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# Women are doing more unpaid domestic & care work than the men think they are

Findings from the latest Ipsos & UWS study on the behaviours and attitudes towards household and domestic caring responsibilities in Singapore

**Singapore, 6 May 2021** – A high labour force participation of women, and more women among corporate leadership in Singapore indicate that attitudes towards gender equality in Singapore have gained steps in a positive direction. But household and caring responsibilities still tend to sit more on the shoulders of Singaporean women.

This is among the findings from the latest *Ipsos* study on the behaviours and attitudes towards household and domestic caring responsibilities in Singapore. The study was conducted in collaboration with *United Women Singapore*, a local non-profit organisation that advances women's empowerment and gender equality. The study was conducted over the period of 12<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020 among 500 married Singaporeans either with no children or whose youngest child is 18 years and below.

### Gender-defined roles still exist

Despite close to 9 in 10 Singaporeans agreeing that household chores can be equally shared by husband and wife, gender-defined roles still exist in the Singapore household. In general, cleaning and cooking and childcaring are taken on more by the women. Whereas responsibilities that can be said to need more physical strength or technical knowledge such as repairs, and management of tech devices are taken on more by the men.

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The main responsibilities that the women look after are ones that require daily attention, and which have a larger ongoing impact or can potentially disrupt the regular functioning or rhythm of the household. The responsibilities taken on more by men are likely less frequent in nature such as paying of bills or household repairs.

### Women are doing more than the men think

Taking a closer look, women tend to say they are doing more than the men think they are. While 43% of women say they are the main person responsible for carrying out house cleaning tasks, only 24% of men think the women are. Similarly, for Laundry with 52% of women vs 32% of men who say the women are; and Cooking/Preparation of meals with 59% of women vs 45% of men who say the women are.

### Happiness and stress levels due to domestic responsibilities

With more responsibilities sitting on the shoulders of women, fewer women (54%) than men (75%) say they are happy about their household and caring responsibilities. This gap is wider among those with children where 47% of moms say they are happy compared to 78% of dads. With their household and caring responsibilities, 41% of moms report experiencing many stressful moments and another 10% say it is indeed very stressful and hard to cope with.

Happiness levels tend to improve significantly among women who are able to work from home. 25% of women who were working from home say they were very happy to be doing their domestic responsibilities, compared to only 8% of women who are not working from home. There is however no such contrast for men working from home or from their work site.

**Melanie Ng, Director of Public Affairs at Ipsos in Singapore** said, **“Working mothers speak of ‘mommy guilt’**. These women often have to juggle their commitments as a mother

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with those as an employee, which adds to another level of daily stress. Working from home gives them the flexibility of balancing their work and home responsibilities better. There is merit for companies and organisations to consider more flexible work arrangements such as working from home, for women with children.”

When asked if they had enough personal time to look after their physical, mental and emotional well-being, only 52% of women agreed. This contrasts with 68% of men who say this of themselves. This disparity is more pronounced between women (45%) and men (67%) with children. For these parents, close to 2 in 3 agree that they are limited in the career that they can build or the jobs they can take because of child caring responsibilities. Slightly more so among moms (64%) than dads (58%).

About 1 in 2 Singaporeans (man or woman) agree that those who stay home to take care of children or elderly are recognized for the value they bring to society.

**Georgette Tan, President at United Women Singapore** said, “The recent changes in working patterns due to the pandemic has put the spotlight on the gender inequality that exists on the domestic front, and highlighted the value of women and their contribution to society. We have to educate and advocate for mindset changes towards gender roles and 'de-feminise' the caregiving and household responsibilities. By ensuring shared responsibilities, this will allow women more time for self-care, pursue their career aspirations and contribute even more to the community.”

### A gradual shift in attitudes between generations

There is a gradual shift in attitudes between generations. Sharing of household responsibilities is more significant among those below 34 years old. For example, when it comes to House cleaning, 38% of married women below 34 years old say that this is a task

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fairly shared between her and her spouse. In contrast with just 28% of married women between 35 – 44 years of age who say the task is shared. The contrast is more stark on a task such as paying of bills, with 55% of women below 34 years old say that this is a shared responsibility, versus only 27% of women between 35 – 44 years old who say the task is shared.

When asked to what extent they agreed that between husband and wife, the husband's primary responsibility is to earn enough income for the family and the wife's primary responsibility is to look after the needs of the household, 32% of women and 41% of men in Singapore agreed.

**Melanie Ng, Director of Public Affairs at Ipsos in Singapore** said, "While this attitude of gender-defined roles still exist and is a view that is held by both men and women, it seems to be less strongly held among the younger generation. There could still be pressure from the extended family who belong to the older generation, to maintain these roles, but we are seeing a shift in attitudes between generations as perhaps women are given more opportunities to build their careers and men are increasingly supportive of that."

**-END-**

### Note to Editors

### About the study

- The survey was conducted online between 12<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020, among a nationally representative sample of n=500 adult Singaporeans who are married with no children or with children where the youngest child is 18 years old and below.

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- Quotas on gender and ethnicity were employed to ensure that the sample's composition reflects the overall population distribution, based on Singapore Department of Statistics population estimates.
- This quantitative study was conducted online via the Ipsos Online Panel.

For further information or to set up further interviews with opinion leaders cited in this article, please contact

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### About United Women Singapore

United Women Singapore (UWS) is a local non-profit organisation that advances women's empowerment and gender equality, and builds a pipeline of women leaders and influencers in Singapore. The organisation works towards narrowing the gender equality gap through education and raising awareness and advocacy on issues such as anti-violence and women's empowerment, with the support of key stakeholders including corporate partners, government agencies, academia, the diplomatic community, non-profits and community groups and the wider community.

United Women Singapore has an Institution of Public Character (IPC) status and all donors are able to claim tax relief from their assessable income based on the amount donated, at prevailing deduction rate.