What can internationally comparable quantitative data tell us about how gender norms are changing?

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Knowledge to action: Effective action on gender norms that affect adolescent girls

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Acknowledgements

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Key points

Standardised national surveys, opinion data and administrative data from developing countries, collected at regular intervals, can reveal important information about how gender norms affect adolescent girls, and whether the prevailing norms are changing. This information can be vital for policy-makers and programme designers. These types of survey are particularly useful for:

- **Understanding trends in gender norms:** Large-scale household surveys include questionnaires targeted at women, putting questions to girls from the age of 15 up. The data generated can reveal the situation of adolescent girls at a given point in time (year of the most recent survey) or over time (for countries where two or more rounds of data are available). This makes it possible to see any change (or lack of change) for relevant indicators during that period.
- **Exploring links between attitudes, practices and social and demographic characteristics:** As well as enabling us to carry out simple trend analysis of indicators, analysing the different background characteristics of the households and/or individuals interviewed means we can determine correlations between norm indicators and socioeconomic characteristics – for example, household members' level of education, their religion, ethnicity, language, location, and economic status. We can answer questions such as, in a given country, which geographic localities (regions and urban/rural populations) are more likely to have seen changes in early marriage over time? And are certain discriminatory gender norms more entrenched among some ethnic groups?
- **Revealing insights into programme or policy effectiveness**. Although most household survey data are not linked to any specific intervention, changes over time can be explored in light of policy or programmes that might have contributed to such changes. If the policies and programmes are introduced at the national level and at sufficient scale, they can trigger changes that can be picked up by subsequent rounds of national survey data.
- **Making comparisons across countries and regions**. Data sets from standardised surveys (such as the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS)) in different countries allow for comparisons of indicators across countries and/or regions. When comparing two or more countries, it is worth checking how the questions have been translated – both in terms of language and cultural understanding – to ensure that responses are indeed comparable.

There are, however, some important constraints in using these data to analyse changing gender norms that affect adolescent girls. The vast majority of relevant survey data examine either attitudes or practices, and while these are useful proxies for indicators of norms, they are not the same as norms. Data on people's perceptions of norms are typically collected via small-scale studies and are not available in internationally comparable data sets. Other weaknesses include the following:

- **Few data reflect girls' own attitudes.** Data on attitudes to gender equality are mostly framed broadly and captured from adults rather than asking girls for their views; this said, the data capture gender norms in the broader environment in which girls are growing up. Some data on prevailing norms and practices do relate directly to girls' lives – for example, data on education enrolment, adolescent pregnancy and/or female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C).
- **Data may not capture local nuances**. The standardised and large-scale nature of the MICS, DHS and LSMS means that local differences in norms and practices could be missed or misrepresented. For example, when child marriages formally take place but the girl does not go to live with her husband until she is some years older (e.g. during mid-adolescence), data on the age of marriage can be inaccurate.
- **Answers to sensitive questions may be unreliable.** Despite training and guidance for interviewers and survey designers, it is possible that respondents will not always give truthful answers to questions on very sensitive matters such as domestic violence, child marriage, and harmful traditional practices.
- **Coverage may be incomplete.** For various reasons, survey or administrative data may not be available for the most marginalised groups and communities – for example, people living in very remote or conflict-affected areas – and thus give an incomplete picture of whether gender norms are changing, and how.

Setting the scene

How do we know if gender norms are changing? Which types of data can tell us about changes in people's attitudes and practices when it comes to gender? Developing country governments regularly collect nationally representative data relevant to gender norms in the form of three major household surveys: the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS); the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS); and the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS). Because most countries collect data every few years, indicators from these surveys can provide useful insights for development policy-makers and practitioners about how gender norms are changing.

This Research and Practice Note describes the main data available to help you identify how gender norms are changing in a given country or context. We look at the usefulness of data from three main sources: (1) the regular household surveys already mentioned; (2) opinion or perception surveys; (3) administrative data collected by governments at different levels (such as region, district, zone or village).

There are many other smaller, 'one-off' data sets, usually for one or two countries or national zones, and these can provide robust insights into changing gender norms. Longitudinal studies, such as **Young Lives**, which follow the same individuals over time, can also reveal how gender norms are affecting adolescent girls. Here, though, we focus on data sets for which there is comparable information from a number of countries and over time. Some of the data concern adult women but are still relevant to adolescent girls, as they provide insights into the factors that help or hinder changes in people's attitudes and perceptions of what is expected of girls and boys as they reach adolescence and then adulthood.

What can national household-level surveys tell us about how gender norms affect adolescent girls?

Household surveys repeated at regular intervals include some questions that are the same and others that are similar in each round, on key factors affecting adolescent girls, such as domestic violence, harmful traditional practices, educational achievement, family planning, ownership of land and other productive resources, and how different members of the household use their time (see Table 1 on the following page for a summary of the types of information collected in these surveys). Some of the questions produce data on how discriminatory gender norms affect adult women, but they are relevant to adolescent girls because, in many low-income countries and communities, girls marry during adolescence (or even earlier), and so issues such as security of land tenure or

differences in age and education level between spouses have a big impact on their lives.

We now look at each of the three national household surveys in turn, and how their data can help an analysis of changes in gender norms.

Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)

MICS is the largest source of statistically sound and internationally comparable data on women and children worldwide. They are supported by UNICEF, and typically implemented in partnership with national governments. To date, 278 surveys have been undertaken in 109 low and middle-income countries. Of those countries that have MICS data, around three-quarters have more than two rounds of data, while 43 have three or more rounds.

