



The COVID-19 pandemic Research on the distribution of work in households

A study prepared by the
National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE)



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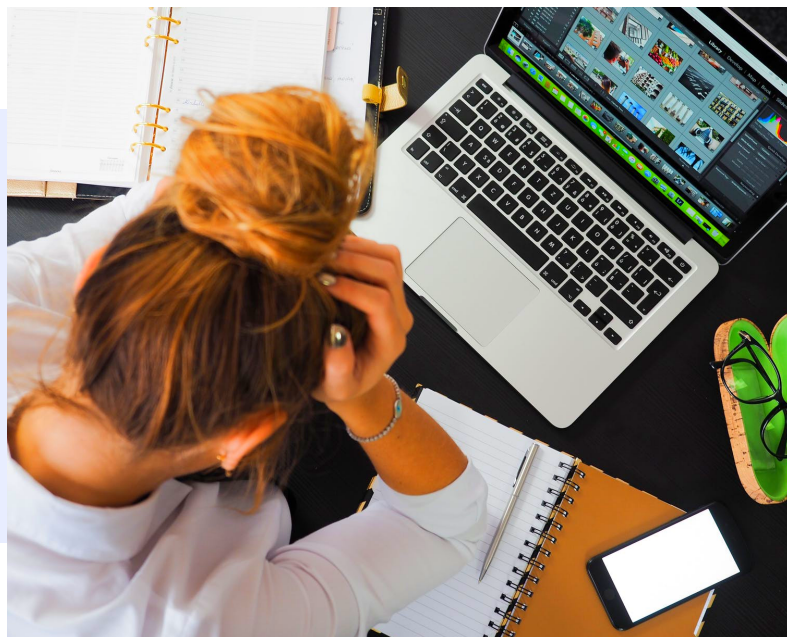
Executive Summary

Four months into the COVID-19 pandemic, between June and July 2020, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) disseminated an online survey about the distribution of tasks between women and men during the pandemic. The backdrop to this survey were the sudden changes that forced many individuals to adapt to radically different work and social practices brought about by the need to stop the spread of COVID-19. Several reports, globally and locally, had already started indicating that these changes were impacting differently women and men.

The survey asked respondents about the increase/decrease in time spent on different tasks – paid work, housework, caring for children, home-schooling for children, caring for dependent adults, leisure/free-time, personal care and sleep - as a result of COVID-19. It also inquired about the respondents' perception of equality in the sharing of responsibilities with their partner during the pandemic.

The findings indicate that, during the pandemic, the increase in the number of hours spent doing household tasks and childcare increased more for women than for men, while the time spent on leisure, personal care and sleep decreased more for women than it did for men. Thus, the findings of this survey confirm that the existing gender inequality in the distribution of unpaid household and caring responsibilities was exacerbated as a result of the pandemic.

The research study concludes that, in order to address the evidenced inequalities, one needs to invest in and build on existing measures - such as improved care services and a more flexible work environment – as well as promote behavioural changes that break gender stereotypes and overcome traditional gender roles.



1. Introduction

The United Nations stated that *“The impacts of COVID-19 are exacerbated for women and girls simply by virtue of their sex”* [1]. The year 2020, when the COVID-19 broke out, was meant to be ground-breaking for gender equality, particularly due to the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action. However, the pandemic has been threatening the gains made with respect to gender equality.

In the context of the above statement [2] and the gender equality developments that are being discussed at both national and international levels, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) deemed

it opportune to look into how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting women and men in Malta. Sudden changes have been leaving their mark on people’s lifestyle, particularly with employment issues, school closure and remote working for many workers.

This research focuses on assessing the unequal distribution of unpaid/informal work within households between women and men with an online survey (refer to Annex 1) disseminated between the 23rd June and the 13th July 2020.



2. Distribution of tasks pre and during COVID-19

The NCPE research looked at the changes in the time spent on different tasks by women and men during COVID-19. Thus, the survey **did not** ask respondents about the total hours spent on different tasks, both before as well as during COVID-19, but about the **increase/decrease** of time spent on different tasks as a result of COVID-19.

In order to understand the situation with regards to gender equality in the distribution of tasks it is useful to look at the results reported in the **EIGE Gender Equality Index 2019** since this sheds light on the **point of departure** from which there were decreases or increases during COVID-19.

The Gender Equality Index is a tool developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) to measure the progress of gender equality in the EU. The scope of the tool is to give more visibility to areas that need to be addressed by Member States; moreover, it supports policy makers in designing effective gender equality measures. The Index covers a number of different domains including those of “work” and “time”.

Employment

With respect to the **work** indicators for Malta, the Gender Equality Index 2019 [3] reports that the **full-time employment** rate for a couple with children stands at 55.8% for women, and 94.7% for men; whereas in the EU28, 60.1% women and 88.2% of men hold such rates respectively.

Additionally, it is crucial to note that the Index finds that, in Malta, around 25% of women work on a **part-time basis**, in comparison to 7% of men.

Care activities

The **time** [4] indicators for Malta show that, when it comes to **care activities**, particularly **caring for and**

educating children and grandchildren, elderly or people with disabilities, the gap between women and men is very wide – 85.1% of women in a “couple with children” are involved in such activities, compared to 57.7% of men in the same category. Moreover, 42% of women care for and educate their family members for at least one hour per day, compared to 25% of men.



Housework

When it comes to **doing daily cooking and/or housework**, the percentage of Maltese women who fall under the category of “couple with children” stands at 96.4% in comparison to 31.4% for men. The percentage of EU28 women stands at 91.9% and 31.7% for men respectively.

The findings above highlight **structural discrepancies** in gender equality in Malta when it comes to employment (paid/formal work), alongside caring and household responsibilities (unpaid/informal work), prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the outbreak of the pandemic in early 2020, people’s realities have changed substantially particularly with schools’ closure and changes to the educational system (i.e. hours and days of operation) that have inevitably left women in a difficult position due to the pre-existing structure of the workforce as well as social norms. In some cases, this had led women to lose or quit their job, especially if the role cannot be carried out remotely [5]. Additionally, the pandemic has reinforced women’s work in temporary, part-time and precarious jobs due to their unpaid care roles. [6]

Furthermore, **Eurostat’s** [7] publication of unemployment gender segregated statistics for the first quarter of 2020, reaffirm that “*COVID-19 fallout takes a higher toll on women, economically and domestically*” [8]. The male unemployment rate in the EU has increased from 6.2% in February to 6.3% in March, whereas the rate for women is substantially greater, from 6.7% to 7.0%. Moreover, the EU unemployment rate in May remained stable for men at 7.0%, but increased to 7.9% from 7.7% for women. Statistics on unemployment in Malta also reaffirm that women were more likely to lose or quit their job since the unemployment rate of men in May 2019 stood at 3.4% and 3.9% in 2020, respectively; whereas that of women stood at 3.4% in May 2019 and rose to 4.7% in May 2020.

Additionally, with respect to part-time employment and reduced working hours, Malta was one of the seventeen EU MS where the working hours of women decreased more than that of men [9].

These new realities prompted the NCPE to research the effects that the pandemic has had and is still having on gender equality. Thus, the NCPE developed and disseminated a survey online with respect to COVID-19 and the impact it had on the distribution of work across households in Malta. The survey particularly looks into how the pandemic has affected the sharing of unpaid tasks in households.



3. Methodology

- **Quantitative approach** – the survey was distributed on the NCPE’s social media platforms and was also sent by email to NGOs, private companies and the public sector.
- Since the survey was disseminated online, it is not representative of the population. The percentages shown in this study refer to the respondents only and cannot be interpreted as a reflection of society at large, although they do offer important insights about the wider social realities. Moreover, whilst monitoring the survey results coming in, the NCPE noted that many more women were answering the online questionnaire. In order to try to address this discrepancy, the NCPE created a paid advert on Facebook to promote the survey, specifically targeting men.
- The survey was divided into four main sections: i) profile of respondents ii) changes to employment status during the COVID-19 pandemic iii) changes in hours spent per week on a number of different tasks and iv) statements on equality in the distribution of work.



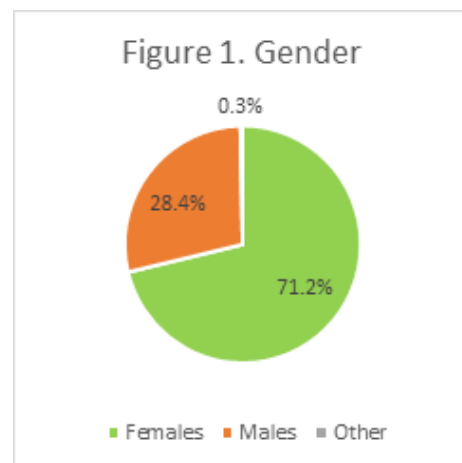
4. Results

4.1. Profile of respondents

4.1.1. Gender

Out of 1,906 respondents, 1,358 were women, 542 were men and 6 identified as other.

Table 1. Gender of respondents		
Females	1,358	71.30%
Males	542	28.40%
Other	6	0.30%
Total	1,906	100%



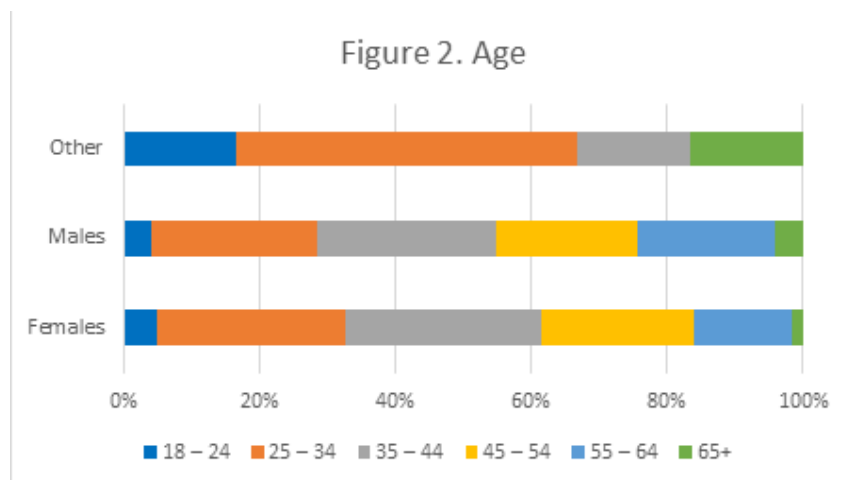
The participation of women in this survey is almost triple that of men. While various factors could have contributed to this, one such factor could have been stereotypical mentalities since the title of the survey is “Research on the distribution of work in households during the COVID-19 pandemic”.

4.1.2. Age

The majority of both female and male respondents fell in the following age groups: 25-34 and 35-44.



Table 2. Age of respondents						
	Females		Males		Other	
18 – 24	67	4.90%	23	4.20%	1	16.70%
25 – 34	378	27.80%	131	24.10%	3	50%
35 – 44	391	28.80%	143	26.40%	1	16.70%
45 – 54	303	22.30%	113	20.90%	0	0%
55 – 64	195	14.40%	110	20.30%	0	0%
65+	24	1.80%	22	4.10%	1	16.70%
Total	1,358	100%	542	100%	6	100%

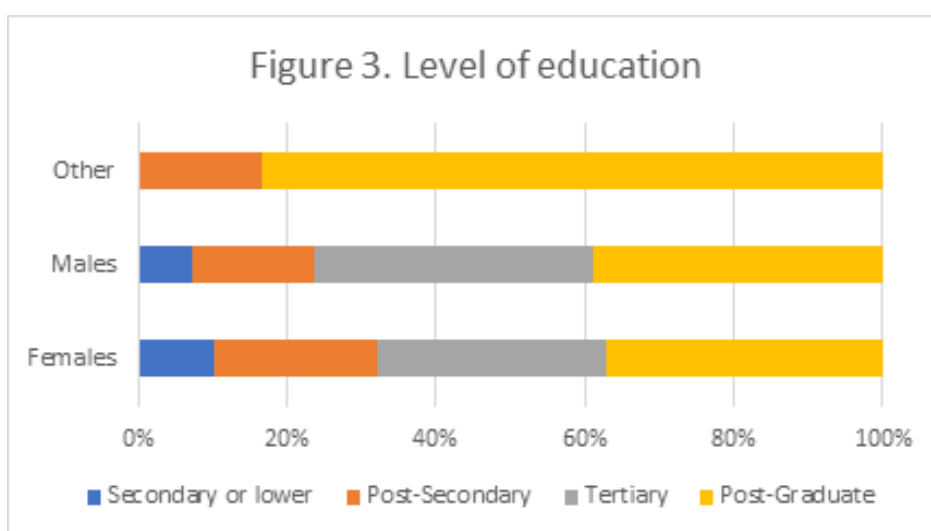


4.1.3. Education



The absolute majority of respondents have a tertiary or a post-graduate level of education. Therefore, the research findings of this survey do not adequately represent other groups in society whose employment could be less stable and hence have fewer alternative ways of working, such as remote working, during the pandemic.

