

Closing the Gap: **Why Masculinities Are Central to Gender Data and Climate Policy at SB64**

Guidance from the MenEngage Climate Justice Working Group for the Expert dialogue on relevant issues in gender and age-disaggregated data and gender analysis

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Overarching Message

Gender-transformative climate action cannot be achieved by focusing exclusively on the impacts upon women, girls and other marginalized communities. Expanding evidence on men and boys complements and strengthens ongoing efforts to advance gender equality by deepening our understanding of how gendered norms and power relations—including about masculinities—shape climate risks, emissions, adaptation pathways, resilience, governance, and opportunities for transformative change ([WECEF et al., 2026](#)). Crucially, we must:

1. Center the clear links between the climate crisis and patriarchal masculinity norms, ideologies and systems. Without addressing these as a root cause, we cannot achieve climate and gender justice.
2. Challenge the idea that gender = (cis)women only. And at the same time make sure work with boys and men is accountable to women.
3. Identify and address both the challenges and opportunities connected to men's and boys' relationships with gender (in)equality, global heating, and climate justice.
4. Center the leadership of Indigenous, women, girls and LGBTQI+ people in these discussions, and challenge heteronormativity (recognizing that not all men and boys are a homogeneous group, and moving beyond the binary of men and women as the only two genders).
5. Beyond working with men and boys, address the structural level. Patriarchy and colonialism are extractivism systems built on the logic of domination, violation, and taking from land, bodies, and communities. In its place, we must actively recreate a world where care is at the center. The care sector is under-funded and neglected yet it is low-carbon, life-sustaining, and central to climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience.

Understanding who experiences climate impacts is essential. Equally important is understanding who influences emissions, who controls resources, who exercises decision-making power, and who shapes investments and development pathways. In many cases, this is men and boys, including men in positions of power. However, men also have a vital and relatively untapped role to play as allies, beneficiaries and agents of transformative change to advance climate and gender justice, as they learn to share power and be accountable for their actions ([Burrell et al., 2025](#)).

Integrating this evidence into climate planning, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), reporting frameworks, climate finance mechanisms, and implementation processes can contribute to more effective, equitable, and transformative climate action. This way of thinking allows us to

question the ‘naturalness’ of men being in power—together with the structures of power and privilege at the roots of the climate crisis that usually go unnamed.

This perspective aligns with existing international commitments, including the enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender and its Gender Action Plan, the Just Transition Work Programme, NDCs, NAPs, and broader climate justice commitments. The objective is **not to create a separate agenda on men and boys**, but to address an important implementation and evidence gap within existing gender-responsive climate frameworks.

Question 1: What data and evidence exists on the roles, behaviors, and impacts of men and boys in the context of climate change, including as agents of change, beneficiaries of climate action, and contributors to or perpetrators of emissions-intensive practices?

Current evidence demonstrates that gender influences not only vulnerability to climate impacts but also patterns of resource use, consumption, emissions, occupational exposure, governance, environmental decision-making, and resilience.

It is becoming increasingly widely understood that women, girls, and LGBTQI+ people experience disproportionate impacts from climate breakdown ([Anjum & Aziz, 2025](#); [Goldsmith et al. 2022](#)). However, significant evidence gaps remain regarding how masculinities, gender norms, age, and male-dominated institutions shape climate outcomes. Men disproportionately work in emissions-intensive and extractive sectors, including transport, energy, fossil fuels, mining, construction, fisheries, industrial agriculture, infrastructure development, and heavy manufacturing ([Aavik et al. 2025](#); [Cohen, 2014](#)). Men also continue to dominate the political, economic, financial, and institutional spaces that influence climate trajectories, resource allocation, and investment decisions ([Pearse, 2017](#)). For instance, in 2020, only 15% of environmental ministers worldwide were women ([IUCN, 2021](#)).

Future evidence frameworks should **move beyond assessing vulnerability alone and examine responsibility, influence, power, and opportunities for transformation**. Understanding who drives emissions and why, who benefits from carbon-intensive systems, and who has the power to influence environmental outcomes is essential for effective climate policy ([Nagel & Lies, 2022](#)).

