

TWO YEARS ON

THE LINGERING GENDERED EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN PAKISTAN



BACKGROUND

Evidence shows that the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis span well beyond its direct health effects, impacting access to health care, employment and income, among other outcomes, and women are often at a disadvantage.¹ To measure these concerns and design effective responses to the crisis, UN Women partnered with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of Pakistan to implement a second round of Rapid Gender Assessment Survey (RGA) utilizing Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI).² This lasted eight weeks and began in September 2021. The sample was large and balanced, including 3,636 adults (age 18 and over)³, with 48 per cent women and 52 per cent men (annex I).

At the time of data collection, the COVID-19 caseload in Pakistan was high. At the beginning (30 September 2021), there were 1,232,595 reported cases, and by the end of fieldwork (8 December 2021), there were 1,289,543 reported cases. Mobility restrictions were in place in the country to a large extent. The spike in the COVID-19 caseload in Pakistan risked overwhelming the health system, slashing economic growth, derailing the recovery and pushing the country's most vulnerable people further into poverty. The impacts were not limited to disease but also affected livelihoods. The ones at risk included people who were already living below the poverty line, women, children, people living with disabilities, older people and other marginalized groups whose lives, livelihoods, nutrition and access to basic services were least secure.

1 For further references on the gendered effects of COVID-19, see <https://data.unwomen.org/resources/covid-19-emerging-gender-data-and-why-it-matters>.

2 For an overview of results from the first round of the Rapid Gender Assessment Survey, see <https://data.unwomen.org/publications/unlocking-lockdown-gendered-effects-covid-19-achieving-sdgs-asia-and-pacific>

3 Methodological details are provided in the regional report, available at <https://data.unwomen.org>.

KEY FINDINGS

MORE THAN HALF OF ADULTS IN PAKISTAN HAVE RECEIVED COVID-19 VACCINATION BUT GENDER GAPS ARE EVIDENT

The Government-led vaccination programme in Pakistan was first rolled out on 11 March 2021. An estimated 65 per cent of women and 55 per cent of men self-reported having received two doses of COVID-19 inoculation as of November 2021 (figure 1). However, among vulnerable groups, notably among older people

(age 60 and over), women are at a disadvantage. In Pakistan, 69 per cent of women and 78 per cent of men aged 60 and over received two doses of COVID-19 inoculation. However, in rural areas, men are at a disadvantage (figure 2).

Figure 1: Proportion of people who completed two doses of COVID-19 inoculation as of November 2021, by sex and age group (percentage) (n=3,636)

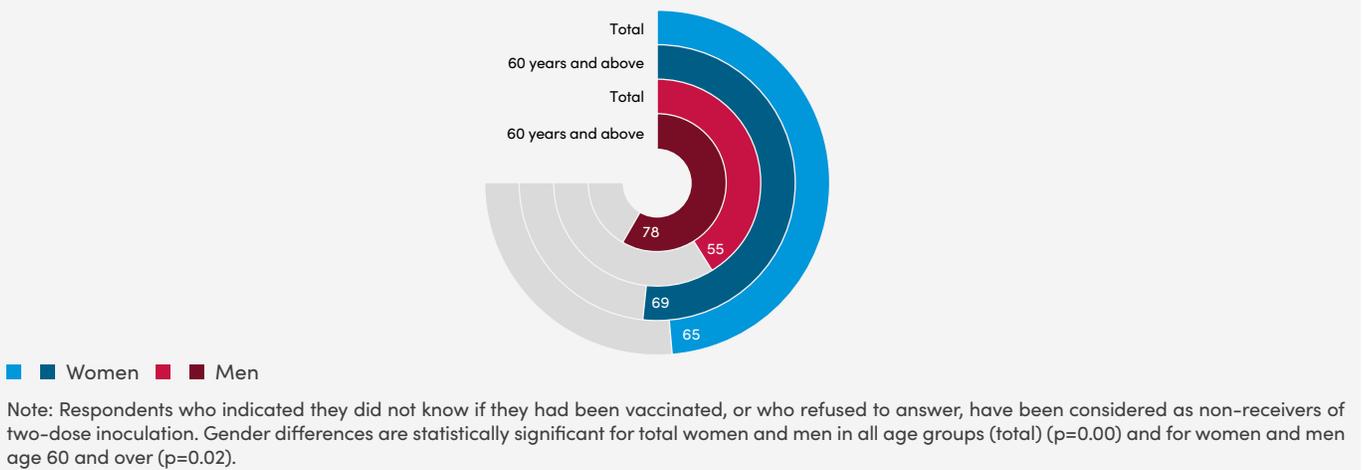
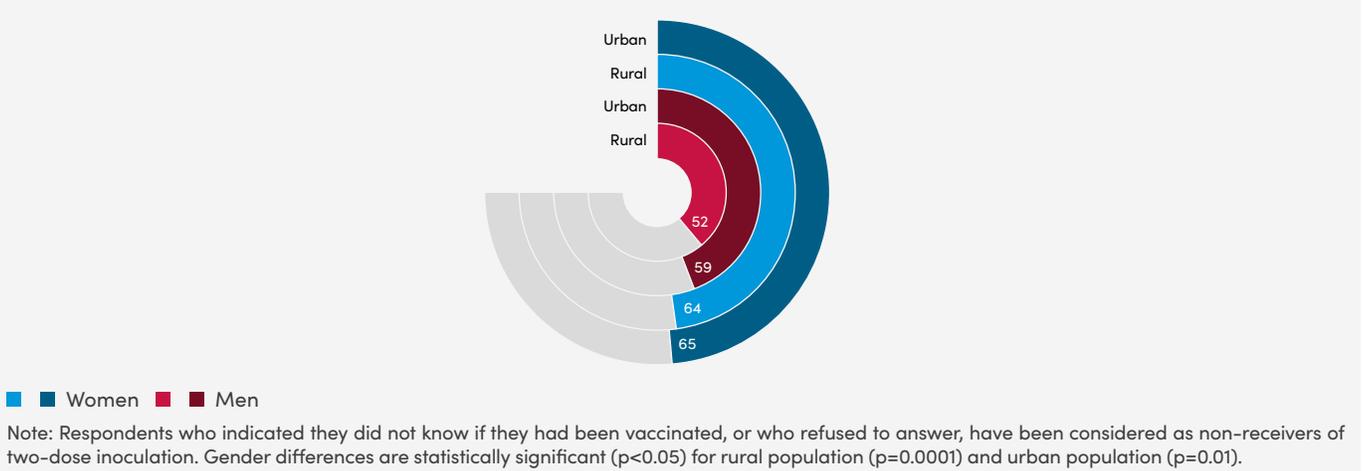


Figure 2: Proportion of people who completed two doses of COVID-19 inoculation as of November 2021, by sex and location (percentage) (n=3,634)



The majority of respondents who had not received two doses of COVID-19 inoculation cited “waiting to be called for receiving the second jab” as the main reason. This was more the case among men than women (37 per cent women and 47 per cent men) (figure 3). In addition, fears about the side effects of vaccines were cited as

main reason by 14 per cent of women and 7 per cent of men who had not completed two doses. Concerns about contagion and overwhelmed health care facilities affected access to health, globally. In Pakistan, about 28 per cent of people noted difficulties accessing medical supplies and hygiene products, (figures 4 and 5).

