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P20 Women's Parliament

Unpacking the status of Women in South Africa

Mr Solly Molayi
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Population Insights



The **South African** population in
2025 is estimated at

63 100 945



Source: Mid Year Population Estimates, 2025



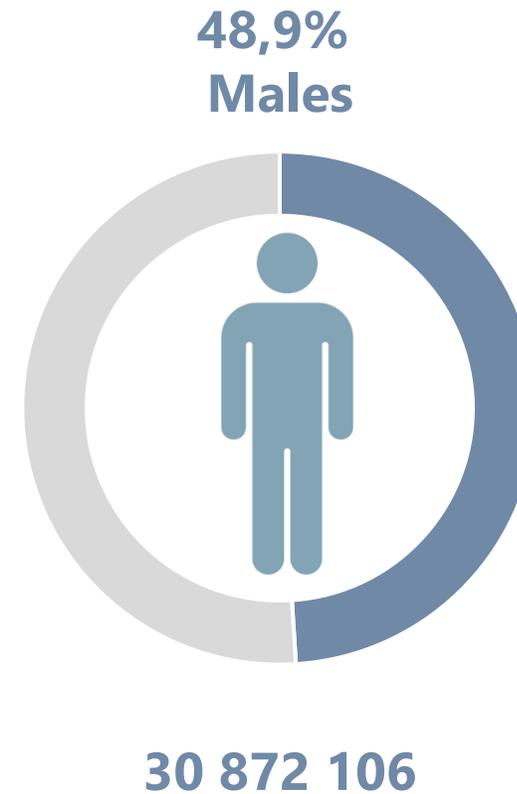
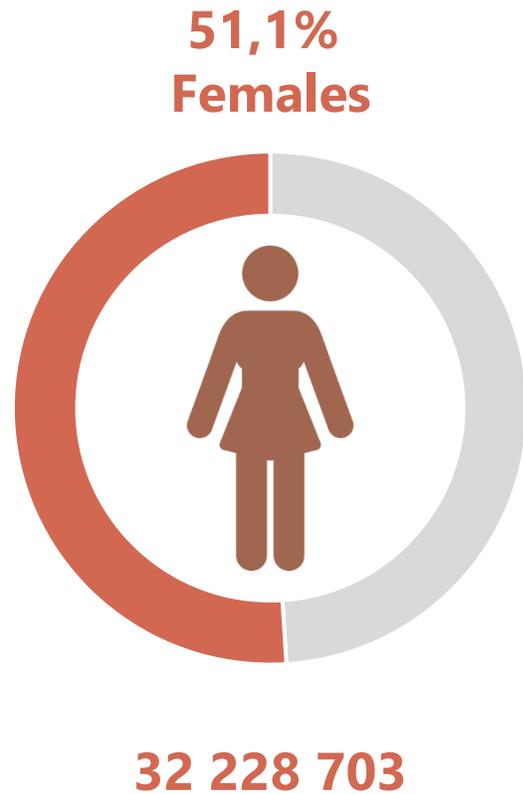
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Approximately 51% (32,2 million) of the population is female.

South Africa's population by sex, 2025



Source: Mid Year Population Estimates, 2025



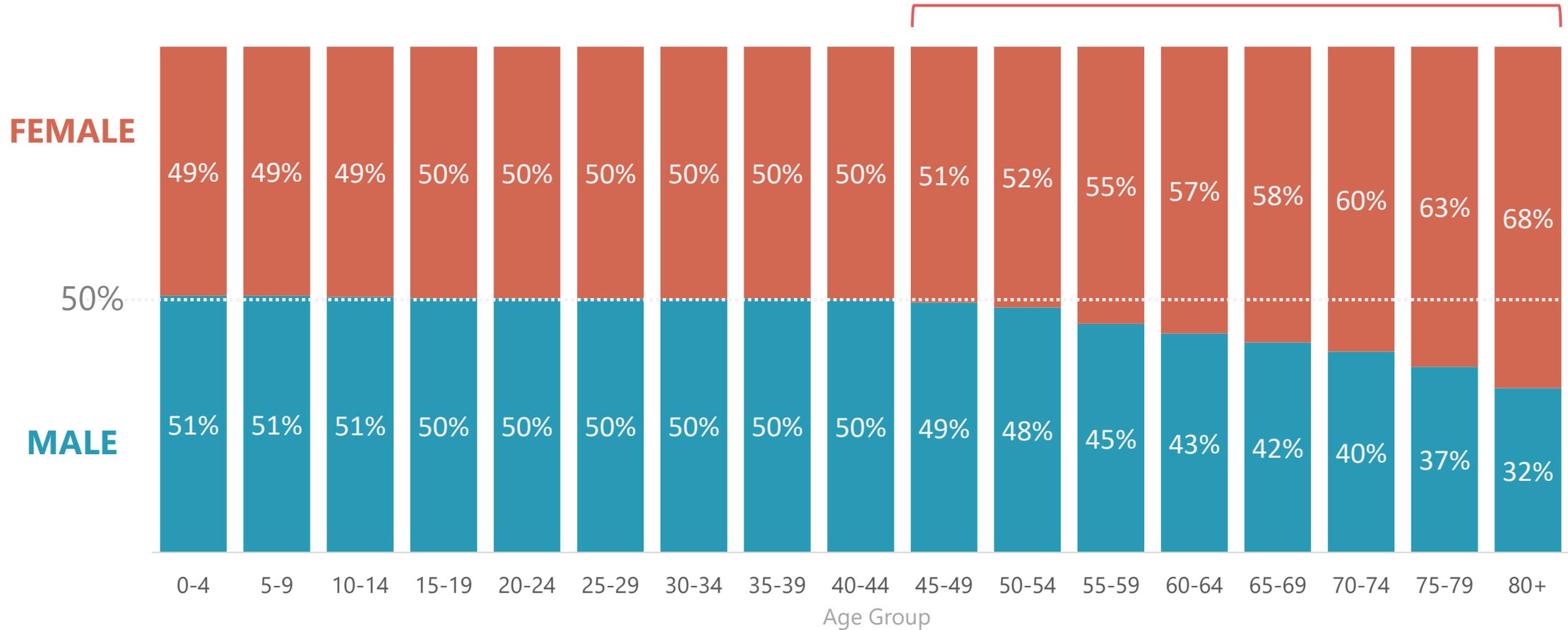
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Women outnumber men from ages 45 and above

SA age structure by 5-year age groups and sex, 2025

Women outnumber men from ages 45 and upwards



Source: Mid Year Population Estimates, 2025



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Families and households

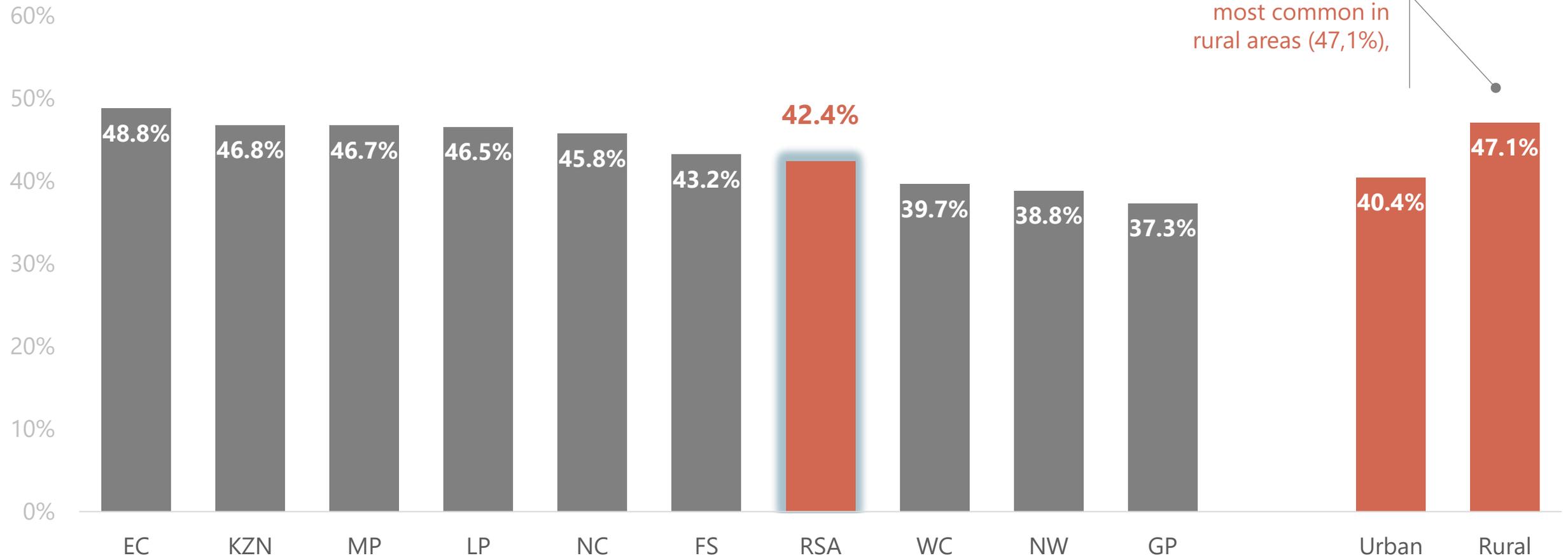


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More than two-fifths (42,4%) of all households were headed by **females**.

Percentage of female-headed households by province, 2024



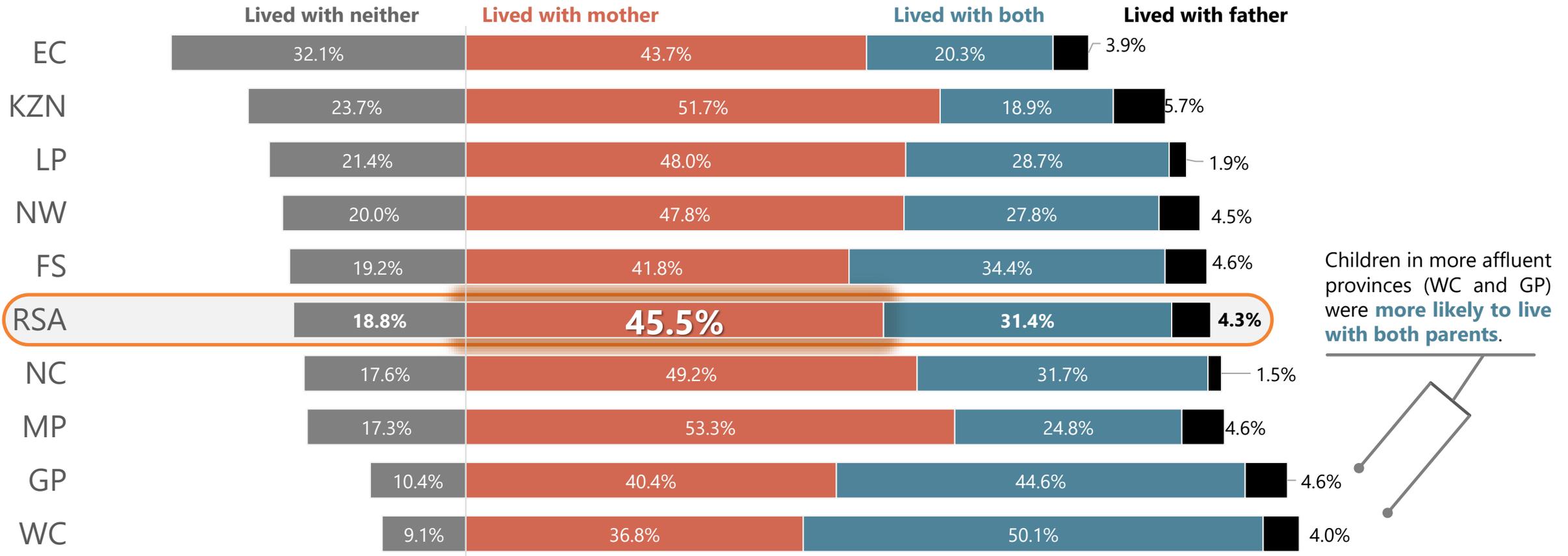
Source: General Household Survey 2024



Nationally, **45,5% of children lived with mothers only** while less than a third (31,4%) of children lived with both parents

