

A Review of Advertising in the Caribbean and Its Links to Gender Equality, Gender Norms, and Violence Against Women and Girls



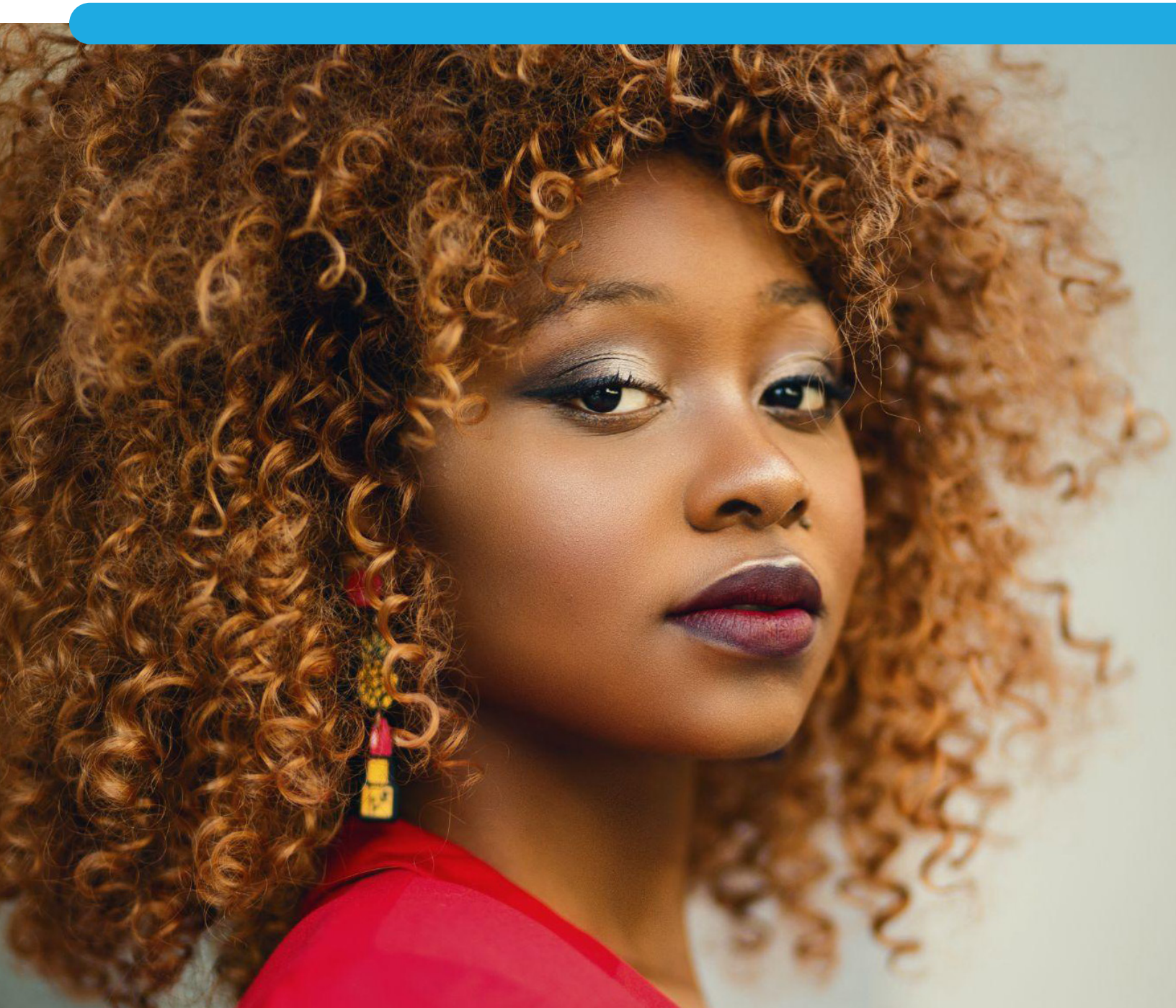
Spotlight Initiative
To eliminate violence against women and girls

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Foreword

UNICEF works for the rights of every child, everywhere in the world. Yet gender inequalities and discrimination often hinder children's ability to fully enjoy their rights. Gender norms learned by girls and boys from very early ages shape their identities and can have a profound impact on their future life choices and opportunities.

Stereotypes about how girls and boys are expected to behave can affect children's sense of self from a young age and typically result in girls facing greater disadvantage than boys. They can reduce girls' confidence and create pressures to fulfill unrealistic beauty standards, sometimes at the cost of their mental and physical health. Meanwhile, boys may feel restricted from fully displaying their emotions and be pressured to act in risky or violent ways to fulfill stereotyped perceptions of masculinity. We know this to be especially true in the Caribbean region, where violence against women and girls (VAWG) is one of the major problems facing the region today.

The social norms that underpin VAWG are based on shared beliefs and expectations about how people should behave and include rigid gender roles that build social acceptance of violence and entrench constructions of aggressive and dominant masculinities. Existing research suggests that advertisements and marketing influence gender socialization since childhood, yet data on how gendered roles are portrayed in advertisements and marketing material are largely missing, including in the Caribbean.

In response to this need, UNICEF and the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media are pleased to have come together to conduct a baseline study on the representation of gendered behaviors and harmful stereotypes in advertisements across four countries in the Caribbean. The study analyzes 600 advertisements from television and digital media that aired between 2019 and 2021 in Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago to identify which groups are most commonly represented in the region's advertisements and how they are portrayed. The advertisements reinforced imagery that casts women in traditional gender roles as caregivers but also as objects of sexual desire. The evidence showed that women were portrayed in revealing clothing seven times as often as men. The consequence of sexualized media can lead to stereotyped attitudes about women and girls, and increased tolerance of sexual violence. The study's findings are therefore very concerning, particularly given the high rates of family violence and normalization of VAWG in the Caribbean.

Given that advertising can play a powerful role in either perpetuating or challenging social norms that condone violence against women and girls, this report outlines concrete recommendations for advertising agencies, policymakers, and other actors on steps forward to promote positive messages that advance the rights of all women and children.

UNICEF is committed to eliminating all forms of violence against children, girls and women. Together, UNICEF and our partners are generating new evidence, knowledge, and tools, as well as engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, to ensure women and girls everywhere can live a life free of violence. This study is an important contribution to this global effort. We hope it will inspire the marketing and advertising community, civil society, and governments to take targeted actions to ensure that the powerful influence that advertisements have on society will be leveraged to advance gender equality and human rights for all.

Youssouf Abdel-Jelil

UNICEF Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, a.i.

November 2022

Executive Summary

Advertising has a pervasive influence on societies. Children and adolescents are exposed to a barrage of advertisements through television and other digital platforms. This exposure has surged in recent years, as digital technologies have become increasingly integrated into the daily lives of children, adolescents, and their caregivers. Advertisements promote certain messages, which may shape viewers' perceptions of what society is or could be – including what behaviors and roles are considered appropriate for women, girls, men, and boys.

Indeed, evidence suggests that advertisements and marketing materials may significantly influence gender socialization processes. As outlined in a recent UNICEF- and U.N. Women-commissioned evidence review concerning the media's influence on gender norms and violence against girls, **gender socialization** refers to the processes by which individuals learn and internalize **gender norms**: “informal rules and shared social expectations that distinguish expected behaviour on the basis of gender.”¹ This process is especially influential during adolescence – an important transitional phase between childhood and adulthood, when gender norms are either solidified, rejected, or transformed. Gender norms are closely related to **gender stereotypes**: “generalizations about groups of people as gendered subjects.”² For example, many societies believe that a woman's “appropriate” role is to be primarily responsible for her household's domestic duties, such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for the family. This norm consequently informs stereotypes that “all women” enjoy performing these tasks.

Programmatic and scholarly research show that discriminatory norms are a key driver of violence against women and girls (VAWG). The goal of upholding local norms may be used to justify acts of violence. For example, evidence from India shows that when women's greater access to employment and financial resources challenges household power dynamics and expectations of men and women's “appropriate” roles, women may experience greater risks of GBV.³ Discriminatory gender norms also normalize acts of VAWG: Research from diverse global contexts suggests that media reporting of VAWG that reflects discriminatory gender norms contributes to victim blaming and the cultural normalization of violence, which consequently justifies inadequate state responses.^{4,5}

To promote gender norms more aligned with human rights, evidence suggests that interventions targeting multiple agents and institutional sites of gender socialization are needed.⁶ Yet policymakers and practitioners often overlook advertising as a key site of gender socialization and an entry point for changing harmful gender norms. Greater knowledge around advertising and its influence on stereotypes, norms, and gender socialization – particularly among children and adolescent viewers – can help inform future interventions to dismantle these critical barriers to gender equality.

This research from UNICEF and the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, with the support of the Spotlight Initiative Caribbean Regional Programme, attempts to address some of these data gaps by investigating the forms and prevalence of gendered messaging in advertising content across the Caribbean. More specifically, this report presents the findings of a systematic content analysis of gender representation in 600 advertisements from television and digital media in four countries (Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago) that aired between 2019 and 2021.

This analysis identifies how women, girls, men, boys, and gender-diverse individuals are portrayed in this sampling of advertisements, and it explores how these depictions might reinforce or challenge harmful gender norms. In doing so, the results also surface a number of potential drivers and risk factors associated with VAWG. In addition to providing valuable baseline data for monitoring progress and accountability toward gender representation in advertising, the evidence generated from this study also informs a series of concrete recommendations for how advertising agencies, policymakers, and other international bodies can better promote positive messages that advance the rights of all children.

Key Findings

The study's findings indicate that **harmful gendered norms and stereotypes are present in advertising in the Caribbean**. However, inequities were often subtle. Women and men appeared in advertisements at similar rates overall – but the ways in which they were portrayed were often distinct and illustrative of discriminatory gender norms and a patriarchal system that privileges masculinity over femininity.

