

COVID-19 and Families

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COVID-19 - Multiple stressors on families

- High **health** risk, the closure of **daycare centers and schools**, **work** from home, social distancing, and the **economic** impact of shutdown upset family's daily routines and functions in an unprecedented manner
- **Death, illness, income and job loss, loss of institutional and personal support for caregiving, limited social interaction**
- Potential impact on many aspects including:
 - Demographic behavior – marriage, fertility, contraceptive practices, cohabitation, divorce, mortality, migration
 - Labor Market Behavior, economic well-being
 - Family Dynamics – relations, division of domestic labor, parenting, time together
 - Mental Health – loneliness, anxiety, depression
 - Youth & Children's development (e.g., learning)

Literature (mostly on economic stress & natural disaster)

- Global → Nation → Community → **Household** → **Individuals**
- Complex social processes that has significant immediate and long-term consequences on family
- changes in health risks, opportunity structure do not affect all countries or households in the same manner
- Segments in the society, and even members within the same family, face unequal risks and burdens

ASIAN FAMILIES AMID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Webinars on 9 July, 23 July and 6 August 2020
 4pm-5.30pm (SGT & PST) | 3pm-4.30 pm (ICT) | 1.30pm-3pm (IST)

Speakers on 9 July



Dr Ravi Verma
 Director, International Center for Research on Women, India



Prof. Grace T. Cruz
 Director, Population Institute, University of the Philippines



A/Prof. Aree Jampaklay
 Director, Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, Thailand



Prof. Jean Yeung
 Founding Director, Centre for Family and Population Research, National University of Singapore

Moderator

Speakers on 23 Jul



A/Prof. Feng Qiushi
 Deputy Director, Centre for Family and Population Research, National University of Singapore



Dr. Hu Shu
 Head, Sociology Programme, Singapore University of Social Sciences



Ms. Kelly Hand
 Deputy Director (Research), Australian Institute of Family Studies



A/Prof. Bussarawan (Puk) Teerawichitchainan
 Co-Director, Centre for Family and Population Research, National University of Singapore

Moderator

Speakers on 6 Aug



Prof. Gavin Jones
 Emeritus Professor, Australian National University



Prof. Emiko Ochiai
 Director, Asian Research Center for the Intimate and Public Spheres, Graduate School of Letters, Kyoto University, Japan

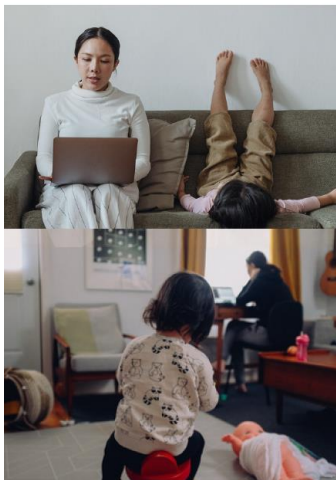


Prof. Jean Yeung
 Founding Director, Centre for Family and Population Research, National University of Singapore



A/Prof. Vincent Chua
 Co-Director, Centre for Family and Population Research, National University of Singapore

Moderator



The Impact of the Pandemic on Family Life in Asia

The webinar aims to build bridges between academia and civil society organizations by bringing together researchers and practitioners to discuss the findings of the international research project "The Impact of the Pandemic on Family Life Across Cultures", an international research study conducted in 72 countries across Asia, Europe, North America, Middle East and Latin America. This first event will present the findings of the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on children's and parents' mental health, parent-child relationships, coping strategies, family resilience and family policies in Malaysia, Indonesia, Mongolia, and Singapore.

17 December 2020 | 2PM-4PM (Singapore) | 6AM-8AM (UTC)

Moderators



Mr. Lee Wee Min
Asia Regional Director,
Focus on the Family
Global



A/P Anis Ben Brik
Founding Director, Program
for Social Policy Evaluation
and Research, College of
Public Policy, Hamad Bin
Khalifa University, Qatar



Prof Wei-Jun Jean Yeung
Founding Director, Centre for
Family and Population
Research, Department of
Sociology, National University
of Singapore

Panellists



Dr. Vincent Wong
Consultant Psychiatrist,
Focus on the Family
Malaysia



Ms Joanna-Koh Hoe
CEO, Focus on the Family
Singapore



Ms. Khongorzul Tuya
CEO, Focus on the Family
Mongolia

<https://fass.nus.edu.sg/cfpr/conferences/>

Speakers



Anis Ben Brik
Associate Professor and
Founding Director
Program for Social Policy
Evaluation and Research,
Hamad Bin Khalifa University,
College of Public Policy



Renata Kaczmarska
Focal Point on the Family,
DISD, DESA,
United Nations



Patricia Chu
Chairperson
CiFA



Lee Wee Min
Asia Regional Director
Focus on the Family Asia



Wei-Jun Jean Yeung
Provost Chair Professor
Department of Sociology and
Founding Director,
Center for Family and Population
Research,
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences,
National University of Singapore

