Evolving Masculinities:

How Do Bangladeshi Men in Canada Navigate the Meaning of Manhood?

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BANGLADESHI TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITIES IN CANADA

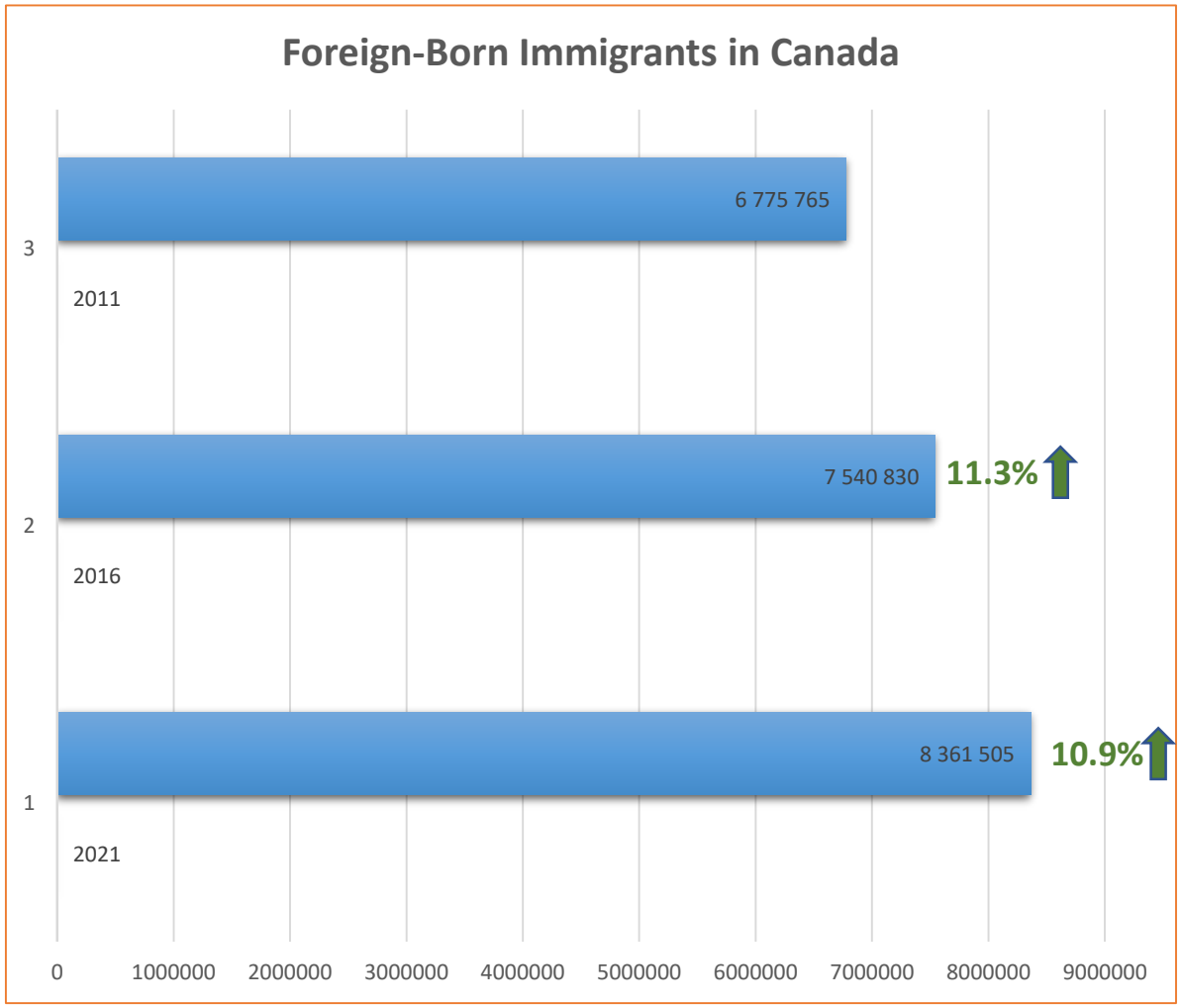
Earliest arrival in Canada in the late 1960s

