

Gender Differences in Time Use in Jordan: Unpaid Caregiving and Female Employment

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Abstract

Using the 2025 wave of the Jordan Labor Market Panel Survey (JLMPS), this paper describes gender differences in unpaid care responsibilities and how these vary by demographic, family, and labor market characteristics. The addition of a 24-hour time-use module in the JLMPS 2025 makes it possible to showcase differences between men and women across a range of socioeconomic attributes. The findings indicate that women devote far more time than men to unpaid care within Jordanian households. Marriage and having children further increase the hours women spend on these tasks. Women who are employed face the added strain of managing both paid and unpaid work, with married wage-earning women experiencing the greatest time pressure.

Keywords: time use, unpaid care work, employment, gender roles, JLMPS, Jordan

JEL Classifications: J16, J22, D13

ملخص

باستخدام موجة عام 2025 من المسح التتبعي لسوق العمل في الأردن (JLMPS)، تصف هذه الورقة الاختلافات بين الجنسين في مسؤوليات الرعاية غير مدفوعة الأجر وكيف تختلف هذه الاختلافات حسب الخصائص الديموغرافية والأسرية وسوق العمل. إن إضافة وحدة استخدام الوقت على مدار 24 ساعة- في JLMPS 2025 يجعل من الممكن عرض الاختلافات بين الرجال والنساء عبر مجموعة من السمات الاجتماعية والاقتصادية. وتشير النتائج إلى أن النساء يخصصن وقتاً أطول بكثير من الرجال للرعاية غير مدفوعة الأجر داخل الأسر الأردنية. ويؤدي الزواج وإنجاب الأطفال إلى زيادة الساعات التي تقضيها المرأة في هذه المهام. وتواجه النساء العاملات ضغوطاً إضافية تتمثل في إدارة العمل المدفوع الأجر وغير المدفوع الأجر، حيث تعاني النساء المتزوجات اللاتي يحصلن على أجر - دخل من أكبر ضغوط الوقت.

1. Introduction

Jordan – like many countries within the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region – has persistently low rates of female labor force participation (Krafft, Assaad & Ragab, 2026). This pattern is despite impressive gains in female education and health outcomes; women’s educational attainment often exceeds that of their male peers, yet their employment levels remain some of the lowest in the world (Assaad et al, 2020). There are many complex and intertwined reasons for this paradox, including structural barriers, economic policies, social norms, and a lack of enabling infrastructure, all of which continue to limit women’s ability to engage in labor market activities (UN Women, 2020a).

A central consideration to this stagnation in women’s labor force participation is the heavy and unequal burden of unpaid care work borne by women. Unpaid care work includes both direct tasks, such as caring for children, elderly family members, or the sick, and indirect ones like cooking, cleaning, and household maintenance. These responsibilities are vital to societal functioning but are largely invisible in economic statistics and undervalued in policymaking (Charmes, 2019; Ferrant, Pesando, & Nowacka, 2014). Studies find that if unpaid work was valued, it would be equivalent to US\$11 trillion globally (Coffey et al, 2020). The exclusion of unpaid care work from national accounts distorts international comparisons based on gross domestic product (GDP) because it underestimates the material well-being in countries where home-made consumption is higher but goes uncounted (Ferrant, Pesando, & Nowacka, 2014), like the MENA region.

Across regions, socio-economic groups, and cultures, women disproportionately shoulder the burden of unpaid care work (Samman et al., 2016). This unequal distribution stems from deeply rooted gender norms that define caregiving and domestic responsibilities as primarily female roles, leading women to spend a substantial share of their daily time meeting these expectations (Ferrant, Pesando, & Nowacka, 2014). While time poverty and the care burden are global issues, they are particularly acute in MENA countries due to entrenched gender norms and limited investment in care services (Economic Research Forum & UN Women, 2020; UN Women, 2020a; World Bank, 2024).

Globally, women on average spend 3.3 times as much time on unpaid work as men do (Samman et al., 2016). However, this ratio is much worse in MENA countries. According to several studies, women spend five to ten times as much time as men engaged in unpaid work, the highest female-to-male ration in the world (Arab Barometer, 2023; ILO, 2018). A study on Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia shows that, on average, women devote 6-7 times more time per day than men to unpaid work (Charmes, 2015). More recently, a study in Egypt by Atallah & Hesham (2024) found that women on average spend 5.4 hours per day in unpaid care work, which is nearly five times the amount of time that men spend on similar tasks.

Specific to Jordan, a study of unpaid care work in Ma’an in southern Jordan finds that women dedicate 59 hours a week on unpaid care work, compared to 22 hours for men (Perrin, 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic and the accompanying closure of childcare centers and schools might have exacerbated women’s unpaid care burdens. A study by UN Women (2020b) on Jordan found that increased demand for care within the household during the pandemic triggered a significant time squeeze for women in employment by further augmenting their unpaid workload. Likewise, a study from Krafft et al. (2024) on give MENA countries, including Jordan, found an increase in care work for women with children under 18 during the pandemic. However, this increased care work did not lead to increased

exit from employment. Women's responsibility for unpaid care work does not change if they engage in paid employment (Assaad, Krafft, and Selwaness, 2022) and is exacerbated for married women with young children (ERF & UN Women, 2020; UN Women, 2020a; Krafft & Li, 2024).

The inequality in time-use between the sexes is at least in part attributable to social norms around the perceived role of men and women within the household. There is mixed evidence about whether these norms are changing or not. For example, a survey of 12 MENA countries by the Arab Barometer (2023) suggests that most participants believe that helping children study should be a shared responsibility between the sexes. Additionally, while male subjects in Ma'an still believed in the gender division of labor, they expressed openness to the idea of outsourcing unpaid care work to individuals outside the households, even if it requires paying for a service (Perrin, 2021). A study by UN Women (2023) shows that while the majority of those surveyed regardless of sex still believed that women must be the primary caregivers and men must be the primary breadwinners, the perception is shifting a little bit for younger men and women as well as single or divorced women, who tend to generally hold more progressive views. A study by El Feki, Barker, and Heillman (2017) found that in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, and Palestine the majority of men surveyed support inequitable traditional attitudes, with no differences across generations.

Investment in affordable childcare, eldercare services, and family-friendly workplace regulations have been shown in other countries to reduce the time constraints women face and promote more equitable labor market outcomes (Samman et al., 2016; Devercelli & Beaton-Day, 2020). While there is some evidence that this may not be true for countries in the MENA region (e.g., as discussed in Krafft and Li, 2024), it may still be worthwhile to invest in the care economy as it can have the double benefit of opening up women's time to engage in paid employment and also creating work opportunities in sectors like education and health that disproportionately employ women.

The foundation for effective reform lies in robust data. Without comprehensive time use statistics, policymakers cannot accurately diagnose the problem or assess the impact of interventions. As such, this paper contributes to the growing literature on unpaid care work in the MENA region by exploring the time-use module of the Jordan Labor Market Panel Survey (JLMPS) 2025 data (OAMDI, 2026; Krafft et al., 2026). The aim of this paper is to quantify the unequal burden of unpaid care work and to explore how demographic, family, and labor market characteristics amplify or diminish these inequalities. The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 discusses the methodology and data used in this paper. Section 3 reports time-use patterns by individual traits. Section 4 focuses on disaggregating time-use by household and family characteristics. Section 5 explores heterogeneity of time-use for men and women across different labor market outcomes, including type and sector of employment. Finally, Section 6 explores how time use changes for employed women based on their work arrangements and the type of childcare that they make use of while at work.

2. Data

This paper draws on the most recent wave of the nationally representative JLMPS (2025), with a primary focus on the newly integrated time-use module. The module consists of two components:

one covering children aged 6–9 years, and another covering adolescents and adults aged 10 years and older. For individuals aged 10 and above, the survey collects detailed information on all activities undertaken on the day preceding the interview, spanning the period from waking until sleeping. Time use is recorded in 15-minute intervals, allowing for precise measurement of daily activities. Interviewers classify reported activities using a two-level classification based on the 2016 International Classification of Time-Use Statistics (ICATUS) developed by the United Nations Statistics Division. This classification comprises nine broad activity categories: (1) employment and related activities; (2) production of goods for own final use; (3) unpaid domestic services for household and family members; (4) unpaid caregiving for household and family members; (5) unpaid volunteer, trainee, and other unpaid work; (6) learning; (7) socializing, communication, and religious practices; (8) culture, leisure, mass media, and sports; and (9) self-care and maintenance.

The questionnaire further distinguishes between main and secondary activities. Specifically, it records the primary activity undertaken during each 15-minute interval, as well as any secondary activities performed concurrently. In the analysis, we aggregate the total time spent on each activity over the day, considering both main and secondary activities. To avoid double counting, we count each 15-minute interval only once when the main and secondary activities reported for the same time slot belong to the same broad category of activity. This paper concentrates on three of these categories, which are central to our research questions: (i) employment and related activities, as a measure of time spent in paid work; (ii) unpaid domestic services for household and family members, as an indicator of indirect unpaid care work; and (iii) unpaid caregiving for household and family members, as an indicator of direct unpaid care work. By focusing on these activities, we aim to highlight disparities in paid work and unpaid care work, thereby illuminating gendered patterns in time use and the persistence of the male breadwinner–female caregiver model.

Our analysis focuses on the working-age population (aged 15–64 years), who should participate in the labor market, to assess how unpaid care responsibilities may constrain women’s opportunities for paid employment. Our analytical sample represents 62 percent of the total survey population, comprising 25,945 of the 42,061 individual observations. We further adjust survey weights to account for variation in time use across weekdays and weekends. In accordance with the time-use literature, we treat Friday as the weekend and all other days as weekdays, following the methodology proposed by Assaad et al. (2024) and adopted by Atallah and Hesham (2024).

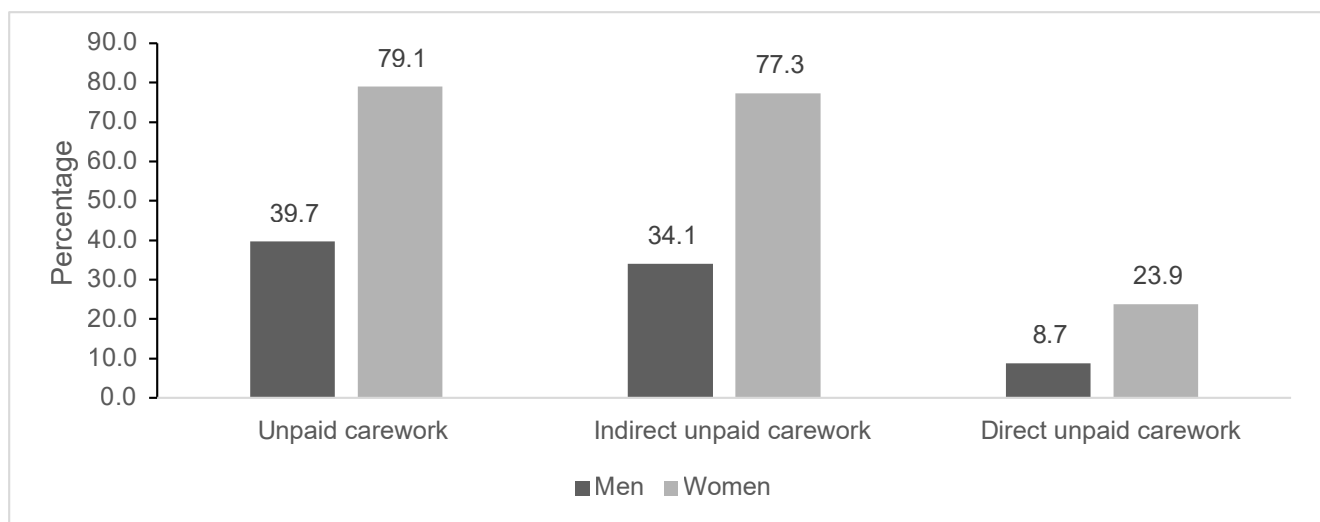
The analysis is primarily descriptive, providing a comprehensive portrait of time use among men and women in Jordan. We begin with an overview of time use by key socio-demographic characteristics—age, marital status, education, and area of residence—before examining household and family dynamics, including relationship to household head, number of children, dependency ratio, and household wealth. We then explore how time use varies by labor market status, employment type, and sector of employment. Finally, we assess whether specific work arrangements—such as the working from home and access to childcare—help alleviate women’s unpaid care burden or facilitate their participation in paid work.

3. Time use by demographic characteristics

3.1. Men and women's participation in unpaid care: The extensive margin

In this section, we begin by examining the percentage of Jordanian men and women engaged in unpaid care activities within the household, referred to as the extensive margin. We analyze men's and women's participation in daily care activities across key socio-demographic characteristics, including age, marital status, educational attainment, and area of residence. As shown in Figure 1, approximately 79% of women aged 15–64 participate in daily care work, compared to 40% of men in the same age group, yielding a female-to-male participation ratio of roughly 2:1. Disaggregating care work into direct and indirect activities reveals that the gender gap is even more pronounced in direct care—primarily childcare and eldercare—with a female-to-male ratio of 2.7:1, compared to 2.3:1 for indirect care. These figures demonstrate that women carry the primary responsibility for both direct and indirect care work, with the burden being especially heavy in activities involving direct caregiving.

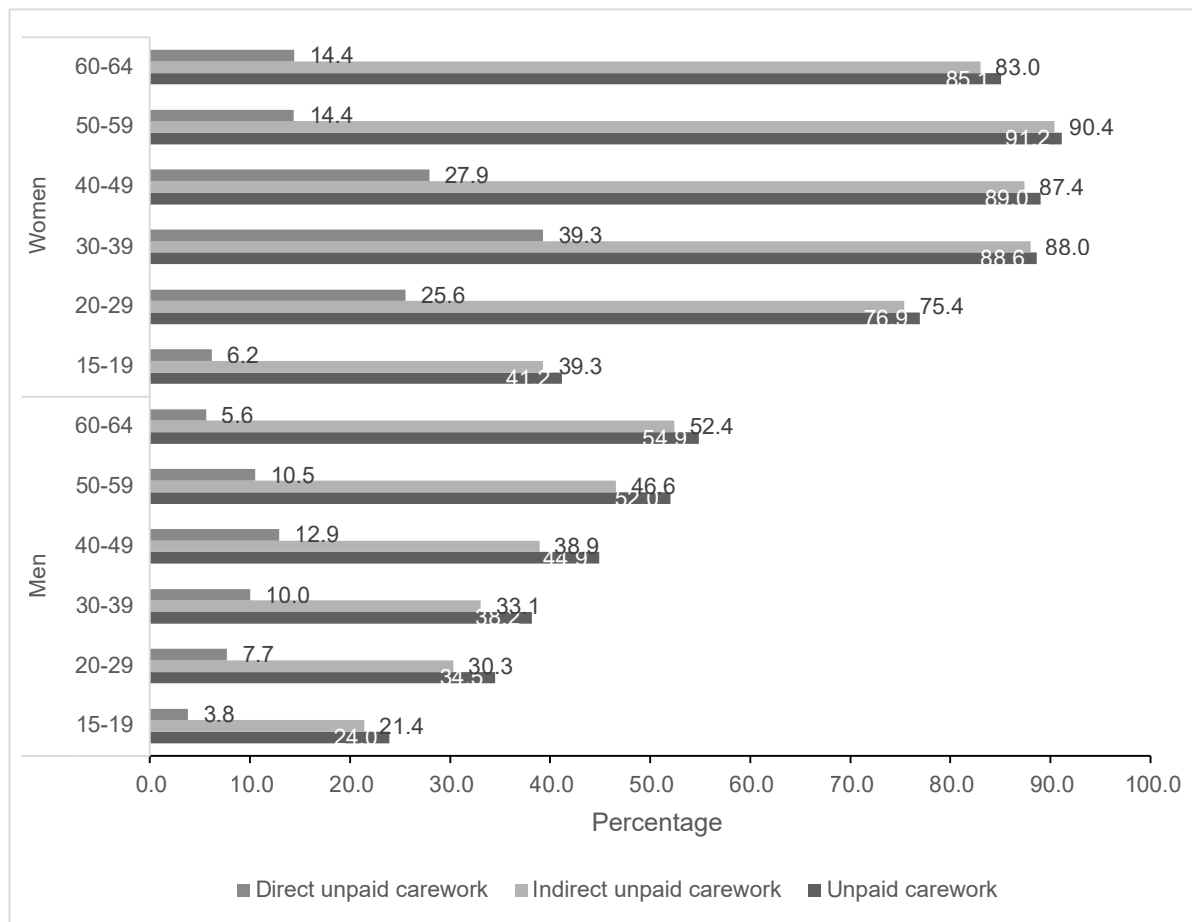
Figure 1. Percentage of individuals engaged in unpaid care work by sex, working-age population (ages 15-64)



Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 adult time-use module.

