WOMEN'S UNPAID CARE WORK IN EGYPT: GENDER GAPS IN TIME-USE

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INTRODUCTION

- Gender disparities in time allocation are one of the key features of gender inequality, hindering women's full participation in economic and social life (Abdourahman, 2010; Zilanawala, 2014; UN Women and ERF, 2020; Marter-Kenyon et al., 2023).

- Traditional gender norms play an important role in shaping the gendered division of labor, especially in developing countries.

- Marital status is a key predictor of how much time women spend on unpaid care work.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A new time use module in ELMPS 2023 allows us to examine women's time spent on unpaid care work as opposed to market work relative to men.

- 84% of Egyptian women aged 15-64 participated in unpaid care work daily, compared with only 34% of men.

- Women of working age allocated an average of 5.4 hours per day to unpaid care work, more than five times the amount of time spent by men on similar tasks.

- The female-to-male ratio of time spent on unpaid care activities reached 6:1 for married individuals.

- Employed women faced a double burden of having to balance their paid and unpaid work commitments.

- Deeply entrenched social expectations prevent meaningful change in gender roles, despite shifts in personal beliefs on gender norms.
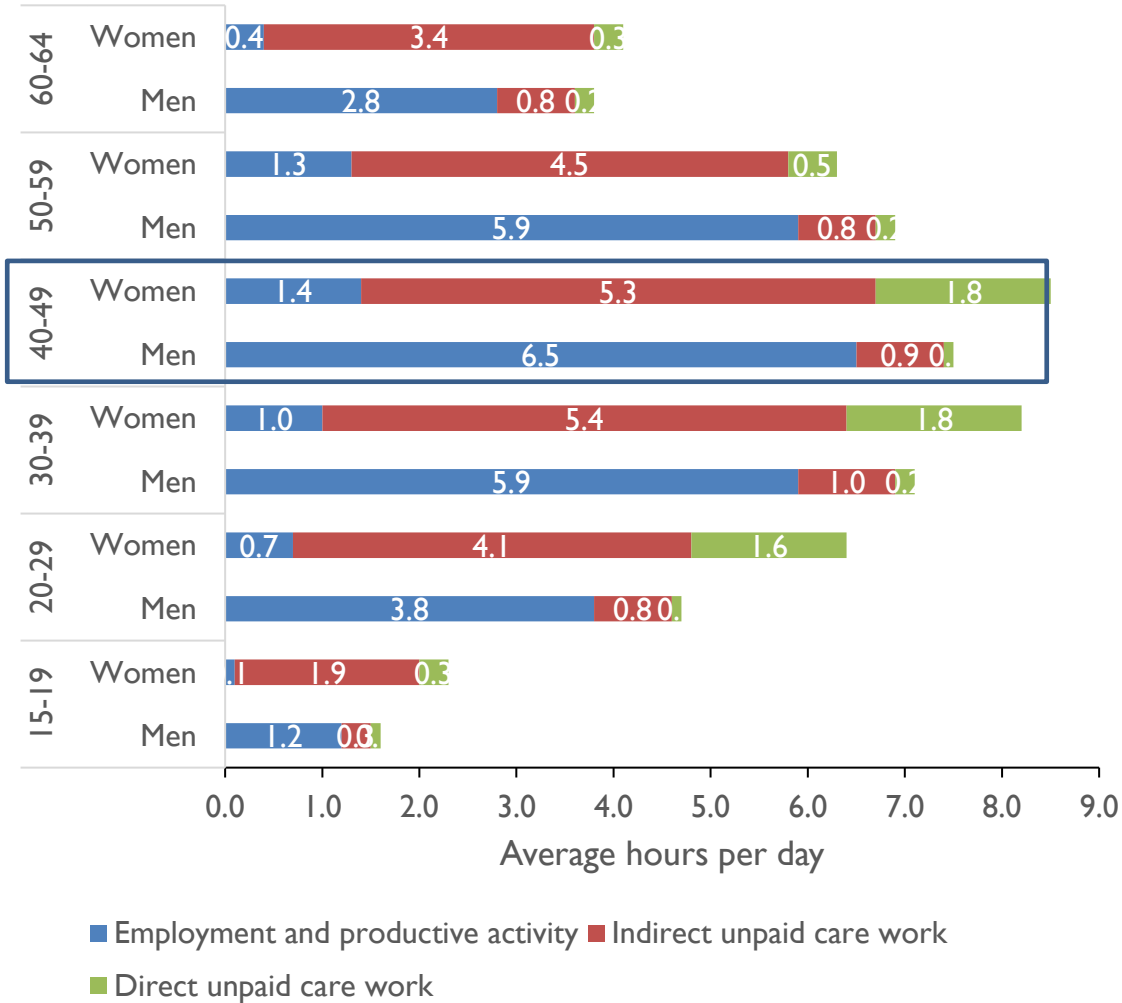
OUTLINE

