



ECLAC

# Time-use measurements in Latin America and the Caribbean

“Information systems: transforming data into information, information into knowledge and knowledge into political decisions”

Pillar 9 of the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030

February 2021

## What are time-use surveys?

Time-use surveys are methodological tools for data collection that allow the activities carried out by people in a given period and the amount of time they spend on each of them to be measured quantitatively.

Thanks to the information provided by these surveys, a thorough analysis can be carried out of the time spent on all forms of work, including different activities related to domestic and care work, paid work, community work and volunteering, as well as personal activities.

Latin America has a wealth of experience in the conceptual and methodological development of time-use measurement.

Over the last 40 years, the Regional Gender Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean has driven a gradual development of time-use measurements. In addition, since it was established in 2006, the Working Group on Gender Statistics of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has been instrumental in methodological progress in this area.



Number of  
Latin American  
countries that  
have some sort of  
time-use measure

**19**

## What are time-use surveys used for?

Time-use surveys are extremely important because they provide input for the design, formulation, monitoring and evaluation of economic and social equality policies and because of their broad analytical capacity for different areas of research:

- analysis of the sexual division of labour and gender inequalities;
- studies on the link between monetary poverty, income and the distribution and allocation of time;
- studies on the relationship between production within the system of national accounts and household production;
- measurements of well-being;
- national, regional and international requirements for data on unpaid work;
- measurements of all forms of work.

In Latin America, time-use surveys have been central to the discussion on recognizing and redistributing unpaid work and have guided the formulation of public policies that address the social needs of care through social co-responsibility, by transferring responsibilities from the family to the public and private sectors (Aguirre and Ferrari, 2014).



### Total work

Comprises any activity performed by persons of any sex and age to produce goods or to provide services for use by others or for own use (ILO, 2013).



### Unpaid work

These are social reproduction tasks, such as caring for children, older people, the sick and persons with disabilities, as well as household maintenance, carried out within households and for their own use or profit (ECLAC/INEGI/INMUJERES/UN-Women, 2016).



### Paid work

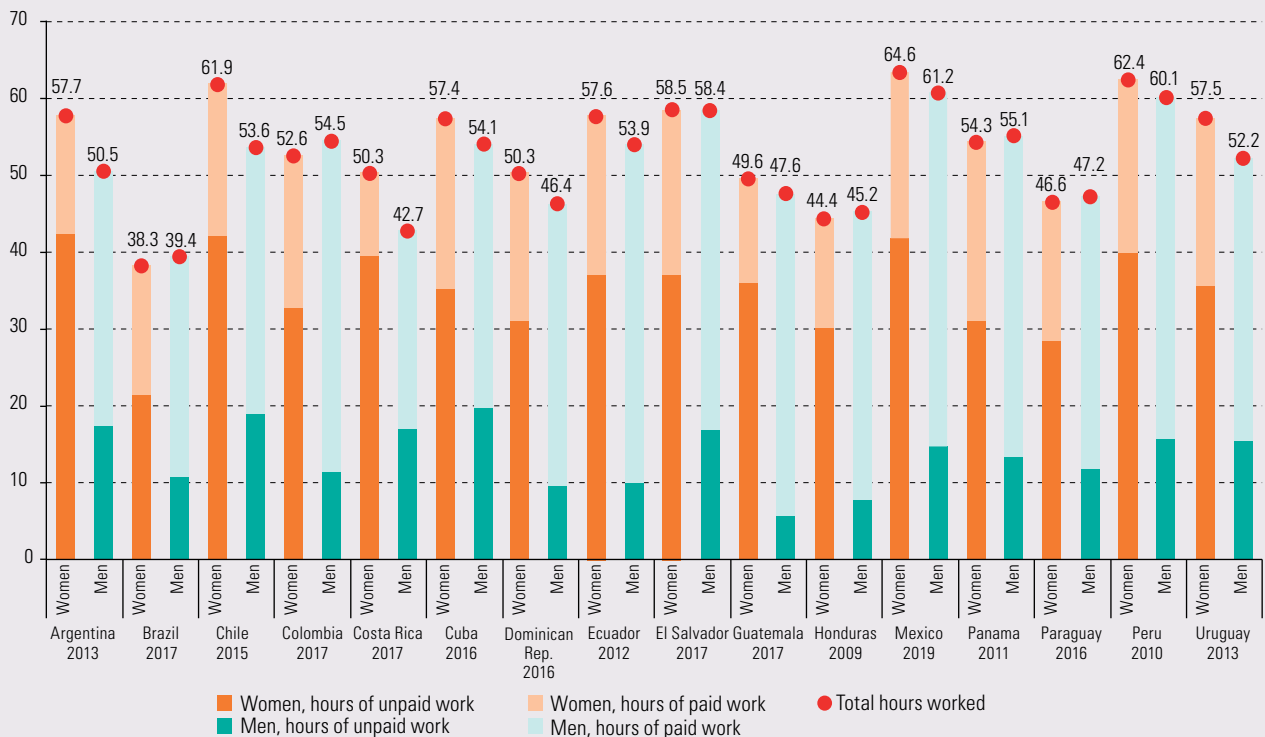
Refers to all work done for the production of goods and services undertaken by third parties in exchange for remuneration or benefits (ECLAC, 2017).

