

**Mothers of young children
whose partners have been
mobilized by the IDF**





The context



On October 7, approximately 300,000 reservists were mobilized by the IDF (Israel Defense Forces).



During the first week of war, schools and pre-schools all over the country were closed and even a month after the outbreak of the war schools in many parts of the country had not returned to their routines.



All over the country, and especially in the south, air raid sirens were often sounded, calling on the population to move to protected areas.



The challenge

The mothers of young children who have a spouse in the IDF constitute a large population, and anecdotal information suggested that they are facing serious needs.

Prior to this study there was a lack of systematic information on the subject.

Prior to this study neither the policy community nor the press had been giving serious attention to this population.



The mothers



Mothers of young children (up to age 12) whose spouses were mobilized for reserve duty are playing a key role in dealing with this complex and challenging situation.



Approximately 100,000 such mothers are responding to the day-to-day needs of their children and homes, while dealing with their children's anxieties regarding the rocket attacks as well as their own.



All this alongside concerns for the safety of their spouses.



Most of these mothers are also employed.



The research response of the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute

1. Analysis of the discourse in a variety of social media forums regarding the situation of mothers of young children whose spouses had been mobilized (in cooperation with Buzzilla)
2. An internet survey of mothers of young children (in cooperation with iPanel)
3. A survey of human resources managers (pending)



Mothers of young children whose spouses have been mobilized by the IDF



Part 1:

Thematic analysis of conversations in
the social media



Objective of the thematic analysis of conversations in the social media

An in-depth understanding of the needs of mothers of young children whose spouses were mobilized during the Israel-Hamas War and of how those needs are being addressed



The cooperation between Brookdale and Buzzilla

Brookdale identified a need for an analysis of the discourse in social media regarding the needs and experience of mothers of young children during the war.

Brookdale commissioned the analysis from Buzzilla, a company that monitors social networks, and Merav Borenstein Gabai, an external research consultant.



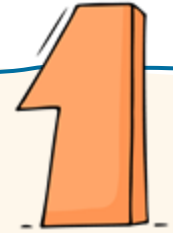
The report produced by Buzzilla can be found on the Brookdale website





Six issues for immediate action





Local Authorities

Finding: Several local authorities have mobilized to help mothers of young children whose spouses have been mobilized, but most have not yet done so.

Recommended actions: All authorities should be encouraged to learn from the actions of their peers who are pioneers in developing services for such mothers. The Ministry of the Interior could initiate grants to local authorities that take action on this issue, thereby incentivizing them to do so.



2

The workplace – rights and consideration

Finding: Many mothers lack information about their workplace rights in wartime, such how much they can expect the employer to be flexible with them regarding working hours and working from home.

Recommended actions: This is an issue that the relevant government ministries can address quickly, while balancing the needs of the economy and employers with the needs of society and working mothers. The Ministry of Labor should disseminate information on the wartime rights of working mothers using simple non-legal language. Employers' organizations should encourage employers to be considerate of the special needs of mothers of young children whose partners have been mobilized.



3

Teachers

Finding: Mothers who are teachers face a somewhat unique challenge. On the one hand, it is important for the country that they return to work as much, and as soon, as possible so that the entire society can move toward a productive routine. On the other hand, in wartime many teachers do not have arrangements for their own small children.

Recommended actions: The Ministry of Education, together with the local authorities, can identify teacher-mothers in this situation and formulate an appropriate response for them. More generally, it is recommended that the local authorities facilitate the opening of daycare centers for the children of mothers who work in places/positions required during an emergency. The frameworks will be tailored to the needs of children whose parents work in jobs that are vital to the wartime economy.



The weeks just before, and immediately after, childbirth

Finding: Mothers face significant and unique challenges during these weeks. Among other things, they don't always have the necessary equipment - either to bring the baby home or to receive the baby at home. Purchase of some of the necessary equipment is not purely technical; there can be a significant emotional dimension.

Recommended actions: Local authorities can organize volunteering efforts in which experienced mothers living near the expectant/new mothers help those in need of advice and support. Mother and child clinics could refer the women who need these supports to the local authorities. Neighbors and friends can offer to assist with shopping, housework, or help with older siblings. Companies that distribute or manufacture baby products might also be able to help.



Employers and the Ministry of Economy

Finding: Many mothers of young children are hesitant to leave the home and travel to their workplaces due to the need to care for their children. Some of these mothers work in essential positions and the employers are insisting that they to come to the workplace.

Recommended actions: The Ministry of Economy could give incentives to employers who address the unique needs of mothers of young children who are required to be physically present at the workplace.



5

Civil society

Finding: Civil society has not yet sufficiently internalized the scope and nature of the needs of this group, and there are few organizations for volunteering for these mothers.

Recommended actions: It is important to raise awareness of the many needs of mothers on the home front, and of the great help that can be provided to them through a regional/community volunteer center and within the framework of neighborly relations (and this is in addition to the assistance already provided by families and by friends through WhatsApp groups).



Objectives of the internet survey

1. To analyze the recent experiences and needs of all mothers of young children, the assistance they have received to address those needs, and the nature and extent of unmet needs
2. To compare the experiences, needs and assistance received between two groups of Jewish mothers of young children: those whose spouses are currently serving in the IDF and those whose spouses are not



Mothers of young children whose spouses have been mobilized by the IDF



Part 2:

The internet survey

Bruce Rosen, Lior Beserman Navon, Yoa Sorek, Bracha Berlin



Methods of the internet survey (1)

- The study was based on an online panel survey conducted between October 26 and November 2, a period that largely coincided with the first week of the IDF's ground incursion into Gaza.
- In the first stage of the data collection, responses were gathered from 595 mothers who constitute a nationally representative random sample of all mothers of young children who had registered with the survey company. This group constituted the basic sample of the study, and it was used by the research team to realize the first objective of the study.



Methods of the internet survey (2)

- The basic sample included only 72 mothers of young children whose spouses are currently serving in the IDF, which was not enough for calculating reliable estimates for this group and for realizing the second goal of the study.
- Accordingly, in the second stage of data collection, the research team used filtering questions to identify, and gather responses from an additional 334 Jewish mothers of young children whose spouses are currently serving in the IDF.
- The two stages together made it possible to assemble an expanded sample which was used to realize the second goal of the study. The expanded sample included 403 Jewish mothers with spouses currently serving in the IDF and 341 Jewish mothers with spouses who are not currently serving in the IDF.

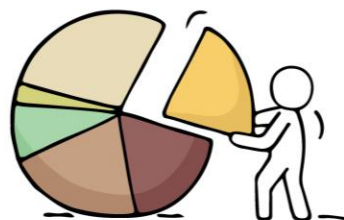


Survey timeline

Event	Date
Initiation of work on the project plan	10.10
Initiation of work on the questionnaire	12.10
Initiation of data collection for the pilot	26.10
Initiation of the main data collection effort	29.10
Presentation of initial findings	30.10
Completion of data collection	2.11
Presentation of intermediate findings	5.11
Presentation of full findings	9.11



Initial findings from the survey of mothers of young children





Part A

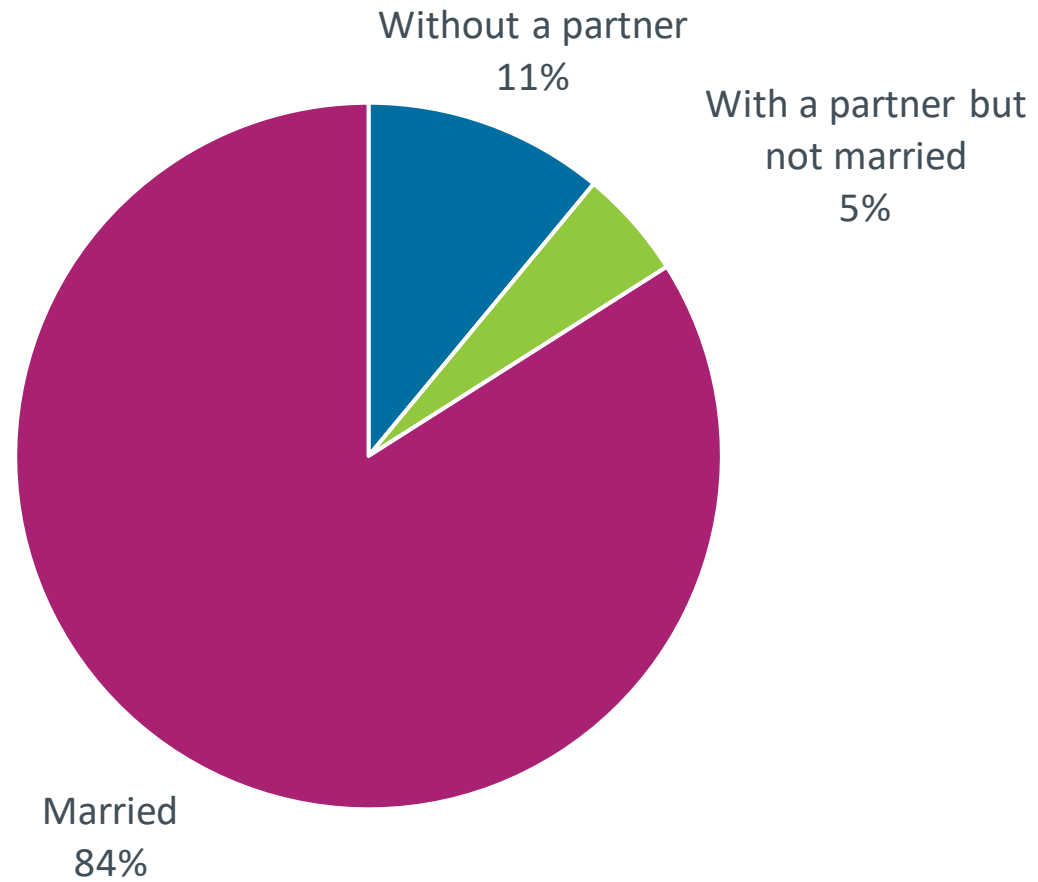
All the mothers

(Using the basic sample, which had 595 respondents)



