

MEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA



MINISTERUL MUNCII
ȘI PROTECȚIEI SOCIALE
AL REPUBLICII MOLDOVA
MAI INCLUZIVI. MAI ECHITABILI. MAI SOLIDARI.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Equality between women and men is a fundamental value that ensures equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities in all areas of life, in the family and at work, through equal pay for work of equal value, equal economic independence of women and men, equality in decision-making, contributing to the eradication of gender-based violence and improving the quality of life. Gender equality is also a prerequisite for an innovative, competitive and prosperous economy.

Equality between women and men is one of the objectives and core values of the European Union. *The Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025: Striving for a Union of Equality* emphasizes that gender equality contributes to the creation of new jobs which generate increased productivity and constitute a potential to be tapped.

The Republic of Moldova through the *Programme for promoting and ensuring equality between women and men in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2023-2027* aligns itself with the European integration aspiration, promoting the principle of equal opportunities between women and men, girls and boys. Thus, the Republic of Moldova aims to significantly increase the level of gender equality in the fields of education, health, labour market, entrepreneurship, social protection and local development, etc. and to reduce the risks associated with social, economic, cultural and political inequalities in various sectors of social and economic life.





The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES)

The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) is one of the most comprehensive surveys exploring men's practices and attitudes towards gender equality, alongside those expressed by women. It incorporates a comprehensive research methodology, including the Gender Equitable Men (GEM) Scale, a standardized instrument that uses a series of statements to measure attitudes about gender norms in intimate relationships and differentiate social expectations between men and women in household responsibilities, reproductive health, sexual relationships and the area of gender-based violence.

IMAGES results are used to assess the attitudes and behaviour of men and women, to inform, direct and monitor efforts to promote gender equality, develop information campaigns in this area, related to the involvement of fathers in the upbringing and education of children, preventing and combating gender-based violence, etc., at international and national level.

IMAGES was carried out for the first time in the Republic of Moldova in 2015 by the Women's Law Center in partnership with Sociopolis, funded by the OAK Foundation. Its data has contributed to policy development in the field

of gender equality and related areas. After 9 years, in 2024, with the financial support of UNFPA Moldova, the Women's Law Center, in partnership with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, has set out to conduct a new **Men and Gender Equality Survey in the Republic of Moldova, 2024 (IMAGES-2)** to learn about the changes that have occurred in the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of men and women in the Republic of Moldova from 2015 to 2024. The sociological study was conducted by Sociopolis.

IMAGES-2 allowed the monitoring and evaluation of the results of the policies implemented during the period under research in the field of gender equality in the Republic of Moldova and can help to streamline efforts in this area. The findings of the study can contribute to the development of evidence-based programmes to train professionals in the field of gender equality, guide the design of public awareness campaigns and the development of activities to promote men's involvement in household responsibilities, parenting and education of children, and campaigns to combat gender-based violence.



PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of the sociological study *Men and Gender Equality in the Republic of Moldova, 2024* (IMAGES-2) was to know and understand the behaviour and attitudes of men and women in the field of gender equality, and the changes that have occurred from 2015 to 2024, in order to monitor the results of policies in this field and to contribute to their further development.

The study objectives included:

- 1** Assessment of men's current attitudes and behaviour on various aspects of gender equality (time spent with children, household activities, manifestation of violence, access to health services, communication and negotiation with wife/partner on family dimension, sexual relations, etc.);
- 2** Comparison of men's attitudes and behaviour with women's, on the nominated aspects;
- 3** Analysis of trends in changing attitudes and behaviours of men and women from 2015 to 2024;
- 4** Analysis of the factors explaining changes in men's and women's behaviour and attitudes towards gender equality;
- 5** Assessing men's and women's knowledge and attitudes towards policies promoting gender equality.

The research data are intended for use by governmental and local authorities, representatives of the non-governmental sector for the development of gender equality policies, organization of advocacy activities, development of social services.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The IMAGES-2 **research methodology** was based on the principles and rules established in **IMAGES** by Equimundo (formerly Promundo). The complex methodology applied internationally was complemented in the Republic of Moldova with qualitative sociological methods to gain in-depth knowledge of the opinions of men and women. It is worth mentioning that during the data interpretation, a comparative analysis of the changes in the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of men and women between 2015 and 2024 was applied, with the *Men and Gender Equality in the Republic of Moldova* study, conducted in 2015 (IMAGES-1), as a reference point.

The **quantitative research** involved 1529 people aged 18-59 years. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in respondents' homes by interviewers using tablets (CAPI). Following international methodology, two distinct samples were drawn: a main sample of 1014 men and a control sample of 515 women to examine differences in perceptions, attitudes and practices. Both samples were probabilistic and stratified.

Survey data were complemented by **qualitative data** collected in focus group discussions with men and women separately. The qualitative research sample consisted of 80 people: 57 men and 23 women. 8 focus group discussions were conducted - 6 with men and 2 with women. In the focus group discussions, the aim was to investigate in depth some of the issues identified in the quantitative study.



KEY FINDINGS

Gender perceptions and attitudes

Gender equality is interpreted differently by the people of the Republic of Moldova, being associated both with equal opportunities and legal rights and with the distribution of family and social responsibilities. Gender equality is seen by many Moldovans as an indispensable element for a just society, indicating a gradual evolution in the public mentality regarding the role and status of women and men. Differences in the perception of gender equality between men and women are evident, with women being more likely to perceive gender equality as a fundamental right. A section of the population perceives gender equality as an active effort to break down traditional hierarchies and guarantee equal rights and opportunities for all.

However, it is important to point out that some men, as well as women, misperceive gender equality with same-sex equality. This perception determines their reluctance or even negative attitude towards gender equality and has an impact on the degree of acceptance of legislative or social initiatives for equality, suggesting a need for clear education on the real meaning and purpose of gender equality.

27% of men and 29% of women believe that giving women rights means that men lose out (*total and partial agreement*), and 37% of men and 38% of women believe that once women gain rights, men's rights are reduced (*total and partial agreement*). Unequal and stereotypical views are even more evident in the context of the labour market as 53% of men and 59% of women believe that employing women in the workforce means taking jobs away from men (*total and partial agreement*).

Gaps in the correct perception of gender equality lead 73% of men and 75% of women to consider that gender equality has been largely achieved in the Republic of Moldova. Arguments highlighted changes in the regulatory framework for ensuring gender equality, campaigns to promote gender equality, the increase in the number of women involved in politics and in various public structures.

53%

of men believe that employing women in the workforce means taking jobs away from men (*total and partial agreement*).

86%

of men consider that for a woman the most important thing is to look after the house and cook for her family

81%

of men consider that contraception should be a joint decision between partners.

A large proportion of men see a woman's role in the family closely linked to caring for and bringing up children. 86% of men and 71% of women *agree totally and partially* that for a woman the most important thing is to look after the house and cook for her family. The proportion of men who consider changing diapers, washing and feeding babies to be a mother's responsibilities is 66%. This indicator is also quite high among women – 61%. It should be noted that 64% of men say that they should have the final say in family decision-making (*total agreement and partial agreement*), compared with 43% of women who agree. These perceptions depend on upbringing in the family of origin, but also on certain traditions and customs that exist.

64%

of men say that they should have the final say in family decision-making (*total agreement and partial agreement*).

Men's views on sexuality and sexual relationships do not differ from women's. 61% of men and 61% of women believe that men need more sex than women (*total and partial agreement*). Also, according to 70% of men and 69% of women, men don't talk about sex, they act. But tolerance of men who cannot get an erection during sex is characteristic for a higher number of women, which can be explained by stereotypical views of men that they must always be strong.

Contraception should be a joint decision between partners, also discussed with a doctor, to ensure a responsible approach to health and family, according to 81% of men and 81% of women (*total agree*). However, 22% of men and 26% of women believe that it is a woman's responsibility to protect herself from becoming pregnant.



In the Republic of Moldova, some stereotypes about sexual violence continue to be present among both men and women. Research data shows that *if a woman is raped, 33% of men and 21% of women believe that she has done something to end up in this situation. Even more women and men say that if the woman has a bad reputation or does not resist physically when raped, these cases cannot be considered rape (36% of men and 32% of women).*

The IMAGES-2 study highlights significant differences between men and women in terms of **correct perception of gender equity in the Republic of Moldova**, while revealing a higher rate of correct perception among women in the four areas analysed.

Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is the area where the correct perception is highest. 85% of women and 70% of men correctly recognize and understand the issue of gender-based violence. This reflects a relatively high awareness of gender equity issues related to violence, most likely due to frequent activities and discussions on this topic in society.

In the area of **reproductive health and rights**, 77% of women and 62% of men have a correct perception. The differences in perception can be explained by the fact that women are directly affected by reproductive health issues and are better informed about them. And among men, traditional gender attitudes tend to dominate, according to which men have decision-making power over women's bodies and women should respect their decisions.

The understanding of gender equity in the context of **sexual relationships** is slightly higher among women (65%) than among men (60%). Although the difference in perceptions between men and women is smaller than in other areas, this suggests that there are still variations in how each gender perceives roles and equality in intimate relationships, and further education and awareness-raising efforts are needed.

The area of **household responsibilities** is the one in which the correct perception of gender equity is the lowest, with only 64% of women and 55% of men recognizing the equitable distribution of household responsibilities as a gender equity issue. This reflects the fact that in many households in the Republic of Moldova, the traditional division of household responsibilities still prevails and perceptions of gender roles remain strongly influenced by cultural norms.

70%

of men correctly recognize and understand the issue of gender-based violence.

62%

of men have a correct perception of reproductive health and rights.

55%

of men recognize the equitable distribution of household responsibilities as a gender equity issue.

Childhood experiences of men

The family of origin has a special role in shaping conceptions of gender equality. It is here that the first educational and personality development takes place, and family and social values are internalized. Research data indicate that in the family of origin, more men saw their mother's daily respect for the father/other man with whom she lived together as a mother than the father/other man's respect for the mother. Of particular note is the increase in the number of men who reported *daily* respect from their father/other man to their mother growing up, from 49% in 2015 to 66% in 2024, and from their mother to their father/other man they lived with, from 54% in 2015 to 71% in 2024, respectively.

An analysis of men's household activities shows increasing trends in men's involvement from one generation to the next. The fathers of men born in the 1960s were less involved in household activities than the fathers of those born in the 2000s. This reduced the number of those that never: looked after their children, from 10% to 5%; prepared food, from 20% to 12%; tidied up the house, from 27% to 16%; washed clothes, from 37% to 31%.

Family decision-making is becoming more participatory. There is a slight increase from 2015 to 2024 in the number of families in which both partners decide on investment expenditure (from 52% to 59%), current consumption expenditure (from 41% to 56%), and schooling or other activities related to children (from 44% to 55%).

56%

There is a slight increase from 2015 to 2024 in the number of families in which both partners decide on current consumption expenditure (from 41% to 56%).

Practices in everyday family life

Family financial insurance

In the opinion of 75% of men and 70% of women who participated in the research in the year 2024, the main responsibility for day-to-day family material provision should rest on the shoulders of the husband. This reveals traditional views that perpetuate inequalities in the family and society.

Only 1 in 4 men and 1 in 3 women believe that both spouses/partners should contribute to the family budget. Such views are specific to a higher number of highly educated urban men and women, where both partners are active in the labour market.

The analysis of household income provision practices reveals a clear **trend in which men continue to be the main contributors to the family budget**, but with significant variations by age and education. 53% of men state that they are primarily responsible for the household budget, while 34% claim that the budget is provided by both partners, and another 4% indicate the wife/partner as the main budget provider. Women's responses, however, show more signs of changing social norms and a shift towards modernity. Only 32% of women say that the main source of income for the family budget is the husband/partner.

Another 31% of women consider that the main income is provided by both partners, and 29% say that they themselves are the main income providers. The differences in men's and women's answers on the contribution to the family budget can be explained by a number of cultural, economic and psychological factors. On the one hand, men continue to perceive themselves as the ones responsible for providing financially for the family, reflecting a traditional mindset and social pressure on men to maintain this role. On the other hand, the divergence in responses may also be influenced by subjective perceptions of the value of each partner's work and how each individual perceives financial contributions to the couple.

53%

of men state that they are primarily responsible for the household budget.

Children's education

Men's views on *equal* involvement in the upbringing and education of children differ from those of women. Men report more involvement and participation in these activities. **Fathers' overall involvement in the upbringing and education of children is trending upward, from 55% in 2015 to 68% in 2024.** The research data shows an increase in fathers' involvement in various child-rearing activities: (i) in the daily care of the child from 26% to 50%, (ii) taking the child/children to and from extracurricular activities from 28% to 49%, (iii) taking the child/children to and from kindergarten/school from 26% to 48%, (iv) including staying at home with a sick child from 15% to 33%. However, some prejudices and stereotypes regarding fathers' involvement in the upbringing and education of children continue to exist in men's mentality, with childcare and education being considered as female activities.

The involvement of fathers in carrying out various activities with children aged 0-4 years has increased on a daily basis playing from 60% to 74%; bathing - from 21% to 36%; changing diapers or clothes - from 9% to 30% and cooking - from 7% to 23%.

There are also important changes in terms of fathers' daily involvement in activities with children aged 5-13: playing - from 31% to 57%; discussing personal problems - from 11% to 39%; doing homework - from 11% to 32%; exercising - from 4% to 26%, etc.

Nonetheless, the focus-group discussions confirm that some prejudices and stereotypes regarding the involvement of men in the upbringing and education of children continue to persist in men's mentality, thus the upbringing and education of children being considered as women-like activities.

68%

Fathers' overall involvement in the upbringing and education of children is trending upward, from 55% in 2015 to 68% in 2024.

74%

of men state that they play daily with their children aged 0-4 years.

58%

of men in 2024, compared to 30% in 2015, stated that household chores are shared by both partners.

72%

of men in 2024, compared to 69% in 2015, mentioned that they made decisions regarding their child's health together with their partner.

57%

of men state that they play daily with their children aged 5-13 years.



Household responsibilities

More and more housework is done by both partners together. This was reported by 30% of men in 2015 and 58% in 2024. **Involvement of men with their female partners in household activities is multi-faceted**, ranging from buying groceries (from 45% to 64%), cleaning (from 22% to 50%), cooking (from 17% to 40%), minor repairs (from 24% to 40%) and washing clothes (from 14% to 35%).

The decision-making process

Decision-making within the family/couple is becoming an increasingly participatory process. The number of men **making decisions together** with their spouses in their current families **on current** (69%) **and investment** (75%) **expenditures** is much higher than it was in their families of origin (56% and 59% respectively).

There has also been an **increase in the involvement of men alongside spouses/partners in making decisions regarding the health of family members.** 72% of men in 2024, up from 69% in 2015, said that they made decisions together about their child's health, and 58% in 2024, up from 49% in 2015, about their wife's/partner's health.

The desire to have the last child, it was reported, was shared by both spouses/partners in 2024 by 80% (63% in 2015) of men and 75% (56% in 2015) of women. There was also an increase in the number of men - 50%, in 2024, who regularly accompanied their wives to the doctor during pregnancy, compared to 23% in 2015. However, the presence of men at the birth of the child did not change, only 18% of men were present in the delivery room and supported their wives at the birth of their last child. The reasons given are varied and reveal the presence of prejudices and stereotypes.

Research data show a significant increase in the number of men and women who do not use condoms as a method of protection during sex from 2015 to 2024, from 37% to 73% among men and from 46% to 53% among women. About one in two women and three in four men indicated they have not used this method of protection in the past year. Condom use is higher among men aged 18-29. It is uncharacteristic of men in other age groups or married men. There are significant differences in condom use by residence - 64% of urban men and 79% of rural men said they had never used a condom in the past year.

50%

of men regularly accompanied their wives to the doctor during pregnancy.

80%

of men in 2024, compared to 63% in 2015, indicated that the decision to have their last child was made jointly with their partner.



Knowledge, attitudes and practices on violence

21%

of men believe that women should tolerate violence to maintain their family.

Men's and women's attitudes towards domestic violence are gradually changing. Fewer and fewer people believe that women have to tolerate violence in order to maintain their family or that there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten. 13% of women and 21% of men believe that women should tolerate violence to maintain their family. Also, 23% of men believe that there are times when a woman should be beaten, while only 12% of women agree with this statement. It is important to note that 11% of women are willing to accept the use of force by husbands/partners in situations where they do not want to have sex.

A large body of research emphasizes that witnessing violence against one's own mother as a child is one of the strongest predictors of later violence. The present research data provides evidence that men who have witnessed violence against their mother are more likely to perpetrate violence against their partner/spouse, and perpetuate the cycle of violence, than those who have not witnessed such behaviours. Of particular note is the increase in the number of men who have not witnessed their (step-) father applying physical violence to their mother by the age of 18, from 70% in 2015 to 77% in 2024.

77%

of men have not witnessed their (step-) father applying physical violence to their mother by the age of 18.

A new type of violence practiced by some men is online violence, manifested by intimidating and controlling the privacy of their wives/partners. The IMAGES-2 study looked at four forms of online violence: (i) control over phone or computer, (ii) installing monitoring and geo-location software on devices, (iii) threatening to share intimate video/photo material online, and (iv) online stalking. Of these, controlling a phone or computer was the most prevalent, reported by 11% of men and 16% of women.

Worryingly, the number of women reporting some consequences of physical violence by husbands/partners has increased. Thus, the number of wives/partners who reported pain, bruises, respectively, from 22% in 2015 to 35% in 2024, from 3% to 10% of those who reported sprains and from 2% to 10% - fractures.

Analysis of the causes of domestic violence shows important changes. There has been an increase in the importance of the use of narcotic substances, which has become one of the main causes of violence, according to both men and women.

Comparing the IMAGES-1 data with IMAGES-2, shows that the number of women who know about existing services for victims of violence has increased from 68% to 74%. At the same time, the number of men who know about these services has decreased from 61% in 2015 to 49% in 2024.

Data shows an increase in the number of women using existing services for victims of violence from 3% in 2015 to 11% in 2024. But the numbers continue to be small, with virtually only 1 in 10 victims using existing services. The police continue to be the most frequently called institution in cases of domestic violence, in 8 out of 10 cases of violence, women turn to the police.

Awareness of counselling services for domestic abusers is decreasing from 42% in 2015 to 35% in 2024 among women and from 38% to 26% among men, respectively.


Awareness of the possibility of the court issuing a Protection Order is also decreasing, from 50% in 2015 to 36% in 2024 among men, among women it remained unchanged (44% in 2015 and 43% in 2024). Men's attitudes about compliance with the Protection Order show slight improving trends in 2024 compared to 2015: 88% reported that they would contribute to the upkeep of children while they were away from the family (86% in 2015), 87% would cover expenses and damages caused by violence (74% in 2015), 85% - would respect the visitation regime of minor children (76% in 2015), 73% - would participate in counselling programmes to reduce domestic violence (65% in 2015), 77% would stay away from the victim for the period of the Protection Order (64% in 2015) and 69% would temporarily leave the shared dwelling (61% in 2015).

11%

of men control their wife's/partner's phone or computer, making it the most common form of online violence they perpetrate.

26%


of men are aware of the existence of counseling services for domestic offenders.



The level of awareness of the possibility of a Protection Order for victims of domestic violence being issued by the courts has registered a significant decrease among men, from 50% in 2015 to 36% in 2024. Among women, the level of awareness remained the same (44% in 2015 and 43% in 2024).

Men's attitude towards the compliance with the protection order measures has registered small improvement tendencies in 2024 compared to 2015, 88% - would contribute to the maintenance of the children while they are away from the family (86% in 2015), 87% would cover the expenses and damages caused by the violence (74% in 2015), 85% - would respect the visitation regime of minor children (76% in 2015), 77% would stay away from the victim for the period of the protection order (64% in 2015), 73% - would participate in counselling programmes to reduce domestic violence (65% in 2015) and 69% - would temporarily leave the common residence (61% in 2015).

The level of awareness of the possibility of the police issuing an Emergency Restraining Order is slightly higher among women (40%) than among men (38%). Of the men who are aware of the possibility of a Police Emergency Restraining Order, 69% believe they would temporarily leave the shared residence and 75% believe they would keep their distance from the victim or attend a violence reduction counselling programme. About 2 in 10 men said they would not comply with the provisions of the Emergency Restraining Order.



Knowledge and attitudes on gender policies and legislation

Policies that empower women in leadership positions

8%

The number of male employees who are bothered by a female boss, reduced from 13% in 2015 to 8% in 2024.

From 2015 to 2024, there was an increase in the number of men from 55% to 69% and women from 73% to 78% who agree with policies that allow women to assert themselves in leadership positions. It reduced the number of male employees who are bothered by a female boss from 13% in 2015 to 8% in 2024. In the group discussions, it was emphasized that professionalism should determine the choice of bosses, but it was highlighted that women put in more effort, can find better ways to communicate with people and have better developed organizational and leadership skills.

Divorce policies and childcare rights

30%

of men consider that the Moldovan legal framework on divorce favours women.

IMAGES-2 data shows a reduction in the number of men and women who have misperceptions about divorce and post-divorce childcare laws. Opinions that the Moldovan legal framework on divorce favours women decreased from 49% in 2015 to 30% in 2024 among men and from 37% to 23% among women. Also, the opinion that the divorce process gives women a better chance of obtaining the right to take care of their children decreased from 57% to 42% among men and from 50% to 42% among women for the period analysed.

Policies on violence against women

In recent years, the Republic of Moldova has made significant progress in eliminating violence and developing social services by improving the existing legal framework and adopting the ***Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence***. However, the IMAGES-2 data shows that the number of men (from 63% to 48%) and women (from 62% to 52%) who are aware of the fact that there is a normative framework regulating violence against women in the Republic of Moldova has decreased. It should be noted that during the period analysed, the number of people who consider that it is too easy for a woman to accuse a man of violence has increased among both men (from 63% to 75%) and women (from 50% to 58%). Moreover, 44% of men and 31% of women perceive the legal framework as too harsh towards perpetrators. At the same time, the number of those who believe that the current laws contribute to greater stigmatization of female victims increased from 59% to 65% among men and from 69% to 78% among women.

The research data shows that the number of men who have heard about campaigns to prevent violence against women has decreased from 45% to 29% between 2015 and 2024, and the number of men who have seen at least once on TV a commercial or news report interviewing a man who has used violence against women has decreased from 67% to 46% respectively. In contrast, there was a slight increase in men's participation in individual or group actions organized in their locality or workplace to discuss with men who have used violence against women, from 11% in 2015 to 14% in 2024. Younger, urban, higher educated men in higher numbers participated in such activities.



65%

of men believe that the current laws contribute to greater stigmatization of female victims.

LGBTQ+ non-discrimination policies

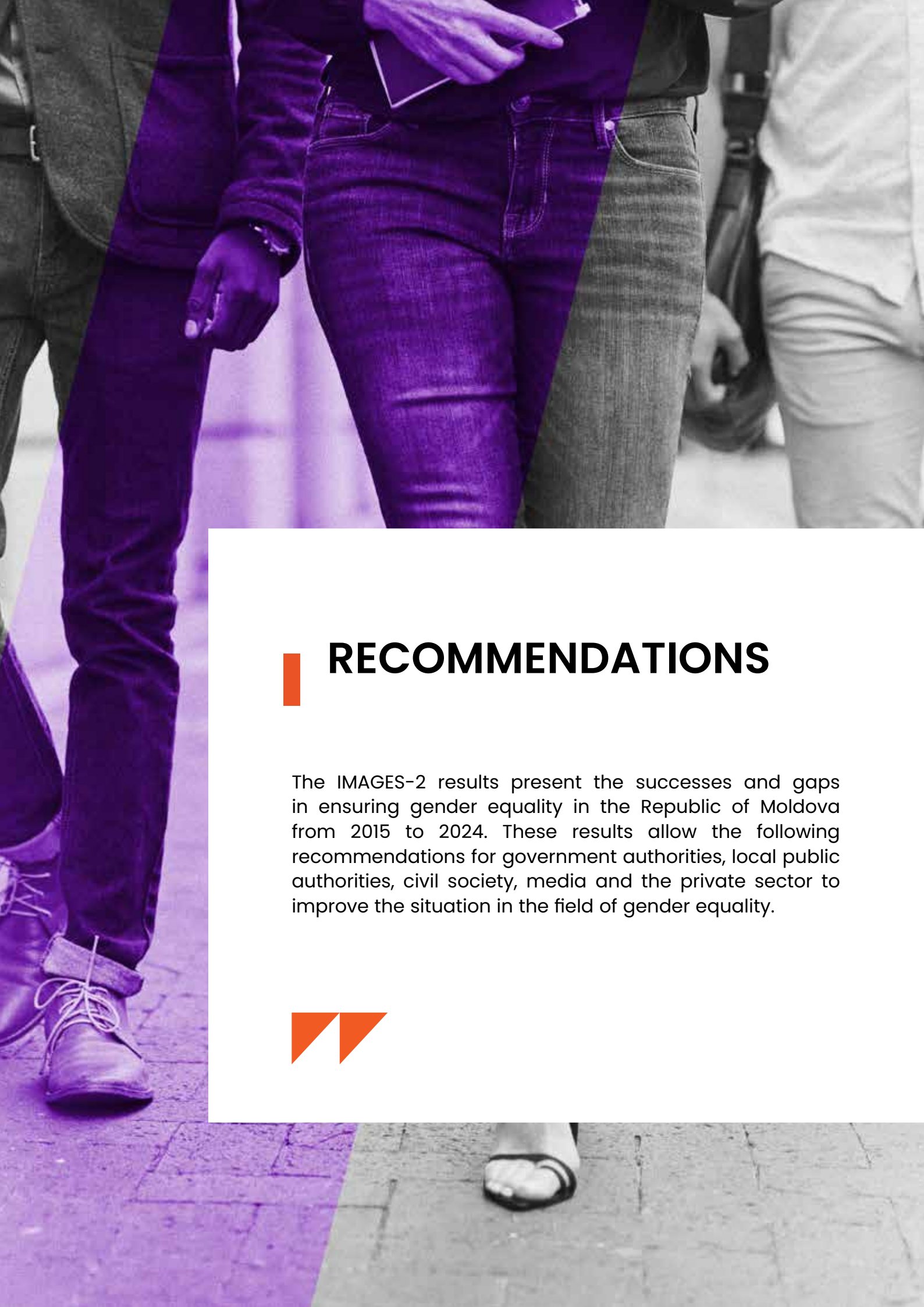
The population lacks sufficient information about sexual diversity, which contributes to intolerance. In 2024, there was an increase in the population's negative attitude towards sexual diversity issues, a situation explained by its „**massive propagation**“. In this context we highlight the refusal of men to answer the questions on sexual diversity, supplemented by their refusal to participate in the survey because of these questions, which led to their exclusion from the questionnaire for men.

The data shows an increase in the number of women who are against laws to protect homosexual people from discrimination (from 49% in 2015 to 64% in 2024) and against introducing laws to allow same-sex marriage (77%).

Practices and attitudes towards social deviance

Criminal behaviour and violent tendencies are often influenced by factors such as traditionalism and masculinity norms. IMAGES-2 data indicate that the number of men who said they had committed theft at least once fell from 46% in 2015 to 33% in 2024. The number of men who reported having been arrested also decreased slightly over this period, from 17% to 14%.

The number of male drinkers remained constant, while the number of female drinkers decreased slightly from 63% in 2015 to 56% in 2024. At the same time, the proportion of both men (from 20% to 28%) and women (from 43% to 57%) who drink no more than five glasses of alcohol at a party has increased among drinkers.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The IMAGES-2 results present the successes and gaps in ensuring gender equality in the Republic of Moldova from 2015 to 2024. These results allow the following recommendations for government authorities, local public authorities, civil society, media and the private sector to improve the situation in the field of gender equality.



In the field of ensuring gender equality

- Strengthening partnerships between governmental authorities, local public authorities, media, employers and civil society organizations in the field of gender equality and women's protection in order to expand the impact of the various programmes and projects implemented;
- Development and implementation of focused educational programmes that explain what gender equality entails and dismantle persistent stereotypes, especially in rural areas and among people with low education and low income;
- Mainstreaming gender equality and non-violence education into the school curriculum to influence attitudes and behaviours from pre-adolescent age and eliminate gender stereotypes, contributing to more informed and tolerant generations;
- Promoting and encouraging men to actively participate in childcare and education through various campaigns and actions at national and local level;
- Organizing campaigns that directly involve men as agents of change, promoting positive models of masculinity;
- Developing programmes to support couples in developing communication skills and building relationships based on respect and partnership;
- Developing parenting education programmes that encourage shared parenting responsibilities and promote healthy role models;
- Organizing information campaigns about paternity leave and its benefits for the family;
- Forming community-based support groups to promote gender equality and non-violence and providing logistical and financial assistance to this end;
- Training fair and responsible behaviour among media representatives to promote responsible gender discourse and reduce stereotypes perpetuated in the public space;
- Promoting intergenerational dialog by creating intergenerational discussion platforms to address stereotypes and facilitate exchange of experiences and perspectives.

In the field of preventing and combating gender-based violence

- Organizing information campaigns, with a focus on rural communities, to raise awareness of and prevent gender-based violence and provide information on women's rights, including on forms of violence on the digital dimension;
- Developing promotional materials and resources, with the involvement of women-victims, to help them identify the different forms of violence and know where to turn for help;
- Expanding the network of specialized services and promoting existing services for victims of violence in order to increase awareness and use of these services by people in need of help;
- Organizing workshops and interactive discussions for men in work collectives and communities to reduce tolerance towards all forms of violence and to increase the level of intervention in cases of gender-based violence;
- Creating and expanding specialized long-term psychological and economic support programmes for victims of violence, especially in rural areas where these services are limited;
- Organizing training programmes for women to help them develop their skills and financial independence, thus reducing dependency on partners and the risk of remaining in abusive relationships;
- Providing grants or financial incentives for women who are victims of violence to help them leave the abusive environment and start a new life;
- Monitoring and evaluating the quality of social services for women affected by violence, including the involvement of women service beneficiaries in these activities;
- Ensuring strict enforcement of laws on the protection of victims of violence, with regular monitoring and clear sanctions for non-compliance;
- Developing effective offender rehabilitation programmes that prevent recidivism and provide support for behavioural change;
- Organizing training courses for members of multidisciplinary teams (police officers, social workers, medical staff, etc.) in order to improve the intervention and support offered to victims of gender-based violence.

In the field of sexual and reproductive health

- Introducing sexual and reproductive education programmes in schools to improve knowledge about reproductive health and prevent teenage pregnancies, including sexually transmitted diseases;

- Implementing information campaigns promoting the importance of using condoms and modern contraceptive methods to prevent unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases among young people;

- Promoting active participation of partners in the pregnancy monitoring process and support of wives in the postnatal period, including by taking paternity leave;

- Organizing campaigns on the benefits of men in childbirth to reduce prejudices and encourage participation and emotional and physical support for the wife/partner.

In the field of sexual diversity policies

- Initiating education and awareness-raising programmes to combat prejudices and misperceptions about sexual diversity;

- Organizing awareness-raising campaigns to promote respect and tolerance for sexual diversity, countering homophobia and discrimination.

The research data, in particular the focus group discussions, suggest that good gender equality information should focus on the need for balance and inclusiveness, so that the promotion of gender equality is carried out in a way that avoids polarization and supports harmonious understanding and cooperation between the genders. Activities in this area could therefore:

(i) Maintain a balance and promote women's rights in a way that supports collaboration and mutual respect between the genders, avoiding any perception of competition or unwarranted tensions. Emphasize that advancing gender equality can benefit society as a whole, creating a more inclusive and just environment for all.

(ii) Include both genders. Training sessions and activities on gender equality should be more balanced in terms of participants and include both men and women, to ensure a common understanding and to avoid situations where women only discuss equality among themselves.

(iii) Promote equitable access to opportunities. Programmes and opportunities to support women should be accessible and visible to all, including men. Greater transparency can reduce the resentment and sense of marginalization that can arise when one group perceives that the other is receiving more benefits.

(iv) Include positive and constructive messages. Awareness raising campaigns should emphasize the benefits of working and raising children together to create an atmosphere of mutual support.

(v) Choose target groups carefully. It is important to segment the population in order to tailor messages to different target groups and choose the best channels for information. For example, in rural areas or where the population is older, radio, TV and/or leaflets should be used, while in other environments modern channels such as TikTok, Instagram, etc. can be used.



INTRODUCTION

Equality between women and men is a fundamental value which ensures equality in rights, responsibilities and opportunities, in the family and professional life, through equal pay for work of equal value, equal economic independence of women and men, equality in decision-making, contributing to the eradication of gender-based violence and improving the quality of life. Gender equality is also a prerequisite for an innovative, competitive and prosperous economy.

Equality between women and men is one of the objectives and core values of the European Union. *The Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025: Striving for a Union of Equality*¹ emphasizes that gender equality contributes to the creation of new jobs which generate increased productivity and constitute a potential to be tapped.

The Republic of Moldova through the *Programme for promoting and ensuring equality between women and men in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2023-2027*² aligns itself with the European integration aspiration, promoting the principle of equal opportunities between women and men, girls and boys. Thus, the Republic of Moldova aims to significantly increase the level of gender equality in the fields of education, health, labour market, entrepreneurship, social protection and local development, etc. and to reduce



the risks associated with social, economic, cultural, political inequalities in various sectors of social and economic life.

*The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES)*³ is one of the most comprehensive surveys exploring men's practices and attitudes towards gender equality, alongside those of women. It includes a comprehensive research methodology, including the Gender Equitable Men (GEM) Scale a standardized instrument that uses a series of statements to measure attitudes about gender norms in intimate relationships and differentiate social expectations between men and women in domestic responsibilities, reproductive health, sexual relationships and the area of violence. The tools developed on gender equity are used to assess the attitudes and behaviour of men and women, to inform, direct and monitor efforts to promote gender equality, to develop information campaigns in this area, on the involvement of fathers in the upbringing and education of children, preventing and combating gender-based violence, etc., at international and national level.

IMAGES was carried out for the first time in the Republic of Moldova in 2015 by the Women's Law Center in partnership with Sociopolis, funded by the OAK

Foundation. Its data has contributed to policy development in the field of gender equality and related areas. After 9 years, in 2024, with the financial support of UNFPA Moldova, the Women's Law Center, in partnership with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, conducted IMAGES-2 to know the changes that have occurred in the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of men and women from 2015 to 2024. The sociological study was conducted by Sociopolis Consultancy.

IMAGES-2 allows the monitoring and evaluation of the results of gender equality policies in the Republic of Moldova and can help to streamline efforts in this area. The findings of the study can contribute to the development of evidence-based programmes for the training of professionals in the field of gender equality, guide the design of public awareness campaigns and the development of activities to promote men's involvement in household responsibilities, parenting and education of children, and campaigns to combat gender-based violence.

¹ EU GAP III. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152>

² Government Decision No. 203 of 12.04.2023 on the approval of the Program for promoting and ensuring equality between women and men in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2023-2027. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=137409&lang=ro

³ <https://www.equimundo.org/images-research/>



I. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.1. RESEARCH GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the sociological study Men and Gender Equality in the Republic of Moldova, 2024 (IMAGES-2) was to know and understand the behaviour and attitudes of men and women in the field of gender equality and the changes that have occurred from 2015 to 2024, in order to monitor the results of policies in this field and to contribute to their further development.

The study objectives included:

- 1** Assessment of men's current attitudes and behaviour on various aspects of gender equality (time spent with children, household activities, manifestation of violence, access to health services, communication and negotiation with wife/partner on family dimension, sexual relations, etc.);
- 2** Comparison of men's attitudes and behaviour with women's, on the nominated aspects;
- 3** Analysis of trends in changing attitudes and behaviours of men and women from 2015 to 2024;
- 4** Analysis of the factors explaining changes in men's and women's behaviour and attitudes towards gender equality;
- 5** Assessing men's and women's knowledge and attitudes towards policies promoting gender equality.

1.2. INTERNATIONAL CONCEPTUAL-METHODOLOGICAL BASIS

The research followed the principles and rules set out in **IMAGES**⁴ by Equimundo (formerly Promundo). It comprises the most comprehensive tools developed on the topic of gender equity, which are used to assess the attitudes and behaviour of men and women, before and after the implementation of policies or programme initiatives.

The questionnaire underpinning the IMAGES research is based on the following tools:

- (i) Gender Equality and Quality of Life Questionnaire developed by the Norwegian Ministry of Gender Equality and Children,
- (ii) Items developed by the World Health Organization to study violence against women in different countries,
- (iii) Gender Equitable Men (GEM)⁵ Scale developed by the Population Council and Promundo.

Internationally, IMAGES research data are used for (i) advocacy activities; (ii) development of a global and national database for assessing men's behaviour and attitudes with a standardized instrument; (iii) data analysis for monitoring men's behaviour and attitudes in different countries; (iv) development of international awareness campaigns.



⁴ Promundo-US (2021). Manual for replicating the International Men and Gender Equality Survey. <https://www.equimundo.org/resources/manual-for-replicating-the-international-men-and-gender-equality-survey/>

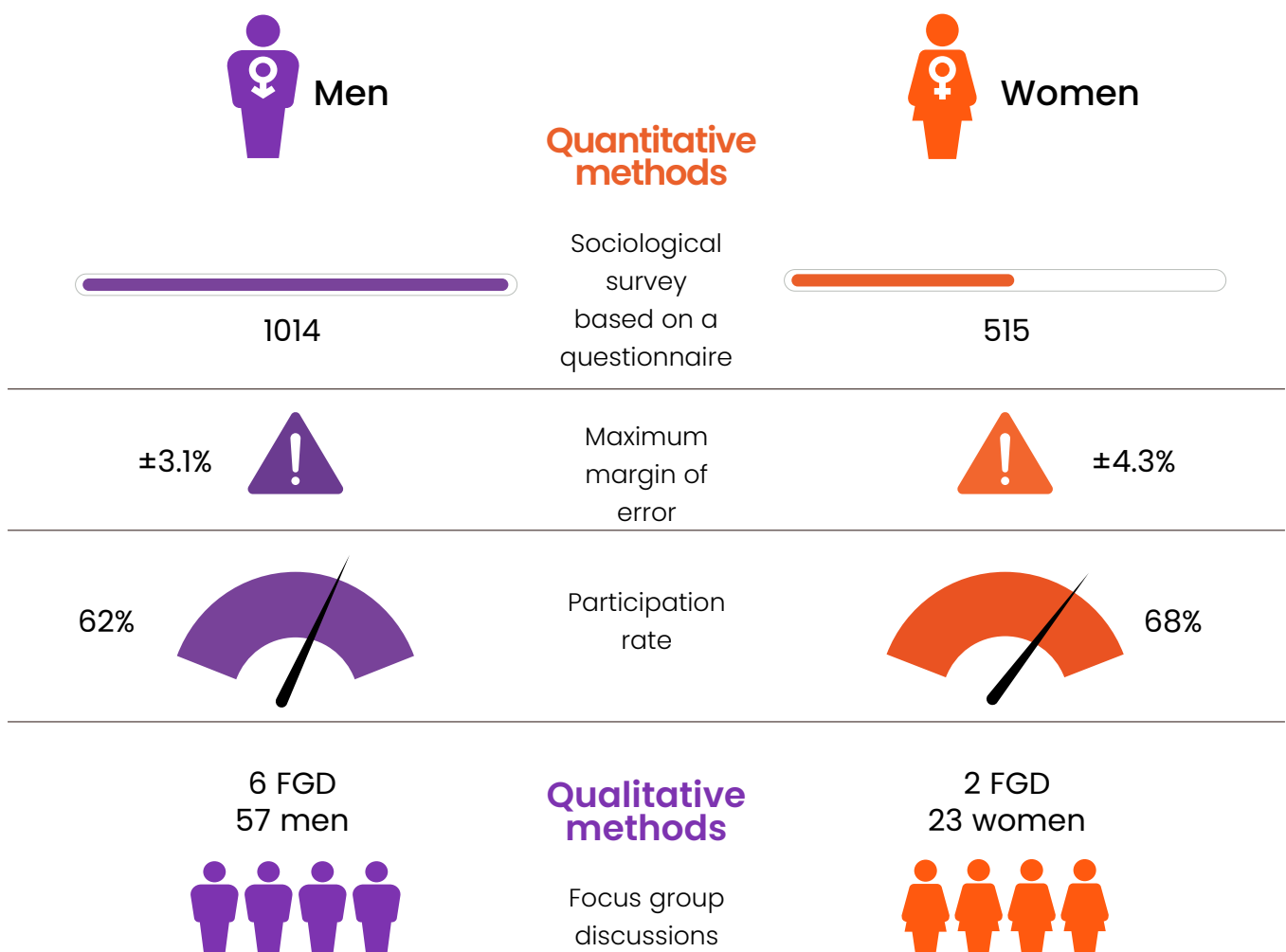
⁵ Nanda, Geeta. 2011. Compendium of Gender Scales. Washington, DC: FHI 360/C-Change. <https://www.indikit.net/document/86-compendium-of-gender-scales>

1.3. METHODOLOGY APPLIED IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

The IMAGES-2 study conducted in the Republic of Moldova was based on a complex methodology applied internationally, which was complemented with qualitative sociological methods to gain in-depth knowledge of men’s and women’s opinions (Figure 1. Research methods).

It is worth mentioning that during data interpretation, a comparative analysis of the changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of men and women between 2015 and 2024 was applied, having as a reference point the *Men and Gender Equality in the Republic of Moldova study*, conducted in 2015 (IMAGES-1).

