

THE STATE OF THE YOUTH IN THE OCCUPIED  
PALESTINIAN TERRITORY: AN IN-DEPTH,  
MULTI-LEVEL AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY  
INTO WELLBEING AND GENDER EQUALITY  
AMONG PALESTINIAN YOUTH

INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH

BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY



# THE STATE OF THE YOUTH IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY: AN IN-DEPTH, MULTI-LEVEL AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY INTO WELLBEING AND GENDER EQUALITY AMONG PALESTINIAN YOUTH

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Funded by Oxfam-Quebec

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background and Rationale

Youth, which include young women and men between the ages of 15-29, account for nearly one-sixth of the world's population, where the proportion of is expected to increase over the coming decades. This population is important, not only because it constitutes a significant and growing proportion of the world's population, but also because youth represent the future of society, and can play an important role in social, political, and economic development<sup>1</sup> nationally and globally. Importantly, at the present time, many youth face significant internal and external challenges and stressors, often as a result of broader structural factors<sup>2</sup>.

In the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), young women and men between the ages of 15-29 constitute roughly one third of the population. Despite their importance of this group in influencing the future direction of society, Palestinian youth face significant difficulties or obstacles, including high unemployment, poor living conditions, and heightened insecurity stemming from the Israeli military occupation<sup>3,4,5</sup>. Furthermore, within Palestinian society, youth are marginalized and excluded from full participation in public and political life<sup>6</sup>. They also face increasing social pressures caused by conservatism, patriarchy, gender discrimination and unequal distribution of social and political power<sup>7</sup>. These dimensions, including the occupation, shape the environment in which Palestinian youth live through and navigate, and are likely to have adverse impacts on their wellbeing.

Women in the OPT, just like in other societies, face gender inequality and marginalization. Many changes need to be made in education, labor force, wage, and decision-making to increase the inclusion of women. Palestinian women have double the disadvantage, as they have to deal with both the gender inequality within the society and the occupation that targets their physical and mental well-being<sup>8,9</sup>. Despite improvements in Palestinian women's education, more progress is necessary to increase women's participation in leadership roles and the labor force. Only 19.6% are in labor force in contrast to 100% participation in domestic labor/activities<sup>10</sup>. Furthermore, gender dynamics are important to understanding how young

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<sup>1</sup> Goldin, N. (2014). *The global youth wellbeing index*: Rowman & Littlefield.

<sup>2</sup> Arnett, J. J., Žukauskienė, R., & Sugimura, K. (2014). The new life stage of emerging adulthood at ages 18–29 years: implications for mental health. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 1(7), 569-576.

<sup>3</sup> Abu Fasheh, W. (2013). *The Status of Youth in Palestine*: Sharek Youth Forum

<sup>4</sup> Giacaman, R., Rabaia, Y., Nguyen-Gillham, V., Batniji, R., Punamäki, R.-L., & Summerfield, D. (2011). Mental health, social distress and political oppression: The case of the occupied Palestinian territory. *Global public health*, 6(5), 547-559

<sup>5</sup> Giacaman, R., Shannon, H. S., Saab, H., Arya, N., & Boyce, W. (2007). Individual and collective exposure to political violence: Palestinian adolescents coping with conflict. *The European Journal of Public Health*, 17(4), 361-368.

<sup>6</sup> Transparency International. (2015). *Asset Declarations in Palestine Illicit Enrichment and Conflicts of Interest of Public Officials* Transparency International.

<sup>7</sup> Abu Fasheh, W. (2013). *The Status of Youth in Palestine*: Sharek Youth Forum

<sup>8</sup> Kabeer, N., *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Critical Analysis of the Third Millennium Development Goal*. *Gender and Development*, 2005. 13(1): p. 13-24.

<sup>9</sup> Rubenberg, C., *Palestinian Women: Patriarchy and Resistance in the West Bank*. 2001, The United States of America: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

<sup>10</sup> Social and Economic Policies Monitor. *Women in the Palestinian labor market*. 2017 [cited 2018 26/02]; Available from: <http://www.almarsad.ps/archives/791>.

women and men experience equality and equity, which is influenced by a complex web of cultural and social factors.

Although there is an increase in attention on youth<sup>11</sup> as a sector in research in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), data provided about Palestinian youth remains limited. Moreover, the majority of research done on youth exclusion has largely utilized uni-dimensional and uni-level analytical approaches. Much of the research has focused on the economic dimension of exclusion (particularly unemployment), while a limited number of studies have, for example, highlighted how exclusion from the labor market leads to or is influenced by other forms of exclusion, which operate at different levels from the state and society to the family (macro, meso, micro).

The current literature on Palestinian youth focuses on unemployment, utilizing mainly the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) Labor Force and other such surveys, including the Palestinian Family Health Survey, the Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS), and the Socioeconomic and Food Security Survey (SEFSec). There are several other reports published by local organizations, which rely on compiling information from other reports. An example is the Sharek Youth Forum's reports on youth<sup>12</sup>, which relies on a literature review that combines information from various sources. Such reports present a general picture of the conditions of youth, which is necessary but not sufficient as they mainly rely on qualitative work that can provide important insights, but cannot be generalized to the larger population of youth. Additionally, these reports often rely on descriptive statistics and cannot be used for comparisons between groups. Therefore, there is a need to conduct more in-depth statistical analysis of rich data sets, such as the nationally representative Power2Youth study.

This study presents an important opportunity to fill the gap of knowledge by offering a critical understanding of the state of youth through a comprehensive interdisciplinary and multi-level approach. By combining the economic, political and socio-cultural spheres and a macro (policy/institutional), meso (organizational) and micro (individual) level analysis, we can explore the root causes and complex dynamics of the processes of youth exclusion and inclusion from the labor market and civic/political life, while investigating the potentially transformative effect of youth agency.

Moreover, the processes of exclusion/inclusion are produced at the intersection of different axes of power stemming from privileges and disadvantages, structured not only generational, but also on gender, class, ethnicity, and other social divides that act to create differences and inequalities among youth themselves. It is important to look at the intersectionality of various factors in creating the different subgroups of young women and men, and to look into interventions and policies that meet the interests and needs emerging from this intersectionality. If some of the literature looks at gender as a defining factor, the data analysis needs not only a specific focus on gender, but it also requires the interlinked contributing factors to oppression/discrimination.

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<sup>11</sup> Various definitions of youth exist, for the purposes of this study; we refer to youth as young women and young men between the ages 18 and 29.

<sup>12</sup> See: Sharek Youth Forum. The status of youth in Palestine at : <http://www.youth.ps/new/userfiles/file/publications/Research%20and%20Studies/SharekYouthForum-Promise-or-Peril-The-Status-of-Youth-in-Palestine.pdf>

The Institute of Community and Public Health (ICPH) of the Birzeit University is a research and teaching institute that is also a partner of Power2Youth (P2Y) in OPT. P2Y<sup>13</sup> is a consortium of research and academic institutions from different disciplines based in the EU member states, Switzerland, Norway and South East Mediterranean (SEM), countries formed to explore the dynamics of youth exclusion and the prospects for youth transformative agency in the SEM region. As part of the project, a survey (which included a representative sample of Palestinian youth with a total sample size of 1353, and about 53% of the sample comprised of young women), was conducted in the West Bank<sup>14</sup> and the Gaza Strip. In this project, ICPH conducted further in-depth statistical analysis as well as additional qualitative fieldwork to inform our analysis and elucidate the findings. By analyzing the data, we were able to identify the main factors associated with young people's wellbeing<sup>15</sup>, or lack thereof, and therefore provide policy makers and practitioners with an understanding of the conditions of Palestinian youth as well as the evidence needed for policy making and interventions.

In this study, we focused on two important aspects, wellbeing and gender relations. We chose these two aspects, first for their importance, particularly in the context of the OPT, where youth are especially vulnerable and where wellbeing is threatened. Understanding the needs of youth and the factors that determine their wellbeing<sup>16</sup> are important in formulating policies that invest in youth. We draw on the WHO's definition and operationalization of wellbeing, which views wellbeing as positive mental health whereby each individual realizes their potential, can cope with the stresses of life, work productively and is able to make a contribution to her or his community<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, gender dynamics are important to understanding how young women and men experience inclusion and exclusion. They also inform how they navigate a complex web of cultural, social, political, and economic factors and dynamics in their lives and how they navigate and overcome these challenges.

Generally, there is a dearth of research about gender equality and equity issues from the perspectives of youth. As for wellbeing, other than generalities, in our review of the literature, we were unable to locate any analysis related to the wellbeing of young Palestinians or the factors associated with wellbeing. In other words, the analyses included in this study will contribute to the identification of actual priority area needs for Palestinian youth that require action by stakeholders and identify particular groups of youth that may be more vulnerable. Furthermore, we draw on youths' own words and experiences through the qualitative portion of the study. As a part of the validation and dissemination process, we also conducted participatory dissemination workshops in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip in order to present findings, share and discuss the findings directly with youth and other stakeholders, and generate policy recommendations based on the priorities identified by youth themselves.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.power2youth.eu/project#sthash.Yw8KC81a.dpuf>

<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, Jerusalem was not included in the survey

<sup>15</sup> Well-being is defined based on the WHO definition, which operationalizes well-being through asking questions in various domains of life. Refer to methodology for operationalization.

<sup>16</sup> Well-being is a multifaceted, culturally and contextually sensitive concept and has different definitions and connotations. Mainly, it means feeling and functioning well. The WHO-5 index for mental wellbeing used in the quantitative survey covers the constructs of positive mood, vitality and general interests.

<sup>17</sup> Winther Topp, C. Ostergaard SD, Sondergaard, Bech P. The WHO-5 Well-Being Index: A Systematic Review. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* 2015;84:167-176.

## Research Objectives

The ultimate outcome is to gain a better understanding of the state of young women and men between the ages of 15-29 in the OPT to influence stakeholders for directing appropriate programming and interventions towards youth needs and interests, and specifically towards gender justice.

## Research Questions

This research project will focus on two central research questions:

- 1) What is the status of the wellbeing of Palestinian youth in the OPT? And, what are the factors that influence the wellbeing of youth?
- 2) How do Palestinian youth perceive gender equality issues? And, what are the factors that play an important role in determining attitudes towards gender equality?

## METHODS

For the quantitative portion of the study, we conducted our analysis in multiple stages. First, we examined key variables separately; then looking at bivariate associations and developing scales for various dimensions; and finally running different multivariate analyses to arrive at the most informative and statistically sound model. We include two measures that serve as proxy measures for trust and social relations, as well as a third measure focusing on perceived personal freedom. The first is the perceived importance of the youth's opinion in her/his family. We created a trust measure based on responses to five questions, which included the degree of trust youth had in their nuclear families, extended families, neighbours, people they knew personally, and people they met for the first time. A higher score on the scale indicates a higher degree of trust. Additionally, we ran various iterations of the multivariate model, initially including all variables deemed statistically significant in the bivariate analysis and other important control variables, irrespective of statistical significance (including age, gender, wealth/socioeconomic status).

The sample for the analysis conducted in this study consisted of 1353 youths (18-29 years old). Approximately 53% of the sample consisted of young women. Approximately 40% of the respondents reside in the Gaza Strip, with the remaining 60% residing in the West Bank. About 69% of the participants reside in urban areas, 15.5% in rural areas and 15.2% in refugee camps. About 21% of the sample completed a post-secondary degree, while about 42% had completed a secondary education. Refer to table 1.1 in the appendix for additional sample characteristics.

