



► Room document: 8*

Statistical definitions of care work



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1. Abbreviations and acronyms

CAUTAL	Classification of Time-Use Activities for Latin America and the Caribbean
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HETUS	Harmonised European Time Use Survey
ICATUS	International Classification of Activities for Time-Use Statistics
ICLS	International Conference of Labour Statisticians
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LMIC	Low- and Middle-Income Country
OPS	Own-use provision of services
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SNA	System of National Accounts
TUS	Time use survey
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Statistical Commission
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division

2. Introduction and background

1. Interest in the topic of *care work* has intensified in recent years in tandem with awareness of the importance of a well-functioning *care economy* for broader economic and societal goals. Care work and the care economy feature increasingly prominently in national policy agendas¹, as countries seek to respond to accelerating demographic shifts, and continue to grapple with persistent inequalities in labour market participation and access to decent work - inequalities brought to the fore, and exacerbated, by the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. The ILO has historically been at the forefront of efforts to spotlight and mainstream care work and the care economy. In the last decade, major areas of advancement include: i) initiatives to extend knowledge² and data-availability³ on paid and unpaid care work and the broader policy environment, ii) the launch of new tools and resources to advance measurement of care work and to inform national care policies and strategies⁴, and iii) ongoing work to advance and promote relevant international standards, resolutions, and conventions⁵.
3. The ILO's 2019 *Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work*⁶ - building on the *Women at Work* and the *Future of Work* Centenary Initiatives launched in 2013 - united these themes, recognising the need for a transformative agenda for gender equality, centred on a reconfiguration of the social organisation of paid and unpaid care work and investment in the care economy. Building on this momentum, the 2021 *Global Call to Action* highlighted *investment in the care economy* for inclusive economic growth. The 110th (2022) and 111th International Labour Conference (2023) renewed these commitments⁷.
4. Looking to the future, the topic of *decent work and the care economy* is confirmed as an item for general discussion at the 112th International Labour Conference (2024)⁸, at the request of ILO Governing Body. This agenda item is expected to build on emerging consensus centring care work – and investment in the care economy – as part of the ILO transformative agenda for gender equality and non-discrimination, and indivisible from efforts to promote decent work and social justice⁹.

¹ILO (2022) *Care at work: Investing in care leave and services for a more gender equal world of work*, International Labour Office, Geneva: ILO, 2022. ISBN: [978-92-2-036679-0](#)

²ILO (2022) *Care at work: Investing in care leave and services for a more gender equal world of work*, International Labour Office, Geneva: ILO, 2022. ISBN: [978-92-2-036679-0](#); ILO (2018) *Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work*, International Labour Office, Geneva: ILO, 2018. ISBN: [978-92-2-131643-5](#); ILO-Gallup (2017) *Towards a better future for women and work: Voices of women and men*, International Labour Office, Geneva: ILO, 2017 ISBN: [978-92-2-128962-3](#)

³ILO (2023) Labour Force Survey [Resources](#)

⁴ILO (2023) [Global Care Policy Portal](#)

⁵A comprehensive listing of ILO Conventions relevant to care work is available in ILO (2018) *Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work*, International Labour Office, Geneva: ILO, 2018. ISBN: [978-92-2-131643-5](#), Table A.1.1. Appendix A.1

⁶ILO (2019) Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work ([wcms_711674.pdf\(iilo.org\)](#))

⁷ILO (2022) ILC 110th Session: Record of Proceedings ([ILC.110/Record](#)), ILO (2023) ILC 111th Session: Record of Proceedings ([ILC.111/Record](#)),

⁸ILO (2022) Agenda for the 112th Session (2024) of the International Labour Conference ([Agenda/21-11-2022](#))

⁹ILO (2021) Governing Body 343rd Session, Geneva, November 2021. [GB.343/INS/2](#)

5. Several wider UN and other multilateral initiatives have similarly foregrounded care work and the care economy. These include *Our Common Agenda* – launched by the UN Secretary General in 2021, at the request of Member States, with the aim of reinvigorating the multilateral system and accelerating progress towards the sustainable development goals (SDGs). *Our Common Agenda* includes 12 commitments for action. Commitment five – *place women and girls at the centre* promotes gender parity and “large-scale investments in the care economy”¹⁰.
6. Launched the same year, the *Global Alliance for Care* aims at building momentum to strengthen care policies and to address inequalities in care provision¹¹. In 2023, the strength of support for a new and transformative approach to the care economy was symbolised by the UN General Assembly’s proclamation of an *International Day of Care and Support*¹².
7. In a further indication that care work and investment in the care economy has moved from the periphery to the centre of global concerns, the *Beyond GDP* initiative – an ongoing process led by the *United Nations Statistics Division* (UNSD) to update the System of National Accounts (SNA) – promises a revised accounting framework to complement (and/or update) traditional macro-economic indicators with additional metrics that incorporate the contributions of environmental and social goods, including unpaid care work¹³.
8. The increasing focus on care work and the care economy at global, regional, and national levels has greatly intensified demands for data on the topic. Labour force surveys provide a key data source. Currently, however, no internationally agreed statistical standards exist to inform the measurement of care work and to promote consistency and international comparability. As a result, a wide variety of practices can be observed among countries, international agencies, non-governmental organisations, and academic researchers. Some of this divergence emerges from differences in the scope of interest and/or measurement objectives. In other cases, divergence occurs despite common stated objectives and scope.
9. The difficulty this presents for international comparability and monitoring over time is well recognised. There is growing demand, both from within the wider UN system and from ILO constituents, for an internationally agreed *definition of care work*¹⁴.
10. Work to develop a new reference definition, conceptual framework, and measurement guidance is now proposed. Given the strong relationship of this topic to existing ICLS standards, and other ongoing work, such as the update of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08), a clear option is to develop standards on the topic for discussion at a future ICLS. The 21st ICLS is being asked to discuss this topic with a view to agreeing the way forward.

