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Research

# BASELINE STUDY

**EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD PROGRAMME FOR  
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT - GEORGIA  
(ENPARD III) - SUPPORT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
LIVELIHOODS IN DISADVANTAGED RURAL REGIONS OF  
GEORGIA (APRIL 2019)**



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## Contents

<i>List of figures in the main report</i> .....	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	3
INTRODUCTION .....	6
BACKGROUND.....	8
METHODOLOGY .....	14
RESULTS.....	17
SOCIO ECONOMIC BACKGROUND .....	17
INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE.....	18
SERVICE DELIVERY.....	25
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES .....	30
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	47
REFERENCES .....	50
APPENDIX 1: LOGFRAME .....	52
APPENDIX 2: GENDER AND DIVERSITY BRIEF.....	53
APPENDIX 3: DIAGRAMS - DATA.....	61
APPENDIX 4: FREQUENCIES AND GENDER DISAGGREGATED DATA .....	86
APPENDIX 5: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS .....	87

### *List of figures in the main report*

Figure 1: Table describing regression types.....	15
Figure 2: Table describing qualitative data collected.....	16
Figure 3: Income by source.....	18
Figure 4: Participation in social entities.....	19
Figure 5: Reasons for not participating in associations.....	20
Figure 6: Probability of having contacted with municipality in the last 12 months.....	22
Figure 7: Assessment of government performance.....	23
Figure 8: People in local government represent the views of people like me.....	24
Figure 9: Access to services.....	25
Figure 10: Number of services available by group status.....	26
Figure 11: Who people would approach to deal with issues.....	28
Figure 12: Businesses per capita.....	30
Figure 13: Share of households reporting they own different kinds of animals.....	33
Figure 14: Average number of animals owned per household.....	33
Figure 15: Obstacles to raising animals.....	34
Figure 16: Reasons for not engaging in agriculture.....	35
Figure 17: Input purchases for tourism businesses.....	36
Figure 18: Purchase of agricultural products.....	37
Figure 19: Where and who agricultural products are sold.....	37
Figure 20: Refer to products as local.....	38
Figure 21: Main breadwinner.....	39
Figure 22: Attitudes towards women and earning money.....	40
Figure 23: Asset ownership.....	41
Figure 24: Asset ownership by sex.....	42
Figure 25: Household responsibilities.....	43
Figure 26: Who is in charge of the following in your household? By Sex.....	43
Figure 27: Who is responsible for/makes decisions about.....	45

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) started the “Implementing LEADER in Mestia municipality for better livelihoods in high mountainous regions of Georgia” in 2019. The project aims to improve the livelihoods of vulnerable households in Mestia Municipality, a remote high mountainous region of Georgia. The project aims to support both economic and social well-being. To do so, the project will attempt to improve the diversification and competitiveness of the rural economy, the inclusion of vulnerable groups, and the sustainable management of natural resources in Mestia Municipality. The LEADER approach, which the project takes, uses a bottom-up approach to rural development. The project will be implemented over the course of four years, concluding in February 2022.

In support of this goal, CARE commissioned the Caucasus Research Resource Centers Georgia (CRRG Georgia) to carry out a gendered political economy analysis as a baseline report. The results of the baseline data collection activities are presented in this report. The research project aims to look into three broad areas within Mestia Municipality including inclusive governance, service delivery, and markets. To provide data on these subjects, the project used a mixed methods approach, including: desk research, focus groups, key informant interviews, and a survey.

The studies findings lead to a number of conclusions and recommendations. They are presented below according to subject matter.

## **Inclusive governance**

With inclusive governance people engage with the local government more than any other available forum. People assess its performance relatively positively regardless of whether they have engaged with it in the last year or not, which about a third of the public has. Nearly no one is engaged with third sector organizations, and people are rarely part of other types of membership organization. This suggests that the easiest entry point to engage people will be local government, since people are already in contact with their municipality.

People believe that the relatively difficult circumstances of everyday life lead to low levels of civic engagement. Hence, showing the tangible value of engagement is likely pre-requisite for increasing civic engagement and thus making governance more inclusive. Hence, it is recommended that the project attempt to show how people will tangibly benefit from the project in order to encourage their participation.

Another barrier to participation that shows up in the survey is the fact that people report there are no groups to join in their community. This fact may suggest the need to help organize the population or provide incentives for the formation of local groups if participation is wanted outside of local government. At the same time, any incentives should be designed to ensure the long-term sustainability of groups, and that groups do not disappear following the end of a funding period. As a general good practice, CARE might consider encouraging gender balance and inclusion of vulnerable groups in the local action group the project is creating or any other organization the institution creates or encourages the creation of. At the same time, the organization should avoid tying incentives solely to vulnerable group inclusion as it has the potential to incentivize the artificial inclusion of vulnerable groups. Clearly, if CARE helps set up an

NGO (s) in the region, this/these organizations should avoid antagonizing the government. Assuming CARE follows the LEADER approach and past examples of LAG's this is unlikely to be an issue, however, as these models seek local government buy in.

The lack of spaces generally speaking that could be used for community events and accessible spaces for people with disabilities specifically were noted as potential barriers to community engagement. Based on this it is recommended that the project encourage policy that makes spaces available to the public. A simple albeit temporary solution to pilot such an initiative would be making whatever office space CARE is using in Mestia available for meetings during specific times of the week or day.

### **Service delivery**

When it comes to services, most people in Mestia municipality have access to most of the services asked about on the survey. Drainage systems; culture and entertainment; and public transport are the services people have the weakest access to. Although people have access to a variety of services, the quality of these services varies according to qualitative data. This suggests that the project on the one hand should aim to improve the situation around these least accessible services as well as improve the quality of already accessible services. Rather than doing so through direct service delivery, however, for the project's results to be sustainable policy change at the local level should be prioritized.

People in rural areas are significantly less likely to have access to most services asked about. People with people with disabilities in their households also have significantly weaker access to services. This suggests these two groups are in greater need of support and hence the project should aim to support these groups. Although short term service delivery would be positive, the project should attempt to encourage policy change at the local level since this can institutionalize positive changes made during the course of the project.

The population generally report that they would engage their local government if they encountered service delivery issues. People with people with disabilities in their household and internally displaced people are more likely to address the central government in cases of issues with services. This likely stems from central government providing services specifically to both these groups. Nonetheless, the local government is often the appropriate actor to address to resolve these issues. Hence, a communications campaign and information provision on which authorities can deal with which problems, particularly for people with disabilities and the internally displaced would likely result in better service delivery through decreased time spent addressing inappropriate institutions.

### **Economic opportunities**

In terms of markets, on an absolute scale there are a small number of businesses in Mestia municipality. However, the data indicate the number of businesses per capita is comparable to other rural areas in Georgia.

When it comes to tourism, about 16% of households have a tourism business, most of which are guesthouses or hotels. These businesses are concentrated in more developed areas. Less developed communities in Mestia municipality think appropriate infrastructure should be developed to encourage tourism in their areas. This suggests that if the project supports the development of the tourism economy

and aims to support the least served population, then it should focus on developing tourism outside Mestia and Ushguli. At the same time, the project may not have adequate resources to achieve this as support to developing markets is a relatively intensive activity, particularly if a conducive infrastructural environment is not available. Hence, the project should consider the strategy it can pursue most fruitfully given realistic limitations on resources.

About half of the households in Mestia report they are engaged in agriculture, and about 30% of households are engaged in commercially oriented agriculture. Although only half of households report they are engaged in agriculture, 75% report having agricultural animals. This finding falls in line with the fact that in focus groups, people reported that almost everyone was engaged in some form of agricultural activity. The main challenge to raising animals is reported to be animal diseases. The most common reason for not engaging in agriculture is a lack of land.

A plurality of businesses get supplies and sell products in the town of Mestia, and a majority refer to their products as local when talking to customers. This generally suggests a reasonable level of access to markets for agricultural producers and tourism operators. A plurality of people sell and purchase goods locally in Mestia municipality. Few people report access to markets as a problematic issue for their business. Although access to markets appears to be reasonably well, if the project is going to work towards agricultural development, it should consider attempting to further improve access to markets as Mestia is a remote municipality. Hence, transport costs inhibit its agricultural products from being competitive outside the region. This fact combined with the short growing season and lack of arable lands in the region suggest that focusing on local markets and using agricultural production as part of a tourism business may also be a good strategy to promote.

The data surrounding gender collected within the project generally suggests that men overestimate their role in household responsibilities, and think they have a greater role in the economic well-being of households, as is the case elsewhere (CRRC 2019). Men are more likely to have access to productive assets. There does not appear to be a gap between carrying out tasks and making decisions about them. This gap in perceptions likely suggests that men do not recognize how important women are in the well-being of households along these dimensions. Through highlighting this finding and increasing men's awareness, women's position in the community could be improved.

# INTRODUCTION

Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) started the “Implementing LEADER in Mestia municipality for better livelihoods in high mountainous regions of Georgia” in 2019. The project aims to improve the livelihoods of vulnerable households in Mestia Municipality, a remote high mountainous region of Georgia. The project aims to support both economic and social well-being. To do so, the project aims to improve the diversification and competitiveness of the rural economy, the inclusion of vulnerable groups, and the sustainable management of natural resources in Mestia Municipality. The LEADER approach, which the project takes, uses a bottom-up approach to rural development. The project will be implemented over the course of four years, concluding in February 2022.

In support of this goal, CARE commissioned the Caucasus Research Resource Centers Georgia (CRRC-Georgia) to carry out a baseline report and gendered political economy analysis. The results of the baseline data collection activities are presented in this report. The research project aims to look into three broad areas within Mestia Municipality including inclusive governance, service delivery, and markets. To explore these issues, the following research questions were posed by CARE:

## ***Inclusive governance***

- What forums exist for collaboration and interaction of citizens?
- To what extent are participants in LG bodies representative of the local population?
- To what extent are citizens representative of the local population within forums?
- Which groups are marginalized, vulnerable or excluded from decision-making processes, if any?

## ***Service delivery***

- Which services are provided to the local population and by which mechanisms?
- To what extent are the service delivery needs of different parts of the population being met by local authorities?
- How well do local authorities understand the local population's needs?

## ***Economic Opportunities***

- Which markets and local businesses exist in the location (market and local business mapping)?
- Which opportunities and challenges exist for market development and growth?
- Which opportunities and challenges exist for market development and growth as relates gender?

The above research questions are slightly modified forms of the research questions CARE put forward in the project’s terms of reference. CARE put forward the research questions with the goals of the LEADER project in mind.

To provide answers to the above research questions, the project used a mixed methods approach. CRRC-Georgia carried out a household survey representative of Mestia Municipality, including interviews with 484 individuals. The response rate was 65%. The survey’s average margin of error was 2.4%. Besides quantitative data collection, the organization carried out 15 focus groups, including 10 focused on gender related issues and 5 focused on inclusive governance. Ten key informant interviews were carried out with policy makers, NGO workers, and business people in the municipality.

This report is organized as follows. The next section provides background on Mestia municipality, inclusive governance, service delivery, and the economy in the region. The subsequent section provides an overview of the methodology used for the study. In the following section, the results of the study are presented, including chapters on inclusive governance, service delivery, and markets. The final section of the report presents conclusions and recommendations. In annex to the report, the baseline data, data collection instruments, survey results tables, and a gender and diversity brief are presented.

## BACKGROUND

Although Georgia's economy has grown substantially over the past decade, the income gap between rural and urban areas remains large, with rural households more likely to have consumption levels below the minimum subsistence level (Gassmann et al. 2013). Caucasus Barometer data from 2008 to 2017 shows that this pattern has been consistent over time. Residents of mountain regions tend to face additional challenges due to their remoteness, harsh conditions, and limited opportunities, leading to increases in migration to urban areas although time series data on the subject is not available to assess the extent of these challenges to the best of the research team's knowledge as compared with other rural areas.

In Georgia's mountain regions, including this project's focus area of Zemo (Upper) Svaneti, unemployment and low levels of income are generally considered the largest problems (UN Women 2014). A large proportion of the population engages in low-productivity agriculture oriented towards subsistence (Gassmann et al. 2013). Farmers in these regions face additional barriers to accessing markets due to poor infrastructure and the scale of their operations. Most families have the experience of using short-term credit to meet basic needs like food and fuel (UN Women 2014). In addition, large education gaps exist between rural and urban areas (Gassmann et al. 2013).

In Upper Svaneti, a household survey conducted in 2011 found that most households earn income from more than one source, engaging in diversified strategies in order to mitigate against income shocks (Kemkes 2015). For many households, the largest share of income comes from livestock. This is followed by wage employment, which only about half of households engaged in. The survey also found that less than one percent of households had any annual savings, underscoring most residents' vulnerability to economic shocks.

The tourism industry, which has grown dramatically in certain parts of Svaneti over the past decade, increasingly provides an alternative income source for families who have turned part of their homes into a guesthouse or operate another type of tourism business (Capucci et al. 2015). Tourism is not new in Svaneti; it was a popular mountaineering destination during the USSR, but became a "no-go" zone during the period between independence and the 2003 revolution (Voll and Mosedale 2015). However, investment in Mestia as well as the general popularity of nature tourism among travelers to Georgia (among international visitors to Georgia in 2018, 37 percent "visited nature" according to data from the Georgian National Tourism Administration) has helped put Svaneti on the tourist map (GNTA). Four-season tourism related to the ski industry has also been increasing; between the ski seasons of 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, the number of visitors to Tetnuldi resort near Mestia increased by 122 percent (Georgian Journal 2018). In 2018, Samegrelo-ZemoSvaneti received \$42.8 million in foreign direct investment (GeoStat 2019a).

There is suggestive evidence that this increase in job opportunities and incomes has reversed the flow of outmigration from Svaneti and allowed more residents to earn a living in Svaneti (Capucci et al. 2015). However, most of the benefits of tourism have remained concentrated around the hub of Mestia and, to a lesser extent, the high-altitude village of Ushguli.

### **Government policies and projects for mountain development**

Over the past four years, the government of Georgia has renewed its focus on the development of high mountain regions. However, this is not a new effort: Georgia's first law on mountain regions was accepted in 1999, which included some tax breaks for mountain residents and wage raises for teachers and public servants (Gassmann et al. 2013). In 2003, this was amended to the state law on "socio-economical and cultural development of high mountains," which prioritized investment to develop tourism infrastructure, cultural heritage (such as music and handicrafts), and electrical infrastructure (Gassmann et al. 2013).

In July 2016, the government's investment in mountain regions increased with the passing of the Mountain Law of Georgia (Agenda.ge 2016). This law aimed to stem the flow of rural-to-urban migration as people left their mountain villages to seek better employment opportunities in bigger cities, which has been nontrivial. In 2002, 164 Georgian villages were deserted and 74 villages had a population of 5 people or fewer (Democracy and Freedom Watch 2016). By 2014, estimates suggested that these numbers had increased to 223 abandoned villages and 157 villages with five or fewer inhabitants.

The 2016 law granted the status of being a "mountain settlement" to 1,730 settlements with over 300,000 residents (Papidze 2018). Residents of these settlements became eligible for a number of social benefits. This included increased social assistance: pensions and social assistance are 20 percent higher for mountain residents, and the state provides families with monthly assistance of 100 GEL for two years following the birth of a new child (increasing to 200 GEL per month starting with a family's third child). Mountain residents and businesses were also granted tax breaks such as exemption from income tax for residents with a salary below 6,000 GEL per annum, exemption from profit tax for 10 years, and permanent exemption from property tax. The state also increased wages for healthcare professionals and teachers in mountain regions (Papidze 2018).

In December 2018, the government further increased their focus on mountain regions with the release of a mountain development strategy for 2019-2023, which promised to spend an additional 66 million GEL on improving mountain infrastructure and living conditions (Papidze 2018). The strategy focuses on improved service delivery and initiatives to mitigate outmigration. This includes initiatives to aid tourism development, including the development of road infrastructure (both construction of new roads and repair of existing roads) and developing 4-season tourist infrastructure and service delivery (e.g. restoration of cultural monuments). It also includes investment in the agricultural industry, such as supporting small and medium enterprises and farming collectives, supporting the development of high-value agricultural products, and granting tax exemptions for agricultural products. Infrastructure improvements are also promised, such as improving energy access, waste management, and ICT systems. In addition to the existing subsidies for teachers and healthcare professionals, further spending is promised on education (focusing on infrastructure and access) and healthcare (focusing on facilities, access to emergency services, and increasing the number of healthcare workers). To improve awareness of public services, the government also plans to build out municipal websites and increase the number of public service centers (Papidze 2018).

In addition to the aforementioned government policies, a project designed in collaboration with the European Commission, Sweden, and the Austrian Development Agency titled "Green Economy: Sustainable Mountain Tourism & Organic Agriculture (GRETA)" aims to improve the business environment

and support new avenues of income generation, specifically in tourism and agriculture (Delegation of the EU to Georgia 2018). Among other things, the project aims to build capacity of travel and mountain guides and accommodation owners, to establish a national quality standard and control system for local tourism service providers, to harmonize Georgian organic legislation with EU organic legislation, and to strengthen capacity related to organic products at multiple points in the agricultural supply chain (Delegation of the EU to Georgia 2018).

### **Service delivery**

Despite the government's increased investment in mountain regions, including the focus area of ZemoSvaneti, there remains substantial gaps in basic service delivery. For example, a 2013 survey of mountain residents conducted by the Center for Social Sciences and UN Women found that 38% of respondents were in need of government social assistance, but still not receiving any financial aid (UN Women 2014). In addition, 5% of respondents reported that they have not received their pensions to which they are entitled. According to data from the National Statistics Office of Georgia, in 2018 there were 34,751 "helpless families" registered for the state subsistence allowance in Samegrelo-ZemoSvaneti, but only 14,597 families received this assistance (GeoStat 2019b). This suggests that despite the government's ambitious commitment to improving living conditions in mountain regions, many of these proposed benefits may not actually reach the intended population.

Physical infrastructure also poses issues. Many roads are in poor condition. As of 2018, approximately 400 villages in high-altitude areas remained without access to power (Papidze 2018). Infrastructure for healthcare and secondary education in villages remains limited. According to a UNDP report from 2013, although each village has a doctor who can provide first aid, there are no village pharmacies; people need to travel to cities to procure medicine (Gassmann et al. 2013). Although health insurance coverage has improved dramatically since the introduction of the Universal Health Coverage Programme (UHCP) in 2013, data suggests that there are still large discrepancies in coverage between rural areas and Tbilisi (Richardson and Berdzuli 2017). As for schools, although each village has a primary school, the distance a child needs to travel to secondary school can range between 8 to 12 kilometers (Gassmann et al. 2013). Many children also do not receive the quality of education they need in order to pass national exams.

### **Inclusive governance**

Across Georgia, local municipal councils (Sakrebulo) are one of the primary mechanisms of citizen engagement (Transparency International 2017). According to the Local Self-Government Code, citizens have the right to initiate draft resolutions via petitions, to convene Sakrebulo meetings, to hold a general assembly of a settlement, and to participate in drafting and reviewing municipal budgets. In addition, the Code obliges local officials to report on their work and provides for publicity of authorities' work (Transparency International 2017). According to the Local Self-Government Code, Sakrebulo should also have "gender equality councils" with the purpose of monitoring the gender equality situation and developing proposals to eliminate discrimination. In addition, traditional pre-Soviet governance structures of Svaneti survive to some degree and are an important means of resolving disputes within the community (Kemkes 2015).

In the Mestia municipality, the Sakrebulo is open to citizens every day from 10am - 6pm (Mestia Municipality). The Mestia Sakrebulo has its own website, where they post information including meeting

summaries, decisions, and links to relevant legislation. According to their contact information, they also have a hotline that citizens can call in addition to a standard phone number and email address. They also have an online “Letter of the City Council” form that citizens can submit. There is an active gender equality council.

Based on municipal data from the years 2015-2016, Transparency International (2017) found a low level of engagement with local government in Samegrelo-ZemoSvaneti. Over the reporting period, only 24 petitions were registered, and only some of these petitions were discussed in *Sakrebulo*s. Their analysis suggests that citizens primarily use the petition mechanism to request infrastructure improvements (such as outdoor lighting and road repair) rather than to seek any amendments to legal regulations.

## **Vulnerabilities**

### *Gender*

Traditional gender attitudes, which dictate that women’s primary role should be in the family, are strong in Svaneti. In a survey conducted in Georgia’s mountainous regions, 69% of respondents agreed with the traditional view that men should work outside the home and women should manage the household (UN Women 2014). Women also tend to have less access to resources than men. Due to inheritance traditions, it is much less common for women to own property relative to men, although there are no legal barriers to women’s ownership of property. Most women live with their husband or father and are not considered the owner of their home i.e. the male members of the household are thought to be the owners of the home regardless of the actual legal ownership status. When women earn personal income, it tends to be spent on family matters (UN Women 2014).

Labor migration is common among women in Svaneti. However, among migrants who move abroad, men tend to return, while women often stay abroad (UN Women 2014). Young women in particular tend to see their futures outside the region; many cite the lack of employment and higher education opportunities as a reason to move to Georgia’s bigger cities. Many girls also seem to feel restricted by social norms, expressing the desire to leave their families’ homes and villages in search of more freedom and personal development (UN Women 2014). However, some women also express the desire to stay and to establish opportunities in the region.

Women and girls tended to view women’s political participation positively (UN Women 2014). Many expressed views that women are more careful, diplomatic, and socially sensitive, and that an increase in women’s participation would make politics more humane.

The same report highlighted that a majority of women living in mountain settlements were not aware of key government programs and policies aimed at mountain development. In addition, many female respondents were not informed about their rights to request information on policies or budgets (UN Women 2014).

### *Internally Displaced Persons*

As of 2013, there were over 258 000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in Georgia as a result of the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia and the 2008 Georgian-Russian war (Gassmann et al. 2013). As of 2012, Samegrelo-ZemoSvaneti housed a third of the IDPs in Georgia (Gassmann et al. 2013). However,

Mestia has a very small share of these IDPs, with 172 registered IDPs living in the Mestia municipality as of 2015 (Mestia Municipality). IDPs are eligible for a number of mechanisms of government assistance. They are entitled to a monthly allowance, temporary shelter and arable land, free primary and secondary education, and assistance finding employment (Gassmann et al. 2013). In 2014, the government amended the law on IDPs to increase monthly allowances to 45 GEL, simplify the bureaucratic process of obtaining IDP status, and increase protections related to IDPs' housing situations (Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons 2014). IDPs' social benefits, including pensions, tend to be their main source of income (Gassmann et al. 2013).

However, older surveys suggest substantial gaps in service delivery: as of 2011, in Samegrelo-ZemoSvaneti, only 12 percent of the IDPs registered in the database actually received these benefits (Gassmann et al. 2013). Whether this pattern holds in the Mestia municipality specifically is unclear. A 2012 report by the International Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) highlights that while the government of Georgia has made considerable efforts to improve conditions for IDPs, resources have remained limited and implementation has not been systematic (IDMC 2012). The extent to which service delivery has improved under the government's new law on IDPs is unclear. Focus group discussions from 2015 suggest that limited capacity to reach out and provide timely services to IDPs continues to be a major constraint (World Bank 2016).

#### *People with disabilities*

In 2015, there were nearly 120,000 registered persons with disabilities in Georgia (IDFI 2015). In the Mestia municipality, there were 229 registered persons with disabilities in 2015 (Opendata.ge). However, the true number of people with disabilities is likely higher, due to underreporting caused by stigma, lack of information, and the costs of registration (World Bank 2007).

People with disabilities are eligible for government assistance of 70 or 100 GEL per month, depending on their category of disability (IDFI 2015). However, while the government has a number of well-intentioned laws towards social integration, research suggests that this tends to be incomplete and insufficient (Gassmann et al. 2013). A lack of resources, limited legislation, and low levels of societal awareness about disability seem to compromise the implementation of policy (Makharadze et al. 2010). A 2011 report by the World Health Organization concluded that many people with disabilities do not receive the services they require and that they suffer from unequal access to healthcare, education, and employment (WHO 2011). Indeed, employment rates for persons with disabilities are very low (Gassmann et al. 2013). While the Law on Education requires inclusive education, in reality, access to quality education for those with disabilities is limited (Gassmann et al. 2013). In addition, therapy and rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities are nearly non-existent in rural areas (Gassmann et al. 2013). Persons with disabilities face additional barriers to accessing the social benefits to which they are entitled: In a 2013 survey of mountain residents conducted by the Center for Social Sciences and UN Women, 8 percent of respondents stated that they needed, but did not use, social services for people with disabilities (UN Women 2014).

#### *Elderly and Youth*

Elderly people, which comprise a higher percentage of the population in rural areas relative to the rest of the country, face additional difficulties accessing social services. This is particularly true for health services,

which are critical: due to low financial resources and the limited infrastructure for healthcare in rural areas, elderly people struggle to access sufficient health care facilities (UNDP 2013).

Young people in mountain regions, on the other hand, suffer from a lack of opportunities for employment, education, and entertainment (UN Women 2014). While the increase in Svaneti's tourism industry has provided employment opportunities for some (Capucci et al. 2015), many young people still express the desire to migrate to a bigger city (UN Women 2014). This appears to be particularly true for young women, who are sensitive to the restrictions imposed by cultural norms in their communities and wish to seek more opportunities for personal development (UN Women 2014).

# METHODOLOGY

To address the questions posed within the project, CRRC-Georgia carried out a mixed methods study. The study has made use of desk review; key informant interviews with policy makers, NGOs, and businesses; and focus groups with community members focused on inclusivity and gender related issues. This section of the report provides an overview of the study's methodology.

## **Quantitative data collection and analysis**

A household survey was carried out within the project. The survey questionnaire was developed by CARE, and CRRC-Georgia provided feedback on the questionnaire before it was finalized. The survey a number of issues related to inclusive governance, service delivery, and markets in Mestia.

To obtain a representative sample of Mestia municipality, the survey used clustering with stratification for sampling. The list of election precincts in Mestia Municipality was used as the sampling frame, with the number of voters used as the measure of size. The survey was stratified by community. The strata included the following communities:

- Khaishi;
- Idliani;
- Chuberi;
- Nakra;
- Pari;
- Lakhamula;
- Etseri;
- Tskhumari;
- Becho;
- Latali;
- Lenjeri;
- Mestia;
- Mulakhi;
- Tzvirmj;
- Ipari;
- Kala;
- Ushguli.

Clusters were selected within strata with probability proportional to size. After selecting clusters, random walk was carried out within clusters. Once households were selected, a Kish table was used to select the respondent. The survey has an achieved sample size of 484 and average margin of error of 2.4%. The response rate was 65%. There is no accepted standard to judge non-response by in survey. This number is comparable to other rural surveys in Georgia. It compares positively to European and US contexts where response rates are substantially lower (e.g. 2-10% response rates in the United States for political polling are common). Non-response consists of people not wanting to participate in the survey, not being present during the period during which the survey was being carried out, language issues, among other barriers

that prevent respondents from participating in the survey. Unit non-response due to item non-response did not occur within the survey.

The survey data is analyzed using a mixture of descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics include frequencies and crosstabulations. These statistics provide an overall picture. In contrast, regression analysis is used to understand whether observed differences between groups are likely to be different from one another or attributable to survey error. Logistic, Poisson, and ordinary least squares regressions are used as appropriate to the outcome of interest. Errors are clustered at the cluster level.

*Figure 1: Table describing regression types*

<b>Type of regression</b>	<b>Rational for using</b>
Ordinary least squares	The outcome of interest is continuous or continuous-like
Poisson	The outcome of interest is a count variable
Logistic	The outcome of interest is binary or ordered

Regression results are generally presented as predicted means or predicted probabilities to make interpretation of the data more straightforward. Predicted means and probabilities are the chances that someone will fall into a given group or a predicted score for a given group of people given that data at hand and adjusting for all of the other variables in the statistical model. As opposed to regression coefficients, which show how things vary based on membership in a single group, predicted probabilities and means enable one to know not only the expected difference between groups but also the average score of that group.

**Qualitative data collection and analysis**

In tangent to the survey, the organization carried out qualitative data collection and analysis. The qualitative data collection included key informant interviews and focus groups. The key informant interviews focused on different aspects of community inclusiveness and mobilization around different issues. The key informant interviews were carried out with policy makers, NGO representatives, and businesses people working in Mestia Municipality. Two different focus group guides were used for the data collection. The first focused on issues related to gender while the second focused on issues related to inclusivity. The focus groups were conducted with men and women separately, and carried out in fifteen different communities to gain a sense of how different communities feel about the aforementioned issues. The table below summarizes the qualitative data collection carried out within the project:

Figure 2: Table describing qualitative data collected

#	Data collection method	Instrument	Target group	Number of participants	Focus
5	Focus group discussion	Inclusivity Focus Group Guide	Male and female community members	Participants = 33 Female = 20 Male = 13 (2 female only FGDs, 2 male only FGDs)	Inclusivity
10	Focus group discussion	Gender Focus Group Guide	Male and female community members	Participants = 63 Female = 30 Male = 33 (5 female only FGDs, 5 male only FGDs)	Gender
10	Key informant interview	Key informant interview guide	Business owners, government officials, and NGO workers	No one reported that they were an IDP or PWD. This specific question was not asked during the focus groups, likewise participants have not been asked their names, age and other personal details	Community engagement and inclusivity

# RESULTS

This section of the report provides an overview of the results of the study. It first discusses issues related to inclusive governance, including representation in local government and attitudes towards local government. Next, the section provides data and analysis on service delivery in the municipality, with a focus on service delivery and the mechanisms by which it is delivered. Finally the section discusses economic data, with a focus on tourism, agriculture, and gender.

## SOCIO ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

The survey is representative of the adult (18+) population of Mestia municipality. The data was weighted to age and sex of the population of Mestia. The data suggests the average number of adults per household in the municipality is 2.7 and the average number of household members is 3.7. The adult population of the region is estimated to be 52% women and 48% men. About a quarter of the population is elderly (23%). Most elderly within the sample (70%) are female. A quarter of the population (25%) has tertiary education, a third (31%) vocational education, and almost half secondary or a lower level of education (44%). As in the rest of Georgia, women are more likely to have higher levels of education than men. While 28% of women have tertiary education in Mestia municipality, 21% of men do. More than a third of women (38%) have vocational education, while 23% of men do. About a third of women (34%) have secondary education or a lower level compared with half of men (55%).

Most households are headed by men (65%). About one in four households (26%) are headed by women. About one in eleven (8%) are headed jointly by men and women. The vast majority of households in Mestia municipality (92%) own their dwelling. The share is equal for male headed households and female headed households (92%). There is no difference between jointly headed households, with 93% owning their homes. Only 2% rent or lease and an additional 6% do not own their dwelling, but do not pay for it either. A small share of dwellings are multi-household homes (3%). Similarly, to with household ownership, there is no significant difference in the other answer options by sex.

