

# Gendered Patterns Of Time Use In Rajasthan: Analyzing The Disparities In Paid And Unpaid Work

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## Abstract

In a world of work, the unpaid work done by women often goes unrecognised, but it is well documented that the unpaid work performed by women is pivotal for the community's growth. Globally, women are devoting a greater share of time to unpaid household work and care work, restricting them from the greater work opportunities in the paid sector. To understand the participation of women in the labour market, it is imperative to study their corresponding participation in unpaid work. This paper examines the time allocation among women and men in Rajasthan by taking the data from the Time Use Survey Report 2019 to understand their relative time allocation in paid and unpaid work in the state. The findings of the study reveal that women do more unpaid work than men. Men on the contrary are more involved in paid activities and do less unpaid work.

## Introduction

Women and girls represent half of the world's population and therefore also half of its potential. However, gender inequality persists everywhere and stagnates social progress. On average, women in the labour market still earn 23 percent less than men and women spend about three times as many hours in unpaid domestic and care work as men (United Nations, 2023). In literature, income inequality has received considerable attention from researchers due to its quantifiable effect on economic growth. The conventional measures were directed towards measuring inequalities mainly in the context of income distribution and its components (Theil, 1979). In contrast, the gender gap in unpaid work has been less researched because women's unpaid labour is often invisible in economic statistics. The extant literature rarely addresses the amount of work that women perform outside the labour market, hindering their participation in paid work. Economic measurements, like GDP, exclude unpaid work predominantly performed by women, leading to a significant underrating of women's unpaid work. The labour force survey data barely includes the extensive range of unpaid domestic and caregiving activities that women perform. Methodological problems are associated with the existing system of measuring inequalities in the unpaid sector. The measures have often been criticized for failing to address the gender gap in unpaid domestic and caregiving work (Hirway, 2000). India despite performing well on metrics like higher levels of female education, decreased fertility rate, more reforms and policies for gender equality and empowered schemes for financing women's self-help groups, does poorly in terms of decreasing female labour force participation rate which is very contrasting considering the overall growth of women. The decline in women's labour force participation has led to de-feminization of work in India (Abraham, 2013). Men by conventional gender roles are required to work in paid work while women are expected to do unpaid household work. Such expectation has led to significant undervaluation of the extensive unpaid services that women provide for the betterment of the community. The provision of unpaid services by women at such low costs of unrecognition and undervaluation has resulted in women doing most of this work. Despite advancements, women are still expected to perform household duties alongside paid employment, leading to "double-burden" where they manage domestic and professional responsibilities simultaneously (Canelas & Salazar, 2014). Cross-country research highlights that a two-hour increase in unpaid labour commitments correlates with a decrease of 10% in the female labour force participation rate (Ferrant et al., 2014). The complexities involved in quantifying and

valuing unpaid work, combined with non-recognition in the official statistics of the nation have intensified the issues related to gender inequality, emphasizing the need for policy interventions that can recognize and redistribute the household division of labour more equitably. Given this censored data on paid and unpaid work of men and women, it becomes imperative to study the gender disparities in unpaid work. By studying and analysing these disparities, the government can work towards decreasing the gender inequalities that limit equitable systems in society. For a more detailed and context-specific analysis, we have limited our study to the state of Rajasthan. The state presents a compelling case for a time-use study on gender inequalities due to its deeply entrenched socio-cultural norms, skewed labour force participation, and pronounced gender disparities in unpaid work. The state records one of the states with lowest female labour force participation rates in India as per PLFS 2022, while exhibiting a high burden of unpaid domestic and caregiving responsibilities on women. Patriarchal traditions, early marriage practices, and restrictive mobility further exacerbate gendered divisions of labour. Unlike other states, Rajasthan's rural-urban divide is stark, making it an ideal setting to analyze variations in time allocation across different socio-economic contexts. Additionally, the state's economic dependence on agriculture and informal labour highlights the intersectionality of work and gender roles, offering critical insights for policy interventions aimed at redistributing unpaid work and enhancing women's economic participation. Thus, Rajasthan serves as a microcosm of broader gender inequalities in India while allowing for a more focused and context-specific analysis.

### Data and Methodology

This study has included the data from India's first comprehensive Time Use Survey 2019 which has covered the whole of Indian states except Andaman and Nicobar. The Time Use Survey has used a systematic sampling method for the selection of households. Time use survey is considered a better measure than other labour force surveys as it has some built-in advantage for improved estimates and better understanding of the workforce (Hirway & Jose, 2011). The data comprises the time allocation of men and women in paid and unpaid activities across the states of India. It is considered a highly representative dataset because of its large sample size. Time Use Survey comprises of 1,38,794 households and 4,47,250 persons of age 6 years and above. The paper will show tables of participation rates and average time spent by men and women in major ILO categories of work for the age group 15-59. Own use production of goods and services refers to the work that provides goods and services for own final use by the households. The paid work in this paper implies work in the employment sector or the main occupation of the respondent. The unpaid work done by women implies the work done for managing the household whereas care work implies taking care of elders and children in the household. Unpaid trainee work is the work that produces goods and services without any pay to gain some skill or experience. Voluntary work is work which an individual performs out of her will without any pay.

