



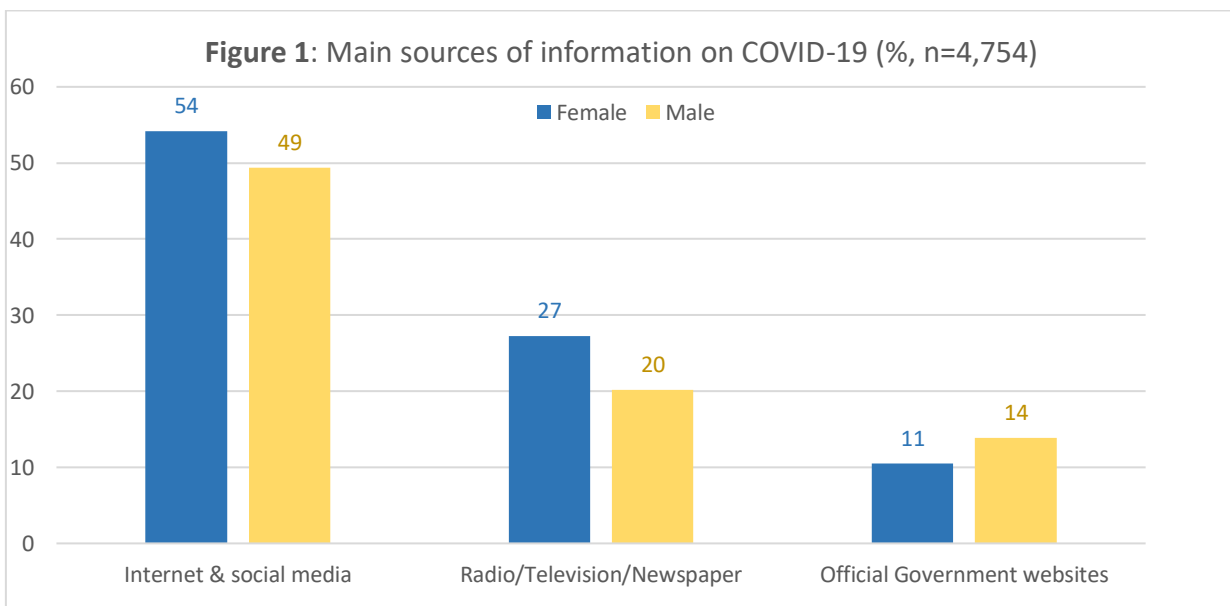
Gender-Differentiated Consequences of COVID-19 on women’s and men’s economic empowerment in the Maldives

Note on methodology: As face-to-face data collection has been rendered impossible due to lockdown measures associated with COVID-19, UN Women APRO has partnered with the private sector for the collection of evidence to inform policy and programming responses to the pandemic. In the Maldives, UN Women partnered with Maldives National Bureau of Statistics, Ooredoo and Dhiraagu to administer the survey on a random sample of 500,000 users. The survey was first rolled out on 22 April 2020.

A total of **4,754** responses were received. Weights were applied to correct for sex, age and education response differentials. Here are what we learned.

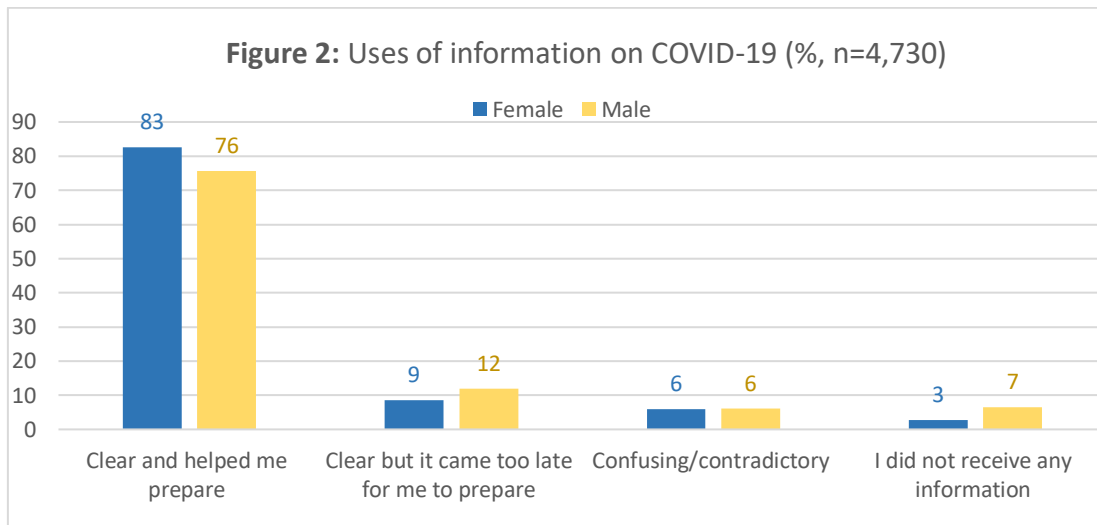
Key finding: Men are more likely to rely on a variety of sources of information on COVID-19. However, they are less likely than women to use this information to prepare.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the need for accurate information to prevent contagion. Misleading information, mainly reported over the internet, could potentially lead to a higher spread. Thus, diversifying sources of information might help obtaining a more accurate picture. Results from the survey show that in the Maldives almost half of the population (both men and women) relies on the internet to learn about COVID-19. However, men appear slightly likelier to rely on other sources of information, such as official government websites (Figure 1). Data also indicates that men are more likely to not know about COVID-19 (7%) (not shown).



