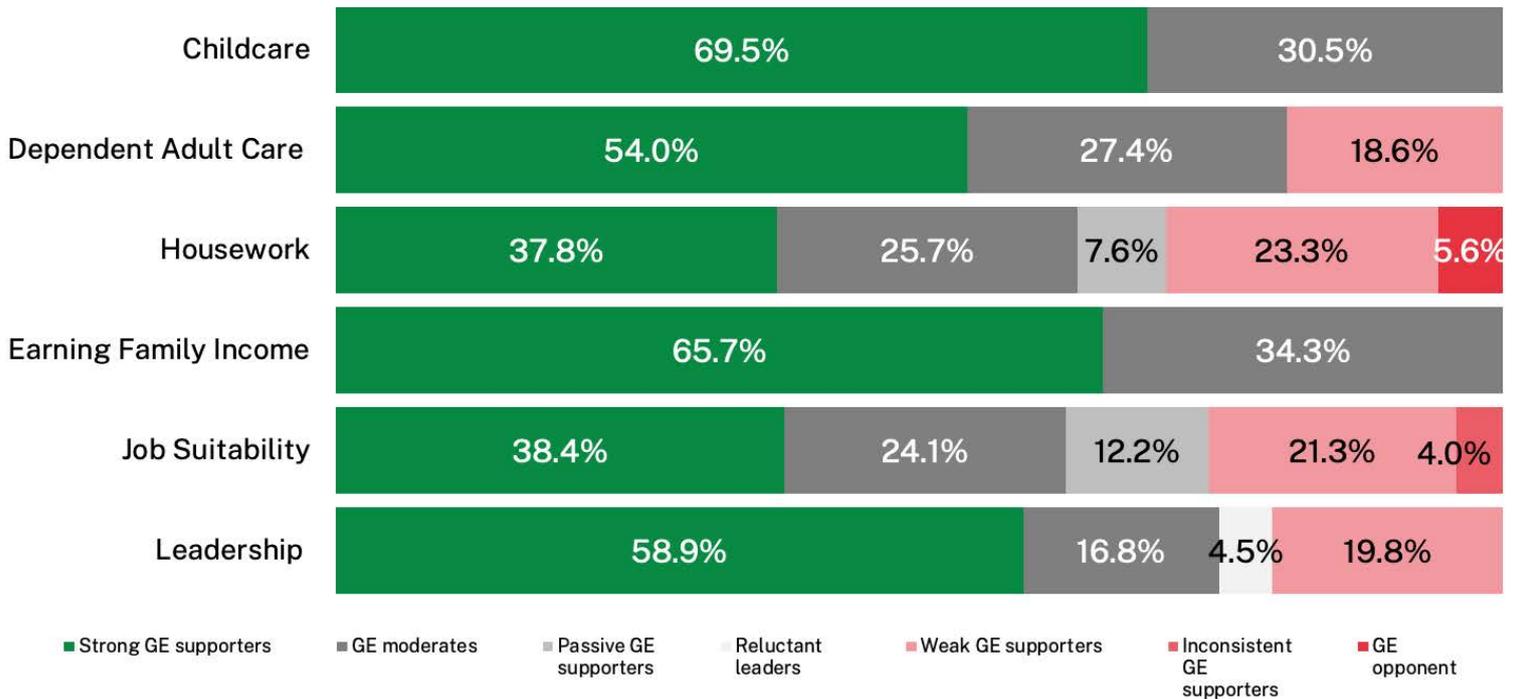
Figure ID 7.2 Profile composition across domains – Men
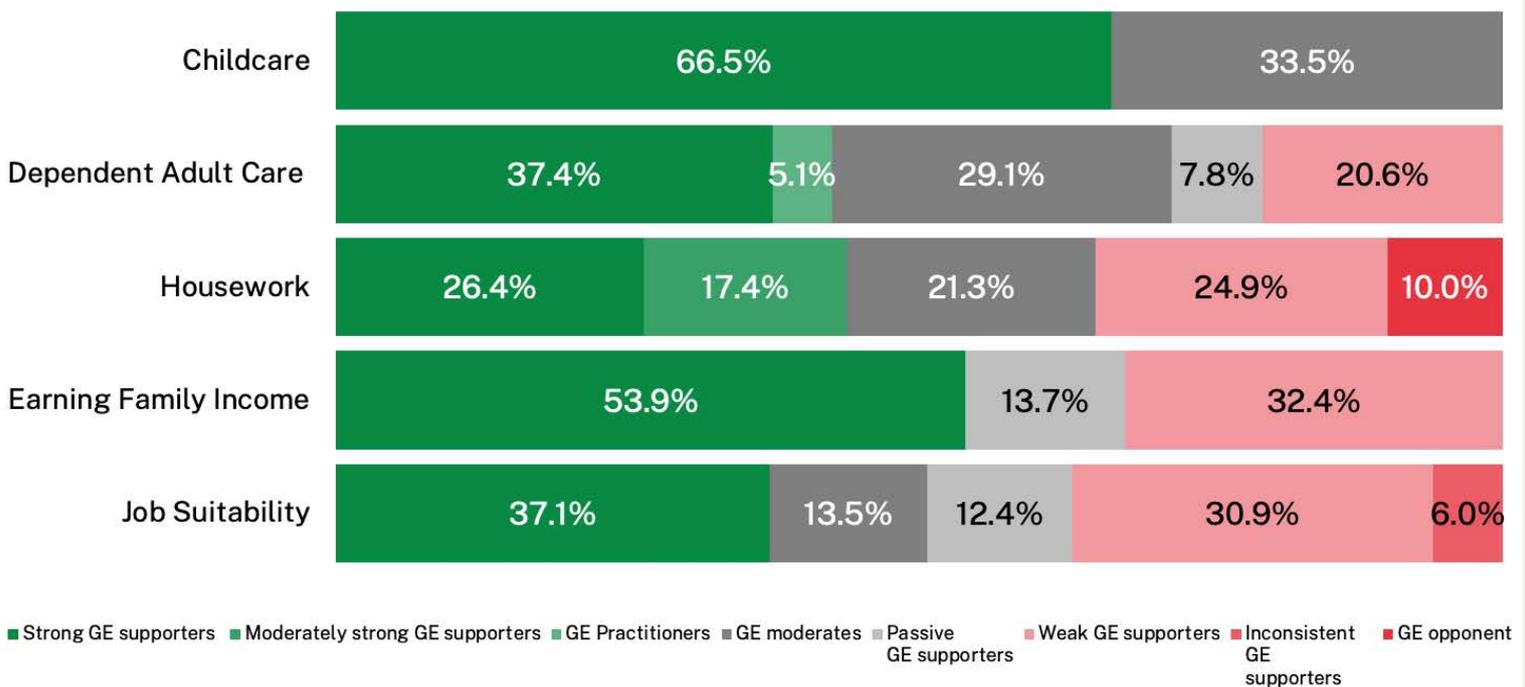
Domain				
Childcare	66.5%	33.5%		
Dependent Adult Care	37.4%	5.1%	29.1%	7.8%	20.6%
Housework	26.4%	17.4%	21.3%	24.9%	10.0%
Earning Family Income	53.9%	13.7%	32.4%	
Job Suitability	37.1%	13.5%	12.4%	30.9%	6.0%

■ Strong GE supporters ■ Moderately strong GE supporters ■ GE Practitioners ■ GE moderates ■ Passive GE supporters ■ Weak GE supporters ■ Inconsistent GE supporters ■ GE opponent

Note: This figure presents the distinct women's and men's profiles identified within each domain. Profiles were determined through latent profile analysis based on participants' attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy, conducted separately for each domain. Only women's profiles were examined for the Leadership domain.

Childcare domain

- **66% of women and 65% of men were classified as Strong GE supporters –** individuals who reported strong gender-equal attitudes and engaged in corresponding behaviours and advocacy. This suggests that childcare in Indonesia is perceived as a broadly shared responsibility. This contrasts with qualitative findings where participants acknowledged that gender roles are evolving, yet the female caregiver/male breadwinner model remained deeply entrenched. Participants in validation workshops critiqued men's performative caregiving, highlighting how some men may equate selective 'helping' with 'equality', potentially explaining the dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative findings.

- **Normative expectations were associated with women's and men's profile membership,** with higher perceived social approval of gender-equal division of childcare associated with membership in the more gender-equal profiles. This underscores the central role of perceived social approval in motivating more equal childcare. The importance of normative expectations also emerged in qualitative findings, particularly among those with less gender-equal attitudes.

- **Younger men were more likely to be classified as Strong GE supporters compared to older men,** indicating a generational shift in attitudes and behaviours.

Figure ID 8 Segmentation profiles in the Childcare domain

Women

■ % GE attitudes ■ % GE behaviours ■ % GE advocates
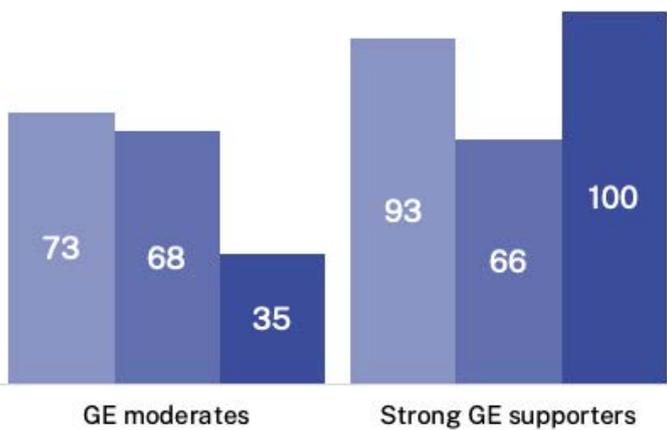
Key characteristics	GE moderates (34%)	Strong GE supporters (66%)
GE normative expectation (%)	66	75

Men

■ % GE attitudes ■ % GE behaviours ■ % GE advocates
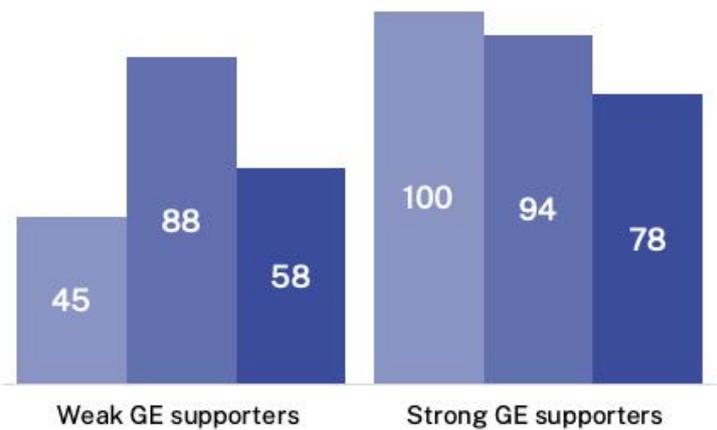
Key characteristics	Weak GE supporters (35%)	Strong GE supporters (65%)
Age 18-24 (%)	7	10
GE normative expectation (%)	60	75

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure ID 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.

Dependent Adult Care domain

- **Nearly nine in ten women and two in three men could be classified as either GE Moderates or Strong GE supporters, showing that adult care is highly gender-equal:** Women were more likely than men to be classified as Strong GE supporters and to share adult care equally in the GE Moderate group, highlighting a gender gap in attitudes and behaviours.

- **Weak GE supporters made up a notable share of participants:** Around one in six women and one in five men could be classified as Weak GE supporters.

Within this profile, almost none reported gender-equal attitudes, yet most reported gender-equal behaviours, suggesting that caregiving demands and a lack of alternative arrangements, rather than attitudes may drive practice in this group.

- **Muslim women were less likely to be classified as Strong GE supporters, indicating the influence of religion on Caregiving roles:** Muslim men were spread relatively equally across profiles, suggesting that religious influence may depend on theological interpretation, as alluded to in qualitative work.
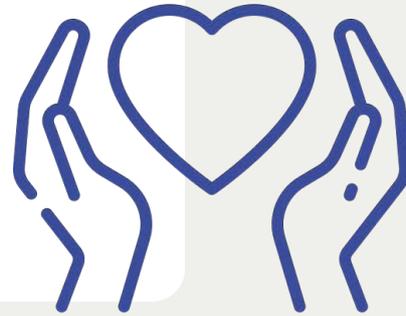
Figure ID 9 Segmentation profiles in the Adult Care domain

Women
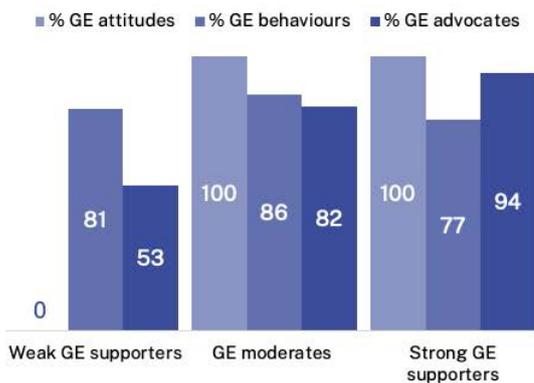
Key characteristics	Weak GE supporters (14%)	GE moderates (33%)	Strong GE supporters (53%)
With children (%)	96	95	95
Muslim (%)	96	91	89
Post-secondary (%)	78	75	70

Men
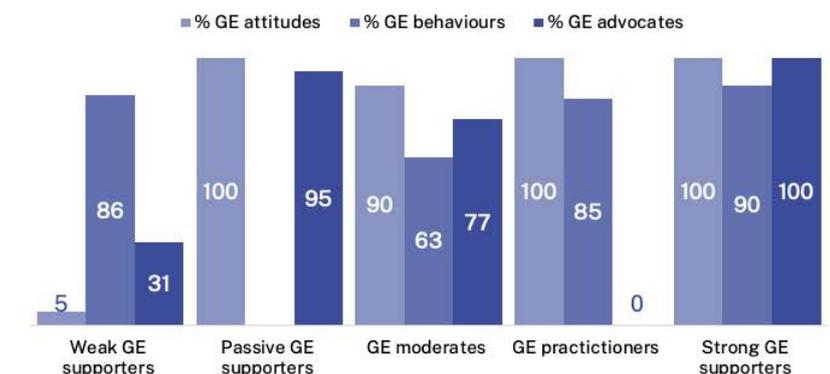
Key characteristics	Weak GE supporters (22%)	Passive GE supporters (9%)	GE moderates (30%)	GE practitioner (4%)	Strong GE supporters (34%)
Age 18-24 (%)	8	7	14	0	15
Resides in Java (%)	75	60	74	86	82
Javanese ethnic group (%)	50	53	53	57	56
Self-employed (%)	39	53	41	29	42
Muslim (%)	92	87	90	71	89
Working (%)	94	87	96	100	98
With people with disability (%)	33	33	47	29	53

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure ID 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.

Housework domain

The majority of women and nearly half of men were classified as Strong GE supporters, those who reported gender-equal attitudes and engaged in corresponding behaviours and advocacy. The majority of Strong GE supporters among both women and men perceived that gender-equal support is widespread, Among men, Strong GE supporters also perceived that equality is already being practised (empirical expectations), suggesting that their support was associated with both social approval and observed behaviours.
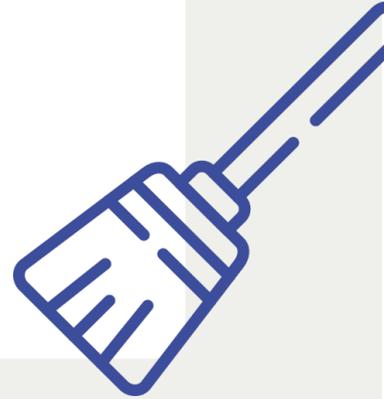
Figure ID 10 Segmentation profiles in the Housework domain

Women

Legend: % GE attitudes, % GE behaviours, % GE advocates

GE moderates: 76, 68, 43
Strong GE supporters: 93, 68, 100
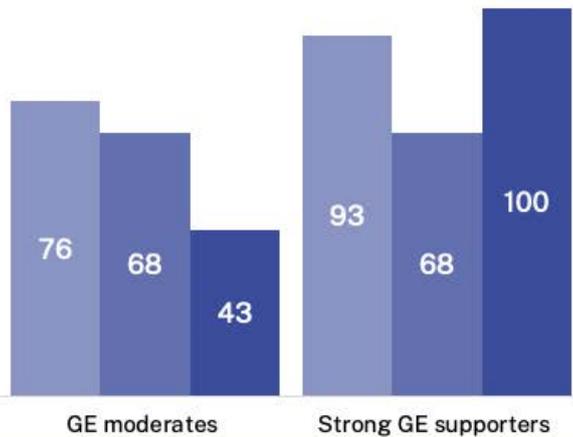
Key characteristics	GE Moderates (38%)	Strong GE supporters (62%)
GE normative expectation (%)	65	72

Men

Legend: % GE attitudes, % GE behaviours, % GE advocates

Weak GE supporters: 44, 51, 54
Passive GE supporters: 100, 0, 80
Strong GE supporters: 100, 84, 79
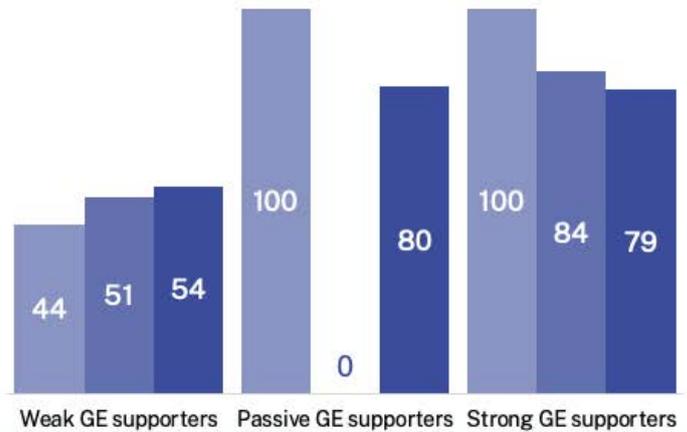
Key characteristics	Weak GE supporters (38%)	Passive GE supporters (17%)	Strong GE supporters (45%)
Residing in Java (%)	64	67	76
Muslim (%)	89	89	87
GE normative expectation (%)	59	76	73
GE empirical expectation (%)	56	67	74

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure ID 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.

Earning family income domain

- **Support for gender-equal sharing of family income was stronger among men:** Unlike other domains, a higher share of men (34%) than women's (23%) could be classified as either Moderately strong GE or Strong GE supporters, making this the only domain in the Indonesian context where men's support for gender equality was stronger overall. Qualitative works suggested that women's income-generating work was often supported by both women and men out of financial necessity, though some women expressed a firm commitment to their jobs.

- **Conversely, nearly half of men and just over one in three women could be classified as either Weak GE supporters or GE Opponents:** Individuals who practiced and advocated for gender-equal division of responsibilities to some degree but did not hold corresponding attitudes underscoring that gender-equal income-sharing is less widely accepted than caregiving or housework. Likewise, many interview participants either adhered to or observed that the male breadwinner model was deeply entrenched at a cultural level.

- **Women classified as Strong GE supporters were more likely to reside in Java:** For men, residing in Java was associated with a greater likelihood of belonging to both the Moderately Strong and Weak GE Supporter profiles. The differences based on Javanese ethnicity were less pronounced.

- **Different expectations are connected to women's and men's profiles:** For women, normative expectations were generally low across the profiles, with the highest levels observed in the GE moderates and Strong GE supporters profiles. For men, profiles were strongly associated with empirical expectations. This underscores that perceived approval and observed practice operate differently across genders.

Figure ID 11 Segmentation profiles in the Earning Family Income domain

Women

Key characteristics	GE opponents (12%)	Weak GE supporters (28%)	Passive GE supporters (8%)	GE moderates (32%)	Strong GE supporters (22%)
Residing in Java (%)	67	68	64	75	79
Javanese ethnic group (%)	48	64	53	58	60
Self-employed (%)	40	52	82	66	73
GE normative expectation (%)	19	29	22	29	33

Men

Key characteristics	GE opponents (18%)	Weak GE supporters (32%)	GE moderates (20%)	Moderately strong GE (17%)	Strong GE supporters (14%)
Aged 18–24	5	11	11	12	10
With people with disability (%)	14	17	19	19	28
Residing in Java (%)	60	79	65	76	65
Javanese ethnic group (%)	43	52	49	54	54
GE empirical expectation (%)	44	55	64	73	83
Working (%)	95	95	88	94	97

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure ID 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.

Job suitability domain

- **Men's and women's Job Suitability profiles had similar structure and size but were associated with different demographic and normative variables:** The majority of women (75%) and men (61%) could be classified as either GE moderates or Strong GE supporters. Only a small share of women (22%) and men (35%) fell into the Inconsistent or Weak GE supporters profiles.

- **Expectations matter for men, not women:** Men's profile segmentation were associated by both normative and empirical expectations, with more gender-equal profiles reporting higher levels of both. This underscores the role of social reinforcement, both perceived approval and observed practice, in shaping men's support for people taking on non-traditional gendered work roles (e.g., men in nursing). For women, in contrast, neither form of expectation was associated with profile membership.

Figure ID 12 Segmentation profiles in the Job Suitability domain

Women

■ % GE attitudes ■ % GE behaviours ■ % GE advocates

	Inconsistent GE supporters	Weak GE supporters	Passive GE supporters	GE moderates	Strong GE supporters
% GE attitudes	0	66	100	100	100
% GE behaviours	30	56	0	64	85
% GE advocates	70	72	89	85	90

Key characteristics	Inconsistent GE supporters (3%)	Weak GE supporters (19%)	Passive GE supporters (2%)	GE moderates (28%)	Strong GE supporters (47%)
Javanese ethnic group (%)	42	61	24	58	55
Married (%)	50	64	35	65	58
With children (%)	50	64	29	64	59
With dependent adult (%)	29	41	41	38	37
With people with disability (%)	17	23	12	18	23

Men

■ % GE attitudes ■ % GE behaviours ■ % GE advocates

	Inconsistent GE supporters	Weak GE supporters	Passive GE supporters	GE moderates	Strong GE supporters
% GE attitudes	0	59	100	100	100
% GE behaviours	32	59	0	74	90
% GE advocates	56	65	84	55	93

Key characteristics	Inconsistent GE supporters (6%)	Weak GE supporters (29%)	Passive GE supporters (4%)	GE moderates (17%)	Strong GE supporters (44%)
GE normative expectation (%)	46	62	73	70	82
GE empirical expectation (%)	51	62	60	67	78

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure ID 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.

Women's Leadership domain

- **Most women reported supporting gender equality in Leadership:** More than half (over 50%) of women are Strong GE supporters of women's leadership, and an around 20% fall into the GE Moderates profile. This suggests that access to leadership roles is not straightforwardly determined by attitudinal or advocacy alignment. Qualitative interviews underscored that financial necessity was a key determinant/enabler of women's employment, as such, women without gender-equal attitudes or advocacy may be motivated to take on a leadership role for financial reasons.

- **Expectations and socio-economic factors:** Women's profile membership in leadership was associated with both normative expectations and household responsibilities. Strong GE supporters reported the highest normative expectations. GE Moderates were most likely to have children, while Weak GE were more likely to live with dependent adults or report having a disability themselves. Reluctant leaders –women accepting gender-equal attitudes and engaging in advocacy but reluctant to stay in the leadership role themselves –were least likely to be self-employed. This suggests that their future leadership aspirations might be driven by negative experiences associated with their role in their current workplace rather than lack of ambition.
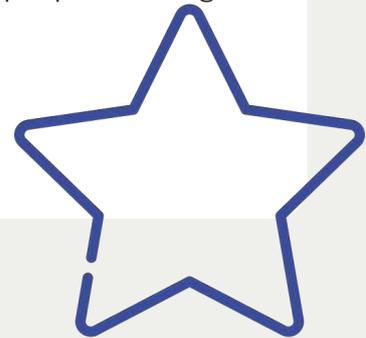
Figure ID 13 Segmentation profiles in the Women's Leadership domain

Women

Legend: ■ % GE attitudes ■ % GE behaviours ■ % GE advocates

	Weak GE supporters	Reluctant leaders	GE moderates	Strong GE supporters
% GE attitudes	59	100	100	100
% GE behaviours	77	67	79	78
% GE advocates	62	92	63	98
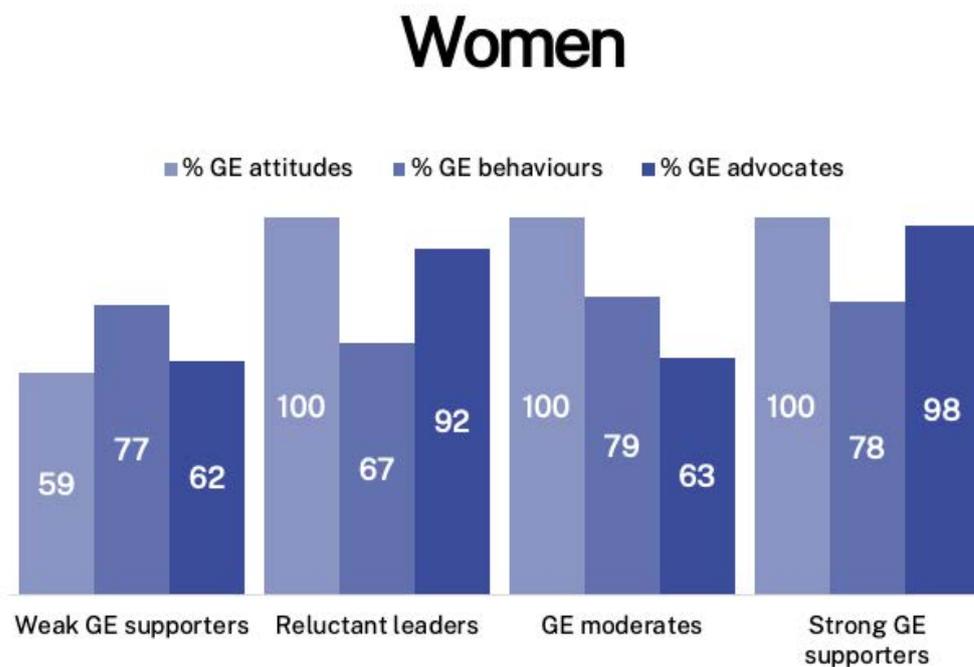
Key characteristics	Weak GE supporters (18%)	Reluctant leaders (3%)	GE moderates (21%)	Strong GE supporters (58%)
Self-employed (%)	37	21	36	34
With dependent adult (%)	56	36	43	45
With people with disability (%)	34	21	27	29
Having disability (%)	17	14	7	11
With children (%)	62	57	74	67
GE normative expectation (%)	66	74	77	79

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure ID 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.
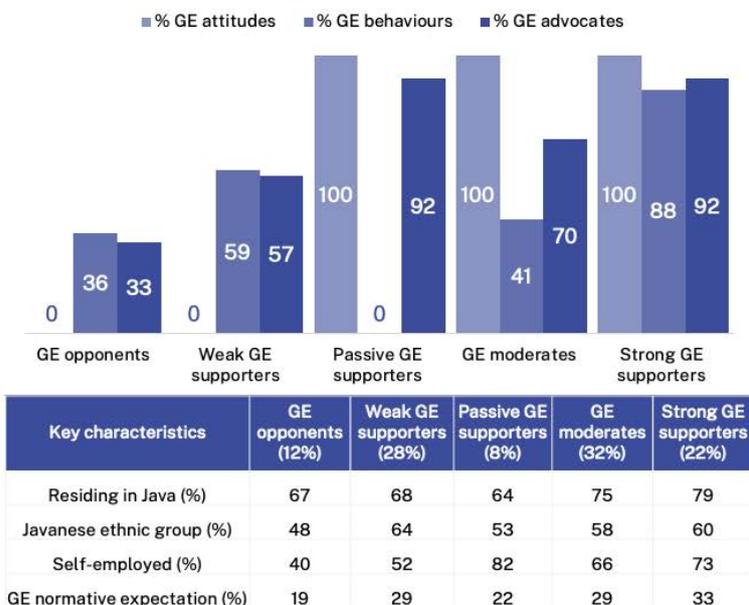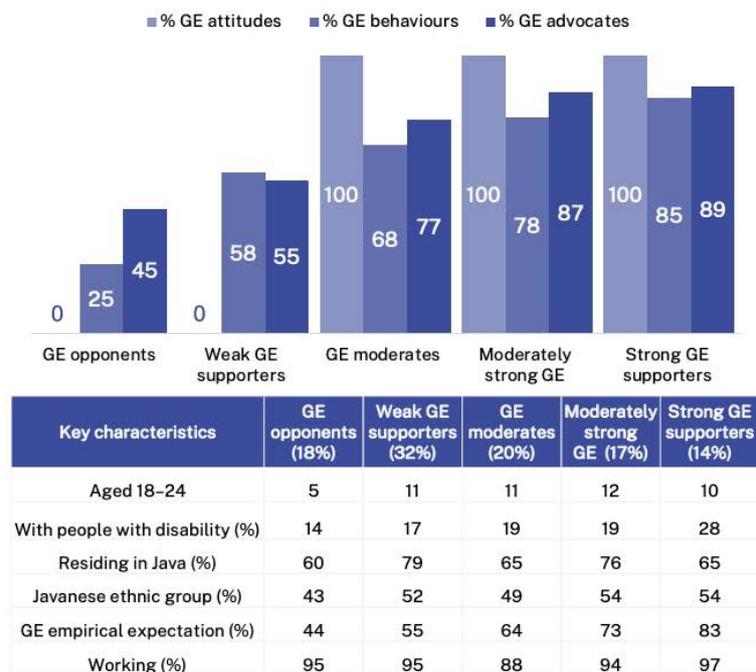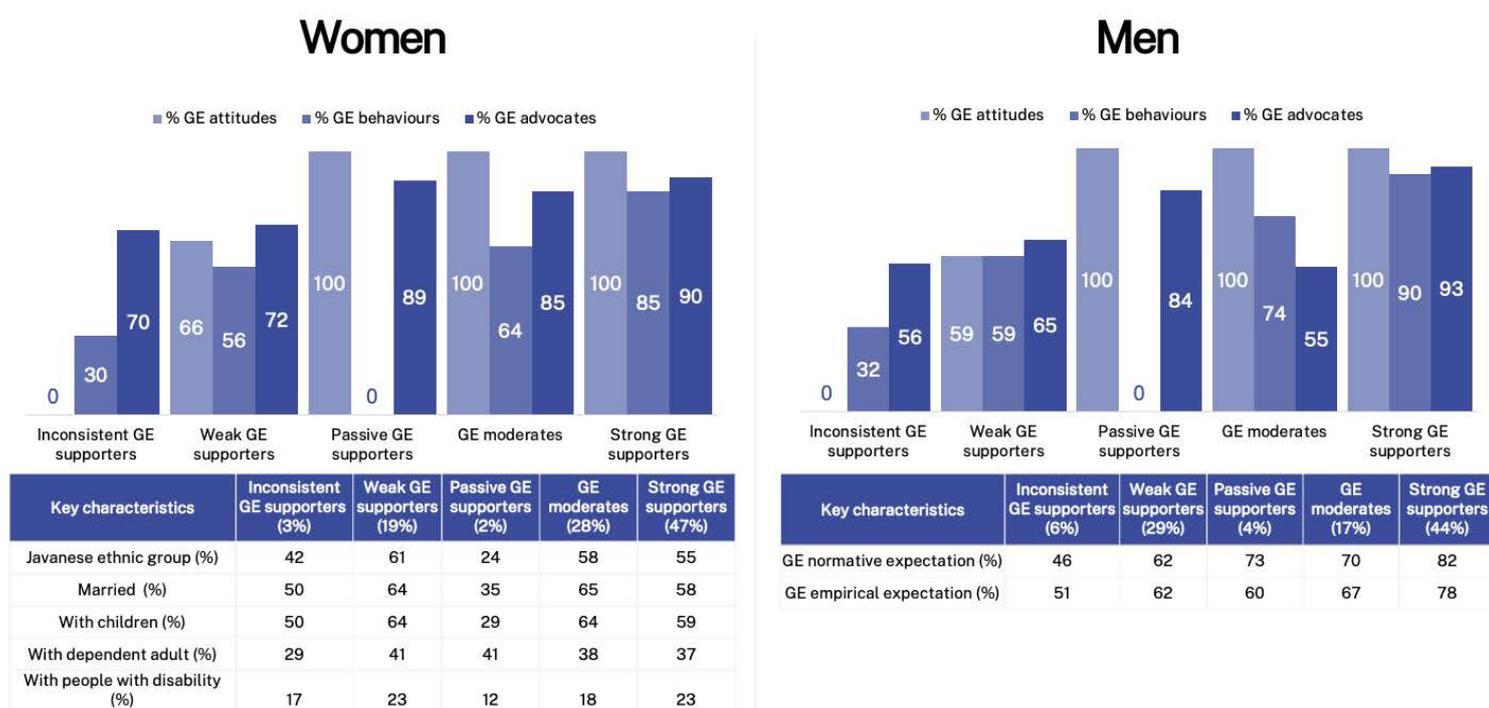
2.3 Factors influencing gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and social norms

2.3.1 Structural, contextual and normative factors

This section explores, based on qualitative work, examines the enabling and constraining contextual factors that shape gender-equal practices.

It focuses on understanding what influences individuals' attitudes and behaviours in caregiving and economic roles, both within households and in broader social contexts. This was investigated through interviews held with 15 members of the general audience from Indonesia in 2024 (see **Annex 2** for further details).

Identity and status beliefs

These beliefs operated as both enabling and constraining in relation to more gender-equal behaviours. For some participants from Indonesia, identity aligned with mutual support or autonomy. Participant 5, a married man, stated, *"Even if my wife doesn't say anything, I try to be observant… why should it be a problem for me to step in?"* and Participant 14, a partnered woman studying her master degree, noted, *"I trust myself more to secure a stable financial situation than relying on my partner,"* presenting caregiving and economic roles as expressions of self. Participant 9, a married man and a father of two children, similarly described participation as natural, shaped by childhood observation of gender-equal behaviours. In these cases, conformity to traditional expectations required neglect of personal values and identity, encouraging the decoupling of behaviour from traditional normative and empirical expectations.

Key takeaways

- **Shifting expectations and identity negotiation shape conditions for change:** Participants described gradual shifts in what they viewed as acceptable household arrangements, shaped by family, partners and peers. Recognition of gendered expectations and identification with values of mutual support or autonomy encouraged more gender-equal practices. However, identity tied to caregiving or provider roles continued to align with less gender-equal expectations.

- **Negotiation, communication and structural conditions help translate from attitudes to behaviour:** Participants noted that shared responsibilities were possible when communication was acted upon. Where communication lacked reciprocity, attitudes did not translate into practice. Division of labour based on initiative or availability enabled sharing, but depended on both partners' willingness to act outside gendered norms. Economic necessity made dual incomes, yet women often absorbed more caregiving. Access to childcare, family support and flexible work allowed for more balanced arrangements, while lack of such supports reinforced women's caregiving responsibilities.

- **Social norms remain a powerful reference point limiting change:** Despite awareness of inequality, participants frequently referred to traditional expectations. For this small qualitative sample, more gender-equal attitudes coexisted with less gender-equal behaviours, highlighting how shifting norms and supportive structures are both necessary for translation into practice.

However, identity could also align with existing expectations. Participant 5 referred to *"stepping in"* when his wife was busy, indicating caregiving as primarily her role, while Participant 3, a single woman caring for her elderly parents, noted feeling *"I feel that if our roles are too restricted in society or within the family, we don't get the chance to try new things or express ourselves honestly… I have life goals and priorities, but being caught up in household routines makes me feel drained,"* reflecting the pull of expected responsibilities based on her identity as a woman and a caregiver in her family. Therefore, for these participants, identity enabled more gender-equal practices when associated with support or autonomy, and constrained them when connected to existing role expectations, reflecting conditional preferences shaped by empirical and normative expectations.

Resistance to empirical expectations and norm recognition

This enabled more gender-equal behaviours when participants demonstrated critical consciousness to gender norms, through explicitly naming common gender expectations and making their disapproval clear. Participant 3, a single woman, expressed an ideal arrangement for her future partner, *"I want to share responsibilities equally. It's not just because he is a man that he has to be served all the time... Childcare should not only be the mother's duty. The roles of a husband and father should also be balanced,"* and Participant 5, a married man, noted, *"Whoever is available should just do it,"* indicating a rejection of gendered assumptions.

Participant 14, a partnered woman pursuing her masters, similarly questioned why women accept limiting expectations. However, recognition did not always lead to change. Participant 9, a married man with children, stated, *"Household chores are usually seen as women's work... but that depends on each person's mindset,"* and Participant 12, a married man, noted roles are sometimes *"shaped by culture,"* signalling continued alignment with prevailing norms. For these participants, resistance enabled deviation when alternatives were seen as acceptable, and constrained it when norms were unquestioned, and treated as appropriate defaults, reflecting conditional preferences shaped by empirical and normative expectations.

Access to information, career experience, and education

This was described by participants as enabling more gender-equal behaviours when exposure to work opportunities, education, or family support provided examples of arrangements that accommodated shared roles. Participant 5, a married man, reflected on his relationship formation, stating, *"From the moment we met, we both already had our own jobs and activities... Since my wife had a work routine even before marriage, I never saw it as an issue,"* possibly hinting that women's paid work prior to partnering may set a normative expectation in some couples that

this will be continued.

Participant 12, a married man, similarly noted, *"We both met while we were already working... That was entirely my wife's decision,"* indicating autonomy supported through previous exposure to employment. Participant 14 linked education to future role expectations, saying, *"I've been given the opportunity to continue my education to a master's level... I intend to be the primary financial provider,"* showing how access to education informed her intentions for household roles. Access to information, education, and supportive networks therefore enabled participants to consider a wider range of arrangements. Access informed empirical expectations, which is what participants observed others doing, and normative expectations, which what they believed was appropriate within their reference group, shaping the conditions under which more gender-equal behaviours were seen as acceptable.

Division of tasks based on perceived strengths, availability, and initiative

This enabled more gender-equal practices when responsibilities were taken up by whoever was in the position to respond. For these couples, sanctions for non-conformity to traditional norms were outweighed by the benefits of more efficient task execution. Participant 9, a married man, explained, *"Usually, I would ask my wife to sleep first while I took care of the baby... We took turns,"* demonstrating care allocation driven by moment-to-moment readiness.

Participant 12, a married man, similarly noted, *"If I notice something is overlooked... I will just take the role of feeding them without having to discuss it first,"* presenting caregiving as shared and situational rather than fixed. Task division based on initiative therefore enabled more gender-equal arrangements, however this is conditional upon both partners being willing to actively responded to needs outside gendered roles. This suggests conditional preferences influenced by household-level empirical expectations, which means that participants adjusted their behaviour according to what they believed their partner would do, and a normative

expectation that 'household responsibilities are more effectively/fairly executed by whoever is available' enabling shared roles.

Couple communication and negotiation

This enabled more gender-equal arrangements when responsibilities were discussed and adjusted collaboratively rather than assumed. Participant 4, a married woman and a mother of one child, stated, *"We talk about job openings. If there's an opportunity, I discuss it with my husband and see if he supports it,"* indicating that decisions about work were helped through dialogue. Participant 10, a married working mother, similarly explained, *"Sometimes I need to meet the buyer or tenant in person, so I ask my husband to help,"* showing that caregiving was negotiated in response to work needs. However, communication did not always lead to shared responsibilities.

Participant 2, a married woman with a child, stated, *"I've told my husband many times [to help with domestic work]... but now I've just grown tired of saying it again,"* demonstrating that negotiation was limited when responses were not reciprocated. Communication therefore enabled more gender-equal behaviour when negotiation was treated as legitimate and acted upon and constrained it when efforts to communicate were not met with shared responsibility. Communication updated empirical and normative expectations within the relationship, supporting conditional preferences for shared roles when both partners were responsive and increasing sanctions for deviation from traditional norms when unresponsive.

Necessity and household economics

This enabled more gender-equal economic participation when financial pressure made dual incomes a practical expectation. Participant 9, a married man with children, observed, *"If you ask most husbands, they would probably say it's better for their wives to stay home. But because of economic factors, it's now common for wives to work as well..."* and Participant 10, a working mother, stated, *"the cost of living keeps increasing... the main reason for continuing to work is for my child,"* indicating that women's employment

was treated as necessity. Participant 14, a woman pursuing her master's degree, linked financial participation to personal security, saying, *"I trust myself more to secure a stable financial situation than relying on my partner".* This was a recurring theme were women alluded to empirical expectations that the traditional male-breadwinner model may fail to guarantee security, hence sanctions for non-compliance were outweighed by benefits of financial autonomy, potentially motivating positive deviance.

However, despite economic pressures, caregiving pressures often nonetheless fell to women. Many participants noted instances where women were forced to reduce or leave work to attend to domestic obligations – though such choices were grounded in a deep devotion to family wellbeing they nonetheless reflected traditional norms and sometimes driven by men as household heads. Participant 13, a married man and a father of three children, noted, *"my wife decided to stop working to care for our children,"* and Participant 10, a married woman said, *"Before, I always wanted to work. But after having a child, I started prioritising family and my child more..."* reflecting that care responsibilities were still primarily managed by women. Economic necessity therefore expanded expectations for women's financial contribution, but maintained expectations around caregiving, reflecting empirical pressures for dual incomes alongside normative expectations that women adjust first.

Structural supports and time-use infrastructure

This enabled more gender-equal behaviours when childcare, family assistance, or flexible work arrangements allowed caregiving and paid work to be shared. Participant 9, a married man, said, *"My parents actually offered... From the time the kids were small, they were already at my parents' house,"* indicating that family support enabled both partners to work. Participant 10, a working mother, similarly noted, *"My mother takes care of my child... Sometimes she picks up my child if I'm unable to,"* allowing her to continue earning income. However, in the absence of such support, caregiving responsibilities

remained concentrated. Participant 2, a married woman and mother, described needing additional domestic support, stating, *"My husband almost doesn't help at all,"* and noted no alternative options (i.e. relatives, outsourcing) were feasible. Access to social and structural supports therefore enabled practical sharing of responsibilities, while lack of support reinforced expectations that caregiving would fall to women, reflecting the role of structural conditions in shaping empirical and normative expectations.

Underlying social norm structures and sanctioning beliefs

These operated as a constraining factor when participants referred to expectations about what women and men 'should' do in the household and workforce. Participant 8, a single man, stated, *"As a man, my duty is to work… Women are more suited to managing the household,"* framing gender roles as *"common knowledge".* Participant 13, a married man, similarly noted, *"Ideally, it [earning] should be the man's responsibility,"* reinforcing the expectation that men provide financially. Some women also expressed these expectations from within their own roles. Both housewives with children, Participant 4 said, *"Mothers can have careers, but their main role remains at home,"* while Participant 1 reflected, *"They say it is a man's duty to provide."* These norms were reinforced through family decision-making; Participant 2 explained, *"My husband hasn't allowed me to work again because he prioritises our child… So for now, that's how it is."* These accounts reflect traditional strong normative expectations, where compliance is maintained through perceived approval or disapproval from family and community, shaping conditional preferences even when alternatives are recognised.

Findings from this small qualitative sample suggest that participants in Indonesia navigate gender roles through a mix of shifting attitudes, household negotiation, and enduring social expectations. While many expressed supports for more gender-equal arrangements, translation into practice was uneven and often constrained by

partner dynamics, structural barriers, and ingrained beliefs about men's and women's responsibilities. Access to family support, flexible work, and shared communication appeared to facilitate more equal divisions, yet without these enabling conditions, less gender-equal practices persisted. These insights offer an indicative snapshot of evolving gender norms within the sample, but broader research would be required to understand their prevalence and variation across Indonesia.

2.3.2 Reference networks

This section examines the role of reference networks in shaping gender-equal behaviours and economic participation, with specific reference to family, friends, colleagues, cultural communities, media platforms, and politics.

This was investigated through interviews with 15 members from the Indonesian general audience in 2024 (see **Annex 2** for further details).

Family

Family emerged as the most influential reference group, either reinforcing traditional arrangements or providing models of shared responsibility. Across different backgrounds, participants highlighted the role of parents, grandparents, and extended family in transmitting gendered expectations. These early experiences deeply informed their current behaviours and beliefs about who should care for the household and who should contribute financially. Analytically, family sets the initial baseline of empirical expectations (who actually does care and paid work at home) and normative expectations (who ought to), which later anchor adults' conditional preferences.

Participant 9, a married man with children, shared how his upbringing set early expectations that men can and should perform housework: *"I grew up with all brothers, so we were already helping our parents a lot. Since our parents worked, we were the ones who cleaned the house. So I think it was just something I carried over from my upbringing".* In contrast, Participant 2, a stay-at-home mother, similarly described

how her upbringing shaped her preferences, though in this case towards more traditional models of care: *"my husband grew up in a family where his father worked and his mother stayed home to take care of the children and household. He saw that model in his family. In my family, it was similar. When we were dating, we never really talked about these things. It just seemed normal, right? I mean, traditionally, a mother's role is to stay home and take care of the children and the house".*

Friends & colleagues

While family set baseline expectations, friends and colleagues served as peer-level reference points, offering real-time comparisons that could normalised women's dual roles, highlighted unequal burdens or model traditional roles. Participant 10, a married woman and freelancer, described how women's friendship networks could subtly challenge gendered expectations leaving women overburdened: *"Discussing household responsibilities with friends or relatives, most of the time, it's still the wives who take care of the children. Sometimes they complain about being exhausted…Maybe they hope to get more help from their spouse".*

A few men further reflected on the double burden they saw women take on in their friend's homes; *"Most of my female friends are working mothers, and very few are stay-at-home moms. In general, I notice that working mothers bear a heavier burden"* Participant 12, married man. While a minority only, these accounts underscored how observing peers could validate men's choices to deviate from traditional norms by reinforcing household level empirical expectations that 'women who work and care are overworked' and normative expectations that 'household labour division should be gender-equal'.

Neighbours

Neighbours emerged as a uniquely influential reference group within the Indonesian participants' context, particularly among participants from non-metropolitan areas outside of the capital city Jakarta, where residential communities tend to be more tightly knit and socially observant. In these environments, everyday interactions and routines were often visible to neighbours,

creating a strong localised force for social comparison and norm reinforcement. Neighbourhoods thus operate as high-frequency, high-visibility reference networks where empirical expectations are continuously observed, and normative expectations are enforced informally. Participant 9, a married man with children, reflected on how neighbourhood acceptance could enable positive deviance: *"In my neighbourhood, most wives also work. From what I see, the husbands are also involved in household chores. For example, my neighbour across the street hangs the laundry every morning. So there's no longer any feeling of shame or thinking that it's only a wife's duty".*

Neighbourhoods had dynamic interactions with class. Participant 9 notes that his neighbourhood when men perform domestic work is *"different from elite urban areas, where you might still see husbands sitting around drinking coffee and reading the newspaper while the wife works and takes care of the house".* However, Participant 10, a married woman with children, noted that *"In urban areas, things might be starting to become more balanced, but in my area, I still see that it's not quite equal yet. Maybe because the husband forbids it, or the wife is afraid of her husband. She might be afraid of being labelled as disobedient if she tries to look for work".* Here, less gender-equal attitudes were implied to be prevalent within both urban elite and more rural communities, but more common in a suburban, more middle-class setting. Further research is needed to understand these dynamics.

Media

More distant but nonetheless omnipresent, media set public discourse on gender norms creating visible exemplars and opening space for discussion. These role models were observed to nurture more gender-equal attitudes and practices, expose people to alternative arrangements, but often they also reflected ongoing expectations about caregiving and provision. Participant 14, a partnered woman from Jakarta, recalled the importance of online role models *"From what I see, the role models are mainly influencers on social media, especially feminist influencers. They empower women to pursue education and*

careers instead of prioritising finding a life partner" but noted cases of backlash from men. Broadly, participants reflected that often there were media debates and ongoing discussions about gender roles showing how media operated as a space of contestation - to either encourage or sanction deviation from traditional norms.

Religion

Similarly, religion, especially Islam, did not constitute a reference network in of itself but was frequently cited as a key factor shaping them, often (but not always) upholding conventional expectations around male authority and financial provision. Religion was also sometimes used as a platform to promote fairness through the lens of gender equality or even push for change within marriage and caregiving dynamics. Participant 2, a housewife, shared that she often sent videos promoting more gender-equal role sharing from prominent Islamic scholars to her husband *"so that he also knows and understands",* grounding their household negotiations in shared religious values compatible with gender equality. Meanwhile, Participant 13, a married Christian man with children, shared *"In our belief, even though women and men are equal, there is still an order or hierarchy within the household. The man has the responsibility as the head of the family, even though in terms of position, they remain equal".* His reflection captured a commonly held view that religion supports a model where women and men are equal in value but different in role, and where men's authority is believed to be maintained without necessarily undermining women's dignity. This and similar principles could be instrumentalised to ground both more gender-equal and less gender-equal practices, influenced by the individual's preferred sources of religious guidance. Religion both set the broader landscape of gender norms and was embedded within everyday life, influencing salient reference networks for many participants.

These reference networks helped explain why factors such as economic necessity or access to support enabled more gender-

equal behaviours in some contexts but reinforced existing divisions in others. When reference networks modelled or legitimised shared roles, participants described greater confidence in adopting similar practices; when they upheld expectations of men as breadwinners or women as caregivers, participants expressed pressure to comply despite personal preferences. In Bicchieri's terms, reference networks shaped conditional preferences by setting empirical expectations of what was common and normative expectations of what was appropriate, determining which behaviours were seen as viable, legitimate, or likely to incur sanction within Indonesian households and communities of this sample group.[188]

2.3.3 Enablers and barriers of advocacy

This section looks at the factors that can hinder and enable gender equality advocacy – from the private to public sphere.

Reflections from the Indonesia validation workshop revealed that advocacy for gender equality is shaped not only by individual attitudes, but by the social norms embedded within participants' reference networks as well as contextual factors.

Participants identified key enablers to advocacy that reflect shifting **normative expectations** (what others believe they should do) and **empirical expectations** (what others are observed doing). For example, men's support for women's organisations and parental awareness of workload distribution were seen as signs that advocacy is increasingly expected and socially validated. Exposure to positive role models in the workplace, the private sphere, or on social media, as well as multi-level government promotion of gender equality also helped. These enablers often were tied to a corresponding counter-effect. For example, men's support for women's organisations was recognised as an enabler, while a lack thereof was attributed as a barrier. Parental awareness of workload distribution was generally associated with favourable attitudes towards gender

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188   Bicchieri 2017

advocacy in the private sphere, while the reverse relationships was also observed.

Barriers to advocacy often reflected conditional preferences, as participants were willing to advocate for gender equality only if they perceived support from their reference networks or felt safe from backlash. **Fear of familial conflict, workplace opposition, or being labelled a 'social justice warrior'** limited advocacy, even among those with gender-equal attitudes. **Barriers were often attributed these to patriarchal norms and conservative religious interpretations.** Criticism was directed to the recent rise in politically conservative attitudes towards gender equality, as seen in the government budgetary cuts to gender equality projects and the mainstream media, who 'do not want to portray gender-equal roles'. **Broader public discourse which promoted 'gender harmony' over 'gender equality' was also criticised for relegating women to domesticity,** underscoring the potential for gender equality messaging to be co-opted. Participants additionally described a fear of backlash (both hypothetical and actualised) such as familial conflict, workplace opposition to women's leadership and attracting stigmatised labels such as a 'social justice warrior'. Participants' advocacy behaviours were shaped by their **reference networks**, particularly family, peers, and colleagues. Within social circles dominated by men, peer pressure to conform to traditional roles discouraged advocacy, while gender-equal networks (e.g. feminist influencers, supportive workplaces) enabled it.

Participants discussed strategies for effective advocacy in the public and private sphere. These included training service workers to use a gender-neutral approach, showcasing instances of leadership by women, building gender-sensitivity in the media and government at all levels, involving men in advocacy, ensuring safe spaces for women's autonomous advocacy, seeking effective contexts for workload distribution negotiations, upskilling men to take on domestic work, promoting women's

organising, and encouraging collective, rather than individual advocacy. One example pointed to flexible working arrangements afforded to women with small children. While this ostensibly supports women's workforce participation, the participant noted that it inadvertently reinforces gender norms by implying childcare is a women's responsibility -highlighted the importance of scrutinising advocatory policy decisions through a gendered and normative lens.

Progression from gender-equal attitude holder to behaviour modeller to advocate differed across **reference networks**. In public spheres (e.g. workplaces, social media), shifting norms and supportive networks enabled advocacy. In private spheres (e.g. family), traditional expectations and hierarchical relationships often constrained it, highlighting how norm conflict across networks shapes advocacy behaviour. **Education on gender equality, whether from communication between partners, formally, or from the media, was broadly supported to catalyse progression along the continuum.**

However, education was not seen as a panacea, for example, participants observed women in workplace leadership positions who nonetheless held traditional attitudes towards gender roles in their private lives. Conversely, women's patriarchal upbringings sometimes motivated their participation in public advocacy, but traditional family norms prevented them from advocating in their private lives. Likewise, while youth were seen as being more likely to support gender advocacy, participants again noted that these attitudes were often not translated in their personal lives. These instances highlight that while an individual may progress along the continuum in their public life, such gains are not necessarily translated to the private sphere. Some participants noted this challenge was attributable to 'misconceptions on patriarchy and religion' foundational to the formation of normative and empirical expectations.

The need to build understanding on substantive gender equality[189] at the

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189 **Substantiative gender equality** refers to gender equality marked by equality of outcome (i.e. equality in law, opportunity and treatment) as opposed to **descriptive gender equality** which refers to equality in representation (i.e. numeric). This difference can be illustrated by comparing **descriptive** representation, such as the number of women in parliament being equal to men, with **substantive** representation, which considers whether women have the same ability as men to enact change in parliament.

household, societal and institutional level was a further trend of the discussion. **One participant summarised that** *'women are perceived as having achieved gender equality in terms of quantity'.* This highlighted a belief that due to women's increased roles in public life, and broader descriptive representation, gender equality has already been achieved – potentially acting as an attitudinal barrier. Similarly, participants criticised the social media trend of men carrying their children as a performative gesture which distracts from the need for structural change. **Participants critiqued performative gestures, such as men doing domestic work being praised as 'helping',** as evidence of **descriptive norm change** without **substantive norm transformation**. These actions signal surface-level shifts but fail to challenge the underlying normative expectation that caregiving is women's responsibility. This illustrates a barrier to advocacy was a lack of understanding on the importance of substantiative gender equality, that transcends superficial and descriptive representation.

In summary, participants identified enablers and barriers to gender equality advocacy that reflect the interplay of normative and empirical expectations across reference networks. Advocacy was often contingent on conditional preferences as individuals were more likely to act when they perceived support or alignment with others' behaviours and expectations. Structural enablers such as flexible work and institutional support facilitated norm deviation, while persistent patriarchal norms, fear of backlash, and misinterpretations of equality limited advocacy, particularly in private spheres. These findings underscore the importance of fostering both attitudinal and structural/contextual conditions for sustained norm change.

2.4 Shifts in gender norms

2.4.1 SNAPS survey waves over time

This section examines the extent to which gender norms have evolved over time, as reflected in SNAPS data from 2020 (second wave) to 2024 (current wave). It analyses trends in attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy for gender equality, highlighting areas of progress as well as persistent gaps.

By comparing data (where comparable across surveys) across survey iterations, this section offers insights on the evolution of gender norms across time.

Key takeaways

- **Aspirations for gender-equal caregiving remain high but are weakening:** Across SNAPS waves, most women and men's aspirations to share childcare equally continued, but support declined notably in SNAPS 2024.

- **Women reported childcare load has fallen sharply, but equality remains elusive:** In SNAPS 2024, the share of women reporting that they do most childcare dropped by nearly 30 percentage points compared to SNAPS 2022. Yet men's reports of sharing equally or doing more changed little, revealing a persistent perception gap.

- **Economic roles show gradual movement toward shared responsibility:** While the male breadwinner norm persists, both women and men increasingly expect greater mutual contribution to family income. Actual behaviour data show modest progress toward equality, suggesting evolving, though still uneven,

Figure ID 14 Gender-equal practices across SNAPS waves - Childcare domain
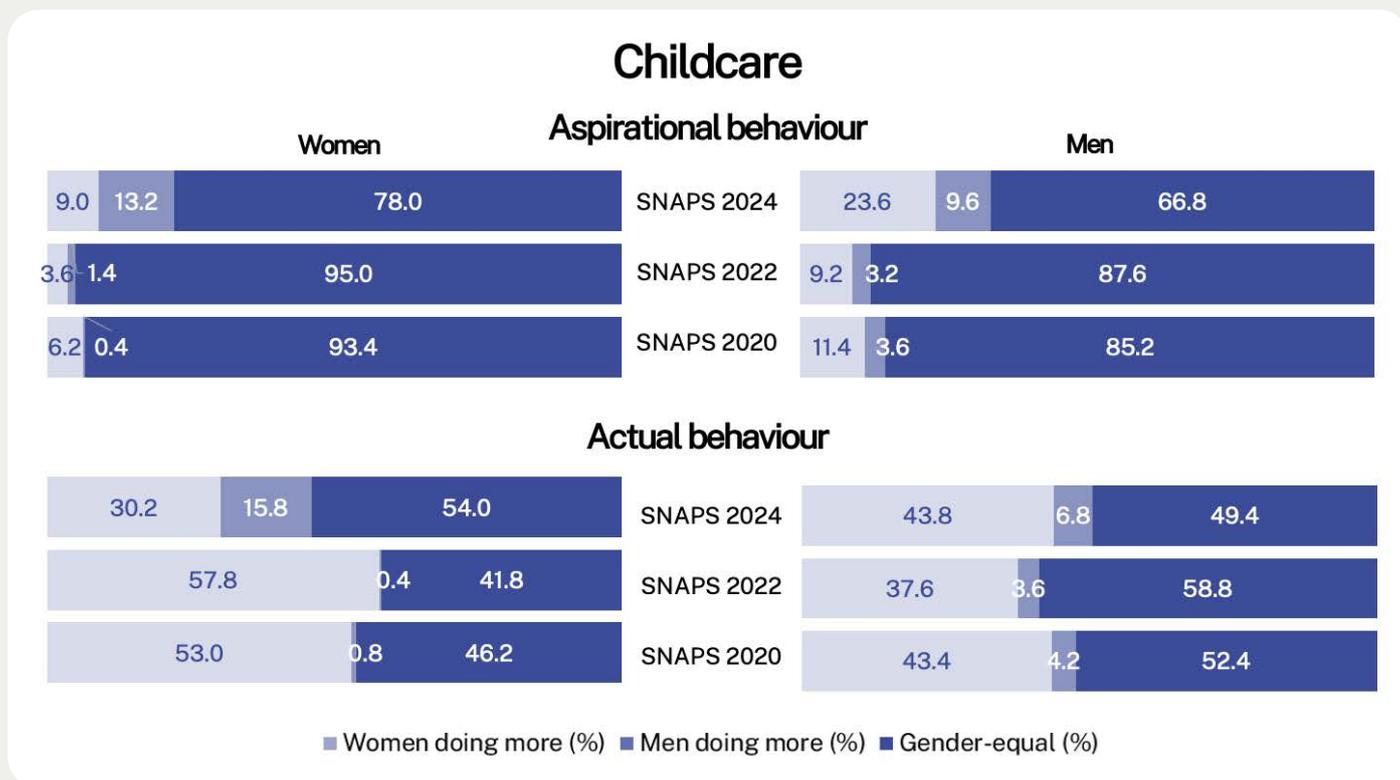
Note: This figure presents the distribution of gender-related behaviours in the Childcare domain for women and men in SNAPS 2020, 2022, and 2024.

Shifting gender norms in caregiving & domestic roles

- **Participants consistently aspired towards gender equality in Caregiving and Domestic roles:** Across all SNAPS waves, the majority of women and men who were neither married/partnered nor had children expressed strong aspirations for gender-equal childcare arrangements. Per the conceptual framework, these are personal normative beliefs that suggest support for independent gender-equal behaviour. However, as the model emphasises, attitudes alone are insufficient for social norm change unless reference-group normative and empirical expectations also shift.

- **Aspirational behaviour historically fails to translate to actual behaviour:** Despite aspirations for gender equality in Childcare among unmarried/unpartnered and childless individuals, among participants with actual childcare responsibilities, a much lower proportion reported sharing childcare duties equally. This pattern was consistent across all waves, including SNAPS 2024, supporting the notion of conditional preferences: that people's behaviour is constrained by the combination of empirical and normative expectations within their reference group.

- **SNAPS 2024 captured a reversion towards traditional gender norms vis-à-vis aspirational and actual behaviour:** Notably, the proportion of participants expressing aspirational support for gender-equal childcare sharing declined in SNAPS 2024 compared to SNAPS 2020 and 2022 by around 20 percentage points. In addition, the share of men reporting that women were doing more childcare rose from about 10% to nearly 25%. This could indicate a shift in empirical expectations (fewer people seen practicing equality) or normative expectations (lower perceived approval for gender-equal behaviour), highlighting how fragile norm change can be if either expectation weakens due to external factors. According to expert interviews, key trends that may be propelling a return to traditional norms in Indonesia include an increase in religious fundamentalism and the proliferation of traditional gender ideas on social media and anti-feminist influencers.

- **Behaviours in SNAPS 2024 shifted as well:** Although changes in aspirational behaviour suggest a move away from gender-equal childcare, the proportion of women reporting that they do more childcare fell by about 28 percentage points, while the proportion of men reporting more childcare rose by 4 points compared to SNAPS 2022. This divergence reflects that perceptions of what others do may differ from reality and underscores the need to address both empirical and normative expectations to foster genuine behavioural change.

Shifting gender norms in economic roles

- **The male breadwinner social norm remains apparent in men's expectations:** With regards to earning family income, aspirational preferences for gender-equal sharing were consistently higher among women than men across all waves by 12–28 percentage points. Men's weaker aspirations for equality in this domain, especially compared with Childcare, suggest that the social norm of men as primary breadwinners retains deeply entrenched. This suggests the persistence of both empirical and normative expectations. Together, these expectations might reinforce conditional preferences that discourage men from embracing equal earning responsibilities, even as attitudes towards shared caregiving show greater flexibility.

- **Women and men increasingly want each other to take on greater responsibility, indicating evolving normative expectations:** In SNAPS 2024, double the number of women expressed a preference for men to take on more responsibility for earning income than in previous waves. Conversely, among men, the proportion wanting women to contribute more increased (from 1 in 20 in SNAPS 2020 to 1 in 5 in SNAPS 2024), while the share expecting men to do more declined. This may reflect that women are pushing back on the overwhelming double burden while men are increasingly realising the economic necessity of women's income streams. Alternatively, women may be pushing for fairer divisions of household and economic labour (and turning to traditional gender norms in the process) while men's views on gender norms could be becoming more gender-equal (however expert interviews suggested this is not likely the case).

- **Trending towards gender equality, though perceptions differ between genders:** In terms of actual behaviour, SNAPS 2024 showed a higher proportion of both women and men reporting gender-equal responsibility for earning family income. A significant perception gap emerged: while 26% fewer men said they bore the most financial responsibility, women observed only a 11% decrease in men bearing primary responsibility. These behavioural changes may stem from sampling variations, differences in survey phrasing across waves, or broader shifts in national economic and social conditions.

Figure ID 15 Gender-equal practices across SNAPS waves – Earning Family Income domain

Earning Family Income

Aspirational behaviour

Women				Men		
1.4	46.4	52.2	SNAPS 2024	15.4	44.6	40.0
4.4	35.0	60.4	SNAPS 2022	2.6	62.2	35.2
6.0	38.4	55.6	SNAPS 2020	4.6	54.6	40.6

Actual behaviour

Women				Men		
6.2	52.6	41.2	SNAPS 2024	21.0	42.4	36.8
9.6	63.2	27.0	SNAPS 2022	5.2	67.2	27.4
20.4	43.2	36.4	SNAPS 2020	5.8	73.0	21.2

■ Women doing more (%) ■ Men doing more (%) ■ Gender-equal (%)
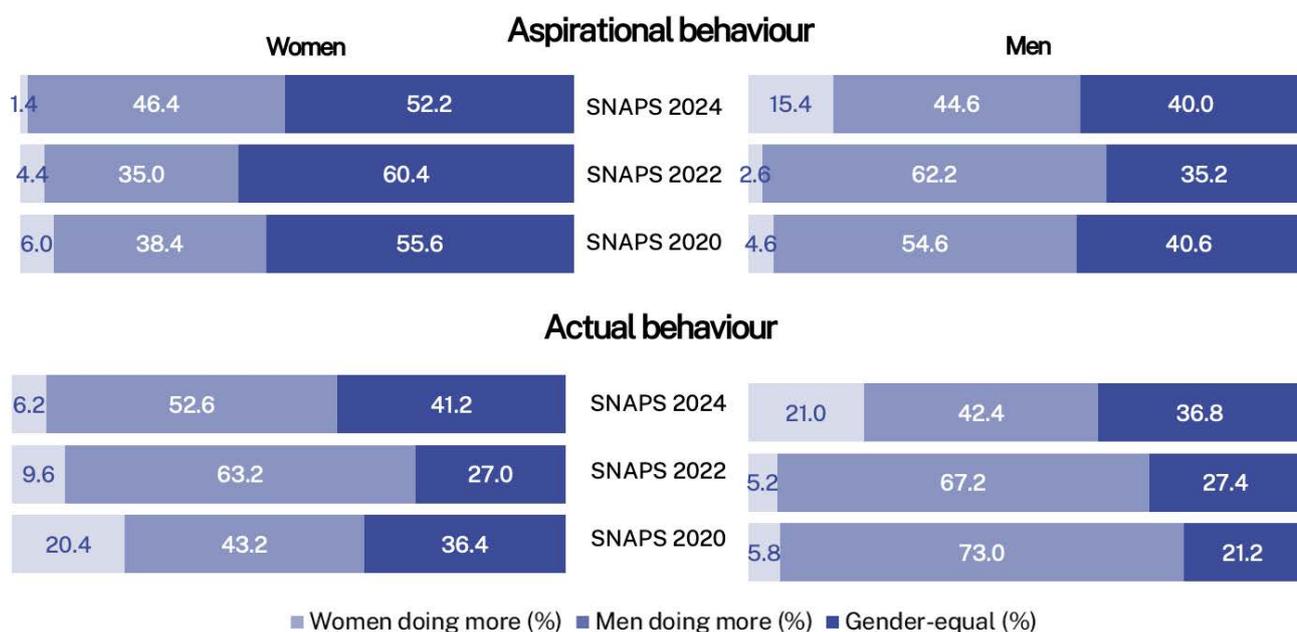
Note: This figure presents the distribution of gender-related behaviours in the Childcare domain for women and men in SNAPS 2020, 2022, and 2024.

2.4.2 Societal transformations

Countries across the world are witnessing a suite of societal transformations that are inevitably influencing and interacting with gender norms – and Indonesia is no exception to this.

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence and social media ubiquity is enabling the proliferation of misogynistic ideology and content, reinforcing conservative gender norms about women's roles in social, economic, and domestic spheres. The resurgence of right-wing authoritarian politics and rollbacks of gender-equal policies are galvanising anti-feminist movements and threatening hard-won gender equality gains. The climate crisis threatens to add to women's mounting unpaid care burden. At the same time, rising cost of living, growth in the digital gig economy, increasing demand for care, and international and national action on gender equality provide opportunities to challenge traditional ideas about who should perform care and who should earn income in the family. However, the impact of these shifts on gender norms is not always straightforward – in many cases, they hold both the risk of entrenching traditional gender norms and the potential to challenge and reshape them.

This section details the nature of these shifts, how they manifest in Indonesia, and the impact that they may have on gender norms. These shifts are drawn from a combination of the literature and interviews with experts in Indonesia.

The climate crisis

Climate change and resulting climate-induced disasters can entrench unequal gender norms. Women already shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid care. However, climate-related disasters disrupt both care systems and access to these (i.e. health care facilities, benefit/aid programs, relatives unable to perform care). As such, women must work harder to compensate for these shocks.[190] Similarly, when climate-related disasters reduce access to resources (i.e. food, water, fuel) women must work harder and/or in more vulnerable settings. As such, the

Key takeaways

- The climate crisis, rising costs of living, cultural, demographic, and political shifts along with technological disruptions are creating a dynamic gendered landscape in Indonesia where tradition and norm disruption are coinciding.

- If policy settings are calibrated to support positive deviance from traditional norms, these shifts have the potential to challenge traditional norms and update conditional preferences towards gender-equality.

- However, if current policy paradigms remain unchanged, these shifts will likely embed traditional norms, at the cost of women's dignity and humanity and women and men's equality.

climate crisis has increased women's unpaid labour, sometimes at the expense of their own safety, along with educational and employment opportunities.[191] Impacts of the climate crisis upon women documented in Indonesia have included increased economic insecurity, risks of climate displacement, loss of livelihoods, increased health risks and interrupted access to health facilities.[192] Experts also noted that economic insecurity (exacerbated by climate change impacts) may also increase underage marriages and gender-based violence, with concurrent impact's on women's and their children's health and education.

