



IN BRIEF



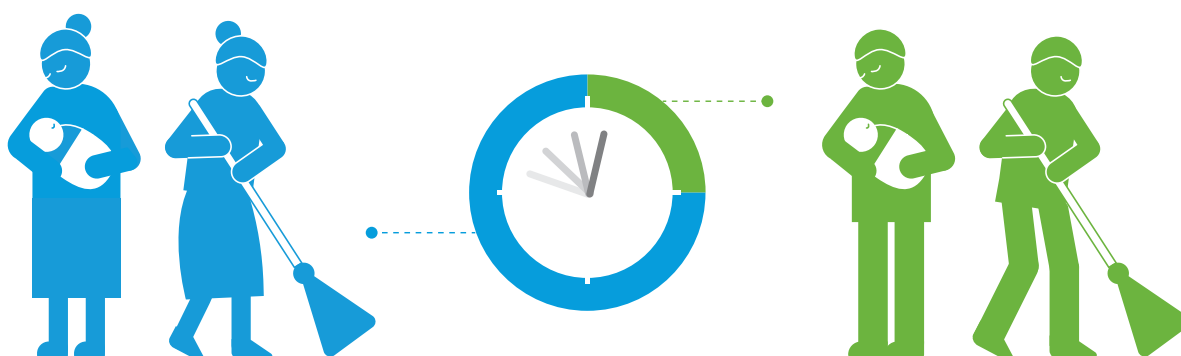
TIME TO CARE: Women's unpaid care work and the inequality crisis in Georgia

What is unpaid care work and why should we care?

Around the world, women spend two to ten times more time on unpaid care work than men. This unequal distribution of care responsibilities is linked to gender roles and stereotypes, along with institutional and structural barriers, and leads to unequal employment opportunities and economic outcomes evident in labour force participation, wages and job quality for women and men worldwide. The challenge is particularly great in developing countries because of the limited access to basic infrastructure and public services and the lesser extent to which men carry out unpaid care work.¹ While the unequal gender distribution of unpaid care work is an essential barrier to women's economic empowerment and women's participation in public life more broadly, it also constitutes a major impediment to the social and economic well-being of communities at large.

Unpaid care work

"All unpaid services provided by individuals within a household or community for the benefit of its members, including care of persons and domestic work. Common examples include cooking, cleaning, collecting water and fuel, and looking after children, older persons, and persons with illness or disabilities. [...] Women and girls have disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work; globally they spend three times as much time on this work as do men and boys. Unpaid care work is one of the main barriers preventing women from moving into paid employment and better-quality jobs."²





The unequal distribution of unpaid care work between women and men is an infringement of women's human rights³ as well as a brake on economic development globally. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that **606 million women, or 41 per cent of those currently considered economically inactive, are outside the labour market because of their unpaid care responsibilities.**⁴ This exclusion has an impact on economic growth and sustainable development. Today, we have solid evidence that investing in care policies and thus reducing and redistributing women's share of unpaid work (for example, through flexible working-time arrangements, affordable childcare and paid parental leave for both men and women) contributes to achieving more equitable labour market outcomes, creates jobs and increases productivity and well-being for both men and women.⁵

The value of unpaid work

Women's unpaid work subsidizes the cost of care that sustains families, supports economies and often fills in for the lack of social services. Yet it is rarely recognized as 'work'. Unpaid care and domestic work are valued to be 10 and 39 per cent, respectively, of the gross domestic product and can contribute more to the economy than the manufacturing, commerce and transportation sectors.⁶

Women's unpaid work is acknowledged specifically in Sustainable Development (SDG) Goal 5, on the attainment of gender equality and the empowerment of women and

girls. Target 5.4 of SDG 5 explicitly calls for recognizing and valuing unpaid care and domestic work. Nevertheless, governments are often reluctant to dedicate funding to addressing care needs and investing in care infrastructure, seeing these solely as social expenditures and not as investments in economic development with positive returns. Quality data measuring unpaid care work is not always available, and policies are often made without considering the impact of this work.

In Georgia, the female labour force participation rate in the past decade (40–46 per cent) largely lagged behind men's rate (62–67 per cent), and the adjusted gender pay gap stood at 21.4 per cent in 2020.⁷ The data show that the economic inactivity rate is higher among women at all ages, but the difference between women's and men's economic inactivity rates is greater (48.4 for women versus 18.8 for men) during women's reproductive years (ages 25–34), indicating that women's economic participation is strongly linked with family and care responsibilities.⁸ However, reliable estimates of unpaid care work performed by men and women in Georgia were missing from the picture until recently. In 2020 and 2021, the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat), in partnership with UN Women and with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway and the UN Women flagship programme "Making Every Woman and Girl Count", conducted Georgia's first-ever Time Use Survey (GTUS), the only survey which gives reliable estimates on the time that women and men each spend on paid and unpaid work. Building on the research paper of the same title (forthcoming), this brief summarizes the main findings from the GTUS data analysis as they relate to unpaid care work and lays out general recommendations.^{9,10}

