

APRIL 2020

COUNTING WOMEN'S WORK: MEASURING THE CARE ECONOMY

Women worldwide are primary caregivers for children and the elderly, a key role that ensures the health of families and communities and that builds every nation's labor force. However, much of women's work driving the care economy is invisible in official statistics.

Methods used to measure economic activity do not include women's unpaid work, resulting in policies that overlook how unpaid work limits women's engagement in the market economy and contributes to gender inequality. The goal of the Counting Women's Work (CWW) project is to understand women's paid and unpaid contributions to national economies and economic growth by analyzing how women and men spend their time in the marketplace and at home.

Unlike most other analyses of economic activity, CWW analysis estimates production, consumption, and transfers of goods and services for the household economy, including unpaid care work such as childcare and household chores. By measuring both men and women's paid and unpaid work, CWW analysis is uniquely positioned to increase awareness of women's contribution to their countries' economies. These analyses can also inform policy and program decisions related to economic growth and gender inequality.

Why Does Counting Women's Work Matter?

CWW analysis quantifies differences between women and men with respect to market work and wages; time dedicated to providing household services and care for children, elders, or other dependents; and total time spent working.

Results from these analyses provide evidence that can inform more effective policies to overcome women's obstacles to paid work. In addition, CWW analyses help make the case for extending social welfare benefits (such as sick leave, retirement, and childcare) to men and women who perform unpaid care work.

With CWW analysis, it is possible, for example, to project the impact of reducing the hours girls spend in care work on girls' completion of secondary school. Such analysis could be particularly useful in some African countries. Despite efforts made to increase gender equality in education, girls are still not as likely as boys to complete primary or secondary school in some countries. One



Unpaid Work

All work not compensated. Includes unpaid work in a family business and unpaid care work.

Unpaid Care Work

Unpaid work to sustain households and care for household and community members. Includes direct care and household services.

Direct Care

Directly caring for children, elderly, the disabled and volunteering.

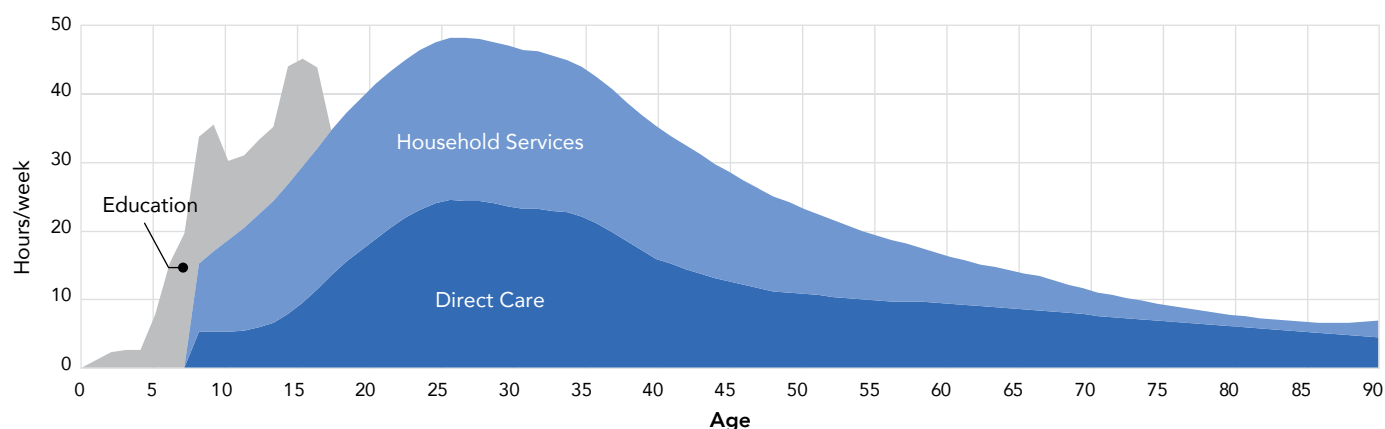
Household Services

Activities like cooking, cleaning, and household maintenance.

of the primary reasons is that girls are burdened with unpaid care work, starting around the age they would be entering secondary school. Reducing the amount of time women and girls spend doing unpaid care work could leave girls more time to attend school or pursue higher education, increasing women's income-earning potential (see figure, page 2).

