

Decreasing Domestic Drudgery: Why It Matters and What We Know About What Works in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

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Men and women tend to use their time differently

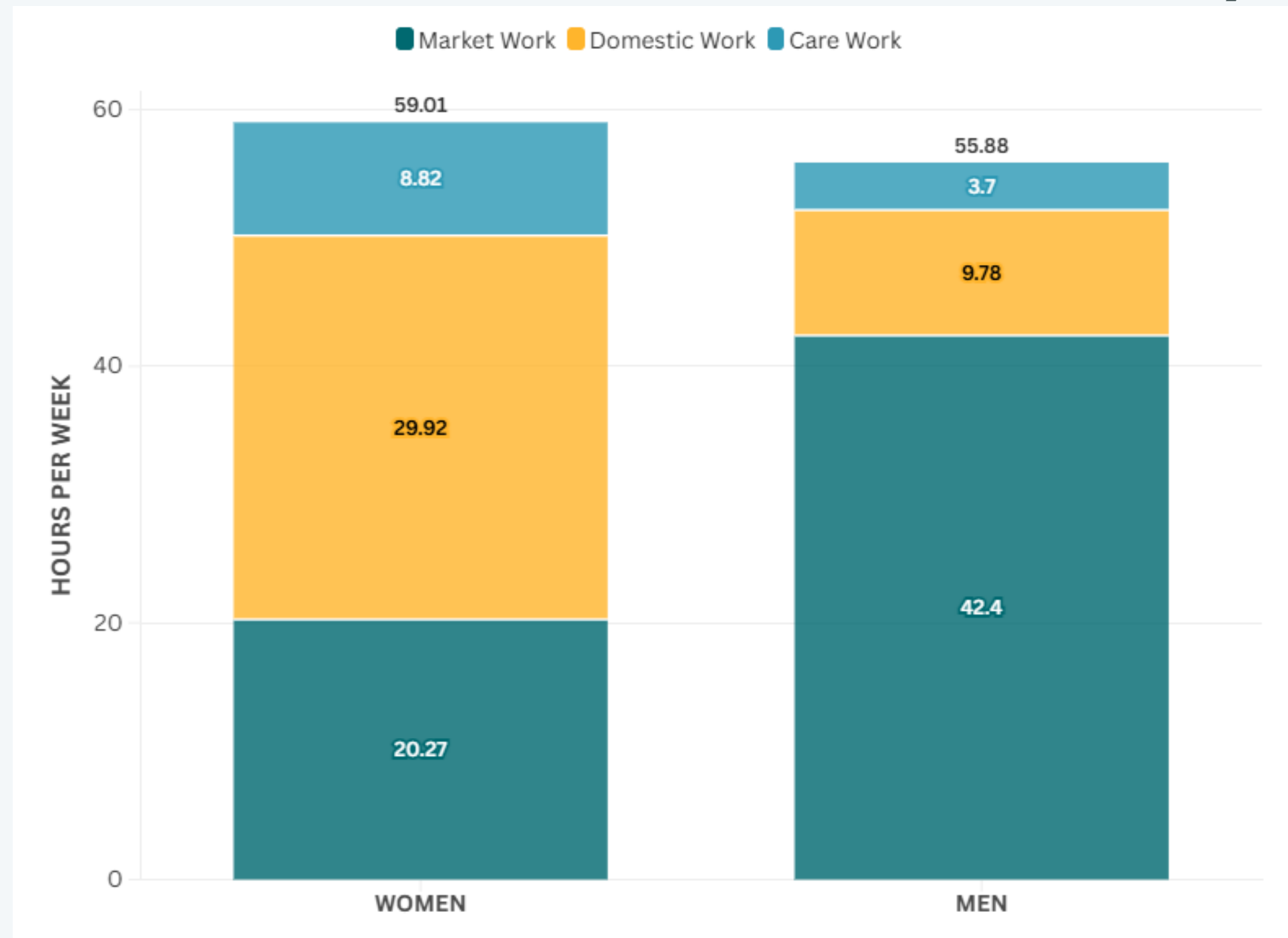


Figure created by authors using data from [Gottlieb et al. \(2024\)](#) on average weekly hours worked by married working-age adults, based on “high-quality time-use data from 77 nationally representative surveys covering 7.4 million individual diaries across 50 countries”.

