

Title: **Differences between the Socio-Economic Characteristics of Male and Female Household Heads and their Households in Cameroon**

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This study seeks to bring out the differences that exist between the socio-economic features of female and male household heads as well as their households. The analysis of the data for this study revealed the following:-

A greater proportion of male than female household heads in Cameroon are educated, earn a permanent wage, in marital unions and have at least one personal source of income. Male household heads are by far higher in proportion than female heads of households especially in rural areas. It can be expected that with increasing urbanization, the proportion of female household heads will rise even though women will still remain in minority as household heads. Women head smaller households than men. This is exemplified by smaller average household sizes for households headed by women in both rural and urban areas of Cameroon. Households headed by women are mostly simpler ones which are either single parent or single persons' households. A greater proportion of female than male household heads owns their dwelling. Overcrowding within sleeping rooms expressed by the average number of persons per room is common in households headed by men than those headed by women. Little variation exists among households headed by men and those headed by women in terms of access to electricity, water and modern toilet facilities. The differences in the characteristics of female and male household heads as well as their households are a result of many years of differential treatment of men and women in terms of access to education, access to land, access to credit and position of decision-making. Even though the socio-economic position of the female household head is generally worse than that of her male counterpart, increasing urbanization and modernization give hope for an improved status for the female household head

Key words: Household, household head, economic situation, economic vulnerability

Source of Data and Methodology

Source of Data

Data for this study comes from the Third General Population and Housing Census of Cameroon. Variables linked to the household head defined as the person who heads a household and whose authority is acknowledged by all its members such as the sex, sector of residence, marital status, employment situation and situation within employment, age etc. that were supposedly collected on all household heads are used in the study. This study also uses information collected on the dwelling units the different households in Cameroon such as their ownership, the amenities that they possess and their class or standing

Methodology

The information used in this study was collected on the total population and on all the households (ordinary households) in Cameroon from the 11-24 November, 2005. Like many other African censuses, this census was made up of two parts. There was a first part that collected information on all individuals living in the different households in Cameroon and the second part that collected information on the housing conditions of the population.

Some of the variables used in this study come directly from the census questionnaire while others are derived from a combination of variables (composite variables). Composite variables or derived variables include variables such as economic vulnerability and class of household dwelling unit.

The method of analysis is essentially descriptive with the use of ratios, rates, percentages, pie and bar charts.

Some Limitations of the Study

- The concept of “household” seemed to be mistaken in some situations with that of the “family”
- The term “household head” used in this study refers to that declared by the household who in some circumstances may not be the real head. It is likely some men may have been declared as household heads when they effectively do not head the households.

Despite these and perhaps other limitations, the notions of household and household head are useful for data collection and analysis

Definition of some Concepts Used in this Study

Household: The term household used in this study, refers to the private or ordinary household made of a group of related or unrelated persons who live together under the roof or concession and often meeting their basic needs together under the authority of one person called the household head

Economic Vulnerability of Household Head: A household head is said to be economically vulnerable if he or she has no source of personal income which can be from rents, pension or a wage earned from working.

Introduction

Many years of differential access to education, income, employment and positions of authority between males and females in Cameroon has resulted in many socio-economic differences between them. One of the domains where such differences are noticed is in the domain of household leadership. Due to cultural and other factors the proportion of female household heads is very small especially in the rural areas and their average household sizes are significantly smaller than those headed by men. Female household heads are predominant among single parent, widowed and economically vulnerable household ones..

Female headed households in Cameroon are generally smaller and of simpler structures compared to those headed by men. Due to the fact that a significant proportion of female household heads are of advanced ages, there is greater likelihood that the housing situations of their households expressed by ownership of dwelling units and access to household facilities such as electricity, pipe borne water, modern toilet facilities, etc are higher than for male counterparts. This study is divided into four sections namely: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Male and Female Household Heads, Sex of household Heads and House Size and Composition, Economic Situation of Male and Female Household Heads and Housing Conditions of Households Headed by Males and Females.

1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Male and Female Household Heads

The socio-demographic characteristics of male and female household heads examined here concerns their ages, sex, educational levels, marital status and employment status. A study of these characteristics is important because they have an important bearing on the living conditions of household members, household size, child upbringing, the consumption of goods and services and the occurrence of demographic phenomena such as marriage, death and migration.

1.1 Distribution of Household Heads by Sex

Sex is one of the key factors that determine access to the position of household leadership especially in societies where men are overwhelmingly present in positions of leadership and decision-making culturally and otherwise. Men are often considered as household heads irrespective of their ages or economic situation or ability to take decisions on behalf of all or some members of the household. Boys as young as 10 are sometimes declared as household heads just because by tradition they represent their departed father. These boys often exercise no authority over other household members. In other situations, very old men who may not exercise any real power over a household are declared as household heads. In other situations, the way the interviewer poses the question to determine the household gives the impression that the household head must necessary be a man. A question such as “Who is the father of this household” is often asked in order to determine the household. For these and other reasons, men are disproportionately present among household heads among male dominated societies such as that of Cameroon (table 1).

Table 1 Household Heads by Sex and Sector of Residence

Sector of Residence	% Distribution of Household Heads by Sex	
	Male	Female
Urban	75.3	24.7
Rural	78.9	21.1
Total	77.0	23.0

Despite the fact that women make up more than 51% of the population of Cameroon (3rd GPHC, 2005), they constitute only 23.0% of the population of ordinary household heads. The proportion of female household heads is higher in urban (24.7%) than rural areas

(21.1%), (table 1). The higher proportion of female household heads in urban than rural areas can be attributed to the fact that there are many women studying in institutions of higher learning in urban areas and living singly, higher liberty of women to live alone and outside marriage in their households in urban than rural areas, etc. Female household headship is often limited to the absence of a male adult.

With increasing urbanization, the fact that many couples are increasingly living apart for work reasons and a higher migration rate for married men than women, the proportion of female household heads in Cameroon is expected to increase. Considering the slow increase of the proportion of female household heads, it is not expected to go above 30% at least for the next 15 or 20 years.

1.2 Age Distribution of Male and Female Household Heads

Age like sex, constitutes one of the factors that determine access to the position of household head. Even though men are often household heads, women may become household heads in the presence of very young males especially children. The age of the household head has important effects on the size, composition and structure of household; for example small households are often associated with very young household heads.

Men in the Cameroonian society have a higher liberty than women to become household heads at very early ages. Allowing young women to become household heads to live on their own at very young ages and to head their own households is often unacceptable by many Cameroonian customs. Many women become household heads at advanced ages when they may have become widows. For these reasons the mean age for female household heads is expected to be higher than that of their male counterparts.

Table 2 Households by Sex and Mean Age

Sector of Residence	Mean Age of Household Head by Sex		Mean Age of Household Head (both sexes)
	Male	Female	
Urban	40.3	43.0	40.9
Rural	45.1	51.8	46.5
Total	42.6	46.6	43.6

In both rural and urban areas of Cameroon, the mean ages of female household heads are higher than for males. While the gap between the mean ages of female and male household heads in rural areas is 2.7 years, it is as high at 6.7years in urban areas, (table 2).

The predominance of males as household heads is common at all ages as shown by figure 1

Figure 1a Age Pyramid of Urban Household Heads

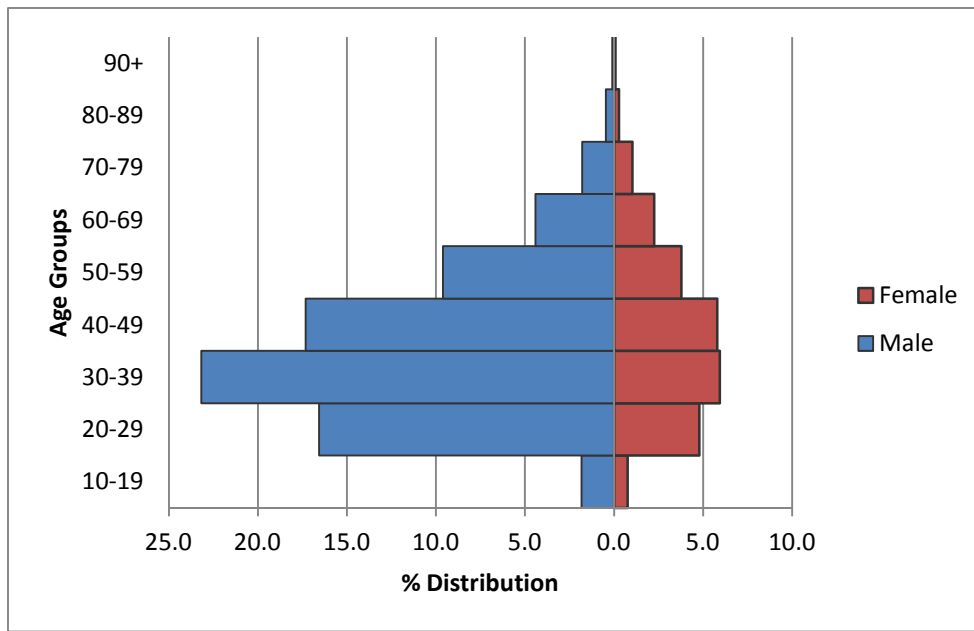


Figure 1b Age Pyramid of Rural Household Heads

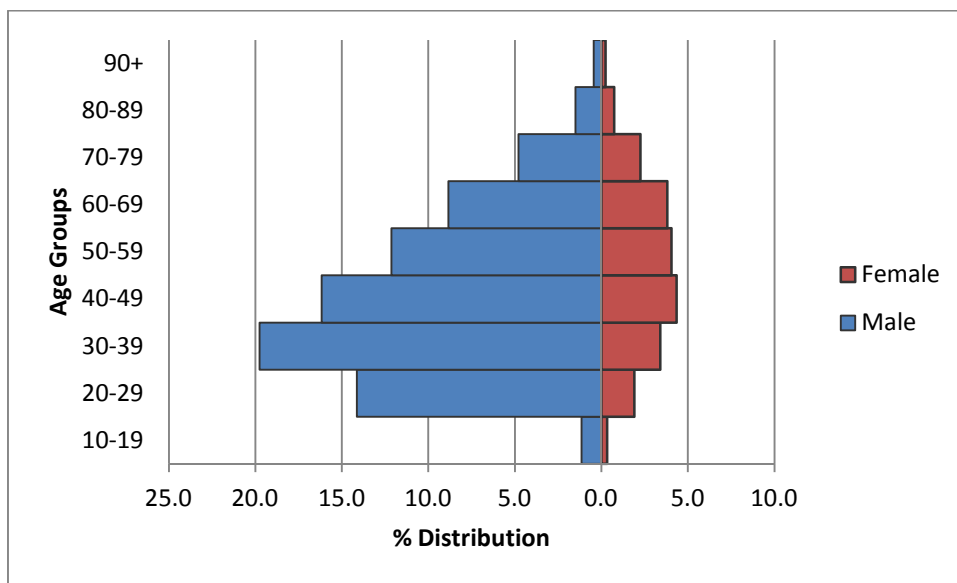
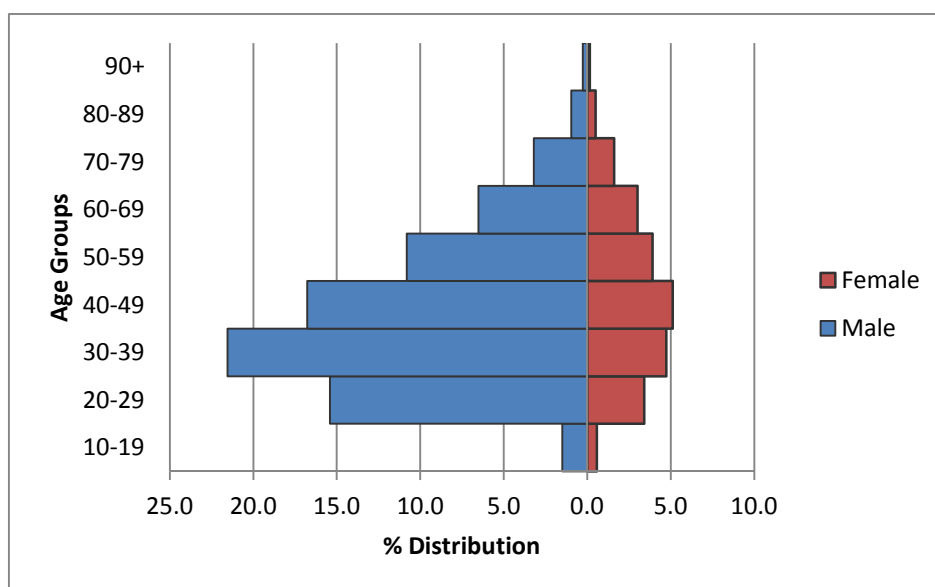


Figure 1c Age Pyramids of Household Heads (both Urban and Rural Areas)



Between 10 and 19 years, the proportion of female and male household heads is very small both in rural and urban areas. The proportion of female adolescent household heads is far smaller than that of males. A bulk of ordinary household heads both males and females is found within the age brackets 20 to 59 with the overwhelming dominance of male household heads. The proportion of household heads both males and females who are 60 years and above is very small but there is near equality both in the proportions of male and female household heads (figures 1a, b, c). This is an indication of the lower life expectancy for women than men and the relatively high age differences between wives and husbands in Cameroon and many other sub-Saharan countries.

1.3 Educational Levels of Male and Female Household Heads

The educational level of the household head is one of the factors that determine their access to gainful employment and hence the wellbeing of the household. It also largely determines the occurrence of demographic events such as mortality, migration and fertility within the household. Unfortunately female household heads like women in general lag behind men in terms of educational attainment (table 3)

Table 3: Male and Female Household Heads by Levels of Education

Educational	% Distribution by Sex								
	Urban Sector			Rural Sector			Both Sectors		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Non	47.2	52.8	100.0	64.7	35.3	100.0	58.7	41.3	100.0
Primary	70.2	29.8	100.0	78.9	21.1	100.0	76.2	33.8	100.0
Secondary	78.7	22.3	100.0	88.3	11.7	100.0	81.2	18.8	100.0
Higher	81.4	18.6	100.0	78.9	21.1	100.0	82.2	17.8	100.0

Women who make up only 23% of ordinary household heads in Cameroon make up to 41.3% of household heads with no education. In both rural and urban areas, women are represented in higher proportions among household heads with no or low education and less than proportionately

represented among household heads with higher educational levels. The general trend is a reduction of the proportion of female household heads with increase in educational levels. This to a large extent reflects the general gender differences in educational levels witnessed in both rural and urban areas in Cameroon.

1.4 Marital Status of Male and Female Household Heads

The marital status of a person is important in determining whether he or she becomes a household head or not. A woman who was single and lives alone will lose the position of household once married and living with the husband. On the contrary, a woman who loses the husband as a result of death, divorce or separation may accede to the position of household head which she formerly did not hold. From this analysis, most female household heads are expected to be those living alone, divorced or widowed. Men on the other hand, usually do not lose their status of household head as result of change of marital status.

Table 4: Male and Female Household Heads by Marital Status

Sector of Residence	% of Female Household Heads by Marital Status						
	Single	Married	Cohabiting	Separated	Divorced	Widowed	Total
Urban	36.9	24.0	2.5	3.9	3.8	28.8	100.0
Rural	15.1	27.9	2.0	4.2	3.5	47.7	100.0
Both Sectors	27.4	25.7	2.3	4.1	3.7	36.9	100.0

Sector of Residence	% of Male Household Heads by Marital Status						
	Single	Married	Cohabiting	Separated	Divorced	Widowed	Total
Urban	17.4	68.3	1.5	1.2	2.7	8.1	100.0
Rural	11.8	76.9	0.4	1.1	2.3	5.7	100.0
Total	14.2	73.7	0.9	1.1	2.5	6.6	100.0

While a majority of female household heads are either single (27.4%) or widows (36.9%), a vast majority of male household heads (73.7%) are currently in marital unions (table 4). The proportion of single female household heads is higher in urban than rural areas. Married female household heads are most likely to be those living without their husbands who might have migrated.

1.5 Employment Status of Male and Female Household Heads

When household heads are employed, this enables them to earn an income that can be used for the upkeep of the household. Poor households are therefore expected to be found in a large majority among those with unemployed household heads. Due to the higher rate of unemployment among female than male headed households, female headed households are more exposed to poverty than those headed by their male counterparts.

Table 5: Male and Female Household Heads by Employment Situation

Employment Situation	% Distribution of Household Heads by Sex and Sector Residence								
	Urban			Rural			Both sectors		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Employed	32,5	22,3	28,7	60,9	47,3	56,4	50,6	37,2	46,0
Housewife	0,0	11,6	4,3	0,0	4,8	1,6	0,0	7,6	2,6
Renter	1,3	1,3	1,3	4,8	0,5	0,7	1,0	0,8	1,0
Pensioner	13,9	3,4	10,0	2,5	1,8	1,8	6,6	1,6	4,9
old	13,6	17,8	15,2	10,6	15,1	12,1	11,7	16,2	13,3
Disabled	2,3	2,5	2,4	3,2	3,6	3,3	2,9	3,2	3,0
Unemployed	36,2	41,2	38,1	21,9	28,3	24,0	27,1	33,5	29,3
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

In both rural and urban areas of Cameroon, the proportion of female household heads who are unemployed is higher than that of their male counterparts irrespective of the sector of residence. If the proportion of female household heads who are housewives is added to those who are unemployed, the proportion of women who are not working becomes significantly higher than that of men. The proportion of female household heads who receive income from rents or pensions is again significantly lower than that of men in both rural and urban areas. The proportion of female household heads who cannot work because they are too old to work is appreciably higher than that of their male counterparts in both rural and urban areas (table 5).

1.6 Situation of Employed Male and Female Household Heads within Employment

The situation of a person within employment gives indication of job and income security. For the household head, a secured job such as one that can secure a permanent wage entails income security on a permanent basis to meet up the needs of the household. A permanent wage for the household head especially in the formal sector always entails social security for the household and an assured means of subsistence for the household even when the household head retires. Unfortunately, fewer female than male household heads have access to a situation within employment that guarantees income security for them and their households even during retirement

Table 6: Male and Female Household Heads by Situation within Employment

Situation within Employment	% Distribution of Household by Sex and Sector of Residence								
	Urban			Rural			Both Sectors		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Permanent wage Earner	14,63	3,75	11,55	1,46	0,19	1,11	4,59	1,06	3,61
Temporary wage Earner	8,20	3,03	6,73	2,18	0,87	1,82	3,61	1,40	2,99
Employer	0,97	0,31	0,78	0,52	0,24	0,44	0,63	0,26	0,52
Self-employed	73,76	88,83	78,03	92,97	94,40	93,37	88,40	93,04	89,69
Family help	2,33	4,02	2,81	2,83	4,29	3,24	2,71	4,22	3,13
Unpaid Apprentice	0,07	0,04	0,06	0,03	0,01	0,02	0,04	0,02	0,03
Paid Apprentice	0,04	0,03	0,03	0,02	0,00	0,01	0,02	0,01	0,02
Total	100,00	100,00	100,00	100,00	100,00	100,00	100,00	100,00	100,00

An examination of the situation of household heads within employment reveals the remarkable under representation of female household heads among permanent wage earners in

both rural and urban areas. Even though the proportions of female and male household heads who are self-employed are all high, that of female household heads is about five points higher (88.4% against 93.04%). The proportion of women who are working for the family is close to two times higher than that of their male counterparts. The proportion of female household heads who are employers is far less than that of their male counterparts. In general female household heads occupy less privileged situations within employment than male household heads (table 6).

Self employment which is a common feature of Cameroonian household heads especially the female ones is usually concentrated in the informal sector and peasant agriculture. These sectors are characterized by low or near absence of social security and no guarantee for old age pensions. The disproportionate presence of female household heads among self-employed household heads entails that they will be equally disproportionately represented among old household heads without pensions.

2.0 Sex of household Heads, House Size and Composition

Under this section, the interest is to examine how household sizes examined through average house sizes, the composition of households by specific age groups and relations to the household head vary with the sex of the household head.

2.1 Sex of Household Heads and Average House Sizes

Average household size refers to the ratio of the total population of a given area to the number of households. It translates to some extent the average load that is supported by each household head.

Table 7: Average House Sizes by Sex of Household Head

Sector of Residence	Average Household size by Sex of Household Head	
	Male	Female
Urban	5.0	4.1
Rural	5.9	4.0
Total	5.4	4.1

In both rural and urban areas, the average house size for male headed households is larger than that of female headed households. The difference is more important in rural than urban areas (1.9 against 0.9) (table 7). The lower average house size for female than male headed households is linked to the generally smaller sizes of female headed households. One reason for the smaller average household sizes of female headed households is the fact that women usually become household heads in the absence of an adult male.

2.2 Age Composition of Female and Male Headed Households

The composition of ordinary households by specific age groups sheds light on the level of dependence within households. The proportions of households that host children below 15 and persons above 60 years give an impression of the level of dependence within the society.

Table 8: Age Composition of Households by Sex of Household Head

Specific Age Group	% Distribution of Household Heads by Sex								
	Urban			Rural			Both Sector of Residence		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
0-4	15.7	12.3	15.3	19.6	15.1	18.9	17.8	13.5	17.0
5-14	24.1	25.1	24.3	28.6	30.8	29.0	26.5	27.5	26.7
15-59	57.1	57.7	57.3	46.0	43.8	45.7	51.2	51.8	51.3
60+	3.0	4.0	3.4	5.8	10.2	6.5	4.5	7.2	5.0

The proportions of female headed households that host elderly persons are higher than those of male headed households irrespective of sector of residence. This is partly due to the fact that a significant proportion of female household heads are elderly persons. On the other hand, the proportions of male headed households that contain children below 5, is higher than those of female headed households in both rural and urban areas (table 8).

2.3 Basis of Household Formation and Sex of Household Head

Households can be formed based on a single persons, married couples with or without children or other persons, single parents or unrelated persons. The sex of the household is expected to be highly associated with the structure of the household or its basis of formation.

Table 9: Basis of Household Formation by Sex of Household

Basis of Household Formation	% Distribution of household Heads					
	Urban		Rural		Both Sectors	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Single Person	13.4	16.5	8.5	18.9	11.1	17.4
Marriage couple(s)	68.4	2.5	81.5	2.1	75.5	2.3
Single parent	13.4	78.0	8.0	76.2	10.3	77.7
Others	4.8	3.0	2.0	1.9	3.1	2.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The proportion of female household heads that head simple household structures such as single persons' and single parent households is higher than that of men. The difference between the proportion of women that head single parent households and that of men is particularly high. This difference is about 67%. This translates to a large extent that fact that women are often allowed the responsibility of catering for children when the father is absent from the household as a result of migration, dissolution of marriages or childbirth out of wedlock. Men are more present as heads of households where the married persons live together than women. The presence of men as heads of this form of households is more visible in rural than urban areas (table 9)

3.0 Economic Situation of Male and Female Household Heads

The economic situation of male and female household heads is analyzed here from a non-monetary perspective. It is examined through the notion of economic vulnerability of household heads, defined as the absence of at least a personal source of income for household heads which could be income earned from working, from a pension or rents and the employment situation of other members of the household.

3.1 Economic Vulnerability of Male and Female Household Heads

As means of assessing and comparing the economic situation of households headed by men and women, the notion of economic vulnerability of household heads has a limit in that it does not take into consideration the financial contributions for the upkeep of the household that come from other members of the household or remittances that come from outside the household. However, the lack of a personal source of income for the household is sufficient indication that the household is very likely to face economic hardship.

Table 10: Percentage Distribution of Economically Vulnerable Household Heads by Sex

Sector of Residence	% of Economically Vulnerable Household Heads by Sex		
	Male	Female	Both Sexes
Urban	52.3	63.0	60.0
Rural	31.8	50.4	41.1
Total	41.8	60.4	48.1

In both the rural and urban sectors, female household heads are economically vulnerable than male household heads. In both and especially the urban sector, more than 50.0% of female household heads live under economically vulnerable conditions. Only 31.8% of male households in rural areas can be considered as economically vulnerable against 50.4% of female household heads. In the urban areas, these proportions are 52.3% and 63.0% respectively (table 7).

During the Third Cameroon Household Survey of 2008, it was realized on the contrary that people living in households headed by men are poorer than those living in households headed by women. In fact, 41.6% of people living in households headed by men are poor against 33.4% for those headed by women. This can be explained by the fact that households headed by women are generally smaller and also the fact that they receive more financial remittances.

The gap between male and female household heads in terms of economic vulnerability becomes intensified at old age especially for urban residents. This is due to the fact that more old female household heads than men who had spent most of their time working in the informal sector have few or no source of resource once they retire. In the rural areas many old female household heads may continue working on their farms even at old age and their rate of economic vulnerability is lower than that of men. At old age and in both rural and urban areas, female household heads are still more economically vulnerable than men (table 10).

Table 11: % of Economically Vulnerable Elderly Household Heads by Sex

Sector of Residence	% Economically Vulnerable Elderly Household Heads by Sex		
	Male	Female	Both Sexes
Urban	29.0	56.3	38.5
Rural	20.6	34.9	25.0
Total	23.3	42.6	29.5

Even though economic vulnerability is less severe among elderly household heads of both sexes living in rural and urban areas compared to the general level, economic vulnerability of elderly women living in urban areas is very close to the general level and the gender gap is still very wide (tables 7 and 11).

3.2 Employment Status of Female and Female Household Heads and Other Members of their Households

When the household head is employed alone, he or she shoulders the responsibility of providing the basic needs of the household alone. If the household is unemployed and there is no other member of the household who is employed or earns an income, the economic situation of the household can really be bad unless there is significant financial remittances from outside. A cross tabulation of the employment status of male and female household heads with that of other members of their households helps to some extent to provide information on the economic situation of their households as well as the differences in their economic situations.

Table 12: % of Households with at Least One Employed Member by Employment Status and Sex of the Head

Employment Status of Household	% of households with at least an employed member by Sex of the Household head	
	Male	Female
Employed	43.0	35.7
Unemployed	38.1	32.1
Total	41.4	33.6

Only 35.7% of households headed by employed women host at least one adult who is employed against 43.0% for those headed by men. Households headed by unemployed women also have a lower proportion of employed household members than those headed by men (table 9). Female household heads therefore, face a greater likelihood of running their households unassisted financially by another member of the household who earn income

4.0 Housing Conditions of Households Headed by Males and Females

Lodging is a fundamental right for every household. A sufficiently large and comfortable dwelling unit is necessary for every household. A comfortable dwelling unit promotes the physical and mental health of household members and also favours their social development irrespective of the sex or other socio-economic characteristics of the head.

4.1 Type of Housing Structure and Sex of the Household Head

The information on table 10 shows that irrespective of sector of residence a great majority of households headed by men are those that are found in compounds or concessions (38.4%) and isolated buildings (36.4%). For households headed by women, the highest proportion resides in isolated buildings (40.4%), followed by compounds or concessions (33.2%). The proportion of households headed by men (2.1%) that resides in modern villas is slightly higher than that for households headed by women (1.9%). In rural areas, the possibility for a household headed by a woman to reside in a modern villa is equal to that of a household headed by a man even though modern villas are rare in rural areas. Apart from isolated houses where there exist a difference of four points between the proportion of male household heads and the proportion of female household heads, there do not exist any important difference in access to a type of housing structure based on the sex of the household head(table 13).

Table 13: Housing Structures by Sex of Household Heads

Type of Housing Structure	% Distribution of Household heads by Sex					
	Both Sectors		Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Isolated building	36.4	40.4	34.6	36.1	38.2	45.8
Modern Villa	2.1	1.9	3.8	3.1	0.4	0.4
Multiple apartment building	18.5	19.5	28.9	28.6	7.6	7.6
Storey building with multiple apartments	3.0	3.6	4.9	5.5	1.1	1.3
Compound	38.4	33.2	26.4	25.2	51.1	43.5
Others	1.6	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.7	1.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

4.2 Source of Household Lighting for Male and Female Headed Households

The source of lighting is one of the factors that influence the quality of life for members of the household. The ideal source of household lighting is electricity which unfortunately is not available to all households. The first condition to gain access to electricity is the presence of functional electricity installations or electricity generator in the area where the household is located.

Table 14 Households by Sex of Head and Source of Lighting

Source of Lighting	% Distribution of Household heads by Sex								
	Both Sectors			Urban			Rural		
	male	female	Total	male	female	Total	male	female	Total
Electricity	49.3	53.3	50.2	81.2	79.2	80.7	15.6	19.6	16.4
Gas	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.0	0.0	1.0
kerosene	42.8	40.5	42.3	15.7	17.7	16.2	71.3	70.1	71.0
Saw dust	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.3
wood	5.5	4.2	5.2	1.2	1.2	1.1	10.1	8.0	9.7
Others	1.1	0.7	1.0	0.4	0.4	0.4	1.7	3.1	1.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Globally, the proportion of households headed by women that uses electricity is higher than that of households headed by males especially in rural areas. In urban areas, the proportion of households headed by men that uses electricity is slightly higher than that of households headed by women (81.2% against 79.2%). The gap

between the proportions of female headed households that use electricity for lighting is not important, signifying that the sex of the household head is not an important determinant factor for the use of electricity in household lighting. The difference between the proportion of households that uses kerosene vary very little with sex of household head (42.8% for households headed by men against 40.5% for households headed by women, with 15.7% and 17.7% respectively for urban areas).

4.3 Ownership Status of Dwelling Unit

The ownership status of a dwelling unit of a household is an indication of the degree of housing security of the household. When the household head owns a dwelling unit, its housing situation is more secured than that of household that rents its dwelling unit.

Table 15: Occupation Status of Dwelling Units by Sex of Household Head

Occupation Status	% Distribution by Sex and Sector of residence								
	Both sectors			Urban			Rural		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Owner	45.6	51.4	47.0	85.0	84.8	84.9	64.8	66.0	65.0
Simple Renting	46.4	41.8	45.3	6.1	6.3	6.1	26.8	26.3	26.7
Renting with buying option	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Housed by Employer	2.7	1.4	2.3	2.9	1.5	2.6	2.8	2.8	2.4
Housed by Parents	4.6	4.7	4.7	5.1	6.3	5.4	4.9	4.9	5.0
Others	2.1	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

When the urban and rural areas are considered together, female household heads have a greater chance of being owners of their households than male household heads. In urban areas the proportion of female household heads (51.4%) that own their dwelling units is significantly higher than that of their male counterparts but in rural areas, the proportions are fairly similar (84.8% against 85.0% respectively). In urban areas, the proportion of female household heads who rent their dwelling units (46.4%) is fairly higher than that of male household heads (41.8%).

4.4 Standing of Dwelling Units for Male and Female Headed Households

The standing of a dwelling unit is appreciated by the type of material that are used to construct the dwelling unit as well as the facilities such as water, electricity, etc that it has. In this study, housing units of six categories are distinguished:-

High standing housing units (walls, roof and floor of durable material, internal water system toilet, lighting from electricity, drinking water from tap or mineral water, waste disposal through septic tank, gas or electricity for cooking, etc.).

Average standing (walls, roof or floor of durable material, water system toilet which can be external/internal, common or private toilet, cooking energy is gas, lighting using electricity or gas, drinking water comes from external tap, waste water disposed in a septic tank

Low standing (multiple apartment dwellings, floor, walls and roof of durable materials, lighting from electricity, gaz, electricity or kerosene, cooking energy from gas, electricity or kerosene, used water evacuated is through any means and drinking water from any source

Traditional improved housing (toilet not water system, walls, roofs and floor constructed with any kind of material, all sources of drinking water, all modes of evacuation of waste water, house not a villa or storey building, etc.)

Simple traditional housing (walls , roof or floors not made of durable material, drinking water from external type, spring, wall or stream, lighting from electricity, wood or kerosene, absence of water system toilet of any type, etc.

Others (not belonging to any of the above types)

Type 15 Dwelling Standing by Sex of Household Head

Standing of Dwelling Unit	% Distribution of household Heads by Sex					
	Both sectors		Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
High	3.4	3.7	5.7	5.8	1.0	1.0
Average	17.7	20.1	28.8	29.5	6.1	7.8
low	34.9	39.3	49.8	50.1	19.3	25.3
Improved Traditional	18.3	21.7	10.4	10.2	26.5	36.5
Simple traditional	20.9	11.1	2.9	2.2	39.8	22.6
Others	4.8	4.1	2.4	2.2	7.3	6.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

No matter the sector of residence, the proportion of women that head households that reside in dwellings of high standing is higher than that of men. Among household heads that reside in average standing houses, the proportion of households headed by women is higher (20.1% against 17.7%). For households residing in low standing housing, the proportion of female headed households is 39.3% and that of male headed households is 34.9%. The proportion of male headed households residing in simple traditional housing is higher than that of male headed households irrespective of sector of residence (table 15).

4.5 Average Number of Persons per Sleeping Room for Male and Female Headed Households

The average number of persons per sleeping room is derived by dividing the population of a household by the number of rooms used for sleeping. It is an important indicator of overcrowding in a household.

Table 16: Households Headed by Men and Women by Average Number of Persons per Sleeping Room

Sector of Residence	Average Number of persons per sleeping room	% Distribution of Household Heads by Sex	
		Male	female
Urban	Equal or less than 3	81.8	87.9
	Greater than 3	18.2	12.1
Rural	Equal or less than 3	83.1	89.7
	Greater than 3	18.9	10.3
	Equal or less than 3	82.4	88.6
	Greater than 3	17.6	11.4

Irrespective of the sector of residence, the proportion of women who head households with low values of average number of persons per room (less than 3 persons per room) is higher than that of men. This can be attributed to the generally small sizes of female headed households.

4.6 Sources of Drinking Water for Male and Female Headed Households

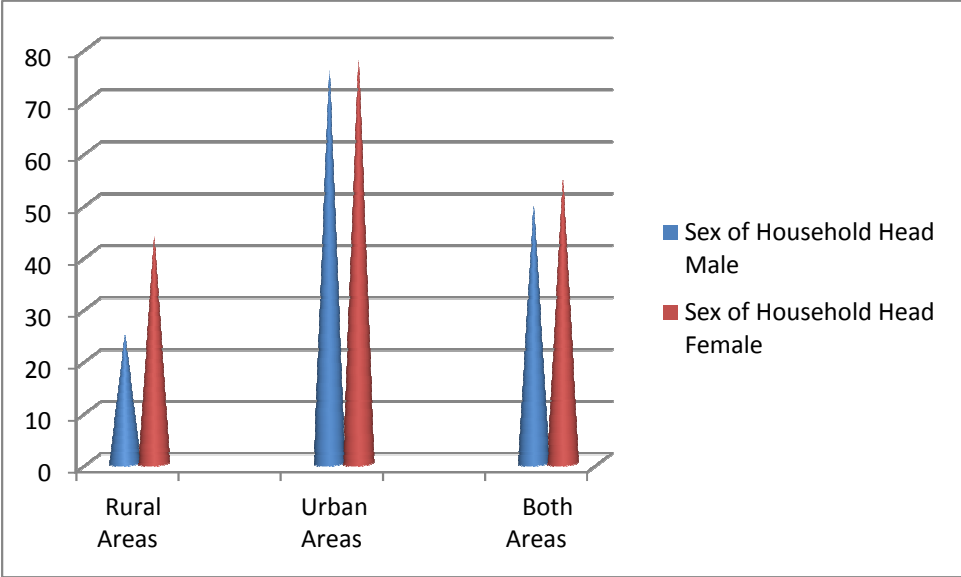
Safe drinking is one of the most essential needs of man. This is why the provision of safe drinking water features prominently among government policy and the Millennium Development Objectives. Unfortunately not all households in Cameroon have access to good drinking water. Table 14 shows the distribution of households headed by men and women according to their sources of drinking water.

Table 17 Household Heads by Sex and Source of Household Drinking Water

Source of drinking water	% of Household Heads by Sex					
	Both sectors		Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Internal tap	9.9	11.3	17.3	18.1	2.2	2.5
External tap	11.9	14.9	17.4	19.3	6.1	9.3
Developed Well	14.6	12.1	11.0	9.9	18.3	15.0
Undeveloped Well	14.2	10.0	0.0	4.6	22.8	17.0
From paid tap	21.3	23.0	35.4	35.7	6.5	6.6
Stream	16.7	17.2	3.7	4.1	30.4	34.2
Forage	6.2	5.2	5.4	4.3	7.0	6.2
Mineral or table water	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Spring	2.6	3.1	2.2	2.3	3.0	4.0
Developed Spring	1.6	2.1	0.7	0.7	2.7	3.8
Lake /marsh	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.4
Others	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The sex of the household head seems to have no significant influence on the source of supply of drinking water. However, households headed by women have a greater tendency than those headed by men to get drinking water from paid taps (table 17).

Figure 2 : % Distribution of Households by Sex of their Heads and Access to Potable Drinking Water



Households headed by women resort to potable sources of drinking water more than those headed by men irrespective of sector of residence (figure 2).

4.7 Type Toilet Facility and Sex of Household Head

Toilet facilities are used to dispose of human waste. The type of toilet is an indicator of the quality of human waste disposal and the level of sanitation and hygiene practiced in the household. Poorly disposed human refuse is at the origin of the transmission of diseases which often have deadly consequences. The water system toilet represents what is known as modern toilets and the others are traditional.

Table 18: Type of Toilet Facility by Sex of Household Head

Type Toilet Facility	% distribution of Household Heads by Sex					
	Both Sector		Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Internal Water System Toilet	9.2	10.5	16.0	16.9	2.1	2.1
External Private Water System Toilet	2.2	2.4	3.6	3.5	0.8	0.8
Common Water System Toilet	1.5	1.6	2.0	2.0	1.0	0.9
Private latrines	23.7	25.1	25.7	25.7	21.4	24.4
Common latrines	53.6	53.4	50.5	50.0	56.9	57.8
Nature	8.4	5.0	1.4	1.4	15.8	11.9
Others	1.4	1.2	0.6	0.5	2.0	2.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

In total, the proportion of female headed households that has internal water system toilet (10.5%) is greater than that of male headed households (9.2%). In the rural milieu, these proportions are almost the same. A large difference exists between the proportion of male headed households that dispose their human waste in nature (15.8%) and that of female headed households (11.0%). The sex of the household head therefore, seems to influence the use of nature for human waste disposal.

4.8 Source of Cooking Fuel and Sex of Household Head

The source of cooking energy has a link with environmental degradation. If many households use firewood for cooking, this promotes deforestation.

Table 19: Sex of Household Head by Source of Cooking Fuel

Source of Cooking Fuel	% Distribution of Household Heads by Sex		
	Male	Female	Total
Electricity	2.8	2.8	2.8
Gas	16.2	17.3	16.5
Kerosene	9.0	8.6	8.9
sawdust	3.3	3.2	3.3
firewood	67.3	67.6	67.4
Other	1.4	0.5	1.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

The sex of the household head does not seem to influence the type of fuel used by households for cooking. This is so because there exist no appreciable difference between the proportions of households headed by males or females and the source of cooking fuel.

4.9 Sex of Household Head and Mode of Evacuation of Household Refuse

Households in the course of their consumptions produce enormous quantities of solid waste. One of the worries of municipal authorities and individuals is how to evacuate these wastes. Many modes exist for the evacuation of this waste. How the modes of household refuse disposal vary with the sex of the household head and this is the interest of this section.

Table 21 Mode of Household Refuse Disposal by Sex of Household Head

Mode of Household Waste Disposal	% of Household Heads by Sex					
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
At roadsides	6.0	5.5	8.3	7.6	3.6	2.7
Public dustbins	21.7	24.1	40.2	41.2	2.3	2.1
In brushes	44.0	44.2	31.7	32.0	57.0	60.0
In streams	4.1	3.9	6.2	5.8	1.8	1.5
By burying	4.2	4.9	4.0	4.3	4.4	5.6
Around the household	15.5	13.8	5.6	5.6	26.0	24.3
By burning	2.9	1.7	1.8	1.3	4.0	2.3
other	1.6	1.9	2.2	2.2	0.9	1.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Information on table 21 shows that the sex of the household head does not seem to significantly influence the households' mode of household refuse disposal. However, it must be noted that households headed by women are less inclined to refuse disposal through less desirable modes such as burning or depositing around the house. Households headed by women are more inclined to using public dustbins.

Conclusion

A greater proportion of male than female household heads are educated, earn a permanent wage, are in marital unions and have at least one personal source of income. Male household heads are by far higher in proportion than female heads of households especially in rural areas. It can be expected that with increasing urbanization, the proportion of female household heads will rise even though women will still remain in minority as household heads. Women head smaller households than men. This is exemplified by smaller average household sizes for households headed by women in both rural and urban areas of Cameroon. Households headed by women are mostly simpler ones with either single parent or single persons' households. A greater proportion of female household heads own their dwelling units than men. Overcrowding within sleeping rooms expressed by the average number of persons per room is common in households headed by men than those headed by women. Little variation exists among households headed by men and those headed by women in terms of access to electricity, water and modern toilet facilities.

Recommendations

At the end of the above analysis, the following general recommendations can be advanced:

- The government of Cameroon should continue and intensify efforts to close the gender gap in education especially in technical and scientific domains;
- Government, NGOs and traditional authorities should increase efforts aimed at informing, educating and communicating so that men and women should change attitudes that block women's access to land, credit and employment outside the household, and
- Government should increase efforts aimed at promoting good governance and sustained economic growth so as to improve upon the living conditions of all households.

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