‘Girls Speak Out’: a four-country survey of young women’s attitudes and recommendations for action
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1 Executive Summary

Following the publication of its ‘Hear Our Voices’ report in 2014, Plan International’s thinking began to focus on the clear need to examine adolescent girls’ suggestions for improvements to their lives and how girls themselves would deal with barriers to equality, including the issues of gender violence and early pregnancy.

In 2015 Plan International (‘Plan’) commissioned Ipsos MORI to undertake a study which aimed to consult with adolescent girls to explore their own priorities and attitudes, identify recommendations for change, and understand who they thought should be responsible for implementing these changes.

As part of the research, a total of 4,218 interviews were conducted with girls aged 15-19 across Ecuador (1,000), Nicaragua (1,000), Pakistan (1,018) and Zimbabwe (1,200). A quota approach was adopted, with 15-minute face-to-face interviews being conducted between 23 February and 3 April 2015. As part of the research, and where deemed appropriate, prior consent was obtained from the respondent’s parent or guardian, as well as from the respondent.

The research findings were also shared with the Plan country offices of Ecuador, Nicaragua, Pakistan and Zimbabwe and a consultation was undertaken to allow for a contextual response to the findings.

1.1 Key findings

Adolescent girls express mixed opinions regarding degrees of autonomy, in relation to decision making and financial control. Overall, the results tell of patchy or partial empowerment of girls, with a third (34%) responding that they ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ make decisions about their own lives, a third saying sometimes and a third responding ‘often’ or ‘always’.

This is particularly the case in Pakistan, where girls are more likely to feel that they ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ make their own decisions. Here, only one in five girls (20%) believe that they can ‘always’ or ‘often’ make decisions about their own lives, with just over half reporting ‘seldom’ or ‘never’. In addition, they also report that girls have less access to technical resources such as the internet, and more burden is placed upon them in relation to domestic chores.

A clear contrast exists in relation to equality of opportunity. Whilst the majority of girls in each country believe that parents encourage girls to succeed at school just as much as boys, a significant minority feel that girls are ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ given as many opportunities as boys to get on in life. This is further evidenced by the negative results on distribution of household labour, which in all countries clearly indicate that the burden of household chores falls disproportionately on the girls.

Across the four countries over a third (38%) of girls reported that they ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ feel confident to speak up and be heard when in the presence of boys and men. However, over a third (39%) of girls believe that their concerns do matter in the community, although this is much less evident in Nicaragua, where 61% of girls believe that girls ‘seldom’ or never’ feel that their concerns are of
any importance. The provision of information on avoiding pregnancy and access to contraception is highest in Ecuador and Nicaragua, with girls in Pakistan and Zimbabwe reporting that such resources are less likely to be available. Four in ten girls in Zimbabwe (41%) disagree that girls have access to contraceptives to avoid unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. It is important to consider alongside these results that girls having control over use of contraceptives is often determined by the male in the relationships; therefore, access to contraceptives does not necessarily equate to use of contraceptives.

Although perceived levels of equality in relationships is mixed across countries, with a proportion of girls reporting that they believe they have equality in their relationships, roughly a third of girls interviewed disagreed that boyfriends or husbands are willing to use condoms to avoid unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Additionally, adolescent girls in Zimbabwe and Pakistan reported high agreement rates, 43% and 31% respectively, in response to whether they often feel pressured to take part in sexual activities.

Girls in Ecuador and Nicaragua believe that girls can continue to attend school whilst pregnant and can also return after childbirth. In contrast, this is widely rejected in Pakistan, where 61% of girls disagree that girls can continue to go to school while pregnant.

The experiences of young married girls vary across all countries; overall, the findings indicate that for many girls once married their rights, such as access to information, education and right to live free from violence, are further compromised. Forty per-cent of married girls in Ecuador reported that they often feel pressurised to take part in sexual activities with their husband or boyfriend. Overall, 89% of the girls interviewed disagreed that it is beneficial for girls to marry before the age of 18. The majority of girls disagree that girls face social pressure to marry at a young age (most notably 76% of girls in Nicaragua); that said, four in ten girls in Pakistan reported that they face social pressure to marry, with Zimbabwe reporting a similar incidence.

Girls tend to reject the perceived ‘benefits’ of early marriage, such as protecting the honour of a family. In contrast, they tend to agree that early marriage can bring negative consequences:

- 74% of girls from Pakistan agree that girls who get married before the age of 18 years are less likely to complete their education;
- 86% believe that girls who marry as teenagers are more likely to experience abuse or violence;
- In Ecuador, almost three in five girls agree that girls who marry young are more likely to experience violence in their homes;
- In Nicaragua this rises to seven in ten girls;
- In Zimbabwe it is even higher, at eight in ten.

Girls comprehensively reject the notion that violence and abuse from a teacher is acceptable, although a notable minority do question whether a girl may be at fault if a male teacher or student harasses her.
Girls in Zimbabwe tend to feel safe when using toilets and latrines, although this is the exception when compared to the other countries, with 74% of girls in Nicaragua and 70% of girls in Ecuador disagreeing that girls always feel safe when using toilets and latrines at school. Similar findings by country also emerge when girls were asked to consider how safe they feel when walking to school. In Ecuador, 63% of adolescent girls disagree that girls always feel safe on the way to school.

Girls also reject the notion that it is acceptable for males to use violence against their partners, although a minority in Pakistan and Zimbabwe (10% for both countries) agree that violence should be tolerated in order to keep families together. In Pakistan, agreement levels on acceptance of partner violence are higher for those girls who have one to two years of education and those who have children.

The majority of girls believe that they can travel on public transport without a male guide – although this is not the case in Pakistan, where over half of the girls reported that girls should not travel without a male guide. The threat of violence is an impediment to girls’ mobility and access to public spaces:

- 21% of girls in Nicaragua believe that girls should not be seen in public places after dark;
- this rises to 41% of girls in Ecuador;
- 66% of girls in Pakistan, and
- 85% of girls in Zimbabwe.

Solutions in relation to the issues of early pregnancy, early marriage and safety tend to focus on the education of women in the form of awareness-raising programmes, campaigns and increased access to information.

“I would hold talks on the consequences that a pregnancy at an early age brings. The talks would be given in the schools and would bring in girls who are already mothers to share their stories.”

Girl, Ecuador

“We should carry out educational campaigns on how to use condoms and the different planning methods.”

Girl, Nicaragua

They also call for more supportive attitudes from families and the community to help girls who fall pregnant at an early age, and believe that this is a two-way process, with girls feeling sufficiently empowered to raise issues and concerns with them in return.

“I would tell their parents not to marry them at an early age, and let them know the abuses of getting pregnant at an early age.”

Girl, Pakistan

“I would tell them to become friends with their mums so they can guide them and give them counselling, so when girls need to make a decision they can take advice from their parents and not regret it later.”

Girl, Ecuador
In relation to safety, girls are more likely to advocate the need for schools to impose rules and regulations which clearly state that violence and abuse is unacceptable and for them to implement a complaints process. In relation to the wider community, solutions tend to focus more on girls having someone they trust who they can talk to and them having the confidence to report violence and abuse.

“I would encourage them to open up their eyes when there is an abuse situation and report it. Do not remain silent!”
Girl, Nicaragua

“I would educate my peers on their rights and encourage them to report any form of abuse to the police.”
Girl, Zimbabwe

Despite the limitations to the lives and opportunities of adolescent girls that emerge from the research, the vast majority of girls believe that girls are becoming more valued as equal members of the community and that they have more opportunities in life than their mother did at their age. This is particularly notable in Nicaragua, where 96% agree that they have more opportunities than their mother.

Girls tend to believe that mothers and female care-givers and girls themselves should be responsible for improving the situation of girls, with less emphasis placed on the government, institutional structures and men and boys.
2 Introduction

2.1 Background

In September 2014, Plan International (‘Plan’) published its ‘Hear Our Voices’ report\(^1\) – a study which provided a comprehensive insight into the lives of over 7,000 adolescent girls and boys (aged 12-16) across 11 countries in four regions. The report is one of the largest studies of its kind and key elements focus on issues surrounding adolescent girls’ rights, the challenges they face and their views on empowerment – all in their own words.

Following the publication of this report, Plan’s thinking began to focus on the clear need to examine adolescent girls’ suggestions for improvements to their lives; who they believe should be responsible for these changes, and how they would deal with barriers to equality, including the issues of gender violence and early pregnancy. Whilst there is a wealth of data relating to the personal experiences of adolescent girls and the barriers affecting their empowerment, there remains a lack of comprehensive and robust data which focuses on girls’ own recommendations or calls to action. The importance of this is further emphasised by the finding from the ‘Hear Our Voices’ report that adolescent girls are strong advocates for change.

2.2 Objectives

In 2015, Plan commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct a representative survey of adolescent girls across four countries of interest (Ecuador, Nicaragua, Pakistan and Zimbabwe). These were selected on a purposive basis given Plan’s work in these countries, their inclusion in the ‘Hear Our Voices’ research and the need for representation across geographical regions.

The overall aim of the study is to consult with adolescent girls to explore their own priorities and attitudes, focusing on their recommendations for change. How do they think the lives of adolescent girls can be improved and who is responsible for this? In more detail, the study aimed to focus on a number of thematic areas that emerged from the ‘Hear Our Voices’ research and were identified as being key barriers to equality and empowerment. These included:

- Decisions around early pregnancy;
- Decisions relating to early marriage;
- Safety in school and the community;
- Gender-based violence in the community.

In total, 4,218 adolescent girls aged 15-19 were interviewed across the four countries as part of the study. The results of this survey will feed into Plan’s ‘State of the World’s Girls’ report, published in the autumn of 2015, and will help inform the core of the report’s recommendations chapter.

2.3 Methodology and ethical considerations

2.3.1 Methodology

A key aim of the study was to deliver robust and comparable quantitative data that is broadly representative of the target population in the four countries and stands up to scrutiny. When selecting a survey methodology it is important to consider the differences between a quota sample and a random probability sample in order to appreciate the relative strengths of each and the extent to which the data from this survey can be considered reliable and robust.

The ‘gold standard’ of survey methodology is a true random probability survey. Face-to-face interviewing using random probability involves the most rigorous methods and carries with it a great deal of credibility; particularly with academic audiences. The main difference between random probability sampling and a quota sampling approach is at the sample selection stage. Here, random probability sampling uses systematic selection procedures which ensure that each member of the survey population has a known and non-zero probability of selection. Adopting this approach increases the representativeness of the results by increasing the statistical efficiency of the sample (i.e. wider confidence intervals), reducing error through the assessment of bias and leading to an increase in precision, which means that we are able to make stronger inferences from the sample surveyed to the population. A great deal of effort is made to contact and persuade those selected to take part through processes such as re-visits, re-issues and incentives, which helps to ensure a good response rate and therefore limits non-response bias. Having said this, such methods are time-consuming and require the creation of a sampling list from which to select participants; for example, a list of addresses similar to the Postcode Address File in the UK. In light of the countries selected, this would prove to be problematic given that a comprehensive household list is unlikely to be available in each country.

In contrast, quota sampling is a non-random sampling method and involves a fixed quota of interviews being set (within each sampling point\(^2\)) on variables such as age and region to ensure the sample is broadly representative of the population of interest. Such quotas are based on the most up-to-date demographic profile of the population in each of the countries; for example, age and urban/rural split. As part of the survey, interviewers ask potential interviewees a series of demographic screening questions to identify whether they fit the profile before continuing with the main survey. One key drawback of sampling in this way is that it is not possible to calculate selection probabilities, thereby making it more difficult to control for bias. To reduce interviewer selection bias and increase the randomness of selection, interviewers are typically given a set of instructions to follow when selecting households – for example, following a particular route, only interviewing one person per household and skipping three households after the successful completion of an interview. Although a quota sampling approach is methodologically less pure

\(^2\) ‘Sample Point’ is a clearly defined, specific and unique area that an interviewer will go to in order to achieve a fixed amount of interviews. Each could be a town, village, neighbourhood in a city, street etc.
than random probability, its key advantage is that the sample profile matches the known profile on specified variables. In addition, this method does not require the creation of a sampling list of addresses – an important consideration on a study of this nature. Furthermore, the sample achieved is not reliant on natural fall-out so it is easier to achieve a sample that is nationally representative.

It is worth noting here that adopting a quota sampling approach does bring a number of drawbacks. A quota sample has not been chosen by random selection, which means that it is not possible to calculate the potential sampling error.\(^3\) Although random probability sampling procedures cannot fully guarantee that the final achieved sample will be structurally identical to the population on certain variables, it is based upon statistical theory which can clearly demonstrate why samples are free of selection bias and why it is possible to calculate standard errors and confidence intervals.

In addition to the above, certain traits in a quota sample may be over-represented. For example, if we are basing our quotas on region and age, the final sample may be somewhat skewed on other demographics and characteristics, e.g. attendance and school and social grade.

Nevertheless, quota sampling was identified as the most beneficial survey methodology for this survey, given the difficulty in obtaining a comprehensive sampling frame. In addition, a quota sampling approach also enables time savings when compared to a ‘gold standard’ random probability approach. This was a key consideration as data collection had to be completed in time for the publication of Plan’s report in the autumn of 2015. This sampling method is also frequently used by Ipsos MORI for representative surveys that are subject to external scrutiny.

### 2.3.2 Data collection

Fieldwork in all countries ran between 23 February and 3 April 2015, with an aim to achieve 1,000 interviews with adolescent girls aged 15-19 in each country. A total of 4,218 interviews was achieved, split as follows:

**Total number of interviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total number of interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>1,018*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>1,200*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Pakistan achieved 18 extra interviews to ensure that an equal number of interviews were conducted in each sample point (see footnote page 7). Zimbabwe achieved an extra 200 interviews due to an error in the specification, although weighting has been applied to correct for this.

Face-to-face Pen and Paper Interviewing (PAPI) was conducted in Ecuador, Nicaragua and Pakistan, and Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI)

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\(^3\) The natural error between the sample population and the true characteristics and attitudes of the entire population, i.e. all young women aged 15-19 in each country.
was conducted in Zimbabwe. All the data collected from the PAPI interviews was then entered into an online survey link created by the UK office, whereas the CAPI data is entered directly into the interviewer’s computer and then uploaded to the online link. In both cases this minimises any errors, given that the online survey automatically routes the interviewer/data entry staff to each relevant question and will not allow them to progress if information is missing. In the case of PAPI interviewing, the respondent was re-contacted to clarify any missing or contradictory responses.

The interviews were semi-structured in format, with a number of open-ended questions built into the survey to allow respondents to speak freely on the ways in which they would better protect young women from abuse and violence and from becoming pregnant or getting married at a young age. All responses were reviewed and coded, and we have included a selection of these verbatim throughout the report to provide insight into a particular issue or topic. However, they should not be interpreted as defining the views of all participants.

The final draft was shared with the protection and gender advisers and the programme managers of Plan country offices of Ecuador, Nicaragua, Pakistan and Zimbabwe. This consultation process was used to validate the findings of the study, to consider in more depth the contextual analysis of the findings and to identify two or three core recommendations/key messages from each of the country reports that could be used to further increase the reach and impact of this research report.

### 2.3.3 Sampling and regional coverage

As part of the overall approach, the sample was stratified by region to ensure that it achieved the best representation of the geographical distribution of the country's population within the confines of feasibility. In addition, it was also stratified by rurality/urbanity as an indicator of population density. Although the process of stratification increases the accuracy of survey estimates, one of the difficulties for multi-country projects is that the data for the stratifiers need to be universally available in all project countries. For this reason, and due to the limited availability of official statistics for girls aged 15-19, stratifiers were confined to these two measures.

In order to ensure a representative sample, fieldwork was conducted in as many regions as possible in each country. The key exceptions here are regions that were deemed to be unsafe due to political volatility/military conflict (e.g. the Taliban-held regions of Pakistan) and areas that are prohibitively remote and inaccessible, with very small/dispersed populations, for example the ‘Zonas No Delimitadas’ regions in Ecuador. Other regions were excluded due to time, cost and resource constraints. The table below provides details of the regional coverage by country.
As mentioned above, the urban/rural split was also used as a stratifier for the research. This meant that the split of sample points selected in urban or rural areas was a close match to the split of the population of 15 to 19-year-old adolescent girls in each country. For example (and in line with the table below), 620 interviews were conducted in urban areas of Ecuador, versus 380 in rural areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Regions covered as part of the fieldwork</th>
<th>Regions excluded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>Azuay, El Oro, Esmeraldas, Guayas, Loja, Manabí, Pichincha and Tungurahua</td>
<td>Bolivar, Cañar, Carchi, Chimborazo, Cotopaxi, Galapagos, Imbabura, Los Rios, Morona Santiago, Napo, Orellana, Pastaza, Santa Elena, Santo Domingo, Sucumbios, Zamora Chinchipe and ‘Zonas No Delimitadas’*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>Chinandega, Jinotega, León, Managua, Masaya, Matagalpa, RAAN (Regio Autonoma Atlántico Norte) and RAAS (Regio Autonoma Atlántico Sur)</td>
<td>Boaco, Carazo, Chontales, Esteli, Granada, Madriz, Nueva Segovia, Rio San Juan and Rivas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Baluchistan, Islamabad Capital Territory, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh</td>
<td>Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Bulawayo, Harare, Manicaland, Masvingo and Midlands</td>
<td>Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland West and Matabeleland South</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Ecuadorian territory which is not assigned to any province, i.e. Las Gondolinas, La Manga del Cura and El Piedrero.

### Urban/rural split

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Total female aged 15-19</th>
<th>Female aged 15-19 (urban)</th>
<th>Female aged 15-19 (rural)</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>14,483,499</td>
<td>705,989</td>
<td>440,148</td>
<td>265,841</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
<td>38 National Institute of Statistics &amp; Censuses, 2010</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>5,142,098</td>
<td>292,485</td>
<td>168,687</td>
<td>123,798</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
<td>VIII Censo de Población y IV de Vivienda - Nicaragua 2005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>176,669,226</td>
<td>8,876,518</td>
<td>3,190,323</td>
<td>5,686,195</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1998 Censes Report of Pakistan (Projected to 2014 population)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>13,061,239</td>
<td>712,803</td>
<td>266,596</td>
<td>446,207</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Zimstat - Zimbabwe National Population Census 2012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3.4 Sample points

As mentioned previously, a sample point is a clearly defined, specific and unique area that an interviewer will go to in order to achieve a fixed amount of interviews. Each could be a town, village, neighbourhood in a city or street. Using the population data for each country the sample points were selected at the regional level, with the number of interviews allocated proportionately to the size of the sample point. In order to ensure the integrity of the design, each country conducted the same number of interviews in each sampling point. The following table details the number of points and total number of interviews per point.

Number of sampling points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of sampling points (in total)</th>
<th>Number of interviews to be conducted in each sampling point</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3.5 Quotas and weighting

As well as stratifying the sample, quotas were set on age (an equal split of 20% for each age category\(^4\)). We believe that it is a fair assumption that nationally (and locally) there will be equal numbers of young women of each age, with the mortality rate having a minimal effect.

Following fieldwork, weighting was then applied to account for any imbalances achieved in the urban/rural and age quotas and subsequent discrepancies in the data. In most cases the quotas achieved matched the requirements, although Zimbabwe was unable to meet the rural quota due to a number of logistical challenges and incidents relating to interviewer safety. Their original target for the urban/rural split was N=370/630 (37%/63%), although their final split was N=800/400 (67%/33%).\(^5\) Weighting was therefore applied to correct for this imbalance. This had the effect of down-weighting those in rural areas to less than 1.0, which meant that the effective base size (used for statistical testing after weighting) was reduced slightly to 830. We use the effective base size for statistical testing because it increases statistical reliability.

The data collected has been weighted by age (an equal split for each category) as well as being weighted by the national figures for population living in urban and rural regions.

\(^4\) 20% in each category for those aged 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19.
\(^5\) For this reason, as well as regional restrictions on fieldwork, caution should be exercised in Zimbabwe given that findings cannot be considered to be truly nationally representative.
2.3.6 Statistical reliability

The adolescent girls who took part in our survey are only a sample of the total ‘population’ of adolescent girls who live in each country. Therefore, we cannot be certain that the figures obtained in the survey are exactly those that would have been reached had every girl aged 15-19 in the population taken part (these would be the ‘true’ values). We can, however, predict the variation between the survey results and the ‘true’ population values from knowledge of the size of the samples on which the results to each question is based, and the number of times a particular answer is given, e.g. 50% of respondents. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95% – that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the ‘true’ value will fall within a specified range. The table below illustrates the predicted ranges for different sample sizes and percentage results at the ‘95% confidence interval’:

### Statistical reliability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The approximate confidence intervals (or margin of error) between the survey results and true population results</th>
<th>10% or 90%</th>
<th>30% or 70%</th>
<th>50%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>860 (Zimbabwe)*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 (all other countries)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*After weighting, the effective base size was reduced to 860.