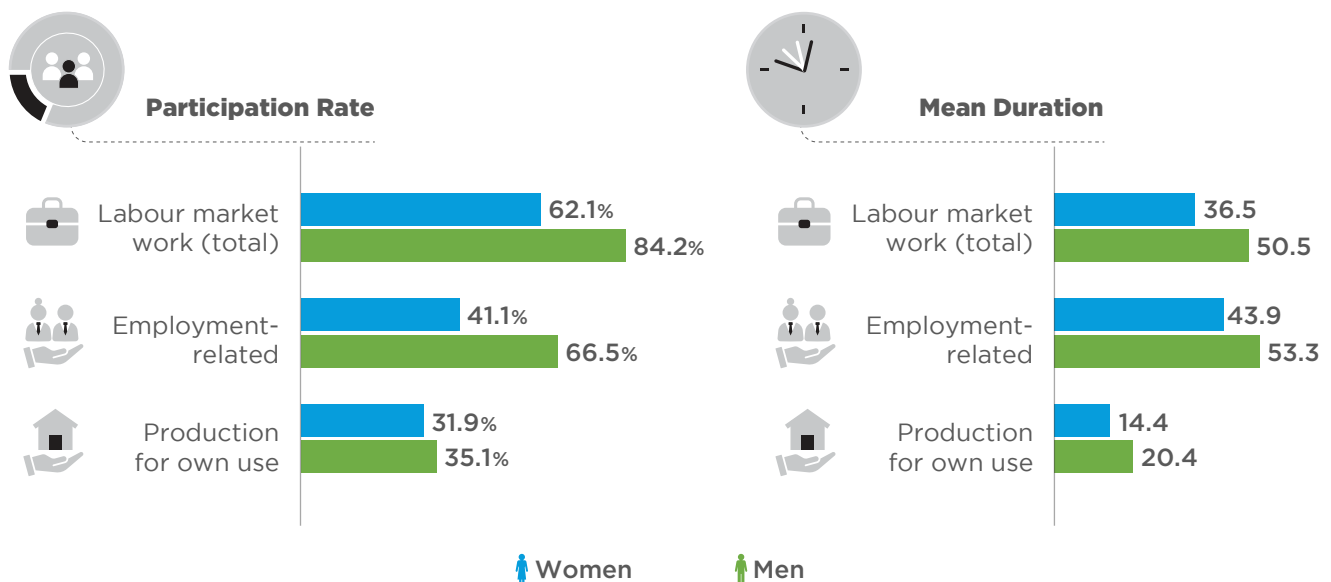
Women spend less time on paid work than men

Prime aged women engage in primary labour market work activities to a lesser extent than men, both in terms of participation rate (62.1 per cent versus 84.2 per cent) and average time spent (36.5 versus 50.5 hours). In other

words, women are less likely to be employed; but even when they are employed, they spend fewer hours on paid work.

Figure 1.

Participation rate (percentage) and mean duration (hours per week) of time spent on labour market work, by sex



Note:

Participation rate is calculated as the percentage of women and men in the sample of prime working age (25-62 years) who have performed at least 10 minutes of primary labour market work activities in a one-week period. **Mean duration** is the mean time spent by individuals who performed at least 10 minutes of primary labour market work activities in a one-week period.

A deeper analysis of the GTUS results reveals that women are 33.3 per cent less likely to be in the labour force than men. However, women who are caregivers are even less likely – about 58.4 per cent below that of non-caregiver women and men.¹¹ Moreover, the probability of being in the labour force declines for both women and men when the respondent is in the later stage of the life cycle, lives in a rural area, or are in poor health.

The GTUS results show that being married and having young children significantly reduces women's weekly

labour market work time (by 9.3 hours on average).

Men's time in labour market work, on the other hand, is not affected by the presence of any care needs; rather, they spend 5.6 more hours on paid work if they are married. This phenomenon is in line with the notion of the 'motherhood penalty', which implies the disadvantages that mothers typically face in the labour market, such as lower pay as well as hiring and promotion discrimination.¹²