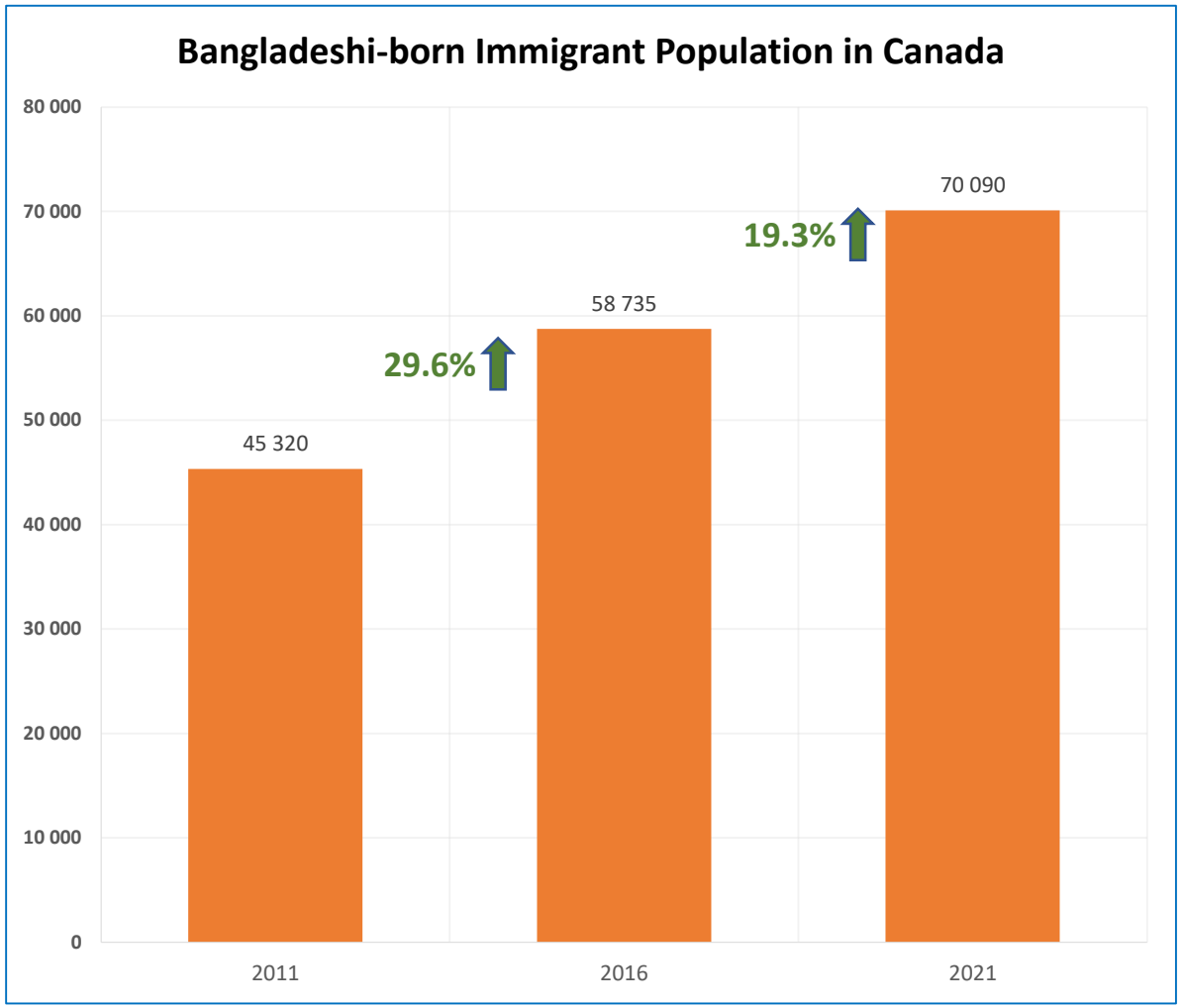
- BD Bengalis from East Bengal (Till 1947) → Bangladeshi Bengalis from East Pakistan (1947-1971) → Bangladeshis (1972 – to date)
- BD No visa was needed till 1983 as members of a commonwealth country

<3% of South Asian migrants in Canada

<1% of total migrants in Canada

IMMIGRATION TRENDS IN CANADA





Source: Canadian population Census of 2011, 2016, and 2021 by Statistics Canada

BANGLADESHI TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITIES IN CANADA

