



TIME SURVEY OF INFORMAL SECTOR WORKERS IN ZIMBABWE

2024

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LFCLS	Labour Force and Child Labour Survey (LFCLS)
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
VWW	Valuing Women's Work
VISET	Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation

About VISET

VISET Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation (VISET) is a union of informal economy workers with structures throughout Zimbabwe. The organization was formed and registered as a Trust in 2015 to spearhead the social and economic transformation of street vendors by championing their quest to earn livelihoods in the current harsh economic circumstances. Furthermore, the organization was formed pursuant to the need for a solidarity center for informal economy workers who continue to be victims of human rights violations. The organization has a national membership database of over 68 000 informal economy workers located in all major cities, towns and growth points in Zimbabwe. VISET envisions a society with informed and proactive Informal Economy players who are able to contribute effectively to the development of the national economy. To date, the organisation has managed, through training and capacity development initiatives, to enhance the capacity of vendors to engage solution holders on issues affecting them and participate effectively in decision making. VISET's programmatic thrust is anchored on three mainstays **(1)** taking action to defend, promote and expand the rights of street vendors, **(2)** improve the working conditions of streets vendors and **(3)** strengthen their capacities to trade profitably and grow their businesses. The membership of the organisation is made up of street traders, SMEs, Cross Boarder Traders and Small Tuck-shop owners. VISET has a strong national presence with structures in all the major cities and towns. These structures, known as Socio-Economic Champions (SOCHAMPS) are the local ambassadors for VISET, that aid information dissemination and provide VISET with information on the contextual pulse of activities and processes taking place in project implementation areas. Currently the organisation is working on the following programmatic pillars:

- Capacity Development for Entrepreneurship in the Informal Economy
- Gender, People with Disability, Youth and the Informal Economy.
- Policy Advocacy, Research, Documentation and Knowledge Generation
- Economic Justice and climate proofing the informal sector.
- Citizen Agency, Democracy and Governance in the Informal Economy

These programming pillars are all anchored on the VISET motto of ***“promoting the participation of the informal sector actors in economic, policy and legislative processes.”***

1. Executive Summary

This report provides findings from research carried out by VISET in November-December 2023, which was carried out in 10 locations across Zimbabwe. This study is part of the work VISET is doing on women in the informal sector and is supported by donor. The primary aim of the research was to determine the amount of time women in the informal sector use to carry out unpaid care work at the expense of other income generating activities in the informal economy.

The research involved a mix of questionnaires and surveys across a sample of 179 informal sector workers. This research report provides an overview of the research, its findings and the issues arising from the study. In particular, it contributes to the understanding of time-use patterns of women in the informal sector and in particular, the amount of time women spent doing unpaid care work.

1.1 Key Findings

Informal sector workers spend long hours daily carrying out unpaid care work duties outside their normal vending duties. The combination of unpaid care work and vendors normal daily duties increases the burden especially on women who do most of the unpaid care work in the household. To deal with this problem, government should come up with policies and programs that recognize and value unpaid care work, invest in public services like healthcare, childcare, and education and invest in public infrastructure to reduce the burden of unpaid care work on women.

2. Abstract

This research paper is an output of Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Empowerment's (VISET) time use survey for women in the informal sector in Zimbabwe. It is part of the organisation's ongoing work on Valuing Women's Work (VWW) and Transformative Leadership in the informal economy. The VWW project seeks to build the capacities of women in the informal economy so that they can take up leadership roles in the sector and contribute to the formalisation of the informal economy. It also aims to identify program and policy solutions to promote women's economic empowerment by acknowledging, reducing, and redistributing women's unpaid care work. The paper presents findings of time use data and unpaid care work for women working in the informal sector in Harare. It identifies gaps and

provides recommendations for policy makers and development actors to support women in the informal sector. More specifically, this paper provides policy advice on how relevant actors can recognise unpaid care work undertaken by women in the informal economy by measuring and valuing it and take deliberate actions to redistribute unpaid care tasks equally between men and women.

2.1 Introduction and Background

Worldwide, estimates show that about 61% of the global workforce are informally employed (ILO,2018). Just like in many other developing countries, a large share of the population depends, for its livelihood, on the informal sector. The informal sector plays a significant role in Zimbabwe's economy, employing a large portion of the population and contributing to economic growth. In recent times, policy makers and development partners have put more focus on women's economic empowerment especially on the backdrop of overwhelming evidence on the direct relationship between women's labour force participation and sustainable and inclusive growth. According to research by Ferrant and Kolev (2016), eliminating discriminatory social institutions could add an equivalent of 16 percent of Global GDP. Research has shown that women in poor countries tend to get the worst outcomes on economic participation because time spent in unpaid care work decreases as the country's GDP increases and the gender gap will remain the same (OECD, 2019).

They often face multiple burdens, including caring for children, the elderly, and the sick, as well as performing household chores. The undervaluation and unequal distribution of care work perpetuate gender disparities, limiting women's economic opportunities and their ability to participate fully in public life. While both women and men play productive roles in the informal sector, women often face multiple burdens, including caring for children, the elderly, and the sick, as well as performing numerous household chores. These responsibilities are crucial for the functioning of societies, but they are often undervalued and underappreciated, leading to gender inequalities and hindering women's economic empowerment.

2.2 Overview women’s participation in the labour force in Zimbabwe in the informal sector in Zimbabwe

Statistics show that women continue to lag behind in accessing economic empowerment opportunities including getting job opportunities as compared to their male counterparts. According to the 2019 LFCLS, although women’s share in the labour force has increased over the years, the gap between the percentage of women in paid employment and that of men remains wide. Further, data shows that shows 57.4 percent of women were less likely to be in paid employment than men at 64.8 percent while women were more likely to be engaged as own account workers than men. The 2022 LFCLS results show that 44 percent males were employed as compared to 27.4 percent females. Of these, 50.1 percent males were employees while 5.8 percent were employers. Data shows that more women are employed in low quality jobs especially in the informal sector as compared men. At least 5.2 million people work in the informal economy in Zimbabwe, with women constituting about 65 percent of this population (ILO, 2021). According to Zimstats, segregation of women and men in different occupations is usually associated with gender roles or stereotypes. The choices and opportunities available to women and men in terms of their education and training also results in gender based occupational segregation.

