



How has the last year impacted on gender equality in HE?

25 February 2021

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Advance HE

The impact on women's equality and in turn gender equality is global

“The pandemic is deepening pre-existing inequalities, exposing vulnerabilities in social, political and economic systems which are in turn amplifying the impacts of the pandemic.

Across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, the impacts of COVID-19 are exacerbated for women and girls simply by virtue of their sex.”

The impact on women's working lives

**Institute of Fiscal Studies
research, May 2020:**

- Mothers are one-and-a-half times more likely than fathers to have either lost their job or quit since the lockdown began.
- Mothers are doing paid work during 2 fewer hours of the day than fathers, but they do childcare and housework during 2 more hours each.
- Mothers combine paid work with other activities (almost always childcare) in 47% of their work hours, compared with 30% of fathers' work hours

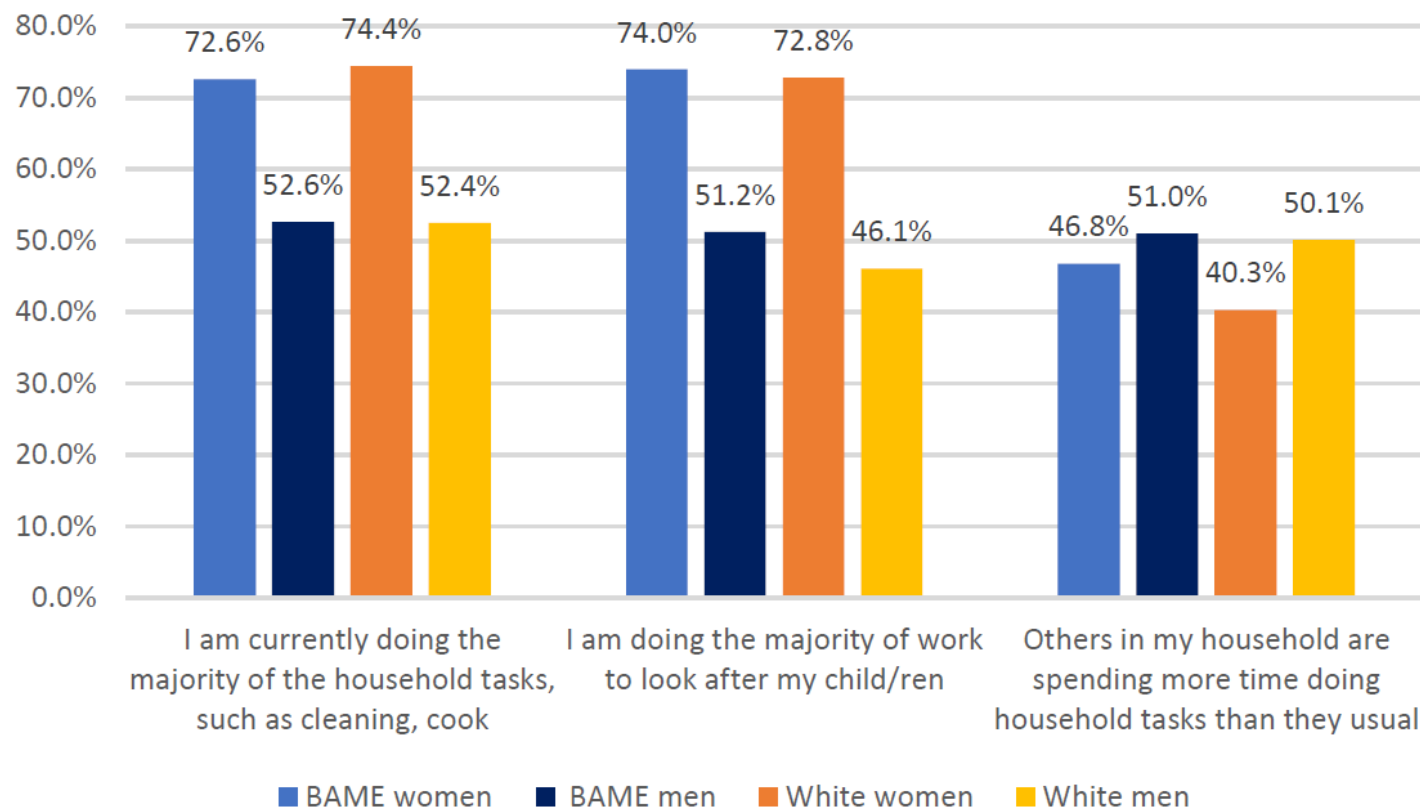


‘Who would have predicted that on the 50th anniversary of the Equal Pay Act, British women would be back in the home, up to their ears in dishes, dinners and nappies, watching their careers evaporate as the pay gap widens?’