- Time-use by sociodemographic characteristics

- Time-use by household and family dynamics

- Time-use by labor market status

- Time-use by gender norms

- Concluding remarks and policy recommendations
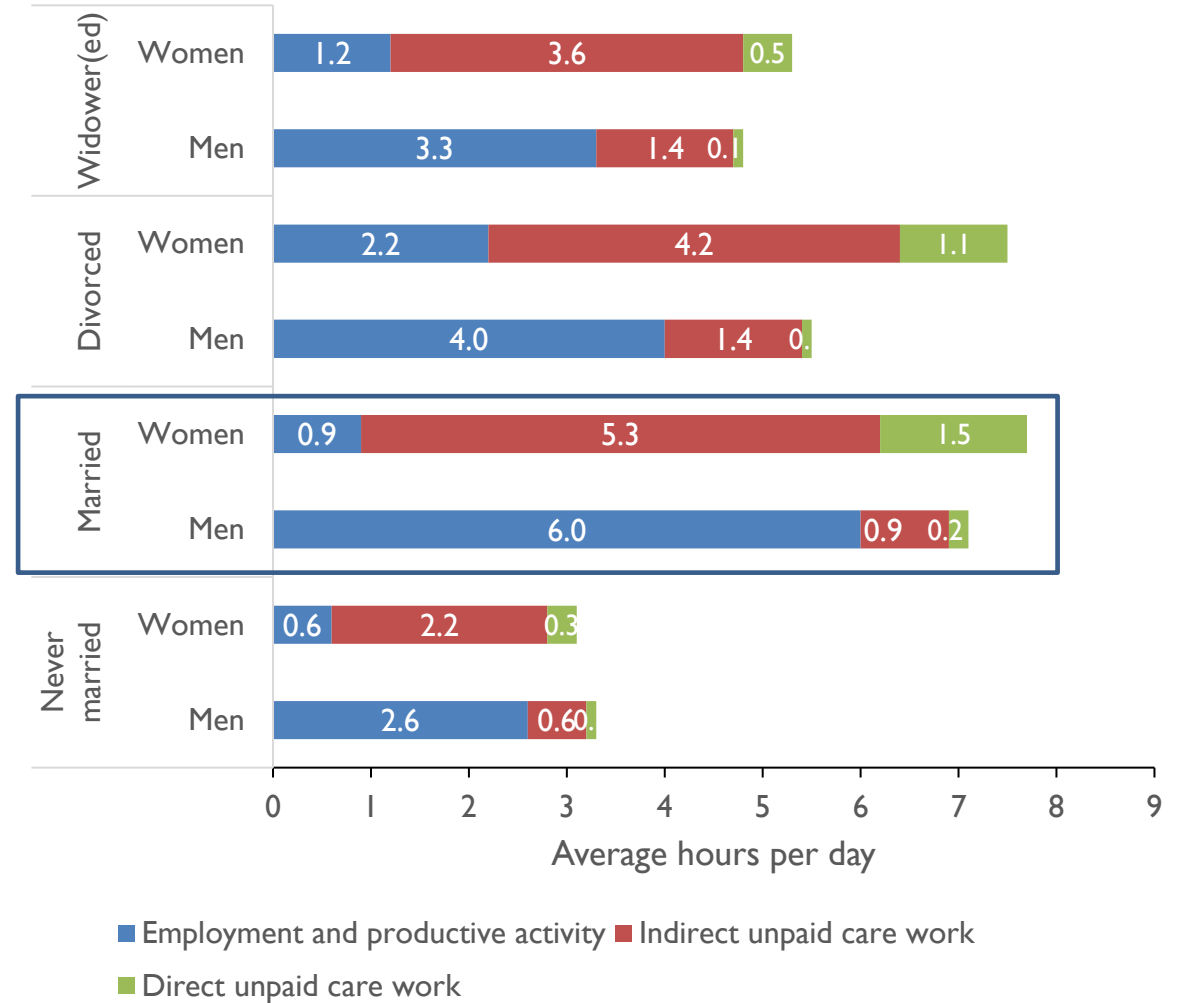
TIME-USE BY SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