Webinar II: The Impact of the Pandemic on Family Life in Asia

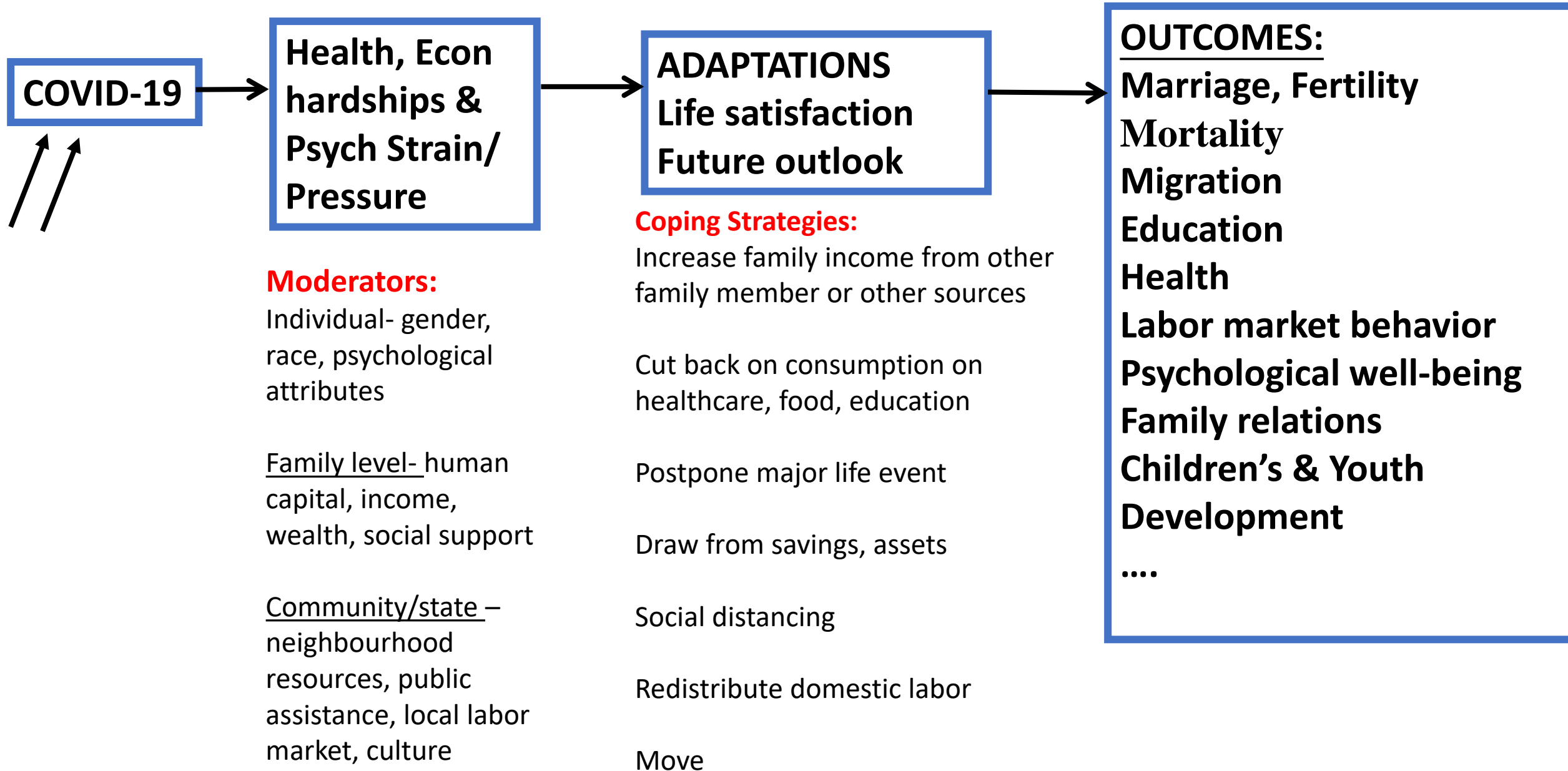
The webinar aims to build bridges between academia and civil society organizations by bringing together researchers and practitioners to discuss the findings of the international research project "The Impact of the Pandemic on Family Life Across Cultures", an international research study conducted in 72 countries across Asia, Europe, North America, Middle East and Latin America. This second event will present the findings of the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on children's and parents' mental health, parent-child relationships, coping strategies, family resilience and family policies in China, Philippines, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

3 February 2021 | 9AM – 11AM (Singapore) | 1AM – 3AM (UTC)

Relevant Theories

- integrates several strains of thoughts:
 - **microeconomic theories** that see family members pooling resources together and smoothing life course consumptions over time
 - the **family stress theory** that takes sociopsychological factors into account
 - **Exchange/conflict theory** – lower resources group lose out more, members in group bargain for services with resources
 - **Gender ideology theory** – women higher unemployment rate, added domestic labor distribution, domestic violence

Conceptual Framework at the micro-level



Uneven impact on households & individuals

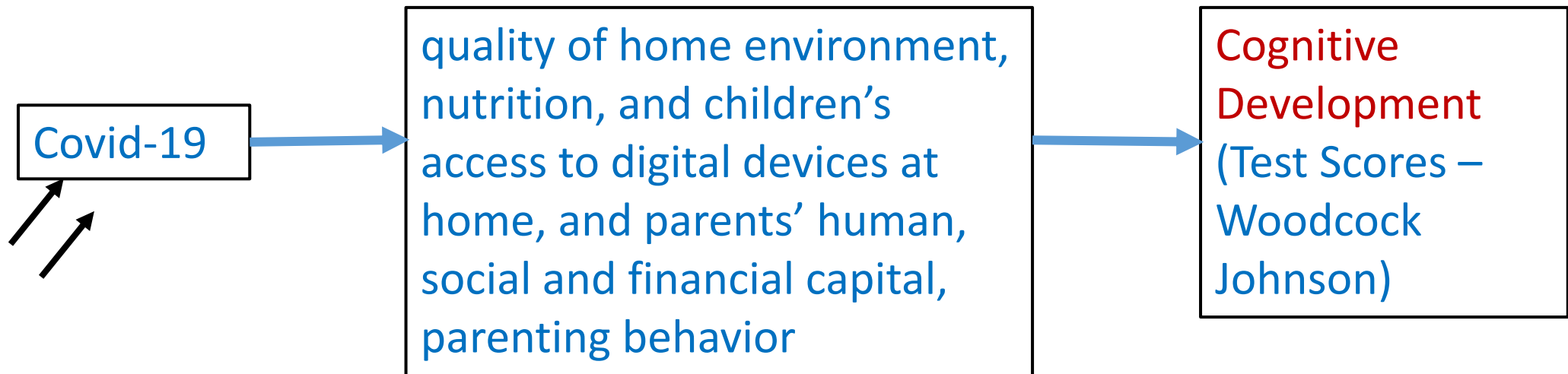
- The vulnerable groups are those with **low education & low income, single parent families and those with multiple risk factors**
- **women** (lose job, cut paid labor, have higher occupational health hazard since many are in health care industry, exposure to violence at home, disproportionate burden on unpaid labor – childcare and housework)
- **older adults** (health risk, ageism on the labor markets)
- **youth** (unemployment 3-5 times higher than the adult unemployment rate)
- **Children** (violence, learning issues)
- **racial minority groups** (discrimination on job markets)
- **migrant** workers have higher risk of losing their jobs and problems with visa

Both short- and long-term impact

- graduating cohorts during economic recession still have lower wages 5 years after the recession – “scarring” effect (UK, Germany, Japan studies)
- Children grew up in Great Depression in U.S. are more likely to have mental and behavioural problems in adulthood
- the impact of COVID-19 will be long-lasting. We need to be concerned about its aftermath. Short-term patched up help will not be sufficient. We need to think more systematically where the weak links in our public safety nets are.
- Will exacerbate existing inequalities because the severity of shock and coping ability vary across SES groups – threatens the SDG (poverty, gender equality)

Impact on Children (preschoolers in Singapore)

- Based on 2 waves of data collected in Singapore in 2018-2021
- we argue COVID-19 will **widened gap** in children's health, socio-emotional, and cognitive development and has a long-term impact
- Covid-19 crisis will exacerbate pre-existing inequalities in key resources for children's development





NUS
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<https://fass.nus.edu.sg/cfpr/sgleads/>

Singapore Longitudinal EArly Development Study

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Professor Wei-Jun Jean Yeung
Department of Sociology
National University of Singapore

FUNDED BY:

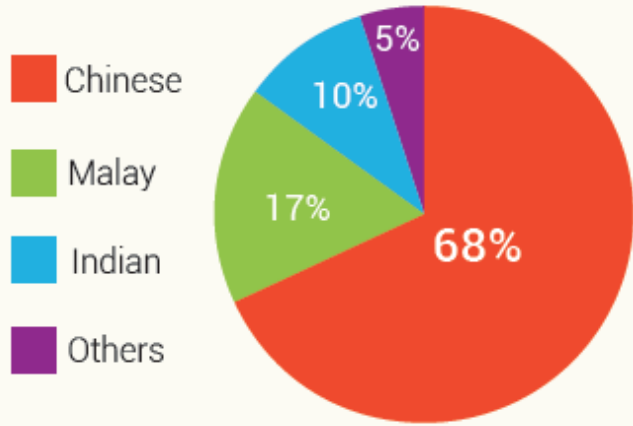
Ministry of Education Social Science Research Thematic Grant
(MOE 2016 – SSRTG – 044)

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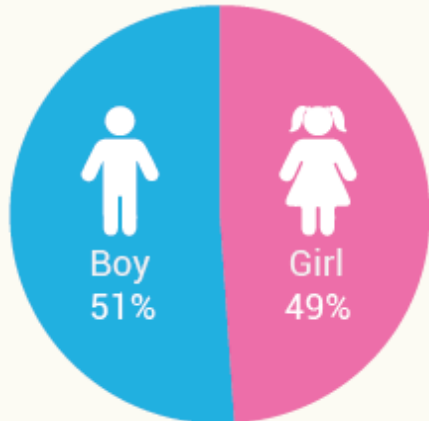
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Wave I: 2018-19

Child's Race

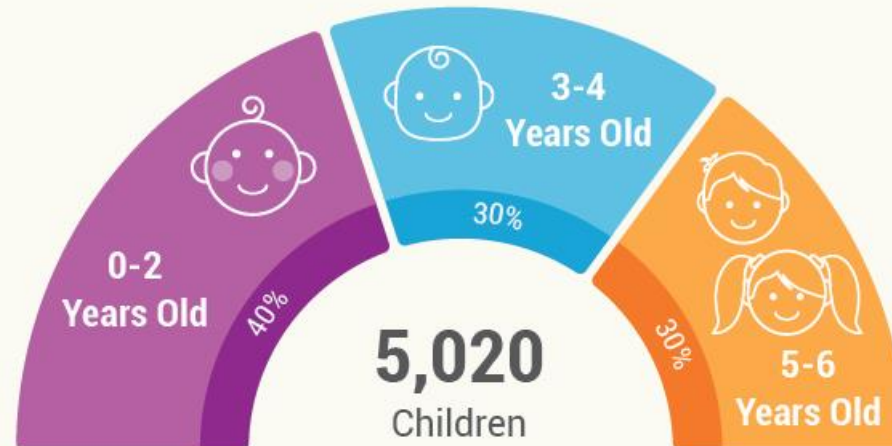


Child's Gender



WHO ARE THE SG LEADS FAMILIES?

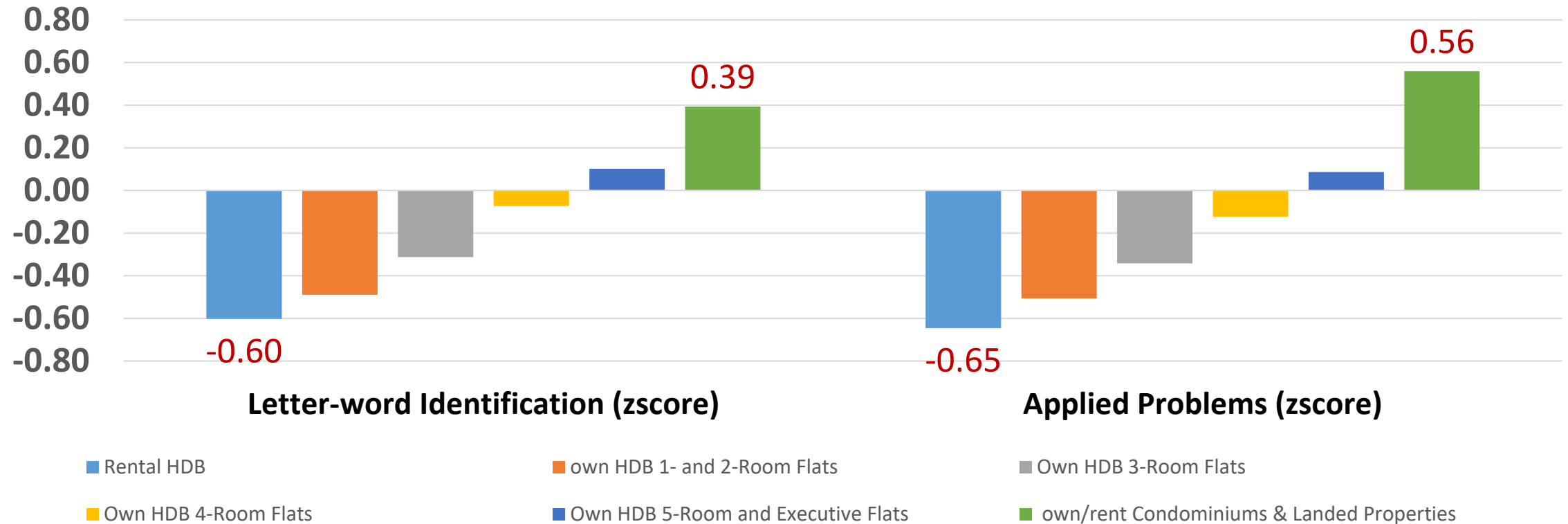
A nationally representative sample of **5,020** Singaporean children under 7 in **3,484** households across the island.



Singapore SES indicator – housing type

- 80% Singaporeans live in public housing, among the highest home ownership countries in the world
 - rental HDB flats (4.9%)
 - Owned 1-2rm (0.6%)
 - Owned 3rm (11.7%)
 - Owned 4rm (37%)
 - Owned 5rm+ (27.7%)
 - private condo and landed property (18.7%)

Large Gap in Achievement Test for aged 3-6, by housing type Woodcock-Johnson Test (standardized scores)



1 standard deviation gap - half of the children who live in private condos or landed properties ranked 78th percentiles or higher, half of the children living in the rental HDB ranked lower than 35th percentile.

1.2 standard deviation gap - half of the children living in condos or landed properties ranked 74th percentile or higher, half of the children living in the rental HDB units ranked lower than 15th percentile.

