

Your mother didn't work while you were growing up? You might not be a feminist



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Introduction

- Between the years 2020 -2023, the Global Gender Gap score for all 146 countries changed from 68.6% to 68.4% (K. Pal, R. Li, K. Piaget, S. Baller, S. Zahidi, Global gender gap report 2023). This indicates practically no improvement over the last 4 recorded years. It is possible that the practices, ideas and values of gender inequality are passed down generations in growing societies.
- Sons with working mothers being inclined to spend more time with family and daughters with working mothers spending less time on housework (McGinn, K. L., Ruiz Castro, M., & Lingo, E. L., 2019).
- The gap in employment among parents is attributed to the belief that maternal employment damages family life (Scott and Clery, 2013). However, it is unclear whether individuals that have lives in families with a working mother feel the same way.
- The lack of women within the workforce could be enforcing the cycle of toxic gender dynamics by affecting children's perception of women in society.

Methods

Sample

- Adults (above the age of 18) who had reported to having or not having a working mother during childhood and responded to questions of interest under the cumulative variable were drawn from the General Social Survey (GSS) recoded in 2021. This research contains 4,032 complete responses from participants.
- The General Social Survey (sometimes, General Social Surveys) is a series of nationally representative cross-sectional interviews in the United States that collects data on contemporary American society to monitor and explain trends in opinions, attitudes, and behaviors. This data was collected online and by phone.

Measures

- Response: Gender Equality Score.** Measured by summing up all responses of interest was labelled "gender roles". Respondents were assigned scores on a scale from 0-6 depending on their responses to selected questions.
- Explanatory: Mother's working status when respondent was growing up.** Measured by binary variable "Did your mother ever work for pay for as long as a year, while you were growing up?"

Research Questions

- Is there an association between a mother's employment status when respondent was growing up and respondent's opinions on gender roles and the role of women in social sectors?
- If there is an association, does it experience a change depending on respondent's sex?

Results

Bivariate

- Chi-Square test indicated that **respondents with working mothers were significantly more likely to be in support of women having the final say in abortion (59.45%)** than those without whose mothers did not work (48%). ($X^2=12.16, df=1, p<.0001$) (Figure 1)
- Similarly, **respondents with working mothers were significantly more likely to be in support of women's ability to be president (90%)** than those without whose mothers did not work (84%). ($X^2=8.46, df=1 p<.004$) (Figure 2)