Research increasingly demonstrates that gender norms influence mobility choices, consumption patterns, environmental behaviors, occupational risk exposure, leadership practices, adaptation strategies, and responses to climate-related crises ([Hultman & Pulé, 2018](#); [Nagel, 2025](#)). In many countries men on average contribute higher levels of carbon emissions due to being more likely to drive cars and eat meat, for instance ([Carlsson Kanyama et al. 2021](#)). This is connected to masculine ideals suggesting that ‘real men’ should be dominant, in control, and entitled to have power over others – including the environment. Expectations of manhood such as being ‘tough’, stoic, and self-reliant can also contribute to higher exposure to heat stress, hazardous working conditions, environmental pollution, occupational injuries, and climate-related health risks for men ([Enarson & Pease, 2016](#)). For example, during ‘natural’ disasters some men may refuse to leave out a desire to demonstrate masculine bravado ([McKinnon, 2022](#)). On average, men also tend to express lower levels of concern or willingness to address climate change than women – especially in wealthier countries ([Bush & Clayton, 2023](#)).

Boys, young men, adult men, and older men experience climate risks differently and play distinct roles within climate governance, livelihoods, resource management, and community resilience, with some having more power and vulnerability than others in different contexts. Greater attention to age-disaggregated data, as part of approach which takes account of intersectional inequalities, is therefore essential ([Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014](#)).

At the same time, men and boys can play important roles as allies and agents of change. Emerging evidence demonstrates that engaging men and boys can strengthen climate adaptation, sustainable resource management, environmental stewardship, care-based approaches, gender equality, and community resilience ([Burrell et al., 2025](#)). Caring for and becoming more connected with the environment can also have positive impacts on men and boys and offer positive ways of being away from restrictive norms of masculinity ([Pedersen & Burrell, 2025](#)).

Key recommendations:

- Invest in more research examining the complex ways in which masculinities shape environmental behaviors, resource consumption, adaptation practices, emissions, and decision-making.
- Generate race-, age-, gender-, and occupation-disaggregated evidence on boys and young men as climate actors, beneficiaries, rights holders, and affected populations.
- Examine differences between adolescent boys, young men, adult men, and older men in relation to climate vulnerability, leadership, environmental behaviors, and adaptation capacities, and explore ways of effectively mobilizing and holding accountable men in positions of power for climate (in)action.
- Document how social expectations surrounding masculinity influence occupational exposure to climate risks across different sectors, especially in climate-exposed occupations such as agriculture, construction, energy, transport, and waste management.
- Incorporate environmental health dimensions, including heat stress, air pollution, toxic contaminants, occupational injuries, hazardous working conditions, and climate-related health risks in policies and research on men's health.
- Generate evidence on successful initiatives where men and boys contribute to climate adaptation, environmental stewardship, sustainable livelihoods, care work, and community resilience and conduct more research into how to engage men and boys effectively in climate justice.

- Support youth-led and participatory research examining changing attitudes, aspirations, leadership, and behaviors among boys and young men regarding climate action, sustainability, and social justice.

Question 2: What methodological approaches have been most effective in capturing the gendered dimensions of climate action in ways that go beyond a focus on vulnerability?

Existing climate and gender research often relies heavily on vulnerability assessments. While these remain important, they do not adequately capture power relations, agency, social norms, leadership, responsibility for emissions, institutional influence, or behavioral transformation ([Djoudi et al., 2016](#)).

More comprehensive approaches are needed that examine gender as a relational system influencing access to resources, decision-making authority, social expectations, environmental behaviors, political participation, leadership, and institutional power.

Intersectional approaches are particularly important because men and boys are not a homogeneous group ([Pearse, 2017](#)). Age, class, income, occupation, geography, disability, sexuality, ethnicity, migration status, and other factors shape both climate vulnerability and responsibility for emissions. As do socialized masculinity norms, which interact with these axes of difference to produce vastly different relationships to power, risk, and care.