- In Egypt, time use patterns for men and women are strongly influenced by socio-demographic factors such as age, marital status, education, and location (urban/rural).

- Although each factor affects how unpaid care work is divided, age and marital status play the most critical roles in shaping these patterns.

Figure 1: Time-use by sex and age, working age population (ages 15-64)

		Employment and productive activity	Indirect unpaid care work	Direct unpaid care work
60-64	Women	0.4	3.4	0.3
	Men	2.8	0.8	0.2
50-59	Women	1.3	4.5	0.5
	Men	5.9	0.8	0.2
40-49	Women	1.4	5.3	1.8
	Men	6.5	0.9	0.2
30-39	Women	1.0	5.4	1.8
	Men	5.9	1.0	0.2
20-29	Women	0.7	4.1	1.6
	Men	3.8	0.8	0.2
15-19	Women	0.1	1.9	0.3
	Men	1.2	0.0	0.0

Average hours per day

■ Employment and productive activity ■ Indirect unpaid care work
■ Direct unpaid care work

Source: Authors' calculations based on ELMPS 2023 time-use module.

Figure 2: Time-use by sex and marital status, working age population (ages 15-64)

		Employment and productive activity	Indirect unpaid care work	Direct unpaid care work
Widower(ed)	Women	1.2	3.6	0.5
	Men	3.3	1.4	0.1
Divorced	Women	2.2	4.2	1.1
	Men	4.0	1.4	0.1
Married	Women	0.9	5.3	1.5
	Men	6.0	0.9	0.2
Never married	Women	0.6	2.2	0.3
	Men	2.6	0.6	0.1

Average hours per day

■ Employment and productive activity ■ Indirect unpaid care work
■ Direct unpaid care work

Source: Authors' calculations based on ELMPS 2023 time-use module.

Figure 3: Women's time use (average hours per day) by type of activity, marital status and household composition, working age population (ages 15-64)

Source: Authors' calculations based on ELMPS 2023 time-use module.

