

#MalesMatterToo



Are Men Being Left Behind?

**2025
Survey Report**

Are Men Being Left Behind?

2025 boys to MEN Foundation Survey Report

Report Author

Ifeoma I. Idigbe (Mrs.)

Founder and Executive Vice Chairman, boys to MEN Foundation

Report Contributor

Jeremiah Olusegun Elisha

Senior Programmes Officer, boys to MEN Foundation

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Contact Information

www.boystomenfoundation.ng

e mail: leaders@boystomenfoundation.ng OR foundationmen@gmail.com

Instagram; Facebook; X [boystomenn](#)

LinkedIn: [boys to MEN Foundation](#)

Telephone: +234 807 843 8367

#MalesMatterToo

They Say

I want to shout
But make no sound
There is only silence
The silence of my anguish.

For the words I cannot speak
 'Men don't talk' they say.
For the tears I cannot shed
 'Men don't cry' they say
For the embrace I long for
 'Not for men' they say
For the help I cannot seek
 'Men are strong' they say
For the courage I lack
 'Men are brave' they say
For the responsibilities I cannot shoulder
 'Men must provide' they say.

I am only human
Imperfect. Afraid. Vulnerable. Insecure.

I want to shout
Loud and long
But make no sound
No one can hear
There is only silence
The silence of my anguish.

For the silence I must endure
For the words I dare not speak
For the loneliness I feel
I am a man, they say.

***From the book, 'About Men: Random Poems, Monologues and Reflections'
written by Ifeoma I. Idigbe***



Are Men Being Left Behind

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I. Introduction

Are Men Being Left Behind?

Humanity and masculinity are not mutually exclusive. They are absolutely compatible because one is first human before being masculine. In statistical terms, gender is a subset of humanity.

But what defines masculinity? Is it just the genitals as representative of the human body and its physical differences? How did masculinity come to define society in such a decisive way, enough for the phrase 'It's a Man's World' to encapsulate significant truth? Does this still hold true in the 21st century, or has the reality of life and its changing expectations begun a silent gender revolution that calls to question this truth, this 'reality'?

boys to MEN Foundation decided to interrogate these questions from a predominantly male standpoint in choosing our 2025 Research topic. This standpoint was informed as a way of eliminating female bias and resentments associated with pervasive patriarchy. Let the inherent owners of a 'man's world' engage with the subject. Does this characterization still hold true or **Are Men Being Left Behind?**

Whilst most gender initiatives have focused on women as the 'disadvantaged sex', one wonders whether that concentration is partly responsible for the changing gender narrative. Perhaps men are becoming disadvantaged! An inclusive approach to societal development requires attention to the experiences of both genders. This research was undertaken to illuminate the perceptions and specific pressures affecting men, allowing an inclusive dialogue on gender dynamics.

This report presents our findings in answer to this question. It builds upon existing understanding by providing current, localized data on the perceptions of men's roles, challenges, and societal expectations. In an age marked by social and economic shifts, understanding the evolving roles and challenges faced by men is important, and from the perspective of a Foundation focused on supporting men, the survey is an imperative, representing a continuation of boys to Men Foundation's commitment to evidence-based programming and advocacy that will allow us to achieve our vision represented by our slogan #MalesMatterToo.

The relevance of this research extends across the world, particularly in Africa, where strong patriarchy and traditional gender norms often intersect with modern societal demands and co-exist as awkward bedfellows. Men in these contexts frequently navigate complex expectations related to provision, leadership, and emotional stoicism. This survey seeks to offer insights into how these factors influence the daily lives of men, affecting their mental health, professional opportunities, and personal relationships. By shedding light on these areas, this report aims to contribute to more focused support systems and policies that will encourage mindset, attitude and behavioral change in both males and females, and foster an environment in which both can thrive and contribute positively to their families and communities. This report provides a statistical analysis of responses, offering both quantitative and qualitative insights through analyses, into the perspectives of the surveyed population.

II. Research Methodology

Our research methodology comprised the use of questionnaires which were administered virtually, collated and analysed statistically (quantitative) and qualitatively. The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions. The open ended questions allowed us to capture individual nuances and personalized feedback across the survey population.

The survey was administered via our social media network, primarily to young men undergoing their National Youth Service Corps programme in Lagos State. This was intentional, the focus of our research being on gaining the perspectives of Gen Z and millennials (young men just starting out, or in the early stages of their professional lives), on the research question 'Are Men Being Left Behind'. This age group are the leaders in the not-so distant tomorrow and gaining insights into their mindsets will help to direct the areas of emphasis of our programmes as well as advise on necessary societal shifts to support males. Our minimum targeted responses were 100 but we achieved a total of 132 responses.

The survey was therefore focused on capturing perceptions from young, adult males. The resulting demographic breakdown from the 132 respondents expectedly included a strong representation of male respondents (99.2%), within the 20-30 age range (96.2%), and a high level of educational achievement (97% holding OND/HND/Graduate degrees or higher). This demographic profile totally achieves the intended focus of this survey.

The collected data was analyzed statistically. For closed-ended questions, numerical and percentage distributions of responses were calculated. For open-ended questions, responses were categorized into common themes, and frequencies were provided to indicate the prevalence of each theme. The themes derived from the open ended questions are particularly important because they represent individual, original perspectives of the participating individuals. Insights were derived from these quantitative and qualitative analyses, highlighting key trends and perceptions within the surveyed group.

III. Executive Summary

Our 2025 research survey 'Are Men Being Left Behind' gathered responses from 132 respondents. The demographic profile of respondents was predominantly male (99.2%) and largely comprised individuals within the 20-30 age range (96.2%), indicating a focus on the perspectives of young adults. This is not surprising as they were administered primarily to youth corpsers, most of whom are Gen. Z. The survey group was therefore well educated, with 98.5% holding OND/HND/Graduate degrees or higher, hence their qualification for the National Youth Service programme.

A significant finding is that over half of the respondents, specifically 56.1% (a combined 22.0% strongly agree and 34.1% agree), perceive that men are being left behind in society. This indicates a prevalent sentiment among the surveyed population regarding this issue. When asked about specific areas where men face more challenges than women, Mental Health Support was identified by 73.5% of respondents, making it the most frequently cited area. "Social Expectations" followed, with 55.3% of respondents indicating it as a challenge. These figures suggest that the perceived emotional and social pressures on men are substantial.

Consistent with the concerns about mental health, there is a strong perception that societal expectations hinder men from seeking help for emotional and mental struggles. This view was held by 80.3% of respondents, largely attributed to the belief that showing vulnerability is equated with weakness (50-55% of open-ended responses) and the societal pressure to maintain a stoic demeanor (30-35%). Additionally, an overwhelming majority of 92.4% of respondents believe society places too much emphasis on traditional gender roles for men.

Regarding the definition of modern feminism, responses were varied. While a significant proportion (40-45%) defined it as advocating for equality or equal rights for all genders, a notable counter-narrative (20-25%) perceived it as negative, misandrist, or toxic. This may be giving rise to the phenomenon of masculinism which argues that traditional masculine traits and roles have been unfairly stigmatized, and advocates more strongly for men in this changing gender narrative. It appears to be a counterpart to feminism.

Despite these differing interpretations, most respondents (87.1%) believe that gender equality initiatives should include a focus on men's issues, advocating for a holistic approach to gender equity. Suggested solutions to ensure men are not left behind centered on promoting emotional openness (35-40%), increasing mental health support and resources (30-35%), and challenging traditional masculine norms through education and awareness (20-25%).

In the context of relationship dynamics, the survey indicates a shift from traditional norms. A large majority of respondents (90.9%) expressed no objections to marrying a woman more educated than themselves, citing reasons such as mutual learning and growth (45-50%) and the irrelevance of education to love and compatibility (30-35%). Similarly, 81.1% are comfortable marrying a woman who earns more, primarily due to perceived financial benefits and the view of marriage as a partnership. However, opinions are more divided on living in a wife's house, with 42.4% agreeing, 34.8% disagreeing, and 22.7% unsure, suggesting that traditional views on home ownership may persist more strongly.

Regarding societal roles, a majority of 58.3% of respondents believe there should not be specific gender roles for men and women, indicating a preference for gender-neutral roles. The responsibility for raising boys is seen as a joint effort by both parents by 91.7% of respondents 8.3% believe it is a father's role primarily. No respondent thought of was a mother's role. This is an interesting response given that more men state informally that they are closer to their mothers than their fathers. There thus appears to be a perceived difference between the reality of mothers being more involved in their sons upbringing, and what respondents consider to be the ideal. Furthermore, a majority of 63.6% believe fathers are performing well in this role, though a notable portion (36.4%) hold a different view. Again, this is contrary to verbally expressed opinions. Could loyalty to their fathers and fellow men have influenced responses?

In summary, the survey indicates a clear awareness among the male-dominant respondents of specific challenges faced by men, particularly concerning mental health, the pressures of societal expectations, and the complexities of evolving gender roles. There is a recognized need for more comprehensive support systems and a broader, more inclusive approach to gender equality that addresses men's issues. The findings suggest a desire for greater emotional freedom and a re-evaluation of traditional masculine ideals. The responses suggest an evolving outlook on gender roles within relationships, with a willingness to accept more egalitarian dynamics in terms of education and income. However, some traditional views persist.

'Are Men Being Left Behind?' Our survey suggests Yes. There is a recognized fear that the prevailing social dynamics are affecting males in ways that leave them vulnerable and in strong need of support and understanding to avoid being left further behind. If the concerns expressed by respondents are not urgently addressed, there might be an imperative for new broad based policies aimed at addressing a gender narrative that is increasingly toxic for men. Indeed, gender related policies must consider that males are integral to the word gender.

Overall, this report underscores the importance of continued dialogue and targeted interventions to address the identified challenges faced by men. It suggests that efforts to promote emotional openness, provide accessible mental health resources, and foster a more balanced understanding of gender roles could contribute to a more equitable and supportive society for all.

IV. Survey Results and Analyses

This report provides a detailed statistical analysis of the responses from the 2025 boys to MEN Foundation research survey on the question **Are Men Being Left Behind?** The questionnaires were administered over a three month time period to National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members who attended boys to MEN Foundation leadership and life skills programmes across service NYSC Local Government Areas in Lagos State. The nature of cross country deployments by the NYSC ensured that the sample population were males from all over Nigeria, from different universities (both private and public, local and international) who were deployed to Lagos State for their NYSC. The sample population can therefore be considered representative of young men in Nigeria as a whole, from different backgrounds/value systems and socio - economic status. We expect this diversity to be significant, because if their views are convergent irrespective of these factors, the implication is that, there is a strong consensus or agreement on the issues raised.

Some questions are repeated in different ways throughout the survey as a way of confirming the authenticity of related responses. Indeed, the responses to these similar questions consistently corroborate the findings throughout the survey.

The analysis focuses on the numerical and percentage distribution of responses for each question, offering quantitative and qualitative insights into perceptions regarding men's roles, challenges, and societal expectations.

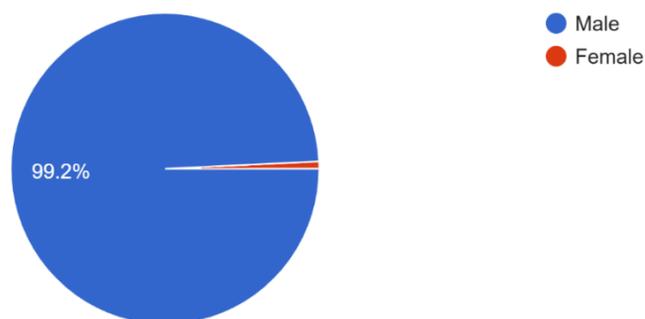
Total Number of Respondents: 132

1. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

- **Gender Distribution**

Gender:

132 responses



Male: 99.2% (131 responses)

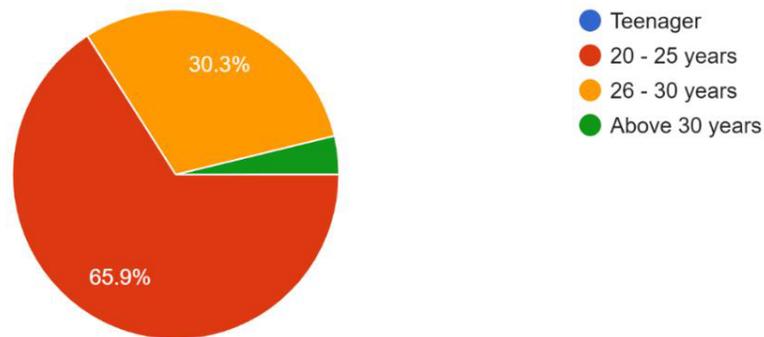
Female: 0.8% (1 response)

The results show that expectedly, the survey population was overwhelmingly male (99.2%). The participation of females is an aberration. As already stated above, the questionnaires were administered primarily to male youth corpsers. The opinions reflected in the responses are therefore predominantly male. This was deliberate because the purpose of the survey is to

establish what males think about being male in current times. The female responses are negligible and immaterial.

