

# Working from Home and Time Allocation in Food-Related Activities

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## MOTIVATION

One of the most persistent forms of inequality is the unequal division of domestic work.

Indeed, despite women's increasing presence in the labor market, they still shoulder the double burden of paid and unpaid work (Campaña et al., 2018). Working from home emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic as a potential game changer, offering flexibility and more time at home that could encourage men to participate more in household tasks. This research focuses on one of the most routine and gendered household activities: **foodwork**, which includes **grocery shopping, cooking, and washing dishes** (Restrepo & Zeballos, 2020). This issue is particularly relevant in Latin America, where cultural norms run deep and telework has rapidly become a permanent feature of the labor market.

To understand these dynamics, this study examines **four scenarios**: when both partners are working from home, when both are working away, or when only one of them is teleworking. Using time-use surveys from **Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Guatemala**, this research provides novel evidence on how telework shapes gender equality within households.

## METHODS

To address the interdependent nature of time-use decisions within households and to obtain efficient estimates, this study employs a **Seemingly Unrelated Regression (SUR)** model, applied specifically to time devoted to paid work, food preparation, and eating.

The following system of equations was estimated separately for each country in the sample, resulting in four independent estimations:

For each individual  $i$   $WH_{ihc} = \alpha_{WH} + \beta_1 Couple_{ihc} + \beta_2 X_{ihc} + \beta_3 Z_{hc} + \varepsilon_{WHihc}$

living in a household  $h$   $FP_{ihc} = \alpha_{FP} + \beta_1 Couple_{ihc} + \beta_2 X_{ihc} + \beta_3 Z_{hc} + \varepsilon_{FPihc}$

in the country  $c$  ( $c=1,2,3,4$ )  $E_{ihc} = \alpha_E + \beta_1 Couple_{ihc} + \beta_2 X_{ihc} + \beta_3 Z_{hc} + \varepsilon_{Eihc}$

Vector of individual socio-demographic characteristics

Vector of household characteristics

Couple's work arrangement:  
- Both partners working away from home  
- Both working from home  
- Only her working from home  
- Only him working from home

$WH_{ihc}$ ,  $FP_{ihc}$ , and  $E_{ihc}$  represent the hours that each individual report performing paid work, food preparation and eating, respectively.

## OBJECTIVES

- Examine how working from home influences the allocation of time to paid work, foodwork, and eating among men and women in opposite-gender couples in Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Guatemala.
- Analyze whether the relationship between working from home and time use varies depending on the work arrangement within the household: both partners working from home, both working away from home, only the woman working from home, or only the man working from home.
- Assess whether working from home contributes to a more equitable division of food-related domestic work or, conversely, reinforces traditional gender specialization patterns in Latin American households.
- Provide novel empirical evidence on the gendered effects of working from home in a region where cultural norms and socioeconomic structures shape domestic dynamics in distinct ways, thereby contributing to the scarce literature on this topic in Latin America.

## MAIN RESULTS

Country	Foodwork		Eating		Paid work	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Both Working From Home	↑↑↑	↑↑↑↑	↑↓	↑↑	↓↑	↓
Her Working From Home	↑↑↑	↓↓	↑	↓	↓↓↓	↑↑
Him Working From Home	↓↓	↑↑	↓↑	↑		↓↓

**Note:** Arrows indicate the direction of the relationship (more or less time devoted to each activity) compared to the scenario where both partners work away from home. Only statistically significant relationships are shown. For Guatemala, no data are available regarding time spent eating.

## MAIN REFERENCES

- Campaña, J. C., Giménez-Nadal, J. I., & Molina, J. A. (2018). Gender norms and the gendered distribution of total work in Latin American households. *Feminist Economics*, 24(1), 35-62.
- Restrepo, B. J., & Zeballos, E. (2020). The effect of working from home on major time allocations with a focus on food-related activities. *Review of Economics of the Household*, 18(4), 1165-1187.