Figure 1: Trend of Bangladeshi Immigrants Entering Canada

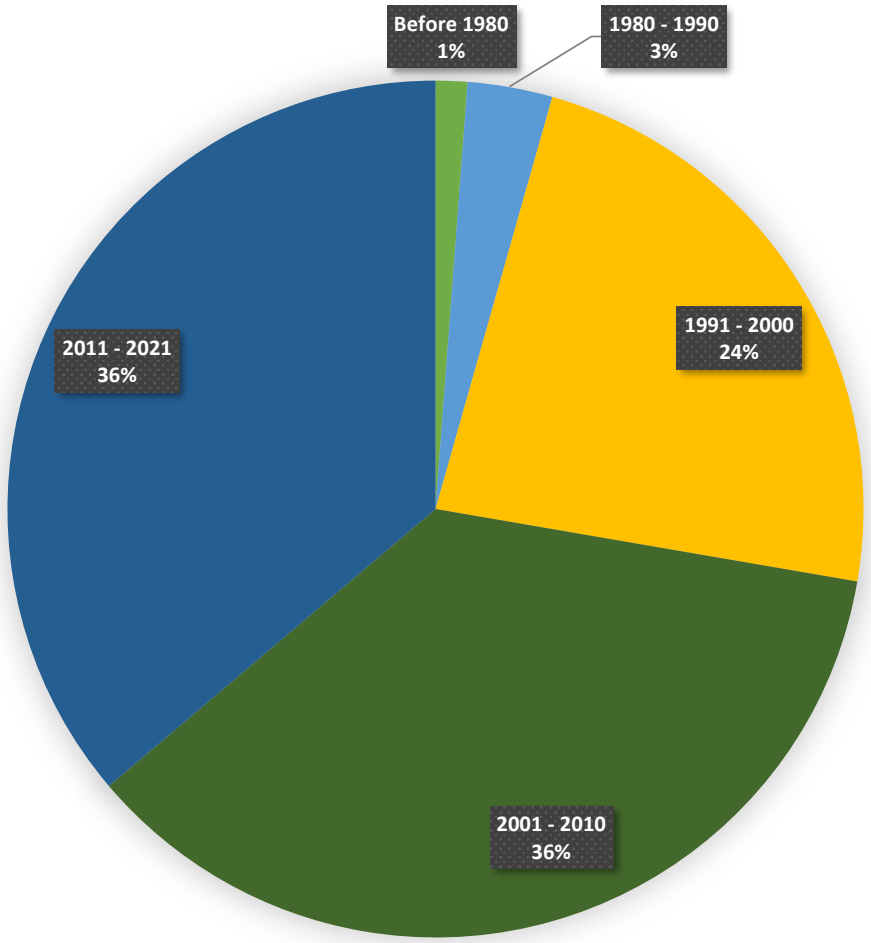


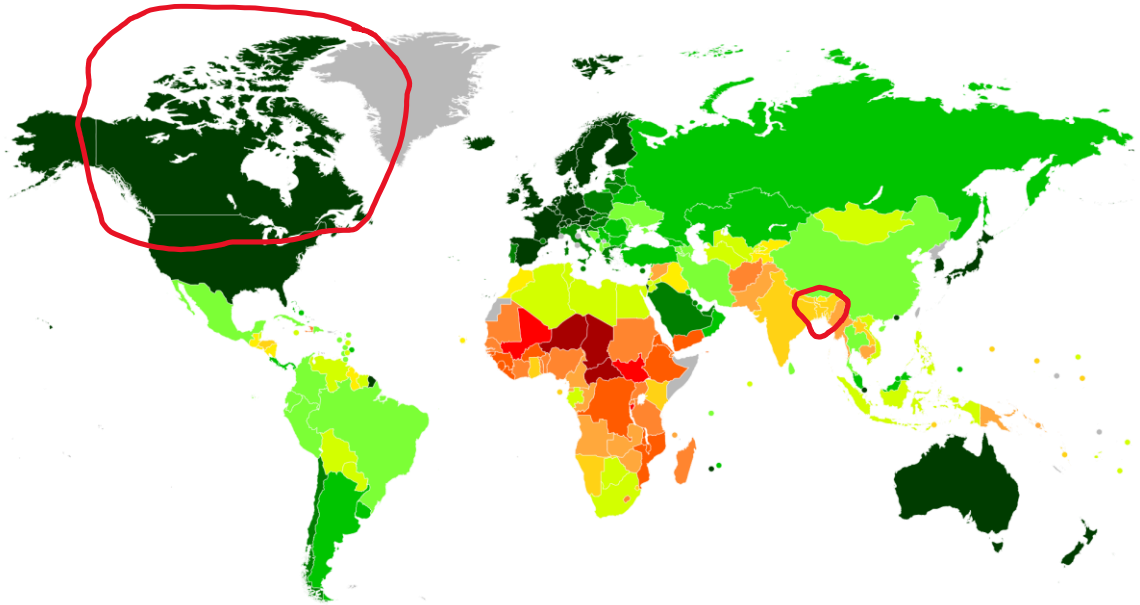
Table 1: Number of Bangladeshi Migrants Entering Canada Over the Years