- **Age Range Distribution:**

Age range
132 responses



Teenagers: No teenagers are evident from the chart.

20 - 25 years: 65.9% (8 responses)

26 - 30 years: 30.3% (40 responses)

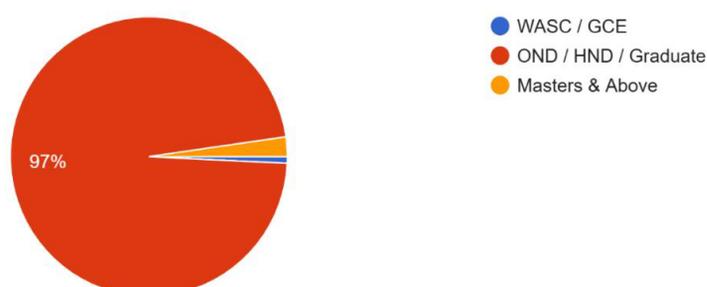
Above 30 years: 3.8% (5 responses)

There were no teenagers in the sample size as the majority of respondents were youth corpers which presupposes graduation from a financial institution. Teenage corpers are a rarity. 96.2% of the respondents fall within the 20-30 years age range with 3.8 % over 30 years. All respondents are likely to be Gen Z. It is unlikely that any are millennials who would long since have graduated and completed their youth service. Furthermore the cut off age for the national service 30 years.

The perspectives in this study are therefore those of young males coming into the workforce and feeling the full pressure of new and/or increasing responsibilities. This is exactly the desirable male population to give relevance to this study.

- **Educational Qualifications Distribution**

Educational qualifications?
132 responses



WASC / GCE: 1.5% (2 responses)

OND / HND / Graduate: 97.0% (128 responses)

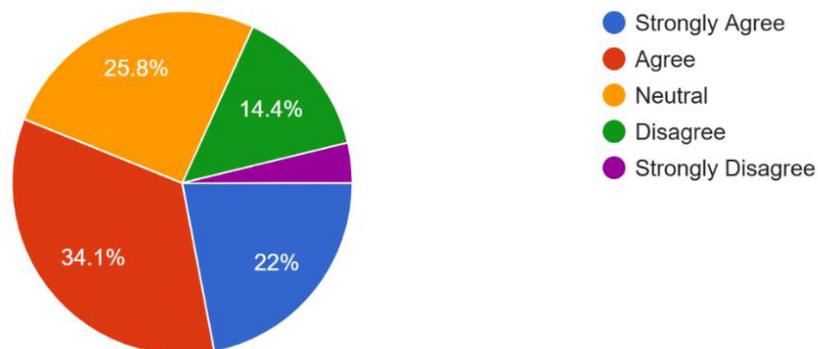
Masters & Above: 1.5% (2 responses)

The vast majority of respondents (98.5%) are graduates or with qualifications from higher institutions, those with only WASC/GCE being negligible at 1.5% representing only 2 respondents. Again, this is not surprising as the sample pool were predominantly youth corpers.

2. PERCEPTIONS OF MEN'S CHALLENGES

Question 1: Do you believe that men are being left behind in society today?

132 responses



Strongly Agree: 22.0% (29 responses)

Agree: 34.1% (45 responses)

Neutral: 25.8% (34 responses)

Disagree: 14.4% (19 responses)

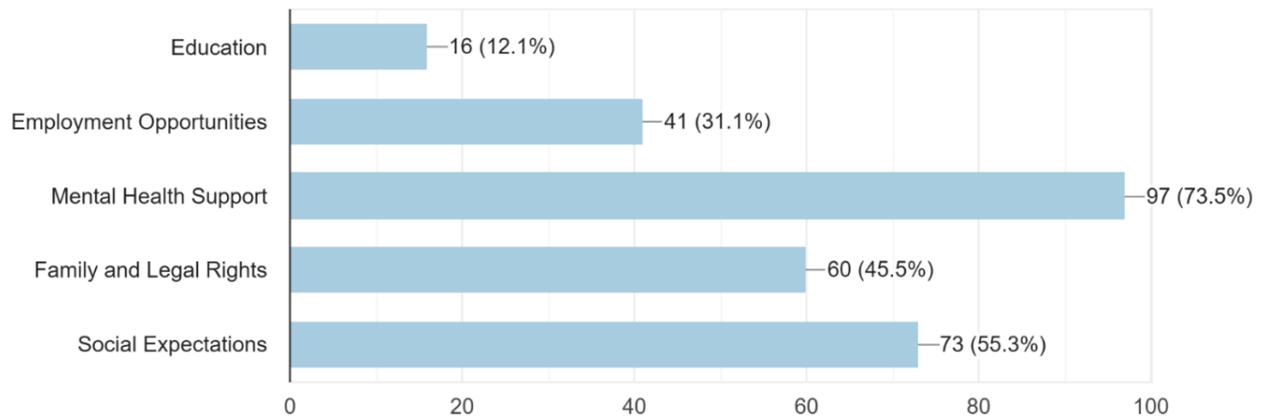
Strongly Disagree: 3.8% (5 responses)

A combined 56.1% of respondents either "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" that men are being left behind, indicating a prevalent perception of this issue among the surveyed group. This level of response gives validity to the survey question.

18.2% Disagree and 25.8% are Neutral. There are a number of reasons why some men might disagree or remain neutral for the purpose of this survey. These include the influence of patriarchy, and the fallacy that men are strong in all things and at all times, built on the view that a man who complains is a weak man. Agreeing with this premise would thus be seen as weakening the man's image. It could be from family upbringing and personal experiences that do not validate this viewpoint; It could also be that they simply do not care and are truly neutral. One would have to interrogate this subset of the survey for further clarification, but it is worth consideration.

Question 2: In what areas? Do you think men face more challenges than women? (This is an open ended question that allowed respondents to give their own responses. Percentages are of total responses, and do not sum up to 100% because of multiple responses allowed for the question).

132 responses



Education: 12.1% (16 responses)

Employment Opportunities: 31.1% (41 responses)

Mental Health Support: 73.5% (97 responses)

Family and Legal Rights: 45.5% (60 responses)

Social Expectations: 55.3% (73 responses)

Mental Health Support and Social Expectations are overwhelmingly identified as the top areas where men face more challenges, followed by Family and Legal Rights. These results align with the verbal feedback we receive during our programme discussions. There is a sense that too much is expected from men without the necessary support structure to facilitate their achieving the expected successes.

Immediately after graduation, even during their youth corps when they receive minimum pay and are not economically settled, there are expectations of financial support for their families. Black Tax is a major recognition in their budgets. The stress levels from these expectations and lack of support structures have implications for mental health, where again, on a national level, there is limited support for everyone irrespective of gender. However, the entrenched patriarchal system and social expectations of men heighten mental challenges for males as appropriately captured in the results.

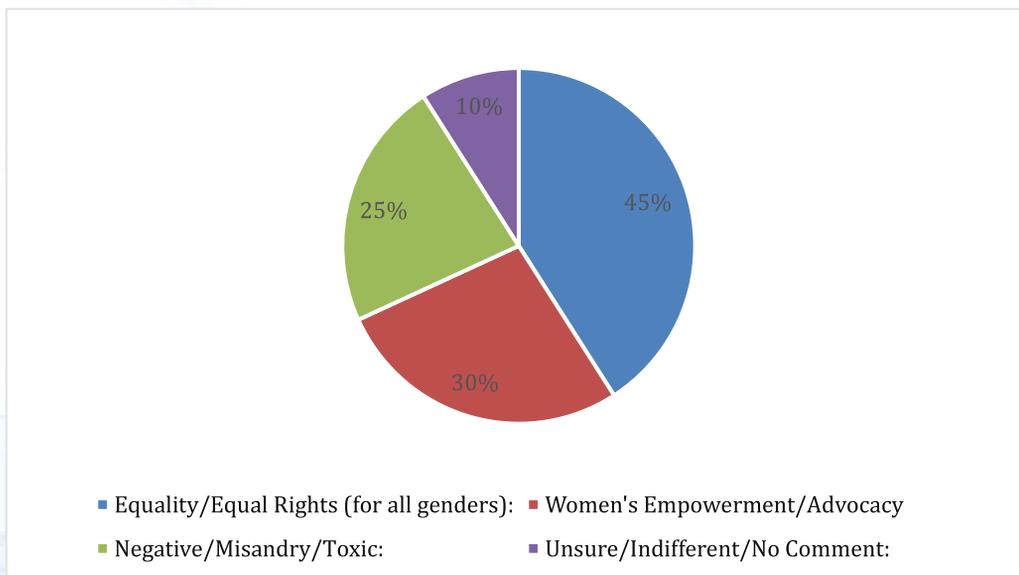
With regard to Family and Legal Rights, there are more policies and laws protecting women than for men, especially with regard to abuse. There is an assumption that males being the stronger sex physically, are 'safe' and can 'tough it out' if necessary. Given the increasing reports on male abuse... pedophilia, homosexual abuse and domestic molestations, this is not accurate. These need to be researched for statistics. Furthermore, emotionally men are not allowed to show their vulnerability resulting in toxic masculinity that presents itself as depression, higher suicide rates among men, drug addiction, alcoholism and even madness – there also appear to be more mad men than women on the streets of Lagos (no data available) which seems to lend some credence to the result

of a lack of mental health support. This result corroborates the findings of our 2022 Depression report which found an overall lack of mental health support in Nigeria, mental health being somewhat of a taboo subject, especially for males.

Employment Opportunities represent 31.1% of these responses. This is somewhat significant. It is interesting that men would think that women may have fewer challenges than men with regard to employment opportunities. This suggests that women may have an advantage. Is this true, and if so, is it from gender equality initiatives/affirmative action or that women perform better in employment exams and interviews? There seems to be increasing evidence to suggest that females are generally performing better educationally and at work. This should perhaps be the subject of research.

3. SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS AND FEMINISM

Question 3: How do you define modern feminism? (Open-ended responses, with common themes identified in individual responses. Some respondents gave multiple responses so the total is not 100%)



Equality/Equal Rights (for all genders): 45% (59 responses)

Women's Empowerment/Advocacy: 30% (40 responses)

Negative/Misandry/Toxic: 25% (33 responses)

Unsure/Indifferent/No Comment: 10% (13 responses)

The results indicate that whilst a core understanding of feminism as gender equality exists (45%), there appears to be a strong counter-narrative perceiving it as anti-men or focused on female supremacy, and therefore negative or toxic (25%). This may be giving rise to the phenomenon of **masculinism** which argues that traditional masculine traits and roles have been unfairly stigmatized, and advocates more strongly for men in this changing gender narrative. It appears to be a counterpart to feminism.

30% also acknowledge feminism as being about Women's Empowerment and Advocacy for women. No criticism appears to be implied in 75% of these responses, merely the factual recognition of feminism as being about efforts to advocate for gender equality.

Question 4: Do you think there are enough mentorship and support programmes for young men in society?

132 responses



Yes, there are plenty of programmes available: 4.5% (6 responses)

There are some, but not enough to meet the need: 50.0% (66 responses)

No, mentorship and support for young men are lacking: 29.5% (39 responses)

I'm not sure / I haven't noticed any: 15.9% (21 responses)

A combined 79.5% of respondents believe that mentorship and support programmes for young men are either insufficient or completely lacking, highlighting a perceived gap in support systems. If we add the responses 'I'm not sure/I haven't noticed any' (15.9%) to the definite 79.5%, this gives a staggering total of 95.4%!

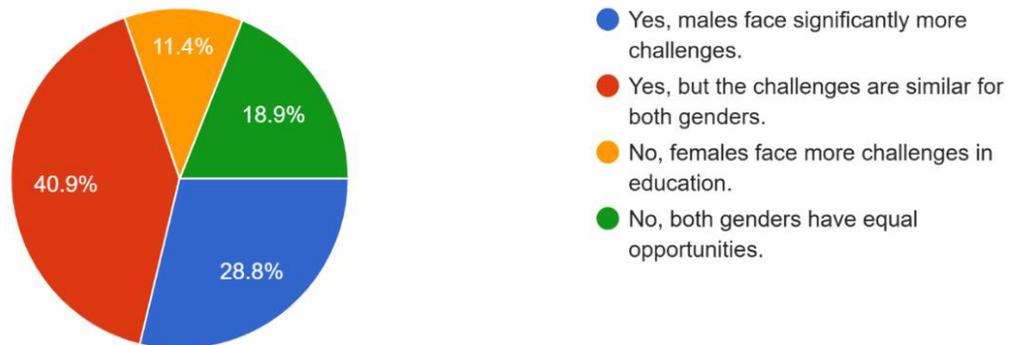
These results cannot be attributed to ignorance of what support is available. It is a definite statement that little support is available. No wonder so many men are in crisis! ... High societal expectations and little or no support.

