

FOR RELEASE MARCH 2, 2022

How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society

Indians accept women as political leaders, but many favor traditional gender roles in family life

BY Jonathan Evans, Neha Sahgal, Ariana Monique Salazar, Kelsey Jo Starr and Manolo Corichi

FOR MEDIA OR OTHER INQUIRIES:

Jonathan Evans, Research Associate
Neha Sahgal, Associate Director of Research
Anna Schiller, Senior Communications Manager

202.419.4372

www.pewresearch.org

RECOMMENDED CITATION

Pew Research Center, March 2, 2022, "How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

About Pew Research Center

Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world. It does not take policy positions. The Center conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, content analysis and other data-driven social science research. It studies U.S. politics and policy; journalism and media; internet, science and technology; religion and public life; Hispanic trends; global attitudes and trends; and U.S. social and demographic trends. All of the Center's reports are available at www.pewresearch.org. Pew Research Center is a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts, its primary funder.

© Pew Research Center 2022

How we did this

This study is part of Pew Research Center’s most comprehensive, in-depth exploration of India to date. For this report, we [surveyed 29,999 Indian adults](#) (including 22,975 Hindus, 3,336 Muslims, 1,782 Sikhs, 1,011 Christians, 719 Buddhists, 109 Jains and 67 respondents who belong to another religion or are religiously unaffiliated). Many findings from the survey in India were previously published in “[Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation](#),” which looked in detail at religious and national identity, religious beliefs and practices, and attitudes among religious communities. The survey also included several questions on gender roles in Indian society, but these questions were not analyzed in the previous report and are now being published for the first time. Interviews for this nationally representative survey were conducted face-to-face under the direction of RTI International from Nov. 17, 2019, to March 23, 2020.

To improve respondent comprehension of survey questions and to ensure all questions were culturally appropriate, the Center followed a [multiphase questionnaire development process](#) that included expert review, focus groups, cognitive interviews, a pretest and a regional pilot survey before the national survey. The questionnaire was developed in English and translated into 16 languages, independently verified by professional linguists with native proficiency in regional dialects.

Respondents were selected using a probability-based sample design that would allow for robust analysis of all major religious groups in India – Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains – as well as all major regional zones. Data was weighted to account for the different probabilities of selection among respondents, and to align with demographic benchmarks for the Indian adult population from the 2011 census. The survey is calculated to have covered 98% of Indians ages 18 and older and had an 86% national response rate.

For more information, see the [Methodology](#) for this report. The questions used in this analysis [can be found here](#).

Acknowledgments

This report was produced by Pew Research Center as part of the Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures project, which analyzes religious change and its impact on societies around the world. Funding for the Global Religious Futures project comes from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the John Templeton Foundation.

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals:

Research Team

Neha Sahgal, *Associate Director of Research*
Alan Cooperman, *Director of Religion Research*
Jonathan Evans, *Research Associate*
Ariana Monique Salazar, *Research Analyst*
Kelsey Jo Starr, *Research Analyst*
Manolo Corichi, *Research Assistant*

Methods Team

Patrick Moynihan, *Associate Director of International Research Methods*
Alexandra Castillo, *Research Methodologist*
Clark Letterman, *Senior Survey Manager*

Editorial and Graphic Design

Michael Lipka, *Editorial Manager*
Rebecca Leppert, *Editorial Assistant*
David Kent, *Senior Copy Editor*
Bill Webster, *Senior Information Graphics Designer*
Jeff Diamant, *Senior Writer/Editor*

Communications and Web Publishing

Stacy Rosenberg, *Associate Director of Digital*
Anna Schiller, *Senior Communications Manager*
Travis Mitchell, *Digital Producer*

Others at Pew Research Center who contributed to this report include Michael Dimock, James Bell, Claudia Deane, Gregory A. Smith, Conrad Hackett, Anne Fengyan Shi, Besheer Mohamed,

Stephanie Kramer, Jacob Poushter, Samirah Majumdar, Laura Silver, Neil G. Ruiz, Rakesh Kochhar, Russell Maltempo, Richard Wike, Becka A. Alper, Mark Hugo Lopez, Kiana Cox, Dalia Fahmy, Cary Funk and Gracie Martinez.

Former Pew Research Center staff who contributed to this report include Scott Gardner, Stacy Pancratz, Martha McRoy, Omkar Joshi, Mark Wang, Aleksandra Sandstrom, Katayoun Kishi, Katie Simmons, Bruce Stokes, Steve Schwarzer, Danielle Cuddington, Courtney Nelson and Clara Huergo.

The Center is grateful to a panel of expert advisers who provided guidance at all stages of this report: Hilal Ahmed, associate professor at the Center for the Study of Developing Societies; Sriya Iyer, professor of economics and fellow of St. Catharine's College at the University of Cambridge; Devesh Kapur, Starr Foundation Professor of South Asian studies at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies; Ravinder Kaur, professor of sociology and social anthropology at the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi; Ajay Verghese, assistant professor of political science at Middlebury College; and Rina Verma Williams, associate professor of political science at the University of Cincinnati. We appreciate Siddhartha Dubey, professor of journalism at Ashoka University, for advising us on strategic outreach in India.

Fieldwork for the survey was conducted under the direction of RTI International.

While the analysis for this report was guided by our consultations with the advisers, Pew Research Center is solely responsible for the interpretation and reporting of the data.

Table of Contents

Overview	6
1. Views on women's place in society	30
2. Son preference and abortion	44
3. Gender roles in the family	53
Methodology	65

How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society

Indians accept women as political leaders, but many favor traditional gender roles in family life

More than half a century ago, India was one of the first countries in the world to elect a [woman as prime minister](#), and the country currently has several highly influential women politicians, including Sonia Gandhi, the head of one of the [major national parties](#). Today, most Indians say that “women and men make equally good political leaders,” and more than one-in-ten feel that women generally make *better* political leaders than men, according to a recent Pew Research Center survey of nearly 30,000 adults throughout India. Only a quarter of Indian adults take the position that men make better political leaders than women.

Most Indians see women and men as equally good political leaders

% of Indian adults who say that in general ...



Note: Don't know/Refused responses not shown.

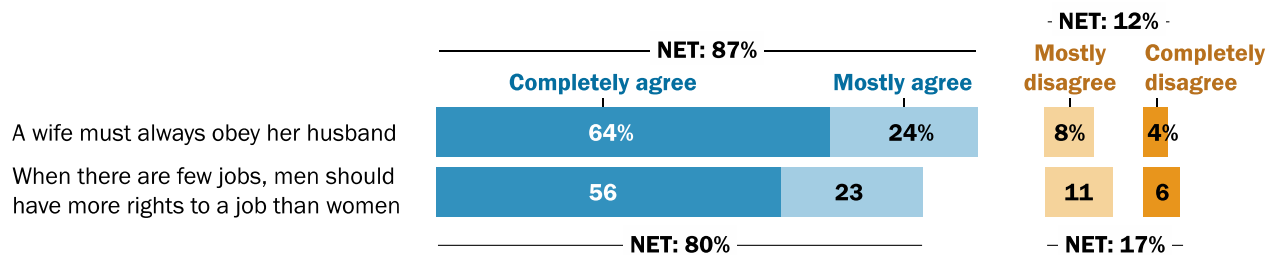
Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details. “How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Yet, in domestic settings, Indians tend to say men should have more prominent roles than women. About nine-in-ten Indians agree with the notion that a wife must always obey her husband, including nearly two-thirds who *completely* agree with this sentiment. Indian women are only slightly less likely than Indian men to say they completely agree that wives should always obey their husbands (61% vs. 67%), according to the survey, which was conducted between late 2019 and early 2020 (mostly before the [COVID-19 pandemic](#)).

Indians overwhelmingly agree with the notion that wives should obey husbands

% of Indian adults who agree/disagree with the following statements



Note: Don't know/Refused responses not shown. Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.
Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.
"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

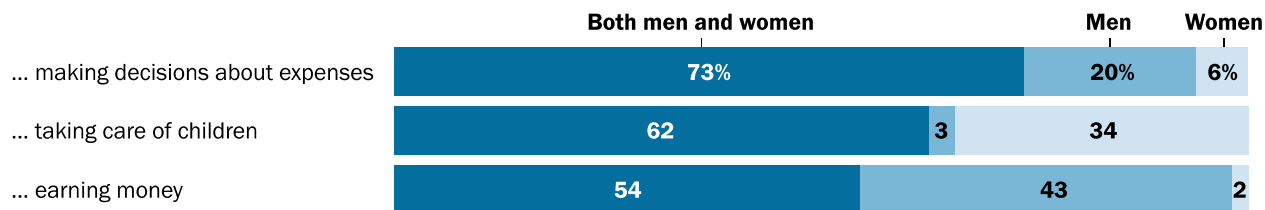
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Many Indians express egalitarian views toward some gender roles in the home. For instance, 62% of adults say both men and women should be responsible for taking care of children. But traditional gender norms still hold sway among large segments of the population: Roughly a third of adults (34%) feel that child care should be handled primarily by women.

Similarly, a slim majority (54%) says that both men and women in families should be responsible for earning money, but many Indians (43%) see this as mainly the obligation of men. And Indian adults overwhelmingly say that when jobs are in short supply, men should have greater rights to employment than women, reflecting the continued prominence of men in the economic sphere. Eight-in-ten agree with this sentiment, including a majority (56%) who completely agree.

Nearly three-quarters of adults in India say both men and women should make financial decisions in a family

% of Indian adults who say that in a family, ___ should be primarily responsible for ...



Note: Depends/Other/Don't know/Refused responses not shown.
Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.
"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Indians value having both sons and daughters: Nearly all Indians say it is very important for a family to have at least one son (94%) and, separately, to have at least one daughter (90%). And most Indians say that both sons and daughters should have equal rights to inheritance from parents (64%) and have the responsibility to care for parents as they age (58%). But survey respondents are far more likely to say that sons, rather than daughters, should have greater rights and responsibilities in these areas. For example, while about four-in-ten Indian adults say that sons should have the primary responsibility to care for aging parents, just 2% say the same about daughters.

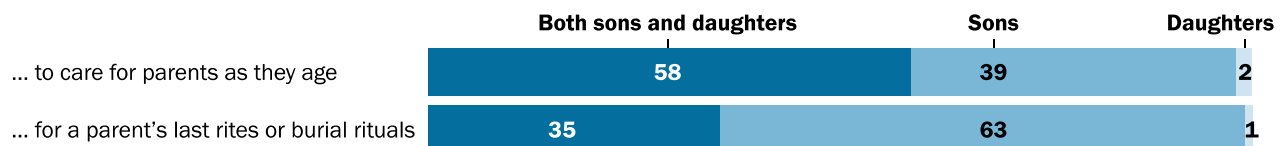
Moreover, most Indians (63%) see sons – not daughters – as being primarily responsible for parents’ last rites and burial rituals. Religious funeral practices for loved ones are [widely seen as very important](#), and at least [according to Hindu tradition, sons must perform last rites](#) for a parent to ensure freedom for the soul in the afterlife. Recently, women – including [actress Mandira Bedi](#) and the daughters of India’s former [Chief of Defense Staff](#) – have publicly challenged these norms by lighting family members’ funeral pyres.

In India, nearly two-thirds of adults say sons should handle their parents’ last rites

% of Indian adults who say ____ to inheritance from parents



% of Indian adults who say that in a family, ____ should have the primary responsibility ...



Note: Daughters-in-law/Sons-in-law/Other/Neither/Depends/Don't know/Refused responses not shown. Muslims and Christians were asked about "burial rituals," all other respondents were asked about "last rites."

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

These 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 – a custom broadly referred to as "son preference." Adult sons traditionally live with their parents and provide financial support to the family. Meanwhile, when daughters marry, their families may pay a dowry, an illegal practice that [still features in some marriages](#), and daughters

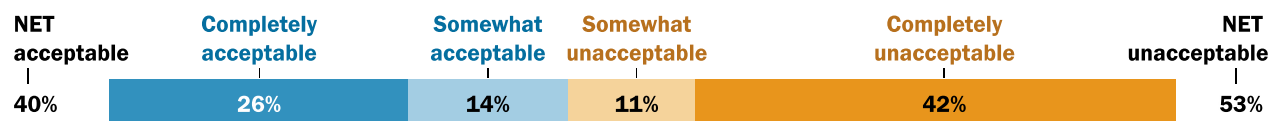
often [live with their husband's parents](#) and fulfill obligations toward their in-laws. In recent years, Indian society has paid increased attention to improving the status of daughters – the government's [Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao](#) (“Save the girl child, Educate the girl child”) program, for example, seeks to prevent sex-selective practices during pregnancy and to ensure educational opportunities for girls by conducting [public awareness media campaigns](#), among other policies.

Son preference and the increased availability of ultrasounds in recent decades [have contributed to](#) the selective abortion of female fetuses across India, despite the illegality of the practice. And for many years, India has had one of the [most skewed sex ratios at birth](#) in the world. For example, according to the [2011 census](#), there were 111 boys born for every 100 girls born in India, though recent data suggests the gap [may be narrowing](#).¹

Many Indians see sex-selective abortion as acceptable in at least some circumstances: Four-in-ten Indians say it is either “completely acceptable” or “somewhat acceptable” to “get a checkup using modern methods to balance the number of girls and boys in the family,” a euphemism to connote sex-selective abortion.² A similar share (42%) says balancing the number of girls and boys in a family via modern methods is completely *unacceptable*, while roughly one-in-ten describe the practice as “somewhat” unacceptable.

Four-in-ten Indians say it is acceptable to balance gender makeup of family via modern methods

% of Indian adults who say it is ____ to get a checkup using modern methods to balance the number of girls and boys in the family



Note: Don't know/Refused responses not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

“How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

¹ These statistics are referred to as sex ratio at birth (SRB). International convention is to present SRB as the number of boys per 100 girls. In the census of India and India's National Family Health Survey, however, this ratio is often expressed as the number of girls per 1,000 boys. This report follows the international practice, so all ratios are presented as the number of boys per 100 girls. Around the world, SRB naturally tends to skew slightly male (roughly 105 boys for every 100 girls). The exact causes of the skew are debated, but some scientists posit that the explanation may lie, at least in part, in [higher female mortality rates](#) early in pregnancy.

² This is the first major study in India to ask about opinions of sex-selective abortion. Because the practice is illegal, researchers designed the question in consultation with a subject-matter expert and subsequently tested it with respondents before including it in the full survey – all part of the extensive [questionnaire design process](#) for this project. Testing found this question to be understood by respondents without being offensive.

On this question and all others included in this report, differences in opinion between men and women and across age groups are modest. In other words, Indian women typically are not much more likely than Indian men to express egalitarian views on son preference and gender roles (see “In India, men a little more likely than women to have conservative views on gender” on page 21), and the same is true of young Indian adults (ages 18 to 34) relative to their elders.

This is the second report based on a Pew Research Center survey conducted face-to-face nationally among 29,999 Indian adults. Many findings from the survey were previously published in “[Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation](#),” which looked in detail at religious and national identity, religious beliefs and practices, and attitudes among religious communities. The survey also included several questions on gender roles in Indian society, but these questions were not analyzed in the previous report and are now being published for the first time. (Another recent Pew Research Center report, “[Religious Composition of India](#),” used Indian census data to examine how India’s religious makeup has changed since independence.)

Local interviewers administered the survey between Nov. 17, 2019, and March 23, 2020, in 17 languages. The survey covered all states and union territories of India, with the exceptions of Manipur and Sikkim – where the rapidly-developing COVID-19 situation prevented fieldwork from starting in the spring of 2020 – and the remote territories of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep; these areas are home to about a quarter of 1% of the Indian population. The union territory of Jammu and Kashmir was covered by the survey, though no fieldwork was conducted in the Kashmir region itself due to security concerns.

This study, funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts and the John Templeton Foundation, is part of a larger effort by Pew Research Center to understand religious change and its impact on societies around the world. The Center previously has conducted religion-focused surveys across [sub-Saharan Africa](#); the Middle East-North Africa region and many other countries with [large Muslim populations](#); [Latin America](#); [Israel](#); [Central and Eastern Europe](#); [Western Europe](#); and the [United States](#).

The rest of this Overview covers perceptions of gender discrimination; how Indian attitudes on gender compare globally; the strong influence of education and religion in gender attitudes; the minimal differences in gender attitudes between Indian men and women, and among adults of different ages; and regional and state-level variation in how gender roles are viewed.

Indians perceive more discrimination against women than religious minorities, but most say women do not face ‘a lot of discrimination’

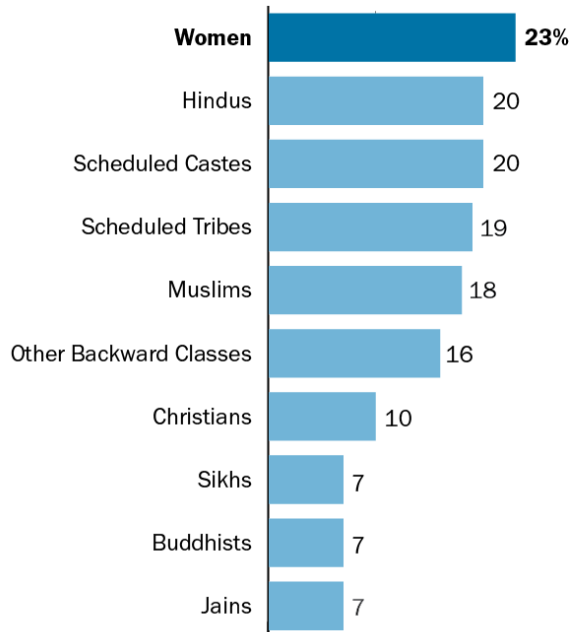
Almost a quarter of Indians (23%) say there is “a lot of discrimination” against women in their country, slightly more than the shares who say [some religious groups](#) or [lower castes](#) face a lot of discrimination. This means that the vast majority of Indian adults do not see a lot of discrimination against any of these groups.

