



Gender and family roles: A survey in urban India

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ABSTRACT

The society has certain preconceived notions formed through the generations preceding us about how a person, who is assigned a particular gender is supposed to act, dress, behave and present themselves. These are known as the gender role. 'Gender roles in society means how we're expected to act, speak, dress, groom, and conduct ourselves based upon our assigned sex.' These roles exist in all cultures, sub-cultures and societies of the world, these are usually shaped with the experiences and changes that occur over time. For example, Blue was considered to be associated with girls as it was viewed as delicate and on the contrary pink was considered as strong and thus, associated with boys. Another example would be that high heels were first invented for male aristocrats to make them appear taller and thus more formidable or intimidating. These roles might feel like a natural part of our lives, but these adversely affect our lives in ways that are inconspicuous. These may be in the form of personality traits, domestic behaviours, occupations and even physical appearances. With the presence of these roles come expectations and that is followed by stereotypes that get attached to a certain gender. And any aversion to said stereotypes is called a rebellion and the person to be an outcast. This paper attempts to understand the stereotypes, gender roles as well as the family roles which are associated with particular genders, that currently exist, with a survey conducted in urban India.

Keywords: Gender, Gender roles

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Identity draws on the grammar of everyday life. In other words, daily communication takes place because ordinary people have a shared cultural context that forms the basis for why they feel an affinity for a certain identity and for other members who share this identity. Identities are fluid and multiple. They are fluid in that, over time new interpretations of an identity may emerge. (Banerjee, 2003)

Gender roles are based on the different expectations that individuals, groups, and societies have of individuals based on their sex and based on each society's values and beliefs about gender. Gender roles are the product of the interactions between individuals and their environments, and they give individuals cues about what sort of behaviour is believed to be appropriate for what sex. Appropriate gender roles are defined according to a society's beliefs about differences between the sexes. (Blackstone, 2003)

Gender roles are sometimes created on the basis of stereotypes about gender. Gender stereotypes are oversimplified understandings of males and females and the differences between them. Individuals sometimes base their perceptions about appropriate gender roles upon gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes tend to include exaggerated or erroneous assertions about the nature of males and females (Blackstone, 2003)

The idea that gender identity is at least partially a social construction is widely acknowledged in sociology and social cognitive theory. These literatures identify belief in one's own ability (self-efficacy) as a key mechanism for personal agency and show that this belief is highly correlated with educational aspirations and subsequent occupational choices.

Gender disparities in efficacy beliefs, in turn, are cited as an important factor behind the difference in male and female aspirations, especially in leadership (Beaman, 2012; Esther Duflo, 2012; Pande, 2012; Topalova, 2012)

Women's autonomy can be measured in a variety of ways (Narayan 2006), but women's access to and control over resources is a fundamental aspect of autonomy, For instance, a woman's autonomy may be manifest through her control of major resources, such as having her name on a housing title or rental agreement, as well as through control of minor resources, such as having cash on hand for household expenditures. A number of studies have also suggested that the ability to make decisions regarding a variety of household choices is an important part of women's empowerment (Bloom, Wypij, and Das Gupta 2001; Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001; Kishor 2000; Morgan et al. 2002). This includes such decisions as purchasing expensive goods, children's healthcare, and marriage decisions. [as cited in (DESAI, 2010; ANDRIST, 2010)

Although a small percentage of men have increased their family work to take account of this, research over time and across cultures continues to document the persistence of inequality in the allocation of household work within dual career families, even among couples with 'modern' ideologies and a commitment to gender equality at home and at work (Moss, 1991; Hochschild, 1989; Cooper, 1988; Sandqvist, 1992) [as cited in (ROUT, 1999; LEWIS, 1999; KAGAN, 1999)]

