



Time Transfers by Age and Gender in 28 Countries

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Abstract

Transfers of services that are produced through unpaid care work (such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, household maintenance, and direct care) sustain our societies. Yet they differ considerably between genders and across countries. This visualization highlights the cross-country differences in giving and receiving unpaid household services (time transfers) by gender and age for 28 countries. It demonstrates how much more unpaid care work is done by women compared with men across the lifecycle in all countries. The visualization also shows that the highest amount of time transfers is received by the youngest generations.

Keywords

unpaid care work, time use, gender

Care, housework, and other household services are a central part of our lives, but standard measures of economic activity include these services only if they are provided for pay. The vast majority of household services, however, are provided on an unpaid basis, mostly by women. We demonstrate how much household service is provided and received by men and women at different ages by visualizing transfers of unpaid care working time (time transfers). Time transfers are unpaid care work done by someone and consumed by another one. They usually flow within households, where household members consume the unpaid care work products of other household members (e.g., they receive direct care or help doing homework, or they eat a meal cooked by another household member). Nonetheless they also flow between households (when someone cares for someone else outside the household). The estimates of time transfers are based on the methodology of National Time Transfer Accounts (Donehower 2019; Vargha, Gál, and Crosby-Nagy 2017). These accounts are based on time use surveys and estimate the time spent and the market value of unpaid care work (including direct care and housework) and its consumption, as well as their difference: the transfers of services that are produced through unpaid care work by age and gender.

Figure 1 shows the gender- and age-specific time transfers for 28 countries (1999–2015) in hours per day. The differently colored tiles show the values at different ages, from 0 to 85 years and older. The blue colors indicate age groups that are net givers of time: the time they spend on unpaid care

work is higher than the amount they consume on average. The red colors indicate net receivers of time: on average, their consumption of household services exceeds their time spent on unpaid care work. Even though some unpaid care work is done and transferred by these age groups (except for the youngest ones), the amount of time they consume from the work of others is higher. The biggest advantage of our visualization is that the age groups that are net givers or receivers can be easily compared across many countries. The shades of the two colors highlight the difference in magnitude of time transfer received or given in the different countries.

In all countries, more age groups of women provide larger time transfers compared with men. In Ghana (2009) and Senegal (2011), women are net givers of care and household services starting from age 10, while in Slovenia (2001),

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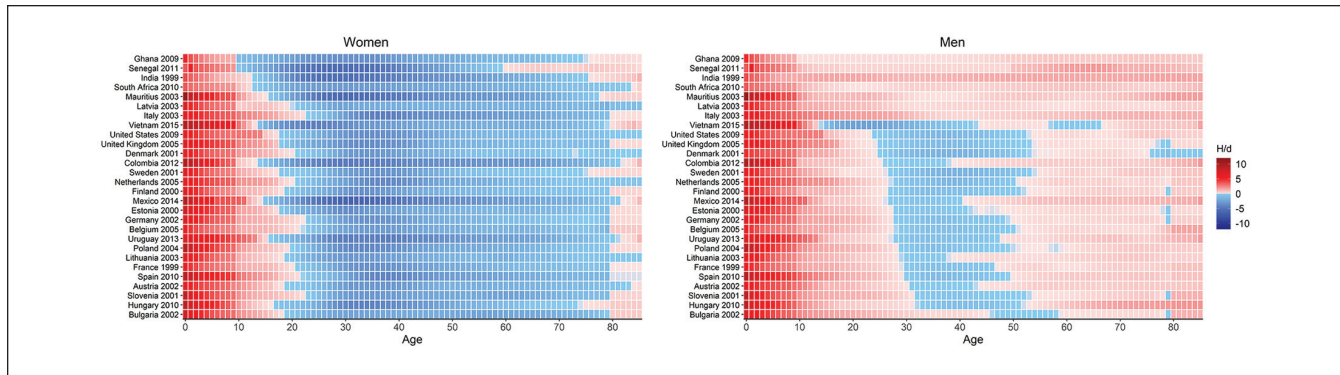


Figure 1. Time transfers by age and gender in 28 countries (1999–2015), hours per day.

