

Topic 1: Easing the Burden of Unpaid Domestic Work

INTRODUCTION

Unpaid domestic work is when an individual receives absolutely no compensation for completing draining household care and jobs, ranging from, but not limited to, completing the chores required for physical upkeep of the household, and caring for the children and elderly that are a part of that household¹. Women have continually handled said domestic work within their households for centuries, in accordance with the patriarchal mindset of prompting men to search and work outside of their households through traditional skilled and unskilled labor to finance their families. Though said division of work can be considered organized, the real issue arises when a woman upholding and upkeeping her household through necessary care is not considered a comparable career of its own just because there is no explicit monetary compensation associated with it. In other words, since women's domestic work does not have any income associated with the labor put in, there is an overarching belief across the globe that the long hours worked by women in order to provide household support is not a substantive contribution towards the wellbeing of the household. The assumption that unpaid labor is not substantial work, however, can be refuted. Domestic work and unpaid care is estimated to comprise nearly 10 to 39 percent of the economy based on the Global Development Index (GDP), which can be comparable to the commerce, manufacturing, and transportation sectors; such unpaid work effectively replaces the high costs of social and care services and infrastructure by allowing families to stay as self-sustainable as possible².

The general stigma against understanding the strains and hardship associated with unpaid domestic work is fueled by the lack of gender equality present in many basic aspects of society: women are constantly brought down and shamed for working unpaid labor jobs in households as opposed to building a "traditional" career, which in turn raises gender inequality levels and directly sets back the progress made on Sustainable Development Goal 5 and makes all household work much more of a burden for women to practice. For instance, even though women spend nearly three times as many hours working to support their families at home compared to men, they are still frowned upon as homemakers because their work is considered a default social obligation, as opposed to the overall belief that industry work by men requires an acquired skill and practice.

¹UN Women. (n.d.). *Redistribute unpaid work*. UN Women. Retrieved August 14, 2022, from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/csw61/redistribute-unpaid-work>

²United Nations. (2016, December 30). *Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work*. United Nations. Retrieved August 13, 2022, from https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E%2FCN.6%2F2017%2F3

TOPIC HISTORY

Unpaid labor through women has been a direct result of a highly patriarchal society, or a community controlled by men, likely having originated as early as 4000 years ago³. And though women have largely stayed within these “traditional” roles for thousands of years, there was a shift during periods where there was heavy warfare across the globe, most notably with a rise during the late 1930s-1970s, as women were essentially forced to provide an income by entering the workforce as they had none from the ongoing war, while continually performing unpaid care for their families. Though said encouragement into paid labor jobs pushed women out of their comfort zone, they also had to focus on household upkeep since they had no outside support. Additionally, since women supposedly created “low-quality” products, employers felt the need to compensate women accordingly, thus making way for the gender wage gap and further pushing women to work even harder to support their families. In other words, there was an increased burden on their wellbeing that stemmed from working twice, or even thrice, as hard for their families. And though this continued for the next few decades, the increased strain on women across the globe from this era had largely come to the attention of the international community as a social issue since the late 1960s through the lens of economics and sociology research that previously ignored the impact of unpaid and household work.

CURRENT SITUATION

Developments towards easing the burden of unpaid domestic work started in the last thirty years-- beginning with the most basic acknowledgements of the issue at hand. In two international conferences held in 1995, the Social Summit and the Fourth World Conference on Women, there was an encouragement to account for unpaid labor as a form of global work beyond typical paid labor, however, there was controversy on even changing the definition of “work.” In fact, also in 1995, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was where the United Nations recognized the burden that unpaid labor brings upon women while highlighting its negative impact on gender equality around the globe⁴. Thus, since such a large number of governments have an issue with actually recognizing the validity of unpaid labor and the economic benefit said work has provided, there had not been any significant actions taken on an international level beyond that point.

There have been smaller movements to move forward with the issues. In 2013, UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty, Magdalena Sepúlveda requested states to finally begin recognizing unpaid labor and care as a human rights issue as it is clearly hindering women’s progress in society across the board and limiting equality with respect to even the most basic of resources, such as healthcare and childcare⁵. However, during this era of acknowledgement, especially with global tensions, notably with the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic, the burden

³Collins, G. (1986, April 28). *Patriarchy: Is it invention or inevitable?* The New York Times. Retrieved February 24, 2

022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/04/28/style/patriarchy-is-it-invention-or-inevitable.html>

⁴UN Women, *Beijing Declaration and platform for action (1995)*. Beijing; United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women.

continues to worsen for unpaid labor. From analyzing 38 countries, UN Women found that 60% of women and 54% of men have stated that they have spent more time on unpaid work since the initial onset of the pandemic⁶. With such a struggle to even understand the scope and issues relevant to unpaid domestic work, current global turmoil and lack of stability have caused the issue to worsen for all involved parties.