When disaggregating by age group, Figure 2 shows that the gender gap in unpaid care activities is already present at age 15-19 and persists across the life course. The largest disparities are observed among individuals aged 20–29 and 30–39, where the female-to-male participation ratio in care work reaches approximately 2.2:1—meaning that for every man engaged in daily care, two women are involved. Within these cohorts, the gender gap is particularly pronounced in direct care activities: the ratio of women to men engaged in direct care is 3.3:1 among those aged 20–29 and 3.9:1 for the age cohort 30–39. For indirect care, the ratios are slightly lower at 2.5:1 for those aged 20-29 and 2.7:1 for those aged 30-39. After age 40, the gap in care participation gradually narrows, reaching its lowest levels of 1.8:1 and 1.6:1 among individuals in their fifties and sixties.

Figure 2. Percentage of individuals engaged in unpaid care work by sex and age group, working-age population (ages 15-64)



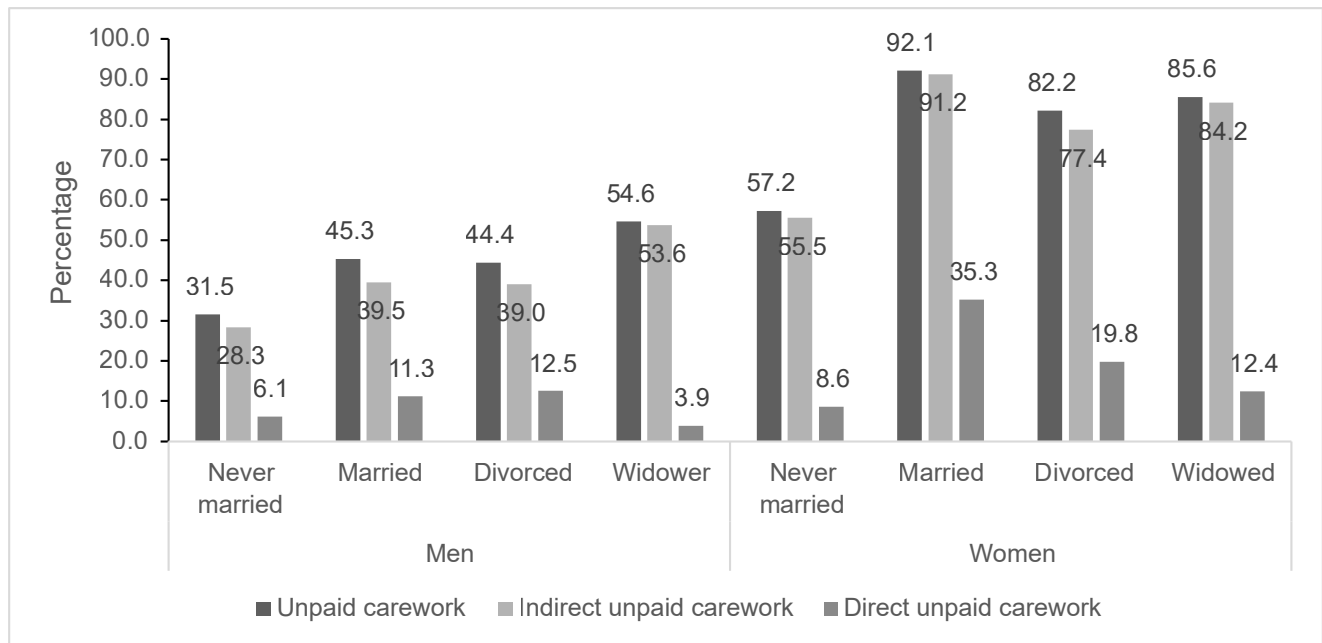
Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 adult time-use module.

These patterns are consistent with life-cycle dynamics. Between the ages of 20 and 39, men and women are more likely to marry and form families, a stage that is typically associated with a disproportionate allocation of care responsibilities to women within the household (see Figure A1 in the Appendix for a more detailed illustration of the gender gap). The figure further supports this interpretation by showing that men’s participation in unpaid care work increases with age, particularly in indirect care activities related to household chores. This pattern may reflect the fact that marriage, and especially widowhood at older ages, necessitates greater involvement by men in domestic tasks. In contrast, women’s participation in unpaid care work continues to rise until their 50s, after which a slight decline in daily involvement in household chores is observed.

Complementing the age group analysis, we further examine unpaid care participation by marital status. As shown in Figure 3, women’s participation in unpaid care activities is highest among married women, at 92%. By contrast, men’s participation peaks among widowers, with nearly 55% engaged in care activities consistent with our previous findings by age cohort. This pattern underscores the importance of marital status in shaping household time-use dynamics, as also highlighted by Selwaness and Krafft (2021), Assaad, Krafft, and Selwaness (2022), and Atallah and Hesham (2024). Turning to female-to-male ratios, the overall differences are relatively small across never-married, married, and divorced individuals

when considering participation in total unpaid care. However, the disparities become more pronounced in direct care activities: the female-to-male ratio reaches 3.1:1 among married individuals, compared to 1.8:1 for the never married and 1.9:1 for the divorced. In contrast, the ratio declines substantially among widowed individuals, reflecting a narrowing of the gender gap in later life (see Figure A2 in the Appendix).

Figure 3. Percentage of individuals engaged in unpaid care work by sex and marital status, working-age population (ages 15-64)

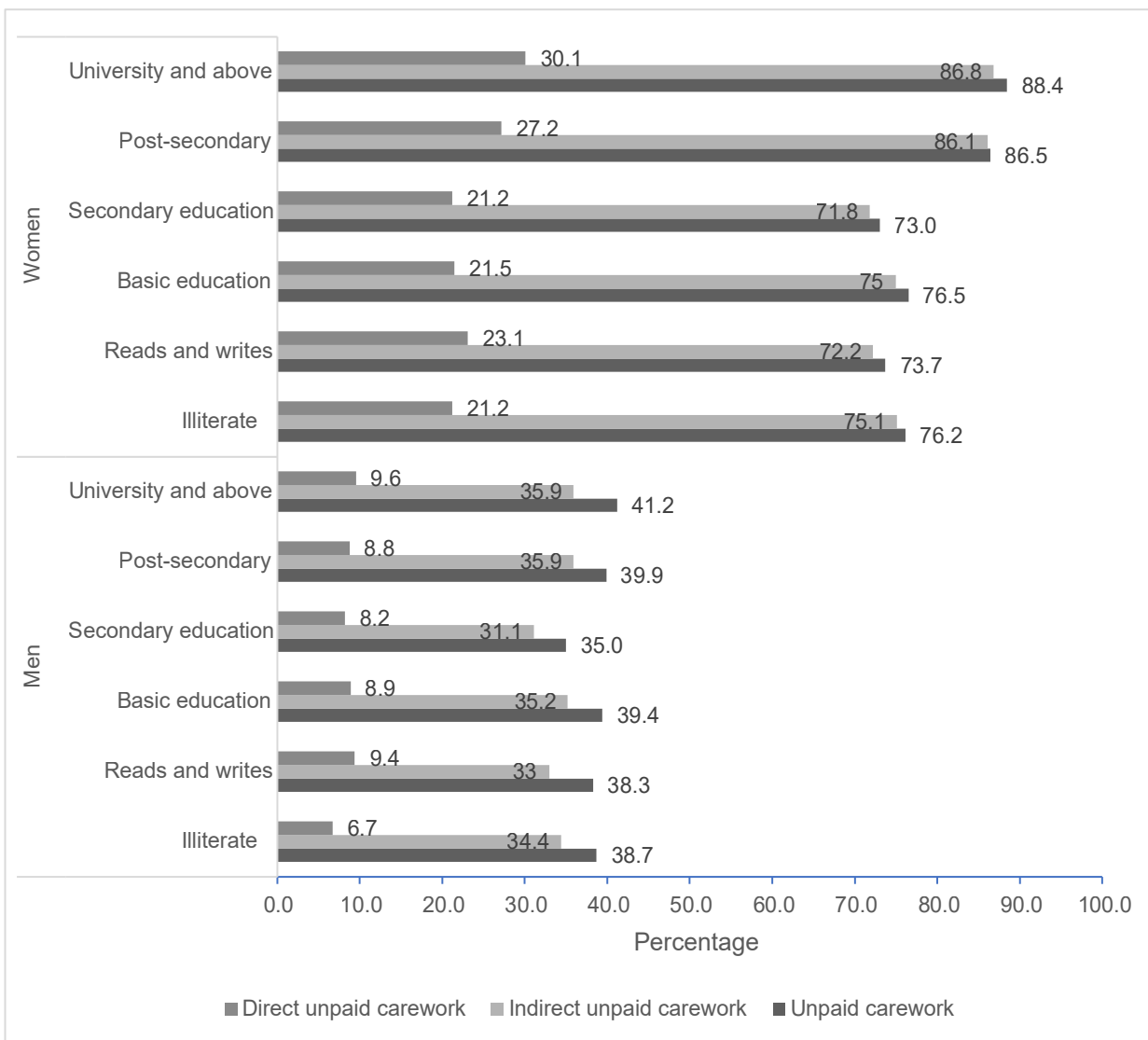


Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 adult time-use module.

The role of other socio-demographic characteristics, particularly educational attainment and area of residence, also warrants attention. As shown in Figure 4, similar patterns emerge for both men and women: individuals with higher levels of education participate more often in unpaid care activities on a daily basis. While the overall increase in men's participation in unpaid care work is relatively modest, their involvement in direct care activities increases relatively between the lowest (6.7%) and highest (9.6%) educational levels.

These patterns are reflected in the women-to-men ratios presented in Figure A3 in the Appendix. Although the overall gender ratio in unpaid care participation remains stable at around 2:1, meaning that for every man engaged in daily unpaid care work, two women participate, we observe no clear association between the educational level and daily participation in indirect and direct care activities.

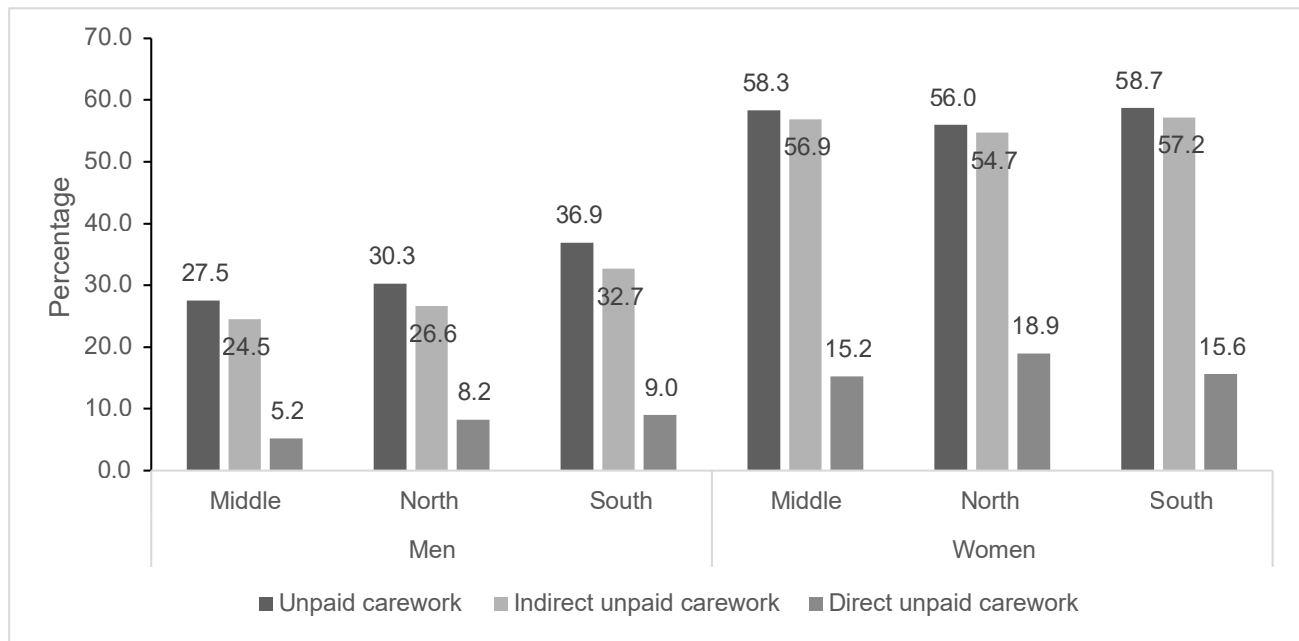
Figure 4. Percentage of individuals engaged in unpaid care work by sex and education level, working-age population (ages 15-64)



Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 adult time-use module.

Finally, considering area of residence, Jordan is divided into three main regions: Middle (including the capital, Amman), North, and South. As shown in Figure 5, men record the lowest participation rates in daily unpaid care in the Middle region (27.5%), whereas women report the highest rates in the Middle as well as the South regions (58%). This results in the widest gender gap in unpaid care participation in the Middle, with a female-to-male ratio of nearly 2:1, compared to 1.8:1 in the North and 1.6:1 in the South (see Figure A4 in the Appendix).