About one-in-six Indian women (16%) said that they had *personally* felt discriminated against because they are a woman in the last 12 months before the 2019-2020 survey – comparable to the shares of women who said they have recently felt discriminated against due to their religion (16%) or their caste (14%). Similar shares of Indian men said they had faced recent gender (14%), religious (17%) or caste (15%) discrimination.

But far more adults see *violence* against women as a major national issue. As described in a previous [Pew Research Center report](#), three-quarters of Indians say violence against women is a “very big problem” – greater than the share who say communal violence is a very big problem (65%), and similar to the shares who say this about crime and corruption (76% each). Police cases registered as “crimes against women” nearly doubled [between 2010 and 2019](#), and rapes and murders of women have led to [massive protests across India](#).

About a quarter of Indians say women in the country face a lot of discrimination

% of Indian adults who say there is a lot of discrimination against _____ in India today



Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

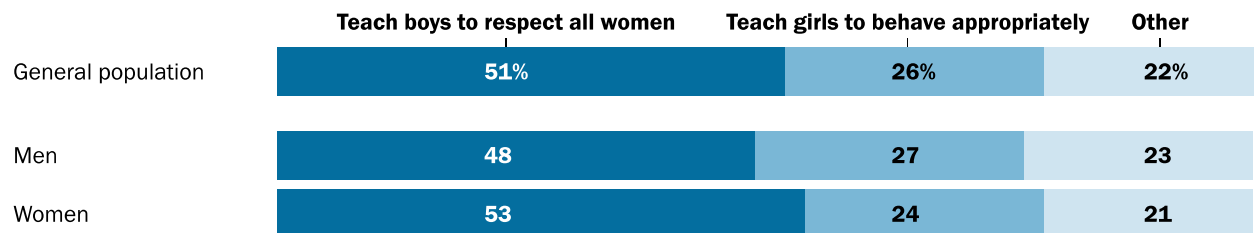
“How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The survey asked respondents which of two options is more important to improve the safety of women in their community: teaching boys to respect all women or teaching girls to behave appropriately. Roughly half of Indians say teaching boys to respect women is more important, while about a quarter of Indians say teaching girls to behave appropriately is the better way to improve women’s safety. An additional quarter of Indian adults don’t take a clear position between those two options, instead voicing that some combination of the two approaches is necessary, that improved law and order through policing will improve the situation or that women are already safe. Women are slightly more likely than men to say that teaching boys to respect all women is the more important way to improve safety (53% vs. 48%).

Half of Indians favor improving women’s safety by teaching boys to respect women

% of Indian adults who say to improve the safety of women in their community, it is more important to ...



Note: “Other” includes the following answer options, none of which were read aloud: “Women are already safe,” “Improve law and order/policing” and “Both/Depends/Other.” Don’t know/Refused responses not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

“How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

How India's gender attitudes compare globally

Pew Research Center has asked a couple of the questions on this survey in many countries around the world, allowing a glimpse of where Indians fit globally when it comes to public opinion on these issues.

Across 47 countries and territories, a global median of 70% say it is very important for women to have the same rights as men, according to data from [two recent waves](#) of the Center's [Global Attitudes survey](#). This is similar to the share of Indians who feel gender equality is very important (72%).³

Indians are less likely than people in North America (92% [median](#)), Western Europe (90%) and Latin America (82%) to place high importance on women and men having the same rights. But they are more likely than those living in sub-Saharan Africa (48% median) and the Middle East-North Africa region (44%) to say this. Adults in Central and Eastern Europe (69% median) are roughly similar to Indians on this question.

Within South Asia, Indians are somewhat more likely than Pakistanis to say it is very important for men and women to have equal rights (72% vs. 64%).

³ This figure (72%) comes from the 2019 Global Attitudes survey and is slightly lower than the share (80%) who said this in the 2019-2020 India survey on which most of this report is based. [Context effects](#) could account for this difference: The survey question comes much later in the Global Attitudes survey than in the India-specific survey; and the Global Attitudes survey question is the third in a battery asking respondents to rank how important things are, while the question stands on its own in the India-specific survey. No matter the cause for the slight difference, a solid majority of Indians support equal gender rights.

Most Indians strongly support equal rights for women, in line with global public opinion

% of adults who say it is **very important** for women to have the same rights as men



Source: 2019 Global Attitudes Survey (34 countries); 2015 Global Attitudes Survey (13 countries and territories: Burkina Faso, Chile, Ghana, Jordan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Palestinian Territories, Peru, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Venezuela, Vietnam).

"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Despite broadly aligning with global public opinion on equal rights for women, Indians tend to be more conservative than people in most other countries surveyed when it comes to gender dynamics in the home and in the economy.

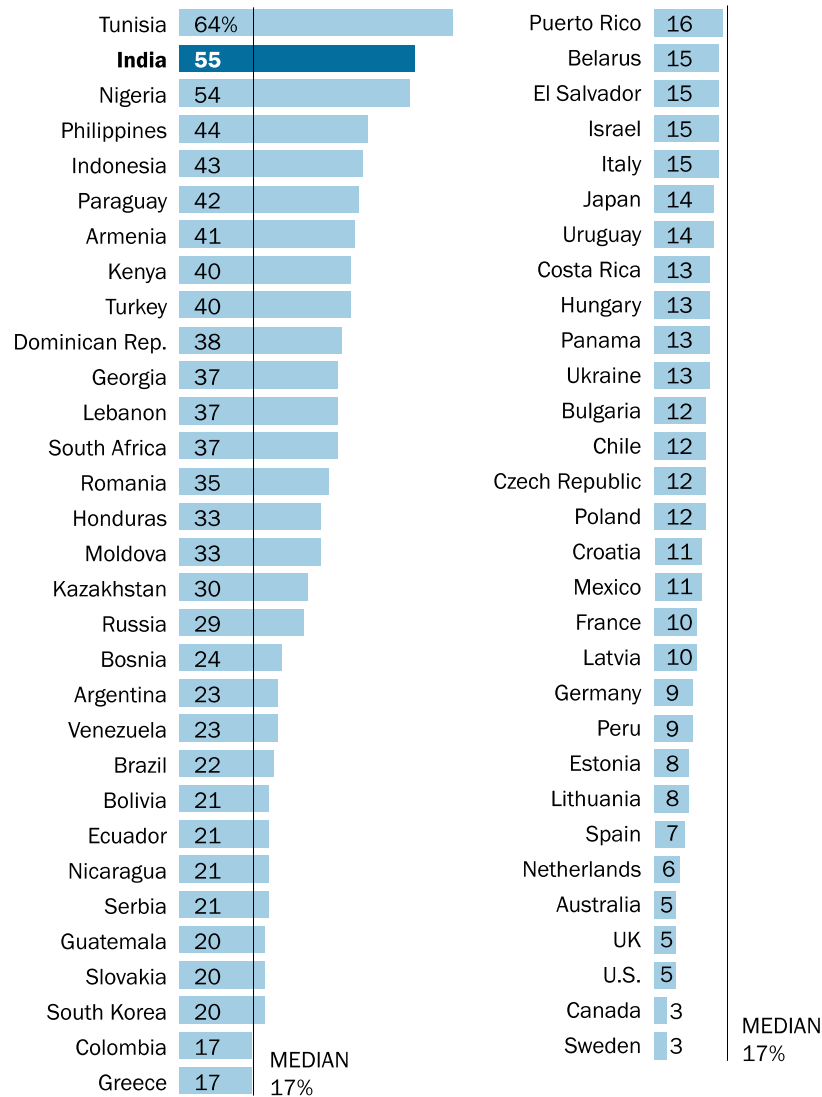
For instance, across 61 countries surveyed from 2013 to 2019, a median of 17% completely agree with the statement “When jobs are scarce, men should have more rights to a job than women,” but roughly three times as many Indians say the same (55%).⁴ In fact, only one surveyed country – Tunisia (64%) – has a higher share who completely agree with the notion that men should have greater rights to jobs in times of high unemployment.

On this measure, Indians are substantially more traditional than people from North America (4% median), Western Europe (7%), [Central and Eastern Europe](#) (14%) and [Latin America](#) (20%).

⁴ This figure (55%) comes from the [2019 Global Attitudes survey](#) and is nearly identical to the figure (56%) from the 2019-2020 India survey on which most of this report is based.

Indians among most likely to completely agree that men should sometimes receive job preference

% of adults who **completely agree** with the statement: “When jobs are scarce, men should have more rights to a job than women”



Source: 2019 Global Attitudes Survey (34 countries); 2015-2016 Religion in Central and Eastern Europe survey (11 countries: Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Moldova, Romania, Serbia); 2013-2014 Religion in Latin America survey (16 countries and territories: Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, Venezuela).
 “How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society”

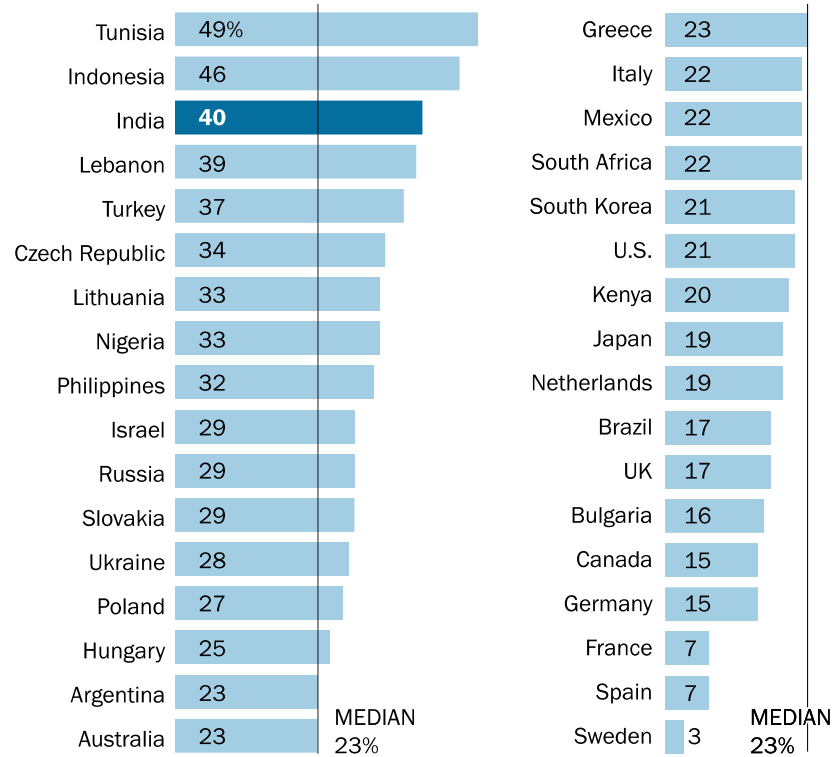
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

These attitudes, [combined with a scarcity of jobs](#), may be one reason why India has one of the lowest female labor force participation rates in the world (21% vs. 53% global median), according to 2019 [United Nations \(UN\) data](#). India’s male labor force participation rate is much higher (76%), and this within-country discrepancy contributes to India’s low ranking on the UN Gender Inequality Index (123rd out of 162 ranked countries).

The [2019 Global Attitudes survey](#) in 34 countries also asked a question about gender roles that was not on the 2019-2020 India survey: “Which kind of marriage is more satisfying, one where the husband provides for the family and the wife takes care of the house and children, or one where the husband and wife both have jobs and together take care of the house and children?”

Four-in-ten Indians say marriage with traditional gender roles is more satisfying

% of adults who say a marriage is more satisfying if the husband provides for the family and the wife takes care of the house and children



Note: Respondents were asked, “What kind of marriage do you think is the more satisfying way of life? One where the husband provides for the family and the wife takes care of the house and children OR One where the husband and wife both have jobs and together take care of the house and children?” The two options were randomized.
 Source: 2019 Global Attitudes Survey.
 “How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

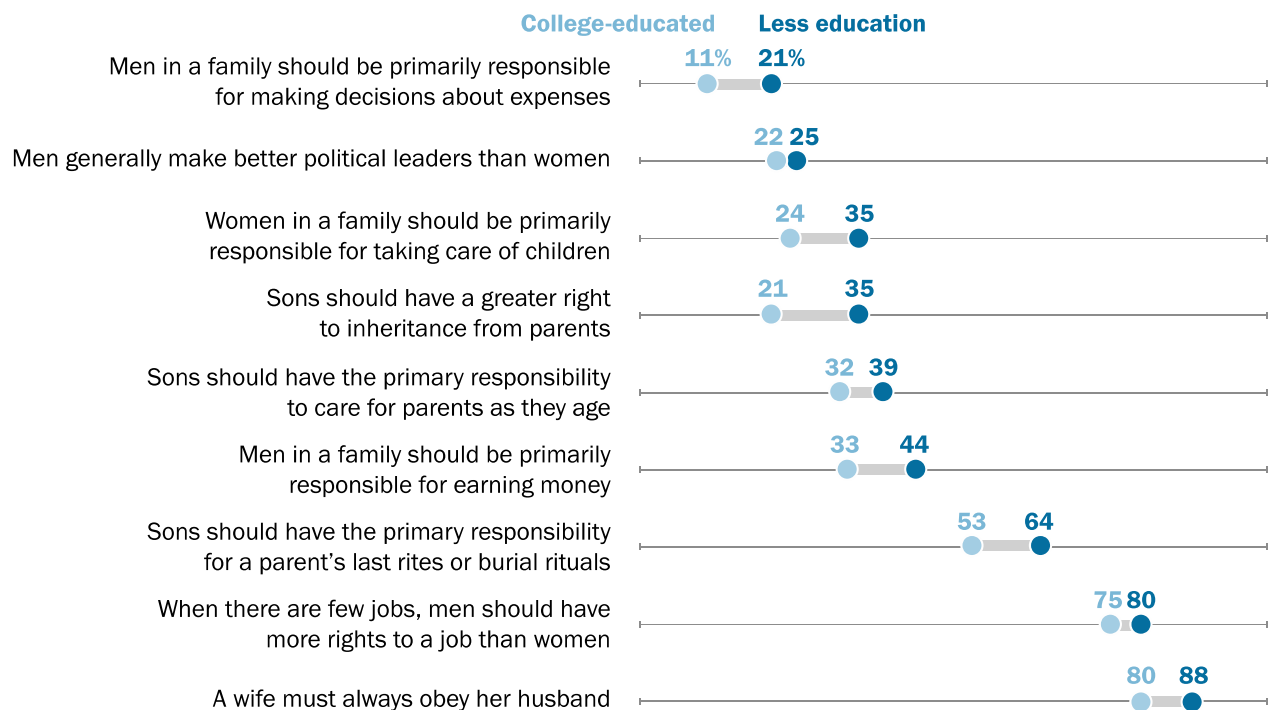
Indians are among the most likely to say the husband should provide for the family while the wife focuses on the home: Four-in-ten Indians prefer this traditional family dynamic, compared with a global median of 23%.

Indians with a college degree are less likely to hold traditional views on gender roles

Indian adults with a college degree are less likely than those without a college education to support conservative gender norms. For example, about a quarter of college-educated Indians (24%) say women in a family should be primarily responsible for taking care of children, while roughly a third of Indians with less formal education (35%) say child care responsibility should rest with women.

College-educated Indians less likely to say wives must obey husbands, although overwhelming majority still hold this view

% of Indian adults who say ...



Note: Differences by education level are statistically significant. Muslims and Christians were asked about "burial rituals," all other respondents were asked about "last rites."

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

However, even Indians who have completed college sometimes do overwhelmingly endorse traditional views on gender-related issues. For instance, large majorities among those with a college degree (80%) and those with less education (88%) agree with the notion that wives must always obey their husbands.

Muslims more likely than other Indians to say men should provide a family's income

India's main religious groups have widely divergent opinions about gender roles in the family. For example, while nearly three-quarters of Indian Muslims (74%) say that sons should have the primary responsibility for a parent's burial rituals, just 29% of Sikhs say that sons alone should handle last rites. Across several aspects of family life, this pattern repeats: Muslims are the most likely, and Sikhs are the least likely, to support traditional gender roles.

Sikhs least likely to hold a variety of traditional views toward gender roles

% of Indian adults who say that ...

	Sons should have the primary responsibility for a parent's last rites or burial rituals	Men in a family should be primarily responsible for earning money	Women in a family should be primarily responsible for taking care of children	Sons should have the primary responsibility to care for parents as they age	Sons should have a greater right to inheritance from parents	Men in a family should be primarily responsible for making decisions about expenses
Muslims	74%	61%	44%	43%	42%	28%
Jains	67	31	27	33	25	19
Hindus	63	43	34	39	34	20
Buddhists	46	22	12	35	18	9
Christians	44	34	34	29	31	14
Sikhs	29	17	14	17	11	9

Note: Darker shades represent higher values. Muslims and Christians were asked about "burial rituals," all other respondents were asked about "last rites."