Figure 3: Proportion of people who cited “waiting to be called” as the main reason for not having received two doses of COVID-19 inoculation as of November 2021, by sex (percentage), (n= 1,278)

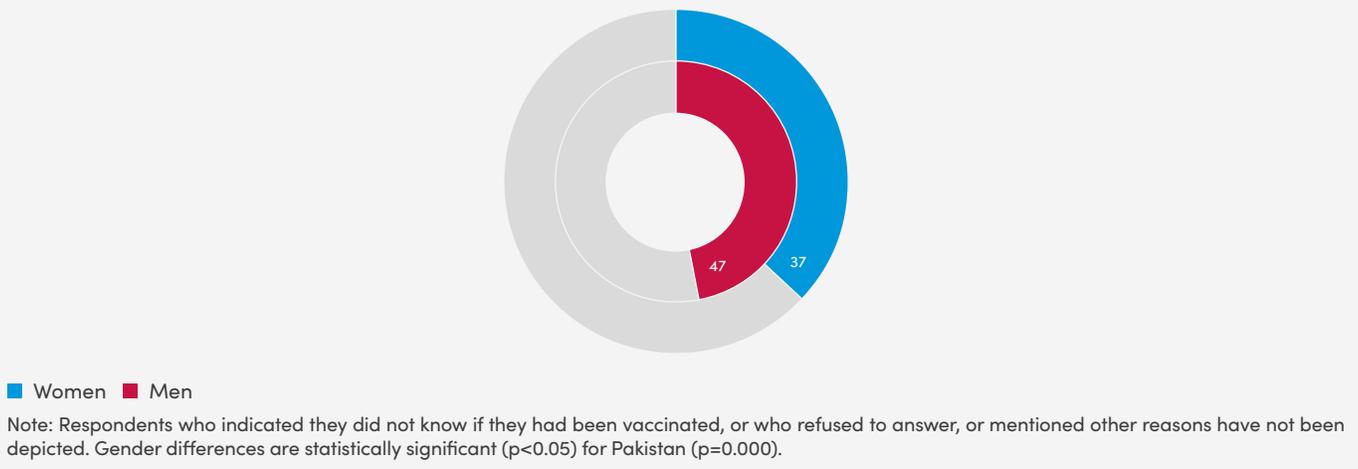


Figure 4: Proportion of people who encountered difficulties accessing medical supplies, by sex (percentage) (n=3,636)

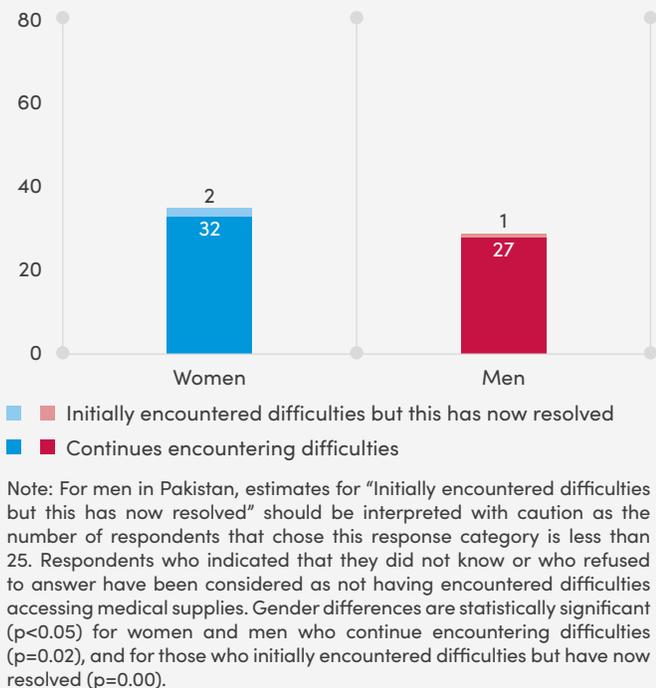
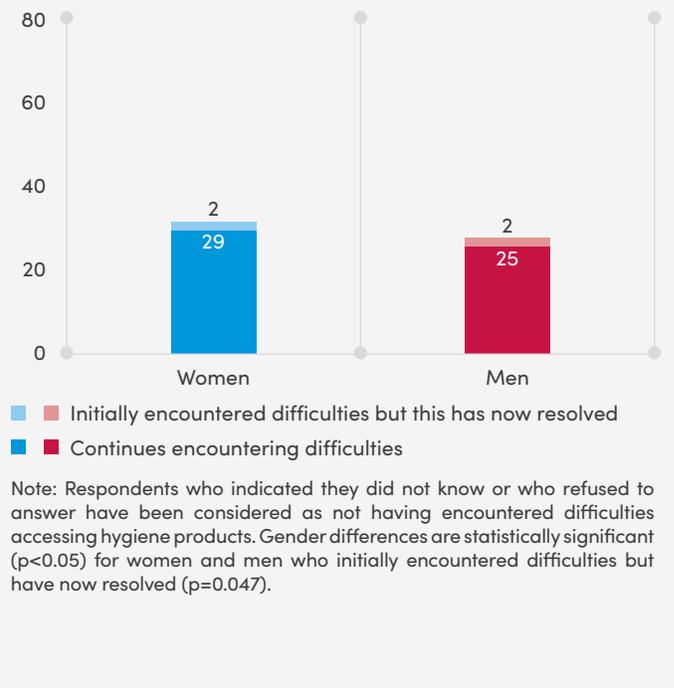


Figure 5: Proportion of people who encountered difficulties accessing hygiene products, by sex (percentage) (n=3,636)

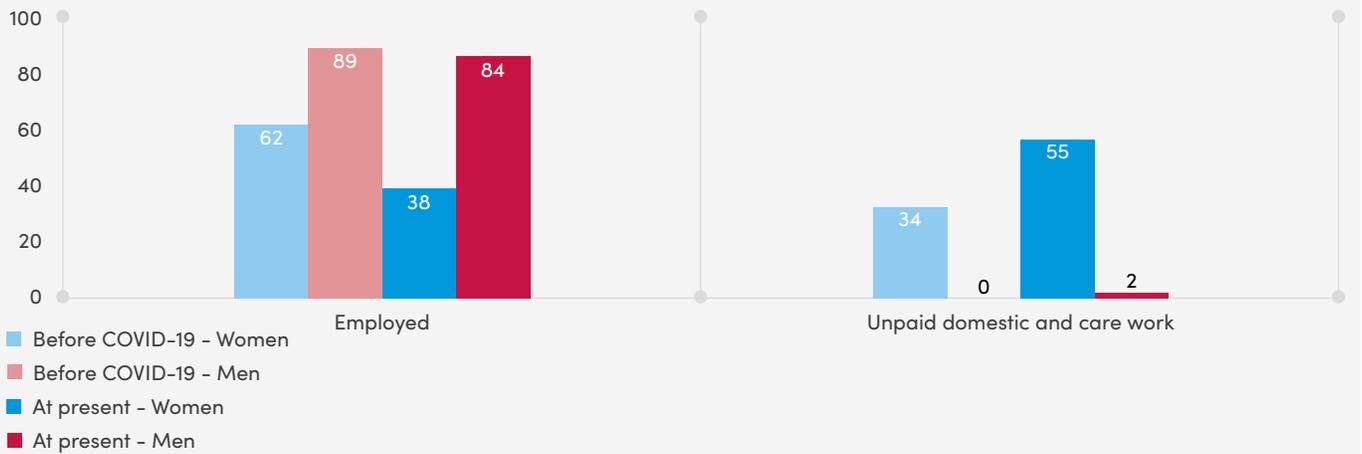


MORE WOMEN ARE LEAVING THE LABOUR MARKET TO TAKE ON ADDITIONAL HOUSEHOLD CHORES

Prior to COVID-19, fewer women than men engaged in gainful employment. The pandemic has exacerbated gender inequalities and pushed some women out of the labour market to take on additional unpaid work at home