For example, with a sample size of 1,000 in a country where 30% give a particular answer, the chances are 19 in 20 that the ‘true’ value (i.e. the one which would have been obtained if all adolescent girls in that country had been interviewed) will fall within the range of +3 percentage points from the survey result (i.e. between 27% and 33%). In other words, we can be 95% confident that our margin of error falls within plus or minus 3%.

We can also note that although the effective base size\(^6\) of 860 for Zimbabwe was used for statistical testing, the margin of error remains the same as for a sample of 1,000. As noted in the previous methodology section, the above confidence interval calculations relate only to samples that have been selected using strict probability sampling methods. However, in practice it is reasonable to assume that these calculations provide a good indication of the confidence intervals relating to this survey.

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\(^6\) The base size after weighting.
2.3.7 Sub-group analysis

When reporting, only sub-group differences that are statistically significant have been reported; for example, a difference between adolescent girls in urban versus rural areas in a given country. The typical sub-group differences that have been analysed include the following:

- Age;
- Urban and rural regions;
- Education (number of years of schooling completed);
- Currently married and non-married adolescent girls;
- Current occupation (for example, in education, in paid work);
- Girls with or without children; and
- Differences by region in each country.

2.4 Ethical considerations

All Ipsos companies and partners work closely together to adhere to strict ethical and quality standards. All are ESOMAR members and comply fully with the ESOMAR Code of Conduct for market research, which promotes the highest ethical and professional standards in the industry globally, as well as their national codes of conduct.

Interviewing children and young people requires special consideration and precaution on the part of the researcher. Ipsos fieldwork managers and all interviewers working on the project were required to read and evidence their commitment by signing Plan’s Child Protection policy. The policy sets out the minimum global standards for Plan staff, associates and visitors. A copy of the policy was provided in the national or widely spoken language (English or Spanish) and was signed by the local teams at the interviewer briefings.

Parental consent was obtained in accordance with the national law of each country, Plan’s guidance, and expert advice from each Ipsos country team. Country-specific requirements for parental consent were as follows:

- Ecuador and Pakistan: parental consent needed for adolescent girls aged 15-17 years.
- Nicaragua: parental consent needed for adolescent girls aged 15-17 years, and those aged 18-19 who currently live with their parents/guardian.
- Zimbabwe: no parental consent required by law as the legal age of consent in Zimbabwe is 15. However, the researchers did seek to obtain parental consent and the majority of interviews have signed parental consent forms.

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7 Differences have typically been reported between younger adolescent girls (aged 15-17) and older girls (aged 18-19). However, some comparisons may be made between separate aged groups, for example, those aged 15 versus those aged 19.
Whenever parental consent was required, interviewers provided parents with information about the study. This information included the aims and objectives of the study and details of the commissioning client and fieldwork agency, as well as details on how the study results would be used. Reassurances were also provided regarding confidentiality, the respondent’s right to stop the interview at any point, and Ipsos’ adherence to the ESOMAR Code, all of which acts to safeguard the respondent and their family from risk.

In order to avoid undesirable methodological effects, e.g. response bias, it is not preferable for adults to be present in the room during the interview. To avoid bias, interviewers requested that the child be allowed to complete the interview in private. Due to cultural sensitivities, particularly in rural areas, this was not possible for the majority of interviews (82%) undertaken in Pakistan.

All young women who were eligible to take part were asked to give informed consent before taking part in the survey. As is the case when asking for parental consent, respondents were given a full explanation of the study. This included information on the aims and objectives of the study, details of the commissioning client and fieldwork agency, details of how the study results would be used, full reassurances regarding their right to stop the interview at any point and Ipsos’ adherence to the ESOMAR Code and any national codes of conduct. Adolescent girls who took part in the survey were also provided with an information sheet at the end of the interview. This provided details of support organisations (provided by Plan) which the girls could contact if they felt that they were affected by any issues that were raised as part of the survey.

Guidance was sought from the Plan country offices and incorporated into the ethical guidelines and materials described above.
3 Comparisons across countries – perceptions of equality

The questions in this section relate to adolescent girls’ perceptions of equality and empowerment. As part of the research, all participants were asked to reflect on how often, if at all, they think girls their age are able to express their agency, have access to and control of resources and if they have the same opportunities as boys, using a five-point scale of ‘never’, ‘seldom’, ‘sometimes’, ‘often’ and ‘always’.

To distinguish more clearly between the positive and negative responses we present the data below without the incidence of ‘sometimes’. It can be assumed that the percentage that is not represented in the below slides can be attributed to the percentage of ‘sometimes’.

Comparisons between countries are examined in this chapter, with more detailed discussion and analysis being outlined in each individual country chapter.

Q1. How often, if at all, would you say that girls your age are able to make decisions about their own lives?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>% Never/Seldom</th>
<th>% Often/Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador (1,000)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua (1,000)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan (1,018)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe (1,200)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents

Opinions appear to be split in relation to decision making. In Pakistan, although over half of girls (52%) believe that girls their age are ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ able to make decisions about their own lives, one in five (20%) say that girls their age are ‘often’ or ‘always’ able to make these decisions. Broadly speaking, the results across other countries are more evenly spread, with under half of girls in each country believing that girls their age are ‘always’ or ‘often’ able to make decisions about their own lives.
Focusing on financial decisions, there is a clear split by country. Girls in Nicaragua and Zimbabwe believe that girls their age have greater autonomy, with 56% and 47% respectively saying they are ‘often’ or ‘always’ able to decide what to spend money on. In comparison, around a third of girls in Ecuador and Pakistan believe that this is ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ the case.

When asked to consider how often girls their age are given as many opportunities as boys to get on in life, girls in Pakistan tend to be the least optimistic, while girls in Nicaragua tend to be the most optimistic. Girls in Zimbabwe also tended to be less optimistic about life opportunities, with nearly four in ten (39%) saying that they are ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ given as many opportunities as boys to get on in life. Although the majority of girls in Ecuador responded positively to this statement (39% ‘often/always’), a quarter (26%) say that girls their age are ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ given as many opportunities as boys to get on in life.
Turning to access to the internet and social media, results vary greatly across countries. Almost two in three girls in Pakistan (59%) say that they are ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ given as much opportunity as boys to use the internet and social media. When compared with the other survey countries, around two in five girls in Ecuador (42%) say that they are ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ given as many opportunities as boys to use the internet or social media. In contrast, the majority of girls in Nicaragua (71%) say that this is ‘often’ or ‘always’ the case. In Zimbabwe, opinions are evenly balanced.

Looking at education and equal opportunities, results are much more positive and consistent across countries. The majority of girls believe that girls are ‘often’ or ‘always’ encouraged by their parents to succeed at school just as much as boys. The results are particularly high in Nicaragua and Zimbabwe, with over four in five girls giving this response (82% and 86% respectively). However, it is
notable that around one in five girls in Pakistan say that this ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ the case (19%).

![Bar chart showing the distribution of responses to Q6. How often, if at all, would you say that girls your age share the housework equally with their brothers or boys?](image)

The results are less positive when focusing on the equal distribution of household labour. In all countries, the results suggest that the burden of household chores falls disproportionately on girls – most notably in Pakistan (67%) and Zimbabwe (60%). This is also the case for around half of girls in Nicaragua (47%), although the results are slightly more positive in Ecuador, where just over three in ten girls (35%) feel that girls their age ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ share the housework equally with their brothers or boys. In all cases, though, the negative exceeds the positive.

![Bar chart showing the distribution of responses to Q7. How often, if at all, would you say that girls your age feel confident to speak up and be heard when in the presence of boys and men?](image)

Overall across the four countries, respondents do not believe that girls are sufficiently confident to ‘often’ or ‘always’ speak up and be heard when in the presence of boys and men. Only a quarter of girls in Zimbabwe express confidence, with the highest numbers, 37%, registered in Ecuador.
And finally, when asked about the importance of girls’ concerns in the community, six out of ten (61%) girls in Nicaragua believe that girls their age ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ feel that their concerns matter in the community. This is particularly striking given that a much lower proportion of girls in Ecuador, Pakistan and Zimbabwe feel this way.

**Overall**

Over 4,000 girls in the four countries were asked about the different dimensions of empowerment related to decision making and control over their own lives. Generally, the responses of the girls from Nicaragua suggest the highest levels of autonomy and empowerment, followed to a slightly lesser degree by Ecuador, with findings from Pakistan indicating the lowest levels, followed closely by Zimbabwe. The results also indicate that girls with nine or more years of education have better access to information, are less likely to marry young, will stay in education longer and are less likely to experience violence.
Key findings

- Respondents express varying degrees of independence in relation to decision making, financial control, opportunities to get on in life and their concerns mattering in the community. Only 37% of adolescent girls feel confident to speak up and be heard in the presence of boys and men. There is a clear divide here, with younger girls feeling less empowered.

- Perceptions regarding equality appear to be significantly lower for adolescent girls who are married. They are less likely to believe that housework is shared equally or that girls and boys have equal access to the internet.

- Adolescent girls tend to agree that they have access to information and advice regarding pregnancy as well as contraception, although control over contraception use emerges as a key concern. A third of adolescent girls reported that husbands or boyfriends are unwilling to use condoms and 40% of married girls agree that girls often feel pressured to take part in sexual activities with their husband or boyfriends.

- Despite agreeing that girls do have access to information and advice concerning pregnancy, the overwhelming impression from the solutions proposed by adolescent girls was the need for more education, information and openness around the issues of relationships, contraception and pregnancy.

- Although a majority of adolescent girls believe that girls can go to school whilst pregnant and return to school following childbirth, they also emphasised the need for alternative educational opportunities so they can complete secondary education, and stressed the importance of young mothers being allowed to return to school.

- Girls, particularly those in rural areas, tend to disagree with the perceived ‘benefits’ of early marriage. Ninety-one per cent of girls disagree that it is beneficial for girls to marry before the age of 18; 57% agree that girls who get married before the age of 18 are less likely to complete their education and 59% of girls agree that girls who marry young are more likely to experience violence in their homes.

- Safety is a grave concern for adolescent girls in education; 70% said they do not feel safe using toilets or latrines at school and 63% do not feel safe on their way to and from school.
• An overwhelming majority believe that violence, abuse and bribery from teachers is unacceptable. However, there is less consensus in relation to who is at fault if a girl is sexually harassed. Solutions for preventing violence and abuse focus on changes at the educational and national level as opposed to physical security.

• Safety in the community is of particular concern for adolescent girls; 41% responded that girls should not be seen in public after dark. Girls having better access to information and training to protect themselves from violence was the most popular suggestion in terms of tackling violence against girls in their communities and cities.

• The family is a central factor in the protection of girls, with mothers and fathers needing to take responsibility for improving the situation for girls.

4.1 Profile of respondents

In Ecuador, 1,000 girls aged between 15-19 years were interviewed, with 200 interviews per age group¹ conducted across urban and rural regions.

The majority of adolescent girls interviewed (87%) are currently attending school, high school, college or university. Four in five (79%) have completed nine or more years of school. In total, 97% of adolescent girls interviewed had either been or are currently at school.

Fewer than one in ten (7%) adolescent girls who were interviewed are currently married, although a higher proportion (13%) are cohabiting (either with their husband or a partner). Where adolescent girls are living as part of a couple, 97% of their husbands, boyfriends or partners contribute to daily household expenses such as food and housing costs.

The majority of adolescent girls interviewed (86%) do not have any children. Just over one in ten (12%) have one child and 2% have two children. Almost half (47%) of adolescent girls with children were between 17-19 years old when they had their first child; 38% were 15-16 years old and 7% were 13-14 years old. Just under one in ten (8%) adolescent girls were aged 12 years or under when they gave birth to their first child, which serves to highlight the issue of early pregnancy in Ecuador.

4.2 Young women’s priorities

Adolescent girls were asked to consider a range of statements and reflect on how often, if at all, they think girls their age are able to express their agency, access resources and be given the same opportunities as boys using a five-point scale of ‘never’, ‘seldom’, ‘sometimes’, ‘often’ and ‘always’.

¹ N=200 for each of those aged 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19.
4.2.1 Making decisions about their own lives

Broadly speaking, girls report varying degrees of decision making and control they have over their own lives. Just over a quarter of adolescent girls (27%) say they are ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ able to make decisions about their own lives. On the other hand, a third (32%) say they are ‘often’ or ‘always’ able to make these decisions.

Younger adolescent girls tend to think they have less control over their lives, with over one in three girls aged 15-17 (35%) saying that girls their age are ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ able to make those decisions, compared with fewer than one in five (16%) girls aged 18-19.

Adolescent girls also express mixed views in relation to how often girls their age are able to decide what to spend their money on. One in three (33%) believe that girls their age are ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ able to make these decisions, whilst a similar proportion (31%) say that they are ‘often’ or ‘always’ able to decide this. In line with previous statements, older adolescent girls are also more likely to believe that girls have greater financial control. One in five (19%) adolescent girls aged 19 believe that girls their age are ‘always’ able to decide what to spend their money on, which is double the proportion for girls aged 15-17 (9%).
How often would you say that girls your age …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Often/Always</th>
<th>% Sometimes</th>
<th>% Seldom/Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... are given as many opportunities as boys to get on in life?</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... are given as much opportunity as boys to use the internet and social media?</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... are encouraged by their parents to succeed at school just as much as boys?</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... share the housework equally with their brothers or boys?</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents in Ecuador (1,000)

A different theme within the survey focused on life opportunities, with little consensus across a number of statements. When comparing themselves with boys, around a quarter of girls (26%) feel that girls their age are ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ given as many opportunities as boys to get on in life. Once again, results vary by age. Almost one in three 15 to 17-year-olds (29%) believe that they are ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ given as many opportunities as boys to get on in life, in comparison to 22% of those aged 18-19.

Thinking about access to technological resources, opinions are also mixed. Slightly less than half (42%) believe that girls their age are ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ given as much opportunity to use the internet or social media as boys. This compares to a third of adolescent girls (32%) who believe that girls their age are ‘often’ or ‘always’ given these opportunities.

Turning to the importance of school, and in contrast to the mixed opinions surrounding previous statements, around three-quarters of adolescent girls (77%) believe that girls their age are ‘often’ or ‘always’ encouraged by their parents to succeed at school just as much as boys, with almost half (49%) reporting that this is ‘always’ the case for girls.

The burden of household work falls disproportionately on girls and is often a factor in their attendance and performance at school. Just over one in three adolescent girls (35%) believe that girls their age ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ share the housework equally with their brothers or boys. This has a negative impact on girls’ opportunities; as more time is spent on housework, girls have less time to dedicate to homework or other activities that they enjoy. These results are consistent with the results from the ‘Hear Our Voices’ findings on gender roles and responsibilities in the household.

4.2.2 The impact of marriage

Results suggest that married adolescent girls experience greater inequality than the unmarried:

- Married adolescent girls are more likely than those who are unmarried to say that girls are ‘never’ given as many opportunities (39% versus 25%).
- Married girls are also 13% more likely than unmarried girls to say that boys and husbands never share household work.
- In addition, girls who have children are almost twice as likely as childless girls to say that girls ‘never’ share the housework equally with their brothers or boys (18% versus 11%).

In later sections of the survey it also emerged that young married girls are less likely to speak up in the company of boys and men, feel more pressure to have sex with their partners and are more at risk of gender-based violence in the home.

To be able to voice their concerns and call for change, it is important for adolescent girls to feel able to speak up about issues affecting their lives. In Ecuador, a relatively low proportion of them (37%) believe that girls their age ‘often’ or ‘always’ feel confident to speak up and be heard when in the presence of boys and men. In contrast, nearly three in ten (29%) believe that girls their age ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ feel confident. It is worth noting that, in the ‘Hear Our Voices’ study, younger girls (aged 12-16) report significantly higher incidences (80%) of never feeling confident to speak up and be heard in the presence of boys and men.

Whilst fewer than one in ten adolescent girls (7%) say that girls their age ‘never’ feel confident to speak up and be heard when in the presence of men or boys, the results vary considerably when we examine girls’ relationships with
boys. Once again, there appears to be a link between early marriage and a lack of empowerment, with 17% of married girls reporting that girls ‘never’ feel confident to speak up and be heard in front of boys and men, versus 6% of unmarried girls. Similarly, those that live with their husbands or someone else as a couple are twice as likely as those who are not to say they ‘never’ feel confident to speak up (13% versus 6%). This is also the case for girls who have children (13% in comparison to 6% of those without children).

Adolescent girls’ responses were also mixed when asked to think about how often girls feel that their concerns matter in their community. Half (50%) believe that girls their age ‘often’ or ‘always’ feel that their concerns matter in the community, although a significant minority (19%) believe that girls their age ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ feel this way. More specifically, a quarter of adolescent girls aged 15 years (26%) believe that their concerns ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ matter, reinforcing the suggestion that age plays a key part in girls’ feelings of empowerment.

4.3 Making decisions about pregnancy and sexual relationships

“The principal characteristics of pregnant adolescents between the ages of 15-19 are those of unequal gender relations, cultural practices, poverty, the lack of sexual education and little access to services of family planning. The predominant factor that results in girls under the age of 15 becoming pregnant is sexual violence.”

Jorge Parra, UNFPA, Ecuador

- According to the Andean Plan to Prevent Teenage Pregnancies, Ecuador ranks second in teenage pregnancy in Latin America. In 2012, twenty out of every hundred live births were born to teenagers.3
- A 2012 study investigating the relation between education and adolescent pregnancy found that out of the 100% of girls that were studying before they got pregnant, only 30% of girls returned to their studies afterwards.
- The same study found that 56% of pregnant adolescent girls left their education for more than one year.
- 95% of girls who left school wanted to return to their studies.4

This section explores adolescent girls’ attitudes towards pregnancy, what they would do to better protect girls from getting pregnant at a young age (if they were in a position of authority), and what they think would help girls who get pregnant at a young age.

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During the interview, adolescent girls were asked to give their opinion on a series of statements concerning pregnancy and relationships, using a five-point point scale where 1 signifies ‘strongly agree’ and 5 signifies ‘strongly disagree’.

### 4.3.1 Attitudinal statements relating to pregnancy and relationships

One series of statements asked adolescent girls about their attitudes towards the provision of information and advice regarding relationships, sexual health and use of contraceptives. Results here are slightly more encouraging in comparison to previous statements relating to agency and opportunities. However, a significant minority – around one in four girls – disagree that they have sufficient access to resources that would help prevent early pregnancy.

#### In your opinion, do you agree or disagree with the following statements about pregnancy and relationships?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
<th>% Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>% Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls have someone to talk with about their bodies and sexual health</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls have enough information about how to avoid getting pregnant</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls have access to contraceptives to avoid unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents in Ecuador (1,000)

Around half of adolescent girls (54%) agree that girls have someone to talk with about their bodies and sexual health. Interestingly, and in contrast to the other countries, adolescent girls living in rural areas are more likely than girls living in urban areas to agree (29% versus 23%). This finding bears further analysis as it is unlikely that this applies to official provision of services in rural areas.

A sizeable minority, almost a quarter of adolescent girls (24%), disagree that girls have someone to talk with about their bodies and sexual health. Once again, disparities relating to age are evident, with younger girls aged 15 more likely to disagree than girls aged 19 (31% versus 27%).

When asked to think specifically about pregnancy, a higher proportion of adolescent girls (62%) agree that girls have enough information about how to avoid getting pregnant. Again, over a quarter (26%) disagree.

A similar majority of adolescent girls (58%) agree that girls have access to contraceptives to avoid unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases,
with the proportion of those agreeing higher among those who have completed nine or more years of school (60%). This finding may be linked to the likelihood of greater access to contraception within schools, or information regarding other sources. It is important to note that although girls report access to information on how to avoid getting pregnant and access to contraceptives, this should not be taken as a clear indicator that suggests contraceptive methods are being used. A study conducted on adolescent pregnancy by Habitus Investigation of the World Bank (2011 – 2012) found multi-causal reasons, from the lack of understanding of the sexual education materials they receive in school on how to avoid pregnancy, to the difficulty to apply what they have learned in front of hostile pharmacy staff who often reject the idea that adolescents should be able to buy contraception, and the lack of trust to talk to parents about sexual relations and how to avoid pregnancy.