1. First, the reviewed advertisements reinforced imagery that casts **women as caregivers but also as objects of sexual desire**. For example, women were more likely than men to be depicted with family or as having dependent children (10.6% compared with 7.7%), to be portrayed in domestic spaces (22.9% compared with 17.7%), and to be performing domestic tasks (3.3% compared with 1.8%). At the same time, women were portrayed in revealing clothing seven times as often as men (9.1% compared with 1.4%).
2. On the other hand, **men were portrayed as powerful providers and leaders**. Overall, men were more likely than women to be shown having a professional, paid occupation (32.2% compared with 22.5%) and actively at work (26.1% compared with 18.3%). Men were also more likely than women to be represented across almost all of the reviewed occupations, with this difference being statistically significant for service, retail, and blue-collar jobs (11.1% compared with 6.5%) and jobs in military or law enforcement (0.4% compared with 0.1%).
3. Furthermore, this analysis also finds that **advertisements in the Caribbean failed to capture the region's diversity, widely excluding nondominant groups**. Characters portrayed in the reviewed advertisements were largely heterosexual, young, thin, non-disabled, and middle-class. There was a near-total absence of LGBTQIA+ individuals (less than 1% of all analyzed characters), people living with disabilities (less than 1%), and older adults (less than 9% were estimated to be ages 50 or older). Very few characters were portrayed as working-class (3.2%) or having large bodies (6.1%).

Therefore, although there were very few instances of outright violence or harm from individual characters in the reviewed advertisements, the subtle ways in which they depicted and therefore reinforced traditional gender roles may also suggest that it is “appropriate” and “normal” to punish those who violate these norms – including through acts of VAWG.

This report also identified a few promising trends and practices. There was no statistically significant difference between the percentage of men and women portrayed in parenting contexts. There were also no statistically significant differences for behaviors related to decision making, leadership, or socializing. Furthermore, several reviewed advertisements illustrated positive norms, including men engaged in domestic tasks, couples treating one another as equals, and characters with greater diversity in terms of age, race/ethnicity, and body size.

Recommendations

Evidence indicates that gender stereotypes can have harmful social impacts, such as promoting values and behaviors that are associated with VAWG. As such, this study's finding on the prevalence of gender stereotypes in advertisements across the Caribbean is highly concerning, particularly given the severely high rates and normalization of VAWG in the region. In order to challenge these norms and promote positive content that advances the rights of women and girls, this report recommends the following actions by key stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AGENCIES AND ADVERTISERS

- ♦ Develop content that promotes positive messages for children and adolescents, advances human rights, and challenges harmful stereotypes and normalized beliefs around VAWG.
- ♦ Mainstream gender- and age-sensitive advertising practices, including through raising awareness and building capacity for education.
- ♦ Strengthen content-quality testing and evaluation mechanisms.
- ♦ Develop partnerships and collaborations with gender equality organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- ♦ Expand opportunities for adolescents to participate in their communities and in the processes that affect them.
- ♦ Work with youth organizations to change social norms that stand in their way, and develop platforms for them to share their experiences and propose solutions
- ♦ Partner with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and private-sector allies to develop a set of regional and/or country-specific standards of practice on gender- and age-sensitive advertising.
- ♦ Engage in advocacy with local advertising-standards associations to create or strengthen statutory guidelines.
- ♦ Collaborate with women's organizations and CSOs to develop locally appropriate strategies and campaigns to incentivize uptake and implementation of relevant standards.
- ♦ Invest in local and global advocacy to raise awareness around the linkages between advertisements, gender socialization, discriminatory gender norms, and gender inequality (including VAWG).
- ♦ Invest in research and building the evidence base, including around the nexus between advertisements (and other media formats), gender socialization, discriminatory gender norms, and gender inequality (including VAWG).

Introduction

UNICEF is committed to protecting the rights of all children. In the wake of what the U.N. Secretary General termed a “shadow pandemic” of gender-based violence (GBV) during the COVID-19 crisis,⁷ it has become especially evident that protecting children’s rights requires increased investment in and attention to eliminating violence against women and girls (VAWG), in all its forms.

Indeed, **VAWG in the Caribbean is pervasive and normalized, particularly when perpetrated in the context of family⁸ and intimate partner relationships.** Rates of VAWG in the region are among the highest in the world and deeply entrenched in society and policy structures.⁹ Recent national studies commissioned by U.N. Women in Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago found that an estimated 45% of women in the region have experienced intimate partner violence (IPV) in their lifetime.¹⁰ This violence represents a severe violation of women and girls’ fundamental human rights, and it has serious and long-lasting negative impacts on their and their family’s wellbeing.

Together with the Spotlight Initiative, UNICEF and its partners are generating new evidence, knowledge, and tools to ensure women and girls everywhere can live free from violence. Such efforts are needed to realize children’s, adolescents’ and women’s rights, as protected by international human rights law, and to advance progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 5: Gender Equality.

Eliminating VAWG requires addressing its root causes. Programmatic and scholarly evidence suggests that primary among the various drivers of GBV are discriminatory **gender norms**: “informal rules and shared social expectations that distinguish expected behaviour on the basis of gender.”¹¹ For example, evidence from India shows that when women’s greater access to employment and financial resources challenges household power dynamics and expectations of men and women’s “appropriate” roles, women may experience greater risks of GBV.¹² Discriminatory gender norms also normalize acts of VAWG: Research from diverse global contexts suggests that media reporting of VAWG that reflects discriminatory gender norms contributes to victim blaming and the cultural normalization of violence, which consequently justifies inadequate state responses.^{13,14}

This presents two questions: Where do these norms come from, and how can they be challenged?

As outlined in a recent UNICEF-commissioned evidence review concerning the media’s influence on gender norms and violence against girls, individuals learn and internalize gender norms via the relational process known as **gender socialization**.¹⁵ This process begins at birth and is especially influential during childhood and adolescence – which are formative years for shaping one’s identity and values. During this time, “girls are more likely to be praised for their looks and given toys to encourage caregiving while boys are praised for their physical strength and given toys to develop cognitive and physical skills.”¹⁶ Gender socialization also continues throughout one’s life, as they interact with different agents and institutions that reinforce, or challenge learned norms.

Gender norms are closely related to **gender stereotypes**: “generalizations about groups of people as gendered subjects.”¹⁷ For example, many societies believe that a woman’s “appropriate” role is to be primarily responsible for her household’s domestic duties, such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for the family. This norm consequently informs stereotypes that “all women” enjoy performing these tasks. Stereotypes – and the norms they reproduce and reinforce – are communicated by a number of different actors and mediums, including advertisements and marketing materials.

Advertisements and marketing materials accompany us while watching television, browsing the internet, chatting with friends over social media, or engaging with any number of other digital platforms. As children and adolescents

increasingly interact with these different media, they are also increasingly exposed to the messages these media promote. Such messages shape children’s perceptions of what society is or could be – including what behaviors and roles are considered appropriate for women, girls, men, and boys.

To promote gender norms more aligned with human rights, evidence suggests that interventions targeting multiple agents and institutional sites of gender socialization are needed.¹⁸ Yet policymakers and practitioners often overlook advertising as a key site of gender socialization and an entry point for changing harmful gender norms. Greater knowledge around advertising and its influence on stereotypes, norms, and gender socialization can both help inform future policies and programs that seek to dismantle these barriers to gender equality and help lead to the realization of the rights of all women and children, especially the most disadvantaged.

This research from UNICEF and the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, with the support of the Spotlight Initiative Caribbean Regional Programme, attempts to address some of these data gaps by investigating the forms and prevalence of gendered messaging in advertising content across the Caribbean. Through a systematic content analysis of 600 advertisements from television and digital media in four Caribbean countries (Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago) that aired between 2019 and 2021, this study finds that **harmful gender norms continue to be represented, reproduced, and reinforced in television and digital media advertisements in the Caribbean**. In particular, the reviewed sampling of advertisements reinforce beliefs that women are “natural” caregivers but also as sexual objects of desire. Meanwhile, men are portrayed as strong leaders and workers, contributing to the perception that they are providers. Furthermore, this analysis finds that advertisements in the region largely lack diversity, thereby contributing to the exclusion of marginalized groups, including LGBTQIA+ individuals, older adults, those with larger bodies, and individuals with disabilities.

These are concerning findings, given evidence that suggests such messaging may promote discriminatory gender norms associated with VAWG. Therefore, to challenge these harmful norms and help eliminate VAWG, content-creation agencies and advertising companies should reform their current practices and promote messages that are better aligned with our shared goals of gender equality and human rights for all.

Methodology

Content analysis

This study looks at advertisements from four Caribbean countries to assess how the advertisements represent gender and other social constructs. To do so, we leveraged the methodology employed by the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media to conduct a systematic content analysis. This research method is ideal for analyzing visual media, wherein researchers operationalize complex concepts into quantifiable markers and systematically identify every occurrence of those markers in media.

Human expert coders determined the prevalence of different groups, identities, and relevant behaviors across video media content. To ensure inter-rater reliability, or the degree of agreement among expert coders, the Institute rigorously trained coders, then had them practice and examined their coding results on sample content. Whenever agreement among coders did not meet standards of acceptability, another training session was held. If coders did not meet agreement on a variable, the variable was removed.

Using this approach, this study analyzes the following variables: gender; socioeconomic status; profession; sexual orientation; age; race or ethnicity (with one’s skin tone as a proxy indicator); body size; and dis/ability status. This study’s definitions for these variables are provided in Annex A. It is important to note that these definitions are inherently limited and fail to capture the real richness and diversity of individuals’ “on-screen” and “off-screen” identities. Nonetheless, the proven rigor of this approach indicates that these definitions remain highly effective for monitoring the representation of gender stereotypes¹⁹ in advertising and marketing materials.

