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# Women's economic empowerment in the Solomon Islands

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Note: This document was originally created during the IDM phase, which was a partnership between the Australian National University, International Women's Development Agency and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The World Food Programme provided additional funding for the Solomon Islands study. Image credit: the West 'Are'Are Rokotanikeni Association (WARA) in the Solomon Islands, a partner of IWDA.

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## Individual Deprivation Measure Partners:



Australian  
National  
University



## IDM Solomon Islands Study Partner:



# Women's economic empowerment

'Economic empowerment' is comprised of two inter-related components: 1) economic advancement and 2) economic-related power and agency.<sup>1</sup> The Individual Deprivation Measure (IDM) collects information relevant to assessing both components. Economic advancement can be measured by opportunities to engage in paid work, and asset ownership and control. Power and agency can be measured by voice in the household and public domain, in terms of influencing prioritisation and decision-making in relation to economic resources and activities. BTime use is also a factor in economic empowerment because insufficient time for economic activities is a barrier to women's economic advancement and limits income and wealth generation, including economic contributions to the household, which can further constrain voice within the household.

IDM dimensions on work, time-use and voice are particularly interconnected and can reveal important information regarding women's pathways to economic empowerment. This section explores the work, time-use, and voice dimensions along with data from an additional module administered at the individual level: asset ownership and control, to highlight the multidimensional nature of economic empowerment and resiliency for women and men.

Five research questions were generated to interrogate variables associated with women's pathways to economic empowerment using the available data.

1. How does asset ownership differ between men and women across different asset classes?
2. Is dwelling ownership related to more voice in the household for women and men?
3. Is voice in the household associated with voice in the public domain for men and women?
4. Is paid work associated with reductions in unpaid domestic and care responsibilities for men and women?
5. Is engaging in paid work associated with voice in either the household or public domain for men and women?

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<sup>1</sup> <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/689691538764837080/GroW-Program-2017-12.pdf>

### 1. How does asset ownership differ between men and women across different asset classes?

The data from the assets module demonstrate the importance of individual-level measurement. Asked whether they owned the dwelling at which the interview took place, similar proportions of men (64%) and women (61%) responded affirmatively. Follow up questions revealed that only 25 percent of women owned the dwelling alone, compared to 74 percent of men. These proportions were reversed for shared ownership (26% of men said they owned with others, compared to 75% of women); suggesting that men viewed shared ownership as their sole ownership, or that women viewed men's sole ownership as shared property. This pattern was replicated for the land on which the dwelling sat, although shared land ownership was more common for both men and women than shared dwelling ownership.

#### Assets relevant to land and housing ownership - percent ownership by men and women

Dwelling	Own	Men	64	Same
		Women	61	
	Owned alone	Men	74	Big gap
		Women	25	
	Owned with others	Men	26	
		Women	75	
Land	Own	Men	42	gender gap
		Women	35	
	Owned alone	Men	28	bigger gap
		Women	12	
	Owned with others	Men	72	
		Women	88	

Further analysis of the assets module revealed findings relevant to gendered inequity in asset ownership, access, and control. Men were more likely to solely own assets tied to productive activities, such as small livestock, fish, and poultry. Although ownership rates were low overall, men were more likely to own transport-related assets, which has implications for time-use, along with being high value wealth-related assets. Although, again, overall ownership rates were low, men were more likely to own assets relevant to participating in business activities, such as a mobile phone, computer, internet connection, and general business equipment. Men were also more likely to own a radio, an important asset for accessing information. The only asset owned by more women than men was a sewing machine.