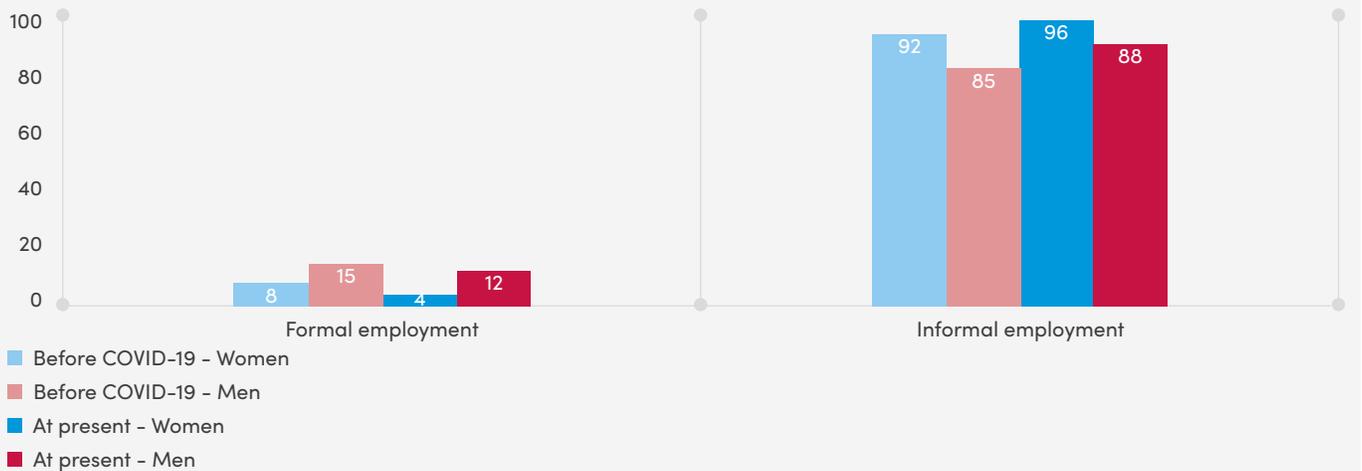
(figure 6). COVID-19 has also pushed workers into informal jobs, with more women than men noting shifts from formal to informal jobs. Women are still more likely than men to engage in informal employment overall (figure 7).⁴

Figure 6: Proportion of people in employment and performing unpaid domestic and care work before COVID-19 and at present, by sex (percentage) (n=706 current employment; n=704 previous employment)



Note: For men in Pakistan performing unpaid domestic and care work at present and before COVID-19, estimates should be interpreted with caution as the number of respondents that chose this response category is less than 25. All gender differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) in Pakistan ($p = 0.00$). Differences across women in employment and unpaid care and domestic work, before and after COVID-19, are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) in Pakistan ($p = 0.00$). Before and after COVID-19, differences for men in employment are statistically significant ($p = 0.02$).

Figure 7: Proportion of people engaged in informal and formal employment, before COVID-19 and at present, by sex (percentage) (n=514 current employment; n=583 previous employment)



Note: Data for women in Pakistan in formal employment at present and before COVID-19 should be interpreted with caution as the number of respondents that chose this response category is less than 25. Gender differences in formal and informal employment at present are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) in Pakistan ($p = 0.00$).

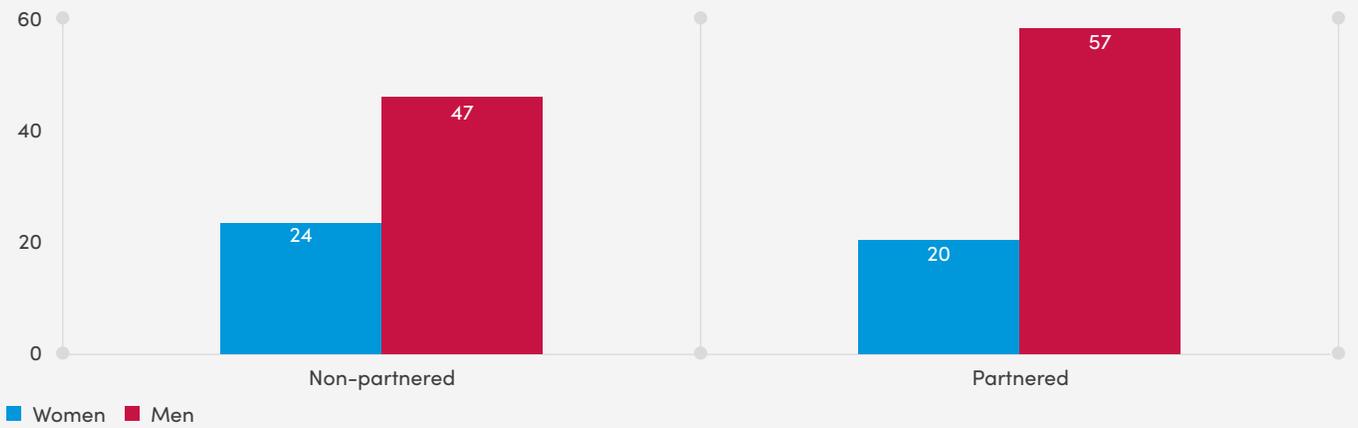
⁴ For additional evidence on the gendered impact of COVID-19 on socioeconomic indicators and employment, see F. Bari, A. Farooqui, S. Kamran, S. Shakil and S. Jamal (2020). *COVID-19 and the New Normal for Women in the Economy: Case for Pakistan*. The Asia Foundation.

THE PANDEMIC IS WORSENING GENDER POVERTY GAPS, AS WOMEN ARE LESS LIKELY TO HAVE AN INCOME AND MORE LIKELY THAN MEN TO LOSE INCOME

In Pakistan, 21 per cent of women and 54 per cent of men noted having a source of personal income at the time of the survey. Gender gaps in this regard are large, with both non-partnered and partnered women at a

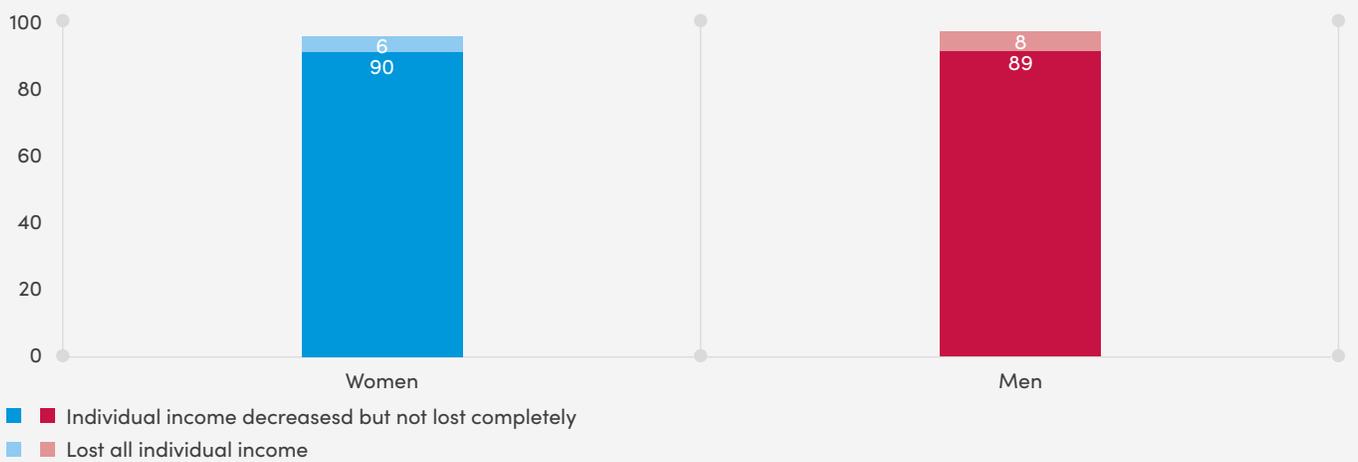
disadvantage (figure 8). As a result of the economic recession triggered by the pandemic, 90 per cent of women and 89 per cent of men saw drops in their income (figure 9).

