



# Erosion of Traditional Herbal Knowledge: The case of a Berber community in the High Atlas Mountains of Morocco

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## Introduction

Elders are essential for the transmission of traditional knowledge to younger generations  
In El Maghzen, plant knowledge is common to men and women and herbal medicine prevalent.  
The loss of knowledge is likely to occur as communities are increasingly targeted for development.  
Prevention of this knowledge erosion is vital for future generations as loss of knowledge is likely to occur through family connections and group cohesion.

## Objectives

To identify the gatekeepers of plant knowledge transmission  
To determine the channels of erosion.  
To present measures for preventing the loss of knowledge.

## Methodology

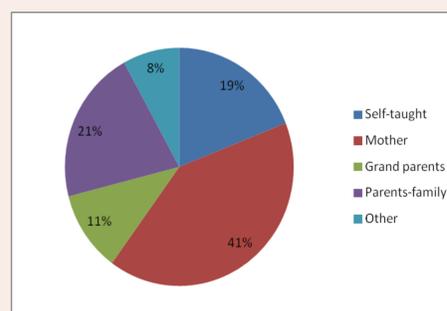
Ethnobotanical and anthropological tools, semi-structured interviews, plant free listing, in depth participant observation on herbal medicine harvesting, post harvesting and herbal preparation.



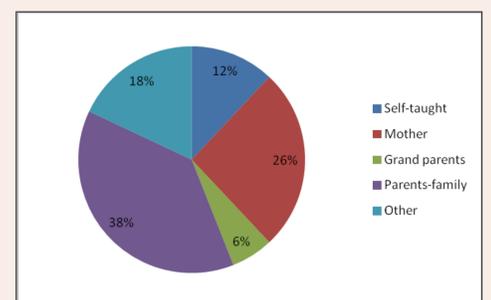
## Results

Traditional herbal knowledge is best transmitted where there is family and group cohesion, and entirely within the community .  
Most families store plants in the house as herbal medicine is the only form of treatment.  
Transmission to children occurs through traditional practices, women being a vector in the home and gardens, whereas men's transmission occurs mostly in the mountains and at the river.

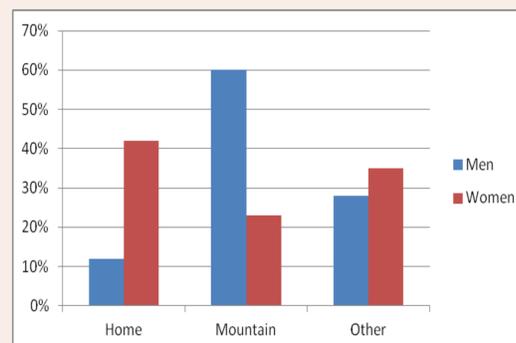
Self-reporting of relative significance of particular social pathways for acquiring plant knowledge for women in El Maghzen



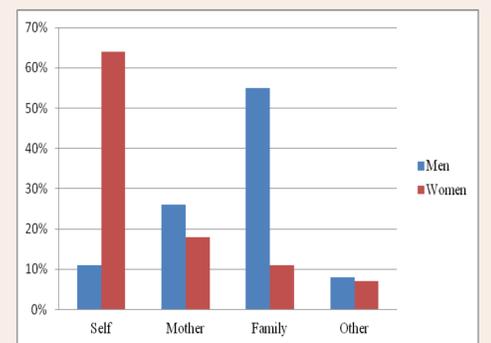
Self-reporting of relative significance of particular social pathways for acquiring plant knowledge for men in El Maghzen



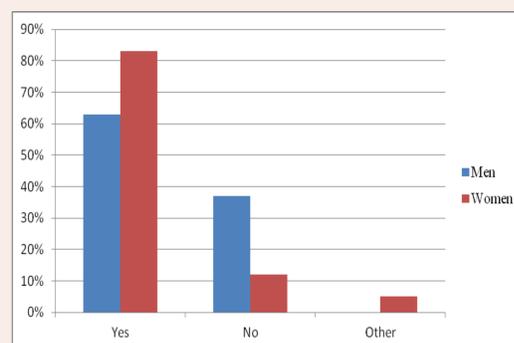
Response by men and women to the question 'Where did you learn about plants?'



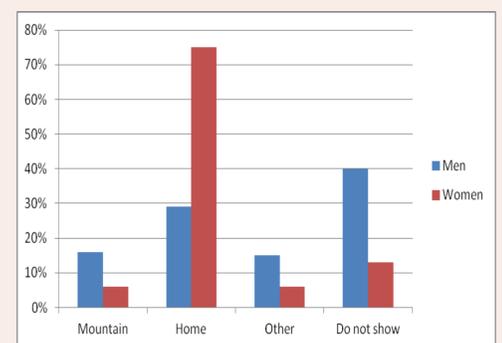
Responses by men and women to the question: 'Who collects plants to be used as medicine?'



Responses by men and women to the question: 'Do you have plants in the house?'



Responses by men and women to the question: 'Where do you show the plants to younger children?'



## Conclusion

Although difficult, it is possible to anticipate how herbal knowledge might change.

Knowledge transmitted through family connections and activities requires group cohesion. Family relations and shared activities influence each other and erosion is likely to occur where this mutuality breaks down.

As women become increasingly involved with cash-generating development activities, and become more financially autonomous, subsistence activities are likely to diminish. With the decrease in an activity, transmission of knowledge associated with it is likely to erode .

## Acknowledgments

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