

The gendered and social impacts of labour mobility in the Pacific

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Outline

- ❖ Overview of Pacific labour mobility research projects
- ❖ Impacts of labour mobility in PICs
- ❖ Summary of key findings



The World Bank's current work on Pacific labour mobility

- ❖ A combination of research and development projects aiming to improve equitable LM opportunities and better understand ways to enhance positive development impacts of LM
 - Pacific Labour Mobility Survey
 - Impact Evaluation of the PLS
 - Gendered and Social Impacts of Labour Mobility

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of DFAT for these analytical projects.

Understanding development impacts of Pacific LM on workers, their families and communities

Economic impacts

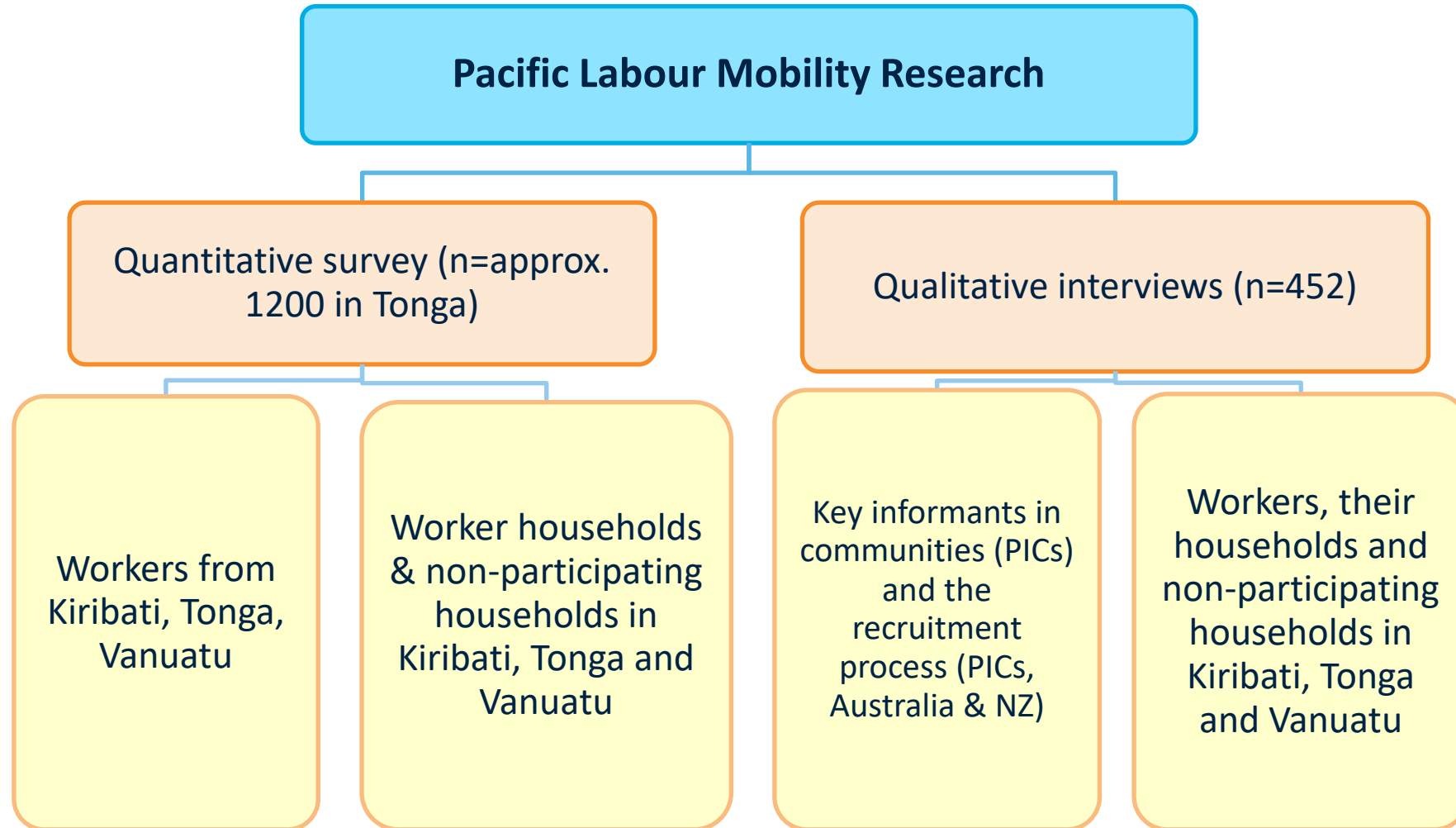
- What are the impacts of temporary labour migration schemes on the economic wellbeing of migrant workers and their families?
- Looking at a wide range of indicators, such as labour activities, income and expenditure, remittances, investment in human and physical capital, housing, and perception of workers and their households on LM.