Sample selection

To ensure this study’s analysis was representative of the Caribbean’s diversity, sample countries were selected based upon population, the presence and non-presence of Spotlight Initiatives, language diversity, and media production capacities.²⁰ This resulted in the selection of four countries: Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The sampling of advertisements used in this study were identified and compiled by Media Institute of the Caribbean as well as PCI Media, a nonprofit organization that specializes in working with communities to create narratives for social change. Advertisements were selected from the 10 companies with the largest spending budgets in each country for the years 2019, 2020, and 2021. This final sample included 3,427 identified characters across 600 advertisements.²¹

As illustrated by Table 1, this sample features greater representation from Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago (each representing 33.3% of the sample), compared with Barbados and Saint Lucia (each representing 16.7% of the sample). The majority (70.3%) of reviewed advertisements come from the television (see Figure 1). Lastly, while the study includes a considerable variation of sectors (see Figure 2), several were more commonly represented, including the following: banking and insurance (24.7%), food and drink (19.0%), and electronics and technology (14.5%).

Table 1

Percentage of advertisements from each country in the sample, 2019–2021

COUNTRY	PERCENT OF SAMPLE
Barbados	16.7%
Jamaica	33.3%
Saint Lucia	16.7%
Trinidad and Tobago	33.3%

Figure 1
Percentage of television and digital advertisements across Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, 2019–2021

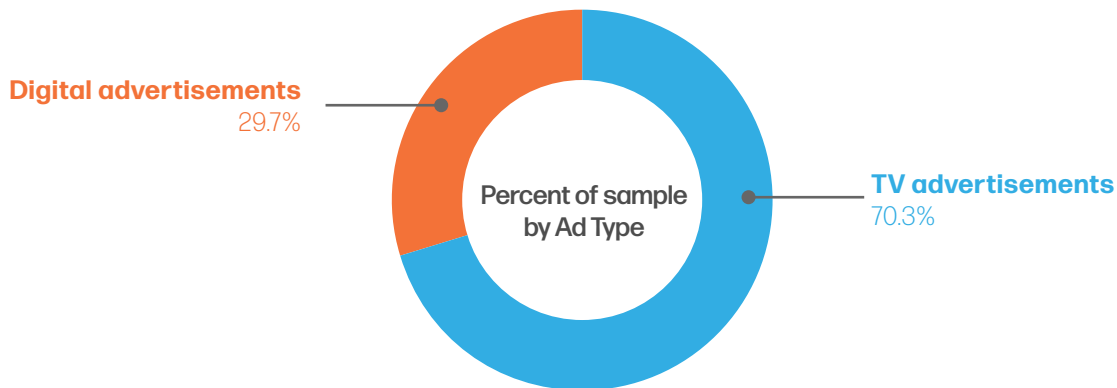
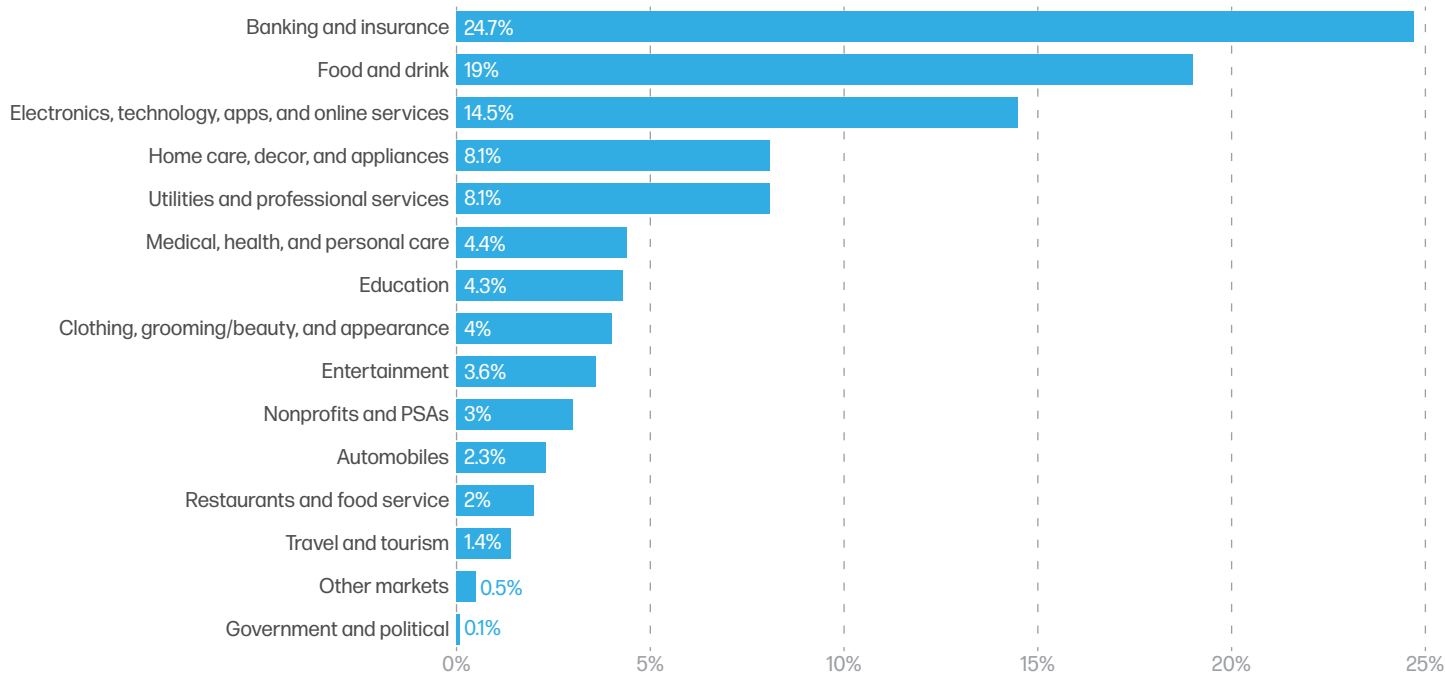


Figure 2
Percentage of market sectors in advertisements across Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, 2019–2021



Terminology

We also want to clarify how several terms are used throughout the report. When describing **characters**, we refer to the individuals depicted in the reviewed advertisements. The authors also use two related but distinct terms to describe the study's findings: **Statistical significance** was determined using Chi-square analyses. Any differences that are statistically significant at a p-value of 0.05 are noted with an asterisk. Additionally, we also report on **gender gaps**, which refers to percent difference between men and women's representation among the reviewed advertisements.

Findings

Descriptive analysis

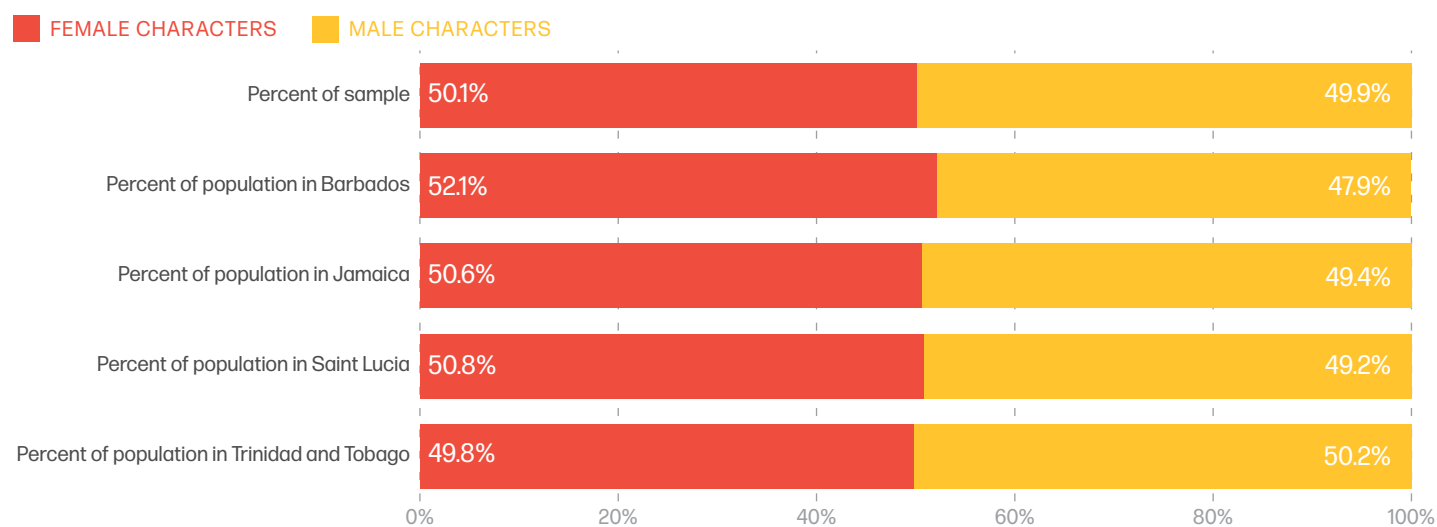
We begin with a descriptive analysis of identified characters in this sampling of advertisements, including an examination of how women and men are represented across each target variable. Based upon this analysis, we then discuss identified stereotypes and their potential influence on gender socialization and the normalization of VAWG in the region.

GENDER

Women and men were nearly equally represented among the reviewed advertisements, with women representing 50.1% and men 49.9% of the identified characters (see Figure 3). No nonbinary characters were identified in the sample.

Figure 3

Gender representation in advertisements across Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, 2019–2021, compared to proportions of countries' population



Population information provided by the Central Statistical Offices/Department of Statistics for the Eastern Caribbean Area Countries.

MARKETS AND SECTORS

As depicted in Table 2, men were more likely than women to be represented in the following markets: automobiles (3% compared with 1.7%), utilities and professional services (9.4% compared with 6.9%), and entertainment (4.7% compared with 2.4%). In contrast, women were more likely than men to be represented in advertisements related to the following markets: clothing grooming/beauty, and appearance (6% compared with 2%); home care, decor, and appliances (8.6% compared with 7.7%); and medical, health, and personal care (5.1% compared with 3.6%).

