

# Informal labor and household self-consumption in Greece: A systematic review and empirical analysis

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## Abstract

This study investigates the scope, drivers, and socioeconomic impacts of informal household labor and self-provisioning in Greece. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, it combines survey data from 2,087 respondents across various regions with a bibliometric analysis of 162 Scopus-indexed publications covering the period from 1984 to 2025. Survey results reveal that households routinely undertake maintenance activities, ranging from painting and cleaning to mid-skill plumbing and electrical repairs, as well as caregiving tasks such as babysitting, with remuneration typically provided through a combination of in-kind and domestic exchanges, although a considerable portion remains uncompensated. Bibliometric mapping identifies household labor supply and the informal sector as central motor themes, while sector-specific studies and theoretical explorations inhabit niche and emergent quadrants. Ultimately, these findings underscore the significant yet often overlooked economic contribution of informal domestic work and advocate for policy measures that formally recognize, support, and integrate these practices within broader welfare and labor-market frameworks.

*Keywords:* informal labor, self-consumption, systemic review, empirical analysis, Greece

*JEL Classification:* J46, D13, O17

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## 1. Introduction

Informal labor has consistently constituted a significant share of Greece's economic activity, with estimates placing the shadow economy at approximately one-quarter of the country's GDP (Bitzenis and Vlachos, 2024). Employing methodologies such as DYMIMIC and currency-demand models, various studies estimate the informal sector's contribution to GDP at between 20 and 28 percent during the early 2000s, underscoring its resilience despite successive waves of economic and institutional reform. Specifically, Katsios (2006) estimates informal economic activity at 28.2 percent of GDP in 2002, while Bitzenis, Vlachos and Schneider (2016), drawing on a meta-analysis of MIMIC-based studies, report an average share of 27.4 percent between 1999 and 2008. These findings attest to the enduring nature of informality in Greece's economy, even in the context of Eurozone integration and structural adjustment programmes.

Informal labor, self-provisioning, and reciprocity-based exchange constitute analytically discrete yet empirically entangled dimensions of informality, each forging a conceptual bridge between macroeconomic estimates and quotidian practices. Informal labor encompasses income-generating activities conducted beyond the purview of formal regulatory and social protection mechanisms, typically marked by the absence of contractual employment, taxation, or access to social insurance (Leyva & Urrutia, 2020). Self-provisioning refers to the domestic production of goods, most commonly food or essential services, intended for personal or household consumption rather than for market exchange, and often functions as a strategy of subsistence, resilience, or adaptation under conditions of economic precarity (Onyenekwe et al., 2024; Vávra et al., 2018). A reciprocity-based economy, by contrast, is grounded in non-monetized exchanges of goods, labor, or services that are embedded in norms of mutual obligation and social trust, rather than mediated by contractual or market-based logics; such practices illuminate alternative modes of coordination and value creation within informal networks (Beltrán et al., 2023; Weber & Göbel, 2006).

The persistence of informality can be attributed to a confluence of structural and institutional determinants. A Multiple-Indicators Multiple-Causes (MIMIC) model, developed by Dell'Anno, Gómez-Antonio and Pardo (2006), identifies key drivers, including elevated tax and social security burdens, complex regulatory frameworks, high unemployment rates, and widespread self-employment. Their analysis also reveals a negative correlation between formal GDP growth and informal sector expansion, suggesting that economic contractions intensify the use of undeclared activity. Furthermore, Kaplanoglou and Rapanos (2012), analyzing Eurobarometer and European Social Survey (ESS) data, demonstrate that diminishing public trust, shaped by recurrent tax amnesties, convoluted legislation, and perceptions of pervasive corruption, further exacerbates informality. Their findings indicate a strong inverse correlation between trust in government and hours worked undeclared, highlighting the central role of institutional credibility in shaping informal labor dynamics.

The fiscal repercussions of informality are particularly pronounced in the case of self-employment (Vlachos et al., 2022). Through employing proprietary bank-credit data, Artavanis, Morse and Tsoutsoura (2016) estimate that Greek self-employed professionals under-report taxable income by factors ranging from 1.75 to 1.84. These figures translate into estimated annual revenue shortfalls of €22.8 to €28.2 billion, with tax losses in 2009 alone amounting to €10.7–12.0 billion, approximately one-third of the national budget deficit for that year. These estimates highlight the significant macroeconomic and fiscal implications of widespread tax evasion within the informal sector.