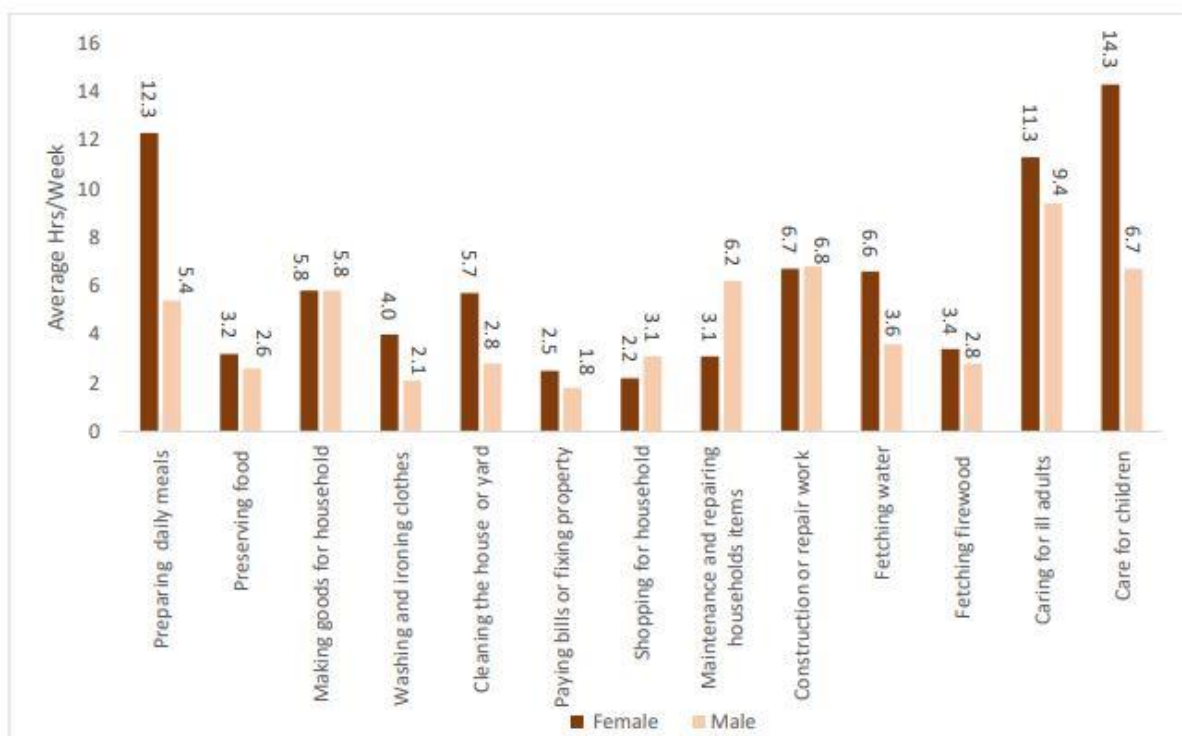


Figure 1: Average Time Spend in Unpaid Activities (in hours per week) in Own Household by Women and Men, 2019 LFCLS

According to LFCLS (2019), women usually spend less time in economic activities than males do because of their gender roles in society. The survey shows that about 53 percent women and 47 percent men worked for less than 20 hours in the reference week. Although there has been an increase in women's participation in the labour force, they continue to bear the majority of responsibilities at home and perform most unpaid work. Women spend an average of 14 hours per week in unpaid caring for children under five years in own household compared to about 7 hours spend by men. Women spend an average of 12 hours per week preparing meals. This is more than twice the number of hours men spent on the same activity.

3. Methodology

3.1 Study setting

This study was conducted in 10 different locations, Binga, Bulawayo, Beitbridge, Chinhoyi, Chipinge, Chiwundura, Goromonzi, Gweru, Harare, and Masvingo. The majority of participants were drawn from Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe with an estimated population of 1.6 million people. Just like Harare, the majority of the population in the other locations is unemployed after most industries collapsed due to the economic meltdown over the last two decades. As a result of lack of employment opportunities, many people in these locations eke a living from the informal sector mainly through selling groceries, fruits and vegetables, second hand clothes, airtime, and so on. Workers in the informal sector in these areas face numerous challenges which include lack of vending space, unavailability of WASH services, absence of social security, vulnerability to arbitrary arrests and confiscation of wares among many other problems. The majority of these informal sector workers are women who work long hours daily to put food on the table.

3.2 Data collection methods and sampling strategy

A total of 200 questionnaires were administered and 179 responses were received. The questionnaires were administered online using Kobo toolbox. Fifteen One on One interviews were conducted across the 10 vending sites to provide in-depth personal reflections on how individual vendors allocate their time on a daily basis outside their normal vending duties. They were selected from fruit and vegetable, second hand clothes and airtime vending sectors. Two types of purposive sampling were done to identify study participants; snow balling or chain sampling and homogeneous sampling. The initial study participants helped identify the next interviewees and only married vendors were selected. The participants were recruited into the study until the further enrolling of new participants were not adding any new information. The later sampling method was chosen to ensure simplification of the analysis. A structured qualitative research interview guide was developed by the research team, with several changes done to ensure the key themes to be explored in the study were addressed and follow up probes were also included.