Adolescent girls who are married are more likely to ‘strongly agree’ that girls their age have access to contraceptives (54% versus 38% overall), as are girls living with their husbands or partner (48%) and those with children (46%). It is usually accepted that once married or pregnant, women and girls need to access contraceptives to control the number of pregnancies they have; their role as mothers or wives opens up unbiased and open access to these services. On the other hand, girls who are not yet married or mothers often face shame and stigma.

Overall, a quarter of adolescent girls (25%) disagree that girls have access to contraceptives, rising to almost one in three (31%) for adolescent girls aged 15.

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A greater degree of disparity exists in relation to power, equality and girls’ relationships with their husbands and partners. Fewer than half of girls (43%) agree that boyfriends or husbands are willing to use condoms to avoid unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, although those who are living with their husband or partner are more likely to agree with this statement (52%). These findings should also be considered in connection with the previous results, where 54% of the girls reported that they have access to contraception; this again places a question mark on whether girls have control over contraception use if a third of girls feel that boyfriends or husbands are unwilling to use condoms.

Similar findings emerged when girls were asked to think more specifically about equality within sexual relationships. Fewer than half (46%) agree that girls have an equal say in their relationships with their boyfriends or husbands, with those aged 15 years being even less likely to agree (39%).

A similar proportion of girls (46%) disagree that girls often feel pressured to take part in sexual activities with their boyfriend or husband. That said, over one in four girls (27%) agree with this statement. This increases to 40% in the case of married girls and 36% of adolescent girls with children.

### Pregnancy and education in Ecuador

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Girls can continue to go to school while pregnant”</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Girls can return to school after having a baby”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents in Ecuador (1,000)

The vast majority agree that girls can continue to go to school while pregnant, with almost seven in ten (67%) strongly agreeing. In particular, over three-quarters of girls who have children (77%) ‘strongly’ agree with this statement, compared to 65% of girls without children.

Focusing on education after childbirth, the vast majority agree that girls can return to school after having a baby, with 71% strongly agreeing with this statement. Girls who reported having their first child aged between 17 and 19 years also had a high incidence of agreement at 83%.

Although this finding falls in line with results from Nicaragua and Zimbabwe,
there is a clear contrast with results from previous studies. A study conducted by Observatorio Social del Ecuador\textsuperscript{7} (OSE) found that of those girls who attended school before getting pregnant, just 30\% returned to education following the birth of their child. This may suggest a disparity between perceptions and reality, which could benefit from further investigation.

Focusing on the issue of transactional sex, sexual relationships and power, one in ten (11\%) agree that girls are encouraged to accept gifts or money in exchange for sex with boys. By region, this is particularly an issue in Cuenca (20\%), Quito (17\%), Esmeraldas (16\%) and Ambato (15\%).

4.3.2 Suggestions to help girls who get pregnant at a young age

During the survey, the interviewer read out a list of suggestions that could help girls who get pregnant at a young age. From this list they were asked to choose three responses that they thought would be the most helpful.

| The following list includes some suggestions that could help girls who get pregnant at a young age. Which three suggestions do you think would be the most helpful? |
| Supportive attitudes of families and communities towards young girls who get pregnant | 62 |
| Better access to affordable healthcare services for young mothers | 51 |
| Alternative educational opportunities to complete secondary education | 48 |
| Girls with babies or young children being allowed to return to school | 46 |
| Boys/fathers helping girls with childcare and domestic chores | 33 |
| Childcare services at school, such as nurseries | 27 |
| Access to government money for child support | 20 |

In Ecuador, adolescent girls placed the greater importance on changing values and attitudes towards pregnancy, with around three in five adolescent girls (62\%) believing that ‘supportive attitudes of families and communities’ could help girls who get pregnant at a young age. Just over half of adolescent girls in Ecuador (51\%) prioritised ‘better access to healthcare services for young mothers’ to help girls who get pregnant.

Almost half of adolescent girls (48\%) believe that alternative educational opportunities are required to help girls complete their secondary education, with a similar proportion (46\%) citing the need to ensure that ‘girls with babies or young children are allowed to return to school’. This is slightly at odds with the previous findings, where 82\% of adolescent girls agreed that girls are able to continue to go to school.

\textsuperscript{7} Observatorio Social del Ecuador y Plan Internacional (2012). La niñez excluida en el Ecuador contemporáneo. Quito: Plan Internacional.
whilst pregnant, and 85% also agreed that they can return to secondary education following the birth of a child. The notion that girls have the (legal) right to continue their education while pregnant and return to education thereafter is clearly reflected in the high percentage of the agreement levels. What is perhaps not captured here are the influences and pressures that pregnant girls can face from families, schools and communities, which often lead to girls dropping out of school due to the stigma and shame brought on the family of the girl and on the girl herself. This in some way goes to explain the high priority girls gave to the suggestion that ‘supportive attitudes of families and communities’ would most help girls who get pregnant at a young age.

4.3.3 Recommendations in relation to early pregnancy

As indicated by the emerging themes in their verbatim responses, adolescent girls in Ecuador (if placed in a position of authority) would focus on implementing a range of school and popular educational programmes rather than on legal or policy changes. The suggestion most voiced by girls is the implementation of programmes that teach adolescent girls about various contraceptive methods and sexual health (41%), followed by awareness-raising programmes, campaigns and publicity that provides information on methods for preventing early pregnancy (26%).

Furthermore, girls would commission awareness-raising campaigns in schools (18%) and would like to see campaigns that highlight and outline the potential consequences, risks or problems associated with early pregnancy. Such responses are in direct contrast to the previous finding that a large proportion of adolescent girls (62%) agree that girls have enough information about how to avoid getting pregnant, meaning that further investigations into the issues surrounding information provision could be beneficial.

Girls would also encourage parents to speak more openly with their children about issues related to sexual health and contraception and advise them better on the issues related to the prevention of early pregnancy.

—“Real testimonies of young people who have already gone through this situation, addressed to classmates.”

—“Talks and videos to prevent pregnancy, and to share experiences of other girls who have had babies so they know that having a baby is really difficult.”

—I would give counselling on available contraceptives and how to use it to prevent pregnancy and diseases.

—I would create campaigns about pregnancy prevention in private and public schools with the help of psychologists and counsellors.”
4.4 Early marriage

This section explores adolescent girls’ attitudes towards marriage, what they think could help girls in relation to getting married at a young age and what they would do if they were in charge of improving the situation for girls to protect them from early marriage.

- Of adolescents between the ages of 15 and 17, 64,000 are mothers and 45 million are married or with a partner.8
- In April 2015, the National Assembly of Ecuador approved a Reformation of the Civil Code which included the increase of minimum age of marriage from 12 years to 18 years.

4.4.1 Attitudinal statements in relation to early marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girls face social or family pressure to marry at a young age</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It is beneficial for girls to marry before they are 18 years old</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marrying girls at a young age can help protect the honour or reputation of her family</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Getting married at a young age can help reduce a family’s financial burden</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost seven in ten adolescent girls (67%) disagree that girls face social or family pressure to marry at a young age. Interestingly, girls living in rural areas are more likely than those living in urban areas to disagree (71% versus 64% respectively). Differences relating to marital status are also evident. Whilst one in five (20%)...
agree that girls face social or family pressure to marry at a young age, this proportion is higher among girls who are married (31%).

Strikingly, 91% of girls disagree that it is beneficial for girls to marry before they are 18 years old, with seven in ten (72%) strongly disagreeing; 85% of adolescent girls disagree that marrying girls at a young age can help protect the honour or reputation of her family. Here, disagreement levels are higher for those living in rural areas (88%), those who are not living with a husband or partner (87%), and those without children (87%).

The vast majority of adolescent girls also disagree that getting married at a young age can help reduce a family’s financial burden.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you agree or disagree with the following statements …</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls who get married before the age of 18 years are less likely to complete their education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls who marry as teenagers are more likely to experience violence in their homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nearly six out of ten (57%) adolescent girls agree that girls who get married before the age of 18 are less likely to complete their education. A sizeable minority (32%) disagree with this statement, rising to 45% for those who are married.

Almost six out of ten agree that girls who marry young are more likely to experience violence in their homes.
4.4.2 Suggestions to help girls in relation to getting married at a young age

Adolescent girls were read a list of suggestions that could help girls in relation to getting married at a young age and asked to select the three suggestions that they thought would be most helpful.

The following list contains some suggestions that could help girls in relation to getting married at a young age. Which three suggestions do you think would be the most helpful?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestions</th>
<th>% Selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls having more confidence to raise issues and concerns with their family or in the community</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls having better access to quality secondary education</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls having access to paid and dignified work opportunities</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families and communities valuing girls’ education more</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing the issue of early marriage with men and boys</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls being able to decide for themselves when and who they marry</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media campaigns that oppose child marriage</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better national laws to prevent child marriage</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community leaders publicly condemning child marriage</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* % Selected

The key solutions selected by girls tend to focus on confidence and empowerment, but also a need for wider changes within society, led by those in power. A clear majority of girls (61%) believe that the most helpful suggestion is ‘girls having more confidence to raise issues and concerns with their family or in the community’. Better access to quality secondary education is also important for girls (41%), as is the need for girls to have access to paid and dignified work opportunities (39%). Furthermore, the latter statement was proposed by almost half of girls with children (48%).

4.4.3 Recommendations in relation to early marriage

As part of the research all verbatim comments were coded. The verbatim responses suggest that if placed in charge, adolescent girls would want to implement educational programmes that focus on teaching adolescent girls specifically about issues relating to early marriage and raising awareness through programmes, campaigns and general publicity. These could be led not only by schools, but also by peer educators within the local community. One in five adolescent girls (20%) mention the need for education (both popular and institutional) that teaches the importance of completing school and thinking about the future.

Twenty-nine per cent of girls questioned believe it is important to develop educational programmes, campaigns and publicity that explain the risks,
consequences and problems associated with getting married at a young age. Adolescent girls also believe it is important to teach girls not to marry at a young age (13%).

The role of parents in preventing early marriage was highlighted by many, with suggestions for parents to talk to their children and advise them against early marriage. Adolescent girls also noted the importance of involving parents in discussions about early marriage and for parents and girls to have greater trust, love and respect for each other (12%).

Additional suggestions included advocacy for the creation of laws prohibiting child marriage and enforcing current laws preventing early marriage.

“I think we should give them advice that first they must complete school, become someone in life, and afterwards they can take this step more responsibly.”

“I would make an awareness campaign for teenagers, so they can understand the risks they might have to take when they get married before the age of 18.”

“I’d advise them not to marry at an early age as they are not prepared and they are too young and their dreams are cut short.”

“I would tell them to become friends with their mums so they can guide them and give them counselling, so when girls need to make a decision they can take advice from their parents and not regret it later.”

“I’d tell parents to build trust so their daughters can tell them about their problems.”

“Discuss early marriage between girls and boys.”
4.5 Feeling safe in school and the community

This section explores girls’ life at school and what they believe could help protect girls from abuse or violence during this time.

4.5.1 Attitudinal statements in relation to safety at school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
<th>% Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>% Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is acceptable for teachers to give strong physical punishment to girls in certain situations</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is acceptable for teachers to call girls hurtful names or shout at them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In certain situations it is acceptable for a teacher to ask a girl for sexual favours in exchange for grades or other school benefits</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is a girl's fault if a male student or teacher sexually harasses her.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focusing on girls’ relationships with their teachers, an overwhelming majority believe that violence, abuse and bribery from teachers is unacceptable. However, there is less consensus in relation to who is at fault if a girl is sexually harassed.

An overwhelming majority of adolescent girls (95%) disagree that it is acceptable for teachers to give strong physical punishment to girls in certain situations, with 88% strongly disagreeing. Furthermore, almost all adolescent girls (98%) disagree that it is acceptable for teachers to call girls hurtful names or shout at them, with 88% strongly disagreeing. The majority of adolescent girls (96%) also disagree that in certain situations it is acceptable for a teacher to ask a girl for sexual favours for grades or other school benefits, with 84% strongly disagreeing.

Adolescent girls’ attitudes towards responsibility and sexual abuse are more varied. Almost three quarters of adolescent girls (73%) disagree that it is a girl's fault if a male student or teacher sexually harasses her, with girls living in urban areas slightly more likely to disagree (75%). In contrast, around one in ten girls (11%) agree that it is a girl’s fault if a male student or teacher sexually harasses her. Further investigation of this issue would be valuable, in particular the need to separate out male students and teachers in further questioning.
Do you agree or disagree with the following statements …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
<th>% Neither nor disagree</th>
<th>% Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls always feel safe using toilets or latrines in school</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls always feel safe on the way to school</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If girls witness abuse or are abused, they feel there is someone they can report it to in confidence, without putting themselves at risk</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents in Ecuador (1,000)

Turning more generally to safety in school, seven in ten girls (70%) disagree that girls always feel safe using toilets or latrines in school. This clearly indicates that for girls, latrines and toilets are of great concern when it comes to the risk of and the actual incidences of gender-based violence. Furthermore, almost two-thirds disagree that girls always feel safe on the way to school (63%), with around one in seven agreeing (16%). By sub-group, girls aged 19 are slightly more likely to disagree with this statement (69%).

Levels of disagreement for these statements are some of the highest across the four countries surveyed, which demonstrates a clear need for girls’ safety in and around school to be addressed, and indicates that lack of safety may be a key factor in girls’ school attendance. Focusing on reporting abuse, there is less agreement between adolescent girls. Only 45% agree that if girls witness abuse or are abused, they feel there is someone they can report it to in confidence, without putting themselves at risk. This rises to 48% of girls who have completed nine or more years of school. Over half either do not know (16%) or disagree that there is someone they can report to (39%) and this rises to 43% in rural areas.

63% of girls disagree that girls always feel safe on the way to school.
4.5.2 Suggestions to help protect girls from abuse or violence at school

When asked which three suggestions would be most effective in helping protect girls from abuse or violence at school, girls were most likely to cite policy changes at the educational and national level, as opposed to physical improvements relating to security or the recruitment of more teachers.

The following list includes some suggestions of things that could help protect girls from abuse or violence at school. Which three suggestions do you think would be the most helpful?

- Schools having clear and strong rules that harassment, violence and abuse are not acceptable at school (47%)
- Schools having a clear and easy to use complaints process, so that girls can report situations of violence in a safe and confidential way (45%)
- The government having a national action plan to end violence and abuse in school (44%)
- Police or security services taking action when cases of violence or abuse at school are reported to them (39%)
- Schools having rules for teachers, which do not allow relationships with students and exchanging sex for grades (39%)
- Improvements to make the school more secure, such as protective fencing and security gates (30%)
- Having separate toilets or latrines for girls only that are safe and clean (30%)
- Schools recruiting more female teachers (15%)

The two most popular suggestions are school based: ‘schools having clear and strong rules that harassment, violence and abuse are not acceptable at school’ (47%) and ‘schools having a clear and easy-to-use complaints process’ (45%). Girls who have completed nine or more years of school are more likely to say this (48%).

Changes at the national level are also important, with almost half believing that the government should implement ‘a national action plan to end violence and abuse in school’ (44%), followed closely by ‘the police or security services taking action when cases of violence or abuse at school are reported to them’ (39%).

4.6 Feeling safe in relationships and the community

This section explores girls’ opinions about the lives of girls in the area where they live, what they think could help protect girls from abuse or violence in their community and what they would do if they were in charge of improving girls’ safety.
A study from 2012 found that seven out of ten girls, boys and adolescents indicated that they had suffered some type of violence in their homes.

The same study found that 69% of adolescent girls between 10 and 15 years of age have been victims of gender-based violence, especially sexual abuse.\(^9\)

In Ecuador, 27%, 22% and 4% of girls aged 15 to 19 reported emotional, physical and sexual violence by a partner, respectively.\(^10\)

4.6.1 Attitudinal statements in relation to girls feeling safe in the community

Girls were asked to share their attitudes about issues of safety in their community, both within private and public spaces. Overall, there is a resounding rejection of violence against women where husbands and partners are the perpetrators, with girls clearly aware of their rights in relation to this.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is sometimes acceptable for a boy to hit or use violence against his girlfriend.</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women should put up with violence from their husband in order to keep their family together</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a girl or woman is raped, it is better for her to not tell anyone</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ninety-nine per cent of girls disagree that ‘it is sometimes acceptable for a boy to hit or use violence against his girlfriend’, with over nine in ten (93%) strongly disagreeing. Girls living in urban areas are more likely to strongly disagree (94%) than girls living in rural areas (90%).

Furthermore, 96% of girls in Ecuador disagree that ‘women should tolerate violence from their husband in order to keep the family together’, with almost nine

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in ten (87%) strongly disagreeing. Although the proportion is small, 5% of married women agree with this statement, versus just 1% of unmarried women.

Adolescent girls also believe that it is important to speak out about rape. Nine in ten girls (91%) disagree that if a girl or woman is raped, it is better for her not to tell anyone. Girls living in urban areas are more likely than girls living in rural areas to disagree with this statement (93% versus 89%). A noted 5% of girls neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement, which raises questions around whether this percentage of girls have a clear understanding of what constitutes rape and what their rights are in relation to cases of abuse and rape. This proportion of girls (although low relative to the ‘disagree’ statements) represents a significant proportion of the population and would benefit from further investigation.

These results should be considered in line with the earlier response rate, which outlined that 39% of girls disagree that if girls witness abuse or are abused there is someone they can report it to without putting themselves at risk. This illustrates again a disconnect in relation to what should happen – for example, a woman should tell someone if they are raped – and what happens in reality; an overwhelming majority of girls know they should report rape but a sizeable minority may feel that the risk of doing so is too great.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you agree or disagree with the following statements ...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Girls should not travel on public transport without a male family member or male friend travelling with them</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="Image" alt="Table" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Girls should not be seen in public places after dark</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="Image" alt="Table" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When thinking about their safety in public spaces, one in four (25%) agree that girls should not travel on public transport without a male family member or male friend travelling with them. Again, the results vary by urbanity, with girls in rural areas feeling safer. Just over a quarter of girls (27%) living in urban areas agree that girls should not travel on public transport, compared with only one in five girls (20%) living in rural areas.

Girls were less sure about their presence in the community after dark, with almost an equal split between those who agree and disagree. Four out of ten girls
(41%) agree that girls should not be seen outside in the community after dark, whilst a similar number (44%) disagree.

These results indicate the extent to which girls fear experiencing violence in their cities and communities, which has a negative impact on girls’ empowerment by restricting their mobility and undermining their confidence.

### 4.6.2 Suggestions to help protect girls from abuse and violence in their communities

When asked which three suggestions would be most effective in helping protect girls from abuse or violence in the area where they live, the most commonly cited solution was for ‘girls to have better access to information to protect themselves from violence’ (41%), reflecting a focus on defensive as opposed to preventative measures, and involving girls themselves feeling responsible for their own safety, ahead of anyone else. However, adolescent girls did cite policy-level changes, including a sustained effort by the government to deal with alcohol and drug problems (38%), with a further 38% wanting retributive measures such as ‘tougher penalties for boys or men who abuse or are violent towards girls or women’. A higher proportion of girls living in rural areas (42%) suggested this in comparison to girls living in urban areas (36%).

Girls are also likely to consider practical suggestions about the use of space in their local area. Thirty-eight per cent of girls proposed that ‘girls should have safe places and groups where girls and women can share information and experiences related to violence and abuse’. A similar proportion (37%) mentioned the need for girls to have someone they can trust to speak to about violence and abuse. It is worth noting that this was the highest-ranking measure in the other three countries surveyed (Nicaragua, Pakistan and Zimbabwe).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The following list includes some suggestions that could help protect girls from abuse or violence in the area where you live. Which three suggestions do you think would be the most helpful?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls having better access to information and training to protect themselves from violence <strong>41%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governments and the police acting to tackle problems with alcohol or drug use in the local area <strong>38%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tougher penalties for boys or men who abuse or are violent towards girls or women, such as longer prison sentences <strong>38%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls having safe places and groups where girls and women can share information and experiences related to violence and abuse <strong>38%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls having someone they trust who they can talk to if they experience any abuse or violence <strong>37%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls feeling able to report violence or abuse to community leaders, local authorities or police without being afraid <strong>37%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with boys and men to educate them about the harmful effects of violence and abuse towards girls <strong>33%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families and communities valuing girls the same as boys <strong>30%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* % Selected
Base: All respondents in Ecuador (1,000)
4.6.3 Recommendations in relation to violence and abuse

When probed about what they would do if they were in charge of improving girls' safety in their community, the themes in the verbatim responses are more varied than those related to preventing early marriage and early pregnancy. If they were in charge, adolescent girls would be most likely to improve the safety of the area by calling for a greater police presence (38%).

Following this, girls would also seek to make changes at the grassroots level by, for example, educating their local community about issues relating to abuse, violence and safety (17%) and creating community groups that seek to act upon and tackle the issue (15%).