During the sovereign debt crisis, household self-consumption emerged as a supplementary coping strategy, albeit at a scale more limited than commonly

assumed. Analysis of EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) microdata by Konstantinidis (2022) reveals a negative association between food self-provisioning and household food insecurity from 2009 to 2014. Notably, however, the overall incidence of home food production declined during this period, challenging prevailing narratives of widespread subsistence activity (Konstantinidis, 2022). Complementary qualitative research by Benessaiah and Eakin (2021) on urban “back-to-the-land” movements shows that many households adopted small-scale farming practices motivated by shifts in personal agency and social values, yet often remained outside formal agricultural registration systems, reflecting the informal character of these responses (Bitzenis, Makedos and Kontakos, 2014).

Concurrently, informal solidarity-based networks provided vital community support. Ethnographic research by Rakopoulos (2015) documents grassroots “anti-middleman” food initiatives in Thessaloniki, which facilitated direct distribution to vulnerable households outside established charitable frameworks. Parallel forms of non-monetary exchange, including barter clubs, local currencies, and free bazaars, were observed by Sotiropoulou (2011) as emergent economic practices during austerity. Furthermore, survey-based investigations across South-Eastern Europe identify multiple motivations for informal consumption, including economic advantage, personal trust networks, and dissatisfaction with formal market provision (Littlewood, Rodgers and Yang, 2018; Williams, Horodnic and Windebank, 2017).

Ultimately, methodological approaches to informal economic activity continue to confront definitional and empirical complexities. As demonstrated by Luque (2022), the absence of consensus, ranging from conceptions of illegality to subsistence-oriented practices, hampers survey design and inter-study comparability. Standardized household and labor-force surveys often underreport undeclared activity, while indirect estimation methods, such as MIMIC models, although analytically robust, rely on demanding statistical assumptions. More recently, scholars have sought to refine methodological practice by integrating novel quantitative sources, including banking records, with ethnographic and qualitative research. This combined approach has yielded deeper insights into the structures and dynamics of informal labor in Greece, while contributing to the progressive refinement of conceptual and empirical frameworks.

## **2. Methodology**

This study employed a mixed-methods approach (Zourna et al., 2021), combining primary and bibliometric data (Bitzenis, Koutsoupias and Nosios, 2025B). The primary data were collected through an online, structured questionnaire disseminated via digital platforms to ensure broad accessibility and engagement, garnering responses

from 2087 participants across various regions in Greece, reflecting a diverse demographic background. In parallel, a bibliometric dataset was curated from the Scopus database (Bitzenis, Koutsoupias and Nosios, 2025D; Bitzenis and Koutsoupias, 2024B; Bitzenis and Koutsoupias, 2023A; Baas et al., 2020) to analyze the scientific literature landscape related to the study theme. The search strategy utilized the following query:

TITLE-ABS-KEY(informal AND labor AND household AND (production OR consumption)) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "BUSI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "ECON") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "SOCI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "MULT")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ch")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English"))

The initial search results underwent a systematic filtering and selection process, adhering strictly to the PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines. This process ensured methodological transparency and reproducibility. The steps included identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion of articles, all of which are illustrated in Figure 1 (Page et al., 2021).

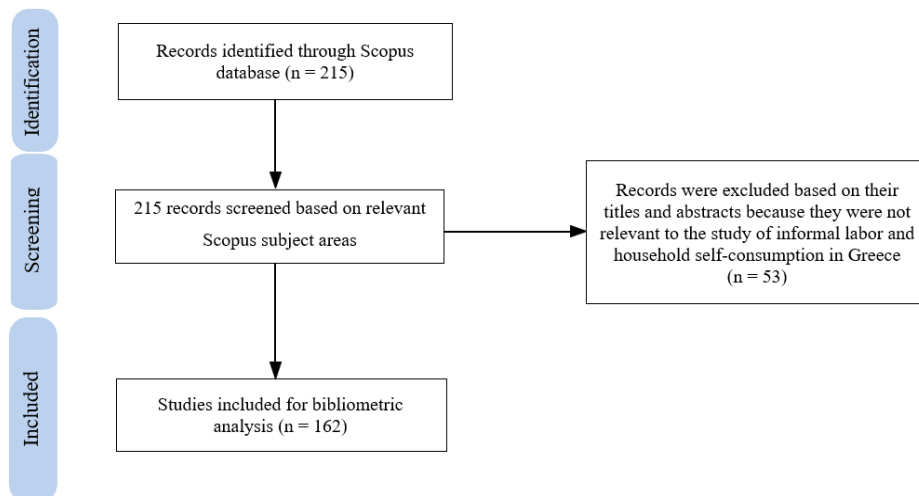


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram of the selection process

