



Rural Youth Perspectives on Land Ownership and Decision-Making Power: A Gendered Analysis from Central Asia

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Outline:

- Motivation & Research gap
- Research Questions
- Theoretical Framework
- Data & Methods
- National Frameworks
- Key Findings
- Key Takeaways



Global & Regional Importance

- Secure land rights improve livelihoods, productivity, and empower women and youth (*Kurbanov, Djanibekov, & Herzfeld, 2025*).
- Gender gaps in land ownership limit women's and youth's ability to invest and make decisions (*FAO, IFAD, & CGIAR, 2018*).
- In Central Asia, kinship and inheritance norms often restrict young women's control over property (land) (*Asian Development Bank (ADB), 2019*).

Research Gaps

- Few studies focus on rural youth and how gender and age intersect in shaping land ownership and autonomy.
- Limited regional evidence on how youth in Central Asia engage with land across different types of work.
- The role of household structure, such as living with parents, is rarely analyzed in relation to youth's decision-making power.

How do gender, household structures, and economic participation shape rural youth's land ownership and decision-making autonomy in Central Asia?

- **Land ownership & sector of work** – Do rural youth working in agriculture differ in land ownership from those in non-agriculture, and how does this differ by gender?
- **Household & family context** – How does living with parents affect young people's autonomy in land and property use decisions, particularly among young women?

The questions draw on Property Rights Theory and Household Bargaining Models to understand how institutional and household factors shape youth empowerment.

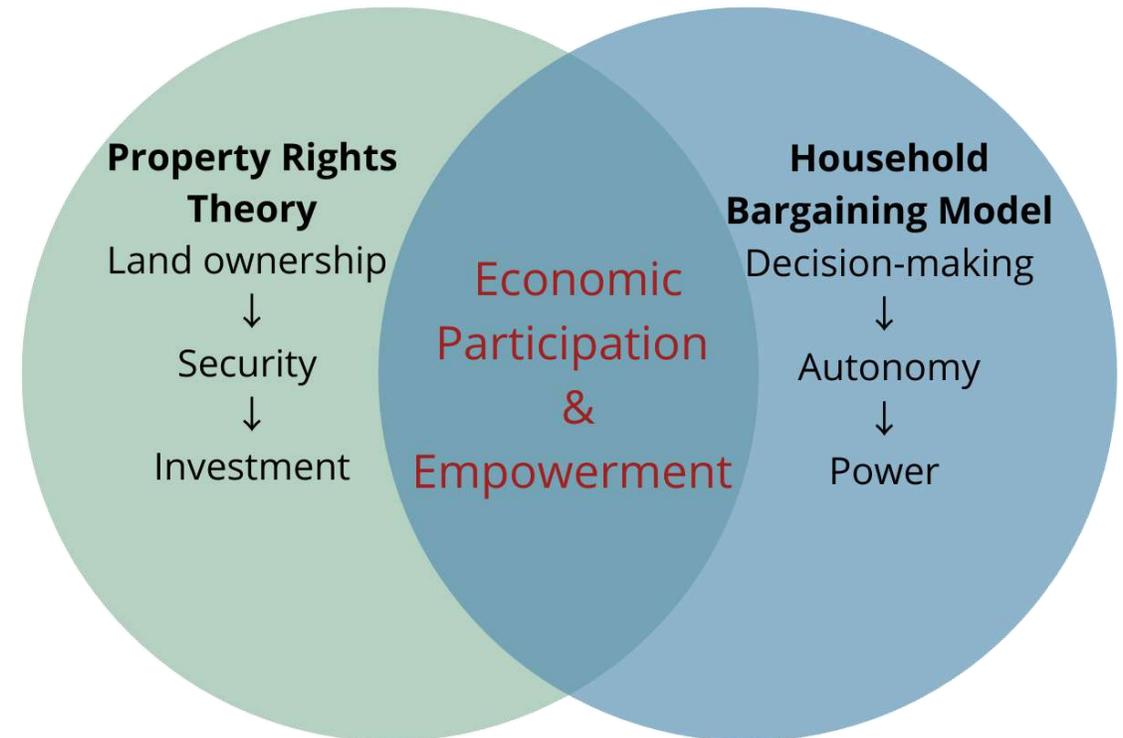


Property Rights Theory

- Secure ownership increases investment, productivity, and empowerment
- Youth and women with recognized land rights are more likely to engage in productive use and long-term planning
- Explains how legal and social recognition of land shapes economic opportunities

Household Bargaining Model (Seebens, 2011)

- Decision-making power depends on individuals' access to resources (income, land, assets)
- Within households, youth and women's control over land or income strengthens their bargaining position
- Helps explain variations in autonomy and decision-making within families



