

# GENDER & COVID-19: ECONOMIC OUTCOMES AND TIME USE

Economic, educational and time use outcomes among adolescent and young adults in Nairobi during the COVID-19 pandemic

November 2020



## Why This Matters

- The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated livelihoods and education globally. The restrictions on movement and closures of schools and workplaces to mitigate risk of transmission can cause profound economic and educational disruption, particularly for adolescents and young adults who are completing school and transitioning to self-sufficiency.
- Gender imbalances in the economic impact of COVID-19 may have serious effects on Nairobi youth, and may especially amplify the economic disadvantages of young women.
- School closures together with economic pressures can prompt youth to enter the labor force early, pitting short-term economic goals against longer-term training and economic achievement.
- Youth are a critical population during this time with gender-differentiated needs for support. Young

women may face substantial economic risks from the COVID-19 pandemic that prompt financial dependence on male partners.

- Young people face gender differences in time use and time substitution, reflective of traditional gender roles (i.e. income generation for men and caregiving for women). For young women, COVID-19 may prompt increased household and caregiving responsibilities, which impede access to education and employment.

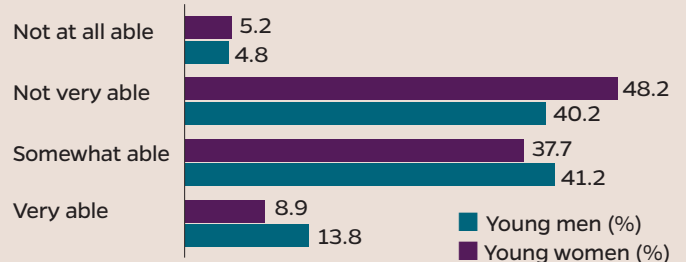
## Spotlight on Gender Analysis

A gender analysis is critical, inclusive of gender-stratified quantitative analysis and attention to gendered social and economic power dynamics, norms, and underlying inequities.

## Key Findings: Inability to Meet Basic Needs

An estimated 53.4% of young women and 45.0% of young men were not at all able or not very able to meet basic needs since the COVID-19 restrictions began (Figure 1). Only 13.8% of men and 8.9% of women report being very able to meet basic needs. Young women are significantly more likely to report not being able to meet basic needs.

**Figure 1.** Ability to meet basic needs of food, healthcare, toiletries



“ You find that a member of the family maybe used to work in a certain industry... **then due to this COVID-19 they lose their jobs... So the breadwinner becomes one person [instead of having two]** so challenges are many in the house... Shopping for food for the house, everything has just changed... **You may find even that in some families both the breadwinners have lost their jobs.** ”  
 - 15-year-old male FGD participant

**When reporting on their households, 13.9% of youth reported that at least one male household member had fewer or no meals since the start of COVID-19. For women, this number jumped to 18.9%.**

## Key Findings: Disruptions to School and Employment

Preceding the COVID-19 mitigation measures, the majority of young people were either in school or working informally in the gig economy (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Pre-COVID activity by gender

	Young women %	Young men %
Employed in the formal economy	11.5	9.2
Working in the informal/gig economy	26.4	37.1
Student	40.2	33.7
Working in home/caregiver	4.7	2.3
Self-employed	10.5	15.0

School closures were implemented as a pandemic mitigation measure, affecting all youth in school. In terms of economic disruption, 93.4% of young people (93.8% of women, 94.5% of men) experienced either disruption to their formal employment or to their informal income generation. There were no significant differences in specific economic disruptions between genders (Table 2).

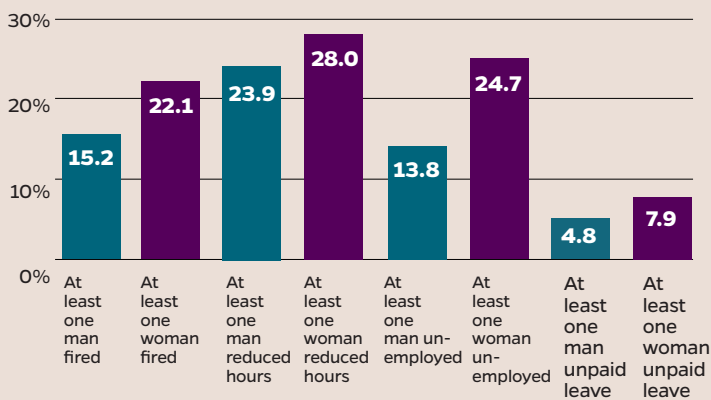
**Table 2.** Economic disruptions during COVID-19, by gender