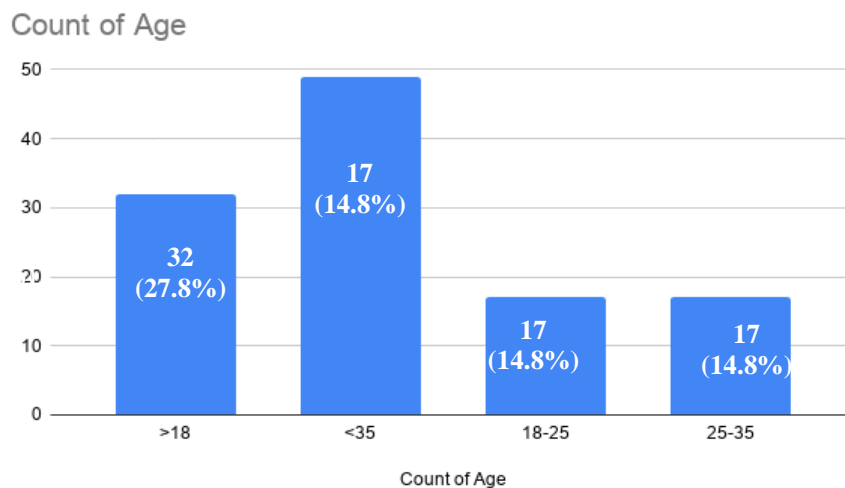
In a society rife with gender stereotypes and biases, children regularly learn to adopt gender roles which are not always fair to both sexes. As children move through childhood and into adolescence, they are exposed to many factors which influence their attitudes and behaviors regarding gender roles. These attitudes and behaviors are generally learned first in the home and are then reinforced by the child's peers, school experience, and television viewing. However, the strongest influence on gender role development seems to occur within the family setting, with parents passing on, both overtly and covertly, their own beliefs about gender. (Witt, 1997)

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- To assess the gender and family roles taken on by both men and women in an urban setting in India, a primary data collection was undertaken in the form of a questionnaire, filled in by a randomly selected sample of 115 respondents.
- The questions aimed to figure out not just the current role and duties performed by men and women in a standard household but also the thought process of the respondents with regards to the roles that we often associate with a particular gender.
- This data was then analysed.
- This data was collected in Surat, Gujarat, India.

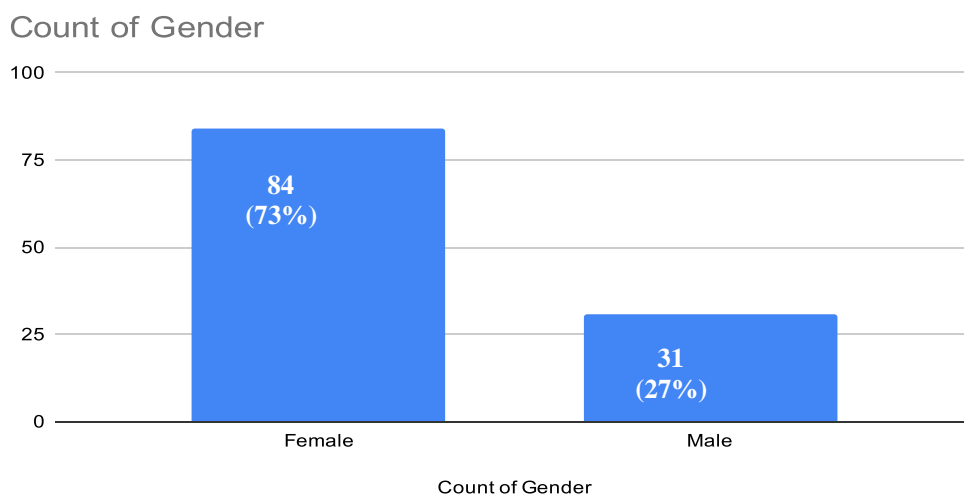
3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS (QUESTION WISE)

1. Age



Of the 115 people surveyed, the demographics as per their age came out to be- as the major share of people over 35 years of age, followed by the age group of less than 18 years and an identical number of people participating of ages 18 to 25 and group of 25 to 35 years old with both almost 15 per cent each.

2. Gender

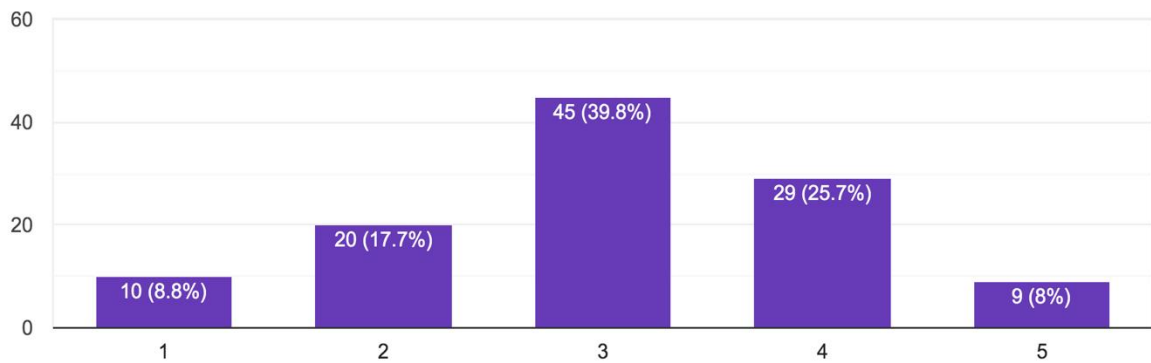


With the random sample, reached by the survey, we were able to contact over 84 women and only 31 males, so the male population wasn't able to be represented appropriately since not even half of the surveyed people are males.

