



# The State of GENDER EQUALITY for U.S. Adolescents

## Familial Influences

In 2018, Plan International USA, an international organization that advances girls' equality and children's rights, commissioned leading non-partisan public opinion research firm, PerryUndem, to conduct an extensive public opinion study of adolescents, ages 10 to 19, on issues and experiences related to gender equality. The goal of the research is to provide a resource for policymakers, media, and others who want to understand how adolescents feel about gender equality and what shapes their views, as well as inform solutions to achieve gender equality in the U.S.

**One piece of the survey explored the actions and perspectives of family members and how they may shape adolescents' views around equality. For example:**

- Having a parent who has talked about how to prevent or stop sexual harassment as a result of the #MeToo movement is correlated with adolescents' perceiving sexism as a problem in society and wanting equal numbers of men and women in leadership.
- Among boys, having a mom who does not have a final say in family decisions is correlated with adolescents feeling more comfortable with women having traditional gender roles.

**Slightly more than half of boys and girls say they have a mom who has strong feelings about equality for women. This was correlated with feelings and behaviors, such as:**

- Agreeing that there should be equal numbers of men and women who are leaders in work, politics, and life.
- Perceiving sexism as a problem in society.

**Having a parent who identifies as a Republican is also correlated with a number of views among boys and girls, including:**

- Feeling more comfortable with traditional gender roles.
- Only somewhat agreeing or disagreeing with wanting equal numbers of men and women who are leaders in work, politics, and life.
- **Not perceiving sexism is a big problem in society.**
- Only somewhat agreeing or disagreeing that men and women should be treated equally (significant among boys with a Republican parent, not girls with a Republican parent).

**3 IN 10 BOYS HAVE HEARD  
SEXUAL COMMENTS FROM  
THEIR DAD**



**Among boys, having a father who makes sexual comments and sexual jokes about women is correlated with several feelings and behaviors, such as:**

- Feeling it is okay to ask a girl for a naked or sexy picture.
- **Feeling pressure to join in when other boys talk about girls in a sexual way.**
- Feeling pressure to be physically attractive.
- Feeling pressure to control and dominate others.
- Only somewhat agreeing or disagreeing that men and women should be treated equally.

**CLOSE TO HALF OF BOYS AGES 14 TO 19 HAS HEARD  
THEIR FATHER OR OTHER MALE FAMILY MEMBERS  
MAKE SEXUAL COMMENTS OR JOKES ABOUT WOMEN**



**47%  
OF BOYS**



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THE STUDY AND PLAN'S  
CAMPAIGN TO ACHIEVE  
GENDER EQUALITY IN THE U.S.,  
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