Data Sources

- Phone-based survey by FAO-UCA

Conceptual Evidence

- Literature review
- Policy Review

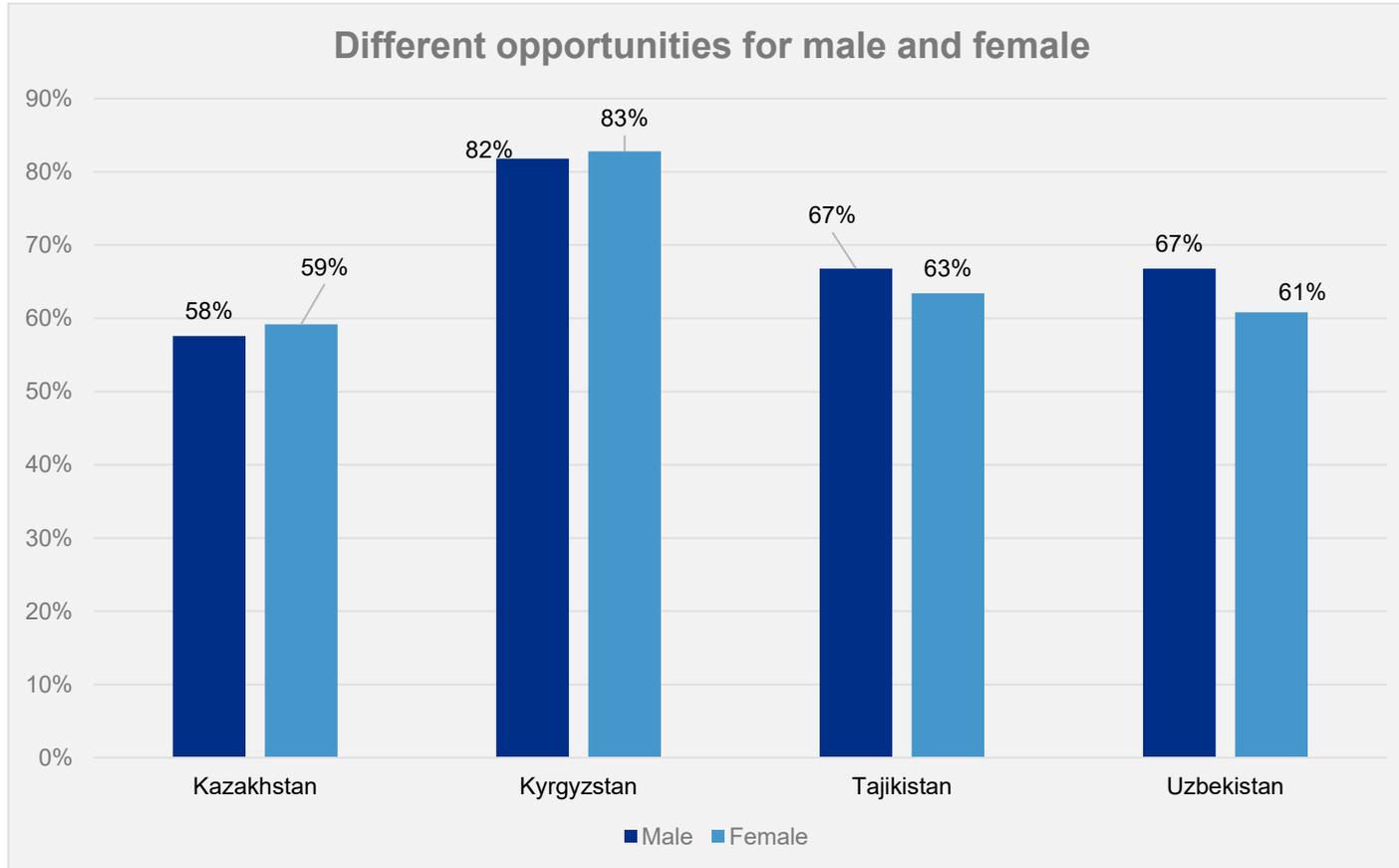
Methods

- Descriptive statistics
- Gender-disaggregated analysis

Sample by age group		18-23 years	24-30 years	31-35 years	Total
Each of the country	Female	200	200	100	500
	Male	200	200	100	500