**Assets relevant to production - percent ownership by men and women**

Large livestock	Own	Men	0
		Women	0
Small livestock	Own by myself	Men	29
		Women	15
	Own with others	Men	8
		Women	17
Fish/poultry	Own by myself	Men	9
		Women	4
	Own with others	Men	4
		Women	6

**Assets relevant to transport and mobility - percent ownership by men and women**

Bicycle	Own by myself	Men	6
		Women	1
	Own with others	Men	0
		Women	1
Motorbike	Own at all	Men	0
		Women	0
Car, van, or bus	Own by myself	Men	5
		Women	1
	Own with others	Men	1
		Women	2
Boat with no motor	Own by myself	Men	12
		Women	4
	Own with others	Men	2
		Women	6
Boat with motor	Own by myself	Men	7
		Women	2
	Own with others	Men	3
		Women	3

**Assets relevant to participation in economic activities - percent ownership by men and women**

Cellphone	Own by myself	Men	54
		Women	38
	Own with others	Men	1
		Women	3
Business equipment	Own by myself	Men	8
		Women	3
	Own with others	Men	2
		Women	3
Computer	Own by myself	Men	7
		Women	5
	Own with others	Men	1
		Women	3
Internet connection	Own by myself	Men	2
		Women	0
	Own with others	Men	0
		Women	0

**Assets relevant to awareness of information - percent ownership by men and women**

Television	Own by myself	Men	3
		Women	2
	Own with others	Men	0
		Women	3
Radio	Own by myself	Men	18
		Women	6
	Own with others	Men	2
		Women	5

**Asset relevant to domestic or business use - percent ownership by men and women**

Sewing machine	Own by myself	Men	6
		Women	10
	Own with others	Men	3
		Women	2

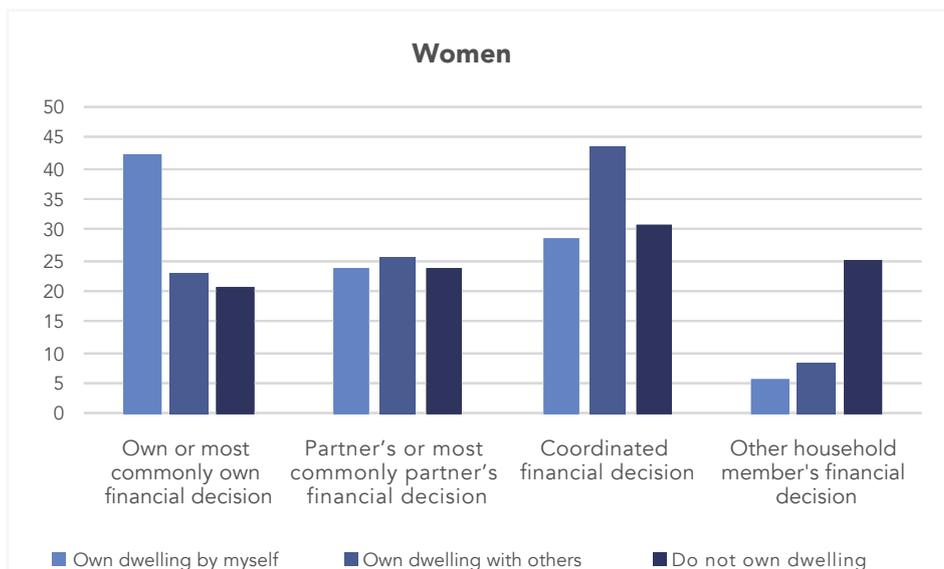
### **1. Is dwelling ownership related to more voice in the household for women and men?**

Initial evidence suggests that the relationship between dwelling ownership and bargaining power in the household is stronger for women than for men; that is, owning a dwelling is more significant for women, in terms of the power, than it is for men. The figures below present the percentage of men and women with various types of dwelling ownership (by self, with others, or don't own), crossed with the extent to which they are responsible for household financial decisions (their own decision, their partner's decision, a coordinated decision, other household member's decision).