Whilst more research is under development, specific gendered issues in climate change recur. Reduced fish stocks act as a case study demonstrating the impact of climate change in the Indonesian context. Fish provides 50% of Indonesia's protein requirements.[193] However, declining stocks may place additional pressure on women to maintain household food security. Declining fish stocks are anticipated to exacerbate pressure on land rights access, as fishing communities turn to the land given reduced stock.[194] This may create risk of land rights dispute with implications for women's safety. Women's role in fisheries and the

190   (United Nations, n.d.-b)
191   (UN Women 2025a)
192   (Rosalinda et al. 2024)
193   (World Bank, n.d.)
194   (Salyanty 2024)

agricultural sector more broadly is more likely to be informal and less-well paid than men's,[195] decreasing their access to climate mitigation and adaptation support programs, increasing vulnerability.[196] These phenomena will likely be exacerbated by climate change's impacts on other agricultural sectors.

Critically, research also notes women in Indonesia play a pivotal and irreplaceable role in resilience, adaptations and mitigation strategies. Though more vulnerable than men, women are not victims of climate change, but rather, key agents of change who must be involved in decision making processes.[197]

The rising cost of living

The climate crisis, along with other factors, has seen a global increase in the cost of living. While this shift may be precipitated by economic necessity as opposed to genuine intentions to challenge traditional gender roles, it may still help to shift normative and empirical expectations around women's participation and leadership in the workforce. Experts in the interview reinforced other studies and noted that cost of living pressures are increasingly necessitating dual incomes within households, forcing both partners to work.[198]

Rising costs of living stressors may also exacerbate risks to women's safety. One expert highlighted that women and girls from low socio-economic households were at higher risk of violence, unwanted pregnancy and child marriage in the advent of economic downturn. Another noted that men were often uncomfortable with wives/partners out-earning them, furthering risk of household conflict. Rising divorce rates (and husband abandonment) due to economic pressures were also pointed to by an expert who noted that these often left a double burden of care on women, many without the

capital or education to find secure or flexible employment.

Beyond the double burden of care, rising living costs are deterring or delaying couples' decisions to have children, given concerns about the affordability of raising a child. A recent report by UNFPA found that 39% of Indonesian's cited financial limitations as a factor leading them to have fewer children.[199] A potential impact of delayed parenting choices may be that women enter and stay in the labour force longer, challenging norms that relegate women to the domestic sphere.

As such, economic shifts must be met with proactive action focussing on supporting women's meaningful participation in public life, while mitigating potential backlash, to prevent women being left with the double burden.

Political shifts

The world is experiencing a rising "global wave of autocratisation".[200] Of the global population, 40% is estimated to live in countries where democracy is declining,[201] a trend which threatens historic progress on gender equality. Governments worldwide have brought in a suite of changes that oppose gender equality, including cutting workplace diversity and inclusion initiatives and repealing anti-discrimination and equality legislation.[202] In combination with world leaders vocally promoting traditional gender norms[203] this trend is also galvanising right-wing movements among the general populace, enabling a resurgence and public airing of discriminatory attitudes, including misogynistic views.[204] Authoritarian and anti-feminist governments also constrain women's participation in politics and leadership, including through framing women as unfit to hold positions of power,[205] which serves to further shut down challenges to traditional

195   (Salyanty 2024)
196   (World Bank, n.d.)
197   (Biswas and Barua 2025)
198   (Damayanti et al. 2025)
199   (United Nations Population Fund 2025)
200   (Nord et al. 2025)
201   (Nord et al. 2025)
202   (Juan-Torres et al. 2025; Brechenmacher 2025)
203   (Juan-Torres et al. 2025)
204   (Khan et al. 2023)
205   (Nord et al. 2025)

gender norms and the status quo.[206]

Experts in Indonesia spoke of the hangover of the Suharto government's policy of 'state ibuism' (state motherhood) which emphasised women's traditional roles. They added that this resulted in continued government support for women's organisations which doggedly promote traditional gender roles, rather than progressing transformative reform. Previously relatively unified, political divisions began to emerge between women's rights advocacy groups during the 2014 presidential election, fragmenting the movement.[207] Subsequent administrations have also faced fiscal constraints that led to budget adjustments across portfolios, which stakeholders note may have had implications toward overall gender equality agenda.[208, 209]

Increasing internet access, the digital economy and social media adoption

Social media and online influencer's increasing ubiquity has also impacted views on gender in Indonesia, though literature is disparate. Nonetheless, social media has immense following in Indonesia. A 2024 study found that internet penetration was at nearly 80% of total population, and 87% among Gen Z users (aged 12-27).[210] Tiktok and Instagram are the most popular social media platforms with 110 million users each.[211]

Experts from Indonesia recalled that social media has enabled the rise of misogynistic women and men influencers promoting traditional norms and normalised sharing misogynistic content, in addition to discrimination towards non-binary genders.[212] Accounts such as @thisisgender promote the view the feminism is an imported western concept and following such ideals is un-Islamic.[213] Contrastingly, accounts such as @muslimahfeminis promote Islamic interpretations compatible with gender equality[214] and Aliansi Laki-Laki Baru (Alliance of modern men) extol masculinities conducive to gender-equality.[215] Experts and literature[216] further noted that gender transformative social media content has also helped people see there are alternatives to traditional gender norms. In the absence of flexible working arrangements and amid norms that prioritise women's place in the home, social media has also been used by women to promote and run home-based businesses enabling a balance caregiving and earning.[217]

Beyond social media, experts noted that the internet had also enabled more flexible working practices (though such arrangements were often noted as being nascent only, and not the norm). Experts further recalled that multinational companies (whose transnational work is enabled by the internet) promoted diversity and inclusion initiatives increasing women's workplace representation and starting conversations about gender equality. The digitalisation of markets and the proliferation of e-commerce platforms are also providing women with opportunities to earn and increase their income while offering flexibility. Ride share platforms have offered one means of flexible income increasingly being used by men (and a small proportion of women) as a means of supplementing income or a form of employment with lower barriers to entry. However, research does not seem to have investigated how flexible employment enabled by the gig-economy impacts on men's caregiving behaviours. Alternatively, women are using informal e-commerce networks to reduce the domestic load – for example, WhatsApp groups are used by some Jakartan women to coordinate grocery deliveries from informal vendors.[218]

206 (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC 2022)
207 (Dewi 2020)
208 (Laksono 2025)
209 (Puspita Sari 2025)
210 (Veronika 2025)
211 (Veronika 2025)
212 (Sartini and Adrian 2023)
213 (Nisa 2023)
214 Nisa 2023)
215 (Fahadi 2022)
216 (Dwityas et al. 2025)
217 (Dwityas et al. 2025)
218 (Rakhmani et al. 2020)

Social media and digital platforms in Indonesia have created a contested space where traditional gender norms proliferate alongside progressive alternatives and economic opportunities for women, though the latter remains nascent.

The growth of artificial intelligence

The rapid development and adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) is one of the most significant transformations humanity is currently living through. AI technologies are evolving at breakneck speed and have the potential to fundamentally reshape or reinforce norms across the personal and professional spheres. AI has the capability to challenge gender inequality if human creators intend it to do so – however, bias appears embedded into training data and regulation has failed to keep pace with industry growth. Indonesia is seeking to become a regional hub of AI development. However, the "ambitious"[219] National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence of 194-pages has limited reference to the gendered impacts of AI.[220]

AI may reduce women's overall employment rates and entrench gendered occupational segregation. The ILO finds that 4.7% of women's jobs are at high risk of automation compared to 2.4% of men's,[221] with similar concerns expressed by the Indonesian Minister for Digital Affairs Meutya Hafid.[222] Furthermore, due to embedded patriarchal norms, women in Indonesia report high perceptions of gender bias within the tech sector (over 77%), lower rates of participation in STEM fields compared to men and lower AI literacy.[223] Women's exclusion from the technology sector inhibits gender-transformative development, resultantly embedding traditional norms.[224]

As an emerging policy trend, it is yet unclear how AI will impact gender norms in Indonesia, but concerted policy action is needed to proactively address gendered bias and impacts.

International and national action on gender equality

From the establishment of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995 to the recent Political Declaration to mark its 30th anniversary in 2025, there has been a strong global push by international bodies to advance gender equality and secure commitments from governments to do the same – particularly in the advent of aforementioned shifts that may threaten historical hard-won gains.[225] Initiatives by the Indonesian government to increase women's workforce participation may have a positive impact on gender norms or entrench the double burden of care.

As of 2023, women outnumber men in tertiary enrolments in Indonesia by 10%.[226] Theoretically, rising rates of education continue to boost women's employment potential, increasing the opportunity cost for women of unemployment and normalising women workforce participation. This shift should have led to higher rates and longevity of employment. However, women's labour force participation remains at around 1 in 2 women and declines significantly following marriage and childbirth.[227] As such, increasing educational attainment for women may be changing gendered economic norms, they are not necessarily disrupting traditional caregiving ones.

Various policy measures have been enacted to increase women's workforce participation. In Indonesia, the 2024 Mother and Child Welfare Bill extended maternity leave from three to six months (though the additional three months are conditional). However, paternity leave entitlements remain at only two days, funded by the employer

219   (Wadipalapa et al. 2024)
220   This observation draws on keyword searches for "wanita" (woman), "perempuan" (female/woman), and "jenis kelamin" (gender/sex).
221   (Gmyrek et al. 2025)
222   (antaranews.com 2025)
223   (Tunjungbiru et al. 2025)
224   (Tunjungbiru et al. 2025)
225   (United Nations 2025c)
226   (World Bank Open Data, n.d.-c)
227   (Basnett et al. 2023)

–a limitation that remains unaddressed even following the introduction of the country's new care roadmap and action plan. These increases in maternity leave may support women's workforce participation alongside caring duties. However, a lack of simultaneous increases in paternity leave (or the introduction of gender-equal parental leave) disavows shared caregiving.[228] Furthermore, flexible working arrangements are key to enabling shared caregiving but experts noted that such arrangements were nascent only in Indonesia. Positively, flexible work arrangements for government employees have been gradually formalised since 2021, though no government regulation exists for private sector employers.[229]

Experts noted the awareness of gender equality and other diversity measures in the private sector was growing. Experts described how Indonesian companies have invested in gender equality measures, for instance, to attract overseas investors committed to women's representation. Increased Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) regulations were highlighted by an expert as a significant transition with the potential to shift gender norms by opening space for discussions on gender equality. According to one expert, multinationals based in Indonesia often have more gender-equal and inclusive workplace culture, initiated by global headquarters with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) policies–which similarly may catalyse local conversations on gender equality. However, experts also noted that actions are often aimed at meeting minimum levels of compliance rather than a commitment to shifting gender norms in the workplace.

Policy efforts to support women's workforce participation may help shift gender norms towards normalising shared income-earning responsibilities and women's participation in public life. However, without equal efforts to simultaneously shift existing caregiving norms, such policies have the potential to place a double burden on women. The risk of caregiving norms becoming entrenched in future and reinforcing this double burden is particularly acute given another significant societal transition: the increasing demand for care.

Increasing demand for care

Increasing demand for care–particularly for children, older people, and persons with disability–is driven by a range of demographic and economic transitions at work in Indonesia.

The growth of the middle class across Indonesia is likely increasing families' ability to afford childcare and demand these services (though this may be hampered by rising cost of living pressures). Declining fertility rates and higher life expectancies are also driving population aging in Indonesia[230] and increasing demand for older people care. This trend is further compounded by increasing rates of urban-to-rural migration by youth seeking economic opportunities. However, such dynamics often require leaving behind older relatives, challenging existing traditional family-based care models. Disability prevalence is also rising due to higher likelihood of disability as people age. Likewise, greater awareness and earlier diagnoses of developmental and learning disabilities in children is increasing prevalence.[231] Experts noted that a distinct 'sandwich generation' had emerged in Indonesia; women who must care for both younger and older relatives. These dynamics increase the demand for care,[232] at the same time the government attempts to increase women's labour force participation.

There are government efforts to meet this shift. Indonesia introduced both a Care Economy Roadmap and accompanying National Action Plan in 2024. Along with other measures, the Care Economy Roadmap and National Action Plan seeks to shift maternity leave from being employer-funded

228 (Basnett et al. 2023)
229 (Merdikawati, et al. 2025)
230 (Basrowi, Rahayu, Chandra Khoe, et al. 2021)
231 (Merdikawati, et al. 2025)
232 (Merdikawati, et al. 2025)

(which may disincentives hiring women) to being included within the social protection system.[233] However, one expert noted there was uncertainty around the budget devoted to the Roadmap and Action Plan (with the leading department's budget being cut by 50% in 2024-25), and implementation responsibilities. Fortunately, experts noted some new gender equality measures adopted by businesses (though a small minority) will help address this shift. For example, one expert from a major Indonesian company noted that staff asked for paternity leave reforms and health benefits for children and spouses (which previously had only been extended to men).

If implemented successfully, these policy efforts have the potential to support positive shifts in norms surrounding the value of care work and who performs it, ultimately creating space for women's meaningful participation in both the public and private spheres.

Cultural shifts

Religion was a key factor influencing gender norms mentioned by experts in Indonesia. In Indonesia, experts spoke concertedly on the growth in religious fundamentalism and conservative interpretations of Islam that promote traditional gender roles, attributing this trend to investments by the Middle East in schools and other institutions. Experts pointed to growing local and transnational religious fundamentalism rejecting women's activism and activity outside the private sphere, discouraging anti-female genital mutilation activism and online Islamist groups seeking to dissuade women from working. Experts also spoke of a continuing tension between international and local norms and resistance to 'Western ideas' of women's workforce participation. As such, promoting Islamic interpretations compatible with gender-equality was endorsed by experts as key to creating grass-roots support for gender-equality.

Overall, Indonesia stands at a juncture of potential polycrises, spanning climate and economic ruptures, technological developments, political and demographic shifts. These challenges are simultaneously challenging and reinforcing traditional gender norms. Without ambitious policy implementation that addresses economic participation and caregiving responsibilities in tandem for both women and men, these transformations will likely further engrain inequality.

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233   (Merdikawati, et al. 2025)

4. Conclusion

As a predominantly Muslim country, Indonesia's gender dynamics remain strongly influenced by Islamic values and traditional expectations. The education gap has closed, with more women pursuing higher education than men. However, women's labour force participation has remained stagnant over the past decades, and disparities persist in pay, leadership representation, political participation, and caregiving responsibilities.

Embedded in strong religious values that emphasise women's traditional roles, changing traditional normative expectations remains a key challenge for Indonesia. This study highlights four key findings.

1. **First, attitudes toward gender equality in both caregiving and economic roles are generally positive**, exceeding 70 percent among both women and men for Caregiving and Domestic roles. In practice, however, caregiving responsibilities, particularly Childcare and Housework, remain largely borne by women (around 32 to 46 percent reported that women perform more domestic labour). Male-breadwinner norms remain strong with 50 percent of men expressing attitudes and aspirations to contribute more to family income and around 40 percent of women sharing the same view. Although both women and men tend to underestimate gender-equal attitudes and practices in most domains, they often overestimate them in relation to family income.

2. **Second, gender-equal attitudes are closely associated with advocacy, while gender-equal behaviours are more strongly linked to gender-equal** upbringing and empirical expectations. Gender-equal normative expectations also influence behaviours and advocacy, though inconsistently. Latent profile analysis shows that strong gender-equality supporters comprise about half of respondents across most domains, except for family income, where around 30 percent of both women and men show weak support for gender equality. These findings highlight a complex interplay between attitudes, behaviours, advocacy, and demographic factors.

3. **Third, qualitative insights reveal key enabling and constraining factors shaping gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy.** Enablers include having a supportive reference network and allies, availability of care services and flexible working arrangements, partner's willingness to take on non-traditional roles and engage in open communication, along with education and exposure to career opportunities and alternative household arrangements away from traditional arrangements. Barriers persist in pervasive patriarchal norms, mistaking descriptive for substantiative representation or 'helping' for 'equality', conservative religious interpretations, limited structural supports for flexible work and caregiving, and fear of sanctions or social backlash. Factors such as economic necessity can also encourage nominally more gender-equal practices, but may not result in broader normative update, often leaving women with a double burden.

4. **Fourth, analysis of SNAPS data from 2020 to 2024 reveals mixed results in gender equality progress.** While women report more equitable sharing of Childcare, men's responses indicate regression from SNAPS 2022. Similarly, although men report family income is more equally distributed, women indicate

that men still bear greater responsibility, which is lower than in SNAPS 2022 but higher than in SNAPS 2020. Gender-equal aspirations have declined among the unpartnered or childless, with both women and men increasingly expecting the other to take primary responsibility. Broader societal transformations are at play. These include climate impacts, rising living costs, changing government budget priorities, the rise of AI and social media, flexible working trends, and the pervasive influence of religious ideologies, simultaneously reinforcing traditional norms and opening opportunities for greater equality.

Overall, Indonesia has made progress toward gender equality in Caregiving and Domestic roles despite entrenched gender norms in economic domains. Meaningful transformation will require reshaping normative and empirical expectations and advancing multi-level strategies that combine cultural change, policy reform, and institutional support to ensure that daily practices keep pace with evolving gender-equal attitudes.

Malaysia

1. Contextual background

This section provides an overview of gender equality progress in Malaysia. Overall trends are captured by gender gap report rankings. Malaysia ranked 108th out of 148 countries in the 2025 Global Gender Gap Index.[234] This ranking highlights the ongoing impact of persistent gender inequalities and norms in areas such as labour force participation and caregiving responsibilities despite progress in other areas such as education.

1.1 Education-employment paradox

IMalaysia has made significant strides in closing the gender gap in educational attainment, particularly in the post-independence era. Both boys and girls enjoy equal opportunity and access to education, with affordable education playing a major role in bridging gender disparities in primary and secondary school enrolment.[235] With regards to women in tertiary education specifically, the ratio of enrolment in tertiary education was 46% for women compared with 32% for men as of 2024.[236] At a gender parity ratio of 1.31 in 2024,[237] Malaysian women are currently more likely than men to pursue higher education.

Better access to education and changing social preferences have encouraged more women to enter the labour force. However, the gender gap in women's labour force participation remains significant. Women are still considered an "underutilised resource" in the Malaysian economy. As of 2024, 78% of men were in the labour force, compared to just 52% of women. Nevertheless, this does represent progress because in 2011, women's labour force participation was only 45%.[238]

1.2 Norms influencing labour force participation gap

Women's participation in the Malaysian labour force is strongly shaped by family formation and caregiving responsibilities. World Bank analysis from 2021 found that many women left the labour force during their childbearing years and often did not return.[239] Shorter and more interrupted work histories hinder women's career progression and reduce their likelihood of entering managerial and leadership roles.[240]

Patterns of labour market engagement are further influenced by socioeconomic, ethnic, and geographic factors. Findings from 2021 suggest that urban Malay fathers tend to be more engaged in household tasks, including childcare, than those in rural areas.[241] Greater involvement by men in household work facilitates women's participation in paid employment, particularly in dual-income households.

Religious beliefs also play a central role in shaping gender norms and household decision-making, often with conflicting effects. Among Muslims, a 2021 study

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234   World Economic Forum 2024
235   World Economic Forum 2024
236   World Bank Open Data 2025b
237   World Bank Open Data 2025b
238   World Bank 2021b; Lim 2019
239   World Bank 2021b
240   World Bank 2021b
241   Hossain and Madon 2021

showed that highly religious women were more likely to embrace traditional domestic roles, while more religious men often displayed greater willingness to share household responsibilities.[242] Interpretations of Islamic teachings vary: while Islam promotes complementary spousal roles and mutual respect, certain traditional interpretations reinforce patriarchal practices. For instance, some Malay men believe they should have the final say in their spouse's employment decisions, reflecting persistent gender hierarchies. In the Quran, women's right to work is recognised, but in some interpretations, it remains subject to a husband's consent.[243]

These intersecting cultural, religious, and social dynamics are reflected in age–participation profiles. Bumiputera women aged 25 to 39, primarily Malays and other Indigenous groups, have lower labour force participation rates than Chinese and Indian women of the same age group as of 2019.[244]

1.3 Employment patterns and pay gap

Malaysian women are more likely to be concentrated in low paying sectors and are overrepresented in clerical, service, and sales positions. In 2015, about 46% of working women were employed as service and sales workers, often in part-time arrangements.[245] In terms of industry, data from 2015 showed a feminisation of wholesale and retail trade.[246] There are no formal restrictions on women's employment in any sector. However, gender norms and stereotypes surrounding work continue to influence employment patterns. For instance, a 2025 study on the construction industry identified a belief that gender diversification leads to declining firm performance.[247] Analysis of data from

2009 to 2019 showed that women were more likely than men to be in informal sectors.[248] The same analysis found that most unpaid domestic workers were women.

The gender pay gap in Malaysia is relatively small by global standards. In 2016, women earned only 2.1% less than their men in comparable roles and by 2019, the gender pay gap was reportedly non-existent.[249] However, inequalities are more apparent along socioeconomic lines. World Bank analysis from 2016 found the widest gender pay gaps among the top 10% and bottom 20% of the income distribution.[250]

1.4 Leadership, political representation, and access to capital

Women's participation in national political leadership remains below parity. As of 2024, women held 13.5% of seats in Malaysia's national parliament, well below the 30% target set under Malaysia's 2009 National Policy on Women.[251] Malaysian women face "unique and complex" barriers to political participation such as gender-biased political cultures, party structures, and limited access to resources.[252] Data gaps remain regarding women in regional leadership. However, in terms of overall women's political empowerment, Malaysia ranked 128th out of 148 countries in 2024.[253]

In the private sector, women's representation in high paying or leadership positions has declined, moving further from parity. A business survey by Grant Thornton found that, in the corporate sector, 36.2% of senior management roles were held by women in 2025, down from 39.6% in 2024.[254] This decline highlights the continued difficulty women face advancing into top leadership

242   Boo 2021
243   World Bank 2019
244   World Bank 2019
245   World Bank 2021b; Lim 2019
246   Lim 2019
247   Lim et al. 2019
248   World Bank 2024b
249   Vaghefi 2018; Lee, n.d.
250   World Bank 2019
251   IPU Parline 2024
252   Aminuddin and Azlan 2024
253   World Economic Forum 2024
254   Grant Thornton Malaysia 2025

roles despite strong educational attainment. Women's **access to capital, lending and loans** also remains limited. A 2021 analysis of credit-card market segmentation highlighted opportunities to attract more women entrepreneurs through targeted financial products.[255] Nevertheless, women owned about 20% of registered establishments in 2022, reflecting an annual growth rate of 2.3% and a growing appetite for entrepreneurship.[256]

1.5 Gender norms and the care economy

Deeply rooted social and religious norms continue to shape attitudes toward gender roles. Men are widely regarded as primary breadwinners, while women are expected to manage household and caregiving responsibilities.[257]

Time spent on domestic care remains heavily unbalanced. In 2023, women in Malaysia spent an average of 4.44 hours per day on unpaid care and domestic work, compared with just 1.56 hours for men.[258] According to the 2018 Malaysian Labour Force Survey, 60.2% of women outside the labour force cited "housework and caregiving" as their main reason for non-participation.[259]

Access to childcare services remain limited and costly. Although recent data are lacking, a 2013 ACCA–TalentCorp survey found that the lack of affordable, quality childcare was a major barrier to sustained employment for women.[260] Public investment in early childhood care and education remains low, estimated at around 0.1% of GDP, far below the 1% international benchmark.[261]

However, there are signs of shifting norms. **Men's perception of women's work** is changing, as are women's estimations of their own contributions. The World Values Survey showed a declining share of both women and men who agreed with the statement *"men*

should have more right to a job than women", dropping from 70% and 42% in 2012 to 57% and 38% in 2018, respectively.[262] However, structural and cultural barriers remain entrenched. Sustainable progress toward gender equality will require coordinated reforms to expand childcare infrastructure, promote women's leadership and financial inclusion, and challenge persistent gender stereotypes that limit women's full economic participation.

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255   Alam et al. 2011
256   Bernama 2025
257   World Bank 2019; 2021b
258   Hanna et al. 2023b
259   World Bank 2019
260   ACCA and TalentCorp 2013; World Bank 2019
261   Nambiar 2025
262   Ingelhart et al. 2014; Haerpfer et al. 2024

Malaysia
Factsheet

Global gender gap score /1.00

0.681

108th
Global ranking

Educational attainment score/1.00

0.996

59th
Global ranking

Women's political empowerment score/1.00

0.079

128th
Global ranking

Workforce participation

56%

82%

Time spent on domestic work

Women: 4.44 hrs

Men: 1.56 hrs

"When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women"

47.8%
agreed in the World Values survey questionnaire

2. Findings & discussion

2.1 Gender-equal attitudes and practices

2.1.1 Prevalence of gender-equal attitudes and practices

This section examines the prevalence of gender-equal attitudes and behaviours, and the extent to which individuals actively support or advocate for gender equality as reported in SNAPS 2024.

It provides an overview of how widely gender-equal perspectives are held within the target population and the extent to which these attitudes translate into behaviours and advocacy that promotes equality, focussing on…

Key takeaways

- **A majority of people supported gender equality – though this was stronger among women:** Support was lowest in the 'earning family income' domain indicating the male breadwinner norm's hegemony. Just under 1 in 3 men did not aspire to gender-equal family income earning.

- **Despite mostly gender-equal views, most participants reported women doing more Caregiving and Domestic work.**

- **Advocacy is likely still perceived as a 'women's issue', gender equality advocacy is stronger among women:** Yet, both women and men advocate more than they act, suggesting persistent barriers to translating attitudes into everyday practice.

Caregiving & domestic roles

Key takeaways

- **Most participants support the equal distribution of Caregiving and Domestic responsibilities,** with women expressing supportive attitudes at a higher rate than men (8-11 percentage points difference).

- **Aspirations are often gender-equal:** Among participants not yet in a partnership, most aspire to an equal distribution of Caregiving and Domestic responsibilities. However, nearly one in five women wanted men to take on more, while a similar proportion of men still expected women to assume a greater share of Caregiving and Domestic work, suggesting competing expectation sets across genders within anticipated reference networks before roles are actualised. This may vary across generations within the sample, with one qualitative participant reflecting "I realised that people in their 20s, they are more into spreading the tasks 50/50… But I'm not sure, maybe in the

older generation, it might be that they switch to like, okay, just women, you do everything" (Participant 6, Malaysia)

- **Around one-third of participants reported that women currently undertake the majority of Childcare and Housework tasks:** This proportion is lower for Dependent Adult Care, suggesting that men were more willing to share responsibilities for caring for dependent adults (likely influenced by filial piety). This disconnect between attitudes and behaviours is consistent with the conceptual framework which suggests that attitudinal change is insufficient to motivate personal behavioural change, preventing wider normative change.

- **Women's advocacy is higher than men's:** Although most participants reported that they advocate for gender equality in Caregiving and Domestic roles, this figure is over 10 percentage points higher among women than men. General audience interviews suggested that women are more likely to advocate, though may face backlash or roadblocking from peers, families and the state, while men may be more reluctant to advocate for fear of attracting stigmatisation from peers, Participant 3 noted how men were reluctant to show public support, reflecting that a common sentiment among friends was "Yeah, I support it, but quietly" demonstrating how fear of sanctions can inhibit allyship.

Figure MY 1 Gender-equal attitudes and practices in Caregiving and Domestic roles
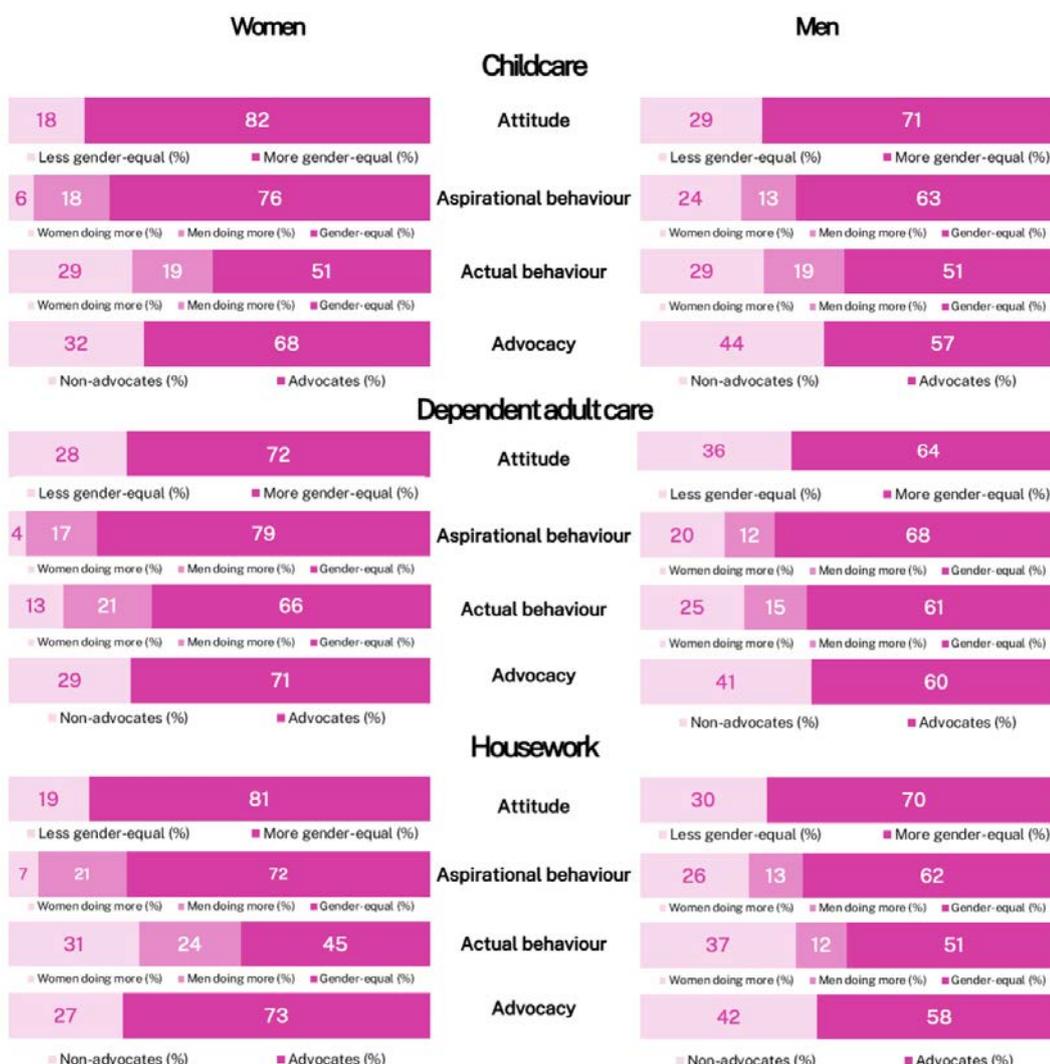
Note: This graph presents the proportion of responses by women and men. The analysis covers the domains of Childcare, Dependent Adult Care, and Housework, based on 2024 SNAPS survey data. A detailed explanation of how behaviours were captured can be found in **Note 3 – Annex 1**.

Economic roles

Key takeaways

- **Despite the high women's employment rate in the sample (65% compared with 52% nationally in 2023)[263], the male breadwinner norms persisted:** Although more than half of participants, 63% of women and 57% of men, favoured equal sharing of responsibility for Earning Family Income, support for gender equality in this domain remained the lowest, underscoring persistent gender norms that cast men as the primary breadwinners. Among those not yet married (i.e. aspirational behaviours), about one in three still expected men to assume greater responsibilities, while one in five men preferred women to take on more.

- **Our qualitative sample highlighted that many factors may moderate the normative expectation of women as sole caregivers, particularly tertiary education:** Participant 3, a single man, exemplified this finding, reflecting *"Because the people around me are all generally educated, at the very least tertiary, I would say… women are still expected to work. I don't think in my social circle the idea of man being sole breadwinner and woman being housewife is something that is necessarily acceptable or desirable."* Similarly, participant 7 noted *"Education, right? I think that's a huge chunk of where all this takes place… There are also a lot of girls, especially in rural areas where you just cannot have this conversation… In that sense… education has definitely shaped my thoughts and decisions.".*

- **Among married participants, 40–46% reported sharing earning responsibilities equally, 38–46% said men do more, and only 9–22% said women do more:** This shows that actual behaviour has not caught up with supportive attitudes, as traditional expectations still shape household roles.

- **Attitudes towards Leadership and Job Suitability were more gender-equal:** Most participants believed both women and men can be effective leaders and perform well in any role. Although a lower proportion of women hold leadership positions, those who do mirror men's ambitions in maintaining their leadership roles. This presents evidence of domain segmentation where public-sphere norms (leadership/competence) are more gender-equal than private-sphere earning norms.

- **Similar to Caregiving and Domestic responsibilities, a higher percentage of women than men indicated advocacy for gender equality in economic roles:** Mirroring the trend in domestic roles, higher gender-equal attitudes compared to actual behaviour and higher levels of advocacy than actual behaviours were evident in the economic sub-theme across all four norms. This indicates barriers preventing the translation of attitudes into behaviours. Qualitative findings suggested these may include a lack of men's willingness to take on caregiving work, inadequate access to domestic services or familial help, or a labour market not designed to support dual caregiving and earning responsibilities for both women and men (i.e., flexible work, paternity leave).

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263 Note that of the sample 65% of women were employed compared to the national female labour force participation rate of 56% in 2025. Based on World Bank's World Development Indicators. The labour force participation rate is as percentage of population in each gender aged 15 and above based on modelled ILO estimate (World Bank Open Data 2025a)

Figure MY 2 Gender-equal attitudes and practices in Economic roles

Note: This graph presents the percentage of gender-equal responses regarding economic roles, disaggregated by women and men. The analysis covers the domains of Earning Family Income, Job Suitability, Women's Leadership, based on 2024 SNAPS survey data. A detailed explanation of how behaviours were captured can be found in **Note 3 – Annex 1**.

2.1.2 Misperception of gender-equal attitudes and behaviours

This section explores the gap between participants' perceptions and the actual prevalence of gender-equal attitudes and behaviours for gender equality.

It focuses on whether individuals tend to underestimate how widely gender equality is supported and practiced in their communities (i.e. 'pluralistic ignorance' as per the conceptual framework). Understanding this perception gap helps identify areas where social norms may be misaligned with actual behaviours, shedding light on potential opportunities to correct the misperceptions and promote gender-equal practices.

Key takeaways

- **Cases of pluralistic ignorance were evident for both women and men across domains–** but more so for Caregiving and Domestic roles.

- **In the earning family income domain both women and men overestimated the prevalence of support and gender-equal behaviour among their peers.**

- **Women's perceptions and actual support for gender equality were generally higher than men's.**

- **Top areas to prioritise interventions** include those that seek to correct misperceptions on gender-equal attitudes and behaviours (based on the highest observed level of pluralistic ignorance) is presented in **Table MY 1.**

Table MY 1 Top three underestimations in gender-equal attitudes or behaviours

Caregiving & domestic roles ♡	Economic roles 🐷
Women's GE behaviours in Dependent Adult Care (23 p.p. ***)	Women's GE attitudes in Women's Leadership (15 p.p. ***)
Women's GE behaviours in Childcare (17 p.p. ***)	Women's GE attitudes in Job suitability (10 p.p. ***)
Women's GE behaviours in Housework (12 p.p. ***)	Women's GE attitudes in Women's Leadership & Job suitability (5 p.p. ***)

Note: Difference between perceived and actual attitudes or behaviours are presented in percentage points. (***) denotes statistically significant results at 95% confidence level.

Caregiving & domestic roles ♡

Key takeaways

- **Across all Caregiving and Domestic roles, underestimations of support were evident for both women and men:** This misperception may lead people to think that others are less supportive of equal sharing of responsibilities, in turn reducing their perception that such behaviour is socially approved.

- **Among women, this underestimation also applied to behaviour:** More people were equally sharing Caregiving and Domestic responsibilities than women expected, indicating that their perceived empirical expectations lagged observed practice.

- **Among men, this underestimation of behaviours occurred primarily in the context of Dependent Adult Care:** More people were practising equal sharing, or men were taking on more responsibility than their partners

in this domain than men perceived, highlighting domain-specific lags in men's perceived empirical expectations.

- **Women's perceptions of, and actual support for, gender equality was generally higher than men's,** suggesting the potential normative and empirical expectation of gender equality as a 'women's issue' (i.e. among women, approval and empirical awareness of gender equality is higher). Results for behaviours varied and in some cases was statistically insignificant.

- **This suggests there is potential to correct these misperceptions and promote more equal participation by all genders in targeted areas across Caregiving and Domestic work.**

Childcare

Perceived level — Actual level

Women's attitudes 70%
Men's attitudes 68%
Men's behaviour 64%
Women's behaviour 63%

82%
72%
71%
64%

Dependent Adult Care

Perceived level — Actual level

Women's attitudes 66%
Men's attitudes 65%
Men's behaviour 63%
Women's behaviour 63%

86%
80%
72%
63%

Housework

Perceived level — Actual level

Women's attitudes 70%
Men's attitudes 67%
Men's behaviour 64%
Women's behaviour 63%

81%
70%
68%

Figure MY 3
Misperception of gender equality in Caregiving and Domestic roles

Note: This graph illustrates the difference between perceived (left) and actual (right) levels of gender-equal attitudes (solid lines) and behaviours (dashed line) across domains (Childcare, Dependent Adult Care, and Housework). Results are shown separately for women (darker colour) and men (lighter colours). An upward slope indicates underestimation, where people perceive less equality than it actually exists, while a downward slope indicates overestimation, where perceived equality exceeds actual equality. Statistically significant differences at the 5% significance level are indicated by coloured lines. Statistically insignificant differences are indicated by the grey lines.

Economic roles

Key takeaways

- **Underestimations of gender-equal attitudes and behaviours were less evident for both women and men for economic roles compared to Caregiving and Domestic roles,** implying perceived expectations were closer to actual support and practice in the economic domain.

- **In the Earning Family Income domain, both women and men overestimated the prevalence of both gender-equal attitudes and behaviour among their peers by only 1-8%.** However, the difference between women's perceptions and actual behaviour was not statistically significant. Bicchieri recommends in these cases to avoid correcting favourable overestimates and instead to reinforce these with credible approval cues (e.g. showcasing positive deviance, increasing visibility of more gender-equal role-models).[264]

- **Evidence of underestimations of gender-equal attitudes were present for women and men's perceptions in the Job Suitability and Leadership domains:** In these cases – more people supported women's job suitability and leadership than perceived.

- **Women's perceptions of, and actual, gender-equal attitudes for gender equality were generally higher than men's:** Results for behaviours varied and in some cases was statistically insignificant.

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264   Bicchieri 2017

Earning Family Income

Perceived level | Actual level

Women's attitudes 65% → 63%
Women's behaviour 63%
Men's attitudes 62% → 59%
Men's behaviour 62% → 57%
55%

Job Suitability

Perceived level | Actual level

Women's attitudes 71% → 86%
Men's attitudes 67% → 72%
Women's behaviour 64% → 63%
Men's behaviour 63% → 61%

Women's Leadership

Perceived level | Actual level

Women's attitudes 71% → 86%
Men's attitudes 64% → 74%
Women's behaviour 57% → 55%
Men's behaviour 52%
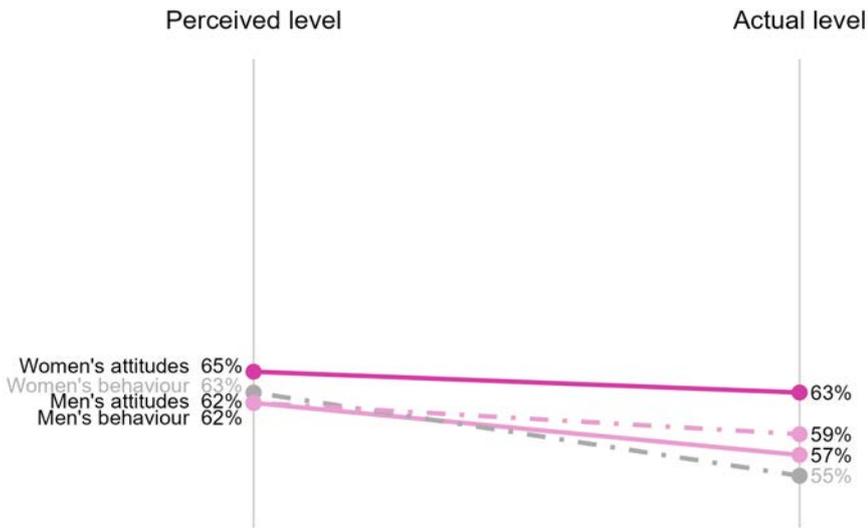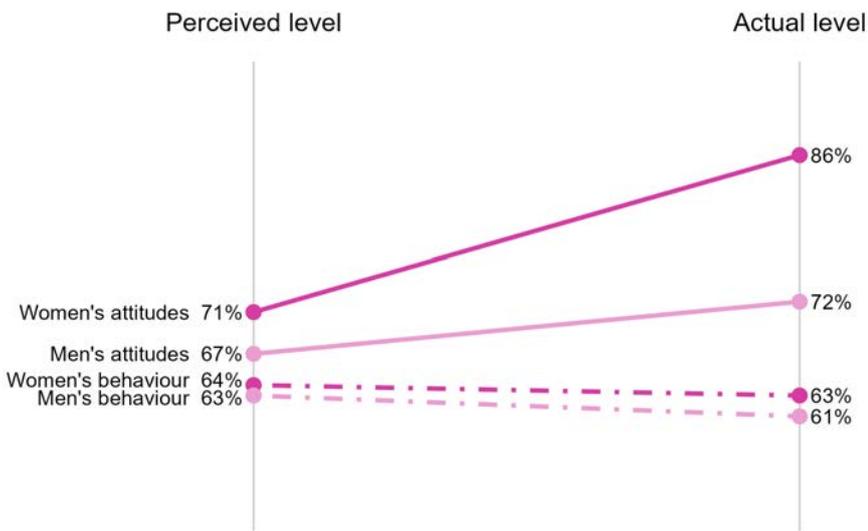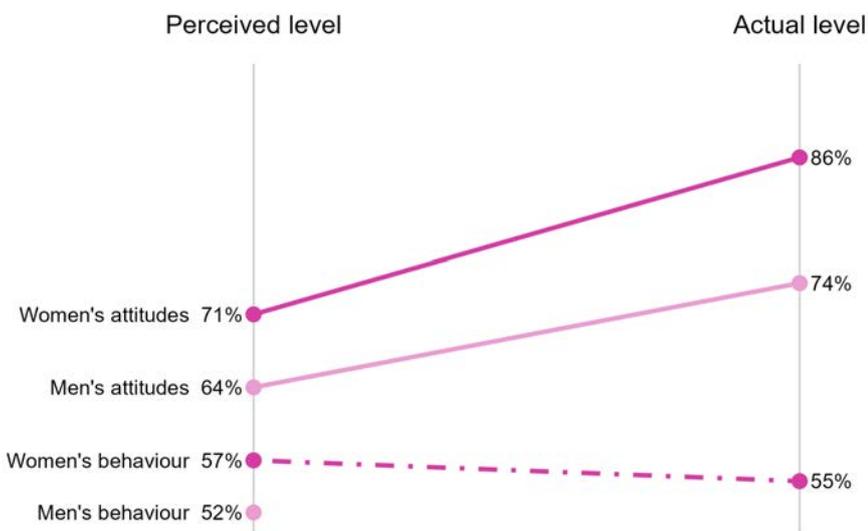
Figure MY 4 Misperception of gender equality in Economic roles

Note: This graph illustrates the difference between perceived (left) and actual (right) levels of gender-equal attitudes (solid lines) and behaviours (dashed line) across domains (Earning Family Income, Job Suitability and Women's Leadership). Results are shown separately for women (darker colour) and men (lighter colours). An upward slope indicates underestimation, where people perceive less equality than it actually exists, while a downward slope indicates overestimation, where perceived equality exceeds actual equality. Statistically significant differences at the 5% significance level are indicated by coloured lines. Statistically insignificant differences are indicated by the grey lines.

2.2 Characteristics associated with gender-equal attitudes and practices

2.2.1 Characteristics associated with gender-equal attitudes practices

This section presents the quantitative analysis of socio-demographic patterns and the factors associated with gender equality.

It first explores key socio-demographic differences among groups with varying levels of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy, such as differences by age, gender, ethnicity, and family structure. It then examines the factors that shape individuals' attitudes and practices related to gender equality, examining how upbringing, media exposure, and cultural determinants may influence how people perceive and practice equality in their daily lives.

Key takeaways

- **Having gender-equal role models was an important factor:** Whether in everyday life, the media or during in their upbringing – empowered both women and men to adopt more gender-equal behaviours.

- **Demographic insights, especially those related to media consumption, underscore the importance of tailoring gender-focused messaging** to specific audiences to prevent perverse outcomes (i.e. resistance or backlash against gender equality messaging or interventions).

- **Gender-equal attitudes were linked to gender equality advocacy but not gender-equal behaviours:** This accords with Bicchieri's theory of normative change – individual gender gender-equal attitudes do not signal societal change and highlight that normative and empirical expectations still need to shift to create normative change.[265]

Caregiving & domestic roles

Key takeaways

- **Role models mattered for women:** Aligning with the qualitative findings, seeing examples of positive deviance, such as other women who share childcare and housework more equally, or households where men take on a larger share, appears important for women in adopting gender-equal behaviours. This pattern is supported by positive associations between gender-equal empirical expectations, gender-equal upbringing, and media exposure and women's adoption of such behaviours. These findings are also consistent with Bicchieri's argument that visible public signals help normalise equality within relevant reference networks.[266]

- **Following this finding, qualitative interviews highlighted the pivotal role of the family as a reference network to inform behaviours:** Qualitative findings suggested traditional behaviours modelled during upbringing may not necessarily be replicated, particularly where sufficient resources/supports are available to support gender equitable caregiving (i.e. accessible childcare, flexible work).

- **Demographic characteristics were associated with gender-equal behaviours:** Characteristics, such as ethnicity and religion, were associated with behaviours around Caregiving and Domestic roles, though the patterns differed between genders. For example, in the case of Dependent Adult Care, being Malay or Chinese was positively associated with gender-equal behaviour among women but was negatively associated among men. This suggested distinct community-level reference networks and sanction structures that shape conditional preferences.

- **Across all genders, attitudes were strongly associated with advocacy, yet attitudes did not always translate into behaviour:** This highlights a complex and non-linear relationship between attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy and the role of structural/normative barriers which mediate progression.

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265 Bicchieri 2017
266 Bicchieri 2017

Figure MY 5 Factors associated with gender-equal practices in Caregiving and Domestic roles

Note: This figure shows factors associated with gender-equal behaviours and advocacy across Caregiving and Domestic roles in Malaysia. Only factors that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level are shown. Blank cells indicate that no factors were associated with a given practice.

Childcare

Behaviours

Women
- ↑ Working
- ↑ Gender-equal upbringing
- ↑ Gender-equal media exposure

Men
- ↓ Having disability

Advocacy

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↑ Chinese
- ↓ Gender-equal upbringing

Men
- ↑ Working
- ↑ Gender-equal upbringing
- ↑ Gender-equal media exposure

Dependent adult care

Behaviours

Women
- ↑ Malay
- ↑ Chinese
- ↑ Age 18-24

Men
- ↓ Gender-equal attitude
- ↓ Malay
- ↓ Chinese
- ↓ Having disability
- ↓ Age 18-24

Advocacy

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude

Men
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude

Housework

Behaviours

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal empirical expectation
- ↑ Malay
- ↑ Chinese
- ↑ With dependent adult
- ↑ Gender-equal upbringing
- ↑ Gender equal media exposure
- ↓ With children

Men
- ↓ With children
- ↓ Having disability
- ↓ Working

Advocacy

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude

Men
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude

Economic roles

Key takeaways

- **Role models mattered for women:** Consistent with findings on Caregiving and Domestic roles and qualitative work, seeing positive examples of positive deviance from traditional norms in economic roles was associated with women themselves demonstrating gender-equal behaviours, such as equally sharing responsibility for earning family income, working in occupations not traditionally associated with their gender, or holding leadership positions.

- **Men's gender-equal behaviours were strongly associated with gender-equal attitudes:** Men with more gender-equal attitudes were more likely to be advocates, share responsibility for earning family income and to hold more gender-equal views on Job Suitability. These stand out as cases where men's private beliefs were closer to the empirical context they perceive, even as normative approval of the male-breadwinner model persists.

- **Enabling women's leadership is nuanced:** For women, characteristics associated with holding leadership positions included post-secondary education, being married with children and dependent adults, and even having a disability. While some of these associations may appear counterintuitive, this may be partially attributed to the leadership analysis being limited to women who are already leading – a selected group capable of navigating both professional and family responsibilities in the Malaysian context where only one in two women participate in the labour force.

- **Contrary to the qualitative findings, exposure to gender-equal media was negatively associated with women's leadership.** This may possibly reflect unintended consequences of portrayals that reinforce the expectation for women to "do it all" or other misguided messaging that is inadvertently creating a perverse outcome. Similar patterns were found in behaviours and advocacy for women in leadership positions. It could also reflect that gender-equal media portrayals are more noticed by those against it, while those who already have gender-equal attitudes see it as the norm, and therefore do not label such media as 'gender-equal' to begin with. Further research is needed to explain these findings.

- **Attitudes showed a positive association with advocacy, but behaviours did not for the earning family income and leadership domains:** However, for non-traditional occupational roles, both attitudes and behaviours were positively associated with advocacy, indicating stronger alignment across these dimensions. Interestingly, exposure to gender-equal media in STEM was negatively associated with workplace advocacy, perhaps suggesting that portrayals of women's representation in STEM may give the impression that gender equality has already been achieved. A similar dynamic was observed among men with more gender-equal upbringing. Qualitative findings suggested the inverse relationship, though hinted that this might not be the case when 'gender-equality' is a necessity (i.e. economic insecurity demands women's employment). These domain differences indicated varying alignment of private beliefs, empirical expectations, and normative expectations across economic roles.

Figure MY 6 Characteristics associated with gender-equal practices in Economic roles

Note: This figure shows characteristics associated with gender-equal behaviours and advocacy across domains in Economic roles in Malaysia. Only characteristics that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level are shown. Blank cells indicate that no factors were statistically significant. Analysis for the leadership domain is not available for men due to its irrelevance.

Job suitability

Behaviours

Women
- ↑ Working
- ↑ Gender-equal upbringing

Men
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↑ Gender-equal empirical expectation
- ↑ Post-secondary education
- ↓ Malay

Advocacy

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal behaviour
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↓ Gender-equal media exposure in STEM
- ↓ Married

Men
- ↑ Gender-equal behaviour
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↑ Self-employed
- ↓ Gender-equal media exposure in STEM

Leadership

Behaviours

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal empirical expectation
- ↑ Married
- ↑ Post-secondary education
- ↑ With dependent adult
- ↑ With child
- ↑ With disability
- ↓ Gender-equal media exposure

Men

Advocacy

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↓ Gender-equal media exposure

Men

Family income

Behaviours

Women
- ↑ Working
- ↑ Gender-equal upbringing

Men
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↑ Gender-equal upbringing

Advocacy

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude

Men
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude

2.2.2 Interconnectedness between attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy

Using latent profile analysis, the profiles on the opposite page illustrate how attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy align within the population, highlighting patterns that range from low alignment to strong consistency in support for gender equality.

It is noteworthy that the profiles were built relative to each domain and are consistent within each domain, separate for women and men (therefore cross-domain comparison is unachievable). The profiles for gender equality (GE) within the Childcare domain are relatively similar, but not identical, to the GE profiles in the Dependent Adult Care domain. Some profiles, such as GE Opponents, Reluctant Leaders and Moderately strong GE supporters profiles, appear as standalones because there is no closely matching profile in other domains. Domains with a greater diversity of combinations in gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy may result in a larger number of profiles.

The list of profiles identified in each domain is shown opposite.

Key takeaways

- **Social expectations were significantly associated with both men's and women's profile segmentation, though not consistently across all domains:** Normative expectations were more salient in men's profiles, whereas empirical expectations appeared more prominently in women's profiles.

- **Broader socio-economic were associated with profile membership:** Men's engagement was also shaped by a wide range of structural factors including age, religion, ethnicity, disability, education, and employment, while women's predictors were fewer and less consistent, often limited to caregiving or income contexts.

- **Translation gaps persisted:** For women, the key constraint lay in public advocacy (e.g., only 39% of women in the GE Moderates in Housework engaged in advocacy despite strongly gender-equal attitudes and behaviours). For men, the barriers were behavioural (e.g., Passive GE supporters approving of equality but did not practice it), underscoring limits to turning approval into action.

Figure MY 7.1 Profile composition across domains – Women

Domain		
Childcare	69.5%	30.5%
Dependent Adult Care	54.0%	27.4% / 18.6%
Housework	37.8%	25.7% / 7.6% / 23.3% / 5.6%
Earning Family Income	65.7%	34.3%
Job Suitability	38.4%	24.1% / 12.2% / 21.3% / 4.0%
Leadership	58.9%	16.8% / 4.5% / 19.8%

Legend: ■ Strong GE supporters ■ GE moderates ■ Passive GE supporters ■ Reluctant leaders ■ Weak GE supporters ■ Inconsistent GE supporters ■ GE opponent
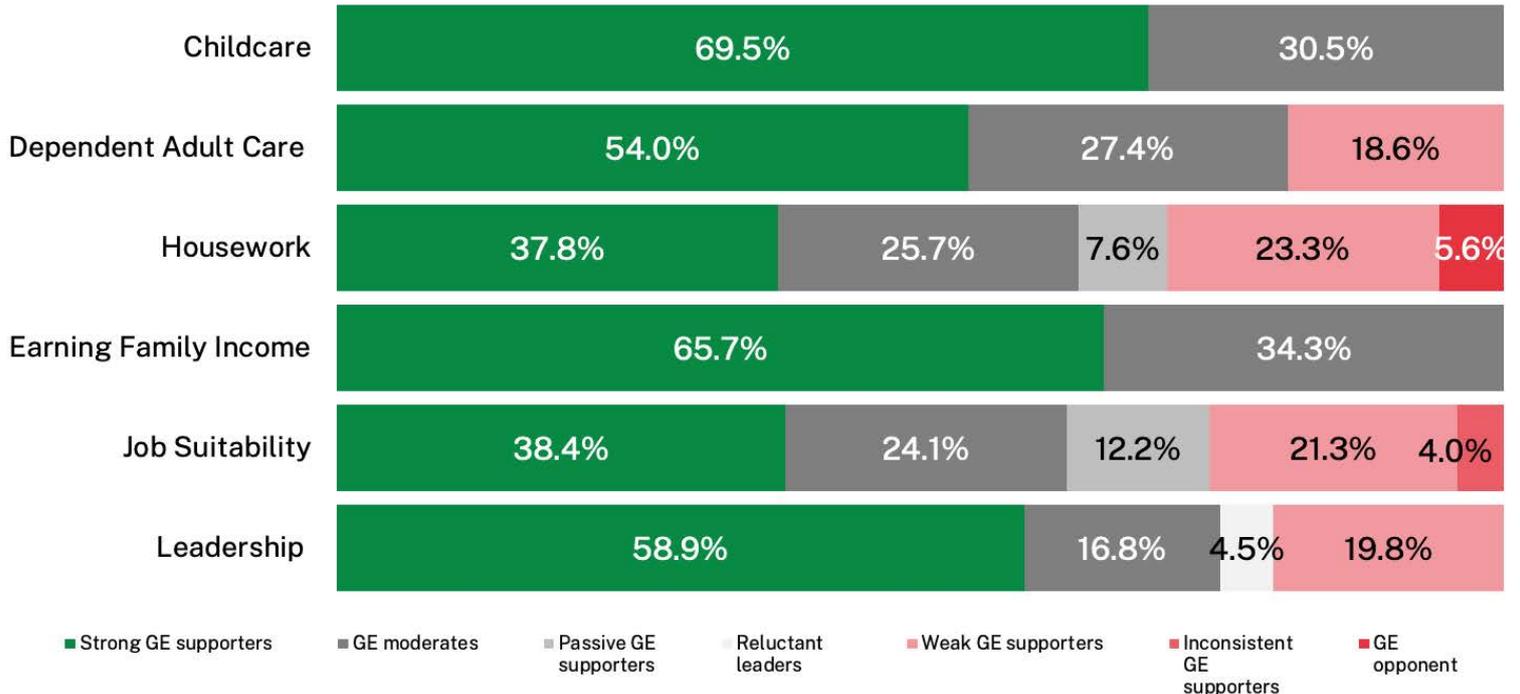
Figure MY 7.2 Profile composition across domains – Men
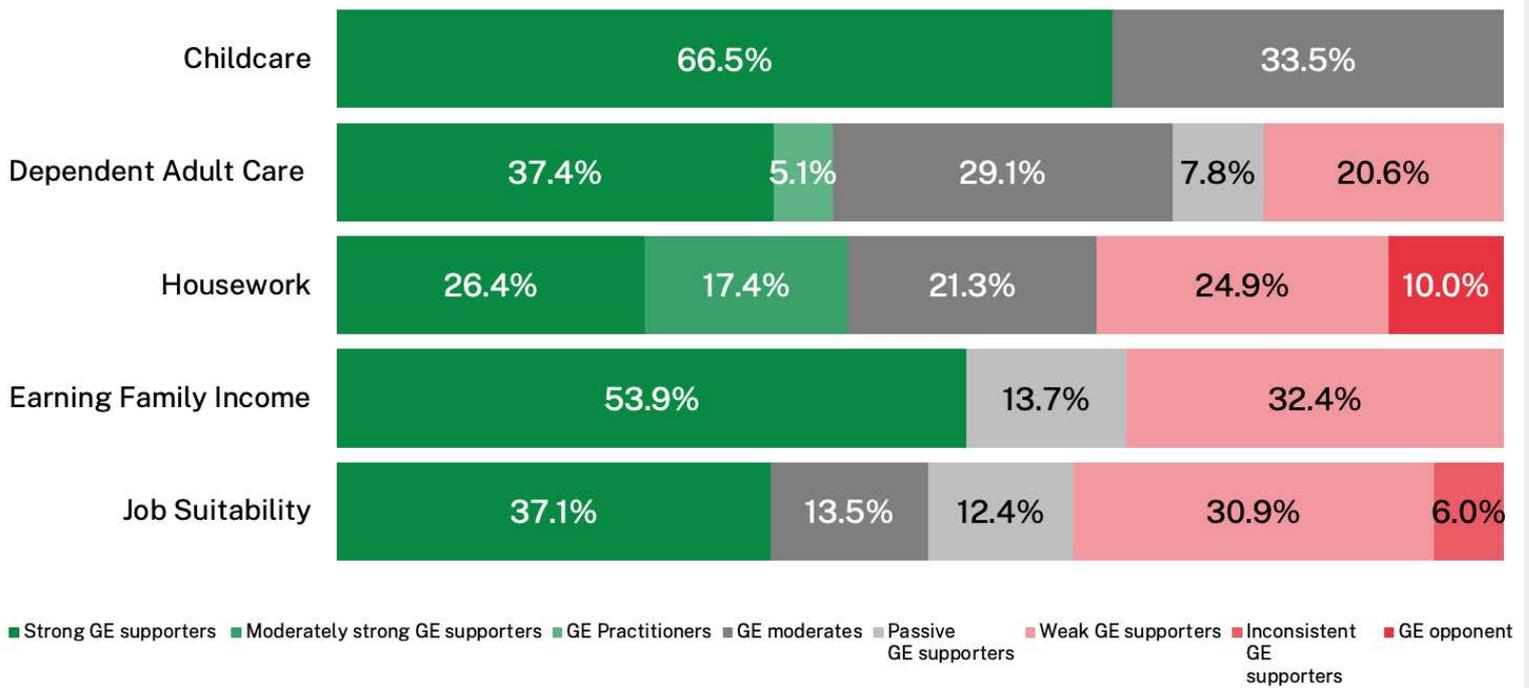
Domain		
Childcare	66.5%	33.5%
Dependent Adult Care	37.4% / 5.1%	29.1% / 7.8% / 20.6%
Housework	26.4% / 17.4%	21.3% / 24.9% / 10.0%
Earning Family Income	53.9%	13.7% / 32.4%
Job Suitability	37.1%	13.5% / 12.4% / 30.9% / 6.0%

Legend: ■ Strong GE supporters ■ Moderately strong GE supporters ■ GE Practitioners ■ GE moderates ■ Passive GE supporters ■ Weak GE supporters ■ Inconsistent GE supporters ■ GE opponent

Note: This figure presents the distinct women's and men's profiles identified within each domain. Profiles were determined through latent profile analysis based on participants' attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy, conducted separately for each domain. Only women's profiles were examined for the Leadership domain.

Childcare domain

- **Normative expectations toward gender equality appeared to an important determinant of profile membership:** For both women and men, normative expectations tend to with of whether participants fell into the Strong GE supporter profile, showing that perceptions of social approval are central to shaping childcare-related gender equality.

- **Behaviours were shaped by situational demands:** Across both women and men, childcare behaviours were consistently high and showed the smallest profile gaps. This suggested that caregiving demands sustained practice, regardless of attitudinal acceptance or public advocacy.

- **Women leant more towards gender equality:** The distribution of profiles across genders was somewhat similar, both with a majority of Strong GE supporters (over 50%). Among women, nearly half were GE moderates, whereas among men, a similar proportion were Weak GE supporters. This suggests that women, overall, leant more strongly toward gender-equal attitudes and practices than men.

Figure MY 8 Segmentation profiles in the Childcare domain
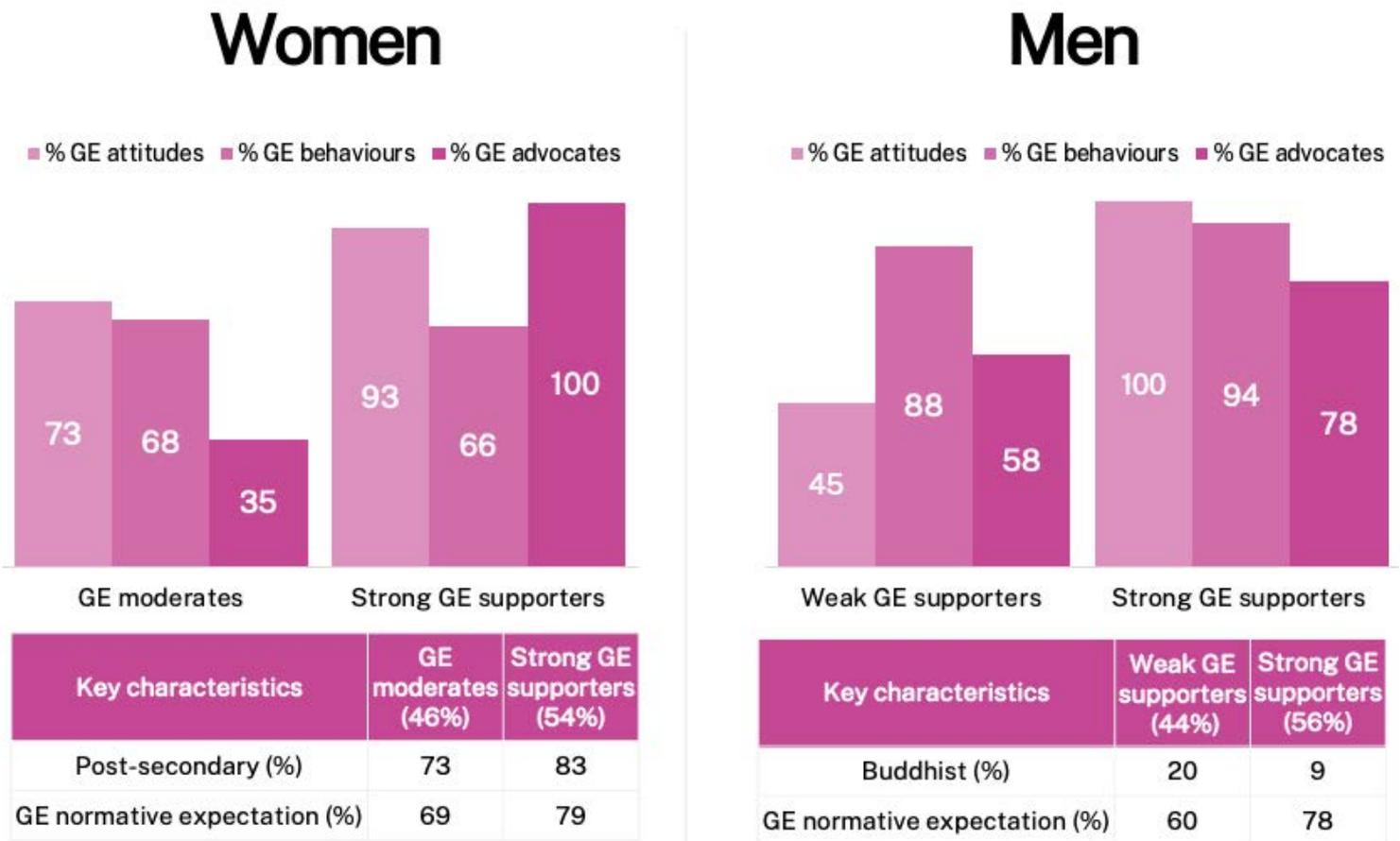
Women

■ % GE attitudes   ■ % GE behaviours   ■ % GE advocates

GE moderates		Strong GE supporters	
73	68	93	66
	35		100

Key characteristics	GE moderates (46%)	Strong GE supporters (54%)
Post-secondary (%)	73	83
GE normative expectation (%)	69	79

Men

■ % GE attitudes   ■ % GE behaviours   ■ % GE advocates

Weak GE supporters		Strong GE supporters	
45	88	100	94
	58		78

Key characteristics	Weak GE supporters (44%)	Strong GE supporters (56%)
Buddhist (%)	20	9
GE normative expectation (%)	60	78

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure MY 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.

Dependent Adult Care domain

- **Women led in Strong GE Supporters:** Both women and men had similar proportions of Weak GE supporters (both under one-third) and GE moderates (both 33%). However, women were considerably more likely to be Strong GE supporters (41%) compared to men (24%), while the remaining men were split between Passive GE supporters and GE practitioners.

- **Expectations diverged by gender:** Women in the Strong GE supporter profile were more likely to perceive higher empirical expectations than other profiles, that is, they were more influenced by what they observed others doing. In contrast, men in the Passive GE supporter and GE practitioner profiles were more likely to perceive higher normative expectations, suggesting their attitudes/behaviours were shaped more by what they believed society expected of them.

- **Socio-economic and demographic contexts matter:** Working women were slightly more likely to fall into the GE moderate profile, than other profiles. They were also less likely to have children, more likely to be Muslim and have post-secondary education. This suggests that women's gender-equality attitudes/behaviours may be shaped by their educational attainment and employment status but constrained by family responsibilities.

- **For men, the determinants were more diverse:** Those residing in Central Malaysia, with post-secondary education, and who were employed were more likely to be strong GE supporters. This indicates that men's approval of gender equality is linked to both socioeconomic factors and regional context.

Figure MY 9 Segmentation profiles in the Adult Care domain

Women

Key characteristics	Weak GE supporters (26%)	GE moderates (32%)	Strong GE supporters (42%)
Buddhist (%)	12	12	8
Working (%)	61	73	71
With children (%)	90	74	81
GE empirical expectation (%)	62	70	75
Muslim (%)	54	73	64
Post-secondary (%)	68	87	84
With disability (%)	37	32	21

Men

Key characteristics	Weak GE supporters (30%)	Passive GE supporters (6%)	GE moderates (31%)	GE practitioner (7%)	Strong GE supporters (26%)
Age 18-24 (%)	11	23	12	0	22
Resides in Central Malaysia (%)	48	54	50	25	66
Malay ethnic group (%)	79	85	69	81	66
Muslim (%)	71	85	65	63	62
Buddhist (%)	12	8	22	6	10
Post-secondary (%)	74	77	88	63	86
With disability (%)	15	54	29	19	21
GE normative expectation (%)	59	87	68	81	78
Chinese ethnic group (%)	22	15	29	13	24
Working (%)	94	100	96	88	97

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure MY 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.

Housework domain

- **Social expectations were associated with men's profile segmentation:** Higher levels of gender-equal normative or empirical expectations were associated with a lower likelihood of belonging to the Weak GE supporters profile. This suggests that men's support for gender-equal housework is shaped by how they think others expect them to act and by what they see in practice around them.

- **Profile determinants differed between women and men:** No significant factors was found in determining women's profile membership. In contrast, men's profiles were associated with a wider range of factors: Passive GE supporters were more likely to be Buddhist, self-employed, and either having a disability themselves or living with someone who has a disability.

- **Women were either strong or moderate gender-equal supporters and were evenly split between these two profiles, while men's profiles were more diverse:** Women were split evenly between GE moderate and Strong GE supporters (50% each). Men showed a more varied pattern: nearly half were Strong GE supporters (45%), but a substantial share were Weak GE supporters (43%), with a smaller group classified as Passive GE supporters (12%).

