



**Universidad Nacional de  
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***Time Use Surveys in Latin America:  
Approaches and Methods***

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**Unpaid Work and the Economy: Gender, Poverty, and  
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# Time Use Surveys in LA

- A cumulative process of learning by doing since first experiences took place (Cuba in 2001, Mexico in 1996, Nicaragua in 1998), consolidated by CEPAL (2003).
- Different approaches to TUS according to objectives and budgetary restrictions.
- Current attempts to enhance comparability and improve data quality in order to be able to value household production.

# Methodological Decisions

## *a. The Questionnaire: Task Survey or Activity Diary*

This is probably the toughest decision to be made. With the exception of Cuba and Buenos Aires, all other TUS in LA have followed the Task Survey form.

## *b. Data Collection Method: Interview or Self Administered Diary*

Experience indicates that the self administered questionnaires are extremely demanding on respondents and tend to produce high non-response rates. Interviews are generally associated with tasks surveys, but this is not necessarily true (South African case).

# Methodological Decisions

## *c. Type of survey: Stand-alone Survey or Module in a Household Survey*

Again, with the exception of Cuba, all other TUS in LA have been *ad hoc* modules attached to household surveys (be them expenditure surveys or labor market surveys), due to budgetary restrictions. This approach enhances information source comparability, as TUS socioeconomic information is collected in a standardized way.

## *d. Objectives: Well-being Measurement or Household Production Valuation*

Household Production Valuations seems more difficult when having tasks surveys' data. Most of LA TUS have privileged the first objective, although there have been attempts at valuing (Pedrero, 2005). A second round of surveys might attempt to tackle the second objective more seriously.

# Methodological Decisions

*e. Coverage, Sample Size and Unit of Analysis: Number of Households Surveyed, Number of Individual Diaries Collected Per Person and Number of Questionnaires Collected Per Household*

This implies the balancing between sample size and individual respondent's burden. The trend in the EU has been to ask for two diaries per person to cut down costs (weekdays and weekend days) *which are treated as independent observations*. In LA, to the contrary, there has been a great emphasis on the household as the unit of analysis (therefore requiring *all household members' answers*).

*f. Contextual variables*

Having information on time-saving assets (like some durable consumer goods), primary responsibility for domestic work (including the availability of domestic paid service) are examples at hand.

# Choices for BATUS: Tasks Survey

	<i>Tasks Survey</i>
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ To identify and quantify differences and inequalities in the ways time is used at familiar and social level.</li><li>▪ To make the domestic women's work visible.</li><li>▪ To contribute to the measurement of time used in the home production of goods and services to be consumed by household members.</li></ul>
Coverage	Buenos Aires City (not national) as a module of EAH survey.
Unit of observation	Households (all individual members above a certain age covered).
Age	Girls and boys older than 10. Upper bound is being tested.
Time of reference	Week, discriminating between days of the week and weekend.
Simultaneous Activities	It does not offer any information (some have tried it, like Costa Rica and Mexico, predefining some tasks as simultaneous, like "minding children").
Classification of Time Use Activities	Not necessary (although the <i>list of tasks</i> has to be a selection as well).

# Choices for BATUS: Tasks Surveys

	<i>Tasks Survey</i>
<i>Advantages</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ It appears to be less demanding; the respondent is required to fill a yes/no questionnaire (though it can become demanding if it is too long!).</li><li>▪ Latin American comparability.</li></ul>
<i>Weaknesses</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ This type of surveys does not respect the 24 hour limit (it can either surpass or collect less than the required hours).</li><li>▪ Not able to differentiate simultaneous activities.</li><li>▪ The time span, designed to capture infrequent tasks, becomes too wide for repetitive tasks (people have to mentally multiply hours to answer).</li><li>▪ The result of survey is highly dependent on the listing of activities.</li></ul>

# Choices for BATUS: Diary

	<i>Diary completed through an interview (not self administered)</i>
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To measure and to analyze the use of the time in different days by different individuals.</li> <li>▪ To offer information on the division of paid and unpaid work between women and men and other relevant groupings.</li> <li>▪ To know more on time used in reproductive labor by household members.</li> <li>▪ To understand dynamics of (invisible) productive activities like the subsistence or informal sector work.</li> </ul>
Coverage	Buenos Aires City (not national) as a module of EAH survey.
Unit of observation	One individual selected at random in each household.
Age	Girls and boys older than 10. Upper bound is being tested.
Time of reference	One day each selected individual. The reference day is being tested (yesterday; last 24 hours).
Simultaneous Activities	It offers information <i>without hierarchies</i> (simultaneous activities are not ranked).
Classification of Time Use Activities	Necessary ( <i>ICATUS and Cuban Classification of Activities</i> ).

# Choices for BATUS: Diary

	<i>Diary completed through an interview (not self administered)</i>
<i>Advantages</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ It diminishes the respondents' load (as opposed to the self-administered Diary) and therefore non-response rates.</li><li>▪ Gives international comparability.</li><li>▪ Follows UN recommendations.</li><li>▪ Captures simultaneous activities (in a restricted way).</li><li>▪ Captures the relationship between paid and unpaid working time.</li><li>▪ Captures new paid work forms.</li></ul>
<i>Weaknesses</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Greater demand on sample design and field work.</li><li>▪ Loses in-household distributive information.</li></ul>

# The Buenos Aires TUS 2005

- Contest the view that illiteracy and semi-illiteracy rates justify the task survey approach.
- BA TUS design has followed the SA **top-down approach**: we gave up the self-administered diary; the two days per respondent; the two respondents per household. We aim at the lowest possible non-response rates (we carry the EAH non-response rates already).

# The Buenos Aires TUS 2005

- BA TUS does not compromise statistical quality, (will be representative of BA population); fieldwork is being designed accordingly, and it **follows UN recommendations.**
- Tasks ahead are ending the Classification of Activities and adapt it to the Buenos Aires case, and fieldwork training.
- BATUS is neither a nationwide nor a standalone survey so we are assuming the risks and we have still to be proved right!