

9 IN 10 INDIANS THINK WIFE MUST ALWAYS OBEY HUSBAND: STUDY

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While Indians accept women as political leaders, they mostly favour traditional gender roles in family life, says a report released by the Pew Research Center, a Washington DC-based non-profit.

The study, titled “How Indians view gender roles in families and society” and released on March 2, is based on a survey of 29,999 Indian adults conducted from November 2019 to March 2020.

According to the report, while 55% of Indians believed that men and women make equally good political leaders, “nine-in-ten Indians agree with the notion that a wife must always obey her husband”.

Traditional norms

Indian women were only slightly less likely than Indian men to agree with this sentiment (61% versus 67%). Although most Indians expressed egalitarian views on gender roles, with 62% saying that both men and women should be responsible for child care, traditional norms still held sway, with 34% convinced that child care “should be handled primarily by women”.

Similarly, while a “slim majority (54%) says that both men and women” should be responsible for earning money, as many as 43% believed that earning an income is mainly the obligation of men. Also, 80% of Indians agreed with the idea that when there are few jobs, men should have more rights to a job than women.

Equal rights

While Indians valued both sons and daughters, nearly 94% said it is very important for a family to have at least one son, with the corresponding figure for daughters being 90%.

About 64% of Indians also said that sons and daughters should have equal rights to inheritance from parents. But while four-in-10 adults said that sons should have the primary responsibility to care for ageing parents, only 2% said the same about daughters.

The report, noting that prevalent gender norms “are part of a wider phenomenon in Indian society where, for a variety of historical, social, religious and economic reasons, families tend to place higher value on sons rather than daughters, found that 40% of Indians saw “sex selective abortion as acceptable in at least some circumstances”. However, 42% found this practice “completely unacceptable”.

Noting that Indian women are typically not much more likely than Indian men to express egalitarian views on son preference and gender roles, the study found that similar views prevailed among young Indian adults (18 to 34) relative to their elders.

Pew Center report

The Pew Center report also compares gender attitudes in India with its findings in the rest of the

world.

The study, noting that a global median of 70% said that it was very important for women to have the same rights as men, found a similar ratio in India, with 72% of Indians saying gender equality is very important.

However, Indians were less likely than people in North America (92% median), Western Europe (90%), and Latin America (82%) to place a high value on gender equality. They were more likely to do so compared to sub-Saharan Africa (48% median) and the Middle-East-Northern Africa region (44%). In South Asia, Indians were more likely to bat for gender equality than Pakistanis (72% to 64%).

The survey found that Indians with a college degree were less likely to hold traditional views on gender roles, although this did not extend to all gender-related issues.

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Pew Center report

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