Eight percent of the population of Mestia report having legally recognized internally displaced status (9% of men and 7% of women). Two percent of adult men and women report they have legally recognized disability status. Twenty eight percent of the population reports having socially vulnerable status. Men are slightly less likely to report this (25%) than women (31%). About half of households (53%) report an income per person below the subsistence minimum of GEL 179.10 at the time of the survey (the local equivalent of the poverty line). About two thirds (65%) of these people are legally recognized as socially vulnerable.<sup>1</sup> About four in ten (38%) report they are employed. The survey does not enable the calculation of the unemployment rate. Men report being employed slightly more often than women (41% compared with 35%).

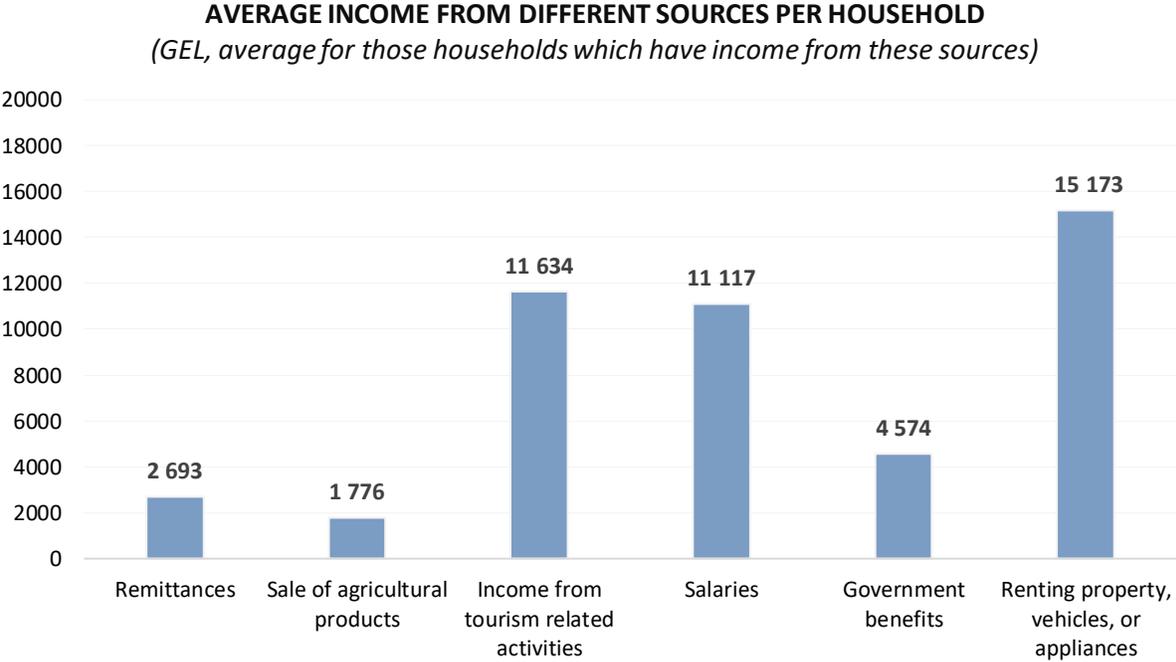
Most households in Mestia Municipality report receiving government benefits (79%). About four in ten (38%) households report earning money from salaries and about a third (30%) report households earn

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<sup>1</sup> Socially vulnerable is a status conferred on a family from registration with the Social Service Agency of Georgia (SSA). The status is conferred to a family after a poverty score card methodology is used to assess the family's situation. For more details on the benefits these families receive, the following page at the SSA provides further detail: [http://ssa.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=35](http://ssa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=35)

money from the sale of agricultural products. Around one in six (17%) households report having income from tourism related activities. About 7% of households report receiving remittances. One in twenty (5%) report some other type of income not asked about and 3% report having rental income. Average income for each of these sources per household is provided below. The average total income per household per month is GEL 243.

Figure 3: Income by source



Food (50%), healthcare (30%), construction (6%), and education (6%) were the largest costs for families in the last 12 months.

People on the survey were asked to identify where their household stands on a ladder with five rungs that represents society. Few families (9%) placed themselves on the top two rungs of the ladder. A third (37%) put themselves in the middle. About half (53%) report that they are on one of the bottom rungs of the ladder.

### INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE

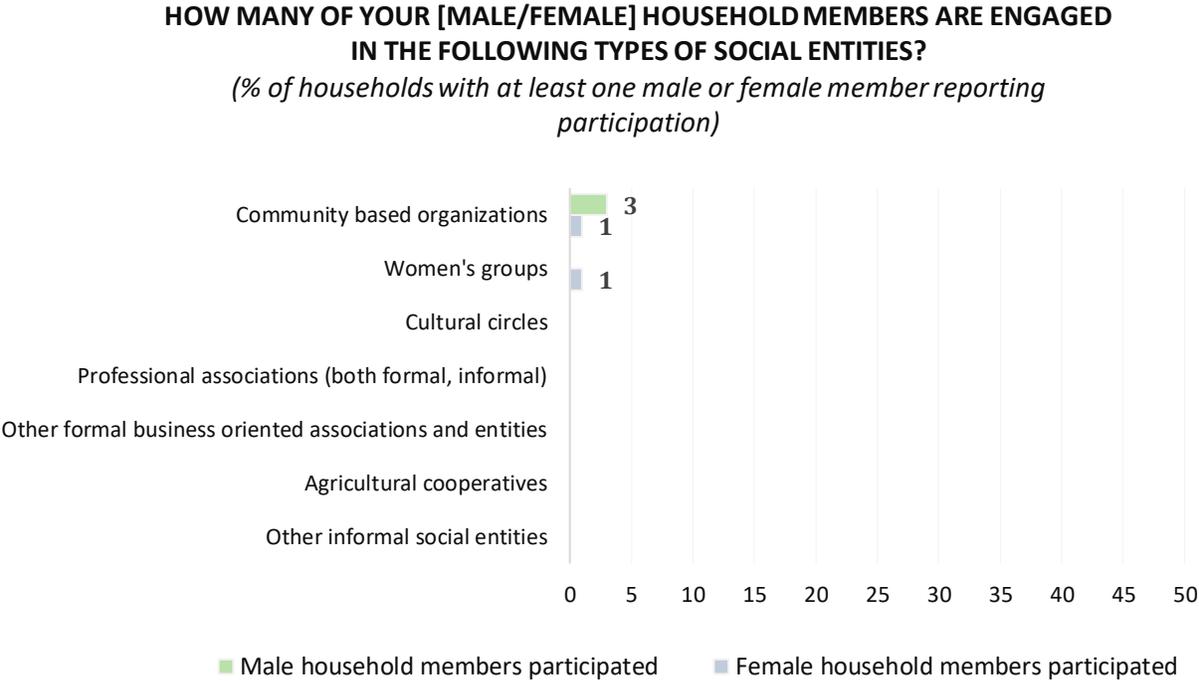
This sub-section of the report provides an overview of what forums exist for collaboration and interaction among citizens in Mestia; the extent to which participants in local government bodies are representative of citizens; representation in other forums; and which groups are more and less likely to participate in different forums.

Participants in the key informant interviews and focus groups mentioned a variety of forums for decision-making. Some emphasized the role of the local municipality, both in making decisions as well as organizing meetings and playing a mobilizing or facilitating role. Some interviewees noted that the local government

has representatives in all villages and that they serve as a medium between village residents and the municipality. Other interviewees emphasized more traditional community assemblies as the main forum for local decision-making. These assemblies sometimes, but not always, have a city hall representative in attendance. The role of civil society appears to be very limited. Only one youth NGO was mentioned in the qualitative data.

To understand forums available for collaboration, the survey asked about men’s and women’s participation in a number of different types of groups. The results suggest that very few households in Mestia (4%) participate in any of the types of groups asked about.

Figure 4: Participation in social entities



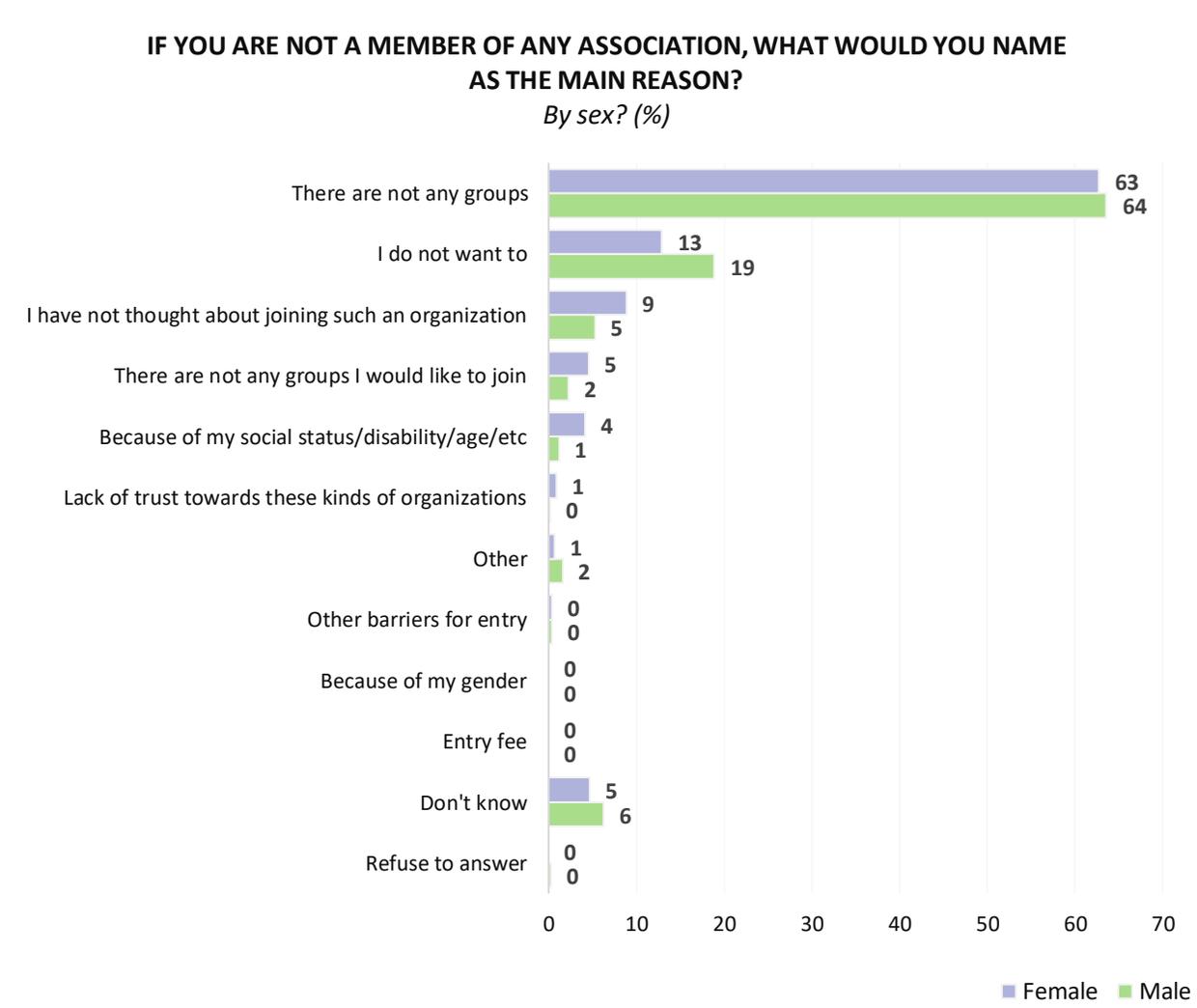
Besides asking about household member participation in the above types of groups, the survey asked respondent’s participation. The results reaffirm the above, with 3% of respondents reporting they participate in one of the previously mentioned types of groups. Given the small sample of households that report they have members that participated in any of the above types of groups, it is not possible to accurately estimate whether any particular groups are more or less likely to participate in these types of groups from the survey.

Qualitative data from key informant interviews and focus groups suggests that public life is generally quite limited, coinciding with the above data. Several participants noted that towns in Svaneti, even Mestia, lack public spaces and entertainment venues where people can gather. Interviewees also said that lack of time limits people’s public engagement; due to time-consuming work and family responsibilities, people find it hard to attend community meetings or get otherwise involved in public life. Some interviewees also

highlighted a lack of knowledge and sense of social responsibility, leading people to focus predominantly on their private issues rather than public challenges.

Individuals that reported they did not participate in any of the types of organization asked about on the survey were asked why they do not participate. The results suggest that the main reason is that people are not aware of any such groups in their community (63%). The next most common responses were the respondent did not want to join any group (16%) or they had never thought about joining such a group (7%). There are no statistically significant differences in responses between sexes.

Figure 5: Reasons for not participating in associations



In key informant interviews, several interviewees suggested that the most effective way to mobilize people is to engage them personally, whether by calling people and asking them to attend a discussion, sending invitations, or bringing people from home. Another interviewee suggested that showing the potential for change was crucial to mobilize the community: people would be more motivated if they saw how their participation had changed something.

Qualitative data suggests that in general, men are still the primary decision-makers in community settings (informal settings). Participants had a range of opinions on women's role in decision-making: some thought that although men got advice from women, women's opinions were generally not heard in a formal way. Others thought that women were quite active and involved in decision-making. Some participants noted that men and women tended to be represented in different spheres of public life. Women were overrepresented in education and healthcare, while men occupy the majority of leadership positions in the *Sakrebulo* (government forum, essentially city council).

Focus group participants and key informants who commented on the status of IDPs generally thought that IDPs were wholly integrated and faced no barriers to engaging in public life. However, they noted that people with disabilities face substantial challenges and were less likely to be active in public life, because most infrastructure, including roads and buildings, is not adapted to their needs. This makes it difficult for them to enter public spaces.

Several interviewees mentioned that young people lack opportunities for engagement. While some interviewees thought that youth were quite active in decision-making and mentioned some youth led projects in Mestia, others said that youth were not listened to in community meetings and that they were discouraged from participating. Interviewees generally said that elderly people were highly respected and their opinions were valued greatly in community decisions, but that they were often inactive as social members.

According to participants in the qualitative research, one of the primary barriers to engagement in public life is a lack of awareness and interest. Some thought that people expected others to change things for them. Others thought that the local government did not communicate enough with the public. In general, the extent to which people will mobilize seems to depend heavily on the issue at hand. Another commonly cited barrier to developing public life was the lack of community spaces where people can gather, socialize, and share ideas. Another opinion expressed was that a lack of trust among the community, stemming from mistrust bred in the Soviet times, prevented people from engaging in public life.

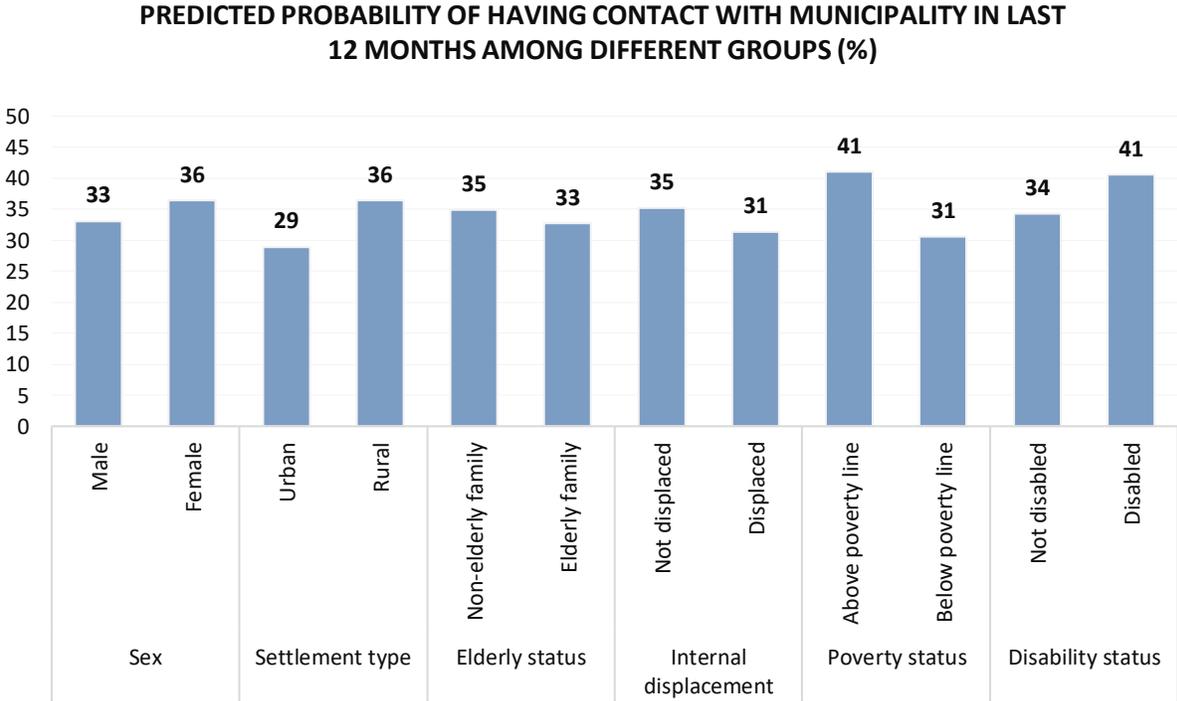
Marginalized groups appear to face additional barriers, although several participants stated that they faced no issues to engaging in public life. Despite substantial improvements in women's status in Svaneti, some participants reported that women's opinions were not taken seriously on community issues and that they sometimes did not feel comfortable getting involved in discussions. However, several participants in focus groups felt that women have become more actively engaged in community decisions over the past 10 years. Several interviewees highlighted the issues that people with disabilities face in participating in public, stemming first and foremost from the lack of accessibility of most places in Svaneti, which prevents them from entering public spaces and participating in discussions. Accessibility can also be an issue for elderly people. According to participants, IDPs and ecomigrants are fully integrated into the community and do not face additional barriers.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> People commenting on the status of IDPs and ecomigrants, during the focus group surveys can be or not be representatives of these subgroups, as the FGD participants were not asked to identify themselves to be part of any subgroup. Please see the methodology section.

The survey also asked about engagement with municipal government.<sup>3</sup> The data suggests 34% of individuals have had contact with Mestia’s municipal government in the last year. A logistic regression analysis with sex, settlement type, poverty status, disability status, internal displacement, and social vulnerability status suggest there are no significant differences between these groups.

Figure 6: Probability of having contacted with municipality in the last 12 months



In qualitative interviews and focus groups, a sizable portion of participants said that they had contact with their local government and that it was relatively easy to get in touch with them. Some said that the municipality tries hard to engage residents and posts information on Facebook as well as a physical board at the municipality. Other respondents said that engagement varied substantially based on the issue at hand. There also appear to be some differences between Mestia and the smaller villages, with distance and transportation to Mestia posing an issue for more remote towns. In addition, focus group participants from Becho and Kala reported that local representatives only tried to engage them before elections rather than engaging with their problems on an ongoing basis.

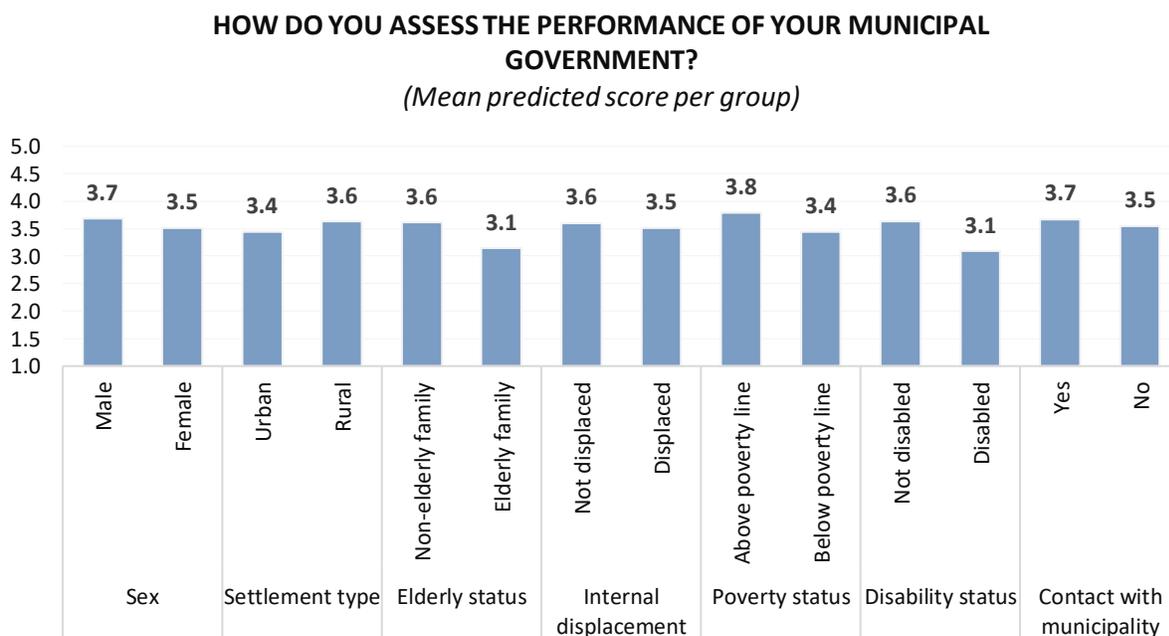
Generally, people are more positive than negative about the performance of the municipal government. Overall 48% assessed municipal government positively, while 16% assessed it negatively. One in twenty (6%) reported not knowing how local government was doing and 28% assessed its performance neither positively nor negatively<sup>4</sup>. People living in elderly only households and people in households below the poverty line assess the performance of the municipality less positively than individuals in non-elderly

<sup>3</sup> “In the past year, have you had any contact with your local government?”

<sup>4</sup> 2% have abstained from answer.

households and households above the poverty line.<sup>5</sup> People in households with members with disabilities also appear to assess the municipal government’s performance more negatively ( $p < 0.1$ ).<sup>6</sup> Controlling for the previously noted factors, contact with the municipal government is not associated with more positive or negative assessments of government performance.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 7: Assessment of government performance



In qualitative focus groups, participants were split on their assessment of the local government’s performance. Several participants said that the municipality responds to the needs of local people: for example, building a kindergarten that a village had needed, implementing good village support programs, or fixing road infrastructure. Others said that the local government did not understand locals’ needs, and that their needs were not being met. For example, residents of Becho complained that the government only repaired part of the road that was needed – right before the last elections – and that they did a poor job. People reported they have written a good deal of complaints about their public school, but the government had done nothing. An interviewee from Pari also expressed frustration that the municipality “preferred to build roads than to invest in long-term projects such as vocational education for youth.” Most of the negative opinions held by participants about the local government appeared to be related to infrastructure.

To understand perceived representativeness of the local government, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: “People in local government represent the views of people like me.” The results suggest that only 5% of the public strongly agree and a further 30% agree with the statement. A similar share of the public reported that they neither agree nor disagree with the

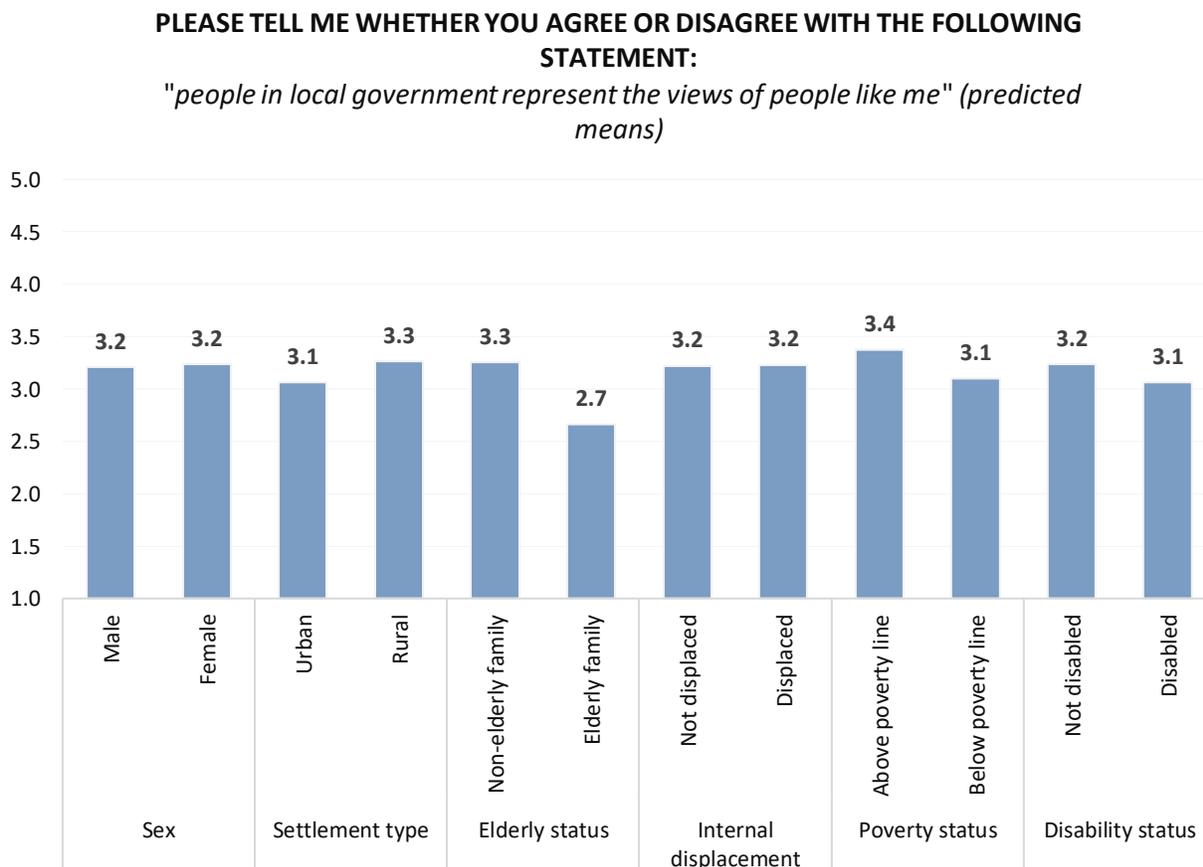
<sup>5</sup> Results come from a multi-variate ordinary least squares regression.

<sup>6</sup> Results come from a multi-variate ordinary least squares regression.

<sup>7</sup> Results come from a multi-variate ordinary least squares regression.

statement (37%), and 18% disagreed (13%) or strongly disagreed (5%). About one in ten (9%) report they do not know whether they agree or disagree. As with the question on municipal performance, people in elderly households and people living in households below the poverty line are less likely to report agreement with this statement.<sup>8</sup> People in rural areas appear to be slightly more likely to agree with this statement ( $p < 0.1$ ).<sup>9</sup>

Figure 8: People in local government represent the views of people like me



Few participants commented on the representativeness of their local government in key informant interviews or focus groups. However, those that did expressed satisfaction. For example, women in the Tsvirmi focus group mentioned that a local government representative in their village understood their needs very well, as he was a local himself, and that the Mestia municipality helps their village as they can.

The above data and analysis suggests that local government is the primary forum that people engage with, and that people assess its performance relatively positively regardless of whether they have engaged with it recently or not. About a third of the public has had some form of contact with it in the last year. Most of the public is either positive about their local government or ambivalent in terms of whether people in it represent people like them. Elderly households are less likely to think local government represents

<sup>8</sup> Results come from a multi-variate ordinary least squares regression.

<sup>9</sup> Results come from a multi-variate ordinary least squares regression.

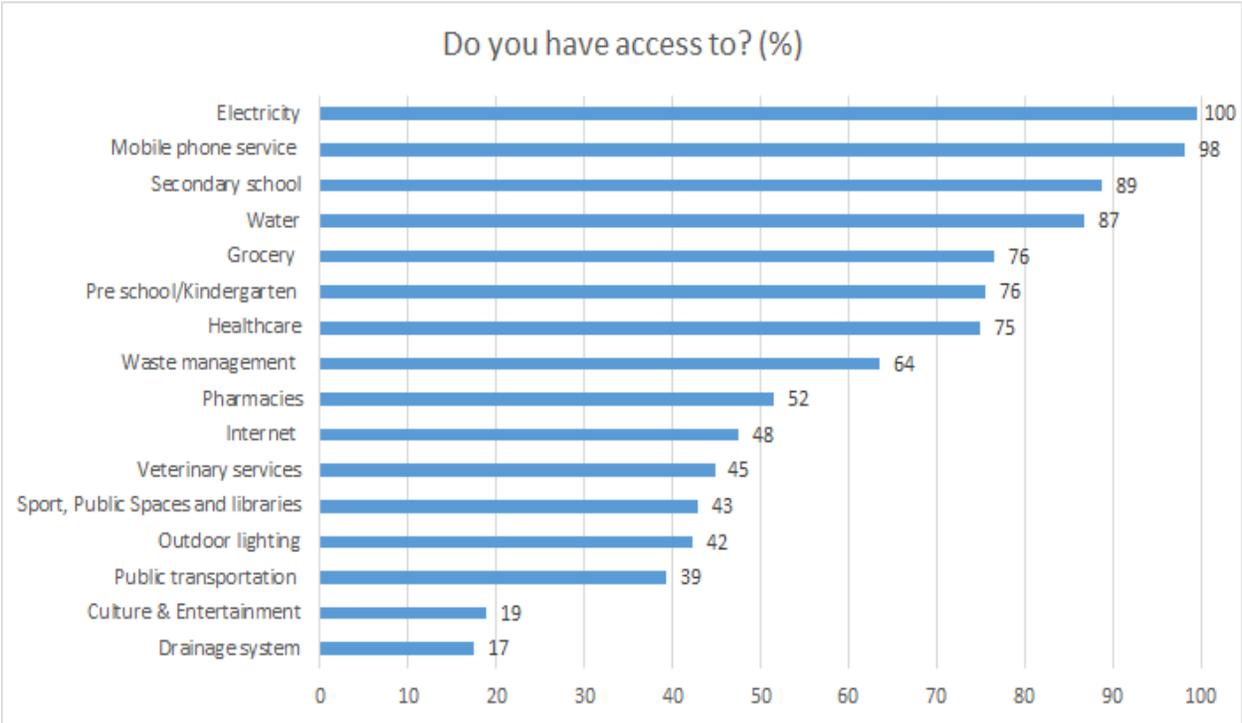
people like them. Attitudes vary little between women and men on the issues discussed in this section of the report. Nearly no one engaged with third sector organizations. People believe that the relatively difficult circumstances of everyday life lead to low levels of civic engagement. Showing the tangible value of engaging is something that a number of individuals recommended to increase civic engagement. Another barrier to participation that shows up in the survey is the fact that people report there are not groups to join in their community.