¹⁰UN (2021) *Our Common Agenda - Report of the Secretary General*, New York, United Nations Publications ([eISBN: 978-92-1001012-2](#))

¹¹Government of Mexico (2021) [Global Alliance for Care](#)

¹²UN (2023) *International Day of Care and Support* ([A/RES/77/317](#))

¹³UN (2022) [Valuing What Counts – United Nations System-wide Contribution on Progress Beyond Gross Domestic Product \(GDP\)](#), United Nations System, High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP), New York, UN, 2022.

¹⁴For instance, the UN Deputy Secretary-General recently singled out “*the need for a better articulation (definition) of care work*” to serve as a guiding “vision [for] ...a common understanding of care...as central to realizing *Our Common Agenda* (Deputy Secretary-General’s meeting with UN Leaders on “Realizing the full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal on Care Work”, New York, 21st November 2022)

3. Relevant international statistical standards and classification schemes

11. This section provides an overview of selected current international standards which, when integrated, provide a coherent conceptual framework for the advancement of an international definition of care work, as a cross-cutting concept.

3.1 The 19th ICLS (Resolution I) Forms of Work Framework

12. Resolution I of the 19th ICLS, *"concerning statistics of work, employment, and labour underutilization"*¹⁵ provides an internationally agreed statistical definition of "work" as a reference concept. Under this definition, work "comprises any activity performed by persons of any sex and age to produce goods or to provide services for use by others or for own use"¹⁶. This definition encompasses all paid and unpaid productive activities and applies regardless of the (in)formality or (il)legality of the sector and status of the work, or the economic unit in/for, which it is performed.
13. The 19th ICLS concept of work is aligned to the general production boundary as defined in the SNA 2008 and its concept of economic unit that distinguishes i. market units (i.e., corporations, quasi-corporations, and household unincorporated market enterprises); ii. non-market units (i.e., government and non-profit institutions serving households), iii. households that produce goods or services for own final use.
14. The 19th ICLS standards are especially notable for extending the remit of labour statistics to encompass work activities that fall outside of the SNA "production boundary" but within the broader SNA "general production boundary".
15. All work falls within the SNA general production boundary. This means that, in macro-economic terms, all work is recognised as economically productive. All non-work (i.e., all activities that do not involve production of goods or provision of services) falls outside of the SNA general production boundary. In the case of non-market-oriented activities, this boundary is identified by applying the "third-party criterion"¹⁷ (this means that an activity cannot be performed by another person on one's own behalf, e.g., sleeping, learning, recreation). Such activities fall outside of the general production boundary.
16. While the SNA general production boundary recognises all work as economically productive, a narrower, "production boundary" determines which economically productive activities are included – and which excluded – in estimates of core macro-economic indicators, including gross domestic product (GDP)¹⁰. Such indicators occupy a central role in public policy, planning, and budget decisions, focussing attention and resources on a sub-set of economically productive activities.

¹⁵ILO (2013) ICLS-Resolution-I-[STATI-131114-1], 3: 7

¹⁶ILO (2013) ICLS-Resolution-I-[STATI-131114-1], 3: 7

¹⁷The "third person criterion" was originally developed by Margaret Reid (1934) *Economics of household production*. New York, NY, John Wiley.

► Figure 1: The 19th ICLS forms of work framework.

Intended destination of production	for own final use		for use by others			
Forms of work	Own-use production work		Employment (work for pay or profit)	Unpaid trainee work	Other work activities	Volunteer work
	of services	of goods				in market and non-market units
						in households producing goods services
Relation to 2008 SNA	Activities within the SNA production boundary					
	Activities inside the SNA General production boundary					

Source: ILO (2013) The 19th ICLS [resolution I concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization](#)

17. As shown in figure one, the 19th ICLS forms of work framework specifies five separate and mutually exclusive forms of work:
 - a. own-use production work comprising production of goods and services for own final use;
 - b. employment work comprising work performed for others in exchange for pay or profit;
 - c. unpaid trainee work comprising work performed for others without pay to acquire workplace experience or skills;
 - d. volunteer work comprising non-compulsory work performed for others without pay;
 - e. other work activities (not defined in the resolution)¹⁸.
18. Prior to the 19th ICLS standards, labour statistics' coverage of work activities (as per the definition of employment established by the 13th ICLS in 1982) was identical with the narrower of the two SNA production boundaries. This covered all work performed for pay or profit, as well as selected unpaid work activities (unpaid traineeships / apprenticeships, organisation-based volunteer work, direct volunteer work to produce goods, and own-use production of goods). Own use provision of services and direct volunteer work to provide services were excluded.
19. With the introduction of the 19th ICLS, the remit of labour statistics was extended to comprehensively recognise all *forms of paid and unpaid work* as eligible for coverage in labour statistics. This framework provides a strong foundation for the delineation of care work – and the characteristics of those who perform it – within each distinct form of work, as well as for monitoring and mapping shifts in the distribution and volume of care work undertaken across different forms of work. In addition, unlike the previous standards, it provides a basis for the measurement of all care work, part of which (own-use production work to produce services – or own-use provision of services) was excluded from the scope of the 13th ICLS standards.
20. To date, many countries have adopted, or are in the process of adopting the 19th ICLS standards through updates to their national labour force surveys, data tabulations, and statistical indicator frameworks. The ILO has produced model questionnaires and national adaptation and implementation guides, and continues to provide technical assistance, training, and guidance to countries, to support adoption of the 19th ICLS standards¹⁹.

¹⁸“Other work activities” include activities such as unpaid community service and unpaid work performed by prisoners, when ordered by a court or similar authority, and unpaid military (or alternative civilian) service, which may be treated as a distinct form of work for measurement (such as compulsory work performed without pay for others) ILO (2013) ICLS-Resolution-I-[STATI-131114-1], 3.