Table 2

Gender representation in advertisements by market sector across Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, 2019–2021

MARKET SECTOR	PERCENT OF FEMALE CHARACTERS	PERCENT OF MALE CHARACTERS
Automobiles*	1.7%	3.0%
Banking and insurance	24.5%	25.0%
Clothing, grooming/beauty, and appearance*	6.0%	2.0%
Education	3.9%	4.7%
Electronics, technology, apps, and online services	15.2%	13.7%
Entertainment*	2.4%	4.7%
Food and drink	18.4%	19.7%
Government and political	0.1%	0.1%
Home care, decor, and appliances	8.6%	7.7%
Medical, health, and personal care*	5.1%	3.6%
Nonprofits and public service announcements (PSAs)	3.0%	2.9%
Restaurants and food service	2.3%	1.6%
Travel and tourism	1.3%	1.6%
Utilities and professional services*	6.9%	9.4%
Other	0.6%	0.3%

The variables designated with asterisks denote statistically significant differences.

AGE GROUPS

As shown in Table 3, less than 9% of the characters in the sample were ages 50 and older, which aligns with discriminatory norms that exclude and marginalize older adults. The vast majority of the sample (about 91%) were adults under the age of 50, and more specifically, just over 15% were children or teenagers (ages 1-19).

Table 3

Characters' ages in advertisements across Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, 2019-2021, compared to proportion of countries' population

CHARACTER AGE	PERCENT OF SAMPLE	PERCENT OF POPULATION IN BARBADOS	PERCENT OF POPULATION IN SAINT LUCIA	PERCENT OF POPULATION IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
Child (1-12 years old)	9.9%	17.2%	17.2% (1-11)	18%
Tween (13-14)	2.2%	2.6%		3%
Late teens (15-19)	3.2%	6.8%	8.8% (12-16)	7%
20s	32.3%	13.4%		18%
30s	31.2%	14.1%		15%
40s	12.3%	14.9%		14%
50s	5.8%	13.2%		12%
60 and older	3.1%	17.5%	11% (65 and over)	13%
Characters under 50	91.1%	69.2%		75%
Characters 50 and older	8.9%	30.7%		25%

Population information from the Central Statistical Offices/Department of Statistics for the Eastern Caribbean Area Countries. Population percentages for Jamaica were not available.

When considering gender, we find that women were more likely than men to be portrayed as young (see Table 4). Women outnumbered men among characters younger than 30 years old, at which point men became more common (that is, among characters ages 30 and older). Put differently, 51.9% of identified women were under the age of 30, compared with 43.2% of men. These findings may have various interpretations. They can reflect beauty standards that place a high value on women appearing youthful, and/or they can reflect discriminatory gender norms that assume women are more naive and less mature or capable than men.

Table 4

Age of characters by gender in advertisements across Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, 2019–2021

CHARACTER AGE	PERCENT OF FEMALE CHARACTERS	PERCENT OF MALE CHARACTERS	GENDER GAP (IN PERCENTAGE POINTS)
Child (1–12 years old)	10.7%	9.0%	1.7
Tween (13–14)	2.2%	2.1%	0.1
Late teens (15–19)*	4.0%	2.5%	1.5
20s*	35.0%	29.6%	5.4
30s*	29.3%	33.2%	-3.9
40s	11.7%	13.0%	-1.3
50s*	4.9%	6.6%	-1.7
60 and older*	2.2%	4.0%	-1.8

The variables designated with asterisks denote statistically significant differences.

VARIATION IN SKIN TONES

Overall, the reviewed advertisements included a greater representation of darker skin tones, with 23% of the identified characters having medium skin tones, 37.7% having medium-dark skin tones, and 19.2% having dark skin tones.

As depicted in Table 5, women were more likely than men to have medium-light (11.3% compared with 8%) and medium skin tones (28.6% compared with 17.4%). Conversely, men were over twice as likely as women to have dark skin tones (26.7% compared with 11.6%). These findings suggest that the reviewed advertisements may reflect beliefs that a woman's value should be primarily based upon how well she aligns with established societal beauty standards. This would explain why women were more likely than men to be represented with medium or light skin tones (which discriminatory norms view as more "attractive").

Table 5

Skin-tone representation by gender in advertisements across Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, 2019–2021

CHARACTER SKIN TONE	PERCENT OF FEMALE CHARACTERS	PERCENT OF MALE CHARACTERS	GENDER GAP (IN PERCENTAGE POINTS)
Light tones	10.3%	10.5%	-0.2
Medium-light tones*	11.3%	8.0%	3.3
Medium tones*	28.6%	17.4%	11.2
Medium-dark tones	38.2%	37.4%	0.8
Dark tones*	11.6%	26.7%	-15.1

The variables designated with asterisks denote statistically significant differences.

DIVERSE GENDERS AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Very few LGBTQIA+ characters were identified in the sample (0.3%). Of the few represented, they were slightly more likely to be women than men. This reflects the broader marginalization of individuals with diverse genders and sexual orientations (see Table 6).

Table 6

LGBTQIA+ representation by gender in advertisements across Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, 2019–2021

LGBTQIA+ CHARACTERS	PERCENT OF FEMALE CHARACTERS	PERCENT OF MALE CHARACTERS	GENDER GAP (IN PERCENTAGE POINTS)
Non-LGBTQIA+ characters*	99.5%	99.9%	-0.4
LGBTQIA+ characters*	0.5%	0.1%	0.4

The variables designated with asterisks denote statistically significant differences.

BODY TYPES

Just 6.1% of the characters in the sample had a large body type, compared to much higher rates in the countries' populations (Barbados, 33.8%; Jamaica, 28.6%; Saint Lucia, 31.9%; Trinidad and Tobago, 25.7%), which aligns with harmful norms around "body shaming" and the marginalization of individuals with large body types. Among the few characters with large body types, there was slightly greater representation of women than men. However, this difference was not statistically significant.

Table 7

Characters with large body types by gender in advertisements across Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, 2019–2021

CHARACTER BODY TYPE	PERCENT OF FEMALE CHARACTERS	PERCENT OF MALE CHARACTERS	GENDER GAP (IN PERCENTAGE POINTS)
Characters with a large body type	6.5%	5.6%	0.9
Characters without a large body type	93.5%	94.4%	-0.9

DISABILITIES

Very few of the analyzed characters appeared to have any physical, cognitive, communicative or mental-health disabilities: Only 0.3% of characters had visible or acknowledged disabilities, whereas over 4% of the populations in Caribbean countries have disabilities (Barbados, 4%; Saint Lucia, 4.9%; Trinidad and Tobago, 4.1%).²² Further, nearly two-thirds (63.7%) of the characters that appeared to have a disability were featured in advertisements for medical, care, or insurance products or services, suggesting these markets target these groups' based on their distinctive needs in a way that highlights difference rather than emphasizes inclusion. There were no statistically significant gender differences identified in the reviewed advertisements' representations of characters with disabilities.

Table 8

Disability representation by gender in advertisements across Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, 2019–2021

CHARACTER DISABILITY STATUS	PERCENT OF FEMALE CHARACTERS	PERCENT OF MALE CHARACTERS	GENDER GAP (IN PERCENTAGE POINTS)
Characters without a disability	99.8%	99.5%	0.3
Characters with a disability	0.2%	0.5%	-0.3

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Men were more likely than women to be portrayed in working-class roles (5.2% compared with 1.6%), whereas women were more likely to be shown in middle-class roles (96.6% compared with 92.3%). Interestingly, our analysis also finds that men were slightly more likely than women to be portrayed in upper-class roles (2.5% compared with 1.8%). However, this difference was not statistically significant.

Male characters were more likely than female characters to be working class (5.2% compared with 1.6%), whereas female characters were more likely to be shown as middle class (96.6% compared with 92.3%). While there were more upper-class male characters than female characters (2.5% compared with 1.8%), this difference was not statistically significant.

Table 9

Class differences by gender in advertisements across Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, 2019–2021

CLASS	PERCENT OF FEMALE CHARACTERS	PERCENT OF MALE CHARACTERS	GENDER GAP (IN PERCENTAGE POINTS)
Working class*	1.6%	5.2%	-3.6
Middle class*	96.6%	92.3%	4.3
Upper class	1.8%	2.5%	-0.7

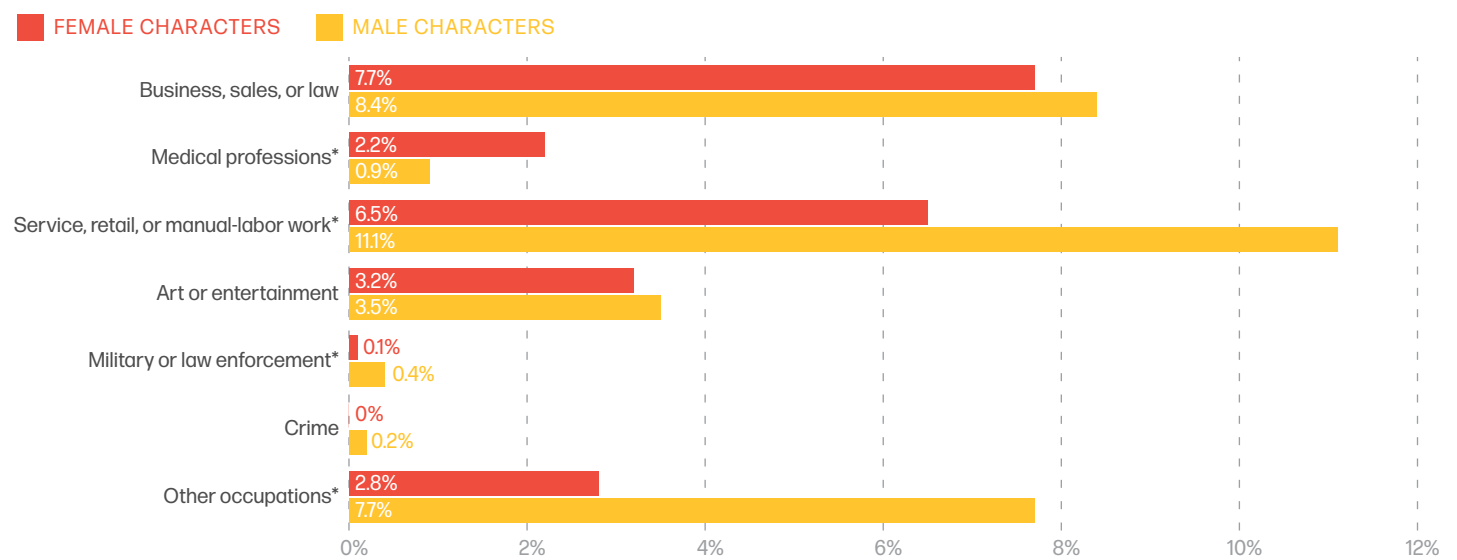
The variables designated with asterisks denote statistically significant differences.

