



International Labour Organization  
Organisation internationale du Travail  
Organización Internacional del Trabajo



# Women at Work in G20 countries: Progress and policy action since 2019

Paper prepared for the G20 Employment Working Group  
Saudi Arabia's G20 Presidency 2020

2020



# Contents

Executive summary	3
1. Introduction	5
2. Recent developments in reducing gender gaps in the labour market	5
2.1. Taking stock of the Brisbane goal	5
2.2. Large gender gaps in job quality	7
2.3. Women on the frontline in the COVID-19 crisis	10
3. Policy action	17
3.1. Measures to increase women's participation in the labour market	17
3.2. Measures to improve the quality of women's earnings	17
3.3. Measures to improve women's labour market security	18
3.4. Measures to improve working conditions	19
3.5. Relevant policy developments since the COVID-19 outbreak in selected G20 countries	20
4. Conclusions	21

## Executive summary

### **The COVID-19 pandemic has put at risk the progress made towards the G20 25x25 Brisbane goal**

In 2019, further progress occurred in most G20 economies towards meeting the G20 Brisbane goal of reducing the gender gap in labour force participation by 25 percent by 2025. In around half of G20 members, the decline in the gender gap since 2012 is on track to meeting the goal. The gap has also declined in most other G20 countries even if more concerted action is required. However, gender differences in participation remain large in Saudi Arabia, despite some progress made for Saudi nationals, and have widened further in India.

Promoting greater labour force participation of women is only half the battle and further progress is required in closing gender gaps in job quality and employment opportunities. Gender differences in pay remain stubbornly large in most G20 economies, with only modest progress occurring in a few countries towards closing the gap. This is reflected in persistently large gender differences in access to managerial and leadership positions and in the incidence of part-time work. However, there has been some modest progress in most G20 economies towards closing the gender gap in self-employment opportunities.

All G20 economies are being hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected women in three key dimensions: they are strongly represented in frontline occupations in the health and care sectors, they have suffered disproportionately from job loss and reduced hours, and they have taken on a disproportionate share of unpaid work at home compared to men. Women have, in addition, suffered from a higher incidence of domestic violence during lockdowns. Thus, the COVID-19 crisis risks eroding some of the gains in gender equality that have been achieved in G20 labour markets over recent years. This is not inevitable if swift and decisive action is taken by policy makers to address these additional burdens and systemic challenges faced by women and if the more active involvement of men in childcare and housework during the lockdowns is transformed into a permanent shift in gender attitudes towards a gender-equitable division of unpaid care work.

### **A range of policy action is being taken to foster greater gender equality in the labour market**

G20 countries are continuing to advance gender equality in the labour market through a combination of policies, which span different and complementary areas, such as education, vocational training, promotion of female entrepreneurship, or access to affordable childcare and other measures in favour of a better work-life balance. Further efforts have been made to improve women's labour market security and working conditions, including protection against work-related violence and harassment. G20 countries are also continuing to pursue strategic inclusive targeting with more rigorous and time-bound numeric targets. Establishing numerical targets and putting in place the necessary mechanisms to measure progress and impact should help accelerate the achievement of the 25x25 target and advance SDGs 8 and 5. Finally, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, action has also been taken by G20 governments and the social partners to address some of the additional burdens facing women in the labour market and in reconciling the demands of work and family life.

### **Further action is required**

While the policy initiatives that G20 countries have taken to advance gender equality in the labour market are welcome, they will need to be reinforced in several areas. First, greater efforts will be needed in several G20 countries to achieve the G20 Brisbane 25X25 gender goal. Second, gender gaps in job quality (inter alia pay, access to management positions and working-time arrangements) are still persistent in all G20 countries and should be tackled by comprehensive measures to improve both women's access to the labour market and progression in their jobs and careers. Third, the major economic crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic risks reversing some of the progress achieved in reducing gender inequalities in the labour market.

During the post-confinement phase of the pandemic, some of the policies taken in the early months of the crisis will need to be adapted and, in some cases, better targeted to account for the situation of women and the large heterogeneity in working conditions across sectors, firms and workers. In particular, G20 countries should consider scaling up their efforts towards:

- Better working conditions for health-care sector workers and other essential workers
- Promoting job creation through hiring subsidies targeted at low-skilled workers
- More inclusive paid sick leave provisions
- Strengthening family-friendly working arrangements
- Improving access to affordable care services for children, older persons and other dependent sick or disabled persons
- A gradual scaling back of COVID-19 specific care leave provisions
- Establishing a supportive and enabling environment that will facilitate women entrepreneurs' access to digital services, including financial services for women entrepreneurs
- Promoting women's participation in managerial and leadership positions
- Work environments free from violence and harassment
- Better data on gender gaps in the labour market and the impact of policies.

## 1. Introduction

At the Brisbane Summit in 2014, G20 leaders committed to reduce the gender gap in labour force participation by 25 per cent by the year 2025 (the 25x25 target). G20 Ministers of Labour also agreed on a set of key principles to improve the quality of women's employment. Since then, it was agreed that annual G20 national employment plans would also include information on the key policy measures that have been introduced or are planned to be put in place to achieve the 25x25 target and improve the quality of women's employment. These measures aim at improving women's access to the labour force, the quality of their earnings, their labour market security and working conditions.

This annual report by the ILO and OECD provides a review of progress in achieving the Brisbane goal to reduce the gender gap in labour force participation and recent developments in reducing gender inequality in other key labour market outcomes. It identifies key challenges for closing gender gaps in the labour market, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and promising policy initiatives. The report begins with a review of how gender gaps in labour market outcomes have evolved both prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is followed by an overview of the new and most relevant policy developments that G20 countries and other countries invited to the G20 meetings<sup>1</sup> have reported in the area of gender equality in the world of work since 2019. Areas for further policy action to promote greater gender equality in the labour market, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, are identified in the concluding section.

## 2. Recent developments in reducing gender gaps in the labour market

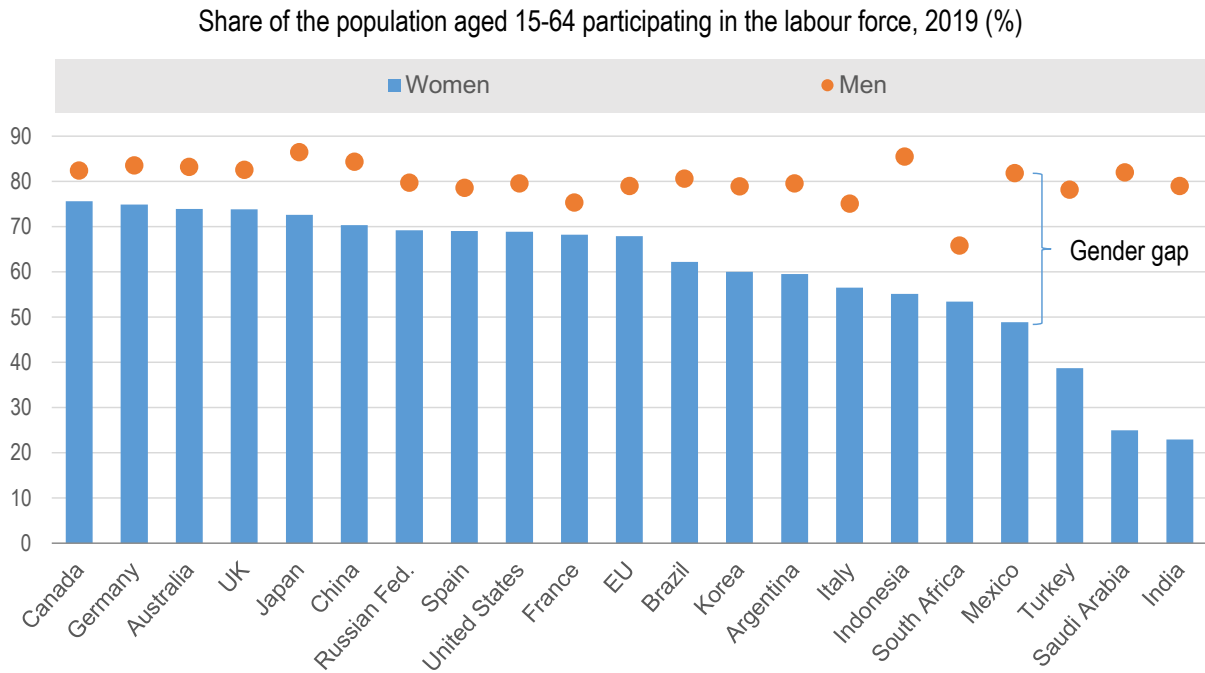
All G20 economies are being hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has particularly affected women in three key dimensions in managing their paid work and household responsibilities. They are strongly represented in frontline occupations in the health-care sector and thus exposed to contagion, they have suffered disproportionately in many countries from job loss and reduced hours, and they often face a heavy burden at home during lockdowns in terms of additional family responsibilities and a higher risk of experiencing domestic violence. Thus, the COVID-19 crisis risks eroding some of the gains in gender equality that have been achieved in G20 labour markets over recent years. This is not inevitable if action is taken by policy makers to address these additional burdens faced by women and if the more active involvement by men in childcare and housework during the lockdowns is transformed into a permanent shift in gender attitudes towards a gender-equitable division of unpaid household work.

This section first reviews progress towards the G20 Brisbane goal prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and then gives an initial assessment of the impact of the pandemic on the situation of women in the labour market.

### 2.1. Taking stock of the Brisbane goal

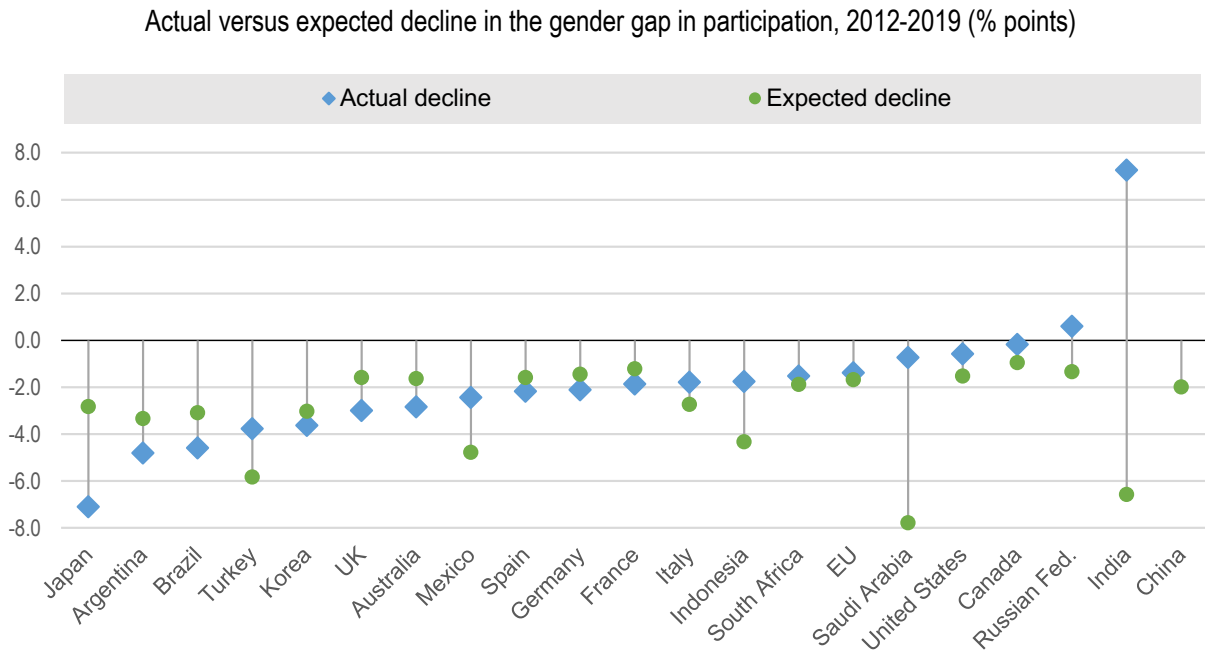
In nearly all G20 economies for which recent data are available, there was an increase in the labour force participation rate of women aged 15-64 between 2012 and 2019.<sup>2</sup> India was the only exception where there was a fall in the participation of women.<sup>3</sup> Despite this increase in most countries, there remain large country differences in the participation of women and, consequently, in the gender gap in participation (Figure 1). Overall, **there has been a decline in the gender gap in participation in almost all G20 economies** for which data are available with the exceptions of India and Russia (Figure 2).<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 1. Gender gaps in labour force participation remain substantial in some countries**