Even without the results of this survey, in Nigeria, any support for men is often from church or community organisations, and this is limited, largely being meeting opportunities to talk about how men can support the church or community, rather than how they can cope better.

Our Foundation, boys to MEN Foundation is one of only a handful of registered organisations devoted to supporting men. The men we encounter on our programmes say we are the only one they are aware of. Most gender organisations are focused on supporting and advocating for women and the Girl Child.

Question 5: Do you think males face more challenges in completing their education compared to females?

132 responses



Yes, males face significantly more challenges: 28.8% (38 responses)

Yes, males face more challenges: 40.9% (54 responses)

No, females face more challenges in education: 11.4% (15 responses)

No, both genders have equal opportunities: 18.9% (25 responses)

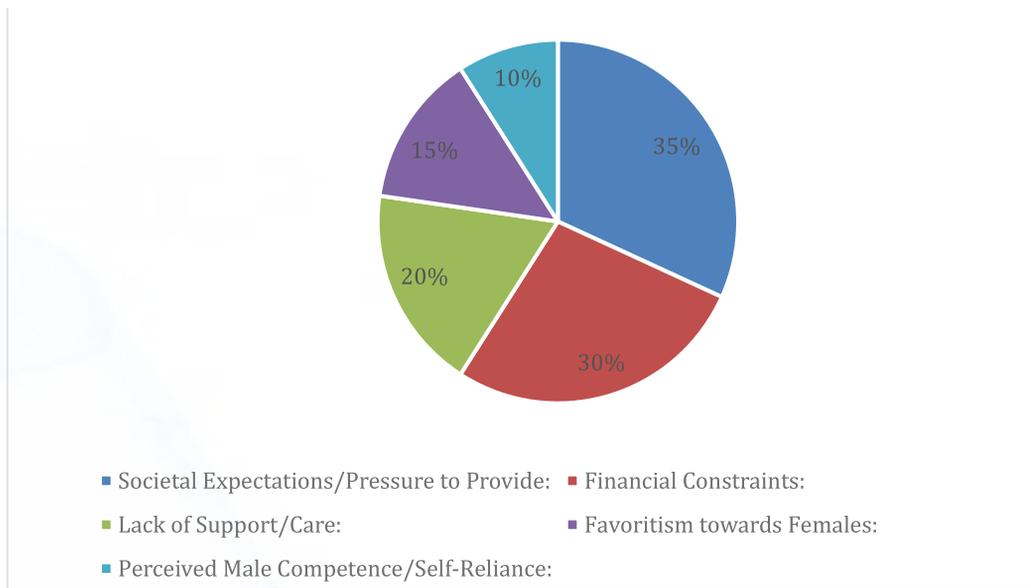
69.7% of the respondents feel that men face more challenges in completing their education than women, with a notable proportion (28.8%) stating that males face **significantly** more challenges. This is significantly higher than the number who feel women face more challenges (11.4%).

These responses that suggest men face more challenges in completing their education are somewhat surprising given the patriarchy and cultural limitations that combine to make it more difficult for women to even start, let alone complete their education. The results may however stem from the educated male sample for this study limiting themselves into considering fellow students (females) within their higher education institutions as against the overall pool of females in Nigeria. It may also stem from the fact that many young men seem to face difficulties paying their way through school. It appears increasing numbers are no longer funded by family. If they are lucky their fees are paid, but living expenses are their responsibility. Some say females sometimes find men willing to underwrite their school and living expenses, not so males (should be researched).

18.9% feel women have equal opportunities. This may be in response to the rise in female enrolments in institutions of higher learning, represented by the increasing numbers of female youth corps which is their current constituency. This again does not take into consideration the numbers of women out of school, simply for being female. Perception becomes reality.

Question 5b: In what way? (Open-ended, common themes identified in individual responses)

The responses to this question validate the Yes and No answer of Question 5.



Societal Expectations/Pressure to Provide: 35% (46 responses)

Financial Constraints: 30% (40 responses)

Lack of Support/Care: 20% (26 responses)

Favoritism towards Females: 15% (20 responses)

Perceived Male Competence/Self-Reliance: 10% (13 responses)

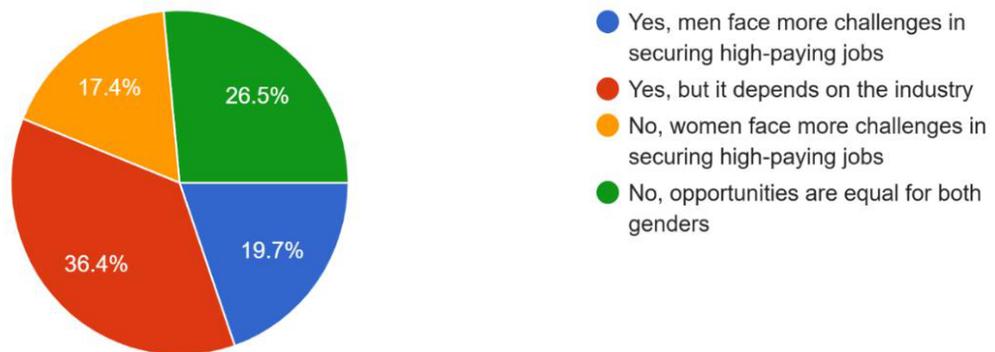
Societal expectations and financial constraints are confirmed as primary hindrances to male educational attainment, 35% and 30% respectively. Translated, this means that family financial responsibilities make it difficult for males to fund their own education. These are supported by Favouritism towards females 15%, and perceived male competence and self reliance 10%, which are really different ways of saying the same thing, that women have it easier, so a total of 25%. Lack of Support/Care (20%) confirms societal expectations of males as more competent to take care of themselves.

The implication of these results is that indeed men, as represented in the sample, believe they face more challenges than females. If the narrative is limited to the context of males and females already in higher institutions, the operative words being completing their education, they may be right. It is entirely possible that once women get into these institutions (whether having overcome obstacles to admission or not) they somehow find the support needed to complete their education, whereas males have to struggle to overcome financial constraints and be self reliant, as a result of perceived male competence and the absence of a support framework as well as societal expectations that they can do it.

Indeed, this seems the reality of being male within larger society. It appears that even the respondents who indicated (in Q5) that women face more challenges or that both genders have equal opportunities, abandoned those positions in answering the second part of the question (Question 5b).

Question 6: Do you believe men are at a disadvantage in securing high-paying jobs today?

132 responses



Yes, men face more challenges in securing high-paying jobs: 19.7% (26 responses)

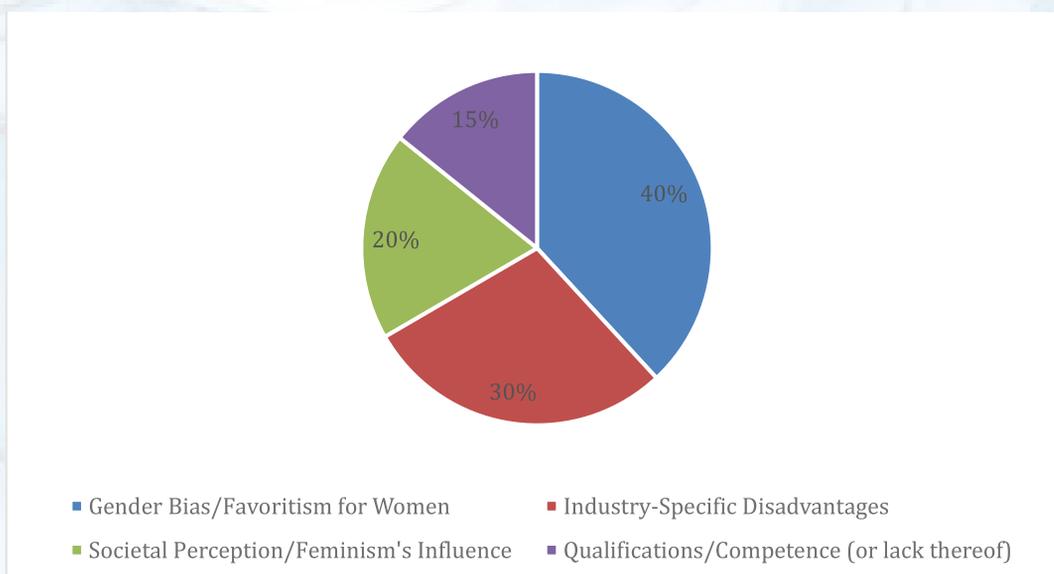
Yes, but it depends on the industry: 36.4% (48 responses)

No, women face more challenges in securing high-paying jobs: 17.4% (23 responses)

No, opportunities are equal for both genders: 26.5% (35 responses)

A combined 56.1% believe men face more challenges even if it depends on the industry, suggesting a perceived disadvantage for men in high-paying job acquisitions. The responses to Question 6b below which seeks clarification on 'In what ways', provide some insights.

Question 6b: In what ways? (Open-ended, common themes identified in individual responses)



Gender Bias/Favoritism for Women: 40% (53 responses)

Industry-Specific Disadvantages: 30% (40 responses)

Societal Perception/Feminism's Influence: 20% (26 responses)

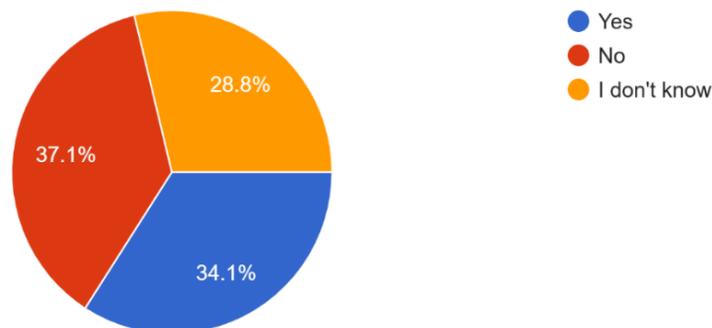
Qualifications/Competence (or lack thereof): 15% (20 responses)

A perceived gender bias favoring women (40%) and industry-specific dynamics (30%), are key reasons cited for men's disadvantage in high-paying jobs. Perceived gender bias most likely refers to affirmative action policies in companies, regulatory bodies, and in Government. Given this result, questions arise as to how many companies have such policies, how many adhere to such affirmative action policies, and at the most fundamental level, how have respondents identified such companies, and who gave them data on how many males/females apply, and their success rate? These are clearly perceptions. But what informs such strong perceptions?

Could the male respondents also be making excuses to justify increasing incompetence or low confidence in males? These are interesting considerations, made more interesting by the perception that Qualifications/Competence play only a small role (15%) when it comes to securing high paying jobs. Add this to the perception of the influence of feminism (20%). In a man's world? These are truly interesting observations. The responses to Question 7 below are probably more representative of the reality. The reality is unclear owing to the absence of research data in these areas.

Question 7: In your opinion, are men being under-represented in certain professional fields because of gender-based policies?

132 responses



Yes: 34.1% (45 responses)

No: 37.1% (49 responses)

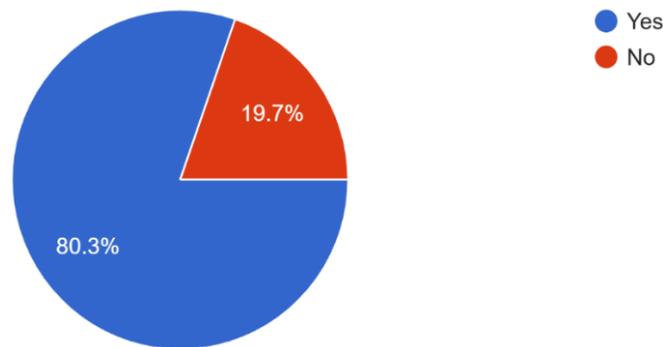
I don't know: 28.8% (38 responses)

Opinions are divided, with a slight majority disagreeing (37.1%) compared to those who agree (34.1%) that men are under-represented in certain professional fields because of gender-based/affirmative action policies. 28.8% are unsure. There is no empirical evidence to support any position and the results are not so sharply different. In fact, looking at the pie chart

(without checking the stated percentage findings), one might assume that each answer represents one third of the respondents – opinions are almost equally divided.