## SERVICE DELIVERY

Access to services is generally considered a fundamental governance issue. The issue is particularly acute in remote areas, such as high mountainous areas like Mestia Municipality. With this in mind, this section of the report provides data on which services people have access to and by which mechanisms they obtain these services; and the extent to which service delivery reaches different portions of the population.

The survey asked the population about access to 16 different services or resources including water; electricity; waste management; drainage; outdoor lighting; internet; mobile phone service; public transportation; pre-schools and kindergartens; secondary school; healthcare; pharmacies; veterinary services; groceries; culture and entertainment; and sport, public spaces, and libraries. The results suggest that people generally have access to electricity (100%), mobile phone service (98%), and secondary schools (89%). Relatively small shares of the population have access to drainage (17%); culture and entertainment (19%); and public transportation (39%). On average, people have access to 10 of the 16 services asked about on the survey.

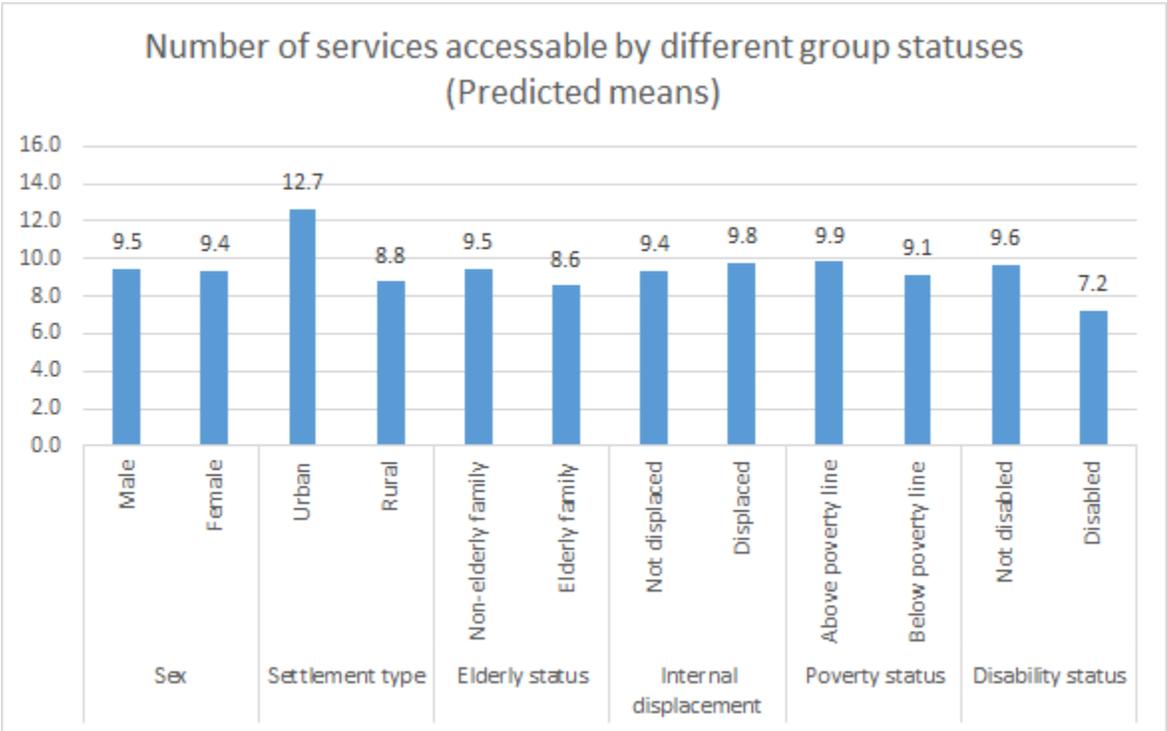
Figure 9: Access to services



Across the qualitative focus groups in different villages, the two most frequently mentioned pressing service delivery issues related to bad roads and waste management. Other commonly mentioned problems were with poor electricity/gas supply, drinking water supply, sewage, outdoor lighting, and a lack of public spaces/entertainment options. Although large shares of respondents in the quantitative survey indicated that they did have access to these services, the qualitative data suggests that these public services may still be of inconsistent quality. For example, although over 99% of respondents said that they had access to electricity, poor electricity and gas supply was mentioned frequently in focus groups, and participants in Nakra noted that during winter, snowfall damages the power lines and they are often left without power in the winter.

The data suggests people in different social and demographic groups have differing levels of access to services. People in rural areas; those in households below the poverty line; and people in households who have a member with a disability have significantly lower levels of access to services. There is no significant difference between men and women in terms of access to services.<sup>10</sup>

Figure 10: Number of services available by group status

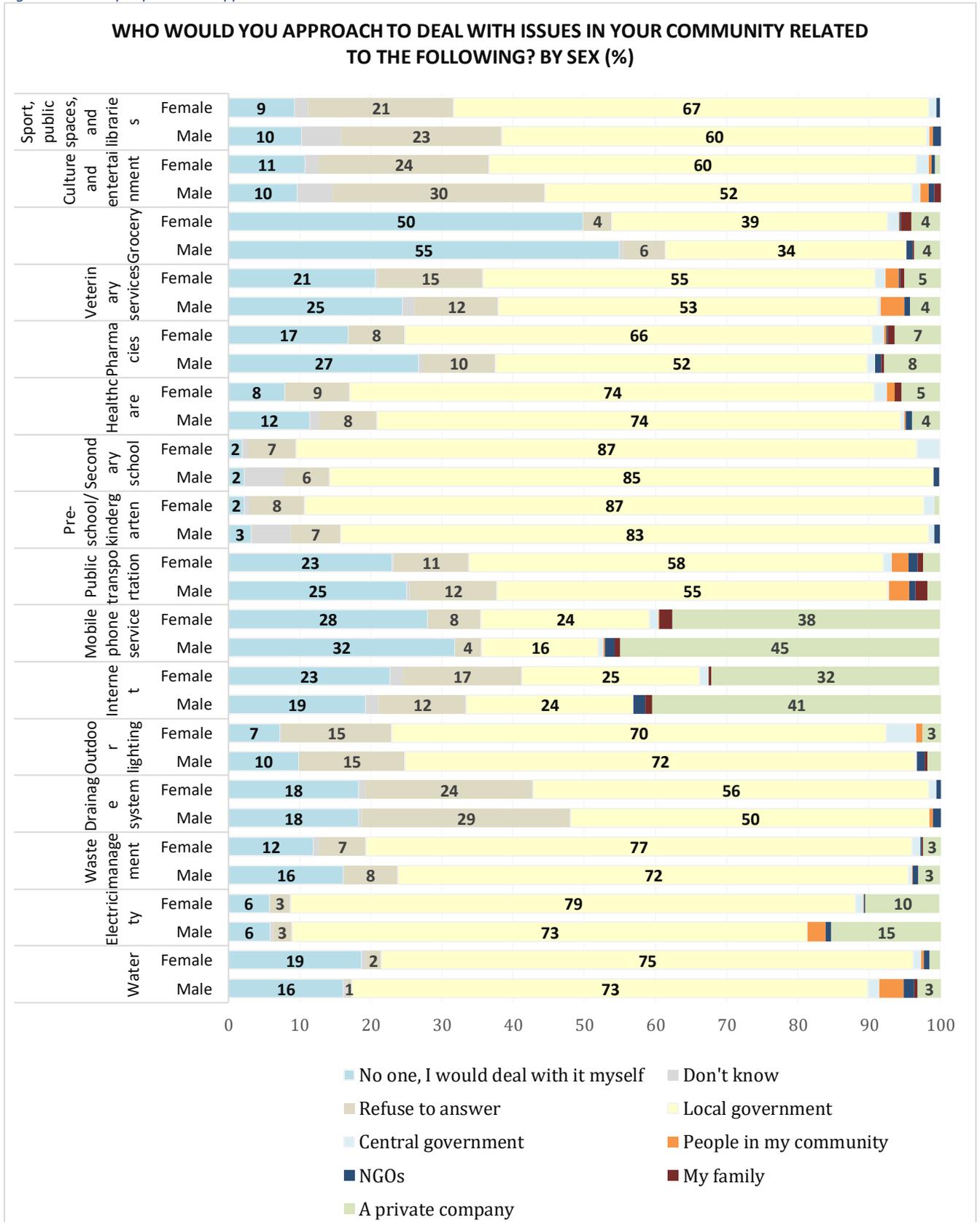


In addition to simple access to services, the survey also asked about who individuals would approach to address issues in their community related to each of the services asked about. The chart below shows

<sup>10</sup> To understand whether groups had differential access to services, logistic regressions were run to understand whether or not different social and demographic groups had differing levels of access to different services. In addition, a Poisson regression was used to understand whether different groups had different overall levels of access to services, based on their score on an index that summed together the total number of services that respondents reported having access to.

responses for each of the services asked about. The data suggests that generally speaking people are quite willing to approach local government with problems related to services. The only cases in which less than half the population would approach local government about an issue are those that are generally private sector domains (groceries; internet provision; and mobile phone service). As the chart below shows, there are few differences between men and women in terms of attitudes towards this issue. Further regression analysis suggests that after adjusting for settlement type, elderly status, internal displacement, poverty status, and disability status, the differences between women and men's attitudes are no longer significant.

Figure 11: Who people would approach to deal with issues



To look for patterns in the above data related to demographics, regressions were again run.<sup>11</sup>The results suggest that people who have household members who have disabilities are more likely to address central government than people who are not, and less likely to address local government. This pattern may be due to familiarity with central government, as most services for people with disabilities are delivered by central rather than local government. People with people with disabilities in their households are also less likely to address other people in their community. People who were displaced by conflict are more likely to report they would address central government to solve their issues than others. Again this is likely due to familiarity as IDP services are centrally administered. This is neither a positive nor negative finding in and of itself. However, it does suggest that it may be useful to carry out awareness raising focused on which government agencies provide which types of services among families who have members who are people with disabilities or are internally displaced. This could reduce service delivery time through decreasing the amount of time individuals search for the appropriate service provider.

The employed and rural people are also slightly more likely to address central government, all else equal. There is no clear explanation for this pattern. People in rural areas are also significantly more likely to report that they would not address anyone, but rather would deal with the issue themselves and are less likely to report that they would address a business to deal with issues with service delivery. These patterns are likely explained by the lack of business and other institutional presences in rural settlements of Mestia. In terms of addressing NGOs, too few people reported they would to make a reliable estimate of whether different groups are more or less likely to do so, which in turn suggests few would.

The data and analysis presented above suggests that people generally have access to most of the services asked about. Yet, there is still a demand for better service delivery. Drainage systems; culture and entertainment; and public transport are the services people have the weakest access to. Although people have access to a variety of services, the quality of these services varies according to qualitative data and people would like there to be improved service delivery quality. Access to services is significantly more common in urban areas compared with rural ones. People with people with disabilities in their households also have significantly weaker access to services. People generally report that they would engage their local government if they encountered service delivery issues. People with people with disabilities and internally displaced people are more likely to address the central government in cases of issues with services.

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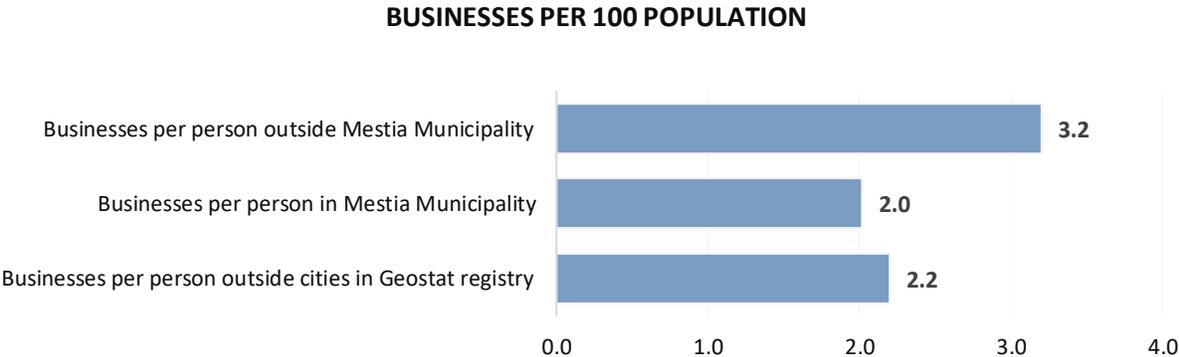
<sup>11</sup>To understand whether any particular group was more or less likely to approach a different organization to solve their problems, a simple additive index was created for the number of times a respondent reported they would address local government; central government; people in their community; NGOs; their family; and no one. Poisson regression was then used to understand if different groups were more or less likely to address different institutions.

## ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

To understand the economic situation in the project area, the survey asked a number of questions about markets, local businesses, and the economic situation. A number of questions specifically focused on gendered attitudes towards economic activity were asked as well. Besides the survey questions, the organization also used statistics from the National Office of Statistics of Georgia to map the business situation in the project area.

Geostat’s business registry suggests that there are 188 businesses with physical addresses registered in Mestia Municipality. This is approximately 2 registered and physically located businesses for every 100 people in Mestia Municipality (using the 2014 census data to estimate the municipality’s population). By comparison, in the rest of the country, there were 3.2 businesses with a registered physical address for every 100 people. A plurality of these, however, are registered in urban areas and particularly in Tbilisi. Outside of the cities listed in the business registry as separate entities (Tbilisi; Batumi; Poti; Rustavi; Sokhumi; Kutaisi; Tskhinvali), there are approximately 46,000 businesses registered with a physical address. Excluding the populations of the cities from the census as well as the population of Mestia and comparing to the total business count suggests an average rate of 2.2 businesses registered with a physical address per 100 individuals, a figure comparable to the numbers in Mestia on a per capita basis.

Figure 12: Businesses per capita



There are no large businesses registered in Mestia according to the new business size standard in Georgia. Using the old definition, there were 2 large businesses, 7 medium sized businesses, and 171 small businesses. Eight businesses did not have information on their size. According to the new definition there are 2 medium businesses in Mestia Municipality, 178 small businesses, and 8 businesses without information about their size.

In total 133 of the businesses registered with a physical address in Mestia are classified according to the NACE II definition of sector in Mestia. A majority of these businesses are in the tertiary sector (74%). Most of the remaining businesses are in the secondary sector (23%). The remaining businesses are in the primary sector. Overall, this data should be taken as indicative of formal business sector rather than definitive due to the large share of missing data in the business registry on sector of primary activity. Formal tourism and agriculture related businesses represent a small share of the absolute number of

businesses in Mestia municipality. Although tourism and agriculture are relatively small shares of the formal sector in Mestia Municipality, both activities make up important parts of the local economy.

### *Tourism*

In recent years, Svaneti has experienced a significant increase in tourism. The market remains largely informal, with many families renting out rooms in their homes and providing other informal services to tourists that visit the region. To understand this market, the survey contained a number of questions about the share of households engaged in tourism, the type of tourism business, and revenues from tourism related activities.

Overall, 16% of households report having some sort of tourism business. Of these 80% report owning and running a guesthouse or hotel business. Most of the remaining people running a tourism business (18%) report having another type of tourism business or not managing property. A small share (2%) report either managing a guesthouse or renting out a property that someone else manages as a guesthouse. Rural households; households with only elderly members; and households living below the poverty line are all significantly less likely to have tourism businesses.

In key informant interviews, several interviewees said that many things have changed in Svaneti over the past five years. The roads have improved, the tourism sector in Svaneti is developing, and family incomes have increased. In the focus groups outside Mestia, however, participants had mixed opinions on the state of development of the region, particularly as related to tourism. Several participants in villages such as Becho, Idliani, Ipari, Kala, Khaishi, Nakra, Tchuberi, and Tsvirmi said that their area had a great deal to offer tourists, particularly in terms of nature tourism. However, some participants expressed frustration that all the money spent on developing tourism was going to Mestia. In many of these villages, tourism remains very limited despite hope that it will grow.

Many focus group participants said that appropriate infrastructure – such as roads and waste management – was a barrier to attracting and accommodating more tourists. Even in Ushguli, where participants noted that tourism has been growing every summer, participants said that their waste management problems negatively impacted tourism development. Another barrier mentioned was language: in some cases, finding qualified local staff that speak sufficient English or Russian has been difficult. Lastly, several participants mentioned financial barriers to getting more involved in tourism. For example, participants in Mulakhi said that half of their families own guesthouses – and all of them took credit to start their businesses. Those who did not have guesthouses wanted to start one, but were prevented by financial problems. Participants also suggested that an increase in tourist routes (such as hiking trails) and ski slopes would help attract more tourists.

Among individuals with tourism businesses, the average number of tourists reported per year was 152 and the median reported number was 65. The large difference between the median and mean stems from the wide range of tourists served (from 0 to 1000) among the businesses. The average reported income for a tourist business in the last 12 months in the municipality was GEL 10,967 per household.

### *Agriculture*

Agriculture is another important part of the rural economy in general, as well as in Mestia municipality. As in other parts of the country, in Mestia, a large share of the working population is engaged in small scale subsistence oriented agriculture.

Overall, the survey suggests that 51% of households are engaged in agriculture, and 30% of households are engaged in an agricultural activity that results in monetary income for the family. Male headed households (57%) are more likely to engage in agriculture than female headed households (39%) or jointly headed households (45%). Female headed households are also less likely to engage in commercially oriented agricultural activities (34% of male headed households versus 20% of female headed households). There is no difference between jointly headed households and male headed households in terms of commercial engagement in agriculture (30% of jointly headed households). Households in rural areas are more likely to be engaged in agriculture. Households that live below the poverty line and that have only elderly members are significantly less likely to engage in agriculture.<sup>12</sup> While 30% of households report having some agricultural income, the average agricultural income per family is relatively small. The average agricultural income among households engaged in commercial agriculture in the region is GEL 1776.

This is complemented by qualitative data from focus groups: in many villages, participants said that nearly everyone was engaged in some form of agriculture, but that this was predominantly for family use rather than commercial. In some of the villages where tourism is developing more quickly, such as Becho, participants mentioned that they use their agricultural products in their tourism business. A few others mentioned that they sell products in Mestia and Zugdidi, but this was relatively rare. According to some participants, they did not have the resources necessary to expand production.

Overall, 86% of households report owning agricultural lands in Mestia municipality. The average reported amount of agricultural land holdings is 0.7 Ha. Few households (6%) rent lands. The average amount rented among families that rent was 0.4 Ha. On average, households that use the land they own for agricultural work on 0.6 Ha of the land they own and 0.4Ha of the land they rent.

Three quarters (75%) of households own at least one agricultural animal. Male headed households are more likely to own animals (79%) than female headed households (64%). The most commonly owned type of agricultural animal is cows (68%), followed by calves (37%), and poultry (26%). Other animals such as rabbits (2%) are owned by relatively few households. The charts below provides the share of male and female headed households owning each animal asked about on the survey and the average number of each type of animal in each household that owns them. Following the general pattern, female headed households are less likely to own most types of animals.

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<sup>12</sup> These results come from a logistic regression.

Figure 13: Share of households reporting they own different kinds of animals

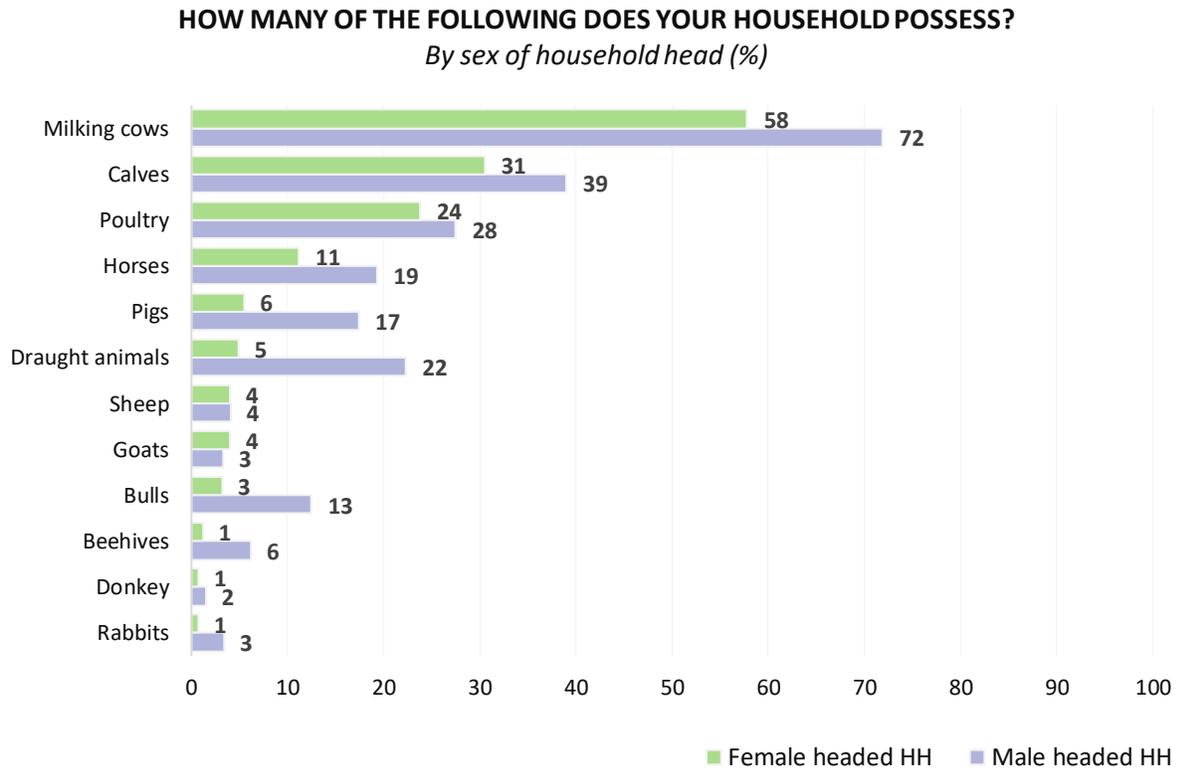
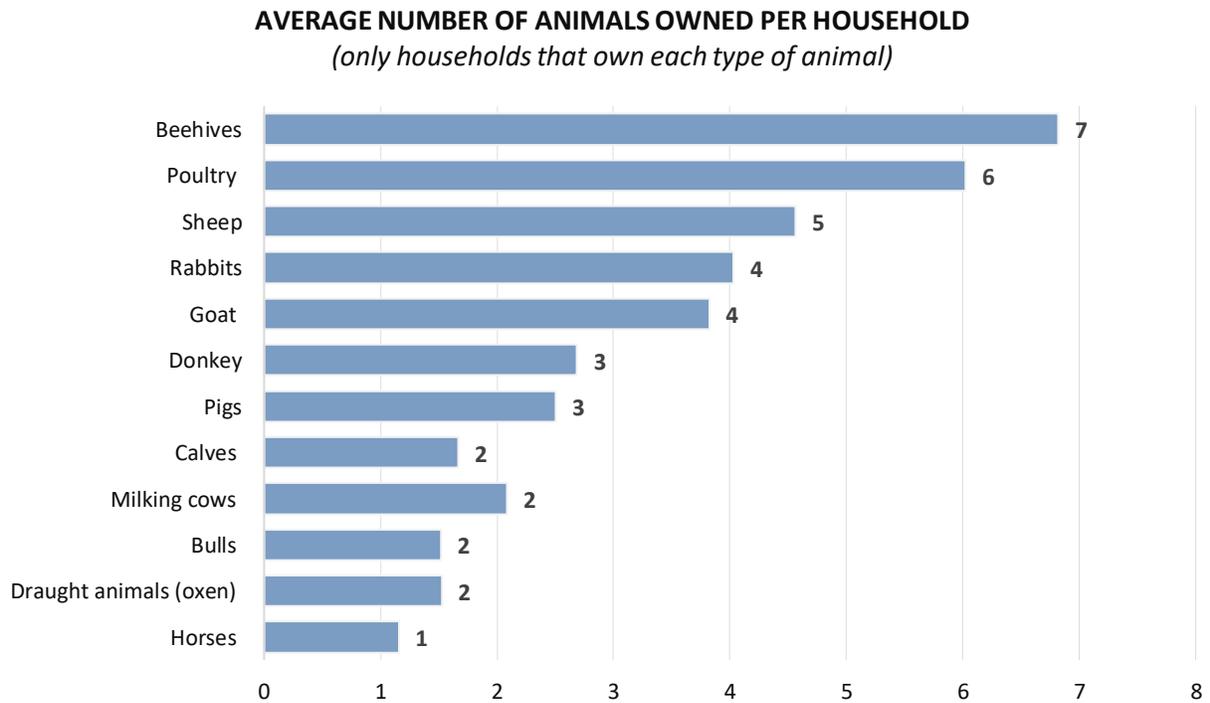
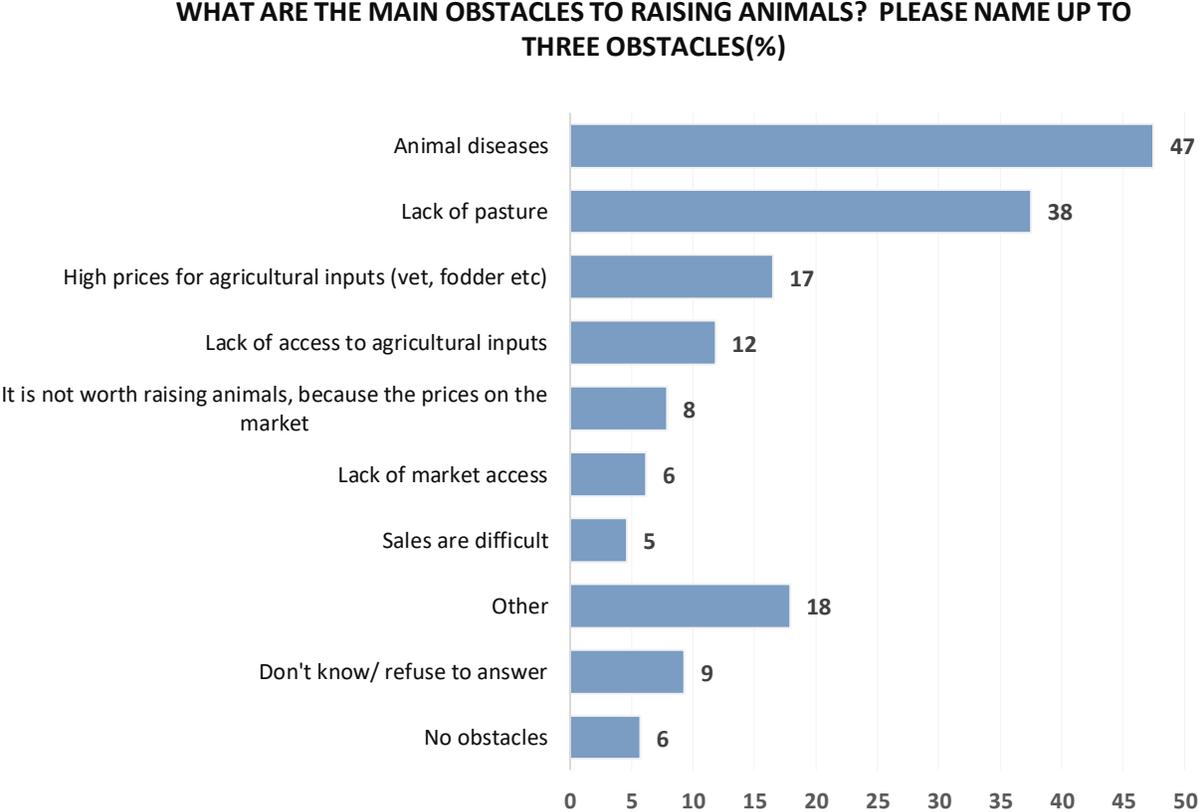


Figure 14: Average number of animals owned per household



The survey also asked respondents the main challenges to raising animals. Respondents reported animal diseases (47%), lack of pasture (38%), and high prices for inputs(17%) most often. People who own animals are significantly less likely to report not knowing or refusing the answer the question. People who do not own animals reported that it was not worth raising them, because market prices are too low slightly more often than people who own animals. Otherwise, responses were relatively similar between animal owners and non-owners.

Figure 15: Obstacles to raising animals

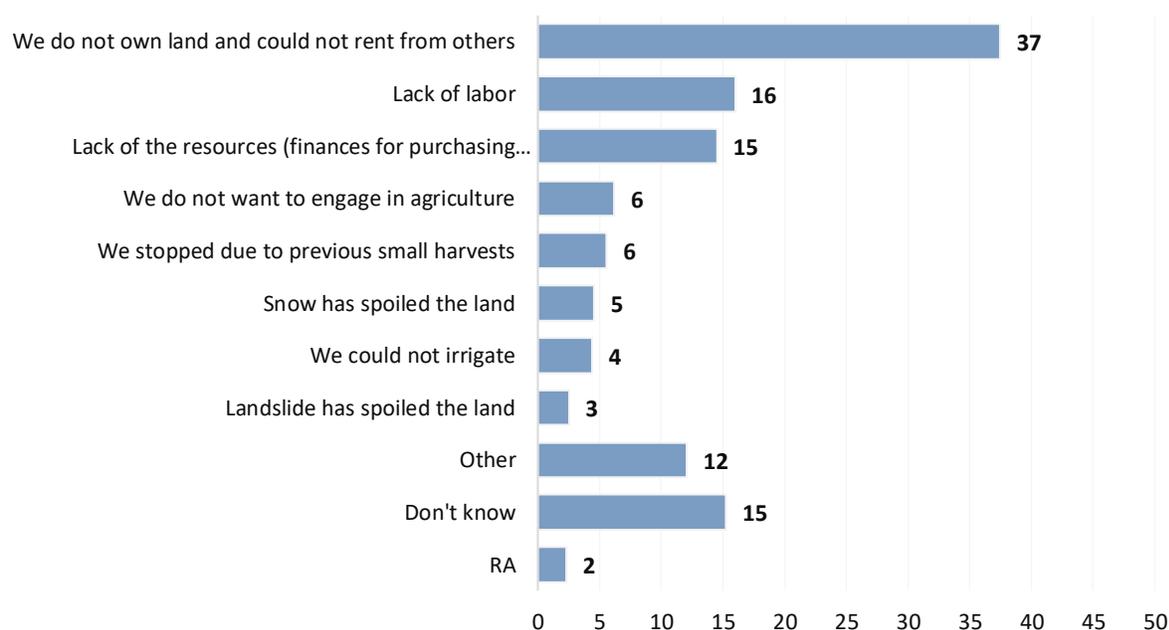


Besides challenges to raising animals, the survey also asked respondents that were not engaged in agriculture why they do not engage in it. The most common responses were lack of land (37%) and lack of labor (16%).