Methodology & scope of review

1. Focus

- unpaid arduous domestic work (e.g., cooking, cleaning, laundry, fetching water & fuel)

2. Study inclusion criteria

- Estimate causal impacts on women's time spent on domestic drudgery
- Published in English between 2010 and 2025
- Focus on low- or middle-income countries

3. Approach

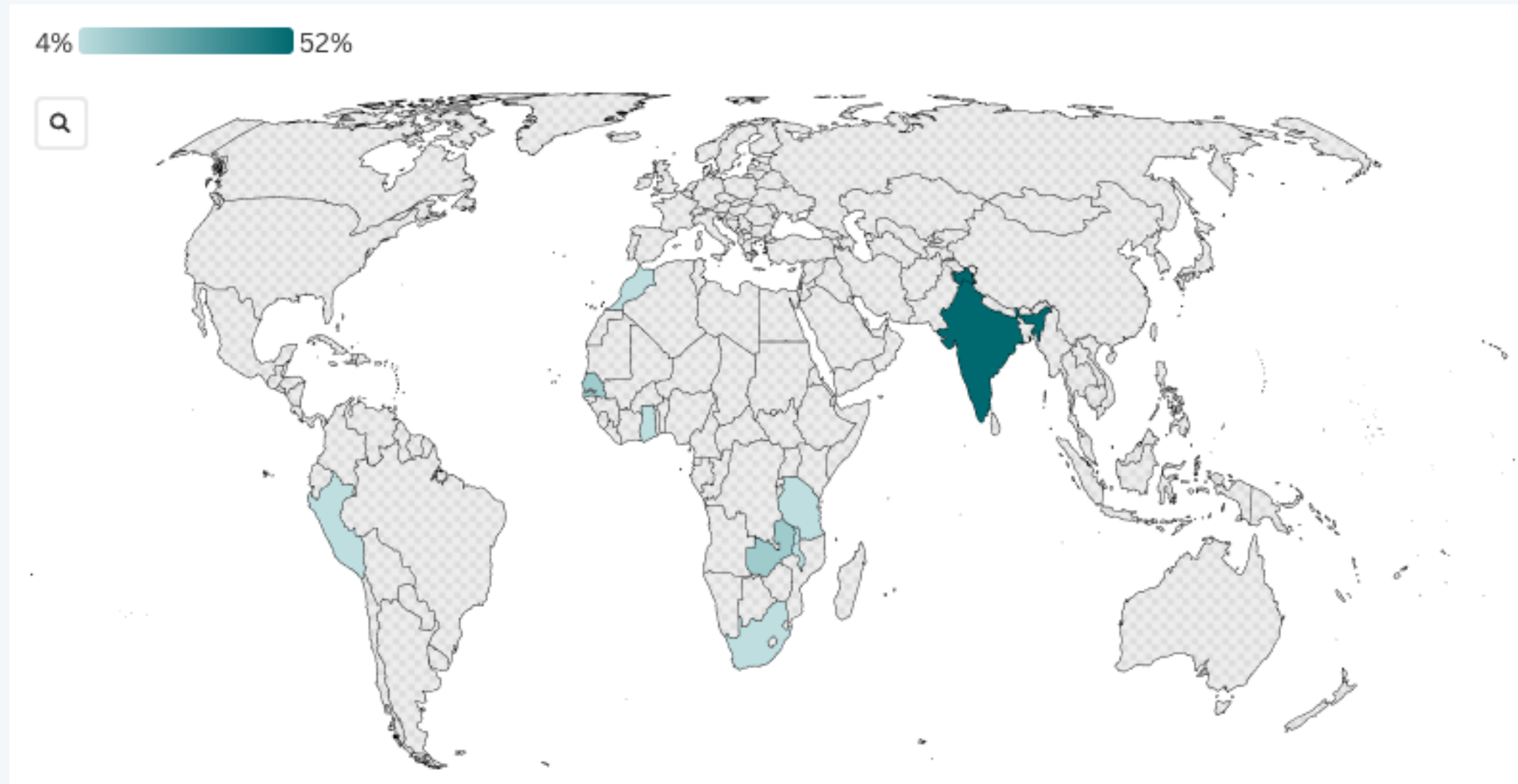
- Identify a set of anchor studies → expand list based on citation networks