Figure 1. Research methods



The quantitative research involved 1529 people aged 18-59 years. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in respondents' homes by interviewers using tablets (CAPI). Following international methodology, two distinct samples were drawn: a primary sample of 1014 men and a secondary sample of 515 women, to examine differences in perceptions, attitudes and practices. The samples were probabilistic and stratified on the basis of the following criteria: (i) the 35 administrative-territorial units of the Republic of Moldova, (ii) the place of residence and (iii) the number of inhabitants in rural localities (2 types of localities). Both samples are nationally representative, with a margin of error of $\pm 3.1\%$ for men and $\pm 4.3\%$ for women, at a 95% confidence level.

The participation rate of men was 62% and the response rate was 81%: 62 men out of 100 agreed to participate in the research, and of those who initially agreed, during the course of the questionnaire at some point 19 men refused to continue answering the questions and dropped out.

The female participation rate was 68% and the response rate was 80%: 68 women out of 100 agreed to take part in the research, and of these, 20 refused at some point to continue answering the questions in the questionnaire.

The participation rate and response rate was higher in the under 30 population. Respectively, to compensate for the differences in the probability of selection of survey respondents and the non-participation and dropout rates, data weighting was applied, based on a coefficient based on the age of respondents according to data of the National Bureau of Statistics.

The questionnaires, developed at international level, were adapted to the reality in the Republic of Moldova with the support of the Women's Law Center, UNFPA and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (Gender Equality Policy Department). Subsequently, they were transferred into digital format in Romanian and Russian, giving respondents the

possibility to choose the language of communication for the interview.

The men's questionnaire had 10 sections:

1. Socio-demographic characteristics and professional activity;
2. Childhood experiences;
3. Relations between men and women;
4. Sexual diversity;
5. Family relationships;
6. Policies;
7. Parents, fathers' relationships with children;
8. Relationships and violence;
9. Health and quality of life;
10. Final.

And the questionnaire administered to women, according to international methodology, included only 9 sections. It omitted women's experiences during childhood, and the 6th section dealt with Parents, mothers' relationships with children.

The average interview lasted 45 minutes for men and 38 minutes for women.

The survey data were complemented by data from focus group discussions, conducted separately with men and women. In the focus group discussions, the aim was to investigate in more depth some of the issues identified in the survey. 8 focus group discussions were conducted - 6 with men and 2 with women (Appendix 2. Data on persons participating in the focus group discussions). The participants of the focus group discussions were selected taking into account the following criteria: gender, age, place of residence (village, town, Chisinau municipality), education, occupational status (employed/unemployed), employment in different sectors of the national economy.

Field data collection was conducted from July 26 to August 28, 2024, for the quantitative component. Focus group discussions were conducted from October 1-15, 2024.

Socio-demographic structure of the samples

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample of men

		Number	Percentage
		Men	
Total		1014	100%
Age	18-29 years	238	24%
	30-39 years	254	25%
	40-49 years	263	26%
	50-59 years	258	25%
Residence	urban	412	41%
	rural	601	59%
Geographical region	Chişinău	174	17%
	North	269	27%
	Center ⁶	320	31%
	South	251	25%
Educational level	Middle school (8-9 classes)	216	21%
	High school (10-12 classes)/Secondary (10-11)	276	20%
	Secondary technical professional	251	24%
	Post-secondary technical professional	138	14%
	Higher education (first and/or second cycle)	208	21%
Ethnicity	Moldovan / Romanian	851	84%
	Other ethnicity	161	16%
	No answer	1	0%
Average monthly household income	Less than 3000 lei	143	14%
	3001-5000 lei	151	15%
	3001-5000 lei	161	16%
	8001-11000 lei	150	15%
	11001-13700 lei	74	7%
	More than 13700 lei	239	24%
	No answer	95	9%
Presence of a relationship	Yes ⁷	656	65%
	No ⁸	358	35%
Presence of a stable partner	Yes	649	64%
	No	365	36%

Men sample

The sample of men comprised 1014 men from 35 administrative territorial units of the Republic of Moldova and is representative at national level (Table 1). 59% of the men are from rural and 41% from urban areas. According to the age variable, 24% of the men are aged 18 to 29, 25% - 30 to 39, 26% - 40 to 49 and 25% - 50 to 59. 84% of the men stated that they are Moldovan/Romanians.

65% of the men reported being in a relationship and 64% reported being in a relationship with a stable partner. Relationships are usually between men and women. Within the research sample, there was only one instance where the male respondent reported having a stable male partner. The analysis of partnerships from the perspective of the spouse's/partner's education shows that 52% of men have spouses/partners with the same level of education, in 27% of men - the wife has a higher level of education, and in 21% - the husband is with a higher level of education.

Analysis of the occupational status of the men who participated in the research reveals that 42% are formally employed, 23% are informally employed, 11% are not employed but looking for work, 10% are migrant workers, 5% are in education, 5% are retired, 4% are not employed but not looking for work.

In 79% of the households of the interviewed men, the main source of income is the salary, in 11% - own business, in 6% - pension. The proportion of those who indicated own business as the main source of income is higher among men aged 50-59 years, with secondary

technical vocational education and from rural areas. The average number of working hours per week for men who are employed - 41 hours (minimum - 2 hours and maximum - 84 hours). However, 6% of men who are employed work between 41-50 hours per week, 5% - between 51-60 hours and 2% more than 61 hours per week. The main reasons for working longer hours per week are the demands of the workplace (7%) and the need to have more money (5%), less often to maintain family living standards or because the work is important for their professional career.

Data on average monthly income per household was provided by 91% of the men participating in the survey. Respectively, 14% indicated an average monthly income below 3000 lei, 15% - between 3001 - 5000 lei, 16% - between 5001 - 8000 lei, 15% - between 8001 - 11000 lei, 7% - between 11001 - 13700 lei and 24% - above 13700⁹ lei. Thus, further in this research report, average monthly household incomes up to 5000 lei will be considered as low, incomes between 5001-11000 lei - medium income and those above 11001 lei - high income. Of the men participating in the research, 9% have a degree of disability caused by health problems or following an accident. And 5% own a firearm, of which 4% own an authorized firearm and 1% - an unauthorized firearm.

6 Without Chisinau municipality.

8 Options: Single, divorced, widowed.

7 Options:

- Officially married to a woman I live with,
- I live with a woman, but we're not officially married,
- I have a partner/girlfriend, but we don't live together,
- I have a male partner with whom I live together.

9 13700 lei is the amount of the monthly average salary according to national economy, foreseen for 2024 based on Government Decision nr.1033 of 21.12.2023 regarding the approval of the value of the monthly average salary according to national economy foreseen for 2024. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=140758&lang=ro

Table 2. Characteristics of the female sample

		Number	Percentage
		Women	
Total		515	100%
Age	18-29 years	110	21%
	30-39 years	149	29%
	40-49 years	125	24%
	50-59 years	130	25%
Residence	urban	220	43%
	rural	294	57%
Geographical region	Chişinău	101	20%
	North	134	26%
	Center	151	29%
	South	128	25%
Educational level	Middle school (8-9 classes)	111	21%
	High school (10-12 classes)/Secondary (10-11)	107	21%
	Secondary technical professional	75	15%
	Post-secondary technical professional	73	14%
	Higher education (first and/or second cycle)	148	29%
Ethnicity	Moldovan/ Romanian	422	82%
	Other ethnicity	92	18%
	No answer	1	0%
Average monthly household income	Less than 3000 de lei	65	13%
	3001-5000 de lei	103	20%
	3001-5000 de lei	99	19%
	8001-11000 de lei	105	20%
	11001-13700 de lei	29	6%
	More than 13700 lei	85	17%
	No answer	29	5%
Presence of a relationship	Yes ¹⁰	395	77%
	No ¹¹	120	23%
Presence of a stable partner	Yes	377	73%
	No	138	27%
Experience living with a man ¹²	Yes	414	80%
	No	101	20%

Women sample

The sample of women included 515 persons from 35 administrative territorial units of the Republic of Moldova and is representative at national level (Table 2). 57% of the women are from rural and 43% from urban areas. According to the age variable, 21% of women are aged 18 to 29 years, 29% - 30 to 39 years, 24% - 40 to 49 years and 25% - 50 to 59 years. 82% of women are of Moldovan/Romanian ethnicity.

77% of the women reported being in a relationship and 73% reported being in a relationship with a stable partner. The number of women who have experience of living with a man, however, is 80%. Of the 73% (377 women) of women in a stable relationship - 46% have the same level of education as their partner, 32% have a higher level of education than their partner, 21% a lower level than their partner and 1% do not know their partner's level of education.

The analysis of the occupational status of the women who participated in the research reveals that 40% are officially employed, 13% - not employed but looking for work, 13% - not employed but not looking for work, 10% - unofficially employed, 8% - on maternity or childcare leave, 5% - retired, 4% - students, 4% - working abroad, the rest - other less relevant situations. The average number of working hours per week for the 50% of women in the sample who are employed is 40 hours (minimum - 8 hours and maximum - 80 hours). There are no significant differences in the average number of working hours per week between women (40 hours on average) and men (41 hours on average).

9% of the women who participated in the research are disabled due to a health problem or as a result of an accident.

10 Options:

- Officially married to a man I live with,
- I live with a man, but we are not officially married,
- I have a partner/friend, but we don't live together,
- I don't have a steady partner.

11 Option: No partner.

12 Married, cohabiting, partnered, divorced, widowed women.

II. GENDER PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES

2.1. PERCEPTION OF GENDER EQUALITY

The concept of “gender equality” is perceived and interpreted differently by the inhabitants of the Republic of Moldova. During the focus group discussions, diverse perspectives were identified, with multiple fundamental aspects being emphasized: equality of opportunities, equality before the law, lack of superiority, equal distribution of responsibilities in the family, equal treatment in society, equality in the political sphere, etc. (Box 1).

At the same time, the participants in the focus group discussions emphasized that there are differences in the perception of gender equality between men and women. Women want equal rights but perceive a lack of understanding of this ideal on the part of men:

- *“Although some men support gender equality, they feel subconsciously superior anyway” (FG_7_F_U);*
- *“When we talk about gender equality, we women think about rights and possibilities, while men think about physiological aspects” (FG_7_F_U);*
- *“We women are fighting for certain rights that we didn't have, and some men don't understand this...” (FG_8_F_R).*

The diversity of responses reflects the fact that gender equality is understood and appreciated from multiple, complementary and varied perspectives. These include both core issues of justice and legal rights, as well as social norms and gender roles in the family. A number of participants perceive gender equality as an active step towards breaking



down traditional hierarchies and ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all. At the same time, the variety of interpretations also points to a possible fragmentation of perceptions of gender equality, which may mean that the effective implementation of equality policies requires awareness campaigns tailored to different groups and levels of understanding. These perceptions show that gender equality is seen by many Moldovans as an indispensable element for an equitable society, indicating a gradual evolution in the public mentality regarding the role and status of women and men.

However, it is important to point out that some men, as well as women, misperceive gender equality as being confused with same-sex equality. This perception determines the reluctance or even negative attitude of some people towards gender equality and has an impact on the degree of acceptance of legislative or social initiatives for equality, suggesting a need for clear education on the real meaning and purpose of gender equality.

It is also relevant to mention that many participants in the focus group discussions, especially men, recognize gender equality from a legal point of view, but emphasize the existence of physiological and character differences between men and women:

- *“From a physiological point of view, differences were, are and will remain” (FG_1_B_U),*
- *“Women are gentler and men are tougher. But from a physical point of view, I think women are stronger*

because they can endure more pain than men. In character, men are more stable and women - more emotional” (FG_5_B_R).

Aceste percepții evidențiază persistența unor viziuni tradiționale, conform cărora diferențele de caracter și cele fizice sunt inevitabile și determină roluri distincte în societate.

These perceptions highlight the persistence of traditional views that differences in character and physical differences are inevitable and determine distinct roles in society.

On the other hand, some recognize women’s physical resilience to pain, which demonstrates a certain appreciation of certain abilities, even if this admiration is relativized by the belief that women and men should play different roles. In this context, reference was made to legal differences, such as men’s obligation to do military service and the exclusion of women from life imprisonment for offenses *“men are obliged to do military service, but women can do military service if they want. Women may not be sentenced to life imprisonment, only a maximum of 25 years” (FG_1_B_U)*¹³. For some men, these exceptions are justified by the physical and social differences between men and women. Gender equality is thus perceived as relative, conditioned by a series of legal norms that legitimize certain differentiations.

The varied and sometimes contradictory perspectives show that gender equality remains an unclear, confusing concept for some people in the Republic of Moldova, and that further clarification

¹³This is the perception of some men in the focus group discussion. Life imprisonment also became applicable to women. The criminal legislation of the Republic of Moldova was amended on June 06, 2024 (https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=143519&lang=ro). The only persons who cannot be deprived of their liberty for life are minors, even if they have been found guilty of offenses that require life imprisonment

and information and education efforts are needed. Inequitable and stereotypical interpretations suggest a need to address not only the concept of equality, but also deeply ingrained ideas about gender differences.



Box 1. Perception of gender equality

“Equal opportunities, i.e. women and men can occupy the same positions in society” (FG_7_F_U).

“Equal before the law - have the same rights and obligations” (FG_1_B_U).

“Two people neither of whom should consider themselves superior to the other” (FG_6_B_R).

“Sharing family responsibilities equally” (FG_7_F_U).

“Being applied equal treatment in society” (FG_7_F_U).

“Freedom from discrimination and equal rights and opportunities in politics, economy” (FG_8_F_R).

The views expressed in the focus group discussions explain why 27% of men and 29% of women believe that giving women rights means that men lose out (*total and partial agreement*) and 37% of men and 38% of women believe that once women gain rights, men’s rights are reduced (*total and partial agreement*). However, fewer young men and women, aged 18–29, with higher education and a high average monthly household income, believe that granting women’s rights negatively affects men.

Unequal and stereotypical views are even more evident in the labour market context because 53% of men and 59% of women believe that employing women in the workforce takes jobs intended for men (*total and partial agreement*) (Table 3). These perceptions of gender equality

are more prevalent among people with low levels of education (secondary and high school/general secondary) and low average monthly household incomes.

During the group discussions some women pointed out that in Moldovan society there are still stereotypes in the labour market because *“men are in pole position to fill the vacancies”* (FG_7_F_U), but also in society *“if women dress more openly, they are criticized..., but if a man is without a t-shirt, then it is not taken into account”* (FG_8_F_R).

It was also mentioned in this context that although fathers also have the right to take childcare leave, the number of those who do is low, and the blame is also borne by women *“we women, mothers, do not have the confidence to go out to work*

and leave the man, the father, to stay at home with the child" (FG_7_F_U).

The gaps in the correct perception of gender equality lead 73% of men and 75% of women to consider that gender equality has been largely achieved in the Republic of Moldova. As arguments, during the group discussions, changes in the regulatory framework for ensuring gender equality, campaigns to promote gender equality, the increase in the number of women involved in politics, but also in various public structures (Presidency, ministries, Parliament, etc.), including the possibility for women to work in different fields previously considered purely male - army, police, STEM, etc.

Thus, during the focus group discussions, men emphasized "now women are leading Moldova" (FG_3_B_U). Also, according to some of them, currently actions to promote gender equality need to be carried out "in remote villages, where women are less informed. But in general, in society, I

believe that equal rights between women and men are ensured" (FG_1_B_U). It was specified that some categories of people, especially women, need to be informed about gender equality "there are groups with whom we need to discuss and explain what gender equality is because they follow the principle that if he beats me, he loves me. And after a glass of wine, if he doesn't beat her up and chase her around the house, she reckons that Friday or Saturday didn't go as supposed" (FG_3_B_U).

Also relevant is the fact that 66% of men and 67% of women think that gender equality has gone too far, and 51% of men and 54% of women believe that the benefits of gender equality are particularly reflected in people with a high level of wealth (Table 4). People on low incomes and with a low level of education (secondary education) tend to be more likely to believe that gender equality has largely been achieved and that it benefits the better off.

Table 3. Perception of gender equality, %

	Men		Women	
	Total agreement	Partial agreement	Total agreement	Partial agreement
Women's rights mean men have something to lose	10	17	12	17
When women get rights, men's rights are reduced	15	22	17	21
When women are employed in the workforce, they take a share of men's jobs	22	31	30	29


Some of the research participants, 13% of men and 12% of women, admitted that they do not have enough knowledge about gender equality, while others, 19% of men and 18% of women, admitted that they cannot appreciate its benefits. The lack of knowledge in the field of gender equality is more pronounced among people with secondary education, because as the level of education increases, the proportion of those who indicated the answer do not know about gender equality decreases. In this context, we also point out that some participants in the focus group discussions emphasized that there is still work to be done in Moldova to ensure gender equality "there is still work to be done because some men, at a subconscious level, do not perceive women as a decision factor. As long as some men believe that women should stay at home and they, as men, should make money, we cannot say that gender equality has been achieved" (FG_3_B_U).

Gender equality was recognized by the men and women participating in the focus group discussions as a "normal" thing that generates multiple benefits both within the family and in society. In the family, it contributes to better understanding, helping to strengthen relationships between husband and wife. Gender equality also plays an important role in reducing domestic violence, which participants explain is often linked to personal frustrations channelled into the family space, where society's response is not as prompt as in the public space.

In this way, gender equality contributes to family harmony and becomes the foundation of a healthy and inclusive society, reducing problems such as divorce and child abandonment, which benefits all members of the community. In society, men highlighted in particular that gender equality contributes to the creation of conditions for the well-being of all members by analysing issues more deeply, from different perspectives and in different ways "I have come across this example that men vote to build a road, but the women councillors will propose that in addition to that road a sidewalk be built, so that ladies can also go around with a stroller" (FG_2_B_U). Women, however, referred to aspects such as the possibility to be free and make decisions in the family, the possibility to benefit from more opportunities in society, the possibility to work in different fields (IT, engineering, construction, etc.), but also to take up management positions and have a professional career. Among the most important benefits of gender equality, the reduction of violence against women was indicated as "increasing self-confidence and the power to say no to violence. Financial independence helps you to put your foot down" (FG_7_F_U).

However, it was noted that gender equality also brings some challenges, especially in situations when people are not prepared to benefit from the rights and opportunities they have or to assume responsibilities "if people are not prepared, it can harm them because they are not sensitized and

Table 4. Perception of gender equality and its benefits, %

	Men				Women			
	Total agreement	Partial agreement	Disagreement	I don't know	Total agreement	Partial agreement	Disagreement	I don't know
Gender equality has largely been achieved	47	26	14	13	42	33	13	12
Gender equality has come a long way already	42	24	22	12	40	27	24	9
Work to achieve gender equality largely benefits people with higher levels of wellbeing	30	21	30	19	32	22	28	18

are not aware of what gender equality is" (FG_7_F_U). Among the challenges that gender equality has brought about in the Republic of Moldova, the following were mentioned:

- The migration of a large number of women to work abroad and the exclusive transfer of the responsibility for raising and educating children to men "women have left the children and gone away, men do what they do, they get money and packages and don't really take care of the children" (FG_7_F_U),
- Loss of masculinity "women take over men's roles and men take over women's roles... and when you get into a relationship, the man has more feminine qualities" (FG_8_F_R),

- The loss of femininity "in this struggle to achieve equality between men and women, this femininity is automatically lost..., but women must remain women" (FG_8_F_R).

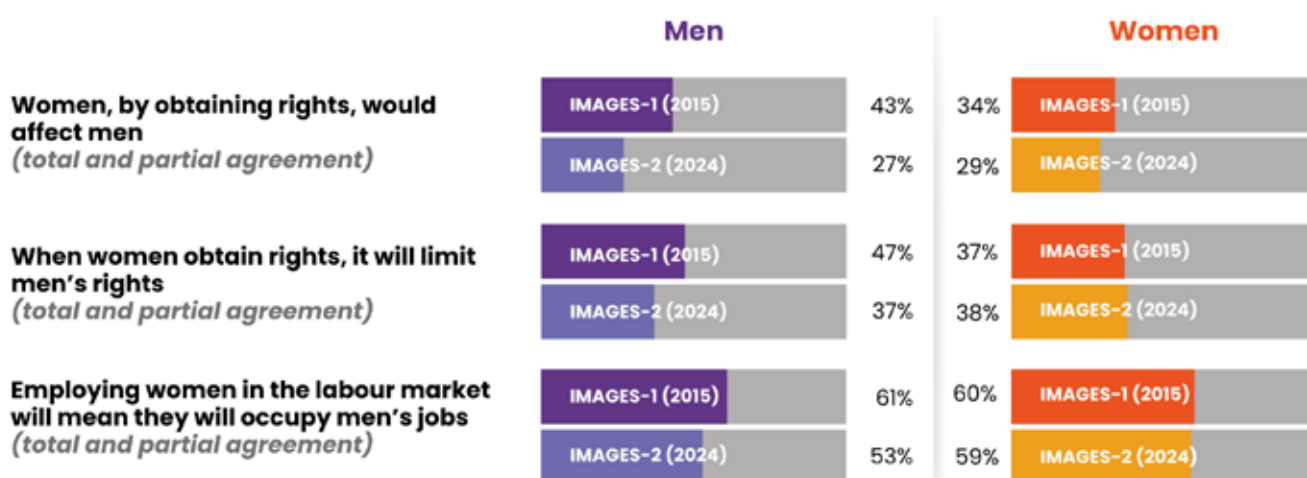
Religion was highlighted by some participants in the focus group discussions as a factor in promoting gender stereotypes "claims that men are superior to women, God's maidservant. And respectively, only the man is allowed to go to the altar, the woman - not. And the man must be the first to go to communion. The woman, regardless of whether she is with a child, must wait her turn" (FG_7_F_U).

Changing trends in perceptions of gender equality

Between 2015 and 2024, perceptions of gender equality in Moldova improved. Fewer and fewer men and women believe that the rights gained by women would negatively affect men. In the labour market, changes are more modest, with perceptions still persisting that hiring women could reduce men's access to certain jobs (Figure 2).

This shows a generally positive attitude of men and women towards gender equality, with 27% of men and 29% of women believing that women's rights mean that men lose out in practical terms.

Figure 2. Trends in perceptions of gender equality, 2015 and 2024, %



2.2. ATTITUDES TOWARDS MASCULINITY

Attitudes towards gender equality are influenced by the education received at home, at school and general societal norms. The view that men should be strong is held by 72% of men and 48% of women (*total agreement and partial agreement*). Also, 76% of men believe that men should use force when they are humiliated (Table 5). Men with higher education and higher average monthly income in smaller

numbers emphasize men’s strength and power. In the case of women, too, it was found that as the level of education and household income increases, the number of those who consider it important for a man to be strong decreases.

Table 5. Attitudes towards masculinity, %

	Men		Women	
	Total agreement	Partial agreement	Total agreement	Partial agreement
To be a man you need to be strong	52	20	30	18
If someone insults a man, he must use force if necessary	57	19	-	-

Changing trends in attitudes towards masculinity

Changes in attitudes towards masculinity are evident in both men and women. In 2024, fewer men and women believe it is essential for men to be strong or to use force in humiliating situations, compared to 2015 (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Attitudes towards masculinity, 2015 and 2024, %



2.3. ATTITUDES TOWARDS FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

The questions used to determine attitudes to family responsibilities reveal that 86% of men and 71% of women total and partly agree that for a woman the most important thing is to look after the house and cook for her family. The proportion of men who consider changing diapers, washing and feeding babies to be a mother's responsibility is 66%. This indicator is also quite high among women - 61% agree with this statement.

64% of men say that they should have the final say in family decision-making (total agreement and partial agreement), compared to 43% of women who agree (Table 6). Such views are less prevalent among young men (18-29 years), highly educated, from urban areas and with high average monthly household

incomes. Also women aged 18-29, urban, with higher education and high household income, in smaller numbers agree with such statements.

The data shows that stereotypes persist which attribute different family responsibilities to gender in both urban and rural areas:

- *"The man is the head of the family and has some responsibilities and the woman - others"* (FG_1_B_U);
- *"In the family everyone has his own occupations. The woman - the child, the kitchen, the laundry, but the man is responsible for the family's earnings, its material state and its defence"* (FG_5_B_R).



Table 6. Attitudes towards responsibilities within the family, %

	Men		Women	
	Total agreement	Partial agreement	Total agreement	Partial agreement
For a woman, the most important thing is to look after the house and cook for her family	56	30	41	30
Changing diapers, washing and feeding babies is a mother's responsibility	34	32	30	31
Men should have the final say in family decisions	38	26	18	25

A large proportion of men see the role of women in the family as closely linked to the care and education of children. These perceptions depend on the upbringing in the family of origin, but also on certain traditions and customs that exist in the society *"it depends on the family they grew up in because if they have been taught that they have to superior to the*

woman, it continues. They will not change" (FG_8_F_R). This was also confirmed by some women *"we can see that there are men who have a more closed mindset... they always think that the woman should stay at home and do the cooking"* (FG_8_F_R).

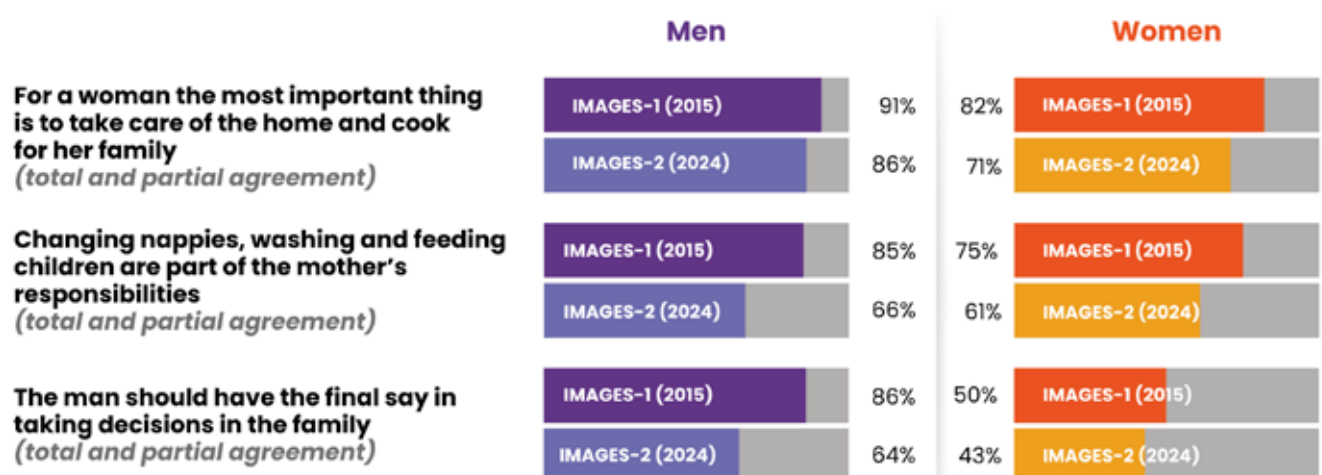
Changing trends in family responsibilities

Men's and women's attitudes towards family responsibilities have changed, but not significantly. In 2024, 86% of men and 71% of women still believe that a woman's main role is to take care of the home and family, compared to 91% of men and 82% of women in 2015. In the focus group discussions, rural men emphasized that *"in the family, spouses have to share their duties, some are more suited to men and some are more suited to women - tidying, cleaning, washing, ironing. I don't interfere. But otherwise there is equality - women have the right to their opinion, and we try to find compromises"* (FG_5_B_R).

Support for the idea that childcare is the sole responsibility of the mother has decreased from 85% in 2015 to 66% in 2024 among men and from 75% to 61% among women over the period analysed.

Fewer and fewer men say they should have the final say in family decision-making, and the number of women who accept this view is also falling (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Attitudes towards family responsibilities, 2015 and 2024, %






2.4. ATTITUDES ON SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Men’s views on sexuality and sexual relationships do not differ from those of women. 61% of men and 61% of women (*total and partial agreement*) believe that men need sex more than women (Table 7). Also 70% of men and 69% of women believe that men do not talk about sex, they act. However, tolerance of men

who cannot get an erection during sex is characteristic for a higher number of women, which can be explained by men’s stereotypical views that they must always be strong.

Table 7. Attitudes towards sexuality and sexual relationships, %

	Men		Women	
	Total agreement	Partial agreement	Total agreement	Partial agreement
Men need more sex than women	31	30	37	24
Men don't talk about sex, they do it	44	26	44	25
Men should feel embarrassed if they can't get an erection during sex	18	19	11	14

Contraception should be a joint decision between partners, also discussed with a doctor, to ensure a responsible approach to health and family, according to 81% of men and 81% of women (*total agreement*). However, 22% of men and 26% of women believe that it is a woman’s responsibility to protect herself from becoming pregnant (Table 8). This opinion is explained by the fact that women generally take contraceptives to prevent

unplanned pregnancies “*I believe that the woman takes the decision more often*” (FG_5_B_R). The number of men who take responsibility for their wife/partner not to get pregnant and show a higher attitude for their bodily independence is higher among young, urban men with post-secondary technical vocational education and higher education and high household income.

Table 8. Attitudes on reproductive health, %

	Men		Women	
	Total agreement	Partial agreement	Total agreement	Partial agreement
Men and women must decide together which method of contraception to use ¹⁴	81	10	81	12
It is a woman's responsibility to protect herself from becoming pregnant	22	31	26	31
A man/woman should be offended if his/her spouse asks him/her to use a condom	-	-	10	8

In the focus group discussions, the importance of sex education in terms of informing and preparing young people (boys and girls) to communicate effectively in their relationships, including about personal desires and boundaries, was emphasized. In particular, it was highlighted that this would help girls and women to express themselves and feel comfortable in their relationships, avoiding socially imposed roles or unrealistic expectations. It would also help them to prevent sexual violence by informing them about abusive behaviours *"I would really like girls, women, mothers-to-be to express their point of view and feel emotionally comfortable, to feel appreciated, to feel that they are worth something. It's not that you're my wife and that you're a woman who's indebted to me when I am drunk, when I am sober, when I need it"* (FG_7_F_U).

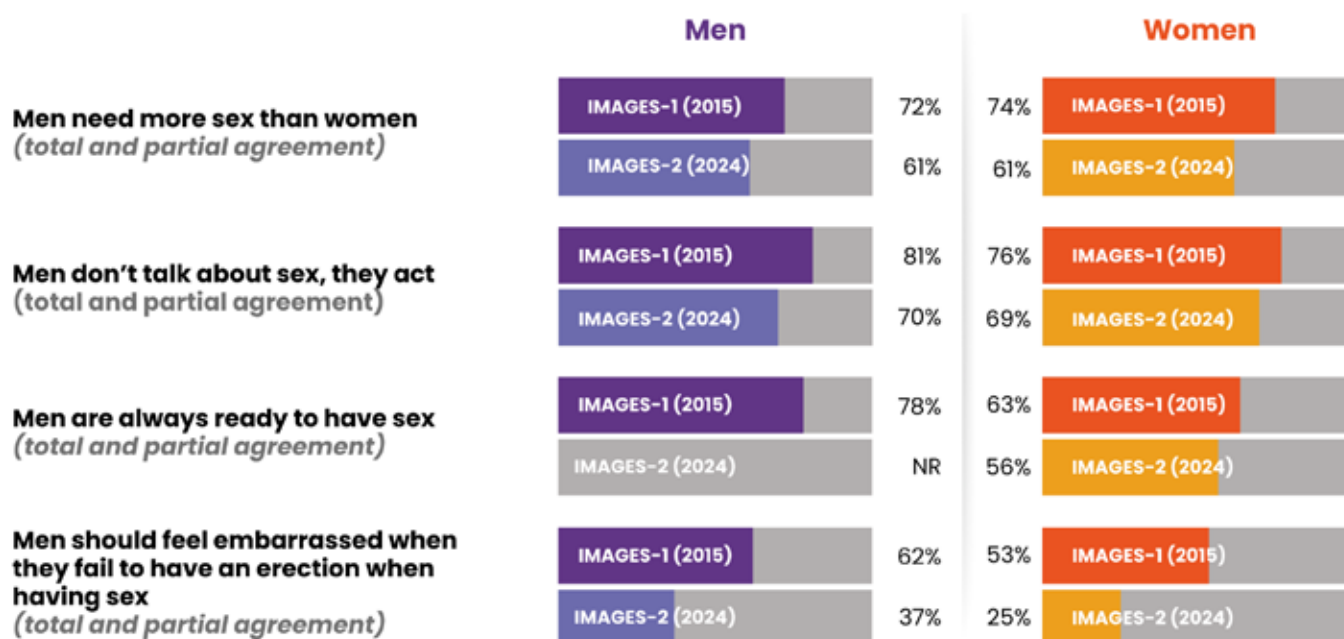
These aspects must be taken into account to argue the need for sex education in schools that would help prevent unplanned pregnancies among young people, but also reduce the risk of infection *"I had a case when unfortunately a girl too young, got pregnant in 8th or 9th grade. And the boy the same is from 8th or 9th grade, kids. And if there were these lessons in schools, I think there would be no more of that"* (FG_7_F_U). However, it was reported that although there are programmes on sexual and reproductive health, the topic continues to be taboo both in the family and in educational institutions. The focus group discussions testify that for men over 30, the topic is not discussed outside the family *"I don't talk about what I do in bed, there are topics that are not discussed outside the family"* (FG_3_B_U).

Changing trends in sexual relationships and reproductive health

The most important changes in attitudes towards sexuality and sexual relationships were in men's embarrassment in situations when men cannot get an erection during sex: 37% of men in 2024, compared to 62% in 2015, and 25% of women, compared to 53%, respectively, believe that men should feel embarrassed (Figure 5).

14 In calculating the Gender Equitable Men Scale, the proportion of men and women who disagree (total and partial) with this statement was taken into account.

Figure 5. Attitudes towards sexuality and sexual relationships, 2015 and 2024, %

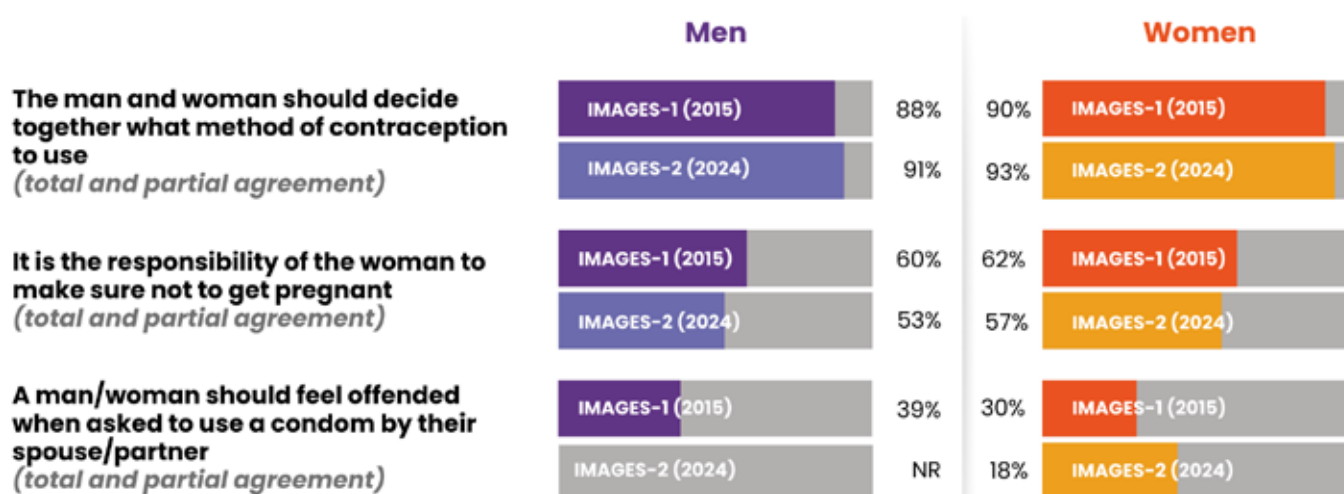


In the area of reproductive health, there have been small changes regarding the decision of partners/spouses to decide together which method of contraception to use. Thus, the proportion of men increased from 89% to 91% and the proportion of women agreeing (*totally and partially*) that the man and the woman should decide together which method of

contraception to use increased from 89% to 93%.

In terms of the attitude that it is a woman's responsibility to protect herself from getting pregnant, the number of men who share this opinion decreased from 70% to 53%, and that of women from 62% to 57% (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Attitudes towards reproductive health, 2015 and 2024, %



2.5. ATTITUDES TOWARDS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

According to the data, 13% of women and 21% of men believe that women should tolerate violence in order to maintain their family. Also, 23% of men believe that there are situations when a woman should be beaten, while only 12% of women agree with this statement. It is important to note that 11% of women are willing to accept the use of force by husbands/partners in situations where they do not want to have sexual relations (Table 9).

family and that there are times when women should be beaten have secondary education and low monthly household incomes. The profile of women who agree to tolerate violence for the family includes women aged 50–59 years and with low monthly household incomes, which is an important aspect to take into account when developing policies to prevent and combat violence against women and girls.

Most of the men who believe that women have to tolerate violence to preserve their

Table 9. Attitudes on domestic violence, %

	Men		Women	
	Total agreement	Partial agreement	Total agreement	Partial agreement
A woman must tolerate violence to preserve her family	12	9	6	7
There are times when a woman must be beaten	7	16	3	9
A man is allowed to hit his wife if she doesn't want to have sex with him	-	-	6	5

Changing trends in attitudes towards domestic violence

The attitudes of men and women towards domestic violence are gradually changing. Fewer and fewer people believe that women have to tolerate violence in order to maintain their family or that there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten (Figure 7). In the focus group discussions it was highlighted *"I think that now violence is judged more severely by friends and acquaintances. In the past it was more acceptable to raise your hand, but now the social consequences are much more serious. If someone allows himself to use violence, he will be excluded from groups and will feel serious repercussions, both in social circles and at work"* (FGD_3_B_U).

Figure 7. Attitudes towards domestic violence, 2015 and 2024, %



2.6. ATTITUDES TOWARDS SEXUAL VIOLENCE

In the Republic of Moldova, some stereotypes about sexual violence continue to be present among both men and women. Research data shows that if a woman is raped, 32% of men and 21% of women believe that *she has done something to end up in this situation*. Even more women and men say that *if the woman has a bad reputation or does not resist physically when raped, these*

cases cannot be considered rape (Table 10). There is some correlation of attitudes towards rape with women's and men's age, residential background, education and income. Women and men aged 18-29 years, from urban areas, with higher education and higher household income, are more likely to have a non-judgmental and stereotype-free view of sexual violence.

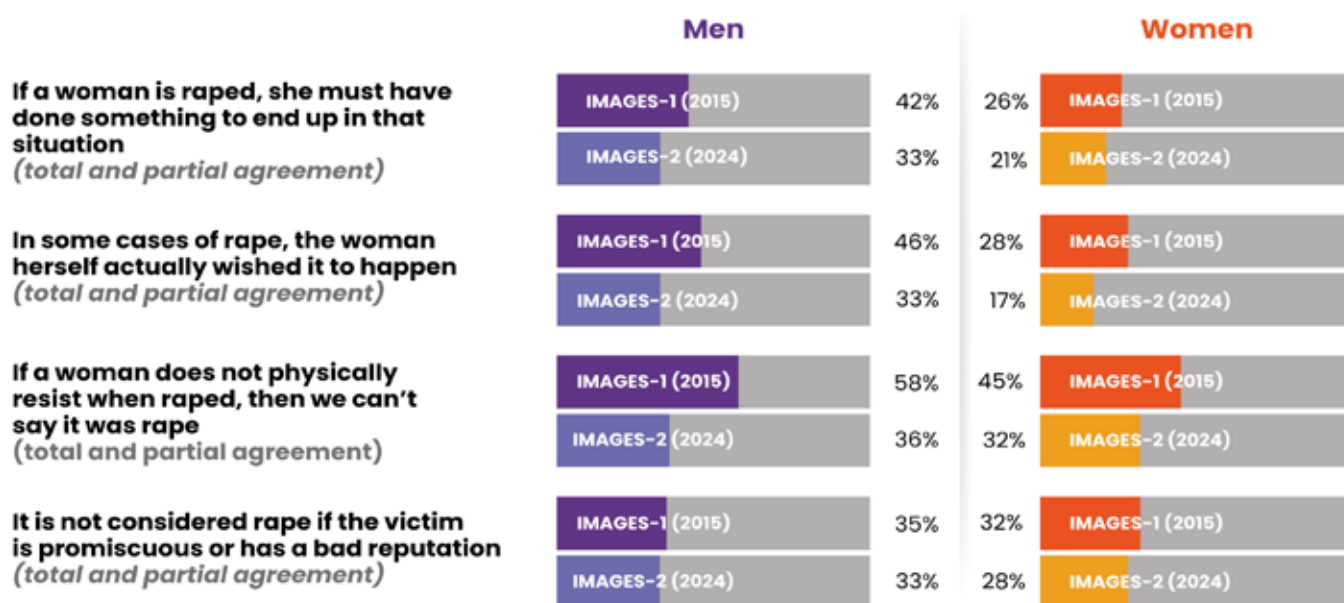
Table 10. Attitudes towards rape, %

	Men		Women	
	Total agreement	Partial agreement	Total agreement	Partial agreement
If a woman is raped, she must have done something to end up in that situation	8	25	6	15
In some cases of rape, the woman herself actually wanted it to happen	9	24	3	14
If a woman does not physically resist being raped, then we cannot say it was rape	23	13	20	12
It is not rape if the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation	20	13	16	12

Changing trends on sexual violence

There are some positive changes in attitudes towards sexual violence among both men and women (Figure 8). The most significant changes are among younger generations, aged 18–29.