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details. "How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Muslims are somewhat less likely than Sikhs to have a college education (5% vs. 9%), based on the [2011 census](#), and as noted previously, Indians without a college degree are more likely to hold conservative gender attitudes. But even when considering education, Muslims are far more likely than Sikhs to support traditional gender roles in the family. For instance, about a third of college-educated Muslims (32%) say women should be primarily responsible for taking care of children, while only about one-in-ten college-educated Sikhs (9%) share this view.

The overwhelming majority of India's Sikh community lives in the state of Punjab (India's only majority-Sikh state), and people in Punjab consistently express less preference for traditional gender roles within the home – a pattern that is not just driven by Sikhs in the state. Indeed, Punjabi Hindus are much less likely than Hindus nationally to express traditional views on some gender roles. For example, while 34% of Indian Hindus overall say women should be primarily responsible for taking care of children, just 13% of Punjabi Hindus say this – similar to the 14% of

Indian Sikhs who take this position. (See “Southern states not necessarily more egalitarian than Hindi Belt states in gender attitudes” on page 26 for more on state and regional differences across India.)

For many years, Punjab has had one of the [most skewed sex ratios](#) across Indian states. According to the [2011 census](#), for every 119 boys born in Punjab, 100 girls were born. However, more recent data suggests the skew may be decreasing. In the most recently conducted National Family Health Survey (NFHS), there were 111 boys [born in Punjab](#) for every 100 girls.⁵

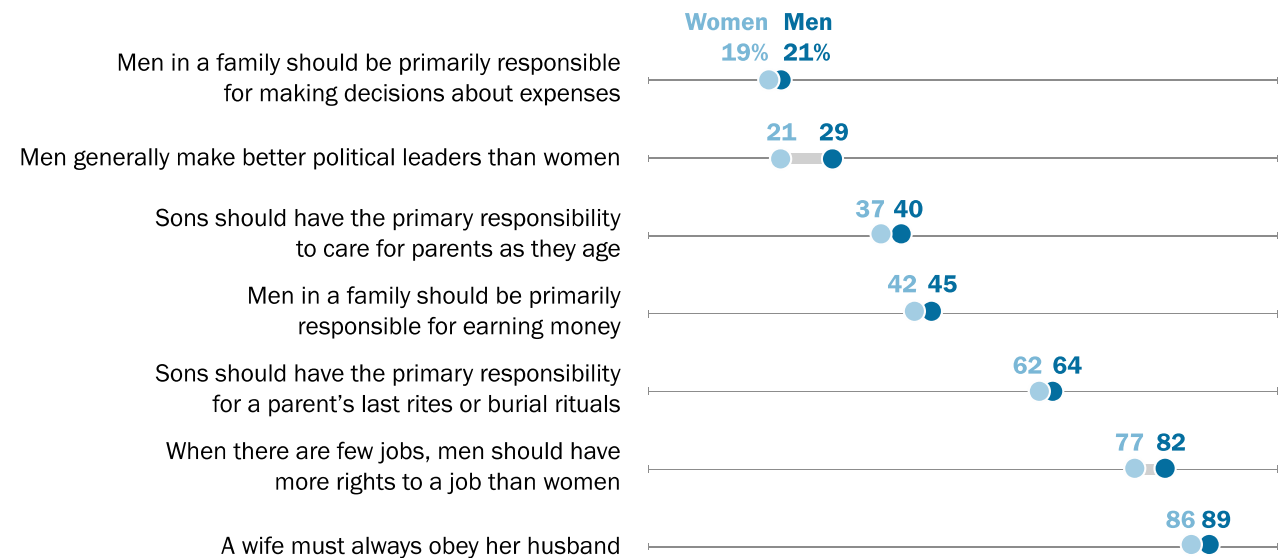
⁵ These statistics are referred to as sex ratio at birth (SRB). International convention is to present SRB as the number of boys per 100 girls. In the census of India and India’s National Family Health Survey, however, this ratio is often expressed as the number of girls per 1,000 boys. This report follows the international practice, so all ratios are presented as the number of boys per 100 girls. Around the world, SRB naturally tends to skew slightly male (roughly 105 boys born for every 100 girls). The exact causes of the skew are debated, but some scientists posit that the explanation may lie, at least in part, in [higher female mortality rates](#) early in pregnancy.

In India, men a little more likely than women to have conservative views on gender

Across a variety of measures, Indian men are more likely than women – but only slightly – to take a traditional view of gender roles. For instance, 82% of men say that when there are few jobs, men should have more rights to jobs, compared with 77% of women who share this perspective.

Small differences between men and women in India on gender attitudes

% of Indian adults who say ...



Note: Differences by gender are statistically significant. Muslims and Christians were asked about “burial rituals,” all other respondents were asked about “last rites.”

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

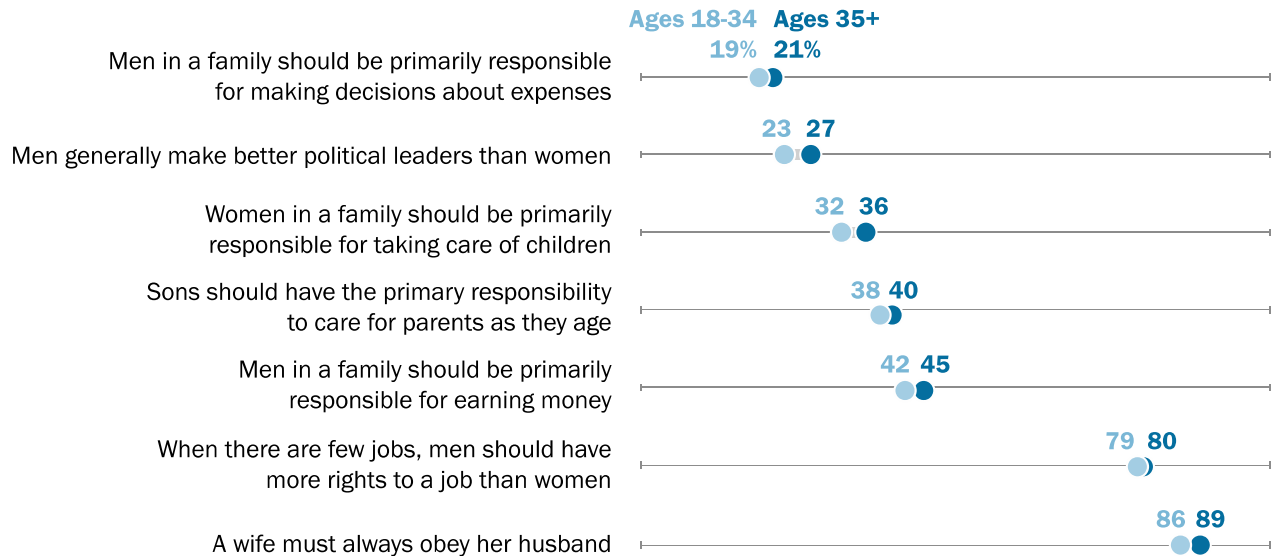
“How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Similarly, older Indians (ages 35 and older) are marginally more likely than younger adults to hold traditional views on gender roles. While 45% of Indians ages 35 and older say that men in a family should be primarily responsible for earning money, 42% of those ages 18 to 34 agree.

Younger Indian adults have slightly less traditional views on gender roles

% of Indian adults who say ...



Note: Differences by age are statistically significant.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

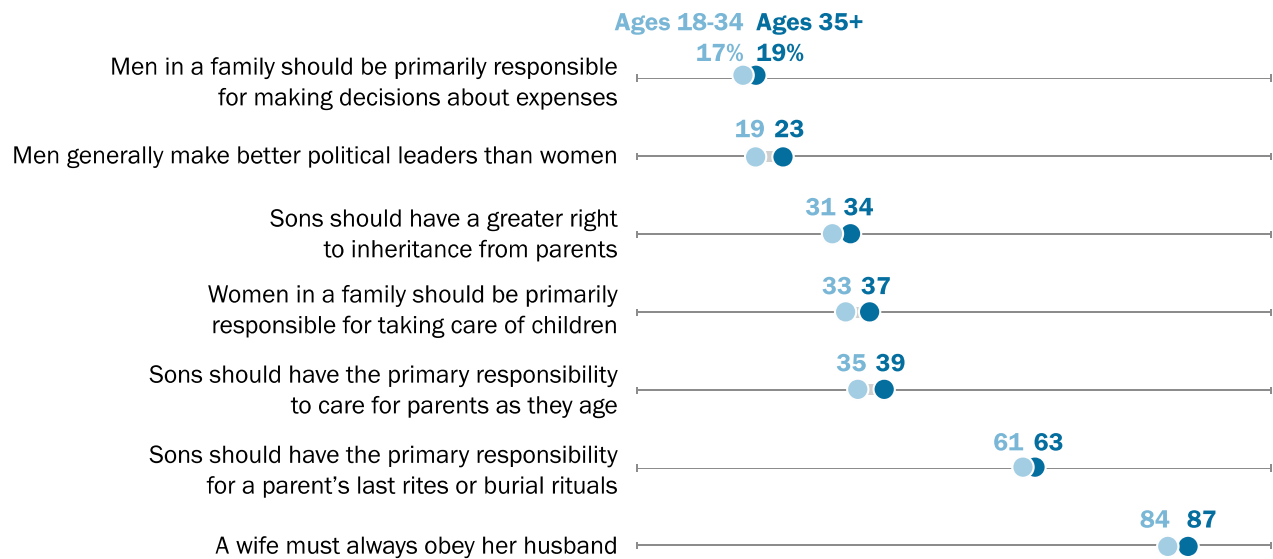
"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Even when looking at attitudes only among Indian women, the differences between younger and older adults are minimal, with older women slightly more likely than younger women (ages 18 to 34) to hold conservative views on gender roles. For example, 37% of older Indian women (ages 35 and older) think women in a family should be primarily responsible for caring for children, while a third of younger Indian women take this position.

Vast majority of Indian women, young and old, agree wives should obey husbands

% of Indian women who say ...



Note: Differences by age are statistically significant. Muslims and Christians were asked about "burial rituals," all other respondents were asked about "last rites."

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.
 "How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Sidebar: India's changing gender norms

The general consistency across age groups could suggest that Indian attitudes on family gender roles may not be changing very much over time. But a long-running survey shows that attitudes and behaviors on gender roles appear to have become more egalitarian since the end of the 20th century, with perhaps the biggest changes in the early 2000s.

India's [National Family Health Survey](#) (NFHS) has been conducted five times, with the first happening roughly three decades ago. Typically, women ages 15 to 49 and men ages 15 to 54 in selected households are eligible to be interviewed.⁶ By comparison, all Indian adults (ages 18 and older) were eligible to be included in the Pew Research Center survey. Differences in sampling and question wording make it difficult to compare the two surveys directly. Still, NFHS surveys are useful in analyzing data over time.

Between the survey's second (1998-99) and third (2005-06) rounds of data collection, several measures showed a move away from traditional attitudes. For example, while 31% of married women under age 50 who were earning money in 1998 and 1999 said that their husband was mainly deciding how to use the money the wife earned, that number halved (15%) by 2005 and 2006.

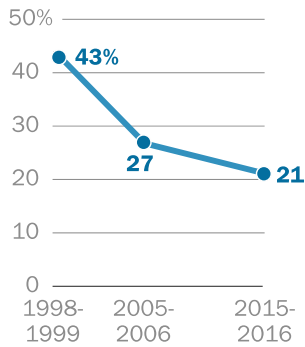
Between the survey's third (2005-06) and fourth (2015-16) rounds, changes have been more modest, though still with a slight tendency toward less conservative views. Over that decade, for instance, the share of married men under age 50 who said husbands should have the greater say in deciding about visits to a wife's family or relatives declined slightly, from 26% to 21%.⁷

⁶ The more recent rounds of this survey have included a men's module alongside the longstanding women's module, although the questions asked of men sometimes differ from those asked of women. This analysis of NFHS data only includes respondents ages 18 to 49 for both women and men.

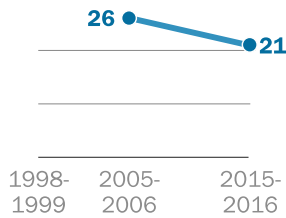
⁷ As of publication, the NFHS round five dataset (fielded 2019-2021) has not been released for analysis. [Initial fact sheets](#) from the fifth round (released at the end of 2021) indicate that women's involvement in household decisions has slightly increased since the fourth round, suggesting that Indians may be continuing toward more egalitarian attitudes. Some of the largest increases in women's involvement in decision-making between the fourth and fifth rounds are in the Hindi Belt locations of Delhi, Bihar and Haryana.

Generally, Indian men becoming less likely to be main decision-makers about family issues

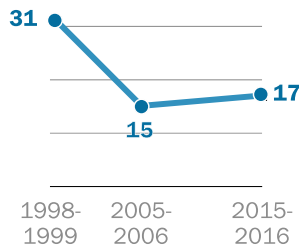
*% of married women ages 18-49 who say their husband mainly decides about visits to the wife's family or relatives**



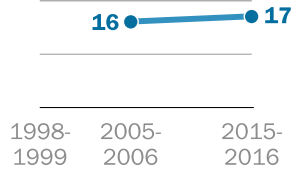
% of married men ages 18-49 who say husbands should have the greater say in deciding about visits to the wife's family or relatives



*% of married women ages 18-49 who say their husband mainly decides how to use the money the wife earns***



*% of married men ages 18-49 who say they mainly decide how the money their wife earns will be used****



*In 1998-1999, women were asked who decides about "your going and staying with parents or siblings."

**Question only asked of married women who had cash earnings in the last 12 months, as of the survey date.

***Question only asked of married men whose wives have cash earnings.

Source: India National Family Health Survey, rounds two, three and four.

"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

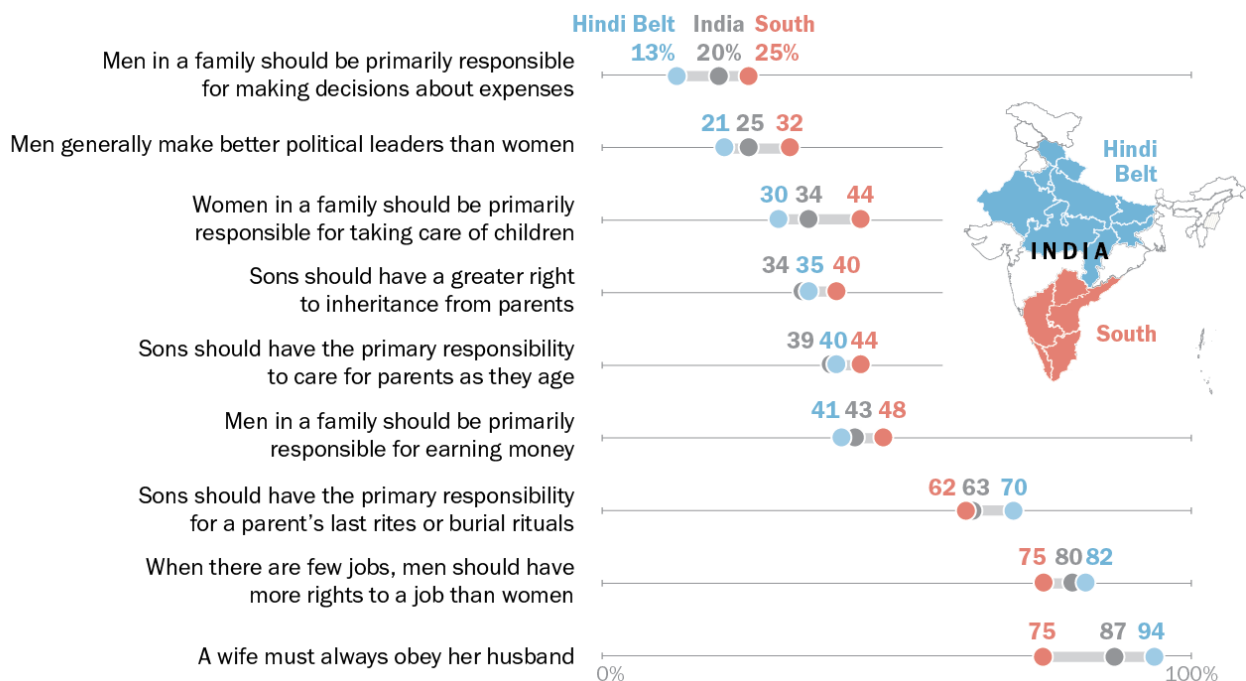
Southern states not necessarily more egalitarian than Hindi Belt states in gender attitudes

Women in India's Southern states generally have better socioeconomic outcomes, on average, than those in other parts of the country, particularly when compared with states in the Northern Hindi Belt. For instance, Southern women tend to be [more highly educated](#) and [to live longer](#). This North-South divide is [commonly discussed](#) in [academic literature](#).

But Southern attitudes toward gender roles are not necessarily more egalitarian. While Indians in the South are less likely than those in the Hindi Belt to say, for example, that a wife must always obey her husband (75% vs. 94%), Southern adults are *more* likely to say that men in families

Southern Indians more likely than those in the Hindi Belt to favor some traditional gender roles, but less likely to say wives should obey husbands

% of Indian adults who say ...



