

# GENDER AND LABOUR

## HOUSE WORK

Gender inequality in household labour is a global issue, with women often carrying out more unpaid work than men:

- Time spent on housework

According to the Gender Equality Index 2021, women with children spend about an hour more on housework per day than men with children. Employed women spend about 2.3 hours daily on housework, while employed men spend about 1.6 hours.

- Unpaid work

Women do at least two and a half times more unpaid household work than men. This includes cooking, cleaning, fetching water and firewood, taking care of children and the elderly, and child care.

- Gendered division of labour

Household labour is often stereotyped as being dominated by women, with routine tasks like cooking and cleaning, while less regular tasks like repairing the house or car are stereotyped as being dominated by men.

- Impact on the economy

Women's unpaid work is essential for households and economies to function. It supports economies and often fills in for the lack of social services.

Some ways to fight gender inequality in household labor include:

- Sharing household tasks on a fair basis
- Setting good role models for children
- Rotating rules so that cooking doesn't always stick with the mother and garbage doesn't always stick with the father

## THE INVISIBLE LABOUR

Invisible. It means the work that is not seen from our eyes. For example, the main responsibility for housework and caregiving tasks, like looking after the family, especially

children, the elderly and sick members, lies with women. There are such works or tasks which are often not recognized as works and therefore remain invisible.

2. **Physically demanding.** Very tough and difficult tasks. For example, women do a lot of work inside the home. Some of these works such as carrying heavy headloads of firewood, fetching water from a far-off place, washing clothes of the entire family members etc. are very tough and difficult. Still, women do them regularly without making any complaints.

3. **Time-consuming.** Household works that take much time. For example, women's routine begins from early morning and continues up to late night. During this period they are seen busy in fulfilling the needs and wishes of their family member. They often sit with their children and help them in completing their homework. This is a good example of time-consuming work.

## **My mother doesn't work.**

The phrase “my mother doesn't work” can be a reflection of societal norms and attitudes toward gender roles, particularly in how we value different types of work. Gender sensitization involves understanding and challenging these norms to create a more equitable view of all forms of labor. Here's how gender sensitization relates to the concept of invisible labor:

1. **Challenging Traditional Roles:** Traditionally, caregiving and household responsibilities have been disproportionately assigned to women. When someone says, “my mother doesn't work,” it may reflect a narrow understanding that overlooks the value of these traditional roles. Gender sensitization involves recognizing that this kind of work is labor, and it's often undervalued or dismissed.
2. **Valuing All Work Equally:** Gender sensitization aims to shift perceptions so that all forms of labor, whether paid or unpaid, are valued equally. This includes recognizing the significant amount of work that goes into managing a household, caring for children, or providing emotional support. Acknowledging this helps combat the misconception that only paid, formal employment counts as "real" work.
3. **Equitable Distribution of Labor:** By understanding the concept of invisible labor, we can address the imbalance in how domestic and caregiving responsibilities are distributed. Gender sensitization encourages sharing these responsibilities more equitably among all family members, regardless of gender. This shift can help alleviate the disproportionate burden often placed on women.

4. **Creating Inclusive Policies:** Gender sensitization also involves advocating for policies that recognize and support all types of labor. This could include parental leave policies, childcare support, or flexible work arrangements that accommodate caregiving responsibilities.
5. **Work-Life Balance:** The expectation for women to manage housework, along with employment, can create significant stress and challenges. Gender sensitization and policies that promote equitable sharing of housework are essential for improving work-life balance and reducing gender disparities.
6. **Changing Norms:** Over time, there has been progress in recognizing the importance of housework and advocating for a more equitable distribution of these responsibilities. Efforts include promoting shared domestic duties, encouraging more balanced parental leave policies, and challenging stereotypes around gender and domestic labor.

"Share the load" is a phrase that refers to the idea that men and women should share the responsibilities of running a household equally. The phrase is often used in the context of the #ShareTheLoad campaign, an award-winning initiative by Ariel that aims to challenge gender expectations in the home.

Creating a more progressive future, Happier households, when Men and women sharing the load equally.

It has a significant impact, with over 1.5 million Indian men pledging to share the load.

Sharing the load can have many benefits, including:

- **Stress-free lives:** Sharing domestic responsibilities can lead to a more serene and stress-free life for both men and women.
- **Empowerment:** Women are empowered to pursue opportunities outside the home.
- **Mutual respect:** Shared responsibilities can foster mutual respect, harmony, and freedom for all.
- **Enhanced social interactions:** Sharing house chores can enhance social interactions and familial bonds.

## Women's Work: Its Fact and Fiction

In the world today, security and social respect are closely related to jobs and income. Most of us enter college hoping to get a good job when we pass out with

a degree. But women and men get very different messages about work. Society tells a man that he must work, earn and support his family. (This is a big pressure on a boy.) It is generally felt that women may consider taking up a job, but only if they can make sure that the household work does not suffer. Economic security and social respect do not seem relevant for women. The general impression is that women's work is not serious work. Also, that their income is "supplementary" to the main income of the family. But do you think such perceptions are actually true? Do women not work? Does this work not have economic value? Do women only supplement the family economy? Or, is their contribution as "primary" and as essential as any other?