Social impacts

- What are the positive and negative impacts of temporary labour migration from PICs on migrants, their partners and families?
- What enables and what hinders women's participation in labour migration programs?



Data collection: both qualitative and quantitative

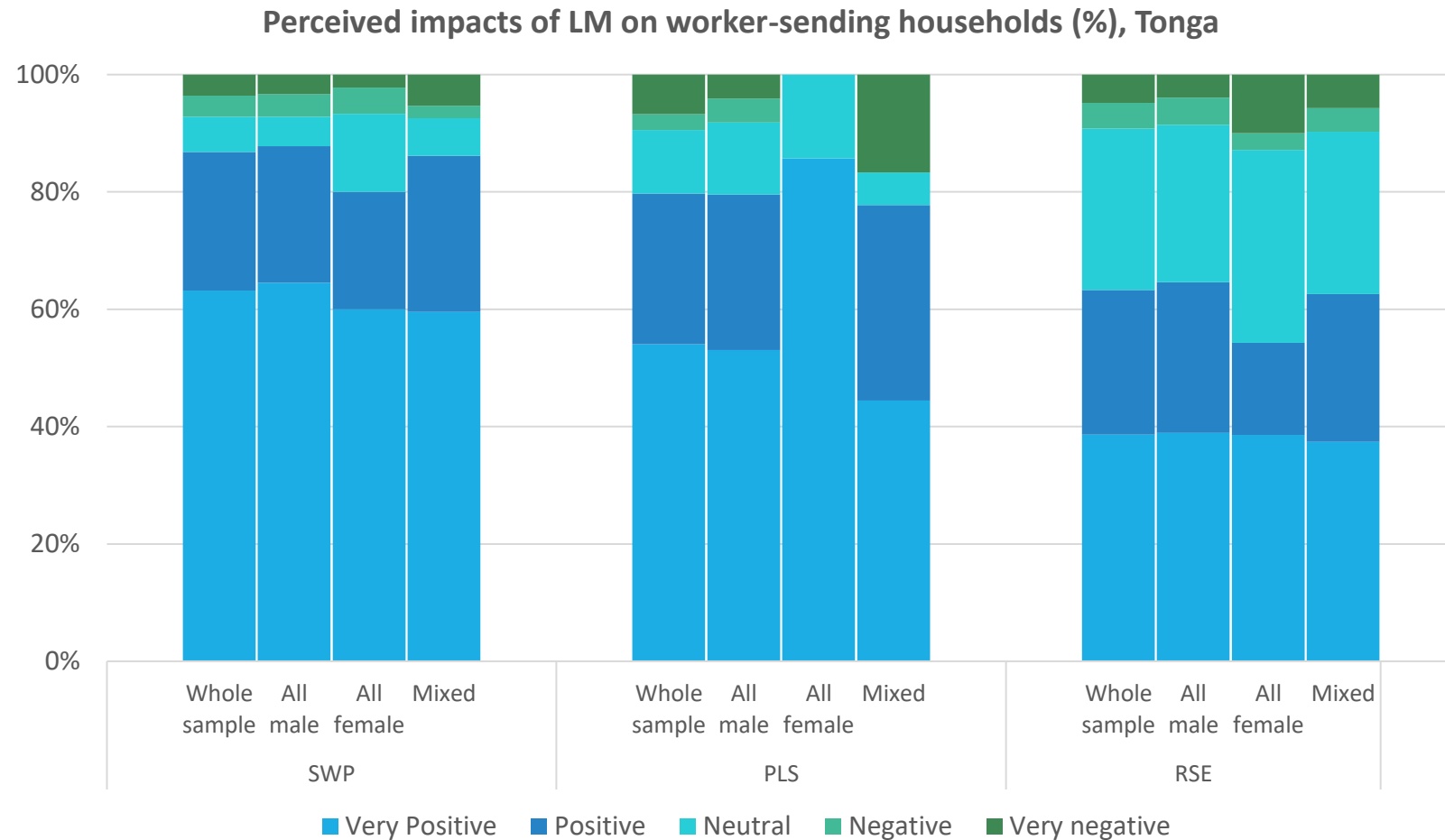


Impacts of Labour Mobility in PICs

Overall, LM is viewed positively by workers and their communities

- ❖ In-depth interviews and quantitative data both show that LM schemes are viewed positively in PICs.
- ❖ BUT interviews reveal there are also some negative impacts.