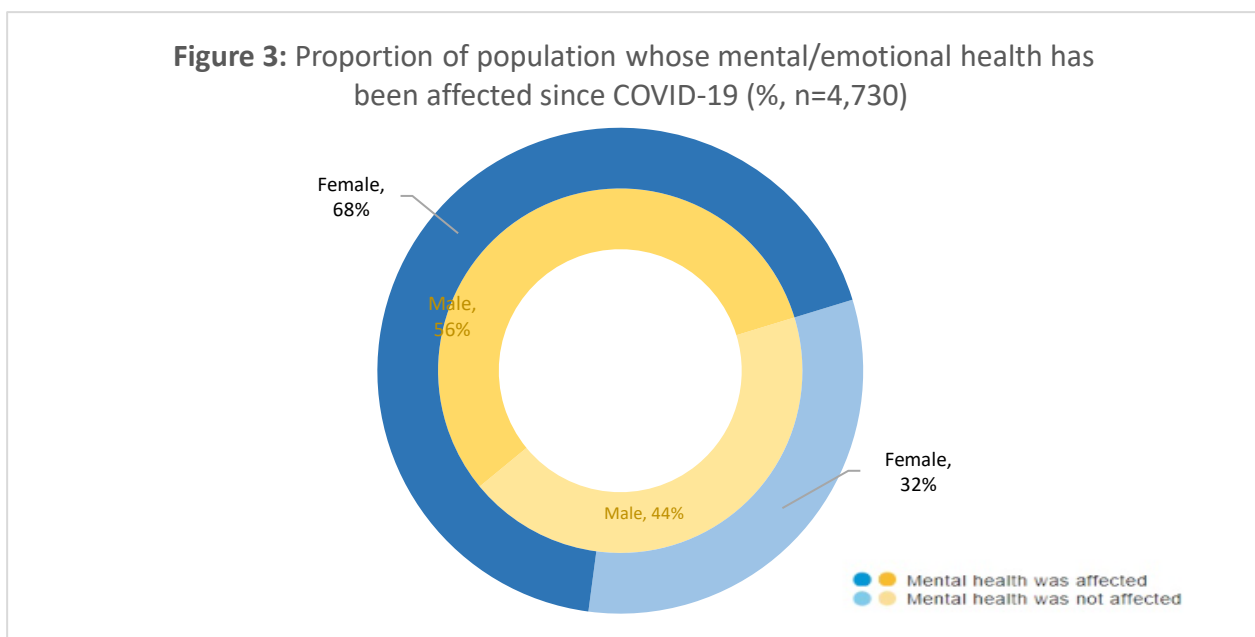
* Note: For this question, respondents could choose among 9 different answer categories. Figure 1 reports only the categories with highest frequencies. Other categories are not reported because the number of observations is negligible.

As women tend to play an important role in promoting hygiene routines within the household, their access to reliable sources of COVID-19 information is essential. Figure 2 shows that a higher proportion of women found the information they got clear and helpful to prepare for the pandemic (83%).