## Total work time in Latin America

The time-use surveys that have been carried out in Latin America in recent decades have allowed the total work time of men and women to be calculated, which has been adopted by the countries of the region as one of the indicators of the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Latin America (16 countries): time spent on total work —paid and unpaid— population aged 15 years and over, by sex and country

(Hours per week)



**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of data from time-use surveys conducted in the respective countries. Updated information as at 31 December 2020.

**Note:** The heterogeneous nature of data sources means that comparisons between countries are not possible; hence, the aim of this figure is to show the trends within each country. Paid work refers to work done to produce goods or provide services for the market and is calculated as the sum of time devoted to employment, job searches and commuting to and from work. The time-use surveys in Argentina and Guatemala do not include questions about the time spent commuting to and from work; in Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala and Uruguay, they do not include questions about the time spent on employment seeking or setting up a business. Unpaid work refers to work that is performed without payment and is undertaken mostly in the private domain. It is measured by quantifying the time a person spends on own-use goods production work, unpaid domestic work, unpaid care of household members, unpaid work for other households or for the community and volunteering. The survey in Argentina does not include questions about own-use goods production work; in Brazil it only includes questions about unpaid domestic work and in Honduras it does not include questions about own-use goods production work or unpaid work for other households, the community or volunteering. Data correspond to national totals, except in the cases of Argentina, where they refer to 31 urban conglomerates, and Cuba, where they are limited to Old Havana. Data refer to the population aged 15 years and over, except in the cases of Argentina, where they are limited to the population aged 18 years and over, and Nicaragua, where they refer to the population aged 6 years and over.

Although the data are not comparable, because the time-use surveys' methodologies respond to each country's specific objectives, they do reveal conclusive trends regarding the unequal distribution of time. They show that women are overrepresented in unpaid work. On average, women dedicate two thirds of their time to unpaid work and one third to paid work; while it is the inverse for men, who spend one third of their time on unpaid work and two thirds on paid work.

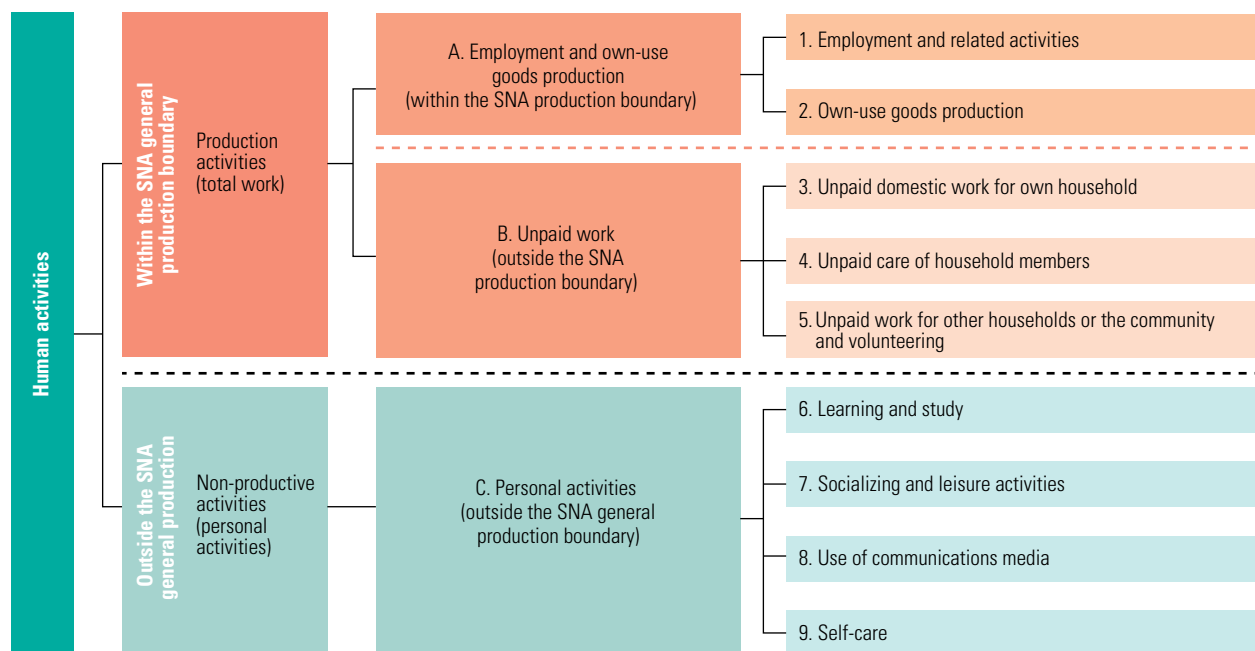
## Classification of Time-Use Activities for Latin America and the Caribbean (CAUTAL)