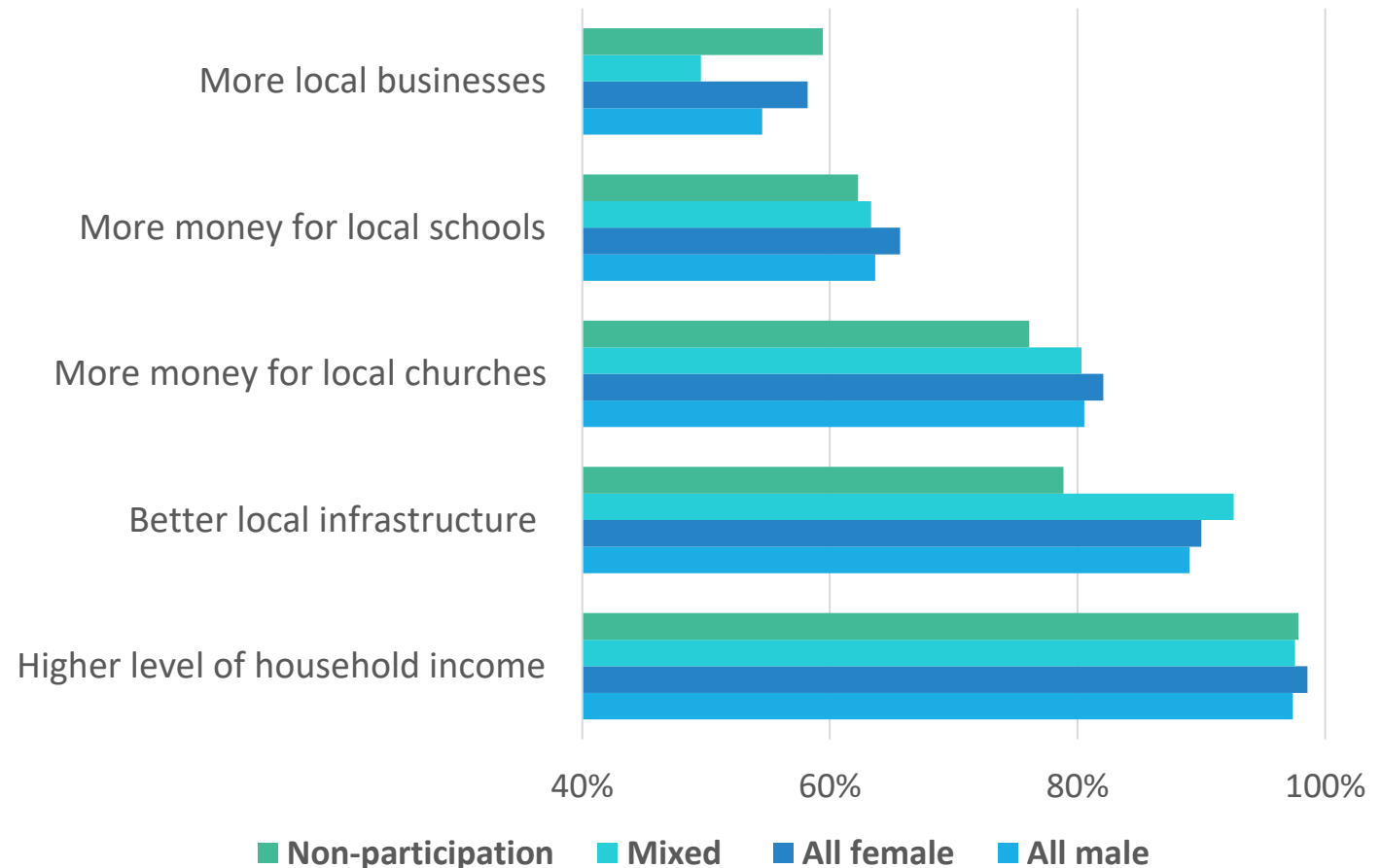
“I want to thank the program because there are many families benefitting from it and the program is beautiful. The problem depends on the individual and the program should continue as there are people out there that need and rely on it.” Family member of worker, Tonga