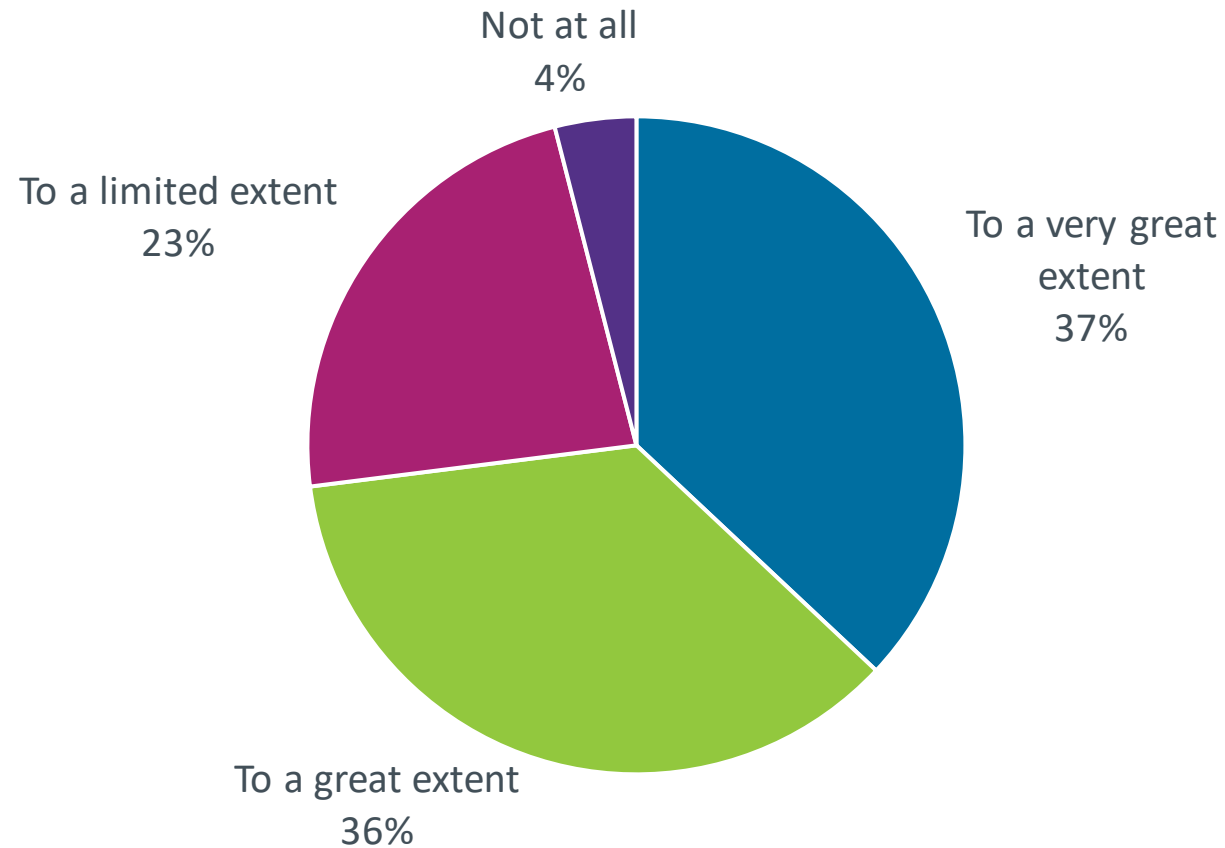


Family status





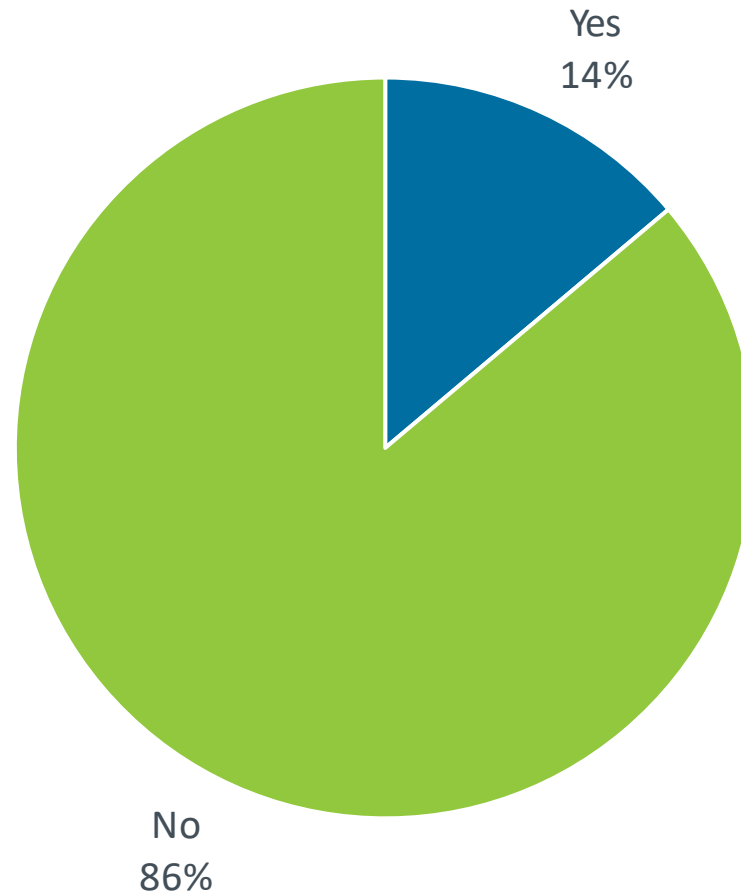
The extent to which the partner was involved in the care of the children and housework before the war (Among respondents with a partner)



N = 558



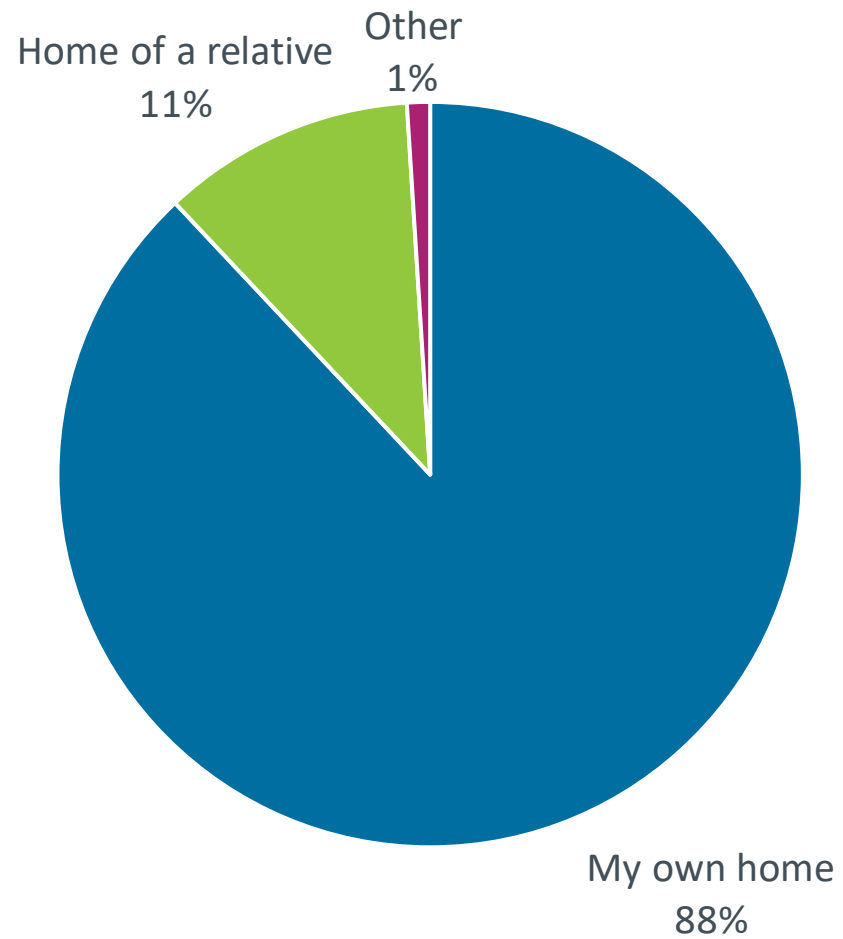
Is the partner currently in the IDF? (Among respondents with a partner)



