

PUBLIC OPINION POLL

# MEN'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE BRIDE PRICE TRADITION IN KENYA



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# MWELEKEO INSIGHTS

## Who We Are

We are a Kenyan-based research firm specialising in data-driven research and analysis focused on understanding public sentiment and informing decision-making across various sectors. We work to empower businesses, policy makers, and communities through scientific evaluations and credible insights.

## We Conduct:

National surveys, impact assessments, voter behavior analysis, and policy research to understand and amplify citizen voices and inform development strategies.

## Ethical Standards:

We adhere to strict ethical research practices, ensuring participant confidentiality, informed consent, and data anonymity.

## Our Notable Projects:

We have conducted projects on intergenerational dynamics, gender issues, economic policies, and public perception trends such as Perception of Kenyans to Gen Zs after 2024 protests, Kenya's fiscal policies, Attitudes of women toward marriage, and educational studies.



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# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In many Kenyan communities, the bride price tradition is an important requirement and aspect of marriage. To show appreciation and respect to the family of the bride, the groom and his family pay the bride's family money, gifts and livestock as a final seal of marriage. Cultural heritage forms the basis and the tradition is regarded as an act of respect, family togetherness, and somewhat a compensation to the bride's family. In many instances, the bride price ceremony is an elaborate affair with pomp and glory. But how relevant is the tradition today, and what do Kenyans think of the underlying reasons?

This study looks at the opinions of Kenyan male adults aged 18–45 about the bride price tradition. The research aims to determine if men still see it as a vital tradition or if they think it is now old-fashioned and problematic and whether it commodifies women or commercialises marriage in any way. The study highlights the clash between tradition and modernity, economic impacts, and the shifting attitudes of such traditions among different groups of men.



## INFORMED CONSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

Participation in this study was voluntary, and all respondents provided informed consent before participating. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and potential data uses. They were assured that they could withdraw from the study without consequences.

Mwelekeo Insights is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all respondents. No personally identifiable information was collected during the survey, focus groups, or interviews. Data is aggregated and anonymised to ensure individual responses cannot be traced back to participants. All findings are reported in a manner that upholds the principles of integrity, transparency, and respect for respondents' privacy. Data will be stored securely and used solely for research purposes, which aligns with ethical standards for social research.

# POLL OBJECTIVE

## General Objective

- ✔ To assess the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of Kenyan men aged 18–45 regarding the bride price tradition, with a view to understanding its cultural significance, socio-economic impact, and evolving relevance in contemporary Kenyan society.

## Specific Objectives

- ✔ To determine the level of support for the bride price tradition among men aged 18–45 in Kenya.
- ✔ To identify variations in attitudes toward bride price among men based on age group, location, level of education and marriage status.
- ✔ To explore men's perceptions of bride price as either a valuable cultural practice or an outdated custom.
- ✔ To examine how economic factors such as affordability and financial pressure influence men's attitudes toward bride price.
- ✔ To assess the influence of religion and cultural beliefs on men's support for or opposition to the bride price tradition.
- ✔ To investigate how men's views on bride price relate to perspectives on gender equality, fairness, and women's autonomy.
- ✔ To explore men's preferences for alternative practices in place of traditional bride price.
- ✔ To inform policy, public discourse, and cultural engagement efforts on the future of bride price in Kenya.

# POLL QUESTIONS

The poll aimed to answer the following key questions:

- ✔ To what extent do men support or oppose the bride price practice in Kenya today?
- ✔ How do men's attitudes toward bride price vary based on age, location (urban vs. rural), level of education, and marital status?
- ✔ Do men view bride price as a valuable cultural tradition or as an outdated custom that no longer fits modern society?
- ✔ In what ways do economic factors such as affordability and financial pressure affect men's attitudes and decisions regarding bride price?
- ✔ To what extent do religious and cultural beliefs influence men's support for or opposition to the bride price tradition?
- ✔ How do men perceive the relationship between bride price and issues of gender equality, fairness, and women's autonomy in marriage?
- ✔ How does the expectation to pay bride price impact men's decisions about whether or when to get married?
- ✔ What alternative practices to traditional bride price do men prefer, if any?
- ✔ What kinds of emotional or social pressures do men experience in relation to fulfilling bride price expectations?
- ✔ What do men believe should be the future of the bride price tradition in Kenya - should it continue, be reformed, replaced, or abolished?



# METHODOLOGY

## Sampling & Data Collection



### DESIGN

National Qualitative Survey



### POPULATION

Kenyan male adults  
aged 18-45



### COVERAGE

Nationwide



### DATA ANALYSIS

Total level, key demographics  
(setting, gender, and age)



### FIELDWORK PERIOD

May 13<sup>th</sup> - June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025.



### SAMPLE SIZE

15,823 Respondents



### MARGIN OF ERROR

+/- 3.4% at a 95%  
confidence level



### DATA COLLECTION

50% CATI,  
50% focus groups.



### SAMPLING

Multi-stage stratified sampling  
(proportionate to target  
population).