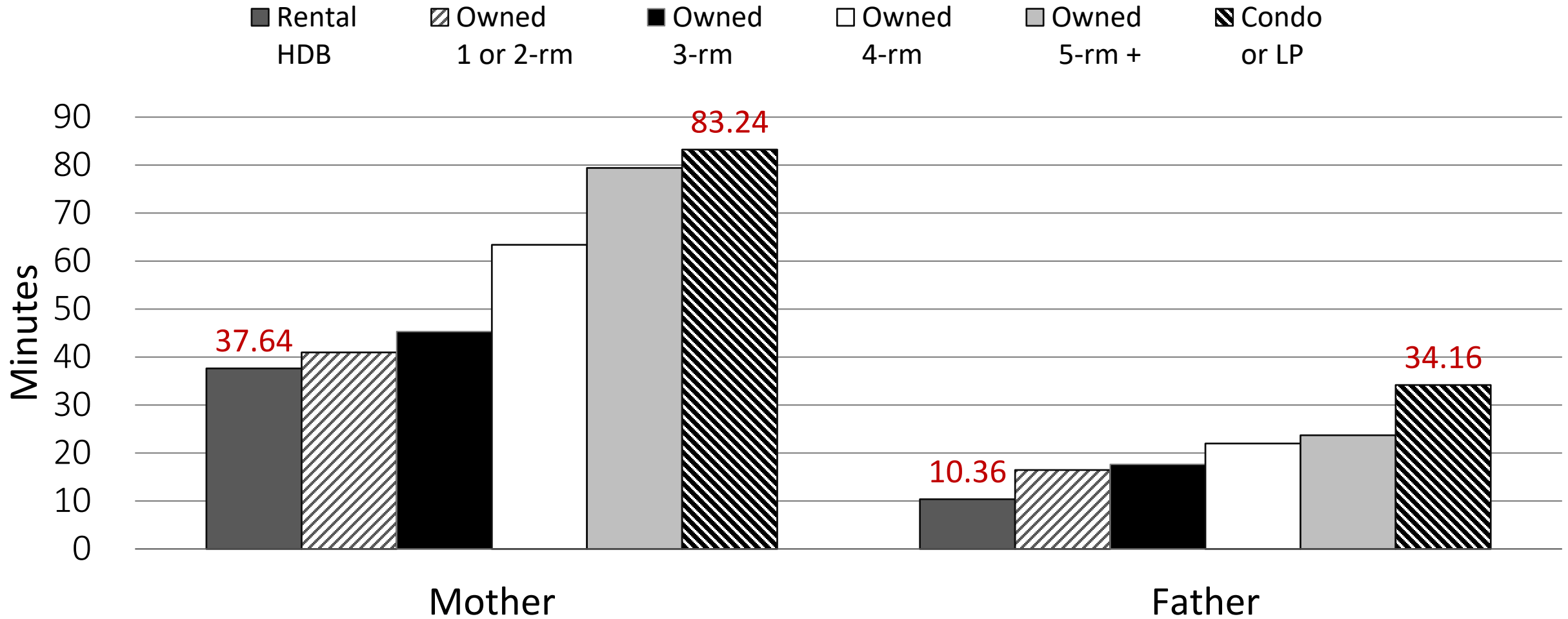
Pre-pandemic - Families have varying capacity to function as daycare and school

- parents of higher SES have more resources, are better informed of children's developmental needs, better equipped to create an environment that is **safer, healthier, and more stimulating** for children
- **more involved** in children's learning, **set more boundaries** for children's activities - e.g., more likely to set a regular time and place for their children to do schoolwork
- children in higher SES households spend **less time on electronic devices, and more time on achievement-oriented activities, sports, and other active play**
- Better-educated parents have **better skillsets to teach** - help with their children's schoolwork, particularly for older children

Varying Resources & parental involvement at home

- access to cognitively stimulating materials at home - books, toys, music instruments, and technology at home
- Half of the children (53%) living in rental flats have fewer than 10 books. 56% of the children living in private condos or landed properties have 50 books or more, compared to 10% of those living in rental flats.
- During the pandemic, become even more important for children's socio-emotional and cognitive development when school and outside resources are less available.

Mean Time a Singaporean Child (0-6) is Engaged With the Parents in Reading for A Week, by housing type



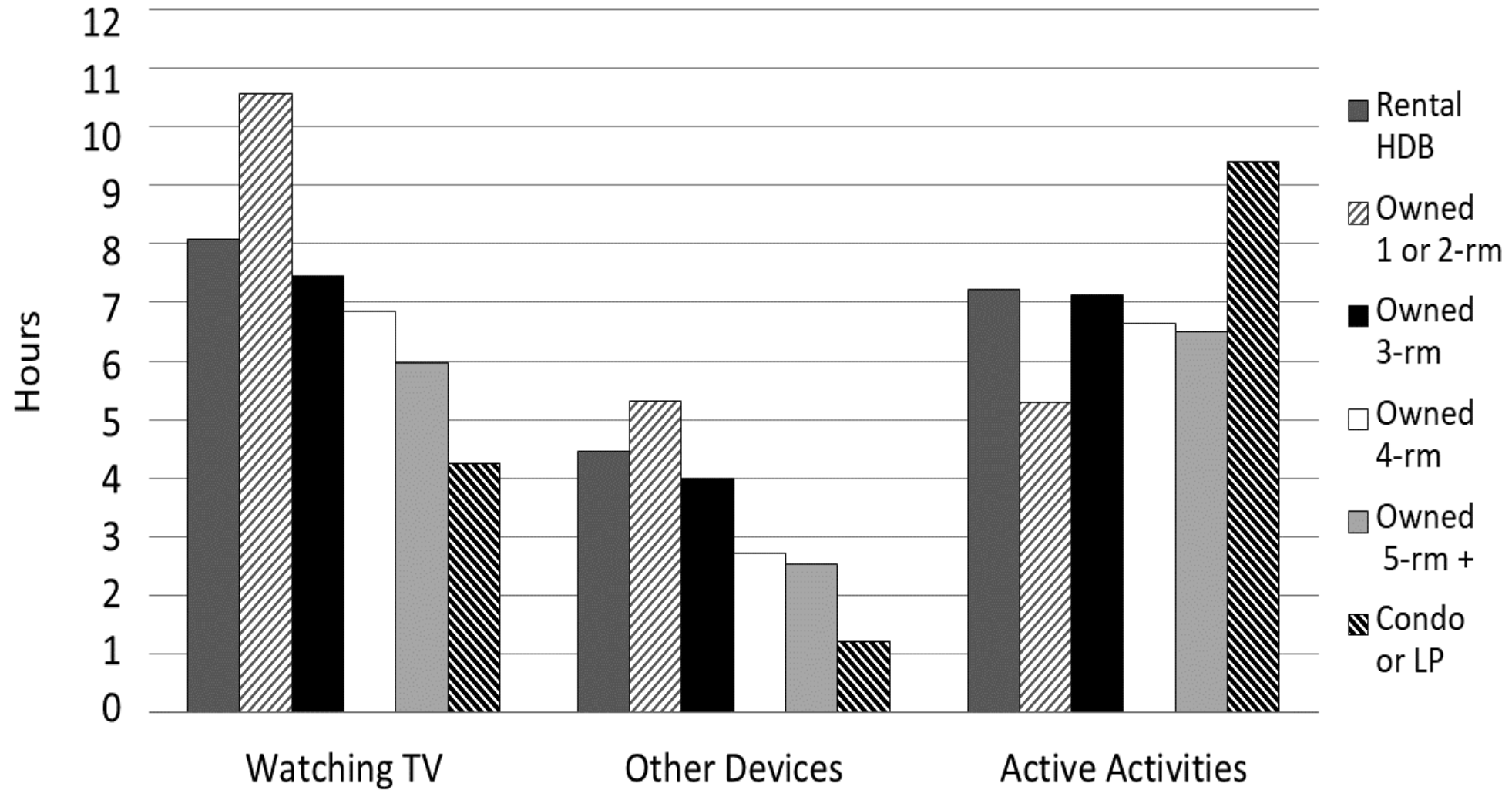
Half of the PCG living in private condos and landed properties read to their children every day. In rental flats, 14% of the parents read to their children daily, but 31% of them never read to their children.