¹⁹This work is reported in a separate room document. ILO (2023) Room-Document 7 [New modular LFS tools for statistics on own use provision of services](#)

3.2 International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08)

21. The *International Standard Classification of Occupations* (ISCO) provides a comprehensive framework for the classification of occupations worldwide. ISCO is periodically updated to maintain relevance to, and coverage of, occupations. The current version, and the fourth iteration, of ISCO was released in 2008 (ISCO-08)²⁰.
22. ISCO is characterised by a four-level hierarchical structure. ISCO-08 includes ten major groups, based on required skill level and specialization. These ten major groups (denoted by a one-digit code) contain 43 *sub-major groups* (coded to two digits), 130 *minor groups* (coded to three digits), and 436 *unit groups* (coded to four digits). Table one, below, summarises the 10 major ISCO-08 groups in terms of scope, and provides example occupations.

► Table 1 ISCO-08 major groups²¹

ISCO-08 Major Groups	Scope of groups, examples of occupations included
1 Managers	<u>Scope:</u> includes most of the occupations of ISCO-08 Major Group 1, such as Managers in an organization with a hierarchy of managers or in a specialized role.
2 Professionals	<u>Scope:</u> includes most of the occupations of ISCO-08 Major Group 2, such as engineers, medical doctors and nurses, teaching professionals, business and administration professionals, ICT professionals, and legal, social and cultural professionals.
3 Technicians and Associate Professionals	<u>Scope:</u> includes most occupations of ISCO-08 Major Group 3, such as science and engineering technicians, health associate professionals, business and administration associate professionals, legal, social and cultural associate professionals and ICT technicians.
4 Clerical Support Workers	<u>Scope:</u> includes most occupations of ISCO-08 Major Group 4 such as general office clerks, customer service clerks, contact centre information clerks, receptionists, personnel clerks.
5 Service and Sales Workers	<u>Scope:</u> includes most occupations of ISCO-08 Major Group 5, such as shop sales assistants, waiters, cooks, hairdressers, personal care workers, security guards.
6 Skilled Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Workers	<u>Scope:</u> includes most occupations of ISCO-08 Major Group 6, such as Skilled Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Workers.
7 Craft and Related Trades Workers	<u>Scope:</u> includes most occupations of ISCO-08 Major Group 7, that do not involve supervision or higher skill levels such as welders, tailors, carpenters, butchers
8 Plant and Machine Operators, and Assemblers	<u>Scope:</u> includes most occupations of ISCO-08 Major Group 8, such as sewing machine operators, vehicle drivers, mobile plant operators.
9 Elementary Occupations	<u>Scope:</u> includes most occupations of ISCO-08 Major Group 9, such as cleaners, labourers, fast food preparers, street vendors.
0 Armed Forces Occupations	<u>Scope:</u> includes most occupations of ISCO-08 Major Group 0, including commissioned and non-commissioned officers, and other ranks.

23. There is wide acceptance and adoption of ISCO-08 as a standard for occupational classification within international labour statistics. This promotes comparability in international reporting and exchange of statistical and administrative information concerning occupations. That said, ISCO-

²⁰ISCO-08 was adopted through a resolution of a Tripartite Meeting of Experts on Labour Statistics in December 2007 and subsequently endorsed by the Governing Body of the ILO in March 2008. It is part of the International Family of Classifications, which refers to classifications that have been reviewed and approved as guidelines by the United Nations Statistical Commission or other competent intergovernmental bodies. See: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/classifications/Family>

²¹Source: [International Standard Classification of Occupations \(ISCO\) | International Standard Classification of Occupations \(ISCO\) \(ilo.org\)](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/classifications/Family)

08 is, like its predecessors, a product of its time. The case for revising ISCO-08 was discussed during the 19th and 20th ICLS^{22,23}. At the direction of the 20th ICLS, the ILO – as the custodian for ISCO – established an expert working group and undertook to identify areas for revision to ISCO-08^{24,25}. A separate room document details the process and progress to date²⁶.

24. When integrated with the 19th ICLS forms of work framework, ISCO-08 can provide an appropriate classification scheme for distinguishing care work performed as employment, unpaid trainee work, and volunteer work²⁷.
25. Section three of this room document “*Conceptualising care work*” summarises the role of occupational classification schemes for measurement and mapping of care work in relation to the major groups and lower-level groupings and discusses some key measurement challenges.
26. The timing of the ISCO-08 revision process is fortuitous for the development of a statistical reference definition for care work and related measurement guidance. As proposed revisions to ISCO-08 crystallise, these will be imported into measurement guidance for care work, ahead of finalisation. Similarly, some proposed revisions to ISCO-08 may be optimised to enhance their relevance for care work measurement.

3.3 International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC, rev.5)

27. Experiences of mapping care work indicates that ISCO-08 classifications do not always suffice in isolation for the identification of *care work* in the above forms of work. In such cases, it is necessary to combine information for ISCO-08 with information classified according to the *International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities* (ISIC).

► Table 2 ISIC (rev.5) sections²⁸

ISIC Sections (rev.5)			
A.	Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	L.	Financial and insurance activities
B.	Mining and quarrying	M.	Real estate activities
C.	Manufacturing	N.	Professional, scientific, and technical activities
D.	Electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply	O.	Administrative and support service activities
E.	Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	P.	Public administration and defence; compulsory social security
F.	Construction	Q.	Education
G.	Wholesale and retail trade	R.	Human health and social work activities
H.	Transportation and storage	S.	Arts, sports, and recreation
I.	Accommodation and food service activities	T.	Other service activities
J.	Publishing, broadcasting, and content production and distribution activities	U.	Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing
K.	Telecommunications, computer programming, consultancy, computing infrastructure, and other information service activities	V.	Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies

²²The document is available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_221637.pdf

²³The document is available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_636056.pdf

²⁴The ILO, as the ISCO custodian, is responsible for the ISCO revision process. ILO publishes materials and resources to support ISCO implementation, and actively provides capacity building and technical assistance to users, including countries, agencies and others.