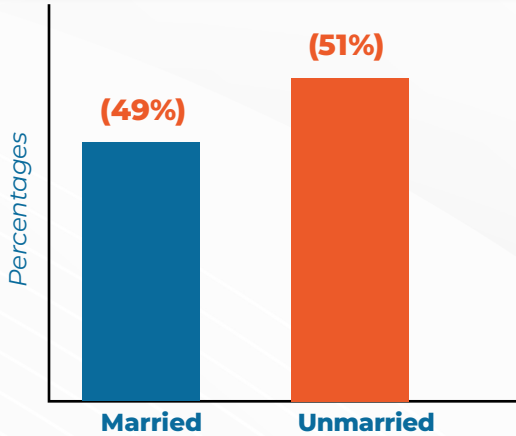


### FUNDING

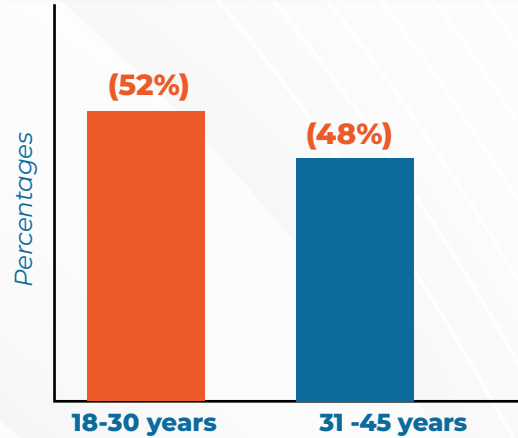
Self-Sponsored

# DEMOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

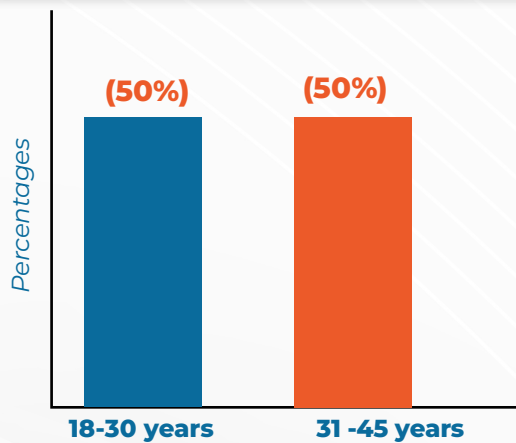
## MARRIED VS UNMARRIED



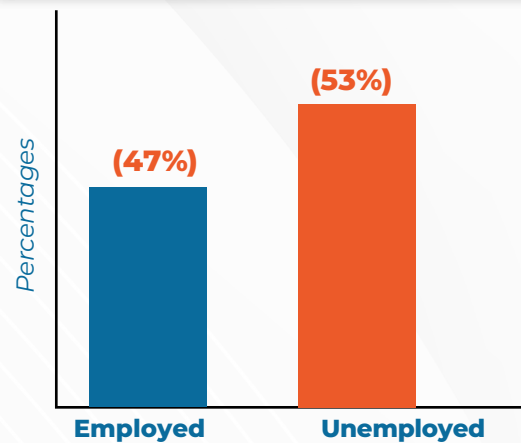
## AGE DISTRIBUTION



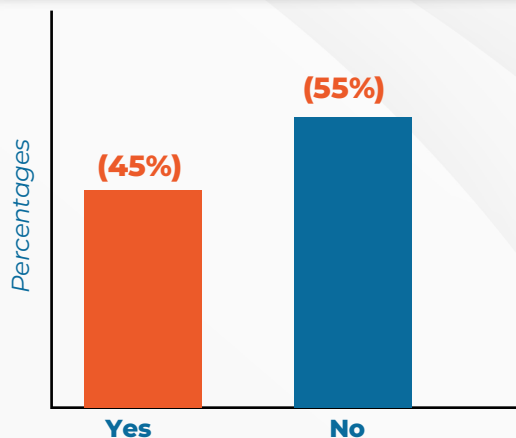
## RURAL VS URBAN



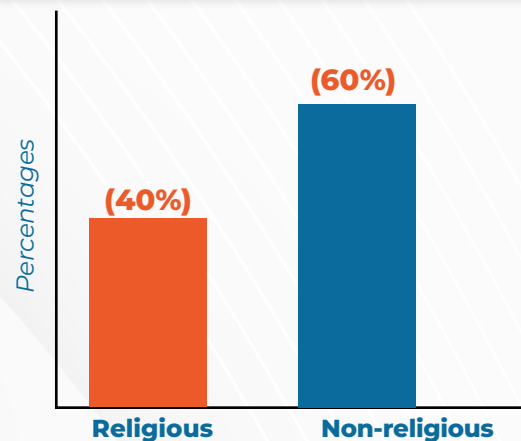
## EMPLOYED VS UNEMPLOYED



## ACCESS TO TERTIARY EDUCATION



## RELIGIOUS VS NON-RELIGIOUS



# KEY INSIGHTS

## 01 UNIVERSAL AWARENESS, DIVERGENT UNDERSTANDING

Awareness of the bride price tradition is nearly universal among respondents, but interpretations of its meaning and purpose vary widely. Virtually all participants recognised the concept of bride price, regardless of background. However, deeper probing revealed that while some view it as a sacred cultural rite, others see it as a transactional or even exploitative practice.

## 02 GEOGRAPHIC AND AGE DIVIDES IN PERCEPTIONS

The bride price tradition remains deeply embedded in Kenyan cultural identity, especially among older men and those in rural settings. However, support for it is far from unanimous as many younger and urban respondents are beginning to question its relevance in contemporary society.

## 03 A DIVISIVE TRADITION ON GENDER ISSUES?

Perceptions of fairness and gender roles strongly influence attitudes toward bride price, with sharp opinions emerging between on the role, benefit and relevance of the bride price tradition in modern-day Kenya.

## 04 BRIDE PRICE IN THE FACE OF EDUCATION AND EXPOSURE

Urban residency, higher education, and broader exposure to diverse cultures correlate with more critical views of the bride price practice, reflecting a broader trend toward modern reinterpretations of traditional practices.

## 05 WHEN CULTURE MEETS COST, WHICH WAY?

Economic realities play a critical role in shaping opinions about bride price, with affordability concerns and the perceived economic impact of the traditions influencing the support and opposition as well as calls for reform.

## 06 WHO SHOULD PAY? A QUESTION OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITY

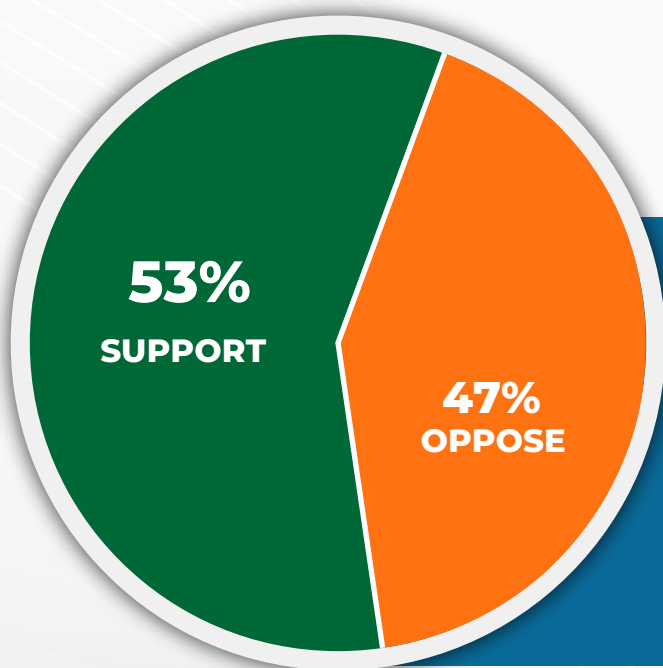
Most male respondents believe the groom or his family should pay the bride price, but there's growing debate about cost-sharing and fairness in a world of increasing feminist awareness

# FINDINGS

## i) LEVEL OF SUPPORT FOR THE TRADITION

To what extent do male adults aged 18–45 still support the bride price tradition in Kenya, and how is this support distributed across different social groups?