	Young women %	Young men %
Disruption to any income generation	93.8	94.5
Disruption to formal employment	84.4	80.4
Disruption to informal income generation	96.9	97.3
Laid off from employment	17.6	23.4
Workplace closed due to COVID-19 restrictions	68.8	76.5
Informal work or self-employed work closed	63.6	60.2
Lower demand for informal work	65.8	72.2
Faced barriers to physically traveling to work	6.5	5.9
Left work to care for children or relatives	5.2	0.0

“ I have seen after people losing their jobs mostly **there is a design they have started hustling. You find that even though children are not at school** there is a design they have started to look for themselves money. **They themselves are selling fruits on the road.** ”  
 - 19-year-old female FGD participant

Figure 2 displays employment changes to a participant’s household members. For example, 22.1% of participants reported that at least one female household member was fired since COVID began, while only 15.2% of participants report that at least one male household member was fired since COVID began. Overall, while not statistically significant, the women in youths’ households were more affected by furlough, reduced hours, or unemployment.

**Figure 2.** Household impacts and hardships during COVID-19, by gender



# Key Findings: Gender Differences In Economic Reliance

When asked about changes in dependence from before to after COVID-19 restrictions began,



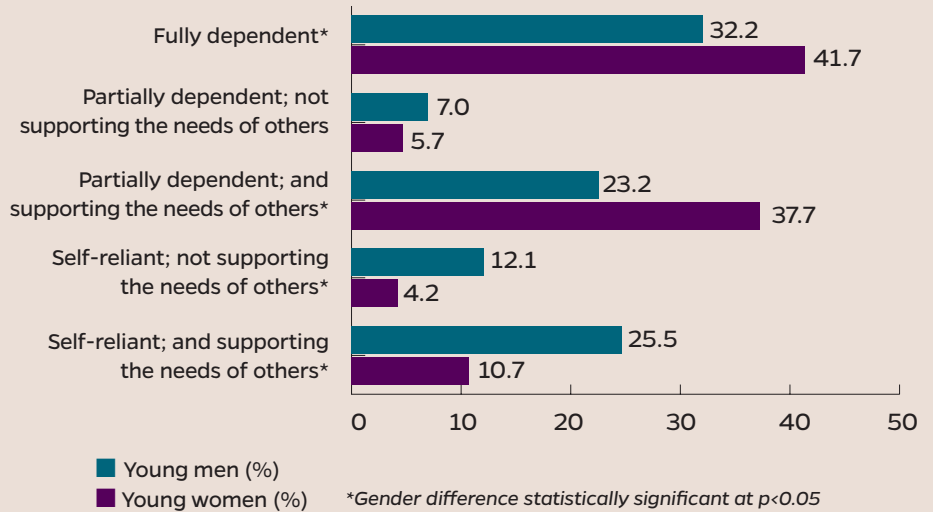
**54.0%** of young women reported an increase in financial reliance on others, compared to



**36.2%** of young men ( $p < 0.001$ ).

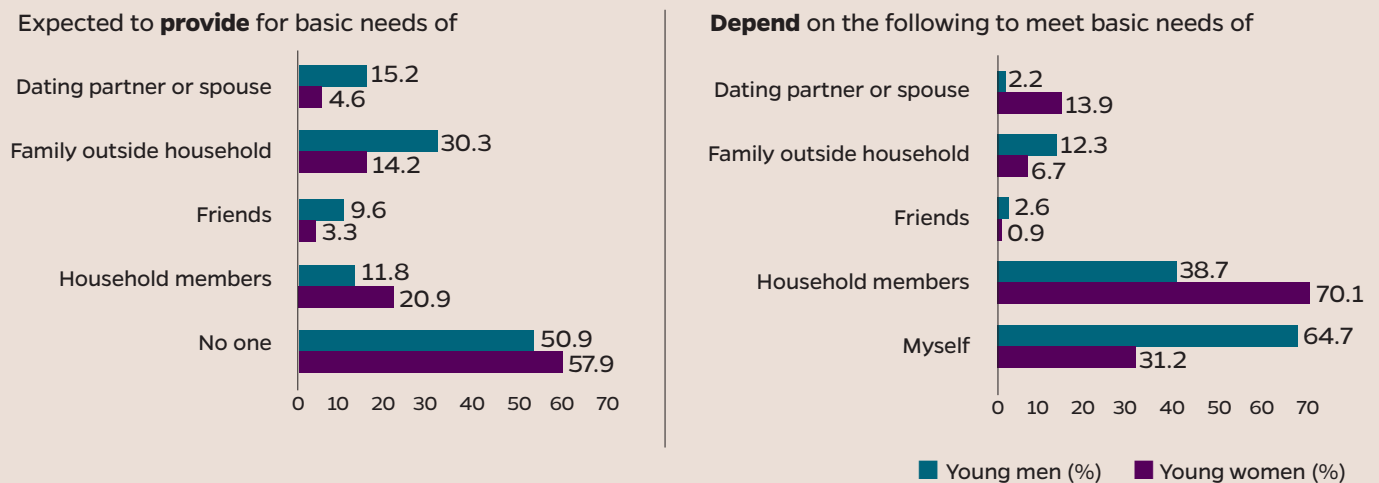
Despite gender similarities in disruptions to education and employment, economic dependence in the COVID-era differs by gender. Overall, young men are more likely to be self-sufficient and in provider roles than young women, and young women are more likely to be in a situation where they are either fully dependent on others, both providing for others and accepting support from others simultaneously.