Question 8: Are men less likely to seek help for emotional and mental struggles due to societal expectations?

132 responses

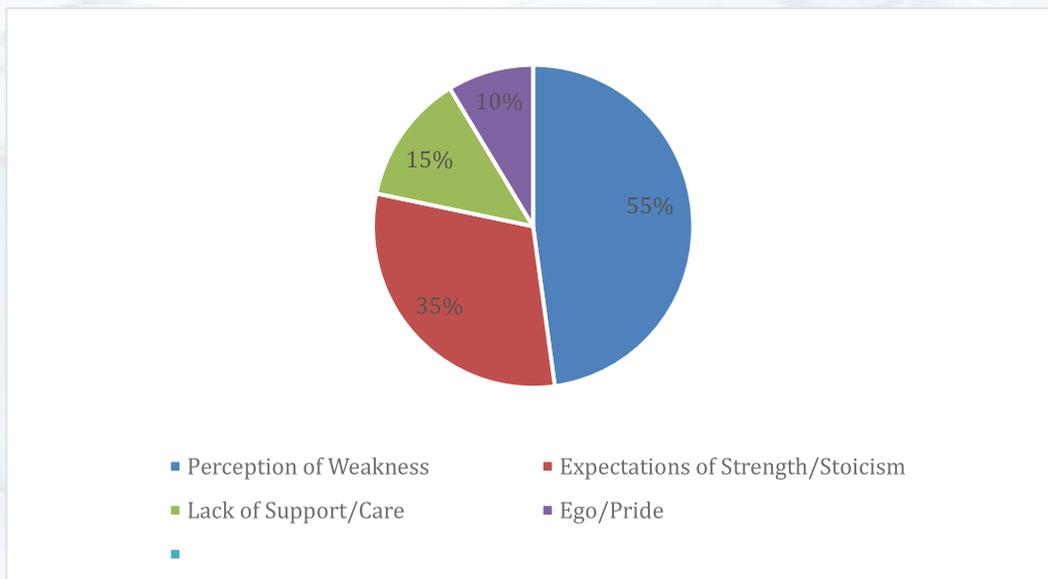


Yes: 80.3% (106 responses)

No: 19.7% (26 responses)

An overwhelming majority (80.3%) agree that societal expectations hinder men from seeking help for emotional and mental struggles. This is a confirmation of the opinions expressed in our earlier referenced Depression survey report 2022.

Question 8b: Why / Why not? (Open-ended, common themes identified in individual responses)



Perception of Weakness: 55% (73 responses)

Expectations of Strength/Stoicism: 35% (46 responses)

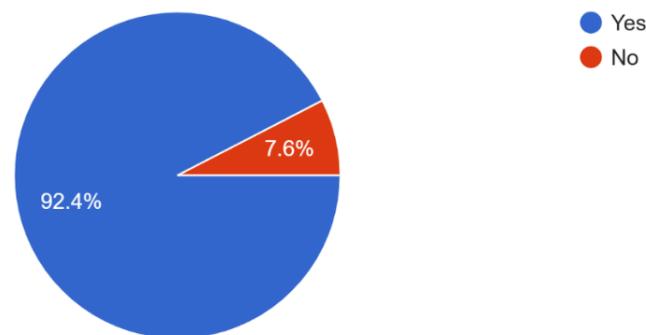
Lack of Support/Care: 15% (20 responses)

Ego/Pride: 10% (13 responses)

The belief that showing emotions is a sign of weakness and the societal pressure to be strong are the dominant reasons cited. A total of 90%. All the reasons ascribed for the failure of men to seek help are tied to societal notions of masculinity informed and reinforced by the way boys are raised, socialization at school, in church, and most of their social interactions throughout their lives. Both males and females have these expectations of men. Ego and pride represent 10% of the responses. This too is tied to upholding societal expectations and taking pride in being seen to be 'a man'.

These results are significant because they were identified by the respondents themselves.

Question 9: Do you think society places too much emphasis on traditional gender roles for men?



Yes: 92.4% (122 responses)

No: 7.6% (10 responses)

An almost unanimous majority (92.4%) believes society places too much emphasis on traditional gender roles for men. Patriarchy and strong cultural norms of 'men in charge' win the day at the expense of the well being of men and providing a support structure.

Question 10: What is the role of patriarchy in the gender narrative? (Open-ended, common themes identified in individual responses)

This question directly addresses patriarchy in society and its role in determining behaviour and gender roles. Again, the specific responses were generated by the respondents themselves giving them authenticity.

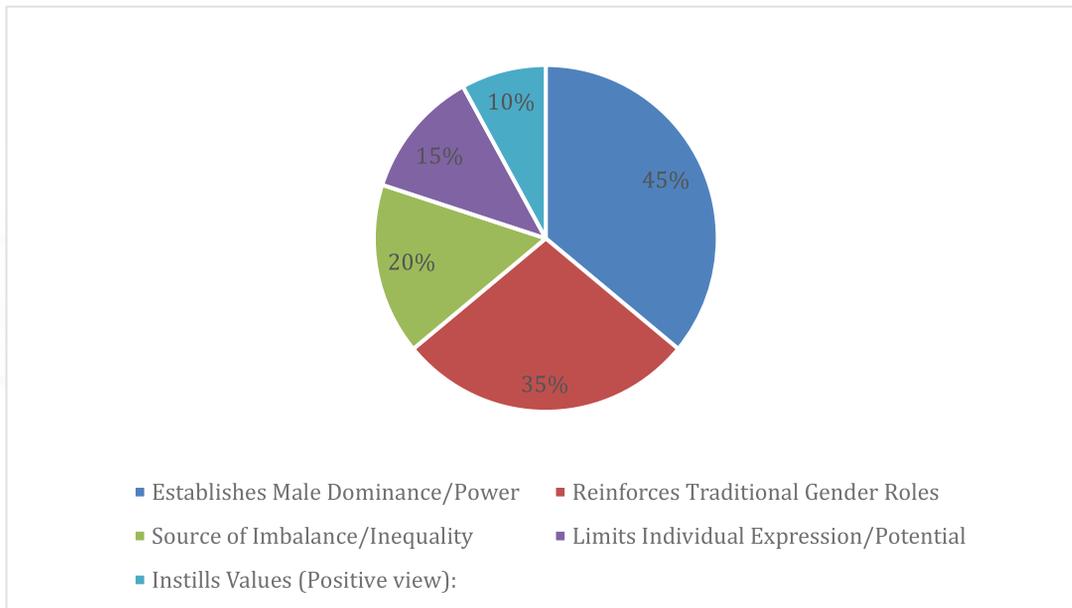
Establishes Male Dominance/Power: 45% (59 responses)

Reinforces Traditional Gender Roles: 35% (46 responses)

Source of Imbalance/Inequality: 20% (26 responses)

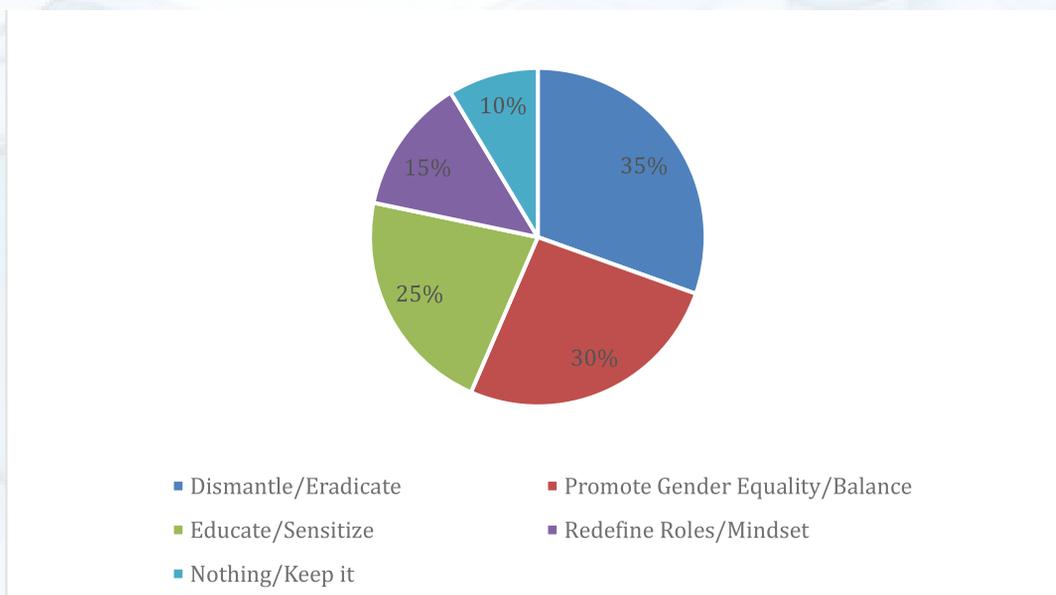
Limits Individual Expression/Potential: 15% (20 responses)

Instills Values (Positive view): 10% (13 responses)



Patriarchy is largely seen as a system that establishes male dominance and reinforces traditional, often limiting, gender roles. 20% consider it to be a source of Imbalance/Inequality. 15% do not think it limits individual expression or potential with its prescriptive traits and roles for each gender. Responses to the next question provide further clarification.

Question 11: What should society do about patriarchy? (Open-ended, common themes identified in individual responses)



Dismantle/Eradiate: 35% (46 responses)

Promote Gender Equality/Balance: 30% (40 responses)

Educate/Sensitize: 25% (33 responses)

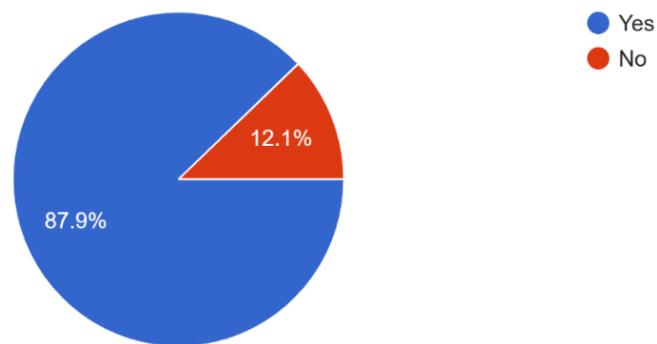
Redefine Roles/Mindset: 15% (20 responses)

Nothing/Keep it: 10% (13 responses)

The most common calls are to dismantle patriarchy and to promote gender equality through education and redefinition of roles. 65%. This is a strong statement that for this generation, patriarchy no longer works. This opinion is supported by the 25% suggestion for education and sensitization. Mindset change and redefinitions of gender roles are also considered desirable (15%). A total of 35% think change should be promoted. Clearly pressures from the demands of patriarchy are increasingly considered untenable. There is however still 10% of males who think patriarchy should remain. Such males often argue (during our programmes) about the 'bad' behaviour of women who are 'allowed' more prominent roles in families.

Question 12: Do you think there is a stigma attached to men showing vulnerability in society?

132 responses



Yes: 87.9% (116 responses)

No: 12.1% (16 responses)

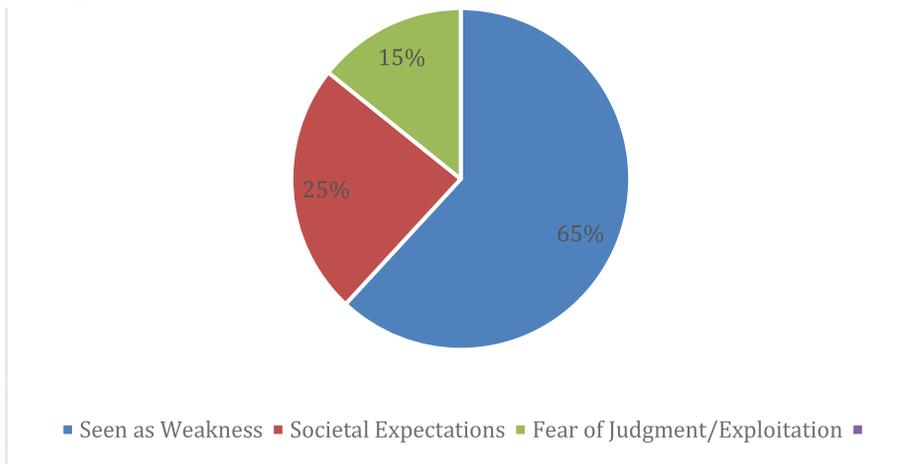
A very high percentage (87.9%) confirms the existence of a stigma attached to men showing vulnerability. This speaks to how boys are raised to be strong, (often to their emotional detriment).