For the qualitative portion of this study, we began by developing an interview guide based on the findings of the quantitative portion as well as pertinent literature. We then conducted a pilot focus group discussion with Birzeit University students to test the questions. Upon finalization of the guide, we conducted eleven focus group discussions with youth throughout the OPT, including: Hebron, Halhoul, Bethlehem, Ramallah, the Northwest Jerusalem villages, Nablus city, Northern West Bank villages (discussion took place in Nablus city), Jerusalem city, Gaza City, Deir Al-Balah, and Rafah. A consultant, working and residing in Gaza City, implemented the focus group discussions conducted in the Gaza Strip after discussion and feedback from the ICPH team. The focus group discussions ranged in size from about eight participants to a maximum of about twenty participants. The focus group discussion included young women and men from different backgrounds and areas. Most of the

groups were mixed, with the exception of one all-women group in the Northern West Bank,<sup>18</sup> and another all women group in Rafah where the young men invited refused to join the discussion because young women were also attending.<sup>19</sup> The ICPH team conducted the remainder of the focus group discussions. In each focus group discussion, at least two researchers from ICPH<sup>20</sup> were present to facilitate. All the focus group discussions were audio recorded and then transcribed verbatim. We analysed the data through multiple readings, and then coding of each focus group discussion by at least two researchers independently, and then organizing into main themes based on the research objectives. We then presented the initial findings from the study in participatory workshops where we invited young women and men, as well as institutions working on issues pertaining to youth and/or gender equality. The workshops provided a platform for participants to engage with and respond to the findings we presented, and then put forth policy recommendations. The recommendations presented at the end of the report are the recommendations put forth by participants in the workshops. The workshops were conducted simultaneously in Birzeit and Gaza, where another workshop was also organized in East Jerusalem.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Youth Wellbeing:**

#### **Quantitative Findings-Status of Wellbeing and its Determinants among Palestinian Youth:**

In this section, we present the findings from the quantitative portion of the study. In terms of wellbeing, the mean wellbeing score for the sample was 58.74 (out of a maximum possible score of 100), which is a bit higher than the WHO cutoff point for ill-being (50). This number indicates that the wellbeing of youth based on the WHO-5 scale is slightly good. It is important to note that about 36% of the respondents had scores below 50, which means that they have poor wellbeing according to the WHO. Young men had slightly higher levels of ill-being compared to young women, where about 37.5% of young men had scores below 50 compared with 34.1% of young women. Table 1.2 in the appendix provides additional information on wellbeing and other scale scores.

#### ***Multivariate Analysis: the Determinants of Wellbeing***

Here, we examine the factors that affect youth wellbeing, based on the results of the multivariate analysis. Table 2.1 in the appendix includes the final model for the full sample (West Bank and Gaza), and tables 2.2 and 2.3. We then include regression results for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip separately due to some noted variations in how these variables impact wellbeing. Furthermore, given the variations in the political and institutional contexts within the West Bank and Gaza Strip, we thought it was important to examine wellbeing in each context, separately. The overall results are informative of general trends and provide comparative insights. As we noted previously, the people of the Gaza Strip have been suffering under occupation for over fifty years, a severe illegal blockade for over a decade, where three wars have taken place in the last decade. The ongoing political division between Fatah and Hamas also means that the main Palestinian political body ruling in the West Bank is the Palestinian Authority, and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. While both the West Bank and Gaza Strip

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<sup>18</sup> The young men invited to participate did not show up.

<sup>19</sup> This is despite the researcher clarifying what the aims of the focus group were.

<sup>20</sup> In most FGDs, the facilitators included one woman and one man, typically including two women and one man. The exception is the Gaza Strip, where the researcher was a woman.

are occupied territory, inevitably impacted by the Israeli occupation, conditions in the Gaza Strip are much more dire, with the government's ability to provide basic services severely constrained. The structural differences and differences in absolute conditions are likely to result in variations in the effects of determinants on wellbeing. As we will see below, the determinants of wellbeing do vary between the West Bank and Gaza Strip. For example, while in the West Bank, satisfaction with government efforts to secure employment opportunities was a significant determinant of wellbeing, in the Gaza Strip, this determinant was not significant rather the perceived importance of youth was more important. The perceived importance of youth variable is based on questions related to how important respondents believed youth were in society in terms of their actual participation and inclusion.

Table 2.1 summarizes the results from the multivariate linear regression analysis, with wellbeing as the outcome variable. In general, a unit change in any of the independent variables is associated with B coefficient, indicating resultant unit change in the wellbeing score (out of a maximum total of 100). The key variables that are associated with wellbeing are: gender, age, satisfaction with housing, satisfaction with neighborhood, perceived influence/importance of youth in society, perceived importance of opinion within the family, satisfaction with government efforts to guarantee employment opportunities for youth, personal freedom scale score, confidence in political/government institutions, and trust. We also include education and wealth score in the model. However, these variables are not statistically significantly associated with wellbeing. While this finding may be surprising, it is consistent with past studies conducted in the OPT. It is important to note that while 'objective' measures of wealth based on amenities and living conditions is not statistically significant, satisfaction with housing and neighbourhood were found to be statistically significant. The measures serve as proxy measures for subjective living conditions/socioeconomic status.

#### *Explanation of associations:*

Sociodemographic characteristics: The results indicate (refer to tables in annex) that male youth have lower wellbeing scores compared to females, where on average, men have scores that are about three points lower compared to women ( $B=-2.917$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Furthermore, age appears to be inversely associated with wellbeing, where every year increase in age is associated with about 0.7 point decrease in wellbeing score ( $B= -0.682$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). Objective measures for wealth and socioeconomic characteristics were not found to be significantly associated with wellbeing. However, subjective measures were found to be statistically significant associations with wellbeing. Youth who indicated that they were satisfied with the conditions of their homes, had, on average and with all else equal, scores that were 3.5 points ( $B= 3.516$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) higher compared to youth who indicated that they were dissatisfied with their housing. Similarly, youth indicating that they were satisfied with their neighborhoods had scores that were almost 5 points higher compared to youth who were dissatisfied with their neighborhoods ( $B=4.83$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

Trust and social relations: We find that youth indicating that their opinion was very important to their family had scores that were about 3 points higher compared to youth who did not consider their opinions to be very important in their families ( $B=2.929$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). We find that every point change in the trust scale score is associated with about a 1.6 point increase in the wellbeing score ( $B=1.559$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). The personal freedom scale consists of positive responses to six items: the freedom to express one's thoughts and ideas at home; the freedom to express one's thoughts and ideas among close friends; the freedom to express one's thoughts and

ideas in the community; the freedom to express one's thoughts and ideas on the national level; the freedom to dress and groom oneself as you wish; and the freedom to visit places you like. We did not include the question about freedom to leave the country and travel abroad because youth in Gaza are unable to leave the Gaza Strip due to the illegal blockade that has lasted over a decade as along with extreme mobility restrictions severely limiting movement in and out of the Gaza Strip. The responses to this item were highly correlated with region. In other words, almost all respondents from the Gaza Strip reported that they did not have this freedom at all, which meant that we could not separate this variable from region. The findings from the regression analysis indicate that every positive response to the freedom items is associated with an approximately a 1.6 point increase in the wellbeing score ( $B=1.585$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

Linking Social Capital/Trust and confidence in political institutions and perceived importance of youth: To capture youth's perceptions of government institutions and the role and importance of youth, we included three separate measures. The first is whether youth were satisfied with government efforts to create employment opportunities for youth. The survey does not specify which government, and based on qualitative work and other insights, it appears that youth in the West Bank understand this to be the Palestinian Authority government, while in Gaza, youth's responses reflect their satisfaction with the Hamas de facto government. The second measure is a confidence scale where we counted the number of institutions youth indicated they had at least some confidence in. These institutions include: security forces, police, courts, government, local councils/municipalities, political parties, parliament, and public civil services. The final measure pertains to youth perceptions of the importance/significance of youth in various institutions. These include voluntary organizations, political parties, local community, and whether political leaders took youth into consideration. We counted how many times youth indicated that youth were at least somewhat important. Here importance was subjective and measured on a likert scale (not important at all, somewhat important, important, and very important).

The results indicate that all of the aforementioned measures are significantly positively associated with wellbeing, albeit to varying degrees. Youth who indicated that they were satisfied with government efforts to provide employment opportunities for youth scored about 3.4 points higher than youth who were unsatisfied with government efforts ( $B=3.367$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). For every institution youth indicated satisfaction in, the average wellbeing score increased by 0.67 points ( $B=0.674$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). For each item youth were perceived to be important or influential, the average wellbeing score increased by about 1.16 points ( $B=1.155$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

Once we separate the analysis for the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the results change in some ways.

### **West Bank**

Sociodemographic: The results of the regression analysis indicate that the key variables associated with wellbeing are: gender, satisfaction with neighborhood, the importance of youth's opinion in family, personal freedom, trust, and satisfaction with government efforts to secure employment opportunities for youth.

Male respondents had, on average, scores that were about four points lower than females ( $B= -3.988$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Age was no longer statistically significant in this analysis, but may in part be due to the smaller sample size when separating the sample. The sample size is still large enough for robust results among young women and men, but may result in a reduced statistical ability to detect small differences between groups. Youth who indicated they were

satisfied with their neighborhoods had scores that were about 10 points higher compared to youth that were dissatisfied with their neighborhoods ( $B= 9.989, p<0.001$ ).

*Trust and social relations:* youth who reported that their opinions were very important in their families had scores that were on average about 3 points higher compared to youth who did not feel their opinions were very important in their families ( $B=3.219, p<0.05$ ). Higher reports on the personal freedom and trust scales were also associated with higher wellbeing scored. Each point change in the personal freedom scale was associated with a 1.3 point increase in wellbeing score ( $B=1.317, p<0.05$ ). Each point increase on the trust scale results in an approximately 1.5 point increase in wellbeing score ( $B=1.475, p<0.001$ )

*Linking social capital/trust and confidence in political institutions and perceived importance of youth:*

The only measure from this category that was significant in the analysis for the West Bank is satisfaction with government efforts to provide employment opportunities for youth, where youth participants who were satisfied with government efforts had scores that were higher by about 5 points ( $B=5.316, p<0.01$ ) compared to youth who were dissatisfied.

#### **Gaza Final Regression:**

*Sociodemographic:* The results of the regression analysis indicate that the key variables associated with wellbeing are: age, satisfaction with housing, personal freedom, trust, and the perceived influence of youth. Age was statistically significant in this analysis, whereas gender was no longer significant. Each additional year of age was associated with approximately a one point decrease in wellbeing ( $B= -0.993, p<0.01$ ). Youth who indicated they were satisfied with their housing had scores that were about 5.5 points higher compared to youth that were dissatisfied with their housing ( $B= 5.493, p<0.01$ ). Here, satisfaction with government efforts to secure employment is not significant, whereas it is in the West Bank. One possible explanation for this is that the conditions in the Gaza Strip are much more dire economically with an unemployment rate over 45%, youth are likely to view broader constraints and the Israeli occupation as holding the main responsibility for the lack of work opportunities. The conditions in the Gaza Strip may also partially explain why Gaza youth appear to be more concerned with their home conditions and less so with broader neighbourhood conditions.

*Trust and social relations:* Higher reports on the personal freedom and trust scales were also associated with higher wellbeing scored. Each point change in the personal freedom scale was associated with approximately a 2.1 point increase in wellbeing score ( $B=2.118, p<0.01$ ). Each point increase on the trust scale results in an approximately 1.8 point increase in wellbeing score ( $B=1.838, p<0.001$ )

*Linking social capital/trust and confidence in political institutions and perceived importance of youth:* The only measure from this category that was significant in the analysis for the Gaza Strip was youth's perceptions of importance of youth, for every item youth were considered to be important (or taken into consideration by leaders), the wellbeing score increased by about 2.6 points ( $B=2.608, p<0.01$ ). These included appreciation for the importance of youth in voluntary organizations, political parties, and local community, and whether politicians pay attention to issues of concern to youth.

### **Qualitative Findings: *Wellbeing, its definition and determinants among Palestinian youth***

The findings from the qualitative portion of our research indicate that wellbeing itself is a multidimensional concept that encompasses various aspects/dimensions of life and is influenced by a multitude of determinants. For young women and men, wellbeing largely includes both physical and psychosocial understandings of health.

The findings from youth themselves highlight the particularly vulnerable state Palestinian youth are in, especially given the presence of political, economic and social structures that limit their participation and render their futures ever the more uncertain. Specifically, Palestinian youth as Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian territory (West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip) suffer the consequences of prolonged occupation, which includes limitations on basic freedoms, chronic uncertainty and difficult economic conditions. Furthermore, as we will explain in more detail in what follows, youth feel the repercussions of an increasingly repressive Palestinian political system that increasingly limits their freedom of expression and other freedoms, while limiting their participation in political life.

Economic concerns and more specifically the high levels of unemployment are considered a key determinant of ill-being among Palestinian youth. The issue of unemployment was considered to be one of the most important issues youth have to deal with, and limited their future prospects. It also increased their pessimism about the future, and for some increased their desire to migrate in search of a better future. The social aspects of life could either be a source of support, like social support and trust, or further restriction for youth, like limitations on freedom and social pressures. Family support was considered key to the wellbeing of young women and men and was commonly viewed positively. Youth's experiences and interactions with the broader community/society however were mixed. Many participants felt that there was a lot of negativity and discouragement from people around them, which also stifled their freedoms. For young women, restrictions imposed by traditions and social norms were more pronounced and caused greater pressure on young women. Youth's personal characteristics moderated the effects of social, economic and political conditions whereby personality traits including determination and perseverance had the potential to help youth overcome negative influences.