Note: Muslims and Christians were asked about "burial rituals," all other respondents were asked about "last rites." Fieldwork could not be conducted in the Kashmir Valley due to security concerns. Fieldwork could not be conducted in Manipur or Sikkim due to the COVID-19 outbreak. No locations in Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, or Ladakh were selected for inclusion in the survey. Fieldwork was not conducted in Andaman and Nicobar Islands or Lakshadweep.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details. "How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

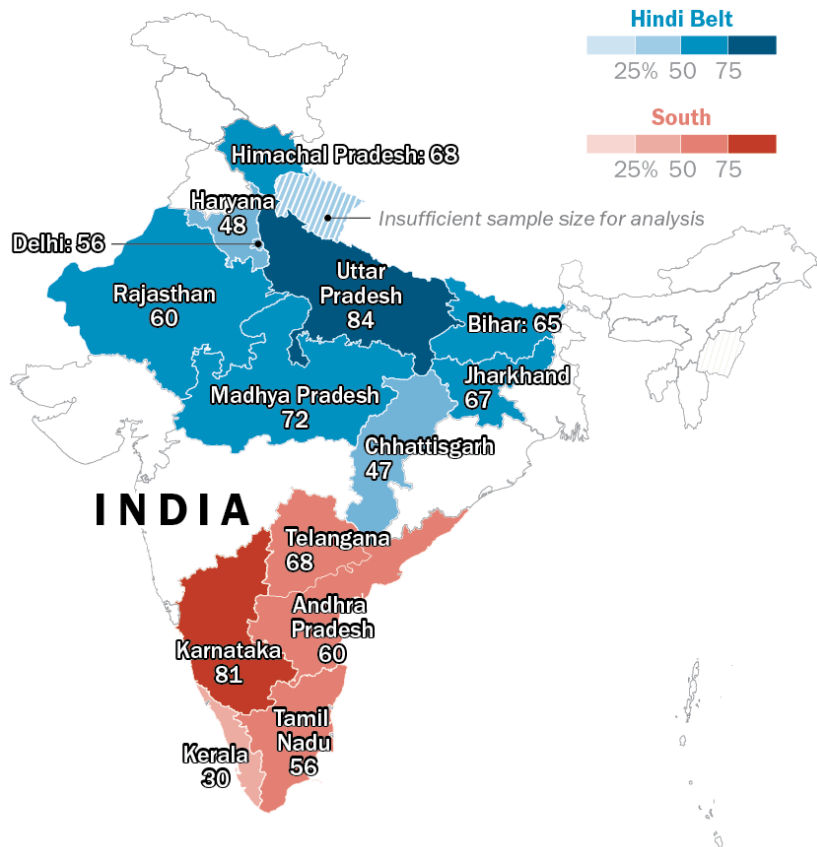
should be responsible for making decisions about expenses (25% vs. 13%) and that women should be primarily responsible for taking care of children (44% vs. 30%).

These regional analyses, though, mask significant variation *within* regions. In the South, people in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh often express more traditional views than those in Kerala: 81% of Karnataka’s residents and 60% in Andhra Pradesh think sons should be responsible for a parent’s last rites, while just 30% of Keralites say the same. Meanwhile, attitudes toward gender roles in Tamil Nadu and Telangana tend to vary quite a lot based on the issue; for example, Tamilians are among the least likely to say that a wife must always obey her husband, but the state also has the highest share of people who say women should be primarily responsible for taking care of children.

The Hindi Belt also has large variations between states on gender roles. For example, Uttar Pradesh is often among the most conservative states, while the National Capital Territory of Delhi is consistently at the other end of spectrum. For complete state-level details on these questions, see [Chapter 3](#).

People in Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka overwhelmingly say sons should handle parents’ funeral rituals

% of Indian adults who say sons should have the primary responsibility for a parent’s last rites or burial rituals



Note: Muslims and Christians were asked about “burial rituals,” all other respondents were asked about “last rites.” Shares for several states outside the Hindi Belt and the South can be found in Chapter 3. While fieldwork was conducted in Puducherry and Uttarakhand, adequate sample sizes are not available for analysis. No locations in Chandigarh were selected for inclusion in the survey.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

“How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

How regions of India are defined for this report

[Previous reporting](#) from this survey largely used membership in India's [six zonal councils](#) to define regions. In this report, however, it makes more sense to analyze at the state level due to wide variations among states within the same zone.

This report does, though, describe differences between two commonly discussed regions: the Hindi Belt and the South. While different definitions exist, a broad definition of the Hindi Belt includes the following 11 states and union territories, located in the Northern part of the country: Bihar, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

The South includes the following six states and union territories: Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.

Sidebar: National Family Health Surveys also show big variation within regions

Even though the surveys include different questions and have different sample compositions, NFHS surveys broadly show similar patterns to the Center's recent survey: Southern attitudes and behaviors often are comparable to, or even more traditional than, those in the Hindi Belt, and states within both regions are diverse in how traditional gender roles are considered.

For example, in the most recently released NFHS data, about a third of men in Southern states (34%) say husbands should have a greater say than wives when making major household purchases, compared with roughly a quarter in Hindi Belt states (27%).⁸

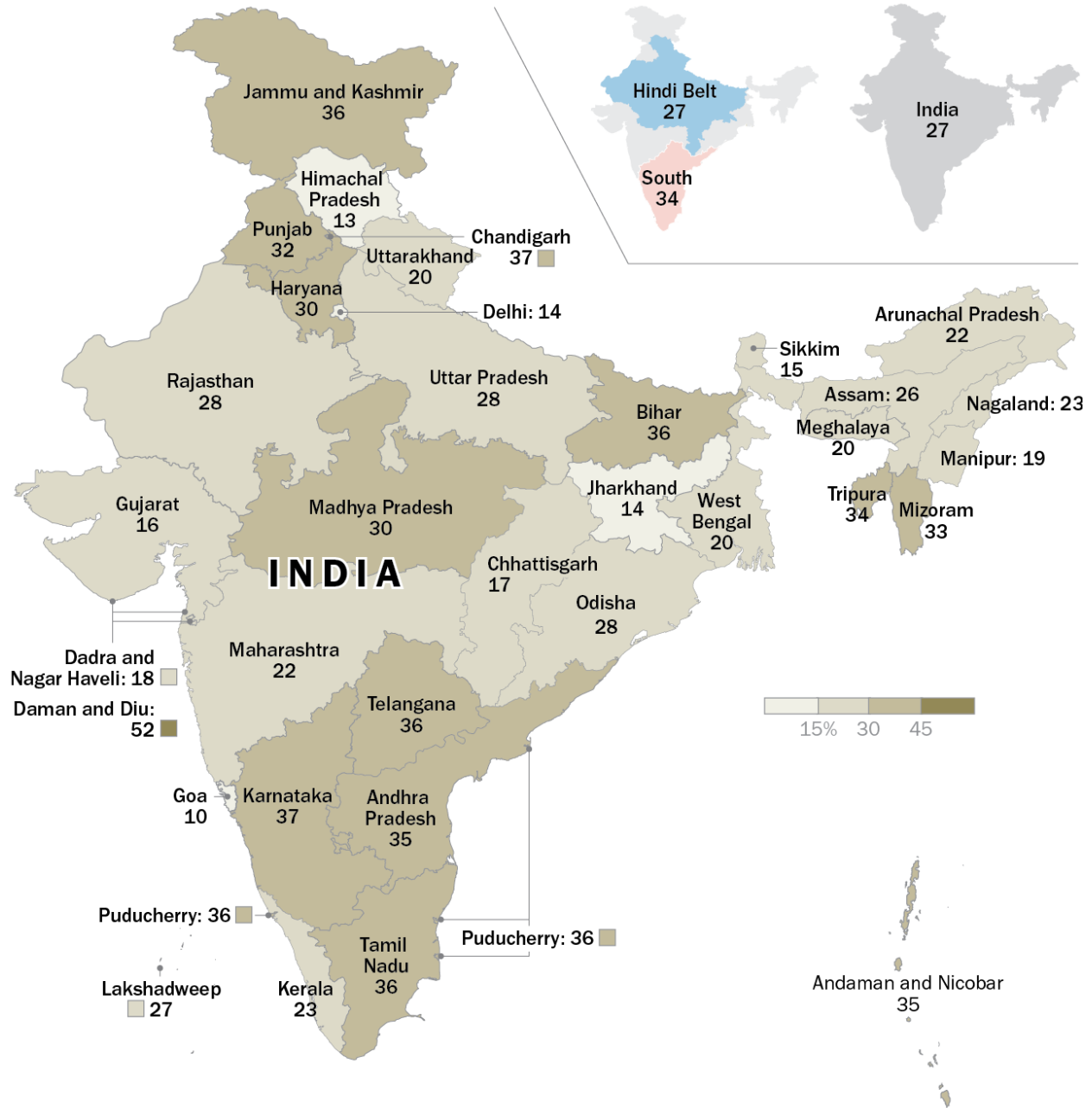
On this topic, within-region variation is stark in the Hindi Belt. While 37% of residents in Chandigarh think husbands should have more say than wives in major purchases, just 13% in Himachal Pradesh offer this opinion.⁹

⁸This analysis is based on men ages 18 to 49. As of publication, the NFHS round five dataset (fielded 2019-2021) has not been released for analysis.

⁹[Initial fact sheets](#) from the fifth round of the NFHS (released at the end of 2021) again indicate that there is within-region variation on women's involvement in household decisions.

One-third or more men in most Southern states think husbands should have greater say in major purchases

% of Indian men ages 18-49 who say husbands should have a greater say than wives in major household purchases



Note: Jammu and Kashmir has since been divided into two territories, and Daman and Diu has merged with Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

Source: India National Family Health Survey, round four, 2015-2016.

“How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

1. Views on women’s place in society

About a quarter of Indians (23%) say there is “a lot of discrimination” against women in their country. And 16% of Indian women reported that they personally had faced discrimination because of their gender in the 12 months before the 2019-2020 survey.

In addition, three-quarters of adults see violence against women as a [very big problem](#) in Indian society. To improve women’s safety, about half of Indian adults (51%) say it is more important to teach boys to “respect all women” than to teach girls to “behave appropriately.” But roughly a quarter of Indians (26%) take the opposite position, effectively placing the onus for violence against women on women themselves.

On the whole, however, Indians seem to share an egalitarian vision of women’s place in society. Eight-in-ten people surveyed – including 81% of Hindus and 76% of Muslims – say it is very important for women to have the same rights as men. Indians also broadly accept women as political leaders, with a majority saying that women and men make equally good political leaders (55%) or that women generally make *better* leaders than men do (14%).

Yet these views exist alongside a preference for traditional economic roles. Indians generally agree that when there are few jobs available, men should have more rights to a job than women (80%), including 56% who *completely* agree with this statement. Majorities of both men and women share this view, though men are somewhat more inclined to take this position.

Most Indian women do not perceive widespread discrimination against women in India

Roughly a quarter of Indians (23%) say there is “a lot of discrimination” against women in India today. (Respondents were given two options; they could either say there is a lot of discrimination against women, or there is not a lot of discrimination.) Christians are the religious community most likely to perceive widespread discrimination against women in India (30%).

Indian women are only slightly more likely than Indian men to say there is a lot of discrimination against women in the country (24% vs. 22%, respectively). In general, views on gender discrimination do not differ much – if at all – between respondents of different ages or education levels.

While most Indians do not perceive a lot of gender discrimination in their country, Indians are [modestly more likely to say there is a lot of discrimination against women](#) than to say the same about discrimination [against religious groups](#) or [lower castes](#).

A quarter of Indians say there is a lot of gender discrimination

% of Indian adults who say there is a lot of discrimination against women in India today

General population	23%
Hindus	23
Muslims	21
Christians	30
Sikhs	18
Buddhists	18
Jains	23
Men	22
Women	24
Ages 18-34	23
35+	23
Less than college	23
College graduate	22
General Category	23
Scheduled Caste/Tribe	25
Other/Most Backwards Class	20
Religion very important	23
Religion less important	26

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

“How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Indians in different regions have very different perceptions of how much discrimination women face. In general, respondents in the South are more likely than [those in the Hindi Belt](#) to feel there is a lot of discrimination against women in India today. For example, in the Southern states of Telangana and Tamil Nadu, more than a third of adults say there is a lot of discrimination against women (44% and 39%, respectively). By contrast, in the Hindi Belt states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, only 6% of respondents say this is the case. As Pew Research Center previously has reported, [South Indians also are more likely](#) than Indians in the Hindi Belt to perceive a lot of discrimination against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The Northeastern state of Assam stands out, with 52% of respondents reporting widespread gender discrimination. This mirrors the broader pattern of respondents in the Northeast being among the most likely to say there is a lot of discrimination in India against people from [various religious groups](#) and [from lower castes](#). But in general, the majority of Indians in most states and union territories say there is not a lot of discrimination against women.

Southern Indians more likely to see discrimination against women

% of Indian adults who say there is a lot of discrimination against women in India today

Assam	52%
Telangana	44
Odisha	42
Tamil Nadu	39
Andhra Pradesh	31
Rajasthan	29
Karnataka	28
Jharkhand	27
West Bengal	26
Gujarat	23
Kerala	23
Chhattisgarh	22
Madhya Pradesh	22
Bihar	21
Meghalaya	20
Punjab	19
Haryana	17
Delhi	15
Maharashtra	14
Jammu and Kashmir	13
Himachal Pradesh	6
Uttar Pradesh	6

Note: **Blue** indicates Hindi Belt. **Red** indicates South. While fieldwork was conducted in the following states and union territories, adequate sample sizes are not available for analysis: Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Tripura and Uttarakhand. Fieldwork could not be conducted in the Kashmir Valley due to security concerns. Fieldwork could not be conducted in Manipur or Sikkim due to the COVID-19 outbreak. No locations in Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, or Ladakh were selected for inclusion in the survey. Fieldwork was not conducted in Andaman and Nicobar Islands or Lakshadweep. Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details. "How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Most Indian women say they have not recently experienced gender discrimination

Fewer than one-in-five Indian women (16%) said they had *personally* felt discriminated against in the 12 months before the 2019-2020 survey because of their gender. And women were only slightly more likely than men to say they had experienced gender discrimination in the past year (16% vs. 14%, respectively).

Christians – despite being the most likely religious group to say there is a lot of discrimination against women in India – had the lowest rate of women *personally* reporting discrimination because of their gender (9%).

Across India, women in different age groups and with different levels of education reported experiences with gender discrimination at roughly similar rates. However, women who had faced recent financial difficulties (those who said they had not been able to afford food, housing or medical care for themselves or their families in the last year) were twice as likely as those who had not recently faced such financial difficulties to report that they personally had experienced gender discrimination in the past year (22% vs. 11%).

Older and younger women report facing similar levels of gender discrimination

% of Indian women who say they have felt personally discriminated against in the last 12 months because of their gender

Total women	16%
Hindus	16
Muslims	16
Christians	9
Sikhs	15
Buddhists	13
Ages 18-34	16
35+	16
Less than college	16
College graduate	14
General Category	16
Lower castes	16
Religion very important	16
Religion less important	16
Recent financial hardship	22
No financial hardship	11

Note: Lower castes include Scheduled Castes/Tribes as well as Other/Most Backward Classes. Adequate sample size of Jain women is not available for analysis.

“Recent financial hardship” includes those who say they did not have enough money to pay for food, medical care and/or housing in the last year.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

“How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Survey respondents' personal experiences with gender discrimination also varied across the country. On the upper bound, women in Jammu and Kashmir and in Assam reported the highest levels of personal gender discrimination in the past year (35% and 32%, respectively), while women from Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh were among the least likely to say they personally had faced discrimination because of their gender (7% and 6%, respectively).

Women in Jammu and Kashmir, Assam overall more likely to report recent gender discrimination

% of Indian women who say they have felt personally discriminated against in the last 12 months because of their gender

Jammu and Kashmir	35%
Assam	32
Telangana	29
Tamil Nadu	28
Haryana	24
Himachal Pradesh	24
Rajasthan	23
Delhi	22
Madhya Pradesh	22
Bihar	17
Karnataka	17
West Bengal	16
Punjab	14
Uttar Pradesh	14
Odisha	12
Jharkhand	11
Kerala	8
Maharashtra	8
Gujarat	7
Andhra Pradesh	6

Note: **Blue** indicates Hindi Belt. **Red** indicates South. While fieldwork was conducted in the following states and union territories, adequate sample sizes are not available for analysis: Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Tripura and Uttarakhand. Fieldwork could not be conducted in the Kashmir Valley due to security concerns. Fieldwork could not be conducted in Manipur or Sikkim due to the COVID-19 outbreak. No locations in Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, or Ladakh were selected for inclusion in the survey. Fieldwork was not conducted in Andaman and Nicobar Islands or Lakshadweep.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Indians favor teaching boys respect as a way to improve women's safety

Amidst India's ongoing problem with [violence against women](#), the survey asked respondents whether, to improve the safety of women in their community, it is more important to teach boys to respect all women or to teach girls to behave appropriately.