Year	Number of Migrants
Before 1980	840
1980 - 1990	2,245
1991 - 2000	16,335
2001 - 2010	25,300
2011 - 2021	25,365

Source: Statistics Canada, 2022a

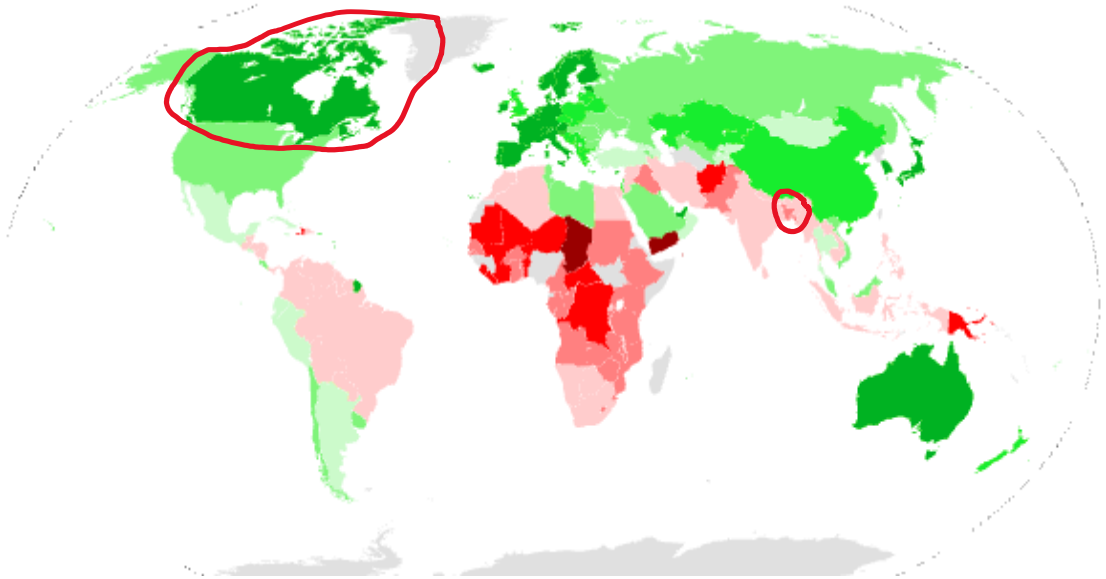
Source: Statistics Canada, 2022

POSITIONS IN GLOBAL INDEXES



Human Development Index (HDI) 2022

Canada 18th vs. Bangladesh 129th

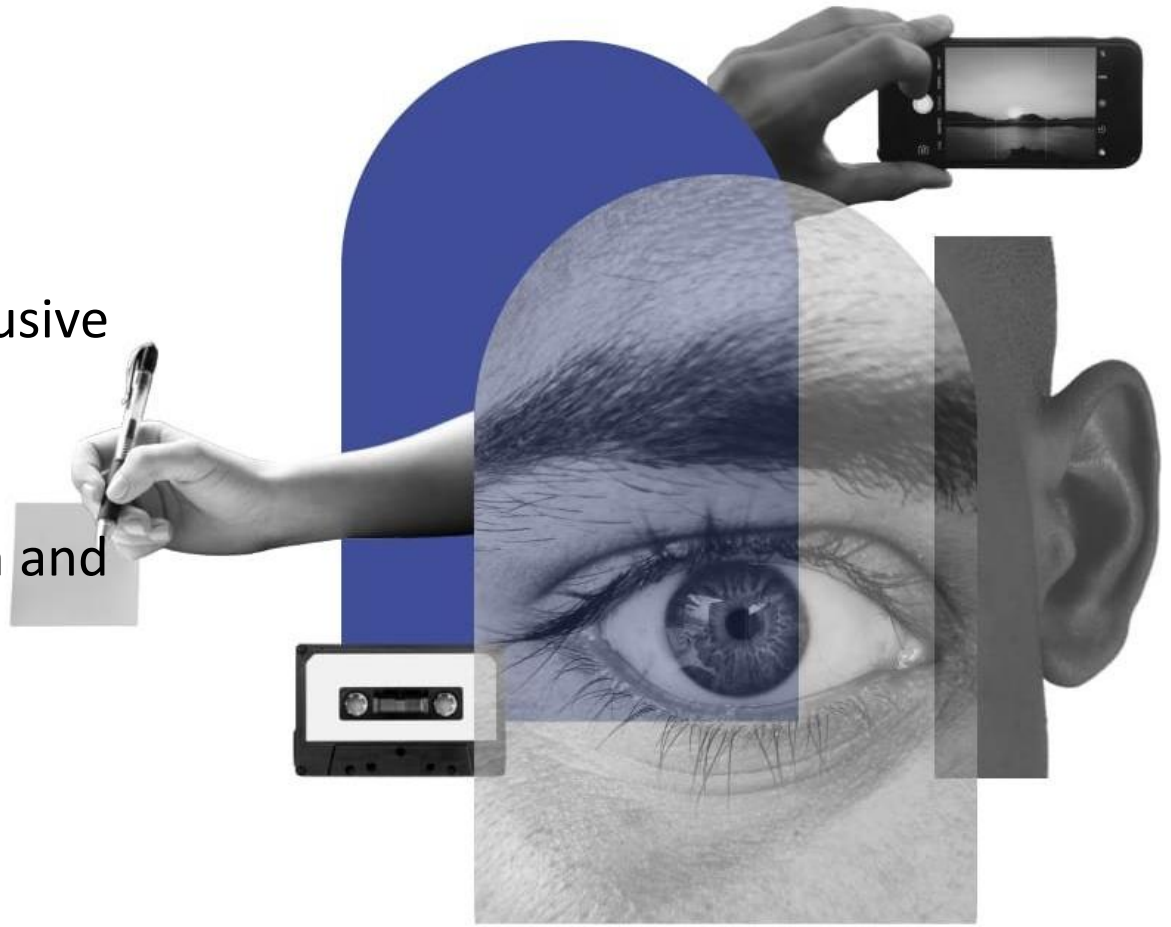


Gender Inequality Index (GII) 2022

Canada 18th vs. Bangladesh 127th

RESEARCH DESIGN

- Use two specific qualitative research tools
- Purposive sampling through snowballing
- 24 participants were selected through an inclusive approach to accommodate variations
- An iterative process throughout the data collection and analysis period
- Pseudonyms selected by the participants
- Some quotes have been translated from *Bangla*



OVERVIEW OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Demographics	Participants
Age	40
Length of Stay	12.5
Numbers of Years of Education[1]	15.8
Annual Gross Income Range	80k+ (CAD)
Annual Gross Income Range of Participant's Wives	40k+ (CAD)
Family Size	3.3

[1]In Bangladesh, it usually takes 10 years of education to finish high school, 12 years to finish college, 16 years for an undergraduate degree, 17 to complete post-graduation, and at least 21 years of education to finish a doctoral degree.

DEFINING A MAN

- “Man means strong, to be muscular. Who looks like a man and is a provider. He is a safe person, making sure of the safety of the family, and he is respectful as well. Another is that the man is someone who can be trusted.” ***(Elham)***
- “Men are more responsible. And men are very hardworking. Men are professionals. Men are more angry. Men know how to love the most.” ***(Indigo)***
- “Masculinity is good, and there is another definition of toxic masculinity that is bad, some like having to argue with everyone and then fighting with everyone. But yeah, you need masculinity like a woman having some… at night facing a threat. She will run to a man for help, you know. So, masculinity should be there, and even if there are a lot of women, and someone is having a problem, then a man will come up and try to help her.” ***(Shiplu)***

DEFINING A MAN

- **Provider & Protector (24)**
- **Loving, Caring & Understanding (20)**
- **Respectful & Responsible (17)**
- Hard Working & Outgoing (14)
- Physically Fit & Strong (10)
- Leader & Decision-maker (9)
- Stoic & Dominating (7)
- Creative & Dynamic (7)
- Sensible & Sharing (6)
- Comfort Loving (4)

MEN IN THE SPOTLIGHT: WHAT DOES SOCIETY VALUE MOST?