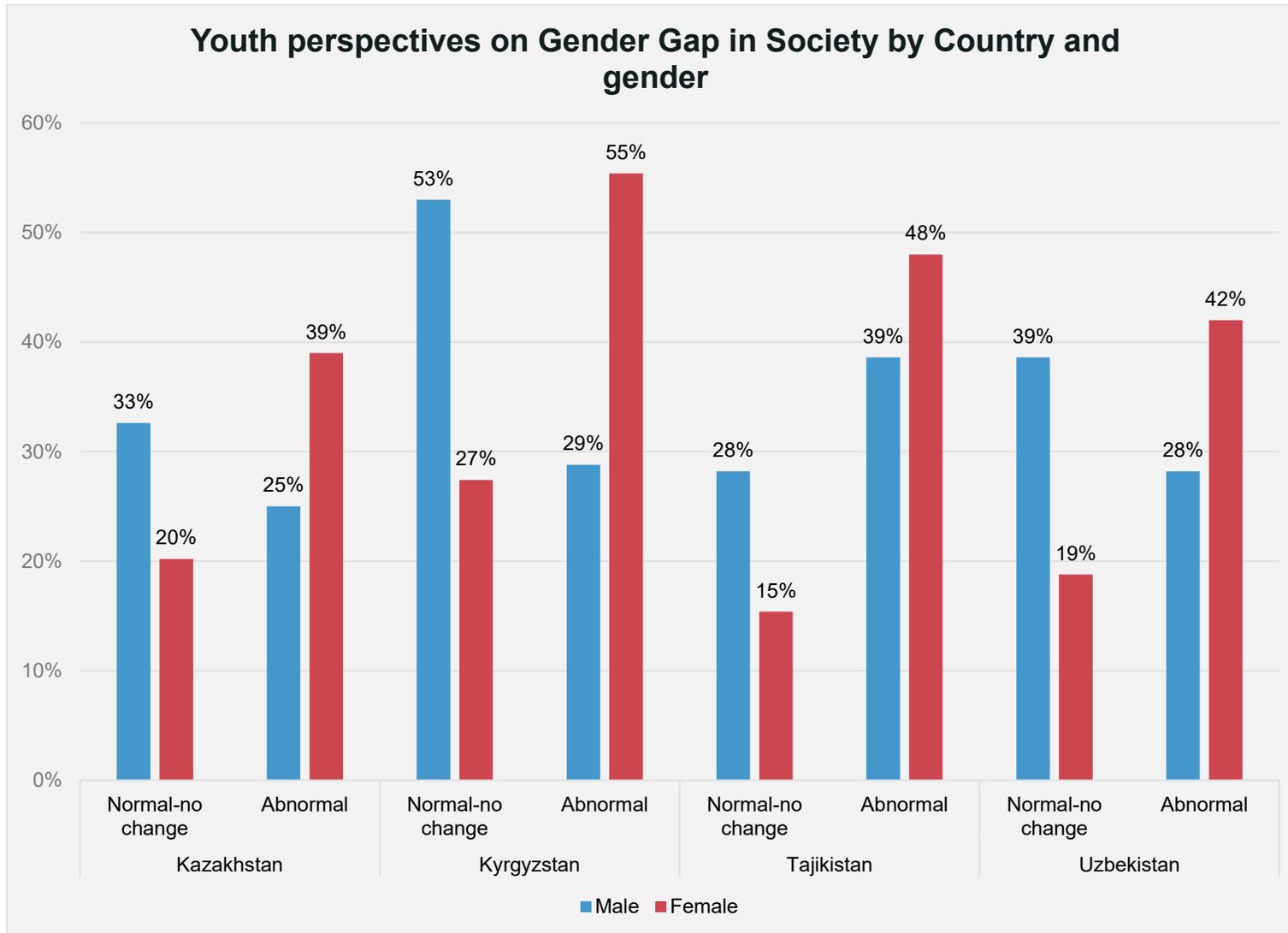


Policy Area	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Land Policies & Reforms	Modernized Land Code (2003, amended); introduced digital land cadastre and transparent land auctions; launched pilot projects for efficient agricultural land circulation (Land Code of Kazakhstan, Adilet, 2025; Kursiv Media, 2021).	Implementing Land Code reforms; upgraded land registration and digital mapping; land cadastre modernization improving rural investment climate (Land Code of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2025).	Land Code reforms strengthened land-use certificates and family farm registration; developing a national land-use database for better allocation (Land Code of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2012).	Land Reform Roadmap (since 2019) introduced digital land information system, transparent land leasing, and sustainable land-use projects (FAO Uzbekistan, 2025).
Youth Policies	National Youth Policy (till 2029) supports entrepreneurship, skills training, and rural youth employment; over 200 youth resource centers nationwide (Government of Kazakhstan, 2023; Senate of the Parliament, 2024).	Youth Development Concept promotes employment, start-ups, and civic engagement; regional youth centers provide entrepreneurship and digital-skills programs (UNFPA Kyrgyzstan, 2022).	National Youth Strategy integrates youth priorities into education and jobs; Youth Innovation Centers support rural start-ups and green initiatives (UNDP Tajikistan, 2021).	Youth Policy reforms (2021) established “Youth Book” and “Youth Industrial Zones”; connecting young people with education, business grants, and training (President of Uzbekistan, 2021; Tashkent Times, 2021).
Gender Equality Strategies	National Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan implemented; gender quotas introduced in parliament and local councils; rising women’s participation in business (Law on Gender Equality, Kazakhstan, 2009; Bureau of National Statistics, 2024).	National Gender Equality Strategy (2021–2030) enhances women’s rights and leadership; gender focal points in ministries and local governments (UN Kyrgyzstan, 2024).	National Strategy for the Advancement of Women expanded microfinance and leadership training; increasing women’s representation in local councils (World Bank, 2021).	Gender Equality Law (2019) institutionalized equal opportunities; regional gender councils established; nationwide expansion of women’s employment programs (Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2019; UzDaily, 2020).



- Majority of youth acknowledge unequal gender opportunities
- Highest agreement observed in Kyrgyzstan
- Male-female views largely consistent across countries

