

Gender and unpaid work: findings from the Time Use Survey¹

New Zealand's first national Time Use Survey, conducted in 1998/99, provided valuable new information on how New Zealanders spend their time. The recent Statistics New Zealand publication *Around the Clock*² presented a comprehensive analysis of the survey's findings in all areas of economic and social participation.

Figure 1

Average Hours per Day Spent on Paid, Unpaid and Total Work by Sex

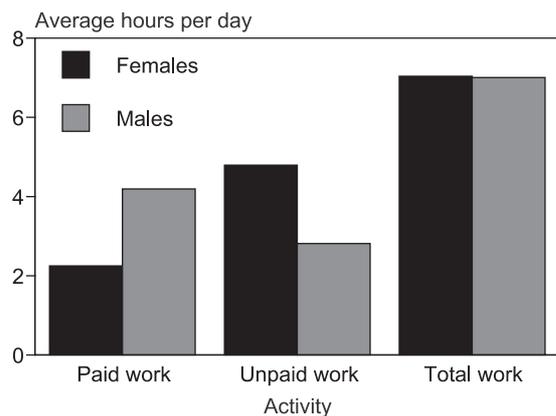
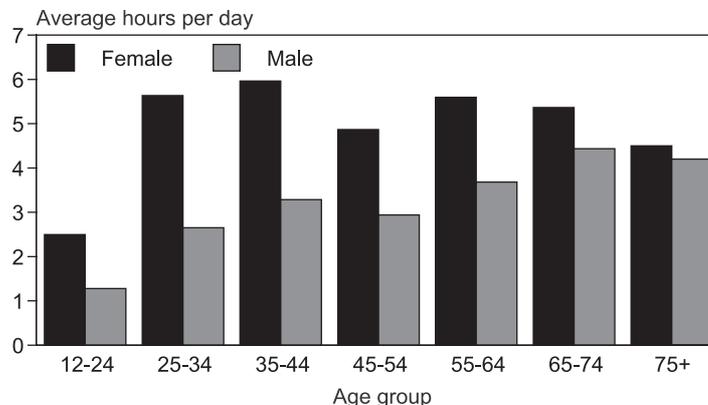


Figure 2

Average Hours per Day Spent on all Types of Unpaid Work by Sex and Age



Among the most important findings were those on unpaid work: how much time goes into unpaid work, the types of unpaid work that people do and how this varies for different groups. This article outlines some of these findings, focusing particularly on differences in participation in unpaid work between men and women.

Gender differences in unpaid work

Men and women spend about the same amount of time working, on average seven hours a day, or 49 hours a week.³ However, as Figure 1 shows, females spent two hours a day more than males on unpaid work, while males spent two hours a day more than females on paid work. While approximately 60 percent of males' work is paid, almost 70 percent of females' work is unpaid. An activity is classed as unpaid work if it is a productive activity that has no remuneration and satisfies the third person criterion – that is, the activity yields an output that can be exchanged.

In each age group females spent more time on unpaid work than males, as Figure 2 shows. Differences between age groups reflect the influence of labour force participation and the presence of young children in the family. Women's unpaid work participation is greatest

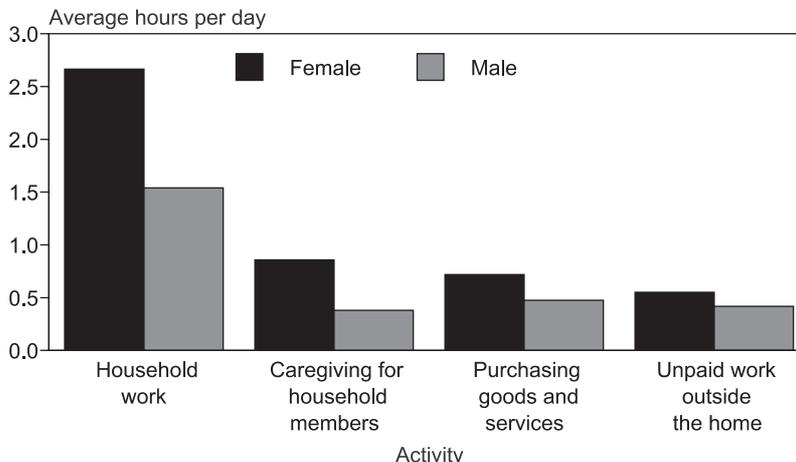
1 This article was prepared by Patrick Ongley of the Social Policy Division of Statistics New Zealand.

2 Statistics New Zealand (2001) *Around the Clock: Findings from the New Zealand Time Use Survey*, Wellington.

3 All figures in this report are averages for the population aged 12 and over, which was the subject population for the Time Use Survey. They refer only to primary activities, or those respondents recorded in the first column of their time use diaries. The survey also collected information on simultaneous activities but they are excluded from this analysis.

Figure 3

Average Hours Per Day Spent on Unpaid Work by Type of Activity and Sex



in the years when they are most likely to be looking after young children, while men’s participation is greatest when they are most likely to have retired from the labour force.