Figure 8: Proportion of people who have a source of personal income, by sex and partnership status (percentage) (n=3,635)



Note: Partnership status was classified as partnered if respondents were married, and non-partnered if respondents were separated, widowed, divorced or single (never married). The responses “I do not know” and “Refuse to answer” have not been depicted in the figure. All gender differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Figure 9: Proportion of people who saw changes in personal income since the onset of COVID-19, by sex and type of change (percentage) (n=779)



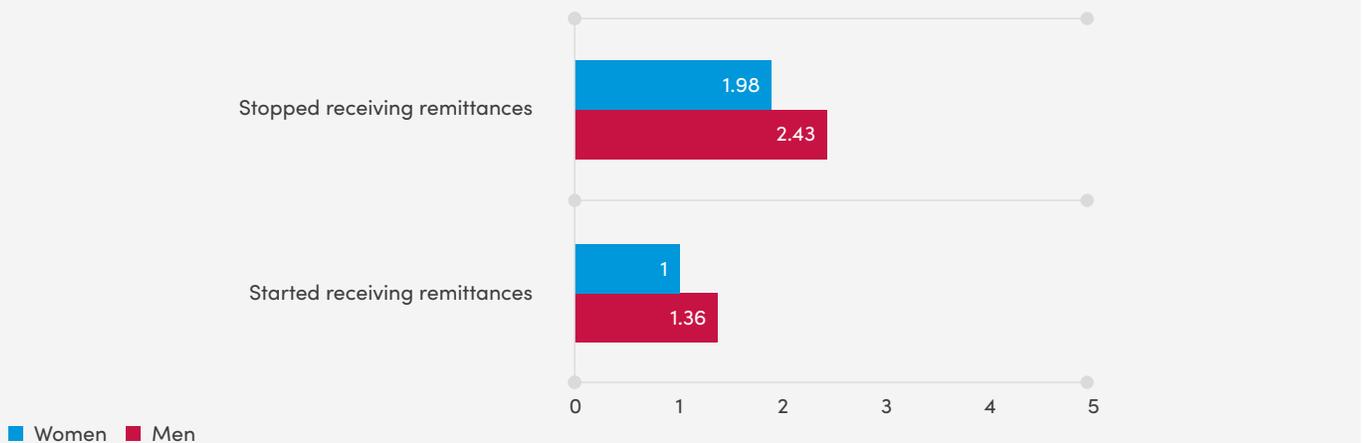
Note: The figure depicts the proportion of people who saw decreases, among those who noted any change in their personal income. People who noted their income did not change have not been considered in this calculation. The proportion of people who saw increases in their income was only 4 per cent of the sample and has not been depicted. For women in Pakistan, the number of responds that lost all individual income is less than 25 cases and thus estimates should be interpreted with caution.

REMITTANCE FLOWS HAVE SHIFTED TOWARDS MEN

In Pakistan, about 5 per cent of both women and men receive remittances as of November 2021. Women were less likely to note they have stopped receiving remittances since the onset of COVID-19, but they were also less likely to have started receiving them since the onset of COVID-19.

Although more than 2 per cent of men noted they stopped receiving remittances since the onset of COVID-19, they were slightly more likely than women to have started receiving them since the onset of COVID-19 (figure 10).

Figure 10: Proportion of people who stopped/started receiving remittances since the onset of COVID-19, by sex (percentage) (n=3,633)



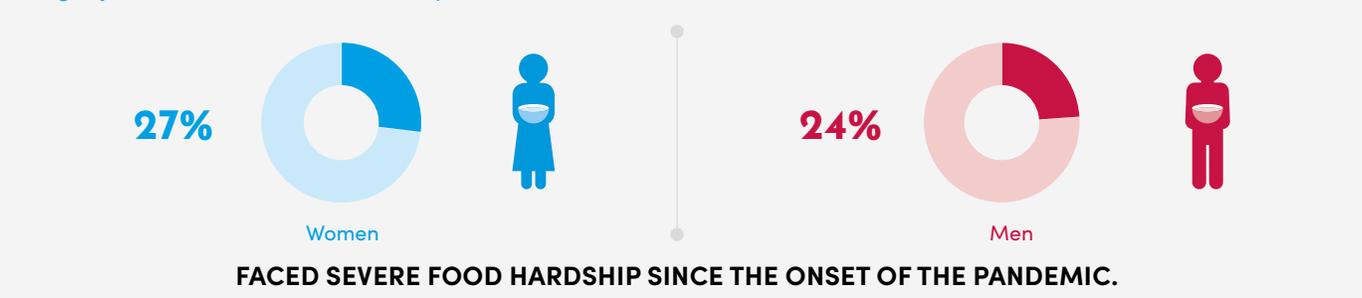
Note: Respondents who refused to answer have been excluded from the analysis. Estimates for women who started receiving remittances in Pakistan amounts to less than 25 observations and thus should be interpreted with caution.

CHANGES IN HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND OTHER FACTORS INCREASE WOMEN’S VULNERABILITY TO FOOD HARDSHIP

Most people who experienced a change in household income (56 per cent of people) saw their income drop since the onset of the pandemic (98 per cent of women and 97 per cent of men who noted a change in household income saw it decrease). Of these women and men, 81 per cent of women and 48 per cent of men had no personal income. Drops in household income, in many

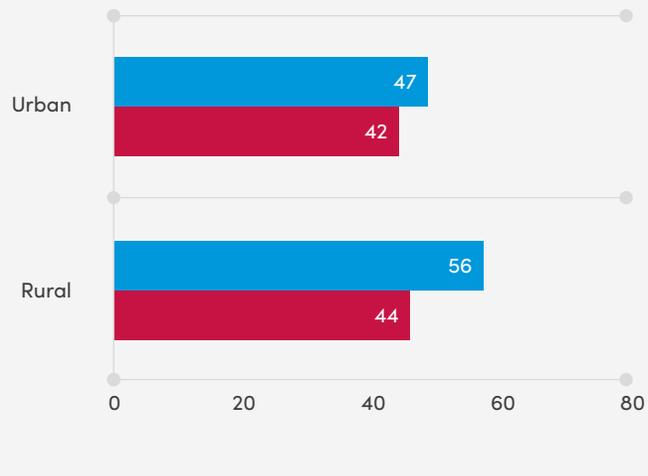
cases, were accompanied by food hardship. In Pakistan, roughly 50 per cent of adults are experiencing food hardship, with more women than men both in urban and rural areas experiencing this challenge (figure 11).⁵ When focusing only on those who experienced severe food hardship since the onset of the pandemic, gender gaps also emerge.