DIRECTIVE

In the discussion and debate regarding the topic at hand, UN Women strives to support member states with their policies and standards towards easing the burden of unpaid domestic work. There is a high level of overlap between the other issues discussed by UN Women, including, but not limited to, access to education, healthcare, and political representation, which all implicate larger burdens and problems for those completing unpaid domestic work that delegates should be mindful of throughout the progression of committee. Additionally, delegates are strongly encouraged to focus on the impact and evolution of current events to accurately assess the status quo and how it directly impacts the topic. The committee as a whole is highly encouraged to focus on developing both long term and short term action plans that can be taken in order to minimize the burden of unpaid domestic work from the root cause of the problem itself. Lastly, it is extremely important to compare and contrast the status of unpaid domestic work across all states regarding the issue; more specifically, how will developing nations have to approach this conflict differently from developed ones?

⁵United Nations. (2013, October 24). *Women's unpaid work in the home is a 'major human rights issue,' says UN expert*. UN News. Retrieved August 13, 2022, from <https://news.un.org/en/story/2013/10/453702-womens-unpaid-work-home-major-human-rights-issue-says-un-expert>

⁶United Nations. (n.d.). *Whose time to care? - Unpaid Care and Domestic Work During COVID-19*. UN Women. Retrieved August 13, 2022, from https://data.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Whose-time-to-care-brief_0.pdf

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³Collins, G. (1986, April 28). *Patriarchy: Is it invention or inevitable?* The New York Times. Retrieved February 24, 2

022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/04/28/style/patriarchy-is-it-invention-or-inevitable.html>

⁴UN Women, *Beijing Declaration and platform for action (1995)*. Beijing; United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women.

Topic 2: Establishing Equal Wages for the Female Labor Force

INTRODUCTION

Globally, women make 23 percent less than male workers.¹ This disparity become even more prominent in the countries with the largest gaps at women making just 40% of what a man doing the same job makes.² The wage gap is influenced by many factors including hiring discrimination, access to health and child care, education, and responsibilities within the home. On top of businesses being more reluctant to promote and hire women, particularly for high paying jobs, the additional unpaid work women are more likely to take on due to societal

78% of companies pay men more

Median hourly gender pay gap at companies in Great Britain

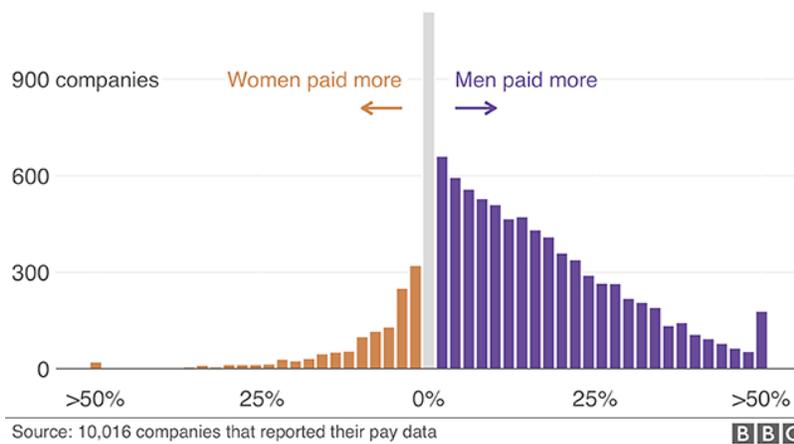


Figure 1: Statistics of 10,000+ companies pay for men versus women.

pressures leave them with less time and opportunities to focus on their career.³ Without efforts to close the gap in women's access to work time and equal paying jobs for equal work, the gap will persist.

Another problem facing the wage gap is the recent Covid-19 Pandemic. Women lost jobs at much higher rates than male workers, meaning they felt the economic impact of the pandemic much more than male workers.⁴ For those still with jobs, many worked in the healthcare system as nurses, doctors, and caregivers. This put women in a more vulnerable position for contracting Covid and being taken out of the work environment. Additionally, women were more likely to oversee childcare during the pandemic, taking up approximately 5 more hours a week of childcare worldwide while men only picked up 3.5 hours, all of which is unpaid and often done during the traditional workday when children used to be in school.⁵

Women have not had equal pay since they began to enter the workforce, but the pandemic has taken a hit to the little progress made to pay women the same as men. With these additional responsibilities and layoffs from work, women are put in an even worse position to make the money they deserve.

¹ Nations, U. (n.d.). *International Equal Pay Day*. United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/observances/equal-pay-day>

² *What Is the Gender Pay Gap and How Do We Close It?* (n.d.). Global Citizen. <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/what-is-the-gender-pay-gap/#:~:text=Globally%2C%20women%20earn%20on%20average>

³ *How Women Worldwide Face the Gender Pay Gap and Why it Persists*. (2020, November 17). Globaledge.msu.edu. <https://globaledge.msu.edu/blog/post/56934/how-women-worldwide-face-the-gender-pay>

⁴ *How Women Worldwide Face the Gender Pay Gap and Why it Persists*. (2020, November 17). Globaledge.msu.edu. <https://globaledge.msu.edu/blog/post/56934/how-women-worldwide-face-the-gender-pay>

⁵ *From insights to action: Gender equality in the wake of COVID-19* | *Digital library: Publications*. (n.d.). UN Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/09/gender-equality-in-the-wake-of-covid-19>

TOPIC HISTORY

Documents displaying the gender pay gap date back to as early as the 1300s when women in Europe made about half of their male counterparts. Since this was based on cultural customs, so this practice could go back either further.⁶ Women did not become a major part of the workforce until the 20th century though. This was catalyzed by World War 2 bringing many women into domestic workforces as men were recruited for battle overseas. After, the end of the war, women wanted to continue working, and with the assistance of generalized education in many countries, women continued to work, increasing their presence in the workplace through the 1990s.⁷ Despite the great contributions women were making to the economy, they continued to be paid less than men, even when performing the same job.

