



For more information, or to request an interview, please contact:

Michelle Geis Wallace at mgeis@burness.com or +254 711 326 770

Eloni Porcher at eporcher@burness.com or +1 443 869 0073

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 13:30 GMT/ 08:30AM ET ON 28 JANUARY 2021

Editor's note: All press materials, including the full report and individual country reports, can be accessed on the online press room at <https://burness.com/press-room/gendersurvey-wd>, password: [gender](#).

New multi-country survey finds overwhelming majority of citizens want their governments to act now to accelerate progress on gender equality

- A new survey covering 17¹ countries on six continents—representing half the world's population—reveals that a majority of respondents want their governments to devote more resources and attention to supporting gender equality.
- The first survey of its kind since the outbreak of COVID-19, the new poll shows that the pandemic has taken a disproportionate toll on women compared to men, in terms of both mental health and household obligations.
- The survey offers a roadmap for actions that the public most wants to see, spotlighting where leaders' and decision-makers' focus and investments can have the most striking impact.

NEW YORK/PARIS, January 28, 2021—A first-of-its-kind international survey finds that the global public overwhelmingly supports gender equality, and a resounding majority is ready for their governments and business leaders to take action to bridge the gender divide. At the same time, women and girls around the world are suffering the worst impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, which has disproportionately affected their mental and physical health, as well as their economic prospects. The vast majority of respondents—80% on average across the 17 surveyed countries—said gender equality is a priority to them personally, and 65% said their government should do more to promote gender equality in their country.

¹ Australia, Argentina, Canada, Colombia, France, Germany, Great Britain, India, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, New Zealand, China, South Africa, Switzerland, Tunisia, and the United States

The global public perception survey, released in a new report by Women Deliver and Focus 2030, includes 17 countries across six continents whose inhabitants represent half the world's population.

The results come two months before the [Generation Equality Forum](#), a civil society–centered, global gathering for gender equality convened by UN Women and co-hosted by the governments of Mexico and France. There, leaders in government, the private sector, and civil society will have a critical opportunity to commit to bold, specific actions on gender equality issues. The forum will galvanize political action and secure financial commitments for the period of 2021-2026 on measures to advance women's rights and opportunities around the world. Sixty-one percent of respondents urged their governments to use this forum as an opportunity to increase funding for gender equality initiatives.

“2021 promises to be a milestone year for accelerating global progress on gender equality. The Generation Equality Forum will call on governments, corporation, civil society and people of all ages and backgrounds around the world to step up with bold commitments to make gender equality a reality,” said Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women. “At such a critical moment it is invigorating to see that global public opinion is not only behind us, but pushing us to do more. The world is affirming that gender equality cannot wait. We can and we must achieve it in our generation, and it must be intersectional and intergenerational.”

Despite 25 years of progress since the landmark World Conference on Women in Beijing, no country has fully met its commitments to gender equality. More than half of the world's girls and women—as many as 2.1 billion people—live in countries that are not on track to reach key gender equality-related targets by 2030.²

“We've made a lot of progress on gender equality over the last 25 years, but there's so much work left to do. Now, with COVID-19, just as women are assuming an outsized role in responding to the pandemic in their communities and at home, they are also experiencing enormous added burden, and we could see the consequences of that strain playing out for years to come,” said Divya Mathew, Senior Manager, Policy and Advocacy at Women Deliver.

“This survey shows us where the world has fallen short, but it also delivers the encouraging news that the vast majority of women and men around the world expect their leaders to take action to advance gender equality.”

Fielded in July and August of 2020, the survey offers a comprehensive picture of public experience and perception across six major gender equality issues, in addition to insights on how the COVID-19 pandemic had affected respondents' lives, livelihoods, and emotional health. It also asked participants about their personal experiences with gender discrimination, their attitudes about sexist practices, and their beliefs about the causes of gender discrimination.

² Equal Measures 2030, *Bending the Curve Towards Gender Equality by 2030* (Surrey: Equal Measures, 2020), <https://data.em2030.org/2020-index-projections/bending-the-curve-towards-gender-equality-by-2030/>.