### GENERAL SUPPORT FOR THE BRIDE PRICE TRADITION



Support  
Oppose

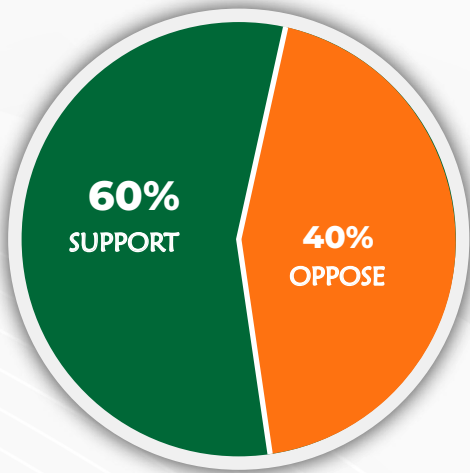
53% of participants (male) express support the bride price tradition in Kenya, while 47% oppose it. This indicates a slight majority favour maintaining the tradition, influenced by factors such as cultural and religious values, peer pressure, and economic considerations.

### CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

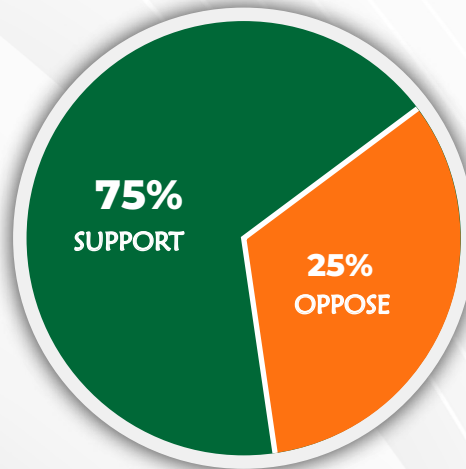
- ✓ Love
- ✓ Pre-conditions for marriage
- ✓ Culture and religious influences
- ✓ Level of education
- ✓ Peer pressure and societal status.
- ✓ Economic matters
- ✓ Cost vs. Benefit analysis

