

COVID-19 and gender equality

The pandemic has affected each of us differently. And chances are, your gender may well have played a role in how you experienced the crisis.



Global

Global trends indicate that women have been disproportionately affected economically and at home. Here's how the pandemic has affected women around the world:

At work

Existing gender inequalities mean that women are more vulnerable to the economic effects of COVID-19.

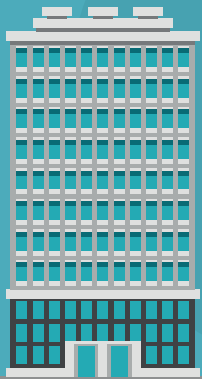
Women's jobs are **1.8x** more vulnerable to this crisis than men's jobs



Women's global job-loss rates: **5.7%**
Men's global job-loss rates: **3.1%**

Globally, women make-up **39%** of employment but account for **54%** of overall job losses

Women's jobs are **more at-risk** than men's because women are disproportionately represented in sectors negatively affected by COVID-19 such as **food service and retail**.



At home

It's not just professionally and financially where women have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. They've also borne the weight of increased responsibilities at home:

3x

Before the pandemic, women were spending on average 3x as many hours on unpaid domestic and caring work than men¹

Although men and women report an increase in unpaid care work due to the pandemic, COVID-19 has disproportionately increased the time women spend on **domestic and family responsibilities**.

Women do an average of **75%** of the world's total unpaid care work including:

- Childcare
- Caring for the elderly
- Cooking
- Cleaning



Why is this happening?

There are a wide range of factors that shape how women are experiencing the consequences of COVID-19, including:

- Pre-existing inequality:** the global gender parity score remained relatively flat in the five years before the pandemic:
 - 2014: 0.60
 - 2019: 0.61

(On a scale of 0-1 where 1 indicates full parity between women and men)
- Attitudes:** traditional views on gender roles may be impacting decisions being made within families around who cares for children, and who gives up their job:
 - According to the global World Values Survey, more than half the respondents in many countries in South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa agreed that men have more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce.
 - About one in six respondents in "developed countries" said the same.

United Kingdom



A **third** of working mothers reported having lost work or hours due to a lack of childcare during the pandemic



More than seven in 10 women who applied for furlough after the latest school closures had their requests turned down



As **three-quarters** of the part-time labour force, women were hit hard when part-time jobs fell **70% in the first 11 weeks of the pandemic**

The fallout from the pandemic has been brutal for mothers, who have been **47% more likely to lose their jobs than fathers**, according to another study by the Institute of Fiscal Studies

90% of the UK's **2 million single parents** were women who have said they had **"consistently been left behind"** during the pandemic

SBG, UK

India

COVID-19 is taking a toll on the emotional wellbeing of India's working women as **47%** report they are experiencing **more stress or anxiety due to the pandemic**



More than **2 in 5 (44%)** working mothers are working outside their business hours to provide childcare, nearly twice as many men (25%).



Around **1 in 3 (31%)** working mothers are currently providing childcare full-time, when compared to under **1 in 5 (17%)** working fathers

The labour force has shrunk by **13% for women** but just **2% for men** due to COVID-19



42% were unable to focus on work with their children at home

The male experience

While women are at higher risk of losing their job and of taking on more responsibilities at home, **men are facing their own challenges due to their gender**.

Male friendships

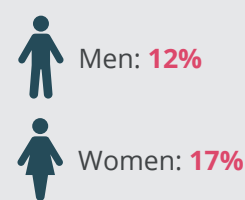
Generally, men's friendships are rooted in shared interests and hobbies, compared to women's friendships which tend to be more emotional. So, with the closure of activities, and socialising prohibited during lockdown, the pandemic has arguably been harder on men socially than on women:

Men are taking on more unpaid care work

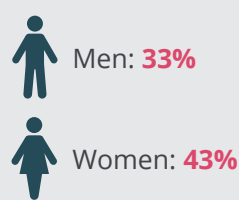
Although the bulk of unpaid care work is being taken-up by women, men are reporting significant increases in the amount of time they are spending working in the home:



Men are **less likely to meet a friend in a public place** for exercise than women



Men are **less likely than women to form a support bubble**

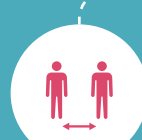


2x

Fathers in the UK now spend **twice as much time caring for their children** than at the start of the crisis

Other factors

Gender isn't the only factor that's impacting how we're affected by the pandemic. Groups facing the biggest challenges caused by COVID-19:



Quarantine, self-isolation and distancing

Some demographics find it harder to self-isolate than others, due to the unique challenges they face:

- Poor and minority populations
- People in low and middle income countries
- Migrants in camps and detention facilities
- People living in poverty, and those who are homeless
- People living in domestically-abusive environments



Increased care work

Care responsibilities predominantly fall to women. However, women differ in access to resources that can support them:

- Lower savings
- More responsibilities
- Less support

People also facing challenges due to increased care work:

- Single parents
- People facing intersecting forms of discrimination, such as: racism, sexism, ableism and more



Unemployment

Certain groups are disproportionately affected by job losses:

- Youth workers
- Older workers
- Younger workers
- Women
- Migrants
- Low-paid workers
- Service sector workers



Resource deployment

Critical health and other services for vulnerable groups are at risk, with governments prioritising COVID-19:

- Sexual and reproductive health services
- Services for migrants and refugees
- Access to other healthcare

Addressing gender inequalities

There's a financial incentive to address gender inequality

- If no action is taken, global GDP growth could be \$1 trillion lower in 2030.
- But taking action now could add \$13 trillion to global GDP in 2030.
- Businesses in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams are 25% more likely to have above-average profitability than companies in the fourth quartile.

Steps to be taken

- Address inequalities in unpaid child care
- Promote financial inclusion through flexibility introduced by digital platforms
- Interventions to address attitudinal biases rooted in traditional gender roles

Sources

- McKinsey & Company: <https://mck.co/30cAflI>
- BBC News: <https://bbc.in/3ecUs2Q>
- The Guardian: <https://bit.ly/3qk6E4f>; <https://bit.ly/3kLvj0D>
- The Economic Times: <https://bit.ly/3uURGoR>
- Business Standard News: <https://bit.ly/3qjCeIT>
- Queen Mary University of London: <https://bit.ly/3c8seUa>
- World Economic Forum: <https://bit.ly/3uXCszY>
- Office of National Statistics: <https://bit.ly/3bjEtOQ>
- Psychology Today: <https://bit.ly/3bjEwdu>