**Figure 3.** Dependence and provision of economic needs among young men and women



Economic reliance on dating/marital partners was highly gendered with young men more likely to provide for (15.2%) and young women more likely to depend on partners (13.9%), as shown in Figure 4.

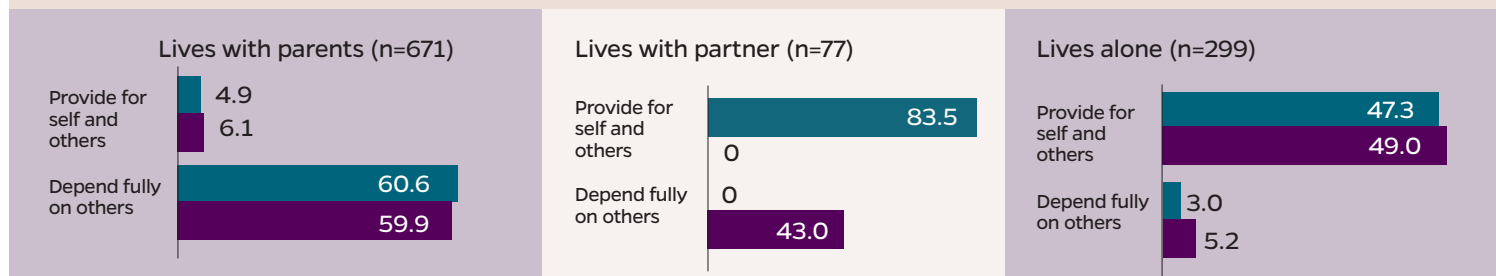
**Figure 4.** Nature of economic provision and dependence, by gender



Patterns of economic reliance and provision varied by living situations. A greater portion of young men were living alone as compared with young women (47.9% vs. 6.3%), while young women were more likely to live with parents (66.4% vs 36.0% among young men), and a smaller portion living with a partner (4.1% of young men; 10% of young women).

**Figure 5.** Dependence and provision of economic needs by living situation

■ Young men (%)  
■ Young women (%)



## Key Findings: Gender Differences in Time Use

Significant gender differences were identified in time use following school closures and economic disruptions. On a typical COVID-era day, overall, young women reported higher average daily hours spent on caregiving and housework and a smaller number on income generation as compared with young men (Table 5). These patterns remain when looking at only young people who were previously working or only young people who were previously in school. For example, on average in a given day, young women spend 1.76 more hours on caregiving than young men do.

**More young women than young men report their household responsibilities increased substantially during the pandemic time.**

42.2%

Young women

31.6%

Young men

**Table 3.** Average difference in current daily time use (hours), by gender

Activity	Young women	Young men	Difference in hours (Women - Men)
<b>Overall (n =1217)</b>			
Caregiving	2.50	0.74	1.76**
Housework	2.15	1.43	0.72**
Gathering supplies	1.00	0.81	0.19**
Schoolwork	1.75	1.95	-0.20**
Working	1.85	3.72	-1.87**
<b>Among those earning income pre-COVID (n = 615)</b>			
Caregiving	2.13	0.52	1.61**
Housework	1.99	1.46	0.53**
Gathering supplies	1.10	0.88	0.22*
Schoolwork	0	0	n/a
Working	2.95	4.92	-1.97**
<b>Among those in school pre-COVID (n = 497)</b>			
Caregiving	2.68	1.09	1.59**
Housework	2.10	1.34	0.76**
Gathering supplies	0.84	0.66	0.18**
Schoolwork	1.75	1.95	-0.20**
Working	0.92	1.50	-0.58

\* difference statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$

\*\* difference statistically significant at  $p < 0.001$

Table 4 displays average daily hours spent on activities by household contexts.

- Young women spend more time than young men on caretaking and housework across a range of economic and living situations; their time spent on caregiving and on housework was highest for those living with children.
- Young men's time on paid work exceeded that for young women across a range of economic and living situations. Young men's time on paid work was highest among those who were economic providers.