N = 558

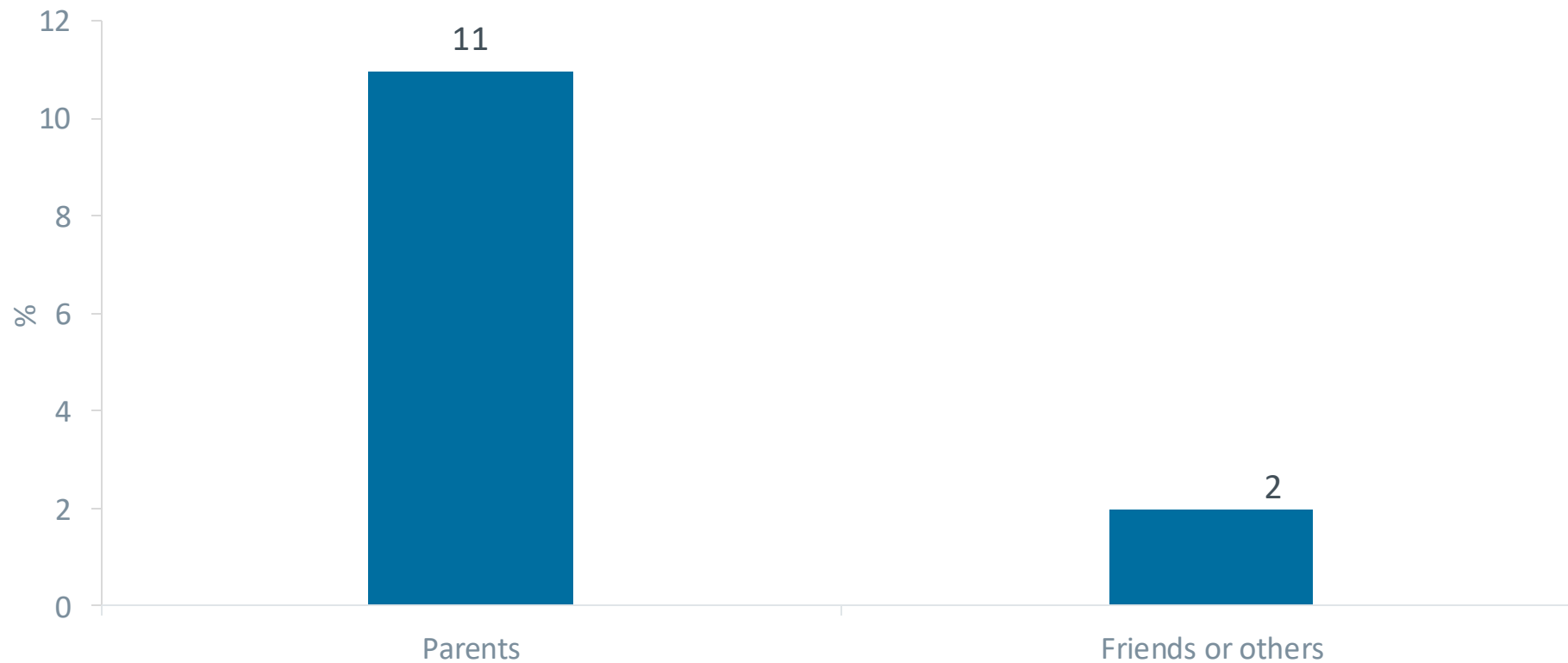


Current place of residence





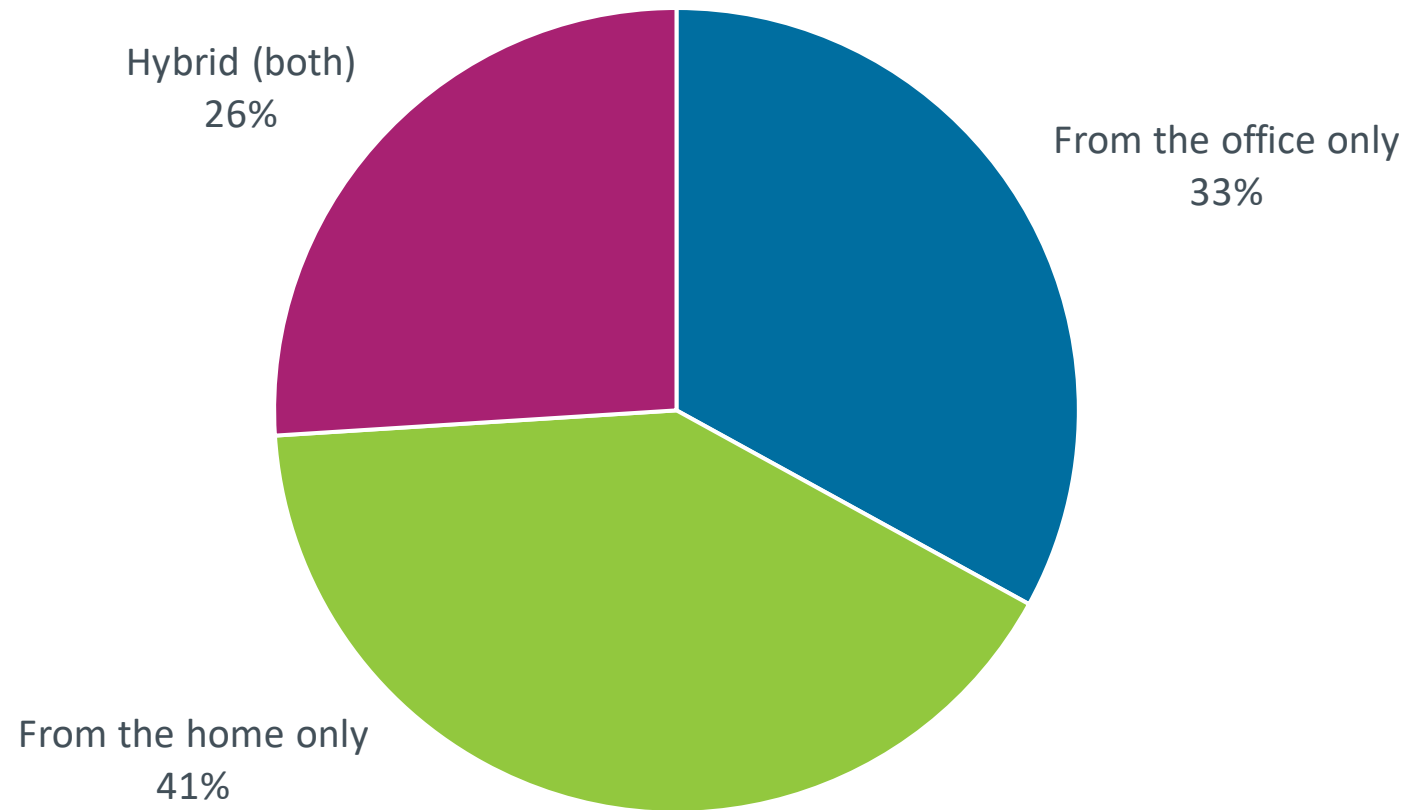
Others living in the respondent's permanent home in the wake of the outbreak of the war (percent)



N = 595



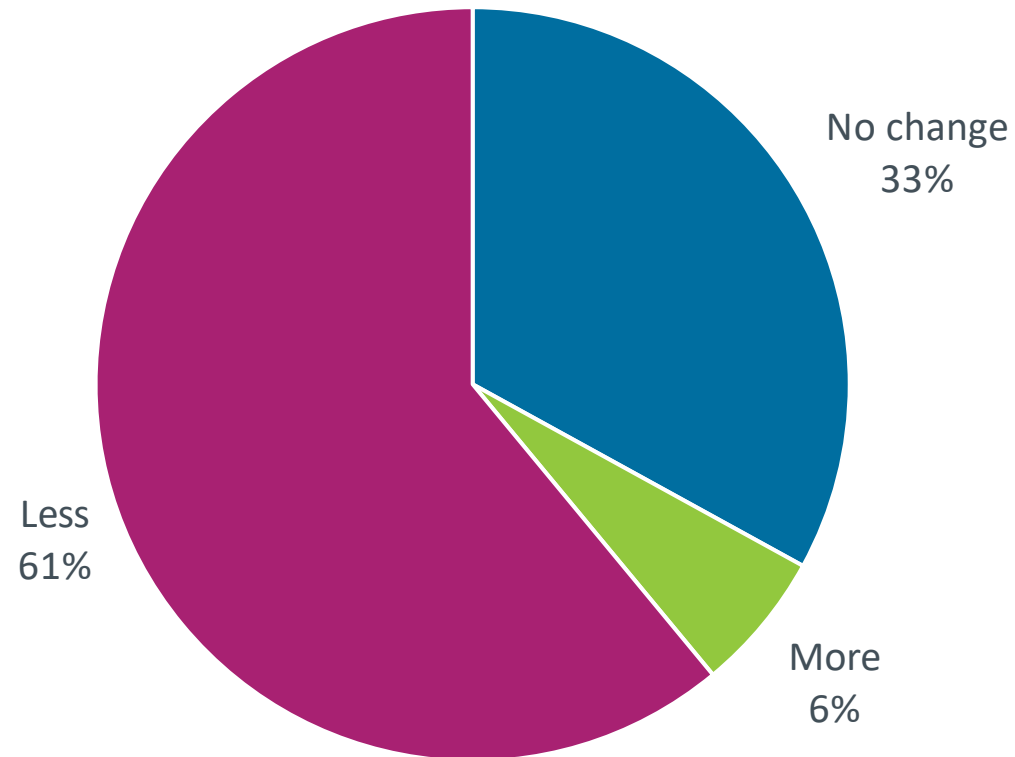
Place of work, since the outbreak of the war (Among salaried respondents)



N = 453



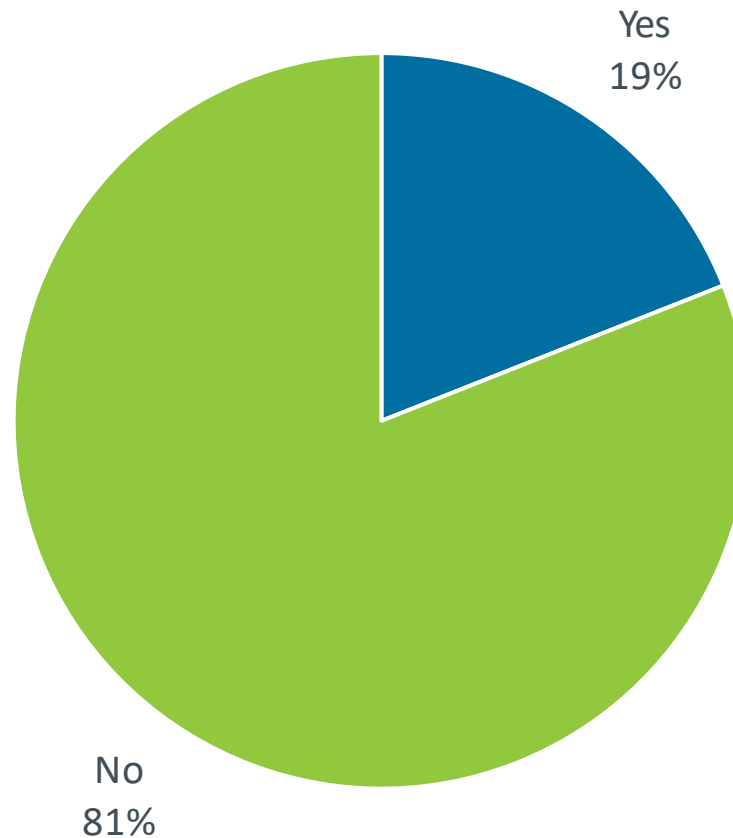
The change in the number of hours worked in the wake of the outbreak of the war (Among salaried respondents)



N = 453



Has your employer asked you to undertake tasks that you had to decline because of the situation? (Among salaried respondents)

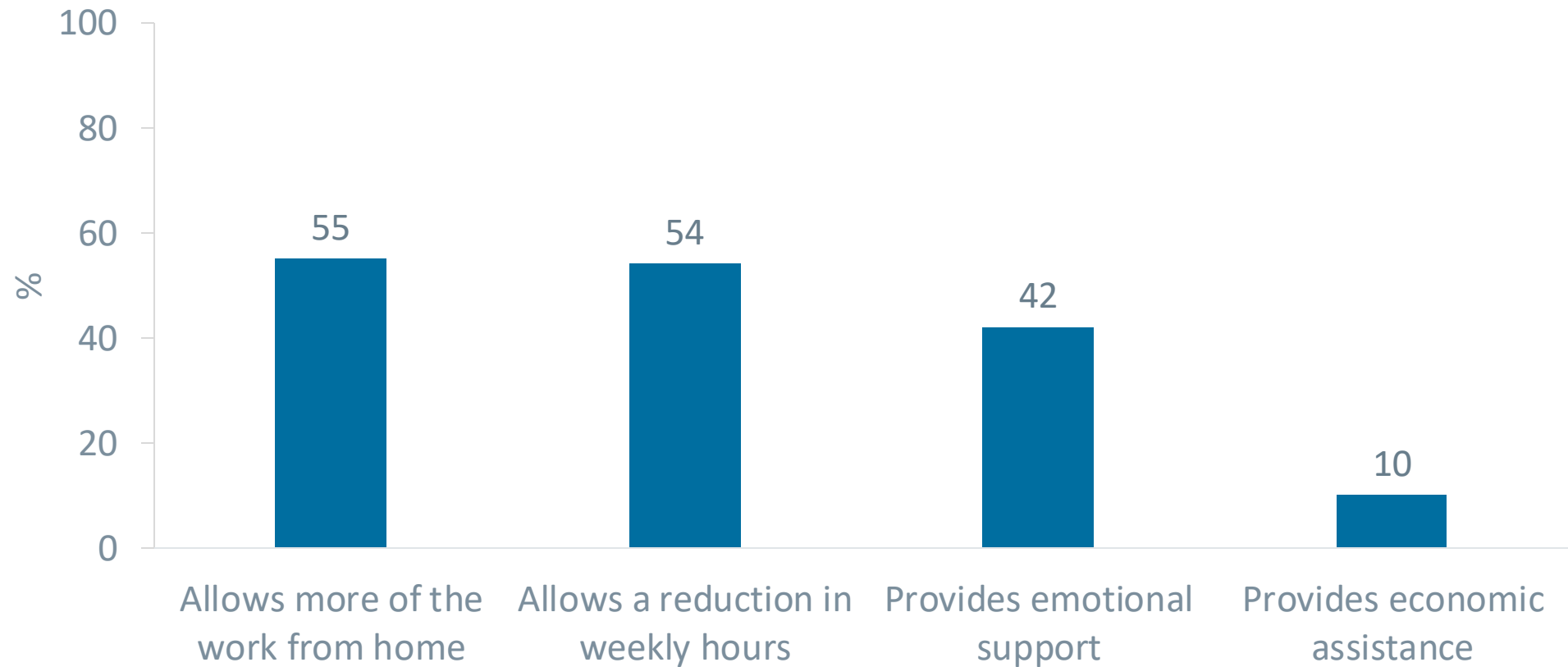


Primarily: More hours at the office, more hours overall, and tasks that were difficult to carry out

N = 453



Assistance from the employer (percent) (Among salaried respondents)



