



How do household members share tasks across the agrifood system in Rajshahi, Bangladesh?

Data Note 19

December 2023

ABOUT THIS DATA NOTE | The

Transforming Agrifood Systems in South Asia (TAFSSA) district agrifood systems assessment aims to provide a reliable, accessible, and integrated evidence base that links farm production, market access, dietary patterns, climate risk responses, and natural resource management with gender as a cross-cutting issue in rural areas of Bangladesh, India, and Nepal. It is designed to be a multi-year assessment. Using data collected in February–March 2023, this data note describes how different tasks are performed and shared within the household and how female respondents within these households perceive the notion of leisure, work pressure, and support with chores from other household members. This is one of a set of data notes that, together, provide a holistic picture of the agrifood system in the district.

Figure 1. District location in Bangladesh



Figure 2. Highlights from this data note



Work pressure

74% Women experience work pressure



Task sharing

More common in agricultural work than food prep and home maintenance



Men

Do on-farm work and all tasks related to going to markets



Women

Do postharvest work and all tasks related to food preparation and caregiving



Adolescents

Often handle tasks related to livestock, food-related tasks like water fetching, cooking, and childcare

OVERVIEW OF CONTENTS

TAFSSA's district agrifood systems assessment aimed to interview three respondents per household: a female adult (aged 20+ years), a male adult (aged 20+ years), and an adolescent (aged 10-19 years). Information on the household and respondent sampling strategy is provided at the end of this data note.

In this data note, you will first find information on background characteristics of the households and their adult and adolescent members. This is followed by information on *daily available time for leisure and rest* of female respondents and the nature of *work pressure* they face. Additionally, you will learn about the female respondents' perception about availability of *support with chores* from other household members when they fall ill.

The data note then delves into the various *agricultural, food preparation, maintenance, and care-related tasks* that households are involved in, to what extent these tasks are performed by a single household member, equally shared between two members, in conjunction with hired help, or by hired help exclusively. In addition, the data note also explores the *household gender dynamics* of such tasks and how they are performed by *different age groups*. You will get information on the pattern of adult female, adult male, and adolescent engagement with respect to selected tasks.

Finally, you will find *comparative insights* into the gender dynamics of selected task engagement between households with and without any adult male members. This provides a sense of the impact of adult men's presence or absence on intrahousehold workload sharing, specifically with respect to women's and adolescents' workload. More detail about the measurement methods are found in the following pages.

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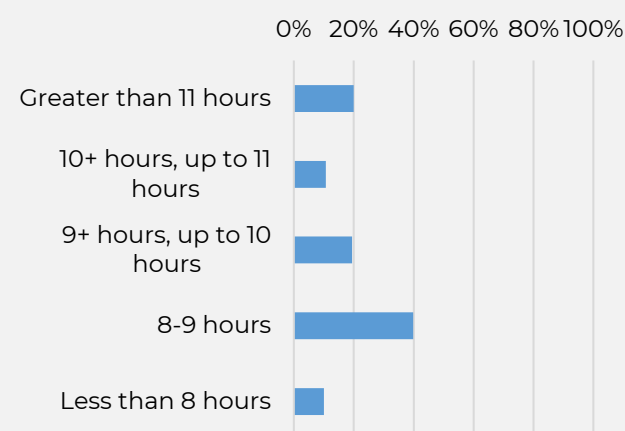
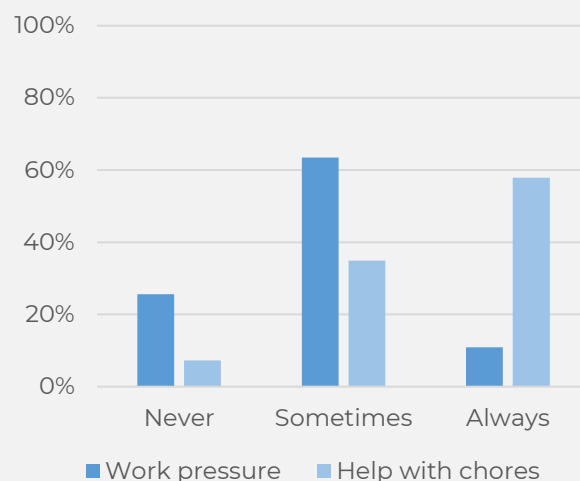
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Table 1. Household and individual characteristics

Household characteristics		Individual characteristics			
Number of surveyed HHs (n)	1000		Adult female	Adult male	Adolescent
Female-headed, %	8				
Education of head (years)	5	Number	1206	1195	1210
Average household size, members	4	Age, yrs. mean (range)	40 (20-110)	41 (20-110)	14 (10-19)
Involved in agriculture, %	91	Education, yrs. mean (range)	5 (0-17.5)	6 (0-17.5)	7 (0-11.5)
Has improved toilet, %	98	Married, %	85	90	15
Drinking water source		Employed, %	9	90	10
Tube well or borehole, %	89	Primary occupation			
Piped to neighbour, %	4	Unpaid household work, %	85	0	14
Main source of income		Farming, %	1	37	1
Crop cultivation, %	41	Own enterprise or business, %	1	16	1
Business, %	25	Student, %	1	5	78
Wages, %	22				
Type of fuel used for cooking					
Wood, %	88				
Straw/grass, %	78				
Dung cake, %	45				

Figure 3A. Hours of rest in a day for women (N=999)**Figure 3B. Women's perception of work pressure and support (N=999)**

Note: The figure presents information about the daily duration of rest for women respondents. The figure also depicts their perception of the work pressure they face and about availability of support with chores from other household members when they fall ill.

FINDINGS

- ✓ Most women rest for 8-9 hours per day.
- ✓ Around 60% of women “sometimes” feel work pressure and “always” have support from family members when they fall ill.