Figure MY 10 Segmentation profiles in the Housework domain

Women

Legend: ■ % GE attitudes ■ % GE behaviours ■ % GE advocates

GE moderates: 76, 68, 43
Strong GE supporters: 93, 68, 100
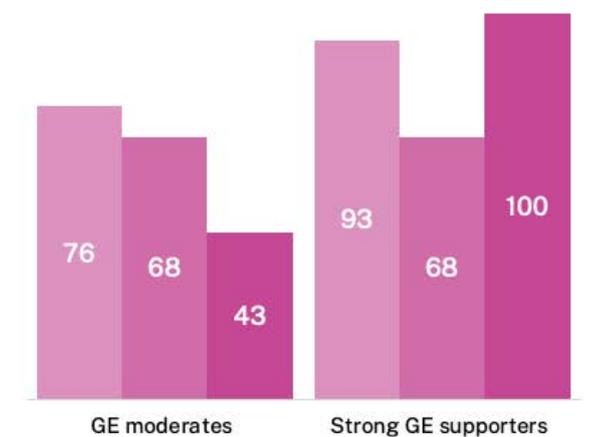
Key characteristics	GE Moderates (51%)	Strong GE supporters (49%)
No significant factors associated with profile membership		

Men

Legend: ■ % GE attitudes ■ % GE behaviours ■ % GE advocates

Weak GE supporters: 44, 51, 54
Passive GE supporters: 100, 0, 80
Strong GE supporters: 100, 84, 79
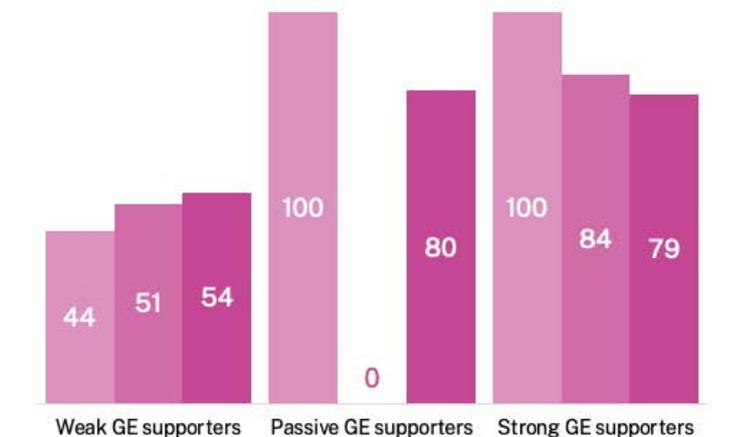
Key characteristics	Weak GE supporters (41%)	Passive GE supporters (9%)	Strong GE supporters (50%)
Age 18-24 (%)	11	14	13
Buddhist (%)	19	9	14
Post-secondary (%)	84	80	86
Working (%)	89	94	95
Self-employed (%)	33	29	23
Malay ethnic group (%)	66	80	68
With people with disability (%)	53	63	54
With disability (%)	16	31	14
GE normative expectation (%)	59	80	74
GE empirical expectation (%)	57	77	71

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure MY 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.

Earning family income domain

- **The combined proportions of GE opponents and Weak GE supporters, 41% among women and 43% among men, represent participants who did not support of gender-equal attitudes:** This constitutes a considerable share of both women and men, suggesting that attitudes toward income-sharing remain notably less gender-equal and lag other domains such as caregiving or domestic roles. Qualitative work indicated the persistent of the male breadwinner norm even in a sample characterised by high levels of post graduate education.

- **Findings pointed to a gendered progression:** Men were more concentrated in the more gender-equal profiles, with 28% being as Moderately strong GE or Strong GE supporters, compared to 21% of women in the Strong GE supporters profile. This suggests stronger attitude and advocacy for gender equality among men in earning family income.

- **Expectations play gendered roles:** Empirical expectations were strongly associated with women's profiles. For women, empirical expectations significantly related to profile membership, those with higher empirical expectations were more likely to be Passive GE supporters, suggesting that women respond to what they see others doing. For men, normative expectations were more influential, higher levels of normative expectations were associated with being Moderately strong or Strong GE supporters, reflecting sensitivity to social approval in shaping their support.

- **Cultural roots impact gender-equality in earning family income:** For both women and men, individuals from the Malay ethnic group were more likely to be GE opponents, whereas those from the Chinese ethnic group were more likely to be moderately Strong GE supporters among men and GE moderates among women. Aligning with qualitative findings, this pattern suggests that ethnic background exerts a notable influence on gender-equality attitudes. Among men, being Muslim was also associated with a higher likelihood of belonging to the GE opponents profile.

Figure MY 11 Segmentation profiles in the Earning Family Income domain

Women

Key characteristics	GE opponents (7%)	Weak GE supporters (37%)	Passive GE supporters (7%)	GE moderates (29%)	Strong GE supporters (21%)
Aged 18–24	3	13	3	12	14
Resides in Central Malaysia (%)	48	47	31	46	44
Malay ethnic group (%)	93	67	69	66	73
With disability (%)	14	20	28	18	26
With dependent adult (%)	24	44	69	50	63
GE empirical expectation (%)	40	54	82	67	78
Chinese ethnic group (%)	7	27	21	29	16
Self-employed	10	10	10	24	21

Men

Key characteristics	GE opponents (15%)	Weak GE supporters (33%)	GE moderates (24)	Moderately Strong GE (14%)	Strong GE supporters (14%)
Aged 18–24	5	10	14	16	18
Resides in Central Malaysia (%)	54	46	55	48	53
Malay ethnic group (%)	84	69	65	59	64
Chinese ethnic group (%)	16	29	31	41	29
Muslim (%)	84	63	60	52	60
With people with disability (%)	49	48	53	63	66
GE normative expectation (%)	38	56	64	77	76

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure MY 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.
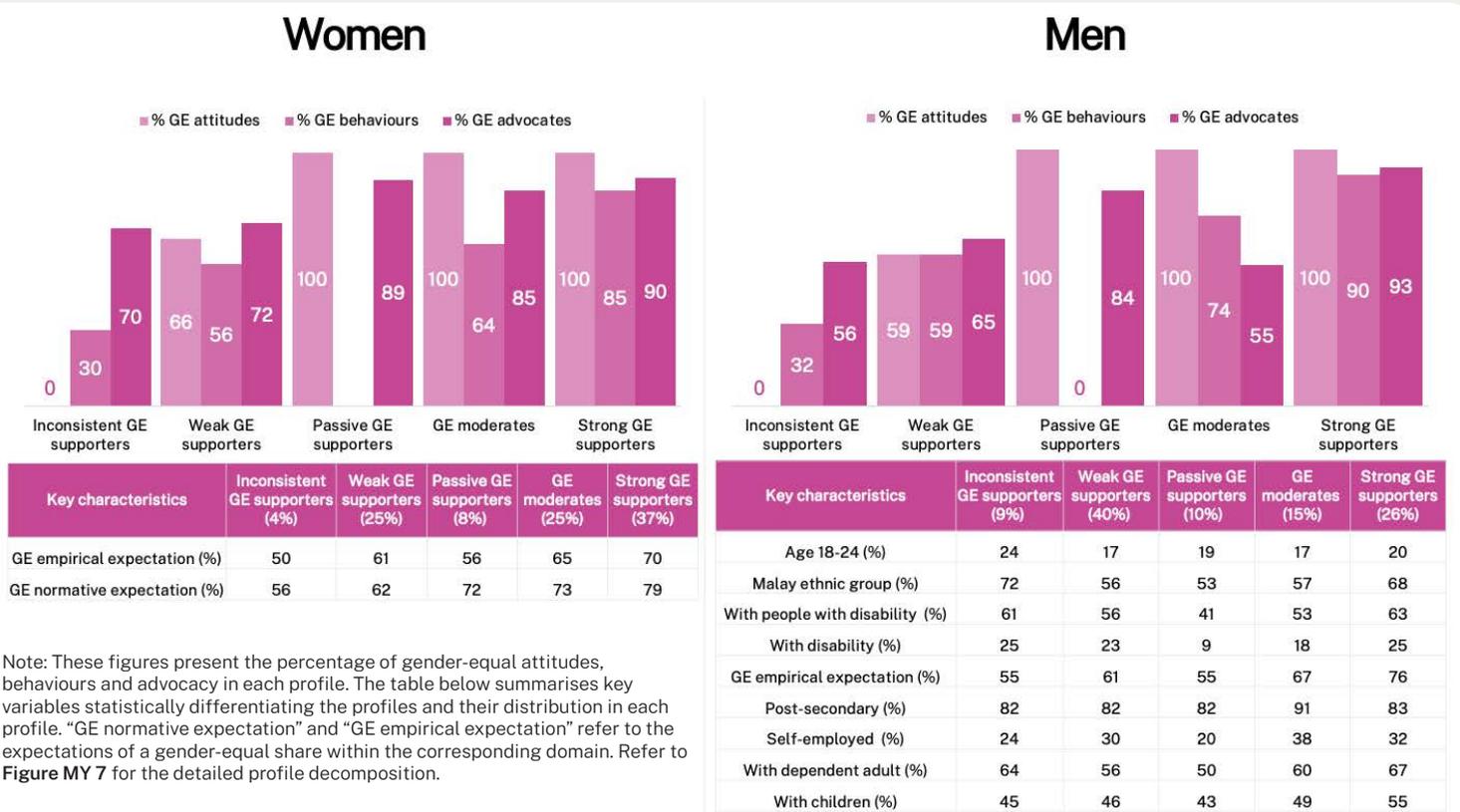
Job suitability domain

- **Women were more supportive of women and men in non-traditional jobs:** Women were more concentrated in the more gender-equal profiles, being either GE moderates or Strong GE supporters, which together account for 62%. In contrast, men were disproportionately represented in less gender-equal profiles, being either Weak GE supporters or GE opponents, making up 50%. This pattern indicates that women are more inclined toward supporting gender equality in people taking jobs that do not conform to traditional gender roles. Participant 1 reflected on men's opposition to attempts to reduce workplace or leadership segregation "From the male perspective, some men might view gender equality policies, like quotas or set-asides, as protectionist and possibly limiting their opportunities" highlighting that efforts to address workplace inequality should be approached with sensitivity.

- **Expectations were key factors:** Gender-equal empirical expectations were associated with profiles for both women and men. For women, gender-equal normative expectations also mattered, while for men they did not. Higher levels of both expectations among women were associated with a greater likelihood of belonging to the Strong GE supporter group. Among men, higher empirical expectations alone were associated with membership in the Strong GE supporter profile. As per the conceptual framework, this indicates that for women gender-equal behaviours in Job Suitability forms a social norm (i.e. is determined by both observed and perceived expectations) while men's is tied primarily to observed behaviours, constituting a descriptive norm. Among men, higher empirical expectations alone were associated membership in the Strong GE supporters profile. Interestingly, in the qualitative sample, which consisted of highly educated participants, normative expectations emerged only indirectly, or as a force to be challenged, when cited as influencing gender norms.

- **Socio-economic factors were more strongly associated to men's gender-equality profiles, compared to women:** Men's profile membership was further linked to the structural and demographic factors. Younger men were more likely to belong to either the inconsistent GE supporters or Strong GE supporters' profiles. Those of Malay ethnicity were more likely to fall into the inconsistent GE supporters' profile. Men with disabilities and those living with someone a disability were more likely to be either inconsistent or Strong GE supporters. Self-employed men were more likely to be GE moderates or Strong GE supporters. Additionally, men with children or dependent adults were more likely to belong to the Strong GE profile. This highlights that men's support for gender-equal Job Suitability is conditioned by their socio-economic position more than women's.

Figure MY 12 Segmentation profiles in the Job Suitability domain

Women

Key characteristics	Inconsistent GE supporters (4%)	Weak GE supporters (25%)	Passive GE supporters (8%)	GE moderates (25%)	Strong GE supporters (37%)
GE empirical expectation (%)	50	61	56	65	70
GE normative expectation (%)	56	62	72	73	79

Men

Key characteristics	Inconsistent GE supporters (9%)	Weak GE supporters (40%)	Passive GE supporters (10%)	GE moderates (15%)	Strong GE supporters (26%)
Age 18-24 (%)	24	17	19	17	20
Malay ethnic group (%)	72	56	53	57	68
With people with disability (%)	61	56	41	53	63
With disability (%)	25	23	9	18	25
GE empirical expectation (%)	55	61	55	67	76
Post-secondary (%)	82	82	82	91	83
Self-employed (%)	24	30	20	38	32
With dependent adult (%)	64	56	50	60	67
With children (%)	45	46	43	49	55

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure MY 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.

Women's Leadership domain

- **Profiles identified common ground among women:** Among three out of four profiles (Reluctant leaders, GE moderates, Strong supporters), all women (100%) agreed that gender does not determine leadership capability. This suggests strong attitudinal consensus in leadership compared to other domains.

- **Broad support for gender equality in leadership:** Nearly half of women (45%) were Strong GE supporters, indicating broad approval of gender-equal leadership. The remaining women were divided between Weak GE supporters (29%) and GE moderates (23%), while only a small minority (4%) were \to the GE Moderate and Strong GE supporter profiles. Similarly, higher normative expectations were associated with a lower likelihood of being Weak GE supporters, and a greater likelihood of being reluctant leaders, GE Moderates, or Strong GE supporters. Together, these patterns underscore the central role of perceived peer and community approval in shaping leadership-related gender-equality profiles.

- **Socio-demographics influence profile membership – to a degree:** Marital status was the only significant demographic factor associated with profile membership. Married women were less likely to be Reluctant leaders but more likely to belong to the GE moderate profile.

Figure MY 13 Segmentation profiles in the Women's Leadership domain

Women

■ % GE attitudes   ■ % GE behaviours   ■ % GE advocates

Key characteristics	Weak GE supporters (29%)	Reluctant leaders (4%)	GE moderates (23%)	Strong GE supporters (44%)
Married (%)	56	24	65	60
GE empirical expectation (%)	58	50	65	64
GE normative expectation (%)	62	76	78	80

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure MY 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.

2.3 Factors influencing gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and social norms

2.3.1 Structural, contextual and normative factors

This section explores, based on qualitative work, the enabling and constraining contextual factors that shape gender-equal practices.

It focuses on understanding what influences individuals' attitudes and behaviours in caregiving and economic roles, both within households and in broader social contexts. This was investigated through general audience interviews held with 9 participants from Malaysia in 2025 (see **Annex 2** for further details).

Identity and status

These beliefs functioned as both an enabling and constraining factor in shaping more gender-equal behaviours. For some participants, identity was a basis for enacting more gender-equal practices. Participant 2 stated, *"I am a woman with a career,"* placing paid employment at the centre of her identity, while Participant 3 reflected, *"I am a queer man but I still benefit from male privilege… I have to actively do work to make sure that I'm not contributing,"* indicating that self-awareness created a sense of responsibility to act in more gender-equal ways. Identity enabled gender-equal behaviours when participants had a normative expectation that people 'like them' should support fairness and shared responsibility, lowering sanctions for non-compliance with gendered norms. For these couples, forfeiting personal values and identity became a cost of adhering to collective norms, likely encouraging positive deviance. Conversely, identity constrained change when linked to traditional caregiving and economic roles. Participant 7 described that mothers would *"naturally"* take on more duties, and Participant 5 noted she *"would not mind spending more time with the children,"* suggesting that caregiving was part of maternal identity. Identity enabled more gender-equal behaviour when individuals believed their identity required

fairness and constrained it when identity was tied to expectations that mothers or women should prioritise care.

Gender norms

Participants who recognised gender norms and resisted them, explained how they were able to deviate toward more gender-equal practices. Participant 9 stated, *"It doesn't mean I'm a woman, I should take care of my child alone, we can do it together,"* actively redefining expectations. Potentially here, the implied awareness

Key takeaways

- **Recognition of shifting norms and generational contrasts shapes reflection and agency:** Participants contrasted their parents' strict gender divisions with peers' more gender-equal practices, validating their own choices and increasing openness to shared roles. Higher education and international exposure broadened what was viewed as 'normal'.

- **Negotiation, communication, and structural conditions enable or restrict sharing:** Household responsibilities were more evenly negotiated where communication was mutual and seen as legitimate (*"we have to do it together,"* Participant 9).

- **Economic necessity made dual-income more normalised, yet some women had no option but to put caregiving first.** Access to childcare, domestic services and flexible work helped enable translation of attitudes into practice, while lack of such supports reinforced women's default caregiving roles.

- **Social expectations continue to influence behaviour despite individual change:** Even when participants rejected gendered divisions, widespread beliefs that men should provide, and women should care remained influential for several participants. Task division based on skills rather than gender (Participant 6) supported more gender equal sharing, but when framed through gendered preferences, maintained fewer equal outcomes.

that gendered expectations stem from constructed normative systems, may support positive deviance as expectations are not treated as objective facts rooted in biological determinism. This recognition enabled agency, allowing participants to distinguish between what others do and what they considered acceptable. However, norm recognition did not always lead to behavioural change when participants still felt (or were) compelled to comply. Participant 7 noted she tried to resist gendered expectations to help clean up during family gatherings but *"end up going in to assist other women anyway,"* demonstrating that despite awareness, without perceived permission to deviate, traditional outcomes can be maintained. Norm recognition enabled more gender-equal behaviour when participants believed deviation would be socially acceptable and constrained it when they anticipated social pressure or internalised expectations.

Access to information, knowledge, and education

This emerged as an enabler by reshaping what participants believed was 'normal' and possible. Participant 3 noted, *"the idea of man being sole breadwinner in my educated circle... is not desirable,"* showing how his social environment normalised women's economic roles. Participant 4 described her husband learning domestic skills abroad, which made shared care feasible. Exposure to new information allowed participants to see roles as flexible rather than fixed. In contrast, limited access constrained behavioural change. Participant 7 said that *"a lot of girls, especially in rural areas, where you just cannot have this conversation [about gender equality]... these are foreign terms to them."* Access to education shifted what participants believed others do and expect (structural/contextual enabler), while lack of exposure sustained traditional assumptions as the default (empirical expectations in reference networks).

Task division based on skills or preferences

This division enabled more equal outcomes. Participant 6 stated, *"I'm picky about cleaning... he's picky about cooking,"*

indicating that competencies, not gender, were the organising principle. However, it is noted that different roles do not necessarily equate to equal roles, with some trends evidenced around men being more likely to undertake comparatively more 'fun' or cleaner, roles like cooking in comparison to cleaning up after children/the house. Participant 4 emphasised joint responsibility, saying, *"we take care of it together."* Skills framed as trainable supported shared roles. However, when strengths were described through gendered assumptions, they constrained equality. Participant 7 reflected expectations that women *"still have to play all these different roles,"* indicating preferences can be interpreted through normative gender roles, limiting scope for deviation. Skills-based allocation enabled deviation from gender roles when treated as neutral (conditional preference enabling change), while gendered interpretations reinforced traditional divisions.

Communication and negotiation between couples

This functioned as an enabling mechanism by allowing roles to be negotiated rather than assumed. Participant 9 described telling her partner, *"we have to do it together,"* and Participant 1 explained that financial decisions were made *"through discussions,"* showing that mutual dialogue facilitated adaptation. However, communication was constrained by perceived limits on how assertively women could speak. Participant 5 noted *"If we communicate too directly, sometimes the guy might think we are being demanding"* indicating that some women moderated their communication style to avoid backlash. Communication acted as an enabler when both partners accepted negotiation as legitimate (conditional preferences supported by mutual expectations), but it was constrained when social expectations discouraged women from voicing needs (normative expectations limiting deviation).

Economic necessity

This enabled gender-equal participation in work by making dual incomes expected. Participant 3 stated, *"you do need two people*

contributing," and Participant 9 said income *"should be equally balanced,"* indicating that financial realities made women's paid work normative. At the same time, necessity constrained equality in caregiving expectations. Participant 9 left her job after childbirth, noting, *"we decided I should quit,"* reflecting that women were still expected to adjust first when competing demands arose. Necessity and household economics acted as a structural/contextual enabler by normalising women's economic roles, but caregiving expectations positioned women as the ones who should adjust, reflecting persistent normative expectations shaping conditional preferences.

Access to social and structural supports

Access to supports like childcare, domestic workers, and flexible work patterns enabled practical sharing of responsibilities. Participant 1 explained that the availability of daycare meant they did not assign roles based on gender, and Participant 2 relied on paid care to remain employed. These supports made deviation from traditional roles possible. However, limited access to such contextual supports constrained equality. Participant 7 described domestic help as *"a privilege,"* and recent rising costs led some women to leave work. Structural supports enabled gender-equal behaviours by reducing the burden of care, while lack of structural support reinforced expectations that women should default to caregiving.

Awareness of societal norms and expectations

Even when individuals personally rejected traditional norms, awareness of societal norms and expectations continued to shape behaviour. Several participants referenced widespread beliefs that men should provide and women should care, often within the contexts of what people around them said. These expectations constrained gender-equal practices by setting a default model of behaviour.

These findings reflect insights from a small qualitative sample and should be interpreted as indicative rather than representative.

Participants' accounts illustrate how gender equality is negotiated through the interaction of personal values, household dynamics, and contextual supports. Within this sample, communication, education, and access to enabling structures appeared to support more gender-equal arrangements, while persistent social expectations and limited resources sustained less gender-equal divisions.

The results offer a nuanced view of how individuals make sense of and navigate gender norms in everyday life, but further research with a larger and more diverse sample would be needed to assess the wider applicability of these patterns.

2.3.2 Reference networks

This section examines the role of reference networks in shaping gender-equal behaviours and economic participation, with specific reference to family, friends, colleagues, cultural communities, media platforms, and politics.

This was investigated through 9 interviews held with the general audience from Malaysia in 2024 (see **Annex 2** for further details).

In Malaysia, interview participants did not make decisions about caregiving and economic roles in isolation; rather, they referred (explicitly or implicitly) to the views and behaviours of people around them. These 'reference networks' included family members, friends, colleagues, cultural communities, media audiences, and political institutions, shaping both normative and empirical expectations. Across the findings, the same factors, such as access to childcare or partner support, enabled gender-equal behaviour where reference networks supported it or reinforced traditional roles when reference networks upheld conventional expectations. Understanding who participants looked to for guidance, approval, or comparison helps explain why similar resources or circumstances may lead to different outcomes.

Family

For Malaysian participants, family operated as the most significant reference network,

functioning in both enabling and constraining ways across generations. Participants frequently cited mothers, fathers, or in-laws who modelled or supported gender-equal responsibilities, thereby legitimising women's economic participation and men's involvement in domestic life. Participant 2, a single professional woman, described growing up with a mother who worked, saved independently, and ran a business, stating, *"I grew up in a family that believes in gender equality in the sense that if you can do it, we can do it too,"* demonstrating how maternal modelling established an empirical expectation that women earn and provide. Participant 3, a single man, highlighted a generational shift, noting that while his parents' generation followed *"a very traditional division of labour,"* in his own cohort *"all of my female cousins are... working in the workforce, independent,"* signalling that updated empirical expectations within the family enabled alternative gender models. Participant 4, a married woman with children, contrasted her working mother with her non-working mother-in-law, reflecting that seeing both *"showed me that it's okay for both parents to work,"* demonstrating how exposure to diverse family scripts expanded the range of acceptable roles.

On the constraining side, participants also described family as a site where traditional gender norms were reinforced. Participant 7, a married woman with children, recounted that women in her family *"chose intentionally... to put family first,"* while Participant 9 noted that previous generations expected women to reduce work after childbirth without equal consideration that men might do the same, creating legacy expectations. Across accounts, family functioned as the origin of normative and empirical expectations, either establishing shared roles as viable preferences, or embedding traditional roles as default, thereby shaping the conditional preferences participants carried forward into adulthood.

Friends

Among Malaysian participants, friends were the second most influential reference group after family, acting as adult mirrors that either validated more gender-equal arrangements or reinforced traditional expectations. On the enabling side, friends exposed participants to peers who divided household and caregiving responsibilities, which updated expectations of what was expected in modern relationships. Participant 3, a single man working as a researcher, noted that among his peers, roles were *"a lot more fluid,"* and Participant 5, a PhD student studying abroad, observed, *"most of my friends are working and... they actually divide the chores,"* signalling that gender equality in domestic work was becoming an empirical expectation within her circle. Friends also shaped aspirations, with Participant 5 further stating that seeing peers travel *"was my motivation, why I wanted to work."*

On the constraining side, friends also reproduced traditional beliefs and expectations that women should prioritise caregiving. Participant 7, a married professional woman studying her masters abroad, recounted ongoing debates with friends who believed *"women should take a step back and take on caring responsibilities, and that men should be the providers,"* while Participant 9, a partnered woman, noted that observing friends' lives, particularly through social media, created expectations about lifestyle and partnership that influenced her own thinking. Across these accounts, friends actively shaped empirical and normative expectations, reinforcing that peer contexts are key spaces where gender roles are negotiated, challenged, or upheld.

Colleagues and professional peers

These relationships served as important reference networks for Malaysian participants, shaping what was seen as acceptable or possible in balancing work and caregiving. On the enabling side, colleagues modelled shared responsibilities and workplace flexibility, reinforcing gender-equal behaviours. Participant 2, a single working mother, observed that among younger colleagues, *"both the man and the woman... help pick them up, drop them off, feed the kids, cook for the kids,"* indicating emerging norms of shared caregiving. Participant 3, a single man, described actively countering gendered expectations in the workplace by volunteering to clean

dishes, resisting assumptions that *"the expectation somehow always [falls] on the female colleagues."* Participant 4, a married woman with children working as a global health researcher, shared that during COVID-19, international colleagues accommodated family routines by adjusting online meeting times, noting there was *"a consensus... about working hours... to match my family's routine,"* signalling international exposure facilitated by work may expose participants to different norms.

On the constraining side, workplace attitudes also reinforced traditional roles. Participant 7, a married professional woman with children studying abroad, stated, *"society still thinks that it's not a dad's job... they don't see the reason that paternity leave should be given,"* reflecting how professional environments can mirror wider patriarchal beliefs. Across these accounts, colleagues reflected both empirical expectations (who actually takes leave, who adjusts schedules for care) and normative expectations (what is acceptable), either widening the scope for gender-equal practices or reinforcing traditional divisions of labour.

The media

Less proximate than peer-to-peer or family relationships, the media was not as central as family or friends, still played a meaningful enabling role in shaping participants' attitudes towards gender equality. Participants in this highly educated sample primarily referred to digital media (i.e. social platforms, short video clips, and news) as narratives that encouraged women's self-reliance and validated public support for gender equality. Participant 6, a partnered woman, explained that social media videos showing cautionary tales of women's reliance on men *"motivate us... to be hardworking and independent".* Participant 2, a single-working mother, described online platforms as important spaces for solidarity and mobilisation, noting that public support for gender equality *"grows every time... at least online if not physically,"* despite formal deterrence. For Participant 8, a married man with children, everyday engagement with Facebook and YouTube reflected how media formed part of the social environment through which norms were observed and shared. Across these accounts, media functioned as a background force, contributing to shifting expectations.

Religion

Not a direct reference network in of itself but more so an influence on reference networks, religion was only explicitly referenced by one participant. Her reflections suggested that while religion may not have been a day-to-day influence for this highly educated sample, it can still shape gender expectations at a societal level. Participant 7, a Hindu woman of Indian ethnicity, described Malaysia's *"Muslim-majority"* cultural context as reinforcing *"patriarchal"* expectations about caregiving, stating, *"it's a very patriarchal culture...you don't see the men...getting involved in doing the dirty work."* She also observed that religion and politics are closely intertwined, shaping public attitudes toward family roles and what is viewed as culturally acceptable: *"They get a huge resistance back home-because it's not seen as culturally appropriate, or there are all these fears about Malaysia becoming too liberal."* From a social norms perspective, her reflections indicate that where patriarchal religious interpretations are salient, it can anchor traditional normative expectations and increase perceived sanctions for deviating from status quo roles. Given religion was only explicitly mentioned by one participant, and it did not feature prominently in decision-making for this sample, further research may be needed to confirm its role.

Multi-ethnic culture

Similarly, in Malaysia's multi-ethnic context, culture functioned as a key influence upon broader reference networks that both enabled and constrained gender-equal behaviours. Cultural exposure - both international and inter-ethnic - introduced participants to alternative models of men's involvement in care. Participant 6, who is Chinese Malaysian and married to a Japanese man, both living in Ireland, stated, *"he's going to take leave to take care of the newborn baby... this is something in Japanese culture"* showing how perceived alternative cultural norms shaped her expectations for paternal

responsibility. Although this participant attributed her husband's willingness to care to *"Japanese culture"*, it is also possible that distance from his home culture or other factors created space for new norm creation, particularly given men in Japan spend on average 3.5 hours less per day on care than men in Malaysia.[267] Furthermore, Participant 7 observed that higher-income Chinese families commonly hired nannies from birth, while higher-income Malay and Indian households typically relied on live-in domestic workers, making external care a culturally sanctioned practice across groups. On the constraining side, participants also reflected that culture sustained expectations that men should be financial providers and women should prioritise family. Participant 9 illustrated, *"Mostly it's because of culture... the husband will take the responsibility to earn the household income".* Participant 7 linked this to national-level dynamics, explaining that multi-ethnic politics created resistance to policy changes that would support gender equality, stating women remained *"hugely affected."* Across these accounts, culture and ethnicity operated as powerful sources of both empirical and empirical expectations shaping conditional preferences.

Politics

Malaysian participants described politics primarily in terms of laws, policies, and institutional decisions as another key factors influencing the broader landscape influencing reference networks. Participant 3 pointed to parental leave policy as an example of how government regulations reflect broader expectations, stating, *"the number of days of paternity leave versus maternity leave... structurally reinforce gender norms."* Participant 7 described how citizenship laws previously treated women and men differently, explaining, *"you have so many stateless children in Malaysia just because their mom, the Malaysian, had a foreign partner... this was not the same for men,"* and described this as *"very political."* She also commented that, in her experience, *"in the public space, there's still very much resistance... women [are] hugely affected... when it comes to policy."* By contrast,

Participant 8, a married woman with children, expressed optimism about political change, stating, *"we're more open now with our new government... we are more advanced, more forward-thinking."* These reflections indicate that participants saw political structures as influencing expectations around gender roles through formal policy settings, rather than through personal beliefs or direct guidance.

Across the Malaysian interviews, gender attitudes and behaviours were shaped not by a single determinant but through a dynamic interaction. Reference networks played a critical role in establishing what was perceived as normal and acceptable, with family providing initial expectations, peers and colleagues shaping contemporary norms, and broader cultural and political structures forming the backdrop against which choices were made. Overall, these patterns highlight the importance of understanding social norms not as static, but as negotiated across multiple domains, with movement toward gender equality dependent on both structural supports and shifts in the reference networks that guide everyday decision-making.

2.3.3 Enablers and barriers of advocacy

This section looks at the factors that can hinder and enable gender equality advocacy – from the private to public sphere.

For Malaysia, we asked the interviewees (see **Annex 2** for further details on qualitative methodology) for their views on enablers and barriers of advocacy. Validation workshops with gender equality stakeholders were not conducted in Malaysia, as was done in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, as this was not part of the original scope of research.

On the enabling side, participants emphasised the importance of supportive and inclusive networks. Here, they highlighted the role of reference networks in shaping conditional preferences. These included colleagues, supervisors, and external peer groups that created safe spaces for dialogue and encouraged practical steps toward advocacy. Visibility of gender

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267   Hanna et al. 2023a

advocacy in the media also helped normalise discussions and provided models of action. At the individual level, a strong sense of self and conviction, often tied to honouring the sacrifices of earlier generations of women, was a powerful motivator, as was increased confidence in negotiating gender roles. As one participant put it:

> *"I always say that I work on the sacrifices of the women before me. I'm in a space where I consider myself privileged, because of the sacrifices that people have made, right? And I obviously want to keep paying that forward. In my case, that would mean taking different steps. The things my mom did, which for her would have been seen as advocacy, are very different from what I'm doing now."*
>
> **– Participant 2, woman, Malaysia**

At the same time, significant barriers constrained wider engagement. Structurally, the sociopolitical environment was often seen as unsupportive. Participants pointed to peaceful events such as women's marches being labelled "aggressive" and quickly shut down with little justification provided, presumably for their deviation from normative expectations of women's docility. This not only curtailed public visibility but also reinforced fear of backlash or conflict.

"Honestly, the women's march, it's not aggressive. We're in a park most of the time, and we've got signs, we've got someone chanting, and then discussions and stuff like that. It's not really a disruptive thing… But they do shut it down. They've never really had a proper reason why. So what we do is we support each other and say, this is your right. If you get detained, these are your rights. This is what you can and cannot do, or what they can and cannot do to you." (Participant 2, woman, Malaysia)

Another recurring theme was the lack of men who are visible allies. Several participants argued that expecting only women to advocate places an unfair burden on them, and that participation by men would lend credibility and broaden the reach of advocacy efforts. Yet others noted that men often supported quietly, unwilling to take public

stances because it challenged normative expectations and masculine identities.

> *"Expecting only women, or only femme persons, to advocate for gender equality is an unfair burden to place. … I do think men need to step up and start putting convictions into practice. You can't just say you're a feminist and then expect women to do your laundry and cook and clean for you."*
>
> **– Participant 3, man, Malaysia**

> *"Masculinity… I think it contradicts their masculinity. It challenges the societal norms. It challenges their standing in society as well. Now they have to go out and speak to their friends. And it's like they almost enable one another. 'Yeah, I support it, but quietly.'"*
>
> **– Participant 3, man, Malaysia**

Normative expectations similarly shaped women's conditional preferences, as did practical considerations of efficacy. Some participants described hesitancy stemming from family dynamics, particularly when living with less relative holding less gender-equal attitudes, where advocacy could provoke conflict at home. Others voiced concerns about policy-level initiatives, such as gender quotas, which they feared could lead to tokenism if applied rigidly across organisations.

> *"I think one concern for people might be family dynamics, like if you live with less gender-equal family members. There might be fear of backlash or offending others. … My only concern when it comes to campaigns or promoting gender equality is with policy, for example, if the government sets a requirement for a certain portion of top management to be filled by women. … This is the concern, if it becomes forced."*
>
> **– Participant 1, man, Malaysia**

Finally, contextual factors highlighted the role of personal circumstances, outside social norms. Limited opportunities to

join accessible public advocacy, lack of resources, and constraints of time and energy were cited as reasons why some individuals, despite personal conviction, were unable to participate more actively.

Taken together, these findings show that engagement in gender equality advocacy among the qualitative interview participants in Malaysia is enabled by personal conviction and supportive networks, but it is constrained by structural resistance, a fragile sociopolitical space, and the constraining influence of normative expectations upon men's involvement. Participants' reflections highlight both the promise of gradual change and the persistent challenges that limit broader mobilisation.

2.4 Shifts in gender norms

2.4.1 SNAPS survey waves over time

Data for this section are not available for Malaysia, as the SNAPS survey was conducted in the country for the first time in 2024.

2.4.2 Societal transformations

Countries across the world are witnessing a suite of societal transformations that are inevitably influencing and interacting with gender norms – and Malaysia is no exception to this.

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence and social media ubiquity is enabling the proliferation of misogynistic ideology and content, reinforcing conservative gender norms about women's roles in social, economic, and domestic spheres. The resurgence of right-wing authoritarian politics and rollbacks of gender-equal policies are galvanising anti-feminist movements and threatening hard-won gender equality gains. The climate crisis threatens to add to women's mounting unpaid care burden.

At the same time, rising cost of living, growth in the digital gig economy, increasing demand for care, and international and national action on gender equality provide opportunities to challenge traditional ideas about who should perform care and who should earn income in the family. However, the impact of these shifts on gender norms is not always straightforward –in many cases, they hold both the risk of entrenching traditional gender norms and the potential to challenge and reshape them.

This section details the nature of these shifts, how they manifest in Malaysia, and the impact that they may have on gender norms. These

Key takeaways

- **Climate change and increasing demand for care are intensifying women's unpaid workload in Malaysia, which risks entrenching traditional caregiving norms:** Investing in accessible childcare, care for older people, and gender-responsive climate and social policies will be essential to prevent these pressures from reinforcing women's double burden.

- **Global and local digitalisation including the growth in social media adoption and the rapid development of AI present both opportunities and challenges for gender norms:** Social media holds both the potential challenge traditional gender norms and the risk of entrenching them, depending on the context of use. Meanwhile, the gendered impacts of AI may reinforce traditional gendered occupational segregation if the Malaysian government does not meet this shift with gender-responsive policy.

- **Rising living costs, the growth of the gig economy, increasing divorce rates, and government efforts to increase women's labour force participation may be supporting women's economic participation and could help shift traditional economic norms in Malaysia:** However, without equivalent efforts to address traditional caregiving norms in tandem, these shifts risk reinforcing the double burden on women to perform both economic and domestic duties.

shifts are drawn from a combination of the literature and interviews with experts in Malaysia.

The climate crisis

The world is currently in a climate crisis. Climate-induced disasters are increasing in frequency and magnitude, with significant and harmful consequences for biodiversity, human health and livelihoods, infrastructure, and the economy.[268] Malaysia is particularly at risk of natural disasters including floods and inundation given its tropical climate and river systems. Floods cause more damage to the country than any other natural disasters, and the severity and frequency of these floods will be further exacerbated by climate change.[269] The frequency and intensity of heat waves is also projected to increase in Malaysia as a result of climate change.[270]

Climate change intensifies resource scarcity, reducing crop yields and making supply of fuel sources, water, and other essential resources unreliable.[271] Due to gender norms that relegate women to the domestic sphere, they are often responsible for sourcing these household necessities. Climate change, by making these activities longer and more difficult, increases the time that women spend on such unpaid activities for the household and further entrenches norms that restrict women to performing Caregiving and Domestic responsibilities. Furthermore, research has also indicated that women experience higher rates of violence due to climate change-driven resource scarcity. For instance, one study found from focus group discussions with Indigenous communities in Malaysia that women farmers experienced greater emotional and physical violence following low crop yields.[272]

Furthermore, climate change disrupts care and educational systems. For instance, in 2019, roughly 2,500 schools across

Malaysia were closed due to air pollution caused by haze and El Niño climate events which affected 1.7 million students.[273] Such events result in women having to take care of children which adds to their already disproportionate share of unpaid care and entrenches traditional caregiving norms. Transport infrastructure may also be damaged, disrupting women's access to physical workplaces given women are disproportionate users of public transport. This impact may threaten women's employment and income, which can in turn perpetuate gender norms that preclude women from economic participation.[274]

Political shifts

There have been some shifts in the political realm related to gender equality. Notably, in 2022, the Malaysian government appointed a Gender Focal Point and a Gender Focal Team for every government ministry and agency, comprised of deputy secretaries and directors who are responsible for mainstreaming gender into government planning, policy implementation, and initiatives.[275]

However, progress on improving women's representation in political leadership has remained slow over the past two decades, highlighting the need to further transform the political sphere. In 2018, Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail became the first woman Deputy Prime Minister in Malaysia – yet this historic achievement was not reflective of the broader state of politics. For instance, in 2018, women made up 10.9% of political candidates and 14.4% of elected Members of Parliament. In 2022, the percentage of women candidates increased to 13.4%, but the percentage of Members of Parliament remained at 14.4%.[276]

Similarly, women's representation in decision-making roles in the public sector remains

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268   United Nations 2025a
269   Abid et al. 2024
270   World Bank and Asian Development Bank 2021
271   United Nations, n.d.-a
272   Klima Action Malaysia 2025
273   UNICEF Malaysia 2021
274   Klima Action Malaysia 2025
275   Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development, n.d.
276   Align Platform 2024

low. in 2004, the government mandated a minimum quota of 30% representation of women in decision-making roles in the public sector. However, this target was only met in June 2023, when the percentage of women in leadership reached 38.8%. However, experts also pointed out that in many cases one woman may appear on multiple boards, meaning that while there is greater women's representation overall, the absolute number of women in leadership may be lower than the figures suggest. This target for leadership may thus have limited effects on shifting gender norms in a meaningful way.

The rising cost of living

Globally, the prices of goods and services have increased for households. Factors including climate change and geopolitical tensions have strained agricultural supply or disrupted supply chains, driving up prices for food and other goods. In Malaysia, other factors such as inflation, housing costs, taxes, high education and healthcare costs have also contributed to rising living costs.[277]

General audience and expert interviews highlighted that cost of living pressures in Malaysia are increasingly necessitating dual incomes within households, forcing both partners to work. Increases in living costs are leading many households to adopt a dual-income model where both partners work and contribute to household income. While this shift may be precipitated by economic necessity as opposed to genuine intentions to challenge traditional gender roles, it may still help to challenge traditional norms around women's economic participation.

Rising living costs are also deterring or delaying couples' decisions to have children, given concerns about the affordability of raising a child. A recent report by UNFPA found that among individuals surveyed in fourteen countries, 39% cited financial limitations as a factor leading them to

have fewer children.[278] A potential impact of delayed parenting choices may be that women enter and stay in the labour force longer.

Increasing internet access, the digital economy, and social media adoption

The world is becoming increasingly digitalised through the adoption of digital technologies, internet connectivity, and social media.[279] Social media use has risen in Malaysia from an estimated 55% of the population using social media in 2015 to 70% in 2025.[280, 281]

The impact of social media on gender norms is not fixed but holds both the potential to challenge traditional gender norms and the risk of entrenching them, depending on the context of use.[282] On one hand, social media can support positive change in gender norms by enabling women's digital activism and helping to spread feminist messaging. One study suggested that exposure to social media has increased Malaysian women's awareness of gender issues.[283] Another study highlighted the use of social media to coordinate in-person feminist events such as Malaysia's Women's March in 2023, which brought together individuals calling for reforms including better work rights, equal political participation, and freedom of choice.[284] An expert interviewee also mentioned social media being used to increase representation of men involved in parenting, which carries the potential to challenge traditional caregiving norms.

On the other hand, social media can equally enable the spread of misogynistic content that threatens to reify traditional gender norms. Experts spoke to how social media has increased the spaces to air anti-feminist backlash. One manifestation of this backlash has been the explosion of the 'manosphere', a network of online communities that purport to address men's issues and rights but

277 Azmi et al. 2023
278 United Nations Population Fund 2025
279 World Bank 2024a
280 Kemp 2015a
281 Kemp 2025b
282 Koester and Marcus 2024
283 Goh et al. 2021
284 Razak and Halabi 2024

promote narrow definitions of masculinity and femininity.[285] This rhetoric seeks to entrench traditional caregiving and economic norms. Further investigation is needed to understand the impact of social media on gender norms in Malaysian context specifically.

Beyond social media, increased digitalisation has given rise to a range of digital labour platforms and enabled the growth of the gig economy. The gig economy has the potential to support more women into the labour force by allowing them to earn while maintaining flexibility in when and how much they work. Indeed, in Malaysia, women are estimated to comprise 46% of gig workers.[286] One expert pointed to the growth in the number of women joining platforms such as Grab, a popular ride-hailing platform in Malaysia. According to Grab Malaysia, there has been a 156% increase in the number of women drivers joining the platform since 2021, following deliberate efforts to engage women through campaigns and training programs.[287]

However, women in the gig economy continue to earn less than men, with wage gaps mirroring those present in the traditional labour force.[288] Thus, while the flexibility offered by gig work may be encouraging more women into the labour force, women joining the gig economy under these conditions may still experience limited economic security. The Malaysian government has begun to address this issue, with the Gig Workers Bill 2025 recently passed to establish legal protections for gig workers.[289] Furthermore, data also show that gender segregation by industry persists in the gig economy, and that the rise of gig work is not necessarily challenging stereotypes about women's and men's suitability for certain jobs. Women remain in highly feminised industries such as childcare, tutoring, and household services,[290] and in Malaysia are more highly represented in data

entry and clerical roles.[291] This division may contribute to entrenching norms about which jobs women and men should perform.

The growth of artificial intelligence

The rapid development and adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) is one of the most significant transformations humanity is currently living through. AI technologies are evolving at breakneck speed and fundamentally reshaping norms across all spheres of life, both personal and professional.

The ILO finds that 4.7% of women's jobs are at high risk of automation compared to 2.4% of men's.[292] This threat could have flow-on effects for economic gender norms by reducing women's overall employment and entrenching gendered occupational segregation.

In Malaysia, the government established a National Artificial Intelligence Office (NAIO) in late 2024 which is set to launch a National AI Action Plan for 2026-2030.[293] Through these efforts, Malaysia is aiming to accelerate AI adoption across all sectors and industries and to become a regional leader in AI. Malaysia has demonstrated some efforts to address the gendered impacts of AI through initiatives such as Women in AI and gender-inclusive AI leadership programs.[294] However, it remains to be seen whether the new action plan will sufficiently address the gendered impacts of AI. Without doing so, Malaysia risks leaving women behind in the pursuit of AI progress and entrenching gender inequality.

International and national action on gender equality

From the establishment of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995 to the recent Political Declaration to mark its 30th anniversary in 2025, there has

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285   Venkataramakrishnan and Squirrell 2024
286   Hernando and Calizo Jr. 2024
287   Grab Malaysia 2024
288   Rani et al. 2022
289   Gig Workers Bill 2025
290   Bhagavathi and Kumar 2025
291   Datta et al. 2023
292   Gmyrek et al. 2025
293   Ministry of Digital 2025
294   UNESCO 2025

been a strong and consistent global push by international bodies to advance gender equality and secure commitments from governments to do the same – particularly in the advent of aforementioned shifts that may threaten historical hard-won gains.[295]

The Malaysian government, in parallel, been acting on gender issues with a particular eye to increasing women's labour force participation to both support gender equality efforts and realise economic gains for their countries. One expert interviewee suggested that Malaysia has been particularly invested in advancing gender equality efforts due to commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, indicating that international gender equality frameworks may also influence national action.

The Malaysian government has set a target in its Thirteenth Malaysia Plan 2026-2030 for women's labour participation to reach 60% by 2030,[296] from a current figure of 56% in 2025.[297] In support of this target, the government has recently adopted a range of policies to encourage women into the labour force, including supportive workplace policies, anti-discrimination laws, and other incentives.

For instance, in 2022 the Malaysian government introduced a suite of amendments to the Employment Act of 1995, the country's main labour law, including increasing maternity leave entitlements, providing protections against termination for pregnant employees, and prohibiting employment discrimination.[298] The government also introduced the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act in 2022 which establishes a legal framework for addressing and remediating sexual harassment, including in workplaces, with the intended effect of making work environments safer for women.[299] The government has previously provided tax exemptions for women returning to work and recently extended these until 2027, alongside establishing

childcare facilities near public sector workplaces to relieve women's caring responsibilities and enable participation in work. These government efforts may support norm change in that increasing women's engagement in the labour force can help normalise sharing of earning responsibilities among all genders. Furthermore, active efforts to increase women's representation in leadership may also shift norms related to women's suitability for leadership in work environments.

Experts also noted the increasing rates of women's educational attainment as a shift that has been occurring, such that women are outpacing men. Women's enrolment rates are higher than men's at every level of education.[300] However, the literature suggests that this does not necessarily translate into a high rate of women's labour force participation.[301] This suggests that higher educational attainment alone has not been sufficient to move the dial on traditional caregiving and economic gender norms.

At the same time, shifting gendered economic norms without equal efforts to also shift gendered caregiving norms risks reinforcing a double burden on women to perform both paid and unpaid work. For instance, in 2022 Malaysia increased maternal leave entitlements from 60 days to 98 days which may support women to better balance work with caregiving.[302] However, paternal leave entitlements remain paltry in comparison, with fathers granted only seven days. These increases in maternity leave may support women to remain attached to the workforce alongside caring duties. However, the lack of simultaneous increases in paternity leave discourages men's involvement in caregiving and reinforces traditional gender norms which position women as primary caregivers and men as breadwinners.

295   United Nations 2025c
296   Ministry of Economy 2025
297   Department of Statistics Malaysia 2025a
298   Employment (Amendment) Act 2022
299   Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development, n.d.
300   Department of Statistics Malaysia 2024b
301   Salleh and Mansor 2022
302   Employment (Amendment) Act 2022

Increasing demand for care

The demand for care – particularly for children, older people, and persons with disability – is growing, driven by a range of demographic and economic transitions. Demand for childcare is growing as women continue to enter the labour force. The need for older adult care is also increasing as Malaysia continues to age, with the percentage of people aged 65 years and over projected to be 9.3% by 2030.[303] This growing deficit is further exacerbated by urbanisation trends where younger people migrate from rural to urban areas for economic opportunities and disrupt traditional models of family-based care for their older parents.[304] The demand for care for persons with disability is also growing as disability prevalence increases, due to higher likelihood of disability as people age as well as greater awareness and earlier diagnoses of disabilities in childhood.

Women already bear a disproportionate burden of informal and unpaid care in Malaysia. On average, women spend 4.4 hours per day on unpaid care and domestic work compared to men who spend 1.6 hours.[305] As care demand increases, traditional economic and caregiving gender norms may be further entrenched. Furthermore, women who are engaged in the workforce may increasingly take on a 'double burden' – having to perform labour both inside and outside of the home.[306] Thus, even though women may share earning responsibilities with their partners, they may continue to bear the burden of domestic duties if traditional caregiving norms are left unaddressed.

To avoid this governments and other stakeholders must respond with investments in formal care infrastructure and supportive policies that encourage redistribution of caregiving responsibilities. However, while Malaysia has increasingly recognised the importance of care for communities and the economy, the country lacks a comprehensive and integrated strategy to respond to rising care demand. Without an integrated framework to systemically address rising care demand, Malaysia risks adding to women's unpaid care burden and entrenching gender-unequal caregiving norms.[307]

Cultural shifts

In addition to the above shifts, experts highlighted other trends including the role of religion in Malaysia in upholding traditional gender norms. They pointed to conservative interpretations of the Quran that promote traditional family-based values – a "patriarchy-based system rooted in religion". In recent years there has also been an upswing in religious fundamentalism in Malaysia.[308, 309] However, there are also efforts by activist organisations such as Sisters in Islam[310] in Malaysia to counter fundamentalist Islamic readings and instead present interpretations that support feminist ideals, helping to challenge traditional gender norms. Thus, while the rise of fundamentalist religion may reinforce traditional economic and caregiving norms, there also exist movements to push back against this shift and promote more gender-equal norms under the framework of Islam.

Experts also suggested that increasing divorce rates in Malaysia are also necessitating women's economic independence and thus increasing women's participation in the workforce. General divorce rates in Malaysia have grown from 7 per 1000 women in 2017 to 8 per 1000 women in 2023, with a significant peak in 2022 at 8.9 divorces per 1000 women.[311, 312] Research has typically explored the effect of women's increasing labour force participation on divorce rates, but some

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303   Department of Statistics Malaysia 2025b
304   Merdikawati, et al. 2025
305   Hanna et al. 2023a
306   Choong et al. 2019
307   Mukhriz et al. 2024
308   Osman 2017
309   Jaafar et al. 2020
310   Sisters in Islam, n.d.
311   Department of Statistics Malaysia 2018
312   Department of Statistics Malaysia 2024a

studies have examined the opposite direction of this relationship and suggest that women may increase their employment in both the aftermath of a divorce and preceding it if it is expected.[313] This trend holds potential to challenge traditional economic gender norms that constrain women from economic participation. However, it should be noted that not all women are able to increase their employment and many experience significant financial hardship after divorce.

Overall, Malaysia stands at a juncture of potential polycrises, spanning climate and economic ruptures, technological developments, political and demographic shifts. These challenges are simultaneously challenging and reinforcing traditional gender norms. Without ambitious policy implementation that addresses economic participation and caregiving responsibilities in tandem for both women and men, these transformations will likely further engrain inequality.

Note: Section 2.8 "Shifts in Gender Norms: Measuring SNAPS Survey Results Over Time" is not included, as Malaysia was first surveyed in SNAPS in 2024.

313   Thielemans and Mortelmans 2021

4. Conclusion

As a multi-ethnic and multicultural country, Malaysia's path toward gender equality has been multifaceted and complex. Despite women outnumbering men in higher education, female employment rates remain low. Beyond employment, disparities between women and men persist in occupational segregation, leadership representation, political participation, and caregiving responsibilities. This study highlights four key findings.

1. **First, attitudes toward gender equality in both caregiving and economic roles are generally positive** which ranges from 57 to 87 percent among both women and men across domains. However, large attitude-behaviour gaps persist, particularly in Childcare and Housework, where gender-equal practices account for only about half of responses. Men consistently report lower gender-equal attitudes, aspirations, and advocacy than women, and male-breadwinner norms remain deeply entrenched. Around one-third of both women and men still believe men should contribute more to family income. Only 75 percent of men support gender-equal leadership, and just 61 percent advocate for it; the lowest rates among all countries surveyed. While both women and men tend to underestimate gender-equal attitudes in most domains, they often overestimate them in relation to earning family income.

2. **Second, gender-equal attitudes are closely associated with advocacy, while gender-equal behaviours are more strongly linked to gender-equal media exposure and upbringing.** Gender-equal empirical and normative expectations also influence behaviours and advocacy, though inconsistently. Latent profile analysis shows that the strong gender equality supporters profile makes up about half of respondents across most domains, except for Earning Family Income and Job Suitability. Notably, around 35 percent of both women and men are weak gender equality supporters in the earning family income domain, underscoring the stickiness of the male-breadwinner norm. These findings highlight a complex interaction between attitudes, behaviours, advocacy, and demographic factors.

3. **Third, qualitative insights reveal key enabling and constraining factors shaping gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy.** Enablers include having a supportive reference network and allies, availability of care services and flexible working arrangements, partner's willingness to take on non-traditional roles and engage in open communication, exposure to international contexts, along with education and exposure to career opportunities. Barriers persist in the form of entrenched male-breadwinner and female-caregiver norms, gendered stereotypes, fear of social backlash, and a lack of state support. Factors such as economic necessity can also encourage nominally more gender-equal practices, but may not result in broader normative update, often leaving women with a double burden.

4. **Fourth, broader societal shifts including climate disruptions, rising living costs, increasing divorce rates, digitalisation, and the growth of AI and the gig economy.** These can both reinforce traditional norms and open new opportunities for gender equality.

Overall, Malaysia's journey toward gender equality remains a work in progress. Meaningful transformation will require reshaping normative expectations and advancing multi-level strategies that combine cultural change, policy reform, and institutional support to ensure that daily practices keep pace with evolving gender-equal aspirations.

Philippines

1. Contextual background

This section provides an overview of gender equality progress in the Philippines. Overall trends are captured by gender gap report rankings. The Philippines ranked 20th out of 148 countries in the 2024 Global Gender Gap Report.[314] This ranking highlights the Philippines' achievements in education and women's political representation. However, as discussed below, gender gaps persist elsewhere.

Education-employment paradox

Despite overall strong performance in educational attainment, gender parity at all levels of education has not been achieved – for the first time in 2025, boy's primary school net enrolment rate surpassed that of girls. As such, the Philippines educational attainment score in the Global Gender Gap report dropped by 1.2 percentage points from previous years of full parity.[315]

In general, women's literacy and school enrolment rates have matched or exceeded those of men for over two decades.[316] Women in tertiary education are overrepresented, particularly in professional and technical courses.[317] As of 2023, the ratio of female to male students in tertiary education was 1.3.[318]

However, these educational gains have not translated proportionally into employment. Women's labour force participation has remained stagnant for three decades, fluctuating between 47% and 52% since 2000. In 2022, only 50% of working-age women were active in the labour force, compared to 72% of men. By contrast, women's participation peaked at 52% in 2002, fell to 43% during the COVID-19 pandemic, and has only partially recovered since.[319]

1.1 Norms influencing labour force participation gap

Women's participation in paid work is strongly shaped by family formation and caregiving expectations. According to the 2021 Women, Work, and Childcare Survey, 59% of women reported being their household's primary caregiver, compared to 38% of men.[320] Additionally, many women are responsible for caring for their own or their spouse's aging parents, particularly those of the "sandwich generation" who provide intergenerational care. This extensive caregiving responsibility is reinforced by the cultural concept of *utang na loob*, a deep sense of duty and indebtedness to one's parents that disproportionately falls upon women.[321]

Religious and cultural norms also influence women's participation. In predominantly Catholic communities, women are often perceived as the moral and familial anchors of the household.[322] While in Muslim-majority areas such as the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), traditional interpretations of Islamic

314   World Economic Forum 2024
315   World Economic Forum 2024
316   TheGlobalEconomy 2023
317   Republic of the Philippines 2023; World Bank 2025c
318   TheGlobalEconomy 2023
319   World Bank 2025a
320   World Bank 2021c
321   Estioko et al. 2023
322   World Bank 2021c

gender roles contribute to lower workforce participation, in a report from 2021 it was 29% for Islamic women compared with 72% for Islamic men.[323]

Gender discrimination further constrains women's access to employment. Pregnant women face hiring bias based on perceptions of reduced productivity or higher liability. Muslim women are 13 percentage points less likely to be employed than Roman Catholics, facing a "double barrier" of restrictive religious norms and Islamophobia in predominantly non-Muslim workplaces.[324]

Participation also varies by region, age, and family structure. Urban women's labour-force participation peaks between ages 25–29 and again between 40–44, while rural women's participation increases gradually from 20–24 to a peak at 45–49, as many re-enter the workforce once their children are older.[325] Having young children reduces women's likelihood of working by 7.4% but increases men's likelihood by 3.8%, reflecting entrenched gender stereotypes that position men as breadwinners and women as caregivers.[326]

Educational attainment is a strong determinant of participation. Women with college or higher degrees are 27 percentage points more likely to join the labour force than those with primary education or below.[327] However, norms that undervalue women's education continue to persist. These beliefs, which assume that women's primary role is domestic, discourage some families from investing in girls' education. Conversely, highly educated women from affluent or migrant-supported households may choose not to work, citing financial security or social preference.[328]

During crises, lower-income women are especially vulnerable to withdrawal from the labour market. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, women from low-income households were more likely to cite childcare and eldercare as reasons for not working than women from higher-income groups. [329]

1.2 Employment patterns and pay gap

Filipino women remain heavily concentrated in **low paying and informal sectors**. National survey and World Bank data show that women cluster in low-wage occupations such as retail trade, domestic service, and community or social work, with a large share working without pay in family businesses or as unpaid household workers.[330] Informal employment limits access to job security, parental benefits, and health insurance. Many employed women work in private households, accounting for about 9% of all working women compared with just 1% of men. The vast majority of domestic workers are women, reinforcing norms that associate care work with women.[331] Caregiving responsibilities further reinforce informality. Women who leave formal jobs after childbirth often return through part-time, home-based, or informal work, perpetuating gendered occupational segregation and income inequality.[332]

Despite women's high educational attainment, a persistent **gender pay gap** remains. Among women who are employed, most are concentrated at either the lowest or highest ends of the pay scale. In 2019, at the lowest end, women earn 50% less than men and have limited opportunities for skills advancement.[333] At the higher end, women can earn 20% more than men, primarily due to their higher educational attainment.[334] A 2022 study by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies found that in digital-jobs women earned roughly 18.4 % less than men. [335]

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323   World Bank 2021c
324   Emily Christi A Cabegin and Gaddi 2019
325   World Bank 2021c
326   Emily Christi A Cabegin and Gaddi 2019
327   Emily Christi A Cabegin and Gaddi 2019
328   World Bank 2021c
329   World Bank 2021c)
330   World Bank 2021c; NEDA 2023
331   Castillo 2022
332   World Economic Forum 2021
333   World Bank 2021c
334   World Bank 2021c
335   Star and Fausto 2023

1.4 Leadership, political representation and access to capital

Women's participation in national political leadership in the Philippines is relatively strong in some aspects. The country has a history of women in leadership, with two former presidents being women.[336] However, women remain underrepresented overall. Women's representation in the National Congress increased from 15% in 2006 to 28% in 2020, still below parity.[337] Data gaps remain regarding **women in regional leadership**. However, in terms of overall women's political empowerment, the Philippines ranked 34th out of 148 countries in 2024.[338]

With regard to **high-paying and leadership positions**, in 2022 women held 48% of senior managerial positions and were overrepresented in professional roles.[339] However, data from the World Bank indicates that they remain underrepresented in top executive and board-level roles, holding only 43% of such roles within the public sector despite comprising 55% of its workforce.[340]

In terms of women's **access to capital, lending and loans**, women entrepreneurs in the Philippines own a large share of MSMEs but continue to face a gender finance gap. For example, fewer women applied for bank credit, and when they did, receive smaller amounts.[341] Although men continue to outnumber women in the Philippine stock market, women's participation has grown steadily in recent years. The share of female investors increased from 42% in 2013 to 48% in 2020, narrowing the gender gap by six percentage points.[342] Moreover, according to data from BrokerChooser, the Philippines ranks first globally, with women accounting for 44% of all investors, the highest proportion among 123 countries assessed.[343]

1.5 Gender norms and the care economy

Time spent on domestic work remains highly unequal. In 2023, women spent an average of 4.5 hours per day on unpaid care and domestic work, more than twice the 1.7 hours spent by men.[344] Nearly 90% of non-working married women cited household and family duties as their main reason for not seeking employment.[345]

Access to childcare is limited by quality and reliability factors. Public childcare is not widely used and faces availability, accessibility, and quality challenges, as responsibilities are devolved to the *barangay* or village level. Private sector services are often unaffordable, particularly for low-income households. As a result, many families remain reluctant to rely on childcare services. Instead, the prevailing belief is that mothers should stay home and care for their children, which is an option preferred by 76% of surveyed women.[346] Cultural reinforcement of these norms extends into schools, where children are often taught that mothers should be primary caregivers.[347]

Men's perception of women's work is gradually shifting, although other structural barriers remain intact. According to the World Values Survey, agreement with the statement *"men should have more right to a job than women"* has steadily declined. Yet, the belief that caregiving is primarily a woman's duty persists. Women who earn more than their husbands often face social backlash, while men report feelings of insecurity when their spouse's earnings exceed their own, reflecting enduring patriarchal values surrounding household authority.[348]

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336   World Economic Forum 2024
337   World Bank 2021a
338   World Economic Forum 2024
339   Campos 2022
340   World Bank
341   National Tax Research Centre 2022; The Sasakawa Peace Foundation 2023
342   National Tax Research Centre 2022
343   National Tax Research Centre 2022
344   Hanna et al. 2023a
345   World Bank 2021c
346   Belghith and Fernandez 2021
347   Emily Christi A Cabegin and Gaddi 2019
348   Emily Christi A Cabegin and Gaddi 2019

Philippines
Factsheet

Global gender gap score /1.00

0.781

20th
Global ranking

Educational attainment score/1.00

0.988

87th
Global ranking

Women's political empowerment score/1.00

0.377

30th
Global ranking

Workforce participation

50%

72%

Time spent on domestic work

Women: 4.5 hrs

Men: 1.7 hrs

"When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women"

69.1%
agreed in the World Values survey questionnaire

2. Findings & discussion

2.1 Gender-equal attitudes and practices

2.1.1 Prevalence of gender-equal attitudes and practices

This section examines the prevalence of gender-equal attitudes and behaviours, and the extent to which individuals actively support or advocate for gender equality as reported in SNAPS 2024.

It provides an overview of how widely gender-equal perspectives are held within the target population and the extent to which these attitudes translate into behaviours and advocacy that promotes equality, focussing on...

Key takeaways

- Most people support gender equality in all domains, but women's support was higher across all six domains.

- **Traditional gender norms remain strong:** Men expected women to take on more caregiving work. Just under 1 in 10 women anticipated doing more Caregiving and Domestic work themselves, while around 1 in 5 men expected their partners to take on these roles.

- **Often people are unable to translate gender-equal attitudes, aspirations or advocacy to their behaviour.**

Caregiving & domestic roles

Key takeaways

- **Most women and men held attitudes supportive of gender equality in caregiving and domestic roles:** The majority of participants supported that these tasks should be shared equally between women and men, indicating a gender-equal normative expectation. Women consistently reported slightly higher support for gender equality than men, by around 2–6 percentage points. Qualitative findings help explain this pattern, suggesting that as women took on more paid work, they favoured gender equality to ensure fairness in relationships and to avoid the double burden.

- **The majority of women and men held gender-equal aspirations but men expected women to take on more work in the home:** Aspirations for gender-equal Caregiving and Domestic roles were generally the same between women and men. However, a share of men (4-24%) and women (7-10%) still expected women to shoulder a greater share of domestic labour.

- **Attitudes did not always translate to behaviours:** Women and men overall expressed strong support for, and aspired to, gender equality in Caregiving and Domestic roles, but their actual behaviours lagged. This disconnect between attitude and behaviour is consistent with the conceptual framework which underscores that attitudinal change is insufficient to motivate personal behavioural change, preventing wider social norm update. For example, about one-third of all participants said women still did more Childcare and Housework than their male partners. However, for Dependent Adult Care, these figures were lower. Specifically, 21% of women and 26% of men reported that women took on more of the responsibility. Greater men's engagement in the Dependent Adult Care domain could reflect the Philippines cultural concept of *utang na loob*, a deep sense of duty and indebtedness to one's parents, potentially incentivising active care

from both women and men, though often falling disproportionately upon women.[349]

- **Another explanation for this attitude-behaviour gap might be due to the expectation formed from reference network:** According to Bicchieri, individuals often base their behaviour on the expectations of salient reference networks (e.g., partners, in-laws, employers).[350] If those groups signal approval for traditional roles, people may maintain unequal practices even when personally supportive of equality.

- **Women may overestimate partner's contributions:** A notable share of women (15–20%) said their male partners did most caregiving and housework, but only 7–13% of men claimed the same. This gap may suggest pluralistic ignorance or misperceptions of empirical expectations within households, differential sampling, or social desirability in self-reports.

- **A high level of advocacy for gender equality in Caregiving and Domestic roles was present among both women and men:** While a higher proportion of women identified as advocates (82-85%), more than three-quarters of men (74-76%) are also engaged in gender equality advocacy. In validation workshops, advocacy was defined broadly, including actions such as talking to friends and family or signing petitions on gender equality issues. These discussions suggested that involvement in long-term and strategic advocacy, such as active participation in gender-equality campaigns, may be more limited. In Bicchieri's terms, advocacy can serve as a public signal that updates perceived approval when visible to the right audience.[351]

- **Advocates may not always reflect gender equality in their personal lives:** Both women and men reported higher levels of advocacy than actual behaviours, suggesting that some advocates may not enact these principles at home. Qualitative narratives echoed this, with participants noting that it is often easier to advocate publicly than to challenge traditional norms in private, where social stigma and penalties are stronger.

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349 Estioko et al. 2023
350 Bicchieri 2017
351 Bicchieri 2017

Figure PH 1 Gender-equal attitudes and practices in Caregiving and Domestic roles
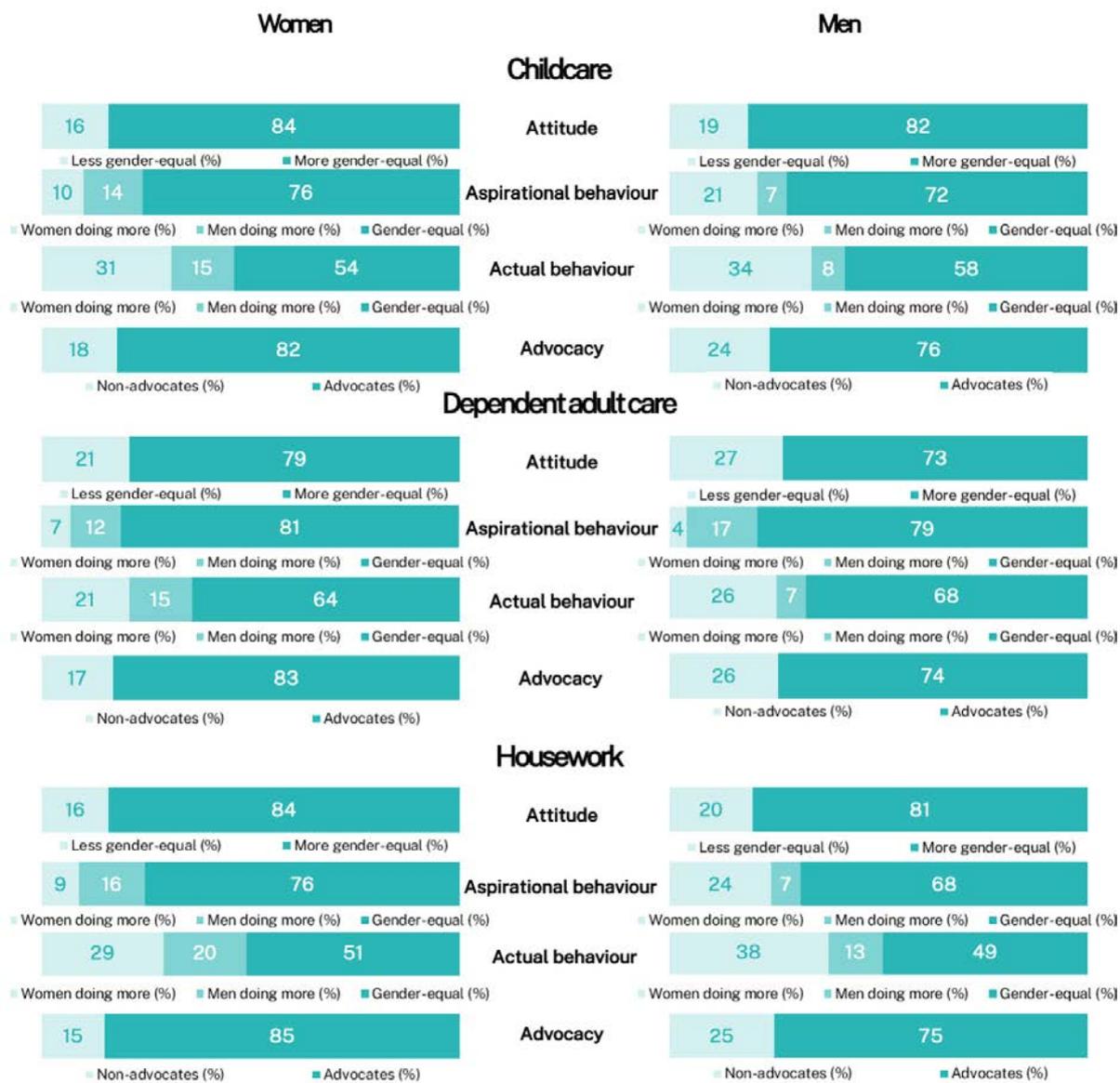
Note: This graph presents the proportion of responses by women and men. The analysis covers the domains of Childcare, Dependent Adult Care, and Housework, based on 2024 SNAPS survey data. A detailed explanation of how behaviours were captured can be found in **Note 3 – Annex 1**.