Note: The data refer to: 2010 for China and 2018-19 for India; and the population aged 16-64 for the United States  
 Source: OECD calculations based on national labour force surveys and, for China, census data

**Figure 2. The gender gap in participation has narrowed**



Note: The actual decline refers to the observed change in the gender gap in labour force participation for persons aged 15-64 (16-64 for the United States) between 2012 and 2019. The expected decline refers to the decline that would occur by 2019 if there was a steady decline in the gender gap from 2012 onwards to reach the target of a 25% decline by 2025. For China, no recent data are available to calculate the actual decline in the gender gap and census data for 2010 have been projected forward to 2012 to calculate the expected decline in the gender gap.  
 Source: OECD calculations based on national labour force surveys and, for China, census data.

In around half of G20 members, the decline in the gender gap is in line with, or better than, the expected progress towards meeting the G20 Brisbane goal. In other words, the actual decline in the gender gap between 2012 and 2018 has been around the same or greater than what would be expected if there was a steady decline in the gap each year to reach the 2025 goal. Among this group of countries, particularly large reductions occurred in Japan, Argentina, Brazil, Turkey and Korea. The actual decline was also noticeably greater than the expected decline in Australia, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Spain. Of the G20 economies where the decline in the gap was less than expected, there was, nevertheless, a sizeable reduction in Indonesia, Mexico and Turkey. Of more concern is the situation in Saudi Arabia where the gap remains wide, despite some decline for Saudi nationals, and in India where it has increased.<sup>5</sup>

## 2.2. Large gender gaps in job quality<sup>6</sup>

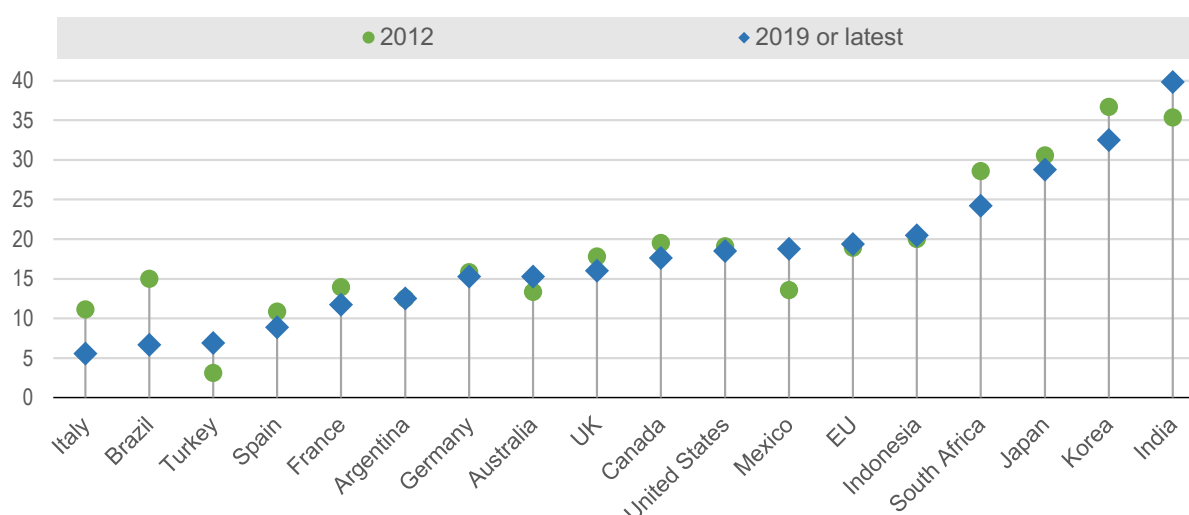
Improving women's access to the labour market is only half of the battle to promote greater gender equality in the labour market. Action is also needed to tackle large gender gaps in job quality. In areas such as pay, access to management positions and working-time arrangements, progress in tackling gender disparities has been uneven. Better job opportunities for women would not only enhance their well-being but also enhance their incentives to participate in the labour market and reduce the underutilisation of their skills.

*The gender pay gap has declined but remains substantial*

**In the majority of G20 countries, there has been a small decline in the gender earnings gap between 2012 and 2019** (Figure 3). However, at the current slow pace of improvement, it would take many years to reach complete pay parity between men and women in wage and salaried work. In a few countries, there was even a reversal with the gap widening, although the data are often volatile from year to year and so this does not necessarily represent a more permanent trend. With only slow progress in closing the gender pay gap, women continue to earn substantially less than men in most G20 countries. In terms of median full-time earnings, women earn between 30-40% less than men in Korea and India, down to a gap of 10% or less in Italy, Brazil, Turkey and Spain. There is a risk that with the disproportionate effect of the COVID-19 crisis on women, some of the improvements in closing the gender pay gap may be reversed.

**Figure 3. Gender pay gaps remain substantial**

Difference in median full-time earnings between men and women as a % of earnings for men, 2012 and 2019



Note: The data refer to median gross (monthly or weekly) earnings of full-time wage and salary workers. The data for 2019 refer to: 2014 for the EU and Turkey; 2015 for Brazil; 2016 for Italy; 2017 for France and Spain; and 2018 for Germany, India and South Africa. The data for 2012 refer to 2010 for the EU and Turkey, 2013 for South Africa and 2014 for Korea.

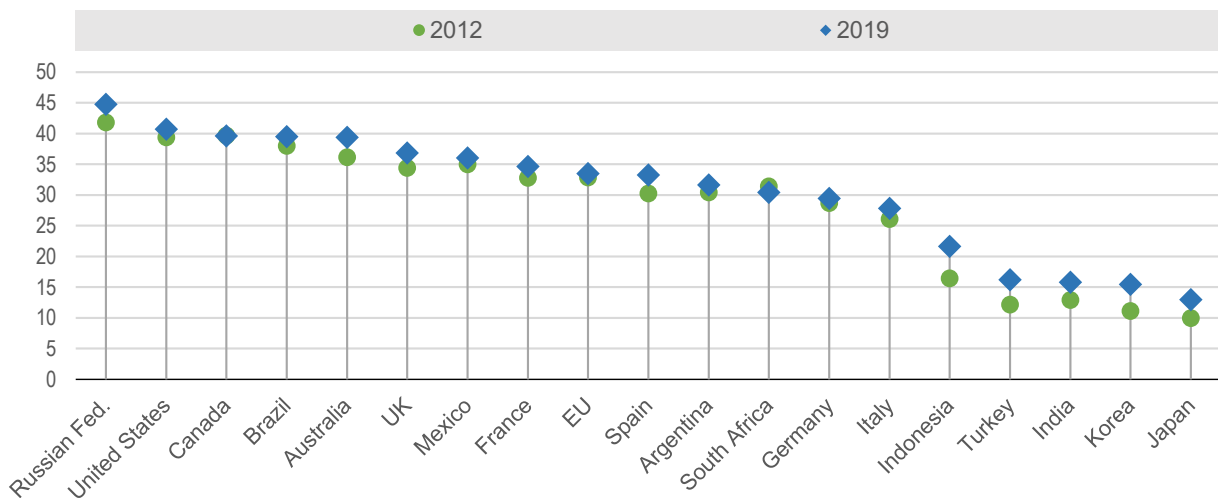
Source: OECD Earnings Distribution Database; Eurostat; and OECD estimates based on national labour force surveys for Argentina, Brazil, India, Indonesia and South Africa.

### Some progress in accessing leadership jobs and self-employment

The gender gap in earnings partly reflects the difficulties women face in moving into higher paid jobs. Currently, women account for around 40% or more of all managerial jobs in Russia and the US, but this declines to 15% or less in Korea, India and Japan (Figure 4). **Since 2012, some progress has been made in most G20 countries in increasing the share of women in management roles**, notably in Indonesia. Social norms and gender stereotypes, which create a glass ceiling for women, coupled with women's shorter working hours, continue to be obstacles to more equal representation of women in leadership positions.

**Figure 4. A rising share of women in managerial jobs**

Share of women in total employment in management occupations (ISCO-08 Group 1), 2012 and 2019 (%)



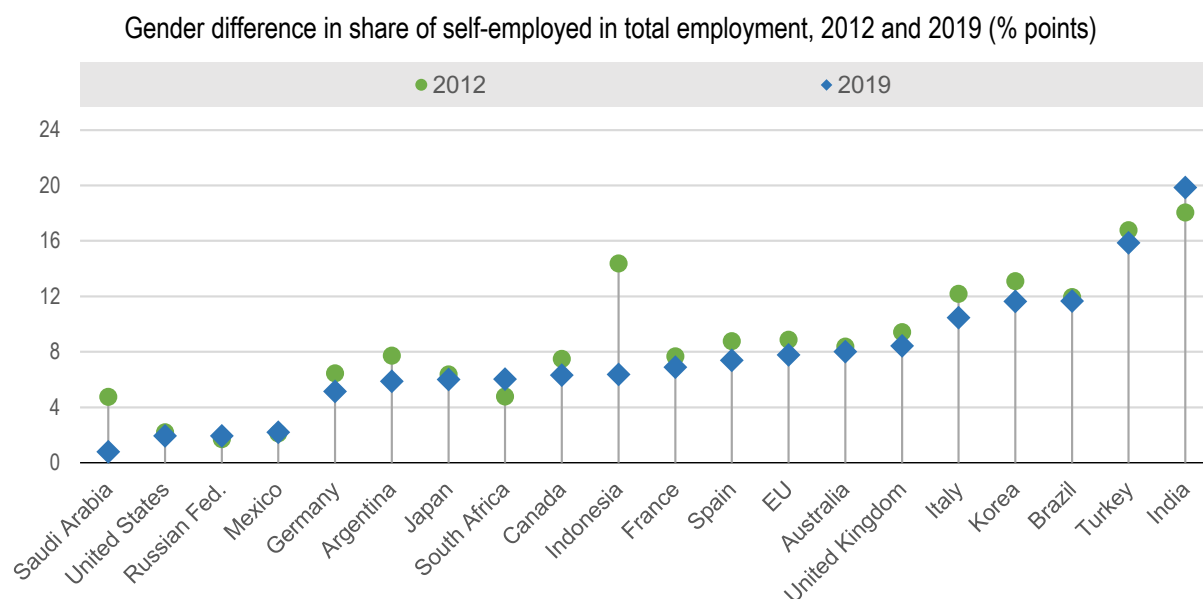
Note: The data for 2012 refers to 2013 for Mexico and 2014 for France.