3. Do you believe the gap between men and women has diminished?

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113 responses



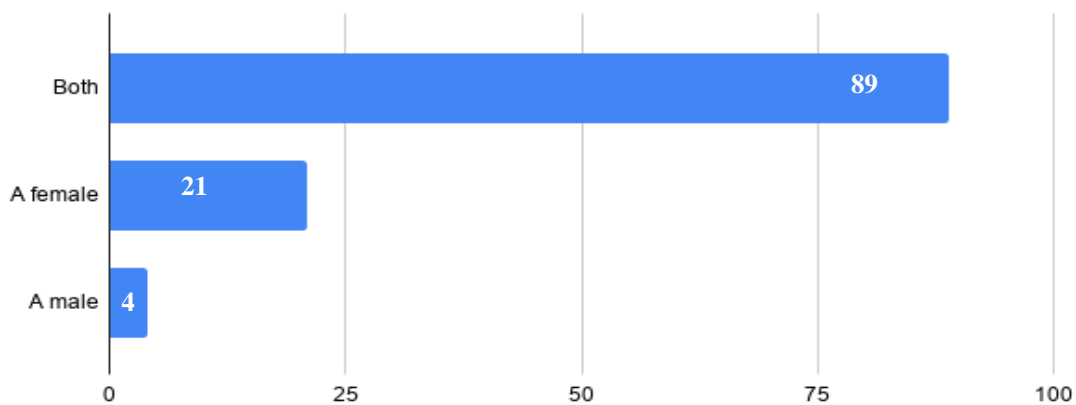
The survey asks the individual to rank their opinion on whether the gap between men and women as per their roles has diminished on a scale of 1 to 5 with one being barely diminished to completely diminished, the results show that the majority people rated for a 3 which states that the gap has improved but not entirely, however more people voted for ‘barely’ as compared to ‘completely’.

4. Who in your house does the following roles?

This question was to measure the present family roles taken on by the genders respectively.

a.

Count of Who in your house does the following roles?
[Disciplining the children]

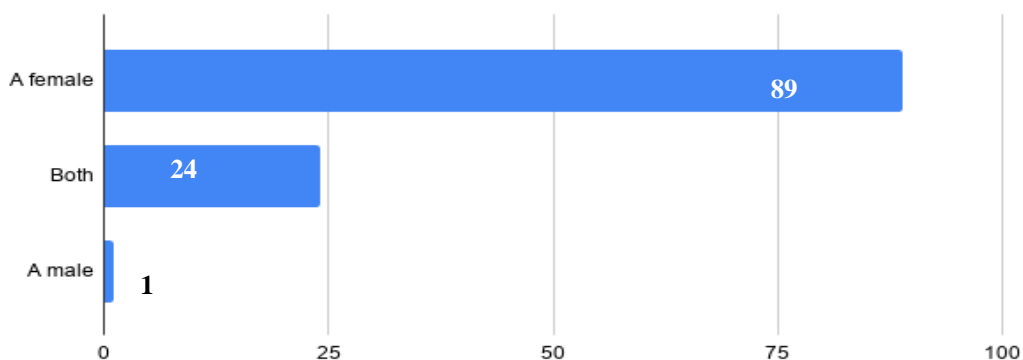


Count of Who in your house does the following roles? [Disciplining the children]

So as per the analysis the vast majority states that both genders take on the role of disciplining the children, however the households with only a female doing the same was five-folds more than just a male doing the same.

b.

