

UNPAID CARE WORK IN GEORGIA

Women bear a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work, resulting in negative social and economic outcomes for women. Unpaid care work significantly contributes to a country's economic and societal well-being. However, such work remains mostly invisible and unrecognized. In no country in the world do men and women equally share unpaid care work.¹ However, the extent and manifestations of this imbalance vary across countries and regions, including within Georgia. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the gender gap in unpaid domestic and care work in the country.

What is care work?

The production and consumption of goods and services necessary for the physical, social, mental and emotional well-being of humans constitutes the care economy. Most importantly, the care economy is a crucial element of the social sustainability holding together families, communities and economies. Care work can be both paid and unpaid, formal and informal. Care work consists of direct, personal activities, such as feeding a child, and relational care activities, such as cooking and cleaning. The majority of care work is unpaid and performed in the household, meaning it lacks social and economic recognition. The Global Alliance for Care's Urgent Call to Action, a key outcome of the Mexico Generation Equality Forum held in 2021, summarizes these points succinctly, noting that "care and domestic work [are] an essential, universal need that contributes to individual and household well-being, social development and economic growth, yet is often unrecognized and undervalued."²

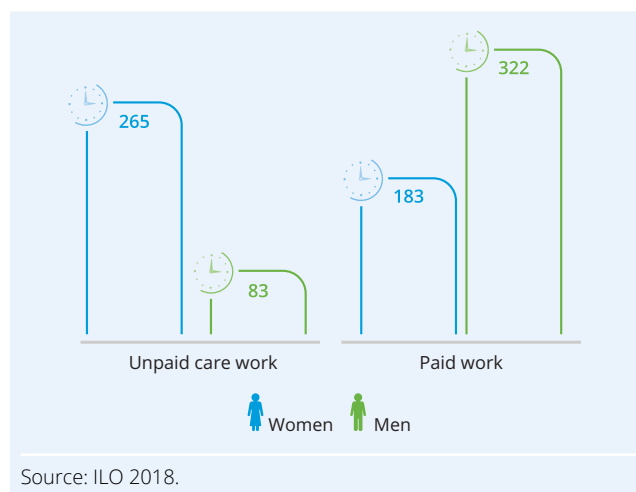
Unpaid care work and time poverty

The term **'time poverty'** refers to the fact that some individuals do not have enough discretionary time—the time available after engaging in paid and unpaid work and necessary activities like sleep—to engage in activities that build their social and human capital.³

Unpaid care work is the main contributor to women's time poverty and an obstacle to women's economic participation. Indeed, globally women spend more than three times as much time on unpaid care work than men (Figure 1). In countries where there is a more equal sharing of unpaid care work between men and women, there are higher levels of women's economic activity.⁴ Globally, 606 million women and million men of working age are outside the labour force due to family responsibilities.⁵

FIGURE 1

Time spent daily on unpaid care work and paid work, by sex, globally (minutes per day)