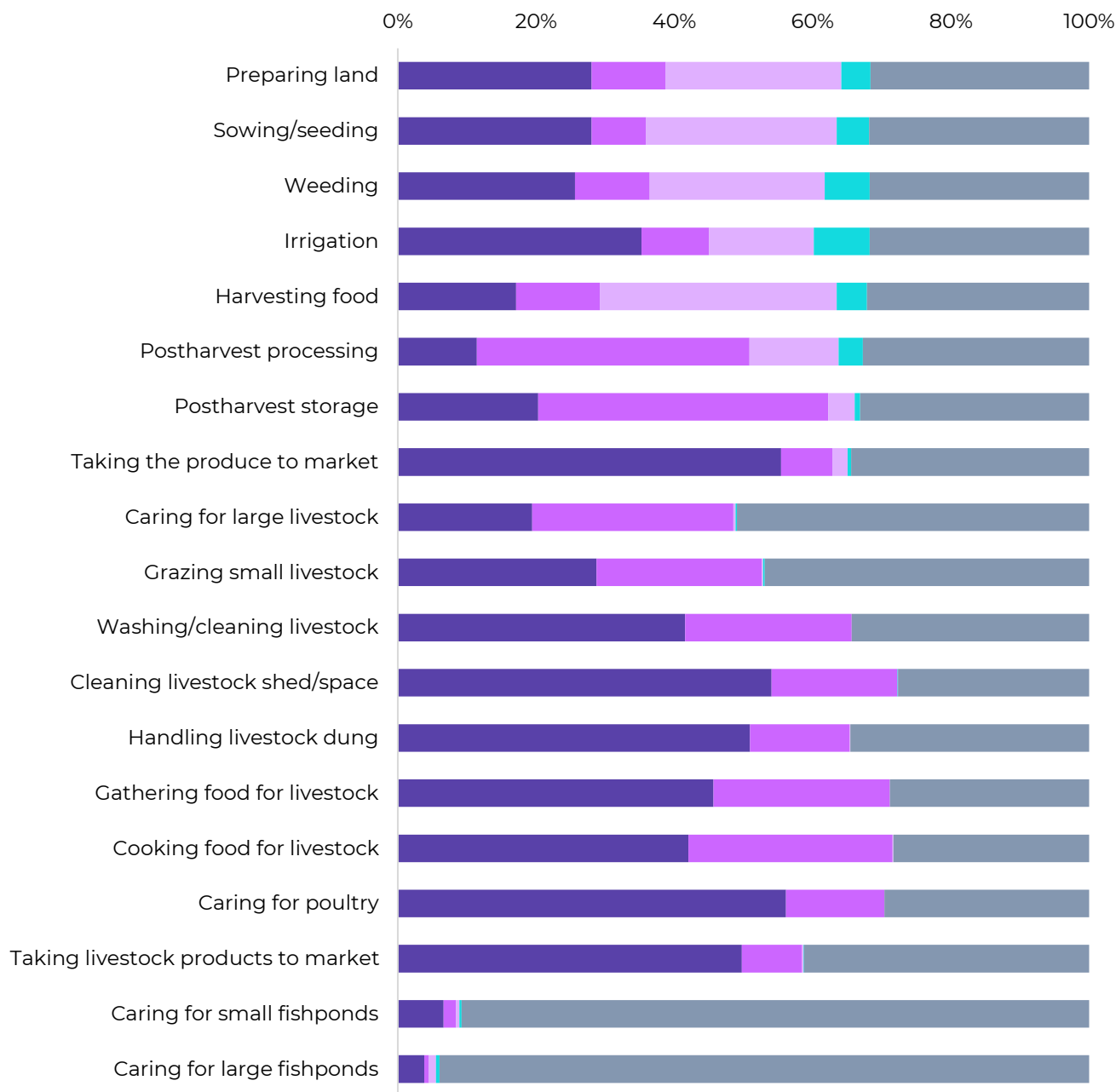
Work pressure

74% of women “sometimes”
or “always” feel work pressure



Figure 4. Agricultural tasks performed by households (N=999)

■ One member ■ Equally shared ■ One member + hired help ■ Hired help only ■ Non-performing household

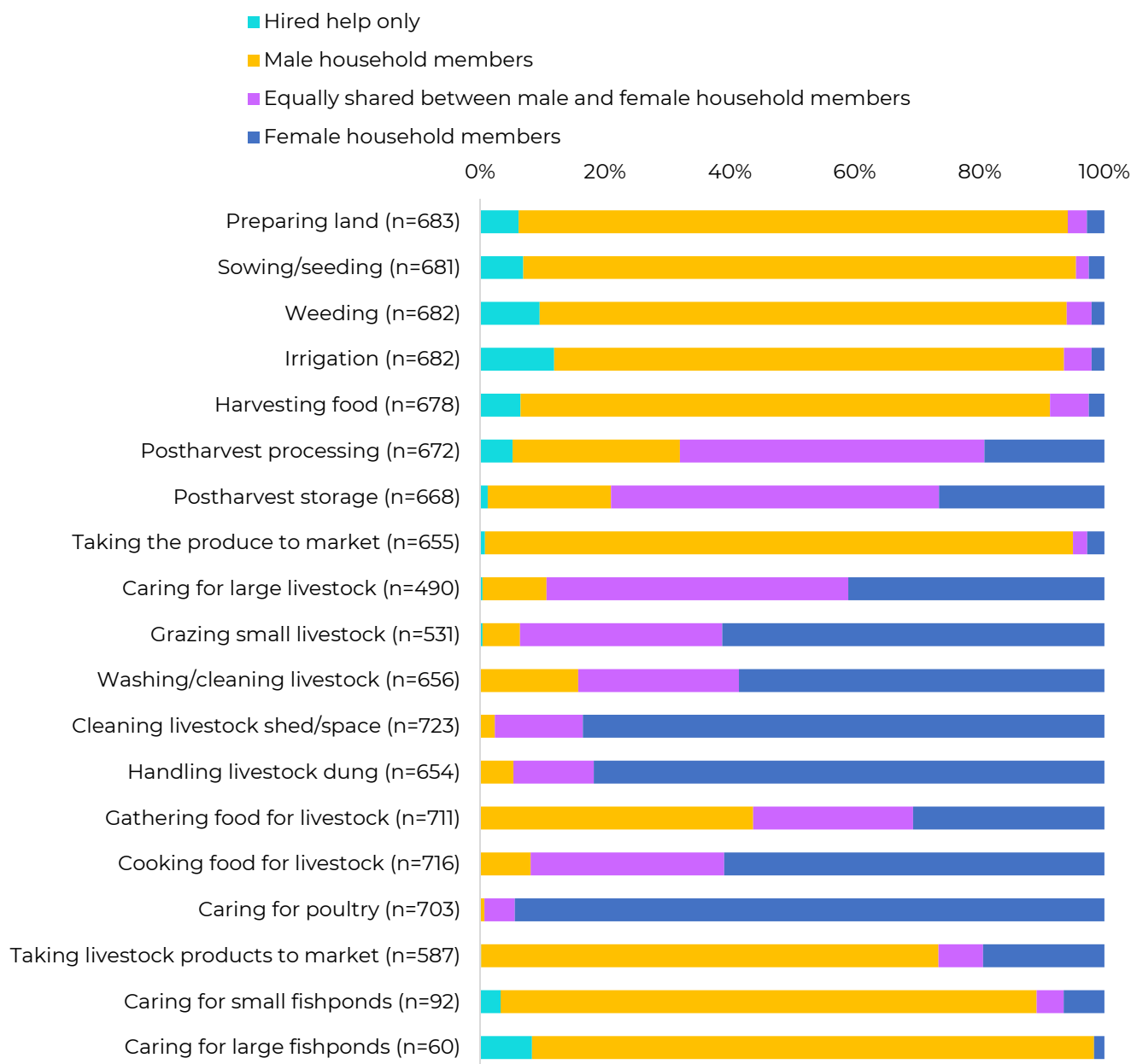


Note: This figure shows the percentage of households that perform various agricultural tasks. Each bar also shows who performs the task, whether it is performed by one household member, shared equally between two household members, shared between a household member and hired help, or performed entirely by hired help.

FINDINGS

- ✓ Agricultural tasks are often shared by household members but, depending on the task, only one member does the task in around 11-56% of households.
- ✓ Some households hire help for tasks involving crops and fishponds, but not for tasks involving livestock.

Figure 5. Division of household agricultural tasks between hired help, male household members, and female household members

