



The 'Time Use Survey' as an opportunity lost

GS II: Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.

The all India Time Use Survey, 2019 has just been published by the Government of India. As a survey that has covered the entire country for the first time was done by the National Statistical Office.

Understanding Time Use Survey

The "Time Use Survey, or TUS, provides a framework for measuring time given by the population on different activities. Its primary objective is to measure the participation of men and women in paid and unpaid activities. TUS is an important source of information on the time spent in unpaid care-giving activities, volunteer work, unpaid domestic service-producing activities of the household members. It also provides information on time spent on learning, socializing, leisure activities, self-care activities, etc., by the household members"

Key developments

The reason for the demand of TUS globally is the commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030. The Government of India is fully committed to the SDG. TUS data are also required for understanding and monitoring major socioeconomic concerns of countries. Somehow, both these developments have not been incorporated in this first time use survey.

The need for Time-use data

1. Time-use data are needed for implementing not only the SDG 5.4 on unpaid work but also for implementing the SDG-1 to the SDG-10.
2. Even for the SDG 5.4 — considered to be the most important SDG for measuring and valuing unpaid domestic services and unpaid care by women and men, and reducing unpaid work through public services and infrastructure — the Indian TUS data are not adequate.

Defining work and recognition to Unpaid domestic work

A new ILO's Resolution presents a new definition of work, new forms of work and a new labour force status classification. "Work" is divided into five categories: employment; own use production of goods and services by



households; unpaid trainee work; volunteer work; and other work. **Unpaid domestic services and unpaid care are now formally recognised as “work” for the first time.**

Clearly, the Resolution cannot be implemented without time use data. However, in the Indian TUS, ILO Resolution was not factored in and conducted as an independent TUS. The TUS does not even have employment as one of the objectives of the TUS.

Breaks in Indian surveys

1. Experts have always argued that Indian Employment/Unemployment Surveys, or EUS, tend to under-report informal workers, due to the nature of informal employment.
2. Being frequently intermittent, scattered, temporary, short term or unstable, it is frequently not reported accurately by the EUS.
3. Again, women frequently view work as a part of household work and under-report it.
4. Also, the EUS is not equipped to collect data on multiple jobs performed by people, the time spent on work (i.e. intensity of work), the scattered nature of work, subsistence work, and work performed under simultaneous activities.
5. The TUS, which collects comprehensive information on all human activities, provides improved estimates of the workforce as well as shed light on important characteristics of the workforce.
6. The TUS can thus provide critical information to add the richness of the EUS. The Expert Committee on the 62nd Round of the NSSO on EUS, therefore, recommended that a national TUS should follow a EUS.

Conclusion:

In short, the Indian TUS has missed two important opportunities — of implementing the SDG 5.4 and the ILO’s important resolution.



Learn Through Graphics: See the difference in unpaid work across gender

Where India spends time

CHART 1 SHARE OF TIME SPENT IN 24 HOURS PER PERSON

■ Self-care and maintenance
 ■ Socialising, religious practice, leisure, sports, etc
 ■ Employment and related activities
 ■ Learning
 ■ Unpaid domestic/caregiving services for household members
 ■ Other unpaid work

Data for those aged 6 years and above (in %)

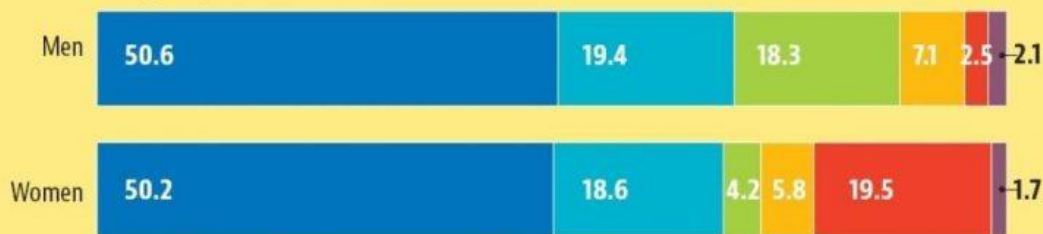


CHART 2 PARTICIPATION IN DOMESTIC AND CAREGIVING SERVICES

■ 15-29 years
 ■ 15-59 years
 ■ 60 years and above (in %)