Figure 5. Percentage of individuals engaged in unpaid care work by sex and geographical location, working-age population (ages 15-64)



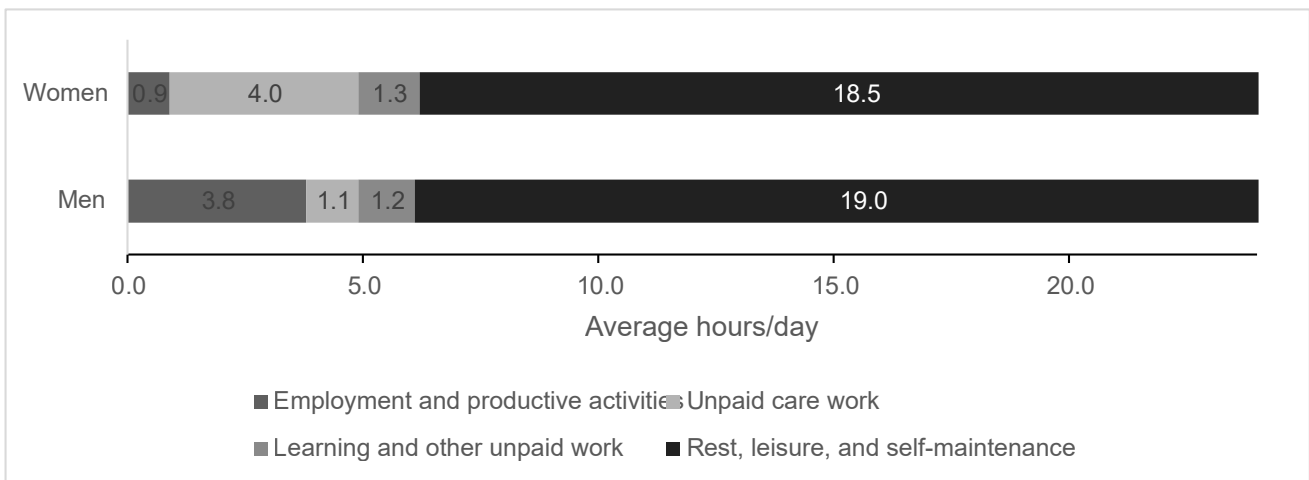
Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 adult time-use module.

3.2. Time-use gender disparities by demographic characteristics: The intensive margin

Looking at the average hours per day spent on different activities, Figure 6 provides an overview of time allocation among individuals aged 15–64. On average, women devote only 0.9 hours per day to employment-related activities, compared to 3.8 hours for men. By contrast, women spend 4 hours per day on direct and indirect unpaid care work, while men spend just 1.1 hours. This translates into a women-to-men's ratio of approximately 3.6:1 for unpaid care; meaning that for every hour men contribute, women contribute three and half approximately. For employment-related activities, the ratio is inverted: at around 0.2:1, men spend roughly six hours in paid work for every hour spent by women. In addition, men allocate more daily time than women to activities such as socializing and communication, culture and leisure, and self-care and maintenance.

Moreover, as previously noted, time use is aggregated across both primary and secondary activities, which may overlap within the same time slots during the day. To provide further insight into this overlap, Figure 7 presents time use by activity type, distinguishing between primary activities and secondary activities performed in parallel, when the activities are part of different broad categories. As shown in the figure, for both men and women, rest, leisure, and self-maintenance constitute the main secondary activities undertaken alongside other tasks. Men spend an average of 1.1 hours per day on rest, leisure, and self-maintenance as secondary activities, compared to 0.6 hours for women. Beyond this, men do not report engaging in other activities as secondary tasks. By contrast, women additionally spend around 0.1 hours per day on unpaid care work as a secondary activity alongside other primary activities.

Figure 6. Time use (average hours per day) by type of activity and sex, working-age population (ages 15-64)¹



Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 time-use module.

Figure 7. Time use (average hours per day) by type of activity, classification of activity (main/secondary), and sex, working-age population (ages 15-64)



Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 time-use module.
 Note: Secondary activities only shown if from a different classification.

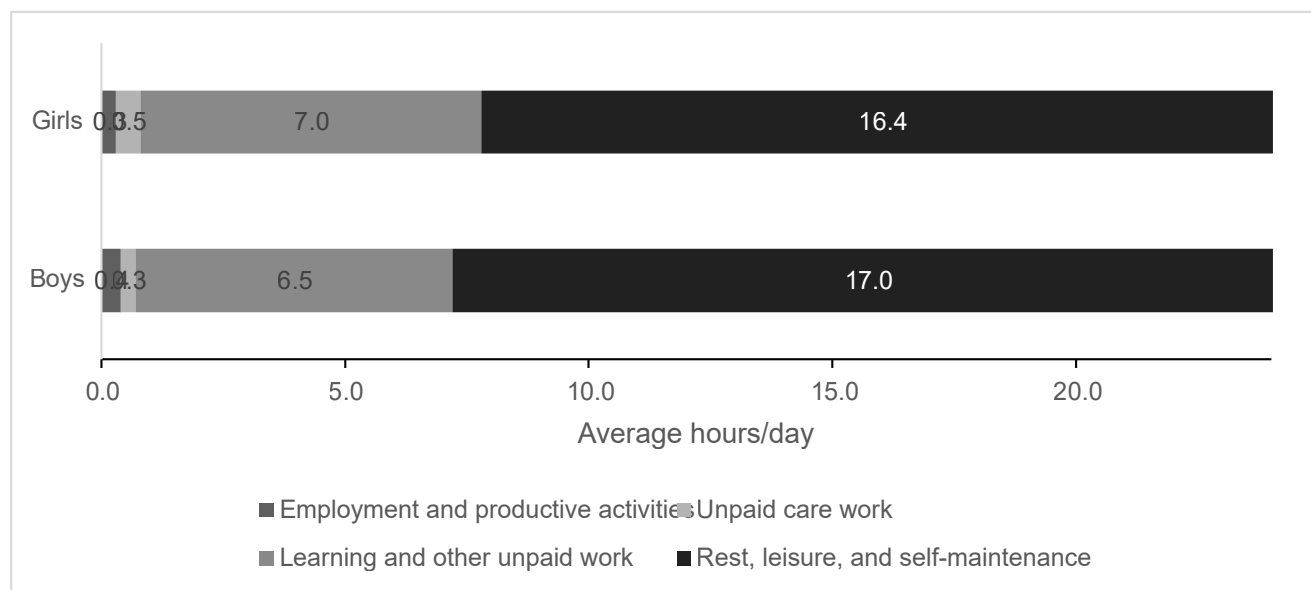
In fact, gender gaps in time-use patterns emerge at early ages. Using the same time-use module applied to children aged 10 to 14², we examine average daily hours spent on different activities by boys and girls as per Figure 8. While gender differences observed in time allocated

¹ Total time use by sex does not necessarily sum to 24 hours, as we aggregate time spent on both primary and secondary activities. As a result, total reported time may exceed 24 hours, reflecting the fact that some activities overlap and are performed simultaneously during the same time intervals.

² To capture gender differences in children's time use, we focus on those aged 10–14, as the same detailed time-use module is applied to this age group. For younger children aged 6–9, a more limited set of time-use questions is administered; therefore, their results are not directly comparable and are excluded from the analysis.

to employment-related activities are limited, the disparity is larger in unpaid care work: girls spend on average 0.5 hours per day on unpaid care, compared to only 0.3 hours for boys—a ratio of almost 2:1. Moreover, girls devote slightly more time to learning activities, averaging 7 hours per day compared to 6.5 hours for boys. By contrast, boys spend more time on rest, leisure, and self-maintenance, mirroring the gendered time-use patterns observed among adults.

Figure 8. Time use (average hours per day) by type of activity and sex, ages (10-14)



Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 time-use module.

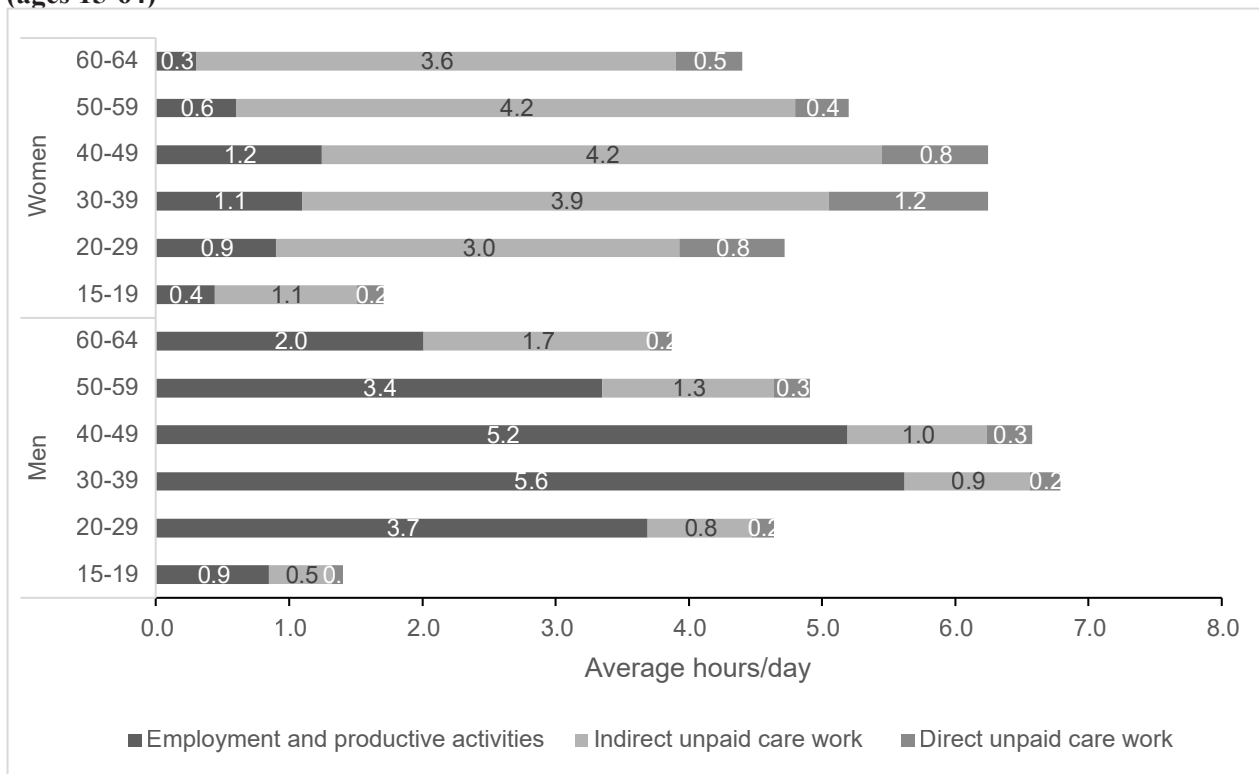
By age group, Figure 9 shows that women spend the greatest amount of time on unpaid care work during their 30s and 40s, averaging between five and six hours per day. These age groups also correspond to women's highest engagement in employment-related activities, at around 1.1 to 1.2 hours per day. Together, these patterns highlight the pronounced double burden faced by women during mid-life. In fact, the time women devote to unpaid care increases sharply after their 20s, nearly quadrupling, before continuing to rise and then declining in their 50s and 60s.

Among men, a similar life-cycle concentration of effort is observed during the 30s and 40s, but it is driven primarily by employment-related activities, which increase sharply to over five hours per day. In contrast, men's time spent on unpaid care work peaks later in life, reaching around two hours per day on average during their 60s.

In terms of the gender gap, disparities are most pronounced during the 20s and 30s, when women spend roughly four hours per day on unpaid care work for every one hour spent by men (see Figure A5 in the Appendix). By contrast, men consistently devote more time to employment-related activities across all age cohorts, with their peak occurring in their 30s, when they average 5.4 hours per day compared to approximately one hour for women. The female-to-male ratio in employment-

related time remains low and relatively stable across age groups, reaching its maximum of 0.5:1 among those aged 15–19. Overall, these patterns reflect life-cycle dynamics in care and work, whereby women’s disproportionate caregiving responsibilities intensify during the childbearing and family-formation years, substantially constraining their participation in paid employment.

Figure 9. Time use (average hours per day) by type of activity, sex and age group, working age population (ages 15-64)



Source: Authors’ calculations based on JLMPS 2025 time-use module.

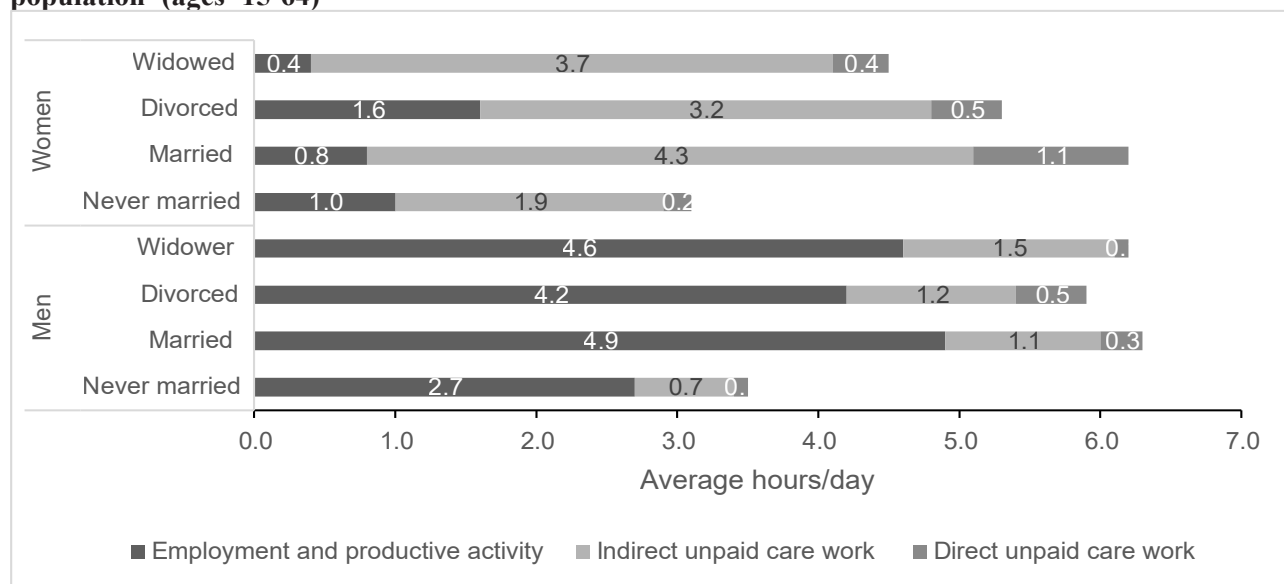
These patterns are further reflected in the analysis by marital status. As shown in Figure 10, never-married women spend the least time on unpaid care work, averaging about two hours per day. Marriage is associated with a sharp increase in women’s unpaid care time, rising to approximately 5.5 hours per day when both direct and indirect care activities are considered. Although average unpaid care time is lower among widowed and divorced women, divorced women stand out as spending the least time on unpaid care work and the highest number of hours on employment-related activities, at around 1.6 hours per day, compared to women in other marital statuses.

Among men, married individuals devote the greatest amount of time to employment-related activities, averaging around five hours per day, consistent with earlier findings. In contrast, widowed and divorced men spend more time on unpaid care work than married and never-married men. Notably, divorced men devote relatively more time to direct care activities, while widowers spend more time on indirect care work. This pattern likely reflects differences in living

arrangements and caregiving responsibilities: divorced men may assume direct caregiving roles when living with their children, whereas widowers living alone are more likely to take on routine household tasks such as cooking and cleaning, thereby increasing their indirect unpaid care burden.

In terms of the gender gap, these patterns translate into the widest disparities among married individuals, where women spend approximately four hours on unpaid care work for every hour spent by men. The smallest unpaid care gap is observed among divorced individuals, with a female-to-male ratio of about 2.2:1. Conversely, employment-related gender gaps are largest among widowed and married individuals, with female-to-male ratios of 0.1:1 (widowed) and 0.2:1, (married). The narrowest employment gap appears among divorced individuals, where women spend around 0.4 hours for every hour spent by men (see Figure A6 in the Appendix). Taken together, these findings underscore how marital status reinforces traditional gender divisions of labor, with marriage in particular amplifying women's care burden and constraining their engagement in paid employment. These findings are consistent with prior research on Jordan showing that marriage amplifies women's unpaid care responsibilities and constrains their engagement in the labor market (Selwaness & Krafft, 2021; Assaad et al., 2022). The persistence of strong gendered norms around household specialization and the expectation that women shoulder primary responsibility for domestic and caregiving tasks contribute to these patterns (ERF & UN Women, 2020). In this context, marital status functions not only as a demographic characteristic but also as a key institution that reinforces traditional gender divisions of labor in Jordan.

