

UNDERSTANDING OF MASCULINITY AND GENDER EQUALITY IN THE SECURITY SECTOR OF UKRAINE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This national study and its dissemination were commissioned by Promundo and UN Women Ukraine under the UN Women Ukraine projects “Gender Equality at the Centre of the Reforms, Peace and Security” and “Building Democratic, Peaceful and Gender Equal Society in Ukraine,” funded by the Government of Sweden and the Government of Norway, respectively, with the coordination of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine and the participation of the National Academy of Internal Affairs, in partnership with the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology.

Authorship

Promundo and UN Women Ukraine coordinated the study in partnership with the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, the National Academy of Internal Affairs, and the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology.

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the views of UN Women, the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations, or the official position of the Government of Sweden and the Government of Norway.

The first-ever International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES¹) in Ukraine’s security sector was conducted from February 2019 to December 2020 at the initiative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine (MIA). It involved close cooperation with – and the expert and technical support of – UN Women, with financial support from the Governments of Sweden and Norway and partnership with the National Academy of Internal Affairs (NAIA), the nongovernmental organization Promundo-US², and the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS).

IMAGES is one of the most comprehensive studies ever to explore men’s practices and attitudes related to gender equality alongside women’s. Using a wide variety of measures, IMAGES questionnaires investigate areas such as gender-based violence, health and health-related practices, household division of labor, men’s participation in caregiving and as fathers, men’s and women’s attitudes about gender and gender-related policies, transactional sex, men’s reports of criminal behavior, and quality of life. “Gender” refers to socially constructed expectations about how boys, men, girls, women, and gender-diverse people behave and see themselves in interactions with the world and each other³. Social norms – people’s expectations about what they are supposed to do and what others do – are learned through socialization and influence experiences during the life course, including social hierarchies, access to resources, and exposure to violence⁴.

The overarching goal of IMAGES is to **build understanding of men’s and women’s practices and attitudes related to gender equality in order to inform, drive, and monitor efforts to promote gender equality, particularly at the government policy level**. Toward this end, IMAGES findings have been widely disseminated globally to inform policy and programming across multiple sectors. This study explored gender and masculinity within the Ukrainian security sector, with the IMAGES questionnaire thoroughly adapted and revised to reflect the local context and the MIA’s particular needs. Data collection involved face-to-face interviews with members of the National Police, National Guard of Ukraine, and State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, with one self-administered section, and the data collected provide a rich source to inform policy aimed at gender equality in the security sector of Ukraine.

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

The survey was conducted in six administrative regions: Zakarpatska Oblast (west); Kyivska Oblast and the City of Kyiv (center); Kharkivska, Donetsk, and Luhanska oblasts (east), and Odeska Oblast (south). The sample of 1,500 people was equally divided among the MIA’s three services – the National Police, the National Guard of Ukraine, and the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine – and the target audience was certified employees of these services, including those currently serving in the Joint Forces Operation (JFO) zone, those who had returned to regular service after the JFO, and those with no JFO experience. MIA representatives selected the participating departments/military units and the participating respondents. To ensure the minimum necessary representation of women in the sample, at least 10 percent of respondents had to be women. In the end, the study included 1,595 participants, of whom 241 – 15 percent – were women.

FINDINGS

GENDER ATTITUDES

The majority of respondents support gender equality in Ukrainian society, even though a large proportion also hold restrictive attitudes about some gender topics at the societal level. The majority of respondents are generally positive about the call to gender equality; 65 percent of the surveyed men and women agree that Ukraine needs greater effort to promote equality for men and women. A notable proportion of men and women, though, hold misconceptions about gender equality; about one-third of respondents (37 percent of men and 30 percent of women) believe that when work opportunities are scarce, men should have access to jobs before women. Slightly more than a quarter of respondents (29 percent of men and 26 percent of women) feel that when someone says “gender,” they are talking about women or sexual minorities, and nearly every fifth man (16 percent) and every tenth woman (11 percent) says more rights for women mean fewer rights for men.

