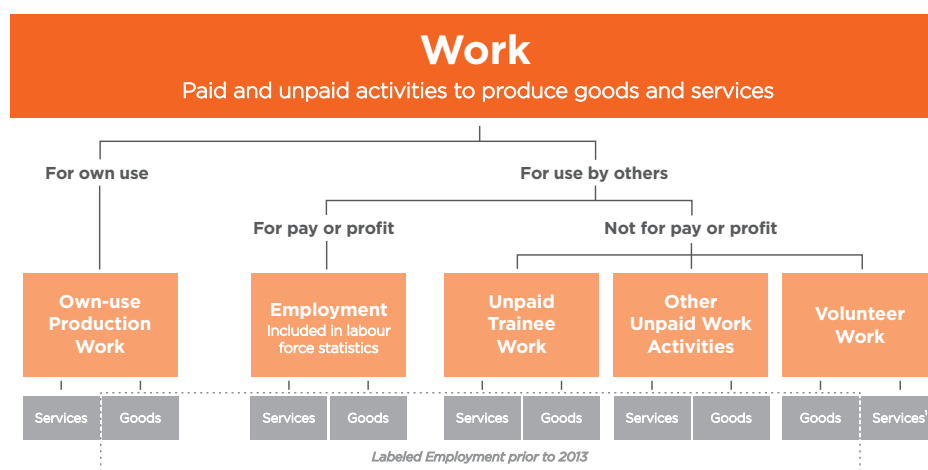


# Measuring women's paid and unpaid work under ICLS 19

## Policymaker's brief

### Why did the definitions of work and employment change?

In 2013, the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) made a substantial change to the way that we think about and [represent the world of work](#). For a long time, we have thought of the labor market as segmented in three ways: individuals were employed, unemployed, or inactive. The 19th ICLS agreed that these categories failed to accurately capture all the ways that individuals engage with the economy and labor market. Instead, the first international statistical definition of 'work' was agreed upon, and includes five major activities that individuals can be involved in (as shown below).



There are two important aspects of this new definition:

1. 'Work' includes both paid and unpaid activities—which can now be separately measured more comprehensively.
2. An individual can be involved in more than one activity at the same time.

### Why is this change important for women?

Both aspects of this new definition are important for understanding all of the paid and unpaid productive activities women are involved in. Why?

1. Globally, we know that women do more unpaid work than men and that this is often not captured well by methods of data collection based on the old framework. The new framework allows for greater understanding of the connections between paid and unpaid work for both women and men.
2. Women often perform multiple roles, for example providing care and domestic services (own-use production of services) while also being employed. Women also tend to engage more often than men in voluntary activities aimed to support vulnerable groups such as the poor, elderly or sick. Within the labor market, women are over-represented in vulnerable groups such as contributing family workers and home-based workers. Across rural and urban areas, women are also often engaged in subsistence agriculture, fetching water, collecting firewood or making other goods for their households, which can now be more

#### HOW CAN YOU HELP GENERATE NEW INFORMATION ON PAID AND UNPAID WORK?

1. Ask your NSO if they are implementing changes to LFS or collecting more Time Use data in light of new definitions of work.
2. Allocate budget or technical support to your NSO or other data producers to collect new data.
3. Work with key stakeholders to design policy based on new data.
4. Provide feedback to your NSO on how data can be made more relevant for policy.

fully measured. The new definitions will enable us to understand the multiple roles that women play and their trade-offs (e.g. more time in unpaid work may mean less time available for paid work) so that policies can be better designed to meet their needs.

3. The previous focus on unemployment alone did not make visible the women who wish to have a paid job or work more hours but are prevented from doing so—in some cases because of care commitments, but also due to the lack of jobs or because of structural or societal barriers. With the new indicators, we will be able to measure labor underutilization, making women's unmet need for employment more visible.

### What kinds of policy questions do the new definitions allow us to answer?

The ICLS 19 definitional changes were driven by demand from policymakers to understand more about women's and men's participation in labor markets and their contributions through unpaid work, to their households, communities and the economy. The new data can be used to highlight the different approaches to policymaking required to support men's and women's labor force participation through employment and entrepreneurship programs for example, and reduce labor underutilization through better information on the structural barriers to employment. The data will also facilitate policy on a more equitable distribution of unpaid care work among women and men, and between the state, the household, and the private sector.

### What are the data implications?

To measure the concepts of paid and unpaid work as well as labor underutilization well, we need new data. Luckily your National Statistical Office (NSO) is on hand to help with this. In many countries, the Labor Force Survey (LFS) is run on a regular basis to collect information on various aspects of work. Since 2013, the ILO, with support from the [Women's Work and Employment Partnership hosted at Data2X](#), has been working to test new ways of asking questions to measure all types of work and has released [guidance notes](#) on how to collect the new information required. The World Bank has also been working to update the Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS), which is conducted in many countries around the world, to generate complementary information. [Time Use Surveys](#) have also dramatically increased our understanding of the amount of unpaid care and domestic work done by

women and men and have become the basis for many new policies on labor market activation, social protection, and redistribution of care and domestic work. Other forms of data collection, such as household surveys and censuses, also provide important insight into working activities.

### How can data producers and policymakers work together?

The transition to implementing the new definitions of work and employment will require considerable effort on the part of both data producers and policymakers; collaboration to build gender-sensitive policies will be key. Collecting the new information will require three activities from policymakers:

**Collaborate with data producers** (National Statistical Offices or other Line Ministries) to discuss the policy implications of this data from the beginning of data production and provide feedback throughout the cycle. *Be sure they are producing what you need to make good policy choices.*

**Fund and advocate for improved data.** Making changes to LFS; collecting Time Use data; and conducting surveys and censuses requires investment in both the operating budgets and the skills of your country's data producers. *Make sure they have what they need to produce the best products and services for you.*

**Use the data.** The most powerful thing you can do is use the data to make policy that positively impacts the economy and society.