Source: ILOSTAT and OECD estimates based on national labour force surveys

Self-employment can be another important source of employment opportunities for both women and men. However, the share of all working men who are self-employed is higher on average across G20 economies by 7½ percentage points than the share for working women (Figure 5). This gap ranges from near parity in Saudi Arabia to around 20 percentage points in India. **Since 2012, some progress has been made in most G20 countries in closing the gender gap in the share of self-employment in total employment**, notably in Indonesia. However, women entrepreneurs still face a number of added challenges. Relative to male-owned businesses, female-owned businesses are often smaller, grow less rapidly and more likely to close during the initial years after start-up. The COVID-19 crisis has resulted in a wave of bankruptcies and this may have affected women business owners particularly badly. This is especially true for women in the informal economy, who cannot easily get access to credit and are therefore more likely to have to close their businesses for extended periods with substantially reduced or no revenues. More generally, limited access to financial capital, management advice and business training remain significant constraints to female entrepreneurship.



**Figure 5. The gender gap in self-employment is narrowing**



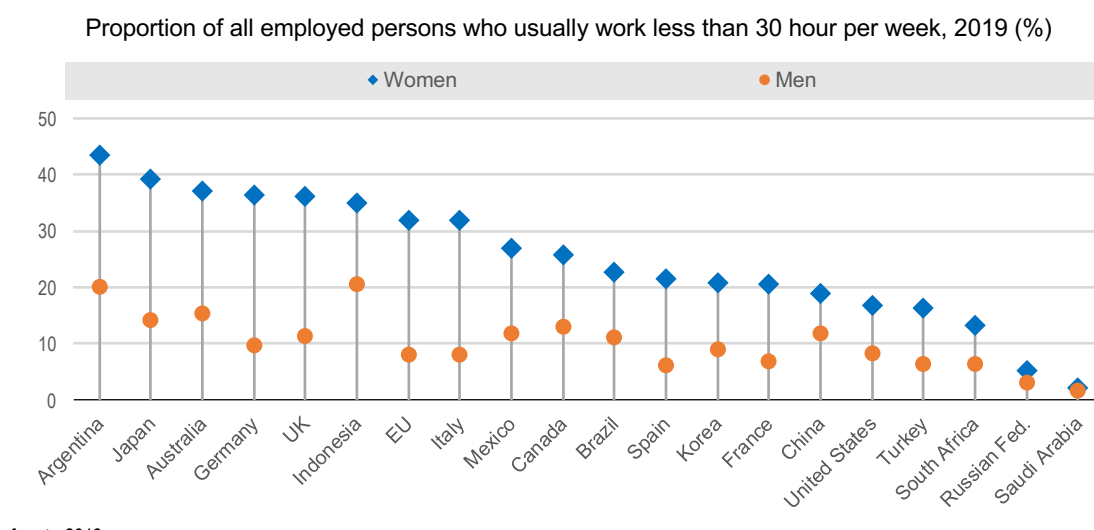
Note: A positive gap means that the share of self-employment in total employment is higher for men than women. The data for self-employment include own account workers. 2012 refers to 2013 for Saudi Arabia. 2019 refers to 2015 for Saudi Arabia.

Source: ILOSTAT and OECD estimates based on national labour force surveys.

*Full-time permanent employment remains far more common for men than women*

Women are also more likely than men to work in some diverse forms of employment, i.e. fixed-term employment, part-time and on-call work, temporary agency work and other multiparty employment relationships, as well as disguised employment and dependent self-employment. In 2019, the share of part-time employment in total employment was higher for women than men in all G20 countries (Figure 6). The gender gap in part-time share of employment is around 30 percentage points or more in Argentina, Australia, the EU, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom.

**Figure 6. The gender gap in part-time work remains large**



Note: All persons in employment, wage and salary workers only in the United States. The data refer to 2010 for China, 2016 for Saudi Arabia, 2017 for Indonesia and 2018 for Brazil. The data refer to actual hours of work of less than 30 for Argentina and less than 35 for China.

Source: OECD Employment Database, national labour force surveys and census data for China.

Since 2012, there have been mixed trends across G20 countries in the growth of part-time work relative to total employment. These changes have been similar for women and men in most countries. Consequently, **there has been little change in the gender gap in the incidence of part-time work.**

Some diverse forms of employment can provide some flexibility in better managing work and family responsibilities for both women and men. However, it can also be a source of employment instability and result in lower social protection coverage and smaller accrued pension rights for women than men. It may also result in fewer opportunities for training or career advancement, which jeopardises women's chances to obtain better-quality jobs.

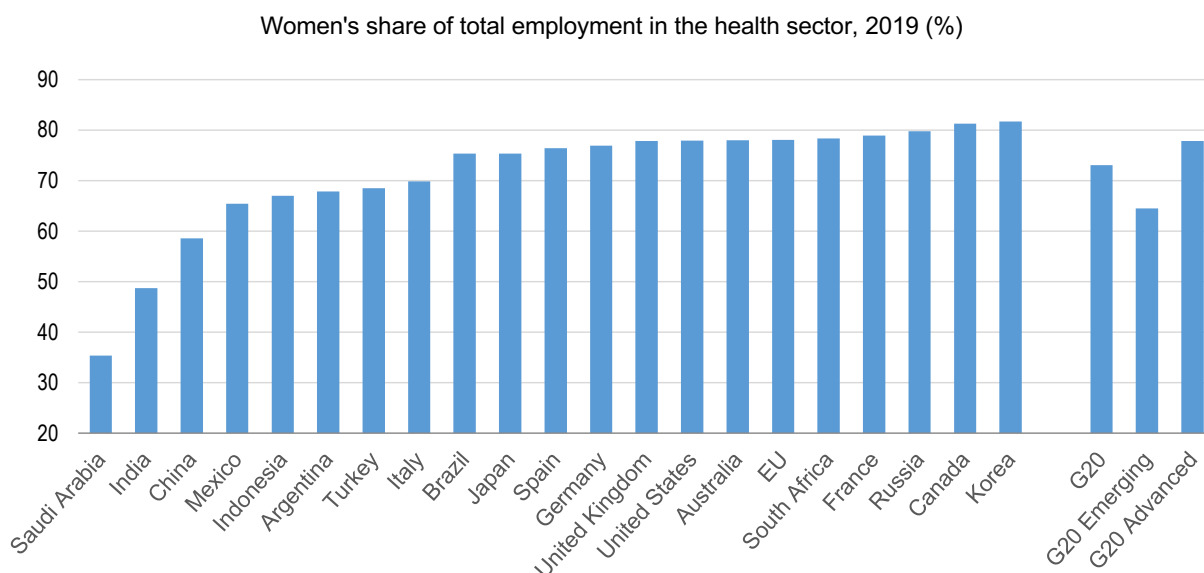
### 2.3. Women on the frontline in the COVID-19 crisis<sup>7</sup>

The labour market impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been severe and short-term prospects are gloomy. While it is not yet possible to draw a full picture across all G20 economies, the early evidence suggests that the impact has been greater for women on several fronts and risks pushing back some of the gains towards greater gender equality in the labour market that have been achieved over recent years.

#### *A greater exposure to difficult and unsafe work*

Women are playing a key role in the health care response to the pandemic. They account for the majority of health-sector workers in nearly all G20 economies, ranging from a low of 35% in Saudi Arabia to a high of 80% or more in Russia, Canada and Korea (Figure 7). Along with their male colleagues, they have been facing exceptional demands, and considerable risks, through the crisis. The strain has often been particularly acute for mothers, who also had to cope with additional childcare demands as a result of school and childcare facility closures during the containment phase of the crisis. Even before the pandemic, health-care workers were reporting high levels of violence and harassment compared to other industries. With COVID-19, their exposure to discrimination, stigma, violence and harassment has increased.<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 7. Women typically account for the majority of jobs in the health sector**

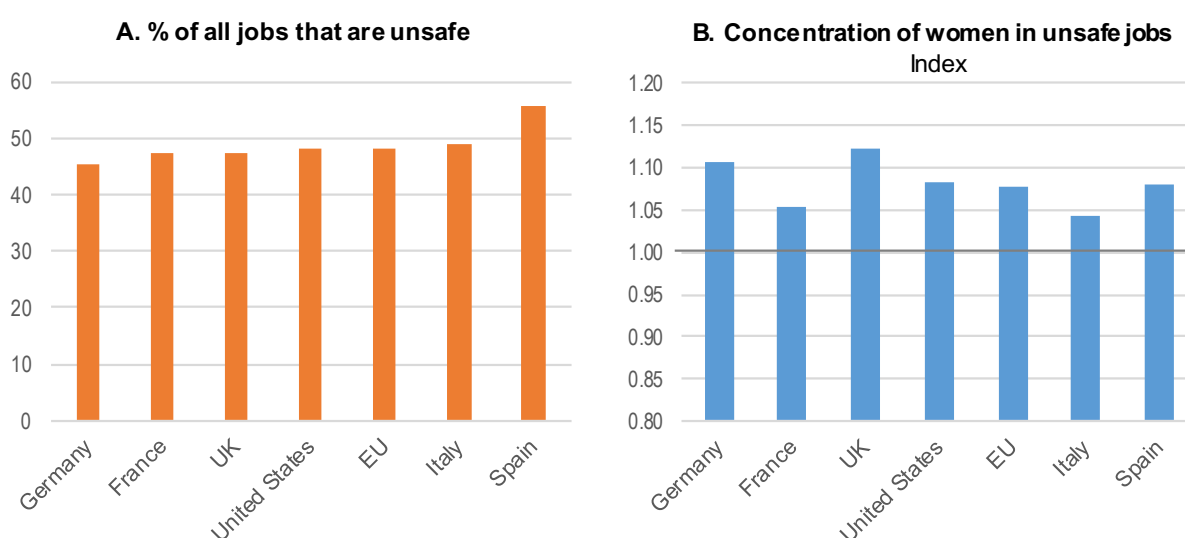


Note: The data refer to the ISIC Rev. 4 sector Human health and social work activities (Q). The data refer to 2018 for India and Saudi Arabia and to 2010 for China.

Source: Eurostat, ILOSTAT, national labour force surveys and census data for China.

More generally, gender differences in employment by occupation and sector have meant that women are somewhat more concentrated in unsafe jobs than men. Unsafe jobs in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic refer to those jobs that cannot be done from home and involve substantial close contact with clients or other workers. Estimates of the total number of jobs that are unsafe have been calculated for a number of countries by Basso et al. (2020).<sup>9</sup> For those G20 countries for which these estimates are available, they fall within a range of between 45% and 55% of all jobs (Figure 8A). These estimates also suggest that women are slightly over-represented in these jobs relative to their share of all jobs (Figure 8B). This is the result of two offsetting factors. Although women in many countries are more likely than men to be in jobs that can be done from home,<sup>10</sup> they are also even more likely than men to be in jobs that require close contact with clients or other workers.

**Figure 8. Women working in unsafe jobs**



Note: Unsafe jobs in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic refer to those jobs that cannot be done from home and involve substantial close contacts with clients or other workers. The concentration index is calculated as the share of women in unsafe jobs divided by their share in all jobs. A value greater than one means that they are over-represented in unsafe jobs relative to their share of all jobs. The data for the EU average exclude Bulgaria, Lithuania, Malta, Poland and Slovenia.