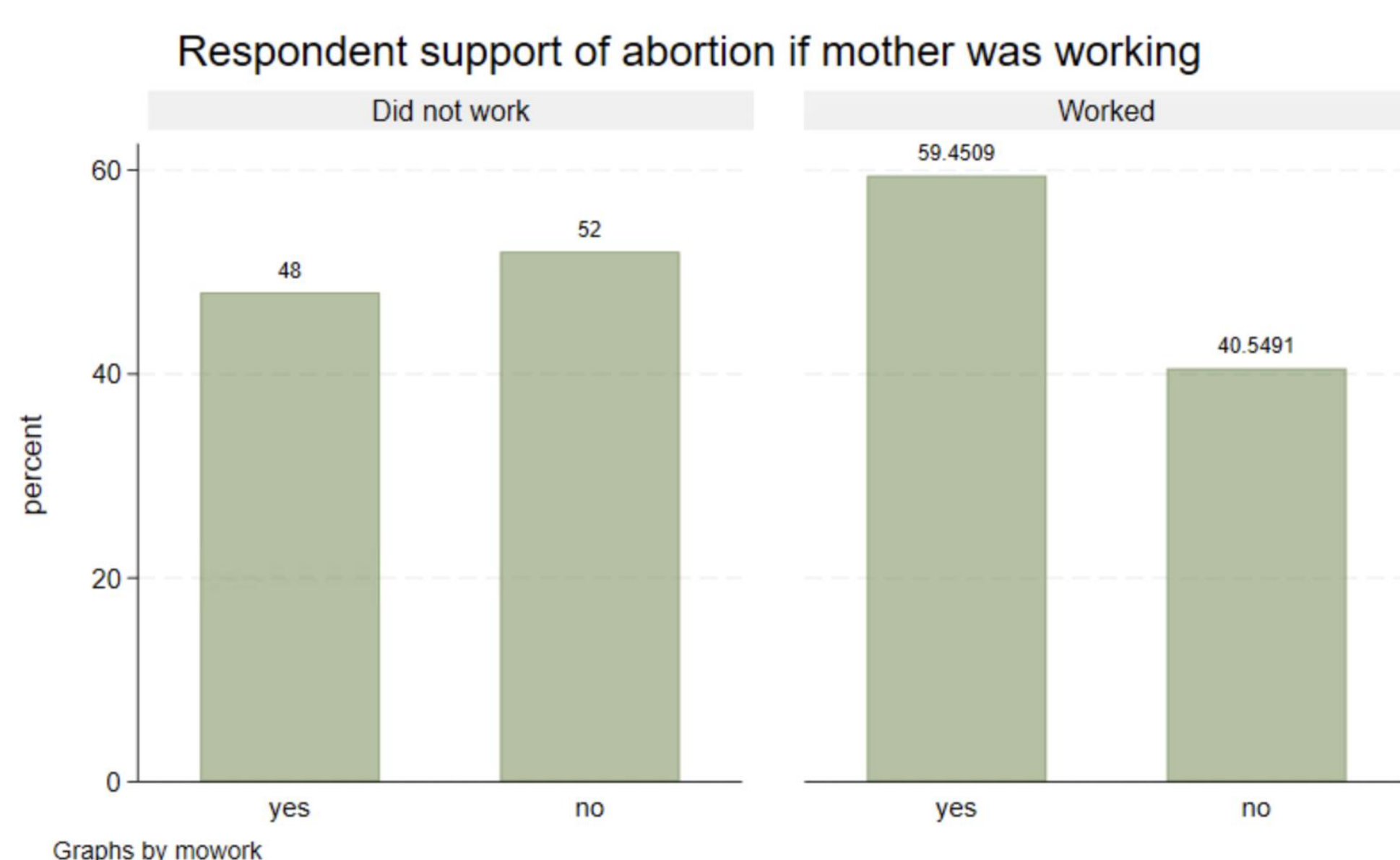


Figure 1. Bar graph showing distribution of respondents in support and against a woman's freedom to decide on an abortion by mother's working history

