

ANALYSIS OF GENDER GAPS IN THE FIELD OF CARE IN CYPRUS

July 2025

1. INTRODUCTION: National context regarding gender differences in care

In Cyprus, traditional gender roles continue to shape daily life both in the private and public spheres. Despite significant strides toward legal gender equality, cultural norms still influence the division of unpaid care and domestic responsibilities. Women are more than often expected to manage household duties and provide caregiving, while men are typically seen as financial providers. These expectations begin early in life, with children internalizing stereotypes from their families, media and educational environments.

The education system in Cyprus, although modernized in many areas, often fails to fully challenge traditional gender norms. Textbooks, teaching practices and social interactions can still reinforce the idea that certain roles or careers are more appropriate for boys than for girls. This has a lasting effect on students' aspirations, limiting their career choices and reinforcing occupational gender segregation.

At the local level, the Municipality of Athienou has taken proactive steps to address social inclusion and promote equality. Through close collaboration with the Municipal Board of Youth and the Municipal Board of Social Welfare, efforts have been made to support vulnerable groups and empower women. Public awareness campaigns, inclusive community events, and local partnerships with schools have laid the groundwork for gender-sensitive initiatives, though further actions are needed to address the deeper, often invisible cultural roots of inequality.

Cyprus has also been impacted by broader European and global gender equality strategies. However, persistent gaps remain. According to the EU Gender Equality Index, Cyprus scores below the EU average in the 'Time' domain, reflecting the uneven distribution of unpaid care and domestic work. The Stereotype Trap project provides an important opportunity to explore these gaps from the perspective of youth and to design targeted educational interventions that promote co-responsibility and gender balance.

2. Country profile on the gender gap in care

The population of Cyprus, according to the 2021 census, is 918,100 people. Of these, 48.6% are men and 51.4% are women. Specifically, the numbers are:

- Males: 445,708
- Females: 473,673

Therefore, the female population is slightly larger than the male population in Cyprus.

The population of Cyprus has the following age distribution: 15.9% are under 15 years old, 67.4% are between 15 and 64 years old, and 16.7% are 65 years old and over.

Cyprus has a two-tiered healthcare system consisting of both public and private sectors. The public sector, primarily funded by the state budget and mandatory social contributions, is administered by the Ministry of Health and offers a comprehensive range of services. The private sector is funded through voluntary health insurance and out-of-pocket payments. In 2019, Cyprus introduced the General Healthcare System (GESY), a universal health insurance system that aims to provide universal coverage and free access to healthcare services.

2.2 Analysis of indicators from the Gender Equality Index Progress in gender equality

With 60.7 points out of 100, Cyprus ranks 21st in the EU on the Gender Equality Index. Its score is 9.5 points below the score for the EU as a whole.

Since 2010, Cyprus's score has increased by 11.7 points, due to improvements in the domains of power (+ 13.8 points) and time (+ 12.5 points). Since 2020, Cyprus's overall Index score has increased by 3.4 points. This can be attributed to increases in the domains of knowledge (+ 7.7 points) and time (+ 7.1 points). Due to making steady progress compared with other Member States, Cyprus has risen from the 22nd place to the 21st place since 2020.

3. National/regional/local policies on gender equality in care

Gender equality in Cyprus faces challenges, despite the country's commitment to promoting women's rights and gender equality. Cyprus ranks low on international gender equality indicators, particularly in terms of women's political participation and their health and survival. However, there are efforts and initiatives to strengthen gender equality, such as the work of the Commissioner for Gender Equality and participation in international conventions to protect women's human rights.

Equality between men and women is a key objective of the Republic of Cyprus, in all sectors of the state and society, based on the provisions of the International Conventions. These priorities are summarized in two main objectives: (a) the examination of legislative discrimination against women and the establishment of equality between men and women in all areas of law, and (b) the

implementation of the principle of equality and equal opportunities in practice, which requires, among other things, a change in mentality, the promotion of special programs that support and empower women in their multiple roles, as well as the integration of the principle of equality in all programs and policies (gender mainstreaming).

3.2. Government initiatives to reduce gender gaps in care

In Cyprus, gender inequalities in the distribution of unpaid care work and family responsibilities remain a persistent issue. Recognizing the need to promote co-responsibility between men and women, the Cypriot government has adopted several strategic measures over the past decade, aligned with EU directives and national priorities.

a. National Action Plan on Gender Equality (2024–2026):

The most recent strategic framework includes targeted objectives to promote gender balance in both professional and domestic spheres. It emphasizes:

- Encouraging men's involvement in unpaid care and household duties.
- Awareness campaigns challenging traditional gender roles in families.
- The development of training programs for public servants and educators to recognize gender stereotypes.

b. Parental Leave and Work-Life Balance Legislation:

- Cyprus has implemented the EU Work-Life Balance Directive, offering:
- Paternity leave (2 weeks) for fathers.
- Parental leave for both parents with income-related allowances.
- Flexible work arrangements for parents of young children.

These policies aim to promote shared care responsibilities and reduce the burden traditionally placed on women.

c. Public Childcare Support:

Although still developing, the Cypriot state supports early childhood care through:

- Subsidized public nursery schools.
- Expansion of community-based childcare services.
- Plans to improve accessibility in rural areas and support working mothers.

d. Campaigns and Education:

The government and the Commissioner for Gender Equality have launched:

- Public information campaigns about the value of shared parenting.
- School-based programs that challenge gendered expectations related to domestic work and caregiving.

3.3. *Impact assessment and recommendations for improvements*

Despite recent legislative and policy advancements in Cyprus, the unequal distribution of care responsibilities between women and men remains a deeply rooted structural issue. Cultural expectations continue to place the burden of unpaid care work—such as childcare, elder care, and household tasks—disproportionately on women. While initiatives like paternity leave and awareness campaigns are positive steps forward, their uptake and impact have been limited. A more comprehensive and gender-transformative approach is necessary to challenge norms and support co-responsibility at both institutional and community levels.

Recommendations for Improvement:

a. Increase Duration and Incentives for Paternity Leave

Extend the duration of paternity leave and offer financial incentives to encourage higher uptake by fathers. Promoting positive role models of involved fatherhood can help shift public attitudes.

b. Introduce Mandatory Shared Parental Leave

Implement shared, non-transferable parental leave for both parents to prevent over-reliance on mothers and encourage fathers' active participation in caregiving.

c. Expand Affordable and Accessible Childcare Services

Invest in high-quality, subsidized childcare facilities across urban and rural areas to relieve care pressures from families, particularly mothers.

d. Strengthen Gender Education and Public Awareness

Launch nationwide campaigns that challenge stereotypes related to caregiving roles and highlight the importance of co-responsibility in families and society.

e. Support Employers in Creating Family-Friendly Workplaces

Offer incentives and guidance to companies that implement flexible working hours, remote work options, and parental support programs that benefit all genders equally.

f. Train Public Sector Staff and Educators

Develop targeted training modules for public officials, school staff, and health professionals to recognize gender bias in care dynamics and promote inclusive practices.

g. Monitor and Evaluate Policy Impact

Establish regular monitoring systems to assess the effectiveness of gender equality measures in care and ensure continuous improvement based on data.

4. Educational plan and awareness-raising initiatives for gender mainstreaming at national/regional/local level

4.1. Key programs and initiatives

- National Gender Equality Strategy 2024–2026

The strategy outlines the government's commitment to integrating gender equality in education and public life. It emphasizes the importance of challenging gender stereotypes from an early age and promoting co-responsibility in families through awareness campaigns, educational material, and teacher training.

- School-based Gender Equality Programs (Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth)

Various schools in Cyprus, with guidance from the Ministry, have implemented thematic projects on equality, non-discrimination, and respectful relationships. These include workshops, student-led campaigns, and integration of gender-sensitive content in citizenship and health education courses.

- Commissioner for Gender Equality – Awareness Campaigns

The Commissioner regularly conducts national campaigns such as “Real Men Share” and “Together at Home” which promote shared responsibilities at home and challenge toxic masculinity. These campaigns are often accompanied by educational materials distributed to schools and youth organizations.

- Training for Educators and Public Officers

The Cyprus Academy of Public Administration, in cooperation with the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality, offers seminars on gender mainstreaming, inclusive communication, and unconscious bias. Teachers and school staff are encouraged to participate in these programs to foster gender-aware school environments.

4.2. *Initiatives and programs at the regional/local level*

- Local Municipal Actions – Municipality of Athienou

The Municipality of Athienou, as a project partner in Stereotype Trap, has promoted youth participation in equality-focused actions, school collaborations, and intercultural community events. These initiatives aim to foster critical thinking on gender roles and encourage co-creation of inclusive learning spaces.