In some countries, MICS have been collected for almost 20 years so cover a sufficiently long period over which to explore changes in gender norms. There have been five rounds of MICS: MIC 1 covered 1996-1997; MICS 2 covered 2000-2003; MICS 3 covered 2006-2009; MICS 4 covered 2011-2012; and MICS 5 began in 2014 and is ongoing. You can find out which kinds of data are available for each country, and for which years, at the **MICS portal**.

The MICS consists of different questionnaires, three of which have questions relevant to analysing changing gender norms (these have generated particularly rich data in the past two rounds). Surveys (tools) for all data rounds and countries are available **here**.

How MICS design and content has evolved

During the first two rounds of data collection, the household questionnaire was quite basic, asking questions on education, health and mortality. There was a separate women's questionnaire (but no separate questionnaire for men) with a couple of questions relevant to an analysis of discriminatory gender norms:

- Birth history (providing information about a girl's age when she first gave birth)
- Contraceptive use, though this mainly concerned the type of family planning method used (if any).

During MICS 3 (2006-2009), the household questionnaire was still basic, but now included some additional elements relevant to gender norms analysis:

- *Questions on security of tenure*: Although there were no direct questions about women's ownership and use of land and property, data were collected and disaggregated by sex, so it was possible to conduct some analysis of whether women and adolescent girls could own land.
- *Child discipline:* This module collected information that could be disaggregated by sex, making it possible to

analyse whether parents disciplined sons or daughters differently, from a young age to adolescence.

There was still no separate questionnaire for men. The women's questionnaire included, for the first time, 'optional modules' (decided at country level between the government and the UNICEF country office). The two that are relevant for the analysis of gender norms are as follows:

- A module on *family planning and unmet needs*, which generated data on adolescents' use of contraception (although it did not ask whether social norms prevented adolescents accessing contraception).
- There was one question on *attitudes toward domestic violence*, asking whether a husband is justified in beating his wife in some situations (rather than ascertaining the prevalence of domestic violence). In that this explores what the interviewee believes is the right thing for a husband to do, it provides direct insights into a prevailing gender norm.

MICS 3 also included some 'situation-specific modules' that were only applied in some countries (with the decision taken at the country level), but could generate rich

information on how discriminatory gender norms affect adolescent girls:

- A module on *marriage / union with polygyny*: This included information about age at first marriage, early marriage practices, whether a husband has more than one wife, and certain characteristics of the husband (such as his age, to ascertain spousal age differences).
- *Female genital mutilation/cutting*: This is a crucial module for analysing discriminatory gender norms in some countries. It asks a comprehensive set of questions about whether FGM/C is practised, what type of circumcision is performed, at what age, how it was arranged and carried out, etc. It also asked whether the respondent thinks the practice should be continued or discontinued – an important indicator of change in attitudes toward FGM/C, assuming of course that respondents answer this very sensitive question truthfully, which may be difficult to know.
- *Sexual behaviour* among young women aged 15-24 (which includes older adolescents). This module included questions designed to elicit factual information about a woman's number of sexual partners, the nature of sexual relationships, and use of condoms. Again, though, there may be limitations of the data generated

Table 1: Overview of data available on gender norms from major household surveys

Survey type	Harmful traditional practices	Strategic life decisions	Use of resources	Time use
MICS	• Early marriage / early childbirth • Female genital mutilation/ cutting (FGM/C) • Domestic violence (attitudes towards it) • Child discipline	• Educational attainment (by gender) • Family planning • Sexual behaviour • Health-seeking behaviour • Differences in age and education level of spouses	• Ownership of dwelling, agricultural land, livestock (disaggregated by gender)	
DHS	• FGM/C • Domestic violence (prevalence and attitudes towards it) • Early marriage / child birth	• Educational attainment • Employment and occupation • Family planning • Women's opinions on whether a woman can refuse sex with her husband • Hurdles faced by women in accessing health care • Freedom of movement	• Asset ownership • Control over own earnings • Differences in age and education level of spouses • Women's participation in household decisions	
LSMS		• Educational attainment (with a specific question on why a child is not attending school) • Who makes household decisions	• Decisions over use of resources received as 'additional income'	• Time household members spend on domestic activities and work outside the home (paid/unpaid)

due to the fact that the questions are of a closed nature (so no ability to probe answers). Also, given the very sensitive nature of the questions, interviewees may not always respond truthfully, if at all.

MICS 4 (2011-2012) was redesigned to include the optional modules and questions as core, generating more data for which to analyse changes in gender norms. The household questionnaire now included the module on child discipline, asking more specific questions, but did not include the security of tenure module. The women's questionnaire now included the modules on marriage/union with polygyny, FGM/C and sexual behaviour, as well as a detailed module on family planning and the question (in MICS 3) on whether husbands were justified in beating their wives in certain situations. There was a new module on life satisfaction. Although the questions asked do not specifically mention gender norms, they are useful for correlation analysis to explore the perceived life satisfaction of respondents who experience discriminatory norms (such as FGM/C or early marriage).

MICS 4 also included a separate men's questionnaire for the first time. It included the same question asked of women on attitudes toward domestic violence, as well as the modules on marriage/union, sexual behaviour and life satisfaction, with the same questions asked of women. There is a short module on circumcision. Having responses to the same questions from men and women in the family means we can explore differences in how men/boys and women/girls perceive gender norms.

There have been few changes to the design of MICS 5. The relevant modules for analysing discriminatory gender norms are the same as in MICS 4, for all questionnaires.

Table 2 summarises the information available from each MICS round.

Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)

The DHS is a nationally representative household survey that provides data for a wide range of indicators on population, health and nutrition. These surveys are technically and financially supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and are carried out in partnership with national governments, implemented by national statistics agencies.

There are two main types of DHS: the standard DHS, and interim DHS. A standard DHS has large sample sizes (usually between 5,000 and 30,000 households) and is typically conducted every five years, which allows comparisons over time. The sample is generally representative at the national level, the residence level (urban-rural), and at the regional level (departments, states).