LM improves living standards of HHs and communities

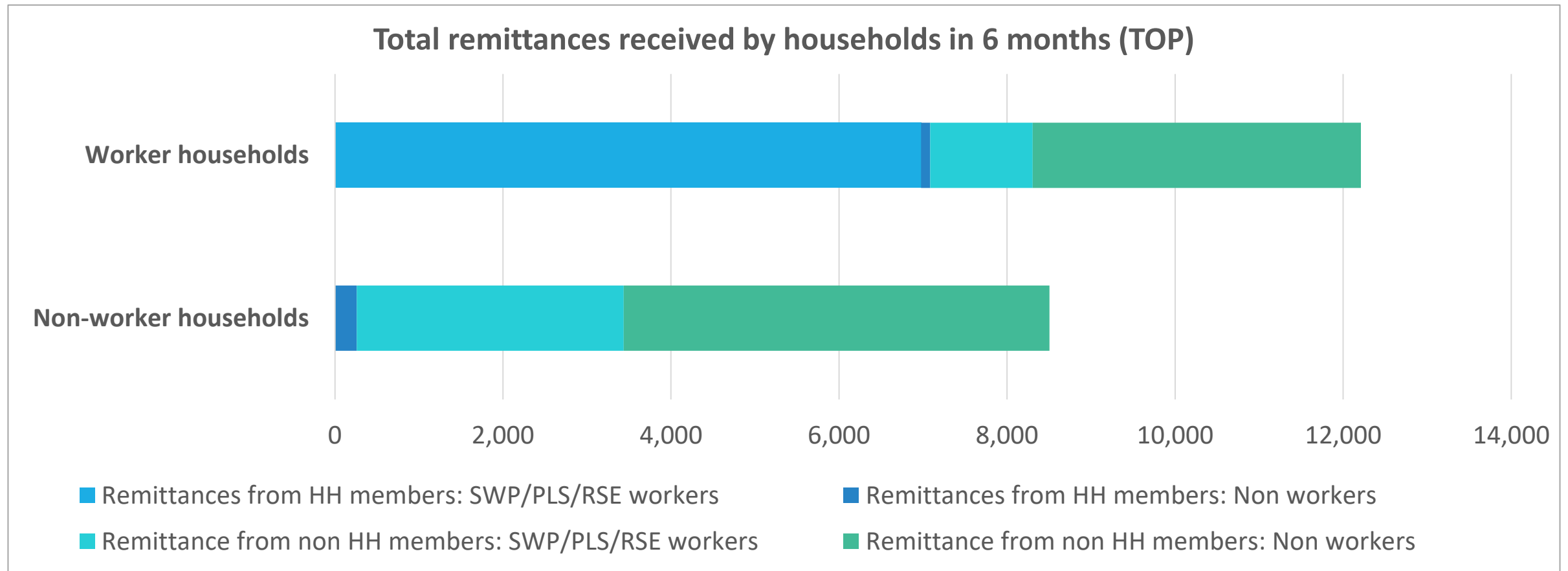
- ❖ Establishment of small businesses by some workers e.g. sewing, canteens etc.
- ❖ Men and women both provided financial support to families and communities.
- ❖ Women considered more focused on family needs and sometimes better financial managers than men.
- ❖ Community disapproval when money used for 'selfish' reasons.

Perceived economic benefits of LM, Tonga



Remittances support workers' households as well as others in the community

Evidence from Tonga suggests that temporary migrant workers remit not only to their own households, but also to others in their communities, including households that do not participate in labour mobility schemes.



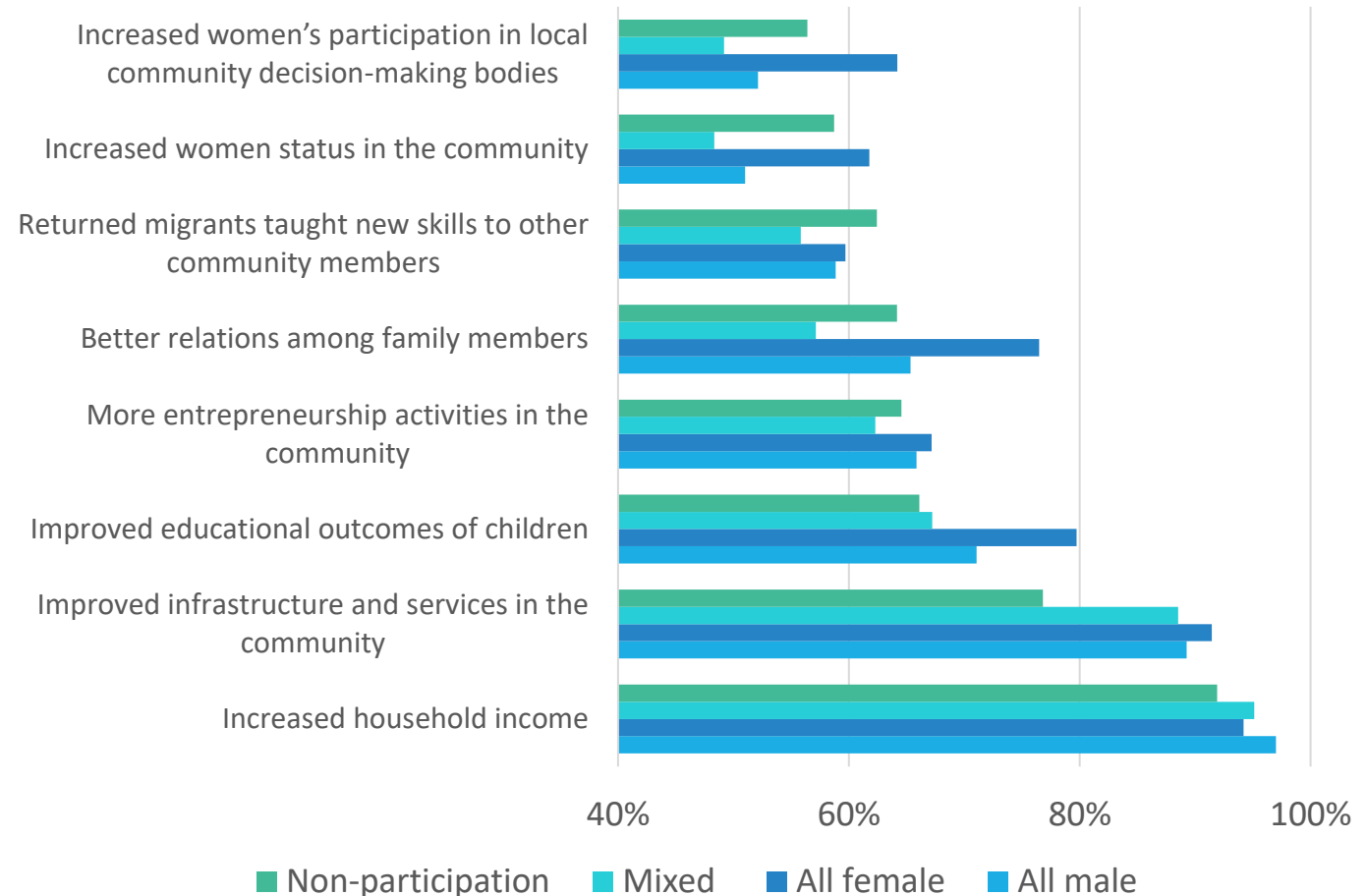
LM improves emotional well-being and leads to skills gains