Women spend triple the hours on unpaid work than men

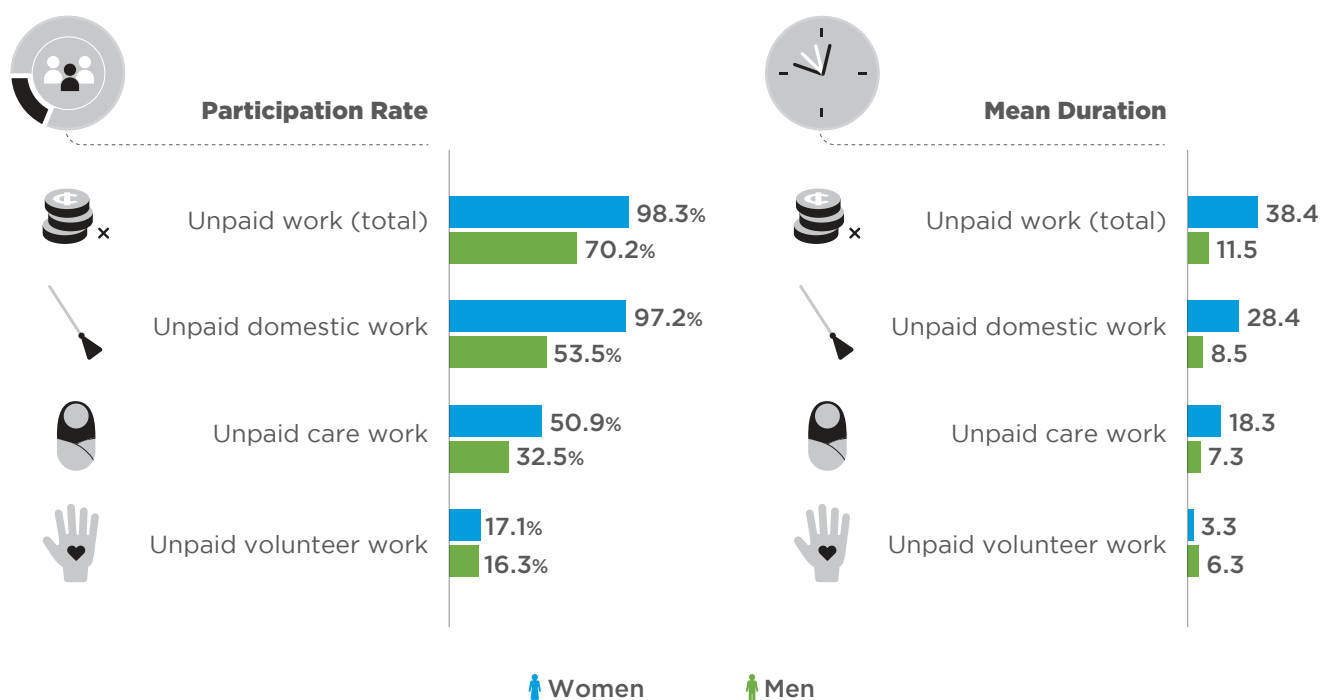
Women have much higher participation rates and spend more time in unpaid domestic and care work than men. The GTUS shows that 98.3 per cent of prime working age women participate in unpaid work (including unpaid domestic, care and volunteer work), compared to 70.2 per cent of men; and the weekly mean duration of the total unpaid work for women equals 38.4 hours on average, which is more than three times higher than that for men (11.5 hours).

Most women (97.2 per cent) and more than half of men (53.5 per cent) perform domestic chores, but women spend

nearly triple the hours on unpaid domestic work than men (28.4 hours per week versus 8.5 hours, respectively). In addition to household chores, women are responsible for providing direct care to children, older persons, and persons with functional difficulties. Accordingly, women have a much higher participation rate in direct care activities than men (50.9 per cent versus 32.5 per cent, respectively) and spend more time providing direct care than men (18.3 hours versus 7.3 hours, respectively).

Figure 2.

Participation rate (percentage) and mean duration (hours per week) of time spent on unpaid work, by sex