In the sections that follow, we present the findings in more detail drawing on young women and men's own words.

#### Defining Wellbeing:

As we stated earlier, wellbeing is a comprehensive concept that includes both physical and psychosocial wellbeing. In large part, physical and psychosocial wellbeing were seen as complementary to one another. Initially many of the participants focused on the physical elements of wellbeing, where having wellbeing meant to 'be free of disease' or having physical strength. One young woman from a village north of Nablus pointed out: **"...meaning that (the person) is free of any disease that they may suffer from, his wellbeing is health meaning that there is strength, the presence of wellbeing means that he doesn't suffer from any diseases or anything that would cause his wellbeing to deteriorate."**

A young man from Halhoul noted that wellbeing also includes psychosocial wellbeing: **"I think that peace of mind feeds into wellbeing, because if you don't have it you don't have wellbeing..."** Another young man added: **"[wellbeing is] peace of mind, being psychologically at ease, social and material comfort."** A young man from Rafah noted: **"the absence of disease and mental and social health, a comprehensive state of physical, mental, social, and health and not (just) a body absent of disease."**

A young woman from Rafah elaborated on wellbeing and how a person's ability to deal with their environment: "[wellbeing] is similar to mental health, a person needs to be at peace with themselves and with the environment around them and how the individual manages themselves is what gives them good mental health or wellbeing." Another young woman also connected her definition of wellbeing with society's treatment of women:

**"For me as a girl, a safe place to live in and that family and others around me have a changed perspective on girls. I face problems, why do you go out and go there? and what do you want with this project? leave it. Okay, we're supposed to resolve this social problem between males and females, we're trying. Give me an opportunity, I suffer from gender (discrimination), and then there will be psychological ease/comfort [once there is greater gender equality]."**

As we can see from the quotes above, wellbeing as understood by Palestinian youth is a holistic concept that encompasses both psychological and physical dimensions, and is linked more broadly to understandings of good health. Physical and psychological health were also seen to be connected, often complementing each other or impacting and impacted by each other. As one young man from Bethlehem noted: **"...the wellbeing of a person is physical and psychological, like the psychological sometimes might hit the body and the bodily might also impact the psychological."** Having wellbeing was seen as key to the youth participating in the study, and as one young woman from the Southern West Bank stated **"The one who has wellbeing is fortified, protected and resistant (محصن)."** In the following sections, we focus on the determinants of wellbeing, and have divided them into social, economic, political, and personal determinants. While the importance of each dimension varied among youth, they largely believed that they influenced wellbeing through their interaction with each other, rather than as having an independent impact on wellbeing.

#### Determinants:

##### *Social*

Social dimensions of life were particularly important for young women and men as determinants of wellbeing. These domains were also perhaps among the more complex in terms of their scope and the magnitude of their impact on youth. On a broader level, youth often differentiated between family level factors and the broader social environment that is linked to community and socio-cultural norms. The family represented the most basic and foundational level of impact on wellbeing and in youths' experiences of social life. Familial harmony was considered essential to youths' sense of security and peace of mind. Conversely, the absence of harmony or the presence of problems within the family was considered detrimental to wellbeing and a great source of stress for youth. One young man from Gaza City noted:

**"when you live in a house where the family supports you and the relationship between you and them is not a relationship of father or mother or a dominating/controlling person but a relationship of friendship, then the output from this house is a productive individual not just at the level of the family they might benefit the family and society more generally."**

Another young man from a village northwest of Jerusalem elaborated:

**“Perhaps the family, the person’s family supports him or pulls him down or creates barriers, now this is the starting point and the [youth] begins<sup>21</sup> from this point to external society depending on this foundational column. A person’s future is determined (by the family), maybe the person will be embarrassed or is consistently down or is too shy to speak or express his opinion or say anything so if the central family is supportive of the individual, he will enter society from a position of strength...”**

Similarly, one woman in Hebron noted: **“wellbeing is something you derive from your environment and family. If the child went through phases of his/her childhood with a sound upbringing and life skills, this child will grow up with wellbeing if the atmosphere of the house is sound..”** She then links the political environment to wellbeing, where she says **“...[conversely] for example come to the old city [in Hebron] and look at the problems between families and the occupation, and the clashes with settlers and Israelis at the checkpoints, in the first example [the child’s] mindset is one thing and in the other it is something else entirely, including his priorities and ambitions.”**

In addition to the issue of upbringing, this young woman also noted the importance of the environment a child lives in, and notes that for children living in more insecure and politically vulnerable spaces, like the old city of Hebron, their futures are more precarious. Here we also see an example of the interaction between the social and political environments, which we will elaborate on later in this report.

The way in which children and youth<sup>22</sup> are brought up was seen as essential to how youth dealt with various aspects of their lives in the future and also shaped the space in which youth were allowed to navigate or conversely the types of restrictions imposed on them. One young woman from a village in the northern West Bank noted:

**“[the family] has to be in sync on the basis that you can (independently) go out and walk your first steps in your life or enter society, so you have to first have a connected family that is lenient also, that you can have discussions with them, not ‘be quiet, don’t speak’, thank God there is interconnectedness and understanding...family is the foundation.”**

As we see throughout these quotes from young women and men, family is also considered to be essential in either fostering or inhibiting self-esteem/confidence. Often for girls and young women, there is a gendered layer to this effect. As one young woman in Rafah noted: **“with respect to self-confidence from the family we have at the level of Rafah, there are a lot of young women with a lack of confidence in themselves that led them to get married early and not finish their education and not do the work that they like...”** Some of the participants believed that if these young women had more confidence and encouragement to apply themselves they would not give in to the pressure to get married early. Others also elaborated on the particularities’ of young women’s relationships with their families, that further reveal the gendered layer to family relations and society more broadly. One young woman from a village in the northern West Bank noted: **“of course I’m going to be quiet and be depressed I’m going to remain quiet that’s it, they (referring to her family) didn’t get me used to speaking...if someone tells me something, I’m going to say okay and remain quiet even if I wasn’t satisfied.”** Another young

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<sup>21</sup> i.e. this is the foundational point or starting point in one’s life.

<sup>22</sup> In the study, the age group we included for youth was between 18-29. In reference to the discussion on upbringing, many participants believed that the way youth are brought up when they are children has an important impact on their outlook and personalities later on. So while childhood was not a key phase of interest for the study, it was brought up by youth as a formative phase that impacted them as they got older.

woman in the same focus group added: **“if you don’t want to listen to my opinion then I don’t have a personality and this will lead to feeling low and crushed inside and this might then lead to fatigue.”** Another young woman from Gaza city added:

**“the source of the gap between me and my father is that he always has an objection to the girl going out so when I want to go out... when I tell him I want to go out he tells me everything you do is for nothing, at the end of the day you’re a girl and even if you reach Mars, in the end you’re going to go to the kitchen.”**

In the same focus group, a young woman shared a very different experience:

**“My father studied in Britain so he’s very open...I often go out after work until about 12 at night with foreigners so how is it that this family accepts this as normal... this has an outstanding impact on my mental wellbeing even when I was a student I used to work and had my freedom meaning that I had high status.”**

The experiences of girls noted above highlight the gendered experience of restrictions that also connect to the broader community, which will be the focus of the following section. Many girls noted that even if their families are open and understanding, they still had to conform to societal expectations and understandings of propriety, which monitored young women’s behaviour more closely than that of young men. Therefore, while a positive and healthy environment at home was considered important, its presence did not always protect young women from the judgment and impositions of social norms and expectations. As we will discuss below, among both young women and men, the family was still considered to be a safe haven compared to broader community, which was seen to be more judgmental and discouraging. While some of the examples noted above exemplify more negative or restrictive relationships between youth and their families, these did not represent a majority of the youth who participated in the study, and highlight more generally the importance of family relationships on youth wellbeing. As the family was considered to be an important haven for youth, any problems within the family were seen to have more detrimental impacts. Participants in the study believed that among these impacts is a lack of a sense of security and stability, which is likely to shape the way that youth live their lives.

#### Broader community:

On a more general level, having social relationships was considered to be important to wellbeing by youth. One young woman from Rafah remarked on the importance of social relationships: **“... through my social relationships I am able to find myself, humans are social beings by nature...”** Similarly, a young woman from Halhoul noted: **“whoever doesn’t have relationships, doesn’t have wellbeing.”** Although youth agreed generally that social relationships are important, they also had their limits and what was more important was having relationships with people who were a positive influence. Others noted that at times having too many relationships was not good because it would increase social responsibilities and expectations.

As we noted before, although many of the youth felt that they had a supportive family environment, their assessments of the broader community were more negative particularly in terms of the lack of encouragement and space for youth participation. One young man from Ramallah explained:

**“Each person has their energy threshold (taqa)...it’s possible that there are people among us who have ideas and have a way, but how do you get them to the right way? We have [capabilities], but we don’t have anyone who understands them, and there’s no one to motivate you.”**

Another young man from Halhoul added:

“...and maybe its feeling down, there isn’t anyone to support you with a specific idea and there are a lot of youth that don’t find employment or work and if we turn to the issue of employment and work, you will find that some youth try to escape [unemployment] by investing in themselves. He would think of an idea or project to work with and you find the closest people to him bring him down, tell him it won’t succeed...maybe if he moved forward with it and put all of his wellbeing into it he would produce but it’s the bringing down by all the people around him and they’re reducing his sense of worth or the value of the thing he is thinking of.”

This lack of encouragement and support for youth, and more generally the limited space for the participation of youth in community life, especially in positions of leadership, was a great demoralizing force and negatively influenced their wellbeing. Youth consistently emphasized that they had the energy and drive to improve themselves and their conditions, but that oftentimes their enthusiasm was met with discouragement from the people around them.

In addition to the lack of encouragement youth felt, many participants also discussed the negative consequences of gossip or criticism from people. For some youth, this was an additional source of added pressure, and for others it further restricted their freedom, especially when they had to adjust their plans and behaviours to limit gossip. As with the restrictions from family discussed previously, youths’ experiences were also gendered and appear to affect young women to a greater degree. One young woman from Gaza city explained: “tell anybody that you work evenings, a big attack, you’re a girl, how do you go by yourself, how...I don’t allow anyone lower my standing...I don’t, okay I am confident in myself, but it still affects me a lot.” Another young woman in Ramallah noted: “What we’re living in, is a society very judgmental of individuals and the nature of a person is that you don’t like to be judged, so this has an effect in that we are living in a closed society.”

For some youth, in addition to being demoralizing these comments and judgments from people also influenced decisions. For example, a young man from Halhoul explained:

“you don’t find the needed support and you don’t find people around you both within the family and society. [For example] your average is good [in school], we all see this a lot and there’s one [young woman] who studied in Abu Dis, Physics with a scholarship, and people blamed her...the girl had grades in the nineties and people kept telling her you have a high average....and you chose this concentration. This force from your family and society affects your spirits and keeps us away from the things we want, I think that the characteristic (of society) and I get upset, it robs us of our energies<sup>23</sup>...the impact of society on me in that it dictates what you work or what you do affects your spirits.”

A young woman in the same focus group added:

“I see that people have this negativity about them, any action on your part they have to comment about, and even at the level of the family, you come up with an idea and you’re excited to do something they tell you know, and they give you a thousand reasons not to do it, they depress you. This [happens] a lot. There is something, a negative atmosphere in general.”

#### *Societal Restrictions and Curtailed Freedoms:*

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<sup>23</sup> This translation might be unclear, but here the participant was articulating the point in Arabic to signify that these unnecessary restrictions and the lack of support and encouragement from society puts youth in a situation where they have to expend their energy on dealing with these negative influences rather than on putting it towards something more productive.

In their discussions of community, youth highlighted what they felt are restrictive social norms and traditions that curtail their freedoms. Many youth felt that people around them held on to traditions that were not in line with the demands of the modern world and often limited youth's freedoms. Oftentimes, these traditions were reinforced directly by their parents/family, even if their parents/family did not fully agree with them. Ultimately, these restrictions were a source of pressure and stress for youth.