While women spend more time than men on unpaid work regardless of labour force status, women who work full time spend considerably less time on unpaid work than those who work part time or are not employed. Men who are not employed also spend much more time on unpaid work than those who work either part time or full time.

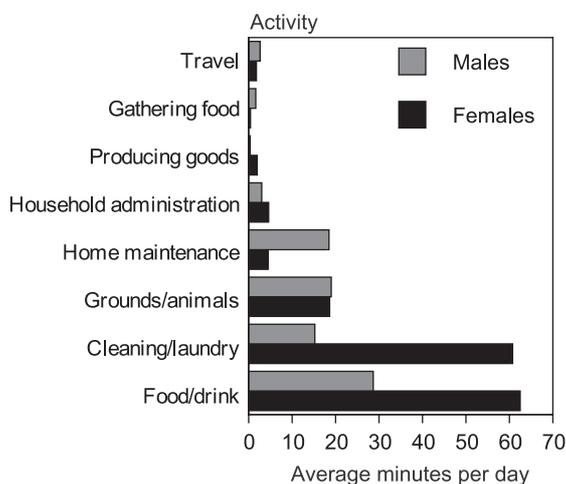
Similarly, women do more unpaid work than men, regardless of whether they are parents or not. Mothers with children spent 2.6 hours a day more on unpaid work than fathers with children. Mothers with children spent 2.0 hours more per day on unpaid work than other women (5.7 hours compared with 3.7 hours). Children’s age also had an important influence on the amount of time both mothers and fathers spent on unpaid work, with younger children placing greater demands on parents’ time.

Types of unpaid work

The major categories of unpaid work are: household work, caregiving for household members, purchasing goods and services for the household, and unpaid work outside the home (either informally or on a formal basis for voluntary organisations). As Figure 3 shows, women spent more time than men on each of these activities. For both sexes the majority of time was spent on household work, though females averaged over an hour a day more than males. Females also spent more than twice as long as males on caregiving for other household members, predominantly for young children. Male and female participation rates were closest in the area of unpaid work outside the home.

Figure 4

Average Minutes per Day Spent on Types of Household Work by Sex



Household work

The category of household work includes a range of different tasks, as shown in Figure 4. The most common of these are food and drink preparation and clean-up, and indoor cleaning

and laundry. On average, women spent over an hour a day on each of these tasks, while men spent less than half an hour on food and drink preparation and 15 minutes on cleaning and laundry. However, males spent considerably more time than females on home maintenance and slightly more time on grounds maintenance and animal care.

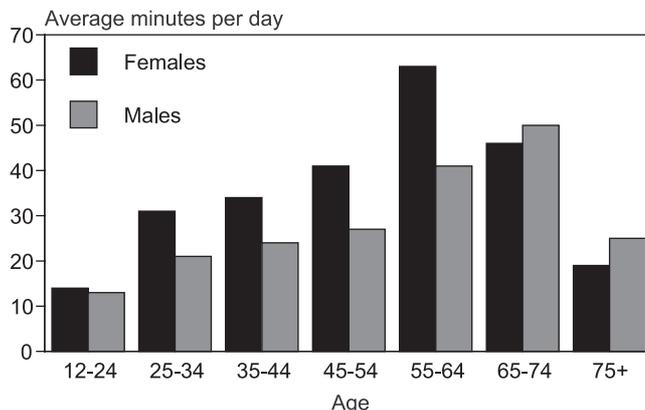
Time spent on household work generally increases with age and peaks in the retirement age groups. The gap between men and women narrows, and women's participation falls after the age of 75, while men's increases. In the 75 plus age group, men spent just 18 minutes a day less on household work than women did. Among both males and females of all ages, those who work full time spent on average less time on the major types of household work than those who work part time, or are not employed.

Caregiving for household members

Around 95 percent of caregiving time involves caring for children, with the majority of this being for children of pre-school age. Those who spend the most amount of time caregiving are those in the peak child-raising ages of 25 to 44, as Figure 5 shows. Responsibility for this task falls largely to women, with those aged 25 to 34 spending 1.9 hours a day on caregiving compared with men's 0.6 hours. Women aged 35 to 44 averaged 1.6 hours compared with men's 0.9 hours. In older age groups, time spent on this activity falls quite markedly and there is little difference in the participation of men and women. In these age groups, caregiving often involves looking after older family members.

Figure 6

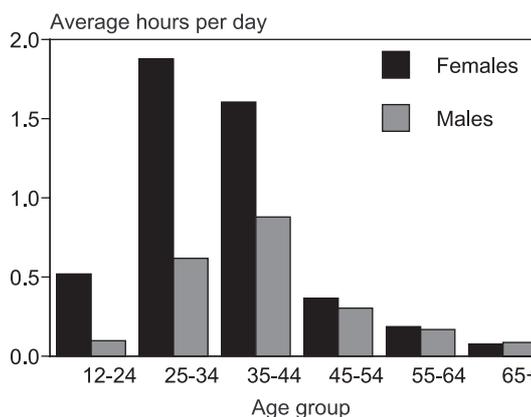
Average Minutes per Day Spent on Unpaid Work Outside the Home by Sex and Age



Females averaged 29 minutes a day looking after children aged 0 to 4, and 23 minutes caring for children aged 5 to 13. Males spent an average of 12 minutes a day caring for children in each of these age groups. Caring for adults involved an average of five minutes a day for females and two minutes a day for males.