Economic roles

Key takeaways

- **Support for gender-equal economic role sharing was high, though the male breadwinner model persists:** A sizeable majority of women and men held gender-equal attitudes across all domains, with men's attitudes lagging behind women's by 4–7 percentage points. Consistent with other countries, the Earning Family Income domain had the least support from both women and men.

- **An attitude-behaviour gap emerges:** Among participants who were not yet married or in a partnership, a majority expressed gender-equal aspirations in all economic domains. However, across all domains, actual gender-equal behaviour was lower. This is consistent with the Conceptual Framework which suggests that attitudinal change is insufficient to motivate personal behavioural change, preventing wider normative change. Qualitative findings suggested that a key barrier to gender-equal behaviour for economic roles was the normative expectation that the man should be the primary breadwinner, along with structural factors such as inadequate childcare access or flexible work arrangements (particularly in urban areas requiring long commutes).

- **Advocacy is strong:** Strong advocacy for gender equality exists in economic roles for both women and men. As with previous findings, a higher proportion of women identified as advocates for gender equality in these domains compared to men, reflecting that gender equality may still be perceived as a 'woman's issue'. Similar with Caregiving and Domestic roles, higher levels of advocacy (79-88% of people depending on gender/domain) than actual behaviours were evident in the Economic roles across all domains, indicating barriers in translating advocacy to behaviours.

Figure PH 2 Gender-equal attitudes and practices in Economic roles[352]

Women | Men

Earning family income

Attitude
- Women: Less gender-equal (%) 21 | More gender-equal (%) 79
- Men: Less gender-equal (%) 28 | More gender-equal (%) 73

Aspirational behaviour
- Women: Men doing more (%) 21 | Women doing more (%) 3 | Gender-equal (%) 75
- Men: Men doing more (%) 17 | Women doing more (%) 20 | Gender-equal (%) 63

Actual behaviour
- Women: Men doing more (%) 34 | Women doing more (%) 12 | Gender-equal (%) 55
- Men: Men doing more (%) 25 | Women doing more (%) 21 | Gender-equal (%) 54

Advocacy
- Women: Non-advocates (%) 15 | Advocates (%) 85
- Men: Non-advocates (%) 21 | Advocates (%) 79

Job suitability

Attitude
- Women: Less gender-equal (%) 8 | More gender-equal (%) 92
- Men: Less gender-equal (%) 15 | More gender-equal (%) 85

Aspirational behaviour
- Women: Not applying for a role not traditionally associated with their gender (%) 30 | Applying for a role not traditionally associated with their gender (%) 70
- Men: Not applying for a role not traditionally associated with their gender (%) 38 | Applying for a role not traditionally associated with their gender (%) 62

Actual behaviour
- Women: In a role traditionally associated with their gender (%) 40 | In a role not traditionally associated with their gender (%) 60
- Men: In a role traditionally associated with their gender (%) 39 | In a role not traditionally associated with their gender (%) 61

Advocacy
- Women: Non-advocates (%) 12 | Advocates (%) 88
- Men: Non-advocates (%) 19 | Advocates (%) 81

Leadership

Attitude
- Women: Less gender-equal (%) 8 | More gender-equal (%) 92
- Men: Less gender-equal (%) 13 | More gender-equal (%) 87

Aspirational behaviour
- Women: Not staying in a leadership role (%) 15 | Staying in a leadership role (%) 85
- Men: Not staying in a leadership role (%) 12 | Staying in a leadership role (%) 88

Actual behaviour
- Women: Not in a leadership role (%) 47 | In a leadership role (%) 53
- Men: Not in a leadership role (%) 40 | In a leadership role (%) 60

Advocacy
- Women: Non-advocates (%) 13 | Advocates (%) 87
- Men: Non-advocates (%) 20 | Advocates (%) 80

Note: This graph presents the proportion of responses by women and men. The analysis covers the domains of of Earning Family Income, Job Suitability, Women's Leadership, based on 2024 SNAPS survey data. A detailed explanation of how behaviours were captured can be found in **Note 3 – Annex 1**.

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352 Note that of the sample 54% of women were employed compared to the national female labour force participation rate of 50% in 2025. Based on World Bank's World Development Indicators. The labour force participation rate is as percentage of population in each gender aged 15 and above based on modelled ILO estimate (World Bank Open Data 2025a)

2.1.2 Misperception of gender-equal attitudes and behaviours

This section explores the gap between participants' perceptions and the actual prevalence of gender-equal attitudes and behaviours for gender equality.

It focuses on whether individuals tend to underestimate how widely gender equality is supported and practiced in their communities (i.e. 'pluralistic ignorance' as per the conceptual framework). Understanding this perception gap helps identify areas where social norms may be misaligned with actual behaviours, shedding light on potential opportunities to correct the misperceptions and promote gender-equal practices.

Key takeaways

- **Misperceptions exist across all domains, though to varying degrees:** While both women and men tend to underestimate the gender-equal attitudes of their peers, they have a fairly accurate understanding of their peers' actual levels of gender equality in behaviours. In some cases, people even overestimate gender-equal behaviours in practice.

- **Women and men's perceptions of gender-equal attitudes and behaviours (empirical expectations) varied by domain, though being statistically insignificant:** Women often perceived higher levels of gender-equal attitudes than men in the economic domains. However, men often perceived higher levels of gender-equal behaviours than women in the caregiving domains. Qualitative work highlighted men may equate secondary 'helping' or 'assisting' with equality.

- **Women overestimated the percentage of women in roles not traditionally associated with their gender and in positions of leadership** – potentially attributable to the Philippines affirming history of high-ranking female political involvement. This would align with the Conceptual Framework's emphasis on showcasing positive deviance and gender-equal role-modelling to influence empirical expectations and downstream conditional preferences.

Table PH 1 Top three underestimations in gender-equal attitudes or behaviours

Caregiving & domestic roles ♡	Economic roles 🐷
Women's GE behaviours in Dependent Adult Care (12 p.p. ***)	**Women's GE attitudes in Women's Leadership** (14 p.p. ***)
Women's GE behaviours in Childcare (11 p.p. ***)	**Women's GE attitudes in Job suitability** (13 p.p. ***)
Women's GE behaviours in Housework (9 p.p. ***)	**Women's GE attitudes in Women's Leadership & Job suitability** (12 p.p. ***)

Note: Difference between perceived and actual attitudes or behaviours are presented in percentage points. (***) denotes statistically significant results at 95% confidence level.
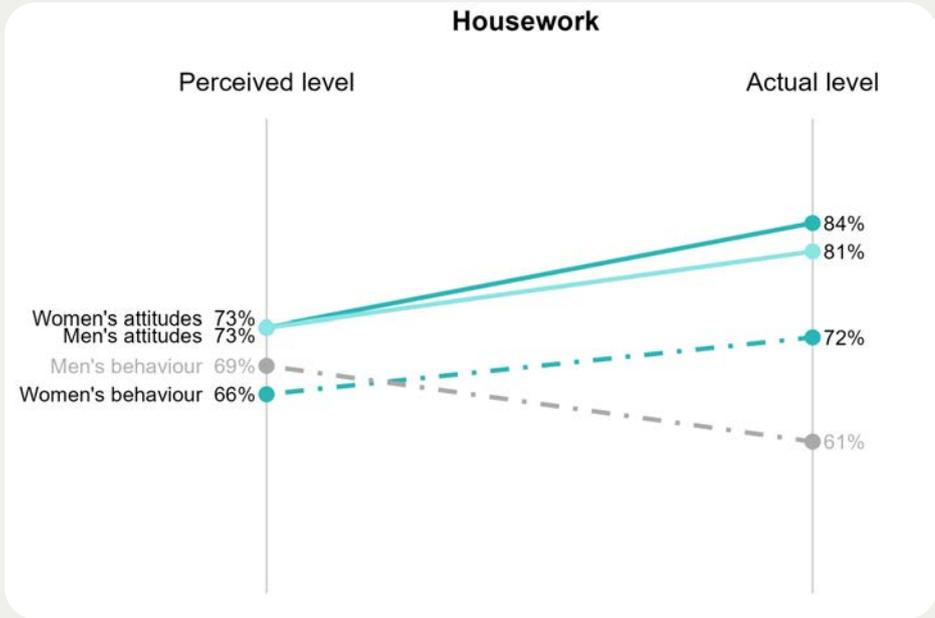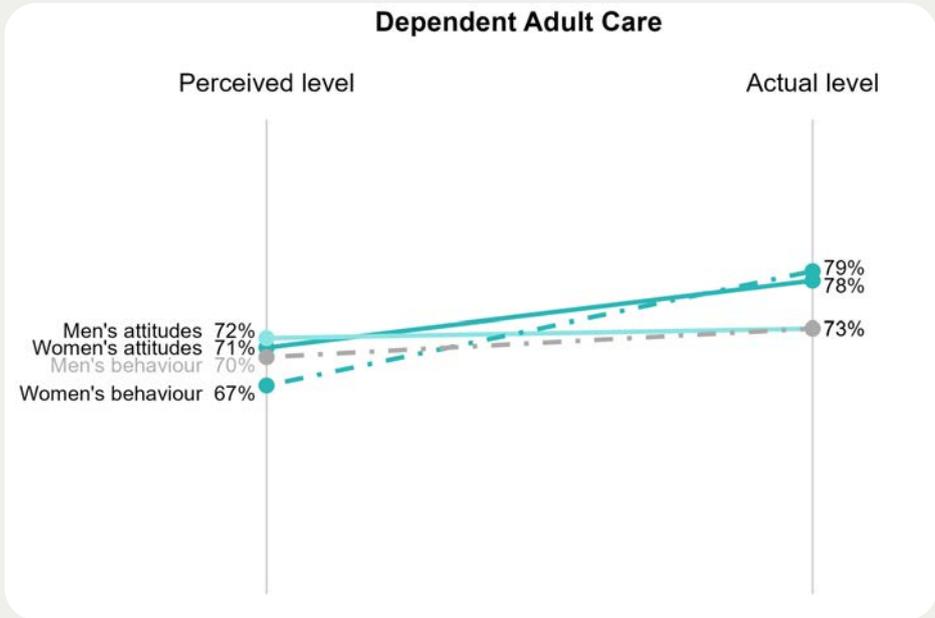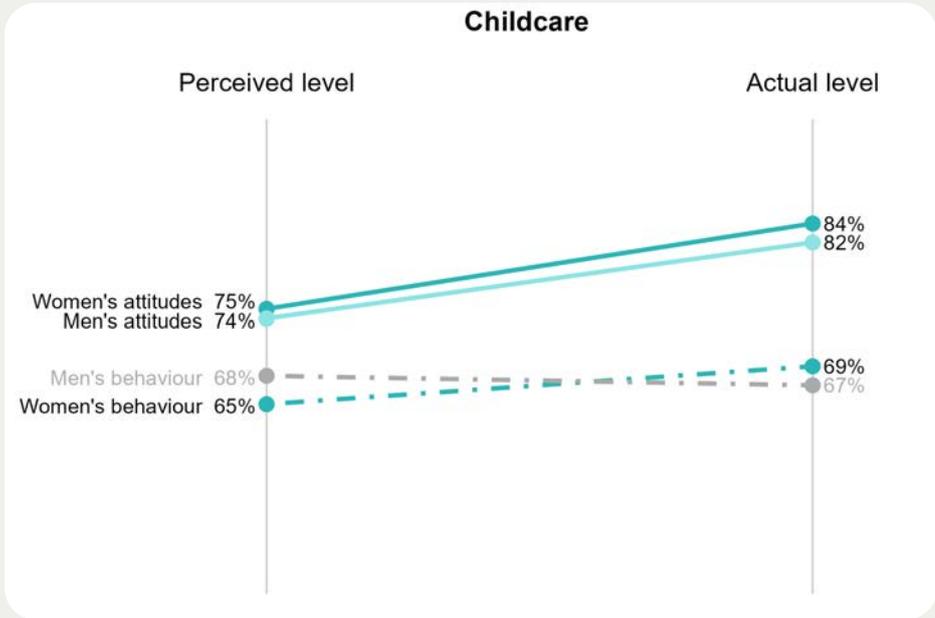
Caregiving & domestic roles

Key takeaways

- **Underestimations of gender-equal behaviour and attitudes are evident, though minimal:** Across all Caregiving and Domestic domains, gender-equal attitudes were higher than both women and men realised. Women further underestimated the gender-equal behaviours of their peers in all domains. This indicates the prevalence of pluralistic ignorance that could be addressed to potentially shift gender norms. Qualitative interviews highlighted the importance of high-salience, high-proximity reference networks (i.e. family, friends) in shaping perceptions of attitudes and behaviour. This could potentially create an echo chamber leading participants to underestimate gender-equal behaviours when these are not modelled within their immediate reference networks, even when broader public discourses may signal cases of normative shift.

- **Men's perceptions of gender-equal attitudes towards Housework was the largest underestimation:** In most domains, underestimations of peer's normative and empirical expectations was only around 1-11 percentage points. However, men underestimated the prevalence of gender-equal support for Housework by 18 percentage points – highlighting an area with particularly acute pluralistic ignorance. Given perceived behaviour levels are comparatively accurate, showcasing positive deviance may be more effective when attempting to influence conditional preferences.

- **Men overestimated gender-equal behaviours among people like them, though these differences were statistically insignificant:** Overall, there was no clear evidence of pluralistic ignorance for men's behaviours. This suggests that men's perceived empirical expectations were closer to observed practice in these domains than women's. As per the point above, Bicchieri suggests that overestimations in favour of the desired behaviour change should not be alerted to the target cohort. Instead, examples that reinforce the desired behaviour should continue be highlighted.[353]

- **Women and men's perceptions differ:** Men's perceptions of gender-equal behaviours (though not attitudes, which varied and was statistically insignificant) were higher than women's in all sub-themes. This potentially signals that (1) men overestimate the extent to which gender equality has been achieved and (2) women and men disagree on what constitutes gender-equal behaviour.

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353   Bicchieri 2022

Childcare

Perceived level | Actual level

Women's attitudes 75%
Men's attitudes 74%

Men's behaviour 68%
Women's behaviour 65%

84%
82%

69%
67%

Dependent Adult Care

Perceived level | Actual level

Men's attitudes 72%
Women's attitudes 71%
Men's behaviour 70%
Women's behaviour 67%

79%
78%
73%

Housework

Perceived level | Actual level

Women's attitudes 73%
Men's attitudes 73%
Men's behaviour 69%
Women's behaviour 66%

84%
81%
72%
61%

Figure PH 3 Misperception of gender equality in Caregiving and Domestic roles

Note: This graph illustrates the difference between perceived (left) and actual (right) levels of gender-equal attitudes (solid lines) and behaviours (dashed line) across domains (Childcare, Dependent Adult Care, and Housework). Results are shown separately for women (darker colour) and men (lighter colours). An upward slope indicates underestimation, where people perceive less equality than it actually exists, while a downward slope indicates overestimation, where perceived equality exceeds actual equality. Statistically significant differences at the 5% significance level are indicated by coloured lines. Statistically insignificant differences are indicated by the grey lines.

Economic roles

Key takeaways

- **Underestimations of gender equality are present:** Across all domains, both women and men underestimated levels of gender-equal attitudes. Underestimations were also present for men's perceptions of gender-equal behaviours in the earning family income domain and women's perceptions of behaviours in the leadership domain. Levels of underestimation varied by domain, meaning targeted interventions may be more effective in certain contexts.

- **Women overestimated the proportion of women were in occupations not traditionally associated with their gender as well as the number of women in leadership positions:** This overestimation could be attributed to the Philippines' history of women's representation high political office, including former presidents and vice presidents. However, the overall representation of women in political offices and managerial roles in the Philippines remains far from parity. [354]This finding speaks to the importance of not assuming

pluralistic ignorance and ensuring that efforts to progress gender equality are continued, despite potential perceptions this may have already been achieved. In communications intended to influence normative and empirical expectations, Bicchieri advises against noting inflated perceptions of supportive attitudes or behaviours.[355]

- **Women's perceptions of, and actual, levels of support for gender equality were higher than men's in all domains for economic roles:** However, men's perceptions of gender-equal behaviours in the earning family income domain was higher than women's – signalling women and men may not share consensus on what equality in economic roles constitutes

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354   World Economic Forum 2024
355   Bicchieri 2017
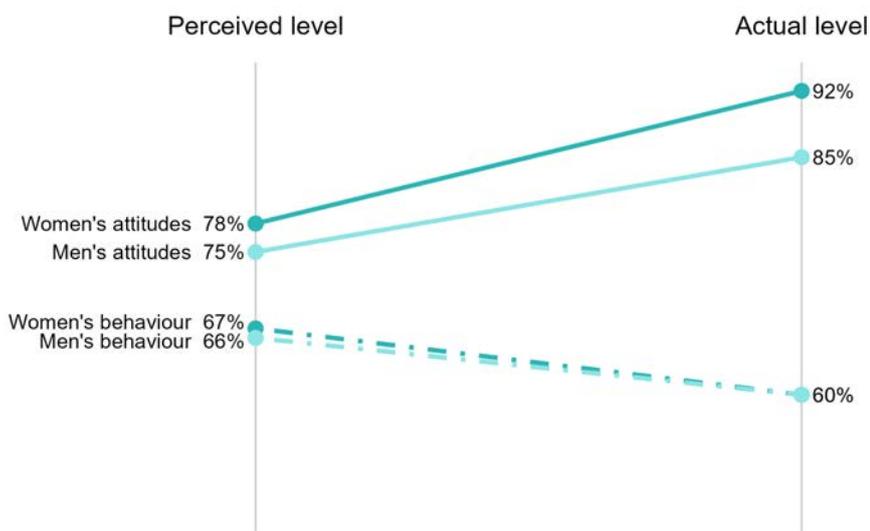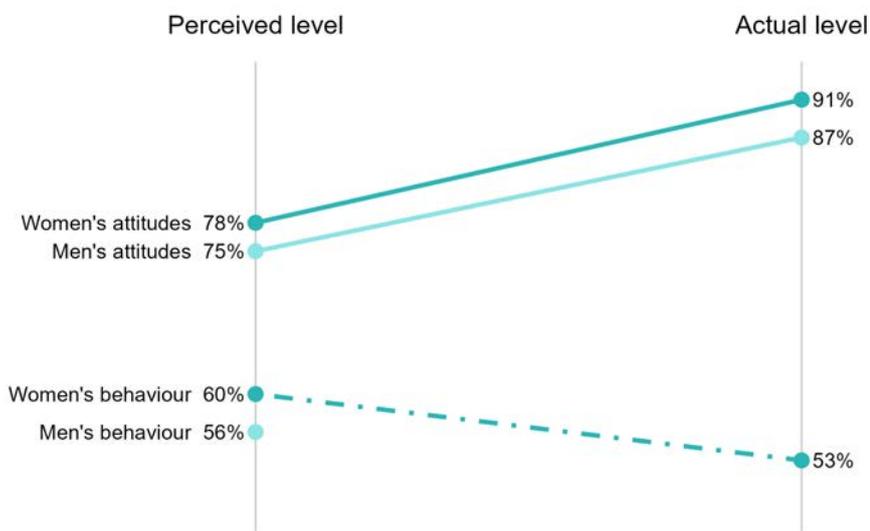
Figure PH 4
Misperception of gender equality in Economic roles

Earning Family Income

Perceived level | Actual level

Women's attitudes 73%
Men's attitudes 71%
Men's behaviour 68%
Women's behaviour 68%

79%
76%
72%
68%

Job Suitability

Perceived level | Actual level

Women's attitudes 78%
Men's attitudes 75%

Women's behaviour 67%
Men's behaviour 66%

92%
85%

60%

Women's Leadership

Perceived level | Actual level

Women's attitudes 78%
Men's attitudes 75%

Women's behaviour 60%
Men's behaviour 56%

91%
87%

53%

Note: This graph illustrates the difference between perceived (left) and actual (right) levels of gender-equal attitudes (solid lines) and behaviours (dashed line) across domains (Earning Family Income, Job Suitability and Women's Leadership). Results are shown separately for women (darker colour) and men (lighter colours). An upward slope indicates underestimation, where people perceive less equality than it actually exists, while a downward slope indicates overestimation, where perceived equality exceeds actual equality. Statistically significant differences at the 5% significance level are indicated by coloured lines. Statistically insignificant differences are indicated by the grey lines.
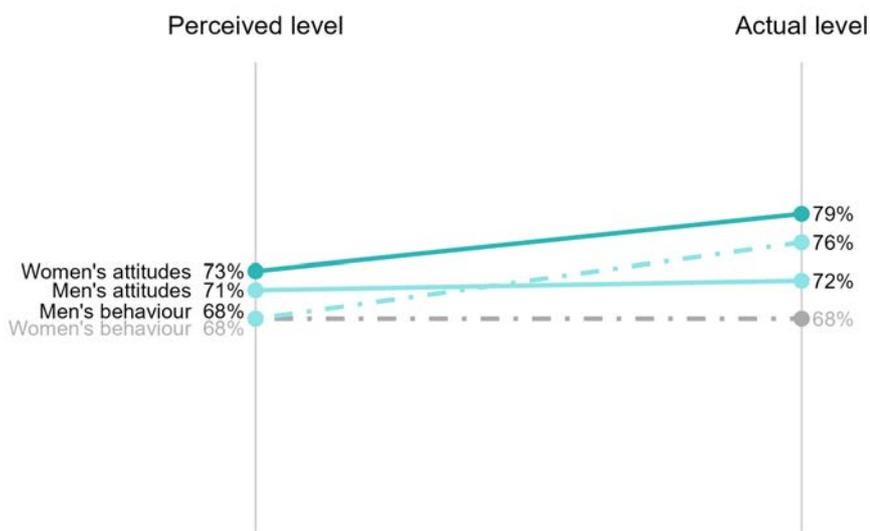
2.2 Characteristics associated with gender-equal attitudes and practices

2.2.1 Characteristics associated with gender-equal practices

This section presents the quantitative analysis of socio-demographic patterns and the factors associated with gender equality.

It first explores key socio-demographic differences among groups with varying levels of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy, such as differences by age, gender, ethnicity, and family structure. It then examines the factors that shape individuals' attitudes and practices related to gender equality, examining how upbringing, media exposure, and cultural determinants may influence how people perceive and practice equality in their daily lives.

Key takeaways

- **Gender-equal role models – whether in everyday life, the media or their upbringing – appeared to empower women to adopt more gender-equal behaviours:** This signals the importance of highlighting positive deviance to influence empirical expectations.

- **However, exposure to gender-equal upbringing or media was occasionally negatively associated with gender-equal behaviours and advocacy among men:** This underscores the need for further research on the mechanisms through which gender-equal initiatives influence practices.

- **Socio-demographic and household factors:** Socio-demographic characteristics and household situations were also associated with advocacy and behaviours, though these associations were not consistent across women and men or domains.

- **Gender-equal attitudes were linked to gender equality advocacy but not gender-equal behaviours:** This accords with Bicchieri's theory of normative change – individual attitudes do not signal meta-level change and highlights that normative and empirical expectations (and perceived costs) still need to shift to create normative change. [356]
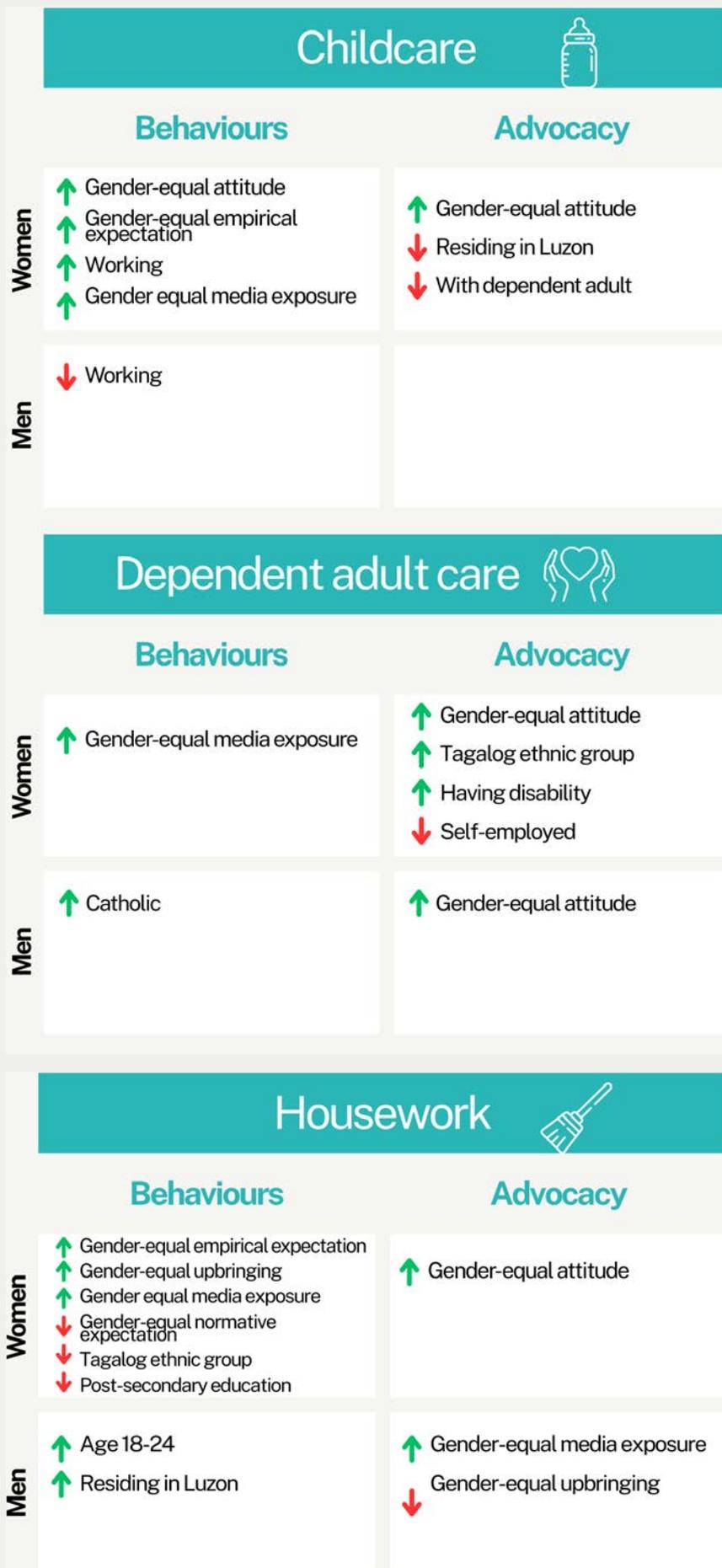
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Caregiving & domestic roles

Key takeaways

- **Gender equality role models are important for women's gender-equal behaviours:** Having gender-equal attitudes, gender-equal empirical expectations, gender-equal media exposure, and having a gender-equal upbringing was positively correlated with more gender-equal behaviours for women. This highlights the importance of gender-equal representation to encourage positive deviance from traditional norms. Noticeably in all sub-themes media showed a positive association with gender-equal behaviours for women. Experts interviewed during the qualitative research phase similarly emphasised the importance of media as a valuable resource to be leveraged in interventions. These associations support Bicchieri's claim[357] that public signals are an effective means to shift what is considered a typical behaviour and approved of within reference networks.

- **Normative expectations show unexpected results:** Women who believed others expected equal sharing of Housework responsibilities were less likely to exhibit gender-equal behaviour in Housework. In the qualitative interviews, less gender-equal normative expectations were often rejected by participants who sought to independently craft household dynamics between themselves and their partner, although it is recognised this could just be reflective of the sample interviewed. However, it is further plausible that participants would reject gender-equal normative expectations for the same reasons. This pattern points to possible misalignment between perceived broader approval (i.e. households are becoming more gender-equal) and normative expectations within participant's immediate reference networks (e.g., partner/in-laws). This suggests the influence of changing normative expectations among the reference networks that may sanction behaviours.

- **Demographic factors are significantly associated with women's behaviours:** Some demographic factors were linked to less gender-equal practices in sharing housework. Specifically, individuals identifying as Tagalog and women with post-secondary education were negatively associated with gender-equal behaviours. Cultural norms tied to ethnic backgrounds, as noted in the validation workshops, may help explain these patterns. Additionally qualitative work suggested that despite higher education levels among younger generations of women, they still face traditional expectations to lead Caregiving and Domestic work as social norms are collectively interwoven across generations.

- **Demographic factors are also significantly associated with men's behaviours:** The only factor associated with a lower likelihood of men's gender-equal behaviours was being employed, which is likely due to the male-breadwinner norm. In contrast, Catholic men, men in the 18-24 age group, and men residing in Luzon, were more likely to report gender-equal behaviours. This was echoed in qualitative findings where generation, region and age were raised as factors influencing more gender-equal attitudes and behaviours, suggesting cohort- and location-specific reference networks where empirical and normative expectations are already shifting

- **Gender-equal attitudes are positively associated with advocacy, but time constraints inhibit action:** Gender-equal attitudes were associated with advocacy in domains. Consistent with the Conceptual Framework attitudes did not always translate to behaviour. However, advocacy was lower among women if residing Luzon, caring for dependents, or self-employed. Qualitative findings indicated this is likely due to time constraints and income precarity, suggesting that perceived costs of compliance might keep conditional preferences from shifting even when underlying beliefs are supportive.

- **Role models have varying connection to men's gender-equal practices:** For men, aside from gender-equal attitudes, exposure to gender-equal media was positively associated with advocacy. However, men who experienced a gender-equal upbringing were surprisingly less likely to be advocates. This could suggest that they did not perceive a need to advocate for this behaviour, as they may overestimate gender-equal normative expectations surrounding caregiving. Alternatively, if nominally 'gender-equal' behaviours are necessitated during upbringing (i.e. absent father means mother must take on caring and work) and this is perceived as having a negative impact on familial wellbeing, men may adopt more traditional views towards household roles. Ultimately, further research is needed to test assumptions and tease out explanations.

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Figure PH 5 Factors associated with gender-equal practices in Caregiving and Domestic roles

Note: This figure shows factors associated with gender-equal behaviours and advocacy across Caregiving and Domestic roles in the Philippines. Only factors that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level are shown. Blank cells indicate that no factors were associated with a given practice.

Childcare

	Behaviours	Advocacy
Women	↑ Gender-equal attitude ↑ Gender-equal empirical expectation ↑ Working ↑ Gender equal media exposure	↑ Gender-equal attitude ↓ Residing in Luzon ↓ With dependent adult
Men	↓ Working	

Dependent adult care

	Behaviours	Advocacy
Women	↑ Gender-equal media exposure	↑ Gender-equal attitude ↑ Tagalog ethnic group ↑ Having disability ↓ Self-employed
Men	↑ Catholic	↑ Gender-equal attitude

Housework

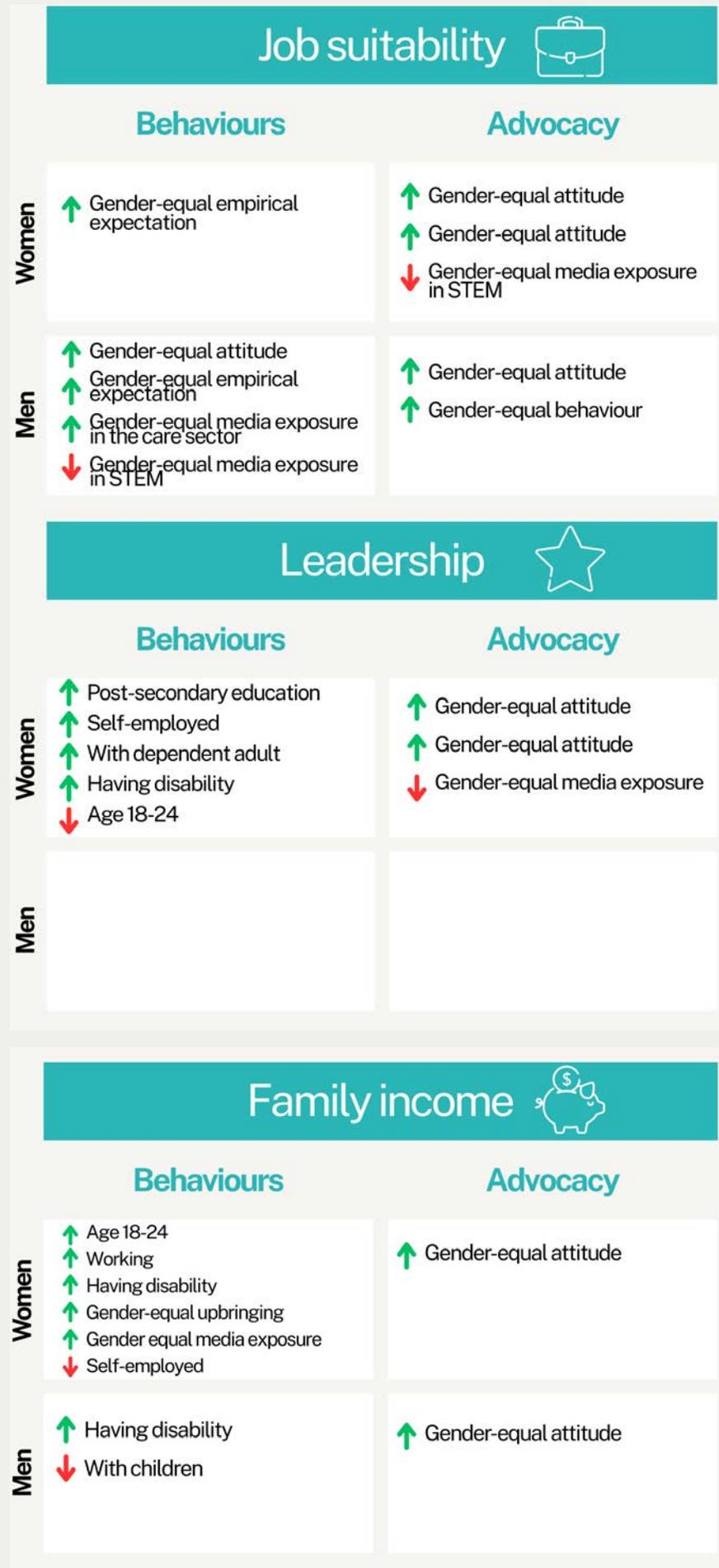|	Behaviours	Advocacy
Women	↑ Gender-equal empirical expectation ↑ Gender-equal upbringing ↑ Gender equal media exposure ↓ Gender-equal normative expectation ↓ Tagalog ethnic group ↓ Post-secondary education	↑ Gender-equal attitude
Men	↑ Age 18-24 ↑ Residing in Luzon	↑ Gender-equal media exposure ↓ Gender-equal upbringing

Economic roles

Key takeaways

- **Role models matter:** Similar to Caregiving and Domestic roles, women's exposure to positive deviance from traditional gender norms was significantly associated with their gender-equal behaviours in Economic roles. Having a gender-equal upbringing and media exposure, and gender-equal empirical expectations were all associated with gender-equal behaviours. These cues update empirical expectations around women's earning and leadership and, when publicly accepted, strengthen normative expectations. This sentiment was echoed in qualitative interviews: *"I think since I am very aware and conscious of these roles, it really comes from being influenced by my mom... Household responsibilities should be shared. It should be a partnership where both of us contribute."* (Participant 6, Philippines).

- **Various demographic factors were additionally associated with more gender-equal behaviours for women** – speaking to the importance of targeted interventions leveraging audience segmentation and considering the role that different reference networks and opportunity structures have on shaping expectations. See **PH6** for details.

- **Informal work may impact gender equality:** being self-employed was had a negative associated with gender-equal behaviours for earning family income. Participants in the validation workshop noted that women's self-employment in the Philippines often takes the form of informal work – a choice frequently driven by constrained options and characterised by low income and protections. As such, self-employed women may be less able to model gender-equal income earning behaviours due to a combination of structural barriers, higher perceived costs and weaker approval signals.

- **Men as breadwinners:** Among men, having children was associated with a lower likelihood of reporting gender-equal family income-earning behaviour, highlighting the increased pressure on men to serve as primary providers as the family grows. While the analysis did not explicitly consider income, one interview participant further reflected on how breadwinning norms interact with class: "In the Philippines, it is widely acknowledged that both women and men can work. However, when we look at different social classes, particularly in lower-income groups, there is still an expectation that women handle domestic tasks while men focus on earning income." (Participant 6, Philippines)

- **The role of disability:** While there is a negative association between men with children and gender-equal behaviours in the earning family income domain, the inverse relationship was found for men with disabilities. Qualitative findings hinted this may be due to the additional challenges faced in navigating structural and individual circumstances related to disability, potentially necessitating a more gender-equal approach – one participant reported her father's depression meant he was responsible for care work while her mother was the primary earner. This suggests that changing structural and household circumstances can recalibrate empirical and normative expectations and open space for renegotiating roles.

- **Gender-equal attitudes were positively associated with advocacy across all domains of economic roles for both women and men, as were gender-equal behaviours for women in some domains.** However, exposure to gender-equal media was negatively associated with advocacy among women in two out of three domains. Such media might disproportionately highlight the challenges women face in these sectors which could discourage advocacy, sending public signals that do not always reflect supportive private beliefs. One participant from the general public interviews noted that the media often espoused messages promoting women's employment to increase economic growth – meaning that such messaging may create a perverse outcome if not perceived as a genuine attempt to empower women or is associated with creating a double burden of care.

Figure PH 6 Characteristics associated with gender-equal practices in Economic roles

Note: This figure shows characteristics associated with gender-equal behaviours and advocacy across domains in Economic roles in Malaysia. Only characteristics that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level are shown. Blank cells indicate that no factors were statistically significant. Analysis for the leadership domain is not available for men due to its irrelevance.

Job suitability

Behaviours

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal empirical expectation

Men
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↑ Gender-equal empirical expectation
- ↑ Gender-equal media exposure in the care sector
- ↓ Gender-equal media exposure in STEM

Advocacy

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↓ Gender-equal media exposure in STEM

Men
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↑ Gender-equal behaviour

Leadership

Behaviours

Women
- ↑ Post-secondary education
- ↑ Self-employed
- ↑ With dependent adult
- ↑ Having disability
- ↓ Age 18-24

Men

Advocacy

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↓ Gender-equal media exposure

Men

Family income

Behaviours

Women
- ↑ Age 18-24
- ↑ Working
- ↑ Having disability
- ↑ Gender-equal upbringing
- ↑ Gender equal media exposure
- ↓ Self-employed

Men
- ↑ Having disability
- ↓ With children

Advocacy

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude

Men
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude

2.2.2 Interconnectedness between attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy

Using latent profile analysis, the profiles on the next page illustrate how attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy align within the population, highlighting patterns that range from low alignment to strong consistency in support for gender equality.
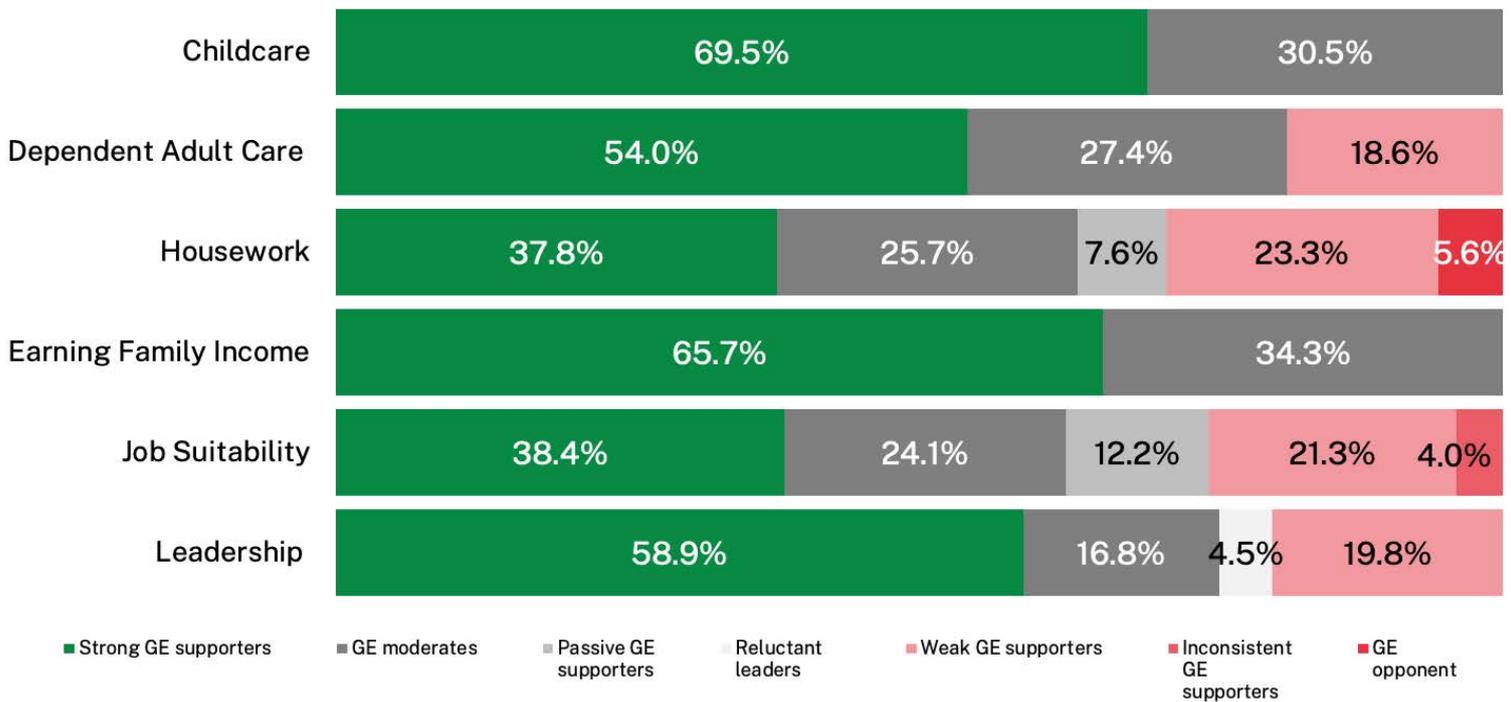
It is noteworthy that the profiles were built relative to each domain and are consistent within each domain, separate for women and men (therefore cross-domain comparison is unachievable). The profiles for gender equality (GE) within the Childcare domain are relatively similar, but not identical, to the GE profiles in the Dependent Adult Care domain. Some profiles, such as GE Opponents, Reluctant Leaders and Moderately Strong GE supporters profiles, appear as standalones because there is no closely matching profile in other domains. Domains with a greater diversity of combinations in gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy may result in a larger number of profiles.

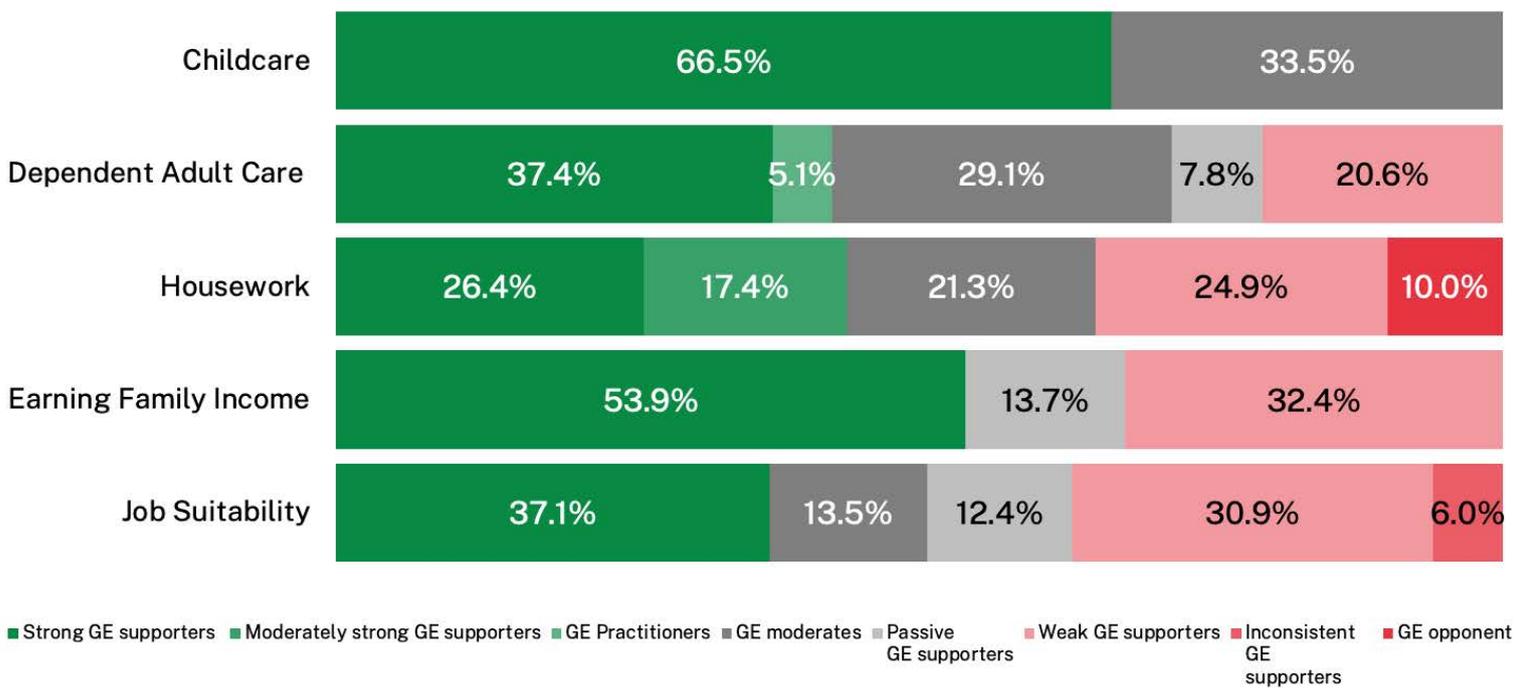**The list of profiles identified in each domain is shown on the next page.**

Key takeaways

- **Normative expectations showed a consistent association:** Across most domains (Childcare, Dependent Adult Care, Housework, and Earning Family Income), profile membership was strongly associated with perceived societal approval of gender-equal roles. This association was clearer for men (where expectations consistently related to profile segmentation) than for women, whose profiles were connected more to caregiving responsibilities, education, and household roles. This is consistent with qualitative findings which suggested the importance of similar variables.

- **Divergent gendered pathways exist:** In Caregiving and Domestic roles, women's advocacy closely followed their gender-equal attitudes, while men often reported higher advocacy than their attitudes, suggesting their engagement was driven more by external expectations than internal beliefs.

- **Structural and relational constraints were present:** Passive profiles emerged for women in Income and Housework, reflecting constraints such as non-cooperative partners or unequal household arrangements. Among men, distinctive Passive GE and GE Bystander profiles in adult care highlighted similar barriers: either strong attitudes/advocacy without behaviours, or behaviours without advocacy.

- **Economic and work-related roles showed mixed results:** In earning family income, women's profiles were associated with normative expectations and caregiving responsibilities, while men's were more strongly influenced by empirical expectations and ethnicity. In Job Suitability, neither normative nor empirical expectations related to profile segmentation; instead, socio-economic factors such as age, ethnicity, caregiving, and self-employment shaped membership.

Figure PH 7.1 Profile composition across domains – Women

Domain						
Childcare	69.5%		30.5%			
Dependent Adult Care	54.0%	27.4%		18.6%		
Housework	37.8%	25.7%	7.6%	23.3%	5.6%	
Earning Family Income	65.7%		34.3%			
Job Suitability	38.4%	24.1%	12.2%	21.3%	4.0%	
Leadership	58.9%	16.8%	4.5%	19.8%		

■ Strong GE supporters ■ GE moderates ■ Passive GE supporters ■ Reluctant leaders ■ Weak GE supporters ■ Inconsistent GE supporters ■ GE opponent

Figure PH 7.2 Profile composition across domains – Men

Domain							
Childcare	66.5%		33.5%				
Dependent Adult Care	37.4%	5.1%	29.1%	7.8%	20.6%		
Housework	26.4%	17.4%	21.3%	24.9%	10.0%		
Earning Family Income	53.9%	13.7%	32.4%				
Job Suitability	37.1%	13.5%	12.4%	30.9%	6.0%		

■ Strong GE supporters ■ Moderately strong GE supporters ■ GE Practitioners ■ GE moderates ■ Passive GE supporters ■ Weak GE supporters ■ Inconsistent GE supporters ■ GE opponent

Note: This figure presents the distinct women's and men's profiles identified within each domain. Profiles were determined through latent profile analysis based on participants' attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy, conducted separately for each domain. Only women's profiles were examined for the Leadership domain.

Childcare domain

- **Both women and men show comparable profile splits, with roughly three-quarters positioned in the Stronger GE supporters profile:** This indicates that, despite some gendered differences in determinants, the overall balance of support is similar across both women and men.

- **Normative expectations underpin stronger profiles:** Among both women and men, Strong GE supporters reported higher gender-equal normative expectations, showing that peer/community approval reinforces stronger support for gender-equal childcare.
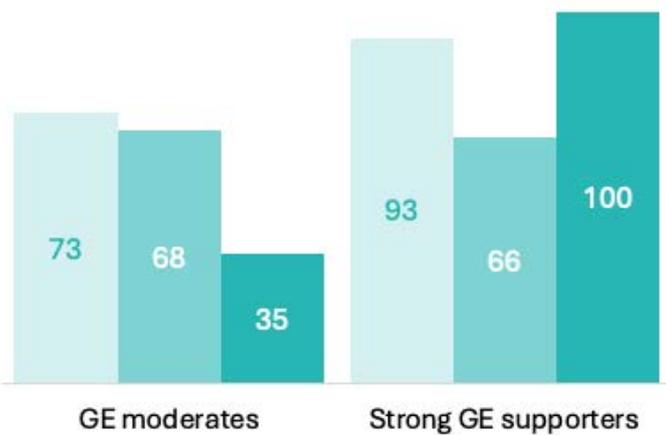
- **For men, residing in Luzon were associated with stronger GE support, while being self-employed was less common among strong supporters.**

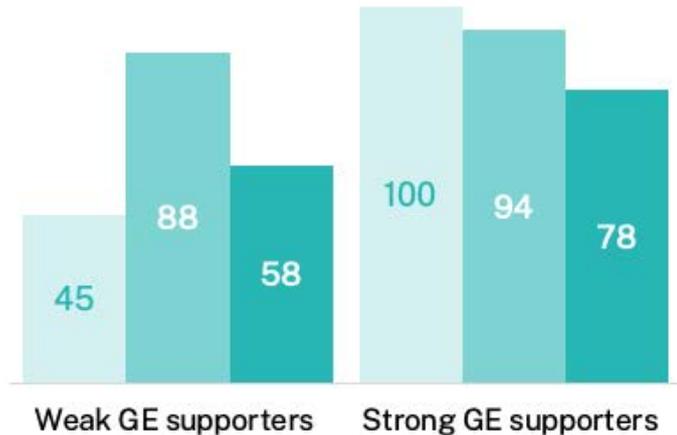**Figure PH 8** Segmentation profiles in the Childcare domain

Women

% GE attitudes   % GE behaviours   % GE advocates

	GE moderates			Strong GE supporters	
73	68	35	93	66	100

Key characteristics	GE moderates (29%)	Strong GE supporters (71%)
GE normative expectation (%)	67	78

Men

% GE attitudes   % GE behaviours   % GE advocates

	Weak GE supporters			Strong GE supporters	
45	88	58	100	94	78

Key characteristics	Weak GE supporters (28%)	Strong GE supporters (72%)
GE normative expectation (%)	67	81
Reside in Luzon (%)	48	61
Self-employed (%)	15	8

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure PH 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.

Dependent Adult Care domain

- **The share of Strong GE supporters is broadly similar across genders, but women's support is more decisively concentrated,** with just over half (53%) in the strong supporter profile and the remainder split between GE Moderates (20%) and Weak GE supporters (26%). Men show a comparable proportion of Strong GE supporters (44%), yet their overall distribution is more fragmented: in addition to GE Moderates (27%) and Weak GE supporters (17%), smaller groups fall into Passive GE supporters (7%) and GE Practitioner (6%), reflecting weaker and more disengaged forms of support.

- **GE Moderates and Strong GE supporters showed alignment:** Among both women and men, GE Moderates and Strong GE supporters demonstrated high and consistent acceptance across attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy, showing that stronger profiles are relatively stable across genders for this domain. This may reflect the cultural concept of *utang na loob*, a deep respect for elders, potentially motivating more gender-equal care (though literature notes the burden often falls upon women).[358]

- **Profile determinants differed by gender:** For women, age and education were fairly evenly distributed across profiles, suggesting that structural responsibilities rather
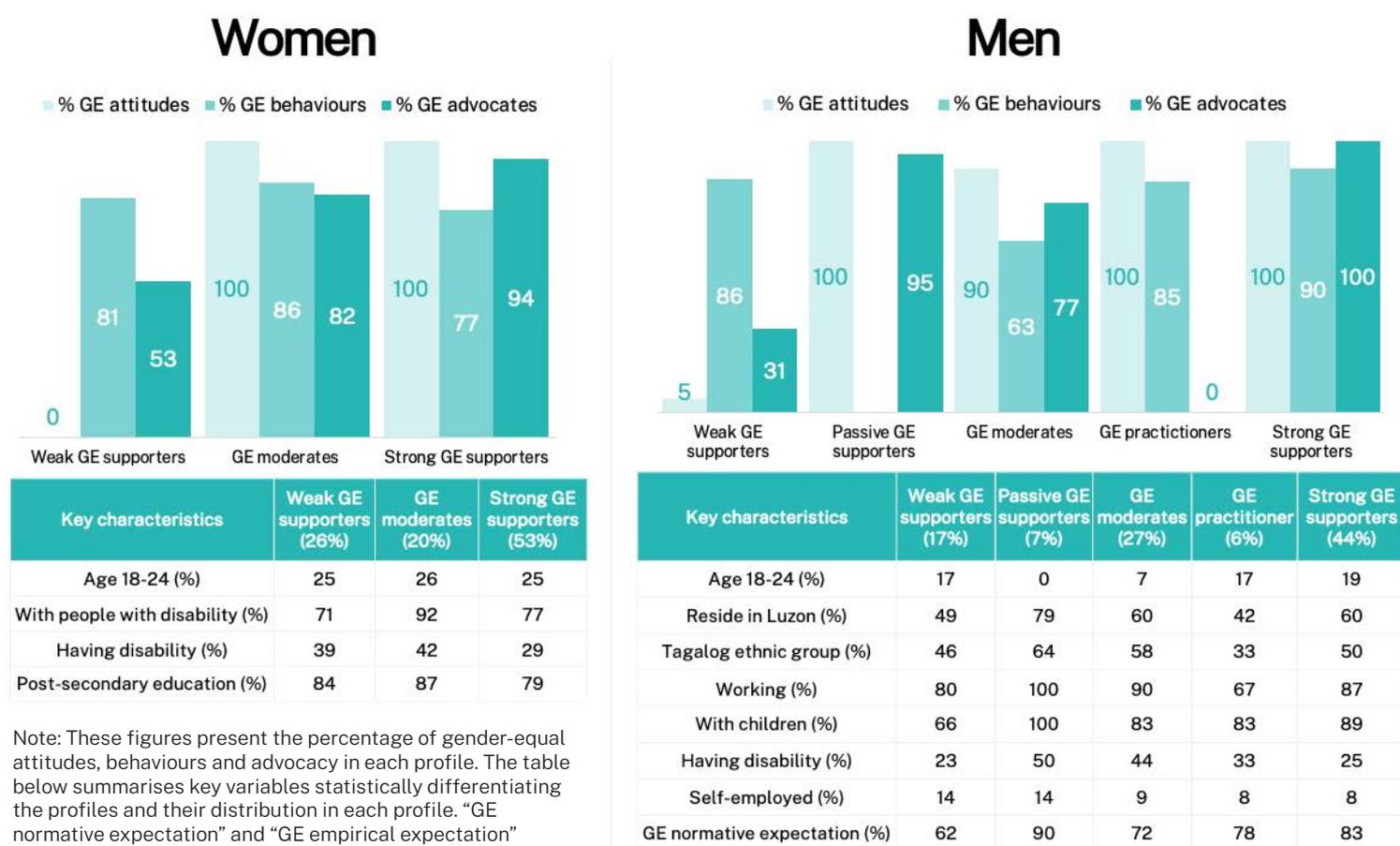
than demographics drive profile differences. For example, women living with people with disability or having a disability were more likely to be Moderate GE supporters. In contrast, men's profiles were more strongly shaped by family responsibilities (having children) and regional or ethnic factors. Employment status also differentiated men's profiles, with those working or self-employed more likely to fall into the Passive GE category.

- **Role of normative expectations:** Higher perceived normative expectations were associated with a greater likelihood of belonging to the Passive GE supporter profile among men. This shows that men's support for gender equality in adult care is more contingent on perceived societal approval. In contrast, neither normative nor empirical expectations were associated with women's profiles, indicating that women's engagement were less associated with external norms and more by structural and caregiving contexts. Similarly, qualitative interviews found that though there were a strong normative and empirical expectations of eldest daughters as primary carers for dependent adults, though these were often challenged by female participants, reflecting evolving norms.

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Figure PH 9 Segmentation profiles in the Adult Care domain

Women

Legend: % GE attitudes, % GE behaviours, % GE advocates

Key characteristics	Weak GE supporters (26%)	GE moderates (20%)	Strong GE supporters (53%)
Age 18-24 (%)	25	26	25
With people with disability (%)	71	92	77
Having disability (%)	39	42	29
Post-secondary education (%)	84	87	79

Men

Legend: % GE attitudes, % GE behaviours, % GE advocates

Key characteristics	Weak GE supporters (17%)	Passive GE supporters (7%)	GE moderates (27%)	GE practitioner (6%)	Strong GE supporters (44%)
Age 18-24 (%)	17	0	7	17	19
Reside in Luzon (%)	49	79	60	42	60
Tagalog ethnic group (%)	46	64	58	33	50
Working (%)	80	100	90	67	87
With children (%)	66	100	83	83	89
Having disability (%)	23	50	44	33	25
Self-employed (%)	14	14	9	8	8
GE normative expectation (%)	62	90	72	78	83

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure PH 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.
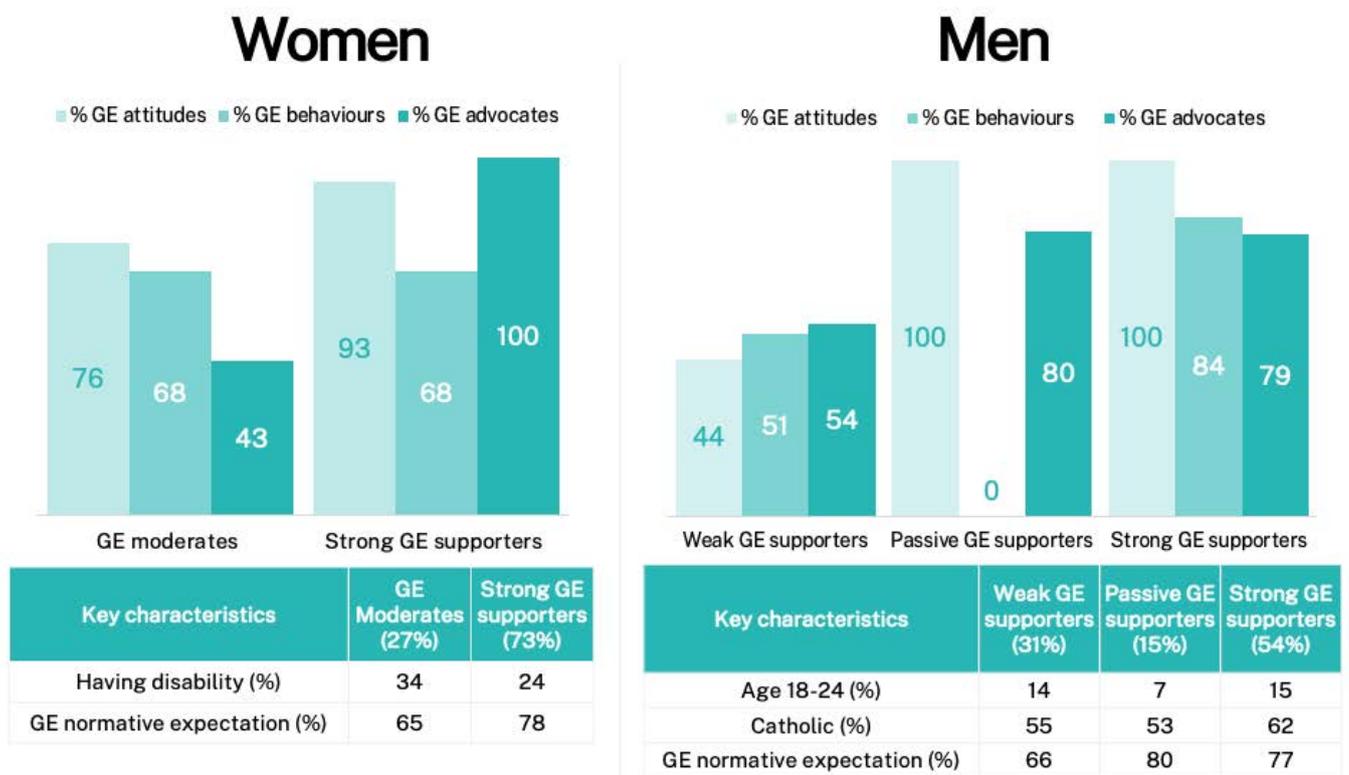
Housework domain

- **Women's support was heavily concentrated at the stronger end, with 73% classified as Strong GE supporters and the remaining 27% as Moderate GE supporters:** In contrast, men's distribution is more fragmented: while just over half (54%) are Strong GE supporters, sizeable minorities fall into weaker categories, including 31% Weak GE supporters and 15% Passive GE supporters. This suggests that women show a more unified and decisive acceptance of gender equality in Housework, whereas men's support is more divided.

- **Expectations as an important factor in determining stronger profiles:** For both women and men, normative expectations were significantly associated with profile membership. Women in the Strong GE supporter profile reported higher perceived societal approval of gender-equal Housework, while men in both Strong and Passive GE supporter profiles reported higher gender-equal normative expectations than Weak GE supporter profiles.

- **Religious affiliation as a secondary factor:** Among men, being Catholic was also linked to Strong GE supporter membership, indicating that cultural or religious identity may reinforce support for gender-equal sharing of housework.

Figure PH 10 Segmentation profiles in the Housework domain

Women

% GE attitudes   % GE behaviours   % GE advocates

| GE moderates | | | Strong GE supporters | | |
| 76 | 68 | 43 | 93 | 68 | 100 |

Key characteristics	GE Moderates (27%)	Strong GE supporters (73%)
Having disability (%)	34	24
GE normative expectation (%)	65	78

Men

% GE attitudes   % GE behaviours   % GE advocates

| Weak GE supporters | | | Passive GE supporters | | | Strong GE supporters | | |
| 44 | 51 | 54 | 100 | 0 | 80 | 100 | 84 | 79 |

Key characteristics	Weak GE supporters (31%)	Passive GE supporters (15%)	Strong GE supporters (54%)
Age 18-24 (%)	14	7	15
Catholic (%)	55	53	62
GE normative expectation (%)	66	80	77

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure PH 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.

Earning family income domain

- **Weak attitudinal support remains across less-gender-equal profiles:** Both women and men in the GE opponents and Weak GE supporters profile reported no gender-equal attitudes, underscoring that attitudes toward family income roles remain less gender-equal than in caregiving or domestic domains. Together, these two profiles accounted for 22% of women and 26% of men, indicating that a notable minority in both women and men continue to hold traditional views about income-sharing responsibilities. Qualitative interviews underscored the pervasiveness of the male-breadwinner model. However, accounts also suggested that career experience (for women), a commitment to financial autonomy (i.e. women witnessing a failure of the breadwinning norm), social class, generation, exposure to a more gender-equal reference network, and education act as moderating factors.

- **Gender-equal profiles were more common among men:** The combined share of men in Strong and Moderately strong GE supporters (54%) exceeded that of women in Strong GE supporters (46%). This suggests men are somewhat more represented in the most gender-equal income-related profiles. On the other hand, a small but notable share of women (12%) fall into the Passive GE profile, pointing to possible structural barriers that limit the translation of supportive attitudes into practice. Qualitative interviews suggested that a lack of care support (i.e. accessible child and elder care support), gender stereotypes, a lack of flexible workplaces, unsupportive partners, and normative expectations of gendered household roles acted as structural barriers to women's economic participation.

- **Normative expectations were associated with women's profiles (more likely among Passive and Strong GE supporters), whereas empirical expectations were associated men's profiles** (with a stronger gradient across levels of support). This suggests that men's progression is more influenced by observed practices in their social environment.

- **Socio-economic and demographic determinants existed:** Age, ethnicity, and caregiving responsibilities were significant determinants of profile membership for both women and men. Among women, respondents who are Tagalog, have children, and don't live with family members with disabilities were more likely to be Passive GE supporters. Among men, identifying as Tagalog or Catholic was associated with a reduced likelihood of being in the GE opponent profile.

Figure MY 11 Segmentation profiles in the Earning Family Income domain

Women

Key characteristics	GE opponents (1%)	Weak GE supporters (21%)	Passive GE supporters (12%)	GE moderates (20%)	Strong GE supporters (46%)
Age 18-24 (%)	0	16	23	24	21
Reside in Luzon (%)	50	62	72	69	73
Tagalog ethnic group (%)	25	58	70	55	56
Post-secondary education (%)	100	80	67	87	86
Self-employed (%)	25	10	12	13	8
With people with disability (%)	50	49	33	52	46
Having disability (%)	0	24	35	37	22
GE normative expectation (%)	39	62	86	69	80
With children (%)	100	89	98	85	84

Men

Key characteristics	GE opponents (5%)	Weak GE supporters (21%)	GE moderates (21%)	Moderately Strong (19%)	Strong GE supporters (35%)
Age 18-24 (%)	17	16	7	12	15
Tagalog ethnic group (%)	28	49	55	49	46
With children (%)	83	77	84	79	83
Catholic (%)	28	61	54	56	65
GE empirical expectation (%)	39	57	70	76	80

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure PH 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.
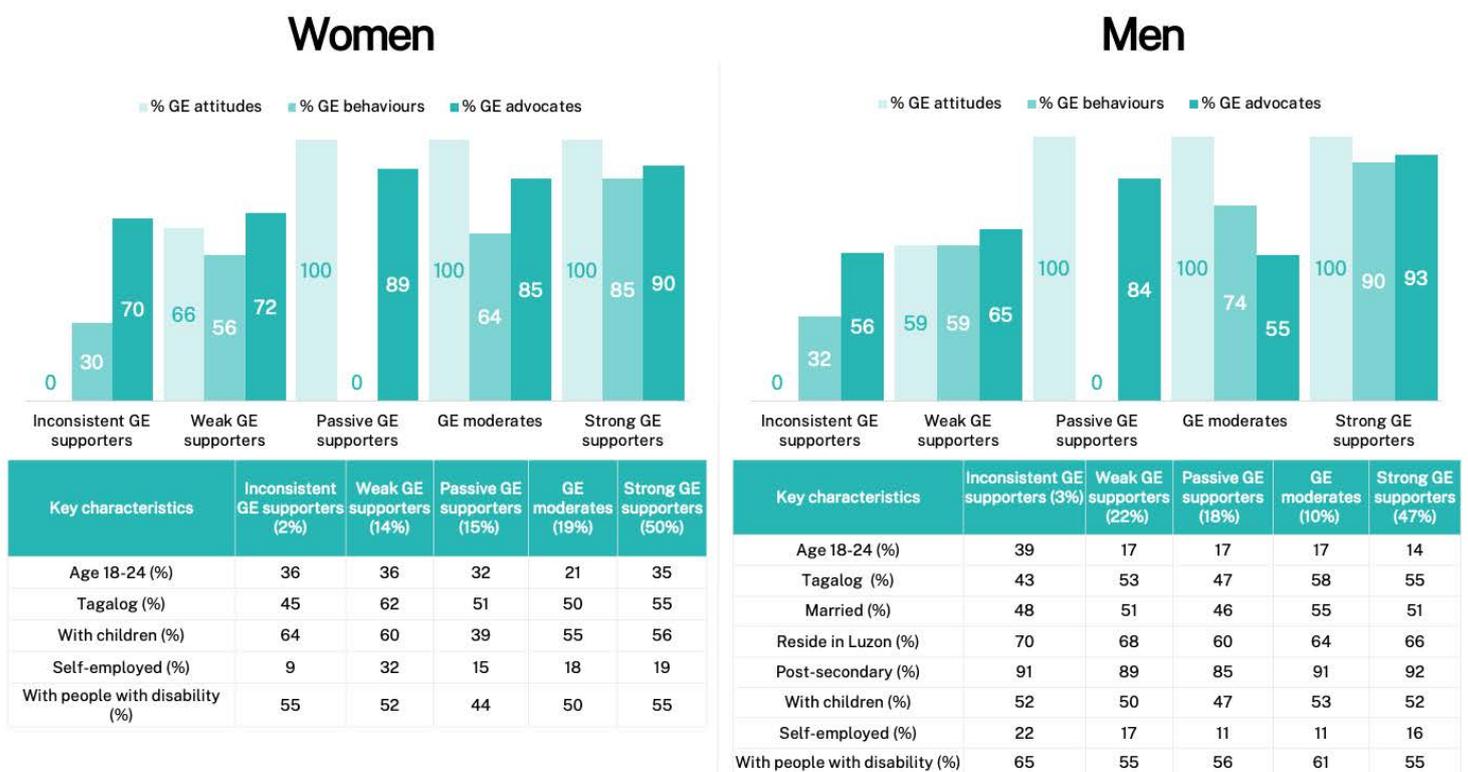
Job suitability domain

- **Overall distributions were broadly similar across women and men:** With about half of both women (50%) and men (47%) classified as Strong GE supporters. However, the middle and weaker profiles diverge. Women showed a more balanced spread across Weak GE (14%), Passive GE (15%), and GE Moderate (19%) supporters, whereas men were more heavily represented in the weaker categories, with 22% GE Weak and 18% Passive GE but only 10% Moderates. This suggests that while the proportion of strong supporters was comparable, women were more likely to cluster in the moderate category, whereas men were more concentrated in weaker and disengaged profiles.