N=452

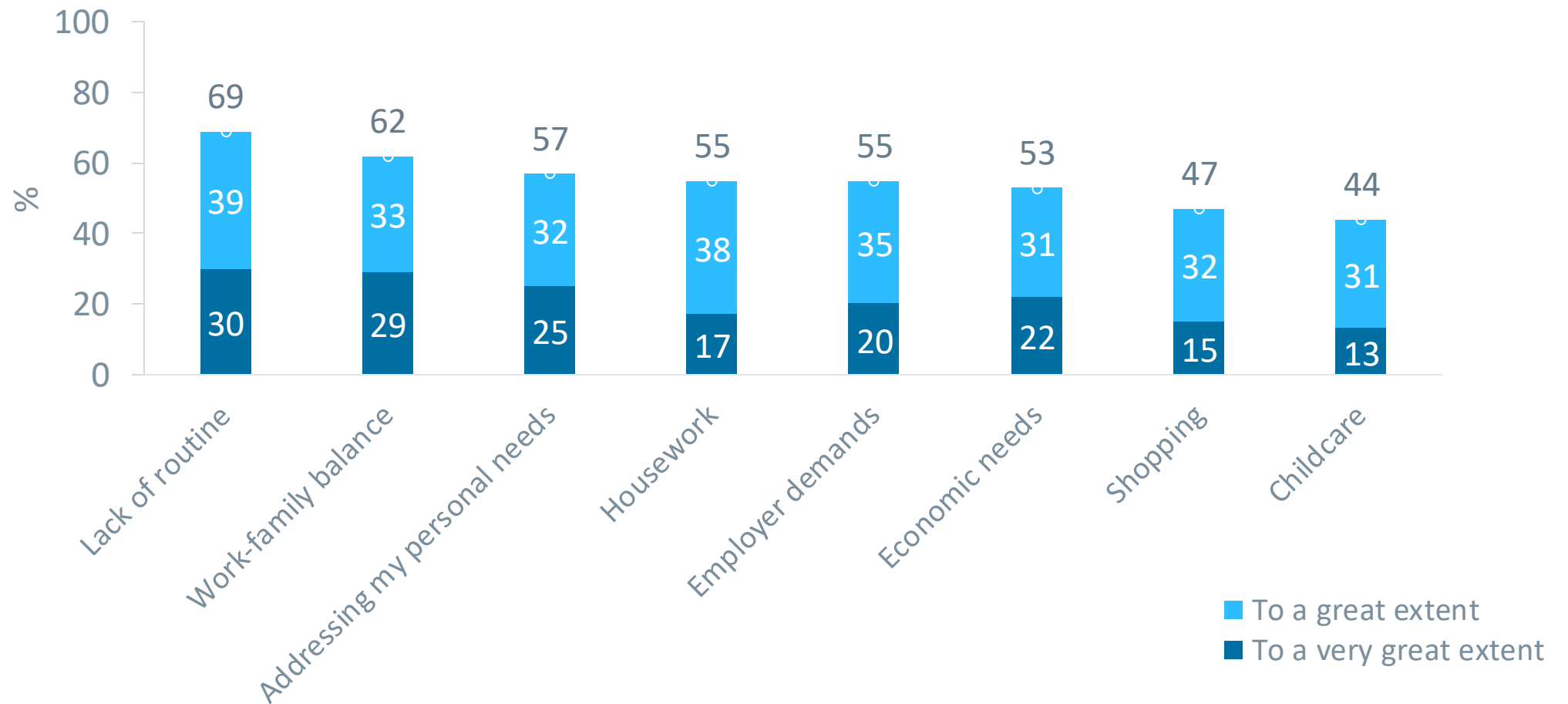


Subgroups that were more likely to report difficult sentiments

- Mothers living in peripheral regions
- Arab mothers
- Single mothers
- Divorced mothers in cases where the father is substantially involved in childcare
- Mothers with fewer than four children
- Mothers who are secular or traditional

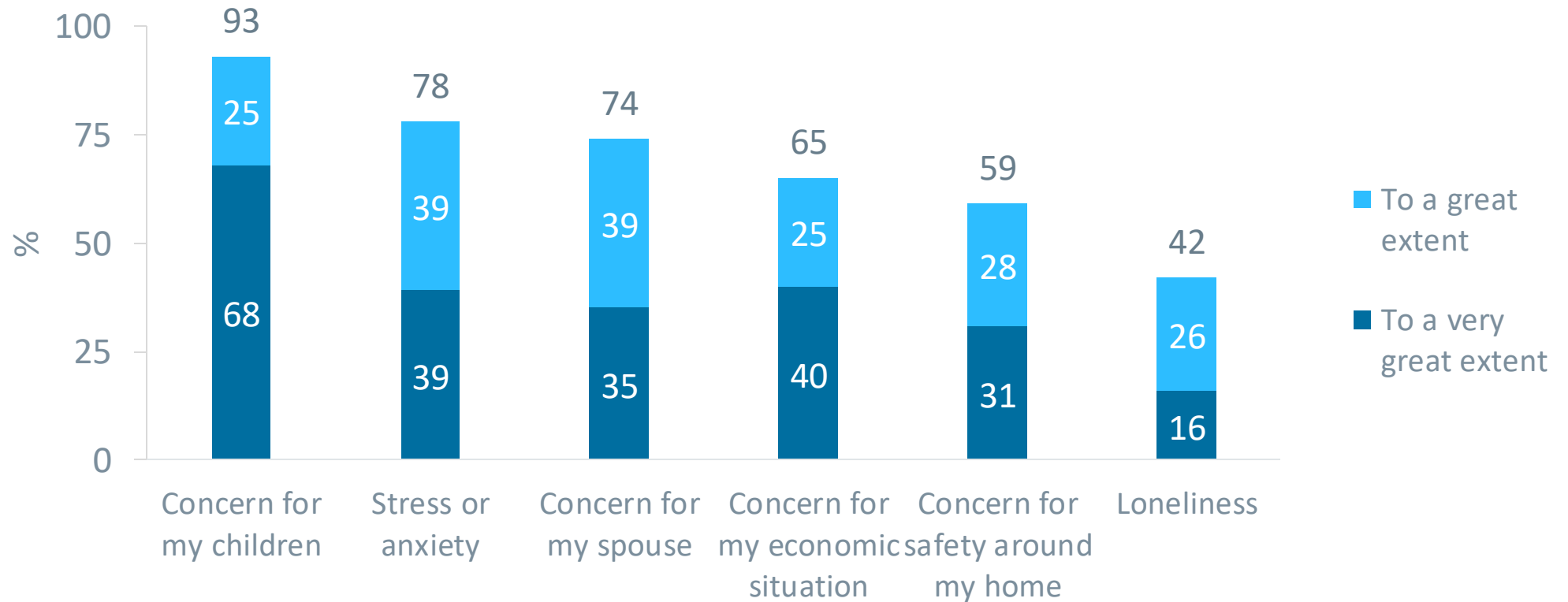


Respondents reporting great or very great difficulty with various tasks (percent)





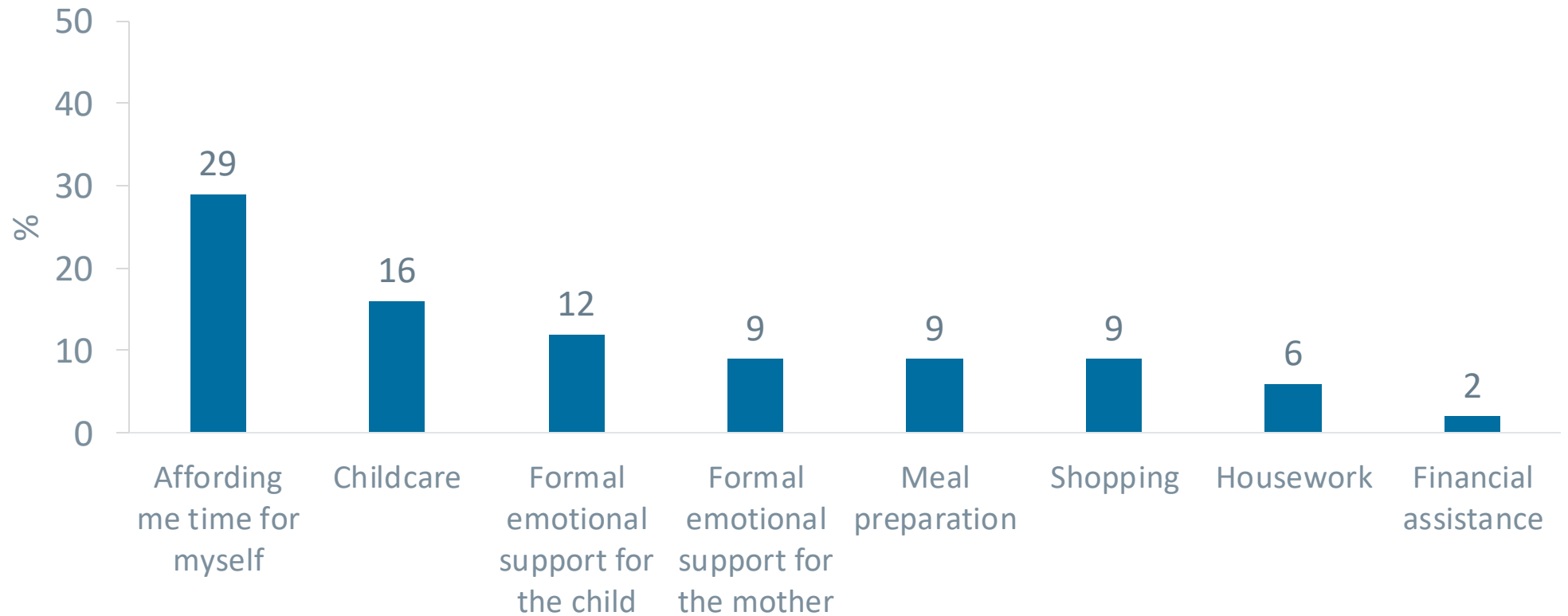
Respondents reporting various sentiments to a great or very great extent (percent)



N = 595



Respondents receiving various forms of assistance (percent)