Figure 5

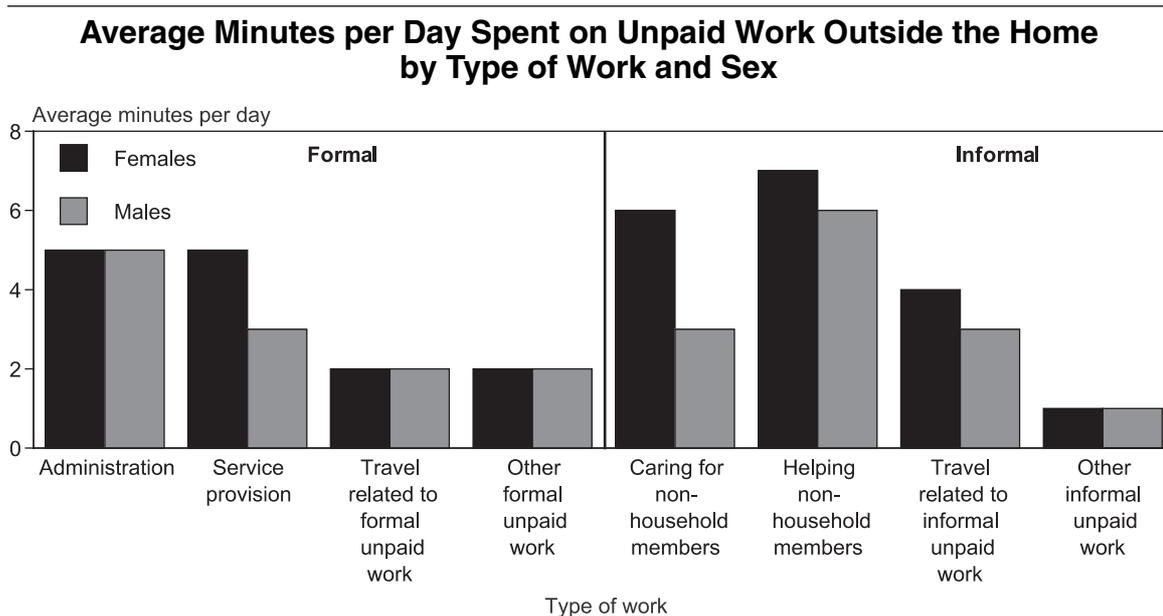
Average Hours per Day Spent on Caregiving for Household Members by Sex and Age



Unpaid work outside the home

Participation in unpaid work outside the home increases for women up to the 55 to 64 year age group, and for men up to the 65 to 74 year age group, as Figure 6 shows. Women do more unpaid work than men, up until the 55 to 64 year age group, when their time peaks at 63 minutes a day. However, after this their average time decreases. In the retirement age groups, men do more unpaid work outside the home than women, peaking at 50 minutes a day in the 65 to 74 year age group.

Figure 7



Labour force status is again a factor. Both men and women who were employed full time spent 20 minutes a day on unpaid work outside the home, while the highest participation for females was among part-time workers (42 minutes) and for males who are not employed (35 minutes).

Helping non-household members is the most common form of unpaid work outside the home for both males and females, who spent an average of seven minutes and six minutes a day, respectively, on this task. The greatest difference between males and females relates to caring for people outside their household. On average women spent twice as much time as men on this activity – six minutes a day compared with three minutes. In formal unpaid work, administration (for voluntary agencies, community organisations, schools, etc) took up the most time, an average of five minutes a day for both men and women. Women spent more time than men on service provision (eg delivering meals on wheels, providing parent help at school) – five minutes compared with three minutes a day.

Conclusion

New Zealanders spend more time on unpaid work than on paid work. Over the course of a year, we do over 4.2 billion hours of unpaid work.

If this is converted into full-time jobs of 40 hours a week, it equates to over two million jobs. By comparison, 3.5 billion hours is spent on paid work, equating to 1.7 million full-time jobs of 40 hours a week. Of the total hours spent on unpaid work, 2.7 billion are done by women and 1.5 billion by men.

The value of unpaid work in New Zealand in 1999 was \$40 billion⁴, which is equivalent to 39 percent of gross domestic product. Work done by females accounted for 64 percent of the total value, or \$25 billion⁵.

The results clearly demonstrate the large investment of time in unpaid work and its economic significance. The fact that women do the majority of this work, both inside and outside the home is not unexpected, but for the first time we are able to measure the extent of this contribution and its economic value.

Note: This article presents some summary results from *Around the Clock* and *Measuring Unpaid Work in New Zealand 1999*. A copy of these publications can be ordered through publications@stats.govt.nz, or can be downloaded from the Statistics New Zealand website, www.stats.govt.nz.

⁴ Based on a median housekeeper wage rate.
⁵ Statistics New Zealand (2001) *Measuring Unpaid Work in New Zealand 1999*.