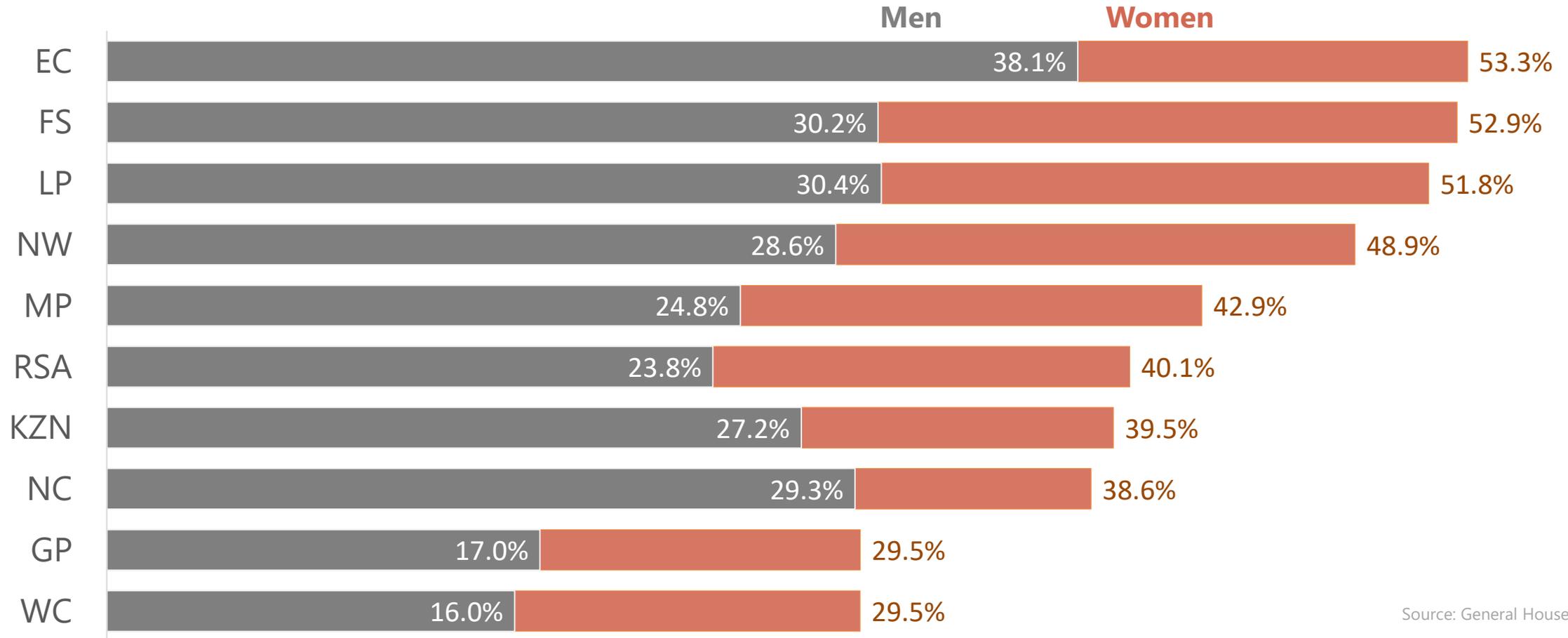
Percentage of children living arrangements by province, 2024

Source: General Household Survey 2024



Close to **half of Households headed by Women in EC, FS, LP and NW do not have an employed household member within the household**

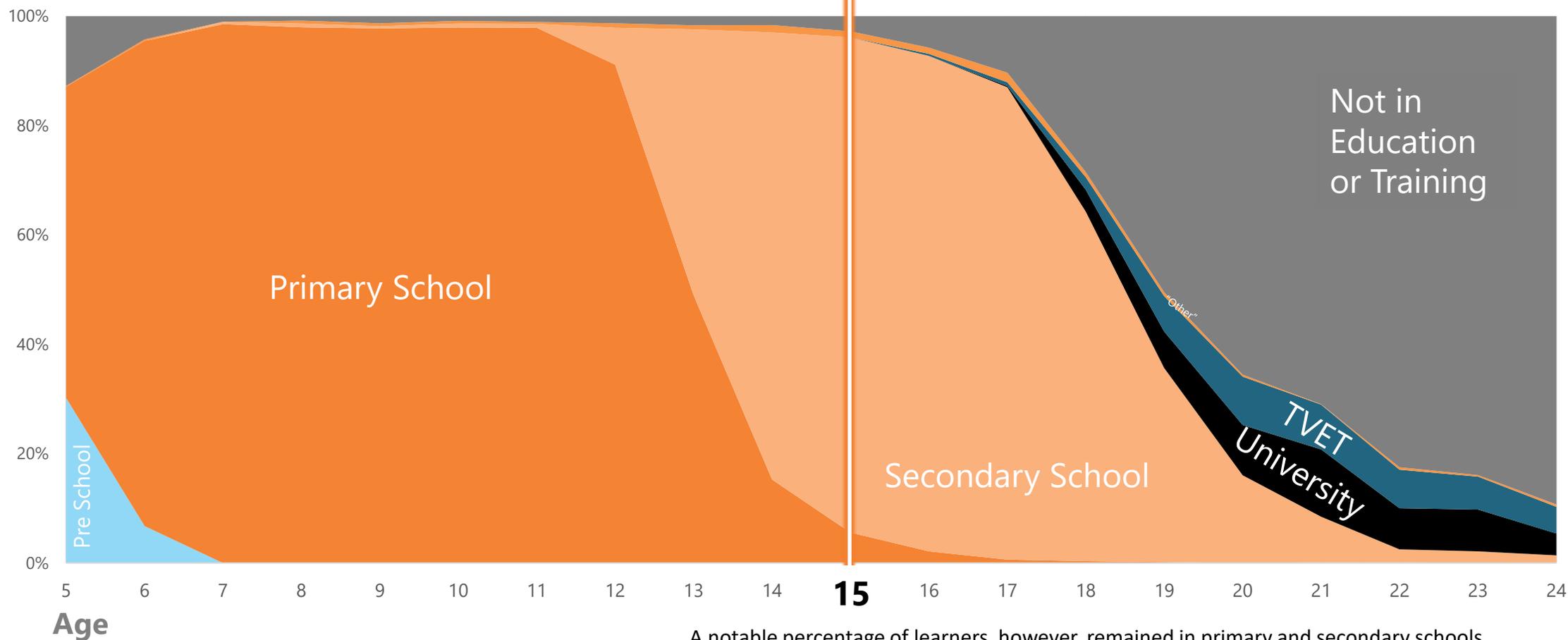
Households without an employed household member by province and sex of household head, 2024



Source: General Household Survey 2024

Participation in education institutions was **virtually universal (96,1%) by the age of 15 years** (the last compulsory school age).

Type of educational institution attended by individuals aged 5–24 years, 2024

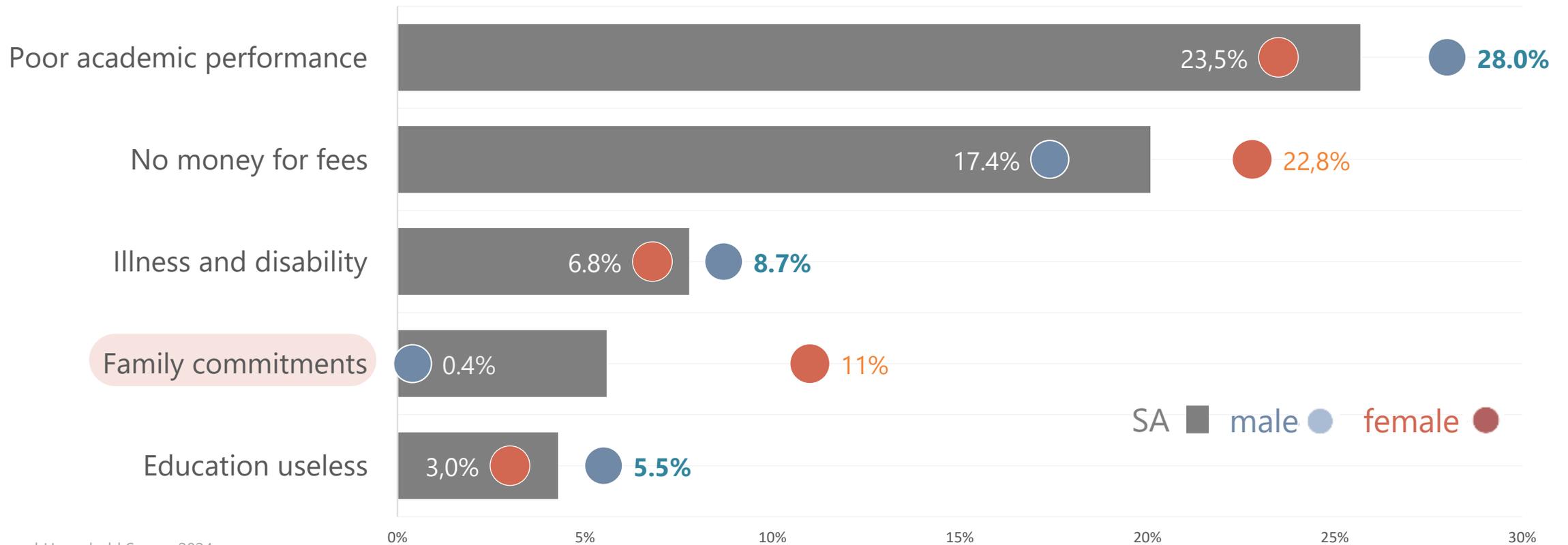


A notable percentage of learners, however, remained in primary and secondary schools long after they should have exited those institutions

Source: General Household Survey 2024

Top reasons for **males** not attending school was **poor academic performance**, with large gender disparity in **family commitment** as a reason for not attending school.

Percentage distribution of selected reasons given by individuals aged 7 to 18 years for not attending an educational institution, by sex, 2024



Source: General Household Survey 2024

Women in the Workplace



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The official unemployment rate increased by 0,3 of a percentage point to **33,2%** in Q2:2025 compared to Q1:2025.

41,8 million

People of working age in South Africa (15 – 64-years old)

Labour force

25,2 million

Not Economically Active

16,6 million



SA's official unemployment rate stands at

33,2%

Increased by 0,3 of a percentage point between Q1:2025 and Q2:2025

ILO hierarchy – Employed first then unemployed and the remainder is NEA (including discouraged job-seekers). 3 mutually exclusive groups. Cannot be in two groups at the same time.

Source: QLFS Q2: 2025



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The unemployment rate for women stands at **35,9 %** in Q2:2025.

21,0 million

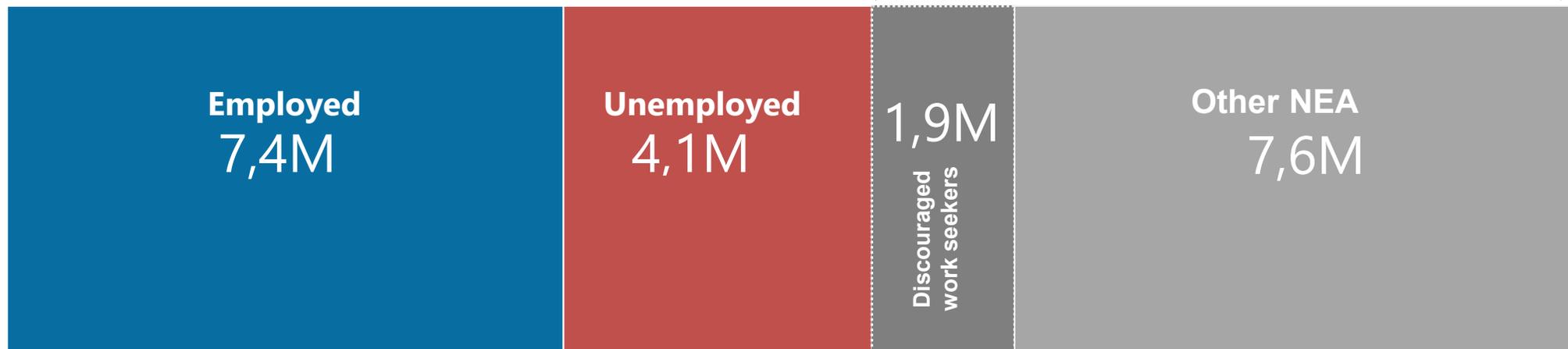
People of working age in South Africa (15 – 64-year-old)

Labour force

Not Economically Active

11,5 million

9,5 million



SA's women unemployment rate stands at **35,9%** increased by 0,4 of a percentage point between Q1:2025 and Q2:2025

ILO hierarchy – Employed first then unemployed and the remainder is NEA (including discouraged job-seekers). 3 mutually exclusive groups. Cannot be in two groups at the same time.

Source: QLFS Q2: 2025

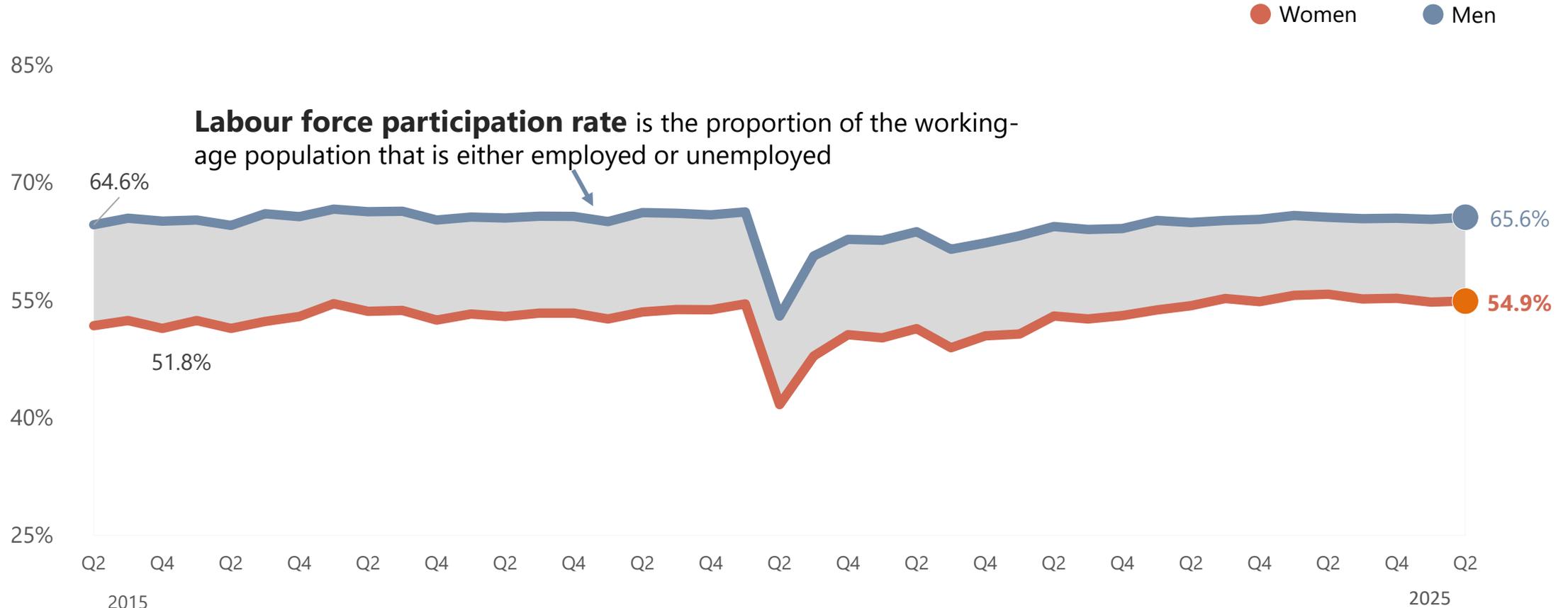


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Although **women's** labour force participation rate has been increasing over time, **men's** participation in the labour force is higher than that of women.