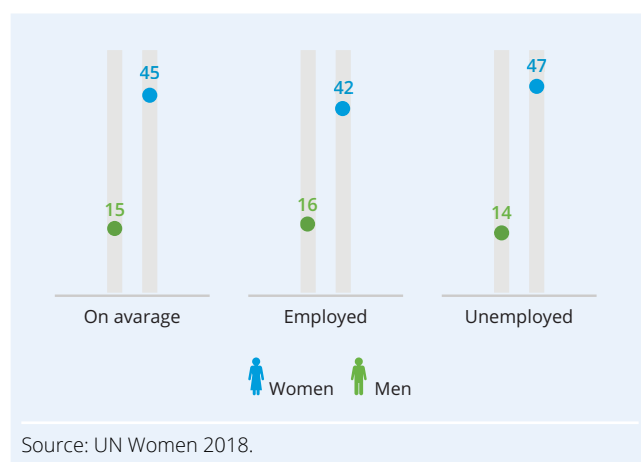




In Georgia, unpaid care work is the most widely reported reason given for women's economic inactivity, with 49 per cent of women citing it as the main reason for not working.⁶ This trend can be explained by the fact that in Georgia, women are the main performers of household work, spending an average of three times as much time on homemaking as men.^{1,7} The burden of unpaid care work is not significantly different for employed and unemployed women. This disparity clearly demonstrates the double burden of women's work.⁸ Moreover, there is a gendered difference in the amount of time spent on paid and unpaid work by men and women, resulting in women's time poverty (Figure 2). This often limits women's choice of income-earning opportunities and, more generally, their decision to participate in the labour market.

FIGURE 2

Amount of time spent on unpaid care-related work (hours per week)

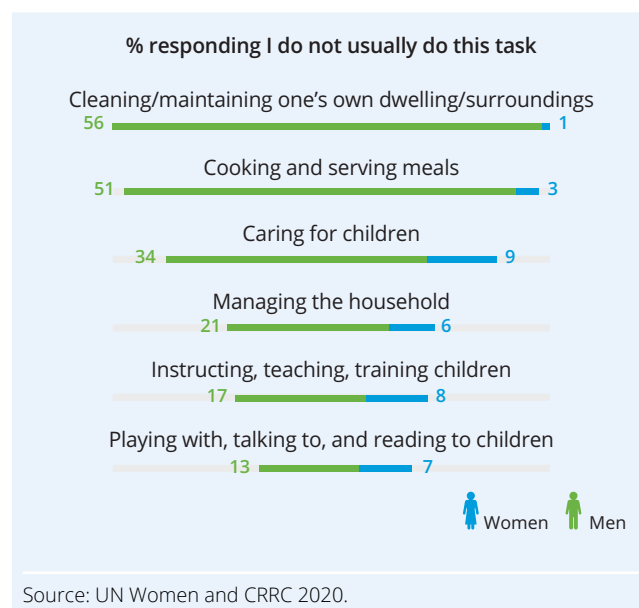


The rapid gender assessment of the COVID-19-related situation in Georgia, conducted by UN Women Georgia in 2020, shows that even before the pandemic, significant differences existed between women's and men's participation in household chores. As seen in Figure 3, men rarely undertook cleaning (56 per cent of men never do, compared to 1 per cent of women), cooking and serving meals (51 per cent of men, compared to 3 per cent of

women), or childcare (34 per cent of men, compared to 9 per cent women).

FIGURE 3

Share of male and female population not usually spending time on a task (percentage)

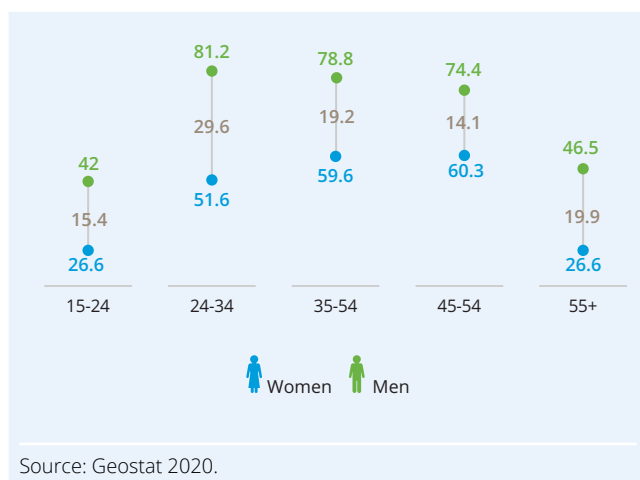


In Georgia, the gender gap in employment is highest for the population aged 25–34, at 29.6 percentage points (Figure 4).⁹ A lower level of economic activity among women of reproductive age is associated with an increased burden of care work. Family circumstance, especially the presence of children in the household, affects women's and men's labour market participation differently. While labour market activity does not differ for single men and women, the discrepancy appears with marriage and intensifies with the number of children. For instance, women with two children experience a six-times higher non-participation rate than men with two children.¹⁰ This implies that there is a 'motherhood penalty' for women with care responsibilities and a 'labour force premium' for men who live with care recipients. In addition, women who leave the workforce for family-related reasons have a low probability of resuming gainful employment later in life.¹¹

