

UNPAID WORK AS A POTENTIAL SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYMENT IN THE LABOUR MARKET

*Miriam Martinkovičová¹, Mariana Považanová¹,
Alena Kašćáková²*

¹ Department of Economics

² Department of Quantitative Methods and Information Systems
Matej Bel University, Banská Bystrica

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Abstract

This paper considers the problem of unpaid work in households. It focuses on the different categories of unpaid work, particularly the implementation of housework, child care and adult care. Specifically, household services, and domestic care services with included health services are designated as “white jobs” which may have the potential to create new jobs. These “white jobs” represent an untapped source of employment in the labour market.

The main objective of the paper is to explore the various social determinants influencing the decision of Slovak families to use or not use alternative market substitutes of selected categories of unpaid work with the aim of identifying the hidden potential for job opportunities in the labour market in Slovakia and the potential demand for those services.

The results of the primary research suggests that Slovak households have a potentially greater interest in procuring household services from external sources, rather than procuring personal services for themselves. In terms of the perspective demand for the above mentioned services, the research found that in this case it should be necessary to take into consideration the strong influence of traditionalism and conservatism, which affects the scope and nature of market substitute usage.

NIEODPŁATNA PRACA JAKO POTENCJALNE ŹRÓDŁO ZATRUDNIENIA NA RYNKU PRACY

Miriam Martinkovičová¹, Mariana Považanová¹, Alena Kašćáková²

¹ Katedra Ekonomii

² Katedra Metod Ilościowych i Systemów Informacyjnych
Uniwersytet Mateja Bela w Bańskiej Bystrzycy

Słowa kluczowe: nieodpłatna praca, białe miejsca pracy, opieka nad dziećmi, opieka nad osobami starszymi, usługi domowe.

Abstrakt

Artykuł dotyczy problemu nieodpłatnej pracy w domu. Zwrócono w nim uwagę na różne kategorie pracy nieodpłatnej, szczególnie na prace domowe, opiekę nad dziećmi i opiekę nad osobami starszymi. Poruszono w nim również kwestie związane z usługami domowymi oraz usługami pomocy w gospodarstwach domowych, które wraz z usługami opieki zdrowotnej są określane jako „białe miejsca pracy”, stanowiące niewykorzystane źródła zatrudnienia na rynku pracy.

Głównym celem pracy było zbadanie różnych czynników społecznych wpływających na decyzje rodzin słowackich o korzystaniu lub niekorzystaniu z wybranych kategorii nieodpłatnej pracy, identyfikacja ukrytych możliwości zatrudnienia na rynku pracy w Słowacji oraz potencjalnego popytu na te usługi.

Wyniki badań wskazują, że słowackie gospodarstwa domowe są bardziej zainteresowane korzystaniem z usług innych gospodarstw domowych niż świadczeniem usług domowych we własnym zakresie. Badania wykazały również, że silny wpływ na rozmiary potencjalnego popytu na tego typu usługi ma tradycjonalizm i konserwatyzm.

Introduction

The current global economic crisis can be evaluated and assessed from various aspects. In most cases the results of this analysis is finding the significant negative impacts on production, trade, finance or consumption. The most significant, in terms of being the most sensitive, are the effects that occur in the context of direct distortion or in the restriction of production, which then reduces the number of jobs and increases layoffs. Job loss, unemployed status, is becoming a potential threat and a nightmare for people of working age in the labour markets of most national economies, including Slovakia, as evidenced by the available statistics.

The economic activity rate of people 15 to 64 years of age in Slovakia in the years 1998–2011 was on average of 58.74%. The lowest value of 56.8% was recorded in Slovakia in the years 2000–2002 and the highest value of 62.3% in 2008 (Eurostat 2012a). Compared with those statistics, the unemployment rate for the same period was on average 15.11%, the lowest unemployment rates 9.53% was in 2008 and highest rate of 19.28% was recorded in 2001 (Eurostat 2012b). The current unemployment rate in Slovakia for the first quarter of 2013 reached 14.53% (Statistical Office 2013). With regard to the above mentioned data, experts warn that the domestic labour market has generated for its citizens only 45% of job opportunities in the years 2000 – 2006, the remaining job opportunities were created abroad. This figure is interesting from the point of view that it refers to the period when the economic crisis was not yet a reality of our daily lives. In relation to the expression of negative impacts of the ongoing crisis, predictions are also appearing that the natural mechanisms of the open labor market tend not to be able to generate jobs to a greater extent even in the near future (DIVINSKÝ, POPJAKOVÁ 2007). It is therefore important to examine the actual dynamics of

job creation and job destruction in the domestic labor market and also its changing nature.

