

Canadian Youth Perceptions on Gender Roles and Inequalities

CHAT SHEET

Preamble

Plan International's 2011 global report, **Because I am a Girl: So What About Boys?**, reveals that there are many good reasons to close the inequality gap – because it's good for boys, too. Men and boys, just like women and girls, are set back by gender stereotypes and inequalities, which they learn from a young age and that are influenced by a variety of factors.

Gender inequality is evident in many developing and developed countries around the world. However, it exists in varying degrees across countries, which is evident when looking at recent country findings from the *So What About Boys?* report and a 2011 Canadian survey commissioned by Plan Canada.

So, where do Canadian youth stand on perceptions of gender roles and inequalities?

There are some encouraging findings on Canadian youth's attitudes towards traditional gender stereotypes and inequalities.

- Canadian youth (91 per cent) believe equality between men and women is good for both boys and girls
 - » 93 per cent of youth in Ontario agree with this statement, while in Alberta the figure is 88 per cent
- A majority of Canadian youth (96 per cent) believe girls should have the same opportunities and rights as boys to make their own choices in life
- Canadian youth (95 per cent) believe parents must take equal responsibility for their children. However, the figures in Rwanda (22 per cent) and India (nine per cent) are much lower
 - » Youth in British Columbia and Ontario (97 per cent) agree with this statement the most
- Canadian youth (45 per cent) say it wouldn't matter if they had more sons or more daughters and 17 per cent said they would like to have the same number of boys and girls. In India and Rwanda, boys and girls would prefer to have more sons than daughters
- Six-in-ten Canadian youth (60 per cent) think gender should not determine whether someone does or does not receive employment at school, in government or in top companies. However, 31 per cent of youth in India and 69 per cent of youth in Rwanda believe when women work they are taking jobs away from men

However, some gender stereotypes and inequalities still exist among youth in Canada. Boys and girls continue to face pressure to conform to traditional stereotypes of male and female roles.

- One third of Canadian boys (31 per cent) believe that a woman's most important role is to take care of her home and cook for the family. In the U.K., only 15 per cent of young boys think the same. However, the results are higher in India (73 per cent) and Rwanda (68 per cent)
- Canadian youth (48 per cent) think men should be responsible for earning income and providing for the family
 - » Youth in Quebec agree with this statement the most (53 per cent), while the figures in Ontario and British Columbia are 46 per cent, and in Alberta 47 per cent
- Although 78 per cent of Canadian youth disagree with the statement "boys should not cry", 77 per cent of Canadian youth believe boys are likely to be made fun of if they cry
 - » Youth in Quebec are the least likely to believe boys are likely to be made fun of if they cry (71 per cent), while in Alberta the figure is higher (80 per cent)
- Canadian youth (45 per cent) agree that "to be a man you need to be tough". However, only 13 per cent of youth in the U.K. and 26 per cent of youth in Rwanda think the same
 - » Fewer youth in Quebec agree with this statement (32 per cent), while in Ontario and Alberta the figure rises (51 per cent)
- Over one third of Canadian youth (42 per cent) agreed that "being a man means taking more risks"
- Seventeen per cent of Canadian youth still believe that a man should have the final word about decisions in his home. In the U.K., 13 per cent of youth think the same
 - » Youth in British Columbia are the most likely to agree with this statement (21 per cent)
- More Canadian youth believe boys are likely to be made fun of if they play with dolls (92 per cent) than if they wear pink (62 per cent) or are bad at sports (57 per cent)

So, where do Canadian youth feel pressure to conform to traditional stereotypes of male and female roles?

- Two thirds (66 per cent) of Canadian youth think pressure comes from peers and friends
- Almost half (46 per cent) of Canadian youth say the pressure comes from the media
- One third (35 per cent) of Canadian youth say pressure comes from family

It's important for all of us to tackle gender inequality – education of our youth is one key. Adults should lead by example – at home, at school and everywhere in between. So, what do Canadian adults currently think about traditional gender roles and stereotypes?

- Over one third of Canadian adults (43 per cent) think men should be responsible for earning income and providing for the family
- Twenty-four per cent of Canadian adults think a women's most important role is to take care of her home and cook for her family
- Three-in-ten Canadian adults (29 per cent) think women should be the ones responsible to take care of the children

- More Canadian men than women believe that being a man means taking more risks (men 41 per cent, women 19 per cent) and to be a man you need to be tough (men 38 per cent, women 21 per cent)
- About one-in-eight Canadian adults (76 per cent) believe boys are more likely to be made fun of if they cry
- About a quarter of Canadian adults think there should be the same number of men and women working at schools (26 per cent), religious institutions (24 per cent), top companies (24 per cent), and government positions (24 per cent)
- Over seven-in-ten Canadians think boys are subject to mockery if they play with dolls (89 per cent), wear pink (73 per cent) or are bad at sports (63 per cent)

NOTE TO EDITORS

Canadian youth and adult survey

Two surveys were conducted for this study:

- From July 29th to July 30th 2011 an online survey was conducted among 1,001 randomly selected Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists. The margin of error — which measures sampling variability — is +/- 3.1%, 19 times out of 20. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population of Canada. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.
- From August 3rd to August 7th, 2011, an online survey was conducted among a sample of 1,003 Canadian youth aged 12 to 17 whose parents are Angus Reid Forum panel members. The margin of error on the full base — which measures sampling variability — is +/- 3.02%. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

Rwanda, India and U.K. youth survey

Due to time and availability of services, data in India and Rwanda were collected in one district per country through school surveys. To increase the variability in the samples, randomization of schools was carried out after stratification on socio-geographical criteria of the selected district. The selection of schools inside the strata was shaped by school (random), grade (five grades assuming mean ages of 12-16) and whole-class group.

U.K. participants were recruited through their parents who are members of an online research panel managed and incentivized to comply with ESOMAR and the MRS (U.K.) standards. The proportions of participants match those of the wider U.K. population. More specifically, at 95 per cent confidence level, the margin of error for the whole sample is 3.5 per cent.

The following table shows sample size per country, for both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods.

Data collection method	Country	Sample size	Average age
Quantitative: School survey (level of representation: district level)	India	825 ♂	14.4
		747 ♀	14.1
	Rwanda	677 ♂	15.6
		550 ♀	15.8
Quantitative: Web-based survey (level of representation: national level)	UK	506 ♂	14.2
		505 ♀	14.2