Why such perceptions arise: Seeing and not seeing women work

Have you ever wondered about the women in television advertisements and films? Almost all these women are always fresh, smiling, beautifully dressed. They worry about their children's and family's health; they make sure they buy only the right, healthy and nutritious products. They keep their houses miraculously clean and lovingly and dedicatedly feed smiling sons.

What we generally do NOT see on TV is:

a) Household work never ends. Homemakers (a new term for housewives) are constantly on their feet, working non-stop, even when they are ill, to take care of their family.

b) In addition, in both rural and urban areas, what is termed household work includes many income-generating activities.

c) A large number of women also work outside the home, and they do many different jobs. Women who are working for an income can be vegetable vendors, beauticians, corner-shop assistants and owners, domestic workers, television anchors, actresses, lab technicians, doctors, accountants and clerks –to list only some of the fields in which they are found.

Thanks to the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution of India that provided reservations for women in the elected bodies of municipal corporations and gram panchayats, women are now in decision-making roles in politics. Similarly, we also have women politicians in our legislative assemblies and parliament.

Of late, we also find women heading important banks such as the ICICI, SBI, etc. as well as becoming CEO's of multinational companies such as Pepsico.

If we look around us, our everyday life is teeming with examples of both kinds of women: women who are engaged full-time in taking care of the family; and women who work to earn an income and also do the housework. The women in your family may also be doing this.

The funny thing is that what we actually see does not change the image in our minds.

Why these perceptions are not true: More information about working women

The 2011 Census gives a figure of 35 crore women who are in the working age group (15-65 years). According to the 2010 National Sample Survey (NSS 2010) only 11.2 crore women declared themselves to be working for an income.

A large number of these women are in:

- \* agriculture (transplanting, weeding, ploughing and allied activities) : 7.7 crore

- ¢ tobacco-related work (collecting and drying tendu leaves: rolling beedis, textile work, traditional weavers and dyers or mill workers): 1.2 crore

- ¢ construction: 57 lakh

60% women in India are literate. 6.5% have passed out of high school. But

illiteracy among rural women workers is still 66%. Compared to the 1990s, opportunities for women with education have increased in urban areas. India

now has:

- e 25 lakh women school-teachers

- ¢ 23 lakh saleswomen

- e 17 lakh women offering personal services such as beauticians

- e 12 lakh nurses and other hospital staff, and

- e 11 lakh women in government service.

These figures are impressive. But the sad part is that many women are unable to make use of expanding opportunities. They do not have the skills required by the market. This is the reason why as many as 19 lakh women have been thrown out of agricultural employment due to mechanization, who now work as domestic servants in urban areas.

Here are some facts and figures about women's work and politics:

- Gender pay gap

In 2018, the global gender pay gap was 22%, meaning women earned around 78% of what men earned.

- Women in the labor market

Women are less likely to participate in the labor market than men, and are more likely to be unemployed. They are also overrepresented in informal and vulnerable employment.

- Women in agriculture

Women are overrepresented in seasonal, informal, part-time, and low-wage work in agriculture. They also have limited access to social protection.

- Women in politics

At the current rate of progress, gender parity in national legislative bodies will not be achieved before 2063.

- Women's representation in parliament

Women hold 36% of parliamentary seats in Latin America and the Caribbean, 33% in Europe and Northern America, and 27% in sub-Saharan Africa.

- Women's representation in land ownership

Less than 15% of landholders worldwide are women, despite most women in the global south working in agriculture.

- Women's legal protection

Nearly 82 million women around the world don't have any legal protection against discrimination in the workplace.

How we need to think about  
women's work

Why is women's work invisible, under-valued, and poorly appreciated? There are several reasons for this. For instance, when looking at women's work, we tend to focus on the work that is remunerative, i.e., work which gives an income. If a woman does not earn money, she is considered a non-worker or unproductive. Using this definition, the 2011 Census of India categorized most of the working age women in India as non-workers. But women's work, unlike men's work, is not limited to activities that earn personal income. A large portion of women's work goes into the income-generating activities of their families. They also work to maintain the family. All this does not give them an income. But it does prevent them from taking on a job that will earn them an income. Let us see how this happens.

Definition of a worker:

One who works continuously for eight to ten hours outside the home for money.

For one, many women currently categorized as non-workers actually work for family or household enterprises. To list some of them: agriculture, animal husbandry, weaving and dyeing, pottery, petty trading, small hotels, kirana shops, catering, family-run businesses such as textile or jewellery, food and beverage hawking, and many small enterprises both in rural and urban areas. This is called unpaid family work. None of these family enterprises can run unless the women of the household shoulder a large part of the responsibility and work.

However this work does not give the woman any control over the family's disposable income, including the share she has earned. Such work is invisible and is not recognized. It is seen as "supporting the family" and not as work that produces an income.

Second, there are the women who work for wages, but from home. They are engaged in beedi/ papad/ agarbatti/ bangle-making, tailoring, embroidery or any number of activities that give them some income. They work between seven to nine hours on such jobs. This is called home-based work. Compared to unpaid family workers these women do have more control over their income. But much, if not all, of it goes into supporting the family. As they work from home, and think of themselves only as "supplementing" family income, such women tend to not think of themselves as workers. The census also does not count them as workers!

Since Sunday is a holiday for everyone, should mothers also not have a holiday? Yes or no? Please give reasons.