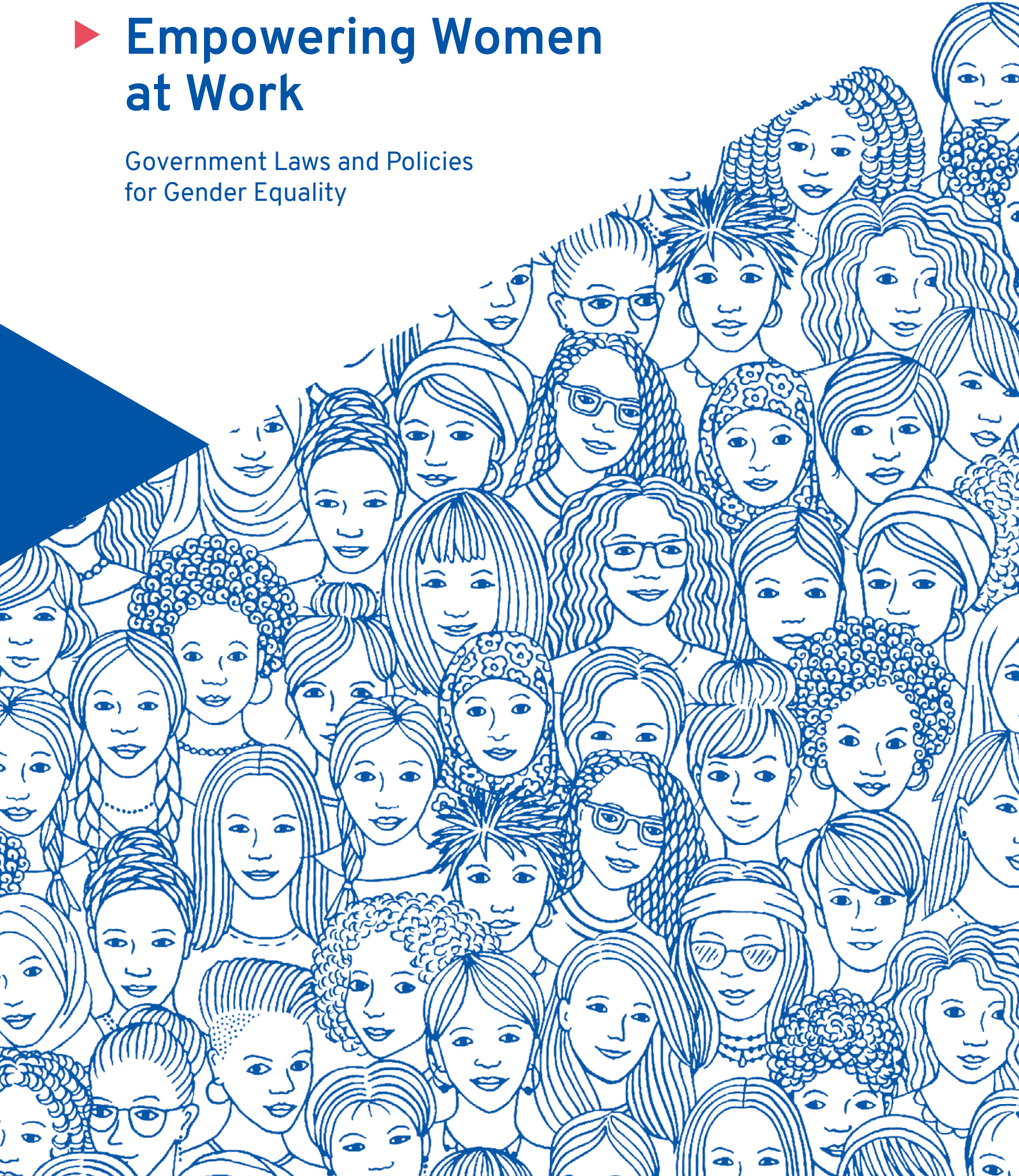


► Empowering Women at Work

Government Laws and Policies
for Gender Equality



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Executive summary

The year 2020 was set to be memorable. Across the world, leaders and women's rights activists had planned to celebrate anniversaries of key legal and policy innovations that had consolidated women's rights as human rights in international law, including the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA).¹ The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the celebratory momentum and plunged the world into an unprecedented health, economic, job and care crisis.

Since 1995, equality between men and women in the world of work had seen some encouraging improvements, but these achievements have remained modest.² The COVID-19 crisis is eroding this hard-earned and fragile progress. Women and girls are facing severe hardships, including higher rates of poverty and job loss, increased unpaid care work, and greater exposure to discrimination and violence.

No country has so far achieved gender equality, not even among the highest-income countries in the Group of 7 (G7). If no transformative action commensurate with the scope of these challenges is taken, the devastating and long-term impact of the pandemic will seriously compromise the achievement of the Sustainable Development Agenda, the most comprehensive multilateral development framework, adopted in 2015.

Many international and regional normative instruments, declarations, initiatives and frameworks remain as points of reference for advancing gender equality and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is imperative that governments renew their commitments and act urgently and decisively to reverse these adverse trends and resume efforts to build a better future for women at work.

This document examines how governments can design and implement policies that promote a future of work that is gender-responsive by design and is anchored in social justice and decent work principles. It focuses on five key areas where government policies can reverse the regressive effect of the crisis and revitalize progress towards the SDGs:

- ▶ achieving equal pay for work of equal value;
- ▶ preventing and eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work;
- ▶ creating a harmonious work-life balance for both women and men;
- ▶ promoting women's equal representation in leadership in the world of work;
- ▶ investing in a future of work that works for women.

Part 1 presents an overview of the frameworks guiding government policies for promoting gender equality in the world of work. It includes an introduction to the key normative instruments and a brief summary of the international labour standards which underpin the leading role of governments, in collaboration with other stakeholders, in aiming to achieve gender equality and women’s economic empowerment by 2030.

Part 2 sets out the rights-based and economic case for government action, also taking into account the COVID-19 crisis. It provides an overview of current labour market and policy trends, focusing on the situation in G7 countries. It offers policy guidance based on the ILO normative frameworks and up-to-date evidence on what works. It also presents 44 illustrative policy examples based on the experience of G7, EU and selected best-in-equivalent-income-group countries. The objective is to inspire action by presenting a range of measures taken by governments with a view to achieving gender equality at work, in both the short and medium term.

Despite the many encouraging examples presented in this review, immediate, comprehensive and transformative efforts are needed, especially in the context of COVID-19 policy responses and crisis recovery.

This document is part of the EU, UN Women and ILO project “Empowering women at work through responsible business in G7 countries” (WE EMPOWER G7) Programme. WE EMPOWER G7 aims to support sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth by promoting women’s economic empowerment in the public and private sectors in G7 countries. This report therefore focuses on government policies in G7 and EU countries in leading the way and accelerating progress on gender equality at work during these turbulent times.

List of acronyms

BDPfA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
COVID-19	Corona virus disease 2019
DV	Domestic violence
EBMOs	Employer and business membership organizations
ECCE	Early childhood care and education
EC	European Commission
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EPIC	Equal Pay International Coalition
EU	European Union
GAP III	EU's new Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021–2025
G7	Group of 7
G20	Group of 20
GBVH	Gender-based violence and harassment
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEAC	Gender Equality Advisory Council
GRP	Gender-responsive procurement
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICT	Information and communication technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILO MNE Declaration	ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy

IOE	International Organisation of Employers
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
IWPR	Institute for Women’s Policy Research
MIG SCORE	Gender equality model
MSMEs	Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OSH	Occupational safety and health
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SH	Sexual harassment
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UN Guiding Principles	UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights
UNHROHC	United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner
USD	United States dollar
W7	Women 7
WED	Women’s Entrepreneurship Development
WE EMPOWER-G7	EU, UN Women and ILO project “Empowering women at work through responsible business conduct in G7 countries”

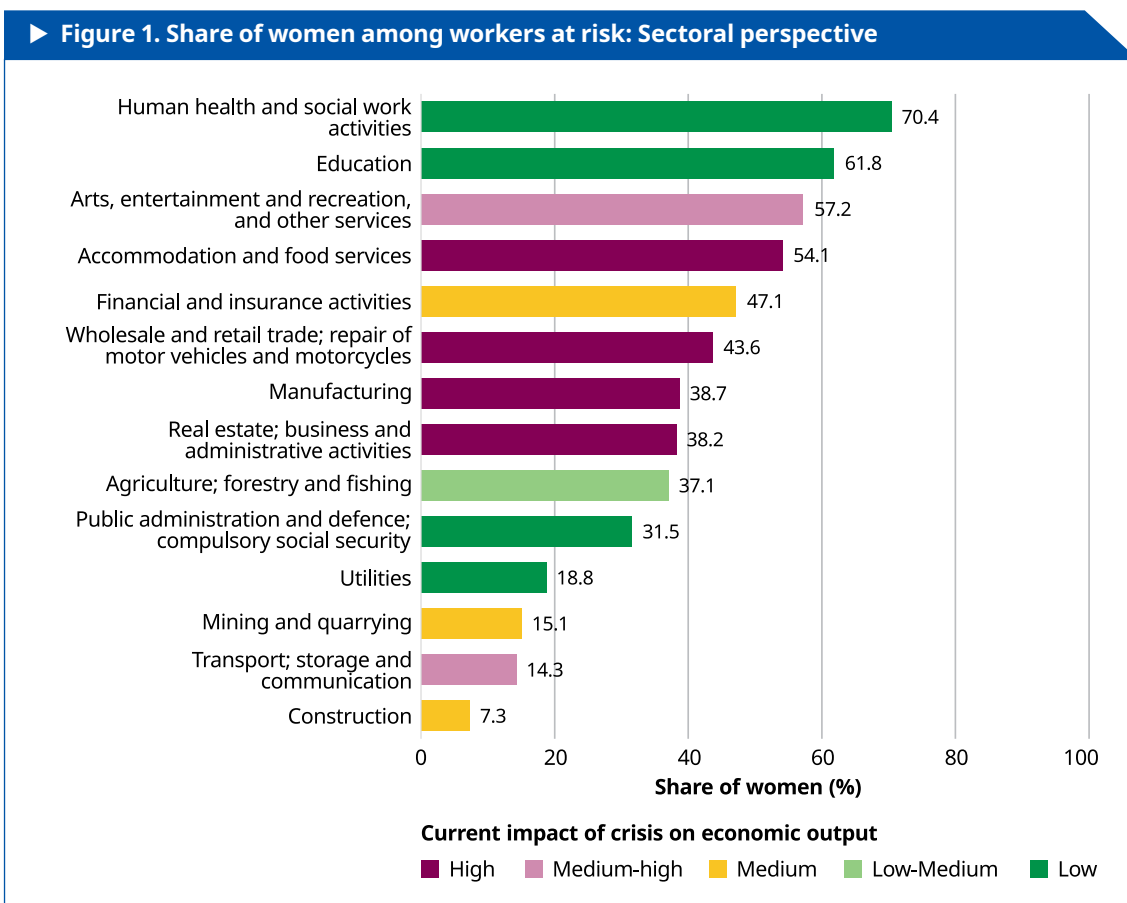


Introduction

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, progress on equality between men and women in the world of work was stalling, and in some cases reversing. Gender gaps with respect to key labour market indicators had not narrowed in any meaningful way for over 20 years.³ At the time of finalizing this publication (October 2020), governments around the world are shaping policy responses to address the unprecedented global health pandemic, which has rapidly turned into an economic and labour market crisis, causing social disruption that threatens the long-term livelihoods and wellbeing of millions.⁴ Preliminary findings show that the pandemic has become a “magnifier” of gender inequality, exacerbating pre-existing gaps and posing a serious threat to the achievement of the SGDs, in particular SDG 5 on gender equality and women’s economic empowerment, and SDG 8 on decent work.⁵

Women are disproportionately affected by the pandemic in multiple ways. Before the pandemic, 1.3 billion, or 44.3 per cent, of women worldwide were in employment, compared to 2 billion, or 70 per cent, of men.⁶ In 2020, 527 million women, representing 41 per cent of total women in employment, were employed in sectors at high risk of severe COVID-19 impact in terms of job losses and reductions in working hours, compared to 35 per cent in the case of total male employment.⁷ This suggests that women’s employment is likely to be hit more severely by the current crisis than men’s. In high-income countries, including G7 and EU members, the share of women employed in high-risk sectors is 40 per cent, representing 104 million women (67 million in G7 countries).⁸ ILO sectoral analysis shows that in high-risk sectors such as the arts, entertainment and recreation (shown in light red in Figure 1), as well as accommodation and food services, women are over-represented. In other at-risk sectors, for instance the wholesale and retail trade, manufacturing, real estate, and business and administrative activities, a noTable percentage of jobs are done by women (Figure 1).

Women are also at the centre of the crisis response. Globally, women account for more than 70 per cent of the workforce in the health and social work sectors (see Figure 1), and in food services, as well as the unpaid volunteers stepping in to assist in crisis response in their community. They are all essential workers, risking their health and safety to save lives and restore good health during this crisis.



Source: Authors based on ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Second Edition (7 April, 2020)

The crisis is also affecting women on account of pre-existing inequalities, decent work deficits and discrimination. Women with limited earnings and savings, migrants and those holding insecure jobs, working as small entrepreneurs or in the informal economy, typically lack social and labour protection and suffer the highest economic impacts. Almost 1.6 billion informal economy workers, accounting for 76 per cent of informal employment worldwide, are significantly impacted by the current crisis and face substantive loss of earnings and worsening poverty. In this category, women are over-represented.⁹

The absence of adequate pay-equity frameworks, social protection systems and care policies exacerbates working families' vulnerability to the crisis. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, women were already paid less than men for work of equal value, were under-represented in high-paying occupations and managerial positions, and were doing more than three-quarters of all unpaid care work globally.¹⁰ These persistent disparities between men and women have substantially increased. Women are more likely to have ceased from or reduced their involvement in paid work in order to meet the care needs of out-of-school children (over 1.4 billion (84.8 per cent) in 172 countries),¹¹ older persons and sick relatives, and to perform intensive household work. In some countries, women are dropping out of the labour force at higher rates than men as a result of the long-term effects of the crisis and the lack of childcare solutions.¹² This risks widening the gender pay gap.¹³

Violence and harassment is still a reality for many women in the world of work, which extends beyond physical spaces into the digital world.¹⁴ National lockdowns across the world are also putting women at increased risk of experiencing gender-based violence, with reports from many countries of an escalation in the incidence of domestic violence since the COVID-19 outbreak.¹⁵

Such enormous and unprecedented challenges underscore the need for governments, workers and employers to renew their commitment to gender equality at work. Urgent action is required to ensure a human-centred COVID-19 response and recovery, in order to build a better “normal”, tackling gender injustices and meeting the challenges of climate change and the digital and demographic transitions.¹⁶ These policies are not a luxury for times of prosperity, but represent the core of crisis and recovery responses.

The ILO provides tools and resources that can help governments to prioritize gender equality at work during these unpredictable times. International labour standards provide a strong foundation for government policies.¹⁷ The Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205), for instance, calls for the inclusion of a gender perspective in all crisis response design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.¹⁸ Social dialogue – consultation and collaboration among governments, workers and employers and their representatives – is essential if responses are to be effective and sustainable. This is highlighted in the ILO’s integrated policy framework for responding to the COVID-19 crisis, which stresses that social dialogue is a guarantee of lasting solutions.

In this context, achieving women’s economic empowerment and gender equality at work will require even more coordinated, proactive and transformative policies from a variety of global stakeholders – governments, the private sector, including employer and business membership organizations (EBMOs), trade unions and civil society. In particular, government policy plays a central role in creating an enabling environment in which women can enjoy the rights and protections they need if they are to participate meaningfully and thrive in the economy. These policies should complement and stimulate parallel changes within our societies: overcoming gender stereotypes, achieving equal distribution of unpaid care work, establishing a culture of zero-tolerance for gender-based violence and sexual harassment, supporting women-owned businesses and women entrepreneurs, and promoting women’s leadership and decision-making in the world of work.

This report is divided into two parts. Part 1 presents an overview of the normative instruments intended to guide governments in introducing up-to-date frameworks on gender equality, including in times of crises. Part 2 presents the rights-based and economic case for promoting gender equality. It also provides illustrations of legislative and policy efforts that have been made to promote women’s economic empowerment in key areas: achieving equal pay for work of equal value, preventing and ending violence

and harassment at work, promoting work–family balance and sharing of childcare responsibilities, promoting women in leadership roles in the world of work, and building a future of work that works for women.

This compilation of guidance and examples of laws and public policy, prepared as part of the EU, UN Women and ILO project “[Empowering women at work through responsible business conduct in G7 countries](#)” (WE EMPOWER – G7), is one of a series of publications illustrating key stakeholders’ practices intended to foster gender equality at work. WE EMPOWER – G7 aims to support sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth by promoting women’s economic empowerment in the public and private sectors in G7 countries.

Methodology

This report relies on a variety of sources. It draws on research carried out by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the European Commission, the Council of Europe, Eurostat, the G7, the OECD, UN Women and other organizations.

The selection of illustrative government policies featured in this document was made in the light of their transformative and replicable nature, their positive impact on gender equality, where assessed, and their alignment with the principles contained in international labour standards and normative frameworks. The document also attempts to highlight some gender policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis, as they relate to the topics covered.

As well as mappings and good practices developed by the WE EMPOWER-G7 programme, the review took stock of recent publicly available reports describing good practices on gender equality at work with relevance for governments, with the focus on G7, EU and selected best-in-equivalent-income-group countries.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive study of all good and promising practices. The impact of the featured policies could not be determined in some cases, particularly when initiatives had been recently implemented or impact evaluations were not available. Nonetheless, the aim is to provide inspiration that a wide range of governments can adapt to their particular circumstances, including in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. Table 1 categorizes the 44 practices illustrated in this report, by topic and by geographical location.

► Table 1. Illustrative laws and policies by topic and geographical location		
Topic	Country or other geographical level	Total number of laws and policies
Equal pay for work of equal value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • France • Iceland • Spain • Sweden • Switzerland • United Kingdom 	6
Ending violence and harassment in the world of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Union • Australia • Canada • Finland • France • Germany • Japan • The Netherlands • Spain (2) 	10
Promoting work–life balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Austria • Denmark • France (2) • Germany (2) • The Netherlands • Norway • Spain • United Kingdom (2) 	11
Women in decision-making in the world of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australia • Canada • France (2) • Germany • Italy • Sweden • United States 	8
Building a future of work that works for women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G20 • Belgium • Canada (2) • Denmark • Estonia • Germany • Japan • United States 	9
Total		44



PART 1:

SETTING THE SCENE: GUIDING FRAMEWORKS FOR GOVERNMENT POLICIES TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AT WORK

The resources available to governments seeking to promote gender equality in the world of work include normative instruments and international initiatives. Normative instruments derive their universal authority from the process by which they were developed. International labour standards and other ILO normative instruments are adopted by the International Labour Conference, which consists of delegates from the governments and the most representative employers' and workers' organizations of each of the 187 Member States. Where the UN is concerned, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is the most relevant international treaty that addresses gender equality. International initiatives and other policy frameworks, on the other hand, facilitate the implementation of international normative instruments and targets by creating opportunities for stakeholders to engage on specific topics.