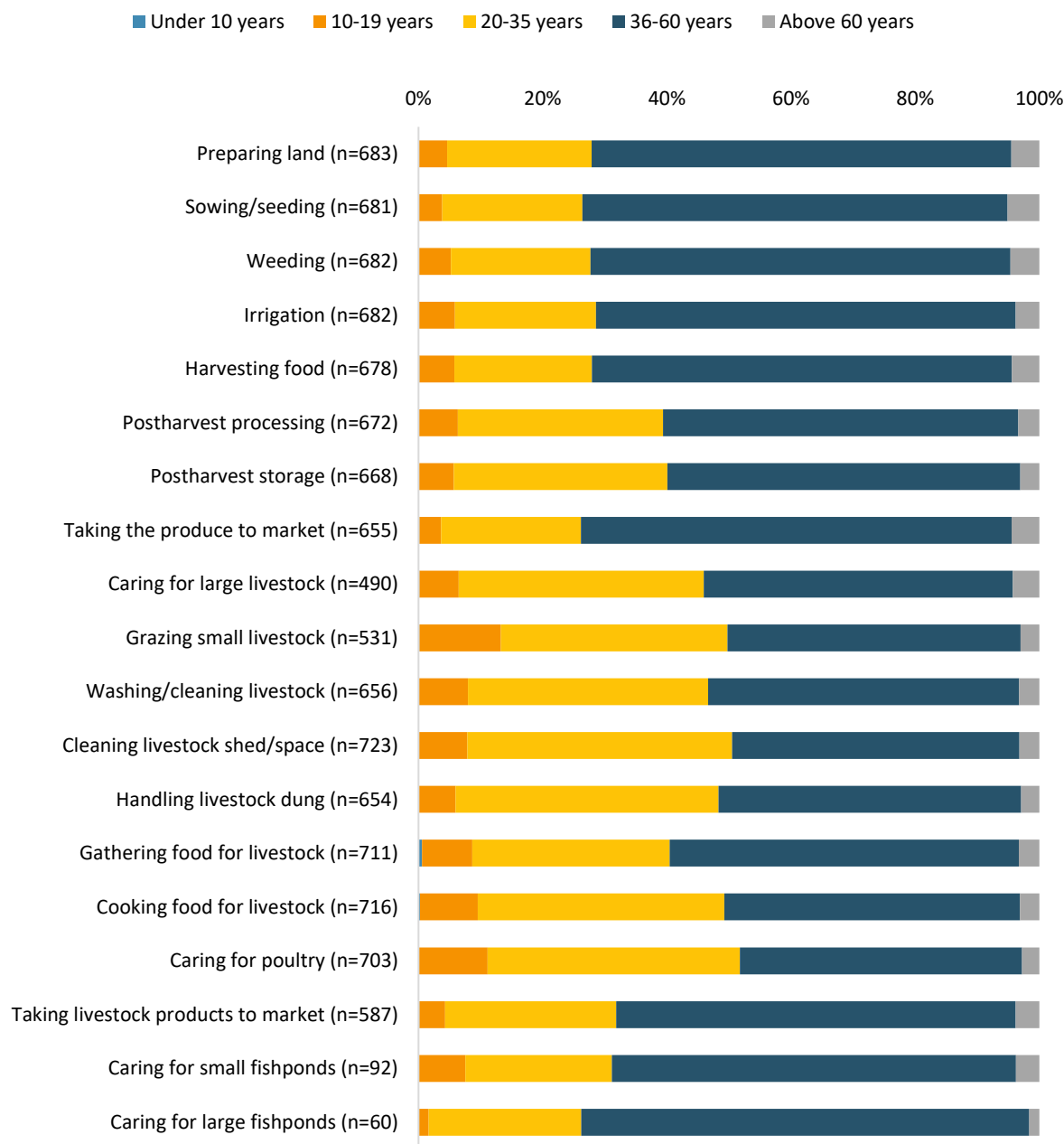


Note: Each bar in this figure represents the rate of involvement of male household members (including both adult and adolescent males), female household members (including both adult and adolescent females) and hired help in an agricultural task for households that performed that task. The figure also presents the degree of equal sharing between male and female household members for each task.

FINDINGS

- ✓ Male household members are usually solely responsible for tasks in the field and market, while female household members are more involved in taking care of livestock.
- ✓ Male and female household members share tasks related to postharvest storage and processing.

Figure 6. Division of household agricultural tasks by age group of household members performing the tasks



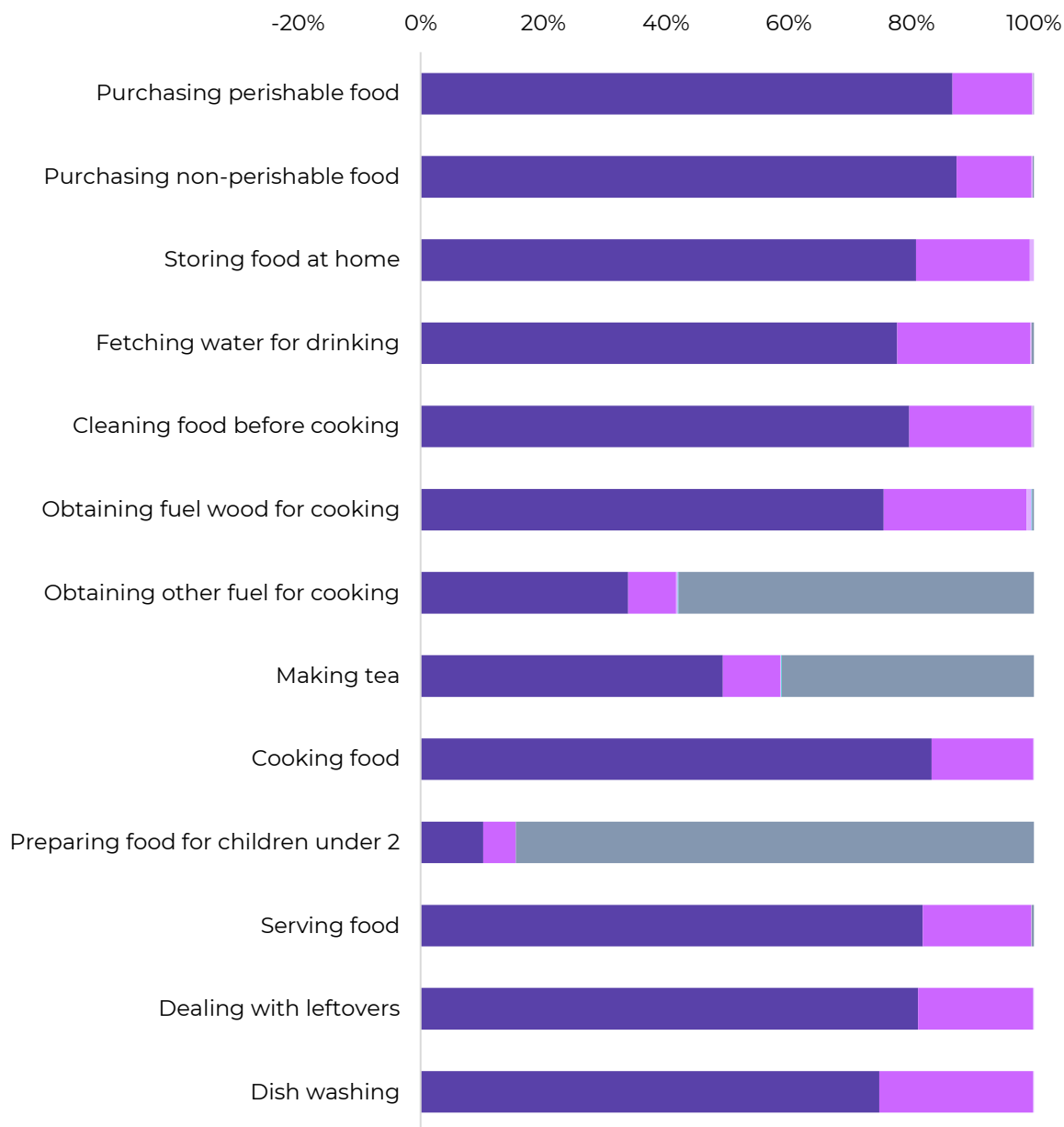
Note: This figure shows the extent of different age groups' participation for households that perform various agricultural tasks. We used five age groups to capture the age differences in the engagement of each task: under 10 years, from 10 to 19 years, from 20 to 35 years, from 36 to 60 years and above 60 years.

FINDINGS

- ✓ Agricultural tasks are primarily performed by the “36 to 60 years” age group, followed by the “20-35 years” age group.
- ✓ Overall, the “10 to 19 years (adolescent)” age group's participation in agricultural tasks is low, except for involvement in small animal and poultry care tasks.
- ✓ Young children (<10y) do not participate in agricultural tasks.