Count of Who in your house does the following roles? [Cooking the meals]

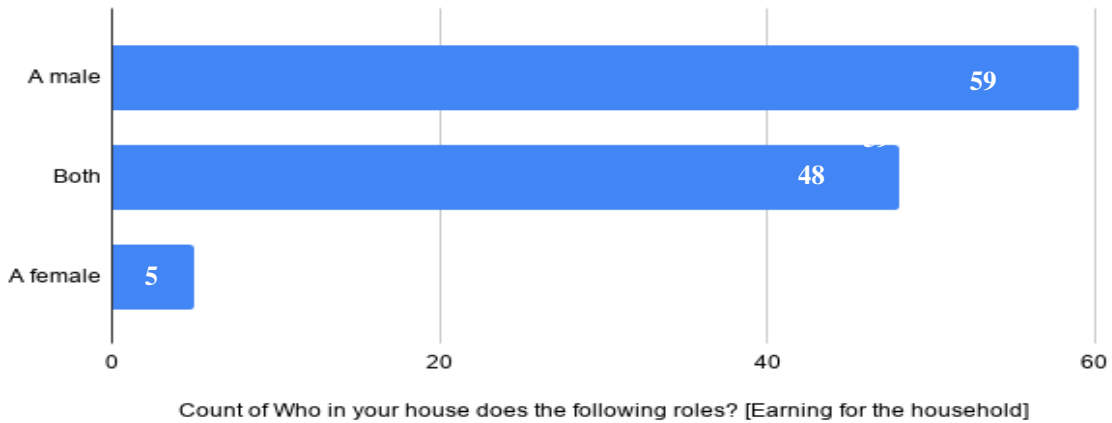


Count of Who in your house does the following roles? [Cooking the meals]

The data received for who takes on the role of cooking the meals for the household, has a majority of females to be the answer with a striking eighty-nine households, and merely one household with a male taking on this responsibility and twenty-four with both taking equal responsibility for meals.

c.

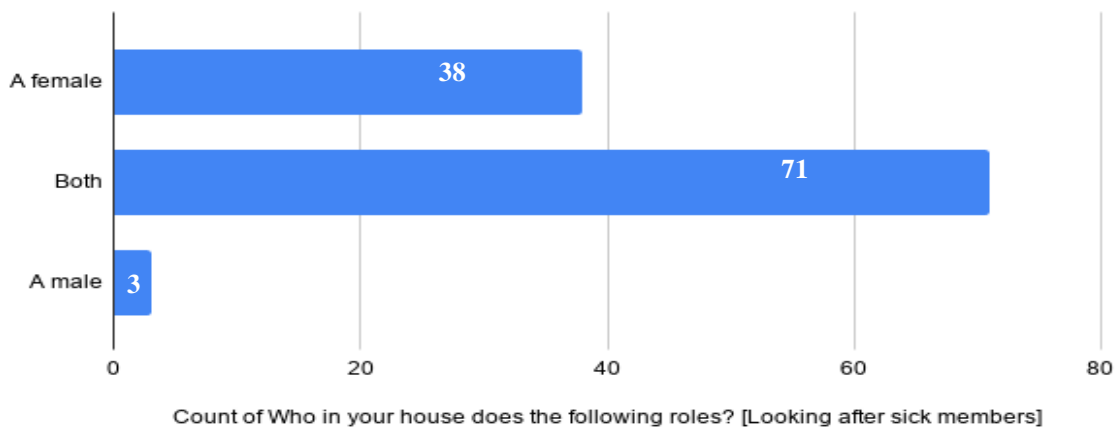
Count of Who in your house does the following roles? [Earning for the household]



The interviewed participants stated that males take on the role of earning for the house was a majority stake, however the households wherein the responsibility of being the bread winner is shared equally was not far behind that data, but households with only a female taking this role was a mere five households.

d.

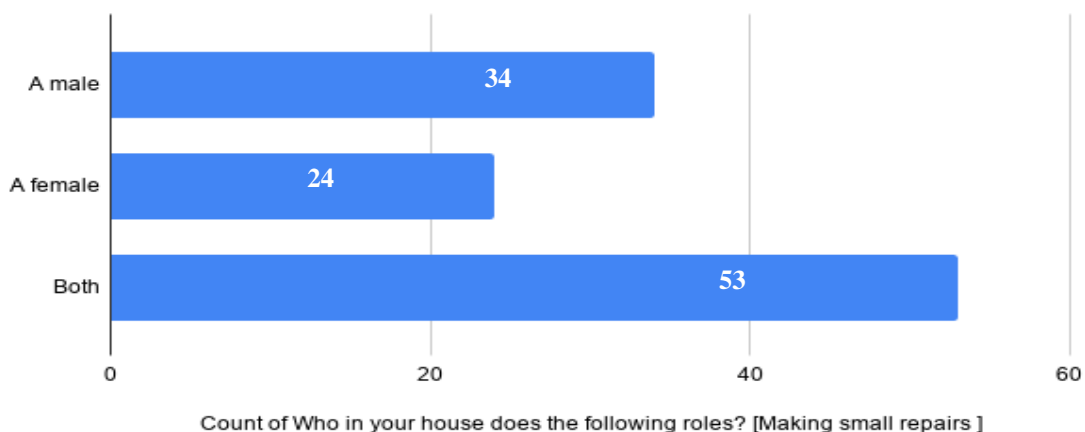
Count of Who in your house does the following roles? [Looking after sick members]



