

## State of World Population Report (SoWP) 2021

The State of World Population is an annual report published by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Each edition covers and analyses developments and trends in world population and demographics, as well as sheds light on specific regions, countries and population groups and the unique challenges they face.

The State of World Population report is UNFPA's annual flagship publication. Since 1978, the SoWP report has been published every year.

On April 14, 2021, UNFPA released the State of World Population Report 2021, titled, 'My Body is My Own.' This is the first time a United Nations report has focused on bodily autonomy, defined as the power and agency to make choices about your body without fear of violence or having someone else decide for you.

### About State of World Population Report 2021

For the first time, a United Nations report focuses on bodily autonomy - the power and agency to make choices about your body without fear of violence or having someone else decide for you.

A serious lack of bodily autonomy has had far-reaching implications much beyond the profound harm to individual women and girls that include potentially depressing economic productivity, undercutting skills, and extra costs to healthcare and judicial systems.

The report measures both women's power to make their own decisions about their bodies and the extent to which countries' laws support or interfere with a woman's right to make these decisions.

The SoWP report 2021 is the first where bodily autonomy has been discussed in detail with key findings based on a survey conducted in many countries.

### SoWP Report 2021 - Key Findings

- Despite constitutional guarantees of gender equality in many countries, worldwide, on average, **women enjoy just 75 per cent of the legal rights of men**
- Information so far from 57 countries shows that only about half of adolescent girls and women can make their own decisions that underpin bodily autonomy and integrity as measured by these two indicators
- Only **55 percent of girls and women** are able to **make their own decisions in all three dimensions of bodily autonomy**, which include, healthcare, contraception, and the ability to say yes or no to sexual intercourse
- Only **71 per cent of countries guarantee access to overall maternity care**

- Only about **80 per cent of countries have laws supporting sexual health and well-being**
- Only **about 56 per cent of countries have laws and policies supporting comprehensive sexuality education**
- Women and girls in many instances lack the power to contest these disparities because of still low levels of participation in political and other forms of decision-making

## Bodily Autonomy

The principle of bodily integrity sums up the right of each human being, including children, to autonomy and self-determination over their own body. It considers an unconsented physical intrusion as a human rights violation.

Cases with violation of bodily autonomy especially among women and girls have been a cause of concern for people across the globe. Some important examples of violation of bodily autonomy discussed in the State of World Population Report 2021 include:

- Persons with disabilities at greater risk of rape and coerced sex
- Forced and Child Marriage
- Female genital mutilation
- Honour Killings
- Poverty leading to unwanted sex exchanged for a home and food
- Lack of contraceptive choices
- Marital rape and “marry-your-rapist” laws

## The Indian Scenario

- According to National Family Health Survey (2015-16):
  - 12% of currently married women take decisions about their healthcare all by themselves
  - Healthcare decision for 23% are taken by their spouses entirely
  - While 63% take healthcare decisions in concern with their spouses
- In most Indian states and Union Territories, the cases of domestic violence have also reduced. However, Sikkim, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Assam and Karnataka witnessed an increase in the number of cases
- In terms of contraceptives:
  - Only 8% of currently married women (15-49 years) independently take the decision
  - 83% decide jointly with their spouse

## SoWP 2021 - Other Important Points

- Bodily autonomy and integrity influence many aspects of health as well as a decent, dignified life. The fifth Sustainable Development Goal on gender equality and other Sustainable Development Goals too, including those related to promoting health, reducing inequalities and ending poverty must be a key focus for improvement
- The report reveals how serious many of the shortfalls in bodily autonomy are; many have worsened under the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic

- Girls and young women with disabilities are more likely to experience violence than either their male peers with disabilities or girls and young women without disabilities