About half of Indians (51%) say it is more important to teach boys to respect all women, while roughly a quarter (26%) say it is more important to teach girls to behave appropriately. Others offer a variety of additional responses, such as that teaching both things is important or that it depends on the situation (13%); that improving law and order or policing is the most important way to protect women's safety (7%); or that women are already safe (2%). A very small share (2%) did not offer a response to the question.

Roughly half of Indians prefer to improve safety of women by teaching boys to respect all women

% of Indian adults who say to improve the safety of women in their community, it is more important to ...

	Teach boys to respect all women	Teach girls to behave appropriately	Women are already safe*	Improve law and order/policing*	Both/depends/other*
General population	51%	26%	2%	7%	13%
Hindus	52	26	2	6	13
Muslims	47	27	2	9	13
Christians	41	22	2	11	21
Sikhs	40	20	2	12	23
Buddhists	56	22	1	10	10
Jains	51	25	1	6	17
Men	48	27	2	8	14
Women	53	24	1	6	13
Ages 18-34	52	25	2	7	12
35+	50	26	2	6	14
Less than college	51	26	2	6	13
College graduate	49	23	2	11	15
General Category	50	26	2	10	11
Lower castes	51	25	2	5	15
Religion very important	52	26	2	6	13
Religion less important	43	25	2	11	16

* Answer options not read aloud.

Note: Don't know/Refused responses not shown. Lower castes include Scheduled Castes/Tribes as well as Other/Most Backward Classes.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Women are somewhat more likely than men to say that teaching boys to respect all women is the most important way to improve women's safety (53% vs. 48%).

Within all of India's major religious communities, the most common response is "to teach boys to respect all women." However, while Christians and Sikhs are somewhat less likely than other

groups to say this, they are *more* likely than people in other religious groups to say that both kinds of teaching are important or that the right approach depends on the situation.

While opinion does not vary substantially among Indians of different ages or educational backgrounds, a sizeable gap does emerge around religious commitment. Indians who say religion is very important in their lives are more likely than others to say that teaching boys to respect all women is crucial to improving the safety of women (52% vs. 43%).

Opinions on the best way to improve women's safety vary considerably across India. For instance, 63% of Rajasthan residents say it is more important to teach boys to respect all women, compared with 40% of people in West Bengal.

In the South, people in neighboring states have differing views. Only about a third of Tamil Nadu residents would prioritize teaching boys to respect all women (34%), compared with over half of Andhra Pradesh locals (56%).

Most states prefer to improve women's safety by teaching boys respect over teaching girls to behave

% of Indian adults who say to improve the safety of women in their community, it is more important to ...

	Teach boys to respect all women	Teach girls to behave appropriately	Women are already safe*	Improve law and order/policing*	Both/depends/other*
Chhattisgarh	71%	7%	0%	0%	19%
Rajasthan	63	25	1	1	10
Madhya Pradesh	62	15	2	0	17
Delhi	60	21	3	5	10
Maharashtra	58	24	1	8	10
Andhra Pradesh	56	21	2	5	16
Gujarat	56	25	2	5	9
Himachal Pradesh	55	34	7	1	4
Jharkhand	55	26	3	0	8
Haryana	54	28	3	1	12
Uttar Pradesh	53	23	1	4	18
Assam	50	21	1	16	11
Bihar	50	35	1	1	11
Telangana	47	26	2	7	18
Odisha	45	27	1	3	20
Kerala	44	23	1	18	12
Karnataka	43	36	4	3	13
West Bengal	40	33	1	20	5
Punjab	37	20	2	15	23
Tamil Nadu	34	30	5	13	16
Jammu and Kashmir	33	23	7	30	7
Meghalaya	21	6	2	12	58

* Answer options not read aloud.

Note: **Blue** indicates Hindi Belt. **Red** indicates South. Don't know/Refused responses not shown. While fieldwork was conducted in the following states and union territories, adequate sample sizes are not available for analysis: Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Tripura and Uttarakhand. Fieldwork could not be conducted in the Kashmir Valley due to security concerns. Fieldwork could not be conducted in Manipur or Sikkim due to the COVID-19 outbreak. No locations in Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, or Ladakh were selected for inclusion in the survey. Fieldwork was not conducted in Andaman and Nicobar Islands or Lakshadweep.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Most Indians say it is very important that women have same rights as men

Most Indian adults (80%) say that, in general, it is very important for women to have the same rights as men, with solid majorities of all major religious groups sharing this view. Buddhists are especially likely to say gender equality is very important (91%), while Muslims and Christians are somewhat less likely than members of India's other major religious communities to express this sentiment (76% and 70%, respectively).

Nationally, women, younger Indians (ages 18 to 34), and college graduates are slightly more likely than others to say it is very important for women to have the same rights as men.

Overall, Indians with high levels of religious commitment – i.e., those who say religion is very important in their lives – are more likely than other Indians to believe that gender equality is very important (83% vs. 65%). And those with a favorable view of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are modestly more likely than others to endorse equal rights for women (83% vs. 76%).

Indians overwhelmingly say they value gender equality

% of Indian adults who say it is very important for women to have the same rights as men

General population	80%
Hindus	81
Muslims	76
Christians	70
Sikhs	83
Buddhists	91
Jains	83
Men	79
Women	82
Ages 18-34	82
35+	79
Less than college	80
College graduate	84
General Category	80
Lower castes	81
Religion very important	83
Religion less important	65
Favorable view of BJP	83
Unfavorable view of BJP	76

Note: Lower castes include Scheduled Castes/Tribes as well as Other/Most Backward Classes.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Broadly, Indians in the South are somewhat *less* likely than those elsewhere to say it is very important for women to have the same rights as men. For example, while 80% of Indian adults overall think gender equality is very important, smaller shares in Kerala (72%), Telangana (71%) and Andhra Pradesh (66%) take this position. Still, large majorities across Indian states and union territories share this sentiment.

Majorities across Indian states and territories want equal rights for women

*% of Indian adults who say it is **very** important for women to have the same rights as men*

Chhattisgarh	93%
Himachal Pradesh	92
Maharashtra	91
Madhya Pradesh	89
Haryana	87
Odisha	86
Assam	85
Uttar Pradesh	84
Rajasthan	83
Bihar	82
Karnataka	82
Meghalaya	82
Delhi	81
Punjab	81
Jammu and Kashmir	80
Jharkhand	78
Tamil Nadu	77
Gujarat	73
Kerala	72
Telangana	71
Andhra Pradesh	66
West Bengal	65

Note: **Blue** indicates Hindi Belt. **Red** indicates South. While fieldwork was conducted in the following states and union territories, adequate sample sizes are not available for analysis: Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Tripura and Uttarakhand. Fieldwork could not be conducted in the Kashmir Valley due to security concerns. Fieldwork could not be conducted in Manipur or Sikkim due to the COVID-19 outbreak. No locations in Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, or Ladakh were selected for inclusion in the survey. Fieldwork was not conducted in Andaman and Nicobar Islands or Lakshadweep. Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details. "How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Most Indians believe women to be equally good political leaders as men

India has a long history of women holding political power, from the 1966 election of Indira Gandhi, one of the world's first [woman prime ministers](#), to other well-known figures, such as [Jayalalitha](#), [Mamata Banerjee](#) and [Sushma Swaraj](#).

The survey results reflect this comfort with women in politics. Overall, a small majority of respondents express the opinion that, in general, women and men make equally good political leaders (55%). Some Indians (14%) even say women tend to make *better* political leaders than men. Only a quarter of Indians say that men generally make better political leaders than women.

Modest differences by gender exist. Men are more likely than women to believe men are superior politicians (29% vs. 21%, respectively), while women are slightly more likely to favor the abilities of women leaders (16% vs. 13%).

Younger Indian adults (ages 18 to 34) and college graduates are somewhat more likely than their elders and those with less formal education to say women and men make equally good political leaders.

Younger Indians, college graduates somewhat more likely to say women, men make equally good leaders

% of Indian adults who say that in general ...

	Men make better political leaders than women	Women make better political leaders than men	Women and men make equally good political leaders
General population	25%	14%	55%
Hindus	24	15	56
Muslims	31	13	50
Christians	25	12	58
Sikhs	24	17	50
Buddhists	19	15	64
Jains	31	13	52
Men	29	13	55
Women	21	16	56
Ages 18-34	23	15	57
35+	27	14	54
Less than college	25	14	55
College graduate	22	14	62
General Category	28	16	51
Lower castes	24	14	57
Religion very important	25	14	57
Religion less important	27	16	50
Favorable view of BJP	25	15	57
Unfavorable view of BJP	29	15	53

Note: Don't know/Refused responses not shown. Lower castes include Scheduled Castes/Tribes as well as Other/Most Backward Classes.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Views on gender and political leadership differ substantially across Indian states. In a handful of states, about a third or more of the population says that men generally make better political leaders than women, including a slim majority in Himachal Pradesh (54%).

By contrast, only about one-in-eight adults in the East Indian state of Odisha (12%) say men make better political leaders. In Odisha and several other states, solid majorities say women and men make equally good political leaders.

In a few states – including the three Southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu – roughly one-in-five or more people surveyed say women generally make *better* political leaders than men.

Pluralities in a few Indian states and union territories see men as better political leaders than women

% of Indian adults who say that in general ...

	Men make better political leaders than women	Women make better political leaders than men	Women and men make equally good political leaders
Himachal Pradesh	54%	11%	35%
Meghalaya	49	13	34
Jammu and Kashmir	47	17	35
Gujarat	37	13	43
Karnataka	36	21	40
Tamil Nadu	35	24	31
Kerala	31	7	58
Andhra Pradesh	30	21	48
Haryana	30	16	51
West Bengal	30	10	49
Assam	27	20	48
Telangana	23	17	58
Uttar Pradesh	23	12	62
Punjab	22	17	51
Delhi	21	18	59
Jharkhand	21	10	60
Rajasthan	21	15	62
Bihar	20	12	59
Maharashtra	19	16	65
Madhya Pradesh	18	17	57
Chhattisgarh	15	3	79
Odisha	12	8	72

Note: **Blue** indicates Hindi Belt. **Red** indicates South. Don't know/Refused responses not shown. While fieldwork was conducted in the following states and union territories, adequate sample sizes are not available for analysis: Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Tripura and Uttarakhand. Fieldwork could not be conducted in the Kashmir Valley due to security concerns. Fieldwork could not be conducted in Manipur or Sikkim due to the COVID-19 outbreak. No locations in Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, or Ladakh were selected for inclusion in the survey. Fieldwork was not conducted in Andaman and Nicobar Islands or Lakshadweep.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Most men and women think men should be given hiring preference when there are few jobs

While a majority of Indians express openness to women political leaders and endorse equal rights for women, the vast majority of the population (80%) agrees with the idea that “when there are few jobs, men should have more rights to a job than women,” including 56% who *completely* agree with that statement. Most Indian women as well as men express total agreement with this statement, though men are somewhat more likely to do so (59% of men vs. 54% of women).

Although the survey was conducted before the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), this question may have become even more relevant because women in India have [disproportionately suffered](#) from long-term job losses amidst the pandemic’s economic fallout.

Opinion varies by religious group. Nearly two-thirds of Muslims (64%) completely agree that men should get preference for jobs over women, compared with roughly a third of Christians (34%) who take the same view.

Highly religious Indians are especially likely to fully agree that limited jobs should go to men: Six-in-ten Indians who consider religion very important in their lives say this, compared with about four-in-ten Indians for whom religion is less important (38%).

College graduates are somewhat less inclined than others to completely agree that men should have more rights to a job when employment opportunities are scarce (49% vs. 57%).

Majority of Indians say men should have more rights than women to scarce jobs

% of Indian adults who _____ that, when there are few jobs, men should have more rights to a job than women

	Completely agree	Mostly agree	Mostly or completely disagree
General population	56%	23%	17%
Hindus	56	23	17
Muslims	64	22	12
Christians	34	28	34
Sikhs	52	29	15
Buddhists	49	24	27
Jains	42	27	29
Men	59	23	16
Women	54	23	19
Ages 18-34	55	23	19
35+	57	23	16
Less than college	57	23	17
College graduate	49	25	24
General Category	58	23	17
Lower castes	56	23	17
Religion very important	60	21	16
Religion less important	38	35	24
Urban	52	26	20
Rural	58	22	16
Favorable view of BJP	59	23	16
Unfavorable view of BJP	54	22	17

Note: Don’t know/Refused responses not shown. Lower castes include Scheduled Castes/Tribes as well as Other/Most Backward Classes.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

“How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

People in some Southern states are among the least likely to completely agree that men should have more rights to limited jobs than women. Fewer than half of respondents in Karnataka (45%), Andhra Pradesh (41%), Telangana (41%) and Kerala (28%) hold this view.

At the same time, a majority of residents in the Southern state of Tamil Nadu (60%) fully agree that when there are few jobs, men should be given preference in hiring. This view also is prevalent in most Hindi Belt states, such as Uttar Pradesh (69%), Haryana (67%) and Madhya Pradesh (66%). And in Himachal Pradesh, nine-in-ten respondents express total agreement with this notion.

South Indian states among least likely to say men should have more rights to scarce jobs than women

% of Indian adults who completely agree that, when there are few jobs, men should have more rights to a job than women

Himachal Pradesh	90%
Uttar Pradesh	69
Haryana	67
Madhya Pradesh	66
Rajasthan	62
Maharashtra	61
Tamil Nadu	60
Bihar	57
West Bengal	56
Gujarat	55
Odisha	54
Chhattisgarh	53
Jharkhand	50
Punjab	50
Jammu and Kashmir	46
Assam	45
Karnataka	45
Andhra Pradesh	41
Telangana	41
Delhi	40
Meghalaya	36
Kerala	28

Note: **Blue** indicates Hindi Belt. **Red** indicates South. While fieldwork was conducted in the following states and union territories, adequate sample sizes are not available for analysis: Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Tripura and Uttarakhand. Fieldwork could not be conducted in the Kashmir Valley due to security concerns. Fieldwork could not be conducted in Manipur or Sikkim due to the COVID-19 outbreak. No locations in Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, or Ladakh were selected for inclusion in the survey. Fieldwork was not conducted in Andaman and Nicobar Islands or Lakshadweep. Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details. "How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

2. Son preference and abortion

Historically, in Indian society, sons have been expected to take care of their aging parents, and men have been the main beneficiaries of inheritance. Meanwhile, married women often live with and support their in-laws. In line with these and other traditions, families have tended to [place higher value on](#) – and provide more support to – their sons than their daughters, a set of attitudes and practices known as “[son preference](#).”

Today, nearly all Indian adults say it is either very important or somewhat important for a family to have at least one son, but an identical share (99%) also separately say it is important to have a daughter. Indians are only slightly more likely to say that it is *very* important to have a son than to have a daughter (94% vs. 90%).

However, one enduring manifestation of son preference has been the practice of sex-selective abortions – using ultrasound or other tests to learn the sex of a fetus and terminating the pregnancy if the fetus is female. While the Indian government has [enacted measures](#) meant to curtail this practice, the survey finds that a substantial minority of Indians (40%) say it is completely acceptable or somewhat acceptable “to get a checkup using modern methods to balance the number of girls and boys in the family.” On the other hand, roughly half of adults (53%) – including most Muslims (58%), Jains (54%) and Hindus (53%) – say that this practice is either “somewhat unacceptable” or “completely unacceptable.” (The indirect phrasing of the question, while perhaps unfamiliar to people outside of India, was carefully tested by survey researchers in India in order to convey the concept of sex-selective abortion to respondents without being offensive.)

A majority of Indian adults (55%) also say that abortion in general should be illegal in all or most cases, even though the medical procedure was legalized [in the 1970s](#) and continues to be legally available in India today. Indians’ views on abortion are correlated with their views on sex-selective abortion: Those who oppose abortion overall are more likely to see sex-selective abortion as unacceptable.

Nearly all Indians say it is important for a family to have both a son and a daughter

Indians nearly universally say it is at least somewhat important for families to have at least one son (99%) and, separately, at least one daughter (99%). This includes at least nine-in-ten who say it is *very* important to have a son (94%) and a daughter (90%).

Muslims are somewhat more likely to say it is very important to have a son than a daughter (95% vs. 86%, respectively). This gap is smaller for Hindus (94% vs. 91%) and nonexistent for Sikhs (95% each).

Adults who say religion is very important in their lives are more likely than others to say it is very important to have both sons and daughters. For instance, 95% of Indians who say religion is very important in their lives think it is very important to have at least one son, compared with 86% of Indians who place less importance on religion. Indians who say religion is very important also are somewhat more likely than others to have any children, regardless of gender (76% vs. 69%).

Slightly more Indians say it is very important for a family to have at least one son than at least one daughter

*% of Indian adults who say it is **very** important for a family to have at least one ...*

	Son	Daughter	Difference
General population	94%	90%	+3
Hindus	94	91	+3
Muslims	95	86	+9
Christians	90	87	+3
Sikhs	95	95	0
Buddhists	90	92	-2
Jains	90	93	-3
Men	93	90	+4
Women	94	91	+3
Ages 18-34	93	90	+3
35+	94	90	+4
Less than college	94	90	+4
College graduate	93	92	+1
General Category	93	90	+3
Lower castes	94	90	+3
Religion very important	95	92	+3
Religion less important	86	82	+4

Note: Lower castes include Scheduled Castes/Tribes as well as Other/Most Backward Classes. Differences are calculated before rounding. Statistically significant differences are indicated in **bold**. Respondents were asked separately about the importance of having a son and the importance of having a daughter. The order in which these questions were asked was randomized.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Residents in some states are significantly more likely to place importance on having a son than a daughter. These states are scattered across India. For example, in both the Eastern state of West Bengal and in the Southern state of Telangana, noticeably larger shares say it is very important for a family to have a son (93% and 90%, respectively) than to have a daughter (80% and 77%).