There is no pre-determined sample size. An appropriate sample size for a survey is the minimum number of persons (e.g. women age 15-49, currently married women 15-49, children under age five) that achieves the desired survey precision for core indicators at the domain level. If funding is tight and fixed, the sample size is the maximum number of persons that the funding can cover. An interim DHS collects information on key performance indicators, but may not include data for all impact evaluation measures (such as mortality rates). These surveys are conducted between rounds of Standard DHS and use shorter questionnaires. The Standard DHS is more relevant for the purposes of analysing the impact of gender norms on adolescent girls, and how gender norms are changing.

To date, seven phases of DHS have been carried out in a total of 88 low and middle-income countries (though not all phases in all countries). The first phase was conducted from 1984 to 1989; the most recent started in 2013 and is ongoing. The DHS includes three types of questionnaire that contain relevant information on gender norms: - - The household questionnaire collects data on relevant background characteristics as well as information on educational attainment, which can be disaggregated by sex. The women's questionnaire includes several indicators on topics related to gender norms (education and employment; reproductive behaviour and intentions; contraception; status (with questions on women's empowerment, decision-making, autonomy, ownership of assets, barriers to medical care, and attitudes towards domestic violence); and husband's background. Data are collected from women aged 15-49, so including older adolescents and women with different marital status. The men's questionnaire is similar to the women's questionnaire but shorter. It includes questions on how many children they want, knowledge and use of contraception, and employment and gender roles. As with the MICS, the DHS is useful in that it allows us to compare perspectives and attitudes around gender norms between male and female respondents.

While there are 'model questionnaires', some countries require additional information. To accommodate this, and to achieve some level of comparability across countries that want to collect such data, there are optional modules to address other topics. The DHS tools are available **here**.

DHS gender corner

Recognising that it contains rich data on gender attitudes and norms, the DHS portal now has a '**gender corner**', which gives easy access to the following survey modules:

Domestic violence: Questions on domestic violence in DHS are self-reported, and can provide empirical data about respondents' experiences. But self-reporting may produce biased responses, reflecting respondents'

Table 2: How the design and content of the MICS has evolved

| | Relevant questionnaire modules/items | | |
	Household questionnaire	Women's questionnaire	Men's questionnaire
MICS 1 **1996-1997** **MICS 2** **2000-2003**	Focuses on education, health, mortality; and provides some background characteristics for analysis of other indicators	Some questions relevant to an analysis of discriminatory gender norms: birth history provides information about age at birth of first child; module on contraceptive use	Not included
MICS 3 **2006-2009**	Additional modules/items: • Security of tenure: no specific questions on women's ownership and use of land/property, but some analysis could be drawn about women's (and adolescents') possibility of owning land • Child discipline: provides information that can be disaggregated by sex to analyse whether different child discipline practices apply to boys and girls, from a young age to adolescence	Additional modules/items: • Family planning: more complex module which can be used for analysis of adolescents' use of contraception • Attitudes toward domestic violence: item focused on whether a husband is justified to beat his wife • Marriage/union with polygyny module: includes information about age at first marriage, whether a husband has multiple wives and characteristics of husband (including age) • Module on FGM/C: questions about the occurrence of FGM/C, type, age of child, how the procedure was performed, whether the respondent thinks the practice should be continued or discontinued • Sexual behaviour for women aged 15-24: information about number of partners, relationships to sexual partners and use of condoms for women (including adolescents). It is useful to understand different practices and analyse issues around sexual risk behaviours	Not included
MICS 4 **2011-2012**	Additional module on child discipline in the core questionnaire, with more complex questions than in MICS 3	Additional modules on: • Marriage/union of polygyny • FGM/C • Sexual behaviour • Family planning • Domestic violence • Life satisfaction	Includes questions on: • Attitudes towards • Domestic violence • Marriage/union • Sexual behaviour • Life satisfaction • Circumcision

perceptions of what constitutes domestic violence, or an unwillingness to admit to it. Fear or shame, for example, may mean that interviewees give untruthful answers.

Women's status and empowerment: The DHS Program data and analysis provide an in-depth look at the different life courses of women and men, when they first have sex, marry, and have their first child. It explores whether they work, whether they control income and household decisions, gender differentials in education and in children's health and health care, and women's experience of various forms of gender-based violence.

Each DHS includes the following indicators of women's status and empowerment:

• Literacy and educational attainment
• Employment and occupation
• Control over own earnings (most surveys)
• Age at first marriage
• Age at first birth
• Contraceptive use
• Differences in age and education between spouses.

Surveys implemented since 1999-2000 also give information on the following indicators:

• Women's participation in household decisions
• Women's attitudes toward wife-beating by husbands
• Women's opinions on whether a woman can refuse to have sex with her husband
• Hurdles faced by women in accessing health care for themselves.

In some countries, the DHS includes a 'women's status module' with additional questions and indicators that are highly relevant to analysing changes in gender norms:

• Choice of spouse (i.e. a girl or woman's input into choice of husband)
• Natal family support
• Asset ownership
• Control over money for different purposes
• Knowledge and use of micro-credit programmes
• Attitudes about gender roles
• Freedom of movement
• Membership of an association
• Having a bank account.

Female genital cutting: The DHS has asked women in 23 countries about their experiences of FGM/C through a dedicated module. In most countries, these data have been collected since the year 2000; in some countries, such as Mali and Malawi, the data go back to 1996.

Overall, while the Gender Corner is a useful resource, it could be improved. For instance, it does not provide any reflections on the challenges linked to collecting factual and standardised data about sensitive issues such as domestic violence and FGM/C. It could include an explanation about how data collection addressed ethical and sensitive issues when eliciting interviewees' responses. It could also give links to relevant DHS qualitative reports (see Box 1), explaining how they complement the quantitative data.