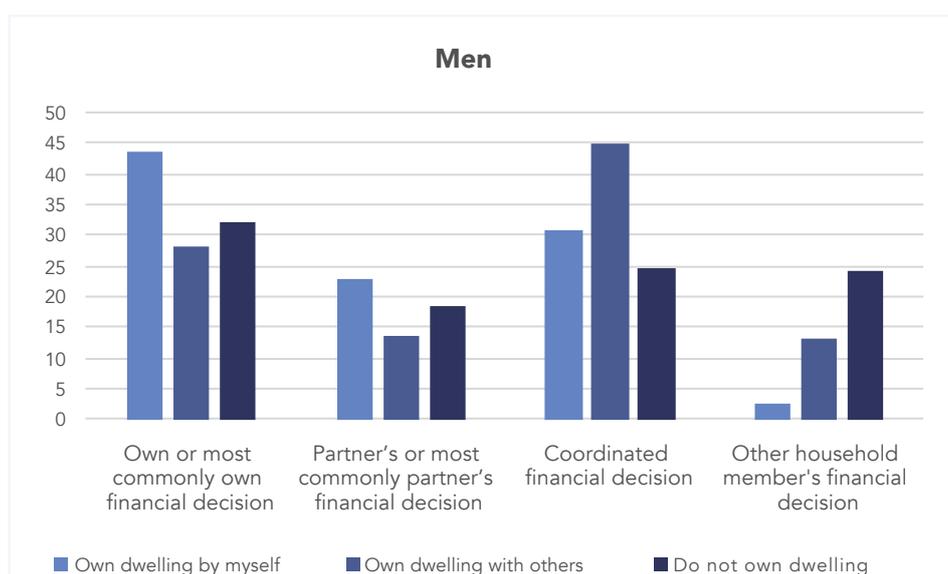
Dwelling ownership was associated with increased household financial decision-making power for both men and women - but especially for women. Forty-two percent of women who owned the dwelling by themselves also primarily made decisions about household finances, compared to 22.7 percent of women who owned the dwelling with others and 20.7 percent of women who did not own the dwelling. Women who owned the dwelling with others reported more coordinated decision making. The effect of dwelling ownership was not as pronounced for men. Of the men who owned their dwelling, 43.5 percent said they primarily made household finance decisions, compared to 28.1 percent who shared ownership and 32.3 percent of those who did not own the dwelling in which they lived.

Roughly equal proportions of women reported their partner primarily making decisions about household finances, regardless of their dwelling ownership status - 23.6 percent of those who owned the dwelling by themselves, 25.5 percent of those who owned with others, and 23.8 percent of those who did not own. Twenty-two percent of men with sole ownership reported their partner making decisions, compared to 13.7 percent of men who owned the dwelling with others.

Based on this data, for women, land or dwelling ownership is related to increased voice within the household, particularly when a woman is the sole owner of the dwelling.



**Figure 1.** Percent of women who make household financial decisions by dwelling ownership status



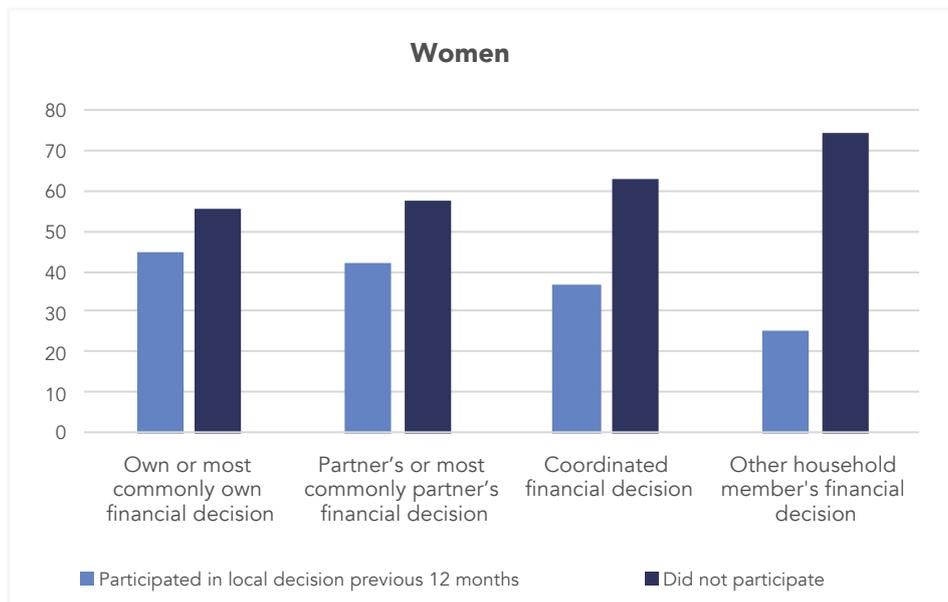
**Figure 2.** Percent of men who make household financial decisions by dwelling ownership status