The verbatim responses suggest that one in ten adolescent girls (10%) would teach girls not to go out alone, or at night, echoing the focus on defensive measures.

“If I had the power to do it, I’d improve safety, make the police patrol the neighbourhoods 24 hours a day and put an officer in post to receive reports of abuse and violence against teenagers.”

“I would go directly to the community to talk with the parents and give them advice about how violence is not good, that it leads you nowhere.”

“I would have community squads jointly with the police working as a team to have control in the neighbourhood where I live, so that delinquents know that our neighbourhood is protected.”

“I’d advise girls not to go out alone but with the company of an adult, so she does not expose herself to a danger.”

“That girls have safe places, to be able to talk about violence and abuse and take action into this matter, for their own sake.”
4.6.4 Who should be responsible for improving the situation of girls?

Girls were asked to think about all the issues discussed in the survey and choose three people or groups that they think should be responsible for improving the situation for girls in the area where they live.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>% Selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers and female care-givers</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers and male care-givers</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police or security services</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls themselves</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools / school teachers</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community based organisations for women or girls</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious leaders / community leaders</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider family members, such as aunts or uncles</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* % Selected

In Ecuador, three in ten girls (33%) believe that girls themselves should be responsible for improving their situation. This option is ranked fourth, whereas in the other three countries it is ranked first or second.

Girls living in urban areas are more likely to believe that girls should be responsible (35%) than those living in rural areas (29%). In contrast to this, 5% of girls think that boys should be responsible for improving the situation for girls.

The family is central to the protection of girls. The majority (63%) of girls feel that mothers and female care-givers should be responsible, and 56% place the onus on fathers and male care-givers. That said, almost half of girls (46%) believe that the police or security services should be responsible for improving the situation for girls in the area where they live. This again reflects the high incidence of insecurity girls feel in their daily lives and indicates that girls feel that more could be done by the police and security services to protect them.
Almost four in five (79%) adolescent girls agree that girls are becoming more valued members of the community, rising to 82% among girls who have completed nine or more years of school. Furthermore, almost half of girls (49%) strongly agree with this statement. However, nearly one in five girls (18%) with children disagree that girls are becoming more valued members of the community, compared to one in ten overall (10%).

When asked to compare girls' opportunities across generations, the vast majority (92%) agree that girls have more opportunities in life than their mothers did; rising to 94% of girls who have completed nine or more years of school. This positive feeling towards the current and future situation for girls is slightly lower for girls who live with a husband or partner, with the proportion agreeing falling slightly, to 87%.
5 NICARAGUA

Key findings

- When considering degrees of independence in relation to decision making, financial control and opportunities to get on in life, girls express varying opinions – although agreement levels are highest in comparison to the other countries surveyed. As with Ecuador, younger girls feel less empowered.
- Married Nicaraguan girls are more likely to believe that girls are able to make decisions about their own lives, but less likely to feel they can report abuse or violence without putting themselves at risk.
- Girls tend to disagree with the perceived ‘benefits’ of early marriage, with 94% disagreeing that it is beneficial for girls to marry before they are 18 years old and 70% agreeing that girls who marry as teenagers are more likely to experience violence in their homes.
- Just under two-thirds (63%) agree that girls who get married before the age of 18 are less likely to complete their education; rising to four in five (81%) girls who are not in education, employment or training.
- When focusing on confidence to speak up in front of males and feeling that their concerns matter in the community, girls in Nicaragua feel much less empowered. Sixty-one per cent of girls believe that they ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ feel that their concerns matter in the community. This represents a key divide in relation to personal autonomy and girls’ influence within the community.
- By region, girls in urban areas appear to feel more equal and empowered, with the highest degrees of inequality in regions such as RAAN Siuna and RAAS (El Rama).
- Girls in rural areas are less likely to believe they are given as many opportunities as boys to get on in life; less able to access information through the internet; less likely to be encouraged by their parents to succeed just as much as boys in school; and less likely to have sufficient information and advice about pregnancy and access to contraception.
- Girls tend to agree that girls can continue to attend school whilst pregnant and return after childbirth. They are also the most likely to agree that they have sufficient information and advice about pregnancy and sexual health, and access to contraception.
- Sixty per cent of girls believe they have an equal say in their relationship with their boyfriends and husbands, yet 35% disagreed that boyfriends
or husbands are willing to use condoms to avoid unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. This rises to 45% in the RAAN region.

- Verbatim solutions in relation to early pregnancy tend to focus on additional support from boys, fathers and the family, as well as awareness-raising educational programmes. In contrast, early marriage solutions focus on girls feeling more empowered to make decisions and having the confidence to raise issues and concerns.

- Safety at school is a concern, with 74% of girls disagreeing that girls always feel safe using toilets or latrines in school.

- Solutions to prevent violence and abuse at school focus on policies to be implemented by schools and the government. Echoing this, girls believe that the government, police and security services should also play a key role in preventing abuse and violence in the community and helping girls as a whole.

5.1 Profile of respondents

In Nicaragua, 1,000 girls aged 15-19 were interviewed, with 200 interviews per age group. Interviewing took place in the urban and rural areas of each province. The majority of adolescent girls interviewed (84%) are currently attending school, high school, college or university. Ninety per cent of adolescent girls have completed nine or more years of school. One in ten (10%) are not in education, employment or training and a small minority (6%) are in paid work.

One in ten adolescent girls (10%) are married, rising to 13% of girls in rural areas. Almost one in five adolescent girls (18%) live with their husband or partner, rising to a quarter of girls living in rural areas (25% compared with 14% living in urban areas). Where adolescent girls are living with their husband or partner, nearly all (99%) say that their husband, boyfriend or partner contributes to daily household expenses such as food and housing costs.

The majority of adolescent girls (82%) do not have any children. Just under half of those with children (44%) were aged between 15 and 16 when they had their first child, with just over one in three (32%) aged 17-19. More than one in ten (14%) were aged 13-14 and a few (3%) were 12 or under.

The results in this survey should be interpreted with two key findings in mind: 90% of the girls interviewed in this study have nine or more years of schooling, making their educational level high relative to the overall population, and 82% of the surveyed girls do not have children, which is low in proportion to the adolescent girl population at large.
5.2 Young women’s priorities

5.2.1 Making decisions about their own lives

In Nicaragua, around two in five adolescent girls (43%) say that girls their age are ‘often’ or ‘always’ able to make decisions about their own lives, rising to almost half of older girls aged 18-19 (47%). Although opinions are mixed, this represents the highest agreement level across the four countries surveyed and suggests that girls in Nicaragua feel that they have more autonomy regarding decision making as they get older.

Girls’ relationships with boys may influence their opinions, although age could be the key determining factor. By sub-group, the following differences in those citing ‘always’ are apparent:

- Girls with a child (53%) versus those who are childless (26%);
- Girls living with their husband or partner (52%) versus those who do not (27%);
- Married adolescent girls (49%) versus those who are unmarried (29%).

Leaving the parental home does seem to be associated in Nicaragua in particular with girls achieving greater autonomy in their lives, though it is not clear whether this perception does in fact correspond with reality. For example, one study carried out in rural areas of Nicaragua highlighted the problem of violence within the home as a major risk factor for young women aged between 10 and 16 getting pregnant. This negative reality affects the self-esteem of adolescent women and the confidence they have in their ability to create their own life project. Finding a man to love and protect them and building a home that is different from the one they come from then becomes a priority for adolescent women.¹

A notable proportion (31%) believe that girls their age are ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ able to make decisions about their own lives, with 14% believing that this is ‘never’ the case.

Focusing on financial control, over half of adolescent girls (56%) believe that girls their age are ‘often’ or ‘always’ able to decide what to spend money on. Once again, levels are highest in Nicaragua in comparison to the other three countries. Furthermore, two in five (40%) believe that this is ‘always’ the case – rising to around half of girls aged 18-19 (54%). Conversely, just over one in five adolescent girls (22%) believe that girls are ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ able to decide, with 9% believing that this is ‘never’ the case. As before, younger adolescent girls aged 15-17 are more likely to say that this is ‘never’ the case (13%).

When making comparisons with their male counterparts, almost three in five adolescent girls (57%) feel that girls their age are ‘often’ or ‘always’ given as many opportunities as boys to get on in life. Once again, this is the highest level across the four countries. Girls living in urban areas are slightly more likely than girls living in rural areas to believe that girls their age are ‘always’ given as many opportunities (41% versus 35% respectively).

At the other end of the scale, one in five adolescent girls (21%) believe that girls their age are ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ given the same opportunities. As might be expected, adolescent girls who are not in education, employment or training are more likely than those in education to report that this is ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ the case (29% versus 20% respectively). By region, adolescent girls living in the Jinotega and RAAN (Siuna) region2 are more likely to say ‘seldom’ or ‘never’.

Seven in ten adolescent girls (71%) report that girls their age are ‘often’ or ‘always’ given as much opportunity as boys to use the internet and social media

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2 Small base size of N=74.
– the highest percentage across the four countries, by some margin. Around half of adolescent girls (49%) believe that girls their age are ‘always’ given as much opportunity, with those living in urban areas more likely to report this than girls living in rural areas (52% versus 45% respectively). Adolescent girls who have completed nine or more years of school are also more likely to say ‘always’ (52% versus 45%), which again suggests that accessibility might be a driver in this response.

Focusing on education and equal opportunities, the vast majority (83%) feel that girls their age are ‘often’ or ‘always’ encouraged by their parents to succeed at school just as much as boys. Two-thirds (66%) feel that girls their age are ‘always’ encouraged as much as boys, which, as might be expected, is higher among girls who have completed nine or more years of school (72%). Other sub-group differences for ‘always’ include:

- Girls who are unmarried (68%), versus those who are married (56%);
- Girls living in urban areas (70%) versus those in rural areas (62%).

Levels of equality appear to fall sharply when considering the issue of housework. Around half (47%) of adolescent girls believe that their brothers or boys ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ share the housework equally, whilst one-third (34%) say this happens ‘often’ or ‘always’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often would you say that girls your age ...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... feel confident to speak up and be heard when in the presence of boys and men?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... feel that their concerns matter in their community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents in Nicaragua (1,000)

When asked to consider their position in the community, adolescent girls express less optimistic views, which appears to suggest that girls are less valued in the community compared to within the home. Fewer than one in five adolescent girls (17%) believe that girls their age ‘often’ or ‘always’ feel that their concerns matter in the community. In contrast, the majority (61%) report that girls ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ feel this way, the highest level reported across the four countries. This response was
slightly higher among girls who have completed nine or more years of education (64%) and for those currently in education (63%).

By region, those in the RAAS³, León and Chinandega regions are slightly more pessimistic, with 71-73% feeling that girls’ concerns ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ matter. It is worth noting that León and Chinandega have a polarised political situation which leads to increased tensions in communities. The RAAS region overall has high instances of violence, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and gender-based and sexual violence.⁴

Similar to the above, few believe that girls feel confident when voicing their opinions in the presence of boys and men. Around two in five (42%) believe that girls their age ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ feel confident to speak up and be heard, with those aged 15-17 being more likely to give this response (46%) compared to those aged 18-19 (36%).

5.3 Making decisions about pregnancy and sexual relationships

- According to the DHS survey 2012, 24% of adolescent girls aged 15-19 who were interviewed reported having already been pregnant at least once.⁵
- A 2012 study reported that the adolescent participants who had a previous history of pregnancy when aged 10-16 had significantly lower levels of formal education, were married at an earlier age, have a greater number of children and are more often housewives.⁶

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³ Low base size of N=75
⁵ Encuesta Nicaragüense de Demografía y Salud 2011/12 (ENDESA 2011/12)
5.3.1 Attitudinal statements relating to pregnancy and relationships

In your opinion, do you agree or disagree with the following statements about pregnancy and relationships?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
<th>% Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>% Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls have someone to talk with about their bodies and sexual health</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls have enough information about how to avoid getting pregnant</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls have access to contraceptives to avoid unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents in Nicaragua (1,000)

In comparison to the other countries, girls in Nicaragua are the most likely to agree that they have sufficient information and advice about pregnancy and sexual health, and access to contraception. Almost two-thirds of adolescent girls (64%) agree that they have someone to talk with about their bodies and sexual health. However, even in Nicaragua nearly a quarter of adolescent girls disagree, rising to almost three in ten (28%) for those living in rural areas.

Three-quarters of adolescent girls (75%) agree that girls have enough information about how to avoid getting pregnant. However, slightly fewer (68%) agree that girls their age have access to contraceptives to avoid unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Perceived access to contraception is lower in rural areas, with 20% disagreeing with this statement versus 16% overall.

These results are somewhat surprising given the high rate of adolescent pregnancy in the country. However, while access to information and contraception is perceived to be largely available, this does not mean that adolescent girls have the autonomy to negotiate condom use in their relationships. A recent study exploring adolescent pregnancy in rural communities in Nicaragua found that although knowledge and access to contraceptives exists, adolescent girls interviewed said that they did not use contraception before they became pregnant either because they did not know how to use it, or because they could not access contraceptives, or because their partners did not allow them to use them.7

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This is borne out by our research findings, in which 35% of adolescent girls disagreed with the statement that boyfriends or husbands are willing to use condoms to avoid unwanted pregnancy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree 79%</th>
<th>Disagree 15%</th>
<th>Agree 87%</th>
<th>Disagree 7%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Pregnancy and education in Nicaragua

Focusing on school and pregnancy, over three-quarters (79%) agree that girls can continue to go to school whilst pregnant, rising to just over four in five girls aged 18-19 (82%). It should be noted, however, that adolescent girls who are pregnant are often pressurised by families and education authorities to leave their current school and attend an adult night school or a weekend school that separates them from their peers and networks, and leads to increased isolation. This was also noted in the ‘Hear Our Voices’ research: “In the school environment, social stigma and unofficial school rules against pregnant girls or young mothers attending classes keep many adolescent girls from continuing their education.”

Encouragingly, 85% of those who have a child are more likely to agree. However, overall a significant minority, one in seven adolescent girls (15%), disagree that girls can continue to go to school whilst pregnant – rising to a quarter (25%) of girls living in the RAAS (El Rama) region. In contrast, adolescent girls are more positive about returning to education after childbirth, with almost nine in ten (87%) agreeing that girls can return to school after having a baby. Again, it is unclear here whether adolescent girls perceiving that they can return to school after having a baby can be directly correlated with them actually returning to school.


10 Low base size of N=75
In your opinion, do you agree or disagree with the following statements about pregnancy and relationships?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
<th>% Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>% Disagree</th>
<th>% DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boyfriends or husbands are willing to use condoms to avoid unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls have equal say in their relationships with their boyfriends or husbands</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls often feel pressured to take part in sexual activities with their boyfriends or husband</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents in Nicaragua (1,000)

As part of the interview, girls were asked to consider their relationships with their boyfriends or husbands. Although a small majority of adolescent girls (57%) agree that girls have an equal say in their relationships (the highest level across the four countries), more than a quarter (27%) disagree, with girls aged 18-19 being more likely to disagree (31%). Notably, almost half of adolescent girls living in the RAAS (El Rama) region\(^{11}\) (45%) disagree with this statement, suggesting a pattern of inequality within this area.

The majority of adolescent girls (60%) disagree that girls often feel pressured to take part in sexual activities with their boyfriends or husband – the highest level of disagreement across the countries. Nevertheless, a significant minority (19%) agree with this statement. These findings should perhaps be considered in connection with the high percentage of girls reporting that their boyfriends will not use condoms; in this sense, girls may not feel pressured to take part in sexual activities, but on the other hand do feel pressurised to have sex without using a condom.

When focusing on girls’ attitudes towards the use of contraception, there is greater variation in the results. Around two in five adolescent girls (39%) agree that boyfriends or husbands are willing to use condoms to avoid unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, rising to around half (51%) of adolescent girls who are married. That said, around a third (35%) disagree with this statement, rising to almost half (48%) of girls living in the RAAS (El Rama) region\(^{12}\). This would suggest that although girls believe that they have sufficient access to contraception and information, they have little power in decisions surrounding their own bodies, particularly in relation to using birth control and planning pregnancy.

Almost seven in ten adolescent girls (69%) disagree that girls are encouraged to accept gifts or money in exchange for sex with boys, with girls aged 18-19 being

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\(^{11}\) Ibid – low base size
\(^{12}\) Ibid – low base size
slightly more likely to disagree (73%). However, more than one in ten adolescent girls (14%) agree that transactional sex is encouraged. In particular, almost one in five girls (18%) in Managua agree with this statement.

5.3.2 Suggestions to help girls who get pregnant at a young age

The following list includes some suggestions that could help girls who get pregnant at a young age. Which three suggestions do you think would be the most helpful?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>% Selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys/fathers helping girls with childcare and domestic chores</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive attitudes of families and communities towards young girls who get pregnant</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better access to affordable healthcare services for young mothers</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare services at school, such as nurseries</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative educational opportunities to complete secondary education</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls with babies or young children being allowed to return to school</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to government money for child support</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked to select from the pre-coded list, just over half of adolescent girls (54%) believe that boys and/or fathers assisting with childcare and domestic chores could help girls who get pregnant at a young age. Girls living in the RAAN (Siuna) region\(^{13}\) are particularly likely to favour this option (70%). This option scored significantly higher than in the other countries surveyed, sending a clear message that adolescent girls in Nicaragua feel that boys and fathers could and should do more to support girls who get pregnant at a young age. It is unclear why this option scores so highly, though it may be that the role of fathers, and boys and men in general, in family and domestic life has had more attention from campaigning and civil society organisations.

Changing cultural values are also important for adolescent girls. Almost half (46%) believe that supportive attitudes of families and communities towards young girls who get pregnant could improve the situation. Adolescent girls who are married are particularly likely to select this option (56%). Access to services is also important, with the same proportion (46%) suggesting that improved access to affordable healthcare services could help young mothers.

Whilst there is little to separate most responses, adolescent girls are much less likely to prioritise the role of the central government; with only one in five (20%) selecting access to government money for child support.

\(^{13}\) Low base size of N=74
5.3.3 Recommendations in relation to early pregnancy

If adolescent girls were in a position of authority, they would be most likely to implement sex education programmes that provide girls with information regarding contraception and sexual health (45%). This echoes the apparent inconsistency in Ecuador, where girls believe they have sufficient information but still advocate for further age-appropriate education and talks on the correct use of contraception methods and negotiation of condom use.

Girls would also advocate for education programmes, including campaigns, publicity and workshops that explain how to prevent early or unwanted pregnancies (15%) and provide information on the potential risks, consequences or problems associated with early pregnancy (9%). In comparison to other countries, responses tended to centre on fewer proposed solutions, although other suggestions include: education to teach teenage couples to have greater love and trust for each other (6%), and teaching girls to have greater levels of self-respect (4%). Mentions of education in some form accounted for the vast majority of responses, with little reference to new legislation, government intervention or additional resources.

“I’d give them talks to inform them about the methods to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease.”

“We should carry out educational campaigns on how to use condoms and the different planning methods.”

“I would give them talks; provide them with more information on the risks. It is a huge responsibility to have babies at an early age.”

“I’d encourage them to complete education and to be aware of pregnancy to not hold back their dreams.”
5.4 Early marriage

5.4.1 Attitudinal statements in relation to early marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls face social or family pressure to marry at a young age</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is beneficial for girls to marry before they are 18 years old</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marrying girls at a young age can help protect the honour or reputation of her family</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting married at a young age can help reduce a family's financial burden</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, around three-quarters of adolescent girls (76%) disagree that girls face social or family pressure to marry at a young age – the highest level of disagreement across the four countries. Adolescent girls in Matagalpa and León are particularly likely to disagree with this statement (89% and 86% respectively). That said, nearly one in seven (15%) adolescent girls agree that girls face social or family pressure – rising to over one in five girls (22%) who are not in education, employment or training.

An overwhelming majority disagree with the perceived ‘benefits’ of early marriage. Almost all adolescent girls (94%) disagree that it is beneficial for girls to marry before they are 18, with only 2% of girls agreeing with this statement. Furthermore, around nine in ten (91%) disagree that marrying girls at a young age can help protect the honour or reputation of her family. Disagreement levels for the two statements are the highest for any of the surveyed countries.

Adolescent girls are slightly more pessimistic about the relationship between marriage and financial independence, although the vast majority – around four in five adolescent girls (82%) – disagree that getting married at a young age can help reduce a family’s financial burden. In contrast, around one in ten (9%) agree with this statement. Those who are living with their husband or partner are more likely to agree (14%).