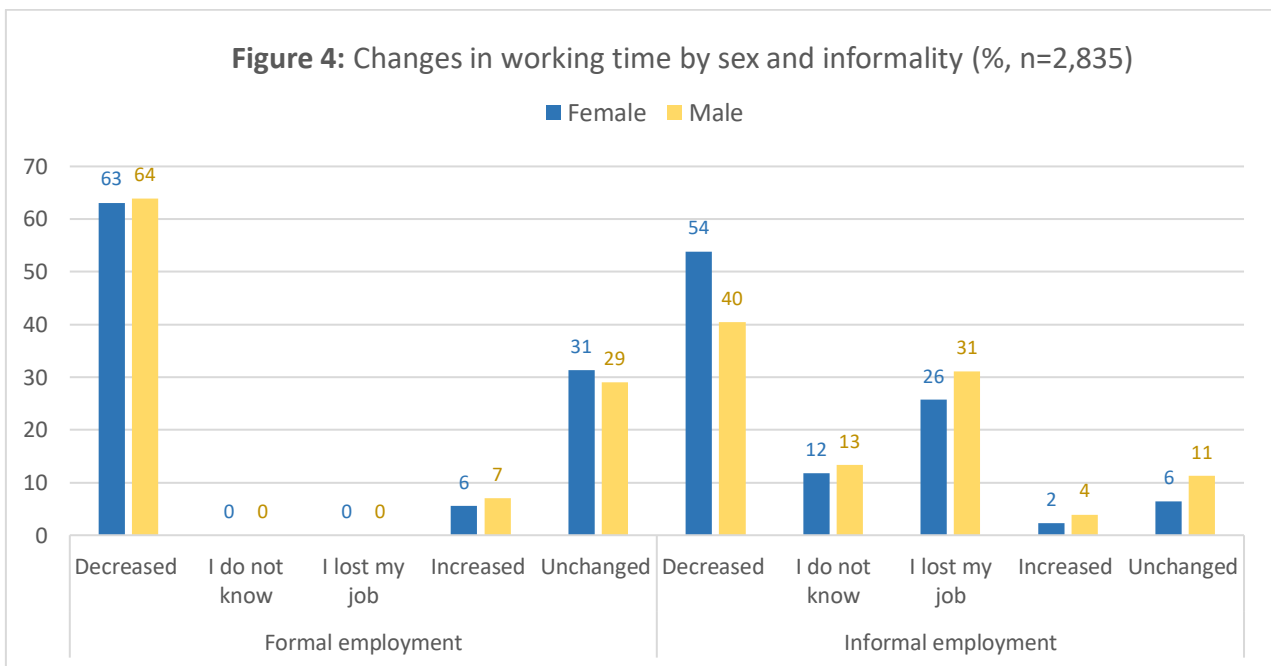
Key Finding: The COVID-19 pandemic is disproportionately affecting women’s mental and emotional health.

Although evidence generally shows that men are more likely to die of COVID-19 than women, the pandemic is having disproportionate effects on women’s emotional health. Figure 3 shows that a total of 68% of women reported that their mental and emotional health has been affected. Increased economic strains and gender-based violence are expected to be contributing to these outcomes. In addition, data indicates that women are also more likely to stay home when men migrate, as men often work in other islands or resorts, thus bearing alone the burden of unpaid care work (not shown). All of these events might increase stress and affect emotional health.