N = 595

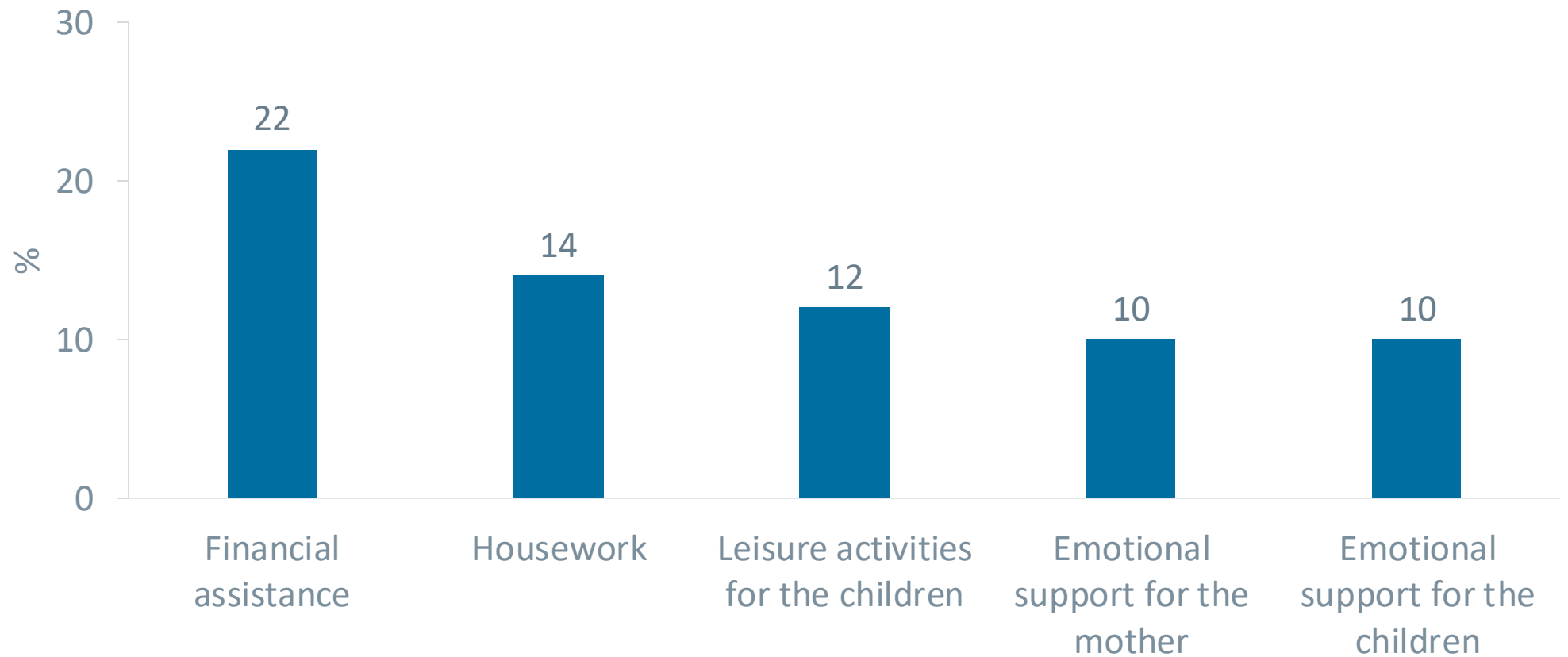


Subgroups more likely to report practical difficulties

- Mothers living in peripheral regions
- Arab mothers
- Single mothers
- Divorced mothers in cases where the father is substantially involved in childcare
- Mothers who are secular or traditional
- Mothers whose partners were mobilized
- Mothers up to age 35
- Mother in families with below average incomes



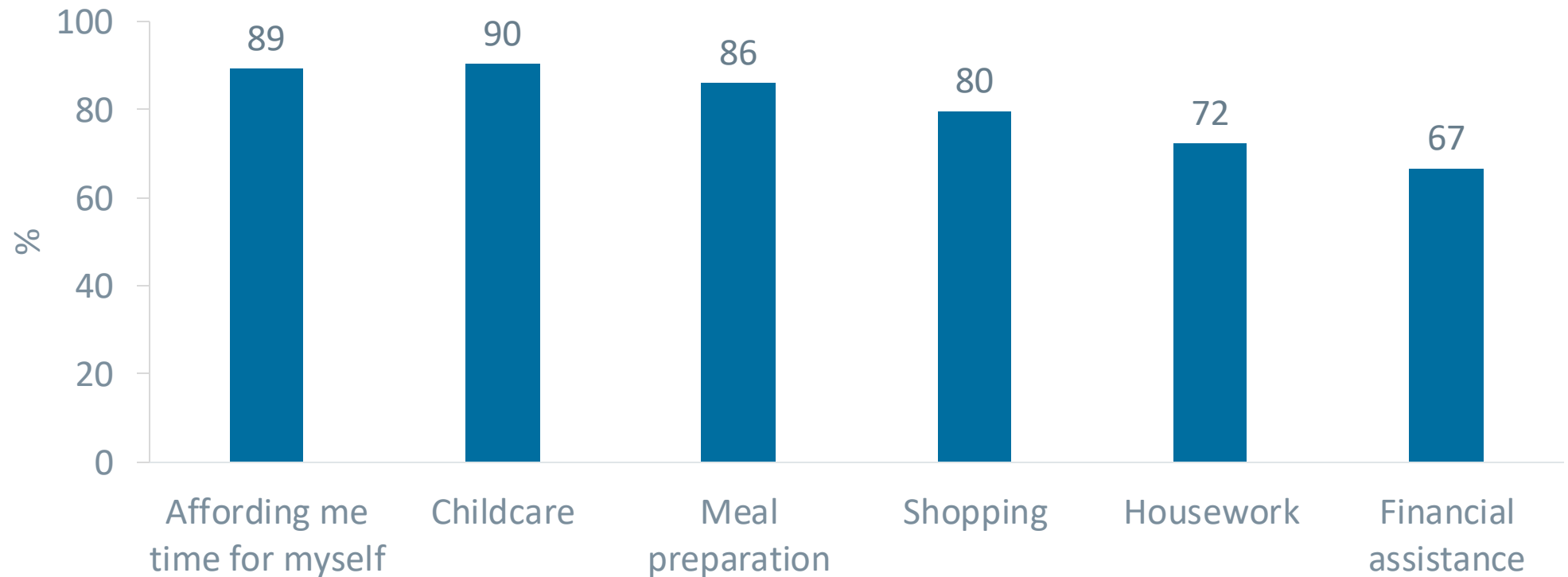
If you could get additional assistance in only one area, what would you choose? (percent)



N = 595



The proportion of the mothers who received assistance from family members from among those who reported receiving assistance (percent)



N = 595



Summary of the findings regarding all the mothers (1)

- Mothers of young children are going through a very challenging time.
- Many of them are worried and tense about several areas of life. The most prominent concern is for the children: 93% of the mothers reported that they worry about their children to a great extent or a very great extent.
- More than 40% of the mothers reported many or very many difficulties in a variety of contexts, such as the lack of routine (69%) and demands from work (55%).
- 41% of salaried mothers are currently working only from home, about 60% work fewer hours than usual and about 20% were asked by their employers to perform tasks they could not or did not want to perform.



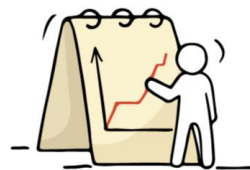
Summary of the findings regarding all the mothers (2)

- About 30% of the mothers reported receiving assistance that afforded them time for them to attend to personal needs. About 10% of the mothers reported receiving other types of assistance.
- Many of the mothers were interested in receiving additional assistance.
- The most prominent type of assistance sought was financial aid (20% of the mothers).



Findings from the comparison between the mothers whose partners were mobilized and the mothers whose partners were not (Among Jewish mothers of young children who have a partner)

Based on the expanded sample



Note the that findings presented here are unweighted

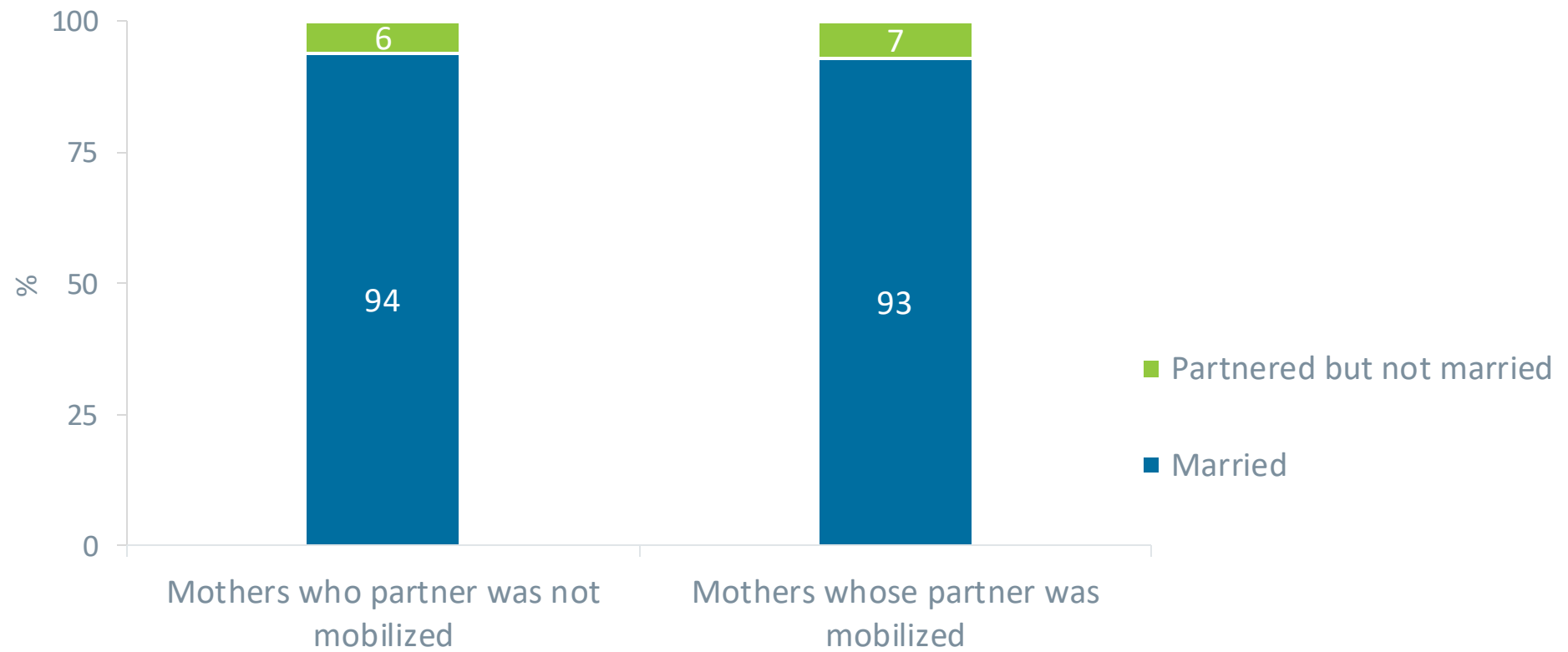


The size and composition of the sample used for the comparison

- 403 Jewish mothers of young children whose partners were mobilized
- 341 Jewish mothers of young children whose partners were not mobilized
- 741 All Jewish mothers of young children



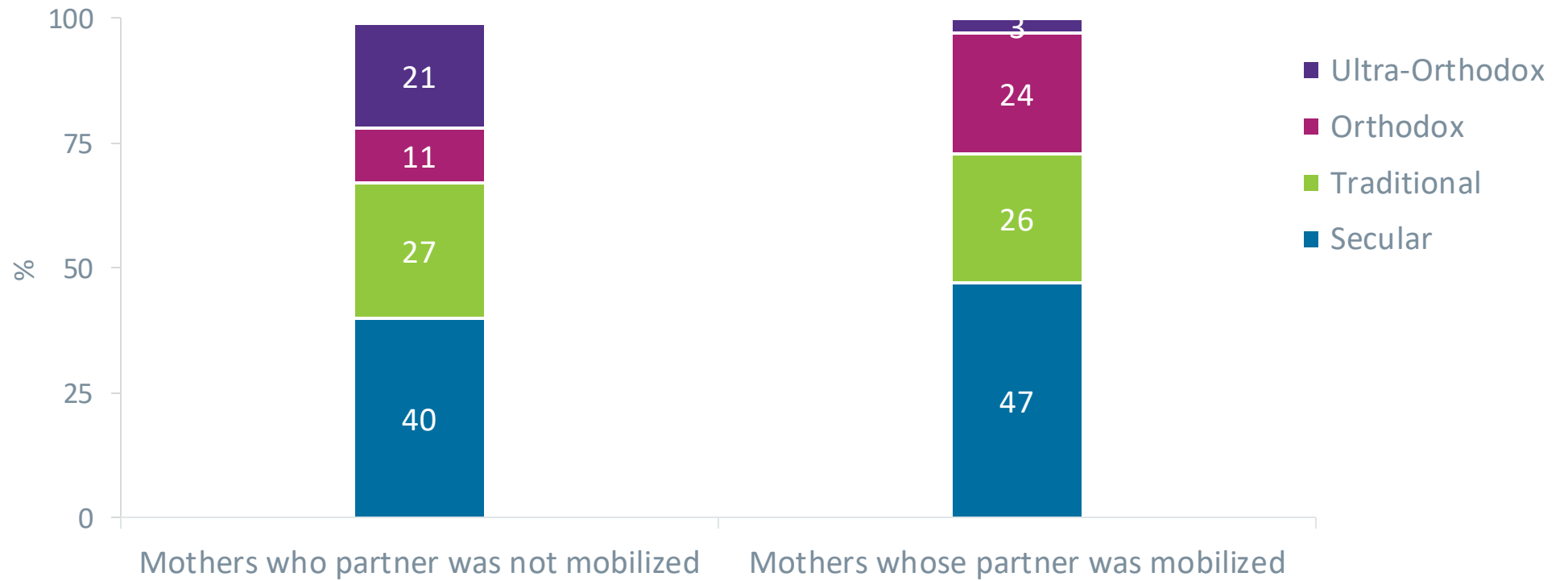
Family status (percent)