Table 3. Level of education of respondents						
	Females		Males		Other	
Secondary or lower	137	10.10%	40	7.40%	0	0%
Post-Secondary	299	22.00%	88	16.20%	1	16.70%
Tertiary	416	30.60%	203	37.50%	0	0%
Post-Graduate	506	37.30%	211	38.90%	5	83.30%
Total	1,358	100%	542	100%	6	100%

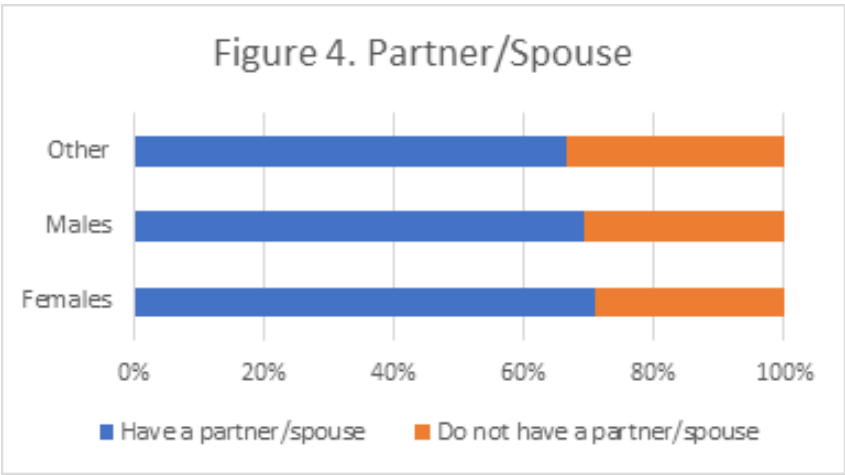


4.1.4. Partner/spouse living in same household

The majority of the respondents have a partner/spouse living in the same household.

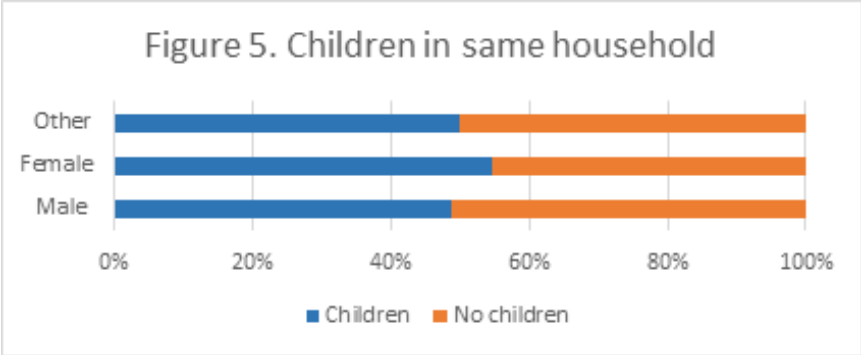


Table 4. Having a partner/spouse living with the respondent in the same household during the COVID-19 pandemic							
	Females		Males		Other		Total
Have a partner/spouse	942	69.40%	363	66.90%	4	66.70%	1309
Do not have a partner/spouse	384	28.30%	162	29.90%	2	33.30%	548
No reply	32	2.30%	17	3.20%	0	0%	49
Total	1,358	100%	542	100%	6	100%	1,906



4.1.5. Children living in same household

More than half of the female respondents (54.6%), and less than half of the male respondents (48.7%), stated that they have children living in the same household.

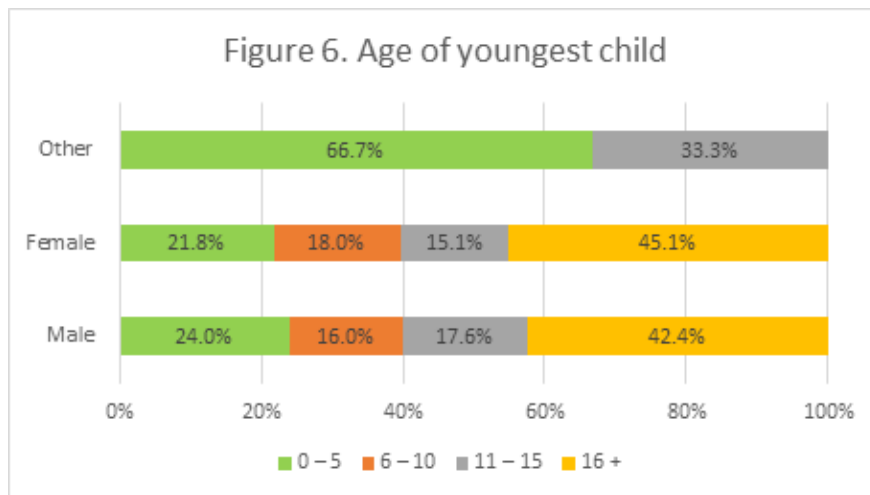


4.1.6. Age of youngest child



More than half of both female and male respondents with children, have children under 16 years, with 0 – 5 being the most common age cohort.

A considerable number of respondents, (45.1% for females and 42.4% for males) have children over 16 years.

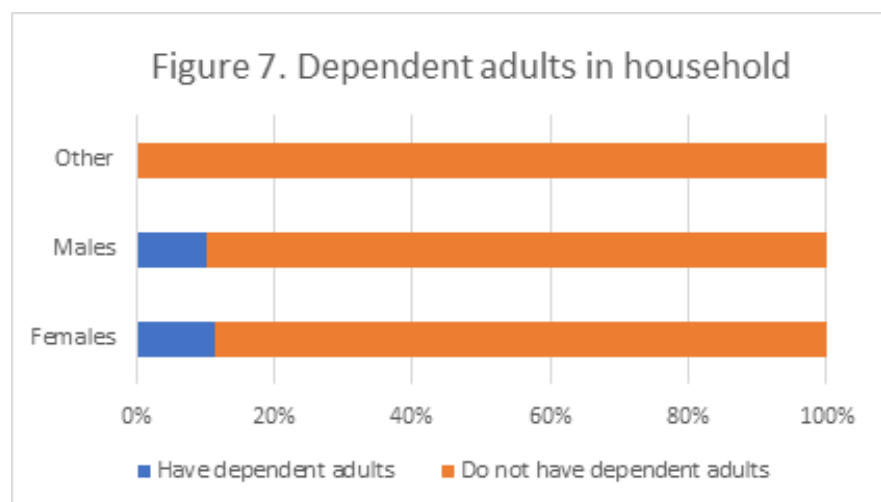
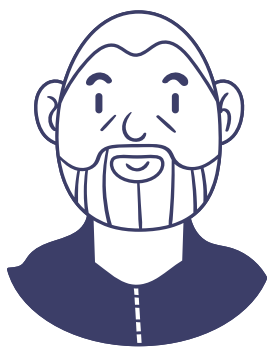


4.1.7. Dependent adults in households

The majority of the respondents do not have dependent adults living with them.

Table 5. Having dependent adults in household

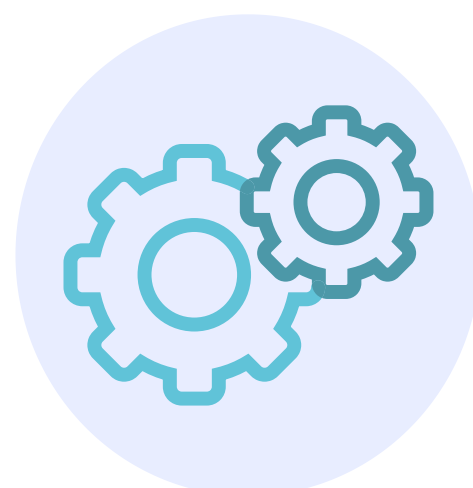
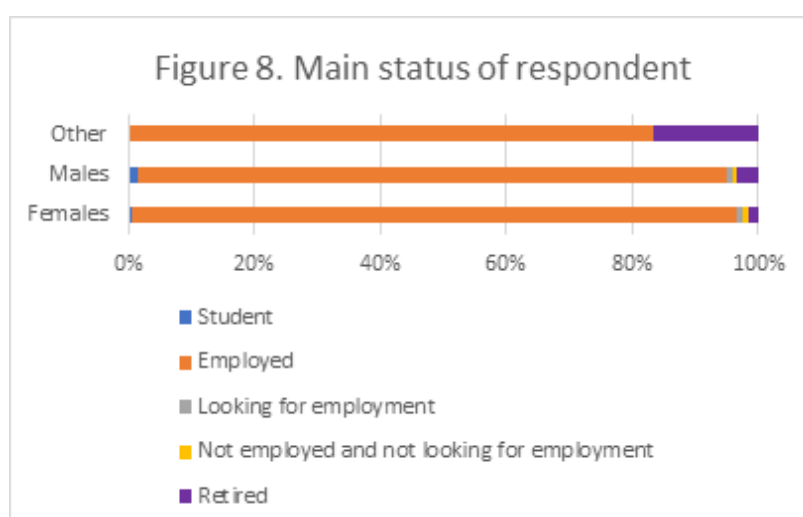
	Females		Males		Other		Total
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	
Have dependent adults	155	11.40%	55	10.10%	0	0%	210
Do not have dependent adults	1,183	87.10%	478	88.20%	6	100%	1,667
No reply	20	1.50%	9	1.70%	0	0%	29
Total	1,358	100%	542	100%	6	100%	1,906



4.1.8. Main status of respondent

The majority of both female and male respondents were employed when participating in the survey.

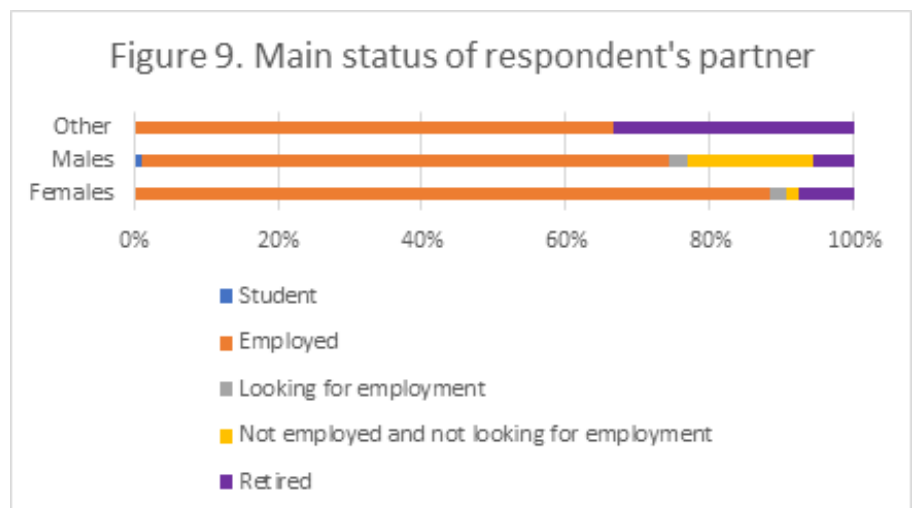
Table 6. Main status of respondent							
	Females		Males		Other		Total
Student	10	0.70%	9	1.70%	0	0%	19
Employed	1,283	94.50%	498	91.90%	5	83.30%	1,786
Looking for employment	11	0.80%	4	0.70%	0	0%	15
Not employed and not looking for employment	13	1.00%	3	0.50%	0	0%	16
Retired	21	1.50%	19	3.50%	1	16.70%	41
No reply	20	1.50%	9	1.70%	0	0%	29
Total	1,358	100%	542	100%	6	100%	1,906



4.1.9. Main status of partner/spouse

The majority of both males and females replied their partner/spouse was gainfully employed while participating in the survey.

Table 7. Main status of respondent's partner/spouse							
	Females		Males		Other		Total
Student	2	0.20%	4	1.10%	0	0%	6
Employed	828	87.90%	261	71.90%	2	50%	1,091
Looking for employment	22	2.30%	9	2.50%	0	0%	31
Not employed and not looking for employment	15	1.60%	62	17.10%	0	0%	77
Retired	73	7.70%	20	5.50%	1	25%	94
No reply	2	0.20%	7	1.90%	1	25%	10
Total	942	100%	363	100%	4	100%	1,309



4.2. Changes to employment status during the COVID-19 pandemic

4.2.1. Changes to employment status of respondent

45.2% of female respondents and 46.2% of male respondents retained their full hours of work, and fully or partially worked from home.