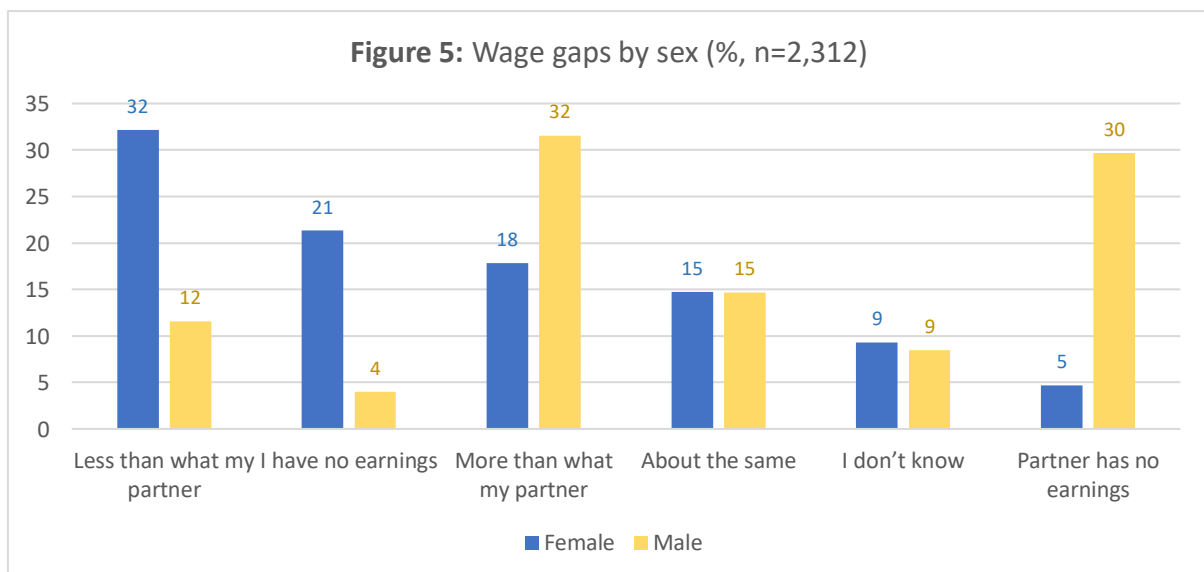


Key finding: Informal workers are losing their jobs and formal workers are working less hours as a result of COVID-19.

The spread of COVID-19 is not only a global health pandemic, it is also affecting people’s livelihoods substantially. In Asia-Pacific, where the majority of the population is engaged in informal employment, vulnerability is exacerbated by the lack of social protection. Data shows that, in the Maldives, women in informal employment are likelier than men to see their working hours reduced (54%) (Figure 4). Job losses are also an emerging concern among informal workers. This phenomenon is affecting both women (26%) and men (31%). However, these changes are occurring in a labor market that is segregated along gender lines. As shown in Figure 5, women are likely to earn less than their partners (32%) or have no earnings at all (21%).

