



FACT SHEET - UNPACKING MEN'S HEALTH

There has been little work done on masculinities, both as a field of inquiry and site of advocacy, in Sri Lanka. To address the gap in evidence-based studies of masculinities, CARE Sri Lanka undertook a study on men's knowledge, practices and attitudes toward gender and gender-based violence (GBV) in Colombo, Hambantota, Nuwara Eliya and Batticaloa districts. The study is part of the UN Multi-country Study on Men and Violence, coordinated by Partners for Prevention, a UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and UNV regional joint programme for gender-based violence prevention in Asia and the Pacific, which explores gender-based violence and masculinities to inform evidence-based violence prevention interventions.

The study highlights the need to work with men in more targeted psychosocial programmes. Acknowledgement of men's own experiences of childhood violence and the need to create the space for healing and wholeness must be facilitated. Men's risky behaviors and the need for sexual and reproductive health education and services for men arise through some of the key findings of this study.

Key findings

MEN'S HEALTH

- ❖ Economic pressures resulting from inadequate income, lack of economic assets and financial responsibilities as breadwinners and male heads of households were found to be amongst the primary causes of male stress and lack of well-being.
- ❖ Eight percent of men had moderate depressive symptoms while 6% showed signs of high depression. Seven percent of men had ever had suicidal thoughts. Rates of male depression were highest in Nuwara Eliya, where 28% of men reported depressive symptoms, followed by Batticaloa (12%) and Colombo (6%), with men in Hambantota reporting the lowest rates of depression (4%).
- ❖ Men with less education were at highest risk of depression and suicidal thoughts, possibly due to the fewer opportunities for employment and social mobility available to men with less education.
- ❖ Fifty-six percent of men reported work-related stress.
- ❖ While 70% of male respondents declared that to be a man means providing for one's family and extended family, 50% reported being frequently stressed or depressed because they have to provide and be responsible for their family, pointing to the great social burden placed on men to be providers.
- ❖ Men who had multiple sexual partners or who engaged in transactional sex and sex with sex workers were found to be significantly more likely to force non-partner women into sex.
- ❖ Only 4% of men surveyed had ever been tested for HIV/AIDS and condom-use is low.



MEN'S EXPERIENCES OF ADVERSITY

- ❖ Four percent of male respondents had been sexually assaulted or raped by another man. Although the prevalence of sexual violence against men is much lower than that against women, the community, legal and medical support channels available to men who experience rape are far fewer. Ten percent of men surveyed in Colombo had experienced sexual violence by another man, compared with 3% in Nuwara Eliya, 2% in Batticaloa and 1% in Hambantota.
- ❖ More than 4% of men had experienced homophobic violence and the majority of both male and female respondents stated that it would be shameful to have a homosexual son.
- ❖ Eleven percent of men had ever been in a fight with a weapon. The highest percentage of males reporting the use of a weapon in fights was in Colombo, the capital city with rapidly expanding suburbs, slums and a migrant labour population moving to the city for work.
- ❖ More men (28%) than women (3%) reported experiencing sexual abuse during childhood, highlighting the need to make visible the vulnerability of boys to sexual abuse without detracting attention from the issue of sexual abuse of girls.
- ❖ Men in Colombo (22%) and Nuwara Eliya (19%) reported higher rates of having experienced childhood sexual abuse than men in Batticaloa (8%) and Hambantota (8%).

IMPACT OF MEN'S EXPERIENCES OF ADVERSITY ON THEIR USE OF VIOLENCE

- ❖ Men who experienced emotional, sexual or physical abuse during childhood were 1.7 to 2 times more likely to use violence against a female intimate partner than men who did not experience abuse.
- ❖ Men who were emotionally or sexually abused as children were more than twice as likely to use sexual violence, including rape, against a non-partner.