### **1. Is voice in the household associated with voice in the public domain for men and women?**

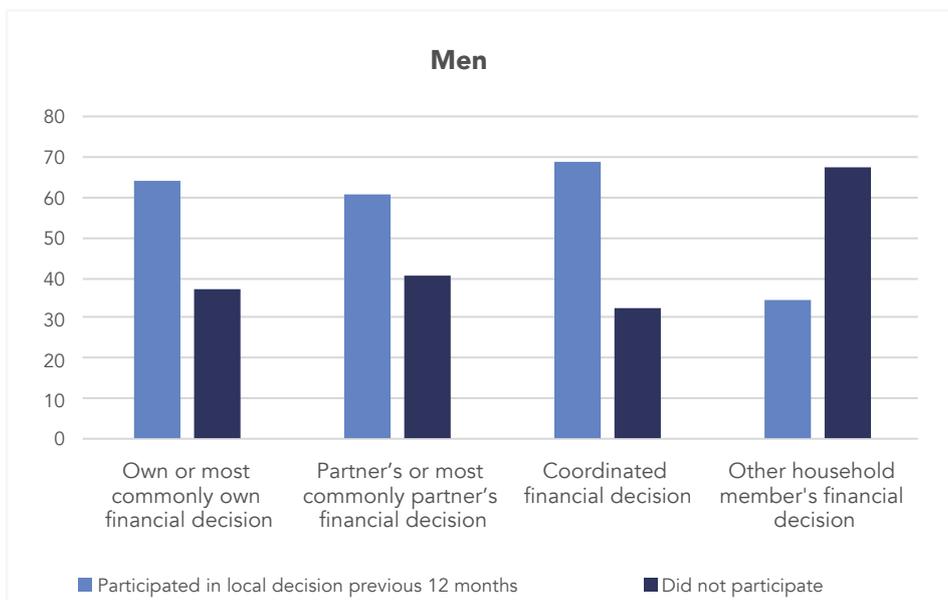
Level of control over household financial decisions was crossed with having participated in a local decision-making process.<sup>2</sup> Figures 80 and 81 represent the percentage of men or women with different levels of financial decision-making power within their household, among those who participated in a local decision (e.g., 44.8% of women who participated in a local decision-making process also primarily made household financial decisions). Regardless of financial decision-making status within the household, however, women more

<sup>2</sup> The specific decision-making process was not specified; respondents were asked whether they had 'participated in a local decision-making process in the previous 12 months'

commonly reported not participating in local decision-making processes than did men. For men, financial decision-making status did not have a significant impact on participation in local decision-making, except for where the financial decision-making was reported to be with other household members.<sup>3</sup>



**Figure 3.** Percentage of women with different levels of financial decision-making power in their household, among those who participated in a local decision-making process



**Figure 4.** Percentage of men with different levels of financial decision-making power in their household, among those who participated in a local decision-making process

<sup>3</sup> This may have been younger respondents referring to parents or older relatives.

### **1. Is paid work for men and women associated with changes in time spent on unpaid domestic and care responsibilities?**

From the time-use dimension, time spent on unpaid work and care were summed.<sup>4</sup> Overall, women spent more time on unpaid work and care than men, regardless of paid work status. Women who had not performed paid work in the previous seven days spent on average 38 more minutes on unpaid/care work the previous day than did women who had done paid work. By contrast, men who did no paid work spent six more minutes on unpaid care/work, relative to the men who were engaged in paid work. These findings suggest that the relationship between work and time-use is more significant for women than for men, especially with regards to time spent on unpaid and care work.