Following data acquisition, both datasets were systematically cleaned and prepared for analysis. Questionnaire responses were imported into Microsoft Excel, where variables were coded and missing or inconsistent entries were corrected (Bitzenis and Koutsoupias, 2024A; Bitzenis, Koutsoupias and Boutsouki, 2023; Bitzenis and Koutsoupias, 2023B). The cleaned dataset was then exported to RStudio for descriptive and inferential analyses (Bitzenis, Koutsoupias and Nosios, 2025A; Bitzenis,

Koutsoupias and Nosios, 2025C). Concurrently, bibliometric records from Scopus were imported into the bibliometrix package and analyzed, allowing for the calculation of descriptive metrics and the generation of thematic maps and citation-ranking tables. These procedures facilitated the identification of research clusters, thematic developments, and gaps in the literature (Koutsoupias & Nosios, 2025; Koutsoupias, 2024; Thomos, Bitzenis and Koutsoupias, 2023).

### 3. Results

The following section presents the main empirical findings, drawing on both the bibliometric analysis of the literature and primary survey data. These results collectively offer a comprehensive overview of the scope, characteristics, and compensation patterns associated with informal household labor in Greece.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Description	Results
MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT DATA	
Timespan	1984:2025
Sources (Journals, Books, etc.)	146
Documents	162
Annual Growth Rate %	1.7
Document Average Age	11.3
Average citations per doc	13.28
References	6556
DOCUMENT CONTENTS	
Keywords Plus (ID)	577
Author's Keywords (DE)	482
AUTHORS	
Authors	334
Authors of single-authored docs	71
AUTHORS COLLABORATION	
Single-authored docs	74
Co-Authors per Doc	2.11
International co-authorships %	21.6
DOCUMENT TYPES	
article	142
book chapter	20

The bibliometric corpus under review, as demonstrated in Table 1, covers the interval 1984–2025 and comprises 162 contributions sourced from 146 unique outlets. An annual expansion rate of 1.7 percent signals a sustained broadening of inquiry into informal labor and household self - consumption, while a mean document age of 11.3 years and an average of 13.28 citations per item attest to the lasting impact of seminal works alongside an ongoing influx of novel findings. In aggregate, these studies cite 6,556 antecedent publications, underscoring the field’s richly accretive knowledge base.

Regarding thematic indexing, scholars have furnished 482 distinct author-assigned descriptors (DE), supplemented by 577 algorithmically derived Keywords Plus entries. The close parity between these two vocabularies indicates a well-structured conceptual framework, one that supports both manual co - word exploration and automated bibliometric mapping. This dual taxonomy facilitates the rigorous delineation of entrenched constructs and the systematic identification of emerging research avenues.

Analysis of authorship patterns identifies 334 individual researchers, including 71 who have contributed as sole authors. Single-author works account for 74 records, approximately 46 percent of the total, while the balance reflects collaborative enterprises averaging 2.11 authors per paper. Cross-national collaborations appear in 21.6 percent of multi-author outputs, indicating moderate levels of international synergy and suggesting further potential for global scholarly integration.

Finally, the predominance of journal articles, 142 out of 162 items, highlights the primacy of peer-reviewed periodicals as the chief vehicle for disseminating empirical findings and theoretical advances. The balance of 20 book chapters attests to the complementary role of edited volumes in fostering interdisciplinary dialogue and region-specific inquiry. Together, these descriptive metrics depict a mature yet dynamically evolving field, characterized by incremental growth, robust thematic indexing, diversified authorship patterns, and a prevailing reliance on journal-based dissemination (see Table 1).