Figure 7. Food preparation related tasks performed by households (N=999)

■ One member ■ Equally shared ■ One member + hired help ■ Hired help only ■ Non-performing household

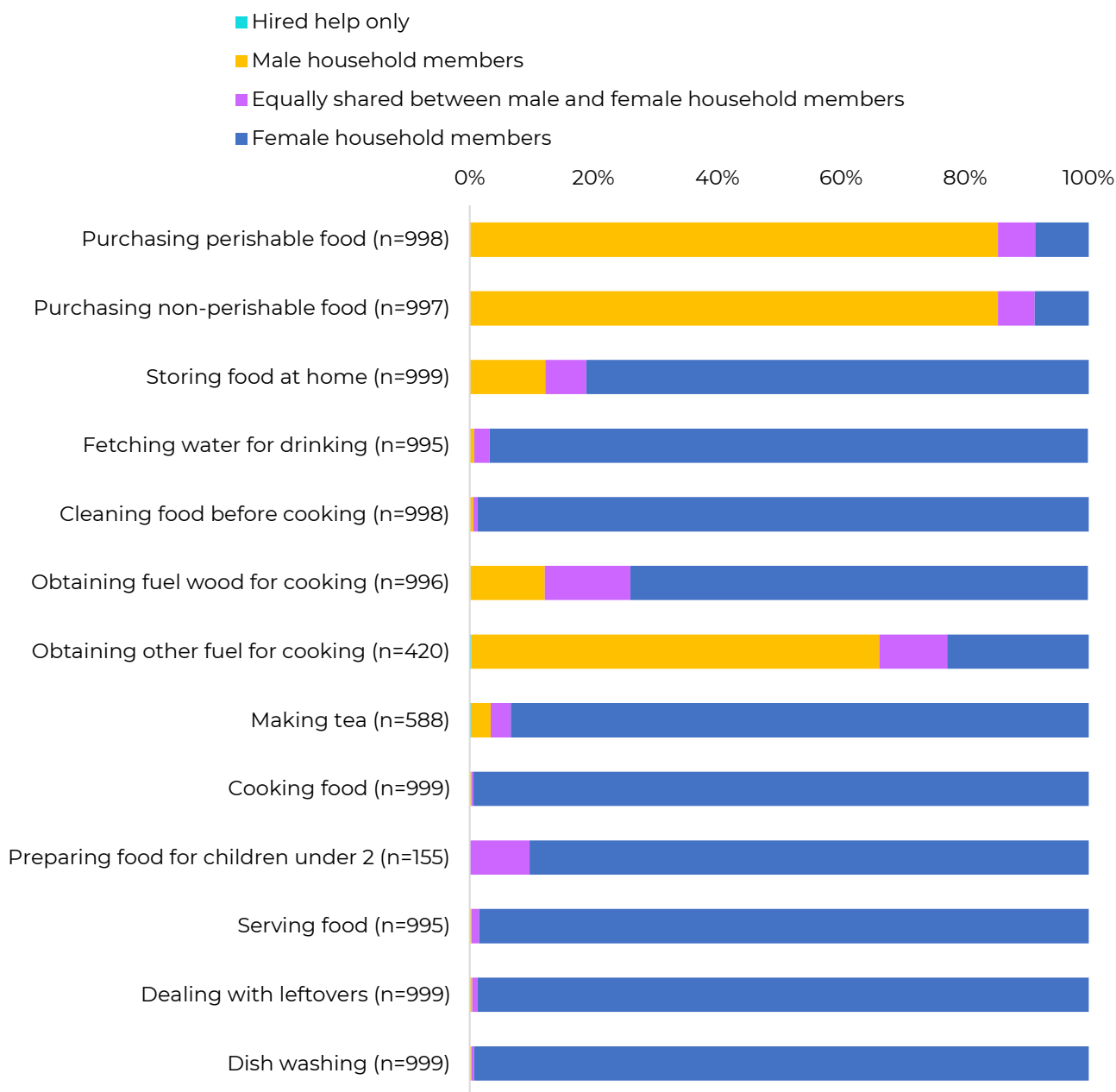


Note: This figure shows the percentage of households that perform various food preparation related tasks. Each bar also shows who performs the task, whether it is performed by one household member or shared equally between two household members. A very low percentage of households reported hiring help to perform these tasks.

FINDINGS

- ✓ Food preparation related tasks are often performed by only one household member.
- ✓ On average, in 16% of households, these various tasks are also shared among their members.

Figure 8. Division of household food preparation related tasks between hired help, male household members, and female household members



Note: Each bar in this figure represents the rate of involvement of male household members (including both adult and adolescent males), female household members (including both adult and adolescent females) and hired help in a food preparation related task for households that perform that task. The figure also shows the degree of equal sharing between male and female household members for each task.

FINDINGS

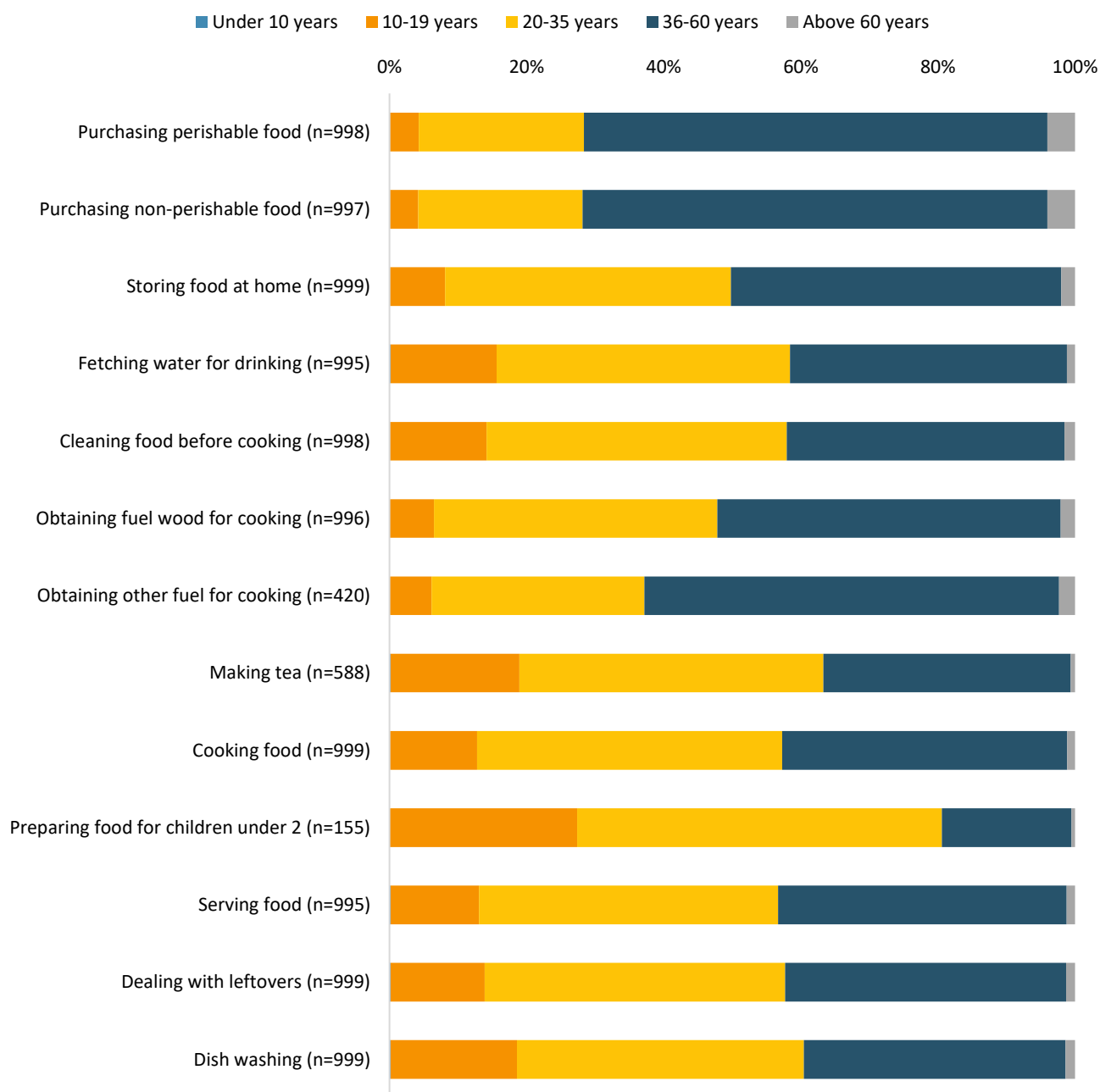
- ✓ Female household members are usually solely responsible for food preparation related tasks.
- ✓ Male household members are generally in charge of tasks that involve going to the market, but some food preparation tasks are shared equally by male and female members in around 5% of households.