N = 741



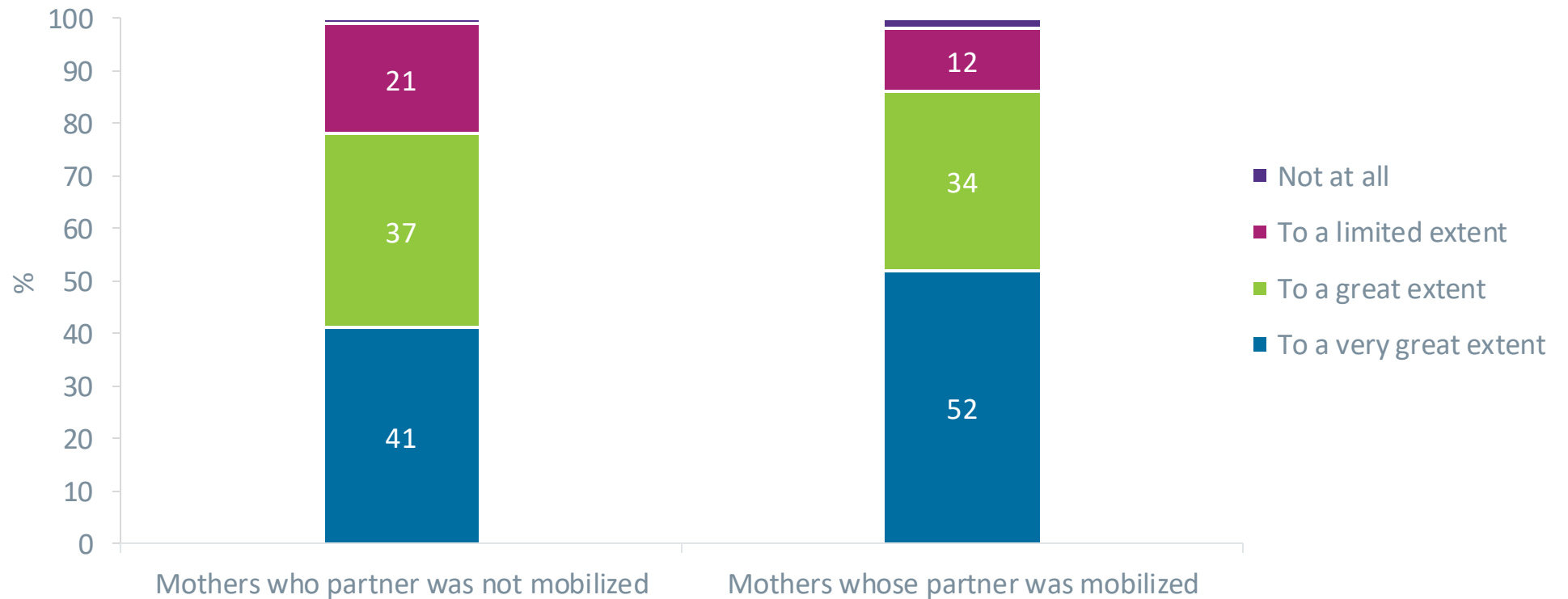
Religiosity (percent)



N = 741



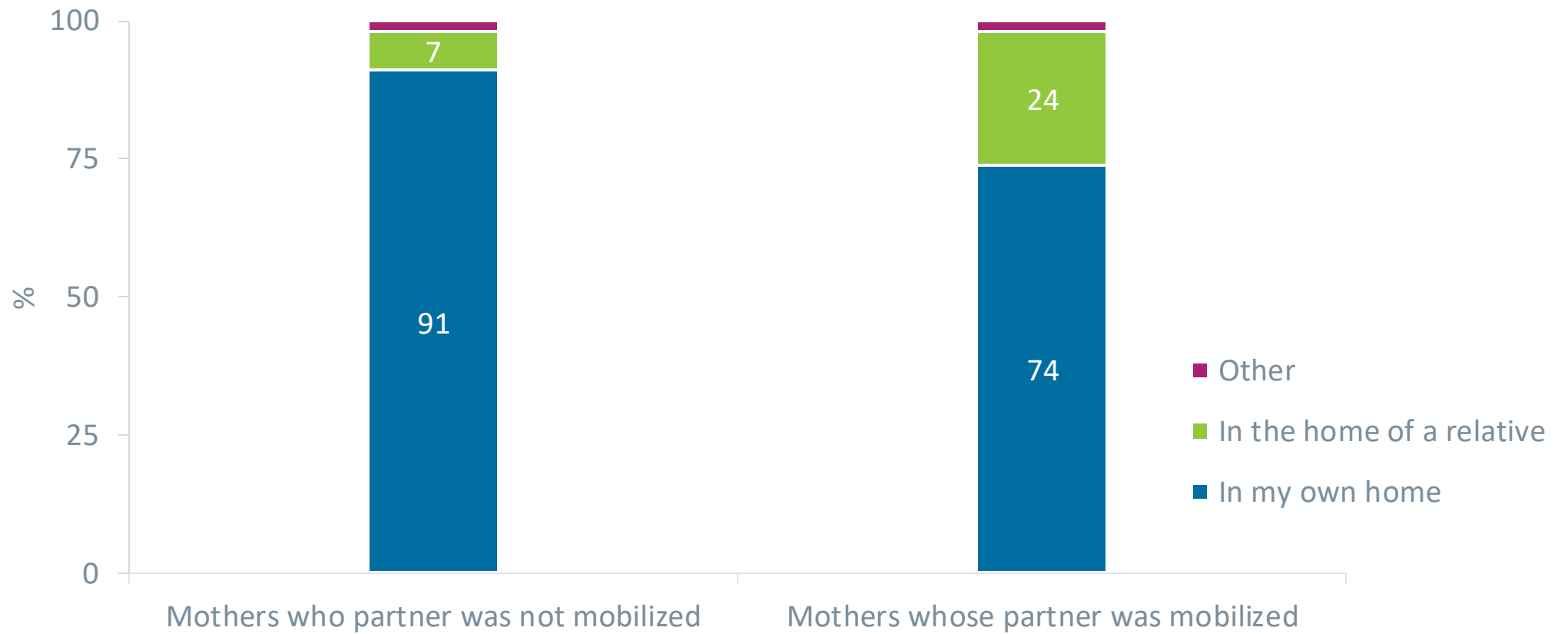
The extent to which the partner was involved in the care of the children and housework before the war (Among respondents with a partner)



N = 741



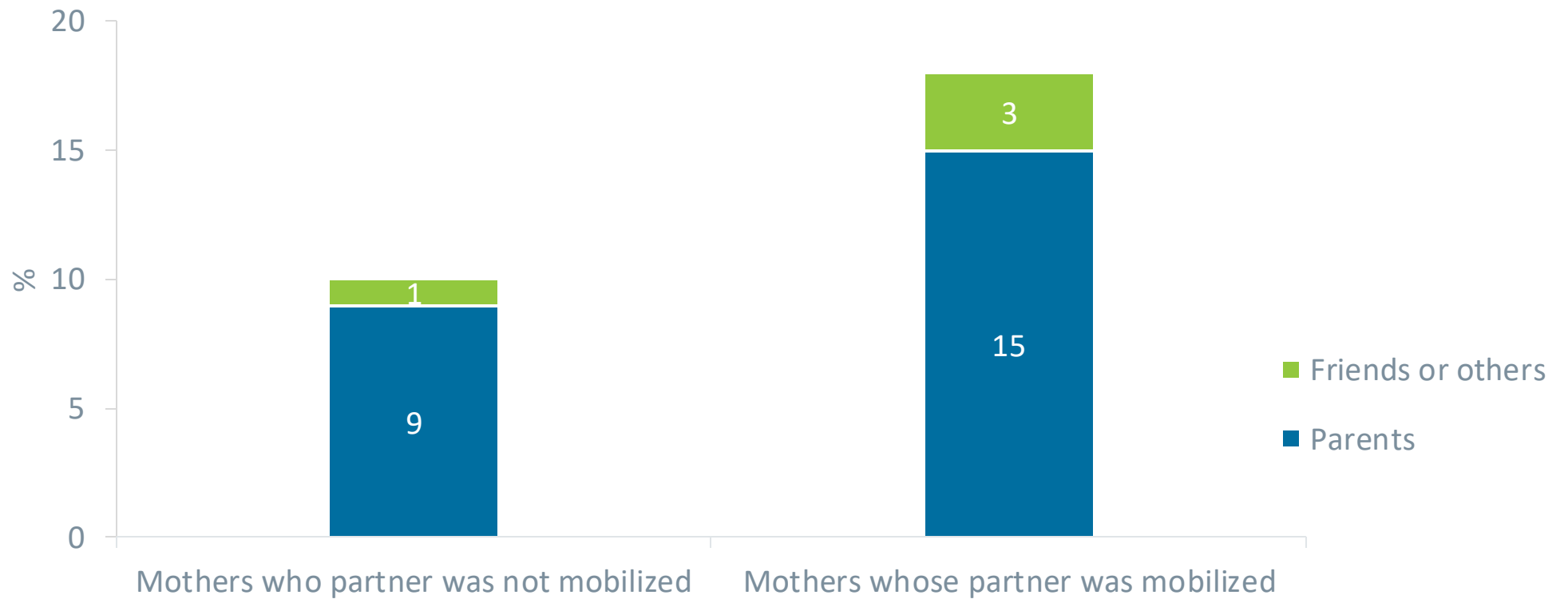
Current place of residence (percent)



