

# Global Perceptions of Progress on Gender Equality

**Accelerating Gender Equality Through Media and  
Advertising To Transform Society and Drive Brand Growth**



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# Opening Summary

Gender inequality is truly global in scope and limits opportunities for nearly four billion women around the world.<sup>1</sup> The World Economic Forum's *2023 Global Gender Gap Report* revealed that the global gender parity gap has reached a closure of only 68%.

The *2023 Global Perceptions of Progress of Gender Equality*, an ongoing thought leadership initiative between SeeHer and dentsu, found much the same results. Across the five countries we surveyed, women are perceived as 70% equal to men across various dimensions, encompassing equal rights, political empowerment, workforce/economic participation, educational attainment, health, and societal perceptions.

Our landmark study, released in 2021, focused on the U.S., and probed perceptions of gender equality among men, women, women of color, and various generations. A significant finding of the initial study was the power of media and marketing to affect gender equality.

In 2023 we revisited the study with an expanded global lens, exploring perceptions of gender equality in the U.K., India, Japan, Mexico, and the U.S. This report outlines how, while multiple issues contribute to gender inequality, media and advertising are consistent in playing an outsized role across cultures by changing and improving outdated stereotypes. The removal of gender bias, replaced by authentic representation of women in media and advertising, is also a key driver of business growth, which shifts societal mindsets, unlocking possibilities for women globally.

By understanding global perceptions of gender equality and the barriers women face in different countries, we can infuse these learnings into how they are depicted and leverage the power of the media and marketing ecosystem to create the change we need to see.

<sup>1</sup>The World Bank, 2022

Section 01

# Gender Inequality: Pandemic, Reset, and Recovery



## As we assess the state of gender equality across the globe, it's important to understand the impact of major worldwide events, such as the pandemic.

At the outset of the pandemic, a substantial 69% of global consumers held optimistic views regarding gender equality. Within a year of the pandemic's onset, this optimism increased, with 75% expressing hope for a positive transformation in gender dynamics. However, by 2022, amid the disproportionate impact on women's economic recovery, coupled with global conflicts and regressive legislation against women's rights, consumer sentiment plummeted to 59%. Presently, nearly half of global consumers (46%) view the current landscape as the most adverse for gender equality in recent memory.

The fragility of gender equality becomes starkly evident during societal upheavals, where women's societal status becomes susceptible to moving backward. With consumer sentiment on gender equality at an all-time low, research such as the *Global Perceptions of Progress on Gender Equality* is critical to understanding how we can continue to move forward.

“

### UNITED KINGDOM RESPONDENT:

“I would like to see women portrayed as we actually are...diverse, unique, strong, adaptable rather than trying to fit us into stereotypes. I would like to see women and men being shown as being in harmony with each other rather than being in competition.”



# Foreword: SeeHer

Globally, the journey toward gender equality stands at a critical juncture. Recognizing the fragility of progress, the World Economic Forum projects that we may need another century to achieve true gender equality.

Women's economic power cannot be overstated. Globally, women wield over \$30 trillion in annual consumer spending, surpassing the markets of China and India combined. Ignoring or underestimating the influence of female consumers would be a strategic misstep. However, despite this economic clout, women often feel underserved by brands. Research indicates that over 50% of consumers desire more accurate portrayals in advertising – and when they are accurately portrayed, brands see a 500% increase in consumer spending.

This is why SeeHer is committed to increasing the representation and accurate portrayal of all women and girls to achieve gender equality and drive business growth in the global marketing and media ecosystem, now and for generations to come." This is a call to join forces, amplify voices, foster learning, empower teams, and strengthen our commitment consistently throughout the year.

The urgency for actionable change is underscored by the concerning regression in the U.S., ranking among the top five countries with significant declines in the *Global Gender Gap* annual report.

We must prepare for the next generation, who represent over \$12 trillion in lifetime spending power. This upcoming generation is characterized by being the most diverse in U.S. history, with technological prowess unparalleled by other generations. They are also the most open to fluid gender roles. Gen Z males challenge traditional norms, with 70% expressing openness to doing housework, sharing their emotions, and stay-at-home parenting. This makes it crucial to reassess how we portray men in marketing and media.



**Christine Guilfoyle, President, SeeHer**

In conclusion, the challenge is clear, and our response must be unwavering. What you did three years ago, last year, or even last month is not good enough. Gender equality is a movement, and we all must prioritize progress every day. Marketers, you must mandate that gender equality best practices be embedded throughout your ecosystem, which will both drive business growth and transform society and culture, now and for future generations.

# Foreword: SeeHer



**Latha Sarathy, Chief Research Officer, ANA, SeeHer**

Exploring consumers' perceptions and perspectives is critical to understanding the opportunities and barriers they face in various aspects of their lives. Given that gender inequality is the one consistent global inequality, expanding our 2021 landmark study, *Perceptions of Progress on Gender Equality in the U.S.*, to a global view was essential to how SeeHer moves forward in addressing the accurate portrayal of women and girls. In our global study, we explored perceptions of gender equality of adults in the U.S., U.K., Mexico, India, and Japan.

A resounding 94% of adults worldwide believe in the importance of ensuring women have equal rights in all aspects of their lives. This collective acknowledgment places the power to drive change in our hands and requires a consistent commitment.

Our study also found a global expectation of media and marketing as catalysts to move gender equality forward. Eighty-two percent of adults in all countries felt that media could advance gender equality and 80% felt the same for brands. This underscores the significant influence both sectors wield in building a gender equitable culture. Media and brands can be disruptive forces to transform society.

With this impetus, our expanded study provides marketers and media companies timely, actionable intelligence, with a market-by-market outlook on obstacles to overcome and tactical recommendations on how to leverage their influence to shift societal perceptions and increase opportunities for women. Across the board, a consistent challenge to gender equality is the perpetuation of stereotypes. Overall, only 16% of global consumers felt that women were portrayed accurately all the time in advertising and media.

An equally important goal of the study is to illustrate how gender equality is a business growth driver. SeeHer has validated that when a brand commits to gender equality, key brand health metrics, including sales, increase by double digits across all global markets.

Media and advertising are a tremendous force for societal change, and brands can unlock significant opportunities for both women's empowerment and business growth through advancing gender equality.

# Foreword: dentsu

## dentsu

Equal rights for all is work without a finish line. As part of our core values, dentsu champions meaningful progress. We place equal priority on being a force for good and a force for growth through work that starts purposeful conversations and creates progressive change. Beyond the impactful work we create with our clients, we strive to ensure our culture, policies, and benefits demonstrate those commitments.