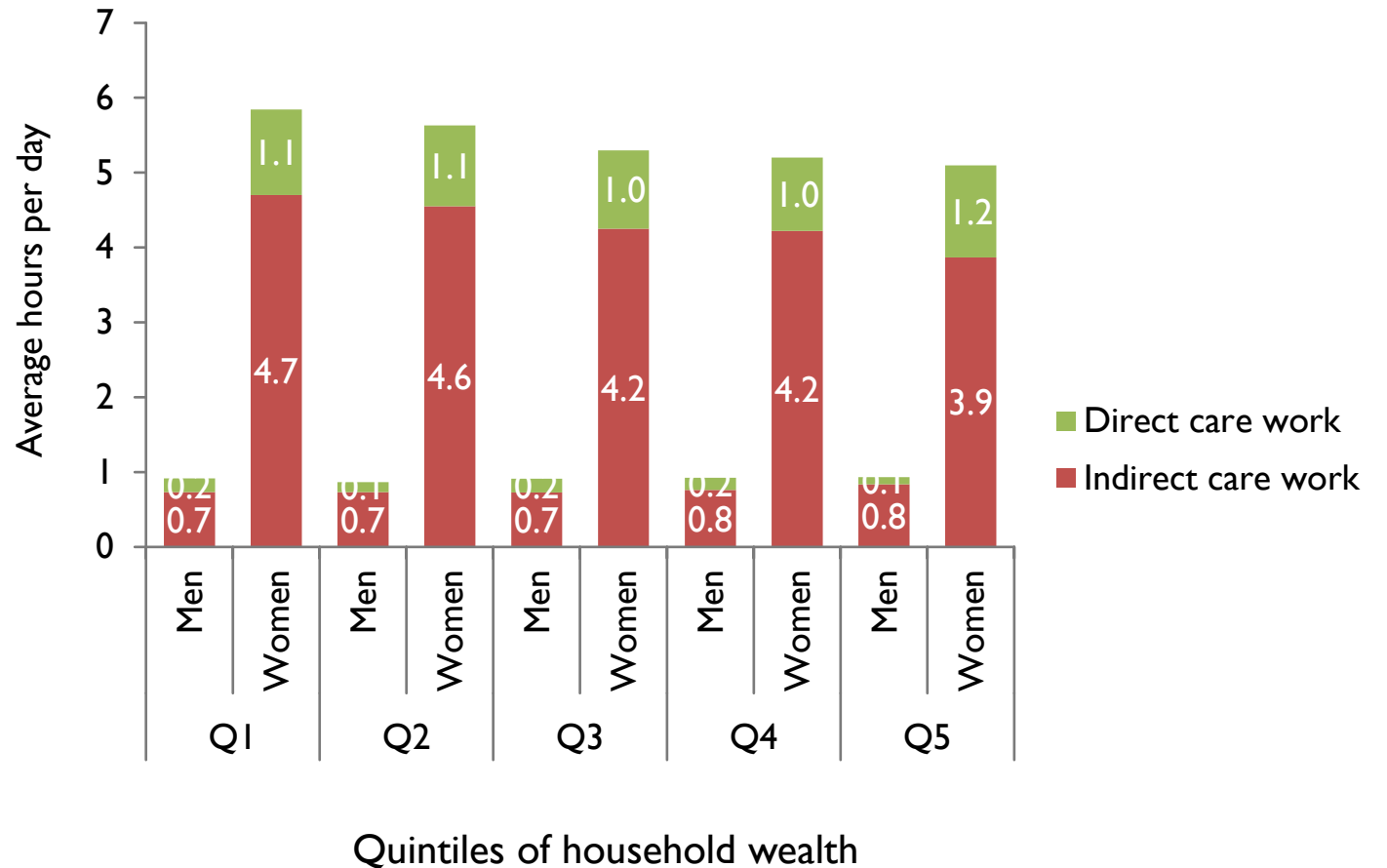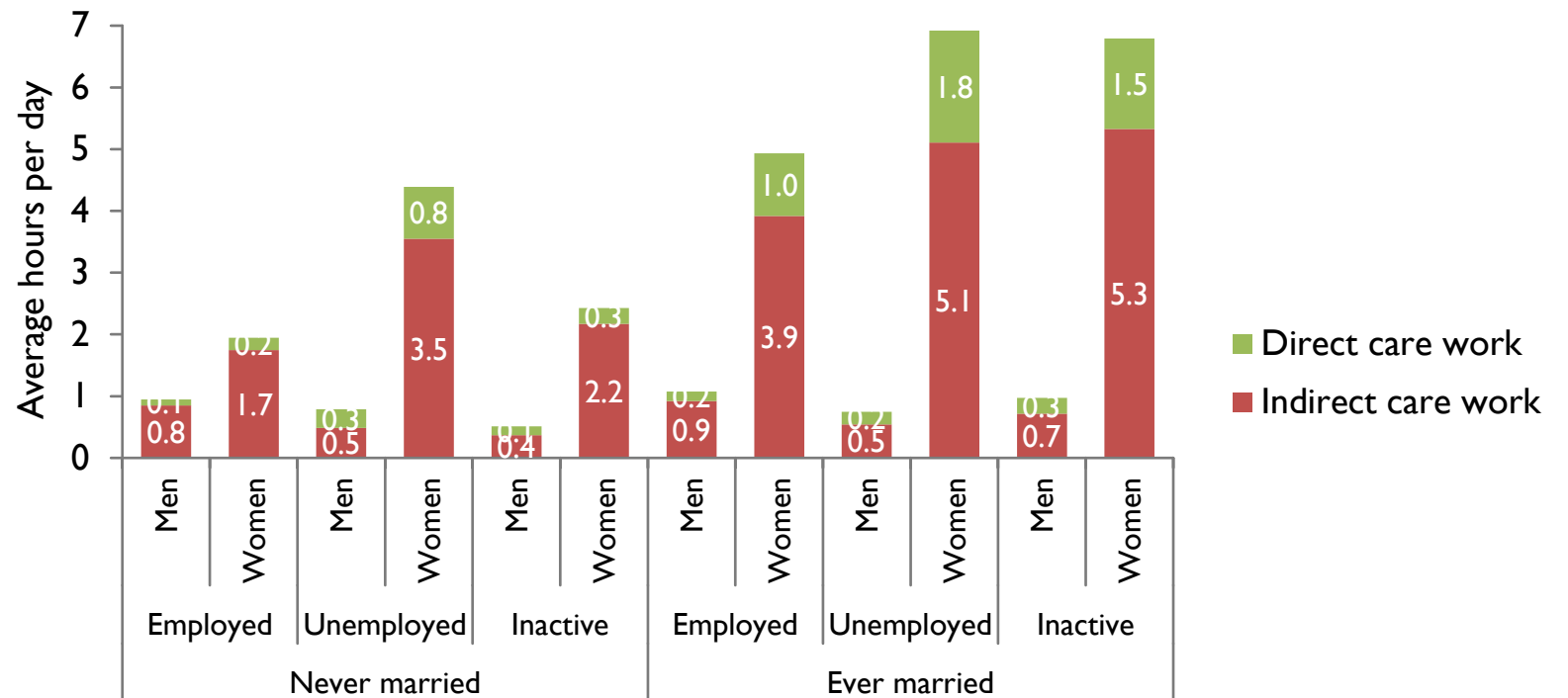**Figure 4: Time spent on unpaid care work (average hours per day) by sex and household wealth quintiles, working-age population (ages 15-64)**