- ❖ Increased self confidence, self esteem, agency and independence (women).

“It has changed me a lot. It had made me strong. I have always been surrounded by my family, and coming here, I had to live on my own, which changed me to become a strong woman and be independent.” Female ni-Vanuatu worker

- ❖ New skills: job specific skills as well as English language, time management, financial management and leadership (some gendered differences).

Perceived social benefits of LM, Tonga



LM increases women's decision-making power

- ❖ Many women reported increased control of HH income and greater involvement in HH decision making after LM.

“Whenever I can't make any decision on any issues, she sometimes decides for both of us, her mindset had been changed by participating in seasonal work.” Husband of Tongan worker

“I control my household expenditure in Kiribati by limiting the money I send back home.” Female i-Kiribati worker

- ❖ But ingrained belief among some women that men should be ‘in control’.

“They [female workers] have greater control over their finances and what they want to do in life. In my opinion, I disagree because I think taking control over her husband is not a good thing. It is not a good idea for wives to overwrite their husband's leadership.” Female ni-Vanuatu worker



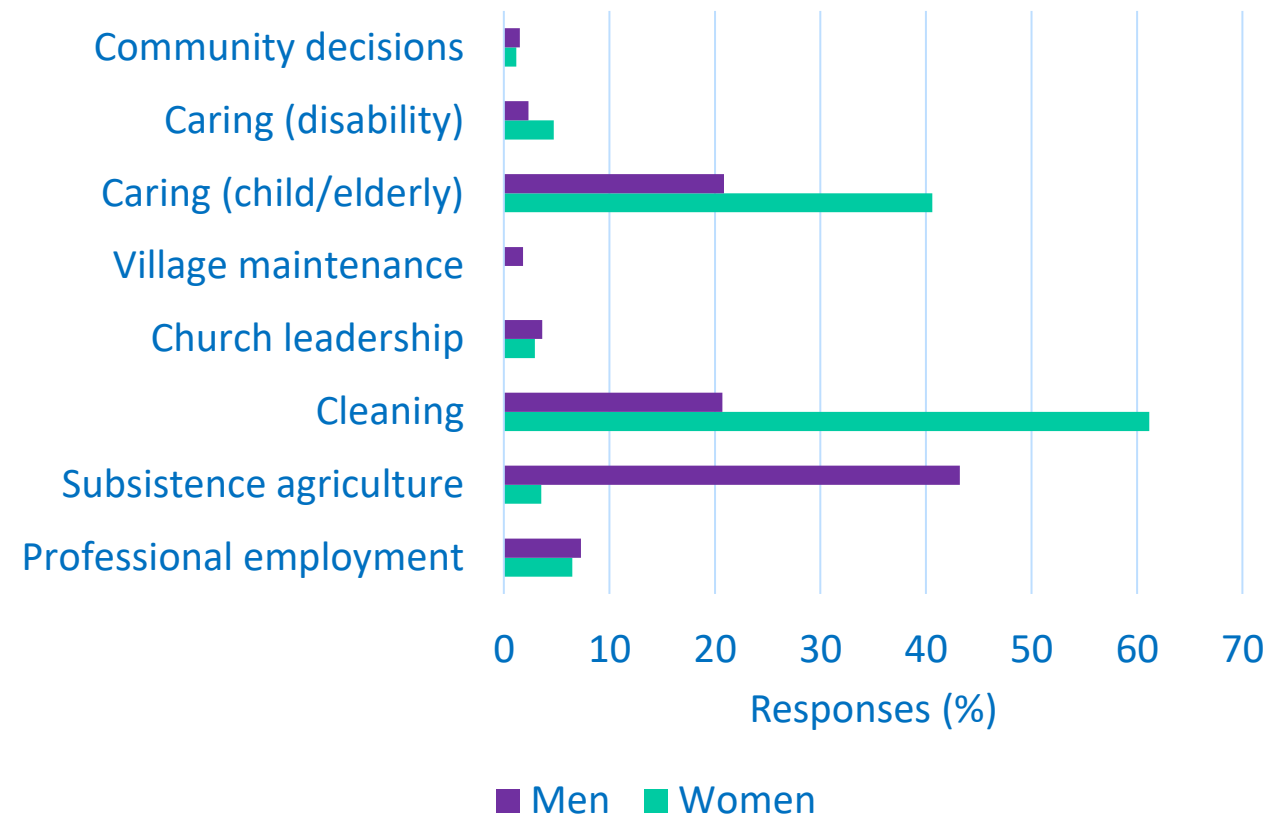
LM increases workloads of remaining household members (especially women) and affects the gendered division of labour