In West Bengal, Telangana, more Indians value having sons than daughters

*% of Indian adults who say it is **very** important for a family to have at least one ...*

	Son	Daughter	Difference
West Bengal	93%	80%	+14
Telangana	90	77	+12
Assam	95	89	+6
Gujarat	91	86	+5
Karnataka	92	88	+4
Uttar Pradesh	99	96	+3
Jammu and Kashmir	93	83	+10
Jharkhand	92	88	+4
Tamil Nadu	96	92	+4
Bihar	88	85	+3
Chhattisgarh	100	97	+3
Haryana	96	95	+2
Madhya Pradesh	96	94	+2
Andhra Pradesh	85	84	+1
Himachal Pradesh	96	96	0
Kerala	95	95	0
Meghalaya	98	98	0
Odisha	91	91	0
Punjab	95	95	0
Rajasthan	96	95	0
Delhi	96	97	-1
Maharashtra	91	93	-2

Note: **Blue** indicates Hindi Belt. **Red** indicates South. Differences are calculated before rounding. Statistically significant differences are indicated in **bold**. Respondents were asked separately about the importance of having a son and the importance of having a daughter. The order in which these questions were asked was randomized. While fieldwork was conducted in the following states and union territories, adequate sample sizes are not available for analysis: Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Tripura and Uttarakhand. Fieldwork could not be conducted in the Kashmir Valley due to security concerns. Fieldwork could not be conducted in Manipur or Sikkim due to the COVID-19 outbreak. No locations in Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, or Ladakh were selected for inclusion in the survey. Fieldwork was not conducted in Andaman and Nicobar Islands or Lakshadweep.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

“How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Four-in-ten Indians say it is acceptable ‘to balance the number of boys and girls in a family’

Son preference in India has affected both individual families and society at large. Indeed, India’s sex ratio at birth has long been skewed, with significantly more boys than girls born each year than would be expected under natural conditions. This [imbalance increased](#) along with the rise of ultrasound technology, which made it easier for some Indians to selectively abort female fetuses; in other cases, female babies have been killed after birth.

Over time, the Indian government has taken different approaches to try to prevent sex-selective abortions, such as the [Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act](#) of 1994 (amended in 2003), which banned testing for the sex of the fetus. According to the [2011 census](#), there were 111 boys born for every 100 girls born in India, but recent data suggests the gap [may be narrowing](#).¹⁰

Given the sensitivity around this topic – and the fact that it is illegal in India for medical providers to tell parents the sex of a fetus – the survey could not directly ask respondents if they thought sex-selective abortion should be legal or illegal. Instead, a euphemism was used. The survey asked Indians how acceptable or unacceptable it is to “get a checkup using modern methods to balance the number of girls and boys in a family.”

Fully 40% of Indian adults say this practice is at least “somewhat” acceptable, including roughly a quarter (26%) who say it is *completely* acceptable. Meanwhile, about half of adults say sex-selective abortion is somewhat unacceptable (11%) or completely unacceptable (42%). Men and women have virtually identical views on this topic, and differences by religion on this question are generally modest.

Adults who say abortion in general should be legal in all or most cases (see “Most Indians say abortion should not be legal” on page 51) are substantially more likely than other Indians to say that sex-selective abortion is at least somewhat acceptable. Moreover, Indians who have had difficulty purchasing food, medicine or housing for their family in the past year are more likely than those who did not have these financial difficulties to say the practice can be acceptable. At the

¹⁰ These statistics are referred to as sex ratio at birth (SRB). International convention is to present SRB as the number of boys per 100 girls. In the census of India and India’s National Family Health Survey, however, this ratio is often expressed as the number of girls per 1,000 boys. This report follows the international practice, so all ratios are presented as the number of boys per 100 girls. Around the world, SRB naturally tends to skew slightly male (roughly 105 boys for every 100 girls). The exact causes of the skew are debated, but some scientists posit that the explanation may lie, at least in part, in [higher female mortality rates](#) early in pregnancy.

same time, adults from General Category castes are slightly more inclined than those from lower castes to see sex-selective abortion as acceptable (43% vs. 39%).

Slim majority of Indians say sex-selective abortion is unacceptable

% of Indian adults who say it is _____ to get a checkup using modern methods to balance the number of girls and boys in the family

	NET acceptable	Completely acceptable	Somewhat acceptable	NET unacceptable	Somewhat unacceptable	Completely unacceptable	Don't know/ refused
General population	40%	26%	14%	53%	11%	42%	7%
Hindus	40	26	14	53	11	42	7
Muslims	37	24	13	58	12	46	6
Christians	43	23	20	51	13	38	5
Sikhs	38	21	17	48	9	40	14
Buddhists	48	35	14	49	10	39	2
Jains	40	20	20	54	12	43	6
Men	40	26	15	53	11	42	6
Women	40	26	14	53	11	42	8
Ages 18-34	39	26	14	54	11	43	7
35+	41	26	15	52	10	42	7
Less than college	40	26	14	53	11	42	7
College graduate	39	26	13	59	12	48	2
General Category	43	29	14	51	10	41	6
Lower castes	39	24	14	54	11	43	7
Religion very important	39	27	13	54	10	44	7
Religion less important	45	21	24	49	13	36	6
Recent financial hardship	44	28	16	49	11	39	7
No financial hardship	37	24	13	56	11	45	7
Abortion legal in all/most cases	65	44	21	31	8	24	3
Abortion illegal in all/most cases	24	14	10	72	14	58	4

Note: Lower castes include Scheduled Castes/Tribes as well as Other/Most Backward Classes. "Recent financial hardship" includes those who say they did not have enough money to pay for food, medical care and/or housing in the last year. Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. Respondents were asked "How acceptable or unacceptable is it to get a checkup using modern methods to balance the number of girls and boys in the family? Completely acceptable, somewhat acceptable, somewhat unacceptable or completely unacceptable?"

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.
"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Looking at this question at the state level, at least one-in-five people in nearly every state say sex-selective abortion is acceptable. Chhattisgarh stands out as an exception; just 4% of Indians there say the practice is somewhat or completely acceptable. Meanwhile, a few states – including Meghalaya (74%), Assam (68%) and Tamil Nadu (57%) – have clear majorities who say sex-selective abortion is at least somewhat acceptable.

In some states, a relatively high proportion of survey respondents say they do not know or decline to answer the question, including roughly one-in-five in Jharkhand (21%) and 17% in Madhya Pradesh.

In several states in the country's Hindi Belt, relatively few people say the practice of sex-selective abortion is acceptable, while majorities consider it unacceptable. Despite these opinions, some of these states, such as Haryana, have had highly skewed gender ratios, suggesting the widespread prevalence of sex-selective abortion in the region.

Across the Hindi Belt, fewer than half see sex-selective abortion as acceptable

% of Indian adults who say it is _____ to get a checkup using modern methods to balance the number of girls and boys in the family

	Completely/ somewhat acceptable	Completely/ somewhat unacceptable	Don't know/ refused
Meghalaya	74%	20%	6%
Assam	68	24	8
Jammu and Kashmir	60	37	2
Tamil Nadu	57	35	8
Maharashtra	53	44	2
Karnataka	52	46	2
Andhra Pradesh	49	49	1
Telangana	47	52	1
Punjab	41	45	14
Uttar Pradesh	41	57	2
Odisha	40	49	11
Gujarat	38	49	13
Jharkhand	38	41	21
West Bengal	37	55	8
Himachal Pradesh	29	71	0
Bihar	28	59	12
Delhi	27	70	3
Kerala	27	65	7
Madhya Pradesh	27	56	17
Rajasthan	26	71	3
Haryana	22	72	6
Chhattisgarh	4	89	7

Note: **Blue** indicates Hindi Belt. **Red** indicates South. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Respondents were asked "How acceptable or unacceptable is it to get a checkup using modern methods to balance the number of girls and boys in the family? Completely acceptable, somewhat acceptable, somewhat unacceptable or completely unacceptable?" While fieldwork was conducted in the following states and union territories, adequate sample sizes are not available for analysis: Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Tripura and Uttarakhand. Fieldwork could not be conducted in the Kashmir Valley due to security concerns. Fieldwork could not be conducted in Manipur or Sikkim due to the COVID-19 outbreak. No locations in Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, or Ladakh were selected for inclusion in the survey. Fieldwork was not conducted in Andaman and Nicobar Islands or Lakshadweep.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

For example, the [2011 census](#) found a ratio of 121 boys born per 100 girls born in Haryana.¹¹

More recently, however, there is some evidence that the sex ratios in these states have become more balanced. In the 2019-2021 National Family Health Survey (NFHS), data showed that Haryana's sex ratio at birth had [become less skewed](#), at 112 boys to 100 girls. In neighboring Punjab – which is not part of the Hindi Belt but has also had a [highly skewed sex ratio](#) – the most recent NFHS survey once again showed considerable change: In the [2011 census](#), there were 119 boys for every 100 girls born in the state, but in 2019-2021, Punjab's sex ratio at birth was [somewhat closer to normal](#), at 111 boys per 100 girls. These trends suggest that the practice of sex-selective abortion may be in decline, perhaps as a result of laws banning the practice and greater awareness generated by public education campaigns. Data from India's next census (scheduled to be [conducted in 2022](#)) is expected to provide a more definitive picture.

¹¹ These statistics are referred to as sex ratio at birth (SRB). International convention is to present SRB as the number of boys per 100 girls. In the census of India and India's National Family Health Survey, however, this ratio is often expressed as the number of girls per 1,000 boys. This report follows the international practice, so all ratios are presented as the number of boys per 100 girls. Around the world, SRB naturally tends to skew slightly male (roughly 105 boys for every 100 girls). The exact causes of the skew are debated, but some scientists posit that the explanation may lie, at least in part, in [higher female mortality rates](#) early in pregnancy.

Most Indians say abortion should not be legal

In 1971, India [legalized abortion](#) for women through the first 12 weeks of pregnancy – and, in some circumstances, up to 20 weeks. Since then, legal abortion access has expanded several times, most recently in a [2021 law](#) allowing abortions in some cases through 24 weeks of pregnancy.¹²

Despite this, the survey finds that most Indian adults do not believe abortion should generally be legal. Indeed, a slim majority (55%) say abortion should be illegal in all or most cases, including 36% who say it should be illegal in *all* cases. Just 38% of Indians say it should be legal in all or most cases.

At least half of adults surveyed in most of India’s major religious groups say abortion should be illegal in all or most cases. However, Buddhists are more likely than members of other religious communities to say abortion should be legal in all or most cases (51%), including 36% who say it should be legal in all cases.

Adults who say religion is very important in their lives are more likely than those for whom religion is less important to say abortion should be illegal (56% vs. 47%). Additionally, nearly six-in-ten Indians who say they voted for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the 2019 national election (59%) say abortion should be

Most Indians oppose legal abortion

% of Indian adults who say abortion should be ...

	Illegal in all/ most cases	Legal in all/ most cases
General population	55%	38%
Hindus	54	38
Muslims	57	36
Christians	49	40
Sikhs	60	29
Buddhists	46	51
Jains	59	36
Men	55	38
Women	55	37
Ages 18-34	54	38
35+	55	37
Less than college	55	37
College graduate	57	40
General Category	53	42
Scheduled Caste/Tribe	57	33
Other/Most Backwards Class	55	38
Religion very important	56	37
Religion less important	47	44
Urban	51	43
Rural	56	35
Recent financial hardship	52	40
No financial hardship	57	36
Voted BJP in 2019	59	35
Voted Congress*	52	41

* Indian National Congress party

Note: Don’t know/Refused responses not shown. “Recent financial hardship” includes those who say they did not have enough money to pay for food, medical care and/or housing in the last year.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

“How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

¹² This survey was fielded before the 2021 law was ratified, but the government first introduced the legislation in January 2020, while fieldwork was still in process.

illegal, while roughly half of Indians who voted for the opposition Indian National Congress party say the same (52%).

In most Indian states, half of adults or more say abortion generally should be illegal, but Indians who live in the South of the country are less likely to take this view. For example, fewer than half of respondents say abortion should be illegal in all or most cases in Andhra Pradesh (46%), Telangana (39%), Kerala (35%), Karnataka (31%) and Tamil Nadu (31%).

Overall, opposition to abortion is higher among Indians who live in Hindi Belt states, like Haryana (90%) and Rajasthan (76%), than in other parts of the country.

However, significant differences sometimes exist between neighboring states. For example, a majority of Indians in the Hindi Belt state of Bihar say abortion should be illegal in all or most cases (61%), compared with roughly four-in-ten in bordering Jharkhand (43%).

Indians in Southern states less opposed to legal abortion

*% of Indian adults who say abortion should be **illegal** in all or most cases*

Haryana	90%
Chhattisgarh	88
Himachal Pradesh	82
Rajasthan	76
Delhi	73
Meghalaya	68
Madhya Pradesh	65
Gujarat	63
Uttar Pradesh	63
Bihar	61
Odisha	58
Punjab	58
West Bengal	52
Assam	50
Andhra Pradesh	46
Jammu and Kashmir	44
Jharkhand	43
Maharashtra	41
Telangana	39
Kerala	35
Karnataka	31
Tamil Nadu	31

Note: **Blue** indicates Hindi Belt. **Red** indicates South. While fieldwork was conducted in the following states and union territories, adequate sample sizes are not available for analysis: Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Tripura and Uttarakhand. Fieldwork could not be conducted in the Kashmir Valley due to security concerns. Fieldwork could not be conducted in Manipur or Sikkim due to the COVID-19 outbreak. No locations in Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, or Ladakh were selected for inclusion in the survey. Fieldwork was not conducted in Andaman and Nicobar Islands or Lakshadweep. Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details. "How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

3. Gender roles in the family

While most Indians say that men and women should share some family responsibilities, many still support traditional, patriarchal values. For example, a slim majority of Indians (54%) say that both the men and the women in a family should be responsible for earning money. But 43% instead take the view that men should be the primary earners. Moreover, nearly two-thirds of Indians (64%) – including 61% of women – express complete agreement with the idea that a wife always is obligated to obey her husband.

Indian attitudes about gender roles within family settings vary widely across religious groups. In general, Sikhs and Buddhists are the most likely to support an equal distribution of family responsibilities, while Muslims are often the least egalitarian in their attitudes. For example, a large majority of Sikhs say both men and women should earn money in a family (80%) and that both sons and daughters should tend to their parents' funeral rituals (69%). But Muslims are much less likely to view these as shared responsibilities (37% and 24%, respectively); most Indian Muslims say these roles should fall to men and sons.

Younger Indian adults typically are no less traditional than their elders in their views on family gender roles, and these attitudes do not vary much between men and women. For instance, 33% of Indian women (along with 34% of men) say that sons should have greater rights than daughters to inherit from parents. But college graduates often are more likely than other Indians to support gender equality in the family. College-educated Muslims, for example, are much more inclined than Muslims with less education to say that sons and daughters should have equal inheritance rights (83% vs. 55%).

Gender attitudes also differ greatly depending on where people live within India. For example, survey respondents in the country's Southern region generally are less likely than those living in the country's Hindi Belt to say that a wife always must obey her husband. But Indians in Southern states don't necessarily go so far as to support egalitarian gender roles in a family – in fact, people in the South are *less* likely than those in the Hindi Belt to say responsibilities like caring for children or earning money should be shared between men and women.

These broad regional differences often are accompanied by large variations between bordering states. For instance, people in two Southern states, Karnataka and Kerala, have widely different views about family roles. Karnataka residents, for example, are more than twice as likely as people in Kerala to say sons should have the primary responsibility to care for their parents as they age (60% vs. 25%) – part of a broader pattern in which Karnataka consistently stands out as having conservative attitudes on gender roles, while Kerala typically is much less traditional.

Indians tend to say men and women should share family responsibilities

Most Indians say that both women and men should be responsible for earning money (54%), caring for children (62%) and making family financial decisions (73%). Still, substantial minorities have traditional views when it comes to family responsibilities, saying men should be the primary money earners in a family (43%) and women should be the primary caregivers for children (34%). And one-in-five adults say men should be the primary decision-makers about family expenses.

Most Indians say men and women should *both* care for children, but many support traditional gender roles

% of Indian adults who say in a family, _____ should be primarily responsible for ...