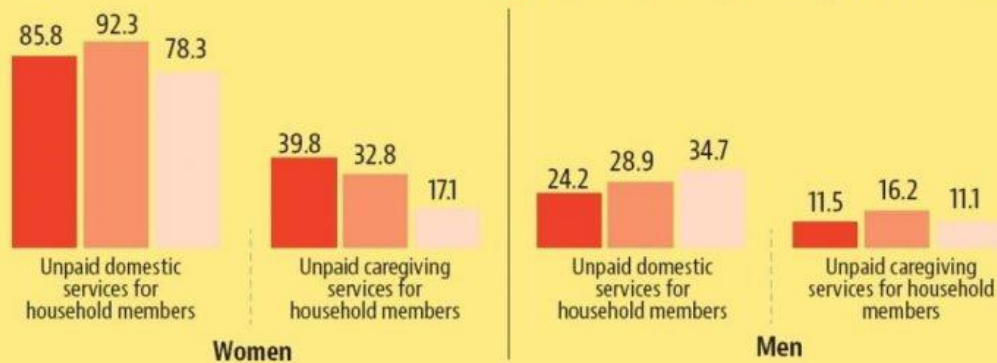
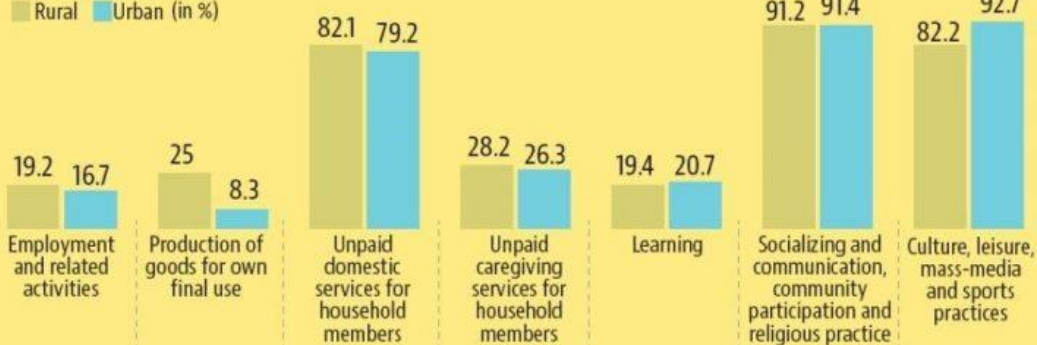


CHART 3 PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES

■ Rural
 ■ Urban (in %)



Source: Time Use in India-2019, NSO



India's no to RCEP could still be a no

GS II: Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Bottom line: The circumstances under which New Delhi had distanced itself from the RCEP negotiations have hardly improved

RCEP

Last week, 15 East Asian countries agreed to take their economic integration several notches higher by forging the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the largest free trade agreement (FTA) ever.

Strengthening Of The Regional Value Chains

In 2019, RCEP members accounted for about 30% of world output and population and 28% of world trade. But more importantly, about 44% of their total trade was intra-RCEP, which is a major incentive for the members of this agreement to agree to the deal for this could contribute to the strengthening of the regional value chains. This may well prove propitious for the RCEP member countries in their efforts to recover from the COVID led downturn.

Disputed issues in WTO included in RCEP

1. RCEP includes traditional market access issues, following the template provided by the World Trade Organization (WTO).
2. However, it also includes issues that are currently being discussed by several groups of WTO members as a part of their agenda to “reform the multilateral trading system”.
3. These issues are electronic commerce, investment facilitation, which seems to be the first step towards a multilateral agreement on investment and creating an enabling environment for the participation of small and medium enterprises in global trade.
4. While India has been opposed to the inclusion of all these issues in the WTO, the formation of RCEP could provide serious momentum to the discussions in WTO.