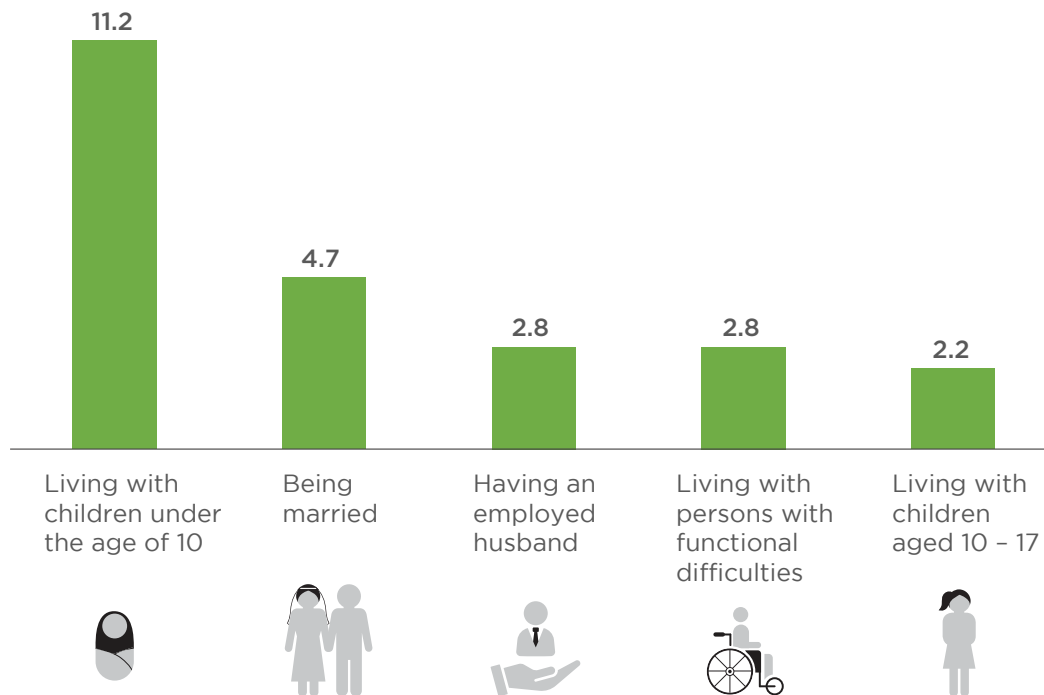


A deeper analysis of the GTUS data reveals that women's unpaid work is affected by a number of factors. For example, they spend 4.7 more hours on unpaid work per week on average if they are married, 2.8 more hours if they have an employed spouse and 11.2 more hours if they live in households with children under the age of 10. In

addition, other care needs, such as those of older children aged 10–17 and persons with functional difficulties, only increase women's weekly unpaid work by 2.2 hours and 2.8 hours on average, respectively, but not that of men. These results confirm that women in Georgia shoulder most of the care responsibilities in their households.

Figure 3.

Factors affecting women's unpaid work (mean duration in hours per week)



Women and men in households with young children and residing in rural and other urban areas spend less time in unpaid work than their counterparts residing in the capital, Tbilisi. This may be explained by the nuclearization

of families brought about by urbanization. Extended kinship networks tend to be more present in rural areas, thereby enabling women to receive childcare assistance from other relatives.

Women's time spent on unpaid work increases even more when taking supervisory and parallel care activities into consideration

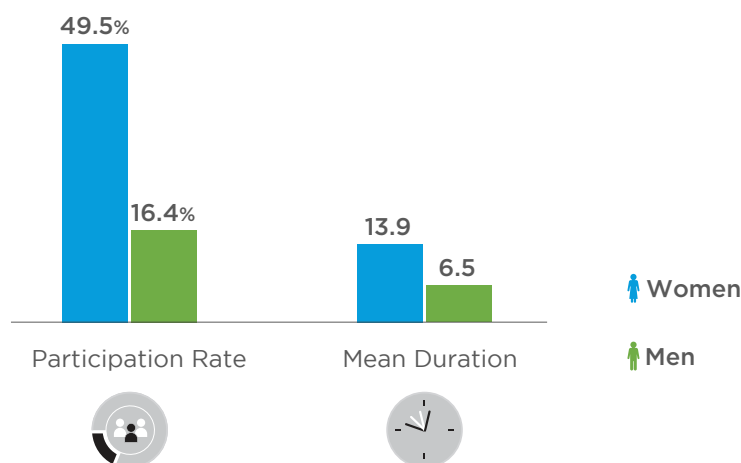
Supervisory care is an important yet often ignored form of caregiving. While some care activities are active in the sense that they require the caregiver to pay close attention to children or frail older person's behaviour or to perform basic tasks such as feeding, dressing or bathing for a person with functional difficulties, a significant amount of care takes the form of passive or 'on-call' availability. The GTUS data show that a greater proportion of women provide supervisory care while doing primary work activities, which are mostly another unpaid work activity, compared to men (49.5 per cent versus 16.4 per cent). Even more striking is the result that women spend 13.9 hours per week on average on supervisory care, while men spend about 6.5 hours per week.

Supervisory care

Supervisory care refers to being present or remaining in proximity to a dependent, whether a child, a frail older person or a sick or disabled individual, in order to be available or 'on-call' while performing a non-care activity.

Figure 4.

Participation rate (percentage) and mean duration (hours per week) of time spent on supervisory care, by sex



Weekly supervisory care time increases for women by 15.2 hours on average (from 13.9 to 29.1 hours per week on average) when households have children under the age of 10 and by 13.5 hours (to 27.4 hours per week on average) when households have person(s) with functional difficulties.

Women, - who take on multiple roles that compete for their time, often engage in parallel activities. This is especially true for care work, which demands such long hours that it is often performed in combination with other activities.¹³ For example, mothers often watch or talk to their children (parallel activity) while cooking



(primary activity). The longer the time a woman performs caregiving while also engaged in a primary activity, the greater the amount of stress she experiences. Thus, the length of time in which one performs parallel care work is also an important determinant of a person's well-being.