Digital Gap by housing type

	Rental HDB	Owned HDB 1-2 Room Flats	Owned HDB 3-Room Flats	Owned HDB 4-Room Flats	Owned HDB 5-Room and Executive Flats	Owned/Rental Condos & Landed Properties	Overall Total
Unweighted N	594	94	1282	1546	769	736	5021
Weighted %	5.3%	0.7%	11.2%	36.1%	27.6%	19.1%	100%
% No Computer	44.4%	48.0%	27.1%	17.1%	8.6%	3.9%	15.0%
% No Tablet	53.8%	54.5%	37.5%	31.0%	23.5%	10.8%	27.2%
% No smart phone	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Has WIFI connection	91.2%	94.5%	97.5%	98.8%	98.2%	96.6%	97.6%

Source: SG LEADS Wave I, 2018-2019

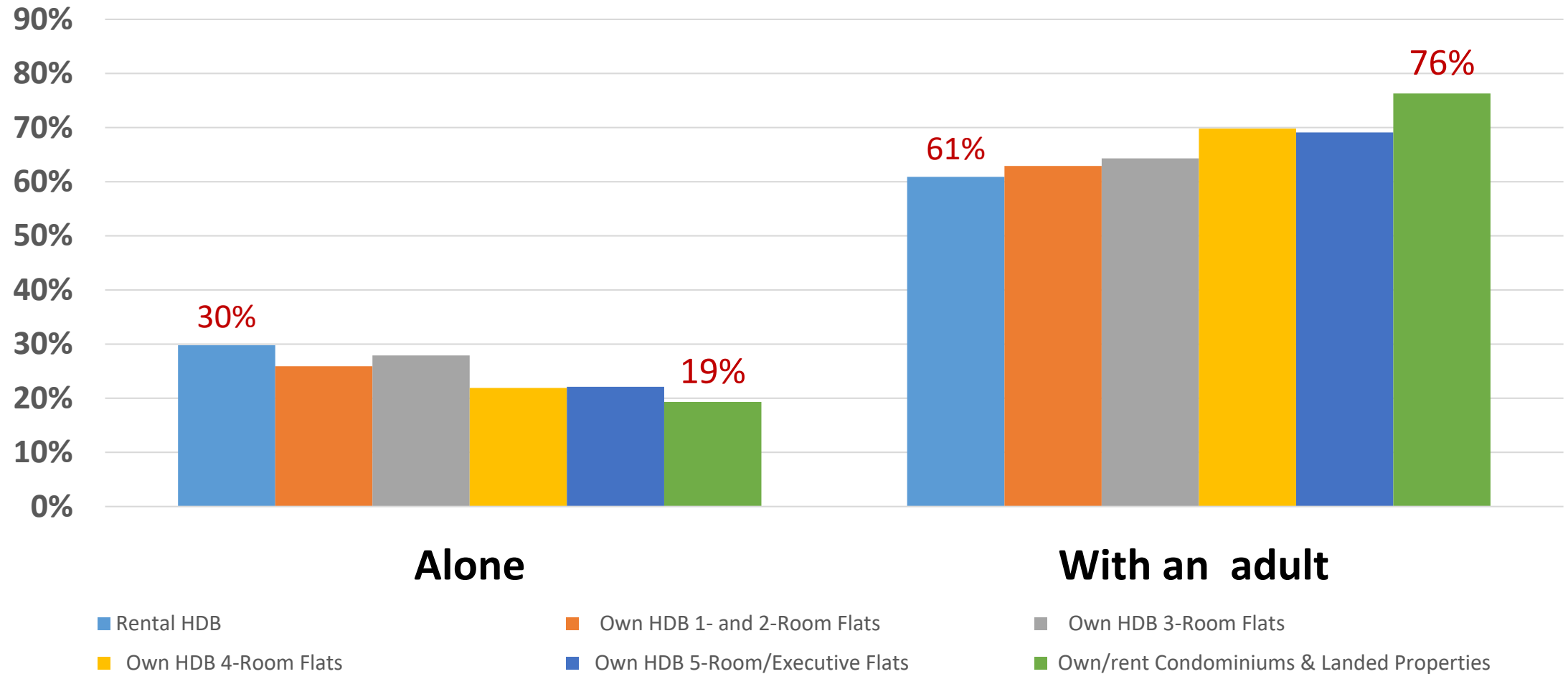
Mean Time a Singaporean Child Spends in Electronic Device Use and Active Activities in a Week



Software & parental guidance

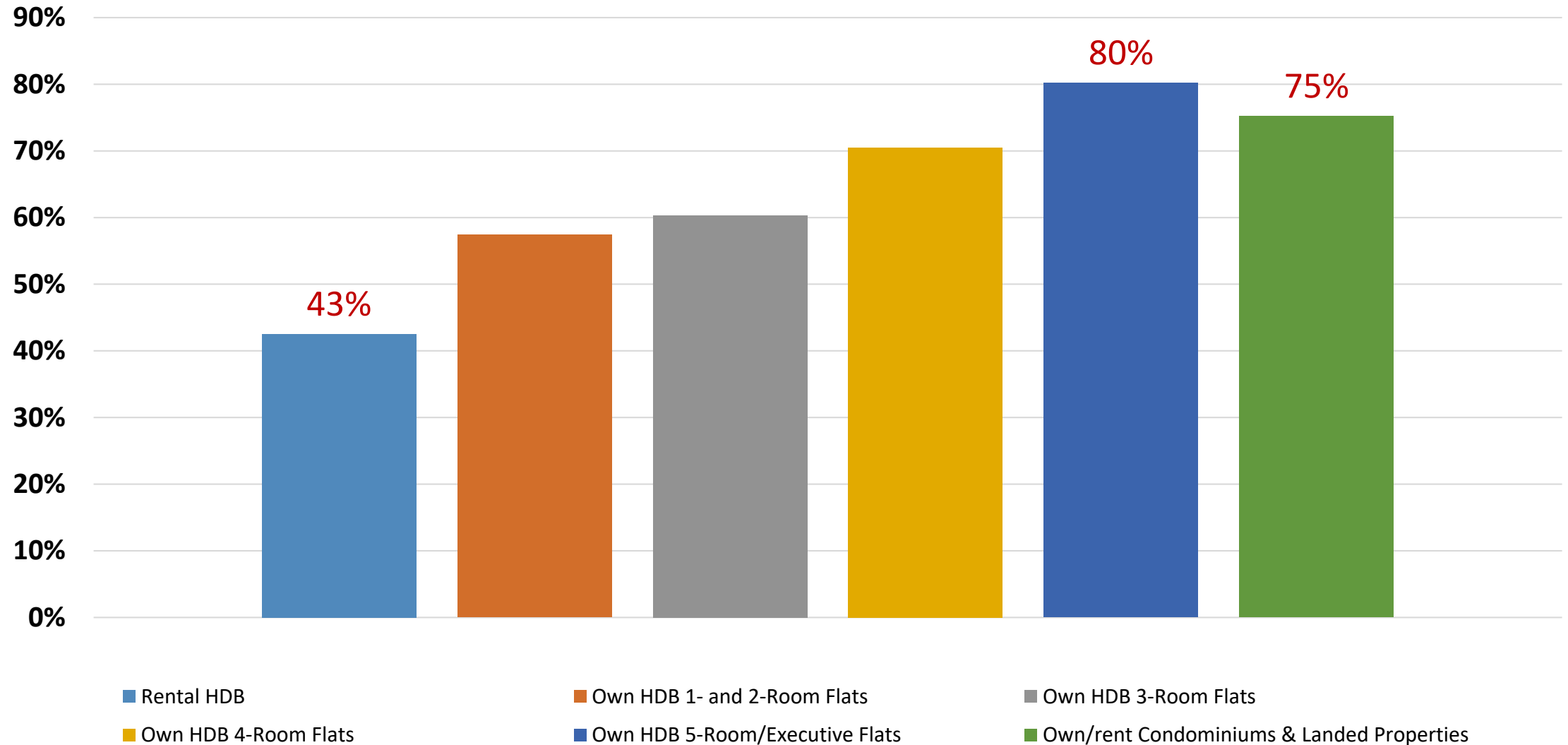
- In addition to the hardware, higher SES parents help children's learning more, **sourcing additional out-of-school resources for children and to supervise** their homework and technology-use more
- During pandemic, these digital gaps can be expected to have **widened** during school-closing period.

