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Understanding Masculine Attitudes and Associations with Intimate Partner Violence Perpetration in Trinidad and Tobago

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Why This Matters

- Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a growing public health and human rights issue that disproportionately affects women globally.^{1,2}
- In Trinidad and Tobago, approximately 44% of ever-partnered women have experienced IPV in their lifetime.³ Reports show over 6,250 cases of domestic violence (March 2020–March 2022) and 972 hotline calls (2023) in recent years, mostly related to male-perpetrated IPV against women.^{4,5}
- Societal norms that reinforce male dominance and rigid gender roles contribute significantly to IPV against women. Attitudes that normalize violence, control over women, and sexual entitlement are key drivers of male-perpetrated IPV globally.⁶
- IPV perpetration against women and girls in Trinidad and Tobago is thought to be driven by these norms as well. Research highlights how constructions of masculinity in the Caribbean, such as those in Trinidad and Tobago, normalize violence and suppress non-violent male identities, perpetuating cycles of abuse and gender inequality.^{7,8}
- While existing research provides a broad understanding of IPV in the Caribbean, there is limited evidence on the specific drivers of male-perpetrated IPV within Trinidad and Tobago's socio-cultural context. This lack of localized research hinders the development of targeted, evidence-based interventions. Addressing this gap is crucial for creating effective policies that promote gender equality, challenge harmful stereotypes, and reduce violence against women.⁹

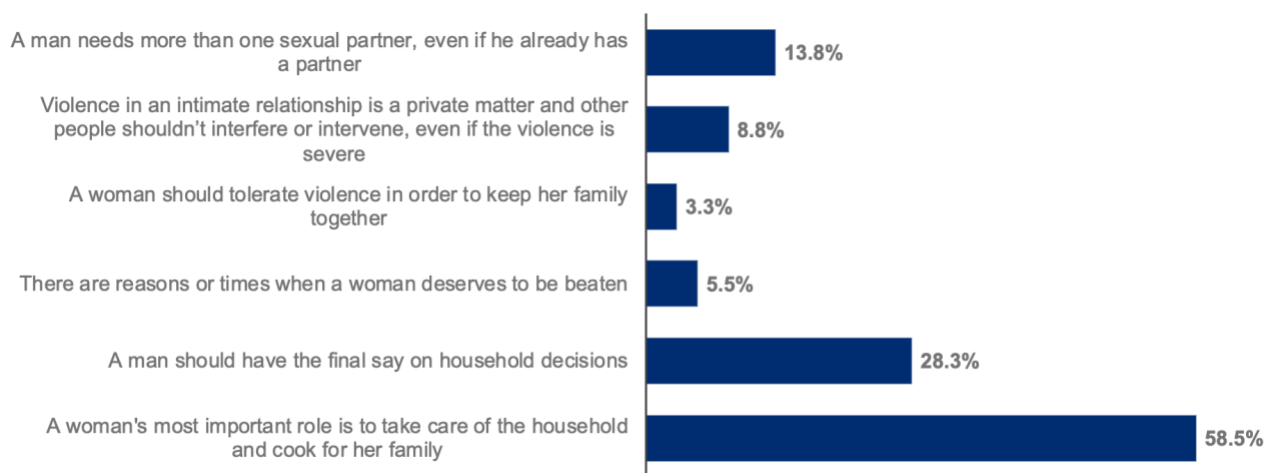
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Key Findings

There is evidence to suggest that ever-partnered men in Trinidad and Tobago hold entrenched attitudes around patriarchal norms within the home and romantic relationships.

- Approximately 59% of men agree with the statement, “a woman’s most important role is to take care of the household and cook for her family.”
- About 28% believe men should have final authority over household decisions.
- More than 5% agree that there are reasons or times when a woman deserves to be beaten.

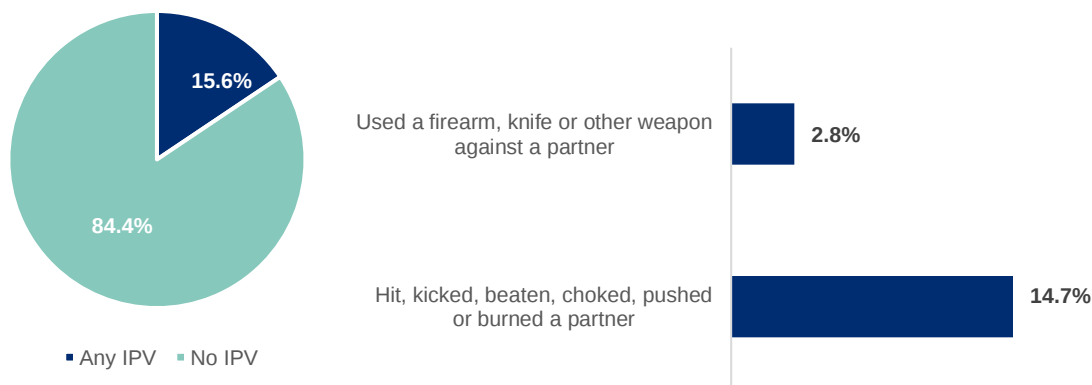
Figure 1: Men’s attitudes towards gender roles, percent agreement (n=545)



Approximately 16% of men reported any lifetime perpetration of IPV.