**Table:1 Percentage of persons participating in a day in activities of major divisions of TUS activity classification as major activity for age group 15-59 in Rajasthan (considering only the major activity of the time slots)**

	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Employment and related activities	63.6	23.6	70.2	14.0
Production of goods for own final use	20.9	45.9	1.8	8.1

Unpaid domestic services for household members	20.2	92.8	16.8	90.3
Unpaid caregiving services for household members	9.0	28.6	8.9	30.2
Unpaid volunteer, trainee and other unpaid work	1.0	1.6	0.6	1.1
Learning	17.7	10.6	21.4	14.0
Socializing and communication, community participation and religious practices	84.1	79.9	79.0	84.8
Culture, leisure, mass-media and sports practices	76.5	71.0	83.1	83.5
Self-care and maintenance	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: NSS Time Use Survey report, 2019

The data presented illustrates the percentage of men and women in rural and urban areas participating in various activities based on Time Use Survey (TUS) classifications. The significant gender differences in participation rates stem from societal norms, cultural expectations, and structural inequalities, which vary between rural and urban settings (Lee, 2002). Below is a detailed explanation of the observed disparities:

In both rural and urban areas, men exhibit significantly higher participation in employment-related activities compared to women (63.6% rural men vs. 23.6% rural women; 70.2% urban men vs. 14.0% urban women). This reflects the persistent gendered division of labour, where men are traditionally expected to be primary breadwinners.

For women, employment outside the home is often constrained by domestic responsibilities, societal expectations, and limited access to education and job opportunities, especially in rural areas (Raihan et al., 2017). Rural women accounting for 45.9% participation rate and rural men accounting for 20.9% are more engaged in the production of goods for own final use activity than their urban counterparts (8.1% women and 1.8% men). It is because in rural areas, subsistence agriculture and home-based production are more common, and women are heavily involved in unpaid agricultural and domestic work. On the other hand, urbanization reduces reliance on self-production as goods and services are more readily available in markets, leading to lower participation rates for both genders.

Women bear a disproportionate burden of unpaid domestic services for household members, with rural women accounting for 92.8% and urban women accounting for 90.3% dedicating substantial time to these activities. This is a direct result of entrenched gender roles that view household work as

women's primary responsibility. Men, on the other hand both in rural (20.2%) and urban (16.8%), participate far less in domestic chores, reflecting traditional norms that exempt them from such tasks. The gender disparity is also evident in caregiving roles, where rural women (28.6%) and urban women (30.2%) participate far more than rural men (9.0%) and urban men (8.9%). Women are often the default caregivers for children, the elderly, and the sick due to societal expectations and lack of alternative care systems. Female carers subsidize the economy but no assistance is provided to these unpaid carers (Hunter, 2012).

When it comes to learning men, especially in urban areas (21.4%), show greater engagement in learning activities compared to women (14.0%). This can be attributed to better access to education and professional training for men, while women face barriers such as early marriage which is high in Rajasthan compared to India, domestic responsibilities, and societal undervaluation of female education (Kumari et al., 2022).

Even in leisure and socializing activities, men enjoy slightly higher participation. For instance, 84.1% of rural men and 79.0% of urban men dedicate more time to these activities than women. This reflects the freedom men often have to allocate time for personal interests, while women are constrained by their unpaid domestic workload.

Although participation is relatively high for both genders in culture, leisure, mass-media and sports, women still lag slightly behind men. Social norms and lack of free time for women, especially in rural areas, limit their involvement in such activities. The category of self-care and maintenance reflects essential daily activities like eating and sleeping, where participation is equal across all groups (100%).

**Table: 2 Minutes spent in a day on an average per participant in the activities of major divisions of TUS activity classification as a major activity in Rajasthan (considering only the major activity of the time slot)**

	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Employment and related activities	499	312	557	390
Production of goods for own final use	258	177	224	104
Unpaid domestic services for household members	112	304	116	317
Unpaid caregiving services for household members	84	130	87	145
Unpaid volunteer, trainee and other unpaid work	140	93	135	59
Learning	421	411	462	419

Socializing and communication, community participation and religious practices	139	125	117	128
Culture, leisure, mass-media and sports practices	149	146	145	175
Self-care and maintenance	732	717	705	733

Source: NSS Time Use Survey report, 2019

This table presents the average time, in minutes, that rural and urban men and women spend on various activities daily. The data highlights significant gender disparities in time use, particularly in unpaid domestic and caregiving work. Women, both in rural and urban areas, spend considerably more time on household duties than men (e.g., 304 minutes for rural women versus 112 for rural men). In contrast, men dedicate more time to employment-related activities, with urban men working the longest hours (557 minutes). This pattern reflects traditional gender roles, where men are expected to be primary earners, while women manage household responsibilities. The time spent on unpaid volunteer work is also higher for rural men, possibly due to greater community engagement in villages. Interestingly, learning time is nearly equal across genders, suggesting an increasing emphasis on education. Urban women spend the most time on culture, leisure, and mass media, likely due to better access to recreational activities. Lastly, self-care and maintenance occupy the largest share of the day, emphasizing the universal need for rest and personal well-being. Although the literature shows that there is a time crunch for both males and females, but women face more time poverty than men (Beaujot & Andersen, 2007; Noh & Kim, 2015). These trends reflect deep-rooted social structures that continue to shape how men and women allocate their time.

### Conclusion

Persistent gender disparities in time use, particularly in employment and unpaid domestic work is reflected in the population of Rajasthan. Gender roles deeply rooted in cultural and social norms continue to assign women the primary responsibility of managing households, while men are expected to engage in income-generating activities. This divide is further influenced by the urban-rural context, where urbanization has increased access to paid employment for both men and women, yet traditional gender roles persist, particularly for women. Structural barriers such as unequal access to education, employment opportunities, and social freedoms further restrict women's participation in economic and recreational activities. These observations highlight the urgent need for policy interventions aimed at redistributing unpaid work, enhancing women's access to education and employment, and challenging entrenched gender norms. Promoting shared household responsibilities and providing institutional support, such as childcare facilities, can help bridge these disparities and ensure equitable participation in all spheres of life.

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