1.1 Normative instruments

Normative instruments set out the broad objectives of gender equality, identify obstacles which need to be overcome and advocate for a systemic approach to tackling gender discrimination. In the world of work, the principal instruments of this kind are ILO conventions and recommendations. Although addressed principally to governments, these conventions and recommendations are also useful in formulating corporate policies, and they are referenced in other normative instruments and initiatives, serving to standardize and coordinate approaches. Other normative instruments, most notably the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (ILO MNE Declaration), address governments and business directly and reference conventions and recommendations concerning particular aspects of gender equality.

ILO conventions and recommendations on gender equality at work

Numerous ILO conventions and recommendations set out **international labour standards related to gender equality at work**. These include the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) and Recommendation No. 90; the Discrimination (Employment

and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) and Recommendation No. 111; the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981, (No. 156) and Recommendation No. 165; the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), and Recommendation No. 191; the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) and Recommendation No. 201; and, more recently, the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and Recommendation No. 206. The gender perspective is mainstreamed through many other ILO instruments on working time, part-time work, home-based work, social security, and occupational safety and health. Conventions are international treaties, open for ratification by Member States, which then have the obligation of translating them into national law and putting themselves under international supervision to ensure that they are applying the provisions of the ratified conventions in law and practice.

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Adopted in 1979, the CEDAW is the most important human-rights treaty for women, adopted by 189 States parties. It lays out obligations to eliminate discrimination and achieve substantive equality. Importantly, CEDAW covers not only discriminatory laws, but also practices and customs, and it applies not only to government action, but also government responsibility for addressing discrimination against women by private actors.

The Convention covers both civil and political rights (rights to vote, to participate in public life, and to acquire, change or retain one's nationality, equality before the law and freedom of movement) and economic, social and cultural rights (rights to education, work, health, property and financial credit).¹⁹

► **Table 2. Ratifications of selected ILO gender equality conventions and CEDAW, G7 countries**

Country	Convention No. 100	Convention No. 111	Convention No. 156	Convention No. 183	Convention No. 189	Convention No. 190	CEDAW
Canada	1972	1964	–	–	–	–	1981
France	1953	1981	1989	–	–	–	1983
Germany	1956	1961	–	–	2013	–	1985
Italy	1956	1963	–	2001	2013	–	1985
Japan	1967	–	1995	–	–	–	1985
United Kingdom	1971	1999	–	–	–	–	1986
United States	–	–	–	–	–	–	1980*

Notes: * Signed, not ratified.

Sources: ILO NORMLEX, [Ratification by Convention](#); United Nations Treaty Collection, [8. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#); UN OHCHR, [Status of Ratification in Interactive Dashboard](#), all accessed 15 October 2020.

None of the G7 countries has ratified all of the relevant international normative instruments on gender equality, although this does not mean that the countries concerned do not have legislation in place that is aligned with these instruments.

ILO Declaration for the Future of Work

In June 2019, the International Labour Conference adopted the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work. The Declaration calls for the achievement of “gender equality at work through a transformative agenda, with regular evaluation of progress made, which:

- ▶ ensures equal opportunities, equal participation and equal treatment, including equal remuneration for women and men for work of equal value;
- ▶ enables a more balanced sharing of family responsibilities;
- ▶ provides scope for achieving better work–life balance by enabling workers and employers to agree on solutions, including on working time, that consider their respective needs and benefits; and
- ▶ promotes investment in the care economy”.²⁰

ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work

Adopted in 1998, the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work commits Member States to respect and promote principles and rights in four categories, whether or not they have ratified the relevant Conventions. These categories are freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; the elimination of forced or compulsory labour, and the abolition of child labour; equal remuneration of women and men for work of equal value; and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

To date, 173 countries have ratified Convention No. 100 on equal pay for work of equal value and 175 countries have ratified Convention No. 111 on non-discrimination in employment and occupation. As for Conventions Nos. 156 and 183, they have received 45 and 38 ratifications respectively (see Table 2 for ratifications among G7 countries).²¹

ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration)

The ILO promotes responsible business conduct, including the promotion of gender equality in the world of work, through its MNE Declaration, adopted in 1977 and updated several times, most recently in 2017. It is the only global instrument in this area that has been elaborated and adopted by governments, employers and workers around the world.

The principles of the MNE Declaration are addressed to multinational and national enterprises, governments of home and host countries, and employers’ and workers’ organizations. The areas covered include employment, training, living and working conditions, industrial

relations, and general policies. All of its principles build on international labour standards and, as such, include a number of recommendations that are directly or indirectly related to gender equality.²² A summary of the principles of the MNE Declaration as directed to governments and enterprises is provided in Annex 1.

1.2 International initiatives

All international initiatives recognize the importance of promoting gender equality as a contribution businesses can and should be making to economic and social development and respect for human rights. Some of the most important initiatives concerning gender equality are the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for Equality, Development and Peace; and the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets out goals (SDGs) for lifting large portions of humanity out of poverty, while protecting human rights and the planet. Gender equality and women's empowerment are integral to the achievement of all 17 Goals. The SDGs "seek to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls". Some SDGs are particularly relevant to achieving women's economic empowerment and gender equality at work:

- ▶ SDG 3 on ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all at all ages;
- ▶ SDG 4 on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all;
- ▶ SDG 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls;
- ▶ SDG 8 on promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;
- ▶ SDG 10 on reducing inequalities within and among countries;
- ▶ SDG 17 on promoting justice and peace in implementing the SDGs.

Decent work for women contributes not only to making poverty history, but also to achieving better education, peace and safety, as well as food security and improved nutrition and health outcomes for children and all members of the household.²³

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for Equality, Development and Peace (BDPfA)

In 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women adopted the [BDPfA](#), a comprehensive and visionary international agenda for women's empowerment. It reaffirms the fundamental principle whereby the human rights of women and girls children are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. As an agenda for action, the BDPfA seeks to promote and protect women's full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms

throughout their lives. The BDPfA addresses twelve critical areas of concern requiring specific action to ensure the advancement of women:

- ▶ Women and poverty (A)
- ▶ Education and training of women (B)
- ▶ Women and health (C)
- ▶ Violence against women (D)
- ▶ Women and armed conflict (E)
- ▶ Women and the economy (F)
- ▶ Women in power and decision-making (G)
- ▶ Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women (H)
- ▶ Human rights of women (I)
- ▶ Women and the media (J)
- ▶ Women and the environment (K)
- ▶ The girl child (L)

A 2020 report of the UN Secretary-General to mark the 25th anniversary of the implementation of BDPfA points out that *“States have continued to make efforts in many areas that are critical to advancing gender equality and the realization of women’s and girls’ human rights. However, transformative policies leading to accelerated and irreversible change on a broad scale remain necessary. Commitments have not been matched by action, investments or accountability.”*²⁴ The report calls for a range of actions, both immediate and more systemic and longer-term, to accelerate progress.

The Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC)

The [Equal Pay International Coalition](#) (EPIC) is an initiative driven by stakeholders committed to reducing the gender pay gap and making equal pay for work of equal value a reality across all countries and sectors. Led by the ILO, UN Women and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Coalition engages with governments, employers, workers and their organizations, the private sector, civil society and academia to accelerate the closing of the gender pay gap and the achievement of pay equity.

EPIC provides a platform for member governments to share information on legislation and proactive measures to address the gender pay gap; to exchange methodologies, analysis and tools for measuring the gender wage gap, and to join a network of organizations and policymakers committed to gender equality in the world of work.²⁵ The ILO, UN Women and the OECD leverage their expertise and convening power to offer resources to address this challenge. EPIC has developed a network of experts in the field of equal pay and provides learning opportunities and inputs from a tailor-made perspective. Current G7 and EU governments belonging to EPIC include Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and Portugal.²⁶

In 2019, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) established International Equal Pay Day (IEPD), to be commemorated on 18 September annually.²⁷ Its [first celebration](#) took place in 2020. The UNGA voiced deep concern over the slowness of progress in women's economic empowerment, the undervaluing of work traditionally done by women, and the difficulties in tackling pay inequality. The UNGA urged action to reach the goal of equal pay for work of equal value for all, and encouraged all stakeholders to continue to support the goal of equal pay for work of equal value.

1.3 G7 and EU policy frameworks

The G7 and the EU have both fostered ongoing dialogue, often tripartite, adopted policy frameworks and issued calls to action to accelerate progress towards gender equality in the world of work.

G7 recommendations on gender equality at work

Combining international standards and goals with social and economic dialogue, the Group of 7 (G7) emphasizes the connection between gender equality and increased prosperity.²⁸ At Taormina in 2017, the G7, along with Women 7 (W7),²⁹ put forward a series of recommendations for different parties – effectively action plans for full recognition of the beneficial effects of women's activity in the workplace – drawing attention to the negative effects of unpaid care work, violence, stereotyping and the lack of women's representation in leadership on gender equality at work.³⁰

The Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC), created during Canada's G7 Presidency in 2018 and confirmed during the French G7 Presidency in 2019, published *Recommendations for Advancing Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Girls and Women and a Call to Action*. The GEAC called on the leaders of the G7 and other countries to commit themselves, through the "Biarritz Partnership", to adopting and implementing progressive legislative frameworks for gender equality, drawing on its recommendations. In particular, the Council called on leaders to: (1) end gender-based violence; (2) ensure equitable and quality education and health; (3) promote economic empowerment; and (4) ensure full equality between women and men in public policies.³¹ As a result, in 2019, the G7 leaders adopted the *Paris Declaration on Gender Equality*, underscoring that women's economic empowerment is central to realizing women's rights and equality with men. More open access to quality education, learning and vocational training contributes to women's economic empowerment and to economic growth.³²

The G7 Social Communiqué of June 2019 called for a tripartite approach (engaging governments and employers' and workers' organizations) to identifying market barriers that cause gender-based labour segregation; increasing women's representation on boards, in management and in entrepreneurship; investing in skills development and education in all

fields (especially science, technology, engineering and mathematics – STEM); formulating a gender-balanced care system; and closing gender gaps in employment, pay (especially after leave) and workplace participation.³³ To ensure the success on these tangible actions in both the public and the private sectors, the G7 additionally recommends pre- and post-public assessments to ensure transparency and progress towards women’s economic empowerment and international cooperation.

Box 1. A Call to Action: “Gender Equality and COVID-19 Crisis Response and Recovery: The G7’s Role”

On 12 May 2020, the European Union, UN Women and the ILO invited ministers, CEOs and representatives of business associations, trade unions, civil society and academia to participate in a virtual [High-Level Roundtable](#) (HLRT), “Gender Equality and COVID-19 Crisis Response and Recovery: The G7’s Role”. The objectives were: (1) to highlight the important role of women’s economic empowerment for the G7, building on recommendations from past [G7 Leaders Summits and Gender Equality Advisory Councils of the Canadian and French Governments](#); (2) to exchange perspectives on how Covid-19 has impacted women in the world of work and the key role of G7 stakeholders in the immediate response and long-term recovery. The outcome was a Call to Action for G7 Member States to promote gender equality and women’s economic empowerment in COVID-19 crisis response and recovery:

1. Collect and report intersectional gender statistics and sex, age and race-disaggregated data to inform crisis response and recovery plans.
2. Ensure women’s equal representation, participation and leadership in all COVID-19 response planning and decision-making in both the public and private sectors so that response and recovery policies are effective, inclusive and responsive to the needs of all women and men, girls and boys, particularly those from marginalized and minority backgrounds.
3. Design and implement gender-responsive crisis responses, aligned with international labour standards and intersectional approaches, with long-term solutions and stimulus packages to tackle the new challenges posed to the changing world of work.
4. Expand gender-responsive laws and invest in universal social protection.
5. Mitigate the pandemic’s impact on enterprises and employment, with a tailored and gender-responsive approach to reaching women-owned micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), including through supply chains, as well as hard-hit sectors and occupations where women are over-represented.
6. Incorporate effective measures to prevent and address work-related discrimination and violence against women and girls; ensure women’s access to justice; and allocate adequate resources in COVID-19 national response plans, with a goal of reducing the risks and “flattening the curve” of domestic violence.
7. Ensure that economic and social recovery packages recognize and place a value on unpaid care work and care jobs; provide adequate level of childcare and other care services; and support family-friendly policies that engage men and domestic partners to equally share the responsibilities of unpaid care and domestic work.
8. Ensure that gender equality is front and centre of learning and skills development during response and recovery.
9. Invite businesses to sign and implement the Women’s Empowerment Principles, thus fostering responsible business conduct.
10. Encourage financial stakeholders to leverage the power of capital markets and movements of resources to steer responsible business conduct and foster inclusive corporate cultures.

Source: WE EMPOWER G7, 2020. [Call to Action for G7 Stakeholders. Leaders recommend key gender equality actions in COVID-19 responses and recovery.](#)

European Union frameworks

Gender equality is one of the core values of EU legal frameworks, embedded in the Treaties, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Pillar of Social Rights. There is extensive EU legislation related to gender equality, particularly in the workplace, touching on issues such as maternity and parental leave; equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in employment and occupation, including equal pay, social security, working conditions and harassment; and equal opportunities for workers in self-employment, including access to maternity leave benefits.³⁴ In June 2019, the European Parliament adopted a Directive on work-life balance for parents and carers, which sets out the conditions for paternity, parental and carers' leave, and extends current provisions on flexible working arrangements to workers with young children and other carers.³⁵

The European Commission (EC) has made bold commitments and ambitious plans to promote equality between women and men, as well as mainstreaming the gender perspective throughout all policy spheres. Its Gender Equality Strategy 2020-25 focuses on ending gender-based violence; challenging gender stereotypes; closing gender gaps in the labour market; achieving equal participation across different sectors of the economy; addressing the gender pay and pension gaps; closing the gender care gap; and achieving gender balance in decision-making and politics. As one of the first deliverables of the Strategy, the EC has prioritized mandatory pay transparency measures.³⁶ Recently, the EU has also revived plans to promote the adoption of the Women on Boards Directive, proposed by the EC in 2012.³⁷ The proposal sets a target of a minimum of 40 per cent of non-executive members of the under-represented sex on the boards of European-listed private- and public-sector companies.

In November 2020, the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy put forward the EU's new Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021–2025 (GAP III). The plan aims to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through all external action of the EU. The Gender Action Plan III provides the EU with a policy framework with five pillars of action for accelerating progress towards meeting international commitments and creating a world in which everyone has space to thrive. It makes the promotion of gender equality a priority of all external policies and actions; offers a roadmap for working together with stakeholders at national, regional and multilateral levels; steps up action in strategic thematic areas; calls for EU institutions to lead by example; and ensures the transparency of the results.³⁸

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), founded in 2006, tracks the progress of EU countries in achieving full gender equality and meeting set goals. It ranks EU countries on equality in the realms of health, work, money, knowledge, power and time. Intersectionality and violence, although not quantitatively included in final scores, are also analyzed. According to the most recent data, from 2017, the European Union scores an average of 67.4 per cent where the status of women is concerned. Individual EU/G7 countries received the following scores: France (74.6 per cent), the United Kingdom (72.2 per cent), Germany (66.9 per cent) and Italy (63 per cent).³⁹

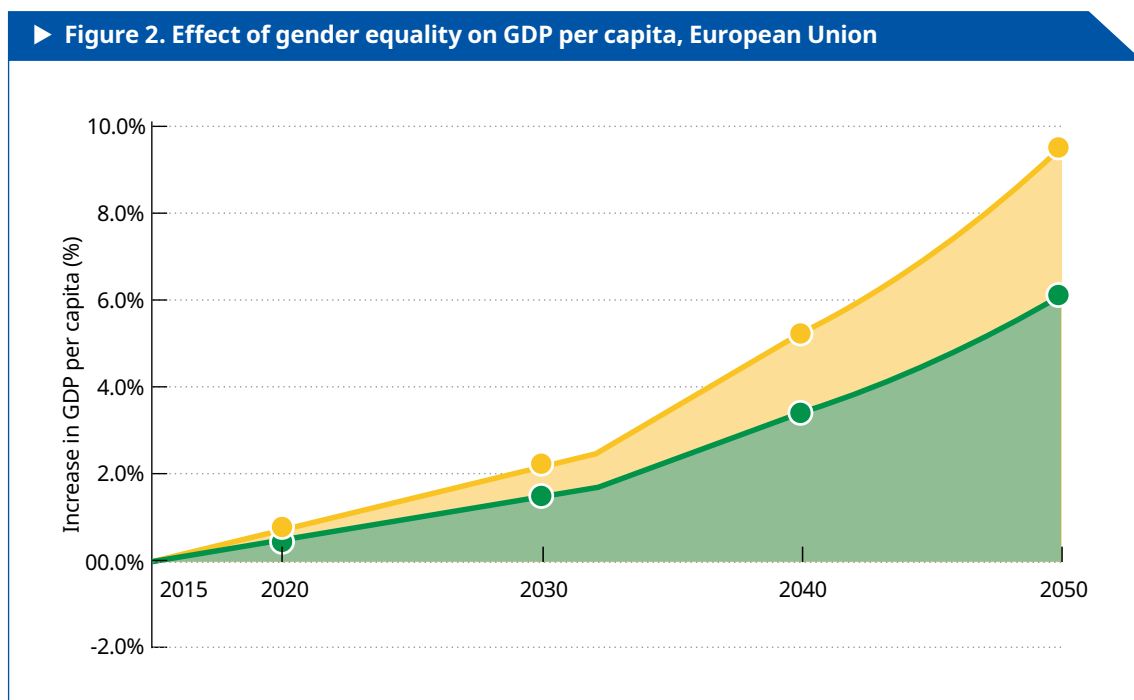


PART 2:

TAKING ACTION FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WORLD OF WORK

The case for gender equality at work

International instruments and frameworks, together with national laws, are crucial to the realization of gender equality at work and women's economic empowerment. As well as a rightful end in itself, remedying gender inequalities has significant economic benefits and is a critical means of achieving broad-based economic growth and social justice. The EIGE estimates that advancing gender equality in the EU would lead to a per capita increase in GDP of between 6.1 and 9.6 per cent, adding a total of between €1.95 trillion and €3.15 trillion to the EU economy and creating an additional 10.5 million jobs by 2050.¹ About 70 per cent of these jobs would be taken by women. This is particularly important for reducing poverty, which is more prevalent among women due to their lower rate of employment and less favourable salary prospects.



Note: Green line represents the impact of slower gender equality progress while the orange line represents the impact of more rapid progress.

Sources: EIGE, [Economic case for gender equality in the EU](#), accessed 15 October 2020.