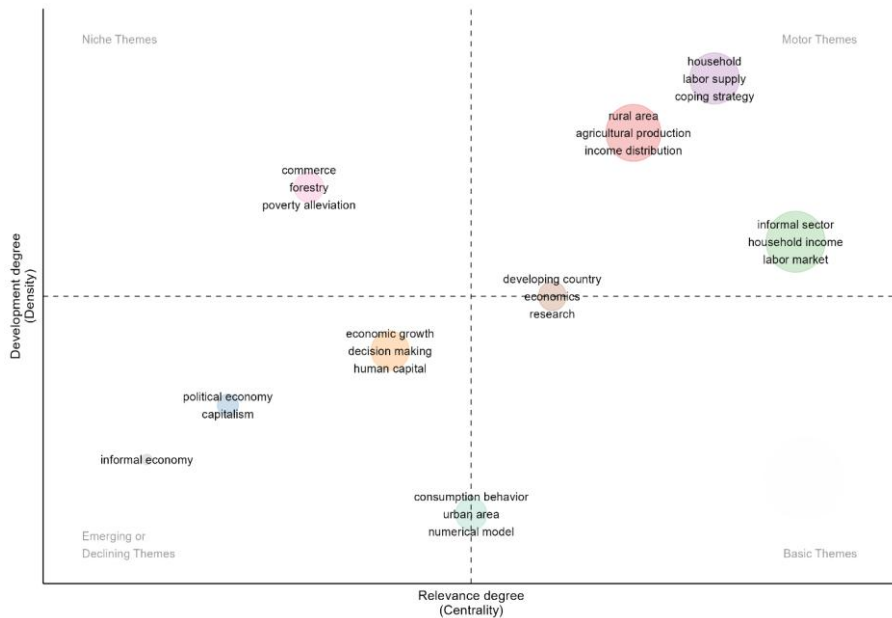


Figure 2. Thematic map

The thematic map in Figure 2 positions research topics along two axes, development (*density*) on the vertical axis and relevance (*centrality*) on the horizontal axis, to delineate four distinct quadrants that together offer a snapshot of the field's structure. Bubble size corresponds to the volume of publications associated with each cluster, thereby signaling the relative weight of thematic concentrations.

In the motor themes quadrant (upper right), six keywords, *household labor supply*, *coping strategy*, *informal sector*, *household income*, *rural area*, and *agricultural production*, coalesce into the largest bubble on the map. The prominence of this cluster reflects both robust internal cohesion and extensive linkages with other subfields. Empirical studies within this domain typically employ survey data and econometric techniques to examine how households allocate labor across formal and informal activities, deploy coping mechanisms in response to economic shocks, derive income from unregulated markets, and integrate subsistence agriculture with small-scale commercial production. Their dual status as central and well-developed themes underscores their role as the field's dynamic core.

The basic themes quadrant (lower right) is occupied by a moderately sized cluster comprising *consumption behavior*, *urban area*, and *numerical model*. Positioned to the right of the map, this grouping is clearly relevant to the overarching discourse on informal labor and self-consumption; yet, its placement below the density midpoint indicates comparatively lower thematic consolidation. Research in this quadrant often

focuses on household expenditure patterns in urban settings, utilizing mathematical and simulation models to capture consumption trajectories under various income scenarios. Although central to understanding demand-side dynamics in informal economies, these topics exhibit a looser network of intra-cluster citations and co-occurrences than those in the motor quadrant.

In the niche themes quadrant (upper left), a distinct cluster formed by *poverty alleviation, forestry, and commerce emerges*. Despite its elevated density, an indication of focused scholarship, this cluster’s position to the left of the centrality axis signals marginal connectivity with the field’s primary debates. Publications here often focus on sector-specific case studies, such as the role of non-timber forest products in household livelihoods or localized trade mechanisms and evaluate targeted interventions for poverty reduction. The strength of internal linkages suggests methodological maturity, even as these studies remain on the periphery of mainstream inquiries into informal labor and household provisioning.

Finally, the emerging or declining themes quadrant (lower left) contains a smaller bubble grouping *informal economy, political economy, and capitalism*. Its location, both below the density midpoint and to the left of the centrality axis, indicates that theoretical and macro-level critiques occupy a relatively marginal position within the empirical literature on Greece’s informal labor and self-consumption. These keywords tend to appear in conceptual reviews or historical analyses that revisit grand theoretical frameworks without extensive engagement in contemporary quantitative or case-based research streams.