Figure 8. Attitudes towards rape, 2015 and 2024, %



2.7. ATTITUDES TOWARDS SEXUAL DIVERSITY

IMAGES also explores the theme of sexual diversity, in particular homophobia which is a basic dimension of traditional masculinity¹⁵. Respectively, the research included questions assessing attitudes regarding the LGBTQ+ group, identity and homophobia.

The research data shows that tolerance of sexual diversity in Moldovan society is low, the majority of citizens have reservations about accepting LGBTQ+ representatives. Only 16% of men and 25% of women consider homosexuality to be normal and natural, and only 25% of men and 31% of women would be willing to have a gay friend. Attitudes towards acceptance of homosexuals by family members are

even more restrictive: 21% of women say they would not be ashamed to have a gay son (men did not agree to answer this question). The responses indicate that many men and women can accept sexual diversity in general, but are homophobic when it can affect them personally.

The percentage of women who believe that same-sex couples should have the right to marry is 30% (Table 11). The data indicate a reluctance to recognize equal rights for sexual minorities, in particular regarding the institution of marriage.

The presence of gay men causes discomfort among women, with 57% saying they feel uncomfortable around

15 Haywood, C., Johansson, T., Hammarén, N., Herz, M., & Ottemo, A. (2017). *The Conundrum of Masculinity: Hegemony, Homosociality, Homophobia and Heteronormativity*. Routledge

them. Furthermore, a significant majority – 74% of men and 68% of women – believe that gay people should not be allowed to work with children or have the right to adopt. Feeling uncomfortable around gay men, coupled with a desire to restrict the rights of sexual minorities in areas such as education and adoption, reflects a traditionalist perception and fears about their influence on children.

large part of the population in the Republic of Moldova, sexual diversity remains a sensitive topic, and persistent negative attitudes point to the need for educational and awareness-raising efforts to promote a more inclusive and empathetic attitude towards the LGBTQ+ community.

Tolerance of sexual diversity is higher among young, urban, better educated and higher income people. This suggests that access to education and interaction with modern values could help to change attitudes in the long term. However, for a

Table 11. Attitudes towards sexual diversity, %

	Men		Women	
	Total agreement	Partial agreement	Total agreement	Partial agreement
Homosexuality is natural and normal	7	9	12	13
Being around gay men makes me uncomfortable	not answered		45	12
I would never accept having a homosexual friend	66	6	54	10
Gay men should not be allowed to work with children	66	8	60	8
Homosexual couples should be allowed to marry just like heterosexual couples	not answered		20	10
Gay men should not be allowed to adopt children	67	7	62	8
I would be ashamed if I had a gay son	not answered		58	10

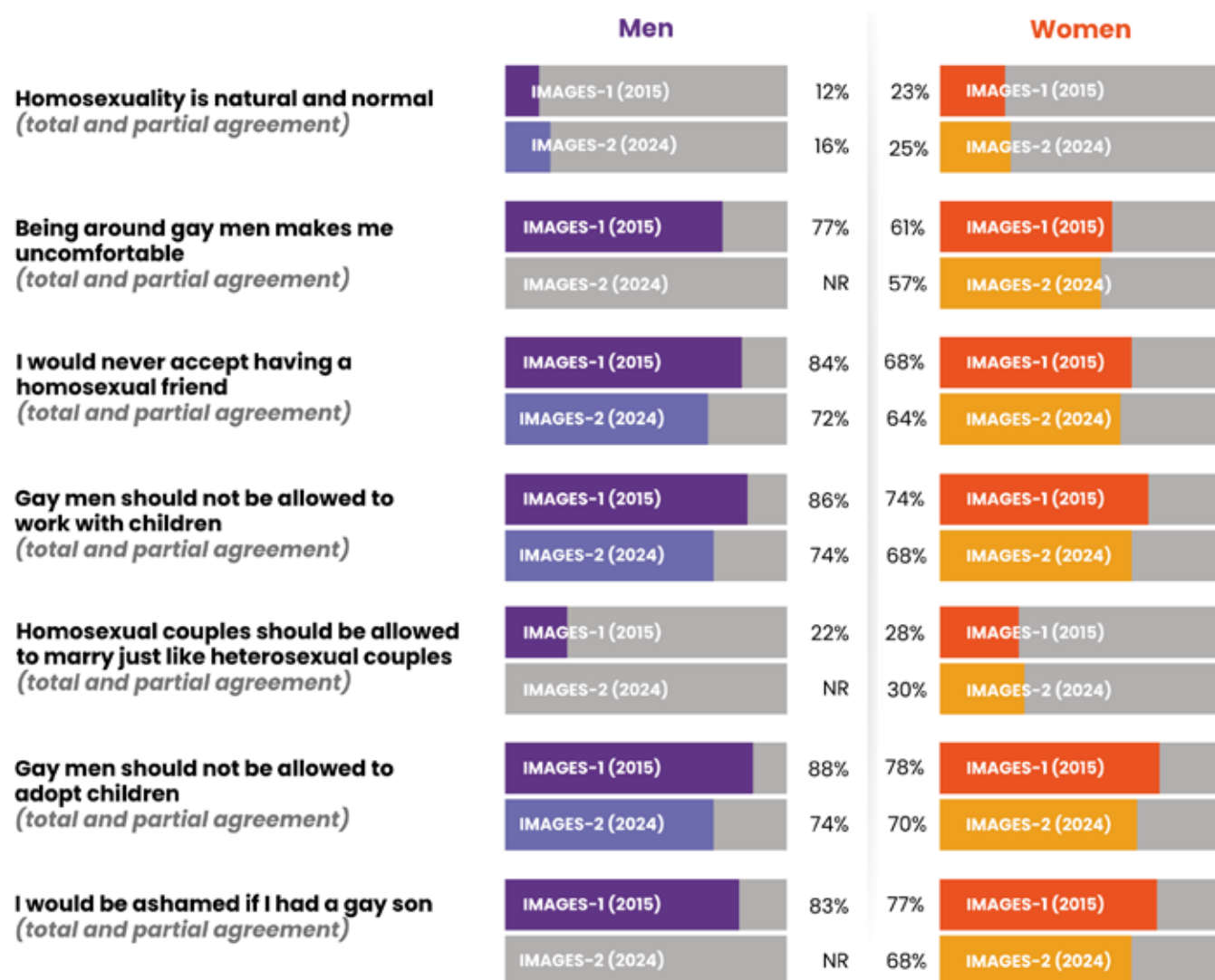
Changing trends in attitudes towards sexual diversity

The dynamic analysis of the data indicates a modest increase in the degree of acceptance of sexual diversity among the population of the Republic of Moldova, both among men and women. The view that homosexuality is natural and the acceptance of friends who would belong to LGBTQ+ groups increases slightly. There is also slightly more openness to the right of homosexuals to work with children, adopt children and marry (Figure 9).

The number of women who feel uncomfortable around gay men is decreasing, and the feeling of shame around a gay son is diminishing.

These trends indicate a slow change in the acceptance of sexual diversity in the Republic of Moldova, although there is still significant reluctance and prejudice in certain segments of the population.

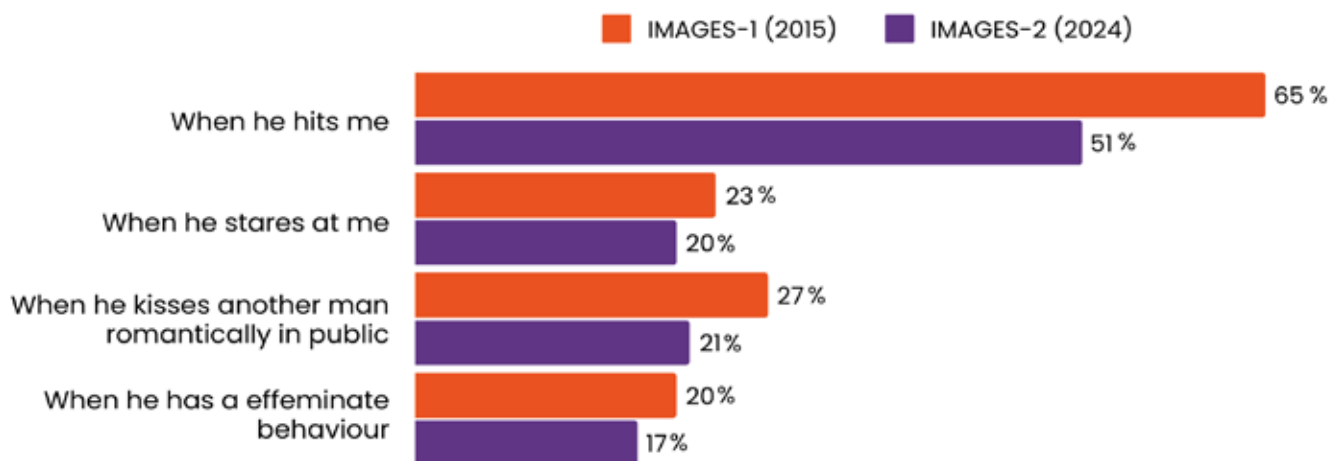
Figure 9. Attitudes towards sexual diversity, 2015 and 2024



Although men’s tolerance of homosexuals has improved slightly, a significant number of respondents still feel that violence against homosexuals is justified in certain situations (Figure 10). Thus, 17% of men justify violence when homosexuals behave in a way perceived as ‘effeminate’, 20% consider violence justified if a homosexual stares at a person, and 21% say that violence is acceptable if they kiss romantically in

a public place. Every second man (51%) considers violence justified in cases where they are hit by a gay man. These data underline the need for further efforts to change perceptions and reduce violence motivated by sexual orientation.

Figure 10. Trends in justification of use of violence against homosexuals, 2015 and 2024, %



2.8. GENDER EQUALITY

The research highlights the significant differences between men and women in terms of the **correct perception of gender equity in the Republic of Moldova**, while revealing a higher rate of correct perception among women in the four areas analysed (Figure 11) (Annex 1)¹⁶.

Gender-based violence is the area where correct perception is highest. 85% of women and 70% of men correctly recognize and understand the issue of gender-based violence. This reflects a relatively high awareness of gender equity issues related to violence, most likely due to frequent activities and discussions on this topic in society.

In the area of **reproductive health and rights**, 77% of women and 62% of men have a correct perception. The differences in perception can be explained by the fact that women are directly affected by reproductive health issues and are better informed about them. Men, on the other hand, are influenced by traditional attitudes, believing that they have decision-making power over women’s bodies and that women should respect their decisions.

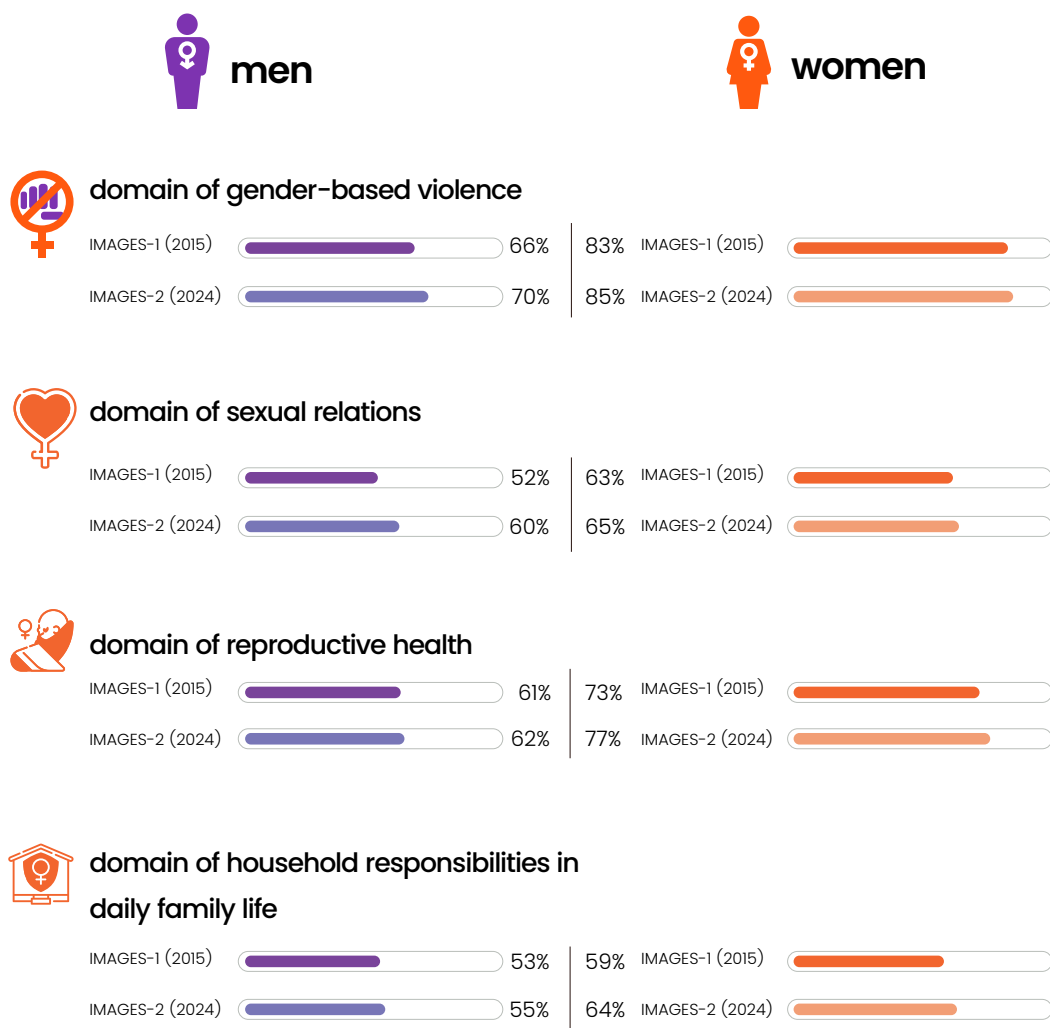
¹⁶ The Gender Equitable Men Scale (GEM) of fair perception uses a scoring system from 0 to 100, where 100 represents a full understanding and acceptance of gender equality.

The area of **household responsibilities** is the one in which the correct perception of gender equity is the lowest, with only 64% of women and 55% of men recognizing the equitable distribution of household responsibilities as a gender equity issue. This reflects the fact that, in many households in the Republic of Moldova, the traditional division of household responsibilities still prevails and perceptions of gender roles remain strongly influenced by cultural norms.

equity in all 4 domains, with a special focus on household responsibilities, an essential aspect for building an equitable society. At the same time, in order to achieve real gender equity in the Republic of Moldova, education and sensitization of both women and men is essential to overcome the stereotypes and traditional norms present.

The IMAGES-2 data emphasizes the need to improve the understanding of gender

Figure 11. Gender equity perception and acceptance rates (GEM) by gender, 2015 and 2024, %



100 represents full understanding and acceptance of gender equality.

Changing trends in gender equity

Although there is a gradual increase in awareness of the importance of gender equality, perceptions differ significantly between generations, educational levels and socio-economic categories. The analysis of changing trends in gender equality in the Republic of Moldova highlights persistent obstacles to progress:

- **Perception of gender equality.** More and more Moldovan citizens, both men and women, understand gender equality as equal opportunities and access to the same positions and legal rights. This trend indicates a higher awareness of the need for equality at professional and legal level for women than for men. The perception of fairness is also higher among younger, better educated and urban people.

- **Awareness of the negative impact of gender-based violence.** The area of gender-based violence has the highest rate of correct perceptions of gender equity, with 85% of women and 70% of men. This is influenced by policies in the field of preventing and combating violence, the efforts of public information and awareness-raising campaigns, and civil society interventions, which have brought the issue to the public's attention. However, consistent law enforcement and effective support for victims of gender-based violence remain areas for improvement.

- **Differences in understanding of reproductive health and rights.** Although the correct perception of reproductive health and related rights has increased, it remains higher among women (77%) compared to men (62%). Women, being directly influenced by reproductive health decisions, have a deeper understanding of gender equity in this area. Gaps in correct understanding among men and their tendency to have decision-making power over women's bodies indicate the need to extend reproductive health education to men as well, promoting the importance of shared responsibility.

- **Differences in understanding of gender equity in the context of sexual relationships.** The higher percentage of women (65%) who correctly perceive

gender equity in sexual relationships compared to men (60%) indicates a greater awareness among women of the need for mutual respect and equity in intimate relationships. These differences, although not as pronounced as in other areas, nevertheless suggest an unequal perspective on roles and responsibilities in intimate relationships. Women are more likely to believe that sexual relationships should be based on consent, respect and equality, a perception influenced by their own experiences and a deep understanding of the impact of inequality in personal relationships. For men, on the other hand, the lower percentage points to the persistence of traditional perceptions that tend to attribute distinct gender roles in the intimate sphere.

- **Slow progress in redistributing household responsibilities.** Equitable redistribution of household responsibilities remains an area with low perceptions of gender equality, with only 64% of women and 55% of men recognizing the importance of equitable distribution of household tasks. Persisting gender stereotypes and traditional cultural norms are still obstacles, particularly in rural areas, where the division of household tasks is often seen as women's responsibility. This trend suggests the need for public education and awareness-raising programmes focused on encouraging equal partnership within the household and dismantling stereotypes.

Although progress has been made in the area of gender equality, the IMAGES-2 data on gender equity suggest that cultural barriers and traditional perceptions still exist in the Republic of Moldova, limiting transformations in this area.





III. MEN'S CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

3.1. UPBRINGING AND EDUCATION OF BOYS IN THE FAMILY OF ORIGIN

The family has a special role in shaping conceptions of gender equality. It is in the family of origin that the first educational and personality development takes place and family and social values are internalized. The research data show that 68% of men were cared for by both parents during their childhood, 14% - by their mother only, 14% - mostly by their mother or another female relative, 2% by their father and 2% by grandparents or relatives, or they cared for themselves (Table 12).

Regarding the presence of the biological father, 73% of the men who participated in the research lived together with their biological father until the age of 18, 20% lived with him for a certain period of their lives (from 1 to 17 years), 5% - did not know their biological father, and for 2% of the men, the father died before they were born. For more than half of the 7% of men who did not know their biological father, there was no other important male person in their childhood (4%). The others indicated that there had been another important male person in their life - grandfather, stepfather, older brother, uncle or another male person (teacher, coach). These aspects of men's childhood upbringing and education are important because they have influenced the formation of their perceptions, attitudes and behaviours regarding family life and gender equality.

Table 12. Childcare for boys in childhood, by age group (men's statement)%

		Both parents equally	Just mom	Mostly mother or other female relative	Just Dad	Someone else
Age	TOTAL	68	14	14	2	2
	18-29 years	59	15	19	2	2
	30-39 years	66	16	12	3	2
	40-49 years	71	12	13	2	1
	50-59 years	73	11	13	2	1

3.2. RELATIONS BETWEEN SPOUSES/ PARTNERS IN THE FAMILY OF ORIGIN

66% of the men, who lived with their biological or stepfather, observed that during their childhood, their father or another man, who lived with their mother, treated her with respect on a *daily basis*,

another 17% reported that this happened *often*, 9% - *sometimes* and 4% - *never* (Table 13).

Table 13. Frequency of observing, during childhood, respectful treatment of mother by biological father or other man, by age group, (men's opinion), %

		Daily	Often	Sometimes	Never	No answer
Age	TOTAL	66	17	9	4	4
	18-29 years	69	17	8	4	2
	30-39 years	68	17	6	4	5
	40-49 years	66	15	10	5	4
	50-59 years	63	20	10	3	4

At the same time, 71% of the men revealed that their mother treated their father or another man with whom they lived together with respect on a *daily basis* (Table 14). It should be noted that there is a direct correlation between these

experiences in the family of origin and the current families/couples of the men who participated in the research, which are presented in Chapter IV of the research report.

Table 14. Frequency of observing, during childhood, respectful treatment of father or other male cohabitant by mother, by age groups (men's opinion), %

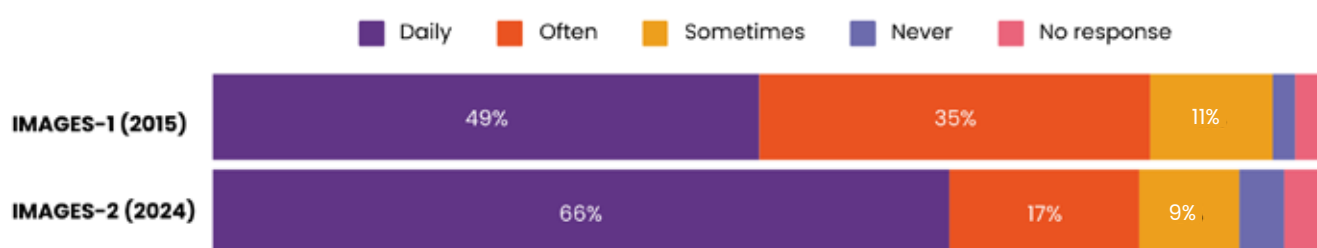
		Daily	Often	Sometimes	Never	No answer
Age	TOTAL	71	17	6	3	3
	18-29 years	75	15	6	2	2
	30-39 years	72	17	4	3	4
	40-49 years	71	14	6	4	4
	50-59 years	67	20	8	2	4



Changing trends in spousal/partner relationships in men's families of origin

Comparative analysis of IMAGES-1 and IMAGES-2 data shows a significant increase in the number of men who reported *daily* respect of their father or another man for their mother during childhood, from 49% to 66% for the period analysed (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Frequency of observing respectful treatment of mother by biological father or other man during childhood, 2015 and 2024 (men's statement), %



At the same time, the research data also shows a significant increase in the number of men who reported their mother's *daily* respect for their father or other man with whom they lived together, from 54% in 2015 to 71% in 2024 (Figure 13). Of note is the fact that in the home families of the men who participated in the research, there was greater respect from the mother to her husband/other man she lived with than from the husband/other man to the mother.

Figure 13. Frequency of observing respectful treatment of father or other male cohabitant by mother during childhood, 2015 and 2024 (men's statement), %



3.3. SKILLS FORMED IN THE FAMILY OF ORIGIN REGARDING HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES

The responses of the men who participated in the IMAGES-2 survey indicate that virtually every third father in childhood was involved in childcare on a daily basis, with other activities such as cooking, cleaning the house, washing clothes being done much less frequently by men. However, it is noteworthy that 8% of fathers were never involved in childcare, 17% never in preparing food, 25% never in tidying the house and 36% never in washing clothes (Table 15).

The analysis of men's household activities shows increasing trends in men's involvement from one generation to the next. The analysis shows that fathers of men born in the 1960s were less involved in household activities than fathers of men born in the 2000s. This reduced the number who never:

- Cared for their children, down from 10% to 5%;
- Prepared food, from 20% to 12%;
- Tidied their house in order, down from 27% to 16%;
- Washed clothes, from 37% to 31%.

These changes are due, on the one hand, to the fact that, in childhood, some of the mothers form these skills in boys, on the other hand, that men internalize some behaviours of the families of origin regarding the performance of some household activities. It is also worth mentioning the impact of migration on the formation of certain skills in Moldovan boys regarding domestic activities in their families of origin. During the focus group discussions some participants emphasized *"My mother decided to go abroad, my father stayed at home. He works in the police and was often on call and came late. A very big responsibility fell on me as an elder brother. And I learned to cook, sew, wash. And I wouldn't say that this is a minus, it's something very useful that really helps me"* (FG_3_B_U).

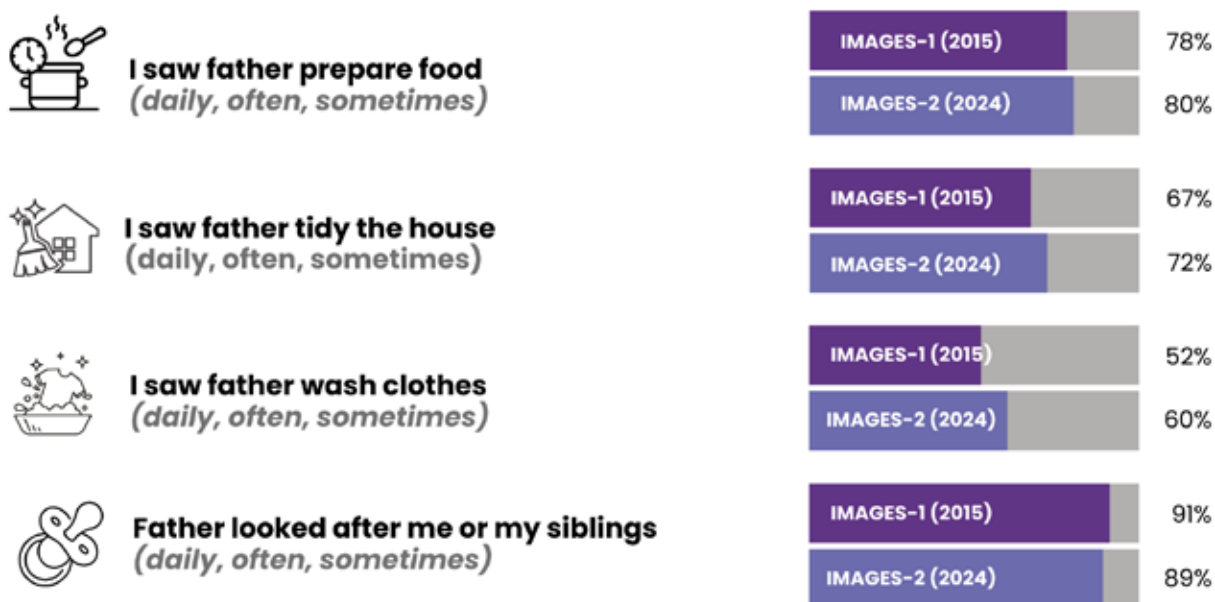
Table 15. Activities performed in the household by the biological father or other man with whom the mother lived (men's statement), %

	Daily	Often	Sometimes	Never	No answer
Prepared food	7	29	44	17	3
Tidied the house	6	24	42	25	3
Washed clothes	5	20	35	36	4
Looked after me or my siblings	36	31	22	8	3

Changing trends in the formation of household responsibilities in men’s families of origin

The formation of men’s household responsibilities in their families of origin is increasing. Men born in the 2000s, compared to those born in the 1960s, reported a greater involvement of their fathers in carrying out some household activities (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Trends in men’s household responsibility skills, 2015 and 2024 (men’s opinion), %



3.4. DECISION-MAKING IN THE FAMILY OF ORIGIN

Male respondents reported that both parents were involved in household decision-making during childhood in more than half of the households (Table 16). However, men’s childhood attests also to some aspects of a patriarchal society, when women were more involved in household decision making related to current consumption and children’s expenditures, and men in decision making related to long-term family investments.

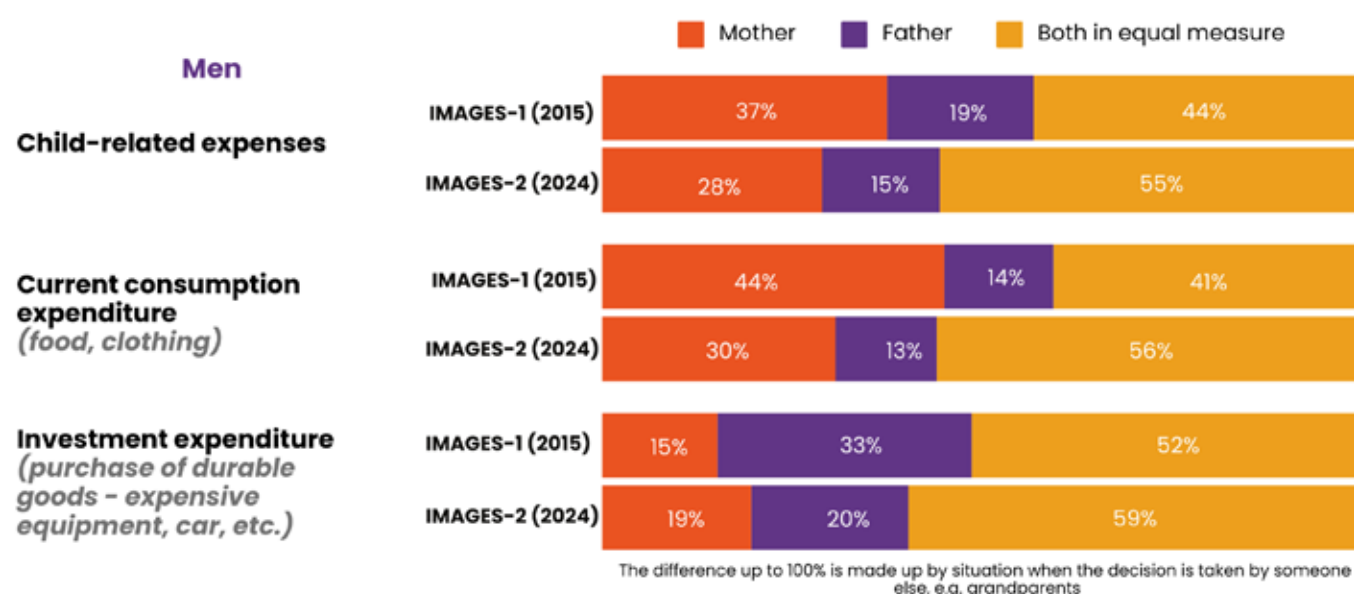
Table 16. Person who had the last say in family decision-making during childhood (men’s opinion), %

	Daily	Often	Sometimes	Never
Child-related expenses	28	15	55	2
Current consumption expenditure (food, clothing)	30	13	56	1
Investment expenditure (purchase of durable goods - expensive equipment, car, etc.)	19	20	59	2

Changing trends in decision-making in the family of origin

Data from the IMAGES-1 and IMAGES-2 studies reveal changing trends from one generation to the next in decision-making in men’s families of origin. There is a slight increase in the number of families in which both partners decide on investment expenditures (from 52% to 59%), current consumption expenditures (from 41% to 56%), and schooling or other child-related activities (from 44% to 55%) (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Person who had the last say in family decision-making during childhood, 2015 and 2024 (men’s opinion), %




3.5. SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT DURING CHILDHOOD

During childhood, a daily respect of men towards girls in the school environment was reported by 63% of men, with another 26% reporting *often* respect, 7% - *sometimes* and 3% *never*. Also, 79% of the men stated that neither they nor their friends had situations when they touched girls or talked about sex to tease them at school (Table 17).

The proportion of men who reported drinking alcohol at school with friends during their childhood is 14% (12% *sometimes* and 2% *often*).

Drug use in the school environment during childhood was reported by very few men.

Table 17. Attitudes and practices towards girls in the school environment during childhood (men), %

	Daily	Often	Sometimes	Never	No answer
The girls were treated with respect	63	26	7	3	1
Me and my friends used to touch girls or talk to them about sex at school	1	2	17	79	1
Me and my friends used drugs at school	0	0	1	98	1
Me and my friends used alcohol at school	0	2	12	86	0

The school environment is where lifelong friendships are formed. Thus, 3% of the men reported that school friends helped them to overcome the problems they had in their life *daily*, 26% - *often*, 38% -

sometimes, 33% - that they did not have such support.

Changing trends in the school environment

The number of men who said they treated girls with respect in the school environment on a daily basis increased from 41% in 2015 to 63% in 2024. Concerning the formation of lifelong friendships in the school environment, there is evidence of

modernization trends in society due to the process of alienation. The number of men who have not formed friendships at school and have never been helped by peers has increased from 20% in 2015 to 33% in 2024.







IV. PRACTICES IN CURRENT FAMILY LIFE

4.1. RELATIONS BETWEEN SPOUSES/PARTNERS AND SOURCES OF FAMILY INCOME

In the 2024 survey, 64% of men and 73% of women reported having a stable spouse or partner. Of the men, 90% lived with their spouse/partner, and of the women - 80% lived with their spouse/partner (Figure 16).

Research data shows that the proportion of young men with a steady partner is lower, but gradually increases with age. Only 45% of men aged 18-29 have a steady partner. This percentage increases to 68% for those aged 30-39, remains at 68% for the 40-49 age group and reaches 74% for men aged 50-59 (Figure 17). For women, the presence of a stable partner is highest at the age of 30-39, after which this indicator decreases.

Figure 16. Share of research participants who reported having a stable partner, %

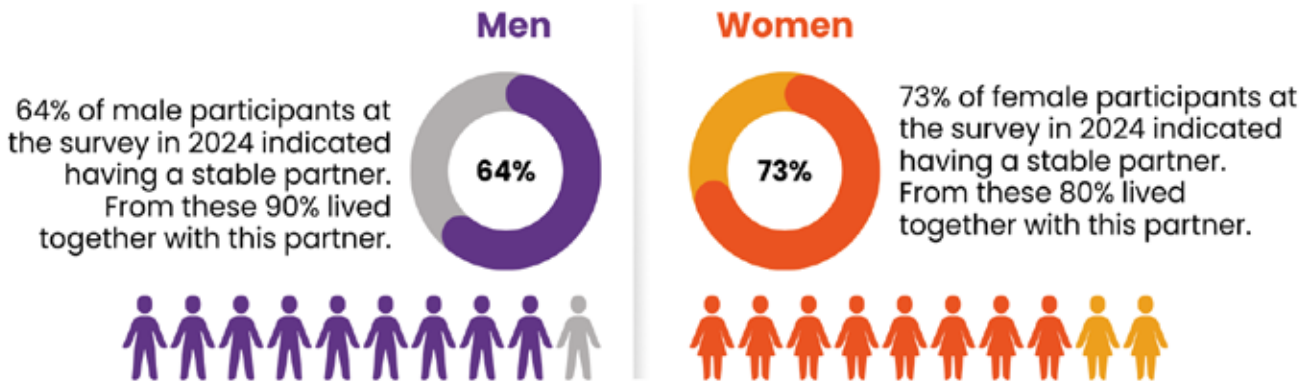
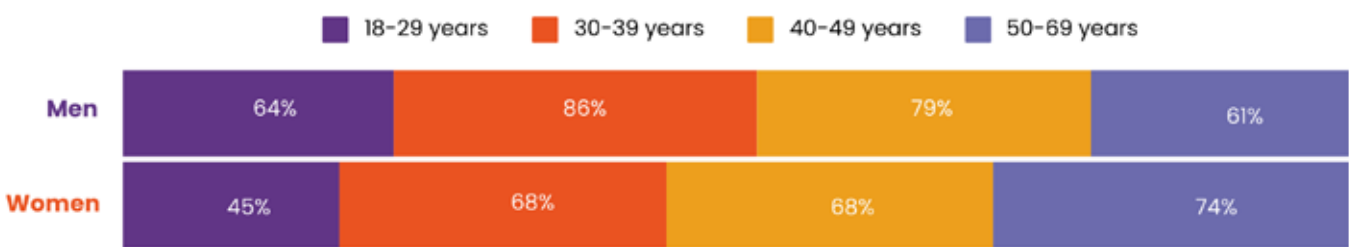


Figure 17. Proportion of men and women with a stable partner, by age group, %



An analysis of perceptions of the main source of household income shows that many men still believe that they should be the main financial breadwinner in the family, although this varies significantly by age. According to the data, 53% of men believe that the main responsibility for the family income rests with them, 34% say that income should be provided by both partners, and 4% believe that the wife/partner should be the main source of income (Figure 20). The data reflect a growing awareness of the importance of financial cooperation within a couple, but also the persistence of traditional mindsets among a significant proportion of men.

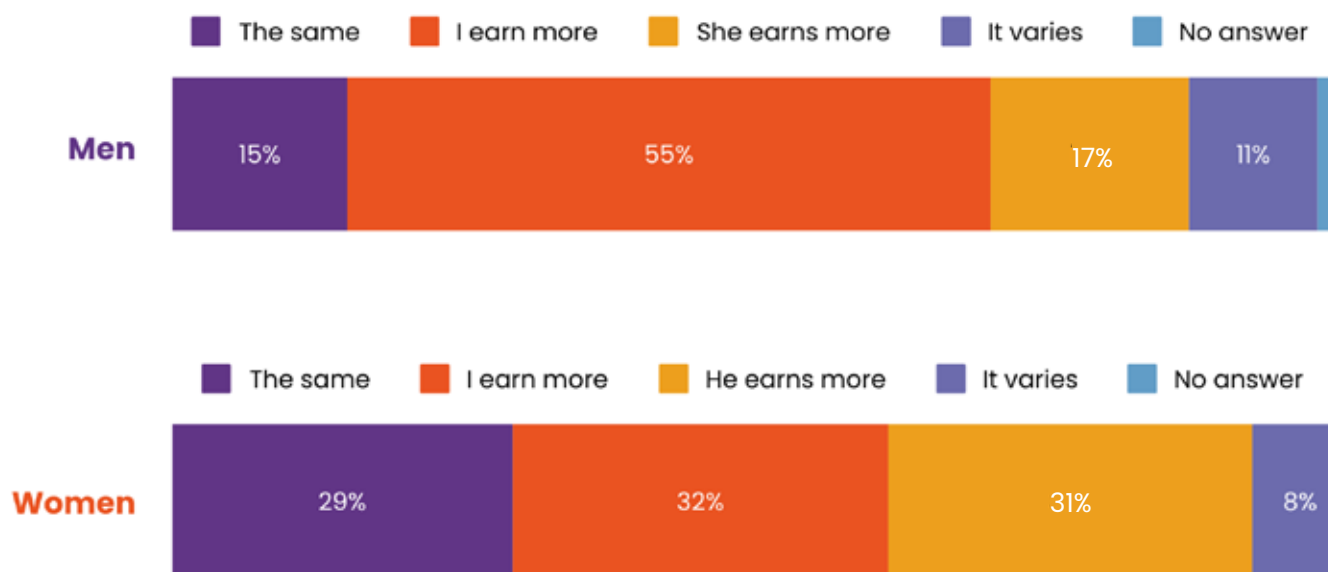
Women's responses reflect signs of changing social norms and a more modern orientation. Only 32% of women believe that the man should be the main contributor to the family budget. Significantly, 31% of women believe that both partners should contribute to the family budget, and 29% say that they should be the main income provider. It is worth noting that 49% of women aged 30-39 believe that their husband or partner should be responsible for the main income, this opinion being influenced by the time devoted to childbirth and childcare. Among the 40-49 and 50-59 age groups, the husband's role in providing income decreases. This information highlights the vulnerabilities that women face during motherhood and childcare and is useful for social and economic policy makers.

Married and cohabiting men, as well as married and cohabiting women, also reported on their contribution to the average monthly household income. The results support previously observed

trends. The percentage of women reporting that they contribute equally to the household income is almost double - 29%, compared to only 15% of men who reported the same. Also, 32% of women reported that their income is higher than their partners', while only 17% of men recognized this (Figure 18).

The differences in men's and women's responses regarding their contribution to the monthly household income can be explained by a number of cultural, economic and psychological factors. On the one hand, men continue to perceive themselves or are perceived as the main source of income, reflecting a traditional mindset and social pressure on men to maintain this role. On the other hand, the divergence in responses may also be influenced by subjective perceptions of the value of each partner's work and how each individual perceives financial contributions to the couple.

Figure 18. Contribution of spouses/partners to the average monthly household income, %



Discussions in the focus group showed that most men now agree that both partners should be active in the workforce. It was pointed out that when only one partner works, various dysfunctions can arise: *“if only men work, women go crazy. And if women work and men stay at home, men go crazy as well – they get lazy. Both have to work, that’s normal. When only one works, the other one has high expectations”* (FG_6_B_R). However, men have varying attitudes towards the situation where the wife contributes more income to the family budget (Box 2). Few find this acceptable on the grounds

that the income is for the family. Many men are of the opinion that they would be bothered by this situation, justifying that women’s higher incomes could lead to a shift in the balance of power in the household.



Box 2. Attitudes towards the wife bringing more money into the family

"It doesn't matter who brings in more money..." (FG_1_B_U).

"Children are common, and money is spent for the good of the children, or for comfort" (FG_3_B_U).

"It would bother me if my wife earned more... She would have more power. She would try to take the lead and rebel" (FG_6_B_R).

"I wouldn't feel comfortable if my wife earned more money than me. I would work at two jobs, just to earn more" (FG_1_B_U).

"If the woman earns much more than the man, it is possible that she will leave him" (FG_1_B_U).

"Men are the ones who should provide the material part, though. But in recent years it depends on partners' studies and education in the family of origin. But I strive to earn more" (FG_5_B_U).

The women consider it normal that sometimes the wife contributes more financial resources to the family budget *"there are moments in life when roles change whether you want them to or not, this is the cycle of life. And then you can't permanently think that all your life I will have power and I will bring more" (FG_7_F_U).* However, from personal

experiences, women observed that men do not feel comfortable in such situations *"I experienced this... we were at the beginning, beginners in the family, and the husband suffered. He felt he was maintained. He didn't say it, but I felt it in his behaviour" (FG_8_F_F_R).*

Changing trends in who is the main breadwinner in the household

The opinion, of 75% of the men and 70% of the women who participated in the research in the year 2024, indicates that the main responsibility for day-to-day family material provision should rest on the shoulders of the husband. These views reveal traditional views that perpetuate inequalities in the family and society (Figure 19). Only one in four men and one in three women have views that indicate

a shift from a traditional to a modern view of the material responsibility of the family. Changes are more visible in urban areas and in families with a higher level of education, where both partners are active in the labour market.