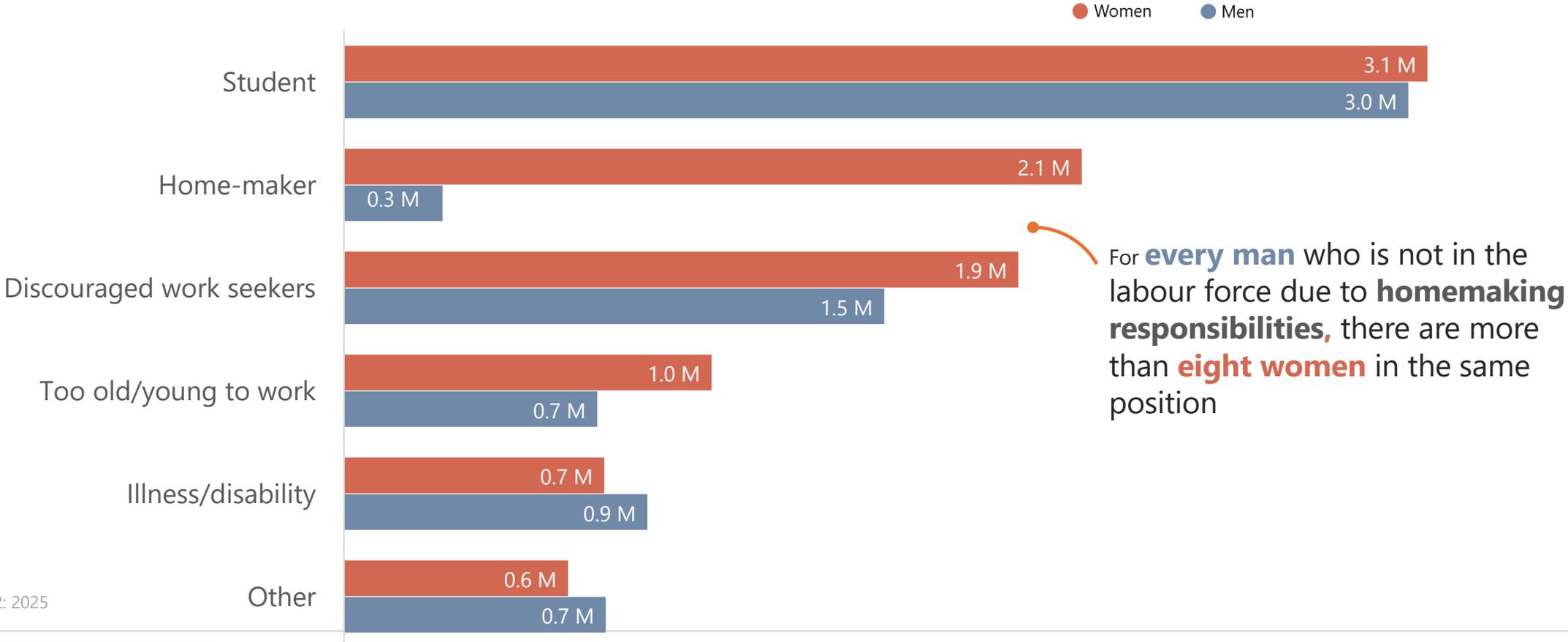
Labour force participation by sex Q2:2015 - Q2:2025



Source: QLFS Q2: 2025

The **gender disparity in participation** is revealed in the reasons cited for economic inactivity, with **Home Maker being the primary driver for the disparity**

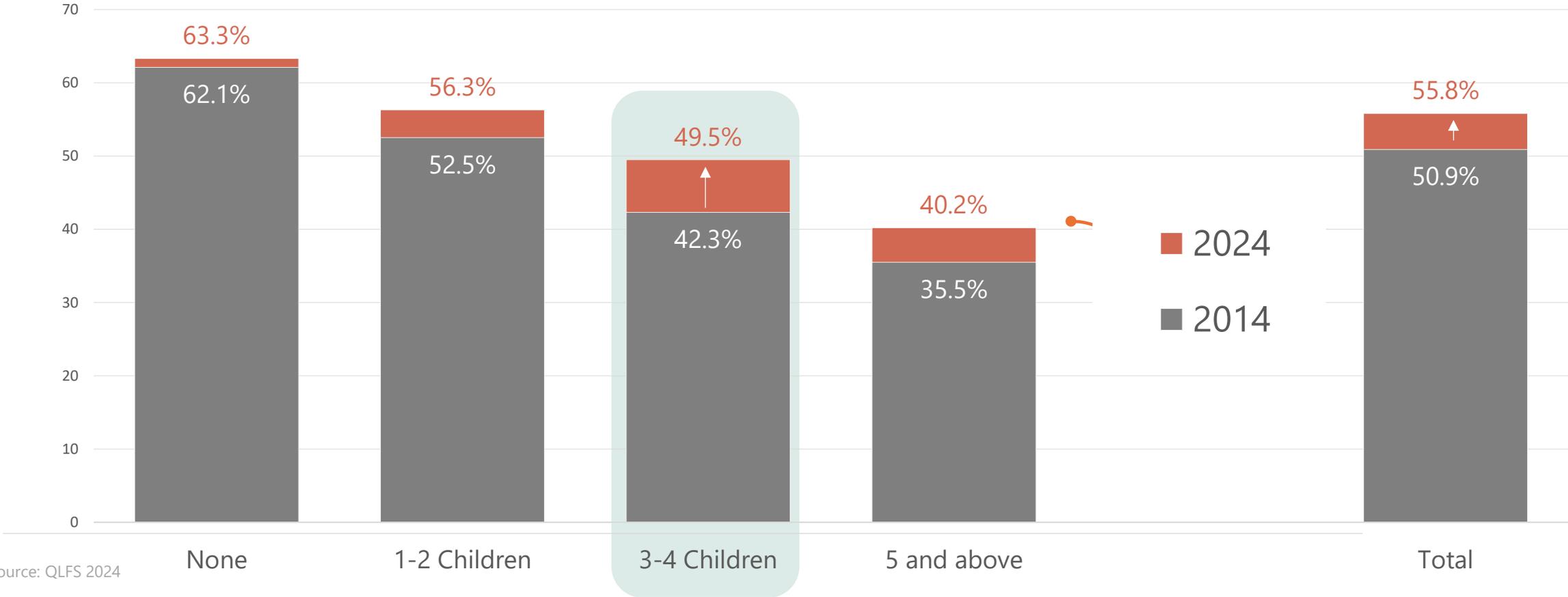
Reasons by being not economically active by sex, Q2: 2025



Source: QLFS Q2: 2025

Regardless of the number of children in the household, Female participation rates in the labour force rose between 2014 and 2024, **with the greatest increase seen in households with 3-4 Children**

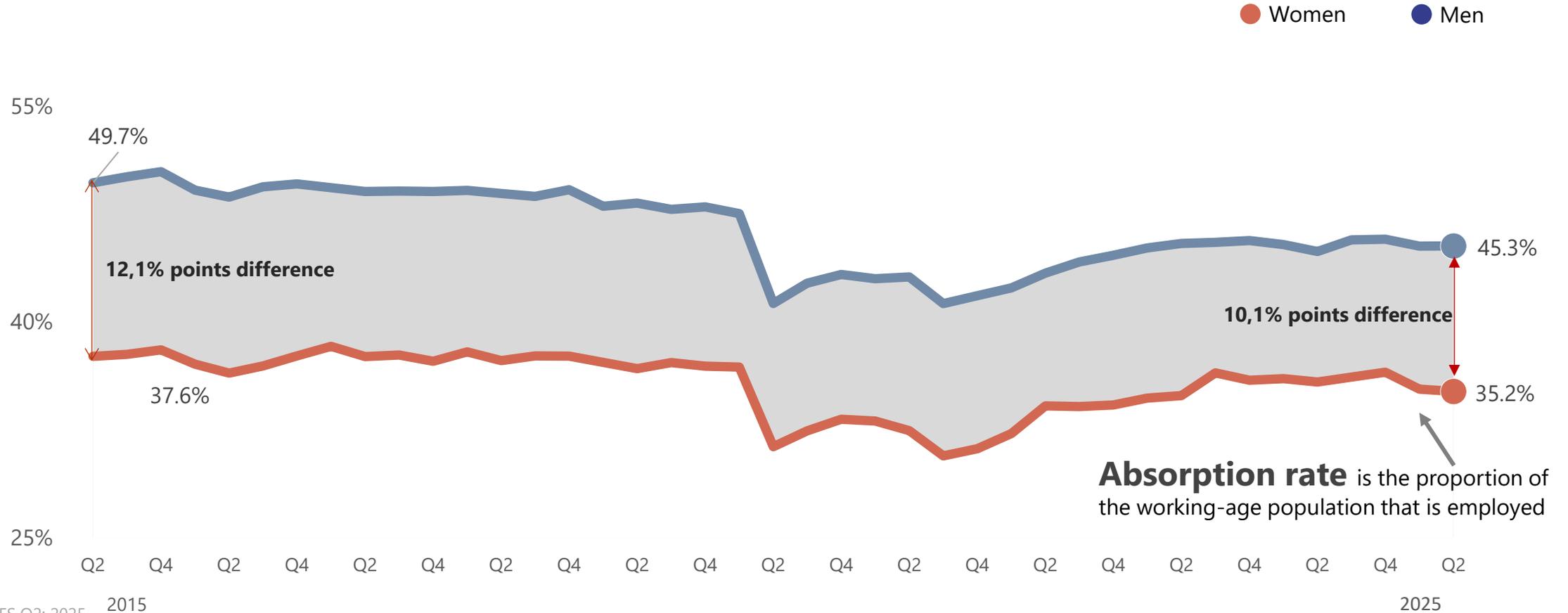
Female labour force participation rate by sex and the presence of children in the household, 2014 and 2024



Source: QLFS 2024

Women's **absorption rate** has been lower than that of men, with a 10,1 percentage points difference in Q2:2025.

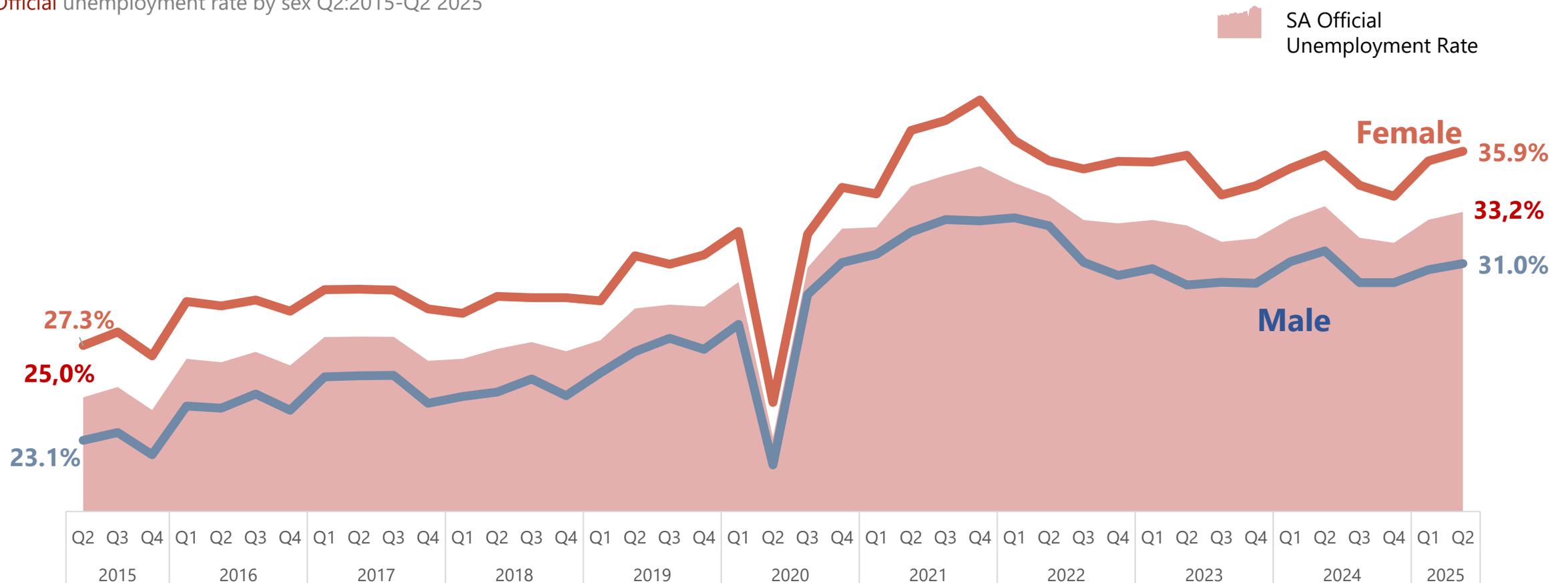
Absorption rate by sex Q2:2015 - Q2:2025



Source: QLFS Q2: 2025

Since Q2:2015, the unemployment rate for women has consistently been higher than that of men. It increased from 27,3% in Q2:2015 to **35,9% in Q2:2025**.