Parallel care work

A significant number of caregiving activities are performed as parallel, alongside a primary activity. The length of time in which one performs parallel care work is also an important determinant of the caregiver's well-being.

The GTUS data show that nearly 12 times more women (7.3 per cent) than men (0.6 per cent) perform additional domestic chores as a parallel or overlapping activity and that the length of parallel care work activities increases significantly if the respondent is female, regardless of household type. In fact, women spend between 8 and 11.2 hours per week on average performing care work while also doing primary, non-caregiving activities. The presence of children under the age of 10 has a strong positive effect on the time spent on parallel care work activities. These results indicate the intensive nature of care work shouldered by women.



Women are more time-poor than men, which undermines their quality of life and well-being

Time poverty estimates from the GTUS data convey information about individual well-being that other conventional economic indicators do not. Three levels of time poverty are examined: low time poverty, meaning more than 60 hours of total work time per week; moderate time poverty, which indicates more than 71 hours of work per week; and severe time poverty, defined as more than 82.5 hours of work per week.¹⁴

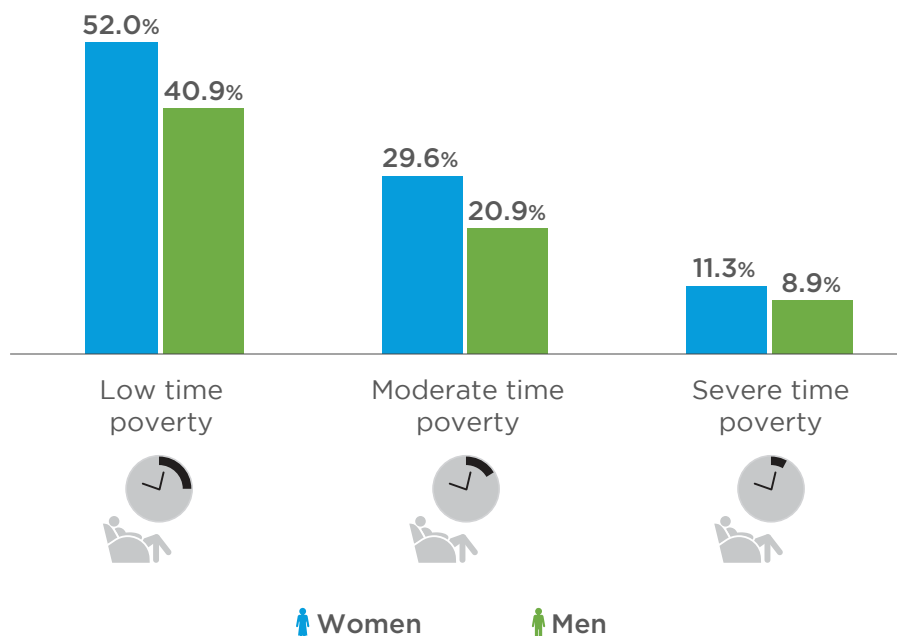
The results suggest that regardless of which definition or level of time poverty is used, the rates are much higher for women than for men. Women have a 22–24.6 per cent higher probability of being time-poor than men, holding all else constant.

Time poverty

Time poverty refers to the lack of time for adequate rest and leisure due to long working hours, whether paid or unpaid. A person is time-poor if that individual's primary activity time in performing labour market work, unpaid domestic work and unpaid caregiving in a given week exceeds a certain work time threshold.¹⁵

Figure 5.

Time poverty rates among women and men (percentage)



Marriage, the presence of children under the age of 10 and higher education levels (at least a vocational or professional degree) increase the probability of being time-poor. The latter might be explained by the fact that more highly educated women are more likely to be

employed (the employment rate for women with tertiary education is higher (53.1 per cent) than it is for women with vocational (34.6 per cent) or secondary education (24.1 per cent)¹⁶), which increases their total time burden.



Interestingly, those living in rural and other urban areas have a lower incidence of time poverty than those residing in Tbilisi, which can be explained again by the presence of extended kinship networks, enabling caregivers to receive help from other relatives.

Being time-poor is related to the tension and stress that individuals experience with long working hours and multiple demands on their time. The GTUS data show that a person is likely to 'always feel rushed' if the individual is time-poor or moderately time-poor and female. Being time-poor raises the probability of always feeling rushed by 12 percentage points, while being female increases it by 8 percentage points. Working-age women are 5 percentage points more likely than men to always feel rushed.