Underlying assumptions and objectives of the research

We can characterize the current stage of development of human society mainly by naming societal attributes such as postindustrial, information, knowledge or supersymbolic society. The fundamental changes relate to lifestyle as a whole. The changes in the labour market involve applying and adapting to changing demands and criteria of the labor market. The general characteristics of the labour market and its trends of development in the near future include:

- permanently increasing requirements of an individuals mental skills necessary for success in the labour market (computer skills, language skills, knowledge of different fields),
- flexible adaptation to rapid changes in production and the need for requalification during working career,
 - acceptance of parallel (sub) workloads,
 - increased importance placed upon lifelong learning for individuals,
 - the replacement of a low-skilled workforce with modern labour technology,
 - a demand for a highly skilled workforce in the labour market (KLINEC et al., 2009, KELLER 2010, STANEK 2009, RIEVAJOVÁ 2009, URAMOVÁ-TUSCHLOVÁ 2012).

Given the complexity and parallelism of the specific factors in the current labour market it is difficult to comprehend the interplay of all these factors. According to experts, the world is divided into countries that are able to adapt to these changes, countries which have a problem with adaptation, and countries that fail to adapt (KLINEC et al. 2009). Those pressures significantly affect the overall compatibility of working-age people in the labour market. At the same time, however, the pressures are causing a paradoxical phenomenon. While the information society requires flexible, educated and skilled computer users, in order to meet these enormous demands, society tends to commit a so called “demographic suicide” (HAŠKOVÁ 2009, POTANČOKOVÁ 2009). On the other hand, people who have few or no applicable skills are growing in number. They become unemployable and often their entire existence, and also the existence of their more numerous offspring, pose a greater burden on active workers. (BEDNARIK et al. 2005) To put this in context, it has been indicated that up to 27.3% of respondents who are the beneficiaries of government poverty programs reported that the main cause of their lack of contact with the labour market was maternity and/or parental leave.

We can identify the main determinants of the current economic crisis, which directly or indirectly affects national labour markets and thus the unemployment rate as follows:

1. streamlining production and the reduction of the workforce,
2. increasing demand for high skilled labour,
3. a quantitative increase in groups of people, who hardly possess any applicable skills for the labor market in this new system
4. increasing fertility rates among people with lower levels of labour market participation and low levels of education.

These trends have their impact on the character of development of the welfare state in many ways. Usually public debate is concerned with an increase in social spending. The new knowledge indicates that people who are fully integrated in the information society will require a perceptible reduction of social solidarity, in order to avoid supporting those who are dependent on this solidarity for a long time. KELLER (2010) even argues that an increase of selfishness and individualism will reduce the welfare state.

Those facts, statistics and forecast trends are not optimistic or positive. Therefore, it is necessary to search and find potential reserves or previously untapped possibilities of new job creation, ideally suited to those social groups who hardly possess any applicable skills for the modern labor market

The main objective of this paper is to explore the various social determinants influencing the decision of Slovak families to use or not use alternative market substitutes. On this basis, the hidden potential job opportunities in the labour market and the demand for those services may be evaluated.

Research methods and methodology

Efforts to promote and create new job opportunities for national labor markets in the coming years will be among the priorities of the EU. The creation of new jobs at a time of fiscal consolidation is part of a strategy designed to help increase the employment rate in the 20–64 year age group to a level of 75% by 2020 (European Commission 2012). In this context, member states should focus their attention into several areas. One of them is to create initiatives that facilitate the development of the sectors with the greatest potential for job creation. The health sector and social services sector are included in this area. Activities that contribute to the well-being of families and individuals in the home, such as care services (care for adults and children) and household services, have a significant and important potential in terms of job creation. Domestic care services are part of the so-called. “white jobs” along with the health services and activities in institutional care and service.