1 A time use survey has never been conducted in Georgia; as a result, data for SDG indicator 5.4.1 (the proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location) are not available. This brief uses data from a 2018 UN Women survey as a proxy. The survey asked respondents for estimates of the time they spent on a variety of domestic work and care work activities. A time use survey of Georgia will become available in 2022.

FIGURE 4

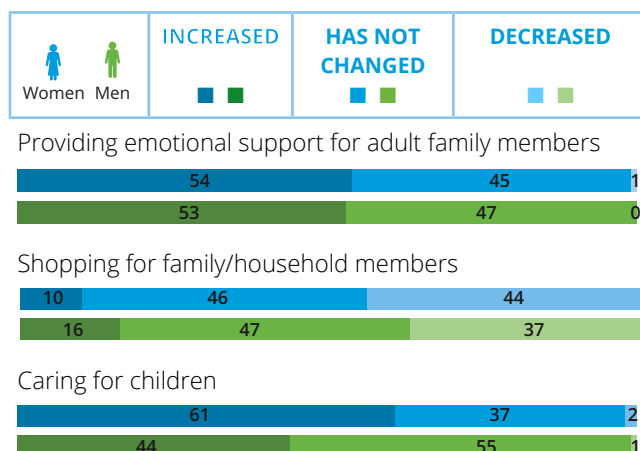
Labour force participation rate, by sex and age (percentage); and corresponding gender gap (percentage points)



As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, women are more likely to experience an increased housework burden. Women reported spending more time on 1.19 household tasks on average as a result of the pandemic. As seen in Figure 5, more women (61 per cent) than men (44 per cent) report that time dedicated to childcare, cleaning (35 per cent and 24 per cent, respectively) and cooking (31 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively) has increased.¹²

FIGURE 5

Changes in time spent dedicated to different tasks as a result of COVID-19, by sex (percentage)



Playing with, talking to, and reading to children



Instructing, teaching, and training children



Engaging in leisure/recreational activities



Cleaning and maintaining one's own dwelling and surroundings



Cooking and serving meals



Learning, including formal or informal education



Managing the household



Assisting older/sick/disabled adults



Source: UN Women and CRRC 2020.

Changes in care and housework have been more pronounced in the case of larger households and families with children. This stems from the increased time that parents needed to dedicate to online schooling, as children were now at home, with large households and families with children reporting significantly more time spent on unpaid domestic work since the start of the pandemic.¹³ With more people at home more of the time, women also began to spend more time on household chores than they did prior to the pandemic.¹⁴

Notably, women were more likely to report a decrease in the amount of time spent on leisure activities (31 per cent) than men (23 per cent), and correspondingly men were more likely to report an increase in leisure activities (30 per cent) than women (21 per cent), indicating that the pandemic has further increased time poverty for women.

Some causes and consequences of the unequal distribution of unpaid work

Due to patriarchal norms and values in Georgia, the division of household labour is gendered. Household responsibilities are quite starkly segregated by gender, with women doing nearly all household chores. There is no significant discrepancy between women's and men's perceptions on this matter: for instance, while 94 per cent of women say they usually or always do the washing, 89 per cent of men confirm that their partner usually or always does this task.¹⁵ As for childcare responsibilities, they remain the primary domain of women; approximately 70 per cent of women report being always or usually responsible for childcare.¹⁶ Despite the above-mentioned unequal division of household labour, only about 16 per cent of women are dissatisfied or completely dissatisfied with how household tasks are divided.¹⁷ This pattern reflects the widespread internalization of established gender roles among women and men. The gendered expectations defined by these roles precipitate gender inequalities both in the home and in society.