Infographic 1: Severe food hardship in Pakistan



5 In 2020, the survey conducted by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics to evaluate the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 showed that severe food insecurity in the country increased to 10 per cent between April-July 2020 compared to approximately 3 per cent reported in HIES 2018-19.
 6 Moreover, 30 per cent of the households reported moderate food insecurity in 2020 compared to 13 per cent reported in HIES 2018-19.

Figure 11: Proportion of people experiencing moderate or severe food hardship, by sex and location (percentage) (n=3,631)



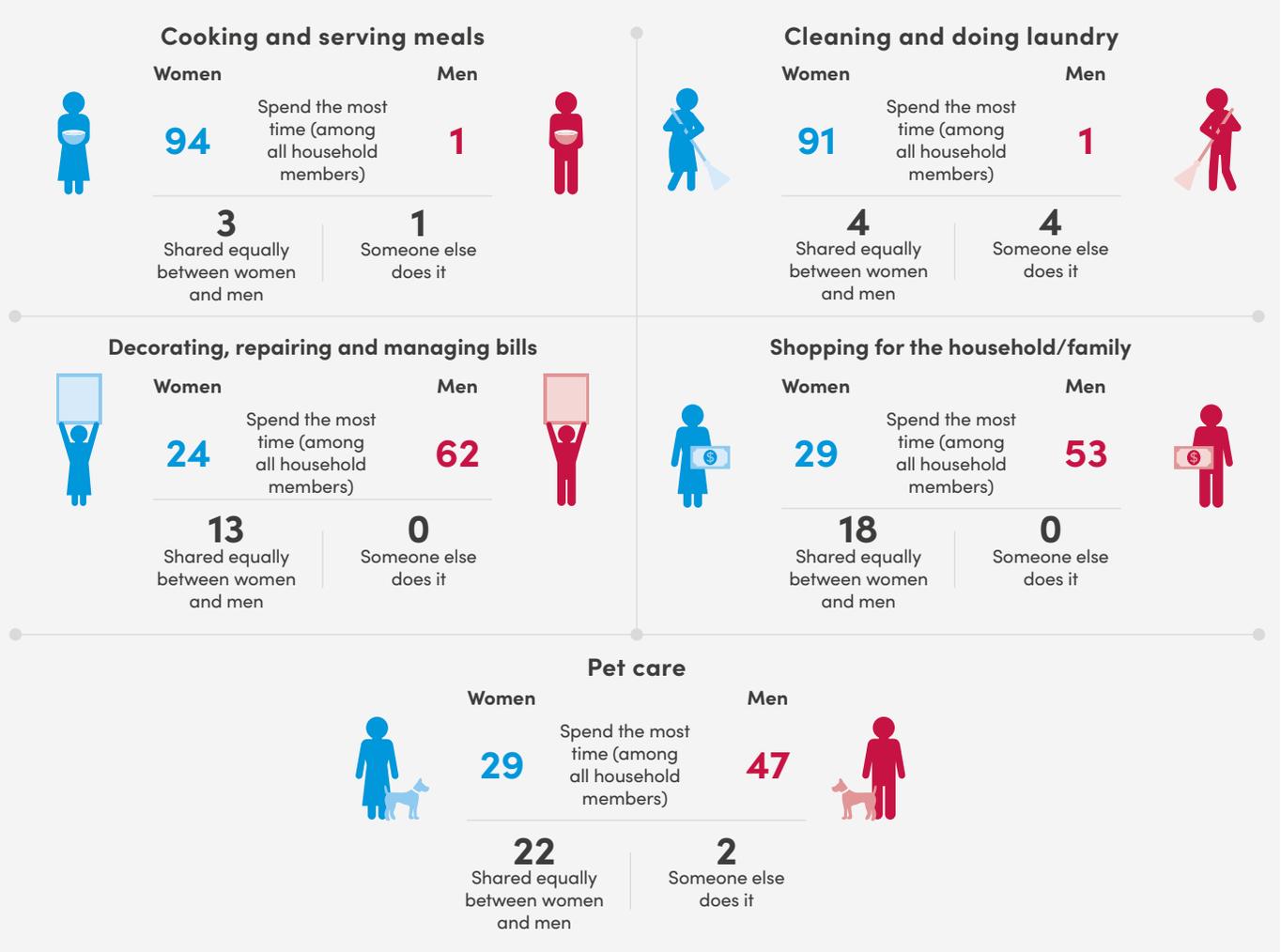
Note: Food hardship measures the lack of access to food in enough quantity or quality. Data collected utilizing FAO FIES questionnaire sequence were analysed using the Rash model to assess the performance of the scale. The data passed the statistical validation tests, and the raw score (the number of affirmative answers to the eight questions) can be considered as an ordinal measure of food security. Therefore, an individual is considered as experiencing food hardship if the raw score is four or higher. At this raw score the probability of experiencing food hardship is higher than 50 per cent.

COVID-19 MULTIPLIED UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORKLOADS, BUT REDISTRIBUTION OF TASKS DID NOT TAKE PLACE

Women, overall, are more likely to take on domestic and care chores at home (figures 12 and 13). In Pakistan, women take on most of the cooking, cleaning and unpaid care work. The onset of the pandemic multiplied these responsibilities, with 32 percent of women and 21 percent of men noting an increase in time spent on feeding, washing and providing

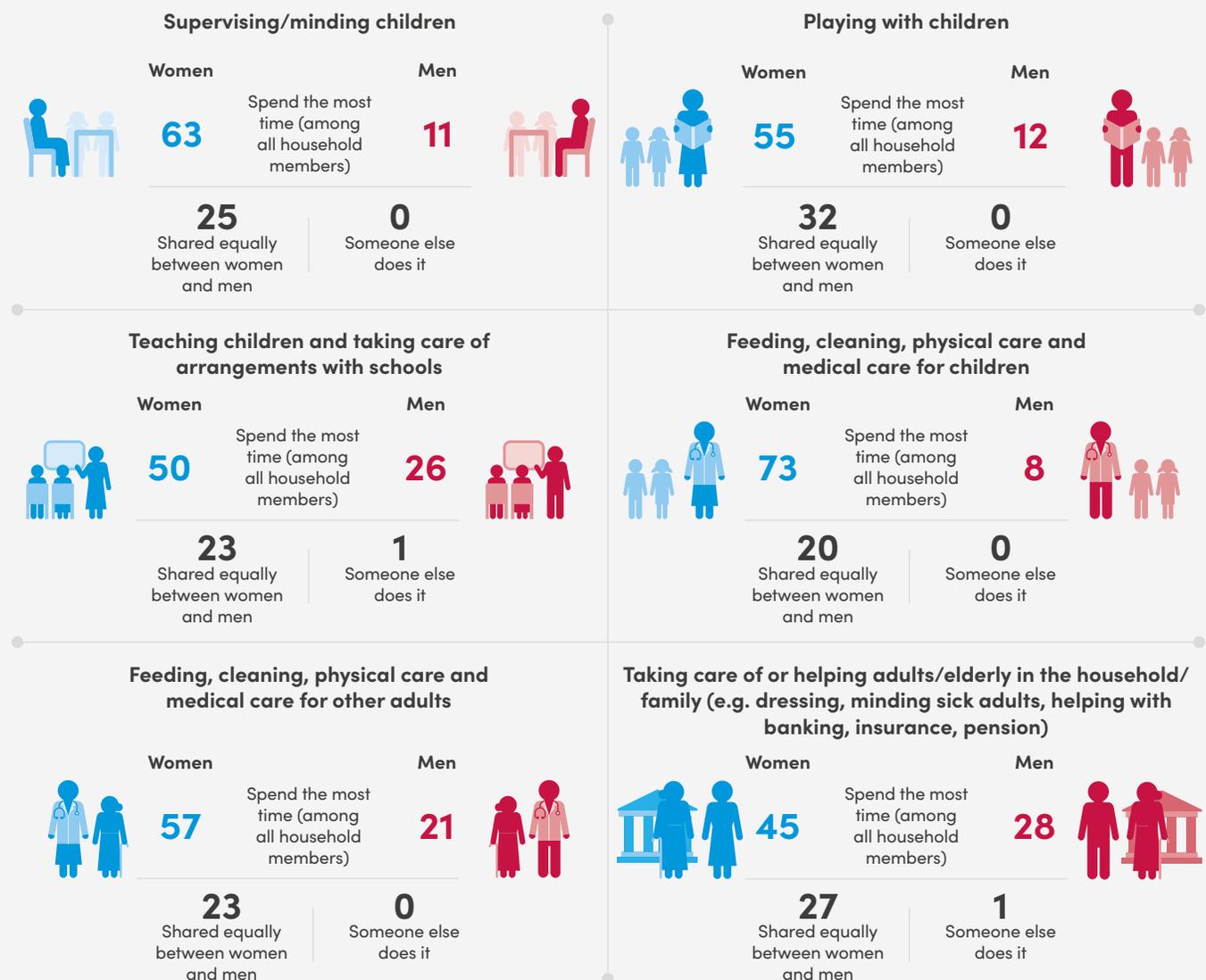
physical and medical care for children. An estimated 51 percent of people noted that children missed school because they lacked access to remote learning technologies, or they were unable to pay for schooling (figure 14). More women than men are in charge of teaching children and managing related arrangements with schools.