Taken together, the thematic map illustrates a research landscape in which empirically grounded, policy-oriented studies of household labor supply and income effects form the field’s motor themes; quantitative urban consumption analyses constitute basic themes; sectoral investigations in forestry and commerce represent niche scholarship; and broad theoretical treatments of informality and capitalism remain at the margins (see Figure 2).

Table 2. Top 10 most cited papers

Paper	Total Citations
Gough, I, 2004, <i>Insecurity and Welf Regimes in Asia, Africa and Lat America: Soc Policy in Development Contexts</i>	158
Roberts B, 1994, <i>Int J Urban Reg Res</i>	118
Dong F, 2012, <i>Agric Financ Rev</i>	76
Barone G, 2011, <i>Labour Econ</i>	75
Gidwani V, 2018, <i>J Peasant Stud</i>	68
Trupp A, 2017, <i>Ann Tour Res</i>	66

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Abegunde Do, 2008, Soc Sci Med	57
Pearson R, 1997, Dev Change	51
Hassink Whj, 2011, Soc Sci Med	49
Oberhauser Am, 1995, Gender Place Cult	45

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Table 2 enumerates the ten most frequently cited studies on informal labor and household self-consumption in Greece, underscoring the seminal works that have most profoundly shaped this field of inquiry. Primarily, Gough et al. (2004) study offers a comprehensive typology of welfare *regimes* in developing contexts, arguing that formal social insurance and labor-market protections have historically covered only a minority of households, thereby compelling most families to rely on informal risk-pooling through extended kin networks and limited state provision. In addition, he demonstrates how market-oriented reforms over the past few decades have shifted the social-protection mix toward a *liberal-informal* model, in which both market mechanisms and household provisioning jointly bear the burden of social risks that formal institutions once mediated. Likewise, Roberts' (1994) analysis of the informal economy defines it as all income-earning activities unregulated by the state yet linked to formal markets, and he illustrates how households deploy flexible strategies, such as multiple income sources, home-based work, and reciprocal networks, to navigate job loss, wage stagnation, and welfare retrenchment. He further emphasizes that these informal labor and family-support strategies are deeply embedded in local social relations, portraying households as active agents rather than passive victims of economic restructuring.

Subsequently, Dong, Lu and Featherstone (2012) employ farm-household survey data alongside an endogenous-switching regression model to distinguish between credit-constrained and unconstrained households, finding that the lack of access to formal loans prevents constrained farmers from assembling optimal input combinations, thereby causing underutilization of labor and forgoing the use of more productive seeds or equipment. Their counterfactual simulations suggest that lifting credit constraints would increase average output by roughly seventy-five percent, as households would both raise input levels and acquire higher-quality inputs. In a complementary vein, Barone and Mocetti's (2011) paper leverages variation in the local presence of low-skilled migrant women, primarily employed in household services, as an instrument to estimate the impact of paid domestic labor on native women's labor supply. They document that in areas with more migrant caregivers, native women work longer hours without altering their employment rates, particularly among those with higher opportunity costs. This indicates that paid domestic services substitute for unpaid household labor, thereby facilitating greater market participation among women, while also highlighting potential tensions with formal welfare provisions.

Moreover, Gidwani and Ramamurthy's (2018) study revisits the *agrarian question* through life-history interviews with working-class women in the informal sector, introducing the concept of *middle migrants*, households that straddle rural origins and urban livelihoods through translocal householding. By tracing how these women establish footholds in urban labor markets while remaining tied to rural social reproduction, the authors expose how caste, gender, and spatial hierarchies shape informal economic practices and possibilities for agency. Furthermore, Trupp and Sunanta's (2017) ethnography of ethnic-minority souvenir vending in tourism districts reveals how handicraft production and street vending are gendered as *women's work*, situating female vendors at the base of the informal tourism economy. They argue that although mobile vending provides many women with breadwinner roles, it also reinforces patriarchal norms and entrenches gendered divisions of labor, demonstrating how gendered expectations both constrain and emerge from informal economic activities.