4. Resulting sample

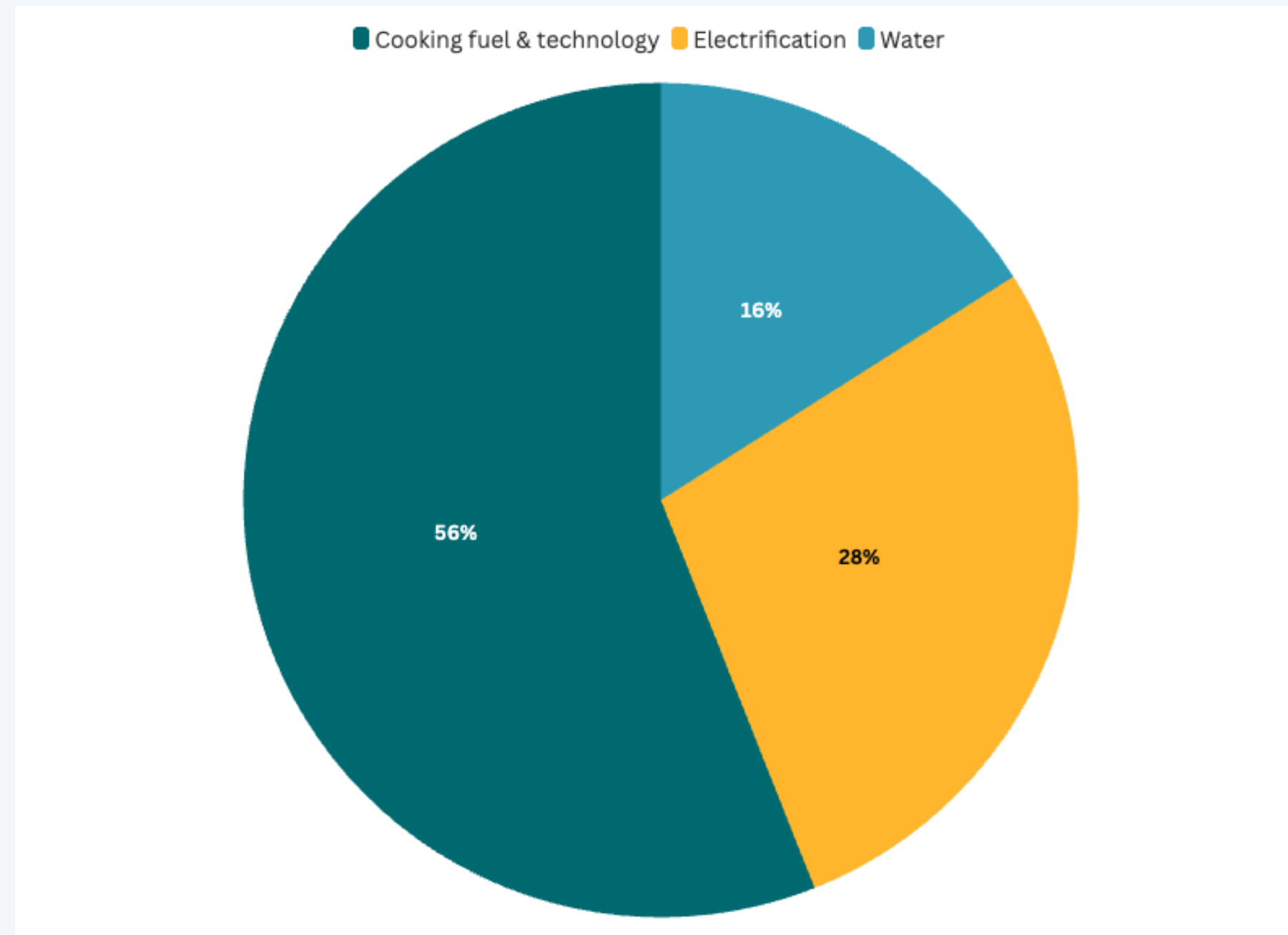
- 25 studies [16 published in 2020 or later]