We champion a gender-equal and inclusive society through game-changing campaigns that not only focus on women's empowerment, but also address critical issues around women-owned businesses and professional pathways. Last year, dentsu Americas piloted OWN IT - a one-of-a kind fellowship experience focusing on female business owners. The event connects small-women owned businesses to C-suite executives and provides tools and resources to help female entrepreneurs enhance their businesses.

As a leader in the advertising industry, dentsu is acutely aware of how representation influences reality – which is why we consider advancing women and girls in society as a non-negotiable. Our partnership with SeeHer shines a light on how we as an industry can continue to use marketing and media to not only empower women, but to impact their financial futures.

With those shared values in mind, we collaborated with SEEHER on this study to understand global consumers' attitudes around the importance of, progress of, and barriers to gender equity and equality. This latest iteration builds off a U.S.-focused series of reports published in 2021 and expands the findings to a global scale.



**Christena Pyle, Chief Equity Officer, dentsu Americas**

Both dentsu and SeeHer are keenly aware of the power of data and insights to create and inspire lasting change. Perceptions of Progress has insights for everyone – that you can think through and take back to your team, your work, your day-to-day to make a difference – and those small individual actions across the marketing community ladder up to sustainable progress to advance equality.

dentsu is proud to be a company that promotes progress, elevate women-owned businesses, and work towards opportunities for everyone. **Together, we can shape a better future for women today, tomorrow, and beyond.**



Section 02

# Revisiting U.S. Perceptions on Gender Equality: Hope Turns to Disillusionment

**According to the 2023 World Economic Forum report, the United States declined from 27th to 43rd out of 146 countries in gender equality, marking a significant downward shift. Concurrently, our study found that there is a perceptible decline in consumer hopefulness about the future of gender equality.**

In our initial study conducted in 2021, Americans' overall outlook on gender equality was very positive, with 88% saying they felt hopeful about the future. The majority of Americans also had strong confidence that the next decade would see more female leaders in politics and business.

What we found in 2023 is that, on the surface, not much has changed. Our current study shows that 85% of Americans feel hopeful about gender equality and over 90% believe that we will see more women in leadership positions in business and politics.

Yet, when we look a bit deeper, we see that alongside hopefulness there is an undercurrent that true progress has been slow to actually materialize. In 2021 only 40% of Americans "strongly agreed" that gender equality would be achieved in their lifetimes. In 2023 this remained consistent at 39%.

Similarly in 2021, when looking at those who felt "very hopeful" about the future of gender equality, close to half (47%) felt this was the case. However, by 2023 this had dropped to 39% of adults.

This decline is also mirrored in the value of gender equality as a "very important personal issue." In 2021, 73% of both men and women in the U.S. stated that they felt that gender equality was personally very important to them. But in just two years, this sentiment dropped to 64% overall – 57% for men and 70% for women.

Lastly, we see that the top two barriers to true equality cited in 2021, sexualization/harassment towards women and the pay gap, remain the same.

Within this paradigm of hopefulness and absence of change, the United States manifests a palpable sense of disconnectedness. While gender equality remains a key concern in the United States, we are witnessing a discernible onset of disillusionment.



A key insight from our 2021 study was that gender barriers often find their roots in media and advertising, where stereotypes are reinforced and women are often portrayed in traditional roles and settings, thereby hindering the progression of breaking gender boundaries.

While our most recent study finds that the vast majority (90%) of U.S. consumers believe in the potential for media and marketing to create change by helping shape gender roles, we also see that barriers rooted in media and advertising still exist.

Two barriers that rose in urgency were "lack of willingness to support or promote women" and "persisting stereotypes about women's roles."

Once again, we see a dichotomy of reality versus expectation. Although we may feel we have moved beyond gender stereotypes, we see an accentuation of women being portrayed in more traditional roles over the last two years (Figure 1).

There is also an increasing lack of confidence in media and marketing in terms of how they support gender equality. When asked if they feel "media usually accurately portrays women," 32% agreed with this statement in 2021. In 2023 this decreased to 24%.

In short, despite an awareness of the pivotal role played by media in advancing gender equality, there is a growing sense that the lack of change is holding us in place and contributing to consumer dissatisfaction.

Achieving gender equality within the media and marketing ecosystem is going to require a renewed dedication of energy and intention from media and marketers. The United States stands out among the other countries surveyed, with 56% of consumers prioritizing accurate portrayals as one of the top solutions to advancing women. Only supporting and nurturing female talent and increasing female leadership are seen as more important.

However, in a country as diverse as the U.S., accurate portrayals necessitate deep understanding of the diverse needs of women and may require tailored strategies to make a true impact.

Figure 1

### Women more likely to be portrayed as...

|                      | 2021 | 2023 | % Change |
|----------------------|------|------|----------|
| Leaders              | 48%  | 30%  | -18      |
| Caretakers           | 52%  | 70%  | +18      |
| Strong               | 62%  | 55%  | -7       |
| Dainty               | 38%  | 45%  | +7       |
| In a Leading Role    | 46%  | 38%  | -8       |
| In a Supporting Role | 54%  | 63%  | +9       |

Section 03

# Global Perceptions: Gender Equality is a Universal Concern, but Prioritization Varies

Gender inequality is widely recognized as a global concern, with the majority of consumers across the five countries surveyed recognizing its importance on both a global and personal level.

- 84% of global adults say gender inequality is an important global issue.
- 93% of global adults say women’s equality is an important issue to them personally.

But there are significant differences in how gender equality is perceived, addressed, and approached by region. The United Kingdom and India demonstrate the most concern, prioritizing the achievement of gender equality compared to other forms of discrimination and inequality higher than other countries.

In contrast, as noted earlier, the United States is witnessing a discernible onset of cynicism: the perception of gender equality’s attainability has dwindled as the country regresses.

Mexican consumers exhibit a remarkable emphasis on gender equality, with 91% expressing it as a top global concern – a sentiment surpassing that of any other country surveyed. On the other end of the spectrum, Japan, with only 77% of consumers acknowledging gender inequality as a pressing concern, displays a more restrained engagement with this issue.