3.3 Methodological Overview

LOGISTICS	DETAILS
Methodology	Questionnaires and face to face interviews were conducted among informal sector workers in 10 districts in Zimbabwe.
Definition of Informal Traders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 years or older • Traders doing jobs that lack the basic social or legal protections.
Sample size	200 vendors drawn from the VISET membership across 10 districts.
Sample frame	Population stratified by location
Vendor Qualification	Two types of purposive sampling were done to identify study participants; snow balling or chain sampling and homogeneous sampling. and only married vendors were selected.
Questionnaire Length	25 questions
Fieldwork	November – December 2024
Implementation	The study was funded by VISET and implemented by the VISET programs team.

4. Demography

Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Empowerment conducted a time survey to ascertain how men and women in the informal sector allocate their time. The study was conducted in 10 districts, Binga, Bulawayo, Beitbridge, Chipinge, Chiwundura, Chitungwiza, Chinhoyi, Goromonzi, Harare and Masvingo

4.1 Gender distribution

VISET conducted a time-use survey targeting vendors in Harare. A total of 200 questionnaires were administered and 179 responses were received. Of these, 60.89 percent of the responses were from females while 39.11 respondents were males. This gender distribution suggests that there is a higher representation of females among informal sector workers in Zimbabwe compared to males.

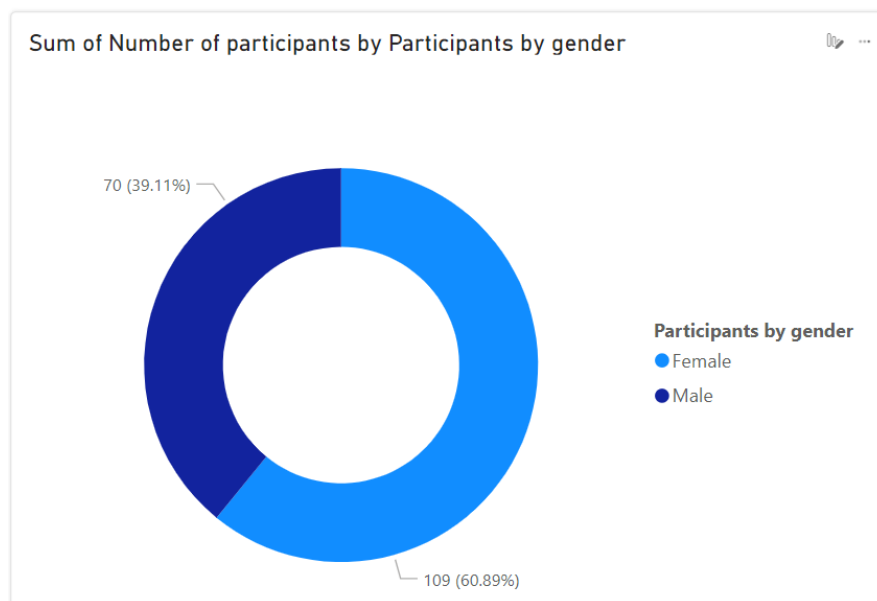


Figure 2: Respondents by gender

4.2 Participants by Age

The largest group of respondents fell within the 38-44 age group followed closely by the 31-37 age range. This distribution of respondents provides insight into the age demographics of informal sector workers in Zimbabwe

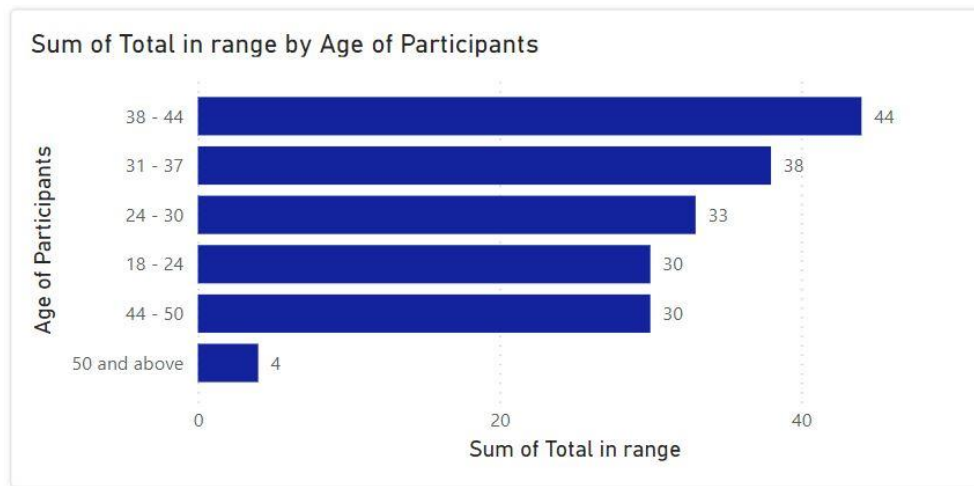


Figure 3: Respondents by age

4.3 Participants by Marital Status

Data from the survey shows that of the 179 participants, 84 were married, representing 46.9 percent of respondents. This data shows that the majority of participants were married or lived with partners followed by informal traders who were single (35.75 percent) and those divorced or separated (15.64 percent).