Fetching water

Women are solely responsible for fetching water in 97% of households



Figure 9. Division of household food preparation related tasks by age group of household members performing the tasks



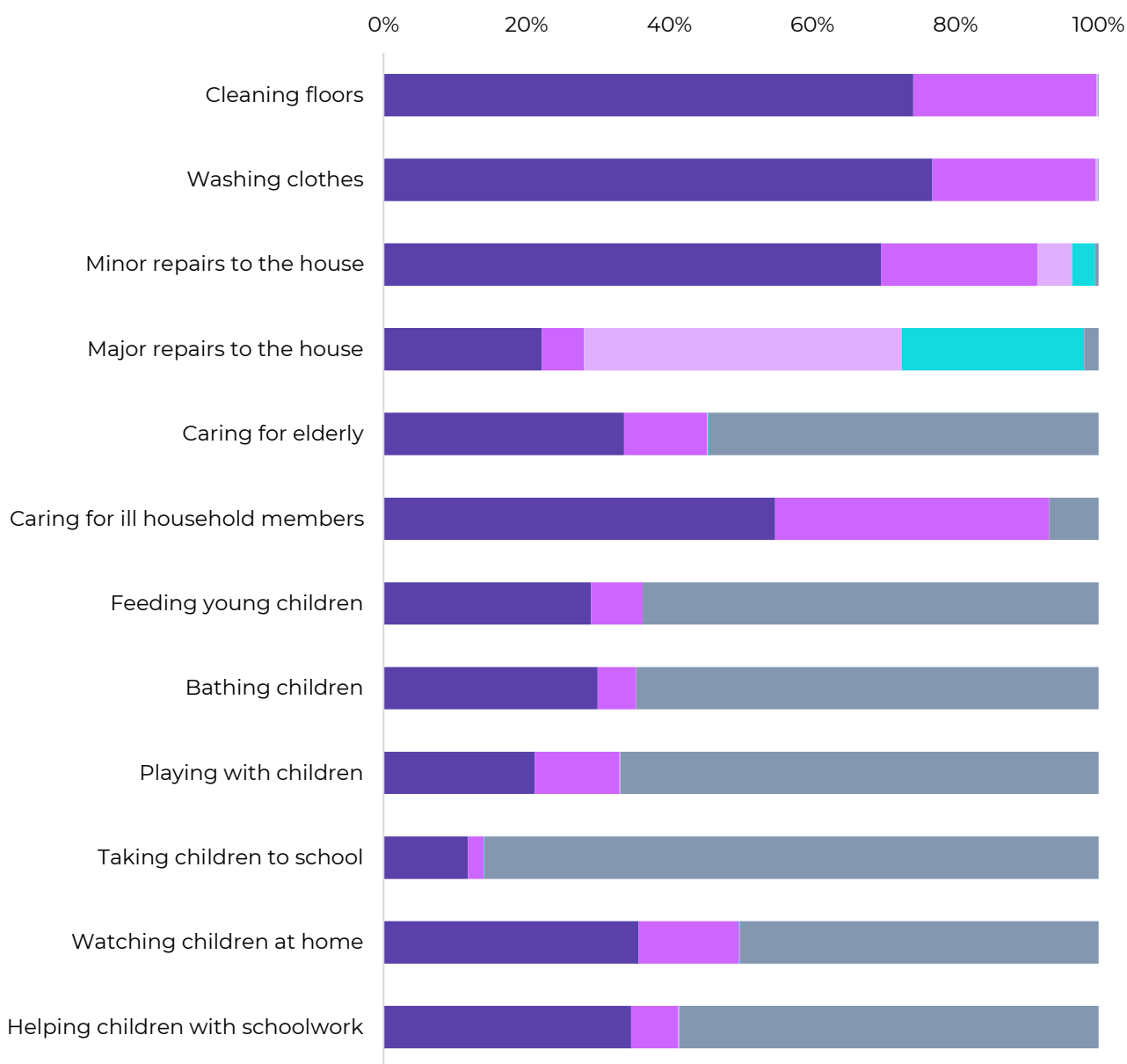
Note: This figure shows the extent of different age groups' participation for households that perform various food preparation tasks. We used five age groups to capture the age differences in the engagement in each task: under 10 years, from 10 to 19 years, from 20 to 35 years, from 36 to 60 years and above 60 years.

FINDINGS

- ✓ Food preparation related tasks are primarily performed by the “36-60 years” age group, followed by the “20-35 years” age group.
- ✓ Overall, the “10-19 years (adolescent)” age group's participation in food preparation related tasks is high as compared to their involvement in agriculture tasks.

Figure 10. Maintenance and care-related tasks performed by household members (N=999)

■ One member ■ Equally shared ■ One member + hired help ■ Hired help only ■ Non-performing household