One young woman from a village northeast of Jerusalem told us: **"...norms and traditions that are exaggerated affect a person's psychological wellbeing."** Here again, this young woman was referring to the unnecessarily restrictive norms that especially limit women's participation. A young woman in the same group explained: **"Traditions might limit/constrain for example young men and women, for example for a person with ambition, this affects their psychological wellbeing and it might make them go backwards and not progress."** Another young woman from Ramallah emphatically stated **"these norms and traditions that restrict [youth] are not just norms and traditions, but backwardness...all of these things are old, how do we allow people who lived centuries before us control our lives now, let's say it is not backwardness, it is insanity."** A young man in the same group added:

**"its official insanity...what is happening is officially insane...because for example it is insane when I tell a girl you can't go out and take part in an activity where girls were drawing a mural on a wall because the wall is by the street, but when it comes to an awards ceremony and all the whole world attends and there are cameras they tell girls come get your award...or when a girl completes the tawjihi exam and wants to go to university, her father comes and tells her I don't have daughters that go to university or you can't study at a mixed university, what do you call this?!"**

Here again, participants pointed out how these traditions tend to be more restrictive of young women and girls, and prevent them from participating in the activities that exist for youth. For example, one young man mentioned that they have a youth center in their village but that most girls and young women in the village do not come to the center because they are afraid of gossip.

While traditions and cultural norms were considered to be more restrictive of girls and young women, especially in terms of their mobility, they were also a source of pressure for young men. One young woman from a village near Bethlehem noted:

**"for example in the same office I see K and A have to save for the household, and they have to save for dowry and gold, I am more carefree than they are. I feel like there is a specific kind of pressure on young men from the traditions that we don't even understand why they have been put in place, so we can make a lunch for a thousand people we don't like and we feed them and they come talk about us and go home and we have to spend money on them, work for five years for a wedding...these norms and traditions are a pressure on the wellbeing of youth, both men and women."**

These burdens and pressures placed on young men posed a significant challenge to their wellbeing. This point was emphasized by young men, especially in the focus group we had in Nablus, where young men explained how these societal demands placed on men, especially when they were looking to get married, creates a great burden. One young man noted, **"it's suffocating and so many young men go into debt to get married and meet the demands imposed by tradition."** So while young men had greater mobility compared to young women, traditions restricted their freedom and increased the financial burdens on them, especially for marriage.

One young woman from Hebron explained that traditions can be restrictive, but that the core problem is that people do not respect differences:

“Now norms and traditions at times cause problems and control us and restrict us. For example, like he said the way a young man deals with a girl or the way you’re treated at work by your supervisor, or treatment by your teacher, I feel like there is always this authority over you. Of course, we shouldn’t cross any red lines, but of course my norms are not like those of my father sixty years ago so I have to behave in a way that is natural and in line with my personality, and not restrict myself to [my father’s norms]. Maybe he has ideas and I respect that but I also want someone to respect the ideas that I have, no one respects the other, between men and women, black and white, or a girl who wears a headscarf and one that doesn’t...and honestly when a young man wears shorts you find a thousand people commenting on him and when a sheikh passes by wearing a dishdasha a thousand people comment...we don’t respect each other.”

The need to respect difference was reiterated by youth in various discussions and relates back to what they see as a largely judgmental society. Some even noted that this is a more recent trend, and based on photographs they have seen from the past or stories from their relatives, there seemed to be more of an openness and acceptance of difference before. When youth referred to traditions (تقاليد), they largely referred to these conservative norms that have come to be thought of as traditions.

This closed mindedness and what some described as selective and blind attachment to some traditions has a negative impact on young women and men’s wellbeing, especially when they are not allowed the possibility to change and adapt societal norms. Some youth noted that if we examine traditions, some of them are positive, like when people helped and supported each other during tough times. However, the selective clinging on to more restrictive traditions is what they largely viewed as a problem. Others also said that while they think more freedoms should be offered to youth, they would not want things to become chaotic where there is no order at all. They explained that they did not want to forgo social values completely. More often, the respondents were vague about what they meant here, but occasionally they mentioned that they did not think that too much openness in relationships between women and men should become the norm, and that certain boundaries should be maintained. Some values and traditions are important, especially those that do not restrict youth from progressing and participating actively in social and public life. One young woman from a village northeast of Jerusalem noted: **“openness within limits, we are talking about freedom from its correct understanding.”** This young woman believed that the limits should be in line with religious values rather than what she viewed as more restrictive and conservative norms and traditions (عادات و تقاليد). Another young woman from a village near Hebron noted: **“Of course we want free(dom), the person who has freedoms and who has opportunities open to them will have better wellbeing.”**

### *Economic*

Economic conditions are another key dimension affecting wellbeing and includes both personal/household as well as broader economic conditions. Participants often noted that economic conditions are generally bad, with high unemployment and increasing costs. In the oPt, overall unemployment is 27%, and over 45% among youth. However, it reaches about 60%

in the Gaza Strip<sup>24</sup>. Youth in Gaza emphasized the importance of rampant poverty resulting from the ongoing siege of the Gaza Strip. This emphasis on economic conditions may seem to be inconsistent with the statistical findings, however if we consider it closely it is not necessarily inconsistent. In the quantitative findings, household wealth was not found to be a significant determinant of wellbeing. The economic characteristics that youth mentioned were not measured in the survey, and have more to do with relative economic conditions and capabilities. In the quantitative analysis, satisfaction with neighborhood was a statistically significant determinant of wellbeing. This measure may actually be closer to what youth had in mind. Additionally, measures of economic conditions like wealth and even income at times may not be sensitive enough to measure differences between individuals or families. It would be inaccurate to conclude that because wealth index was not found to be statistically significant in the analysis, that economic factors are not important. The young women and men who participated in focus group discussions believed that there was a link between economic conditions and personal wellbeing, where having their needs met was important to wellbeing. Income on its own, however, does not have an indefinite positive effect on wellbeing. In other words, it was necessary but insufficient to assure good wellbeing. Broader (poor) economic conditions, and especially unemployment, were considered to have a negative impact on wellbeing, even if youth were economically well off on an individual level.

*Bad Economic Conditions and Increasing Demands:*

One young woman from Rafah explained:

**“the economic situation has an impact, now the father if he doesn’t have money how will he provide for his children and it will also impact me, for example, in my studies. How will I buy books? All of this will have an impact.”** Another young man from Rafah added: **“a house, a car, that I live a free life, where is the problem, the people that have money are the ones who are living their lives, whereas a graduate without work or a [good] economic situation [will not be living their lives].”**

A young woman from Bethlehem explained:

**“For sure, for example, someone who is financially comfortable and doesn’t have debts or anything [that he owes] will be psychologically at ease, that is healthy. But it is something else when someone has loans and debt and *hamm* (agony), meaning for sure his psyche will be strained/fatigued and he will keep thinking how will I cover this loan, how will I cover this, how will I pay for that, so he will be emotionally exhausted.”**

Others noted that economic conditions were very difficult, where even if you were employed it was still very difficult to provide one’s basic needs. Incomes were not commensurate with increasing prices and demands. Furthermore, while many people were facing great challenges to provide their basic needs, young women and men also pointed to increasing social inequalities.

One young man from Bethlehem noted:

**“...especially now, you feel like we are living in a world that is all about image. It is not like before, life used to be simpler. I remember for example when I was in school none of my classmates had a phone or a laptop, that makes life demands or issues**

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<sup>24</sup> Refer to: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/westbankandgaza/overview>

easier on us and our families, but now the burdens of life increased meaning that a phone that costs 3000 shekels is considered an essential life demand and as these demands increase it makes economic conditions more difficult and this affects us...”

A young woman from Ramallah elaborated on the issue of debt and the growing inequalities:

**“the idea of debts causes many problems and affects financial conditions, actually it’s a means by which people can be dominant in society sometimes, if you are person with strong financial capital, you can buy whatever you want, this has become the policy that we deal with.”**

Here, wealth and financial means are increasingly becoming important markers of status. The last point this young woman made was reiterated in different ways by young people from different groups where they noted that social inequalities are increasing and people with money were seen to be treated differently by people around them, where they also had greater access to what they needed and were able to have greater control over their lives. It is important to note that many participants also noted that money on its own was not enough for wellbeing, and the most important thing is being content with your life. If you are wealthy but do not have good relationships or have other problems, you may not have good wellbeing.

#### *Unemployment and Poor Economic Prospects:*

While economic conditions are important in that they determine living conditions, which are important to a person’s wellbeing, employment and the employment prospects, or lack thereof, were key determinants of wellbeing for youth. One young woman in Rafah explained: **“for us as soon-to-be graduates what really affects us is obtaining employment.”**

Another young woman from a village near Nablus went on to say:

**“there’s no work, there’s no place that you go to that tells you yes I can help you, I can stand with you so you can build this project. Finding someone to help is difficult, it’s difficult to find that and this affects your psyche when you find someone who completed a doctorate or masters or bachelors and you find them working in Israel, a doctor working in construction or an engineer working in something, no one (is employed in what they studied).It is rare to find someone educated who works in their profession.”**

Similarly, a young man from Hebron explained:

**“we want to talk about youth, why is it that youth finish university and there are no jobs? It’s known, in Hebron there are about 3000<sup>25</sup> people and they employ about 40 so that leaves 2960 people unemployed, where will they go? Either Israel, they’ll go get married so they can get a permit and they go to Israel and find themselves in debt for 10 years into the future. This is not just. Right. Measure this on society as a whole.”**

The quotes from the participants demonstrate the negative impact the lack of employment opportunities has on their wellbeing and morale. The lack of economic opportunity also further restricts the space for youth to participate actively. Some participants said that they tried to take advantage of volunteer opportunities so that they have something to do or so that they gain experience. However, many participants who had experience with volunteering opportunities were disappointed that these volunteer positions or internships did not lead to paid employment, and some expressed feeling like they were being taken advantage of by

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<sup>25</sup> This was a number used by the participant to illustrate his point.

institutions who relied on voluntary labour. So on the one hand, it was important for them to gain experience and have something to keep them busy, but this was only feasible for short periods and many felt that it was only fair that they were eventually compensated. Economic opportunities were also tied to the political context, as we will discuss in the following section, both in terms of the strains on economy due to occupation, but also importantly as reported by young people due to corruption, ageism and the lack of proper planning in national organizations.

### *Political*

The political dimension is an important determinant of wellbeing for youth, and includes both internal political conditions and conditions related to the Israeli military occupation. Prolonged occupation and restrictions have a negative impact on wellbeing, especially where they limit youths' mobility and opportunities, including restrictions on travel for education and work, closures of universities and roads, and restrictions on imports and exports thereby limiting business opportunities. For some youth, resisting the occupation provided them with hope and was a source of drive to work towards a better future. Youth's discussions of the internal political context highlight the ever-shrinking space for youth in the political and public spheres as well as the lack of trust in Palestinian political institutions. Corruption, *wasta* (*nepotism or cronyism*), autocracy, and ageism within these institutions further exclude and demoralize youth. We will first discuss the internal Palestinian political environment and then discuss the political conditions resulting from the Israeli occupation in relation to youth wellbeing.

#### *Political-internal Palestinian:*

One of the most important issues for youth relating to the Palestinian political context was the issue of *wasta* ( nepotism or cronyism), and corruption. The presence of *wasta* is important for various reasons. First, it limits opportunities for young women and men and reinforces inequalities that exist within society, which are often family based. Youth considered this to be unfair and was another cause of pessimism about the future. According to one young man in Rafah: **"jobs for us have become hereditary like a monarchy. Everything has become like this...continuously the wastas (connections/nepotism) also has a big role, the son of someone will get employed with a recommendation."** Another young woman from a village in the northern West Bank added on this point:

**"... people now are going along with not putting the right person in the right place (based on their merit and qualifications), no, now they go by if you have a *wasta* I will go along with you (will get the appointment). Now, us youth why do we study, is it not to find a job so we can work and find ourselves? To do something for our future!"**

This idea was reiterated repeatedly by youth, and was met with a lot of frustration. Youth who had connections were seen to be at an advantage, and ultimately this system that depended on connections meant that the government did not operate as it should, especially where people without proper qualifications were given positions because they had connections. This was a source of stress for youth and it reduced their trust in the political system. In our statistical analysis, we found that youth who thought that *wasta* had a role in society generally had poorer wellbeing. This point was reinforced in the focus group discussions where the presence of *wasta* or a system that depended on nepotism, reinforced inequalities, reduced opportunities for youth, and also meant that institutions were not

appropriately run because the people with the qualifications were not necessarily given the opportunities or positions they were qualified for. Also despite the fact that they disagreed with this dependence on connections, many of the youth participating in the study also noted that these connections became necessary. The perceived dominance or reliance on *wasta* was not restricted to any one sector, as one young woman from the North West Bank noted: **“we have a problem here, whether in health, education or anything, there is something called *wasta*.”**

While nepotism was considered one of the most important types of corruption, youth generally had very little trust and confidence in public institutions. Again, this finding is consistent with the statistical analysis. Similar to the above, this was a source of frustration for many participants. They also felt that public institutions did not provide people with adequate services and that this reduced the quality of their lives and their prospects for the future. One young woman from a village near Nablus explained: **“why is it that, for example, the government has shortcomings in a lot of things, [even] in health?”** Another young woman in Hebron also explained that despite funding that comes in for projects, people rarely see the benefits because of corruption:

**“I want to discuss two things other than ‘that here is no work for you’...it’s possible that the projects run by the ministries, there is a lot of corruption in the funding that comes in, there is a lot of funding that comes in and we should see factories and other [developmental] projects that provide opportunities for youth, but we don’t see anything. Everything that we see is consumerist, nothing productive. And the second thing, in schools, they don’t teach life skills like problem solving or self-confidence, they teach you to read, which is good, but there is a lot missing.”**

This point was reiterated by participants in different groups who noted that there isn’t proper investment and development of sustainable programming that offers opportunities for youth, which is a reflection of the government’s inefficiency. Some participants noted that this was also partially limited by funding policies that focused on specific areas pre-set by donors that are not priorities in the Palestinian context. This young woman’s second point was also brought up by youth, and more prominently by young men in Jerusalem who also found themselves ill equipped to navigate the Israeli system with the education they received. Many participants felt that the political system was not designed to train them to think critically, or gain the necessary skills they needed in order to work towards a better future. Ultimately, this was further evidence that the political system did not have the interests of the people, and especially youth in mind.