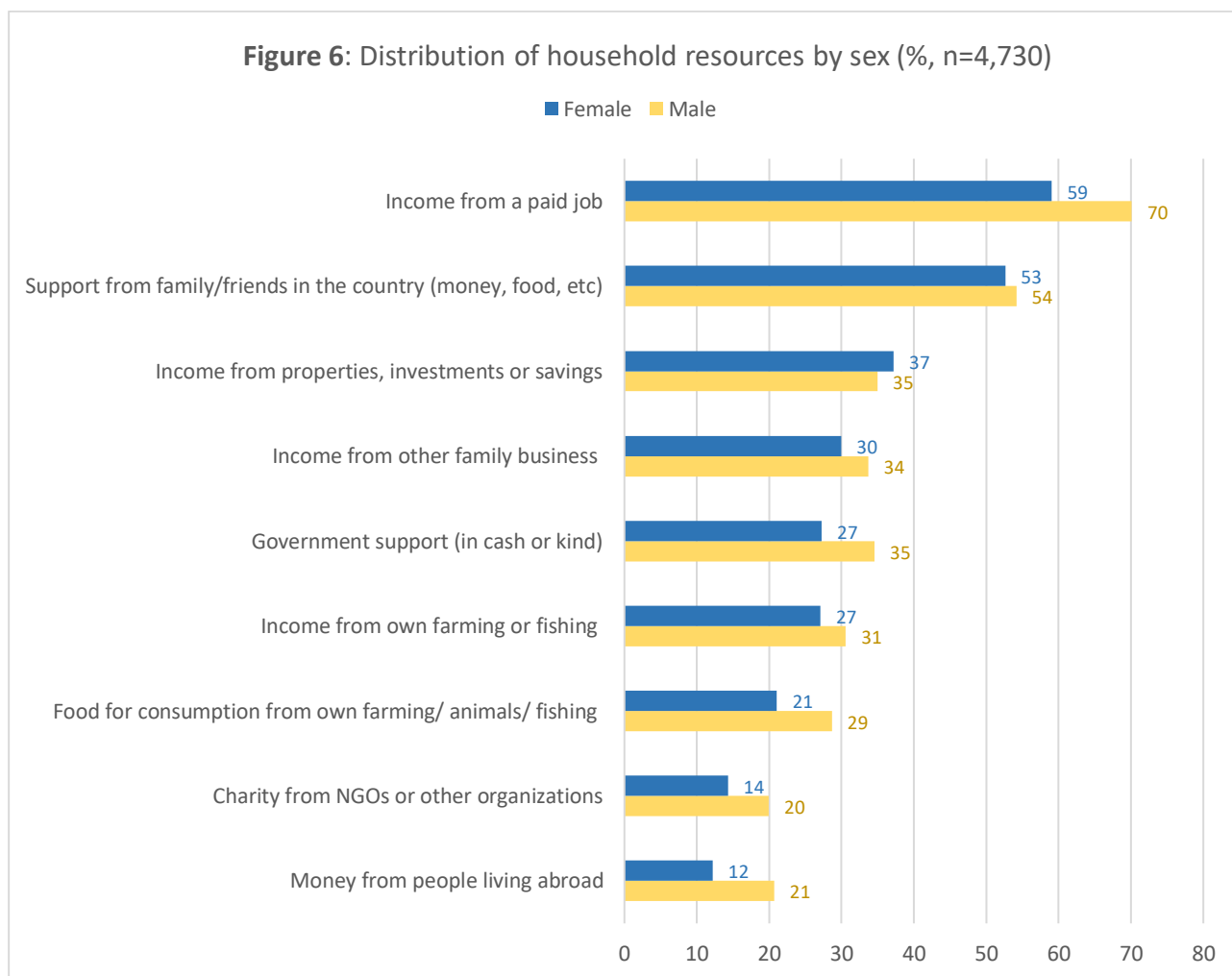


* Note: Figure 6 shows estimates only for the employed population. Formal employment includes employees that are contractually covered by pension schemes and health insurance as well as registered self-employed. Informal employment includes employees not covered by pension schemes and health insurance, unregistered self-employees, contributing family worker and the “other” sub-group that reported not being covered by a health insurance.



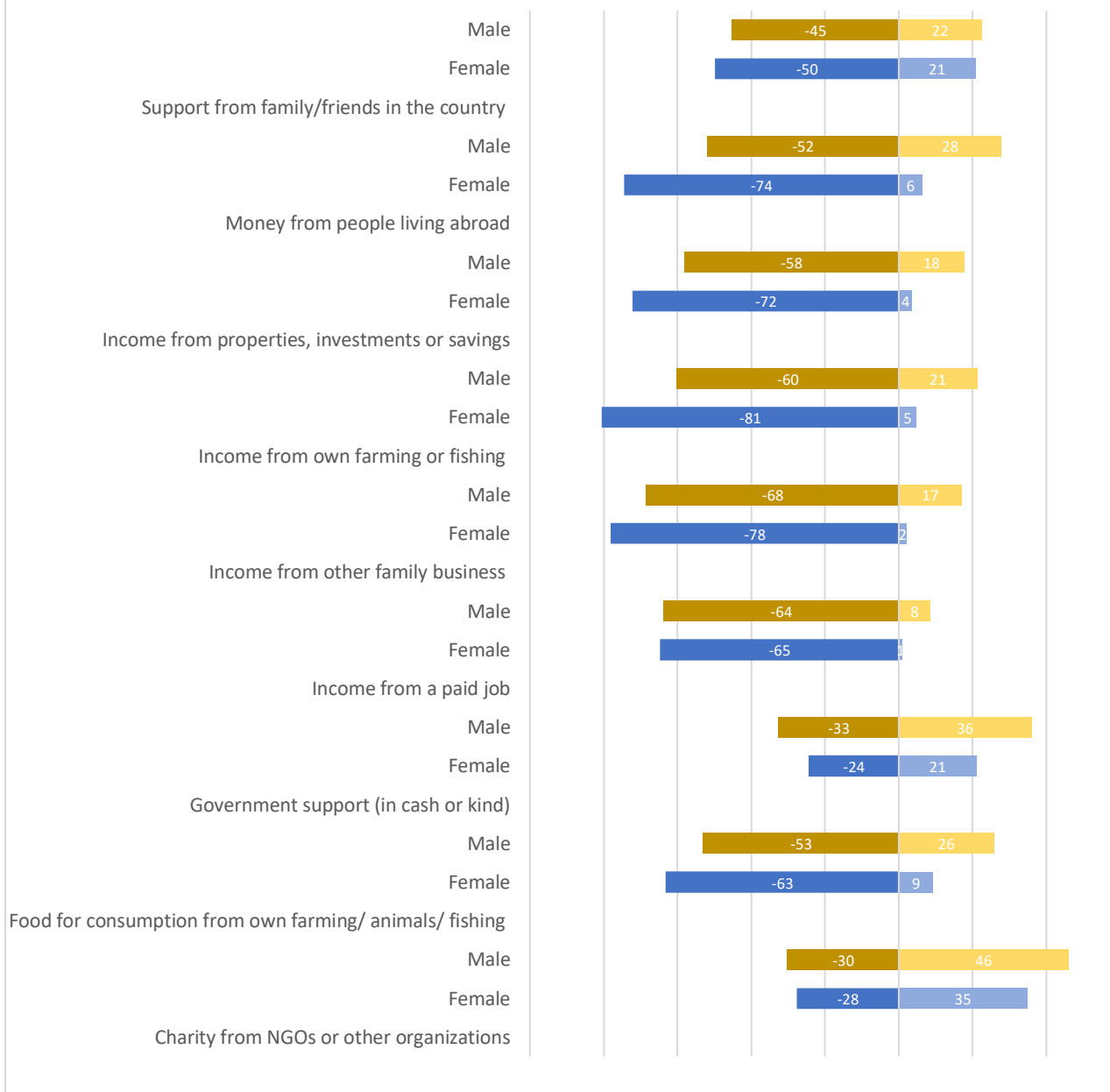
Key finding: As a result of COVID-19, household resources are dwindling for everyone, but there are gender differentials.