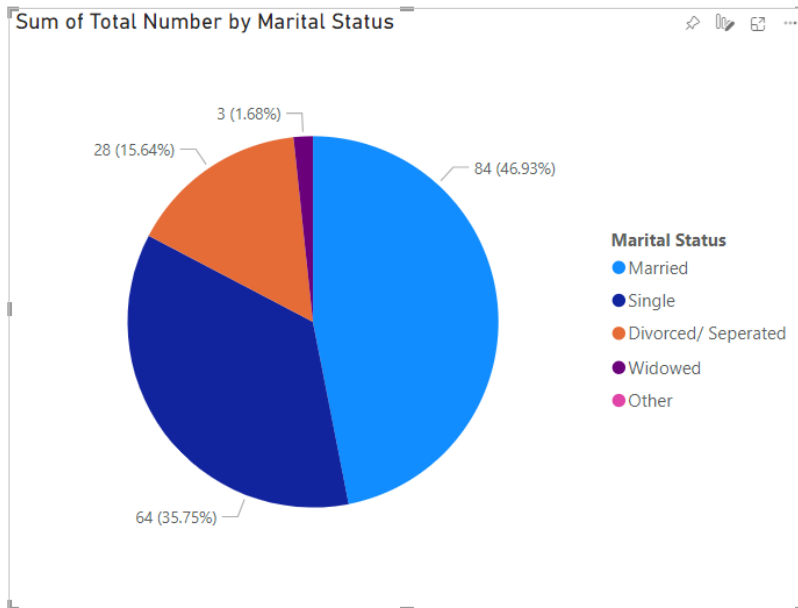


Figure 4: Respondents by Marital Status

4.4 Participants by Location

The majority of respondents were drawn form Harare (15.64 percent), followed by Bulawayo and Masvingo (20 percent each) respectively. A total of 10 locations were chosen for the study. This data represents the population dynamics of the chosen study areas.

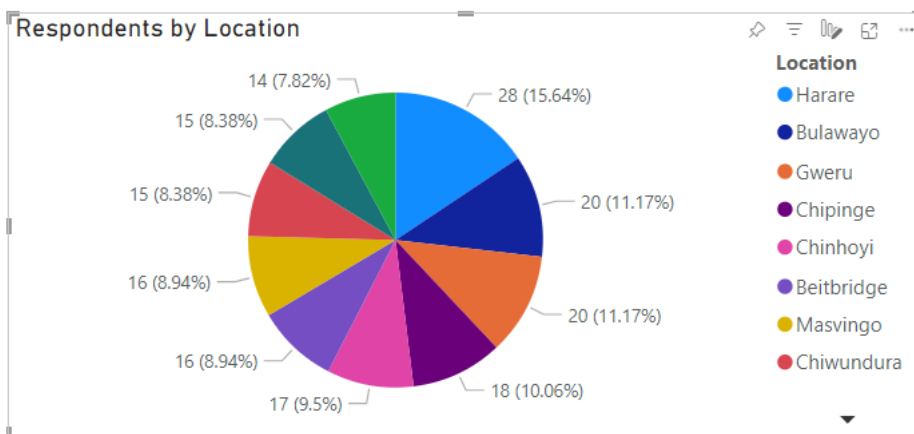


Figure 5: Respondents by Location

4.5 Participants by Level of Education

Survey data revealed that 86 participants out of the population of 179 had either ordinary level or advanced level qualification (the highest), while participants with bachelor's degrees were 57 followed by those with diplomas (21). 8 of the respondents had master's degrees. This data suggests high levels of education among informal sector workers in the surveyed areas.

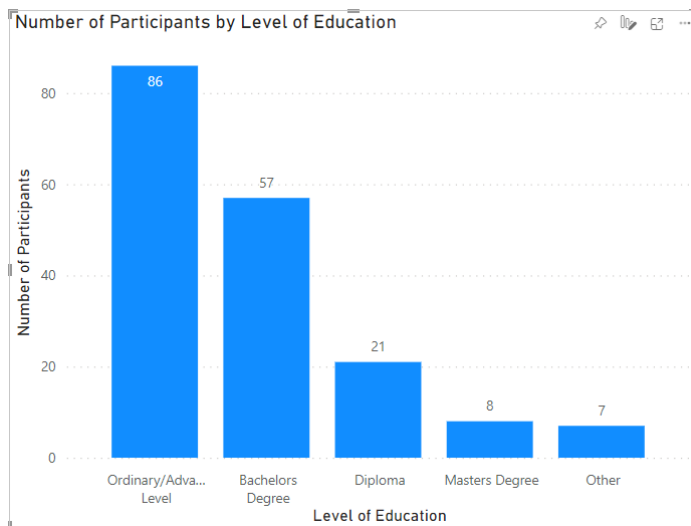


Figure 6: Respondents by Level of Education

4.6 Respondents by Sector

The majority of respondents were vendors in the fruits and vegetables sector (26.26 percent), followed by those in the airtime retail and mobile phone accessories (22.35 percent) and those selling groceries representing 21.23 percent of the survey population.

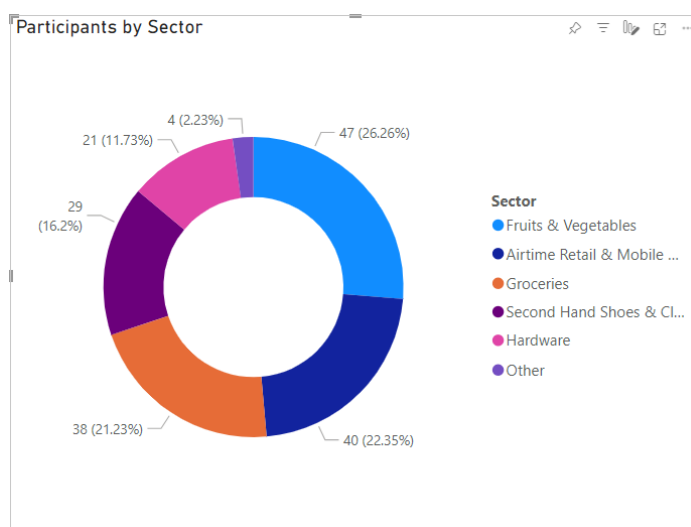


Figure 7: Respondents by Sector

4.7 Sources of Income

Most respondents indicated that outside vending, they also get financial support from family and friends followed by income from personal investments and allowances from their partners. This data suggests that informal sectors workers rely on a mix of income to augment their earnings from vending.