	... earning money			... taking care of children			... making decisions about expenses		
	Men	Women	Both	Men	Women	Both	Men	Women	Both
General population	43%	2%	54%	3%	34%	62%	20%	6%	73%
Hindus	43	2	55	3	34	62	20	6	74
Muslims	61	1	37	3	44	52	28	5	66
Christians	34	3	60	2	34	63	14	11	74
Sikhs	17	1	80	1	14	83	9	2	87
Buddhists	22	2	75	2	12	84	9	3	86
Jains	31	2	62	4	27	64	19	1	70
Men	45	1	53	3	33	62	21	5	73
Women	42	2	55	3	35	61	19	6	74
Ages 18-34	42	2	55	3	32	64	19	5	75
35+	45	2	53	3	36	60	21	6	72
Less than college	44	2	53	3	35	61	21	6	73
College graduate	33	2	64	2	24	73	11	5	82
General Category	45	2	51	3	36	59	24	5	70
Scheduled Caste/Tribe	40	2	57	3	34	62	19	6	74
Other/Most Backwards Class	45	1	53	3	33	63	17	6	76
Religion very important	44	1	54	3	34	62	20	5	74
Religion less important	42	3	53	4	36	58	19	8	71

Note: Other/Depends/Don't know/Refused responses not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Some religious groups are more traditional than others when it comes to gender roles in a family. For example, Muslims are more inclined to say men should be the primary earners in a family and make family financial decisions, while women should mainly be responsible for the children. Sikhs and Buddhists, meanwhile, are the most likely to say men and women should share equally in these family responsibilities.

Education also makes a big difference in how Indians think family responsibilities should be distributed. College graduates are more likely than other Indians to say men and women should share family duties. For example, roughly three-quarters of college graduates say both men and women in a family should care for children (73%), compared with about six-in-ten among all other Indians (61%).

Indian attitudes about family gender roles greatly depend on where people live. Generally, Southern Indians are more likely than Indians living in [the country's Hindi Belt](#) – defined as 11 states and union territories including Jharkhand, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi and Chhattisgarh – to have traditional attitudes about family responsibilities. For instance, people in the Southern state of Tamil Nadu are more than twice as likely as people in Jharkhand to say men should earn money in a family (55% vs. 24%) and women should care for children (57% vs. 26%).

Attitudes on these issues also vary greatly *within* certain regions of the country. Among Southern states, for example, Kerala and Telangana stand out as having *less* conservative views on gender than some of their neighbors. For instance, one-in-five people or fewer in Kerala (19%) and Telangana (16%) say men should make family financial decisions, compared with roughly four-in-ten in Karnataka (39%).

Indians in Gujarat and West Bengal among the most likely to have traditional attitudes about gender roles

% of Indian adults who say in a family ...

	Men should be primarily responsible for earning money	Women should be primarily responsible for taking care of children	Men should be primarily responsible for making decisions about expenses
Jammu and Kashmir	68%	19%	24%
Gujarat	63	51	41
West Bengal	58	54	34
Assam	57	30	27
Tamil Nadu	55	57	25
Karnataka	51	43	39
Uttar Pradesh	51	33	8
Andhra Pradesh	50	46	22
Meghalaya	46	41	29
Rajasthan	45	31	17
Bihar	41	37	17
Himachal Pradesh	39	19	15
Odisha	39	41	23
Telangana	39	36	16
Kerala	37	26	19
Chhattisgarh	32	29	6
Delhi	31	26	14
Madhya Pradesh	29	23	18
Haryana	28	12	8
Maharashtra	27	13	15
Jharkhand	24	26	17
Punjab	16	14	8

Note: **Blue** indicates Hindi Belt. **Red** indicates South. While fieldwork was conducted in the following states and union territories, adequate sample sizes are not available for analysis: Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Tripura and Uttarakhand. Fieldwork could not be conducted in the Kashmir Valley due to security concerns. Fieldwork could not be conducted in Manipur or Sikkim due to the COVID-19 outbreak. No locations in Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, or Ladakh were selected for inclusion in the survey. Fieldwork was not conducted in Andaman and Nicobar Islands or Lakshadweep.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

“How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Vast majority of Indians agree that a wife must always obey her husband

Even though most Indians think men and women should share in family responsibilities, nearly nine-in-ten Indians (87%) completely or mostly agree with the notion that “a wife must always obey her husband.” This includes a majority of Indians (64%) who *completely* agree with this sentiment.

About six-in-ten or more Sikhs (61%), Buddhists (62%), Hindus (64%) and Muslims (67%) express complete agreement that a wife should be subservient, although fewer Jains (52%) and Christians (44%) feel this way.

Women are only modestly less likely than men to say that wives should obey their husbands in all situations, and most women agree completely with this sentiment (61% vs. 67% among men).

Indians without a college education, those from Other Backwards Classes and those who live in rural areas are more inclined than other Indians to completely agree that wives must be obedient. For example, most Indians without a college degree (65%) completely agree that a wife must always obey her husband, compared with roughly half of college graduates who say the same (52%). Religious commitment also factors into this traditional attitude about marriage: People who say religion is very important in their lives are much more likely than other Indians to completely agree that a wife should obey her husband (67% vs. 44%).

Most Indians *completely* agree that a wife must always obey her husband

% of Indian adults who _____ that a wife must always obey her husband

	Completely agree	Mostly agree	Mostly or completely disagree
General population	64%	24%	12%
Hindus	64	23	12
Muslims	67	24	8
Christians	44	35	20
Sikhs	61	29	9
Buddhists	62	23	15
Jains	52	27	19
Men	67	22	10
Women	61	25	14
Ages 18-34	62	24	13
35+	65	24	10
Less than college	65	23	11
College graduate	52	28	19
General Category	60	27	13
Scheduled Caste/Tribe	63	25	12
Other/Most Backwards Class	68	20	11
Religion very important	67	22	11
Religion less important	44	37	19
Urban	56	27	16
Rural	67	22	10
Lives in joint family	69	20	10
Not a joint family	57	28	14

Note: Don't know/Refused responses not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

“How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Indians who currently live in a joint family – single households that include extended family members, such as when three generations of grandparents, parents and children live under the same roof – also are more likely than others to express complete agreement with the idea that wives should obey their husbands in all situations (69% vs. 57%).

Even though people in the Southern states of India are more inclined than people in the Hindi Belt to support traditional family responsibilities, they generally are *less* likely to see wives as obligated to obey their husbands. Roughly a third in Tamil Nadu (36%) and Karnataka (34%) completely agree that a wife should always obey her husband, compared with vast majorities in Hindi Belt states such as Himachal Pradesh (90%), Uttar Pradesh (82%) and Bihar (81%).

Most Hindi Belt Indians completely agree that wives must always obey husbands

*% of Indian adults who **completely** agree that a wife must always obey her husband*

Himachal Pradesh	90%
Uttar Pradesh	82
Bihar	81
Haryana	78
Madhya Pradesh	78
Rajasthan	77
Jharkhand	74
Odisha	72
Maharashtra	71
Assam	68
Chhattisgarh	64
Gujarat	63
Telangana	63
Jammu and Kashmir	62
Delhi	59
Andhra Pradesh	58
Punjab	55
Kerala	39
Meghalaya	38
Tamil Nadu	36
Karnataka	34
West Bengal	32

Note: **Blue** indicates Hindi Belt. **Red** indicates South. While fieldwork was conducted in the following states and union territories, adequate sample sizes are not available for analysis: Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Tripura and Uttarakhand. Fieldwork could not be conducted in the Kashmir Valley due to security concerns. Fieldwork could not be conducted in Manipur or Sikkim due to the COVID-19 outbreak. No locations in Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, or Ladakh were selected for inclusion in the survey. Fieldwork was not conducted in Andaman and Nicobar Islands or Lakshadweep. Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details. “How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Many Indians say sons should have prominent place in caring for elderly parents

Respecting elders is a [core value in India](#), and most Indians (58%) say that both sons and daughters should be responsible for caring for parents as they age. But four-in-ten Indian adults (39%) say this responsibility should fall primarily to sons, while very few (2%) think daughters should be mainly responsible.

Across India's major religious groups, most people say both sons and daughters should care for parents as they age, including the vast majority of Sikhs (80%). But Muslims generally are less inclined than others to say children of both genders should share the responsibility to care for aging parents (54%), while many Muslims (43%) say sons should carry the bulk of responsibility for elderly parents.

Attitudes about who should tend to aging parents do not vary much by caste, except in some religious groups. Among Hindus, for example, caste isn't correlated with attitudes on whether sons or daughters should care for aging parents. But Christians from higher castes are more likely than Christians from lower castes to say both sons and daughters should care for parents in their elderly years (75% vs. 61%).

Majority of Indians say sons and daughters should care for aging parents together, but many say the responsibility falls more on sons

% of Indian adults who say _____ should have the primary responsibility to care for parents as they age

	Sons	Daughters	Both
General population	39%	2%	58%
Hindus	39	2	58
Muslims	43	2	54
Christians	29	4	65
Sikhs	17	1	80
Buddhists	35	2	63
Jains	33	0	64
Men	40	2	57
Women	37	2	59
Ages 18-34	38	2	59
35+	40	2	57
Less than college	39	2	58
College graduate	32	1	65
General Category	38	2	58
Lower castes	39	2	58
Religion very important	39	2	58
Religion less important	34	2	62

Note: Daughters-in-law/Sons-in-law/Other/Neither/Depends/Don't know/Refused responses not shown. Lower castes include Scheduled Castes/Tribes as well as Other/Most Backward Classes. Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details. "How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

While most Indians say both sons and daughters should care for their aging parents, this is a minority opinion in several, mostly Southern, states. Instead, majorities in Telangana (61%) and Karnataka (60%) say sons should tend to their parents' needs, with far fewer in these states saying that sons and daughters should share the responsibility.

But much smaller shares in neighboring Southern states favor sons taking on the bulk of the responsibility for elderly parents. Only about a quarter of Indians in Kerala (25%) and Tamil Nadu (27%) say sons primarily should care for their aging parents.

Majorities in Southern states of Telangana, Karnataka say sons should be primary caretakers for aging parents

% of Indian adults who say sons should have the primary responsibility to care for parents as they age

Telangana	61%
Karnataka	60
Andhra Pradesh	52
Gujarat	51
Uttar Pradesh	51
Himachal Pradesh	46
Madhya Pradesh	43
Maharashtra	40
Jharkhand	37
Assam	35
Jammu and Kashmir	35
Bihar	34
Haryana	31
Odisha	30
Rajasthan	30
Chhattisgarh	29
Tamil Nadu	27
Kerala	25
Delhi	23
Punjab	20
West Bengal	19
Meghalaya	11

Note: **Blue** indicates Hindi Belt. **Red** indicates South. While fieldwork was conducted in the following states and union territories, adequate sample sizes are not available for analysis: Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Tripura and Uttarakhand. Fieldwork could not be conducted in the Kashmir Valley due to security concerns. Fieldwork could not be conducted in Manipur or Sikkim due to the COVID-19 outbreak. No locations in Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, or Ladakh were selected for inclusion in the survey. Fieldwork was not conducted in Andaman and Nicobar Islands or Lakshadweep. Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Majority of Indians say sons should be responsible for parents' last rites

One area where most Indians do not see room for gender equality involves the last rites or burial rituals for deceased parents. Nearly two-thirds of Indians (63%) say sons should have primary responsibility over parents' last rites or burial rituals, although attitudes differ significantly on this across religious groups.

Most Muslims (74%), Jains (67%) and Hindus (63%) say sons should be primarily responsible for last rites or burial rituals, but far fewer Sikhs (29%), Christians (44%) and Buddhists (46%) expect this from sons. Instead, Sikhs, Christians and Buddhists are more likely to say that both sons and daughters should be responsible for their parents' last rites. (Very few Indians, regardless of religion, say daughters should be primarily responsible for funeral rituals.)

Indians without a college degree are more likely than college graduates to say sons should primarily tend to parents' last rites or burial rituals (64% vs. 53%). Indians from Other Backwards Classes (69%) also are more inclined than those in other castes to say this (60% among General Category, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe members).

Most Hindus, Muslims and Jains in India say sons should be responsible for parents' last rites or burial rituals

% of Indian adults who say _____ should have the primary responsibility for parents' last rites or burial rituals

	Sons	Daughters	Both
General population	63%	1%	35%
Hindus	63	1	35
Muslims	74	1	24
Christians	44	2	52
Sikhs	29	1	69
Buddhists	46	1	53
Jains	67	3	30
Men	64	1	34
Women	62	1	36
Ages 18-34	62	1	36
35+	64	1	34
Less than college	64	1	34
College graduate	53	1	45
General Category	60	1	38
Scheduled Caste/Tribe	60	1	38
Other/Most Backward Class	69	1	29
Religion very important	65	1	33
Religion less important	49	2	48
Urban	59	1	39
Rural	65	1	33
Favorable view of BJP	67	1	31
Unfavorable view of BJP	60	1	38

Note: Daughters-in-law/Sons-in-law/Other/Neither/Depends/Don't know/Refused responses not shown. Muslims and Christians were asked about "burial rituals," all other respondents were asked about "last rites."

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Those who say religion is very important in their lives are considerably more likely than other Indians to say sons alone should be responsible for funeral rituals (65% vs. 49%). And this is true even among Sikhs, who are less inclined in general to support the view that sons bear primary responsibility for funeral rites. For instance, highly religious Sikhs are nearly twice as likely as those who say religion is not very important in their lives to say sons should shoulder the responsibility for their parents' last rites (31% vs. 17%).

In India, politics also are linked with views on this question. Those who express a favorable view of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are somewhat more likely than other Indians to say sons should be primarily responsible for their parents' last rites and burial rituals (67% vs. 60%).

Attitudes on this issue also vary greatly by state. The vast majority of people in Uttar Pradesh (84%) and Gujarat (80%), for example, say sons should be responsible, while about three-in-ten in Sikh-majority Punjab (29%) agree.

Southern states are especially varied in their views. About eight-in-ten people in the Southern state of Karnataka (81%) say sons should tend to their parents' funeral rituals, while just three-in-ten in Kerala take this stance.

Relatively few in Punjab and Kerala say sons should have primary responsibility for their parents' last rites

% of Indian adults who say sons should have the primary responsibility for parents' last rites/burial rituals

Uttar Pradesh	84%
Karnataka	81
Gujarat	80
Madhya Pradesh	72
Himachal Pradesh	68
Telangana	68
Jharkhand	67
Meghalaya	66
Bihar	65
Andhra Pradesh	60
Rajasthan	60
Odisha	58
Assam	56
Delhi	56
Maharashtra	56
Tamil Nadu	56
Haryana	48
Chhattisgarh	47
West Bengal	46
Jammu and Kashmir	38
Kerala	30
Punjab	29

Note: **Blue** indicates Hindi Belt. **Red** indicates South. Muslims and Christians were asked "burial rituals," all other respondents were asked about "last rites." While fieldwork was conducted in the following states and union territories, adequate sample sizes are not available for analysis: Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Tripura and Uttarakhand. Fieldwork could not be conducted in the Kashmir Valley due to security concerns. Fieldwork could not be conducted in Manipur or Sikkim due to the COVID-19 outbreak. No locations in Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, or Ladakh were selected for inclusion in the survey. Fieldwork was not conducted in Andaman and Nicobar Islands or Lakshadweep.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Most Indians say both sons and daughters should have equal rights to inheritance

Nearly two-thirds of Indians (64%) say sons and daughters should have equal inheritance rights from parents, including majorities across all religious groups.

But some religious groups are more egalitarian than others when it comes to inheritance. Sikhs (84%) and Buddhists (81%), for example, are more likely than Hindus (64%), Christians (63%) and Muslims (56%) to say sons and daughters should have equal inheritance rights. About a third of Hindus (34%) and an even larger share of Muslims (42%) say that sons should have greater rights to inheritance.

Across groups, college graduates are more likely than Indians with less education to say sons and daughters should have equal rights to inheritance from their parents (77% vs. 63%). The gap is especially pronounced among Muslims – the vast majority of college-educated Muslims (83%) say sons and daughters should have equal inheritance rights, while just a slim majority of less-educated Muslims (55%) support equal inheritance rights for both genders.

While women and men nationally are about equally likely to say sons and daughters should have equal rights of inheritance (65% vs. 63%, respectively), this opinion is a bit more common among Muslim women than Muslim men (60% vs. 53%). Still, among Indian women overall, a third say that sons should have greater rights to inheritance, compared with just 2% who say the same about daughters.

About a third of Indians say sons should have greater rights to inherit from parents

% of Indian adults who say _____ should have greater rights to inheritance from parents

	Sons	Daughters	Both equally
General population	34%	2%	64%
Hindus	34	2	64
Muslims	42	1	56
Christians	31	4	63
Sikhs	11	3	84
Buddhists	18	1	81
Jains	25	2	72
Men	34	2	63
Women	33	2	65
Ages 18-34	33	2	65
35+	34	2	63
Less than college	35	2	63
College graduate	21	1	77
General Category	33	2	64
Lower castes	34	1	64
Religion very important	35	1	63
Religion less important	27	3	68
Urban	29	2	68
Rural	36	1	62

Note: Other/Neither/Depends/Don't know/Refused responses not shown. Lower castes include Scheduled Castes/Tribes as well as Other/Most Backward Classes.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Once again, Indians in different states vary considerably in their support for sons having greater rights to inheritance from their parents – from roughly six-in-ten in Telangana (62%) to one-in-ten in Chhattisgarh (10%).

Sikh-majority Punjab ranks among the states with the smallest shares of Indians who say inheritance rights should belong disproportionately to sons. But while there is a gap of 22 percentage points between Sikhs and Hindus at the national level on this question, similarly small shares of Punjabi Hindus (15%) and Punjabi Sikhs (11%) say sons should have greater rights to inheritance from parents.

