

(Re)thinking Masculinities

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Who We Are



Promundo is a global leader in promoting gender justice and preventing violence by engaging men and boys in partnership with women and girls:

- Founded in Rio de Janeiro in 1997
- Consortium members in Brazil, US, DRC, and Portugal, and partners globally
- Focus on contextual adaptation, scaling up and sustainability
- Rooted in social justice, health equity, activism and community voices
- Using research to drive practice and policy

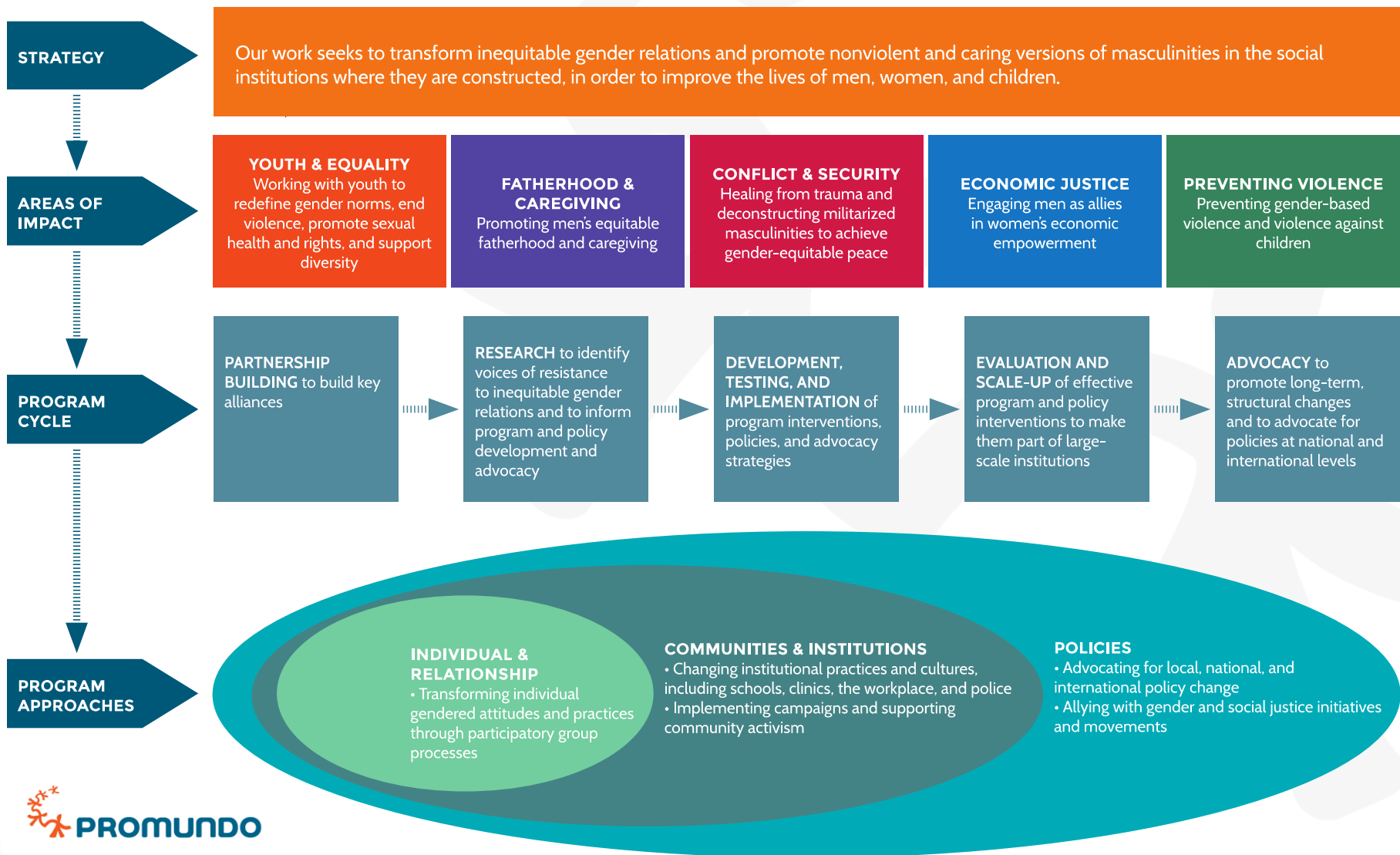
What we do

- We carry out internationally recognized **Researches** on issues related to gender, masculinities, violence, and health, informing our program designs and measuring the impact of our work.
- This allows us to develop our **Programs** and **Methodologies** that support our workshops and structured group education,
- and also creating **Campaigns** where we ask people to challenge violence and harmful stereotypes, and to act as agents of change in their communities.
- Through **Policy Advocacy**, we create the legal, structural, and social environment to support these community and individual changes and to give them a national and global impact.