Women allocate less time than men (21.6 hours versus 28.3 hours per week on average) with respect to primary free-time activities. However, a greater proportion of

women than men spend their free time in the form of parallel activities (78 per cent versus 73.3 per cent). This suggests that much of women's free time involves performing other activities, such as minding their children while visiting a friend or walking to the park.

The results suggest that there are important gender inequalities that have an adverse impact on the well-being of women and that this impact includes an off-kilter work-life balance, as indicated by their long working hours. This intensification of working time can also lead to chronic fatigue and stress. In the longer term, the persistence of long total work hours among women can eventually lead to a decline in fertility rates below replacement levels as well as lower labour supply and economic growth, and it can undermine the ability of societies to remain sustainable, as shown in the experiences of Japan and the Republic of Korea.¹⁷



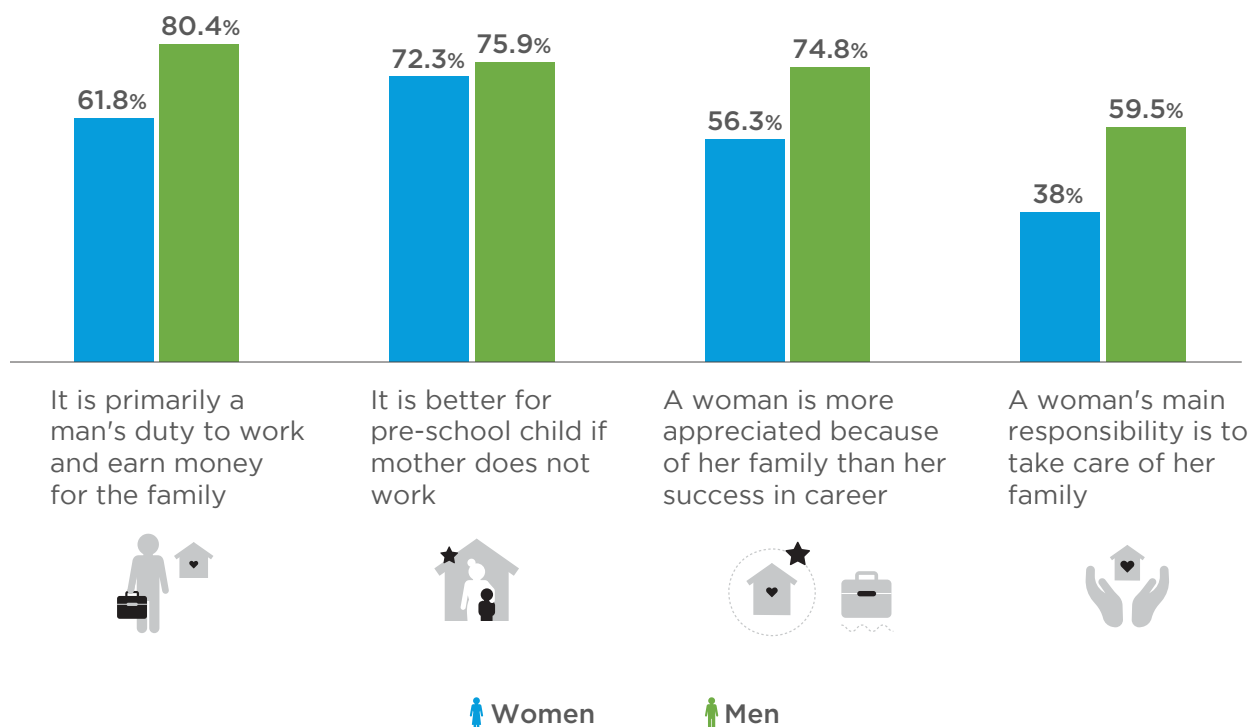
Solving the puzzle

Despite some positive changes in recent years, patriarchal norms remain deeply rooted in Georgian society, where the majority of men – and a smaller but still considerable number of women – think that women's main responsibility is to take care of her family rather

than pursue a professional career. Recent public opinion surveys confirm that men are still predominantly considered the main breadwinners for their families, while women are predestined for care work.

Figure 6.

Public attitudes towards gender roles (percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements)



Source: UNDP 2020.

The GTUS data analysis results shed light on how these widespread gender norms are translated into the daily realities that are disadvantageous for women on many levels. The study findings confirm that, as expected by society at large, women in Georgia shoulder most of the care responsibilities in their households. This not only prevents them from moving into paid employment and better-quality jobs but also – and most importantly – undermines their quality of life by limiting their free time and thus their opportunities for learning, socializing, personal and professional development, and self-care.