N = 741



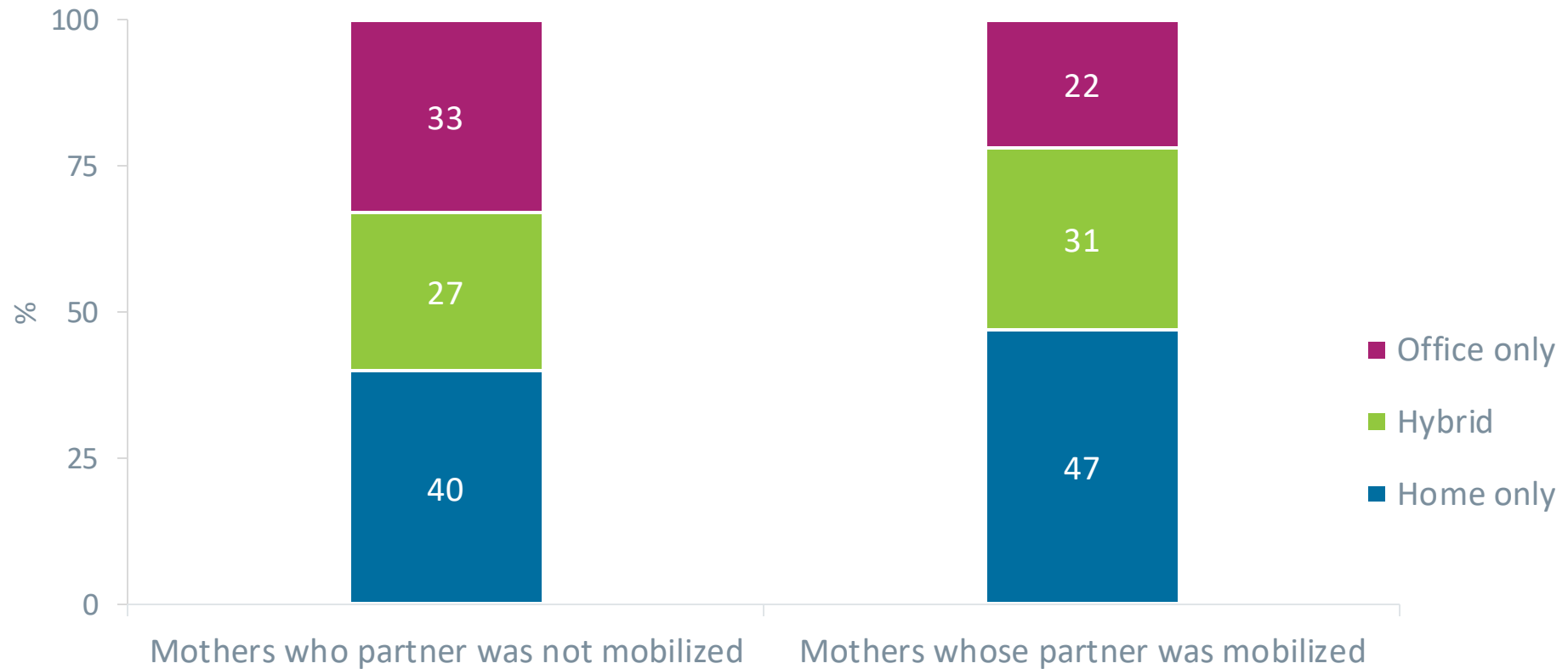
Others living in the respondent's home in the wake of the outbreak of the war (percent)



N = 741



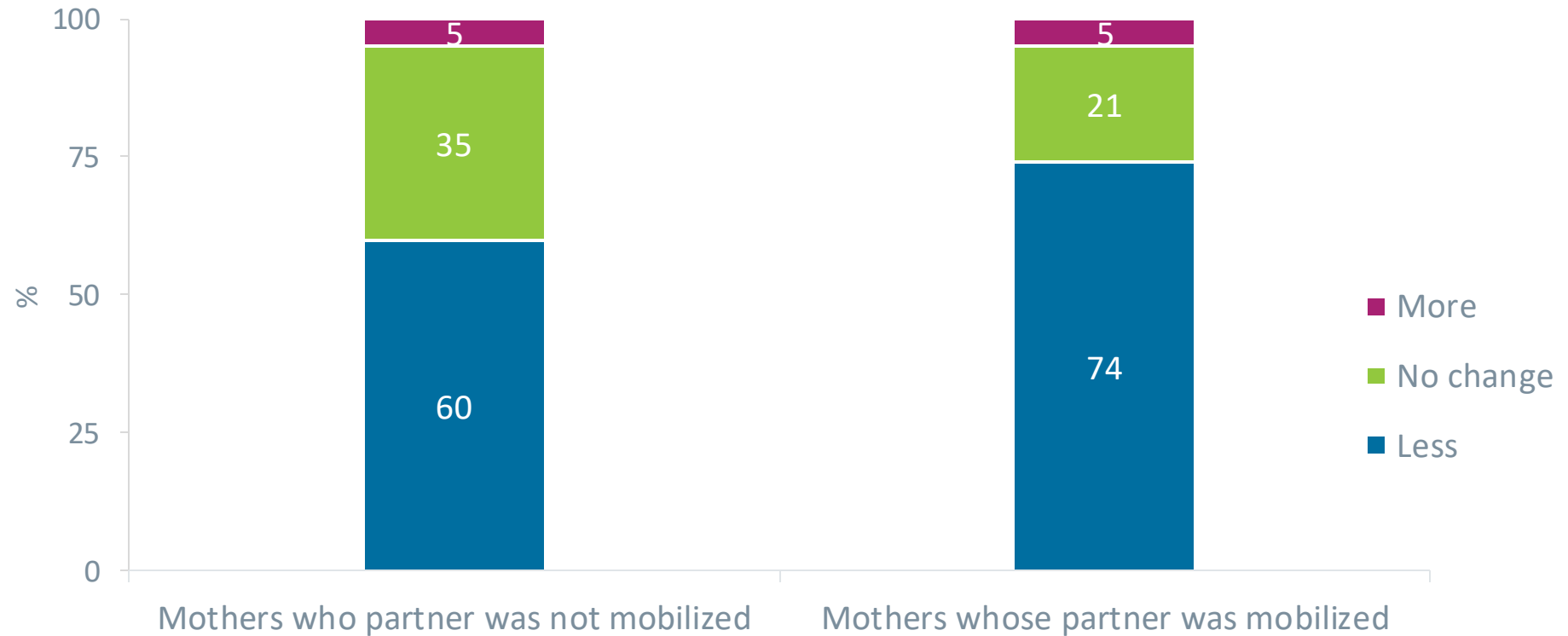
Place of work, since the outbreak of the war (Among salaried respondents)



N = 570



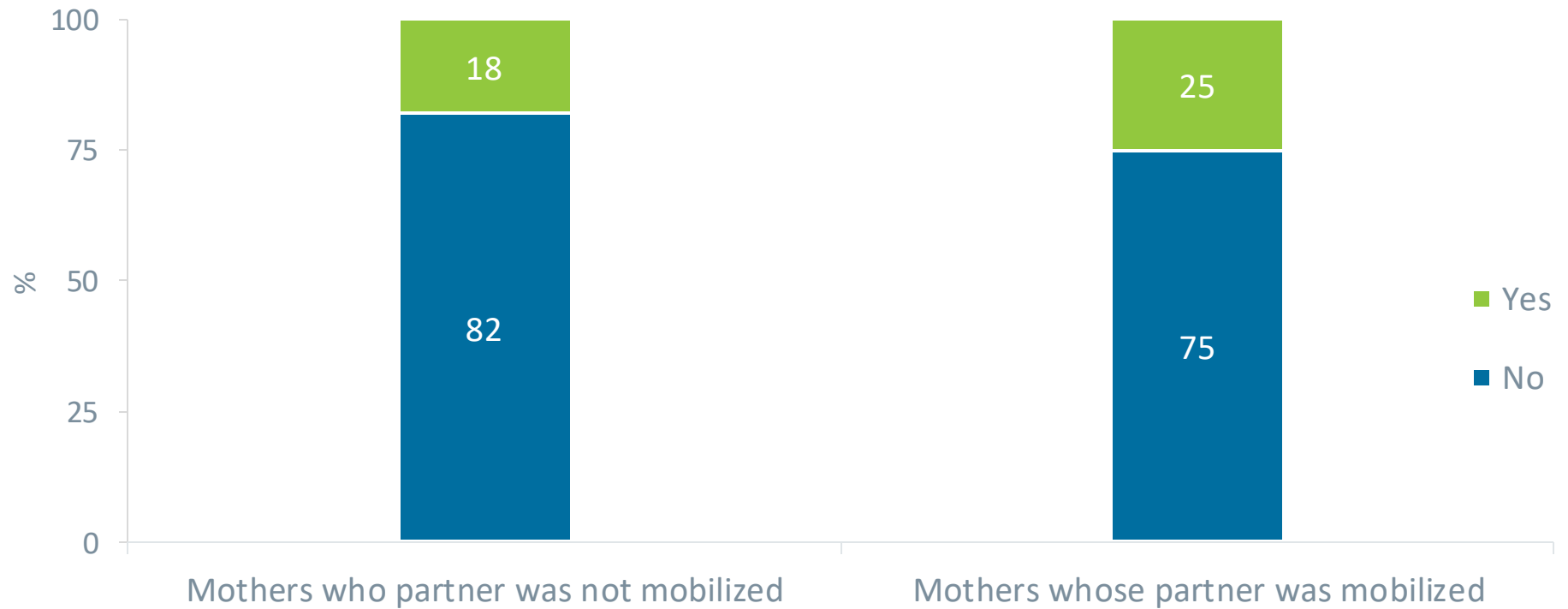
The change in the number of hours worked in the wake of the outbreak of the war (Among salaried respondents)



N = 570



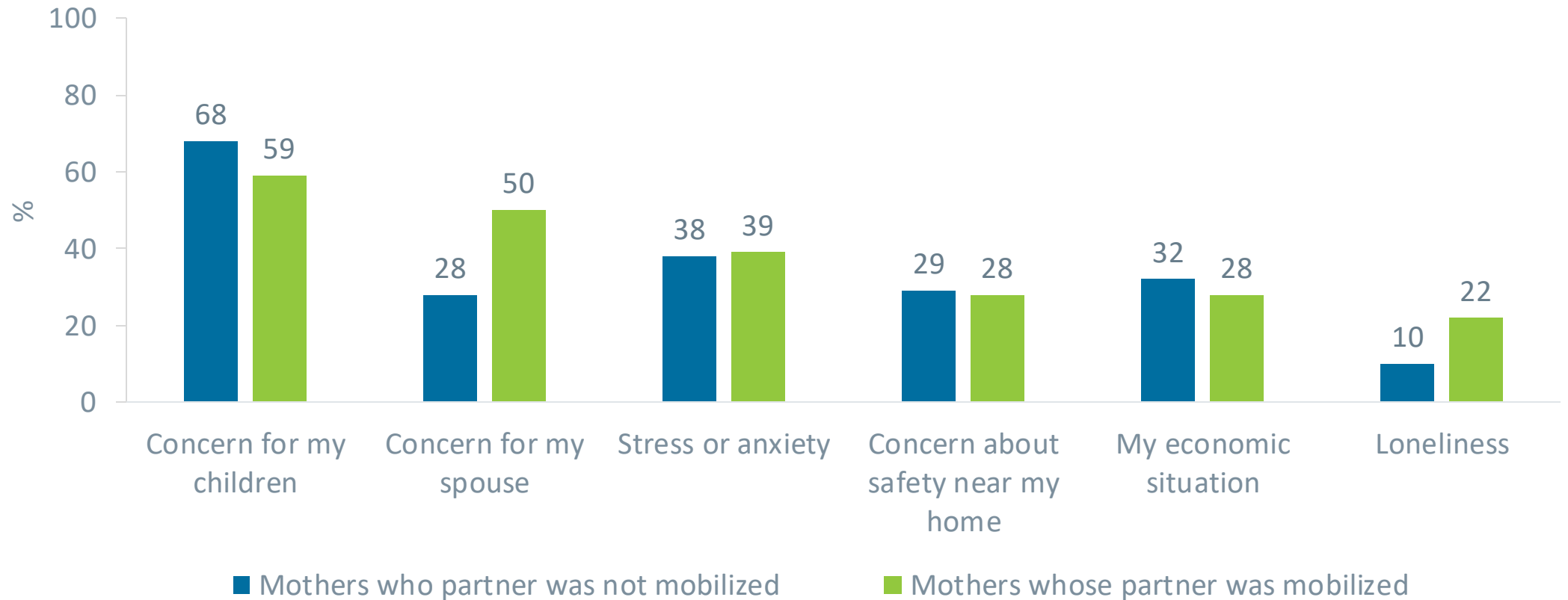
Has your employer asked you to undertake tasks that you had to decline because of the situation? (Among salaried respondents)