94% of girls disagree that it is beneficial for girls to marry before they are 18 years old.
Focusing on the potential negative consequences of early marriage, girls are more likely to agree with these statements. Just under two-thirds (63%) agree that girls who get married before the age of 18 are less likely to complete their education, rising to four in five (81%) girls who are not in education, employment or training. Nevertheless, a significant minority, 30%, disagree with this statement, with a higher proportion of responses from adolescent girls who are married (39%).

In terms of early marriage and violence, seven in ten (70%) agree that girls who marry as teenagers are more likely to experience violence in their homes, although this does fall to three in five adolescent girls who are married (60%). That said, a quarter (25%) disagree that girls who marry as teenagers are more likely to experience violence in their homes.

The following list contains some suggestions that could help girls in relation to getting married at a young age. Which three suggestions do you think would be the most helpful?

- Girls being able to decide for themselves when and who they marry
- Girls having better access to quality secondary education
- Girls having more confidence to raise issues and concerns with their family or in the community
- Families and communities valuing girls’ education more
- Girls having access to paid and dignified work opportunities
- Media campaigns that oppose child marriage
- Community leaders publicly condemning child marriage
- Discussing the issue of early marriage with men and boys
- Better national laws to prevent child marriage

Base: All respondents in Nicaragua (1,000)
Adolescent girls emphasise the importance of empowerment, choice and control over decisions about marriage. When asked to select from the pre-coded list, three in five adolescent girls (59%) believe that girls need to be able to decide for themselves who they marry and when. Related to this, adolescent girls believe that it would be helpful for girls to have the confidence to raise issues and concerns with their family or their community (43%).

Adolescent girls also see education as an important factor in preventing early marriage. Almost half (47%) believe it would be helpful for girls to have better access to quality secondary education, rising to three in five adolescent girls (60%) who are not in education, training or employment. As well as having access to education, adolescent girls also believe that it would be helpful for families and communities to place more value on girls' education (41%). There would appear to be a slight disparity here, given the finding that 83% of girls in Nicaragua believe that girls are encouraged by their parents to succeed at school just as much as boys.

5.4.2 Suggestions to help girls in relation to getting married at a young age

As with early pregnancy, adolescent girls would place most emphasis on the importance of education by encouraging teenagers to complete their schooling and think more about their future (25%). Girls would also educate teenagers on issues surrounding sexual relationships and marriage by, for example:

- Encouraging education that teaches adolescent girls to wait for the right person, or until they are more mature before they get married (14%);
- Advising girls to avoid getting married whilst they are young (10%);
- Placing greater importance on campaigns and publicity; particularly those that explain the consequences, risks and disadvantages of getting married at a young age (10%).

“I’d advise them not to marry, that they’d better study and get prepared for having a good future.”

“I’d advise them to get married when they are at the right age and that they should get to know their boyfriend well.”

“I’d tell young girls: do not get married, because we are not at the right age for that kind of responsibility.”

“I would have media campaigns to fight against marriage at an early age due to its consequences.”
5.5 Feeling safe in school and the community

- High-school education in Nicaragua is excessively urbanised (71% in 2013) and the majority of those who complete high school come from non-poor households (73%).
- In 2013, the Institute of Forensic Medicine reported 6,069 cases of sexual violence; 30% of these cases involved adolescent girls aged 14-17, and 42% were girls aged 0-13.

5.5.1 Attitudinal statements in relation to safety at school

The findings show that girls in Nicaragua reject any form of physical or emotional abuse from teachers. Almost all adolescent girls disagree that it is acceptable for teachers to give strong physical punishment to girls in certain situations, or for teachers to call girls hurtful names or shout at them (96% and 99% respectively).

Girls’ views are similar in relation to sexual coercion in school, with more than nine in ten (92%) disagreeing that in certain situations it is acceptable for teachers to ask a girl for sexual favours in exchange for grades or other school benefits. Just 2% of girls agree with this statement.

99% of girls disagree that it is acceptable for teachers to call girls hurtful names or shout at them.

There is slightly less consensus as to whether it is a girl’s fault if a male student or teacher sexually harasses her. More than four in five adolescent girls (86%) disagree with this statement, with one in ten (10%) stating that they neither agree nor disagree. However, 4% of adolescent girls agree with this statement.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
<th>% Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>% Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls always feel safe using toilets or latrines in school</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls always feel safe on the way to school</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If girls witness abuse or are abused, they feel there is someone they can report it to in confidence, without putting themselves at risk</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A small majority of adolescent girls (57%) agree that if girls witness abuse or are abused, they feel there is someone they can report it to in confidence; around a quarter (26%) disagree with this statement. Disagreement is higher among those who are married and those who have children (35% and 31% respectively).

Focusing on physical safety around school, three-quarters of girls (74%) disagree that girls always feel safe using toilets or latrines in school, and almost two-thirds (61%) disagree that girls always feel safe on the way to school.

74% of girls disagree that girls always feel safe using toilets or latrines in school.
5.5.2 Suggestions to help protect girls from abuse or violence in their communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>% Selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools having a clear and easy to use complaints process, so that girls can report situations of violence in a safe and confidential way</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvements to make the school more secure, such as protective fencing and security gates</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools having clear and strong rules that harassment, violence and abuse are not acceptable at school</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having separate toilets or latrines for girls only that are safe and clean</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The government having a national action plan to end violence and abuse in school</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police or security services taking action when cases of violence or abuse at school are reported to them</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools recruiting more female teachers</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools having rules for teachers, which do not allow relationships with students and exchanging sex for grades</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When considering the pre-coded list of suggestions, adolescent girls in Nicaragua emphasise the importance of a range of policy-level solutions. These include schools having a clear and easy-to-use complaints process for girls to report violence (50%) and schools having clear rules that harassment, violence and abuse are not acceptable (45%). In particular, younger girls are more likely to call on schools to develop a clear complaints process (48% of 15 to 17-year-olds versus 40% of 18 to 19-year-olds).

Forty-seven per cent of girls also stress the importance of physical security measures such as protective fencing and security gates (47%). In addition, and reflecting their fears regarding the safety of toilets, they would also advocate having separate facilities for girls which are safe and clean (43%).

A substantial percentage of girls, 41%, believe that the government should take more responsibility and develop a national action plan to end violence and abuse in school. By sub-group, older girls are more likely to call on the government to implement policy change (48% of those aged 18-19 versus 37% of those aged 15-17).
5.6 Feeling safe in relationships and the community

5.6.1 Attitudinal statements in relation to girls feeling safe in the community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you agree or disagree with the following statements …</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is sometimes acceptable for a boy to hit or use violence against his girlfriend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women should put up with violence from their husband in order to keep their family together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a girl or woman is raped, it is better for her to not tell anyone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When thinking about relationships with boys, virtually all girls in Nicaragua disagree that it is sometimes acceptable for a boy to hit or use violence against his girlfriend, or that women should put up with violence from their husbands in order to keep their family together (100% and 99% respectively). This represents the highest levels of disagreement across the four countries. The vast majority (93%) also disagree that if a girl or woman is raped, it is better for a girl or woman not to tell anyone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you agree or disagree with the following statements …</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls should not travel on public transport without a male family member or male friend travelling with them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls should not be seen in public places after dark</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents in Nicaragua (1,000)
Focusing on their feelings of safety and their presence within the wider community, slightly more than one in ten adolescent girls (12%) agree that girls should not travel on public transport without a male accompanying them. This represents the lowest level of agreement across all countries surveyed. In contrast, two-thirds of adolescent girls (68%) disagree with this statement.

Focusing on feelings of safety after dark, around a quarter of adolescent girls (23%) agree that girls should not be seen in public places after dark. Once again, this represents the lowest levels of agreement across the four countries.

5.6.2 Suggestions to help protect girls from abuse or violence in their communities

The following list includes some suggestions that could help protect girls from abuse or violence in the area where you live. Which three suggestions do you think would be the most helpful?

- Girls having someone they trust who they can talk to if they experience any abuse or violence: 52%
- Governments and the police acting to tackle problems with alcohol or drug use in the local area: 48%
- Girls having better access to information and training to protect themselves from violence: 43%
- Tougher penalties for boys or men who abuse or are violent towards girls or women, such as longer prison sentences: 38%
- Girls feeling able to report violence or abuse to community leaders, local authorities or police without being afraid: 37%
- Working with boys and men to educate them about the harmful effects of violence and abuse towards girls: 33%
- Families and communities valuing girls the same as boys: 28%
- Girls having safe places and groups where girls and women can share information and experiences related to violence and abuse: 20%

Girls are most likely to select pre-coded options that advocate safe spaces for girls to discuss incidences of abuse or violence. Half of adolescent girls (52%) believe that ‘girls having someone they trust who they can talk to if they experience any abuse or violence’ would be the most effective asset in protecting them. Moreover, just over a third of adolescent girls (37%) also advocate the importance of ‘girls feeling able to report violence or abuse to community leaders, local authorities or police without being afraid’ as an important measure. This is a clear indication of the extent to which girls feel silenced and powerless when it comes to talking about and reporting violence in all its forms. This presents a real challenge for addressing instances of gender-based violence in the home, communities and schools. If girls do not feel safe reporting violence and remain silent, it is likely they will continue to experience violence as they get older, feel undervalued, disempowered and accept a reality in which violence is normalised.

Adolescent girls are also likely to focus on suggestions that require government or legal interventions. Almost half of adolescent girls (48%) cite the importance
of ‘governments and the police acting to tackle problems with alcohol or drug use in the local area’, with two in five (38%) advocating ‘tougher penalties for boys or men who abuse or are violent towards girls or women’ and a third highlighting the importance of working with men and boys to educate them about the harmful effects of violence and abuse towards girls.

5.6.3 Recommendations in relation to violence and abuse

If placed in a position of power, adolescent girls would be most likely to develop a programme of education that teaches girls to report abuse or violence either to someone (20%), to the authorities or police specifically (10%), or that encourages them in general to speak out about their experiences (10%).

Girls are also likely to call for more action from the police or security services. For example, they would call for improvements to safety in the local area through an increased police presence (17%) and, more generally, they would seek to improve safety and security in their local community (7%).

Following this, girls are also likely to advocate strategies that influence the wider community. Around one in ten adolescent girls (13%) suggest developing programmes or campaigns or organising the community in a way that gives girls safe places to go to for advice, information and support about violence and abuse (8%).

“I’d gather all the girls to talk on this subject and tell them that they should not remain silent if they are being abused.”

“I would advise them that if they are being abused to call the police and break the silence.”

“I would encourage them to open up their eyes when there is an abuse situation and report it; do not remain silent!”

“If I could, I would place police officers in the roads.”

“I’d organise groups of neighbours and parents led by the leader of the area, to protect girls, and to be more alert.”

“I think the government and community leaders should create places where information and protection can be given to those who have been abused.”
5.6.4 Who should be responsible for improving the situation of girls?

Which 3 people or groups on this list do you think should be responsible for improving the situation for girls in the area where you live?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>% Selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police or security services</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls themselves</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government / Ministry for the Family</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers and female care-givers</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers and male care-givers</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious leaders / community leaders</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider family members, such as aunts or uncles</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools / school teachers</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community based organisations for women or girls</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As with responses to previous questions, girls in Nicaragua place an emphasis on the police, as well as the national government, acting to protect girls. This is in contrast to the other countries, where more of an onus is placed on girls’ families.

Just over half of adolescent girls (51%) believe that the police or security services should be responsible for improving the situation for girls, with those who are not in education, employment or training being particularly likely to give this response (62%). Girls also place an emphasis on the role of the government, with almost four out of ten (39%) believing that the government or Ministry for Family should play a key role. This rises to almost half of adolescent girls who are married (49%). There is a clear consensus here that state services and governments have a key role and responsibility in improving the situation of adolescent girls.

Turning to the perceived responsibility of boys and girls, almost half of girls (47%) believe that girls themselves should be responsible for improving their situation – with this being the second most commonly cited response. In contrast, and in line with other countries, much less emphasis is placed on boys needing to take responsibility (17%).

Thinking about more informal groups, mothers and female care-givers are often considered as responsible actors (35%). Fewer adolescent girls place emphasis on fathers and male care-givers (27%) or on the religious community (26%).
5.7 Girls then, now and in the future

Thinking about their position in society more generally, the majority of girls in Nicaragua feel optimistic about gender equality and opportunities in life. The vast majority of adolescent girls (78%) agree that girls are becoming more valued as equal members of their community. However, it is important to note that around one in ten girls disagree with this statement (9%) and although there is a consensus that girls are becoming more valued in communities, the results of this survey clearly indicate that more progress is needed in order for there to be greater gender equality, as well as greater equality of opportunity between girls themselves. Finally, it is perhaps encouraging to note that almost all adolescent girls (96%) agree that they have more opportunities in life than their mothers did at their age.
Key findings

- Findings show that perceptions of equality and empowerment in Pakistan are low in comparison to the other countries surveyed. When considering degrees of independence in relation to decision making and financial control, girls in Pakistan express the lowest levels of agreement across all countries. This is also the case for statements relating to equality of opportunity, such as shared housework and internet access.

- Additional statistical analysis in Pakistan shows that there is a clear correlation between educational achievement and control over decision making. Findings also suggest that the greater number of years a girl spends in education, the more likely she is to agree with statements relating to equality and empowerment, to agree with the suggested negative consequences of early marriage and pregnancy, and to believe that abuse and violence against women (in various guises) is unacceptable.

- Analysis of the findings from Pakistan shows that it has the largest number of sub-group differences across all countries. Girls who are more likely to agree with statements relating to equality and empowerment tend to be older girls, those who are in education or have achieved nine or more years of schooling, girls who are unmarried, and those who live in urban areas.

- Overwhelmingly, girls in Pakistan agree that once a girl becomes pregnant she cannot continue her education.

- Seventy-four per cent agree that girls who get married before the age of 18 are less likely to complete their education, and 86% believe that girls who marry as teenagers are more likely to experience violence in the home.

- Focusing on early marriage, girls in Pakistan are the most likely to agree with the statement relating to the benefits of early marriage in comparison to other countries, although the majority still disagree.

- Solutions relating to early marriage tend to focus on greater access to secondary education and the creation of educational programmes for girls and their families.

- The majority of girls believe that violence, abuse and harassment by teachers is unacceptable, although disagreement levels are lower than in other countries. They also believe that girls should not travel on public
transport without a male, or be seen in public places after dark, which reflects a pronounced sense of curtailed mobility and freedom for girls.

- In terms of solutions, adolescent girls in Pakistan are more likely to focus on suggestions relating to the immediate physical protection of girls within school, as opposed to long-term strategies implemented by schools. This is in clear contrast to the other countries surveyed.

6.1 Profile of respondents

In Pakistan, 1,018 adolescent girls aged 15-19 were interviewed, with an approximate split of 200 interviews per age group. Interviewing took place in the urban and rural areas of each province.

Just over half of adolescent girls (53%) are currently attending school, high school, college or university, with around two in five adolescent girls (42%) reporting that they are not in education, employment or training. A small minority of girls are either in an apprenticeship or training (3%) or in paid work (1%).

Due to cultural sensitivities and social norms in Pakistan, questions relating to living arrangements and pregnancy were only asked of those who are currently married. Around one in ten (12%) adolescent girls are married, with those living in rural areas more likely to be married than those who live in urban areas (14% versus 6% respectively).

6.2 Young women’s priorities

6.2.1 Making decisions about their own lives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Often/Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Seldom/Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... are able to make decisions about their own lives?</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... are able to decide what to spend money on?</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Over half of the respondents (52%) believe that they can ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ make decisions about their own lives, with one in five girls (20%) believing that this is ‘always’ or ‘often’ the case. This represents the lowest agreement level across all four countries. Slightly more encouraging is the finding that one in three adolescent girls (34%) feel that they are ‘always’ or ‘often’ able to decide what to spend money on.

Further analysis of the results reveals that sub-group differences are consistent across the two statements. Those who are more likely to feel that they can ‘always’ or ‘often’ make decisions on these two issues include:

- those who live in urban regions;
- are aged 18-19 years;
- are currently in education;
- are not married;
- are based in the Punjab region.

As an example, over a quarter of urban-based adolescent girls (28%) are ‘always’ or ‘often’ able to make decisions about their own lives (versus 20% overall) and 45% are ‘always’ or ‘often’ able to decide what to spend money on (versus 34% overall).

In contrast, those who feel that they can ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ make these decisions include:

- those who live in rural regions;
- are aged 15-17 years;
- have never attended school;
- are not in education, employment or training;
- are married;
- are based in the Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa regions.

As a further example, eight in ten (80%) adolescent girls who have never attended school believe that girls are ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ able to make decisions about their own lives (versus 52% overall). Furthermore, six in ten who have never attended school (59%) are ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ able to decide what to spend money on (versus 38% overall).

The above sub-group differences tend to recur throughout.
How often would you say that girls your age …

- ... are given as many opportunities as boys to get on in life?
  - 23% Often/Always
  - 24% Sometimes
  - 53% Seldom/Never

- ... are given as much opportunity as boys to use the internet and social media?
  - 21% Often/Always
  - 19% Sometimes
  - 59% Seldom/Never

- ... are encouraged by their parents to succeed at school just as much as boys?
  - 57% Often/Always
  - 22% Sometimes
  - 20% Seldom/Never

- ... share the housework equally with their brothers or boys?
  - 15% Often/Always
  - 17% Sometimes
  - 67% Seldom/Never

Base: All respondents in Pakistan (1,018)

In terms of equality of opportunities, nearly one in four adolescent girls (23%) report that they are ‘always’ or ‘often’ given as many opportunities as boys to get on in life, with more than half (53%) believing that this is ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ the case.

More encouraging is the finding that almost six in ten (57%) feel that they are ‘always’ or ‘often’ encouraged by their parents to succeed at school just as much as boys. However, it appears that inequalities are apparent in daily life, with six in ten adolescent girls (59%) feeling that they are ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ given as many opportunities as boys to use the internet and social media. Similarly, two-thirds of adolescent girls (67%) report that they ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ share the housework equally with their brothers or boys. In terms of equality, these four statements represent the lowest levels of agreement across the four countries.
The final statements in this section relate to girls’ confidence and the strength of their voice. Over half of adolescent girls (54%) ‘always’ or ‘often’ feel that their concerns matter in the community and, in contrast to the previous statement, this represents the highest level of agreement across countries. That said, this drops to 29% for the proportion who ‘always’ or ‘often’ feel confident to speak up and be heard when in the presence of boys and men.

6.3 Making decisions about pregnancy and sexual relationships

- In a DHS survey, girls who reported experience of violence from the age of 15 were asked to identify perpetrators – in Pakistan, husbands or partners were the most commonly cited.¹
- More than one in seven adolescent girls experienced physical violence during pregnancy in Pakistan²; 40% of 15 to 19-year-old girls in Pakistan migrated because of marriage, compared to under 5% of boys.³

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Due to cultural sensitivities in Pakistan, all questions relating to pregnancy and sex were only asked of those who are currently married. In total, 119 adolescent girls (12% of the sample) were asked these questions. In terms of statistical reliability, this means that the values fall with +/- 5-9% of the ‘true’ values (i.e. the values if we had interviewed all married adolescents girls aged 15-19 in Pakistan). Caution should therefore be exercised when interpreting these results; they are not comparable with the results of Ecuador, Nicaragua and Zimbabwe, given the difference in the sample size.

6.3.1 Attitudinal statements relating to pregnancy and sexual relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Don’t Know (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls have someone to talk with about their bodies and sexual health</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls have enough information about how to avoid getting pregnant</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls have access to contraceptives to avoid unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All married respondents in Pakistan (119)

As part of the interview, married adolescent girls were asked a series of questions relating to the provision of information and advice regarding pregnancy, sexual health and contraceptives. Overall, results were mixed across all three statements with no real consensus.

In terms of information provision, a slightly lower proportion (39%) agree that girls have enough information about how to avoid getting pregnant. Similarly, access to birth control also appears to be a barrier for adolescent girls, given that only one in three (34%) agree that girls have access to contraception to avoid unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. The proportion who disagree stands at one in four (24%).

In relation to having someone to talk to about their bodies and sexual health, 44% of adolescent girls reported that they have someone to talk to about these issues. These results are somewhat surprising, given that in Pakistan sexual education can be a sensitive issue. A study in 2013 reported that youth had no
access to accurate information from a reliable source concerning bodily and sexual (though no one used the word itself) issues and indicated that their parents find it hard to discuss sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issues with them. Respondents said that they went through a very difficult stage when they reached puberty, as they had no one to share their feelings with or seek information from.4

Other studies have also found that adolescents in Pakistan are poorly informed about sexual issues, reproductive biology and health.5

The interview also examined relationships between married adolescent girls and their husbands and, once again, there was little consensus among girls.