OCCUPATIONS

Among the reviewed advertisements, men were more likely than women to have an occupation (32.2% compared with 22.5%) and to be portrayed working (26.1% compared with 18.3%). (See Figure 4.) Men were also portrayed in nearly every occupation at higher rates than women, further reflecting stereotypes of men as “breadwinners.” These differences were statistically significant for service, retail, or manual-labor work (11.1% compared with 6.5%) and work in military or law enforcement (0.4% compared with 0.1%). While more women than men were shown in medical professions (2.2% compared with 0.9%), it is important to note that this doesn’t necessarily mean more women were depicted as doctors, given that this category encompasses everyone who works in the medical field, including nurses and receptionists.

Figure 4

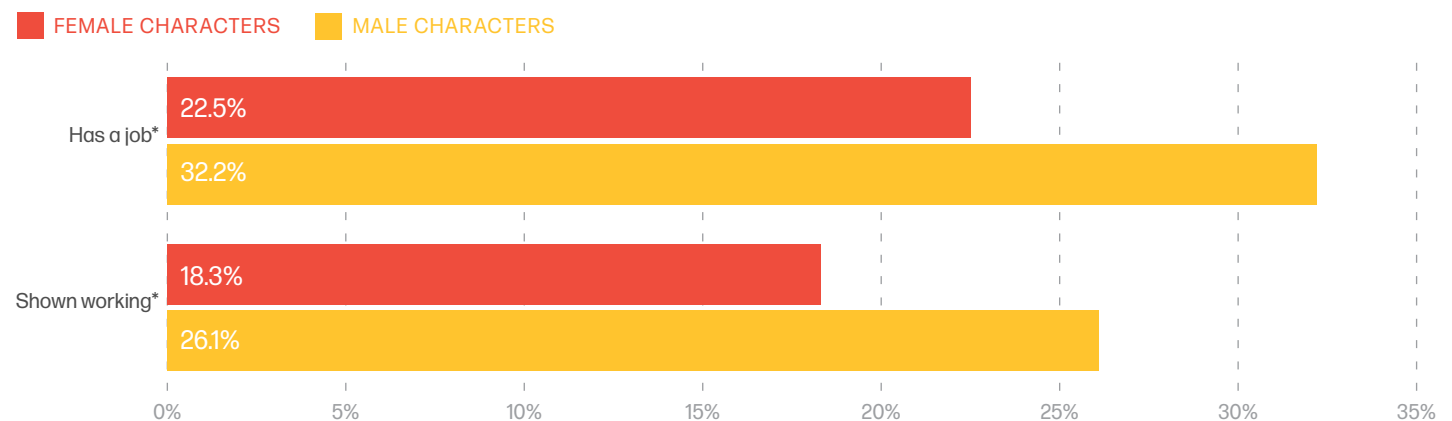
Character occupations by gender, shown in advertisements across Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, 2019–2021



The variables designated with asterisks denote statistically significant differences.

Figure 5

Characters in positions of success and authority by gender in advertisements across Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, 2019–2021



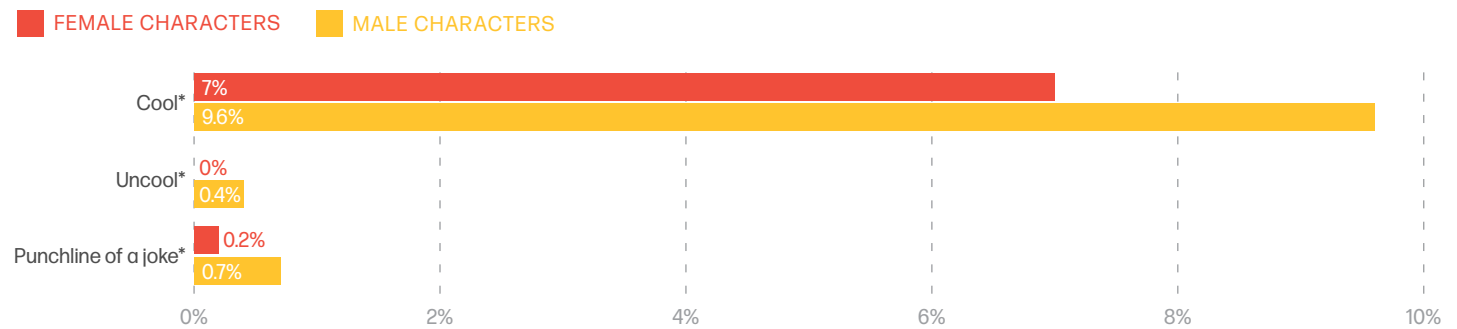
The variables designated with asterisks denote statistically significant differences.

CHARACTERS' LIKEABILITY

Based on our analysis, men were more likely than women to be portrayed as “cool” in the reviewed advertisements (9.6% compared with 0.7%). For this study, we define a character as “cool” if they are shown as popular or as someone who is setting trends that others follow. We also found that men were three times more likely than women to be depicted as the punchline of a joke, although very few advertisements overall included such depictions (0.7% compared with 0.2%). These findings may suggest that men are more likely than women to be judged for their social standing.

Figure 6

Character perceptions by gender in advertisements across Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, 2019–2021



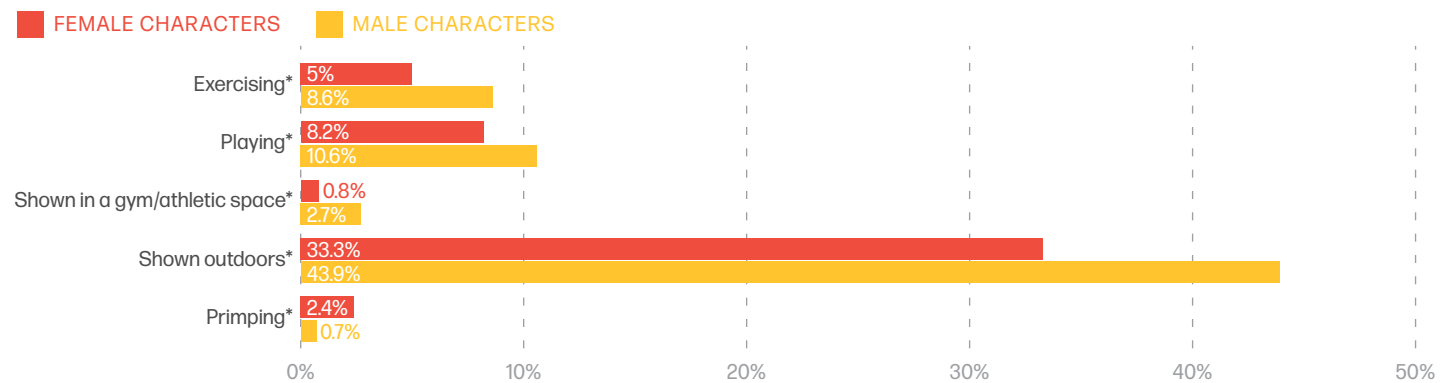
The variables designated with asterisks denote statistically significant differences.

BEHAVIORS AND ACTIVITIES

Our analysis also identifies differences in what activities men and women were portrayed doing in the reviewed advertisements. These differences often aligned with stereotypes around men and women’s different interests. In particular, men were more likely than women to be shown exercising (8.6% compared with 5.0%) and engaging in leisure and play activities (10.6% compared with 8.2%). Men were also more likely than women to be shown outdoors (43.9% compared with 33.3%) or in gyms or athletic spaces (2.7% compared with 0.8%). There were no statistically significant differences for behaviors related to decision-making, leadership, or socializing.

Figure 7

Social behaviors by gender in advertisements across Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, 2019–2021



The variables designated with asterisks denote statistically significant differences.

When looking specifically at behaviors related to appearance, women were more likely than men to be portrayed priming (2.4% compared with 0.7%), which aligns with stereotypes of women as being more concerned with their physical appearances, or norms that place a greater value on women’s ability to meet society’s beauty standards. There was no gender difference for portrayal of restrictive eating.