Work has been done to decrease the gender pay gap, and it has shrunk with most countries having women making about 60% of what men made in the 1970s to now women making 77%. This is slow progress though, and many estimates predict the gender pay gap will not close for 202 years even before the pandemic.³ This problem cannot be simply fixed by standardizing pay across the genders either. Women are expected to be the primary caregiver to



Figure 2: Woman working while taking care of her child. Source: Gallup News

children and the household in most cultures, meaning they must take more time out of their day to focus on these tasks than men do. Additionally, women are seen as the primary contact should something go wrong particularly with kids, meaning they must seek jobs that allow them the flexibility to address these needs. With less hours available to work and needing a more flexible schedule, women are pushed into lower paying jobs to get their needs met. This

means women are overrepresented in low paying jobs and men are overrepresented in high paying jobs.³ Until the unpaid labor women put into their families and homes are balanced with men, it will be difficult to promote women into positions where they can obtain equal pay.

Women also face direct discrimination within their jobs. Societal norms lead employers to view of the work of men as more valuable than of women even if the work is the same. This then leads to employers paying women less for the same work, and it can go even further. When looking who to promote, women will be again considered less valuable with equal merits to men.² This can be seen by the proportion of women and men in executive positions, such as in the U.S. where only 25% are women.⁸ Significant work still needs to be done to promote women in the work force globally.

⁶ de Pleijt, A. (2021, January 6). *Two worlds of female labour: Gender wage inequality in Western Europe ...* Wiley Online Library. Retrieved August 18, 2022, from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/chr.13045>

⁷ Ortiz-Ospina, E., Tzvetkova, S., & Roser, M. (2018, March 24). *Women's Employment*. Our World in Data. Retrieved August 18, 2022, from <https://ourworldindata.org/female-labor-supply>

⁸ Hyken, S. (2019, December 11). *The executive gender gap*. Forbes. Retrieved August 18, 2022, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/shephyken/2019/12/15/the-executive-gender-gap/?sh=37f89a403b2f>

CURRENT SITUATION

The Covid-19 pandemic has only made the gender pay gap more prominent. In 2020, women made up 39% of the global workforce but 45% of layoffs.⁹ Industries such as domestic workers, which are heavily populated by women workers, took some of the largest layoffs of the pandemic. Domestic workers, who are 80% women, had layoffs of 72%. Women also saw a 60% drop in pay over the first month of the pandemic, putting financial burdens on them and their families.



Figure 3: Statistics for men and women care during the pandemic.

Women also had additional work within the home. Prior to the pandemic, women spent an average of 26 hours of childcare a week, but this increased to 31 hours, whereas men only went from 20.5 hours to 24 hours. Meaning women are now doing an additional seven hours of unpaid work taking care of their children than men. Women's mental health is also declining due to the pandemic, with women consistently reporting worse mental health than the previous week at higher rates than men. Women also see a longer road to normalcy after the pandemic with 39% believing

they will be back into normalcy within a year compared to 46% of men. The pandemic is putting stress on all parts of women's lives.

The United Nations is not allowing this problem to pass by though. In 2019, the Human Rights Council again pressed nations to work towards ending the gender pay gap, highlighting how long it has existed for and the slow progress made to rectifying the situation.¹⁰ Additionally, the General Assembly created the International Equal Pay Day to bring awareness to the gender pay gap and encourage nations to continue to reduce this disparity.¹¹ UN Women also continues to advocate for women's rights in and out of the workplace. For example, UN Women holds many conventions every year to promote equal pay for women, and they advocate for unpaid work to be incorporated into paid work.¹² Gender equality is also one of Sustainable Development Goals which are supposed to be accomplished by 2030.⁹ Though gender equality nor equal pay is projected to be met by 2030, it still shows a commitment by the UN to uplift women

⁹ United Nations. (2017). *Sustainable Development Goals ... Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform*. Un.org. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

¹⁰ A/HRC/RES/41/14

¹¹ A/RES/74/142

¹² *Economic empowerment*. UN Women – Headquarters. (n.d.). Retrieved August 19, 2022, from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment>

DIRECTIVE

Collaborate to create comprehensive plans that address not only the inequality of pay for women and men directly but also the other factors that contribute to this problem. Consider other identities that would make women additionally vulnerable to the consequences of unequal pay. Mind the difference in resources that industrialized versus developing countries have to address this problem. Promote the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals to create gender equality. Focus on the impact of Covid-19 on the possible solutions and problems equal pay faces. Initiate steps that will reduce the burden of unequal pay on women and provide a more fair society for all.



Figure 4: Collaborative work. Source: Plainview Blog