Men’s attitudes about gender roles, masculinity, and femininity are almost always more restrictive than those of women. Many respondents share the idea of rigid gender roles – and men reveal biased views somewhat more

¹ See: <https://promundoglobal.org/programs/international-men-and-gender-equality-survey-images/>

² See: <https://promundoglobal.org/>

³ Authorship of the term belongs to Promundo

⁴ Same as above

often than women. The thought that a man should have the final word about decisions in the home is supported by over half of men (56 percent) and only about a quarter of women (26 percent). Similarly, nearly half of men (48 percent) and just a quarter of women (23 percent) say it is better for everyone if the man earns the money and the woman only takes care of the home and children. Men reveal stereotypical expectations about masculinity and femininity more often than women do, though some aspects of the issue are seen as less important by men and women alike. In particular, 70 percent of men and half that proportion of women (35 percent) feel a gay man is not a “real man”; 15 percent of men and 6.4 percent of women say a man who talks a lot about his worries, fears, and problems should not really get respect. Also, 12 percent of men and 2.1 percent of women agree that a “real man” should have as many sexual partners as he can. The statement that it is more important for a woman to marry than to have a career is supported by 47 percent of the surveyed men compared to 28 percent of women.

Overall, there is relatively limited support for a strictly gendered division of household labor. As few as 15 percent of men and 12 percent of women say taking care of children should be only the mother’s responsibility; 9.8 percent of men and 5.0 percent of women support the idea that a man should not have to do household chores, and 11 percent of men and 3.8 percent of women believe that only the main breadwinner needs to know the household’s financial information.

In an encouraging finding, very few respondents express justification for intimate partner violence. Small proportions of men (3.9 percent) and women (2.9 percent) say there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten. Overall, 1.3 percent of men and 1.2 percent of women agree that a woman should tolerate violence to keep the family together; 4.0 percent of men and 0.4 percent of women agree that men should use violence to get respect if necessary.

CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Nearly all respondents recalled their fathers being involved in at least some domestic work and childcare, although men were more likely than women to report that their fathers had participated in such tasks. The vast majority of men (96 percent) and women (93 percent) had fathers who carried out some traditionally “feminine” household tasks during the respondent’s childhood

or adolescence. Male and female respondents said most common task done by fathers was cooking (reported by 90 percent of the surveyed men and women), while over 81 percent of male and female respondents remembered their fathers doing childcare tasks. Additionally, most respondents had fathers who took responsibility for school-related tasks, such as transporting children to and from school (reported by 87 percent of men and 83 percent of women) and helping them with homework (86 percent and 81 percent, respectively). Among the least widespread tasks completed by fathers were washing clothes (mentioned by 67 percent of men and 57 percent of women), cleaning the house (mentioned by 85 percent of men and 75 percent of women), and cleaning the bath or toilet (mentioned by 75 percent of men and 54 percent of women).

At the same time, most respondents felt their mothers had decision-making power in their childhood homes. Over two-thirds of respondents (74 percent of women and 70 percent of men) think that in their childhood, their mother was involved in making important decisions, such as spending the family budget on big purchases like a car, a house, or large home appliances.

However, many mothers still experienced violence in the respondents’ childhood homes. Psychological violence against mothers was more frequent than physical violence, and daughters noticed it more often than sons (46 percent compared to 38 percent). Nearly half of surveyed men (46 percent) and two in five surveyed women (39 percent) witnessed domestic violence against their mother at least once. Additionally, 18 percent of men and 21 percent of women witnessed their mothers being beaten when they were children.

And half of surveyed men and women experienced violent childhoods, with boys at consistently higher risk of experiencing physical violence at home and at school. Overall, 47 percent of women and 55 percent of men experienced domestic violence as children. Physical abuse was more commonly reported than psychological abuse, and boys experienced it more often: 52 percent of men were physically punished by their family members at least once in childhood compared to 44 percent of women, while 19 percent of men and 17 percent of women had been publicly humiliated by their relatives. Boys also had a greater likelihood of exposure to physical violence at school. Overall, 37 percent of the surveyed men and 15

percent of women experienced physical or emotional violence from teachers or peers in school environments. The most widespread were fights between schoolchildren: 33 percent of male respondents and 14 percent of female ones said someone in their school or community was physically violent to them or threatened them with violence at least once. Physically punished by teachers were 9.7 percent of boys (compared to 2.9 percent of girls).