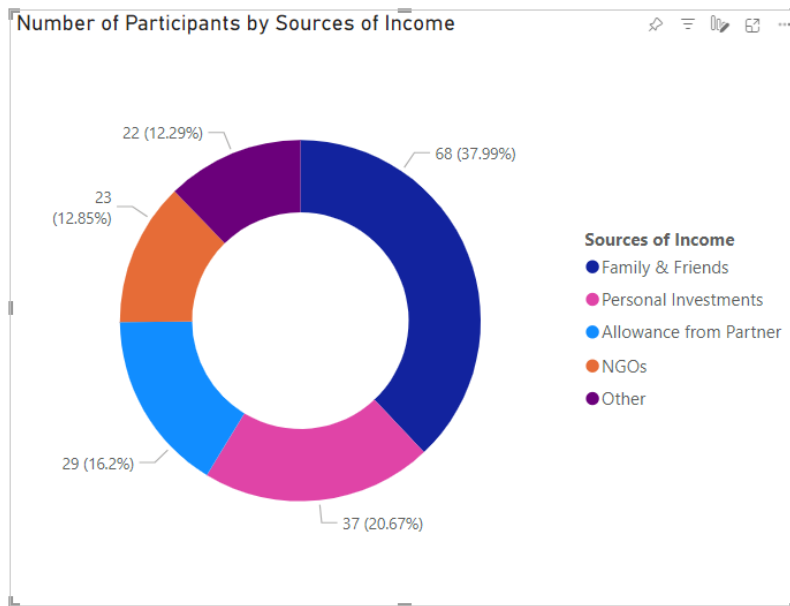


Figure 8: Respondents by Sources of Income

5. Overview of Unpaid Care Work in the Informal Sector

5.1 Proportion of informal traders with unpaid care work responsibilities

Research data shows that 115 respondents, representing 55.6 percent of informal traders, perform unpaid care work. This suggests that a significant proportion of informal sector employees have to balance between paid informal sector work and household unpaid care work on a daily basis. The data brings to the fore the daily realities of informal traders in terms of work-life balance.

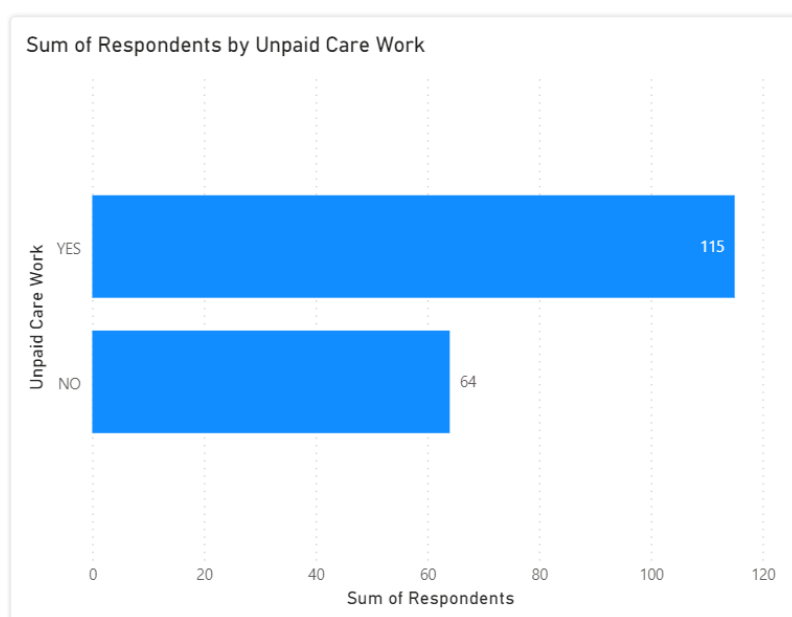


Figure 9: Proportion of informal traders with unpaid care responsibilities

5.2 Distribution of unpaid care responsibilities

Vendors spend the majority of their time (45.25 percent) outside their vending duties cooking and cleaning at home. They spent significant time (19.55 percent) preparing children for school, taking them to and from school and assisting them with homework. Informal traders also spent a lot of time caring for children (17.88 percent) and others including the sick and the elderly at home, followed by laundry duties which take up about 17.32 percent of their time.

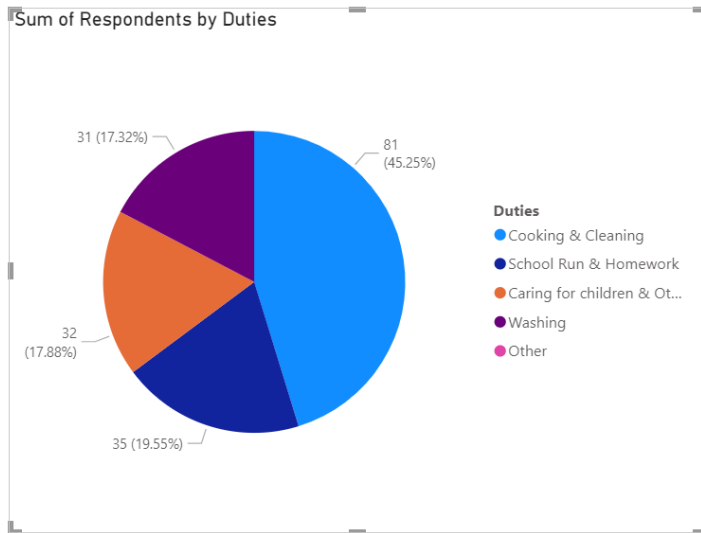


Figure 10: Distribution of unpaid care duties

5.3 Starting time per day

The data below shows that many informal traders begin their daily as early as 4am daily so as to accommodate a mix of unpaid care responsibilities and their normal vending duties. Some traders especially in the fruits and vegetables sector wake up early to go to the market to buy their stock at wholesale prices and then go back home to do various unpaid care duties such as preparing children for school and cooking and cleaning and so on. Airtime vendors said they wake up early to go and sell airtime by the busy street intersections during peak time in the morning which is usually 6-9 am. Thus, vendors generally start their day very early which also means longer working hours.