- Nearly 15% engaged in behaviors like hitting, kicking, or choking a partner, and about 3% have used a weapon, such as a firearm or knife, against a partner.

Figure 2: Lifetime physical IPV perpetration, overall and by item (n=545)



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Men's attitudes supporting traditional gender roles are significantly associated with physical IPV perpetration.

- Men who agree that a woman's role is to take care of the household and men who agree that a man should have the final say on household decisions were more likely to report perpetrating IPV compared to those who disagree, at 19.8% versus 9.7% and 22.1% versus 12.9%, respectively ($p < 0.01$).
- Additionally, men who agree that there are reasons or times when a woman deserves to be beaten and men who agree that a man needs more than one sexual partner, even if he already has a partner, were more likely to report perpetrating IPV compared to those who disagree, at 36.7% versus 14.4% and 29.7% versus 13.5%, respectively ($p < 0.001$).

Table 1: Bivariate analysis of the association between men's attitudes towards gender roles and physical IPV perpetration (n=545)

	Any IPV Perpetration		
	No (n=460)	Yes (n=85)	p-value
	%		
A woman's most important role is to take care of the household and cook for her family			
Agree	80.3	19.8	0.002
Disagree	90.3	9.7	
A man should have the final say on household decisions			
Agree	77.9	22.1	0.008
Disagree	87.1	12.9	
There are reasons or times when a woman deserves to be beaten			
Agree	63.3	36.7	<0.001
Disagree	85.6	14.4	
A woman should tolerate violence in order to keep her family together			
Agree	77.8	22.2	0.433
Disagree	84.6	15.4	
Violence in an intimate relationship is a private matter and other people shouldn't interfere or intervene, even if the violence is severe			
Agree	75.0	25.0	0.061
Disagree	85.3	14.7	
A man needs more than one sexual partner, even if he already has a partner			
Agree	70.3	29.7	<0.001
Disagree	86.5	13.5	
Bolding signifies p<0.05; p-value generated by chi-square test			

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Action Steps

Given these findings, there is a need to:

- **Address traditional gender roles** by launching public education campaigns that promote equitable gender roles, shared decision-making, and balanced domestic responsibilities, and by partnering with community leaders, educators, and local organizations to normalize gender equity.
- **Transform attitudes supporting violence** by developing behavior change programs that highlight the harms of IPV and promote alternative, non-violent ways to resolve conflict.
- **Address harmful masculine norms** by integrating discussions on healthy masculinity into community programs and schools and by engaging male role models to promote respect and equality in relationships.

Methods

Using quantitative research design, an adapted version of The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), conducted by the Caribbean Male Action Network in 2022, was utilized for this study. The IMAGES questionnaire integrates items from established survey tools on topics such as gender, quality of life, childhood exposure to violence (including witnessing gender-based violence), health, sexuality, family dynamics, and fatherhood, while also incorporating new, tailored items. The survey sampled Trinbagonian men ages 18-75 (n=800, 100% response rate). Data were collected between January and April 2022 using the pen-and-paper method. Trained enumerators administered the IMAGES survey in person, providing support to participants if needed, and ensuring that responses were accurately recorded. The pen-and-paper approach enabled face-to-face interaction, which can help clarify any questions participants may have about the survey, reduce non-responses, and foster a greater level of trust and engagement, especially when discussing sensitive topics such as gender roles, violence, and health issues. All collected responses were later digitized for analysis, maintaining data accuracy, and facilitating comprehensive review and comparison.

The analytical sample for this secondary analysis was restricted to ever-partnered men from Trinidad and Tobago (n=545). The majority of men in the sample were aged 35 years or older (58.9%), were single (52.3%), and had a secondary level of education or less (56.4%). Over half identified as African (53.0%), followed by East Indian (20.3%) and other ethnicities (26.5%). Nearly a quarter of the sample (24.0%) had previously been incarcerated.

The analysis systematically explored the prevalence of agreement (versus disagreement or don't know) with various attitudes toward traditional gender roles and violence tolerance among ever-partnered men. Key attitudes examined included beliefs about a woman's role in the household, male authority in decision-making, and the acceptability of violence in relationships to maintain family unity. A composite variable for "any IPV" was created to capture reports of any form of physical violence against a partner by aggregating responses across multiple IPV indicators, including "Have you hit, kicked, beaten, choked, pushed or burned a partner?" and "Have you used a firearm, knife or other

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weapon against a partner?” Chi-squared tests were employed to assess associations between agreement with gendered attitudes and IPV perpetration.

Suggested citation:

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