- **The proportion of GE Moderates profile were similar for women at 20% and men at 21%:** Among women, although advocacy for the idea that gender should not determine Job Suitability is high (70%), only 41% were actually working in non-traditional roles. While this indicates a gap between advocacy and behaviour, it may also reflect structural barriers that limit women's opportunities to take on non-traditional roles despite their strong attitudes and support for gender equality.

- **The role of social expectations appeared limited:** Neither normative nor empirical expectations were associated with profiles for either women or men. This suggests that Job Suitability perceptions were more strongly associated by socio-demographic and structural contexts than by perceived societal approval or observed practice.

- **Socio-economic factors:** For women, ethnicity (Tagalog) and self-employment were associated with greater likelihood of belonging to the Weak GE supporters profile, and caregiving responsibilities (children, with people with disabilities) were less likely to belong to the Passive GE supporters profile. For men, age, caregiving, and employment were influential, with younger, self-employed, and living with family members with disabilities more likely to be Inconsistent GE supporters.

Figure PH 12 Segmentation profiles in the Job Suitability domain

Women

Legend: ■ % GE attitudes ■ % GE behaviours ■ % GE advocates

Key characteristics	Inconsistent GE supporters (2%)	Weak GE supporters (14%)	Passive GE supporters (15%)	GE moderates (19%)	Strong GE supporters (50%)
Age 18-24 (%)	36	36	32	21	35
Tagalog (%)	45	62	51	50	55
With children (%)	64	60	39	55	56
Self-employed (%)	9	32	15	18	19
With people with disability (%)	55	52	44	50	55

Men

Legend: ■ % GE attitudes ■ % GE behaviours ■ % GE advocates

Key characteristics	Inconsistent GE supporters (3%)	Weak GE supporters (22%)	Passive GE supporters (18%)	GE moderates (10%)	Strong GE supporters (47%)
Age 18-24 (%)	39	17	17	17	14
Tagalog (%)	43	53	47	58	55
Married (%)	48	51	46	55	51
Reside in Luzon (%)	70	68	60	64	66
Post-secondary (%)	91	89	85	91	92
With children (%)	52	50	47	53	52
Self-employed (%)	22	17	11	11	16
With people with disability (%)	65	55	56	61	55

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure PH 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.
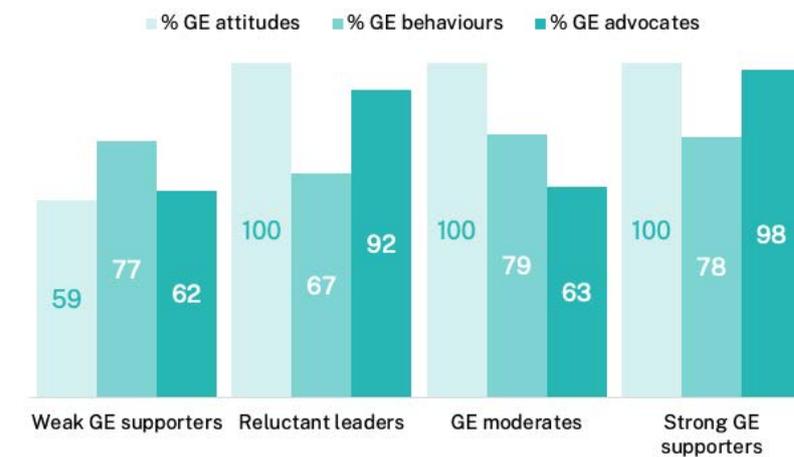
Women's Leadership domain

- **In the domain of women's leadership, support is strongly concentrated at the higher end:** Two-thirds of participants (67%) could be classified as Strong GE supporters. A further 10% fell into the GE Moderates profile. This pattern suggests broad acceptance of women's leadership, with only a minority expressing weaker or hesitant support.

- **Direct workplace experience isassociated with profile membership:** Since the sample used for analysis in this domain comprised only of women who were currently in a leadership position, exposure to professional environments likely reinforced the view that both women and men are equally capable leaders. This mirrors patterns observed in the Job Suitability domain, where workplace experience are connected attitudes and advocacy. This was also reflected by men in qualitative interviews, as summarised by Participant 2 "At my university, computer science is a heavily mixed field. There are women who excel and even dominate... Women are respected in the field, and many of them are student officers, leading student organisations."

- **Weak profile marked by low conviction:** Both Weak GE supporters and Reluctant leaders reported similar proportions of members in leadership positions. However, Weak supporters showed much lower attitudinal acceptance and advocacy, suggesting that holding leadership roles does not automatically translate into gender-equal attitudes or advocacy. Qualitative interviews underscored that economic necessity was a key determinant/enabler of women's employment, as such, women without gender-equal attitudes or advocacy may be motivated to take on a leadership role for financial reasons.

- **Socio-economic factors had varying results:** Respondents with disability, have dependent adult family members, or live with people with disabilities were more likely to be Weak GE supporters. Catholic respondents were more likely to be Moderate or Strong GE supporters.

Women

Legend: ■ % GE attitudes ■ % GE behaviours ■ % GE advocates

	Weak GE supporters	Reluctant leaders	GE moderates	Strong GE supporters
% GE attitudes	59	100	100	100
% GE behaviours	77	67	79	78
% GE advocates	62	92	63	98

Key characteristics	Weak GE supporters (15%)	Reluctant leaders (9%)	GE moderates (10%)	Strong GE supporters (67%)
Reside in Luzon (%)	70	70	59	65
Catholic (%)	46	52	65	65
With people with disability (%)	72	55	59	66
Having disability (%)	54	40	39	29
Tagalog (%)	45	60	48	55
Self-employed (%)	15	5	26	14
With dependent adult (%)	73	65	59	70
With children (%)	51	22	57	56

Figure PH 13
Segmentation profiles in the Women's Leadership domain

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure PH 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.

2.3 Factors influencing gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and social norms

2.3.1 Structural, contextual and normative factors

This section explores, based on qualitative work, the enabling and constraining contextual factors that shape gender-equal practices.

It focuses on understanding what influences individuals' attitudes and behaviours in caregiving and economic roles, both within households and in broader social contexts. This was investigated through 7 interviews held with the general audience from the Philippines in 2024 (see **Annex 2** for further details).

An ecosystem of normative and structural/contextual factors shaped caregiving and economic roles within Filipino households. These were observed to embed conventional scripts of gendered behaviour, or in the presence of supportive reference networks, household or personal necessity, affinity with more gender-equal values, or access to resources, behaviour could alternatively be decoupled from traditional expectations.

Personal identity and status beliefs

These beliefs shaped participants perspectives and behaviours on caregiving and earning responsibilities. For many women deviation from traditional expectations –particularly a desire to be financially independent –formed an integral part of their identity, as illustrated by Participant 3 *"Internally, I value independence and don't want to be financially reliant on anyone'"* For others, equal role sharing was driven by identification with the value of 'fairness' which superseded traditional gender roles, Participant 2 explains *"As a brother, as a man, I want to share household responsibilities equally to support my wife".* In these cases, conformity to traditional expectations required neglect of personal values and identity, encouraging the decoupling of behaviour from traditional normative and empirical expectations. Alternatively,

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359 Bicchieri 2017

Key takeaways

- **Naming and resisting norms helps in shifting choices:** When participants explicitly recognise/critique gender norms and ground roles in identity/fairness, plus negotiate with partners, their conditional preferences move toward sharing,

- **Structures can decide translation:** Flexible work, childcare/eldercare, education/skills, and partner/family support are pivotal enablers; without them, gender-equal attitudes rarely translate to behaviours.

- **Behaviour does not equal normative changes (yet):** Economic necessity/singlehood often drive more equal behaviours first (dual earning, men doing care), while normative approval may lag. As per Bicchieri,[359] descriptive change (i.e. empirical expectations) were shown to precede full social-norm change (i.e. normative and empirical expectations) towards gender-equality.

- **Sticky normative scripts persist but reference networks can shape these:** Unequal divisions were stabilised by the male (or eldest daughter) breadwinner and female caregiver norms, entrenched through gendered competency stereotypes and "men are just helping," and "different but equal" narratives of fairness.

- **Reference networks:** Can mediate conditional preferences, motivating positive deviance away from traditional expectations if the network is more gender-equal. Family is the main engine driving early normative and empirical expectations, friends/colleagues can refresh the descriptive signal, male-identifying partners are gatekeepers who can enable or block behavioural and normative change. Media and politics appear to shape the broader normative landscape.

traditional definitions of gender roles and attachment to these roles and values was suggested to entrench gendered expectations, Participant 7 alludes to how her identity as a woman endows her with gendered capability *"Based on my experience, women can do cooking and cleaning more effectively than men."*

Household communication and negotiation

This was used by many participants to ensure a more even household labour distribution, with Participant 6 explaining *"I think if I have a partner, communication will be really important...We need to have conversations and listen to each other...It's really about finding a setup that benefits both of us".* Communication provided a practical mechanism to coordinate responsibilities, contributing to household-level normative and empirical expectations that 'household responsibilities are negotiated, not determined by gender'. However, communication could also be a mechanism through which sanctions for deviation could be imparted, Participant 7 (a working mother) reflected on criticism she encountered for her non-conformity to traditional expectations saying *"Honestly, if you think too much about what others say, you will just get hurt".* Communication provided a tool to unpack or entrench traditional expectations.

Divisions of labour based on skills, strengths and/or preferences

This allowed participants to negotiate a division of household labour that aligned with their individual abilities, isolated from traditional tropes, or functioned as a red herring, obscuring gender inequity through framings of 'strengths' or 'preference' based on gendered capabilities. Participant 1 explains that her husband takes on primary caregiving as he *"is actually better at that".* Participant 6, a 27-year-old single man, explains that "my mom just lets me do the things I really want to do in the house" including gardening and decorating. Here frames of 'preference' uphold traditional gender roles, which when unscrutinised or these roles assumed without negotiation, can lead to less gender-equal household arrangements.

Access to info, career experience and education however, exposed participants to alternative models of household organisation, set a precedent that women's work was legitimate and increased women's leverage within relationships. Many participants described how observing women's leadership at their workplaces set an empirical expectation that women can balance work and care. Further, Participant 1 a 19-year old single man, explained that *"She [his future partner] studied...so she should be able to work if she wants to"* suggested how women's education set a normative expectation of their legitimacy in the workforce. Likewise, Participant 7's earns "more income than my [her] husband" as she had access to higher education (Bachelor and Masters) through her employer. Participant 7 explains that within her reference network (particularly in-laws and partner) her higher salary justified her breadwinning role and her husband's caregiving role, demonstrating how norms that 'the family should be provided for with whoever's salary is best' can trump traditional gender norms (though this norm can risk disadvantaging women given the gender pay gap).

Necessity and household economics

This is also at play in Participant 7's account. Participants were commonly "influenced by the idea of both partners working to be financially stable" as described by Participant 2. While women's workforce participation was portrayed as *"the norm here [in Metro Manilla]"* (Participant 5, Philippines), they reflected on the persistent societal expectations that men are lead earners, and that even when women were working, they are required to take on the double burden, or mental load of care. Alternatively, men's responses suggested that singlehood (often occurring when mothers went overseas for work) necessitated that they take on the domestic load, though this may be shared by female relatives. Nonetheless singlehood created an opportunity to challenge traditional normative and empirical expectations of who performs care. More research is needed to understand whether potential new domestic skills are both developed and carried forward into future relationships.

Structural supports and time-use infrastructure

This critically appeared to mediate whether household responsibilities were more gender-equal and reduced the double burden on women. A key theme present in the Philippines was commute times deleterious impact on time for care, with participants describing 2–4-hour commutes. As such, flexible working arrangements facilitated a balance of work and care *"The biggest factor was the commute...Working from home... [allowed me to] take care of my family's needs without wasting three to four hours daily in traffic"* describes Participant 3 (28-year-old, single woman, Philippines). Family support, often from grandparents, supportive husbands willing to take on domestic work and outsourced domestic services were key factors that enabled participants to decouple behaviours from traditional expectations that women provide care. Eldest daughters were also an important source of household labour, enabling their mothers to work, while expectations upon sons appeared to be weaker. Participant 5 (single working woman) summarised *"In the beginning, I idolised women who could do both, but now I understand that without resources like daycare, nannies, or a high salary, it's much harder"*.

Underlying social norm structures and sanctioning beliefs

These were shown to entrench expectations that women *"excel at both career and motherhood"* as described by Participant 5. Women cited that the persistent social expectation that they manage the double burden: *"Especially for women my age, it's more common for us to keep working even as we are breastfeeding, even during our third trimester..."* (Participant 5), inhibiting economic participation, balanced households and risking burnout. Beyond carrying the double burden within the immediate family, a further normative and empirical expectation emerged as described by Participant 3 (single woman) *"For families in the Philippines... caregiving responsibilities fall on the eldest, especially if they are female. This is something I've observed not just in my family but also among my peers"*.

Traditional expectations on gendered abilities

These expectations further established stereotypes used to legitimise women's disproportionate caregiving, and industrial segregation: *"Work as a driver, masonry, carpentry, construction, this fits better for men"* (Participant 7, married woman). Meanwhile, strong normative expectations surrounding men's role as the primary provider persisted – even where gender equality was supported in principles. Participant 2 (single man) reflects *"... The emotional and physical burden on women is heavier... That's why I think the financial burden should be heavier on the men's side"*, here, benevolent sexism masks space for true equality. Critically, breadwinning expectations in the Philippines context were also placed eldest daughters who were expected (or felt obligated to) contribute to familial income and support siblings' tuition fees, however, men reportedly did not face the same obligation to provide for their siblings. Participant 5 summarised this trend *"I feel like it's more common for eldest daughters to feel the greater responsibility to take care of the family's expenses"*.

Resistance and reflection towards normative and empirical expectations

This on the other hand could drive more gender-equal behaviours. This was often coupled alongside the critical recognition of gender norms and awareness of their evolution: *"Definitely, gender norms are changing... My sisters and I now know we have the option to not have children or to delay marriage"* reflects Participant 5 (single woman). Here, an implied understanding that positive deviance from traditional norms is part of a broader collective shift may lower perceived sanctions for non-compliance as deviation is widespread, not a solitary venture. Likewise, a critical recognition of gender norms encouraged participants to view these as malleable. This opened potential for participants to evaluate the alignment of social norms to their personal values, encouraging positive deviance where benefits exceeded costs. Participant 6, a single man working in gender advocacy, explains *"I personally believe that gender roles shouldn't matter. We are all human, and*

we all have the capacity to accomplish tasks, regardless of gender".

These findings underscored the nuanced normative ecosystem in which participants navigated household responsibilities. Men's openness to communicate, critical consciousness of expectations and the presence of caregiving support from families or partners, emerged as key factors enabling more equitable arrangements. Yet underlying normative beliefs about gendered capabilities continue to sustain the male-breadwinner/female-caregiver model even where women actively participate in paid employment.

2.3.2 Reference networks

This section examines the role of reference networks in shaping gender-equal behaviours and economic participation, with specific reference to family, friends, colleagues, cultural communities, media platforms, and politics.

This was investigated through interviews with 7 members from the Philippines general public in 2024 (see **Annex 2** for further details).

Family

Family consistently emerged as a powerful influencer of ideas around care, gender roles and economic responsibilities. Across the board, family appeared to serve as a moral and behavioural compass, either to replicate or diverge from, setting initial normative and empirical expectations, shaping children's conditional preferences into adulthood. Family experiences either reinforced traditional expectations or provided a model for more gender-equal attitudes and behaviours. Participants described parents modelling more gender-equal behaviours or alternatively sought a more gender-equal balance than the previous generation. Participant 1, a married woman with children, described her insistence that her husband be involved in childcare stemmed from *"My mother was always the one taking care of us, while my father was working. That's why I dreamed of having children who are very close to their father".*

Friends and colleagues

While families shaped early preferences, these could later be influenced through friends and colleagues. These networks provided a peer-level opportunity for observation, comparison and mutual reflection, either sanctioning or supporting positive deviance. Participant 3's, a single woman, account demonstrated how friends can support the development of normative expectations of gender-equal relationships, *"When I talk with my friends, it's quite hard for us at this stage in life to find a partner with the same thought process....it's difficult to find someone [a partner] who aligns with our goals".* Friends were described as providing support and exemplars, lowering sanctions for women modelling positive deviance.

Workplaces

Beyond friends, workplaces were evident as a space for social observation. Participants noted how observing female leadership shaped their attitudes that women could, and should, lead, and for women that this was something they could aspire to. In this mostly gender-equal sample, workplaces participants were exposed to positive deviance outside their immediate circle. Participant 6, a single man, elucidated *"Working in a female-dominated environment now, I have experienced a more collective approach... I find it refreshing to work with female leaders who emphasise evidence-based decision-making".*

Women reflected on how friends, colleagues and family could convey cautionary tales. In this sample, these generally related to the breakdown of the male-earner/female-homemaker contract, setting normative expectations (i.e. 'women should be financially independent to avoid dependency') and empirical expectations (i.e. 'men alone are not always sustainable providers'). These expectations could encourage positive deviance as sanctions for non-conformity to traditional norms are outweighed by perceived benefits of greater security, wellbeing or empowerment. Inversely, accounts of deviation from traditional norms failing could have the opposite impact, but this was not observed within this sample of 7 interviews.

Public figures and discourse in the media

For its role in setting social-level normative and empirical expectations public figures and discourse in the media also formed an influential reference network. Participant 2, a single man, criticised the media as *"women are always portrayed as the ones doing household chores, while men just go to work"* but nonetheless *"encourages both women and men to work since the economy is struggling"*, entrenching the normative and empirical expectation that women both work and care. Participant 5 similarly reflected how the media normalised women's work, encouraging more gender-equal economic norms - though problems may surround the sexualisation or trivialisation of women's corporate work: *"Since I was young, it was seen as cool to be a girl with a job, wearing a blazer and a pencil skirt".* Participant 7, a married woman offered a more localised take (*"In the media, I can see different situations...Women can sell whatever they like, fruit or vegetables."*), showing how grass-roots portrayals could normalise women's economic agency, even in informal sectors. These accounts show how media can set public narratives, either shaping conditional preferences towards more gender-equal households or reinforcing traditional scripts.

Politics

Though less frequently cited that other networks, politics was also influential as a reference network given the Philippines strong history of women's executive political leadership. Women reflected that seeing women model positive deviance and succeed in the public sphere shaped their (and their mother's) normative and empirical expectations on who can work, lead and care. Participant 5, a single woman, reflects:

> *"Our first female president was a housewife who suddenly ran for office... She felt responsible for the country and stepped up...That alone is inspiring. My mother was a teenager when that happened, and I think it influenced her and many women of her generation".*
>
> **– Participant 5**

Summarily, the diverse and interconnected system of reference networks within this sample (sometimes conveying contradictory messages) illustrated the intricate challenges of navigating changing social norms in the contemporary Philippines. These acted to either reinforce traditional gendered divisions of labour or support new models of more gender-equal partnership.

2.3.3 Enablers and barriers of advocacy

This section looks at the factors that can hinder and enable gender equality advocacy – from the private to public sphere.

Reflections from the Philippines validation workshop revealed that advocacy for gender equality is shaped not only by individual attitudes, but by the social norms embedded within participants' reference networks as well as contextual factors.

Participants reflected on how structural and individual-level factors enabled advocacy behaviours. Work colleagues, supervisors, and external network acted as a key reference network, mediating conditional preferences towards advocacy behaviours - where such networks were supportive, participants felt advocacy was more achievable. Likewise access to safe platforms for advocacy, supportive policies and opportunities for upskilling were contextual factors participants identified as increasing the viability of results and participation.

Likewise, participants acknowledged the role of intersectionality as a **key contextual factor** impeding involvement. For instance, **limited accessibility and discriminatory attitudes towards women with disability limited advocacy participation**. Further contextual factors that either induced or inhibited an individual from engaging with advocacy included generation, family values (i.e. normative expectations), educational institutions and social media. Participants noted that it might be easier to influence younger generations than older ones but reiterated the **importance of setting gender-equal empirical expectations in young people through role-modelling.**

Conversely, participants' fear of opposition when deviating from traditional normative expectations of gender roles was a major barrier to advocacy. **Participants recalled instances of backlash, challenges from more conservative groups** or community voices – creating a strong disincentive. Participants shared concerns on media's influence as a reference network with the power to 'cancel' opponents. Further structural barriers to advocacy included what appeared to be a **'triple burden': women are expected to shoulder working, caring and advocating**, often without access to sufficient resources to manage all three. Participants also noted individual-level factors as influencing conditional preferences towards advocacy. These included fear of offending others, and of being 'smart shamed' – being perceived as lecturing or intellectually superior.

Participants reflections underscored the persistence of traditional **normative expectations** of women as caregivers, **making personal advocacy in the private sphere challenging**. Participants shared that this often related to conflict avoidance between partners, a fear of hurting men's feelings or egos, and a perceived need to preserve "family harmony" or uphold traditional family expectations rather than advocate or model positive deviance. As such, participants 'pick[ed] their battles' - weighing when and where to act whether encouraging a partner to share housework or explaining gender-equal role sharing to in-laws. Support from women's partners and peer networks were seen as key enablers of advocacy in the private sphere, underscoring the importance of reference networks.

Public advocacy (signing petitions, joining protests or advocacy initiatives) by contrast was seen as more accessible - and, as reflected in the data, does not require individuals to 'walk the talk' privately. Some cited that engaging in public advocacy created an avenue to express their aspirations for gender equality, particularly for those who did not (or could not) demonstrate gender-equal behaviours in their private lives. **Public advocacy was again enabled by a supportive reference network of peers, and structural factors - critically, sufficient time and resources.** However, fear

of backlash was the major inhibitor.

Transecting public and private advocacy participants also noted a common perception that gender-equal sharing – or **"women's rights", as they phrased it, was perceived as an issue that only women needed to address.** This suggests an empirical expectation that men are not expected to be involved in advocacy or demonstrate positive deviance - creating a reinforcing cycle of non-involvement with implications for women's advocacy labour.

Interestingly, the group discussed social media influencers as an emerging reference network mediating behaviours and attitudes towards advocates and gender equality itself. Both general audience and expert interviews pointed to a rise in both gender-equal and regressive influencers. Participants emphasised **the importance of grounding gender-equal campaigns in both data and personal stories to enhance impact.** They further emphasised scrutiny of the campaign's audience, messaging, and overall strategy to ensure efficacy.

Based on the Philippines validation workshop findings, advocacy for gender equality is significantly shaped by the interplay between individual attitudes, reference networks, and structural/contextual factors that either enable or constrain advocacy behaviours. Recognising the multitude of mediating factors that may enable or hinder advocacy, participants recognised there was not always a linear transition between gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy. **These findings underscore that effective gender equality advocacy requires addressing both structural inequities and shifting normative expectations across multiple spheres of influence**, from intimate partnerships to public discourse.

2.4 Shifts in gender norms

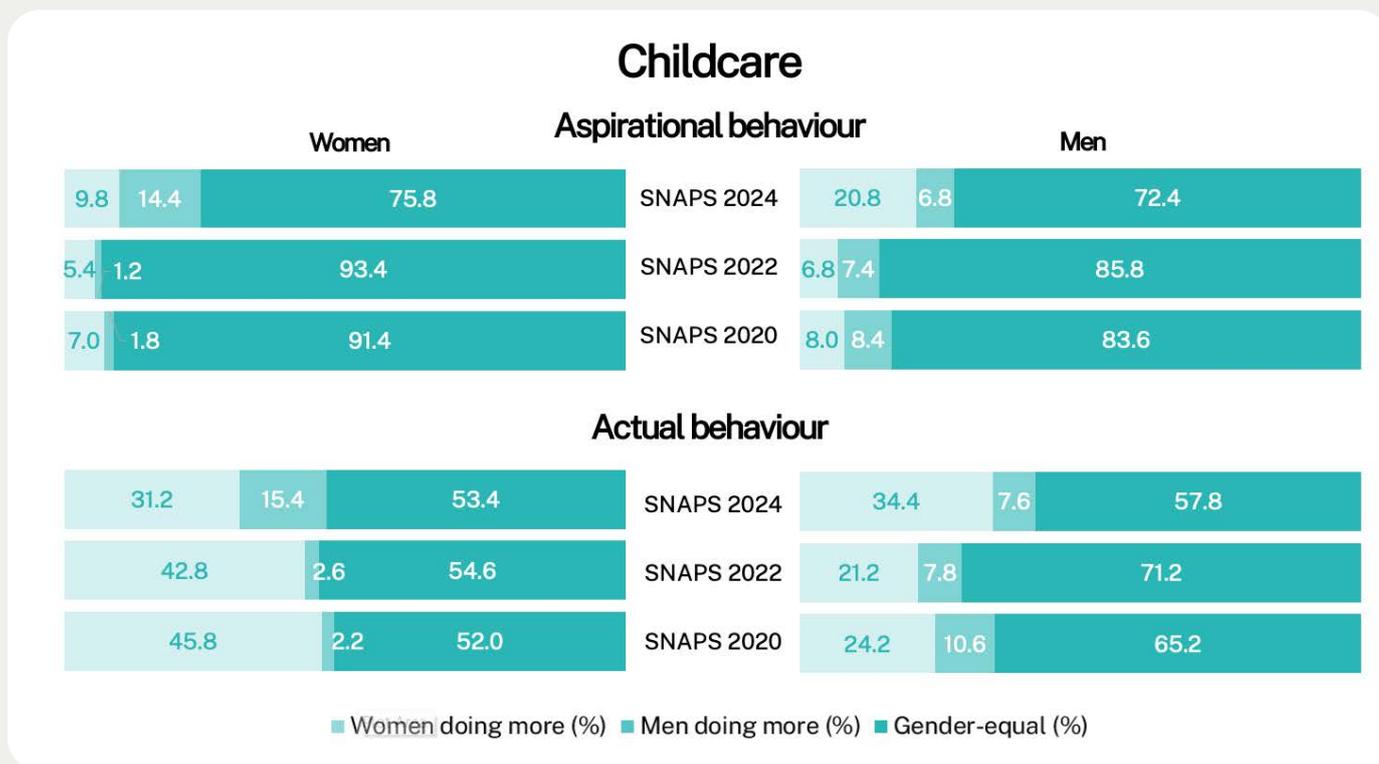### 2.4.1 SNAPS survey waves over time

This section examines the extent to which gender norms have evolved over time, as reflected in SNAPS data from 2020 (second wave) to 2024 (current wave).

It analyses trends in attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy for gender equality, highlighting areas of progress as well as persistent gaps. By comparing data (where comparable across surveys) across survey iterations, this section offers insights on the evolution of gender norms across time.

Key takeaways

- **Gender-equal aspirations remain strong but unevenly realised:** Unpartnered and child-free participants, especially women, expressed strong support for equal sharing of Childcare and Income, yet actual sharing among partnered participants remained much lower across waves.

- **SNAPS 2024 revealed a shift toward traditional norms:** Aspirational support for equal childcare and income sharing declined, with men in particular less likely to report equal arrangements.

- Despite these persistent male-breadwinner expectations and declining gender-equal attitudes, SNAPS 2024 showed increased reporting of equal Income responsibility and a notable decline in men claiming sole financial burden, suggesting circumstantial, if not normative, change.

Figure PH 14 Gender-equal practices across SNAPS waves - Childcare domain

Childcare

Aspirational behaviour

Women				Men		
9.8	14.4	75.8	SNAPS 2024	20.8	6.8	72.4
5.4	1.2	93.4	SNAPS 2022	6.8	7.4	85.8
7.0	1.8	91.4	SNAPS 2020	8.0	8.4	83.6

Actual behaviour

Women				Men		
31.2	15.4	53.4	SNAPS 2024	34.4	7.6	57.8
42.8	2.6	54.6	SNAPS 2022	21.2	7.8	71.2
45.8	2.2	52.0	SNAPS 2020	24.2	10.6	65.2

■ Women doing more (%) ■ Men doing more (%) ■ Gender-equal (%)

Note: This figure presents the distribution of gender-related behaviours in the Childcare domain for women and men in SNAPS 2020, 2022, and 2024.

Shifting gender norms in caregiving & domestic roles

- **Gender-equal aspirations are strong:** Across SNAPS waves, participants who were neither married/partnered nor had children expressed strong aspirations for gender-equal childcare arrangements. Women consistently showed a greater preference for equal childcare sharing than men –highlighting that the normative expectation of women as the primary caregiver are potentially weaker for women than men.

- **Attitudes do not translate to behaviours:** Among participants with actual childcare responsibilities, across all waves a much lower proportion reported sharing childcare duties equally.

- **SNAPS 2024 saw a swing towards traditional gender norms:** Notably, the proportion of participants expressing aspirational support for equal childcare sharing declined in SNAPS 2024, compared to SNAPS 2020 and 2022. This could reflect sampling differences, how questions were phrased between survey waves or changed national economic or social circumstances resulting in a swing away from gender-equal gender norms.

- **SNAPS 2024 showed a shift toward women reporting that their spouse took on a greater share of Childcare responsibilities:** This trend was not mirrored in men's responses. Instead, fewer men reported equal sharing of childcare and more indicated that women were doing more, reflecting a shift toward more traditional gender norms as well as a potential mismatch in perceptions of who does what in the home, with women potentially over-estimating this work (or men, under-estimated it).

Figure PH 15 Gender-equal practices across SNAPS waves - Earning family income domain
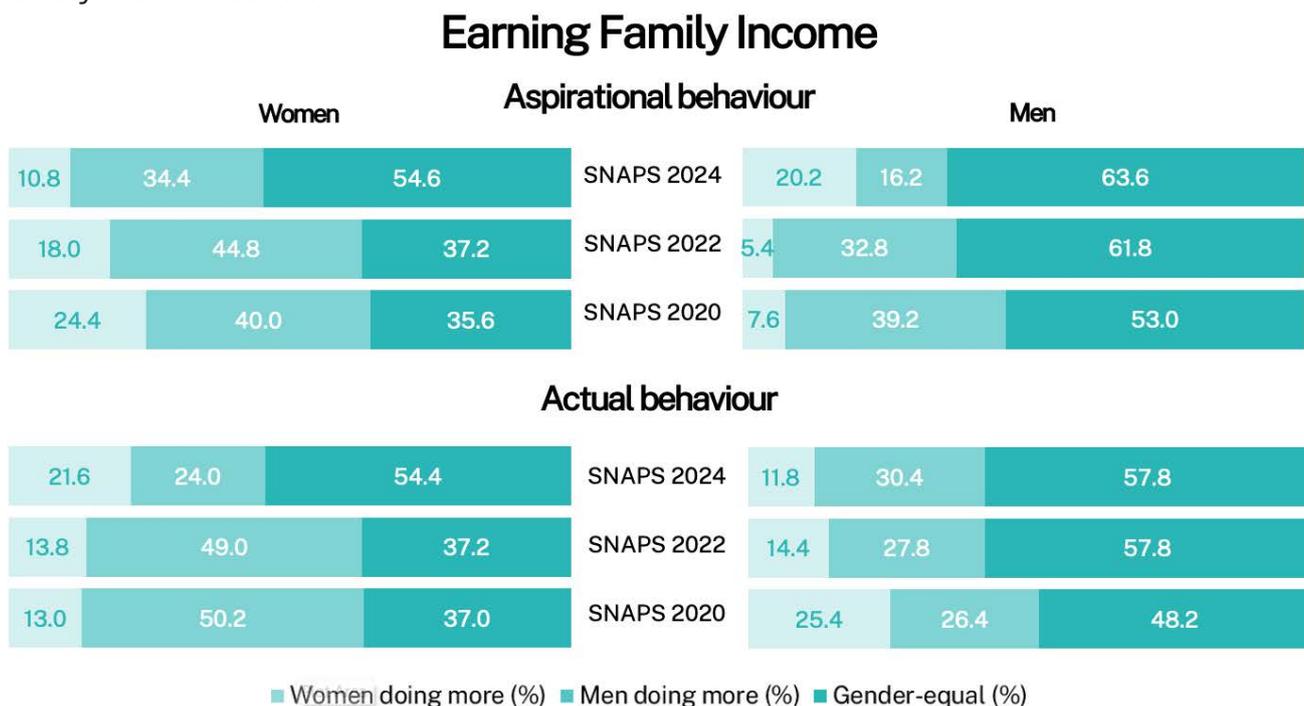
Earning Family Income

Aspirational behaviour

Women

	SNAPS 2024	SNAPS 2022	SNAPS 2020
Women doing more (%)	10.8	18.0	24.4
Men doing more (%)	34.4	44.8	40.0
Gender-equal (%)	54.6	37.2	35.6

Men

	SNAPS 2024	SNAPS 2022	SNAPS 2020
Women doing more (%)	20.2	5.4	7.6
Men doing more (%)	16.2	32.8	39.2
Gender-equal (%)	63.6	61.8	53.0

Actual behaviour

Women

	SNAPS 2024	SNAPS 2022	SNAPS 2020
Women doing more (%)	21.6	13.8	13.0
Men doing more (%)	24.0	49.0	50.2
Gender-equal (%)	54.4	37.2	37.0

Men

	SNAPS 2024	SNAPS 2022	SNAPS 2020
Women doing more (%)	11.8	14.4	25.4
Men doing more (%)	30.4	27.8	26.4
Gender-equal (%)	57.8	57.8	48.2

■ Women doing more (%) ■ Men doing more (%) ■ Gender-equal (%)

Note: This figure presents the distribution of gender-related behaviours in the Earning family income domain for women and men in SNAPS 2020, 2022, and 2024.

Shifting gender norms in economic roles

- **The male-breadwinner model remains entrenched:** For earning family income, aspirational preferences for gender-equal sharing was consistently higher among women than men across all waves by 12-28 percentage points. Men's aspirational preferences for gender-equal sharing of earning family income was noticeably weaker than the Childcare domain – possibly a reflection of the persisting strength of the normative expectation of the male-breadwinner novel.

- **Women and men increasingly want each other to take on greater responsibility:** In SNAPS 2024, double the number of women expressed a preference for men to take on more responsibility for earning income than in previous waves. Conversely, among men, the proportion wanting women to contribute more increased (from 1 in 20 in SNAPS 2020 to 1 in 5 in SNAPS 2024), while the share expecting men to do more declined. This may reflect that women are pushing back on the overwhelming double burden while men are increasingly realising the economic necessity of women's income streams. Alternatively, women may be pushing for fairer divisions of household and economic labour (and turning to traditional gender norms in the process) while men's views on gender norms may be becoming more gender-equal (though expert interviews suggested the inverse is more likely).

- **Trends towards gender equality were evident, though perceptions differ between women and men:** In terms of actual behaviour, SNAPS 2024 showed a higher proportion of both women and men reporting gender-equal responsibility for earning family income. A significant perception gap emerged: while 24% fewer men said they bore the most financial responsibility, women observed only a 10% decrease in men bearing primary responsibility. This suggests a shift away from traditional norms where men were expected to bear the bulk of financial responsibilities, coupled with a potential difference in understanding on what constitutes gender-equal behaviour between women and men. These behavioural changes may stem from sampling variations, differences in survey phrasing across waves, or broader shifts in national economic and social conditions.

2.4.2 Societal transformations

Countries across the world are witnessing a suite of societal transformations that are inevitably influencing and interacting with gender norms – and the Philippines is no exception to this.

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence and social media ubiquity is enabling the proliferation of misogynistic ideology and content, reinforcing conservative gender norms about women's roles in social, economic, and domestic spheres. The resurgence of right-wing authoritarian politics and rollbacks of gender-equal policies are galvanising anti-feminist movements and threatening hard-won gender equality gains. The climate crisis threatens to add to women's mounting unpaid care burden. At the same time, rising cost of living, growth in the digital gig economy, increasing demand for care, and international and national action on gender equality provide opportunities to challenge traditional ideas about who should perform care and who should earn income in the family. However, the impact of these shifts on gender norms is not always straightforward – in many cases, they hold both the risk of entrenching traditional gender norms and the potential to challenge and reshape them.

This section details the nature of these shifts, how they manifest in the Philippines, and the impact that they may have on gender norms. These shifts are drawn from a combination of the literature and interviews with experts in the Philippines.

The climate crisis

The world is currently in a climate crisis. Climate-induced disasters are increasing in frequency and magnitude, with significant and harmful consequences for biodiversity, human health and livelihoods, infrastructure, and the economy.[360] The Philippines is the most disaster-prone country according to the World Risk Index in 2024.[361] It is vulnerable particularly to cyclones, the frequency and intensity of which are exacerbated by climate change. The Philippines experiences

360   United Nations 2025a
361   Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft and Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict 2025

Key takeaways

- **Climate change and increasing demand for care are intensifying women's unpaid workload in the Philippines, which risks entrenching traditional caregiving norms:** Investing in accessible childcare, care for older people, and gender-responsive climate and social policies will be essential to prevent these pressures from reinforcing women's double burden.

- **Global and local digitalisation including the growth in social media adoption and the rapid development of AI present both opportunities and challenges for gender norms:** Social media has helped to increase awareness about gender equality, while at the same time facilitated greater abuse against women. Meanwhile, AI has been used as a tool to support women's economic participation; however, the gendered impacts of AI may reinforce traditional gendered occupational segregation if the Philippine government does not meet this shift with gender-responsive policy.

- **The effects of the previous presidency on enabling gender-unequal norms are still being felt throughout the Philippines, and female representation in leadership requires more attention to genuinely shift norms around women's leadership:** Although the Philippines is known for having two women heads of state, women's representation in parliament and in ministerial positions remains low.

- **Rising living costs, the growth of the gig economy, and government efforts to increase women's labour force participation may be supporting women's economic participation and could help shift traditional economic norms in the Philippines.** However, without equivalent efforts to address traditional caregiving norms in tandem, these shifts risk reinforcing the double burden on women to perform both economic and domestic duties.

19-20 cyclones per year on average and is increasingly vulnerable to sea-level rise, which is advancing at a faster rate than the global average.[362]

Climate change in the Philippines is causing significant internal displacement, with an estimated 71.2 million internal displacements occurring since 2008.[363] This displacement can entrench gender inequalities by reducing women's employment and income levels, which can in turn perpetuate gender norms that preclude women from economic participation.[364]

Furthermore, climate change disrupts care and educational systems. For instance, typhoon Odette in 2021 affected almost 30,000 schools in the Philippines;[365] such events result in women having to take care of children which adds to their already disproportionate share of unpaid care and entrenches traditional caregiving norms.

Climate change is also intensifying resource scarcity, reducing crop yields and making supply of fuel sources, water, and other essential resources unreliable.[366] Due to gender norms that relegate women to the domestic sphere, they are often responsible for sourcing these household necessities. Climate change, by making these activities longer and more difficult, increases the time that women spend on such unpaid activities for the household and further entrenches norms that restrict women to performing Caregiving and Domestic responsibilities.

The rising cost of living

Globally, the prices of goods and services have increased for households. Factors including climate change and geopolitical tensions have strained agricultural supply or disrupted supply chains, driving up prices for food and other goods. In the Philippines, in 2018 a family of five needed 10,756 pesos per month to meet their basic needs; this figure in 2023 has risen to 13,873 pesos.[367, 368]

Qualitative findings from this study highlighted that cost of living pressures are leading many households to adopt a dual-income model where both partners work and contribute to household income. While this shift may be precipitated by economic necessity as opposed to genuine intentions to challenge traditional gender roles, it may still help to challenge traditional norms around women's economic participation.

Rising living costs are also deterring or delaying couples' decisions to have children, given concerns about the affordability of raising a child. A recent report by UNFPA found that among individuals surveyed in fourteen countries, 39% cited financial limitations as a factor leading them to have fewer children.[369] A potential impact of delayed parenting choices may be that women enter and stay in the labour force longer.

Political shifts

The world is experiencing a rise a "global wave of autocratisation".[370] Of the global population, 40% is estimated to live in countries where democracy is declining[371]– a trend which threatens historic progress on gender equality. Governments worldwide have brought in a suite of changes that actively oppose gender equality, including cutting workplace diversity and inclusion initiatives and repealing anti-discrimination and feminist legislation.[372, 373] In combination with world leaders vocally promoting traditional gender norms, this trend is also galvanising right-wing movements among the general populace, enabling a resurgence and public airing of conservative

362 International Organization for Migration 2024
363 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2025
364 Cazabat et al. 2020
365 World Bank 2022
366 United Nations, n.d.-a
367 Philippine Statistics Authority 2020
368 Philippine Statistics Authority, n.d.
369 United Nations Population Fund 2025
370 Nord et al. 2025
371 Nord et al. 2025
372 Juan-Torres et al. 2025
373 Brechenmacher 2025

and discriminatory attitudes, including misogynistic views.[374] Authoritarian and anti-feminist governments also constrain women's participation in politics and leadership, including through framing women as unfit to hold positions of power,[375] which serves to further shut down challenges to traditional gender norms and the status quo.[376]

In the Philippines, many experts spoke about the negative impact of the former President's six-year tenure from 2016 to 2022 on gender norms and women's rights. The former President's overt misogyny including sexualising comments, combined with the lack of formal condemnation of this misogyny, encouraged and permitted sexist attitudes and behaviours in society – effects which experts say are "still haunting" the Philippines.

However, the Philippines is also widely recognised for having had two long-term women heads of state, Presidents Corazon Aquino and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who collectively led the country for 16 years. This representation has helped to drive up the Philippines' gender equality ranking in the Global Gender Gap Report, placing the country 20th in the world in 2025.[377] Another expert noted that women are also increasingly being elected to local governments at the barangay level – the smallest political unit in the Philippines – and suggested that "a lot of women are voting for women themselves".

However, the Global Gender Gap Report reflects that women's representation in parliament and in ministerial positions remains low, and in the latter case has actually declined from 26.3% in 2023 to 17.4% in 2025.[378, 379, 380] Furthermore, other experts elaborated that though the Philippines has had women presidents, this representation has been more tokenistic than

genuinely gender-equal as these women are from dynastic families and women may act as "benchwarmers" for their male relatives (who cannot serve consecutive terms) until they are able to be elected again.

Thus, while visible leadership by women may be a societal shift widely acknowledged in the Philippines, it is unclear to what extent this representation is helping to meaningfully shift traditional gender norms that preclude women from leadership.

Increasing internet access, the digital economy, and social media adoption

The world is becoming increasingly digitalised through the adoption of digital technologies, internet connectivity, and social media.[381] Social media use has soared in the Philippines from an estimated 40% of the population using social media in 2015 to 78% in 2025.[382, 383]

The impact of social media on gender norms is not fixed but holds both the potential to challenge traditional gender norms and the risk of entrenching them, depending on the context of use.[384] Interviews with experts reflected this dual potential. Experts highlighted how social media in the Philippines has been used to highlight women's achievements and wins for gender equality, in turn increasing awareness among younger generations about gender equality. Similarly, social media campaigns on Facebook have been used in the Philippines to try and shift norms such as through creating discussion groups or promoting opportunities to women to engage in STEM fields; however, the success of these campaigns in shifting attitudes and norms is unclear.[385]

Experts also referred to how social media has given rise to "the age of disinformation"

374 Khan et al. 2023
375 Nord et al. 2025
376 Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC 2022
377 World Economic Forum 2025
378 World Economic Forum 2025
379 Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women 2023
380 Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women 2025
381 World Bank 2024a
382 Kemp 2015b
383 Kemp 2025a
384 Koester and Marcus 2024
385 Marcus 2023

and created echo chambers in which people are exposed only to content that reinforces their beliefs. One expert mentioned that the most overt examples of misogynistic messaging on social media have decreased in the Philippines after the introduction of the country's Advertising Standard Council –however, they caveated that the vast amount of content production has meant not everything is vetted. Another expert also highlighted the rise of 'mompreneurs' influencers–women who manage both family and business–who may promote women's economic involvement but may inadvertently reinforce expectations of women to simultaneously excel at work and at caregiving. Furthermore, the proliferation of technology-facilitated gender-based violence has also manifested as "disinformation attacks" and deepfakes against women in the political sphere which have been particularly intensified during elections in the Philippines.[386, 387] This violence deters women from pursuing leadership roles and can further drive norms that deem women unfit for leadership.

Beyond social media, increased digitalisation has given rise to a range of digital labour platforms and enabled the growth of the gig economy. The gig economy has the potential to support more women into the labour force by allowing them to earn while maintaining flexibility in when and how much they work. Indeed, in the Philippines, women are estimated to comprise 45% of gig workers.[388] A study that involved interviews with Filipino mothers showed that these women chose to engage in online gig work for its flexible nature which helped them to balance caring for their child with earning income.[389]

At the same time, women also reported that such flexibility also made it hard to separate work, caregiving, and personal time. This arrangement can reinforce the double burden on women to perform both paid and unpaid work and may further entrench gendered divisions of labour. Furthermore, data also show that gender segregation by industry persists in the gig economy, and that the rise of gig work is not necessarily challenging stereotypes about women's and men's suitability for certain jobs. For example, women generally remain in highly feminised industries such as childcare, tutoring, and household services.[390] This division may contribute to entrenching norms about which jobs women and men should perform.

Digitalisation in the Philippines is reshaping gender norms in complex ways, offering new avenues for challenging status quo powers while also reinforcing traditional roles through social media dynamics and gendered patterns in gig work.

The growth of artificial intelligence

The rapid development and adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) is one of the most significant transformations humanity is currently living through. AI technologies are evolving at breakneck speed and fundamentally reshaping norms across all spheres of life, both personal and professional.

The ILO finds that 4.7% of women's jobs are at high risk of automation compared to 2.4% of men's.[391] This threat could have flow-on effects for economic gender norms by reducing women's overall employment and entrenching gendered occupational segregation. In the Philippines, the Department of Trade and Industry launched its first National AI Strategy Roadmap in 2021, then followed by a second roadmap in 2024, with the aim of becoming a regional leader in AI and adopting AI across all sectors of the economy. However, across both roadmaps, there is no significant mention of gender or gender considerations in AI policymaking, which increases the risk of leaving women behind in the pursuit of AI progress and entrenching gender inequality.[392]

On the other hand, AI has the capability

386   Philippine Commission on Women 2022
387   United Nations Philippines 2025
388   Hernando and Calizo Jr. 2024
389   Potestades 2023
390   Bhagavathi and Kumar 2025
391   Gmyrek et al. 2025
392   Department of Trade and Industry 2025

to challenge gender inequality if human creators intend it to do so, and there has been evidence of AI being used in this way in the Philippines. In 2023, the ILO piloted an initiative that leveraged AI to help train women in remote areas to run their own businesses. The initiative involved using AI chatbots to provide women business owners with technical advice and generative AI to help with creating digital marketing posts – a task which previously took hours and was often dropped altogether because of the time commitment.[393] The use of AI in this example has helped support women to engage in business and generate more income, in turn supporting more gender-equal economic norms. Expansion of such initiatives could help leverage the benefits of AI to support gender equality, however, failure to address inherent bias risks entrenching inequality.

International and national action on gender equality

From the establishment of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995 to the recent Political Declaration to mark its 30th anniversary in 2025, there has been a strong and consistent global push by international bodies to advance gender equality and secure commitments from governments to do the same – particularly in the advent of aforementioned shifts that may threaten historical hard-won gains.[394]

The Philippine government has been acting on gender issues with a particular focus on increasing women's labour force participation which will also help realise economic gains for the country. The government has set a target in the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028 for women's labour force participation to reach between 52-54% in 2028,[395] from 50% in 2024.[396]

The government has previously introduced policies for flexible working which were designed to support women into the labour force.[397] For instance, the Telecommuting

Act of 2018 institutionalised work-from-home arrangements in the private sector and the Department of Labor and Employment introduced enhanced protections in 2022. The *Trabaho Para sa Bayan* (TPB) 10-Year Labor Market Development Plan (2025–2034) also proposes additional measures to support telecommuting, including tax benefits for both employees and employers, as well as expanded coverage for government workers. The plan also proposes improvements to part-time work policies as a strategy to enhance women's labour force participation.[398]

The Philippines has also previously introduced two anti-sexual harassment laws, Republic Act 7877 (Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995) and RA 11313 (Safe Spaces Act or Bawal Bastos Law of 2019), which may make workplaces safer for women. The previous Anti-Sexual Harassment Act recognised gender-based violence in public spaces including workplaces but only in cases where there is a power imbalance between perpetrator and victim; the most recent Safe Spaces Act recognises violence can occur between peers or where the victim may be the perpetrator's superior.[399] These laws also compel employers to proactively prevent gender-based violence in the workplace, with the intended effect of making work environments safer for women. These government efforts may support norm change as increasing women's engagement in the labour force may help normalise sharing of earning responsibilities among all genders.

Multiple experts also noted the increasing rates of women's educational attainment as a shift that has been occurring, such that women are outpacing men. According to the Philippines' Labor Force Survey in 2020, 63% of working-age women had completed at least high school compared to 56% of men, and 18% of working-age women had completed at least college compared to 14% of men.[400] One expert suggested that

393 Gaspar 2025
394 United Nations 2025c
395 Philippine Government 2023
396 World Bank 2025b) (World Bank 2025b
397 Philippine Commission on Women 2024
398 Department of Economy, Planning, and Development 2025
399 Philippine Commission on Women 2021
400 World Bank 2021c

the Philippines "[does not] have a bias in educating children"–however, they also expressed that this fact has not necessarily translated into greater workforce attachment for women. This suggests that higher educational attainment alone has not been sufficient to move the dial on traditional caregiving and economic gender norms.

Furthermore, experts highlighted that shifting economic norms without equal efforts to also challenge caregiving norms risks reinforcing a double burden on women to perform both paid and unpaid work. For instance, in 2019, the Philippines extended paid maternity leave from 60 to 105 days and allowed for up to seven days of this leave to be transferred to fathers, on top of the seven days already legislated under the Paternity Leave Act of 1996.[401] However, there have been no revisions since 2019. These increases in maternity leave may support women to remain attached to the workforce alongside caring duties. However, the lack of simultaneous increases in paternity leave discourages men's involvement in caregiving and reinforces traditional gender norms which position women as primary caregivers and men as breadwinners.

Increasing demand for care

The demand for care–particularly for children, older people, and persons with disability–is growing, driven by a range of demographic and economic transitions. Demand for childcare is growing as women continue to enter the labour force. The need for older adult care is also increasing as the Philippines is projected to become an ageing society by 2030. This growing deficit is further exacerbated by urbanisation trends where younger people migrate from rural to urban areas for economic opportunities and disrupt traditional models of family-based care for their older parents. The demand for care for persons with disability is also growing as disability prevalence increases, due to higher likelihood of disability as people age as well as greater awareness

and earlier diagnoses of disabilities in childhood.[402]

Women already bear a disproportionate burden of informal and unpaid care in the Philippines. On average, women spend 4.5 hours per day on unpaid care and domestic work compared to men who spend 1.7 hours.[403] As care demand increases, traditional economic and caregiving gender norms may be further entrenched. Furthermore, women who are engaged in the workforce may increasingly take on a 'double burden'–having to perform labour both inside and outside of the home.[404]

To avoid this governments and other stakeholders must respond with investments in formal care infrastructure and supportive policies that encourage redistribution of caregiving responsibilities. In the Philippines, the Philippine Commission on Women is currently leading the development of a National Care Economy Policy Framework in partnership with Oxfam Pilipinas. However, as of August 2025, the framework is still pending approval, and an accompanying action plan is lacking.[405] Without an integrated framework to systemically address rising care demand, the Philippines risks adding to women's unpaid care burden and entrenching unequal caregiving norms.

Cultural shifts

In addition to the above shifts, experts highlighted other trends including the enduring role of religion in upholding traditional gender norms. In the Philippines, widely considered the only Christian-dominant country in Southeast Asia, over 78% of the population is Roman Catholic with another 5% falling into other Christian dominations.[406] One expert interviewee stated that views of gender in the Philippines are mediated through religion. Another expert highlighted that although many Filipinos may not formally practice religion, "there is still a performance [one must] adhere to" which involves upholding conservative

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401   *Updated Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Plan,* 2019-2025 2022
402   Merdikawati, et al. 2025
403   Hanna et al. 2023a
404   Merdikawati, et al. 2025
405   Merdikawati, et al. 2025
406   Mapa 2023

Catholic/Christian values and traditional gender norms. According to this expert, this performance is necessary for many Filipinos to maintain belonging in their community (of which religion is typically a central pillar), entrenching rather than challenging traditional gender norms.

The fragmentation of feminist movements was also raised by experts as a key societal shift with impacts on gender norms. Experts pointed to disagreements between older and younger women in feminist movements on issues such as prostitution or sex work and the use of the expression 'queer' in LGBTIQA+ rights advocacy; they explained that this increasing division between feminists may be limiting the strength of movements to shift traditional gender norms compared to if there was a united push to do so. Some research has documented a lack of intersectionality in historical women's movements in the Philippines;[407] however, the current-day fragmentation mentioned by experts and its impact on gender norms is not well documented in the literature, and points to a potential area of future research.

Overall, the Philippines stands at a juncture of potential polycrises, spanning climate and economic ruptures, technological developments, political and demographic shifts. These challenges are simultaneously challenging and reinforcing traditional gender norms. Without ambitious policy implementation that addresses economic participation and caregiving responsibilities in tandem for both women and men, these transformations will likely further engrain inequality.

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407   Hega et al. 2017

3. Conclusion

The Philippines performs well on gender-equality indicators in the 2025 Global Gender Gap Report, ranking twentieth in the world and third in the Eastern Asia and the Pacific region. This achievement is largely driven by women's high tertiary enrolment and strong representation in political leadership, including two former female presidents. Nearly half of senior managerial and professional roles are also held by women. However, this high ranking masks enduring gaps in labour force participation, pay equity, access to finance, and the unequal burden of unpaid care. This study highlights four key findings.

- **First, attitudes toward gender equality in both caregiving and economic roles are generally high, exceeding 70 percent, yet an attitude–behaviour gap persists.** About one-third of women still shoulder greater domestic responsibilities across caregiving domains. Moreover, the male-breadwinning norm is still present among women: while 75 percent of women aspire to equal family income earning, around 21 percent of women favour men as the primary breadwinner. Among men, 17 percent aspire to contribute more to earning the family income, though around 20 percent expect women to earn more. Encouragingly, men's and women's attitudes toward Job Suitability and Leadership are strongly gender equal. Underestimations of gender-equal attitudes exist among both women and men. However, in terms of behaviours, women and men tend to hold a fairly accurate understanding of prevalence or even may even overestimate this.

- **Second, gender-equal attitudes are consistently linked to advocacy, while gender-equal behaviours correlate more strongly with gender-equal media exposure.** Having a gender-equal upbringing and holding gender-equal empirical or normative expectations also shape both behaviours and advocacy, though inconsistently. Latent profile analysis reveals that the strong gender equality supporters profile dominates across all domains, with the share among women higher than among men. The findings highlight a complex interplay between attitudes, behaviours, advocacy, and demographic factors.

- Third, qualitative insights reveal key enabling and constraining factors shaping gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy. Enablers include having a supportive reference network and allies, availability of care services and flexible working arrangements, partner's willingness to take on non-traditional roles and engage in open communication, exposure to more gender-equal models in politics, education and workplaces, along with education and women's access to career opportunities. Barriers persist in the form of entrenched male-breadwinner and female-caregiver norms, gendered stereotypes and fear of social backlash. Factors such as economic necessity can also encourage nominally more gender-equal practices, but may not result in broader normative update, often leaving women with a double burden.

- **Fourth, analysis of SNAPS data from 2020 to 2024 reveals both progress and persistence in gender norms.** Gender-equal behaviours have increased across caregiving and economic roles, except in childcare, where men still perceive women as carrying the heavier load. Yet aspirations for equality have declined among the unpartnered and childless, with both women and men increasingly expecting the other to assume primary responsibility. Broader societal shifts, such as severe climate impacts, political misogyny, rising living costs, and the growth of AI and the gig economy, can reinforce traditional norms as well as create new opportunities for equality.

Despite the Philippines' leading regional position, deep-rooted norms, structural barriers, and unequal domestic burdens continue to constrain women's autonomy. Sustained progress will require multi-level strategies, combining cultural transformation, policy action, and institutional support to ensure behaviours keep pace with evolving gender-equal aspirations.

Vietnam

1. Contextual background

This section provides an overview of gender equality progress in Vietnam. Overall trends are captured by gender gap report rankings. Vietnam ranked 74th out of 148 countries in the 2024 Global Gender Gap Report.[408] This ranking highlights the ongoing impact of persistent gender inequalities in areas such as labour force participation and caregiving responsibilities – underpinned by gender norms – despite progress in other areas such as education.

1.1 Education-employment paradox

Vietnam has not yet achieved full educational parity. Between 2010 and 2018, girls' primary school enrolment remained consistently lower than boys', according to the Gender Equality Monitoring Platform. Enrolment disparities also vary across provinces, suggesting that socioeconomic inequality contributes to gender gaps in education access.[409]

As for **women in tertiary education**, women have begun to outnumber men. As of 2022, the ratio of female to male tertiary students was 1.06, indicating that women slightly outnumber men in higher education.[410] However, this ratio has fluctuated in recent years - standing at 0.99 in 2021 - suggesting that women's participation in tertiary studies is increasing but not yet consistently stable.[411] Confucian values continue to shape educational choices, with girls encouraged to pursue 'appropriate' fields such as education

and healthcare, while men dominate technical, scientific, and leadership-oriented disciplines. Consequently, gender equality remains uneven across disciplines, and achieving lasting parity in education remains a national development priority.[412]

Despite these mixed educational outcomes, **women's labour force participation** remains remarkably high at 68% as of 2025, among the highest globally and well above the global average of 49%.[413] Nonetheless, women's participation continues to trail men's, whose labour force participation rate stands at 79%, underscoring the enduring influence of gendered expectations and labour-market segmentation.[414]

1.2 Norms influencing labour force participation gap

Cutting across all dimensions of women's outcomes, Confucian patriarchal values underpin gender roles in Vietnam, portraying men as public actors, with traits such as uprightness and wisdom, while women are expected to remain in the private sphere, tasked with caregiving, decorum, and loyalty.[415] These ideologies inform policy and social practices, from lower retirement ages for women to gender-coded textbook portrayals of boys as confident leaders and girls as dependent caregivers.[416] These embedded norms persistently affect women's work trajectories, education outcomes, and access to decision-making roles.

Women's engagement in paid employment is deeply shaped by expectations around family formation and caregiving responsibilities.[417] Between 2010 and 2019, women spent about twice as many hours on unpaid domestic

408   World Economic Forum 2024
409   Stockholm Environment Institute 2019
410   TheGlobalEconomy 2022
411   TheGlobalEconomy 2022
412   Vu and Pham 2021
413   Based on World Bank's World Development Indicators. The labour force participation rate is as percentage of population in each gender aged 15 and above based on modelled ILO estimate (World Bank Open Data 2025a)
414   Based on World Bank's World Development Indicators. The labour force participation rate is as percentage of population in each gender aged 15 and above based on modelled ILO estimate (World Bank Open Data 2025a)
415   Vu and Pham 2021
416   Vu and Pham 2021
417   Vu and Pham 2021

and care work as men, and one in five men reported little or no participation in such tasks.[418] These uneven burdens act as a major drag on women's ability to engage in secure, full-time or career-advancing work.

The traditional male-breadwinner role is somewhat less rigid in Vietnam than in neighbouring countries, yet women still face cultural ambivalence.[419] Dual-earner households are increasingly accepted. However, literature indicates many women feel indebted to older generations or anticipate disapproval from parents and parents-in-law (particularly mothers-in-law) when working in more demanding roles.[420]

Geography and ethnicity further shape gender norms. Urban residents and younger cohorts exhibit more gender-equal attitudes, while women from ethnic minorities such as the Thai or Hmong, who face higher illiteracy, child marriage, and school dropout rates, encounter steep barriers to labour force participation.[421] Rural women often delay participation until child-rearing burdens ease, contributing to distinct age-profile labour patterns.[422]

Finally, gender norms around caregiving and leadership continue to shape women's career trajectories in Vietnam. Gender-biased perceptions among HR professionals and managers often lead to women being overlooked for positions requiring long hours, night shifts, or frequent travel.[423] Women in leadership roles are frequently viewed as having to sacrifice their caregiving duties, resulting in social disapproval and hesitation to pursue senior positions.[424] Even among younger women, leadership is still sometimes seen as incompatible with traditional expectations of femininity and family responsibility.[425]

1.3 Employment patterns and pay gap

Women in Vietnam remain heavily concentrated in **informal and low-paying sectors**. According to analysis by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conducted in 2021, 68.5% of employment fell in the informal economy.[426] Of this, women are estimated at approximately 65% while men are around 71.6%.[427] Many women work as unpaid family helpers or in small-scale agriculture and trade. These types of jobs often lack protection, stability, and opportunities for upward mobility.[428] Additionally, limited access to childcare forces many women into informal, precarious jobs that offer flexibility but little security or benefits.[429]

The **gender pay gap** persists across sectors. A report published in 2018 showed men earning on average about 10% more than women. When adjusted for education, age, ethnicity and region, the gap rose to about 13%. In managerial and technical occupations women earn roughly 91 cents for every dollar a man earns. Meanwhile, the same analysis showed that only about 25% of managerial positions were held by women, reflecting deep occupational segregation.[430] In the health sector, Gender Equity Unit analysis (2023) found that women dominated nursing and midwifery roles, while men comprised over 72% of doctors and 83% of specialists, highlighting entrenched gender divisions in professions.[431]

1.4 Leadership, political representation and access to capital

The number of **women in national political leadership** has improved gradually. In the

418 Barcucci et al. 2021
419 CARE 2022
420 CARE 2022
421 M. L. Nguyen et al. 2020
422 M. L. Nguyen et al. 2020
423 M. L. Nguyen et al. 2020
424 Buchhave et al. 2020
425 Buchhave et al. 2020
426 ILO and Institute of Labour Science and Social Affairs 2024
427 ILO and Institute of Labour Science and Social Affairs 2024
428 ILO and Institute of Labour Science and Social Affairs 2024
429 Dang et al. 2022
430 Cunningham et al. 2018
431 Gender Equity Unit 2023

2021 National Assembly elections women obtained 30.26% of seats. This level is often cited as a threshold for achieving substantive influence.[432] Nonetheless, women remain under-represented at the top levels of party and government leadership. Although women account for about 40% of ministerial staff, they hold only about 21% of key leadership roles and are often relegated to deputy or vice positions.[433] In terms of **women in regional leadership**, while they have increased presence in People's Councils due to the introduction of a gender quota, as of 2024 their representation in executive positions such as provincial governors or mayors remains below parity.[434] In terms of overall women's political empowerment, Vietnam ranked 95th out of 148 countries in 2024.[435]

In the private sector, disparities persist in **women's representation in high-paying and leadership positions**. According to Grant Thornton's 2024 Women in Business report, women held 37% of senior management roles in Vietnamese companies (up from 33% in 2023) placing Vietnam above the global average but still short of parity. Although women are highly represented in professional and middle-management positions, few advance to board or chief-executive levels.[436] Persistent occupational segregation and traditional perceptions of leadership suitability continue to hinder women's upward mobility. Moreover, despite the Law on Gender Equality prohibiting discrimination, a 2016 review found that more than 65 per cent of job advertisements for managerial or supervisory roles specified a preferred gender, most commonly men, illustrating enduring bias in recruitment.[437]

Women's access to capital, lending and loans is constrained by structural barriers to finance. Female entrepreneurs own approximately 21% of formal enterprises and a similar share of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), yet they face a persistent gender finance gap.[438] The Women's Initiative for Startups and Entrepreneurship report published in 2025 highlighted that women-led enterprises in Vietnam remain concentrated in micro and informal sectors, with limited access to networks, mentorship, and capital. These barriers collectively constrain women's ability to expand their businesses and translate educational and professional gains into higher-value entrepreneurial activity.[439]

1.5 Gender norms and the care economy

Vietnamese women continue to carry the majority of unpaid care and domestic work, limiting their capacity for full labour-market participation or leadership. In terms of **time spent on domestic care**, in 2023 women spend 3.77 hours a day on average on these tasks compared to 2.28 hours for men.[440] In addition, **access to childcare** remains limited, especially in rural areas.[441]

Socially, younger generations are showing signs of change: millennial women and dual-earner couples in urban centres increasingly embrace shared domestic duties and career-oriented lives.[442] However, norms linking masculinity to breadwinning and women to caregiving remain entrenched, particularly in less-educated, rural, and ethnic-minority communities, posing a fundamental barrier to gender equality in both economic and social spheres.[443] **Men's perception of women's work** is mixed. According to the World Values Survey, agreement with the statement "men should have more right to a job than women" was at 52%.[444] Meanwhile, as discussed above, gender stereotyping and occupational segregation suggest women and men's work is not regarded equally.

432   World Bank 2024d
433   Khalidi 2022
434   General Statistics Office 2023
435   World Economic Forum 2024
436   Grant Thornton Vietnam 2024
437   International Labour Office Bureau for Employers' Activities 2016
438   International Finance Corporation 2017
439   Women's Initiative for Startups and Entrepreneurship 2025
440   Hanna et al. 2023a
441   Dang et al. 2022
442   Vu 2021
443   M. L. Nguyen et al. 2020
444   Haerpfer et al. 2024

Vietnam Factsheet

Global gender gap score /1.00

0.713

74th
Global ranking

Educational attainment score/1.00

0.972

109th
Global ranking

Women's political empowerment score/1.00

0.173

95th

Workforce participation

68%

77%

Time spent on domestic work

Women: 3.77hrs

Men: 2.28 hrs

"**When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women**"

52%
agreed in the World Values survey questionnaire

2. Findings & discussion

2.1 Gender-equal attitudes and practices

2.1.1 Prevalence of gender-equal attitudes and practices

This section examines the prevalence of gender-equal attitudes and behaviours, and the extent to which individuals actively support or advocate for gender equality as reported in SNAPS 2024.

It provides an overview of how widely gender-equal perspectives are held within the target population and the extent to which these attitudes translate into behaviours and advocacy that promotes equality, focussing on...

1 Caregiving & domestic roles

2 Economic roles

Key takeaways

- **Although gender-equal attitudes and aspirations are high among all domains for both women and men, gendered expectations persist:** The proportion of men who expect women to carry a greater caregiving burden ranges from 30% to 35%, while fewer than 10% of men expect to do more domestic/caregiving work. Interestingly, women also expect men to take on more caregiving responsibilities in all domains (around 12–19%), and fewer than 10% expect women to do more. This suggests that while most participants support gender equality, nearly one-third still expect the other gender to bear a larger share of caregiving duties.

- **Despite a strong gender-equal attitudes and aspirations, only around 50% of participants report equally sharing caring/domestic responsibilities:** Around 30% of both women and men reported that women do more Caregiving and Domestic work across all domains.

- **Advocacy for gender equality is stronger among women, yet both women and men advocate more than they act:** This is reflective of persistent barriers to translating attitudes into everyday practice.