Key findings on these questions include:

- **The global public supports the need for women to play a role in all aspects of the pandemic response**, with 82% of survey respondents on average saying they believe women should be involved in the response at all levels. However, facts bear witness to another situation: although women make up 70% of frontline workers, they currently make up only 24% of COVID-19 response committees. To address these realities, a gender lens must be applied to COVID-19 response and recovery plans.
- **COVID-19 has had a significant impact on women** (ages 18-44), who are more likely to report both increased household burdens and greater emotional stress. In 13 of the 17 countries surveyed, women report experiencing more emotional stress and mental health challenges compared to men during the pandemic.
- **Young people, especially young women, have the highest expectations of their governments to advance gender equality**. Three in four young women (aged 18 to 24), across all 17 countries, call on their government to increase funding for equality in their country on the occasion of the Gender Equality Forum, compared to two in three respondents on average.
- **57% of women on average reported experiencing some form of gender-based discrimination in their lifetimes**, with the highest rates of discrimination reported in middle-income countries like Kenya (83%), India (81%), and South Africa (72%).
- **Overall, the top priority for improving gender equality is ending gender-based violence**, including online harassment, sexual assault, forced and child marriage, and female genital mutilation. This was selected as first choice by 32% of respondents on average across the 17 countries.
- **In the United States, self-identified Black or African American respondents are less likely to say that gender equality has improved over the last 25 years**, in comparison to respondents who self-identify as white. This trend was not observed to such a large extent in any other country including countries with a documented history of racial discrimination, such as South Africa.

The public's support for gender equality cuts across generations, political leanings, and socioeconomic groups. While women are stronger supporters of most gender equality issues than men, a great majority of men also support gender equality. Young people under the age of 25, women in particular, are especially likely to hold their governments accountable for advancing gender equality initiatives.

The survey asked respondents for their opinions on six major gender equality issues, all of which the public resoundingly expects governments to address on the occasion of the Generation Equality Forum:

- Violence against women
- Women's economic justice and rights
- Women's movements and leadership
- Sexual and reproductive health and rights
- Women and climate change
- Technology for gender equality

Despite the widespread support for greater gender equality, persistent discriminatory attitudes towards women continue to hinder progress towards ending domestic violence and closing the gender pay gap. At the current rate of progress, it will take another century to achieve professional, political, and economic equality between women and men worldwide.³

Against this backdrop, the survey offers a roadmap for actions that the public most wants to see, spotlighting where leaders' and decision-makers' focus and investments can have the most striking impact.

"Our survey shows the extent to which gender equality has become a universal aspiration across all cultures. A majority of citizens support gender equality in the 17 countries surveyed and aspire to more commitments from their governments. The alleged lack of public support for these issues is no longer a valid excuse to delay action" said Fabrice Ferrier, Director of Focus 2030. "There is no longer anything preventing decision-makers around the world – if not political will - to address the most pressing needs of girls and women and to take the necessary measures to promote gender equality," he added.

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Notes to editors

Methodology: The survey was carried out through an online poll in 17 countries conducted by the polling institute Deltapoll (Australia, Argentina, Canada, Colombia, France, Germany, Great Britain, India, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, New Zealand, China, South Africa, Switzerland, Tunisia, and the United States) in primary local languages, with 1,000 respondents in each country. The countries account for 50% of the world population, including 53% of adult women (aged 18 and over) and 59% of the world's GDP. Nine are high-income countries, five are upper-middle-income countries, and three are lower-middle-income countries. The raw data were weighted by gender, age, and region, plus chosen political party from the last national election. External factors may affect the sampling, such as willingness to take the survey, access to the internet, and COVID-19 lockdowns.

The survey gathered data on race and ethnicity, and the report endeavors to highlight the correlation between race/ethnicity and country-level survey responses. However, a complete

³ World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2020 (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2019), <https://www.weforum.org/reports/gender-gap-2020-report-100-years-pay-equality>.

comparative analysis across 17 countries is not feasible as the race/ ethnicity categories, which are derived from national census data, vary country by country.

Data:

- Focus 2030 and Women Deliver have made the data from the survey widely available through Open Data and a data visualization tool.
- 17 country profiles are also available to capture public perceptions in each of the countries covered by the study.

About Women Deliver

Women Deliver is a leading global advocate that champions gender equality and the health and rights of girls and women. Our advocacy drives investment—political and financial—in the lives of girls and women worldwide. We harness evidence and unite diverse voices to spark commitment to gender equality. And we get results. Anchored in sexual and reproductive health, we advocate for the rights of girls and women across every aspect of their lives. We know that investing in girls and women will deliver progress for all. www.womendeliver.org

About Focus 2030

Focus 2030 is a Paris-based nonprofit organization supporting international solidarity and development actors on communication, mobilization, and advocacy projects to promote the UN Sustainable Development Goals and contribute to their achievement in the Global South in particular, by 2030. www.focus2030.org