Time transfers are transfers of services that are produced through unpaid care work (such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, household maintenance, and direct care) and not captured in standard measures of economic activity. The estimates of time transfers are based on the methodology of National Time Transfer Accounts using time-use surveys (Donehower 2019). The blue colors indicate age groups that are net givers of time: the time they spend on unpaid care work is higher than the amount they consume on average. The red colors indicate net receivers of time: on average, their consumption of household services exceeds their time spent on unpaid care work. Even though some unpaid care work is done and transferred by these age groups (except for the youngest ones), the amount of time they consume from the work of others is higher. Replication files and more details are available at: <https://github.com/LiliVargha/Time-Transfers>.

Sources: Counting Women's Work (2022), Vargha et al. (2016), Hammer (2014), Gál, Szabó, and Vargha (2017).


Germany (2002), and Italy (2003) they are net givers from age 23. Women provide the greatest amount of time transfers during childbearing ages, as indicated by the darker shades of blue-colored tiles. The highest amount of time transfers given is found in Mexico (2014), Mauritius (2003), Senegal (2011), and India (1999) with values of about 6 hours around ages 20 to 30. At older ages women give time transfers typically to their partners. In most countries, only the oldest age groups of women receive time transfers on average, and in a few countries, even women aged 85 and older make time transfers.

Conversely, there are more age groups of men receiving time transfers than giving, as indicated by the number of red tiles on the plot for men. The visualization highlights age-specific differences for men who are net givers: in Vietnam (2015) the youngest age for men giving time transfers is 14 years, while in the United States (2009) it is 24 years. In Ghana (2009), Senegal (2011), India (1999), South Africa (2010), Mauritius (2003), Latvia (2003), and Italy (2003), there is not a single age group of men making time transfers on average. In the countries where men do make time transfers, the age range is generally late 20s to late 40s. The exception is Bulgaria (2002), where only older men between ages 46 and 58 are net givers of time transfers, because of the high amount of time spent on gardening.

The figure also demonstrates that the highest amount of time transfers is received by the youngest children (both male and female). The per capita time consumed by a newborn is 11 hours per day in Mauritius (2003) and 3.6 hours in Senegal. The amount of time transfers received by children decreases gradually with age in all countries. We encourage researchers to use our visualization tool instead

of line graphs when they compare age and gender specific intergenerational transfers or similar data across many countries.

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online. Replication files and more details are available at <https://github.com/LiliVargha/Time-Transfers>

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Author Biographies

Lili Vargha is a sociologist and demographer. Currently she is a Humboldt Research Fellow (postdoctoral researcher) at the Microsociology Department of Humboldt University of Berlin. She is also affiliated with the Hungarian Demographic Research Institute. Her research focuses on the analysis of economic lifecycles and family lifecourses as well as redistribution and transfers among age groups, genders and other socio-economic groups using different types of cross-national data from around the world. Her current research is funded by the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung.

Bernhard Binder-Hammer is an economist and a data scientist at the Technische Universität Wien and the Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital (University of Vienna). His research focuses on measurement and analysis of the economy

from a generational perspective. It includes the analysis of age-specific income trends, of transfers between age groups and generations, and the analysis of public redistribution between age groups and generations. Most of his research is related to National Transfer Accounts, a framework whose aim is to integrating demographic information into National Accounts data and the measurement of transfers within households. His current research is funded by Jubiläumsfond of the Austrian National Bank (project 18465).

Gretchen Donehower is a research specialist with the Center on the Economics and Demography of Aging at the University of California, Berkeley, and an adjunct senior fellow of the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii. She is the current chair of the executive council of the National Transfer Accounts project, which is focused on understanding the age dimension of economic activity. She is a co-principal investigator of the Counting Women's Work Project, which adds a gender perspective to National Transfer Accounts, including adding the value of unpaid care work to the National Transfer Accounts framework. She has a PhD in demography and an MA in statistics from the University of California, Berkeley.