- Global economic inequality is one of the factors affecting the distribution of unpaid care work. Across and within countries, households differ in the time dedicated to household work since there is a difference in the time spent on transforming raw materials into consumable goods. For instance, in developed countries, the time that women allocate to fetching water is negligible, whereas in developing countries, it might take up to an hour per day.¹⁸ The distribution of time allocated to unpaid work significantly varies across non-poor and poor households even within the same country. The household income level determines the availability of intermediate goods and services and of household appliances that can be used to reduce unpaid work time. Thus, the unpaid work burden exacerbates the condition of poor women in poor countries.¹⁹
- The unequal division of unpaid care work generates gender inequalities in a myriad of economic and social outcomes, including the gender employment gap, horizontal and vertical segregation, and the gender wage gap. Due to the burden of unpaid care work, women cannot engage in the

paid job market to the same extent as men, and they have limited access to better-quality jobs. Gender disparities in time spent on unpaid care work translate into corresponding gaps in paid work time. Hence, part-time work is more prevalent among women than men. The part-time employment pattern generates a gender gap in years of work experience, which in turn renders a gender gap in social security and earnings. In addition, the expectation of long working hours in some jobs serves as a deterrent for women burdened with unpaid care work, thereby triggering occupational segregation.

- Public sector infrastructure and the provision of social services—such as childcare, eldercare and universal free access to health services—play a significant role in reducing the amount of time needed for taking care of household members.²⁰ Thus, unpaid work is a subsidy to state provisioning since unpaid work provides goods and services that the public sector could be making available. Unpaid time spent on care work can be also thought of as a 'gift' from one institution to another—from the household to the market—since it lowers the cost of labour by allowing for a smaller wage fund and a larger pool of profits. In the absence of unpaid care work, a higher real wage would be necessary to maintain the same standard of living for employees. In such a way, unpaid work serves as a 'subsidy' to the market economy.²¹
- Most importantly, women's unpaid care-work burden forms a barrier to entering or keeping a paid job since the gendered division of household work negatively affects the time available for women to spend on paid work. Unpaid care responsibilities are one of the factors prompting women to join more precarious jobs, be self-employed or work in the informal economy, which in turn leaves them without adequate social security.²² While care work can also be rewarding, a systemic, unequal division of labour leads to overwork and time poverty, limiting women's economic opportunities, power and control over their lives and diminishing their overall enjoyment of dignified work and life.



Key takeaways

Women shoulder a disproportionate amount of unpaid care work and domestic work in the world as well as in Georgia. This results in lower labour force participation for women, with the largest gap in labour force participation between men and women in the 25–34 age range, key reproductive years for women. The pandemic has

only exacerbated these pre-existing trends. A wide range of changes in Georgian social policy—starting from strengthening social protection and public services to implementing gender-responsive economic policies, among a wide range of other policy options—have the potential to reduce the gendered gap in unpaid care work.²

ENDNOTES

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| 1 ILO 2018. | 8 Ibid. | 15 UNFPA 2020. |
| 2 UN Women and Global Alliance for Care 2021. | 9 Geostat, 2020. | 16 Ibid. |
| 3 Kalenkoski and Hamrick 2014. | 10 IMF 2018. | 17 Ibid. |
| 4 ILO 2018. | 11 UN Women 2018. | 18 Antonopoulos 2009. |
| 5 Ibid. | 12 UN Women and CRRC 2020. | 19 Ibid. |
| 6 UN Women 2018. | 13 UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and CRRC 2021. | 20 Ibid. |
| 7 Ibid. | 14 Ibid. | 21 Ibid. |
| | | 22 UN Women 2020. |

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² To find out more about potential solutions to the gender pay gap, see the Global Alliance for Care's Urgent Call to Action, available at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2021/7/news-gef-paris-to-build-back-better-transform-and-invest-in-the-care-economy>.