Finding out which data are available for which countries

The DHS portal allows you to search data by country or survey characteristic (e.g. 'women's status' or 'female genital cutting'). It is easy to see which countries have more than one round of relevant data. Some countries, including Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nepal, Tanzania and Viet Nam, have three or more complete rounds of DHS data, enabling you to analyse trends and changes in gender norms.

Where data are only available for one year (for example, Sudan only has one round of DHS data on women's status), you can get a snapshot of the situation but will be unable to assess any changes in gender norms, unless new data become available in the years to come.

Box 1: Qualitative research studies associated with DHS

Since the late 1990s, the DHS has included **qualitative research studies** on the following issues that are very relevant to gender norms and adolescent girls:

• Women's reproductive health issues
• Female genital cutting in African countries
• Nutrition of young children
• Voluntary counselling and testing for HIV
• HIV and AIDS and antiretroviral therapy
• The contribution of alcohol to HIV transmission
• Women's recall of events around birth and care of newborns

Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS)

The LSMS began in 1980. It was a response to a perceived need for data that would allow policy-makers to move beyond simply measuring rates of unemployment, poverty and health care use (for example) to understanding the determinants of observed outcomes in each sector. LSMS is supported by the World Bank and generally carried out in partnership with national governments.

The LSMS has been implemented in fewer countries than either the DHS or MICS, but it predates them both, so for some countries it has more rounds of data. The LSMS consists of a household questionnaire with multiple modules, not all of which are included in each national survey due to space constraints. Each country decides what length its questionnaire will be (taking into account the need for information, the capacity of the national statistical agency, and the willingness of households to participate in lengthy interviews). LSMS questionnaires are less standardised than the MICS or DHS, so it is difficult to know exactly what questions have been asked in a given country without consulting the specific survey used (all surveys are available here).

Unlike the MICS and DHS, the LSMS does not have separate questionnaires for women and men. But it does ask who the head of household is, which means all the variables reported at household level can be analysed according to whether the household head is male or female (although country reports do not always include this level of disaggregation). Interestingly, it also asks some questions that are closely linked to gender norms, questions that are not included in either the DHS or MICS –such as why children do not attend school, why women do not use family planning services, and how boys and girls spend their time. The core questionnaire modules that are most relevant for analysing changes in gender norms are as follows:

Educational attainment: The LSMS includes information on why the respondent and any children in the household did not attend school. Possible responses include 'parents do not think it is important'. This is highly relevant for comparing attitudes toward educating girls and boys. Children above 10 years are asked the question directly.

Marriage and maternity history: Including age at first marriage and age of giving birth to the first child.

Motherhood and family planning: In some countries, women are asked why they are not using family planning methods. This information is critical to designing effective programmes to provide quality services but also reveals the level of control adolescent girls and young women have over their sexuality. Possible responses include 'religious reasons' and 'husband opposed', which reflect the role of gender norms.

Time-use and labour: The LSMS asks how many hours each member of the household (including all children) spent in the past week doing domestic activities and activities outside the household.

Non-farm enterprise: Asks which household members own small businesses or engage in other entrepreneurial activity (including sale of goods), with data disaggregated by sex and age.

Household decisions: Asks who is involved in making major decisions in the household, disaggregated by sex.

'Other income': This refers to income other than earnings and wages (so cash transfers, sale of assets, inheritance, etc.). It asks who decides how to use the money (although these questions are not asked about the household's main sources of income).

Not all questions are asked in all questionnaires for all countries. But the time-use and household decision-making components are particularly useful, given that the LSMS is the only source of sex- and age-disaggregated data on these issues.

LSMS data are less accessible for specific countries than DHS or MICS data. Whereas the latter are available on the respective DHS and MICS websites, LSMS data are generally the property of each country's national statistical office, and thus only available on their own websites, which can limit their accessibility.

Taking data from the DHS, MICS and LSMS together

While individual national surveys sometimes overlap (e.g. on literacy or school attendance rates), looking at data from all of them together can give a deeper understanding of how gender norms affect adolescent girls, and how those norms may be changing (or not). Box 2 illustrates this with data from Nepal, on age at marriage, and education.

Box 2: Data on age at marriage, and education – evidence from Nepal

Four rounds of DHS data show a slow rise in the median age of marriage among women aged 24-49, from 16.2 in 1996 to 17.5 in 2011, and an associated decline in the percentage of 19–25-year-olds who have given birth, from 18.7 in 1996 to 12.8 in 2001. A comparison of MICS data from 2010 and 2014 show a decline in the proportion of women married who before the age of 18, from 59.9 to 48.5, although the proportion of women who married before they were 15 had hardly changed during this period.

LSMS data from 2010/11 (the only data available online) provide some insights into the relationship between early marriage and school dropout: 17.2% of 6–24-year-olds who have never attended school gave marriage as the reason. Although this indicator is not reported by gender, given the higher rate of adolescent marriage for girls than for boys in Nepal, most of these are likely to be girls. Interestingly, though, this is notably lower than the 35.3% of respondents of this age group who have never attended school because their parents do not (or did not) want them to.

Limitations of survey data

Although quantitative surveys that collect regular data can help us understand how gender norms that affect adolescent girls are changing, they are subject to some limitations.

Social desirability bias. As already noted, domestic violence, sexual and reproductive health, and harmful traditional practices such as FGM/C are usually culturally sensitive issues, and respondents may not give truthful responses, if they answer direct questions at all. And while in-depth interviews used in qualitative research might elicit more meaningful answers, the data collected are typically on a much smaller scale than survey data.