Source: Basso, G. et al. (2020), "The new hazardous jobs and worker reallocation", *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 246, OECD Publishing.

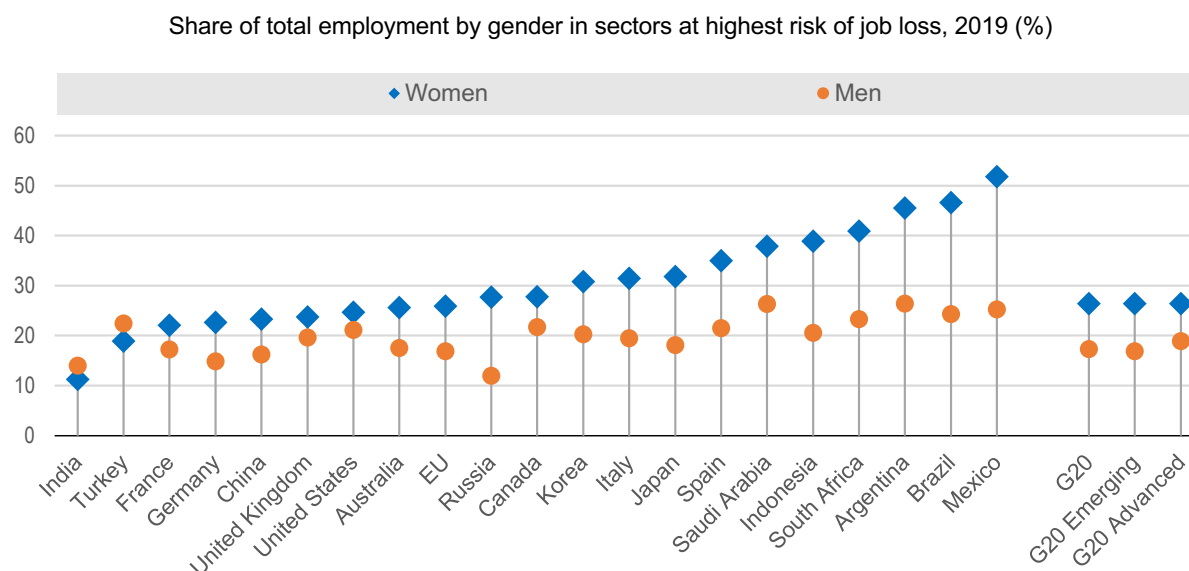
#### *A disproportionate share of job and income losses*

Women have also been disproportionately hit by job and income losses resulting from the sharp reduction in economic activity during national and regional lockdowns to contain the spread of COVID-19. In part, this reflects the fact that women continue to face higher risks of economic insecurity because of gender gaps in pay, hours worked and type of employment contract. It also reflects the greater concentration of women in those sectors that have been most affected by the short-term economic fallout from COVID-19.

Data on job losses by sector during the month of April (2020), i.e. when national and regional lockdowns were in place in most countries, are available for a small number of G20 economies (Australia, Canada, Japan, Korea and the United States). While employment declined in most sectors, four sectors (according to ISIC Rev. 4) experienced disproportionately large job losses on average across these economies: Retail trade (45 & 47); Accommodation and food services (I); Arts, entertainment and recreation (R); and Other services (S, T, U & V). These sectors typically rely on substantial in-person interaction with customers or involve substantial numbers of people in close proximity (e.g. cinemas and restaurants). In 2019, these

four sectors accounted for a higher proportion of total employment for women than for men in all G20 economies with the exceptions of India and Turkey (Figure 9). The risk of job loss for women is particularly high in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico where these sectors account for 45% or more of total employment for women.

**Figure 9. Women's employment is more concentrated in sectors vulnerable to job loss**



Note: The ISIC Rev. 4 sectors covered are: Retail trade (45 & 47), Accommodation and food services (I), Arts, entertainment and recreation (R) and Other services (S, T, U & V). According to data for Australia, Canada, Japan, Korea and the United States, these sectors were disproportionately hit by job losses in April 2020. The data refer to 2018 for India and Saudi Arabia and have been estimated for China based on census data for 2010 and administrative data on changes in employment shares by broad sector between 2010 and 2019.

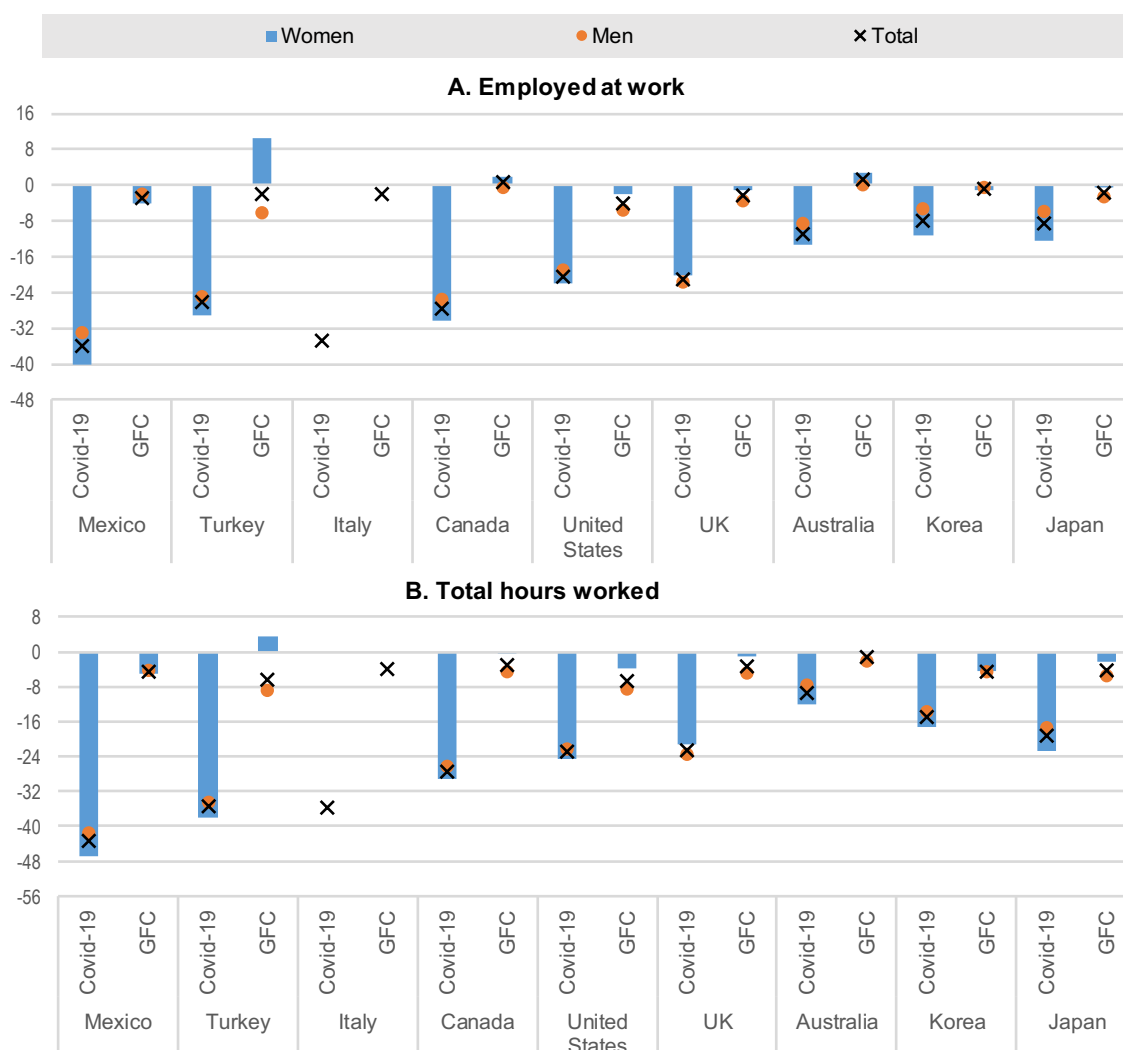
Source: Eurostat, ILOSTAT, national labour force surveys and census and administrative data for China.

For some women workers, the public sector may offer some protection, as job losses have been smaller or negligible in this sector. However, while women account for a substantial proportion of all workers in the public administration sector in many G20 economies (36% on average in 2019), this share is substantially lower in the G20 emerging economies (31%) than in the G20 advanced economies (47%).

For a small number of G20 countries, the actual decline in the number of people working<sup>11</sup> by sex between December 2019 (the cyclical peak month prior to the COVID-19 crisis) and April 2020 (the trough month) can be compared with the total peak-to-trough decline during the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2007-2008 (Figure 10).<sup>12</sup> The COVID-19 crisis has been unusual on several counts. First, the fall in the number of people working has been more rapid and deeper than during the GFC in all of these countries (Panel A). Second, unlike during the GFC and previous recessions, women have experienced a more pronounced decline in work than men, except in the United Kingdom, in line with their greater concentration in sectors most vulnerable to job loss and layoffs during national or regional lockdowns.

**Figure 10. Job loss and falls in total hours worked have been greater for women than men**

% change peak to trough during the COVID-19 crisis and the Global Financial Crisis (GFC)



Note: For all countries, the peak-to-trough period for the Covid-19 crisis refers to 2019(12)-2020(4) (month or quarter in parentheses). For the GFC, it refers to: Australia, 2008(2)-2009(7); Canada, 2007(8)-2009(7); Italy, 2008(Q1)-2009(Q2); Japan, 2008(2)-2009(4); Korea, 2007(12)-2009(3); Mexico, 2008(Q2)-2009(Q2); Turkey, 2008(1)-2009(4); the United Kingdom, 2008(1)-2009(7); and the United States, 2007(10)-2009(5). The data refer to persons aged 15 and over (16 and over for the United States) and are seasonally adjusted. The data for Mexico for April 2020 were collected using a new survey instrument which may have affected their comparability with the data for earlier months.

Source: OECD calculations based on data from national labour force surveys.