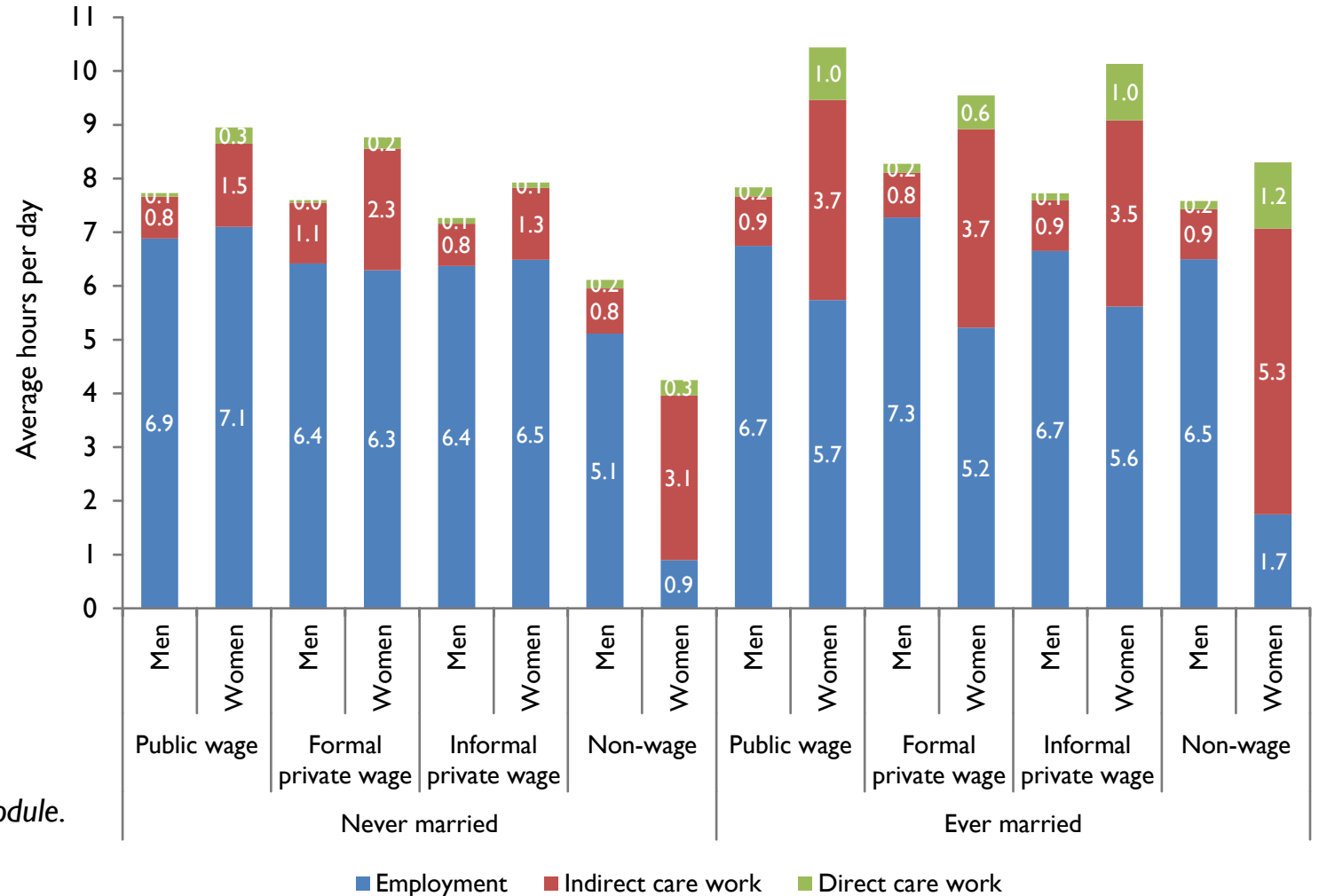Source: Authors' calculations based on ELMPS 2023 time-use module.