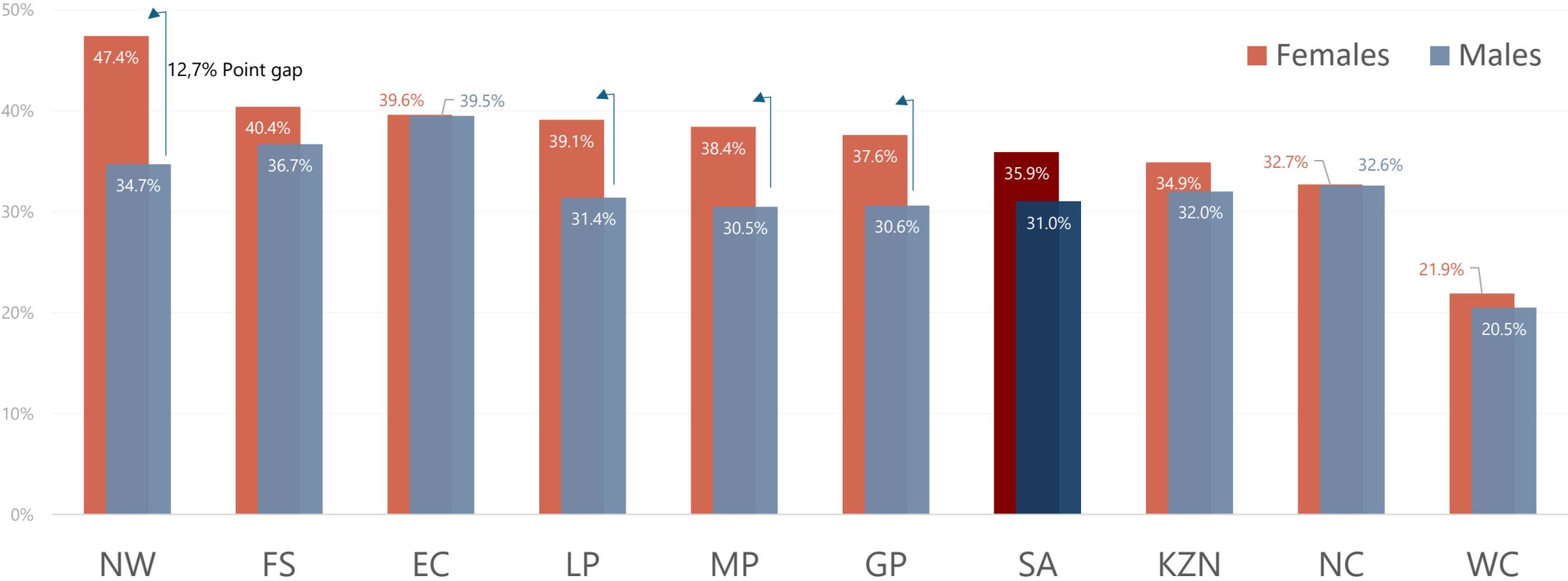
Official unemployment rate by sex Q2:2015-Q2 2025



Source: QLFS Q2: 2025

Women have higher unemployment rates in all provinces, with the largest disparity in the North West (12,7%) while Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Gauteng all have disparities between 7 and 8% points

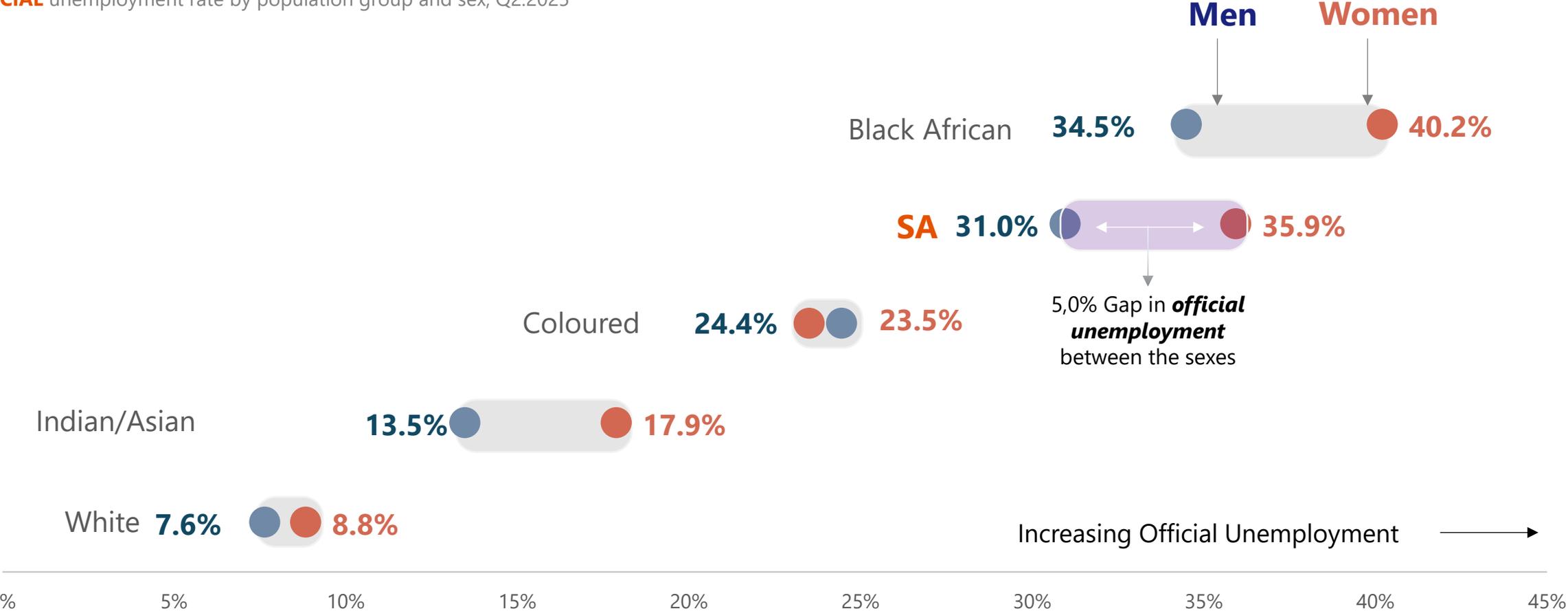
Official unemployment rate by province and sex, Q2:2025



Source: QLFS Q2: 2025

Black African women continue to be the most vulnerable with an unemployment rate of **40,2%** in Q2:2025. *This is 4,3 percentage points higher than the national average for women at 35,9%.*

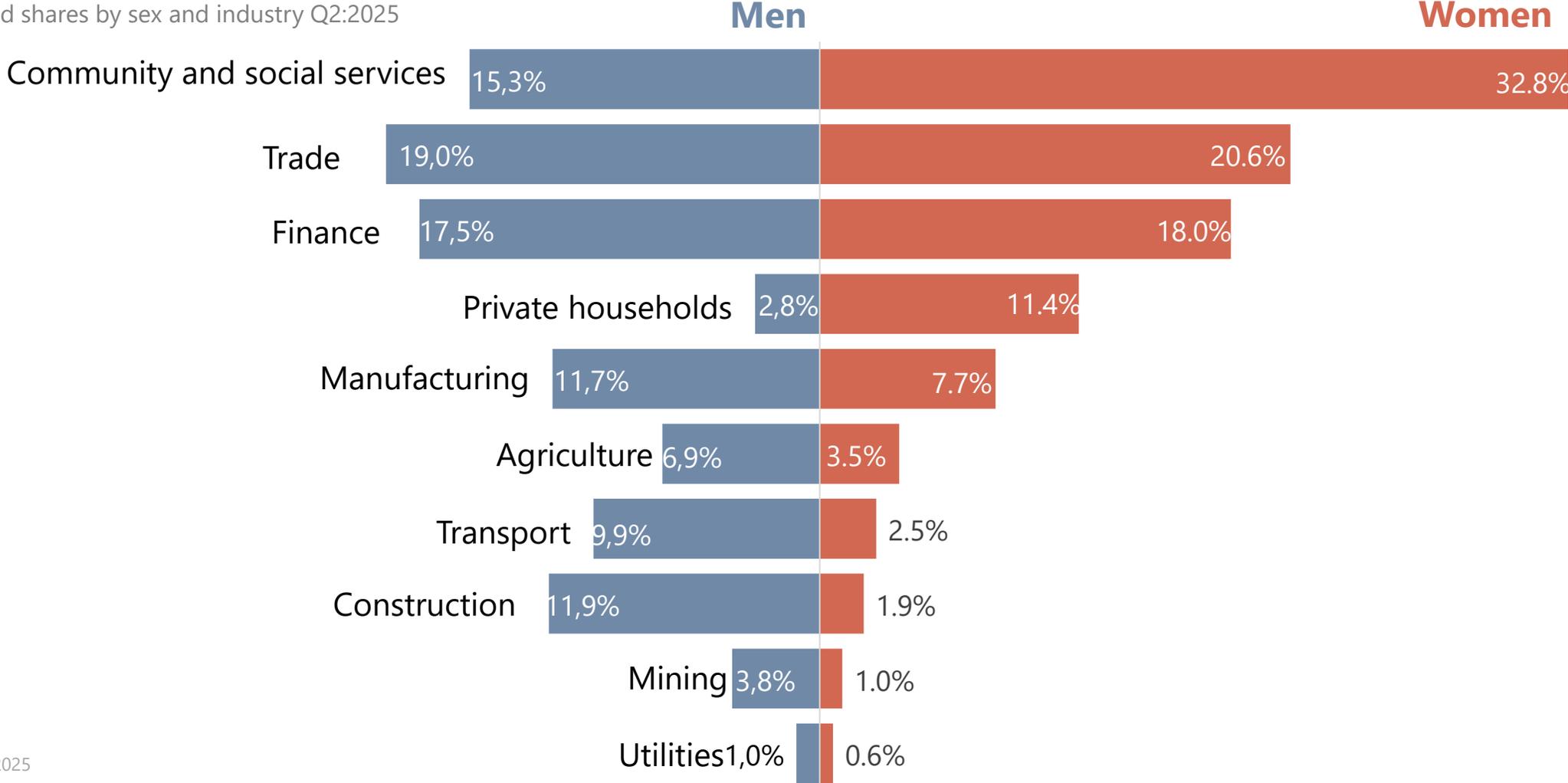
OFFICIAL unemployment rate by population group and sex, Q2:2025



Source: QLFS Q2: 2025

Women were more likely to be employed in **Community and social services, Trade, Finance, and Private households** compared to men.