In the surveyed participants the people answered that both the genders equally take the role of looking after the sick members, but a house wherein only a male takes care of the ill was behind by ten-folds in contrast of only a female looking after the sick members.

e.

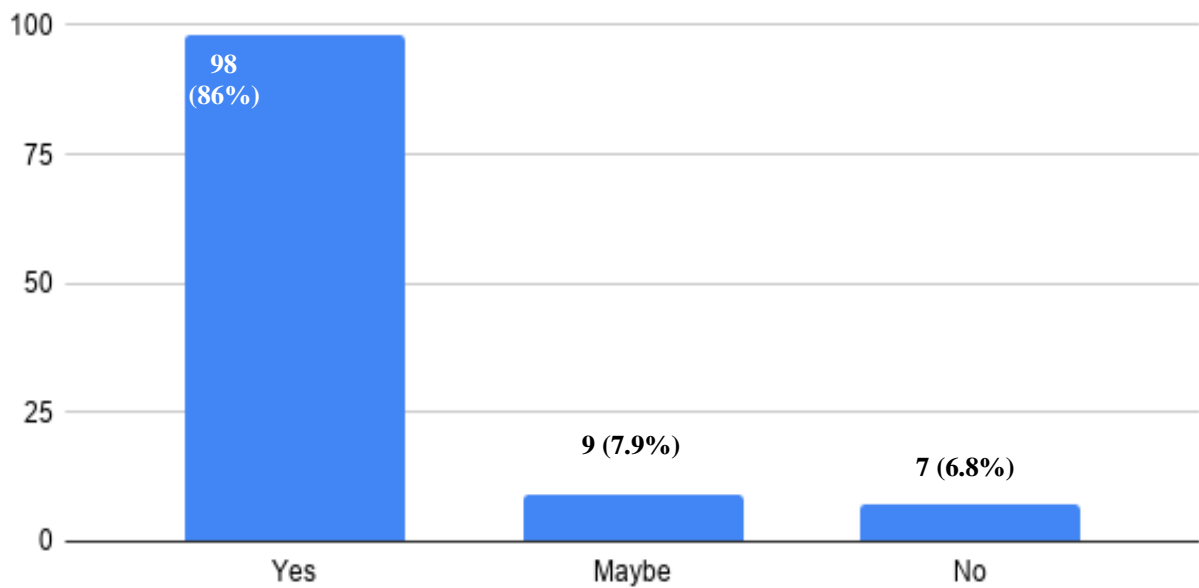
Count of Who in your house does the following roles? [Making small repairs]



In fifty-three households, both the genders take the roles of making small repairs equally. But a house with only a male taking on this responsibility were more by ten counts if compared to one where a female takes on this role by herself.

5. Do you believe men and women share equal responsibility for raising their children?

Count of Do you believe men and women share equal responsibility for raising their children?

