

# WHY AND HOW SHOULD WE VALUE HOUSEWORK?

*Connie Bayudan-Dacuycuy*

EMPOWERING WOMEN AND CLOSING THE  
GENDER GAP IN THE PHILIPPINES  
27 March 2025 | 9:00AM - 11:30AM





# *Outline of the presentation*

**01** INTRODUCTION

**02** HOUSEHOLD'S DIVISION OF HOUSEWORK

**03** INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN HOUSEWORK

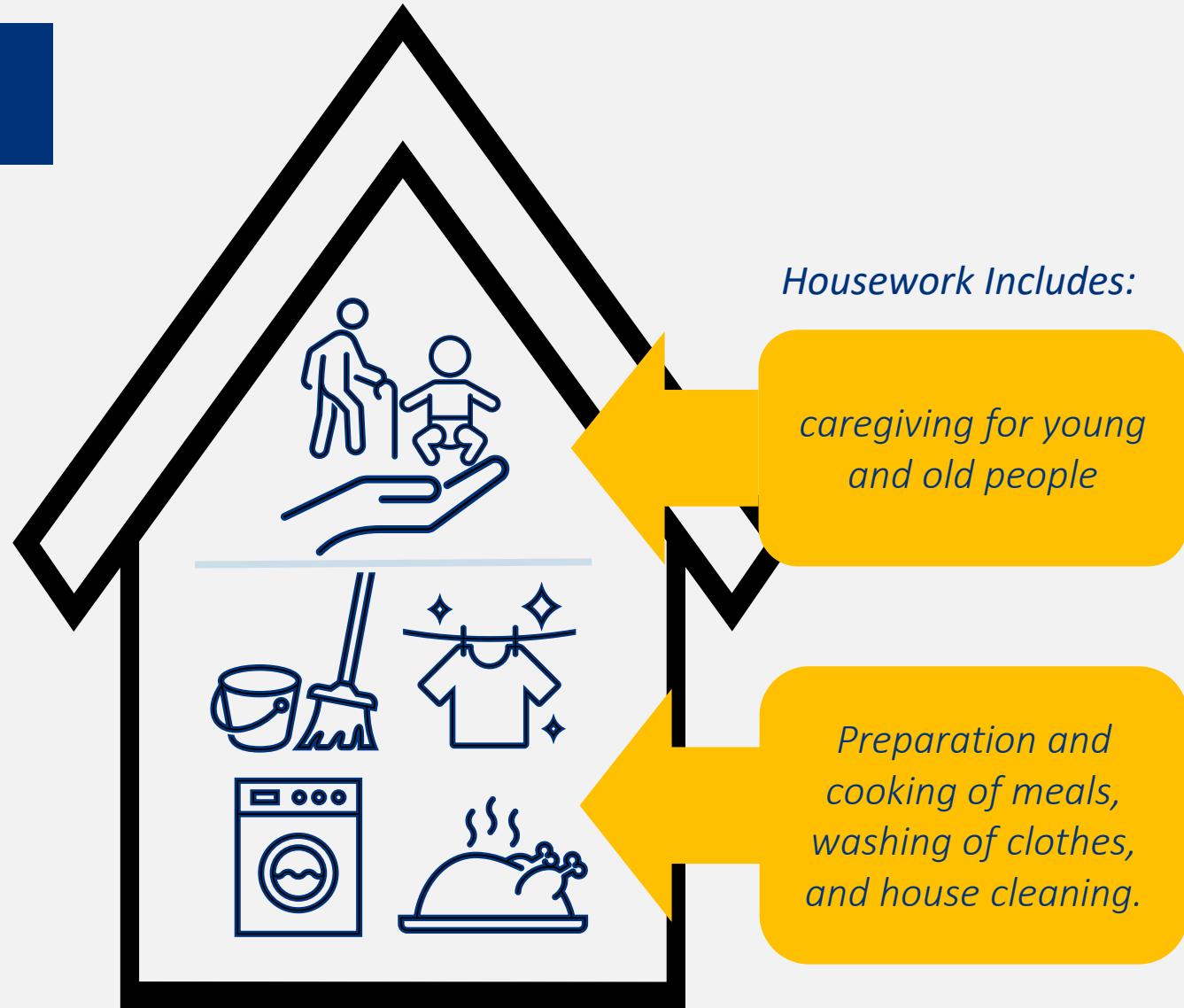
**04** WHY VALUE HOUSEWORK

**05** SOME WAYS FORWARD

# What is housework?

- *Other names: home production or nonmarket work (Becker 1965; Gronau 1977), unpaid work (Elson 2000), and reproductive roles (coined by Marxist economics).*

! Not valued in the measurement of economic output - not recognized as real work



# Household's division of housework



## ROLE OF COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE AND EFFICIENCY (BECKER 1965, 1991)

- **Specialization:** The spouse that commands a higher price in the market work will specialize in market/paid work
- Biological differences can influence specialization in household tasks.



## RESULT OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

Assigns roles to men and women designed to preserve the privilege and dominance of men (Beechey 1979; Baker 2007).