Focusing on sexual relations, one-third of married girls (31%) agree that girls often feel pressured to take part in sexual activities. Over one in three married girls (37%) disagree that boyfriends or husbands are willing to use condoms to avoid unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases – rising to 43% of those living in rural areas.

These results are perhaps surprising given that four in ten (41%) agree that girls have an equal say in their relationships, although almost one in three (31%) disagree.

5 “A research Study on LNA amongst ddolescents in Pakistan”, WEG publication, 2013.
Focusing on pregnancy and schooling, the majority of adolescent girls disagree that girls can continue to go to school whilst pregnant (61%) or return to school after having a baby (54%). In relation to the latter, this disagreement figure is significantly higher than in the other countries surveyed, where the vast majority agree that girls can return to school.

Just over half of adolescent girls (52%) disagree that girls are encouraged to accept gifts or money in exchange for sex with boys, with 16% in agreement. The latter percentage is in line with the other three countries, where agreement levels range from 11-15%. In contrast, however, ‘Don’t know’ responses account for just over one in ten (13%).
6.3.2 Suggestions to help girls who get pregnant at a young age

The following list includes some suggestions that could help girls who get pregnant at a young age. Which three suggestions do you think would be the most helpful?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>% Selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better access to affordable healthcare services for young mothers</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys/fathers helping girls with childcare and domestic chores</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive attitudes of families and communities towards young girls who get pregnant</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative educational opportunities to complete secondary education</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls with babies or young children being allowed to return to school</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare services at school, such as nurseries</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to government money for child support</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All married respondents in Pakistan (119)

Access to healthcare services for young pregnant women is a key solution for married girls, along with support provision from boys and fathers in the form of childcare and chores. Married girls were more likely to select these pre-coded statements (50% and 49% respectively), with comparatively less importance being placed on the need for adolescent girls with children to be allowed to return to school (34%), or for childcare services to be provided within schools (24%). This may be linked to the finding that only a quarter of girls (24%) agree that mothers can return to school following childbirth. There is also less onus placed on the government in terms of providing money for child support (24%), although this rises to 42% in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region.

6.3.3 Recommendations in relation to early pregnancy

A key theme that emerged through the verbatim responses is education: particularly in relation to the need for awareness raising through campaigns and general publicity. Almost one in four (22%) of adolescent girls suggest the need for education in the form of explaining the risks, consequences and problems of getting pregnant at a young age. Similar suggestions include education in relation to preventing early and unwanted pregnancies (17%) and explaining the risks to girls’ health and quality of life (10%). Verbatim responses also focus on the need for direct education by teaching girls about contraception (11%) and emphasising that girls are not ready to become mothers and run a family home (8%).

Aside from education, and in line with the previous responses, more than one in ten adolescent girls (13%) believe that greater access needs to be provided to a clinic or drop-in centre where girls can go to discuss pregnancy issues and
obtain professional help. Other minority mentions include teaching parents not to force their daughters into an early marriage likely to result in pregnancy (6%) and introducing a new law to make marriage under the age of 18 illegal (5%). Interestingly, and despite being asked to imagine themselves in a position of authority, 6% of adolescent girls believe that they have no power to make decisions surrounding pregnancy.

“I would bring all women together and would make a committee and explain to them that early-age pregnancy could be dangerous for their health.”

“I would give them information about family planning so that they can avoid pregnancy.”

“I would explain to women that it is difficult to conceive at an early age and it can also have bad effects on a mother’s health.”

“Taking care of children is a big responsibility and until she is able to take on this responsibility she should not conceive.”

“I would establish a health centre for such girls so they can get information about all these matters.”

“I would tell their parents not to marry them at an early age, and let them know the abuses of getting pregnant at an early age.”

“If I were in charge I would stop early-age marriage. There should be an organisation that penalises the parents if they do this.”

“I would do nothing because I don’t have permission; our elders take all decisions. But I would explain to their parents that early-age pregnancy is dangerous and they should take advice from the doctor.”
6.4 Early marriage

All questions from this point onwards were asked of all girls in Pakistan (a total of 1,018).

6.4.1 Attitudinal statements in relation to early marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls face social or family pressure to marry at a young age</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is beneficial for girls to marry before they are 18 years old</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marrying girls at a young age can help protect the honour or reputation of her family</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting married at a young age can help reduce a family’s financial burden</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Around four in ten (39%) adolescent girls agree that girls in Pakistan face social pressure to marry at a young age – the highest agreement level across all countries. This is significantly higher for married adolescent girls, rising to six in ten (61%). Those in rural areas are also more likely to agree (44% versus 30% of those in urban areas).

There are also clear differences in terms of education, with those who have never attended school more likely to agree with this statement (46% versus 39% overall) and those who have obtained nine or more years of schooling more likely to disagree with this statement (56% versus 49% overall).

In terms of the perceived ‘benefits’ of marriage at an early age, adolescent girls in Pakistan are more likely to agree with these statements than any other country. That said, agreement levels do not exceed more than a fifth of responses in each case. Overall, one in five (21%) agree that getting married at a young age can help reduce a family’s financial burden, although just over half (58%) disagree. One in five (20%) also agree that marrying girls at a young age can help protect the honour or reputation of her family, with a smaller proportion (13%) agreeing that it is beneficial for girls to marry before they are 18.
Consistent patterns in relation to sub-groups emerge when focusing on the above statements – most commonly when examining the differing attitudes of those based in urban versus rural areas, married adolescent girls versus those who are unmarried, and differing levels of education. The chart below details these sub-group differences:

Early marriage: key sub-group differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree overall</th>
<th>Disagree overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“It is beneficial for girls to marry before they are 18 years old”</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years of schooling completed: 34%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married: 24%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sindh region: 17%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural: 15%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9+ years of schooling: 85%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently in education: 86%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban: 86%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has attended school: 81%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Marrying girls at a young age can help protect the honour/reputation of her family”</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married: 34%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sindh region: 27%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never attended school: 27%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural: 22%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Getting married at a young age can help reduce the family’s financial burden”</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married: 32%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sindh region: 33%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9+ years of schooling: 67%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently in education: 66%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khyber region: 65%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban: 86%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has attended school: 81%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Girls who get married before the age of 18 years are less likely to complete their education”</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Girls who marry as teenagers are more likely to experience violence in their homes”</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When focusing on the perceived negative consequences of early marriage, findings tend to be in line with the other countries surveyed. A clear majority of adolescent girls (74%) agree that girls who get married before the age of 18 are
less likely to complete their education. As with the above statements, there is a clear difference between those who live in urban versus rural areas (with 82% in rural areas agreeing compared to 69% in rural areas). Similarly, there are also differences by education, with 80% who have received more than nine years of schooling agreeing with this statement.

Over half (56%) of adolescent girls agree that girls who marry as teenagers are more likely to experience violence in their homes. Once again, agreement levels for those who live in urban areas are higher (64%).

6.4.2 Suggestions to help girls in relation to getting married at a young age

The following list contains some suggestions that could help girls in relation to getting married at a young age. Which three suggestions do you think would be the most helpful?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>% Selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls having better access to quality secondary education</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families and communities valuing girls’ education more</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls having more confidence to raise issues and concerns with their family or in the community</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media campaigns that oppose child marriage</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better national laws to prevent child marriage</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing the issue of early marriage with men and boys</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls having access to paid and dignified work opportunities</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls being able to decide for themselves when and who they marry</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community leaders publicly condemning child marriage</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents in Pakistan (1,018)

Education appears to be a key factor in preventing girls from getting married at a young age. When asked to select from a pre-coded list of suggestions, almost half of adolescent girls (45%) believe that ‘girls having better access to quality secondary education’ would be of most help. This is particularly pertinent for adolescent girls who are currently in education (54%), those who have achieved nine or more years of schooling (51%), and those in the Punjab and Sindh regions (53% and 52% respectively).

In comparison to the other countries surveyed, a greater emphasis is placed upon ‘families and communities valuing girls’ education more highly’ (42%).

Slightly less emphasis is placed on girls having more confidence to raise issues and concerns with their family or the wider community and girls being able to decide for themselves when and who to marry (34% and 26% respectively). That said, the latter percentage is higher for those living in the Punjab region (34%) and those who have achieved nine or more years of schooling (31%).
Around a third of adolescent girls (33%) believe that media campaigns opposing child marriage could be effective, with a similar proportion (32%) citing the need for improved national laws against child marriage.

6.4.3 Recommendations in relation to early marriage

If placed in a position of authority, adolescent girls would be most likely to push for improved education in relation to teaching parents not to force their daughters into marrying at a young age (29%). Other educational suggestions complete the top three mentions, with 24% stating that teenagers should be told to place more emphasis on completing their education and thinking about their future, and 21% advocating the need for increased promotion of the risks and disadvantages of early marriage.

Other mentions include the need for a new law to make marriage under 18 years of age illegal (13%) and teaching girls directly not to marry at a young age (12%).

“I guess we should explain to all parents, because if they are sensible they will take the right decision and we can solve this issue; otherwise, it is not possible.”

“Education is very important so I will tell them to complete their education so that they can do anything in their life and then they won’t need anyone’s help.”

“I would establish schools, Madrassas, and stitching centres for girls. They would be near to their homes so they can easily reach them. I would explain to them that they should get further education and become successful and then marry.”

“I would explain to their parents that girls are too young to be able to bear the burden of another family. She will also face many problems if she becomes a mother. I would stop early marriage with the help of the Jirga [traditional assembly of leaders].”

“I would make a law to stop early-age marriage. If my parents give me permission then I would explain to them and to the Jirga that early-age marriage creates lots of problems and they are not able to perform responsibilities and take care of their children.”

“I would bring all girls together and tell them to avoid early-age marriage because early-age marriage is very dangerous and it creates lots of problems; it also creates difficulties for parents.”
6.5 Feeling safe in school and the community

- In Pakistan there are 82 girls in primary school for every 100 boys\(^6\) and just 64% of women over the age of 15 are literate.\(^7\)
- Between 2006 and 2012, little progress was made in reducing the proportion of the poorest children who had never attended school, and in reducing the gender gap.\(^8\)

6.5.1 Attitudinal statements in relation to safety at school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
<th>% Neither nor disagree</th>
<th>% Disagree</th>
<th>% Don't know / Prefer not to say</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is acceptable for teachers to give strong physical punishment to girls in certain situations</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is acceptable for teachers to call girls hurtful names or shout at them</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In certain situations it is acceptable for a teacher to ask a girl for sexual favours in exchange for grades or other school benefits</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is a girl’s fault if a male student or teacher sexually harasses her.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The vast majority of adolescent girls disagree with each of the above statements that focus on pupil-teacher relations. However, agreement levels do appear to be slightly higher in comparison to the other countries surveyed. Most girls disagree that it is acceptable for teachers to give strong physical punishment to girls in certain situations, or to call girls hurtful names or shout at them (85% and 86% respectively). Levels of disagreement are higher for those with nine or more years of schooling (90% and 89%) and those in urban areas for the former statement (88%). There is a clear consensus on these issues, with only 7% agreeing with each of these two statements (although this rises to 14% for both statements for those in the Sindh region).

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\(^7\) Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2015, Regional Overview South and West Asia, UNESCO.
\(^8\) Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2015, Regional Overview South and West Asia, UNESCO.
A further 70% disagree that in certain situations it is acceptable for a teacher to ask a girl for sexual favours in exchange for grades/other benefits, which is around 20-25% lower than the other three countries. It is worth noting that for this question, 13% responded ‘Don’t know’. Once again, those in urban areas with nine or more years of schooling are more likely to disagree with the statement (76% and 74% respectively), as are adolescent girls who live in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan regions (84% and 78%).

As with previous statements, sub-group differences reveal a clear pattern, with those in urban areas and those in education more likely to disagree with statements that advocate unfair and unethical treatment of adolescent girls in Pakistan.

There is less consensus in relation to whether it is a girl’s fault if a male student or teacher sexually harasses her. Just over half (55%) of adolescent girls disagree with this statement, with around one in seven (16%) agreeing. In comparison, disagreement levels in Ecuador, Nicaragua and Zimbabwe range from 73-86%, although ‘Don’t know’ responses in Pakistan again account for 13%. Interestingly, and in contrast to previous statements, adolescent girls in urban areas are more likely to agree with this statement (25%), as are those who have received nine or more years of schooling (20%).

Focusing on safety around school, just one in four adolescent girls (26%) agree that girls always feel safe using toilets or latrines in school, with the same number agreeing that girls always feel safe on the way to school. There is a clear urban/rural split here, with urban adolescent girls more likely to agree, as well as those who are currently in education or have attended school. This appears to be consistent with the data from the ‘Hear Our Voices’ report, which showed a high level of variability on these issues.9

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In terms of reporting, almost two in three (63%) adolescent girls agree that if girls witness abuse or are abused, they feel that there is someone they can report it to in confidence. This is one of the highest agreement levels across countries. As before, agreement levels are higher in urban areas (73%), for adolescent girls aged 19 (70%) and those in the Baluchistan and Sindh regions (79% and 74% respectively).

6.5.2 Suggestions to help protect girls from abuse or violence at school

The following list includes some suggestions of things that could help protect girls from abuse or violence at school. Which three suggestions do you think would be the most helpful?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>% Selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improvements to make the school more secure, such as protective fencing and security gates</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having separate toilets or latrines for girls only that are safe and clean</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools having clear and strong rules that harassment, violence and abuse are not acceptable at school</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The government having a national action plan to end violence and abuse in school</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools having a clear and easy to use complaints process, so that girls can report situations of violence in a safe and confidential way</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police or security services taking action when cases of violence or abuse at school are reported to them</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools recruiting more female teachers</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools having rules for teachers, which do not allow relationships with students and exchanging sex for grades</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adolescent girls in Pakistan are more likely to focus on pre-coded suggestions relating to the immediate physical protection of girls within the school, as opposed to long-term strategies employed by schools which tend to be the top mentions in other countries. Almost six in ten (59%) cite improvements to make the school more secure (such as protective fencing and gates) and just under half (44%) cite the need for separate toilets or latrines for girls that are safe and clean. These results are also backed up by a recent study in which 51% of respondents who had said their school was unsafe saying this was due to having no security guards and 37% saying it was due to having no separate toilets for boys and girls.10

Following this, other commonly cited suggestions include the school having clear and strong rules that harassment, violence and abuse are not acceptable (41%) and the government having a national action plan to end violence and abuse in school (34%).

By sub-group, those in urban areas are more likely to cite schools having clear and strong rules on harassment, abuse and violence (49% versus 37% for those

in rural areas), and schools having a clear and easy-to-use complaints process for reporting violence (38% versus 30% for rural areas, and 33% overall). In addition, those who have obtained nine or more years of schooling or attended school are more likely to cite the need for protective fencing and gates (63% and 62% respectively).

6.6 Feeling safe in relationships and the community

6.6.1 Attitudinal statements in relation to girls feeling safe in the community

Adolescent girls in Pakistan are overwhelmingly likely to disagree with the assertion that it is sometimes acceptable for a boy to hit or use violence against his girlfriend. Just 3% agree with this statement, with eight in ten disagreeing (79%). However, it is worth noting that there is some uncertainty, with ‘Don’t know’ accounting for over one in ten responses (13%). By sub-group, levels of disagreement are even higher for those in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab regions (94% and 85% respectively) and those who have attended school for nine or more years (84%).

Levels of disagreement are marginally lower when considering whether women should put up with violence from their husband in order to keep the family together (76%). In turn, the proportion who agree with this statement is higher, at one in ten (10%) which, along with Zimbabwe (also 10%), is a much higher proportion than in Ecuador and Nicaragua (0-2%). Agreement levels are even higher for those who have 1-2 years of schooling (over one in four at 28%) and those who have children (18%).
On the subject of rape, one in seven adolescent girls (15%) agree that if a woman or girl is raped then it is better for her to not tell anyone, in contrast to other countries where agreement levels range from 3-4%. Levels of agreement by sub-group vary considerably and in line with previous responses to attitudinal statements.

“If a girl or woman is raped, it is better for her to not tell anyone”

Key sub-group differences

- Sindh region: 26%
- Has children: 26%
- Married: 25%
- Rural: 18%

Agree overall: 15%

- Baluchistan region: 79%
- Urban: 76%
- 9+ years of schooling: 75%
- In education: 70%
- Not married: 69%

Disagree overall: 67%

In contrast to the above statements concerning violence and relationships, there is less consensus on the topic of girls’ presence in public spaces, and this is even more pronounced when focusing upon region.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements ...

- Girls should not travel on public transport without a male family member or male friend travelling with them
  - Agree: 54%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 14%
  - Disagree: 31%

- Girls should not be seen in public places after dark
  - Agree: 66%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 11%
  - Disagree: 22%

Base: All respondents in Pakistan (1,018)
Just over half of adolescent girls (54%) agree that girls should not travel on public transport without a male family member or male friend travelling with them – a much higher proportion than any of the other countries surveyed. Interestingly, this climbs to over nine in ten (91%) of adolescent girls in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region. Levels of disagreement are highest in Baluchistan (47% versus 31% overall).

A further two-thirds of adolescent girls (66%) agree that girls should not be seen in public places after dark, with just over one in five (22%) disagreeing. Agreement levels are highest in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh regions (85% and 74% respectively).

### 6.6.2 Suggestions to help protect girls from abuse and violence in their communities

When reviewing the coded list of suggestions, adolescent girls in Pakistan place a clear emphasis on the need for girls to have direct access to support and information, as well as the confidence to report abuse or violence to authorities – consistent with responses across the three other countries surveyed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The following list includes some suggestions that could help protect girls from abuse or violence in the area where you live. Which three suggestions do you think would be the most helpful?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls having someone they trust who they can talk to if they experience any abuse or violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls having better access to information and training to protect themselves from violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls feeling able to report violence or abuse to community leaders, local authorities or police without being afraid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families and communities valuing girls the same as boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governments and the police acting to tackle problems with alcohol or drug use in the local area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tougher penalties for boys or men who abuse or are violent towards girls or women, such as longer prison sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with boys and men to educate them about the harmful effects of violence and abuse towards girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls having safe places and groups where girls and women can share information and experiences related to violence and abuse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Half of adolescent girls (51%) mention the need for girls to have someone they trust who they can talk to, and a similar proportion (46%) believe that girls require improved access to information and training. They also feel that girls should be able to report incidents on violence or abuse to community leaders, local authorities or police without fear (41%).

Adolescent girls are also likely to call for families and communities to value girls as highly as their male counterparts. This was mentioned by one in four (39%).

By sub-group, adolescent girls in urban areas and those with nine or more years of schooling are more likely to call for improved access to information and training.
(55% and 52% respectively), whereas those in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab regions are more likely to cite the need for the government and police to tackle problems with alcohol and drugs in the local area (44% and 42%).

6.6.3 Recommendations in relation to violence and abuse

When placed in a position of authority, adolescent girls would be most likely to develop a programme of education to teach girls self-defence and the ability to fight back if faced with violence or abuse (mentioned by 19%). That said, and in contrast to previous verbatim recommendations, a similar number of adolescent girls (18%) would advocate the creation of a new law which imposes stronger sentences and harsher punishments on offenders. Other notable mentions include the need to educate girls and improve their self-esteem and confidence (15%), make improvements to the safety and security of the local community (12%), encourage the local community to join together to take action (10%), and teach young boys to respect girls and discourage harassment (8%).

By sub-group, those with nine or more years of schooling and those in the Punjab region are more likely to advocate the need for self-defence education (25% and 24% respectively). In addition, those with children are more likely to advocate stronger sentences and punishments for offenders (28%).

“I would establish an organisation for women to give them training so they can protect themselves from boys.”

“I would give them martial arts training so that they can protect themselves and no one can hurt them.”

“The government should strictly punish those men who misbehave with girls so they never ever think about this.”

“I would give them education about self-esteem and also tell their parents to make their daughters confident so that they can make those boys speechless.”

“People of the area should arrange a security system. And responsible women should be the head of such organisations.”

“I would tell the senior citizens and people in the Jirga to protect girls and solve their problems.”
When asked who should be responsible for improving the situation for girls in the areas where they live, six in ten adolescent girls (61%) believe that this role should be taken on by ‘girls themselves’ – with adolescent girls who are in education or have received nine or more years of schooling more likely to cite this group (64% and 66% respectively). This also ties in with adolescent girls’ perception that it is their responsibility to protect themselves from violence. Immediate family should also play a key role, with mothers and fathers cited by 54% and 46% respectively.