- NGO and Youth Organization Collaboration

Local NGOs and youth centers across Cyprus collaborate with schools to deliver gender equality workshops and role model sessions, especially in rural and semi-urban areas where traditional gender norms remain strong.

4.3. Program analysis

In Cyprus, various policies and initiatives have been introduced in recent years to address gender inequalities in care responsibilities, particularly through awareness campaigns, parental leave policies, and school-based education. These efforts reflect growing institutional recognition of the importance of shared responsibilities and early education in promoting gender equality.

Programs launched by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, along with campaigns by the Commissioner for Gender Equality, have targeted both youth and adults, aiming to challenge traditional norms and encourage co-responsibility in families. Moreover, training sessions for public servants and teachers have helped raise awareness of unconscious bias and the gendered division of labour.

However, despite these initiatives, structural barriers persist. The uptake of paternity leave remains relatively low, and societal expectations continue to place the bulk of unpaid care work on women. In rural and traditional communities, entrenched stereotypes often limit the impact of educational and policy interventions. Furthermore, the lack of systematic evaluation mechanisms makes it difficult to measure the long-term effectiveness of these programs.

Overall, while Cyprus has made commendable progress in integrating gender considerations into education and family policy, further steps are needed to ensure real behavioural change. This includes stronger collaboration between local authorities, schools, and NGOs, increased financial support for inclusive care services, and the active engagement of men and boys in all gender equality initiatives.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Cyprus has taken important steps in recent years to reduce the gender gap in caregiving, especially through the implementation of paternity leave, awareness campaigns, and gender-sensitive education. Initiatives supported by the Ministry of Education, the Commissioner for Gender Equality, and local municipalities, such as co-creation projects and public discussions, have contributed to a more open discourse on shared care responsibilities.

However, survey findings from the Stereotype Trap project reveal that traditional gender roles remain deeply ingrained. Women in Cyprus continue to bear the majority of unpaid care work, both in the home and in wider family structures, limiting their professional opportunities and economic independence. In contrast, men are often excluded or discouraged from participating in caregiving due to persistent social expectations.

6. Attachments and sources

- **Gender Equality in Employment and Vocational Training Committee-**
http://www.eif.gov.cy/mlsi/dl/genderequality.nsf/home_en/home_en?opendocument
- **European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). (2024). *Gender Equality Index 2024* –** <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2023/country/CY>
- **Statistical Office of the Republic of Cyprus -**
<https://www.cystat.gov.cy/el/SubthemeStatistics?id=46>
- **Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights -**
https://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/index_gr/index_gr?opendocument
- **Department of Labour Relations -**
https://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dlr/dlr.nsf/home_en/home_en?openform
- **Commissioner for Gender Equality -**
https://www.institutionforgenderequality.gov.cy/equality/equality.nsf/index_en/index_en?OpenDocument

7. SURVEY ANALYSIS: PERCEPTION OF GENDER DIFFERENCES AMONG ADULTS (18+)

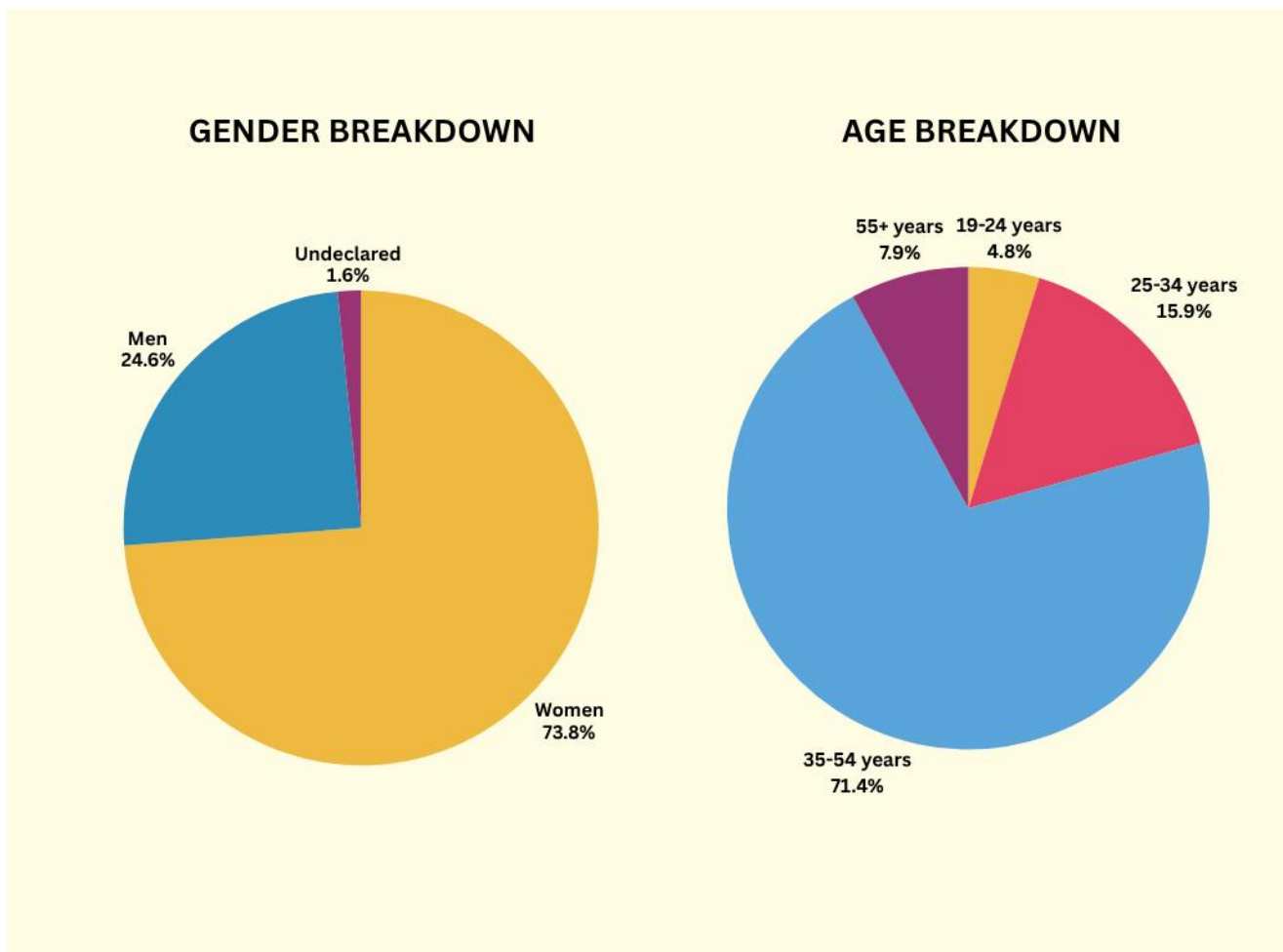
7.1. Introduction

This analysis is based on data collected through a survey conducted among adults (18+) between May and June, 2025, as part of the European project Stereotype Trap. The main aim of the survey was to gain insight into perceptions of gender differences in the areas of caregiving, household responsibilities, employment opportunities, and gender (in)equality in Cypriot society.

The analysis builds on the findings of the national report "Gender Gap Analysis in the Field of Care in Cyprus", which highlights structural inequalities in the distribution of caregiving and household duties, as well as the need for further systemic changes.