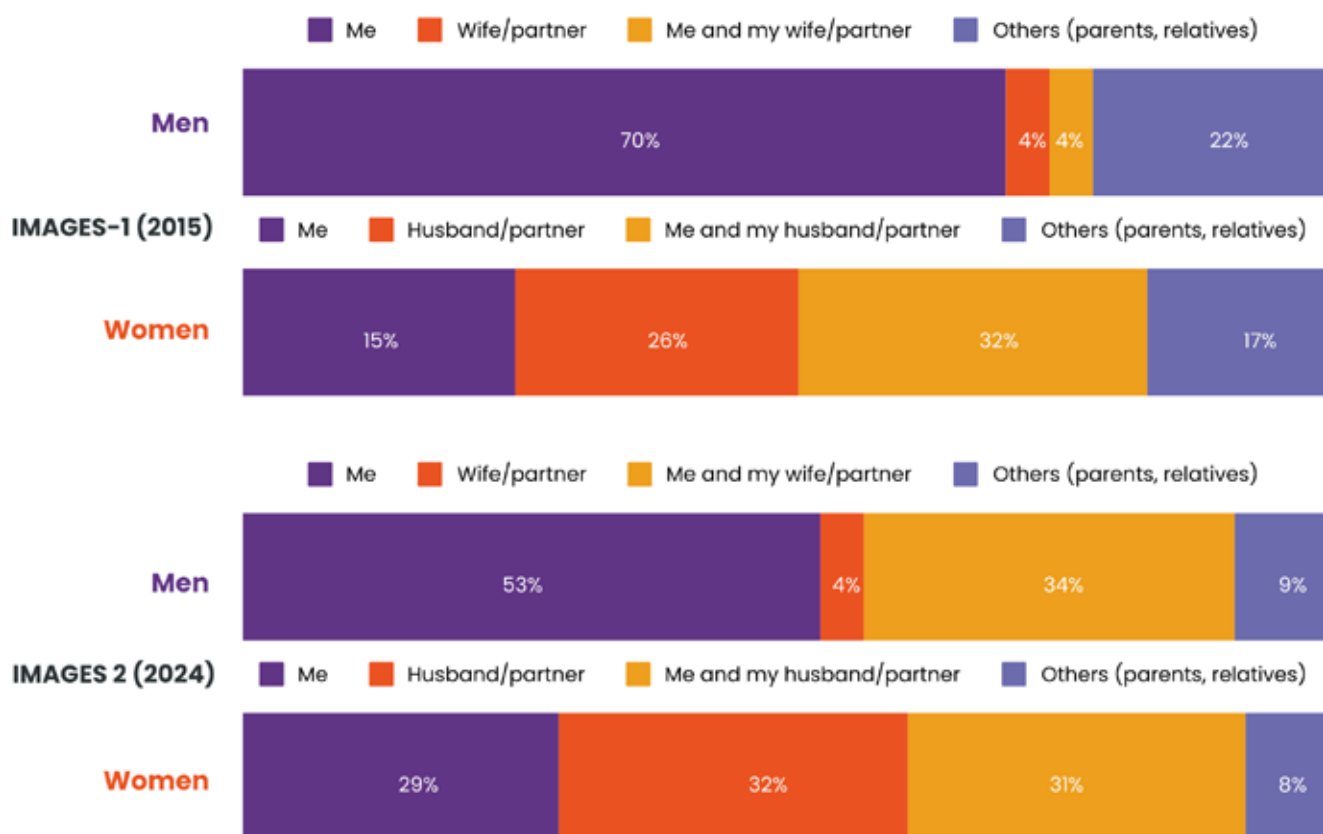
Figure 19. Agreement with the statement - "The main responsibility for the family's material provision lies with the husband, 2015 and 2024, %



Comparative analysis of the IMAGES-1 and IMAGES-2 data shows some changes in men's perceptions of household financial support, with a significant increase in the number of those who recognize that both partners contribute to the main household income, from 4% in 2015 to 34% in 2024. This assertion by men is also supported by women. 32% of women in 2015, and

31% in 2024, reported that both spouses/partners provide the main source of household income (Figure 20). The given situation attests, that some men need more time to also recognize women's contribution to the household budget.

Figure 20. Comparative perceptions on the main source of household income, 2015 and 2024, %



4.2. RAISING AND EDUCATING CHILDREN

The survey data show that 59% (554) of the men and 82% (421) of the women who participated in the survey have biological children. In the households of 18% of the men who participated in the research lives one child, in 23% - 2 children, in 9% - 3 children and in 5% - 4 or more children. Of the men who have biological children, 55% live with all children, 12% - with some children and 33% - live without children.

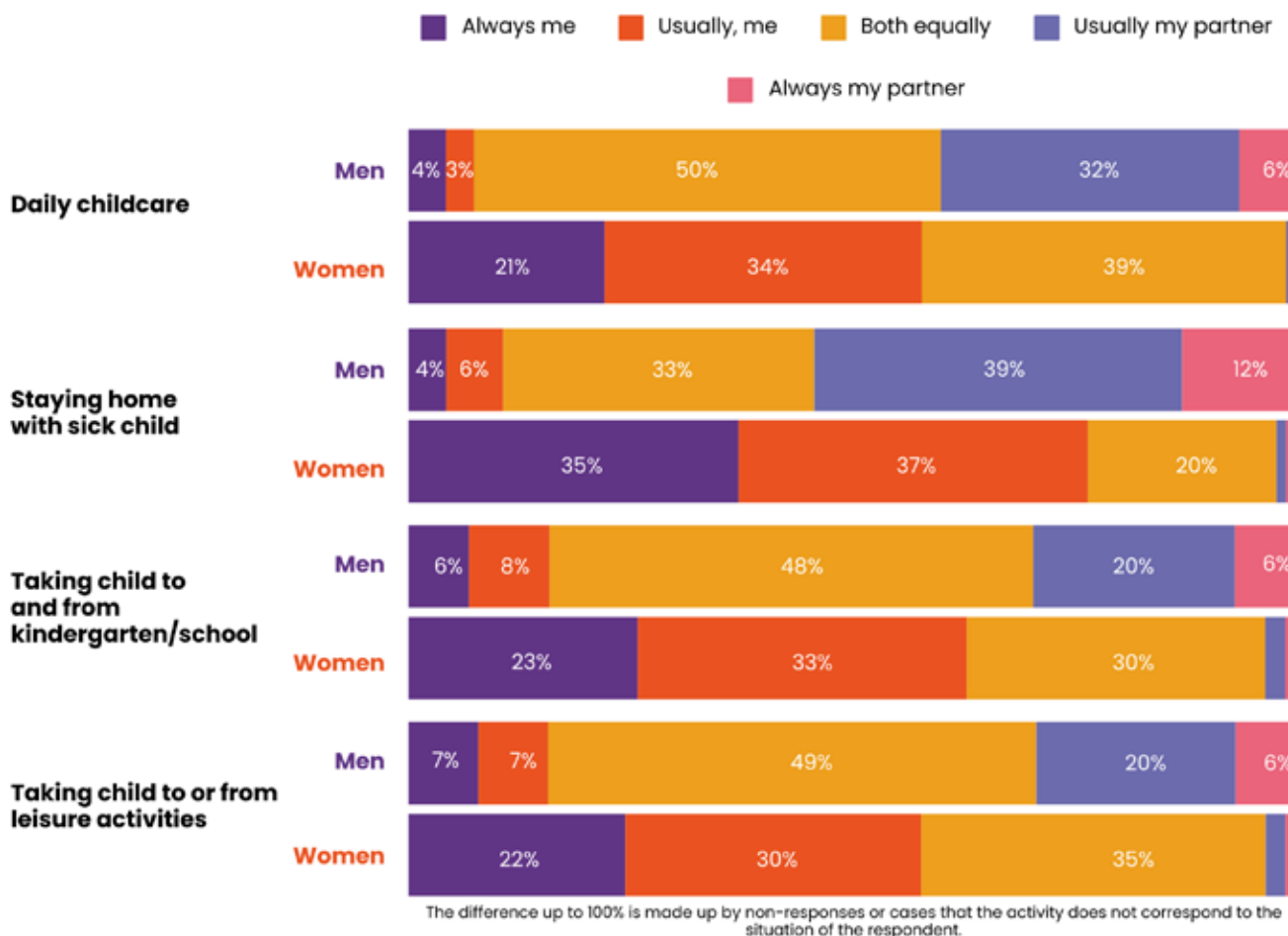
Men's views on equal involvement in the upbringing and education of children differ from those of women (Figure 21). Men report more involvement and participation in these activities. The research data reveal that men's participation in the upbringing

and education of children depends on several factors: the educational model in the family of origin, their involvement in migration processes, their profession and the specifics of their job. For example, according to the focus group participants, long-distance drivers, sailors, policemen, etc. are less involved and participate less. Men with higher education and a high household income were more likely to be involved in various child rearing and care activities.

In the focus group discussions, men emphasized that in the family, the wife interacts more easily with the children and deals with common topics more effectively, and educational roles are divided according to each one's skills and preferences. However, some fathers reported that they spend time with their

children in the evenings after work, go for walks with them, help their children prepare homework, attend parents' assemblies at school, which was also emphasized by women "lately I have noticed so many men with their children out walking and it is so nice" (FG_7_F_U).

Figure 21. Distribution of parenting tasks, %

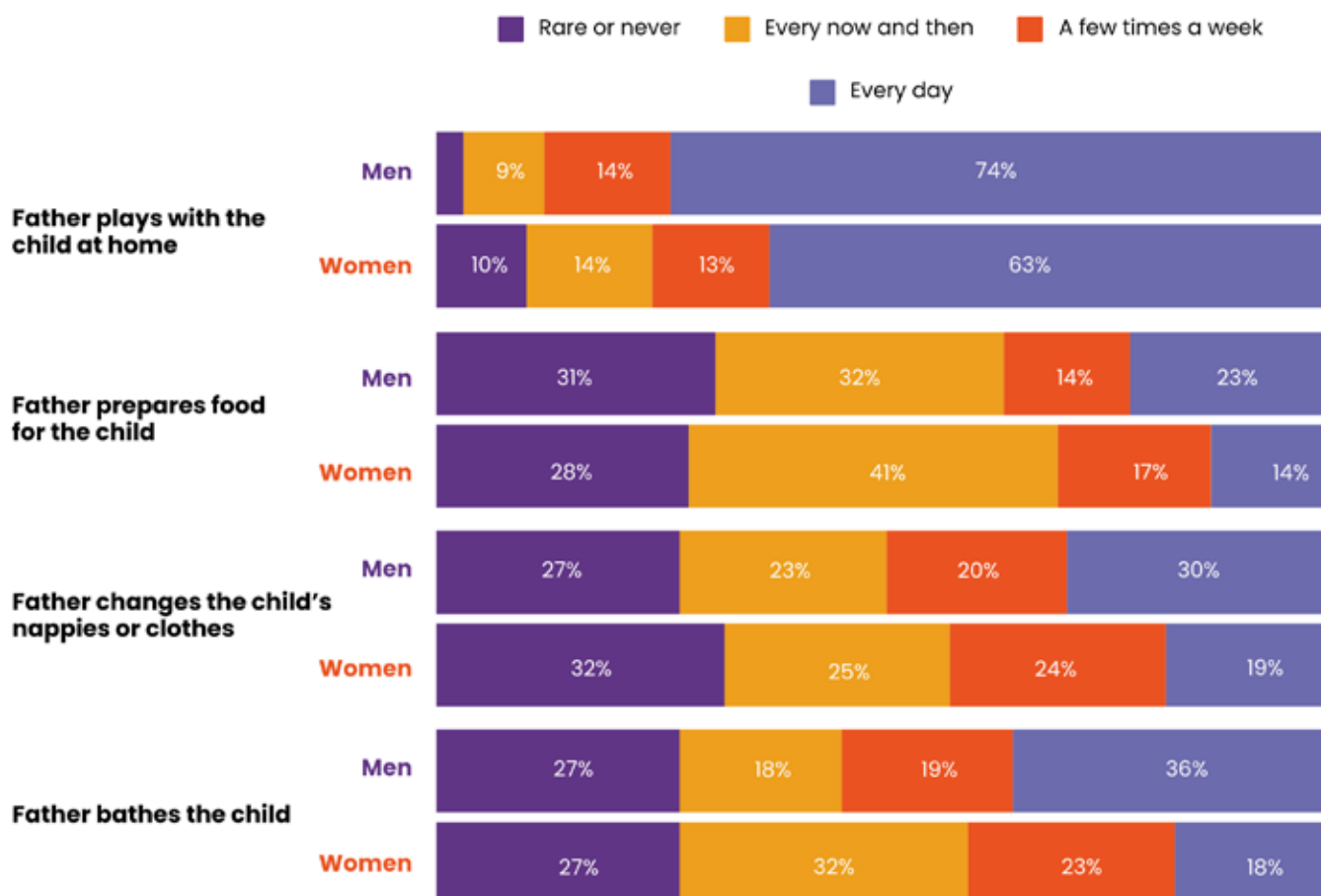


Work limits the time parents can spend with their children. For example, 56% of men and 40% of women reported that they spend very little time with their children because of work obligations. In addition, 70% of men and 58% of women would like to work less in order to spend more time with their children (Figure 25). This problem is more pronounced among rural and low-income men.

The majority of men (94%) believe that their role in caring for children is to support them, a view shared by 83% of women. However, 13% of women expect their partners to be more actively involved in their children's upbringing, highlighting the need for programmes in Moldova that emphasize the importance of both parents' participation in the upbringing and education of their children.

Of the total sample, **12% of men (123) and 29% (117) of women had children aged 0-4 years**. 74% of men with children of this age reported that they play with their child at home every day, a situation also reported by 63% of women. In terms of other activities with children of this age, 36% of men reported bathing the child daily, 30% reported changing diapers daily, and 23% reported preparing food for the child daily (Figure 22). In the focus group discussions, women mentioned that some men were afraid to interact with young, newborn children, fearing that they would harm them.

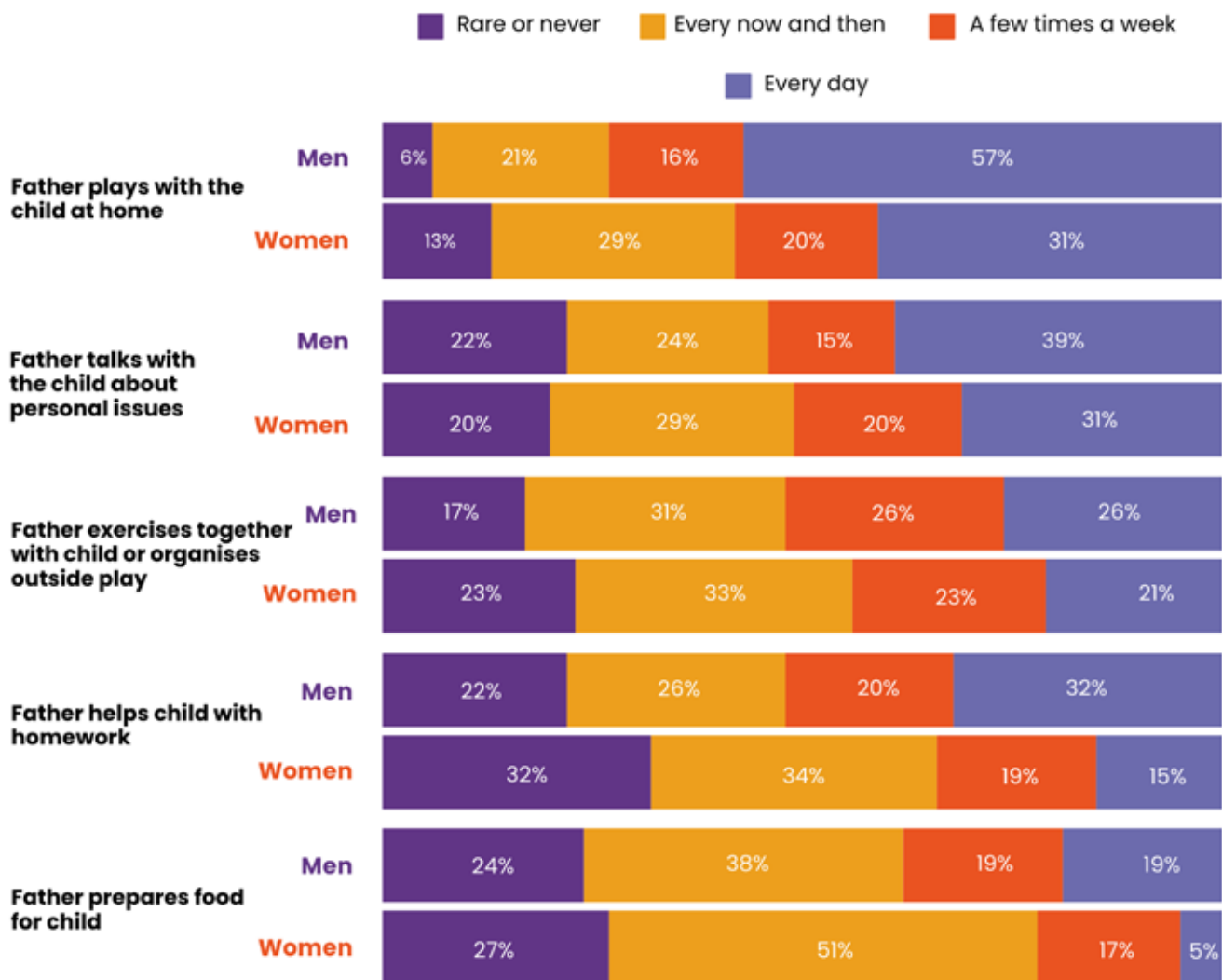
Figure 22. Frequency of daily childcare activities for children aged 0-4 years performed by men, %



Of the total sample, **25% (250) of the men and 33% (169) of the women had children aged 5-13 years** (Figure 23). Men with children of this age engage in a variety of activities with their children on a daily basis, ranging from playing and discussing personal problems to helping with homework, exercising and preparing meals. Fathers, in particular, play a significant role in sports activities, actively participating alongside their children.

Some women emphasized that fathers are more demanding, giving children extra motivation compared to coaches. Thus, the research data indicate trends in fathers' involvement in the upbringing and education of children. In particular, men are more involved in playing with children and less involved in bathing children or preparing food for children.

Figure 23. Frequency of daily care activities for children aged 5–13 years, %

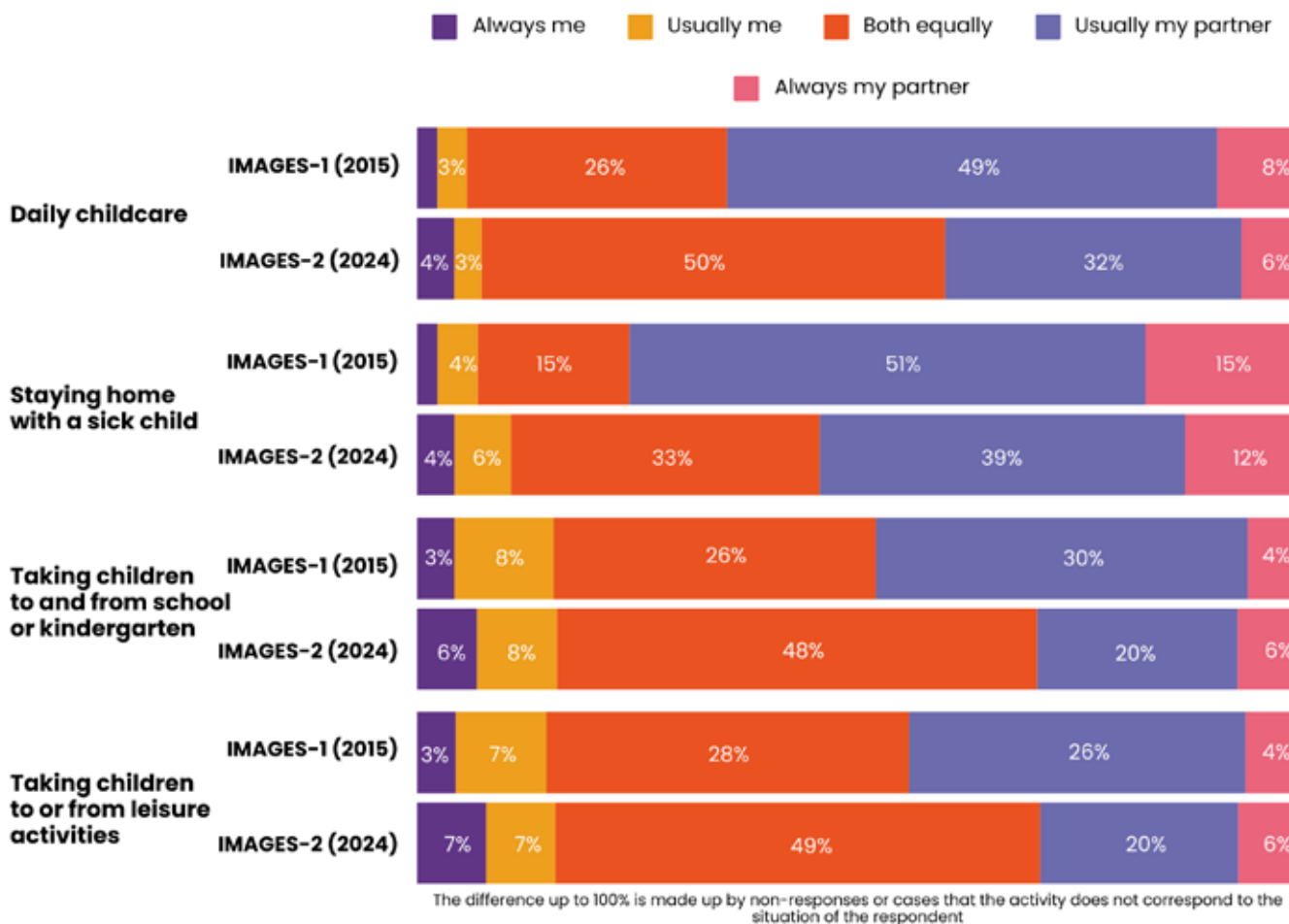


Changing trends in fathers' involvement in raising and educating children

The overall involvement of fathers in the upbringing and education of children is on an upward trend from 55% in 2015 to 68% in 2024. The research data shows an increase in fathers' involvement in various child-rearing activities: (i) in daily childcare from 26% to 50%, (ii) taking the child/children to or from extracurricular activities from 28% to 49%, (iii) taking the child/children to or from kindergarten/school from 26% to 48%, (iv) including staying with a sick child at home from 15% to 33% (Figure 24). However, some

prejudices and stereotypes regarding fathers' involvement in the upbringing and education of children continue to exist in men's mentality, with childcare and child-rearing being considered as feminine activities - *"Nature is so intended that children are more a woman's concern. That's why she gave birth to them, toiled..."* (FG_4_B_U).

Figure 24. Distribution of tasks related to raising and educating children, 2015 and 2024 (men's statement), %

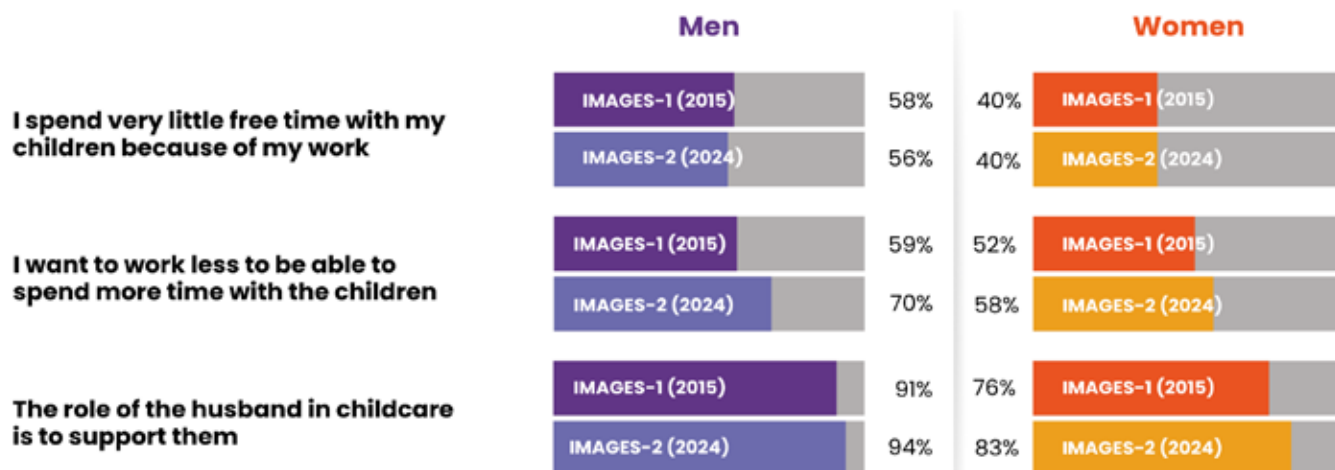


Involvement of fathers in carrying out various activities with children aged 0-4 years on a daily basis has increased, for playing from 60% to 74%, for bathing from 21% to 36%; for changing nappies and clothes from 9% to 30%, and for preparing food, from 7% to 23%.

There are also important changes in terms of fathers' daily involvement in activities with children aged 5-13: playing - from 31% to 57%; discussing personal problems - from 11% to 39%; doing homework - from 11% to 32%; exercising - from 4% to 26%, etc. There was a significant change in the number of fathers who said they would

like to work less so they could spend more time with their children, from 59% in 2015 to 70% in 2024 (Figure 25). In the focus group discussions, men reported that they are always having to make choices to ensure a decent living for their family and this is often at the expense of time spent with children and wife "In this life you have to pay for everything. If you don't pay with money, you pay with your health, you pay with your family, you pay with your attention, with your children, with your wife, with your life, you pay For the comfort of staying at home, with your wife and children, you have to pay" (FG_3_B_U).

Figure 25. Perceptions of time spent with children and husband's role in childcare among men and women, 2015 and 2024, %



Mention should also be made of campaigns or activities organized in the community or in the workplace on involving men in parenting. 20% of men heard about such campaigns. Young men (18-29 and 30-39 years old), with higher education, from urban areas and with a high average monthly household income, are more likely to be aware of such campaigns.

It is also significant that 20% of the men participated in activities discussing the role of fathers in children's lives. Men aged 18-29, with post-secondary technical vocational or higher education and high household income, were more likely to be involved in such activities. In

a focus group discussion, the Fathers' Club was highlighted, where fathers and children take part in competitions aimed at strengthening the parent-child relationship, stimulating father-child interactions "for me competitiveness is very attractive and I spend time here with my child" (FG_3_B_U). Such activities were appreciated as beneficial, as the time spent with the child in this way is more valuable and interesting than activities carried out individually and are considered useful for changing fathers' attitudes and involvement in children's education.

4.3. ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT IN THE HOUSEHOLD

The sharing of responsibilities in the family/couple reveals tendencies towards the modern family "I try to help my wife more, that didn't happen in my family" (FG_5_B_R). According to the research, 58% of men say that household tasks are shared in a way that allows for the involvement of both partners, indicating a shared commitment to managing

duties. However, 27% of men recognize that their wives/partners take on more of the responsibilities, compared to only 9% who claim that they fulfil more of the tasks (Table 18). There are some differences between men's and women's views on this issue, particularly when assessing the degree of involvement of the other partner. For example, 9% of men claim

that they have more responsibilities in the household and 18% of women claim that men’s responsibilities are greater. And vice versa, 21% of women consider

that they have more responsibilities in the family and 27% of men share this view.

Table 18. Assessment of household responsibilities, %

	The spouse/ female partner does more	The involvement of both is the same	Husband/ male partner does more	Hard to appreciate
Men	27	58	9	7
Women	21	55	18	4

Men reported that they are increasingly participating in household activities along with their wives, a fact also highlighted by women. Among the responsibilities still dominated by women are washing clothes and cooking. On the other hand, tasks such as buying groceries, cleaning the house, paying bills and minor household repairs are more frequently done together (Table 19). Men aged 18-29 are the most active in carrying out household activities together with their spouse/partner.

72% of men who live with their wife/partner, in performing household chores (cleaning, cooking, taking care of children) manage on their own, without receiving help from anyone, 18% receive help from children, 9% - help from extended family or relatives, the others - other types of help. Men aged 40-49 and 50-59 years receive more help from children than men aged 18-29 and 30-39 years who receive frequent help from the extended family.

The focus group discussions also highlighted some types of activities

done together *“we do canning. I wash the peppers, my husband cuts them”* (FG_8_F_R). It was emphasized that these changes are largely due to taking over experiences from the family of origin or not accepting some of the experiences of these families *“My father did not get involved in women’s duties. I can do all the things and if necessary I help my wife. My father was not like that. He loved that my mother served him ...”* (FG_6_B_R).

Men say that both they and their wives/partners are equally satisfied with the current division of household responsibilities (29% are *very satisfied* and 70% *satisfied*). Women basically support men’s views on the degree of satisfaction with the current division of household responsibilities (24% are *very satisfied* and 68% *satisfied*).

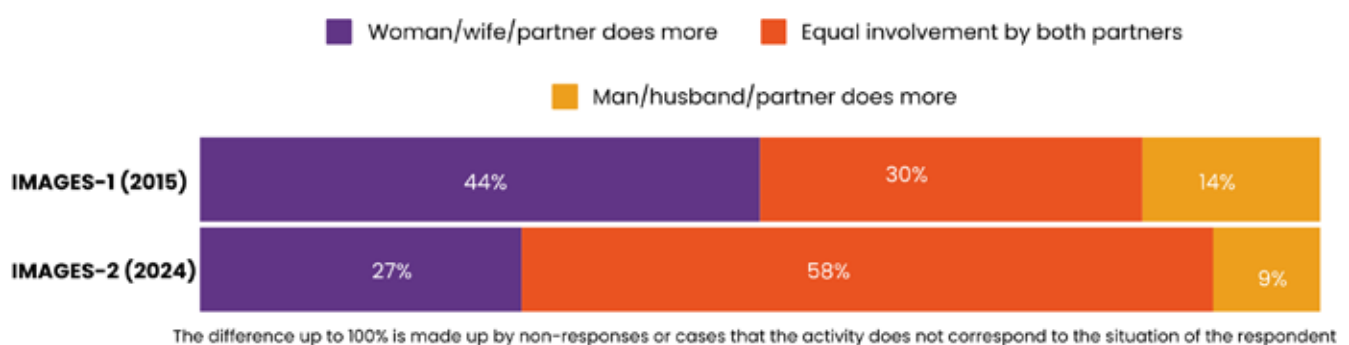
Table. 19. Distribution of responsibilities within the household, %

	Men		Women	
	Wife/ Partner ¹⁷	Together	Me (wife/ partner) ¹⁸	Together
Tidying the house	37	50	30	46
Minor home repairs	4	40	7	48
Buying food	22	64	18	66
Food preparation	43	40	31	38
Paying bills	23	46	21	46
Washing clothes	46	35	34	34

Changing trends in household responsibilities

More and more housework is done by both partners together. This was reported by 30% of men in 2015 and 58% in 2024 (Figure 26).

Figure 26. Assessment of household responsibilities, 2015 and 2024 (men's statement), %

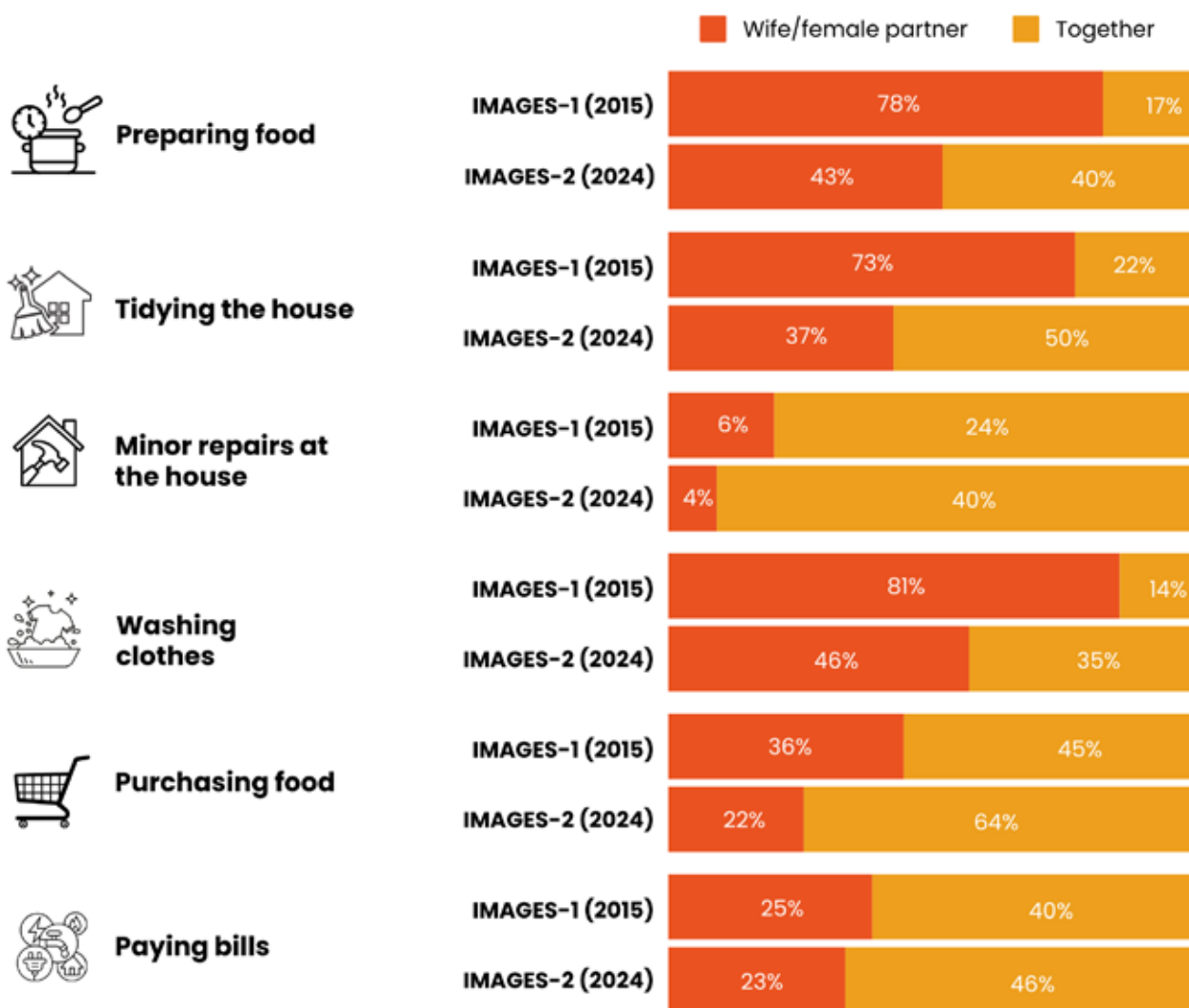


Men's involvement with female partners in household activities is multi-faceted, ranging from food shopping and cleaning to cooking, minor repairs and washing clothes (Figure 27). In the focus group discussions it was highlighted that men help with various tasks such as preparing canned food, cleaning fish, etc. as a form of mutual support and affection.

¹⁷ The cumulative answers "usually partner" and "partner does everything alone".

¹⁸ Cumulated answers "usually me" and "I do everything".

Figure 27. Distribution of household responsibilities, 2015 and 2024 (men's statement), %



The difference up to 100% is made up by non-responses or cases that the activity does not correspond to the situation of the respondent

4.4. DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Decision-making in the family/couple is becoming more participatory “*now the man feels like the head of the family, but he consults with the woman*” (FG_6_B_R). The share of both partners involved in decision-making on current consumption has increased from 56% in the original family to 69% in the current family/couple, and on investment decisions from 59% to 75%. Decision-making about leisure remains the most participatory, with 84% of respondents who said they live with their partner, making these decisions together (Table 20).

Correlational analysis indicates that, as a rule, men tend to replicate the decision-making pattern of the family of origin, both in terms of the purchase of current and durable consumer goods. The level of education of the partners plays a key role in family decision-making. When both partners have the same level of education or when the wife/partner has a higher level of education, decision-making tends to become more participatory.

Table 20. Last say in decision making in family of origin and current family/couple (men's opinion), %

	Family of origin ¹⁹			
	Mom	Father	Both in equal measure	Other situations
Current consumption expenditure (<i>food, clothing</i>)	30	13	56	1
Investment expenditure (<i>purchase of durable goods - equipment, machinery, cars, etc.</i>)	19	20	59	2

	Family/actual partner ²⁰			
	Mom	Father	Both in equal measure	Other situations ²¹
Current consumption expenditure (<i>food, clothing</i>)	21	8	69	2
Investment expenditure (<i>purchase of durable goods - equipment, machinery, cars, etc.</i>)	5	17	75	2
Expenditure on spending leisure time with family, friends or relatives	8	6	84	1

Decisions regarding the health of family members and children are also increasingly made jointly. Thus, 58% of men living with their partner reported that women's health decisions are taken jointly, 23% by their wife/partner and 12% - by men (Table 21). Although the number of men who decide women's health issues together with their partner has increased, the number of those who make decisions alone has not changed over the last 9 years. More men from low-income households continue to make such decisions.

The data collected from men is broadly supported by that of women. 51% of women said that they have the final say regarding their own health, compared to 44% who said that they make the decision together with their husband/partner, 3% that their husband/partner makes the decision. The data shows that more women aged 18-29 make decisions about their own health together with their husband/partner.

¹⁹ 94% of the sample, 949 people who lived with their biological or stepfather.

²⁰ 58% of the sample, 585 people who reported they are married and living together with their partner.

²¹ The difference up to 100% is made up of non-responses.

In the case of children's health - 72% of men emphasized that these decisions are made together, in 14% - the decision is made by the wife/partner and in 10% of cases - by the husband (Table 21). The research data attests to the presence of traditional gender attitudes in the case

of families/couples where men maintain the last word regarding the health of their wives/partners and children. It should be noted that such attitudes and behaviours are found more in low-income families.

Table 21. Last say in decision making regarding the health of family members (men's statement), %

	Me	Spouse/ partner	Together	Other situations ²²
Women's health	12	23	58	3
Child's health	10	14	72	3

In order to better understand how the family in the Republic of Moldova functions and how decisions are made regarding the birth of children, the study participants were asked to indicate who wanted the last child in the family more. The results reveal 80% of men and 75% of women indicated that both spouses wanted it equally (Table 22). However, in the focus group discussions, men over the age of 40 mentioned *"More the wife. She gives birth in the end and if she doesn't*

want to, you can do what you want, with no effect" (FG_2_B_U), *"Men here are one step behind, the decision is more the woman's"* (FG_6_B_R). Men's maintaining control over the decision to have the last child however remains characteristic for 11% of the men who participated in the research, which was also confirmed by the women.

Table 22. Answers on who wanted their last child more, %²³

	Husband/ partner	Wife/ partner	Both in equal measure	Older children	Unplanned
Men's statement	11	7	80	0	4
Women's declaration	11	11	75	0	5

Male attendance at childbirth continues to be very low in the Republic of Moldova. Only 18% of men reported having attended the birth of their last child (Table 23). The number of men who support their wives

at childbirth is higher among the younger generation, 29% of men aged 18-29 attended the birth of their last child.

²² The difference up to 100% is made up of non-responses.

²³ Several answers were allowed.

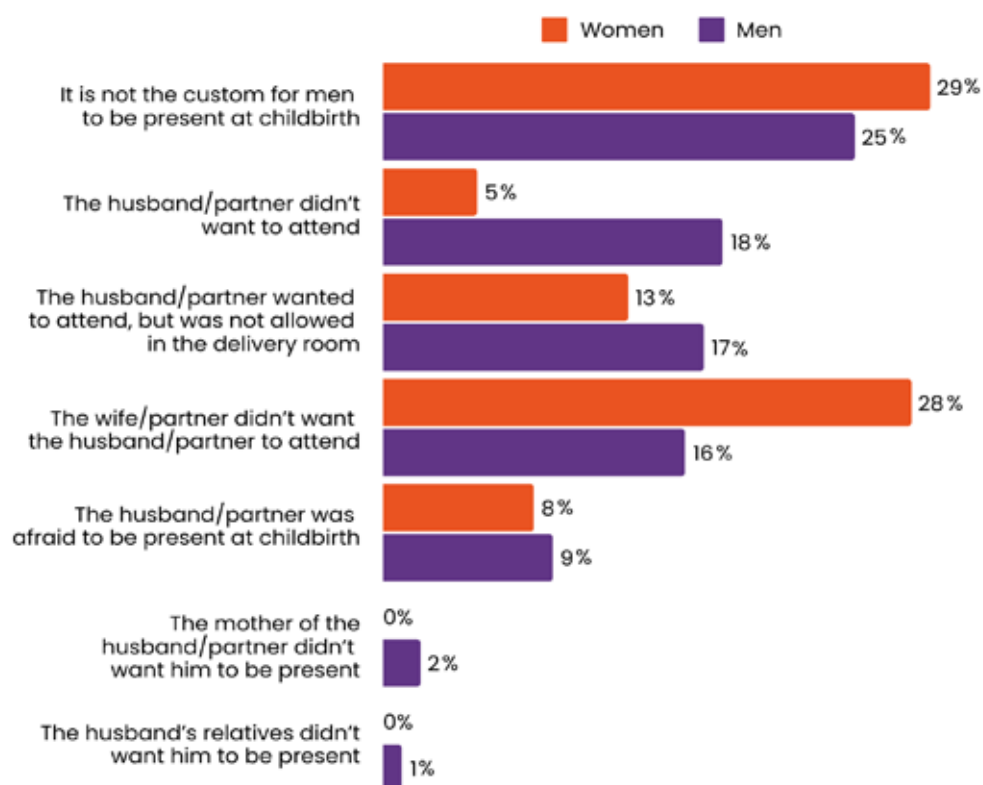
Table 23. Men's place of attendance during the last childbirth, %²⁴

	At the maternity ward in the delivery room	In the maternity waiting room	Home	At work	Abroad
Men's statement	18	22	34	15	8
Women's declaration	18	19	37	19	7

The reasons why a large proportion of the men did not accompany their wives in the delivery room, although they were not busy with other activities, are varied (Figure 28). Among them, 25% mentioned that in their locality there is no tradition for men to attend childbirth, 18% - did not want to attend, 17% - were not allowed to enter the delivery room, and 16% -

said that their wives did not want their presence. Another 9% indicated fear of attending. Women highlighted similar reasons, confirming the presence of a traditionalist conception on this subject in the Republic of Moldova.