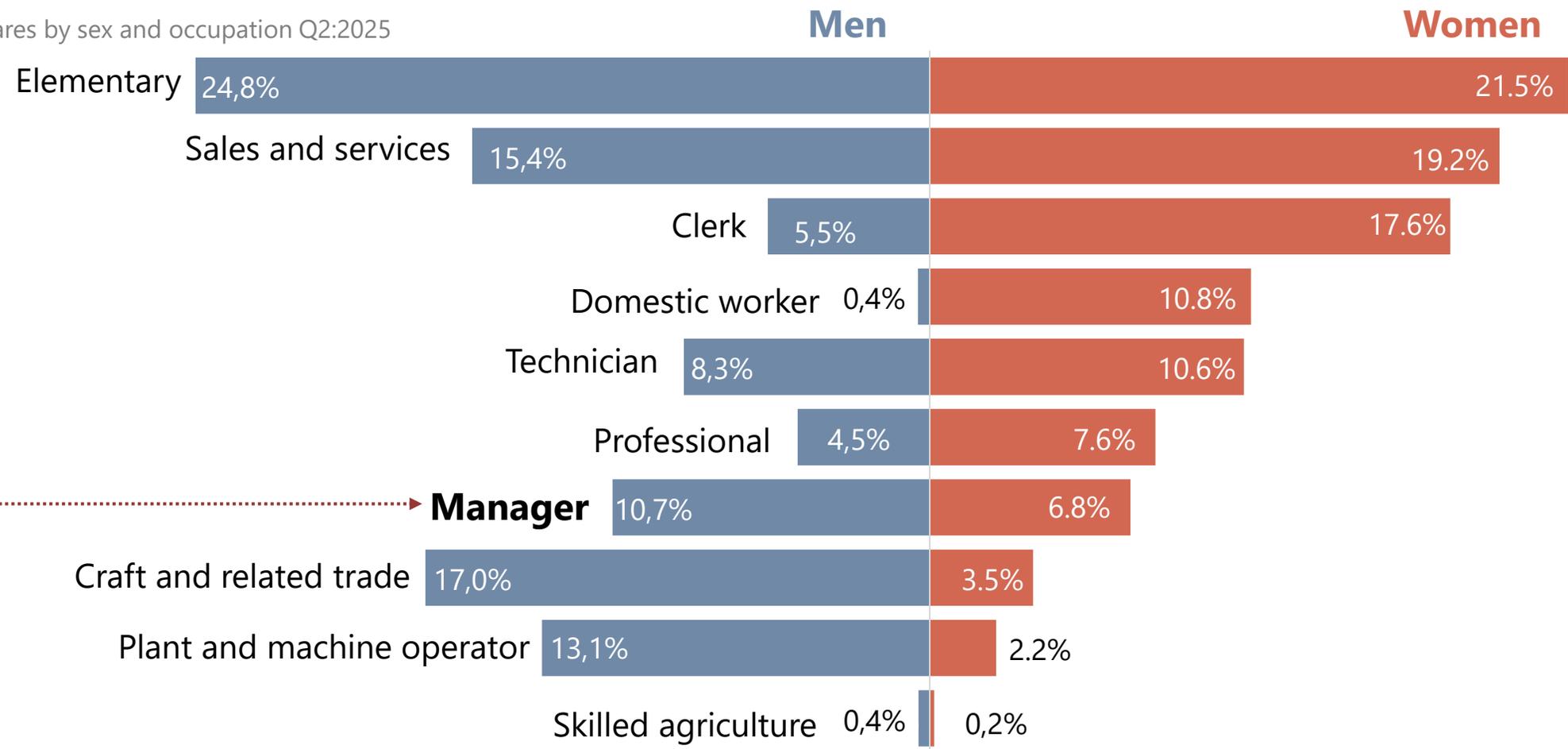
Employed shares by sex and industry Q2:2025



Source: QLFS Q2: 2025

• **Women** occupying managerial positions account for **6,8%** compared to **10,7%** for men. *Women were more likely to be employed in elementary work, sales and services, clerical work, domestic work, technical, and professional occupations.*

Employed shares by sex and occupation Q2:2025



Source: QLFS Q2: 2025

Access To Financial And Related Resources By Households



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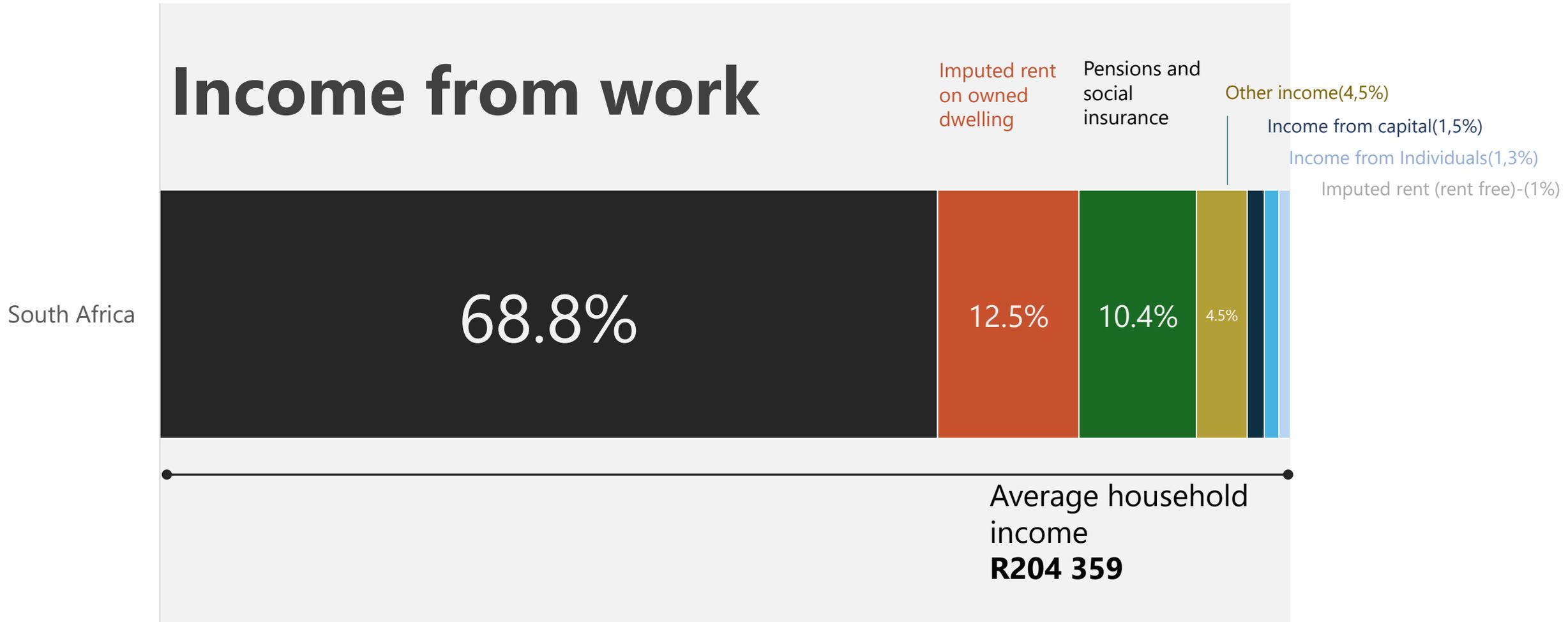
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Nationally, most of the income (almost 70%) was earned from work

Average annual household income, 2023



Source: Source: IES 2022/23

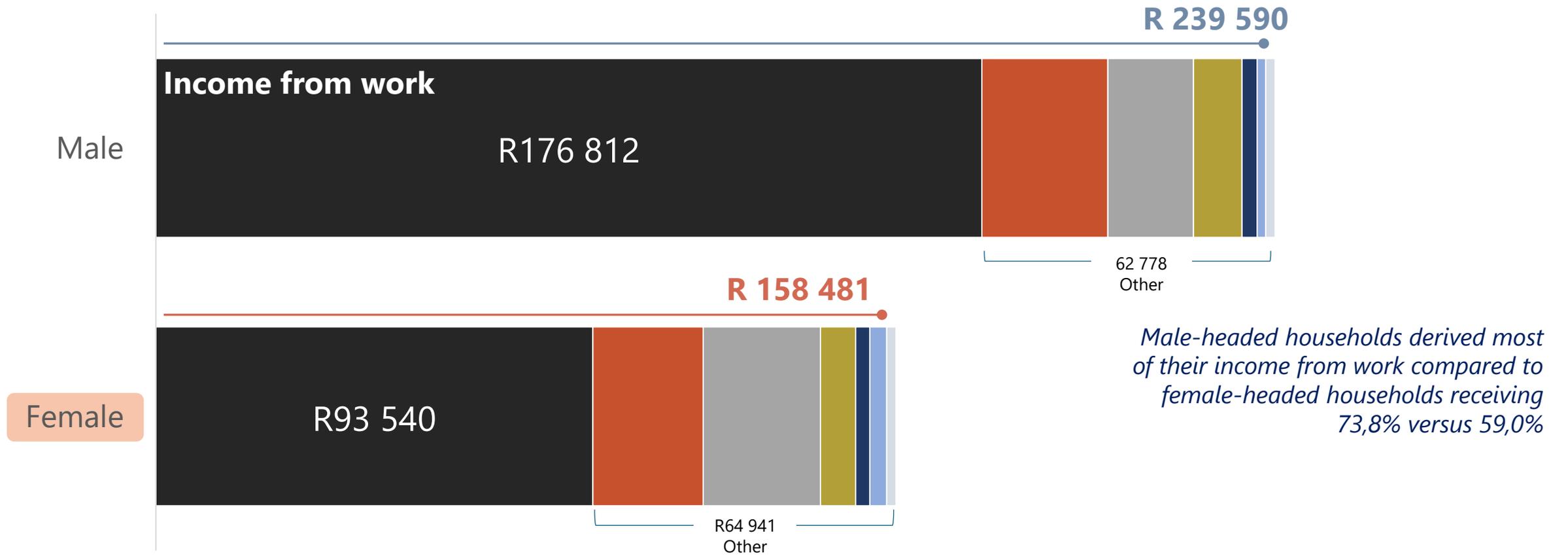


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Female-headed households earned significantly less income than male counterparts

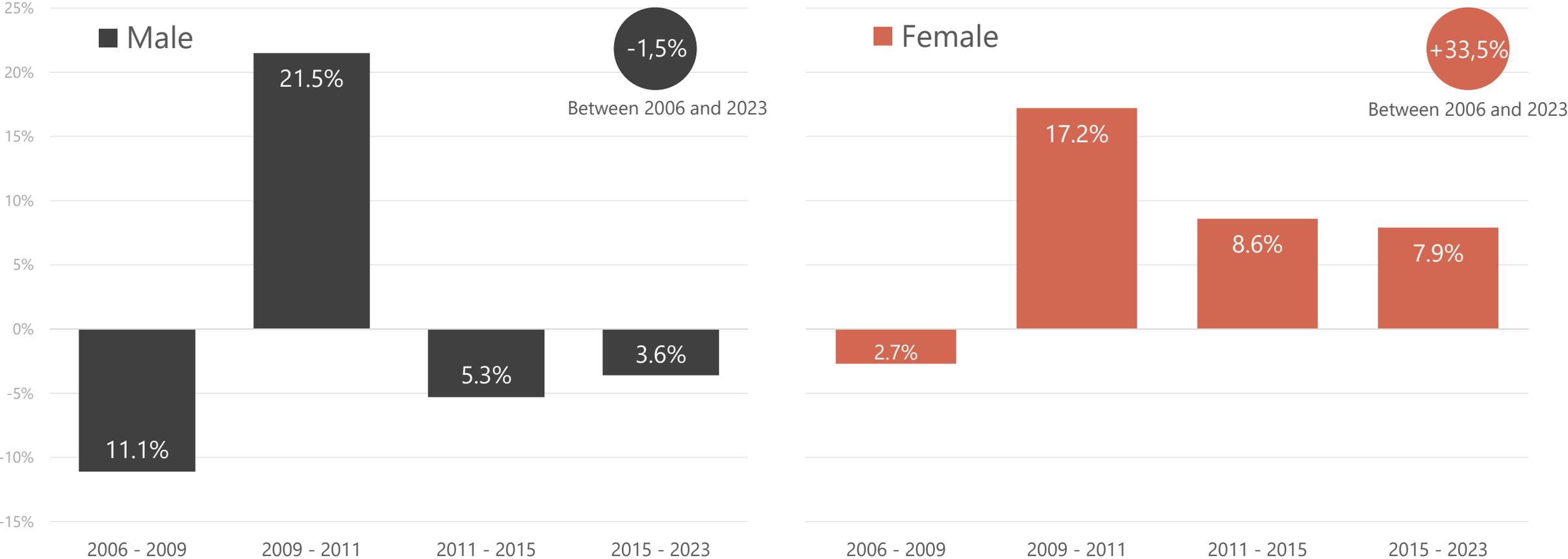
Average annual household income by sex of household head, 2023



Source: Source: IES 2022/23

Female-headed h/holds saw **33,6% income growth** (2006-2023), while male-headed h/holds declined by 1,5%

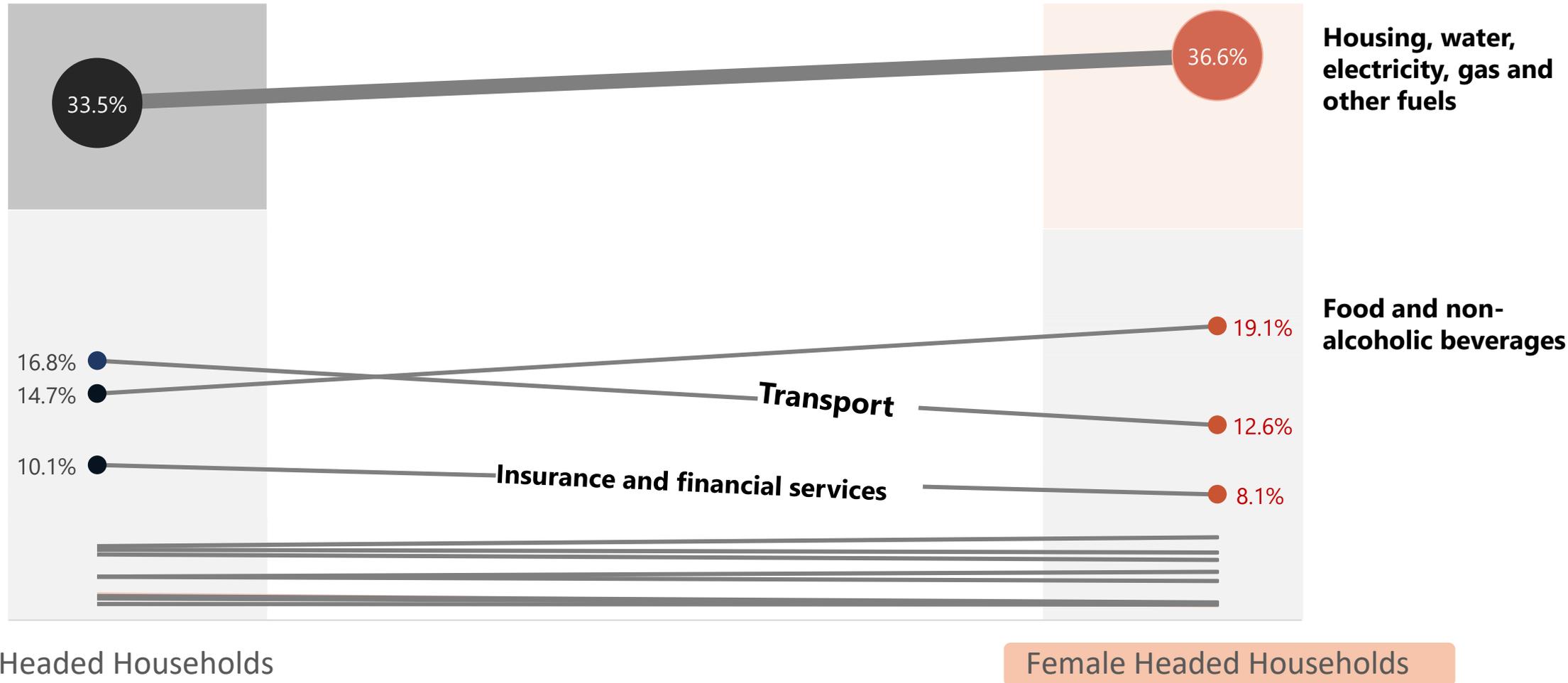
Percentage **real growth** in annual household income between 2006 and 2023 by sex of household head