²⁵The document is available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_651209.pdf

²⁶ILO (2023) [Room document 18 – The International Standard Classification of Occupations \(ISCO-08\): recent developments and revision](#)

²⁷ILO (2022) [Volunteer Work Measurement Guide](#) describes the utility of ISCO-08 for the classification of volunteer activities

²⁸[ISIC Rev.4, page 59, UNSD – Revision of ISIC](#)

28. ISIC classifies economic activities according to industry, based on a four-level hierarchical scheme. Table two summarises the industry *sections* that form the highest level in the scheme.
29. ISIC is very widely implemented in national classification systems for official statistics. ISIC (rev.5), the latest edition of the scheme, was adopted at the 54th Session of the *United Nations Statistical Commission* in March 2023²⁹, following extensive global consultations led by the UN Statistical Division (UNSD), the custodian agency for ISIC.³⁰ ISIC (rev. 5) is organised around 22 one-letter *sections*, disaggregated into 87 two-digit *divisions*, 256 three-digit *groups*, and 461 four-digit *classes*³¹.
30. Some lag in adoption of ISIC (rev. 5) is to be expected, as with any revision to international statistical classification schemes. Parallel editions are, therefore, likely to be in operation for some time, as countries transition from ISIC (rev.4), and will need to be accounted for in the production of guidance for the measurement of care work. However, the timing of this update means that work to develop a definition of care work, and related measurement guidance benefits from having a new release of key standards for classification from the outset – so maximising the relevance and longevity of the guidance in advance of future revisions.
31. Section three of this room document “*Conceptualising care work*” summarises the role of industry classification (in combination with occupational classification) for measurement and mapping of care work in relation to the major sections and lower-level groupings, and discusses some key measurement challenges.

3.4 International classification of activities for time-use statistics (ICATUS-16)

32. Occupation (e.g., ISCO-08) and industry (e.g., ISIC rev.4, rev.5) classifications permit care work to be distinguished when performed as employment, unpaid trainee work, and volunteer work. Employment is recorded as standard in national LFS and at least part if not all of unpaid trainee work can typically be identified. Information on volunteer work can be collected through an add-on module to a labour force survey or another parent survey, or through dedicated volunteer work surveys.
33. The identification of care work performed as own-use production (*own-use provision of services*), which accounts for a substantial proportion of all *care work*, relies on *time-use data*. Historically, time-use data have been collected using dedicated time-use surveys, but there is increasing adoption of modular approaches. A separate room document describes the development and features of newly released *light time-use measurement* add-on modules for attachment to LFS³².
34. Efforts to simplify and modernise time-use measurement have intensified in recent years, motivated, in large part, by renewed efforts to measure the volume, distribution, and contributions of *own-use provision of services work (unpaid domestic and care work)*. The release, in 2017, of the *International Classification of Activities for Time-Use Statistics (ICATUS-16)* was a major advance for the standardisation and international comparability of time-use data.

²⁹UNSC (2023) *Report on the fifty-fourth session*, United Nations Statistical Commission, New York, [E/2023/24-E/CN.3/2023/37](#), page 20

³⁰The broad structure of ISIC Rev. 5 at the Section level, Division level and Group level was endorsed by the UNSC in March 2022. The complete draft structure, including finalization of the structure at the Class level was adopted by the UNSC in March 2023.

³¹[International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities \(ISIC\), Revision 4 UNSD — Revision of ISIC](#). This compares with ISIC (rev.4) 21 sections, 88 divisions, 238 groups and 419 classes ([ISIC Revision 4 \(un.org\)](#): p12).

³²This work is reported in a separate room document. ILO (2023) Room-Documents 7 [New modular LFS tools for statistics on own use provision of services](#)

35. ICATUS-16 is a three-level hierarchically organised classification scheme with 9 *major divisions* (one digit), disaggregated across 56 *divisions* (two-digit), and 165 *groups* (three digit). The scheme is harmonised to the SNA (2008) production boundary and general production boundary, and to the 19th ICLS forms of work framework. Table 3 lists the nine major divisions and summarises their relationship to the 19th ICLS forms of work framework and the SNA (2008). ICATUS-16 provides a scheme for the classification of all activities performed by persons.

► **Table 3 ICATUS Major Divisions³³**

ICATUS Major Divisions	19th ICLS forms of work framework. (SNA (2008) production boundary)
1 Employment and related activities	Employment (work for pay or profit) (Within SNA (2008) Production Boundary)
2 Production of goods for own final use	Own-use production work: Production of goods. (Within SNA (2008) Production Boundary)
3 Unpaid domestic services for household and family members	Own-use production work: Provision of services. (Inside SNA (2008) <i>General</i> Production Boundary)
4 Unpaid caregiving services for household and family members	Own-use production work: Provision of services. (Inside SNA (2008) <i>General</i> Production Boundary)
5 Unpaid volunteer, trainee, and other unpaid work	Volunteer work (organisation based) Volunteer work (Direct volunteering producing goods) Unpaid trainee work Other work activities (Within SNA (2008) Production Boundary) Volunteer work (Direct volunteering providing services) (Inside SNA (2008) <i>General</i> Production Boundary)
6 Learning	N/a (Outside SNA general production boundary)
7 Socializing and communication, community participation, and religious practice	N/a (Outside SNA general production boundary)
8 Culture, leisure, mass media and sports practices	N/a (Outside SNA general production boundary)
9 Self-care and maintenance	N/a (Outside SNA general production boundary)

36. Countries are increasingly adopting ICATUS-16 for their time-use surveys or designing / adapting their national classifications to align to ICATUS-16. ICATUS is broadly comparable with established regional classifications, including the *Harmonised European Time Use Survey* (HETUS) classification scheme and the *Classification of Time-Use Activities for Latin America and the Caribbean* (CAUTAL) scheme. Though some variation remains among these schemes, they are largely interoperable³⁴.