## COMMON CONSIDERATIONS

financial returns, comparative advantages, personal preferences, and gender roles

*Housework and who performs it are intrahousehold issues.  
So, why accommodate housework issues in a policy space?*

# Individuals involved in housework

***Both men and women perform care and domestic work but women perform more (in hours).***

***Hanna et al. (2023)***

- Global average time spent by adults on unpaid care and domestic work: 2.9 hours per day, 12% of the day
- Women's 4.3 hours per day vs men's 1.6 hours.

**2023 Labor Force Survey\* for Eastern Visayas (Lagumbay, n.d.):**

- Women's 15.9 hours per week vs men's 7.6 hours

***Grandparents take care of grandchildren***  
*(Agree et al. 2005; Chen et al. 2018)*

***2018 Longitudinal Study of Aging and Health in the Philippines (LSAHP)***

- 25% of persons  $\geq 60$  yo: Involved in caring for grandchildren.

**Coresident grandmothers in the Philippines are more likely to be a high-intensity caregiver (Chen et al. 2018).**

- Benefits of the culture of co-residence among old and young generations

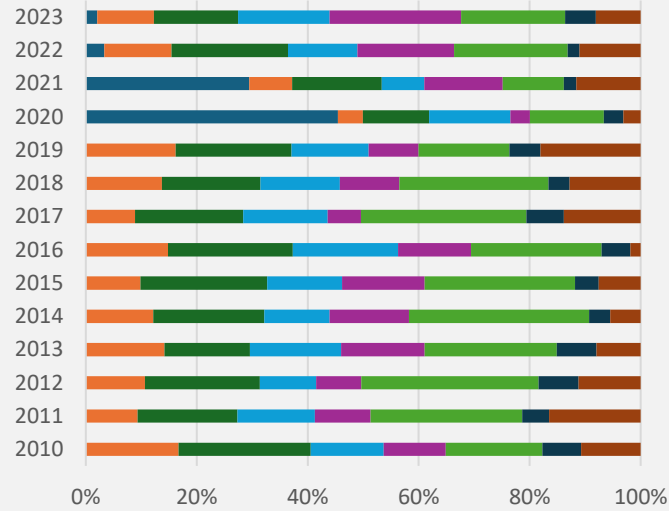
# Individuals involved in housework

The data include info from individuals who are:

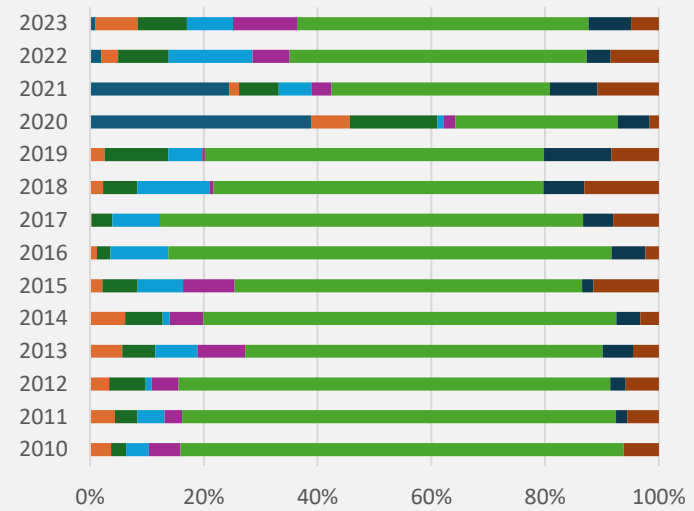
- 1) either the household head or spouse;
- 2) aged 25 to 59 years; and
- 3) either single or married.

- Covid19 pandemic-related
- Temporary Illness/Disability
- Too young/old or Retired/Permanent Disability
- Schooling
- Tired/Believe no Work Available
- Wait for rehire/Job Recall/results
- Household, Family Duties
- Others/bad weather

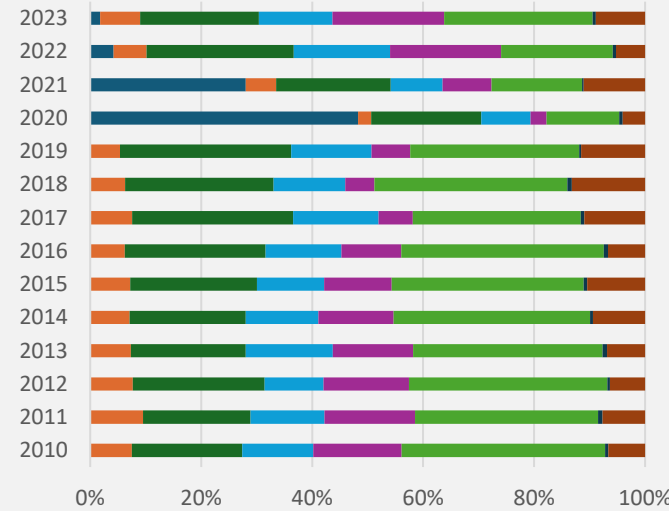
### Single male head



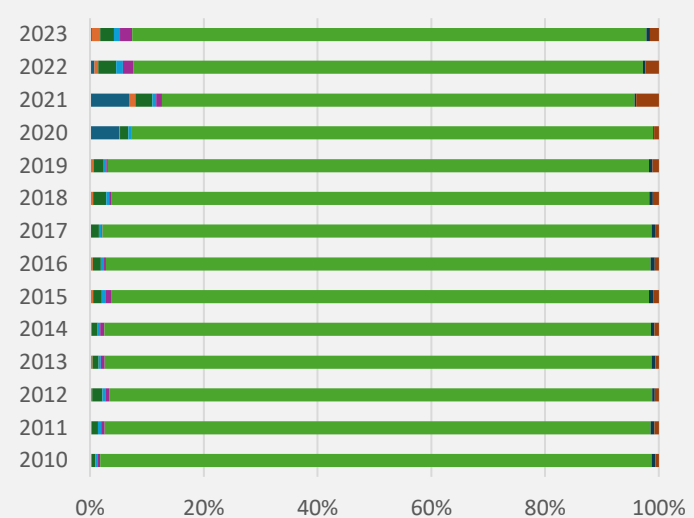
### Single female head



### Married male head/spouse



### Married female head/spouse



Not seeking work

Both men and women indicated housework as a reason.

Gender disparity, however.

# Significance of valuing housework



## Home: A learning institution, partner of educational institutions

- Mothers play a key role in fostering learning environments, especially in early childhood development (physical, emotional, social, cognitive).
- Housework contributes to society by nurturing the next generation of healthy citizens and potential leaders.