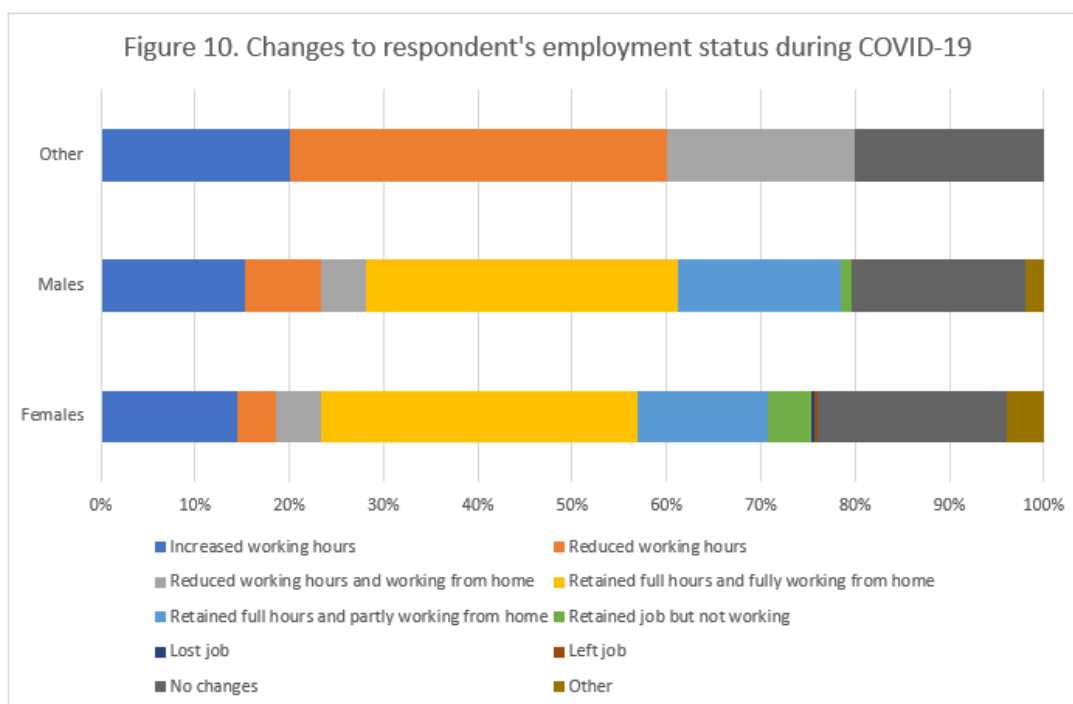
4.4% of female respondents retained their employment throughout the pandemic, however temporarily stopped working; whereas only 1.1% of male respondents reported this.

0.6% of female respondents reported that they have either lost or left their job during the pandemic, whereas no male respondent reported either.



Table 8. Changes to respondent's employment status during the COVID-19 pandemic

	Females		Males		Other		Total
Increased working hours	187	13.80%	76	14.00%	1	16.70%	264
Reduced working hours	53	3.90%	40	7.40%	2	33.20%	95
Reduced working hours and working from home	63	4.60%	24	4.40%	1	16.70%	88
Retained full hours and fully working from home	435	32.00%	164	30.30%	0	0%	599
Retained full hours and partly working from home	179	13.20%	86	15.90%	0	0%	265
Retained job but not working	59	4.40%	6	1.10%	0	0%	65
Lost job	4	0.30%	0	0%	0	0%	4
Left job	4	0.30%	0	0%	0	0%	4
No changes	261	19.20%	91	16.80%	1	16.70%	353
Other	50	3.70%	10	1.80%	0	0%	60
No reply	63	4.60%	45	8.30%	1	16.70%	109
Total	1,358	100%	542	100%	6	100%	1,906

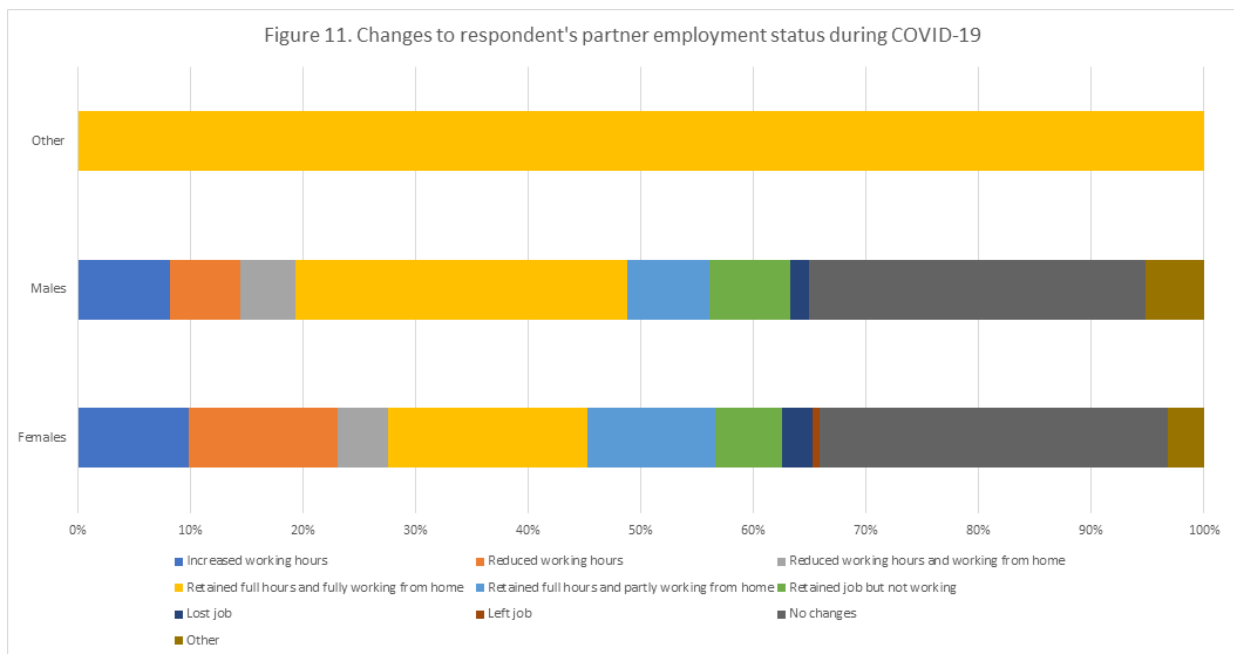


4.2.2. Changes to employment status of partner/spouse

Female respondents were more likely to state that their partner/spouse reduced their working hours during COVID-19. More male respondents reported that their partners retained their full working hours and worked from home.

Male respondents were also more likely to state that their partner retained their job but temporarily stopped working.

	Females		Males		Other		Total
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	
Increased working hours	77	8.2%	25	6.9%	0	0.0%	102
Reduced working hours	103	10.9%	19	5.2%	0	0.0%	122
Reduced working hours and working from home	35	3.7%	15	4.1%	0	0.0%	50
Retained full hours and fully working from home	138	14.6%	90	24.8%	1	25.0%	229
Retained full hours and partly working from home	88	9.3%	22	6.1%	0	0.0%	110
Retained job but not working	46	4.9%	22	6.1%	0	0.0%	68
Lost job	21	2.2%	5	1.4%	0	0.0%	26
Left job	5	0.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5
No changes	241	25.6%	91	25.1%	0	0.0%	332
Other	25	2.7%	16	4.4%	0	0.0%	41
No reply	163	17.3%	58	16.0%	3	75.0%	224
Total	942	100.0%	363	100.0%	4	100.0%	1309



4.3. Changes in hours spent per week on different activities

4.3.1. Paid work

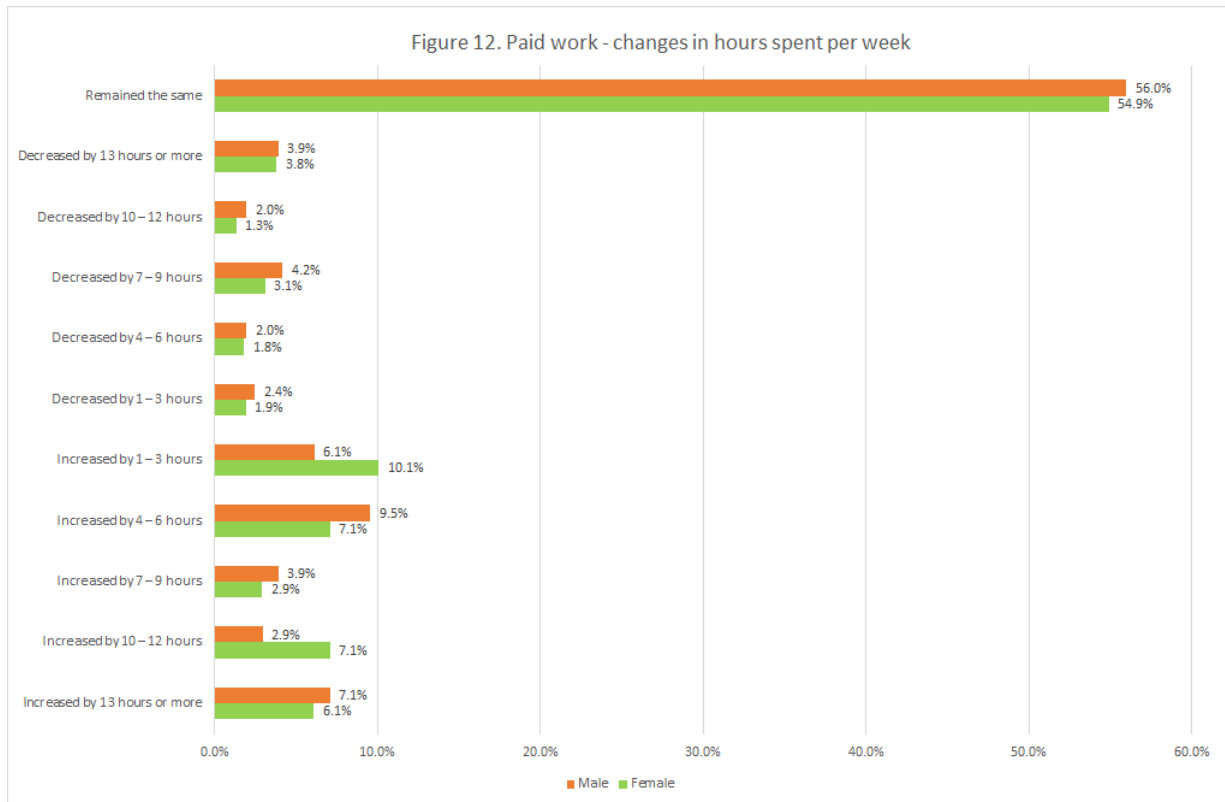
33.2% of female respondents stated that the hours spent on paid work increased during the pandemic compared to 29.6% of male respondents.

11.9% of female respondents and 14.4% of male respondents reported a decrease in paid working hours. The survey did not ask whether such reductions were requested by the employee or imposed on the employee by the employer.

On the whole, the majority of both female and male respondents – 54.9% and 56% respectively - stated that the pandemic has not affected their working hours.

Table 10. Changes in the hours spent per week in paid work before and after start of COVID-19 pandemic

	Females		Males		Other		Total
Increased by 13 hours or more	61	6.1%	29	7.1%	1	33%	91
Increased by 10 – 12 hours	71	7.1%	12	2.9%	0	0%	83
Increased by 7 – 9 hours	29	2.9%	16	3.9%	0	0%	45
Increased by 4 – 6 hours	71	7.1%	39	9.5%	0	0%	110
Increased by 1 – 3 hours	101	10.1%	25	6.1%	0	0%	126
Decreased by 1 – 3 hours	19	1.9%	10	2.4%	0	0%	29
Decreased by 4 – 6 hours	18	1.8%	8	2.0%	0	0%	26
Decreased by 7 – 9 hours	31	3.1%	17	4.2%	0	0%	48
Decreased by 10 – 12 hours	13	1.3%	8	2.0%	0	0%	21
Decreased by 13 hours or more	38	3.8%	16	3.9%	0	0%	54
Remained the same	551	54.9%	229	56.0%	2	67%	782
Total	1,003	100.0%	409	100.0%	3	100%	1,415

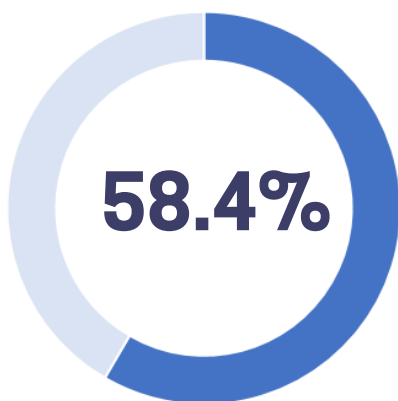


4.3.2. Housework

A larger number of female respondents, 58.4%, stated that the hours spent on housework increased during the pandemic, when compared to 55.2% of men.

6.5% of female respondents and 4.1% of male respondents reported that the hours spent on housework decreased.

More male respondents stated that their load of housework remained the same during the pandemic.