Changes in working time might have a substantial impact on household resources and the overall economy of the country. Data from our survey indicates that in the Maldives income from a paid job is a resource for 59% of women and 70% of men. Furthermore, financial support from family and friends also plays a crucial role for 53% of the female population. Reductions in these resources will surely affect women and men's livelihoods significantly.



Since the spread of COVID-19, however, most resources are dwindling; the only two exceptions being charity from NGOs and government support. But women and men in the Maldives aren't experiencing these changes equally. While men are seeing larger increases of charity and government support than women, more women noted drops in almost every other resource. Figure 7 shows that women experience the bulk of these reductions.

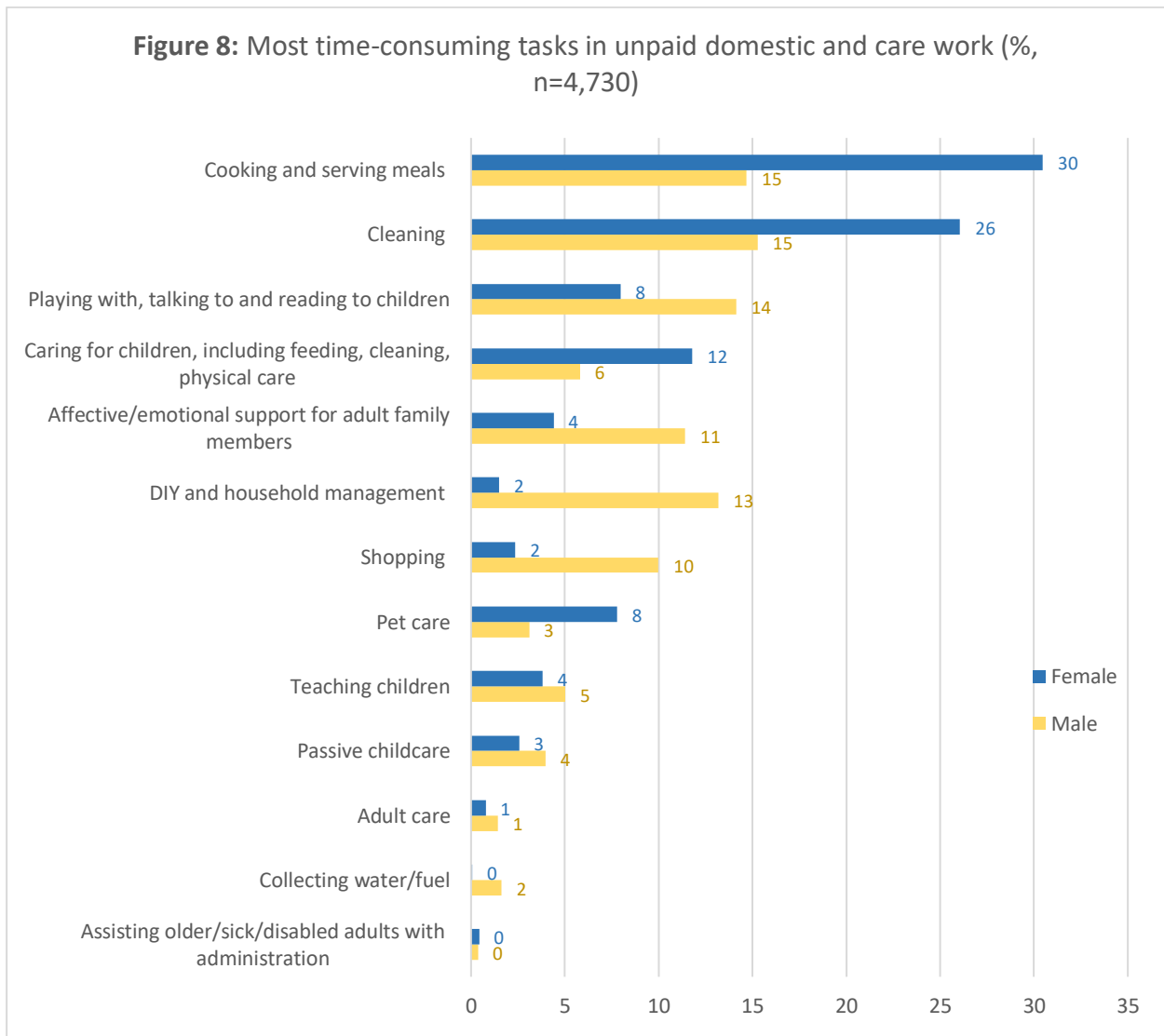
Figure 7: Proportion of resource users who noted increases/decreases since the spread of COVID-19, by sex (%)