Figure 10. Time use (average hours per day) by type of activity, sex and marital status, working age population (ages 15-64)



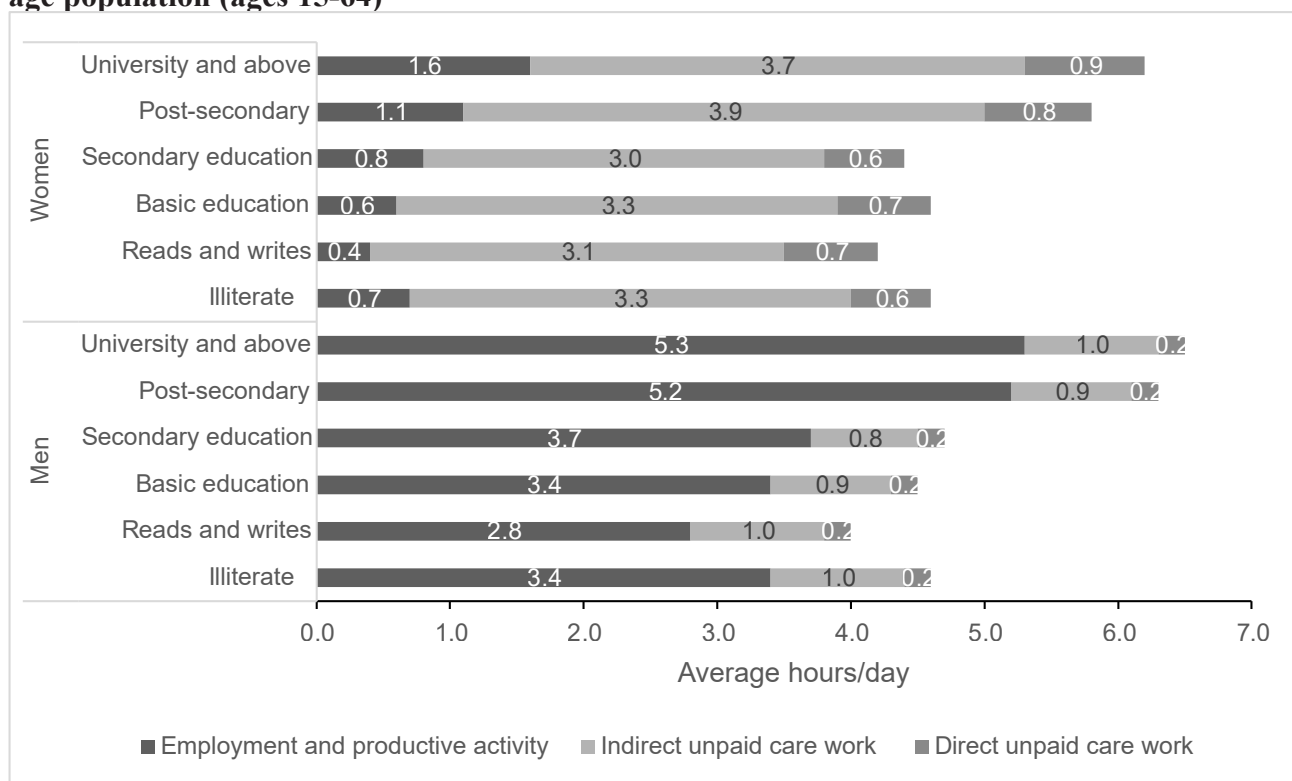
Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 time-use module.

When examining time-use patterns by educational attainment, Figure 11 shows that higher levels of education are associated with greater time devoted to employment for both men and women. On average, men with a university degree spend 5.3 hours per day in paid work compared to 3.4 hours by illiterate men, while women with a university degree spend 1.6 hours, almost twice as much as illiterate women. By

contrast, no clear relationship emerges between education and men’s time spent on unpaid care work. For women, however, education is positively associated with time spent on unpaid care, particularly in direct care activities. Women’s time devoted to direct care increases by approximately 50 percent, from 0.6 to 0.9 hours per day, between the lowest and highest educational groups. Women’s time spent on indirect care also rises overall, although without a strictly monotonic relationship with educational attainment.

In terms of gender gaps, Figure A8 in the Appendix indicates that the women-to-men’s ratio in employment-related activities narrows slightly at the highest levels of education relative to lower ones. In contrast, gender disparities in unpaid care work widen among the highly educated, reaching their peak among individuals with post-secondary education, where the female-to-male ratio rises to 4.3:1, meaning that for every hour spent by men on unpaid care, women spend more than four hours. Taken together, these findings are consistent with patterns observed at the extensive margin: highly educated women are more engaged in both market work and household responsibilities, reflecting a persistent double burden rather than a substitution between the two.

Figure 11. Time use (average hours per day) by type of activity, sex and education level, working age population (ages 15-64)

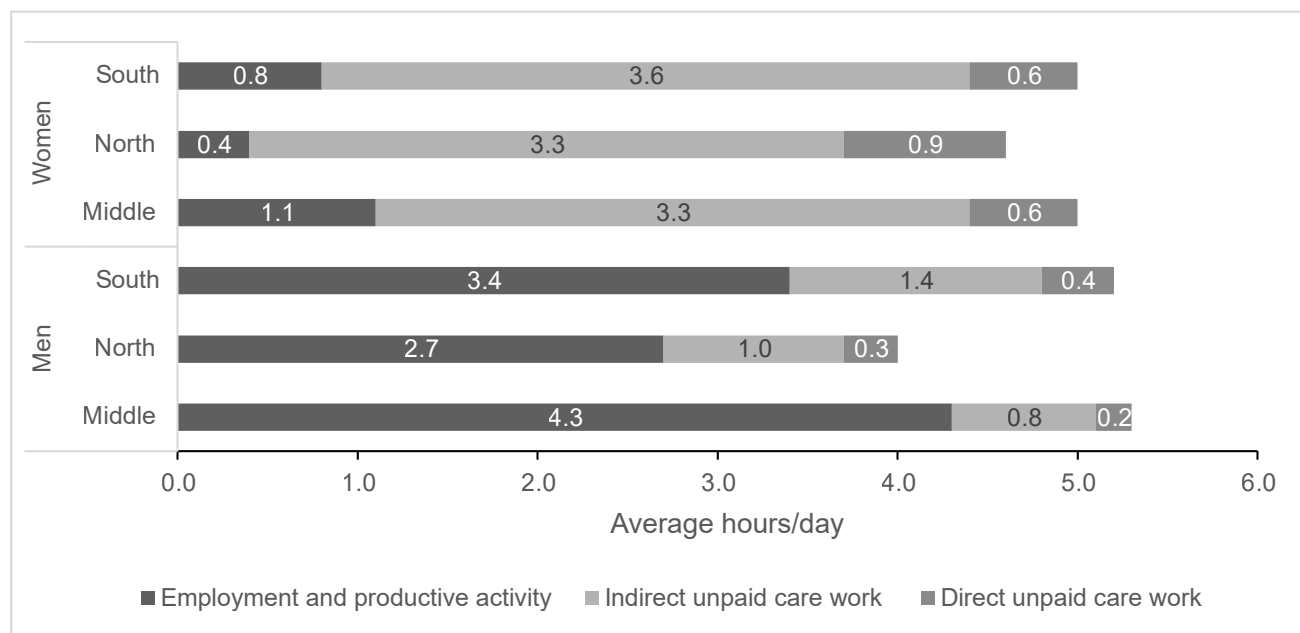


Source: Authors’ calculations based on JLMPS 2025 time-use module.

Finally, differences in time use also emerge by area of residence. Among men, those living in the South region devote the greatest amount of time to unpaid care work, averaging 1.8 hours per day. Among women, unpaid care time is highest in both the South and the North, where women spend an average of 4.2 hours per day. By contrast, time allocated to employment-related activities is highest in the Middle region, Jordan’s economic hub, where men spend on average 4.3 hours per day, compared to 1.1 hours for women.

In terms of women-to-men ratios, the South exhibits the narrowest gender gap in unpaid care work. Conversely, gender gaps in employment are largest in the North and smallest in the Middle region, with female-to-male employment ratios of 0.1:1 in the North, 0.2:1 in the South, and 0.3:1 in the Middle region (see Figure A8 in the Appendix). Taken together, these findings suggest that regional economic structures and labor market opportunities interact with household gender roles: while stronger employment opportunities in the Middle region are associated with higher male employment, women's participation in paid work remains comparatively limited, reinforcing their continued concentration in unpaid care activities.

Figure 12. Time use (average hours per day) by type of activity, sex and location, working-age population (ages 15-64)



Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 time-use module.

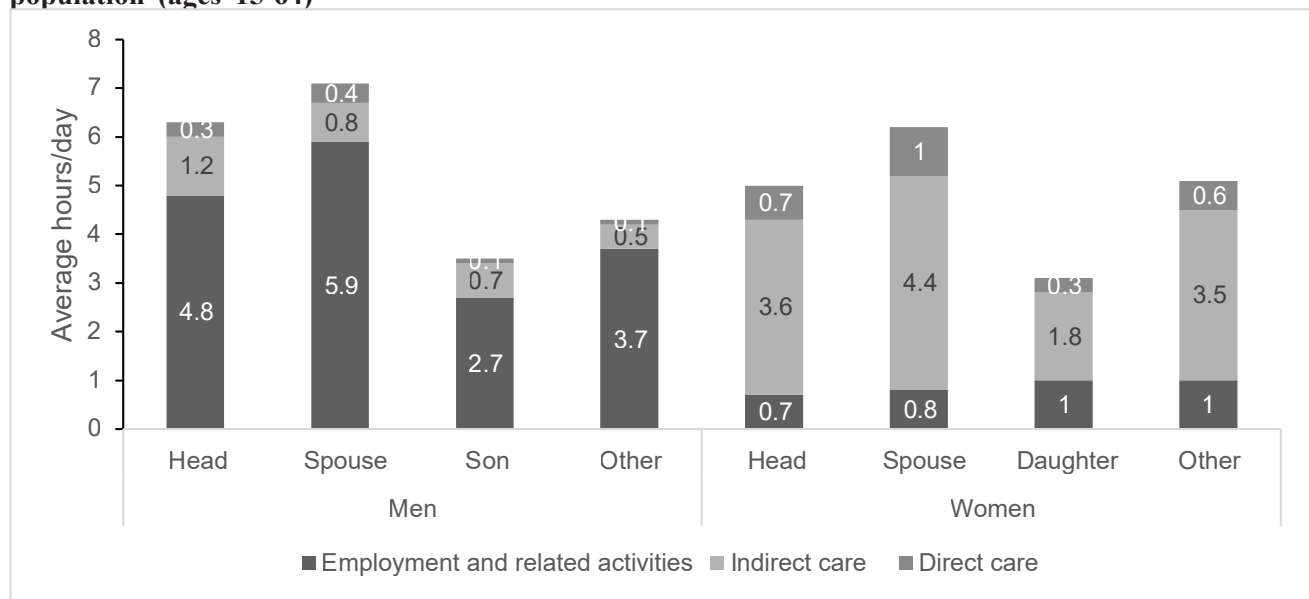
4. Time use by household and family characteristics

As discussed in the previous section, marital status is a key factor shaping men's and women's time-use patterns in Jordan, underscoring the importance of household dynamics in reinforcing the traditional breadwinner–caregiver model. Building on this, we further examine the relationship between household position and time allocation, focusing on employment and unpaid care. We investigate time use according to relationship to the head, presence of children and their age, dependency ratio, and household wealth quintile.

Figure 13 shows that men consistently devote most of their time to employment, while women devote it to unpaid care, regardless of their relation to the household head. This gendered division of labor is evident even among children: daughters spend an average of 2 hours per day on

unpaid care, double the time spent by sons. The gap widens considerably among adult household members. Female heads spend about 4.3 hours on unpaid care, rising to 5.4 hours for wives. By contrast, women’s time spent on employment remains mostly unchanged across household roles. For men, however, the opposite holds true: male heads and husbands record the highest levels of time spent in paid employment, ranging from 4.8 to 5.9 hours per day. We also observe that, among men with different household statuses, male household heads spend more time on unpaid care work, approximately 1.5 hours per day, compared to other men (0.6-1.2 hours per day).

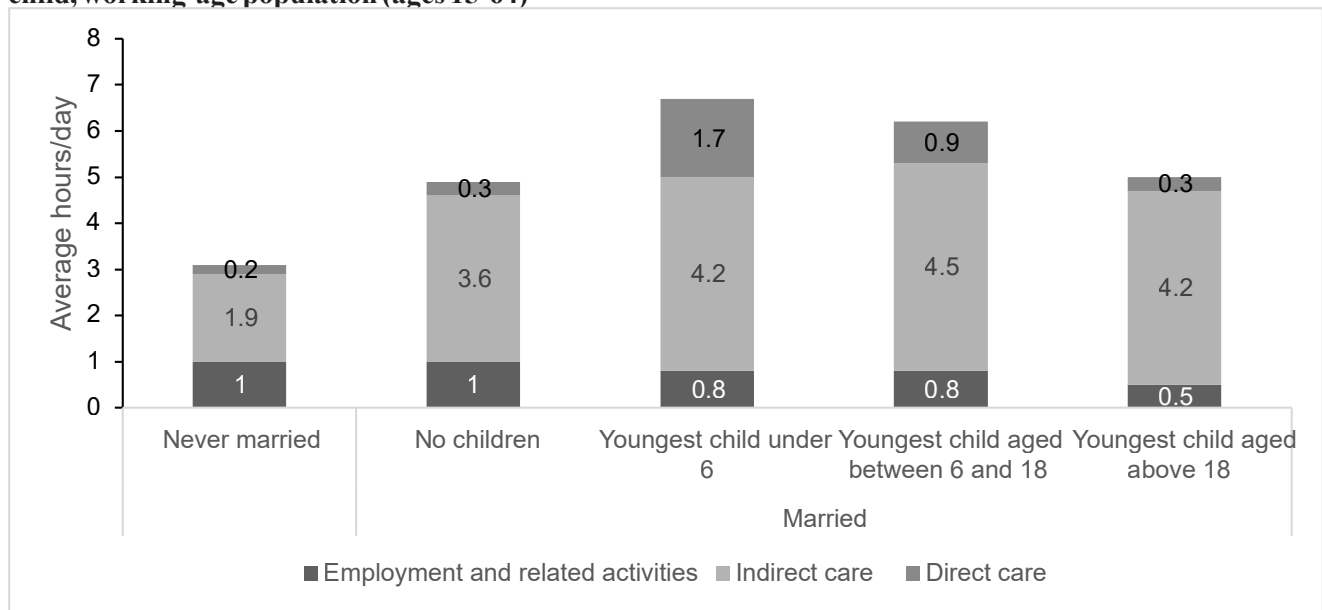
Figure 13. Time use (average hours per day) by type of activity, sex and relation to head, working-age population (ages 15-64)



Source: Authors’ calculations based on JLMPS 2025 time-use module.