Linda Scott, The Guardian: 7 July 2020

www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/07/how-coronavirus-is-widening-the-uk-gender-pay-gap

Evidence of impact on intersectionality between race and gender



Source: BAME women and Covid-19 – Research evidence
www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=cae4917f-1df3-4ab8-94e7-550c23bdc9cf

N=3,253; 1,627; 2,639

Intersectionality continued

- Almost half (45.8%) of parents said they were struggling to balance paid work and caring for their children,
- BAME women were most likely to report that they were struggling, and white men least likely.

Source: BAME women and Covid-19 – Research evidence

www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=cae4917f-1df3-4ab8-94e7-550c23bdc9cf

But what do we know about the impact on women in the HE sector?

May 2020 Findings of Australian Rapid Research Information Forum on impact on women in STEM

- Expect pandemic to disproportionately hinder women's STEM careers.
- Early evidence indicates disproportionate increase in caring responsibilities, job security and paid work capacity. Most acute for those with children under 12.
- Job insecurity more issue for women than men as more likely to be on short term contracts and in casual jobs.
- Women from under represented groups face additional barriers and **anticipate cuts to equity programmes.**
- Hard won gains by women in STEM were at risk.

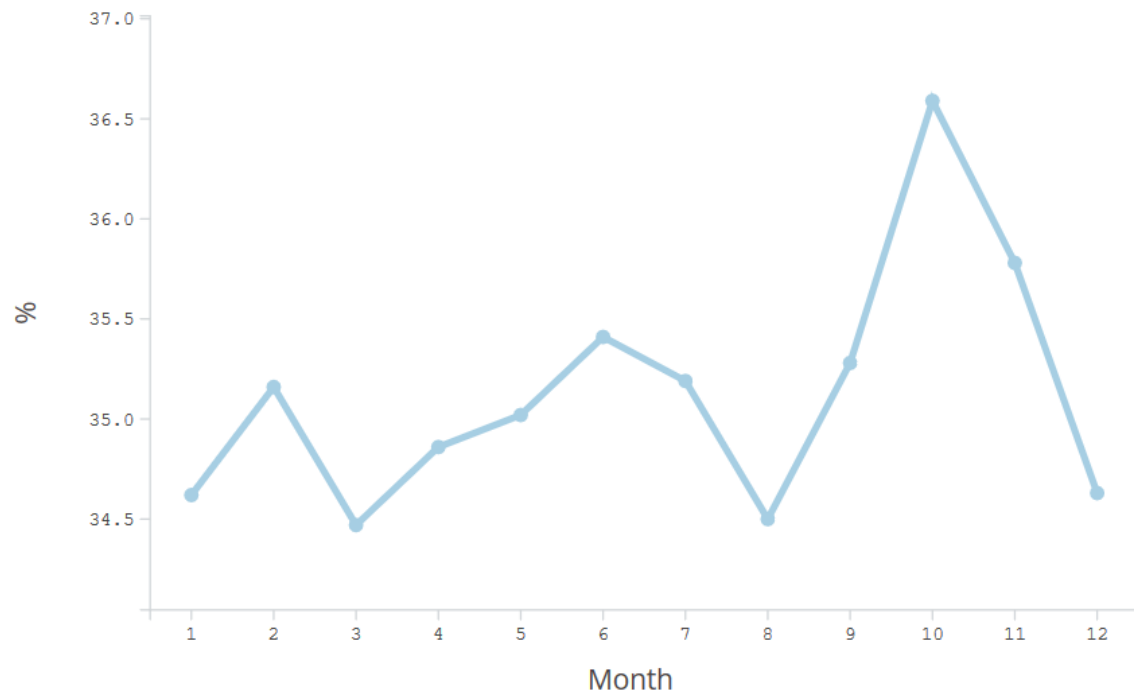
Research conducted within the HE sector to date has found that:

Women report less time to spend on research due to caring responsibilities. Men researchers have reported this to be the case too, 41% in comparison to 42% women (Vitae, 2020).

However evidence shows women have been 'struggling' the most (Smith & Watchorn 2020), and women's publication rates were significantly impacted (Thackery, 2020) (THES, 2021).