Source: Source: IES 2022/23

Female-headed households spend more on housing and food items

Percentage distribution of annual household consumption expenditure by division expenditure and sex of household head, 2023

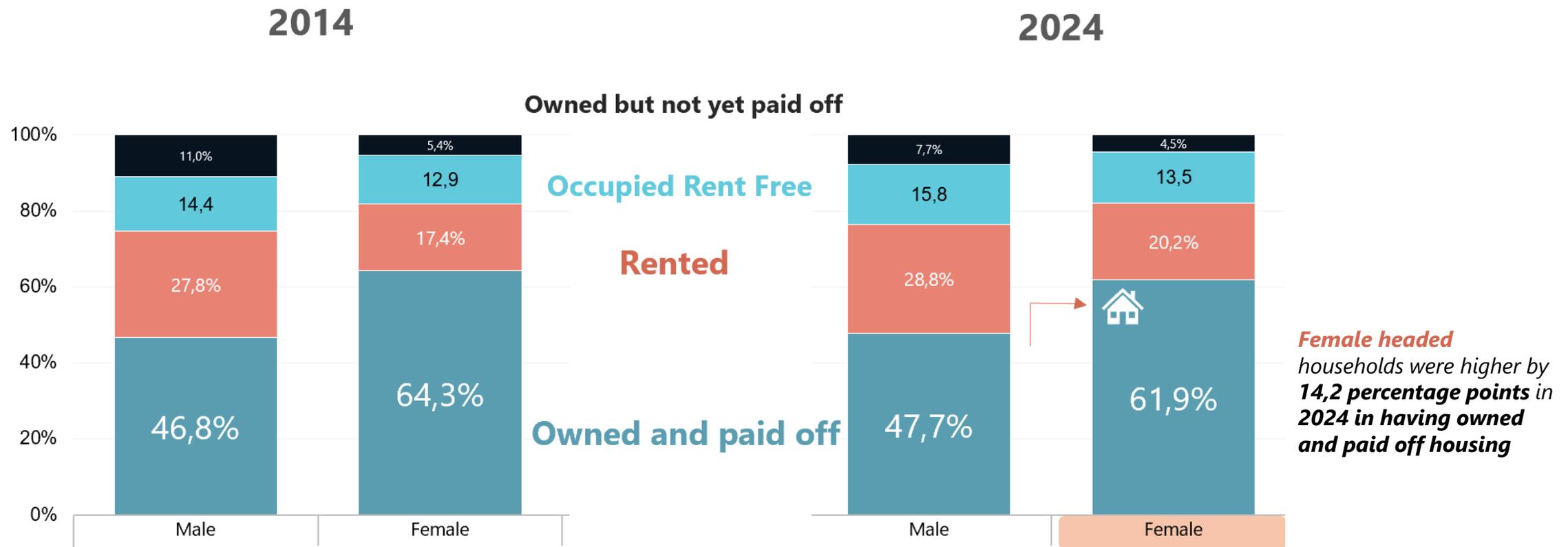


Source: Source: IES 2022/23



Female-headed households were *more likely to occupy dwellings that are owned and fully paid off* compared to their male counterparts

Percentage distribution of households by tenure status and sex of the household head, 2014 and 2024



Source: GHS 2014 and 2024

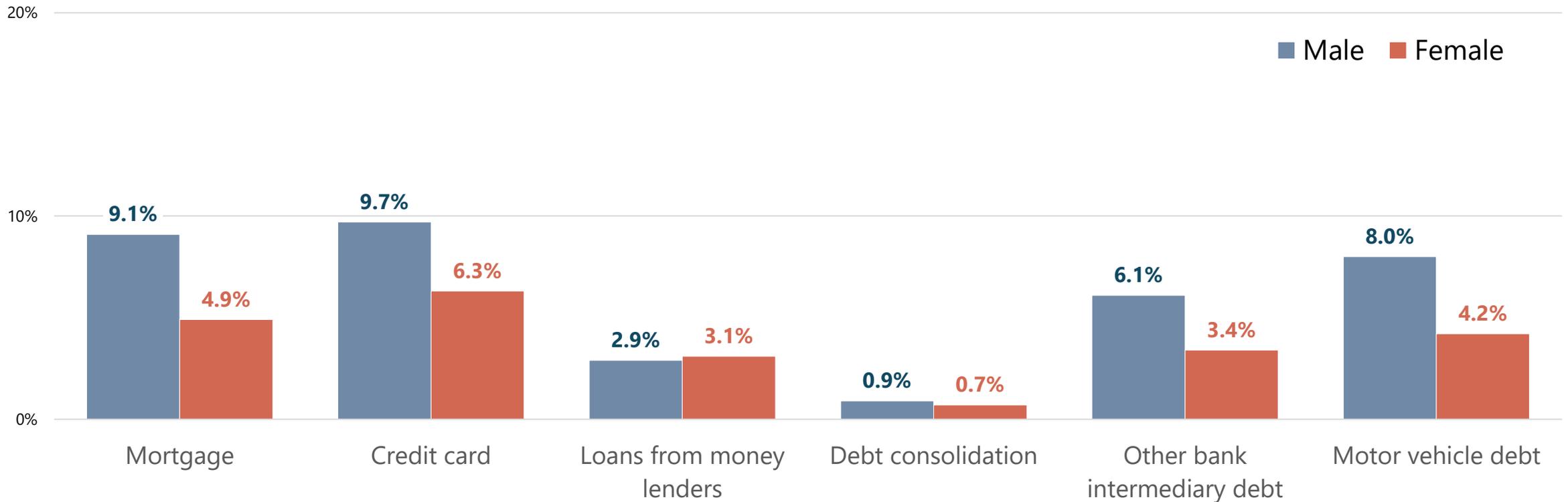


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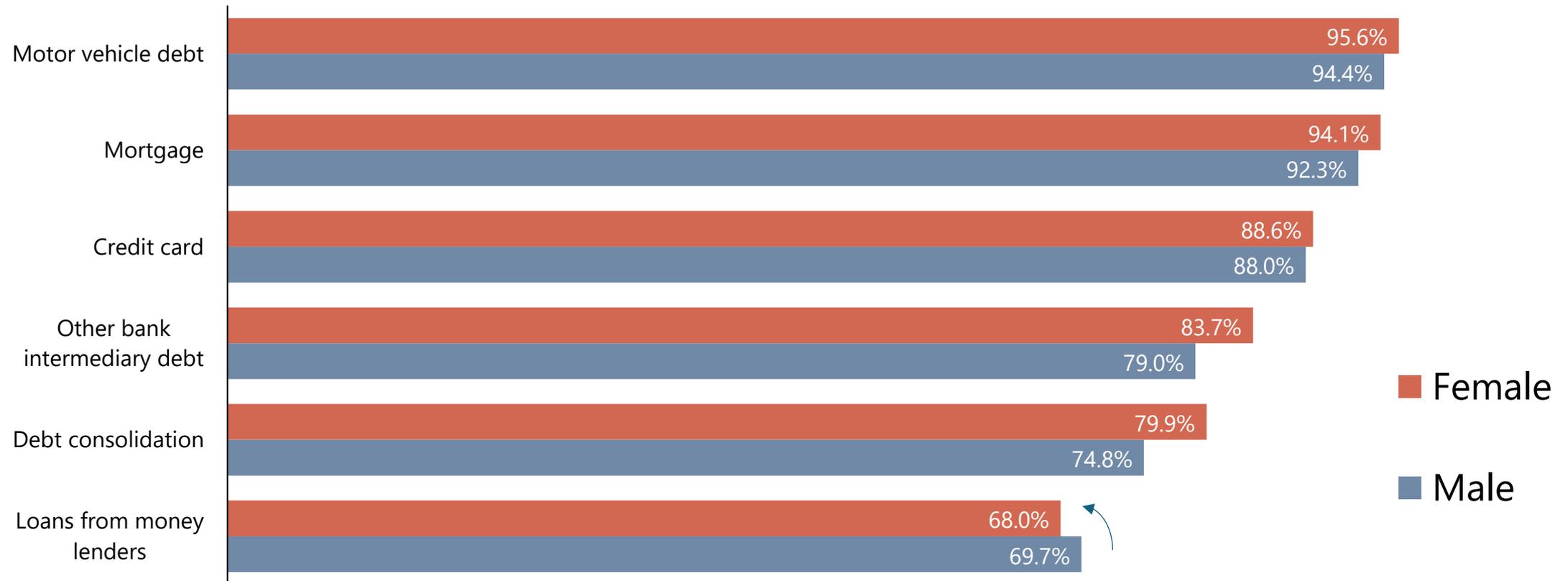
Male-headed households were *more likely to access various banking products*, compared to their female counterparts.

Percentage of households with access to various banking products by sex of the head of household, 2022/23



Female-headed households were likely to be up-to-date with debt repayments compared to male-headed households..

Percentage distribution of households up-to-date with repayments of various banking products by sex of the head of household, 2022/23



Source: Source: IES 2022/23

Poverty & Social Support



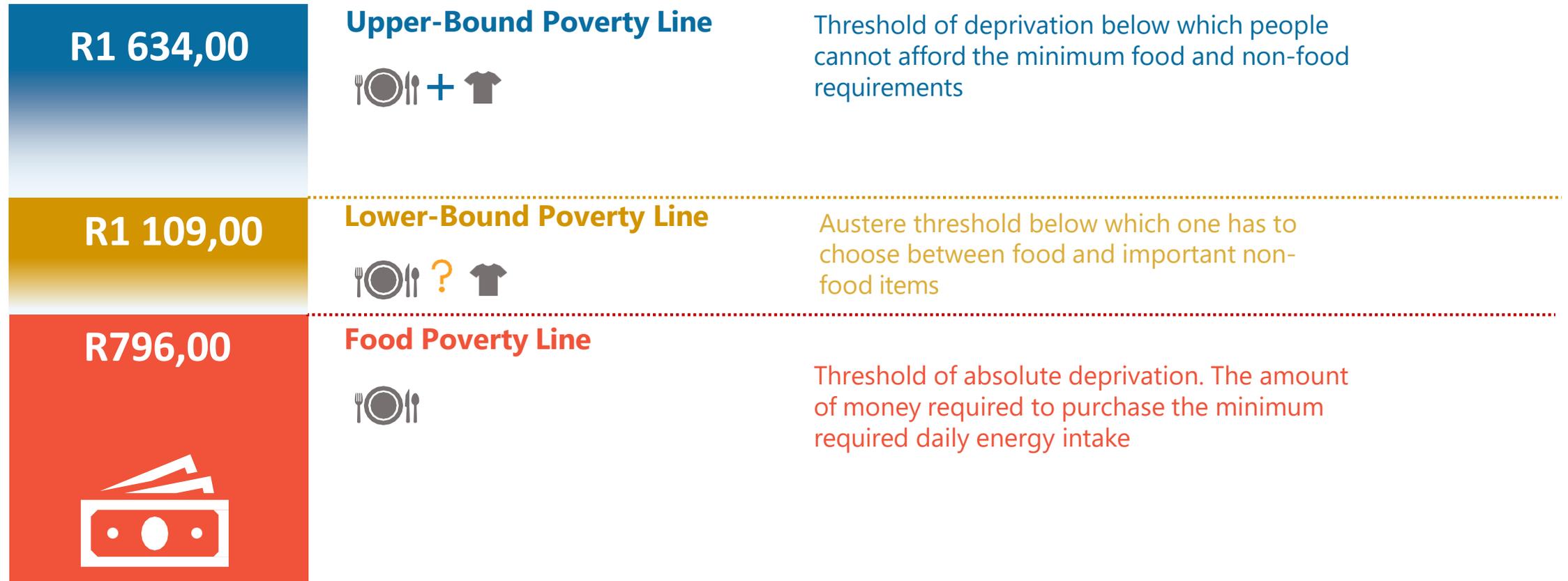
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Inflation-adjusted national poverty lines for 2024 (MAY) (per person per month in Rands)



The NPLs for 2023 are set to May 2023 prices. The LBPL and UBPL lines contain both food and non-food components of household consumption expenditure.