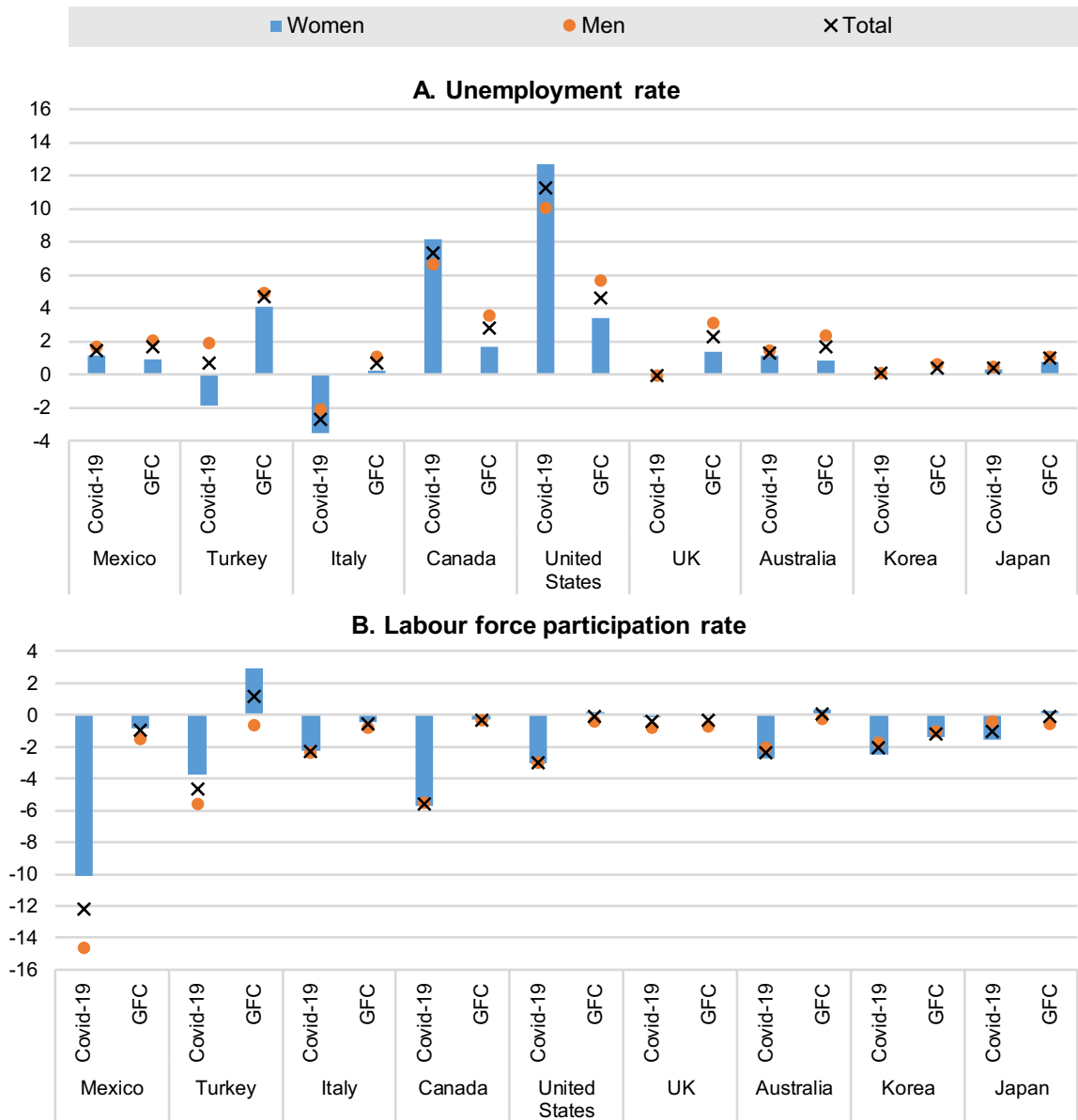
Total hours of work provides a more comprehensive measure of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the volume of work since it takes account not only of the number of people who stopped working but also declines in working time for people still working. The fall in total hours of work between December 2019 and April 2020 was unprecedented, ranging from just under 10% in Australia to just under 50% in Mexico, and was greater for women than for men, except in the United Kingdom (Figure 10B). On average, across the countries for which data are available, the decline in the total hours of work was six times greater than the decline experienced peak to trough during the GFC.

These declines in the number of people working and hours of work have not fully translated into increased unemployment (Figure 11A). While the unemployment rate increased substantially in Canada and the United States, and more so for women than men, it was still less than what would have been expected

given the fall in employment. For example, in the United States, the number of women employed fell by 11.9 million (seasonally adjusted) between March and April whereas the number of unemployed women rose by 8.5 million. The rise in unemployment was much more muted or absent in the other countries, and even declined in Italy. Unlike in Canada and the United States, this partly reflects the fact that in these countries, workers on temporary layoffs are treated as still employed rather than as unemployed.<sup>13</sup>

**Figure 11. Declines in labour force participation have masked rises in unemployment**

% point change peak to trough during the COVID-19 crisis and the Global Financial Crisis (GFC)



Note: For all countries, the peak-to-trough period for the Covid-19 crisis refers to 2019(12)-2020(4) (month or quarter in parentheses). For the GFC, it refers to: Australia, 2008(2)-2009(7); Canada, 2007(8)-2009(7); Italy, 2008(1)-2009(4); Japan, 2008(2)-2009(4); Korea, 2007(12)-2009(3); Mexico, 2008(Q2)-2009(Q2); Turkey, 2008(1)-2009(4); the United Kingdom, 2008(1)-2009(7); and the United States, 2007(10)-2009(5). The data refer to persons aged 15 and over (16 and over for the United States) and are seasonally adjusted. The data for Mexico for April 2020 were collected using a new survey instrument which may have affected their comparability with the data for earlier months.

Source: OECD calculations based on data from national labour force surveys.

The other reason for the more muted response of unemployment to the massive decline in economic activity during the COVID-19 crisis was that a substantial proportion of people in all countries who lost a job or were trying to enter the labour market were not counted as unemployed in labour force surveys. This was because they reported either not wanting to work or not actively looking for work, and so were not classified as unemployed. But, for many of these people, this was because there was little point seeking work during a period of lockdown or because of additional household duties linked to confinement such as childcare and home-schooling of children. The result has been a substantial rise in all countries in the number of people recorded as not being in the labour force. This in turn translates into a fall in the labour force participation rate.

While some decline in the participation rate has also been a feature of previous recessions as people become discouraged from actively looking for work because they believe that no jobs are available, the extent of the decline during the COVID-19 crisis has been unprecedented, with the notable exception of the United Kingdom (Figure 11B). With the exceptions of Mexico and Turkey, the decline in participation in the first few months of the COVID-19 crisis has been as great for women as for men or even greater. This is in stark contrast to the GFC where, apart from Korea, participation fell more for men than for women.

Deeper declines in employment and hours worked for women than men combined with falls in participation have left women more vulnerable than men to sharp income losses. This could worsen an already precarious situation where women had lower incomes than men on average and higher rates of poverty. In some cases, they may also face greater difficulties in obtaining income support because they have not built up enough rights when in employment as a result of irregular hours and low pay. Women also hold less wealth than men on average that could help cushion temporary income losses. And because women tend to have greater care and domestic responsibilities than men, it is often more difficult for them to find alternative employment and income streams (such as piecemeal work) following layoff. Single parents, most of whom are women, are particularly vulnerable. They were hit much harder by the closure of childcare facilities and schools during confinement. Reliance on a single income also means that job loss can be critical for single parents, especially where public income support is weak or slow to react.

#### *An unequal burden at home*

The crisis has also amplified the unpaid work burden of women, as they picked up much of the additional unpaid work caused by widespread school and childcare facility closures. Women already provided most unpaid work at home before the crisis, ranging from around 60 per cent in Canada to 90 per cent in India.<sup>14</sup> The crisis increased the amount of time that parents spent on care, child supervision and home schooling, with much of this additional burden likely having fallen on women. According to a German online survey carried out in March/April 2020, in about half of all households in which childcare was organised within the household, the female partner alone cared for the children.<sup>15</sup> An online survey in the United Kingdom in April/May 2020 also indicates widening disparities in paid work patterns between mothers and fathers.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the additional time spent on housework appears to be greater for women than men in Italy, especially for working women with children aged 0-5.<sup>17</sup> However, the sharing of childcare activities was somewhat more equal. In many G20 countries, unpaid work also comprises caring for the elderly.

There is evidence for some of the advanced G20 economies that the disproportionate burden faced by women during the COVID-19 crisis has also adversely affected their mental health to a greater degree than for men (Box 1). An overview of the global situation suggests that the incidence of domestic violence against women has escalated during the pandemic, as a result of more time spent at home as well as stressors related to social isolation and financial strain.<sup>18</sup> With more people working from home using information and communication technology, workers are also more exposed to work-related cyberbullying.<sup>19</sup> This compounding of poorer mental health, physical and psychological abuse for some women could have long-term adverse consequences on their likelihood of returning to work in the economic recovery.

### Box 1. Mental health of women during the COVID-19 pandemic

A study by the UK Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) concludes that inequalities in mental health have widened as a result of the pandemic with a much larger deterioration in mental health for women and young adults than for the adult population on average.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the results of a survey by the UK Office of National Statistics (ONS) pointed to higher anxiety levels by women than men during the pandemic.<sup>2</sup> However, there was some narrowing of the gap as anxiety declined for both groups from end-March through to early May. ONS analysis of the survey results identifies the following key factors behind higher anxiety levels for women than men: finding working from home more difficult, being more concerned about health and safety at work, spending significantly more time doing unpaid housework (excluding travel and childcare) and spending significantly less time than men on activities such as gardening or DIY (do it yourself, e.g. repairs). Other studies in the UK also document a greater deterioration in mental well-being for women than men and find that much of this gap can be explained by gender differences in social factors and feeling lonely as well as in family-related time use and caring responsibilities.<sup>3</sup>

A survey by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in mid-April also found that emotional and mental well-being had deteriorated sharply during the pandemic and that women were generally more affected than men, especially in terms of feeling depressed or worthless.<sup>4</sup> If anything, mental health along these two dimensions had improved or at least not deteriorated for men. A survey in the United States based on similar questions also points to a sharp decline in mental health, which was particularly marked for women over the course of the weekly survey from the end of April through July.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast to these findings for advanced, mainly Anglo-Saxon G20 economies, the results of two surveys for China do not appear to point to any significant gender differences in mental health linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>6</sup>

1. Banks, J. and X. Xu (2020), "The mental health effects of the first two months of lockdown and social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK", IFS Working Paper, W20/16, Institute for Fiscal Studies, London. <https://www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/WP202016-Covid-and-mental-health.pdf>

2. ONS (2020), "Coronavirus and anxiety, Great Britain: 3 April 2020 to 10 May 2020", 15 June 2020. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/whatmattersmosttopersonalwellbeingduringthepandemic>

3. Etheridge, B. and L. Spantig (2020), "The gender gap in mental well-being during the COVID-19 outbreak: Evidence from the UK", *COVID Economics, Vetted and Real-Time Papers*, Issue 33, 30 June. <https://cepr.org/file/9256/download?token=DHbO0cn>; Oreffice, S. and C. Quintana-Domeque (2020). "Gender Inequality in COVID-19 Times: Evidence from UK Prolific Participants", IZA Discussion Paper No. 13463. <http://ftp.iza.org/dp13463.pdf>

4. ABS (2020), Household Impacts of COVID-19 Survey, 14-17 April 2020, Australia, ABS Cat. No. 4940.0, 1 May. <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4940.014-17%20Apr%202020?OpenDocument>

5. U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey (HPS). Similar questions were used in the January-June 2019 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS). The difference in results between the two surveys point to a sharper deterioration in mental health for women than for men. However, part of this increase for both men and women may reflect the shorter period of one week over which the frequency of negative feelings and thoughts was reported in the HPS compared with the two-week period for the NHIS. For further discussion and results, see <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/covid19/pulse/mental-health.htm>

6. Zhang, Y/ and Z. F. Ma (2020), "Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Mental Health and Quality of Life among Local Residents in Liaoning Province, China: A Cross-Sectional Study", *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(7), 2381. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17072381>; Wang, C. (2020), et al., "A longitudinal study on the mental health of general population during the COVID-19 epidemic in China", *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbi.2020.04.028>



### 3. Policy action<sup>20</sup>

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, many G20 countries had taken initiatives to improve gender equality in the labour market. The crisis has only further highlighted the urgent need to build on and amplify these initiatives.