Figure 16: Reasons for not engaging in agriculture

**IF YOU HAVE NOT CARRIED OUT AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES DURING THE LAST YEAR, WHAT WOULD YOU NAME AS THE MAIN REASONS FOR THIS? YOU CAN NAME UP TO THREE REASONS?**

*(% of people who did not engage in agriculture)*

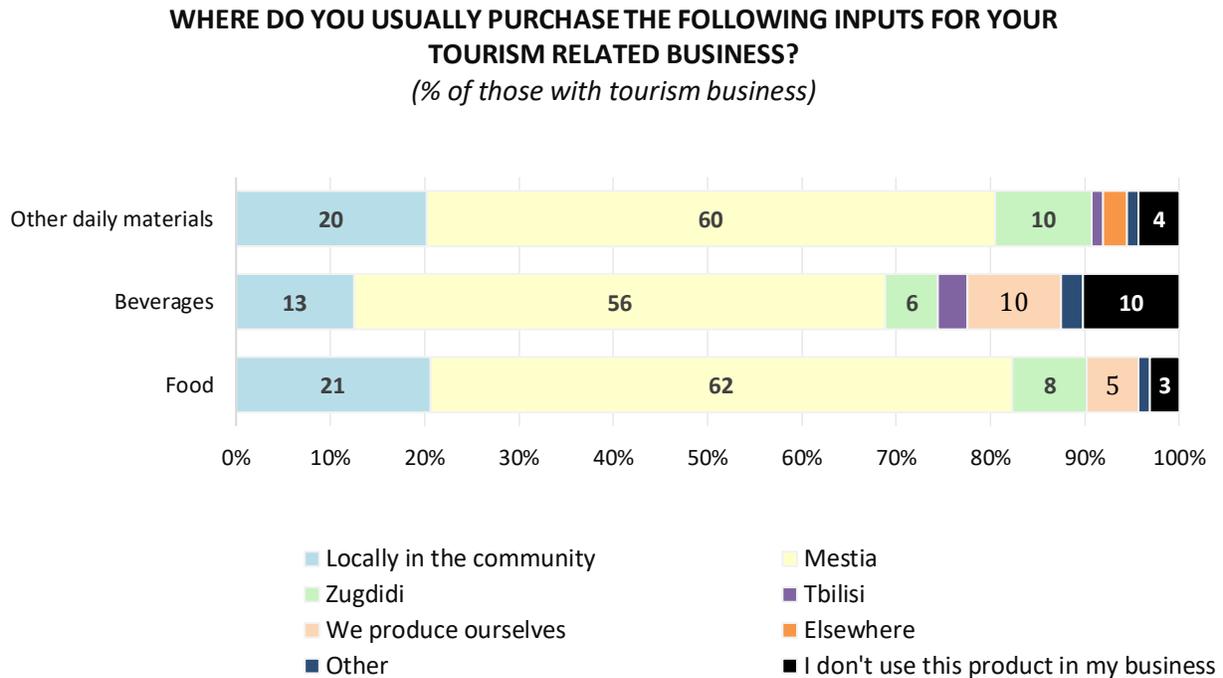


**Markets**

Access to markets for both purchase and sale of goods are critical to economic well-being for small businesses such as those in the tourism and agriculture sectors. Indeed, without them, businesses have no business. With this in mind, the survey contained a number of questions about where people purchase and sell products for their agricultural and tourism businesses.

Tourism businesses were asked where they purchase food, beverages, and other daily used inputs for their business. The results suggest that most tourism businesses purchase inputs in Mestia or their community. Relatively small shares purchase goods in Zugdidi or produce products themselves.

Figure 17: Input purchases for tourism businesses

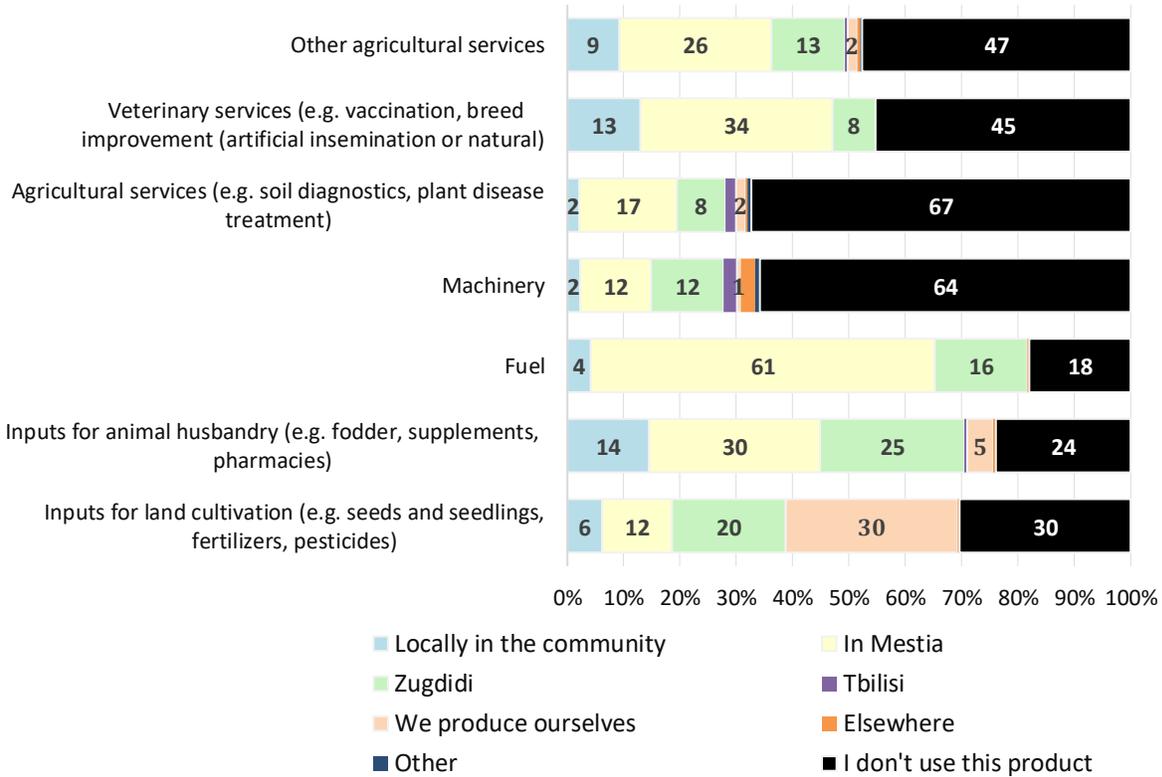


In the agriculture sector, people were asked where they purchase inputs for land cultivation; inputs for animal husbandry, fuel; machinery; agricultural services; veterinary services; and other agricultural services. In the case of many of the products asked about, a large share report they do not use them. The next most common response for most products is in Mestia. About a third of people also report that they produce their own inputs for land cultivation. A fair share of individuals also report purchasing inputs in Zugdidi.

Figure 18: Purchase of agricultural products

**WHERE DO YOU USUALLY PURCHASE THE FOLLOWING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS?**

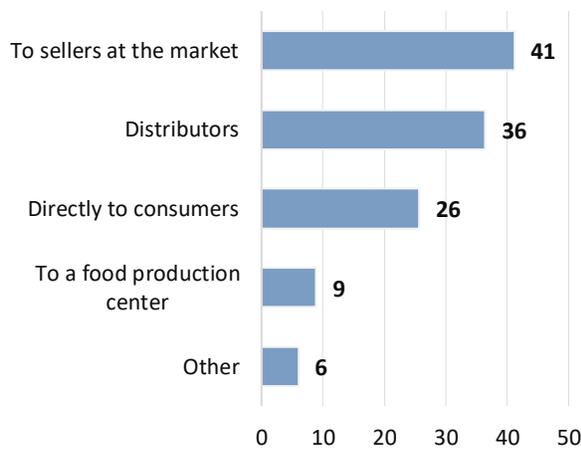
(%; asked only to those engaged in agriculture)



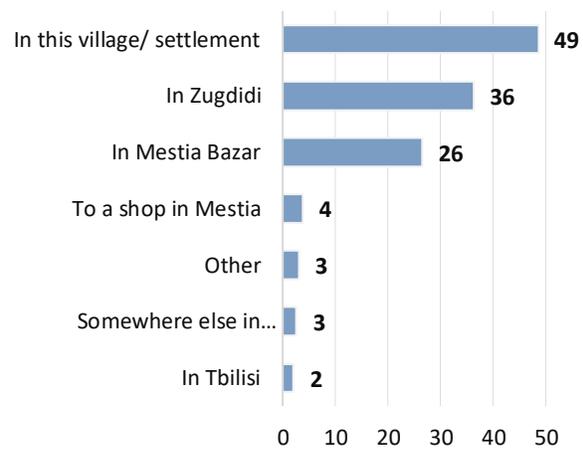
Agricultural producers were also asked where they sell their products and who they sell their products to. Among those that sell agricultural products, the most frequent result was that people sell to people selling at the market (41%), followed by distributors (36%), directly to consumers (26%), and to a food production center (9%). Most producers that sell products sell them either in their village or settlement or in Zugdidi. The Mestia Bazaar is another common location for agricultural producers to sell at.

Figure 19: Where and who agricultural products are sold

### WHO DO YOU SELL YOUR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS TO? (%)



### WHERE DO YOU SELL YOUR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS? (%)

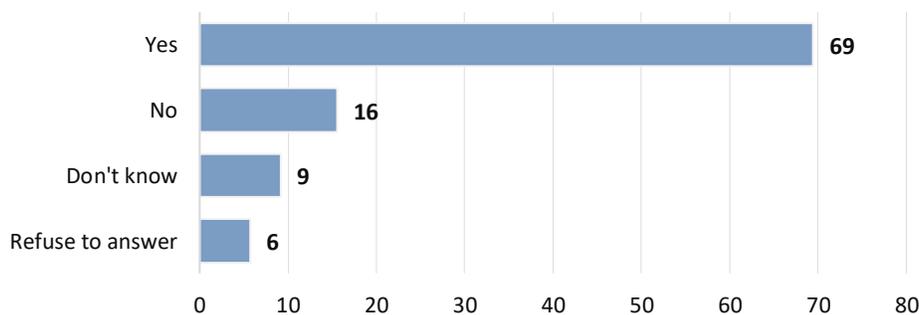


Note: Respondents could select more than one response to the above question. Hence, the percentages do not sum to 100%.

In terms of marketing, producers were asked whether they refer to their products as local. The results suggest that a large majority of people (69%) refer to their products as local when talking with customers.

Figure 20: Refer to products as local

### DO YOU REFER TO YOUR PRODUCTS AS LOCAL WHEN TALKING WITH CUSTOMERS? (%)



Although the above data suggests a reasonable level of access to markets, it should be kept in mind that improved access is important for increasing the size of the agricultural economy in the region. Mestia is a remote region of the country, and transport costs from the region likely inhibit the competitiveness of agriculture at any scale. Further, the lack of arable land and relatively short growing season in the region given its climate further work against commercially viable agriculture being workable in the municipality. This combination of factors mean that if agricultural development is intended to be part of the project, focusing on high value added production should be the focus. Specifically considering the production of goods that can be sold as local to tourists or as inputs in tourism businesses should be a priority given the above. Otherwise, specialty products associated with the region (e.g. Svan Salt and Svan potatoes) also

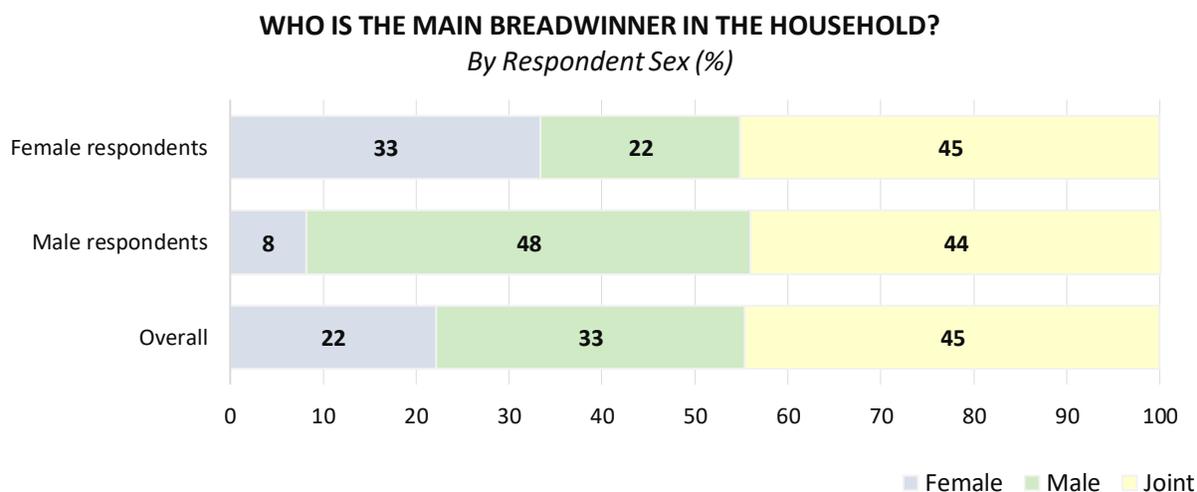
could have a competitive advantage on the larger Georgian market and fetch higher values on the market. If the project works towards agricultural development, these issues should be considered.

### Gender

As data in previous sections of the report suggest, there are a number of differences between men and women in terms of their inclusion in decision making and access to services. Besides these areas, there are a number of sociological differences between men’s and women’s attitudes towards women’s economic activity in Mestia. Moreover, there is a clear gendered division of labor.

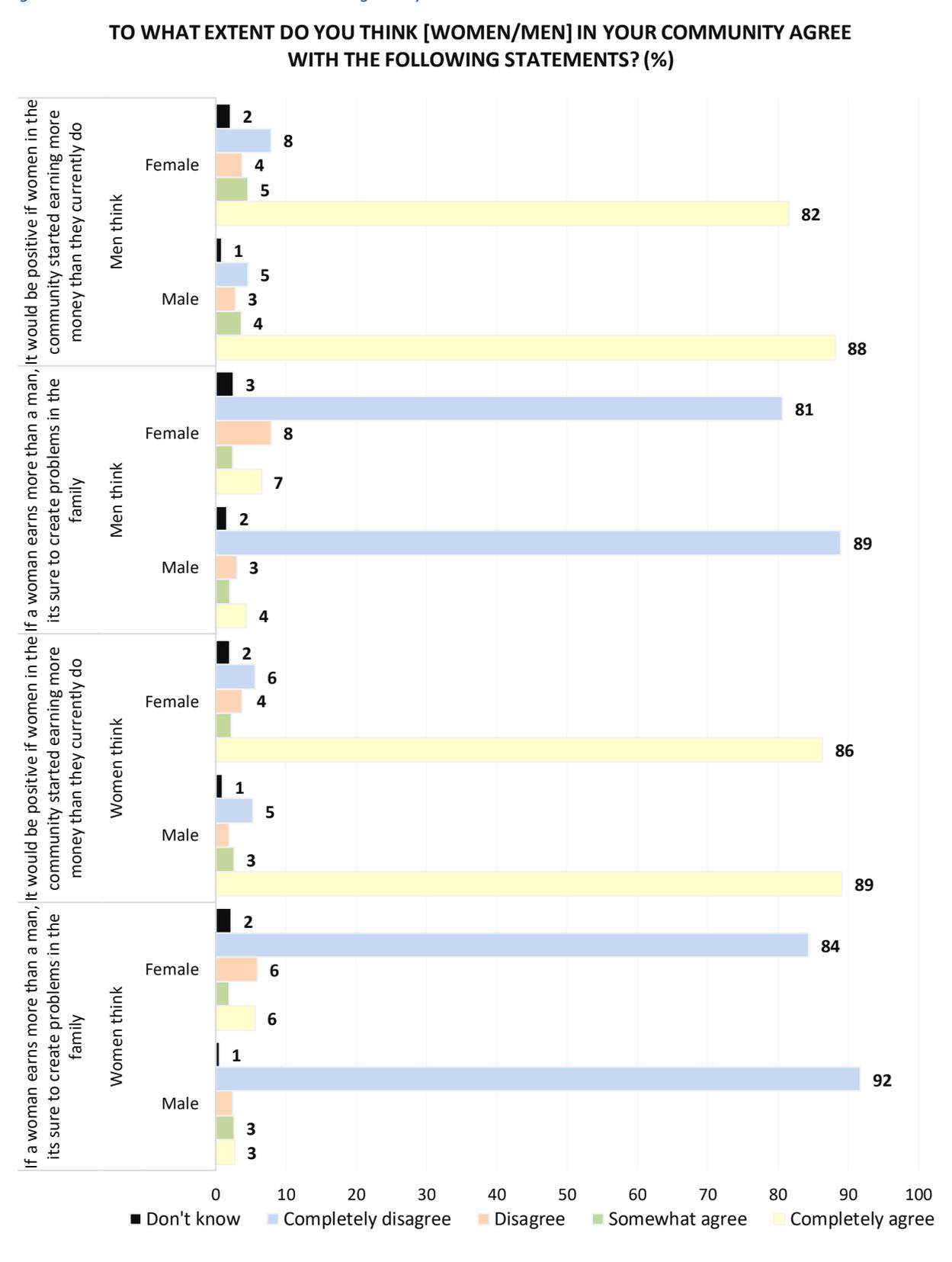
In Mestia, 22% of households have female breadwinners, 33% have male breadwinners, and 45% report that both male and female family members are the “main” breadwinners according to the survey. In focus groups, however, some women mentioned that women are often the main breadwinners of the household. Indeed, men may underestimate how often women are the primary breadwinners in their family, as male respondents were significantly less likely to report that women were the main breadwinners in their family. This finding suggests that that men don’t recognize how often women are actually the main breadwinner in many cases, this falls in line with the literature and findings from local and international studies.

Figure 21: Main breadwinner



Respondents were asked to what extent they think women and men in their community agree with the sentiments that a) if women earn more than men it will create problems in the family and b) it would be positive if women in the community started earning more than men. As the chart below shows, most men and women think that most men and women think that it would be good if women in their community started earning more money. However, women are less likely to think that the men and women of their community disagree with the statement that “If a woman earns more than a man, its sure to create problems in the family” than men. Despite this small but statistically significant difference in response between sexes, the overwhelming majority of both men and women disagree that women earning more than men will cause marital issues and agree that it would be positive for women to start earning more.

Figure 22: Attitudes towards women and earning money



In focus groups, women reported that there were no issues for men when women became successful, and that women felt supported by their husbands, family, and community to work and to engage in community life. Some participants said that their husbands helped them with housework and childcare when they needed to do other things. They noted that women are quite active in Svaneti, and that even while being active outside the home, they are able to be good wives and mothers. Participants in a focus group in Pari mentioned an example of one woman who was “the most active person” in the community, who had done much for the village, and was highly respected because of it. Female focus group participants also said that they want their daughters to get a good education and to have a job. Men’s focus groups, however, did not comment on these questions.

Most participants also expressed that the community supported women’s engagement in business. Many participants knew at least one woman in their community with a business. However, business roles also appeared to be somewhat gendered, with women predominantly working in cafes, restaurants, guesthouses, and shops, while men tended to do more physical activities like driving or guiding tourists. While some focus group participants said that “we are all involved” in their family business, others said that women were the backbone of the businesses and did nearly everything. Although managing financial resources was generally seen as men’s domain, some participants said that women were better able to save and manage money. Participants generally did not think there were additional obstacles for women to have their own business. The law does not create barriers for women to set up businesses in Georgia. Some did note that being pregnant and having children can pose a challenge for women to engage in business, but that family members often support women in these situations. However, some participants noted that community perceptions of business ownership generally focused on men: even when men and women were equally involved, the community referred to the business under the man’s name.

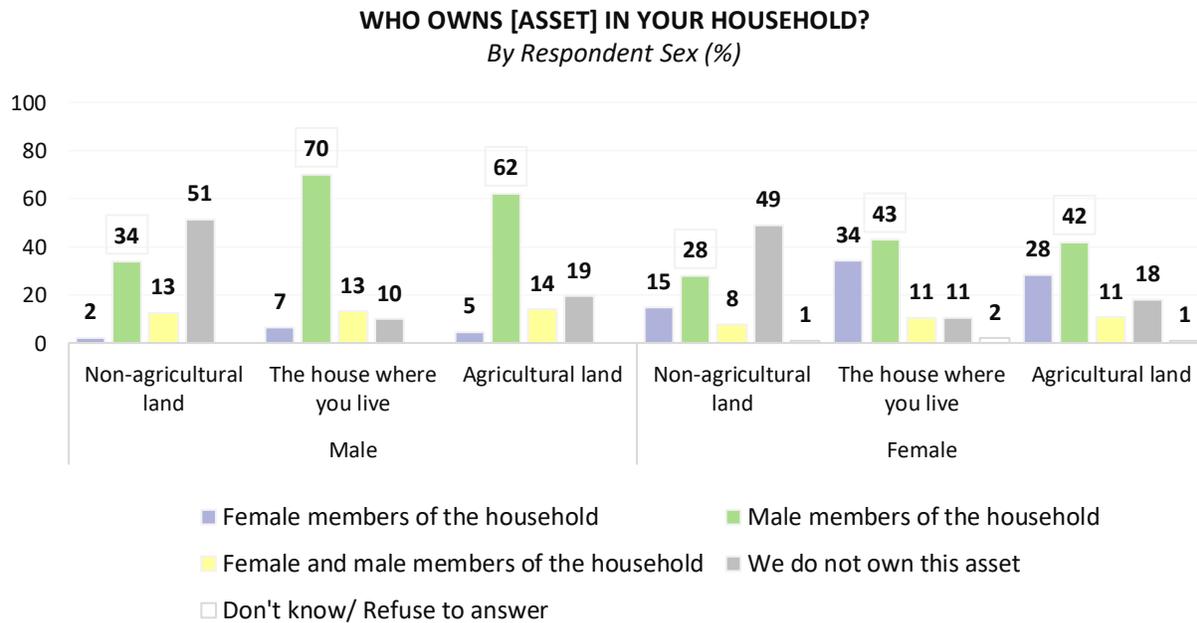
To understand ownership of productive assets, the survey asked who owned the house the people lived in; agricultural land held within the household; and non-agricultural land owned by household members. The results suggest that men are generally more likely to own all of the previously noted assets.

Figure 23: Asset ownership



While the data consistently suggests that men are more likely to own all of the above assets, the above numbers should be considered indicative rather than definitive, because answers to the question vary significantly by the sex of the respondent. Women are more likely to report that women in the household own the above noted assets than men. Men are also more likely to report that men of the household own the assets noted above. This inconsistency suggests that many may not know which household members own which assets.

Figure 24: Asset ownership by sex

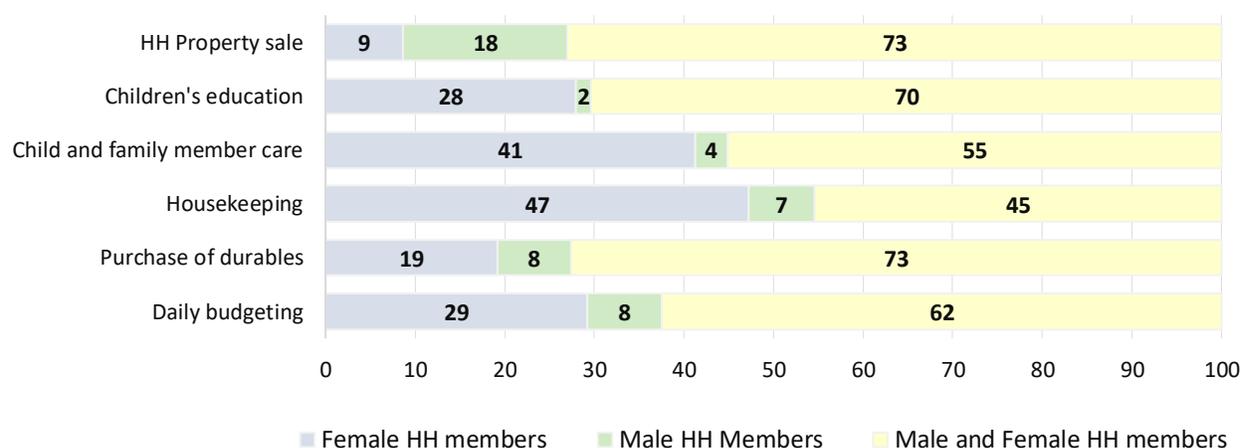


The quantitative data generally coincides with the qualitative data from focus groups. Participants said that men are more likely to own property. This is largely due to inheritance traditions, which dictate that males inherit property and that land and houses are registered in men’s names. Male participants in one focus group said that although these traditions still held, the rules had begun to change a bit: if there is no heir in a family, a woman can inherit property. However, female participants in another focus group said that there was no discussion on the matter of gendered inheritance: women get married and leave their family home, while all inheritance goes to men. For example, one female member said that she did not have a brother and had to fight with her cousins to receive her inheritance.

The survey also aimed to provide an understanding of household responsibilities. The results suggest that most households report sharing most tasks equally. However, when a specific gender is responsible for a task, women are more likely to be responsible for it, with the exception of the sale of household property.

Figure 25: Household responsibilities

**WHO IS IN CHARGE OF THE FOLLOWING IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD?**  
 (% who reported this activity was relevant to their household)



Notably, there is also a gap in perceptions between men and women when it comes to whether tasks are shared jointly or primarily carried out by men or women. As shown in the table below, men are consistently more likely to report that responsibilities are shared jointly, while women report that they are more likely to be responsible for these. This finding falls in line with previous studies of the country (see CRRC 2019).

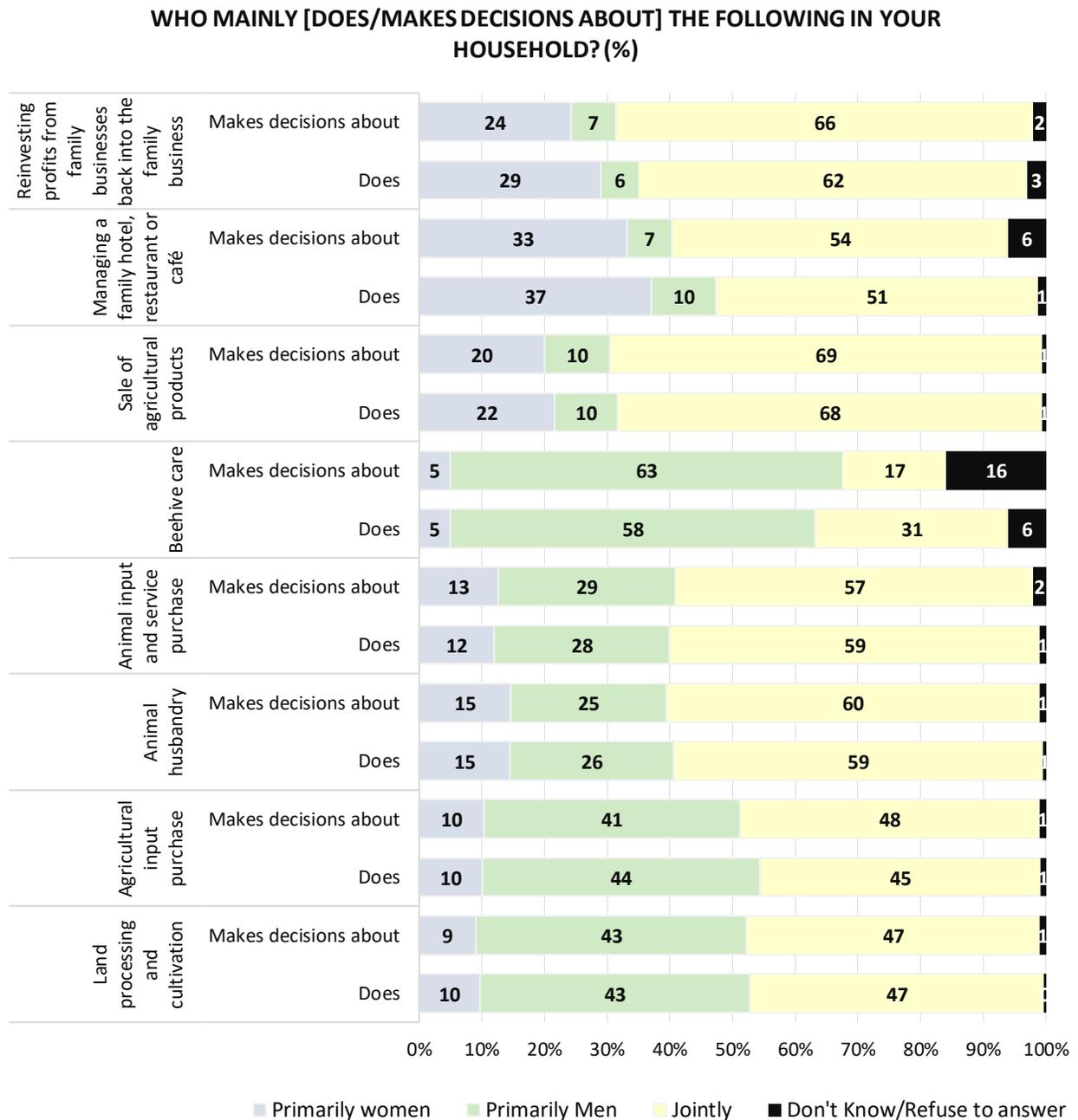
Figure 26: Who is in charge of the following in your household? By Sex

		Daily budgeting	Purchase of durables	Housekeeping	Child and family member care	Children's education	HH Property sale
Male	Female HH members	17	5	33	36	22	0
	Male HH Members	16	16	15	7	4	24
	Male and Female HH members	67	79	52	57	74	76
Female	Female HH members	39	31	59	45	32	16
	Male HH Members	2	2	1	1	0	14
	Male and Female HH members	59	67	41	53	68	70

In qualitative interviews, participants also expressed a highly gendered division of labor, but said that tasks were not strictly distributed: if one partner is away, the other can do their work. In general, however, both male and female participants stressed that men took care of more physically demanding tasks such as chopping wood, making hay, sowing, and land cultivation. In general, women took care of tasks closer to home, such as childcare, cooking, cleaning, and tending to animals and gardens.