To achieve gender equality in the workplace and reap the attendant social and economic benefits, conscious, proactive and concerted efforts on the part of all stakeholders are needed. Governments, in consultation with workers' and employers' organizations, women's organizations and other key partners, have a crucial role to play in making gender equality at work a reality. In particular, governments can catalyze or supplement initiatives for women's economic empowerment by adopting legislation and policies that enhance women's access to the labour market, break down gender stereotypes, achieve equal pay for work of equal value, address gender-based violence and sexual harassment, enable a healthy work-life balance for all, support women's full and effective participation and representation in decision-making, and, finally, are forward-looking where the implications of the future of work for gender equality are concerned.

In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, delivering on the commitments of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, the BDPfA and the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (2019) requires implementation of a package of integrated, inclusive and transformative policies and measures, informed by the relevant international labour standards. In the short-term, COVID-19 policy responses should be designed to mitigate the negative consequences of the crisis for women and other vulnerable groups. Governments should apply a gender perspective in all crisis-response design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, as framed by the four policy pillars of the ILO human-centered response to COVID-19:

- ▶ **Pillar 1:** Stimulating the economy and employment.
- ▶ **Pillar 2:** Supporting enterprises, jobs and incomes.
- ▶ **Pillar 3:** Protecting workers in the workplace.
- ▶ **Pillar 4:** Relying on social dialogue for solutions.

In the longer run, this means building a "better normal", in which gender equality becomes the norm.

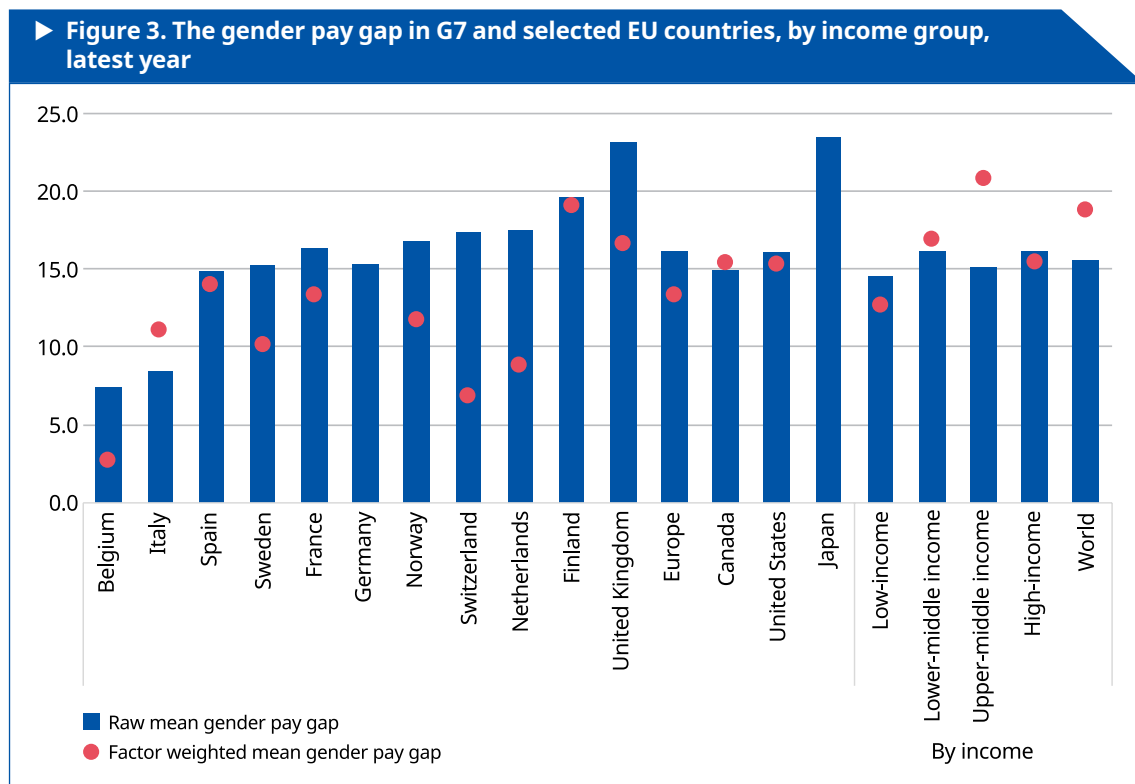
Key government laws and policies for gender equality at work

this section builds on the relevant international labour standards as they concern governments, explains the measures that can be taken to foster commitment and action towards gender equality, and provides illustrative public policy examples. The five key dimensions of gender equality covered here are:

- ▶ achieving equal pay for work of equal value;
- ▶ preventing and ending violence and harassment in the world of work;
- ▶ promoting work-family balance and an equal sharing of childcare responsibilities;
- ▶ fostering women's full and effective participation and representation in decision-making in the world of work;
- ▶ building a future of work that works for both women and men.

2.1 Achieving equal pay for work of equal value

Achieving gender equality and the economic empowerment of women at work will not be possible without ensuring that the work done by women and men is valued equally. While global support for the principle of equal pay is becoming more prevalent, the gender wage gap still persists at a level of approximately 20 per cent globally.² Most recent ILO data based on a new and more robust methodology (the “factored weighted gender pay gap”, which aims to take into account some of the underlying causes of the gender pay gap) shows that the gender pay gap in the G7 countries ranges from 11.0 in Italy to 23.5 in Japan.³ The EU average gender pay gap is 13.3 per cent.



Sources: ILO, 2018. [Global Wage Report 2018/2019](#); for Germany and Japan, OECD, 2020, [Gender wage gap \(indicator\)](#), accessed 16 October 2020.

According to the ILO Global Wage Report 2018/19, the gender pay gap in high-income countries is wider for women at the top of the skills and earnings scale.⁴ On average, education is not a significant explanatory cause of the gender pay gap. In fact, women working in the same occupation are systematically paid less than men, even if their educational levels equal or exceed those of their male counterparts. A significant proportion of the gender pay gap across regions remains unexplained, particularly in high-income countries.

The unexplained factors may include occupational segregation (including gender imbalances in leadership positions, or vertical segregation), the undervaluation of feminized industries,

the “motherhood penalty” versus the “fatherhood premium” (which refers to the differential impact of having children on women and men’s wages), and differences in wage employment participation.⁵ In Europe, for example, working in an enterprise with a predominantly female workforce can result in a 14.7 per cent wage penalty compared to working in a similarly productive enterprise with predominantly male workforce.⁶ Discrimination, as well as conscious and unconscious biases about the role of women in society, can begin to be rectified through education, communication, and appropriate legislation and public policy that permeates into the private sector.

The undervaluation of paid care work also plays a major role in the perpetuation of gender pay gaps. Women make up two-thirds of the workforce in the global care industry, in which other groups at risk of discrimination are also disproportionately represented.⁷ In the United States, 52 per cent of women in home-based care work and over 40 per cent of women in institutional care settings are considered impoverished or near poverty. Black women account for 29 per cent of all women working in institutional care,⁸ with migrant women also largely represented.

Closing the gender pay gap has important economic and social benefits, including “increased female participation in the labour market, entrepreneurship and women moving into higher-paid and higher-skilled jobs”.⁹ Equal pay for work of equal value also has positive inter-generational effects, given the importance of women’s incomes in supporting households’ wellbeing. In the United States alone, if the gender pay gap were closed, the poverty rate of children with working mothers would decrease by almost 50 per cent, benefiting over 25 per cent of children and thus creating a more equitable society.¹⁰

2.1.1 International Labour Standards and other key instruments

The principle of equal pay for work of equal value is enshrined in the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100). The right to equal remuneration applies not only in cases where men and women do the same or similar jobs, but also when they perform work which, though different, is of equal value based on objective criteria, such as skills, working conditions, responsibilities and effort. As per the Convention, remuneration is not limited to the basic pay or wage that the worker receives, but also includes any other compensation, such as bonuses, stock options and overtime pay.¹¹

The Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) and its accompanying Recommendation No. 111, also set forth principles of equality of opportunity and treatment in the world of work, including in relation to remuneration for work of equal value.

While 173 countries have ratified ILO Convention No. 100, only 86 countries, including France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom among G7 countries, have passed laws that give full effect to the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value.¹² The

implementation in law and practice of this principle remains challenging due to a lack of understanding of the scope and application of the concept of “work of equal value”.

Achieving pay equity means acknowledging the reality of an individual’s intersecting identities and moving beyond the binary concept of gender equality to address multiple forms of discrimination based on race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction and social background, real or perceived HIV status or other health conditions, sexual orientation and gender identity, family responsibilities, disability, age and nationality.¹³

Equal pay is recognized as a human right in such international instruments as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966, and the CEDAW, 1979. Equal pay is also an important component of the 2030 Agenda as a key feature of SDG 8, particularly Target 8.5, which aims “by 2030, [to] achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value”.¹⁴

The principle of equal pay for the same work or work of equal value is a foundational principle of the EU and was laid down in the original EEC Treaty of 1957. The principle was implemented in the Equal Pay Directive 75/117/EEC, later replaced by Directive 2006/54/EC (recast). Additionally, legal standards in respect of equal pay have been established by case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU).¹⁵

2.1.2 Guiding principles for governments

A comprehensive and effective legislative approach, by fostering an inclusive and transparent labour market and creating “a driving force for gender equality standards”,¹⁶ can have a positive impact in eliminating gender pay gaps. Ways of promoting equal pay for work of equal value as a driver for women’s economic empowerment include:

1. ensuring equal opportunity and treatment at work for all;
2. establishing and applying the right to “equal pay for work of equal value”;
3. promoting social dialogue and collective bargaining;
4. establishing and implementing wage transparency; and
5. setting adequate and inclusive minimum wages.

Ensuring equal opportunity and treatment at work for all

Clear legislative frameworks that establish a level playing field can ensure that all workers have equal opportunities to access, remain and progress in the labour market, as well as affording protection from all and intersecting forms of direct and indirect discrimination. Repealing discriminatory laws, such as those that restrict women’s access to certain sectors and occupations, and making discriminatory practices unlawful, is not enough. A sound legal framework also needs to include proactive or affirmative action measures (e.g. targets

or quota systems) designed to redress disadvantage and accelerate the rate at which members of under-represented groups gain access to jobs, education, training, promotion, representation and decision-making.¹⁷

Establishing and applying the right to “equal pay for work of equal value”

In order to operationalize the ILO’s Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), it is necessary that national laws and regulations, wage-setting mechanisms and collective agreements, or a combination of these measures, promote the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value, not just for “the same work”. In practice, this entails collecting comparable and reliable gender-disaggregated data on wages and comparing not only the same or similar work, but also jobs of an entirely different nature, which are nevertheless of equal value. The remuneration in question should include all direct and indirect emoluments, whether in cash or in kind.¹⁸

This approach is essential to tackle occupational segregation. Women are over-represented in jobs in education, health and social work, which are undervalued in comparison with work of equal value performed by men in more male-dominated STEM-related sectors.

Training and practical guidance on applying the principle of equal pay for work of equal value in national law and practice is also essential to assist national equality bodies, wage-fixing institutions, social partners and companies in developing national and workplace policies, and negotiating equal pay provisions in collective agreements.

Promoting social dialogue and collective bargaining

Both Convention Nos. 100 and 111 highlight the importance of tripartism, setting out clear requirements for cooperation and consultation with employers’ and workers’ organizations, to ensure the effective implementation of gender equality rights.¹⁹ Social dialogue and collective bargaining agreements that proactively address inequalities can be an effective mechanism for closing gender wage gaps.²⁰ Such procedures are most likely to promote inclusive and gender-equal employment systems when the bargaining is coordinated and conducted at a national or sectoral level.²¹ Ensuring that any collective agreement covers workers in the lowest pay categories can also help to narrow the gender pay gap, particularly in highly feminized occupations or sectors.²²

Establishing and implementing wage transparency

Wage transparency policies are important for the effective enforcement of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. In many countries, the principle is enforced when an employee makes a pay discrimination claim based on information from a colleague who is receiving a higher wage for comparable work. Some pay transparency policies give individuals the right to request the information they would need to make such a claim, or allow social partners and government bodies to initiate investigations.²³

Pay transparency policies may also require employers to measure and report their overall performance on achieving equal pay for work of equal value. As well as having implications for a company's public image, such policies enable women and men to consider a company's level of pay equity when selecting a potential employer, thereby prompting companies to address gaps in order to attract diverse talent. A recent *Harvard Business Review* study indicates that when companies are mandated by law to disclose gender pay gaps, the gaps shrink. It also shows that pay transparency improves the company's gender balance and the number of women promoted to more senior positions.²⁴

The proportion of companies that make their pay gap information public varies greatly among G7 countries, ranging from 78 per cent in the United Kingdom to 50 per cent in Italy, 21 per cent in France, 7 per cent in Canada and Germany, and 2 per cent in Japan and the United States.²⁵ Codifying the importance of transparency in company practice may determine how companies share information publicly and fosters communication regarding efforts to promote gender equity.

Gender-neutral job evaluations, establishing robust and consistent methods for assessing the value of different jobs free from gender bias, are an important component of measuring and monitoring the gender wage gap. Such evaluations provide a relatively objective way of assessing job comparability by taking into account a variety of factors across different jobs, such as the job knowledge, communication skills, physical effort or level of responsibility involved.²⁶

Setting adequate and inclusive minimum wages

As women typically benefit more than male workers from minimum wage increases, well-designed and non-discriminatory minimum wage policies are an important tool for tackling low-paid work, particularly in the care economy, increasing the purchasing power of workers and combating gender-based pay discrimination. Minimum wage policies act as an effective wage floor when they apply to all workers (not excluding female-dominated sectors or occupations) and are designed and set at an adequate level based on evidence and full consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.²⁷

2.1.3 Illustrative practices

Pay transparency and collective bargaining on equal-pay laws (France)

French law requires companies with 50 employees or more to report annually on their performance in respect of gender equality and equal pay, as applied to recruitment, training, working conditions, and work-family balance, by job category.²⁸ In 2018, France adopted a new labour law requiring companies to publicize their progress on women's economic empowerment in five key areas: closing the gender wage gap; opportunities for

raises; opportunities for promotion; no penalties when returning from maternity leave; and women occupying 40 per cent of the 10 highest-paid positions in the company.²⁹ The French Government set deadlines for the publication of these results by large enterprises (more than 250 employees) and by SMEs (50-250 employees). Financial penalties (up to 1 per cent of the wage bill) can be imposed if a company refuses to report its score or if a company's score is still below 75 out of 100 by March 2022 (or 2023 for SMEs).³⁰

Additionally, in 2006 France passed legislation, amended in 2010, that requires collective bargaining with the aim of defining and planning steps to eliminate the gender pay gap.³¹ This compulsory collective bargaining takes place every year during salary negotiations, or less often if an agreement is in place, and the employer must provide a report on gender equality for consideration.³² While a collective agreement on the issue does not have to be reached, the negotiations must be conducted seriously and in good faith. Failure to do so can result in sanctions imposed by the Higher Council for Professional Equality.³³

An analysis by the European Commission's network of legal experts on gender equality and pay transparency legislation in the EU highlighted France's pay reporting and pay equity collective bargaining obligations as an example of "best practice".³⁴

Equal Pay Certification (Iceland)

The principle of equal pay for work of equal value has been enshrined in Icelandic legislation since 1961. The country has since taken a more proactive approach by adopting an Equal Pay Certification Law (2018), which requires companies to prove that they are paying their workers equally, rather than waiting for complaints to be made before enforcing equal pay.³⁵

Companies with more than 25 workers have to complete a certification process demonstrating that they provide equal pay for work of equal value. Workplaces with 250 workers or more had until the end of 2018 to qualify for certification, while smaller companies have been given more time depending on the size of their workforce, with all companies with a workforce of more than 25 required to be certified by the end of 2021. Companies must renew their certification every three years.³⁶

Accredited auditors award the certification after assessing companies' compliance with the Equal Pay Standard. The Standard is an administrative tool laying down rules and requirements that must be met and was developed through a tripartite process involving trade unions, the employers' confederation and government officials.³⁷

In 2016, Iceland's mean gender pay gap was estimated to be 16.3 per cent, which is an improvement on the 17.8 per cent measured in 2011.³⁸ In 2018, the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index named Iceland as "the most gender-equal country to date".³⁹ The impact of its Equal Pay Certification Law is as yet uncertain, given its recent implementation,

but it is a promising policy for further narrowing Iceland's gender pay gap. Iceland is also a member of the EPIC Steering Committee.

Improving pay transparency and working conditions (Spain)

Spain revised its Workers Statute Law in 2011 to include domestic workers.⁴⁰ This law regulates key aspects of decent work, such as establishing a minimum wage and maximum weekly working hours.⁴¹ Domestic workers, under the revised Spanish law, are also now eligible for social security coverage, health care benefits, maternity leave and contractual benefits.⁴²

To increase compliance, the Labour and Social Security Inspectorate enforces the law and investigates grievances. Employers receive a government incentive for complying with this labour legislation, while the General Treasury of the Social Security Scheme has been tasked with disseminating information concerning the law. The Law also calls for impact analyses on a tripartite basis.⁴³

In addition, in October 2020 the Spanish Government enacted a new pay transparency law. It requires companies to release employee salary information, explaining how they decide on basic salaries and other benefits. Non-compliant companies may face fines of up to €187,000 (USD220,000). Companies with more than 50 employees will also have to file a four-year strategy for balancing the number of male and female employees in their workforce. For the Government, tackling the gender pay gap will be crucial to economic recovery and will help prevent the gap from widening as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴⁴

Addressing discrimination and enforcing equal pay for work of equal value (Sweden)

In 2008, Sweden passed a Discrimination Act – a comprehensive piece of legislation designed to ensure equal rights.⁴⁵ On the right to equal pay, the law requires that employers and employees “equalise and prevent differences in pay and other terms of employment between women and men who perform work which is to be regarded as equal or of *equal value*” (emphasis added).⁴⁶

Furthermore, the text of the legislation provides guidance on establishing equal value. Specifically, it stipulates that;

*Work is to be regarded as of equal value to other work if, on an overall assessment of the requirements and nature of the work, it can be deemed to be equal in value to the other work. The assessment of the requirements of the work is to take into account criteria such as knowledge and skills, responsibility and effort. In assessing the nature of the work, particular account is to be taken of working conditions.*⁴⁷

The Discrimination Act also created a new government agency, the Equality Ombudsman's Office, which monitors compliance with the Act and can order financial penalties against institutions that do not take "active measures" against discrimination or, among other things, withhold information.⁴⁸ Among its initiatives, the Ombudsman's Office implemented a "One Million Inspection Project", which in 2008 inspected the pay surveys, analyses and action plans of 600 companies employing a total of 750,000 people to check up on equal pay. With the help of workshops and training offered by the Ombudsman's Office, many employers have since improved their pay survey methodology to better enforce the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. Over half of the participating employers identified and rectified pay discrepancies as a result of the campaign.⁴⁹

Sweden's gender pay gap has been reduced significantly: it stood at 15.4 per cent in 2010, but by 2017 had narrowed to 12.6 per cent.⁵⁰

Supporting companies in achieving pay equity (Switzerland)

In Switzerland, employers are under a constitutional obligation to respect the principle of equal pay for work of equal value.⁵¹ In December 2018, the "Equality Act" was amended with the addition of a new section relating to equal pay between female and male employees. This amendment – which has been effective since 1 July 2020 – requires employers (both public and private) with 100 or more employees to undertake an internal equal pay analysis by 30 June 2021. Additionally, to participate in public tenders employers are required to remediate any unexplained pay discrepancies.