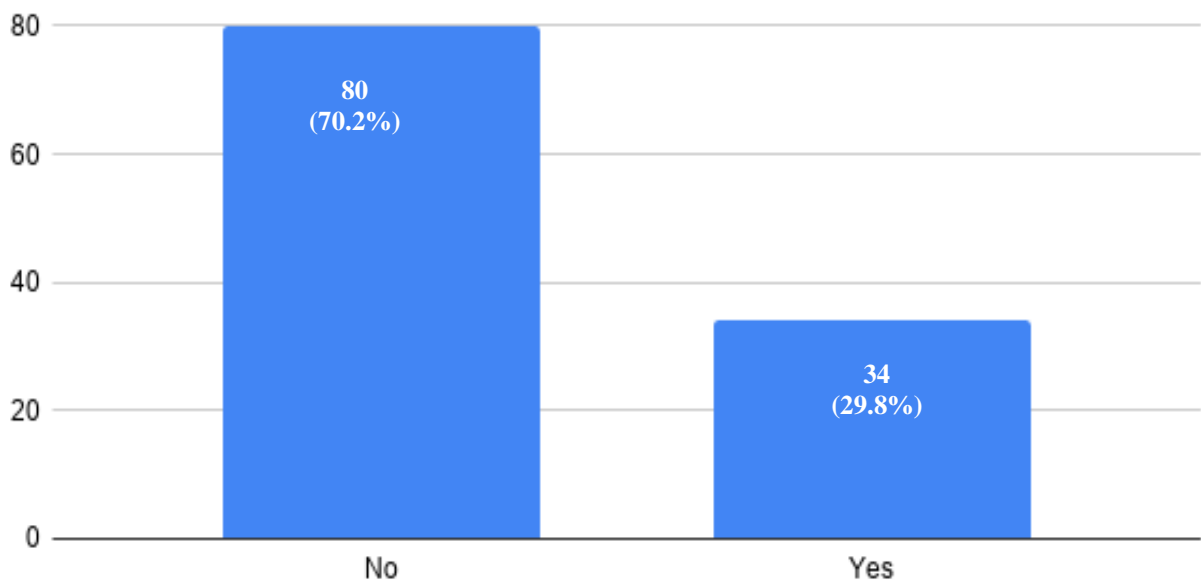


Count of Do you believe men and women share equal responsibility for raising their children?

About eighty-six per cent of interviewees agreed to the statement that men and women have equal responsibility to raise their children, but about eight per-cent were ambiguous in their opinion and stated that as a 'maybe', moreover almost seven per-cent of that sample stated that they don't agree with is statement.

6. Do you believe some jobs are made for only men or only women?

Count of Do you believe some jobs are made for only men or only women?

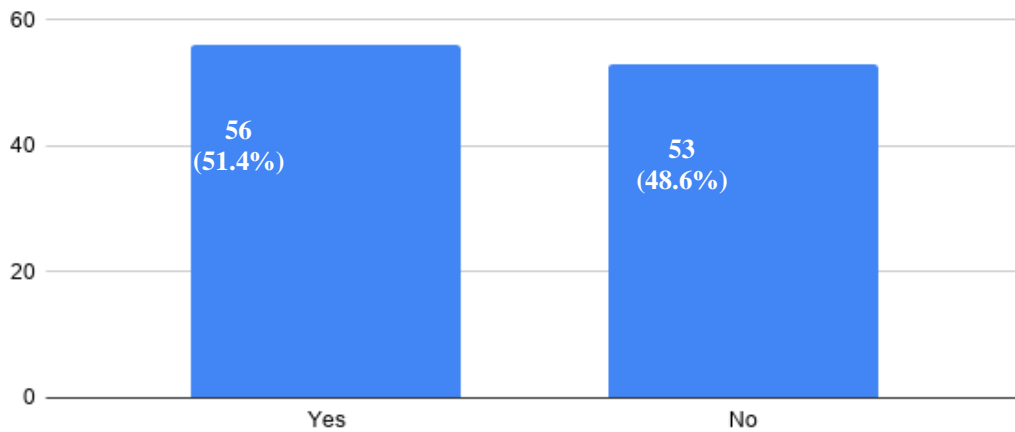


Count of Do you believe some jobs are made for only men or only women?

When asked if some jobs are gender-specific, majority i.e. over seventy per-cent stated that it wasn't so, but the rest i.e. almost thirty per-cent said that yes jobs can be gender-specific, which means certain jobs are meant for only males and some meant only for females.

7. Have you ever been judged for not being masculine or feminine enough?

Count of Have you ever been judged for not being masculine or feminine enough?