In addition to neglecting youth’s needs and interests, many participants also felt that government (including the PA in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza) actively restricted the space for them to participate politically, express their ideas and create political alternatives. Increasingly, youth faced greater restrictions on political freedoms and increased political repressions, especially since the political divisions between Fatah and Hamas. One young man in Bethlehem explained:

**“More than once my grandfather, may God bless his soul, used to tell me be careful not to use Facebook to talk about anything to do with Fatah or Hamas, from 2007 until now, I haven’t said anything that has to do with politics. There have been examples, like relatives that are taken and caught by the secret service and asked why did you say this? What are you doing?”** A young woman in the same group added, **“it has become to everyone that we are not at ease, politically.”** A young man from a village northwest of Jerusalem also noted: **“the reality we live in is one where politics can lead you to get imprisoned, meaning it can cause problems, for example, if you are in a party or said anything that is different from the others (the**

mainstream). This might expose you to a problem even if you do not participate actively in the party, even a speech can cause problems. For example, I'm a caricature artist but because I was arrested, I don't draw any political caricatures [anymore]."

A young woman added, "We suffer from political repression that prevents us from entering politics." A young man from Rafah added "here the Hamas government speaks in the name of the people, and (in the West Bank) Fatah in the name of the people, but where is our freedom [to speak for ourselves]."

#### *Political-occupation related:*

As is evident, the Palestinian internal political situation is a source of stress for youth and an area that participants were largely pessimistic about, especially since they felt that they were consistently excluded and the space available for the political participation of young women and men has been consistently shrinking. The ongoing Israeli occupation is an important political determinant of wellbeing, and influences the overall conditions youth lived under. One of the key consequences of the occupation is the chronic state of instability and insecurity that affects Palestinians, and especially Palestinian youth. As one young man in Jerusalem put it "**...our lives are not stable it's not known (due to the political situation).**" This state of instability and uncertainty affects most aspects of life.

Furthermore, the direct exposure to occupation has very negative psychological effects. One young woman living in Bethlehem explained "**...it's the killing and I live near the Wall and every little bit I hear the bombs during the war on Gaza. I was studying at the university, and I couldn't study but it was normal for the professors that we come in and take our exams...what I want to get to is that this situation naturally affects our psyche.**" Another young woman in the same group added that she felt that her freedom as a Palestinian within OPT was more limited compared to foreigners who visit:

**"But like those who come from outside...I am now in the balad (hometown) I feel that the foreigners that come here have more freedom in the country than I do with respect to mobility and with respect to everything else and also there is something else I don't know (how to put it), but we are also humiliated...some people say it's the occupation, and then other's say you can't blame everything on the occupation but it is true it has a big effect...with the respect to the occupation, it has a huge effect and affects everything for real."**

Mobility restrictions and closures are key dimensions of how the occupation impacts the daily life for youth. For youth in Gaza, closure and illegal blockade have become a part of their daily reality for over a decade, during key phases of their lives. Needless to say, this severely inhibited their lives and their prospects for the future. Feeling suffocated in various aspects of life is a common theme in much of our participants' experiences. For youth in Gaza, this suffocation takes place on a completely different level where youth talked about feeling stuck and imprisoned. The blockade, especially, not only confines youth but also further reduced their opportunities and prospects.

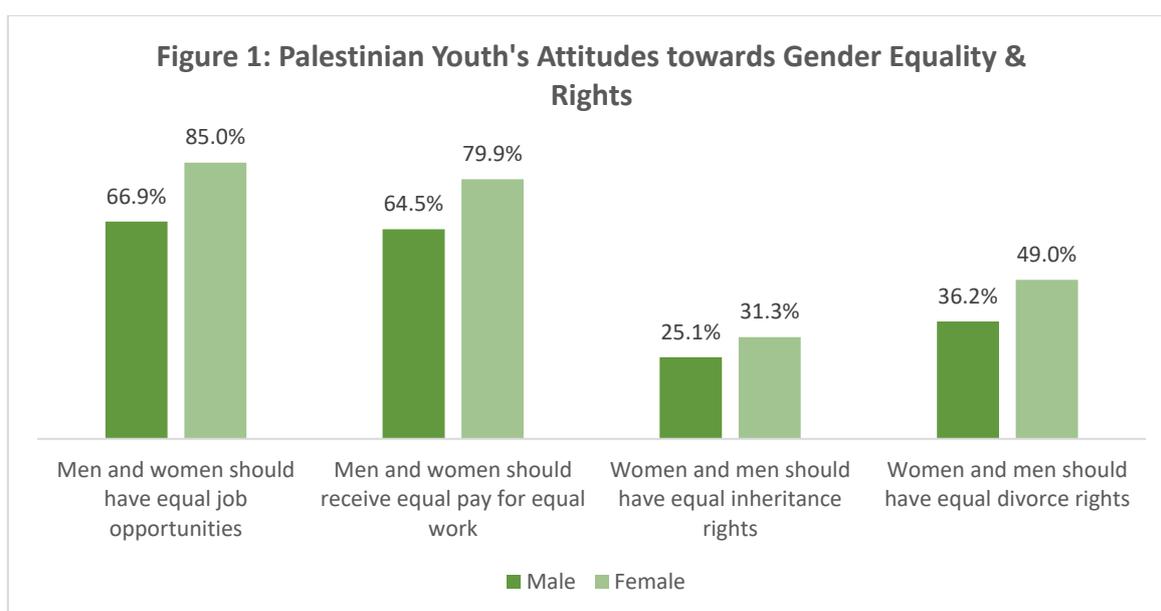
#### **Gender Relations, Equity, and Equality:**

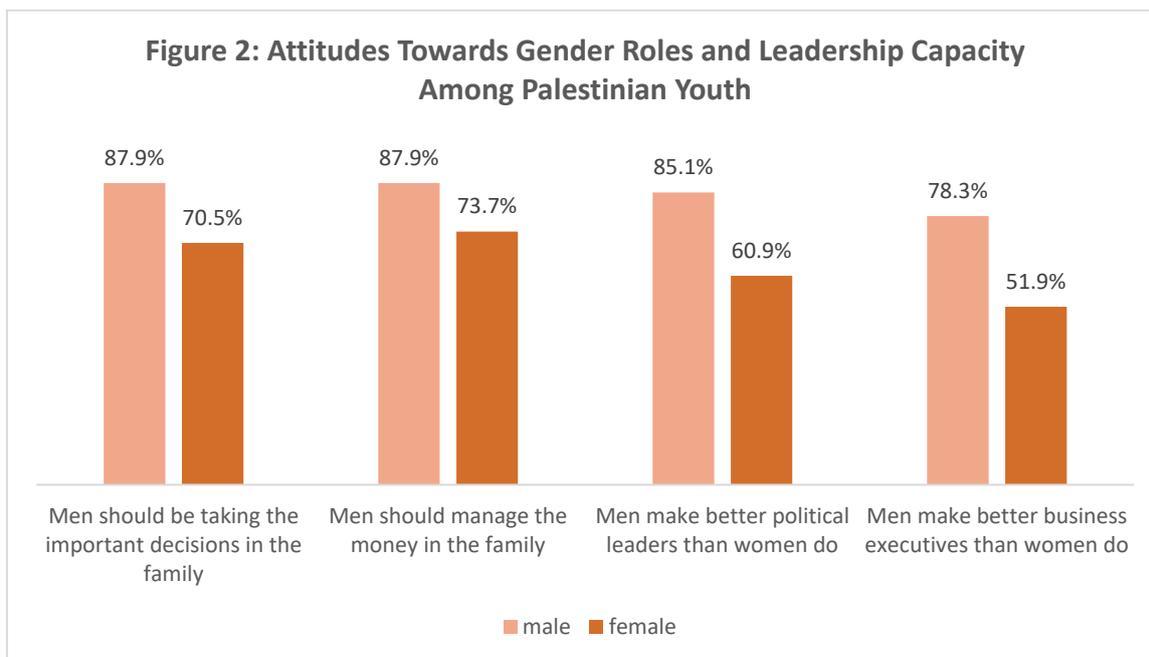
This portion of the report presents the findings focused on gender relations, equity, and equality from both the quantitative and qualitative portions of the study. We begin with the quantitative results and then present the qualitative findings based on young women and men's perspectives.

### Attitudes towards gender equality and their determinants-a quantitative analysis

For ideas on gender, we developed a scale where we counted positive responses to questions on youth's opinions of items that were inclusive of women or assured gender equality, like women's ability to work, divorce laws, and inheritance rights. We also counted the number of discriminatory items/statements that youth disagreed with, like: 'men make better leaders than women'; 'education is more important for men than women'; and 'when employment opportunities are scarce, men have more of a right to employment compared to women.' A higher score on the scale indicates that youth are more supportive of equality or women's rights. We call this scale ProWomen, and it is the outcome variable in this portion. We include the descriptive statistics in the first section and include further breakdown of items in the appendix at the end of the summary. We also conducted the descriptive analysis by gender, and once each item is examined, the discrepancy between young women and men is evident.

There was a marked difference between men and women in the ProWomen scale, where women scored 8.4 compared to 6.1 for men; meaning that on average young women supported a little over 8 items while young men supported 6 items. This discrepancy in attitudes between males and females is shown in Figures 1 and 2, where we examine gender attitudes towards specific items. As we can see in Figure 1, respondents in general have favourable opinions toward women's rights in employment and education, where women's views are more favourable in this regard. However, there is little support among both young men and women for equality in personal status rights. Furthermore, the majority of men and more than half of women believe that men are better suited for leadership positions, as we can see in Figure 2. There appears to be an issue related to men's perceptions about women's capacities as leaders and decision makers in the family and public spheres. This might be due to the absence of women role models at the political and business levels, lack of confidence in women's ability to manage the family financial aspects, and existing social norms around gendered leadership roles and capacities, which reinforce the idea that men make better leaders. In contrast to education and employment, youth were not as supportive towards equality in relation to personal status rights, like divorce and inheritance.





In the multivariate analysis, we conducted the analysis for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip combined, as well as separate. There were not any major differences in the separate analyses, and separating them resulting in a heavily reduced cell size for key variables of mother’s employment and education, so we decided to present the combined results and account for regional differences in the analysis. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the regression results. The key variables (refer to table 3.1 in the annex) associated with the extent to which a youth participant is in favour or women’s rights or gender equality are: gender, age, location of residence, education, mother’s education and employment, and to what extent they perceived women to be influential in society.

Sociodemographic characteristics:

The results indicate the gender and age are inversely related to support of gender equality, where men, on average, agreed with 2.3 fewer items compared to women ( $B=-2.334$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ). In addition, taking into consideration the t-statistic, gender had the largest weight in determining the number of items respondents were supportive of. Each year of age was associated with decreased support of 0.05 items per year on average ( $B=-0.05$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Residing in the West Bank was associated with support of almost one additional item ( $B=0.843$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ), and similarly for residence in camps compared to urban residence, irrespective of whether in the West Bank or Gaza ( $B=0.783$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ). In other words, youth in camps had higher wellbeing scores compared with youth living in urban areas. Education was also positively associated with ProWomen score, where respondents with a secondary education on average supported about 0.4 items more than those with less than a secondary education ( $B=0.366$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), whereas those with a post-secondary on average supported about one additional item ( $B=0.979$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ).