Evolution of indicators, limiting comparability over time. Some indicators have evolved between survey rounds so that while information is collected on a given subject (for example, knowledge of HIV/AIDS), the type of indicator used is different, which means it is not possible to make comparisons over time.

Coverage. Household surveys often under-count 'hard to reach' groups, such as homeless people, very mobile people (including migrant workers and pastoralists) and people living in slums perceived to be dangerous to enter. Up to 350 million people worldwide may be missed out of household surveys for these reasons (Carr-Hill, 2013).

Other limitations include: length of the survey instrument (especially in countries where extra modules are added), which can affect quality of responses; adequate translation of survey questions and responses; and the risk of missing local variations in discriminatory gender practices at the local or district level (such as a formal marriage ceremony taking place during a girl's childhood but she might not go to live with her husband until she is sexually mature or at an agreed time, such as after completing school). As such, it is crucial to triangulate quantitative survey data with other relevant sources of data (e.g. qualitative data, administrative data, data from in-depth studies of particular issues) to gain the most accurate understanding of how gender norms are changing.

What can perception and opinion data add to this picture?

Unlike the household surveys discussed in the previous section, which generate empirical data on attitudes as well as practices, perception or opinion surveys focus on attitudes and beliefs. These concern not only people's attitudes but also, in some cases, their perceptions of prevailing norms on particular issues. These surveys share some of the general limitations of household surveys already discussed – in particular, around reliability of answers to sensitive questions and the risk of answers being affected by social desirability bias. The phrasing of individual questions can also affect the extent to which they generate useful insights. But despite these recognised limitations, perception surveys have the potential to provide insights into changing gender norms.

Box 3: Ethical guidance on approaching sensitive issues with interviewees

There is some guidance and training available to interviewers on how to ask questions about very sensitive issues. In the case of the DHS, for instance, manuals include instructions on how to ask sensitive questions, with this guidance in relation to questions on sexual activity: *'These questions may be embarrassing for some respondents; therefore, ask them in a matter of fact voice. A common reaction for people who are embarrassed is to giggle or laugh. If you laugh in return or act as if you are embarrassed too, the respondent may think that the questions are not serious. Make sure you maintain a serious attitude'* (USAID, 2013).

In the case of the **domestic violence module** of the DHS, ethical guidelines stipulate how it should be implemented. They include:

- Selecting one eligible woman per household
- Providing special training
- Reiterating the need for informed consent
- Ensuring privacy
- Providing referrals and additional information
- Providing support for field staff
- Collaborating with local women's groups.

The information on the websites or instructions for interviewers and field coordinators do not specify who should conduct interviews with women. For ethical reasons, and to put women and girls at their ease in order to talk freely about sensitive issues, it would be useful if they were interviewed by women. While this might well be the case in many countries, the online resources for these surveys do not stipulate that it is a requirement.

MICS indicators	2010	2014
Number of live births to women aged 15 to 19 in a year, divided by the average women in that age group, expressed per 1,000 women (Adolescent birth rate)	N.A	71
Percentage of young women age 15-24 years who are able to read a short simple statement about everyday life or who attended secondary or higher education (Literacy rate among young women)	74.1	84
Gender parity index (secondary school)	0.9	1.02
Percentage of women age 15-49 years who were first married or in union before age 15 (Marriage before age 15)	15.7	15.5
Percentage of women age 20-49 years who were first married or in union before age 18 (Marriage before age 18)	59.9	48.5
Percentage of young women who are married or in union and whose spouse is 10 or more years older, among women age 15-19 years (Spousal age difference)	4.9	6.3
Percentage of young women age 15-24 years who correctly identify ways of preventing the sexual transmission of HIV, and who reject major misconceptions about HIV transmission (Knowledge about HIV prevention among young people)	34.4	36.4
Attitudes towards domestic violence		
Percentage of young women age 15-24 years whose life improved during the last one year, and who expect that their life will be better after one year (Perception of a better life)	39.2	57
Percentage of women age 15-49 years who, at least once a week, read a newspaper or magazine, listen to the radio, and watch television (exposure to mass media)	5.3	11.1

DHS indicators	1996	2001	2010	2014
Percentage of married women currently using any method of family planning	28.5	39.3	48	49.7
Median age at first marriage for women age 25-49 (years)	16.2	16.7	17	17.5
Median age at first sex for women age 25-49 (years)	16.3	16.7	17	17.7
Percentage of women age 15-19 who have had a live birth	18.7	16.2	13.4	12.1
Percentage of young women age 15-24 with comprehensive knowledge about AIDS	57.2	37.7	27.6	25.8
Percentage of wives age 15-49 who received cash earnings for employment in the 12 months preceding the survey who decide alone or jointly with husband how their cash is used	81.3	78.6	86.4	92.8
Percentage of wives age 15-19 who received cash earnings for employment in the 12 months preceding the survey who decide alone or jointly with husband how their cash is used	57.6	43.7	65	77.9
Percent distribution of women age 15-49 by sole ownership of a house and land	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A
Percent distribution of women age 15-19 by sole ownership of a house and land	N.A	N.A	N.A	1.1
Percent distribution of currently married women age 15-49 who usually make decisions about their own health care	N.A	29.3	47.1	65.4
Percentage of women who have experienced physical violence since age 15	N.A	N.A	N.A	21.5
Percentage of women aged 15-19 who have experienced physical violence since age 15	N.A	N.A	N.A	9.6
Percentage of all women age 15-49 who agree that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife for specific reasons	N.A	28.8	23.2	N.Y.A
Percentage of all women age 15-19 who agree that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife for specific reasons	N.A	32.1	24.4	N.Y.A

LSMS indicators	2010/11
Reason for not attending school for female population 6 - 24 years who have never attended school	
Parent did not want	35.3
Reason for leaving school/college for population 6 -24 years who attended school in the past *	
Married	17.2
Reasons for women aged 15-19 not using any family planning methods	
Husband away	24.1
Religious reasons	1.3
Husband does not want	1.0
Distribution of women (household head or spouse of household head) involved in the decision	
Accessing health care for self	71.9
Which contraceptive method to use	18
To take loans	54.8

N.A. = Not available

N.Y.A = Not yet available

* Not reported by gender although data to analyse by gender should be available in the data set

: Most of the MICS indicators relevant to analysing changes in gender norms for adolescent girls were only available from MICS 4, though some new ones were introduced in MICS 5 such as 'adolescent birth rate'.