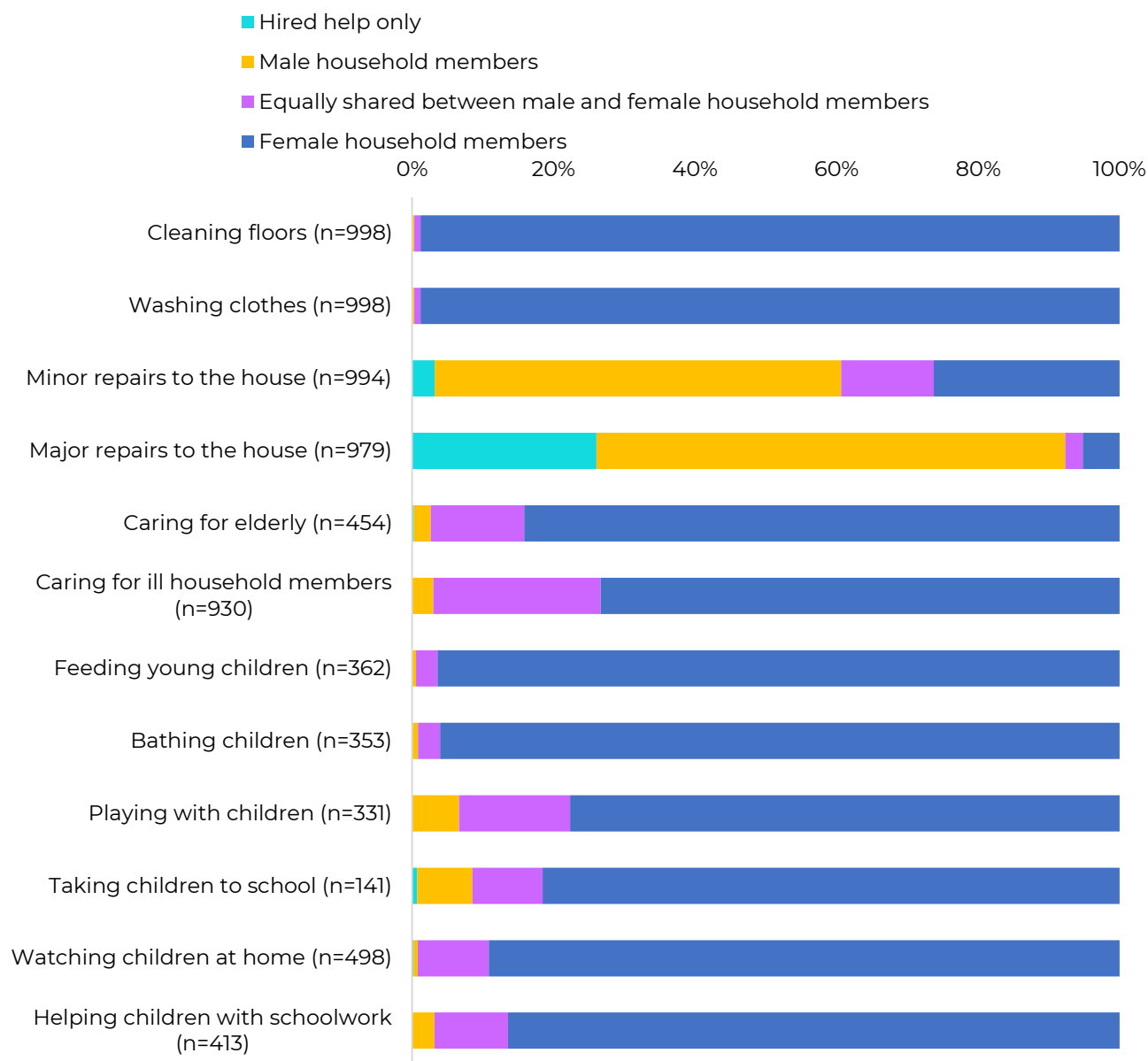


Note: This figure shows the percentage of households that perform various maintenance and care tasks. Each bar also shows who performs the task, whether it is performed by one household member, shared equally between two household members, shared between a household member and hired help, or performed entirely by hired help.

FINDINGS

- ✓ Maintenance and care-related tasks are often performed by only one member, but some tasks are shared by household members in approximately 14% of households.
- ✓ Households do not hire external help very often for maintenance and care-related tasks other than major household repairs (26% of households use only hired help for this task).

Figure 11. Division of household maintenance and care-related tasks between hired help, male household members, and female household members

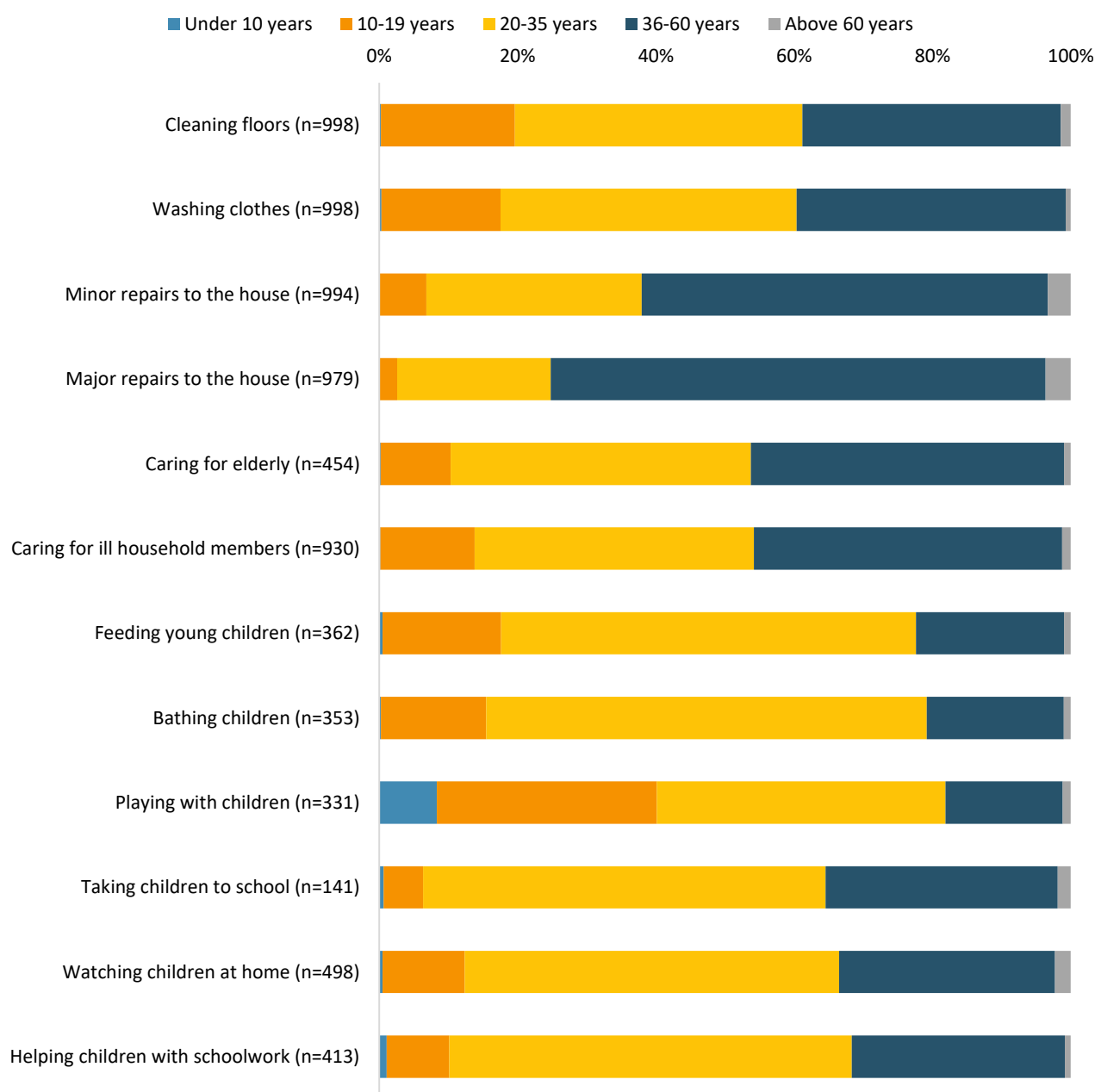


Note: Each bar in this figure represents the rate of involvement of male household members (including both adult and adolescent males), female household members (including both adult and adolescent females) and hired help in a maintenance or care-related task for households that performed that task. The figure also presents the degree of equal sharing between male and female household members for each task.

FINDINGS

- ✓ Female household members are usually solely responsible for maintenance and care-related tasks apart from house repair tasks.
- ✓ House repair tasks are primarily performed by male members, with around 3-26% of households using only external help for these tasks.
- ✓ Tasks related to care of children, elderly and ill family members are also equally shared among male and female household members in around 3-24% of households.