7.2. Analysis

7.2.1 Demographic profile of respondents



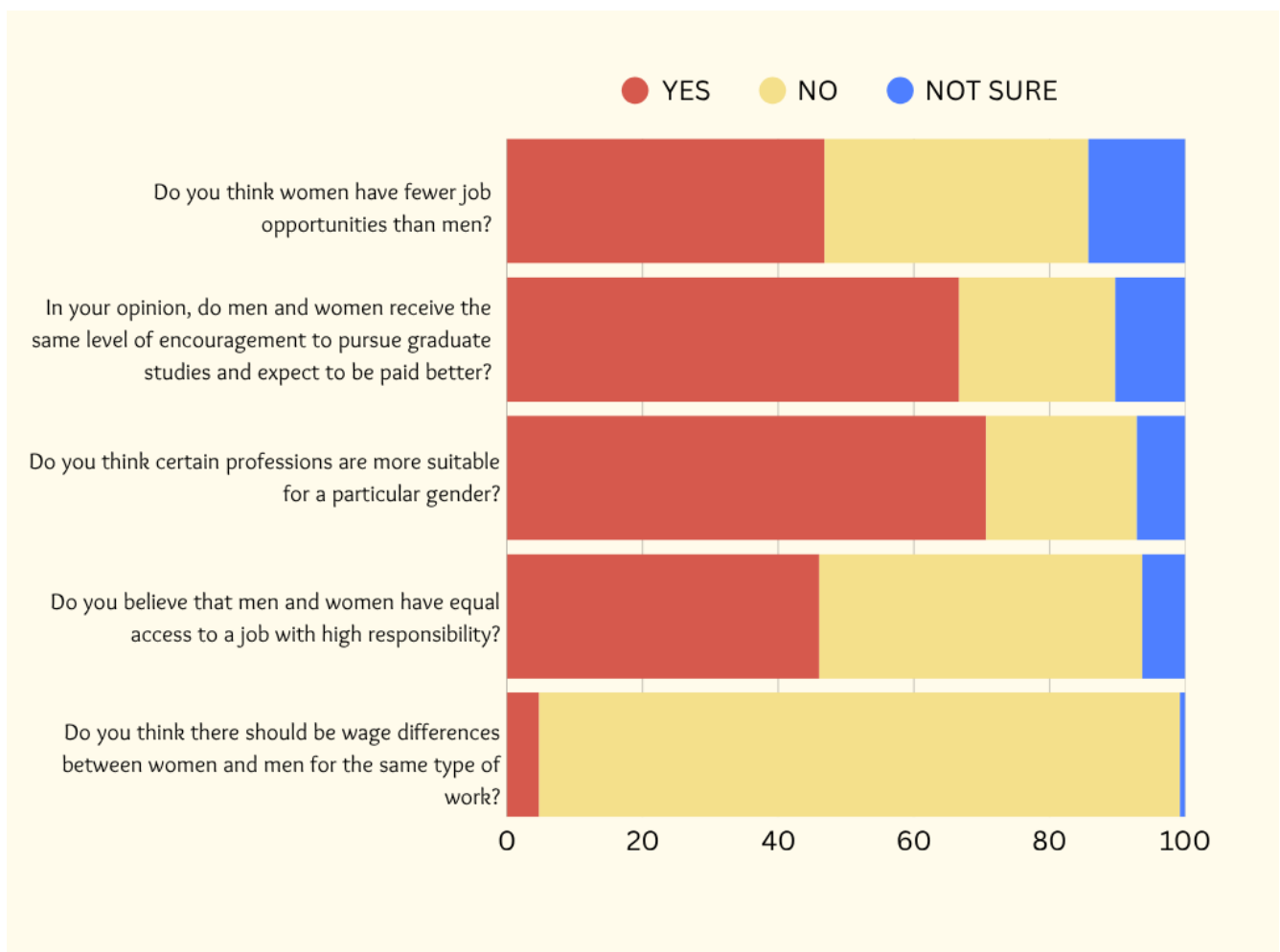
Age Structure of Respondents

The largest share of participants falls within the 35–54 age group, accounting for more than half of all respondents (71.4 %). This age group is typically the most burdened by the combination of work and family responsibilities, offering valuable insight into the everyday reality of balancing professional and private life. Other age groups are also represented, albeit in smaller proportions, indicating the survey’s focus on the active population.

Gender Structure of Respondents

This chart shows a significant predominance of women among the survey participants (73.8%). This dominance reflects the fact that women are more likely to participate in research, especially when it relates to topics such as family, gender equality, and caregiving.

7.2.2. Perceptions of Inequality in Employment and Career Advancement

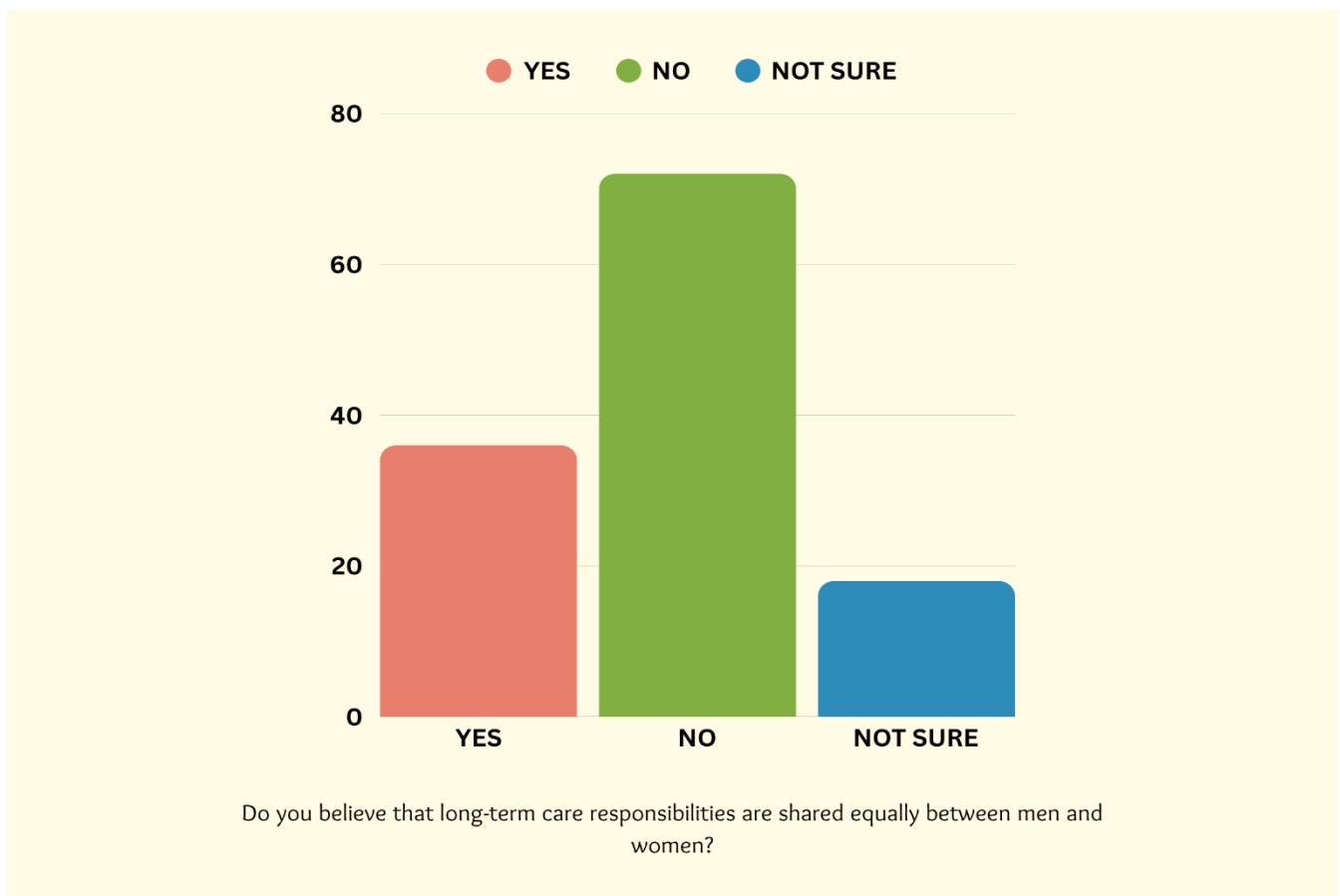


Explanation:

This chart shows participants' responses to five questions, using three color-coded categories: Yes (red), No (yellow), and Not Sure (blue).

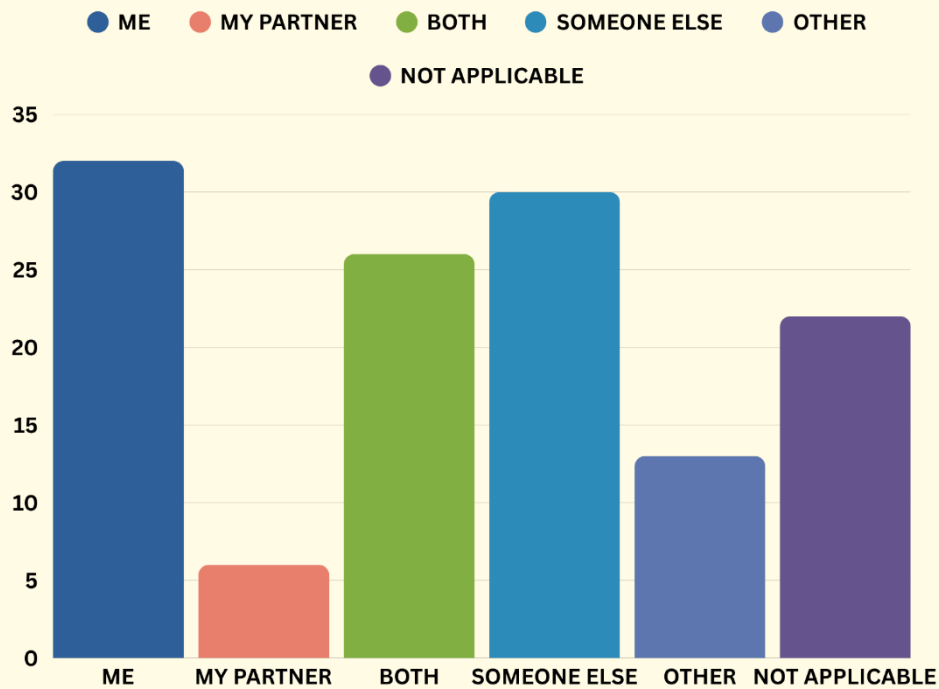
Overall, the chart highlights that many respondents believe there are still inequalities between men and women in terms of job opportunities, encouragement for further studies, and access to high-responsibility positions. The last question shows a more divided opinion on whether there should be wage differences for the same type of work.