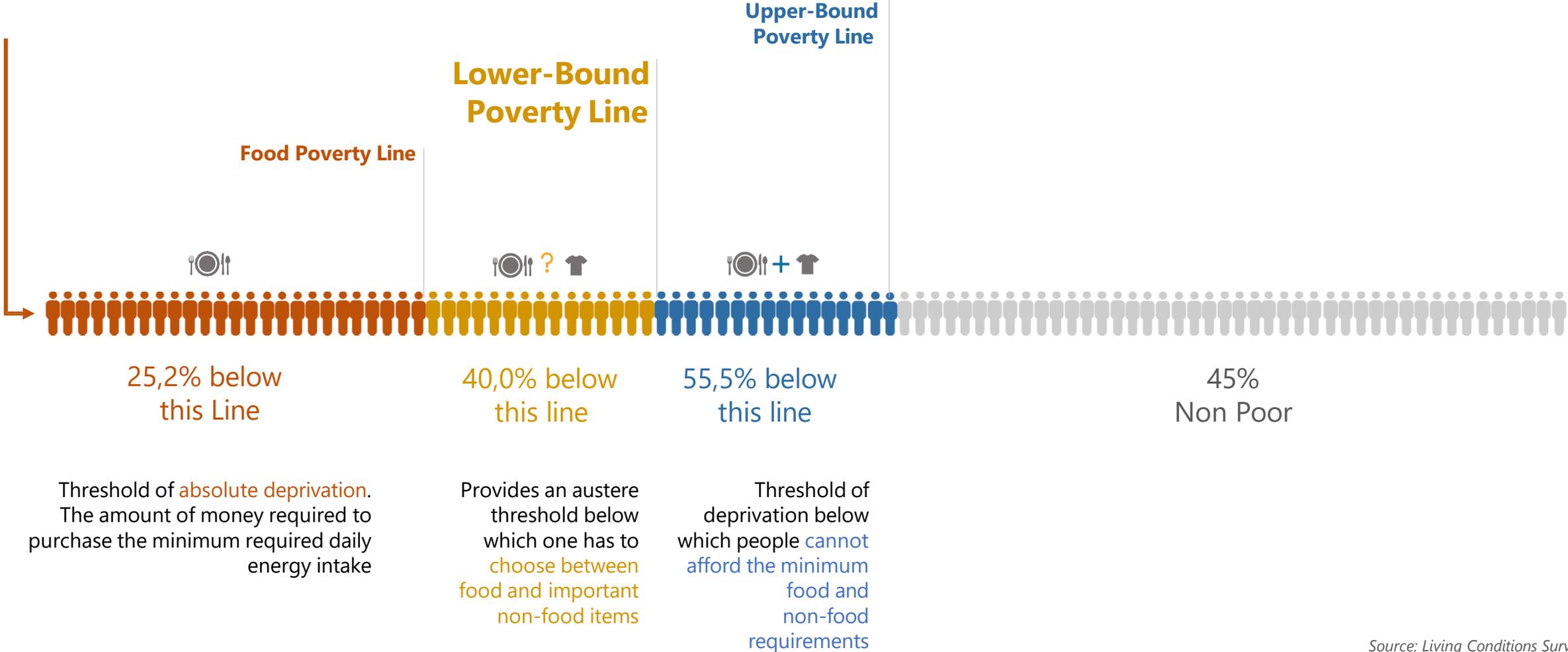
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In 2015, more than a quarter of the population were living below the food poverty line

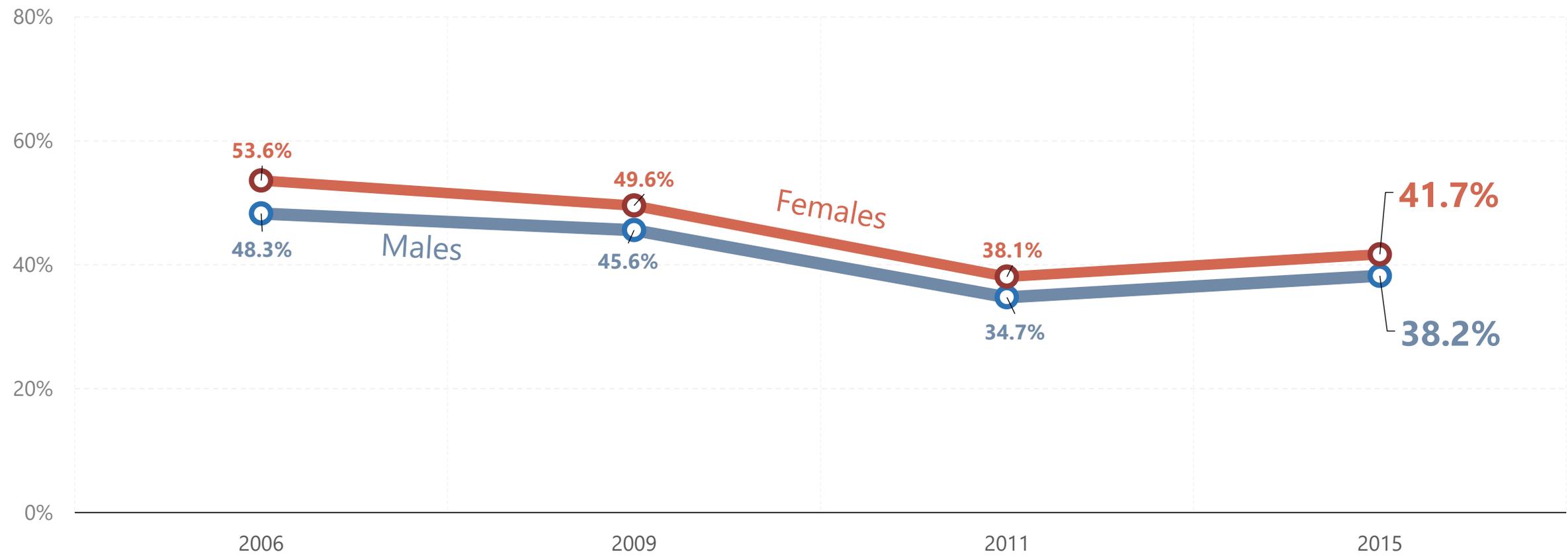
Money-metric Poverty headcounts in 2015



Source: Living Conditions Survey 2015

Females remain more disadvantaged than males consistently recording a higher headcount, gap and severity measures at each point in time; however, *the difference between the sexes is narrowing.*

Poverty headcounts by sex (LBPL)

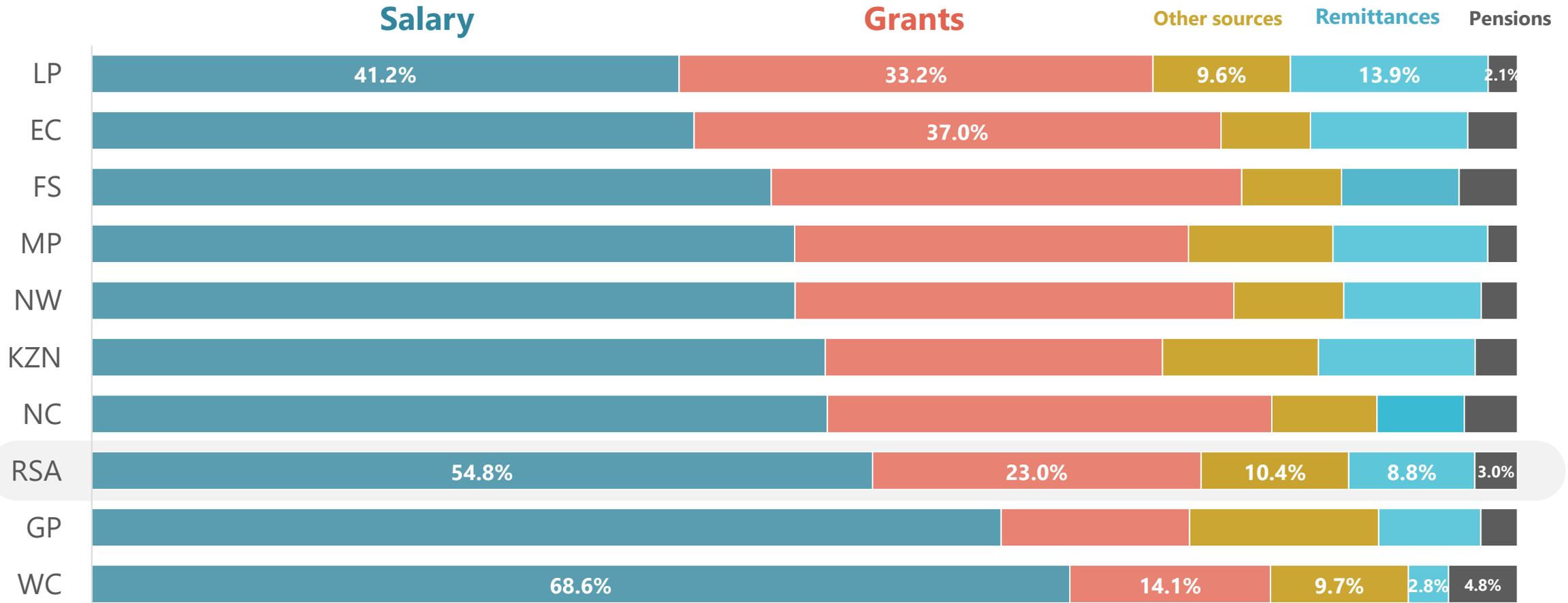


Source: Living Conditions Survey 2015

Grants are the main source of income for almost one-quarter (23,0%) of households nationally.

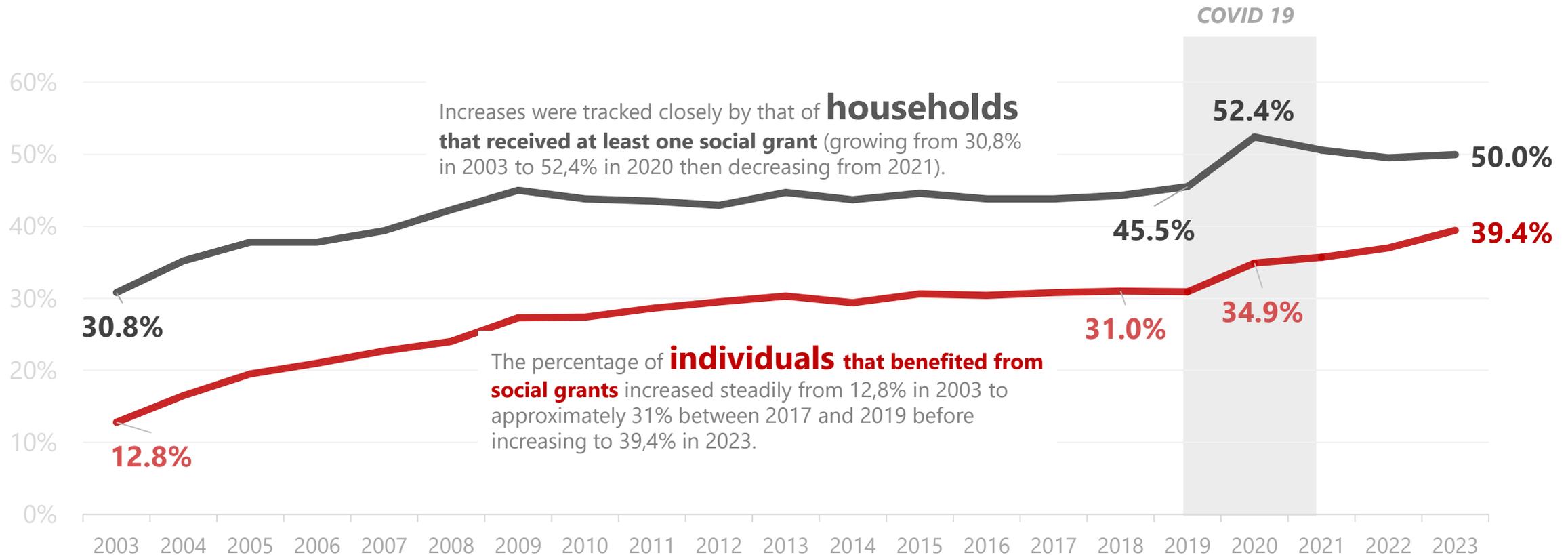
Source: General Household Survey (GHS) 2023

Percentage distribution of main sources of household income by province, 2023



An increase in the percentage of individuals who accessed social grants in 2023 was mainly due to the large uptake of COVID-19 **Social Relief of Distress grants**.