When it comes to responsibilities for agricultural activities, the survey asked about who does and who makes decisions about eight different activities. Generally speaking, the results suggest a gendered division of labor, with men being both doers and decision makers for more activities than women. However, there is not a significant gap between men and women in terms of women being responsible for an activity while men make decisions about it or the reverse. As with the above household tasks, people report joint activity more than gender specific activity overall.

Figure 27: Who is responsible for/makes decisions about



Regarding household decision making, both male and female focus group participants generally noted that decisions were made collectively by the entire family. However, some participants expressed that although issues were discussed jointly, men had the final word. In addition, some types of decisions seem to be more within the purview of either men or women; for example, women tend to make decisions about family care, while men often seem to make – or at least have the final say on – decisions about financial matters. A few women from a focus group in Pari said that only men made financial decisions, even regarding income that they earned: “You make cheese and you spend your time making it; men decide for you where to sell it and how to spend the income from your cheese sales.” On the other hand,

another woman in the same focus group said that she had made the decision in her family about the price at which to sell their cow. Another woman said that “everything is done with mutual agreement.” This data suggests that some families are less equal in terms of decision making than others. Hence, it would make sense to work towards initiatives that increase women’s say in intra-family decision making in families where decision making is unequal.

The above data suggests a number of findings. First, on an absolute scale there are a small number of businesses in Mestia municipality, but this is largely comparable to other rural areas in Georgia. When it comes to the tourism economy, about 16% of households have a tourism business, most of which are guesthouses or hotels. These businesses are concentrated in more developed areas. Less developed communities in Mestia municipality think appropriate infrastructure should be developed to encourage tourism in their areas. About half of the households in Mestia report they are engaged in agriculture, and about 30% of households are engaged in commercially oriented agriculture. Although only half of households report they are engaged in agriculture, 75% report having animals. The main challenge to raising animals is reported to be animal diseases. The most common reason for not engaging in agriculture is a lack of land. Most people engage in trade in the town of Mestia, and a majority refer to their products as local when talking to customers. Although generally positive that there is reportedly good access to markets, the remoteness of the region means that increasing access would be positive for agricultural producers. The data surrounding gender collected within the project generally suggests that men overestimate their role in household responsibilities as is the case elsewhere (CRRC 2019). Men are more likely to report that men are the main breadwinners in the household, to have access to productive assets, and to think they share household responsibilities equally than women. The lack of recognition of women’s work is clearly an issue that the project could work towards changing, which if changed could have a positive influence on women’s empowerment. There does not appear to be a gap between carrying out tasks and making decisions about them.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The above data and analysis leads to a number of conclusions and recommendations.

With inclusive governance people engage with the local government more than any other available forum. Performance assessments are relatively positive regardless of whether a person has engaged with local government in the last year or not (about a third of the public has). Extremely few engage with NGOs or membership organizations. Given the lack of NGOs or other organization, the easiest entry point for the project is likely local government. The difficulties of everyday life may be a cause of the low levels of civic engagement. Showing tangible results from engagement could increase civic engagement and increase the inclusivity of governance. Hence, it is recommended that the project attempt to show how people will benefit in very clear terms from the project in order to encourage their participation.

The data also suggest there are few NGOs in the region. This may suggest that there is a need to help set up NGOs or for CARE to provide incentives for the formation of local groups if local government is insufficient as a forum. Any incentives should encourage the long-term sustainability of groups. As a general good practice, CARE might consider encouraging gender balance and inclusion of vulnerable groups in the local action group the project is creating. The project should also avoid tying incentives to vulnerable group inclusion. This has the potential to incentivize the superficial inclusion of vulnerable groups. Clearly, if CARE helps set up an NGO (s) in the region, this/these organizations should avoid antagonizing the government. Assuming CARE follows the LEADER approach and past examples of LAG's this is unlikely to be an issue, however, as these models seek local government buy in.

Besides, people believe that the relatively difficult circumstances of everyday life lead to low levels of civic engagement. Hence, it is recommended that the project shows how people will tangibly benefit from the project in order to encourage their civic engagement and thus making governance more inclusive.

Another barrier to participation that shows up in the survey is the fact that people report there are no groups to join in their community. This fact may suggest the need to help organize the population or provide incentives for the formation of local groups if participation is wanted outside of local government. At the same time, any incentives should be designed to ensure the long-term sustainability of groups, and that groups do not disappear following the end of a funding period. As a general good practice, CARE might consider encouraging gender balance and inclusion of vulnerable groups in the local action group the project is creating or any other organization the institution creates or encourages the creation of.

At the same time, the organization should avoid tying incentives to vulnerable group inclusion as it has the potential to incentivize the artificial inclusion of vulnerable groups. Clearly, if CARE helps set up an NGO (s) in the region, this/these organizations should avoid antagonizing the government. Assuming CARE follows the LEADER approach and past examples of LAG's this is unlikely to be an issue, however, as these models seek local government buy in.

Spaces for meetings and accessible places for people with disabilities were highlighted as barriers to inclusive governance. Based on this, it is recommended that the project encourage policy that makes spaces available to the public. One way of piloting this would be through opening CARE's office space to the public during specific times to enable public meetings. If there is in fact demand for such a space and

it is accessible to people with disabilities, this can test whether the provision of space (under a number of assumptions) is likely to encourage more inclusive governance.

Access to services is relatively strong in Mestia municipality in terms of the services asked about on the survey. Drainage systems; culture and entertainment; and public transport are the services people reported having access to least often. Although people have access to a variety of services, service quality is reportedly an issue according to qualitative data. Hence, the project could aim to improve the situation around these least accessible services and improve the quality of already accessible services. Rather than providing service delivery, however, policy change should be prioritized to ensure sustainability.

Service access is weaker for rural people and people with people with disabilities in their family. Hence, these groups should be considered target groups for components of the project aimed at improving service delivery. Policy change, via well planned advocacy strategy should be the goal in this case rather than delivery itself as with services more generally.

The population generally report that they would engage their local government if they encountered service delivery issues. People with people with disabilities in their household and internally displaced people are more likely to address the central government in cases of issues with services. The central government is a key service delivery provider for these groups. This may be the reason why they are more likely to report they would address central government. A communications campaign and information provision on which authorities can deal with which problems, particularly for people with disabilities and the internally displaced would likely result in better service delivery through decreased time spent addressing inappropriate institutions.

In terms of markets, on an absolute scale there are a small number of businesses in Mestia municipality. However, the data indicate the number of businesses per capita is comparable to other rural areas in Georgia.

When it comes to tourism, about 16% of households have a tourism business, most of which are guesthouses or hotels. Tourism businesses are more common in more developed areas. Other communities are interested in tourism businesses and would like infrastructure to be developed to support the development of this industry. This data suggests that if the project supports the development of the tourism and targets the least served population, then it should focus on developing tourism outside Mestia (the municipal center) and Ushguli.

About half of the households in Mestia report they are engaged in agriculture. About a third of the municipality engages in commercial agriculture. A plurality of businesses get supplies and sell products in the town of Mestia. This generally suggests a reasonable level of access to markets for agricultural producers and tourism operators. Few people report access to markets as a problematic issue for their business. Although access to markets appears to be reasonably good, if the project is going to work on agriculture, improving access to markets is still important as Mestia is a remote municipality. Hence, transport costs are high for producers relative to lowland competitors. However, this fact combined with the short growing season and lack of arable lands in the region suggest that focusing on local markets and using agricultural production as part of a tourism business may also be a good strategy to promote.

Considering the role of agriculture and tourism in economic life of the region, agricultural development is intended to be part of the project, focusing on high value-added production should be the focus. Specifically considering the production of goods that can be sold as local to tourists or as inputs in tourism businesses should be a priority given the above. Otherwise, specialty products associated with the region (e.g. Svan Salt and Svan potatoes) also could have a competitive advantage on the larger Georgian market and fetch higher values on the market. If the project works towards agricultural development, these issues should be considered

The data surrounding gender collected within the project generally suggests that men overestimate their role in household responsibilities, and think they have a greater role in the economic well-being of households, as is the case elsewhere (CRRC 2019). Men are more likely to have access to productive assets. There does not appear to be a gap between carrying out tasks and making decisions about them.

The gap in perceptions between men and women in terms of economic and household activity likely suggests that men do not recognize how important women are in the well-being of households along these dimensions. Through highlighting this increasing men's awareness, women's position in the community could be improved.

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## APPENDIX 1: LOGFRAME

Results chain		Indicators	Baseline
<b>Overall objective: Impact</b>	To improve livelihoods of vulnerable households in remote, high mountainous regions of Georgia and support their economic and social wellbeing.	<b>OBI 1.</b> Proportion of the population of Mestia municipality living in households with access to basic services	Electricity: 100% Mobile phone service: 98% Secondary school: 89% Water: 87% Grocery: 76% Pre-school: 76% Healthcare: 75% Waste management: 64% Pharmacies: 52% Internet: 48% Veterinary services: 45% Sport, public spaces, and libraries: 43% Outdoor lighting: 42% Public transportation: 39% Culture and entertainment: 19% Drainage system: 17% 53% of households
		<b>OBI 2.</b> Proportion of the population of Mestia municipality living below the national poverty line	
		<b>OBI 3.</b> Proportion of the population of Mestia reporting socially vulnerable status	28%
		<b>SOI 1.</b> Proportion of vulnerable population in Mestia with a perception of improved inclusiveness as a result of the project	N/A
<b>Specific objective(s):</b>	To improve diversification and competitiveness of the rural economy, the inclusion of vulnerable groups, and the sustainable management of natural resources in Mestia municipality by implementing the LEADER approach.	<b>SOI2.</b> Proportion of population in Mestia benefitting from improvements in the local business environment, service provision, infrastructure or natural resource management	N/A
		<b>SOI 3.</b> Number of business operators registered in Mestia municipality, per sector	188 businesses 3% primary sector 23% secondary sector 74% tertiary sector

## APPENDIX 2: GENDER AND DIVERSITY BRIEF

### *Gender and Diversity in Mestia Municipality*

**Cooperative** for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) started the “Implementing LEADER in Mestia municipality for better livelihoods in high mountainous regions of Georgia” in 2019. The project aims to improve the livelihoods of vulnerable households in Mestia Municipality, a remote high mountainous region of Georgia. With a bottom up approach, the project aims to take into account both the diversity of people and their views in the community on the development of Mestia Municipality. With this goal in mind, this brief provides data and analysis related to gender and diversity from the larger study carried out within the project as well as corresponding recommendations for programming. The brief first provides background on gender and different aspects of diversity in Mestia. Next findings from the study related to inclusive governance, service provision, and market integration are provided. The brief finishes with conclusions and recommendations.

### **Background**

Mestia municipality is ethnically homogenous, with Georgian Svan people being the main inhabitants. The main languages spoken are Georgian and Svan, though Svan is slowly becoming less common. Despite ethnic homogeneity, minority and/or vulnerable<sup>13</sup> groups are present in the community, including people with disabilities and elderly people living without the support of younger family members. Traditional gender roles are predominant and serve to inhibit women’s participation in the community.

### *Gender*

Traditional gender attitudes, which dictate that women’s primary role should be in the family, are strong in Svaneti. In a survey conducted in Georgia’s mountainous regions, 69% of respondents agreed with the traditional view that men should work outside the home and women should manage the household (UN Women 2014). Women also tend to have less access to resources than men. Due to inheritance traditions, it is much less common for women to own property relative to men. Most women live with their husband or father and are not expected to receive inheritance (real estate) or own any durable property. That being said it is important to note that this is purely cultural norm and there is no legislation base supporting men’s entitlement to this inheritance. When women earn personal income, it tends to be spent on family matters (UN Women 2014).

Women and girls tend to view women’s political participation positively (UN Women 2014). Many expressed views that women are more careful, diplomatic, and socially sensitive, and that an increase in women’s participation would make politics more humane. However, the majority of women living in mountain settlements were not aware of key government programs and policies aimed at mountain development. Many female respondents were not informed about their rights to request information on policies or budgets (UN Women 2014).

### *People with disabilities*

In 2015, there were nearly 120,000 registered persons with disabilities in Georgia (IDFI 2015). In the Mestia municipality, there were 229 registered persons with disabilities in 2015 (Opendata.ge). However,

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<sup>13</sup> Socially vulnerable is a status conferred on a family from registration with the Social Service Agency of Georgia (SSA). The status is conferred to a family after a poverty score card methodology is used to assess the family’s situation. For more details on the benefits these families receive, the following page at the SSA provides further detail: [http://ssa.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=35](http://ssa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=35)

the true number of people living with disabilities is likely higher, due to underreporting caused by stigma, lack of information, and the costs of registration (World Bank 2007).

People with disabilities are eligible for government assistance of 70 or 100 GEL per month, depending on their category of disability (IDFI 2015). However, while the government has a number of well-intentioned laws towards social integration, research suggests that this tends to be incomplete and insufficient (Gassmann et al. 2013). A lack of resources, limited legislation, and low levels of societal awareness about disability seem to compromise the implementation of policy<sup>14</sup> (Makharadze et al. 2010). A 2011 report by the World Health Organization concluded that many people with disabilities do not receive the services they require and that they suffer from unequal access to healthcare, education, and employment (WHO 2011). Indeed, employment rates for persons with disabilities are very low (Gassmann et al. 2013). While the Law on Education requires inclusive education, in reality, access to quality education for those with disabilities is limited (Gassmann et al. 2013). In addition, therapy and rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities are nearly non-existent in rural areas (Gassmann et al. 2013). Persons with disabilities face additional barriers to accessing the social benefits to which they are entitled: In a 2013 survey of mountain residents conducted by the Center for Social Sciences and UN Women, 8% of respondents stated that they needed, but did not use, social services for people with disabilities (UN Women 2014).

### *Age*

Elderly people, a large share of the rural population relative to the rest of the country, face additional difficulties accessing social services and particularly health related services (UNDP 2013). Young people in mountain regions, on the other hand, suffer from a lack of opportunities for employment, education, and entertainment (UN Women 2014). While the increase in Svaneti's tourism industry has provided employment opportunities for some (Capucci et al. 2015), many young people still express the desire to migrate to a bigger city (UN Women 2014). This appears to be particularly true for young women, who are sensitive to the restrictions imposed by cultural norms in their communities and wish to seek more opportunities for personal development (UN Women 2014).

### **Findings**

The study has found a number of differences between majority and minority groups and men and women when it comes to inclusive governance, service delivery, and economic opportunity.

#### *Inclusive governance*

When it comes to participation in community-based organizations, such a small share of individuals participate that it is not possible to make a statistical judgement about differences in participation. However, qualitative data suggests that men remain the primary decision makers in line with traditional gender roles. Key informant interviews and focus groups suggested that women and men made decisions in different domains though, suggesting a gendered division of decision making. Qualitative data indicated that women have a higher representation in education and healthcare, while men occupy the majority of leadership positions in the *Sakrebulo – local government forum*.

Despite substantial improvements in women's status in Svaneti, some participants reported that women's opinions were not taken seriously on community issues. Often this implies that opinions of women are

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<sup>14</sup> Law of Georgia on social protection of persons with disabilities - The law regulates the general aspects of social life and rights of persons with disabilities (<https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/download/30316/8/en/pdf?fbclid=IwAR07YmxEO4bTLzPqW20tdEsvvu2QpYjYaRg2DF7o9Gc979z8ohoxXkBNcUE>).

not taken seriously by both men and women as it is less expected for a woman to get engaged in decision making on community issues. Consequently, women sometimes did not feel comfortable getting involved in discussions on decision making. However, several participants (men and women) in focus groups felt that women have become more actively engaged in community decisions over the past 10 years.

Several interviewees highlighted the issues that persons with disabilities face in participating in public life, stemming first and foremost from the lack of accessibility of most places in Svaneti, which prevents them from entering public spaces and participating in discussions. Accessibility can also be an issue for elderly people. Interviewees generally said that elderly people were highly respected and their opinions were valued greatly in community decisions, but that they were often inactive as social members.

When it comes to engagement in local government, the results of a logistic regression looking at probability of participation suggest no statistically significant differences between groups (i.e. it is not clear whether or not the differences on the chart below are due to survey error or actual differences). In general, most of the public, including women and vulnerable groups had positive attitudes towards their local government, and qualitative data re-enforced this sentiment.

In qualitative interviews and focus groups, a sizable portion of participants said that they had contact with their local government and that it was relatively easy to get in touch with them. Some said that the municipality tries hard to engage residents and posts information on Facebook as well as a physical board at the municipality. Other respondents said that engagement varied substantially based on the issue at hand. There also appear to be some differences between Mestia and the smaller villages, with distance and transportation to Mestia posing an issue for more remote towns. In addition, focus group participants from Becho and Kala reported that local representatives only tried to engage them before elections rather than engaging with their problems on an ongoing basis.

Generally, people are more positive than negative about the performance of the municipal government. Overall 48% assessed municipal government positively, while 16% assessed it negatively. One in twenty (6%) reported not knowing how local government was doing and 28% assessed its performance neither positively nor negatively<sup>15</sup>. People living in elderly only households and people in households below the poverty line assess the performance of the municipality less positively than individuals in non-elderly households and households above the poverty line.<sup>16</sup> People in households with members with disabilities also appear to assess the municipal government's performance more negatively ( $p < 0.1$ ).<sup>17</sup> Controlling for the previously noted factors, contact with the municipal government is not associated with more positive or negative assessments of government performance.<sup>18</sup>

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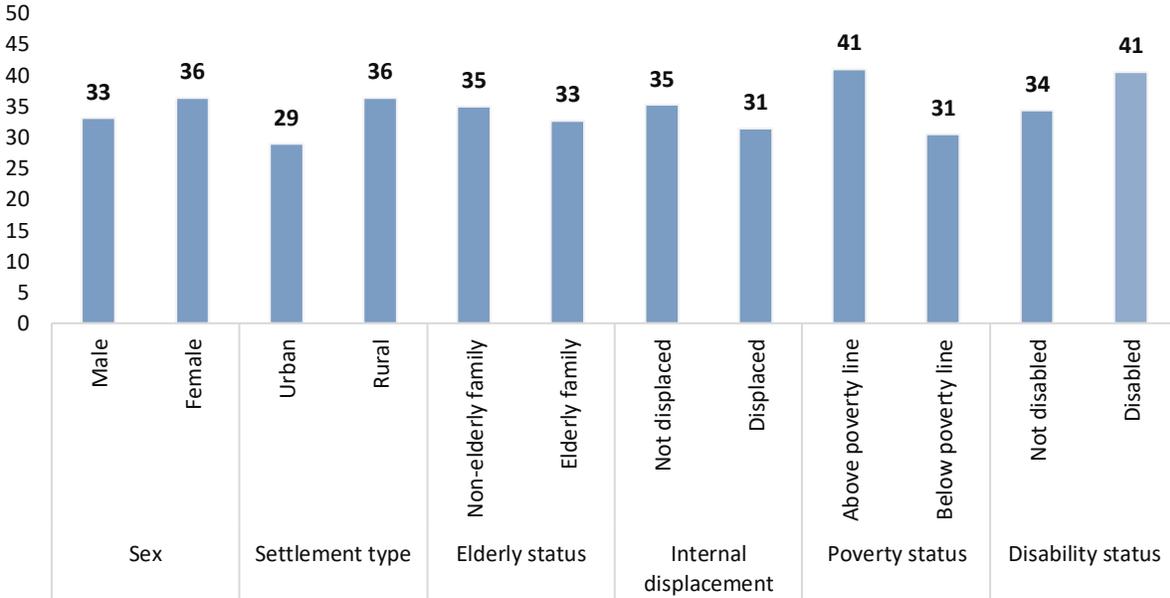
<sup>15</sup> 2% have abstained from answer.

<sup>16</sup> Results come from a multi-variate ordinary least squares regression.

<sup>17</sup> Results come from a multi-variate ordinary least squares regression.

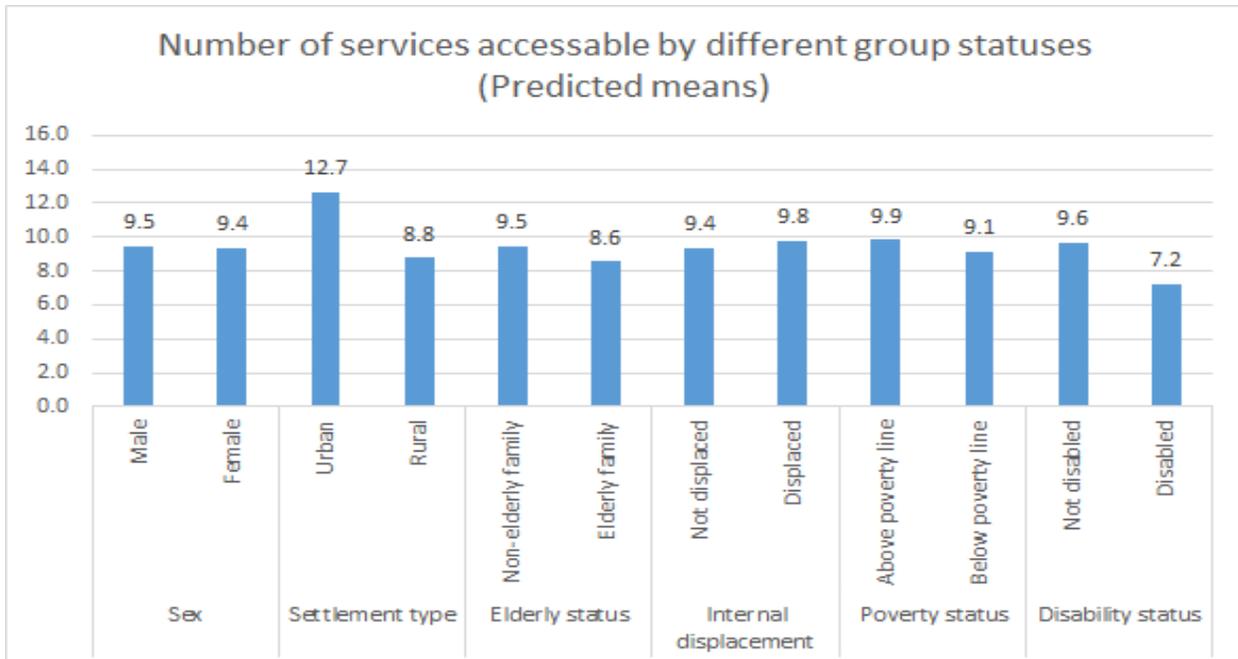
<sup>18</sup> Results come from a multi-variate ordinary least squares regression.

**PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF HAVING CONTACT WITH MUNICIPALITY IN LAST 12 MONTHS AMONG DIFFERENT GROUPS (%)**



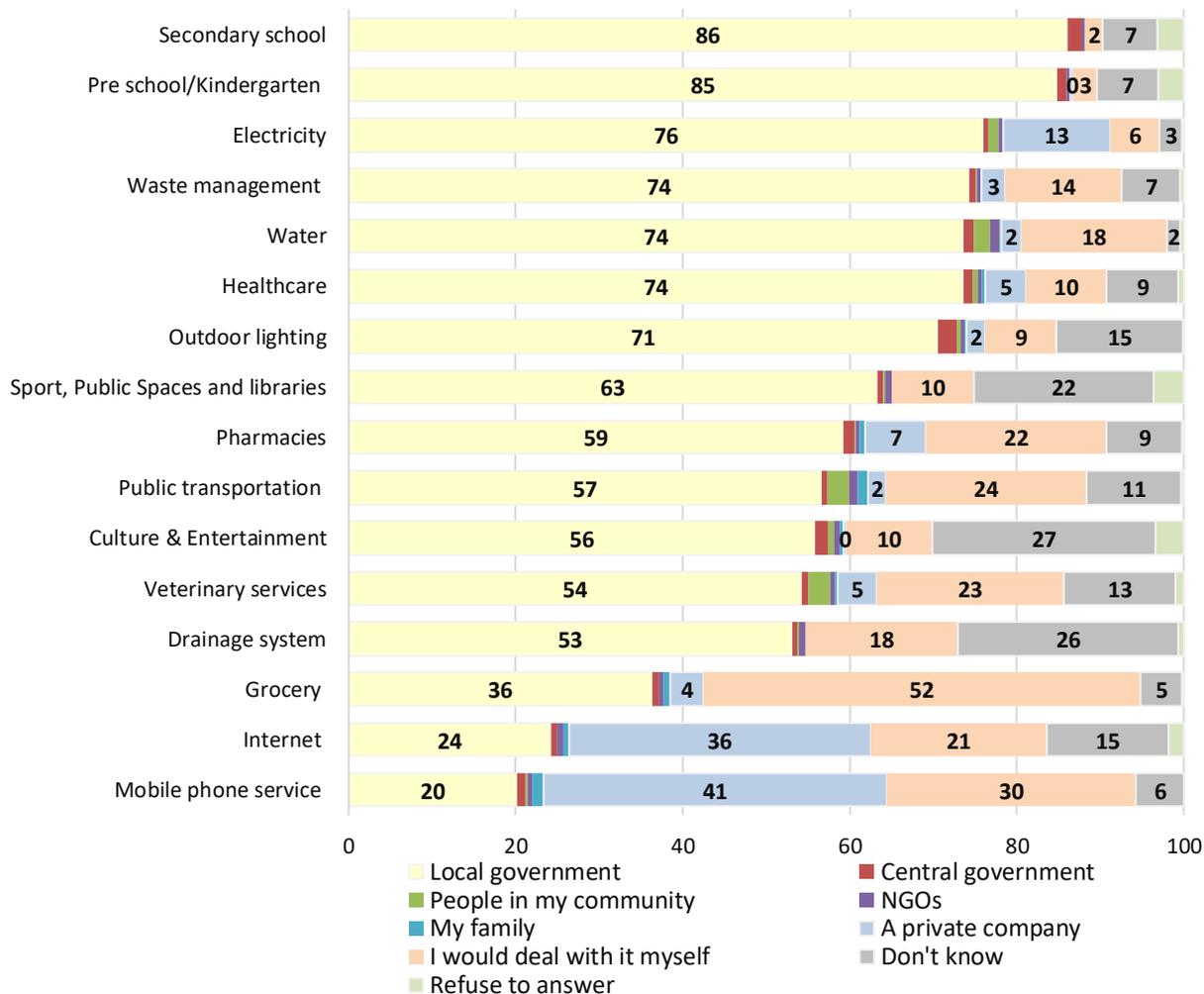
*Service delivery*

Survey data suggests that people in different social and demographic groups have differing levels of access to services. The chart below shows the average number of services people have access to in different demographic groups. Men and women in rural areas; those in households below the poverty line; and people in households who have a member with a disability have significantly lower levels of access to services. (Men and women in rural areas and households that have a person with a disability in them have the weakest access to services all else equal.



When it comes to solving issues related to service delivery, there are also a number of differences between people of different social and demographic groups in terms of who they would seek help from. People with people with disabilities in their households are significantly less likely to approach local government for the resolution of their problems. This likely stems from the fact that the central government is responsible for most services for people with disabilities as they have more capacity to address their needs. In this context, the local population is more familiar with and hence prefers approaching central government instead of local government.

**WHO WOULD YOU APPROACH TO DEAL WITH ISSUES IN YOUR COMMUNITY RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING? (%)**



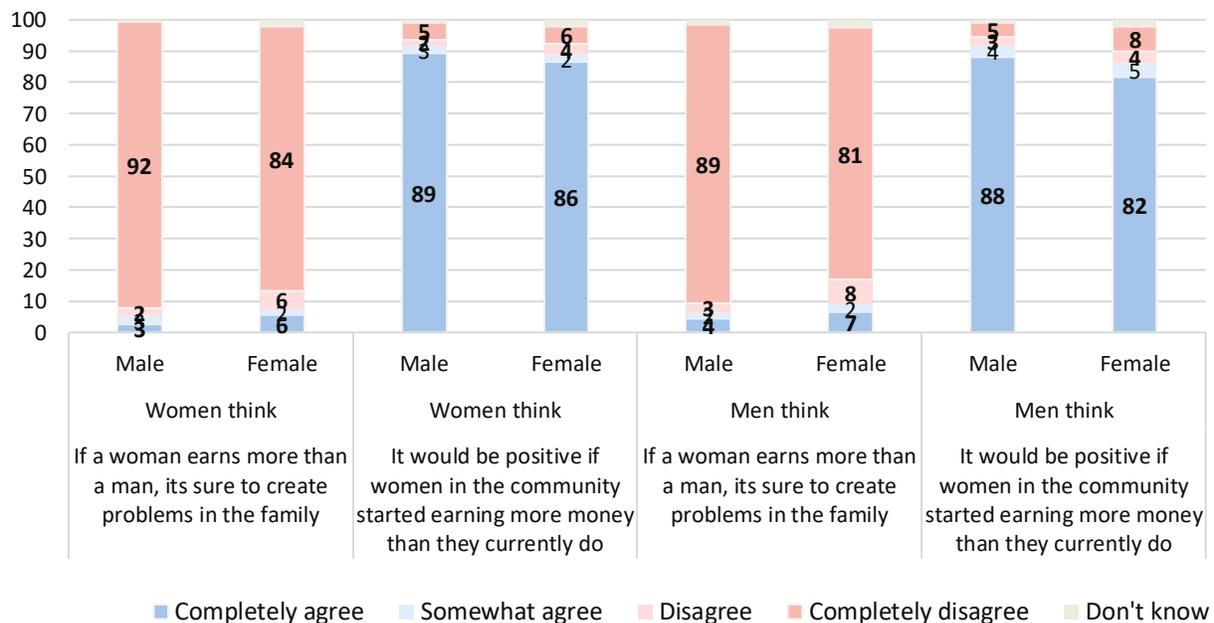
*Economic opportunity*

The survey data indicates a lack of male acknowledgement of women’s economic engagement. For example, the data suggests that in Mestia, 22% of households have female breadwinners, 33% have male breadwinners, and 45% report that both male and female family members are the “main” breadwinners. However, only 8% of male respondents reported that women were the main breadwinners in their family compared with 33% of female respondents, even though this figure should not differ by sex since household members were randomly selected to participate in the survey. Notably, women are also more likely to report that they are responsible for a variety of household management tasks, while men are

more likely to report these tasks are jointly shared. This falls in line with previous data and analysis from Georgia (CRRC 2019). Overall, this data likely suggests that women carry a higher burden compared to men when it comes to daily work load as they are often times both the breadwinner (either main breadwinner or shared) and also household manager. Consequently, they tend to have less time to engage in community matters. On top of that despite this crucial role women carry men overestimate their roles in households and household economic activity and underestimate the role of women.