Figure 12: Proportion of people who noted women/men in the household spend the most time performing different unpaid domestic work activities (percentage)



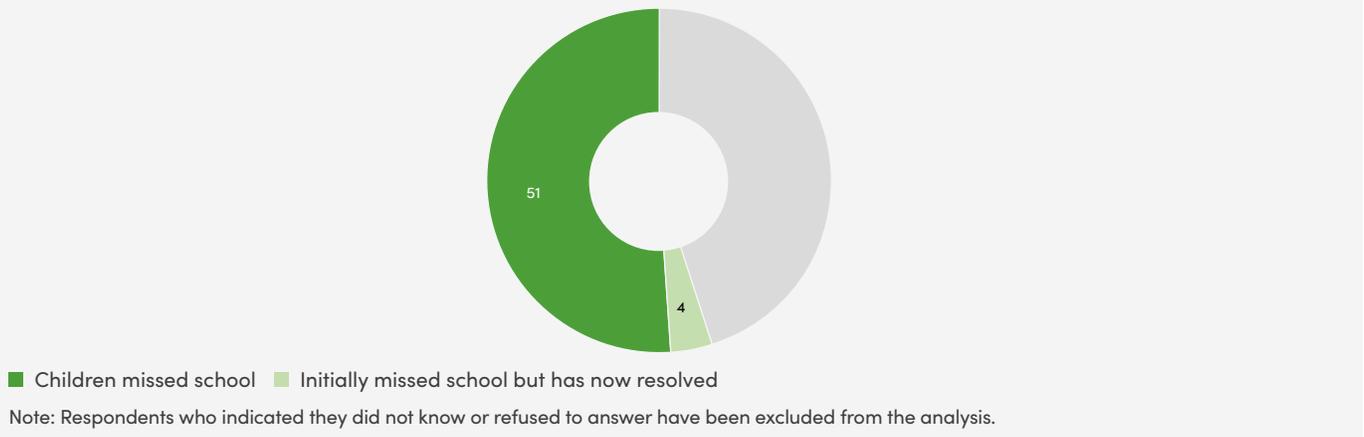
Note: "Women in the household" refers to a clustered category of women respondents who reported being primarily in charge of the activity and respondents of any sex who reported a female household member was primarily in charge of the activity. "Men in the household" refers to a clustered category of men respondents who reported being primarily in charge of the activity and respondents of any sex who reported a male household member was primarily in charge of the activity. "Shared equally between women and men" refers to respondents who reported an activity is equally undertaken by women and men in the household. Respondents who reported that the activity does not take place in the household, indicated they did not know or refused to answer were excluded from the analysis. Estimates should be interpreted with caution when the number of respondents that chose the response category is less than 25, this includes respondents in Pakistan who indicated "Someone else does it" in the analysis of: 1) decorating, repairing and managing bills; and 2) shopping for family. Gender differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) for all unpaid domestic work activities.

Figure 13: Proportion of people who noted women/men in the household spend the most time performing different unpaid care work activities (percentage)



Note: "Women in the household" refers to a clustered category of women respondents who reported being primarily in charge of the activity and respondents of any sex who reported a female household member was primarily in charge of the activity. "Men in the household" refers to a clustered category of men respondents who reported being primarily in charge of the activity and respondents of any sex who reported a male household member was primarily in charge of the activity. "Shared equally between women and men" refers to respondents who reported an activity is equally undertaken by women and men in the household. Respondents who reported that the activity does not take place in the household, indicated that they did not know or refused to respond have not been included in the analysis. Estimates should be interpreted with caution when the number of respondents that chose the response category is less than 25, this includes respondents in Pakistan who indicated 'Someone else does it' in the analyses of: 1) supervising and minding children, playing with children and taking care of or helping adults/ older people (own household of family); 2) teaching children and taking care of arrangements with schools and feeding, cleaning, physical care and medical care for dependent and non-dependent adults; and 3) feeding, cleaning, physical care, and medical care for children. All gender differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Figure 14: Proportion of people who noted that children living in the household missed schooling due to a lack of access to remote learning technologies or inability to pay for schooling (e.g. fees/supplies) since the onset of COVID-19 (percentage) (n=2,850)



THE PANDEMIC HAS OVERLAPPED WITH ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES, MAKING IT HARD FOR WOMEN AND MEN TO COPE

Winds, extreme temperature and high humidity have overlapped with the pandemic. This, coupled with changes in the availability of public transportation (figure 15), affected access to natural resources for women and men. In Pakistan, an estimated 7 per cent of both women and men noted that their access to water sources was compromised since the onset of COVID-19, with both

urban and rural areas being affected (figure 16). In most households in Pakistan, water and fuel collection are unpaid chores, involving mobility outside the home, and are largely men’s responsibilities (figure 17 and figure 18). In addition, 17 per cent of people noted losing access to power.

