

COVID-19 and Gender Equality: Living up to the Challenge

A webinar series powered by the International Gender Champions (IGC)



Factsheet on the gendered impacts of the outbreak

Differentiated health impacts on women and men

- Emerging data shows that **men tend to be more vulnerable to the virus**.
- In countries such as Italy, men represent nearly 60% of people who tested positive for the virus and more than 70% of those who have died, according to the country's National Health Institute (ISS). Even in countries like South Korea, where the proportion of women who have tested positive for the virus is higher than that of men, about 54% of the reported deaths are among men. Across the countries for which CNN has data - spanning nearly a quarter of the world's population - men were 50% more likely than women to die after being diagnosed with Covid-19 ([CNN](#)).

Women on the frontlines

- Women make up **70% of health care workers**, ([World Health Organization](#)), which puts them at higher risk. They are more likely to be front-line health workers, especially nurses, midwives and community health workers (WHO, [Gender equity in the health workforce: Analysis of 104 Countries](#)). **Nurses' levels of exposure are higher than doctors'** because they are much more involved in intimate care of patients ([New York Times](#)).
- Up to 50% of deaths in the European Union are being reported as happening in care homes, which is partly due to a lack of Protective Personal Equipment across those healthcare roles ([Euronews](#)).
- Women are also **frontline carers in homes**. The unpaid care work performed by them is also critical, with women's **unpaid contributions to healthcare equating to 2.35% of global GDP** ([United Nations](#)).

Domestic violence

- Globally, **243 million women and girls aged 15-49 have been subjected to sexual and/or physical violence perpetrated by an intimate partner** in the previous 12 months. With half of the world's population being currently in lockdown due to COVID-19, this number is likely to increase as security, health and money worries heighten tensions ([UN Women](#)).
- **Emerging data shows that since the outbreak, violence against women and girls, and particularly domestic violence, has intensified**. In France, reports of domestic violence have increased by 30% since the lockdown; in Cyprus and Singapore, helplines have registered an increase in calls of 30% and 33% respectively; in Argentina, emergency calls for domestic violence have increased by 25%; increased cases of domestic violence and demand for emergency shelters have also been reported in Canada, Germany, Spain, the UK and the USA ([UN Women](#)).

Care burden

- **Women spend two and a half times more unpaid care and domestic work than men on average** ([UN Women](#)). They make up the majority of those who care for aging or sick family members.
- School closures have put additional strain and demand on women, who are traditional primary caregivers for children in their homes.

Sexual and reproductive health

- Emergency response of COVID-19 outbreak means that **resources for sexual and reproductive health services may be diverted to deal with the outbreak**, contributing to a **rise in maternal and newborn mortality, increased unmet need for contraception, and increased number of unsafe abortions and sexually transmitted infections** ([UNFPA](#)).
- Globally, there are anticipated shortages of contraception. Sexual and reproductive health providers and clinics, which are the primary care providers and **safety net for women of reproductive aged, youth, those uninsured for health care, and people on low incomes** in many countries including in the USA, may also be deemed non-essential and diverted to respond to COVID-19 ([The Lancet](#)).

Women's economic vulnerability

- Emerging evidence on the impact of COVID-19 suggests that women's economic and productive lives will be affected disproportionately and differently from men. **Across the globe, women earn less, save less, hold less secure jobs, are more likely to be employed in the informal sector.** They have **less access to social protections** and are the majority of single-parent households. Their capacity to absorb economic shocks is therefore less than that of men ([United Nations](#)).
- In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, the fear is that gender employment gaps leave women **more vulnerable than men to job loss**; that women's lesser status in the labour market leaves them more exposed and easier to lay off. These fears are particularly acute in many developing countries and emerging economies, where large numbers of women workers continue to work in "informal employment" – jobs that are often unregistered and that generally lack basic social or legal protection and employment benefits ([OECD](#)).
- From past experience and emerging data, it is possible to project that the impacts of the COVID19 global recession will result in a **prolonged dip in women's incomes and labour force participation**, with compounded impacts for women already living in poverty ([United Nations](#)).

Women's lack of participation

- Women make up **20% of the World Health Organization Emergency Committee on COVID-19** ([Women in Global Health](#)).
- Likewise, the WHO-China joint mission on COVID-19 is only 16 percent women. Only 10 percent of the representatives in the U.S. Coronavirus Task Force are women ([The Hill](#)).
- **For every three men quoted in media coverage of the COVID-19 outbreak, only one woman is quoted** ([Women in Global Health](#)).