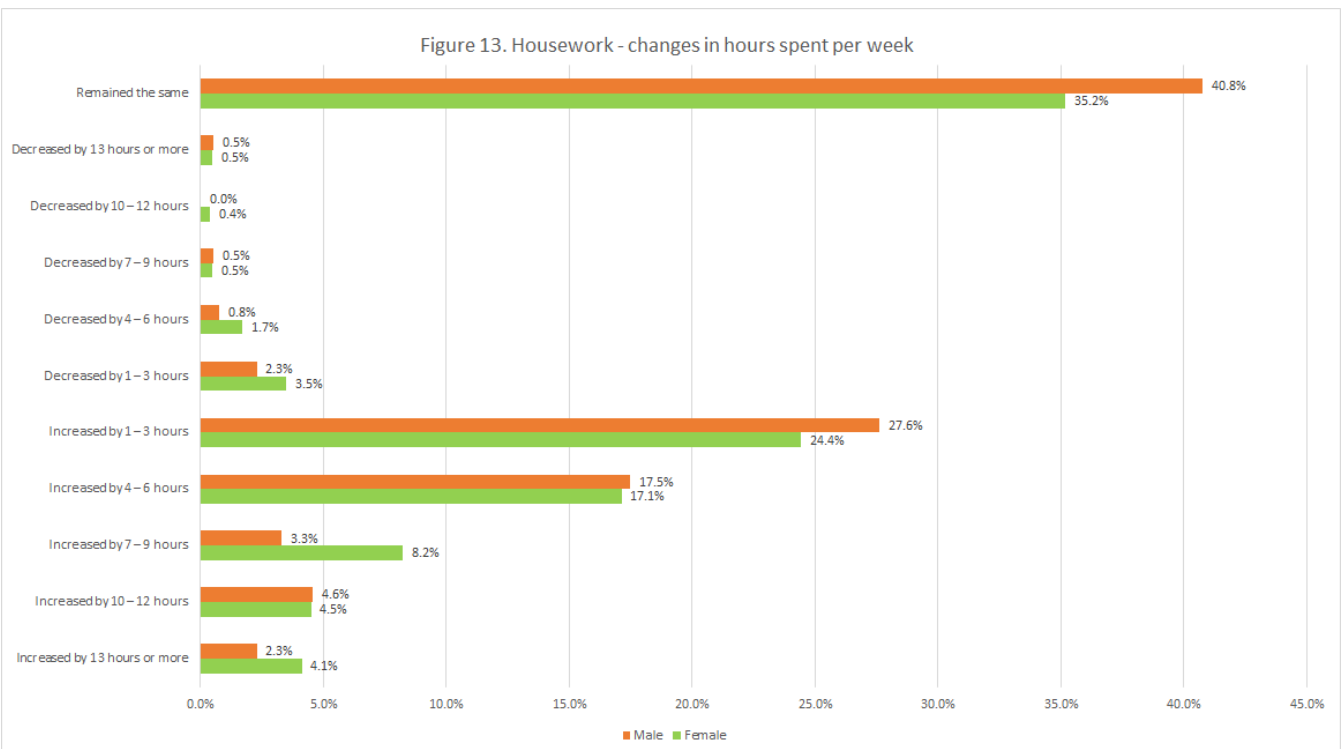


of female respondents stated that the hours spent on housework increased during the pandemic

Table 11. Changes in the hours spent per week in housework before and after start of COVID-19 pandemic

	Females		Males		Other		Total
Increased by 13 hours or more	44	4.1%	9	2.3%	1	25%	54
Increased by 10 – 12 hours	48	4.5%	18	4.6%	0	0%	66
Increased by 7 – 9 hours	88	8.2%	13	3.3%	0	0%	101
Increased by 4 – 6 hours	183	17.1%	69	17.5%	2	50%	254
Increased by 1 – 3 hours	261	24.4%	109	27.6%	0	0%	370
Decreased by 1 – 3 hours	37	3.5%	9	2.3%	0	0%	46
Decreased by 4 – 6 hours	18	1.7%	3	0.8%	0	0%	21
Decreased by 7 – 9 hours	5	0.5%	2	0.5%	0	0%	7
Decreased by 10 – 12 hours	4	0.4%	0	0.0%	0	0%	4
Decreased by 13 hours or more	5	0.5%	2	0.5%	1	25%	8
Remained the same	376	35.2%	161	40.8%	0	0%	537
Total	1,069	100.0%	395	100.0%	4	100%	1,468

Figure 13. Housework - changes in hours spent per week



4.3.3. Caring for children

Female respondents reported a higher overall increase (63%) when it comes to caring for children, in comparison to male respondents (60.7%). Moreover, the difference in the category “Increased by 13 hours or more” is more marked, with double the number of female respondents reporting such increase.

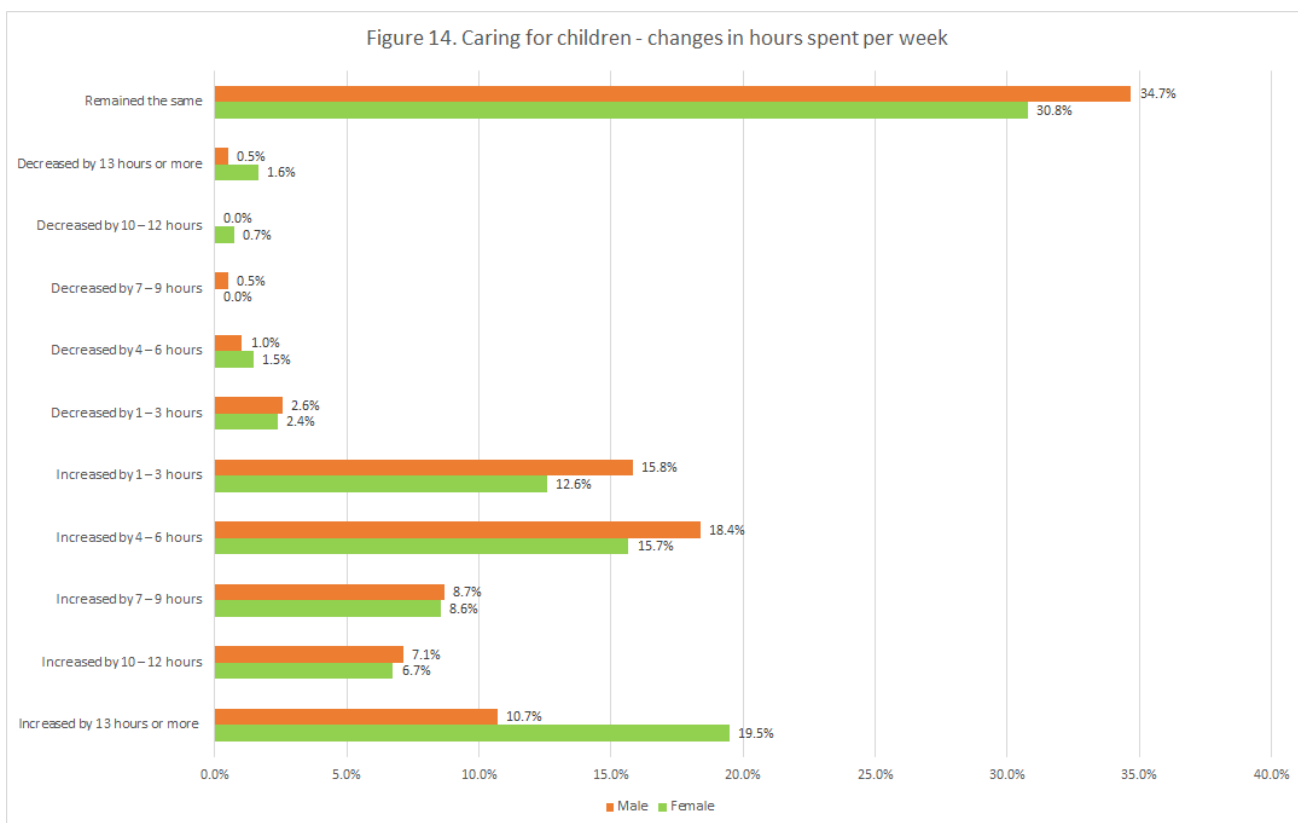
Only 6.2% of female respondents and 4.6% of male respondents stated that the hours spent caring for children decreased during COVID-19.

30.8% of female respondents and 34.7% of male respondents did not report any changes.

Table 12. Changes in the hours spent per week in caring for children before and after start of COVID-19 pandemic							
	Females		Males		Other		Total
Increased by 13 hours or more	107	19.5%	21	10.7%	0	0%	128
Increased by 10 – 12 hours	37	6.7%	14	7.1%	0	0%	51
Increased by 7 – 9 hours	47	8.6%	17	8.7%	0	0%	64
Increased by 4 – 6 hours	86	15.7%	36	18.4%	1	50%	123
Increased by 1 – 3 hours	69	12.6%	31	15.8%	0	0%	100
Decreased by 1 – 3 hours	13	2.4%	5	2.6%	0	0%	18
Decreased by 4 – 6 hours	8	1.5%	2	1.0%	0	0%	10
Decreased by 7 – 9 hours	0	0.0%	1	0.5%	0	0%	1
Decreased by 10 – 12 hours	4	0.7%	0	0.0%	0	0%	4
Decreased by 13 hours or more	9	1.6%	1	0.5%	1	50%	11
Remained the same	169	30.8%	68	34.7%	0	0%	237
Total	549	100.0%	196	100.0%	2	100%	747



"Female respondents reported a higher overall increase (63%) when it comes to caring for children, in comparison to male respondents (60.7%)"



4.3.4. Home-schooling for children

According to the findings, there is a substantial 16% gap between female and male respondents reporting an increase in the time spent on home-schooling; 80.2% for females and 64.2% for males.

5.2% of females and 5.8% of males reported a decrease in the hours spent on home-schooling for children.

Male respondents were also more likely to state that the hours spent on home-schooling have basically remained the same prior and during the pandemic.

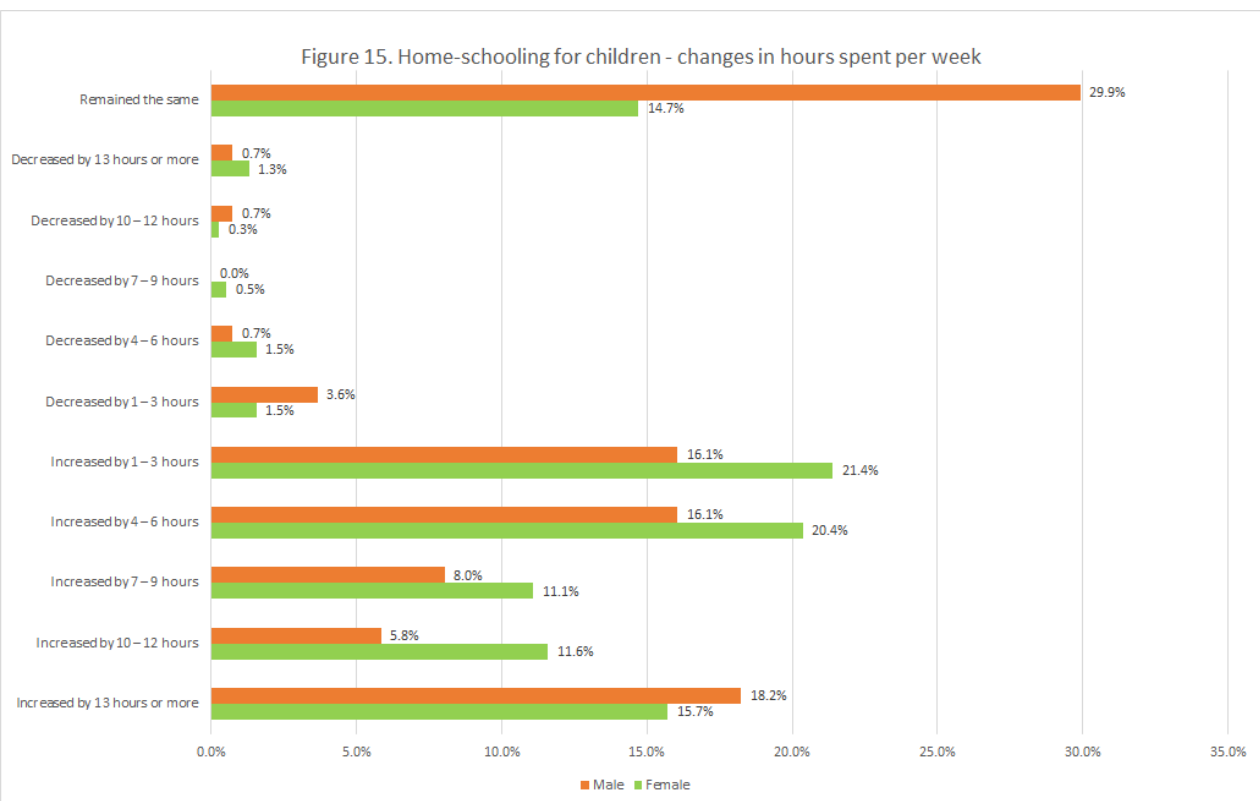
16%

gap between female and male respondents reporting an increase in the time spent on home-schooling

Table 13. Changes in the hours spent per week in home-schooling for children before and after start of COVID-19 pandemic

	Females		Males		Other		Total
Increased by 13 hours or more	61	15.7%	25	18.2%	0	0%	86
Increased by 10 – 12 hours	45	11.6%	8	5.8%	0	0%	53
Increased by 7 – 9 hours	43	11.1%	11	8.0%	0	0%	54
Increased by 4 – 6 hours	79	20.4%	22	16.1%	0	0%	101
Increased by 1 – 3 hours	83	21.4%	22	16.1%	0	0%	105
Decreased by 1 – 3 hours	6	1.5%	5	3.6%	0	0%	11
Decreased by 4 – 6 hours	6	1.5%	1	0.7%	0	0%	7
Decreased by 7 – 9 hours	2	0.5%	0	0.0%	0	0%	2
Decreased by 10 – 12 hours	1	0.3%	1	0.7%	0	0%	2
Decreased by 13 hours or more	5	1.3%	1	0.7%	0	0%	6
Remained the same	57	14.7%	41	29.9%	1	25%	99
Total	388	100.0%	137	100.0%	1	100%	526