37. Section three of this room document “*Conceptualising care work*” summarises the use of time-use data and ICATUS-16 classifications for measurement and mapping of care work performed as own-use provision of services / unpaid domestic and care work.

³³Source: UN (2021), *International Classification of Activities for Time-Use Statistics 2016*, United Nations, 2021, [eISBN: 978-92-1-045150-5](#)

³⁴UN (2021), *International Classification of Activities for Time-Use Statistics 2016*, United Nations, 2021, [eISBN: 978-92-1-045150-5](#), annex 1.

4. Conceptualising care work

38. In 2018, the ILO published a seminal report, titled “*Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work*”.³⁵ The report combined data for over 100 countries, and from multiple sources – primarily labour force surveys and time-use surveys, to produce a detailed review of the “*challenges and opportunities of integrating the care economy into labour market analysis*”. The report surveyed the landscape of both paid and unpaid care work, an approach grounded in the 19th ICLS *forms of work framework*.
39. The concepts, categories, and measurement approaches elaborated in the report provide an initial foundation for the development of a statistical definition of care work.
40. The report sets out a comprehensive and holistic concept of *care work*, whereby *care work* refers to a wide range of “*activities and relations involved in meeting the physical, psychological, and emotional needs of adults and children, old and young*”. This broad conception of *care work* acknowledges that requirements for care extend across the life cycle: “*New-borns and young people...adults...[and]...older persons [all] have physical, psychological, cognitive and emotional needs and require varying degrees of protection, care, or support*”.³⁶
41. Two “broad kinds” of *care work* are distinguished (recognising that they can be difficult to distinguish in practice), based on the extent of interaction involved between caregiver and care-recipient. *Direct care* relates to inter-personal or relational dimensions of care, with direct interaction between caregiver and care recipient. Examples include physical care (feeding, bathing, providing medical attention, etc.). *Indirect care* refers to activities which involve no such interaction, but which are important pre-conditions for direct care. Examples include cleaning, cooking, laundry, and household management and maintenance. The direct / indirect care distinction is a well-established approach in research on care work and the care economy³⁷.
42. At a broad level, the conceptual contours of *care work* are subject to emerging consensus. Certain considerations complicate the delineation of the boundaries between care work and non-care work in practice, however. First, care work cuts across different *forms of paid and unpaid work* and is undertaken in a wide variety of economic units (private homes, communities, market and non-market enterprises). Identical care work activities may be performed, in identical economic units, as paid or unpaid work, and as formal or informal work. Conversely, activities classified as care work when performed as one or another form of work may be reasonably excluded from the category of care work when performed as another form of work. For example, activities such as filing and accounting, interior design, or minor repairs may be classified as care work when performed as own-use provision of services but excluded from classifications of care work within employment.
43. A further complication is that data on care work often require a combination of different measurement sources (often labour force surveys and time-use surveys). As efforts to measure, map, and monitor *care work* have proliferated and intensified, the need for a consistent definition of *care work*, capable of retaining meaning and analytical coherence when applied to different situations, contexts, and settings has become increasingly evident. As discussed below the issues to be addressed are somewhat different for paid and unpaid care work.

³⁵ILO (2018) *Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work*, International Labour Office, Geneva: ILO, 2018. ISBN: [978-92-2-131643-5](#)

³⁶ILO (2018) *Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work*, International Labour Office, Geneva: ILO, 2018. ISBN: [978-92-2-131643-5](#), page 6.

³⁷ILO (2018) *Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work*, International Labour Office, Geneva: ILO, 2018. ISBN: [978-92-2-131643-5](#), page 6.

4.1 Defining and measuring care work: Unpaid care work

44. As it is generally understood and operationalised (in the absence of internationally agreed standards), *unpaid care work* is *care work* that is performed without expectation of pay or profit. With reference to the 19th ICLS forms of work framework, most unpaid care work occurs as *own use provision of services* (also termed *unpaid domestic and care work*). It is intra-household and/or intra-familial, undertaken *by and for* members of the same household or *by and for* relatives living elsewhere.
45. However, not all unpaid care work takes place within household or kin networks. It is also routinely provided within wider communities or networks, via *direct-* or *organisation-based volunteering*, and can also occur as *unpaid trainee work*³⁸.
46. The measurement of unpaid care work has been accorded new priority in official statistics in recent years³⁹. This has occurred as part of a wider revitalisation of interest in the topic in national and international policy circles.
47. Since 2015, the SDGs have mandated countries to produce statistics on the “proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location” (SDG indicator 5.4.1), while also recognising a central role for volunteer work for the realisation of the wider 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda⁴⁰.
48. Nationally, data on unpaid care work has relevance for a wide range of public policy areas, especially when collected alongside data on labour force participation and employment. Such data provide for a much fuller treatment of gender-based differences and inequities, while also permitting a fuller analysis of the contribution of unpaid work to national economies, alongside monitoring of transitions in the social organization of care work, from unpaid to market-based provision (or vice versa).
49. Current international standards for labour statistics provide a strong conceptual framework for the measurement of unpaid care work in labour force surveys, complemented by time-use data in the case of *own use provision of service* (OPS) work⁴¹.
50. Within the 19th ICLS forms of work framework, *own use provision of service work* is a sub-set of *own-use production work*. *Own use production* refers to productive activities for own final use. That is, production of goods or provision of services for “where the intended destination of the output is mainly for final use by the producer...or final consumption by household members, or by family members living in other households”⁴². Four separate “activity clusters” are distinguished within the sub-category of OPS, shown in table 4 below.
51. ICATUS-16, the internationally agreed classification scheme for time-use statistics, is harmonised to the 19th ICLS forms of work framework (notwithstanding minor exceptions, noted in a separate room document⁴³). Table 4 indicates the ICATUS major domains relevant for the measurement of own use provision of services, mapped to OPS activity clusters.

³⁸Unpaid care work may also take the form of “other work activities” within the 19th ICLS forms of work framework, for instance court mandated community work.

³⁹ILO (2013) ICLS-Resolution-I-[STATI-131114-1], 5: 22D.