#### **3.1. Measures to increase women's participation in the labour market**

In 2019, elements of progress are visible in the area of removal of pre-existing barriers to women's access to the labour market, promotion of equal opportunities and treatment, entrepreneurship, youth employment, monitoring and accountability. In some countries, new provisions aimed at eradicating discriminatory practices in recruitment and access to the labour market have been introduced. For instance, the government of **China** adopted a regulation prohibiting gender discrimination in hiring practices, including inquiring about women's marriage and childbearing status during recruitment processes. Some countries have also taken steps towards the elimination of legal barriers to women's participation in employment. For example, **India** amended its legislation to allow employment of women at night. **Saudi Arabia** also introduced a regulation to encourage women who need to work at night to do so, as well as a specific labour law amendment that prohibits gender discrimination in employment.<sup>21</sup>

Getting more women into the labour market requires also supporting them through work transitions, such as school to work, becoming parents or having to take care of family members in need, changing jobs, moving into retirement. This has been an area of increasing attention in all G20 countries, which, in recent years, have introduced measures to favour women's return to work either after childbirth or long-term unemployment due to caring responsibilities. In **Australia**, a specific programme assists carers to 'step back in' to the workforce by facilitating contact with an employment professional who can assess their needs, identify transferable skills, explore career options and develop a plan of action. In **Mexico**, a new welfare programme improves the conditions of access and permanence in the labour market of working mothers through the delivery of direct economic support for childcare in the form of cash transfers. Similar initiatives were introduced in the **Russian Federation, Turkey, Singapore** and **Saudi Arabia** through increasing the availability of early childhood care and education for children under three years of age.

Encouraging results are also evident in the area of women's entrepreneurship development in terms of increased financing and training opportunities. For instance, **Mexico** introduced a programme to support the livelihoods of rural women working in agriculture for a very low pay. This new package includes a cash transfer<sup>22</sup> and in-kind transfers to carry out activities on agroforestry production. In **Turkey**, a specific programme targeted women-led SMEs and provided 17,571 loans for a total of €286 million between 2015 and 2019. More than three-quarter of the participant SMEs reported an increase in their turnovers, 55 per cent received external investments after completion of the programme, while 43 per cent reported an increase in the number of their employees.

As reported in previous years, a common feature that has emerged among several G20 countries is the application of time bound numerical targets. For instance, in **Japan** the percentage of large firms that formulated an action plan with numerical targets on women's tenure, participation in workforce and proportion in managerial positions, registered 99 per cent compliance in 2019.

#### **3.2. Measures to improve the quality of women's earnings**

In recent years, G20 countries have increased attention to improving the quality of women's earnings, recognizing the impact of the care penalty on women's economic outcomes. Common approaches have been used to improve the quality of women's earnings through tackling women's occupational segregation, including their under-representation in management positions, encouraging their enrolment in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education or promoting fair wage policies.

A number of G20 countries have focused their interventions on reducing gender occupational segregation and increasing women's access to the most in-demand and highest paying jobs, including those in STEM fields where women are currently lagging behind, as they join STEM education in fewer numbers than men. For instance, **Canada** is encouraging employers to offer work placements for women in STEM fields, through the provision of an increased wage subsidy. **Australia** is supporting women in three key areas: enabling STEM potential through education, supporting women in STEM careers and making women in STEM visible. In addition, **Australia** is also implementing the "Male Champion of Change for STEM", a group that aims to challenge the systems of entrenched stereotypes in STEM that hold women back. **France** and the **EU** reported similar initiatives. The **United Kingdom** reported an increase in the number of women accepted to STEM undergraduate courses of 34 per cent between 2010 and 2019 as a result of measures adopted to promote women's enrolment in STEM degrees.

Some G20 countries have also introduced measures to improve the quality of women's earnings by ensuring equal representation of women at all levels of economic, social and cultural systems. For instance, **China** and **Indonesia** promoted equal representation of women in managerial positions, **Turkey** encouraged women's representation in the media industry and **Mexico** approved a new labour law reform that aims at achieving gender parity in trade union leadership. **Italy** has extended the obligation for listed and State-owned companies to reserve at least 40 % of the seats in the governing bodies for women.

Other countries have implemented strategies to close the gender pay gap through promoting fair wage policies (e.g. **the EU, France, Germany, India, Switzerland and the United Kingdom**). As part of the Gender Equality Strategy, **the EU** is currently preparing binding pay transparency measures to address the gender pay and pension gap. While, in the meantime, the Government of **France** made compulsory for all companies with over 250 employees to publish the score for the Index for Gender Equality, which captures gender pay equity at the firm level. In the **Russian Federation**, to promote the reduction of the gender pay gap and tackle occupational segregation, the government has increased salaries of public sector employees, who are mostly women. To accelerate the closure of the gender wage gap, some countries (i.e. **France, Italy, Switzerland and the United Kingdom**) have recently become members of the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) promoted by the ILO, UN Women and the OECD. EPIC provides a platform for peer-to-peer exchanges, dissemination of good practices and methodologies for the measurement of the gender pay gap.

Another means to lead to positive outcomes in addressing inequalities at the low end of the wage distribution has been through increases in real minimum wages. The government of **Japan** has prompted wage increases in SMEs and small-scale entrepreneurs in its effort to achieve a national weighted average minimum wage of 1,000 yen per hour (approximately USD 9 per hour). **Mexico** has also taken steps to increase the national minimum wage that has resulted in a higher rise of women's wages relative to those of men. As a result, the gender pay gap declined from 25 per cent to 22 per cent. As part of a pre-existent minimum wage reform, **Germany** has introduced new legislation to improve wages in the care sectors, where women are over-represented, that consists of a combination of regulations set by the care commission and the extension of collectively agreed provisions. The **Russian Federation** has also introduced new minimum wage regulation that sets the federal minimum wage equal to the subsistence average wage of the working-age population in the second quarter of the previous year.

### ***3.3. Measures to improve women's labour market security***

Challenges related to labour market duality between employees with open-ended contracts and those on temporary or fixed-term contracts remain evident as well as the prevalence of informal employment in many G20 countries. Several G20 countries have put in place measures facilitating the transition of women employees to formal employment and registration of women-led informal businesses. For instance, in **Mexico**, a new microfinance programme for women entrepreneurs residing in rural areas included training support and business advice with a view to linking women's businesses to global value chains and

promoting the transition towards the formal economy. In **Turkey**, measures were introduced to promote formal employment and decent work for home-based child-carers. Other G20 members have introduced specific legal provisions to improve women's labour market security. For instance, **Saudi Arabia** has recently introduced provisions prohibiting employers from dismissing a woman during her entire pregnancy and maternity leave.

An increased number of G20 countries have adopted measures to improve labour market security in sectors with a high share of female employment such as domestic work. Domestic workers face some of the poorest working conditions across the care economy and are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. These conditions are the result of a confluence of factors: domestic work is performed behind closed doors, often excluded from labour and social protections and without formal working arrangements. To guarantee decent work for the almost 2.4 million domestic workers, of which 92 per cent are women, on July 3rd 2020 the Government of **Mexico** deposited the formal instrument of ratification of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) with the International Labour Office (ILO).<sup>23</sup> Other G20 members have introduced technical and vocational training for domestic workers. For instance, **China** put in place a series of provisions aimed at protecting the labour rights of domestic workers employed by domestic service enterprises, including free pre-employment training.

In addition, countries have special programmes that target women at different skills levels, in different economic sectors or in especially disadvantaged or fragile geographical areas, including women migrant workers. For instance, in **Indonesia**, a training programme provided mental health support to women prospective migrant workers to face challenges of working life in a placement country.

### **3.4. Measures to improve working conditions**

Reconciling work with family responsibilities has long been on the table as a key barrier for parents in general and for women in particular to prepare for, enter, remain, re-enter and advance in the world of work. A system of legislation providing paid family and care leave for both women and men is an evolving area of intervention, where interesting developments at the G20 level are evident. The **EU** adopted in June 2019 the work-life balance directive with the aim of better supporting a work-life balance for parents and carers, encouraging a more equal sharing of parental leave between men and women, and addressing women's underrepresentation in the labour market. In **France**, the government increased the length of maternity leave for self-employed women, for agriculture workers and extended the duration of paternity leave for fathers of a new-born child hospitalized in a specialized care unit. These measures add to the reform that made school compulsory from the age of 3 years. In **Spain**, new legislation, effective from January 2021, extends paternity leave to 16 weeks, aligning it with maternity leave. At the same time, in **China**, the coverage of maternity insurance for employees has been further expanded, while in the **United States** eight states and the District of Columbia adopted a new paid family leave legislation and eligible federal government workers are now entitled to 12 weeks of paid parental leave.<sup>24</sup>

While part-time work should be an option for those who want to take it, greater time sovereignty would be particularly effective within a world of work where everybody needs to be more involved in care. In **Germany**, new legislation gives employees the right to reduce their contractually agreed working time for a period ranging from 1 to 5 years and afterwards return to their previous working time. Some other G20 countries have introduced measures to adjust working time according to care responsibilities, such as the right to request flexible working arrangements, which under the **EU** directive on work-life balance is extended to working parents of children up to at least eight years of age and to carers.

Other initiatives across the G20 have encouraged the establishment of "sharing-hubs" for enterprise-level good practices regarding women at work. One of these initiatives is found in **Saudi Arabia**, where a new private sector forum<sup>25</sup> to share the best practices across companies to enhance women's working conditions has been created.

Other G20 members also introduced measures aimed at preventing and addressing violence and harassment in the world of work. For instance, **Saudi Arabia** issued an anti-harassment law in October 2019 that specifies prohibited behaviours and sets out preventive measures as well as procedures to investigate complaints. In **Mexico**, in the context of a new labour law reform, there is a specific protocol to prevent, attend and eradicate violence at the workplace level. In **Indonesia**, the government provided training for violence survivors to be economically independent.

### **3.5. Relevant policy developments since the COVID-19 outbreak in selected G20 countries<sup>26</sup>**

The COVID-19 outbreak has further shown how vital the work performed by essential workers is, including health care workers, who are mainly women and at the forefront of the COVID-19 fight. This resulted in many G20 countries introducing short-term policy measures to improve working conditions of essential workers. For example, most of **Canada, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, Switzerland** and the **United Kingdom** have allowed some schools and childcare facilities to remain open during lockdowns, with a skeleton staff, to look after the children of essential service workers.<sup>27</sup> In **Australia**, the Commonwealth Government subsidised childcare facilities that remained open provided their services were free-of-charge and available to disadvantaged children, the children of essential service workers, and for previously enrolled children.<sup>28</sup> In **Argentina, Turkey, Spain** and **Switzerland**, health cooperatives have established funds and distributed protective gear to their members and other workers in essential services.<sup>29</sup> Other examples of policy responses to improve working conditions of health care workers included strengthening existing counselling services for nurses in the **United Kingdom** and providing security guards to ensure safety during the commuting of health workers to and from work in **France**.<sup>30</sup>

In response to COVID-19, a number of G20 countries have also adopted far-reaching measures to contain losses in jobs and income, and many, for the first time, have expanded coverage to the self-employed, temporary workers and domestic workers, among whom women are over-represented. For instance, in **France** and **Italy**, self-employed workers benefit from one-off allowances of €1,500 and 600 respectively. The **United Kingdom** has also protected income of self-employed workers covering 80 per cent of their average monthly profits from the past 3 months, up to £2,500.<sup>31</sup> Similar measures were introduced by **Canada** and **Spain**.<sup>32</sup>

