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Equal Pay International Coalition

EQUAL PAY FOR WORK OF EQUAL VALUE

Equal Pay International Day 18th September 2020

Question & Answers

1. What do we need to ensure that the unpaid care work of women is recognised and fairly compensated?

Care work, both paid and unpaid, is crucial to decent work. Across the world, women perform three-quarters of unpaid care work. One of the main obstacles to better recognition of unpaid work is the lack of data. Time use surveys – the main source of information on unpaid work – are not systematically conducted in all countries. Nonetheless, estimates based on time-use survey data in 64 countries (representing 66.9 per cent of the world's working-age population) show that 16.4 billion hours are spent in unpaid care work every day. This is equivalent to 2.0 billion people working 8 hours per day with no remuneration. In addition to improving data collection, it would be important for governments to invest in transformative care policies, which can yield positive health, economic and gender equality outcomes, leading to better outcomes for children, their mothers' employment and their fathers' caregiving roles, and older persons and people with disabilities. Data on public expenditure on selected care policies show that in countries that tend to invest more in a combination of care policies to offset the care contingencies of the working-age population – i.e. in case of maternity, sickness or disability – the employment rates for women unpaid carers aged 18–54 years tend to be higher than those in countries investing comparatively less. Care services in the form of childcare and long term care as well care infrastructures are also an essential element of redistributing unpaid care work between the family and the State, while care leave policies are very effective in redistributing unpaid care work between women and men thus addressing gender based stereotypes and redefining social norms that have long prescribed women as caretakers and men as the primary breadwinner. For more information, see [here](#).



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2. How do we tackle the invisibility of women's unpaid labour in mainstream economic models, and the consequent failure to recognise and fund childcare and social care as critical infrastructure?

In recent years, a lot of work on measuring the value of unpaid work and the potential for integrating unpaid work into national accounts has been done (see [here](#)). Historically, much of the reason for not including unpaid work in national accounts (and other methods of measuring economic output) has been practical: timely and reliable data on unpaid work are not always easy to come by, and exactly how to value unpaid work is not straightforward. However, valuing unpaid work is not impossible, as the link above demonstrates! In order to produce better estimates, we need improvements to time use surveys – more granularity, better periodicity, better consistency over time, and improved timeliness – and international agreement on standards, classifications, and more generally on *how* to value unpaid work.

3. How can technology help with gender desegregation in gender-segregated jobs and tasks - at work and at home?

Technology carries both risks and opportunities for women's paid work. A few years ago now, we produced a policy brief on women, digitalisation, and the future of work (see [here](#)). One of the main findings in the brief was that, while technology-driven increases in workplace flexibility may help women better combine their current work and family responsibilities – and perhaps also allow and encourage men to engage more in unpaid work – there are also concerns around the impact of technology on job quality, work-life balance, and wider worker well-being.

In terms of jobs loss, the overall impact of technology will likely depend on skill levels. Skills are an important safeguard against many of the risks created by digitalisation and automation, with far fewer highly educated workers at risk of losing their jobs to automation than low-educated workers. In many ways, this is good news for women – across



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OECD countries, women are now more likely than men to graduate from tertiary education. We still need more efforts to close the gender gap in STEM skills and qualifications.

Finally, technological progress and automation have contributed to households in high-income countries devoting less time to housework. The scope for technological advancement in developing countries could lead to a considerable reduction of time spent on unpaid housework by women and children.

4. Why quite many women are pushed to work in the informal sector and precarious conditions?

Informal employment is a huge challenge in many countries around the world. Recent ILO estimates suggest that, worldwide, men are actually more likely to work in informal employment than women. However, in many of the world's poorest countries, it is working women who are most likely to be found in informal employment. This includes most sub-Saharan African, Southern Asian and Latin American countries.

A recent joint OECD-ILO report on informal employment (see [here](#)) highlights some of the major reasons why women in these countries often end up working in the informal sector. Women's ability to find, or availability for, full-time work is one factor: because of their unpaid work responsibilities, many women are able to work only in short-hours or part-time jobs, which are more often informal and less often provide access to social protection. The need for flexibility and the ability to fit work around domestic responsibilities also often prevents women from entering formal jobs with more rigid working hours. In addition, discriminatory norms and practices around appropriate gender roles, as well as, in some countries, discriminatory legislation also often help drive women into informal employment.