In this section we look at three perception surveys: the World Values Survey, the Afrobarometer, and the Latinobarómetro.

World Values Survey

The World Values Survey (WVS), dating from 1981, is a nationally representative survey conducted in almost 100 countries, covering almost 90% of the world's population, using a common **questionnaire**. It is the largest non-commercial, cross-national, time series investigation of human beliefs and values, currently reaching almost 400,000 respondents. Moreover, it is the only study covering all nations, rich or poor, in all regions of the world. There have been six waves of the survey, with the most recent running from 2010 to 2014.

The WVS captures data from older adolescents (questions are put to adult women and men, aged 18 and older), but it is useful for shedding light on broader social attitudes to gender issues that affect adolescents.

There are numerous questions in the WVS that are relevant to analysis of changing gender norms. One set of questions refers to perceptions about women's gender role, including the balance between work and home life; another set reflects gender hierarchies in employment, income, political power and education; and a third set refers to attitudes toward certain gendered practices

(Seguino and Lovinsky, 2009), such as those highlighted in Table 3 below. Although WVS questions are not specific to adolescent girls, they provide insights into discriminatory gender norms that might shape girls' perception of their potential, the roles they should play in the future, or the types of barriers that society puts in front of them.

The questions have changed with each round, which is itself interesting as it reflects changes and emerging issues in the public discourse on gender. While this lack of standardisation means it is not possible to analyse changes over time, the survey data paint a useful picture of gender norms affecting women and girls at a given point in time. Table 3 shows which questions or statements were included in each wav of the WVS, from Wave 3 (1995-1998) to Wave 6 (2010-2014).

Understanding what influences attitudes towards gender equality

The WVS collects data on many background characteristics about respondents, which allow for a richer understanding of their answers. For example, Seguino and Lovinsky (2009) explored the impact of religiosity on gender attitudes and gender equality outcomes, using responses to the WVS questions alongside questions on religious beliefs and behaviour. Analysis of gender attitudes with respect to other variables such as socioeconomic background,

Table 3: Questions or statements from the World Values Survey that reveal insights into changing gender norms

Relevant questions	Survey round			
	6	5	4	3
'Do you agree, disagree or neither agree nor disagree with the following statements?' – When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women	✓	✓	✓	✓
If a woman earns more money than her husband, it's almost certain to cause problems	✓			✓
Having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person	✓			
'For each of the following statements I read out, can you tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with each.' Relevant statements include: – When a mother works for pay, the children suffer	✓			
On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do	✓	✓	✓	✓
A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work			✓	✓
Both the husband and wife should contribute to household income		✓	✓	✓
A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl	✓	✓	✓	✓
On the whole, men make better business executives than women do	✓	✓	✓	✓
Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay	✓	✓	✓	✓
'Please tell me for each of the following actions whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between.' Relevant statements include: Homosexuality	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prostitution	✓	✓	✓	✓
Abortion	✓	✓	✓	✓
Divorce	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sex before marriage	✓			
For a man to beat his wife	✓			
Parents beating children	✓			
'I'm going to read out some problems. Please indicate which of the following problems you consider the most serious one for the world as a whole?' Five statements are provided, one of which is: Discrimination against girls and women	✓			
'If a woman wants to have a child as a single parent but she doesn't want to have a stable relationship with a man, do you approve or disapprove?'		✓	✓	✓
'If someone says a child needs a home with both a father and a mother to grow up happily, would you tend to agree or disagree?'			✓	✓
'Do you think that a woman has to have children in order to be fulfilled or is this not necessary?' Needs children Not necessary Don't know			✓	✓

political inclination, degree of activism, and age might generate interesting analysis about people's perceptions of gender norms and how they change.

Afrobarometer

Afrobarometer surveys began in 2000 and are conducted regularly (every two to three years) in more than 30 African countries to identify trends in public attitudes on democracy and governance. The survey asks a standard set of questions of men and women (aged 18 and above), so responses can be disaggregated by age and gender. This means data can be compared systematically across countries.

The survey questions focus on democracy and governance, including themes such as poverty, economics, politics, social capital, crime and conflict, participation, and national identity. Only a few questions provide specific information about gender norms, and those focus on

Table 4: Afrobarometer survey questions or statements relevant to gender norms

Question or statement	Survey rounds					
	6	5	4	3	2	1
Men make better political leaders than women, and should be elected rather than women	✓	✓		✓		
Women should have the same chance of being elected to political office as men	✓	✓		✓		
In our country, women should have equal rights and receive the same treatment as men do		✓		✓	✓	
Women have always been subject to traditional laws and customs, and should remain so		✓		✓	✓	
'In your opinion, how often, in this country: • Are women treated unequally by traditional leaders? • Are women treated unequally by the police and courts? • Are women treated unequally by employers?' (Response options are: always, often, rarely, never, don't know)		✓				
'In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address?' Responses include: • Gender issues / women's rights	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
'How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say?' Responses include: • Empowering women	✓	✓				

perceptions about women's rights and equality, and their role in politics.