Figure 28. Reasons why husband/partner did not attend birth, by sex, %²⁵



The focus group discussions testify that a significant proportion of men and women "do not understand the usefulness", "do not understand the role" of men in assisting with childbirth and bring to the forefront the idea that "some men are weak-willed

to assist" (FG_3_B_U). Various prejudices and stereotypes were reported as influencing men's and women's views on the role of the partner in childbirth (Box 3).

²⁴ Other situations make up the difference up to 100%.

²⁵ Other situations make up the difference up to 100%.



Box 3. Men's and women's arguments about childbirth assistance

"With all love and respect for my partner, I am not psychologically prepared to witness this, especially after the horrors I have seen in TV shows and movies. I've seen that it's such a practice, that you can go to different sessions, but I would definitely not commit myself to that" (FG_2_B_U).

"For a man it's a bit nauseating. It makes you not want to look at your wife" (FG_5_B_R).

"I don't think it's normal. This is a women's thing. I have read that later men are repulsed by women if they assist" (FG_6_B_R).

"Yes it's not nice, the process is not nice and there are many who change their attitude towards women and change their sex life. Somehow they see women differently..." (FG_8_FG_R).

"...And at the moment when you see it so close, I honestly for me, even if I propose to have been a man in another life, I really wouldn't see that woman in the eyes. Even if she bore that child to me, honestly" (FG_7_F_U).

Few men mentioned that assisting in childbirth is to help, encourage the wife, provide reassurance or prevent obstetric violence "you support the wife... Plus the doctors *can sometimes be violent, but men can observe and intervene. Plus the doctors control their behaviour*" (FG_6_B_R). Some women, however, highlighted the support and the relationship developed by husbands with the child "at that moment not only does he help you, but he understands that it's not so easy to give birth. He understands what a woman goes through and he helps you. He takes the baby in his arms..." (FG_7_F_U). In this context, the research data highlight the need for information about the benefits of men's assistance in childbirth in order to combat prejudices and stereotypes present in the population's mentality, as well as the need to prepare men to emotionally support their wives/partners.

The practice of accompanying the wife/partner to the doctor during pregnancy is not widespread among families in the Republic of Moldova. Of the men who have children and the children are biological, 50% said that they went to every doctor's visit with their wife/partner, 28% went to a few visits, 16% did not accompany her to any check-ups. These practices were also indicated by women, but with a lower level of husband's attendance. Respectively, 32% of them mentioned that their husband/partner accompanied them during pregnancy to every antenatal check-up visit, 30% - several times and 35% that he did not accompany them to any check-up. The profile of men who did not go with their spouse/partner to any check-ups during pregnancy has not changed in the last 9 years and represents men over 50 years of age, with secondary education, with low household income.

23% of men who had biological children and were employed at the time of the birth of their child reported that they took leave at the time of the birth, as did 20% of women. It was found that in more cases, urban men with higher education and higher household income took such leave.

Of the men who took leave when their child was born, 30% took 14 days, 15% - 30 days, 9% - 7 days, the others - some other number of days. Importantly, 88% of the men who took leave when the child was born or were not employed at the time, stayed at home with their wives, helping to care for the child, and 93% of them reported that the time spent with the child helped to establish a bond that was beneficial in their subsequent relationship with the child. And 82% of women whose partners had taken leave when their last child was born confirmed that they had created an initial bond with the child that helped them in subsequent interactions. This fact was mentioned by 9 out of 10 women aged 18-29 with higher education and average household income. In focus group discussions, men reported that this *"changes the father-child relationship, especially son-father, but also father-daughter. I was afraid of my father, I did not have a good relationship with him"* (FG_3_B_U).

On the other hand, 36% of men who did not take leave when their child was born cited lack of financial possibilities as the reason, 16% said they were not allowed to do so at work, 18% did not want to take leave and 31% cited other reasons.

In the focus group discussions, the opinions of men and women on paternal leave were also analysed. It should be noted that some are unaware of the existence of this leave or confuse it with childcare leave. The men who are informed on this issue reported that paternal instinct

is similar to maternal instinct and is valuable, especially when the mother needs help after childbirth. Respectively, they positively evaluated paternal leave emphasizing that it is intended to support the mother in the postnatal period and to ensure the health of mother and child *"a very good thing", "especially when the mother needs help", "prevents postnatal depression", but also to ensure the creation of attachment between father and child "it causes a closer relationship between father and child"* (FG_1_B_U).

The women emphasized that paternal leave immediately after childbirth is very important because mothers face physical and emotional pain (postpartum depression, sleepless nights) and it is essential that the husband/partner is present during this period to observe and understand the hardships of a mother after childbirth. They also reported that the father's presence in the early days is crucial to build an emotional bond with the child, and fathers who are active in parenting develop a deep paternal feeling and a closer bond with their children.

Changing trends in decision-making

Comparative analysis of the data in IMAGES-1 with IMAGES-2 shows that decision-making within the family/couple is becoming increasingly participatory. The number of men making decisions together in current families regarding current (69%) and investment (75%) expenditures are much higher than they were in the original families (56% and 59%, respectively) (Figure 29 and Figure 30).

Figure 29. Last say in decision making in the family of origin, 2015 and 2024 (men’s statement), %

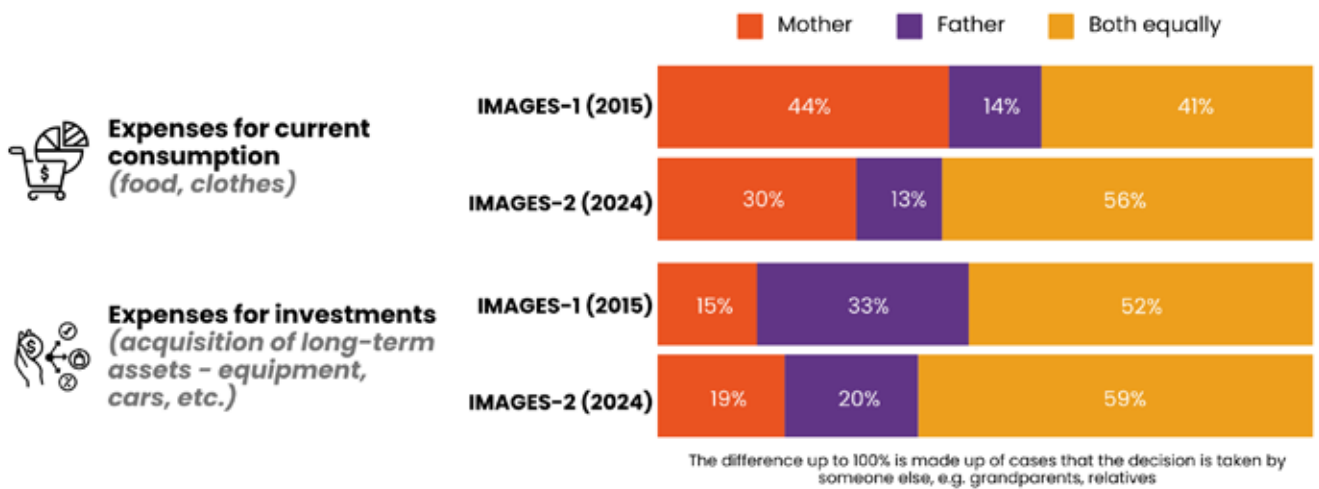
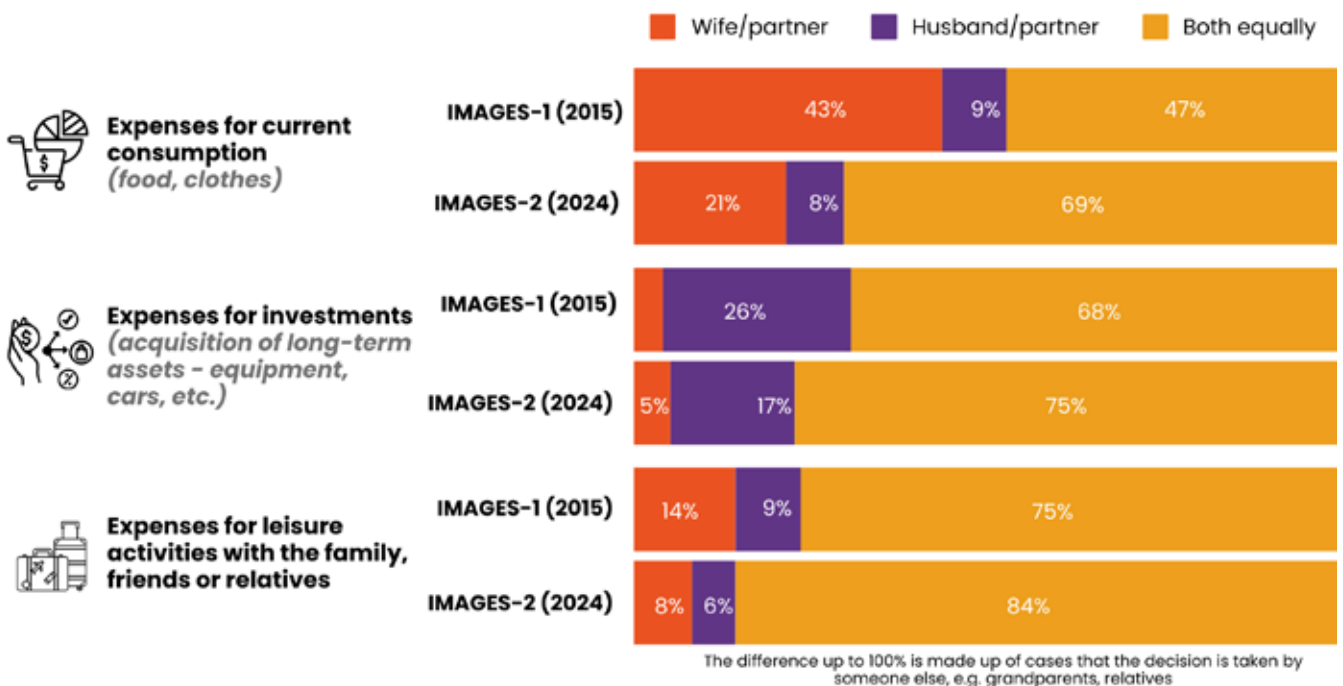


Figure 30. Last say in decision making in the current family, 2015 and 2024 (men’s statement), %



There has also been an increase in the involvement of men alongside their wives/partners in making decisions regarding the health of family members. Thus, 72% of men in 2024, compared to 69% in 2015, said that they take decisions together regarding the child's health, and 58% in 2024, compared to 49% in 2015, regarding the woman's health.

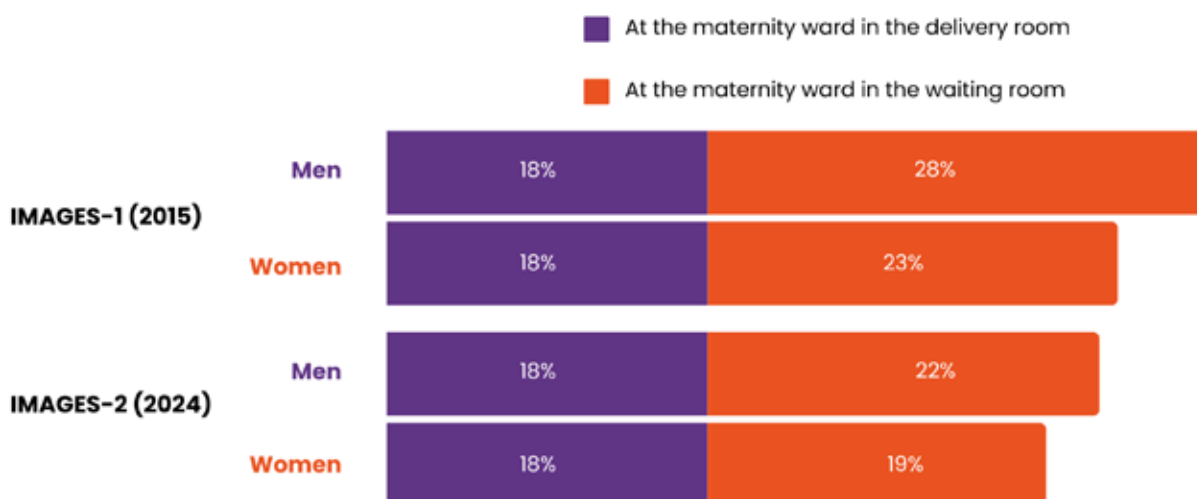
The desire to have the last child in 2024 was reported by both spouses/partners to be 80% (63% in 2015) of men and 75% (56% in 2015) of women.

The number of men who regularly accompanied their wives to the doctor during pregnancy also increased to 50% in 2024, compared to 23% in 2015. However, the presence of men at the birth of their child did not change, only 18% of men were present in the delivery room and supported their wives at the birth of their last child. The reasons given are varied and reveal the presence of prejudices and stereotypes.

The share of men who supported their wife/partner in the maternity ward at the birth of their last child remained the same, but the share of those who were in the waiting room decreased, with both men and women reporting that their husband/partner was at home, at work or other situations. One explanation for this could be that the period compared includes the period of COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions, in which health facilities restricted access to institutions to persons other than those with medical conditions (Figure 31).

More and more men are taking leave when their child is born, spending time with their wives to help care for their child and develop an attachment to their child - 23% in 2024, up from 7% in 2015.

Figure 31. Share of men who, at the birth of their last child, were in maternity hospital according to men and women, 2015 and 2024, %

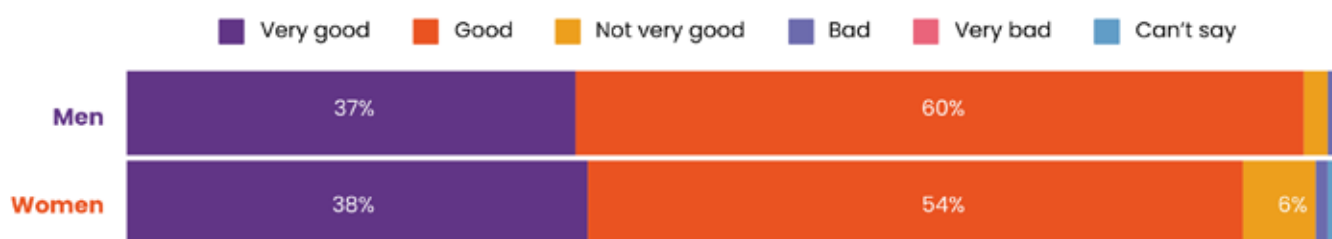


4.5. RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE FAMILY/COUPLE

The quality of the couple relationship is an important aspect in understanding family dynamics and personal satisfaction. 37% of the men who participated in the IMAGES-2 study rated the family/couple relationship as *very good*, 60% - *good*, 2% - *not so good* (Figure 32). The profile of those who rated the relationship as very good is made up of men aged 18-29 and 30-39, with higher education and high income. More men with secondary education and low income rated the relationship as not too good.

Women's answers on the characterization of the couple relationship largely reflect men's opinions - 38% of women emphasized that it is *very good*, 55% - *good*, 6% - *not so good*. Women aged 18-39 with high household income rated the relationship as *very good*. At the same time, women aged 50-59 with low household income rated them as *not very good*.


Figure 32. Appreciation of the relationship within the couple, by sex, %



Men rated on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 means - *I don't like it at all* and 5 - *I like it very much*) the degree of satisfaction they get from various activities with their partner/spouse. The data reveal that over 80% of men feel most satisfied when they eat together, have sex, collaborate on various tasks and communicate openly with their partner. Other satisfying activities for over 70% of men include caring for and spending time with children, traveling, watching TV and cooking together.

However, the high level of satisfaction decreases to around 60% for cultural and sporting activities done together, such as attending cultural-artistic events and sports activities (Table 24). Men with higher household incomes are more satisfied with activities done together with their wife/partner, suggesting that economic status influences preferences for certain joint activities, encouraging experiences that involve additional resources.


Table 24. Men’s satisfaction with activities with their spouse/partner, rated on a scale from 1 to 5, %

	Grade 1-2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Hard to appreciate
Looking after and spending time with children	1	3	9	77	10
Travel	4	6	14	74	3
Participation in cultural events	9	10	13	64	5
Participation in sport	10	9	15	60	6
Communicate	1	4	12	82	0
Dining together	1	2	8	89	0
Working together	2	3	10	83	1
Sexual relations	2	3	9	84	3
Watch TV together	5	6	12	74	4
Cooking together	4	9	14	70	3

Women’s answers on the degree of satisfaction with carrying out activities together with their spouse/partner in the household do not reveal significant differences from men’s assessments (Table 25). More than 80% of the women rated highly activities related to eating together, communicating, caring for and spending time with children, working together and sexual intercourse. Over 70% of women rated watching TV together, traveling and cooking highly. Women’s satisfaction, like men’s, is low for sports

activities and participation in cultural events (theatre, music, film, dance). This is largely explained by the lack of such activities at community level and the low participation of partners in these activities together.

Table 25. Women’s satisfaction with activities with their spouse/partner, rated on a scale from 1 to 5, %

	Grade 1-2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Hard to appreciate
Looking after and spending time with children	1	2	7	82	7
Travel	9	7	7	74	3
Participation in cultural events	12	10	10	64	4
Participation in sport	17	11	12	54	7
Communication	1	4	12	83	0
Dining together	1	2	9	88	0
Working together	2	5	10	82	0
Sexual relations	2	5	8	81	4
Watching TV together	5	5	10	78	2
Cooking together	6	9	13	71	2

Only 69% of men compared to 81% of women had discussed the problems they faced in the last week in the family/couple. The higher number of women reporting such discussions may be related to the masculinity aspect linked to the fact that men perceive themselves as powerful and able to solve problems on their own. It was found that as the level of education of the spouses/partners and the average monthly income in the family increases, the proportion of those who discuss problems together also increases (Table 26).

12% of men do not remember when they talked to their wife/partner about the problems they face. The number of these men doubles in low-income households. The same trends were found for women.

Table 26. Frequency of discussion between partners of everyday problems faced by partner, %

	Throughout this week	1-2 weeks ago	More than 2 weeks ago	I don't remember
Men	69	11	8	12
Women	81	7	7	6

The analysis shows that more married men and men who have a partner but do not live together discuss personal problems with their spouse or partner (Table 27). It should be noted that from

the men's perspective, women more often express their problems and difficulties in the relationship.

Table 27. Men's discussion of the problems they face, depending on reported marital status (men's response), %

	Throughout this week	1-2 weeks ago	More than 2 weeks ago	I don't remember
Total	69	11	8	12
Officially married	72	9	8	11
Concubinage	59	18	9	14
He has a partner but does not live with her	73	9	7	11

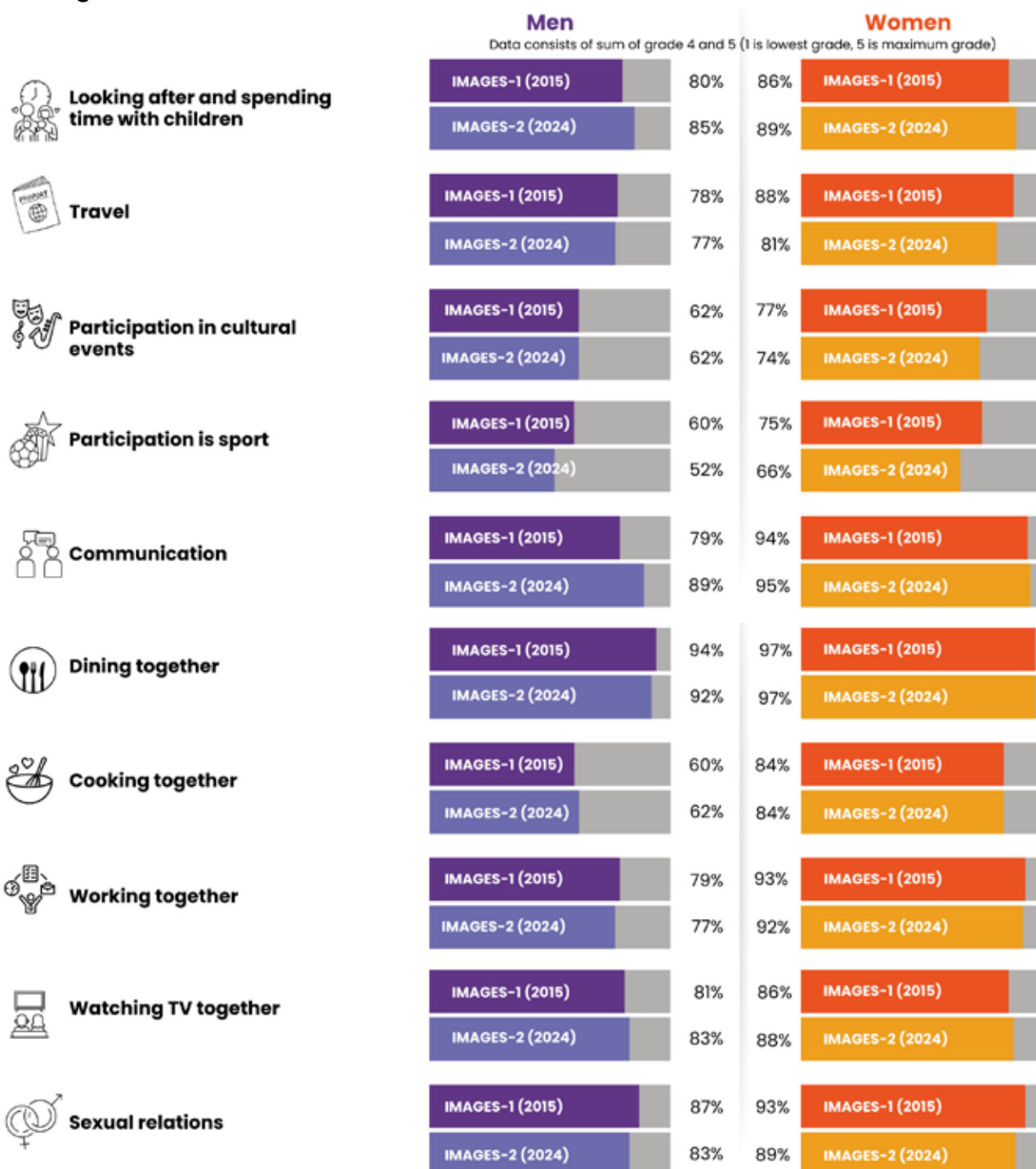
Only 6% of men, when they have problems in their relationship with their wife/partner, seek specialized services such as family counselling or support from a priest or family member. Those seeking such help are people aged 30-39 with high average monthly incomes. The initiative to apply for this help is taken jointly by the partners,

less often on the recommendation of the wife/partner or on the initiative of the husband/partner.

Changing trends in family/couple relationships

The comparative analysis of the data from IMAGES-1 with IMAGES-2, shows an increase in the number of men and women who are very satisfied with doing activities together in the family/couple (Figure 33). There are small changes also concerning the discussion of problems faced together by partners. The number of men who discuss the difficulties they face has practically not changed (69% in 2024, compared to 66% in 2015), compared to the number of women that has increased (from 71% in 2015 to 81% in 2024).

Figure 33. Satisfaction of men and women (scores 4 and 5) with activities done together, 2015 and 2024, %



4.6. HEALTH AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR



The population of the Republic of Moldova generally shows a negligent attitude towards health care, which is reflected in the low frequency of visits to the doctor, especially among men. This is directly related to men's perceptions of gender equality. Men who do not accept gender equality are less likely to access health services. This situation is explained by the fact that a strong man does not need to use health services²⁶. However, this is not the only factor. Additional factors are work, availability of health services, etc.

Only 33% of men have accessed medical services in the last three months, while 28% have made a medical visit in the last year. Alarming, 14% of men last visited a doctor 2 years ago, 7% - 5 years ago, and

18% - have not accessed medical services for more than 5 years (Table 28). Those who avoid regular visits to the doctor and have not seen a specialist for more than 5 years are predominantly men aged 50-59 years, with secondary education and from low-income households.

In the case of women, 19% do not regularly go to medical institutions. Of these, 11% had their last medical visit 2 years ago, 3% - 5 years ago and 5% - have not received medical care for more than 5 years. Most of these women are aged over 50 and come from low-income households.

Table 28. Last addressal to health services, %

	Last 3 months	Over the past year	2 years ago	5 years ago	More than 5 years ago
 Men	33	28	14	7	18
 Women	52	29	11	3	5

The main reason why 64% of men went to the medical services last time was for a preventative check-up, 10% - dental treatment, 7% - the presence of a heart disease or chronic illness, 6% - the need for a medical certificate, etc. In the case of women, 59% did it for a medical check-up, 8% for the presence of a heart disease or chronic illness, 7% for gynaecological

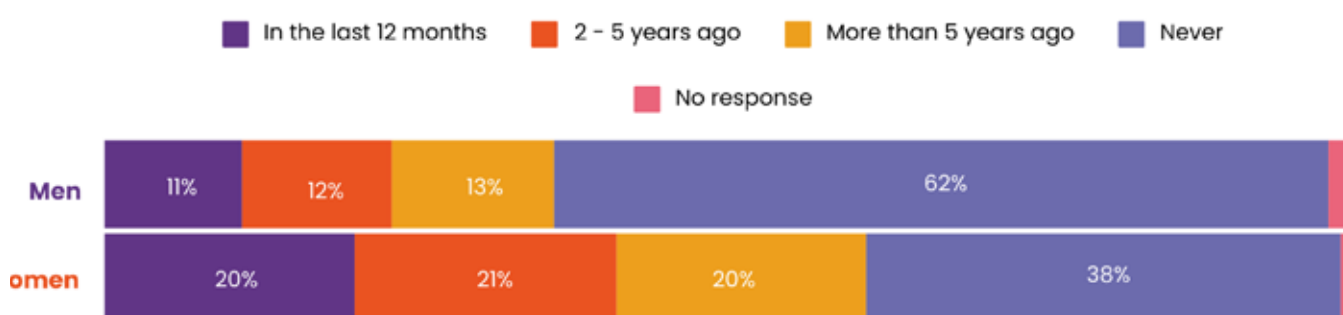
examination, 6% for dental treatment, the rest for other reasons. Medical check-ups decrease with age, from 70% for women aged 18-29 to 52% for women aged 50-59.

²⁶ Heise, L., Greene, M. E., Opper, N., Stavropoulou, M., Harper, C., Nascimento, M., & Zewdie, D. (2019). Gender inequality and restrictive gender norms: Framing the challenges to health. *The Lancet*, 393(10189), 2440-2454. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(19\)30652-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(19)30652-X)

The number of women ever tested for HIV/AIDS is much higher than among men. This situation is explained by the fact that women are obliged to take an HIV/AIDS test during pregnancy. 62% of the men and 38% of the women have never been

tested for HIV/AIDS (Figure 34). 3% of the men who have been tested for HIV/AIDS have not been informed about the results of the test.

Figure 34. Testing for HIV/AIDS, by sex, %



Asked about agreement with the statement "I feel healthy", 68% of men said they *total agreed*, 27% - *partly agreed*, and 5% *disagreed*. The number of men who do not feel healthy increases with age, from 1% in 18-29 year olds to 9% in 50-59 year olds, and is almost double among rural compared to urban people, reaching the highest number among men in low-income households.

Research data reveals that in the last month, 12% of men often experienced stress problems (Table 29). These problems are more common among men aged 18-29, living in rural areas and with higher education.

8% of men have *often* experienced headaches in the last month. Such situations are particularly characteristic for men in the 30-39 age group and with a high school education. At the same time, 6% of men mentioned that they had suffered from depression *often* in the last month. These cases are more common among men aged 30-39, with secondary education and low average monthly household income.

Table 29. Frequency of times of stress, depression and other health problems experienced by men during last month, %

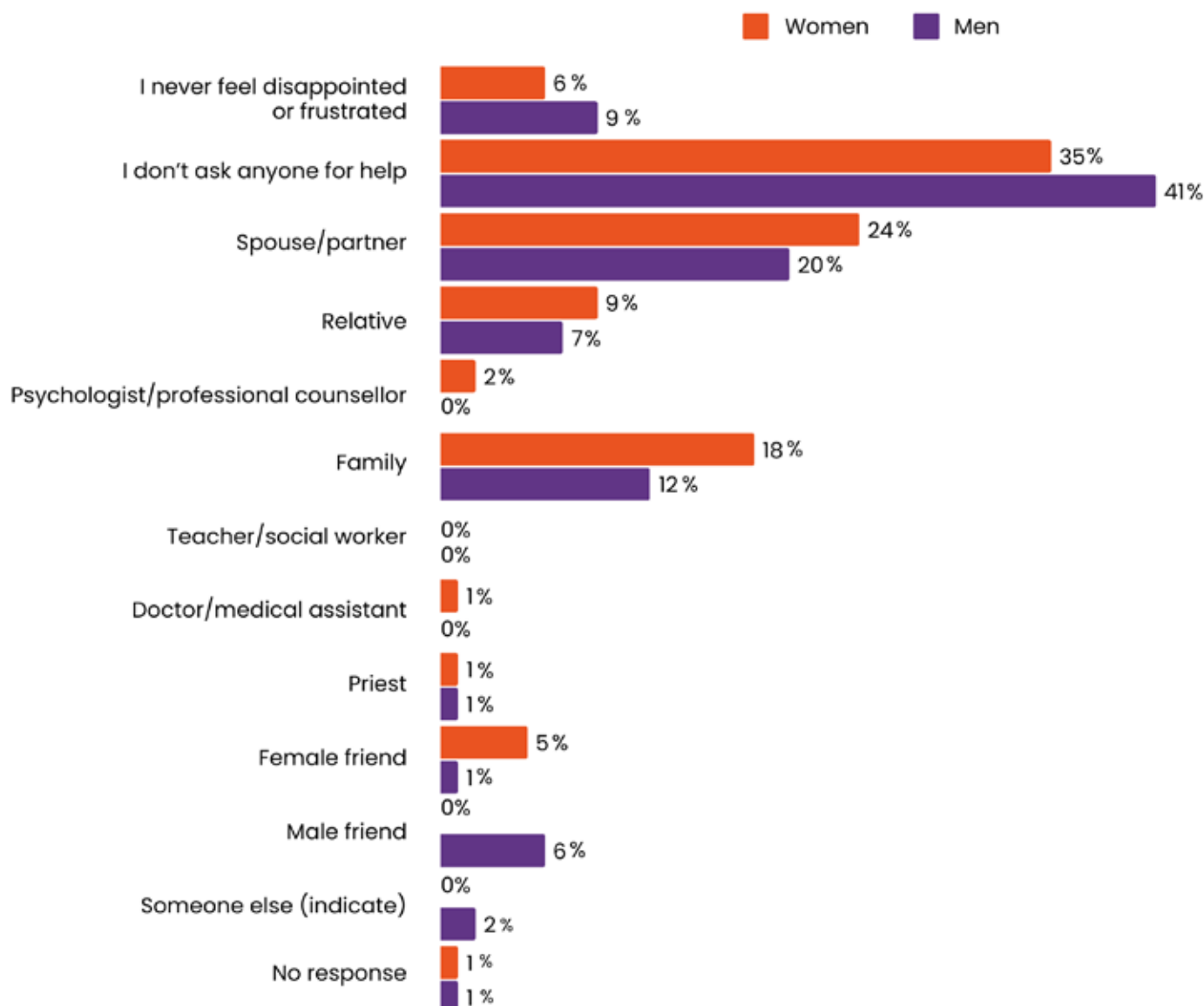
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Stress	51	18	20	12
Depression	73	12	10	6
Suicidal thoughts	93	4	2	1
Weight gain/loss	74	14	10	3
Indigestion/stomach pain	74	13	10	4
Headaches	55	17	20	8
A work-related health problem	78	10	7	1

A significant proportion of men, 18%, feel useless, *agreeing totally or partly* with the statement “*my life is of no use to anyone*”. And 22% of men reported a complex about feeling inferior in their circle of friends. Most of them are secondary school educated and from low-income households. We could thus consider that the uselessness and inferiority are determined by the belief that these situations are due to the impossibility to be the main providers and protectors of the family and to have control over the relationships within it.

The analysis of the situations of refusing intimate relations and the partners’ reactions to the refusal indicates that 60% of the women refused at least once to have intimate relations with their husband/partner (11% - once, 39% - several times, 10% - often). The last time this happened, 76% of the women pointed out that he respected the wishes of the wife/partner, 11% - raised their voice, in the other cases the characteristic situations were anger, hitting, deprivation of certain things or even leaving.

When feeling disappointed or frustrated, 41% of men and 35% of women turn to no one for help (Figure 35). Only 1 in 5 men turn to their wife/partner for help, which is also typical for 1 in 4 women. This is followed by 1 in 10 men and virtually 2 in 10 women seeking help from family.

Figure 35. Help-seeking behaviour in times of disappointment or frustration, by sex, %



Condom use is not a common practice in Moldova. 73% of the whole sample of men stated that they have not used a condom in the last year, compared to 8% who always use, 5% - often, 12% - occasionally. Condoms are used mainly among men aged 18-29. This is little characteristic of men in other age groups or married men (Table 30). There are significant differences in condom use by residence - 64% of urban men and 79% of rural men said they had never used a condom in the last year. In focus group discussions rural men mentioned:

- *"I've never used a condom maybe the wife uses something... I can control myself and I've never used one. I don't need to. Those who cannot control themselves ..."* (FG_6_B_R);
- *"I've only used condoms twice in my life"* (FG_5_B_R).

Table 30. Condom use, past year, by age group (male response), %


		We always use	We often us	Occasionally we use	We do not use	I have not had sexual intercourse during the last year
Age	TOTAL	8	5	12	73	2
	18-29 years	27	10	11	47	5
	30-39 years	4	6	17	72	1
	40-49 years	5	2	13	77	3
	50-59 years	3	3	7	84	4

Women’s responses, in general, show the same trends in condom use over the past year: 53% of the entire sample of women reported that they did not use condoms, compared to 7% who always use, 5% - often, 12% - occasionally (another 22% of women reported not having had sex in the past year) (Table 31). The age-dependent analysis of responses reveals that condoms are used by women aged 18-29.

protect themselves in any way, whether they feel or do not feel I don't know what there..." (FG_8_F_R). This shows that women fear their partners’ reactions to contraceptive use, often going so far as to hide the practice. There is also a lack of information and education in this area, which emphasizes the need for training on contraception both in schools and among women of reproductive age, especially in rural areas.

In the focus group discussions, some women reported that men do not accept that women use contraceptive methods in general and condoms in particular, which creates a climate of fear and insecurity for women *"there are still a lot of men who do not accept that women*



Table 31. Condom use in the last year, by age groups (women's response), %

						I have not had sexual intercourse during the last year
		We always use	We often use	Occasionally we use	We do not use	
Age	TOTAL	7	5	12	53	22
	18-29 years	18	12	12	34	24
	30-39 years	7	6	16	61	10
	40-49 years	3	1	9	71	16
	50-59 years	1	3	10	44	42

Education and information on contraceptive methods are essential, especially as 31% of the women participating in the research said they had had at least one termination of pregnancy: 1% before the age of 18 and 30% after that age. Also, 14% of men confirmed that their wife or partner had experienced a termination. The much lower number of men who indicated that their wife/partner had had an abortion indicates that only half of the women communicate these experiences to their husbands.

Of the 114 men who responded that their wife/partner had ever had a termination of pregnancy, 65% said that they and their wife/partner had taken the decision to terminate the pregnancy. It should be noted that 91% of the men paid the expenses for the termination of pregnancy, but only 56% of them accompanied their wife/partner for the termination of pregnancy to the medical facility (Table 32).

Table 32. Involvement of partners in the decision and process of pregnancy termination, %

	 Men			 Women		
	Yes	No	NA	Yes	No	NA
Termination of pregnancy by wife/partner	14	80	6	31	69	0
Making the decision to terminate pregnancy together ^{27,28}	65	34	1	80	19	1
Cover for expenses for termination of pregnancy by husband/partner ^{29,30}	91	9	0	88	10	2
Accompanying for termination of pregnancy by husband/partner ^{31,32}	56	32	12	53	47	0

27 114 men, 11% of the total sample.

28 124 women, 24%

29 74 men (65% of those who took the decision together) and 7% of the total sample

30 100 women, 19% of total sample

31 114 men, 11% of the total sample.

32 124 women, 24%.

In terms of satisfaction with sex life and frequency of sexual intercourse, the survey data show that over 91% of men are *satisfied* and *very satisfied* with their sex life with their main partner and 89% are *satisfied* with the frequency of sexual intercourse (Table 33). 60% of men aged 18-29 years with a spouse/partner are *very satisfied* with their sex life, compared to 46% aged 30-39 years, 31% aged 40-49 years and 21% aged 50-59 years. These trends were also found for women. 45%

of 18-29 year olds and 44% of 30-39 year olds are *very satisfied* with their sex life, compared to 38% of 40-49 year olds and 22% of 50-59 year olds. It was also found that the number of women who are *very satisfied* with both their sex life and the frequency of sexual intercourse is higher among those with higher education and higher income.

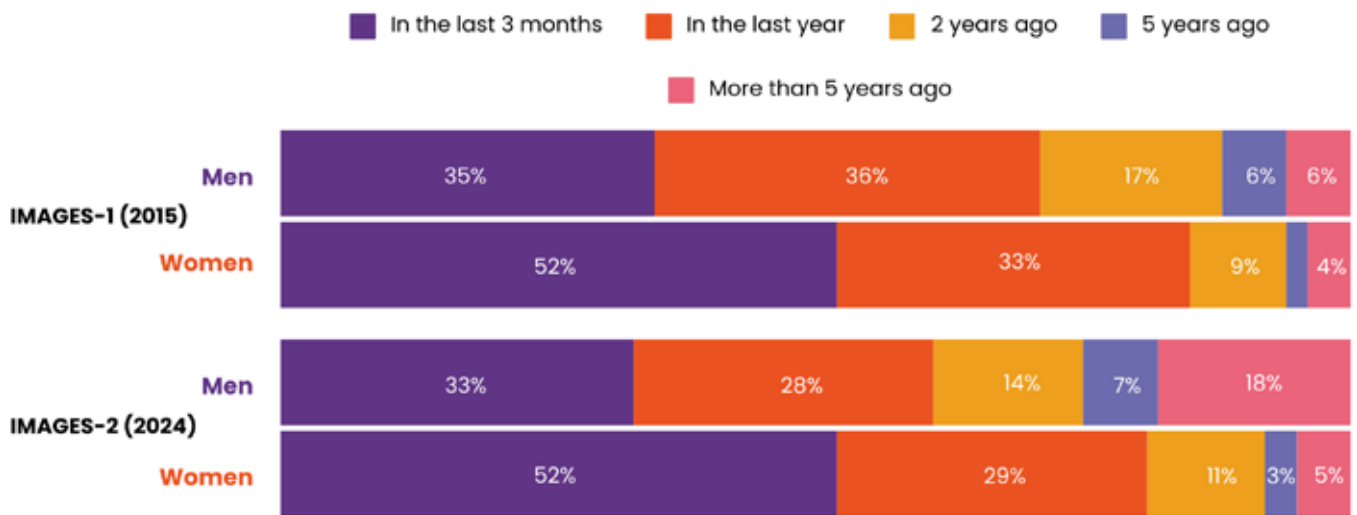
Table 33. Satisfaction with sex life, %

	Men		Women	
	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Satisfied
Are satisfied with their sex life with their main partner	37	54	38	52
Are satisfied with the frequency of sex with their main partner	32	57	33	55

Changing trends in sexual health and behaviour

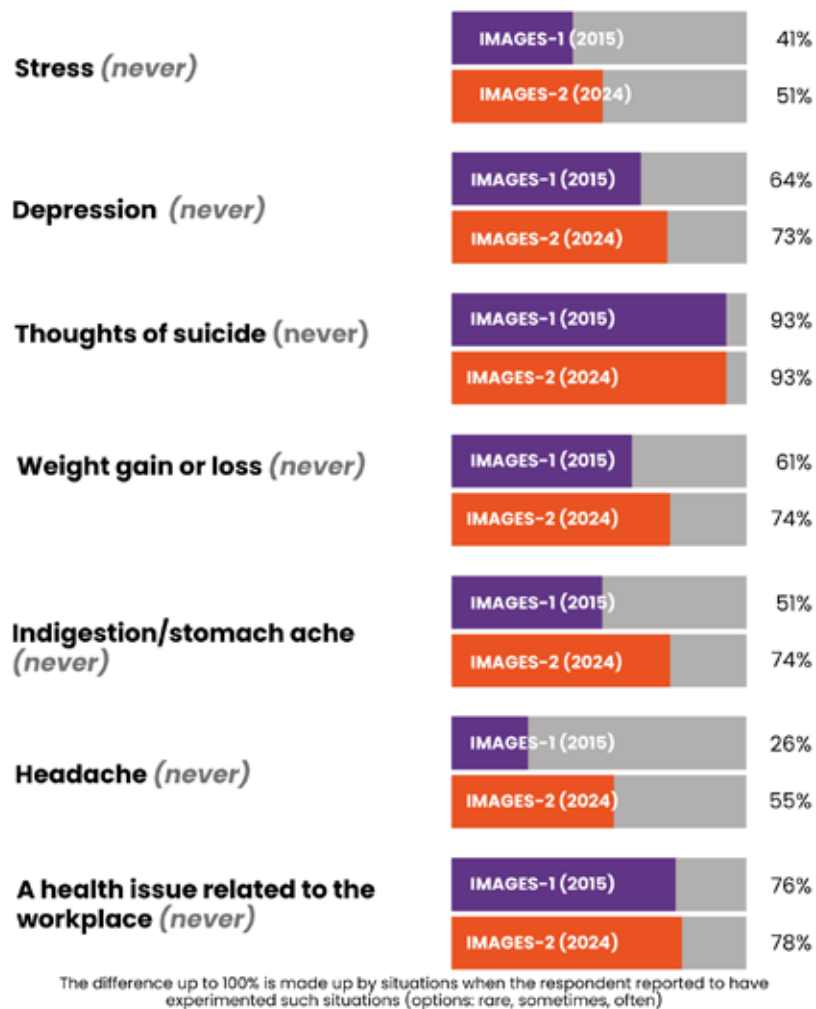
Research data shows a negative trend in going to the doctor among both men and women. The percentage of men reporting that they have not visited a doctor for more than 5 years has increased significantly, from 6% in 2015 to 18% in 2024, while among women the situation remains stable (5% in 2015 and 6% in 2024) (Figure 36).