⁴⁰United Nations (2015) *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* [A/RES/70/1](#), United Nations, New York, 2015

⁴¹As noted above, in section 3.4, time-use data are the main source of information on *own-use provision of service work*

⁴²ILO (2013) ICLS-Resolution-I-[STATI-131114-1], 5: 22D.

⁴³This work is reported in a separate room document. ILO (2023) [Room document 6 – Updates to the resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization](#)

► **Table 4 Own-use provision of service work reflected in ICATUS divisions.**

19 th ICLS forms of work framework: Own use provision of services, Activity clusters	Corresponding ICATUS-16 Divisions
(i) Household accounting and management, purchasing and/or transporting goods	ICATUS Major Division 3: <i>Unpaid domestic services for household and family members</i> ICATUS Divisions (3.) 35: Household management for own final use 37: Shopping for own household and family members 38: Travelling, moving, transporting, or accompanying goods or persons related to unpaid domestic services for household and family members 39: Other unpaid domestic services for household and family members
(ii) Preparing and/or serving meals, household waste disposal and Recycling	ICATUS Divisions at 2-digit (3.) 31: Food and meals management and preparation 32: [Cleaning and maintenance of own dwelling and surroundings] ⁴⁴ 39: Other unpaid domestic services for household and family members
(iii) Cleaning, decorating, and maintaining one's own dwelling or premises, durables and other goods, and gardening	32: Cleaning and maintenance of own dwelling and surroundings 33: Do-it-yourself decoration, maintenance, and repair 34: Care and maintenance of textiles and footwear 39: Other unpaid domestic services for household and family members
(iv) Childcare and instruction, transporting and caring for elderly, dependent or other household members and domestic animals or pets, etc.	ICATUS Major Division 4: <i>Unpaid caregiving services for household and family members</i> ICATUS Divisions (4.) 41: Childcare and instruction 42: Care for dependent adults 43: Help for non-dependent adult household and family members 44: Travelling and accompanying goods or persons related to unpaid caregiving services for household and family members 49: Other activities related to unpaid caregiving services for household and family members ICATUS Divisions (3.) 36: [Pet care] ⁴⁵

52. The 19th ICLS standards specify the production of three headline statistical indicators for OPS: These are: headcounts, participation rates, and volume measures, disaggregated *by activity cluster*⁴⁶.

53. This is in line with the indicators specified in the 19th ICLS for other forms of work (i.e., employment, own-use producers of goods, unpaid trainees, and volunteer workers (the latter disaggregated by type of economic unit)⁴⁷. In all cases, computation of indicators is specified “for the population as a whole and disaggregated by sex, specified age groups (including

⁴⁴Slight misalignment between the content of the activity cluster and ICATUS groups

⁴⁵Slight misalignment between the content of the activity cluster and ICATUS groups

⁴⁶ILO (2013) ICLS-Resolution-I-[STATI-131114-1], 15: 74B.

⁴⁷ILO (2013) ICLS-Resolution-I-[STATI-131114-1], 15: 74A, 74C, 74D

separate categories for youth)⁴⁸, level of educational attainment, geographic region, urban and rural areas, and other relevant characteristics taking account of the statistical precision of the estimates”.⁴⁹

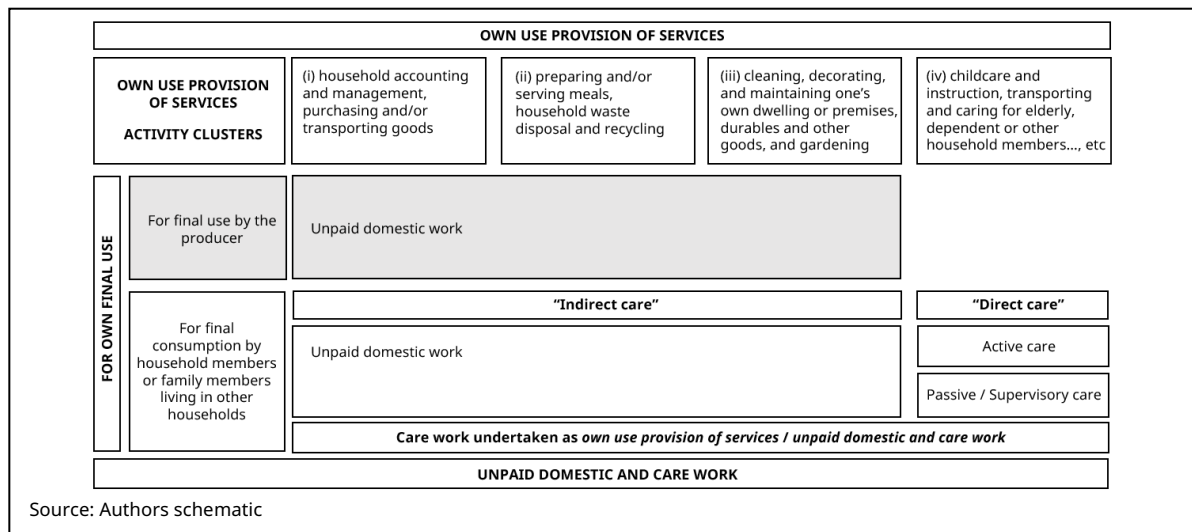
54. The ability to compute comparable indicators for multiple forms of work, based on a single data source, such as a labour force survey, is an important development and a focus of the ILOs strategy to develop tools and guidance to support implementation of the standards.
55. Historically, data availability has been a key challenge for the measurement of OPS. The complexity of the measurement source - the independent time-use survey - has tended to deter regular implementation outside of certain regions (Europe, North America, Australia). International comparability of data has also been an issue, in the absence of standardised methods and approaches for time-use measurement. Recent years have seen major advances in international harmonisation, as well as wider uptake, in for instance, the Latin America and the Caribbean region, and investments by countries in South Asia and Africa regions.
56. Coordinated work at the regional and global level to simplify and modernise time-use measurement, and to standardise (or harmonise) international approaches promise further advances to come. These include, but not limited to, the release of the ILO's add-on light time-use modules – and related guidance and technical assistance - for (intermittent) attachment to LFS's (in selected countries and circumstances).⁵⁰
57. The anticipated release of updated UN guidance on the measurement of time-use (to which the ILOs light time-use modules are aligned), together with *minimum harmonised instruments* for independent time-use surveys in 2024 can be expected to further intensify national interest and implementation of time-use surveys.
58. Whether countries opt for modular or independent time-use measurement – or adopt both with complementary frequencies - financial resources and, in countries with limited prior experience, capacity building and technical support are likely to continue to play a definitive role in uptake.
59. Setting aside data availability, some conceptual and measurement considerations remain relevant to the development of a statistical reference definition of care work and related measurement frameworks.
60. At a conceptual level, one important consideration relates to whether the boundaries of OPS and *care work* performed as OPS can reasonably be treated as identical for the purposes of measurement.
61. Figure two provides a provisional mapping of OPS (unpaid domestic and care work) to *care work* performed as OPS.