Percentage of households and individuals who have benefited from social grants, 2003–2023

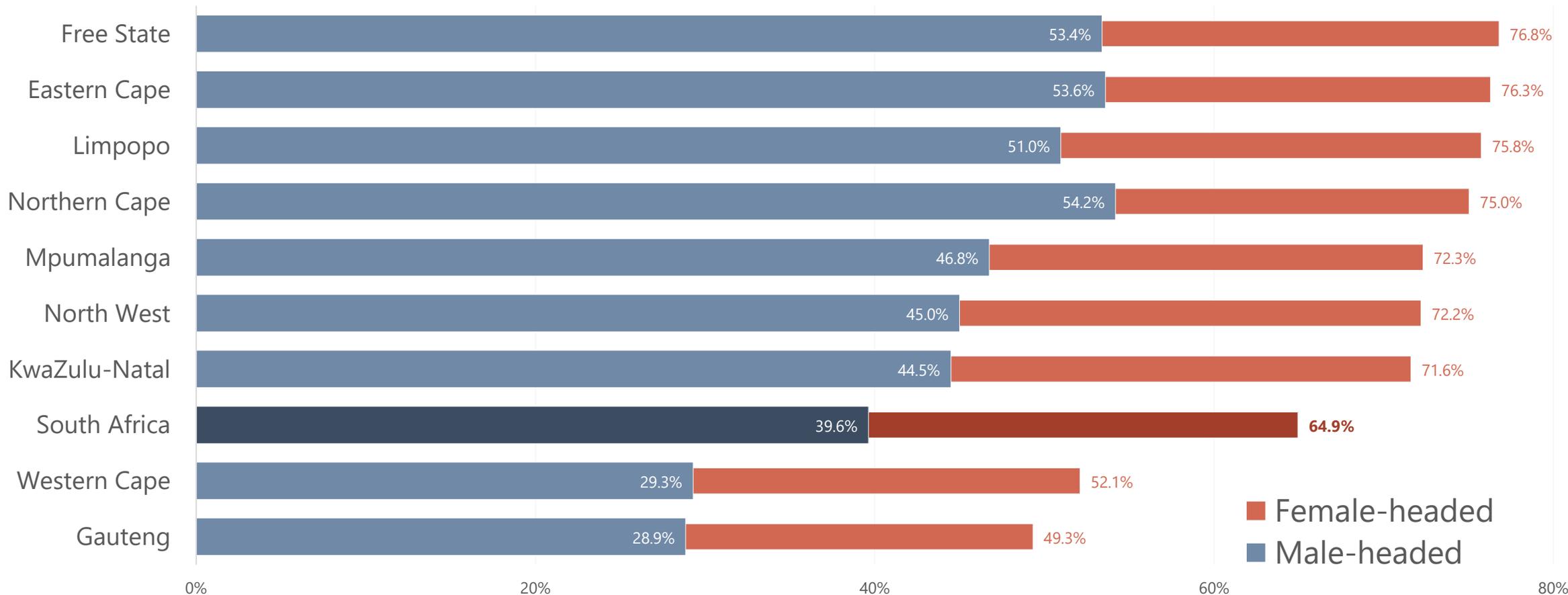


Source: General Household Survey (GHS) 2023

Female headed households are more likely to be benefiting from a social grant compared to male headed households

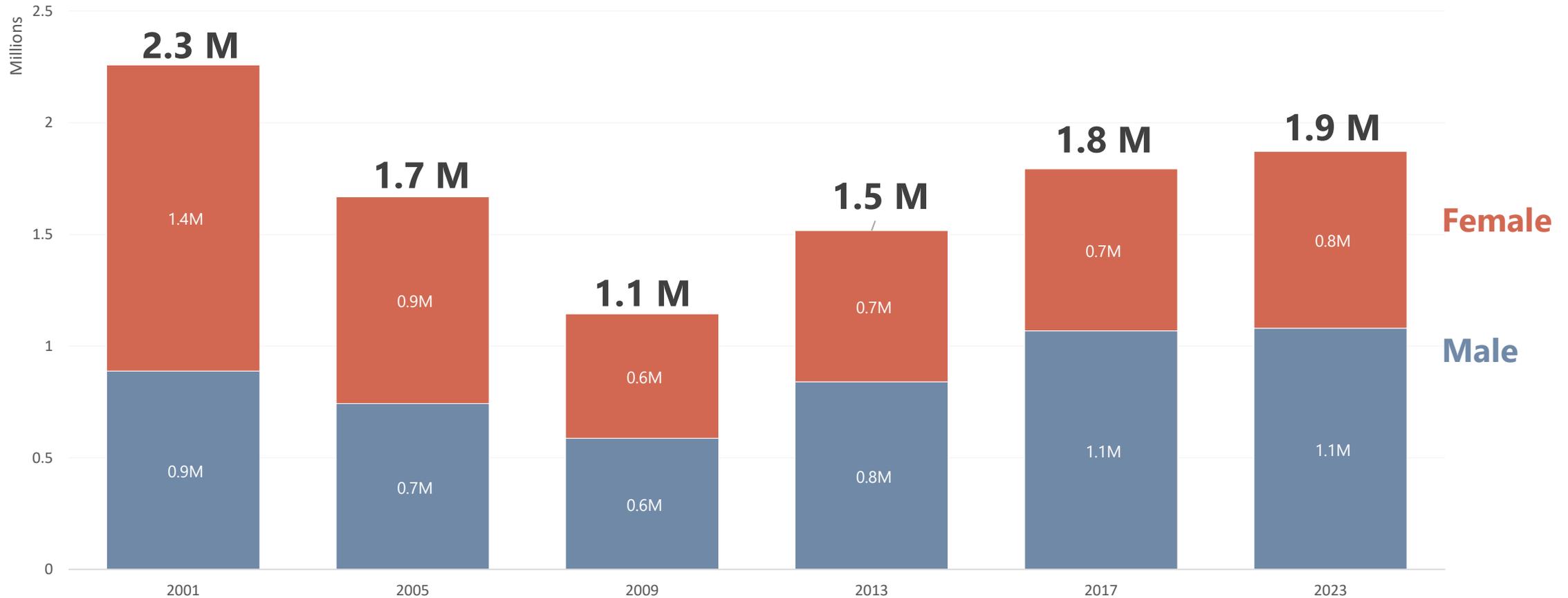
Source: General Household Survey 2024

Percentage (%) distribution of households who have benefitted from social grants by sex of the head of the household, and province 2024



Males consistently made up the majority of individuals who run informal businesses, although their share declined slightly from 59,3% in 2017 to 57,7% in 2023.

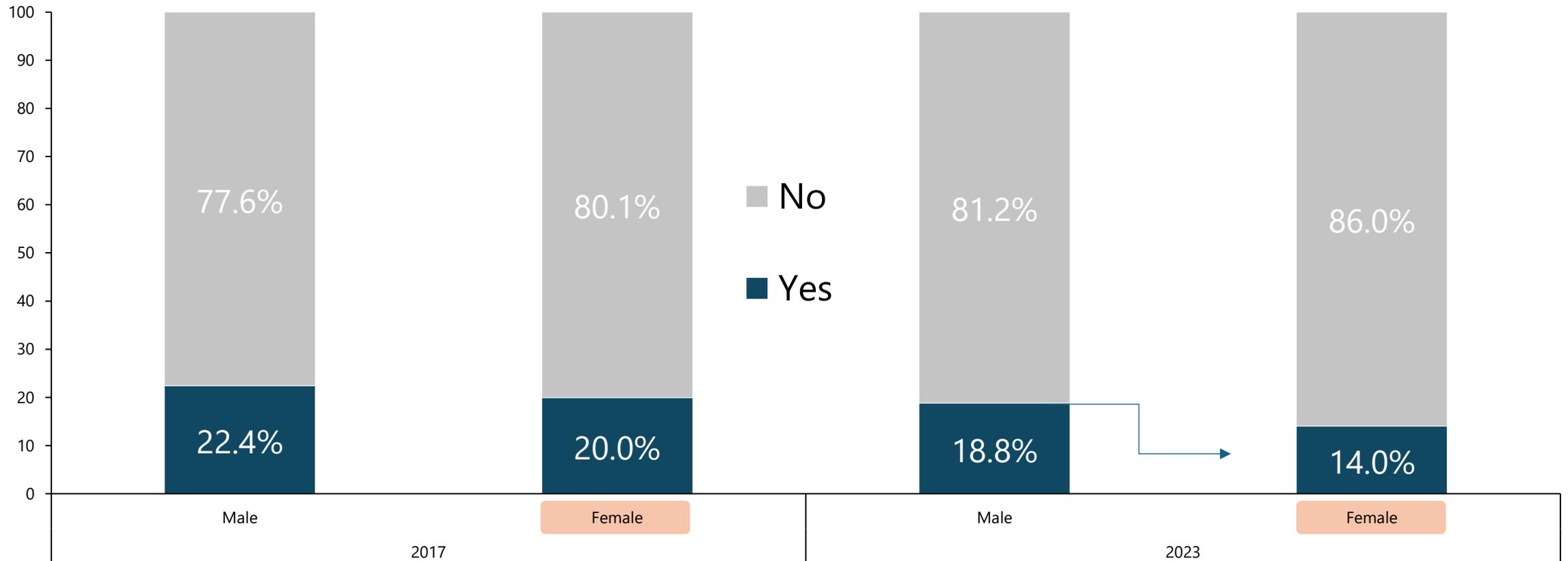
Individuals running at least one non-VAT registered business, 2001–2023 by sex



Source: Survey of Employers and the Self-Employed (SESE) 2023

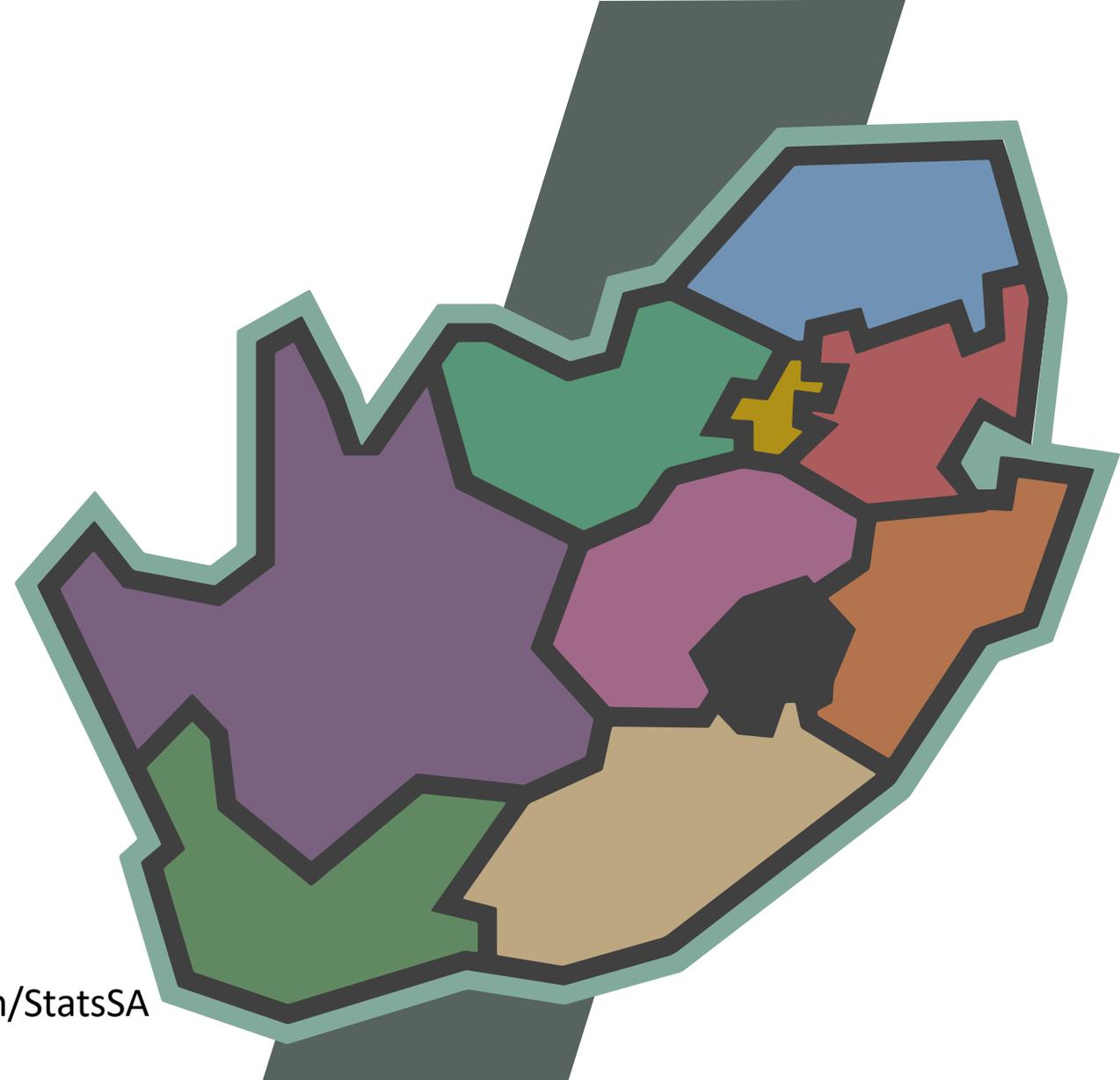
There was a decline in the percentage of business owners (informal) who borrowed money to start a business for both sexes between 2017 and 2023, however **males have higher borrowing rates than females**

Percentage distribution of **persons who borrowed money to start a business** by sex, 2017 and 2023



Source: Survey of Employers and the Self-Employed (SESE) 2023

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