Household services are on the border of this category. It is expected that the demand for care services and household services will increase due to the important trend of an aging population in all member states and also due to the current and expected decline in the number of potential caregivers in families.

The reasons why it is precisely these type of services for which support at the official labour market is extremely urgent are the following:

- Better balance between work and private life, which can be achieved by outsourcing more routine tasks done at home, as well as care for children and the elderly. Accessible and affordable care services are also a prerequisite for increasing female participation in the labour market.

- Creating employment opportunities for people with relatively low skills, particularly in terms of service performance in households that are at a low cost to public finances. The support of these services within the formal economy will bring these services out of the shadow economy. Job creation is also a factor in assessing the costs of various options of long-term care.

- Improving the quality of care due to the fact that workers have the right skills and work in good working conditions and that service providers are subject to strict quality controls.

It is assumed that the transfer of these services from the informal economy to the formal economy will also contribute to the creation and growth of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, since many of these services are provided by the self-employed and small businesses.

This idea has several dimensions which are necessary to take into account for its gradual implementation. In particular it is important to clearly specify those types of activities which will be considered as being appropriate for transfer into the category of formal work. It is the specification of the particular activities currently carried out within the unpaid work in households that are family members and relatives willing to move to the official market. As shown by surveys (MARTINKOVIČOVÁ, KÍKA 2012) with respect to social motives, such factors on which the household members decide which activities they would still like to make themselves through unpaid work in their own families (the education of children, care for sick and elderly parents, traditional household chores) play an important role. These factors fundamentally affect the actual demand for such services and activities, in case these services will be outsourced. Real demand is simultaneously determined by the place of residence, and the location of the household. Regional disparities in economic development are unquestionable and also need to be taken into account. The present state of knowledge indicates that residents of smaller towns and municipalities; will be more cautious and conservative in this respect. On the contrary, the residents of larger cities have increased requirements for these types of market services. The level of education is undoubtedly

a non-negligible determinant of the use or non-use of market substitutes in personal and household services. From the above mentioned characteristics of the current job market and the prospects for its development we can conclude that people with higher education have a significantly higher chance of employment in the official labor market, which naturally reduces the time they spend on running the household and taking care of its members. Conversely, people with lower educational attainment are less compatible with the requirements of the labour market. They are at greater risk of joblessness, which in turn paradoxically creates for them the potential to spend more time on personal home care, or caring for children and/or adults. We can therefore expect that these target groups will not saturate the demand for personal services offered by the official market, which ultimately “block” the creation of new (official) jobs in the formal market.

The categorization of different types of unpaid work in the household shows precisely that housework and childcare are among the most time consuming activities. Table one shows the results of the primary research concerning unpaid work in Slovak households which has been continuously conducted by a team of experts from EF UMB. The most recent data available is from the last phase of research which was conducted on a sample of 1,902 respondents and 861 households in the Slovak Republic in the period of April-May 2013 (Table 1).

Table 1
Number of hours per week devoted to selected types of unpaid work in the household

Specification	Food preparation	Cleaning	Production and repair of textiles	Cultivation of ornamental plants	Pet care	Repair and maintenance services	Shopping services	Childcare	
N	Valid	860	859	849	826	813	822	858	776
	Missing	1	2	12	35	48	39	3	85
Mean	12.287	9.523	3.749	3.56	4.0646	2.1058	7.6713	11.913	
Specification	Caring for adults	Volunteering	Commercial cultivation of plants	Livestock farming	Construction and reconstruction	Unpaid work without commercial exploitation	Total unpaid work per week		
N	Valid	759	758	804	760	773	860	860	
	Missing	102	103	57	101	88	1	1	
Mean	2.3332	0.6367	3.1173	1.7234	1.6476	55.8	61.718		

Source: VEGA 1/0935/13. Unpaid work as a potential source of socio-economic development and determinant of individual well-being. EF UMB, 2013

We suggested firstly that it is necessary to specify the categories in more detail, which include personal services and household services. The working paper of the European Commission (EC, 2012b) includes under this term a “broad range of activities that contribute to the well-being of families and individuals and ranks among it: child care, long-term care for the elderly and persons with disabilities, housekeeping, tutoring, household repairs, gardening, ICT and other household chores”.