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5. The COVID-19 crisis has had a catastrophic impact on women's employment, which risks setting back progress on gender inequality decades. How do we make governments tackle this in economic recovery work?

According to the [ILO's Monitor on COVID 19 and the World of Work](#), new data reveal a significant decline in employment in the second quarter of 2020 compared with the previous year, though with considerable variation across countries. The relative decline in employment is greater for women than for men in all countries, albeit with some exceptions. Furthermore, across OECD countries, the crisis is having a huge impact on employment and job prospects, for both women and men. To some degree, we do not yet know the full-extent of job losses: especially in Europe, the massive use of job retention schemes means that, as far as official statistics are concerned, employment has so far fallen only modestly in some countries, and not at all in others. Nonetheless, between Q4 2019 and Q2 2020, on average across OECD countries with available data, the employment rate for working age (15- to 64-year-old) women fell by 3.5 percentage points, and for working age men by 3.4 percentage points. These are considerably losses already.

In OECD countries, we have already seen policy responses on an unprecedented scale. (You can find a summary of these measures in [OECD Employment Outlook 2020](#)). This includes emergency response measures that are particularly valuable for women, such as special care leave and child care provisions.

Looking further ahead, it is crucial that governments do not forget about the particular needs and circumstances faced by women when constructing their recovery plans. One way of ensuring that women's concerns are fully taken into account is to embed all economic and social policy within broader efforts to "mainstream" gender. In the short run, this means, wherever possible, applying a gender lens to emergency policy measures – thinking about how each and every measure may (or may not) impact men and women differently, and whether the measure adequately addresses the concerns of each. Short-term measures that support women include strengthening access to social protection systems, such as



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health insurance and paid sick leave, for women working in formal and informal employment, and those who are self employed; providing support to women led enterprises and businesses, and to promote flexible work arrangements that allow women to cope with increased care burdens. In the longer run, it means governments having in place a well-functioning system of gender mainstreaming, relying on ready access to gender-disaggregated evidence in all sectors and capacities, as well as investing in social protection systems and promoting women's access to decent work.

For more information on economic fallout, and care economy please visit:

- <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-addressing-the-economic-fallout-of-covid-19-en.pdf?la=en&vs=406>
- <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-covid-19-and-the-care-economy-en.pdf?la=en&vs=407>
- https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/WCMS_744685/lang-en/index.htm

Finally, it is critical that policy measures should provide the fullest possible support for vulnerable and hard-hit groups, including migrants, women, young people and informal workers. Drawing on the latest data, employment losses are larger for women than for men. At the same time, the large increase in inactivity means that policymakers will need to tailor policy responses, including continued income support and efforts to assist with workers' return to employment, to avoid large-scale and long-term marginalization from labour markets – ensuring that no-one is left behind.

More information on measures adopted by governments to address COVID-19 including those that are gender-responsive, please see UN Women and UNDP's COVID-19 global gender response tracker available at: <https://data.undp.org/gendertracker/>



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6. Are there any learnings for disability group (which is practically the most marginalized section of the society) to bring them on equal footing in this respect?

Due to a multitude of barriers, wage employment of persons with disabilities in the private and public sector continues to be rather exceptional. Where statistics are available, persons with disabilities earn less than their non-disabled peers and are often in jobs for which they are overqualified. Breaking down the barriers to salaried employment and promoting equal opportunities in employment requires a comprehensive approach, making use of a wide range of measures. Key among them are collaborating with companies to create more inclusive workplaces, developing the vocational skills of people with disabilities, bringing disabled job seekers and hiring employers together as well as promoting a conducive policy and legal environment for the wage employment of persons with disabilities.

7. If Iceland is so advanced on gender equality, why is it the only OECD country that doesn't have data on unpaid work time by men and women?

Information provided by Iceland: Statistics Iceland is very interested in conducting time use surveys of the Icelandic population. However, due to the cost of such surveys and since it is not a legal requirement within the European Statistical System (in which Iceland participates through the Central European Free Trade Agreement) time use surveys are not conducted by Statistics Iceland.