Problems for India in RCEP

1. In contrast to their market access commitments under goods, commitments made by RCEP members for services trade liberalisation do look shallow in terms of the coverage of the sectors.
2. Movement of natural persons, an area in which India had had considerable interest, is considerably restricted.
3. RCEP members have allowed relatively limited market access only to individuals in managerial positions or those having high levels of skills. The areas of investment and electronic commerce, in both of which India had expressed its reservations on the template adopted during RCEP negotiations, the outcomes are varied.
4. The text on investment rules shows that it is a work-in-progress. The rules on dispute settlement procedures are yet to be written in, and, therefore, it will be interesting to see whether the controversial investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism is included.

Why No RCEP for India?

1. The first is that during the RCEP negotiations, India had raised a number of concerns, two of which, namely, the levels of market access it was expected to provide, especially the deep cuts in tariffs on imports from China, and provisions relating to the investment chapter, have become even more significant over the past several months.
2. Since the border clashes, India has imposed a number of import restrictions on Chinese products and has also subjected investment flows from its northern neighbour to greater scrutiny. Both these measures would have been infructuous if India were a party to the RCEP.
3. Second, India's initiative for its economic turnaround, the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, is primarily focused on **strengthening domestic value chains**, while RCEP, like any other FTA, is solely focused on promoting regional value chains.



Digital nation

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Context: Affordable smartphones and Internet access have made India a digital nation with an estimated 750 million connections and a thriving financial technology sector. However, If digital has to become a way of life, redefining the labyrinthine functioning of citizen-centric services would be a good place to start, with deadlines for government departments.

Highlights:

1. Digital platforms providing goods and services, including online education and telemedicine, have grown vigorously during the COVID-19 pandemic, while many professionals have maintained productivity by working from home.
2. However, the true measure of digital nations is the readiness of governments to use technology to create open, participatory public systems that citizens consider trustworthy. What governance must achieve is a reliable system of digital welfare.
3. A beginning has, no doubt, been made through government-to-citizen services using Common Service Centres, advice to agriculturists, digital payments of welfare benefits through bank accounts and, even legal advice online to four lakh people under the Tele-Law scheme.
4. These represent a welcome advance, but if digital methods were applied to other sectors, such as road safety, the results could be dramatic — potentially reducing the accident mortality rate of about 1,50,000 deaths a year.

Role Of Digital In Universal Health Coverage (UHC)

1. In fact, successive governments failed to grasp the promise of achieving universal health coverage (UHC) by 2022. Now, the nucleus plan is Ayushman Bharat, with a digital health identity for all.
2. With the emphasis on digitalisation, it should be possible to achieve measurable progress early on at least on one UHC component — access to free, essential prescription drugs.



3. A digital health ID would help prescribe and dispense essential medicines free. The Planning Commission estimated that the public procurement cost for this, in 2011, would be 0.1% to 0.5% of GDP.
4. If this is a medium-term goal, the more immediate task of distributing COVID-19 vaccines looms as a test for the government. At a broader level, efficient digital government depends on transforming internal processes, and fixing deadlines for service delivery.

Scorched earth politics

GS II: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests

The trouble in U.S. politics appears unabated weeks after one of the most controversial election campaigns, with outgoing President Donald Trump refusing to concede to his victorious rival, Democratic President-elect Joe Biden.

Highlights:

1. The tectonic shift toward mail-in voting in the 2020 election presumably stemmed from voters' desire to abide by social distancing norms through the pandemic.
2. Mr Trump and his supporters have dismissed the pandemic as a Democratic conspiracy to "steal the election" from the incumbent, allegedly through massive voting fraud.
3. The truth is that even before this election, the rate of voter fraud was statistically insignificant, according to non-partisan studies.

Transition Process

However, even if all legal challenges foisted by Mr Trump peter out, the losers of this election may sabotage the transition process to such an extent that it hobbles the Biden administration taking charge on January 20, 2021. Mr Trump is doubtless emboldened by the 10 million-vote increase in his tally over 2016, but his final act of intransigence is scorching the landscape of the incoming administration and thus harming the recovery prospects of the country he claims to love.