Respondents were asked to what extent they think women and men in their community agree with the sentiments that a) if women earn more than men it will create problems in the family and b) it would be positive if women in the community started earning more than men. As the chart below shows, most men and women think that it would be good if women in their community started earning more money. However, women are less likely to think that the men and women of their community disagree with the statement that “If a woman earns more than a man, its sure to create problems in the family” than men. Despite this small but statistically significant difference in response between sexes, the overwhelming majority of both men and women disagree that women earning more than men will cause marital issues and agree that it would be positive for women to start earning more.

**TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU THINK [WOMEN/MEN] IN YOUR COMMUNITY AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS? (%)**



**Conclusions and recommendations**

The above data and analysis lead to a number of conclusions and recommendations for programming.

First, the data suggest that people in rural areas (in particular people with disabilities and elderly) have weaker access to services. This suggests the need for greater government outreach and service provision in these places, which are more difficult to reach.

Second, the data suggest that in the families of people with disabilities, people are more likely to approach central rather than local government. Although this makes sense given the central government’s role in

service provision for people with disabilities, greater local government outreach to the families of people with disabilities would likely be positive.

Third the qualitative data suggests that in general, men are still the primary decision-makers in community settings, (informal settings). Participants had a range of opinions on women's role in decision-making: some thought that although men got advice from women, women's opinions were generally not heard in a formal way. Others thought that women were quite active and involved in decision-making. Some participants noted that men and women tended to be represented in different spheres of public life. Women occupy the majority of seats in local education and healthcare fora, while men occupy the majority of leadership positions in the Sakrebulo (government forum, essentially city council). Hence, enabling and encouraging women to participate in decision making in other domains would likely be positive, leading to a more gender equitable decision-making process in Mestia.

Fourth, the data shows that women's role in households and economic activity is likely underestimated by men. Women are significantly more likely to report being the main breadwinners and to be primarily responsible for a number of activities that men are more likely to say are jointly shared. This could be remedied through increasing men's awareness of the role women play at home and in the community, in order to create space and mobilize support for women to have their voices heard in both formal and informal decision-making processes.

For that purpose, the project will have to address the underlying norms hindering women's participation. In particular project will have to ensure that women are empowered to express their voice, take leadership positions within communities, in business and in local government.<sup>19</sup>

These findings on needs to be addressed and proposed recommendations are summed up in the table below:

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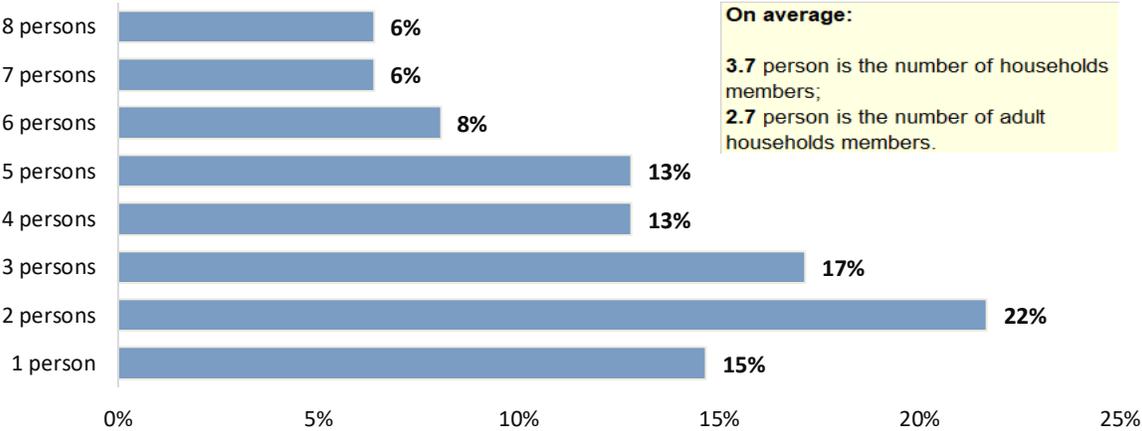
<sup>19</sup> Though these suggestions can not be named to be detailed strategy outline necessary to work in this direction. But based on the findings in this study, along with the stakeholder and resource analysis – project will develop together with local community action groups – Local Development Strategy Document (100% participatory analysis).

<b>Identified gaps and needs</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<p>People in rural areas (in particular the disabled and elderly) have weaker access to services.</p>	<p>Encouraging and supporting greater government outreach and service provision in these places, which are more difficult to reach, with the special focus on needs of disabled and elderly.</p>
<p>In the families of people with disabilities, people are more likely to approach central rather than local government.</p>	<p>Encouraging and supporting greater local government outreach to the families of people with disabilities.</p>
<p>In general, men are still the primary decision-makers in community settings, (both in formal and informal settings). Further women’s decision-making power differs across different domains.</p>	<p>Encouraging and enabling women to participate in decision making in different domains, when they particularly lack decision-making power. This could be reached through engaging male role models and/or existing women leaders.</p>
<p>Women’s role in households and economic activity is likely underestimated by men. Women are significantly more likely to report being the main breadwinners and to be primarily responsible for a number of activities that men are more likely to say are jointly shared.</p>	<p>Increasing men’s awareness of the role women play both at home and in the community to create space and mobilize support for women to have their voices heard.</p>

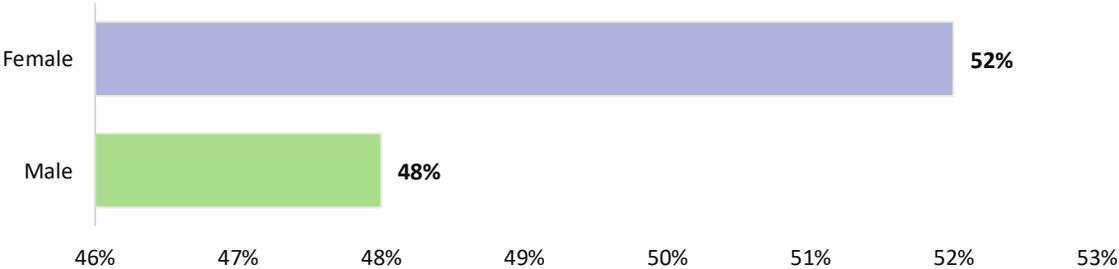
# APPENDIX 3: DIAGRAMS - DATA

## 1. Demographic Characteristics

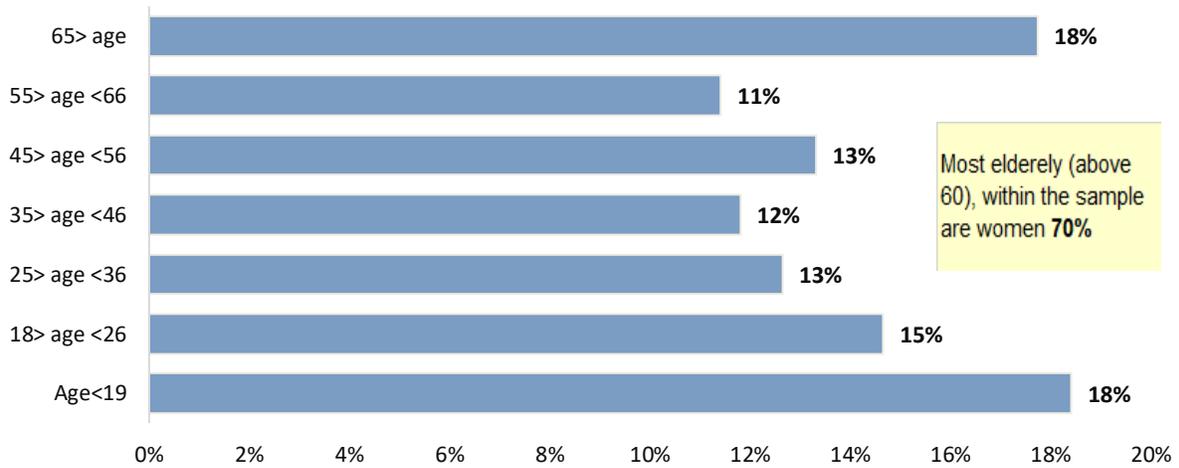
1.1 % OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH FOLLOWING NUMBER OF PEOPLE LIVING IN



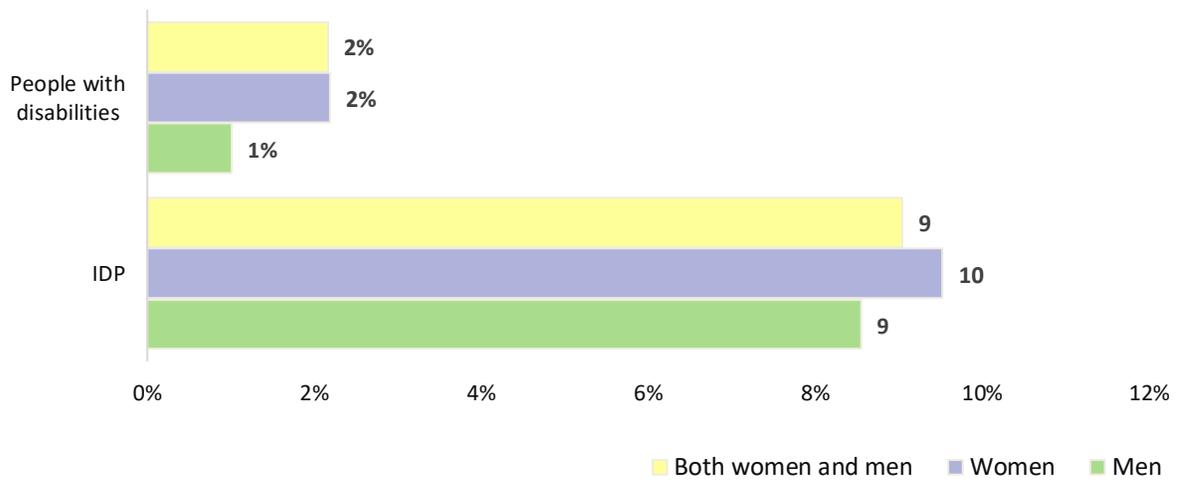
1.2 GENDER DISTRIBUTION AMONG INTERVIEWED HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS, %



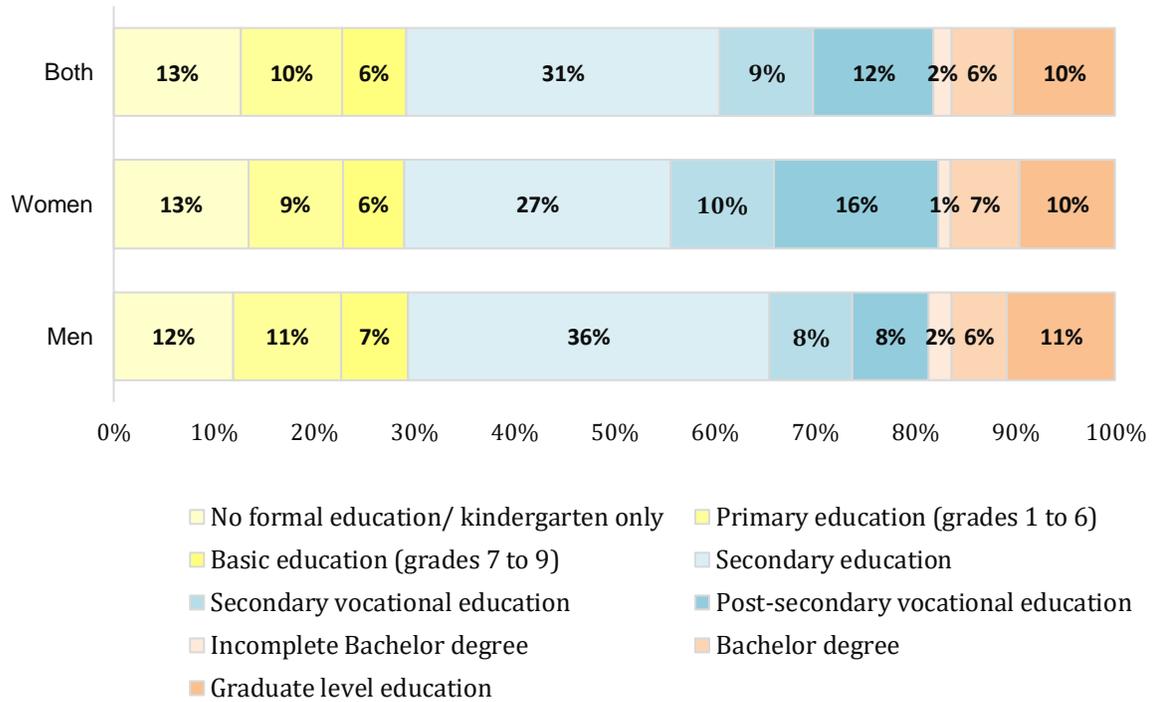
**1.3 AGE DISTRIBUTION AMONG INTERVIEWED HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS, %**



**1.3 IDPs & PEOPLE WITH DISSABILITY STATUSES AMONG INTERVIEWED HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS, %**

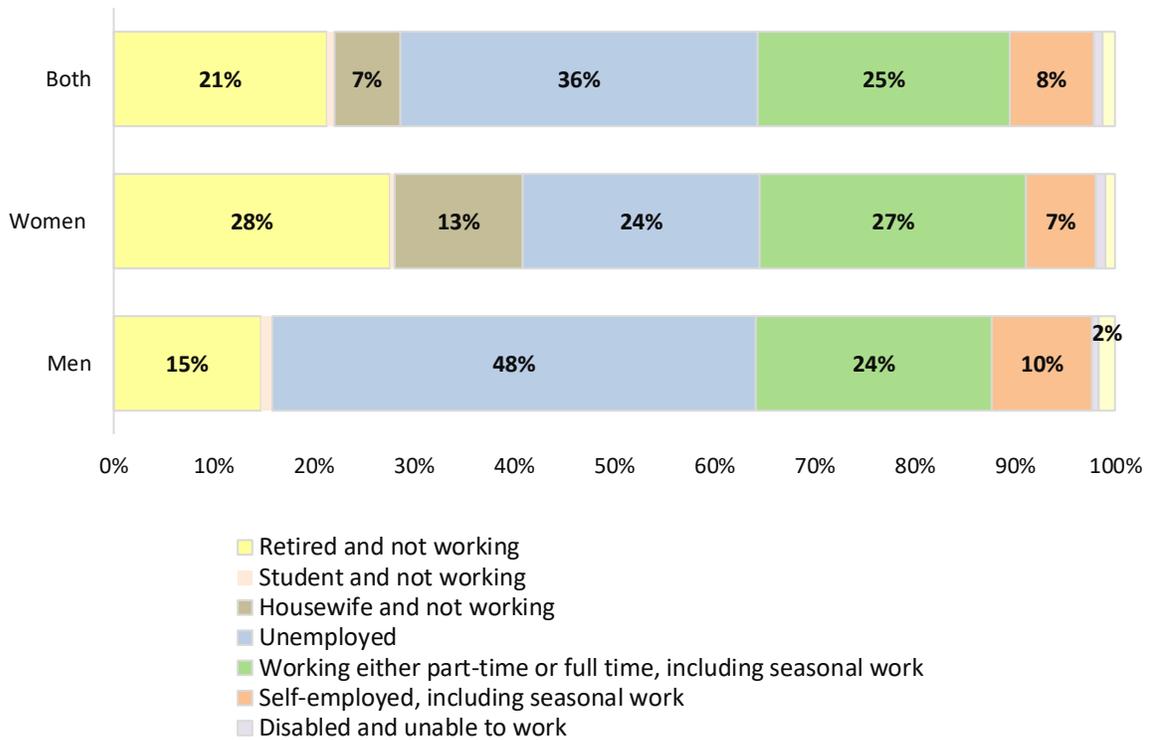


### 1.4 EDUCATION LEVEL AMONG INTERVIEWED HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS, %

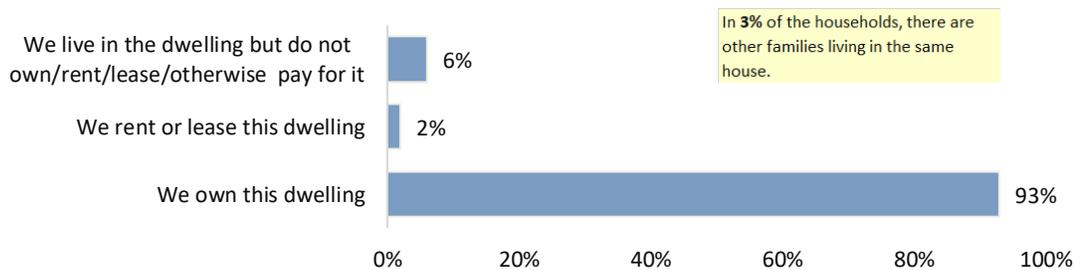


## 2. Social Economic Characteristics

### 2.1 EMPLOYMENT STATUS AMONG INTERVIEWED HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS, %

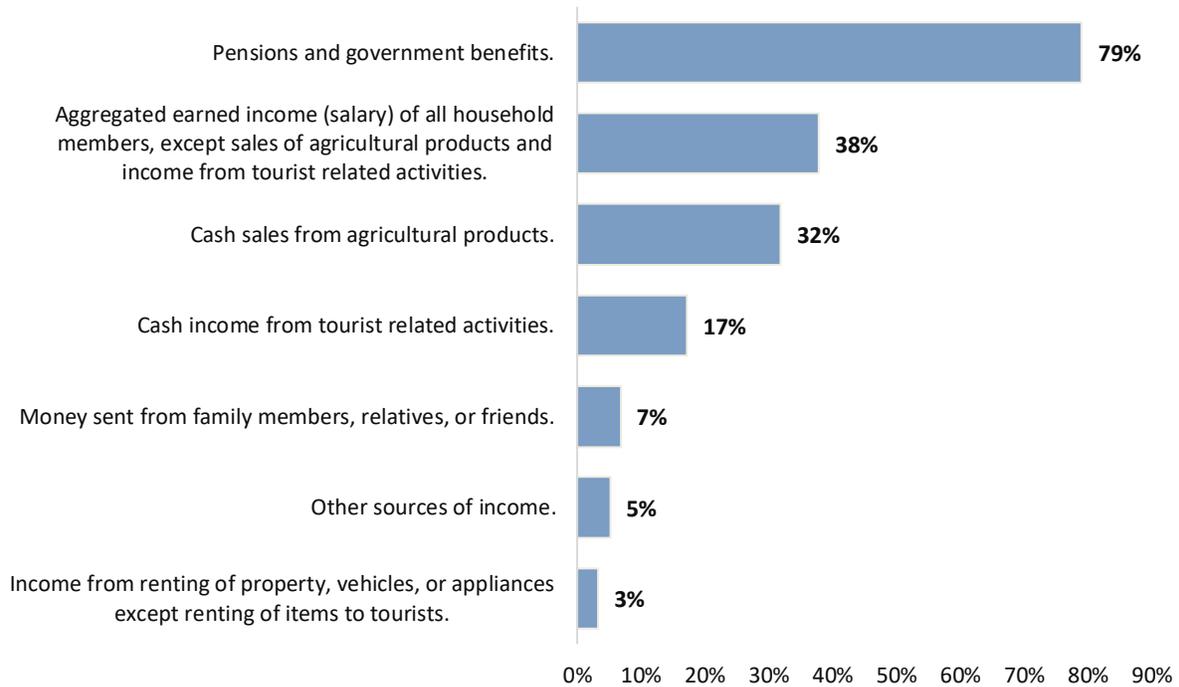


### 2.2 % OF HOUSEHOLDS OWNING THE DWELLING THEY LIVE IN

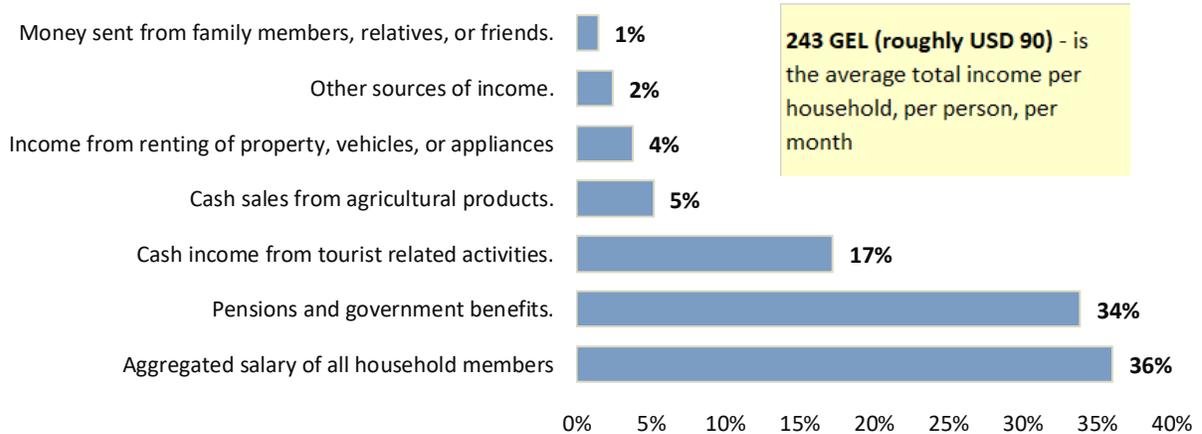


### 2.3 HOUSEHOLDS INCOME SOURCES

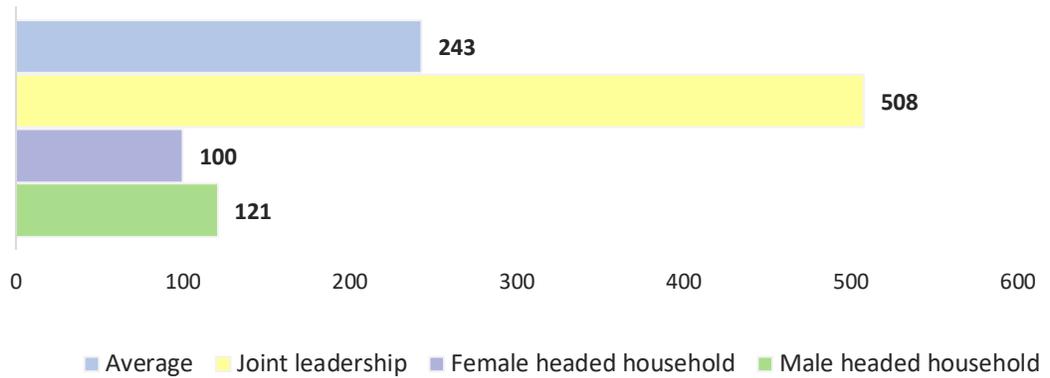
(% of households naming following as one of their income source)



### 2.4 INCOME % DISTRIBUTION FOR MAIN INCOME SOURCES

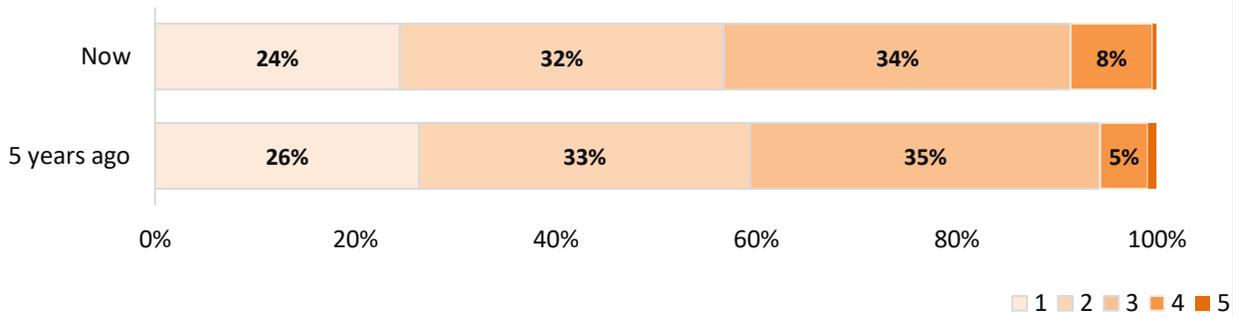


**2.5 AVERAGE PER HOUSEHOLD, PER PERSON MONTHLY INCOME FOR FEMALE, MALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS & FOR HOUSEHOLDS WITH JOINT LEADERSHIP, GEL**

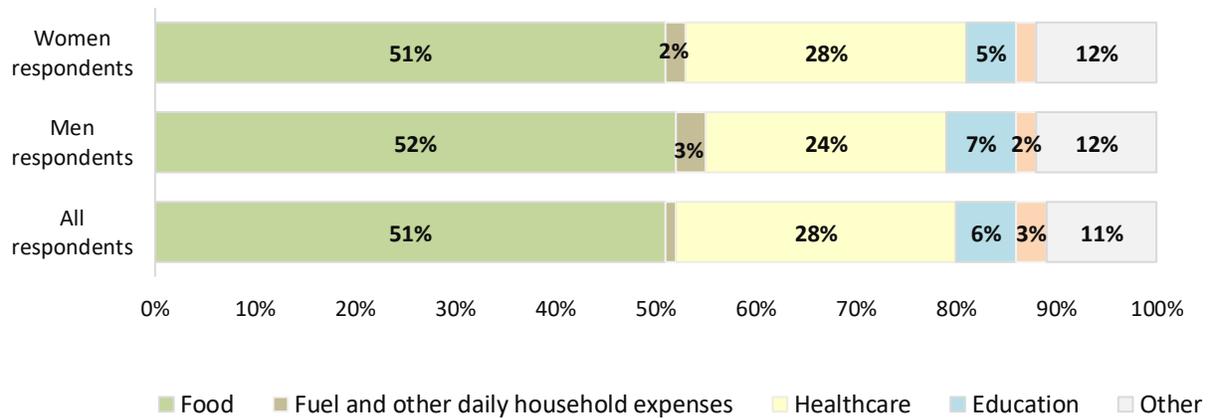


**2.6 HOUSEHOLD SELF ASSESSMENT OF THEIR RELATIVE (IN MESTIA) ECONOMIC CONDITION**

*(1 the lowest 5 the highest)*

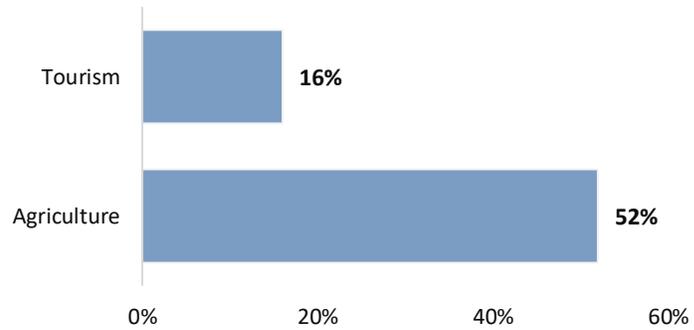


**2.7 MAIN SOURCES OF EXPENSES FOR INTERVIEWED HOUSEHOLDS, %**



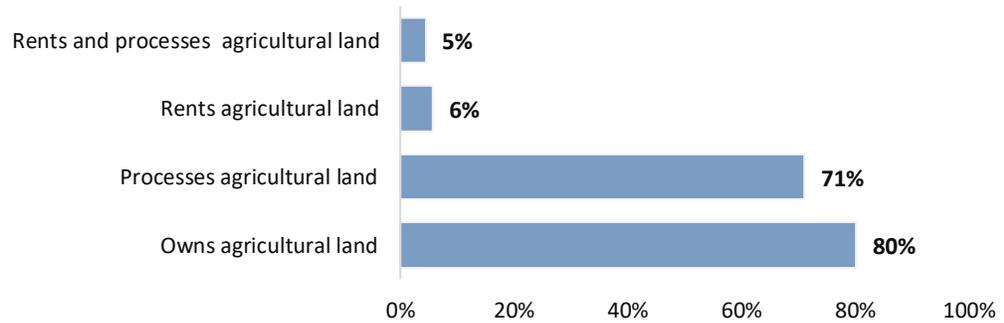
### 3. Tourism & Agriculture

#### 3.1 % OF HOUSEHOLDS INVOLVED IN AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM BUSINESSES

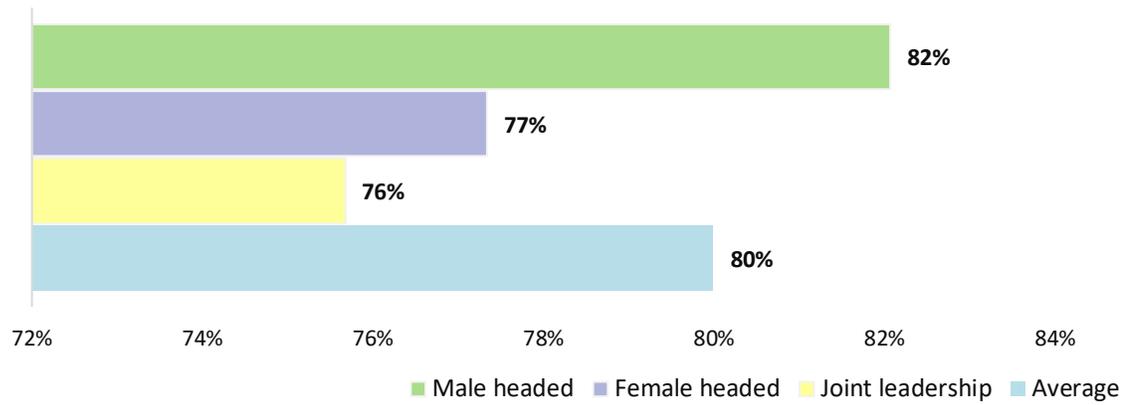


#### 3.2 % OF HOUSEHOLDS OWNING, PROCESSING, RENTING, AND RENTING AND PROCESSING AGRICULTURAL LAND

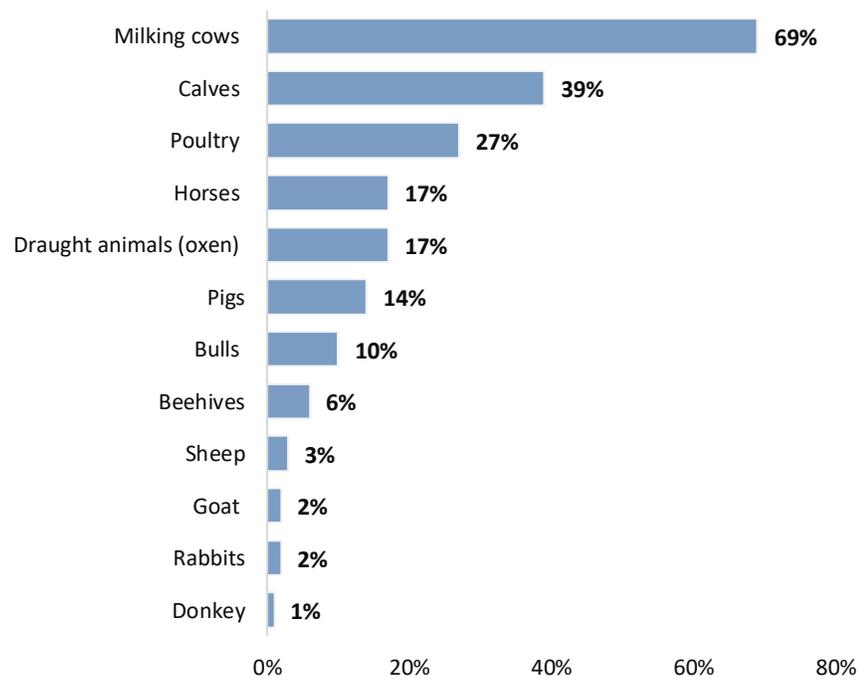
*(The data refers to the period in the last 12 months)*