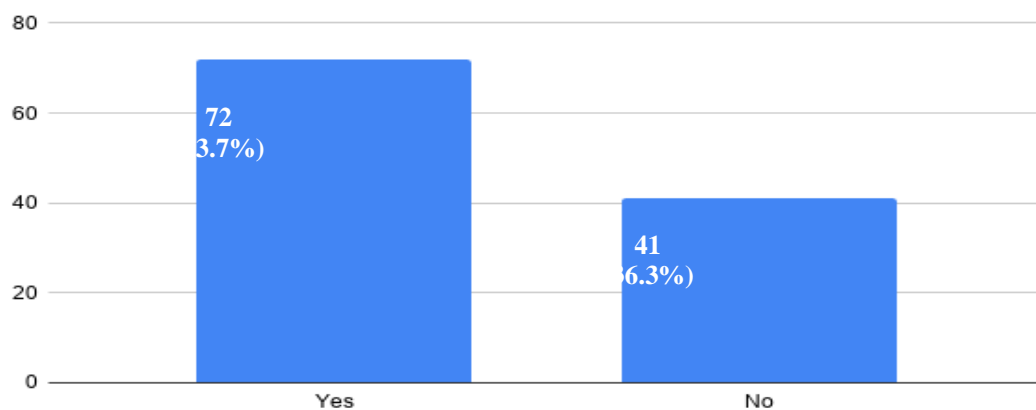


Count of Have you ever been judged for not being masculine or feminine enough?

More than fifty-one per-cent of responders feel that they have been judged for not being masculine or feminine enough, but forty-eight per-cent don't feel that they have been judged for the same.

8. Do you think there is a pay gap?

Count of Do you think there is a pay gap?

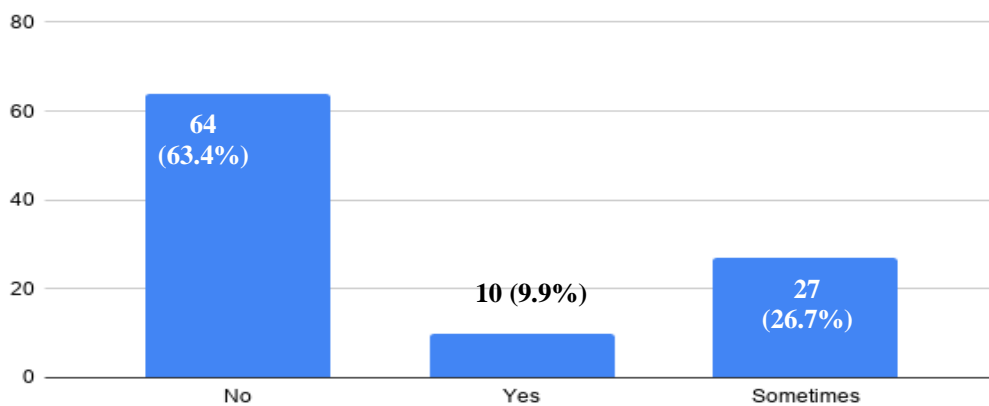


Count of Do you think there is a pay gap?

On being asked about seventy-two respondents think that a pay gap on the basis of the gender still exists, and 41 respondents think that it doesn't exist.

9. If yes, is it justified?

Count of If yes, is it justified?

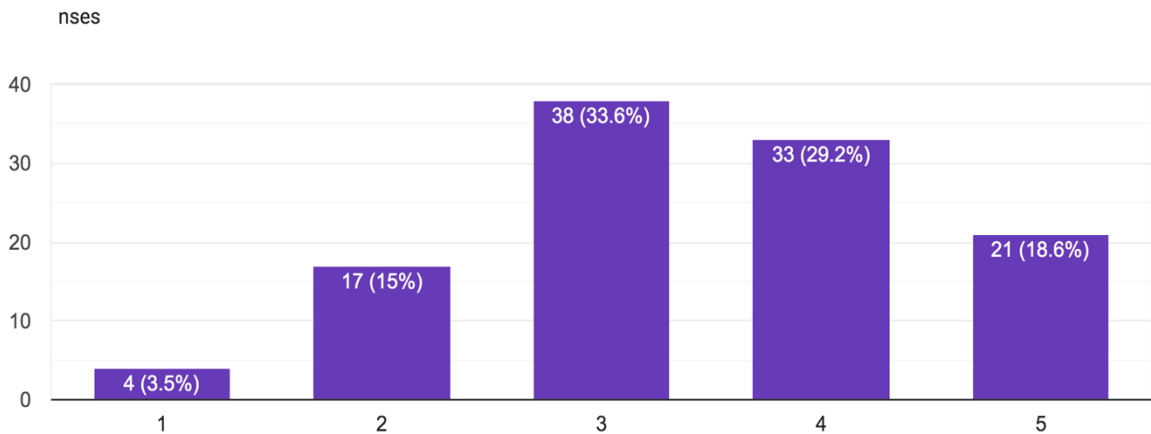


Count of If yes, is it justified?