At the eighth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, all the member States adopted CAUTAL as a classification of time-use activities with a gender approach and suitable for the regional context, which is a milestone in the harmonization and standardization of time-use surveys and the production of statistics on this subject by the countries of the region, thus reinforcing international comparability.

CAUTAL provides a comprehensive structure for all activities that might be carried out in a given period through a conceptual framework that incorporates economic criteria based on the System of National Accounts (SNA). It organizes human activities in accordance with the general production boundaries of the SNA, linked to the production of goods and services, and personal activities (ECLAC/INEGI/INMUJERES/UN-Women, 2016).

CAUTAL is a dynamic, flexible tool designed to respond to the classification requirements and socioeconomic characteristics of each country.

### Conceptual framework and major divisions (one digit) of CAUTAL



**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

At the global level, an important precedent was the classification proposed by the United Nations Statistics Division, the International Classification of Activities for Time Use Statistics (ICATUS) (United Nations, 2017). In addition to the international classifications, some countries of the region have generated their own classifications for time-use measurements.

## Relationship between CAUTAL, ICATUS, SNA and forms of work

Intended destination of production	For own final use		For use by others									
	Own-use production work		Employment (work for pay or profit)			Unpaid trainee work	Other work activities	Volunteer work				
Forms of work	of services	of goods						In market and non-market units goods	In households producing goods services			
CAUTAL	4. Unpaid care of household members	3. Unpaid domestic work for own household	2. Own-use goods production			1. Employment and related activities			12. Unpaid trainee work	10. Other work activities	5. Unpaid work for other households or the community and volunteering	
	51. Unpaid work for other households			11. Employment	13. Employment-seeking or setting up a business	14. Commuting to and from work			53. Volunteer work at non-profit institutions	52. Unpaid work for the community		
ICATUS 2016	4. Unpaid caregiving services for household and family members	3. Unpaid domestic services for household and family members	2. Production of goods for own final use		1. Employment and related activities			5. Unpaid volunteer, trainee and other unpaid work				
				11. Employment in corporations, government and non-profit institutions	12. Employment in household enterprises to produce goods	13. Employment in households and household enterprises to provide services	53. Unpaid trainee work and related activities	59. Other unpaid work activities	51. Unpaid direct volunteering for other households			
								52. Unpaid community- and organization-based volunteering				
Type of work	Unpaid work		Paid work			Unpaid work						
Relation to 2008 SNA			Activities within the SNA production boundary								Activities inside the SNA general production boundary	

**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of International Classification of Activities for Time-Use Statistics (ICATUS); Classification of Time-Use Activities for Latin America and the Caribbean (CAUTAL); International Labour Organization (ILO), "Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization", Geneva, 2013; and System of National Accounts (SNA).

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For further information on the work of the Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC on this and other issues, go to: [www.cepal.org/en/work-areas/gender-affairs](http://www.cepal.org/en/work-areas/gender-affairs) and <http://oig.cepal.org/en>.