

Seven issues affecting women and girls during COVID-19 pandemic



Economic Impacts on Women

1. Greater burden of domestic and care work

Women's ability to do professional work is limited due to the time they spend on domestic work and care in the home

- Globally, women carry out [at least 2.5x](#) more unpaid care work than men; in India, it is 10x more and COVID-19 has increased the burden for women by a [further 30%](#)
- Given that women typically earn less than men, there is a growing risk [that women's jobs in heterosexual households will be sacrificed](#), leading to a drop in women's workforce participation, [delay women's career progression](#), and [increase in gender pay gap](#)

2. Higher rates of job losses

More women employed in hardest-hit sectors, leading to greater job losses and unpredictable incomes

- [~60% of US job losses](#) are amongst women, particularly in low-paid sectors such as hospitality
- In Bangladesh, [25% of the largely female 4.1 million](#) garment factory workforce is now unemployed
- Sex workers globally - from the [~1 million in the US](#) to the [1.2-3 million in India](#) - face loss of income and are also [excluded from COVID-19 social protection responses](#)

3. Reduced financial independence and future prospects

Without financial independence, women and girls are likely to have lower decision-making power

- [21% of US low-income women](#) cannot afford feminine hygiene products on a monthly basis; 1 NGO has increased menstrual hygiene product donations from [200,000 to 900,000](#) during COVID_19
- More than 1.5 billion children are out of school due to COVID-19; school closures can lead to increased early marriage and a higher rate of [child] pregnancy for girls [who will then never return to school](#)



Health and wellbeing impacts on women

4. Increased risk of pregnancy-related deaths and teen pregnancies

Past pandemics saw an increase in undesirable health outcomes for women and girls that experts say are on the rise during the COVID-19 pandemic

- The Ebola outbreak was projected to cause [120,000 preventable maternal deaths](#) due to pressure of health services and fears amongst parents of contracting the disease in hospital
- Teen pregnancies are also [expected to rise as a result of school closures in Africa](#), as seen during the Ebola outbreak, where [~18,000 teenage girls became pregnant](#)

5. Spikes in sexual, physical, and domestic violence and exploitation

National lock-downs leave women vulnerable and at-risk from others

- A surge in domestic violence has been reported across the globe, from China, to Europe to Latin America – [40-50%](#) increased calls for help in Brazil; [90% of increase](#) linked to Covid-19 in China
- [220,000 vulnerable women](#) report being asked for sex by their rental landlords in Scotland in lieu of rent



Health care system impacts for women

6. Increased risk for front-line health workforce

Gender imbalances and representation across the health care workforce lead to inequity in risk

- [70%](#) of the global health and social care workforce is female and at greater risk of contracting COVID-19
- [70% of global health leadership is male](#); in COVID-19 policy spaces, there is inadequate women's representation (e.g., in the [White House Coronavirus Task Force](#))

7. Reduced access to vital health services and exclusion from potential COVID-19 treatments

Reducing health care access for women forces them to take unnecessary risks - from unsafe abortion to taking unapproved medicines whilst pregnant or breastfeeding

- Several reproductive health services may be deemed as [unessential and be diverted due to COVID-19](#). In Texas, [the ban on abortion as non-essential](#) has been reversed
- Sanitary pads [were initially excluded](#) from pandemic essential products lists in several countries
- Pregnant women [could be at risk of pregnancy-related complications](#) due to COVID-19. Yet, trials to find treatments [exclude pregnant women](#), leaving them without a treatment they can safely use