- ❖ Increased workloads for those at home when a HH member migrates (but no complaints).
- ❖ Spouses & children most likely to replace lost labour.
- ❖ Sharing of domestic responsibilities when women migrate (Tonga and Kiribati).

“Men share more in our chores and responsibilities.”
Female Tongan worker

“Before, mum did most of the cooking and washing, but after she participated, we are all sharing chores equally and tending to our own laundry.” Family member of worker, Vanuatu

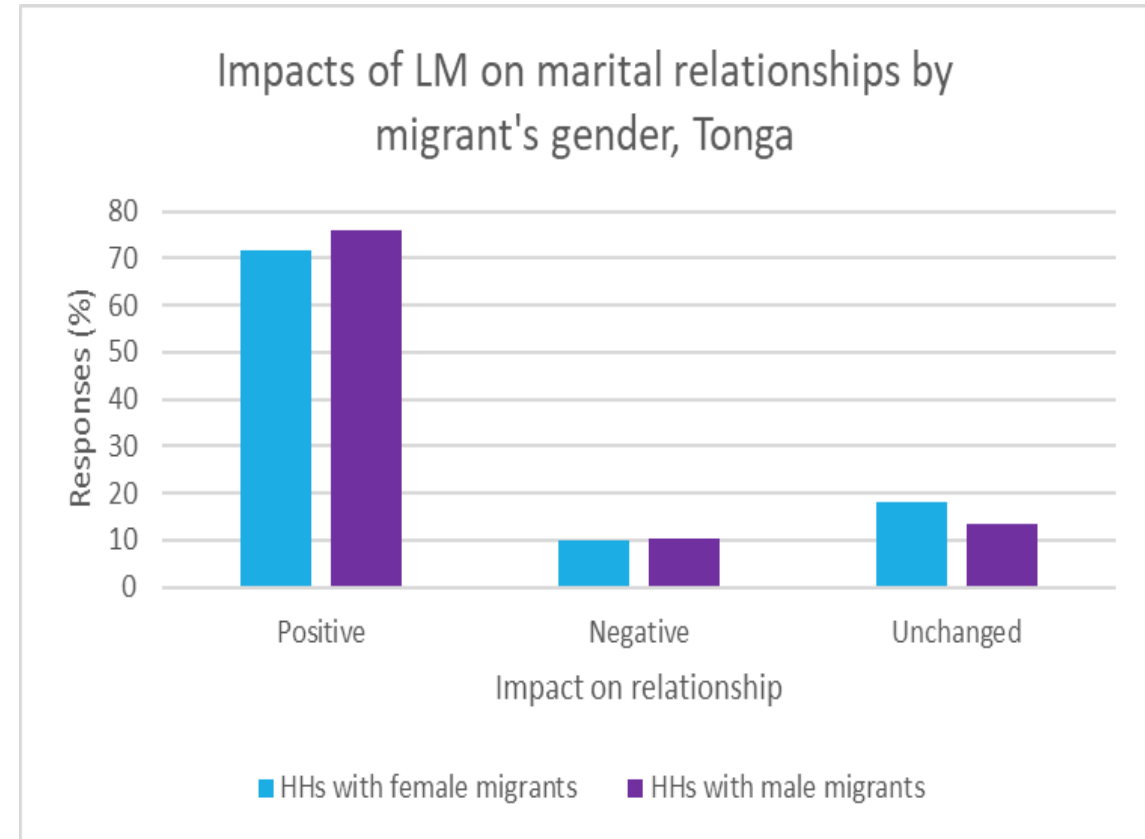
Workers' roles prior to participation in LM, Tonga



Labour mobility has mixed impacts on family relationships

- ❖ In some cases, labour mobility strengthened family relationships thanks to decreased financial stress & regular communication while worker is away.
 - ❖ Communication sometimes difficult with outer islands.
- ❖ Homesickness while away (especially women).
- ❖ Weakened relationships with children (mainly women).
- ❖ Family breakdown - affairs more problematic when women have them.