7.2.3. Care of elderly and children



Explanation:

The results indicate that most respondents believe long-term responsibilities are not equally shared between men and women, while fewer think they are or are unsure. This suggests a perceived imbalance in caregiving roles.



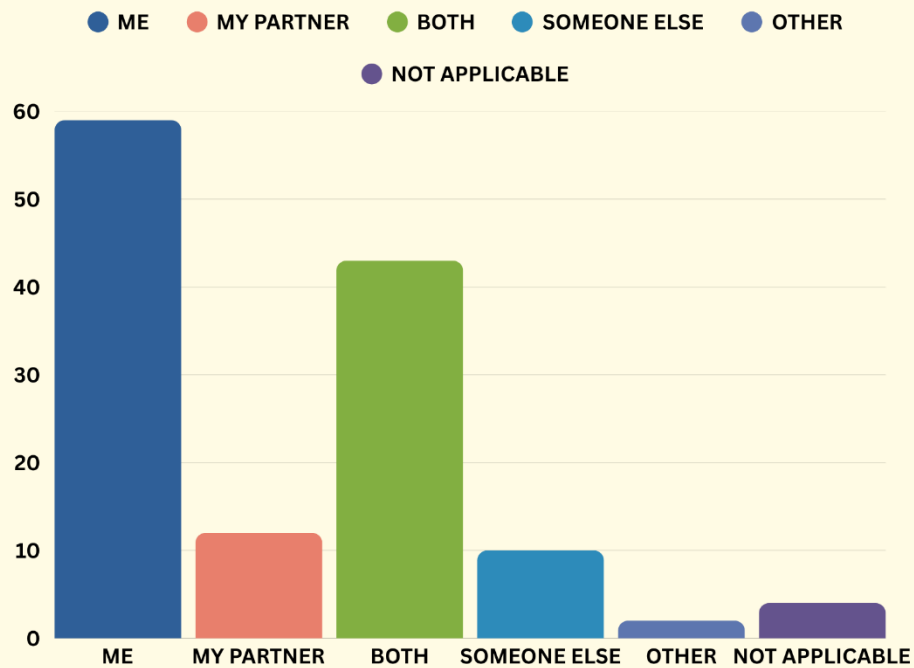
Who in your family is primarily responsible for caring for elderly or sick relatives?

Explanation:

This chart reflects perceptions of responsibility for caring for elderly or sick relatives within families. The majority of respondents indicate that they themselves (mostly women) are primarily responsible, while only a small percentage say their partner (typically men). A notable portion responded “both”, suggesting some level of shared responsibility. Many also mention “someone else” (possibly hired help or extended family), and a significant number selected “not applicable”.

The results suggest that caregiving duties still fall more heavily on women, highlighting a gender imbalance in family care responsibilities.

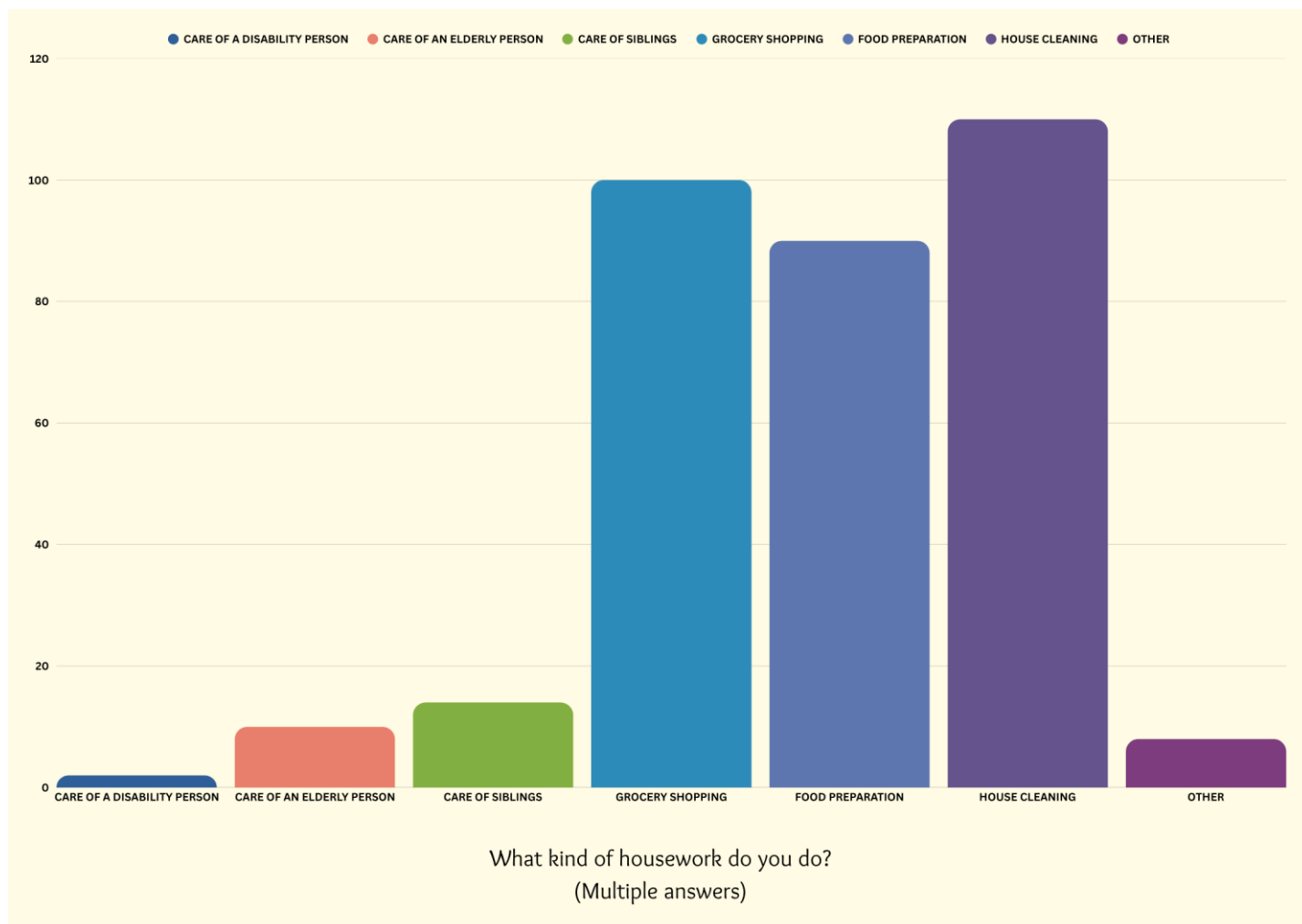
7.2.4. Housework



Who in your home is most responsible for housework?

Explanation:

This chart highlights gender inequality in household responsibilities. The majority of respondents state “Me” as being most responsible for housework – a response likely dominated by women – while very few chose “My partner”, indicating that men are less likely to take the lead in domestic tasks. A fair number selected “Both”, suggesting some shared responsibility, but overall the data points to a clear gender imbalance, with women still bearing the larger share of household.