With whom the child uses smartphone & tablet, by housing type

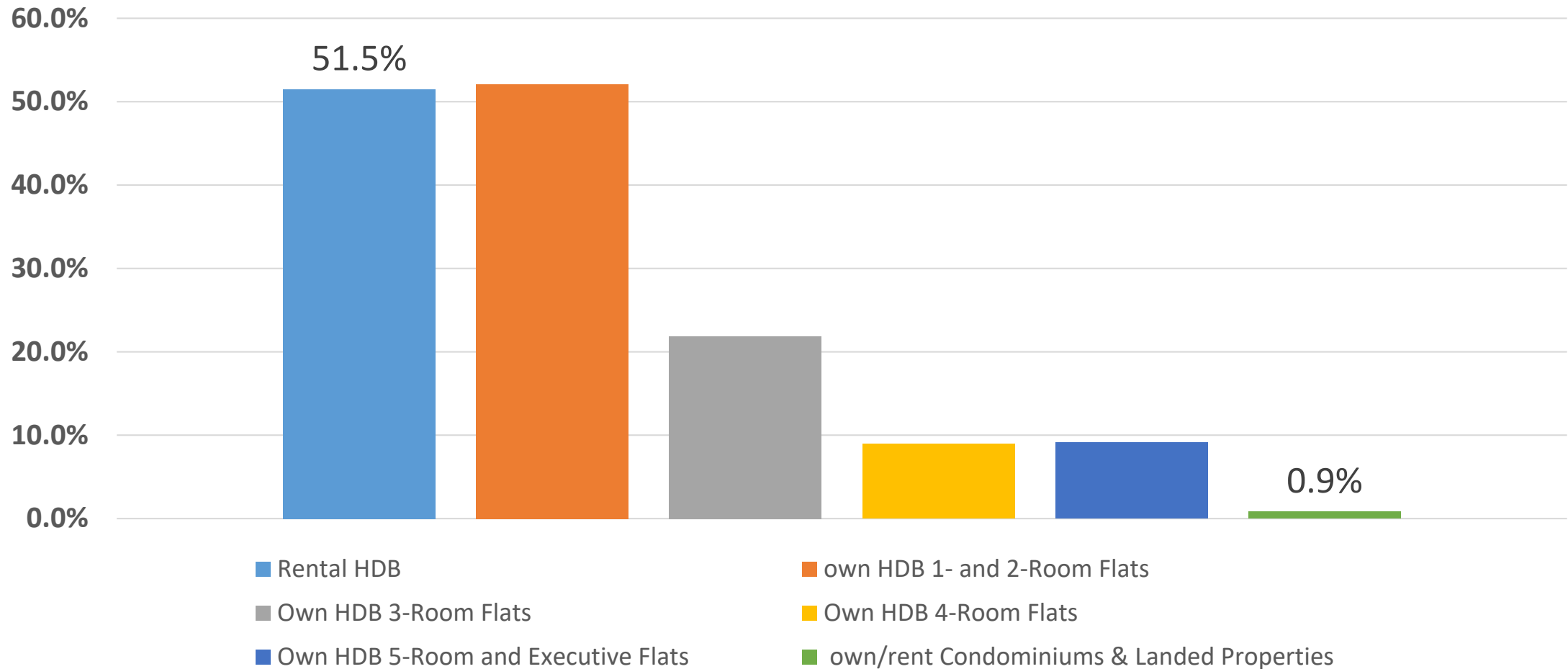


Note: Exclude children who did not use smartphone/tablet.

% Check Child's homework all the time, by housing type



% HH experienced at least one of the financial strain: 1) borrowed money from friends or relatives, 2) applied for government assistance, 3) fallen behind in paying bills , 4) have home, car, property repossessed, 5) utility got cut-off, by housing type



Economic Conditions, Food Insecurity for SG LEADS Families by Housing Type

	Rental HDB	Owned HDB 1-2 Room Flats	Owned HDB 3-Room Flats	Owned HDB 4-Room Flats	Owned HDB 5-Room and Executive Flats	Own/Rental Condos & Landed Properties	Total
FAMILY'S FINANCIAL CONDITION							
Total family income in the last year	\$48,032	\$30,090	\$63,141	\$92,849	\$112,398	\$189,690	\$110,683
Making ends meet							
not enough to cover expenses	32.5%	24.1%	10.7%	5.4%	3.2%	0.6%	6.0%
FOOD INSECURITY							
Worry about current food level	33.2%	27.0%	10.0%	5.2%	3.7%	0.3%	6.0%
							4.3%
Child does not have enough food							
sometimes true	12.5%	10.9%	3.6%	1.4%	0.6%	0.9%	2.0%
often true	1.9%	2.9%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%

Surge of mental health of parents – economic stress & work-life balance
(HILDA, Broadway et al., 2020)

After Pandemic Struck - Economic Stress (job loss & income loss)

- the worst-hit - in retail, aviation, and tourism sectors
- Among the SG LEADS families who live in 1-2 room HDB units, one-third of the fathers work as **machine operators, plants, assembly line workers**; 15% are **cleaners, laborers, and related workers**. Among the working mothers, 10% of them are cleaners, labourers, and related workers and 15% are in **services and sales**. These jobs are highly susceptible to be cut.