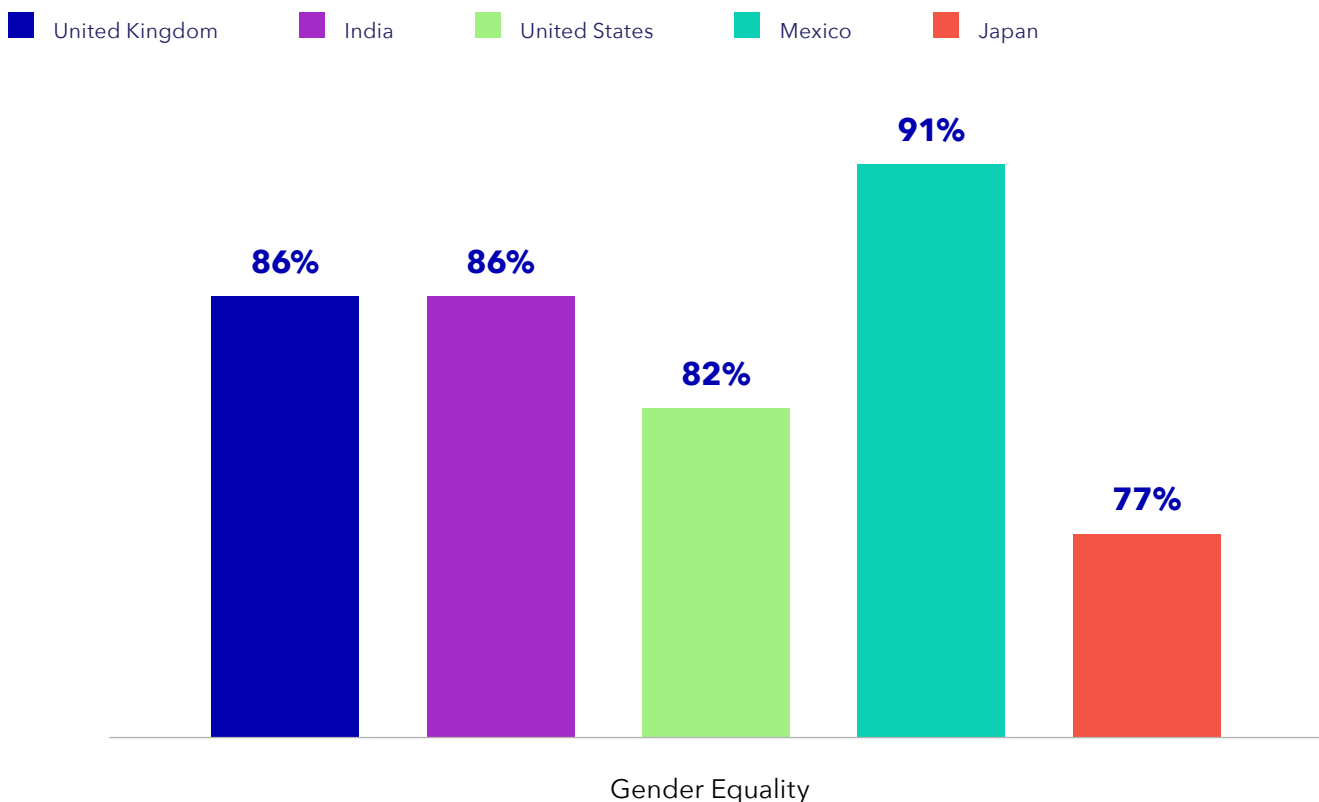
**JAPAN RESPONDENT:**

“Traditionally in Japan, the old-fashioned idea that women should not participate in society is prevalent, so companies and the government should provide full support to break through this and change the mindset.”



Figure 2

**Global Perceptions: Gender Equality Is a Universal Concern But Prioritization Varies**



Section 04

# Unifying Barriers to Gender Equality Persist Across Regions



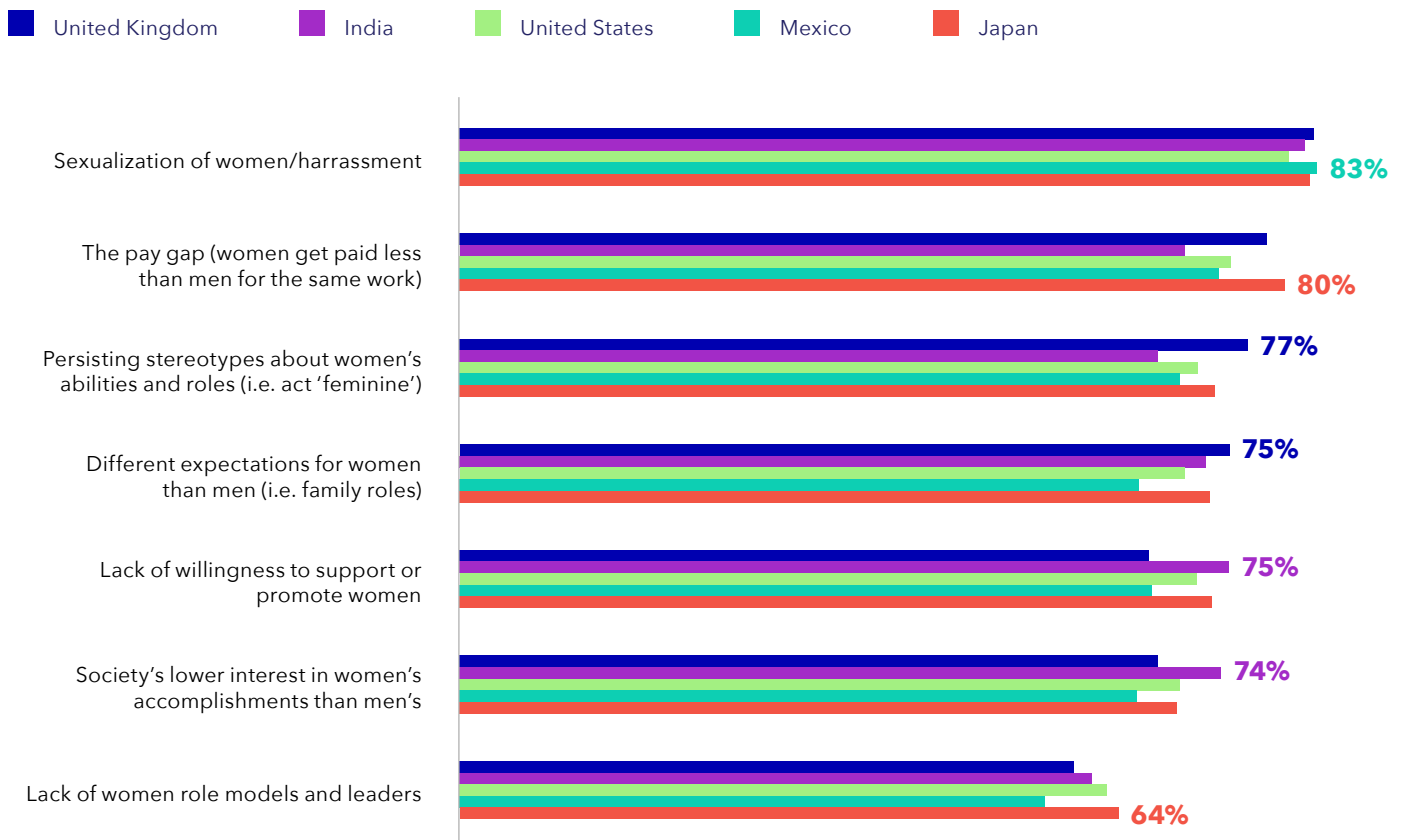
Along with variations on urgency, across regions there is a widespread list of barriers to gender equality, but uniformly, sexualization/harassment of women was the number 1 issue cited. Beyond this, nuanced variations emerge in specific countries aligning with unique regional issues.