To support this process, and enable companies to perform such audits, the Swiss Federal Office for Gender Equality (FOGE) created a free, publicly available online Excel-based tool – called Logib – to measure the gender pay gap.⁵² Available for download in four languages, Logib allows companies to enter their pay data for analysis and identify any gender-specific pay differences.

The pay analysis must be verified by 30 June 2022 by an external and independent provider, such as an auditing firm or a body representing a company's employees. The FOGE also makes available a list of companies and organizations that provide further assistance in evaluating pay equality.⁵³ Because the program is downloaded by companies for private use, the data entered is secured on the companies' local computers and is therefore kept confidential.

At least one year after the verification, but no later than 30 June 2023, the result of this analysis must be communicated in writing to employees. For listed companies, the result of this analysis must be published in the annual financial report. The analysis is to be repeated every four years, unless the first analysis indicates that there is no unexplained pay gap between male and female employees. There are no penalties for violations of the provisions; however, violations could affect the employer's commercial status and reputation.

Switzerland's commitment to equal pay, including the development of the Logib tool, was recognized by the 2018 UN Public Service Award.⁵⁴ Switzerland is also a member of the EPIC Steering Committee and Logib has been nominated by EPIC as an example of good practice.⁵⁵

Mandatory pay transparency and reporting (United Kingdom)

In 2010, the United Kingdom (UK) passed an Equality Act, amended in 2016 to include reporting and transparency measures on the gender gap.⁵⁶ This legislation requires companies with more than 250 employees to publicize the pay of all its employees, making it possible to analyse whether there is a gender pay gap in terms of wages and bonuses, and, if so, how big the gap is. This applies to both public and private-sector organizations. The legislation also provides for sanctions, such as fines, for employers or employers' representatives in the event of non-compliance. The Government has also launched an online service that allows the public to search for company pay-gap data and compare it with other companies in the United Kingdom.⁵⁷ In the UK, 78 per cent of companies reported pay-gap information in 2018.⁵⁸

Between 2017 and 2018, the first full year of mandatory reporting, the pay gap in the United Kingdom fell from 18.4 to 17.9 per cent.⁵⁹ As a result of the UK's multiple gender equity programmes, 1.8 million more women have joined the workforce since 2010, increasing labour force participation among women (aged 16 to 64) to 72 per cent.⁶⁰ To continue closing the gender pay gap, the UK has invested in a number of research initiatives, such as the Workplace and Gender Equality Research Programme (2018), publishing statistics and resources for employers.⁶¹ The UK is also an EPIC member.

2.1.4 Policy measures in the context of the COVID-19 crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic is worsening the social and economic situation of women, and threatening the recent – albeit modest – progress made in reducing the gender pay gap in some countries. New poverty forecasts by UN Women and UNDP warn that the global number of people living in poverty is rising for the first time in 30 years as a result of the pandemic and accompanying lockdown measures. In 2021, 435 million women and girls around the world will be living in extreme poverty (on less than USD1.90 a day), including 47 million impoverished as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶²

The EU economy is expected to shrink by 7.4 percent, resulting in a recession accompanied by considerable job losses.⁶³ Women's jobs and incomes are at particular risk, as a large proportion of women worldwide work in informal employment and in precarious jobs, often lack access to income security and health care through social protection, and are facing an increase in unpaid care work due to school closures. Research by the Hans Boeckler Foundation, for example, estimates that the coronavirus crisis is likely to widen the gender

pay gap in Germany, since 27 per cent of women, as opposed to 16 per cent of men, have reduced their working hours to look after children under the age of 14 following the closure of schools and nurseries.⁶⁴

In line with the ILO policy framework for Covid-19 response, governments are taking action to support workers and families during the pandemic, including those facing job and income losses (Box 2).

Box 2. Crisis-response measures to support women's jobs and income

- **Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States (26 states)** are among those that have introduced new allowances or expanded access to pre-existing schemes, to compensate for the reduction in working hours in companies affected by the pandemic.⁶⁵
- In **Australia**, 6.5 million lower-income workers with benefit entitlements received a one-off lump-sum payment of AUD 750.⁶⁶ **Ireland** made provisions for a new social welfare payment programme to support employees and self-employed people facing unemployment due to the COVID-19 emergency.⁶⁷
- In **France** and **Italy**, self-employed workers benefited from a tax-free lump-sum payment of €1,500 and €600 respectively. In the **United Kingdom**, the allowance for low-income self-employed workers covers 80 per cent of their average monthly earnings (up to £2,500).⁶⁸
- In **France**, a temporary lump-sum payment of €500 was paid directly by the public employment service to workers who lost their jobs, but were not eligible for unemployment insurance. Financial aid was also provided to 800,000 low-income young people under the age of 25 experiencing unemployment and financial hardship during the pandemic.⁶⁹
- In **France**, healthcare staff in the departments most affected by the COVID-19 epidemic received a tax-free bonus payment of €1,500 and an increased overtime payment.⁷⁰
- **Most European Union countries and the United States** have introduced measures to support companies, including the extension of deadlines for income tax declarations, suspension of social insurance contributions, and the granting of interest- and collateral-free loans.⁷¹
- **Italy, Spain, the Slovak Republic and the United Kingdom** have introduced temporary deferments of mortgage payments. Others have introduced reductions on monthly rent on main residences (**Greece**) or temporarily suspended foreclosures (**United States**) or evictions (**France, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United States** and some **Canadian** regions and municipalities). **Japan** has allowed households affected by COVID-19 to postpone the payment of utility bills.⁷²

2.2 Preventing and ending gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work

Gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH), including sexual harassment, is incompatible with decent work yet remains pervasive around the world, irrespective of sector or level of income. Sexual harassment is the most frequently reported form of GBVH.¹ Globally, more than 30 per cent of women over the age of 15 have experienced physical and/or sexual violence, roughly 50 per cent have experienced sexual harassment, and 10 per cent have experienced harassment online (cyberharassment).²

In the EU, between 40 and 50 per cent of women reported that they had experienced some form of sexual harassment in the workplace.³ A 2012 survey by the Australian Human Rights Commission found that 68 per cent of incidents of sexual harassment took place in the workplace and mostly impacted women.⁴ Over a third of Canadian women reported that they had experienced sexual harassment at work, while 12 per cent of men reported the same in a 2018 survey.⁵ Unfortunately, the experiences of many victims go unheard, as four out of five women do not report instances of harassment to their employers.⁶

The occurrence of GBVH, including domestic violence, entails high costs for victims, companies and the national economy. Those experiencing violence and harassment at work can suffer harm to their psychological, physical and sexual health, including physical injuries, anxiety, depression, stress and other lasting impacts of trauma, including harm to their dignity and to their family and social environment.

GBVH negatively impacts women's economic empowerment. Women are more likely to leave the workplace or change jobs, resulting in financial stress.⁷ GBVH may prevent women from accessing, remaining and advancing in the labour market.⁸ In the EU, the prevalence of GBVH on company boards rose from 11.9 per cent in 2010 to 26.2 per cent in 2018, representing an obstacle to women's leadership.⁹

Economies and societies stand to lose a great deal when violence and sexual harassment are not addressed. In Australia, it is estimated that workplace bullying alone costs employers and the economy between 6 and 36 billion Australian dollars per annum.¹⁰ The Canadian economy loses about 19 billion Canadian dollars each year as a result of absenteeism due to violence and harassment.¹¹

To catalyze change, public sector action needs to be scaled up as a matter of urgency, with the world of work as an important entry point. While great strides have been made in the implementation of legal reforms to address violence and harassment in the world of work, in many countries gaps in protection and prevention still remain, due in particular to significant shortcomings in the coverage, implementation and enforcement of sexual harassment laws. Of 189 countries surveyed under the UN Beijing+25 review, 35 have no

such legislation; 59 have no laws on sexual harassment in the workplace; 123 have no laws on sexual harassment in education; and 157 have no laws on sexual harassment in public spaces.¹²

Governments, in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations, can play a key role in adopting and implementing an inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach to the prevention and elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work.¹³ Comprehensive and practical guidance is provided by the relevant ILO international standards.

2.2.1 International Labour Standards and other key instruments

The Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and its accompanying Recommendation No. 206 recognize the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment. The Convention calls on governments to promote a general environment of zero tolerance to violence and harassment and provides a clear framework for addressing and preventing violence and harassment in the world of work.¹⁴

The concept of “violence and harassment” is defined as “unacceptable behaviours and practices, or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm, and includes gender-based violence and harassment, including sexual harassment”.¹⁵

Governments should commit to preventing and ending GBVH. This means adopting legislation and policies guaranteeing the right to equality and non-discrimination in employment and occupation, in particular for women workers, as well as for workers and other persons belonging to one or more vulnerable groups who are disproportionately affected by violence and harassment in the world of work.¹⁶ Measures are required to:

- ▶ legally prohibit violence and harassment;
- ▶ ensure that relevant policies address violence and harassment;
- ▶ adopt a comprehensive strategy to implement measures to prevent and combat violence and harassment;
- ▶ establish enforcement and monitoring mechanisms or strengthen existing mechanisms;
- ▶ guarantee access to remedies and reparation, as well as support for victims;
- ▶ provide for sanctions;
- ▶ develop educational, training tools, guidelines and activities and raise awareness, in accessible formats as appropriate;
- ▶ ensure the existence of effective means of inspection and investigation in cases of violence and harassment, including through the labour inspectorate or other competent bodies.¹⁷

There are other international and regional instruments that address violence and harassment at work.¹⁸ In interpreting the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW), the CEDAW Committee considers workplace sexual harassment as a form of gender-based violence that can reduce gender equality in the workplace and result in health and safety issues.¹⁹ Based on ILO Convention No. 111, relevant comments developed by the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of ILO Conventions and Recommendations consider sexual harassment as a severe form of sex discrimination.

The EU provides some of the most comprehensive and enforceable regional regulations on workplace violence and harassment. The European Social Charter (Revised), 1996, the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (known as the Istanbul Convention), 2011, and several EU Directives also seek to prevent and prohibit various forms of violence and harassment.²⁰

2.2.2 Guiding principles for governments

Public policies that demonstrate a commitment to preventing and ending gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) need to:

1. legislate for the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment;
2. ensure a broad scope of legal protection;
3. enact effective enforcement, remedies and assistance;
4. provide awareness-raising, guidance and training; and
5. mitigate the impact of domestic violence.

Legislate for the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment

National legal frameworks must recognize the right of workers to an environment that is free from violence and harassment. In adopting an inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach to this topic, ILO standards encourage governments to prevent and address violence and harassment in the areas of labour and employment, occupational safety and health, equality and non-discrimination law – and, where appropriate, criminal law – to give victims a range of remedies best suited for their situation.²¹

The legal framework should also address and provide definitions of the different kinds of violence and harassment suffered by workers. These include physical and psychological violence, GBVH, including sexual violence and harassment, bullying, mobbing, and domestic violence. An ILO study found that 27 per cent of the 80 countries surveyed do not define, or only vaguely define, violence and harassment, and 6 per cent only cover physical behaviour, thus excluding pervasive forms of psychological violence and harassment.²² All G7 countries have legislated against work-related sexual harassment, including in their definitions both hostile working environments and ‘quid pro quo’ abuses, with the exception of Japan, where sexual harassment is only vaguely defined (see Table 3).

Legislation also has a key role to play in defining the responsibilities of public authorities, employers and workers, and in empowering them to take action. In particular, it is crucial that the law require employers to take measures commensurate with their level of control to prevent violence and harassment in the world of work, including GBVH.²³ All G7 countries have legislated for work-related sexual harassment, mostly by prohibiting workers, managers and/or third parties from engaging in such behaviour. They also provide accessible and transparent means of making complaints, imposing sanctions on perpetrators or employers and/or providing remedies for victims. In all but Italy and the United States, employers are also required to take steps to prevent or protect workers against sexual harassment. Only in Canada do workers have a statutory right to a workplace free from sexual harassment (see Table 3).

In G7 countries, legislation also differs as to the steps required to address sexual harassment, including the implementation of workplace policies on sexual harassment and the setting up of internal complaints mechanisms and workplace risk assessments that tackle violence, sexual harassment and the associated psychosocial risks (Table 3).

► **Table 3. How legislation regulates the role of the employer in addressing work-related sexual harassment, G7 countries**

Country	Employer mandated to take steps to prevent or protect against sexual harassment	Employer mandated to have a sexual harassment policy	Where SH regulated: Employer mandated to have internal complaints mechanism	Employer mandated to complete a risk assessment for violence*	Employer mandated to undertake an assessment of psychosocial risks
Canada	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, both physical and psychological violence	No
France	Yes	No	Yes	Yes, only psychological violence	Yes and risks include physical, psychological, and/or sexual violence
Germany	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes, but risks do not include physical, psychological, and/or sexual violence
Italy	No	No	No	No	Yes, but risks do not include physical, psychological, and/or sexual violence
Japan	Yes	No	No	No	No
United Kingdom	Yes	No	No	Yes, both physical and psychological violence	Yes, but risks do not include physical, psychological, and/or sexual violence
United States	No	No	No	No	No

Note: *Or a general assessment of risks/hazards that explicitly includes physical and psychological violence.

Source: ILO, Legal indicators from an ILO 80-country study on the law and practice addressing violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work, 2017.

Ensure a broad scope of legal protection

Legal frameworks should also provide a broad scope of protection from violence and harassment in the world of work. Legal protection should therefore extend beyond the traditional employment relationship and encompass hiring, training, access to employment, conditions of employment and third parties with whom workers may come into contact.²⁴

In line with Convention No. 190, coverage should include *“all sectors, public or private, in the formal or informal economy, in urban or rural areas”* and *“workers and other persons in the world of work, including employees as defined by national law and practice, as well as persons who work, whatever their contractual status, persons in training, including trainees and apprentices, laid-off workers, volunteers, job seekers, job applicants and individuals exercising the authority, duties or responsibilities of an employer”*.²⁵

Finally, it is necessary to address violence and harassment in the full range of places where it may occur *“on occasion, in connection with or as a result of work”*, in addition to the traditional physical workplace. This includes work-related travel, social events and training activities, commuting to and from work, and work-related communications (including email, texting and online platforms) in private homes when they are places of work.²⁶

The recent increased use of information and communication technology (ICT) for work purposes has raised concerns as to the disproportionate effects on women of ICT-based forms of violence and harassment, such as cyberbullying and cyber-intimidation. A UNODC study of 8 countries estimates that 25 per cent of women have experienced abuse at least once in their online lives.²⁷ Since there is as yet no international consensus on a definition of cyberbullying, public policy is vital in setting out national standards to protect all employees in their workplaces.²⁸

Although violence and harassment affects all individuals in all sectors and occupations, workers and other persons belonging to particularly vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected. Governments should therefore adopt appropriate measures to identify and take into account the needs and circumstances of members of such groups, which include women, LGBTI workers, indigenous persons, persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV and persons who belong to marginalized groups, such as caste-affected communities and ethnic minorities.²⁹ Recommendation No. 206 also lists the *“sectors or occupations and work arrangements in which exposure to violence and harassment may be more likely, such as night work, work in isolation, health, hospitality, social services, emergency services, domestic work, transport, education or entertainment”*. Table 4 provides an overview of key coverage provisions in G7 countries.

► Table 4. Scope of legal protection against violence in the world of work, G7 countries

Country	Provisions regulate for violence against night, isolated or migrant workers	Provisions regulate for violence against workers in specific sectors or occupations*	Provisions regulate for violence against specific vulnerable groups	Labour law protection against violence includes workers and other persons in the world of work**	Definitions of workplace in violence provisions include aspects of non-traditional workplace	Internet technology is mentioned specifically in regulations on violence
Canada	No	No	Yes, indigenous people, people with disabilities, people living with HIV, Roma	Yes, includes trainees/ interns/ apprentices	Yes, only work trips and home/ telework	No
France	No	No	Yes	Yes, includes trainees/ interns/ apprentices	N/A	Yes
Germany	No	No	Yes	Yes, includes trainees/ interns/ apprentices	N/A	No
Italy	No	No	No	Yes, some legislation covers unpaid workers (volunteers), trainees/ interns/ apprentices	Yes, home/ telework	No
Japan	Yes, night workers	No	No	No	N/A	No
United Kingdom	No	Yes, health workers	No	Yes, some legislation covers trainees/ interns/ apprentices, independent contractors	N/A	No
United States	Yes, night workers	Yes, health and transport workers	No	No	Yes, work-related events, social activities related to work, work trips and home/telework	No

Note: * For instance, domestic, health and transport workers (including seafarers). ** This definition includes unpaid workers (volunteers); trainees/interns/apprentices; and independent contractors.

Source: ILO, Legal indicators from ILO 80-country study on the law and practice addressing violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work, 2017.

Enact effective enforcement, remedies and assistance

Sound and inclusive legislation needs to be coupled with effective monitoring and enforcement to prevent, report and punish violence and harassment in the world of work. These mechanisms should provide *“easy access to appropriate and effective remedies and safe, fair and effective reporting and dispute resolution mechanisms and procedures in cases of violence and harassment in the world of work”*.³⁰

A system of this kind deters perpetrators and helps to transform the cultural norms that underlie violence and harassment. It is also necessary for providing support and justice for victims. For victims, witnesses, whistleblowers and complainants to feel safe, it is essential to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, and prevent victimization or retaliation from their employers or co-workers.³¹

Labour inspection is an important tool in effective enforcement, and ultimately in preventing, monitoring and addressing violence and harassment in the world of work. Empowering labour inspectors to take all necessary action to identify, prevent and protect against all forms of violence and harassment, including psychological violence, verbal, non-verbal threats, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination, is key.³² A better gender balance in the labour inspectorate and gender-responsive training can also enhance inspectors' capacity to address psychosocial hazards and risks and reduce the prevalence of gender-based violence, harassment and discrimination against particular groups of workers.³³

It is vital that victims of violence and harassment have access to compensation in cases of psychosocial, physical or any other injury or illness that results in incapacity to work.³⁴ Support services and remedies for victims of gender-based violence and harassment are also essential and should include support for victims wanting to re-enter the labour market; counselling and information services; 24-hour hotlines; emergency services; medical care and psychological support; crisis centres, including shelters; and specialized police units or specially trained officers to support victims.³⁵ This assistance is crucial if victims are to develop the skills they need to re-enter the labour market with confidence.