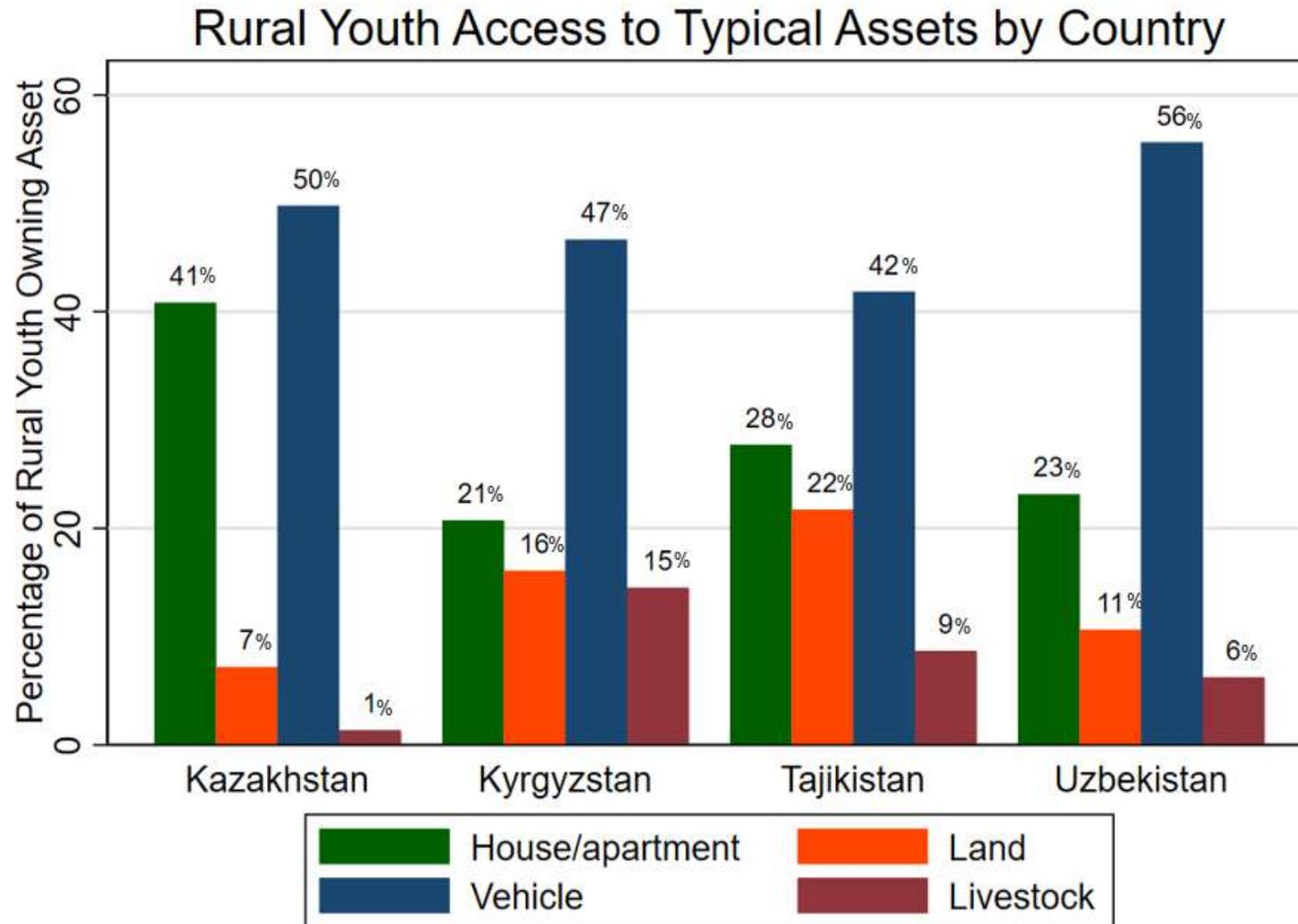
*Note: % of youth agreeing, by gender
Source: FAO-UCA Phone survey (2024)*



- More females than males think gender inequality is not normal and should change
- Males are more likely to see gender gaps as normal.

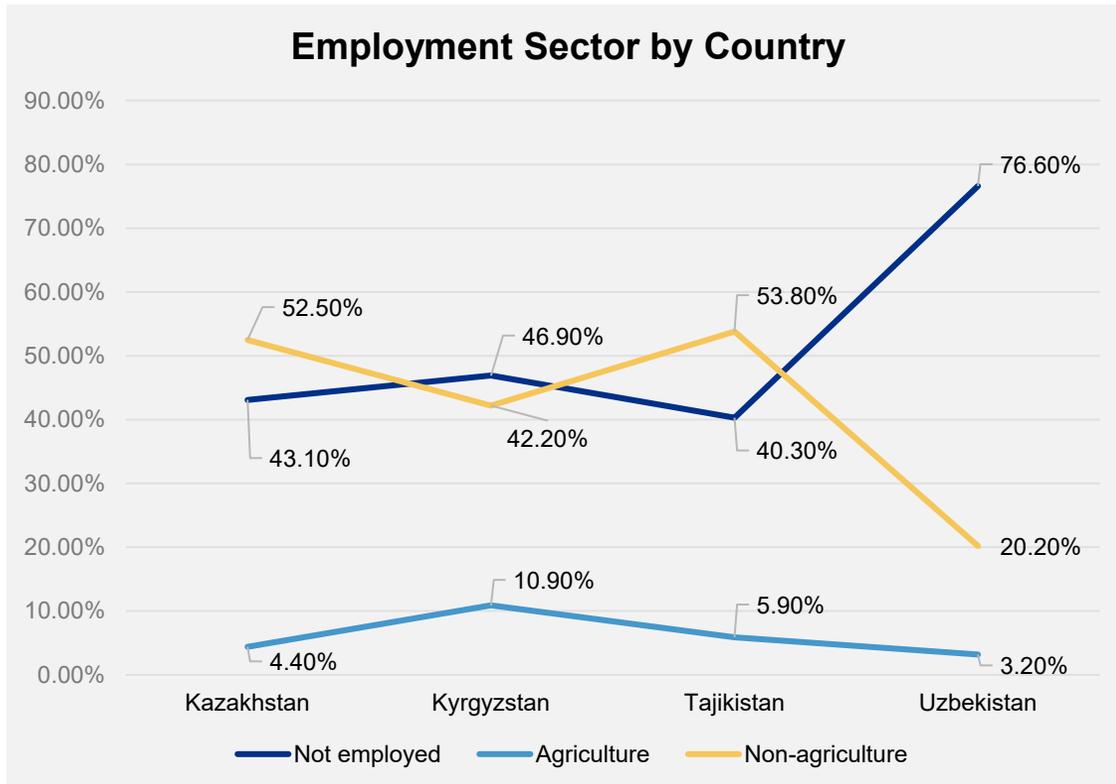
Source: FAO-UCA Phone survey (2024)