There have been six survey rounds to date. Data for the various survey rounds are available **here.** Most of the gender-relevant questions have been asked in all survey rounds, but there are some exceptions (see Table 4).

Although the questions are centred on a specific topic, they are particularly revealing in a continent undergoing significant transformations in governance structures, where women are increasingly taking on roles in politics, and there is a growing understanding of the importance of women's empowerment. Thus, understanding changing perceptions around support for women's rights and how governments are seen to be performing in this area gives a sense of the context in which girls are growing up. Comparing these variables across countries and over time is particularly interesting as it can reveal where change is occurring more rapidly.

Latinobarómetro

The Latinobarómetro is an annual public opinion survey dating back to 1995, involving some 20,000 interviews in 18 Latin American countries, covering more than 600 million people. It asks questions of men and women aged 16 years and above, and uses indicators of opinions, attitudes, behaviour and values. Data from 1995 to 2011 are available **here,** and can be analysed by gender and age.

Table 5 highlights questions from the five most recent rounds (2007-2011) that are most relevant for analysing changes in gender norms.

These questions focus on perceptions of women's role in the workforce and their dual role as mothers and earners, which suggest that these are particularly contentious areas for public perceptions of gender norms in Latin America. The survey also includes questions about whether equal rights apply to women in practice. These data are of limited use for analysing changing gender norms; though older adolescent girls (aged 16-19) are included as respondents, they are not purposively sampled, so may well constitute a small number of total respondents. Nor do the data provide information about gender norms that affect adolescent girls specifically. However, they can give insights into the wider environment in which adolescent girls in this region are growing up, and the extent to which discriminatory gender roles still constrain their life chances and choices.

Table 5: Latinobarómetro survey questions relevant to gender norms

Question	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
'Which of these groups believe the educational system in your country puts them at a disadvantage?' Response options include: • Women	✓				
'To what extent do the following freedoms, rights, life chances and guarantees apply in (x country)?' Response options include: • Equality of men and women	✓		✓	✓	✓
'Which of the following groups do you think complies least with the law?' Response options include: • Women	✓				
'In all countries there are differences or even conflicts between different social groups. In your opinion, how much conflict is there between...?' (Categories are: very strong, strong, weak, none, don't know) Response options include: • Men and women		✓	✓	✓	✓
'Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the phrases: • It is better than women concentrate at home and men at work • Men are better political leaders women • If the woman earns more than the man, there will almost certainly be trouble'			✓		
'Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each the following statements?' Response options include: • The woman must work only if the couple doesn't earn enough money				✓	
'Would you say that in equal conditions of grades or titles a person is more likely, equally likely, or less likely that (READ EACH ITEM) to be promoted or accepted in a job?' Response options include: • Woman compared to a man				✓	
'How do you consider the following things that can happen to a woman from a person who is not her partner?' ('flattering', 'offensive', 'don't know') • A compliment made in private • Being rubbed against on purpose					✓

Table 6: Advantages and disadvantages of administrative data as a source of socioeconomic indicators

Advantages	Disadvantages
Simplicity, speed, and frequency of updating	Concepts, definitions, classifications and methods not suited for statistical purposes
Lower costs	Incomplete coverage and poor reporting
Wider coverage and disaggregation	Coverage biases
Lower response burden	The only data captured are those recorded for administrative purposes
Variety of topics for which data are collected	Results from administrative data made public can be altered by authorities to meet government targets
	Data are generally not centralised, so there is limited public access

Source: Asian Development Bank, 2010; Stuart et al., 2015

What can administrative data collected by developing country governments tell us about changing gender norms?

Administrative data are generated and collated by line ministries and government regulatory authorities, and tend to have broad coverage – often reaching communities in remote and marginalised localities that may be under-represented in other data.

Records, registers and other documents contain a wide variety of data on demographic, social, economic, cultural and environmental topics. They can complement other quantitative and qualitative data, and can be a cost-effective means of collecting data on gender norms, spanning key aspects of adolescent girls' lives, from education and health, to births, deaths and marriages, and land tenure and inheritance rights.

In many developing countries though, the use of administrative data for statistical purposes has been limited due to poor-quality data, biased reporting, and incomplete Table 7 outlines some types of administrative data from which insights on gender norms might be gleaned.

Recently, there has been increasing support for the collection and analysis of administrative data, recognising the range of issues they can capture, and reflecting improvements in the quality of data collection processes. In particular, administrative data have increasingly been seen as a useful source of information for evaluations, helping test the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of different programme design options (Rawlings, 2013).

How can these different types of data best be used by policy-makers, practitioners and evaluators to analyse and drive changes in gender norms?

Policy-makers (including government officials, legislators and donors): Administrative data are useful for policy-makers at the local level as they can provide insights into practices linked to gender norms, and how these may (or may not) change in response to local interventions. They can also reveal information that national-level surveys miss – for instance, concerning access to family planning or other services that can support changes in gender norms locally.

Trends for relevant indicators in major surveys (DHS, MICS, LSMS) show change (or lack of change) in practices linked to gender norms at the national level and for sub-national levels (where data are collected locally). For national-level surveys repeated at different intervals, it may be possible to link any observed changes in gender norms

Table 7: How administrative data can give potential insights into gender norms

Educational records	With broad coverage, these records provide sex- and age-disaggregated data about enrolment, drop outs, and completion rates for different levels of state education, which might include localities not covered by surveys. Such data can shed light on 'son preference' and other gender norms, particularly in remote localities that might not be reached by surveys.
Health records	These can include information on: fertility (number of children per women, age of mother at first birth) to shed light on the numbers of girl mothers; uptake of family planning services (in some cases, health workers might collect additional information such as whether adolescents have sought contraception without parental or spousal agreement); and the extent of FGM/C.
Civil registry	Can provide information about age at marriage (although in countries where child marriage is illegal, such marriages are typically unregistered), and spousal age differences. Religious institutions (churches, temples, etc.) may also keep records of marriage ceremonies. In some cases, civil registries might have information about inheritance, which could enable an analysis of whether equal inheritance rights are practised.
Property registry	Can be used to verify whether land and property are registered in women's names (including older adolescent girls, although in some cases formal ownership can only legally be registered for those aged 18 or over).

to specific national-level policies or programmes introduced between surveys. This is helpful for policy-makers to get a sense of the broader impacts of such interventions.