# DEMOGRAPHICS ON SUPPORT

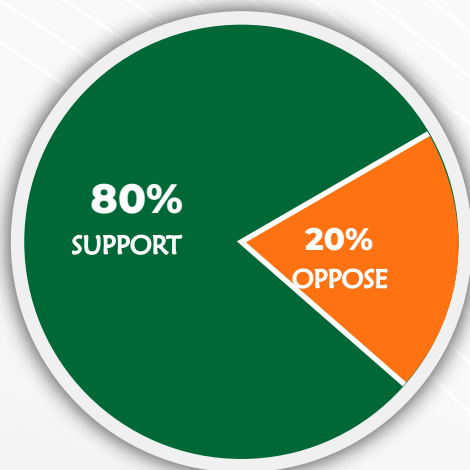
MEN AGED 18-30: SUPPORT VS OPPOSE



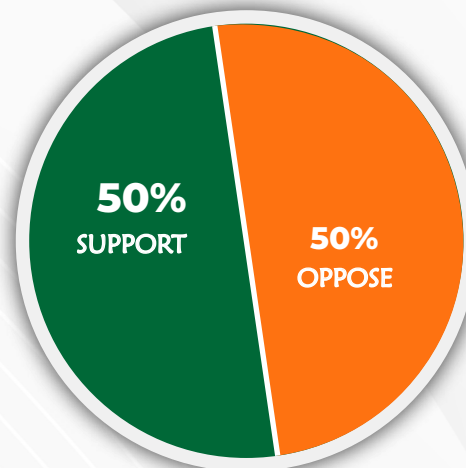
MEN AGED 31-45: SUPPORT VS OPPOSE



MEN IN RURAL AREAS



MEN IN URBAN AREAS



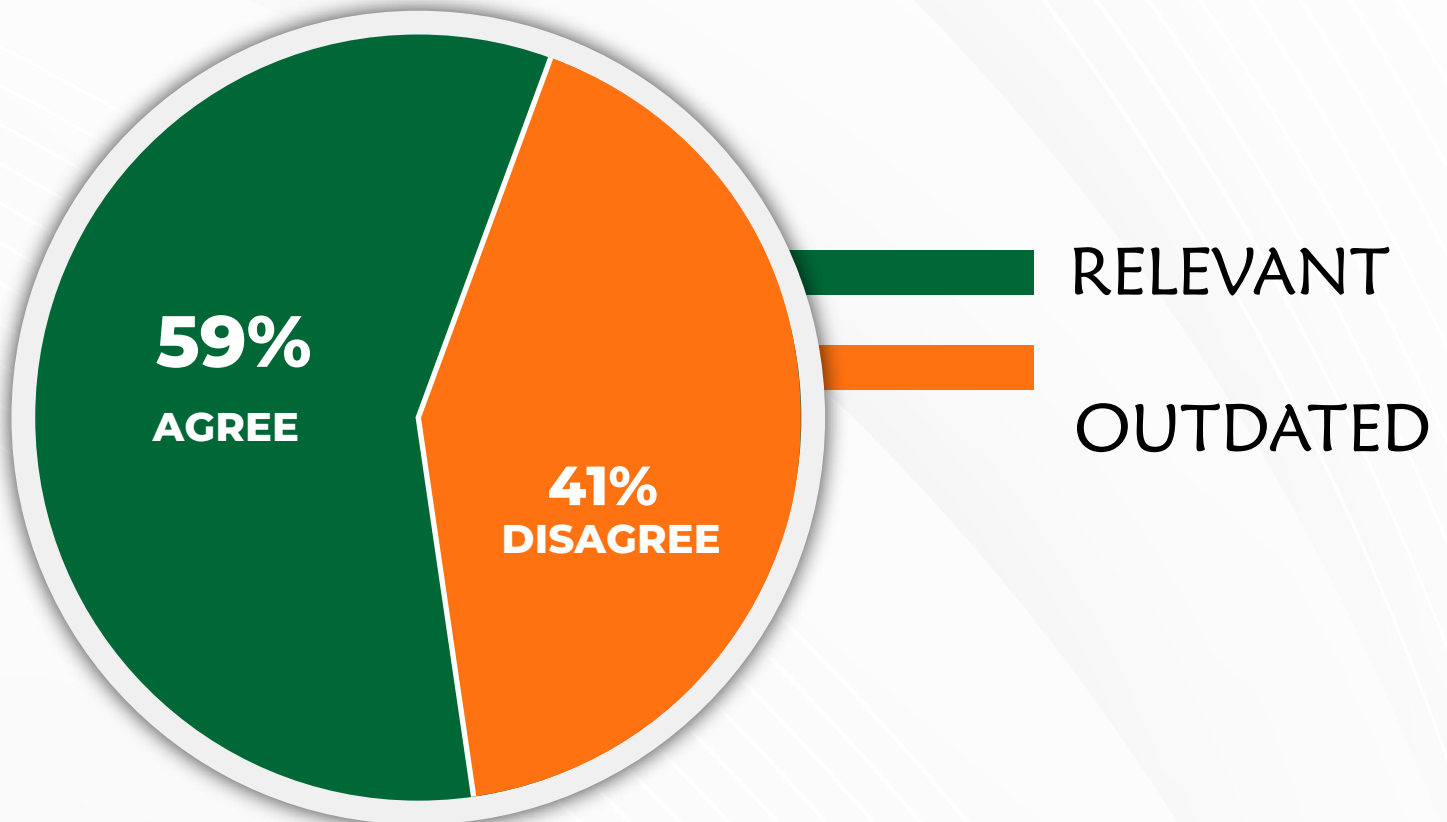
A majority of Kenyan men support the bride price tradition, viewing it as a cultural cornerstone, but a significant minority, especially younger and urban men, question its relevance or advocate reform. Support is stronger among older and rural men, reflecting traditional values, while opposition is higher in urban areas due to modern influences.

## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- ✔ Bride price is a deeply ingrained tradition symbolising respect and family unity.
- ✔ Exposure to globalized views push men to see bride price as outdated or problematic.
- ✔ Financial burdens reduce support among younger men, who face affordability challenges.

## ii) CULTURAL PERCEPTION AND RELEVANCE

Do male Kenyan adults today view bride price as a timeless cultural tradition, or as a practice that no longer fits within modern values and relationships?



Most men recognize bride price as a key part of Kenyan cultural identity, symbolizing respect and family ties. However, a notable portion, particularly younger and urban respondents, question its relevance in modern society, viewing it as less aligned with contemporary values.

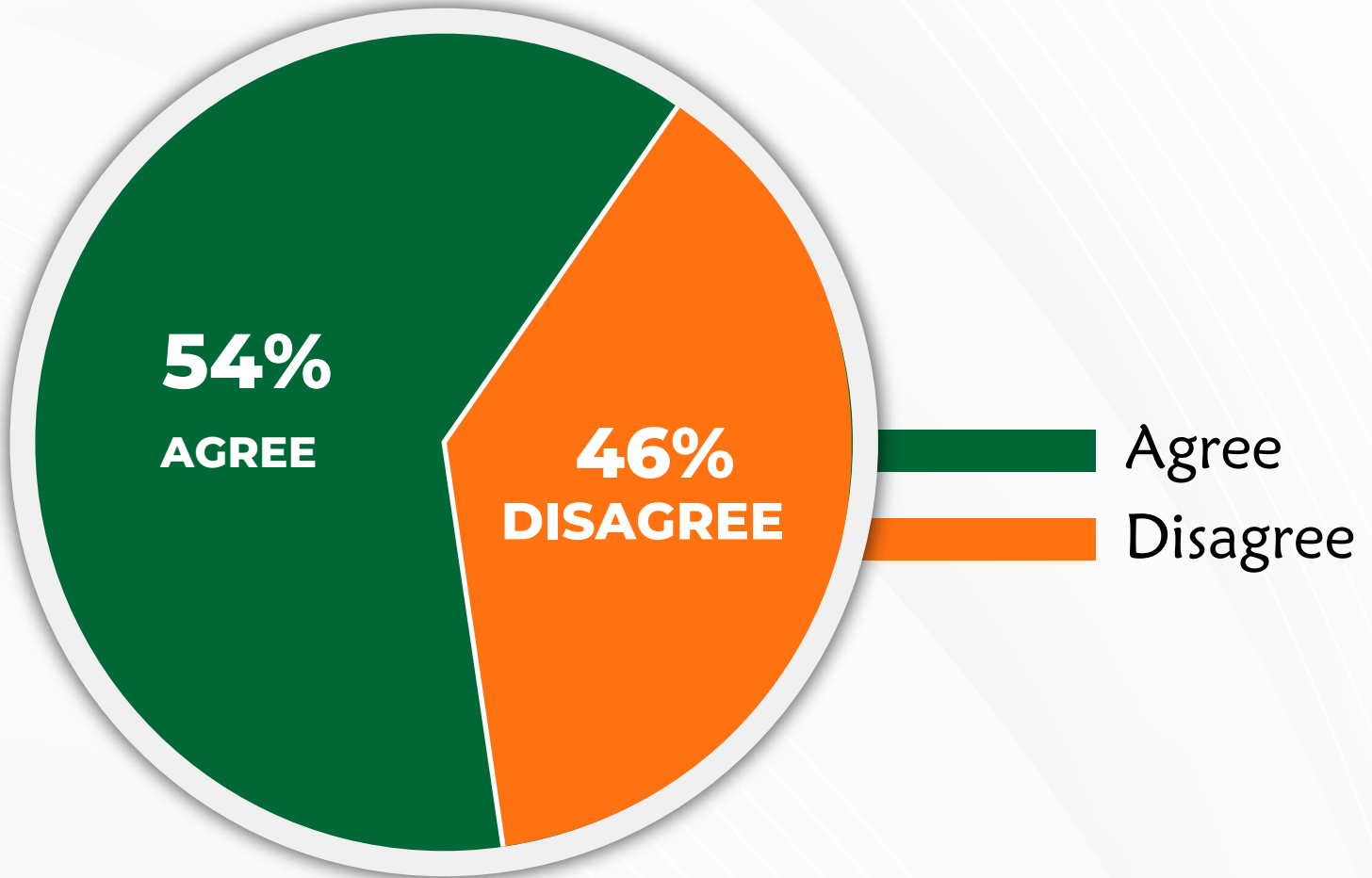
### CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- ✔ Bride price is a longstanding tradition, reinforcing its perceived importance.
- ✔ Exposure to diverse cultures in urban areas prompts reevaluation of traditional practices.
- ✔ Younger men, influenced by modern media and education, are more likely to see it as less relevant.