RQ1: Land ownership and sector of work (i)

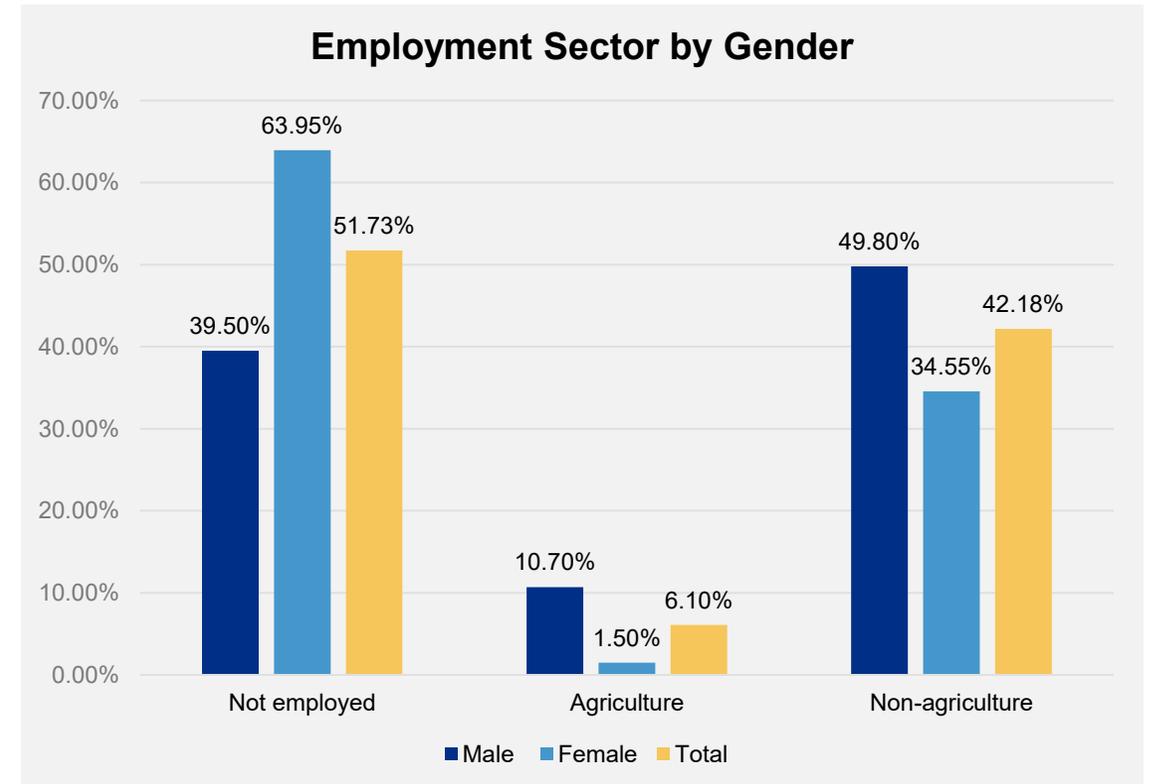


Source: FAO-UCA Phone survey (2024)

RQ1: Land ownership and sector of work (ii)



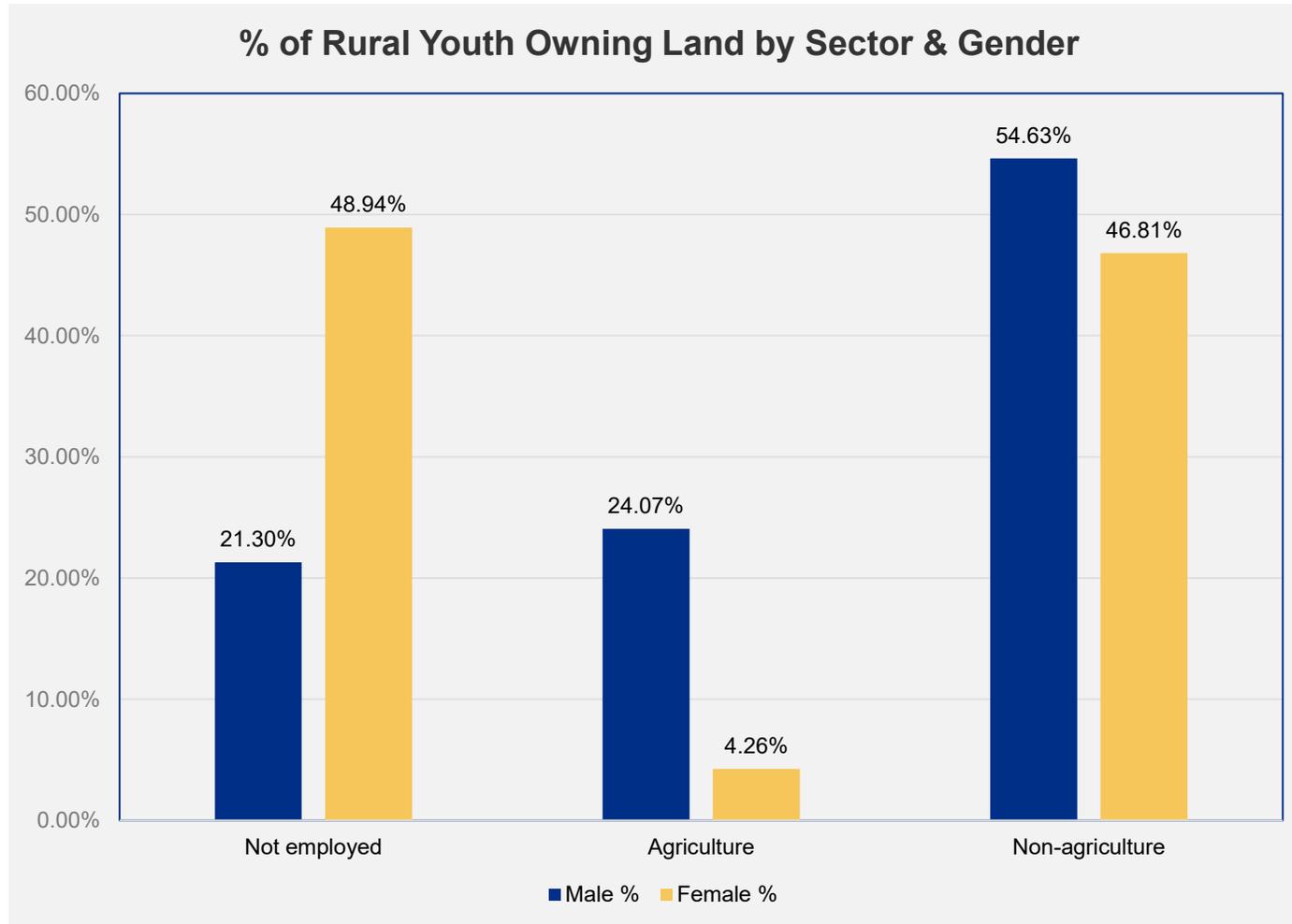
In most countries, rural youth are predominantly non-employed, with limited participation in agriculture and growing engagement in non-agricultural sectors.