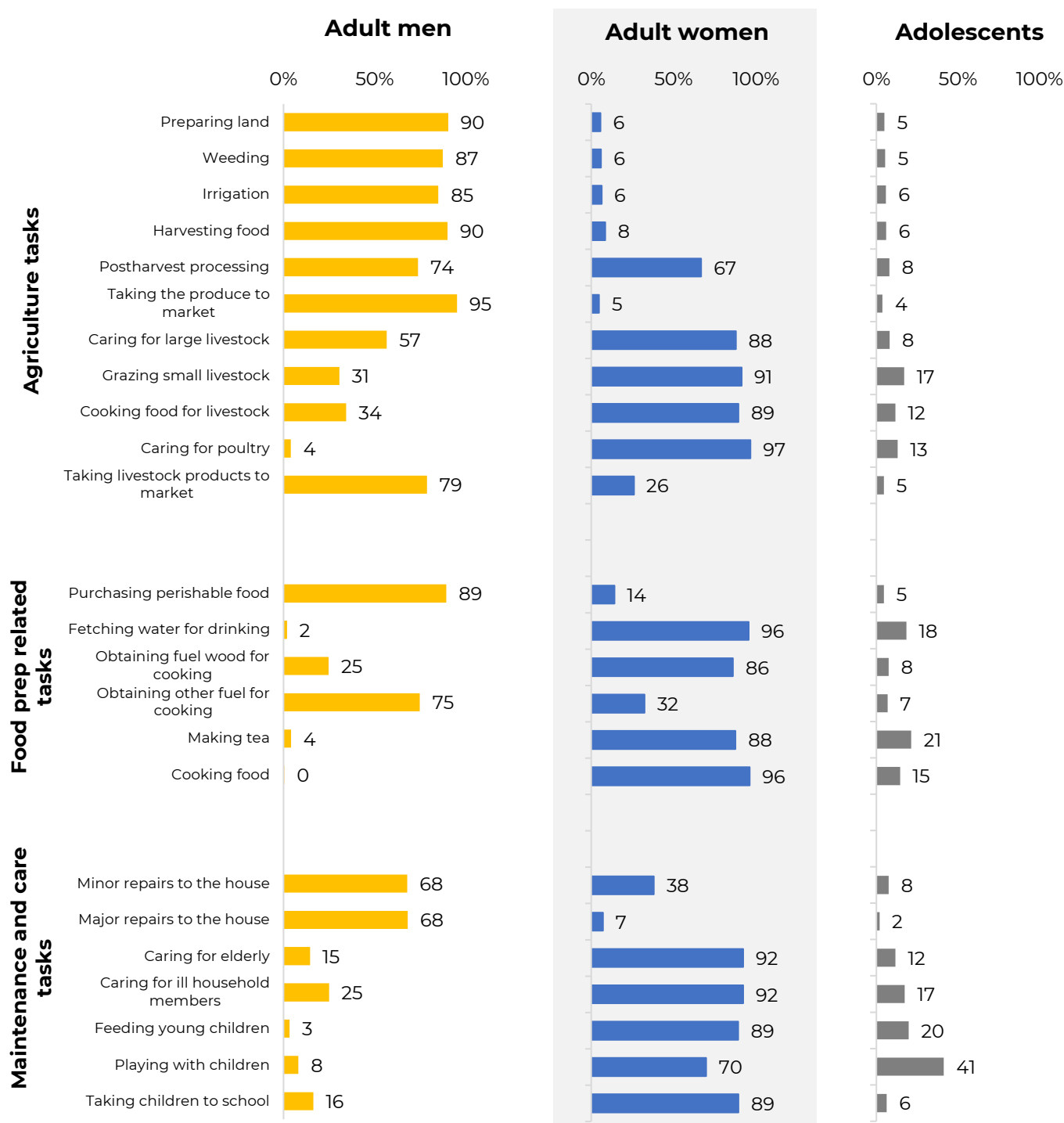
Figure 12. Division of household maintenance and care-related tasks by age group of household members performing the task



Note: This figure shows the extent of different age groups' participation for households that perform various maintenance and care tasks. We used five age groups to capture the age differences in the engagement of each task: under 10 years, from 10 to 19 years, from 20 to 35 years, from 36 to 60 years and above 60 years.

FINDINGS

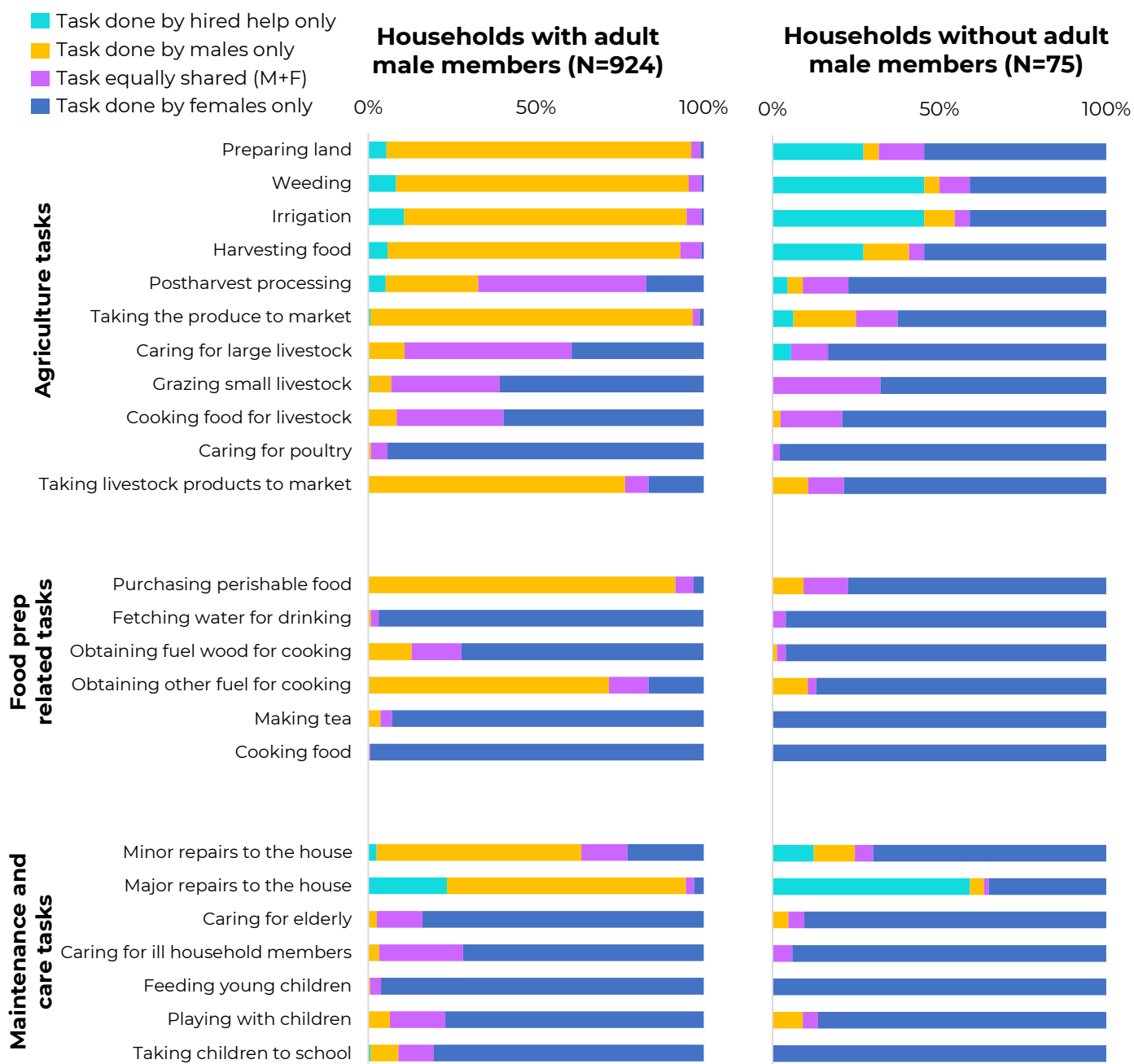
- ✓ Household members in the "20-35 years" and "36-60 years" age groups are primarily responsible for maintenance and care-related tasks; with the exception of playing with children.
- ✓ Adolescents (the 10-19 years group) participate in childcare tasks in around 6-41% of households.
- ✓ Even the "under-10" age group becomes involved in playing with children in around 11% of households.

Figure 13. Household tasks performed by type of task and type of household member (%)

Note: This figure shows the rate of involvement of adult women, adult men, and adolescents as either the primary or secondary person responsible for doing the task in the household.

FINDINGS

- ✓ Adult men are primarily responsible for on-farm tasks, house repair tasks, and tasks that involve going to the market.
- ✓ Adult women are usually in charge of livestock, food preparation, and care-related tasks.
- ✓ Postharvest tasks are often shared among adult male and female household members.
- ✓ While the level of adolescent participation is low across all tasks, their engagement levels vary across tasks: 5-6% on-farm activities, 18% fetching water, and 41% playing with children.