Most evidence comes from India

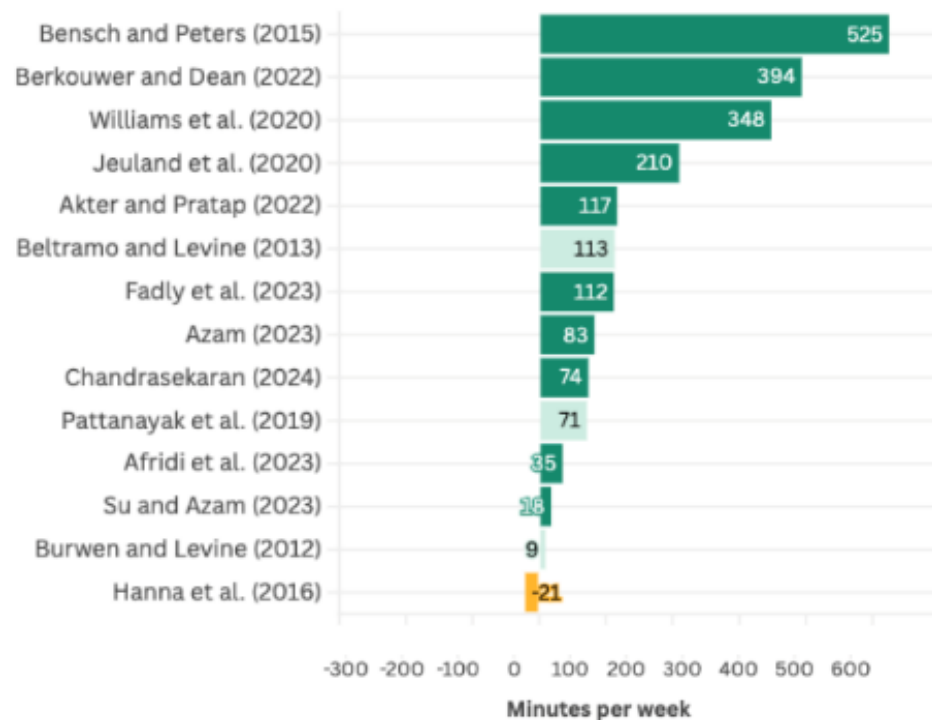


Most studies analyze cooking fuel and technology

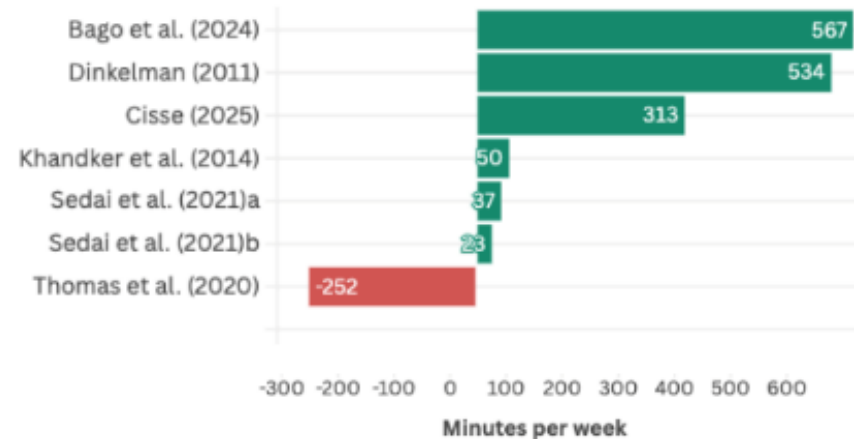


Reductions in domestic drudgery

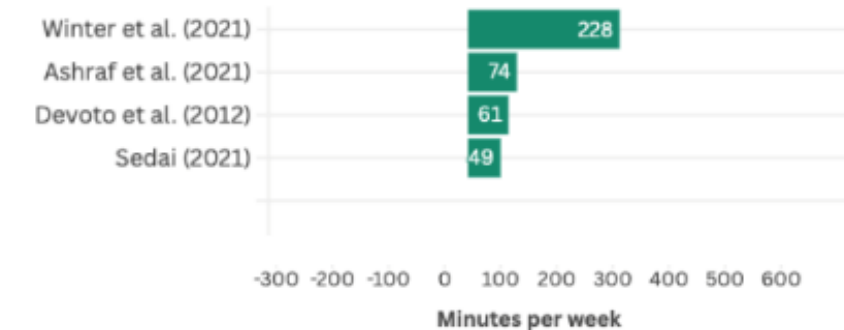
Cooking fuel & technology



Electrification



Water

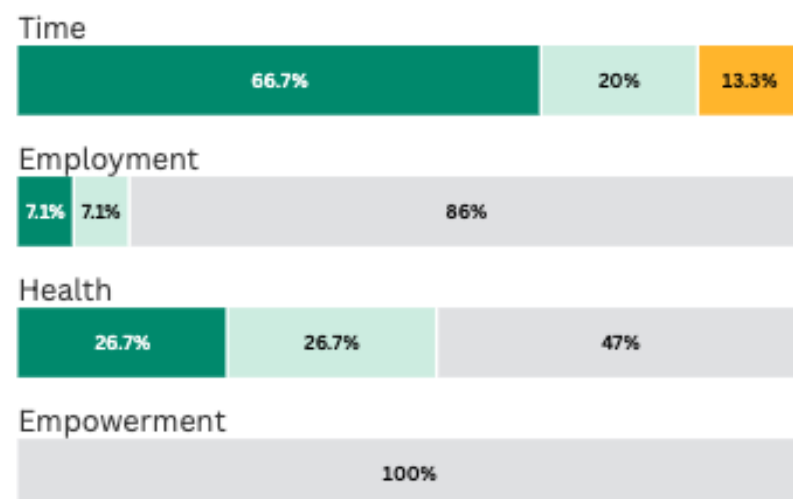


■ Positive, significant