“I see the problem caused by women especially married women because when I was overseas, I would meet married women in different places, so a lot of family breakups happen due to women going on seasonal work.” Female Tongan worker



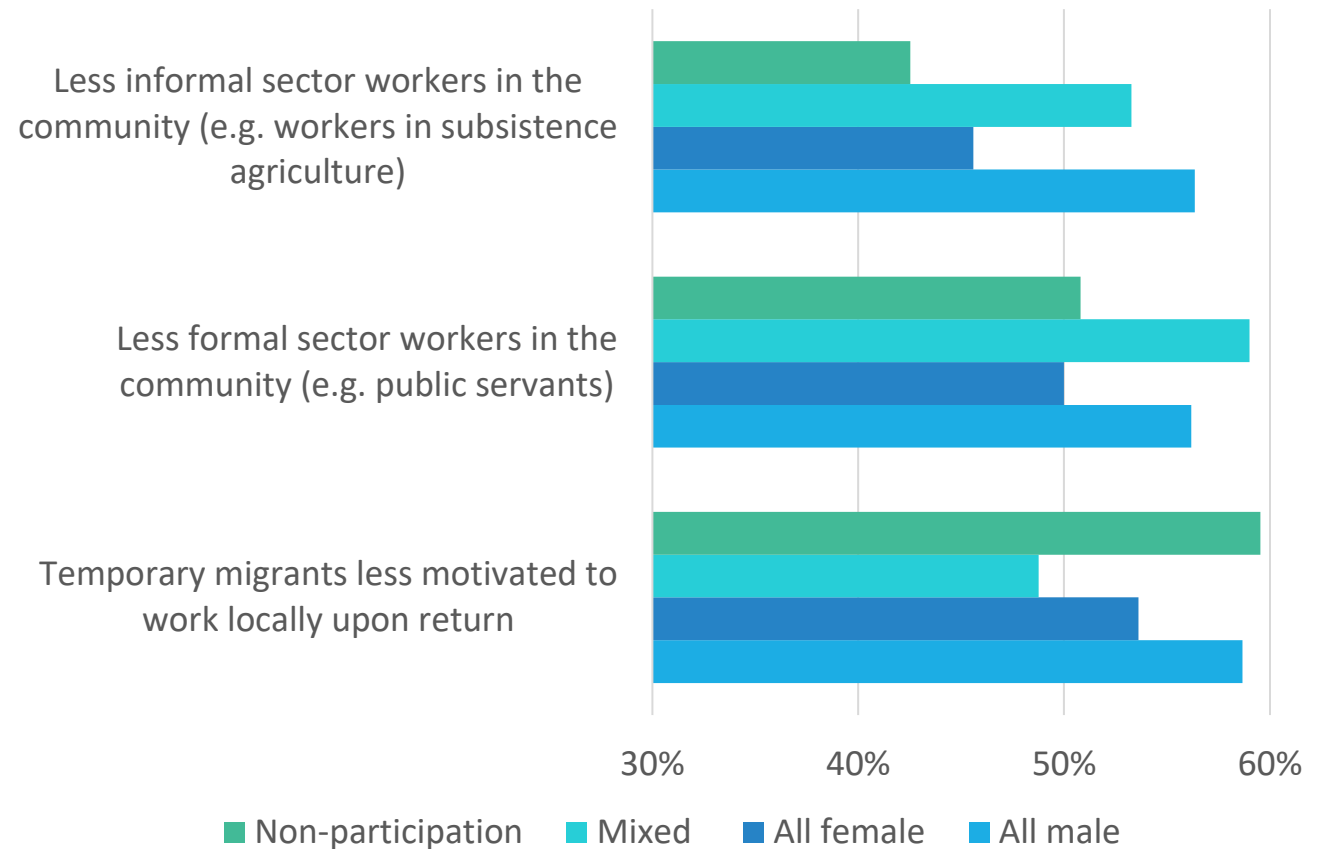
There are concerns over lost labour

❖ Some localised labour shortages in home communities.