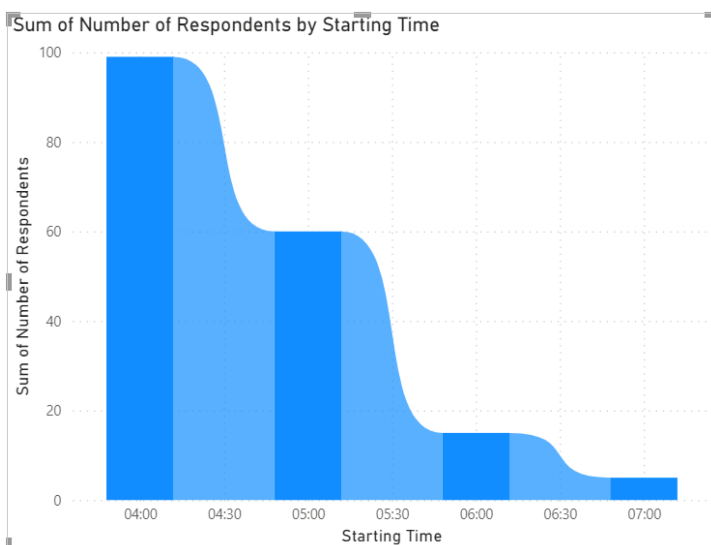


Figure 11: Vendors daily starting times

5.4 Finishing time per day

The graph below illustrates that although vendors start their day early as depicted above, they also finish work late. The majority of vendors (65) finish work after 8pm followed by those who shuts down operations at 9pm and 10pm respectively. This data shows that informal traders spend long hours at work partly due to a mix of work they carry out during the day which includes unpaid care work.

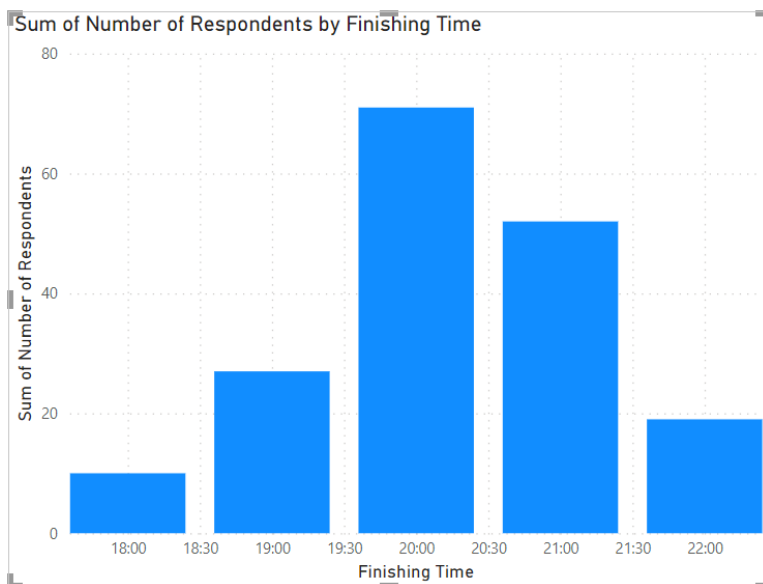


Figure 12: Vendors daily finishing times

5.5 Satisfaction with unpaid care work

Many Informal traders (39 percent) feel that the numerous unpaid care tasks that they perform are not rewarding while a significant number feels the unpaid care work they do is overwhelming. Other vendors think unpaid care work is also tiring which makes their work routine difficult. Considering that vendors perform their caring before and after spending long hours of vending, the combination of these work tasks takes a significant toll on their wellbeing.

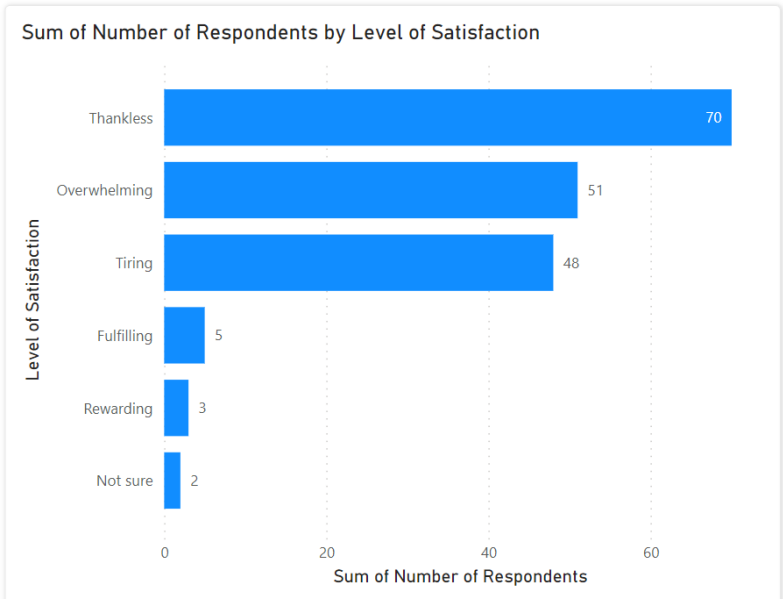


Figure 13: Level of satisfaction with unpaid care work

5.6 Rewarding unpaid care work

An overwhelming majority (144 out of 179) of informal traders believe that they should be paid for unpaid care work. They feel that it is a lot of work that takes away a significant portion of their time daily and hence should be rewarded. Only a small number of informal traders (30) do not agree that vendors should be rewarded for the unpaid care duties they perform at home while a few others said they were not sure if unpaid care should be rewarded or not.

