

TAKING THE

LEAD

GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN ON HOW TO CHANGE THE FACE OF LEADERSHIP

Netherlands Country Report

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1. Country Snapshot

In the Netherlands 519 girls and young women between the age of 15 and 24 answered the survey.

Number of respondents by age

Age	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
N	48	54	52	50	52	55	52	53	51	52	

Of the 519 girls and young women only 0.19% (n=1) had not achieved any level of education. 8.29% (n=43) have completed primary school, 43.93% (n=228) have completed secondary school and 47.59% (n=247) have completed a degree in tertiary education.

Girls and young women were asked to self-identify their social standing by placing themselves at the top, middle or bottom of a ladder, which represented access to good jobs, education and wealth. The responses were that 19.85% (n=103) said they see themselves towards the bottom, while 68.98% (n=358) said they saw themselves in the middle and 11.18% (n=58) saw themselves towards the top.

The majority of girls and young women have never been married at the time of the survey (94.41%) while 5.01% of girls and young women stated that they were married at the time of the survey, with 0.58% of girls and young women mentioning that they are divorced, widowed or separated.

Of the 519 respondents, 16.76% (n=87) said that they have some difficulties with hearing, seeing, moving or talking in their daily life.

2. Leadership aspirations

The survey measured girls and young women's aspirations for leadership in their careers, in politics, and in the household. 72.83% of girls and young women said that they have leadership aspirations in one or more domain. 141 girls and young women in the Netherlands sample (27.17%) said that they have no aspirations in leadership or are unsure.

Most of the respondents (43.55%) said that they would like to be a leader in their career or job. This is followed by 16.38% of girls and young women aspiring to be a leader in their family. Leadership aspirations in their community as well as leadership aspirations in their country and politics were only mentioned by 8.48% and 4.43% of girls and young women respectively.

Leadership aspirations by domain of leadership

Domain of leadership	%	n
Career or Job	43.55	226
Country and Politics	4.43	23
Community	8.48	44
Family	16.38	85
Unsure about leadership	16.18	84
No aspirations	10.98	57

2.1 Leadership aspirations by background

When looking at leadership aspirations by age, the findings are consistent with the overall aspirations of girls and young women in the Netherlands and there is no difference in aspirations between age groups. The majority of girls and young women across all ages aspire to be a leader in

their career. Across all ages, the second highest ranking aspiration is to be a leader in the family or household.

When looking at the connection between the level of education and leadership aspirations, it becomes apparent that the higher the level of education, the stronger are the leadership aspirations of girls and young women in general.

Girls and young women from different self-perceived levels of social standing also have different aspirations. The higher the self-perceived level of socio-economic standing, the stronger are leadership aspirations in a career. While the proportion of girls and young women who have no leadership aspirations or are unsure about leadership aspirations is higher amongst girls and young women place themselves towards the bottom (unsure: 25.24%; no aspirations: 15.53%) of the socio-economic ladder, when compared with girls and young women who place themselves towards the top of the socio-economic ladder (unsure: 6.90%, no aspirations: 10.34%).

Girls and young women who have a stronger perception of the discrimination that women in leadership face because of their gender, also have a stronger wish to become a leader in their family or household compared to girls and young women who aren't as aware about the sexism that women in leadership are facing. This is interesting as it might indicate that girls and young women who are aware of sexism towards female leaders choose to become a leader in their family and household in order not to be subjected to sexism in the workplace or in politics.

3. Barriers to leadership

Girls and young women in the survey were asked a series of questions to measure their perceptions of sexism as it pertains to leadership. Overall, girls and young women in the Netherlands are aware of the sexism that women in leadership are facing.

Proportion of girls and young women's opinion on perceptions of sexism

	How often do you think women in leadership positions are treated less well because of their gender?		How often do you think women in leadership roles experience unwanted physical contact?			Women in leadership have to work harder than men in leadership to be respected		Women in leadership cannot be good mothers	
	%	n	%	n		%	n	%	n
Never	2.12	11	0.39	2	Strongly disagree	7.90	41	50.29	261
Rarely	6.94	36	13.10	68	Disagree	17.15	89	31.79	165
Sometimes	49.90	259	52.99	275	Undecided	15.41	80	8.29	43
Very often	38.54	200	31.21	162	Agree	47.59	247	7.32	38
Always	2.50	13	2.31	12	Strongly agree	11.95	62	2.31	12

The majority of girls and young women (59.54%) agree or strongly agree that women in leadership have to work harder than men in leadership in order to be respected. Furthermore, girls and young women strongly object the perception that women in leadership cannot be good mothers (82.08%). The majority of girls and young women (52.99%) say that women in leadership sometimes

experience unwanted physical contact. 33.52% of girls and young women even say that they believe that women in leadership are very often or always subjected to unwanted physical contact. The picture is similar when it comes to girls' and young women's perceptions of women in leadership being treated less well because of their gender. Almost half of respondents (49.90%) think that this is sometimes the case, while another 41.04% think this happens very often or always.