### iii) ECONOMIC CONCERNS



Do economic realities shape men’s opinions about the bride price tradition?



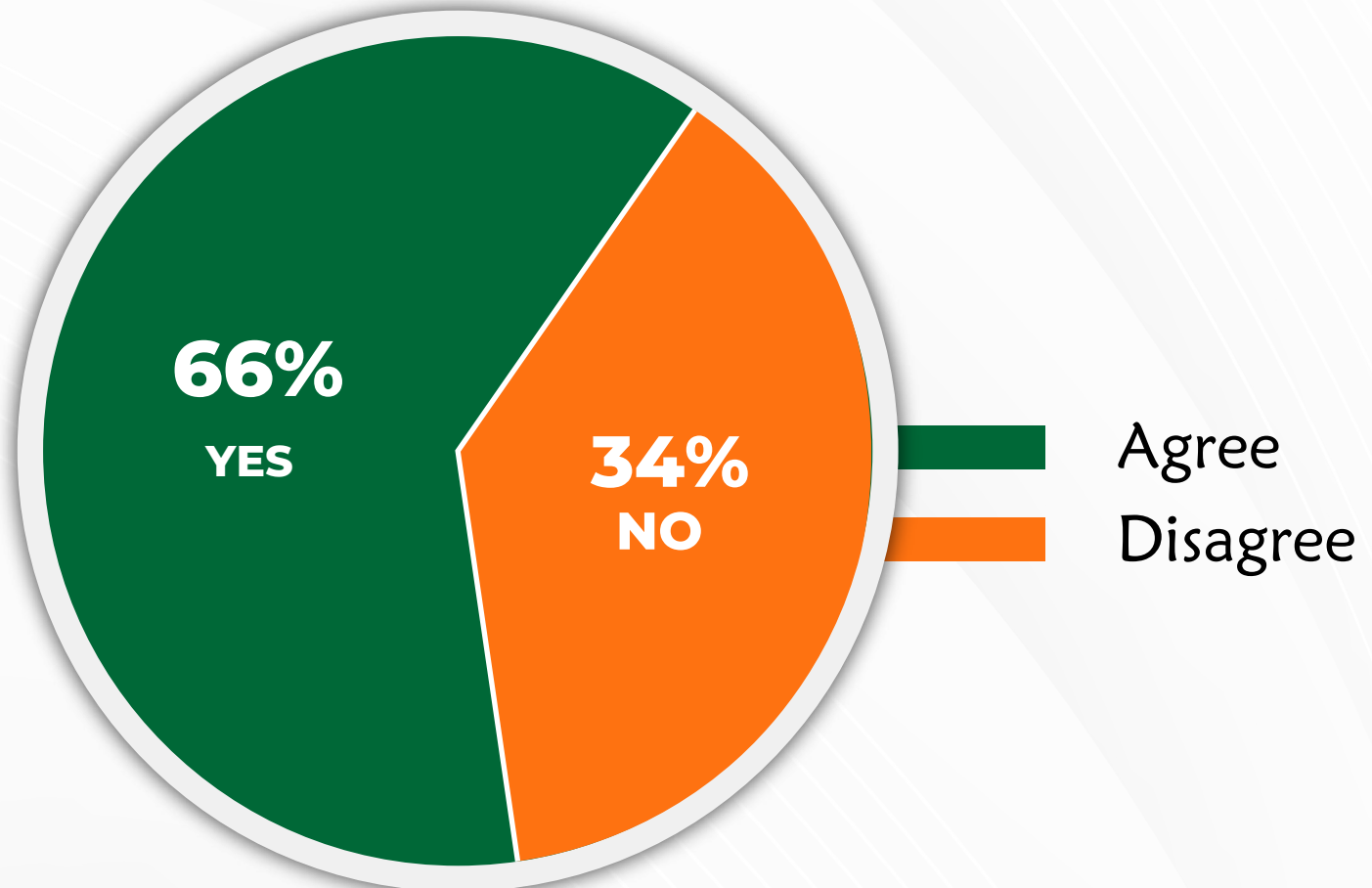
The financial burden of bride price significantly shapes men’s views, with many citing affordability issues as a reason for opposition or calls for reform. This is especially true for younger men or those with limited resources, who find the costs prohibitive.

#### CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- ☑ High bride price demands, including money and livestock, strain financial resources.
- ☑ Younger men often lack stable incomes, making payments challenging.
- ☑ Some families demand excessive payments, fueling resentment and calls for change.

## iv) RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Do religious teachings and cultural norms play a role in shaping men's support or opposition to the bride price tradition?