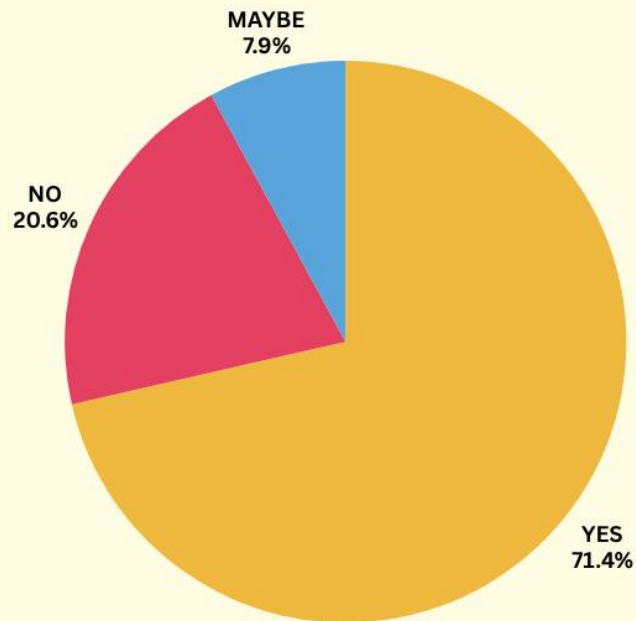
Explanation:

This chart shows the types of housework people report doing, with a strong gender perspective implied.

Tasks such as house cleaning, food preparation and grocery shopping are the most frequently selected, traditionally associated with women's unpaid labor. Less common responses include care for siblings, elderly, or people with disabilities, which also tend to fall more heavily on women.

The results reinforce gendered patterns in domestic work, highlighting that women likely continue to carry the bulk of routine and caregiving tasks within the household.

7.2.5. Free time

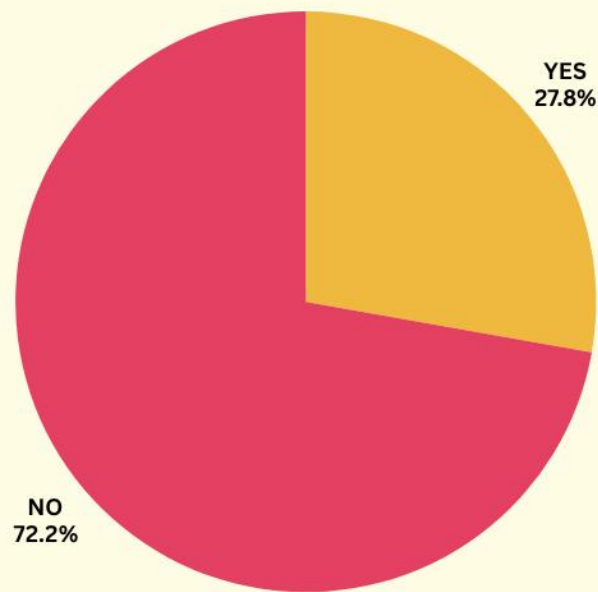


Do you think men and women have equal opportunities to participate in leisure activities?

Explanation:

This pie chart shows perceptions about gender equality in leisure time. While the majority (71.4%) believe that men and women have equal opportunities to engage in leisure activities, a notable 20.6% disagree, and 7.9% are unsure.

From a gender perspective, this suggests that although most perceive equality, a significant portion of respondents—likely reflecting women’s experiences—feel that time constraints or responsibilities may limit their access to leisure compared to men.



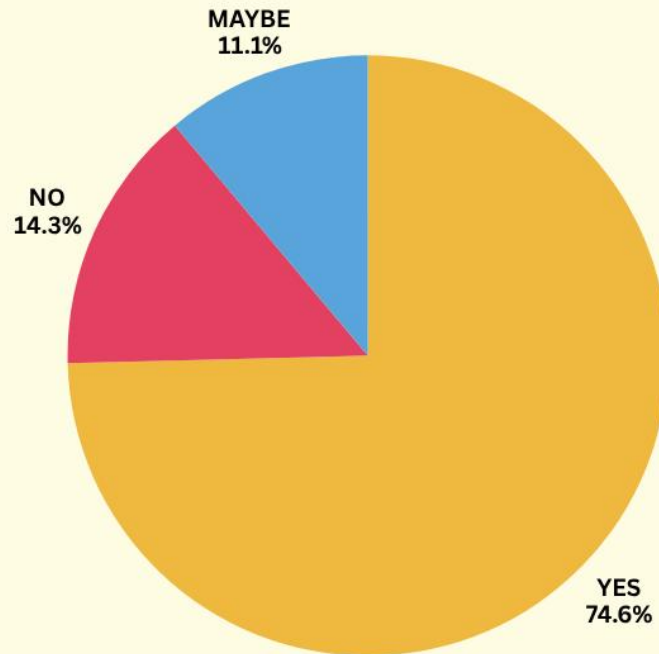
Have you ever felt limited in your choice of leisure activities because of your gender?

Explanation:

This chart explores whether gender has limited individuals in their choice of leisure activities. While the majority (72.2%) responded "No," nearly 28% answered "Yes," indicating they have felt restricted due to their gender.

From a gender perspective, this suggests that a notable portion of respondents—likely more women—experience limitations in leisure participation, possibly due to social norms, safety concerns, or unequal time availability.

7.2.6. Volunteering and leadership



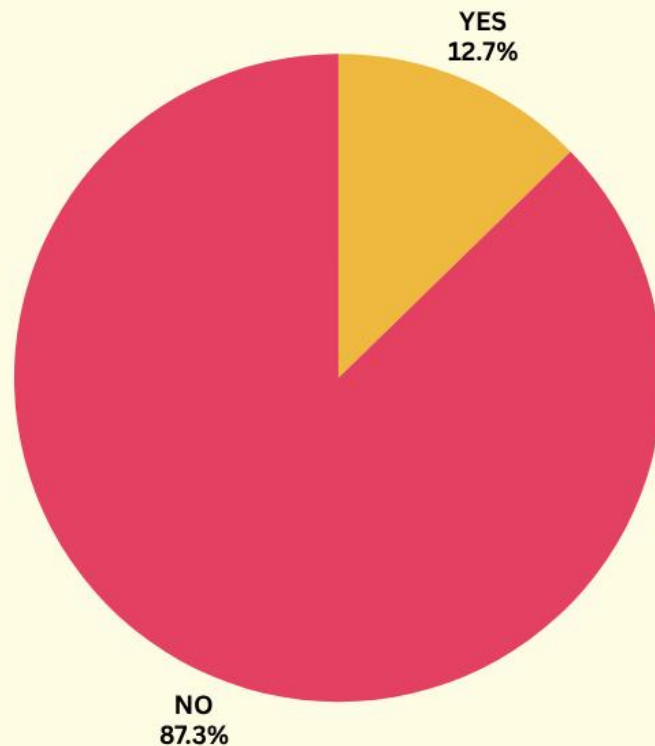
Do you believe that men and women have equal opportunities to take on leadership positions in volunteering?

Explanation:

The chart shows that most respondents (74.6%) believe men and women have equal opportunities to take on leadership roles in volunteering. However, 14.3% disagree, and 11.1% are uncertain.

From a gender perspective, this suggests a generally positive perception of equality in volunteer leadership, though a noticeable minority still sees potential barriers or unequal access, possibly reflecting lived experiences, especially among women.