There is also a need to move beyond quantitative data to understand the role of social inequalities in climate impacts and drivers. Qualitative methodologies and mixed-methods research can help to shed light on the complex dynamics of climate breakdown, adaptation and transformation in different contexts, and the role of gender norms, power relations and resistance in shaping these. Methodologies which actively involve—rather than exploiting—grassroots community knowledge and insights are needed, as part of empowering communities to lead climate responses themselves, for example through participation action and youth-led research. It is particularly vital to ensure that the voices of marginalized groups worst affected by climate change are heard, whilst also analysing the role of those in positions of power in maintaining climate inaction.

We must therefore also not lose sight of the structural forces driving the climate crisis and how these can be shifted. Research should examine how dominant models of economic growth, extractivism, industrial development, and consumption intersect with gender norms and gender stereotypes and social norms around masculinities to shape emissions-intensive systems and environmental degradation.

Evidence increasingly suggests that care, cooperation, social cohesion, and shared household responsibilities can strengthen adaptive capacity and resilience amidst climate-related shocks. Research frameworks should therefore capture the role of care economies and social reproduction alongside conventional economic indicators ([Bauhardt, 2014](#)).

Key recommendations:

- Promote intersectional methodologies that examine how multiple dimensions of identity and inequality shape climate experiences and outcomes, including around masculinities.
- Utilize mixed-method approaches that combine quantitative data with qualitative analysis of gender norms, masculinities, power relations, leadership, and decision-making processes.
- Support participatory action research led by youth, women, First Nations peoples, workers, local communities, and marginalized groups.
- Develop indicators that measure agency, leadership, behavioral transformation, shared decision-making, accountability, and contributions to climate solutions.
- Incorporate social norm analysis into climate monitoring, evaluation, learning, and reporting frameworks.
- Develop evidence frameworks that assess vulnerability, responsibility, power, influence, access to resources, decision-making, emissions drivers, and contributions to climate solutions.
- Strengthen methodologies that capture care work, social cohesion, household resilience, and community-based adaptation capacities.

Question 3: What good practice examples exist of integrating evidence on men and boys into national climate planning, NDCs and reporting processes, and what institutional and political barriers need to be addressed to mainstream this dimension into gender-responsive climate policy?

Evidence on masculinities, gendered social norms and power relations remains largely absent from most NDCs, NAPs, climate reporting frameworks, and climate finance mechanisms. However, [IUCN and NDC Partnership \(2021\)](#) has developed a practical guide that gathers and analyzes gender-disaggregated data, acknowledging the unique challenges that women, men, and gender diverse people face, and seeks to equip countries on how they can do this work. Additionally, emerging initiatives provide useful examples for integrating feminist and

gender-responsive perspectives into climate policy and implementation ([Buckingham et al., 2025](#)).

Promising Example 1:

An emerging example is the [EcoMen](#) initiative in Bangladesh. Developed through collaboration among youth-led organizations, gender justice advocates, and international partners, EcoMen engages boys and young men in climate action, care-based masculinities, environmental stewardship, and gender-transformative approaches to sustainability.

EcoMen provides an emerging case study for examining how gender-transformative approaches engaging boys and young men may influence environmental behaviors, community resilience, care practices, climate leadership, and social norm change. The initiative explores how patriarchal norms, masculinities, and unequal power relations intersect with climate vulnerability, environmental degradation, and just transition challenges.

Through participatory learning, dialogue, reflection, and action planning, EcoMen encourages **young men to critically examine the relationships between masculinity, environmental responsibility, care, accountability, and climate justice**. Such approaches can contribute valuable evidence on behavioral transformation, youth leadership, agency, and community engagement that may inform NDC implementation, NAPs, Gender Action Plans, and climate reporting frameworks.

Promising Example 2:

Another well established and promising example is the Swedish organisation [MÄN](#) who has developed and implemented a [Men in the Climate Crisis Guide](#) for reflective groups, with a focus on masculinity norms' impact on the environment and climate. The guide has been used in Sweden and globally with groups of men as well as mixed genders. In-depth interviews with male participants has shown that the men's engagement increased as knowledge of gender (in)equality and the climate crisis became embodied throughout the group process. This marked a transition from a purely intellectual understanding—a sense that action 'should' be taken—to an embodied awareness, where pro-climate justice behavior is no longer perceived as a sacrifice, but rather as a genuine desire driven by care. Research indicates that the personal narratives developed by the men during the group processes can function as political instruments in global discourse. These narratives normalize environmental and social justice, which directly challenges existing political conventions and creates space for new approaches to international environmental governance ([Hedenqvist 2020](#) and [Hedenqvist et al 2021](#)).