- “I think the… again, this is what I see they are valuing, appreciating one thing is their courage and their hard work, and the patience of keeping a family united.” ***(CMA)***
- “Society always appreciates money. It’s normal, like if you have money, so we have everything. And people value your lifestyle and everything. Lifestyle means if you have a very good job, a very good family, very good at managing kids and everything, people like you and people try to follow you. Other than that, I would say that if you have, if you respect people, definitely people will like you.” ***(Rash)***
- “Society sees positively if he is in a good social position. If he is in a high position in an organization if there is economic solvency. Another thing is his education.” ***(Polash)***

WHAT DOES SOCIETY VALUE MOST?

- **Financial Solvency (15)**
- **Caring & Benevolence (8)**
- **Well Mannered & Responsible (7)**
- **Family Oriented (7)**
- Leadership (4)
- Social Designation (4)
- Physically fitness (3)
- Education (2)
- Courage (1)
- Religiousness (1)

NEGATIVE TRAITS OF MASCULINITIES IN SOCIETY'S PERCEPTION

- “Yeah, society doesn't want men to complain. You know, if you're a man and you're complaining… but if you're a woman, you can complain. But as a man, you cannot complain.” ***(Shiplu)***
- “In Bangladeshi societies, if you are doing something bad, more important than that is how many girlfriends you have. Do you have ten girlfriends? If so, then you are done. You are a bad boy to society. If you come back home late, smoke cigarettes, or don't pray, worse than that is the girlfriend issue.” ***(Roy)***
- “If you do not have financial solvency, your social acceptance will be less. Another is that in the case of men if they have that drug addiction, society sees it very negatively. Obviously, if your social designation is not good, society also sees it negatively.” ***(AUA)***

NEGATIVE TRAITS IN SOCIETY'S PERCEPTION

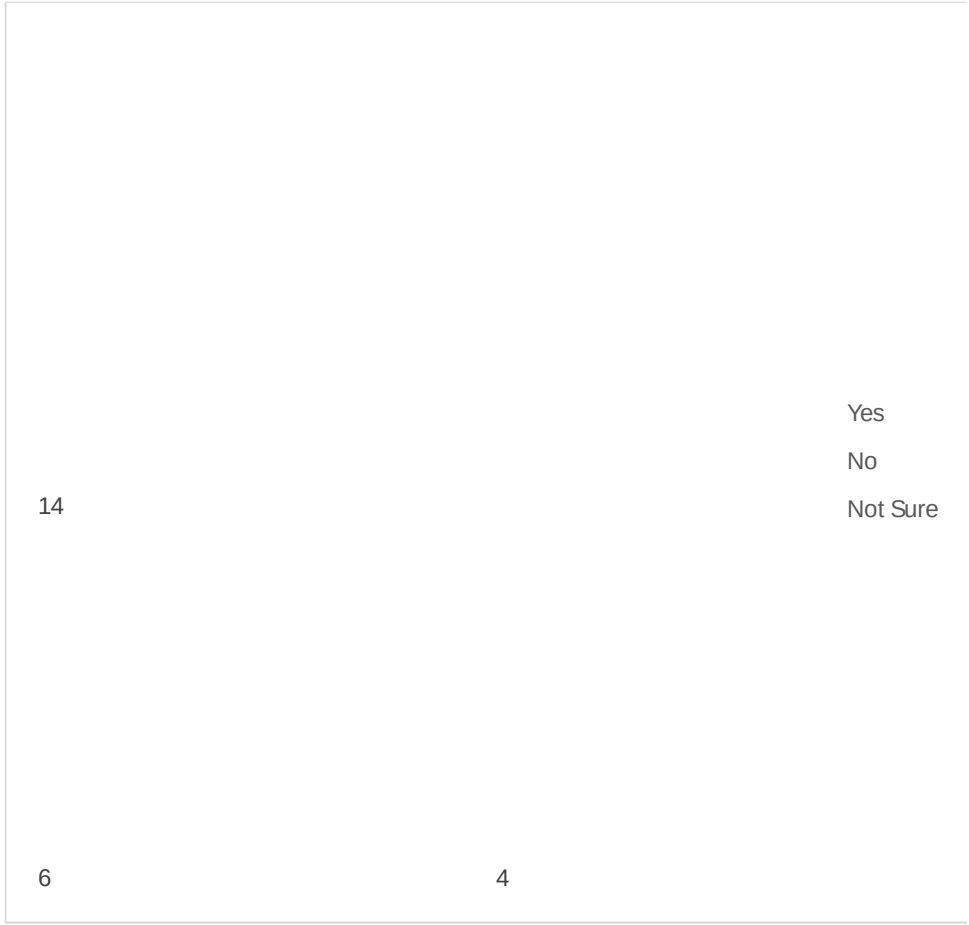
- **Financially Dependent (8)**
- Smoker & Alcoholic (7)
- Promiscuous (7)
- Abusive and Aggressive (5)
- Disrespectful & Rude (5)
- Intolerant and Inconsiderate (4)
- Sexist & Misogynist (4)
- Dominating (3)
- **Ambitious & Risk-taker (2)**
- **Emotional (2)**