- India revealed a distinctive ranking of barriers. Here, the lack of support and diminished interest in women’s achievements assume greater prominence than other countries, with 75% of consumers designating it as the second-ranked barrier.
- For Mexico, the pay gap and persisting stereotypes about women’s abilities stood out at 70% or higher, with the remaining barriers notably lower with exception of sexualization/harrasment (83%), which was highest of all countries.
- The U.K. ranked persisting stereotypes of women’s abilities at 77% and different expectations for women versus men at 75%, higher than any of the other countries surveyed.

- In the U.S. the pay gap was the second most cited barrier, followed by persisting stereotypes, the lack of willingness to support women, and different expectations of men versus women tied at fourth.
- In Japan, responses highlighting the lack of female role models and leaders (64%) surpassed the overall global average (61%) and individual country responses. Paradoxically, when respondents were questioned about their gender equality mindset regarding role models, only 30% of Japanese participants believed that women should be presented as role models for others. Yet Japan also had the highest ranking for the pay gap, at 80%. This incongruity suggests that gender equality barriers in Japan extend beyond structural challenges and require a fundamental shift in the mindset of Japanese consumers to propel gender equality forward.

Figure 3

### Barriers To Gender Equality



Section 05

# Globally, Women are Just 7/10th's of a Man



**As noted in the opening of this report, the World Economic Forum’s 2023 Global Gender Gap Report revealed that the global gender parity gap has reached 68%.**

This indicates that globally, women are perceived as 70% equal to men across various dimensions, encompassing rights, political empowerment, workforce/economic participation, educational attainment, health, and societal perceptions.

Our *Global Perceptions of Progress Report* closely aligns with the findings of the World Economic Forum, but shows that Japan emerges with the highest disparity, rating women as most unequal (5.4/10), trailed by the U.K. (6.4/10) and the U.S. (6.6/10) in societal aspects.

Unique to our study, we explored the role of media and advertising in global gender equality. This dimension, absent from the *Global Gender Gap Report*, receives a global rating of 7/10, with diminished scores in Japan (5.5) and the U.K. (6.0).

Emphasizing the critical nature of media and advertising, we see that in none of the countries surveyed were women seen as fully equal to men in media and advertising depictions.

Figure 4

**How equal are women in your country?**  
(Scale of 1-10)

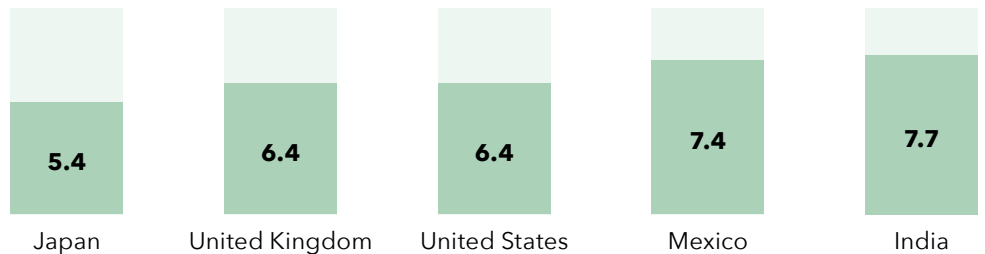
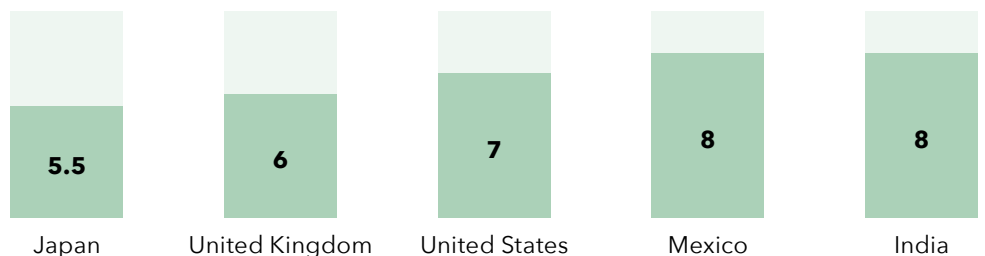


Figure 5

**How equal are women in media and advertising depictions?**  
(Scale of 1-10)



Section 06

# Media and Marketing Are Key Pillars For Advancing Gender Equality

## This raises the question of the role of media and advertising in galvanizing global change in gender equality.

Across all countries, there is a collective recognition of the substantial role played by media and advertising in shaping perceptions of gender equality. Consumers recognize the far-reaching influence of how women and girls are depicted, ranking it equally to many of the other societal pillars.

In fact, globally, 89% of adults said that media has the ability to teach girls they can do anything boys can do, and vice versa.