N = 570



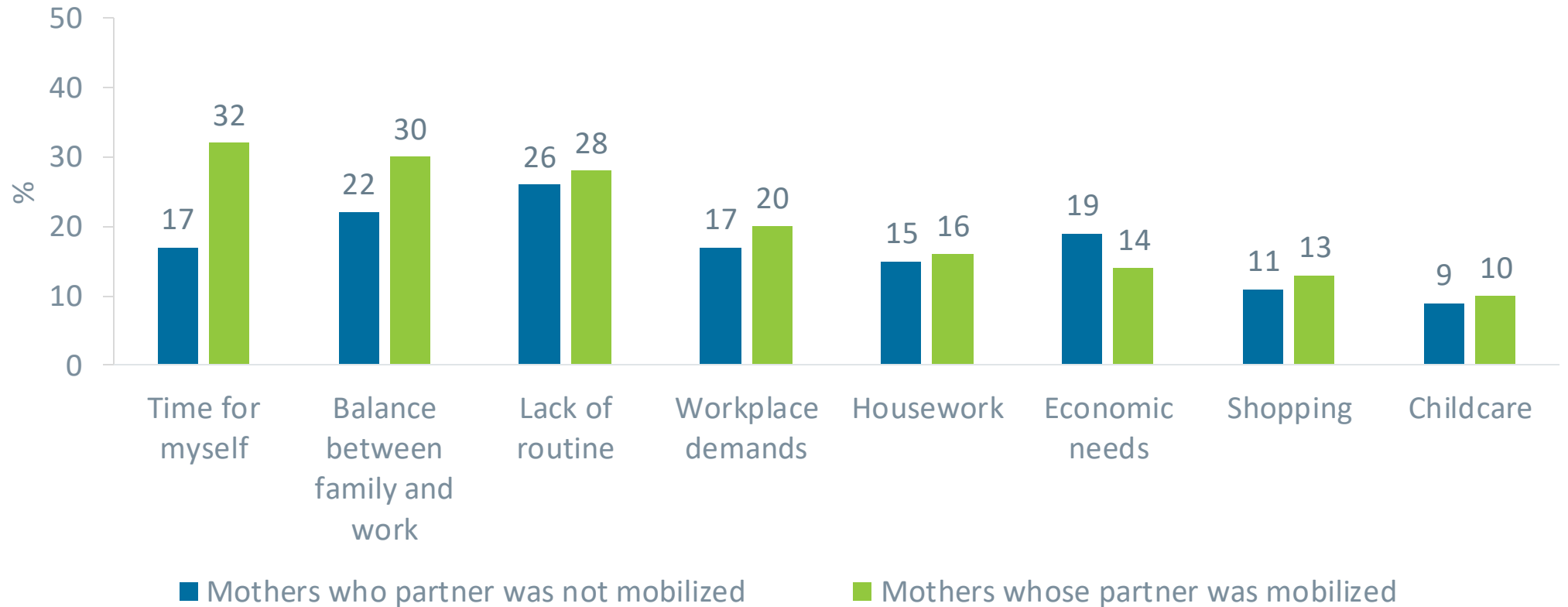
Respondents reporting various sentiments to very great extent (percent)



N = 741

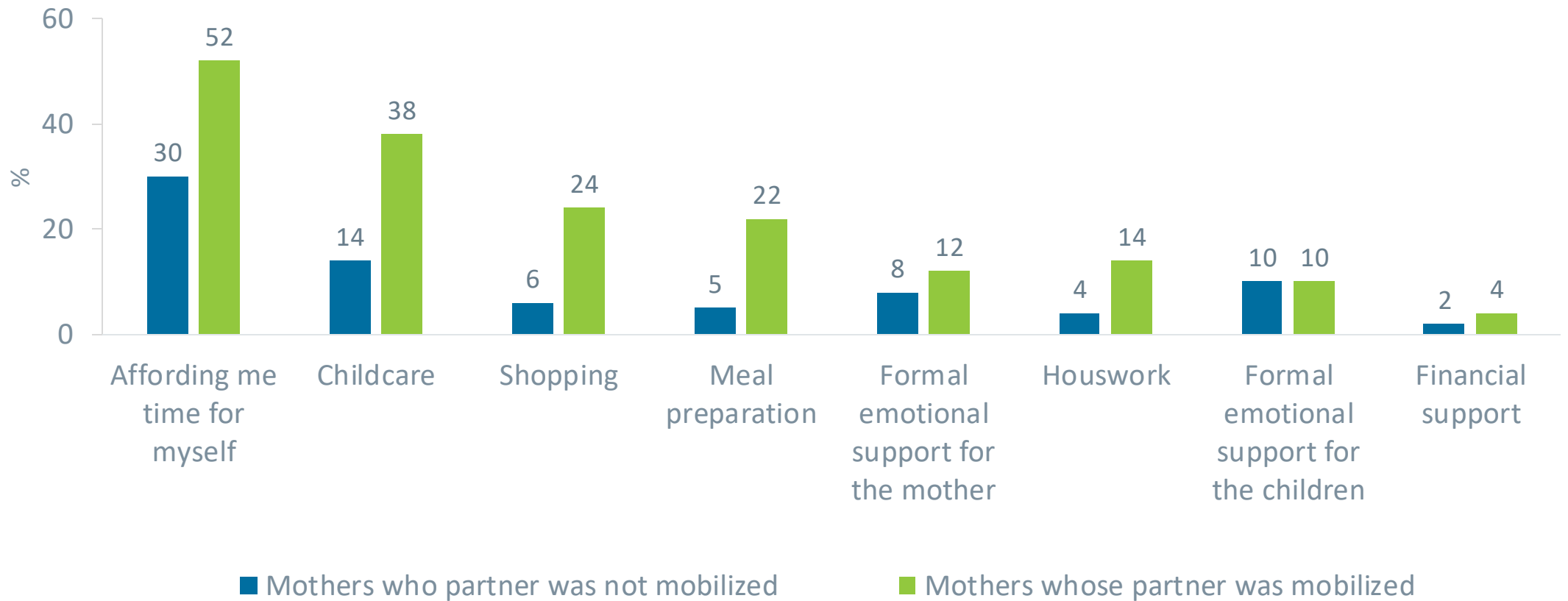


Respondents reporting great or very great difficulty with various tasks (percent)



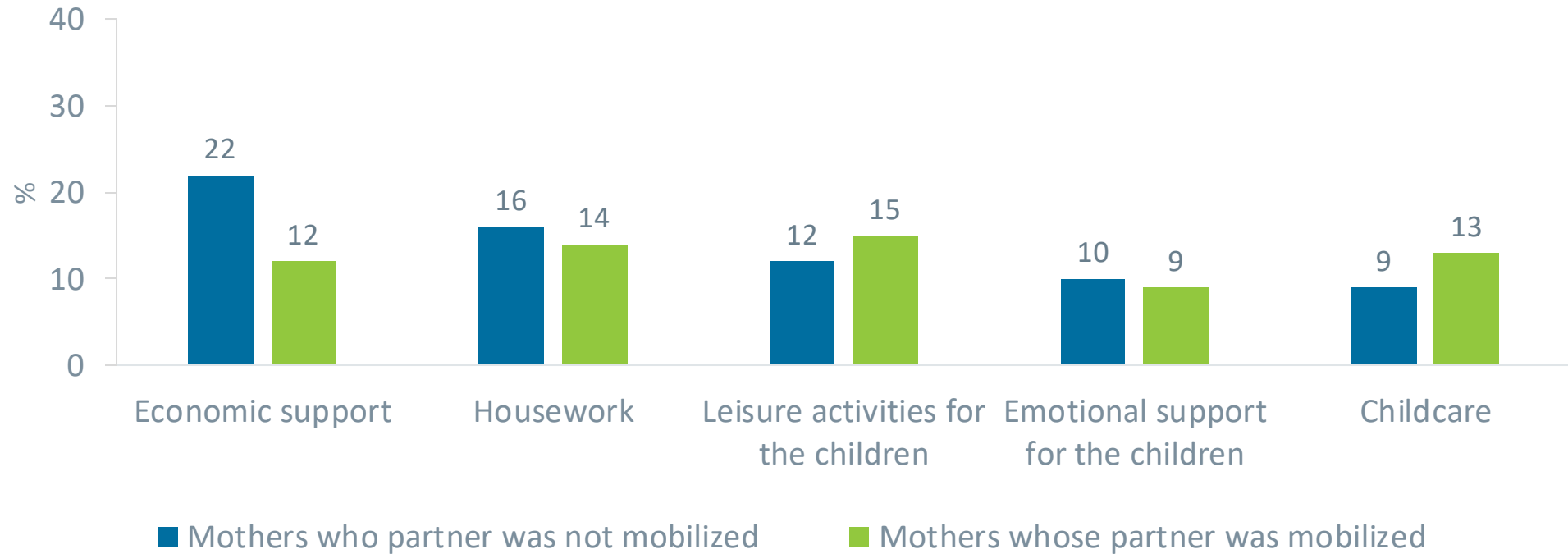


Respondents receiving various forms of assistance (percent)





If you could get additional assistance in only one area, what would you choose? (percent)





Additional background characteristics (percent)

Characteristic	Mothers whose partner was not mobilized	Mothers whose partner was mobilized
Lived in the periphery before the war	21	28
Age up to 35	43	57
Were employed before the war	86	82
Four or more children	17	13
Have a child under age 7	69	85
Have an academic degree	59	78
Above average family income	45	53



Summary of the findings from the comparison of the two groups (1)

- On many of the topics examined, the findings were similar for both the mothers whose spouses are currently serving in the IDF and the mothers whose spouses are not in the IDF.
- At the same time, a substantially higher percentage of the mothers whose spouses are in the IDF reported a very high degree of loneliness (21% versus 10%), worry about their spouses (47% versus 28%) and unmet personal needs. A higher proportion of those mothers also reported great difficulty in taking care of their personal needs (31% versus 17%).
- On the other hand, the mothers whose spouses are in the IDF receive more assistance than the other mothers in most of the areas examined, including assistance with childcare (38% versus 14%), assistance that gives them time for their personal needs (52% versus 30%) and assistance in preparing meals (22% versus 5%).



Summary of the findings from the comparison of the two groups (2)

- When asked to indicate the area in which it is most important for them to receive assistance, the mothers whose spouses are in the IDF were less likely to identify financial support as their greatest need.
- Conversely, they were more likely to identify assistance with children's leisure activities and assistance with household chores as their priority needs.



Conclusions and recommendations

- Mothers of young children, and especially those whose spouses are currently in the IDF, are going through an extremely challenging time.
- Many mothers receive significant assistance from their friends and family members, but they still face substantial challenges in a variety of areas.
- Employers, local authorities, voluntary organizations and government agencies can do more to help these mothers, and doing so would be an important contribution to our national and social resilience.
- Specific recommendations for each of these groups can be found on the MJB website.