The last set of variables that were found to be significantly associated with respondents’ support of gender equality were mother’s education and employment, and to

what extent they perceived women to be influential in society. These indicators are important proxies for how youth are socialized to perceive gender roles. We found that youth with mothers who had completed their secondary education supported about 0.4 items more than youth whose mothers had a below secondary education (0.417,  $p < 0.05$ ), while youth whose mothers completed a post-secondary education, supported about one additional item compared to youth whose mothers had a below secondary education ( $B = 0.837$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). We ran various models that included fathers' education and employment, but they were not statistically significant in the bivariate and multivariate analysis. Here, it is likely that mothers' education and employment have a greater impact on youth because if they have an educated and employed female role model, they are more likely to think that that is the norm. Furthermore, they may be more likely to see women as capable to hold employment and have a life outside the home. Respondents whose mothers were employed also supported about one additional item on the scale ( $B = 0.923$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

The women's influence scale included in the analysis measures the extent to which women thought that females had influence over four key aspects in their lives: family decisions, decisions about their education, decisions related to employment, and decisions related to choosing a marriage partner. Each time respondents reported that they believed women had influence in one of these areas, they, on average, supported about 0.3 items on the ProWomen scale ( $B = 0.269$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Put differently; if a youth believed women had influence in three aspects, and with all else equal, they supported about one additional item on the ProWomen scale compared to a youth respondent who did not believe women had influence in any of these dimensions. Essentially, this indicates that the more influence both young women and men think women have in society, the more supportive they are of gender equity.

### **Understandings and Experiences of Gender (In)equality: Qualitative findings**

Throughout the course of fieldwork for this study, discussions around gender equality and the impact of gender on young women and men's lives were perhaps the most contentious, and often filled with deep tensions and contradictions. In our approach, we gauged youths' perspectives both through questions on what gender equality and equity meant in the abstract, and questions that focused on areas in youths' lives where they felt gender equality or inequality were present. The findings from the quantitative analysis of the survey pointed to marked differences between young women and men in their attitudes towards gender equality, in our qualitative investigation, this trend was evident. Importantly, there also appeared to be a gap between young men's perceptions of young women's lives and young women's actual experiences. As we were preparing for a group discussion in the old city in Nablus and introduced the main topics of the focus groups to youth, one young man commented to another young man *"once you hear what young men do, you'd want to kill yourself."* Here this young man was referring to the harassment that young women face, and was expressing his shock at the prevalence of it. The comment was spontaneous, and although the reaction seems extreme, it does highlight this important information gap, where much of what women experience is normalized, unheard or intentionally silenced. Another important experience we had in the field was the unexpected challenge of getting some youth, especially young men, to discuss gender inequality beyond abstract notions of what should be rather than what is. This was especially the case in groups that had more male participants. In groups that had more participation from young women, this part of the discussion focused a lot more on real life experiences of inequality or gender discrimination rather than abstract notions of what gender roles and gender equality should look like.

In fact, we found that, there was a lack of clarity on what “gender equality” meant to young men and women. Even though all youth agreed that equality means having the same rights, responsibilities, abilities, opportunities, sharing roles, this agreement was not absolute and was conditioned by social norms and the religious context as was described by a young woman from Bethlehem: **“When I travel, my attire completely differs from what I would wear here. I wouldn’t go out in shorts here, but I would over there. I wouldn’t do it here because I know that they would judge me.”**

Findings from the qualitative component supported findings from the quantitative analysis in terms of youths’ agreement on women rights in education and employment as long as it does not interfere with religious and cultural beliefs. As one young woman from the rural Nablus focus group discussion said **“we remain in an Arab society. We have the customs and traditions of the East that don’t allow me to come home late regardless of how open it is”**.

Many of the participants showed some resistance to the term gender equality. For some, this resistance had to do with the idea that full equality would take away from their manhood. As one young man in his mid-twenties from the South of the West Bank stated:

**“... Look, if they (referring to men) see their male neighbour handwashing clothes, doing laundry with his wife or wiping the floor then he is considered submissive and controlled...And then his wife, herself, despite the fact that he is helpful and they understand each other, she goes and says around to other women...’he never says no to me’. She takes pride knowing she is in control. Why can’t she take pride of the fact that they are on good terms while keeping that to herself?”**

However, for many young women and men, the resistance to the term had to do with their experiences with NGO programming that they felt was condescending and approached their cultural and social norms as if they are backwards .One other participant noted: **“they also have problems in their countries, but they come here [to fix us].”** Another young woman noted that there are problems that need to be addressed, but she had a critique of the depiction of women “as victims” rather than as agents, and noted that many of the programs and workshops use discourse that in essence deprive women of their agency and treat them as passive victims as highlighted by a young woman from the south of West Bank:

**“I notice that all gender studies or gender in general, not just here in Palestine but everywhere else, tends to portray the woman as a victim. This is not how I see it. I see that there are differences and higher pressure on women. Even men do not have the freedom that we think they do. They see freedom as going out...having relationships and drinking, this is not what freedom is. Freedom means that you have choices whether a man or a woman. For example, they always direct us as if we are victims and what not...that a girl has to rebel and what not...instead of seeing that I have been through problems and I have persevered...I think we should stay away from the idea that a woman is always the victim. It puts us in a corner...even a man can be a victim, you think a 20 year old man can have his own house, save to buy his bride gold and think about a wedding; all to show off to the society. This is pressure on the man; the man will in turn put pressure on the woman; and the woman will take it out on the children, it is a circle.”**

Some men felt that the emphasis on women’s rights and gender equality put them in a position where they were viewed as culprits or an enemy of sorts, even though they felt like

they were trying to be respectful towards women, and even when they believed in equity or equality. Others insisted that any discussion of gender equality should take into account religious and cultural values and that part of the problem is what they considered to be an incorrect interpretation of religion and an emphasis on outdated 'traditions'.

Societal norms and expectations were more restrictive of young women's mobility and personal freedom, and placed a lot of pressure on men to fulfil their roles as providers. There was also noticeable social pressure on men caused by social expectations in regards to work, education, marriage, and other life aspects. Therefore, while young men are generally provided with more personal freedom, they face greater economic responsibilities as they get older, and when it comes to marriage, young men noted that they are facing a lot of pressure and limitations on their abilities to choose their spouse. A woman from Hebron argued: **"The guy is also repressed and has to marry his cousin. If he does not marry according to his mother, she becomes angry with him...This also happens but no one talks about it when gender is brought up..."** What this and other similar comments show is that oftentimes gender roles are reinforced by women within the family because they have internalized patriarchal values.

The stress of living in patriarchal society affected both men and women differently, with a bigger disadvantage on women. Yet, young women and men complained about the discourse that is often used by NGOs in Palestine. One that holds the stereotypical view of Arab society and introduce foreign values and understanding of empowerment rather than providing solutions that fit the local culture. Furthermore, many young men noted that they face great pressures to perform their traditional gender roles: **"If she (referring to a married working woman) wants to stay home, no one will force her to provide for her family. But, if she goes to court, I am forced to provide for her. If she is divorced and has the kids, I am forced to support her"**. We should note, however, that many young women who participated in the focus group discussions noted that women's abilities to divorce their husbands and obtain their rights are typically limited and constrained by the application of laws as well as social pressures. A few women who were divorced or separated described having to give up their financial rights in order to maintain custody of their children, or were severely restricted in their movement through increased societal surveillance.

#### *Children of Educated, Working Mothers are More Supportive of Gender Equality*

When investigating factors predicting attitudes towards gender equality, we found that mother's education as well as employment, and the perceived influence of women in society were important predictors of positive attitudes towards gender equality<sup>26</sup>. The perceived role of women within the household and community confirms the statistical findings. One man from a village Northwest of Jerusalem, highlighted the role of mothers' education in positively influencing attitudes toward gender equality:

**"Of course if the mother is educated, the first thing she will do is transfer her education and intellect to her children. She will transfer her own experience and will improve it. If, for example, the mother used to suffer from her brothers making trouble for her when she went to school, she will give more freedom to her daughters to go in and out of the house and she will be able to teach them to value trust, so she'll know they are going to school and coming back"**.

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<sup>26</sup> Other factors included age, gender, place of residence and education

Another woman from Halhul said: **“I will raise my son with this mentality that a woman is free to wear what she wants. I will raise my son and raise my daughter with the same mentality. I will tell my son not to learn from his friends and that they are wrong, as they learn from one another.”**

*Experiences of gender inequality-constricting the lives of young women:*

Throughout the focus group discussions, youth participants, and especially young women, pointed out the presence of gender inequality in education, workplace, marriage, divorce, inheritance, rights, and social restrictions. Young women discussed the lack of freedom to live their lives as they wanted, to go out at night, travel and study in the field or university of their choice. Those restrictions were enforced by the fear of being watched and “what people would say”, thus affecting their reputation and family’s reputation. Additionally, women complained about unequal pay and discrimination against women’s marital status in the workplace. There were also complaints about not applying religion the way it is supposed to be. Ultimately, these restrictions constricted women’s lives in very palpable ways. One young woman in the South of the West Bank noted: **“now it has become a dream for me to ride a bicycle!”** She explained that while riding a bicycle is so simple, because of social norms that considered it inappropriate for women to ride bicycles in her village, this simple thing has become a life dream for her.

It is important to take into consideration that while some of these restrictions seem benign; what they ultimately do is limit the space for women’s participation and can have effects on the self-esteem and wellbeing of girls and women. Furthermore, while patriarchy places greater restrictions on women’s lives, especially in terms of mobility and appearance, it also places pressure on young men to conform to expected societal norms and limits their freedoms in other ways. Many participants noted that the current sociocultural configuration had negative impacts on all youth, men and women. However, they also noted that addressing the inequalities would only take place by working within society and increasing awareness while being culturally sensitive at the same time.

## CONCLUSION

Our investigation into wellbeing and gender relations among young Palestinian women and men has yielded important findings. The findings from the portion of the study focused on wellbeing show that Palestinian youth generally have low levels of wellbeing, especially when we take into account that about 36% of youth have poor wellbeing based on the WHO cut-off. The quantitative findings revealed that social determinants of wellbeing are especially important. However, it should be taken into consideration that the quantitative portion of the study did not include any variables related to the Israeli occupation. The analysis also revealed that the exclusion of youth, whether in the internal political sphere or in the social sphere, including within the family, has negative impacts on wellbeing. Through the qualitative portion of the study, we were able to dig deeper and understand how youth defined wellbeing and what they thought were the most important determinants of wellbeing.

The findings revealed that youth have a holistic understanding of wellbeing that takes into account both physical and psychological dimensions. Furthermore, this definition is closely interlinked with the broader social, political, economic, and environmental contexts. Similarly, the determinants of youth wellbeing are related to these contexts and interact with each other

to impact youth wellbeing, often mediated through youths' personal characteristics. In terms of the determinants, the political context, especially the political context pertaining to the Israeli occupation plays a key role in affecting the wellbeing of Palestinian youth, both directly through creating uncertain conditions and exposing youth to violence, humiliation and restrictions that limit their freedom and prospects, but also through its impact on other domains, including economic conditions. In fact, one of the key economic determinants of wellbeing, according to youth, is the prospect of unemployment.

One key aspect of the impact of the social domain on the wellbeing of Palestinian youth was through social restrictions manifested in various forms. It is important to keep in mind that while these restrictions and the lack of encouragement youth perceived affected all youth, these restrictions have an important gendered dimension and oftentimes impact young women more than young men. This finding connects with the second portion of the study which focuses on gender relations and attitudes among Palestinian youth.

In general, the findings reveal that support for gender equality is limited. Furthermore, there is a discrepancy between young men and women. This finding was consistent in both the quantitative and qualitative portions. In general, young men are less supportive of gender equality compared with young women. What is perhaps more important is that there appears to be a gap between young men and women in terms of their perceptions and their experiences of gender relations. Within this domain, culture appears to have a significant impact on youths' attitudes, perceptions and experiences. The findings from the qualitative portion of the study brought to light the sharp differences between young men and women in terms of the restrictions imposed upon them, where young women generally faced greater restrictions compared to their male counterparts. One of the key findings of this study is that while young women were more negatively impacted by social restrictions, social expectations of young men place incredible pressures on young men who are in a weakened position to meet these expectations due to broader contextual factors, including unemployment and insecurity. The findings affirm that patriarchy has negative impacts on youth in general, albeit in different ways for men and women. Education and awareness were considered to be key to improving perceptions and actual experiences of gender equality according to youth participating in this study.