HOUSEHOLD DYNAMICS

Among Ukrainian families, joint decision-making by spouses is a promising indicator of equitable household dynamics. Respondents in this survey were more likely to identify certain types of decisions as mutual, including decisions about making big purchases (68 percent of men and women believe they make decisions together) and about contraception (78 percent of men and 71 percent of women believe these decisions are mutual). Overall, 73 percent of the surveyed men and 80 percent of women think that in their families, women participate in making all of the important decisions that were asked about – and respondents are pleased with this situation: 97 percent of men and 91 percent of women are satisfied with decision-making in their family. On the other hand, men are more often convinced that their partners are also satisfied with the situation (96 percent of men think so), while women are less sure about it (91 percent of women).

Although nearly all men participate in housework to some extent, differences remain in the types and amounts of work most frequently performed by men and by women. Nearly all men employed in the security sector say they are rather involved in housework – 99 percent do at least one chore traditionally considered “feminine” at least sometimes. While 96 percent report cleaning at least sometimes, men are significantly less involved in all the other studied chores compared to women: 91 percent cook food compared to 100 percent of women, 84 percent clean the bathroom/toilet versus 97 percent of women, and 85 percent wash clothes versus 100 percent of women. Women are also more involved in daily work necessary to satisfy the household’s basic needs: 100 percent of women buy household goods at least sometimes compared to 97 percent of men, and 92 percent of women control the weekly budget compared to 84 percent of men. Instead, men more often do tasks requiring physical strength: 98 percent of men repair something in the household at least sometimes

compared to 51 percent of women; 84 percent of men do outdoor household chores compared to 64 percent of women.

PARENTING

Nearly all men participate in parenting activities, but the distribution of duties remains unequal, and most daily childcare chores are done by women. Nearly all the surveyed men who have children (95 percent) report their involvement in at least some childcare chores for their youngest child; for example, men are most involved in playing and doing leisure activities with children. In addition, many men talk with their children about personal matters, take them to/from school or daycare, help give them a bath, or help with homework. However, the survey findings show that in most cases, many daily childcare activities are performed almost exclusively by women; these duties include feeding and supervising children, changing diapers or clothes, and staying home with the child when he or she is sick.

Even as most parents express disapproval for physical punishment to discipline children, a significant proportion have used some violent or physical means of discipline themselves. In the preceding month, half of parents used some violent methods to discipline their children aged 3 to 14 – such as yelling (53 percent of male respondents and 60 percent of female ones) and beating or slapping (24 percent of the surveyed men and women). About three-quarters (72 percent) of men and two-thirds (65 percent) of women feel that parents who are sensitive to their children’s feelings and moods often spoil them. Also, 55 percent of men and women believe the problem with children today is that parents give them too much freedom. Most respondents disapprove of physical punishment to discipline children, though men are slightly more inclined to think that spanking children for misbehavior teaches them to behave themselves (15 percent of men and 7.7 percent of women agree with this statement).

SECURITY SECTOR FOCUS

When it comes to a career in the security sector, female and male employees have different motivations for joining – and although women are more likely to report experiencing negative mental health outcomes, high proportions of both men and women experience these effects. For more than half of men (55 percent), the main motive to work in the MIA is protecting the country, while women have several major motives: Protecting

the country is crucial for 37 percent of female employees, but 24 percent name financial security and 19 percent name family traditions as crucial factors – motives that men mentioned much more rarely. Additionally, the survey found 48 percent of men and 31 percent of women have undergone traumatic incidents during their MIA service (for instance, the death of a colleague, being shot at, seeing a corpse, or discharging their weapon against someone). As a result, 37 percent of these men and 53 percent of these women had at least one of the listed consequences lately: nightmares, trying hard not to think about the incidents, being alert, feeling detached from people, or feeling guilty.