Legislation and policies to counter violence and harassment should be informed by robust monitoring and by the collection and publication of data disaggregated by sex, form of violence or harassment, and sector of economic activity.³⁶ Statistics on violence and harassment are useful in identifying causes and trends, and thus shaping awareness-raising, training, and prevention activities.³⁷ Table 5 provides an overview of key provisions for the enforcement of laws to counter violence and harassment in the world of work in G7 countries.

► **Table 5. Key provisions for the enforcement of laws to counter violence and harassment in the world of work, G7 countries**

Country	Employer mandated to have internal complaints mechanism*	There is an internal investigation process for complaints of sexual harassment (or in general which covers SH)	Workers' compensation (injury) pays out for injury due to violence	Workers' compensation pays out for stress/ burnout	There is mandated no-reprisals for complaints*	Labour inspectors have the power to stop work if there is a risk of danger from violence
Canada	Yes**	Yes	Both physical and psychological violence	Yes	Yes, includes witnesses	Yes
France	Yes	Yes	***	Yes	Yes, includes witnesses	No
Germany	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes, includes witnesses	No
Italy	No	N/A	No	No	No	No
Japan	No	N/A	***	Yes	N/A	No
United Kingdom	No	N/A	Only physical violence	No	Yes, includes witnesses	No
United States	No	No	***	No	Yes, includes witnesses	No

Notes: *Where physical and psychosocial violence is regulated. ** And complaints are mandated to be anonymous. *** Source of injury vague – it may include violence.

Source: ILO, Legal indicators from ILO 80-country study on the law and practice addressing violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work, 2017.

Provide guidance, training and awareness-raising

Governments, in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations, should ensure that violence and harassment in the world of work is addressed in relevant national policies, such as those concerning occupational safety and health, equality and non-discrimination, and migration.³⁸ In addition, governments can assist judges, labour inspectors, police officers, prosecutors and other public officials in fulfilling their mandate in respect of violence and harassment in the world of work, as well as assisting public and private employers and workers and their organizations in preventing and addressing violence and harassment.³⁹

Government can also introduce gender-responsive education, training, awareness-raising and other programmes that address the root causes of violence and harassment, including discrimination, the abuse of power relations, and cultural and social norms.⁴⁰ When awareness-raising campaigns are well-designed and accessible to all, including migrants, persons with disabilities and other groups, they can provide tools for identifying and addressing abusive situations. Additionally, they can convey a sense of the unacceptability of violence and harassment, in particular gender-based violence and harassment, transform

cultural norms and foster safe, healthy and harmonious workplaces.⁴¹ Table 6 provides an overview of key provisions on guidance, training and awareness-raising in respect of violence and harassment in the world of work in G7 countries.

► **Table 6. Key provisions on guidance, training and awareness-raising in respect of violence in the world of work, G7 countries**

Country	National policy on violence/gender-based violence	Employer mandated to train managers, supervisors or employees on physical and psychosocial violence risks*	Systematic collection of statistics on violence in employment and occupation (surveys)	Systematic collection of statistics on sexual harassment in employment and occupation (surveys)
Canada	Yes, mentions the workplace	Yes**	Yes, but includes only physical violence	No
France	Yes, mentions the workplace	No	Yes, not defined but collected	No
Germany	Yes, mentions the workplace	No	Not collected	No
Italy	General - does not mention workplace	No	Not collected	No
Japan	Yes, mentions the workplace	No	Not collected	No
United Kingdom	Yes, mentions the workplace	Yes, but only workers	Yes, includes both physical and psychological violence	No
United States	No	No	Yes, includes both physical and psychological violence	Yes

Note: *Or risks in general where risks/hazards explicitly include physical and psychosocial violence.

Source: ILO, Legal indicators from ILO 80-country study on the law and practice addressing violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work, 2017. ** Government of Canada, 2020, [Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Regulations](#).

Mitigate the impact of domestic violence

The world of workplace can play an important role in mitigating the effects of domestic violence on individuals and workplaces. Convention No. 190 recognizes that governments, employers' and workers' organizations and labour market institutions can help to recognize, respond to and address the impacts of domestic violence.⁴² Governments, in particular, should take measures to recognize the effects of domestic violence and, as reasonably practicable, mitigate its impact on the world of work, by providing:

- leave for victims of domestic violence;
- flexible work arrangements and protection for victims of domestic violence;

- ▶ temporary protection against dismissal for victims of domestic violence, as appropriate, except on grounds unrelated to domestic violence and its consequences;
- ▶ the inclusion of domestic violence in workplace risk assessments;
- ▶ a referral system to public mitigation measures for domestic violence, where they exist; and
- ▶ awareness-raising about the effects of domestic violence.⁴³

A 2018 ILO study showed that in only seven of the 80 countries (9 per cent) surveyed were employers required or empowered to take steps to prevent or protect against domestic violence in the workplace.⁴⁴ However, governments are increasingly acknowledging the workplace as a privileged entry point for addressing domestic violence and are adopting laws that give employers a role in responding to domestic violence. In New Zealand, for instance, there is a statutory right to 10 days of paid leave from work for any person experiencing domestic violence. Victims are also entitled to fast-tracked flexible working conditions to ensure their safety.⁴⁵ In Puerto Rico (United States), if one employee has been a victim of domestic violence, employers can request a protection order in her or his favour in order to prevent any form of violence perpetrated by visitors or any other person present in the workplace⁴⁶

France is the only G7 country that, in line with UN Women's guidance, has adopted a law including "economic violence" in the definition of domestic violence (see Table 7 for a review of legal provision on this topic in G7 countries). This form of violence is defined as acts that prevent a person from entering into and remaining in employment. Canada recently passed a law providing for job-protected, partially-paid leave for people who are either the victims of domestic violence or parents of victims,⁴⁷ thus joining Italy and the United States among the G7 countries that make leave provision for victims of domestic violence. These leave periods, especially when paid, are crucial for physical and psychosocial recovery, the safe relocation of the victim and dependents, and the taking of legal and other measures.

► **Table 7. Key provisions on domestic violence (DV) and the world of work, G7 countries**

Country	Domestic violence is regulated	Where DV is regulated: definition includes economic violence implicitly or explicitly related to the world of work	There exists an obligation for employers to prevent, protect against or manage DV	Employer mandated to prevent DV in the workplace/ protect against DV	Provisions for leave for DV victims
Canada	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes, paid leave
France	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Germany	No	N/A	No	No	No
Italy	Yes	No	No	No	Yes, paid leave
Japan	Yes	No	No	No	No
United Kingdom	Yes	No	No	No	No
United States	Yes	No	No	No	Yes, unpaid leave

Source: ILO, Legal indicators from ILO 80-country study on the law and practice addressing violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work, 2017. For Canada, Government of Canada, 2020, [Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Regulations](#).

2.2.3 Illustrative practices

Measuring the prevalence of gender-based violence (European Union)

According to the 2016 Eurofound Sixth European Working Conditions Survey, around 16 per cent of workers, mostly women, reported exposure to adverse social behaviour during the 12 months prior to the survey (2015). The most reported adverse social behaviour was bullying/harassment (5 per cent of respondents), followed by physical violence (2 per cent) and sexual harassment (1 per cent).⁴⁸ Compiling accurate and comparable data on the incidence and prevalence of violence and harassment in the world of work remains extremely challenging.

In its objective to combat GBVH, the European Commission (EC) has been working on a pilot project launched by Eurostat to measure the prevalence of violence against women in the EU. The initiative is developing an EU-wide survey built on the methodology used for the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights' 2014 survey, which included information on whether violence occurred in the workplace. The project is being conducted in cooperation with over a dozen countries, which will pilot the instrument.⁴⁹ The survey task force includes national statistical institutes, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), EIGE, Eurostat, and the EC, which will be finalizing the survey and implementing full-scale fieldwork in late 2019.⁵⁰

Addressing discrimination, sexual harassment, cyberharassment and domestic violence (Australia)

As defined in Australia's Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (amended in 2017), sexual harassment includes both implicit and explicit behavior. The Act provides protection from discrimination not only in employment, but also in the areas of promotion, job security, training, apprenticeships and contract work.⁵¹ The law also establishes "vicarious liability", deeming an employer responsible if an employee commits sexual harassment and the employer did not take all reasonable steps to prevent it.⁵²

In 2011, Australia passed the Sex and Age Discrimination Legislation Amendment Act, which extends protection against sexual harassment in the workplace to include harassment performed via the internet, social media and text-messaging.⁵³ Australia has also adopted specific statutes protecting persons with disabilities from harassment and discrimination in employment.⁵⁴

Enterprise and sectoral collective agreements provide for paid family violence leave and other arrangements, such as part-time work, telework, temporary change of work location and changes of work contacts, to address family-related violence. In Australia, over 1 million employees are covered by more than 1,000 agreements containing clauses on domestic violence.⁵⁵

Enforcing the right to a workplace free from sexual harassment, including through the OSH management system (Canada)

In 2016, the Government of Canada found that women were more likely to face workplace harassment than men (19 per cent as opposed to 13 per cent), including sexual harassment (3.8 per cent versus 0.7 per cent).⁵⁶ As a result, Canada's federal legal framework prohibits workplace violence in both labour and anti-discrimination law. The Canadian Labour Code establishes the right to a workplace that is free from sexual harassment.⁵⁷ In 2018, the Canadian Parliament passed Bill C-65, which amended its Labour Code to strengthen the framework for preventing harassment and violence, including sexual harassment and sexual violence in the workplace and within Parliament.⁵⁸ The amendment requires employers in federally regulated workplaces, as part of their occupational safety and health (OSH) responsibilities, to investigate and report on any incidents, implement a sexual harassment policy, protect victims from retaliation and ensure their privacy.⁵⁹

In June 2020, the Federal Government published the Workplace Harassment and Violence Regulations, which will come into force on January 2021. These introduce new requirements in line with the provisions of ILO Convention No. 190, including obligations to conduct workplace risk assessments, taking into account risk factors such as "family violence" and those affecting "psychological health and safety"; draw up a workplace harassment and

violence prevention policy; provide training for employees and employer; and establish support measures and resolution processes.⁶⁰

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) has enacted guidelines and provides information and training on workplace violence and harassment. It has created an e-learning platform offering courses on issues such as bullying, harassment, and domestic violence as it affects the workplace. The Centre has also produced a series of podcasts relating to violence and harassment in the workplace. The Centre's website provides a suite of resources on the topic of violence prevention, including fact sheets, publications, posters, and other promotional items.⁶¹ CCOHS also has a telephone hotline offering a free, confidential, person-to-person information service that enables workers to contact health and safety specialists with questions regarding workplace health and safety issues.

Several Canadian provinces have adopted laws that define domestic violence as a workplace health and safety issue, which thus require employers to enact policies and conduct training in relation to the impact of domestic violence on the workplace.⁶²

Guidance and assistance through OSH policies and awareness-raising (Finland)

Finland has ratified the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155) and has implemented a national OSH policy, which includes training, the adaptation of work to the physical and mental capacities of workers, and protection from reprisals against complainants. The implementation of these provisions has included protective and compensation measures in respect of third-party violence, night work and work in isolated areas.

In Finland, labour inspections cover violence and harassment in the world of work as part of their remit, in line with Recommendation No. 206 (Paragraph 21). Labour inspectors submit a questionnaire to workers before they visit a company, asking whether their health and safety is endangered by violence or the threat of violence at work. The answers to this questionnaire help the inspectors to focus their visit and enable them to offer the employer guidance on ways to address workplace issues.⁶³

The Ministry of Justice has also launched a "Discrimination-free zone" campaign as part of its "Equality is Priority" project. It brings together over 600 workplace communities in the fight against discrimination, bullying, and harassment. The programme gives participating communities a "discrimination-free zone" sign to display in their workplace, once they have completed an online form providing information on combating discrimination, including harassment.⁶⁴ By completing the online form and displaying the sign, employers declare their workplaces to be "discrimination-free zones".⁶⁵

Tackling psychosocial violence and harassment, including through collective bargaining (France)

In 2015, the prevalence of bullying and harassment in the workplace in France was reported at 12.2 per cent, an increase on the 9.5 per cent reported in 2010.⁶⁶ Data from France also indicate that LGBT persons frequently experience discrimination and harassment in education, access to employment and throughout the employment cycle.⁶⁷

Employees in France are protected from violence and harassment by labour law, the criminal code and collective bargaining agreements. These protections are extended to all individuals, including jobseekers and domestic workers. The law requires employers to analyse psychosocial risks in the workplace and take relevant action to mitigate them. This is reflected in the term “moral harassment”, defined as repetitive acts performed with the intention or effect of degrading employees’ working conditions in a manner likely to impair their dignity, harm their physical or mental health or compromise their professional future.⁶⁸ Cyberbullying is also covered. The labour code also requires that every workplace with more than 50 employees must have a workplace committee to examine security and hygiene issues and other working conditions.⁶⁹

Cases can go to the criminal courts when conciliation fails, and sanctions include fines and imprisonment. The criminal code stipulates that a criminal conviction must be publicized, which carries a social stigma that many companies and individuals would be eager to avoid.⁷⁰

The national collective agreement on harassment and violence in the workplace (2010) obliges employers – in consultation with workers and their representatives – to establish measures to prevent and address harassment at work. The law also allows workers’ representatives to play an active role in investigating possible cases of violence and harassment.⁷¹

Addressing intersecting forms of discrimination, violence and harassment, against women (Germany)

The General Equal Treatment Act of 14 August 2006 implements European Directives setting forth the principle of equal treatment and requires employers to create a workplace environment that is safe and free from violence and harassment. The Act provides a comprehensive legal definition of harassment and sexual harassment. It includes “hostile-environment sexual harassment”, i.e. conduct, such as displaying pornographic materials at a workstation, which may be directed at an individual or directed at nobody in particular.⁷²

The scope of the law is fairly broad, protecting against discrimination, as well as harassment and sexual harassment, based on race or ethnic background, gender, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Discrimination in respect of pregnancy or motherhood is considered sex-based discrimination. The law also covers workers in self-employment, part-time workers, those seeking to access employment (recruitment and selection processes), and third-parties. Domestic workers are also protected.⁷³

The Act adheres to the doctrine of “vicarious liability”, whereby an employer is held liable for harassment or mobbing perpetrated by an employee, unless the employer can prove that reasonable measures have been adopted to prevent such behaviour. As a result, workers have the right to refuse to work, without loss of pay, if their employer does not take sufficient steps to eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace, in line with Convention No. 190 (Art. 10 (g)).⁷⁴

In 2007, the Federal Government’s Second Action Plan to Combat Violence against Women was adopted to address intersectional forms of discrimination and give women the right to protection against violence and harassment.⁷⁵ As a result, migrant women and women with disabilities are protected. The legislation also provides for the creation of a Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency.⁷⁶

The Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health conducts employee surveys across Germany to assess psychosocial risks in the workplace.⁷⁷ A project has also been launched to provide labour inspectors with training concerning psychological stress and strain at work.⁷⁸

Ending “power harassment” (Japan)

In 2012, a representative survey of 4,580 enterprises showed that over 45 per cent of workers reported *pawahara* or “power harassment” (another term for psychological harassment). Temporary workers in Japan were also found to be at a higher risk of workplace bullying and verbal abuse.⁷⁹ A new Anti-Power Harassment Law was passed in September 2019 that will come into effect in April 2020 for large enterprises and in April 2022 for small and medium-sized enterprises.⁸⁰ The law defines “power harassment” as “verbal or physical behavior that goes beyond business necessity and that takes advantage of superior positions in a relationship, harming the workplace environment”.⁸¹ Employers are now responsible for taking action, both proactively and reactively, to protect workers from those who have greater power within their organization, and are obliged to compensate workers for harm done to them in this way. Employees are also protected from dismissal or unfavourable treatment for reporting such cases.⁸² Courts have also ruled that compensation should be paid by companies to the families of employees who committed suicide having been victims of *pawahara*.⁸³

The Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) defines six types of power harassment, with examples: physical, mental, social, overworking the employee, underworking the employee and invading personal privacy.⁸⁴ The MHLW also provides guidelines on how companies can take steps to prevent harassment and resolve issues of harassment in the workplace.⁸⁵ To demonstrate the value and effectiveness of such measures, the Ministry also provides case studies for companies that choose to draw on government resources.⁸⁶

Preventing workplace sexual intimidation and promoting employment reintegration of victims of domestic violence (The Netherlands)

The Netherlands Working Conditions Act of 1999 requires employers to undertake preventive OSH measures in relation to psychosocial risks that lead to work-related stress. It specifies that the notion of employment-related psychosocial pressure includes sexual intimidation, aggression and violence, as well as aggravation and pressure of work in an employment situation that causes stress.⁸⁷

The Dutch Council of Women (NVR) and Federatie Opleiding (FO) have launched a project entitled “De Nieuwe Toekomst” (The New Future), with government funding.⁸⁸ This project aims to develop the economic independence and labour participation of women who are victims of domestic violence. The nine-month programme consists of ten group-training meetings and individualized coaching to develop and enhance the independent management skills of women wanting to take active steps into education or the world of work.⁸⁹ Roughly half of the women from eight Dutch municipalities that took part in the programme from 2014 to 2016 have achieved greater social, educational and/or labour integration.⁹⁰ Moreover, many women said they felt more confident when they left the programme.

The Atria Institute on Gender Equality and Women’s History is conducting an impact study, scheduled to run from 2018 to 2021, on the long-term effects of “De Nieuwe Toekomst”. It has been monitoring women for eighteen months, from their time on the programme to their integration into the labour market.⁹¹ Starting in January 2019, Atria has also been recruiting relief organizations and other municipalities that are not yet using the De Nieuwe Toekomst programme to study wellness factors for women who are seeking care as victims of domestic violence.