Additionally, Abegunde and Stanciole's (2008) investigation uses a two-part model on household survey data to assess the impact of chronic-illness shocks on household spending and labor income, finding that households facing long-term disease substantially increase healthcare expenditures and reduce labor supply and earnings, yet manage to maintain non-medical consumption by tapping informal transfers. This finding suggests that extended family networks provide partial insurance in the face of formal-coverage gaps, with socioeconomic status and education further modulating these effects. On the other hand, Hassink and Van Den Berg's (2011) analysis of time-use diaries distinguishes *shiftable* from *unshiftable* informal care tasks, arguing that personal-care activities such as feeding and bathing impose fixed-time constraints that standard estimates of care's labor-supply impact fail to capture. They contend that these time-bound tasks carry higher opportunity costs than more flexible chores and that labor-supply models must account for such unshiftable care demands to measure accurately the burden of informal caregiving on households.

Finally, Pearson's (1997) paper reconceives an economic crisis as a *crisis of reproduction*, demonstrating that sudden breakdowns in public provisioning of essential goods and services prompt households to devise survival strategies, including trading in informal markets, exiting formal employment, and diversifying income portfolios, that reinforce existing gender divisions as women absorb added reproductive burdens through unpaid and informal work, with significant political ramifications for civic engagement and social movements. In a similar light, Oberhauser's (1995) interviews with rural women artisans exploring their responses to male job losses reveal mechanisms of home-based production and small-scale entrepreneurship, such as quilt-making, through which women supplement household incomes and, in the process, renegotiate gender relations by assuming economic provider roles even as they juggle childcare and other reproductive

responsibilities. Both studies thus illuminate how macroeconomic shocks catalyze household-level strategies that simultaneously challenge and perpetuate gendered divisions of labor (see Table 2).

Table 3. Have you encountered households undertaking maintenance or repairs without professional services?

Response	Count of responses
Yes	1826
No	135
Don't know / Don't answer	109
No answer	20

The results for the first question of the survey, as demonstrated in Table 3, aimed to determine the extent to which respondents had observed households performing maintenance or repair tasks without professional assistance. Of the 2,090 individuals surveyed, 1,826 confirmed their awareness of such informal practices, whereas only 135 denied any prior knowledge. A further 109 participants either professed uncertainty or declined to respond, and 20 offered no reply. These findings attest to the prevalence of non-professional domestic labor and underscore its status as a long-standing modality of household self-provisioning within the communities under study (see Table 3).

Table 4. Indicate the nature of the work undertaken

Category of Occupation	Number of responses
Plumbing	1281
Electrical work	1178
Painting	1537
Cleaning	1534
Babysitting	1179
Private tutoring	783

Participants who acknowledged informal maintenance were subsequently asked to enumerate the specific activities involved, as seen in Table 4. Routine chores, *painting*, and *cleaning* emerged as the most frequently reported, with 1,537 and 1,534 mentions, respectively. Such high frequencies underscore the importance of low-barrier, regular maintenance tasks in household self-consumption strategies, as these activities require minimal specialized tools or technical expertise. Beyond these foundational duties, moderately skilled repairs also occupy a prominent position:

*plumbing* work was cited by 1,281 respondents, and *electrical work* by 1,178. Caregiving services, in the form of *babysitting*, garnered 1,179 mentions, closely paralleling the incidence of technical repairs, whereas *private tutoring*, noted by 783 participants, represented the least common form of informal domestic work in this cohort (see Table 4).

Table 5. Select the type of compensation to be provided

Type of compensation	Number of responses
Goods / Services	181
Domestic compensation	451
Both	664
None	446

The inquiry’s third dimension, as highlighted in Table 5, addressed the modalities of recompense for non-professional household labor. A plurality of respondents (n = 664) indicated that such contributions were remunerated through a hybrid system combining in-kind goods or services with domestic provisions, such as meals or lodging. Compensation exclusively in domestic terms was reported by 451 participants, while 181 received solely goods or services. Notably, 446 respondents affirmed that no explicit remuneration was extended. These patterns highlight the predominance of reciprocal and mixed in-kind exchange mechanisms within informal labor networks, revealing the persistence of uncompensated contributions as a significant component of household self-provisioning.

Taken together, these descriptive statistics outline the multifaceted landscape of informal domestic labor and its integration into broader frameworks of self-consumption. The ubiquity of painting and cleaning as foundational tasks, alongside the substantial incidence of technical repairs and caregiving, attests to the broad spectrum of services that households internalize. The comparatively lower prevalence of private tutoring delineates the boundaries of informal provisioning for specialized educational support. Finally, the observed remuneration patterns, spanning hybrid, solely in-kind, and uncompensated arrangements, illuminate the reciprocal exchange mechanisms that underpin non-professional work and shape the domestic labor economy in the absence of formal service engagement (see Table 5).