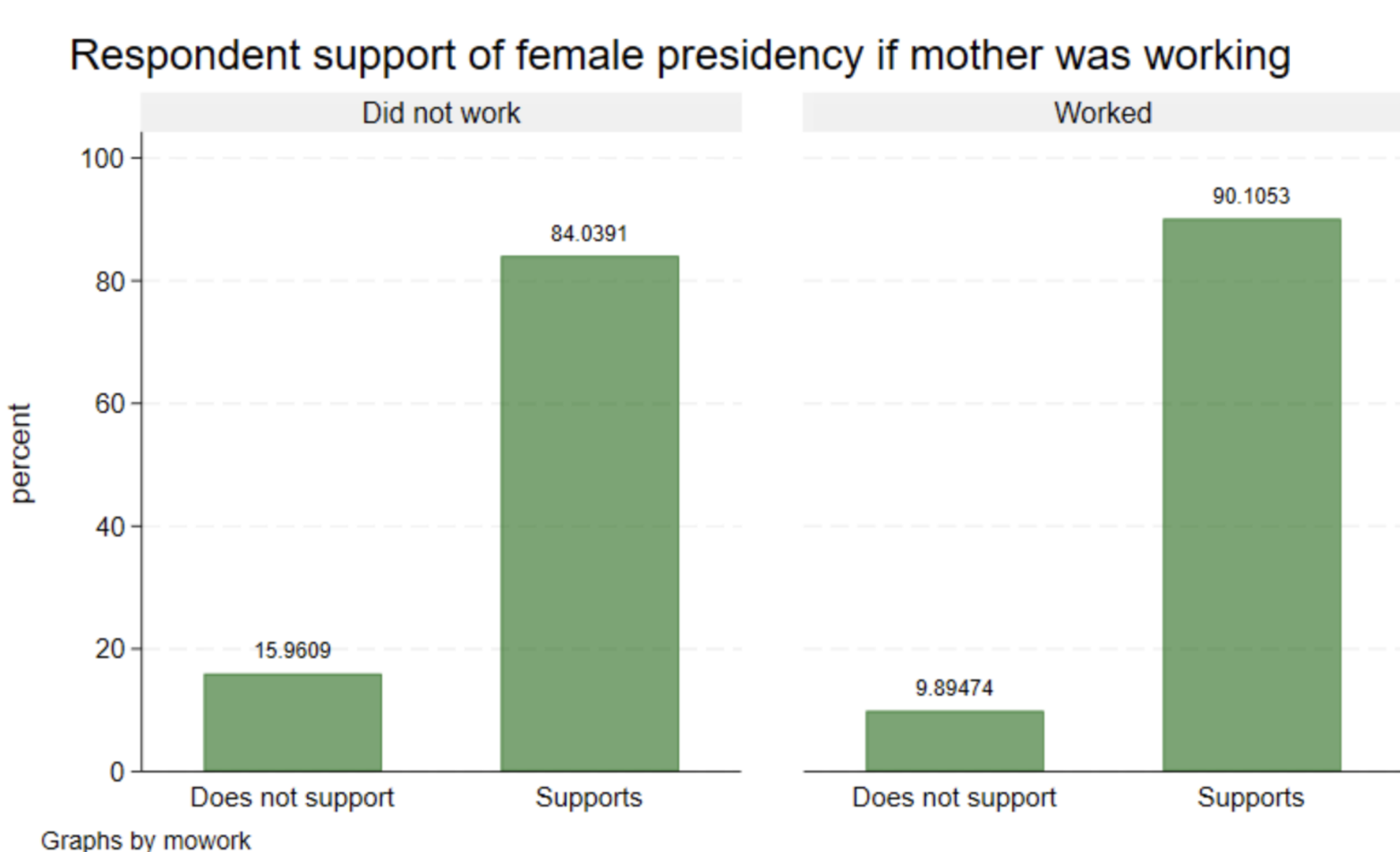


Figure 2. Bar graph showing distribution of respondents in support and against a female presidency by mother's working history

- A Chi-Square test indicated that there is a statistically significant relationship between a mother's working status and respondent's gender roles score ($X^2=18.52, df=1, p<.005$.)
- Average gender equality score is higher among respondents whose mother has been employed while they were growing up. (Figure 3)