Personal services and household services have a number of interesting characteristics in terms of employment policy:

- low import share (activities carried out on the spot), which means low import loss in the case of public intervention,
- a high share of employment, which in the case of public support is a potentially important impact on job creation,
- different levels of requirements for technical skills (in some areas of the “self-help activities” there are higher requirements for care), but in general, a need for adequate levels of e-skills and social skills,
- low productivity in some specific operations but indirect productivity growth in the cases where customers of personal and household services can focus more on their work, which has higher productivity,
- since there is predominance of illegal workers in these sectors, public intervention is unlikely to lead to a shift of employment from other sectors,
- a growing need for these services due to the aging population and the need to increase women’s participation in the labor market.

Activities in the field of personal services and household services help to improve the balance between work and private life and also provide benefits through a higher number of hours worked in the labour market or on a return to the labour market. Personal services and household services are traditionally provided in households by women, mainly. Some of these services were gradually externalized outside the household (through service facilities such as catering, laundry facilities, kindergartens and homes for the elderly) or stayed within households through outside workers who were directly or indirectly employed by the household. A significant part of these activities still remain outside the formal market, thus creating the potential for official employment.

Results and discussion

The facts and processed data allow clear underlying assumptions relating to the analysis of demand and the real possibility of outsourcing of selected types of unpaid work in Slovak households. Based on the above-defined nature of personal services and household services we interpret the existing results

with respect to the variables: the place of residence, age and education of respondents. This, in our opinion, may significantly influence the decisions of households and their members on the use of selected types of unpaid work which falls under the classification of observation services, offered by the market. The following tables (2–4) show the basic structure of respondents by age, education and place of residence.

Table 2

Identification of respondents with respect to place of residence

	Specification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	town + municipality	1,472	77.4	77.4	77.4
	the regional seat	430	22.6	22.6	100
	total	1,902	100	100	–

Source: VEGA 1/0935/13. Unpaid work as a potential source of socio-economic development and determinant of individual well-being. EF UMB, 2013.

Table 3

Identification of respondents with respect to age group

	Specification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 (15 – 25)	565	29.7	29.7	29.7
	2 (26 – 40)	451	23.7	23.7	53.4
	3 (41 – 64)	603	31.7	31.7	85.1
	4 (65 or older)	284	14.9	14.9	100
	total	1,902	100	100	–

Source: VEGA 1/0935/13. Unpaid work as a potential source of socio-economic development and determinant of individual well-being. EF UMB, 2013.

Table 4

Identification of respondents with respect to education

	Specification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	without education	5	0.3	0.3	0.3
	basic education	117	6.1	6.1	6.4
	secondary 1	303	15.9	15.9	22.3
	secondary 2	629	33.1	33.1	55.4
	secondary 3	87	4.6	4.6	59.9
	higher education	762	40.1	40.1	100
	total	1,902	100	100	–

Source: VEGA 1/0935/13. Unpaid work as a potential source of socio-economic development and determinant of individual well-being. EF UMB, 2013.

Table 5
Reasons for use/potential use of market service given the place of residence (number of respondents)

Specification	Food preparation		Cleaning		Cultivation of ornamental plants		Repair and maintenance services		Childcare		Caring for adults	
	town and municipality	the regional seat	town and municipality	the regional seat	town and municipality	the regional seat	town and municipality	the regional seat	town and municipality	the regional seat	town and municipality	the regional seat
Professional and quality	19 / 0	9 / 0	1 / 0	10 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	87 / 2	45 / 5	12 / 0	0 / 0	1 / 8	1 / 0
Fast	83 / 5	28 / 0	18 / 4	0 / 0	11 /	0 / 0	26 / 2	0 / 0	1 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0
Cannot be provided by the family	17 / 29	1 / 2	10 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	153 / 12	48 / 5	7 / 0	1 / 0	3 / 1	3 / 0
Reasonably Priced	94 / 15	29 / 3	0 / 23	0 / 0	0 / 19	0 / 0	247 / 4	8 / 0	0 / 0	1 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0
Time saving	192 / 6	141 / 0	7 / 1	0 / 12	0 / 1	0 / 0	21 / 5	5 / 7	1 / 1	0 / 0	1 / 1	1 / 0
Allow to devote more time to career	37 / 0	17 / 0	0 / 4	0 / 8	0 / 0	0 / 0	4 / 0	0 / 1	3 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 1	0 / 1
Available	34 / 1	8 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	7 / 4	0 / 0	2 / 1	0 / 0	0 / 1	0 / 0
Other	40 / 1	6 / 0	0 / 3	0 / 3	0 / 2	0 / 4	3 / 3	0 / 0	0 / 4	0 / 3	9 / 2	9 / 3

Source: VEGA 1/0935/13. Unpaid work as a potential source of socio-economic development and determinant of individual well-being. EF UMB, 2013.