Table 6. Have you heard whether those who provide their services, as described in the previous question, receive any form of benefit or compensation?

Response	Number of responses
Yes	1077

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No	452
Don't know / Don't answer	475
No answer	92

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In Table 6, participants were asked whether they believed that individuals performing non-professional domestic work, such as maintenance or repair tasks, receive any form of benefit. Of the 2,096 participants, 1,077 indicated that such benefits are indeed provided. In contrast, 452 respondents stated they were not aware of any benefits, 475 expressed uncertainty or declined to answer, and 92 offered no response. This distribution illustrates a plurality of awareness regarding compensatory practices for informal household labor, alongside considerable variation in respondent knowledge.

Those affirming the existence of benefits represent the largest single response category. Their number suggests that many perceive informal contributors as receiving returns for their efforts, which may include non-monetary advantages or reciprocal exchanges. Given prior findings on mixed in-kind arrangements and unpaid contributions, these affirmations likely reflect recognition of occasional or context-specific forms of recompense, such as reciprocal services, meals, or other in-kind goods, that accrue to individuals undertaking domestic tasks without professional credentials.

Conversely, the combined total of 927 respondents who either denied knowledge of benefits or expressed uncertainty highlights a substantial minority whose perceptions differ from the majority view. The near parity between those explicitly negating any benefit and those uncertain or unwilling to answer underscores heterogeneity in household norms and the visibility of compensatory practices. Variability in responses may stem from differences in cultural expectations, the private nature of in-kind exchanges, or limited exposure to contexts where informal labor is prevalent.

Non-responses, while the smallest segment at 92, further indicate potential ambiguity or sensitivity surrounding the question of benefit provision. When considered alongside the 475 expressions of uncertainty, these non-responses suggest that a notable portion of participants either lacked sufficient information or opted not to engage with the topic. Collectively, the data reveal a complex landscape of beliefs about the recognition and reward structures for non-professional domestic work, characterized by a plurality of acknowledgments of benefits yet accompanied by significant levels of unawareness and uncertainty (see Table 6).

Table 7. Demographics - Age groups

Age groups	Count
10-20	81
21-30	607
31-40	421
41-50	441
51-60	321
61-70	69
71-80	16
80-89	3
Don't know	107
Don't answer	21

Table 8. Demographics - Gender groups

Gender	Count
Male	955
Female	1108
No answer	24

The age distribution of the sample, as demonstrated in Table 7, is concentrated within early and mid-career cohorts, with respondents aged 21–30 constituting the largest group (607 individuals), followed by those aged 41–50 (441) and 31–40 (421). Collectively, these three brackets represent the majority of participants and reflect life stages during which household formation, property maintenance, and family caregiving are most prominent. The relatively modest representation of younger adolescents (81 respondents aged 10–20) and older adults (69 respondents aged 61–70, 16 aged 71–80, and 3 aged 80–89), alongside 107 individuals who did not specify or were uncertain of their age and 21 non-responses, suggests that the descriptive findings on informal domestic labor predominantly capture the experiences of individuals who are most likely to reside in self-managed households and engage directly in maintenance, repair, and caregiving tasks.

Furthermore, as shown in Table 8, the gender composition of the survey is approximately balanced, with 1,108 female and 955 male respondents, and 24 non-responses. This near parity affords a broad perspective on the division of informal labor across domestic domains. Given traditional patterns of gendered task allocation, the substantial female representation provides insight into caregiving and routine upkeep activities, such as cleaning and painting, while the male contribution elucidates engagement in technically skilled tasks, including plumbing and electrical repairs. The balanced gender distribution thus underpins the validity of aggregated descriptions of task frequency and compensation modalities by ensuring that no single gender's practices disproportionately skew the observed patterns.

When these demographic characteristics are aligned with the reported incidence of self-provisioned tasks, a coherent profile emerges. The prominence of painting and cleaning corresponds to the needs and capacities of adults within the 21–50 age range, who frequently oversee household aesthetics and sanitation without external assistance. Similarly, the significant counts for plumbing (1,281 mentions) and electrical work (1,178 mentions) align with the technical self-reliance expected of homeowners or long-term tenants seeking cost-effective solutions. The comparable frequency of caregiving tasks, represented by 1,179 babysitting mentions, further reflects the life stages of respondents in the primary age cohorts, many of whom likely assume child-rearing responsibilities. By contrast, the lower incidence of private tutoring (783 mentions) may reflect both the specialized pedagogical skills required and the demographic concentration in cohorts that are less likely to provide or require informal educational support.