In the following section, we summarize the key recommendations put forth by participants in our dissemination activities, including young women and men who participated in the focus group discussions.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

As part of this project, we conducted a series of workshops where the research team presented the findings from the study. Throughout these workshops, we put together recommendations that participants in the workshop, who mainly consisted of youth, were necessary for improving wellbeing and attitudes towards gender equality or more equitable gender relations.

### **Wellbeing**

Based on the discussion with participants pertaining to wellbeing, we identified four major contexts or levels of actions that include recommendations for all policy makers and civic leaders, based on the findings from the study.

### **Advocacy:**

- Increase advocacy activities to advocate for an end to occupation;
- Highlight the negative consequences of occupation on health and wellbeing of the Palestinian population in advocacy activities;

### **Neighborhood and Community**

- The collaboration of all policy makers in all sectors, including universities, to raise awareness and secure resources to educate people and decision makers about wellbeing and its importance, and its socio-political determinants, through workshops, advertisements, public events and campaigns;
- The government should create more safe and well-managed spaces for youth such as parks, sport clubs, museums, theaters, cultural centers, etc. to practice recreational, physical and cultural activities and productive leisure time and positive emotions; an active and engaged lifestyle and to also learn skills and improve talents, to interact and make friends and to release negative energy;
- Include youth in the policy-making agendas of local authorities and increase social and political participation of young women and men to ensure a better representation, and therefore advocating for their strategic interest and practical needs;
- Civil society and media organizations should facilitate social platforms for young women and men that target social problems and misconceptions that inversely affect the wellbeing of youth and fight the entrenched patriarchy, social control, restrictions, and inequitable gender relations by promoting openness, acceptance, freedom, and respect;
- Awareness campaigns should also work to target parents and the community more broadly in order to create a more supportive and encouraging environment for youth.

### **Family**

- The governmental and non-governmental organizations should establish programs, policies and subsidies for disadvantaged families that increase awareness and support of appropriate, effective, open, and supportive home environment and upbringing because of the importance in producing emotionally and cognitively healthy individuals.

### **Institutions**

- Develop and reform the educational system to include life skills, such as problem solving, self-efficacy, self-confidence, and critical thinking;
- Incorporate social and emotional programs that enhance personal attributes and skills, important for wellbeing, in schools and universities curriculums and in religious and cultural platforms in order to increase personal resources, emotional intelligence and capacity to endure and resist;
- Conduct training activities for school teachers and counsellors focusing on extracurricular activities for students and in how to provide a more innovative and supportive environment for youth;
- Strengthen the collaboration and the information system between the educational system and other sectors such as the labour market, agricultural and industrial sectors. This includes joint programs to communicate the needs, resources and the opportunities between all sectors to better manage and reduce unemployment and create more economic opportunities;

- Expand extracurricular programming at schools in order to help develop young people's skills;
- Expand vocational training programs and work to increase the acceptability of these programs as an alternative to traditional education for some youth;
- Increase collaboration between education institutions and public and private sectors to train youth for the labour market;
- Expand psychosocial services within the Ministry of Health to better address psychosocial health needs;
- The government should introduce programs that strengthen youth social and financial capital, such as employment and social security as well as welfare policies to reduce inequality and ensure fair and equal access to resources and opportunities for youth and their families. The government should also fight *wasta* and *corruption* and make jobs available based on qualifications and competition;
- Open up opportunities and political positions specifically for youth, with a strong mentorship component so that young women and men are supported in their careers;
- The government should constantly track the national levels of subjective wellbeing, surveys, and polls for consistent feedback from youth about all past and future policies that affects their wellbeing;
- Increase programs for youth with disabilities focusing on integration into public and private associations;
- Create and support local and international advocacy organizations that defend youth from the violations of the Israeli military occupation. To get their voices and needs translated into actions against these violations and eventually help to end the occupation.

### **Personal**

- The educational system in addition to all other sectors should introduce individual oriented programs such as skills building/development and life skills that will help and strengthen youth in cultivating strong and positive personal characteristics that will enable them to increase both their wellbeing and their resilience to contextual factors that reduce wellbeing;
- Strengthen the social, psychological and legal services nationwide for all marginalized individuals and families in need for such support and advocacy (for example youth in extreme poverty, sexually abused youth, drug addicts, etc.).

### **Gender**

In terms of gender, the main levels for intervention are governmental, non-governmental organizations, and community based organizations. Like the recommendations above, these recommendations are based on the participatory working sessions at the dissemination workshops and reflect participants' recommendations and opinions. At the governmental level.

- Integrating gender equality concepts in education curriculums and activities especially at early schooling stages (to change the typical image of women as being mothers and housewives only), workplaces through labor laws, and social spaces while promoting it as part of the local culture in addition to highlighting past and current Palestinian women role models;

- Encourage religious speeches on Fridays and Sundays prayers to stress the importance of women's rights in the sacred texts. For example, speaking about women's issues during the Friday prayer in mosques and Sundays mass in churches;
- Improving current Palestinian Labour Law that ensures there is no discrimination against women on the basis of their marital status and child bearing as well as drafting new laws that grant longer maternity and paternity leaves;
- Enforcing gender budgeting and maintain the women's quota appropriately implemented and practiced without male-coercion in governmental organizations to ensure hearing the voices of women in decision-making;
- Improve Palestinian labor law in terms of minimum wages and protection from harassment and discrimination against women;
- Enshrine equal and equitable employment opportunities in law and assure enforcement;
- The imposition of policies to prevent discrimination in wages and demand payment of wages through banks to obtain proof of pay. This can be done under the control of the Ministry of Labor.

#### **Non-Governmental Organizations level**

- Awareness campaigns about women rights targeting disadvantaged women in their villages. Also support social media forums that support gender equality;
- Target both young men and women in awareness activities in order to reduce the gender gap by presenting young men as partners;
- Provide legal protection and help to marginalized women's groups to defend their inheritance, divorce, education and choosing their partner rights;
- Support small projects to empower women financially to ensure their financial independence;
- Conduct activities that target children at young ages to support gender equality;
- Focus on long term projects that involve both genders and take into account the specificities of each community;
- Develop programs targeting parents that focus on gender equality concepts to make sure these concepts are transferred to future generations;
- Support advertisements and theatrical/acting plays that stress on women's roles in society and gender equality;
- Work on developing women skills and talents at all levels and conduct motivational and inspiring workshops to show examples of success stories;
- Support programs within educational institutions, such as schools and universities, which focus on gender equality concepts.

#### **Community-based Organizations levels**

- Support legal programs stressing on the importance of gender equality in terms of legal protection and education;

- Create legal programs stressing the importance of gender equality in terms of legal protection and education, and amplify the voices of women who the legal systems have failed using social media platforms;
- Break the stereotypical representation of gender roles that the Palestinian media sends and replace it with healthier values that promote a more equitable division of labor between couples;
- Support leadership programs focusing on women leadership and participation to redistribute the power dynamics of male-dominant public and political spheres;
- Showcasing role models and inspiring success stories to construct images for young women to look up to and to help young men encourage women in their vicinities to follow;
- Showcasing positive male role models for young men in order to promote positive masculinity;
- Creates Forums for the exchange of experiences to increase awareness of what Palestinian women face in their societies;
- Awareness campaigns for parents on different issues related to gender equality;
- Educating women about their rights through seminars that cover the theoretical and practical aspects of all groups of society, especially for the young generation;
- Include young men in activities and programs related to gender equity, including awareness building activities and other activities highlighting the negative impacts of gender inequity on both women and men;
- Establish a partnership with the Ministry of Education regarding gender identity and roles;
- Hold empowerment sessions for both genders;
- Activate the role of unions, especially for women rights and issues;
- Separate gender equality from non-religious values;
- Increase awareness of staff about gender equality issues through gender workshops and sessions;
- Campaigns to change existing conditions and laws;
- Organize awareness campaigns on the consequences of early marriage on health and target girls at schools without distorting the image of marriage;
- Organize awareness campaigns on the consequences of gender-based violence and gender inequity;
- Support women as an independent entity and motivate women to transfer their experiences to men;
- Empower the role of religious speeches on prayers on Fridays at mosques and Sundays at churches and to discuss the concepts of gender equality and equity in religion;
- Prepare videos and awareness bulletins about gender equality issues and target media, mosques and clinics (through waiting rooms) to disseminate gender equality concepts and values;
- Target media to stress more on gender equality topics though national television and radio;

- Target women through associations, such as rural development associations, to help uneducated women to learn skills that can be useful for income generation.

**APPENDIX:**

**Analysis tables:**

Table 1.1-Sample Characteristics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Gender</i>	1 Male	625	46.2
	2 Female	728	53.8
	Total	1353	100.0
<i>Wealth quintiles</i>	1 Highest wealth	241	17.8
	2 High wealth	318	23.5
	3 Medium wealth	248	18.3
	4 Low wealth	258	19.1
	5 Lowest wealth	288	21.3
	Total	1353	100.0
<i>Region</i>	1 West Bank	812	60.0
	2 Gaza Strip	541	40.0
	Total	1353	100.0
<i>Residence</i>	1 Urban	937	69.3
	2 Rural	210	15.5
	3 Camps	206	15.2
	Total	1353	100.0
<i>Education</i>	Less than secondary	500	37.0
	Secondary	573	42.4
	Post-secondary	280	20.7
	Total	1353	100.0
<i>Mother's education</i>	1.0 Less than secondary	902	67.6
	2.0 Secondary	296	22.2
	3.0 Post secondary	137	10.2
	Total	1335	100.0
<i>Mother's work</i>	Not Working	1284	95.1
	Working	67	4.9
	Total	1350	100.0
<i>Influence of Women</i>	0	197	14.5
	1	305	22.5
	2	342	25.3
	3	510	37.7
	Total	1353	100.0
<i>Opinion Very Important in Family Satisfied with Government Efforts to secure youth employment</i>	Very Important	554	40.9
	Satisfied	231	17.1

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Wellbeing	.00	100.00	58.7350	22.72464
Pro-women	.00	8.00	5.2396	1.89609
Personal Freedom	.00	6.00	4.5573	1.39863
Trust Score	5.00	20.00	14.4382	2.23943
Confidence in Political Institutions	.00	8.00	2.0057	2.35872
Perceived importance of youth	.00	4.00	1.4668	1.29911

Table 2.1-Combined West Bank and Gaza Regression:

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T statistic	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
<i>Constant</i>	33.554	6.058		5.539	0.000
<i>Male</i>	-2.917	1.240	-0.064	-2.352	<b>0.019</b>
<i>Age</i>	-0.682	0.196	-0.099	-3.485	<b>0.001</b>
<i>Wealth Index Score</i>	-1.213	5.807	-0.005	-0.209	0.835
<i>Secondary Education</i>	0.822	1.356	0.018	0.606	0.544
<i>Post-Secondary Education</i>	2.552	1.731	0.046	1.474	0.141
<i>Satisfied with housing</i>	3.516	1.469	0.070	2.394	<b>0.017</b>
<i>Satisfied with neighborhood</i>	4.830	1.662	0.087	2.907	<b>0.004</b>
<i>Perceived influence/importance of youth</i>	1.155	0.478	0.066	2.415	<b>0.016</b>
<i>Youth's opinion very important in family</i>	2.929	1.248	0.064	2.347	<b>0.019</b>
<i>Satisfied with govt efforts to provide employment opportunities for youth</i>	3.367	1.634	0.056	2.061	<b>0.040</b>
<i>Personal Freedom scale</i>	1.585	0.446	0.098	3.551	<b>0.000</b>
<i>confidence in political and govt institutions</i>	0.674	0.267	0.070	2.521	<b>0.012</b>
<i>Trust Score (trust in family and community)</i>	1.559	0.280	0.154	5.576	<b>0.000</b>
<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>					0.123
<i>Adjusted R2</i>					0.114

Table 2.2 West Bank Final Regression for Wellbeing:

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T statistic	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
<i>Constant</i>	27.949	8.034		3.479	0.001
<i>Male</i>	-3.988	1.607	-0.088	-2.482	<b>0.013</b>
<i>Age</i>	-0.386	0.250	-0.057	-1.544	0.123
<i>Wealth Index Score</i>	-0.886	5.790	-0.005	-0.153	0.878
<i>Secondary Education</i>	0.283	1.713	0.006	0.165	0.869
<i>Post-Secondary Education</i>	2.447	2.356	0.042	1.039	0.299
<i>Satisfied with housing</i>	1.125	2.101	0.021	0.535	0.593
<i>Satisfied with neighborhood</i>	9.890	2.392	0.166	4.135	<b>0.000</b>
<i>Perceived influence/importance of youth</i>	0.359	0.601	0.021	0.597	0.551
<i>Youth's opinion very important in family</i>	3.219	1.621	0.071	1.986	<b>0.047</b>
<i>Satisfied with govt efforts to provide employment opportunities for youth</i>	5.316	1.941	0.098	2.739	<b>0.006</b>
<i>Personal Freedom scale</i>	1.317	0.567	0.083	2.322	<b>0.020</b>
<i>confidence in political and govt institutions</i>	0.474	0.344	0.051	1.380	0.168
<i>Trust Score (trust in family and community)</i>	1.475	0.379	0.139	3.893	<b>0.000</b>
<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>					0.120
<i>Adjusted R2</i>					0.105