**Table 4.** Average daily hours spent by gender, by economic status and household contexts

	Hours caretaking		Hours housework		Hours schoolwork		Hours paid work		Hours gathering water/food	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
<b>Ability to meet basic needs</b>										
Able to meet basic needs	<b>2.02</b>	<b>0.76</b>	<b>1.96</b>	<b>1.38</b>	2.01	2.40	<b>2.41</b>	<b>3.63</b>	0.94	0.74
Unable to meet basic needs since	<b>2.81</b>	<b>0.82</b>	<b>2.24</b>	<b>1.29</b>	<b>1.42</b>	<b>2.36</b>	<b>1.48</b>	<b>2.70</b>	<b>1.01</b>	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Economic status</b>										
Father figure contributes majority of the income	<b>2.40</b>	<b>1.06</b>	<b>2.15</b>	<b>1.24</b>	2.14	2.53	1.26	1.58	<b>1.03</b>	<b>0.66</b>
Mother figure contributes majority of income	<b>2.48</b>	<b>1.08</b>	2.11	1.34	<b>1.58</b>	<b>2.42</b>	1.63	1.69	0.92	0.76
Economic provider	1.20	0.59	1.81	1.35	0.60	1.73	4.51	5.19	<b>1.05</b>	<b>0.77</b>
Economic dependent	<b>2.55</b>	<b>1.08</b>	<b>2.04</b>	<b>1.25</b>	<b>1.84</b>	<b>2.85</b>	0.77	0.81	0.94	0.73
<b>Living situations</b>										
Lives alone	1.25	0.40	<b>2.14</b>	<b>1.47</b>	0.75	1.65	<b>3.31</b>	<b>4.83</b>	0.91	0.76
Lives with parent(s) / parental figure(s) with or without other(s)	<b>2.40</b>	<b>1.04</b>	<b>2.13</b>	<b>1.23</b>	<b>1.86</b>	<b>2.49</b>	1.71	1.65	0.99	0.72
Lives with partner with or without other(s), excluding parents	<b>3.48</b>	<b>1.13</b>	<b>2.16</b>	<b>1.09</b>	0.33	0.00	<b>1.72</b>	<b>4.74</b>	0.97	0.80
Living with children	<b>4.33</b>	<b>1.00</b>	2.22	1.43	1.20	0	<b>1.91</b>	<b>3.86</b>	0.91	0.71

\*bolded if significant difference between male and female hours

\*darker shading indicates increased hours spent

Qualitative data speak to how young people respond to changes in time use in ways not captured in the survey. Concern emerged that young men, who have fewer caretaking and housework responsibilities, have taken on various money-making tactics that can be dangerous. Youth discussed the risks for engaging in criminal behavior:

“ Okay because **we don't have any much of responsibilities both in the house or both in the academic sector, you find that boys [are] engaging in like taking drugs**, you see, bad company and stuff... you find that the boys are idle they are in the house may be... he meets with some bad boys then he ends up, you know falling into bad behaviours.

– 15-year-old male FGD participant

## Action Steps

- The economic disruptions of COVID-19 affect adolescents and young adults across the spectrum of economic dependence to self-sufficiency.
  - Young women face more barriers to self-sufficiency than young men.
- The gender differences in time use during COVID-19 reflect gendered roles, and may have long-term economic implications for both men and women.
  - Among youth earning income pre-COVID, young women spent significantly less time working and more time on caregiving and household work relative to young men on an average day during the COVID pandemic, consistent with concerns for gendered substitution of time use.
- The relatively greater hours more young women engaged in caregiving and household responsibilities appears to detract from economic activity which may have long-term implications for skill development and labor force participation.
- Economic gender disparities could be worsened over time as a result of these patterns. Young women need sustained economic supports to address these risks.
- For young men, a substitution of time from education to the labor force may similarly stunt longer-term economic growth.
- Local organizations and stakeholders must continue to prioritize economic empowerment programs for young people, particularly young women.

## Methods

In 2019, Performance Monitoring for Action (PMA) Agile carried out a Youth Respondent-Driven Sampling Survey (YRDSS) among adolescents and youth ages 15-24 (N=1357, male N=690 and female N=664) in Nairobi, Kenya between June and August. In 2020, a fully remote follow-up study was conducted with the study cohort (now ages 16-26) to track changes in contraceptive dynamics, and assess the gendered impact of COVID-19. The quantitative surveys were conducted by phone in two distinct sessions to limit participant burden: YRDSS Follow-up (N=1223, male N=610 and female N=613) and Gender/COVID-19 Survey (N=1217, male N=605 and female N=612). Sampling weights accommodate the RDS study design, post-estimation adjustment and non-response

adjustment. Virtual qualitative methods included focus group discussions (FGDs) with unmarried youth ages 15-24 (N=64, over 8 groups), FGDs with youth-serving stakeholders (N=32, over 4 groups), and key informant interviews with higher-level stakeholders (N=12). Data collection was conducted from August to October 2020.

## Suggested Citation

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