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Paid work status</b>	<b>Mean hours of unpaid work and care</b>
Women	Paid work	4 hours 31 minutes
	No paid work	5 hours 9 minutes
Men	Paid work	2 hours 42 minutes
	No paid work	2 hours 48 minutes

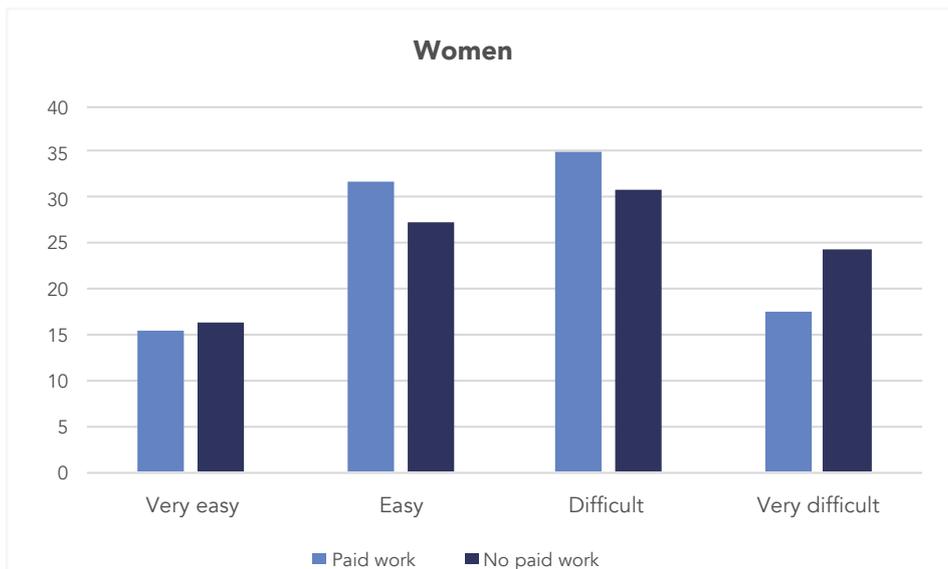
### **2. Is engaging in paid work associated with voice in either the household or public domain for men and women?**

An interesting gender pattern was observed at the intersection of having performed paid work in the previous seven days and the perceived ease of raising concerns with local leaders, organisations or influential people. There was a large impact of paid work on perceived ease of raising concerns for men. Men who had engaged in paid work were significantly more likely to say raising concerns at the local level was very easy, relative to men not in paid work.

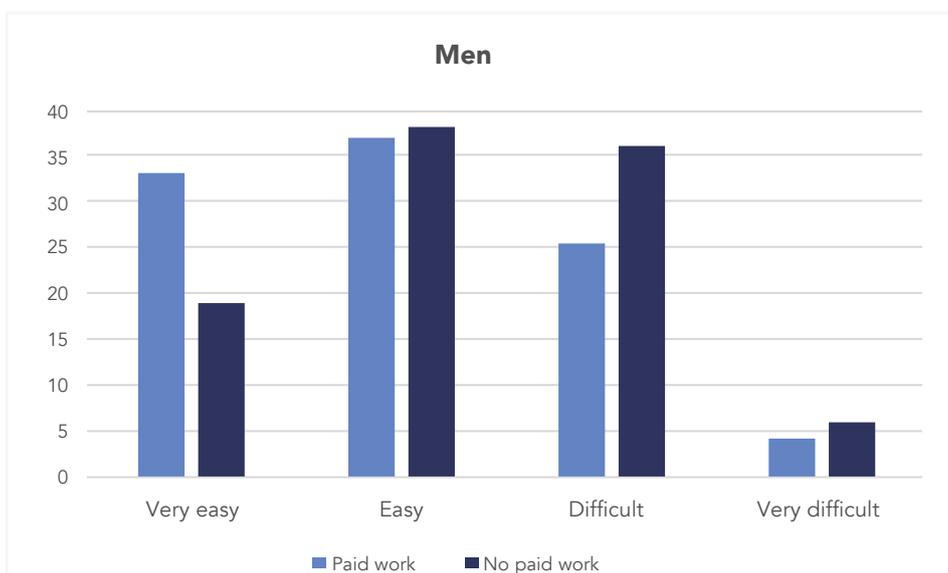
For women, having engaged in paid work did not make it more likely that they perceived raising concerns with local leaders as very easy. Overall, women in paid work were more likely to say that raising issues in public was very 'difficult' than 'very easy'. Women who did not engage in paid work were more likely to have said raising concerns was very difficult, relative to their paid work counterparts. This finding implicates other factors (beyond working outside of the home), such as discriminatory gender norms, on women's perceived ability to raise concerns with local decision-makers.

