



Valuing Women's Time and Care Work: A Synthesis Report on the Data-to-Policy Link

Authored by Mayra Buvinic, Maria S. Floro, and Kelsey Ross. This report synthesizes case studies from Kenya, Mongolia, Senegal, and South Korea. It focuses on the usefulness of time use (TU) data for designing and evaluating public policies, with particular attention to care work.

INTRODUCTION

The report emphasizes the historical neglect of care work in policy discussions, primarily as it is unpaid and predominantly performed by women. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of caregivers, leading to a renewed focus on measuring this work. In 2013, labor statisticians internationally agreed to include unpaid work in labor surveys, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) further emphasized the need to sex-disaggregate this data. While a growing number of countries implement TU surveys, the record to date on their uptake is substandard. Despite their uniqueness and richness, the findings of these surveys are most often underutilized in the design or evaluation of public policies.


DATA-TO-POLICY FRAMEWORK

The authors propose a framework that identifies factors influencing the uptake of TU data in policymaking. This framework considers the processes of policy formulation and decision-making, indicating that the effective use of data requires an interplay between high-quality data production, stakeholder engagement, and enabling socioeconomic and political environments.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Direct and Indirect Policy Influence: The case studies found some direct policy influence of TU survey data in the four countries, such as informing parental leave policies in South Korea and childcare initiatives in Senegal. However, the influence often remains narrow, largely confined to specific ministries or units rather than being widespread across government sectors. The studies also found indirect influence of TU data—changing traditional beliefs regarding the value of women's unpaid work—in countries that used TU data to calculate household production satellite accounts.

2. Context Matters: Each country's political and socioeconomic contexts significantly impact the data-to-policy link. Countries with favorable international conditions for data collection, such as those driven by the UN, showed better policy uptake. Domestic motivations for undertaking TU surveys, including demographic challenges affecting labor markets and government policies, overtake external motivations to encourage policy uptake and long-term commitment.



3. Institutional Capacity and Stakeholder Engagement: The success of TU data usage in policy formulation is contingent upon the institutional capacity of governments, the inclusion of diverse stakeholders, and the establishment of partnerships between data producers and users. Government buy-in is crucial for ensuring that data is utilized effectively. There is a direct link between data and policy, facilitating policy uptake, when a line ministry—with a clear mandate, line responsibilities, and an assigned budget—requests the data.

4. Challenges in Data Collection: The case studies highlight the difficulties in collecting and analyzing TU data, such as respondent fatigue and the complexity of measuring simultaneous activities. Despite these challenges, computer-based information technologies and the ILO's 'light TU' survey modules are aiding data collection efforts.

CONCLUSIONS

The synthesis concludes that while some direct policy influence of TU data is evident, the overall uptake remains limited and often superficial. To enhance the utilization of TU data for policymaking, the authors recommend more frequent surveys or light TU modules at regular intervals to document trends and track impact, capacity building for data analysis, cross-referencing or data integration with labor force or household surveys, and fostering a culture of evidence-based policymaking. Financial resources, both domestic and donor-funded, are essential for sustainable data collection and integration into policy frameworks.

Overall, the synthesis and the case studies emphasize the critical need to recognize the economic and social value of women's unpaid work and its importance to inform policy decisions across government sectors, thereby promoting gender equality and enhancing economic and social wellbeing.

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