Caregiving & domestic roles

Key takeaways

- **Most participants supported the equal distribution of Caregiving and Domestic responsibilities:** around 85-92% depending on gender/domain. Women expressed this support at a slightly higher rate than men (3-4 percentage points).

- **Gender-equal aspirations were high, but women were more gender-equal than men:** Among participants not yet in a partnership or without children, most aspired to an equal sharing of caregiving and domestic responsibilities. However, for men, the gap between attitudes and aspirations was larger (12–18 percentage points) than in other countries. About one in three men aspired for women to take on most caregiving and domestic work, compared with only 3–8% of women, indicating stronger male-breadwinner expectations among men even before partnering.

- **Attitudes do not necessarily translate to behaviours:** Despite a trend towards equal gender attitudes and aspirations, these did not necessarily evolve into behaviours. Both women and men showed comparable perceptions of behaviour, with roughly one-third (27–39%) indicating that women take on a greater share of Caregiving and Domestic work across all domains. This attitude–behaviour gap is consistent with Bicchieri: conditional preferences remain anchored to traditional roles when empirical and normative expectations in close reference networks still favour status quo norms.[445]

- **More women engaged in advocacy:** Although most participants indicate that they advocate for gender equality in Caregiving and Domestic roles, this figure is over 7-8 percentage points higher among women than men. As per the conceptual framework, advocacy operates as a public signal - the fact that advocacy in both women and men exceeds actual behaviour suggests that signalling alone has not yet realigned household-level empirical/normative expectations or reduced perceived costs enough to shift conditional preferences in everyday task division.

445   Bicchieri 2017

Figure VN 1 Gender-equal attitudes and practices in Caregiving and Domestic roles
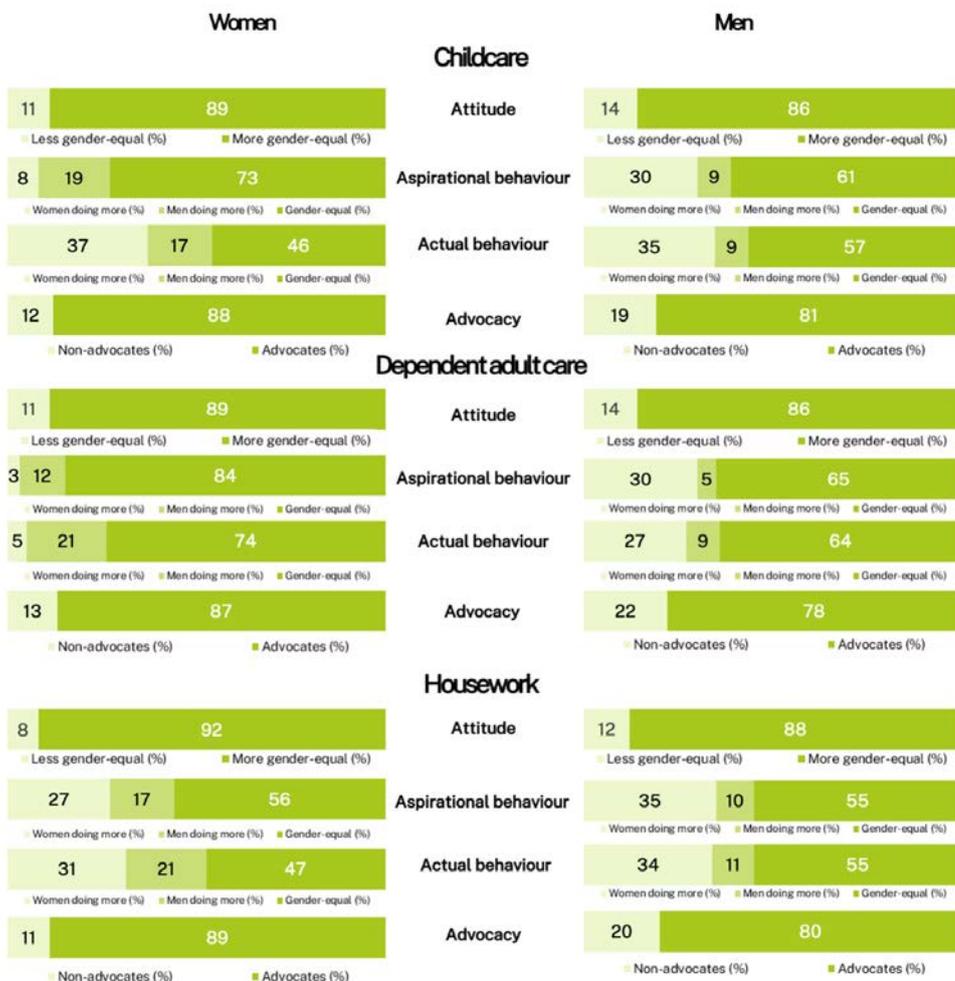
Note: This graph presents the proportion of responses by women and men. The analysis covers the domains of Childcare, Dependent Adult Care, and Housework, based on 2024 SNAPS survey data. A detailed explanation of how behaviours were captured can be found in **Note 3 – Annex 1**.

Economic roles

Key takeaways

- **Men challenge the male-breadwinner norm:** Both men (82%) and women (88%) expressed strong support for sharing responsibility equally in the Earning Family Income domain. Notably, one in three men (32%) thought women should take greater responsibility as breadwinners while only 2% of women thought the same. This could reflect that men are increasingly supporting women's equal contribution to family income, possibly influenced by women's economic potential or social desirability, while women may be resisting the double burden of care or predict high sanctions for deviating from traditional norms.

- **Gender-equal attitudes do not translate to behaviours:** Among married participants, around 60% of women and men report equally sharing responsibility for Earning Family Income, with a similar proportion (22% men and 29% women) reporting that men do more - indicating that supportive private beliefs have not shifted conditional preferences. Qualitative findings pointed to barriers, which is the hegemonic idea of men as primary providers (injunctive expectation), normative and empirical expectations that women's paid work should not affect care, along with inadequate domestic support and limited options for flexible work.

- **Attitudes in the Leadership and Job Suitability domains were more gender-equal:** Most participants believe that individuals of any gender can lead effectively and succeed in any role - suggesting a more gender-equal normative expectation in public and roles-based contexts, even as household breadwinner expectations remain more traditional.

- **Similar to Caregiving and Domestic responsibilities, a higher percentage of women than men indicate advocacy for gender equality in Economic roles:** Higher gender-equal attitudes and advocacy than actual behaviours were evident across domains related to Economic roles.

Figure VN 2 Gender-equal attitudes and practices in Economic roles[446]

Note: This graph presents the proportion of responses by women and men. The analysis covers the domains of of Earning Family Income, Job Suitability, Women's Leadership, based on 2024 SNAPS survey data. A detailed explanation of how behaviours were captured can be found in **Note 3 – Annex 1**.
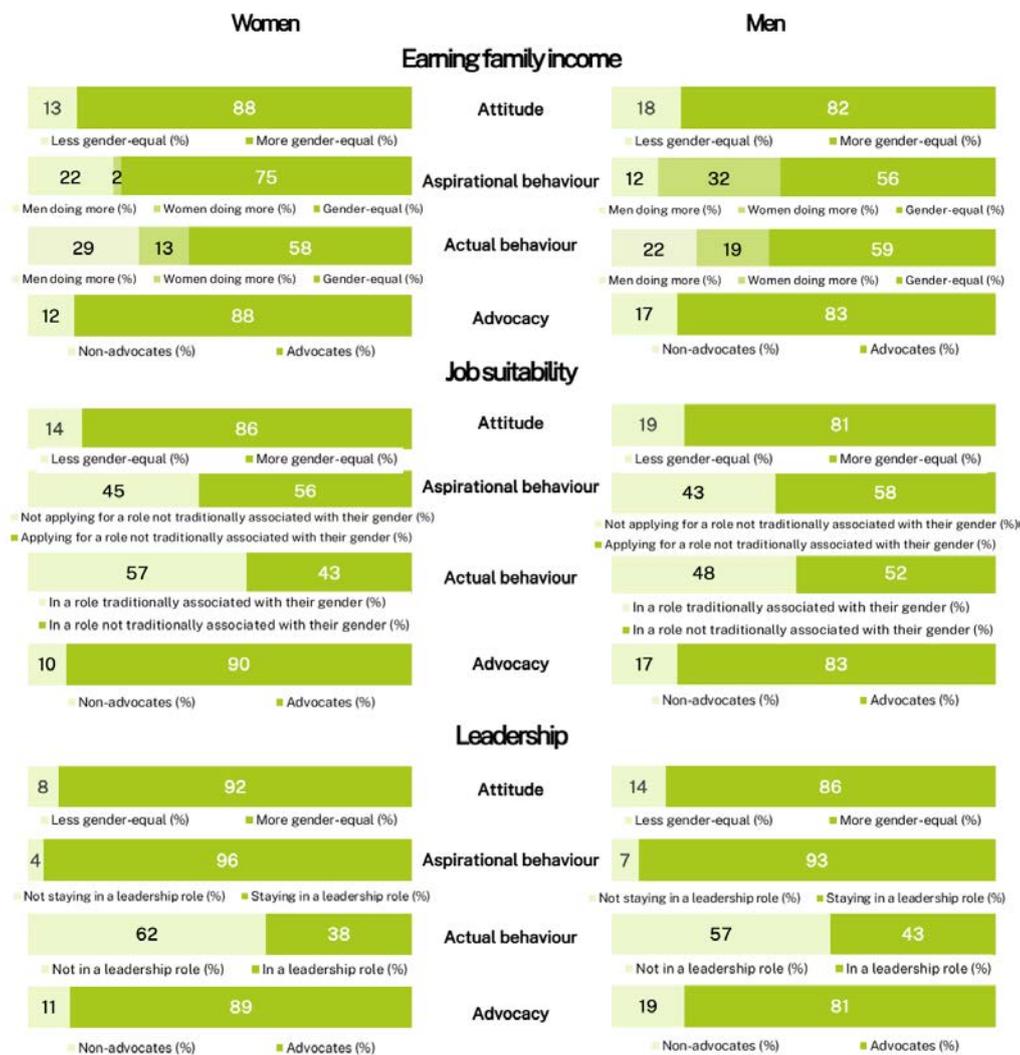
446   Note that of the sample, 81% of women were employed, compared to the national female labour force participation rate of 68% in 2025. Based on World Bank's World Development Indicators. The labour force participation rate is as percentage of population in each gender aged 15 and above based on modelled ILO estimate (World Bank Open Data 2025a)

2.1.2 Misperception of gender-equal attitudes and behaviour

This section explores the gap between participants' perceptions and the actual prevalence of gender-equal attitudes and behaviours for gender equality.

It focuses on whether individuals tend to underestimate how widely gender equality is supported and practiced in their communities (i.e. 'pluralistic ignorance' as per the conceptual framework). Understanding this perception gap helps identify areas where social norms may be misaligned with actual behaviours, shedding light on potential opportunities to correct the misperceptions and promote gender-equal practices.

Key takeaways

- **Underestimations were evident for both women and men across domains for gender-equal attitudes:** However, people had a fairly accurate understanding of their peer's levels of gender-equal behaviours.

- **Women perceived higher levels of gender equality attitudes than men:** This suggests women's reference networks have a stronger approval of gender-equality than men's. However, men perceive higher levels of gender-equal behaviours than women, indicating potential dissonance between women and men on what constitutes gender-equal behaviour.

- **Women's support for gender-equal Job Suitability is often overestimated.**

Table VN 1 Top three underestimations in gender-equal attitudes or behaviours

Caregiving & domestic roles	Economic roles
Women's GE behaviours in Dependent Adult Care (18 p.p. ***)	Women's GE attitudes in Women's Leadership (17 p.p. ***)
Women's GE behaviours in Childcare (16 p.p. ***)	Women's GE attitudes in Job suitability (13 p.p. ***)
Women's GE behaviours in Housework (15 p.p. ***)	Women's GE attitudes in Women's Leadership & Job suitability (12 p.p. ***)

Note: Difference between perceived and actual attitudes or behaviours are presented in percentage points. (***) denotes statistically significant results at 95% confidence level.

Caregiving & domestic roles

Key takeaways

- **Both women and men underestimated gender-equal attitudes across all domains:** The high prevalence of gender-equal attitudes at above 80% suggests that positive deviance could be highlighted to encourage more gender-equal support in Caregiving and Domestic work.

- **Both women and men estimated the prevalence of gender-equal behaviours relatively accurately:** As estimates of actual peer behaviours in these domains are relatively accurate, cases of positive deviance may need to be emphasised to influence change.

- **Women's perceptions of, and actual support for, gender equality was higher than men's in all domains** (though the gender gaps were statistically insignificant for half of the domains). In Economic roles, women's perception of gender-equal behaviours were lower than men's – signalling that men overestimate the extent to which gender equality has been achieved and/or women and men have different understandings on what constitutes gender-equal behaviour.

Childcare

Perceived level — Actual level

Women's attitudes 73%
Men's attitudes 72%
89%
86%

Men's behaviour 68% — 67%

Women's behaviour 63% — 61%

Dependent Adult Care

Perceived level — Actual level

Women's attitudes 73%
Men's attitudes 73%
Men's behaviour 71%
Women's behaviour 67%
89%
85%
75%
73%

Housework

Perceived level — Actual level

Women's attitudes 74%
Men's attitudes 73%
Men's behaviour 70%
Women's behaviour 68%
92%
88%
68%
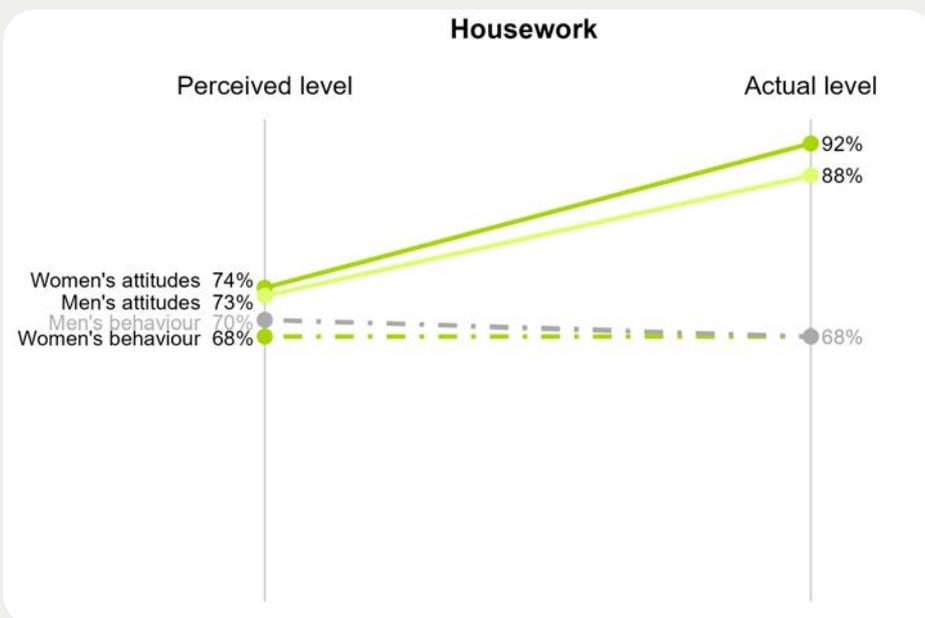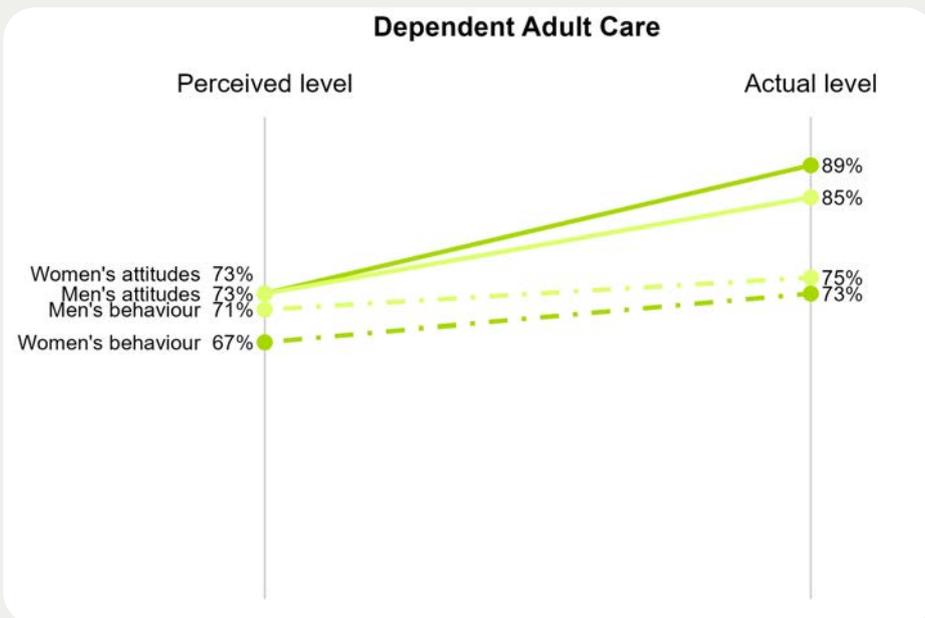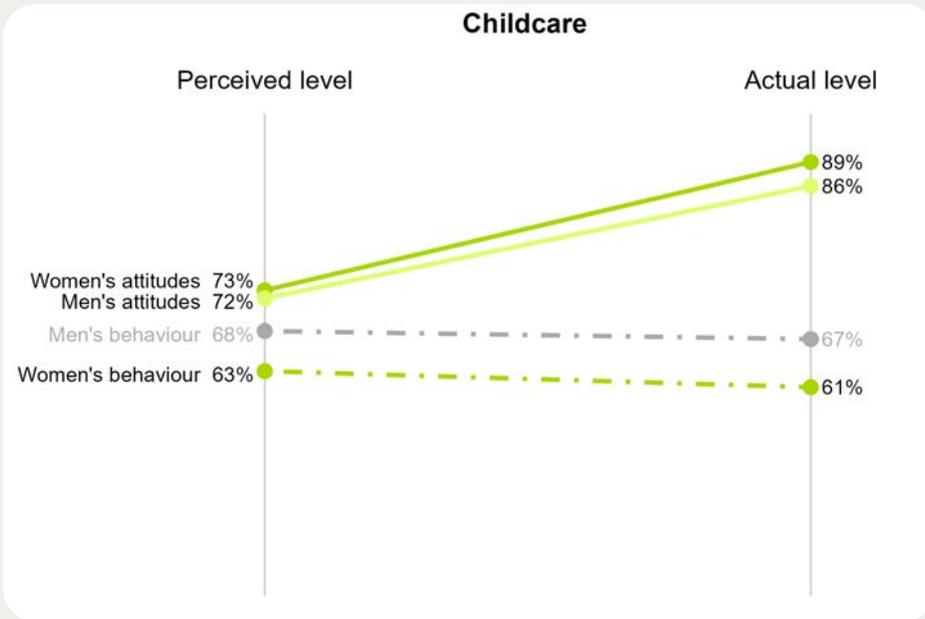
Figure VN 3
Misperception of gender equality in Caregiving and Domestic roles

Note: This graph illustrates the difference between perceived (left) and actual (right) levels of gender-equal attitudes (solid lines) and behaviours (dashed line) across domains (Childcare, Dependent Adult Care, and Housework). Results are shown separately for women (darker colour) and men (lighter colours). An upward slope indicates underestimation, where people perceive less equality than it actually exists, while a downward slope indicates overestimation, where perceived equality exceeds actual equality. Statistically significant differences at the 5% significance level are indicated by coloured lines. Statistically insignificant differences are indicated by the grey lines.

Economic roles

Key takeaways

- **Both women and men underestimated support for gender-equal economic roles across all domains:** Additionally, both women and men also underestimated the prevalence of gender-equal behaviours in the Earning Family Income domain. This underestimation varied by 9-17 percentage points, highlighting disparities between normative expectations and genuine approval of gender equality.

- **Support for gender equality in Job Suitability domain is often overestimated:** In the Job Suitability domain, women overestimated gender equality behaviours, while men underestimated gender-equal attitudes. This could be the result of Vietnam's prominent state-led campaigns to increase female participation in the workforce which occasionally contradict traditional values[447] while skewing perceptions of gender-equal support and behaviours. In communications intended to influence normative and empirical expectations, Bicchieri advises against noting inflated perceptions of supportive attitudes or behaviours. Instead, she suggests that more examples reinforcing the desired action is showcased.[448]

- **Women's perceptions of gender-equal attitudes were generally higher than men's in all three domains:** However, differences were only statistically significant in the Job Suitability domain.

- **In the Job Suitability and Leadership domains, women tended to overestimate the gender-equal practices:** This suggests that visible examples of women in leadership or professional roles may create an impression of broader equality than what is reflected in actual behaviours.

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447   Hoang 2020
448   Bicchieri and Dimant 2022
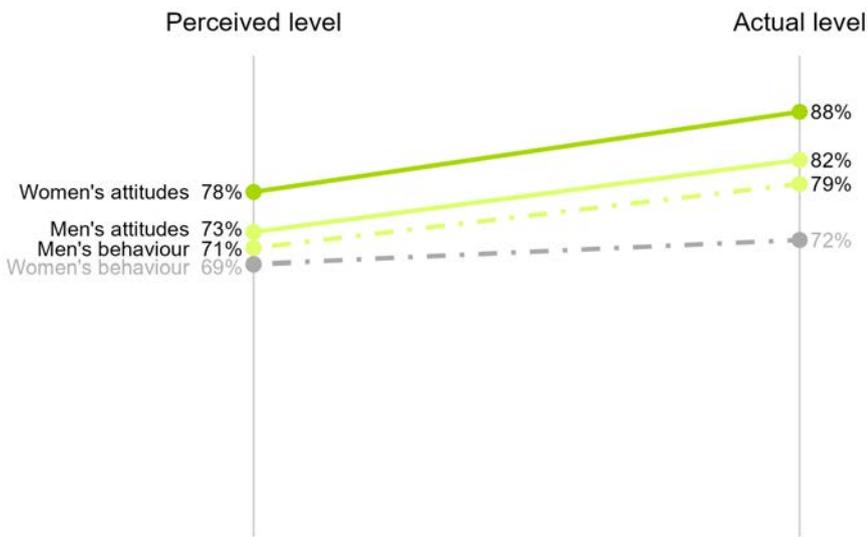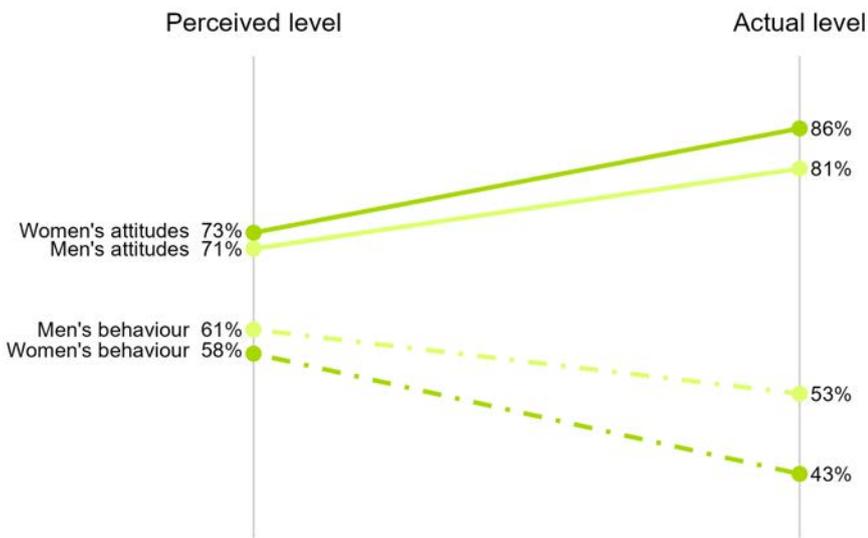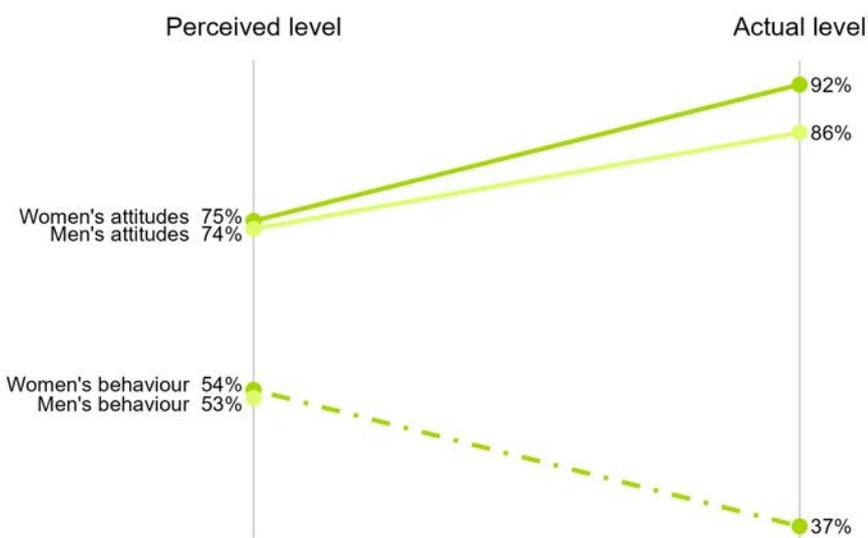
Figure VN 4
Misperception of gender equality in Economic roles

Earning Family Income

Perceived level — Actual level

- Women's attitudes 78% → 88%
- Men's attitudes 73% → 82%
- Men's behaviour 71% → 79%
- Women's behaviour 69% → 72%

Job Suitability

Perceived level — Actual level

- Women's attitudes 73% → 86%
- Men's attitudes 71% → 81%
- Men's behaviour 61% → 53%
- Women's behaviour 58% → 43%

Women's Leadership

Perceived level — Actual level

- Women's attitudes 75% → 92%
- Men's attitudes 74% → 86%
- Women's behaviour 54% → 37%
- Men's behaviour 53%

Note: This graph illustrates the difference between perceived (left) and actual (right) levels of gender-equal attitudes (solid lines) and behaviours (dashed line) across domains (Earning Family Income, Job Suitability and Women's Leadership). Results are shown separately for women (darker colour) and men (lighter colours). An upward slope indicates underestimation, where people perceive less equality than it actually exists, while a downward slope indicates overestimation, where perceived equality exceeds actual equality. Statistically significant differences at the 5% significance level are indicated by coloured lines. Statistically insignificant differences are indicated by the grey lines.

2.2 Characteristics associated with gender-equal attitudes and practices

2.2.1 Characteristics associated with gender-equal practices

This section presents the quantitative analysis of socio-demographic patterns and the factors associated with gender equality.

It first explores key socio-demographic differences among groups with varying levels of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy, such as differences by age, gender, ethnicity, and family structure. It then examines the factors that shape individuals' attitudes and practices related to gender equality, examining how upbringing, media exposure, and cultural determinants may influence how people perceive and practice equality in their daily lives.

Key takeaways

- **Gender-equal attitudes are linked to gender equality advocacy but not gender-equal behaviours:** This accords with Bicchieri's theory of normative change – individual attitudes do not signal meta-level change and highlights that normative and empirical expectations still need to shift to create normative change.[449]

- **Having gender-equal role models – whether in everyday life, the media or during in their upbringing – area associated with gender-equal behaviours:** This signals the importance of showcasing positive deviance to influence empirical expectations.

- **Age was associated with gender-equal behaviour differently for both women and men:** As do other demographic factors highlighting the importance of targeted population interventions.

Caregiving & domestic roles

Key takeaways

- **Gender equality role models were associated with women's gender-equal behaviour:** Among women, having a gender-equal upbringing and holding gender-equal empirical expectations was positively associated with gender-equal behaviours in all domains; consistent with exposure that normalises equality within salient reference networks. As Bicchieri suggests, this points to the importance of highlighting positive deviance to influence empirical expectations.[450] Meanwhile, for men, no statistically significant factors were positively associated with men's gender-equal behaviours across all sub-themes.

- **Age was associated with gender-equal behaviours differently for both women and men:** Qualitative interviewees also stated that younger people were more likely to be more gender-equal. In the Childcare domain, while there was a positive association between age and gender-equal behaviours for women, this was a negative association for men. This could reflect the emerging phenomena of division between young women and men on attitudes towards gender equality.[451] Alternatively, younger mothers might be more willing to outsource care while expectations

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449 Bicchieri 2017
450 Bicchieri 2017
451 Hoang 2020

for men may have remained static, with continued pressure to fulfil the primary breadwinner role despite women's increasing employment.[452]

- **This tension was echoed in qualitative analysis:** Participants generally supported women working but still upheld the notion of the man as the "main pillar" (or "trụ cột"), which is a role encapsulated in the cultural concept. This underscores how norms have shifted to accommodate women's economic activity while leaving expectations for men largely unchanged.

- **Some demographic characteristics show association with women's behaviours and advocacy, though these patterns are inconsistent:** For instance, having childcare responsibilities was negatively linked to women's equal sharing of Housework, and residing in South Vietnam was associated with lower sharing of Dependent Adult Care duties. This aligns with limited research on North-South differences in gender practices in Vietnam, where Northern men tend to be more gender-aware and involved in domestic tasks.[453, 454] Additionally, being of Kinh ethnicity was negatively associated with women's gender-equal advocacy and behaviours in certain domains. However, these findings should be interpreted cautiously, as non-Kinh people comprise only 15% of the population in 2024[455] and were similarly underrepresented in the sample.

- **Flexible working arrangements supported gender-equal behaviours, though these traditional norms remain entrenched:** Notably for Dependent Adult Care and Childcare, self-employed women were more likely to demonstrate gender-equal behaviour, potentially signalling the role of flexible work in enabling more equal divisions of care labour and lowering the cost of acting on supportive attitudes. However, the negative association for both women and men between having children and gender-equal housework behaviours highlighted that traditional gender norms remain pervasive.

- **For both women and men across all domains, gender-equal attitudes were positively associated with advocacy:** Notably, there were no instances where gender-equal behaviours were associated with advocacy, highlighting that the transition between attitudes, behaviours and advocacy is non-linear. Consistent with Bicchieri,[456] gender-equal attitudes do not necessary indicate meta-level normative change, hence barriers prevent the evolution of attitudes and advocacy into behaviour.

452 Hoang 2020
453 Teerawichitchainan et al. 2010
454 Do et al. 2023
455 CECODES, RTA and UNDP 2025
456 Bicchieri 2017

Figure VN 5 Factors associated with gender-equal practices in Caregiving and Domestic roles

Note: This figure shows factors associated with gender-equal behaviours and advocacy across Caregiving and Domestic roles in the Philippines. Only factors that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level are shown. Blank cells indicate that no factors were associated with a given practice.

Childcare

Behaviours

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal empirical expectation
- ↑ Age 18-24
- ↑ Working
- ↑ Self-employed
- ↑ Having disability
- ↑ Gender-equal upbringing
- ↓ Kinh

Men
- ↓ Age 18-24

Advocacy

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↓ Kinh

Men
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude

Dependent adult care

Behaviours

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal empirical expectation
- ↑ Self-employed
- ↑ Having disability
- ↑ Gender-equal upbringing
- ↓ Residing in South Vietnam
- ↓ With people with disability

Men
- ↓ Gender-equal empirical expectation
- ↓ Self-employed

Advocacy

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↑ Gender-equal media exposure

Men
- ↑ Gender equal attitude
- ↑ Residing in South Vietnam
- ↓ Gender-equal upbringing

Housework

Behaviours

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal empirical expectation
- ↑ With disability
- ↑ Gender-equal upbringing
- ↓ With children

Men
- ↓ Gender-equal normative expectation
- ↓ With children
- ↓ Having disability

Advocacy

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↓ Kinh

Men
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude

Economic roles

Key takeaways

- **Gender-equal normative and empirical expectations supported people to adopt gender-equal behaviours:** Across all three domains, gender-equal behaviours were associated with gender-equal empirical expectations among both women and men and gender-equal normative expectations among men. This accords with Bicchieri's understanding of social norm evolution wherein observations of shifting normative and empirical expectations influence behavioural change.[457] Noticeably, there was no relationship between gender-equal normative expectations and men's gender-equal behaviours. Bicchieri highlights that for social norms to change shifting empirical and normative expectations are needed to motivate gender-equal action.[458]

- **Having role models and higher education were related to gender-equal behaviours:** As seen for Caregiving and Domestic roles and mirrored in qualitative findings, having a post-secondary education (for women), and exposure to gender-equal media and a gender-equal upbringing were positively associated with gender-equal norms for both women and men. This demonstrates how positive deviance and empirical examples of gender-equal behaviours can enable behavioural change, with these cues functioning as visible public signals that update empirical expectations within relevant reference networks, making gender-

equal practices appear typical and approved.

- **Gender-equal attitudes were associated with advocacy, but not with gender-equal behaviours, for both women and men:** This again underscores that barriers persist in enabling attitudes and advocacy translating to behaviours. Qualitative findings showed that unequal power dynamics, economic dependency, cultural norms of deference to older generations and sensitivity towards gender equality within workplaces can hinder advocacy –even when an individual holds a complementary attitude. This pattern is consistent with Bicchieri's account that supportive beliefs alone are insufficient to propel gender-equal behaviours when empirical and normative expectations are yet to update conditional preferences.[459]

- **Notably for women, having a post-secondary education was negatively associated with advocacy:** This highlights that educational attainment cannot be relied upon as a panacea to shifting normative and empirical expectations.

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457 Bicchieri 2017
458 Bicchieri 2017
459 Bicchieri 2017

Figure VN 6 Characteristics associated with gender-equal practices in Economic roles

Note: This figure shows characteristics associated with gender-equal behaviours and advocacy across domains in Economic roles in Malaysia. Only characteristics that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level are shown. Blank cells indicate that no factors were statistically significant. Analysis for the leadership domain is not available for men due to its irrelevance.

Job suitability

Behaviours

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↑ Gender-equal empirical expectation
- ↑ Post-secondary education
- ↑ With people with disability
- ↓ Gender-equal media exposure in care sector

Men
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↑ Gender-equal empirical expectation
- ↑ Having disability
- ↓ Gender-equal media exposure in the care sector

Advocacy

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↑ Gender-equal behaviour
- ↓ Post-secondary

Men
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↑ With children
- ↓ Gender-equal media exposure in the STEM sector

Leadership

Behaviours

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal normative expectation
- ↑ Gender-equal empirical expectation
- ↑ Married
- ↑ Post-secondary education
- ↑ Self-employed
- ↑ With dependent adult
- ↑ With people with disability
- ↑ Gender equal media exposure

Men

Advocacy

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↓ Having disability

Men

Family income

Behaviours

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal normative expectation
- ↑ Gender-equal upbringing
- ↓ Gender-equal empirical expectation
- ↓ Self-employed

Men
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↑ Gender-equal empirical expectation
- ↑ Having disability
- ↑ Gender-equal media exposure
- ↓ With people with disability
- ↓ Not religious

Advocacy

Women
- ↑ Gender-equal behaviour
- ↑ Gender-equal attitude
- ↑ Reside in South Vietnam
- ↑ Self-employed
- ↓ Post-secondary education

Men

2.2.2 Interconnectedness between attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy

Using latent profile analysis, the profiles on the opposite page illustrate how attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy align within the population, highlighting patterns that range from low alignment to strong consistency in support for gender equality.

It is noteworthy that the profiles were built relative to each domain and are consistent within each domain, separate for women and men (therefore cross-domain comparison is unachievable). The profiles for gender equality (GE) within the Childcare domain are relatively similar, but not identical, to the GE profiles in the Dependent Adult Care domain. Some profiles, such as GE Opponents, Reluctant Leaders and Moderately strong GE supporters profiles, appear as standalones because there is no closely matching profile in other domains. Domains with a greater diversity of combinations in gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy may result in a larger number of profiles.

The list of profiles identified in each domain is shown on the next page.

Key takeaways

- **Gender-equal expectations were powerful but uneven drivers:** Having gender-equal normative expectations were strongly associated with women's and men's Childcare and Housework profiles, while empirical expectations were especially influential in Job Suitability and Earning Family Income (mainly for men). However, in Leadership, expectations played no role at all, highlighting that the weight of social norms varies by domain.

- **Advocacy divides were the sharpest marker of profile membership:** In caregiving (Childcare, Dependent Adult Care) and Leadership, advocacy rather than attitudes or behaviours was the key factor differentiating the profiles. For women, in particular, attitudes often translated into behaviours, but not advocacy, until reinforced by stronger normative support.

- **Structural and socio-economic contexts might constrain translation:** Across domains, factors such as age, region, ethnicity (Kinh), disability (own or household), caregiving responsibilities, and self-employment were consistently associated with profile membership. These constraints help explain the persistence of Passive supporters, which is a group reporting some gender-equal attitudes and advocacy but no corresponding behaviours, particularly among women.

- **Women and men's profiles vary by domain:** Only Job Suitability showed complete overlap in profile structures between women and men, reflecting shared frames of reference. In contrast, Housework revealed the least overlap, with distinctive gendered profiles.

Figure VN 7.1 Profile composition across domains – Women

Domain	Strong GE supporters	GE moderates	Passive GE supporters	Reluctant leaders	Weak GE supporters	Inconsistent GE supporters	GE opponent
Childcare	69.5%	30.5%					
Dependent Adult Care	54.0%	27.4%			18.6%		
Housework	37.8%	25.7%	7.6%		23.3%	5.6%	
Earning Family Income	65.7%	34.3%					
Job Suitability	38.4%	24.1%	12.2%		21.3%	4.0%	
Leadership	58.9%	16.8%		4.5%	19.8%		

- ■ Strong GE supporters
- ■ GE moderates
- ■ Passive GE supporters
- ■ Reluctant leaders
- ■ Weak GE supporters
- ■ Inconsistent GE supporters
- ■ GE opponent

Figure VN 7.2 Profile composition across domains – Men
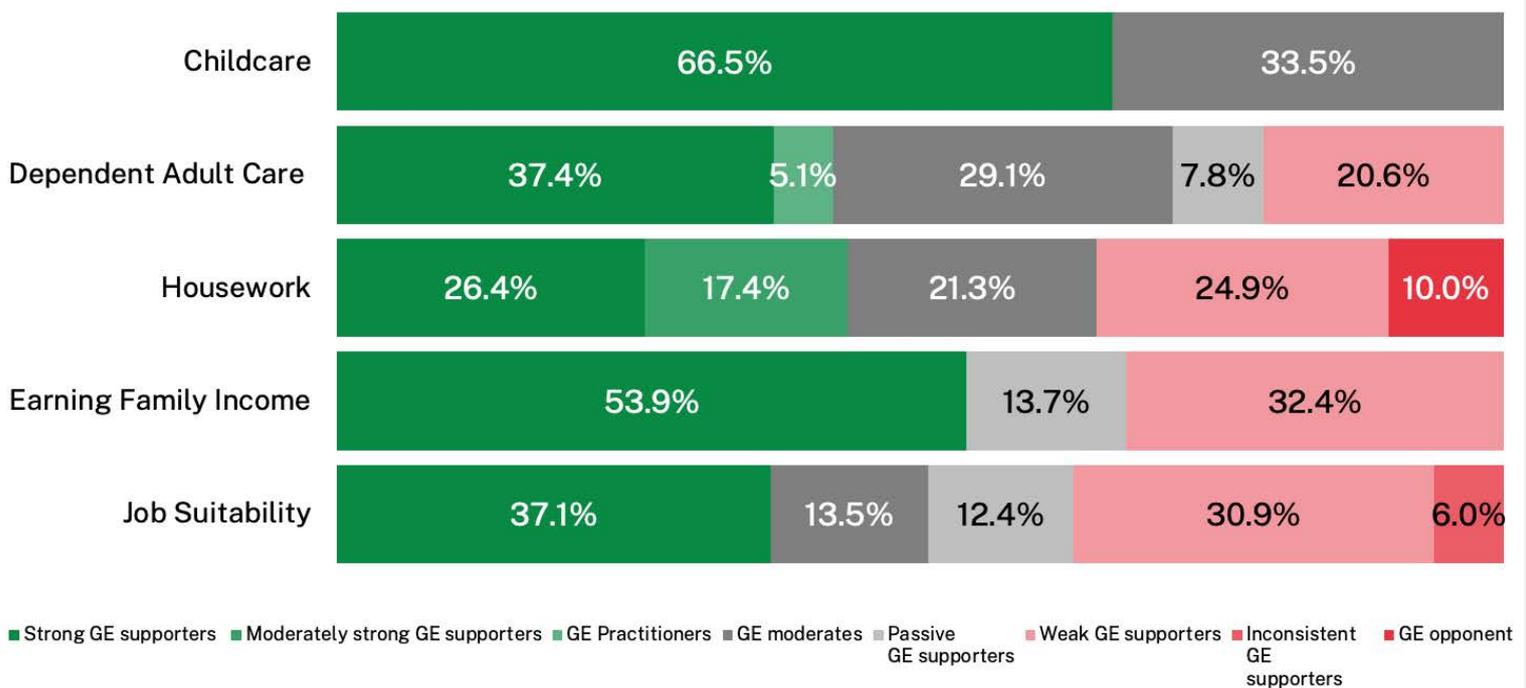
Domain	Strong GE supporters	Moderately strong GE supporters	GE Practitioners	GE moderates	Passive GE supporters	Weak GE supporters	Inconsistent GE supporters	GE opponent
Childcare	66.5%			33.5%				
Dependent Adult Care	37.4%	5.1%		29.1%	7.8%	20.6%		
Housework	26.4%	17.4%		21.3%		24.9%		10.0%
Earning Family Income	53.9%				13.7%	32.4%		
Job Suitability	37.1%			13.5%	12.4%	30.9%	6.0%	

- ■ Strong GE supporters
- ■ Moderately strong GE supporters
- ■ GE Practitioners
- ■ GE moderates
- ■ Passive GE supporters
- ■ Weak GE supporters
- ■ Inconsistent GE supporters
- ■ GE opponent

Note: This figure presents the distinct women's and men's profiles identified within each domain. Profiles were determined through latent profile analysis based on participants' attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy, conducted separately for each domain. Only women's profiles were examined for the Leadership domain.

Childcare domain

- **Women were more concentrated in the gender-equal profiles:** with 81% classified as Strong GE supporters and 19% as GE Moderates. Men with children showed a similar pattern but with a less decisive split (70% Strong GE supporters and 30% Weak GE supporters).

- **Men's profiles clearly differentiated in relation to childcare duties:** they were either Strong GE supporters, showing high levels of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy, or Weak GE supporters, with low levels of gender-equal attitudes and advocacy. Notably, childcare-related behaviours remained high across both profiles, suggesting that men may take on childcare responsibilities regardless of whether they do so willingly or reluctantly.

- **Gender-equal normative expectations were associated profile membership for both women and men:** For both women and men, perceived gender-equal normative expectations were strongly associated with profile membership, with higher expectations consistently associated with higher levels of gender equality attitudes and advocacy, showing that societal approval strongly shapes childcare-related gender equality.

Figure VN 8 Segmentation profiles in the Childcare domain

Women

■ % GE attitudes ■ % GE behaviours ■ % GE advocates

GE moderates: 73, 68, 35
Strong GE supporters: 93, 66, 100
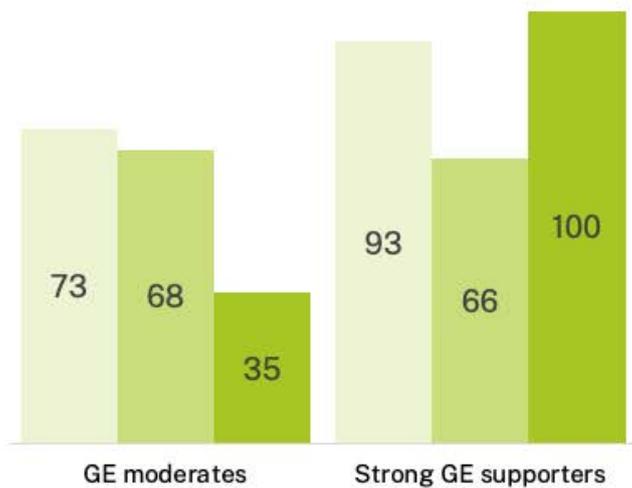
Key characteristics	GE moderates (16%)	Strong GE supporters (84%)
GE normative expectation (%)	67	76

Men

■ % GE attitudes ■ % GE behaviours ■ % GE advocates
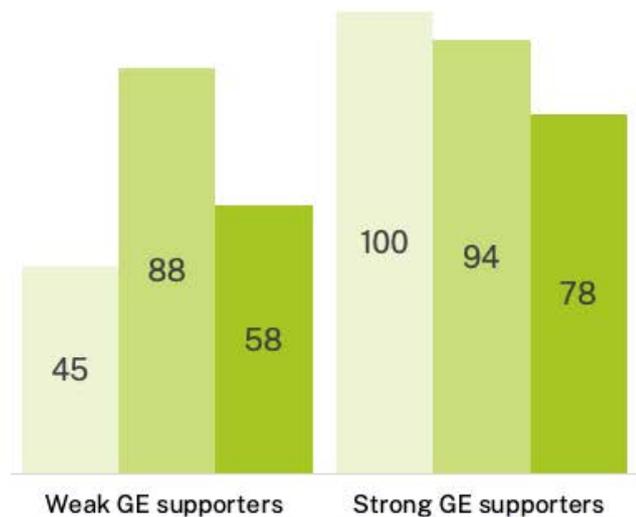
Weak GE supporters: 45, 88, 58
Strong GE supporters: 100, 94, 78

Key characteristics	Weak GE supporters (28%)	Strong GE supporters (72%)
GE normative expectation (%)	65	77

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure VN 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.

Dependent Adult Care domain

- **Most participants were concentrated in gender-equal profiles:** GE Moderates and Strong GE supporters together accounted for 90% of women and 75% of men. This marks dependent adult care as more gender-equal compared to Childcare and Housework.

- **For women, support was highly concentrated in the more gender-equal profiles** (64% strong, 26% moderate, 10% weak). Men showed a more fragmented distribution, with 41% strong and 34% moderate, alongside smaller groups of Weak GE supporters (13%), Passive GE supporters (10%), and GE practitioners (3%). This indicates women's support is more unified, whereas men's is more dispersed across weaker profiles.

- **Gender-equal expectations had gendered impacts:** For women, gender-equal normative expectations were significant: higher perceived societal approval was associated with stronger GE profiles. In contrast, neither gender-equal normative nor empirical expectations were associated with men's profiles and instead demographic factors were more impactful.

- **Socio-economic factors influence results by gender:** For women, younger age were associated with Stronger GE supporters profile, whereas younger men were more likely to fall into the GE Practitioner or Passive GE supporters profiles. Women who were self-employed or having disability were more likely to be GE Moderates. While for men, the same factors (being self-employed and having disability) were most often observed in the Passive GE supporters profile.

Figure VN 9 Segmentation profiles in the Adult Care domain
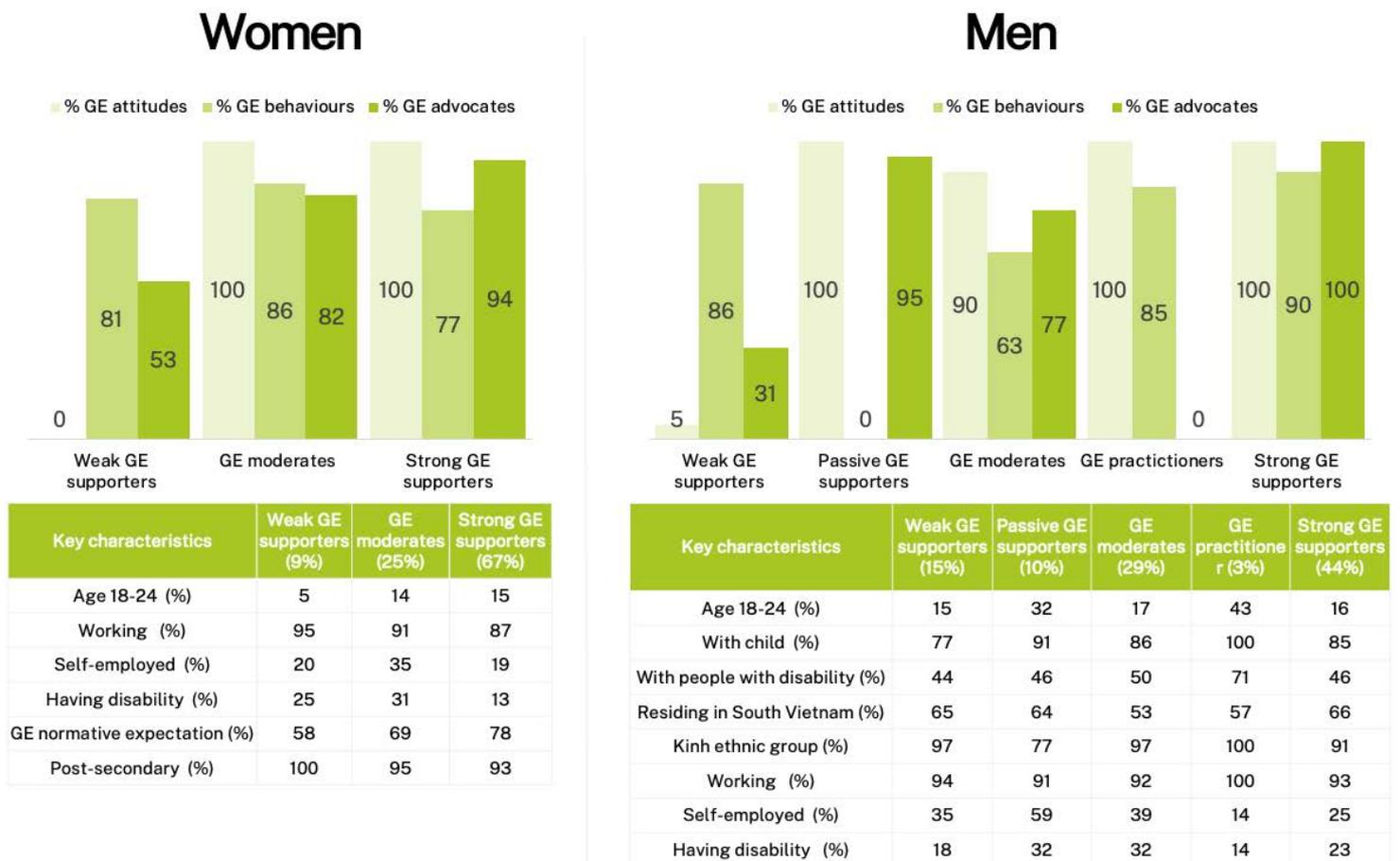
Women

% GE attitudes % GE behaviours % GE advocates

Weak GE supporters: 81, 53
GE moderates: 100, 86, 82
Strong GE supporters: 100, 77, 94

Key characteristics	Weak GE supporters (9%)	GE moderates (25%)	Strong GE supporters (67%)
Age 18-24 (%)	5	14	15
Working (%)	95	91	87
Self-employed (%)	20	35	19
Having disability (%)	25	31	13
GE normative expectation (%)	58	69	78
Post-secondary (%)	100	95	93

Men

% GE attitudes % GE behaviours % GE advocates

Weak GE supporters: 5, 86, 31
Passive GE supporters: 100, 95
GE moderates: 90, 63, 77
GE practitioners: 100, 85
Strong GE supporters: 100, 90, 100

Key characteristics	Weak GE supporters (15%)	Passive GE supporters (10%)	GE moderates (29%)	GE practitioner (3%)	Strong GE supporters (44%)
Age 18-24 (%)	15	32	17	43	16
With child (%)	77	91	86	100	85
With people with disability (%)	44	46	50	71	46
Residing in South Vietnam (%)	65	64	53	57	66
Kinh ethnic group (%)	97	77	97	100	91
Working (%)	94	91	92	100	93
Self-employed (%)	35	59	39	14	25
Having disability (%)	18	32	32	14	23

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure VN 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.
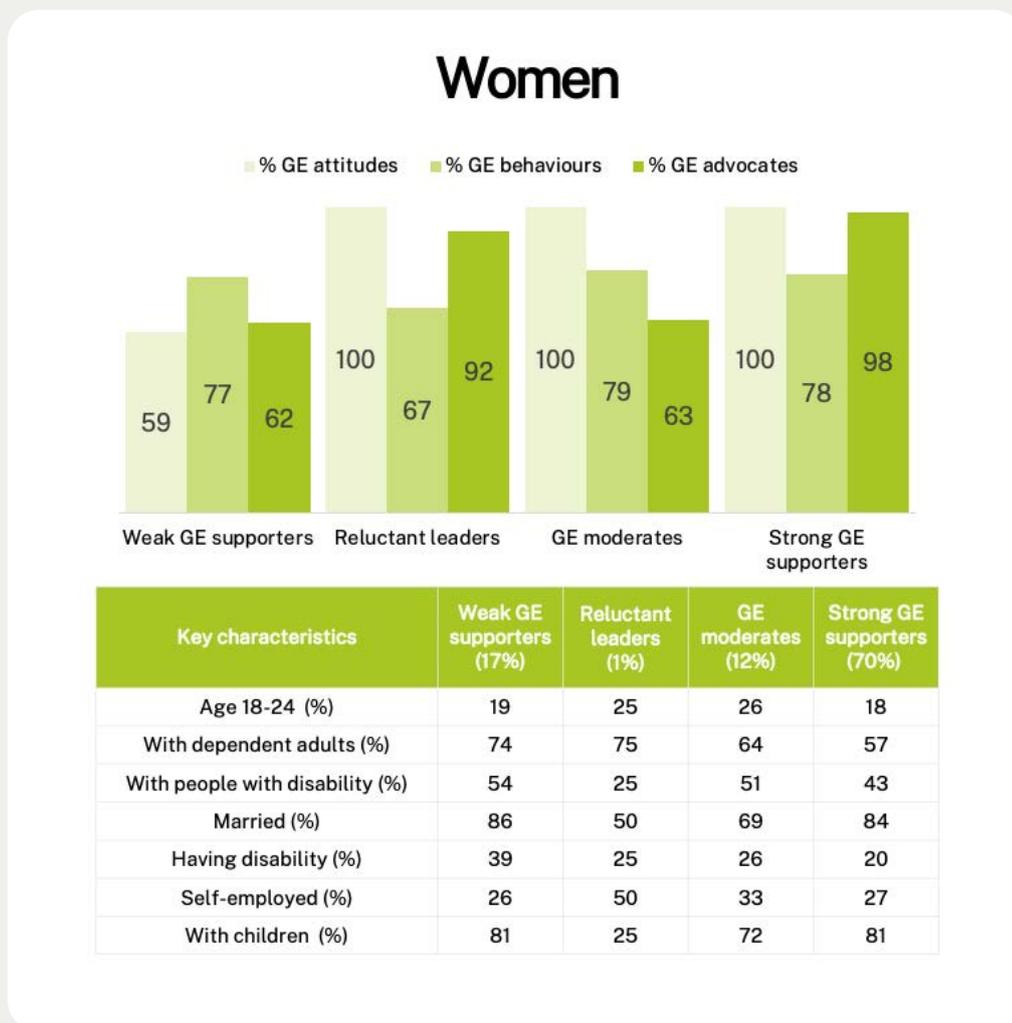
Housework domain

- **Women's support was heavily concentrated in the more gender-equal profiles:** with 78% classified as Strong GE supporters and the remaining 22% as GE Moderates. Men, in contrast, were more divided: while 63% were Strong GE supporters, sizeable minorities fall into weaker categories, including 23% Weak GE supporters and 14% Passive GE supporters. This suggests women's GE support is more unified and decisively strong, whereas men's is more fragmented with notable shares in weaker profiles.

- **Normative expectations appeared to shape women's engagement:** For women, stronger profile membership was significantly associated with higher gender-equal normative expectations and having children. This suggests that both social approval and family roles shape whether supportive attitudes translate into behaviours and advocacy.

- **For men, profiles were influenced less by normative expectations and more by demographic factors:** Younger men were more likely to be found at both Weak and Strong GE supporters, the same pattern observed among those living with people with a disability. One the other hand, men with a disability themselves were more likely to be strong supporters. This indicates that social-demographic backgrounds shape men's GE support in complex, and at times contrasting, ways.

- **Advocacy was the most constrained dimension:** Among women, the GE Moderates showed strong attitudes and behaviours but weaker advocacy, reflecting barriers to publicly identifying as advocates. Validation workshops highlighted the challenges of conducting advocacy in the public sphere including economic dependence, power imbalance and cultural norms of obedience to older generations. Among men, Passive GE supporters demonstrated the reverse gap, pointing to structural barriers that limit practice despite acceptance.

Figure VN 10 Segmentation profiles in the Housework domain

Women

Legend: ■ % GE attitudes ■ % GE behaviours ■ % GE advocates

GE moderates: 76, 68, 43
Strong GE supporters: 93, 68, 100

Key characteristics	GE Moderates (21%)	Strong GE supporters (79%)
Post-secondary education (%)	99	91
With child (%)	86	93
GE normative expectation (%)	67	77

Men

Legend: ■ % GE attitudes ■ % GE behaviours ■ % GE advocates

Weak GE supporters: 44, 51, 54
Passive GE supporters: 100, 0, 80
Strong GE supporters: 100, 84, 79

Key characteristics	Weak GE supporters (21%)	Passive GE supporters (13%)	Strong GE supporters (67%)
Age 18-24 (%)	23	15	21
Having disability (%)	22	15	28
With people with disability (%)	32	24	36

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure VN 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.

Earning family income domain

- **Among women, support was more concentrated in the stronger profiles:** with 60% Strong GE supporters and a further 24% GE Moderates, leaving only small shares in Weak GE (10%) Passive GE (5%) and GE opponents (2%) profiles. Men's distribution is more spread out: while 38% are Strong GE supporters, sizeable groups appear as Moderately strong (23%) and Moderate (22%), with 15% Weak supporters. This indicates that women display a clearer consensus of strong gender equality support, whereas men's support is more fragmented across the moderate-to-strong range, with fewer concentrated at the strongest level.

- **For women, higher gender-equal normative expectations were linked with greater likelihood of being either GE Passive or Strong GE supporters indicating a split effect:** For men, in contrast, empirical expectations showed a clearer gradient, with higher levels associated with gender-equally stronger profiles.

- **Having children was the only socio-economic factor associated with profiles in both women and men, highlighting caregiving responsibilities as a common driver of profile membership:** Among men, having children reduced the likelihood of being GE opponents or Weak GE supporters, potentially indicating how having higher caregiving responsibilities increased likelihood of more flexible norm adoption. Qualitative findings further noted that economic necessity to provide for a family increased necessity of dual incomes. Comparatively, for women, the associated between profile membership and having children was less consistent.

- **Socio-demographic questions had gendered impacts:** For women, being self-employed was associated with greater likelihood of being Passive GE supporters, and having no religion correlates with the likelihood of being a GE Opponent. For men, disability-related factors were more influential: those living with people with a disability or having a disability were more likely to be GE Moderates and living with a dependent adult in the household were more likely to be GE Moderates or Strong GE supporters.

Figure VN 11 Segmentation profiles in the Earning Family Income domain

Women — % GE attitudes, % GE behaviours, % GE advocates

GE opponents	Weak GE supporters	Passive GE supporters	GE moderates	Strong GE supporters
0, 36, 33	0, 59, 57	100, 0, 92	100, 41, 70	100, 88, 92

Key characteristics	GE opponents (2%)	Weak GE supporters (9%)	Passive GE supporters (5%)	GE moderates (21%)	Strong GE supporters (63%)
GE normative expectation (%)	32	65	86	72	80
With child (%)	100	90	91	89	93
No religion (%)	78	63	59	56	54
Self-employed (%)	11	10	32	26	15
GE empirical expectation (%)	31	58	88	68	75

Men — % GE attitudes, % GE behaviours, % GE advocates

GE opponents	Weak GE supporters	GE moderates	Moderately strong GE	Strong GE supporters
0, 25, 45	0, 58, 55	100, 68, 77	100, 78, 87	100, 85, 89

Key characteristics	GE opponents (2%)	Weak GE supporters (15%)	GE moderates (21%)	Moderately strong GE (22%)	Strong GE supporters (40%)
Age 18-24 (%)	13	24	21	17	13
Residing in South Vietnam (%)	63	45	66	53	64
Kinh ethnic group (%)	75	94	95	95	95
With child (%)	63	73	84	90	86
Having disability (%)	13	19	21	16	17
With people with disability (%)	13	19	34	28	26
GE empirical expectation (%)	44	61	65	75	79
With dependent adults (%)	38	48	52	48	52

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure VN 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.

Job suitability domain

- **Profile distribution differed by gender:** Both women and men showed small proportions of inconsistent GE supporters (5% and 6%, respectively). Among women, support is spread evenly across Weak GE (24%), Passive GE (22%), GE moderate (24%), and Strong GE supporters (24%) profiles, suggesting less polarisation and more balance across the spectrum. By contrast, men's distribution is more skewed: while nearly one-third (32%) are Strong GE supporters, larger shares fall into weaker categories, including 31% Weak GE and 19% Passive GE, with only 11% GE moderates. This indicates that women's GE support is more evenly distributed, whereas men's support is more fragmented, with heavier concentration in both strong and weak profiles but fewer moderates.

- **Gender-equal normative expectations were associated with women's profiles:** with higher perceived approval reducing the likelihood of being in the Inconsistent GE or Weak GE categories, but showing relatively similar proportions across the Passive, Moderate, and Strong profiles. In contrast, both normative and empirical expectations displayed a positive gradient among men, with higher expectations linked to more gender-equal profiles overall.

- **For women, there were less associations with socio-demographic factors but these were more pronounced:** Self-employment and living with people with disabilities were linked with stronger profiles, while having children reduced the likelihood of Weak GE membership. In contrast, having a disability increased the likelihood of being in Inconsistent GE or Weak GE profiles. Regional (South Vietnam) and ethnic (Kinh) identity also differentiated women's profiles.

- **For men, determining factors spanned a wider range but were less consistent:** Younger men were more likely to be Inconsistent GE supporters, but other demographic factors such as ethnicity, marital status, religion, education, self-employment and having disability showed little differentiation. Having caregiving responsibilities (living with dependent adults or people with a disability) were also associated with profiles yet did not follow a clear gradient.

Figure VN 12 Segmentation profiles in the Job Suitability domain

Women

Key characteristics	Inconsistent GE supporters (5%)	Weak GE supporters (24%)	Passive GE supporters (22%)	GE moderates (24%)	Strong GE supporters (24%)
Residing in South Vietnam (%)	61	65	59	55	71
Kinh ethnic group (%)	95	99	99	100	98
Self-employed (%)	9	17	12	18	25
With children (%)	70	62	69	73	73
With people with disability (%)	20	31	17	32	36
Having disability (%)	23	22	10	16	16
GE normative expectation (%)	48	67	79	75	80

Men

Key characteristics	Inconsistent GE supporters (6%)	Weak GE supporters (31%)	Passive GE supporters (19%)	GE moderates (11%)	Strong GE supporters (32%)
Age 18-24 (%)	31	23	14	22	18
Kinh ethnic group (%)	98	96	94	98	94
Not religious (%)	49	65	64	56	50
Married (%)	63	70	69	66	69
Having disability (%)	22	23	11	20	19
GE normative expectation (%)	52	64	75	74	80
GE empirical expectation (%)	46	61	52	66	70
Post-secondary education (%)	82	92	89	84	84
Self-employed (%)	27	31	18	27	26
With dependent adult (%)	41	52	43	52	57
With people with disability (%)	18	31	19	34	29

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure VN 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.

Women's Leadership domain

- **The distribution showed overwhelming support at the more gender-equal profiles:** with 70% classified as Strong GE supporters and a further 12% as GE Moderates. Smaller minorities fell into less gender-equal categories, including 17% Weak GE supporters and 1% Reluctant leaders. This indicates broad consensus around Strong GE supporters, with very limited resistance or hesitation. (Childcare, Dependent Adult Care, Housework), neither gender-equal normative nor empirical expectations were associated with Women's leadership profiles. This indicates that peer or societal approval is not what drives attitudes or advocacy toward leadership.

- **Socio-economic factors were associated with profile membership**: Profile differences were shaped by structural and demographic factors rather than gender-equal normative expectations. Younger women were less likely to be in Weak or Strong GE supporters profiles, while married women were more likely to fall into these two categories. Self-employment was associated with a greater likelihood of being Reluctant leaders. Disability also mattered: women with a disability were more likely to be Weak GE supporters, and those living with people with a disability were more likely to be Weak GE supporters or GE Moderate. Caregiving responsibilities further differentiated profiles, women with dependent adults were more likely to be Weak GE supporters or Reluctant leaders, whereas women with children appeared in both Weak GE and Strong GE supporters profiles. Overall, this pattern suggests that women's support for gender-equal leadership is influenced less by societal norms and more by life circumstances and household context.

Figure VN 13 Segmentation profiles in the Women's Leadership domain

Women

Legend: ■ % GE attitudes ■ % GE behaviours ■ % GE advocates

	Weak GE supporters	Reluctant leaders	GE moderates	Strong GE supporters
% GE attitudes	59	100	100	100
% GE behaviours	77	67	79	78
% GE advocates	62	92	63	98

Key characteristics	Weak GE supporters (17%)	Reluctant leaders (1%)	GE moderates (12%)	Strong GE supporters (70%)
Age 18-24 (%)	19	25	26	18
With dependent adults (%)	74	75	64	57
With people with disability (%)	54	25	51	43
Married (%)	86	50	69	84
Having disability (%)	39	25	26	20
Self-employed (%)	26	50	33	27
With children (%)	81	25	72	81

Note: These figures present the percentage of gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy in each profile. The table below summarises key variables statistically differentiating the profiles and their distribution in each profile. "GE normative expectation" and "GE empirical expectation" refer to the expectations of a gender-equal share within the corresponding domain. Refer to **Figure VN 7** for the detailed profile decomposition.

2.3 Factors influencing gender-equal attitudes, behaviours, and social norms

2.3.1 Structural, contextual and normative factors

This section explores, based on qualitative work, the enabling and constraining contextual factors that shape gender-equal practices.

It focuses on understanding what influences individuals' attitudes and behaviours in caregiving and economic roles, both within households and in broader social contexts. This was investigated through interviews held with 11 members of the general public from Vietnam in 2024 (see **Annex 2** for further details).

An ecosystem of normative and structural/contextual factors shaped caregiving and economic roles within Vietnamese households. These were observed to embed conventional scripts of gendered behaviour, or in the presence of supportive reference networks, household or personal necessity, affinity with more gender-equal values, or access to resources, behaviour could alternatively be decoupled from traditional expectations.

Normative and empirical expectations

Reflections on the evolution of normative and empirical expectations was common among participants, as illustrated by Participant 9, a single woman, *"In my generation, I see changes; more young men are taking part in household duties than before".* Narratives of collective normative change appeared to foster an implied sense that when struggles or attempts to resist traditional norms are shared and replicated by others and not an isolated quest, sanctions for deviation are reduced at a societal scale.

Resisting normative and empirical expectations, was also common, as some participants critiqued these as unfair, challenging the assumption that caregiving should fall primarily to women and

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Key takeaways

- **Critical consciousness towards norms can shifts preferences:** When individuals explicitly identify and critique gender norms, anchor roles in identity and fairness, and negotiate with their partners, their conditional preferences tend to shift toward more equitable sharing.

- **Structures often determine practice: Translating gender-equal attitudes into action is often depends on enabling conditions:** Flexible work arrangements, availability of care, education and skills, and sustained partner or family support. In their absence, attitudes often cannot translate into sustained behaviours or advocacy.

- **Behaviour precedes norm consolidation: Economic pressures or shocks may trigger more equal practices** (e.g. dual earning, men providing care) before social norms catch up. As per Bicchieri, empirical changes generally emerge first, while normative expectations, such as approval or sanctions, often lag behind.[460]

- **Normative scripts remain persistent:** Deeply embedded narratives - like the male-breadwinner, women's domestic duty, and "men are just helping" tropes - appear to stabilise unequal divisions.

- **Reference networks shape norm signals:** In the sample, families drove early expectations, friends and colleagues may refresh descriptive cues, and male-identifying partners act as gatekeepers by either enabling or impeding norm change. Media and regional divides appear to shape the broader normative landscape.

earning to men. This was expressed by Participant 6, a 39-year-old father, *"My parents follow traditional views where men work, and women take care of the home. But we make our own decisions. I live for myself and not for my parents".* This critical consciousness of gender norms allowed participants space to renegotiate household

roles on their own terms, instead of defaulting to traditionally prescribed roles.

Individual strengths, availability and preferences

These, rather than gender, were used by many participants as a framework for household organisations. Participant 8, a 35-year-old man single man explains, *"If one cooks well, they should do the cooking [...] the other might clean or prep ingredients"*. Here, conformity to traditional roles in these contexts is simply inefficient, motivating positive deviance as costs are outweighed by benefits of task allocation based on genuine ability. However, Participant 8 further elaborates *"For childcare, I believe that both the man and woman should have responsibilities, but women often take a leading role because they might have more experience and capability in this area. So, it could be more like 70-30"*. These anecdotes illustrate a possible theme of men's selective engagement in domestic work, based on perceived 'naturally' inherently gendered capabilities, rather than equally sharing domestic work outside of gender tropes. As such, frames of task division based on individual strengths and weaknesses could also be grounded in traditional gender labour divisions, obscuring genuine equality within partnerships and limiting scope for renegotiation outside of these binary roles.