Data Collected in Wave 2 (in 2021)

Housing types	Rental HDB	Owned HDB 1- and 2-Room Flats	Owned HDB 3-Room Flats	Owned HDB 4-Room Flats	Owned HDB 5-Room/ Executive Flats	Owned/rented Condo & LP	total
Employment							
started/increased work from home	25.7%	2.7%	31.0%	46.6%	55.0%	61.6%	49.1%
lost his/her job	20.1%	10.3%	15.3%	11.4%	8.4%	5.0%	10.1%
had to close his/her business	1.9%	7.4%	3.5%	1.2%	0.4%	0.8%	1.2%
had a reduction in wage/salary	26.1%	40.0%	31.2%	24.6%	24.9%	18.0%	24.3%
had a reduction in working hours	11.9%	18.2%	15.8%	13.3%	8.9%	10.8%	11.8%
changed occupation	14.1%	7.8%	11.1%	8.2%	7.1%	3.5%	7.6%
Income Change							
increase	6.0%	6.8%	4.8%	6.5%	6.1%	5.6%	6.0%
no change	45.4%	36.4%	42.7%	50.6%	54.5%	60.1%	52.4%
mild decrease	19.2%	29.6%	25.7%	25.9%	27.4%	25.2%	25.9%
moderated decrease	17.4%	22.1%	20.6%	15.0%	11.3%	8.7%	13.5%
severe decrease	12.0%	5.2%	6.3%	2.0%	0.7%	0.4%	2.3%

Spending and consumption	Rental HDB	Owned HDB 1- and 2-Room Flats	Owned HDB 3-Room Flats	Owned HDB 4-Room Flats	Owned HDB 5-Room/ Executive Flats	Owned/ rented Condo & LP	total
cut down spending on non-essential items	45.7%	52.4%	45.6%	36.6%	33.3%	26.0%	35.1%
cut down spending on essential items	32.8%	32.1%	31.3%	20.8%	14.6%	11.0%	18.9%
used money saved for other purposes to pay for everyday expenses	24.8%	27.3%	26.2%	18.0%	15.8%	8.0%	16.7%
ask for a pause on rent/mortgage payments or have missed rent/mortgage payments	6.7%	0.0%	6.8%	3.2%	2.7%	2.8%	3.5%
asked for financial help from friends/family	10.4%	12.4%	6.4%	3.5%	0.9%	1.5%	3.0%
asked for help from government agencies or community organizations	17.3%	18.4%	8.3%	6.3%	3.7%	1.6%	5.4%
lost health insurance / benefits	0.9%	0.0%	1.8%	1.3%	0.0%	0.3%	0.8%
none of the above	39.1%	38.8%	38.5%	49.9%	56.7%	64.3%	52.8%

	W1 weighted (N=3,481 HHs)	W2 weighted (N=2,654 HHs)
worried about the current food level		
never	94.0%	90.2%
sometimes	5.9%	8.3%
often	1.3%	2.6%
worried about the future food level		
never	92.9%	85.5%
sometimes	5.9%	11.9%
often	1.3%	2.6%

Housing types	Rental HDB	Owned HDB 1-2 Room Flats	Owned HDB 3-Room Flats	Owned HDB 4-Room Flats	Owned HDB 5-Room/ Executive Flats	Owned/ rented Condo & LP	Total
worried about the future food level							
never	52.7%	42.7%	72.7%	82.5%	92.6%	96.2%	85.5%
sometimes	35.2%	42.8%	20.8%	14.8%	6.3%	3.8%	11.9%
often	12.1%	14.5%	6.5%	2.7%	1.1%	0.0%	2.6%
worried about the current food level							
never	61.4%	56.4%	79.4%	89.4%	95.4%	97.6%	90.2%
sometimes	28.9%	32.9%	17.3%	9.4%	3.9%	2.5%	8.3%
often	9.7%	10.7%	3.4%	1.2%	0.7%	0.0%	1.5%
can not make ends meet at the end of the month	20.4%	10.3%	12.1%	6.5%	2.3%	0.5%	5.4%
do not have savings of 1 month's family income	56.2%	70.3%	48.1%	31.1%	23.5%	7.3%	27.5%

	Rental HDB	Owned HDB 1- and 2-Room Flats	Owned HDB 3-Room Flats	Owned HDB 4-Room Flats	Owned HDB 5-Room/ Executive Flats	Owned/rented Condo & LP	total
Own a computer/tablet that child can use for homework/home-based learning	87.80%	90.2%	92.8%	94.7%	95.5%	97.60%	95.1%
Child needs to share the device with siblings or parents*	55.90%	68.2%	55.2%	58.4%	50.5%	45.50%	52.8%
Child has a quiet place to study	81.80%	71.0%	85.4%	88.7%	90.3%	92.80%	89.4%
Child participates in extra online tutoring classes during Circuit Breaker	23.00%	10.8%	16.9%	29.4%	30.9%	46.80%	32.0%

	Rental HDB	Owned HDB 1- and 2-Room Flats	Owned HDB 3-Room Flats	Owned HDB 4-Room Flats	Owned HDB 5-Room/ Executive Flats	Owned/ rented Condo & LP	total
Has anyone in this household physically hurt you	2.5%	0.0%	1.1%	0.3%	0.1%	1.7%	0.7%
Has anyone not living in this household physically hurt you	0.5%	0.0%	0.2%	0.5%	0.1%	0.0%	0.3%
Has anyone in this household physically hurt your child(ren)	1.2%	0.0%	0.9%	1.1%	0.7%	0.5%	0.8%
Has anyone not living in this household physically hurt your child(ren)	0.7%	0.0%	0.4%	0.5%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%

Impact on Early Achievement Gap

- Before pandemic - Large achievement gaps in early childhood and research shows that they are **likely to widen** as children get older.
- During the pandemic, we expect to see a “**COVID-19 learning gap effect**”, which shows the learning gap becoming even larger because high-SES parents use their resources and networks to secure stimulating learning opportunities and experiences for their children, while children in more disadvantaged families cannot afford these opportunities and **lag further behind** in post-pandemic period.