The research was conducted through a questionnaire which consisted of 9 modules, where the majority of the modules precisely monitored the current issue of the use, potential use or non-use of market substitutes for each type of unpaid work.

In addition, the research also aimed to identify the reasons that lead household members to the decision to use or reject opportunities to outsource certain activities and services that fall under the classification of personal services and household services. Prepared frequency tables document the first significant imbalances between respondents in the current use of market services. As shown in Table 5, the highest concern was regarding the use of market services including the category of food preparation and repair and maintenance (equipment, furniture and automobile).

The interesting thing is that these services are being used mostly by respondents from towns and municipalities, rather than by respondents from the regional seats. This observation could be due to the fact that the proportion of surveyed households and their members was greater in the category of town and municipalities. The main reasons for the interest in the most utilized services provided by the market include: time savings, affordability, speed, professionalism and quality, but also the fact that the respondents cannot provide these services within the family. The reference terms show potential support for business development in areas that would be able to provide these types of services in the official market. It is interesting to note that a minimum number of respondents described the various categories (except cooking) at affordable, in terms of distance, diversity and capacity. It is also a signal to increase their awareness of potential clients or customers.

Table 6 captures another context. It reveals the non-use of market services by respondents. According to the results, we can divide identified motives into two groups. The first, and most massive group, is represented by the opinion that respondents are able to provide a substantial part of the activities related to running a household by themselves, mostly in the category of cleaning, the planting of ornamental plants and food preparation. These activities are more prevalent in towns and municipalities than in the regional seats. This group of conservative reasons can include an attitude that the respondents still prefer to carry out those actions and activities in their home even in the presence of market substitutes. Here we can also add child and adult care to the reported categories of unpaid work. The support of these activities was dominant in the towns and municipalities. The second group of observed reasons is the opinion that respondents do not perform those types of unpaid work. Within this group are the most labeled following categories of care (municipality – 687 respondents) and care for adults (municipality – 744 respondents).

Table 6
Reasons for non-use of market services with regard to the place of residence (number of respondents)

Specification	Food preparation		Cleaning		Cultivation of ornamental plants		Repair and maintenance services		Childcare		Caring for adults	
	town and municipality	the seat of the region	town and municipality	the seat of the region	town and municipality	the seat of the region	town and municipality	the seat of the region	town and municipality	the seat of the region	town and municipality	the seat of the region
Professional and quality	6	0	0	0	4	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
Priced unavailable	46	8	77	2	23	10	10	1	0	0	3	0
Inflexible and lengthy	1	0	10	0	2	0	1	6	0	0	7	0
Unavailable	4	0	13	1	5	0	9	1	0	0	6	0
Can arrange them by yourself	480	106	836	303	568	104	312	86	214	28	142	37
Do not create more opportunity to pursue career	1	1	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Do not spare time	5	1	0	0	8	1	0	3	0	0	5	0
Do not perform it	17	6	27	8	315	227	357	137	687	310	744	294
Want to continue to be performed at home	25	20	68	40	106	21	17	16	76	14	81	25
Other	5	0	5	0	27	12	13	4	40	6	33	9

Source: VEGA 1/0935/13. Unpaid work as a potential source of socio-economic development and determinant of individual well-being. EF UMB, 2013.

This paradoxical finding can be interpreted at this stage of the evaluation, as follows: the research sample of respondents was moved to households that already have children over 14 years of age requiring less care than in the case of minor children. In the case of a high number of respondents predominantly from towns and municipalities, who say they do not provide care for adults within their families, it can be assumed that they live in separate households and do not have to worry about parents or living with them does not require caring for them.

