

Study finds most Afghans support women's rights, especially when men think of their daughters

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Children playing in Sar-e Pol, Afghanistan. Credit: Firoz Sidiqy, Unsplash, CC0 (creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/)

A majority of people in Afghanistan support human rights for Afghan

women, and men are especially likely to support women's rights when primed to think about their eldest daughters, according to a study published July 17, 2024, in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE*, by Kristina Becvar and colleagues from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Human rights groups have been concerned for the rights of Afghan women in particular since the Taliban took control of Kabul in 2021. Since then, Afghan women have been barred from [higher education](#), many have lost jobs, and there are high levels of early marriage and gender-based violence.

To find out how groups might effectively advocate for women's rights in the country, the authors conducted an online [survey](#) of Afghans, asking how they felt about women's rights to education, employment, and more.

Among the 7,513 respondents to the question of support for women's rights, the authors found that 66% of respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that human rights for women were a top priority for the future of Afghanistan—including 45% of those who strongly supported the Taliban's control of the country.

Women, people living in [urban areas](#), and people who rated themselves lower on the economic ladder were most likely to voice support. The authors also found support for the "first daughters" effect—the research that shows that having a daughter affects a father's attitudes toward women.

The authors showed that when fathers were primed to think of their eldest daughters, they were significantly more likely to support women's rights, with support rising to 80%.

Furthermore, in the comments that survey respondents provided, after

being primed to think of their eldest daughters, men were 4% more likely to mention equality as an important right, 2% more likely to say women's rights are good for society, and 3% more likely to call for international pressure on the Taliban in support for women's rights.

While the survey could only examine the proportion of the Afghan population who use the internet, the authors suggest that human rights organizations could work to appeal to the fathers of eldest daughters to support women and girls.

The authors add, "Our data shows Afghans—even Taliban-aligned Afghans—overwhelmingly support women's basic [human rights](#), and that fathers of eldest daughters are a particularly receptive constituency in elevating [women's](#) status in Afghan society."

More information: The "First daughter" effect: Human rights advocacy and attitudes toward gender equality in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, *PLoS ONE* (2024). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0298812](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0298812)

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