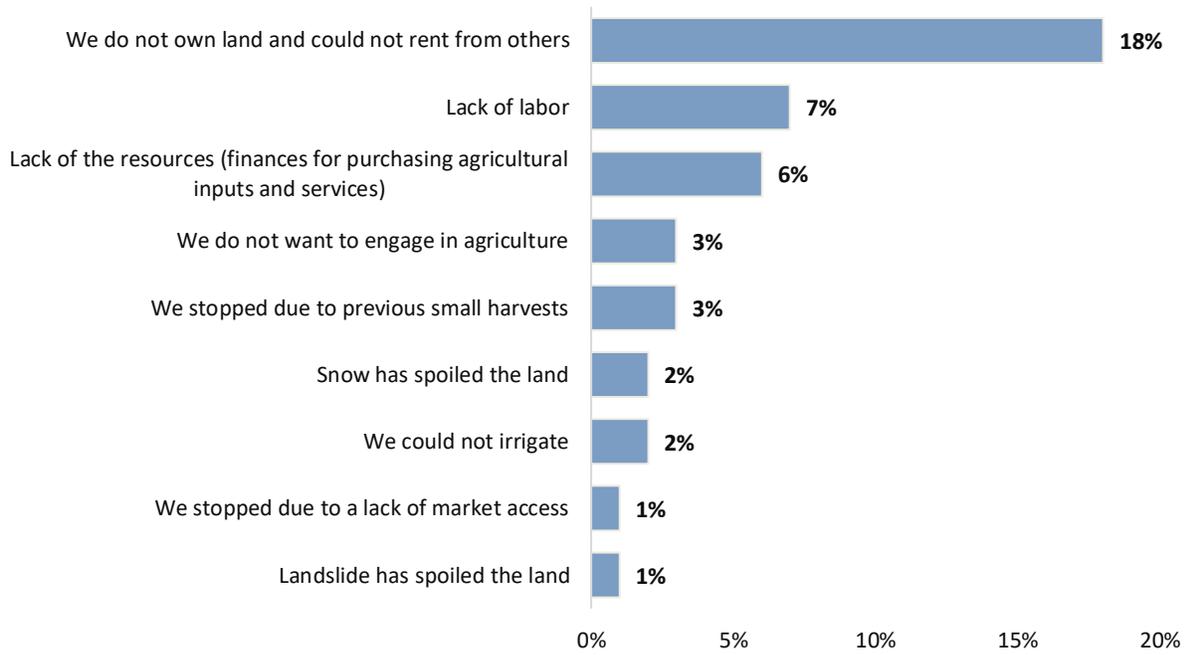
### 3.3 % OF HOUSEHOLDS OWNING AGRICULTURAL LAND



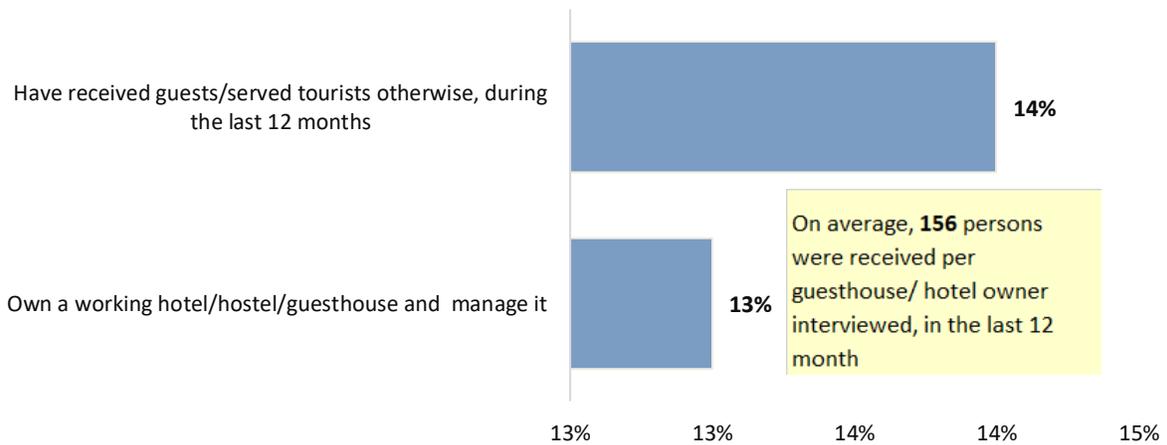
### 3.4 % OF HOUSEHOLDS POSSESSING FOLLOWING ANIMAL PRODUCTS



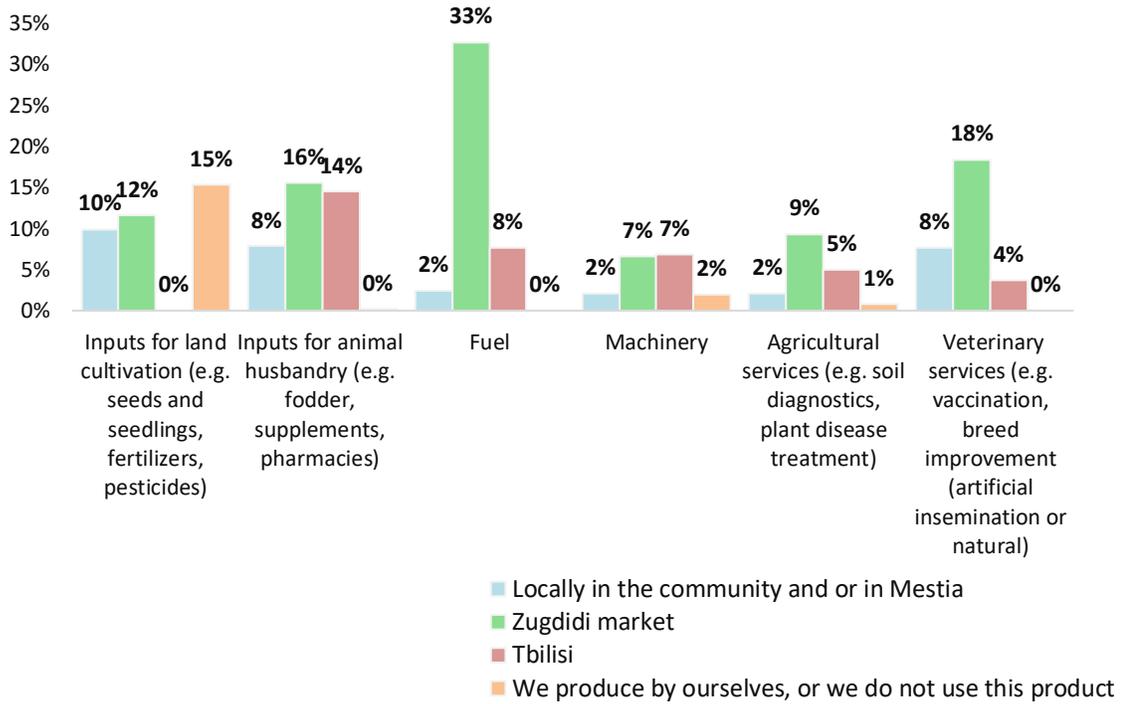
**3.5 % OF RESPONDENTS NAMING FOLLOWING AS THE MAJOR OBSTACLE FOR AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES**



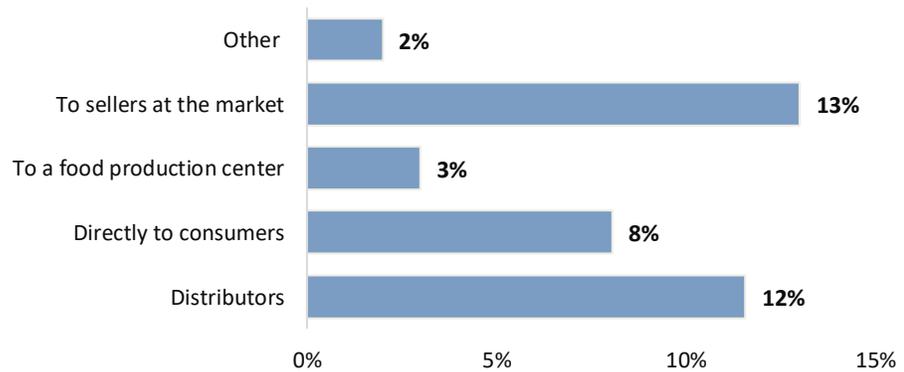
**3.6 % OF HOUSEHOLDS REPORTING FOLLOWING ABOUT THEIR TOURISM BUSINESSES**



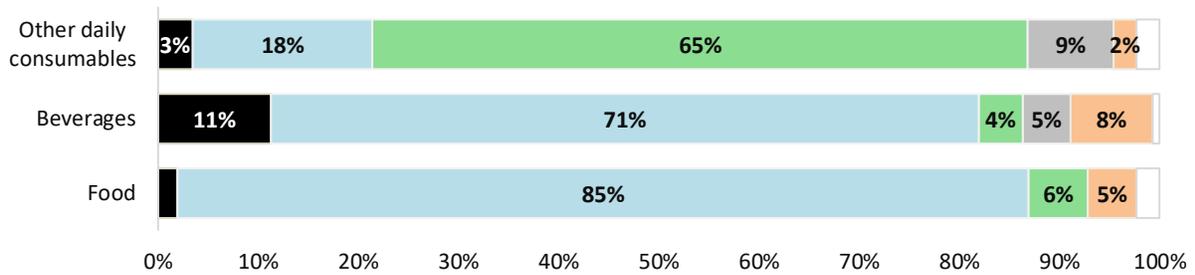
**3.7 % OF HOUSEHOLDS PURCHASING FOLLOWING AGRICULTURAL INPUTS  
LOCALLY, AND OUTSIDE OF THE REGION**



**3.8 % OF HOUSEHOLDS SELLING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS TO FOLLOWING  
MARKETS/DISTRIBUTORS**



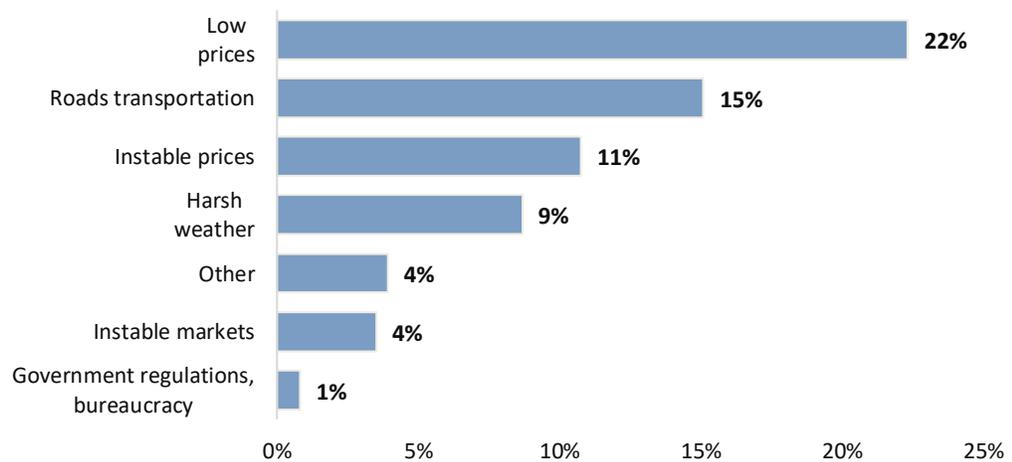
**3.9 % OF GUESTHOUSEOWNER HOUSEHOLDS PURCHASING FOOD, BEVERAGES AND OTHER DAILY CONSUMABLES FROM FOLLOWING SOURCES**



**40%** of guesthouses refer to their products as local while talking to customers

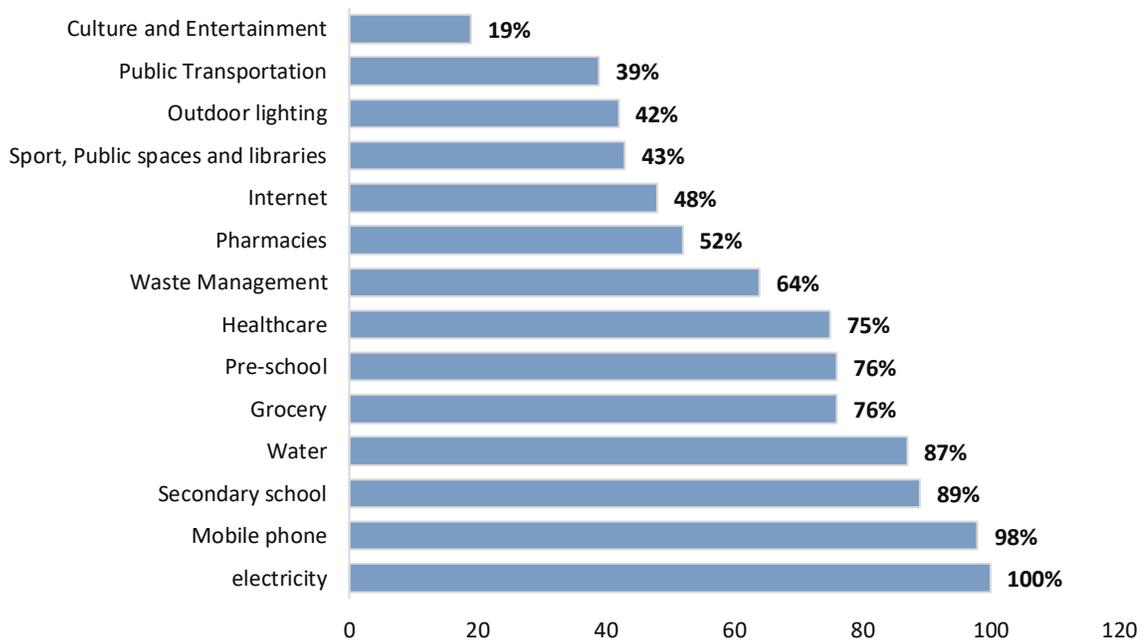
- I Don't use this product
- Locally in the community or in Mestia
- Zugdidi
- Tbilisi or elsewhere

**3.10 % OF HOUSEHOLDS NAMING FOLLOWING TO BE THE MAJOR OBSTACLES FOR TOURISM BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN MESTIA**

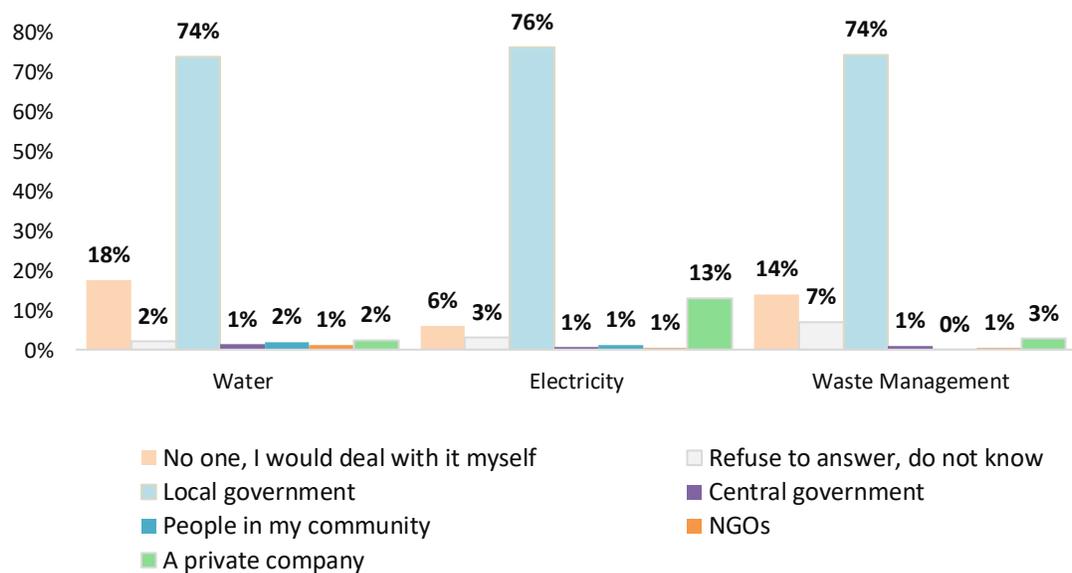


#### 4. Access to Services, Social Inclusion and Governance

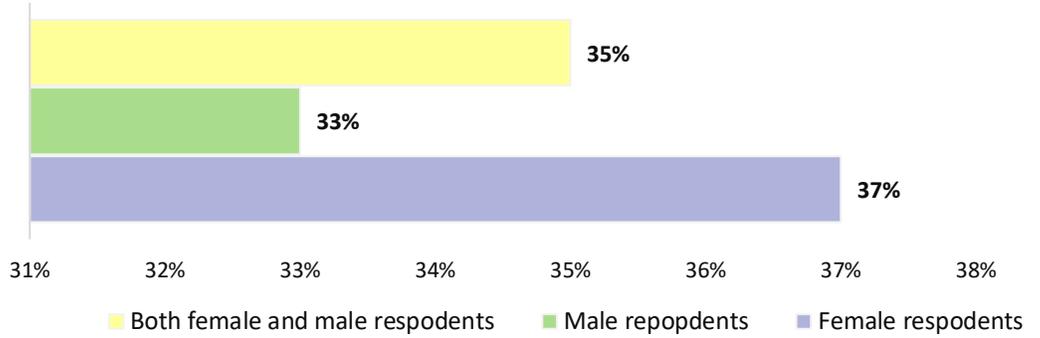
##### 4.1 % OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH ACCESS TO FOLLOWING SERVICES



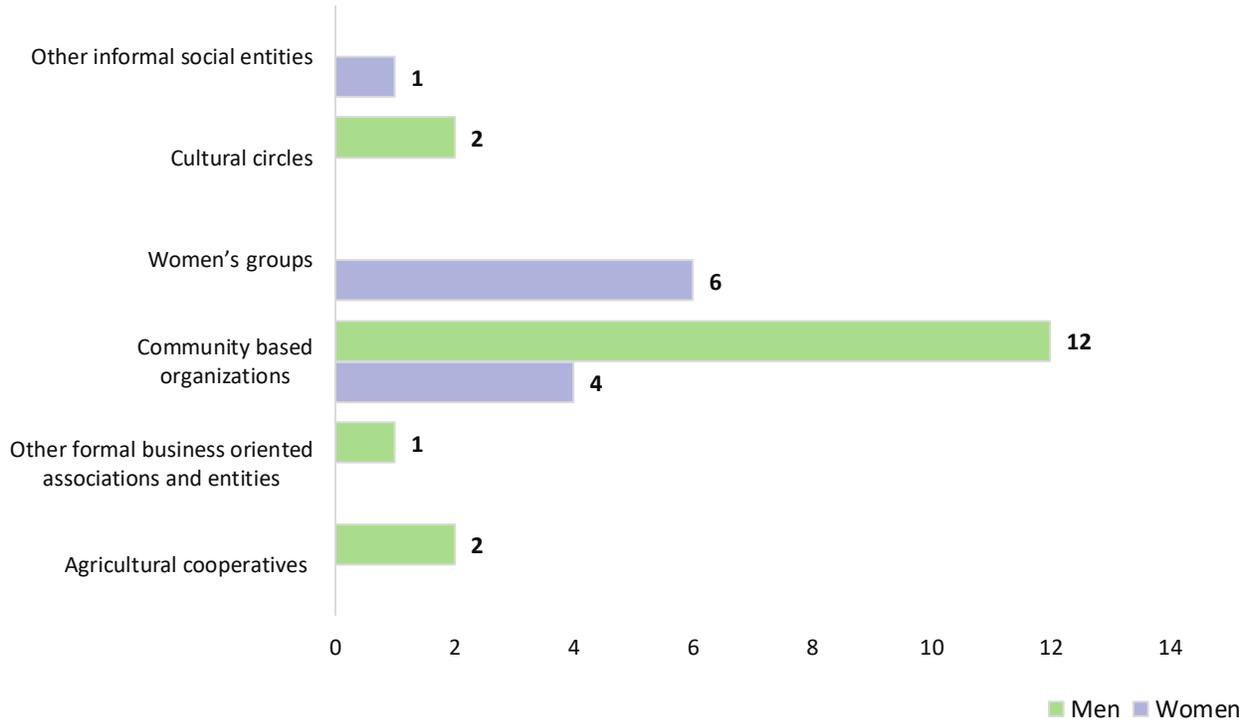
##### 4.2 % OF HOUSEHOLDS WHO REPORT THAT WILL ACCESS TO FOLLOWING BODIES IN CASE THEY HAVE PROBLEMS WITH WATER, ELECTRICITY OR WASTE MANAGEMENT



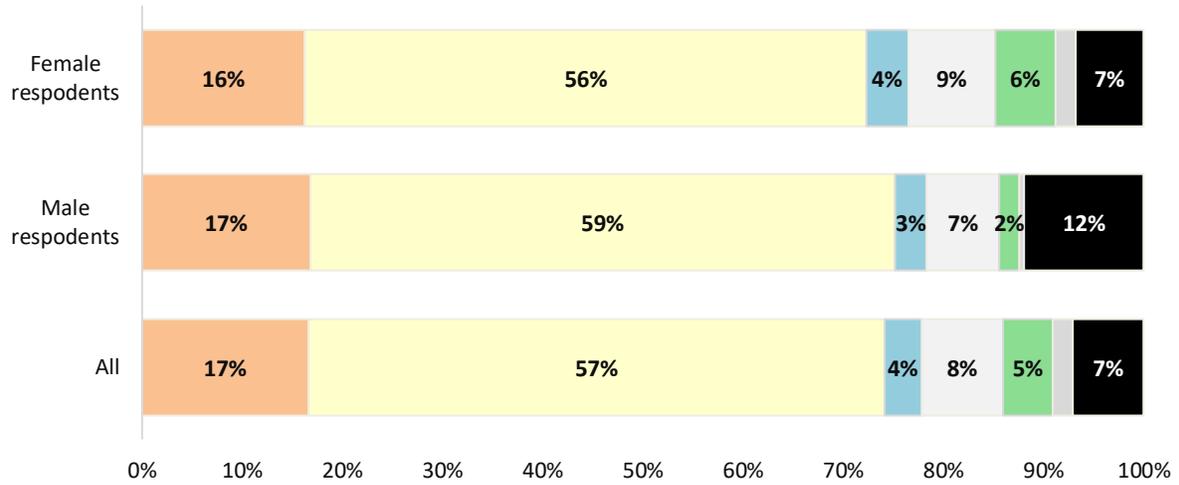
**4.3 RESPONDENTS, THAT HAVE CONTACTED MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS**



**4.4 NUMBER OF WOMEN AND MEN TO BE ENGAGED IN FOLLOWING GROUPS**

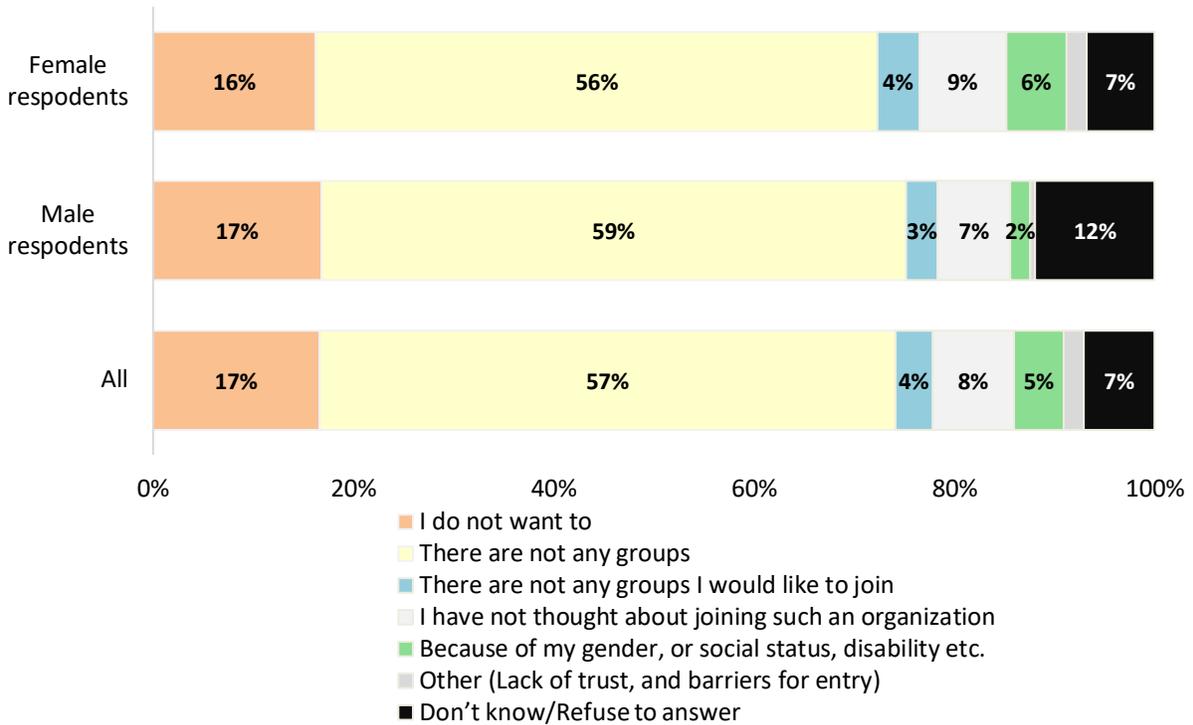


#### 4.5 REASONS GIVEN FOR NOT ENTERING SOCIAL GROUPS

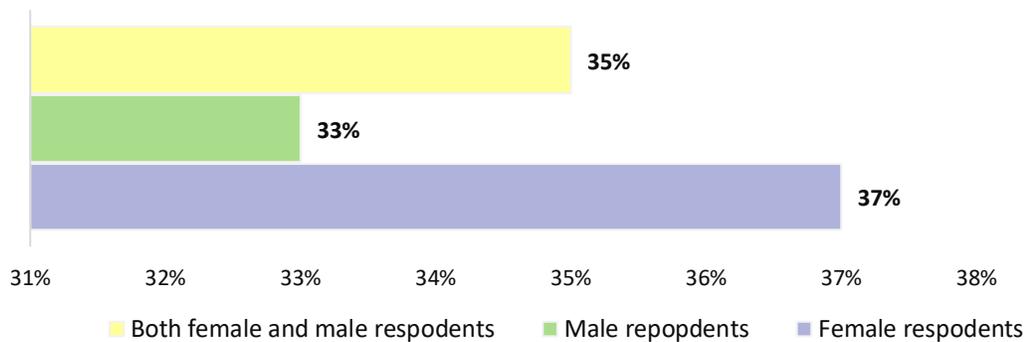


- I do not want to
- There are not any groups
- There are not any groups I would like to join
- I have not thought about joining such an organization
- Because of my gender, or social status, disability etc
- Other (Lack of trust, and barriers for entry)
- Don't know/Refuse to answer

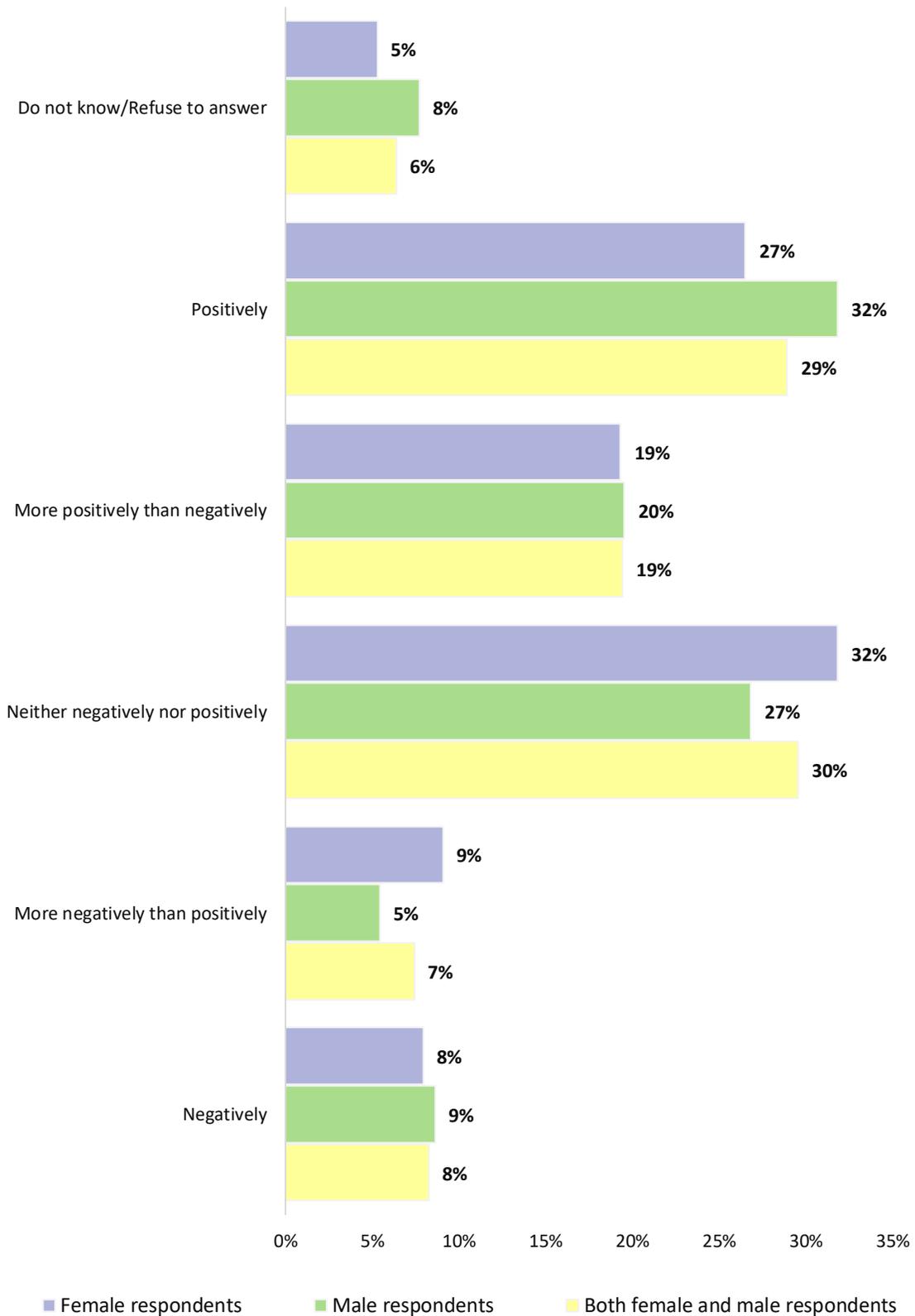
#### 4.5 REASONS NAMED FOR NOT ENTERING SOCIAL GROUPS