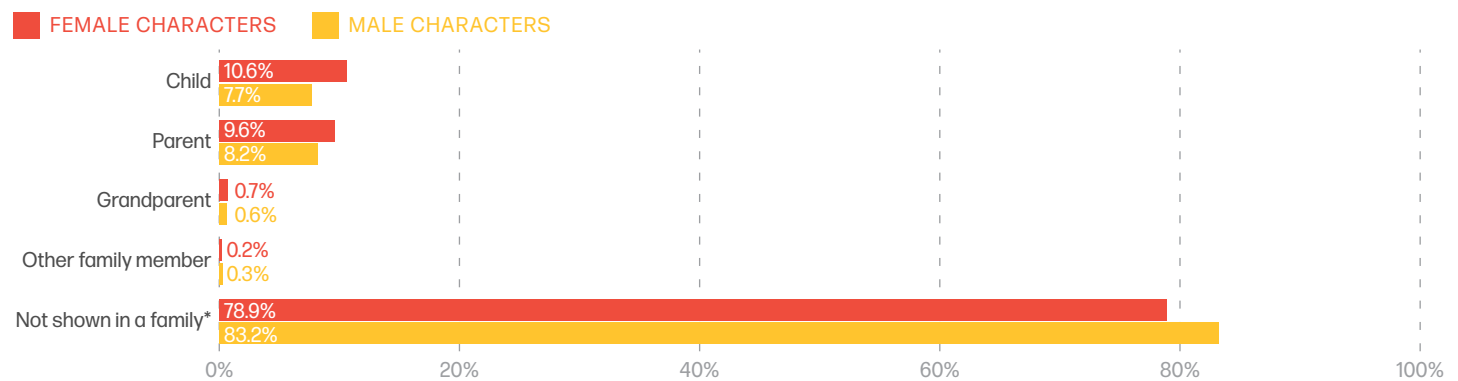
FAMILY ROLES

While some differences between men and women were more subtle in the reviewed advertisements, there were clearer consistencies in how advertisements portrayed men and women’s distinct household roles. For example, men were more likely than women to be shown without other members of their families (83.2% compared with 78.9%), whereas women were more commonly depicted with family or as dependent children (10.6% compared with 7.7%). (See Figure 8.) Furthermore, women were also more likely than men to be portrayed in the home (22.9% compared with 17.7%) and performing domestic tasks (3.3% compared with 1.8%). There was one notable and promising exception to this trend: We found no statistically significant difference between genders for advertisements depicting parenting (see Figure 9).

Overall, these findings align with discriminatory gender norms that women “should” be responsible for caregiving, while men’s “place” is at work or outside the home.

Figure 8

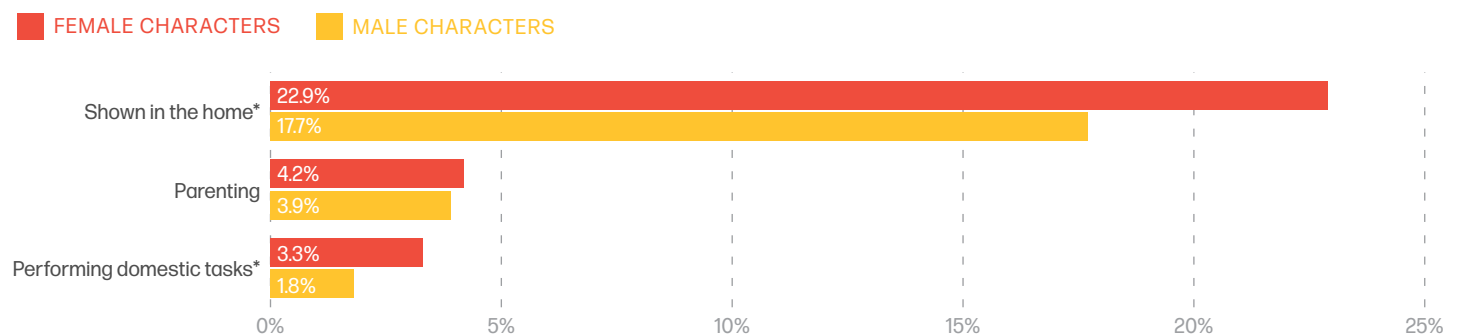
Family roles by gender in advertisements across Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, 2019–2021



The variables designated with asterisks denote statistically significant differences.

Figure 9

Domesticity by gender in advertisements across Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, 2019–2021



The variables designated with asterisks denote statistically significant differences.

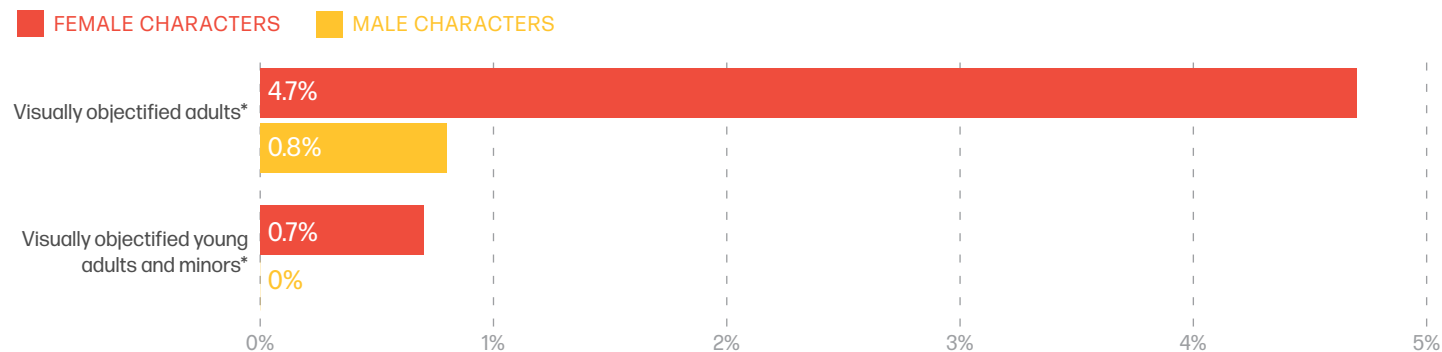
OBJECTIFICATION

As shown in Figure 10, women were five times more likely than men to be visually objectified in the reviewed advertisements (4.7% compared with 0.8%), with visual objectification defined in this study as having parts of their body shown, instead of being represented as a full person. Women were also portrayed in revealing clothing nearly seven times as often as their male counterparts (9.1% compared with 1.4%). Both of these findings reflect harmful misogynistic norms that objectify women, resulting in women and girls being treated as “less human” and therefore less deserving of equal rights and protections.

While the overall rate of objectification was lower when examining only young-adult and minor characters (19 years old or younger), there were still clear gender differences. For example, almost 1% of girls under the age of 20 were visually objectified, compared with no boys under the age of 20.

Figure 10

Visual objectification and revealing clothing for adults, young adults, and minors by gender in advertisements across Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, 2019–2021



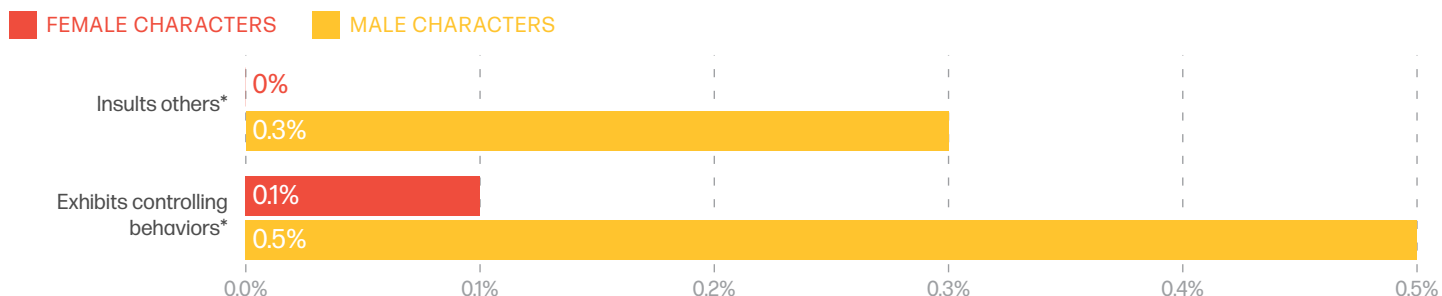
The variables designated with asterisks denote statistically significant differences.

PORTRAYALS OF CONTROL AND VIOLENCE

It was very uncommon for any characters in the reviewed advertisements to be portrayed engaging in harmful behaviors related to VAWG. However, when such behaviors did occur, it was more likely to be done by men than women. Men were more likely than women to be shown as controlling (0.5% compared with 0.1%) or as insulting or belittling others (0.3% compared with 0.0%). For example, in one advertisement, a man pulled a woman’s glasses off of her face and laughed at her for not getting better vision coverage.

Figure 11

Gender differences in violence and harm in advertisements



The variables designated with asterisks denote statistically significant differences.

In conclusion, this analysis finds that the representation of different target variables among the reviewed advertisements often aligned with discriminatory norms in the Caribbean, including those that privilege masculinity over femininity, ability over disability, and lighter skin tones over darker skin tones. Next, we analyze how these trends come together to reflect a number of harmful gender stereotypes. This report then closes with a discussion on their potential influence on gender socialization in the region, including their influence on beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that may contribute to the perpetration and normalization of VAWG.

Identified gender stereotypes

WOMEN AS CAREGIVERS

A widespread gender norm is the belief that a woman's "natural" role is to be her household's primary caregiver and responsible for all domestic duties, such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for the family. In contrast, there is no expectation that men and boys will contribute to these tasks; in some contexts, it might even be viewed as "inappropriate" for them to engage in such "feminine" duties. This norm contributes to inequalities between men and women in a number of ways: Worldwide, women and girls disproportionately bear the burden of caregiving responsibilities within their households and workplaces. This type of work is often unpaid or undervalued, and it may result in women and girls losing access to other personal, educational, or professional opportunities.²³

Emerging evidence suggests a more direct link between unpaid care work and VAWG. For example, Oxfam India's Household Care Survey 2019 found that in households where men and women express greater acceptability of beating women, women also spent more time on unpaid care work and less time on leisure activities. Oxfam India's research also found that poor performance of unpaid care work was at times considered a justification for acts of violence against women "because women are exclusively held accountable for it."²⁴

This illustrates the need to counter these harmful stereotypes and challenge norms around the traditional division of household labor. Yet this study finds that advertising in the Caribbean appears to be doing the opposite. Indeed, our analysis finds that the reviewed sample of advertisements reflect and reinforce norms around women's primary responsibilities as caregivers:

- ♦ Women were more likely than men to be depicted with family or dependent children (10.6% compared with 7.7%). On the flipside, Men were more likely than women to be shown without other members of their families (83.2% compared with 78.9%).
- ♦ Women were more likely than men to be portrayed in domestic spaces (22.9% compared with 17.7%) and performing domestic tasks (3.3% compared with 1.8%).
- ♦ This difference was also made evident in our analysis of which markets were more likely to include men or women in their advertisements. This review finds that women were more likely to be portrayed in home care and appliances (8.6% compared with 7.7%) as well as in medical and personal care (5.1% compared with 3.6%).