8. Shouldn't we outlaw requiring job candidates to disclose their current salary? Doesn't that reinforce gender gaps?

Over the last few years, a number of jurisdictions in the US (17 States) as well as Ontario, Canada (adopted but not entered into force yet) have adopted legislation prohibiting employers from asking applicants about their current or past salaries, benefits, or other compensation. Often these laws also include prohibitions against taking salary history into account when making an offer. The purpose of such legislation is to break the cycle of



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inequality, whereby women (and other marginalized communities) may begin with lower salaries, which can follow them from job to job if the new employers rely heavily on an applicant's previous pay when setting the salary for a new job. A [Boston University](#) study analyzed differences between areas with salary history bans and neighbouring counties in states without bans and found that the new laws generated substantial pay increases for Black (+13%) and female (+8%) candidates who took new jobs. Furthermore, [Harvard Business Review](#) data showed that employers who avoided asking for salary histories were able to significantly reduce unfair pay differences. While other countries around the world are introducing innovative and progressive methods for eliminating the gender wage gap, salary history bans are a relatively new method confined to North America for the moment.

9. What recommendations can you offer for developing nations whose gender pay gap is high, feminicides and the violence against women is part of everyday news?

Eliminating violence against women and achieving women's economic empowerment are not mutually exclusive goals – the two issues are closely interlinked, and research suggests that increasing women's educational attainment and access to formal employment are key factors in reducing violence. Violence – at home and at work - undermines women's educational and employment opportunities, it hinders their income capacity and can be a barrier for their advancement in the workplace. The link between the women's economic empowerment and violence against women is complex. Some studies show that where women engage in informal or irregular work, their risk of intimate partner violence increases as their engagement in the workforce challenges traditional stereotypes that prescribe women caring and domestic duties.

However, there is also information to suggest that increasing women's access to formal employment, and working with communities to normalize women's engagement in paid work, improves a women's bargaining power within her relationship, reduces the risk of violence, and provides her with an avenue out of an abusive situation. For example, in Tanzania, a women's risk of intimate partner violence is significantly lower in areas with a



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higher proportion of women in paid work. Similarly, in Bangladesh, women with higher education and who are engaged in paid work are less likely to experience violence. For more information on the link between addressing violence against women and women's economic empowerment, see;

- <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/progress-of-the-worlds-women-2019-2020-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3512> (chapter 6).

In addition, for developing countries, a minimum wage policy can help address sex discrimination in overall pay structures. In order to maximize the impact of minimum wages on gender equality, coverage has to be broad. In other words, industries and sectors in which women are concentrated should not be excluded from coverage of generally applicable national minimum wage rates, and where rates are set at the industry level or by occupation, coverage for jobs and sectors where women prevail should be ensured. Equally important is setting the minimum wage at the right level and ensuring effective enforcement. Furthermore, national tripartite bodies and mechanisms for consultation have great potential for making equal pay a concern to be addressed by national law and policy, as well as for promoting practical measures in collective agreements and at the enterprise level.

Websites shared by participants during the event

- <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/meta/en/publications-en/who-takes-care-of-children--household-and-the-elderly-/160284>
- <http://www.ces.gouv.qc.ca/english.asp>
- <https://data.oecd.org/earnwage/gender-wage-gap.htm>
- <https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/le-ministere-en-action/egalite-femmes-hommes/>
- <https://www.etuc.org/en/publication/gender-pay-gap-end-secrecy>



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- <http://donewaiting.ca>
- https://www.ilo.org/ankara/publications/WCMS_707580/lang--en/index.htm
- https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_650553/lang--en/index.htm
- <https://www.fpi-lab.org/en/fair-pay-around-the-world-2/>
- <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/progress-of-the-worlds-women-2019-2020-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3512>
- https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response?gclid=CjwKCAjwq_D7BRADEiwAVMDdHjbxzQrK7k7kVpY6pLJonhtNOSqsFSGs2uG2POOEQ8sucHTphi0INRoC780QAvD_BwE#publications