*This graph depicts the proportion of people that responded “Increased” or “Decreased” to the question on whether these resources changed. The other two response categories (not shown here) include “remained unchanged” and “not a household resource”.

Key finding: Unpaid domestic work is the most time-consuming activity for women, detracting from time spent with children. Female single parents are particularly affected.

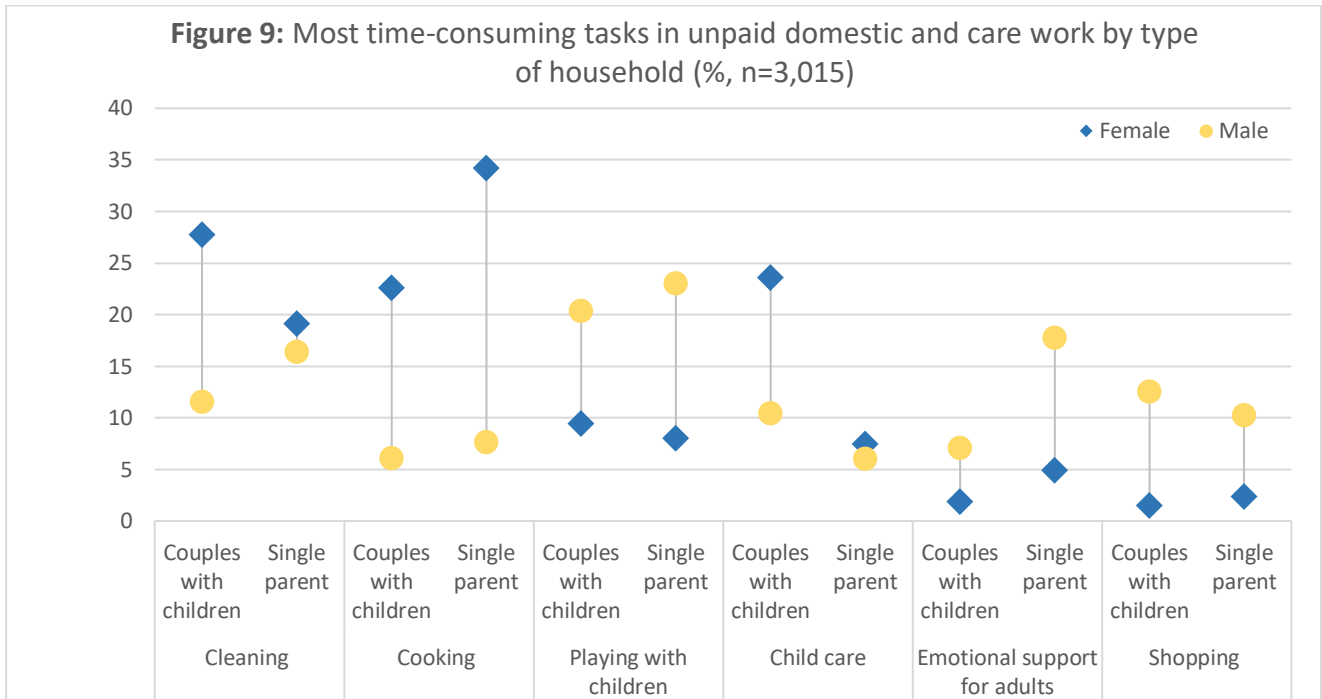
Lockdowns and social distancing have resulted in sharp increases in domestic and care work needs within the household. Despite both men and women being at home, a re-distribution of unpaid domestic work between women and men is not obvious from the data. Figure 8 shows that the most time-consuming activities for women are cleaning (30% of women) and cooking (26%), whereas men distribute their time more evenly across various activities.