Proportion of research papers accepted where the first author is female, by month of submission

2020



Source: Digital Science/Dimensions

HE specific research continued

- Women in professional and services occupations have borne the brunt of caring responsibilities and domestic tasks in comparison to men (WHEN, 2021).
- Many women working from home, may not have access to adequate workspace. Any existing home office space 'defaults to the man' (Patton, 2020).
- Women more concerned than men about contract renewal or cessation. (Vitae, 2020).

Rebuilding momentum for change and building back better



Advance HE connect benefit series

During February have been exploring how Covid-19 has impacted on gender equality:

- Blogs and research publications
- Exploring intersectionality
- Bringing people together globally to share concerns, ideas and responses
- Highlighting barriers that remain and opportunities to further progress gender equality work in the sector

www.advance-he.ac.uk/membership/member-events/February

Themes identified from global gender roundtable

- Extension of funding deadlines and research programmes.
- Recognising impact of Covid-19 during promotions, recruitment and funding allocation processes
- Developing and signing up to new principles related to impact of the pandemic on equality
- Monitoring impact of higher education institutions responses on gender equality
- Conducting research to enable policy development appropriate to our new context
- Recognise current context is opportunity for change



Questions Advance HE has been asking

1. Are you aware of initiatives that were introduced as a consequence of Covid-19 that have supported gender equality?
2. What issues are you aware of that have negatively impacted on gender equality?
3. Do you think the momentum or focus of work to promote gender equality has changed during the pandemic? If so how?
4. What do you think the HE sector can do to 'build back better' for gender equality (phrase from UN disaster relief work)?

Your views

<https://padlet.com/epugh365/c87v3g41v7qggjyx>

Password:
AdvancingEquality

Opportunities to build upon

- ✓ Insights into remote working (Advance HE, 2021)
- ✓ More flexibility in research direction particularly in STEM disciplines (Vitae 2020).
- ✓ An opportunity to reset norm of domestic work being conducted by women (Chauhan, 2020). Studies in the US, Canada, Germany, Turkey and the Netherlands find men are doing more domestic work and childcare than before the pandemic (Aschaiek, 2021, CCF 2020, Schulte & Swenson, 2020)
- ✓ Shift to homeworking and new digital infrastructures present opportunities for wider social change (Oertelt-Prigione, 2020)
- ✓ Potential increased understanding of equality issues in our society among people who engage with media.
- ✓ Potential greater awareness of need for intersectional as well as gendered analyses as opposed to focus on women alone.

Renewed focus on domestic abuse

- In January 2021 Business Minister Paul Scully called upon employers to ensure their organisation is spotting signs of domestic abuse and helping their staff find the right support
- Launch of review to explore how workplace can be improved for survivors
- Domestic Abuse Bill in parliament will bring into law statutory definition



Like COVID-19, you can't always see the signs of domestic abuse.
If you hear violence next door, get help. [#listeningfromhome](#)

NO MORE 

CIPD & EHRC (Sept. 2020) guidance on managing and supporting employees experiencing abuse

www.cipd.co.uk/Images/managing-supporting-employees-experiencing-domestic-abuse-guide_tcm18-84538.pdf

Insights from Aurora longitudinal study

1. Aurorans reported increased leadership skills, confidence and self awareness - how is this being harnessed during and following the pandemic?
2. Longitudinal study highlights need to focus on workplace culture and practice – what previously worked may not work in a post pandemic era.
3. Aurorans are more likely to be promoted than the control group but report challenges in securing opportunities – how are barriers presented by the pandemic being considered in how we communicate with and engage staff as well as in recruitment, funding and promotions processes.

Aurora 2020 successfully moved online

- 1150 women participated representing 90 institutions. This compares to 1450 participants in 2019.
- Extra 25 hours of formal and informal networking opportunities
- Evaluation scores in line with face to face and for some sessions higher

Insights from Athena Swan



- Too early to tell impact of the pandemic on gender equality work undertaken in relation to Athena Swan.
- Was drop in submissions in 2020 primarily due to extensions offered because of the pandemic.
- Will continue to monitor and support the sector e.g. events to support and inform practice and good practice database <https://bit.ly/3dBNm7J>

Moving forward

- Recognise impact of pandemic and that the return to 'normal' alone will not address inequalities
- Support sector initiatives such Aurora and Athena Swan as means for commitment and change
- Critical institutions 'build back better' – requires deliberate intent and action
- Collaboration is key! Advance HE will continue to bring together people and organisations to ensure our HE sector is the best it can be.



For more information
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