Gender-inequitable attitudes and norms persist across the security sector, and in some cases, men are twice as likely to hold inequitable views. For example, men are about twice as likely as women to think that MIA units does not need to employ more women (40 percent versus 21 percent), and they are half as likely to support an increase in the number of female MIA superiors (19 percent of men versus 36 percent of women). Additionally, while 91 percent of women believe that equally qualified male and female employees will do a job equally well, only 76 percent of men think so. Just 39 percent of men say women are physically able to fulfill military or police duties at the same level men do, while 54 percent of women think so. Men are also less supportive of women fulfilling some professional roles in the sector, such as peacekeepers, generals, or members of the National Guard of Ukraine. When it comes to workplace discrimination, over one-third of women (38 percent) agree they and their female colleagues are exposed to numerous forms of discrimination in the security sector compared to 24 percent of men saying female colleagues experience this. Additionally, most men and women (73 percent and 85 percent, respectively) agree the MIA's handling of sexual harassment among the sector employees needs improving.

Still, there are promising signs. Respondents of both genders are quite comfortable working with female colleagues at the same level (85 percent of men and 86 percent of women), with female superiors (65 percent of men and 69 percent of women), and female subordinates (48 percent of men and 49 percent of women). Respondents also show high overall support for women as negotiators or police officers and for women's elevation to middle-ranking officers (i.e., majors to colonels). A vast majority of the surveyed women (74 percent) say there

is a high level of female solidarity in the security sector, and 98 percent of women and 93 percent of men believe in equal financial reward for the same work in the MIA system. Equal promotion opportunities for male and female employees are supported by 96 percent of women and 92 percent of men. Nearly half of the respondents (47 percent of the surveyed men and 42 percent of women) agree that the retirement age for men and women should be the same.

EXPERIENCE OF INTIMATE PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS

Surveyed men and women agree: Men in intimate partner relationships expect to be able to exert control over female partners. Overall, 72 percent of men and 77 percent of women report at least one form of controlling behavior in their family. This is most often expressed in expecting the woman to agree when the man wants sex (78 percent of men and 85 percent of women). Additionally, 76 percent of men want to know where the partner is all the time, and nearly the same share of women (74 percent) say the same about their partner; 29 percent of men and 20 percent of women say the male partner does not let the woman wear certain clothes.

Men's controlling behaviors often result in psychological, economic, or physical violence against their partners. The most frequent is the woman's exposure to psychological violence in her family: 48 percent of men have committed and 39 percent of women have experienced it in various forms in their life with their partner. The second prevailing type is economic violence, and women report it more often than men (experienced by 30 percent of women compared to 18 percent of men reporting perpetration). Some 17 percent of women have experienced physical violence by their partner, while 10 percent of men admit they have done so. Additionally, 11 percent of women and 3.4 percent of men reported the man had sex with his partner even when she did not want to.

Both men and women have inequitable attitudes about sexual harassment, although men are generally less likely to acknowledge the problem or agree that solutions are needed. More than half of surveyed women (58 percent) report experiencing sexual harassment or sex-related actions in public places, while only one-third of their male colleagues (33 percent) report committing such actions. In general, both men and women hold attitudes about sexual harassment that blame women and excuse men. For instance, 14 percent of the surveyed men and

18 percent of surveyed women say women may provoke harassment by the way they are dressed. However, women are twice as likely as men to agree that a man is unable to control himself after a long period of sexual deprivation (20 percent of women and 10 percent of men). The thought that a woman joining the security sector should expect harassment is supported by 11 percent of men and 4.3 percent of women. Overall, 81 percent of men and 94 percent of women support adopting a law criminalizing sexual harassment or sexual offenses in public places. Furthermore, 58 percent of men and 68 percent of women are convinced that domestic violence laws do not guarantee sufficient protection for victims. Men believe that laws make it too easy for a woman to bring violence charges against a man more often than women believe this (48 percent compared to 37 percent).

