

Summary review of evidence: Unpaid work

This note summarises key evidence about unpaid work with a focus on Scotland, and sets out sources for further information and data.

Unpaid work

Unpaid work can include a variety of work, including domestic and care work, unpaid labour market work and voluntary work. The UN estimated that if unpaid care work were assigned a monetary value it would constitute between 10 and 39 per cent of GDP.¹ However, unpaid work is generally unrecognised and under-valued by policy-makers and legislators.

Measuring unpaid work

The most commonly used way of measuring the extent of unpaid work is collecting time use information, about how much time men and women spend per day, week or month carrying out activities that constitute the categories of unpaid work.

Current situation in Scotland

The Scottish Government report (2010) *Caring in Scotland: Analysis of existing data sources on unpaid carers in Scotland*² analysed the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) 2007/08. It found that 63% of women, compared to 37% of men, provided care to someone not living with them. Looking at gender by age, across almost all age groups, women were more likely than men to be carers. The exception was for the 0-18 age group, where a higher proportion of men than women were carers.³

Caring in Scotland provided further detail from its analysis of 2001 Census data on unpaid care work within the respondent's household. It found that across all age groups women were more likely than men to be carers, and that the gender balance is more pronounced for young carers (0-15) and carers aged 85 plus. For male carers, the number of hours caring increased with age, although this pattern was not as obvious or acute as for female carers. However, it was younger and middle-aged female carers who were more likely than other age groups to be providing more than 50 hours of unpaid care each week.⁴

In 2006/07, there were 243,672 people in Scotland who had both a paid job and unpaid care responsibilities, supporting a relative, partner or friend who was sick, disabled or frail.⁵

¹ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Poverty/Pages/UnpaidWork.aspx>

² <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/319575/0102110.pdf>

³ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/04/8765/5>

⁴ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/04/8765/5>

⁵ <http://www.carersuk.org/policy-a-campaigns-scot/research-scotland/item/943-carers-employment-and-services-in-scotland-focus-on-east-ayshire-falkirk-and-highland>

Gender aspects of unpaid work (such as housework, cooking, and childcare), are also covered in Eurofound's recently published Third European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS), although data is available at the UK level only.⁶ The EQLS asked people how often they were involved in these activities outside of paid work. The differences between men and women were striking, especially with regard to housework and, to a lesser extent, childcare: twice as many women as men (78 per cent vs 39 per cent) did cooking or housework every day in the EU-27. Of those in paid employment who engaged in these tasks at least once a week, men in the UK spent on average 26 hours per week caring for children, while women spent 47 hours, compared to the EU-27 average of 18 and 28 hours respectively. The average time spent on cooking and housework by in the UK by men and women in paid employment was 9 and 14 hours, the same as the EU average.

Academic literature

Evidence on the trends in unpaid work from time budget studies suggests that:⁷

- Adding up women's and men's paid and unpaid work leads to near equality in the amount of total work done by men and women, or men doing slightly more total work than women (Jacobs and Gerson, 2001; Harkness, 2008). Such figures show that claims of the 'double burden' carried by women who are employed and do the larger share of unpaid work are not often supported. In fact Sullivan and Gershuny (2000) have shown that there is little evidence that the double burden exists for the vast majority of women. If anything, it is a temporary phenomenon or one based in perceptions rather than in amounts of time spent in total on both paid and unpaid work.
- The average amounts of domestic work and paid work vary by country as well as by gender (Geist, 2008; Gershuny, 2000).
- Although women appear to do more of the unpaid work hours, and have a larger share, than men, the calculations of the amount of hours spent on unpaid domestic work have also been found to depend on which tasks and work items are included in the calculations. When gardening and maintenance or odd jobs are included, the gap between men and women in number of weekly hours spent on unpaid domestic work narrows substantially (Gershuny, 2000).
- There have been changes over time and by country in the amounts and the shares of unpaid work (Gershuny, 2000; Robinson and Godbey, 1997; Jacobs and Gershon, 2001). The time spent on domestic household work by women has been declining over time in many countries (Gershuny, 2000; Harkness, 2008; Bianchi et al, 2000). The time spent on domestic work by men has increased, but not as fast as the increase in women's paid work.
- Early in the 20th century, increases in women's paid work were matched by a decrease in time spent on domestic work. However, for every two hours increase in paid work, domestic work declined by one hour. Later in the century this process continued with every two hours increase in paid work being associated with 1.5 hours decline in unpaid work. More recent 21st century British data suggest that declines in women's domestic work are continuing but

⁶ <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/gender/iwd2013.htm>

⁷ <http://www.beyondcurrenthorizons.org.uk/review-of-future-of-paid-and-unpaid-work-informal-work-homeworking-the-place-of-work-in-the-family-women-single-parents-workless-households-benefits-work-attitudes-motivation-and-obligation/>

now the decline in domestic work time exceeds the increase in paid work time (Harkness, 2008).

- Gershuny describes this combination of changes in women's and men's paid work and domestic work times as movements towards a convergence in time spent on the different types of work by men and women. He also presents evidence that this move towards convergence is apparent in a large number of countries.

(Review conducted by Shirley Dex, Centre for Longitudinal Studies, Institute of Education (January 2009))

Further information

Caring in Scotland: Analysis of Existing Data Sources on Unpaid Carers in Scotland (2010)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/319575/0102110.pdf>

Scottish Household Survey <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/16002>

Growing Up in Scotland <http://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue?sn=5760>

Carers, Employment and Services (CES) study

<http://circle.leeds.ac.uk/projects/completed/supporting-carers/the-carers-employment-and-services-study-ces/>

Bianchi, S., Milkie, M., Sayer, L. and Robinson, J. (2000) Is anyone doing the housework? Trends in the gender division of household labor, *Social Forces*, 79(1), pp. 191-228.

Geist, C. (2008) Gendered views of Domestic Labour: Cross-national variation in men's and women's reports of housework. In: Treas, J.K. and Drobnic, S. Men, women and household work in cross-national perspective.

Gershuny, J. (2000) *Changing Times: Work and Leisure in Post Industrial Society*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Gershuny, J and Sullivan, O. (2008) Time use, gender and public policy regimes. In: *Gender Work and Organization*.

Harkness, S. (2008) The Household Division of Labour: Changes in Families Allocation of Paid and Unpaid Work. In: Scott, J. Dex, S. and Joshi, H. (eds.) (2008, forthcoming) *Changing patterns of women's employment over 25 years*. Cheltenham, Edward Elgar.

Jacobs, J.A. and Gerson, K. (2001) Overworked Individuals or Overworked Families: Explaining Trends in Work, Leisure, and Family Time. *Work and Occupations*, 28, pp.40-63.

Robinson, J.P and Godbey, G. (1997) Time for Life: The surprising ways Americans Use their time. In: Campbell, A. and Converse, P. (eds.) *The Human Meaning of Social Change*. New York, Russell Sage Foundation, pp.17-86.

Sullivan, O. and Gershuny, J. (2001) Cross-national changes in time-use: some sociological (hi)stories re-examined. ISER Working Paper WP 2001-1. Colchester, University of Essex.