



Gender

Covid has intensified gender inequalities, global study finds

Researchers find women hit harder by negative social and economic impacts of the pandemic than men

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Wed 2 Mar 2022 23.30 GMT

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic threatens to reverse decades of progress made towards gender equality, according to a global study that reveals women have been hit much harder socially and economically than men.

Previously, coronavirus-related gender disparity studies have focused on the direct health impacts of the crisis. It is well known, for example, that across the globe men have experienced higher rates of Covid cases, hospitalisation and death. However, until now, few studies have examined how gender inequalities have been affected by the many indirect social and economic effects of the pandemic worldwide.

The research, conducted by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington and published in [the Lancet](#), shows that women have experienced greater negative social and economic impacts than men.

The greatest and most persistent gender gap was seen in employment and uncompensated labour, with 26% of women reporting loss of work compared with 20% of men globally in September 2021. [Women](#)

and girls were also more likely to drop out of school and more likely to report an increase in gender-based violence than men and boys.

“This study provides the first comprehensive global evidence on gender disparities for a wide range of health-related, social and economic indicators throughout the pandemic,” said senior author Prof Emmanuela Gakidou. “The evidence suggests that Covid-19 has tended to exacerbate previously existing social and economic disparities rather than create new inequalities.

“Society is at a pivotal moment where investment in the empowerment of women and girls is critically needed to ensure that progress towards gender equality does not get stalled or reversed because of the Covid-19 pandemic. We cannot let the social and economic fallouts from the pandemic continue into the post-Covid era. Action must be taken now to not only reverse the current disparities, but to further close the gaps present before the pandemic began.”

The study analysed publicly available datasets from 193 countries using surveys taken from March 2020 to September 2021 on health and wellbeing during the pandemic. In every part of the world, women experienced higher rates of employment loss than men since the start of the pandemic. By September 2021, 26% of women and 20% of men had reported losing their job during the pandemic.

“Economic impacts have affected women more than men in some countries because they tend to be employed disproportionately in sectors harder-hit by Covid-19, such as the hospitality industry or as domestic workers,” said Dr Luisa Flor, the study’s co-lead author. “Moreover, gendered social norms in many countries attribute household and childcare responsibilities preferentially to women and reduce their time and ability to engage in paid labour.”

Women were more likely than men to report forgoing paid employment to care for others, with the gender gap widening over time. In March 2020, the ratio for women to men was 1.8 but by September 2021 it had increased to almost 2.4. More than half of respondents reported an increase in unpaid labour such as domestic work and caring for others during the pandemic, with women significantly more likely to report such increases everywhere except north Africa and the Middle East.

Globally, women and girls were more likely to drop out of education than men and boys. The largest gender gaps were seen in central Europe, eastern Europe and central Asia where four times more women than men dropped out of education. Overall, 54% of women and 44% of men said they perceived that gender-based violence had increased in their community during the pandemic.

“The further we progress in this pandemic the more we feel that the inequities being exacerbated are only going to worsen, and that any pre-pandemic progress towards gender equality will be reversed,” said Rosemary Morgan of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, which was not involved in the study. “Hopefully this data will reenforce the need for decision-makers to act before it is too late.”

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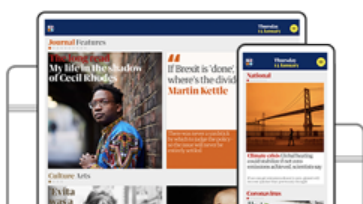
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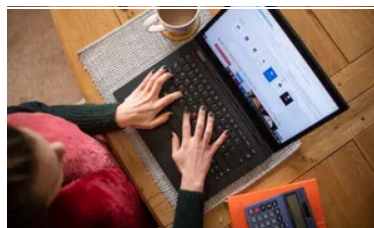
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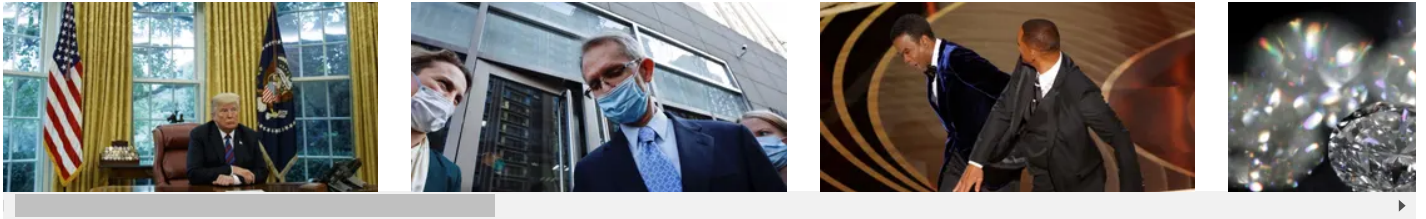
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