Figure 5: Time spent on unpaid care work (average hours per day) by sex, marital status and labor market status, working-age population (ages 15-64)

Source: Authors' calculations based on ELMPS 2023 time-use module.

TIME-USE BY LABOR MARKET STATUS

Figure 6: Time spent on employment and unpaid care work (average hours per day) by sex, marital status and employment status/institutional sector, working-age population (ages 15-64)
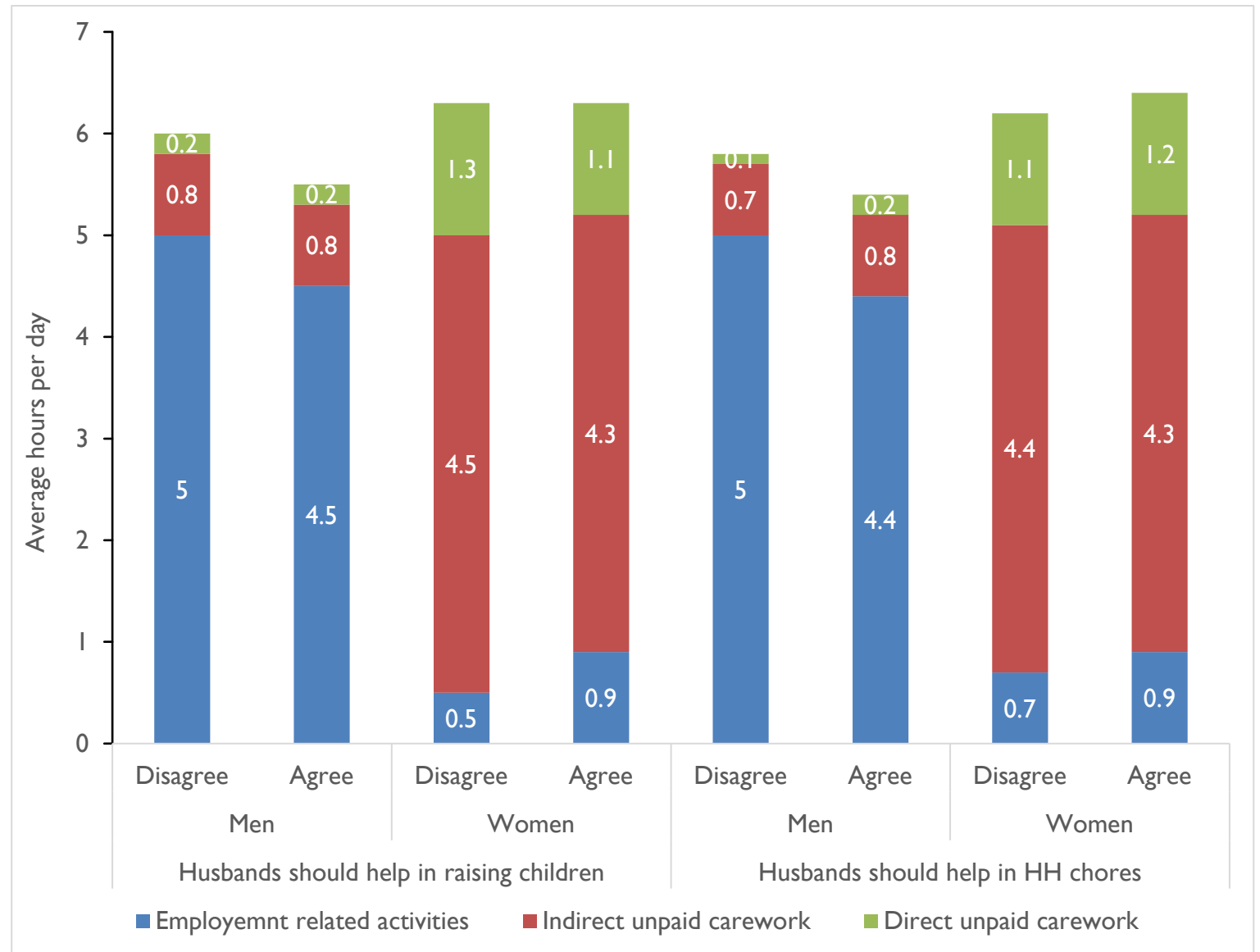
Source: Authors' calculations based on ELMPS 2023 time-use module.

TIME-USE BY GENDER NORMS

■ Time-use patterns are strongly associated with societal gender norms.

■ These norms are rooted in culture and shape expectations on what is accepted from individuals based on their sex (UNICEF and UNFPA, 2022).

■ To assess the potential correlation of gender norms with time use, we use a series of questions designed to assess attitudes and beliefs.

■ We focus four key areas: views on gender equality, traditional gender roles, female labor force participation (FLFP), and childcare.

Figure 7: Time use (average hours per day) by sex and attitudes towards gender roles, working age population (ages 15-64)

Source: Authors' calculations based on ELMPS 2023 time-use module.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Women in Egypt perform unpaid care tasks at three times the rate of men, widening to five times for direct caregiving activities.

- Factors like age, marital status, education, family structure, and location strongly influence the gendered division of unpaid labor, reinforcing disparities notably in terms of age and marital status.

- Women with young children or in lower-income households spend more time on unpaid care work, while wealthier families reduce this burden through paid help or appliances.

- Employed married women work around 10 hours daily across paid and unpaid tasks, showing the need for policies that address gendered care expectations.

- Rigid gender norms still largely dictate unpaid care work expectations.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Educational Reforms:** Integrating egalitarian concepts into curricula and extracurricular activities to influence younger generations' perceptions of gender roles (IMAGES and UN Women, 2017).

- **Family-Friendly Policies and flexible work arrangements:** Implementing workplace policies like flexible work arrangements, remote work, paternity leave, and on-site childcare services could help in balancing caregiving responsibilities (Budig et al., 2016; Petts and Knoester, 2018; Barsoum, 2019).

- **Enhanced Market Services**: Expanding access to affordable childcare and eldercare through government subsidies can significantly increase women's labor force participation (Folbre, 2006; Olivetti and Petrongolo, 2017).