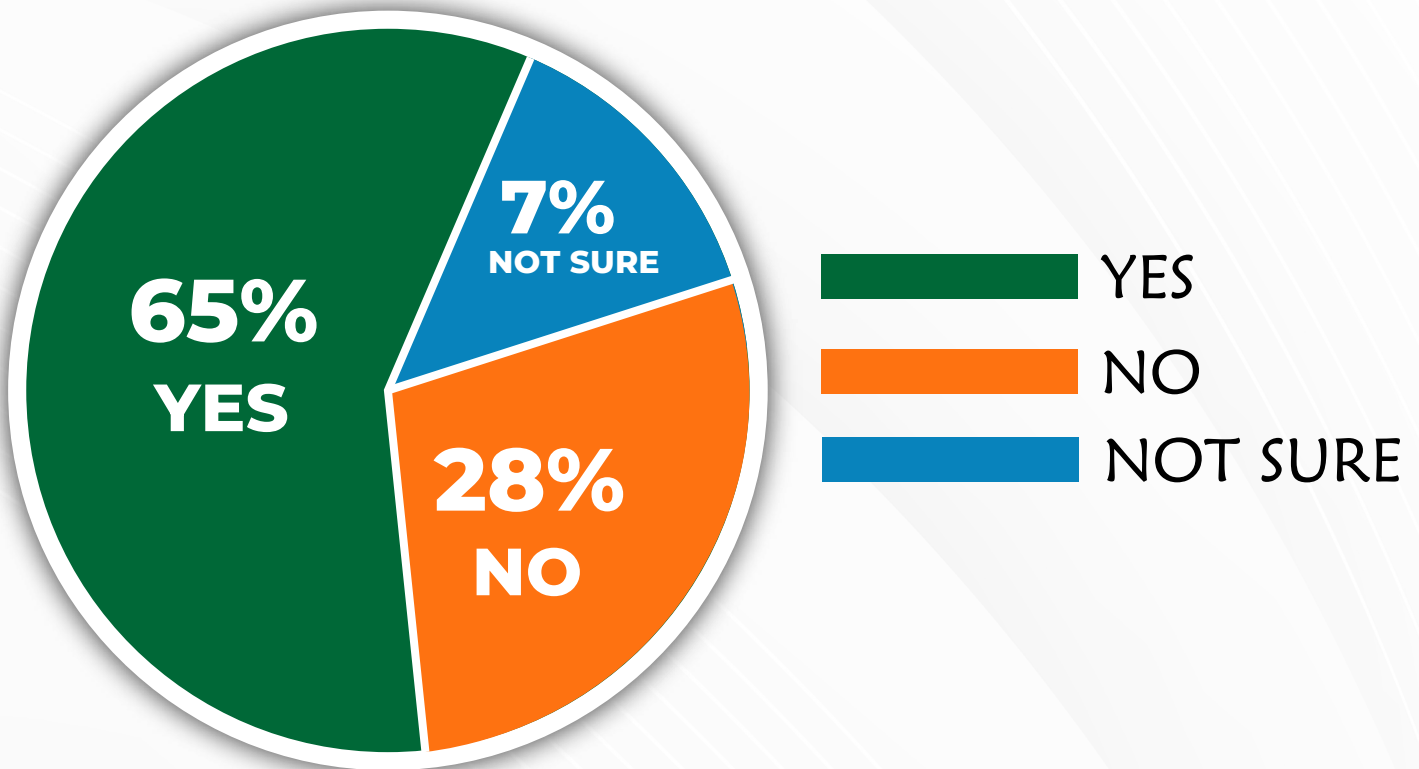


A majority of men view bride price as aligned with religious (e.g., Christian) and cultural norms, seeing it as a respectful tradition. However, a significant portion believes these norms can accommodate modern interpretations, such as lower costs or symbolic gestures.

### CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- ☑ Some Christian doctrines endorse bride price as part of marriage rites, reinforcing support.
- ☑ Traditional practices across Kenyan communities emphasize bride price as a family obligation.
- ☑ Progressive religious and cultural views support adapting traditions to contemporary contexts.

Does the customary bride price tradition commodify women?



A significant minority, especially educated and urban men, view bride price as implying ownership or control over women, reducing their autonomy.

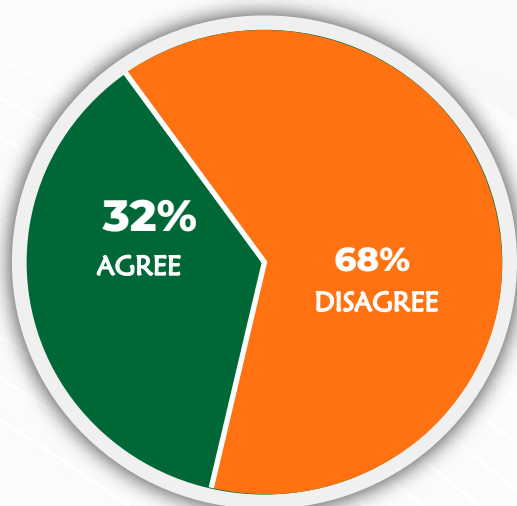
### CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- ✔ Educated men, influenced by feminist ideas, see bride price as reinforcing patriarchal norms.
- ✔ Many men view bride price as a respectful gesture, not inherently gendered.
- ✔ Platforms like X amplify discussions on gender equality, shaping critical perspectives.

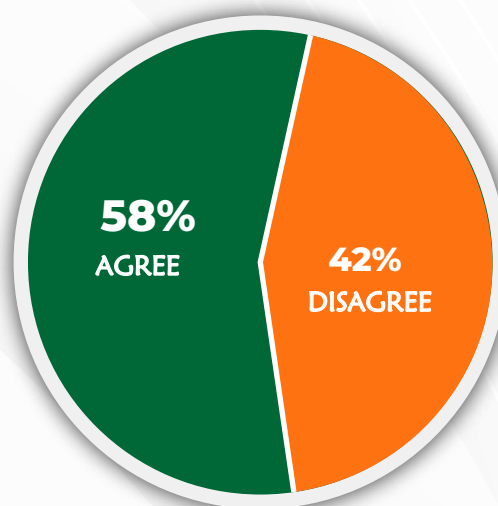
## vi) IMPACT OF BRIDE PRICE ON DECISION TO MARRY

Is a man's decision to marry influenced by the requirement of bride price?

### MARRIED MEN



### UNMARRIED MEN



The financial and social expectations of bride price significantly impact men's decisions about marriage, often causing delays due to inability to meet demands. This is particularly relevant for younger men with limited resources.

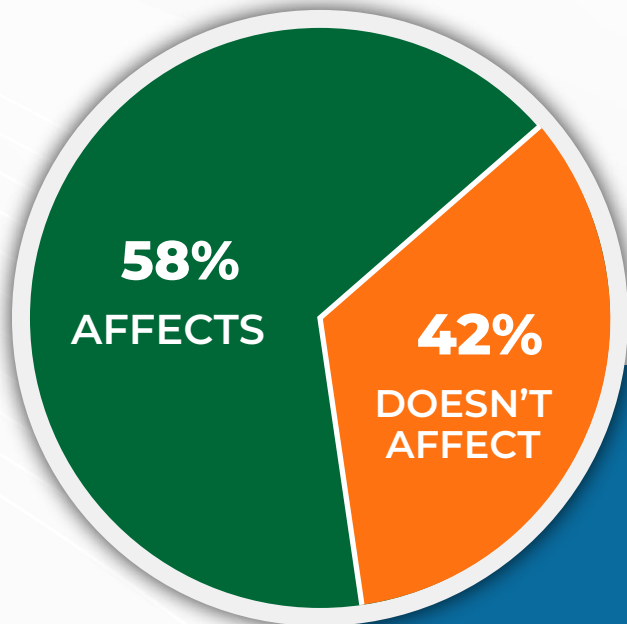
### CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- ✓ Economic constraints
- ✓ Expectations from families and communities.
- ✓ Other priorities such as education and career stability.