Figure 15. Home-schooling for children - changes in hours spent per week



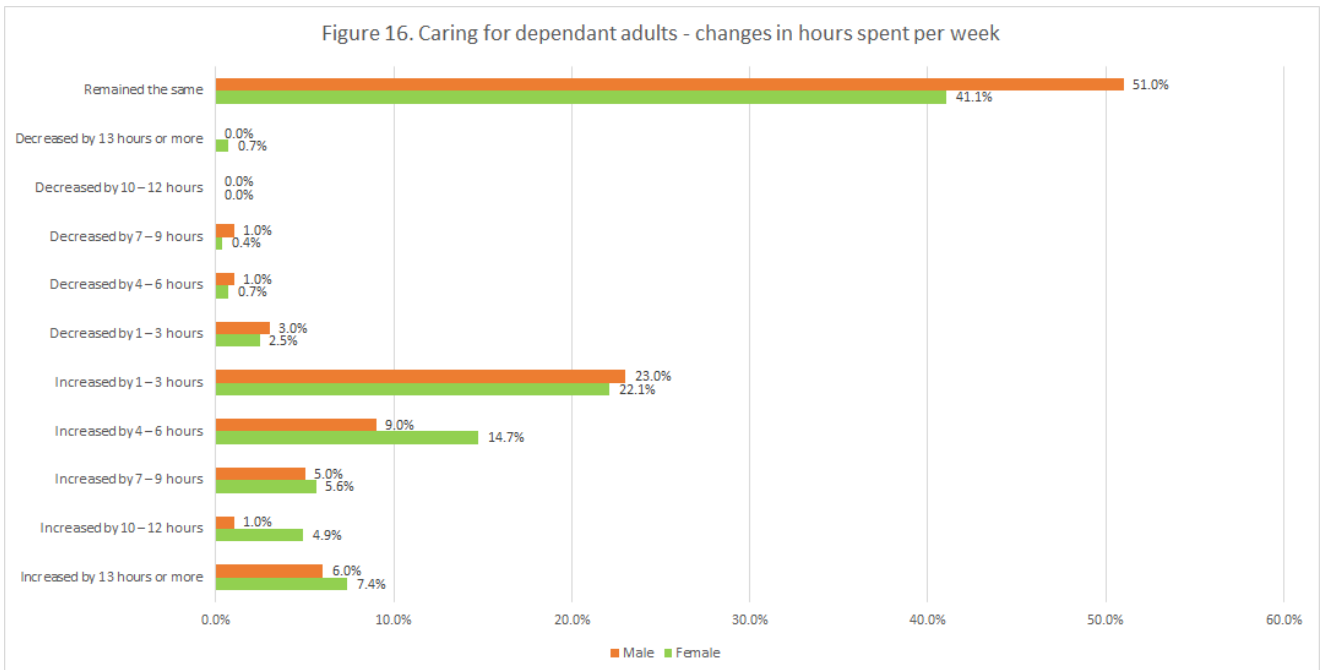
4.3.5. Caring for dependent adults

Female respondents were more likely to report an increase in the hours spent caring for dependent adults during the pandemic. 54.7% of females reported an increase in comparison to 44% of males.

4.2% of females and 2% of males stated that it decreased.

The majority of male respondents have also reported that the time spent on this caring role remained the same.

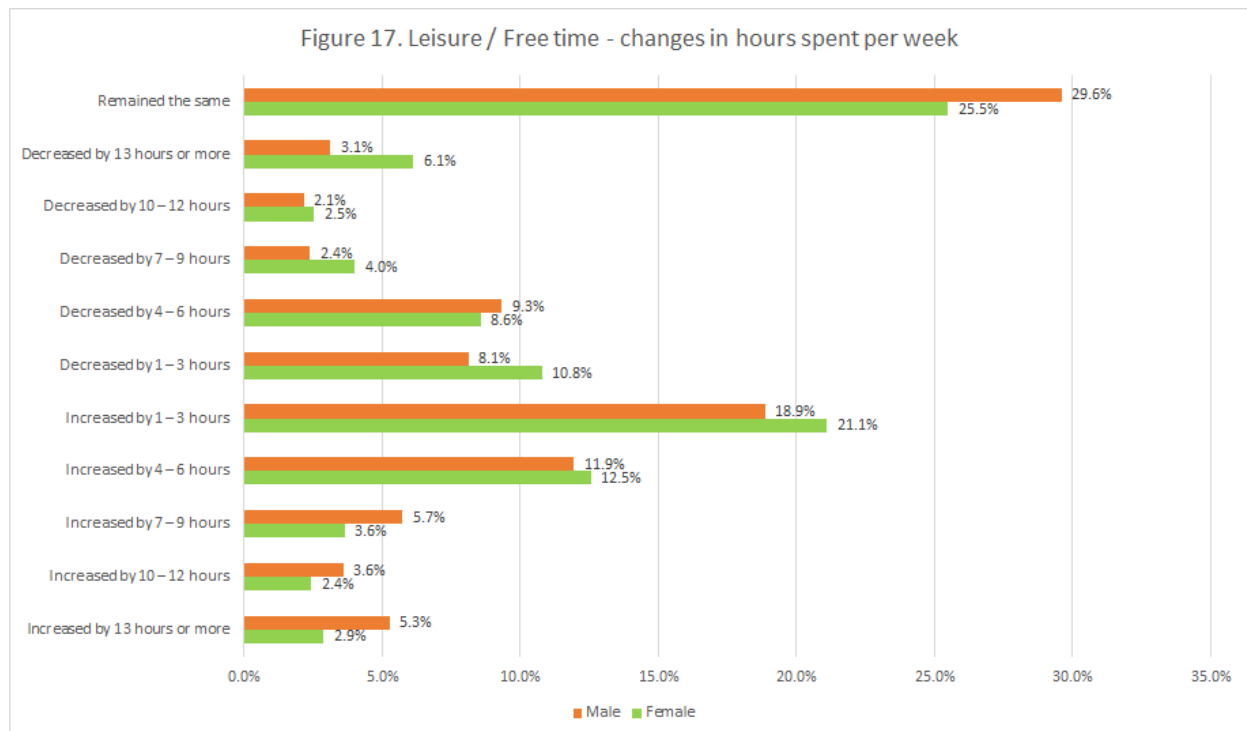
Table 14. Changes in the hours spent per week in caring for dependent adults before and after start of COVID-19 pandemic							
	Females		Males		Other		Total
Increased by 13 hours or more	21	7.4%	6	6.0%	0	0%	27
Increased by 10 – 12 hours	14	4.9%	1	1.0%	0	0%	15
Increased by 7 – 9 hours	16	5.6%	5	5.0%	0	0%	21
Increased by 4 – 6 hours	42	14.7%	9	9.0%	1	50%	52
Increased by 1 – 3 hours	63	22.1%	23	23.0%	1	50%	87
Decreased by 1 – 3 hours	7	2.5%	3	3.0%	0	0%	10
Decreased by 4 – 6 hours	2	0.7%	1	1.0%	0	0%	3
Decreased by 7 – 9 hours	1	0.4%	1	1.0%	0	0%	2
Decreased by 10 – 12 hours	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%	0
Decreased by 13 hours or more	2	0.7%	0	0.0%	0	0%	2
Remained the same	117	41.1%	51	51.0%	0	0%	168
Total	285	100.0%	100	100.0%	2	100%	387



4.3.6. Leisure/free time

Slightly more male respondents (45.3% in comparison to 42.6% of females) reported an increase in their leisure time during the pandemic, and more females reported a decrease (32% in comparison to 25.1% of males).

Table 15. Changes in the hours spent per week in leisure/free time before and after start of COVID-19 pandemic							
	Females		Males		Other		Total
Increased by 13 hours or more	31	2.9%	22	5.3%	1	20.0%	54
Increased by 10 – 12 hours	26	2.4%	15	3.6%	0	0.0%	41
Increased by 7 – 9 hours	39	3.6%	24	5.7%	0	0.0%	63
Increased by 4 – 6 hours	135	12.5%	50	11.9%	0	0.0%	185
Increased by 1 – 3 hours	227	21.1%	79	18.9%	2	40.0%	308
Decreased by 1 – 3 hours	116	10.8%	34	8.1%	0	0.0%	150
Decreased by 4 – 6 hours	92	8.6%	39	9.3%	0	0.0%	131
Decreased by 7 – 9 hours	43	4.0%	10	2.4%	1	20.0%	54
Decreased by 10 – 12 hours	27	2.5%	9	2.1%	0	0.0%	36
Decreased by 13 hours or more	66	6.1%	13	3.1%	0	0.0%	79
Remained the same	274	25.5%	124	29.6%	1	20.0%	399
Total	1,076	100.0%	419	100.0%	5	100.0%	1500



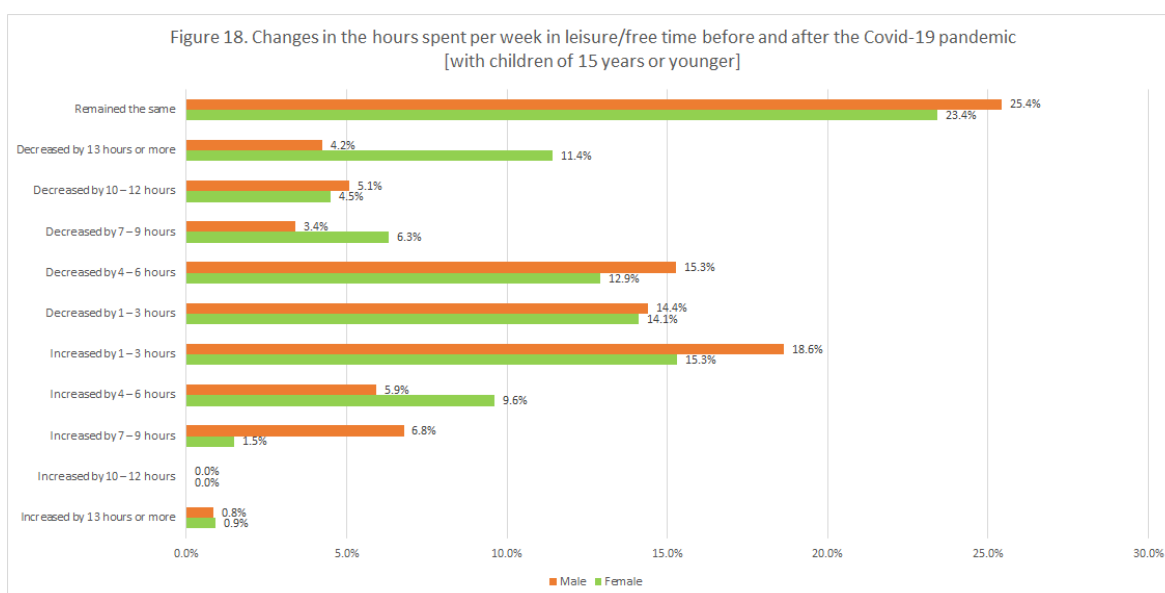
4.3.6.1. Leisure / free time for women and men with children of 15 years or younger

The results for this survey question were filtered to take into account only respondents who have children of 15 years or younger living in the same household. The filtered results show that both women and men in this category reported a higher decrease rather than an increase in their leisure / free time during the pandemic, contrary to results from the entire group of respondents.

49.2% of women with children of 15 years or younger stated that their leisure / free time decreased compared to 42.4% of men. Only 27.3% of women and 32.3% of men in this category reported an increase.



Moreover, gender differences in this category are more accentuated, especially for the “Decreased by 13 hours or more”, where the ratio of women to men who reported a decrease was 3:1 - 11.4% females compared to 4.2% males.