“Currently, the community is running short of young people, male and female... And now we don’t have enough people to do our community work.” Key informant, Vanuatu

“[Workers] are not here for the planting seasons, so we that are left behind plant for them, and when they return, they just harvest, and when it is time to plant again, they are ready to travel out.” Key informant, Vanuatu

Perceived economic disadvantages of LM, Tonga

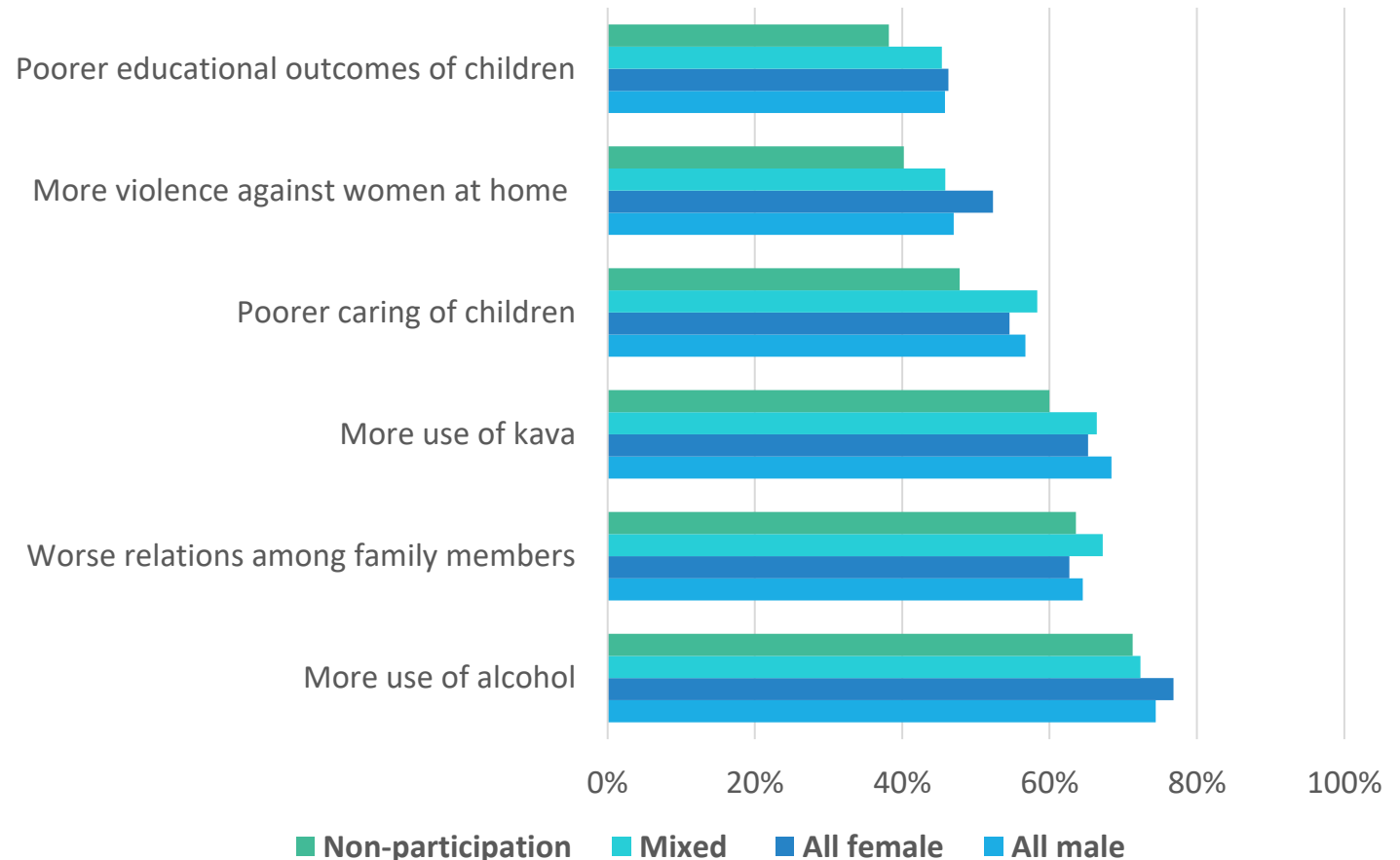


There are also some negative social impacts

- ❖ Higher disposable income has led to concerns over shift towards purchased foods and consequent loss of *kastom* (culture), especially in Vanuatu.
- ❖ Some women reported that LM enable them to leave abusive relationships (Vanuatu), but mixed responses re: gender violence.
- ❖ Increased substance use and abuse (men).
- ❖ Some female workers targeted by gossip upon return home.

“Men will experience this differently and, in my opinion, men don’t face any problem, but for women, the community will gossip about women being more independent.” Female ni-Vanuatu worker

Perceived social problems arising from LM, Tonga



Summary of key findings

- ❖ Labour mobility brings financial benefits to communities and households through income and skills gains.
- ❖ Women who participate in labour mobility can experience increased financial independence, self confidence, self esteem, agency and independence.
- ❖ Impacts on families and communities are mixed, suggesting the need for more interventions to address potential social issues e.g. *Famili i Redi* in Vanuatu.
- ❖ (Deeper and more comprehensive results will be available next year.)



Thank You