The potential demand for personal services and household services can be further examined using the next variable – the age of the respondents as is shown in Table 7. This indicator reveals to us the deeper structure of the target group of potential customers of such services and also shows their characteristics and interests. The results clearly show that the most utilized market services are in food preparation (in most age categories except retirees) and repair and maintenance at ages corresponding to the respondents of working-age. In terms of creating space for substitution market initiatives and to support job creation in this context, it is noteworthy that in the case of age group 65 and over, the respondents claim that it is exactly this field where potential demand is the highest. In this respect, the category of housework has equal prospects – cleaning (25 respondents in age group 2) and services in repair and maintenance (total of 41 respondents in the 2nd and 3rd age group).

Table 7

Use / potential use of market services by age (number of pondents)

Specification	Food preparation	Cleaning	Cultivation of ornamental plants	Repair and maintenance services	Childcare	Caring for adults
1 (15 – 25)	198 / 5	6 / 9	0 / 2	59 / 3	0 / 0	0 / 1
2 (26 – 40)	265 / 7	8 / 25	0 / 6	133 / 20	2 / 1	0 / 4
3 (41 – 64)	229 / 7	16 / 14	3 / 7	213 / 21	3 / 5	6 / 11
4 (65 and more)	62 / 42	17 / 11	8 / 10	31 / 6	0 / 3	8 / 1

Source: VEGA 1/0935/13. Unpaid work as a potential source of socio-economic development and determinant of individual well-being. EF UMB, 2013.

The final variables that affect the decision on the use of externalised services and activities associated with running a household that was examined was education. Concerning the educational structure of the survey sample where 53.6% of respondents have secondary education and 40.1% of respondents achieved a college education, it is natural to expect the actual use of the monitored service types on the market at the high school sample, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8
Use / potential use of market services by educational level (number of respondents)

Specification	Food preparation	Cleaning	Cultivation of ornamental plants	Repair and maintenance services	Childcare	Caring for adults
Basic	30/29	0 / 0	0 / 0	1 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0
Secondary 1	64 / 11	12 / 2	1 / 1	80 / 12	4 / 2	0 / 3
Secondary 2	226 / 5	14 / 7	10 / 1	146 / 15	13 / 1	12 / 6
Secondary 3	48 / 1	20 / 0	0 / 5	25 / 0	3 / 0	0 / 1
College education	388 / 16	46 / 49	0/19	182/24	8 / 7	2 / 10

Source: VEGA 1/0935/13. Unpaid work as a potential source of socio-economic development and determinant of individual well-being. EF UMB, 2013.

Respondents with higher education, as expected, in addition to the active use of market services, also create a potential for their support and development in the future. The frequency of those who in this category said they plan to use the services market is the largest in all studied types of unpaid work. At the same time they represent an exploitable potential for business development and employment in these areas.

Conclusion

This kind of research of unpaid work in Slovakia is unique. The obtained results are continuously processed. We assume they are comparable with foreign sources, and will test that assumption in the next phase of research.

The examination of unpaid work in Slovak households is possible in many ways. In this paper we focus attention on the evaluation of the results and the interpretation of the findings of the research based on the analysis of location of housing, age and education of respondents. As for the place of residence, we take into account the fact that the category of the regional seat was represented in Slovakia by only 8 points with this status. A rather surprising observation seems to be finding that the inhabitants of smaller towns and villages are showing interest and actively using the existing market substitutes, thus supporting the productive capacity of producers and providers of the services as well as regional employment. Another interesting finding is that there is a greater interest in this regard for domestic services (food preparation, cleaning, repair, and maintenance) than for personal services (child and adult care). In terms of prospective demand for such services, research has produced a finding that in some categories of work there are strong influences of traditionalism and conservatism, which affects the scope and the nature of the

use of market substitutes towards saturation which is favoring their own resources and home environment. This trend is naturally stronger in smaller towns and villages.

In terms of age, it was shown that the strongest category of residents supporting the use of market substitutes were people of working age (categories 26-40 and 41-64). The fact that even in this variable preferences for the use or potential use is higher for household services than for personal services.

Education was a significant factor. Given the educational structure of respondents, higher education played an important role in the case of university graduates and in favor of increased support for household services (cleaning, repair and maintenance and food preparation) and the market demand for these substitutes in the future.

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