Adolescent girls place less emphasis on the role of agencies such as the government (19%), community-based organisations for women (19%), schools (18%) and religious and community leaders (14%). Echoing results from the other countries, boys and wider family members are the least likely to be cited.
### 6.7 Girls then, now and in the future

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Girls are becoming more valued as equal members of my community”</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have more opportunities in life than my mother did at my age”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents in Pakistan (1,018)

Perhaps the most encouraging results for Pakistan are those relating to adolescent girls’ assessment of the present and future in relation to equality and opportunities. The vast majority (82%) agree that girls are becoming more valued as equal members of their community, versus just 5% who disagree (the highest agreement figure across all four countries). Sub-groups who are typically more likely to agree here include those who are currently in education (87%), unmarried adolescent girls (83%) and those in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region (93%).

A similar proportion (80%) believe that they have more opportunities in life than their mother did at their age, with just 4% disagreeing. This is significantly higher for those in education (83%) and those with nine or more years of schooling (84%).
7 ZIMBABWE

Key findings

- Girls express mixed views regarding degrees of independence in relation to decision making and financial control. This is also the case when questioned on life opportunities and comparisons with their male counterparts. Whilst the vast majority believe that girls are ‘always’ or ‘often’ encouraged by their parents to succeed at school just as much as boys, only a third believe that girls are ‘always’ or ‘often’ given as many opportunities as boys to get on in life.

- By region, girls in the Harare region are much more likely to express feeling of inequality, both in terms of their everyday life, and within relationships with husband or partners.

- The provision of information on avoiding pregnancy and access to contraception appears to be markedly low in Zimbabwe in comparison to the other countries surveyed – four in ten adolescent girls report that they do not have enough information to avoid getting pregnant, or access to ways to avoid unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

- When examining attitudes to early pregnancy and education, there is a clear divide between pre and post birth. Three-quarters of adolescent girls disagree that girls can continue to go to school whilst pregnant, but the majority agree that they can return following childbirth.

- Levels of equality in relationships are perceived to be low – almost half (45%) disagree that girls have an equal say in their relationship with their husbands or partners and one-third of girls disagree that husbands or boyfriends are willing to use condoms.

- Girls believe that there is an increased need to teach girls to abstain from sex at a young age, and to discuss issues surrounding contraception and sexual health, to help prevent early pregnancy.

- Girls tend to disagree with the perceived benefits of early marriage and agree with the perceived negative consequences. Eighty-one per cent, the highest in the four countries, believe that girls who marry as teenagers are more likely to experience violence in their homes.

- Suggestions to help girls in relation to early marriage tend to focus on empowering girls, keeping them in education and enabling them to have improved levels of autonomy and confidence.
• Girls are more likely to believe that violence and abuse from teachers is unacceptable, although nearly one in four (23%) believe that it is acceptable for teachers to inflict strong physical punishment on girls in certain situations.
• Girls tend to believe that girls their age are safe when travelling to school, using latrines or toilets and when travelling on public transport. In marked contrast, the vast majority believe that girls should not be seen in public places after dark.
• Girls in Zimbabwe believe that girls themselves and their mothers should be responsible for improving the lives of girls. However, they also place an emphasis on community-based organisations.

7.1 Profile of respondents

In Zimbabwe, 1,200 adolescent girls aged between 15 and 19 were interviewed, with 240 interviews per age group. The interviews were conducted in the urban and rural areas of each province.

Around three in five adolescent girls (63%) are currently in school, college or university, although the majority (94%) have been to school at some point. Around four in five adolescent girls (81%) have completed nine or more years of school. Three in ten (30%) are not in education, employment or training. A small minority (6%) are in paid work.

Just over one in ten (11%) adolescent girls are married and slightly more (16%) are currently living with their husband or someone else in a household as a couple. Almost all girls (95%) who live with their husband or partner say that their partner contributes towards daily household costs. The majority of adolescent girls (89%) do not have any children. Almost one in ten (9%) have one child and a small minority (1%) have two children.
7.2 Young women’s priorities

7.2.1 Making decisions about their own lives

Focusing on financial decisions, just under half of adolescent girls (47%) believe that girls are ‘often’ or ‘always’ able to decide what to spend their money on, with a quarter (24%) believing that this is ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ the case. There are differences by age, with those aged 18-19 more likely to say that this is ‘often’ or ‘always’ the case (59%).

Moving on to the wider context, a smaller proportion of adolescent girls (34%) feel that girls can make decisions about their own lives, with just over a quarter (27%) believing that this is ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ the case. Once again, there are differences by age, with 43% of those aged 18-19 believing that this is ‘always’ or ‘often’ the case (versus 28% of those aged 15-17).

By region, adolescent girls in the Harare region are more likely to feel that girls can ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ make decisions regarding their finances (30% versus 24% overall) and their lives (41% versus 27% overall).
Focusing on life opportunities and comparisons with their male counterparts, the vast majority of adolescent girls (86%) report that girls are ‘always’ or ‘often’ encouraged by their parents to succeed at school just as much as boys – the highest level across all countries. At the other end of the scale, 5% believe that this is ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ the case.

In contrast, however, a much smaller proportion of adolescent girls (32%) believe that girls are ‘always’ or ‘often’ given as many opportunities as boys to get on in life, indicating that encouragement by parents does not necessarily translate into equal opportunities outside of school. Although there are no significant differences by age, those who are living with their husband or partner are significantly more likely to believe that this is ‘always’ or ‘often’ the case (44%). By region, those in Masivndo are also more likely to believe this (43%) versus a much lower proportion in Midlands, Bulawayo and Harare.

Opinions are mixed in relation to internet access. Whilst almost four in ten adolescent girls (38%) feel that girls are ‘always’ or ‘often’ given as much opportunity as boys to use the internet and social media, a similar proportion (33%) believe that this is ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ the case. By sub-group, older girls and those based in urban areas are more likely to report that this is ‘always’ or ‘often’ the case (44% and 45% respectively).

Less encouraging is the finding that six in ten adolescent girls (60%) feel that girls their age ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ share the housework equally with their brothers or boys, rising to 68% in Harare. These results highlight a disconnect in the perceived notion of girls being encouraged as much as boys to succeed in school and the reality of the gendered roles and responsibilities in the household which result in girls spending considerably more time on housework compared to their brothers or other boys.

It is interesting to note that girls in Harare are less likely to believe they have as
much opportunity to get on in life as boys and report higher incidences of brothers seldom or never helping them out with household chores, clearly demonstrating a sense of gender inequality. On the other hand, girls from the city of Harare reported increased access to contraception and use of internet and social media in comparison to other sub-groups.

Reflecting on girls’ status in the community, around a third of adolescent girls (36%) believe that girls’ concerns ‘always’ or ‘often’ matter in their community, with a quarter (25%) believing that this is ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ the case. Girls are also pessimistic regarding their peers’ ability to have their voices heard. Only a quarter (25%) believe that girls ‘always’ or ‘often’ feel confident to speak up and be heard when in the presence of boys and men, although this proportion is higher for those aged 18-19 (30%).
7.3 Making decisions about pregnancy and sexual relationships

7.3.1 Attitudinal statements relating to pregnancy and relationships

In your opinion, do you agree or disagree with the following statements about pregnancy and relationships?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls have someone to talk with about their bodies and sexual health</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls have enough information about how to avoid getting pregnant</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls have access to contraceptives to avoid unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents in Zimbabwe (1,200)

Adolescent girls in Zimbabwe tend to believe that girls their age have someone to talk with about their bodies and sexual health, with six in ten (59%) agreeing with this statement, although a significant minority (23%) disagree. Overall, these figures are largely consistent with the other three countries.

The provision of information on avoiding pregnancy generates more mixed opinions, with the same proportion (41%) agreeing and disagreeing that girls have sufficient information. This disagreement figure is the highest across all four countries. By sub-group, older girls are more likely to agree (47% versus 36% of 15 to 17-year-olds). In turn, this translates to higher agreement rates amongst those with nine or more years of schooling (43%) and those who are married (51%).

Access to contraception also appears to be an issue, with four in ten girls disagreeing that access is sufficient. This is the highest disagreement level across all four countries. By sub-group, older girls aged 18-19, those in urban areas and those in the Harare region are more likely to agree (40-42%).

Findings from the ‘Hear Our Voices’ research\(^1\) indicated that up to 65% of the girls that Plan Zimbabwe spoke to reported they ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ make the

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decisions around pregnancy. Furthermore, girls’ perception of their own power to negotiate sex or decide over pregnancy appeared quite low, along with their knowledge of sexual and reproductive health and contraceptive practices. Girls named sexual abstinence before marriage as a way to prevent pregnancy, but did not comment on how widely this method may or, more realistically, may not be practised.

It is also worth noting that although girls report they have someone to talk to about their sexual health, the overriding messaging from schools, churches, mothers and aunts is one that reflects the cultural and social norms of promoting the importance of abstinence and “not playing with boys”. The onus is placed on girls to be vigilant and protect themselves from pregnancy. This is evident from the verbatim responses of the girls when they were asked what would better protect girls their age from getting pregnant:

“Advise them not to always interact with boys and not to put on very short dresses that attract men.”

“Teach girls in schools and colleges to abstain. Teach them to respect their body as it is the temple of the Lord.”

Responses also highlighted the importance of discouraging relations between girls and boys, in particular with older men, with girls saying that they should not be swayed or encouraged to have sex with men for food, money or gifts.

When examining attitudes to early pregnancy and education, there is a clear distinction between pre and post birth. Three quarters (74%) of girls do not believe they can go to school while pregnant, with fewer than one in five (18%) girls agreeing that girls can go to school while pregnant. The vast majority (82%) believe

When examining attitudes to early pregnancy and education, there is a clear distinction between pre and post birth. Three quarters (74%) of girls do not believe they can go to school while pregnant, with fewer than one in five (18%) girls agreeing that girls can go to school while pregnant. The vast majority (82%) believe
that girls can return to school after having a baby, with just 9% disagreeing with this statement.

In contrast, findings from the ‘Hear Our Voices’ research in Zimbabwe found that up to 57% of girls and 53% of boys that Plan spoke to claimed that girls ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ stay in school after they have a baby.

Focusing on relationships, over four in ten adolescent girls (42%) believe that girls often feel pressured to take part in sexual activities with their boyfriends or husbands. This represents the highest agreement levels across all four countries. By sub-group, those based in urban areas are more likely to agree (46%), although those living with a husband or partner are more likely to disagree with this statement (43% versus 34% overall). Levels of equality in relationships appear to be low in Zimbabwe. One-third of girls, 33%, disagree with the statement that husbands or boyfriends are willing to use condoms. By sub-group, those living in the Midlands region and who are living with a husband or partner are more likely to agree (59% and 50% respectively), whereas those living in the Manicaland region are more likely to disagree (46%).

When asked directly about levels of equality, almost half (45%) of adolescent girls disagree that girls have an equal say in their relationships with their boyfriends and husbands – the highest level across all countries surveyed. This rises to 51% of those in urban regions and 55% for those based in the Harare region. Just over a quarter of adolescent girls (29%) agree with this statement. Those aged 18-19 are more likely to agree with this statement (37%), as are those who have children (40%).

Findings appear to be more positive when focusing on transactional sex. Over three-quarters of adolescent women (77%) disagree that girls are encouraged to accept gifts or money in exchange for sex with boys, rising to 85% for those in the Harare region. However, the situation is perhaps not as clear cut as these figures
suggest; when girls were asked what would most help them so they are better protected against pregnancy, the open responses had a considerable number of references to the importance of girls not being influenced by men to have sex in exchange for money or gifts and teaching girls to say no to these advances.

7.3.2 Suggestions to help girls who get pregnant at a young age

The following list includes some suggestions that could help girls who get pregnant at a young age. Which three suggestions do you think would be the most helpful?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>% Selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alternative educational opportunities to complete secondary education</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive attitudes of families and communities towards young girls who get pregnant</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls with babies or young children being allowed to return to school</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to government money for child support</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better access to affordable healthcare services for young mothers</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare services at school, such as nurseries</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys/fathers helping girls with childcare and domestic chores</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If an adolescent girl becomes pregnant at a young age, the majority of girls (64%) believe that alternative educational opportunities should be provided to allow them to complete their secondary education. This validates the earlier findings that girls feel they cannot continue their education while pregnant. On the other hand, and even though 82% of girls had said in response to an earlier question that they believe they can return to school after giving birth, the third most prioritised helpful solution (54%) above identifies girls being allowed to return to school after giving birth. This indicates a disconnect between what girls believe they can do after they give birth and what actually happens. Similar proportions (57% and 54%) believe that supportive attitudes from families and the community are key, as well as girls with children being allowed to return to school.

Overall, girls place less emphasis on childcare services within schools (21%), and boys and fathers helping with childcare and domestic chores (16%). It is worth noting that the perceived importance of boys and fathers helping with childcare was significantly lower in Zimbabwe compared to the other countries. In Pakistan, for example, almost half of the girls thought this would be a helpful suggestion in improving the situation.

By sub-group, those based in urban areas and the Midlands region are more likely to advocate the need for alternative education opportunities (66% and 76% respectively).
7.3.3 Recommendations in relation to early pregnancy

If placed in a position of authority, adolescent girls in Zimbabwe would focus on education as a means to improve the situation for girls so that they are better protected from falling pregnant at a young age. From this, two key educational themes emerged.

By far the most common suggestion is education to teach girls to abstain from sex at a young age and/or before marriage. Almost two-thirds (62%) made this suggestion, rising to 66% of those based in rural areas. Around half of adolescent girls (47%) believe that some form of education should focus on the topics of sexual health and contraception. This is particularly pertinent for older girls aged 18-19 (52%), those who are married (65%) and those living with a husband or partner (62%).

Other notable mentions relating to education include:

- Teaching girls to wait until they are more mature and have met the ‘right’ person (16%);
- Educating them more widely on relationships and to not feel pressured to have sex early (12%);
- Encouraging them to complete their education and prioritise it over relationships (11%);
- Teaching them to not get pregnant at a young age (10%).

Most other suggestions were mentioned by a small minority, including the need for more access to contraception and access to counselling (both 3%).

“I would do outreach campaigns, especially in remote areas and to teach them about abstinence.”

“I would teach girls to value their virginity and wait until they start to indulge in sex.”

“I would encourage girls at schools to abstain and speak to older people who are more mature and experienced about sex and pregnancy.”

“I would teach young girls to abstain or use protection, especially condoms, whenever they have sex.”

“I would empower young girls to have an attitude that resists peer pressure.”

“I would advise them to abstain from sex. I would encourage them to be in the company of good friends, as most teenagers are victims of peer pressure.”
7.4 Early marriage

7.4.1 Attitudinal statements in relation to early marriage

Almost half of adolescent women in Zimbabwe (47%) disagree that girls face social or family pressure to marry at a young age, although a significant minority (37%) agree with this statement – rising to over half (51%) in the Bulawayo region.

Focusing on statements relating to the perceived advantages of early marriage, the vast majority of adolescent girls disagree with each of these. Nine in ten (90%) disagree that it is beneficial for girls to marry before they are 18 years old, with disagreement levels higher among those based in urban regions (93%) and Bulawayo (95%). A slightly lower proportion, but still the vast majority (88%) also disagree that marrying girls at a young age can help protect the honour or reputation of her family. Once again, only a small minority agree (4%), although this is higher for those girls who are married (12%).

On the topic of finances, eight in ten girls (81%) disagree that getting married can help reduce a family’s financial burden, with just 9% in agreement (and 15% for those who are married).
Overall, there are strong levels of agreement in relation to the perceived disadvantages of early marriage. The vast majority of girls (81%) believe that girls who marry as teenagers are more likely to experience violence in their homes; this is the highest reported incidence across all four countries. A slightly smaller proportion (76%) agree that girls who marry before the age of 18 are less likely to complete their education. As with previous statements, girls based in urban areas are more likely to express views that oppose early marriage – with significantly higher disagreement levels for each of these statements (86% and 80% respectively).

The findings of this study indicate that Plan and other NGOs need to focus on married girls as a key population – they are often largely neglected in children’s rights groups and wider women’s rights groups.
7.4.2 Suggestions to help girls in relation to getting married at a young age

The following list contains some suggestions that could help girls in relation to getting married at a young age. Which three suggestions do you think would be the most helpful?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestions</th>
<th>% Selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls being able to decide for themselves when and who they marry</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls having more confidence to raise issues and concerns with their family or in the community</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls having better access to quality secondary education</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better national laws to prevent child marriage</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families and communities valuing girls' education more</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls having access to paid and dignified work opportunities</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media campaigns that oppose child marriage</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community leaders publicly condemning child marriage</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing the issue of early marriage with men and boys</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Suggestions to help girls in relation to early marriage tend to focus on empowering girls and enabling them to have improved levels of autonomy and confidence when making decisions regarding their relationships. Almost half (47%) feel that girls should be able to decide for themselves who and when they marry. This was the most popular suggestion in Zimbabwe and Nicaragua, with much less emphasis placed on this in Ecuador and Pakistan. A further 42% believe that girls need to be encouraged to have the confidence to raise issues and concerns with members of their family and the community. These two statements generated a significantly higher number of mentions for those in urban areas (54% and 45% respectively).

Improved laws to prevent early marriage were also cited by around a third (36%) of girls, although less emphasis is placed upon community leaders (21%) and greater communication with men and boys regarding early marriage (19%).

7.4.3 Recommendations in relation to early marriage

Verbatim responses in relation to the prevention of early marriage tend to focus upon education as a means to empower and inform adolescent girls. If in a position of authority, a third of girls (32%) would focus on the need for girls to be encouraged to complete their education and to think more about their future. Similarly, another key priority for 15% of girls would be to educate girls (through awareness raising and campaigns) on the risks and consequences of early marriage. Other mentions relating to education include:
• The need to teach girls about boys and relationships in general (11%);
• Encouraging them to wait until they are more mature before making a commitment (11%);
• Educating parents on the need for girls to complete their education (6%).

A smaller but notable number of girls discussed the need for new laws to prosecute or punish men who marry young girls (9%) and the need to provide access to career and job opportunities on an equal footing with boys (8%).

“\textit{I would tell girls to refuse any advances or proposals for marriage before they finish their education.}”

“I would encourage them to concentrate on their education and only start thinking of marriage after the age of 18.”

“I would hold campaigns that teach young girls about the disadvantages or risks associated with early marriage, such as death during childbirth, and about the risks of contracting diseases like HIV/AIDS.”

“Put a law that states that marrying a young girl is a crime. Educating parents further about the importance of finishing school.”

“Religious and community leaders should condemn child marriages. Educate the community to value a girl’s education.”

7.5 Feeling safe in school and the community

• In 2012, Zimbabwe spent less than 2% of its GNP on education.\footnote{2} Sixty-three per cent of women over the age of 15 are literate.\footnote{3}
• Between 2000 and 2007, Zimbabwe registered an increase of at least 10 percentage points in the proportion of students who either had no textbook or had to share with at least two other pupils.\footnote{4}

\footnotesize{\begin{footnotes}
\item Education For All Global Monitoring Report 2015, UNESCO
\item Education For All Global Monitoring Report 2015, UNESCO
\item Education For All Global Monitoring Report 2015, UNESCO
\item Education For All Global Monitoring Report 2015, UNESCO
\end{footnotes}
7.5.1 Attitudinal statements in relation to safety at school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
<th>% Neither</th>
<th>% Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is acceptable for teachers to give strong physical punishment to girls in certain situations</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is acceptable for teachers to call girls hurtful names or shout at them</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In certain situations it is acceptable for a teacher to ask a girl for sexual favours in exchange for grades or other school benefits</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is a girl's fault if a male student or teacher sexually harasses her.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the topic of teacher-pupil relations, a notable minority of adolescent girls in Zimbabwe (23%) agree that it is acceptable for teachers to inflict strong physical punishment on girls in certain situations – the highest levels of agreement across all four countries surveyed. This reflects an acceptance of corporal punishment and the extent to which violence is normalised. The agreement level is even higher in the Midlands region (30%). In contrast, only 4% of girls agree that it is acceptable for teachers to call girls hurtful names or shout at them.

Attitudes towards sexual relations between teachers and pupils were also explored as part of the interview. A large majority of girls (92%) disagree that in certain situations it is acceptable for a teacher to ask a girl for sexual favours in exchange for grades and other benefits. By sub-group, this rises to virtually all girls (99%) in Bulawayo.