Question 12b: Why / why not? (Open-ended, common themes identified in individual responses)

Seen as Weakness: 65% (86 responses)

Societal Expectations: 25% (33 responses)

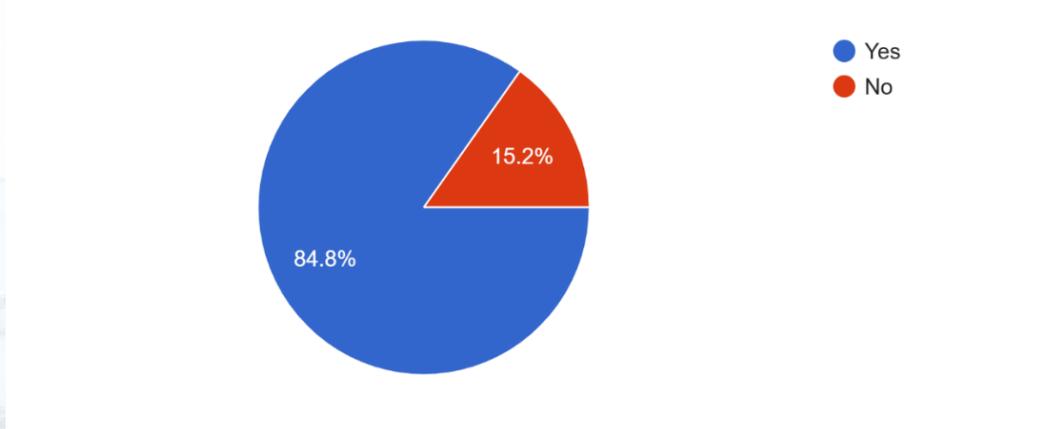
Fear of Judgment/Exploitation: 15% (20 responses)



The overwhelming reason is that vulnerability is equated with weakness, reinforced by societal expectations. Again, this validates previous responses.

Question 13: Are men less likely to seek help for emotional and mental struggles due to societal expectations?

132 responses



Yes: 84.8% (112 responses)

No: 15.2% (20 responses)

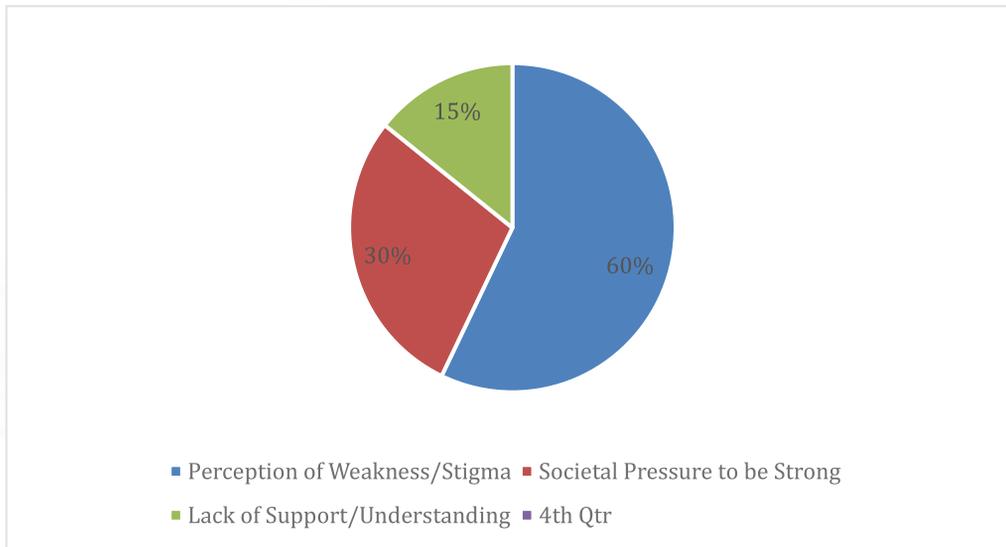
This question is a counterpart to Question 8, with similar results, reinforcing the strong belief that societal expectations prevent men from seeking help.

Question 13b: Why / Why not? (Open-ended, common themes identified in individual responses; a counterpart to Question 8b)

Perception of Weakness/Stigma: 60% (79 responses)

Societal Pressure to be Strong: 30% (40 responses)

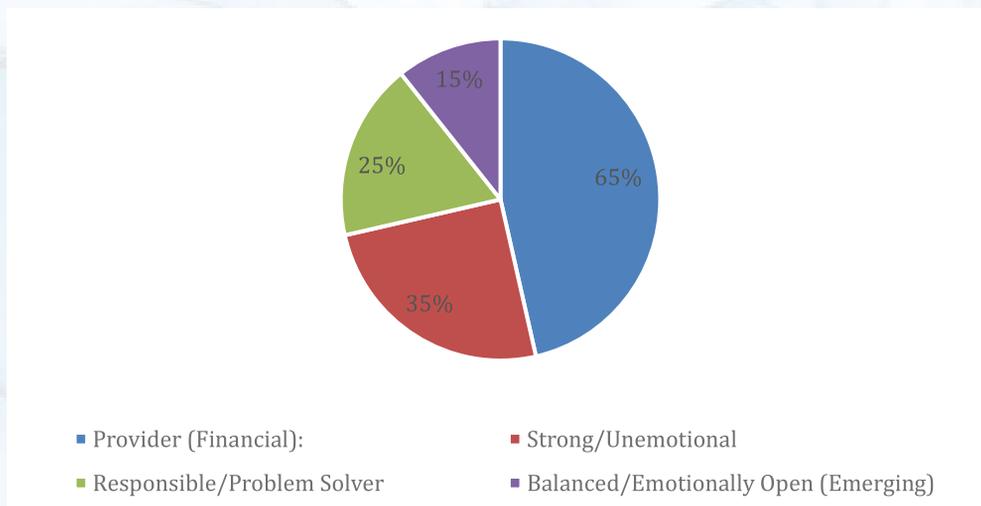
Lack of Support/Understanding: 15% (20 responses)



The consistent message is that men are discouraged from seeking help because of the perception that it signifies weakness with its associated stigma, and acknowledges societal pressure for men to be strong. Validates the results of question 12. Vulnerability and emotional & mental health struggles are equated as the same.

Question 14: What are modern day expectations of men? (Open-ended, common themes identified in individual responses)

This question seeks to establish the perceptions of young men on what is expected of them in today's world. Expectations often fuel behaviour, and new or different expectations may be the catalyst needed to change the burdensome gender expectations of men. The question is structured to elicit their own thought-out responses. Are the expectations of today different from those of yesterday. The responses will tell us.



Provider (Financial): 65% (86 responses)

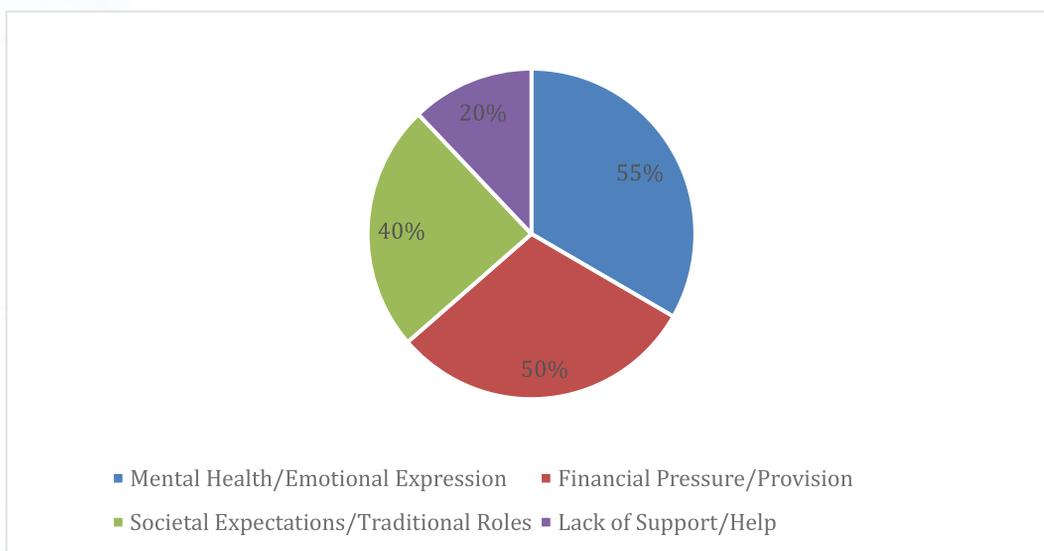
Strong/Unemotional: 35% (46 responses)

Responsible/Problem Solver: 25% (33 responses)

Balanced/Emotionally Open (Emerging): Approx. 10-15% (13-20 responses)

Traditional expectations of men as financial providers and stoic figures remain dominant, though there is an emerging, often conflicting, expectation for emotional openness. This is represented by *Balanced/Open (Emerging)* with 15%. The fact that this point of view was generated from an open ended question makes it authentic. It is encouraging to find that men are beginning to consider emotional freedom as a necessary part of masculinity.

Question 15: What are the biggest challenges men face today? (Open-ended, common themes identified in individual responses)



Mental Health/Emotional Expression: 55% (73 responses)

Financial Pressure/Provision: 50% (66 responses)

Societal Expectations/Traditional Roles: 40% (53 responses)

Lack of Support/Help: 20% (26 responses)

Mental health and financial pressures are consistently identified as the most significant challenges, and they are often the consequence of societal expectations, punctuated by a lack of support.

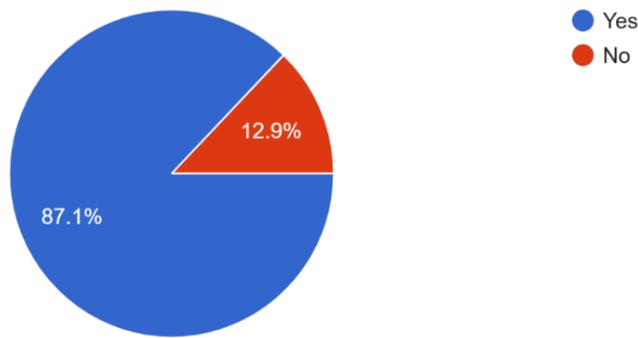
4. GENDER EQUALITY AND SUPPORT

Question 16: Do you believe gender equality should include a focus on men's issues?

Yes: 87.1% (115 responses)

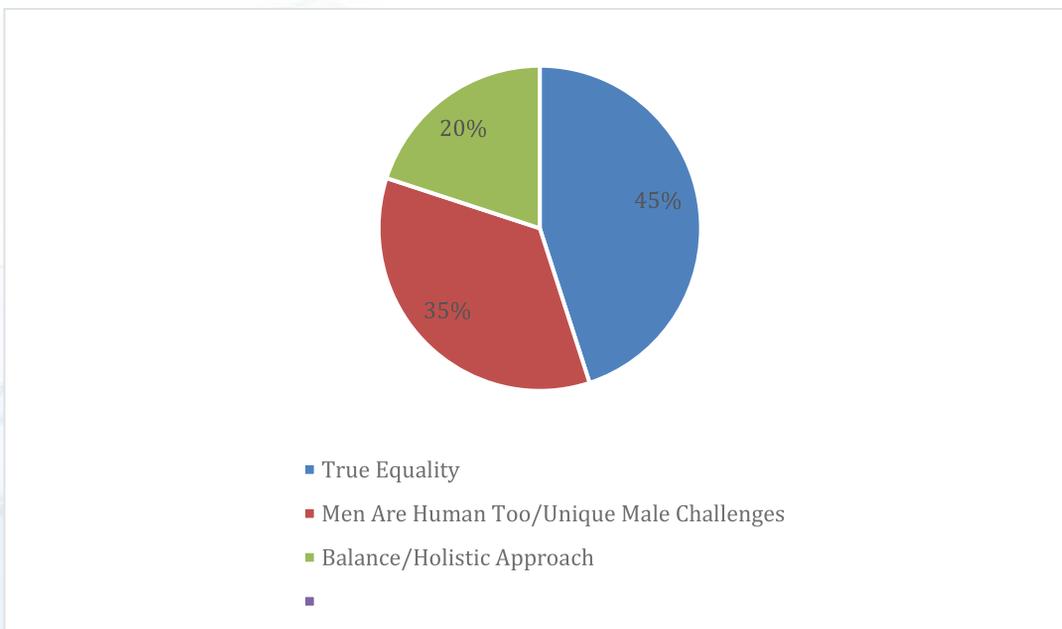
No: 12.9% (17 responses)

132 responses



Overwhelmingly, respondents (87.1%) believe gender equality should encompass men's issues, advocating a holistic approach. Gender does not refer only to women, although this is the commonly, and unconsciously held view. Women have dominated, and continue to dominate gender consciousness and discussions. A change in this narrative is being strongly advocated.