Government Policy and community help

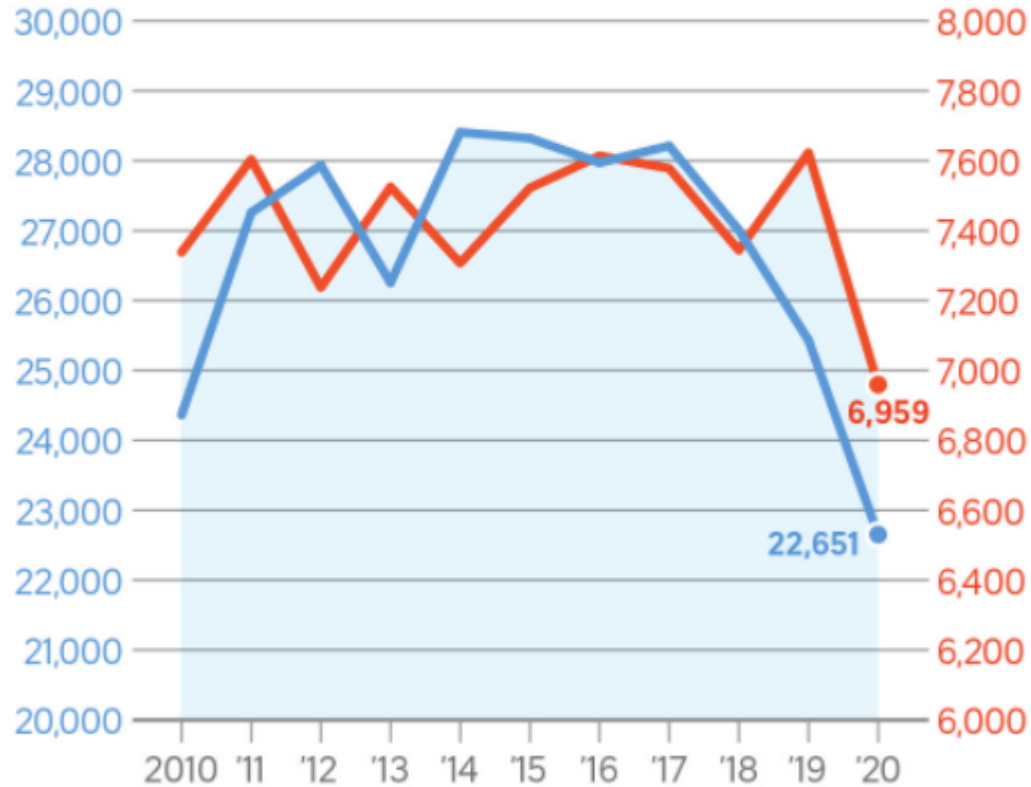
- The Singapore government has been quick to react by providing fast [cash relief](#), [electronic devices and food](#) at home, on-line learning resources, and increase [support for pre-school](#) for children with special needs. [Job support schemes](#) for unemployed and employers
- Assistance from communities and other private sources
- More and sustained assistance is needed as we address the impact of COVID-19 and its aftermath.
- More support [on food, books](#), and guidance on [educational resources, high-quality programmes and games on television or on tablet devices and on-line](#), could be provided to children in disadvantaged families to narrow the gaps in parental resources and capability.
- [More parent-based measures](#) can also be implemented to [reduce stress](#) at home, by offering [job search and training, counselling service and support](#) for parents to maintain healthy psychological well-being, providing [more guidance on how to organise home, stay active, supervise and work](#) with children, seek out creative activities for children, and spend quality family time together.

Marriage and divorce numbers down

Total number of marriages

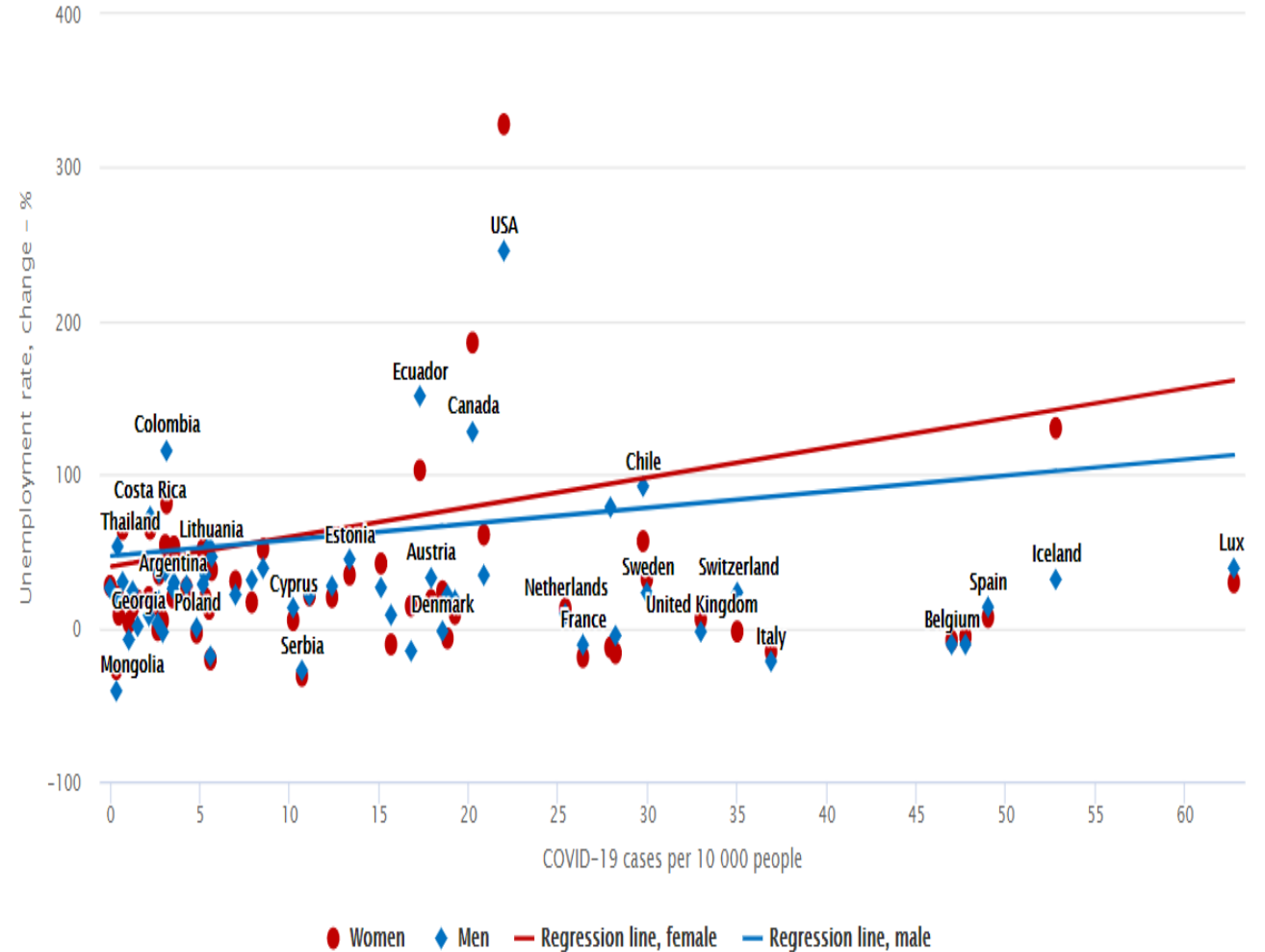


Total number of divorces and annulments



Source: SINGAPORE DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS
STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS
July 7, 2021

Figure 1. Female and male unemployment and COVID-19 prevalence, May 2020



Source: UNCTAD, April 8, 2021