Indians in some Southern states more likely than others to say sons should have greater rights to inheritance

% of Indian adults who say sons should have greater rights to inheritance from parents

Telangana	62%
Andhra Pradesh	51
Karnataka	50
Jharkhand	47
Uttar Pradesh	47
Gujarat	46
Assam	45
Bihar	39
Himachal Pradesh	39
Jammu and Kashmir	28
Odisha	27
Tamil Nadu	27
West Bengal	27
Madhya Pradesh	23
Rajasthan	23
Haryana	22
Meghalaya	20
Maharashtra	19
Delhi	14
Kerala	12
Punjab	12
Chhattisgarh	10

Note: **Blue** indicates Hindi Belt. **Red** indicates South. While fieldwork was conducted in the following states and union territories, adequate sample sizes are not available for analysis: Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Tripura and Uttarakhand. Fieldwork could not be conducted in the Kashmir Valley due to security concerns. Fieldwork could not be conducted in Manipur or Sikkim due to the COVID-19 outbreak. No locations in Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, or Ladakh were selected for inclusion in the survey. Fieldwork was not conducted in Andaman and Nicobar Islands or Lakshadweep. Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details.

“How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Methodology

Between Nov. 17, 2019, and March 23, 2020, Pew Research Center completed 29,999 face-to-face interviews with non-institutionalized adults ages 18 and older living in 26 states and three union territories across India. The sample includes interviews with 22,975 Hindus, 3,336 Muslims, 1,782 Sikhs, 1,011 Christians, 719 Buddhists and 109 Jains. An additional 67 respondents belong to other religions or are religiously unaffiliated. Six groups were targeted for oversampling as part of the survey design: Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and those living in the Northeast region.

Interviews were conducted under the direction of RTI International. Data collection used computer-assisted personal interviews (CAPI) after random selection of households. Sampling was conducted through a probability-based, stratified multistage clustered random design that used composite measures of size (cMOS) to increase diversity in religious representation. National population and religious composition data are available from the 2011 census of India.

The questionnaire was designed by Pew Research Center staff in consultation with subject-matter experts and project advisers. The questionnaire was developed in English and translated into 16 languages, independently verified by professional linguists with native proficiency in regional dialects, and [pretested in various phases](#) prior to fieldwork.

Fieldwork dates by location

States/union territories	Fieldwork dates
Andhra Pradesh	Nov. 28, 2019 – Jan. 2, 2020
Arunachal Pradesh	Feb. 25 – March 21, 2020
Assam	Feb. 17 – March 18, 2020
Bihar	Dec. 1, 2019 – Jan. 26, 2020
Chhattisgarh	Nov. 26 – Dec. 13, 2019
Delhi	Nov. 27, 2019 – March 19, 2020
Goa	Dec. 11, 2019 – Jan. 13, 2020
Gujarat	Dec. 10, 2019 – Feb. 6, 2020
Haryana	Nov. 24, 2019 – March 17, 2020
Himachal Pradesh	Jan. 23 – Feb. 24, 2020
Jammu and Kashmir	Feb. 20 – March 8, 2020
Jharkhand	Dec. 1, 2019 – Jan. 19, 2020
Karnataka	Dec. 23, 2019 – March 22, 2020
Kerala	Jan. 29 – March 2, 2020
Madhya Pradesh	Nov. 24 – Dec. 13, 2019
Maharashtra	Nov. 30, 2019 – March 12, 2020
Meghalaya	Feb. 25 – March 18, 2020
Mizoram	Feb. 27 – March 21, 2020
Nagaland	Feb. 28 – March 22, 2020
Odisha	Dec. 8, 2019 – March 6, 2020
Puducherry	Jan. 12 – Jan. 24, 2020
Punjab	Dec. 23, 2019 – March 21, 2020
Rajasthan	Nov. 17, 2019 – Jan. 31, 2020
Tamil Nadu	Dec. 3, 2019 – March 20, 2020
Telangana	Nov. 25, 2019 – Feb. 1, 2020
Tripura	Feb. 23 – March 8, 2020
Uttar Pradesh	Nov. 25, 2019 – Feb. 13, 2020
Uttarakhand	Dec. 2, 2019 – Feb. 20, 2020
West Bengal	Dec. 9, 2019 – March 23, 2020

Note: Two states, Manipur and Sikkim, were included in the sample design as strata. Due to events that took place during fieldwork, no interviews were conducted in these areas or in the Kashmir Valley. Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India.

“How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Throughout fieldwork, survey performance was assessed by comparing regional results for key demographic variables (including reported religion) with region-specific population statistics available through the census. Data is weighted to account for different probabilities of selection among respondents as well as through an iterative procedure to more closely align the samples with official state and national population figures for gender, age, urbanicity, region and education. The reported margins of sampling error and the statistical tests of significance used in the analysis account for the design effects due to weighting and sample design.

Questionnaire design

The questionnaire covers multiple topics, including religious identity, belief and practice; social cohesion, national identity and politics; gender and the family; and demographic characteristics.¹³ To improve respondent comprehension of survey questions and to ensure all questions were culturally appropriate, the Center followed a multiphase questionnaire development process that included focus groups, cognitive interviews, a pretest and a pilot survey before the national survey. An in-country institutional review board (IRB) also approved the questionnaire, including the consent language, to protect the rights and privacy of Indian respondents.

The question wording and approach to various topics were refined between each phase of the research process. Throughout questionnaire development, academic experts and other advisers were consulted to further improve the questionnaire.

Twenty-two focus groups were conducted to explore and identify key topics related to religion, diversity, nationalism and gender. Focus groups were conducted under the direction of Ipsos MORI and Quipper Research. They were held in five states – Arunachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.

Fifty-six cognitive interviews were conducted to test survey questions for general comprehension, problematic phrasing or concepts, and sensitivity concerns. Cognitive interviews were conducted under the direction of Ipsos MORI. They were held in 10

Languages used to conduct interviews

	Sample size
Assamese	800
Bengali	2,942
English	246
Gujarati	1,964
Hindi	10,994
Kannada	1,403
Konkani	31
Malayalam	857
Manipuri	11
Marathi	4,175
Mizo	90
Nepali	7
Oriya	972
Punjabi	1,902
Tamil	1,530
Telugu	1,708
Urdu	367

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. "How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

¹³ Most of these topics were covered in a [previously published report](#).

states – Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

The fully translated and independently verified questionnaire was then pretested (n=100) across all 16 local languages used in the final survey. The pretest was conducted in six states and union territories – Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Delhi, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

Finally, a pilot survey (n=2,045) was administered to test all survey processes, including interviewer training, questionnaire sensitivity and data quality checks. Pilot survey states were Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

Sample design and weighting

The survey sample was designed to be nationally representative of the Indian population and was selected using a stratified, multistage cluster method. The sample was also designed to allow for robust analysis of all major religious groups – Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains – as well as all major regional zones.¹⁴ To bolster representation of religious groups with lower prevalence in the country, the sample design uses a composite measure of size (cMOS) to increase the probability of selecting primary and secondary sampling units with those religious populations. To ensure adequate sample for stand-alone analyses of the Northeast, the least populated of the zones, the region's strata are allocated more sample than proportional to population size.

Sample design

Strata design begins with states and union territories (UTs) as defined by the 2011 census. The smallest groups are then collapsed together, resulting in a total of 30 strata covering 33 states and UTs as defined by the 2011 census.¹⁵ All sampling units have official statuses and known boundaries defined by the 2011 census. The primary sampling units (PSUs) are clusters of districts, grouped to have approximately 10 or more secondary sampling units (SSUs); the SSUs are primarily subdistricts but also include some large metropolitan areas; and the tertiary sampling units (TSUs) are 2011 census enumeration blocks (CEBs) in urban areas and villages in rural areas. The number of PSUs sampled per stratum is proportional to the composite measure of size for a total of 138 PSUs. Six SSUs are sampled from each PSU and four TSUs are sampled from

¹⁴ Zones in this instance are based on the [zonal council divisions](#) of India, as defined by the States Re-organisation Act of 1956, the North Eastern Council Act of 1972 and the North Eastern Council (Amendment) Act of 2002.

¹⁵ Only the UTs of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep were excluded from the sample design due to remoteness. At the time of the 2011 census, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana were still a unified state.

each SSU, with some exceptions. The sample draw for the national study was conducted in June 2019, five months prior to the start of fieldwork.

Twelve households within each TSU were selected via a random-route procedure – a process in which field staff count residential dwellings from a random starting point as they walk the street and select every *n*th dwelling for an interview, where *n* is adjusted for the size of the area for random route. Within a household, interviewers list all adults (18+ years) and the CAPI device selects one adult at random for the interview. At every address, up to four visits to the household are made to complete an interview. Attempts to contact selected households and respondents are carried out on different days of the week and times of day (with a few exceptions where security and remoteness call for a one-day approach).

Composite measure of size (cMOS)

If the sample had been selected using a typical approach for general population surveys (e.g., probability proportional to population size), there likely would not have been enough respondents from some religious groups of interest for separate analysis and reporting. Instead, the design sought to increase the chance of selecting less-prevalent religious groups by using a cMOS for sampling PSUs and SSUs. Constructed using the 2011 census data on religious compositions of districts and subdistricts, the cMOS calculations assign more value to PSUs and SSUs with greater shares of Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists or Jains relative to the national figures. PSUs and SSUs are both selected using a systematic probability proportional to composite size method, resulting in areas with low-incidence religious populations having greater chances of selection. For example, Mansahi and Sameli, two subdistricts in the Eastern state of Bihar, have approximately the same population size (84,257 and 84,486, respectively), but Mansahi's population as of the 2011 census was 44% Muslim while Sameli's was 9% Muslim. In a general population design, these two subdistricts would have about equal chances of selection. But in this study, Mansahi has a greater chance using our cMOS, since

Targeting increased number of achieved interviews for some religious groups, Northeast region

Religion	Estimated interviews without targeting	Minimum target with cMOS/oversample	Achieved
Hindus	24,306	15,000	22,975
Muslims	3,857	5,000	3,336
Christians	731	1,000	1,011
Sikhs	569	1,000	1,782
Buddhists	223	500	719
Jains	130	500	109
Region			
Northeast	1,102	1,500	1,626

Note: Estimated interviews were calculated as the total desired sample size (n=30,000) multiplied by the national incidence according to the 2011 Census.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India.

"How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Mansahi is home to a large share of a lower-incidence religious group. The cMOS method improved the odds of a religiously diverse sample but did not guarantee it, as demonstrated by the shortfall that remains for Muslims and Jains. Prior to systematic selection, the frame is sorted geographically to help disperse the sample within strata and sampling units.

No religious composition data is available at the TSU level, so TSUs are selected with probability proportional to their population size. A systematic selection approach and implicit stratification by urbanicity are used to help diversify the sample to cover both urban and rural areas.

Weighting

The data is weighted in a multistep process. As a result of using the cMOS, the unweighted sample has more respondents belonging to certain religious groups than would normally occur in a nationally representative sample. Varying probabilities of selection are addressed through statistical adjustments, or weighting, and areas with higher sampling rates are represented in proper proportion to areas with lower sampling rates.

Weights are also adjusted in an iterative proportional fitting poststratification process, commonly referred to as raking, so that the weighted sample distribution more closely aligns with 2011 census population figures. This calibration process is conducted for age by gender, education and urbanicity separately for each of the 28 strata where fieldwork was completed and using stratum-specific population parameters.

The weights for each stratum are then scaled to correct for the oversampling of some regions and states and the corresponding undersampling of larger regions and states. This ensures that all states and subsequent regions are represented in their proper proportion in the weighted estimates included in this report. Finally, the distribution of the raked weights is examined separately for each regional zone, and customized weight trimming (i.e., setting weight ceiling and floor figures) is performed at the zonal level to prevent individual interviews from having too much influence on the final results.

Unweighted vs. weighted sample size for religious groups, Northeast region

Religion	Unweighted	Weighted
Hindus	22,975	24,503
Muslims	3,336	3,364
Christians	1,011	779
Sikhs	1,782	703
Buddhists	719	516
Jains	109	71
Region		
Northeast	1,626	920

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. "How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

In the end, the oversampled religious groups and the higher number of respondents in the Northeast *do not* represent a disproportionate share of the final, weighted sample that is used for analysis.

Coverage and exclusions

Survey coverage is calculated to be 98% of the Indian population. Exclusions, listed below, amounted to about 2% of the national population of India.

Exclusions known prior to sampling:

- Union territories of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep due to remoteness
- Subdistricts that posed a security risk to field staff
- Subdistricts with no reliable population figures from the 2011 census
- Ministry of Defense military cantonment board areas due to inaccessibility
- TSUs with fewer than 25 households due to remoteness.

Exclusions after sampling (see “Significant events during fieldwork” on page 72 for more information):

- Kashmir districts due to continued shutdown of the Kashmir Valley during fieldwork
- Sikkim and Manipur states due to COVID-19.

Precision of estimates

Each item in a survey has its own margin of sampling error (MOSE). The multistage sampling process used in this survey – districts or district groups, subdistricts, villages or census enumeration blocks, households, and eligible individuals within households – means that survey responses are not independent of each other as they would be if we had taken a simple random sample of the Indian population. This clustering of respondents has the effect of increasing the MOSE estimates relative to a simple random sample of the same size. Additionally, this clustering means that every question has a different margin of error depending on how similar respondents in the same village or region are to one another for the item in question. Some estimates (e.g., self-identification as a vegetarian) have a relatively small MOSE, while other estimates (e.g., knowledge of other religions' practices) have a larger margin of error.¹⁶

Design effects and margins of sampling error

	Unweighted N	Median design effect	Margin of sampling error (percentage points)
Overall	29,999	9.5	1.7
Hindus	22,975	22.2	3.0
Muslims	3,336	9.2	5.2
Christians	1,011	3.7	5.9
Sikhs	1,782	10.8	7.6
Buddhists	719	5.9	8.8
Jains	109	1.6	11.9
Andhra Pradesh	955	3.5	6.0
Assam	1,158	10.2	9.2
Bihar	2,609	14.0	7.2
Chhattisgarh	130	1.1	9.0
Delhi	685	3.1	6.6
Gujarat	1,984	31.3	12.3
Haryana	860	6.1	8.2
Himachal Pradesh	231	3.6	12.2
Jammu and Kashmir	364	4.3	10.6
Jharkhand	739	10.1	11.5
Karnataka	1,421	6.9	6.8
Kerala	867	5.8	8.0
Madhya Pradesh	466	3.4	8.4
Maharashtra	4,649	19.8	6.4
Meghalaya	144	3.4	15.1
Odisha	982	9.2	9.5
Punjab	2,118	16.7	8.7
Rajasthan	2,980	16.0	7.2
Tamil Nadu	1,504	14.5	9.6
Telangana	794	2.4	5.4
Uttar Pradesh	1,357	21.8	12.4
West Bengal	2,522	17.7	8.2

Note: Median design effect (DEFF) derived from DEFF of 155 survey items asked to all survey respondents.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 17, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. "How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

¹⁶ These questions were both analyzed in a [previously published report](#).

In addition to clustering, the MOSE is affected by stratified sampling and weighting. Analyses to determine statistical significance for this report were performed using Stata statistical software that accounts for all of these complex design features for tests of statistical significance and measures of sampling error.

We have reported the median MOSE as a rule of thumb when assessing significant differences. In order to reach one MOSE overall and for each subgroup, a median MOSE is produced from 155 individual ones. One should also bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into survey results that is not captured by the MOSE.

For results, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to collecting data from some, rather than all, adults within the population is plus or minus the MOSE. This means that in 95 out of 100 samples of the same size and type, the results obtained would vary by no more than plus or minus the MOSE for the population in question.

Response rates

The contact rate for the survey was 97% for the country overall.¹⁷ The overall cooperation rate for this project was 89%.¹⁸ The overall response rate for this survey is 86%.¹⁹

Significant events during fieldwork

During the fieldwork period between November 2019 and March 2020, fieldwork teams dealt with a number of events that posed challenges to entering certain areas of study and securing interviews with selected households and respondents.

Due to [access and safety concerns](#), planned fieldwork in Kashmir Valley was canceled and the 480 interviews expected to take place there were reallocated to other Muslim-majority areas of the country, including in Jammu, Haryana and West Bengal.

Starting in December 2019, protests broke out in several regions against the country's [new citizenship law](#) that would expedite citizenship for followers of certain religions, excluding, most notably, Muslims. Fieldwork in West Bengal was paused due to the unrest and teams slowly rolled

¹⁷ A contact rate captures how often interviewers spoke with a member of selected households, whether or not an interview was successfully completed.

¹⁸ A cooperation rate describes how often a member of a contacted household agrees to an interview.

¹⁹ A response rate accounts for cooperation and contact rates to form a single indicator of how often interviews with randomly selected individuals were completed from all households selected at random to participate. For more information on this survey's response rates, see the Methodology appendix in a [previously published report](#).

out in the area again starting in January 2020. Delhi field teams were also delayed in their work due to security issues and curfews in study areas.

In March 2020, international concerns for the spread of COVID-19 emerged. Given the safety threat to the field teams, interviews stopped on March 23, 2020, resulting in 39 total villages and census enumeration blocks (1.3% of sample) left incomplete, including the entirety of work in Sikkim and Manipur states.

The Kashmir reallocation and incomplete sampling areas resulted in adjustments to survey weights. Probabilities of selection, cMOS and population parameters were recalculated to exclude Kashmir, Sikkim and Manipur.