Question 16b: Why / Why not? (Open-ended, common themes identified in individual responses)



True Equality: 45% (59 responses)

Men Are Human Too/Unique Male Challenges: 35% (46 responses)

Balance/Holistic Approach: 20% (26 responses)

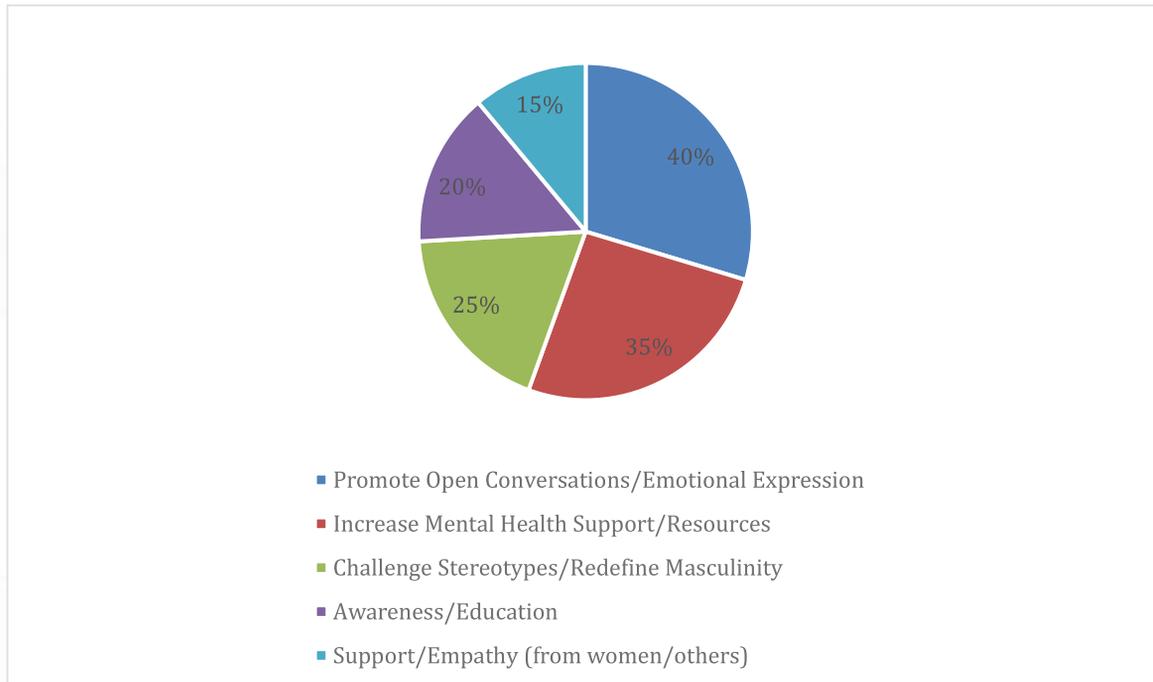
There is a simplicity and fundamental truth captured by these three common themes identified by respondents ... True equality; Men are human too and have their own challenges which should be acknowledged (they too need support); Balance means both genders matter, and this is the holistic approach.

These primary reasons are rooted in the fundamental definition of equality and the

recognition of men's humanity and specific challenges. The clear message is that humanity and masculinity are not mutually exclusive.

Question 17: What do you think can be done to ensure men are not left behind?

(Open-ended, common themes identified in individual responses)



Promote Open Conversations/Emotional Expression: 40% (53 responses)

Increase Mental Health Support/Resources: 35% (46 responses)

Challenge Stereotypes/Redefine Masculinity: 25% (33 responses)

Awareness/Education: 20% (26 responses)

Support/Empathy (from women/others): 15% (20 responses)

The focus is heavily on fostering emotional openness, providing mental health support, and challenging traditional masculine norms through education and awareness. This signals positive mindset and attitude changes in young adult men, and a willingness to be more vulnerable for their own survival and mental health. It is a realization that 'being the man' in the traditional, patriarchal sense is too heavy a burden. In particular, the 40% for Promote Open Conversations/Emotional Expression as well as the 25% for Challenge Stereotypes/Redefine Masculinity are very clear in their intent. This marks the beginning of a significant turning point in the gender narrative.

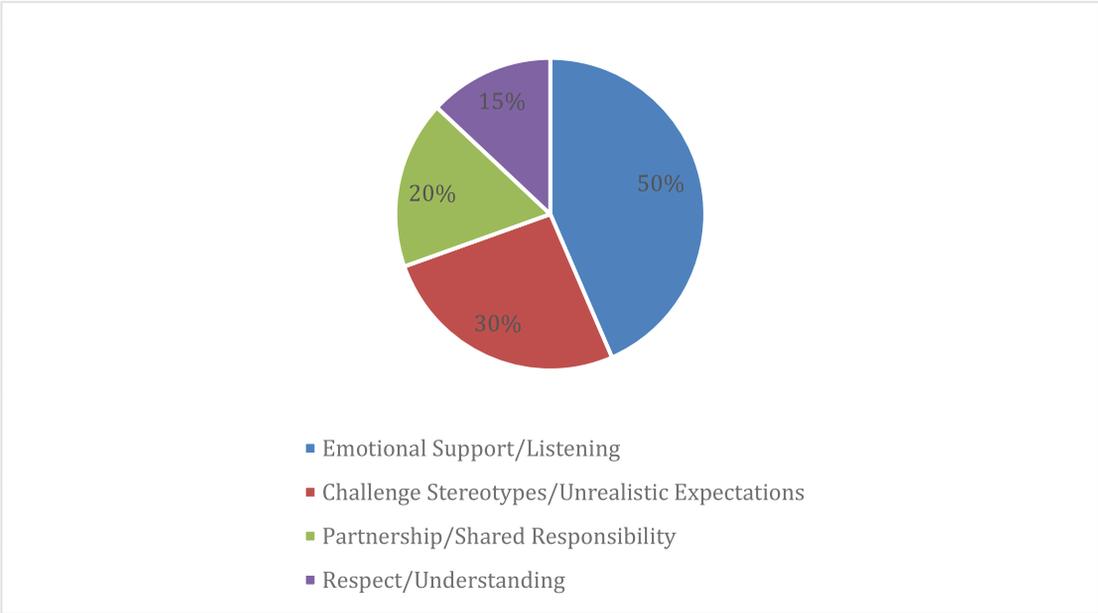
Question 18: How do you think women should support men? (Open-ended, common themes identified in individual responses)

Emotional Support/Listening: 50% (66 responses)

Challenge Stereotypes/Unrealistic Expectations: 30% (40 responses)

Partnership/Shared Responsibility: 20% (26 responses)

Respect/Understanding: 15% (20 responses)

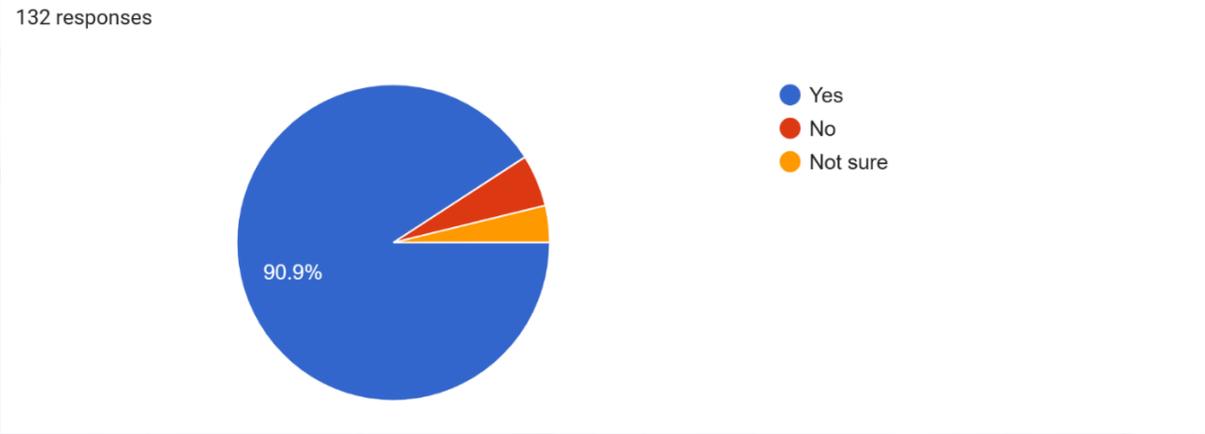


The emphasis is on emotional and empathetic support from women (50%), and a request for respect and understanding (15%) coupled with a call to challenge traditional stereotypes of men that result in unrealistic burdens and expectations (30%).

There is also a call for partnership and shared responsibility (20%), a departure from the traditional idea of men taking full responsibility for their families. Some men go as far as telling their wives not to work. This level of financial and other responsibility is unsustainable given 21st century economic and other challenges. It is important that men themselves recognise this.

5. RELATIONSHIPS AND FAMILY DYNAMICS

Question 19: Can you marry a woman more educated than yourself?



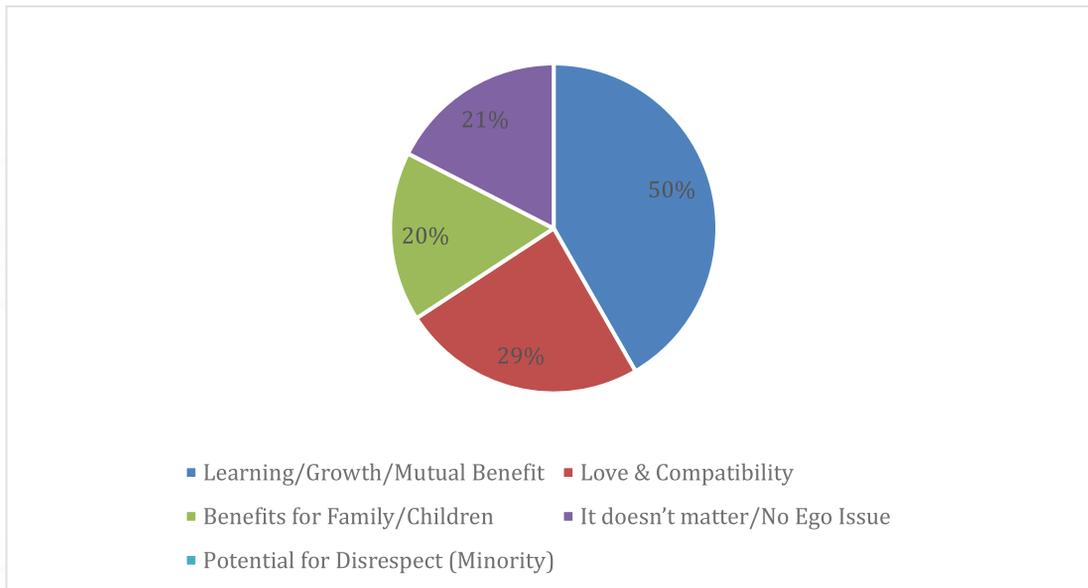
Yes: 90.9% (120 responses)

No: 4.5% (6 responses)

Not sure: 4.5% (6 responses)

An overwhelming majority (90.9%) are comfortable marrying a more educated woman, indicating a significant shift from traditional views. This is a step in the right direction, a significant mindset change.

Question 19b: Why / why not? (Open-ended, common themes identified in individual responses)



Learning/Growth/Mutual Benefit: 50% (66 responses)

Love & Compatibility: 35% (46 responses)

Benefits for Family/Children: 20% (26 responses)

Doesn't Matter/No Ego Issue: 15% (20 responses)

Potential for Disrespect (Minority): 10% (13 responses)

The responses to this question are overwhelmingly positive, with more justifications given to 'Why' it is alright to marry a woman more educated than oneself rather than the 'Why Not'. These include Learning/Growth/Mutual Benefit (50%); Love and Compatibility etc (35%); Benefits for Family/Children (20%) and importantly, Doesn't Matter and No Ego Issue (15%). These reasons essentially highlight the irrelevance of education to progress, love, and benefits for the family.

The only negative responses, a minority view, supporting the 'Why Not' side of the question relate to the Potential for Disrespect. This is a traditional view which they say is based on evidence in some cases.