MATERIALISM AND SEXUAL OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN

In patriarchal societies, women may also be objectified or viewed as objects of sexual desire. Such views contribute to internalized misogyny: When women are sexually objectified, they are perceived and treated as "less human" or less deserving of equal rights and protections. Relatedly, discriminatory gender norms may limit a woman's value to her physical appearance or how closely she fits into socially constructed beauty standards. Such norms may lead to harmful stereotypes of women as being primarily preoccupied in their looks or materialism – in contrast to more "important" and "masculine" issues, like the economy or politics.

These stereotypes contribute to gender-based discrimination and, in particular, the normalization of VAWG. Indeed, a significant body of evidence shows that those who are more likely to objectify women are also more likely to perpetrate violence against them; and women who are sexually objectified are also more likely to be victims of sexual violence.²⁵ For example, in a study of male undergraduates in the United States, those who engaged in more objectification (e.g., by staring at someone's body or making a sexually degrading gesture) were also more likely to report being perpetrators of sexual violence.²⁶ Furthermore, the hypersexualization of women in advertisements may also result in young women and girls feeling pressured to fit into unrealistic beauty standards, resulting in reduced self-esteem or increases in depression or feelings of shame.

Taken together, this evidence illustrates the significant harms caused by the sexual objectification of women, or the treating of women and girls as “less human.” Despite this, our analysis finds that advertisements in the region continue to reinforce stereotypes of women as materialistic and objects of sexual desire:

- ♦ Women were more likely than men to be portrayed as young, with over half (51.9%) of identified women being less than 30 years old, compared with 43.2% of men.
- ♦ Women were more likely than men to be represented in clothing, grooming/beauty, and appearance markets (6% compared with 2%).
- ♦ Women were five times more likely than men to be visually objectified in the reviewed advertisements, with visual objectification defined in this study as having parts of their body shown, instead of being represented as a full person (4.7% compared with 0.8%).
- ♦ Further, women were portrayed in revealing clothing seven times as often as men (9.1% compared with 1.4%). Almost 1% of identified girls and young women (19 years old or younger) were visually objectified, compared with no boys or young men being categorized as such in our analysis.
- ♦ Lastly, when analyzing behaviors, women were more likely than men to be shown primping (2.4% compared with 0.7%).

MEN AS POWERFUL PROVIDERS AND LEADERS

While discriminatory gender norms associate femininity with domesticity and care, masculinity is often associated with strength and power. These norms inform inequalities – with men being viewed as the “superior” gender – and also create harmful stereotypes that “real men” must be professionally successful and their household’s “breadwinner.” These norms may also promote harmful stereotypes of men as controlling, violent, or abusive – and therefore normalize or justify violent behavior by framing them as “natural” for men.

This is especially evident in the Caribbean region, where VAWG is deeply entrenched and normalized, including among younger generations, raising concerns about the intergenerational transmission of VAWG.²⁷ A qualitative study with 60 men in the region, for example, found that acts of violence were justified or deemed acceptable if associated with a threat to men’s masculinity (such as a girlfriend or wife insulting her partner) – or if women were viewed as failing to fulfill their expected roles or “knowing their place.”²⁸ Such perceptions of masculinity may prove particularly fragile and consequential in times of crisis: For example, research from the region found that significant spikes in domestic-violence homicides following the 2011 global economic crisis were directly related to the region’s “crisis in masculinity,”²⁹ as men faced “psychosocial challenges... in reestablishing their position of dominance following the loss of employment, status, and income.”³⁰

Despite this connection between masculinity and the normalization and perpetration of VAWG, our analysis finds that stereotypical imagery of traditional masculinity continued to be portrayed in advertisements in the region. For example:

- ♦ Men were more likely than women to be shown having a professional, paid occupation (32.2% compared with 22.5%) and actively at work (26.1% compared with 18.3%).
- ♦ Men were also more likely than women to be represented across almost all of the reviewed occupations, with this difference being statistically significant for service, retail, and manual labor jobs (11.1% compared with 6.5%) and jobs in military or law enforcement (0.4% compared with 0.1%).
- ♦ Men were slightly more likely than women to be portrayed as upper class (1.8% versus 2.5%).
- ♦ Men were more likely than women to be shown as controlling (0.5% compared with 0.1%) and shown insulting or belittling others (0.3% compared with 0%).
- ♦ Men were also more likely than women to be represented as “cool” or popular (9.6% compared with 0.7%) in the reviewed advertisements.

ADVERTISEMENTS STIGMATIZE, EXCLUDE, AND FURTHER MARGINALIZE

Lastly, analyzed characters in this sampling of advertisements were largely cisgender, heterosexual, middle-class, young, and non-disabled. This lack of diversity reflects discriminatory norms that view certain individuals and groups as secondary, based on their age, body type, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or dis/abilities. As illustrated in a recent study, intersectionality in advertising is an incredibly important area of focus because it supports the full and true representation of people’s lived experiences.³¹ By excluding the other groups, advertisements send the message to viewers that such characteristics are not “normal” or are “invisible” – thus contributing to their further social, political, and economic minoritization and marginalization.

For example:

- ♦ Advertisements rarely included older characters, with less than 9% of all characters in the sample estimated to be ages 50 or older.
- ♦ Of the reviewed characters, only 6.1% had a large body type.
- ♦ Very few (less than 1%) of identified characters appeared to be LGBTQIA+.
- ♦ The majority of characters were portrayed as middle class. The very few working-class characters were more likely to be depicted as men than as women (1.6% compared with 5.2%).
- ♦ Lastly, less than 1% of characters had any visible or acknowledged disability.

Promising practices

This report also identified a few promising trends. For example, there was no statistically significant difference between the percentage of men and women portrayed in parenting contexts. There were also no statistically significant differences for behaviors related to decision-making, leadership, or socializing.

Additionally, several noteworthy advertisements appeared to challenge harmful stereotypes and promote more positive messages for viewers. This illustrates the possibility that future advertisements can use their societal influence as a positive force for good, and can contribute to the elimination of VAWG and the norms that normalize violence:

- ♦ During an insurance commercial, characters talk about their most treasured possessions. The advertisement features two men and one woman, and both men describe and are shown with items associated with caregiving and therefore traditionally viewed as feminine: a sewing machine and a stand mixer. Such portrayals challenge norms that limit caregiving and domestic labor as “women’s responsibility,” and suggest that men can also engage in – and even enjoy – such tasks.
- ♦ In a liquor commercial, we see several people preparing and gathering for Christmas. The advertisement opens with a man cooking Christmas dinner and wiping the counter – domestic tasks that may traditionally be viewed as feminine. We then see another man in a bow tie (potentially his partner) decorating the tree. The people shown gathering for dinner are diverse, with individuals of different ages, skin colors, and body sizes. Such portrayals normalize and promote inclusivity, celebrating the region’s rich diversity.
- ♦ At first, an advertisement for a department store appears traditional. The first image portrays a woman cooking, and the second features a man proposing marriage. However, after that, it shows couples having fun together, and the women are seen as equals to their partners. A woman is depicted starting a pillow fight with her partner. Another woman is shown playing video games with a man, winning, then teasing him about it. Later, this same advertisement shows a woman on a treadmill. She is an average size and wearing workout clothes that are not overly revealing or sexual. This mix of images in this advertisement can be considered positive, given that couples are shown as equals and that women are not sexualized or visually objectified. Furthermore, while most advertisements with women doing exercise portray only exceptionally thin or fit women, it is welcoming to show that women of all sizes can enjoy healthy exercise.



Conclusion and discussion

Advertising and marketing media are key sites for gender socialization and play a significant role in the perpetuation of gender stereotypes. What is portrayed on screen may shape individuals' beliefs about themselves and others. In doing so, they also influence societal attitudes, morals, and understanding of the world around us, including beliefs around the "appropriate" roles for women, men, girls, and boys – and "appropriate" sanctions for those who violate these norms. However, evidence suggests that different media forms can be used for more than just reinforcing existing norms: They may also have the power to catalyze change. Indeed, one study suggested that certain types of media messaging changed beliefs surrounding domestic and family violence, and increased support for gender equality.³²

The power of the media in shaping – or challenging – gender norms is especially poignant during adolescence. During this time, the media's portrayal of gender stereotypes may create conflicting or unrealistic expectations for youth, which may result in low self-confidence, higher rates of depression, and different forms of GBV. Yet adolescence can also be a time for transformation, as young people begin to explore and define their own identities and values. As such, it is critical that policymakers, civil society, and the private sector work together to leverage this opportunity window and thoughtfully apply advertising and marketing as forces for positive change.

With the goal of generating evidence to inform such interventions and therefore contribute to the Spotlight Initiative's mission of eliminating all forms of VAWG, this study conducted a systematic content analysis of gender representations across advertising in the Caribbean. In doing so, our analysis surfaces a number of potential drivers and risk factors between advertisements and VAWG.