Female youth show much higher non-employment rates than males, who are more active in both agricultural and non-agricultural work.

Source: FAO-UCA Phone survey (2024)

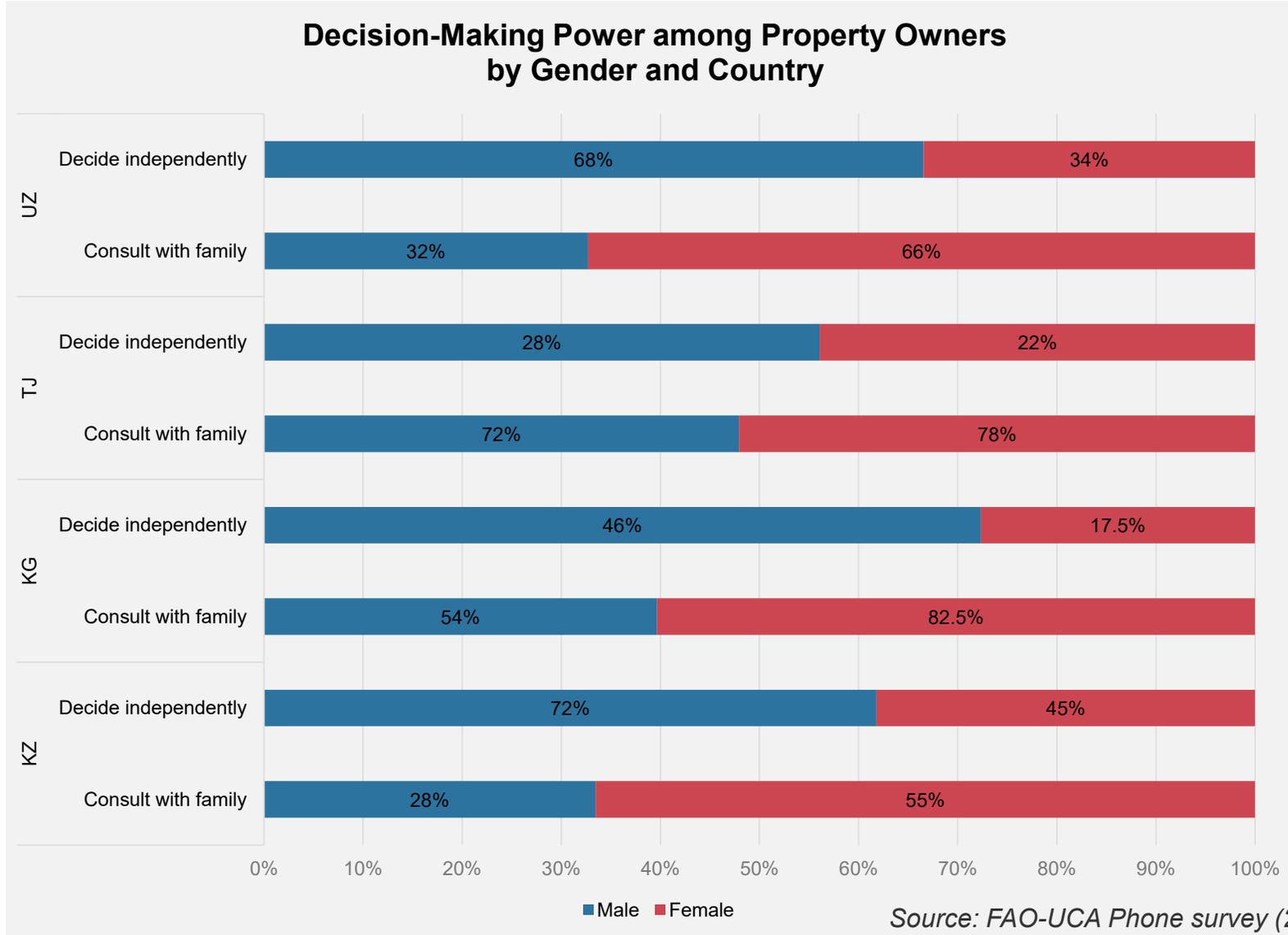
RQ1: Land ownership and sector of work (iii)