PROMUNDO'S THEORY OF CHANGE



MISSION: Promundo works to promote gender equality and create a world free from violence by engaging men and boys in partnership with women and girls.
VISION: We envision a world where all people work to create a nonviolent, caring, and gender-equitable future for themselves and for their children.



Program Areas

Promundo works at all levels of the socio-ecological model across the following areas:

-  Conflict and Security
-  Economic Justice
-  Fatherhood and Caregiving
-  Preventing Violence
-  Research for Action
-  Youth and Equality
-  Gender, masculinities and Health

Our Approach

We approach this work with the understanding that:

- Men and boys are also enmeshed in **gender norms**, social expectations and **power dynamics**
- Gender is **relational** and **intersects** with other dimensions of difference
- Some social norms of masculinity are **harmful to both men and women, boys and girls**
- Therefore, gender equality can bring **benefits** for women, children and men themselves
- Men can be—and are—**agents of change**

Key Premises of Promundo's Work

Men's multiple roles and identities

✓ Men can, and often do, want to prevent and challenge violence

Violence as a learned behavior

✓ Men are not inherently violent

Enabling change through Research → Programming → Advocacy

“Be a man!”

Weak

Sexually Experienced

Physical
Violence

Bitch

Powerful

Defend
yourself

Bullying

Tough

Pussy

Athletic

Competitive

Self Harm

Mama's boy

Don't Cry

No
weakness

Sexual Violence
& Harassment

Strong

Fag

Drinker

Sissy

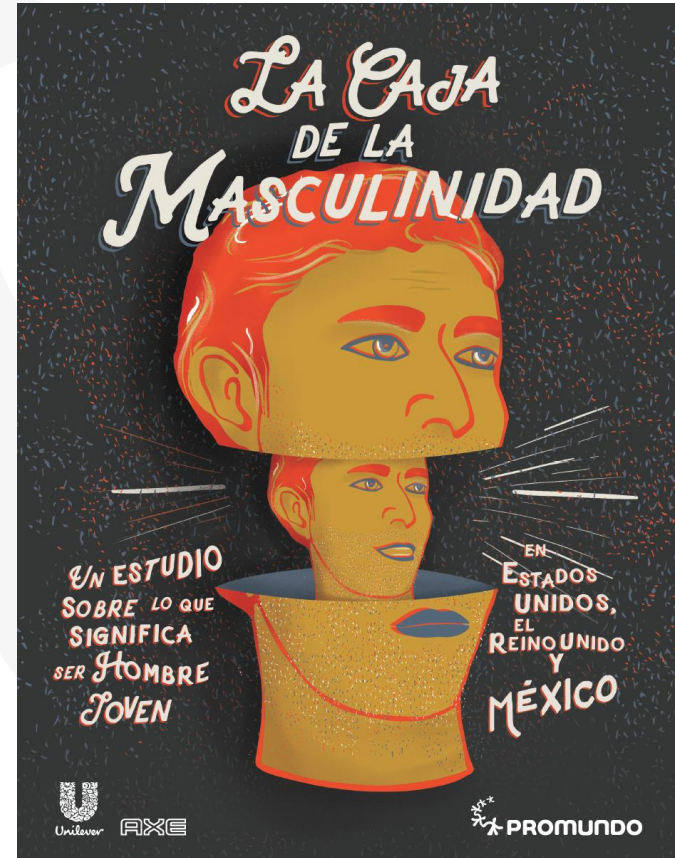
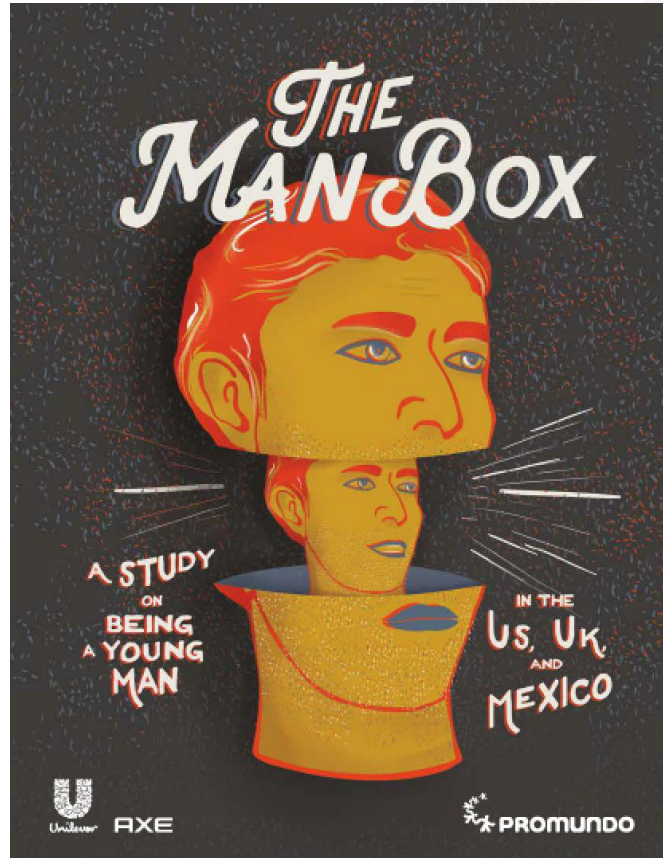
Confident