#### 4.6 RESPONDENTS, THAT HAVE CONTACTED MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS

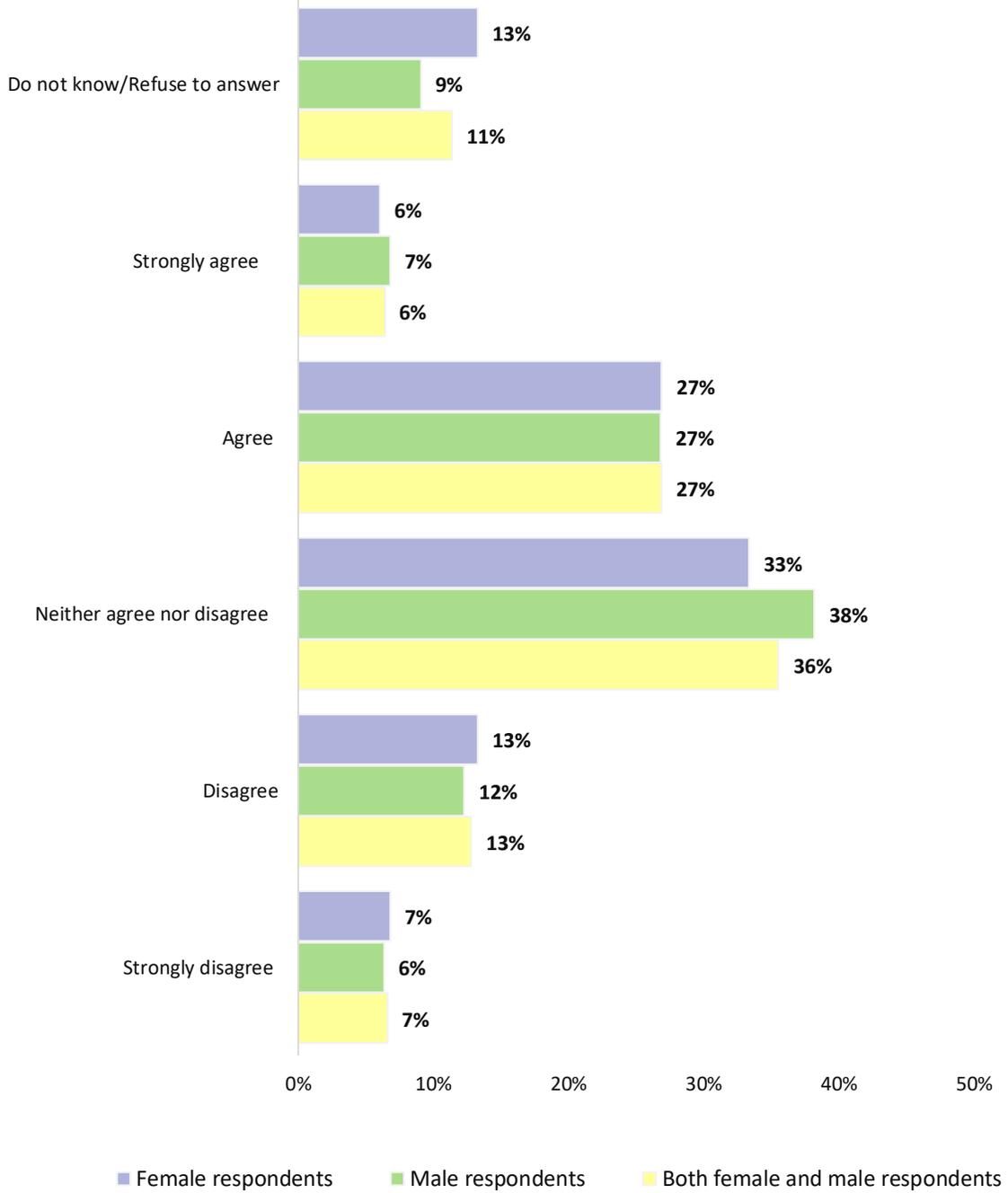


#### 4.7 RESPONDENTS' ASSESSMENT OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE



**4.8 RESPONDENTS' AGREEING OR DISAGREEING WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:**

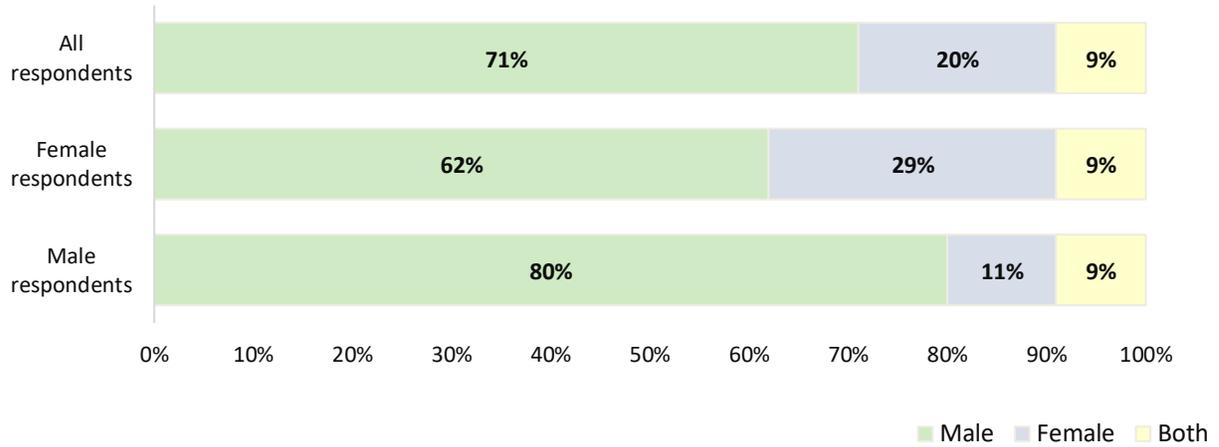
*People in local government represent the views of people like me*



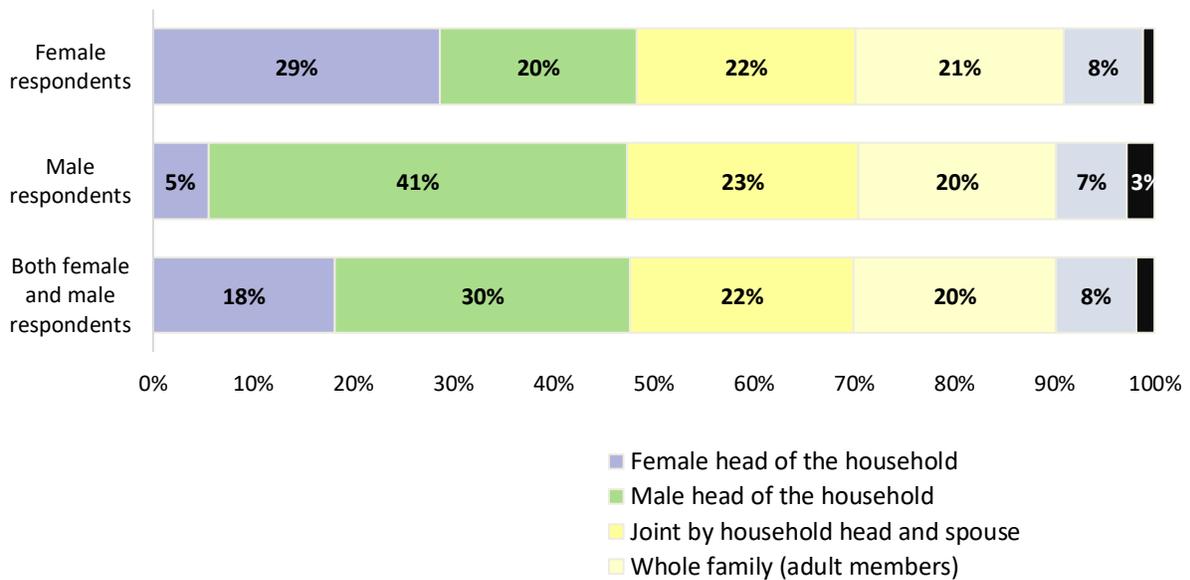
## 5. Gender

### 5.1 HOUSEHOLD HEADS NAMED BY FEMALE AND MALE RESPONDENTS

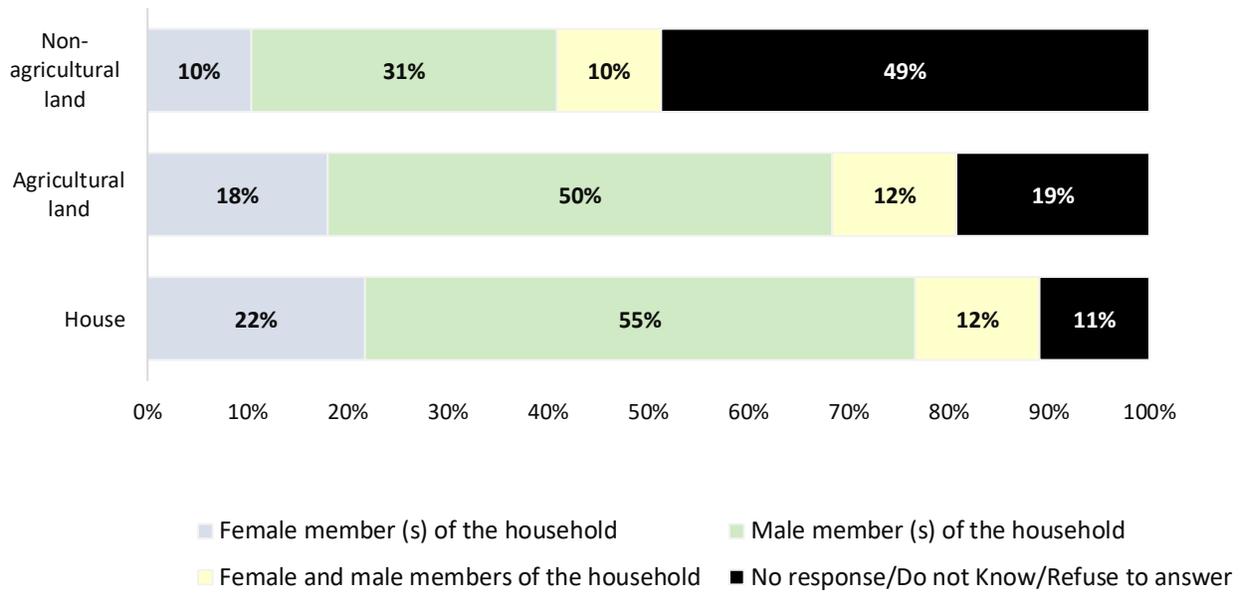
(% out of subsequent responses)



### 5.2 MAIN BREADWINNER IN HOUSEHOLD NAMED BY THE RESPONDENTS

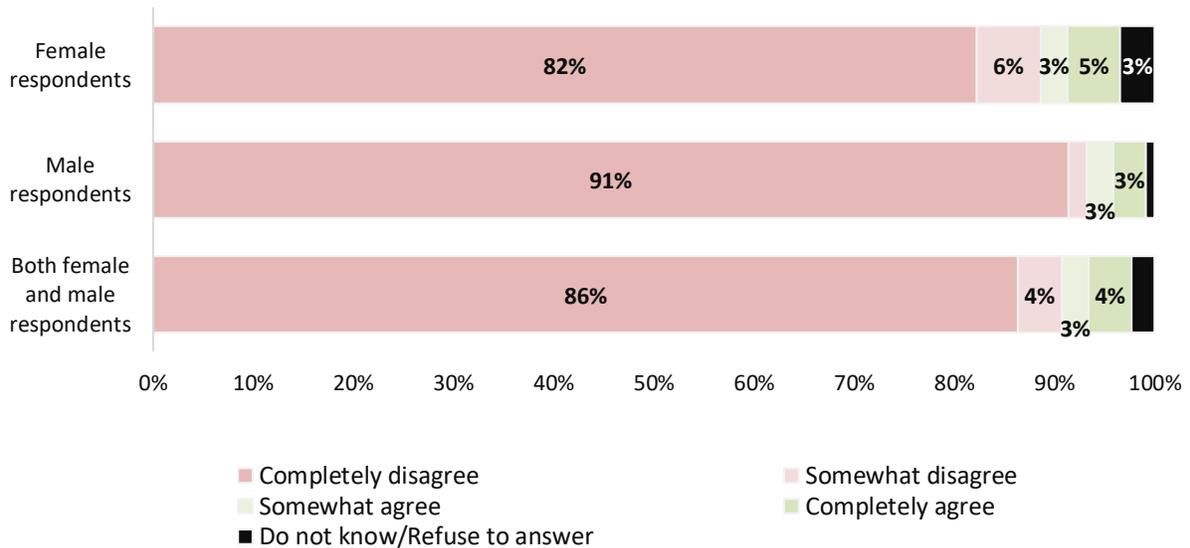


### 5.3 OWNERSHIP OF THE PROPERTIES IN THE HOUSEHOLDS



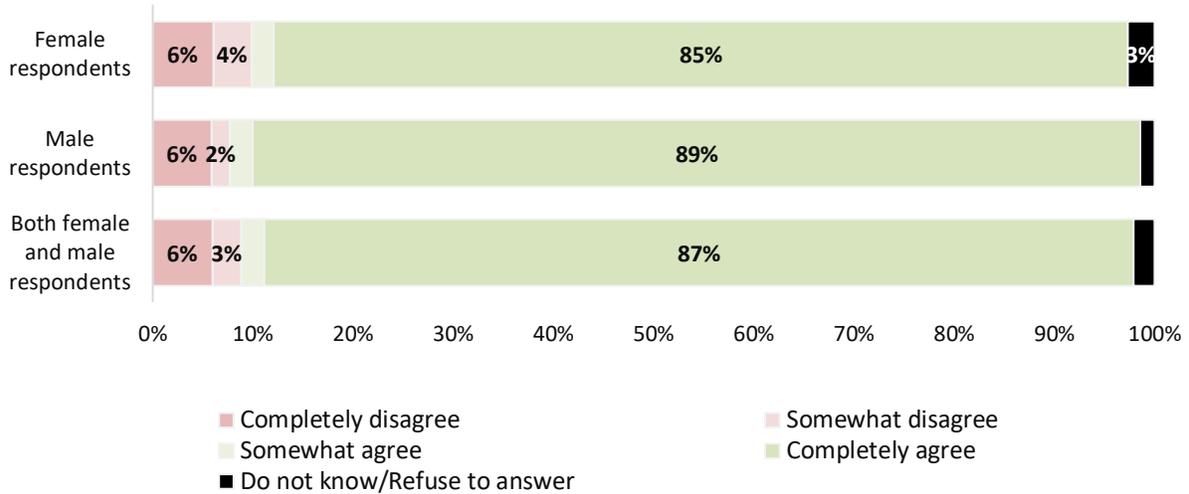
### 5.4 RESPONDENTS' OPINION ON HOW MUCH WOMEN IN THEIR COMMUNITY WOULD AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT:

*If a woman earns more than a man, its sure to create problems in the family?*



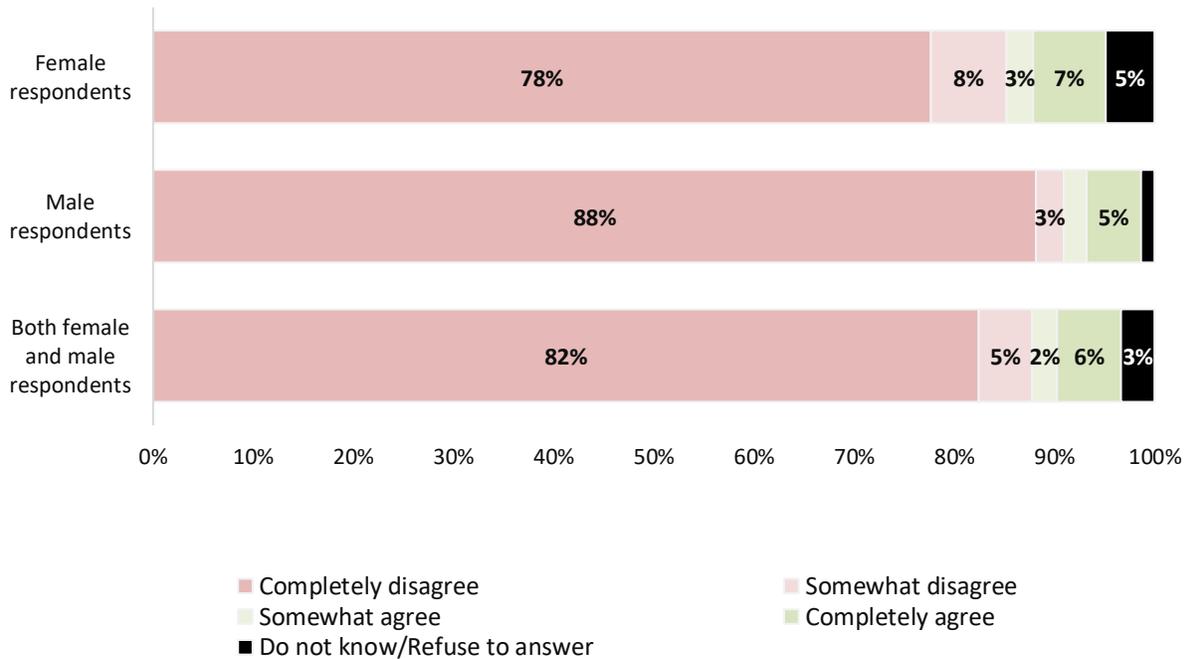
**5.5 RESPONDENTS OPINION ON HOW MUCH WOMEN IN THEIR COMMUNITY WOULD AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT:**

*It would be positive if women in the community started earning more money than they currently do*



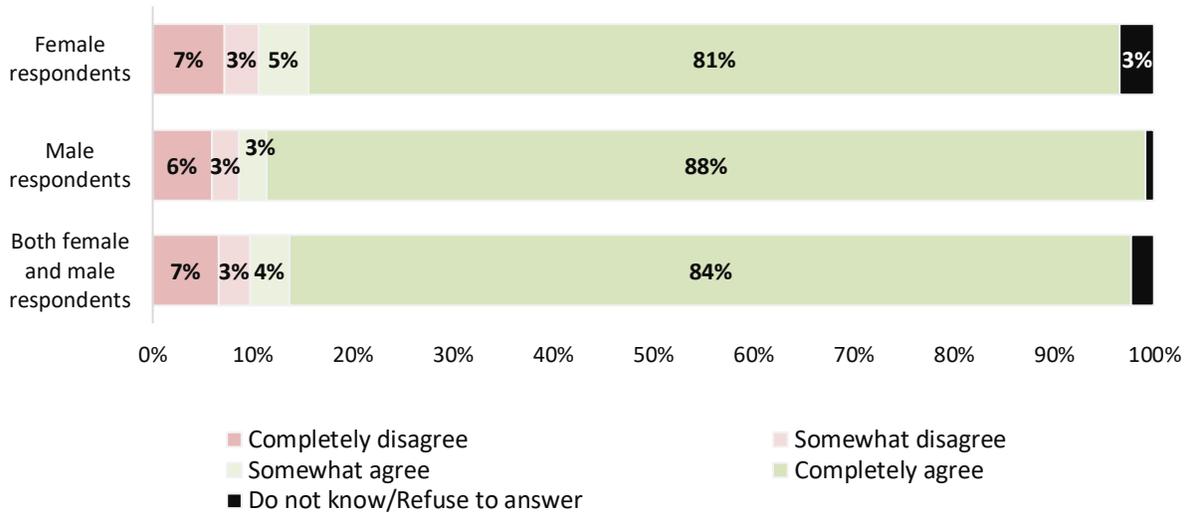
**5.6 RESPONDENTS' OPINION ON HOW MUCH MEN IN THEIR COMMUNITY WOULD AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT:**

*If a woman earns more than a man, its sure to create problems in the family*

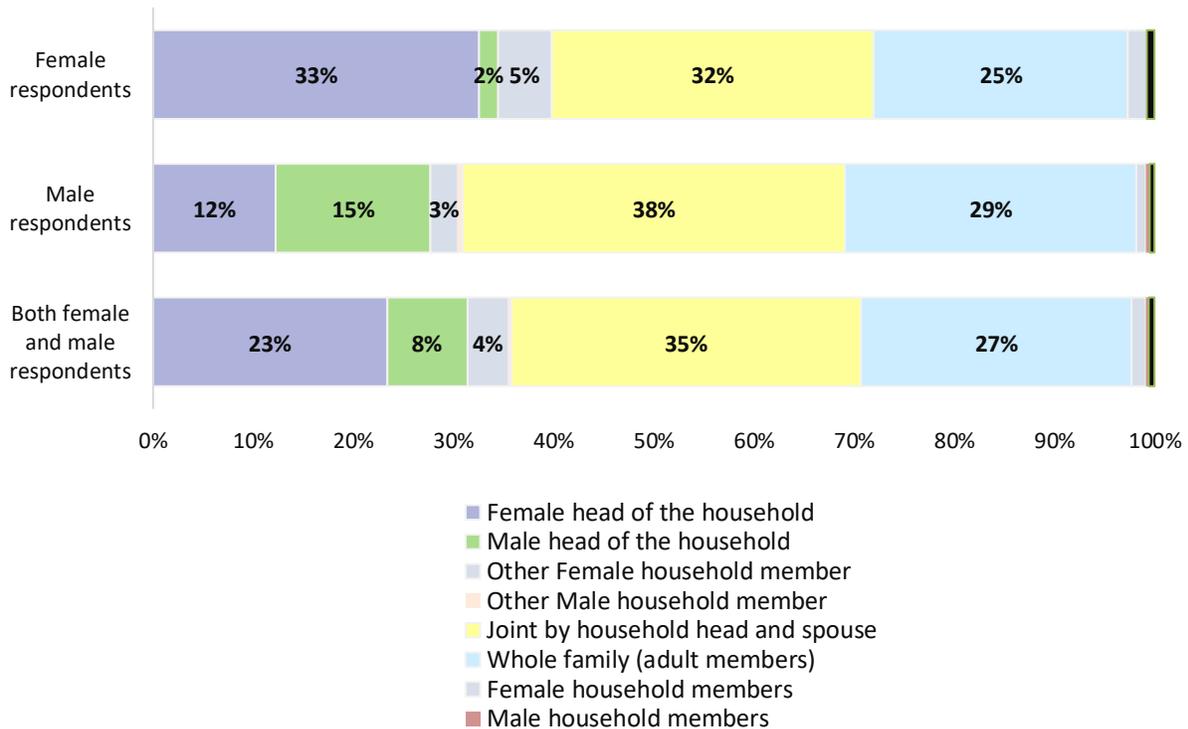


**5.7 RESPONDENTS OPINION ON HOW MUCH MEN IN THEIR COMMUNITY WOULD AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT:**

*It would be positive if women in the community started earning more money than they currently do*



**5.8 % OF RESPONDENTS REPORTING FOLLOWING MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD TO BE IN CHARGE FOR DAILY BUDGETING**



**5.9 % OF RESPONDENTS REPORTING FOLLOWING MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD TO BE IN CHARGE FOR PURCHASING DURABLES**



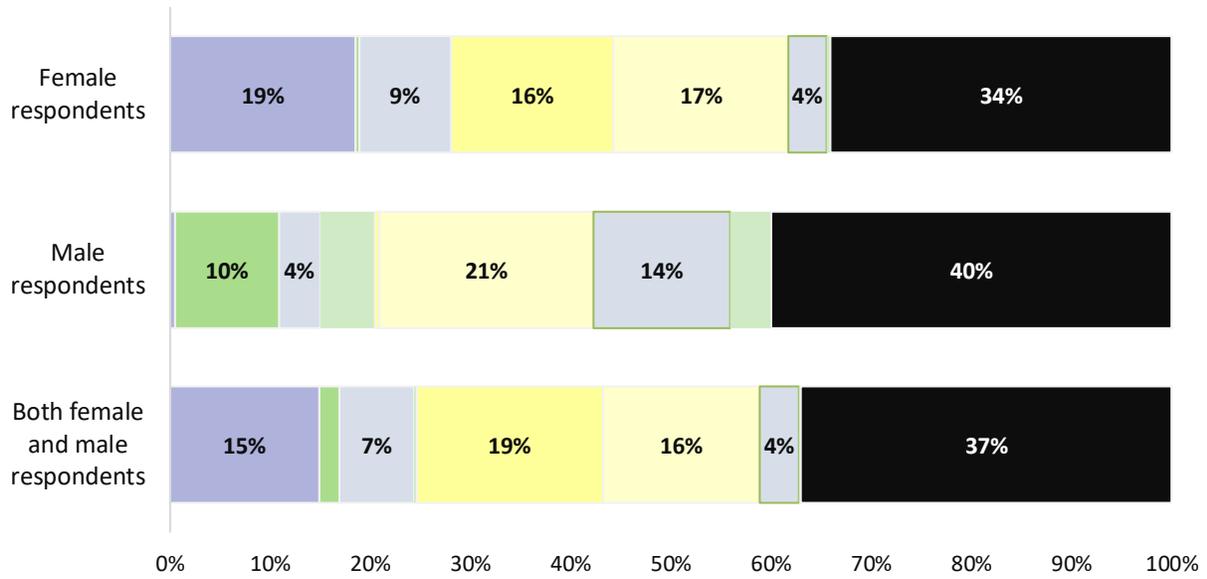
- Female head of the household
- Male head of the household
- Other Female household member
- Other Male household member
- Joint by household head and spouse
- Whole family (adult members)
- Female household members
- Male household members
- No response/Do not know/Refuse to answer

**5.10 % OF RESPONDENTS REPORTING FOLLOWING MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD TO BE IN CHARGE FOR HOUSEKEEPING**



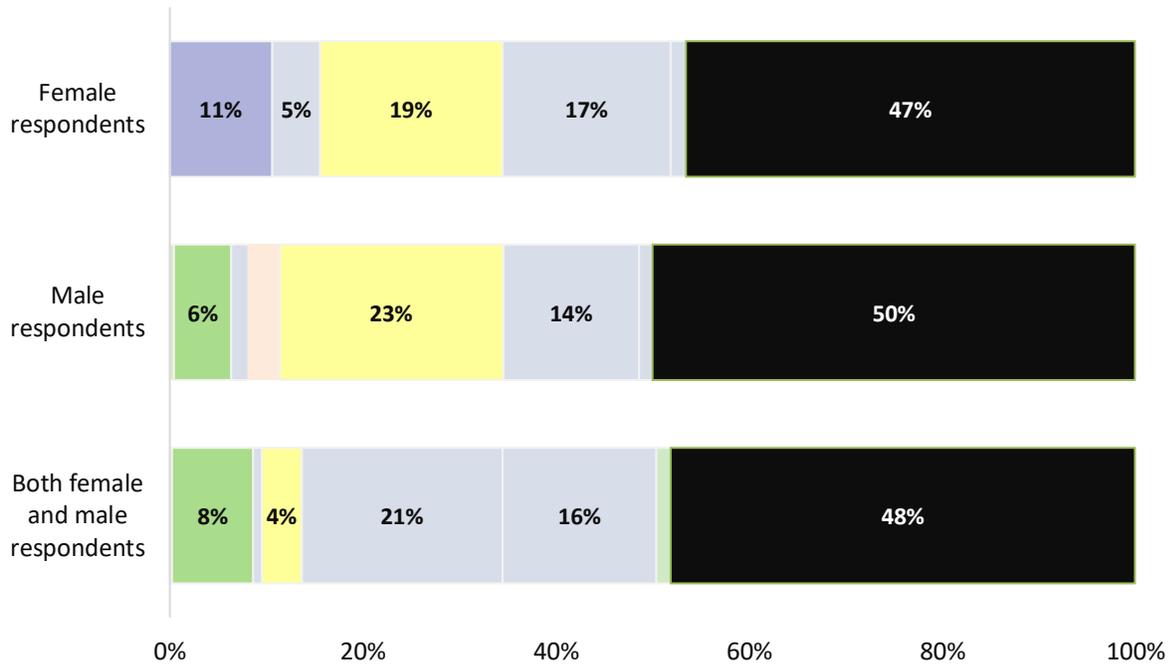
- Female head of the household
- Male head of the household
- Other Female household member
- Other Male household member
- Joint by household head and spouse
- Whole family (adult members)
- Female household members
- Male household members
- No response/Do not know/Refuse to answer

**5.11 % OF RESPONDENTS REPORTING FOLLOWING MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD TO BE IN CHARGE FOR CHILD AND FAMILY MEMBERS CARE**



- Female head of the household
- Other Female household member
- Joint by household head and spouse
- Female household members
- Male head of the household
- Other Male household member
- Male household members
- No response/Do not know/Refuse to answer

**5.12 % OF RESPONDENTS REPORTING FOLLOWING MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD TO BE IN CHARGE FOR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION**



- Female head of the household
- Male head of the household
- Other Female household member
- Other Male household member
- Joint by household head and spouse
- Whole family (adult members)
- Female household members
- Male household members
- No response/Do not know/Refuse to answer

# APPENDIX 4: FREQUENCIES AND GENDER DISAGGREGATED DATA



**Mestia LEADER  
Project Baseline Sur**

# APPENDIX 5: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS



Survey Georgian



Survey English



Gender Focus  
Group Guide



Key Informant  
Interview Guide



Inclusivity Focus  
Group Guide