

# Time Poverty

## The Value of Women's Time and Work

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. Studies show that women around the globe spend more time than men doing unpaid care work. Unpaid care includes tasks like cooking, cleaning and caring for children. Globally, women spend anywhere from two to ten times the amount of time that men do on these tasks. This big difference is called the gender chore gap, and while the gap is closing in some places, it still exists in every country. Even women who work outside of the home do more work than men do inside of it. When a pattern is observed worldwide, it's important to consider why it is there.

Notes

2. There are many potential reasons for the gender chore gap. For example, only women can give birth to children, so raising children and housekeeping have often been assumed to be "women's work." These assumptions can lead to social norms, or rules for behavior that are considered acceptable. People may believe that men and women want to do different tasks or that they are supposed to do—or not do—certain types of labor. Sexism, discrimination or judgment made on the basis of gender, is often responsible for such thinking. It can be hard to see social norms, but throughout history they've have shaped people's choices. For example, there used to be many more female nurses than doctors in the US. Women could become doctors, but female doctors weren't as accepted. This norm influenced women's decisions to become nurses instead, a job with a lower salary.

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3. In the US, the average man spends about 160 minutes a day on unpaid work, and the average woman spends 249. The gender chore gap is 89 minutes. Two of the countries with the narrowest gender chore gaps are Finland (70 minutes) and Denmark (60 minutes). India has the largest of any country where this data is recorded—299 minutes. Though women and girls make up about 50% of the population, women are less than 25% of the labor force. That is partly because of cultural beliefs; some educated women in India may not be allowed to work outside the home. The effects of this gap may harm women, families and countries' economies. GDP, or gross domestic product, is the total value of goods and services produced in a country and is one way to measure a country's economy. If more women joined India's workforce, it could add \$700 billion to the country's GDP by 2025.

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4. There are many ways governments are helping to close the gender chore gap. In Morocco, a two-week increase in maternity leave with public subsidies was linked to an increase in mothers working. Instead of leaving the labor force after having a baby, more women were able to return to their jobs. In Sweden, a portion of parental leave is reserved for fathers to either "use or lose." This time cannot be transferred to the mother. That policy motivates men to take time off after the birth of a child, leading to more sharing of childcare responsibility. This also helps women return to jobs outside of the home. In general, more family-friendly and flexible working policies like this help both men and women attend to their tasks and careers and have more control over their time.

Notes

5. There are different ways to measure poverty. Income poverty looks at how much money people earn. Consumption poverty looks at how much money people live on. Many factors contribute to poverty and some can aggravate one another. Poor health can make it difficult to work and therefore lower someone's income and spending, while a lack of time can make it harder to earn money. In low-income countries, the gender chore gap can lead to time poverty. Time poverty means working long hours in and outside of the home and having no choice to do otherwise—a person cannot reduce the time spent working without increasing his or her poverty level. Because women are expected to do a greater share of unpaid tasks, they are more likely to be "time poor."

Notes

6. Time poverty can lock women into cycles of poverty. In Malawi, rural women and men often work as farmers and seasonal wage laborers, and income poverty is common. Women have the added burden of time poverty because so much of their time is spent on unpaid tasks. An opportunity cost is what is given up to pursue a certain action, and when women spend up to six hours a day working without getting paid, there are many opportunity costs. For example, a woman might not be able to work if she attends school. She might determine that investing in her future earning potential by going to school is worth the opportunity cost. Education is one of the most powerful instruments to reduce poverty. That's another way time poverty can worsen income poverty; it makes it harder to attend school.

Notes

7. Technology can save women time, especially women who spend more than four hours each day on unpaid tasks, like grinding grain or fetching firewood. Today, there are several designs available for stoves that don't require firewood. These new stoves save women time collecting fuel. However, this doesn't solve the problem of men's and women's time being valued differently. Solving this requires tackling social norms and gender roles. Closing the gender chore gap would mean that families can decide together who does what based on a combination of factors and not simply because of unquestioned norms. Additionally, having more time can increase women's ability to earn money, access education and to seek health care for herself and her family when she needs to without sacrificing household responsibilities or a portion of her salary.

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