Finally, the demographic context informs the interpretation of compensation practices for informal labor. A combined form of goods or services with domestic remuneration was reported by 664 respondents, followed by domestic compensation alone (451 mentions) and compensation solely in goods or services (181 mentions). The fact that 446 participants indicated no compensation corresponds to the social expectations and resource exchanges characteristic of the predominant age cohorts and gender groups. In summary, the demographic profile, characterized by a predominance of early- and mid-career adults of both genders, frames the descriptive results, situating the prevalence, scope, and remuneration of informal household labor within the lived experiences of those most actively engaged in self-provisioning and domestic resource management (see Tables 4-8).

#### **4. Conclusions**

The present study highlights the pivotal role of informal labor and household self-consumption in Greece's adaptive economy. Empirical evidence demonstrates that low-skill domestic tasks, painting, cleaning, and routine repairs, constitute the backbone of interhousehold exchanges, reflecting their ease of entry and households' imperative to minimize cash outlays. Concurrently, more specialized services, such as plumbing and basic electrical work, reveal a readiness to acquire or deploy technical skills when formal markets prove to be cost-prohibitive. Care provision, particularly babysitting, emerges as an essential support mechanism for families balancing employment and childcare demands, while mixed compensation arrangements, blending goods, services, and board, predominate over purely domestic or strictly in-kind modalities. These patterns collectively reveal a reciprocity-based economy in which social capital and informal networks systematically compensate for gaps in

formal provisioning, thereby enabling households to smooth their consumption and sustain their well-being under fiscal constraints.

Positioned within the broader literature on undeclared work, our findings reinforce core themes of informal sector dynamics and household coping strategies. Prior studies have shown that macroeconomic shocks, such as recessions and austerity measures, as well as income volatility, prompt households to diversify their domestic labor portfolios and experiment with hybrid compensation models. More recent scholarship on digital mediation suggests that online platforms may simultaneously formalize and fragment informal exchanges, offering new modes of task matching and reputation management. At the same time, nascent analyses of environmental impacts indicate that self-provisioning can yield sustainability benefits through reduced consumption footprints and localized resource use. Together, these evolving dimensions underscore the need to extend traditional theoretical frameworks to incorporate technological transformations and ecological considerations alongside established economic drivers.

Future research should pursue two complementary directions. First, systematic comparative analyses across Mediterranean welfare regimes are needed. By employing harmonized metrics, such as the prevalence of in-kind versus domestic-only exchanges, the composition of hybrid bundles of goods, services, and board, and the scope of relevant policy parameters, including tax incentives and social-benefit entitlements, scholars can isolate the institutional configurations and cultural norms that shape informal domestic markets. Comparing Greece with Spain, Italy, and Portugal will clarify whether the mixed in-kind model observed here is unique to Greece's crisis-driven context or emblematic of broader Southern European welfare architectures. Second, rigorous assessments of the sustainability and resilience outcomes of household self-provisioning should be undertaken. Quantitative measurement of resource savings, for instance, reductions in material and carbon footprints via local food exchanges or cooperative maintenance schemes, can be complemented by in-depth qualitative case studies of community networks (Su & Duan, 2025). Such mixed-method investigations will elucidate the capacity of informal economies to foster environmental stewardship, strengthen social solidarity, and enhance adaptive capacity during periods of economic stress.

In conclusion, informal labor and household self-consumption in Greece form a resilient, reciprocity-driven ecosystem that both supplements and, at times, supplants formal service delivery. Recognizing these practices as integral components of national welfare is vital for accurate macroeconomic accounting, the calibration of social-protection frameworks, and the formulation of inclusive labor policies that legitimize and support undeclared work. By advancing comparative Mediterranean analyses and sustainability-oriented resilience assessments, future scholarship can deepen our understanding of how households navigate economic adversity and

inform policy interventions that harness grassroots coping strategies to promote equity, environmental responsibility, and transparency in rapidly evolving welfare contexts.

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