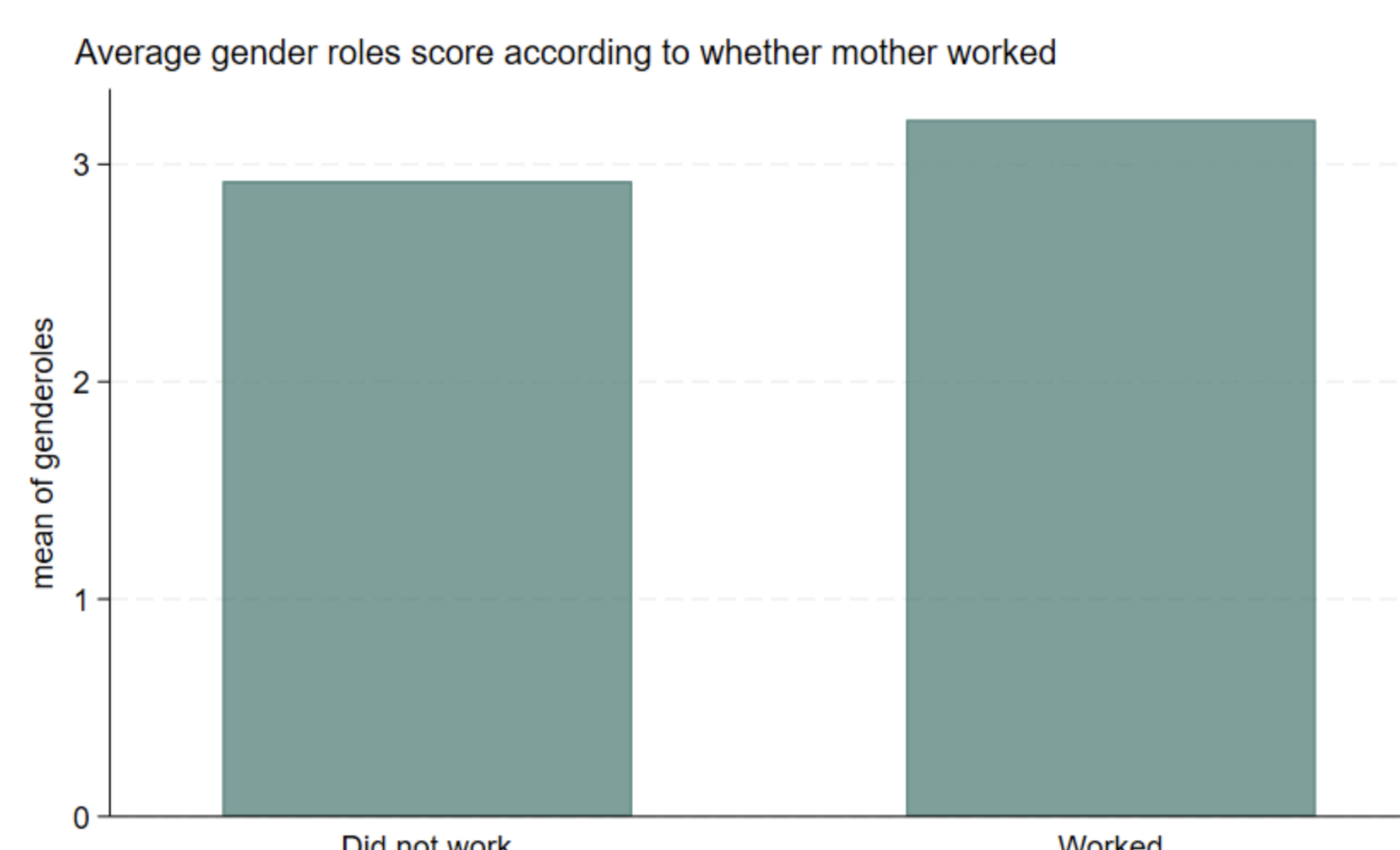


Figure 3. Bar graph showing distribution of respondents in support and against a woman's freedom to decide on an abortion by mother's working history

Multiple linear regression.

- A multiple linear regression analysis revealed that the association between gender equality score and mother's working status when respondent was 16 was statistically significant when controlling for sex. ($CO=0.28, p=0.001, CI=0.12-0.44$)