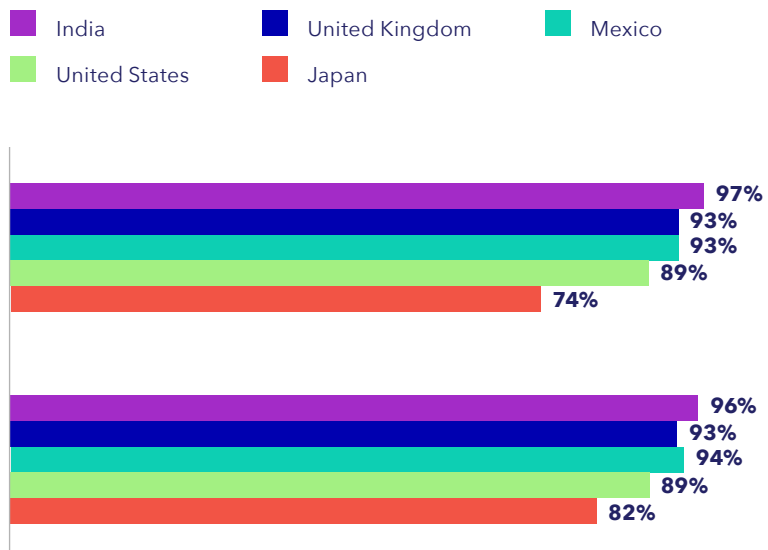
So, although it's fair to say that all countries acknowledge the pivotal role played by media and advertising to advance the equality of women, there are nuanced regional perceptions in how much the accurate representation of women can impact changes versus other initiatives, which underscores the complexity of this global issue.

- The U.K. takes the lead, with 58% of consumers identifying accurate representation in media and advertising as the top method to promote the status of women.

- India and the U.S. both ranked supporting and nurturing female talent and increasing female leadership above accurate portrayals, but ranked accurate representation in media and advertising at 58% and 56% respectively.
- Mexican consumers, while acknowledging the importance of accurate representation, prioritize other efforts, such as enhancing female leadership, increasing visibility in underrepresented industries, and investing in women's futures through public and private programs.
- In Japan, where gender equality is still emerging, only 33% prioritize accurate representation in advertising. Japanese consumers focus more on companies increasing female leadership (48%), supporting and nurturing female employees (47%), and contributing to programs supporting women's futures (39%). This may offer ample opportunity to increase levels of female representation in the Japanese workforce, specifically in leadership roles.

Figure 6

### Media Is A Change Agent, Now & For Future Generations



**Media has the power to teach children that girls can do anything that boys can do.**

**The media plays a crucial role in shaping gender roles and norms.**

Much of this variation could also be traced to the fact that globally, consumers feel progress in representing women in media has been slow, with only 32% overall saying that a lot of progress has been made in the past decade.

Indian respondents stand out by attributing the most influence to change on gender equality to media, expressing heightened optimism about media’s progress in accurately representing women over the last decade.

In contrast, Japanese respondents exhibit the least optimism regarding media’s advancements, indicating a more reserved perspective on the transformative impact of media on gender perceptions versus other initiatives such as economic parity in the workforce.

This interplay of the importance of media and advertising and the perception of a lack of progress poses a significant challenge and opportunity for media professionals and marketers. It is clear that each region requires customized strategies tailored to the specific socio-cultural landscapes of individual countries. But it also underscores the immense impact media and advertising have in changing global cultural norms.

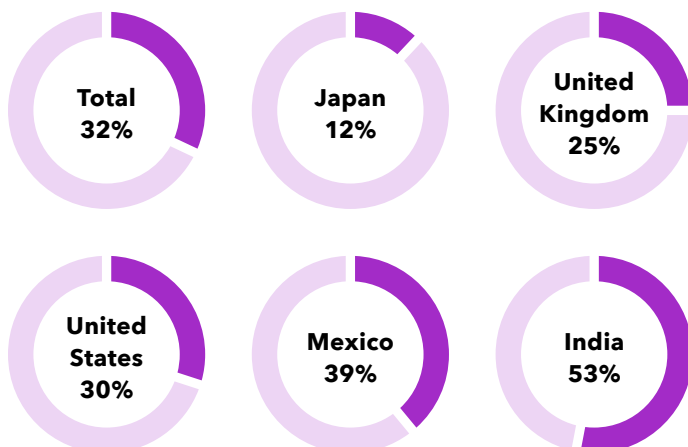
Once again, globally, as in the U.S., we are currently caught in the gap between expectation and reality. If media and marketers work to bridge that gap, the upside is tremendous, both in terms of business growth and societal change.



Figure 7

**Advertising and Media Have Made a lot of Progress in Representing Women Over Last 10 Years**

% Agree



**U.S. RESPONDENT:**

In response to what media and advertising can do: “Be more knowledgeable and accepting of all women, no matter color, age, religion, or sexual orientation.”

Section 07

# Enduring Impact of Stereotypes



## Across the board, a consistent challenge to gender equality is the perpetuation of stereotypes.

Overall, only 16% of global consumers felt that women were portrayed accurately all the time in advertising and media. For most countries, under one-fifth of the respondents felt this way, with India being the only outlier at 28%.

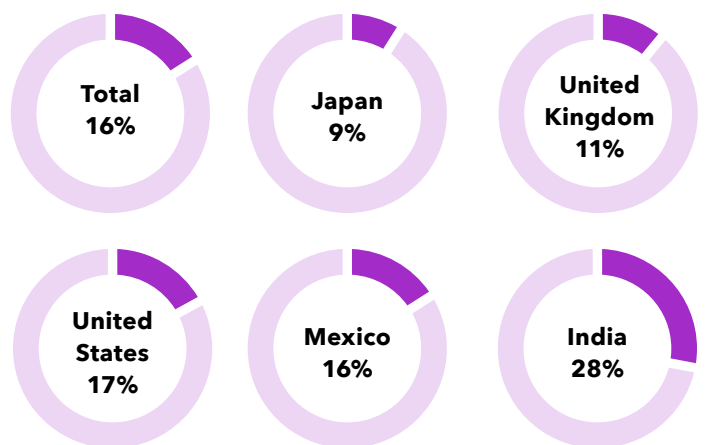
One of the key findings from our prior U.S.-based study was that while media and advertising are perceived as having a major impact on gender roles, they still commonly rely on tropes and stereotypical portrayals in depicting women.

We see similar sentiments echoed by global consumers. The majority felt that women are still more likely to be portrayed as caretakers than leaders and often portrayed as sexualized versus accomplished. Although depictions of women as strong were more common than dainty, there is still a heavier weight on portrayals of women as supporting and submissive. These depictions reinforce negative beliefs that skew how women are perceived and undermine the power of media to change outdated gender perceptions.

Figure 8

### How Often Do You Feel Advertising and Media do a good job of accurately portraying women?

All of the time, % Agree



“

#### INDIA RESPONDENT:

“Brands and media and brand companies must show the reality of society instead of faking it... and should uplift women’s living status.”



Among the various depictions measured, women being most often portrayed as caretakers versus leaders and in supporting versus leading roles had the highest variances in the U.S., U.K., and Japan. This may speak to the higher expectations from these regions than Mexico and India, where progress is more recent in terms of overturning stereotypes of women.