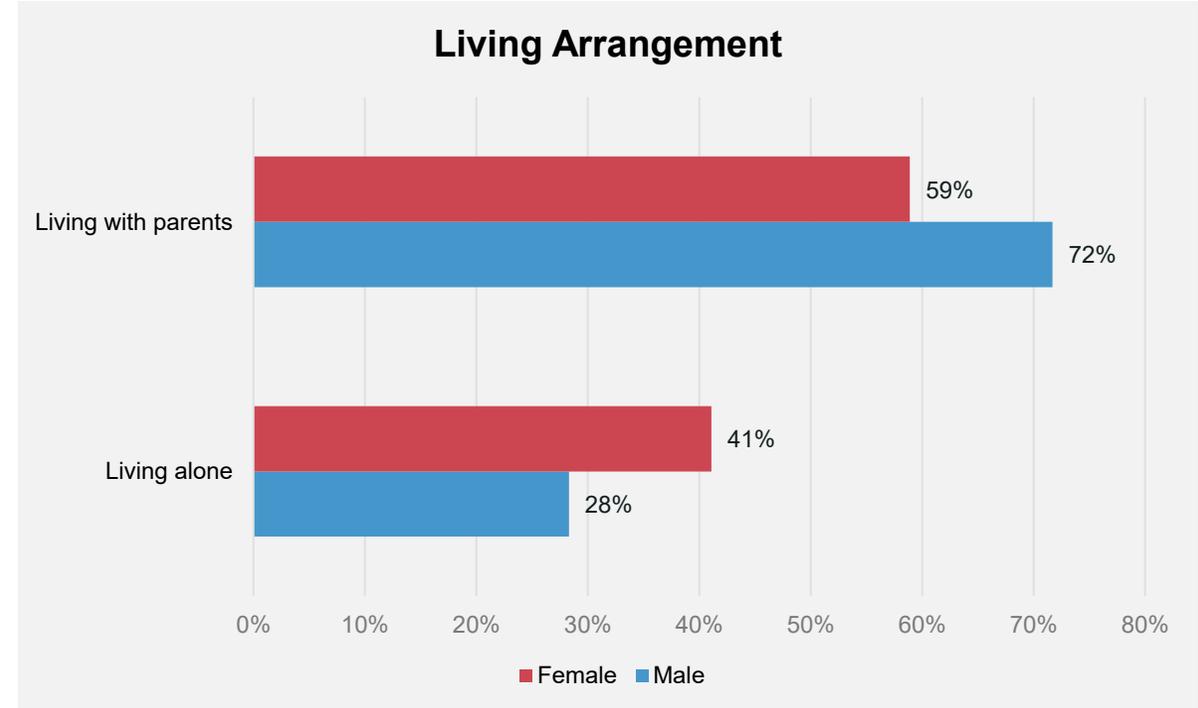
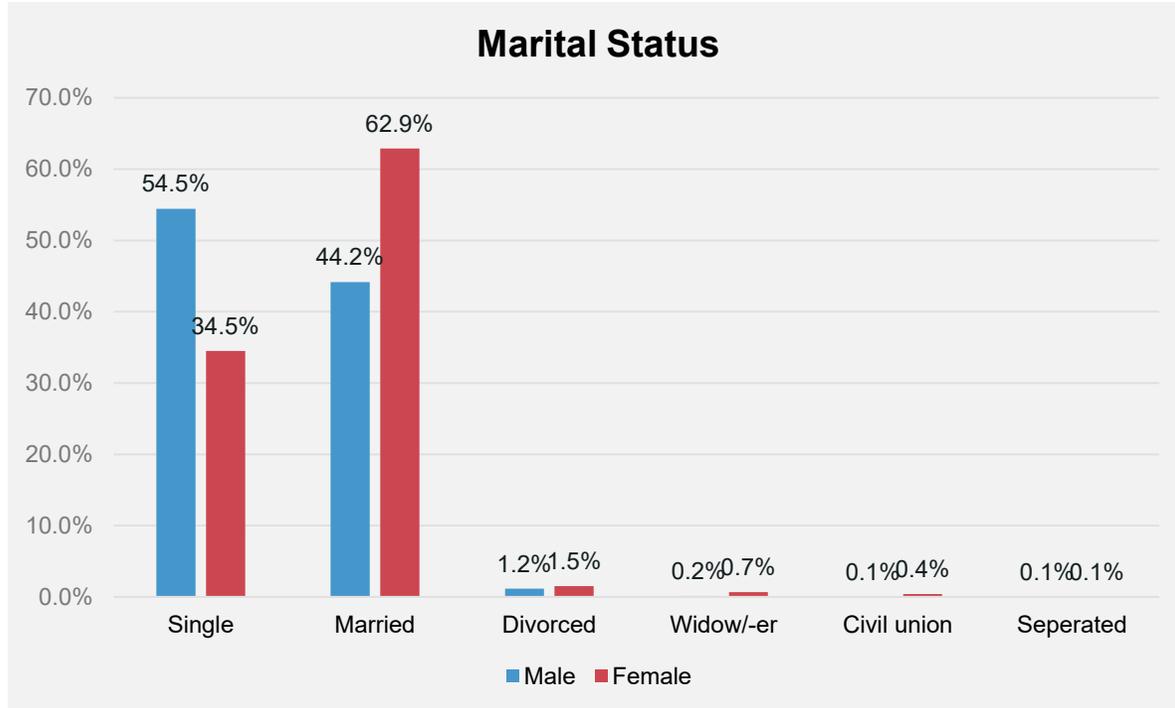


Note: Female agriculture sample small (n=30). Percentages may vary due to sample size.