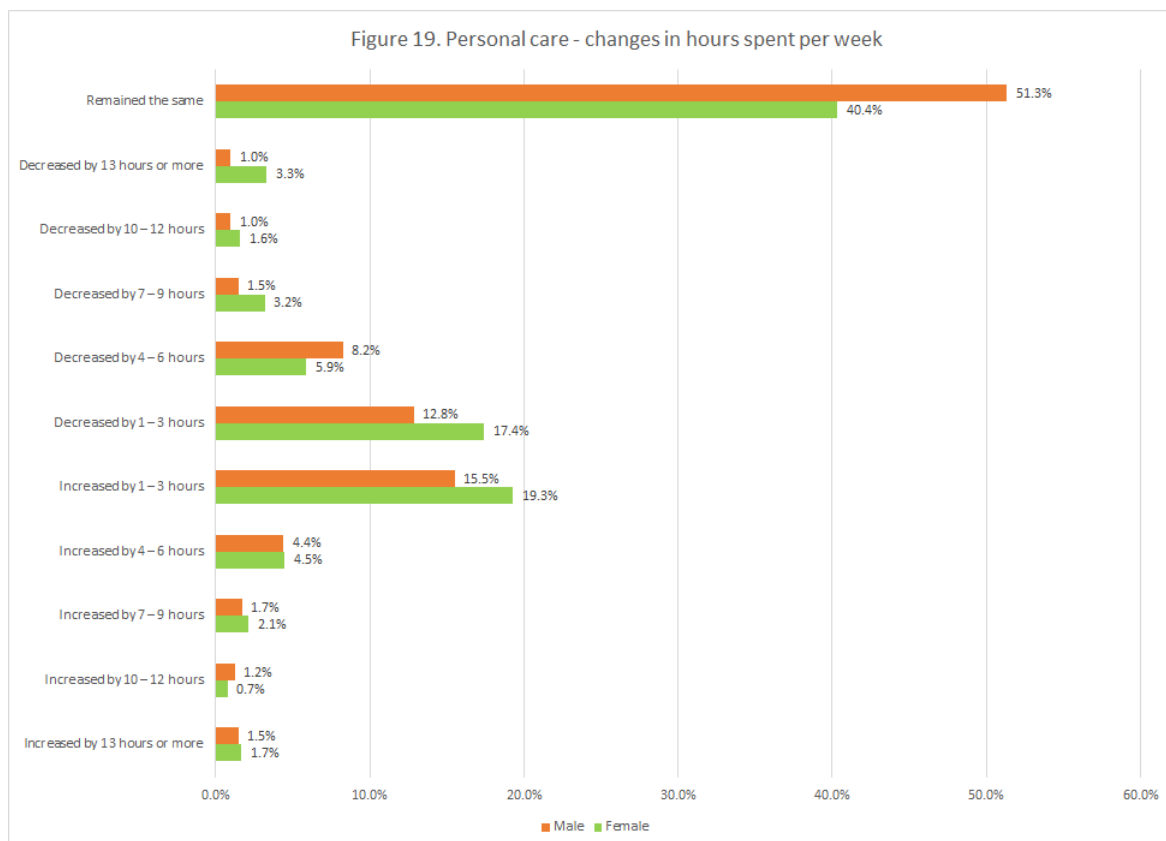
4.3.7. Personal care

More female respondents reported a decrease in the hours spent on personal care – 31.3% of females compared to 24.5% of males.

28.3% of female respondents and 24.2% of male respondents reported an increase in the hours spent on personal care.

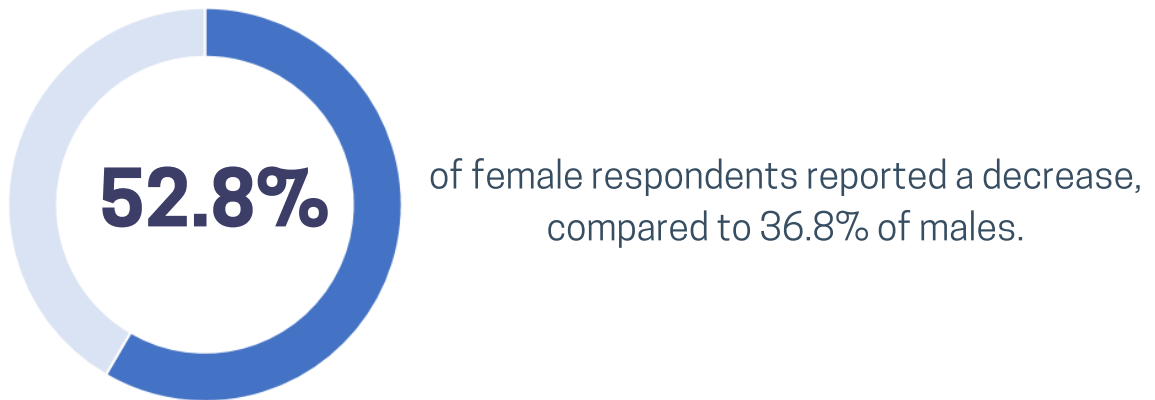
Male respondents were more likely to report (51.3% compared to 41.4% of females) that the hours spent on personal care prior to the pandemic remained the same during the pandemic.

Table 16. Changes in the hours spent per week in personal care before and after start of COVID-19 pandemic							
	Females		Males		Other		Total
Increased by 13 hours or more	18	1.7%	6	1.5%	0	0.0%	24
Increased by 10 – 12 hours	8	0.7%	5	1.2%	0	0.0%	13
Increased by 7 – 9 hours	23	2.1%	7	1.7%	0	0.0%	30
Increased by 4 – 6 hours	48	4.5%	18	4.4%	0	0.0%	66
Increased by 1 – 3 hours	207	19.3%	64	15.5%	2	50.0%	273
Decreased by 1 – 3 hours	187	17.4%	53	12.8%	0	0.0%	240
Decreased by 4 – 6 hours	63	5.9%	34	8.2%	0	0.0%	97
Decreased by 7 – 9 hours	34	3.2%	6	1.5%	1	25.0%	41
Decreased by 10 – 12 hours	17	1.6%	4	1.0%	0	0.0%	21
Decreased by 13 hours or more	35	3.3%	4	1.0%	1	25.0%	40
Remained the same	433	40.4%	212	51.3%	0	0.0%	645
Total	1,073	100.0%	413	100.0%	4	100.0%	1,490

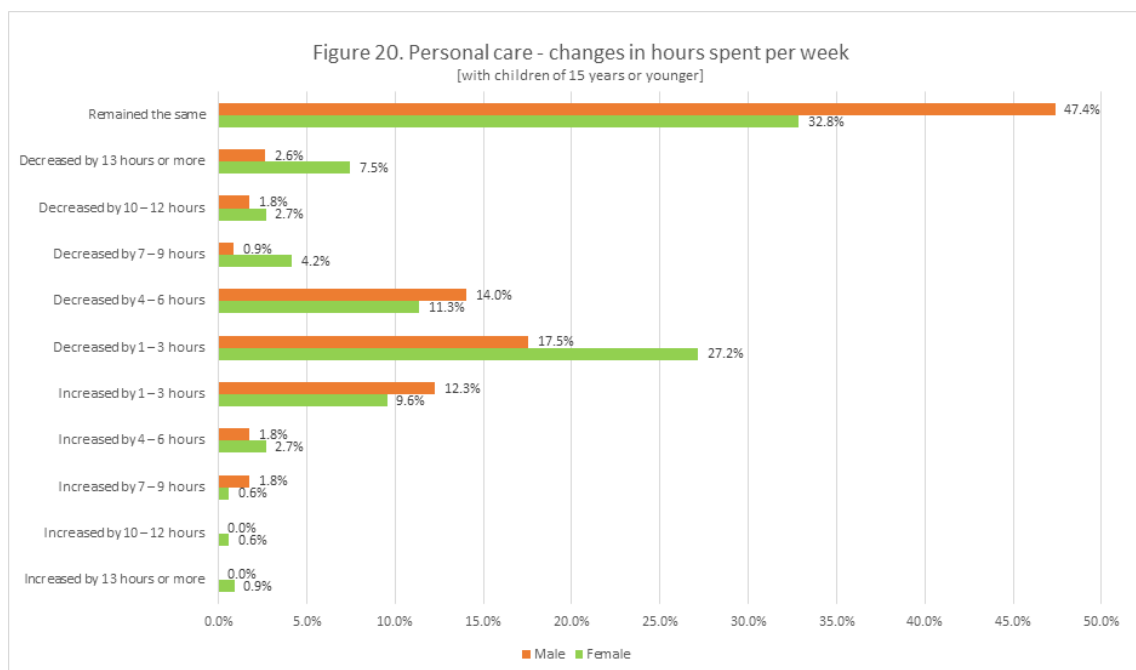


4.3.7.1. Personal care for women and men with children of 15 years or younger

The results for this survey question were filtered to take into account only respondents who have children of 15 years or younger living in the same household. The filtered results show that both women and men in this category reported a higher decrease and a lower increase in the time spent on personal care during the pandemic compared to the entire group of respondents.



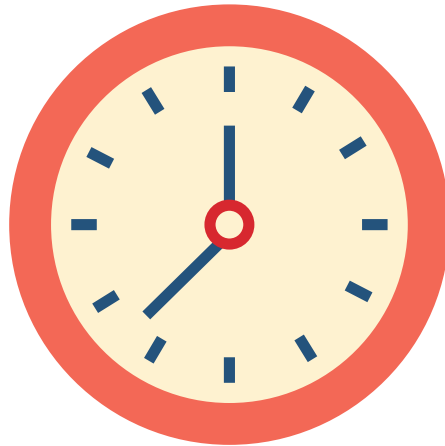
The gap between the two genders is also significantly wider within this category. 52.8% of female respondents reported a decrease, compared to 36.8% of males. Only 14.3% of females and 15.8% of males reported an increase.



4.3.8. Sleeping hours

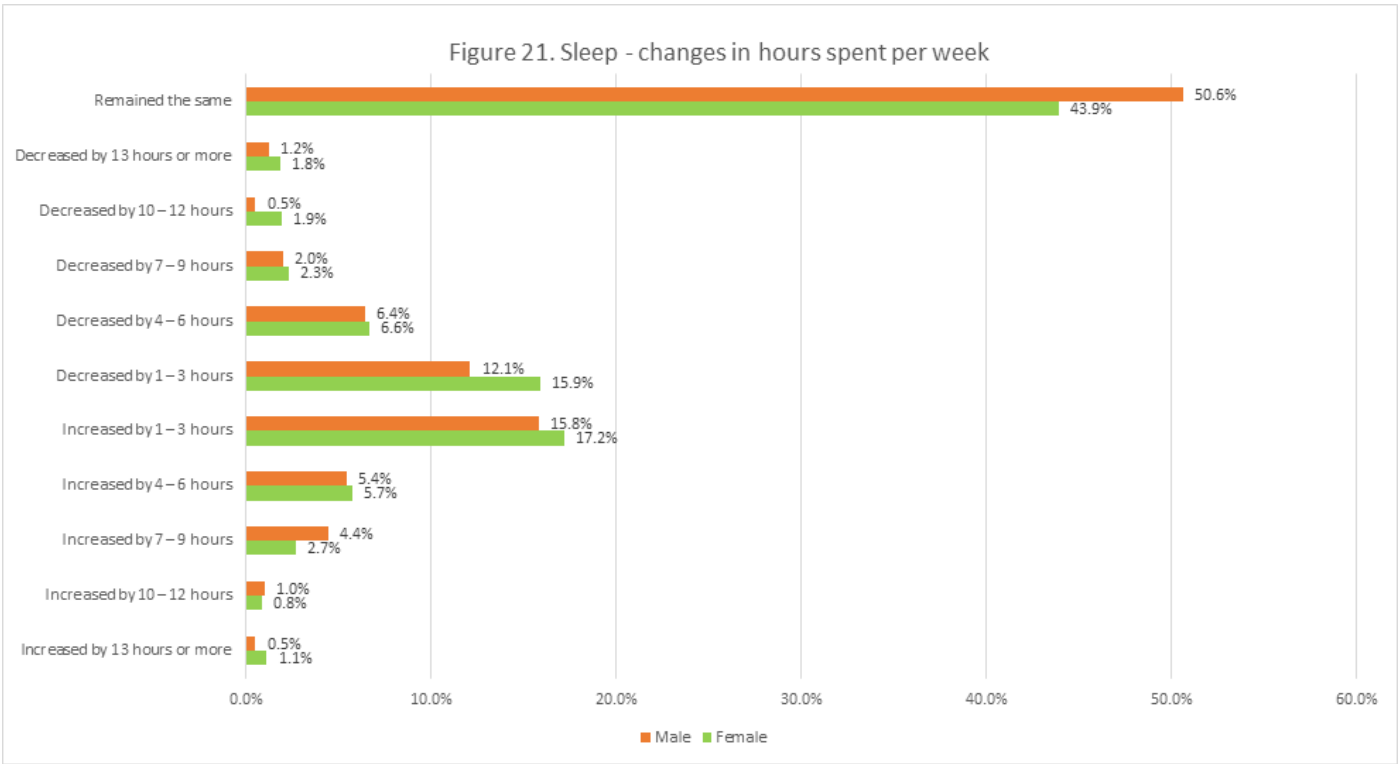
The majority of both female (57.8%) and male (66.8%) respondents stated that their sleep has either remained the same or increased by 1-3 hours.

28.6% of female respondents and 22.2% of male respondents reported a decrease in sleeping hours.