The time burden on married women has been consistently confirmed throughout our analysis. A critical factor shaping this burden is the presence of children, who require constant care, especially at younger ages. Figure 14 compares the time use of never-married women with that of married women with and without children of different ages. The results show that even in the absence of children, married women more than double their time spent on unpaid care work compared to never-married women, increasing from about 2 hours to 4 hours per day. The demands rise sharply when young children are present: women with children under the age of six spend more than 6 hours daily on unpaid care, of which nearly 2 hours are devoted to direct care. As children grow older, the intensity of direct care decreases, which reduces the overall time women allocate to unpaid care activities.

Figure 14. Women’s time use (average hours per day) by type of activity, marital status, and age of youngest child, working-age population (ages 15-64)³



Source: Authors’ calculations based on JLMPS 2025 time-use module.

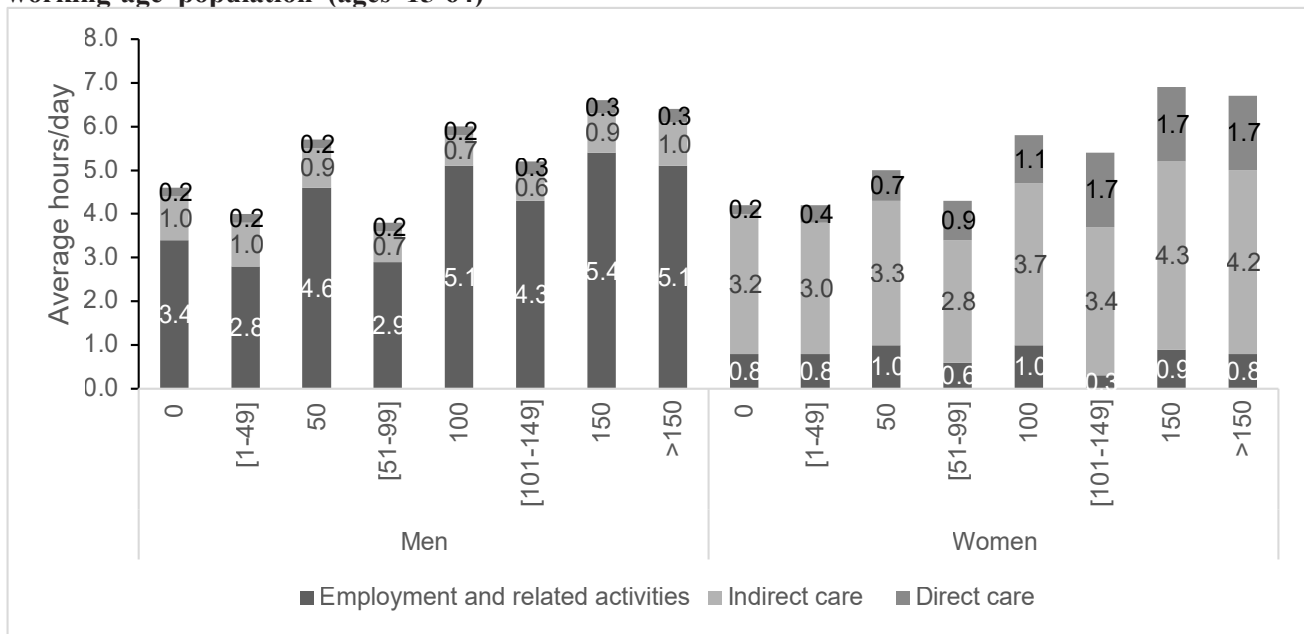
In fact, the caregiving burden is not limited to children; it typically encompasses both children and elderly members living in the household. To capture this, it is essential to calculate the dependency ratio of households and examine the extent to which time-use patterns vary accordingly. The dependency ratio is defined as the total number of individuals aged 0–14 and 65 or older divided by the number of working-age individuals in the same household. A dependency ratio of 0 indicates the absence of dependents, while a ratio of 100 implies that the number of dependents equals the number of working-age individuals.

As shown in Figure 15, women’s time spent on unpaid care activities increases steadily with higher dependency ratios. In households with no dependents, women devote on average 3.4 hours per day to unpaid care work, whereas in households with a dependency ratio above 150, this rises to approximately 6 hours per day. A large share of this increase is driven by greater involvement in direct care activities, which are closely linked to the needs of children and elderly household members.

In contrast, women’s time spent on employment-related activities shows little variation across dependency ratios, except for a sharp decline when the dependency ratio lies between 101 and 149. By comparison, men’s time devoted to unpaid care work exhibits no meaningful change with the dependency ratio. Instead, men primarily increase the time allocated to employment. For instance, when the dependency ratio is zero, men spend on average 1.2 hours per day on unpaid care work and 3.4 hours on employment-related activities. When the dependency ratio exceeds 150, these figures rise to approximately 1.3 hours per day on unpaid care work and 5.1 hours per day on employment.

³The analysis is restricted to biological children of the woman who are currently living in the same household.

Figure 15. Time use (average hours per day) by type of activity, sex and household dependency ratio, working-age population (ages 15-64)



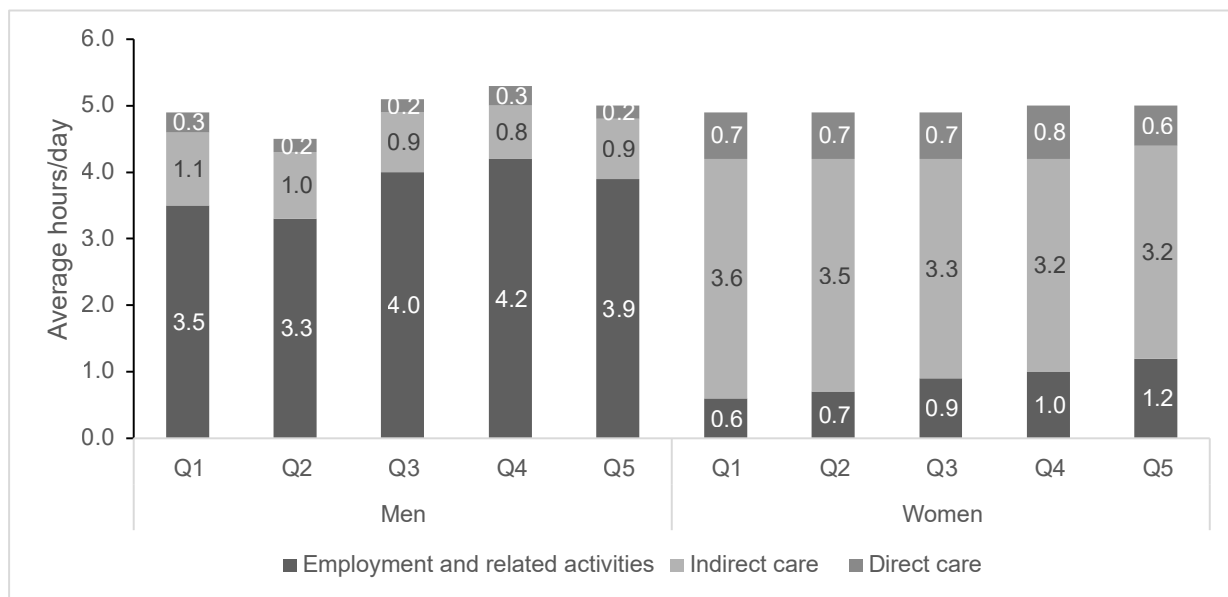
Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 time-use module.

Finally, we examine the relationship between household wealth and time use. Dividing Jordanian households into five wealth quintiles, from the poorest (first quintile) to the richest (fifth quintile), reveals differences in women's time allocation. Women in poorer households devote more time to unpaid care work, averaging 4.3 hours per day in the poorest quintile compared to 3.8 hours in the richest. This decline likely reflects greater access to resources that reduce domestic burdens, such as the ability to hire nannies or domestic workers or to use labor-saving household appliances for tasks like cleaning and cooking (Atallah and Hesham, 2024; Assaad and Ragab, 2026).

At the same time, women's participation in paid employment increases with household wealth, with average time rising from 0.6 hours per day in the poorest quintile to 1.2 hours in the richest. This pattern suggests a reallocation of women's time away from unpaid care work and toward market activities as household wealth increases.

By contrast, men's time spent on unpaid care work remains relatively stable across wealth quintiles, showing no clear association with household wealth. Men's time allocated to employment-related activities, however, increases between the poorest households (first and second quintiles, 3.3-3.5 hours per day) and the middle and upper-middle quintiles (third and fourth quintiles, 4.0-4.2 hours per day), before declining slightly in the richest quintile (3.9 hours per day).

Figure 16. Time use (average hours per day) by type of activity, sex and wealth quintile, working-age population (ages 15-64)

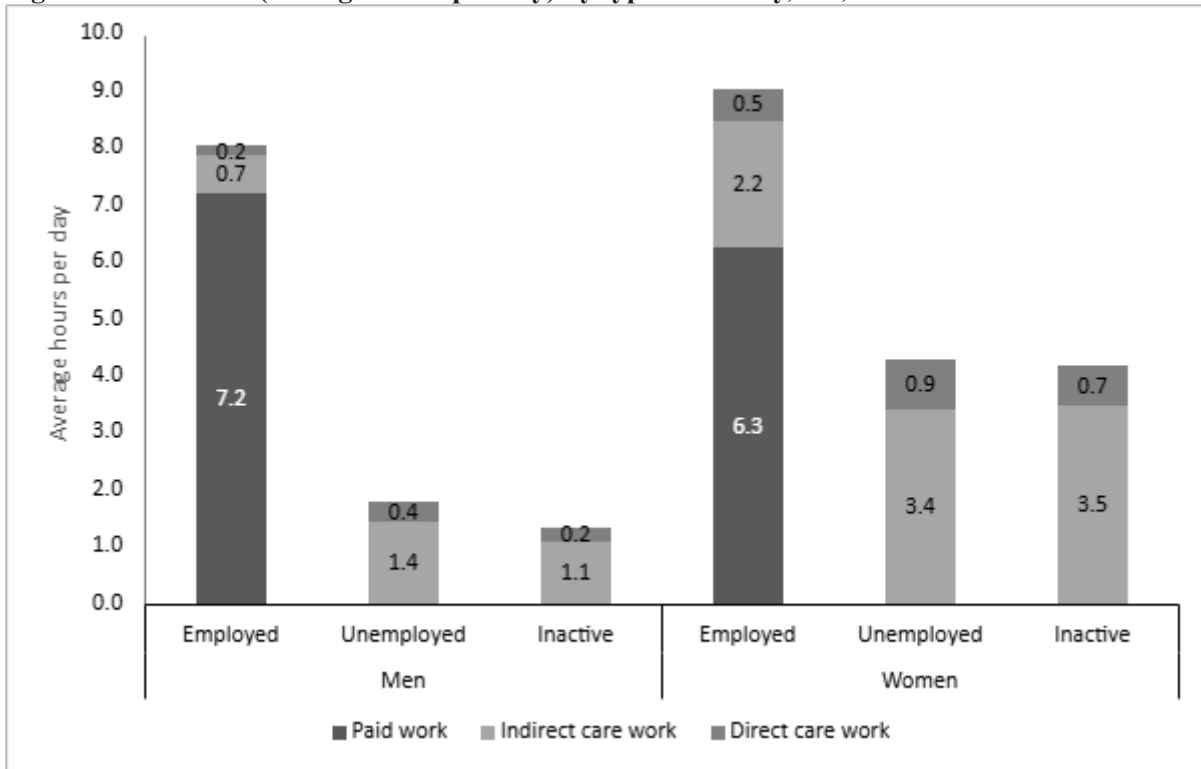


Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 time-use module.

5. Time use by labor market status

This section explores time spent on unpaid care by men and women across different economic activities, including employment status and sector. Figure 17 shows time spent on paid and unpaid care work (both direct and indirect) by labor force participation status. Across all three categories of employment, unemployment, and inactivity, women spend a larger share of their time on care work compared to their male counterparts. Employed men, however, spend more time in paid work than employed women. Unemployed men spend a larger share of their time in care work compared to men who are inactive, which is likely to do with life stage as illustrated in Figure 9; unemployed men are more likely to be parents of young children compared to inactive men, who are either too young (students) or too old (retired). Across all three labor market statuses, employed women spend the least amount of time doing unpaid care work (2.7 hours compared to 4.3 hours for unemployed and inactive women). However, these women also have the largest gender gap in unpaid care work as they spend nearly 3 times the amount of time in care activities compared to employed men, providing evidence for the double burden that employed women have to bear.

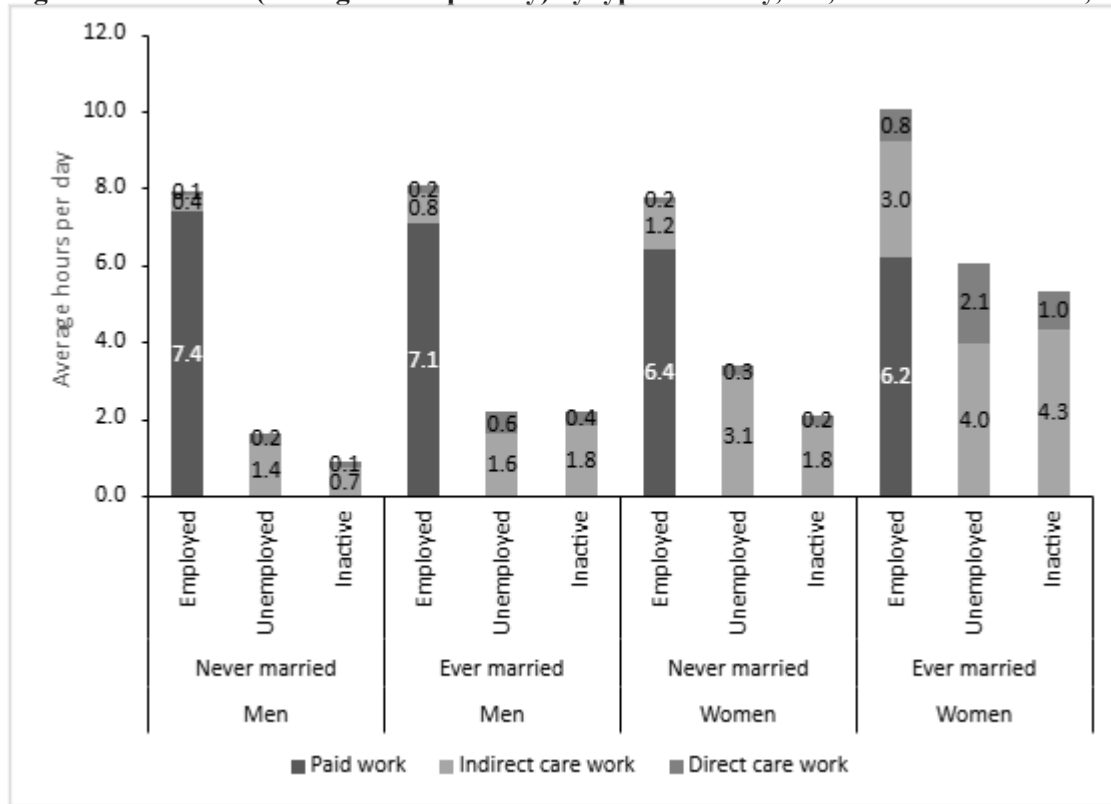
Figure 17. Time use (average hours per day) by type of activity, sex, and labor market status



Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 time-use module.