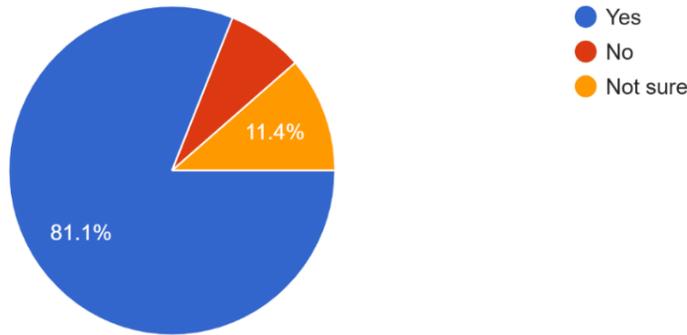
Question 20: Can you marry a woman who earns more than you?

Yes: 81.1% (107 responses)

No: 7.6% (10 responses)

Not sure: 11.4% (15 responses)

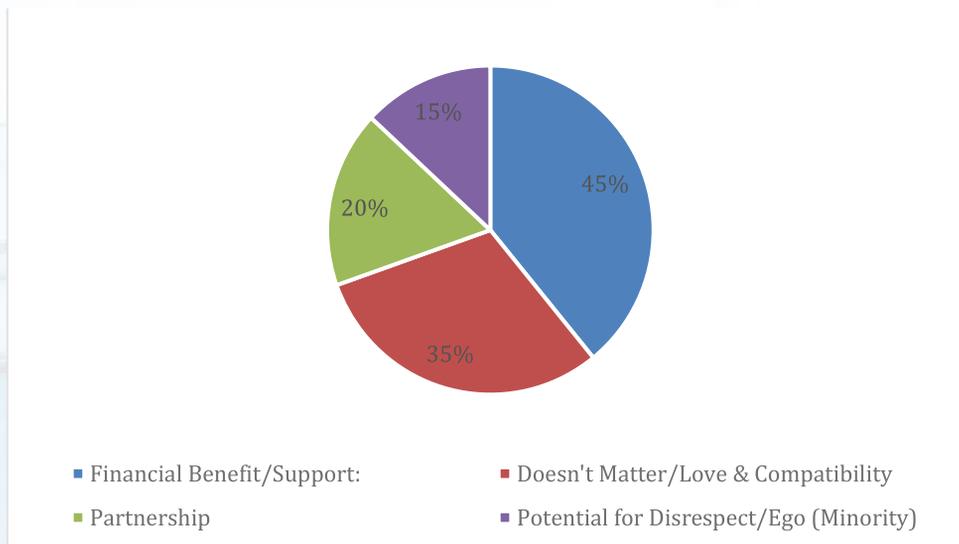
132 responses



This question about earning power elicited a lower percentage than Question 19 on education (81.1% vs 90.9%, almost 10% difference). Money it appears, is a more sensitive topic than education, a tacit recognition that there is more power and control attached to having more money. Those comfortable marrying women who earn more, perhaps feel the advantages of higher total family incomes outweigh the disadvantages, reflecting evolving financial dynamics in relationships.

A total of 19% say an outright No, or are Not Sure.

Question 20b: Why / Why not? (Open-ended, common themes identified in individual responses)



Financial Benefit/Support: 45% (59 responses)

Doesn't Matter/Love & Compatibility: 35% (46 responses)

Partnership: 20% (26 responses)

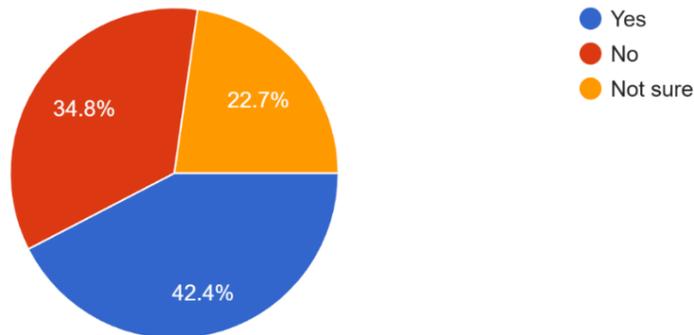
Potential for Disrespect/Ego (Minority): 15% (20 responses)

These results mirror the responses to Questions 18 and 19b which consider how women can support men and why women having higher educational qualifications should not matter. Financial benefits and the view of marriage as a partnership are key drivers for

acceptance of this dynamic, while ego and the potential for disrespect remain a concern for a minority.

Question 21: Can you live in your wife's house?

132 responses



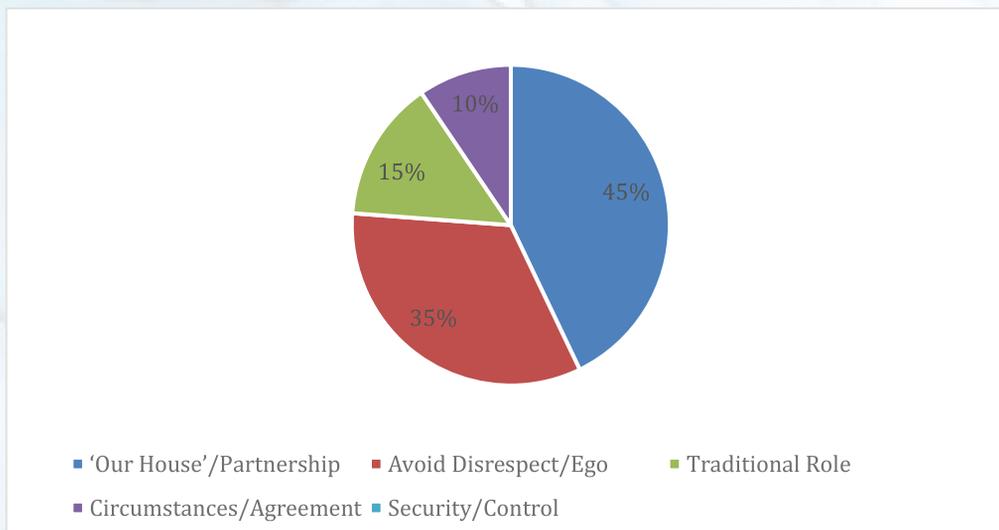
Yes: 42.4% (56 responses)

No: 34.8% (46 responses)

Not sure: 22.7% (30 responses)

As we interrogate further the dynamics of marital relationships, we see a widening gap between the acceptance (Yes) and non-acceptance (No) of the parameter given. Only 42.2% of the young men agree they would live in their wives houses, a significant departure from 90.0% for higher education, and 81.1% for a higher salary. A significant proportion (34.8%) would not, and a considerable number (22.7%) are unsure. The total outright No's and Unsure are more (57.5%) than those who said Yes. This is a more divided stance compared to education and income, suggesting lingering traditional views on home ownership. The reasons advanced are given below.

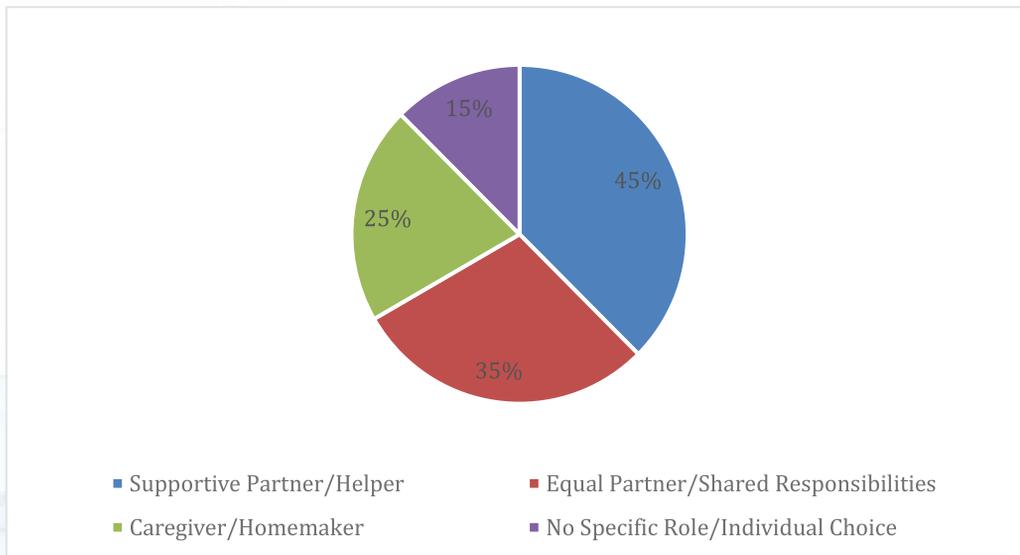
Question 21b: Why / Why not? (Open-ended, common themes identified in individual responses)



- 'Our House'/Partnership:** 45% (59 responses)
- Avoid Disrespect/Ego:** 35% (46 responses)
- Traditional Role:** 15% (20 responses)
- Circumstances/Agreement:** 10% (13 responses)
- Security/Control:** 10% (13 responses)

The understanding of the importance of a shared partnership is strong (45%), but concerns about perceived disrespect and adherence to traditional male roles in home ownership are significant. There is also a small number (10%) who concede that circumstances may make this apparently uncomfortable situation necessary. The question that may arise therefore, is how deep do the mindset changes run?

Question 22: What do you think a woman's role should be in the home? (Open-ended, common themes identified in individual responses)



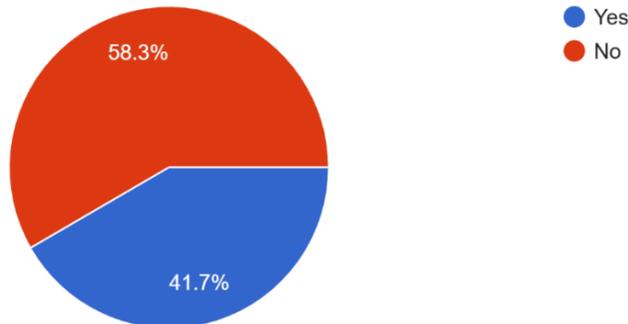
- Supportive Partner/Helper:** 45% (59 responses)
- Equal Partner/Shared Responsibilities:** 35% (46 responses)
- Caregiver/Homemaker:** 25% (33 responses)
- No Specific Role/Individual Choice:** 15% (20 responses)

There appears to be a strong leaning towards women being supportive and equal partners, while traditional homemaker/caregiver roles are still present in the responses. Having both within the same context is compatible.

The response of No Specific/Individual Choice as a role for women is very interesting, representing a more advanced, modernistic thinking, unusual within our social contexts.

Question 23: Do you think there should be specific roles for men and women in society?

132 responses



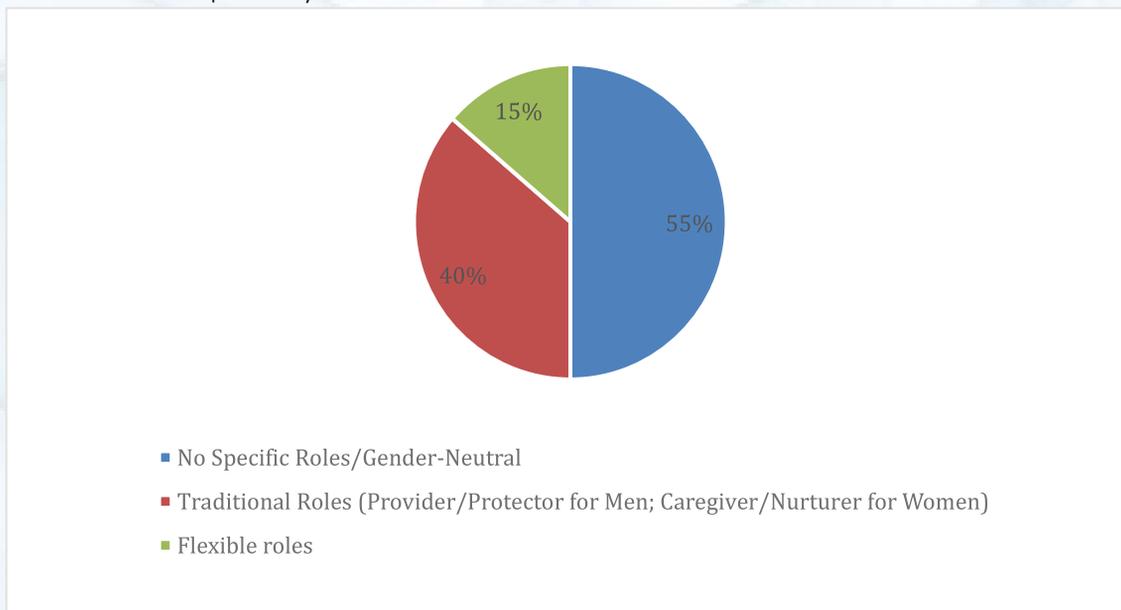
Yes: 41.7% (55 responses)

No: 58.3% (77 responses)

A majority (58.3%) believes there should not be specific gender roles in society, indicating a radical shift from traditional thinking, and a preference for gender-neutral roles. Gender neutrality in roles allow the most capable to take responsibility in any given context, and may be more optimal in family organization and dynamics than strictly assigning roles.