⁴⁸The relevant guidance on disaggregation by age-band states: *Five-year age bands should be used for the main aggregates, where the lowest age bracket refers to persons aged 15–19 years and the highest age bracket to persons aged 75 years and above. Where concerns regarding the precision of the estimates impede disaggregation by five-year age bands, broader bands may be used; in all cases these should include 15–24 years, 25–34 years, 35–54 years, 55–64 years, 65–74 years and 75 years and above* (ILO (2013) ICLS-Resolution-I-[STATI-131114-1] 18:93)

⁴⁹ILO (2013) ICLS-Resolution-I-[STATI-131114-1], 14: 71.

⁵⁰Reported in a separate room document. ILO (2023) [Room document 6 – Updates to the resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization](#)

► **Figure 2: Provisional mapping of OPS / unpaid domestic and care work to “care work”**



62. At a measurement level, it may be important to distinguish between unpaid domestic work performed for (just) oneself and unpaid domestic work performed for one's household or family members (perhaps as well as oneself). This distinction may be of particular relevance for sub-group analysis of inequalities in the distribution and volume of care work performed as OPS. Such an approach would be consistent with the analysis of care work in other forms of work.
63. In practice, data limitations may restrict the extent to which *care work performed as OPS* can be identified as a sub-set of OPS, though this does not lessen the need for clear conceptual constructs. The adoption of international standards, guidelines, and model instruments may enable data to be suitably disaggregated for this purpose in the future.

► **Box 1 Considerations for standard setting: Care work undertaken as own-use provision of services.**

Conceptual considerations for standard setting

- Defining the boundaries of care work performed as OPS / unpaid domestic and care work.
- Assessing the case for the definition of sub-categories of care work performed as OPS and its providers.
- Defining appropriate terminology for care work performed as OPS and its providers.

Measurement considerations for standard setting

- Defining measurement criteria for the concept of care work performed as OPS.
- Developing indicator frameworks and recommended sub-groups for disaggregation.

Data availability

- Mapping the extent to which existing – and forthcoming – data sources are compatible with the concept(s) of care work performed as OPS.

64. Considerations related to the measurement of care work as a sub-set of other unpaid forms of work (volunteer work and unpaid trainee work) are addressed in section 3.2, below.

4.2 Defining and measuring care work: Paid care work

65. Paid care work refers to care work undertaken as employment. Here the term “employment” is used in line with the reference definition contained in Resolution I of the 19th ICLS. Under the previous (13th ICLS) standards, the concept of employment was expansive, collapsing all activities within the SNA (2008) production boundary (figure one) within a single “employment”

category. The 19th ICLS standards narrowed the concept of employment to encompass only “work performed for pay of profit”⁵¹.

66. As noted above, labour force surveys are the main data source for identifying care work performed as employment. Labour force surveys record information on the occupation and industry of reported employment, as standard. The high degree of international acceptance the relevant classification schemes (ISCO and ISIC) supports international comparability.
67. There is broad consensus that information on occupation and industry classification is essential to identify care work performed as employment within the much wider category of employment. There is, however, a wide divergence of practice when it comes to determining *which* occupation and industry codes are appropriate and sufficient to identify care work performed as employment.
68. The approach developed by the ILO in the 2018 report *“Care Work and the Future of Care Jobs”* provides a conceptual starting point. Paid care work is here restricted to *“occupations providing a face-to-face service that develops the human capabilities of the care recipient”*⁵²
69. Within this formulation four separate and mutually exclusive categories of paid care work are identified based on the occupation and industry / sector of the employment, as follows:
 - (i) Care work performed [as employment] in care sectors (specified as: education, health, and social work).
 - (ii) Non care work performed [as employment] in care sectors (specified as: education, health, and social work), “as they support the provision of care services”.
 - (iii) Care work performed [as employment] in non-care sectors.
 - (iv) Domestic workers [employed by households].
70. Table five, below, summarises the ISCO-08 and ISIC (rev.4) codes corresponding to categories (i) - (iv), as adopted in the ILO’s (2018) report. This is presented to provide an illustrative example, one possible approach for the classification of paid care work as a sub-category of employment. It is not intended to be prescriptive.
71. The approach presented in table five points to several considerations for the development of a statistical definition of care work.
72. At the conceptual level, the principal consideration relates to scope. The underlying rationale for the selection of relevant occupational and industry codes requires that criteria for inclusions / exclusions are closely defined. In the absence of internationally agreed statistical standards, this presents a challenge for replication and international comparability. The above, illustrative, example, provides an explicit rationale for the inclusion / exclusion of occupations and industries, but this may be operationalised in diverse ways – or the rationale itself may be narrowed, expanded – or otherwise modified.