Figure 18 also looks at time use by labor market status but further disaggregates the data by marital status: ever married, which is defined as currently married, divorced, or widowed, and never married, which is defined as being single. Consistent with the findings from the previous section, ever married women spend a larger share of their time in unpaid care work compared to never married women. At the extremes, never married employed women spend 1.4 hours in unpaid care work compared to 6.1 hours for unemployed ever married women. The gender gap is largest for ever-married employed women spending nearly 4 times the amount of time in unpaid care work compared to their male counterparts.

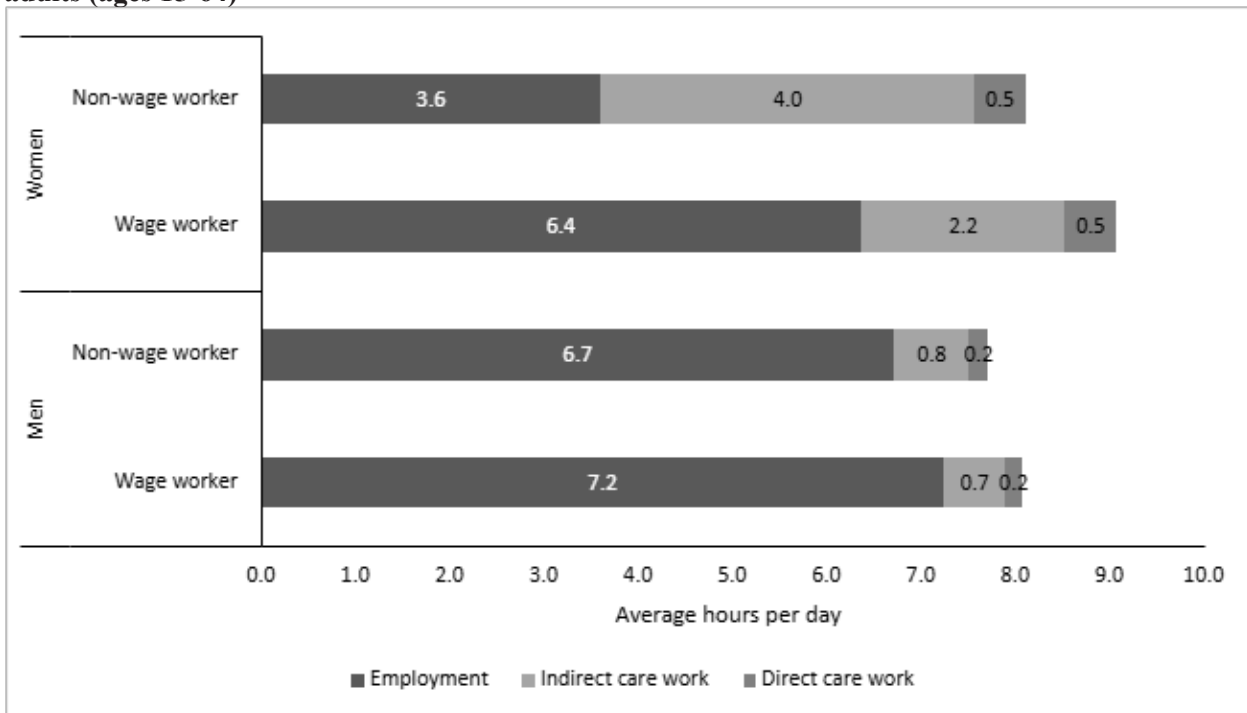
Figure 18. Time use (average hours per day) by type of activity, sex, labor market status, and marital status



Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 time-use module.

Figure 19 looks at time use for working people, including employment and unpaid care work, disaggregated by gender and type of work (waged workers, defined as employed, and non-waged workers, defined as employer, self-employed, or unpaid family worker). Women in waged work have the highest number of working hours (the sum of paid employment and unpaid family work). Female non-wage workers spend more time in unpaid care work (4.5 hours) than in employment (3.6 hours). This supports the findings in Banihan (2020), that family responsibility remains one of the biggest challenges to female entrepreneurship in Jordan. Waged workers have a more egalitarian distribution, but the gap is still large; men spending 0.8 hours more at work compared to women, and women spending 1.8 hours more of unpaid care work compared to men.

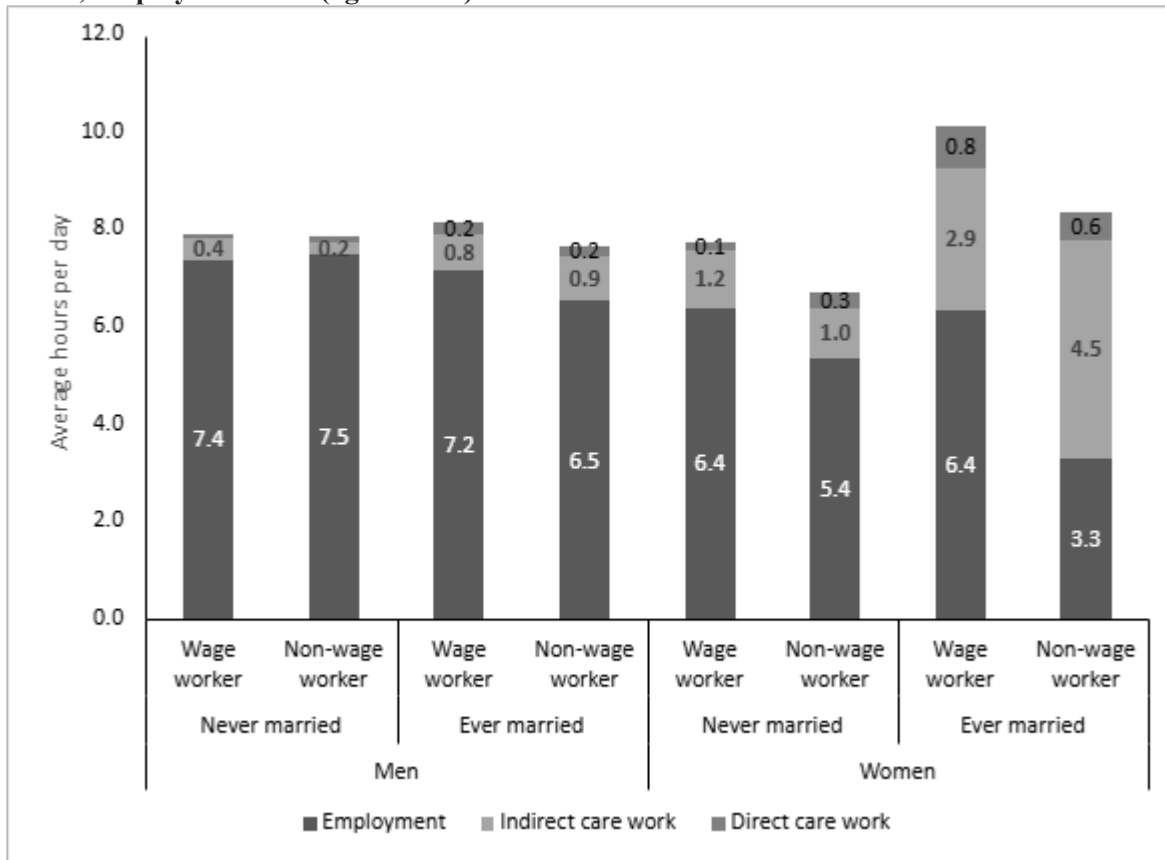
Figure 19. Time use (average hours per day) by type of activity, sex, and type of employment, employed adults (ages 15-64)



Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 time-use module.

Figure 20 adds a further disaggregation by marital status. Regardless of the type of employment, ever-married men spend the same amount of time in unpaid care work. Non-waged, ever-married male workers spend around 0.7 hours less in paid work, but that doesn't translate to more unpaid care work. Women spend the same amount of time in waged work, regardless of marital status. However, married women in wage work spend nearly 3 times as much in unpaid care work than their unmarried counterpart. The biggest burden of unpaid care work is carried by non-waged, ever-married female workers. Non-wage work like self-employment seems to be a double-edged sword for employed women, especially married ones; on the one hand it allows women to engage in economic activity while also meeting their perceived gendered role within the household. On the other hand, it allows the perpetuation of the unequal distribution of paid and unpaid work between the two genders. Note that the sample size for female non-wage workers (especially never married) is small, so conclusions should be drawn with care.

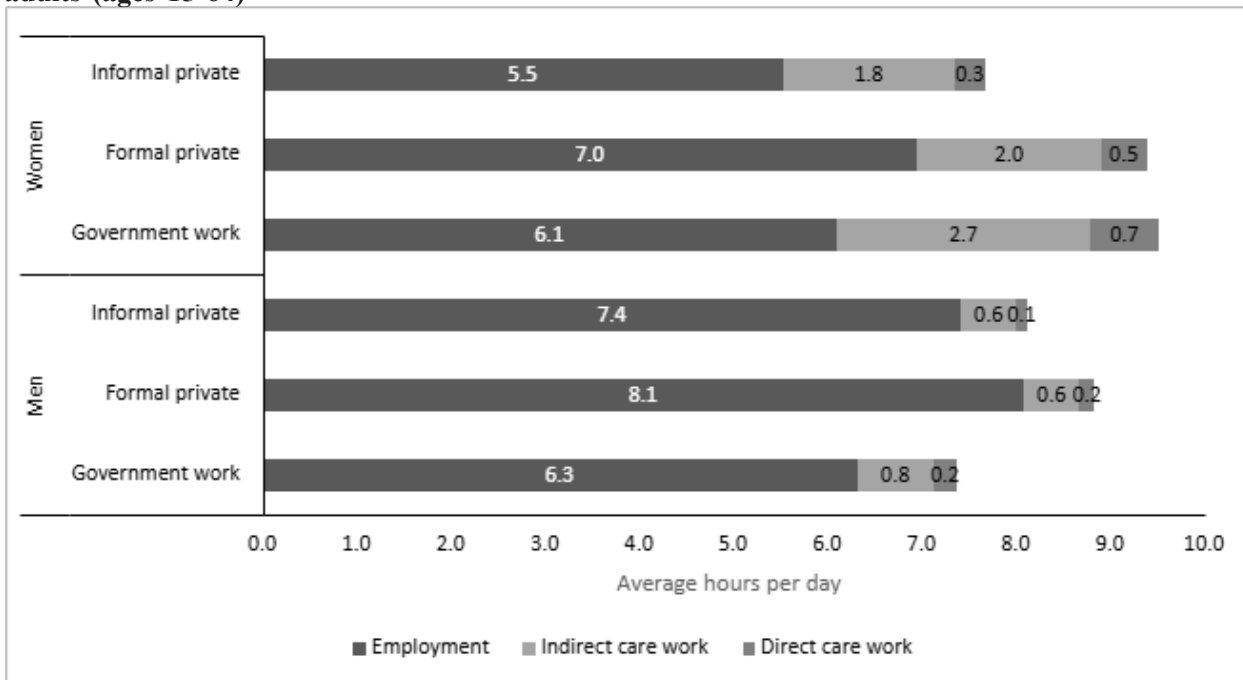
Figure 20. Time use (average hours per day) by type of activity, sex, type of employment, and marital status, employed adults (ages 15-64)



Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 time-use module.

Figure 21 disaggregates time use by employment sector, including government work, formal private sector, and informal private sector. This disaggregation showcases why government work is deemed more desirable for women than private sector work (Assaad, 2019) as they spend about an hour less in employment. All the extra time is allocated to unpaid care work, with female government workers spending 0.9 hours more in direct and indirect care work compared to their private sector counterpart. Women in informal private sector spend the least amount of time in employment and in unpaid care work.

Figure 21. Time use (average hours per day) by type of activity, sex, and employment sector, employed adults (ages 15-64)

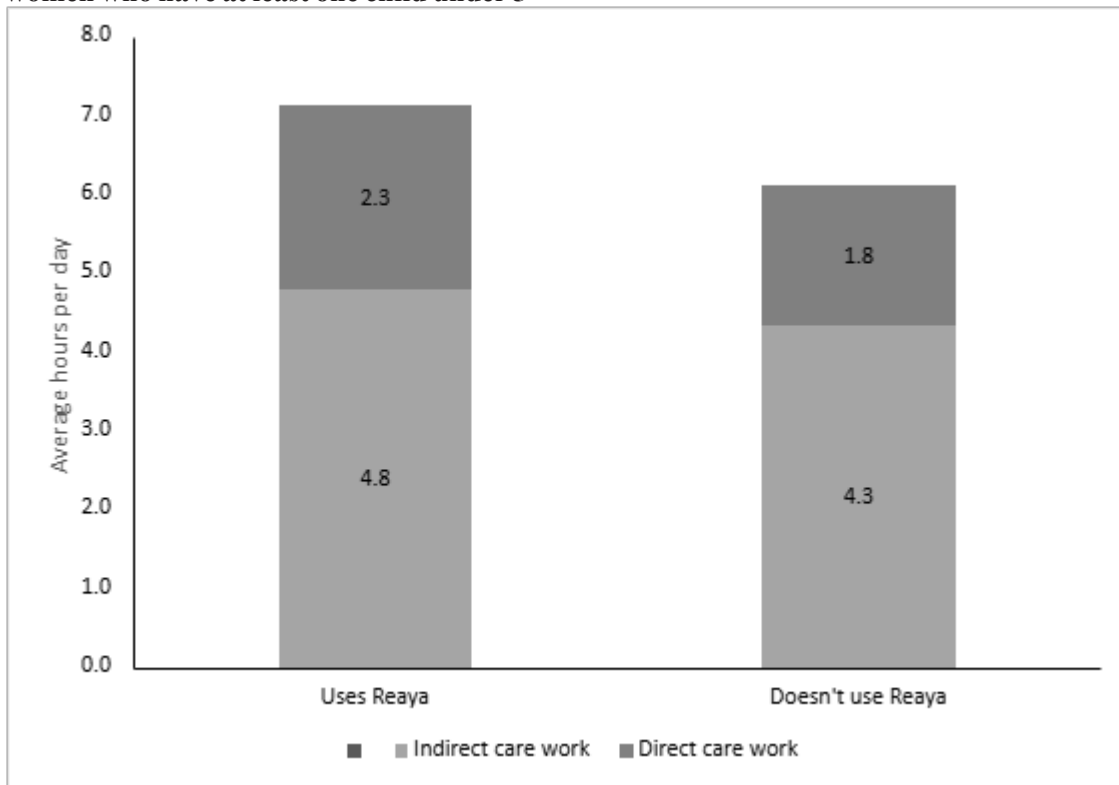


Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 time-use module.

6. Time use by care policies and work arrangements

This section presents results on time-use by different childcare and work arrangements. Figure 22 showcases time use for women based on whether or not their household receives payment from the Reaya program. Reaya is a flagship program launched in September 2021, and it provides financial assistance for women who earn less than JD1000 per month by paying the mother caring for the child at home for 6 months or making 6 months contribution towards nursery fees (World Bank, 2024). All the women who make use of the Reaya program that are captured by the JLMPS are non-employed, as such they are compared to other non-employed women. The results show that women who make use of Reaya spend about an hour more in unpaid care work than women who don't use the program.