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<sup>4</sup> The sample was disaggregated by gender, then the mean hours spent on unpaid work and care was calculated for men who did paid work compared to those who did not, and women who did paid work compared to those who did not.

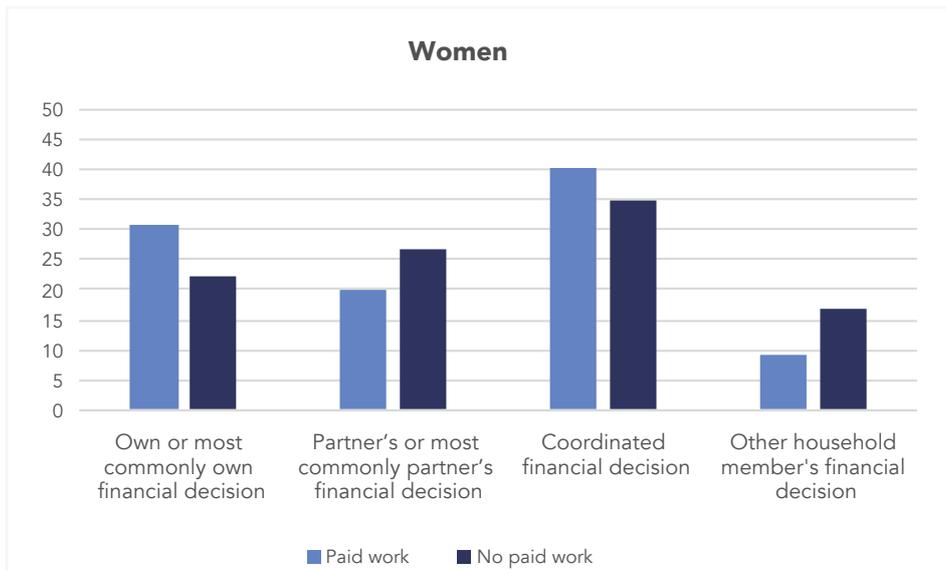


**Figure 5.** Percent of women who rated ease of decision-making, within each category of paid work

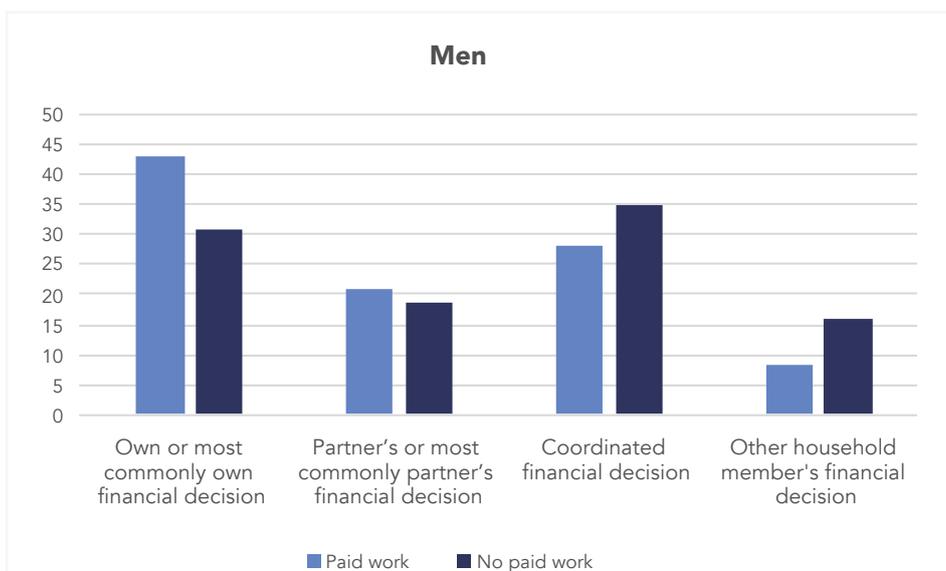


**Figure 6.** Percent of men who rated ease of decision-making, within each category of paid work

For voice inside the household, measured by extent of decision-making power over household financial decisions, there was an impact of paid work on women's control over financial decisions, as there was for men. Among women, a higher percentage of women who did not engage in paid work reported financial decisions being their partner's decision, compared to women who did paid work. For men, paid work was also associated with increased financial decision-making; but there was little impact of paid work on rates of partners making decisions. Among men, no paid work was associated with higher reporting of coordinated decisions. Both men and women with no paid work reported similar levels of other household member's decision-making, potentially representing younger household members who live with their parents or older relatives.



**Figure 7.** Percent of women who indicated extent of decision-making within each category of paid work



**Figure 8.** Percent of men who indicated extent of decision-making within each category of paid work

The data point to a set of interactions that is significant but affects men and women differently. While dwelling ownership was associated with higher levels of women's financial decision-making power within the household, women's decision-making status inside the household was not as strongly associated with voice in the community compared to men. While engaging in paid work was associated with reduced time spent on unpaid domestic and care responsibilities for women, as well as elevated household-level financial decision-making, household voice was not as strongly associated with perceived ability to raise concerns in the community for women as it was for men.

This data demonstrates a complex relationship between household-level voice in the economic realm, and agency and perceived voice and influence at the community level. Advancements in women's paid employment does not necessarily impact women's engagement in other realms of the public domain. Discriminatory gender norms are evident where men's paid work status did not change the amount of unpaid domestic or care work that they undertook, while participating in paid work improved their ease of participating in the community decision-making. Without shifts to underlying gender norms, improvements in pathways to women's economic empowerment, and the equitable sharing and control of economic resources (including labour), will not transpire.