## vii) PRESSURES ASSOCIATED WITH BRIDE PRICE

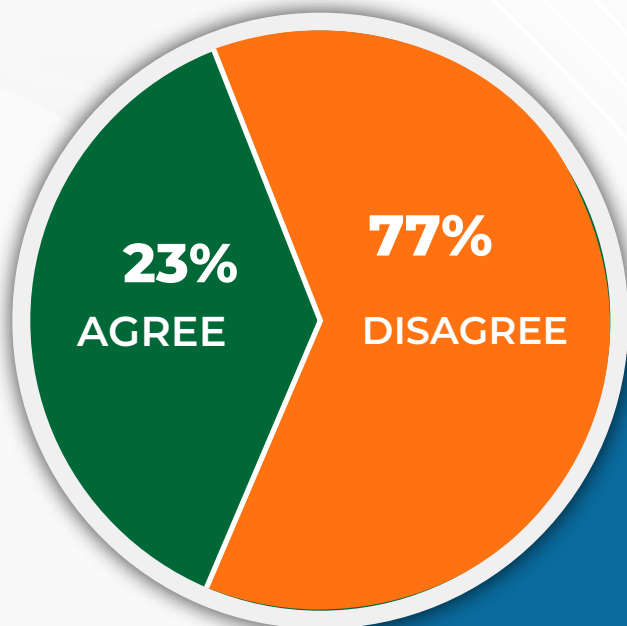
How does the expectation to pay bride price affect men's emotional well-being and social identity?

### IMPACT ON EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING



58% of men feel that the expectation to pay bride price affects their emotional well-being, while 42% do not. This suggests a significant portion experiences emotional strain, likely due to the pressure and financial burden associated with the tradition.

### IMPACT ON SOCIAL IDENTITY



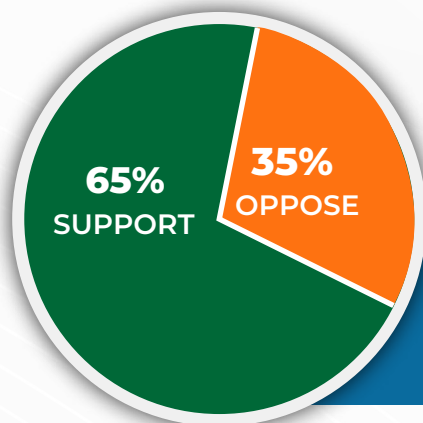
23% of men believe the expectation to pay bride price affects their social identity, while 77% do not. This shows a strong majority do not link their social status or masculinity to this obligation, though a minority still perceives it as influential.

## viii) SUPPORT FOR ALTERNATIVES



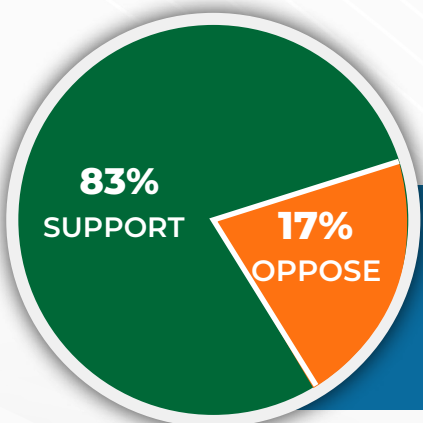
What alternative practices to bride price are Kenyan male adults willing to accept, and how do these options reflect changing societal attitudes?

### COST SHARING BRIDE PRICE WITH WIFE



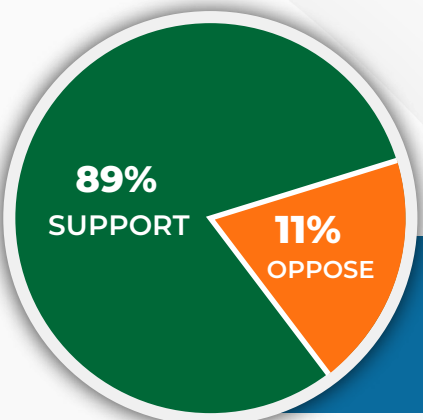
A staggering majority of men (65%) support the proposal that bride-price should be cost-shared between the man and woman in light of feminist pushes for gender-equality. However, 35% disagreed, arguing that bride price is a men's preserve.

### GRADUAL PAYMENT OF THE BRIDE PRICE PAYMENTS



A high majority of participants support the idea that bride-price should be gradually paid throughout the marriage period, with a majority noting financial burdens and the high rate of marriage breakdowns. However, 17% disagreed with the idea, noting that it should be a one-off payment.

### BRIDE PRICE AS A REWARD SCHEME FOR GOOD BEHAVIOUR

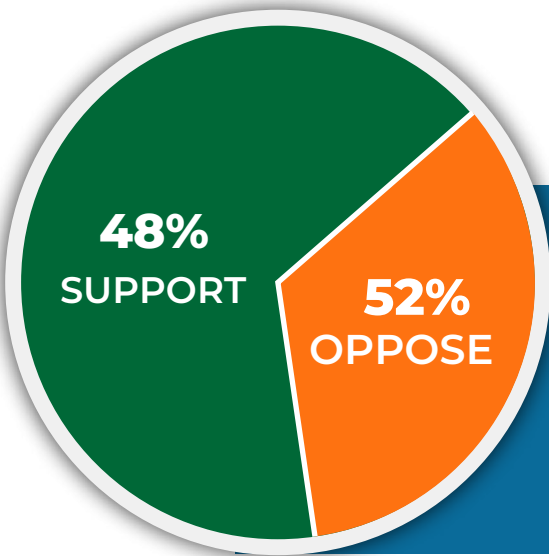


An overwhelming 89% of participants endorsed the idea that bride-price should be a husband's reward for his wife's good behaviour, and not a prerequisite tradition as is the case currently.