It is estimated that “De Nieuwe Toekomst” has the potential to save municipalities approximately €12,000 a year for each programme participant. Movisie, a social knowledge institute, has recognized the programme as a beneficial social intervention.⁹²

Enforcing protection by empowering labour inspectors and setting up fast-track courts to deal with gender-based violence (Spain)

In Spain, enterprises are called upon to “promote working conditions that prevent sexual harassment and harassment on the basis of sex, arbitrate specific procedures for their prevention and channel complaints or claims that may have been formulated by those who have been the object of the same. To this end, measures may be established with a view to negotiating with workers’ representatives matters such as the development and dissemination of codes of good practice, information campaigns and training activities”.⁹³

Spanish labour inspectors have additional duties and powers relating to the issue of workplace violence and harassment. They can initiate investigations as a result of complaints and in situations where a company had previously been under inspection for sexual harassment or where collective agreements establish a duty to implement preventative measures. Additionally, labour inspectors perform awareness-raising campaigns in sectors where there is a greater risk of violence and harassment, such as education, healthcare, and retail.⁹⁴

In 2004, the Organic Act on Integrated Protection Measures against Gender Violence launched a National Sensitization and Prevention Plan regarding Violence against Women, targeting both men and women, to raise awareness of the need to respect human rights and gender equality. Subsequently, the National Strategy for the Eradication of Violence Against Women (2013-2016) set the objectives of increased detection, improved response on the part of the justice system and security forces, and further awareness-raising.⁹⁵ This translated into the establishment of fast-track courts to deal with gender-based violence, for which the law requires the training of judges, magistrates, prosecutors, court clerks, national law enforcement and security agents and coroners in matters of sexual equality, non-discrimination and gender-based violence.⁹⁶

Spain is also one of the few countries in which a workers' compensation law enables workers to receive compensation for occupational illnesses, including those caused by violence and harassment.⁹⁷ Furthermore, government policy supports victims of gender-based violence by providing the right to reduced, reorganized or flexible working time arrangements.⁹⁸

Promoting a cyberspace free from violence and harassment (Spain)

Highlighting the elevated threat of cyberharassment against women, in 2019 the Government of Spain set forth a protocol to address cyberviolence and harassment in the workplace.⁹⁹ The Spanish Data Protection Agency (AEDP) works with multiple ministries, including the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security (MITRAMISS), to ensure that companies with 50 or more employees are respecting the digital rights of their employees as an aspect of occupational health and safety.¹⁰⁰ The AEDP can receive complaints of violations of cybersecurity and assists in protecting the rights of victims to delete any public record of cyberviolence against them.

The AEDP works with the MITRAMISS to raise awareness and provide training for employers' and workers' organizations, and for the ICT and education sectors.¹⁰¹ The protocol discusses preventative measures for tackling cyberviolence and harassment, including criminal and financial sanctions against perpetrators.¹⁰²

This four-year initiative has given rise to a partnership to facilitate the removal of illicit content. Major social media have committed to implementing precautions and expediting the removal of digital content that constitutes cyberviolence and harassment. The efficacy of the project is monitored by a committee whose task is to report statistical results.¹⁰³

2.2.4 Policy measures in the context of the COVID-19 crisis

COVID-19 has also focused the global spotlight on violence and harassment. As a result of lockdown measures, financial insecurity, unemployment, difficulty in accessing healthcare services and other COVID-19-related stress, the WHO has reported an increase in cases of domestic violence, disproportionately affecting women.¹⁰⁴ A report of the EU Parliament indicates that calls to domestic violence hotlines – a useful proxy for gauging the extent of the problem – have increased by 20-40 per cent in the EU since February 2020.¹⁰⁵

Even before COVID-19, the risk of experiencing work-related violence was high in the health sector, with around 62 per cent of health workers globally reporting that they have been exposed to some form of violence in the workplace at least once. Recent data show that COVID-19 exacerbates the risk of violence, harassment and stigmatization of health workers, often due to fear of contracting the virus.¹⁰⁶ The generalization of teleworking may also have led to an increased risk of work-related cyberbullying and other technology-enabled violence and harassment.¹⁰⁷

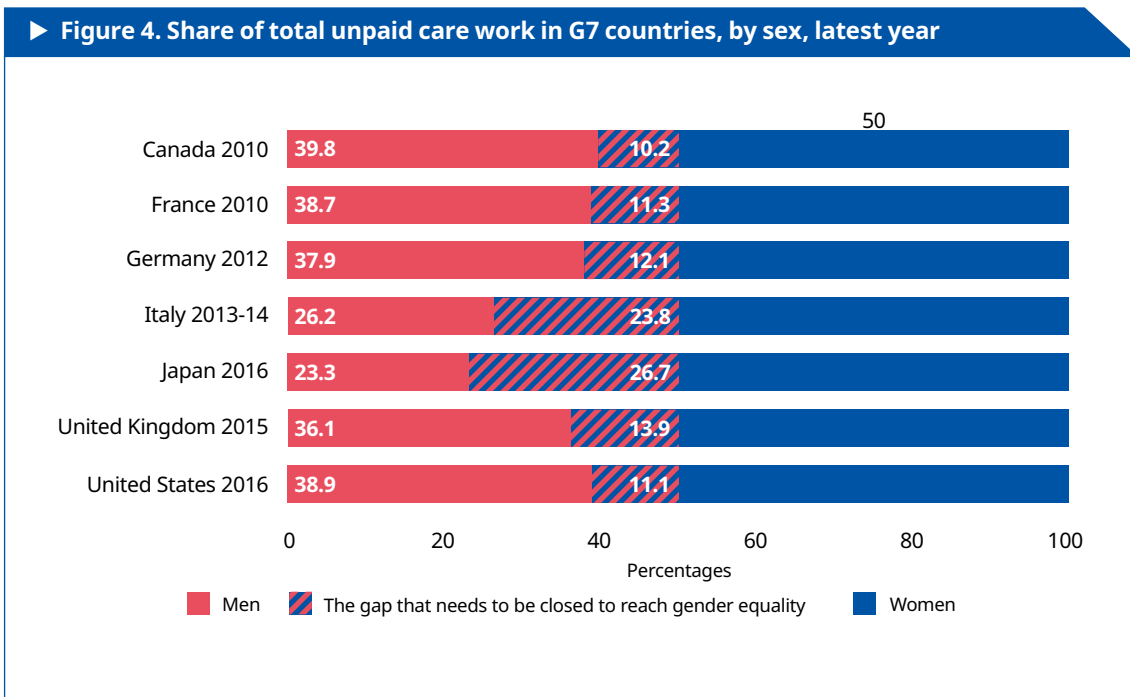
A number of countries have taken urgent action in the COVID-19 context to protect victims (see Box 3). However more integrated measures are needed to ensure everyone's right to a world of work free from violence and harassment, not only during and after the pandemic, but also when it comes to shaping a sustainable recovery and building a better future of work. Efforts to ratify Convention No. 190 and implement both Convention and Recommendation No. 206 remain a key element of response and recovery measures.¹⁰⁸ In particular, in the COVID-19 context, occupational safety and health measures should be further reinforced to prevent and reduce psychosocial risks, including violence and harassment, and promote workers' mental health and wellbeing.¹⁰⁹

Box 3. Measures to prevent and protect victims of gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work

- **Austria** has strengthened protection for victims of domestic violence by increasing the resources of the existing 24-hour helpline and adding a new, professional online “help chat” facility in several languages; assisting women at risk of violence (online and through brochures); and raising awareness through the new “Safe at home” campaign to support women who have violent partners.¹¹⁰
- In **Australia**, employers are required to take account of possible increases in violence and harassment, including cyberbullying and domestic violence while teleworking, in their COVID-19 occupational safety and health policies and risk assessments.¹¹¹
- In **France, Italy and the United States**, national authorities have concluded public-private partnerships with hotels to make rooms available for women victims of domestic violence. **France** has opened pop-up counselling centres and selected pharmacies as safe places where victims of domestic violence can report abuses.¹¹² **Italy** has also committed public resources to combating violence against women, including funds specifically dedicated to COVID-19 issues, and has carried out an awareness campaign to support victims.¹¹³
- The Government of **Canada** has committed 40 million Canadian dollars to providing support for women’s shelters and sexual assault centres, including facilities in Indigenous communities, to help manage and prevent a COVID-19 outbreak on their premises. Over 500 organizations across Canada have received support to protect some of Canada’s most vulnerable.¹¹⁴ Canadian courts have also opted for technology-based operations to ensure access to justice during the lockdown. These arrangements include online hearings to reduce the number of attendees, prioritizing “urgent matters” and, in some cases, carrying out hearings over the telephone or by videoconferencing.¹¹⁵
- In **Spain**, a new programme provides victims of gender-based violence evicted from their homes with an immediate housing solution. The social housing stock has also been increased to provide vulnerable groups with shelter during the crisis.¹¹⁶ The initiative 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.¹¹⁷

2.3 Promoting work–life balance and equal sharing of care responsibilities

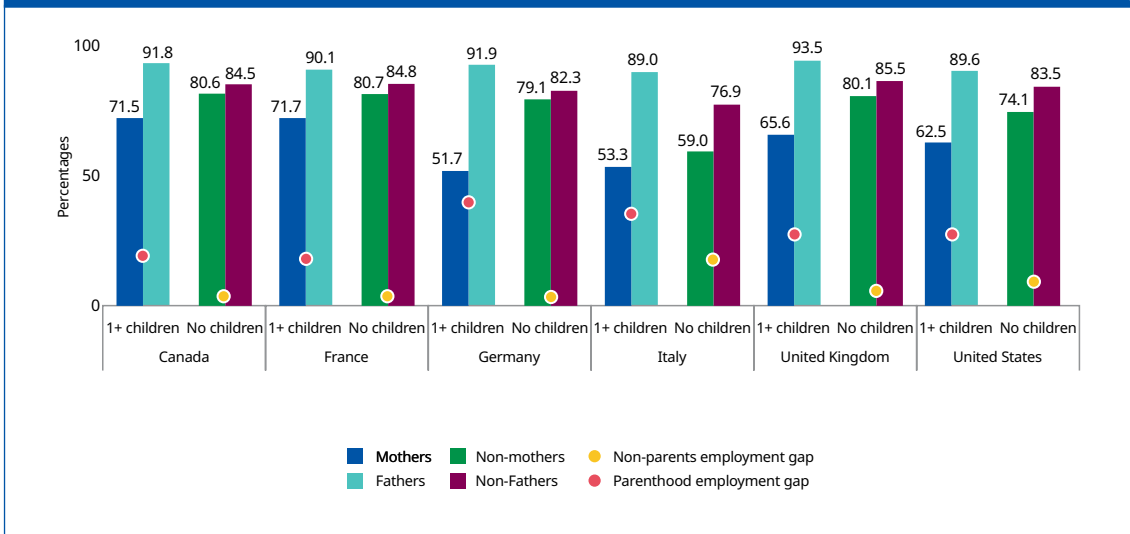
Achieving a healthy work–life balance, given women’s disproportionate share of care responsibilities, is closely associated with promoting and sustaining gender equality and women’s economic empowerment. Across the world, without exception, women do most of the unpaid care work: on average 76.2 per cent of the total number of hours devoted to such tasks. In no country in the world do men and women perform equal shares of unpaid care work.¹ Gaps in unpaid care provision are also found in G7 countries (see Figure 4), although Canada, France, Germany and the United States come closest to gender parity in this respect (along with the Scandinavian countries, Belgium and Estonia), with men performing almost 40 per cent of the total volume of unpaid care work.²



Source: ILO 2018. [Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work](#), p. 55.

Excessive engagement in unpaid care work can adversely impact women's employment prospects. ILO research identifies a "motherhood employment penalty", with women who have children under six years of age working shorter hours for pay or profit than men and other women. In G7 countries, too, there is a wide parenthood employment gap in G7 (see Figure 5). As a result, women also suffer a "motherhood pay penalty", which affects the gender pay gap and can impact their working life. On the other hand, the status of fatherhood is associated with a wage premium.³ Working mothers also incur a "motherhood leadership penalty", in other words they experience the lowest participation rates in managerial and leadership positions (only 25.1 per cent of managers with young children (0-5 years old) are women) compared with their male counterparts (74.9 per cent of managers with young children are men).⁴

► Figure 5. Employment-to-population ratios of women and men with and without children under 6 years of age, G7 countries,* latest year



Note: * Data for Japan are not available.

Source: ILO 2018. [Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work](#) (Geneva), pp. 392–396.

Before the COVID-19 crisis, unpaid care work was a serious barrier to women’s labour force participation and one of the main obstacles to women moving into better-quality jobs. The pandemic is aggravating the penalties that women are facing in the labour force, as well as increasing decent work deficits and discrimination (see Section 2.3.4). Furthermore, when gender intersects with other personal characteristics, such as ethnicity, nationality, age, disability, migration or health status, there is a risk that inequalities among different groups of women will also increase.⁵

As gender inequalities in unpaid care work and in the labour force are closely inter-related, substantive progress in achieving gender equality at work depends on tackling inequalities in unpaid care work. A more equal sharing of unpaid care responsibilities is beneficial for women’s economic empowerment, men’s bonding with their children, and children’s development. These benefits also have a positive impact on the wider society and economy.⁶

Government policies play a primary role in the effective recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work between women and men, as well as between families and the state. They are crucial in creating an environment that makes for a healthier work–life balance for all workers. Care policies include leave policies (maternity, paternity, parental, long-term and other family leaves), care services, social protection benefits related to care, family-friendly working arrangements, and care-relevant infrastructure.⁷ In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, these policies need to be prioritized, in terms of the short-term response and the recovery and resilience measures needed to rebuild a better and more caring society (see Section 2.3.4).

2.3.1 *International Labour Standards and other key instruments*

Maternity protection is enshrined in fundamental human rights treaties, including the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966, and the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979.⁸

A number of international labour standards adopted by the ILO constituents touch on crucial elements that contribute to the achievement of a healthy work–family balance. The ILO’s first maternity protection convention, the Maternity Convention, 1919 (No. 3), was adopted soon after the organization’s founding in 1919, which is indicative of its centrality in advancing social justice. The more recent Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183) aims to preserve the health of the mother and the newborn child, to provide economic and job security – including protection from dismissal and discrimination, maintenance of earnings and benefits during maternity, including breastfeeding, and the right to resume work after giving birth – and therefore to promote equal opportunities in employment and occupation for women.⁹ The Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) and the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202) also aim to ensure income security related to maternity.¹⁰ Furthermore, the ILO Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204) recommends that maternity protection and affordable quality care services be extended to workers in the informal economy, as a means of “[promoting] gender equality in entrepreneurship and employment opportunities and [enabling] the transition to the formal economy”.¹¹

The ILO Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156) and related Recommendation No. 165 set out a number of rights and measures, including additional family leave, childcare and family services, and social security and working conditions provisions, to enable workers to reconcile their work and family life.¹² These standards recognize the need to counter the stereotype that women are mainly responsible for caring and to encourage the sharing of caring responsibilities between women and men, to the benefit of the health, equality and job quality of all.

A number of EU Directives have defined and advanced a common floor of maternity protection and family responsibility provisions. These include, for instance, the Pregnant Workers Directive 1992, the Gender Equality Recast Directive 2006, and the Equal Treatment Directive 2010, which extended maternity protection rights to the self-employed. More recently, the Work–Life Balance Directive 2019 promotes work–life balance for working parents and other carers.¹³ It introduces paid paternity (10 days) and parental leave for all workers, with earmarked periods for each of the parents, carers’ leave, the right of workers with care responsibilities to request flexible working arrangements, and freedom from discrimination for carers taking advantage of these provisions.

2.3.2 Guiding principles for governments

Care policies are crucial in ensuring that all women and men can realize their full economic and social potential.¹⁴ To be transformative, care policies need to be gender-responsive and human-rights based; be universal and provide adequate and equitable benefits; be the primary responsibility of the State; and be founded on social dialogue and women's representation.¹⁵ The following are some of the measures that governments can adopt, implement and evaluate, in consultation with workers' representatives, EMBOs, the private sector and civil society:

1. Providing universal maternity protection and inclusive leave policies;
2. Expanding quality care services;
3. Guaranteeing gender-responsive social protection;
4. Providing family-friendly working arrangements;
5. Facilitating work attachment and reintegration.

Providing universal maternity protection and inclusive leave policies

Leave policies are key means of achieving work–life balance. According to the ILO's Quantum Leap for Gender Equality report: *"A comprehensive system of legislation providing paid family and care leave for both women and men is needed to facilitate women's access to and progress in the labour market, as well as a comprehensive reconsideration of the notion of time in relation to the world of work"*.¹⁶ Over the last 20 years, there have been noticeable improvements, particularly in terms of longer rest periods for mothers before and after childbirth, in line with and beyond international labour standards. However, in 2016, only 77 out of 184 countries (42 per cent) met the minimum standards for paid maternity leave set out in the ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183).¹⁷

An increasing number of countries are also implementing measures to facilitate both mothers' and fathers' care responsibilities, such as paid paternity and parental leave, with dedicated quotas or incentives for fathers. In 1995, only one in five countries provided paid paternity leave. In 2019, the figure was more than half (see Table 8 for an overview of G7 countries).¹⁸

Despite this progress, only 41 per cent of new mothers receive maternity cash benefits that provide them with income security around childbirth.¹⁹ Many individuals are ineligible for leave and maternity benefits on account of their employment status (for example, those who are unemployed, self-employed, in diverse forms of work arrangements, the informal economy or SMEs) or family status (same-sex couples), or do not meet the qualification criteria for entitlements (minimum hours, seniority and so on). This inability to access decent leave entitlements disproportionately affects women and other groups at risk of discrimination. In the EU, for example, 33.6 per cent of women are ineligible for parental

leave, while this is the case for only 23 per cent of men; these proportions are higher in France, Italy and the United Kingdom.²⁰ In other cases, workers are covered but end up with no support. In Canada, for instance, take-up of parental leave benefits remains low among the self-employed, since accessing the employment insurance system is complicated and inconvenient for these workers.²¹

► **Table 8. Summary of paid leave entitlements for mothers and fathers, G7 countries**

Country	Total paid leave reserved for mothers*			Total paid leave reserved for fathers*		
	Duration (weeks)	Average Payment Rate (%)	Full-rate equivalent (weeks)	Duration (weeks)	Average Payment Rate (%)	Full-rate equivalent (weeks)
Canada**	51.0	52.0	26.6	5.0 18.0 ²²	55 33	2.7 2.6
France	42.0	42.9	18.0	28	19.2	5.4
Germany	58.0	73.4	42.6	8.7	65	5.7
Italy	47.7	52.7	25.2	0.8	100	0.8
Japan	58.0	61.6	35.8	52	58.4	30.4
United Kingdom	39.0	30.1	11.7	2.0	19.2	0.4
United States**	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
EU average	65.8	-	-	6.3	-	-

Notes: *This includes paid maternity leave or paid paternity leave plus paid parental leave (quotas) reserved for mothers or fathers. ** According to federal law. State laws may differ.

Source: OECD, [Family Database](#), Indicator Tables PF2.1.A and PF2.1.B; Government of Canada, [EI maternity and parental benefits: What these benefits offer](#).

More efforts are also needed to promote gender parity in the duration of leave entitlements and take-up rates among men, which remain low. Available data from G7 countries shows that progress has been mixed. In France, the number of men taking up publicly provided parental leave benefits per 100 live births has remained stubbornly low over the last decade, standing at 2.4 per cent in 2016.²³ In Germany and Italy, the corresponding figures were 35 per cent (in 2015) and 11 per cent (in 2016) respectively (see Section 2.3.3). The ILO proposes guiding principles on how to design leave schemes that promote gender equality (Box 4).