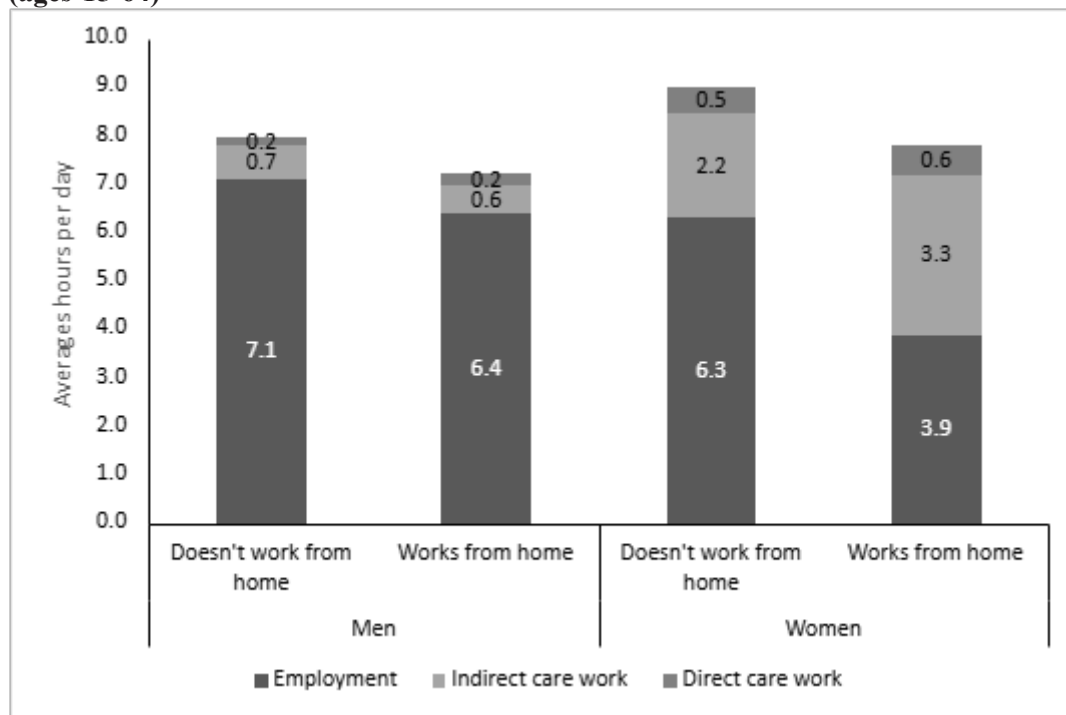
Figure 22. Time use (average hours per day) by type of activity and use of Reaya program for non-employed women who have at least one child under 5



Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 time-use module.

Figure 23 shows time use for working people, disaggregated by gender and by place of work. For men, the amount of time spent in care activities (around 1 hour) doesn't change based on whether they work from home or not. However, working from home does mean more time spent in care for women (by about 1 hour). Both men and women who work from home tend to spend less time in employment than their counterparts who work onsite, but the difference is much larger for women.

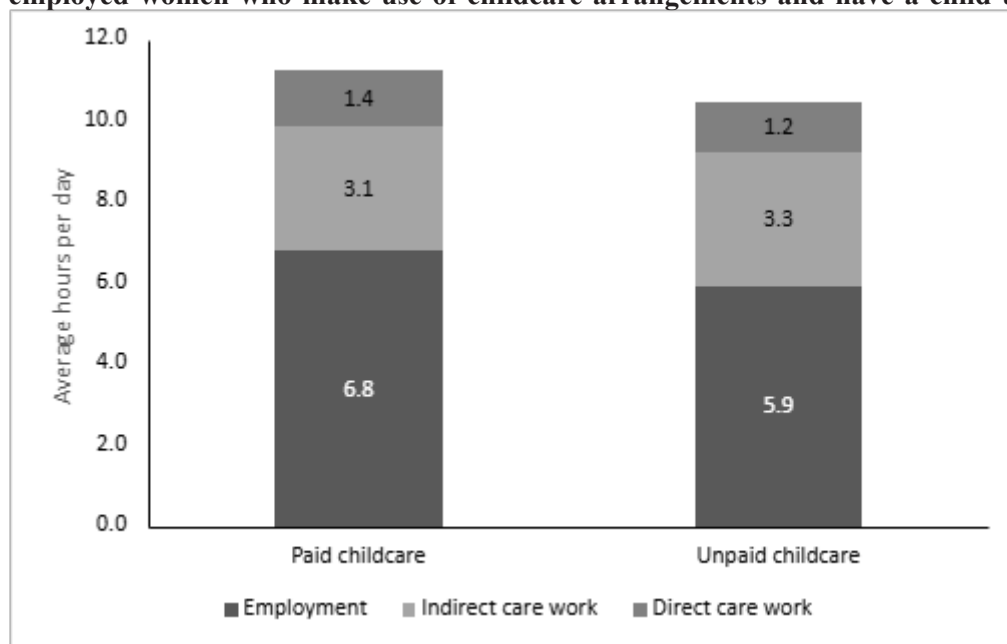
Figure 23. Time use (average hours per day) by type of activity, sex, and place of work, employed adults (ages 15-64)



Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 time-use module.

Figure 24 shows time use for employed women by type of childcare arrangement that they use while they are at work, namely if it is paid or unpaid. Women who pay for childcare tend to spend more time at work than those who do not pay for childcare (by around 0.9 hours). Care time is similar for to the two groups, amounting to an average of around 4.5 hours per day.

Figure 24. Time use (average hours per day) by type of activity and type of childcare arrangement for employed women who make use of childcare arrangements and have a child under 12



Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 time-use module.

7. Conclusion

This paper draws on the newly integrated time-use module of the 2025 wave of the JLMPS. Focusing on the working-age population (aged 15–64 years), it examines gender differences in time-use patterns, with particular attention to the allocation of time between paid employment and unpaid care work. The analysis aims to shed light on how these persistent disparities may constitute a major barrier to women’s participation in the labor market and market employment opportunities.

Overall, the analysis reveals a persistent and substantial gender gap in unpaid care work in Jordan, with women assuming primary responsibility for both direct and indirect care activities across all age groups, marital statuses, educational levels, and regions. This gap is widest during the prime childbearing and family formation years (ages 20–39), especially among married women, who devote far more time to unpaid care than men while participating far less in employment related activities.

Even highly educated women, despite greater engagement in the labor market, face the double burden of combining paid work with disproportionately high levels of unpaid care. Regional patterns further highlight how economic structures and labor market opportunities shape time-use outcomes. In the Middle region, Jordan’s economic hub, both men and women devote the highest number of hours to employment-related activities, resulting in the lowest women-to-men’s time use ratio. At the same time, this region also exhibits the largest gender gap in unpaid care work, with women shouldering a substantially greater share of care responsibilities than men. Taken together, these findings underscore how life-cycle dynamics and marital status collectively reinforce a male breadwinner–female caregiver model, limiting women’s economic participation and perpetuate gendered divisions of labor in Jordan.

The paper shows as well that household dynamics, especially relationship to the head of the household, presence of children, dependency ratios, and wealth, are associated with gendered time-use patterns in Jordan. Across all relations to the head of the household, men consistently devote most of their time to paid employment, while women devote far more time to unpaid care, a gap that begins since young age cohorts and peaks among wives and female heads. The presence of children, particularly young ones, and higher household dependency ratios dramatically intensify women’s unpaid care responsibilities but leave men’s care time largely unchanged. Wealth also is related to these patterns: women in poorer households spend more time on unpaid care and less on employment, while wealthier women shift some time toward paid work, likely reflecting greater access to resources that ease domestic burdens. Taken together, these findings underscore how household structure and economic capacity reinforce the traditional breadwinner–caregiver model, with women bearing the disproportionate cost of caregiving and facing constraints on their participation in the labor market.

When it comes to time-use across different labor market statuses, there are three common patterns. Firstly, women spend more time than their male counterparts in unpaid care work and less time in employment. Secondly, ever-married women spend more time than their never-married counterparts in unpaid care work. Thirdly, married employed women spend more time in total doing work (both employment and unpaid care) than anyone else. These findings highlight the presence of the ‘double burden’ for employed married women where they are expected to manage both their professional responsibilities as well as the majority of household and care duties.

The results also align with existing literature that explains why women tend to pursue certain types of employment over others. For example, Gauri, Rahman, and Sen (2019) finds in their exploration of social norms in Jordan that there is general support for women working, but this declines when it comes to specific scenarios like when a working woman can return from work and the age at which it is appropriate for a mother to leave a child in order to work. Alkasabeh & Isaiteyeh (2026) looked at the data from 2010 and 2025 and found that while there is more endorsement for women's financial independence, men are not supportive when it comes to women's employment in male-dominated settings. Assad et al (2019), in a similar vein, finds that public sector jobs are more desirable because they allow women to reconcile employment with their perceived roles as homemakers. Indeed, the results in this paper show that women in government roles spend less time in employment compared to women in the private sector. The time difference is almost entirely allocated to unpaid care work. Non-waged work like self-employment presents a catch-22, whereby women spend much less time in paid employment compared to waged employees. This may alleviate the double burden and give them more time to engage in unpaid care activities while also remaining in employment. However, it also solidifies their role as primarily caregivers in the household.

Location of work and reliance on paid versus unpaid childcare show a mixed picture. Working from home and having unpaid childcare arrangements are associated with a decrease in the total amount of time that women spend in paid and unpaid work, which could mean a reduction in the double burden and more time for leisure as was discussed by Krafft and Li (2024). However, this comes at the expense of fewer hours in employment rather than an alleviation in unpaid care activities.

In sum, the gendered differences in time use observed in Jordan are deeply entrenched in prevailing social norms. Our analysis suggests two main policy directions. Flexible or less demanding work options for women reduce their overall working time, but this happens because women scale back their paid employment rather than their unpaid care responsibilities. Although such arrangements may ease part of the double burden, they also reinforce women's position as the main caregiver and a secondary earner. Some studies suggest that wider use of flexible work in the private sector could encourage men to spend more time with their families and children (for example, Chung and Lippe 2018; Pabilonia and Vernon 2021; Chung and Booker 2023). The early evidence in this paper does not point in that direction, but further analysis is needed to understand this dynamic more fully. Second, without a fundamental shift in gender norms, neither flexible work arrangements nor other policy interventions will be sufficient to enable women to reallocate time from unpaid care to paid employment. Efforts to promote gender equality should therefore also prioritize awareness campaigns and educational initiatives that emphasize the shared responsibility of household and caregiving tasks between men and women, with the aim of instilling more equitable values in future generations (IMAGES and UN Women, 2017; Atallah and Hesham, 2024).

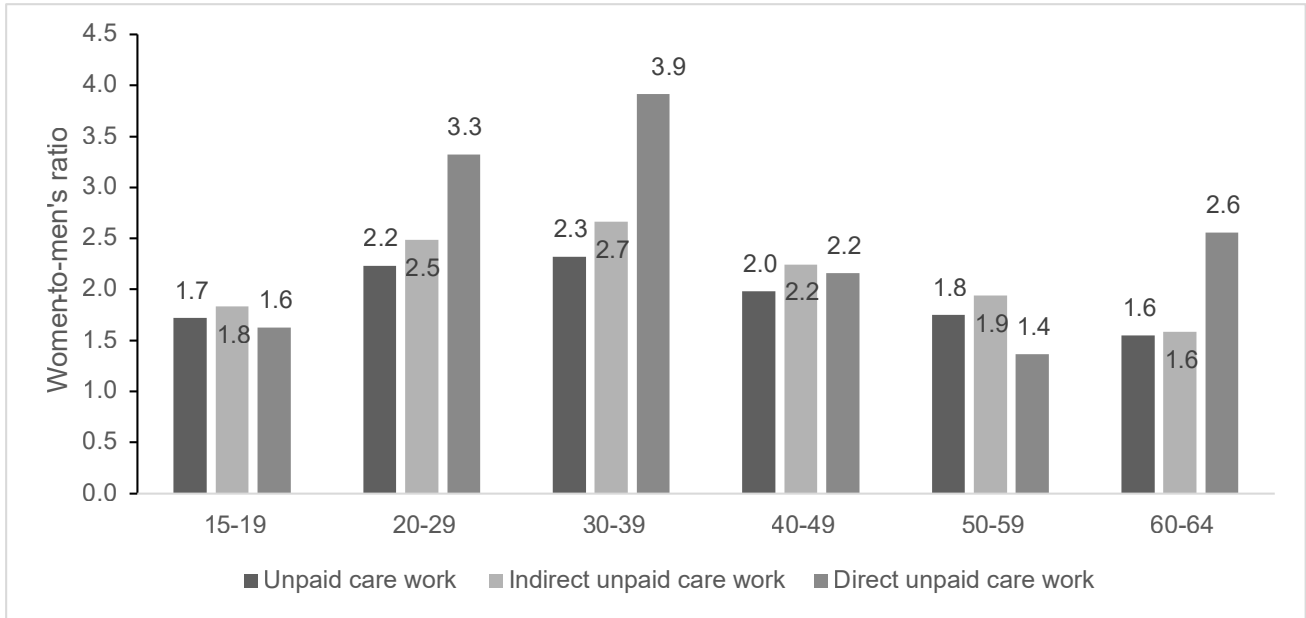
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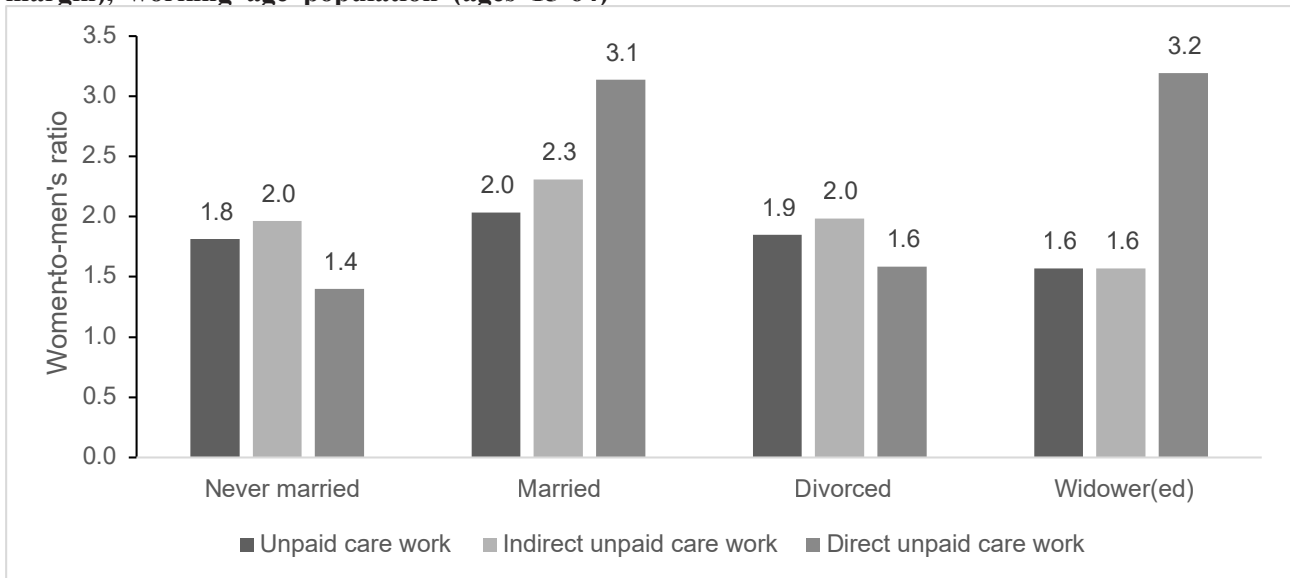
Appendix