Figure 36. Last health care addressal, 2015 and 2024, %



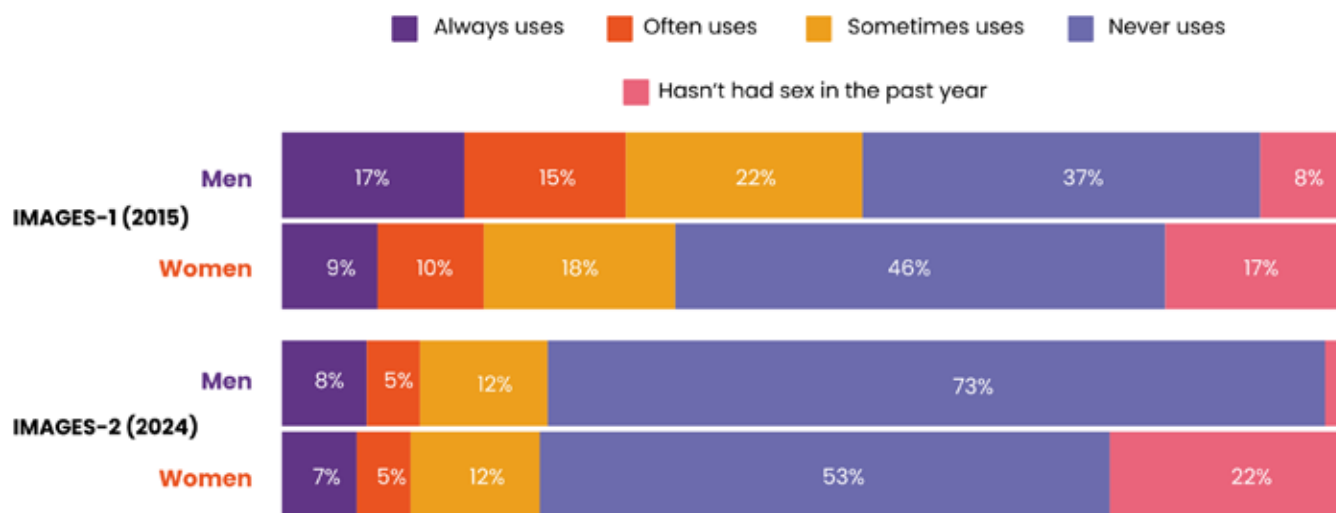
Compared to 2015, there was a decrease in the number of men who indicated that they did not have any mental and physical health problems (Figure 37).

Figure 37. Frequency of stress, depression and other health problems experienced by men in the last month, 2015 and 2024, %



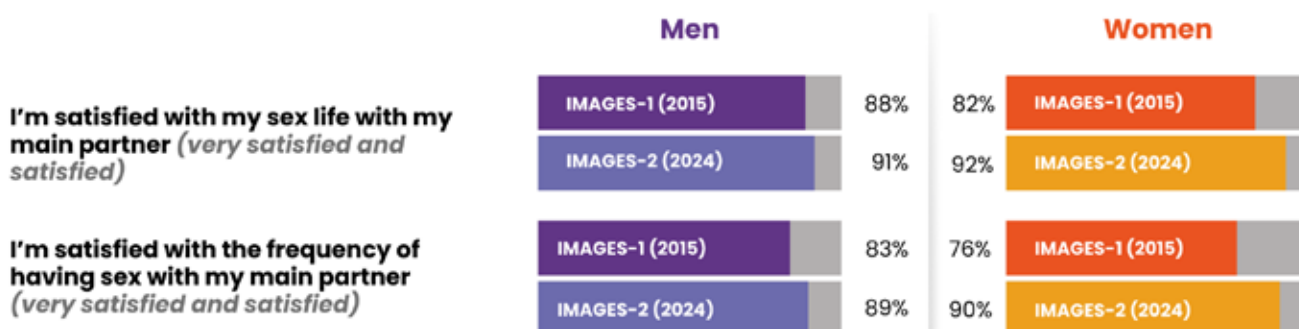
Research data show a significant increase in the number of men and women who do not use condoms as a method of protection in sexual relations from 2015 to 2024, from 27% to 73% among men and from 46% to 53% among women. Virtually one in two women and three in four men reported not using this method of protection in the past year (Figure 38).

Figure 38. Condom use, during past year, 2015 and 2024, %



In 2024, compared to 2015, there was higher satisfaction with sex life for both men and women, and an increase in satisfaction with the frequency of intimate relationships for both groups (Figure 39).

Figure 39. Satisfaction with sex life, 2015 and 2024, %



4.7. MEN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LABOUR MARKET

The IMAGES survey provides a detailed insight into men's employment and job satisfaction. According to the data, 65% of the sample of men are employed: 42% formally and 23% - informally. 62% of employed men *total agree* and 22% *partly agree* that their job is mostly stable (Table 34). Younger, urban and college-educated men are more job secure. It is also worth mentioning that as household income increases so does job security.

Analysis of the data shows that 66% of professionally active men *often* feel

stressed or depressed because of insufficient income, which is also the case for 58% of women. Also, 38% of men are *often* stressed or depressed because they do not have enough work, also reported by 41% of women. The number of men who are stressed because of short working hours is higher among those aged 50-59, from rural areas, with secondary education and low household income.


Table 34. Assessment of some situations in relation to the labour market, %

	Men (employed)		Women (employed)	
	Total agreement	Partial agreement	Total agreement	Partial agreement
The average workplace is largely stable	62	22	63	21
I am often stressed or depressed that I don't have enough work	19	19	17	24
I'm often stressed or depressed because my earned income is not enough	36	30	27	31

Of the men not employed in the labour force, 79% indicated *total* or *partial agreement* that they spend most of their time out of work or looking for work, 69% - *total* or *partial agreement* that they are ashamed in front of their family because of not having work. 48% of the unemployed

spend time outside the home when they cannot find work, and 34% say that they sometimes drink alcohol when they cannot find a job (Table 35). Women's responses highlight the same impact of non-employment on men.

Table 35. Impact of non-employment on men, %

	Men (employed)		Women (employed)	
	Total agreement	Partial agreement	Total agreement	Partial agreement
Husband/partner spends most of his time out of work or looking for work	61	18	54	12
I am ashamed in front of my family because I have no work	50	19	-	-
Husband/partner sometimes spends time away from home when unable to find work	18	30	29	27
I thought about going abroad because I don't have a job	33	17	28	13
Husband/partner sometimes drinks alcohol when unable to find work	13	21	11	18

Every second unemployed man says he has thought about going abroad for work compared to 41% of women. Of the men who signalled the option of work migration due to lack of an income, 43% emphasized that the man is the person who should migrate, 42% that both spouses/partners should leave and only 1% that the woman

should migrate³³. In contrast to men, 52% of women believe that if the family is in financial difficulties, then both partners should migrate.

Changing trends in men's relationship with the labour market

The number of men who consider their job as stable increased from 55% in 2015 to 62% in 2024. At the same time, the number of those who reported stress due to not having enough work or not enough income also increased.

33 11% indicated something else and 4% - don't know.

V. KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES REGARDING VIOLENCE

5.1. VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY, DURING CHILDHOOD

IMAGES-2 data shows that men have experienced different forms of violence in their childhood: neglect, psychological violence, physical violence and sexual violence (Figure 40). Focus group discussions revealed that people who have experienced violence in their families of origin tend to be at higher risk of reproducing this behaviour in their own families, a finding also highlighted by some research³⁴. However, some men who have experienced violence as children emphasized that they choose not to continue this pattern in their families:

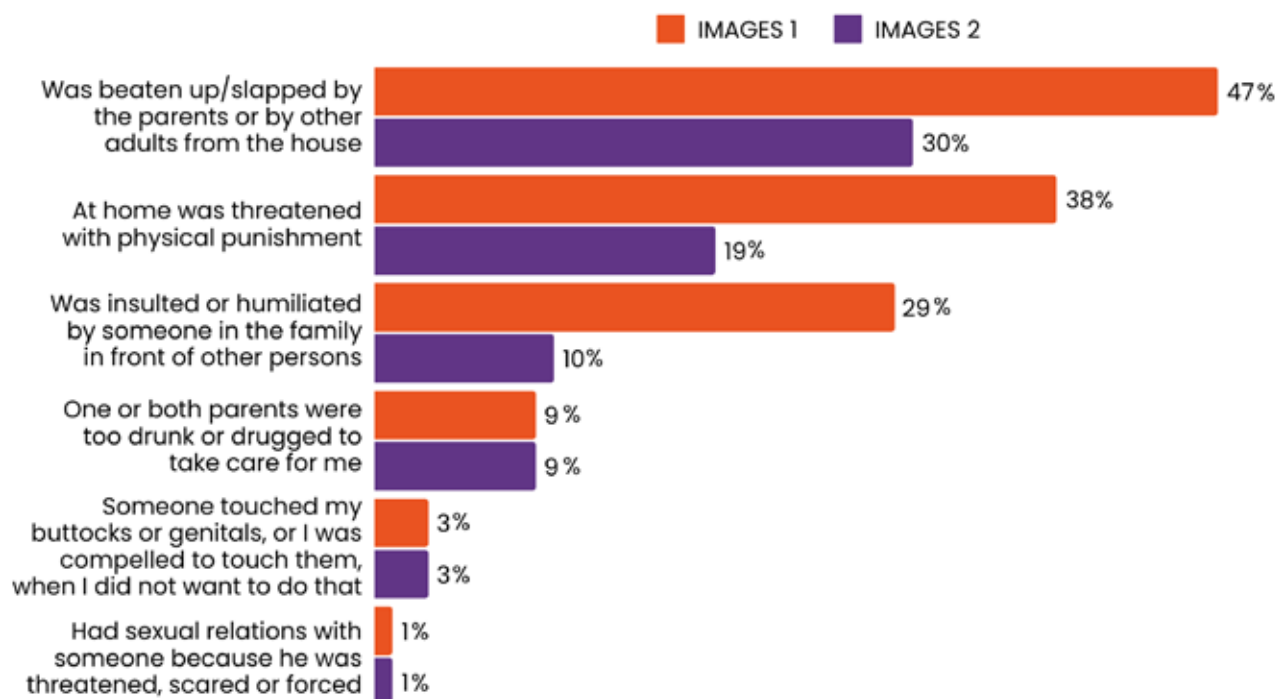
- "... Father was violent in the family, I am not like that" (FG_6_B_R);
- "... I try not to apply violence. I don't want to follow negative examples" (FG_5_B_R).

Changing trends in domestic violence against children

Comparative analysis of the data from IMAGES-1 and IMAGES-2 shows a decrease in physical and verbal violence against children, but levels of other forms of violence, such as neglect and sexual violence, have remained unchanged (Figure 40).

34 Gil-González, D., Vives-Cases, C., Ruiz, M. T., Carrasco-Portiño, M., & Álvarez-Dardet, C. (2008). Childhood experiences of violence in perpetrators as a risk factor of intimate partner violence: a systematic review. *Journal of Public Health*, 30(1), 14-22. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdm071>; Kitzmann, K. M., Gaylord, N. K., Holt, A. R., & Kenny, E. Child witnesses to domestic violence: a meta-analytic review. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 71(2), 339-352. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006x.71.2.339>; Stith, S. M., Rosen, K., K. H., Middleton, K. A., Busch, A. L., Lundeberg, K., & Carlton, R. P. (2000). The Intergenerational Transmission of Spouse Abuse: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(3), 640-654. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00640.x>

Figure 40. Types of childhood violence experienced by men, 2015 and 2024, %



5.2. VIOLENCE IN THE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT DURING CHILDHOOD

The school environment during childhood was a friendly one for the research participants. 14% of the men said they participated in sports activities with friends *every day*, while 45% did so *frequently* and 24% only *occasionally*. Only 17% said they did not engage in such activities.

26% displaying this behaviour often, 7% *occasionally*, and only 3% stating that they did not have a respectful attitude towards girls. Last but not least, 79% of the men stated that neither they nor their friends had ever behaved inappropriately towards girls or talked to them about sex to tease them as children (Table 36).

Respect towards girls as a child was a daily norm for 63% of the men, with

Table 36. Attitudes and practices towards girls in the school environment during childhood (men), %

	Daily	Often	Sometimes	Never	No answer
The girls were treated with respect	63	26	7	3	1
Me and my friends used to touch girls or talk to them about sex at school	1	2	17	79	1

80% of the men reported that they had never been sanctioned at school for physical violence against other children, suggesting that they did not resort to such behaviours at school. In contrast, 16% were sanctioned *occasionally*, 2% *frequently* and 1% *daily*, indicating their involvement in such incidents (Table 37).

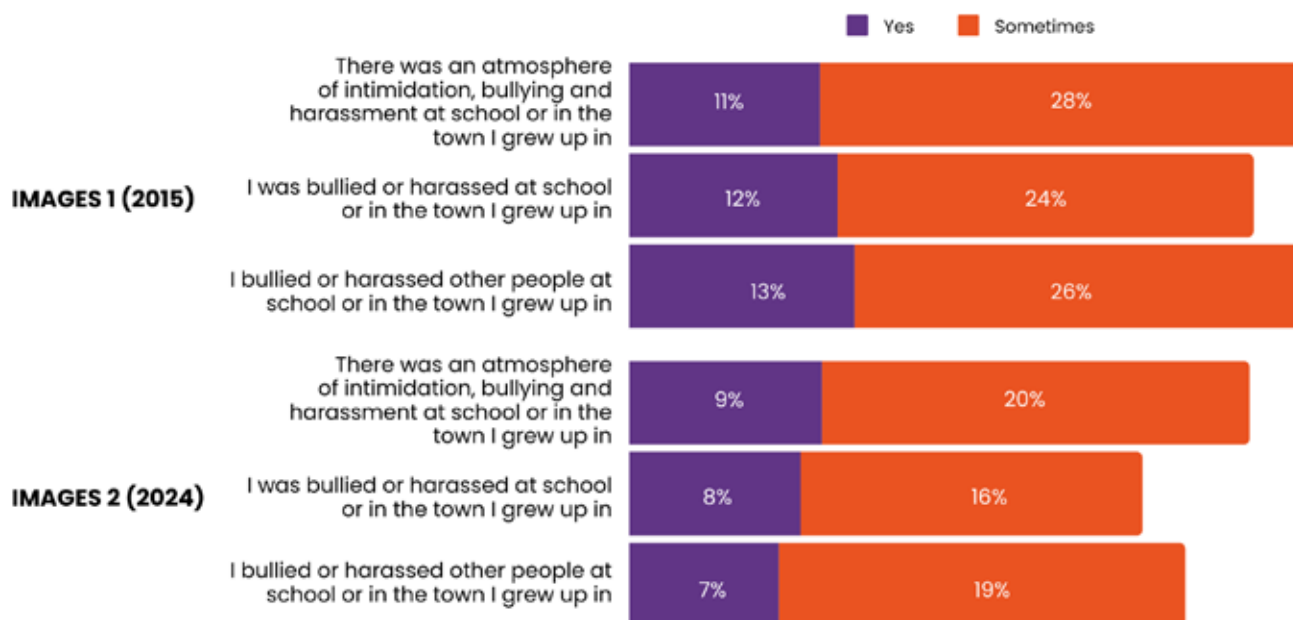
With regard to the presence of a bullying atmosphere in the educational institution or in the community, 9% of the

men mentioned that it was *permanent* and 20% perceived it as *occasional*. In addition, 8% of men said that they had been teased and 7% admitted that they had also been involved in teasing others. Teasing and bullying were more common in urban compared to rural areas during childhood.

Changing trends on violence against children in school and community settings

The survey data indicate a decrease in experiences of bullying, teasing and harassment during childhood, both in terms of perceptions of the general atmosphere of bullying in the school and locality, and personal experiences of being teased or harassed (Figure 41).

Figure 41. Experiences of bullying and harassment at school and in the community, in childhood, 2015 and 2024 (men), %



There was also a reduction in punishments in the school environment (Table 37). This change reflects both an improvement in the educational climate and an increased awareness of the importance of non-violent interactions. The reduction in violent behaviour in educational institutions should also be understood in terms of sustained efforts to implement violence prevention programmes and promote non-violent behaviour among students.

Table 37. Trends in school violence (men), %

		Daily	Often	Sometimes	Never	No answer
IMAGES-1 (2015)	I was punished at school for using physical violence against other children	1	4	32	63	1
IMAGES-2 (2024)	I was punished at school for using physical violence against other children	1	2	16	80	1

5.3. DOMESTIC/INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

A large body of research shows that witnessing violence against one's own mother as a child is one of the strongest predictors of later violence³⁵. The IMAGES-2 data indicate that during childhood, 77% of men stated that they never saw their mother being beaten by her husband/partner, compared to 15% who emphasized that they saw such situations sometimes, 4% - often, 1% - daily and another 4% - does not correspond to

the situation. The present research data presents evidence that men who have witnessed violence against their mother are more likely to apply violence towards their wife/partner and perpetuate the cycle of violence, compared to those who have not witnessed such behaviours (Table 38).

Table 38. Percentage of men who stated that they have used domestic intimate partner violence at least once, %

	They slapped	They pushed or shoved	They punched	They beat, dragged, suffocated	They threatened with a gun, knife or other weapon
Men who stated that they are/were in a relationship with a woman	19	18	4	2	1
<i>Men who said they had witnessed their mother being subjected to violence as a child at the hands of her husband/partner</i>	37	31	10	5	2
<i>Men who said that they had not seen their mother being subjected to violence at the hands of her husband/partner as a child</i>	13	14	3	1	0

35 Gil-González, D., Vives-Cases, C., Ruiz, M. T., Carrasco-Portiño, M., & Álvarez-Dardet, C. (2008). Childhood experiences of violence in perpetrators as a risk factor of intimate partner violence: A systematic review. *Journal of Public Health, 30*(1), 14-22. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdm071>; Kitzmann, K. M., Gaylord, N. K., Holt, A. R., & Kenny, E. Child witnesses to domestic violence: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 71*(2), 339-352. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006x.71.2.339>; Stith, S. M., Rosen, K., K. H., Middleton, K. A., Busch, A. L., Lundeberg, K., & Carlton, R. P. (2000). The intergenerational transmission of spouse abuse: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 62*(3), 640-654. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00640.x> <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00640.x>

The proportion of women who reported repeated experiences of domestic violence is higher than the proportion of men who recognized such situations. It is worth noting that some of these violent actions happened within the last year, which indicates the persistence of these problems today (Table 39).

There is a correlation between the tendency to resort to violence and age, men's level of education and the size of the household income. As men get older, the likelihood of using violence increases, from 6% among 18-29 year olds to 27% among 50-59 year olds. However, violence tends to decrease as men's educational

attainment and household income increase, but it does not disappear completely.

Women reported multiple consequences of domestic violence. Following the application of physical violence by husbands/partners: 35% mentioned bruising and pain, 10% - fractures, internal injuries, 10% - injuries and sprains, 3% - pregnancy loss, another 33% reported psychological consequences - low self-confidence. All this indicates the profound and complex effects of domestic violence on women's physical and mental health.

Table 39. Incidence of domestic violence, %

	Men (n=720) ³⁶			Women (n=414) ³⁷		
	Never	At least once	Over the past year ³⁸	Never	At least once	Over the past year ³⁹
You have slapped/you were slapped	81	19	9	80	20	17
You pushed or shoved/you were pushed or shoved	82	18	8	75	25	18
You punched/you were punched	96	4	16	86	14	24
You beat, dragged, suffocated/ you were beaten, dragged, suffocated	98	2	13	91	9	13
You threatened with a gun, knife or other weapon/ you were threatened with a gun, knife or other weapon	99	1	0	95	5	0

36 Respondents who stated that they are/were in a relationship with a woman.

38 Percentage of all those reporting this form of violence.

37 Respondents who stated that they are/were in a relationship with a man.

39 Percentage of all those who have experienced this form of violence.

A new type of violence practiced by some men is online violence, manifested by intimidating and controlling the privacy of their wives/partners. The IMAGES-2 study looked at four forms of online violence: (i) phone or computer control, (ii) installing monitoring and geo-location software on devices, (iii) threatening to share intimate video/photo material online, and (iv) online stalking. Of these, phone or computer monitoring was the most common, reported by 11% of men and 16% of women. These data highlight an alarming spread of violence in the digital sphere.

Women reported experiences of online violence in greater numbers than men (Table 40). Online violence to wife/partner

was recognized in higher numbers by men aged 18-29 and 30-39, urban and with high household income. However, women across different age groups, education levels, residence backgrounds and household incomes reported online violence. For example, control over a phone or computer was mentioned by both low-income and high-income women, suggesting that these controlling behaviours are prevalent regardless of socioeconomic status.

Table 40. Incidence of wife/partner violence online, %

	Men (n=720) ⁴⁰			Women (n=414) ⁴¹		
	Never	At least once	Over the past year	Never	At least once	Over the past year
You have threatened to distribute intimate videos/photos on the internet/you were threatened to distribute intimate videos/photos on the internet	99	1	67	97	3	23
You harassed her online/he harassed you online	99	1	15	99	1	0
You have installed tracking, geo-location software/he has installed tracking, geo-location software	99	1	50	96	4	17
You have checked her phone, computer/He has checked your phone, computer	89	11	3	84	16	25

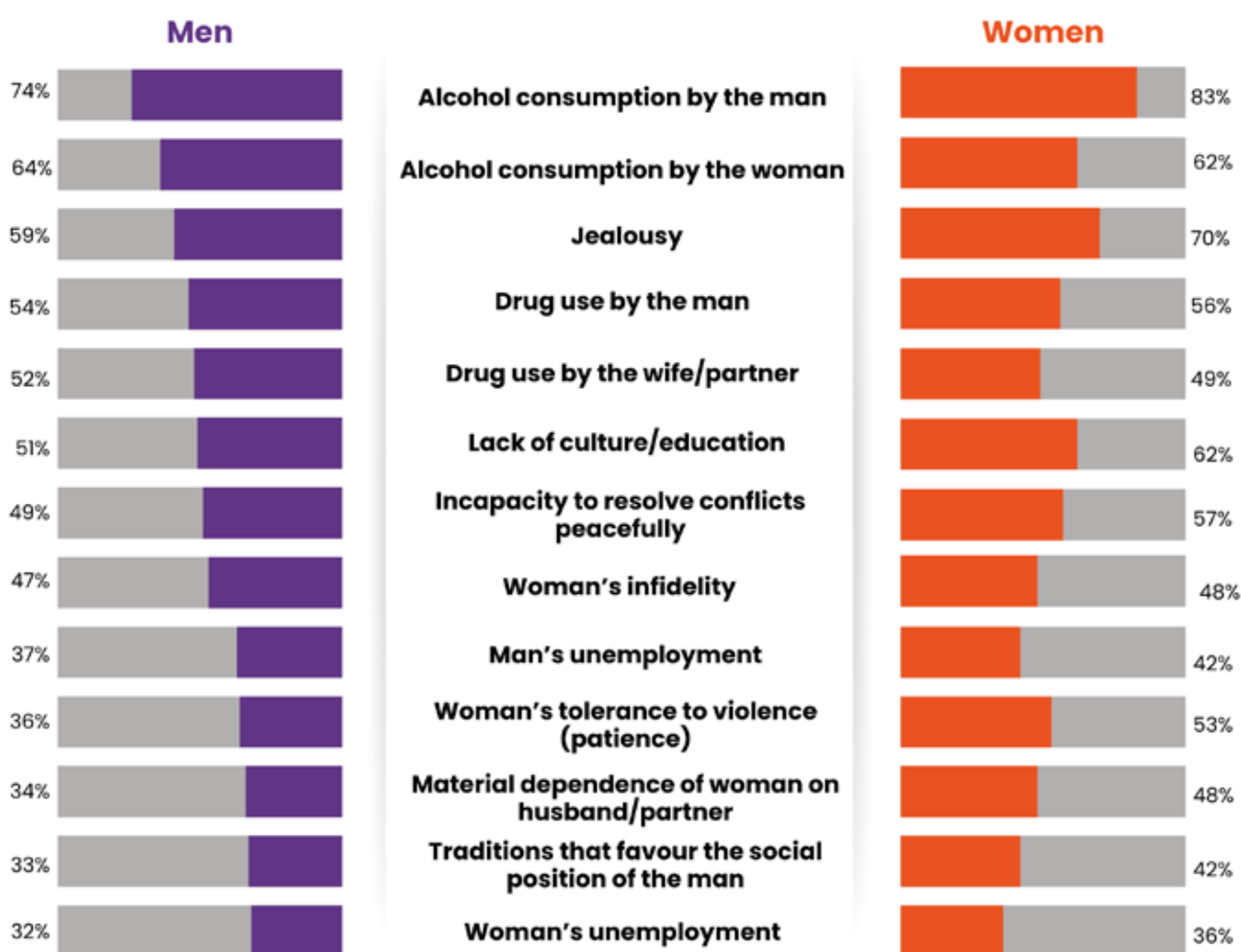
40 Respondents who stated that they are/were in a relationship with a woman.

41 Respondents who stated that they are/were in a relationship with a man.

The causes of domestic violence are varied and include factors such as alcohol and/or substance abuse, jealousy, lack of education, inability to resolve conflicts peacefully and infidelity, among others. When analysing the opinions of men and women, there are differences in their perception of the causes of violence. Men pointed mainly to men's and women's alcohol consumption, men's jealousy and men's use of narcotic substances, while

women emphasized, in addition to these causes, the importance of education as a determining factor. Importantly, 53% of women and 36% of men consider women's tolerance or patience of violence as a significant cause of violence (Figure 42).

Figure 42. Causes of domestic violence, %



The migration phenomenon has a significant impact on the perception of domestic violence by women and men. 43% of women and 39% of men believe that migration contributes to an increase in the number of women who do not accept domestic violence (Table 41). At the same time, migration is also seen as a factor that can amplify domestic violence. This view is held by 32% of women and 34% of men. It is noticeable that rural men aged

40-49 are more likely to believe that migration leads to a stronger attitude among women not to accept violence. This view is also shared by 53% of women aged 50-59, who believe that migration gives them more independence and makes them less tolerant of abuse.

Table 41. Perceived relationship between migration and violence, %

	Men		Women	
	Total agreement	Partial agreement	Total agreement	Partial agreement
Migration contributes to increased violence against women	34	18	32	29
Migration contributes to women's lack of acceptance of domestic violence	39	18	43	26

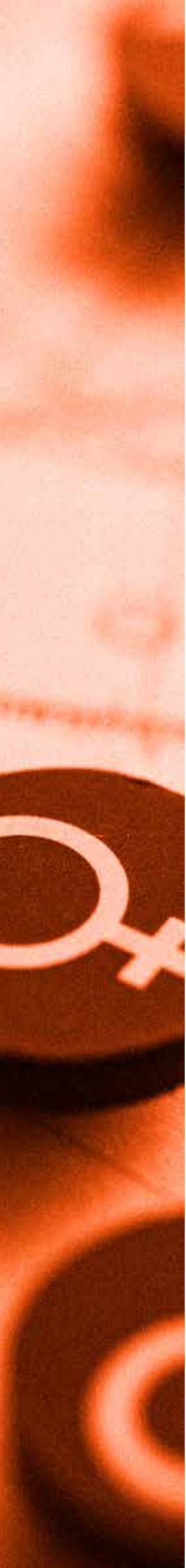
In the Republic of Moldova, anti-violence education is not an integral part of parenting education. Data show that only 28% of men have had discussions with their sons or other boys in their care about violence against girls and women, in contrast to 41% of men who have not had such discussions and 31% who said they have no sons. These results suggest a lack of active involvement in gender equality education within parenting relationships, which may contribute to the perpetuation of violent stereotypes and behaviours in society.

In the focus group discussions, it was emphasized that contemporary society discourages violence more than before. Factors that have led to these changes include:



- **Increase of the level of information and education among the population.** Women are better informed about their rights and available resources. Educational institutions are actively involved, on the one hand in informing and educating pupils about violence, and on the other hand in preventing and identifying cases of violence.
- **Changes in the regulatory framework and in the work of institutions to prevent and combat domestic violence** – *“Many women have gathered the courage to talk about the challenges and violence they experience in the family because they feel protected both by legislation and by society. Even more so because society encourages them not to keep silent”* (FGD_1_B_U). But these changes have a mixed impact. Although some changes have increased the protection of victims of violence, in rural areas, the lack of involvement of some local authorities, such as the police or social work, is seen as a weakness. Moreover, the police can no longer act without the
- **The impact of education and technology.** Increased educational level and access to information and communication technology, including the ability to document incidents of violence, contribute to reducing violence.
- **Increase access to resources and support services.** Expansion of hotlines, service centres and shelters for victims of domestic violence, including promotion of these services in public spaces (in transportation, on the streets, in public institutions, etc.).
- **Women’s financial independence.** Women become more financially independent, allowing them to leave abusive relationships.





This highlights the progress made in addressing and reducing gender-based violence, including domestic violence in the Republic of Moldova. However, participants in the focus group discussions emphasized that there continue to be multiple social and systemic challenges that contribute to its persistence:

- **Presence of rural-urban differences in perceptions and attitudes towards violence, including violent behaviour.** There is a general decrease in violence, especially in urban areas, while in rural areas violence remains present. Traditional attitudes contribute to the persistence of violent behaviour in rural localities - *"I never beat a woman in my family. Once I grabbed her by her hair, but before people beat each other more often. Now it is not like that anymore"* (FG_5_B_R).

- **Women's fear for and economic dependence on violent men.** Many women do not report violence for fear of running out of resources to support their children, which is why violence continues in the relationship, affecting both women and children in the long term - *"many women do not report because they are afraid of being left on the street with their children and they make these choices for their children. But children grow up and leave, but the violence remains..."* (FG_3_B_U).

- **Awareness of and institutional response to violence.** Increased reporting of violence to the police suggests greater awareness and a willingness to disclose and not hide violence. However, many reported cases do not reach a final resolution, and mechanisms to rehabilitate perpetrators are seen as ineffective - *"women have started to pluck up courage. But again this courage is not enough as these denunciations do not reach the end"* (FG_3_B_U); *"these fines that are imposed at every step are not effective"* (FG_8_F_R).

- **Education for abusers.** Centres for the rehabilitation of abusers have been set up, but education methods are seen as ineffective. The exception is electronic monitoring, which seems to have an impact by increasing social shaming and limiting the abuser's access to the victim - *"the abuser is put a strap on his leg that monitors him. Society judges you when it sees you with a leg strap. And in a rural locality, you are very ashamed to have it"* (FG_4_B_U).

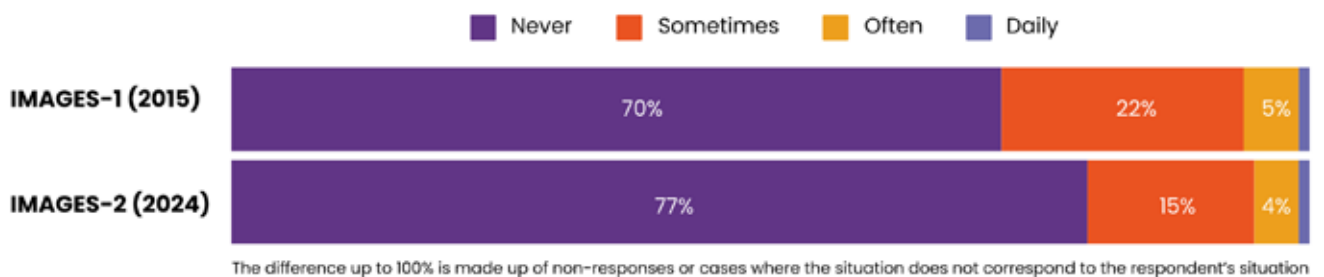
- **The support given by state institutions to women-victims of violence is considered insufficient.** There is a felt need for additional state measures for victims of violence so that they have viable alternatives and a real chance to start a new life away from their perpetrators - *"we are not going to change anything with fines... The state must give the woman a chance to take refuge and start a new life, otherwise she will continue to live with the person who beats her up and eventually stabs her with a knife"* (FG_3_B_U).

Changing trends in domestic violence

Analysis of the causes of domestic violence shows important changes. There has been an increase in the importance of the use of narcotic substances, which has become one of the main causes of violence, according to both men and women.

It is noteworthy that the comparative analysis of data from IMAGES-1 and IMAGES-2 shows an increase in the number of men who did not witness physical violence by their father/the partner against their mother by the age of 18, from 70% in 2015 to 77% in 2024 (Figure 43).

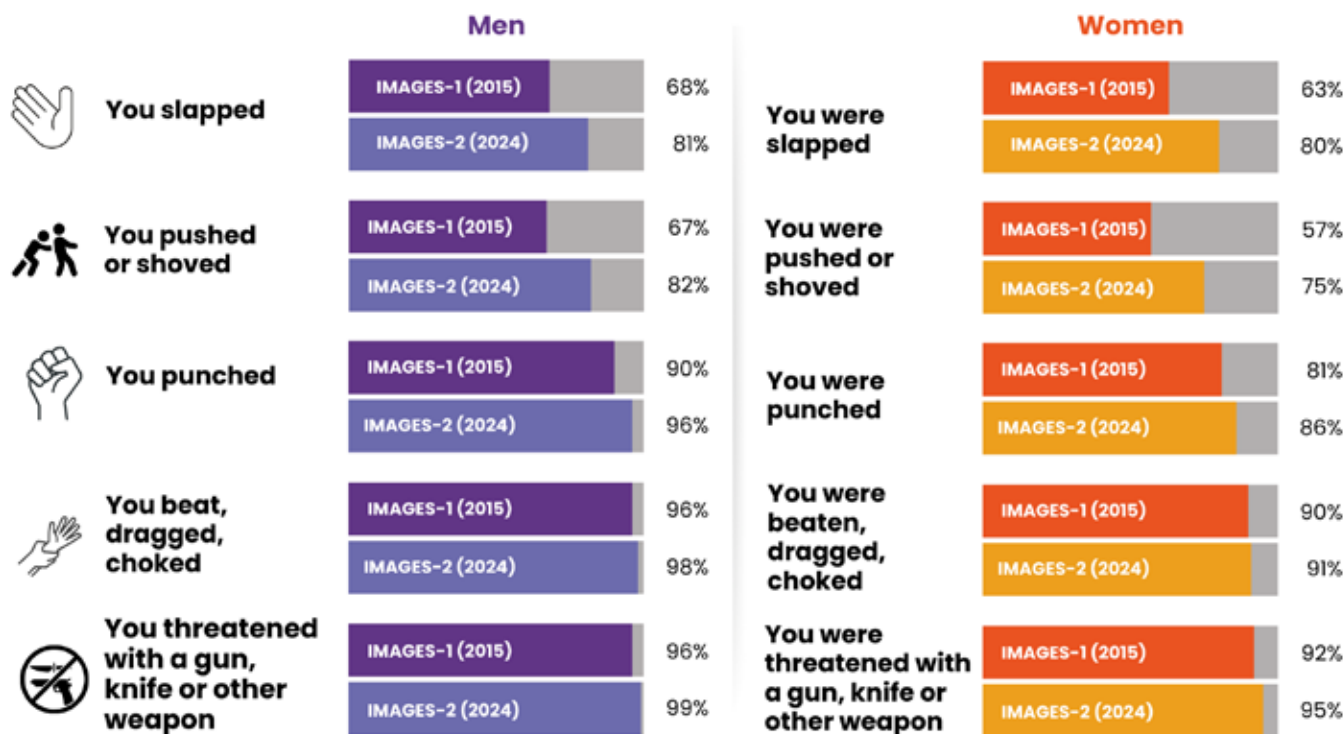
Figure 43 Change in the proportion of men who witnessed violence against their mothers, 2015 and 2024 (men), %



In 2024, there was an increase in the number of men who say they never use domestic violence compared to 2015 survey data. The majority of men report that they have never threatened or physically assaulted their spouse/partner, which is also confirmed by women's responses. However, forms of violence such as hitting, pushing or slapping remain present (Figure 44).



Figure 44. Share of men reporting to use no violence and share of women reporting no domestic violence, 2015 and 2024, %



Worryingly, the number of women reporting some consequences of physical violence by husbands/partners has increased. Thus, the number of wives/partners who reported pain, bruises, respectively, from 22% in 2015 to 35% in 2024, those who reported sprains from 3% to 10% and fracture - from 2% to 10%.

5.4. VIOLENCE IN SOCIETY

Many men exercise power and control over women by using various forms of violence, both in the family and in society. A significant 55% of men and 71% of women *total agree* that “the vast majority of perpetrators are men”. The number of men who disagree with this statement is 11%, double that of women (5%).


In terms of direct experiences, 9% of men reported having a friend who uses physical violence against their wife or partner, while 83% said they did not know of any such person. It is worth mentioning

that the number of women who indicated close friends or acquaintances who are subjected to physical violence by their husband/partner is more than 3 times higher than men (Table 42). More men aged 18-29 years, urban, with higher education and high household income, recognize the presence of a close friend or acquaintance who uses physical violence against their wife/partner.

These data challenge the myth that violence is only present in families where the level of education of the husbands is low, as is the household income. It is important to note that the women profile

who mentioned the presence of friends or acquaintances as victims of domestic violence is diverse and attests that the phenomenon of violence continues to be widespread in the Republic of Moldova.

Table 42. Incidence of physical violence among close friends or acquaintances, reported by men and women, by age groups, %

	Men			Women		
	I know couples where there is violence	I don't know couples like that	No answer	I know couples where there is violence	I don't know couples like that	No answer
TOTAL	9	83	8	35	63	2
18-29 years	16	81	5	37	58	5
30-39 years	10	82	8	33	64	3
40-49 years	6	82	12	35	64	1
50-59 years	7	87	6	35	61	4

The proportion of women who said they have friends or close acquaintances who have been victims of the distribution of disparaging information, including

private data, by husbands or partners in the digital environment is four times higher than men - 12% compared to 3% (Figure 43).

Table 43. Incidence of online violence among close friends or acquaintances, reported by men and women, by age group, %

	Bărbați			Femei		
	I know couples where there is violence	I don't know couples like that	No answer	I know couples where there is violence	I don't know couples like that	No answer
TOTAL	3	94	3	12	83	5
18-29 years	5	94	1	19	75	6
30-39 years	4	94	2	10	85	5
40-49 years	2	92	6	14	83	3
50-59 years	3	95	2	10	85	5


When asked about their ability to influence the behaviour of a violent friend, 63% of those who have such friends believe that they could not bring about a change, 20% believe that they could intervene, and 14% said that they have already done so. More urban and highly educated men have influenced or believe they can bring about change in the behaviour of friends or acquaintances who use violence.

The analysis of men's actions in situations of physical violence against women shows different views depending on their relationship with the perpetrator. If they would see a friend using physical violence against a woman, 51% of men reported that they would intervene at the moment of violence, 16% - would talk to the friend after the violent act, 8% - would notify the police and 3% - would avoid such a friend in the future, and 17% - would not intervene because it is not their problem.

It is important to note that men aged 50-59, from rural areas, with a low level of education and low average monthly household income would not intervene.

If the perpetrator was a stranger, the number of men who would get involved increases to 56%. Also, 9% would talk to the perpetrator after the violent act, 15% would call the police. In this situation, only 14% of men consider that it is not their problem (Table 44). Of note is the increase in the number of men who would notify the police, from 8% when the abuser is a friend to 15% when the abuser is a stranger. These data suggest greater accountability in the face of assaults by strangers compared to situations involving friends.