7.2.7. Stereotypes and social roles



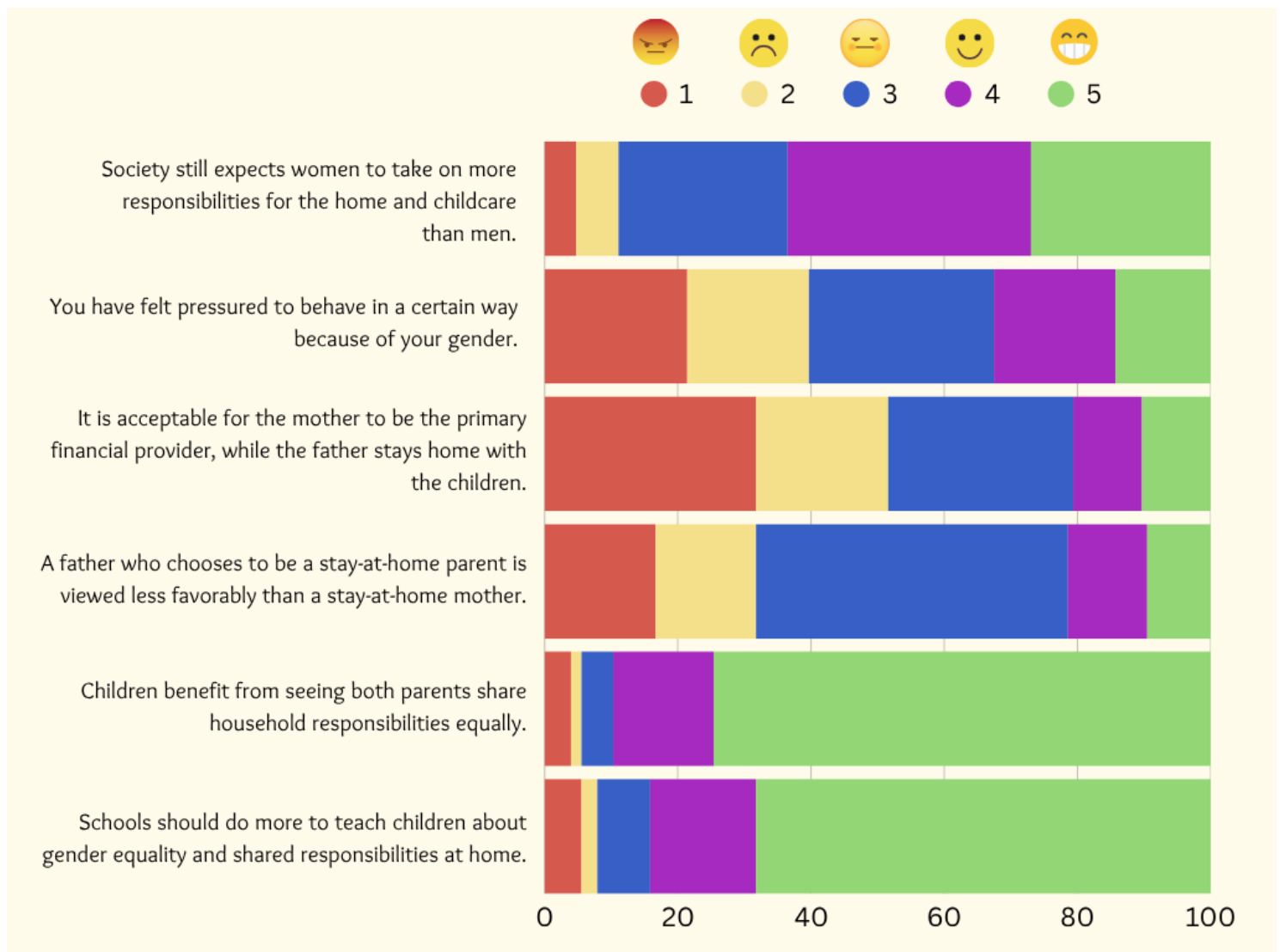
Have you felt pressure from a superior/family member to behave in a certain way because of your gender at work/at home?

Explanation:

This chart shows responses to whether individuals have felt pressure from a superior or family member to behave in a certain way due to their gender, either at work or at home. The vast majority (87.3%) answered "No," while a smaller but notable 12.7% answered "Yes."

From a gender perspective, although the majority do not report experiencing such pressure, the fact that over 1 in 10 respondents have felt gender-based behavioural expectations indicates the persistence of gender norms and stereotypes—especially affecting women or gender-nonconforming individuals. These expectations could relate to how one should speak, dress, take responsibility, or act "appropriately" based on their gender role.

The low percentage may reflect progress toward gender equality, but the presence of such pressure—however limited—still points to underlying cultural attitudes and unequal expectations in both the workplace and domestic environments.



Explanation:

This chart presents attitudes toward gender roles and expectations in family life and education, measured on a scale from strong disagreement (1) to strong agreement (5), using emoji symbols.

Key insights from a gender perspective:

1. "Society still expects women to take on more responsibilities for the home and childcare than men"

A large portion of respondents agree or strongly agree (ratings 4 and 5), indicating broad recognition of ongoing gendered expectations in domestic roles.

2. "You have felt pressured to behave in a certain way because of your gender"

The responses are more spread out, but many show moderate to strong agreement, suggesting that gender-based behavioural expectations still affect a notable number of people.

3. "It is acceptable for the mother to be the primary financial provider while the father stays home with the children"

Opinions here are mixed, though agreement increases toward the centre-right, pointing to growing—but not universal—acceptance of non-traditional family roles.

4. "A father who chooses to be a stay-at-home parent is viewed less favourably than a stay-at-home mother"

Many agree with this statement, revealing ongoing societal bias against men in caregiving roles, reinforcing traditional gender norms.

5. "Children benefit from seeing both parents share household responsibilities equally"

There is overwhelming agreement (mostly 4s and 5s), reflecting strong support for balanced parental roles in the home.

6. "Schools should do more to teach children about gender equality and shared responsibilities at home"

Again, most respondents strongly agree, showing a desire for early education to challenge gender stereotypes and promote equality from a young age.

Summary:

The chart reflects widespread awareness of gender imbalances in family and social expectations. While traditional roles still shape perceptions, there is clear support for more equal responsibility-sharing and for proactive education to shift attitudes in future generations.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The charts collectively reveal that, despite some progress toward gender equality, traditional roles and expectations still heavily influence daily life, especially in caregiving and housework. Women continue to bear the greater share of domestic responsibilities, while societal norms subtly or overtly shape behaviour and opportunities. There is strong support, however, for shared responsibilities, gender education, and equal participation, suggesting a growing awareness and desire for lasting change.

9. Gender Perception Analysis among Youth (Ages 12–18)

9.2. *Introduction*

This report presents an analytical overview of how young people aged 12 to 18 perceive gender roles, based on data collected within the framework of the *Stereotype Trap* project. The questionnaire explores views and experiences across multiple domains including caregiving, household chores, leisure time, volunteering, leadership, and gender-based expectations in society and employment.

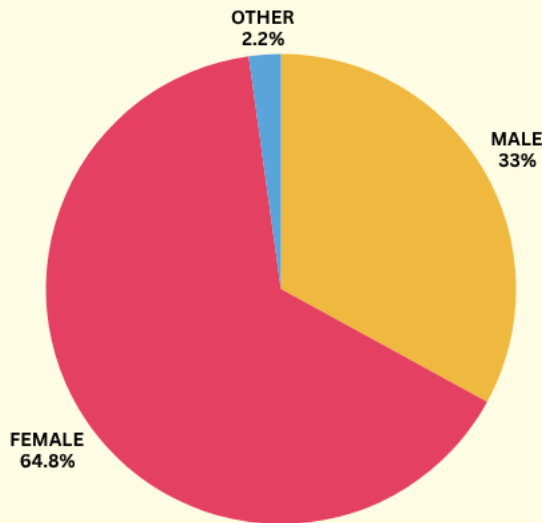
9.2.1. *Demographics*

A total of 91 valid responses were collected from youth aged 12 to 18, categorized as follows:

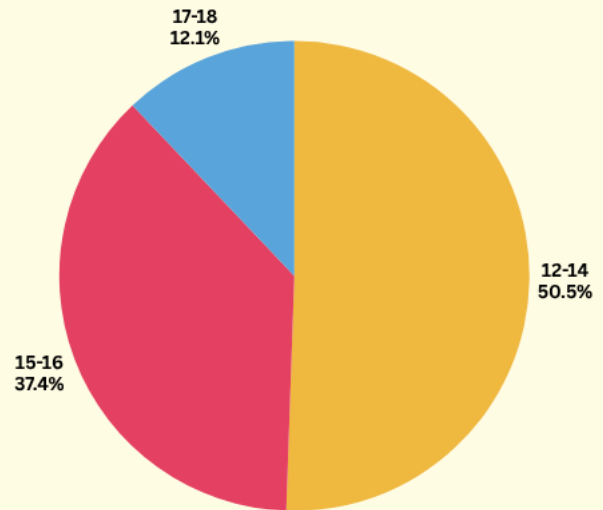
- 12–14 years: 50 respondents
- 15–16 years: 39 respondents
- 17–18 years: 11 respondents

Gender distribution includes both male and female participants, with slight variations in participation levels by gender and age group.