By better understanding gender inequalities in unpaid work, we can build policies that recognize the economic role of unpaid care work and promote more equally shared responsibilities between men and women within the home. Policymakers can benefit by using results of CWW analyses to better quantify potential impacts of economic development programs and to assess gender impacts. Consideration of both paid and unpaid contributions to the economy expands policy perspectives on how to accelerate economic growth. Beneficial programs may include providing free childcare, or childcare within or nearby workplaces, or even mobile childcare facilities. For countries with slower population growth, decreasing unpaid care demands could affect women's labor force participation rates and encourage economic growth.

Women's Unpaid Time Use by Age in Senegal



Measuring Women's Work: Country Examples

VIETNAMESE DISPARITIES IN TIME ALLOCATIONS

- Women in Vietnam spend less time on education than men.
- Women in Vietnam spend less time in the marketplace and more time providing household services and care at home than men.
- Women in Vietnam spend less time on leisure and self-care than men.

COLOMBIAN WOMEN'S SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

- At age 20, women with the lowest educational level devote three times as many hours per day to unpaid household services than more educated women.
- For women, higher education is associated with lower fertility rates and higher labor force participation rates in the market economy, leading to higher wages and increased contributions to pension systems.

INCOME DIFFERENCES IN SENEGAL

- Between ages 20 and 50, women spend approximately half the time men do in paid work, earning less per hour for the work they perform.
- Even if women and men were to be paid market wages for their unpaid work, women's earnings would average less per hour worked than men's earnings.
- Women and men's consumption and income levels are lower in rural areas than in urban areas.

References

"Counting Women's Work: The Gendered Economy in the Market and at Home," https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5994a30fe4fcb5d90b6fbeb/t/5a4557c753450ac86579f096/1514493896596/CWW_Pamphlet_01.pdf.

Gretchen Donehower, "Adding Unpaid Care Work Into the Analysis of Demographic Dividends," Working Paper, Counting Women's Work and National Transfer Accounts research network, <http://uaps2019.popconf.org/uploads/191077>.

Latif Dramani, Oumy Laye, and Sene Ndeye Sokhor, "Arbitrage marché du travail et marché domestique," National Transfer Accounts Working Paper, WP17-03, March 2017, www.ntaccounts.org/web/nta/show/WP17-03.

Oumy Laye and Latif Dramani, "Disparités Régionales et Dividendes Démographiques dans un Contexte D'émergence au Sénégal," Presented at the 7th African Population Conference, Johannesburg, South Africa, Nov. 30, 2015, <https://uaps2015.princeton.edu/papers/150442> (updated presentation in 2016).

National Transfer Accounts, "Counting Women's Work: Measuring the Gendered Economy in the Market and at Home," (January 2017), *National Transfer Accounts Bulletin* 11, <http://ntaccounts.org/doc/repository/NTA%20Bulletin%2011.pdf>.

Jorge A. Tovar and B. Piedad Urdinola, "Home and Market Production Time Use Differentials in Colombia," in *Time Use and Transfers in the Americas*, ed. Urdinola and Tovar (Basel, Switzerland: Springer, Cham, 2019).

Acknowledgments

This brief was prepared by Population Reference Bureau (PRB) in collaboration with the Counting Women's Work project. The brief was authored by Kelley Kline, data analyst at PRB, with support from Marlene Lee, PRB associate vice president in International Programs and Gretchen Donehower, Counting Women's Work project co-director at University of California-Berkeley.

Figure from Counting Women's Work.

© 2020 Population Reference Bureau. All rights reserved.