

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS N° 28

PROVIDERS AND BENEFICIARIES OF UNPAID HOUSEHOLD LABOUR IN EUROPE

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Services provided in the household economy such as care, cooking, shopping and cleaning constitute an important part of transfers between generations and genders. In order to quantify them, we estimated household production and consumption by gender and age in 14 European countries,¹ using the publicly available Harmonised European Time Use Surveys (HETUS). By subtracting production from consumption, age by age, we also calculate net time transfers. Such transfers show how many hours of household services an age group gives or receives on an average day in net terms. The results are presented on the [Figure](#) below for the 14 countries combined as well as for two countries representing the two extremes, Italy and Sweden.

Our results reveal a gender gap in household production that is unevenly distributed over the lifecycle. Women are net providers of unpaid household labour above age 20 until the highest ages. They produce a huge surplus in the household economy, mostly during childbearing ages. In contrast, men are generally net beneficiaries. While the net time given by women in their thirties is three hours on average, men of the same age give less than half an hour,

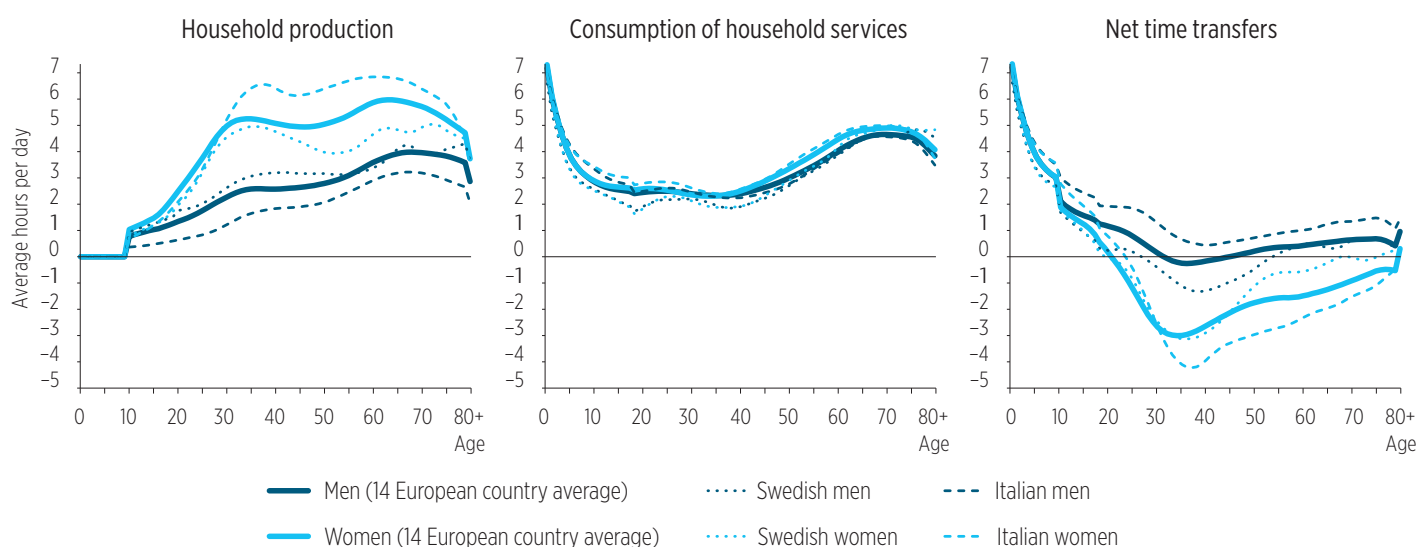
and above age 47 they consume more household goods and services than they produce.

There are important country specific variations. In Italy, all generations of men are dependent on the housework of women, there is no one single male age group generating a surplus. In Sweden, however, net time given by working age men is significant, the highest among the countries analyzed. These two countries represent the two extremes in general: they have respectively the highest (Italy) and the lowest (Sweden) gender gap in the household economy in almost all ages.

The figure illustrates another important aspect of the lifecycle component in household production. Although older men receive transfers of time, the main beneficiaries of household goods and services are children (age 0–17). Even in Italy, where men's participation in household labour is the lowest, children receive more net time transfers than adult men.

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Figure: Daily per capita household production and consumption and net time transfers by age and gender in 14 European countries on average, as well as in Italy and Sweden in early 2000s



Source: Own calculations based on HETUS, EU-SILC and Eurostat population data.

Note: Simple average of 14 European countries with comparable data from early 2000s.

¹ Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.