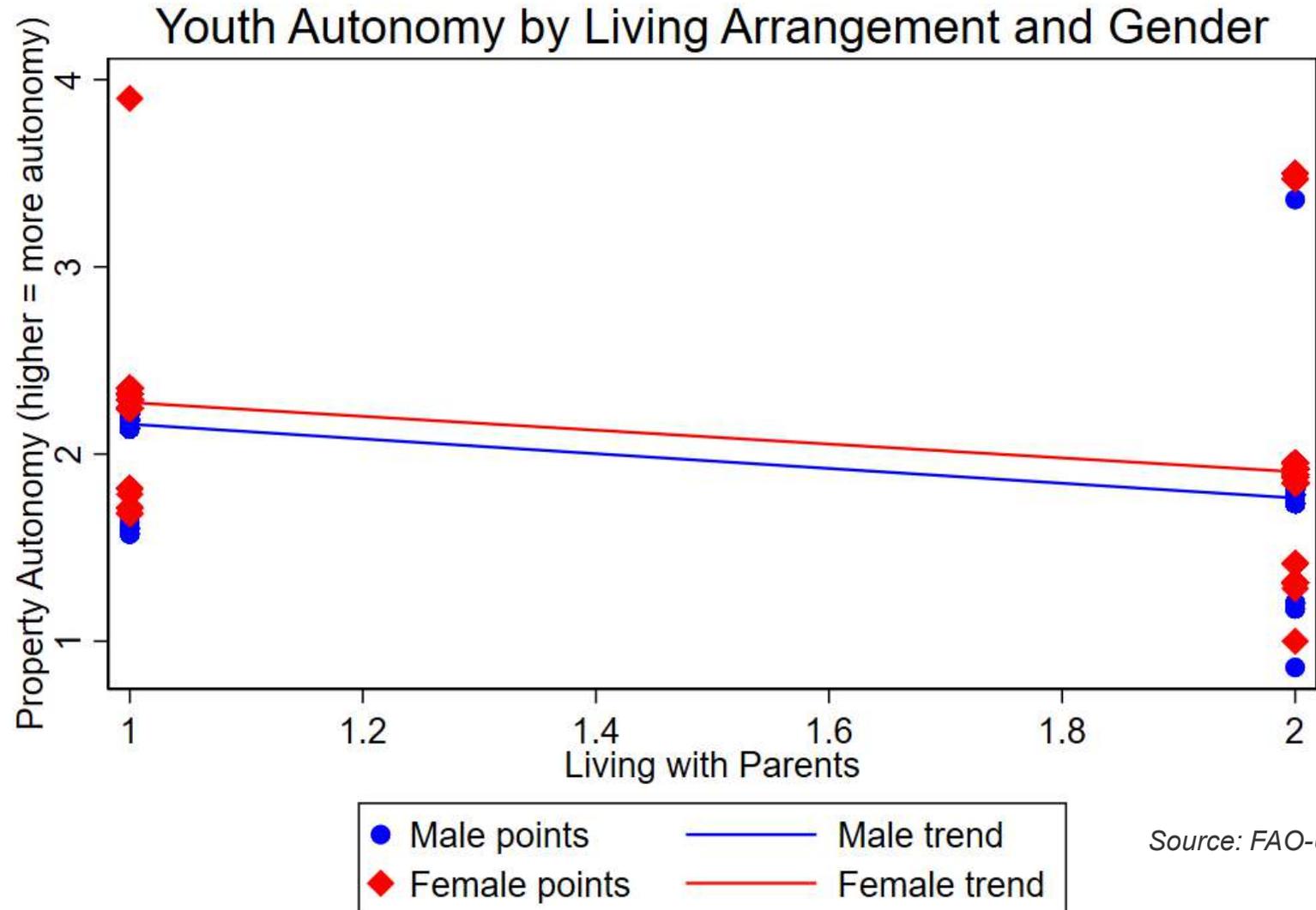
Male	Female	Total
108	47	155

Source: FAO-UCA Phone survey (2024)





Source: FAO-UCA Phone survey (2024)



Source: FAO-UCA Phone survey (2024)

Key Takeaways and Policy Insights

- Low land ownership among youth and women → weaker rights → fewer incentives to invest in agriculture.
- Land ownership is not strongly linked to agricultural work.
- Men more often decide independently about property → unequal control rights
- Women and youth consult family or depend on parents → reflects weaker bargaining power.
- Living with parents significantly reduces youth autonomy (regression coef ≈ -0.40).
- Make land registration youth- and gender-friendly (simpler rules, joint titles).
- Expand youth access to finance, training, and services - especially for women.
- Tackle household barriers: build negotiation skills, legal awareness, and support independent housing.

Thank You!



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