Figure A.1. Women-to-men’s ratio of participating in unpaid care work by age (extensive margin), working age population (ages 15-64)



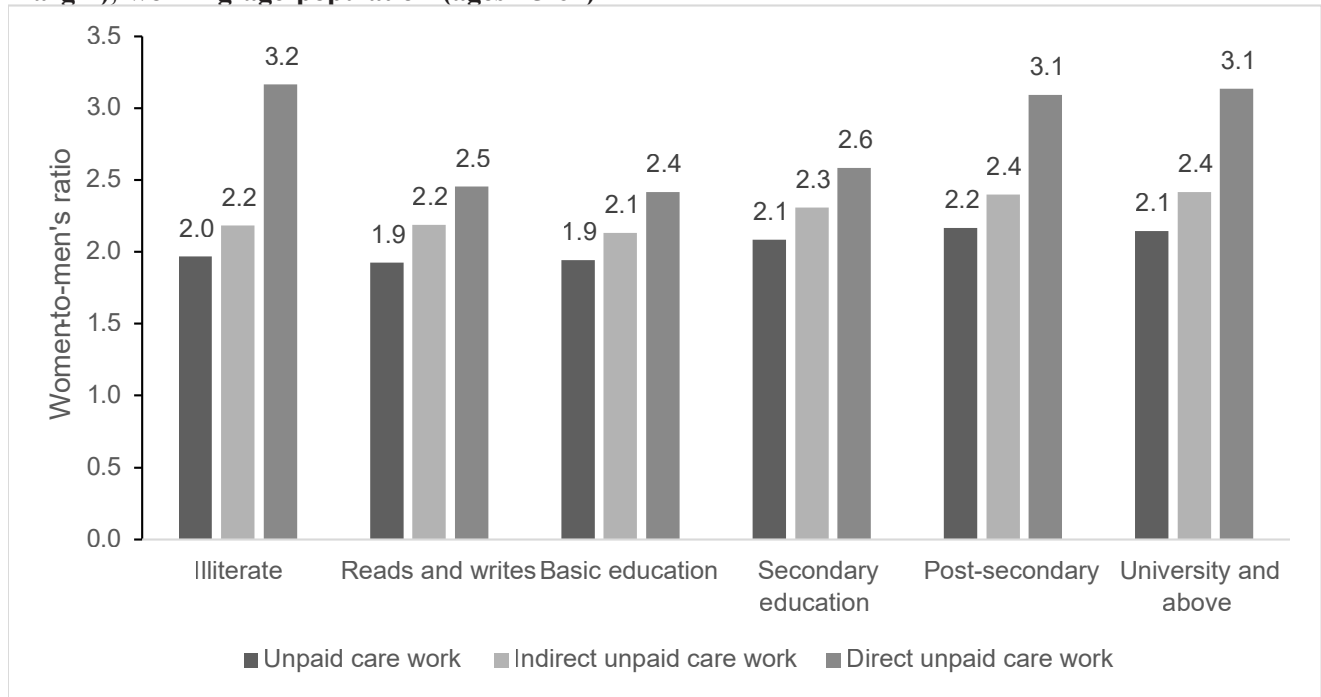
Source: Authors’ calculations based on JLMPS 2025 adult time-use module.

Figure A.2. Women-to-men’s ratio of participating in unpaid care work by marital status (extensive margin), working age population (ages 15-64)



Source: Authors’ calculations based on JLMPS 2025 adult time-use module.

Figure A.3. Women-to-men’s ratio of participating in unpaid care work by educational level (extensive margin), working age population (ages 15-64)



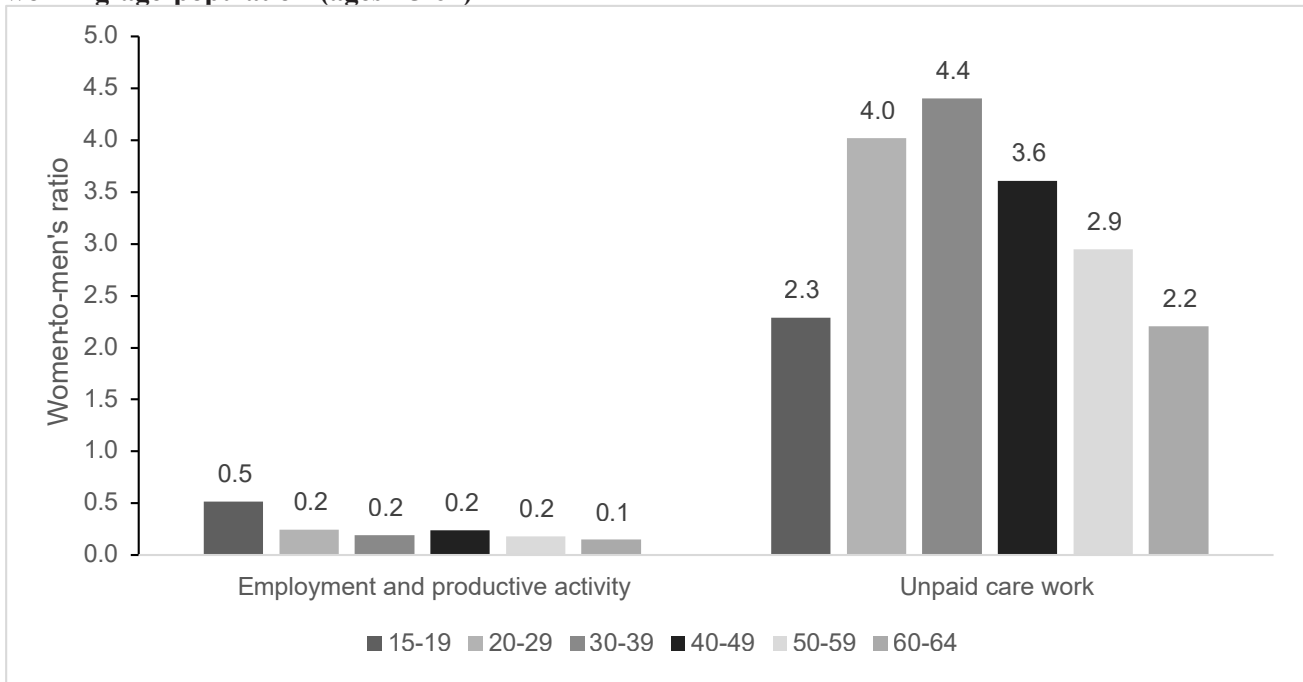
Source: Authors’ calculations based on JLMPS 2025 adult time-use module.

Figure A.4. Women-to-men’s ratio of participating in unpaid care work by geographical location (extensive margin), working age population (ages 15-64)



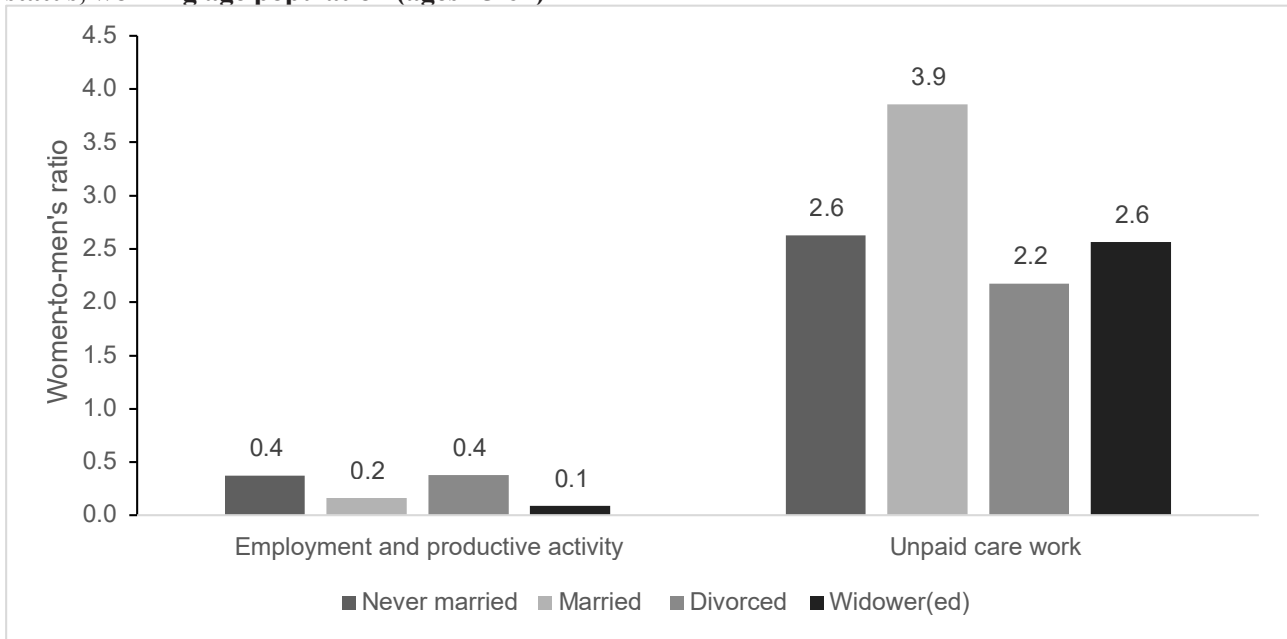
Source: Authors’ calculations based on JLMPS 2025 adult time-use module.

Figure A.5. Women-to-men’s ratio of time spent on employment and unpaid care work by sex and age, working age population (ages 15-64)



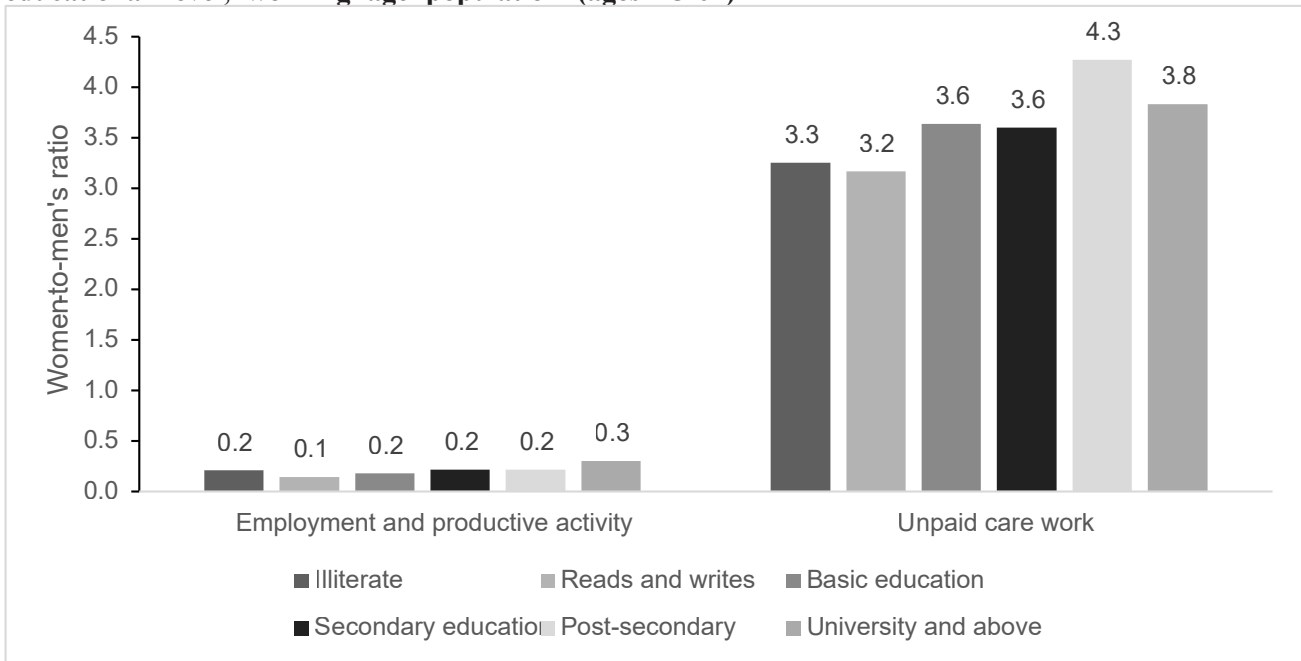
Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 adult time-use module.

Figure A.6. Women-to-men’s ratio of time spent on employment and unpaid care work by sex and marital status, working age population (ages 15-64)



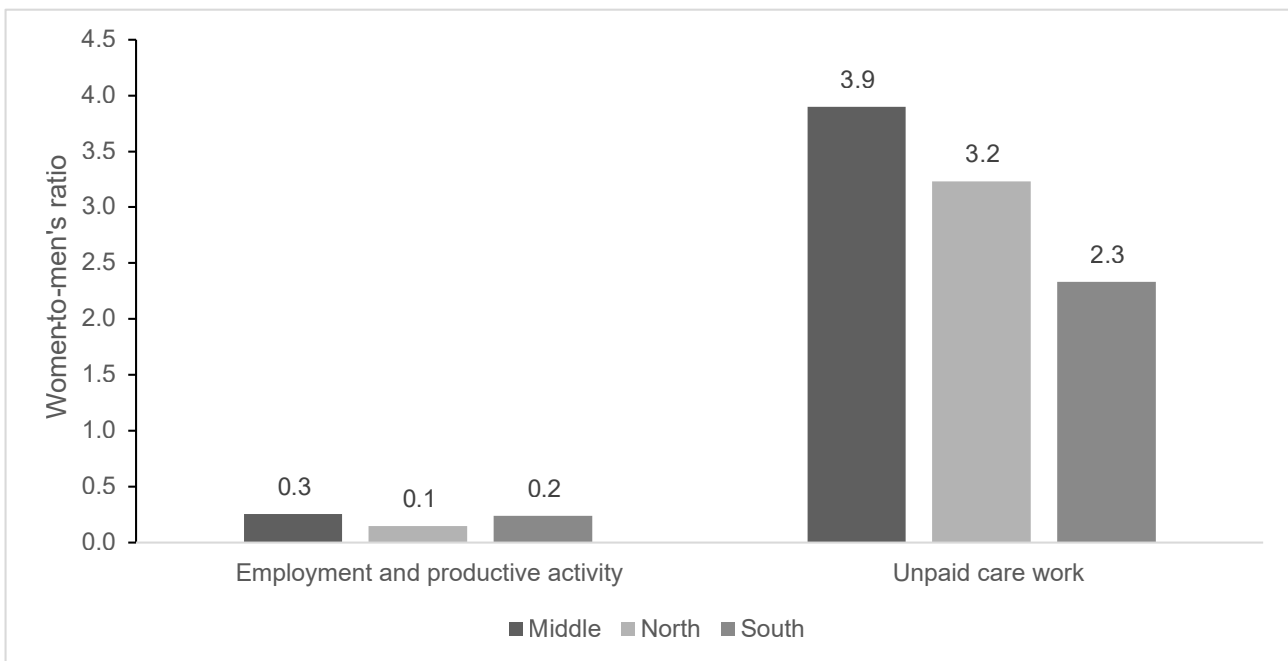
Source: Authors' calculations based on JLMPS 2025 adult time-use module.

Figure A.7. Women-to-men’s ratio of time spent on employment and unpaid care work by sex and educational level, working age population (ages 15-64)



Source: Authors’ calculations based on JLMPS 2025 adult time-use module.

Figure A.8. Women-to-men’s ratio of time spent on employment and unpaid care work by sex and area of residence, working age population (ages 15-64)



Source: Authors’ calculations based on JLMPS 2025 adult time-use module.