Interestingly, girls and young women's leadership aspirations seem to get stronger, the more aware they are of issues of sexism that women in leadership positions are facing.

Girls' and young women's overall perception of sexism is significantly linked to their age and their level of difficulties with hearing, seeing, moving or talking in their daily lives. While girls and young women who are older are also more aware of sexism that women in leadership are facing, the existence of an impairment decreases the girls' and young women's perception that women in leadership face sexism.

When looking at the girls' and young women's perceptions on specific domains of sexism, it seems that the girls and young women's socio-economic status and their marital status further shape their perceptions of sexism. For example, girls and young women who are married agree more with the statement that women in leadership cannot be good mothers. Furthermore, the higher a girls' or young women's socio-economic standing, the more she agrees that female leaders have to work harder to earn the same respect as men.

The level of experience that girls have in leadership does not seem to have an influence on their perceptions of the sexism that female leaders are facing. However, the more confident girls and young women are in their own leadership skills, the stronger is their belief that women in leadership face sexism.

4. Enablers to leadership

The survey asked girls and young women about the frequency of their own leadership experiences, their confidence in leading and whether they have been encouraged by their family, friends or teachers to lead and make decisions.

Proportion of girls and young women naming various enablers to leadership

How confident are you in your ability to lead?	%	n
Not at all confident	2.12	11
A little confident	15.61	81
Neutral	25.43	132
Somewhat confident	46.44	241
Very confident	10.40	54
Have your family, friends, or teachers ever encouraged you to take on a role where you have to lead or make decisions for others?	%	n
No	20.23	105
Somewhat/a little	44.51	231
Yes	35.26	183
Have you ever been in a position where you led others or made decisions for them?	%	n

No	18.11	94
Yes – a few times	66.67	346
Yes – a lot of times	15.22	79

The majority of girls and young women have been in a position of leadership and decision-making a few times (66.67%), while 18.11% of girls and young women have never been leading. The older girls and young women get, the more likely are they to lead more often. Girls and young women who have positive female role models of leadership within their community were also more likely to lead more often. The confidence that girls and young women have in their own leadership skills and the encouragement they get from their family, friends and teachers are important enablers for their role in leadership. Girls and young women who are encouraged and are confident are more likely to lead more frequently.

4.1 Confidence to lead

The majority of girls and young women (56.88%) are confident or very confident in their ability to lead. Not surprisingly, the confidence in themselves being able to lead is highly correlated with the frequency of instances where girls and young women were leading others and the level to which they have been encouraged to take a leadership role by their family, friends and teachers. Of all the girls and young women who have been leading a lot of times, 75.95% said they are very or somewhat confident in their ability to lead. When looking at the girls and young women who have been leading a few times, the percentage of girls who are somewhat or very confident in their ability to lead drops to 59.83%. This indicates that experience in leadership makes girls and young women more confident in their leadership skills or that the girls and young women who are confident are more likely to go into leadership.

Further factors that make girls and young women more confident to lead others are a higher-level of education and a higher level of self-perceived socio-economic standing.

4.2 Encouragement from friends, families and teachers

When looking at how many girls and young women have been encouraged by their family, friends and teachers to lead, it becomes apparent that many girls and young women (35.26%) are encouraged to lead by their peers. This is important as encouragement has a significantly positive effect on girls' and young women's leadership experience and their confidence. However, 44.51% of girls and young women said that they were encouraged only to a certain extent and 20.23% said that they have never been encouraged to lead by their family, friends or teachers. Girls and young women who have a higher level of socio-economic standing and a higher level of education are also the ones who tend to get more encouragement from their peers.

The frequency with which girls were leading in the past correlates strongly with the level of encouragement they get from friends, family and teachers. For example, of all the girls who have made a lot of leadership decisions, 69.62% were encouraged by their peers while 46.81% of girls who have never led have also never received encouragement from their family, friends and teachers.

Girls' and young women's confidence to lead on the other hand, also seem to depend on the encouragement that girls and young women get from their peers. While 58.70% of girls and young women who have been encouraged by their peers say that they are very confident in their skills to lead, only 4.33% of girls who have only been encouraged to a certain extent are very confident as well.

4.2 Role models in the community and media

Proportion of girls and young women who have female leader role models in their community or the media

Are there women leaders in your community that you admire?	%	n
No	46.63	242
Yes	53.37	277
Are there women leaders in media that you admire?	%	n
No	34.68	180
Yes	65.32	339

Having a positive female role model for leadership in the community significantly increases the likelihood of girls and young women leading more frequently.

Overall, the majority of girls and women recognise a female role model of leadership but girls and young women find slightly more female role models in the media (65.32%) than in their community (53.37%).

The higher the level of education of girls and young women and the higher their self-perceived social standing, the more likely it is that they have a role model in the community or in media. Girls and young women who are living with a disability are more likely to have a female role model for leadership within the community or the media than girls and young women who are not living with a disability.