First, the study's findings indicate that harmful gendered norms and stereotypes are present in advertising in the Caribbean. However, inequities are often subtle. Women and men appeared in advertisements at similar rates overall – but the ways in which they were portrayed were often distinct and illustrative of discriminatory gender norms and a patriarchal system that privileges masculinity over femininity. In particular, the reviewed advertisements reinforced imagery that casts women as caregivers but also as objects of sexual desire. On the other hand, men were portrayed as powerful and "cool" professionals, leaders, and role models. Therefore, although the reviewed advertisements portrayed very few instances of outright violence or harm being done by individual characters, the subtle ways in which they depict and therefore reinforce traditional gender roles may also suggest that it is "appropriate" and "normal" to punish those who violate these norms – including through acts of VAWG.

Secondly, this analysis also finds that advertisements in the Caribbean failed to capture the region's diversity, widely excluding nondominant groups. Characters portrayed in the reviewed advertisements were largely heterosexual, young,

thin, non-disabled, and middle-class. There was a near absence of LGBTQIA+ individuals, people living with disabilities, and older adults. Very few characters were portrayed as working class or as having large bodies.

This report also identifies a few promising trends and practices. There was no statistically significant difference between the percentage of men and women portrayed in parenting contexts. Furthermore, several reviewed advertisements illustrated positive norms, including men engaged in domestic tasks, couples treating one another as equals, and characters with greater diversity in terms of age, race/ethnicity, and body size.

Lastly, this study highlights the need for additional research. While our research establishes a useful baseline for the prevalence of gender stereotypes in advertisements across the region, more research is needed to identify the potential impact of this imagery and messaging on local attitudes, beliefs, and practices, including those related to VAWG. Additionally, more research is needed to identify the potential for advertisements to contribute to norms change, particularly among adolescents.

Promoting positive gender norms is critical for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 5: Gender Equality. However, doing so requires ambitious collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including the advertising community, civil society, and governments. This report sought to contribute to these efforts. We find that there is much work to be done to ensure that the powerful influence advertisements have on society – and adolescents in particular – will be leveraged to advance gender equality and human rights for all.

Recommendations for agencies and advertisers

1. *Develop content that promotes positive messages, advances human rights, and challenges harmful stereotypes and normalized beliefs around VAWG.*
 - ♦ Build alternative depictions of masculinities by portraying men and boys in more diverse ways so as not to reduce their worth to harmful and simplistic stereotypes.
 - ♦ Include messaging that encourages children and adults to talk about and display a range of emotions, especially for boys and men.
 - ♦ Refrain from messages that pressure women and girls to lose weight or achieve beauty standards.
 - ♦ Include women and men at work in a variety of roles and settings (e.g., women in the workplace portrayed in leadership roles, and men in the household portrayed in caregiving roles).
 - ♦ When portraying household settings, reflect the reality of diverse family units, including multigenerational households, single-mother- or single-father-led families, and other situations outside of the nuclear family.
 - ♦ Include a greater diversity of characters, considering characteristics such as race, class, disability, body size, gender, and sexual orientation.
 - ♦ Do not include content that promotes any kind of violence (including gender-based and sexual violence, corporal punishment, or other forms of symbolic or psychological violence).
2. *Mainstream gender- and age-sensitive advertising practices, including through awareness-raising and capacity-building.*
 - ♦ Audit in-house creative content practices, using tools such as [UNICEF's Playbook: Promoting Diversity & Inclusion in Advertising](#).
 - ♦ Regularly train staff (especially senior management, advertising production, and creative teams) on unconscious bias, including how our identities impact content development and marketing choices in a way that promotes or challenges harmful gender norms.

- ♦ Make clear and specific commitments throughout the marketing value chain, using functioning accountability mechanisms, to combat harmful stereotypes in content and product design.
 - ♦ Develop long-term strategic plan and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in marketing and advertising.
 - ♦ Create internal strategies or checklists to address diversity, equity, and inclusion in content development and marketing, so that checking for harmful stereotypes becomes part of the creation process (including the revision of existing content).
 - ♦ Develop new ways of engaging consumers to position brands in the nontraditional narrative, by being gender-focused, promoting empowered women, adolescents, and girls, and promoting new and nontoxic masculinities for men, adolescents, and boys.
 - ♦ Hire diverse teams of writers, producers, and artists who can bring new perspectives and experiences to the production process.
3. *Strengthen content-quality testing and evaluation mechanisms.*
- ♦ Leverage tools like the [Unstereotype Metric](#) to create and track advertising content that is free of gender stereotypes, and to push for progressive portrayals of all people.
 - ♦ Test advertising scripts and copy for bias among a diverse audience.
 - ♦ Conduct impact assessments with diverse child stakeholders to understand how marketing can impact their perceptions of themselves and others.
4. *Develop partnerships and collaborations with gender-equality organizations.*
- ♦ Partner with gender-equality organizations and women-led media groups to identify appropriate ways to use marketing and advertising channels to promote messages that combat violence against women and children.
 - ♦ Collaborate with marginalized groups and the organizations that represent them to ensure that their perspectives are reflected while creating advocacy and training materials.

Recommendations for policymakers and international organizations

1. Expand opportunities for adolescents to participate in their communities and in the processes that affect them.
2. Work with youth organizations to change social norms that stand in their way and develop platforms for them to share their experiences and propose solutions.
3. Partner with CSOs and private-sector allies to develop a set of regional and/or country-specific standards of practice on gender- and age-sensitive advertising.
4. Engage in advocacy with local advertising-standards associations to create or strengthen statutory guidelines.
5. Collaborate with women's organizations and CSOs to develop locally appropriate strategies and campaigns to incentivize uptake and implementation of relevant standards.
6. Invest in local and global advocacy to raise awareness around the linkages between advertisements, gender socialization, discriminatory gender norms, and gender inequality (including VAWG).
7. Invest in research and building the evidence base, including around the nexus between advertisements (and other media formats), gender socialization, discriminatory gender norms, and gender inequality (including VAWG).

Relevant guidelines and resources

UNICEF, *Promoting diversity and inclusion in advertising: A UNICEF playbook*, 2021.

UNICEF, U.N. Women, *Promoting Positive Gender Roles in Marketing and Advertising in the Context of COVID-19: Key Considerations for Business*, 2020.

UNICEF and the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media: *Case Study: Gender Bias & Inclusion in Advertising in India*, 2021.

Unstereotype Alliance, U.N. Women, *Beyond Gender: The Invisible Stereotypes*, 2018.

Unstereotype Alliance, U.N. Women, *Beyond Gender 2: The Impact of Intersectionality in Advertising*, 2021.

The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, *If HE Can See It, He Will Be It: Representation of masculinity in boy's television*, 2020.

Appendix: Variables

All variables are tested for reliability among our expert coders, who underwent a rigorous training process and ran pilot tests on data outside of the sample. All variables included in the report have met standards of interrater reliability.

Gender: Character gender was determined through appearance, such as attire, hairstyle, and physical features. It was also identified through pronoun use and other contextual information. Characters are assumed to be cisgender unless explicit details suggest otherwise.

Skin tone: Character skin tone was determined on a five-point scale of light to dark, based on scales and examples agreed upon by expert researchers.

LGBTQIA+: LGBTQIA+ characters were identified through context clues, such as romantic attachments, styling, props, and dialogue. Characters in drag are coded as queer.

Disability: This research was inclusive of physical, cognitive, and communicative disabilities. Disabilities that were not visible were coded only when confirmed through dialogue or visual contexts (e.g., a character visiting a support group).

Age: Character's average age was estimated by facial features, maturity, and contextual clues. This study categorized characters into the following groups: child (1-12 years old); tween (13-14 years old); late tweens (15-19 years old); 20s (20-29 years old); 30s (30-39 years old); 40s (40-49 years old); 50s (50-59 years old); 60-plus (60 years old or older). Analyses of the portrayals of older adults compared representations of characters over and under the age of 50.

Body type: Large body types were identified as those who appeared larger than average sizes, using waist circumference data collected by the CDC.

Socioeconomic status: Characters were determined to fall into one of four categories (living in poverty, working class, middle class, or upper class) based on their purchasing decisions (e.g., a luxury car), their living situations (including the style of house or apartment, the setting, and the objects in their homes), and the context of the advertisement itself (e.g., if a commercial is targeting a specific audience or speaking to a social/class issue). Without any distinguishing features or context, characters were coded as middle class.

Visual objectification: Objectification refers to when the camera captures a character as body parts rather than as a full person. This often includes using slow motion or panning to show off their bodies in a sexual way.

Verbal objectification: Verbal objectification refers to when one character objectifies another in the advertisement, such as catcalling a stranger or speaking crudely about another person to friends.

Endnotes

1. Marcus, Rachel and Harper, Caroline. (2015). Social norms, gender norms and adolescent girls: a brief guide. Overseas Development Institute. Page 4.
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19. Throughout this report, we refer to stereotyping as it relates to recreating harmful gender norms in advertising. This is distinct from the identification of individual stereotypical character types. That is, this report does not count individual instances of one-dimensional, stereotypical characters.
20. The inclusion criteria in the selection of the countries included: (1) population to represent both larger states and populations over one million, and smaller states with populations with less than 300,000; (2) Spotlight Initiative countries with programs currently being implemented and non-Spotlight Initiative countries; (3) language diversity to capture the multilingual nature of the region; and (4) media production capacities, including the presence of radio/television stations and production companies. It should be noted that the geographical scope of the Spotlight Initiative includes the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) English-, French-, and Dutch-speaking Member States.
21. While similar studies have used audience reach and viewership as criteria for identifying a sample of advertisements, this data was not available in the identified target countries, to the best of the authors' knowledge. Therefore, the study used advertisement spending as a proxy for reach and/or popularity. To the extent possible, the study identified top companies and top market sectors leading advertising spending regionwide, in order to provide more context for drawing regional-level recommendations.
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