Outside of structural changes in pay equity, workforce representation, and programs designed to support women, it is societal mindsets that hold women back.

The power of the SeeHer mission and mantra of “If you can see her, you can be her” is palpable across all the countries surveyed. In many ways, this is where change needs to start. As history has shown us, once women can envision themselves breaking barriers, they are an unstoppable force.

This actually leads to the next area to consider in creating change. Who is primarily responsible for leading the charge on gender equality?

Figure 9

### Women Are Most Often Portrayed As...

|                   | United States | United Kingdom | India      | Mexico | Japan      |                        |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------|------------|--------|------------|------------------------|
| Leaders           | 30%           | 29%            | 46%        | 39%    | 22%        |                        |
|                   | 70%           | 70%            | 54%        | 61%    | <b>78%</b> | <b>Caretakers</b>      |
| Assertive         | 45%           | 44%            | 55%        | 56%    | 44%        |                        |
|                   | 55%           | <b>56%</b>     | 45%        | 44%    | <b>56%</b> | <b>Submissive</b>      |
| <b>Strong</b>     | 55%           | 47%            | <b>72%</b> | 53%    | 42%        |                        |
|                   | 45%           | 53%            | 28%        | 47%    | 58%        | Dainty                 |
| Leading Role      | 38%           | 31%            | 48%        | 52%    | 23%        |                        |
|                   | 63%           | 69%            | 52%        | 48%    | <b>77%</b> | <b>Supporting Role</b> |
| <b>Sexualized</b> | 59%           | <b>65%</b>     | 41%        | 56%    | 58%        |                        |
|                   | 41%           | 35%            | 59%        | 44%    | 42%        | Accomplished           |

Section 08

# Gender Equality is Important To All; Women Seen as Main Drivers of Change



Globally, there is a resounding (and unfortunate) sentiment emphasizing, “Women...save yourselves!” – acknowledging that women are perceived as the most direct individual beneficiaries of gender equality and so have the primary responsibility to drive change.

Surprisingly, this was quite consistent across all the regions we measured. Women are predominantly viewed as the party most responsible for advancing gender equality, with men seen as the least or close to the least responsible. This is an immense barrier to change. When gender inequality is not recognized as a *human issue* rather than a *women’s issue*, we are literally standing in the way of progress for everyone.

Although societal power structures and leaders, who are often men, have the power to make change, it is on women where the major onus falls. In terms of who has “a lot” of responsibility to impact change in gender inequality, all countries placed the majority of the burden squarely on women’s shoulders.

- In the U.S., 84% of adults felt women had more responsibility to improve women’s equality versus 77% of men. When parsed out by gender, close to 60% of U.S. men felt women had more responsibility versus 53% of women.
- In the U.K. we see parity in responsibility falling on men and women, at 51% for each when looking at total adults. However, this masks the responses for men versus women. In fact, 57% of U.K. women felt men had more responsibility versus only 45% of men feeling this way.

- In India, 72% of adults felt women had “a lot” of responsibility, compared to 62% believing men should bear more responsibility.
- Mexico was more likely than the other countries to place “a lot” of responsibility on women, with 69% of total adults feeling this way. It is interesting to note that 73% of female respondents also felt women bore the brunt of responsibility, versus 66% of male respondents who held this belief.
- Notably, Japan, despite showing less urgency around advancing gender equality, uniquely positions men (70%) at a level close to women (72%).

While different levels of personal accountability are observed across countries, the overarching trend is that all countries predominantly look to women to play a central role in addressing and solving gender inequality.

This raises the question of how women versus men perceive the urgency of women’s equality, the barriers that women encounter, and the pathways for change.

**INDIA RESPONDENT:**

“Teach boys and men to respect women at home, and not to take them for granted. At school, teach young pupils that girls are equal and can do any work just like boys.”


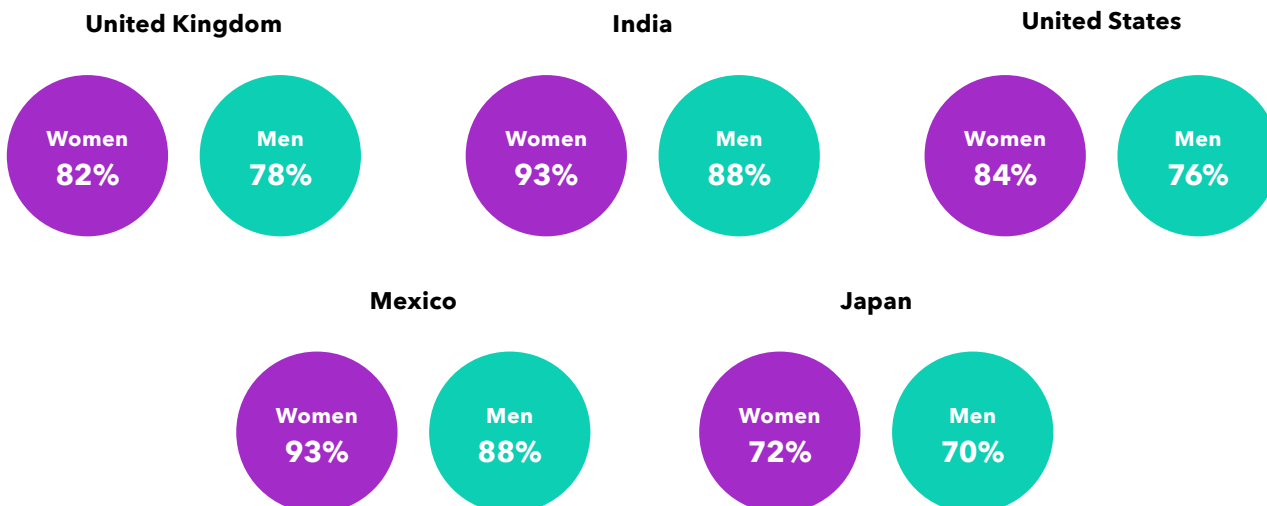


Figure 10

**What level of responsibility to improve women’s equality do each of the following have?**



Section 09

# Societal Levers of Change



## When assessing what societal levers can accelerate equality for women, men and women had marked differences in what was considered “very important” across almost all regions.

Looking at this through the lens of high importance is significant, as it equates with a sense of urgency.

From this viewpoint, Mexican women, followed by Indian women, exhibited the strongest insistence across all dimensions that advancement is very important for accelerating gender equality.