A slightly smaller but still sizable majority of around three in four girls (78%) disagree that it is a girl’s fault if a male student or teacher sexually harasses her. Once again, disagreement levels are highest in Bulawayo (94%).
Focusing on safety at school, and in clear contrast to the other three countries, seven in ten adolescent girls (70%) agree that girls ‘always’ feel safe using toilets or latrines in school. In comparison, agreement levels for Ecuador, Nicaragua and Pakistan ranged from 13-25%. There is less consensus regarding the issue of safety on the way to school, although six in ten girls (59%) are still in agreement (compared to 16-26% of girls in the other countries). Girls in Masivndo have fewer concerns regarding safety, with agreement figures significantly higher for the two statements (87% and 71% respectively).

In terms of reporting, around two-thirds of girls (68%) agree that if girls witness abuse, or are abused, then there is someone they can report it to in confidence. By region, those in Harare are more likely to agree (76%), whilst those in Bulawayo are more likely to disagree (26% versus 15% overall).
7.5.2 Suggestions to help protect girls from abuse or violence in their schools

The following list includes some suggestions of things that could help protect girls from abuse or violence at school. Which three suggestions do you think would be the most helpful?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>% Selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools having clear and strong rules that harassment, violence and abuse are not acceptable at school</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools having a clear and easy to use complaints process, so that girls can report situations of violence in a safe and confidential way</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools having rules for teachers, which do not allow relationships with students and exchanging sex for grades</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police or security services taking action when cases of violence or abuse at school are reported to them</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The government having a national action plan to end violence and abuse in school</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvements to make the school more secure, such as protective fencing and security gates</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having separate toilets or latrines for girls only that are safe and clean</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools recruiting more female teachers</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When reviewing the coded suggestions, adolescent girls in Zimbabwe place a clear emphasis on the role and responsibility of the school to help protect girls from abuse or violence within its environment. Well over half of girls (56%) believe that schools should have clear and strong rules on harassment to convey the message that abuse and violence are unacceptable. This should also be backed up by a clear and easy-to-use complaints process, so that girls can report incidents confidentially (cited by 51% of girls). Additional rules should also be in place, with 48% of girls calling for additional rules within schools which do not permit teacher-pupil relationships.

Girls in Zimbabwe also believe that central agencies such as the government and police should intervene to protect girls. A total of 45% believe that police or security services need to take action when incidents are reported to them. A similar number (44%) feel that the government should introduce a national action plan to end violence and abuse in schools.
7.6 Feeling safe in relationships and the community

7.6.1 Attitudinal statements in relation to girls feeling safe in the community

- According to the Violence against Children Survey, 64% of women aged 18-24 reported incidences of physical violence prior to the age of 18.5
- In a DHS survey, girls who reported experience of violence from the age of 15 were asked to identify perpetrators – in Zimbabwe, husbands or partners were the most commonly cited.6

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**Do you agree or disagree with the following statements ...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is sometimes acceptable for a boy to hit or use violence against his girlfriend.</td>
<td>5 2</td>
<td>93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women should put up with violence from their husband in order to keep their family together</td>
<td>10 5</td>
<td>84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a girl or woman is raped, it is better for her to not tell anyone</td>
<td>4 3</td>
<td>94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents in Zimbabwe (1,200)

Adolescent girls in Zimbabwe reject the notion that it is acceptable for a boy to hit or use violence against his girlfriend. Over nine in ten (93%) disagree with this statement, with just 5% in agreement (which is an interesting contrast to the 23% of girls who agree that it is acceptable for teachers to inflict strong physical punishment on girls in certain situations). Disagreement levels are slightly lower for the assertion that women should put up with violence from their husbands in order to keep the family together. Here, over eight in ten (84%) disagree, with a larger minority (10%) agreeing. Interestingly, younger girls aged 15-17 are more likely to agree (13%), with a higher proportion of those aged 18-19 disagreeing with this statement (88%).

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On the subject of rape, the vast majority (94%) disagree that if a woman is raped then it is better for her not to tell anyone. This is significantly higher for those in rural areas (96%) and those in Bulawayo (99%). These results should be considered in connection with the finding that 49% of adolescent girls identified ‘having someone to talk to and report abuse’ as a key solution to help protect girls from violence and abuse. While their beliefs indicate that if a woman is raped she should tell someone, there is a clear acknowledgement that adolescent girls feel they do not have someone to talk to about abuse or access to appropriate mechanisms to report abuse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls should not travel on public transport without a male family member or male friend travelling with them</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls should not be seen in public places after dark</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focusing on girls’ presence in public spaces, a stark contrast appears. Fewer than one in five girls (16%) agree that girls should not travel on public transport without a male family member or friend, rising to a quarter of girls (25%) in the Harare region. Conversely, 70% of girls disagree with this statement, with levels slightly higher for those in urban regions (73%).

In contrast to this is the finding that the vast majority (85%) agree that girls should not be seen in public places after dark, with agreement levels significantly higher in the Manicaland province (94%). This may relate more to general safety concerns as opposed to notions of equality, so further research on this issue would be valuable – for example, asking the question in relation to young males.
7.6.2 Suggestions to help protect girls from abuse or violence in their communities

Upon reviewing the coded list of suggestions, girls in Zimbabwe tended to focus their responses on three key actions. Around half of girls (49%) believe that girls need to have someone to confide in should they experience violence or abuse. This belief is even more marked in urban areas (57%). Similarly, just under half (44%) believe that girls need to feel reassured that they can report abuse or violence to agencies such as the police, local authorities or community leaders without feeling afraid.

Another key suggestion relates directly to legislative changes, with 48% of girls believing that stricter penalties, such as longer custodial sentences, should be imposed on men and boys in relation to abuse or violence convictions. This is in contrast to Pakistan, where it is much less of a priority.

The results above indicate the extent to which young women feel particularly silenced when dealing with instances or experiences of gender-based violence, both in terms of being able to talk to someone they trust and reporting cases of violence to the authorities. This paints a bleak picture of a context in which girls overwhelmingly feel they cannot be seen outside after dark, and are highly likely to experience violence in the home if they marry young, yet are clear there are no reliable and confidential systems in place, on a formal or informal level, that will support them. This support for adolescent girls, setting up secure reporting systems and safe spaces, should be made a priority.

“Create a women’s club where women and girls have the freedom to express their views, report cases of abuse and violence and have police act on it with the outmost importance.”
Less emphasis is placed on the education of males and wider cultural changes. Just over a quarter of girls (27%) cite the need for greater education of boys and men to make them aware of the harmful effects of violence and abuse towards girls. A further one in five (20%) believe that progress can be made by families and communities valuing girls and boys equally.

7.6.3 Recommendations in relation to violence and abuse

Girls’ verbatim recommendations for improving girls’ safety in the areas they live tend to focus on the education of girls, combined with new legislation. If they were in a position of authority, a quarter (24%) would focus on the need to boost reporting rates by empowering girls to feel confident in reporting attacks to the police or authorities.

Legislation changes were cited by around one in five girls (19%). As previously noted, girls would advocate longer custodial sentences and “stronger punishments” for offenders.

Interestingly, girls in Zimbabwe also place an emphasis on girls taking direct preventative action to protect themselves. Just under a fifth of girls (18%) would advocate a programme of education to teach girls not to go out alone at night. Similarly, just over one in ten (12%) would advise girls to dress appropriately and cover themselves to avoid unwanted attention. Lastly, a further one in ten (11%) would establish self-defence programmes to enable girls to defend themselves and fight back against any attackers.

Other suggestions include educating the wider community in the form of an awareness campaign on the issue of abuse and violence (9%), improving the safety and security of the local areas through greater police visibility (7%) and providing safe spaces where girls can go for information, advice and support (6%).

“I would educate my peers on their rights and encourage them to report any form of abuse to the police.”

“I would make sure they have more police officers to tackle drug and alcohol abuse in the area.”

“I would create laws and legislation against violence and abuse.”

“I would advise girls to avoid going out alone at night or near beer halls.”

“I would teach girls to dress properly, decently, not to wear revealing clothes and not to go to bushy areas alone.”

“I’d train girls to protect themselves, for example by teaching them karate.”
When asked who should be responsible for improving the situation for girls, over half of girls (53%) cited mothers and female care-givers. A similar number (49%) believe that this responsibility should fall to girls themselves. Girls in Zimbabwe are also more likely to cite wider agencies, such as community-based organisations for women and girls (43%), compared to the other countries surveyed.

In contrast, less emphasis is placed on the role and responsibilities of fathers and male care-givers (7%) and boys (2%). This perhaps is a realistic insight into how far gender equality needs to advance in this context; socially assigned gender roles and responsibilities are not called into question overall, and the notion that boys and men have a part to play in improving the situation for girls is perhaps unclear and inconceivable.
7.7 Girls then, now and in the future

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements ...

“Girls are becoming more valued as equal members of my community”

Agree 61%
Disagree 25%

“I have more opportunities in life than my mother did at my age”

Agree 84%
Disagree 12%

Although six in ten girls (61%) agree that girls are becoming more valued as equal members of their local community, a quarter (25%) disagree with this statement, which is a higher proportion in comparison to the other three countries. The proportion who agree is higher for those based in the Manicaland region (79%), as well as those who are currently in education (65%) or girls who have received nine or more years of schooling (63%).

More encouraging is the finding that the vast majority of adolescent girls in Zimbabwe agree that they have more opportunities than their mother did at their age, with around one in ten disagreeing (12%). Once again, agreement levels are highest among those in education (84%) and girls with nine or more years of schooling (86%). In contrast, those who are not in education, employment or training are more likely to disagree (19%).
8 Conclusions

The overall aim of the study was to consult with adolescent girls to explore their own priorities and attitudes, recommendations for change to improve their lives, and who they believe should be responsible for implementing changes. These findings have been outlined and analysed throughout the report and can be grouped into key gender themes and issues that are summarised below.

8.1 Early married life

A recurring theme in Ecuador was the amplified inequality perceived by married girls. They are more likely than those who are unmarried to say that girls are ‘never’ given as many opportunities to get on in life, to agree that girls face social or family pressure to marry at a young age and to report that girls ‘never’ feel confident to speak up in front of males.

Focusing on relationships, they are also more likely to agree that girls their age often feel pressured to take part in sexual activities with their boyfriends or husbands and that boys and husbands ‘never’ share housework equally.

Such disparities are also clearly evident in Pakistan, where married girls are more likely to believe that girls face lower levels of equality in terms of decision making, financial control and opportunities.

This pattern is repeated throughout the findings on early marriage. Married girls in Pakistan are more likely to agree that girls face social pressure to marry at a young age and to agree with the perceived benefits of early marriage, including the notion that marrying young can help protect the honour of a girl’s family and reduce a family’s financial burden.

There is a slight contrast in Nicaragua, where married girls are more likely to believe that girls have more autonomy in relation to decision making and express more positive perceptions of equality in relationships. However, it is unclear whether this perception relates to reality.

When questioned on the topic of early marriage, the majority of girls in most countries (both married and unmarried) tended to refute the perceived ‘benefits’ in relation to early marriage reducing a family’s financial burden and protecting their honour. Instead, they were more likely to agree that girls who marry at an early age are less likely to complete their education and more likely to experience violence in their homes. In the verbatim answers, girls emphasised the need to talk to their parents about these issues and for the parents to be better educated about the risks of early marriage and the importance of girls’ education. It would appear that under social or economic pressure, parents, many of whom are reported as encouraging their girls to stay in school, will still reach for solutions that impede their daughters’ educational and future prospects.
8.2 Education

Statistical analysis for Pakistan reveals that there is a positive relationship between completing education and increased sense of agency, for example being able to make decisions about their own lives. Findings in Pakistan also suggest that the greater number of years a girl spends in education, the more likely she is to agree with statements relating to equality and empowerment, to agree with the suggested negative consequences of early marriage and pregnancy and to believe that abuse and violence against women (in various guises) is unacceptable.

Across other countries, to a lesser extent than in Pakistan, there is nevertheless some suggestion of a positive relationship between number of years in education and perceptions of equality, awareness of their rights and empowerment, although in some cases this is likely to be linked to age. The study clearly highlights the positive impact that education can have on adolescent girls, and further research on this correlation may therefore be useful.

Across all countries, safety in and on the way to school is a major issue and an area in which girls themselves have many practical suggestions for improvement which need to be listened to and acted upon.

8.3 Responsibilities for change and the role of men and boys

Whilst the majority of girls in each country believe that parents encourage girls to succeed at school just as much as boys, on average just over a third feel that girls are ‘seldom’ or ‘never’ given as many opportunities as boys to get on in life. This is further reinforced by the evidence on distribution of household labour, where the results in all countries clearly indicate that the burden of household chores falls disproportionately on the girls.

Notable throughout the study is the comparative lack of emphasis that adolescent girls place on the responsibilities of men and boys in improving the situation for girls their age. The below chart shows that girls place most emphasis on mothers and female care givers, as well as girls themselves – although emphasis is placed on fathers by girls in Ecuador and Pakistan. This pattern is most clearly evident in Zimbabwe, where fathers and boys are given the lowest ranking (boys just 2%). As well as girls and mothers, the role of the police features highly. Questions relating to safety in school and the community were placed towards the end of the questionnaire and so may have been more ‘top of mind’, and this may be reflected in these responses. Despite the possible effect of this positioning, however, greater responsibility is nevertheless placed on girls and their families, with less emphasis on the role of government, community organisations and religious leaders. Nicaragua is an exception to this, with girls more likely to identify the government, the law and the state as key duty bearers. This finding needs more investigation.

Examining the various solutions and suggestions to help girls in relation to pregnancy, early marriage and safety reveals that the responsibilities of men
and boys are less of a priority in the list of suggestions. Proposals for ‘working with males to educate them about the harmful effects of violence and abuse’, ‘discussing the issue of early marriage with males’ and ‘males helping girls with childcare and chores’ do not feature very highly when considering suggestions for change. However, in Nicaragua and Pakistan the latter statement does have some prominence, with around 50% of girls seeing it as a priority for girls in relation to early pregnancy.

Furthermore, verbatim solutions relating to each theme tend to focus upon information, awareness raising and both the informal and formal education of girls: teaching them about contraception; to abstain from sex at a young age; encouraging them to complete their formal education; and ensuring that girls have better access to information and training to protect them from violence. Mentions of boys and men in relation to these topics account for very few of the verbatim answers. More work could therefore be undertaken to explore and understand girls’ reasoning for this disparity.

### 8.4 Marginalisation

Focus on the split between girls living in urban and rural areas and regions within countries, a clear disparity begins to emerge in Pakistan and Nicaragua with perceptions of equality and empowerment being less positive in certain areas.
Overall, girls in rural areas, for example, are less likely to believe they are given as many opportunities as boys to get on in life, less likely to have equal access to information through the internet and social media, less likely to be encouraged by their parents to succeed just as much as boys in school and less likely to have sufficient information and advice about pregnancy and access to contraception.

Further analysis of the findings in RAAN and RAAS in Nicaragua and Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan would be valuable.

8.5 Role of information and communication

In relation to the need for information and communication, the findings are revealing and quite complex. On one hand, the responses suggest that girls have sufficient awareness and information, for example in relation to how to avoid getting pregnant and contraceptives. On the other, the qualitative responses often call for more education and awareness raising in relation to these two topics. This may be a reflection on the quality and age-appropriateness of the information they are receiving.

Institutional and popular education and awareness raising through campaigns and publicity is a key response that runs through all the verbatim responses in each country. Girls require age-appropriate education which teaches teenagers about contraception methods and how to negotiate condom use with boyfriends and husbands. In terms of early marriage, this need focuses on education, both in and out of school, that asks girls to consider their future and explains the risks and consequences.

In relation to safety, this tends to focus on enabling girls to feel more empowered and report abuse and violence, as well as more preventative measures such as training in self-defence. In some countries, girls assume the responsibility for their own safety by emphasising the need to stay in after dark.

8.6 Freedoms and mobility

Curtailed freedom and mobility for girls is a key finding of the research, with many girls reporting a perceived threat of gender-based violence on the way to school and in public places after dark. The vast majority of girls in Ecuador and Nicaragua disagree that girls always feel safe using toilets or latrines at school; in Ecuador 63% of adolescent girls disagree that girls always feel safe on the way to school. Adolescent girls in Pakistan and Zimbabwe believe that girls should not be seen in public places after dark. It is worth noting here that there is greater ambiguity in Zimbabwe as to whether this relates just to girls’ presence in public spaces, or to security concerns applying to both males and females.

Nevertheless, although girls are most likely to call for greater police protection, they are also likely to advocate measures relating to their own behaviour change and physical protection, for example by advising girls not to go out at night and teaching them self-defence as we have noted above.
8.7 Summary

As with the ‘Hear Our Voices’ report, evidence from this research does show that the social norms that underpin gender inequality are changing for the better, and this is reflected throughout the report findings in terms of girls’ own attitudes and priorities. Girls are more likely to dispute the perceived benefits of early marriage and to agree with the negative consequences that it may bring. Furthermore, girls tend to agree that they are encouraged to succeed by their parents at school just as much as boys, that they are becoming more valued as equal members of their community and that they do have more opportunities than their mothers at their age. Having said this, the study findings do reveal a more complex picture. Girls do appear to be constrained in terms of equality of opportunities, financial control, access to technology and their safety in public spaces. Notable differences are apparent across countries, but perceived levels of equality appear to be lower in Pakistan, with more positive findings emerging from Nicaragua.

In terms of priorities and solutions, girls tend to advocate the need for greater knowledge of the various issues – particularly in relation to early pregnancy and early marriage. They also call for more supportive attitudes from families and the community to help girls who fall pregnant at an early age and believe that this is a two-way process, with girls feeling sufficiently empowered to raise issues and concerns with them in return.

A key priority for girls is also the need for alternative educational opportunities should a girl fall pregnant at an early age, and for girls to have better access to quality secondary education.

In relation to safety, girls are more likely to advocate the need for schools to impose rules and regulations which clearly state that violence and abuse is unacceptable and for them to implement a complaints process. In relation to the wider community, solutions tend to focus more on girls having someone they trust who they can talk to and having the confidence to report violence and abuse.

Overall, it is worth noting that many of the proposed solutions and responsibilities for change tend to fall upon girls themselves, for example educational programmes which are aimed at girls and self-defence and protection measures relating to safety. This issue could benefit from further research and examination.

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8.8 Recommendations

- Emerging from this report is the need for more qualitative research to investigate further some of the evolving trends and to understand more fully the complexities of the various themes discussed above. This should include further analysis of the differences that have emerged in the four countries, despite some common threads.
- Girls’ requests for greater access to information, for safe channels of communication, for greater openness around issues of early marriage, early pregnancy and safety need to be respected and implemented in both public and private forums.
- There should be an increased focus on SRHR education and materials that are age appropriate and culturally sensitive. This should include an emphasis on correct use of contraceptive methods and how to negotiate condom use with partner or husband. SRHR education is particularly urgent for girls living in rural areas, where access to information is limited.
- The gap between legislation and actual practice needs to be tackled in areas where girls may be legally entitled to return to school after giving birth or to attend while pregnant but attitudes within the family and community make it difficult for them to do so.
- Violence against girls, both in school and in the wider community, emerges as a key driver of inequality, and to overcome this girls need support from many different sectors of society, including government, their immediate communities and men and boys. This must include effective legislation, robust systems and safe channels where abuse can be reported in confidence and without threat.
- The burden of household chores continues to have a negative impact on gender equality. Work in the home needs to be measured and valued.
- Despite improvements to girls’ lives and expectations, the factors above will continue to impede gender equality and the solutions involve attitudinal, structural and institutions change in families, communities and policy and legislative change. Programme, advocacy and campaigning work needs to reflect this.
- Girls have suggested that it is their responsibility to bring about change in their lives, but their empowerment needs to be met with changes, at all levels, in the society they live in.
- A greater focus must be placed on the diversity of girls’ experiences and on those girls who are most marginalised, including rural girls, those who marry young, and young mothers, who face more barriers to access education and information and are often exposed to greater familial violence.
- There should be much more emphasis on working with men and boys to promote attitudinal and behavioural change – some girls in the study think it inconceivable that men have a part to play in advancing gender equality and tackling violence against girls.
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Plan International is an independent global child rights development organisation committed to enabling vulnerable and marginalised children (and young people) to be free of the effects of poverty. By actively connecting committed people with powerful ideas, we work together to make positive, deep-rooted and long-lasting changes in children’s and young people’s lives. Plan’s flagship Because I am a Girl Campaign is working to create a world that values girls, promotes their rights and ends injustice. A quality education is crucial to this mission and Because I am a Girl will support four million girls to get the education, skills and support they need to move themselves from poverty to opportunity. Plan International is committed to collecting the evidence to inform their programme, advocacy and campaigning work, enabling them to have a positive effect on the lives of children everywhere.

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