⁵¹NB: “remuneration may be payable directly to the person performing the work or indirectly to a household or family member” ILO (2013) ICLS-Resolution-I-[STATI-131114-1],12:28(b))

⁵²This formulation is consistent with established approaches in the literature on care work and the care economy. ILO (2018) *Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work*, International Labour Office, Geneva: ILO, 2018. ISBN: [978-92-2-131643-5](#): page 167.

► **Table 5: Example approach for the classification of care work performed as employment⁵³**

Example approach for the classification of paid care work	Corresponding ISCO-08 and ISIC (rev.4) codes (at 2-digit)
(i) Care work performed [as employment] in care sectors (specified as: education, health, and social work).	ISCO-08 22 – Health professionals 23 – Teaching professionals 32 – Health associate professionals 53 – Personal care workers ISIC (rev.4) 85 – Education 86 – Human health activities 87 – Residential care activities 88 – Social work activities without accommodation
(ii) Non care work performed [as employment] in care sectors (specified as: education, health, and social work), “as they support the provision of care services”.	ISCO-08 13 – Production and specialized services managers 26 – Legal, social, and cultural professionals 34 – Legal, social, cultural, and related associate professionals 51 – Personal service workers 91 – Cleaners and helpers ISIC (rev.4) 85 – Education 86 – Human health activities 87 – Residential care activities 88 – Social work activities without accommodation
(iii) Care work performed [as employment] in non-care sectors.	ISCO-08 22 – Health professionals 23 – Teaching professionals 32 – Health associate professionals 53 – Personal care workers ISIC (rev.4) (Excludes codes classified under (i))
(iv) Domestic workers [employed by households].	ISIC (rev.4) 97: activities of households as employers of domestic personnel

73. In recent years, the scope of paid care work has been subject to renewed interest. This has led to a proliferation of applications. In particular, the concept of *emotional labour*⁵⁴ has been applied to new arenas of paid work, resulting in an expansion of the potential scope for a concept of paid care work⁵⁵.
74. Paid care work also presents challenges for measurement. The “digit level” at which data classifications, such as occupation and industry codes, are made available impacts the extent to which it is possible to refine and delineate paid care work. Occupation and Industry data at the two-digit level will suffice for certain measurement objectives, while frustrating others.
75. A related measurement consideration relates to sample sizes and distributions. Higher levels of occupation- and industry-level aggregations may be required for reasons of data quality and respondent anonymity. In many cases, the desired disaggregation may be unachievable for a given sample size.

⁵³Source: Tabulation based on methods described in ⁵³ILO (2018) *Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work*, International Labour Office, Geneva: ILO, 2018. ISBN: [978-92-2-131643-5](#), page 169)

⁵⁴Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press

⁵⁵For instance, the project “*New Futures of Care*” spotlights the performance of “emotionally laden work in museums”, part of a broader trend to extend the concept of care work to employment in cultural institutes.

76. Box two highlights some key considerations around standard setting for the measurement of care work as employment.

► **Box 2 Considerations for standard setting: Care work undertaken as employment**

Conceptual considerations for standard setting

- Defining the boundaries of care work performed as employment, with reference to the occupation and industry in which the employment is performed, based on the latest developments in the relevant standards.
- Defining meaningful sub-categories of paid care work performed as employment, in line with existing international standards (e.g., differentiated by economic unit) and user needs (e.g., separate identification of "long-term care")
- Defining appropriate terminology for care work performed as employment.

Measurement considerations for standard setting

- Defining measurement criteria for the concept of care work performed as employment.
- Developing indicator frameworks and recommended sub-groups for disaggregation.

Data availability

- Mapping the extent to which existing – and forthcoming – data sources (primarily, but not exclusively, labour force surveys) are compatible with the concept of care work performed as employment.

77. Owing to reliance on common data sources and the similarity of measurement frameworks, any concepts, definitions, and measurement framework developed to classify paid care work as a sub-set of employment is likely to also be appropriate for application to the classification of care work performed as unpaid trainee work.
78. The delineation of care work as a sub-set of volunteer work may be similarly informed, especially when data on volunteer work is gathered via available add-on modules for attachment to LFS.
79. For these reasons, the considerations listed in box two may reasonably be extended to the standards setting process for care work performed through unpaid trainee work and volunteer work.
80. The development of international standards for care work statistics (complemented with technical guidance for implementation), based on industry and occupation codes, would, ideally, proceed in tandem with the ongoing process to identify priority areas for the revision of ISCO-08. Further, this work would, ideally incorporate parallel national, regional, and global developments and concerns, to develop an internationally agreed statistical definition of the care economy, production of comprehensive statistics on care work (paid and unpaid), those performing it, the conditions involved, and its valuation. These different streams can proceed holistically – built on the existing set of statistical standards discussed above.
81. Part of any discussion to develop standards should focus on the range of desired indicators to describe the care economy, and related methodological considerations. This could include, for example, indicators related to the number of participants, volume of work, valuation of work, conditions in which the work is performed, plus relevant disaggregation. Such considerations can ensure that a wide range of data needs can be identified and taken into account in developing the standards. This is similar to approaches taken in recent standard setting activities whereby the standards identify proposed indicators, as well as the related concepts and definitions.

5. Conclusions and points for reflection

- 82. The ICLS is invited to express its views regarding the relevance, importance, and timeliness of the proposed development of a statistical definition of care work and measurement framework, aligned to the latest international standards for labour statistics.
- 83. The ICLS is invited to indicate its support of the proposal that the ILO hosts a standard setting process on the topic of statistical definitions of care work, for reporting, discussion, and possible adoption at the 22nd ICLS.
- 84. Further to an indication of support for this proposal, the ICLS is invited to provide inputs on the potential modality of work, including the possibility to form a *Working Group of Experts*, composed of experts from ILO constituents and qualified observers, or other modalities that could be used. Countries are invited to express their interest to participate in the development process.
- 85. Countries are encouraged to adopt the latest statistical standards and guidance for labour statistics in order to advance the international comparability of data on care work.

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