 ■ Positive, insignificant
 ■ Negative, insignificant
 ■ Negative, significant
 ■ N/A

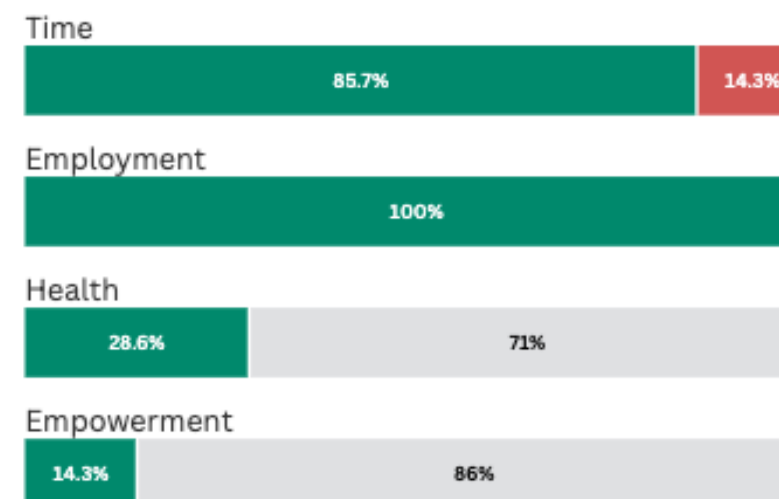
Effects by intervention type

■ Positive, significant
 ■ Positive, insignificant
 ■ Negative, insignificant
 ■ Negative, significant
 ■ N/A

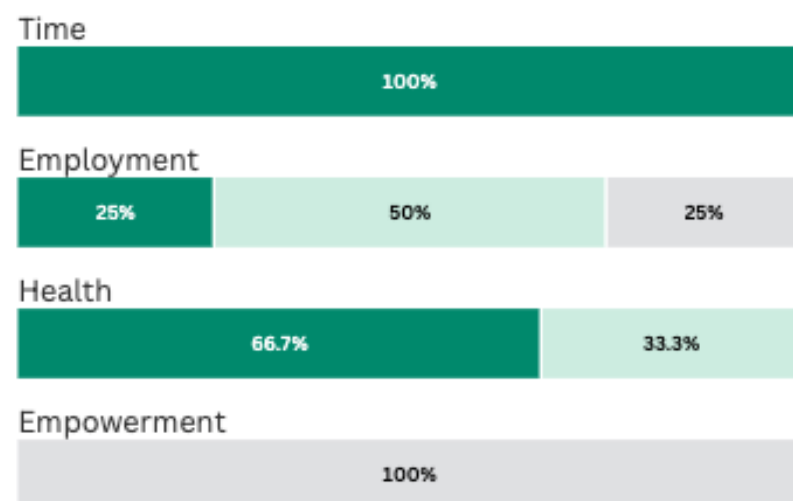
Panel A: Cooking fuel & technology (14 studies)