Box 4. Basic principles of care-sensitive and gender-transformative leave schemes

- Ensure mothers are granted at least 14 weeks of leave paid at a rate of at least two-thirds of previous earnings
- according to Convention No. 183, or up to 18 weeks at 100 per cent according to Recommendation No. 191.
- Ensure that fathers have access to compulsory paid paternity leave for a meaningful period of time.
- Ensure that a sizeable amount of parental leave is reserved for the father and cannot be transferred to the mother.
- Ensure that other forms of leave, such as adoption leave or leave to care for disabled or sick children, adult or older family members, are granted.
- Ensure that periods of leave are paid and that benefits correspond at least to two-thirds of previous earnings.
- Ensure that cash and medical benefits during leave are financed through collectively financed mechanisms, such
- as compulsory social insurance or public funds, and avoid direct costs for employers (“employer liability”).
- Ensure employment protection during leave and guarantee the right to return to the same or an equivalent position.
- Ensure that time spent on leave is credited for social insurance contributions and pension entitlements.
- Ensure universal access to leave rights and benefits, including for those workers in the informal economy.

Source: ILO, [Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work](#), 2018, page 312.

In addition to paid maternity leave, maternity protection, as laid out in the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183) and related Recommendation No. 191, includes the right to maternal and child healthcare, prevention of exposure to workplace health and safety hazards for pregnant and nursing workers, protection against discrimination in employment and occupation, a guaranteed right to return to the job after maternity leave and provision of paid breastfeeding breaks (or a daily reduction of working hours), and nursing facilities at or near the workplace after the mother’s return to work (see Table 9).

Governments stand to benefit from universal maternity protection and comprehensive leave policies. ILO research show that when states invest in a combination of care policies, including maternity benefits, pre-primary education and long-term care services, the employment-to-population ratios of women aged 18–54 tend to be higher than in countries which invest comparatively less.²⁴

► **Table 9. Laws mandating breastfeeding arrangements, G7 countries**

Country	Legal right to arrangements?	Paid breastfeeding breaks?	Total duration of break (in minutes)
Canada	No	No	0
France	Yes	Yes	60
Germany	Yes	Yes	60
Italy	Yes	Yes	120
Japan	Yes	Yes	60
United Kingdom	No	No	0
United States	Yes	No*	No specified allotted time

Notes: *No legal provision in federal legislation.

Source: ILO, 2014. [Maternity and paternity at work: Law and practice across the world](#), 185–187.

Expanding quality care services

The provision of care services is another policy tool designed to lessen the care burden on women, enabling them to participate more freely in the labour market and having a transformative impact in advancing gender equality. Care services may include the direct provision of services for children, older persons, and people living with permanent or temporary illnesses or disabilities. ILO research shows that the employment rate for women with family responsibilities is higher in countries with a greater share of GDP expenditure on early-childhood care and education (ECCE).²⁵ ECCE supports the development, health and learning of young children, with positive benefits for the lifelong wellbeing of children and their parents, for gender equality and for the wider society.

Despite these benefits, access to affordable and good-quality early-childhood care and education remains far from universal. Although many countries are expanding childcare services or making existing services more affordable, even in EU Member States 31 per cent of households experience difficulty in accessing such services, with affordability cited as the main barrier.²⁶ Only in a few high-income countries, such as Germany and Japan, does the state take a leading role in funding long-term care services for older persons and others requiring long-term care or support. In most countries, long-term care services remain mostly funded by out-of-pocket payments.

These trends need to be reversed by providing quality care services on a universal basis. Investing in the care economy will ensure that unpaid care work does not exacerbate gender inequalities at work and push families into poverty and social exclusion, especially during the COVID-19 recovery (see Section 2.3.4).

Guaranteeing gender-responsive social protection

Universal, adequate and gender-responsive social protection systems, incorporating floors, are important for recognizing and valuing unpaid care and household work, as also set out by SDG Target 5.4. The ILO calls for a twofold gender-responsive approach to social protection, which promotes gender equality and addresses women's specific needs, such as reproductive healthcare, maternity provisions and an equal distribution of unpaid care work. Social protection schemes should therefore include in-cash or in-kind benefits that help carers to meet the various care contingencies they encounter at different stages of life, such as childcare, long-term care and disability care, and facilitate their work reintegration.²⁷ They should also include tax-relief provisions that support workers with family responsibilities.²⁸

Gender-responsive social protection can have a positive longitudinal impact on women, since care penalties and gender inequalities at work also lead to a larger gender pension gap. Old-age pensions, including adequate tax-financed basic pensions and social insurance schemes, can be designed to recognize and value both women's and men's periods of unpaid care work, such as the pension care credit schemes adopted in Canada, France, Germany and the United Kingdom (see Section 2.3.3).²⁹

Some governments have taken steps to extend social protection to women in informal, non-standard and self-employment, including the gig and care economies.³⁰

Providing family-friendly working arrangements

Family-friendly working arrangements (telecommuting, condensed hours, compressed work weeks, flexible hours and working locations, etc.) and the option of adjusting working hours or working from home are valuable ways of enabling workers to balance their work and personal life, and this has been especially true in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.³¹

EIGE research shows that flexible working arrangements in the EU are more often available to men than to women (46 per cent and 43 per cent respectively).³² This includes the public sector, in which women are over-represented. Part-time work, when voluntary, can make for a better work–family balance. Yet, more than half of EU women in part-time employment work in this way because they are not able to find a permanent, full-time job.³³ Although men in the EU are less likely to engage in part-time work than women, it is easier for them to transition from part-time to full-time work, as for example in Italy, France and Germany.³⁴

Long working hours and workplace cultures that favour presenteeism and gender stereotypes contribute to occupational segregation and motherhood penalties at work.³⁵ *"An absence of working-time autonomy for both women and men remains a considerable obstacle to gender equality and decent work"*.³⁶ Harnessing technology can help expand choice and better harmonize work and personal life. Nonetheless, attention is needed to address the pressure resulting from the lack of a clear separation between working and private time during remote working.³⁷

Government policy should aim to ensure that all workers not only have the right to request flexible working arrangements, but also that there is an enabling environment for flexible working to be adopted by both men and women. Innovative working-time policies tailored to both workers' and employers' needs should address the challenges posed by the constant availability for work resulting from ICT connectivity. This means setting maximum limits on working time, alongside measures to improve productivity, as well as introducing minimum-hour guarantees to create real choices for flexibility and control over work schedules.³⁸

Facilitating work attachment and reintegration

Women are more likely to take parental leave and quit their jobs due to family responsibilities than men. Their disproportionate share of unpaid care work makes it more difficult for them to recover from long-term family leaves and career breaks, which may result in loss of skills and expertise and deprive companies and society generally of much-needed talent (see Section 2.5). Policies that support the permanence or reintegration of workers with family responsibilities are essential to address “motherhood penalties” and strengthen women’s attachment to the labour market.

In line with the [ILO Workers with Family responsibilities Recommendation, 1981 \(No. 165\)](#), governments could set up or sponsor return-to-work or vocational training programmes and facilities that offer readily accessible and affordable services, such as “*vocational guidance, counselling, information and placement services which are staffed by suitably trained personnel and are able to respond adequately to the special needs of workers with family responsibilities*”.³⁹ Where possible, governments should provide paid educational leave to allow such workers to participate in these programmes.

2.3.3 Illustrative practices

Introducing family tax breaks to support care responsibilities (Austria)

A reform of social protection laws in Austria led to the adoption of the 2018 Annual Tax Act, which came into effect in 2019. This law provides for a “family bonus plus”, namely compensation for families in receipt of “Familienbeihilfe” (“family allowance”),⁴⁰ the aim being to reduce the tax burden on families which are raising children. Families can thus benefit from tax relief of up to €1,500 each year.⁴¹ Low-income single parents are eligible to receive an extra amount of up to €250. The “family bonus plus” recognizes that childcare costs do not end when a child completes secondary education. When a child is over 18 years old, parents may still receive tax compensation of €500 per annum, if they qualify.⁴²

The Austrian government runs a website that addresses questions regarding the bonus, including questions relating to childcare costs, children living abroad, children with disabilities, and parents who are entrepreneurs.⁴³

Addressing the childcare gap through universal care services (Denmark)

In Denmark, government policy addresses gaps in the provision of care services for children from their earliest years and throughout their childhood. Early-childhood care and education (ECCE) services and financial support are provided on the principle of universal and equitable access for all.⁴⁴

Parents are entitled to paid leave that covers nearly all of the first year of a child's life, while ECCE entitlements begin at the age of six months.⁴⁵ Care services available to parents include crèches for the youngest children, kindergartens for children aged three to five, age-integrated facilities for children up to 10 years old, and after-school centres. Around 70 per cent of all day-care facilities are run by local authorities.⁴⁶

Care services are provided throughout childhood. Denmark has one of the most advanced out-of-school-hours care systems,⁴⁷ and registers one of the highest participation rates in OECD countries, with nearly 65 per cent of children attending care centres outside of school hours.⁴⁸ Among high-income countries, Denmark also has the highest rate of maternal employment, with 78 per cent of women living with children aged 0-5 being employed.⁴⁹

Ensuring work-life balance by adopting a right to disconnect (France)

In 2017, a new labour law took effect in France that gives employees the "right to disconnect" from work calls and emails during non-working hours. Companies with 50 employees or more are required to negotiate with workers' representatives to determine the conditions of use of electronic communication tools and take steps to ensure that the agreed guidelines are implemented. If no agreement is reached, the employer must still, after consulting employee representatives, draw up a "charter" defining and establishing the right to disconnect. An employer who fails to comply with these requirements may be subject to a fine of up to 1 per cent of the employees' total remuneration.⁵⁰

The French Ministry of Labour described the legislation as intended to achieve "a balance between work and family and personal life".⁵¹ The law was grounded on research suggesting that the right to disconnect would reduce the stress, fatigue and burnout resulting from hyper-connectivity late at night and during weekends. Negotiations between the employer and workers' representatives are a central part of the new law, the aim being to find a balance between employees' need to disconnect and the employing company's competitive needs, taking into account each company's specific situation and requirements.

As well as signaling the importance of work-life balance for all workers, the new law also recognizes that not all workers can be constantly on call, in particular workers with family responsibilities. The law therefore minimizes the unfair impact that a workplace culture of "anytime, anywhere" availability has on women's career progression.⁵²

Extending equal social protections to the self-employed (France)

In 2017, the French government launched an action plan to support the self-employed. The plan extends equivalent social protections to self-employed workers and integrates the self-employed health insurance scheme (RSI) into the general social security system.⁵³ Codified by the Social Security Financing Law of 2018,⁵⁴ it provides equal access to pension services in a way that does not discriminate between different types of employment, simplifies tax-collection documents and provides flexible payment options.⁵⁵ France provides maternity-health insurance and maternity and paternity leave for self-employed workers on the same terms as for individuals in standard forms of employment.⁵⁶ Pre- and post-natal care is covered under this programme, along with physical examinations for soon-to-be fathers. Adoption leave is also guaranteed.⁵⁷

Promoting a fairer distribution of unpaid care work through leave policies (Germany)

Germany has implemented leave policies designed with the stated goals of giving parents more time for family life, establishing a healthy balance between family and work, promoting shared parenting and ensuring the livelihood of mothers.⁵⁸ The Maternity Protection Act, amended in 2017, extends maternity leave (14 weeks at full pay)⁵⁹ to students. Mothers who give birth to a child with disabilities are granted a longer leave period, while extended protections are afforded to mothers who miscarry.⁶⁰ The law also mandates workplace risk assessments to identify potential hazards for expectant mothers and provides for two paid 30-minute nursing breaks, or one consecutive hour, every day.⁶¹

Parents are entitled to receive parental leave benefits until the child's third birthday and may resume work under their original employment contract on return from leave. Parental leave can be taken by the mother or the father, or by both parents. In 2015, Germany introduced the Parental Allowance Plus, which offers financial incentives for the parents to share parental leave and employment together. The Parental Allowance is paid for up to 14 months if both parents take parental leave (12 months if only one parent takes it). It amounts to 67 per cent of prior earnings (up to a maximum of €1,800). With the addition of the Partnership Bonus, parents can also receive an extra four months if both parents work 25–30 hours per week. Since 2008, the share of fathers who take parental leave (minimum of two months) has increased from 7 to 36 per cent.⁶²

Introducing return-to-work programmes and care services (Germany)

As a follow-up to the G20 Employment Plan, adopted under the Australian G20 presidency, Germany has set itself the goal of increasing female labour force participation. In 2015, it launched the "Programm Perspektive Wiedereinstieg", a return-to-work programme for individuals who are taking a family-related break from employment.⁶³ The programme is

funded by the European Social Fund and offers career counseling, skills training, networking and household support services in 22 locations and on-line.⁶⁴ Since its launch, 6,300 women have joined and 36.5 per cent of them have already entered the labour market.⁶⁵ To showcase its success, the programme has a portal publishing testimonies and good practices, along with resources and tips.⁶⁶ The Federal government has also introduced a “Good early-childhood education and care” programme, allocating €5.5 billion over the period 2019-2022 to improve the provision and quality of day care for children.⁶⁷

Since 28 per cent of mothers in Germany are migrants, and 48 per cent of them are unemployed, the Government has established another return-to-work programme, also funded by the European Social Fund, which caters specifically to migrant mothers.⁶⁸ The programme, entitled “Strong at work – mothers with a migration background are entering the labour market”, is run at 90 locations nationwide and provides language and skills training, as well as counseling.⁶⁹ Since its inception in 2015, two-thirds of participants have found some form of employment opportunity.⁷⁰

Promoting flexible working hours and protecting part-time workers (The Netherlands)

Coming into force in 2016, the Dutch Flexible Working Hours Act allows workers to request changes to their working hours and workplace. Employers with more than 10 employees are required to approve requests for flexible work, unless they can demonstrate a compelling business interest that prevents it.⁷¹ Changes to working time may mean increases or decreases in working hours, including part-time work, as well as changes to work scheduling.⁷²

The Netherlands also has one of the most comprehensive legal protection systems for part-time workers. Under the 1996 Equal Treatment (Working Hours) Act, treating workers differently on the basis of the number of hours worked is prohibited. This protection also extends to those in marginal part-time work. The legislation guarantees workers in casual employment the same entitlements as full-time workers, on a pro-rata basis, including minimum wages, unemployment insurance, health insurance, holiday entitlements, pensions and protection against unfair dismissal.

The Netherlands is among the top three EU countries in terms of percentage of workers performing work remotely, with over 25 per cent of employees doing so.⁷³ Among OECD countries, the Netherlands also has the highest proportion of part-time workers.⁷⁴ However, in 2019 the incidence of women in part-time employment was still much higher (75.2 per cent) than that of men (39.4 per cent).⁷⁵

Introducing fathers' quotas to promote men's take-up of parental leave (Norway)

Norway offers generous parental leave of either 49 weeks at 100 per cent of previous earnings or 59 weeks at 80 per cent, up to a fixed ceiling. When employees are covered under a collective agreement, the employer pays the difference between their wages and this cap. Parental leave benefits are funded by social insurance or general taxation in the case of non-employed women, who receive a flat-rate payment of €7,894 per child.⁷⁶ Self-employed workers are eligible for the same leave benefits as employees, as are same-sex parents.

This system is the result of a 2013 reform designed to increase men's take-up of leave by introducing an individual, earmarked and non-transferable right to well-paid leave for fathers. A quota of 15 weeks' leave paid at 100 per cent (or 19 weeks at 80 per cent) is reserved separately for mothers and for fathers on a "use it or lose it" basis. The remaining weeks are a family entitlement that can be taken as a single block of time, on a part-time basis, or split into shorter blocks of time within a three-year period.

The introduction of a "father's' quota" significantly increased the take-up of leave by fathers, from 4 to 90 per cent in 2019.⁷⁷ While the length of the father's entitlement has varied over the last decade, most fathers (seven out of ten) have taken exactly the number of weeks corresponding to the father's quota, regardless of its length. The results of this experiment show that policy design is important and can change social norms and behaviors in less than a generation. When fathers, including managers, had the experience of being "irreplaceable" in caring for their child during parental leave, "this contributed to turning leave-taking into a norm of modern fathering".⁷⁸

Addressing pension gaps by recognizing unpaid care work (Spain)

Women in Spain disproportionately work in non-standard forms of employment, making up 73.4 per cent of the part-time labour force and 40.5 per cent of the standard permanent-contract labour force.⁷⁹ They are therefore more at risk of losing some social protections as a result of the motherhood penalty. To compensate for the losses women might face due to motherhood and other lapses in employment, Spain has introduced a social security reform that takes into account the "demographic contributions" made by women, in other words their unpaid care work, and protects mothers.⁸⁰ The benefits are both contributory and non-contributory, so even women who have not worked long enough to secure contributory benefits may still be covered by government protections.

To promote the sharing of family responsibilities, both mothers and fathers are eligible for some contributory benefits, though for different lengths of time (16 weeks for a mother and four weeks for a father; 42 days for a mother under the non-contributory system).⁸¹ These benefits play a key role in reducing the gender pay gap, as they provide income security

during maternity leave and minimize the “motherhood pay penalty”. In the long run, these arrangements will also help to reduce the gender pension gap, as women benefit from shorter periods with no income.

Preventing maternity discrimination and enabling return to work (United Kingdom)

Although pregnancy-based and maternity-based discrimination is illegal in the United Kingdom, a 2016 report showed that 11 per cent of mothers felt forced to leave their job, either by being dismissed, made compulsorily redundant or treated so poorly that they felt they had to quit.⁸² The Government ran a consultation to collect feedback on this issue and, as a result, is proposing to extend the redundancy protection period for six months once a new mother has returned to work, and to afford the same protections for those who take shared parental leave or adoption leave.⁸³

In addition, 1.2 million people are not participating in the labour market as a result of unpaid care work, yet would like to return to work. Of these carers, 91 per cent are women.⁸⁴ In 2018, the Government Equalities Office, together with NGOs, employers’ organizations and private partners, prepared a guide and toolkit to help employers set up their own return-to-work programmes, highlighting best practices, guidelines for SMEs, the incorporation of flexible work and testimonials from women who have returned to work.⁸⁵ The resource kit also provides additional resources for companies, creating a private–public alliance for women’s economic empowerment.