GENDER BREAKDOWN



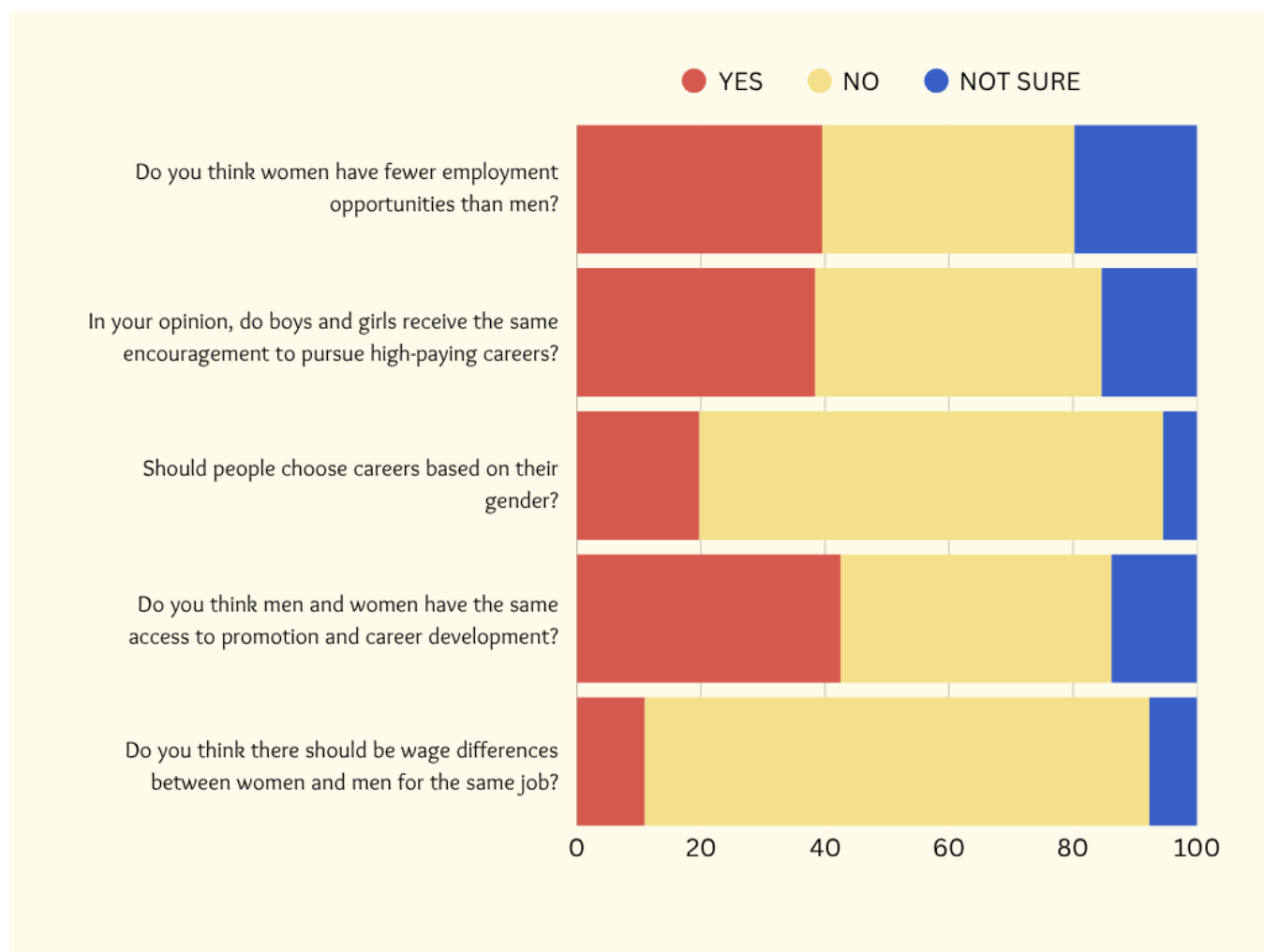
AGE BREAKDOWN



The pie chart on the left shows that **64.8% of respondents were girls** and **33% were boys**.

This gender distribution is significant, as it may influence how caregiving, domestic work, and leadership roles are perceived in the survey. The higher participation of girls also reflects the tendency for young females to be more engaged in topics related to empathy, equality, and social responsibility—domains often overlooked by their male peers due to gendered expectations.

9.2.2. Perceptions of Inequality in Employment and Career Advancement



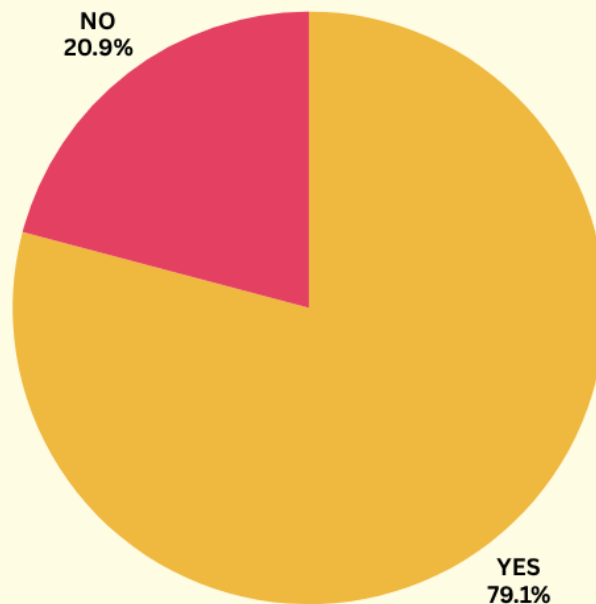
Explanation:

This chart explores how young people aged 12–18 perceive gender equality in employment and career opportunities. Many believe that women still face more difficulties than men in accessing jobs, receiving encouragement to pursue high-paying careers, and getting promoted. This shows that even at a young age, participants recognize that gender can impact professional growth and opportunity.

Interestingly, a large number disagree with the idea that career choices should be based on gender, showing that this age group supports the freedom for everyone to follow their interests and talents regardless of whether they are male or female.

Finally, the strong disagreement with the idea of wage differences for the same job reflects a clear belief in fairness and equal pay. Overall, the responses reveal that most young people are aware of existing inequalities but also value equal rights, opportunities, and respect in the workplace—regardless of gender.

9.2.3. Care for the Elderly or Sick



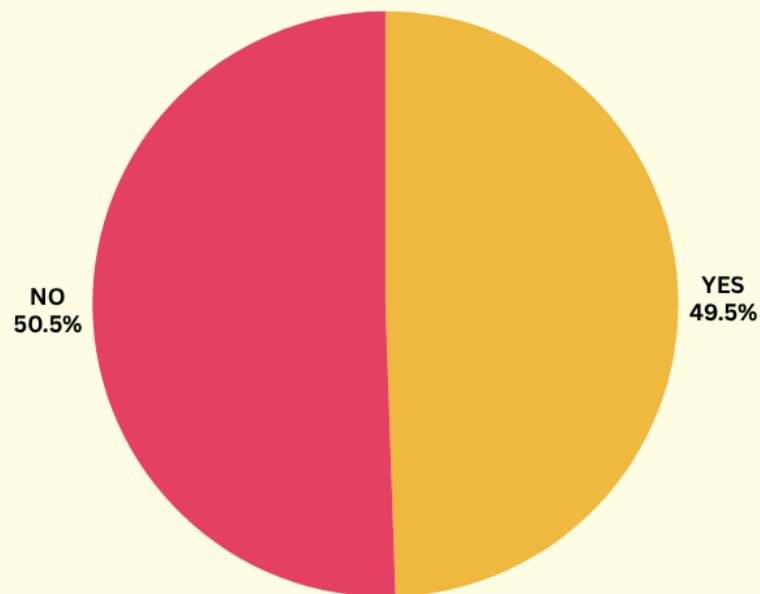
Have you ever helped care for an elderly or sick family member?

Explanation:

This chart shows that a large majority of young people aged 12–18 have helped care for an elderly or sick family member. This suggests that many teenagers are already involved in caregiving responsibilities at home, which can influence how they view family roles and responsibilities.

It also highlights that young people are aware of and participate in supportive tasks, often traditionally expected from women. This early involvement may shape their understanding of care work and gender expectations, especially if caregiving is more common among girls. It's a reminder that conversations about shared responsibilities and gender equality should start early, as these roles are already being experienced in adolescence.