Figure 15: Proportion of people who lost access to public transportation since the onset of COVID-19, by sex and location (percentage) (n=3,634)

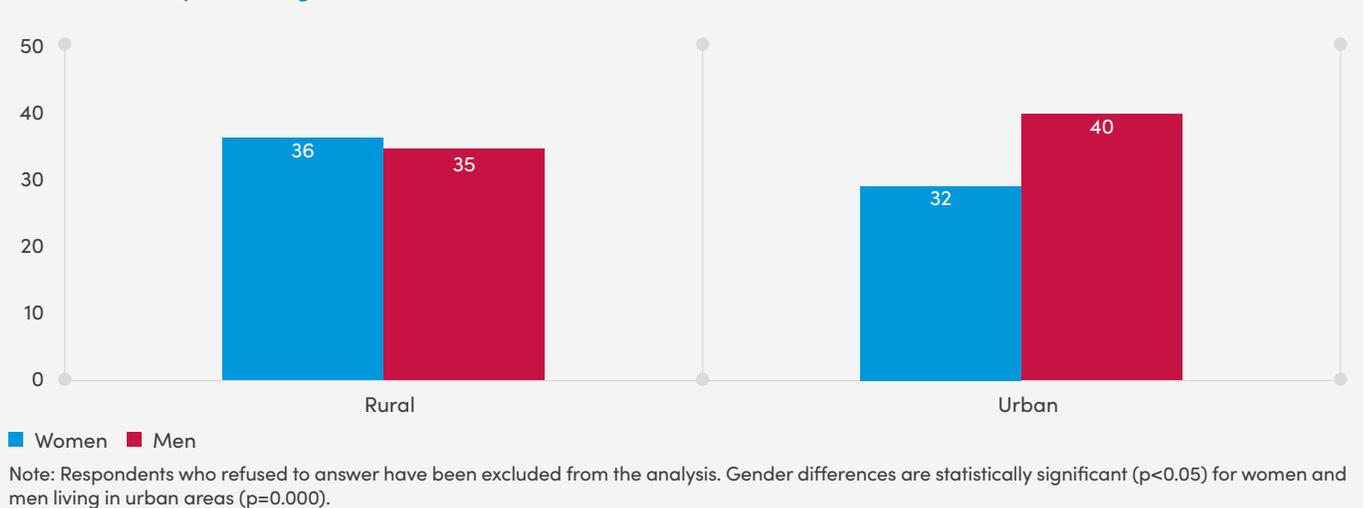


Figure 16: Proportion of people whose water source was compromised since the onset of COVID-19 and continues to be, by sex and location (percentage) (n=3,631)

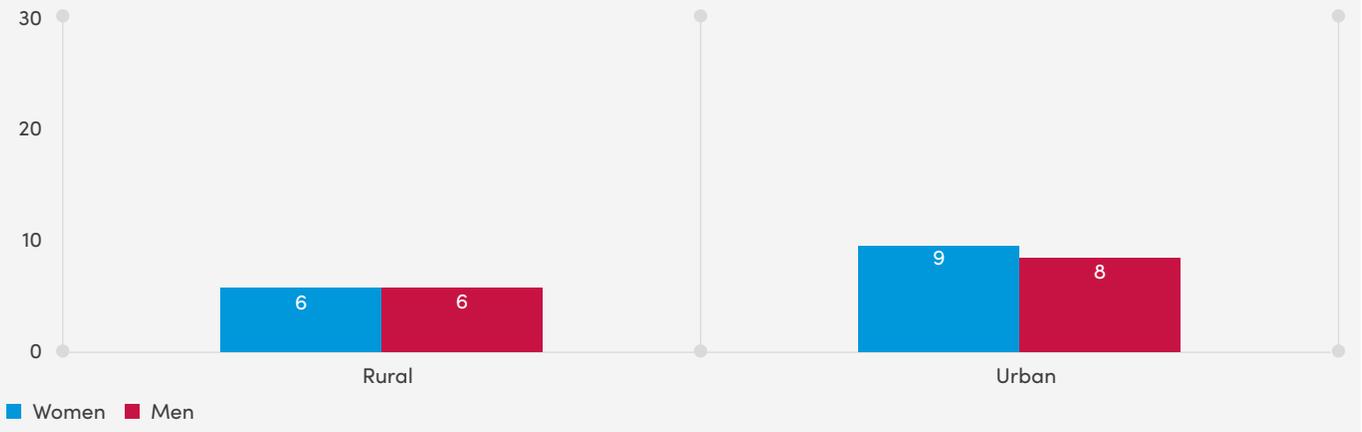
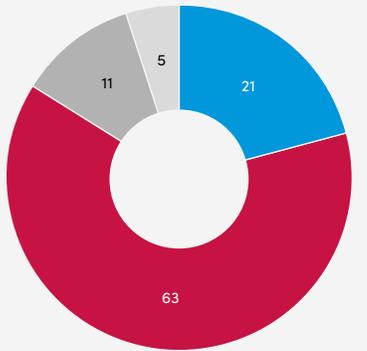
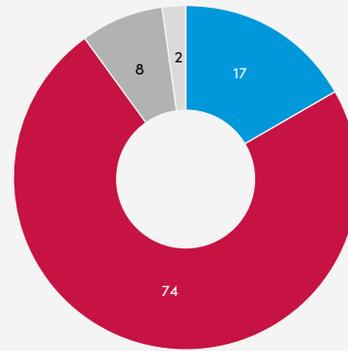


Figure 17: Proportion of people who noted women/men spend the most time fetching water (percentage) (n= 1,516)



■ Women in the household
 ■ Men in the household
■ Shared equally between women and men
■ Someone else does it

Figure 18: Proportion of people who noted women/men spend the most time collecting fuel/firewood (percentage) (n=1,855)



■ Women in the household
 ■ Men in the household
■ Shared equally between women and men
■ Someone else does it

Note: "Women in the household" refers to a clustered category of women respondents who reported being primarily in charge of the activity and respondents of any sex who reported a female household member was primarily in charge of the activity. "Men in the household" refers to a clustered category of men respondents who reported being primarily in charge of the activity and respondents of any sex who reported a male household member was primarily in charge of the activity. "Shared equally between women and men" refers to respondents who reported an activity is equally undertaken by women and men in the household. Respondents who reported that the activity does not take place in the household, indicated they did not know or refused to answer have been excluded from the analysis. Gender differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) for both activities.

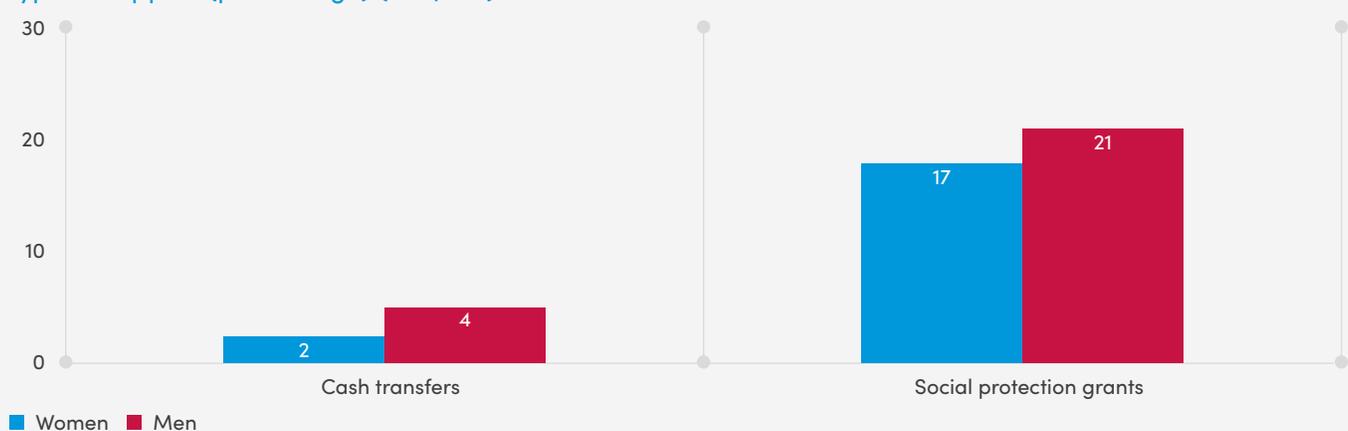
GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES AND OTHER SUPPORT ARE INACCESSIBLE TO MANY

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the livelihoods of people around the world, including in countries where the virus did not spread substantially. In response to the pandemic, the Government of Pakistan launched Ehsaas Emergency Cash, a social safety and poverty alleviation programme to support those experiencing hardship due to the pandemic, such as low-income households.