The COVID-19 outbreak has also prompted a number of initiatives in G20 countries to deploy innovative measures to mitigate the hardship faced by domestic workers who are mainly women. For example, in **Spain**, the Government introduced an extraordinary unemployment benefit for domestic workers. In the **United States**, the National Domestic Workers Alliance, a private non-profit organization, has launched the Coronavirus Care Fund, an emergency relief fund for domestic workers facing hardship.<sup>33</sup> In **Brazil**, the National Federation of Domestic Workers (Fenatrad) and Themis (Gender, Justice and Human Rights) have started a campaign calling for domestic workers to be suspended with pay while the risk of infection continues, or be given the tools to protect against risk, including masks and hand-sanitizing gel.<sup>34</sup> In **Pune, India**, specific campaigns and initiatives on how to reduce the risk of contracting or spreading the virus have been introduced and put in place for domestic workers.<sup>35</sup>

As a response to the COVID-19 lockdowns, several G20 countries have extended the availability of or introduced new measures to reconcile work with family responsibilities, including family friendly working arrangements and care leave policies. **Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Korea, Spain, Switzerland** the **United Kingdom** and the **United States** have all introduced or extended special paid leave (or special income support for those on unpaid leave) for working parents who need to provide care at home while schools or childcare facilities are closed.<sup>36</sup> These leaves, which replace a certain percentage of an employee's wage, usually last for a fixed number of days or weeks, ranging from 10 days (per parent) in **Korea** to up to 12 weeks for eligible employees in the **United States** and four months in **Canada**. In **France**, special paid leave lasts for as long as schools and childcare facilities are closed. Some G20

countries (**Canada, France, and Korea**) have also introduced or extended paid leave (or income support) for workers who need time off to care for children who have contracted the virus or are in quarantine or self-isolation.<sup>37</sup> In **Canada** and **Korea**, this extends to certain adult dependants, too. Other G20 countries provided income support for households or firms in economic need. For instance, in **Japan**, subsidies are being allocated to compensate enterprises that have introduced family leave for workers affected by school closures, to ensure the continued payment of salaries.<sup>38</sup> **Australia** has expanded access to income support payments to persons taking care of someone affected by COVID-19.<sup>39</sup> In **Germany**, childcare benefits have been expanded to support low-income parents, and access to basic income support has been made easier for the self-employed, while in **Spain** vulnerable families with children receiving school meals were entitled to financial aid or the direct provision of food during school closures.<sup>40</sup> The **Russian Federation** has introduced an exceptional means-tested monthly family allowance, available from April 2020, for families with children aged 3-7 years old on incomes below the local subsistence level per capita.<sup>41</sup> **Spain** has also approved the creation of a national minimum income scheme benefitting 850,000 households with low or no income.

In many G20 countries, the incidence of domestic violence has escalated since the COVID-19 lockdowns. Some immediate policy responses have focused on strengthening or introducing new reporting channels. For instance, in **Australia** and **Argentina** helplines, text messaging and online chats for protecting victims of violence and harassment have been strengthened.<sup>42</sup> **France** has also opened pop-up counselling centres and designated pharmacies as safe places where victims of domestic violence can report their situation.<sup>43</sup> In **Spain**, local authorities in many autonomous communities have set up an initiative that enables victims of domestic abuse to go to their pharmacy and request a “Mask 19”, a code word that will prompt the pharmacist to contact the authorities;<sup>44</sup> a similar measure has been implemented in pharmacies in **Argentina**, where the code word is “barbijo rojo”.<sup>45</sup> **Switzerland** has created a national taskforce to review cases of domestic violence and to adopt swiftly adequate measures should the number of reported cases of violence increase. This initiative was complemented with an awareness raising campaign regarding support services for victims of domestic violence. Two states in **Germany** have also announced a new hotline specifically for male victims of violence.<sup>46</sup>

Other G20 countries have strengthened protection measures for victims of domestic violence. **Australia** and **Spain** have introduced fast-track judicial procedures for the most urgent cases.<sup>47</sup> **Canada** has committed up to 540 million Canadian dollars to supporting organizations addressing the needs of women and children fleeing violence. In **Australia, France, Italy** and the **United States**, government authorities and private organizations have engaged in public-private partnerships with hotels to make rooms available for women victims of domestic violence.<sup>48</sup>

Some G20 countries have also taken measures to mitigate the effects of domestic violence in the world of work. In **Australia**, for instance, employers are required to eliminate or otherwise minimise work health and safety risks, including risks that may arise due to teleworking in response to COVID-19, such as domestic violence and cyberbullying.<sup>49</sup> In the **United Kingdom**, the Employers’ Initiative on Domestic Abuse provides guidance to its members on the measures they can take if they fear that their employees face domestic violence during the COVID-19 crisis. These measures range from keeping in contact with employees and signposting them to support contacts, to providing information about helplines, mobile apps and other available support services.<sup>50</sup>

## 4. Conclusions

This year’s report confirms that G20 countries continue to advance gender equality through a combination of policies, which span different and complementary areas, such as education, vocational training, promotion of female entrepreneurship or measures promoting a better work-life balance. However, progress needs to be sped-up. This review also corroborates the continued attention of G20 countries

towards the improvement of women's labour market security and working conditions, including protection against work-related violence and harassment. By prioritizing policies towards improving the quality of women's earnings and making it easier for working parents to reconcile work and care responsibilities, G20 countries are increasingly creating the conditions for attracting and retaining more women in the labour market and generating a more equal world of work but further progress is needed. Some G20 countries also continue to pursue strategic and inclusive targeting with more rigorous and time-bound numeric targets.<sup>51</sup> Establishing numerical targets and putting in place the necessary mechanisms to measure progress and impact should help accelerate the achievement of the 25x25 target and advance SDGs 8 and 5. It is crucial that all G20 countries collect and analyse sex-disaggregated data, not only regarding key labour market indicators, but also on the impact of policies, including the number of related beneficiaries (e.g. take-up rates for paternity and parental leave for fathers and mothers).

While the policy initiatives that G20 countries have taken to advance gender equality in the labour market are welcome, they will need to be reinforced in several areas. First, not all G20 countries are on track to achieving the Brisbane G20 goal of reducing the gender gap in labour force participation by 25% by 2025. Therefore, greater efforts will be needed to remove the obstacles to achieving this goal. Second, gender gaps in job quality are still persistent in all G20 countries and should be tackled by comprehensive measures to improve both women's access to the labour market and progression in their jobs and careers. The slow progress in closing the gender pay gap is of particular concern. Third, the major economic crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic risks undoing some of the progress achieved in reducing gender inequalities in the labour market. The early evidence suggests that employed women are being hit harder than men by the economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the post-confinement phase of the pandemic, some of the policies taken in the early months of the crisis will need to be adapted and, in some cases, better targeted to account for the situation of women and the large heterogeneity in working conditions across sectors, firms and workers.<sup>52</sup> In particular, G20 countries should consider scaling up their efforts towards:

- **Better working conditions for health-care sector workers and other essential workers.** Many G20 countries, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have introduced short-term policy measures to address low pay, violence and harassment, and inadequate health and safety protection for workers in health, care and other essential services, where women are disproportionately represented. These efforts should be maintained through long-term policies aimed at improving the working conditions and pay of these workers. More generally, strong occupational safety and health standards, defined and enforced by public authorities and/or by social partners, should remain a top priority, especially in jobs that require significant physical interaction and exposure to contagion.
- **Promoting job creation through hiring subsidies targeted at low-skilled workers.** This would be particularly beneficial for women who face a higher risk of low pay than men.
- **More inclusive paid sick leave provisions.** Paid sick leave has performed an important role in containing and mitigating the spread of the virus and protecting the incomes, jobs and health of sick workers and their families. Women are disproportionately represented in some forms of non-standard work and so may not be entitled to paid sick leave. Countries should consider reducing gaps in paid sick leave regulations while reinforcing work incentives and employment support to facilitate a return to work.
- **Strengthening family-friendly working arrangements.** The option to telework during confinement has been particularly important for women in selected and high-skill occupations as they face greater care responsibilities than men. G20 countries should seek to reinforce workers' rights to flexible working arrangements where possible, including the right to request teleworking, but also covering flexible start and finish times, "time-banking", and the ability to work condensed weeks.

- **Improving access to affordable care services for children, older persons and other dependent sick or disabled persons.** These services will be essential for many working parents and carers, especially women to remain in work or start looking for a new job. Countries should consider drawing up contingency plans for delivering alternative care services and be mindful of potential school and childcare facility closures in the future. They should also consider strengthening the financial viability of privately run childcare centres in the event of future lockdowns.
- **A gradual scaling back of COVID-19 specific care leave provisions.** Emergency family care leave measures put in place in many countries have been enormously valuable for working parents, especially for women. Countries should avoid a sharp withdrawal of temporary family care leave measures and consider a gradual scaling back in line with the return to more normal schooling and childcare arrangements. Looking further ahead, countries should consider clarifying rules and regulations on parents' rights to family care leave in case of a resurgence of COVID-19 and the associated school closures and work interruptions.
- **Establishing a supportive and enabling environment that will facilitate women entrepreneurs' access to digital services, including financial services for women entrepreneurs.** In this context, gender inclusive digital reforms will support the digitisation of the economy reducing the need for physical contact and promoting the use of internet for accessing both government information, as well as financial services, including credit for female-led MSMEs. Digital and online solutions will also facilitate access to business registration, licensing, e-commerce platforms and funding opportunities for women-led start-ups.
- **Promoting women's participation in managerial and leadership positions.** COVID-19 is a stark reminder that the glass ceiling remains firmly in place. Far from being equally represented in national political and scientific COVID-19 task-forces, women account for barely 25 per cent of the experts in the best-case scenarios.<sup>53</sup> G20 countries should introduce measures to increase the participation and representation of different groups of women in decision-making bodies, including in labour relations, social dialogue, including collective bargaining, and social partner institutions.
- **Work environments free from violence and harassment.** During the confinement, there has been a reported rise in cases of domestic violence and cyberbullying, and a number of G20 countries have taken measures to mitigate these problems. It is vital to ensure continued attention to preventing and addressing domestic violence as well as violence and harassment in the world of work in the post-confinement phase.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Spain is a permanent guest invitee to the G20 meetings. In 2020, Jordan, Singapore, Switzerland and the United Arab Emirates are invited as guest countries.

<sup>2</sup> Recent labour force data by gender is not available nationally for China.

<sup>3</sup> In the case of Saudi Arabia, somewhat greater progress has been made in closing the gap for Saudi nationals. In the case of India, the introduction of a new survey instrument in 2017 means that the data are not strictly comparable over time. Nevertheless, the fall in the participation of women between 2012 and 2019 is substantial and probably reflects other factors than just a statistical break. These include an

improving standard of living, which may have lessened the pressure for women to work, as well as young women staying on longer in education and delaying their entry into the labour market.

<sup>4</sup> Participation rates rose for women in Russia but even more for men.

<sup>5</sup> In Saudi Arabia, non-Saudi residents account for a considerable proportion of the workforce. With respect to Saudi nationals only, greater progress has been made in reducing the gender gap in labour force.

<sup>6</sup> This section does not aim to cover comprehensively all aspects of job quality but only to provide some selected key indicators.

<sup>7</sup> This section draws substantially on: ILO (2020), “The COVID-19 Response: Getting Gender Equality Right for a Better Future for Women at Work” [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms\\_744685.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_744685.pdf); and OECD (2020), “Women at the core of the fight against COVID-19 crisis”, *OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19)*. <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/women-at-the-core-of-the-fight-against-COVID-19-crisis-553a8269/>

<sup>8</sup> ILO op. cit., note 7.