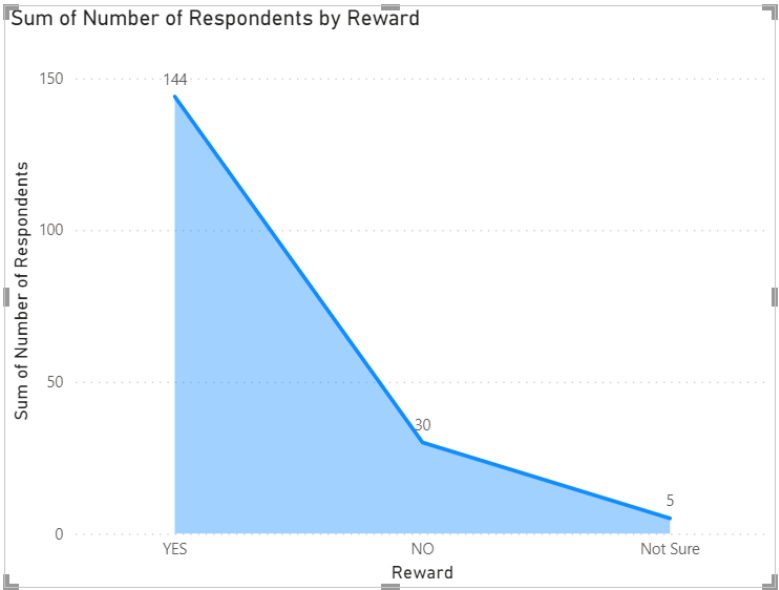


Figure 14: Rewarding unpaid care work

5.7 Time allocation during weekends

Respondents spend more time doing their vending duties during weekends and have less time for other activities. They spend a considerable amount of time attending church but spend more time combined doing household duties at home such as washing clothes, cooking and cleaning and caring for children. They have very little time on leisure and entertainment activities, indicating the absence of work life balance.

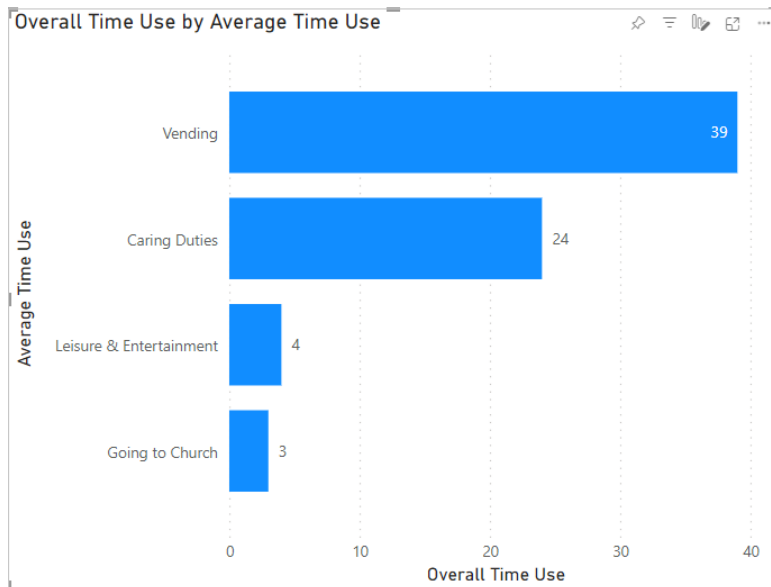


Figure 15: Time allocation during weekends

5.8 Type of change required

The majority of informal traders think that there is need for government policies that recognise unpaid care work and put in place mechanisms to reward them. These policies could also help vendors to cope with the heavy load that comes with balancing work and household responsibilities. An equal number also believes that there is need for men and women to share unpaid care responsibilities at home to lessen the burden especially on women. Others feel that the society in general should change its attitudes on unpaid care work and start realising that it is work too and should be rewarded.

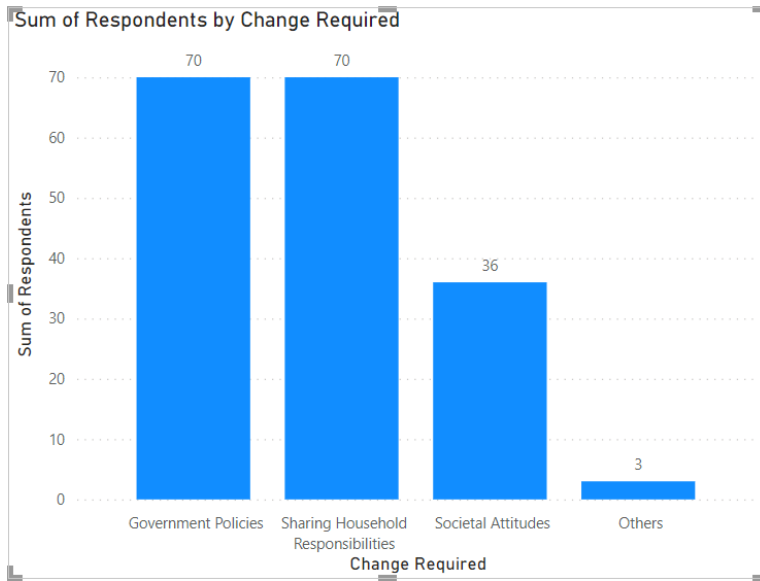


Figure 16: Type of change required

5.9 Responsible duty bearers

Vendors (77) expect the government to do more to assist them to cope with the challenges associated with working in the informal sector. About 67 respondents feel that local councils have a role to play to help informal sector workers to navigate the business environment while 23 others expect NGOs to play a role in assisting workers in the informal economy. There is considerably less expectation from the private sector and churches, but a minority feel that they too should be able to assist informal sector workers.