By analysing how certain outcome variables correlate with other social characteristics (such as gender, age, location, type of locality, region, level of education, etc.), policy-makers can determine whether acting on other variables or concentrating efforts in certain regions might contribute to a stronger shift in gender norms. triangulated to give a fuller picture about how the local population and subgroups within it perceive gender issues.

Development practitioners and programme implementers: Major national surveys, complemented by local-level administrative data, can provide useful information for development planners and practitioners. For example, police reports might indicate that domestic violence or sexual abuse is far more prevalent in certain districts than others, so practitioners might focus on changing behaviour and attitudes among communities in these districts. These data can also be useful to include in NGO funding applications as they can support the 'business case' for an intervention. Local-level administrative data might also be a valuable and cost-effective source of baseline data for specific programmes, as well as providing ongoing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data.

Data from studies on public perceptions (such as WVS, Afrobarometer and Latinobarómetro) can help practitioners understand attitudes toward women and girls in their broader environment, which can highlight entry points for interventions to transform discriminatory gender norms. Opinion data can complement other data that planners and practitioners are likely to have collected – for example, from consultations or participatory assessments in various localities. These different sources of data can be triangulated to give a fuller picture about how the local population and subgroups within it perceive gender issues.

Evaluators: Administrative data are likely to be most useful for evaluating the impacts of specific programmes or services, and are frequently used for M&E purposes. For example, records on school attendance by girls who have received secondary school stipends can provide evidence about whether the programme is, in fact, leading to a direct change in behaviour linked to one gender norm.

Administrative data alone, though, would be insufficient to explain why change is happening. So there would still need to be a rigorous process of data collection and analysis (including baseline, mid-term and endline data) to fully monitor and evaluate the impacts of the intervention. National survey data are generally not particularly useful for M&E purposes because it is not possible to attribute specific changes to macro-level data. However, comparisons of data collected over a period of time (for example, two or more rounds of survey data) might indicate changes in behaviour that can be linked to a national policy or programme.

The main insights, strengths and limitations of each type of data are summarised in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Summary of main strengths and weaknesses of each type of data

Data source	Methodological	Coverage	Thematic	Reliability	Frequency
DHS	Methodologically robust, with large statistically significant samples. No major methodological limitations, particularly as they are improved with each round.	Coverage is significant, nationally representative. Smallest unit of analysis usually district level (or equivalent), though for gender norm analysis, data at the village level would be useful. Small, marginalised population groups might not be included in the sample. DHS and MICS data have been collected in a large number of countries. LSMS data have been collected in fewer countries so less scope for international comparisons	DHS includes very relevant thematic areas, with women's questionnaire exploring behaviour and practices related to discriminatory gender norms	Collected by local organisations with technical support and quality assurance from international agencies sponsoring them (USAID, UNICEF, World Bank), which increases reliability	Full DHS and MICS are carried out with a minimum interval of 5 years, though not all countries have surveys in that interval – they might take longer. In countries where data are not collected so regularly, it is not possible to do robust analysis of gender norm change over time
MICS	Standard surveys with adjustable modules allow for comparability and flexibility. Useful time series data, although for the analysis of some variables linked to gender norm change, a panel survey would be more useful		MICS would benefit from more information on control of assets and decision-making		
LSMS			LSMS data focus on social and economic variables at the household level so do not have much relevant information on gender, but useful gendered analysis is possible for time use, property ownership and decisions over use of resources		Every four years on average
Perception surveys (WVS, Afrobarometer, Latinobarómetro)	Methodologically sound, although since they ask about perceptions rather than more concrete behaviours or events, responses are subjective and are subject to variability	Samples are nationally representative but smaller than household surveys. Coverage is patchy, though it does go to sub-national localities	Afrobarometer focuses on democracy and governance and Latinobarómetro on social and economic issues. Neither explores gender as a priority area, and so questions on gender are few and many of them do not appear in all rounds of data	Data are reliably collected and verified by the technical boards for each survey. But because they are 'perception' surveys, responses are not 'verifiable'	Afrobarometer takes place every 4 to 5 years, while Latinobarómetro data are collected on an annual basis
Administrative data	Methodology not developed to collect statistical data but for administrative purposes. There is no sample as such, but collected depending on administrative process	Coverage is very extensive given that administrative processes – where data are generated – take place at all levels and in all localities, so most far-ranging data set	Very variable as it depends on what type of data are generated by local and national governments in each country. But in terms of social indicators, there are some basic data commonly generated around education, health, police reporting, civil registry, etc.	There is significant scope for data to be inadequately collected or kept/maintained as it depends on incentives of local governments to do this. In the past, administrative data were seen as being of poor quality and not useful for statistical analysis, though the situation is changing	There will be a varying time frame depending on the administrative process for which data are examined. In some cases (e.g. in schools), data might be collected annually; other data might be collected more or less frequently

Resources

Weblinks

Afrobarometer
Demographic Health Survey
Demographic Health Survey: Gender Page
International Men and Gender Equality Survey
Latinobarómetro
Living Standards Measurement Study
Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
World Values Survey
Young Lives

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