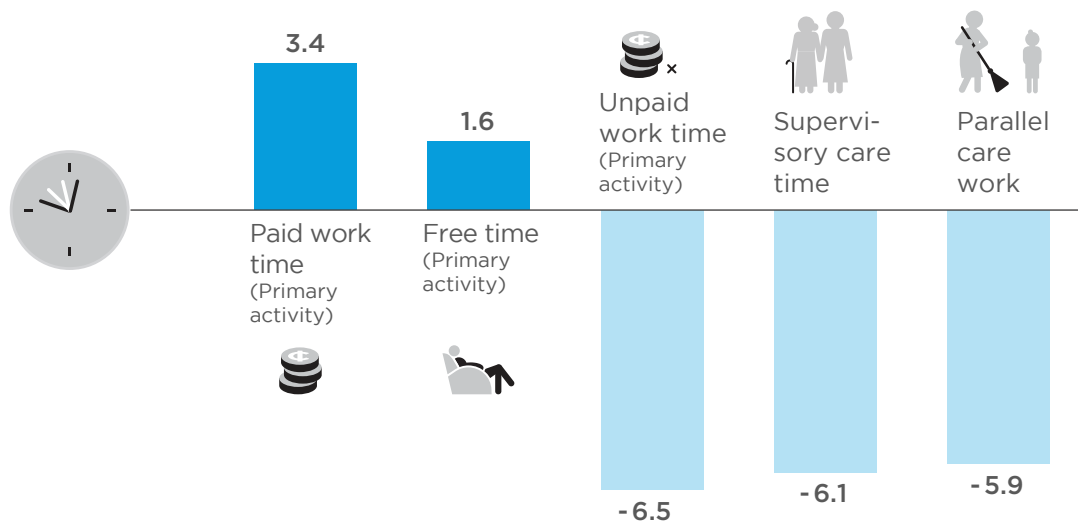
Such unequal sharing of care responsibilities limits women's job prospects and is a major reason behind their low participation rate in the labour force, as well as the gender pay gap. It also explains why reduced gender gaps in education (for example, in 2021, 51 per cent of bachelor's and master's degree students and 54 per cent of PhD students were women¹⁸) have not led to a reduction of the gender gap in employment in Georgia.

While demonstrating how profound gender inequalities in the distribution of unpaid care work can hinder women's labour participation, the GTUS data also point to an important factor that can address this problem: access to caregiving support. The study findings show that access to unpaid, in-house caregiving support (such as the presence of other able-bodied women) significantly affects women's time spent on paid and unpaid work, including supervisory and parallel care activities. Namely, it increases women's weekly time spent on paid work by 3.4 hours and their free time by 1.6 hours, and it reduces their unpaid work time by 6.5 hours. With in-house caregiving support, women's time spent on supervisory and parallel care activities decreases by 6.1 and 5.9 hours, respectively. This effect is even larger for women living with children under 5 years of age and women living with persons with functional difficulties. As a result, access to in-house care support also reduces the probability of being time-poor by between 18 per cent (using the low threshold) and 12.7 per cent (using the moderate threshold).

External care support, such as the support provided by relatives, neighbours and friends living outside the household as well as by crèches, kindergartens, day-care centres, nursing homes and other institutional facilities, is expected to have the same positive effect on reducing the disproportionate share of unpaid care work carried by women. However, the GTUS does not provide reliable evidence on the effect of external care services due to the fact that the time use survey data collection period coincided with the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic – when most childcare services, including kindergartens and schools, were closed (or operating remotely) and outside care services or assistance from relatives remained largely unavailable (due to the stay-at-home order).

Figure 7.

Effect of in-house caregiving support on women's time spent on paid and unpaid work
(mean duration in hours per week)





This analysis shows that investing in care services would enable women in Georgia to enjoy their human rights and realize their full potential, thereby resulting in significant economic returns for their own economic empowerment as well as the country's economic growth.

The analysis also shows that during the pandemic, when external care services were mostly unavailable, help from other female family members – that is, internal care

support – was invaluable for women. However, greater reliance on such support is both unreliable and ineffective because of the increasing nuclearization of families brought about by urbanization and migration and the fact that such in-house support is often paid by another woman with her own health and well-being, limiting her chances of labour market participation.

What's next? Time to care

Governments are the primary duty bearers and responsible actors for the provision of quality, affordable and accessible care services and infrastructure. Governments have a responsibility to invest adequately in comprehensive care systems and to enact policies to ensure decent work for those in the paid care sector.

Recognizing unpaid care work is the first step towards addressing unevenly shared care work and incorporating it into the development agenda. Conducting a full-scale time use survey in Georgia was the first step towards the recognition of unpaid work, yet more needs to be done in order to draw attention to the importance of care work for society and make the contribution of carers, who are mostly women, more visible. To recognize the value of care and its contributions, the following actions are recommended:

- Strengthen the production, dissemination and use of data and statistics on care work, both paid and unpaid, and on care-related policies and investments to shape better and more gender-responsive care policies and systems.
- Estimate the monetary value of unpaid work relative to conventional GDP, and incorporate measures of paid and unpaid care work in national and international statistics, in measures of economic progress and importantly, in policy tools such as macroeconomic models in order to further encourage dialogue on care work and evidence-based policy planning.
- Put unpaid care work at the heart of the debate about gender equality and women's empowerment, and regularly discuss it with policymakers, the donor community and civil society organizations.