HEALTH

Respondents also shared a mixed picture of their personal health, including some barriers to seeking formal health care. Some 58 percent of men and 34 percent of women report smoking cigarettes daily. Repeated cases of alcohol abuse (at least once a month over the past year) were reported by 26 percent of men and 7.2 percent of women. Worryingly, the percentage of those who try to solve their health issues without visiting doctors is 58 percent for men and 45 percent for women.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This special edition of IMAGES, focusing on employees in Ukraine's National Police, National Guard of Ukraine, and State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, provides valuable information to guide policymakers, sector leaders, and all who seek to achieve gender equality within the country's security sector. The report is distinctive in that it provides men's and women's responses side by side on a wide variety of topics related to gender equality at home, at work, and in society. A selection of the most important high-level takeaways include:

- **Security sector employees face traumas in the line of duty, but these experiences are not a significant factor in their attitudes and behaviors related to gender.** In answer to a core research question posed by the MIA at the outset of the study, the data show that one's experience of active combat or proximity to trauma is not the core driver of gender-inequitable behaviors or views. At the same time, many security sector employees have experienced traumatic events in the context

of their jobs and share indications of strained mental health, in some cases with gendered patterns.

- **Encouragingly, most workers in the sector, regardless of gender, support equal pay and equal opportunities for men and women.** There are some very encouraging findings, particularly on men's support for policies that ensure equality of pay and opportunity among men and women in the sector; these findings can be very useful in further examining human resource policies, campaign development, and awareness-raising efforts. The vast majority – over 90 percent of men in the study – agree that men and women in the same position should receive equal salaries and that men and women should have equal promotion and advancement opportunities in the MIA.

- **Overall, however, men's attitudes on gender-related topics are much more restrictive than women's and raise concerns in many areas.** This conclusion is especially important for a sector that is so male-dominated in its membership. The high proportion of men in the sector means that sector leadership needs to devote serious attention to the attitudes held by men within their workplaces. As the percentages presented throughout this report show, men were more likely than women to agree with nearly every restrictive statement about gender roles and masculinity in the study.

- **The study also detected the use and experience of unwanted sexual advances in public spaces (including, but not limited to, the workplace), as well as discriminatory attitudes related to sexual harassment.** Almost three in five female security sector employees have experienced unwanted sexual advances in public spaces, including but not limited to sexual harassment, and one in three has experienced this within the last 12 months. This refers to experiences that took place in any public location, including but not limited to the workplace. One-third of men reported having carried out sexual advances in public, and 16 percent of men admitted to engaging in this behavior during the last year.

- **Restrictive ideas about working women and gender roles persist among security sector staff, even as most approve of women working in the sector and as encouraging signs emerge on generational shifts in men's contributions to household work.** While men's attitudes about gender roles, masculinity, and femininity are

almost always more restrictive than those of women, approximately one-quarter to one-third of surveyed women also held restrictive attitudes on women's domestic and professional roles.

- **An additional area of concern is the high rate of men's controlling behaviors in relationships, as well as sexual harassment in public spaces.** The frequency of controlling behaviors – reported by over 72 percent of participants – is important to consider. Speaking to their own relationships, 78 percent of men and 85 percent of women say men expect their wives to agree to sex when they want it, and 76 percent of men and 74 percent of women say men need to know where their female partner is at all times. These experiences undermine women's autonomy and promote expectations of their submission to male partners.

Research on masculinity and gender issues in the Ukrainian security sector clearly shows the need for a roadmap of gender equality policy implementation in the MIA's departments and units, with the survey uncovering not only challenges related to professional duties but also the need to implement effective staff-organizing, educational, psychological, and teaching measures to ensure employees consciously approach their work environment with an understanding of human rights, gender equality, mutual respect, and tolerance. There are positive indications that such a roadmap would receive the needed high-level political support and priority.

Based on these findings, members of the working group, responsible for conducting the study have prepared recommendations for further promoting gender equality as a priority in the security sector.