Violence is an important concept in understanding barriers to women's economic advancement, voice and agency. Previous research in the Solomon Islands has underlined the interconnectedness of experiences of violence and barriers to empowerment<sup>5</sup> as well as potential risks of violence to women from women's economic empowerment programs such as where cash-based transfers are an assistance modality.<sup>6</sup> The 15 dimensions of the IDM include a module on violence, which was not administered in the Solomon Islands study due to some known limitations. The IDM's sampling method, interviewing all adult members in a household, poses particular challenges for collecting data about violence. In two earlier IDM studies,<sup>7</sup> follow up qualitative work investigated the consequences of measuring violence with all household members. No negative outcomes were reported as a direct result of having administered the module. The IDM data on violence collected to date that did not ask for information on location of violence or perpetrator affected the value of the data for understanding gendered violence. Gender differences in location and perpetrator means that violence experienced by women is typically in the home at the hands of a partner and violence experienced by men is typically outside the home, in public places, at the hands of other men. Given this, and risks associated with asking about personal experience of violence from multiple adults in the same household, an alternative approach will be developed.

The IDM also includes questions about safety and security threats associated with activities such as collecting fuel and water, walking around the neighbourhood at night, and being at home alone. Such data are used in this report to highlight where security threats were faced by both men and women while collecting resources and subjective feelings of safety while walking at night or being alone at home. These are important aspects of deprivation but should not be considered replacements for measuring the gendered impacts of violence as a dimension of poverty.

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5 <https://strongimbisnis.com.sb/resources/women-s-economic-empowerment/12-gender-norms-and-economic-opportunity-2018/file.html>

6 <https://pacificwomen.org/research/no-harm-research-report-solomon-islands/>

7 Indonesia and the Republic of South Africa