Table 2.3 Gaza Strip Final Regression for Wellbeing:

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T statistic	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
<i>Constant</i>	25.062	25.904		0.967	0.334
<i>Male</i>	-1.886	1.978	-0.041	-0.954	0.341
<i>Age</i>	-0.993	0.317	-0.139	-3.138	<b>0.002</b>
<i>Wealth Index Score</i>	-372.114	804.668	-0.019	-0.462	0.644
<i>Secondary Education</i>	0.989	2.248	0.021	0.440	0.660
<i>Post-Secondary Education</i>	2.120	2.683	0.040	0.790	0.430
<i>Satisfied with housing</i>	5.493	2.093	0.116	2.625	<b>0.009</b>
<i>Satisfied with neighborhood</i>	0.281	2.321	0.005	0.121	0.904
<i>Perceived influence/importance of youth</i>	2.608	0.815	0.140	3.202	<b>0.001</b>
<i>Youth's opinion very important in family</i>	1.918	1.967	0.041	0.975	0.330
<i>Satisfied with govt efforts to provide employment opportunities for youth</i>	0.368	3.091	0.005	0.119	0.905
<i>Personal Freedom scale</i>	2.118	0.732	0.127	2.895	<b>0.004</b>
<i>confidence in political and govt institutions</i>	0.758	0.438	0.077	1.730	0.084
<i>Trust Score (trust in family and community)</i>	1.838	0.426	0.186	4.313	<b>0.000</b>
<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>					0.166
<i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i>					0.145

Table 3.1-Final Analysis for Gender Beliefs (combined for West Bank and Gaza, also accounting for regional and residential differences):

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
<i>Constant</i>	7.896	0.536		14.736	0.000
<i>Male</i>	-2.334	0.137	-0.409	-17.095	<b>0.000</b>
<i>Age</i>	-0.050	0.022	-0.057	-2.272	<b>0.023</b>
<i>Wealth index score</i>	-0.062	0.045	-0.033	-1.370	0.171
<i>West Bank</i>	0.843	0.144	0.146	5.849	<b>0.000</b>
<i>camp</i>	0.783	0.189	0.099	4.138	<b>0.000</b>
<i>rural</i>	0.119	0.196	0.015	0.607	0.544
<i>Secondary Education</i>	0.366	0.156	0.064	2.341	<b>0.019</b>

<i>Post-Secondary Education</i>	0.979	0.201	0.140	4.877	<b>0.000</b>
<i>Mother Secondary education</i>	0.417	0.172	0.061	2.427	<b>0.015</b>
<i>Mother post-Secondary Education</i>	0.837	0.253	0.089	3.310	<b>0.001</b>
<i>Mother working</i>	0.923	0.337	0.071	2.737	<b>0.006</b>
<i>Perceived influence of women in society</i>	0.269	0.063	0.102	4.307	<b>0.000</b>
<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>					0.273
<i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i>					0.266

Variables used in wellbeing measure:

HW01 General health situation					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	1 Very good	696	51.4	51.7	51.7
	2 Good	538	39.8	39.9	91.6
	3 Fair	95	7.0	7.0	98.7
	4 Bad	18	1.3	1.3	100.0
	5 Very bad	1	0.0	0.0	100.0
	Total	1347	99.5	100.0	
<b>Missing</b>	9 No answer	6	0.5		
<b>Total</b>		1353	100.0		
HW02 I have felt cheerful and in good spirits past 2 weeks					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	1 All of the time	186	13.8	13.8	13.8
	2 Most of the time	368	27.2	27.2	41.0
	3 More than half the time	304	22.5	22.5	63.5
	4 Less than half the time	290	21.4	21.4	84.9
	5 Some of the time	146	10.8	10.8	95.7
	6 At no time	58	4.3	4.3	100.0
	Total	1352	100.0	100.0	
<b>Missing</b>	9 No answer	1	0.0		
<b>Total</b>		1353	100.0		
HW03 I have felt calm and relaxed past 2 weeks					

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	1 All of the time	160	11.8	11.8	11.8
	2 Most of the time	321	23.7	23.8	35.6
	3 More than half the time	269	19.9	19.9	55.4
	4 Less than half the time	323	23.8	23.9	79.3
	5 Some of the time	196	14.5	14.5	93.8
	6 At no time	84	6.2	6.2	100.0
	Total	1352	100.0	100.0	
<b>Missing</b>	9 No answer	1	0.0		
<b>Total</b>		1353	100.0		
HW04 I have felt active and vigorous past 2 weeks					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	1 All of the time	229	16.9	17.0	17.0
	2 Most of the time	365	26.9	27.0	43.9
	3 More than half the time	279	20.6	20.7	64.6
	4 Less than half the time	277	20.5	20.5	85.1
	5 Some of the time	156	11.5	11.5	96.6
	6 At no time	45	3.4	3.4	100.0
	Total	1351	99.9	100.0	
<b>Missing</b>	9 No answer	2	0.1		
<b>Total</b>		1353	100.0		
HW05 I woke up feeling fresh and rested past 2 weeks					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	1 All of the time	251	18.5	18.5	18.5
	2 Most of the time	326	24.1	24.1	42.7
	3 More than half the time	283	20.9	20.9	63.6
	4 Less than half the time	266	19.6	19.6	83.3
	5 Some of the time	151	11.2	11.2	94.4
	6 At no time	75	5.6	5.6	100.0
	Total	1352	99.9	100.0	
<b>Missing</b>	8 Do not know	1	0.0		
	9 No answer	1	0.0		

	Total	1	0.1		
<b>Total</b>		1353	100.0		
HW06 My daily life has been filled with things that interest me past 2 weeks					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	1 All of the time	199	14.7	14.7	14.7
	2 Most of the time	340	25.2	25.2	39.9
	3 More than half the time	257	19.0	19.0	58.9
	4 Less than half the time	276	20.4	20.4	79.3
	5 Some of the time	171	12.6	12.7	92.0
	6 At no time	108	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	1352	99.9	100.0	
<b>Missing</b>	8 Do not know	1	0.1		
	9 No answer	1	0.0		
	Total	1	0.1		
<b>Total</b>		1353	100.0		

Variables used to create prowomen scale:

Variable	Category	N	%
<b>OA01 If she wants to, a married woman should have paid employment even if she has a husband capable of supporting the family</b>	1 Strongly agree	384	28.5
	2 Agree	547	40.6
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	73	5.4
	4 Disagree	238	17.6
	5 Strongly disagree	106	7.9
	Total	1347	100.0
<b>OA02 Women should not combine full-time employment and raising children</b>	1 Strongly agree	168	12.5
	2 Agree	381	28.4
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	89	6.7
	4 Disagree	546	40.6
	5 Strongly disagree	159	11.8
	Total	1344	100.0
<b>OA03 If the children are well looked after, it is good for a woman to work</b>	1 Strongly agree	336	25.0
	2 Agree	698	52.0
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	85	6.3
	4 Disagree	177	13.1
	5 Strongly disagree	48	3.6
	Total	1343	100.0
	1 Strongly agree	399	29.5

<b>OA04 Men and women should have equal job opportunities</b>	2 Agree	638	47.3
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	78	5.8
	4 Disagree	205	15.2
	5 Strongly disagree	31	2.3
	Total	1350	100.0
<b>OA05 Men and women should receive equal pay for equal work</b>	1 Strongly agree	452	33.5
	2 Agree	533	39.4
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	57	4.2
	4 Disagree	272	20.1
	5 Strongly disagree	38	2.8
Total	1351	100.0	
<b>OA06 Men should be taking the important decisions in the family</b>	1 Strongly agree	616	45.6
	2 Agree	446	33.0
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	70	5.2
	4 Disagree	202	15.0
	5 Strongly disagree	17	1.3
Total	1352	100.0	
<b>OA07 Men should manage the money in the family</b>	1 Strongly agree	600	44.4
	2 Agree	486	35.9
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	64	4.7
	4 Disagree	188	13.9
	5 Strongly disagree	14	1.1
Total	1352	100.0	
<b>OA08 Women and men should have equal inheritance rights</b>	1 Strongly agree	131	9.8
	2 Agree	254	18.9
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	45	3.3
	4 Disagree	458	34.1
	5 Strongly disagree	456	34.0
Total	1344	100.0	
<b>OA09 Women and men should have equal divorce rights</b>	1 Strongly agree	168	12.7
	2 Agree	414	31.3
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	56	4.2
	4 Disagree	408	30.8
	5 Strongly disagree	277	20.9
Total	1324	100.0	
<b>OA10 On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do</b>	1 Strongly agree	505	37.6
	2 Agree	471	35.1
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	73	5.4

<b>OA11 A university education is more important for a boy/man than for a girl/woman</b>	4 Disagree	256	19.1	
	5 Strongly disagree	38	2.8	
	Total	1342	100.0	
	1 Strongly agree	179	13.3	
	2 Agree	247	18.4	
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	61	4.5	
	4 Disagree	606	45.1	
	5 Strongly disagree	251	18.7	
	Total	1344	100.0	
<b>OA12 On the whole, men make better business executives than women do</b>	1 Strongly agree	379	28.2	
	2 Agree	488	36.4	
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	83	6.2	
	4 Disagree	330	24.5	
	5 Strongly disagree	63	4.7	
	Total	1343	100.0	
	<b>OA13 When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women</b>	1 Strongly agree	479	35.5
		2 Agree	559	41.4
		3 Neither agree nor disagree	57	4.2
4 Disagree		214	15.8	
5 Strongly disagree		42	3.1	
Total		1351	100.0	
<b>OA15 Having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person</b>		1 Strongly agree	299	22.2
		2 Agree	604	45.0
		3 Neither agree nor disagree	90	6.7
	4 Disagree	309	23.0	
	5 Strongly disagree	42	3.1	
	Total	1344	100.0	
	<b>OA16 Women's rights should be enhanced</b>	1 Strongly agree	538	40.0
		2 Agree	694	51.5
		3 Neither agree nor disagree	52	3.9
4 Disagree		56	4.2	
5 Strongly disagree		7	0.5	
Total		1347	100.0	
<b>OA18 Opinion about participation making a difference and have an impact in country</b>		1 Yes	856	63.4
		2 No	424	31.4
		8 Do not know	70	5.2
	Total	1350	100.0	

<b>OA19 Opinion about general influence of young women to family decisions</b>	1 Very much	120	8.9
	2 Much	536	39.9
	3 Not so much	587	43.7
	4 Very little	100	7.4
	Total	1343	100.0
<b>OA20 Opinion about general influence of young man to family decisions</b>	1 Very much	524	38.9
	2 Much	704	52.3
	3 Not so much	109	8.1
	4 Very little	9	0.7
	Total	1348	100.0
<b>OA21 Opinion about influence of young women to important decisions on education</b>	1 Very much	213	15.8
	2 Much	684	50.8
	3 Not so much	403	29.9
	4 Very little	48	3.5
	Total	1347	100.0
<b>OA22 Opinion about influence of young men to important decisions on education</b>	1 Very much	597	44.3
	2 Much	661	49.1
	3 Not so much	89	6.6
	Total	1346	100.0
	<b>OA23 Opinion about influence of young women to important decisions on employment</b>	1 Very much	167
2 Much		569	42.3
3 Not so much		532	39.6
4 Very little		77	5.7
Total		1344	100.0
<b>OA24 Opinion about influence of young men to important decisions on employment</b>	1 Very much	648	48.1
	2 Much	608	45.1
	3 Not so much	78	5.8
	4 Very little	13	1.0
	Total	1346	100.0
<b>OA25 Opinion about influence of young women to choices of spouse/partner</b>	1 Very much	309	22.9
	2 Much	578	43.0
	3 Not so much	371	27.6
	4 Very little	88	6.5
	Total	1345	100.0
<b>OA26 Opinion about influence of young men to choices of spouse/partner</b>	1 Very much	774	57.4
	2 Much	518	38.4
	3 Not so much	55	4.1
	4 Very little	2	0.2
	Total	1349	100.0