BIOLOGY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITIES

- “Like, I mean, it's like a kind of creation of the God, I would say. You cannot expect some... Maybe a woman can try to pretend to be a man, but it's actually not the real man. So, I mean, eventually, you cannot be. You can work as a man, but in terms of some… let's say, if it is the case, then why do we have a World Cup for men with another World Cup for women? And so, you are not allowing a woman to participate in a men's World Cup, football, soccer, or cricket, whatever it is. So, biologically, appearance or whatever it is, it's definitely creating the difference.” ***(Fawad Jamil)***
- “It’s a simple physical obstacle.... like, you know, tennis… What is called, like, all the Grand Slam, they used to be, man has a five-round, woman has three rounds. Why? This is the reason. If you watch men's soccer and women’s soccer, you will find the difference.” ***(Sonnet)***

BIOLOGY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITIES

- “No, no, I don't think so.” ***(Sanju)***
- “Yes, due to hormonal differences.” ***(Shahidul)***
- “No, it does not have anything with the body but mostly mental; they think themselves superior to women.” ***(Rony)***
- “Yes, I would say so, but only to an extent. I feel like we have both masculine and feminine tendencies, even as men.” ***(Tufaan Rahman)***
- “Yes, obviously, whoever has the capacity for a larger thought process will dominate. Let it be a girl or a boy.” ***(Hasib)***



Is Masculinities Based On Biology

MASCULINITIES, VIOLENCE, AND SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS

- “Biologically, men are more aggressive, right? Men have these in their biology. Sometimes, when they are angry or when something happens, like when family members or others do not listen to what they are saying or there is a situation…. When they fight… husbands use aggression or power to make their wives listen…. Yes, verbal… you cannot do it physically. The law is here. I think some men want to be physical. They would have been physical if they had been in Bangladesh, but you do not have that option here. So, yes, verbally, they become aggressive with their wives.” ***(Rony)***
- “No, I don't think so. As I said, keeping calm and quiet is a man’s quality, so I'm definitely opposed to that.” ***(Fawad Jamil)***
- “So, if they grow up in an environment where they have to, where they see or learn that their dad or their parents are always like the father is always loud to have his say on the family, then he will be loud. But if they see that his dad has a say when he is soft and normal and doesn't shout, that's when he will be like, OK, soft and sound also have a say.” ***(Barry Allan)***

MASCULINITIES, VIOLENCE, AND SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS

- Men are biologically aggressive
- Need to control
- Depends on the situation
- Need to be aggressive to protect family
- Culturally learnt

MASCULINITIES THROUGH THEIR EYES

- **Traditional Traits**
  - Men should be strong, muscular, providers, protectors, and respectful
  - Positive masculine traits include responsibility, hard work, and professionalism
  - Financial security and avoiding addiction are important for men's social standing
  - Society expects men to be stoic and avoid expressing emotions

- **Biological Basis**
  - Biology creates inherent and unchangeable differences between men and women
  - Men have a natural physical advantage and are more aggressive due to biology
  - Men might also learn aggression from their environment

“… so here, woman, man, everyone is treated equally. Although I'd rather say that men are not treated equally, here, women are treated more superior. The hierarchy is like kids first, then old people, then women, then men.”

- ***Shiplu***

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS