TONGA
2025 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES)

25 Years of Measuring Household Welfare
2000/01 – 2025

Tonga Statistics Department
Nuku'alofa, Kingdom of Tonga
2026

Why the HIES matters for Tonga?

A key source of evidence for people, policy and progress

People

Shows how Tongan households:

- live,
- work,
- earn,
- spend
- and access services

Policy

Informs evidence-based decision making across sectors

Official statistics

Supports:

- CPI weights,
- national accounts,
- poverty,
- Inequality
- and socioeconomic analysis

Development monitoring

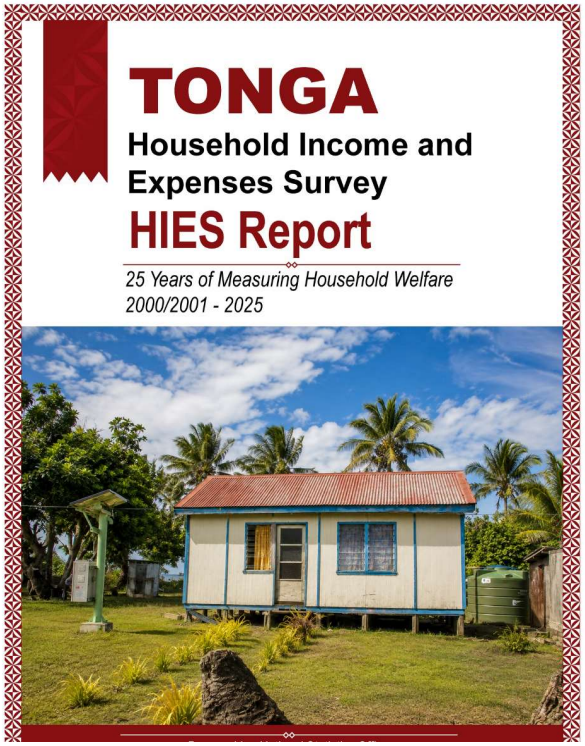
Tracks progress towards:

- national development priorities
- and SDGs

Structure of the report

Eight substantive chapters, a 25-year perspective and annexes

1. **Introduction**
   Context, economy and population
2. **Survey methodology**
   Scope, sampling, data collection, weighting
3. **Report structure and definitions**
4. **Population and household profile**
5. **Education, health and living conditions**
6. **Work, income and other household resources**
7. **Household expenditure and consumption**
8. **Food security, nutrition and dietary patterns**
9. **25 years of measuring household welfare**
- **Annexes**
  Detailed tables, technical notes and questionnaires



25 years of HIES in Tonga

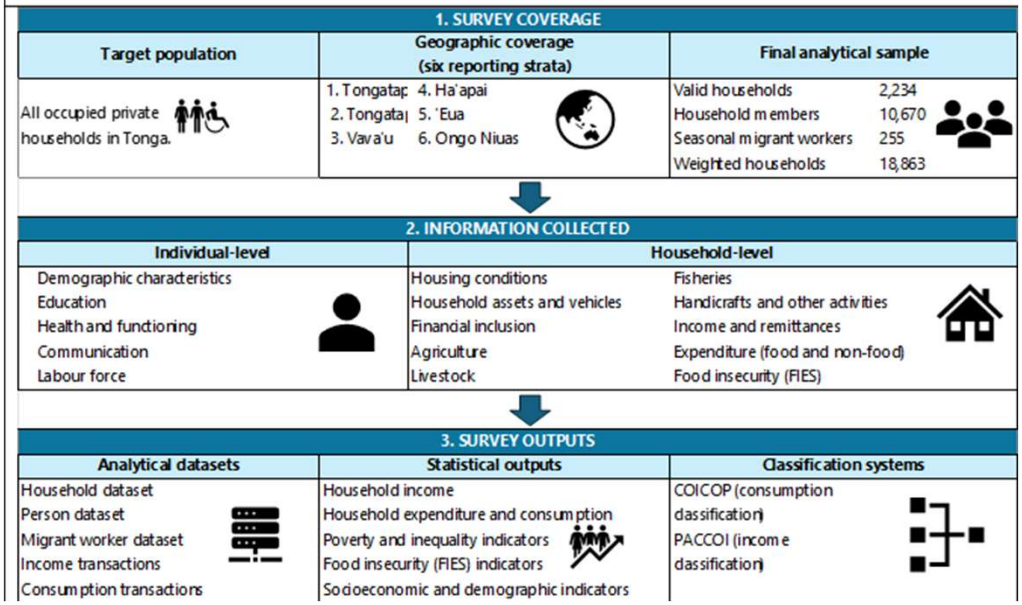
Five national surveys, a growing evidence base

Definitions and methods have evolved over time. 2021–2025 provides the strongest basis for assessing recent changes in household welfare.

25 years of HIES in Tonga /2

Five national surveys, a growing evidence base

Conceptual framework of the 2025 Household Income and Expenditure Survey



Principal methodological developments affecting comparability across HIES rounds

Survey round	Methodological development	Implications for comparability
2000/01	Household loans were treated as household income.	Income aggregates are not directly comparable with subsequent surveys without adjustment.
2009	Expanded documentation of sampling and non-sampling errors and interpretation of relative standard errors.	Improved transparency and assessment of statistical reliability.
2015/16	Adoption of the Pacific standardized HIES methodology, including PAC-COICOP and PACCOI classifications.	Strengthened consistency with subsequent survey rounds and improved regional comparability.
2021	Introduction of a dedicated module on food consumed away from home and expanded distributional analysis, including Gini coefficients.	Changes should be considered when interpreting shifts in expenditure composition relative to earlier surveys.
2025	Continued implementation of the harmonized Pacific HIES methodology, including the integrated analytical framework and Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES).	Maintains conceptual consistency with the 2021 HIES and provides the strongest basis for analysing recent changes in household welfare.

Survey design and coverage

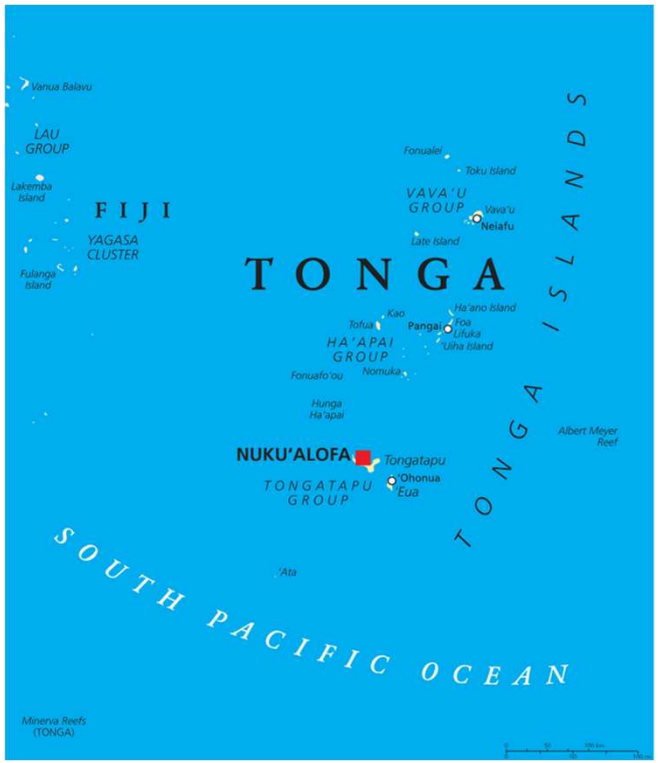
Nationally representative, covering households across Tonga

2,234 valid household interviews

18,863 represented households

99,441 represented residents

National coverage across Tonga's main reporting strata and urban/rural areas



A rich dataset on Tongan households

Integrated information across many areas

Household roster
Age, sex, relationship, education

Work and livelihoods
Employment, primary activities, business

Income and other resources
Employment, self-employment, remittances, gifts, rent, other sources

Expenditure and consumption
All major categories (COICOP)

Food security and nutrition
Dietary patterns, food security indicators

Housing and living conditions
Dwelling characteristics, water, sanitation, electricity, cooking fuel

Education
Attendance, highest level completed

Health
Health status, disability/functioning, health expenditure

Digital access
Ownership and use of digital devices

Geographic detail
Analysis by reporting stratum and urban/rural residence

2025 HIES: FIVE KEY FINDINGS

The Executive Summary brings the results together around five findings

1 RECENT CHANGE

Nominal income and consumption increased but did not keep pace with consumer prices. Income rose 3.8% and consumption 11.4% between 2021 and 2025.

2 HOUSEHOLD RESOURCES

Employment provided about 61% of net household income, while 30.3% of final consumption came from non-cash sources.

3 REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

Average income varied by around 13% across reporting strata, compared with 69% for household expenditure.

4 PRIMARY PRODUCTION

Around 58% of households participated in agriculture and 61% in livestock; home production contributed TOP 73.7 million to final consumption.

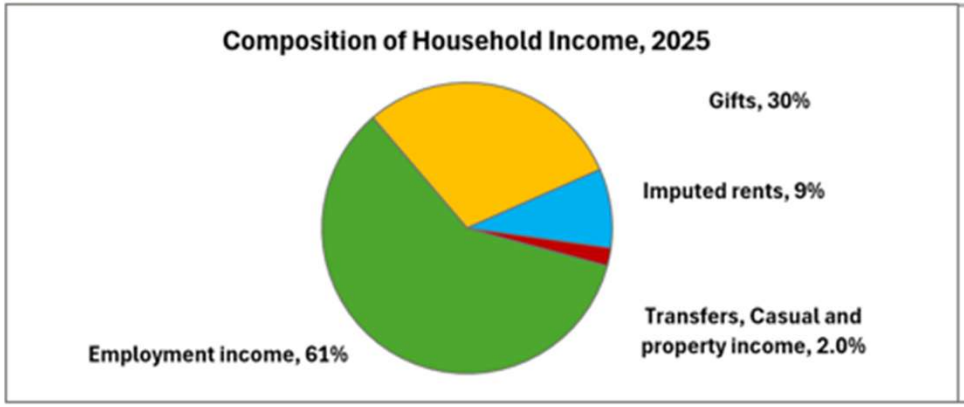
5 ACCESS & DISPARITIES

Broad access to services and support networks coexists with important differences by age, disability, economic status and geography.

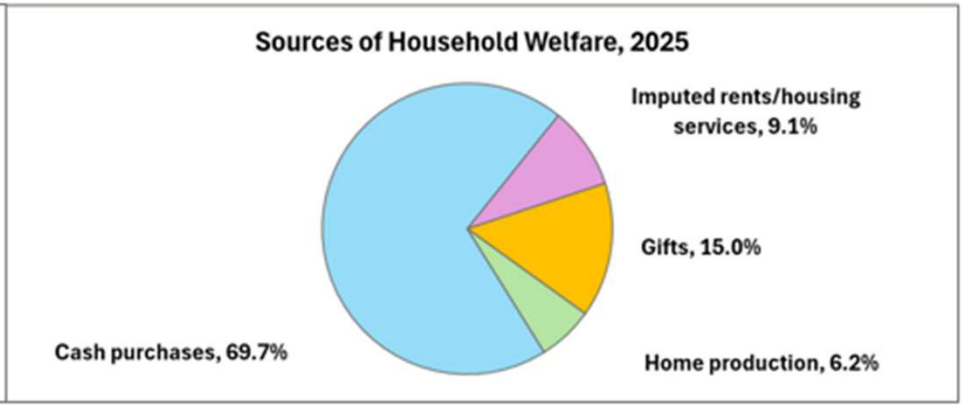
KEY MESSAGE **These five findings provide the framework for interpreting the detailed results that follow.**

HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AT A GLANCE

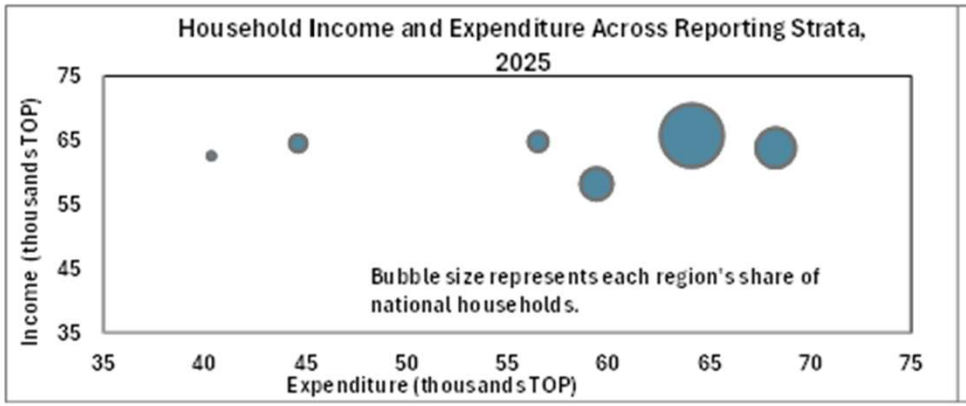
Employment is the main source, but non-employment resources remain important.



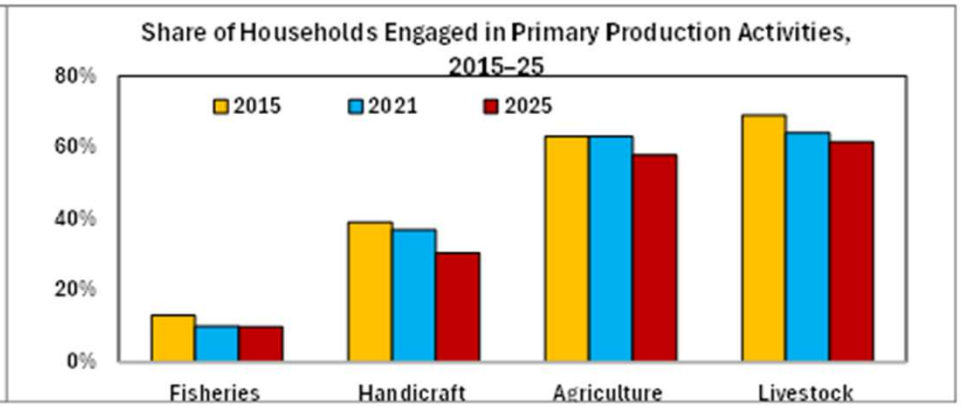
Nearly one-third of final household consumption comes from non-cash sources.



Differences in household expenditure across reporting strata are much wider than differences in average income.



Primary production remains a significant part of household livelihoods.



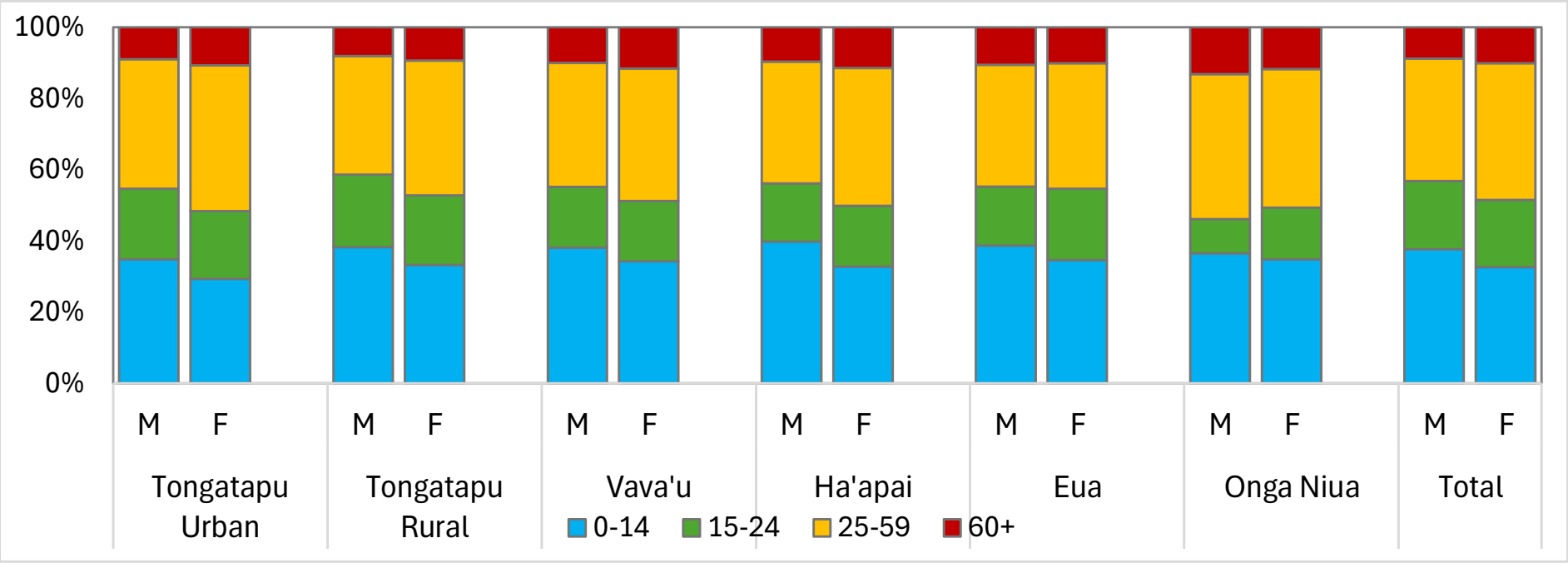
POPULATION STRUCTURE

Selected demographic indicators by reporting stratum, 2025

Indicator	Tonga	Tongatapu Urban	Tongatapu Rural	Vava'u	Ha'apai	'Eua	Ongo Niuas		Urban	Rural
Estimated population	99,441	21,095	52,692	14,035	5,625	4,835	1,158		21,095	78,346
Population share (%)	100	21.2	53.0	14.1	5.7	4.9	1.2		21.2	78.8
Estimated households	18,863	4,069	9,636	2,790	1,157	931	280		4,069	14,794
Average household size	5.4	5.2	5.5	5.0	4.9	5.2	4.1		5.2	5.3
Median age (years)	24	24	22	25	26	27	29		24	24
Dependency ratio (dependants per 100 working-age persons)	80.3	72.0	80.0	88.5	88.1	88.2	92.7		72.0	82.7
Sex ratio (males per 100 females)	94.3	93.4	93.3	98.1	96.4	95.2	99.5		93.4	94.6
Ethnically Tongan (%)	98.88	97.5	99.2	99.3	99.7	98.8	100.0		97.5	99.2
Married (%)	51.6	47.7	50.9	55.2	57.0	57.4	63.7		47.7	52.7

POPULATION STRUCTURE

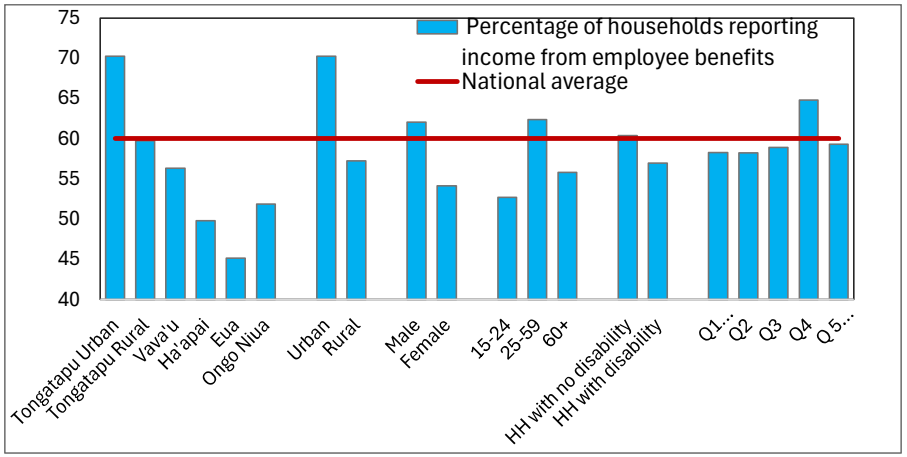
Age structure differs across reporting strata

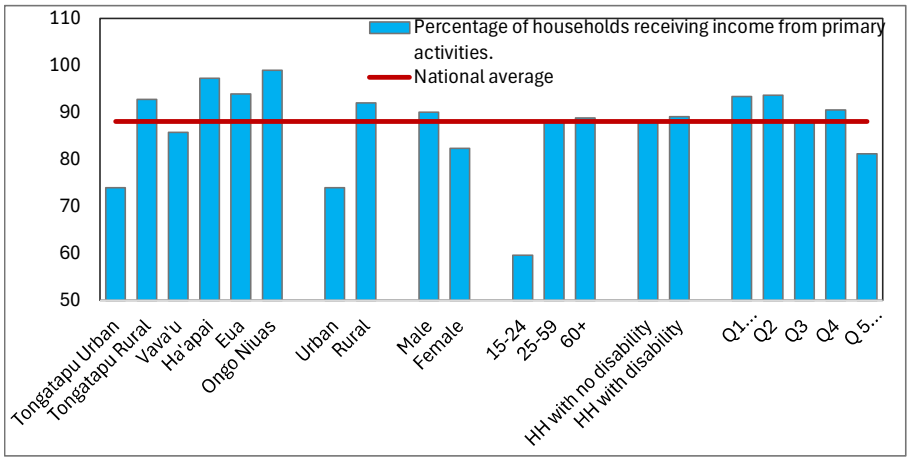


WORK & LIVELIHOODS

The household economy is larger than formal employment

The HIES records labour-force activity and household livelihood activities, revealing how paid work, unpaid work and production coexist.





61%

of net household income comes from employment.

58% / 61%

of households engage in agriculture / livestock.

NOT ONE LABOUR MARKET

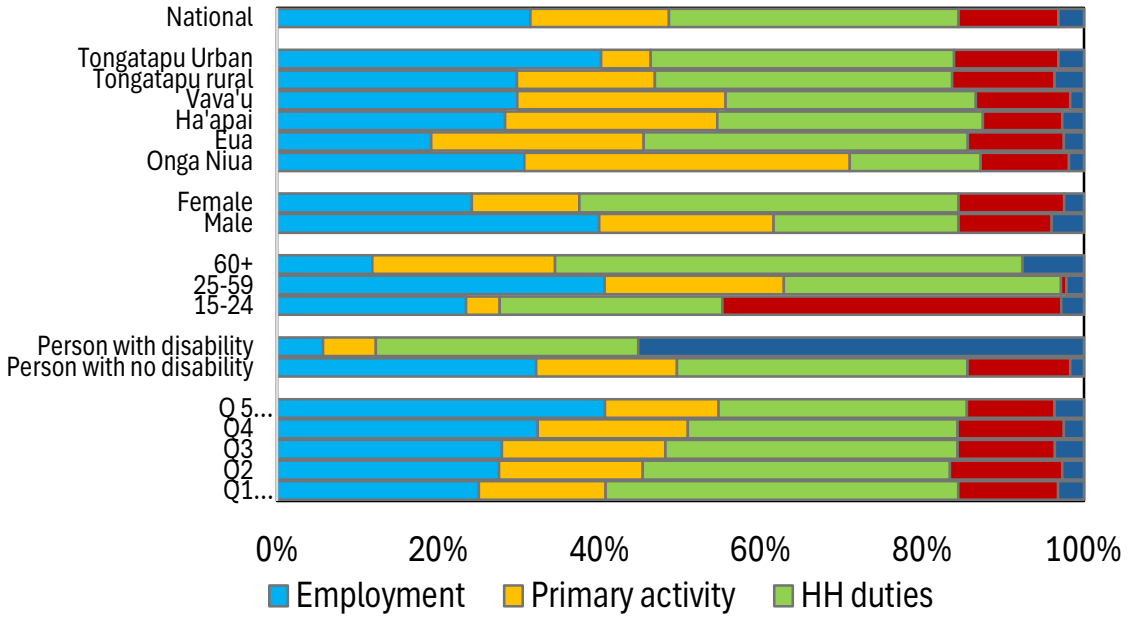
Livelihood portfolios differ by island, sex, age and household circumstances.

POLICY LENS *The report finds that household livelihoods combine employment income, primary production, transfers, remittances and other resources.*

Work in Tonga is not captured by employment alone

Principal activity differs strongly by sex and age

Employment, household duties and primary livelihood activities all form an important part of economic activity.



SEX AND AGE DIFFERENCES ARE PRONOUNCED

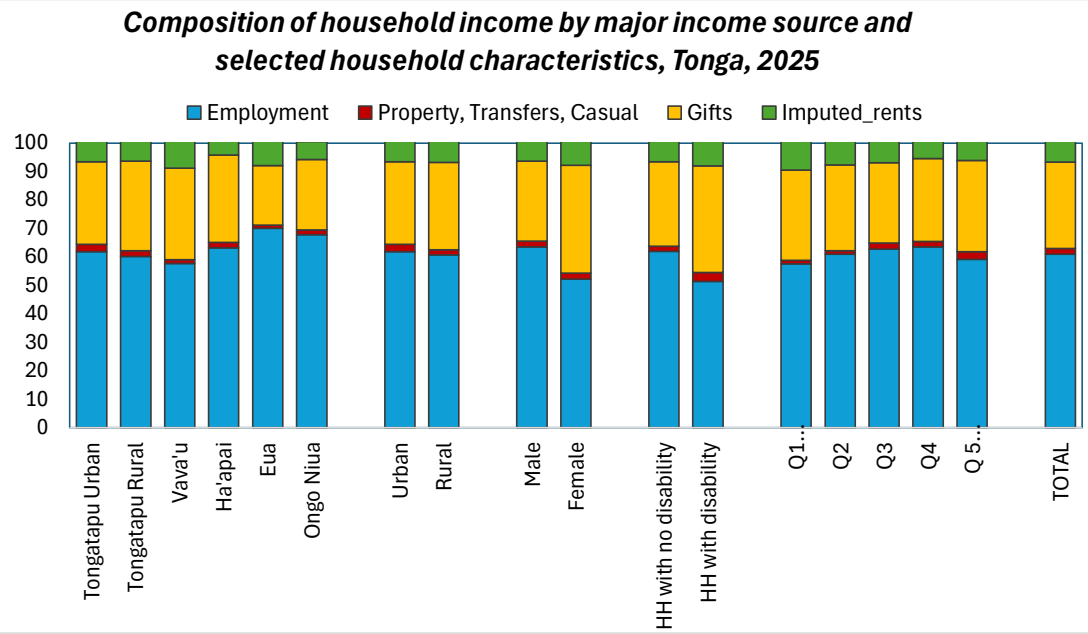
- 39.9% vs 24.1% Employment (men vs women)
- 22.9% vs 46.9% Household duties (men vs women)
- 40.6% Employment ages 25–59
- 57.9%Household duties — ages 60+

KEY MESSAGE *Economic participation in Tonga extends beyond employment and differs substantially by sex and age.*

HOUSEHOLD RESOURCES

Employment is the main source of income, but not the only one

Employment is the largest component, but non-employment resources account for close to two-fifths of net household income.



61% EMPLOYMENT

The dominant source of net household income nationally.

≈30% GIFTS

Gifts account for about 30% of net household income in the report's income-composition figure.

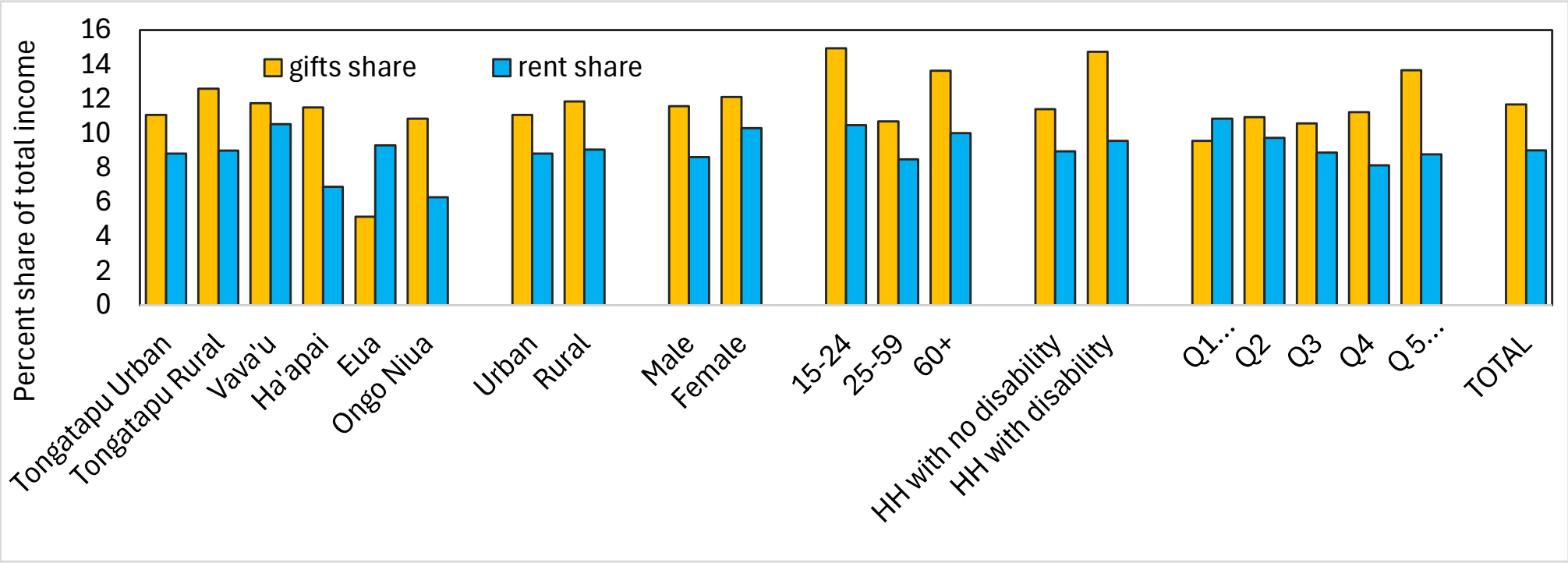
9% IMPUTED RENT

Owner-occupied housing services are an economic resource even without a cash transaction.

POLICY LENS *The report concludes that employment earnings alone do not capture the full range of resources supporting household living standards.*

TRANSFERS & HOUSING SERVICES

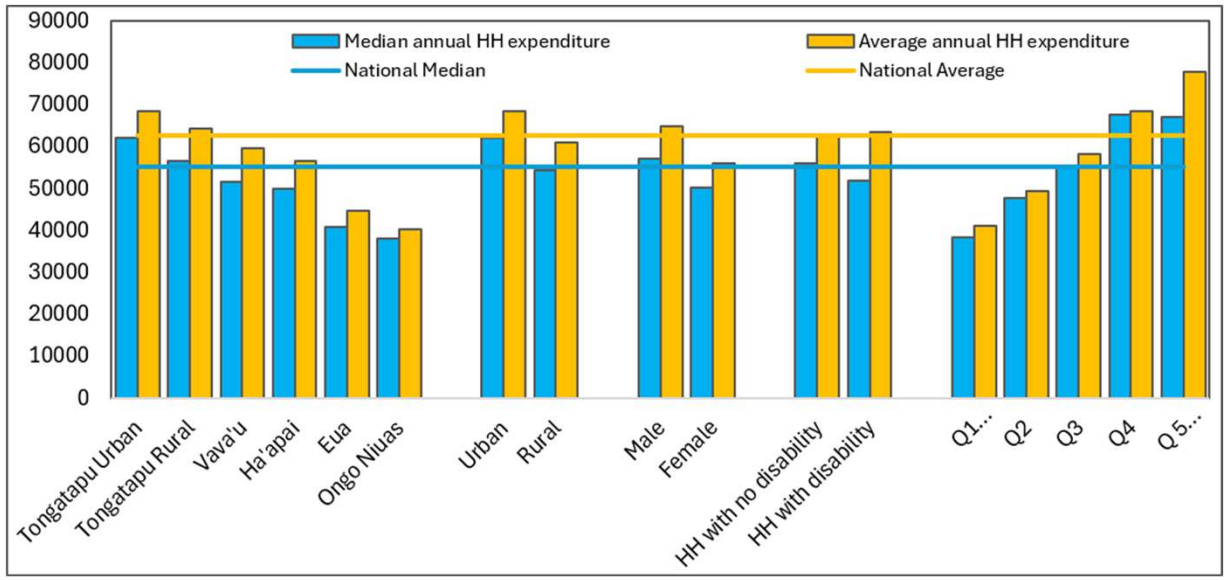
The contribution of gifts and imputed rent varies across household groups



HOUSEHOLD CONSUMPTION

The average household spent TOP 62,546—but the average is not the household experience

Means exceed medians across groups, and expenditure levels vary much more across island groups than average income does.



TOP 62,546

average annual household expenditure

MEAN > MEDIAN

Higher-consuming households pull the average upward.

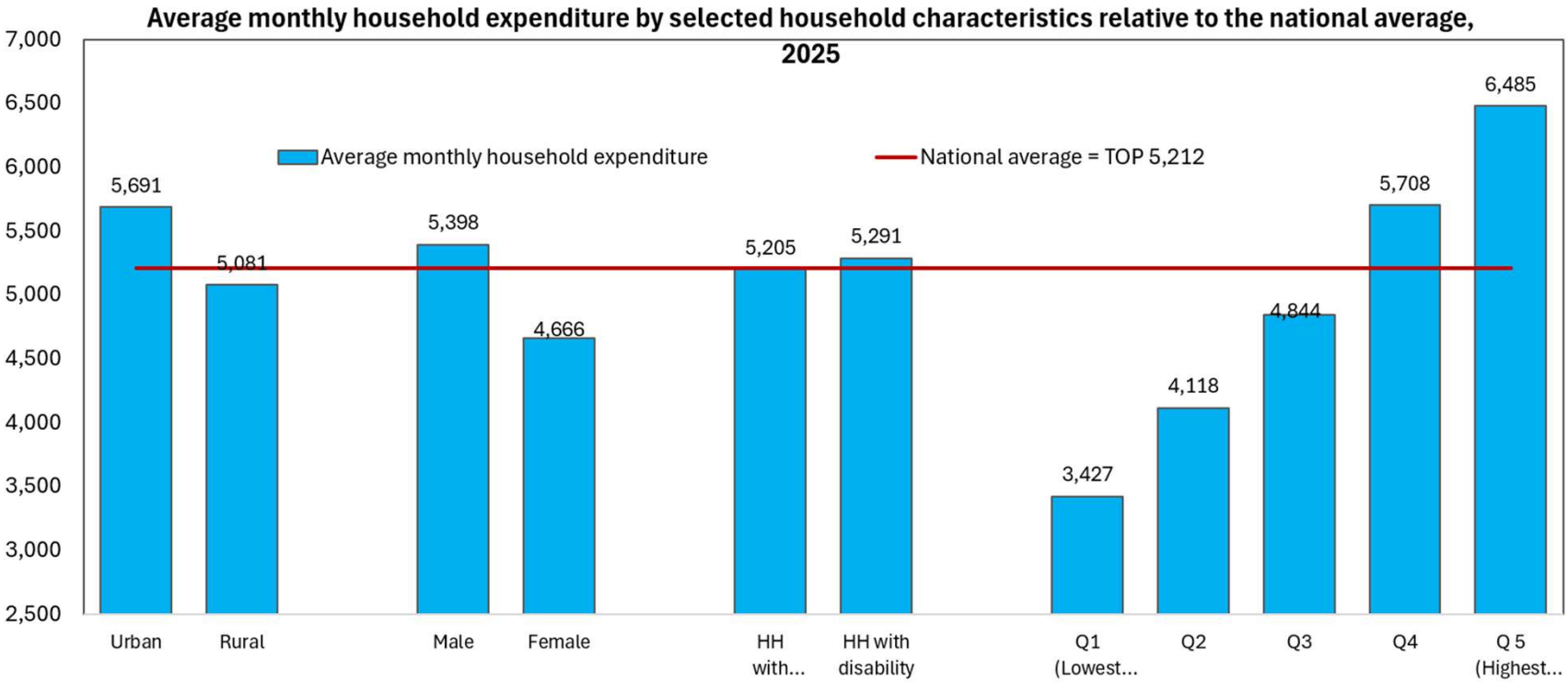
69% REGIONAL RANGE

Highest vs lowest average expenditure across reporting strata.

POLICY LENS *The report presents both averages and medians and documents substantial differences across reporting strata and expenditure groups.*

HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE

Average expenditure differs materially across population groups



HOUSEHOLD BUDGETS

Food is the largest budget item at every welfare level

As expenditure rises, households devote relatively more to transport, restaurants/hotels, transfers and other non-food spending—but food remains first.

National household expenditure by COICOP division, 2025

COICOP division	TOP million	Share (%)
Food and non-alcoholic beverages	432.9	36.7
Housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels	170.0	14.4
Transport	128.8	10.9
Restaurants and hotels	118.6	10.1
Miscellaneous goods and services	77.6	6.6
Transfers	64.0	5.4
Alcoholic beverages, tobacco and kava	50.9	4.3
Communication	36.2	3.1
Clothing and footwear	33.5	2.8
Furnishings, household equipment and routine household maintenance	29.3	2.5
Education	17.5	1.5
Recreation and culture	17.5	1.5
Health	2.9	0.2
Total	***1179.9***	***100.0***

36.7%

food share of household consumption/expenditure in 2025

62%

food + housing + transport together

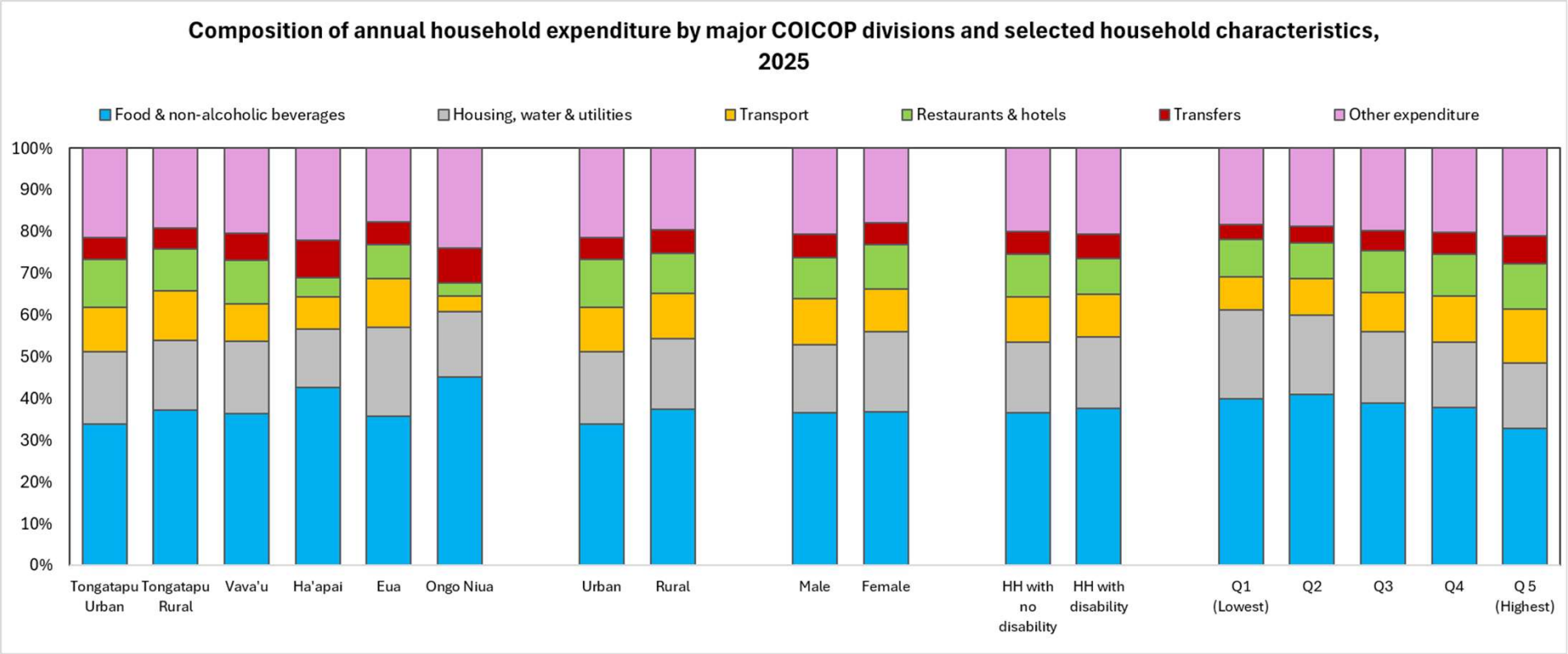
48.2%

increase in transport expenditure, 2021–2025

POLICY LENS *Food, housing and transport together account for 62.0% of total household expenditure; food remains the largest category across expenditure groups.*

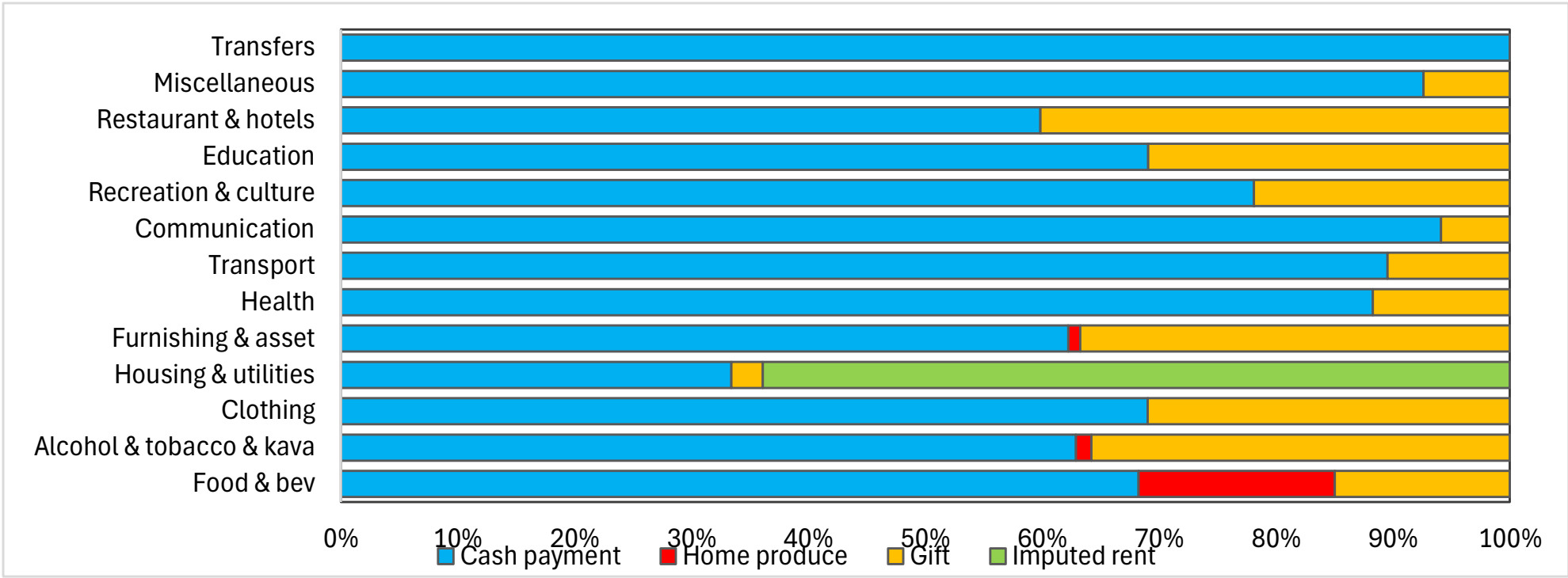
WHAT HOUSEHOLDS SPEND ON

Food remains the largest expenditure category.



HOW EXPENDITURE IS ACQUIRED

Cash, home production, gifts and housing services contribute differently across categories



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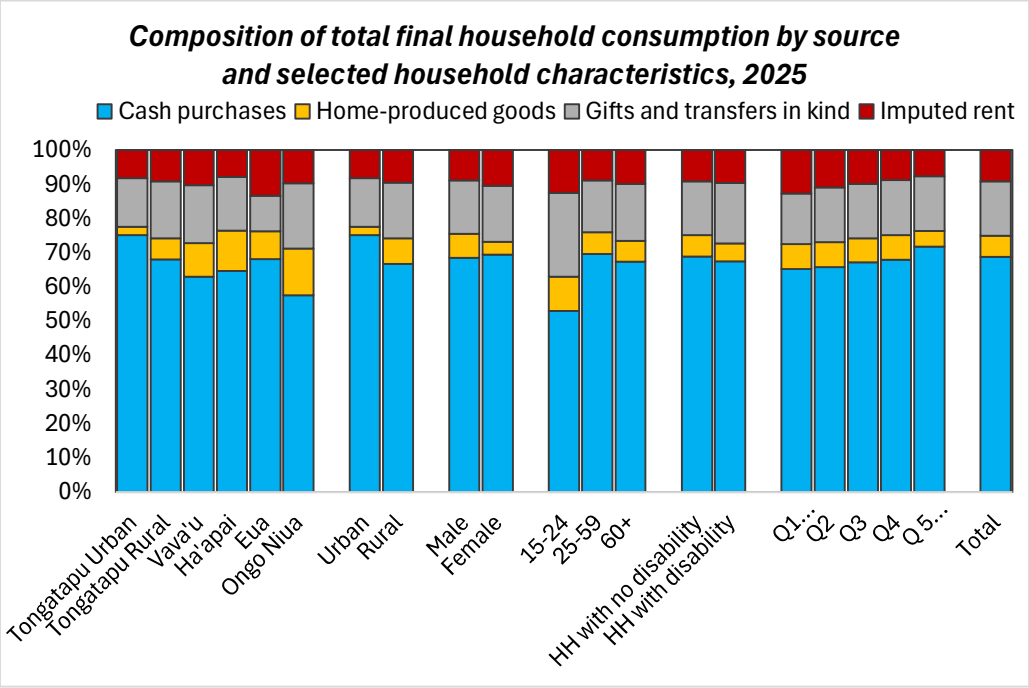
HOW HOUSEHOLDS OBTAIN THEIR FINAL CONSUMPTION

30.3% of final household consumption comes from non-cash sources

Home production, gifts and transfers in kind, and imputed housing services materially widen the resources households can consume.



69.7%

cash purchases

15.0%

gifts & transfers in kind

15.3%

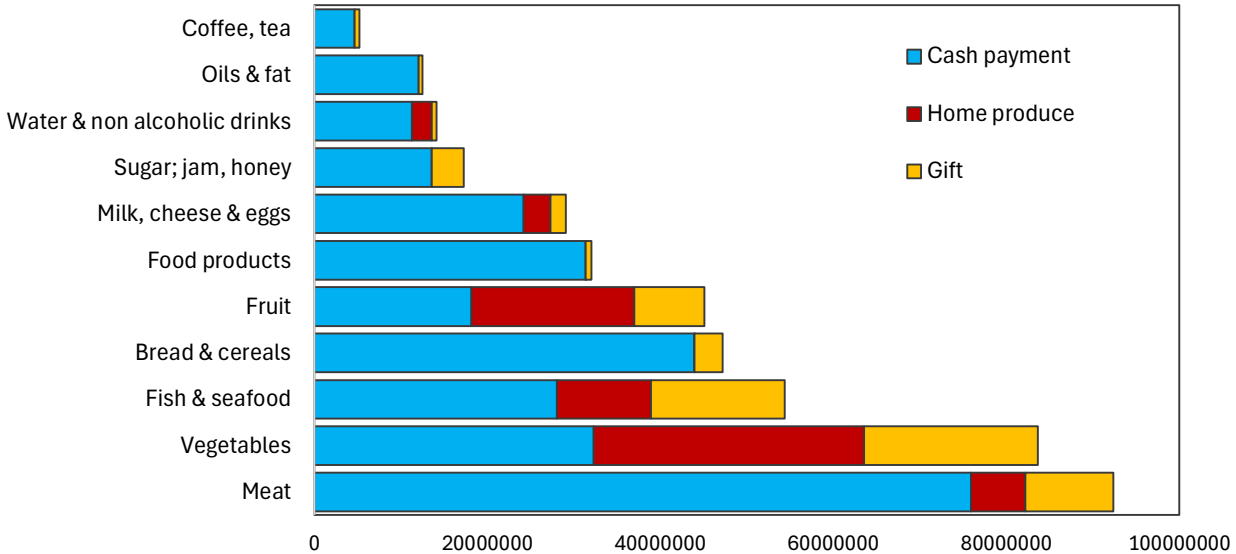
home production + imputed rent (6.2% + 9.1%)

POLICY LENS *The non-cash sources such as gifts and transfers in kind, home production and imputed rent account for 30.3% of final household consumption.*

FOOD SYSTEMS

The food basket connects markets, local production and nutrition

Purchased food is concentrated in meat and cereals; home-produced food is concentrated in vegetables and fruit.



21.4%

meat share of food expenditure

43%

vegetables share of home-produced food expenditure

25.9%

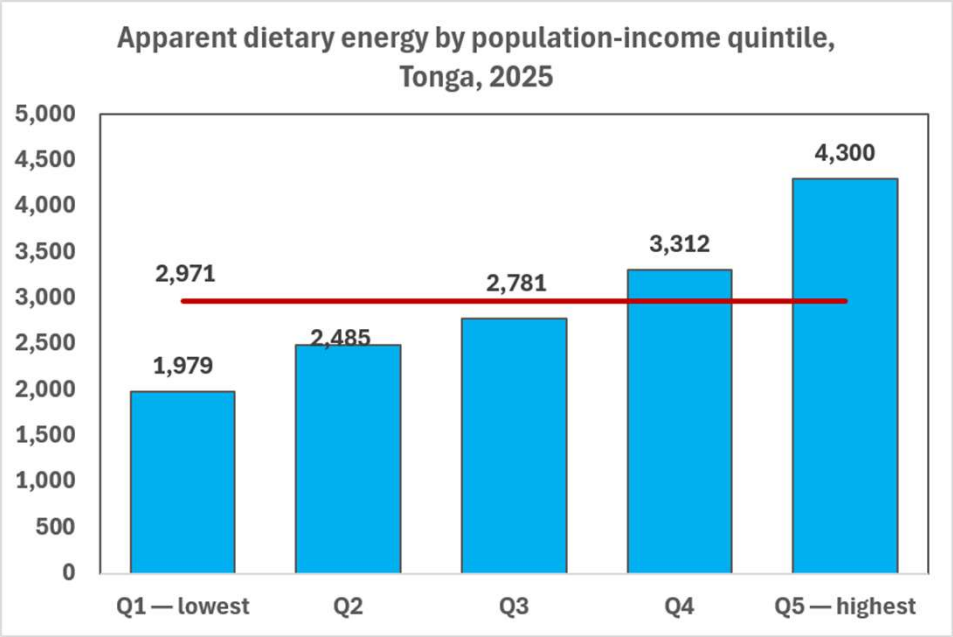
fruit share of home-produced food expenditure

POLICY LENS *The report shows that food expenditure combines market and non-market acquisition and that purchased and home-produced food have different compositions.*

NUTRITION

Food availability rises sharply with income—and diet quality remains a concern

The HIES measures apparent household dietary energy, not individual intake, and shows a strong income gradient alongside composition concerns.



1,979 → 4,300

kcal per capita/day: lowest → highest income quintile

72%

of apparent dietary energy comes from foods classified "to limit or avoid" under Pacific guidelines.

482 → 1,242 mg

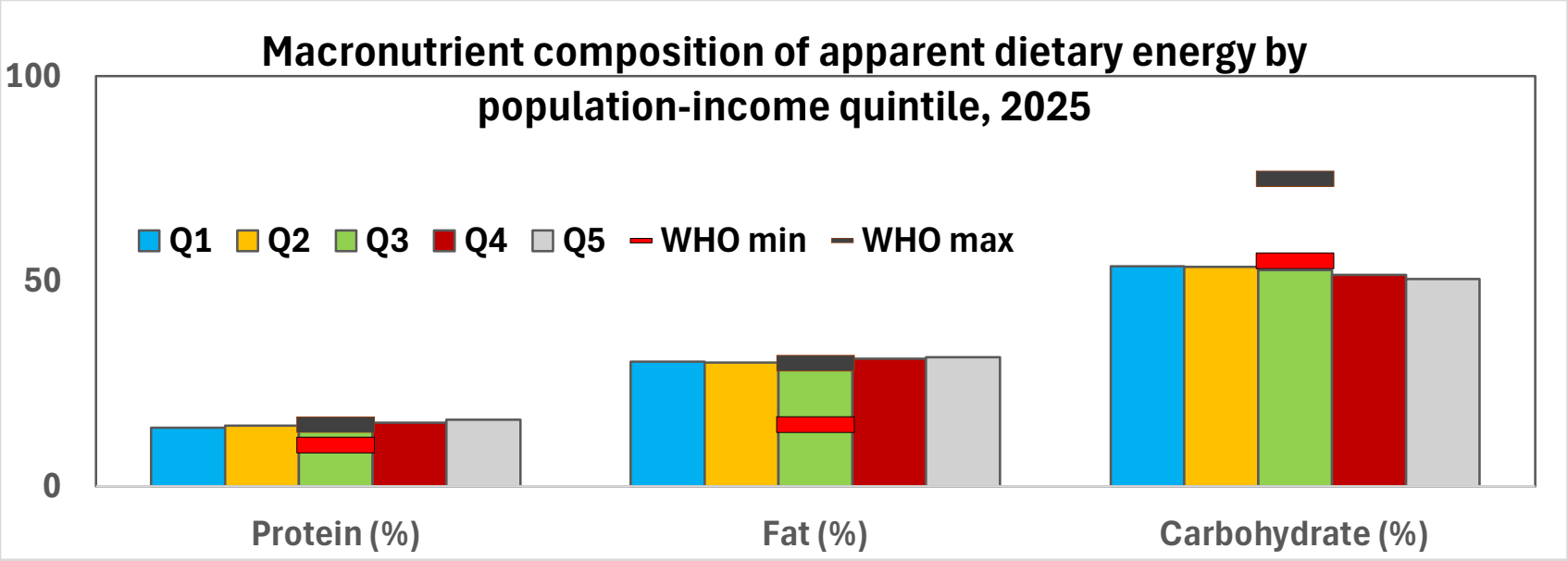
apparent calcium availability, lowest to highest quintile

POLICY LENS *The report states that the principal diet-quality issue is not simply the amount of food available, but the composition of foods contributing to dietary energy.*

DIET QUALITY

The composition of apparent dietary energy differs from recommended ranges

Across all income quintiles, carbohydrates remain below the reference range, while fat is around the upper reference level and protein reaches or exceeds the upper level for some groups.



KEY MESSAGE *Diet quality is an important issue alongside the amount of food available to households.*

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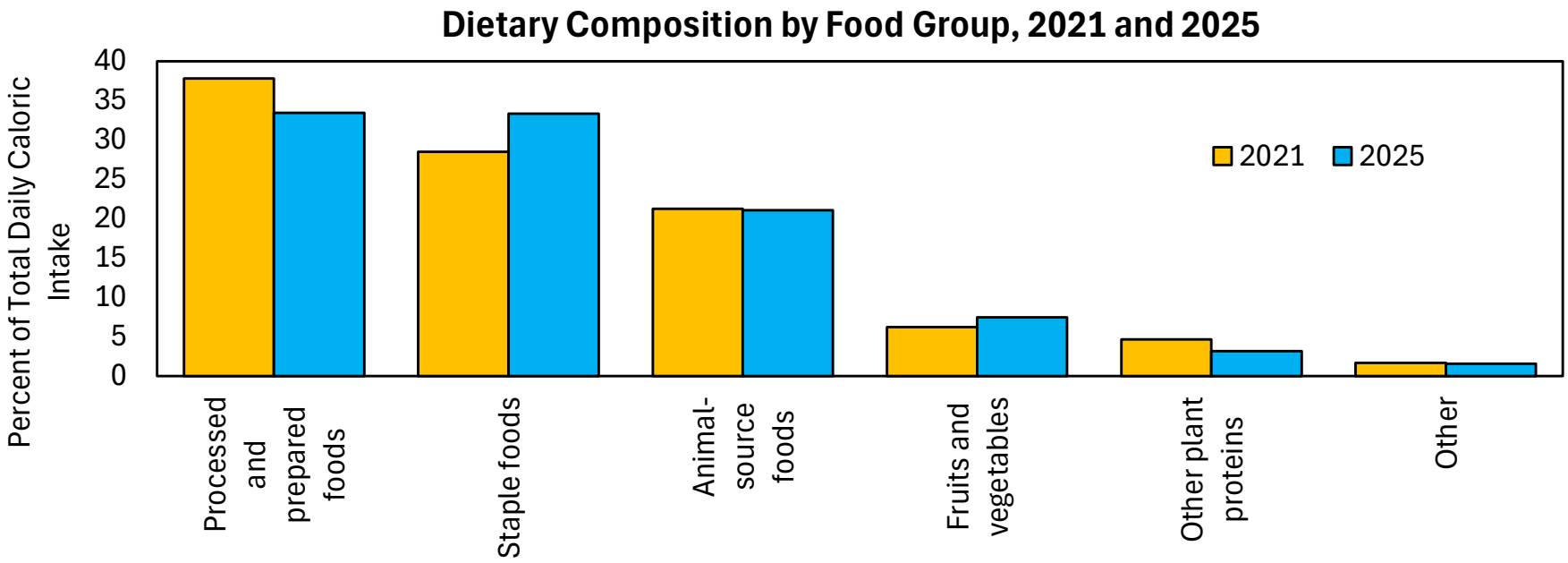
DIETARY CHANGE

The composition of apparent dietary energy shifted between 2021 and 2025

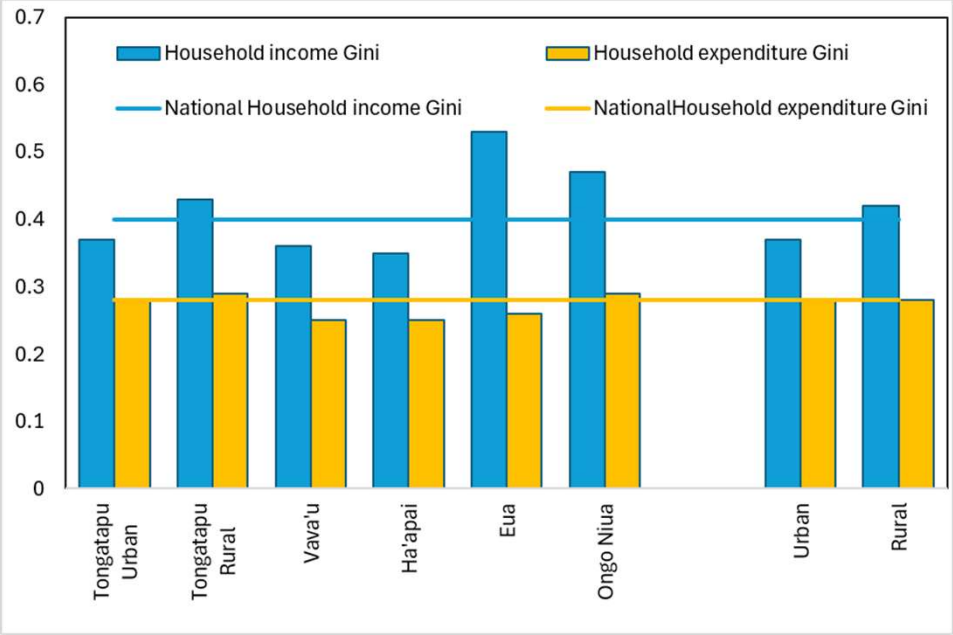
Between 2021 and 2025, staples rose from about 28% to 33% of apparent dietary energy and fruit and vegetables from 6% to 8%, while processed and prepared foods declined from around 38% to 34%.



DISTRIBUTION

Income is more unequal than consumption in every reporting stratum

Household expenditure is distributed more evenly than current household income in every reporting stratum.



0.40 vs 0.28

national income Gini vs expenditure Gini

'EUA: 0.53

highest income Gini among reporting strata

0.25–0.29

much narrower range for expenditure inequality

POLICY LENS *The report concludes that income and consumption provide complementary perspectives on household economic conditions and inequality.*

GEOGRAPHY

Regional differences extend well beyond average income

Average household income varies by around 13% across reporting strata, compared with 69% for household expenditure; the report also documents differences in inequality, remittance reliance, dependency burdens and apparent dietary energy.

Dimension	Regional variation* (highest vs. lowest region,)
Average household income	13%
Average household expenditure	69%
Dependency burden	29%
Apparent dietary energy	31%
Remittance share of income	54%
Income Gini	0.35–0.53

* Highest vs lowest reporting-stratum value, except Gini shown as range.

The report does not attribute these regional differences to a single cause.

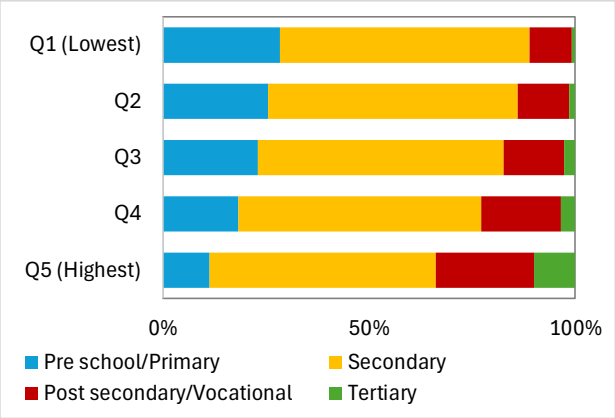
The evidence shows that relatively similar average incomes can coexist with substantially wider differences in other dimensions of household economic conditions.

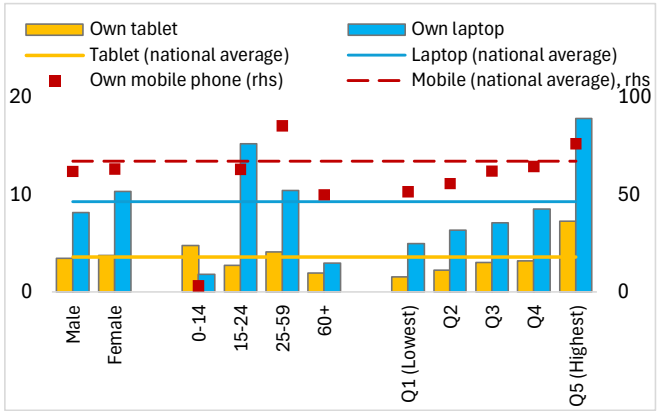
POLICY LENS *The report concludes that similar average household incomes coexist with considerably wider differences in other dimensions of household economic conditions.*

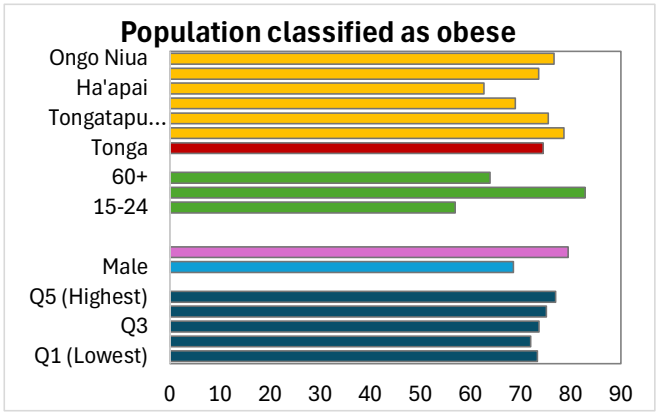
HUMAN CAPITAL

Broad basic access coexists with steep gaps in higher-level opportunity

Education, digital access and health indicators show that the remaining gaps are increasingly concentrated among particular groups.







12.4×
tertiary attainment: highest vs lowest expenditure quintile

30.3% vs 69.2%
internet access: persons with vs without disability

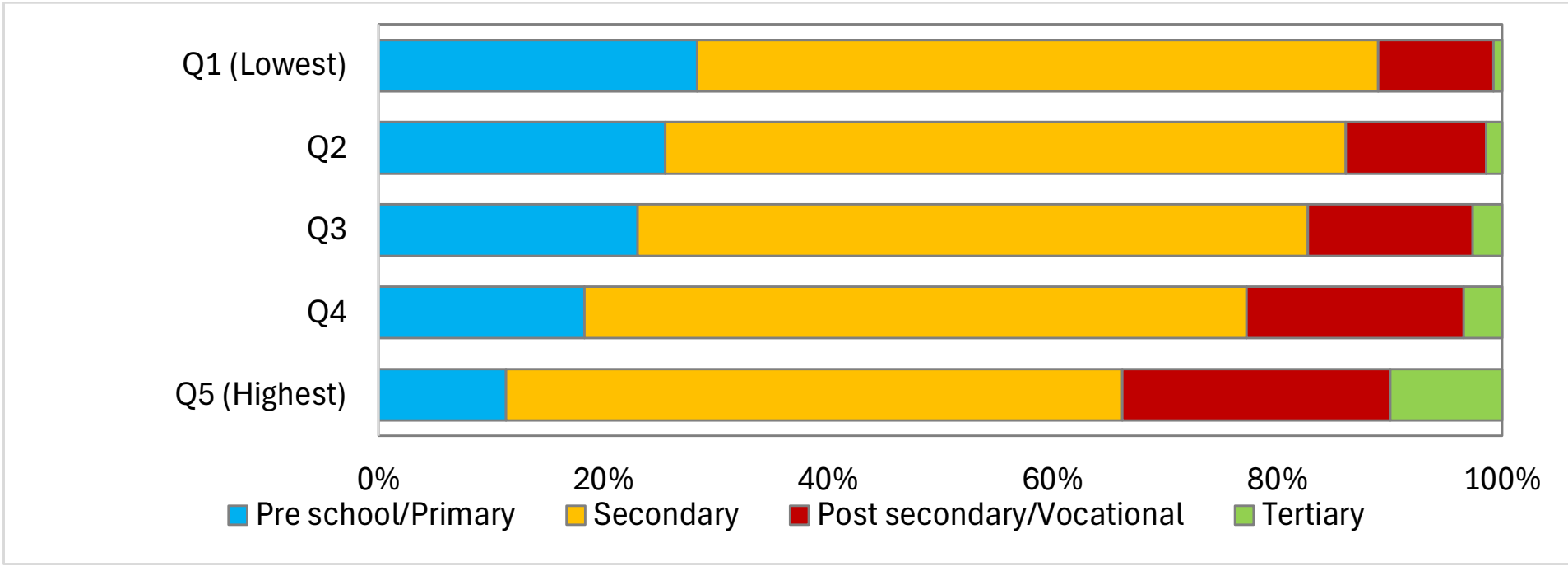
AGE GRADIENT
chronic conditions are considerably more prevalent among older people.

POLICY LENS *The report finds substantial disparities by age, disability/functioning status and economic status despite broad national access to basic services and support networks.*

EDUCATION

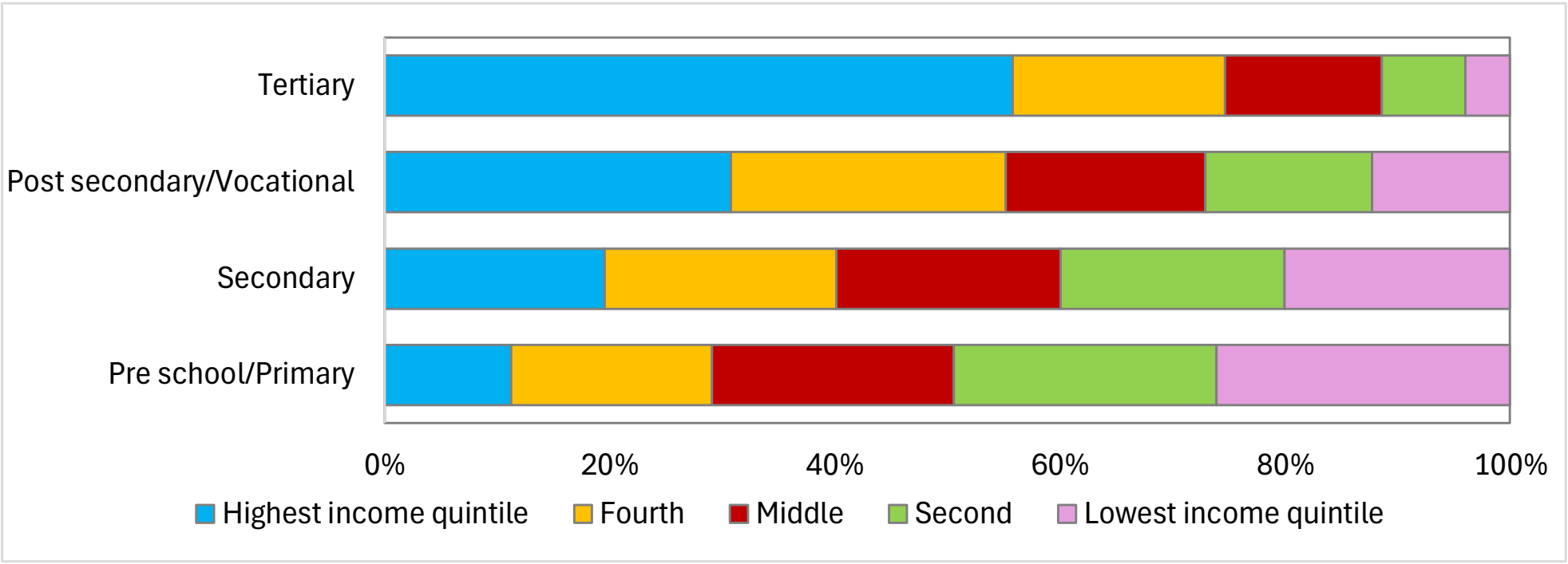
Educational attainment differs across reporting strata

Chart reproduced from the report for reference and discussion.



EDUCATION & ECONOMIC STATUS

Higher educational attainment rises sharply across expenditure quintiles

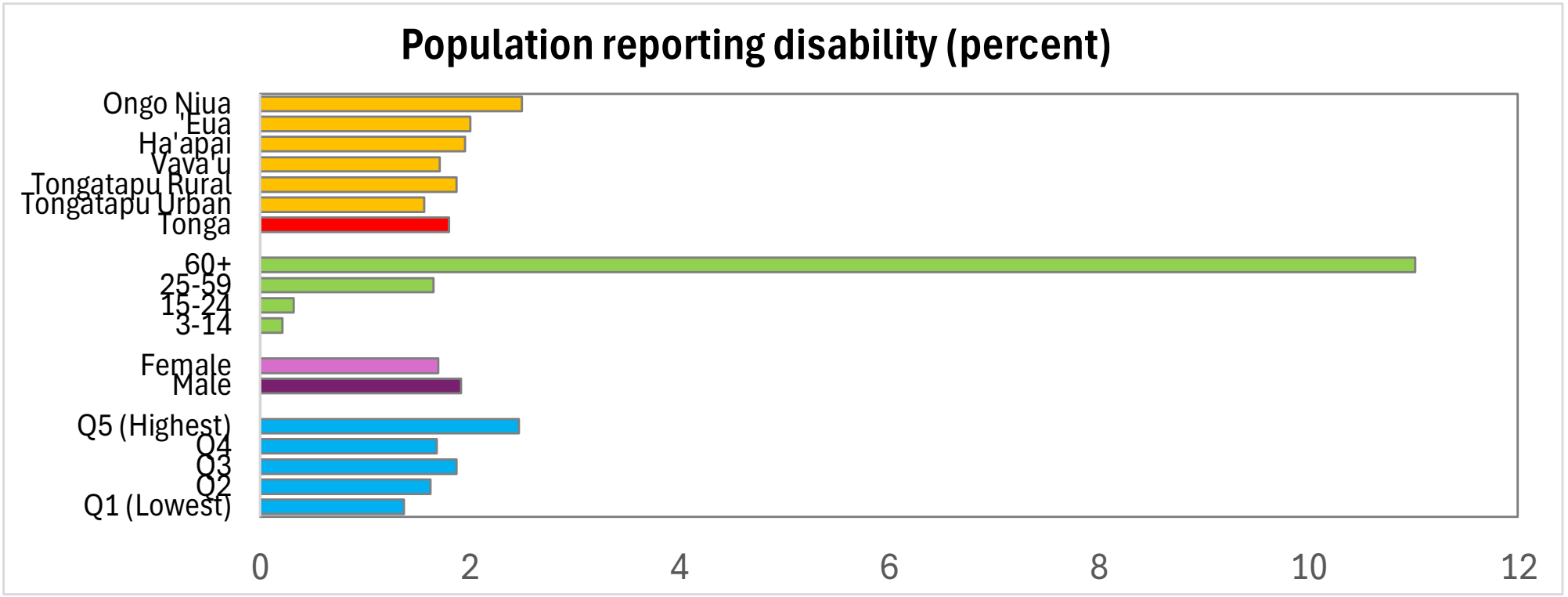


HEALTH

Obesity is widespread across population groups

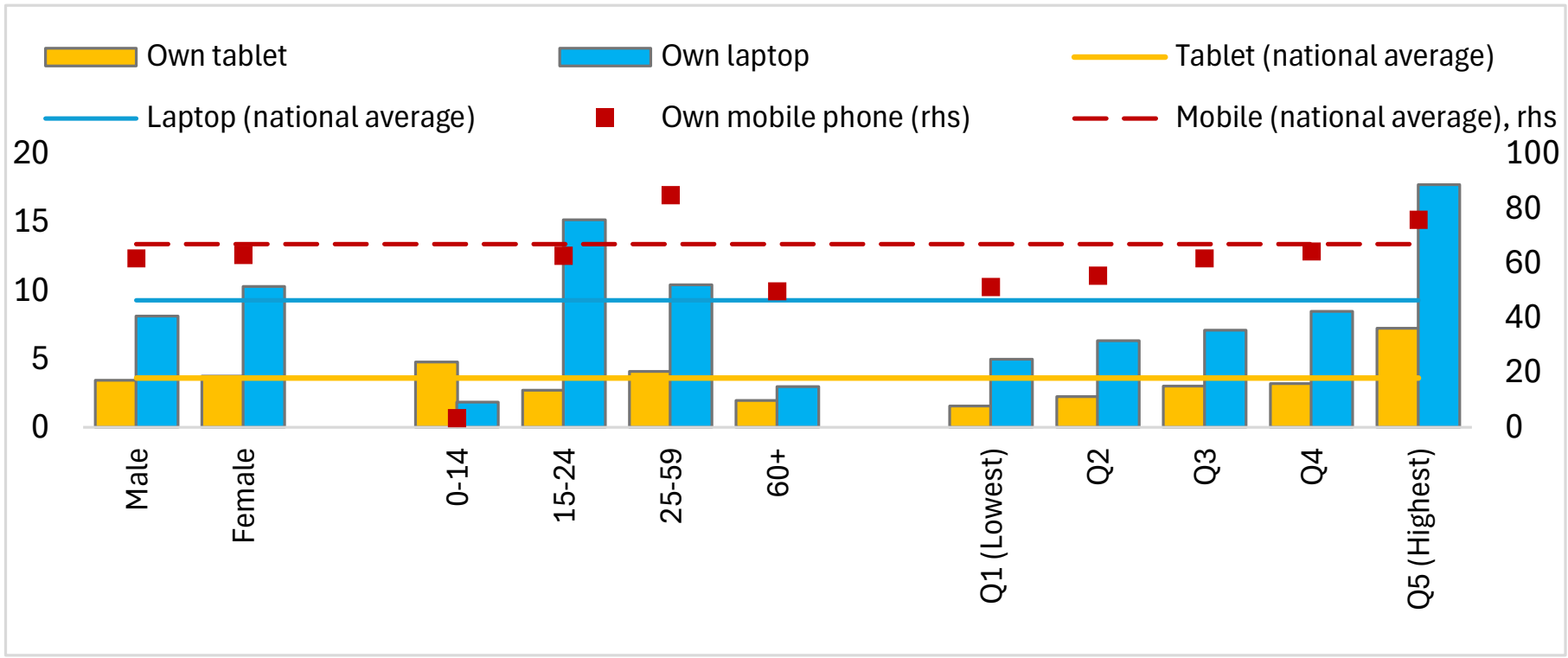
DISABILITY

Disability patterns vary by age and population group



DIGITAL INCLUSION

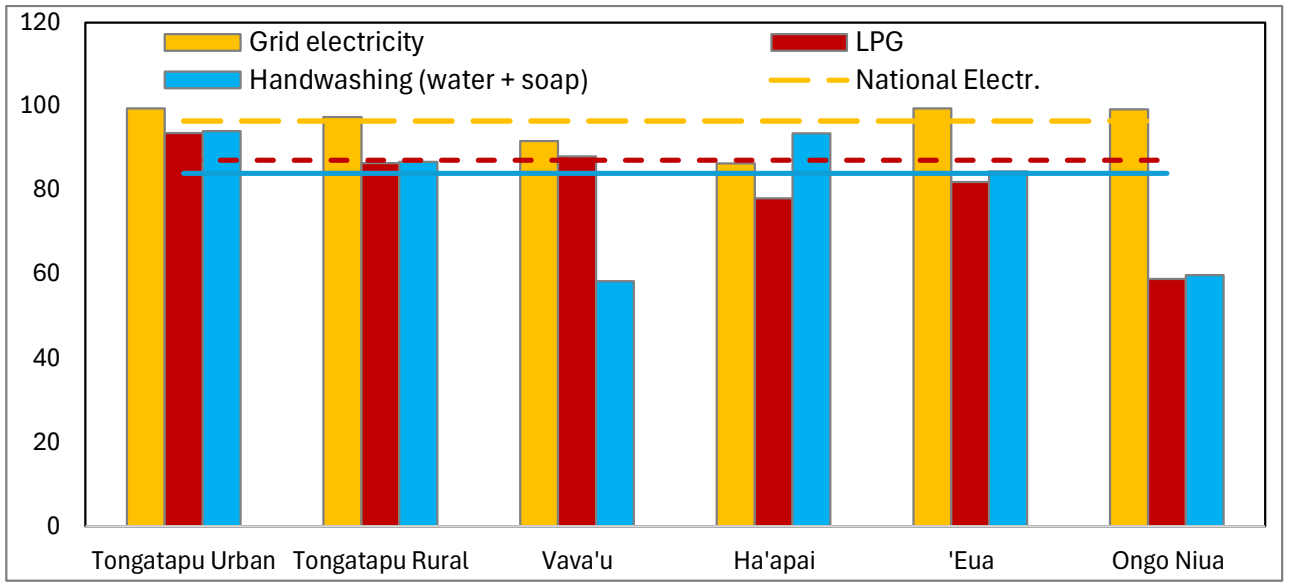
Access to higher-value digital devices remains limited



LIVING CONDITIONS

Basic infrastructure is widespread, but household services and amenities vary considerably across Tonga

Home production, gifts and transfers in kind, and imputed housing services materially widen the resources households can consume.



ELECTRICITY IS WIDESPREAD
Grid electricity ranges from 86.5% in Haʻapai to more than 99% in Tongatapu Urban, ʻEua and Ongo Niua.

COOKING FUELS VARY MORE
LPG use ranges from 93.7% in Tongatapu Urban to 58.9% in Ongo Niua. In Ongo Niua, 38.7% of households rely on wood and coconut fuel, compared with 3.1% in Tongatapu Urban.

HYGIENE SHOWS LARGE GEOGRAPHIC GAPS
Handwashing facilities with clean water and soap range from 58.4% in Vavaʻu and 59.8% in Ongo Niua to 93.6% in Haʻapai and 94.1% in Tongatapu Urban.

HOUSING TENURE
Owner occupation predominates across most of Tonga, accounting for 64.3%–75.2% of households in every reporting stratum except Ongo Niua. Ongo Niua is different, with 71.1% of households occupying dwellings free of charge. Rental housing is limited and concentrated in Tongatapu Urban, where 7.6% of households rent.

2021–2025

Recent nominal gains did not keep pace with consumer prices

Between 2021 and 2025, nominal measured household income increased by 3.8% and consumption by 11.4%; in constant 2025 prices, aggregate income declined by about 19% and consumption by about 13%.

Measure	Nominal change	Real/price context
Household income	+3.8%	≈ −19% in constant 2025 prices
Household consumption	+11.4%	≈ −13% in constant 2025 prices
Food expenditure	+22.9%	Budget pressure
Transport expenditure	+48.2%	Budget pressure

97.7%

consumption as a share of measured household income in 2025

91.0% in 2021

Nominal increases in household income and consumption were insufficient to offset the rise in consumer prices.

QUARTER-CENTURY PERSPECTIVE

The household economy expanded in nominal terms—and consumption moved closer to measured income

The 25-year series provides structural context; exact comparisons with early rounds require care because methods evolved.

Indicator	2000/01	2009	2015/16	2021	2025
Resident population	100,672	103,161	99,557	100,179	99,441
Number of households	16,588	20,432	18,014	18,847	18,863
Average household size (persons)	5.5	…	5.5	5.3	5.4
Dependency ratio (dependents per 100 working-age persons)	…	…	76	74	80.3
Average annual household income (TOP, nominal)	18,605	19,884	32,540	61,753	64,019
Average annual household consumption/expenditure (TOP, nominal)	16,270	18,600	30,510	56,149	62,546
Food share of household consumption/expenditure (%)	43.7	51.0	32.6	33.4	36.9
Consumption/expenditure as % of measured household income	86.8	93.6	93.8	91.0	97.7
Income Gini coefficient	…	…	0.42	0.40	0.40
Expenditure/consumption Gini coefficient	…	…	…	…	0.28
Households receiving remittances (%)	75.0	81.0	84.0	90.0	79.6

POLICY LENS **Read the long series for structural direction; use 2021–2025 for the strongest recent comparison under the harmonised framework.**

WHAT THE EVIDENCE SAYS

The five synthesis findings in the revised final draft

The report is most useful when its findings are read together rather than as isolated statistics.

RECENT CHANGE

Nominal income and consumption increased but did not keep pace with consumer price inflation.

HOUSEHOLD RESOURCES

Living standards are supported by resources beyond employment earnings and market purchases.

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

Average income varies less across reporting strata than expenditure and other household conditions.

PRIMARY PRODUCTION

Agriculture, livestock and home production remain important components of livelihoods and consumption.

ACCESS & DISPARITIES

Broad access to services and support networks coexists with important disparities across population groups.

POLICY DIALOGUE

Official statistical and policy uses identified in the report

The report identifies the following uses of the HIES evidence base.

01	Consumer Price Index rebasing and household expenditure weights	02	National accounts compilation and household income/consumption statistics
03	Income distribution and inequality analysis	04	Food-security assessment and food-consumption analysis
05	Poverty and other socioeconomic analysis	06	National development planning and monitoring of household economic conditions and living standards

From statistics to a shared picture of household welfare

25 years of evidence now connects the household economy, living conditions and distributional outcomes in one national framework.

Thank you.

The value of the HIES is not only what it measures.
It is what it allows Tonga to see together.