Promising Example 3:

The work of the [MenEngage Alliance](#) also offers important lessons. Through its [climate and environmental justice work](#)—as highlighted with the work of EcoMen and MÄN who are shaping the work of MenEngage—the Alliance has highlighted the interconnected nature of climate change, patriarchal masculinities, and extractive economic systems. It has contributed to evidence generation and political analysis on masculinities, environmental behaviors, climate governance, and emissions-intensive systems while promoting accountable engagement of men and boys within feminist and gender justice frameworks ([Kato-Wallace, 2021](#)). This includes recent research with organisations conducting innovative and gender-transformative climate justice work with men and boys across the globe, highlighting the positive impacts this work can have on men, their communities, and the planet—as well as the challenges it faces ([Burrell et al., 2025](#)).

Institutional and political barriers continue to limit progress. A persistent challenge is the perception that gender and climate work concerns only women and girls. This narrow framing can obscure the role of masculinities and gendered norms, power relations, and governance structures in shaping climate outcomes, limiting opportunities for transformative change.

Another challenge is the limited availability of age-, gender-, and occupation-disaggregated climate data. Many climate institutions lack the resources, expertise, methodologies, and political support needed to integrate social norm analysis and gender-transformative approaches into climate planning and reporting.

Key recommendations:

- Integrate evidence on social norms and gender stereotypes about masculinities, care, and gendered behavioral drivers into NDCs, NAPs, and national climate reporting processes.
- Include gender-transformative indicators within climate monitoring frameworks that track changes in attitudes, behaviors, participation, leadership, accountability, and decision-making, including of men and boys.
- Strengthen collection and use of gender-, age-, and occupation-disaggregated climate data.
- Assess how gender norms influence emissions-intensive practices, governance structures, climate investments, infrastructure development, and climate-related decision-making, especially addressing the behaviors, beliefs and actions of men in positions of power.
- Recognizing that climate finance, energy investments, infrastructure planning, land use decisions, and natural resource governance are arenas that are overwhelmingly dominated by men, and shaped by masculinist norms of competition, control, and short-term extraction. Actively work to horizontalize

power across these decision-making structures, creating the conditions for feminist, Indigenous, and care-centered leadership to drive new green climate outcomes.

- Ensure climate finance mechanisms support initiatives that advance climate resilience, gender equality, and just transition objectives, including engaging men and boys in an accountable manner based on intersectional, decolonial feminist principles.
- Allocate dedicated resources for research and programming focused on masculinities, gender norms, care-based approaches, and gender-transformative climate action.
- Require publicly funded climate projects to demonstrate meaningful consideration of and engagement with gender norms and inequalities, including the role of masculinities.
- Build the capacity of climate policymakers, practitioners, and institutions to understand how gender norms and power relations shape climate outcomes, including raising awareness of men in positions of power of their own gendered nature and the impacts of masculinities upon the exercising of power and decision-making for climate action
- Strengthen collaboration among climate institutions, Indigenous, feminist and LGBTIQ activists, organizations and movement, youth movements, labor groups, public health actors, educational institutions, climate justice networks, and MenEngage Alliance partners.
- Ensure meaningful participation of youth organizations, feminist groups, workers' organizations, First Nations peoples, community-based organizations, and marginalized communities in climate policy development and implementation.

Question 4: How can evidence on men and boys contribute to advancing a just transition?

Many workers in carbon-intensive sectors such as the fossil fuels industry are simultaneously exposed to climate risks, environmental degradation, economic uncertainty, and occupational health hazards. As has been mentioned above, men constitute a significant proportion of workers in such sectors ([Aavik et al., 2025](#)). These shows it is vital to consider the gender dynamics of a just transition – and to make sure that everyone is included in it.

A crucial consideration is the need for greater investment in the care sector and social infrastructure which are already low-carbon and vital yet neglected parts of economies ([MacGregor et al., 2022](#)). An important task is encouraging greater numbers of men and boys to resist stereotypes which suggest that caring is

‘unmanly’, and to see such livelihoods as viable employment pathways – including by improving the pay and conditions in the care sector.