Personal identity

Personal identity similarly enabled and constrained gender divisions. As one man put it, *"I've always liked taking care of others [...] parenting isn't something that should fall on just one person"* (Participant 11, single man with no children). Where traditional models fail to provide satisfaction, costs for non-conformity can outweighed by benefits of achieving behaviour based on values alignment. Likewise, where reference networks support responsibility division based on personal preference, availability, values and capability, sanctions are reduced for non-compliance, encouraging positive deviance. Alternatively, a strong resonance with traditional identities could contribute to the perpetuation of traditional norms, Participant 8 explains *"...from the beginning,*

I had always considered myself the primary earner. If the woman could help, that was great; if not, it wasn't a problem. I had always been determined from the start that I would be the primary earner" (a single man with no children).

Singlehood

Singlehood was implied by some men to compel them to perform domestic work. This challenged the norm that domestic work is inherently feminine and allowing them to build capability outside traditional gender domains. This potentially may form the basis of task division if partnered later based on negotiated skills and preference, rather than gender binaries, though further research is needed to confirm.

Open communication between partners

This also emerged as a valuable tool for aligning social expectations with household values, setting normative expectations of what each partner ought to contribute. Participant 4, described how he and his wife negotiated her taking on a higher paying job in real estate while he took on more domestic duties to increase the family's income: *"Yes, we did discuss it. After a few years of transition, we found the finances to be more stable, so I'm happy with it."* (Participant 4, married man with children). However, communication often hinged on men's willingness (as the conventional heads of household) to engage in such negotiations - a further contextual factor shaping behaviour.

Economic necessity

Economic necessity was a further salient theme both enabling and constraining more gender-equal households. Some participants described more gender-equal economic behaviours as a practical response to financial necessity, normalised through Vietnam's long history of women's labour force participation. Participant 1, a married woman with children, describes *"Amongst my friends, if a family had extra money, the wife usually stayed home to take care of the children. But if the family didn't have enough money, both husband and wife went to work"*. For these families, conformity to traditional norms has a direct economic cost in the form

of women's foregone earnings, motivating positive deviance. However, often in these cases, normative expectations only tolerated women's work in times of economic necessity, or as augmenting the man's primary income, not as part of a division of labour grounded in equality. Additionally, though women were often earning, a concurrent normative shift was not seen towards normalising men's caregiving, leaving women with the double burden.

Structural supports and time-use infrastructure

These supports, such as intergenerational childcare, flexible work and supportive partners, meant families were better able to divide household tasks and responsibilities. Critically, Participants suggested the availability of intergenerational caregiving and support from husbands could be a determinant of women's employment, as illustrated by Participant 1 (a married woman with children) *"For family living with grandparents, they can look after the kids when both the husband and wife work. But families with grandparents who are too old or still working, then the wife tend to stay at home more and the hus]band is in charge of earning income".*

Supportive patners

Similarly, supportive compared with unsupportive partners critically moderated household equality. Some men did not take domestic work seriously, leaving women with the burden, *"If I ask my husband to wash dishes, he'll do it, but the dishes won't be as clean. So I end up doing it myself...And when I ask him to help, he sometimes complains that I'm nagging."* (Participant 1, a married woman with children). In contrast supportive husbands/partners were shown to engage in open communication and negotiation regarding domestic responsibilities, carry (at least part) of the mental load of caregiving and enable women's participation in paid work through taking on household labour.

Underlying normative beliefs toward gender roles

These beliefs continued to uphold the male-breadwinner/female-caregiver expectation

and accompanying stereotypes. Participant 2, a single woman with no children, illustrated this *"Usually, people expect women to take responsibilities [at home] because women are more skilful and capable of enduring hardship".* In Vietnam, the male-breadwinner norm was so encoded that observations surfaced where employed women are not obliged to contribute their earnings to family income (likely where this is already adequate), further research is needed to understand this dynamic.

These findings underscored the nuanced normative ecosystem in which participants navigated household responsibilities. Men's openness to communicate, critical consciousness of expectations and the presence of caregiving support from families or partners, emerged as key factors enabling more equitable arrangements. Yet underlying normative beliefs about gendered capabilities continue to sustain the male-breadwinner/female-caregiver model even where women actively participate in paid employment.

2.3.2 Reference networks

This section examines the role of reference networks in shaping gender-equal behaviours and economic participation, with specific reference to family, friends, colleagues, cultural communities, media platforms, and politics.

This was investigated through interviews held with 11 members of the general public from Vietnam in 2024 (see **Annex 2** for further details).

Families

Families shaped both caregiving and economic roles, through observed examples and explicit expectations:

> *"My mom. She's always worked so hard. She did everything when I was growing up, taking care of us, managing the house, and doing all the chores... I follow her example"*
>
> **– Participant 1, married woman with children)**

Further, one participant suggested that in-laws and grandparents were particularly

influential in setting normative expectations on how care should be performed and by whom:

> *"In Vietnam, it was common for grandparents, especially grandmothers, to insist on how a child should be fed, dressed, or disciplined… I rarely saw them target this criticism at men, only at the mothers."*
>
> **– (Participant 11, single man with no children)**

While some participants followed their parents' more-traditional models, others witnessed the breakdown of the male-breadwinner/female-caregiver model, shaping empirical expectations that 'women's careers and care lead to burnout' or 'financial reliance on men creates vulnerability' compelling them to be selective in their partners and negotiate for more equal task allocation within their relationships.

Friends

Friends, stood out as a further influential network in reshaping norms. Seeing friends divide chores, cook, or take parental leave helped normalise more gender-equal practices:

> *"I look after my friends who got married before I do and I found that it is quite common for couples to equally contribute. I think it is a reasonable model."*
>
> **– Participant 5, married man with one child)**

Contrastingly, peers could also reinforce normative and empirical expectations of gendered models of care:

> *"In the case of my two close friends, the expectation from their family and their social circle was that the men should be the primary earners. For example, when one of my friends got a good job, his parents were very proud and it was expected that he would support and be a pillar for the family, which was a sign of this expectation."*
>
> **– Participant 8, single man with no children**

However, peer influence was not always aspirational. Participant 7, a single woman with no children, described witnessing a friend who carried the dual breadwinning and caregiving burden and attributed her friend's stress to a husband who failed to fulfil caregiving responsibilities. This observation set a personal normative belief that equal caregiving is necessary to avoid burnout and inequity. In this case, an empirical deterrent towards unequal household arrangements was established, but it's also plausible to arrive at a more traditional conclusion that women's earning should be avoided or tolerated insofar as it provides for the family.

Culture and regional variation

Though only referenced directly by one participant, this appeared to be an important moderator of normative and empirical expectations surrounding care and earning. Participant 11, a 27-year-old bisexual man, describes,

> *"In the South, men tend to do a lot more housework. They take responsibility without needing to be asked or pressured into it. For example, at my company, there was a colleague from Central Vietnam who married a man from the Mekong Delta. She didn't have to worry about housework, her husband took care of everything, from picking up their child to handling luggage when she travelled."*

Informed by his observations on colleagues, relatives and broader public discourse, Participant 11 further explains:

> *"It is hard to pinpoint an exact reason [for regional difference on gender roles]. I think it is cultural. Northern Vietnam still holds onto strong patriarchal values. The influence of traditional gender roles is very visible. In the South, however, women and men seem to be more equal in terms of household responsibilities. I didn't know if it is because Southern women have a stronger influence in relationships or if men there were simply raised with a different mindset. But there is definitely a significant cultural gap between the two regions".*

Not a direct reference network itself, culture and regional variation were nonetheless a key influence upon the reference networks that shaped participants conditional preferences.

Media

Media was referenced only briefly by participants (likely due to the sample size), Participant 3, a married woman, acknowledged the media's role in promoting more gender-equal views: *"Media and modern society were helping people become more open-minded."*. This sentiment was echoed by Participant 9, a single woman:

> *"Society was more open now. We had access to more information, which gradually led to change. People started to question why things had always been a certain way and realised that some traditional practices were no longer reasonable".*

Here, new information is suggested to lead to a change in normative expectations, progressing conditional preferences towards more gender-equal roles. However, other countries' results highlighted that media could conversely perpetuate conventional gender divisions.

Religion and politics

Religion, and politics were also salient influences upon reference networks in other countries but did not emerge within the Vietnamese sample. This is likely due to sample size limitations as expert interviews highlighted the role of these factors in shaping gender norms.

Overall, the dynamic and overlapping ecosystem of reference networks in this sample, often sending mixed signals, reflected the complexity of navigating a landscape of evolving social norms in urban Vietnam. As per Bicchieri, reference networks could embed traditional norms,[461] but support from allies, affinity with progressive ideals, necessity or access to resources could enable participants to overcome these.

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2.3.3 Enablers and barriers of advocacy

This section looks at the factors that can hinder and enable gender equality advocacy – from the private to public sphere.

Reflections from Vietnam's validation workshop revealed that advocacy for gender equality is shaped not only by individual attitudes, but by the social norms embedded within participants' reference networks as well as contextual factors.

Key enabling factors for advocacy emerged from the validation workshops from the national to individual level. **Participants suggested that conditional preferences towards advocacy be shaped by the national government's renewed focus on gender equality - legitimising instances and narratives of positive deviance**. At the community level, whether or not normative expectations trended towards gender equality within the individual's reference network, was reported to influence attitudes and advocacy behaviours. Whether in the media, family, colleagues or institutionally, **the presence of allies and their support increased the perceived safety of advocacy** in both the public and private sphere. Additionally, at the individual level, participants noted that a personal sense of injustice could be a catalyst advocacy, motivating individuals to act on their attitudes, even in oppositional environments.

Enduring barriers to advocacy were also identified. Within the private sphere (particularly within families) **structural factors such as unequal power dynamics and economic dependency, and normative expectations of obedience to older generations (particularly for women) inhibited advocacy behaviours**. Some noted that the target of advocacy can be a mediating variable - strangers were seen as easier to advocate towards compared to family members, where there is acute pressure to maintain a harmonious relationship. **In public settings such as workplaces, schools, or government agencies, participants reflected that gender equality remains a highly sensitive topic.**

The absence of supportive leadership willing to model positive deviance and challenge empirical expectations was said to stifle initiatives. Control behaviours also impacted behaviours - some individuals perceived advocacy as futile, believing their efforts would not be heard or lead to change.

Advocacy was framed as a long-term commitment, requiring sustained effort, which could drain key players. Across both public and private spheres, the **burden of advocacy** (time, resources, emotional labour) was reported to fall disproportionately on women and marginalised groups. Overall, public advocacy was viewed to be more challenging than private advocacy. However, childrearing in the private sphere was seen as the most approachable domain to foster men's engagement. Men were reported as **viewing gender equality as having little relevancy to them** - creating a barrier towards their engagement and receptiveness to advocate's messaging. Interestingly, this issue encompassed women too. When framed as 'gender equality' participants noted that even female **audiences may disengage with abstract and conceptual language**. Instead, 'sharing family roles' was noted to garner more interest with certain audiences.

Further advocacy strategies were praised and recommended by participants within the household. These included showcasing positive deviance, highlighting advocate's successes *and* struggles to increase relatability and redefining women's success based on achievement of personal goals, rather than material or familial harmony predicated on unequal divisions of labour. **Encouraging couples to openly negotiate the division of labour before marriage and children was also touted.** This creates a space to challenge normative and empirical expectations and ground responsibilities on personal skills and preferences. The qualitative interviews with the general public showed that open communication often enabled successful labour negotiations within households, but participants noted that emotional regulation skills are often not explicitly taught to children - a further area for action. Participants further shared concerns that women's inability to model gender-equal behaviours, despite espousing

these attitudes to their children, may result in children not taking advocacy seriously.

Given these overwhelming demands, participants observed that many advocates gravitated towards a specific domain (i.e. education, domestic labour, or workplace) where they felt their impact would be most meaningful – **building skills and credibility within a distinct reference network**. Beyond the household sphere, at a public and structural level, participants suggested that the Vietnamese government priorities (including addressing an ageing population and declining birth rates) presented opportunities to progress gender equality through integration with broader national goals.

Based on the Vietnam validation workshop findings, advocacy for gender equality operates within a complex ecosystem where individual attitudes, normative expectations, reference network dynamics, and structural conditions collectively shape advocacy behaviours across public and private spheres. **These findings illustrate that while supportive networks and government legitimisation can enable advocacy efforts, persistent barriers include cultural hierarchies, unequal power dynamics, and the disproportionate burden placed on women and marginalised groups to drive change.** Participants insights emphasise the need for strategic approaches that leverage positive deviance, targeted messaging, and integration with broader national priorities to overcome the structural impediments and social norms limiting women's capabilities.

2.4 Shifts in gender norms

2.4.1 SNAPS survey waves over time

This section examines the extent to which gender norms have evolved over time, as reflected in SNAPS data from 2020 (second wave) to 2024 (current wave).

It analyses trends in attitudes, behaviours, and advocacy for gender equality, highlighting areas of progress as well as persistent gaps. By comparing data (where comparable across surveys) across survey iterations, this section offers insights on the evolution of gender norms across time.

Key takeaways

- **Gender-equal attitudes and aspirations remained strong, but more so for women than men:** Unpartnered and childless participants, especially women, expressed strong support for equal Childcare and Earning Family Income sharing, yet challenges exist to translating this to behaviours across all waves.

- **SNAPS 2024 saw a swing against gender-equal attitudes,** with a higher proportion of both women and men wanting each other to take on primary responsibility Childcare and Earning responsibility. Nonetheless, gender-equal behaviours showed a net increase overall.

- **Men's empirical expectations have potentially changed along with their normative expectations:** More men are reporting women taking on primary responsibility for earning family income, with a corresponding shift in men's

Figure VN 14 Gender-equal practices across SNAPS waves - Childcare domain
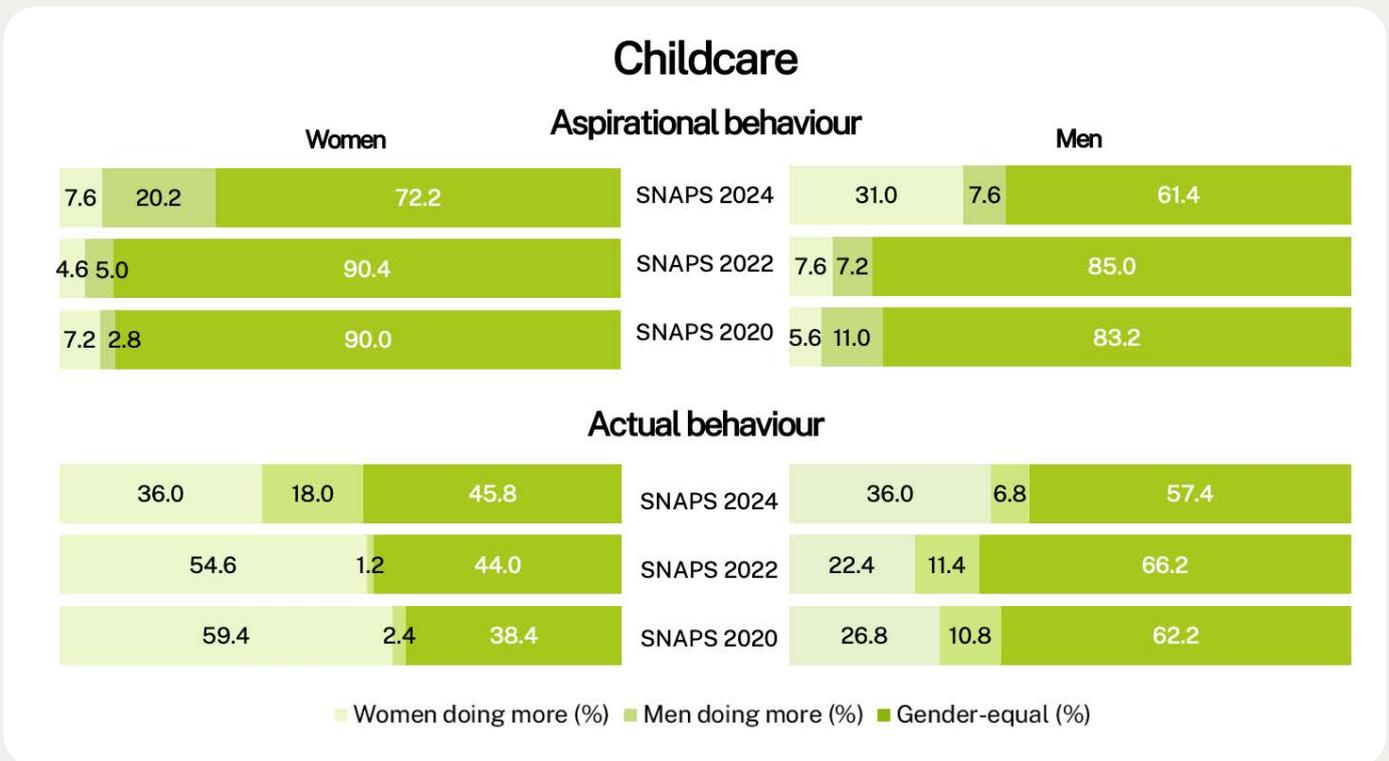
Note: This figure presents the distribution of gender-related behaviours in the Childcare domain for women and men in SNAPS 2020, 2022, and 2024.

Shifting gender norms in caregiving & domestic roles

- **Gender-equal aspirations were high, but stronger for women than men:** Across SNAPS waves, participants who were neither married/partnered nor had children expressed strong aspirations for gender-equal childcare arrangements. Women consistently showed a greater preference for equal childcare sharing than men – highlighting that the normative expectation of women as the primary caregiver are potentially weaker for women than men within salient reference networks.

- **Attitudes don't translate to behaviours:** However, among participants with actual childcare responsibilities, across all waves a much lower proportion reported sharing childcare duties equally. In Bicchieri's terms, supportive private beliefs (attitudes) did not shift conditional preferences where local empirical and normative expectations in households still favoured traditional divisions.[462]

- **SNAPS 2024 saw a swing against equality – women and men want each other to take on more:** The proportion of participants expressing aspirational support for equal childcare sharing significantly declined in SNAPS 2024 compared to SNAPS 2020 and 2022. For men, this signalled a return to traditional gender norms and a reassertion of traditional normative expectations (8% in 2022 expected women to take on more childcare work compared with 31% in 2024). For women, however, the decline in equal-sharing aspirations largely reflects a rise in preferring men to take primary responsibility, which is consistent with cross-pressures from increased female labour-market participation and the "double burden." Alternatively, the gendered difference present could reflect sampling differences or how questions were phrased between survey waves.

- **Gender-equal behaviours have increased:** Despite the decline in aspirations for gender-equal labour divisions, the percentage of people reporting gender-equal childcare arrangements increased between SNAPS 2022 and SNAPS 2024. This divergence suggests empirical expectations may be updating through greater visibility of equal sharing, even as stated attitudes became less gender-equal. Men reported gender-equal behaviours at higher rates than women – indicating potential disparity in understanding of what constitutes gender-equal behaviour between women and men.

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Figure VN 15 Gender-equal practices across SNAPS waves - Earning family income domain
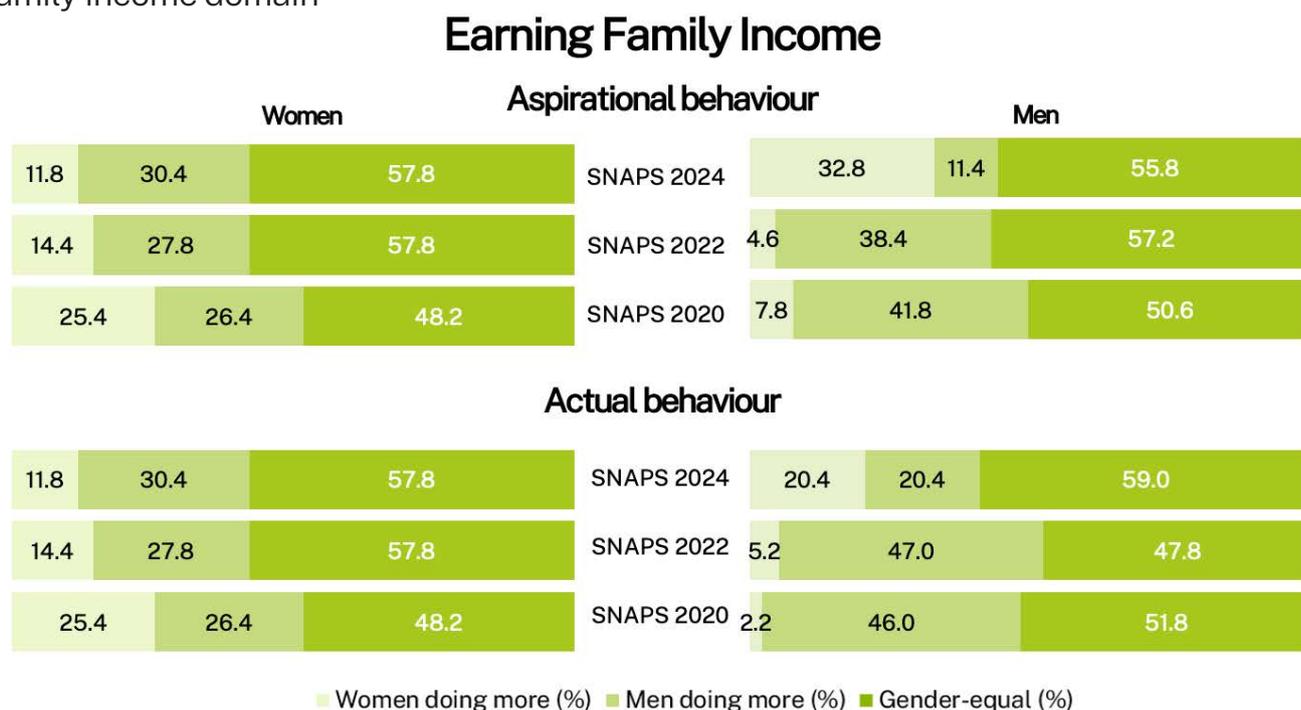
Earning Family Income

Aspirational behaviour

Women

Women doing more (%)	Men doing more (%)	Gender-equal (%)	Wave
11.8	30.4	57.8	SNAPS 2024
14.4	27.8	57.8	SNAPS 2022
25.4	26.4	48.2	SNAPS 2020

Men

Wave	Women doing more (%)	Men doing more (%)	Gender-equal (%)
SNAPS 2024	32.8	11.4	55.8
SNAPS 2022	4.6	38.4	57.2
SNAPS 2020	7.8	41.8	50.6

Actual behaviour

Women doing more (%)	Men doing more (%)	Gender-equal (%)	Wave
11.8	30.4	57.8	SNAPS 2024
14.4	27.8	57.8	SNAPS 2022
25.4	26.4	48.2	SNAPS 2020

Wave	Women doing more (%)	Men doing more (%)	Gender-equal (%)
SNAPS 2024	20.4	20.4	59.0
SNAPS 2022	5.2	47.0	47.8
SNAPS 2020	2.2	46.0	51.8

■ Women doing more (%) ■ Men doing more (%) ■ Gender-equal (%)

Note: This figure presents the distribution of gender-related behaviours in the Earning family income domain for women and men in SNAPS 2020, 2022, and 2024.

Shifting gender norms in economic roles

- **The male-breadwinner model remained pervasive:** For Earning Family Income, aspirational preferences for gender-equal sharing were consistently higher among women than men across all waves by 20 percentage points. Men's aspirational preferences for gender-equal sharing of Earning Family Income was noticeably weaker than the Childcare domain. This suggests the dominance of the Confucian normative expectation of the male-breadwinner[463] embodied in the cultural concept of "trụ cột" – the man as the 'family backbone' as highlighted by the qualitative findings.

- **Women and men increasingly wanted each other to take on greater responsibility:** In SNAPS 2024, there was a notably higher share of women expressing a preference for men to take on more responsibility for earning income than in previous waves. Conversely, among men, the proportion wanting women to contribute more increased (from under 1 in 20 in SNAPS 2020 to 1 in 3 in SNAPS 2024), while the share expecting men to do more declined. This may reflect that women are pushing back on the overwhelming double burden while men are increasing realising the economic necessity of women's income streams. Alternatively, women may be pushing for fairer divisions of household and economic labour (and turning to traditional gender norms in the process) while men's views on gender norms may be becoming more gender-equal (though expert interviews suggested that the inverse is more likely occurring).

- **Trending towards gender equality, though perceptions differed between genders:** In terms of actual behaviour, SNAPS 2024 showed a higher proportion of both women and men reporting gender-equal responsibility for earning family income. A significant perception gap emerged: while 25% fewer men said they bore the most financial responsibility, women observed only a 3% decrease in men bearing primary responsibility. This suggests a shift away from traditional norms where men were expected to bear the bulk of financial responsibilities, coupled with a potential difference in understanding on what constitutes truly equal behaviour between the genders. These behavioural changes may stem from sampling variations, differences in survey phrasing across waves, or broader shifts in national economic and social conditions.

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463 Hoang 2020

2.4.2 Societal transformations

Countries across the world are witnessing a suite of societal transformations that are inevitably influencing and interacting with gender norms – and Vietnam is no exception to this.

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence and social media ubiquity is enabling the proliferation of misogynistic ideology and content, reinforcing conservative gender norms about women's roles in social, economic, and domestic spheres. The climate crisis and increasing demand for care threatens to add to women's mounting unpaid care burden. At the same time, the changing political landscape and the and international and national action on gender equality provide opportunities to challenge traditional ideas about who should perform care and who should earn income in the family. However, the impact of these shifts on gender norms is not always straightforward – in many cases, they hold both the risk of entrenching traditional gender norms and the potential to challenge and reshape them.

This section details the nature of these shifts, how they manifest in Vietnam, and the impact that they may have on gender norms. These shifts are drawn from a combination of the literature and interviews with experts in Vietnam.

The climate crisis

The world is currently in a climate crisis. Climate-induced disasters are increasing in frequency and magnitude, with significant and harmful consequences for biodiversity, human health and livelihoods, infrastructure, and the economy.[464] Being a tropical country with a warm climate, Vietnam is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Under the most extreme Representative Concentration Pathways (RCP) scenario, the average temperature in Vietnam is projected to rise by 3.4°C by the end of the century. With its long coastline, the country is particularly prone to flooding caused by

Key takeaways

- **Women in Vietnam continue to be expected to bear both economic and domestic duties, driven by rising living costs and the pervasive influence of social media:** Therefore, true equality will depend on changing the expectation that women must excel in both spheres. Issues lie not in promoting women to work but in helping them – and men – balance between paid work and unpaid domestic responsibilities. Without such support, women's autonomy will remain constrained.

- **Climate change, demographic shifts, and unaffordable care systems are intensifying women's unpaid workload, risking deeper gender inequality in the future:** Investing in accessible childcare, eldercare, and gender-responsive climate and social policies will be essential to prevent these pressures from reinforcing women's double burden.

- **Vietnam has made progress through strong gender equality legislation and active social movements in the past decades:** The next step is to turn these commitments into tangible change. Greater institutional coordination, accountability, and implementation are crucial to ensure gender equality is fully practiced and transformative.

typhoons and cyclones.[465] Vietnam is ranked first in exposure to river flooding (score 9.9/10) and second in exposure to coastal flooding (score 9.6/10).[466] In October 2025 alone, Vietnam experienced historic flooding in both the northern region due to Tropical Cyclone *Matmo* and the central region, where heavy rainfall led to record-high flooding levels, according to the national meteorological department.[467] Vietnam's future risk and current prevalence of climate-related disasters have implications for gender norms and their evolution.

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464 Blunden et al. 2025
465 European Commission 2022
466 European Commission 2022
467 UN and OCHA 2025

Prevailing social norms agree that women should hold primary responsibility for household maintenance, are exacerbated by climate-related disasters as women must lead household post-disaster clean up, increasing their workloads. In the Mekong Delta region, where flooding is recurrent, these norms place a disproportionate burden on women, both physically and financially, in the aftermath of disasters.[468, 469] As floods disrupt transportation, electricity, health care and livelihoods, women, who often manage household recovery and caregiving, are more vulnerable to these disruptions. The limited access to financial resources, information, and decision-making power,[470] along with the increasing frequency and intensity of climate-related disasters poses an urgent threat to women's livelihood resilience and capacity to recover.

At the same time, women also have restricted participation in flood-preparedness training and local planning processes, excluding them from key decisions that directly affect their lives and communities.[471] Yet research highlights that women are not merely victims of the climate crisis but also crucial agents of adaptation and resilience due to their knowledge, social networks, and community engagement.[472] For example, a study in the Mekong Delta found that female farmers are often more proactive than men in preparing for climate disasters and tend to adopt both immediate and long-term adaptation strategies, particularly among those who are more risk averse.[473]

Recognising these gendered dimensions of climate vulnerability and adaptation, it is strongly recommended that the National Target Program to Respond to Climate Change integrate gender considerations throughout its design and implementation, ensuring that women's voices, experiences, and capacities are meaningfully included in shaping climate resilience strategies.

The rising cost of living

Globally, the prices of goods and services have increased for households. Factors including climate change and geopolitical tensions have strained agricultural supply or disrupted supply chains, driving up prices for food and other goods. While the rising cost of living encourages women into employment alongside their partners, it may also help to shift normative and empirical expectations around women's participation and leadership in the workforce.

This is also resonated in the expert interview where economic necessity was been named as the main reason for high female labour force participation, instead of the changing gender norms. Experts expressed that taking care of children is considered as a woman's duty. However, they further noted that rising living costs are deterring or delaying couples' decisions to have children, given concerns about the affordability of raising a child. One expert noted that sending the children to childcare, especially private higher-quality services, is constrained by household income level. As such, the expert highlighted the need to make childcare system more accessible and affordable to alleviate this burden from women's shoulder.

Interestingly, a study in Vietnam showed that childcare is a non-negligible factor on fertility decisions among women. Specifically, co-residing with grandparents was associated with the desire for a second child among women, partially linked to having reliable and accessible childcare available from the extended family.[474] In another expert interview, it was noted that women nowadays have a say to how many children a household will have and having a son is not always preferred, suggesting normative change over time.

The growing number of women attaining higher education and achieving greater economic independence has encouraged internal migration, while simultaneously making it more challenging for men in

468   NM 2022; European Commission 2025
469   Dang 2024
470   Phuong et al. 2023
471   NM 2022
472   Biswas and Barua 2025
473   Phuong et al. 2023
474   Y. T. H. Nguyen et al. 2023

rural areas to find marriage partners.[475] Although deeply rooted Confucian ideals promote the notion that women should prioritise family roles, societal expectations stemming from Vietnam's socialist history also demand women to contribute financially to the household. This dual expectation has prompted many women to reassess the value of marriage. As a result, delaying marriage has become a strategy to pursue career advancement and maintain autonomy from Caregiving and Domestic responsibilities.[476]

Consequently, Vietnam has experienced a rise in singleness and a declining inclination toward marriage in recent decades.[477] This trend is particularly evident in the two largest cities, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, where the average age at first marriage reached 27.5 years according to the 2019 Population Census, which is 3.1 years higher than the rural average of 24.4 years.[478]

Rising living costs and shifting economic realities are reshaping gender norms, fertility choices, and marriage patterns – creating space for embedding or challenging traditional norms.

Political shifts

Ensuring adequate female representation in legislative bodies has been a key priority for the Vietnamese government, not only to meet structural requirements but also to influence policies on women, children, gender equality, social issues, and to effectively represent women's voices. In 2020, the National Assembly set a challenging goal of having more than 30% female deputies in the 15th National Assembly for the 2021–2026 term.[479] Out of 868 candidates, 45.3% were women, an increase of 6.3% compared to the previous term, and the term concluded with women holding 30.1% of seats. Looking ahead to the 16th National Assembly for the 2026–2031 term, Vietnam has raised

the target for female representation in the National Assembly to 35%.[480]

In 2025, Vietnam is undergoing a critical phase of government restructuring under Resolution No.176/2025/QH15, Resolution No.60-NQ/TW, and the Law on Government Organisation No.63/2025/QH15. Major changes include consolidating ministerial organisations and administration into a two-tier governance system. This decentralisation aims to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the government, optimise budget use, and promote business development and regional economic growth. The year 2025 also marked a milestone with Vietnam appointing its first female Deputy Prime Minister in the history. While these political reforms do not directly create opportunities or risks for gender issues, they signal a new era of significant transformation in Vietnam's political system, with impacts on norms yet to be seen.

Increasing internet access, the digital economy and social media adoption

The world is becoming increasingly digitalised through the adoption of digital technologies, internet connectivity, and social media.[481] The impact of social media on gender norms is not fixed but holds both the potential to challenge traditional gender norms and the risk of entrenching them, depending on the context of use.[482] In 2025, the internet penetration in Vietnam reached 79%.[483]

Interestingly, the rise of social media, particularly Facebook, has influenced how women present themselves, entrenching the need to appear both attractive and professionally competent.[484] This has reinforced an idealised image of women who are expected to contribute financially while remaining active in domestic spheres.[485] The study further highlighted that Facebook

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475 Tran 2025
476 Tran 2025
477 Do and Le 2024
478 General Statistics Office 2020
479 Cổng thông tin điện tử Quốc Hội 2021
480 Cổng thông tin điện tử Quốc hội 2025
481 World Bank 2024a
482 Koester and Marcus 2024
483 Austrade 2025
484 T.-N. Nguyen et al. 2020
485 T.-N. Nguyen et al. 2020

often serves as a space for digital self-representation and social validation, rather than a platform for advancing gender equality.[486]

In another study of 300 digital commercials in the service sector, a growing trend of "femvertising" a term derived from "feminist" and "advertising" to describe marketing campaigns that seek to challenge gender stereotypes, was identified.[487] However, while such campaigns aim to inspire women to pursue their passions and professional ambitions, they simultaneously reinforce expectations that women must excel both at work and within the family.[488] These portrayals suggest that women's success is incomplete without the 'family aspect' thereby reinforcing traditional gender roles. The pressure of maintaining dual responsibilities can ultimately constrain women's professional advancement and personal autonomy.[489]

At the same time, social media has also been leveraged as a tool to challenge and transform gender norms, targeting the youth through relatable stories, highlighting discriminatory norms in contemporary issues. Notable examples include CARE's *Pillars Campaign* (*Nha Nhieu Cot*), WISE's *He Can* and *Ơ Kìa We Trust*, and ECUE's VGEM (Vietnam Gender Equality Movement), some of which have shown promising results on promoting gender equality.[490] One expert also expressed that the exposure to media in urban areas, particularly the Western world, greatly promote shared housework.

Social media in Vietnam is reshaping gender norms, both reinforcing traditional expectations and the double burden of work and care and creating new spaces to challenge status quo ideas.

The growth of artificial intelligence

The rapid development and adoption of artificial intelligence is one of the most significant transformations humanities are currently living through. AI technologies are evolving at breakneck speed and fundamentally reshaping norms across all spheres of life, both personal and professional.

Gender bias is widely recognised to be embedded within AI's training data, resulting in outputs that perpetuate harmful gendered stereotypes, entrenching traditional gender norms.[491] Gender bias embedded in training data has resulted in AI outputs which focus predominantly on men's health information, depict and select genders according to traditional role divisions, provide gender-biased financial advice or credit scores and fail to moderate misogynistic content.[492] Similarly, image recognition systems are reported to be less effective when presented with images of women, particularly women of colour, that do present stereotyped feminine features or with disability.[493] Likewise, the use of AI to perpetuate image based abuse (particularly deepfakes in a pornographic context) has implications for women's online, emotional and physical safety.[494] AI may reduce women's overall employment rates and entrench gendered occupational segregation. The ILO finds that 4.7% of women's jobs are at high risk of automation compared to 2.4% of men's.[495] The gender bias and neglect of gendered safety considerations by AI companies is partially attributable to the workforce demographics of these companies – women represent only 20% of employees in major machine learning companies.[496] Such bias risks entrenching, if not exacerbating traditional norms.

In Vietnam, the 13th Party Congress Resolution and Resolution No. 57-NQ/TW (2024) identify institutional reform as a strategic driver of inclusive and sustainable

486 T.-N. Nguyen et al. 2020
487 L. T. Nguyen et al. 2023
488 L. T. Nguyen et al. 2023
489 L. T. Nguyen et al. 2023
490 Le et al. 2025
491 UNESCO 2024
492 UNESCO 2024
493 Buolamwini and Gebru 2018
494 UK Council for Internet Safety 2019
495 "Work Transformed" 2025
496 UNESCO 2024

innovation. This seeks to ensure technology serves human development and that AI contributes to human empowerment rather than inequality. Guided by these principles, the Ministry of Science and Technology is drafting the Law on Artificial Intelligence in 2025, designed as a legal framework that balances long-term stability with adaptability to rapid technological change. The law's seven chapters comprehensively address issues of risk management, infrastructure, human resources, and AI ethics. More than managing risks, the law seeks to establish the institutional foundation for a self-reliant, innovative, and human-centered digital economy.[497] It is unclear whether Vietnam's AI policy commitments will integrate gender considerations, risking that AI continues to perpetuate harmful gender bias remains paramount.

International and national action on gender equality

In response to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Vietnam has adopted and implemented the National Strategy for Gender Equality (2021–2030). Vietnam's Gender Equality Strategy 2021–2030 offers a pathway toward more gender-equal gender norms. The strategy outlines labour market targets, including increasing the proportion of women in leadership positions and targets for reducing women's care loads (but not increasing men's) by 2030.[498] It also promotes annual month-long campaigns to address gender-based violence and promote gender equality from November 15 to December 15 each year.[499] However, the effectiveness of this strategy will be dependent on implementation.

According to the National Report on 30 Years of Implementation of the Beijing Declaration, launched by the Ministry of Home Affairs and UN Women in October 2025, Vietnam has shown strong political commitment to promoting equal rights through continual legal reforms and gender mainstreaming in all development policies.[500] The country has stated it views gender equality as a foundation for social progress and sustainable development, to ensure that no one is left behind.

One expert mentioned the Women's Union as an effective socio-political organisation, particularly in the mountainous areas where gender norms are typically traditional. With the networks from the central level to the village level, which is out of the administrative level, Women's Union has run awareness campaigns, advocacy program to provide social feedback. On the other hand, the promotion of the slogan *giỏi việc nước, đảm việc nhà* (good at public work, good at home life), reinforces the double burden of women.

Revised legislative frameworks are also creating opportunities to close gender gaps in employment in Vietnam. The Labour Code that came into effect in 2021 includes measures such as gradually reducing the retirement age gap between women and men (raising it to 62 for men by 2028 and 60 for women by 2035) and removing restrictions on harmful occupations for women. Additionally, the definition of sexual harassment has been clarified, providing a stronger legal basis for promoting gender equality in the workplace.[501]

Civil society and NGO initiatives are also playing a significant role in challenging gender stereotypes. For example, from 2020 to 2024, Oxfam implemented a program aimed at promoting gender equality in Vietnam by positioning youth as catalysts and change-makers in their personal and societal lives. This initiative also aimed to improve gender sensitivity in journalism and advertising to encourage more gender-equal public perceptions and behaviours.[502]

Overall, international and national action on gender-equality creates momentum to challenge traditional gender norms and offer both women and men opportunities to break out from traditional gender binaries.

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497   Ministry of Science and Technology 2025
498   Socialist Republic of Vietnam Ministry of 2021
499   Socialist Republic of Vietnam Ministry of 2021
500   UN Women 2025b
501   Gender Equity Unit 2023
502   Oxfam, n.d.

Increasing demand for care

Policy efforts to support women's workforce participation may help shift gender norms towards normalising shared income-earning responsibilities and women's place in the workforce. However, without equal efforts to simultaneously shift existing caregiving norms such policies have the potential to place a double burden on women. The risk of caregiving norms becoming entrenched in future and reinforcing this double burden is particularly acute given another significant societal transition in progress across the four countries: the increasing demand for care.

Increasing demand for care – particularly for children, older people, and persons with disability – is driven by a range of demographic and economic transitions. These include changes in women's labour force participation, shifting labour market policies and emergent government aspirations for economic growth, among other societal and demographic forces. Demographic transition, which is characterised by changes in age structure due to declining birth and death rates, is a major global phenomenon, and Vietnam is no exception. The median age of Vietnam's population has risen from 21.1 in 1990 to 32.5 in 2020 and is projected to reach 41.2 by 2050.[503] Within the ASEAN region, Vietnam ranks third in terms of population ageing, indicating growing pressure on resources for social protection and healthcare services.[504] This trend poses potential risks related to the care burden, which is often disproportionately borne by women.

Compared to other three countries in the region, Vietnam currently lacks an integrated framework for the care economy. Instead, the government has introduced separate action plans that focus on specific population groups. For example, the National Program of Action on Older Persons, launched in 2021, defines the roles and responsibilities of relevant ministries and the Vietnam Association of the Elderly across two implementation phases: 2022–2025 and 2026–2030. The Prime Minister has recently approved the Master Plan for Supporting Early Childhood Education for the 2025–2030 period, with a Vision to 2045 (Decision No. 1705/QD-TTg), in line with Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW. Implemented by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) with technical assistance from the World Bank, the policy seeks to enhance access to early childhood education for children under 36 months old living in industrial zones, export processing zones, and densely populated urban areas. Flexible work arrangement are encouraged but not required, though exerting limited impacts.[505]

Cultural shifts

In Vietnam, Confucian values have left a profound legacy in shaping ethical principles that guide people's behaviour, many of which continue to serve as social norms nowadays. Confucianism emphasises four virtues that women should possess, **work**, **comportment**, **speech**, and **conduct**, which define women's roles within the family and society.[506] While it highlights women as the centre of family life, responsible for building harmony, resolving conflicts, and serving as moral examples for the next generation, it also reinforces gendered divisions of labour.[507] Confucian ideology traditionally confined women's work to the domestic sphere while assigning men to roles outside the home, and historically even prohibited women from sitting for the imperial examinations.[508]

Although these traditional perspectives have faded and Vietnam now ranks relatively high in women's economic participation and opportunity, especially compared to other Confucian-influenced countries such as China and Korea, the long-lasting impact of Confucianism remains evident.[509] Studies show that men are still reluctant to engage in household chores, even when they have lower education or income than their wives,

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503 World Bank 2024e
504 Maheshwari and Maheshwari 2024
505 Merdikawati, et al. 2025
506 Van Vo 2024
507 Rosenlee 2012
508 Rosenlee 2012
509 World Economic Forum 2025

due to enduring norms that define housework as women's responsibility.[510] Interestingly, using the number of historical Confucian elites as a proxy for Confucian influence, a study found that districts with a stronger Confucian legacy tend to have lower gender equality in economic participation and fewer women in leadership positions.[511]

In the present day, women increasingly combine these traditional Confucian ideologies with confidence and public engagement, becoming active contributors to education, business, and social development.[512] *The Three Criteria Campaign* and the Vietnam Women's Union also highlight the ongoing tension between promoting equality and preserving traditional values.[513] Moving forward, it is important to preserve the positive moral and family values of Confucianism while adapting them to support gender equality and meet the needs of a modern society.

Overall, Vietnam stands at a juncture of potential polycrises, spanning climate and economic ruptures, technological developments, political and demographic shifts. These challenges are simultaneously challenging and reinforcing traditional gender norms. Without ambitious policy implementation that addresses economic participation and caregiving responsibilities in tandem for both women and men, these transformations will likely further engrain inequality.

510   Vu 2019
511   Vu and Yamada 2024
512   Nizhnikov and Bac 2023
513   Schuler et al. 2006

3. Conclusion

Vietnam stands out in the region with a high proportion of women in tertiary education, which even exceeded men, and consistently high female labour force participation at about 70 percent over the past decades. However, gender disparities persist in pay equity, leadership representation, and disproportionate domestic responsibilities. This study highlights four key findings.

1. **First, attitudes toward gender equality in both caregiving and economic roles in Vietnam are generally high** at above 80 percent, yet a notable attitude–behaviour gap remains. Around one-third of women still carry a greater domestic burden, and male-breadwinner norms continue to dominate economic roles, with only 58 percent of women and 59 percent of men reporting equal contribution to family income. Misperceptions of gender equality are widespread. While both women and men underestimate the prevalence of gender-equal attitudes across all domains, they overestimate gender-equal behaviours in Job Suitability and Leadership.

2. **Second, gender-equal attitudes consistently correlate with advocacy.** Meanwhile, gender-equal behaviours are more likely linked to hold gender-equal empirical expectations, having a gender-equal upbringing, and gender-equal media exposure in quantitative analysis. Demographic characteristics such as location, ethnicity, and household conditions show some relationship with gender-equal practices, though inconsistently. In addition, latent profile analysis indicates that the strong gender equality supporters profile dominates above 60 percent across most domains, except for Job Suitability, where weak, passive, or inconsistent gender-equal supporters remain highly visible. This highlights the multifaceted interaction of attitudes, behaviours and advocacy and the challenges in translating gender-equal attitudes into action.

3. **Third, qualitative insights highlight key enablers and barriers shaping gender-equal attitudes, behaviours and advocacy.** Enablers include critical awareness of gender norms, open partner communication, structural supports like flexible work and intergenerational childcare, and supportive reference networks. Barriers remain in the form of entrenched male-breadwinner/female-caregiver norms, norms which emphasise family harmony and respect for elders, economic dependency, and the time and emotional burden of advocacy, often falling disproportionately on women. Regional and cultural influences, alongside mixed signals from peers, media, and institutions, further complicate the challenge.

4. **Fourth, analysis of SNAPS data from 2020 to 2024 reveals both progress and persistent gaps in gender norms.** Gender-equal behaviours have risen for both Caregiving and Domestic roles and Economic roles in SNAPS 2024. However, there is a decline in gender-equal aspirations among those unpartnered or childless, with both women and men increasingly expecting the other to take primary responsibility. Broader societal transformations are shaping the normative landscape including climate impacts, population ageing, rising living costs, technological disruption and structural political reform. These simultaneously reinforce traditional norms and open opportunities for greater equality.

Despite strong attitudes and some progress in behaviours, entrenched norms, structural barriers, and unequal domestic burdens continue to limit women's autonomy. Sustained change will require multi-level strategies, combining cultural transformation, policy action, and institutional support to align behaviours with evolving gender-equal aspirations.

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Annex 1: Further methodological notes (qualitative & quantitative)

Note 1: Representing the LGBTQIA+ Community

It should be noted that although for the purpose of the quota we targeted 1,000 women and 1,000 men (based on Ipsos panel data information), for the survey, we also collected data on gender beyond the binary male/man and female/woman delineations for participants and beyond heteronormative assumptions for the genders of their partners, to more accurately reflect gender and sexual diversity amongst participants.

Nine participants (0.5%) preferred another term to describe their gender and 10% identified as LGBTQIA+. Among them, 2% identified as gay, 1% as lesbian, 6% as bisexual, and 1% identified with another term. Of those who indicated they had a partner at the time of the study, 5% indicated their partner identified with the same gender as them. Given the small proportion of participants who identified with non-binary genders, we focused only on self-identified women and men in most analyses presented in this report. For analyses related to behaviours, we excluded participants who indicated they had same-gender partners.21

Note 2: Measuring Perceptions versus Actual Support and Behaviour

The following method was used to measure perceptions versus actual support (or attitudes – i.e. normative expectations) and behaviour (i.e. empirical expectations).

Actual support was measured by the percentage of survey participants who agreed with a relevant gender-equal statement under each domain. *Perceptions of support* was calculated by averaging responses related to normative expectations. Participants were asked to provide their best estimates (on a scale of 0–100%) of what proportion of people aged 18–40 living in urban areas in the countries surveyed would agree with a relevant statement of gender-equal under each domain.

Actual behaviour was measured by the percentage of survey participants who reported either equally contributing with their partners or engaging in role reversals that challenge traditional gender norms. *Perceptions of behaviour* were calculated by averaging responses related to empirical expectations. Participants were asked to provide their best estimates (on a scale of 0–100%) of what proportion of people aged 18–40 living in urban areas in the countries survey had a gender-equal arrangement under each domain.

Note 3: Measuring Behaviours

Behaviours are captured as either actual or aspirational behaviours to distinguish between what people do and what they would do given participants' current life circumstances, such as partnership or parental status. Therefore, in this survey, actual and aspirational behaviours are treated as conditional variables, depending on participants' circumstances. This is different from the previous survey iteration, where aspirational behaviour was collected for all participants. For example, in SNAP 2022, the aspirations of married participants without children were closely aligned with those of unmarried participants, so it was not possible to distinguish behaviours based on life stage or circumstance.

In the **Childcare** domain, behaviours are reported as aspirations for childless participants and as actual behaviours for those with at least one child. In the **Dependent Adult Care** domain, behaviours are reported as aspirations for participants without dependents and as actual behaviours for participants with at least one dependent. In the **Housework** domain, behaviours are reported as aspirations for participants without a partner and as actual behaviours for those with a partner. For **Earning Family Income** domain, behaviours indicate whether participants would take primary responsibility, share equally, or let their partner take primary responsibility. In the **Job Suitability** domain, participants reported their aspirations to apply for roles not traditionally associated with their gender. Finally, in the **Leadership** domain, participants indicated whether they would like to remain in a leadership role.

Note 4: Latent profile (segmentation) analysis

Given the differences in aspirational (among unmarried/unpartnered respondents) and actual behaviours observed in descriptive analyses, for the purpose of the segmentation analyses, we limited the sample to those who engaged in relevant behaviours due to their personal circumstances (e.g., had a partner and a child).

To meet the minimum recommended sample size requirements for this type of analysis, the profiles were developed based on a pooled sample of participants from all four countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam). Using this approach, the profiles could be estimated more accurately, smaller ones identified more reliably, and profile prevalence compared directly across countries.

Separate profiles were developed for women and men to reflect gender-specific differences within each sub-theme. The number of profiles in each case was determined based on a combination of statistical model fit (using Akaike and Bayesian Information Criteria, and the Bootstrapped Likelihood Ratio Test),

profile size (excluding models with profiles representing less than 3% of the pooled sample), and theoretical considerations. As a result, the number of identified profiles varied across sub-themes and between genders.

Note 5: Multivariate Regression Analysis

There are two regression specifications used to analyse the factors associated with gender-equal behaviours and advocacy for gender equality. It is important to emphasise that the analysis focuses explores a range of factors associated with each of behaviour and advocacy, rather than examining the causal impact of any specific variable. Therefore, causal inference should be made with caution.

The following presents the regression specification exploring factors associated with gender-equal behaviour, with results reported separately for each domain (i.e., Childcare, Dependent Adult Care, etc) and each country (i.e., Indonesia, and Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam):

$$_{i,d,c} = \alpha + GE\ Attitude_{i,d,c} + GE\ normative\ expectations_{i,d,c} + expectations_{i,d,c} + GE\ Upbringing_{i,d,c} + GE\ media\ exposure_{i,d,c} + X'_{i,d}$$

where *GE Behaviour*$_{i,d,c}$ is the gender-equal behaviour of an individual i in domain d in country c as the outcome variable. On the right-hand side of the equation, we include several variables, each with a specific rationale. By including *GE Attitude*$_{i,d,c}$, it is possible to examine the association between attitude and behaviour. If there is a linear progression from attitude to behaviour, we would expect a positive association. Similarly, a positive association between each of normative and empirical expectations and behaviours would indicate the role each type of expectation plays in influencing the behaviour.

The following regression specification is for exploring factors associated with advocacy for gender equality:

$$y_{i,d,c} = \alpha + GE\ Attitude_{i,d,c} + GE\ Behaviour_{i,d,c} + GE\ Upbrin\ posure_{i,d,c} + X'_{i,d,c} + \varepsilon_{i,d,c} \quad (2)$$

The specification follows the same framework as Equation (1), but excludes normative and empirical expectations as explanatory variables, given that these concepts relate more directly to behaviours, which is in line with Bicchieri's framework.[1] By including *GE Attitude*$_{i,d,c}$ and *GE Behaviour*$_{i,d,c}$, we are able to examine the association between each of attitude and behaviour, and advocacy. If there is a linear progression from attitude to behaviour to advocacy, we would expect a positive association between each of attitude and behaviour, and advocacy.

In addition, upbringing *GE Upbringing*$_{i,d,c}$, media exposure *GE Media Exposure*$_{i,d,c}$, and demographic characteristics *X'*$_{i,d,c}$ (including age, regional location, ethnicity, religion, educational attainment, employment status, disability status, and caregiving responsibilities) are also included as control variables. Upbringing is included because early family socialisation can shape individuals' understanding of gender roles and their likelihood to adopt gender-equal behaviours.[2,3,4] Media exposure is considered as it can reinforce or challenge prevailing gender norms through representation and messaging.[5,6] Demographic characteristics[7,8,9] provide important context, as factors like age, education, religion, and caregiving responsibilities can influence both opportunities and motivations for gender-equal behaviour. Together, these factors allow examination of a broader set of influences beyond attitudes and social expectations.

Note 6: Comparison of SNAPs over time

Over the four waves, the SNAPS questionnaire evolved in line with the program's shifting priorities over time. Consequently, comparisons were limited to indicators based on consistently phrased questions, primarily those related to Childcare responsibilities and Earning Family Income. Even within these areas, some caveats remained due to variations in wording and response options.

Table A 1 presents the exact wording and response options for the questions identified as comparable across waves.[10] While items related to Childcare behaviour were relatively consistent in wording, a key difference lay in the response scales: SNAPS 2024 used a 1–7 Likert scale, whereas SNAPS 2020 and 2022 used a 1–3 scale.

The differences in the Earning Family Income question were more pronounced. In SNAPS 2020 and 2022 the question was framed in terms of the **magnitude** of income earned, that is whether participants earned more, less or the same as their partners. In contrast, SNAPS 2024 focused on the **responsibility** for earning family income, marking a shift in emphasis that might have influenced participants' interpretations and responses.

Furthermore, while all SNAPS waves aimed to be representative of the target studied populations, each was administered by a different survey firm, using distinct participant panels. This variation may also affect the comparability of results across waves.[11]

1   Bicchieri 2017
2   Chandel and Shanwal 2024
3   Oláh et al. 2018
4   Raley et al. 2012
5   Ross and Padovani 2016
6   Bonner 2019
7   Khurana and Chhikara 2020
8   Pampel 2011
9   Liefbroer and Billari 2010
10   This study does not present direct comparisons with SNAPS 2018, as the questions and response categories were framed differently, limiting the validity of such comparisons. In SNAPS 2018, the question on childcare asked: "Which statement is true with regard to childcare responsibilities within your household?" The response options were: (1) I take most of the responsibility; (2) I share equally with my spouse; (3) I share equally with other family members or paid staff; (4) Most of the care is done by my spouse; (5) Most of the care is done by other family members; and (6) Most of the care is done by paid staff. For household income, participants were asked: "Within your household, do you earn…" with the following options: (1) Much more than your spouse; (2) Slightly more than your spouse; (3) About the same as your spouse; (4) Slightly less than your spouse; and (5) A lot less than your spouse. Due to these differences in survey design and response categories, direct comparisons between SNAPS 2018 and later rounds are not possible.
11   SNAPS 2020 and 2022 were fielded by YouGov, whereas SNAPS 2024 was conducted by Ipsos.

Table A.1 Comparison of question wording and response options across SNAPS waves

Domain	SNAPS 2024[12]	SNAPS 2022[13]	SNAPS 2020
Childcare	**Actual:** Inn my home (excluding help from family members and paid staff): [1 = I do most of the childcare; 4 = My partner and I share childcare equally; 7 = My partner does most of the childcare] **Aspirational:** If I had children in the future, (excluding help from family members and paid staff): [1 = I would do most of the childcare; 4 = My partner and I would share childcare equally; 7 = My partner would do most of the childcare]	**Actual:** In my home (not including the help my partner and I get from other family members and paid staff): [1 = I do most of the childcare; 2 = My partner and I equally share the childcare; 3 = My partner does most of the childcare] **Aspirational:** If in the future I have a partner and children to care for, in my home I would hope that: [1 = I would do most of the childcare; 2 = My partner and I would equally share the childcare; 3 = My partner would do most of the childcare]	**Actual:** In my home (not including the help my partner and I get from other family members and paid staff): [1 = I do most of the childcare; 4 = My partner and I equally share the childcare; 7 = My partner does most of the childcare] **Aspirational:** If in the future I have a partner and children to care for, in my home I would hope that: [1 = I would do most of the childcare; 2 = My partner and I would equally share the childcare; 3 = My partner would do most of the childcare]
Earning Family Income	**Actual:** In my home: [1 = I take most of the responsibilities for earning the family income; 4 = My partner and I equally share responsibilities; 7 = My partner takes most of the responsibilities for earning the family income] **Aspirational:** If I had a partner in the future: [1 = I would take most of the responsibilities for earning the family income; 4 = My partner and I would equally share responsibilities; 7 = My partner would take most of the responsibilities for earning the family income]	**Actual:** In my home, between my partner and I (not including the income we get from other family members): [1 = I earn most of the income for the family; 2 = My partner and I earn similar income for the family; 3 = My partner earns most of the income for the family] **Aspirational:** If I have a partner and/or children in the future, in my home I would hope that: [1 = I earn most of the income for the family; 2 = My partner and I earn approximately the same income for the family; 3 = My partner earns most of the income for the family]	**Actual:** In my home, between my partner and I (not including the income we get from other family members): [1 = I earn most of the income for the family; 2 = My partner and I earn similar income for the family; 3 = My partner earns most of the income for the family] **Aspirational:** If I have a partner and/or children in the future, in my home I would hope that: [1 = I earn most of the income for the family; 2 = My partner and I earn approximately the same income for the family; 3 = My partner earns most of the income for the family]

12   In SNAPS 2024, for Childcare, "women doing more" included responses 1–3 from women or 4–7 from men; "gender-equal" was response 5; and "men doing more" included 1–3 from men or 4–7 from women. For earning income, "men doing more" included 1–3 from men or 4–7 from women; "gender-equal" was response 5; and "women doing more" included 1–3 from women or 4–7 from men.

13   In SNAPS 2020 and 2022, for Childcare, "women doing more" included response 1 from women or 3 from men; "gender-equal" was response 2; and "men doing more" included 1 from men or 3 from women. For earning income, "men doing more" included 1 from men or 3 from women; "gender-equal" was response 2; and "women doing more" included 1 from women or 3 from men.

Table A.2 Demographic characteristics of survey participants

Indonesia			Malaysia		
Demographic characteristics	Number of participants	Proportion of sample (%)	Demographic characteristics	Number of participants	Proportion of sample (%)
Gender			**Gender**		
Women	994	50	Women	1,010	51
Men	1,001	50	Men	988	49
I prefer another term	5	0.25	I prefer another term	2	0.10
Age			**Age**		
18-24	625	31	18-24	606	30
25-34	902	45	25-34	958	48
35-40	473	24	35-40	436	22
Marital status			**Marital status**		
Married/ partnered	1,112	56	Married/ partnered	965	48
Single	843	42	Single	1,001	50
Other	45	2	Other	34	2
Education			**Education**		
Primary school	15	0.75	Primary school	55	3
Junior high school	50	3	Junior high school	22	1
Senior high school	697	35	Senior high school	279	14
Post-secondary education	1,238	62	Post-secondary education	1,644	82
Working status			**Working status**		
Employed	1,515	76	Employed	1,457	73
Self-employed	531	27	Self-employed	376	19

Philippines			Vietnam		
Demographic characteristics	Number of participants	Proportion of sample (%)	Demographic characteristics	Number of participants	Proportion of sample (%)
Gender			**Gender**		
Women	1,000	50	Women	1,026	51
Men	991	50	Men	964	48
I prefer another term	9	0.5	**I prefer another** term	10	0.50
Age			Age		
18-24	723	36	18-24	544	27
25-34	844	42	25-34	940	47
35-40	433	22	35-40	516	26
Marital status			**Marital status**		
Married/ partnered	816	41	Married/ partnered	1,244	62
Single	1,160	58	Single	719	36
Other	24	1	Other	37	2
Education			**Education**		
Primary school	9	0.5	Primary school	7	0.35
Junior high school	56	3	Junior high school	28	1
Senior high school	310	16	Senior high school	270	14
Post-secondary education	1,625	81	Post-secondary education	1,695	85
Working status			**Working status**		
Employed	1,239	62	Employed	1,636	82
Self-employed	212	11	Self-employed	359	18

Demographic characteristics	Number of participants	Proportion of sample (%)	Demographic characteristics	Number of participants	Proportion of sample (%)
Having caring responsibility			**Having caring responsibility**		
For child(ren)	1,091	55	For child(ren)	811	41
For dependent adult family member(s)	709	35	For dependent adult family member(s)	1,121	56
For person(s) with disability	364	18	For person(s) with disability	1,045	52
Disability			**Disability**		
With disability	226	11	With disability	469	24
For dependent adult family member(s)	709	35	For dependent adult family member(s)	1,121	56
For person(s) with disability	364	18	For person(s) with disability	1,045	52
Sexuality			**Sexuality**		
Heterosexual or straight	NA	NA	Heterosexual or straight	NA	NA
LGBTQIA+	NA	NA	LGBTQIA+	NA	NA
Prefer not to say	NA	NA	Prefer not to say	NA	NA
Ethnicity			**Ethnicity**		
Javanese	975	49	Malay/ Bumiputera	1,129	56
Sunda	232	12	Chinese	745	37
Other	793	40	Indian	74	4
			Other	30	2
Religion			**Religion**		
Muslim	1,713	86	Muslim	1,010	51
Protestant	146	7	Buddhist	444	22
Other	141	7	Other	546	27
Region					
Java	1,341	67			
Kalimantan	119	6			
Lesser Sunda Islands	51	3			
Maluku Islands	11	0.55			
Papua	6	0.30			
Sulawesi	133	7			
Sumatera	339	17			

Demographic characteristics	Number of participants	Proportion of sample (%)	Demographic characteristics	Number of participants	Proportion of sample (%)
Having a caring responsibility			**Having caring responsibility**		
For child(ren)	895	45	For child(ren)	1,172	59
For dependent adult family member(s)	1,210	61	For dependent adult family member(s)	963	48
For person(s) with disability	1,159	58	For person(s) with disability	558	28
Disability			**Disability**		
With disability	593	30	With disability	408	20
For dependent adult family member(s)	1,210	61	For dependent adult family member(s)	963	48
For person(s) with disability	1,159	58	For person(s) with disability	558	28
Sexuality			**Sexuality**		
Heterosexual or straight	1,704	85	Heterosexual or straight	946	47
LGBTQIA+	204	10	LGBTQIA+	625	31
Prefer not to say	92	5	Prefer not to say	429	21
Ethnicity			**Ethnicity**		
Tagalog	####	52	Kinh	1,932	97
Bisaya/Binisaya	411	21	Tay	10	0.50
Other	558	28	Hoa	18	0.90
Religion			**Religion**		
Catholic	1,149	57	None	1,116	56
Christian–Other	509	25	Buddhist	639	32
Other	342	17	Other	245	12
Region			Region		
Luzon	1,303	65	South East	979	49
Mindanao	415	21	Red River Delta	679	34
Visayas	282	14	Northwest	8	0.40
			Northeast	27	1
			South Central Coast	132	7
			North Central Coast	34	2
			Mekong River Delta	110	6
			Central Highlands	31	2

Annex 2: Qualitative methodology & sample

Data collection for general audience

General audience interviews were conducted in two stages: the first comprising of participants from Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam, and the second involving participants from Malaysia.

From November 2024 to February 2025, 33 members of the general public were interviewed across Indonesia (15), the Philippines (7), and Vietnam (11). The majority of interview participants were SNAPS 2024 survey participants who had agreed to be recontacted for further research and were compensated through points on the Ipsos survey platform. Additional participants were recruited via snowball sampling or social media advertisements on Instagram and Facebook. Consistent with the quantitative sampling strategy, interviews with the general public focused on urban adults aged 18–40, with an emphasis on achieving gender balance where possible. The Indonesia and Vietnam samples achieved a gender balance; however, due to lower response rates in the Philippines, the sample skewed female (5 women, 2 men).

From April 2025 to July 2025, a total of 9 Malaysian general audience interviews were conducted. Of the participants, 2 were contacted following the Ipsos survey, whereas 7 were recruited via snowball sampling, emailing the GIWL team's networks, and social media advertisements on Instagram. The Malay sample skewed slightly towards women (5) over men (4). As we had limited networks of Malaysian potential participants, and as they were mostly recruited via networks, the sample skewed towards being highly educated (i.e. had undergraduate degree, masters, were pursuing PhDs or had received a PhD).

Participants came from a range of backgrounds in terms of age, religion, region, partnership status, education, and employment. Throughout the recruitment and interview process, we continuously reflected on the sample and adjusted the recruitment strategy in order ensure a diverse and representative sample where possible. For example, most initial Indonesian participants were women, so we reached out to more men for the remaining interviews. Efforts were also made to include the perspectives of single parents, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and people with disabilities or caregiving responsibilities. Among the 42 participants, four identified as bisexual and one as disabled. Due to the outreach methods, the sample leaned toward digitally engaged, educated individuals.

Participants were contacted via email and/or WhatsApp and received an invitation outlining the purpose of SNAPS, their rights as participants, and a preview of the questions to support informed consent. Interviews were conducted via video call, lasting from 30 to 60 minutes. Discussion topics included caregiving, economic responsibilities, and gender advocacy.

Prior to data collection, the lead researchers provided guidance and training to the research team on interview techniques, with a focus on building rapport and approaching potentially private or sensitive topics. During the initial phase, researchers sat in on one another's interviews to offer feedback and promote consistency across countries. Interviews were conducted in Bahasa (Indonesia), English (Philippines and Malaysia), and Vietnamese. Transcripts were translated into English for comparative analysis, with care taken to preserve cultural nuance.

Expert interviews data collection

In parallel, expert interviews were conducted to gain a broader view of gender equality in each country. In total, 19 experts were interviewed (6 in Indonesia, 3 in Malaysia, 5 in the Philippines and 5 in Vietnam), with diverse professional backgrounds including academia, private sector, activism, and entrepreneurship. Interviews, conducted in English, explored themes of gender norms, recent social, political, and economic developments, barriers to equality, and factors driving change.

Validation workshops data collection

In May 2025, in-country validation workshops were conducted in Jakarta, Manila, and Hanoi. No validation workshop was held for Malaysia. These sessions aimed to consolidate findings, gather feedback, and address remaining gaps in the qualitative data. Participants included research partners, relevant NGOs, and other gender-equal stakeholders identified through desk review or survey analysis. Participants were first consulted individually, then divided into small groups where they drew from their unique experience and expertise to explore questions around advocacy and societal transformation. Data gathered from the workshops was triangulated with data from general audience and expert interviews and integrated into the final analysis.

Data Analysis

General audience interviews predominantly informed **section 5.3.1**, **5.3.2** (in the cross-country analysis section of the report) and **2.3.1** and **2.3.2** (in the country profile sections of the report). Following data collection, the team employed an inductive and iterative approach to analysis for the general audience interviews, allowing patterns to emerge from the interview data which were then organised into thematic categories. Interview transcripts were manually coded, with codes organised and visualised using the coding software NVivo.

As new themes emerged, team members collaboratively refined definitions to ensure consistency and clarity across datasets. Analysis of interviews with members from the general public identified the underlying factors influencing attitudes and behaviours related to caregiving, economic roles, and gender advocacy. These also examined the role of empirical and normative expectations, as well as key reference networks such as family, peers, religious institutions, and media to better understand from where these expectations originate.

Validation workshops informed **section 5.3.3** of the cross-country analysis and **sections 2.3.3** of each country profile focusing on enablers and barries to gender-equality advocacy. Data was organised thematically according to individual and/or structural-level factors enabling or inhibiting gender equality advocacy. Results were cross-checked by two team members to ensure accuracy.

Expert interviews predominantly informed **section 5.4.2** in the cross-country analysis and **section 2.4.1** in the country-specific analysis. These sections examined country-specific societal transformations and the influence of policy and institutional dynamics on gender norms. Expert interviews transcripts were summarised thematically by team members and findings were cross-checked against the literature to verify for accuracy (where literature was available or findings heavily caveated if there was no available form of verification).

See **section 6** for an overview of limitations of the qualitative research process.

Table A.3 List of expert interview characteristics

Expert #	Country	Gender	Expertise/Profile
Expert 1	Indonesia	Male/man	Academic/Researcher
Expert 2	Philippines	Female/woman	Academic/Researcher
Expert 3	Philippines	Male/man	Academic/Researcher
Expert 4			Activist
Expert 5	Indonesia	Female/woman	Entrepreneur
Expert 6	Vietnam	Female/woman	Academic/Researcher
Expert 7	Vietnam	Female/woman	Academic/Researcher
Expert 8	Philippines	Female/woman	Private Sector
Expert 9	Indonesia	Female/woman	Academic/Researcher
Expert 10	Indonesia (Australian)	Female/woman	Private Sector
Expert 11	Indonesia	Female/woman	Academic/Researcher
Expert 12	Philippines	Male/man	Academic/Researcher
Expert 13			Private Sector
Expert 14	Indonesia	Female/woman	Academic/Researcher
Expert 15	Philippines	Female/woman	Academic/Researcher
Expert 16	Vietnam	Female/woman	INGOs

Figure A.1 Composition of interview participants by Gender

SNAPS Qualitative Interview Participants (General Audience) by Gender (2024-2025)
Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines had more women than men participants. Vietnam had slightly more men (54%) than women (46%) participants.