The 41.7% Yes may support the subdued responses for Questions 21 and 21b on living in a woman's house. The inference is that providing 'a roof' is seen primarily as a man's role and responsibility, otherwise it might threaten his own sense of worth and contribution, and lead to disrespect. For other roles, more men seem willing to be flexible.

Question 23b: Can you list out these roles? (Open-ended, common themes identified in individual responses)



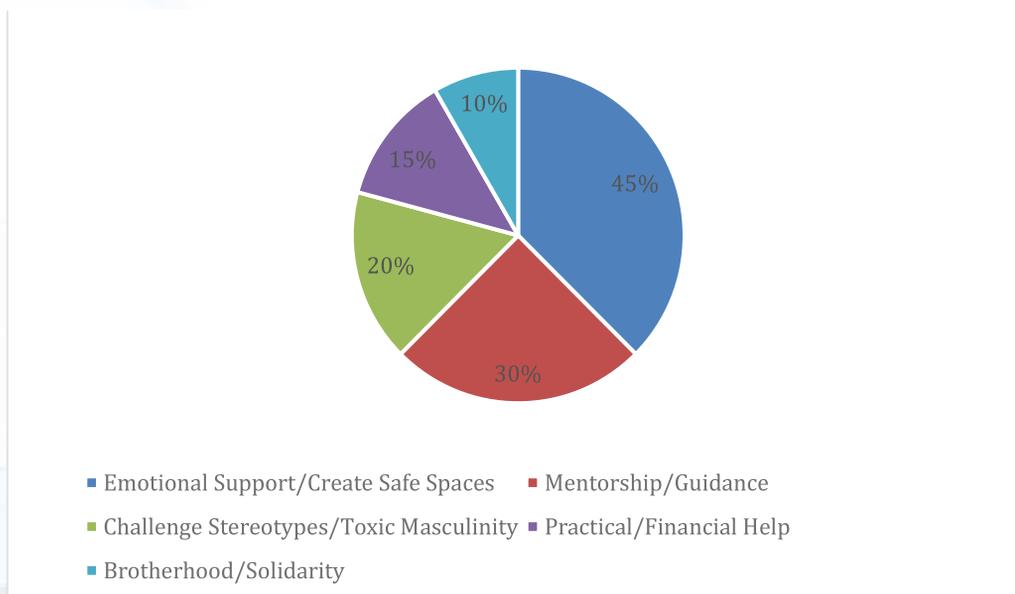
No Specific Roles/Gender-Neutral: 55% (73 responses)

Traditional Roles (Provider/Protector for Men; Caregiver/Nurturer for Women): 40% (53 responses)

Flexible roles: 15% (20 people)

Interestingly this question elicited individual responses in three categories No Specific Roles vs. Traditional Roles vs Flexible (or changeable roles). No Specific roles and Flexible roles appear to be the same, so a majority (total of 70%) rejects specific roles, those who believe in them often cite traditional divisions of labor and responsibility. There thus appear to be essentially two types of men, traditional, and non-traditional, with the non-traditional beginning to gain the upper hand. Is this a new dawn?

Question 24: How can men support other men in the society? (Open-ended, common themes identified in individual responses)



Emotional Support/Create Safe Spaces: 45% (59 responses)

Mentorship/Guidance: 30% (40 responses)

Challenge Stereotypes/Toxic Masculinity: 20% (26 responses)

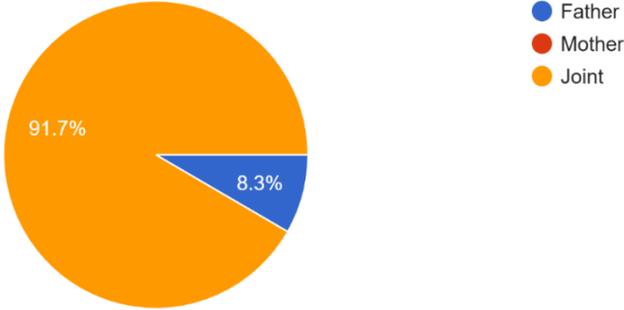
Practical/Financial Help: 15% (20 responses)

Brotherhood/Solidarity: 10% (13 responses)

There is a strong emphasis on fostering emotional openness and creating supportive communities among men. These responses are a forceful recognition that humanity does not exclude masculinity, and society should recognize the human vulnerability of males and provide the necessary support.

Question 25: Whose primary responsibility is it to ensure boys are raised to survive in today's world?

132 responses



Joint: 91.7% (121 responses)

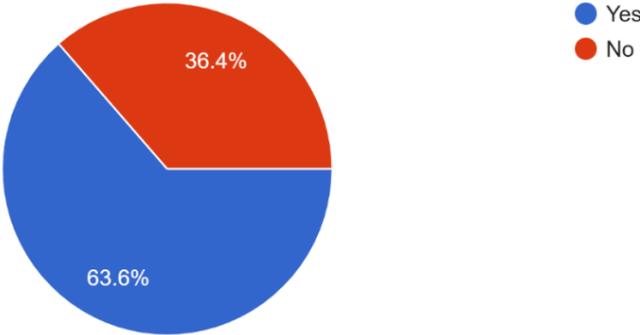
Father: 8.3% (11 responses)

Mother: Not explicitly shown in the provided chart, but implied to be very small or zero.

An overwhelming majority (91.7%) believes it is the joint responsibility of both parents to raise boys. We agree. 8.3% think it is the father's responsibility, but interestingly there is no evidence to suggest any respondent considers it the responsibility of mothers to raise sons ... and yet the reality from our conversations with male participants on our programmes, is that many of them are raised, and sometimes financially sponsored, by their mothers. Hopefully when they are parents, they will live up to their responses to this question.

Question 26: Do you think fathers are playing their roles well in raising boys?

129 responses



Yes: 63.6% (82 responses)

No: 36.4% (47 responses)

A majority of respondents (63.6%) believe that fathers are playing their roles well in raising boys. However, a significant proportion (36.4%) holds the view that fathers are not performing well in this regard. There is thus a mixed perception within the surveyed group regarding the effectiveness of fathers in their parenting role. One should also consider the importance of strong male role models, in the absence of a father's presence or availability.

V. Finally, All Things Considered

The 2025 "Are Men Being Left Behind?" survey provides a perspective on the challenges and societal perceptions affecting men, particularly among a younger, educated male demographic in Nigeria. The findings indicate a clear perception that men face specific disadvantages, especially concerning mental health support and the burden of traditional societal expectations. There is a recognized need for more robust support systems and a call for gender equality initiatives to encompass men's issues.

The responses suggest an evolving outlook on gender roles within relationships, with a willingness to accept more egalitarian dynamics in terms of education and income. However, some traditional views persist, particularly regarding home ownership and the broader concept of specific gender roles in society. The survey also highlights a collective belief in shared parental responsibility for raising boys and a generally positive view of fathers' current roles.

The changes we have observed from the responses validate and justify the *raison d'être* of boys to MEN Foundation. The mindset shift for men has started and is evident in the young graduates at the core of our flagship programme "Owning My Space' Leadership and Life Skills programme for graduates. The young men, participants on our programme are our primary focus precisely because they are young and can change. Those who have attended our programmes are also the primary respondents on this survey, so these responses most definitely reflect their changing mindsets. This is exciting for the Foundation and we can boldly take some credit for some of these mindset and attitude changes. We have shared in the next section, some feedback received from the young men who attended our programmes. These bear witness to the outcome of this survey.

These young men, corporers, entering the workforce as 'new men' or at the very least, 'changing men' with new mindsets and attitudes, will have the power to change the gender narrative and become their best selves, because society, of whom they are a significant part, with understanding, will give them the opportunity and support they need to survive in a changing world.

Overall, this report underscores the importance of continued dialogue and targeted interventions to address the identified challenges faced by men. It suggests that efforts to promote emotional openness, provide accessible mental health resources, and foster a more balanced understanding of gender roles could contribute to a more equitable and supportive society for all. The insights gained will inform future programmes and advocacy efforts aimed at supporting men's holistic development.

We believe additional research is required because this pool of subjects is very specific – mostly Gen Z, young men who are beginning to view the world differently. They are also educated and think differently from many of their more traditional parents. Our results do however show that slowly mindsets and attitudes are beginning to change ... behaviour will follow, and then we will see significant changes in the gender narrative in society.

VI. Changing the Gender Narrative: Feedback from our graduate Leadership and Life Skills programme 'Owning My Space'

- *A Paradigm-shifting experience...delivers on its promise by sowing the seeds in us that show us the kind of man can be, not just who we are expected to be. - Izundu*
- *A beautiful initiative. I really had to learn and unlearn. I never knew there could be a safe space for the male gender, thank you. - Joe*
- *Owning My Space was special. Considering how silent the world can be towards toxic masculinity in the affairs to men, it was refreshing to get noticed and talked to about the vulnerabilities that men face. It was necessary. The programme was a powerful and impactful initiative. It effectively mentored us young men, equipping us with essential life skills/positive values and leadership qualities.*
- *The session was engaging, relatable and fostered a safe space for growth and self expression. It was a much needed effort in shaping responsible and confident young men. "I did not expect the programme to be this fun and interactive. It allowed us as men to be men not as society wants it to be but how we want to be, having talks about challenges and mental health talks as a man has been educative. It was great! - Michael*
- *This programme was an eye opener for me, it made me realise I need to put in work to become the best version of myself. - Nduka*
- *Awesome session on men expressing themselves. I am making a conscious decision to not end up like my father, and also provide support to him during these difficult times. - Joshua*
- *This is a good initiative for Nigerian men. There are so many out there who need this teaching because they make mistakes that cost them their lives. The programme helped remind me to save for the future because my goal is to be financially independent.*
- *Coming here I really did not have much expectations but I am mind blown. The programme touched each sessions that affects the lives of boys. I love how wholistic the sessions were, personally I really enjoyed the monologues and could relate to some of them. - Fiyin*
- *The programme talked about every aspect that touches a boy child and I learned to speak up about my emotions and dump the archaic mentality that men always have to be strong and bottle their feelings. - Fola*
- *I always wondered why I never saw organizations that help the male child but today I was amazed to see one, I am grateful for the teachings. They really impacted me.*
- *The programme been helpful to broaden my understanding of what it means to be a man and the kind of relationship a man should have with his family.*
- *The programme was like a breath of fresh air, it made me feel heard.*
- *boys to MEN Foundation has honestly been a safe space for me. This is my second time here, and honestly, it has been worth it. – Chima*
- *The sessions were very insightful, particularly the first session that had reflections on different issues surrounding the male gender. Some of my perspectives were challenged and I will go on to do better than I am currently doing.*

VII. About boys to MEN Foundation

boys to MEN Foundation is a Nigerian non-governmental organisation (NGO) established in 2017, dedicated to supporting boys and men to become their best selves, and so positively impact the communities in which they live. Thomas Page McBee writes that we must '*create a culture where boys are not raised to see masculinity and humanity as mutually exclusive.*' This embodies our *raison d'être*, together with our motto of *integrity, leadership and equity*.

Our programmes are built on three pillars

- **Pillar I:** Promoting our Mission, the publications and productions that support our second pillar;
- **Pillar II:** Achieving our Vision, the core programmes designed to achieve the changes we seek, for our males to become leaders and their best selves; and
- **Pillar III:** Community Outreach, supporting the vulnerable in our communities.

Our Vision: To shape and produce a new generation of ethical, well behaved young men capable of providing strong, impartial leadership; constantly striving to become their best selves, and possessing the confidence to accept that others may wish to do likewise.

Our Mission: To inspire, nurture and develop males to become confident, adult leaders in society.

Our Motto: Integrity, leadership and equity

Our Slogan: #MalesMatterToo



VIII. *Change Manifesto*

... A declaration of what we all can achieve, if we set our minds to it.

We can change anything!

Our minds make what they will of circumstances

Our relationships, constantly changing rhythms

Social constructs, man-made roles and rules, order our lives

We get it wrong, striving to get it right!

We can change everything!

Let each, male and female, labour as one

Life, a shared cause.

Let old mindsets holding sway give way

Roles defined by need

By circumstance

Not by gender.

A shared world

Change, the only certainty.

*From 'Melodies only Mind: A collection of poems'
written by Ifeoma I. Idigbe*



boys to MEN
Foundation

integrity, leadership and equity...