Figure 14. Household tasks performed in households with & without any adult men (%)

Note: This figure provides an overview of how the presence or absence of adult male household members impacts household gender dynamics related to engagement in selected tasks. Each bar figure shows the rate of involvement of male household members, female household members, and hired help in selected tasks for households with and without adult male members. The figure also presents the degree of equal sharing between male and female household members for each task.

FINDINGS

- ✓ Women are primarily responsible for all the tasks in the majority of households that have no adult men; in addition, the adolescent participation rate increases in these households.
- ✓ On-farm and home repair tasks are performed solely by hired help in about 12-59% of households with no adult men. The same is true for only 5-23% of households with adult men.

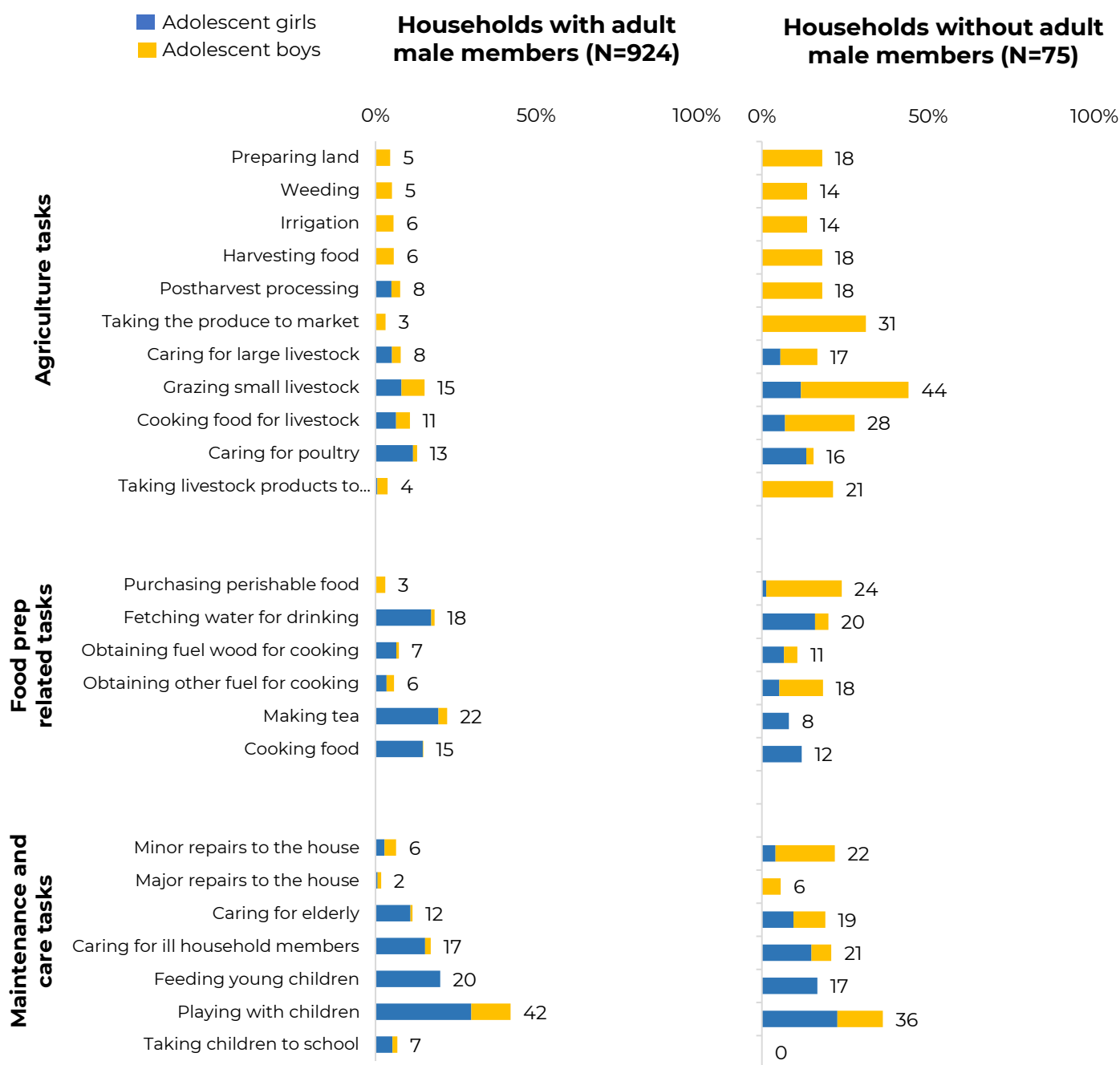


Greater workload for women when men aren't around

Women do postharvest processing alone in 77% of households without adult men¹ vs. 17% of households with adult men

¹Male migration for work for extended periods is common in South Asia

Figure 15. Household tasks performed by adolescent girls and boys in households with and without any adult men (%)



Note: Numbers shown are the cumulative (adolescent boy + adolescent girl) percentages

FINDINGS

- ✓ In households without adult male members, adolescents are more involved in tasks, especially those related to agriculture.
- ✓ Adolescent boys in particular increase their involvement in agricultural tasks when there are no adult men in the household.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Most women report getting sufficient rest, while a significant portion also experience work pressure, and a large percentage receive household assistance during illness.
2. Men predominantly engage in agricultural tasks such as land preparation, sowing, weeding, irrigation, harvesting, and marketing of produce or livestock products.
3. Women are more likely to carry out postharvest processing and storage as well as caring for livestock and poultry.
4. Men's involvement in food preparation, care, and maintenance tasks, excluding external purchases and home renovation, is very limited.
5. Sharing of tasks within households is more common for agricultural tasks than for food preparation and household chores.
6. Overall, adolescents show increased participation in livestock and poultry rearing, food-related tasks, such as fetching water and cooking, as well as in caregiving responsibilities, particularly concerning children.
7. In households without adult men, there is a greater reliance on external assistance and the participation of adolescents in various tasks, alongside an increased workload for women.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR ACTION

1. What factors limit women's involvement in on-farm agricultural tasks?
2. Does women's limited mobility prevent them from going to the markets to either sell agricultural products or to purchase food? Or is it gender norms?
3. What factors can facilitate more sharing of food preparation related tasks among household members?
4. Is there a case for safety nets to alleviate the household task burden on women in households without adult male members?

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Village and household sampling

We selected 25 villages in the district with a probability proportional to the number of households that reside in each village. Within each village, we conducted a household listing to identify eligible households, that is, those with adolescents (10-19 years old). From the households with adolescents, we randomly invited 20 households to participate in the survey. If a household refused, we replaced that household with another randomly selected eligible household, to retain a total of 1,000 households in the district. Thus, the findings reported in this data note are representative of rural households from this district that include an adolescent.

Respondent selection

Within households, one adult female aged 20+ years, one adult male aged 20+ years, and one adolescent aged 10-19 years were selected as the respondents for the survey. When multiple adolescents were living in a household, the oldest adolescent was selected. In some households, an adult male was not available (often due to migration for work). In such households, the female was the only adult respondent (see Table 1 for respondent sample sizes). At the beginning of the interview, the adult in the household primarily involved in agriculture (either male or female) and the adult primarily responsible for food purchasing (either male or female) were identified as the primary respondents.

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ABOUT TAFSSA

TAFSSA (*Transforming Agrifood Systems in South Asia*) is a CGIAR Regional Integrated Initiative that supports actions improving equitable access to sustainable healthy diets, that boosts farmers' livelihoods and resilience, and that conserves land, air, and water resources in a climate crisis.

ABOUT CGIAR

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