## Contrasting realities

- Some women choose unpaid work.
- For others, unpaid work is assigned by gender roles, leading to non-participation in or exits from the labor market.

# Significance of valuing housework



## Demographic trends in the PHL suggest growing challenges for those doing care work.

- **Child care:** Fertility rates (FR) declined from 2.7 children born per woman in 2017 to 1.9 in 2022
  - < 2.1 (replacement rate)
  - < 2.3(global average) (World Bank 2023).
- **Elderly care:** Higher proportion of the elderly to the total population: 8.5% (2020) to 16% (2045)

Japan (1.3 FR) and S Korea (0.8 FR)

### IMF study

- Women in Japan, 5x doing more unpaid work than men, one of the largest gaps among OECD countries;
- >50% of women preferred fewer children

### Critical issues in a dwindling population:

- Social Security System
- National Security.

### Taking steps to encourage childbirth:

- Japan: national subsidies for childrearing, student loans for higher education, greater access to quality childcare services
- SK: Policies on work-family balance, childcare, and housing

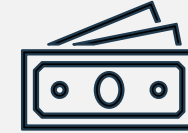


# Significance of valuing housework



## Implications for human capital accumulation

- Interruptions in market work
- Women are affected, given their child-bearing and child-nurturing roles.
- Firms may view the provision of training to irregular workers as a risky investment: Less chance for career advancement



## Implications for wage and work hours

- **Wage premium for married men:**
  - Married vs single males' daily basic pay: PHP 45 higher
- **Motherhood penalty:**
  - Married vs single females' daily basic pay: PHP 30 lower
- Work hours:
  - Married vs single females: 1.3 hours less
  - Married vs single males: 2.3 hours more

Source: 2023 LFS July round

# How should we value housework?

*Providing wage for housework was a popular advocacy in the United Nations system as early as the 1970s (Swiebel 1999). However, this advocacy did not gain traction due to the lack of consensus among stakeholders for several reasons.*

## MEASURE AND VALUE

- 1. Input method:** counts the hours and assign a price
  - Assignment of the price can be by the opportunity cost or the market replacement cost.
  - Under the replacement cost, the global substitute (e.g., average wage of helpers) or the specialized substitute (e.g., nurse, chef) can be used.
- 2. Output method:** assigns a price to the quantity of goods/services produced (e.g., kilograms, etc.).

## CHALLENGES

- 1. Typical wage proposed is lower** than the wage for market work – reinforces society's low valuation of women's work (Swiebel 1999).
- 2. Temporary Solution, Not Long-Term Empowerment**
  - Does not address gender inequality or economic independence.
  - When housework wages stop, financial constraints push women into market work.

# Ways forward



*Craft policies and programs to empower men and women and help them perform their market and non-market roles*

## Broaden opportunities for both men and women who opt out of the market work through enhanced work-from-home opportunities.

- **DTI:** Support micro and small enterprises by enhancing their visibility in local markets, training
- **DICT:** Scale up SPARK (Strengthening the Philippine workforce through Adaptive and Responsive Digital Knowledge, formerly digitaljobsPH), Can benefit from a process/outcome evaluation

## Improve public services that have direct and indirect consequences on housework

- Quality childcare: Highly compensated, better-trained child care workers; lower children/teacher ratio; longer contact hours
- Reliability of mass transportation: Less time on the road, more time to rest/pursue wellness
- Affordability of internet services: PH has the most expensive internet in the ASEAN (PHP 2000 per month per the PIDS infobits).

# Recommendations

## Achieve work-life balance

- More legislations are needed along the lines of flexi-time, work-from-home arrangements.
- 4-day work week in the public sector is a good starting point.

## Strengthen information campaigns on housework

- Begins with raising awareness of what housework is and its broader implications
  - forum, research, infographics

## Design systems for elderly care

- Prepare for an aging population
  - Increase in caregiving demands due to aging or health deterioration of household members can lead to low labor productivity (i.e., absenteeism, tardiness)
- Explore community-based elderly home

# Thank You!



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