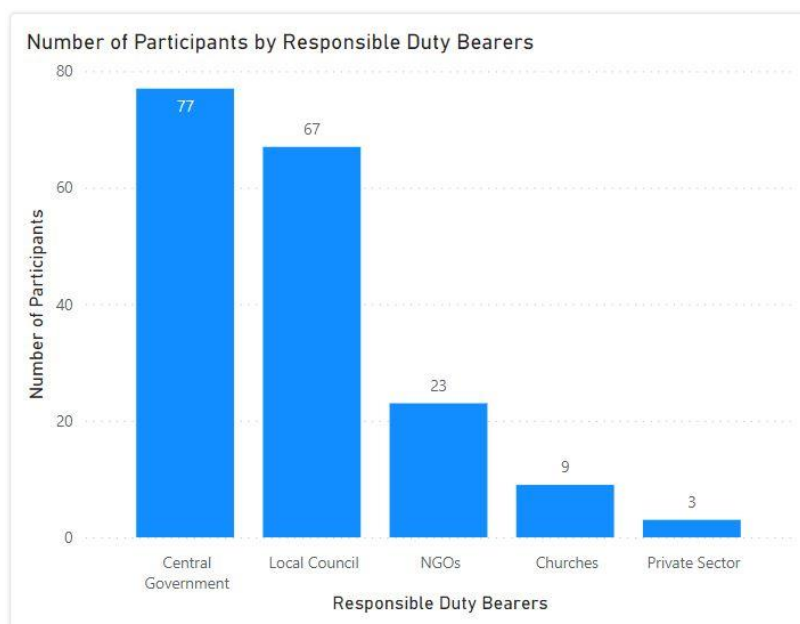


Figure 17: Responsible duty bearers

5.10 Type of Assistance Required

Most informal traders place provisions of loans and grants (45.25 percent) as the most important assistance they require to remain sustainable, followed by the provision of vending spaces (27.93 percent) and social security (19.55 percent). This data suggests that the informal sector faces significant funding gaps and lack of viable operating spaces. Although many informal traders work for several hours daily contributing to economic growth, they do not have access to social security.

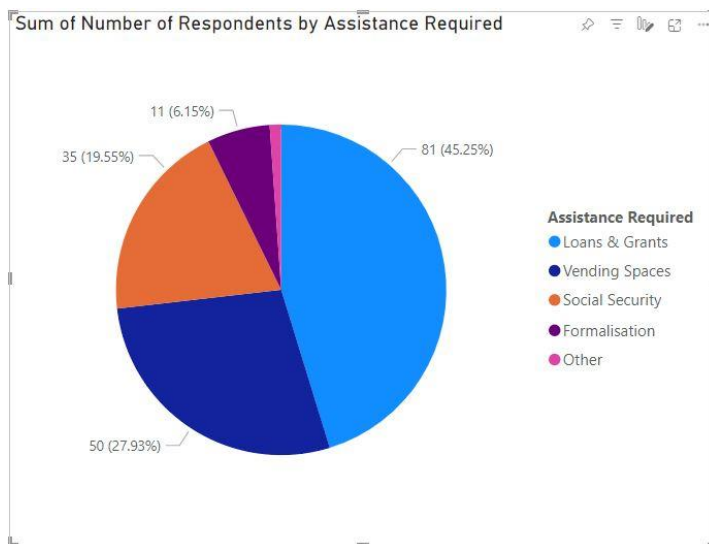


Figure 18: Type of assistance required

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study found that although informal work is not highly rewarding, informal traders also spend large proportions of their time doing household work which is not paid for. This unpaid care work pushes informal traders to work very long hours daily so that they are able to balance their household responsibilities and their paid informal work. The study revealed that the majority of informal traders are women who in turn shoulder the bulk of household duties which includes but not limited to cooking and cleaning, laundry, caring for children, the sick and the elderly and doing school runs among other duties. Even during weekends, women carry out all these laborious duties in addition to vending and have little time for recreational activities. These women find these household duties back breaking and tiring but are thankless duties that are either go unnoticed and underappreciated. To alleviate this, informal traders think a number of things have to change. They think that government should step up and help with conducive and empowering policies and programs that recognise and reward unpaid care work. They also expect local authorities to play a role in making the operating environment more friendly and accommodative to their needs. Informal sector workers also look up to NGOs, the private sector and churches to help them with services, resources and opportunities to thrive. In addition to the multi-sectoral approach to ease the burden on women in the informal sector, this study revealed that societal attitudes towards unpaid care work and the traditional patriarchal system exacerbate the burden of unpaid care work especially on women.

To address the unpaid care work challenge in the informal sector;

The government should:

- Develop policies and programs that recognise the importance of unpaid care work and adopt strategies to deal with the structural problems that perpetuate them.
- Implement policies that recognize and value unpaid care work, such as providing social protection measures for informal sector workers.
- Invest in public services like healthcare, childcare, and education to reduce the burden of care work on women.
- Provide support for infrastructure development to ease the workload of caregivers, such as access to clean water and energy sources.
- Amend labour legislation so that it reflects the problem of unpaid care work and spell out the necessary corrective measures.

NGOs and Churches should:

- Design programs and projects that empower women and educate communities about unpaid care work and provide solutions on how to lessen burden.
- Raise awareness about the importance of unpaid care work and its impact on individuals especially women and society.
- Provide training and capacity-building programs for women to improve their skills and knowledge.
- Advocate for policies that promote gender equality and support vulnerable groups, especially women.
- Offer support services for women in the informal sector.

Private Sector should:

- Partner with NGOs, churches, and government agencies to develop programs that address the challenges faced by women in the informal sector.