9.2.4 Care for Children



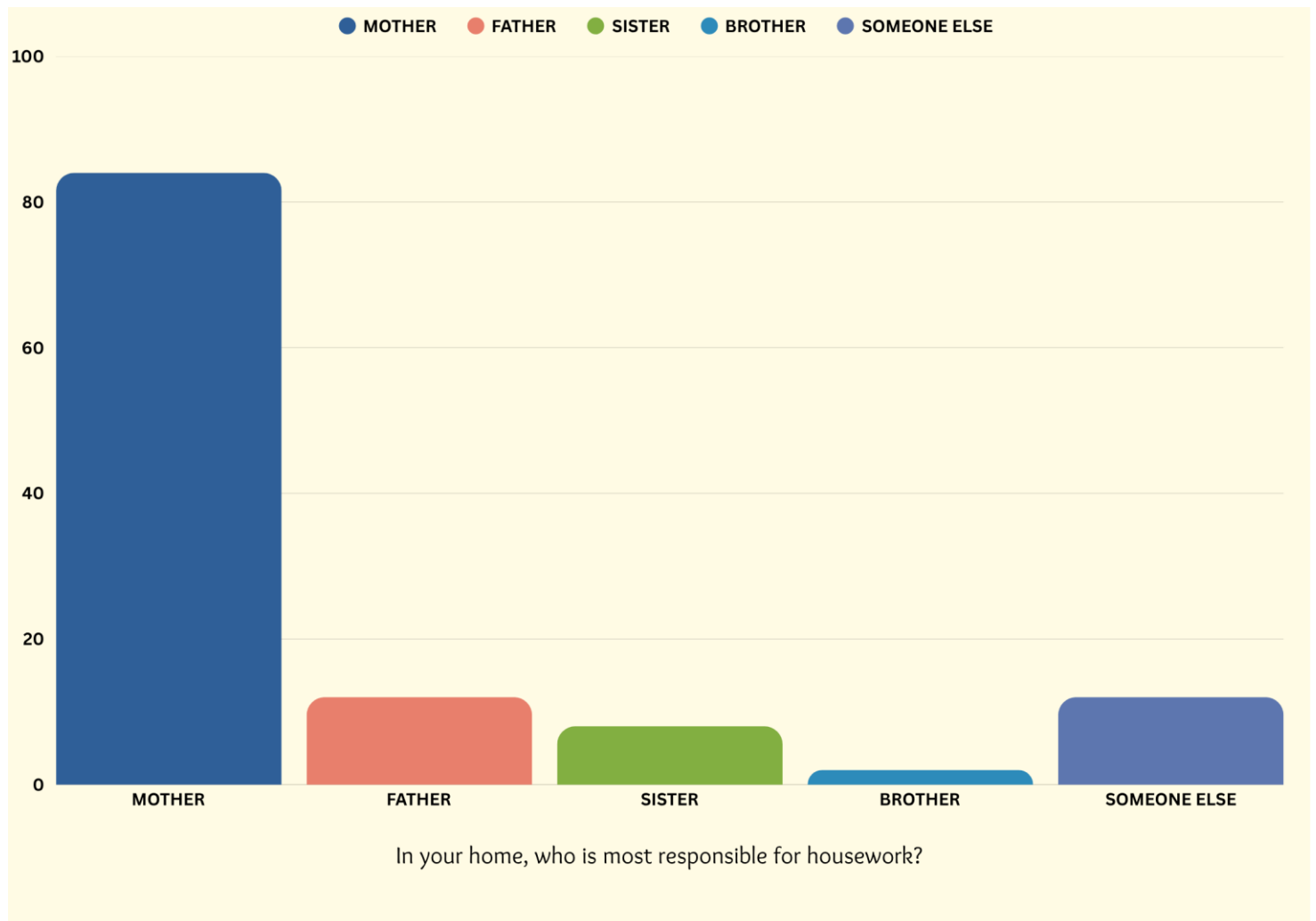
Are you responsible for taking care of your siblings or cousins?

Explanation:

This chart shows an almost even split among young people aged 12–18 when asked if they are responsible for taking care of their siblings or cousins. Nearly half (49.5%) said yes, suggesting that caregiving duties are a common part of life for many teens.

This early involvement in childcare may reflect traditional family expectations—often more common for girls—and shows how gender roles can begin to form and be reinforced from a young age. It also highlights the importance of addressing equality and shared responsibility within the family, starting early in life.

9.2.3. Housework

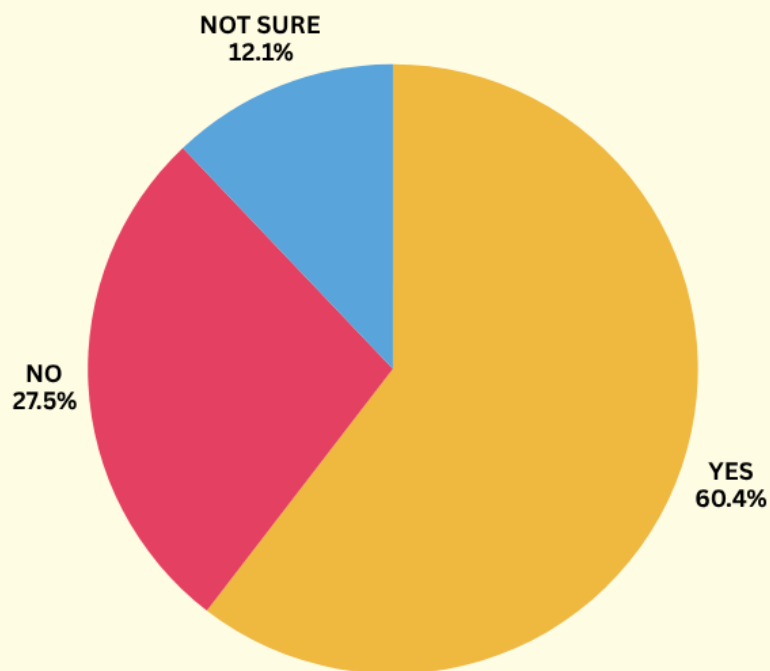


Explanation:

This chart clearly shows that, in most homes, the mother is seen as the person most responsible for housework. The contributions of fathers, sisters, brothers, or others are significantly lower.

From a gender perspective, this reflects how traditional roles are still deeply rooted in many households, with domestic responsibilities continuing to fall mainly on women. Even among young people aged 12–18, this division of labour is visible and likely shapes their understanding of gender roles from an early age. It underlines the importance of promoting shared responsibilities within the family to challenge these long-standing inequalities.

9.2.4. Free Time

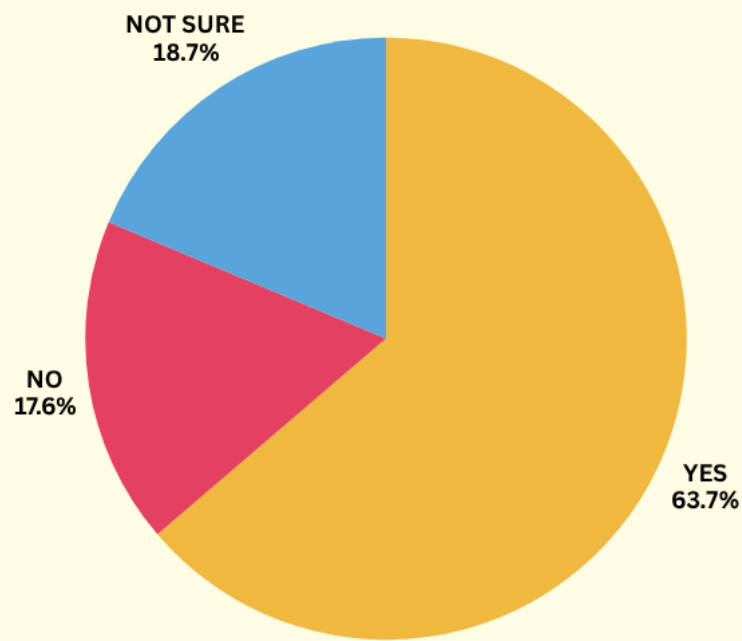


Do you think boys and girls have equal opportunities to engage in leisure activities?

Explanation:

This chart shows that most young people (60.4%) believe boys and girls have equal opportunities to engage in leisure activities. However, a significant portion (27.5%) disagrees, and 12.1% are unsure.

This suggests that while many teenagers perceive a level of fairness in access to free time, a notable group—likely reflecting girls' experiences—still feels that gender can influence who gets more time or freedom to relax and play. It points to underlying inequalities in how leisure is distributed within households, possibly due to extra responsibilities or differing expectations based on gender.



Do you think gender roles are changing in today's society?

Explanation:

This chart shows that the majority of young people (63.7%) believe gender roles are changing in today's society. A smaller percentage (17.6%) disagrees, while 18.7% are unsure.

This reflects a generally optimistic view among adolescents, who recognize a shift away from traditional roles and expectations based on gender. The presence of doubt and uncertainty, however, suggests that while change is noticeable, it may not be equally visible or experienced in all environments—such as home, school, or community.

Conclusion on the Beliefs and Responses of Minors:

The responses of minors show that, despite their young age, they already hold clear views on gender roles and equality. Many recognize that women still carry more responsibilities at home and in caregiving, and that inequalities persist in the workplace and in access to leadership positions. A significant number also report personal involvement in care duties, reflecting early exposure to traditional expectations. At the same time, most express a positive attitude toward changing gender roles and see the importance of education in promoting equality. However, the presence of uncertainty among some respondents suggests that their perceptions are still forming and influenced by their environment.

Comparison with Adults' Perceptions:

Compared to adults, minors tend to show a more hopeful and progressive outlook on gender equality. They are more likely to believe that roles are changing and that equal opportunities are achievable. Adults, on the other hand, often have more fixed views, shaped by long-term social norms and life experiences. While adults may more clearly recognize existing inequalities, they may also be more sceptical about the pace of change. Minors appear more open to transformation, signalling a shift in mindset that could lead to greater equality in future generations.