

CARE WORK AND THE ECONOMY

Advancing policy solutions with gender-aware macroeconomic models

POLICY BRIEF | 21 – 03

ESTIMATING THE UNPAID CARE SECTOR IN SOUTH KOREA

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CWE-GAM Working Paper Series: [21-03](#)

POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

- Lack of recognition and valuation of unpaid care work reinforces gender inequality and hinders economic development.
- Unpaid care time provided by adults (18+) in South Korea rose from 87 million hours per day in 2009 to 92 million hours per day in 2014. This means that 10-11 million full-time paid care workers would be required to replace this unpaid care.
- The value of this work was 23-54% of GDP in 2009 and 22-59% of GDP in 2014 depending on the methods. Approximately 80% of this value was created by women's unpaid care work.
- Visibility of unpaid care work is critical for addressing adverse effects of macro policy on the labor force, women's workloads, and economic development.
- One way to increase visibility is to improve data collection to allow accurate estimation of the scope and cost of unpaid care work.

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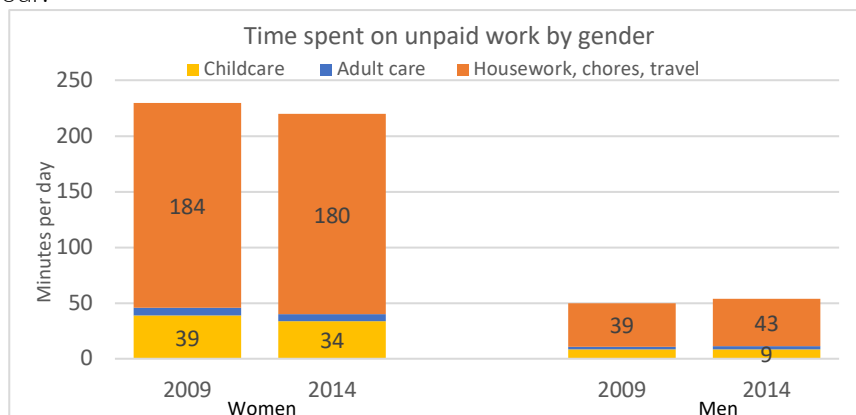
CWE-GAM Working Paper 21-03: [Estimating the unpaid care sector in South Korea](#)

MEASURING AND VALUING UNPAID CARE WORK

Unpaid care work performed in households is productive work, but is often implicitly considered unproductive because it is beyond the conventional production boundaries (i.e., not included in systems of national account (SNA) measures). This paper estimates both the amount of unpaid care provided and the cost of hiring paid care workers to replace the work done by unpaid care workers in South Korea in 2009 and 2014.

ESTIMATES OF TIME AND COST OF UNPAID CARE WORK IN SOUTH KOREA

Time estimates are based on average care time reported in the Korea Time Use Survey, collected in 2009 and 2014. On average, women spent nearly four hours on unpaid work each day; for men, that figure is less than an hour.



These time estimates are then valued based on the estimated cost of replacing these unpaid care services with paid care workers. Different wages are used to estimate an upper and a lower bound for the valuations. **The value of this work was 23-54% of GDP in 2009 and 22-59% of GDP in 2014.** Approximately 80% of this value was created by women's unpaid care work.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Measuring unpaid work is critical for addressing unintended impacts of macroeconomic policy on the labor force, women's work, and economic development. Time use surveys are valuable sources of information on unpaid work; improving these types of surveys should be prioritized to address the critical issue of care in the South Korean economy.