As a follow up to the previous question, when asked if the pay gap existing is justified, about sixty-three per-cent respondents said that it isn't and ten per-cent of them said that it is and almost twenty-seven per-cent of them is justified sometimes.

10. Do you believe females are represented appropriately?

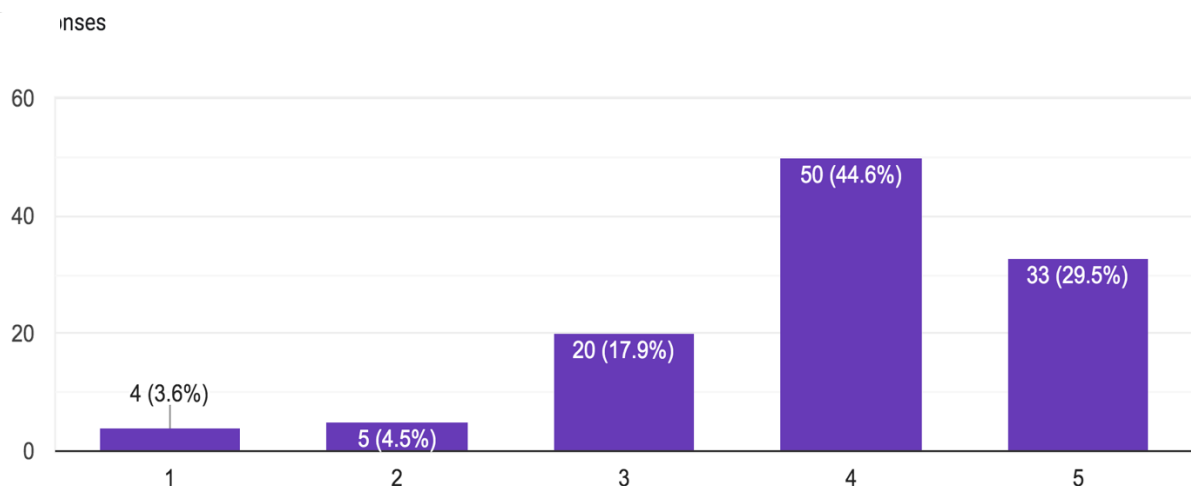
Do you believe females are represented appropriately?



On being asked, if the respondents think that the females are represented appropriately in the current scenario, majority voted for three, on a scale of one to five i.e. barely to completely respectively, to summarize more people voted for four and five than one to two in cumulation.

11. Do you believe men are represented appropriately?

Do you believe men are represented appropriately?



As a count part to the previous question, on being asked if males were represented appropriately in the present times, the majority respondents answered a four on the scale of one to five, ranging from barely represented appropriately to completely represented. To cumulate way more people chose to answer from three to five as compared to one and two as an option.

4. CONCLUSION

To summarise the findings, the gap in the genders hasn't diminished and the convergence of the gender roles is a long way to go. The family roles are played as per the stereotypes, the male being the bread-winner and the women looking after not just the house but also being more involved in the children's lives and in houses with females also working, they have not been provided more autonomy rather more responsibility as they now have to look after the house and children and also work hard to earn a living. However, men have been more involved in the house and taken 'non-traditional' roles like looking after the sick member and also making small repairs.

There, as observed, a significant number of people that believe jobs are bound by gender roles which is how these directly affect the occupation and aspiration of both men and women.

Another aspect that comes with roles are the expectations, and therefore, people feeling judged for not adhering to these roles being almost half of the sample, acknowledges the power that the roles hold over that lives of people.

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APPENDIX

Gender roles in society

i. Personal details

Age:

- >18
- 18-25
- 25-35
- <35

Gender:

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

ii. Research Questions

a. Do you believe the gap between men and women has diminished?

Barely 1 2 3 4 5 Completely

b. Who in your house does the following roles?

A male A female Both

1. Disciplining the children
2. Cooking the meals
3. Earning for the household
4. Looking after sick members
5. Making small repairs

c. Do you believe men and women share equal responsibility for raising their children?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

d. Do you believe some jobs are made for only men or only women?

- Yes
- No

e. Have you ever been judged for not being masculine or feminine enough?

- Yes
- No

f. Do you think there is a pay gap?

- Yes
- No

g. If yes, is it justified?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

h. Do you believe females are represented appropriately?

Barely 1 2 3 4 5 Completely

i. Do you believe men are represented appropriately?

Barely 1 2 3 4 5 Completely