*Note: This graph displays the proportions of people that noted each of these activities where the most time consuming. Even if an equal number of men and women indicate that the same activity is the most time consuming, it doesn't necessarily mean that they spend equal amount of time on this activity, as no specific question covered exact times spent on each activity. **Fetching water has been included among these tasks although it does not qualify as unpaid domestic and care work according to international statistical classifications.

Single mothers (identified through our analysis as unmarried/widowed/divorced females living in households with children) are particularly sensitive to the burden of unpaid domestic work. Cooking and cleaning are the most time consuming activities for single mothers, who might be less able to allocate additional time to

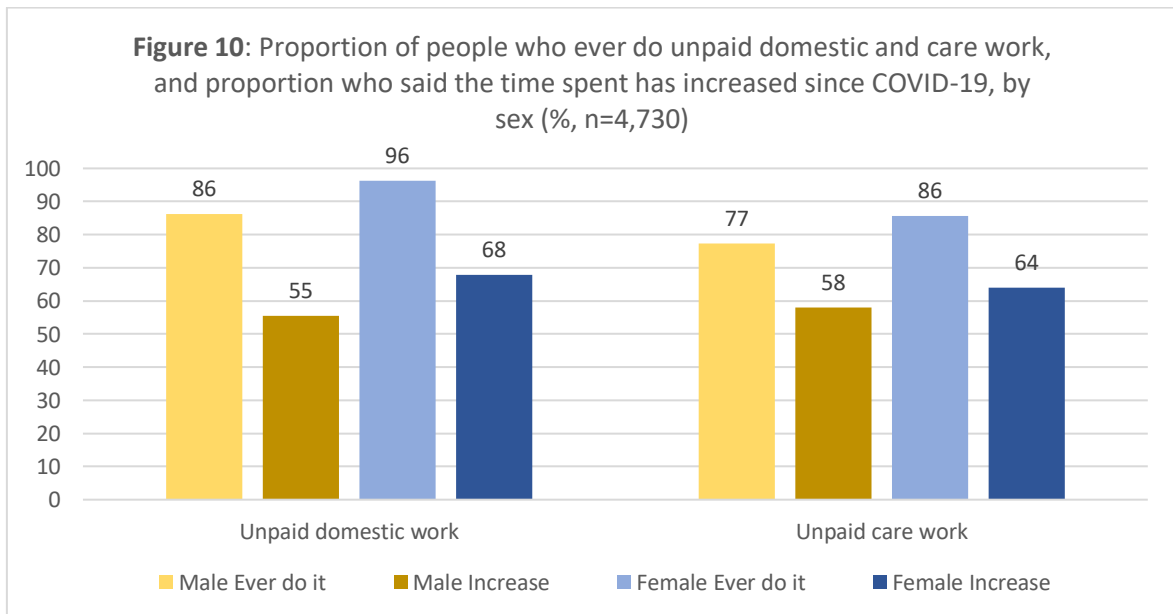
childcare. In turn, couples with children might be able to share childcare responsibilities and therefore their most time consuming activities vary between cleaning and childcare (Figure 7).



*Only activities with time changes of more than 20 percentage points have been included in this graph.

Key Finding: COVID-19 has increased the burden of unpaid domestic and childcare work for everyone. Women however noted the largest increases.

Data from UN Women’s survey shows that women are the main providers of unpaid domestic and care work. While both men and women noted similar increases across unpaid care work activities, the combined burden of unpaid domestic and childcare work is weighing more heavily on women’s time (Figure 10).



Key Finding: Men are helping more, but discriminatory social norms still leave women in charge of most chores.

Discriminatory social norms are a major source of persisting gender inequalities, including within the household, where women are expected to help more. As a result of the COVID-19 lockdown, 80% of women in the Maldives report that their partners help them more with household chores and caring for the family (Figure 11). However, almost 94% of the males reported an increase of such help from their partners. Furthermore, both women and men report that daughters help more in comparison to sons. Men also are likier to receive help from family members in comparison to women.