Table 44. Men's actions in cases when they would see a person perpetrating violence against women (men's response), %

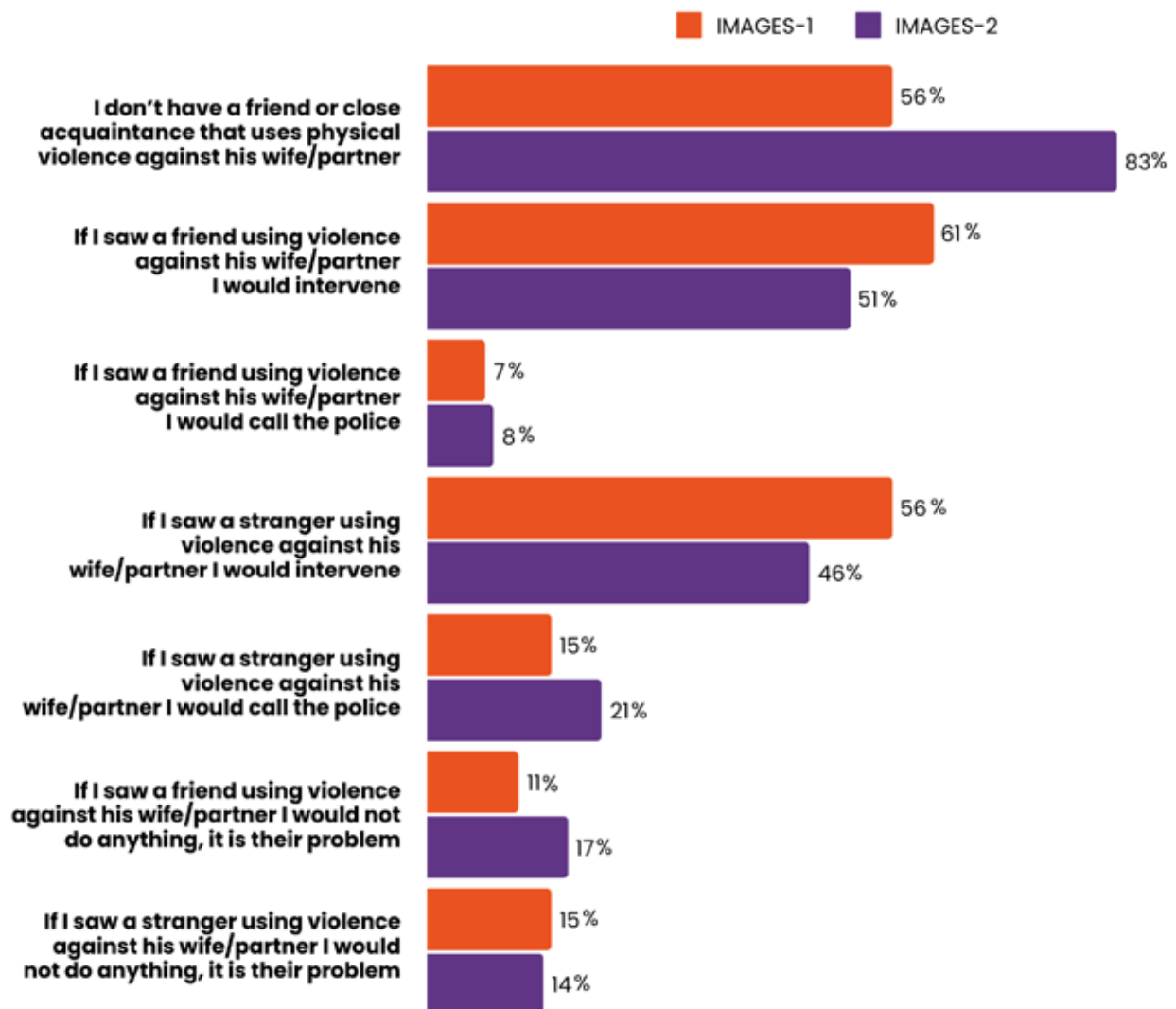
	Men			Women		
	I would intervene at the moment of violence	I would talk to him after the violence	I would notify the police	I'd avoid him, act like a stranger	I wouldn't do anything, it's their problem	I don't know / No answer
A friend applies violence against women	51	16	8	3	17	5
A stranger applies violence against women	56	9	15	3	14	5

The number of men who said that they had been victims of physical violence outside the home in the last 3 months is very low: 5% of men had been hit and 2% had been threatened with a knife, gun or other weapon.

Changing trends on violence in society

From 2015 to 2024, there has been a slight downward trend in the number of men reporting that they do not know people in their close circle who use physical violence against their wives/partners (Figure 45). However, the intention to intervene in such situations decreased among men.

Figure 45. Men's perceptions of physical violence against women, 2015 and 2024, %








5.5. KNOWLEDGE AND APPRECIATION OF SERVICES FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

The IMAGES-2 data highlight the need to improve public knowledge about the existence of services for victims of violence. According to the survey data, 49% of men and 74% of women are aware of the existence of social support services for women victims of violence in the Republic of Moldova. The degree of awareness of the existence of services is higher among people from urban areas, with a high level of education (higher education and post-secondary technical vocational education) and high household income. There is a direct relationship between the level of awareness of existing services and women's education, as well as average monthly household income. As the level of education and income increases, the level of women's awareness of the existence of these services also increases.

Although the vast majority of women are aware of social support services for women victims of violence, only 11% of women who have experienced domestic violence have used these services. The most frequent requests come from women aged 50-59 years, from rural areas, with secondary or technical post-secondary education and low or medium household income. This discrepancy suggests that, although there is a high degree of awareness, there are also significant barriers preventing effective access to support services, such as socio-economic factors or a possible lack of trust in these services.

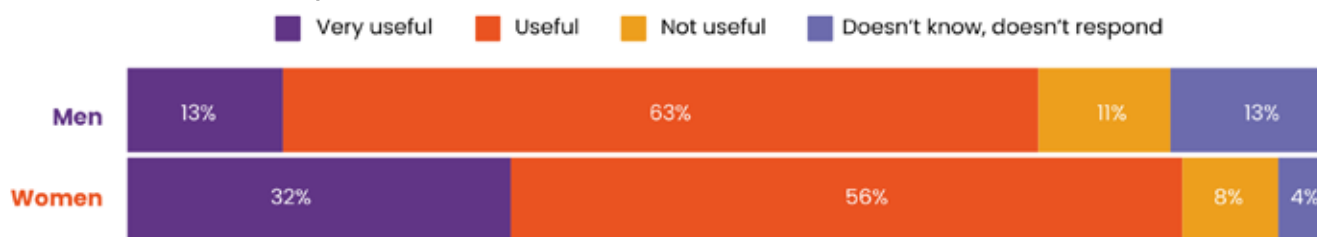
The women-victims of domestic violence who appealed to services, most frequently contacted the police (in 8 out of 10 cases), the town hall (in 2 out of 10 cases), the Women and Girls' Helpline 080088008, organizations that provide support to women, social worker (in 1 case out of 10 for each institution mentioned). No woman-victim of domestic violence turned to a doctor/nurse or priest.



The services provided to these women were rated as *very helpful* by 36% of the women, *helpful* - 35%, *unhelpful* - 16% and 13% could not rate them. These data underline the need to improve the level of trust between women-victims and the institutions providing services, on the one hand, and the quality of services, on the other hand, in order to increase the level of access to these services.

35% of women have heard/know about counselling services for perpetrators of domestic violence compared to 26% of men. Awareness of these services increases with age, reaching the highest level of knowledge among both women and men aged 50-59. Counselling services for perpetrators of domestic violence were rated as *helpful* or *very helpful* by both women and men (Figure 46). Women and men aged 18-29 years, with secondary education and low household income particularly rated the services given as *unhelpful*.

Figure 46. Assessment of helpfulness of counselling services for perpetrators of domestic violence, by sex, %



The level of awareness of the possibility of a Protection Order for victims of domestic violence being issued by the courts is higher among women (43%) than among men (36%). Women and men with secondary education and from low-income families are less informed about the Protection Order that can be issued by the courts for victims of domestic violence.


Table 45. Awareness of the possibility of issuing Protection Order and Emergency Restraining Order, %

	Men		Women	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Protection Order	36	64	43	57
Emergency Restraining Order	38	62	40	60

In the event of a protection order being issued in their name, men who are aware of this legal provision reported that they would comply with the following provisions: 88% - would contribute to the maintenance of the children while they are away from the family, 87% - would cover the expenses and damages caused by the violence, 85% - would respect the visitation regime of minor children, 77% - would stay away from the victim for the period of the protection order, 73% - would participate in counselling programmes to reduce domestic violence and 69% - would temporarily leave the common residence (Table 46). Thus, between 5-23% of men are of the opinion that they would not comply with certain provisions of the protection order issued on their behalf.

Most of the men with low household income and with secondary education reported that they would not comply with various requirements of the Protection Order issued by the court on their behalf. Fewer women, that know about the Protection Order, believe that men would comply with its provisions than men. Only 52% of women believe that their husband/partner would temporarily leave the shared dwelling, 61% that he would participate in counselling programmes to reduce violence, 64% that he would cover all expenses and damages caused by violence, 66% that he would respect the visitation arrangements of minor children, 68% that he would keep distance from the victim of violence and 71% that he would contribute to the maintenance of children.

Table 46. Men’s statements and women’s perceptions of compliance with the provisions of the Protection Order, %

	Men (n=263)		Women (n=177)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Leaving the shared home temporarily	69	23	52	27
Keeping distance/keeping away from the victim of violence	77	15	68	15
Participation in counselling programmes to reduce domestic violence	73	20	61	15
Respecting the visitation scheme for minor children	85	9	66	12
Helping to maintain the children while they are away from home	88	5	71	9
Cover for all expenses and damages caused by acts of violence	87	7	64	14

The level of awareness of the possibility of the police issuing an Emergency Restraining Order is slightly higher among women (40%) than among men (38%). The data shows that women and men with secondary education are the least informed about the Emergency Restraining Order that the police can issue.

Of the men who are aware of the possibility of a Police Emergency Restraining Order, 69% believe they would temporarily leave the shared residence and 75% believe they would keep their distance from the victim or attend a violence reduction counselling programme (Table 47). About 2 in 10 men said they would not comply with the provisions of the Emergency Restraining Order. Men with secondary education and from low-income households in

higher numbers reported that they would not comply with the provisions of the Emergency Restraining Order. For example, 30% of those with secondary school education and 44% of those with low household income indicated that they would not temporarily leave their shared dwelling during the period of the Emergency Restraining Order.

Women’s views on their husband/partner’s compliance with the provisions of the Emergency Restraining Order are slightly lower than those of men. Women aged 40–49 and 50–59 in low-income households, in greater numbers, are not confident that their husbands/partners would comply with the provisions of the Emergency Restraining Order.

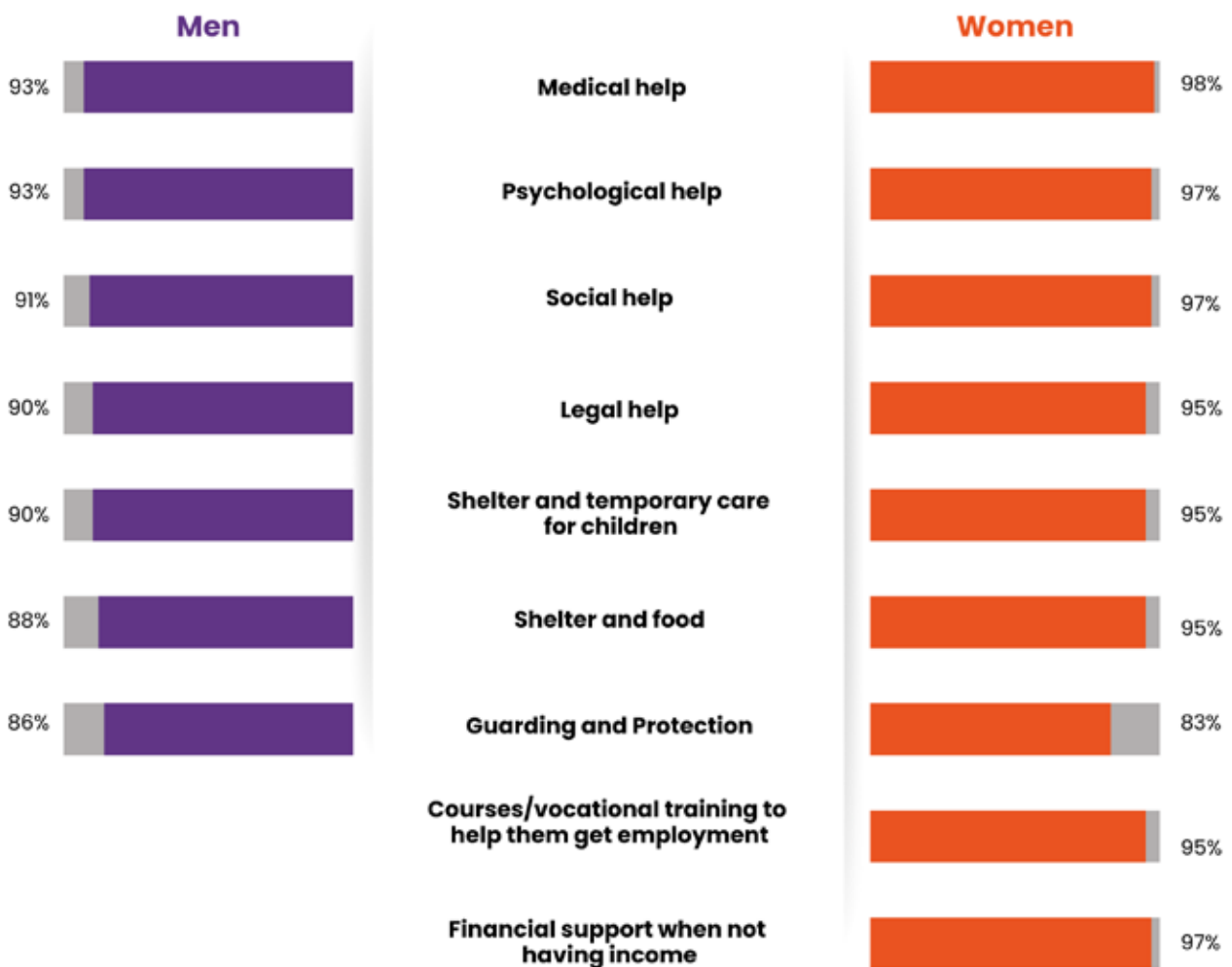
Table 47. Men’s statements and women’s perceptions of compliance with the Emergency Restraining Order, %

	Men (n=274)		Women (n=101)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Leaving the shared accommodation temporarily	69	23	63	18
Keeping distance/keeping away from the victim of violence	75	18	69	14
Participation in a counselling programme to reduce domestic violence	75	19	65	12

There are some differences in men’s and women’s views on the services a woman needs in cases of domestic violence (Figure 47). The opinions of women-victims of violence about the services they need do not differ essentially from

those of women in general. The only difference is that they rank foster and temporary care services for children last, after security and protection services.

Figure 47. Services a woman needs in cases of domestic violence, by gender, %⁴²




42 Women rated the importance of 9 services, men only 7

It should be noted that both 40% of women and 36% of men believe that counselling services for victims of violence are also needed in rural areas. This opinion is shared to a greater extent by women

and men in middle and high-income households (Table 48).

Table 48. Views on location of counselling services for victims of domestic violence, %

	Men			Women		
	Total agreement	Partial agreement	Disagreement	Total agreement	Partial agreement	Disagreement
Counselling services for victims of violence are needed in large urban areas, not in villages	26	14	47	24	12	56

The focus group discussions on the system of services for victims of domestic violence pointed out the need to analyse several aspects of the system in order to improve it: to assess the accessibility, efficiency, degree of involvement of representatives of different institutions with responsibilities in the field in order to understand the existing gaps. The following issues were highlighted:

- **Solid regulatory framework, but poor implementation.** Although there is well developed legislation and a regulatory framework that is considered “perfect” in theory, implementation leaves much to be desired. Police and state institutions are often perceived as operating “at half capacity”, leading to poor results in effectively protecting victims – “The police have to do it and the state has to do it directly. We have many institutions and a very good regulatory framework, but the laws are not enforced, the police and state institutions are not working as they should” (FG_3_B_U).
- **Lack of information and visibility of services.** Hotlines and support centres are not sufficiently known by the population. Inadequate publicity and communication methods not adapted to modern media (e.g. promotion only on radio or television, not on the internet) contribute to limited use of these services – “services are there, but they are not known... Advertising methods are old, but now the world has changed a little” (FG_2_B_U).
- **Low effectivity.** Both men and women consider services to be insufficient and ineffective “services are rather insufficient and not working well” (FG_4_B_U). In many cases, victims do not receive adequate protection or consistent support, and fines imposed on perpetrators are seen as ineffective and even counterproductive, affecting the family budget and creating a sense of impunity – “Women need to go to them when they are suffering from violence... But the problem is that the police come and give a fine and then they pay the fine and live together afterwards” (FG_5_B_R).
- **Lack of rehabilitation services for perpetrators.** In the rural context,

where situations of violence are frequently known in the community, little intervention is taken and the lack of services for the rehabilitation of perpetrators is a major problem.

- **Ambivalent perceptions and social norms.** Among some men, there is an attitude of tolerance towards 'moderate' violence and a reluctance to accept the need for strict interventions, especially when violent actions are considered justified. Some also feel that Protection Orders are too restrictive, indicating a resistance to the idea of protection being offered exclusively to victims – *"The services are bad, it gives too much power to women with the Protection Order, which doesn't allow you to go near the house"* (FG_6_B_R); *"If my wife called the police, the next day I divorce her... Even if I beat her. If I slapped her, she deserved it"* (FG_5_B_R); *"If there is serious violence in the family, then it's good to have that kind of service. But if the man is adequate and only sometimes violent..."* (FG_6_B_R).
- **Lack of psychological support and long-term services.** In addition to the absence of specialized interventions and ongoing psychological support, victims' economic dependence on

their abuser contributes significantly to their return to abusive relationships, amplifying the vicious cycle of violence. Without economic support measures and comprehensive reintegration services, victims face major difficulties in breaking the cycle of violence and rebuilding their lives.

- **Need for proactive and solution-focused measures.** While awareness campaigns are important, the state should also take other pragmatic measures. It is currently possible to provide long-term accommodation for victims (up to one year). However, after this period, without a well-paid job, women victims are unable to support themselves independently, which puts them at risk of returning to abusive situations.


Changing trends in knowledge about services for victims of domestic violence

Comparing the IMAGES-1 data with IMAGES-2, shows that the number of women who know about existing services for victims of violence has increased from 68% to 74%. At the same time, the number of men who know about these services has decreased from 61% in 2015 to 49% in 2024.

Data shows an increase in the number of women using existing services for victims of violence from 3% in 2015 to 11% in 2024.

But the numbers continue to be small, with virtually only 1 in 10 victims using existing services. The police continue to be the most frequently called institution in cases of domestic violence, in 8 out of 10 cases of violence, women turn to the police.

Awareness of counselling services for domestic abusers has decreased from 42% in 2015 to 35% in 2024 among women and from 38% to 26% among men, respectively.



Awareness of the possibility of the court issuing a Protection Order has also decreased, from 50% in 2015 to 36% in 2024 among men, among women it remained practically unchanged (44% in 2015 and 43% in 2024). However, men's attitudes about compliance with the provisions of the Protection Order show small improving trends in 2024 compared to 2015: 88% - reported that they would contribute to the maintenance of children while they are away from the family (86% in 2015), 87% would cover expenses and damages caused by violence (74% in 2015), 85% would respect the visitation regime of minor children (76% in 2015), 73% would participate in counselling programmes to reduce domestic violence (65% in 2015), 77% would stay away from the victim for the period of the Protection Order (64% in 2015) and 69% would temporarily leave the shared dwelling (61% in 2015).



VI. KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES ON GENDER POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

6.1. POLICIES THAT ALLOW WOMEN TO ASSERT THEMSELVES IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

A majority of men (69%) and women (78%) support policies that promote women's access to leadership positions (Table 49). This attitude is shared by a higher percentage of men and women aged 18-29. With increasing age the number of those who agree with these policies decreases. There was also a higher number of those with positive attitudes towards this issue among urban men and women, those with a higher educational level and higher average monthly incomes.

Table 49. Men’s and women’s comparative attitudes towards policies promoting women’s access to leadership positions, by age group, %

	Men		Women	
	Agreement	Disagreement	Agreement	Disagreement
TOTAL	69	24	78	15
18-29 years	73	19	86	8
30-39 years	72	21	73	15
40-49 years	65	28	81	14
50-59 years	65	29	75	19

Among employed men, 16% currently have a female superior and 36% had a female boss at some point. The proportion of men working under a woman is higher among those with higher education. Almost half of men with a higher education have had a female boss during their career.

Male attitudes towards a female boss are largely positive. Of the male employees, only 8% said they were bothered by female leadership. In the focus group discussions, it was emphasized that professionalism should determine the choice of bosses, but it was pointed out that women try harder, can find better

ways to communicate with people and have better developed organizational and leadership skills (Box 4). Some men reported that it also depends on the field in which the woman is in a managerial position *“for example, working as a sailor or engineer is physically demanding. We don’t have days off and I don’t think a woman would cope”* (FG_3_B_U).

Box 4. Men’s attitudes towards a female boss

“Women are sometimes better in leading. They can lead” (FG_1_B_U).

“Sometimes even with a female boss you do more work, you work better” (FG_3_B_U).

“It depends on how they behave, but in practice, women leaders behave better than men bosses and what they promise - they deliver” (FG_6_B_R).

In terms of women’s preferences, 70% said that the gender of the boss is of no importance to them, while 18% prefer a female superior and 12% opt for a male boss. Women’s preference for a male boss increases with age: from 5% in the

18-29 age group, to 12% in the 30-39 age group, 13% in the 40-49 age group, and 19% in the 50-59 age group.

Changing trends in policies that allow women to assert themselves in leadership positions

From 2015 to 2024, the number of men who agree with policies that promote women’s access to leadership positions increased from 55% to 69%. While the number of women increased from 73% to 78%. The number of men who are bothered by a female boss decreased from 13% in 2015 to 8% in 2024.

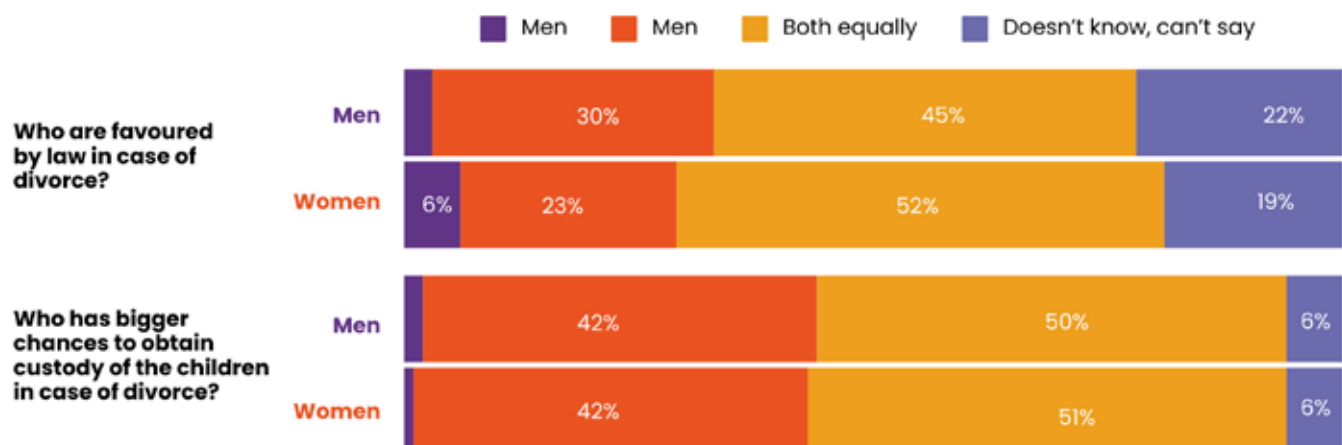
6.2. DIVORCE AND CHILD CUSTODY POLICIES

IMAGES-2 data reveals that 45% of men reported that they would be afraid to divorce or separate from their wife/partner because they may lose contact with their children. These concerns are amplified by the perception of 30% of men and 23% of women that divorce and separation laws in the Republic of Moldova favour women (Figure 48). Men aged 30-39 years, with higher levels of education and higher household incomes, in greater

numbers believe that laws favour women. Only 45% of men and 52% of women say that laws do not favour anyone in divorce situations.

Also, 42% of men and 42% of women believe that women are more likely to get child custody in divorce proceedings. This view is more common among men in the 30-39 age group, with higher education and higher incomes.

Figure 48. Perceptions of legal favourability in divorce and chances of obtaining child custody, by sex, %



Changing trends in divorce and child custody policies

IMAGES-2 data shows a reduction in the number of men and women who have misperceptions about divorce and post-divorce child custody laws. Opinions that the Moldovan legal framework on divorce favours women decreased from 49% in 2015 to 30% in 2024 among men and from 37% to 23% among women. Also, the opinion that the divorce process gives women a

better chance of obtaining custody of their children decreased from 57% to 42% among men and from 50% to 42% among women for the period analysed.

6.3. POLICIES ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In recent years, the Republic of Moldova has made significant progress in eliminating violence and developing social services by improving the existing legal framework and ratifying international treaties such as the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. However, research data show that a part of the population is not aware of the legal provisions in this area. Only 48% of men

said that they know about the existence of legal rules on violence against women, 18% said that they do not exist, and 34% have no knowledge about them (Figure 49). The level of awareness is higher among young, urban, with higher education and higher income men.

Figure 49. Level of awareness of the existence of legal norms on violence against women in the Republic of Moldova, by sex, %



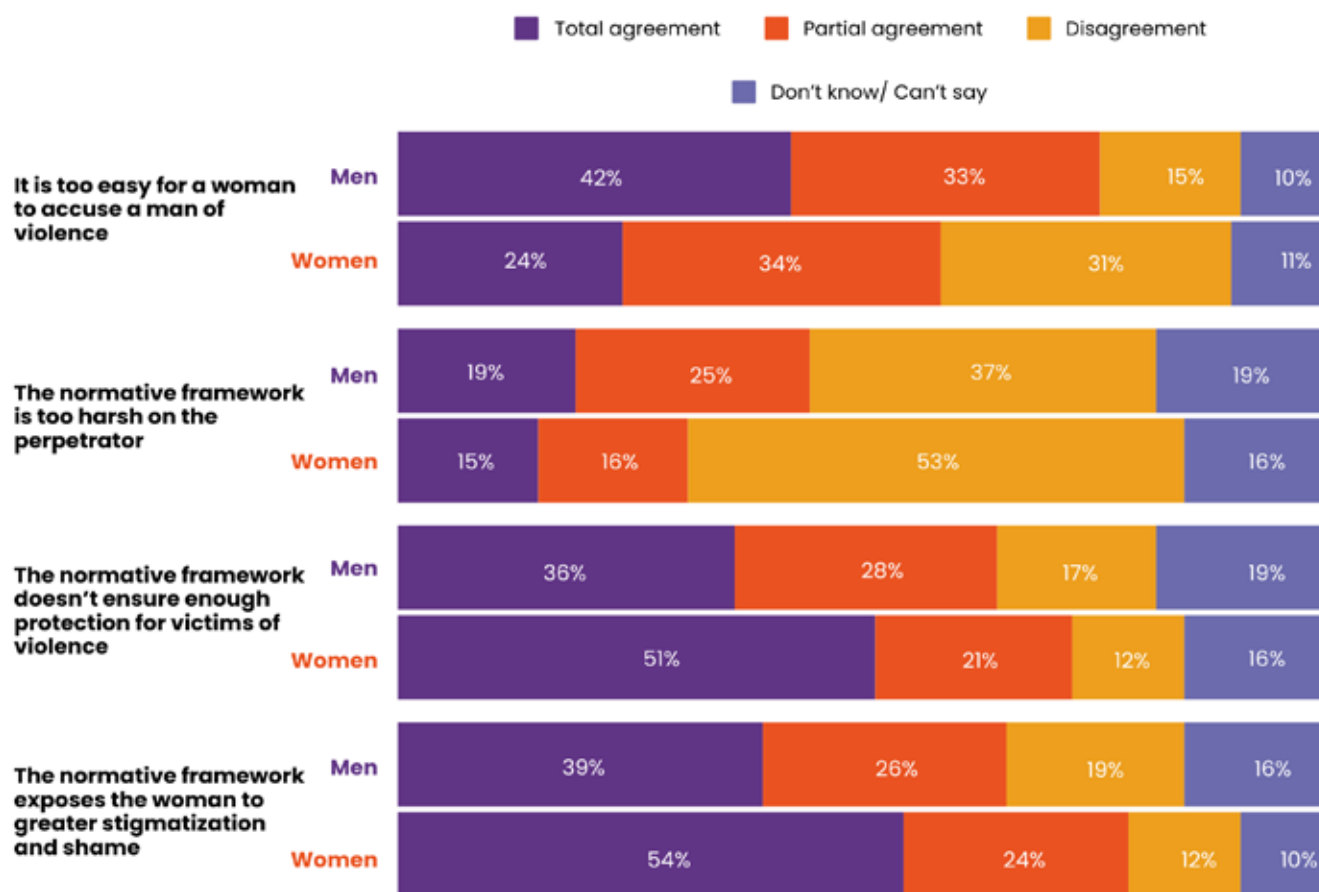
Although the level of knowledge about the normative framework on violence against women is similar between men and women, opinions on how it works differ (Figure 50). Thus, 75% of the men and 58% of the women who indicated that the normative framework on violence against women exists in Moldova believe that, according to the normative regulations, it is easy for a woman to bring charges against a man on the grounds of violence (*total and partial agreement*).

44% of men and 31% of women believe that the current legal provisions are too harsh for perpetrators (*total and partial agreement*). The proportion of men who hold this opinion is higher among men aged over 30, with low education and low and medium household income.

Women who share this position are predominantly over 30 years of age, from rural background.

64% of men and 72% of women say that the current legal framework does not provide sufficient protection for victims of violence (*total and partial agreement*). 65% of men and 78% of women believe that the current legal rules on violence against women expose women to more stigma and shame. This opinion is particularly held by men aged 30–39, with post-secondary technical vocational education and high income. The given view is characteristic for a higher number of women with higher education and high household income.

Figure 50. Assessment of the normative framework regulating violence against women in the Republic of Moldova, by sex, %



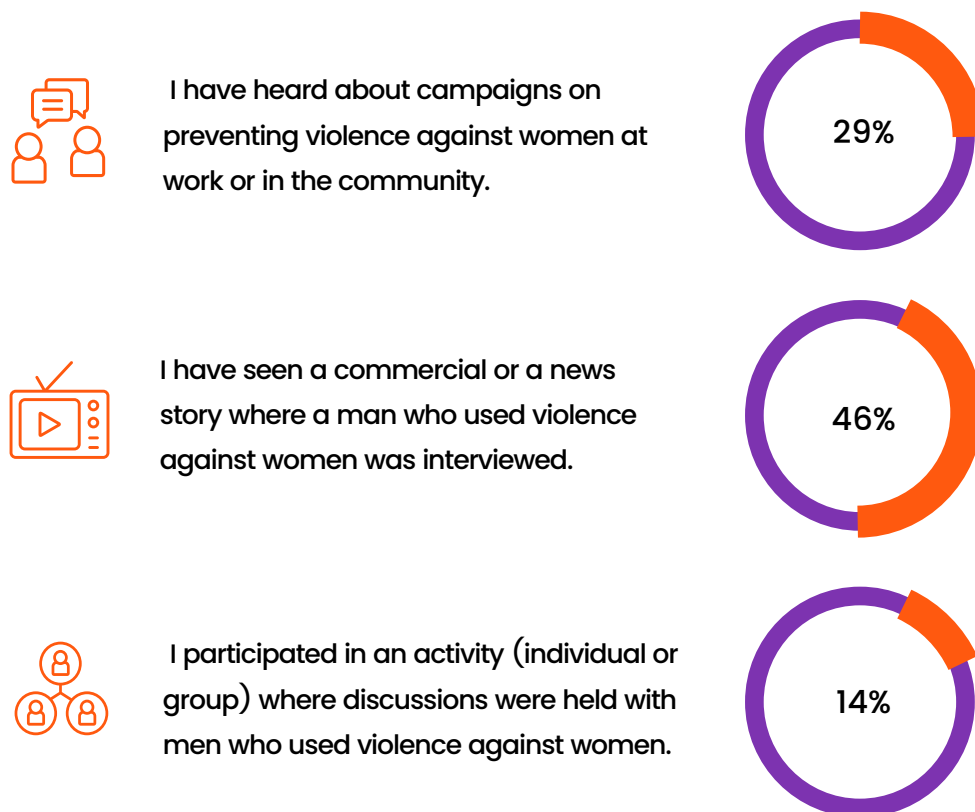
Only men and women that indicated that there are laws regarding violence against women in the

Various campaigns dedicated to the prevention of violence against women have been promoted in recent years, but only 29% of men have heard about such campaigns in the community where they live or at work (Figure 51). More men aged 18-29 and 30-39, urban, highly educated and high-income heard about such campaigns.

The data reveal that 14% of men have participated at least once in an individual or group activity, organized at work or in the community, to discuss with men who have used violence against women. Younger, urban, highly educated men in higher numbers participated in such activities.

It is noteworthy that 46% of the men participating in the research have seen at least once a commercial about violence against women. More than half of the 18-29 year old, urban, with higher education men have seen such commercials.

Figure 51. Men's exposure to campaigns, spots and activities on the prevention of violence against women, %



During the focus group discussions, participants highlighted possibilities for improving campaigns and activities to prevent gender-based violence and domestic violence:

- **The need for relevant and tailored information.** It was emphasized that the population needs to be informed in order to understand the types of violence, especially the less visible ones, such as psychological or economic violence, which are often overlooked, but also about online violence.
- **Organize more campaigns for younger generations.** Education and awareness-raising must start from pre-adolescence to build healthy beliefs and positive attitudes towards equality and respect-based relationships. Debate activities in schools, for example, could provide a platform to discuss and understand the issue of violence, thus contributing to the formation of a preventive mindset.
- **Moving away from general information campaigns towards activities based on direct interactions.** Brochures and leaflets are perceived as having low impact. Instead, interactive activities such as face-to-face discussions, workshops and focus groups are seen as more effective because they facilitate direct communication and allow questions to be asked.
- **The importance of materials with practical and clear information.** Brochures and written materials remain useful when they are well structured and clearly explain where women can turn to and how to recognize different forms of abuse.
- **The importance of long-term support for victims.** One critical issue highlighted is the length of time that some services offered by specialized centres take to provide support (e.g.

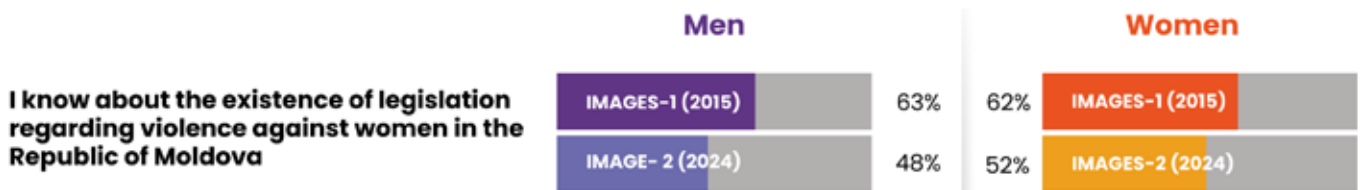
up to two months). Many participants in the focus group discussions felt that psychological problems and trauma take time to overcome and that the short duration of rehabilitation is insufficient to help victims rebuild their lives. Thus, there is a need to extend the period of assistance, including emotional support and guidance in finding stable employment. Current programmes provide an important foundation, but they are insufficient for the complex needs of victims, highlighting the need for more comprehensive resources and support.

According to the participants in the focus group discussions, an effective approach to prevention campaigns should combine traditional awareness-raising activities with interactive and digital methods. The need to segment violence against women prevention campaigns for different target groups was also mentioned, in order to effectively address the specific needs of each group involved or affected. For example, campaigns for the general public should promote awareness of the general signs of abuse and provide information on where people can get help or how to support someone suffering from violence. But for professionals, such as police officers, doctors, teachers or social workers, specific and detailed training programmes are needed, including both theoretical aspects and intervention procedures.

Changing trends in policies on violence against women

IMAGES-2 data shows that the number of men and women who are aware of the fact that there is a legal framework regulating violence against women in the Republic of Moldova has decreased (Figure 52).

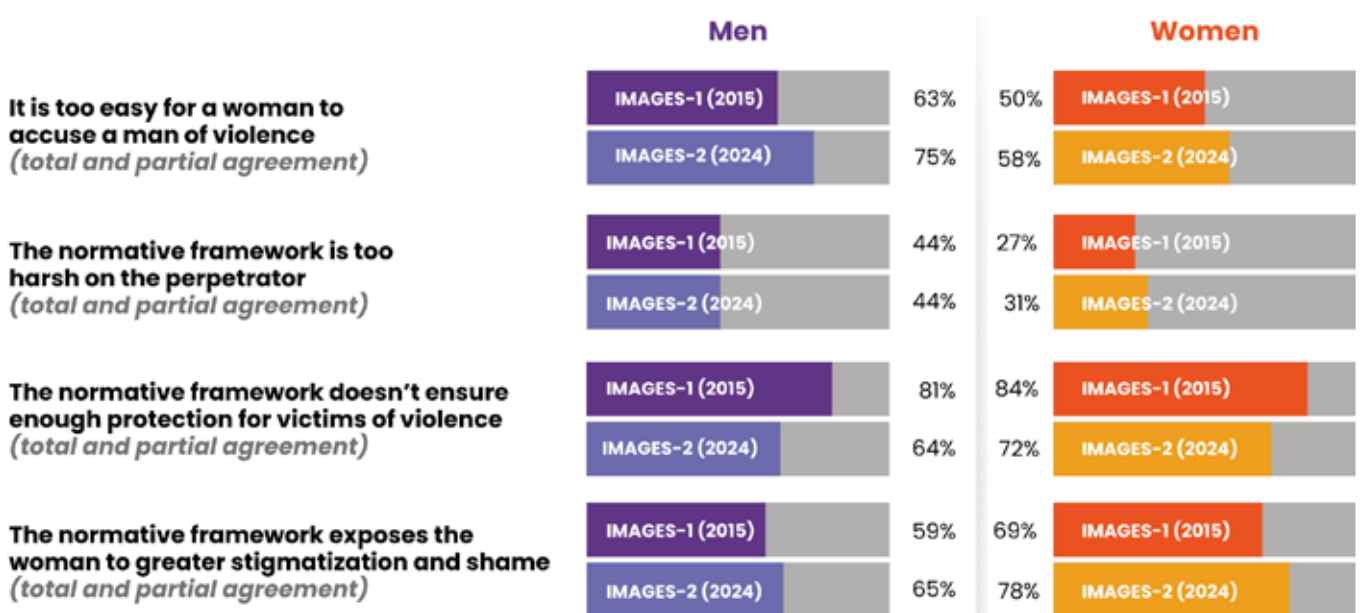
Figure 52. Share of men and women who are aware of the existence of legal norms on violence against women in the Republic of Moldova, 2015 and 2024, %



Over the period, the number of people who think it is too easy for a woman to accuse a man of violence has increased among both men (from 63% to 75%) and women (from 50% to 58%). The number of people who think that current legislation does not provide sufficient protection for victims of violence has decreased, from 81% to 64% among men and from 84% to 72% among women. It is also worth noting

that over a third of respondents perceive the legal framework as being too harsh towards perpetrators. At the same time, the number of those who believe that the current laws contribute to greater stigmatization of female victims has increased (Figure 53).

Figure 53. Evolution of men’s and women’s perceptions of the normative framework regarding violence against women in the Republic of Moldova, 2015 and 2024, %



Only men and women who indicated that there are laws in the Republic of Moldova regarding violence against women

The research data shows a decrease from 2015 to 2024 in the number of men who have heard about campaigns to prevent violence against women, from 45% to 29%, and in the number of men who have seen at least once on TV a commercial or news report interviewing a man who has used violence against women, from 67% to 46%

respectively. On the other hand, there was a slight increase in men's participation in individual or group actions, organized in their locality or at their workplace, in which they discuss with men who have used violence against women, from 11% to 14% during the period under analysis.

6.4. POLICIES REGARDING NON-DISCRIMINATION OF LGBTQ+ PERSONS

The population lacks sufficient information about sexual diversity, which contributes to intolerance. Most men refused to answer questions on homosexuality, so only women were interviewed on this topic. According to the survey, 35% of women believe that there are policies in the Republic of Moldova that protect homosexual people from discrimination, compared to 15% who said no and 50% who don't know.

Of the 35% of women who said policies to protect LGBTQ+ people from discrimination existed, 26% expressed support for them, while 64% disagreed (Figure 54). Women aged 18-29, urban, higher educated and higher income in higher numbers agreed with these policies.

Of the women who said that there are laws in Moldova that protect gay and lesbian people from discrimination, 15% agree that the laws should allow same-sex marriage, compared to 77% who are against. Disagreement with the introduction of such laws increases with women's age, and is higher among those with lower education and lower incomes. In the group discussions, perspectives emerged that reveal complex and largely negative attitudes towards sexual diversity

and the public manifestations associated with it. The following main ideas emerged:

- **Reluctance towards public visibility of LGBTQ+ actions.** Many participants believe that minority sexual orientations should not be promoted or openly displayed. It was mentioned that LGBTQ+ people existed in the past, their actions were less visible and were not discussed publicly "*it existed, but it was not displayed*" (FG_1_B_U). Some participants state that sexual diversity does not bother them personally as long as it is not openly or intensely promoted "*to promote it is not good*" (FG_2_B_U). Thus, discomfort was expressed with the public approach to the topic, feeling that it is imposed on them.
- **Perception of sexual diversity as a health problem.** Some participants in the focus group discussions associate sexual diversity with a form of '*disease*' or '*psychological disorder that needs to be treated*', which highlights an incorrect view and suggests a fundamental misunderstanding of sexual diversity. Some expressed an extremely radical attitude "*let them be shot*" (FG_5_B_R).
- **Opposition to "propaganda".** Several participants expressed their negative attitude towards actions taken publicly

by LGBTQ+ representatives. These are perceived as excessive propaganda of sexual diversity *"I am affected by propaganda, I am against parades, massive and intense propaganda"* (FG_3_B_U). Respectively, it was emphasized that such actions should be more discreet. While not supporting the banning of such events, many men and women oppose explicit promotion such as LGBTQ+ parades, which they consider inappropriate and unnatural - *"...They are imposed on us, I have nothing against them, possibly I do, but I don't say anything. This is strictly according to their laws, but there is no reason in my city, where I was born and where I walk with my child by the hand, to be confronted by such parades. I do not accept that. This is really about their rights being equal to ours"* (FG_8_F_R).