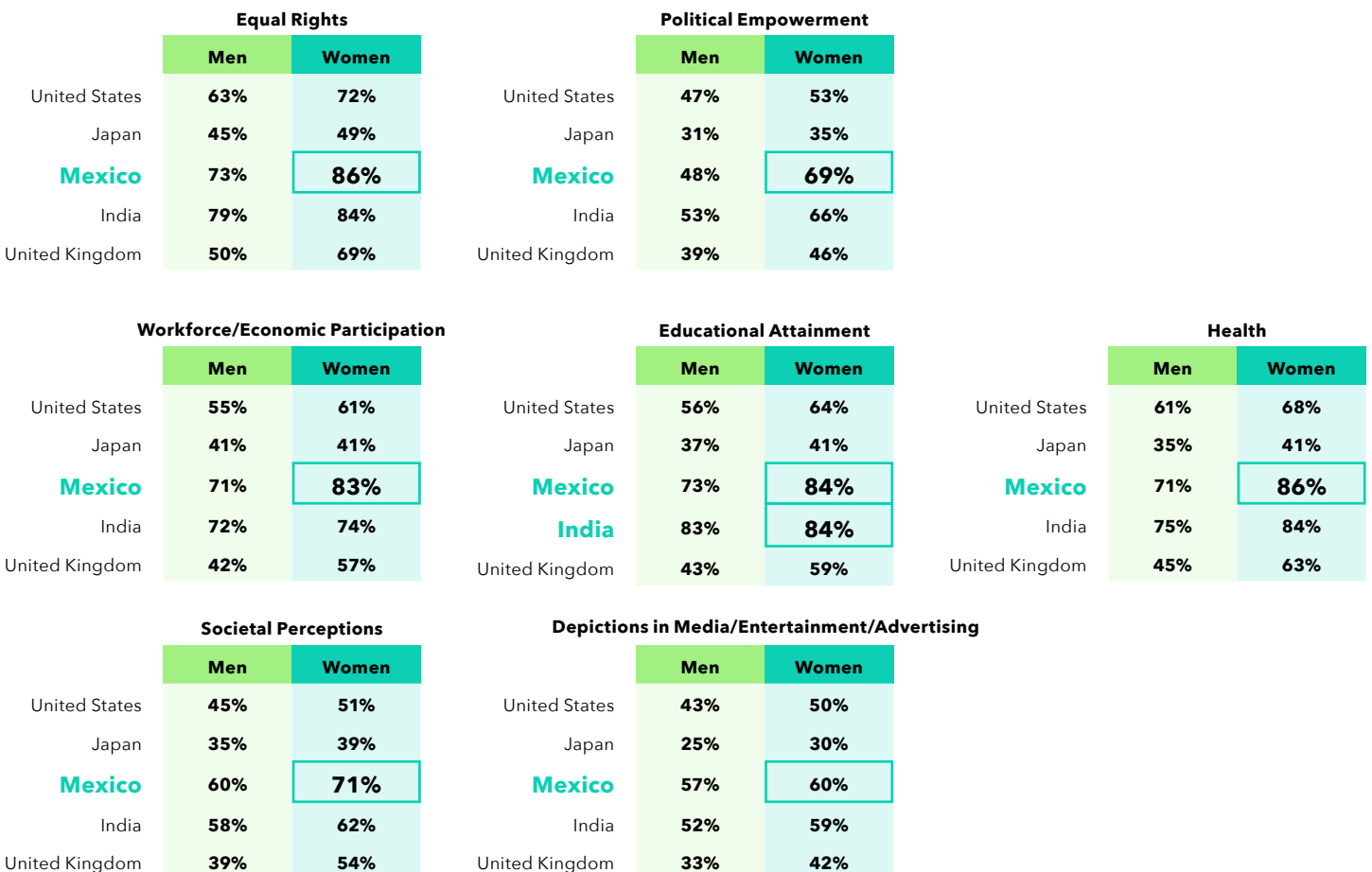
In the U.S., women were more likely than men to see equal rights and educational attainment as key drivers of change.

The U.K. was unique in that the gaps between men and women were greater for seeing each area as “very important,” and in Japan there was a relatively equal perception among both genders, although Japan had lower percentages than all the other regions for each area.

Given the differences between men and women in the “sense of urgency” in these areas to create change, it’s not surprising that women are far more concerned than men, as each issue directly affects their daily lives and future opportunities.

Figure 11


### How important are advancements in each of the following areas to help accelerate equality for women?



Section 10

# Media and Brands Bear Responsibility For Change





It's worth repeating that gender equality is a movement, and we must all participate every day.

On a similar level to women, employers, and schools, the global average for responsibility to improve women's equality was 82% for media and 80% for brands. This underscores the significant influence both sectors wield in building a gender-equitable culture. Media and brands can be disruptive forces to transform society.

However, for them to effectively drive change they must prioritize this imperative. They share equal responsibility and power in counteracting the adverse effects of gender bias and steering the course toward accelerated gender equality. Sustained dedication is essential to create meaningful progress in this regard.

In the U.K., consumers place media at the forefront, ranking it first in terms of responsibility for advancing gender equality. India and the U.S. follow a similar pattern, with media ranked second after women in terms of responsibility. In Mexico, schools are ranked second after women, with all the other options relatively equal. In Japan, brands/companies take the second spot after women for improving gender equality.

It is clear from the *Global Perceptions of Progress for Gender Equality* study that there are several commonalities in what hold women back as well as nuances by region. One of the key points of convergence is the power that media and marketing have to create change by addressing outdated stereotypes and being more proactive in supporting, accurately reflecting, and elevating women in leadership positions.

We offer a set of critical recommendations which we feel can be enacted by media and marketers to be part of the solution of advancing gender equality.

By actively implementing these recommendations, media companies and marketers will contribute significantly to the advancement of gender equality, positively shaping perceptions and promoting equitable representation of women in society, translating into business growth for their brands/companies.

Section 11

# Media and Advertising Must Be Catalysts For Change



## Companies today have the resources and the responsibility to advance the stature of women in society.

By coalescing the media and marketing ecosystem across brands, agencies, media, and platforms, we can enact these recommendations to ensure gender equality continues to move forward.