Successful

Exclusion

Heterosexual

The Man Box study



Full report and executive summary available for free in English and Spanish at promundoglobal.org

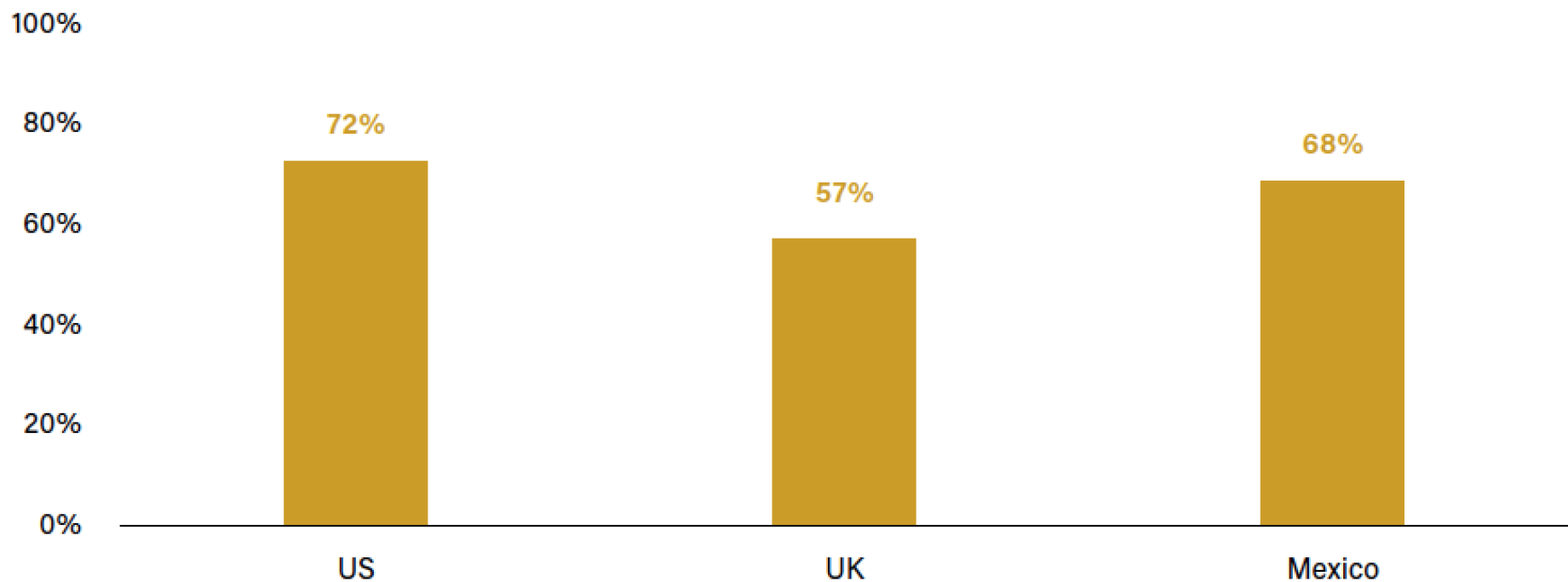
The Man Box study: guiding questions

- Is this “Man Box” still exerting real pressure on young men’s lives?
- Do young men agree with a “Man Box” version of masculinity?
- What are the consequences for young men’s lives and the lives of those around them?



FIGURE 3.1 "A REAL MAN..."

Percentage of survey respondents who report being told that "a real man behaves a certain way"



Methods

- **Survey:** We gathered a sample of 18-30 year old young men, nationally representative according to **wealth, education, ethnic background, and urban/rural settings**
- **Focus Groups:** We convened group discussions of young men in each of the three countries to hear, in these men's own words, what it means to be a man



Measuring the Man Box



1

Self-Sufficiency

A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears, and problems shouldn't really get respect

Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help



2

Acting Tough

A guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak

Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside



3

Physical Attractiveness

It is very hard for a man to be successful if he doesn't look good

Women don't go for guys who fuss too much about their clothes, hair, and skin

A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn't very manly



4

Rigid Masculine Gender Roles

It is not good for a boy to be taught how to cook, sew, clean the house, and take care of younger children

A husband shouldn't have to do household chores

Men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women

Measuring the Man Box



Heterosexuality and Homophobia

A gay guy is not a "real man"
Straight guys being friends with gay guys is totally fine and normal (positive statement)



Hypersexuality

A "real man" should have as many sexual partners as he can
A "real man" would never say no to sex



Aggression and Control

Men should use violence to get respect, if necessary
A man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage
If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time

Results: Does the Man Box matter?

“How does society let men act? Because of society, the pathologies and powers that exist, men can only act a certain way. If you do not fit into the box, you are not labeled as a male, or one of the many labels that we have talked about.”

Focus Group Participant, Washington, DC, US

Results: Does the Man Box matter?

AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE: In my personal opinion...	US	UK	Mexico
A guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak	42%	42%	43%
Men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women	42%	41%	26%
Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help	39%	36%	36%
A “real man” should have as many sexual partners as he can	26%	26%	11%
If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time	46%	37%	26%

Results: Does the Man Box matter?



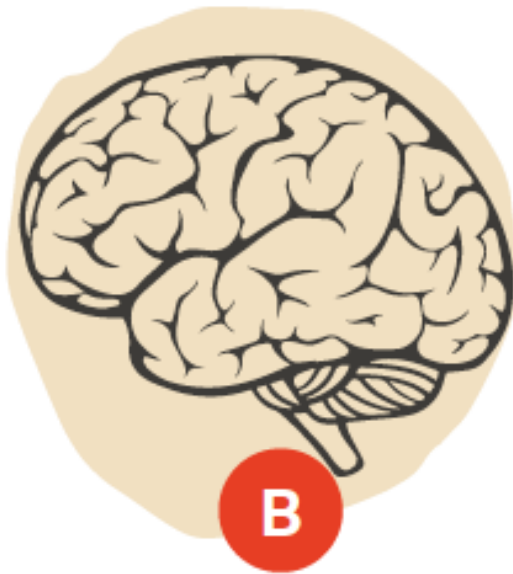
“I’m the man!”

Young men in the US and UK who most agree with society’s rigid notions about how to “be a man” also report high levels of satisfaction with their lives.

But this sense of comfort comes at a cost...

**LIFE SATISFACTION AND
SELF-CONFIDENCE**

Results: Does the Man Box matter?



MENTAL HEALTH

Young men's bravado masks depressive symptoms and frequent thoughts of suicide.

Being in the Man Box is associated with increased likelihood of suicidal ideation in the last two weeks, at a statistically significant level.

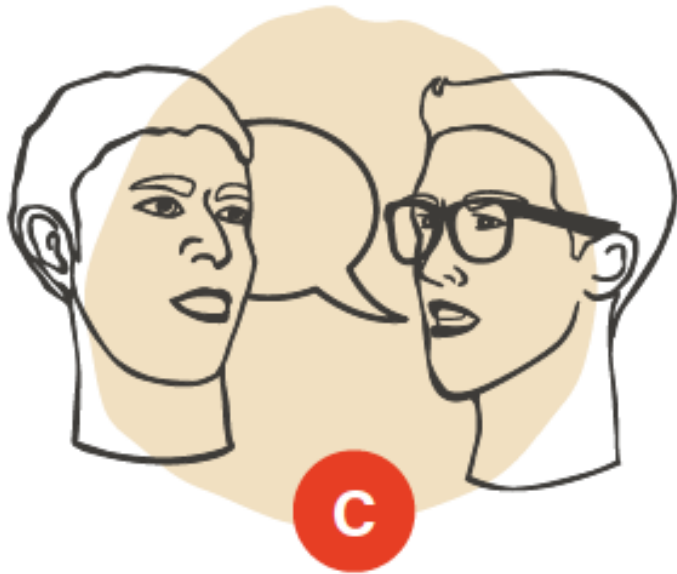
TABLE 4.2 DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS AND SUICIDE IDEATION

Percentage of respondents who report experience at some point in the last two weeks

	Man Box	Little interest or pleasure in doing things	Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	Having thoughts of suicide
US	In	<i>74%</i>	64%	<i>40%</i>
	Out	<i>63%</i>	61%	<i>17%</i>
UK	In	<i>82%</i>	<i>74%</i>	<i>55%</i>
	Out	<i>70%</i>	<i>63%</i>	<i>20%</i>
Mexico	In	<i>68%</i>	50%	<i>19%</i>
	Out	<i>67%</i>	50%	<i>13%</i>

Bold and italic numbers represent statistically significant relationships at $p < .05$

Results: Does the Man Box matter?



**FRIENDSHIP AND
SUPPORT-SEEKING**

Young men are more likely to provide emotional support than to seek it for themselves.

When they do seek support, it is almost always from women in their lives - almost never from their fathers.

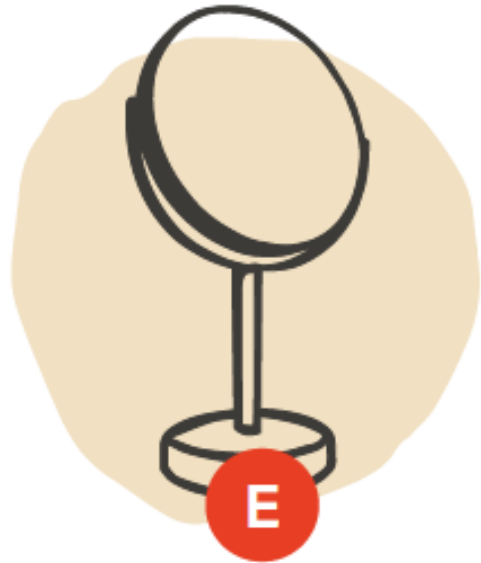
Results: Does the Man Box matter?



Young men inside the Man Box are more likely to engage in risky behaviors

This includes binge drinking as well as risky driving; they are 2 to 3 times more likely to have been in traffic accidents

Results: Does the Man Box matter?



ATTRACTIVENESS

Young men's notions of physical attractiveness still link primarily with muscle bulk and body shape.

They do not identify with a more inward, individual sense of confidence and attractiveness.

Results: Does the Man Box matter?



The Man Box is an enormously violent place, with repercussions for young men, for young women, and others in their lives.

Young men who most agree with rigid notions are much more likely to experience bullying, to perpetrate bullying, and to harass young women sexually.

Results: Does the Man Box matter?



**BULLYING
AND VIOLENCE**

Men in the Man Box are significantly more likely to have perpetrated:

- *Verbal bullying - up to 2 times as likely*
- *Online bullying - 2.5 to 6 times as likely*
- *Physical bullying - 3 to 7 times as likely*

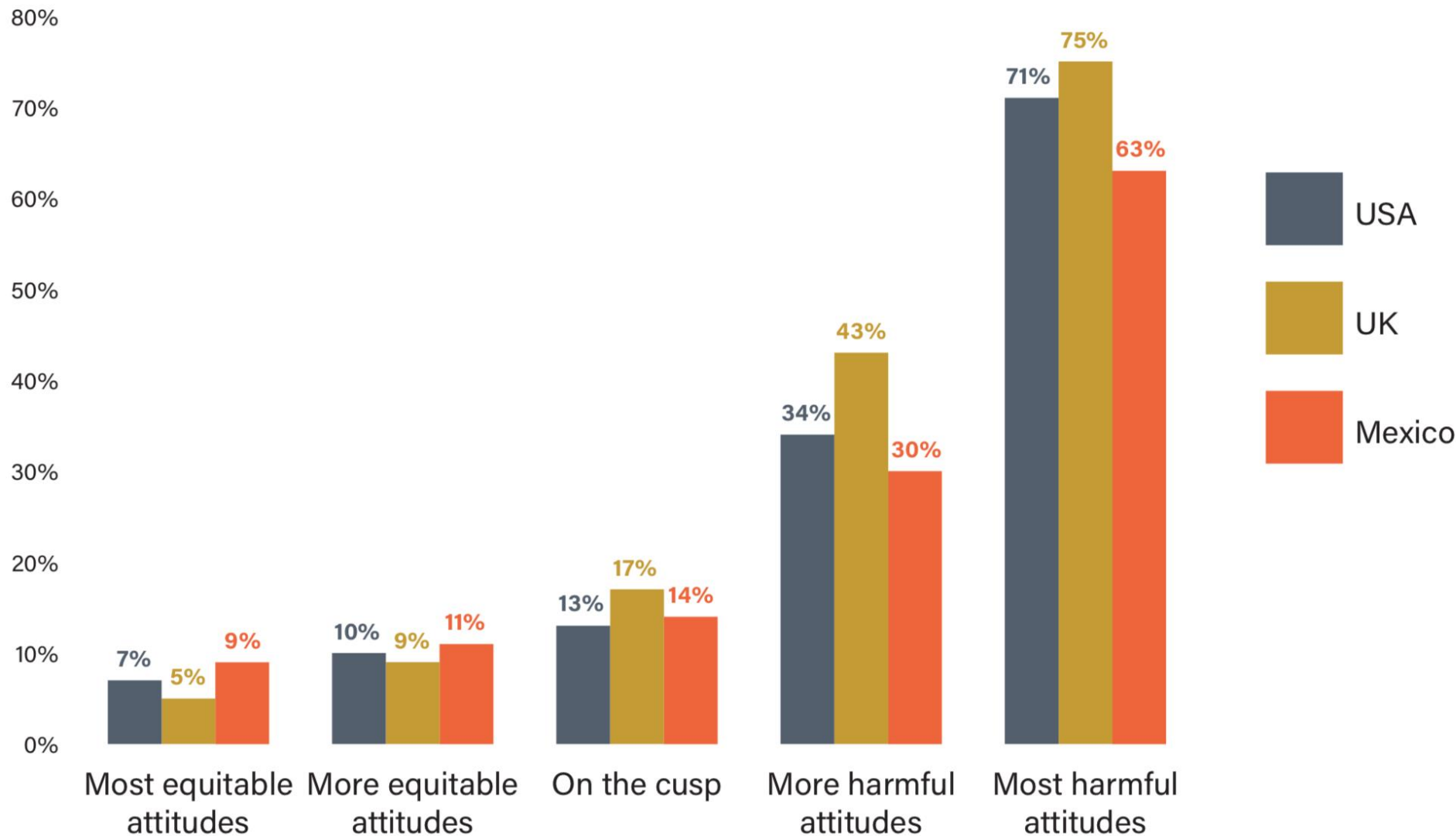
- *Sexual harassment - 3 to 6 times as likely*

In the United States, the proportion of male participants in the Man Box study who told us they had made sexual comments to a woman or girl they didn't know, in a public place, like the street, workplace, school/university, or an internet or social media space *in the last month alone*:

29%

PERPETRATION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT, BY MAN BOX SCALE QUINTILES

Percent who report perpetration



If we see the shape of the problem...

More harmful beliefs about masculinity link with:

- Coercive and controlling relationship behavior
- Perpetrating physical violence against an intimate partner
- Perpetrating sexual violence and sexual harassment
- Perpetrating and experiencing bullying and cyberbullying
- Depressive symptoms
- Suicidal thoughts
- Risky driving & traffic accidents
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Risky sex
- Poor health seeking behavior

...we can make out the shape of solutions

1. The Man Box is bad for (nearly) everyone
2. We all have a role to play in smashing the Man Box, men most urgently
3. Transforming harmful masculinities has to start from the earliest ages
4. We must center the voices, experiences, and preferences of women and survivors of violence
5. It's complicated
6. It's simple

“Be a man!”

Weak	Sexually Experienced		Physical Violence
Bitch	Powerful	Defend yourself	Bullying
Pussy	Athletic	Competitive	Self Harm
Mama's boy	Don't Cry		Sexual Violence & Harassment
Fag	Strong	No weakness	Exclusion
Sissy	Confident	Successful	
	Heterosexual		

“*Everyone* should be...”

You matter.

Caring

Sensitive

Agency

Emotionally intelligent

I support you.

Empathic

Happy

Nonviolence

Invested in relationships

I respect you.

Partnership

Individual

Collaborative

Empathy

You are loved.

Dedicated to a cause

Care

A faint, light gray illustration of a man and a child is visible in the background. The man is on the right, leaning forward, and the child is on the left, leaning towards the man. The illustration is composed of thick, rounded lines.

STATE OF THE WORLD'S FATHERS: UNLOCKING THE POWER OF MEN'S CARE

The **State of the World's Fathers (SOWF)** reports are landmark analyses of fatherhood and caregiving, drawing upon research from studies across the world and providing recommendations for policy and programmatic action to promote gender equality

❖ **The third State of the World's Fathers report** reveals new research on men's caregiving from 11 countries, with additional cross-country analysis of data from over 30 countries. It calls for men's uptake of their full share of the world's childcare and domestic work - across all societies and relationships - to advance gender equality

❖ **85 percent of fathers say that they would be willing to do anything to be very involved in the early weeks and months of caring for their newly born or adopted child. So, what's holding them back?**

MAJOR BARRIERS

- (1) the lack of adequate, paid paternity leave, and low take-up of leave when it is available;
- (2) restrictive gender norms that position care as women's responsibility, alongside the perception of women as more competent caregivers than men;
- (3) a lack of economic security and government support for all parents and caregivers

No country in the world has achieved equality in unpaid care work - or pay equality - between men and women

The progress is incredibly slow:

Across 23 middle- and high-income countries, the unpaid care gap has closed by just seven minutes over the past several decades. Globally, women spend significantly more time than men - sometimes up to ten times as much - on unpaid care, volunteer, and domestic work (and spend more time on unpaid and paid work combined).

Women want men to take paternity leave, and say it would improve their own health

Across the seven middle- and high-income countries surveyed, over 65 percent of women say mothers would have better physical health, and over 72 percent say they would have better mental health if fathers took at least two weeks paternity leave, reveals the report.

Restrictive gender stereotypes are part of the problem

The report finds that significant proportions of men and women - from Promundo and partner-led surveys across every region in the world - agree that “changing diapers, giving baths to children, and feeding children should be the mother’s responsibility.”

Financial stress and insecurity also influence men's caregiving

Up to 76 percent of mothers (UK) and 59 percent of fathers (Canada) from the seven middle- and high-income countries surveyed rate financial barriers as the greatest reason for not taking more parental leave. Context matters: economic insecurity, active conflict or war, and political instability present tremendous challenges for caregiving

A CALL TO ACTION:

- Reaching equality in unpaid care and domestic work is an urgent matter of gender justice and women's rights

- Governments and employers have a role in creating laws and policies that support all parents, caregivers, and families, in all their diversity, to thrive

- The global report calls for countries, employers, and civil society to commit to accelerate action and support men's increased participation in unpaid care work

StateoftheWorldsFathers.org



www.promundoglobal.org

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