- Individual freedom versus child protection. LGBTQ+ adults have a right to their lives, but if children are involved, they need to be protected from exposure to examples deemed inappropriate - *"every adult has the right to do what they want, but children need to be protected"* (FG_6_B_R), *"this is an infection. What the child sees, that's what the child will do next... it's an influence that is not so good for a family"* (FG_5_B_R). This position suggests concerns about influence on minors.

Few in the focus group discussions had a sympathetic attitude towards the public actions taken by LGBTQ+ representatives *"I seem to see the actions taken by these people differently. I see to a certain extent that they want to let it be understood that they are among us. Previously, they were afraid, they were hiding, but now through the parade they want to say: we are part of society, we ride on the same trolleybus with you"* (FG_3_B_U).

Thus, general perceptions reflect significant resistance to the public visibility of sexual diversity. At the same time, there is a distinction between acceptance of individual freedom in the private sphere and discomfort with its promotion or visibility in the public sphere, especially in the context of educating children. These views underline a need for accurate information to reduce stigmatization and misunderstanding of sexual diversity.

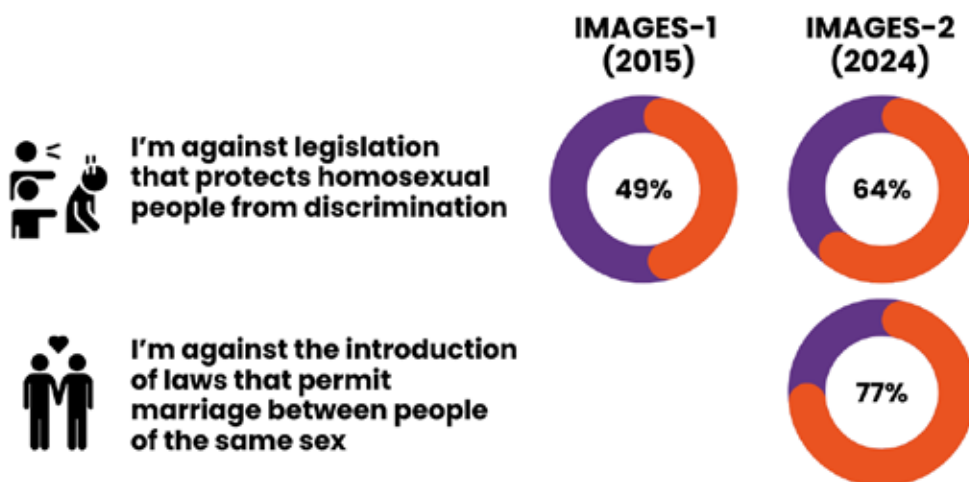
Changing trends in LGBTQ+ non-discrimination policies

In 2024, there was an increase in the population's negative attitude towards non-discrimination policies for LGBTQ+ people, a situation explained by the "massive propagation" of their rights - "they took out May 9 and put up the gay parade" (FG_5_B_R). In this context we highlight the refusal of men to answer the questions on sexual diversity and non-discrimination policies for LGBTQ+ representatives, supplemented by their refusal to participate in the research

because of these questions, which led to their exclusion from the questionnaire for men.

Data shows an increase in the number of women who are against laws to protect gay people from discrimination (from 49% in 2015 to 64% in 2024) and against introducing laws to allow same-sex marriage (77% against).

Figure 54. Women's opinion on the regulatory framework protecting sexual minorities from discrimination, 2015 and 2024, %



VII. PRACTICES AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS SOCIAL DEVIANCE

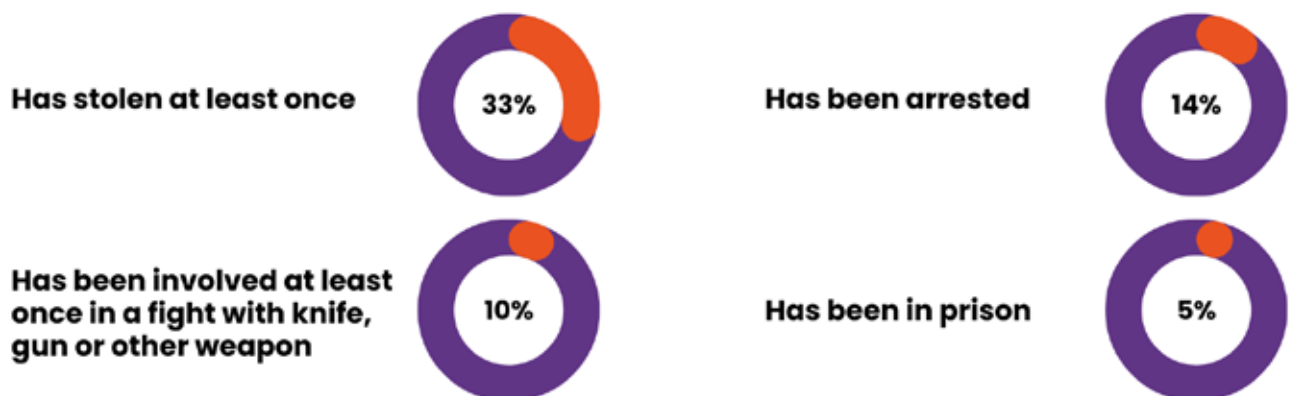


7.1. CRIMINALITY

Criminal behaviour and violent tendencies are often influenced by factors such as traditionalism and norms of masculinity⁴³. Although the number of those involved in crime is relatively small, the IMAGES-2 data give some insight into the phenomenon. Thus 33% of the men reported having stolen at least once (6% - often, 15% - 2-3 times, 12% - once). 14% of the sample of men reported having been arrested and 5% having been in prison (Figure 55).

10% of the men participating in the research were involved at least once in a fight with a knife, gun or weapon (6% - once, 3% - 2-3 times and 2% - often).

Figure 55. Share of men reporting having been involved in criminal activities, including theft, arrest and imprisonment, %



⁴³ Haywood, C., Johansson, T., Hammarén, N., Herz, M., & Ottemo, A. (2017). The conundrum of masculinity: Hegemony, homosociality, homophobia and heteronormativity. Routledge.

Crime trends

The number of men who said they had committed theft at least once fell from 46% in 2015 to 33% in 2024. The number of men reporting having been arrested also decreased slightly over this period, from 17% to 14%. However, there is a slight increase in the number who say they have been imprisoned, from 4% in 2015 to 5% in 2024.

7.2. ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Some international research shows a relationship between alcohol consumption and acceptance of gender equality. They show that men who do not accept gender equality consume more alcohol⁴⁴. IMAGES-2 data do not indicate significant relationships on this issue.

One-third of the men participating in the research reported that they had consumed alcohol during their school years in a school environment. The highest percentages of school drinking were reported by men in the 18–29 and 30–39 age groups (Table 50).

Table 50. Alcohol consumption in school, by age groups, (men’s statements), %

		Never	Sometimes	Often	Daily
Age	TOTAL	86	12	2	0
	18–29 years	84	15	1	0
	30–39 years	80	16	4	0
	40–49 years	89	11	0	0
	50–59 years	93	6	1	0

43 Heise, L., Greene, M. E., Opper, N., Stavropoulou, M., Harper, C., Nascimento, M., & Zewdie, D. (2019). Gender inequality and restrictive gender norms: Framing the challenges to health. *The Lancet*, 393(10189), 2440–2454. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(19\)30652-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(19)30652-X)

The research also focused on participants' current drinking behaviour. Currently, 73% of men and 56% of women drink alcohol, with varied drinking behaviour. Thus, 37% of men consume alcohol once a month or less often, 20% - 2-4 times a month, 9% - 2-3 times a week, 6% - 4 or more times a week (Table 51). There is a clear tendency for alcohol consumption to increase with increasing age, suggesting that age significantly influences the frequency of consumption.

The number of women who drink alcohol is much lower than men - 56%. Of the women who drink, 45% indicated that they drink alcoholic beverages less often than once a month. These data highlight a significant difference between the drinking behaviours of men and women, with a higher prevalence among men.

Table 51. Frequency of current alcohol consumption, %

	Never	Less than once a month	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily
Men	27	37	20	9	6
Women	44	45	9	1	1

Of the men who drink alcoholic beverages, 72% sometimes consume more than 5 glasses of alcohol per evening. This happens in 50% of cases less often than once a month, in 14% - monthly, 7% - weekly (Table 52). Excessive alcohol consumption per evening is characterized to a greater extent by men who do not have a wife or a steady partner, as well as those with low income.

Among women drinkers, 43% admitted to sometimes having more than 5 glasses of alcohol at a party. 37% do so less than once a month, 3% - monthly and 3% - weekly. The research data reveals that weekly consumption of more than 5 glasses is more characteristic of women aged 50-59, with secondary education and low income.

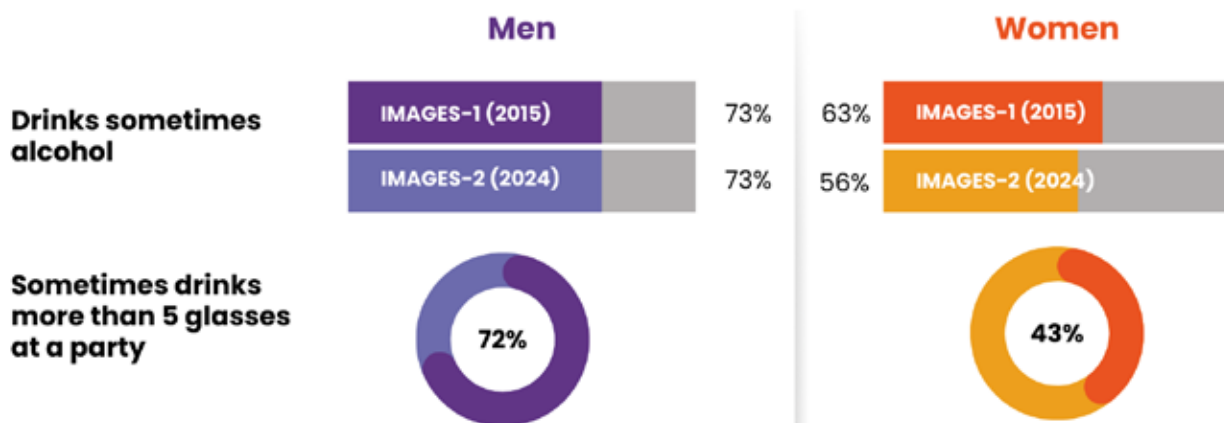
Table 52. Frequency of excessive drinking (more than 5 glasses of alcohol), %

	Never	Less than once a month	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily
Men (n=736, 73%)	28	50	14	7	2
Women (n=286, 57%)	57	37	3	3	0

Trends in alcohol consumption

The percentage of men who drink alcohol has remained constant, while the percentage of women has decreased slightly from 63% in 2015 to 56% in 2024. At the same time, among drinkers, the proportion of both men and women who drink no more than five glasses of alcohol at a party increased (Figure 56).

Figure 56. Trends in alcohol consumption among men and women, 2015–2024, %



7.3. ATTITUDES TOWARDS PROSTITUTION

The IMAGES survey also analyses men’s and women’s perceptions of prostitution. Thus, 87% of men say it is wrong for a girl under 18 to prostitute herself, 77% consider it morally unacceptable for a girl under 18 to prostitute herself and 70% say it is a violation of a person’s rights. In the opinion of 19% of men, prostitution is a job like any other and there is nothing wrong with a girl under 18 practicing it, and 55% believe that if a girl under 18 decides to prostitute herself, it is her choice.

The number of men who do not accept prostitution for adult women and believe it is wrong for women to be in prostitution is decreasing - 69%. The number of men - 53% - who consider it morally unacceptable for an adult woman to

practise this profession is also lower, including those who consider that it would be a violation of her rights - 39%. At the same time, 36% of men, however, see nothing wrong with prostitution practiced by adult women, considering it a job like any other. 86% of men think it would be a woman’s choice.

Women’s responses reveal less tolerance of both girls under 18 and adult women in prostitution compared to men’s (Table 53).

Table 53. Views on people practicing prostitution, %

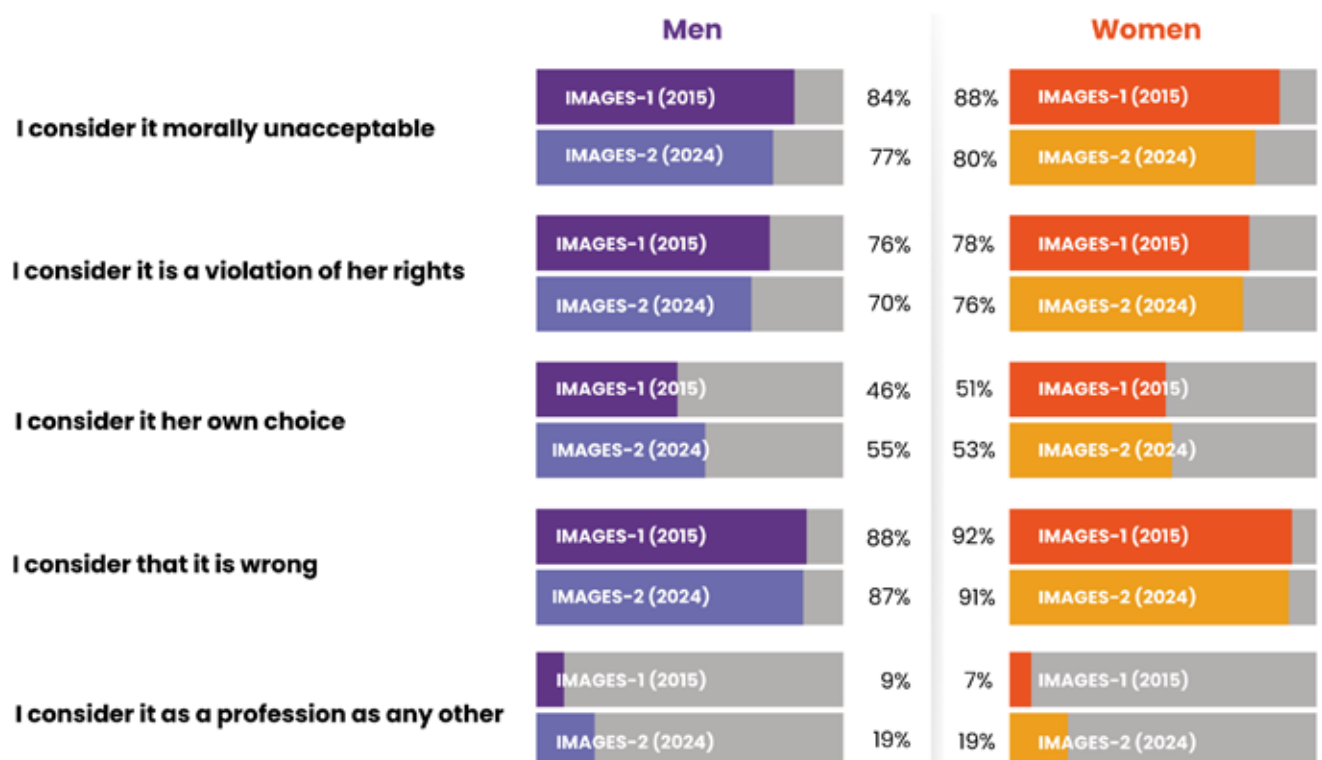
	Men		Women	
	Towards a girl under 18 practicing prostitution	Towards to an adult woman practicing prostitution	Towards a girl under 18 practicing prostitution	Towards to an adult woman practicing prostitution
I find it morally unacceptable	77	53	80	63
I consider it a violation of her rights	70	39	76	45
I think it's her choice	55	86	53	85
I think it is wrong	87	69	91	75
I consider it a job like any other	19	36	19	26

Trends in attitudes towards prostitution

Datele atestă o schimbări în percepția publică privind moralitatea și acceptabilitatea prostituției practicate de minore. A scăzut numărul persoanelor care apreciază că acest act este greșit și inacceptabil din punct de vedere moral. Totuși, există și o altă tendință de remarcant.

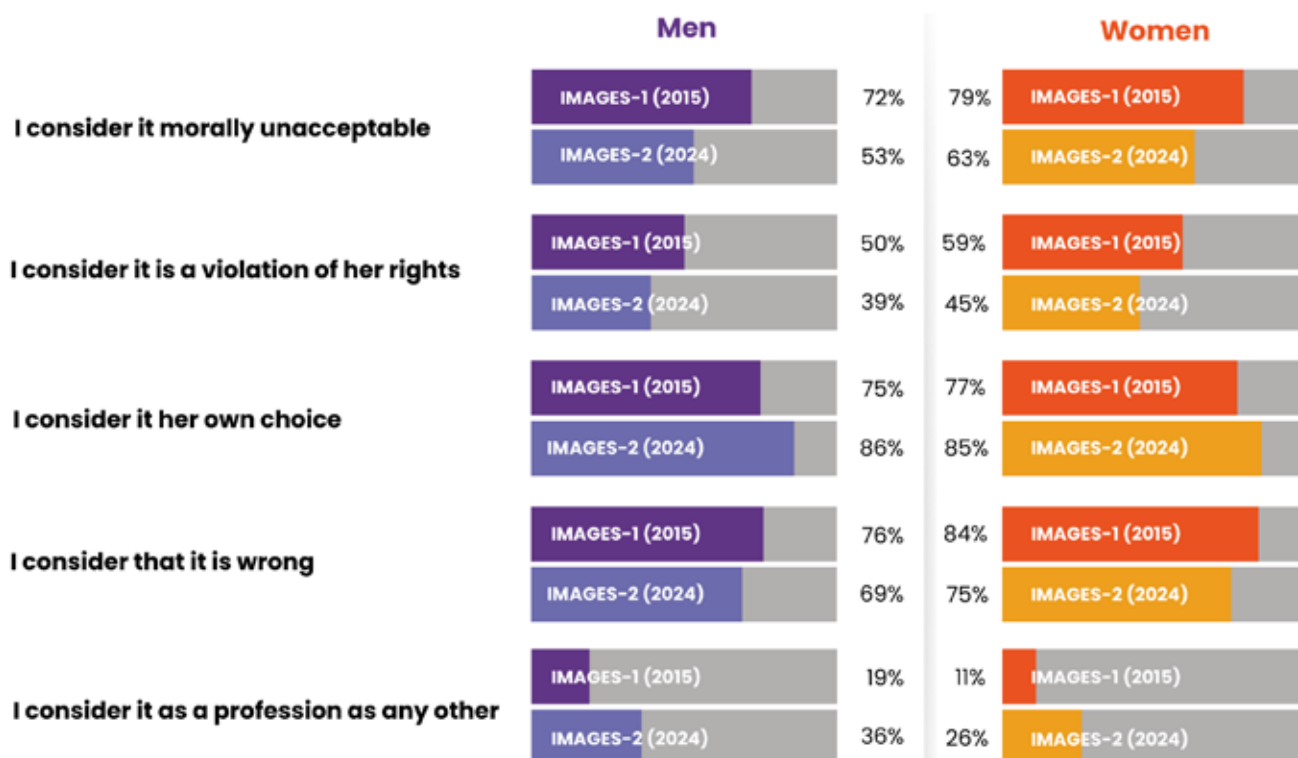
Astfel, în anul 2024, 19% dintre bărbați și 19% dintre femei percep activitatea în cauză ca pe o profesie obișnuită, fără a sesiza o problemă de morală (față de 9% dintre bărbați și 7% dintre femei, în anul 2015) (Figura 57).

Figure 57. Changes in men's and women's attitudes towards prostitution by underage girls, 2015 and 2024, %



In terms of changes in men’s and women’s attitudes towards prostitution of adult women, there is a general trend of acceptance. Attitudes about the morality of prostitution have become more nuanced and perceptions of women’s personal choice have increased. In addition, the proportion of both men and women who accept prostitution as a profession has increased (Figure 58).

Figure 58. Evolution of men’s and women’s attitudes towards prostitution by adult women, 2015 and 2024, %



7.4. ATTITUDES TOWARDS ACCESSING SEXUAL SERVICES AGAINST PAYMENT

Analysis of attitudes towards paid sex reveals that 33% of men and 22% of women consider it normal to pay for sex. Women's opinions on this subject show a higher level of morality, as 66% of women consider it morally unacceptable for a man to pay for sex, compared to 52% of men.

In terms of relationship context, 53% of men and 48% of women think it is acceptable for a man to pay for sex as long as he is not married or in a relationship. This suggests a conditional acceptance of this behaviour, but also a tendency to view serious relationships as a limiting factor.

Almost half of the respondents (53% of men and 50% of women) believe that every man engages in this practice at least once in his lifetime, suggesting a recognition of social norms that may influence sexual behaviour. Respectively, 47% of men and 36% of women view sex as a service that can be bought, which may reflect a more commercialized attitude towards intimacy, particularly among men (Table 54).

Table 54. Attitudes towards men who pay for sex, %

	Men		Women	
	Yes	No ⁴⁵	Yes	No ⁴⁶
I think it's normal for a man to do that	33	57	22	66
I find it morally unacceptable	52	38	66	24
I consider it acceptable as long as he is not married or in a relationship with someone else	53	37	48	39
I believe that every man does this at least once in his life	53	32	50	26
I think only men who have mental or health problems do that	25	63	34	53
I believe that sex is a service that can be bought like other services	47	43	36	52
I believe it is a profession like any other	19	36	19	26

45 The difference up to 100% is non-response.

46 The difference up to 100% is non-response.

On the legal responsibilities for prostitution, 67% of men support the idea of holding both parties responsible. A smaller number opt for sanctioning only the persons who provide such services (22%) or only those who use them (4%). Women's views on this issue are broadly in line with men's, with no major differences in perceptions of responsibility or violation of rights in the context of paid sex services. These results underline a degree of consensus between men's and women's views, but also a complexity in the social perception of prostitution, especially when exploitation of minors is involved (Table 55).

The analysis of the actions they would take if they found out that the person involved in prostitution had been sold, bought or forced into prostitution

reveals that 56% of men would notify the police, demonstrating a concern for reporting exploitative situations. A smaller percentage (18%) indicated that they would avoid sexual contact, choosing a personal avoidance approach, while an even smaller group (9%) indicated that they would choose to accompany the person to the police, showing an active involvement in supporting the victim⁴⁷. These responses highlight a difference in the level of commitment to tackling exploitation: while the majority would choose to report the situation indirectly, some would opt for solutions involving more direct involvement, either by avoiding contact or offering physical support to the victim.

Table 55. Opinions of men and women on legal responsibility for paid sexual services, %

	Persons providing services	People using the services	Both sides	Nobody	Someone else (pimps)
 Men⁴⁸	22	4	67	6	1
 Women⁴⁹	15	3	65	11	6

⁴⁷ Every 5th man did not answer this question.

⁴⁹ The difference up to 100% is women who did not respond.

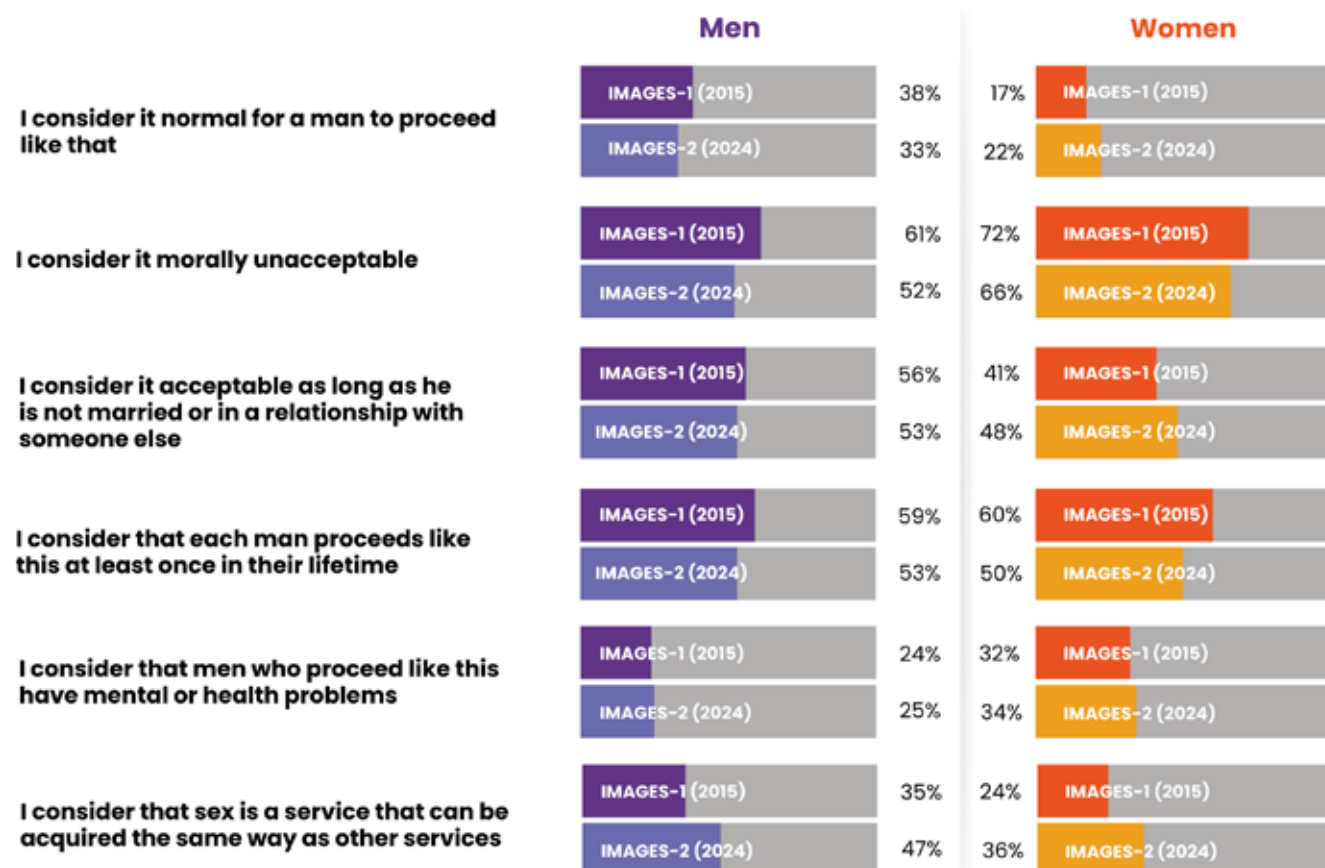
⁴⁸ The difference up to 100% is men who did not respond.

Trends in accessing paid sex services

A comparative analysis of the data in IMAGES-1 and IMAGES-2 shows an increase in the level of acceptance of paid sexual services, with some differences between men and women. Women, in general, remain more critical, maintaining a firmer attitude towards the morality of such actions (Figure 59). Conditioning this attitude on marital status shows that the perception that it is acceptable for a man to pay for sex if he is not married or does not have a partner remains stable among both men and women, signalling a continuity in the perspective related to the moral responsibility associated with couple relationships. At the same time, attitudes towards accessing sexual

services against payment increased significantly, being more pronounced among men than among women. These results indicate a relaxation of moral norms and a greater acceptance of the idea of paying for sex among men, while women remain generally more reticent. Thus, a complexity of attitudes towards prostitution emerges, with differences in perceptions between men and women, reflecting changes in social values and norms.

Figure 59. Attitudes towards men paying for sex, by sex, 2015 and 2024, %





CONCLUSIONS

Gender equality is interpreted differently by men and women in the Republic of Moldova, being associated both with equal opportunities and legal rights and with the distribution of family and social responsibilities. Differences in perception between men and women are evident, with women being more likely to perceive gender equality as a fundamental right. Although there is progress in public perception, stereotypes linked to traditional gender roles are still present, particularly in the labour market and in the context of family responsibilities. Women continue to be perceived as primarily responsible for childcare and household activities. Equitable redistribution of household responsibilities also continues to be a problematic area.

Rising levels of economic wellbeing are seen as a positive factor that could help to improve gender equality in society, but a large proportion of both men and women believe that women's entitlements imply losses for men and that women's employment limits men's opportunities. These views predominate among people with low education and low incomes. People with higher education and higher incomes tend to have a more accurate perception of gender equality.

The research data highlights significant differences between men and women in terms of correct perception of gender equality in the Republic of Moldova, revealing a higher rate of correct perception among women in all four areas analysed: household responsibilities, gender-based violence, reproductive health and sexual relations.

Gender-based violence is the area where correct perception is highest. 85% of women and 70% of men correctly recognize and understand the issue of violence. This reflects a relatively high awareness of gender equality issues related to violence, most likely due to frequent activities and discussions on this topic in society.

Comparative analysis of the IMAGES-1 and IMAGES-2 data indicates that fewer people believe that women have to tolerate violence to maintain their family (21% of men and 13% of women in 2024, compared to 28% of men and 18% of women in 2015) or that there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten (23% of men and 12% of women in 2024, compared to 41% of men and 19% of women in 2015). The research also provides evidence that 'violence leads to more violence'. This was evidenced by higher frequencies of violence reported by men who had witnessed violence against their mothers as children compared to their peers who had not witnessed such behaviour.

The proportion of women who are aware of existing services for victims of violence is on the rise for the period analysed, from 68% to 74%. The number of women who have used existing services for victims of violence has also increased from 3% to 11%. But the number continues to be low, with virtually only 1 in 10 victims using existing services. The police continue to be the most frequently called institution in cases of domestic violence, in 8 out of 10 cases of violence, women turn to the police.

The research data indicates that the knowledge of the possibility of issuance of a Protection Order by the courts has decreased among men from 50% to 36%, among women this indicator remained unchanged - 44% in 2015 and 43% in 2024. Men's attitudes about compliance with the provisions of the Protection Order show small improving trends.

The number of men who have heard about campaigns to prevent violence against women has also decreased from 45% to 29%, and the number of men who have seen at least once a TV commercial or news report interviewing a man who has used violence against women has decreased from 67% to 46%. However, there was a slight increase in men's participation in individual or group actions, organized in their locality or at work, in which they discussed with men who have used violence against women, from 11% to 14% in 2024.

In the **area of reproductive health and rights**, 77% of women and 62% of men have a fair perception. The differences in perceptions are explained by the fact that women are more directly affected by reproductive health issues and better informed about them. Men, however, continue to hold traditional gender attitudes, believing that they have decision-making power over women's bodies and that women should respect the decisions they make.

The decision on the use of contraception is considered to be a matter of mutual agreement between partners to ensure a responsible approach to health and family by 81% of men and 81% of women. However, 22% of men and 26% of women believe that it is a woman's responsibility to protect herself from becoming pregnant.

There has been a significant increase in the number of men and women who do not use condoms as a method of protection in sexual relations, among men from 37% to 73% and among women from 46% to 53% from 2015 to 2024. Approximately one in two women and three in four men reported not using this method of protection during sex in the past year. Condom use is higher among men aged 18-29. However, this is less common among men in other age groups or married men. There are significant differences in condom use by residence - 64% of urban men and 79% of rural men said they had never used a condom in the last year.

The desire to have the last child, it was reported, was shared by both spouses/partners in 2024 by 80% (63% in 2015) of men and 75% (56% in 2015) of women. There was also an increase in the number of men - 50%, in 2024, who regularly accompanied their wives to the doctor during pregnancy, compared to 23% in 2015. However, the presence of men at the birth of the child did not change, only 18% of men were present in the delivery room and supported their wives at the birth of their last child. The reasons given are varied and reveal the presence of prejudices and stereotypes.

The understanding of gender equality in the context of **sexual relationships** is slightly higher among women (65%) than among men (60%). Although the difference in perceptions between men and women is smaller than in other areas, this suggests that there are still variations in how each gender perceives roles and equality in intimate relationships, and further education and awareness-raising efforts are needed.

Men's views on sexuality and sexual relationships are not dissimilar to those of women - 61% of men and 61% of women believe that men need more sex than women. Also, 70% of men and 69% of women believe that men don't talk about sex, they act. But tolerance of men who cannot get an erection during sex is characteristic for more women (75%) than men (63%), which can be explained by the latter's stereotypical views that they must always be strong.

The **area of household responsibilities** is the area where the correct perception of gender equality is the lowest, with only 64% of women and 55% of men recognizing the fair distribution of household responsibilities as a gender equality issue. This reflects the fact that, although there is a trend towards modernization, many stereotypes persist, especially with regard to women's involvement in household activities and child-rearing.

In the opinion of 75% of men and 70% of women who participated in the research in the year 2024, the main responsibility for day-to-day family material provision should rest on the shoulders of the husband/partner. This reveals traditional views that perpetuate inequalities in the family and society. Only one in four men and one in three women believe that both spouses/partners should contribute to the material provision of the family. Although men continue to be perceived as the main source of income in the household, the contribution of both partners is becoming increasingly common, including situations where the wife contributes more financially. 53% of men consider themselves responsible for the main income, while 32% of women say that they are the main income provider over the last year.



The number of men making decisions with their partners has increased to 69% for current expenditure and 75% for major investments. There has also been an increase in men's involvement with wives/partners in making decisions about the health of family members. 72% of men in 2024, up from 69% in 2015, said that they made decisions together for the child's health, and 58% in 2024, up from 49% in 2015, for their wife's health.

Men's views on equal involvement in the upbringing and education of children differ from those of women. Men report more involvement and participation in these activities. However, fathers' overall involvement in the upbringing and education of children is trending upward, from 55% in 2015 to 68% in 2024.

The aforementioned reveals that the change of mentality in the field of gender equality in the Republic of Moldova is happening gradually and is determined by several factors, including: (i) education

in the family of origin; (ii) awareness-raising campaigns in the field of gender equality; (iii) changing values in society, (iv) women's desire to study and have a professional career; (v) increased access to information, especially among young people, etc. The promoters of change in this field are the younger generations, with higher education and medium and high household incomes.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The IMAGES-2 results present the successes and gaps in ensuring gender equality in the Republic of Moldova from 2015 to 2024. These results allow the following recommendations for government authorities, local public authorities, civil society, media and the general public to improve the situation in the field of gender equality.

IN THE FIELD OF ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY

- 1** Strengthening partnerships between governmental authorities, local public authorities, media, employers and civil society organizations in the field of gender equality and women's protection in order to expand the impact of the various programmes and projects implemented;
- 2** Development and implementation of focused educational programmes that explain what gender equality entails and dismantle persistent stereotypes, especially in rural areas and among people with low education and low income;
- 3** Mainstreaming gender equality and non-violence education into the school curriculum to influence attitudes and behaviours from pre-adolescent age and eliminate gender stereotypes, contributing to more informed and tolerant generations;
- 4** Promoting and encouraging men to actively participate in childcare and education through various campaigns and actions at national and local level;
- 5** Organizing campaigns that directly involve men as agents of change, promoting positive models of masculinity
- 6** Developing programmes to support couples in developing communication skills and building relationships based on respect and partnership;
- 7** Developing parenting education programmes that encourage shared parenting responsibilities and promote healthy role models;

- 8 Organizing information campaigns about paternity leave and its benefits for the family;
- 9 Forming community-based support groups to promote gender equality and non-violence and providing logistical and financial assistance to this end;
- 10 Training fair and responsible behaviour among media representatives to promote responsible gender discourse and reduce stereotypes perpetuated in the public space;
- 11 Promoting intergenerational dialog by creating intergenerational discussion platforms to address stereotypes and facilitate the exchange of experiences and perspectives.

IN THE FIELD OF PREVENTING AND COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

- 1 Organizing information campaigns, with a focus on rural communities, to raise awareness on gender-based violence and women's rights;
- 2 Developing promotional materials and resources, with the involvement of women-victims, to help them identify the different forms of violence and know where to turn for help;
- 3 Expanding the network of specialized services and promoting existing services for victims of violence in order to increase awareness and use of these services by people in need of help;
- 4 Organizing workshops and interactive discussions for men in work collectives and communities to reduce the perception of "moderate violence" and to increase the level of intervention in cases of gender-based violence;
- 5 Creating and expanding long-term psychological and economic support programmes for victims of violence, especially in rural areas where these services are limited;

- 6** Organizing training programmes for women to help them develop their skills and financial independence, thus reducing dependency on partners and the risk of remaining in abusive relationships;
- 7** Providing grants or financial incentives for women who are victims of violence to help them leave the abusive environment and start a new life;
- 8** Monitoring and evaluating the quality of social services for women affected by violence, including the involvement of women service beneficiaries in these activities;
- 9** Ensuring strict enforcement of laws on the protection of victims of violence, with regular monitoring and clear sanctions for non-compliance;
- 10** Developing effective offender rehabilitation programmes that prevent recidivism and provide support for behavioural change;
- 11** Organizing training courses for members of multidisciplinary teams (police officers, social workers, medical staff, etc.) in order to improve the intervention and support offered to victims of gender-based violence.

IN THE FIELD OF SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

- 1** Introducing sexual and reproductive education programmes in schools to improve knowledge about reproductive health and prevent teenage pregnancies, including sexually transmitted diseases;
- 2** Implementing information campaigns promoting the importance of using condoms and modern contraceptive methods to prevent unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases among young people;
- 3** Promoting active participation of partners in the pregnancy monitoring process and support wives in the postnatal period, including by taking paternity leave;

- 4 Organizing campaigns on the benefits of the presence of men at childbirth to reduce prejudices and encourage participation and emotional and physical support for the wife/partner.

IN THE FIELD OF SEXUAL DIVERSITY POLICIES

- 1 Initiating education and awareness-raising programmes to combat prejudices and misperceptions about sexual diversity;
- 2 Organizing awareness-raising campaigns to promote respect and tolerance for sexual diversity, countering homophobia and discrimination.

The research data, in particular the focus group discussions, suggest that good gender equality information should focus on the need for balance and inclusiveness, so that the promotion of gender equality is carried out in a way that avoids polarization and supports harmonious understanding and cooperation between the genders. Activities in this area could therefore:

- ▶ Maintain a balance and promote women's rights in a way that supports collaboration and mutual respect between the genders, avoiding any perception of competition or unwarranted tensions. Emphasize that advancing gender equality can benefit society as a whole, creating a more inclusive and just environment for all.
- ▶ Include both genders. Training sessions and activities on gender equality should be more balanced in terms of participants and include both men and women, to ensure a common understanding and to avoid situations where women only discuss equality among themselves.
- ▶ Promote equal access to opportunities. Programmes and opportunities to support women should be accessible and visible to all, including men. Greater transparency can reduce the resentment and sense of marginalization that can arise when one group perceives that the other is receiving more benefits.

- ▶ Include positive and constructive messages. Awareness raising campaigns should emphasize the benefits of working and raising children together to create an atmosphere of mutual support.
- ▶ Choose target groups carefully. It is important to segment the population in order to tailor messages to different target groups and choose the best channels for information. For example, in rural areas or where the population is older, radio, TV and/or leaflets should be used, while in other environments modern channels such as TikTok, Instagram, etc. can be used.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1. Data on participants in the focus group discussions

Nr.	Code	Gender	Residential environment	Number of participants
1	FG_1_B_U	Men	Urban (Chisinau)	8
2	FG_2_B_U	Men	Urban (Chisinau)	11
3	FG_3_B_U	Men	Urban (other cities, except Chisinau)	8
4	FG_4_B_U	Men	Urban (other cities, except Chisinau)	12
5	FG_5_B_R	Men	Rural	10
6	FG_6_B_R	Men	Rural	8
7	FG_7_F_U	Women	Urban (Chisinau and other cities)	11
8	FG_8_F_R	Women	Rural	12

Annex 2. Gender Equitable Men Scale

The **Gender Equitable Men Scale (GEM)** aims to measure attitudes towards gender norms in intimate relationships and to differentiate social expectations between men and women in domestic responsibilities, reproductive health and violence.

The following indicators were used to calculate the GEM:

Gender-based violence:

- There are times when a woman deserves to be beaten,
- A woman should tolerate violence when she is beaten/abused to preserve her family,
- If someone insults me - I will defend my reputation using force - if necessary (question for men only).

Sexual relations:

- Men need more sex than women,
- Men don't talk about sex, they act,
- Men are always ready for sex (question for women only),
- A man can hit his wife if she doesn't want to have sex with him (question for women only),
- Men should feel embarrassed if they can't get an erection during sex.

Reproductive health:

- I would be offended if my husband asked me to use a condom (question for women only),
- It is a woman's responsibility to protect herself from getting pregnant,
- Men and women do not have to decide together which method of contraception to use.

Domestic responsibilities in everyday life:

- For a woman, the most important thing is to take care of the house,
- Changing diapers, washing and feeding a baby is the mother's responsibility,
- The man should have the final say in decision-making.

Each indicator was rated:*

1. Total agreement,
2. Partial agreement,
3. Disagreement.

The value of 3 represents that gender equity is ensured.

*Non-response was not taken into account in the calculation of GEM IMAGES 2. Thus, 92% participated in the calculation of the GEM for men on gender-based violence, 74% in the GEM on sexual relations, 97% in the GEM on reproductive health and 98% in the GEM on daily household responsibilities. In calculating the GEM for women in the area of gender-based violence 97% participated, in the area of sexual relations - 64%, in the area of reproductive health - 90% and in the GEM in the area of daily household responsibilities - 98%.