Reducing and redistributing unpaid care work is the next step in addressing gender inequalities. Reducing and redistributing the disproportionate share of unpaid care work carried by women and girls lead towards positive labour and health outcomes for women. Thus, in order to ensure that unpaid care work is shared more equitably between women and men, the Government, the private sector, communities and households, the following actions are recommended:

- Invest in time and labour-saving infrastructure, technologies and/or practices that reduce the time-consuming unpaid work shouldered by women.
- Strengthen public care systems by ensuring that core economic and social policies include concrete

Maternity and paternity leave

In **Iceland**, the total duration of parental leave is nine months: three non-transferable months for the mother, three non-transferable months for the father and three remaining months to transfer between the mother and father. Non-transferable leave means that if the father does not take advantage of the paternity leave (or of his portion of the parental leave), the total leave period is shortened and the family thus loses out.¹⁹ A similar policy is implemented by **Sweden**, where a minimum share of available parental leave is reserved for fathers on a 'use it or lose it' basis, encouraging an equal sharing of care responsibilities.²⁰



commitments to establish, finance and sustain universal care systems, and invest in affordable, accessible and quality care services and infrastructure for all.

- Enact care-friendly employment policies, including flexible work schedule/teleworking and parental leave, to balance the work and family commitments of women and men.
- Engage the public sector to ensure that they provide decent care jobs, invest in care services and infrastructure, and align with the public sector in applying and enforcing care-related laws, regulations, policies, and labour standards.
- Eliminate discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes that feed the uneven distribution of paid and unpaid work between women and men through culturally relevant education curricula alongside media and advocacy campaigns.
- Encourage positive masculinity so that in-house support can be received not only from women but also from men.

In addition to recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work, it is very important to **reward and represent** paid care workers by ensuring decent work and social protection: “This entails improving current care jobs and creating new quality, decent care jobs that reflect the principle of equal pay for work of equal value and provide comprehensive social protection, worker training and professionalization, freedom of association and collective bargaining for all workers.”²³

Subsidized early childcare

There is a strong and positive correlation between the employment rates of women with young children and the number of their children enrolled in early childhood education programmes for children aged 0–2. The presence of childcare services is also associated with more women in managerial and leadership positions and thus to a less pronounced motherhood pay gap. Evidence from the **United States** shows that female applicants to managerial positions increase by 18.4 per cent when extended hours of childcare are offered by the company.²¹

Türkiye’s labour laws and regulations oblige firms employing 100–150 women workers (married or single) to provide a nursing room for the essential needs of their children under the age of 1. They also oblige employers employing more than 150 female workers to assist their employees by establishing or subcontracting a childcare unit to care for children under 6 years of age.²²

Using childcare services

EIGE’s research shows that childcare services lead to higher financial returns for women than for men. Women with children under 12 years of age using childcare services for at least 14 hours a week are estimated to earn 4.8 per cent more on an hourly basis than women who do not outsource childcare.²⁴

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Endnotes

¹ OECD 2019.

² UN Women 2022.

³ Sepulveda Carmona 2013.

⁴ ILO 2018.

⁵ Folbre 2018; UN Women 2015; IFC 2017.

⁶ UN Women, n.d.

⁷ Geostat, n.d.

⁸ UN Women 2021.

⁹ UN Women 2022b.

¹⁰ The data analysis in this brief focuses on a subpopulation of the household sample that excludes single-person households. Individual respondents in the 1,278 households who are of prime working age (25–62 years old), do not have any functional difficulties, are either married or unmarried, and are living in households with dependents are included in the analysis.

¹¹ The term caregivers refer to persons who performed at least 2 hours of primary care work on a given day.

¹² Budig and England 2001.

¹³ Floro and Miles 2003; Mullan 2010.

¹⁴ The moderate threshold is equal to the benchmark for belonging to the top quartile of the respondents' weekly total work time distribution, which is equal to 71 hours. The severe threshold is equal to the benchmark for belonging to the top decile of the individuals' weekly total work time distribution, which is equal to 82.5 hours.

¹⁵ Bardasi and Wodon 2006.

¹⁶ UN Women 2021.

¹⁷ King et al. 2021.

¹⁸ UN Women 2021.

¹⁹ EBRD and ICRW 2019.

²⁰ OECD 2014.

²¹ ILO 2022.

²² Sida 2012.

²³ UN Women 2022.

²⁴ EIGE 2021.



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