It is therefore vital that just transitions take account of the influence of gender norms and inequalities, including masculinities. These means recognising the centrality of work to many men’s identities – and the anxiety which some may hold that climate action poses a threat to their livelihoods, and thus to their masculinity. [Hultman and Pulé \(2018\)](#) describe how many men are invested in ‘industrial/breadwinner’ masculinities, and [Daggett \(2018\)](#) coined the concept of ‘petro-masculinity’ to describe how, in countries such as the US, many men’s identities are intertwined with fossil fuel consumption. Spaces such as the manosphere are also increasing pressures that being a ‘real man’ means being wealthy and consuming large amounts of natural resources on a finite planet ([Gottzén, 2025](#)).

This can help to explain why we see higher levels of climate denial among men, if they fear the socioeconomic transformations that climate action necessitates. Research in Bangladesh and South Africa has found that the climate crisis has generated feelings of powerlessness as men struggle to keep intact their identities as ‘providers’ and ‘protectors’, leading to increased stress, social dislocation, and in some cases, violence as a means of reclaiming lost authority ([Khan et al., 2022](#)). There is much evidence that climate breakdown exacerbates gender-based violence, and the loss of control generated by economic turmoil is one factor in this ([Thurston et al., 2021](#)).

Commitments to a gender-transformative just transition can therefore help to address these dynamics, and ensure there is community support for efforts to address the climate crisis – including among men. This means not only creating new, good quality employment opportunities for those currently working in carbon-intensive sectors. It also means supporting men to deal with the anxieties and uncertainties produced by climate change (which they may find difficult to express for fear of being seen as ‘weak’), and encouraging them to question notions that they should be the sole ‘provider’ for their families, or that they are a ‘failure’ if they need economic support. For example, in Colombia the NGO IMPACT supported the Coocampo dairy cooperative in Boyacá to create spaces through educational outreach and public participation to question harmful gender norms while improving economic opportunities, and these helped men to embody and put into practice care and cooperation ([WECEF et al., 2026](#)).

A just transition cannot therefore only be about economic (re)investment, but should also address the harmful social norms that are contributing to the unsustainable human relationships with the environment. Furthermore, climate policies should address not only environmental outcomes but also livelihood transitions, decent work, social protection, worker participation, occupational health, and economic

justice. **Evidence on men and boys' gendered experiences of climate change can help identify pathways for supporting workers and communities through equitable transitions while reducing emissions and strengthening resilience.**

Key recommendations:

- Examine how workers in carbon-intensive sectors can participate meaningfully in just transition processes.
- Generate evidence on green skills development, decent work opportunities, and sustainable livelihood pathways for different ages and social groups, with particular attention to how these are influenced by gender norms.
- Support research examining on an intersectional basis how climate policies affect employment, occupational health, social protection, and economic opportunities.
- Promote community-led transition strategies that create pathways toward low-carbon economies while reducing inequalities.
- Invest in low-carbon social infrastructure, such as care and education.
- Support programmes which engage with men and boys (as well as employers – and women, girls, and gender diverse people) about challenging the gender norms which suggest that certain career pathways are ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’, or that men should always and only be a successful ‘provider’.
- Integrate labor rights, occupational health, social protection, and gender-transformative approaches into climate policy planning.

Conclusion

Gender-responsive climate action requires understanding not only who is vulnerable to climate change, but also who controls resources, who exercises decision-making power, who shapes investments and development pathways, and who can contribute to transformative change.

Expanding evidence on men and boys does not diminish the importance of addressing the disproportionate climate impacts experienced by women, girls, and LGBTQ+ people. Rather, it strengthens existing commitments by addressing critical evidence gaps related to masculinities, social norms, governance, care, leadership, emissions, and just transition processes – and men’s role in gender equality.

Integrating age-, gender-, and occupation-disaggregated evidence into climate planning, NDCs, NAPs, reporting frameworks, climate finance mechanisms, and implementation processes can help accelerate progress toward climate justice, gender equality, resilient societies, and a just transition for *everyone*.

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