"28.6% of female respondents and 22.2% of male respondents reported a decrease in sleeping hours"

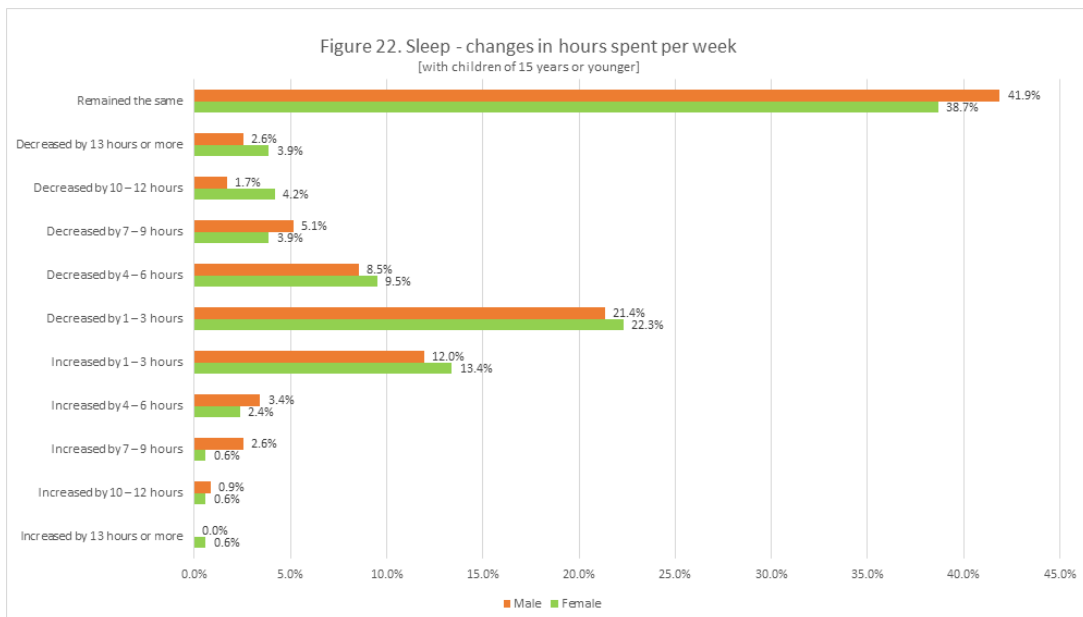
Table 17. Changes in the hours spent per week in sleep before and after start of COVID-19 pandemic							
	Females		Males		Other		Total
Increased by 13 hours or more	12	1.1%	2	0.5%	1	25.0%	15
Increased by 10 – 12 hours	9	0.8%	4	1.0%	0	0.0%	13
Increased by 7 – 9 hours	29	2.7%	18	4.4%	0	0.0%	47
Increased by 4 – 6 hours	62	5.7%	22	5.4%	1	25.0%	85
Increased by 1 – 3 hours	186	17.2%	64	15.8%	1	25.0%	251
Decreased by 1 – 3 hours	172	15.9%	49	12.1%	1	25.0%	221
Decreased by 4 – 6 hours	72	6.6%	26	6.4%	0	0.0%	99
Decreased by 7 – 9 hours	25	2.3%	8	2.0%	0	0.0%	33
Decreased by 10 – 12 hours	21	1.9%	2	0.5%	0	0.0%	23
Decreased by 13 hours or more	20	1.8%	5	1.2%	0	0.0%	25
Remained the same	476	43.9%	205	50.6%	0	0.0%	681
Total	1,084	100.0%	405	100.0%	4	100.0%	1,493



4.3.8.1. Sleeping hours for women and men with children of 15 years or younger

The results for this survey question were filtered to take into account only respondents who have children of 15 years or younger living in the same household. Similar to the results for the entire group of respondents, the majority of women and men in the category also stated that their sleep has either remained the same or “Increased by 1 -3 hours” – 52.1% of females and 53.8% of males.

However, the percentage of women and men in this category who reported an overall decrease is much higher when compared to the entire group of respondents – 43.8% of female respondents and 39.3% of male respondents in this category reported a decrease in sleeping hours.



4.4. "Agree/Disagree" with statements

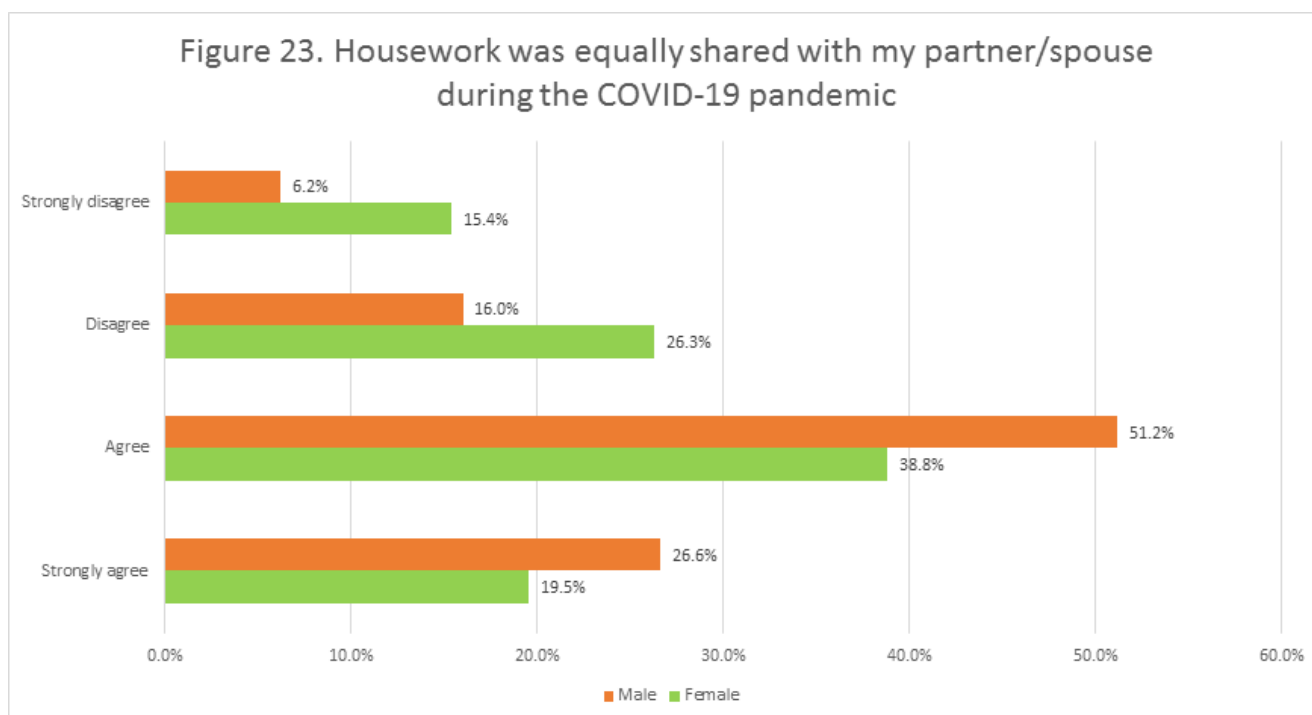
4.4.1. Housework was equally shared with my partner/spouse during the COVID-19 pandemic

Figures show that women were less likely to “strongly agree / agree” with this statement, and more likely to “strongly disagree / disagree”. The opposite happened with male respondents.

Hence, even though figures have shown that the majority of both female and male respondents have been working remotely during the pandemic, female respondents still reported **a lack of equal sharing of housework**, in spite of their male partner/spouse being more present in the household.

These figures also show that men are more likely to perceive that housework is equally shared.

Table 18	Females		Males		Other		Total
Strongly agree	170	19.5%	90	26.6%	0	0.0%	260
Agree	339	38.8%	173	51.2%	1	100.0%	513
Disagree	230	26.3%	54	16.0%	0	0.0%	284
Strongly disagree	135	15.4%	21	6.2%	0	0.0%	156
Total	874	100.0%	338	100.0%	1	100.0%	1,213



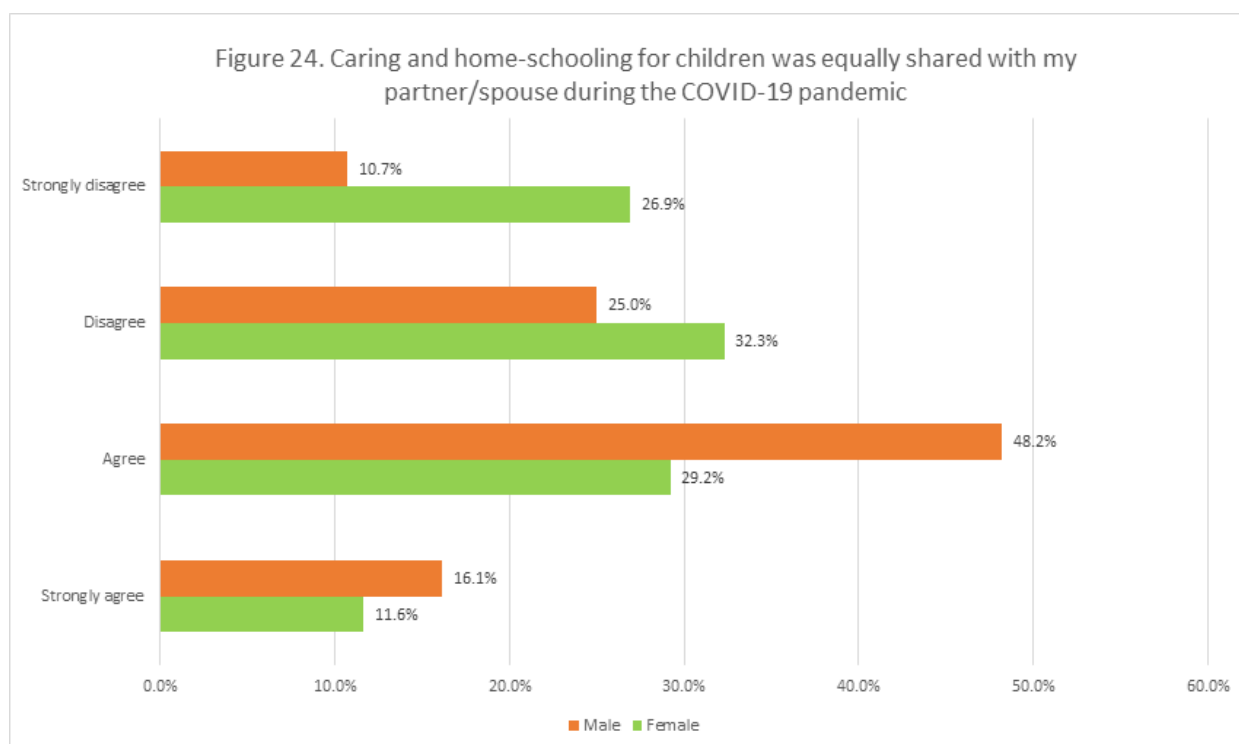
4.4.2. Caring and home-schooling for children was equally shared with my partner/spouse during the COVID-19 pandemic

A large percentage of female respondents (59.2%) disagreed with this statement, indicating that the majority of women shouldered this responsibility.

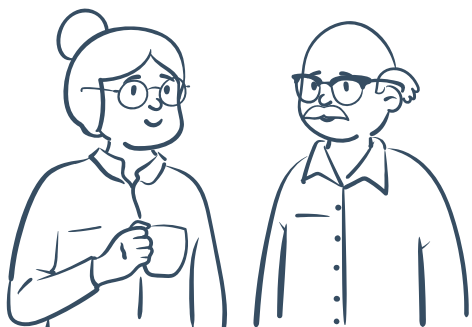
Only 35.7% of male respondents disagreed with this statement.



Table 19	Females		Males		Other		Total
Strongly agree	50	11.6%	27	16.1%	0	0.0%	77
Agree	126	29.2%	81	48.2%	1	50.0%	208
Disagree	139	32.3%	42	25.0%	0	0.0%	181
Strongly disagree	116	26.9%	18	10.7%	1	50.0%	135
Total	431	100.0%	168	100.0%	2	100.0%	601

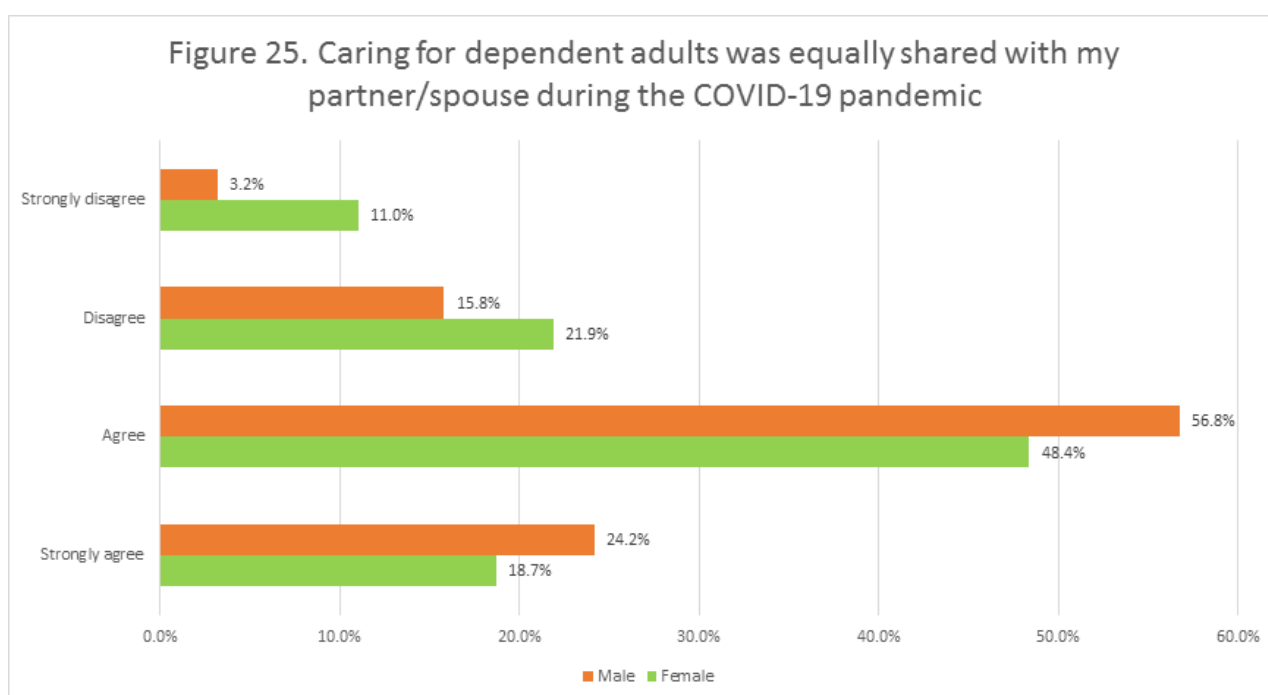


4.4.3. Caring for dependent adults was equally shared with my partner/spouse during the COVID-19 pandemic



Female respondents were more likely to disagree (32.9% compared to 19% of males) with this statement.