# OTHER PROPOSALS



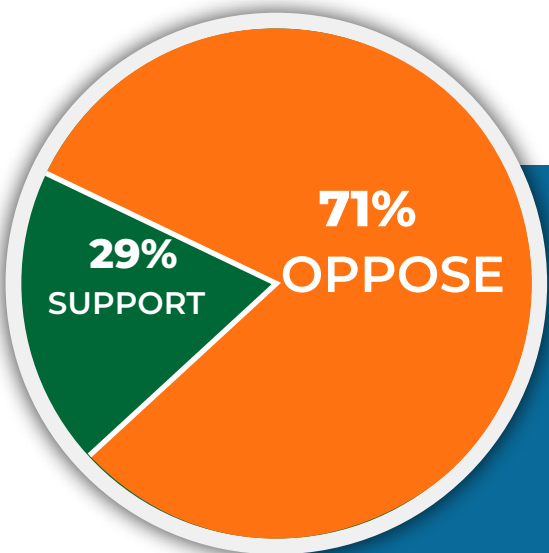
## ABOLISHMENT OF BRIDE PRICE TRADITION



Should the bride price tradition be completely abolished in Kenya?

48% of participants support abolishing the bride price tradition in Kenya, while 52% oppose it. This indicates a nearly even split in public opinion, with a slight majority favouring the continuation of the tradition

## WOMEN PAYING "BRIDE PRICE" INSTEAD?



Should women take up the role of paying for the 'bride price' instead, and men and their families be the ones to receive?

A partly 29% support women taking up the role of paying the bride price instead, with men and their families receiving it, while 71% oppose this idea. This suggests a strong preference for maintaining the traditional structure where men typically pay the bride price.

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## Attitudes Among Men Are Diverse and Shaped by Location, Education, and Age

The study reveals that men's views on bride price are far from monolithic. While rural and older men often defend the tradition as part of their identity and familial duty, younger and urban men are more likely to question its relevance. Education also plays a key role as those with higher levels of education tend to be more critical of the practice, often associating it with outdated gender roles and patriarchal power dynamics.

## Many Men Support Reform, Not Abandonment of the Tradition

Rather than calling for the outright elimination of bride price, many men are advocating for its modernization. They support symbolic or voluntary forms of the practice—such as modest gifts, mutual agreements, or even couple-led decisions—rather than rigid, costly obligations. This reflects a desire to honor cultural heritage while adjusting to today's social and economic realities.

## Bride Price Reinforces Social Expectations of Masculinity

The practice of bride price is widely viewed as a marker of manhood and success. Men reported feeling pressure from families and communities to “prove” their readiness for marriage through payment. Failing to meet these expectations can lead to stigma, strained relationships, or exclusion from traditional rites. These pressures underscore how deeply the tradition is tied to perceptions of male identity, regardless of a man's personal beliefs or financial situation.

## There Is a Growing Demand Among Men for Dialogue and Inclusion in Cultural Decisions

Many men expressed a desire for more open discussions about marriage traditions, including bride price. They feel excluded from critical decisions that often affect their futures—decisions typically led by elders or in-laws. The findings suggest a readiness among men to participate in intergenerational and community conversations about redefining tradition in ways that are more equitable, transparent, and sustainable.

## Perceptions of Bride Price Are Closely Linked to Gender Equality Views

A notable portion of men - especially those with higher education or urban backgrounds view bride price as reinforcing gender inequality. Some respondents expressed concern that paying bride price can create a sense of entitlement or control over women in marriage. Others noted that the transactional nature of the tradition can undermine women's autonomy and perpetuate harmful stereotypes. While not all men reject the practice, many believe it needs to be reimagined in a way that promotes mutual respect and equality in modern relationships.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Encourage Open Dialogue on Reforming the Bride Price Tradition

Create safe, inclusive platforms where men, especially youth, can openly discuss their experiences, concerns, and ideas for reforming bride price. This could include community forums, church gatherings, and cultural dialogues that bring together elders, religious leaders, women, and young men to bridge generational and gender divides.

## Address the Economic Pressures Tied to Bride Price Through Financial Literacy and Support

Given that financial burden is a major issue for men, particularly the youth, programs should offer financial planning guidance for those entering marriage. NGOs and local governments can also partner with community leaders to discourage extravagant or exploitative bride price demands.

## Promote Voluntary and Symbolic Alternatives to Bride Price

Support a cultural shift toward less transactional and more symbolic forms of bride price that retain meaning without imposing financial strain. Public campaigns can highlight examples of voluntary gifting, mutual family agreements, or couple-led arrangements that honor tradition without reinforcing inequality.

## Engage Religious and Cultural Institutions in Advocating for Balanced Practices

Religious and cultural leaders should be involved in shaping a modern interpretation of bride price that reflects both heritage and contemporary values of equality and justice. Sermons, teachings, and cultural rites can be reoriented to emphasize partnership and shared responsibility in marriage.

## Incorporate Gender Equality Education into Cultural and Marriage Preparation Programs

To counter harmful gender norms sometimes reinforced by bride price, integrate gender equality education into traditional marriage preparation, church counselling, and civic education initiatives. Highlight how healthy marriages are built on respect, consent, and shared decision-making.

## Recognize and Include Men in Gender and Cultural Policy Conversations

Men are often overlooked in conversations about gendered cultural practices, yet this study shows they are directly affected and eager to contribute. Policymakers, researchers, and advocacy groups should ensure men's voices are represented in national dialogues on marriage, gender, and cultural evolution.

# SAMPLE COMMENTS



- ✔ “Why should I as a serious man pay for what other men have been receiving for free? This bride price tradition is a joke”
- ✔ “The bride price is a cultural cornerstone, showing respect to the brides family.”
- ✔ “It’s outdated and puts too much financial pressure on young men.”
- ✔ “Somewhat relevant, but it needs reform to avoid exploitation.”
- ✔ “It hinders gender equality by treating women as property.”
- ✔ “My Christian faith supports it, but I think the costs should be reasonable.”
- ✔ “It’s a burden that delays marriages for many young couples.”
- ✔ “I’m neutral; it depends on how families approach it.”
- ✔ “Abolishing it would free couples to focus on building their future.”
- ✔ “It’s meaningful in my culture, but the demands are often excessive.”
- ✔ “It strengthens family ties, but only if both sides agree fairly.”