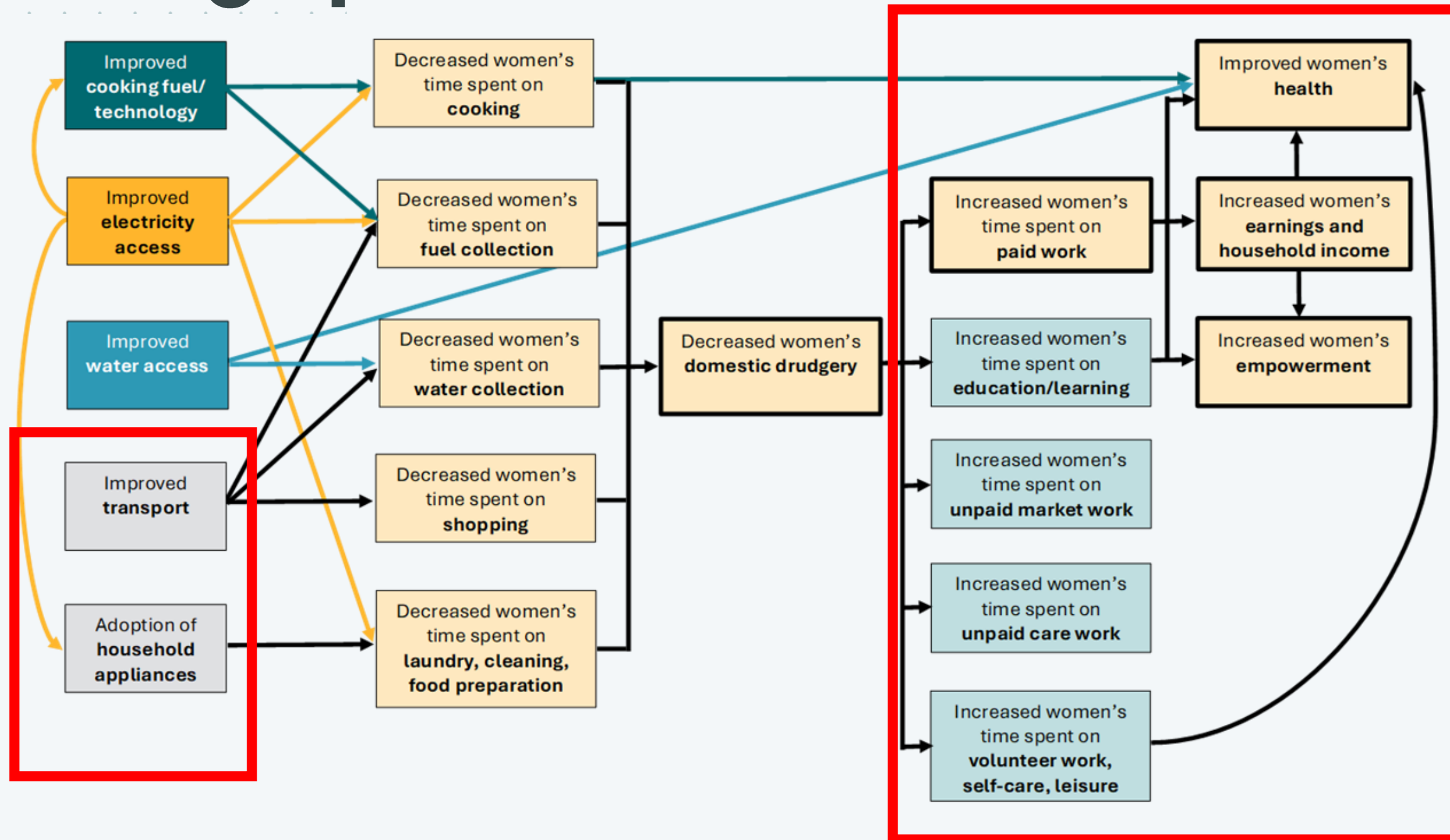
Panel B: Electrification (7 studies)



Panel C: Water (4 studies)



Evidence gaps



Implications – Research

1. **Improve data collection:** Prioritize time-use surveys and qualitative evidence on social norms.
2. **Refine standardization:** Develop cross-study measures for time use impacts.
3. **Broaden outcome metrics:** Incorporate employment, social engagement, and wellbeing measures.
4. **Enhance cost-effectiveness analysis:** Integrate ROI estimates.

Implications – Policy

- **Pair infrastructure with inclusion efforts**
Time savings alone may not translate into empowerment without economic opportunities.
- **Leverage cost-effective solutions**
Early evidence suggests high returns for low-cost interventions like LPG stoves and water access.
- **Align with green transition goals**
Cleaner cooking fuels and electrification reduce drudgery and emissions.

Thank you!



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