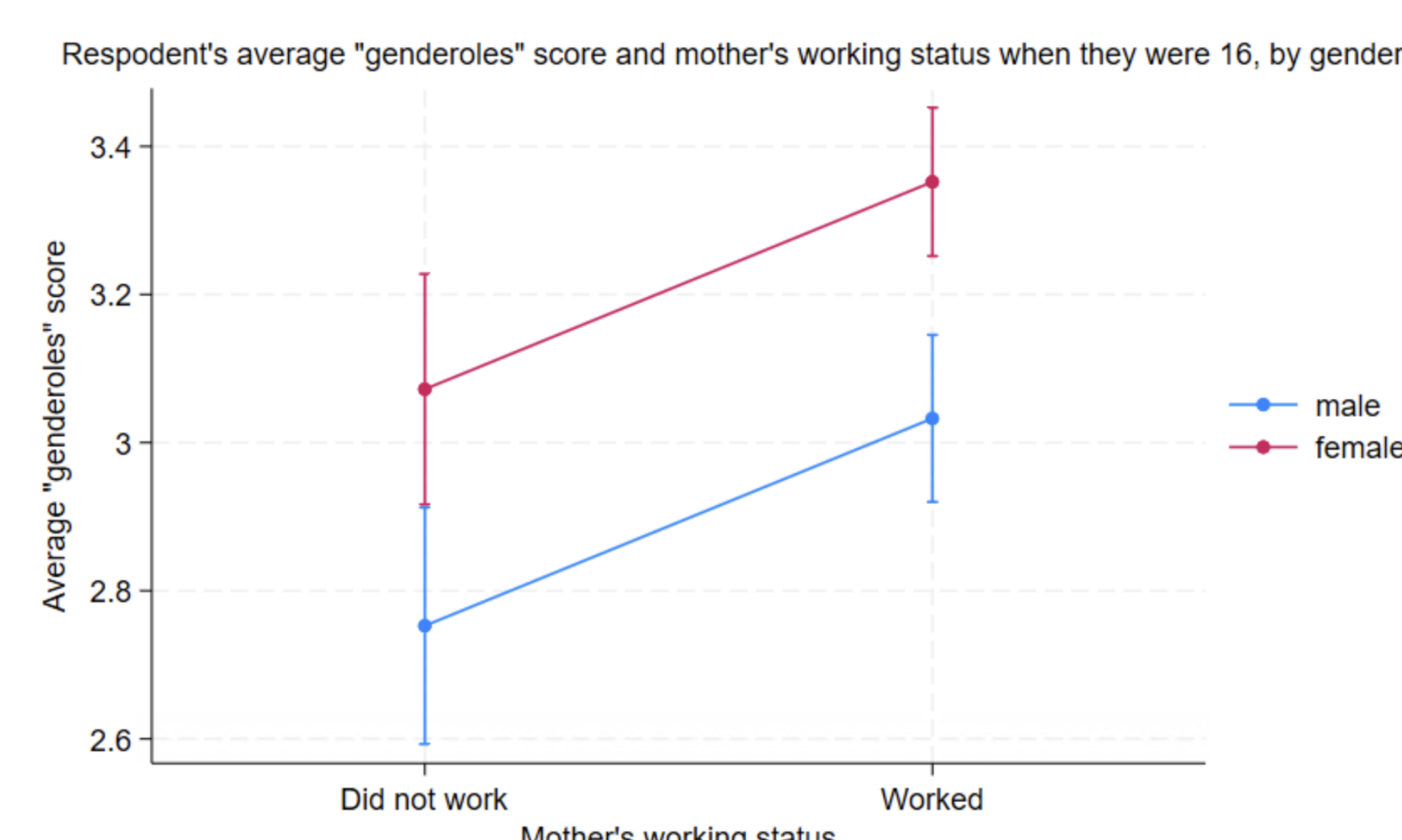


Figure 4. Scatter plot showing average gender roles score depending on mother's working status when respondent was 16, according to sex.

Discussion

- Out of the 6 variables under the cumulative variable "gender roles, five had a statistically significant relationship with the explanatory variable. This indicates that the explanatory variable is associated with respondents' opinion on gender dynamics in most contexts.
- Respondent's whose mother had worked during respondent's childhood are more likely to support notions associated with gender equality in government, healthcare and family dynamics.
- Although the average gender roles score is higher among females than males, the relationship between a mother's working status when respondent was growing up and their gender roles score is consistent among both sexes(Figure 4). Therefore, sex is not a moderating variable.
- There is a statistically significant, positive relationship between respondent's mother's working status when respondent was growing up and their opinion on gender dynamics quantified by their "gender roles" score.
- These findings could be further refined if more variables related to a specific context are evaluated against the explanatory variable e.i all questions related to family dynamics against mother's working status etc.

K. Pal, R. Li, K. Piaget, S. Baller, S. Zahidi, Global gender gap report 2023. World Economic Forum. (2023). <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2023/in-full/benchmarking-gender-gaps-2023/>

McGinn, K. L., Ruiz Castro, M., & Lingo, E. L. (2019). Learning from Mum: Cross-National Evidence Linking Maternal Employment and Adult Children's Outcomes. *Work, Employment and Society*, 33(3), 374-400. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017018760167>

Scott J, Clery E (2013) Gender roles: an incomplete revolution? In: Park A, Bryson C, Clery E, Curtice J, Phillips M (eds) *British Social Attitudes: The 30th Report*. London: NatCen Social Research, 115-138.