Participants were asked to identify their gender as an open question.

Figure A.2 Composition of interview participants by Partnership Status

SNAPS Qualitative Interview Participants (General Audience) by Partnership Status (2024-2025)
Indonesia and Malaysia had more married than single participants. The Philippines and Vietnam had more single than married participants.

Participants were asked to identify their partnership status as an open question.

Figure A.3 Composition of interview participants by Educational Status

SNAPS Qualitative Interview Participants (General Audience) by Educational Status (2024-2025)
Across countries, most of the participants were VET/tertiary educated.

Indonesia

VET/Tertiary
60%

Not specified
26%

Secondary
14%

Vietnam

VET/Tertiary
100%

Malaysia

VET/Tertiary
88%

Secondary
12%

Philippines

VET/Tertiary
100%
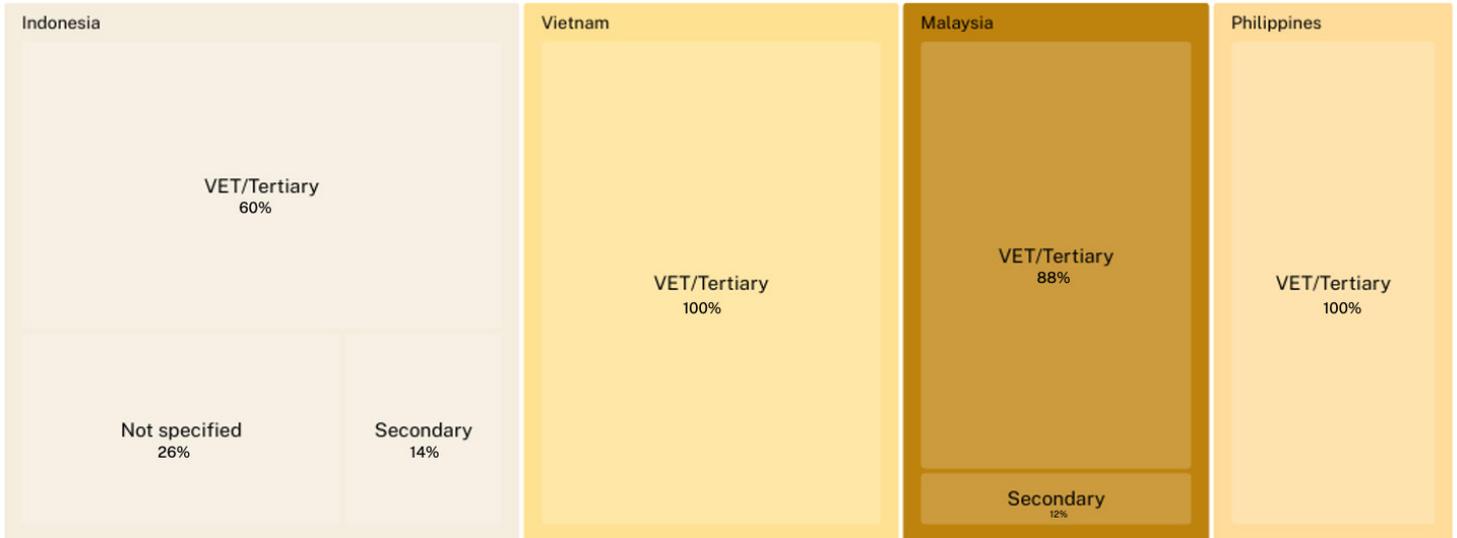
Participants were asked to identify their latest educational status/attainment.

Figure A.4 Composition of interview participants by Caregiving Responsibility

SNAPS Qualitative Interview Participants (General Audience) by Caregiving Responsibility (2024-2025)
Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam had more participants with caregiving responsibilities, particularly for children, than not. The
Philippines had more participants without caregiving responsibilities (57%) than those with children (29%) or adult (14%).

Indonesia

Child(ren)
66%%

None
26%

Adult
10%

Vietnam

Child(ren)
54%

None
46%

Malaysia

Child(ren)
55%

None
45%

Philippines

None
57%

Child(ren)
29%

Adult
14%

Participants were asked to explain their caregiving responsibilities (children, none, or dependent adult).

Annex 3: Regression results

The below section outlines the original regression results used in the 'Characteristic associated with gender equal behaviours' sections.

Methodological Note

Regressions for gender-equal behaviours

Note for the dependent variables under each sub-theme represent gender-equal behaviours, denoted by dummy variables equal to 1 if participants report equally sharing their respective roles with their partner or men taking on more Caregiving and Domestic roles.

All regressions account for the survey's weight, use robust standard errors, and restrict the sample to participants from whom we can infer their actual behaviours. For example, regressions on Childcare restrict the sample to married/partnered participants with child(ren); regressions on Dependent Adult Care restrict the sample to married/partnered participants with dependent adult family member(s); and regressions on Housework restrict the sample to married/partnered participants.

Circle and diamond symbols represent the coefficient estimates for women and men, respectively. The horizontal lines connected to these symbols indicate the 95% confidence interval. If the horizontal line crosses the vertical line at zero, the corresponding independent variable is not statistically significant at the 5% level.

Regressions for advocacy

The dependent variables under each sub-theme represent whether participants identified as advocates for gender equality, coded as dummy variables equal to 1 if they reported engaging in advocacy.

All regressions account for the survey's weight, use robust standard errors, and restrict the sample to participants from whom we can infer their actual behaviours. Circle and diamond symbols represent the coefficient estimates for women and men, respectively.

The horizontal lines connected to these symbols indicate the 95% confidence interval. If the horizontal line crosses the vertical line at zero, the corresponding independent variable is not statistically significant at the 5% level.

Regression results – Indonesia

Childcare
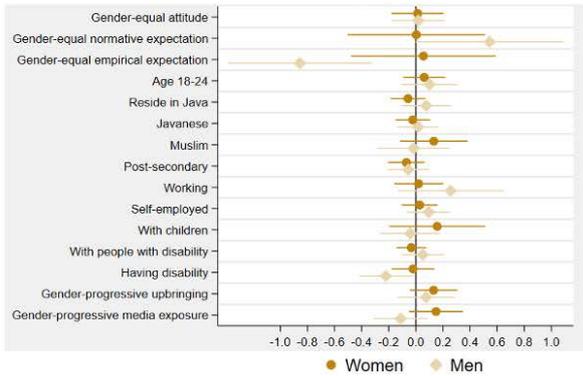
Dependent adult care
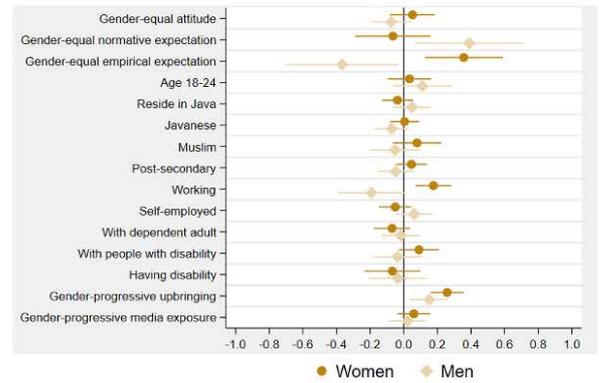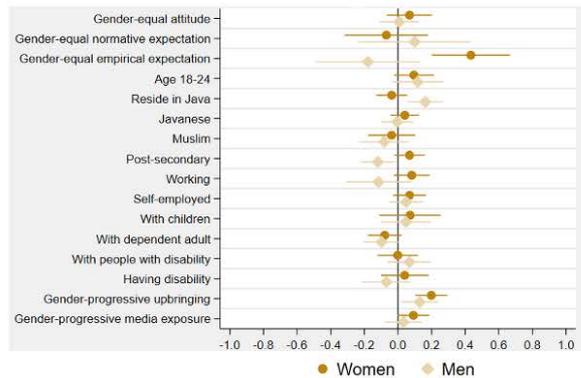
Housework

Figure A.5 Factors associated with gender-equal behaviours in Indonesia - Caregiving and Domestic roles
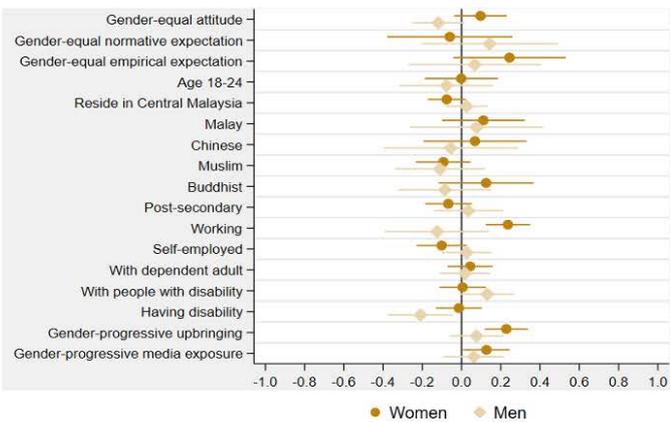
Childcare

Dependent adult care
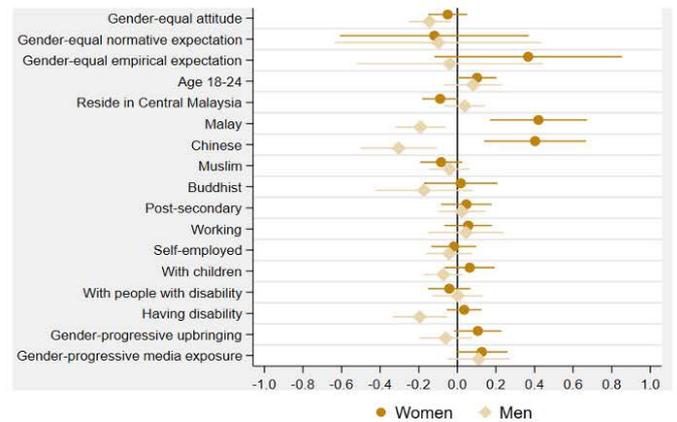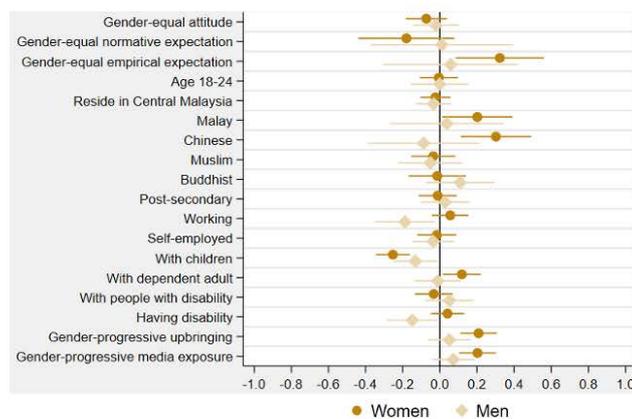
Housework

Figure A.6 Factors associated with gender-equal advocacy in Indonesia - Caregiving and Domestic roles
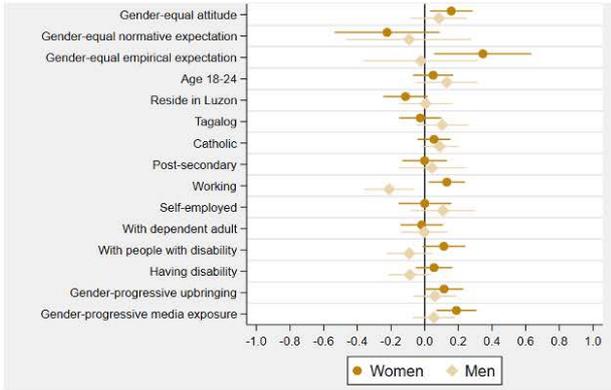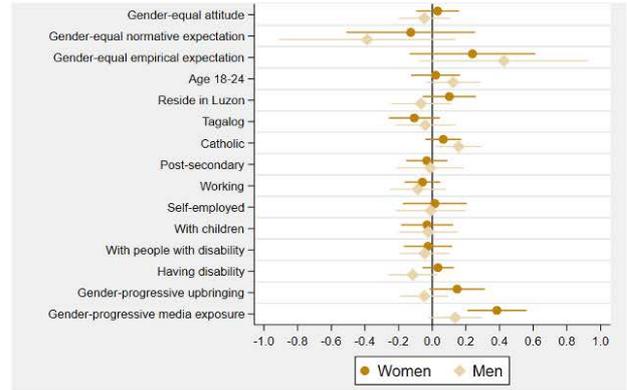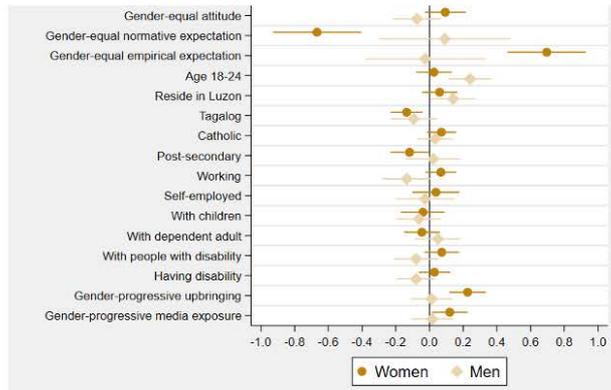
Figure A.7 Factors associated with gender-equal behaviours in Indonesia - Economic roles
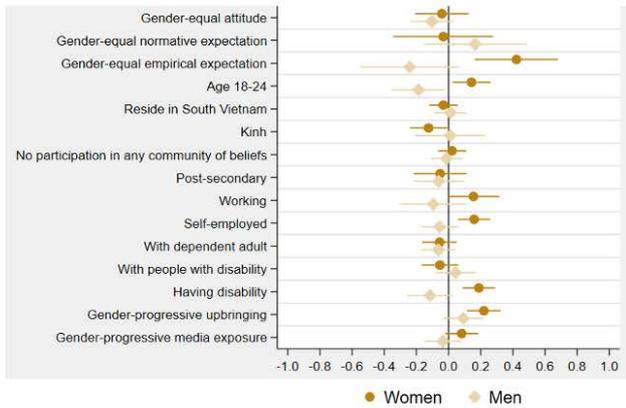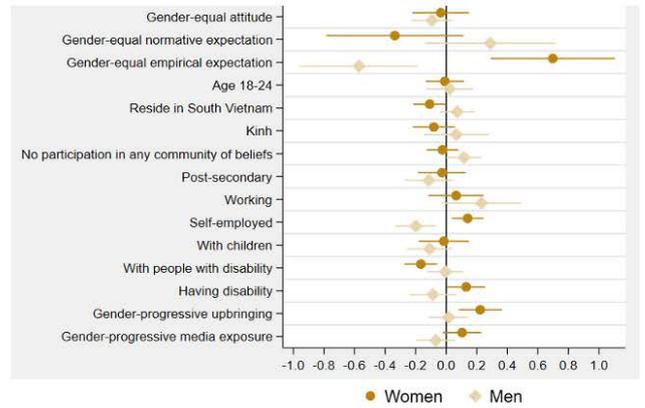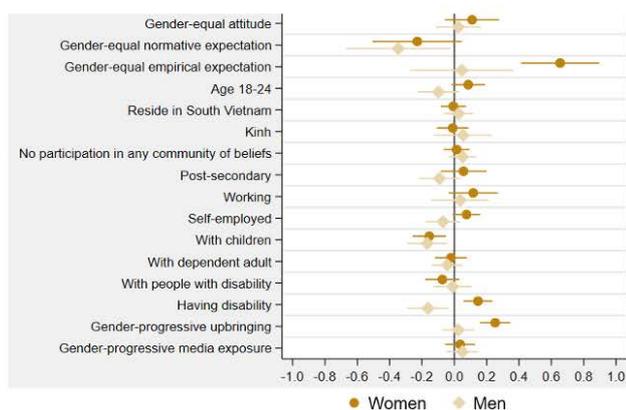
Figure A.8 Factors associated with gender-equal advocacy in Indonesia - Economic roles

Regression results – Malaysia

Childcare

Dependent adult care

Housework
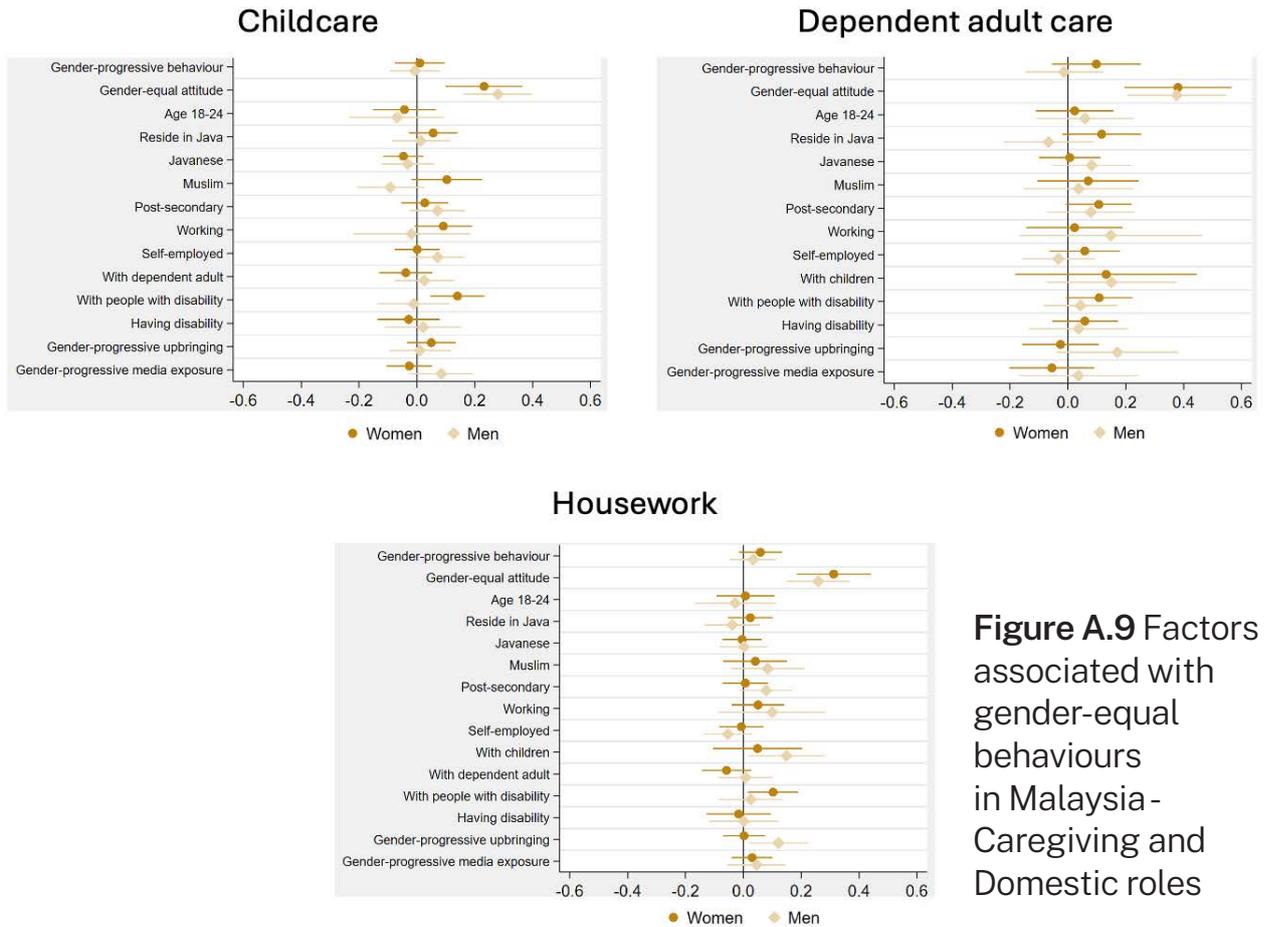
Figure A.9 Factors associated with gender-equal behaviours in Malaysia - Caregiving and Domestic roles

Childcare

Dependent adult care
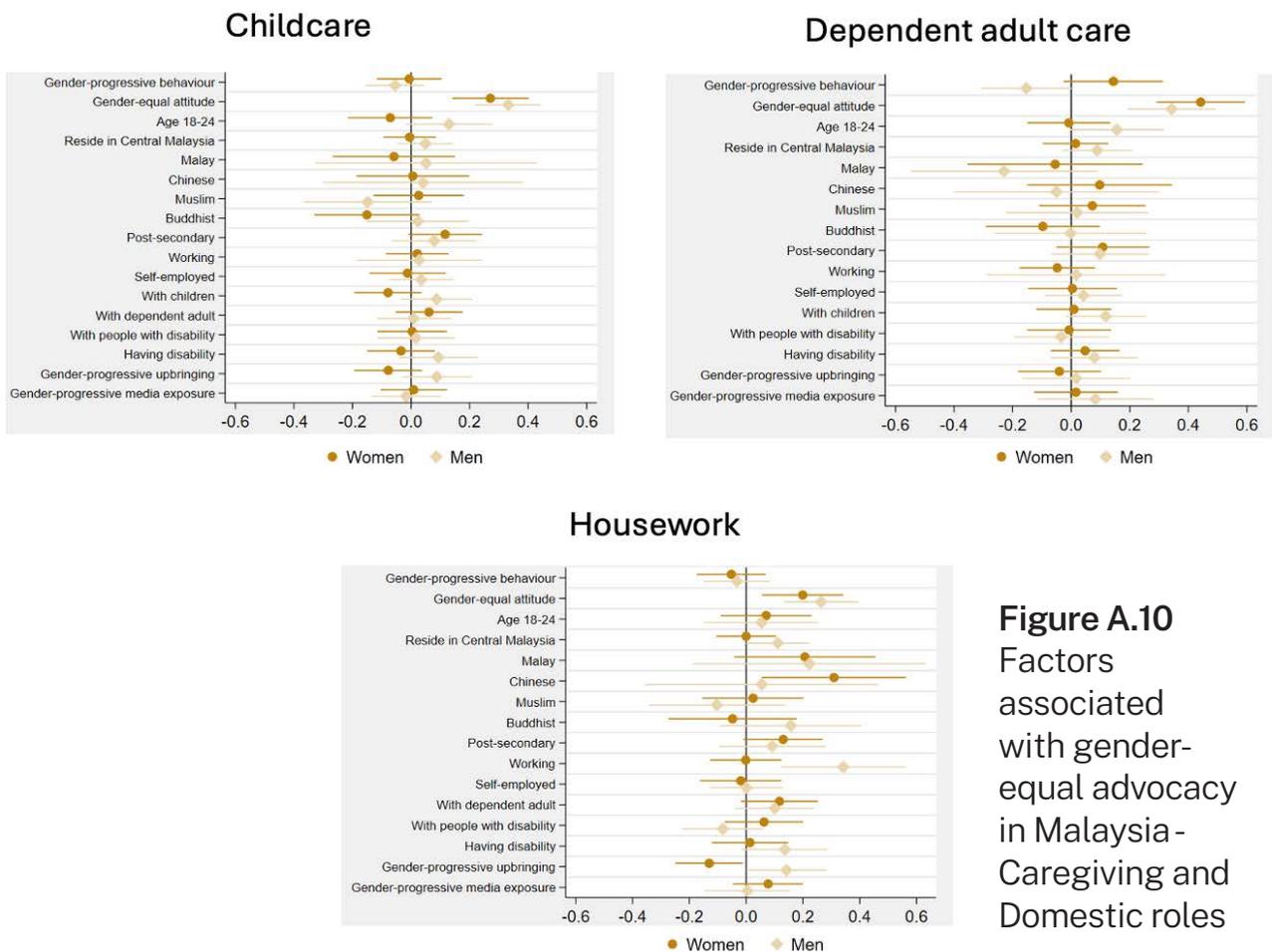
Housework

Figure A.10 Factors associated with gender-equal advocacy in Malaysia - Caregiving and Domestic roles

Childcare
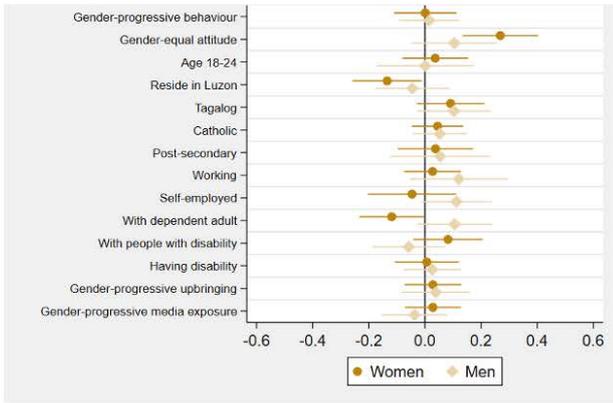
Dependent adult care
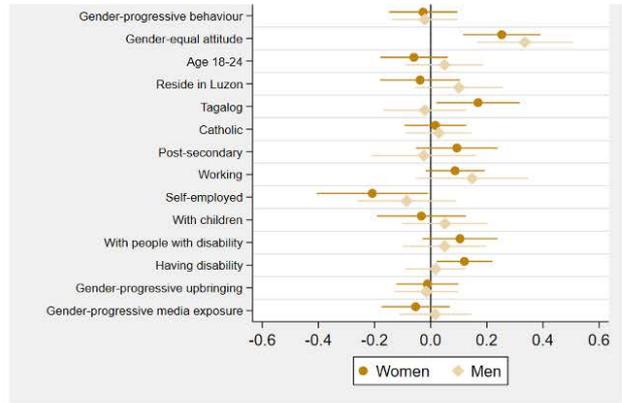
Housework
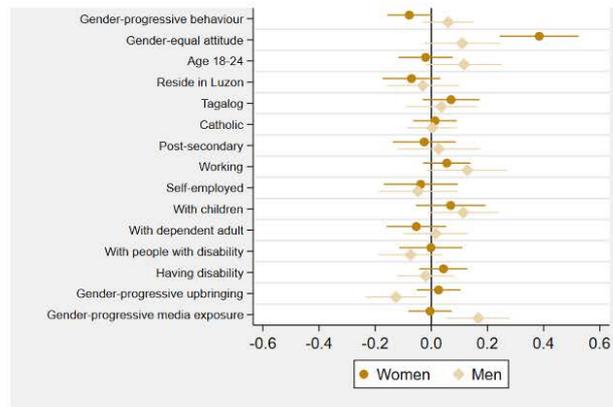
Figure A.11 Factors associated with gender-equal behaviours in Malaysia - Economic roles
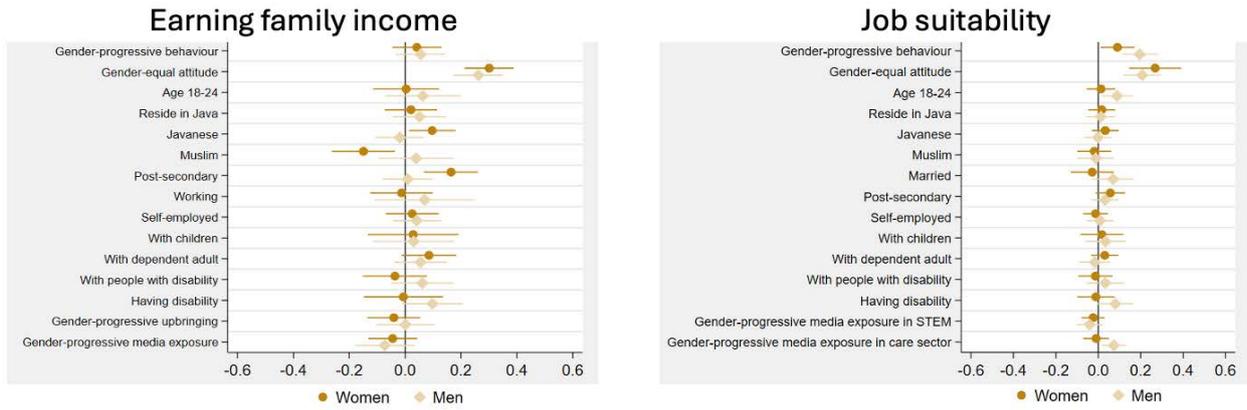
Earning family income
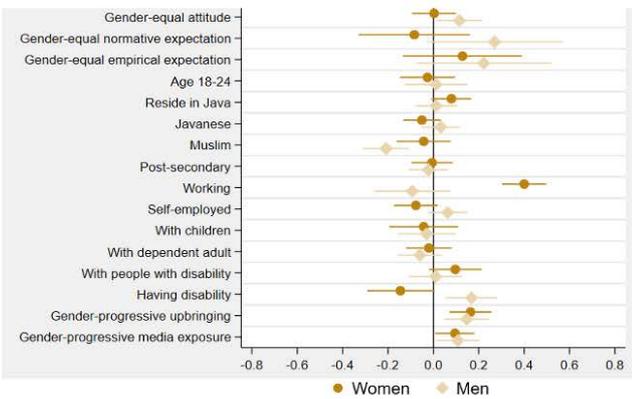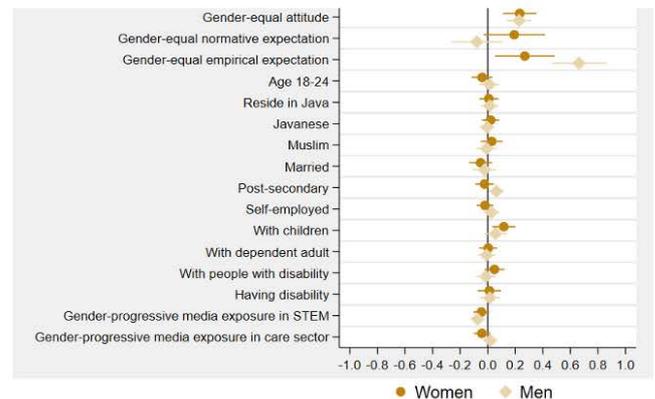
Job suitability
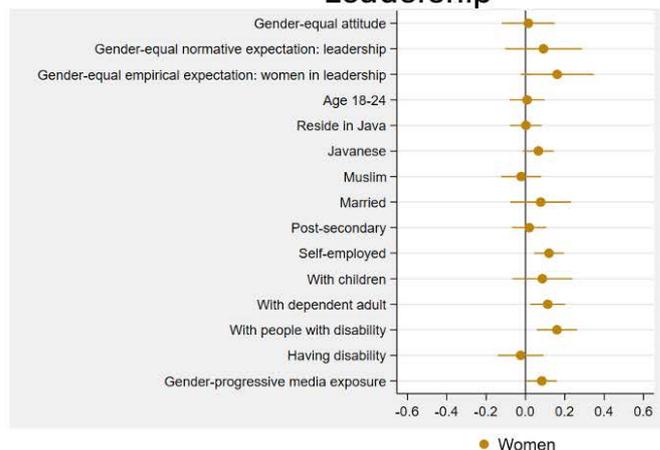
Leadership

Figure A.12 Factors associated with gender-equal advocacy in Malaysia - Economic roles
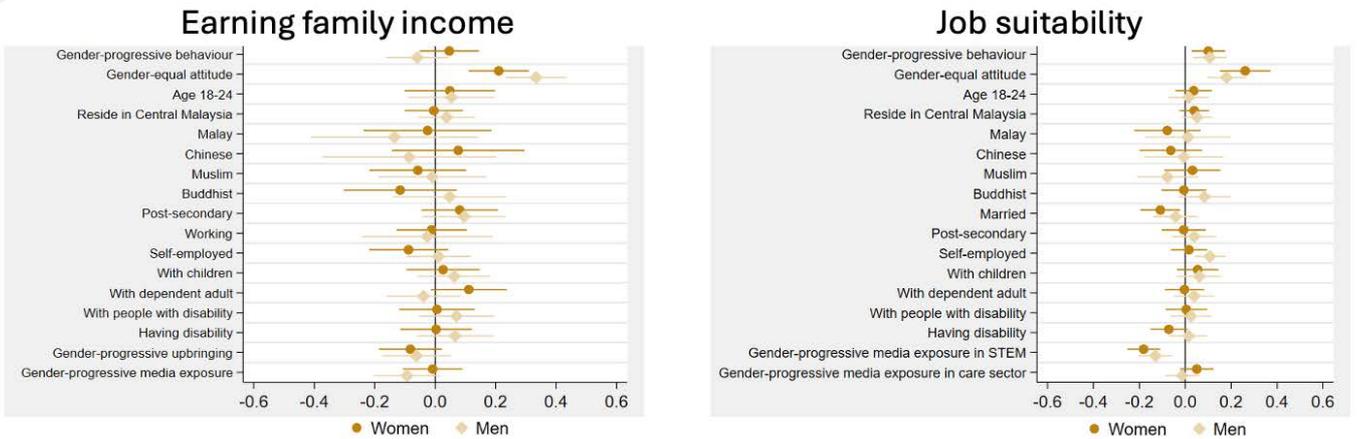
Regression results – Philippines

Earning family income
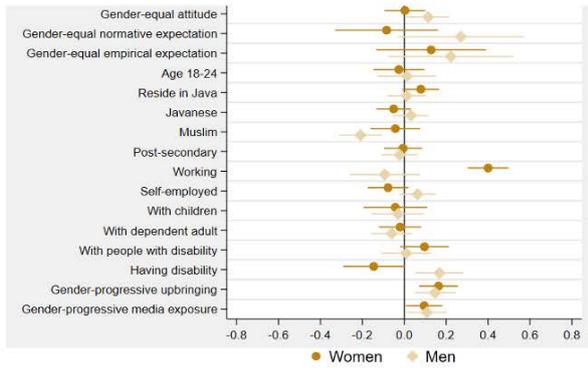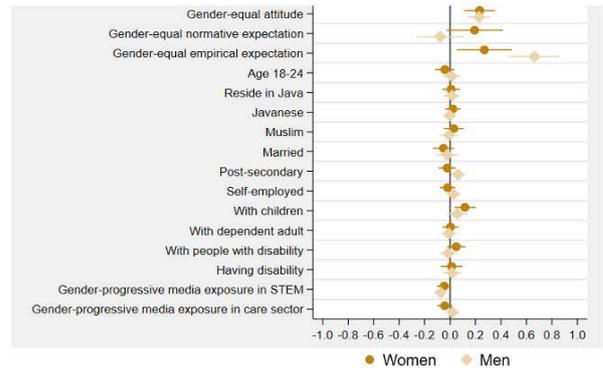
Job suitability
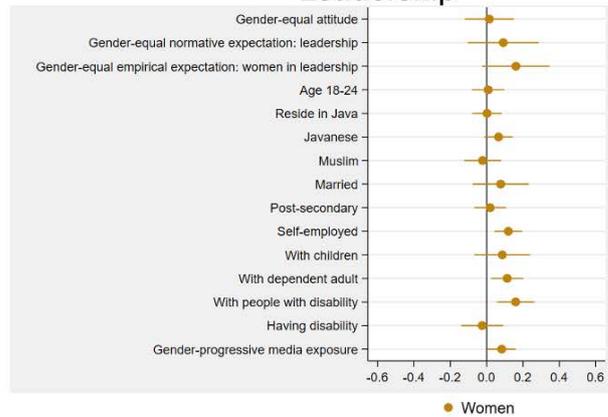
Leadership

Figure A.13 Factors associated with gender-equal behaviours in the Philippines - Caregiving and Domestic roles

Earning family income
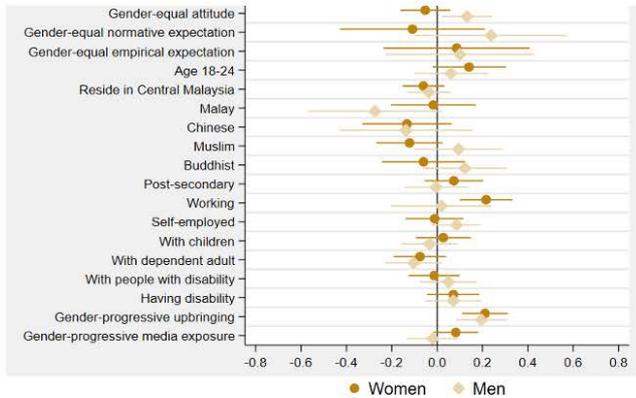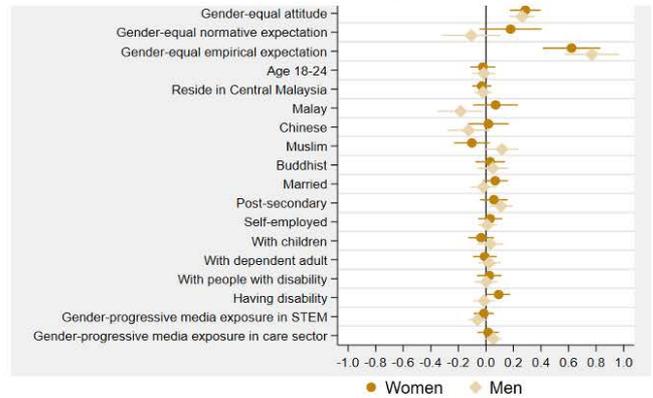
Job suitability
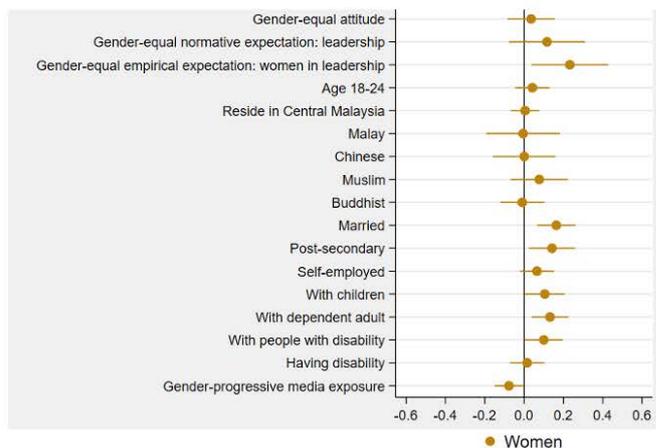
Leadership

Figure A.14 Factors associated with gender-equal advocacy in the Philippines - Caregiving and Domestic roles

Earning family income
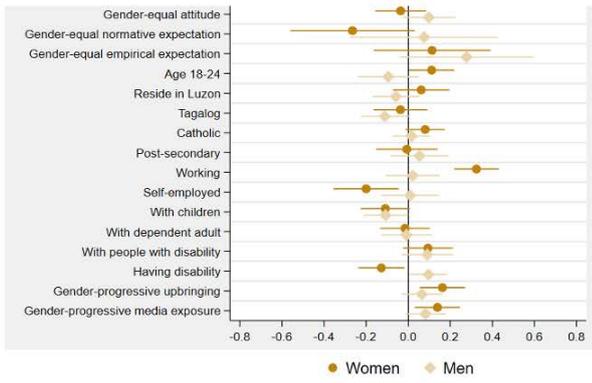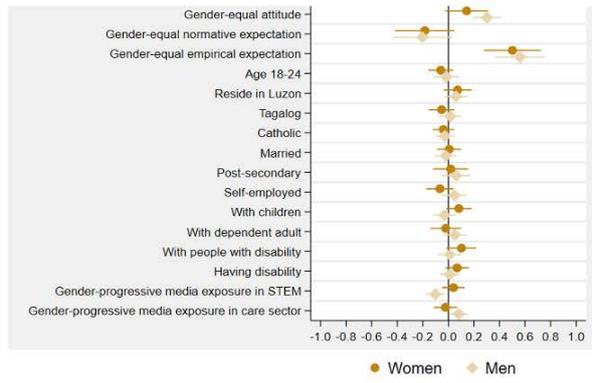
Job suitability
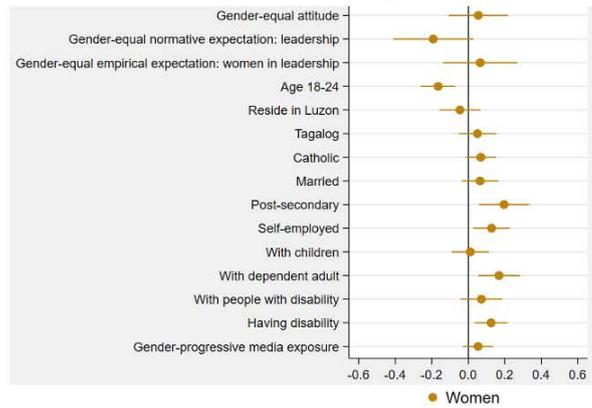
Leadership

Figure A.15 Factors associated with gender-equal behaviours in the Philippines - Economic roles

Earning family income
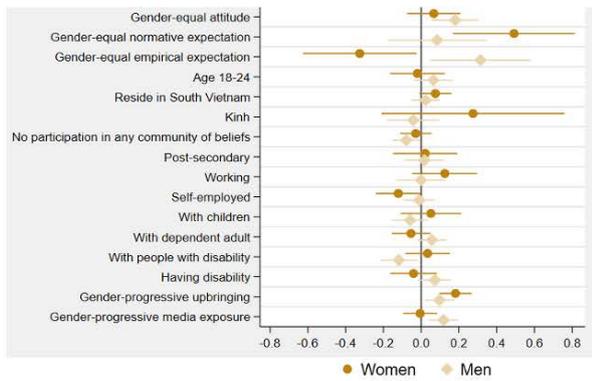
Job suitability
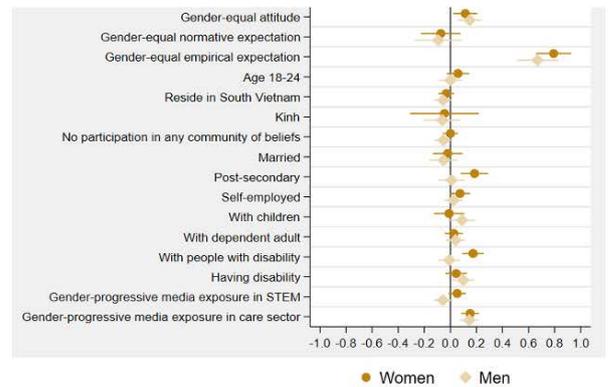
Leadership
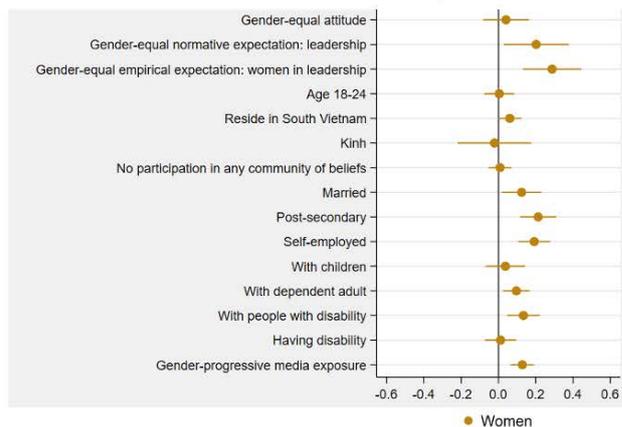
Figure A.16 Factors associated with gender-equal advocacy in the Philippines - Economic roles

Regression results – Vietnam

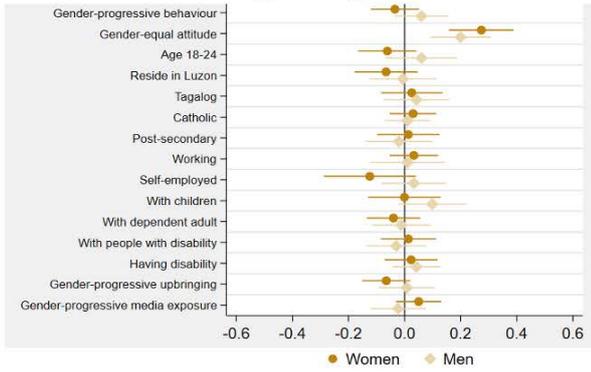## Earning family income

Job suitability

Leadership
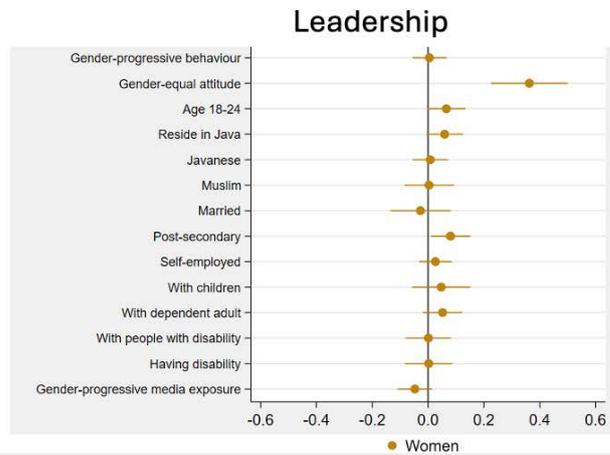
Figure A.17 Factors associated with gender-equal behaviours in Vietnam -Caregiving and Domestic roles

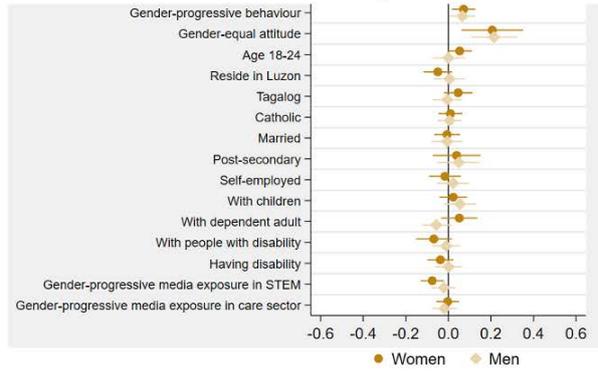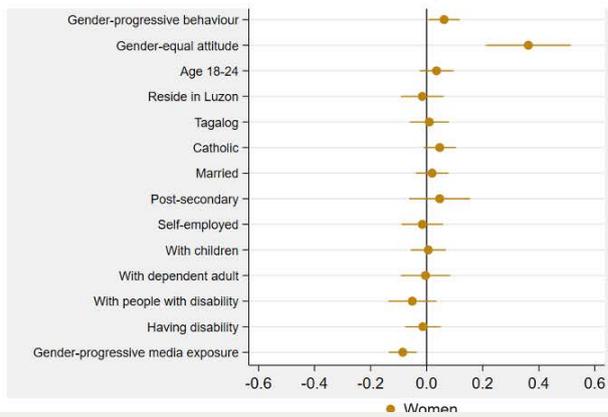## Earning family income

Job suitability
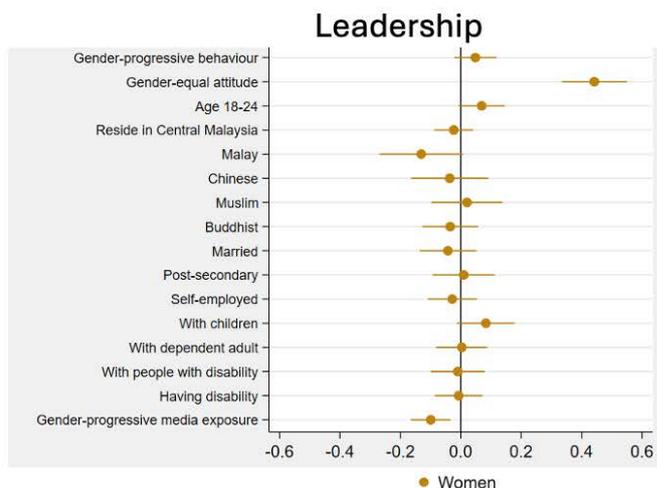
Leadership

Figure A.18 Factors associated with gender-equal advocacy in Vietnam -Caregiving and Domestic roles
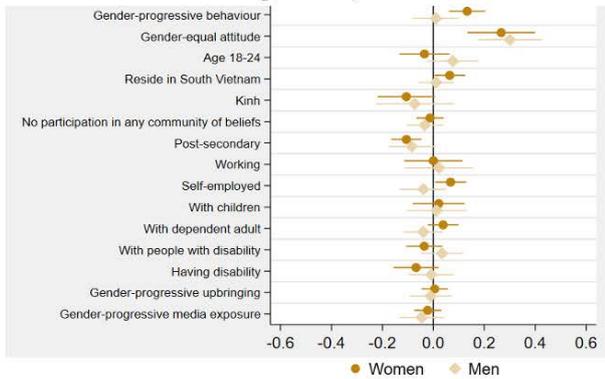
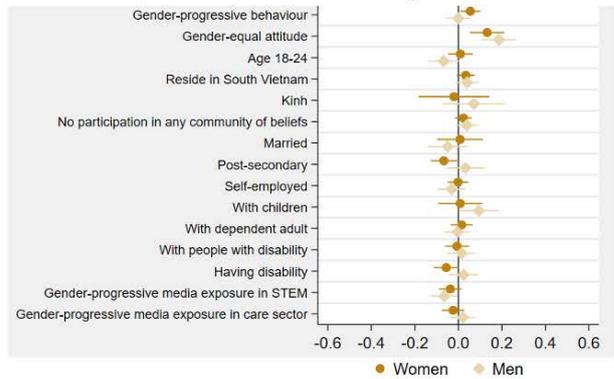## Earning family income

Job suitability

Leadership

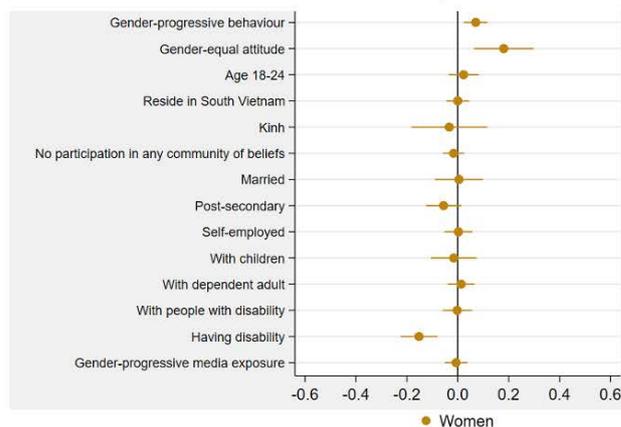**Figure A.19** Factors associated with gender-equal behaviours in Vietnam-Economic roles

Earning family income

Job suitability

Leadership

Figure A.20 Factors associated with gender-equal advocacy in Vietnam-Economic roles

Annex 4: Survey questions and variable constructions for attitudes, behaviours, advocacy, and empirical and normative expectations

A1. Caregiving and Domestic roles

Variable	Construction
Attitude: childcare	**How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Childcare should be shared equally between partners"? [1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree]** [Descriptive statistics] Defined as more gender-equal if the response was 5 or above; otherwise, less gender-equal. [Regressions] The gender-equal attitude variable was constructed as a dummy variable: 1 if the response was 5 or above; 0 otherwise.
Behaviour: childcare	<u>Actual</u>**: In my home (excluding help from family members and paid staff): [1 = I do most of childcare; 4 = My partner and I equally share; 7 = My partner does most of childcare]** <u>Aspirational</u>**: If I had children in the future, (excluding help from family members and paid staff): [1 = I would do most of childcare; 4 = My partner and I would equally share; 7 = My partner would do most of childcare]** [Descriptive statistics] Defined as gender-equal if the response was 4; men doing more if men responded 1–3 or women responded 5–7; otherwise, women doing more. [Regressions] The gender-equal behaviour variable was constructed as a dummy variable: 1 if the response was 4, or if gender roles were reversed (i.e., men reported doing most of the childcare [options 1–3], or women reported their partner doing most of the childcare [options 5–7]); 0 otherwise.

Advocacy: childcare	In general, advocacy refers to supporting a cause, either publicly (e.g., signing an online petition, attending a demonstration or a rally, or joining a gender equality committee at work) or in more discreet ways (e.g., having discussions with your partner, family members, peers or colleagues about the ways women and men are disadvantaged, and what can be done about it).
	How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "I advocate for gender equality in childcare"? [1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree]
	[Descriptive statistics]
	Defined as advocates if the response was 5 or above; otherwise, non-advocates.
	[Regressions]
	The advocacy variable was constructed as a dummy variable: 1 if the response was 5 or above; 0 otherwise.
Empirical expectation: childcare	What proportion of people aged 18-40 years old living in urban areas in [COUNTRY], do you think, share childcare equally with their partners? Please give your best estimates from 0-100% using the sliding scale
Normative expectation: childcare	What proportion of people aged 18-40 years old living in urban areas in [COUNTRY], do you think, would agree with the statement: "Childcare should be shared equally between partners"? Please give your best estimates from 0-100% using the sliding scale
Attitude: dependent adult care	How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Caring for dependent adult family member(s) should be shared equally between partners"? [1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree]
	[Descriptive statistics]
	Defined as more gender-equal if the response was 5 or above; otherwise, less gender-equal.
	[Regressions]
	The gender-equal attitude variable was constructed as a dummy variable: 1 if the response was 5 or above; 0 otherwise.
Behaviour: dependent adult care	Actual: In my home (excluding help from family members and paid staff): [1 = I do most of dependent adult (family member(s)) care; 4 = My partner and I equally share; 7 = My partner does most of dependent adult (family member(s)) care]
	Aspirational: If I had dependent adult (family member(s)) in the future, (excluding help from family members and paid staff): [1 = I would do most of dependent adult (family member(s)) care; 4 = My partner and I would equally share dependent adult (family member(s)) care; 7 = My partner would do most of dependent adult (family member(s)) care]
	[Descriptive statistics]
	Defined as gender-equal if the response was 4; men doing more if men responded 1–3 or women responded 5–7; otherwise, women doing more.
	[Regressions]
	The gender-equal behaviour variable was constructed as a dummy variable: 1 if the response was 4, or if gender roles were reversed (i.e., men reported doing most of the dependent adult care [options 1–3], or women reported their partner doing most of the dependent adult care [options 5–7]); 0 otherwise.

Advocacy: dependent adult care	**How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "I advocate for gender equality in dependent adult care"? [1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree]** [Descriptive statistics] Defined as advocates if the response was 5 or above; otherwise, non-advocates. [Regressions] The advocacy variable was constructed as a dummy variable: 1 if the response was 5 or above; 0 otherwise.
Empirical expectation: dependent adult care	**What proportion of people aged 18-40 years old living in urban areas in [COUNTRY], do you think, share dependent adult (family member(s)) care equally with their partners? Please give your best estimates from 0-100% using the sliding scale**
Normative expectation: dependent adult care	**What proportion of people aged 18-40 years old living in urban areas in [COUNTRY], do you think, would agree with the statement: "Caring for dependent adult family member(s) should be shared equally between partners"? Please give your best estimates from 0-100% using the sliding scale**
Attitude: housework	**For the purpose of this study, we define housework as activities such as (but not limited to) cooking, cleaning, gardening, home maintenance, but excluding childcare** **How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Housework should be shared equally between partners"? [1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree]** [Descriptive statistics] Defined as more gender-equal if the response was 5 or above; otherwise, less gender-equal. [Regressions] The gender-equal attitude variable was constructed as a dummy variable: 1 if the response was 5 or above; 0 otherwise.
Behaviour: housework	<u>Actual</u>**: In my home (excluding help from family members and paid staff): [1 = I do most of housework; 4 = My partner and I equally share; 7 = My partner does most of housework]** <u>Aspirational</u>**: If I had a partner in the future, (excluding help from family members and paid staff): [1 = I would do most of housework; 4 = My partner and I would equally share; 7 = My partner would do most of housework]** [Descriptive statistics] Defined as gender-equal if the response was 4; men doing more if men responded 1–3 or women responded 5–7; otherwise, women doing more. [Regressions] The gender-equal behaviour variable was constructed as a dummy variable: 1 if the response was 4, or if gender roles were reversed (i.e., men reported doing most of the dependent adult care [options 1–3], or women reported their partner doing most of the dependent adult care [options 5–7]); 0 otherwise.

Advocacy: housework	How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "I advocate for gender equality in housework"? [1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree] [Descriptive statistics] Defined as advocates if the response was 5 or above; otherwise, non-advocates. [Regressions] The advocacy variable was constructed as a dummy variable: 1 if the response was 5 or above; 0 otherwise.
Empirical expectation: housework	What proportion of people aged 18-40 years old living in urban areas in [COUNTRY], do you think, share housework responsibilities equally with their partners? Please give your best estimates from 0-100% using the sliding scale
Normative expectation: housework	What proportion of people aged 18-40 years old living in urban areas in [COUNTRY], do you think, would agree with the statement: "Housework responsibilities should be shared equally between partners"? Please give your best estimates from 0-100% using the sliding scale

Note: The description related to housework appears at the beginning of the first sub-section on housework. The description related to advocacy appears at the beginning of the advocacy section.

A2. Economic roles

Variable	Construction
Attitude: working outside the home	How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Everyone, regardless of their gender, should be allowed to work outside the home if they wish"? [1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree] [Descriptive statistics] Defined as more gender-equal if the response was 5 or above; otherwise, less gender-equal.
Behaviour: women working	What is your current employment situation? (Select all that apply) [1 = Working; 2 = Student; 3 = Retired; 4 = Unemployed; 5 = Stay at home parent/carer; 6 = Not working; 96 = Other, please specify] (Working' includes unpaid work for organisations but does not include domestic work for your family or close friends, such as housework, childcare or babysitting) [Descriptive statistics] Defined as women working if women's response was 1; otherwise, women not working. Where do you do most of your work? [1 = At a workplace (e.g. a company office or factory); 2 = At my home (e.g. you run your own business from home or have flexible work arrangements that enable you to work from home); 3 = At various sites] [Descriptive statistics] Defined as working at a workplace if women's response was 1; working at home if women's response was 2; otherwise, working at various sites.

Attitude: earning family income	How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Earning the family income should be an equally shared responsibility between partners"? [1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree] [Descriptive statistics] Defined as more gender-equal if the response was 5 or above; otherwise, less gender-equal. [Regressions] The gender-equal attitude variable was constructed as a dummy variable: 1 if the response was 5 or above; 0 otherwise.
Behaviour: earning family income	<u>Actual</u>: In my home: [1 = I take most the responsibilities for earning the family income; 4 = My partner and I equally share responsibilities; 7 = My partner takes most of the responsibilities for earning the family income] <u>Aspirational</u>: If I had a partner in the future: [1 = I would take most the responsibilities for earning the family income; 4 = My partner and I would equally share responsibilities; 7 = My partner would take most the responsibilities for earning the family income] [Descriptive statistics] Defined as gender-equal if the response was 4; men doing more if men responded 1–3 or women responded 5–7; otherwise, women doing more. [Regressions] The gender-equal behaviour variable was constructed as a dummy variable: 1 if the response was 4, or if gender roles were reversed (i.e., women reported taking most of the responsibility for earning the family income [options 1–3], or men reported their partner taking most of the responsibility [options 5–7]); 0 otherwise.
Advocacy: earning family income	In general, advocacy refers to supporting a cause, either publicly (e.g., signing an online petition, attending a demonstration or a rally, or joining a gender equality committee at work) or in more discreet ways (e.g., having discussions with your partner, family members, peers or colleagues about the ways women and men are disadvantaged, and what can be done about it). How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "I advocate for gender equality in earning the family income"? [1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree] [Descriptive statistics] Defined as advocates if the response was 5 or above; otherwise, non-advocates. [Regressions] The advocacy variable was constructed as a dummy variable: 1 if the response was 5 or above; 0 otherwise.
Empirical expectation: earning family income	What proportion of people aged 18-40 years old living in urban areas in [COUNTRY], do you think, share equally the responsibility for earning family income with their partners? Please give your best estimates from 0-100% using the sliding scale

Normative expectation: earning family income	What proportion of people aged 18-40 years old living in urban areas in [COUNTRY], do you think, would agree with the statement: "Earning the family income should be an equally shared responsibilities between partners"? Please give your best estimates from 0-100% using the sliding scale
Attitude: job suitability	In this section, we will ask your opinions about and experiences of the roles of men and women in the workplace. Typically, some occupations are more likely to be occupied by men, while some others by women. This also applies to work roles, with men being more likely to occupy certain positions and women in other positions. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Gender doesn't determine a person's ability to perform a job"? [1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree] [Descriptive statistics] Defined as more gender-equal if the response was 5 or above; otherwise, less gender-equal. [Regressions] The gender-equal attitude variable was constructed as a dummy variable: 1 if the response was 5 or above; 0 otherwise.
Behaviour: job suitability	<u>Actual</u>: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "My current work role is one that is not traditionally associated with my gender"? [1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree] <u>Aspirational</u>: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "If I had an opportunity, I would apply for a work role that is not traditionally associated with my gender"? [1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree] [Descriptive statistics] Defined as in a role (applying for a role) not traditionally associated with their gender if the response was 5 or above; otherwise, in a role (not applying for a role not) traditionally associated with their gender. [Regressions] The gender-equal behaviour variable was constructed as a dummy variable: 1 if the response was 5 or above; 0 otherwise.
Advocacy: job suitability	How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "I advocate for gender equality in the workplace"? [1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree] [Descriptive statistics] Defined as advocates if the response was 5 or above; otherwise, non-advocates. [Regressions] The advocacy variable was constructed as a dummy variable: 1 if the response was 5 or above; 0 otherwise.
Empirical expectation: job suitability	What proportion of people aged 18-40 years old living in urban areas in [COUNTRY], do you think, are in work roles that are not traditionally associated with their gender? Please give your best estimates from 0-100% using the sliding scale

Normative expectation: job suitability	**What proportion of people aged 18-40 years old living in urban areas in [COUNTRY], do you think, would agree with the statement: "Gender doesn't determine a person's ability to perform a job"? Please give your best estimates from 0-100% using the sliding scale**
Attitude: leadership	**How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Gender doesn't determine whether one makes a good leader"? [1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree]** [Descriptive statistics] Defined as more gender-equal if the response was 5 or above; otherwise, less gender-equal. [Regressions] The gender-equal attitude variable was constructed as a dummy variable: 1 if the response was 5 or above; 0 otherwise.
Behaviour: women in leadership	<u>**Actual**</u>**: Are you working in a leadership role? [1 = Yes; 2 = No]** <u>**Aspirational**</u>**: Would you like to stay in a leadership role? [1 = Yes; 2 = No]** [Descriptive statistics] Defined as in a leadership role if the response was 1; otherwise, not in a leadership role; restricting the sample size for working women. Defined as staying in a leadership role if the response was 1; otherwise, not staying in a leadership role; restricting the sample size for working women in a leadership role. [Regressions] The gender-equal behaviour variable was constructed as a dummy variable: 1 if the response was 1 or above; 0 otherwise; restricting the sample size for working women.
Advocacy: leadership	**How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "I advocate for gender equality in leadership positions"? [1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree]** [Descriptive statistics] Defined as advocates if the response was 5 or above; otherwise, non-advocates. [Regressions] The advocacy variable was constructed as a dummy variable: 1 if the response was 5 or above; 0 otherwise.
Empirical expectation: women in leadership	**What percentage of leadership positions in your country, do you think, are occupied by women? Please give your best estimates from 0-100% using the sliding scale**
Normative expectation: leadership	**What proportion of people aged 18-40 years old living in urban areas in [COUNTRY], do you think, would agree with the statement: "Gender doesn't determine whether one makes a good leader"? Please give your best estimates from 0-100% using the sliding scale**

Note: The description related to job suitability appears at the beginning of the first sub-section on job suitability and leadership roles. The description related to advocacy appears at the beginning of the advocacy section.

A3. Demographic variable constructions

Variable	Construction
Age 18-24	A dummy variable equals 1 if participants aged 18-24, and zero otherwise.
Reside in Java	A dummy variable equals 1 if participants in Indonesia reside in Java Island, and zero otherwise.
Reside in Luzon	A dummy variable equals 1 if participants in the Philippines reside in Luzon Island, and zero otherwise.
Reside in South Vietnam	A dummy variable equals 1 if participants in Vietnam reside in South Vietnam, and zero otherwise. In the survey, South Vietnam consists of Central Highland, Mekong River Delta, South Central Coast, and South East.
Javanese	A dummy variable equals 1 if participants in Indonesia are from the Javanese ethnic group, and zero otherwise.
Tagalog	A dummy variable equals 1 if participants in the Philippines are from Tagalog ethnic group, and zero otherwise.
Kinh	A dummy variable equals 1 if participants in Vietnam are from Kinh ethnic group, and zero otherwise.
Islam	A dummy variable equals 1 if participants in Indonesia are Muslims, and zero otherwise.
Catholic	A dummy variable equals 1 if participants in the Philippines are Catholics, and zero otherwise.
Do not actively participate in any community of belief	A dummy variable equals 1 if participants in Vietnam reported do not actively participate in any community of belief, and zero otherwise.
Married	A dummy variable equals 1 if participants are married or partnered, and zero otherwise.
Post-secondary	A dummy variable equals 1 if participants' latest educational attainment is post-secondary education, and zero otherwise.
Working	A dummy variable equals 1 if participants' employment situation is working, and zero otherwise.

Self-employed	**A dummy variable equals 1 if participants' employment status is self-employed or employer, and zero otherwise.**
With children	A dummy variable equals 1 if participants have at least one child, and zero otherwise.
With dependent adult	A dummy variable equals 1 if participants care for other dependent adult family member/s such as elderly, long-term sick adults or adults with disabilities, and zero otherwise.
With people with disability	A dummy variable equals 1 if participants care for either child/ren or adult family member/s with disabilities, and zero otherwise.
Having disability	**Do you have difficulty … [seeing, even if wearing glasses; hearing, even if using a hearing aid(s); walking or climbing steps; remembering or concentrating; with self-care, such as washing all over or dressing; communicating, for example understanding or being understood (using your usual language)] [1 = No difficulty; 2 = Some difficulty; 3 = A lot of difficulty; 4 = Cannot do at all; 98 = Prefer not to say]** A dummy variable equals 1 where any domain of difficulty functioning's responses are either "a lot of difficulty" or "cannot do at all," and zero otherwise. This is the disability identifier recommended by the Washington Group.
Gender-equal upbringing in childcare	**When you were a child, who in your home did/took most of the childcare? [1 = Women; 4 = Equally both women and men; 7 = Men]** A dummy variable equals 1 if responses are 4 or above, and zero otherwise.
Gender-equal upbringing in care for dependent adults	**When you were a child, who in your home did/took most of the care for dependent adults? [1 = Women; 4 = Equally both women and men; 7 = Men]** A dummy variable equals 1 if responses are 4 or above, and zero otherwise.
Gender-equal upbringing in housework	**When you were a child, who in your home did/took most of the housework? [1 = Women; 4 = Equally both women and men; 7 = Men]** A dummy variable equals 1 if responses are 4 or above, and zero otherwise.
Gender-equal upbringing in responsibilities for earning family income	**When you were a child, who in your home did/took most of the responsibilities for earning the family income? [1 = Women; 4 = Equally both women and men; 7 = Men]** A dummy variable equals 1 if responses are 4 or below, and zero otherwise.

Gender-equal media exposure: caring for children	**Thinking about media today (advertising and programs you consume online, through television, radio, print, and social media), who do you mainly see: Caring for children [1 = Women; 4 = Equally both women and men; 7 = Men]** A dummy variable equals 1 if responses are 4 or above, and zero otherwise.
Gender-equal media exposure: caring for dependent adults	**Thinking about media today (advertising and programs you consume online, through television, radio, print, and social media), who do you mainly see: Caring for dependent adults [1 = Women; 4 = Equally both women and men; 7 = Men]** A dummy variable equals 1 if responses are 4 or above, and zero otherwise.
Gender-equal media exposure: doing housework	**Thinking about media today (advertising and programs you consume online, through television, radio, print, and social media), who do you mainly see: Doing housework [1 = Women; 4 = Equally both women and men; 7 = Men]** A dummy variable equals 1 if responses are 4 or above, and zero otherwise.
Gender-equal media exposure: earning the family income	**Thinking about media today (advertising and programs you consume online, through television, radio, print, and social media), who do you mainly see: Earning the family income [1 = Women; 4 = Equally both women and men; 7 = Men]** A dummy variable equals 1 if responses are 4 or below, and zero otherwise.
Gender-equal media exposure: in leadership roles in the workplace	**And again, thinking about media today (advertising and programs you consume online, through television, radio, print, and social media), who do you mainly see: In leadership roles in the workplace [1 = Women; 4 = Equally both women and men; 7 = Men]** A dummy variable equals 1 if responses are 4 or below, and zero otherwise.
Gender-equal media exposure: in a science, engineering or technology roles	**And again, thinking about media today (advertising and programs you consume online, through television, radio, print, and social media), who do you mainly see: In a science, engineering, or technology roles [1 = Women; 4 = Equally both women and men; 7 = Men]** A dummy variable equals 1 if responses are 4 or below, and zero otherwise.
Gender-equal media exposure: in caring profession	And again, thinking about media today (advertising and programs you consume online, through television, radio, print, and social media), who do you mainly see: In caring professions (e.g. nurse, care home staff) [1 = Women; 4 = Equally both women and men; 7 = Men] A dummy variable equals 1 if responses are 4 or above, and zero otherwise.