- **Increase Women's Visibility:** Showcase women's accomplishments and contributions across diverse industries, promoting female role models.
- **Promote Women's Leadership:** Portray women as leaders and decision-makers in various contexts, reflecting their role in society.
- **Foster Inclusivity:** Prioritize inclusivity not only in advertising but also in company culture and leadership positions.
- **Accurately Represent Women:** Ensure authentic depictions of women in various roles, ages, races, sexualities, and abilities to counter stereotypes.
- **Show Real-Life Scenarios:** Depict women in authentic situations that resonate with their daily lives, fostering relatability.
- **Address Intersectionality:** Pay attention to intersectional challenges faced by women of different backgrounds, acknowledging their unique experiences.
- **Empower Underrepresented Groups:** Focus on depicting younger women, older women, women of color, women with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ women, and women of different religions to help overcome their unique barriers to equality.
- **Combat Harmful Spaces:** Address negative portrayals of women in social media and gaming, actively promoting respectful environments.
- **Collaborate with Industries:** Partner across sectors to accelerate progress in representation and empower women across industries.
- **Invest in Learning and Development:** Educate the public about the importance of accurate and respectful media portrayals, encouraging critical consumption.



“

### MEXICO RESPONDENT:

“Depict them in a more respectful way, portray them as role models, and refrain from incorporating forced inclusions solely for societal approval.”

# Report Contributors

## Contributors



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## SEEHER

SeeHer is the leading global movement to eliminate gender bias in marketing, media, and entertainment. Launched in 2016 by the **Association of National Advertisers (ANA)**, SeeHer's coalition of leaders is committed to setting the gender equality agenda for the industry and driving growth for their businesses. To help its members benchmark success and become catalysts for change, SeeHer spearheaded the development of the Gender Equality Measure® (GEM®), the first research methodology that quantifies gender bias in ads and programming. Winning the prestigious ESOMAR Research Effectiveness Award, GEM® is the global measurement standard, proving that content accurately portraying women and girls dramatically increases purchase intent and brand reputation. SeeHer's suite of training and resources, including GEM®, enables marketers to prioritize best practices as part of an always-on approach to driving growth. The movement includes the following vertical expertise: SeeHer in Sports, SeeHer Entertainment, SeeHer Health, and the SeeHer Media Task Force. Visit **SeeHer.com** to join the movement and follow SeeHer on **LinkedIn** and **Instagram**.

## dentsu

dentsu is the network designed for what's next, helping clients predict and plan for disruptive future opportunities and create new paths to growth in the sustainable economy. Taking a people-centered approach to business transformation, we use insights to connect brand, content, commerce, and experience, underpinned by modern creativity. As part of Dentsu Group Inc. (Tokyo: 4324; ISIN: JP3551520004), we are headquartered in Tokyo, Japan, and our 65,000-strong employee base of dedicated professionals work across four regions (Japan, Americas, EMEA, and APAC). dentsu combines Japanese innovation with a diverse, global perspective to drive client growth and to shape society. Visit: **group.dentsu.com; dentsu.com**.



**dentsu** | **SEEHER**

## Survey Methodology

The survey was administered from March 9-20, 2023 through Toluna, an online research panel. Conducted by dentsu and SeeHer, this survey was distributed among a random sample of three-thousand total respondents, adults aged 18-65 years old. One thousand respondents were surveyed in the United States and five-hundred respondents were surveyed in each international market. The survey garnered an equal number of female and male respondents, and was controlled for nationally representative weighting across age demographics in India, Japan, Mexico and the United Kingdom. In the United States, the sample was boosted among persons with disabilities, LGBTQIA+, and Asian respondents.



# Appendix



Figure 2

## Global Perceptions: Gender Equality Is a Universal Concern But Prioritization Varies

|   | United Kingdom | India | United States | Mexico | Japan |
|---|----------------|-------|---------------|--------|-------|
| <b>Gender Inequality</b>                                  | 86%            | 86%   | 82%           | 91%    | 77%   |
| <b>Racial Inequality</b>                                  | 89%            | 85%   | 86%           | 93%    | 84%   |
| <b>Socio-Economic Inequality</b>                          | 86%            | 88%   | 84%           | 95%    | 87%   |
| <b>Age Discrimination</b>                                 | 82%            | 79%   | 85%           | 87%    | 75%   |
| <b>Sexual Orientation Discrimination</b>                  | 86%            | 85%   | 83%           | 88%    | 75%   |
| <b>Religious Discrimination</b>                           | 78%            | 81%   | 82%           | 81%    | 68%   |
| <b>Discrimination Based on Mental or Physical Ability</b> | 93%            | 86%   | 91%           | 94%    | 83%   |
| <b>Discrimination Based on Body Shape/Size</b>            | 84%            | 80%   | 83%           | 89%    | 74%   |

Figure 3

## Barriers To Gender Equality

|   | United Kingdom | India | United States | Mexico | Japan |
|---|----------------|-------|---------------|--------|-------|
| <b>Lack of willingness to support or promote women</b>                                | 67%            | 75%   | 72%           | 67%    | 73%   |
| <b>Society's lower interest in women's accomplishments than men's</b>                 | 68%            | 74%   | 70%           | 66%    | 70%   |
| <b>Persisting stereotypes about women's abilities and roles (i.e. act 'feminine')</b> | 77%            | 68%   | 72%           | 70%    | 74%   |
| <b>Lack of women role models and leaders</b>  | 60%            | 62%   | 63%           | 57%    | 64%   |
| <b>Different expectations for women than men (i.e. family roles)</b>                  | 75%            | 73%   | 71%           | 66%    | 73%   |
| <b>Sexualization of women/harrasment</b>  | 83%            | 82%   | 81%           | 83%    | 83%   |
| <b>The pay gap (women get paid less than men for the same work)</b>                   | 79%            | 71%   | 75%           | 74%    | 80%   |

Figure 10

**What level of responsibility to improve women’s equality do each of the following have?**

|                         | United Kingdom | India | United States | Mexico | Japan |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------|---------------|--------|-------|
| <b>Women</b>            | 82%            | 94%   | 84%           | 93%    | 72%   |
| <b>Men</b>              | 78%            | 89%   | 77%           | 88%    | 70%   |
| <b>Employers</b>        | 85%            | 91%   | 78%           | 88%    | 62%   |
| <b>Brands/Companies</b> | 84%            | 89%   | 77%           | 87%    | 70%   |
| <b>Media</b>            | 85%            | 91%   | 80%           | 90%    | 67%   |
| <b>Government</b>       | 83%            | 90%   | 74%           | 85%    | 68%   |
| <b>Schools</b>          | 81%            | 92%   | 78%           | 91%    | 65%   |