Table 20	Females		Males		Other		Total
Strongly agree	41	18.7%	23	24.2%	0	0%	64
Agree	106	48.4%	54	56.8%	0	0%	160
Disagree	48	21.9%	15	15.8%	1	100%	64
Strongly disagree	24	11.0%	3	3.2%	0	0%	27
Total	219	100.0%	95	100.0%	1	100%	315



5. Interpretation of Results

The findings of this survey indicate that during the pandemic:

1. the increase in the number of hours spent doing household tasks and childcare increased more for women than for men;
2. the time spent on leisure, personal care and sleep decreased more for women than it did for men.

Considering that the majority of respondents had a tertiary or a post-graduate level of education, the survey results indicates that gender imbalances are prevalent even among those with a higher-than-average level of education. It is also important to underline that the survey did not gauge the time spent on these different tasks, but only looked at the increase/decrease during COVID-19.

Thus, the differences between women and men become even starker when the findings of this survey are seen in the context of the EIGE Gender Equality Index 2019 which shows the extent of inequalities between women and men prior to COVID-19.

Changes to employment status of respondent

When looking at the NPCE findings under this category, specifically the subcategories “retained full hours and fully working from home” and “no changes” one might come to the conclusion that the employment of female respondents was slightly more stable during the pandemic compared to that of male respondents. However, it is important to point out that the profile of the respondents who answered the survey is not reflective of society at large, with persons having a tertiary or post-graduate level of education being heavily over-represented. One can safely assume that this category of persons is more likely to have more secure employment as well as jobs that can be done from home compared to the wider society.

Paid work

The NPCE findings in the subcategories pertaining to

the decrease of working hours, show that there are no significant differences between males and females. It is crucial to note that prior to the pandemic, as reported in the EIGE Gender Equality Index 2019, women were more likely to work on a temporary or part-time basis and/or in precarious employment. Thus, although the decrease in the number of hours worked during COVID-19, as reported in the NPCE survey, is more or less the same for women and men, the real impact of this decrease may be different for women and men. For example, a decrease of two hours of paid work for someone who used to work twenty-five hours is more significant than the same decrease for someone who used to work forty hours.



Housework

The findings in this category have in some way raised more questions than provided answers. One might have thought that the pandemic, in a way, was an opportune period for both women and men to spend their time juggling work and family responsibilities as a team, especially when considering the fact that many men spent more time at home working remotely. However, the complete opposite has been registered. According to EIGE’s Gender Equality Index 2019, prior to the pandemic, 96.4% of women and a mere 31.4% of men in Malta accounted for cooking and/or housework. The figures produced by this survey show that, overall, housework increased with



the same rate for women and men during the pandemic, meaning that the **existing inequality was not corrected or reduced, but reproduced**. Moreover, in the “Increased by 13 hours or more” subcategory of housework, women accounted for 4.1%, almost double the percentage of men, 2.3%.

Caring for children and dependent adults

According to the EIGE Gender Equality Index, prior to the pandemic, 85% of females and 58% of males were carrying this responsibility. The findings of this survey show that women during the pandemic reported a 19.5% “Increased by 13 hours or more” in relation to caring for children whilst only a 10.7% of males reported such increase. In the subcategory “Remained the same” 34.7% was reported by males, and 30.8% by females. The same pattern can be seen in the “Caring for dependent adults” category, although the statistical discrepancies are not as wide as in the case of caring for children.

Considering that the point of departure was unequal, with a substantial gap of 27.4%, the survey findings reaffirm that females were more likely to take on the additional care load during the pandemic.

Leisure / free time

Prior to the pandemic, women and men with children reported 24.8% and 20.4% of leisure time respectively (Gender Equality Index, 2019). Hence it is fair to state that there were no large discrepancies in leisure time between both genders. During the pandemic, the largest percentage of leisure / free time registered for the “Increased by 13 hours or more” was by males – 5.3%, as opposed to the 2.9% registered by females. Moreover, more female respondents reported a decrease in their leisure time - 32%, compared to 25.1% of men.

These differences became wider when the survey results for “leisure / free time” and “personal care” were filtered to include only women and men with children of 15 years or younger living in the same household. There is a gap of 7.2% between women and men who stated that their “leisure / free time” decreased by 13 hours or more. There is also a 16% gap between women and men who reported an overall decrease in the time spent on personal care.

6. Recommendations

The research findings of this survey continue to **reaffirm gender inequality in the distribution of unpaid household and caring responsibilities**. In order to address the inequalities evidenced by the survey, one needs to invest in and build on existing measures - such as improved care services and a more flexible work environment - which have led to improvements throughout the years. However, such measures have to happen alongside behavioural changes that break gender stereotypes and overcome traditional gender roles.

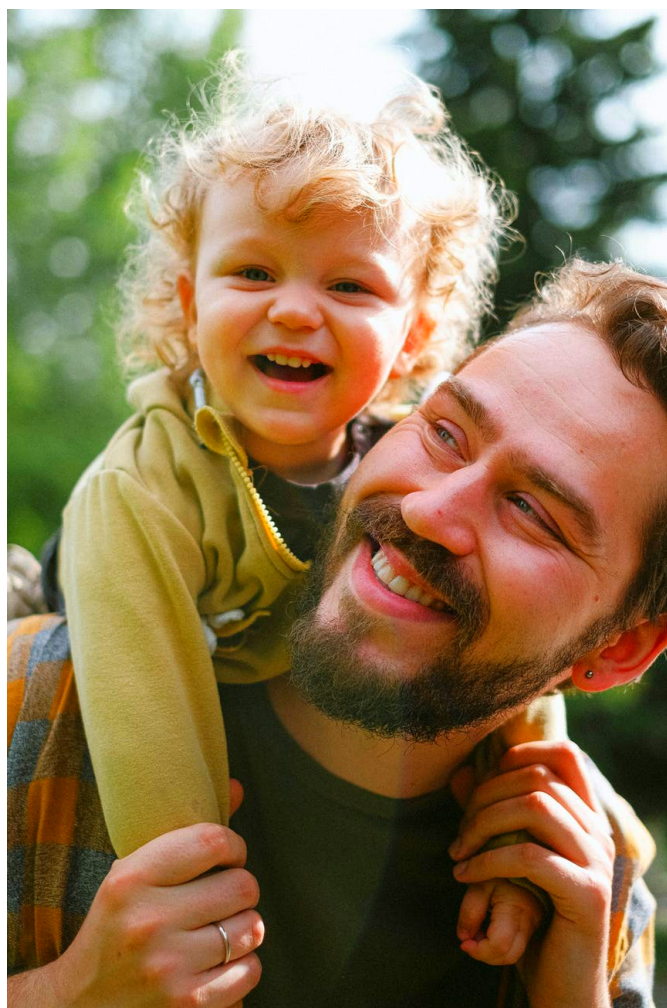
The recommendations being made hereunder by the NCPE are to potentially serve as a step forward towards reaching gender parity and encourage cultural norms which do not hinder the success, potential and quality of life of any person, especially on the basis of gender.

1. Men are to be expected to carry out their share of unpaid care and housework duties, rather than abiding to stereotypical and traditional gender roles. **Paid paternity and parental leave on a use-it-or-lose-it basis** should be introduced in order to incentivise men to take on more child caring responsibilities. These measures will influence and challenge stereotypical public perceptions of men as breadwinners and women as child carers.

2. Introduce **paid parental leave** for both women and men. The cost of this measure would be offset by a decrease in the expenditure on childcare services since these services, especially for very small children, are substantially costly.

3. Incentivise employers to **support male workers** in their choices regarding the sharing of family responsibilities.

4. A **Gender Impact Assessment** of the pandemic, and of the recovery measures so far, should be carried out to enable the development of gender-sensitive recovery measures and structural change.





5. COVID-19 response plans and every recovery measure is to:
 - a. include the **participation of women** and women's organisations;
 - b. aim to transform inequities in unpaid work by **enhancing care services** for both women and men, and
 - c. design and implement **socio-economic national plans**, particularly focusing on the lives and futures of women and girls, by fostering a society and an economy that values women's contribution to society and takes into account their specific needs and experiences.
6. Expand **childcare support** for working parents particularly when schools, childcare and respite care services are closed or limited due to COVID-19.
7. Adopt and enforce **measures against precarious work** which is a reality with links to gender segregation in the labour market. It should be ensured that all jobs have decent conditions and pay.
8. Enhance, incentivise and support **flexible work arrangements** in both the public as well as the private sector.

Both policy measures and behavioural changes are necessary to tackle the deep roots of gender inequality. Gender stereotyping has to be pro-actively addressed across the board, by all stakeholders, in areas such as politics, the media, education and policy making. Ideas, norms and perceptions that limit women's participation in spheres such as the economy and politics, but also limit men's participation in family and domestic life as well as in feminised sectors of the labour market, need to change to enable all persons to reach their own potential through the achievement of a truly gender equal society.

References

- [1] <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/policy-brief-the-impact-of-COVID-19-on-women>
- [2] Ibid.
- [3] <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2019/domain/time/MT/family>
- [4] <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2019/domain/work/MT/family>
- [5] <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-the-impact-of-COVID-19-on-women-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1406>
- [6] <https://eige.europa.eu/COVID-19-and-gender-equality/economic-hardship-and-gender>
- [7] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Unemployment_statistics#Unemployment_by_gender
- [8] <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/blog/COVID-19-fallout-takes-a-higher-toll-on-women-economically-and-domestically>
- [9] https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef20059en.pdf

Annex 1

Research on the distribution of work in households during the Covid-19 pandemic

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) is carrying out a survey on the distribution of work in households across Malta and Gozo during the Covid-19 pandemic.

You are invited to participate in the survey by replying to the questionnaire which takes around 5 minutes to complete and is anonymous.

Deadline: 13th July 2020

1. Gender

- Male**
- Female**
- Other**

2. Age

- 18 – 24 years**
- 25 – 34 years**
- 35 – 44 years**
- 45 – 54 years**
- 55 – 64 years**
- 65+**

3. Education level

- Secondary or lower**
- Post-Secondary**
- Tertiary**
- Post-Graduate**

4. Do you have children living in the same household?

- Yes**
- No**

5. How old are they?

Child 1 Child 2 Child 3 Child 4 Child 5 Child 6 Child 7

Age

6. Do you have dependent adults - adult relatives needing care eg. persons with a disability and older persons - living in the same household?

- Yes**
- No**

7. What was your main status at the end of April 2020?

- Student**
- Employed**
- Looking for employment**
- Not employed and not looking for employment**
- Retired**

8. Did your employment status change during the Covid-19 pandemic?

- Increased working hours**
- Reduced working hours**
- Reduced working hours and working from home**
- Retained full hours and fully working from home**
- Retained full hours and partly working from home**
- Retained job but not working**
- Lost job**
- Left job**
- No changes**
- Other**

9. Do you have a partner/spouse who was living with you in the same household during the Covid-19 pandemic?

- Yes**
- No**

10. What is the gender of your partner/spouse?

- Male**
- Female**
- Other**

11. What was the main status of your partner/spouse at the end of April 2020?

- Student**
- Employed**
- Looking for employment**
- Not employed and not looking for employment**
- Retired**

12. Did the employment status of your partner/spouse change during the Covid-19 pandemic?

- Increased working hours**
- Reduced working hours**
- Reduced working hours and working from home**

- **Retained full hours and fully working from home**
- **Retained full hours and partly working from home**
- **Retained job but not working**
- **Lost job**
- **Left job**
- **No changes**
- **Other**

13. Were there any changes in the hours spent per week on the following tasks before and after the Covid-19 pandemic? (You can compare the last week of February with the last week of April)

Changes per week

[Ranges: Increased by: 13hrs or more; 10-12hrs; 7-9hrs; 4-6hrs; 1-3hrs;
Decreased by: 13hrs or more; 10-12hrs; 7-9hrs; 4-6hrs; 1-3hrs;
Remained the same; Not applicable]

Paid job
Housework (cooking, laundry etc.)
Caring for children (playing, personal care etc.)
Home schooling for children
Caring for dependent adults
Leisure/Free time (hobbies, watching TV etc.)
Personal care
Sleep

14. Do you agree with the following statements?

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree Not applicable

**Housework was
equally shared
with my partner/
spouse during the
Covid-19 pandemic**

**Caring and home
schooling for
children was equally
shared with my
partner/spouse
during the Covid-19
pandemic**

**Caring for dependent
adults was equally
shared with my
partner/ spouse
during the Covid-19
pandemic**

15. Do you have any additional comments?



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