Among all forms of government support, social protection grants had the furthest reach, whereas cash

transfers have not been widely disbursed (figure 19).⁶ In the absence of wealth data, analysis by educational attainment shows how people in different groups have accessed these resources. People with lower levels of education were more likely to receive these forms of support, although women benefitted less than men across all education levels (figure 20). Other measures, such as the distribution of food or agricultural inputs and supplies of personal protective equipment reached very few (figure 21).

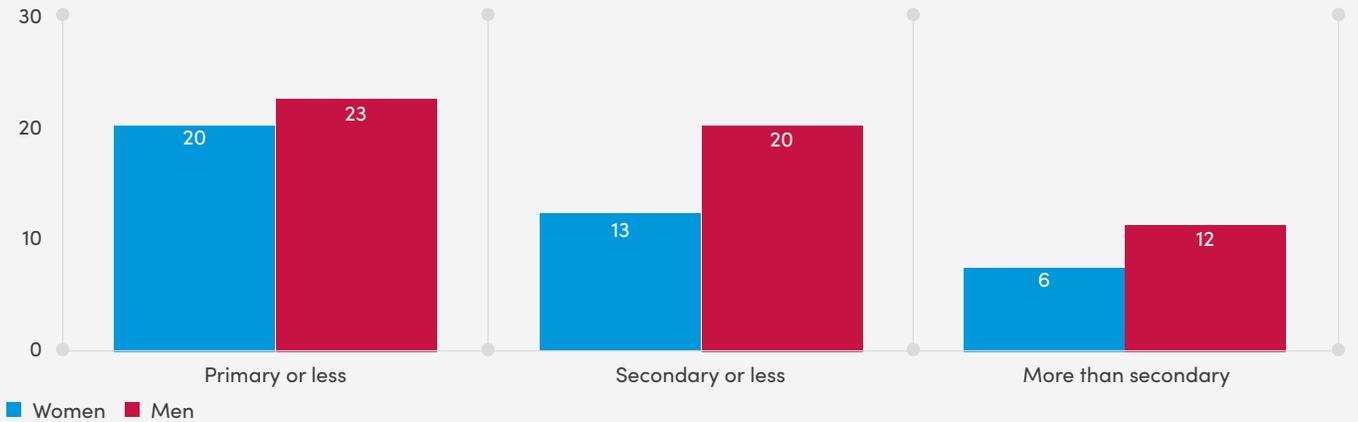
Figure 19: Proportion of people who received government support since the onset of COVID-19, by sex and type of support (percentage) (n=3,634)



Note: Respondents who indicated they did not know or refused to answer have been excluded from the analysis. Gender differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) for Pakistan ($p = 0.001$) for social protection grants and $p = 0.001$ for cash transfers).

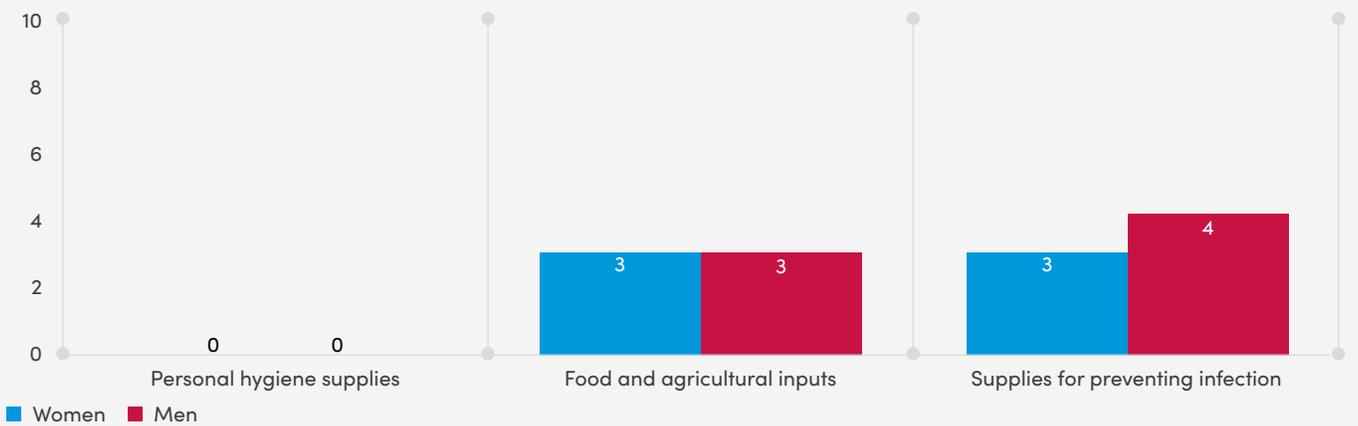
⁶ The second round of the Economic Vulnerability Assessment conducted by the Centre of Economic Research in Pakistan in September 2020 showed that only 12 per cent of urban households in Punjab Province received some cash or in-kind governmental support to tackle pandemic related vulnerabilities. See www.cerp.org.pk/covid-economic-assessment.

Figure 20: Proportion of people who received social protection grants since the onset of COVID-19, by sex and education level (percentage) (n=3,634)



Note: Estimates for women in Pakistan who reported “More than secondary”, should be interpreted with caution as the number of respondents that chose this response category is less than 25. Education levels have been classified into three categories. “Primary or less” includes all respondents who received no formal education, some primary education and those who completed primary school. “Secondary or less” includes all respondents who received some secondary education and those who completed secondary school. “More than secondary” includes all individuals who received technical and vocational training, some university/college education, some post-graduate education, and those who completed university/college education and post graduate education. Respondents who indicated they did not know or refused to answer have been excluded from the analysis. Gender differences between women and men who completed secondary education, or more than secondary education are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) ($p = 0.01$ and $p = 0.05$, respectively).

Figure 21: Proportion of people who received government support in the form of food or agricultural inputs (n=3,633), personal hygiene supplies (n=3,634), or supplies for preventing infection (n=3,636), by sex (percentage)



Note: For women and men in Pakistan who reported having received personal hygiene supplies as government support, estimates should be interpreted with caution as the number of respondents that chose this response category is less than 25 (0 observation). Respondents who indicated they did not know or refused to answer have been excluded from the analysis.

ANNEX I: UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION (PERCENTAGE) (N=3,636)

	Women	Men
Total	48	52
Location⁷		
Urban	68	58
Rural	32	42
Age group⁸		
18–28	36	37
29–39	28	26
40–50	22	21
51–61	10	10
62+	4	7
Marital status⁹		
Married	74	73
Married but separated	1	1
Widowed	7	1
Divorced	1	0
Single (never married)	18	26
Education		
Some primary education	40	32
Primary education	10	7
Secondary education	27	37
Vocational/ college	8	11
Tertiary education	15	13
Disability		
Self-reported	40	23

7 Urban/rural location is self-declared. Population who noted they reside in cities or towns have been considered urban dwellers for the purpose of this analysis. This classification may differ from that used in official statistics in Pakistan.

8 Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100.

9 Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100.