<sup>9</sup> Basso, G., T. Boeri, A. Caiumi and M. Paccagnella (2020), “The new hazardous jobs and worker reallocation”, *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 246, OECD Publishing, Paris

<sup>10</sup> See Foucault, M. and V. Galasso (2020), “Working after COVID-19: Cross-Country Evidence from Real-Time Survey Data”, Sciences Po CEVIPOF, Note 9, May 2020. [https://www.sciencespo.fr/cevipof/attitudesonCOVID19/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Note9\\_FOUCAULT\\_GALASSO\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.sciencespo.fr/cevipof/attitudesonCOVID19/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Note9_FOUCAULT_GALASSO_ENG.pdf). Based on their international survey, the authors report that across most countries (except Italy among those G20 countries included in the survey) women were indeed more likely than men to work from home during the confinement period (as discussed below), although they were also more likely to have stopped working altogether.

<sup>11</sup> The number of people working (employed at work) refers to all persons in employment who reported working at least one hour or more during the survey reference week, irrespective of whether it was in their own home or at the workplace. In other words, it excludes all people in employment who were absent (worked zero hours) during the entire reference week.

<sup>12</sup> The dates of each country’s peak and trough for the GFC are taken from the business cycle turning points established by the OECD. See: <http://www.oecd.org/sdd/leading-indicators/oecdcompositeleadingindicatorsreferenceturningpointsandcomponentseries.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> For example, if North American workers on temporary layoffs were treated as employed in line with statistical practice in other countries, the unemployment rate in Canada in April would have been 6.0% instead of 13.0% (up just 0.6 percentage points from December 2019 instead of 7.4 p.p.). In the United States, the rate would have been 3.2% instead of 14.7%. (up just 0.2 p.p. from December 2019 instead of 11.3 p.p.).

<sup>14</sup> ILO and OECD (2019), *Gender equality in the G20 – Additional analysis from the time dimension*, Background report for the G20 Employment Working Group. [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/multilateral-system/g20/reports/WCMS\\_713376/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/multilateral-system/g20/reports/WCMS_713376/lang--en/index.htm)



<sup>15</sup> Möhring, K. et al. (2020), "Schwerpunktbericht zu Erwerbstätigkeit und Kinderbetreuung, Die Mannheimer", Mannheimer *Corona-Studie*, Universität Mannheim, Mannheim, April. [https://www.uni-mannheim.de/media/Einrichtungen/gip/Corona\\_Studie/2020-04-05\\_Schwerpunktbericht\\_Erwerbstaetigkeit\\_und\\_Kinderbetreuung.pdf](https://www.uni-mannheim.de/media/Einrichtungen/gip/Corona_Studie/2020-04-05_Schwerpunktbericht_Erwerbstaetigkeit_und_Kinderbetreuung.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Andrew, A. et al. (2020), "How are mothers and fathers balancing work and family under lockdown?", IFS Briefing Note BN290, Institute for Fiscal Studies, London. <https://www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/BN290-Mothers-and-fathers-balancing-work-and-life-under-lockdown.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Del Boca, D. et al. (2020) "Women's Work, Housework and Childcare, before and during COVID-19", *COVID Economics, Vetted and Real-Time Papers*, Issue 28, 12 June. <https://cepr.org/file/9151/download?token=9m62THII>

<sup>18</sup> UN (2020) "UN chief calls for domestic violence 'ceasefire' amid 'horrifying global surge'", UN News, 5 April 2020. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1061052>. For Australia, see Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) (2020), *The prevalence of domestic violence among women during the COVID-19 pandemic*, July 2020. [https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-07/sb28\\_prevalence\\_of\\_domestic\\_violence\\_among\\_women\\_during\\_COVID-19\\_pandemic.pdf](https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-07/sb28_prevalence_of_domestic_violence_among_women_during_COVID-19_pandemic.pdf). For other countries, see: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impact\\_of\\_the\\_COVID-19\\_pandemic\\_on\\_domestic\\_violence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impact_of_the_COVID-19_pandemic_on_domestic_violence). Even prior to the crisis, violence against women has been endemic as highlighted in the OECD High-Level Conference on Ending Violence Against Women in February 2020 (<https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/ending-violence-against-women-2020.htm>).

<sup>19</sup> ILO op. cit., note 7.

<sup>20</sup> This review of recent policy measures in the G20 economies also covers Spain, which is a permanent guest invitee to the G20 meetings. In addition, policies to improve gender equality in the labour market are also reviewed for Singapore and Switzerland as guest countries for 2020.

<sup>21</sup> The sectors concerned include, among others, health, aviation, media, publishing, tourism, universities, sports, managerial roles, leadership roles, entertainment, catering.

<sup>22</sup> 5,000 pesos per month (256 US dollars per month).

<sup>23</sup> The convention gives to all domestic workers, irrespective of whether they are hired directly by households or through intermediaries, stronger rights and helps them to combat multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, migration status, disability and HIV status.

<sup>24</sup> Effective October 1, 2020.

<sup>25</sup> The forum's name is Qiyadiyat.

<sup>26</sup> This section is based on the ILO Policy Brief: The COVID-19 response: Getting gender equality right for a better future for women at work. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms\\_744374.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_744374.pdf). For detailed COVID-19 country policy responses see: <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/country-responses/lang--en/index.htm>.

<sup>27</sup> OECD: Supporting people and companies to deal with the COVID-19 virus: Options for an immediate employment and social-policy response (Paris, 2020).

<sup>28</sup> OECD: OECD Employment Outlook 2020 (Paris, 2020)

<sup>29</sup> ILO op. cit., note 7.

<sup>30</sup> Royal College of Nursing: COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and your mental wellbeing, <https://www.rcn.org.uk/get-help/member-support-services/counselling-service/covid-19-and-your-mental-wellbeing> [accessed 30 March 2020]; “Les soignants de l’hôpital Lariboisière à Paris désormais escortés par des agents de sécurité jusqu’au métro, après des agressions”, franceinfo, 1 April 2020, [https://www.francetvinfo.fr/sante/hopital/les-soignants-de-l-hopital-lariboisiere-a-paris-desormais-escortes-par-des-agents-de-securite-jusqu-au-metro-apres-des-agressions\\_3895143.html](https://www.francetvinfo.fr/sante/hopital/les-soignants-de-l-hopital-lariboisiere-a-paris-desormais-escortes-par-des-agents-de-securite-jusqu-au-metro-apres-des-agressions_3895143.html) [accessed 28 April 2020].

<sup>31</sup> ILO op. cit., note 7.

<sup>32</sup> Government of Canada, Prime Minister announces extension of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, 16 June 2020, Press Release <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2020/06/16/prime-minister-announces-extension-canada-emergency-response-benefit>.

<sup>33</sup> International Domestic Workers Federation: Global: IDWF Statement on Protecting Domestic Workers Rights and Fighting the Coronavirus Pandemic, 18 March 2020, <https://idwfed.org/en/updates/global-idwf-statement-on-protecting-domestic-workers-rights-and-fighting-the-coronavirus-pandemic> [accessed 14 April 2020].

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Domestic workers: Frontline care workers face COVID-19 challenges, WIEGO, 2020, <https://www.wiego.org/domestic-workers-frontline-care-workers-face-covid-19-challenges> [accessed 6 April 2020].

<sup>36</sup> OECD: op. cit., note 7.

<sup>37</sup> OECD: op. cit., note 7.

<sup>38</sup> OECD: op. cit., note 7.

<sup>39</sup> COVID-19: advice for women experiencing domestic violence, Australian Government, eSafety Commissioner, 2020, <https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-issues/covid-19/advice-women-domestic-violence> [accessed 28 April 2020].

<sup>40</sup> Gentilini, Ugo, Mohamed Almenfi, Ian Orton, and Pamela Dale. ‘Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19: A Real-Time Review of Country Measures’, 2020, 26. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/33635/Social-Protection-and-Jobs-Responses-to-COVID-19-A-Real-Time-Review-of-Country-Measures-April-17-2020.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> [accessed 17 April 2020].

<sup>41</sup> OECD: op. cit., note 7.

<sup>42</sup> COVID-19: advice for women experiencing domestic violence, op. cit., note 39; M. Ayuso: “El drama de las mujeres que sufren violencia y están aisladas con sus agresores”, La Nación, 19 March 2020.

<sup>43</sup> I. Guenfoud: French women use code words at pharmacies to escape domestic violence during coronavirus lockdown, ABC News, 3 April 2020, <https://abcnews.go.com> [accessed 28 April 2020].

<sup>44</sup> N. Higgins: When home gets violent under lockdown in Europe, BBC News, 13 April 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-52216966> [accessed 28 April 2020].

<sup>45</sup> ‘Barbijo rojo’, la contraseña para las mujeres golpeadas en las farmacias argentinas, El País, 10 April 2020, <https://www.elpais.com.uy/eme/aplausos/barbijo-rojo-contrasena-mujeres-golpeadas-farmacias-argentinas.html> [accessed 28 April 2020].

<sup>46</sup> German states announce new hotline for male victims of domestic violence, DW.COM, 22 April 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/german-states-announce-new-hotline-for-male-victims-of-domestic-violence/a-53209399> [accessed 24 April 2020].

<sup>47</sup> A. Remeikis: Australia’s family court to fast-track coronavirus lockdown-related cases, The Guardian.com, 29 April 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/27/australias-family-court-to-fast-track-coronavirus-lockdown-related-cases> [accessed 28 April 2020]; A. Castedo and L. Immaculada: Spain: Suspension of judicial proceedings and deadlines in the context of urgent measures to fight COVID-19, 18 March 2020. Available at <https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/spain-suspension-of-judicial-82762/> [accessed 28 April 2020].

<sup>48</sup> H. Rozman: “How L.A.’s hotel industry is stepping up in the COVID-19 crisis”, letter to the editor, in Los Angeles Times, 12 April 2020; Local hotels working to help those impacted from coronavirus, WITN.com, Jacksonville, NC, 14 April 2020, <https://www.witn.com/content/news/Local-hotels-working-to-help-those-impacted-from-coronavirus-569645331.html> [accessed 15 April 2020]; A. Thompson: “Nation’s largest hotel chain shelters domestic abuse survivors”, in The Sydney Morning Herald, Sydney, NSW, 7 April 2020; All involved against domestic violence, Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield, 8 April 2020, <https://www.urw.com/en/press-room/press-news/all-involved-against-domestic-violence> [accessed 15 April 2020]; Coronavirus: ouverture à Bruxelles d’un hôtel pour les femmes victimes de violences familiales ou conjugales, rtbf.be, 6 April 2020, [https://www.rtf.be/info/regions/bruxelles/detail\\_coronavirus-ouverture-a-bruxelles-d-un-hotel-pour-les-femmes-victimes-de-violences-familiales-ou-conjugales?id=10476521](https://www.rtf.be/info/regions/bruxelles/detail_coronavirus-ouverture-a-bruxelles-d-un-hotel-pour-les-femmes-victimes-de-violences-familiales-ou-conjugales?id=10476521) [accessed 15 April 2020].

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<sup>51</sup> See section 3.2 for a review of the most recent policy measures in this area.

<sup>52</sup> For further details on policy consideration for governments for the post-confinement period, see: OECD (2020), “Women at the core of the fight against COVID-19 crisis”, *OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19)*. <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/women-at-the-core-of-the-fight-against-covid-19-crisis-553a8269/>

<sup>53</sup> ILO op. cit., note 7.