In 2014, the UK also passed a law that gave employees the right to request flexible working arrangements (for example, to reduce their working hours or work flexi-time). Employers have a legal duty to consider these requests and may refuse them only on one or more business-related grounds that are set out in the legislation. Accompanying this measure was a 2018 report of the House of Commons’ Women and Equalities Committee that evaluates government initiatives related to fathers in the workplace, including the effectiveness of the law on flexible working. The report concludes that many men face a powerful “flexibility stigma” that lowers their take-up of the policy, due to a corporate culture that sees men who take advantage of it as emasculated or lazy and unambitious.⁸⁶

Introducing pension credits and benefits for unpaid care work (United Kingdom)

In 2002, the UK introduced the State Second Pension, with the aim of helping low-income workers to increase their pension entitlements. The pension scheme grants credits for periods when a worker is out of the labour force due to care responsibilities. Eligible recipients include parents, foster parents, grandparents and persons caring for a disabled person in receipt of a family benefit, regardless of their sex.⁸⁷

The Government also offers a Carer Allowance of £66.15 a week for those who provide care to an individual for at least 35 hours a week. In addition to the allowance, eligible carers receive National Insurance credits, which ensure continued coverage of other social protection benefits, including the State Pension, to which the Second Pension would apply, if eligibility is met.⁸⁸

Parents, expectant parents and non-relative carers of children are also eligible for a variety of cash and in-kind benefits, depending on their circumstances. These include the universal Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit, Healthy Start vouchers, Sure Start Maternity Grant and Guardian's Allowance.⁸⁹

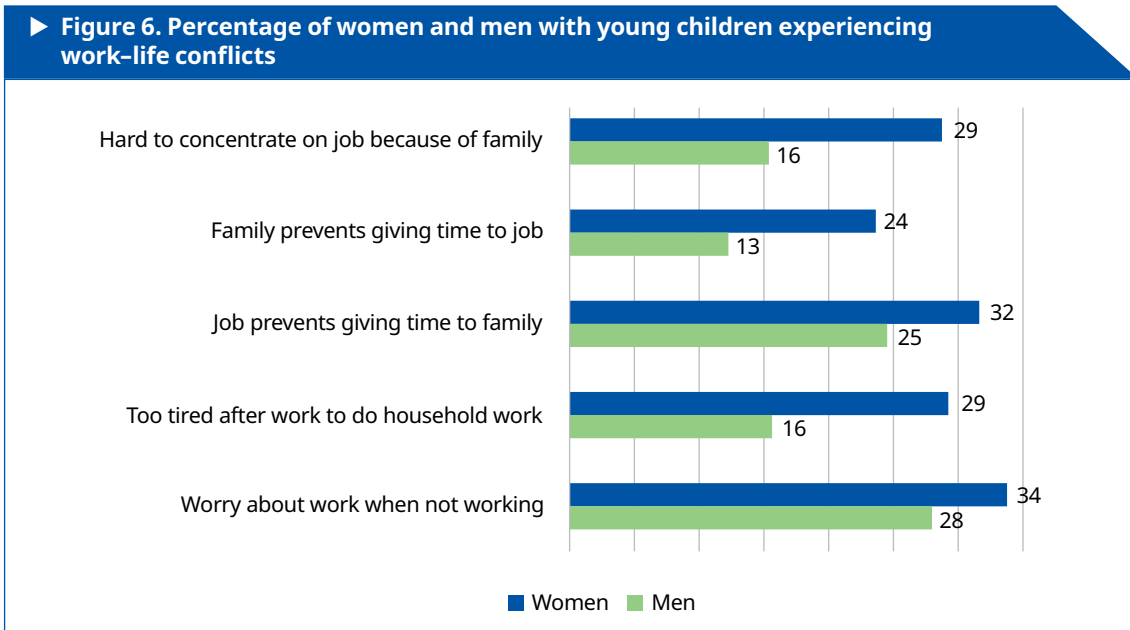
2.3.4 Policy measures in the context of the COVID-19 crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic and related economic crisis are exacerbating gender inequalities in the sharing of unpaid care work. The closure of childcare centres and schools (affecting over 1 billion children across the world in the first half of 2020 and continuing in some countries),⁹⁰ social distancing from relatives and home care workers, the heightened care needs of older and ill persons, and housework intensified by economic and service disruptions are disproportionately affecting women.

Single parents, women with limited earnings and savings, those holding insecure jobs in the informal economy and small enterprises, who typically lack social and labour protection coverage, are among those who suffer the highest impacts. The World Bank estimates that, as a result of school closures, individuals in high-income countries could experience an earnings gap of USD21,158 (nearly USD5 trillion for the whole group), bringing about a drop in GDP of up to 9 per cent.⁹¹

The findings of one of the most comprehensive surveys of working women and men, conducted during the pandemic in Canada and the US, indicate that one in four women are considering leaving their jobs, cutting back hours, or scaling back work as a result of the pandemic, at least temporarily. Among women with young children, the struggle is especially acute, with one in three mothers considering scaling back or quitting altogether – compared with 11 per cent of fathers. Black women, in particular, have faced major challenges due to the health impact of the pandemic.⁹²

A Eurofound survey also confirmed a general deterioration in work–life balance among workers in Europe. This trend was particularly marked among mothers of children under 12 years old, despite the fact that in most countries men slightly increased their participation in unpaid care work as compared to the pre-lockdown situation. Almost 30 per cent of these women found it hard to concentrate on their work, as compared with 16 per cent of men. Work is also impinging on family life, with 32 per cent of young mothers reporting that during lockdowns their job prevents them from giving sufficient time to their family, as against 25 per cent of men.⁹³



Source: Eurofound 2020. [COVID-19 fallout takes a higher toll on women, economically and domestically](#), Dublin.

In 82 per cent of European households, the mother was the one reducing working hours and stepping up for additional childcare needs.⁹⁴ In [Japan](#), close to one million women, the majority of whom were working in temporary and part-time positions, left the labour force between December and April 2020, largely because they feel greater responsibility and guilt than men for being neither the ideal mother nor the ideal worker (the “guilt gap”).⁹⁵ In the US, parents report that they are losing an average of eight hours’ work a week due to childcare needs.⁹⁶ An Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) report also points out that women, particularly those who are pregnant, have been disproportionately affected by discrimination and pandemic-related lay-offs.⁹⁷

In addition to imposing motherhood penalties, the crisis has badly affected the wellbeing of individuals with children, especially women with young children.⁹⁸ In the United Kingdom, for instance, deterioration of mental health is particularly marked among working parents, and is related especially to increased financial insecurity and the time that has to be spent on childcare and home schooling. The burden is not shared equally between men and women, nor between households, but better public policy responses can be formulated if policymakers are cognizant of these inequalities.⁹⁹

A number of countries have taken temporary measures to address the needs of workers with family responsibilities in the context of ECCE and school closures during the COVID-19 crisis (see Table 10). In the long-term, governments should prioritize:

- ▶ strengthening social protection systems to cover all carers and making family responsibilities a priority criterion for accessing social protection benefits;
- ▶ ensuring the right to work-life balance for all workers; and
- ▶ investing in the care economy to create more, better-quality care jobs.

► **Table 10. Policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in support of workers with care responsibilities in G7 and selected EU countries (up to 30 June 2020)**

Country	ECCE and schools: were there mandated closures?	Parental leave – changes to the usual provision	Other measures*
Austria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No for ECCE (though demand fell) Yes for schools 	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extra social assistance for families 3 weeks' special leave on full pay applies in the case of care for a relative or children under the age of 14
Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECCE closures varied by province and territory ECCE for essential workers' children 	No change to existing measures (except in Quebec for healthcare workers);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11/13 jurisdictions created new unpaid leave entitlement; Leave for those caring for persons over 18 years old
Denmark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes (care for essential workers' children available) 	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extra pregnancy protection
Estonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECCE remained open (though demand fell), schools closed 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extra benefit for parents raising a child with special needs or disability who stopped working; free meal delivery for (some) schoolchildren
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes ECCE for essential workers' children, with geographical variation to extent of closures Schools partly closed 	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support available to parents unable to work due to ECCE/ school closures
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, ECCE closures varied by state Childcare for essential workers' children available 	Yes (Parental leave benefit adapted for the pandemic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special (partial) income replacement benefit available for some parents; Extra social assistance, care support allowance for those affected by care shortages
Hungary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes Childcare for essential workers' children available 	Yes, end of parental benefit duration extended if due to finish during lockdown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional or special leave options

Country	ECCE and schools: were there mandated closures?	Parental leave – changes to the usual provision	Other measures*
Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 days of extra parental leave at 50 per cent of pay for working parents with children below the age of 12; • Unpaid leave if they are older. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A €600 childcare voucher (€1,000 for health workers) for alternative care arrangements to replace extra parental leave. Self-employed are covered. • Presumption of priority to “smart” work to those with or caring for persons with serious disabilities; • Number of absence days to provide assistance to disabled family members increased
Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No for ECCE (i.e. childcare for essential workers’ children available) • Yes for schools 	Yes, use of existing special extension to leave where admission to ECCE has been requested but is not available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer subsidy to provide paid leave to parents; • Extra social assistance for parents per child.
United Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • ECCE and primary schools available for key workers 	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers with health-related caring responsibilities can claim sick pay. • Food parcels for children usually provided with free school meals.
United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, based on state decisions • ECCE childcare for essential workers’ children available in some states 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal emergency paid-leave benefits for employees unable to work due to quarantine or isolation, experiencing symptoms of COVID–19, or caring for someone who is in quarantine or isolation and/ or have children in closed schools

Notes: * These measures include new leave arrangements and benefits for parents and other carers. They do not include general social assistance measures, which may also benefit carers.

Sources: Koslowski, A., Blum, S., Dobrotić, I., Kaufman, G. and Moss, P. 2020. [International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2020](#), 11-16. ILO, 2020. [The COVID-19 response: Getting gender equality right for a better future for women at work](#). ILO, [Social Protection Responses to COVID-19 Crisis around the World](#), accessed 30 June 2020.

2.4 Supporting women's equal participation in decision-making in the world of work

Gender equality and women's economic empowerment cannot be achieved without improving the gender balance at all levels of decision-making in the world of work, in the political sphere, in employer and business membership organizations (EBMOs) and in trade union leadership. Increasing the numbers of women in managerial positions and among business owners and entrepreneurs is also essential. Growing evidence shows that organizations with a more balanced representation of women in their decision-making bodies achieve better economic, social and financial results compared to those with less diverse leadership structures.¹

During the COVID-19 crisis and its aftermath, greater representation of women in decision-making roles is critical. Preliminary research by CARE shows that countries with more women in leadership, as measured by the Council on Foreign Relations Women's Power Index (first column, Table 11), are more likely to respond to COVID-19 in ways that consider the effects of the crisis on women and girls. On average, the higher a country's score on the index, the more likely it is to craft gender-responsive measures.²

Despite these benefits, women remain under-represented in political and economic decision-making (Table 11). Although women's representation in national parliaments has doubled since 1995, on average women still accounted for only 24.9 per cent of parliamentarians globally in 2020.³ The level of representation of women in local councils largely reflects the situation at the national level.⁴

Women's participation in decision-making and leadership at work has also remained at stubbornly low levels. Globally, in 2018 women accounted for only 27.1 per cent of managers in government, large enterprises and other institutions, a proportion that has not changed significantly in nearly three decades.⁵ Women with young children (0-5 years old) are least likely to be managers (25.1 per cent), compared with men with young children (74.9 per cent). This is another aspect of the "motherhood penalty" faced by women and the "fatherhood premium" enjoyed by men.⁶

► **Table 11. Women in decision-making in G7 countries, key indicators, latest year**

Country	Women's Power Index score* (2020)	Share of women in national parliaments** (2020)	Percentage of board chairs/ presidents who are women (2020)**	Women's share of seats on boards of largest publicly listed companies (2019)	Share of women as employers (2019)	Share of women in managerial positions (2018)
Canada	48	29.0	5.7	29.1	2.6	35.5
France	60	39.5	2.7	45.2	2.3	34.5
Germany	43	31.2	3.4	35.6	2.4	29.4
Italy	37	35.7	20.6	36.1	3.7	27.0
Japan	15	9.9	0.9	8.4	0.8	14.9
United Kingdom	43	33.9	8.0	32.6	1.4	36.3
United States	18	23.6	4.4	26.1	1.8	40.7

Notes: * The political parity score is an aggregate measure of the representation of women in a country's government. A score of 100 means that women have at least 50 percent representation at all levels of government according to available data. **Lower or single House. ***Reference year: first half of 2020 for France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom; 2018 for Canada, Japan and the United States. Source: France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom: EIGE 2020. Canada, United States and Japan: Deloitte, 2019.

Sources (in order of indicator): [Council on Foreign Relations](#), 2020. [IPU](#), 2020. [Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments](#); EIGE 2020, [Gender Statistics Database](#); [Deloitte](#), 2019; [OECD Stat 2019](#); ILOSTAT, SDG Indicator 5.5.2 – Female share of employment in managerial positions; [ILOSTAT and The World Bank](#). April 2019.

The highest levels of economic leadership remain resistant to gender diversity: globally only 15 per cent of board seats are occupied by women.⁷ Among the largest publicly listed companies in EU-28 in 2020 (first quarter), 7.8 per cent of CEOs were women.⁸ Progress has been made in some G7 countries. Between 2010 and 2016, Italy, France and Germany registered the largest increases in the percentage of women sitting on company boards, as a result of the introduction of quota systems.⁹ However, the percentage of women who chair company boards in G7 countries remains critically low, ranging from 0.9 per cent in Japan to 20.6 per cent in Italy, all of which points to the persistence of the “glass ceiling”, even in the highest-income countries (see Table 11).

For other indicators of economic leadership, the picture is not much brighter. Globally, fewer than 2 per cent of women in employment are employers. While 22 per of all employers are women and 21.7 per cent of enterprises reported that they had a female CEO, there is a great deal of variance across regions, countries and sizes of enterprise.¹⁰ In many cases, women-run businesses are very small or micro-enterprises, with little opportunity for growth. Despite some progress in recent years, women's under-representation in decision-making positions in European business and industry persists.¹¹

2.4.1 *International Labour Standards and other key instruments*

The ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) and Recommendation No. 111 cover discrimination in relation to access to education and vocational training, access to employment and to particular occupations, as well as terms and conditions of employment. Gender equality policies and measures should be concrete and specific, and may require different treatment for certain groups.¹² They should be grounded in consultation and the consent of the various stakeholders, including workers' and employers' organizations, and be continually assessed and reviewed in order to ensure that they remain appropriate and effective in a frequently changing context.¹³ Public procurement policies which give preference to businesses owned by women and favour women entrepreneurship have been identified as particularly effective.¹⁴

The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 aims to improve the gender balance on corporate boards by introducing a Directive, first tabled in 2012, to require a minimum 40 per cent of non-executive members of the under-represented sex on the boards of listed European companies.¹⁵ Companies would be required to demonstrate the application of clear and gender-neutral criteria in their selection processes.¹⁶ The EU cohesion policy supports women's entrepreneurship, women's (re)integration into the labour market and gender equality in traditionally male-dominated sectors. In 2020, Horizon Europe's European Innovation Council (EIC) will also bring forward measures to promote the participation of women in start-ups and innovative small and medium-sized enterprises.¹⁷

2.4.2 *Guiding principles for governments*

To achieve gender equality at work, it is necessary to prioritize the promotion of women's representation and leadership in both the public and private sectors. With increased representation, women have the opportunity to advocate for gender-transformative policies and socio-economic reforms that meet the specific needs and challenges of women, young people and other marginalized groups. In the private sector, women's representation at the executive and management levels can help overcome barriers to women's economic empowerment and address cultural stereotypes and biases that undermine women's position in society and in business.¹⁸ Public policy can encourage women's access to leadership positions by:

1. promoting women's participation and leadership in political decision-making;
2. adopting gender-responsive macroeconomic policies;
3. implementing proactive measures to foster gender balance in company leadership and management positions;
4. supporting and scaling up women-owned enterprises;
5. expanding gender-responsive procurement.

Promoting women's participation and leadership in political decision-making

Strengthening women's agency, voice, leadership and participation entails the transformation of institutions and structures that reinforce and reproduce patterns of discrimination and unequal power relations between men and women.¹⁹ Removing discriminatory legal provisions and practices in political institutions by introducing laws to advance gender equality is an urgent first step. Governments should also devote resources to strengthening the national machinery for promoting gender equality, systematically implement gender-responsive budgeting, collect gender statistics, integrate a gender perspective into all policies and planning, and ensure accountability.²⁰

Temporary affirmative-action measures have also proved to be effective. Research by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) indicates that quota policies for women's representation have been successful in achieving a better gender balance in national parliaments. In 2016, countries with a quota policy had nearly doubled the proportion of women in their parliaments, as compared with those lacking such policies.²¹ In the European Union, the political representation of women has slowly been increasing since 2005. France and Italy have registered some of the most significant improvements in this area.²²

Creating participatory and enabling environments for women's rights organizations is crucial. Promoting freedom of association and collective bargaining is also a powerful tool for encouraging women's participation in trade unions and EMBOs. More efforts are needed to ensure that women are fully represented in leadership positions in these organizations (see ILO, 2020. [Empowering women at work. Trade Union policies and practices for gender equality](#)).

Adopting gender-responsive macroeconomic policies

As called for by the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, the main objective of macroeconomic policy should be to promote "sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all".²³ Priority should also be accorded to respect for the environment and care for people, especially as part of the recovery strategy following the COVID-19 crisis.

Effective macroeconomic policies are critical for ensuring that national budgets are responsive to women's priorities, as assessed by women themselves. Gender-responsive budgeting is an important tool for more effectively prioritizing gender equality in the overall set of national policies.

Fiscal policy – as well as trade, monetary and exchange-rate policies – is very influential in terms of GDP, labour participation rates and decent work.²⁴ It is crucial for women's economic empowerment as it has the potential to stimulate the aggregate demand required to increase employment opportunities for both women and men, and ensure the success of women entrepreneurs (who own and operate between 25 and 33 per cent of formal enterprises).²⁵ To be gender-responsive, fiscal policy should be integrated with public care,

infrastructure and social protection policies, so as to promote fair treatment for women and marginalized groups in the labour market.²⁶

The inclusion of gender equality considerations in trade agreements, in particular the eradication of gender-based violence and discrimination, and the promotion of women's social and political rights, can help to make gender equality a part of inclusive economic growth and sustainable socio-economic development. Such agreements can also specify areas of cooperation for promoting women's full participation and advancement in society, for example in female entrepreneurship and leadership.²⁷ Favorable international conditions that allow women-owned businesses equal access to resources, credit, legal protection and the capital needed to start up and expand beyond national borders can further promote gender equality at work.²⁸ According to the European Parliament, in 2018 only 20 per cent of current EU trade agreements mentioned women's rights. In response, the EU adopted a resolution to give more consideration to gender equality in trade agreements. There are currently more references to women or gender in the political – rather than trade-related – sections of such agreements.²⁹

Implementing proactive measures to foster gender balance in company leadership and management positions

Temporary proactive measures, such as setting mandatory or voluntary targets, goals or quotas, have also been used in the private sector to increase the proportion of women in managerial and leadership positions. Binding quotas have been shown to have the greatest impact on increasing the proportion of women on company boards. For instance, the introduction of quotas in Italy and France resulted in 500 and 208 per cent increases, respectively, in the proportion of women on company boards between 2010 and 2016.³⁰

Other measures that have served to accelerate the pace of women's participation in managerial and leadership positions include mentoring and training for female candidates, flexible working-time arrangements (see Section 2.3) and awareness-raising campaigns that challenge traditional stereotypes of the "ideal leader". Offering women and men training to enable them to enter non-stereotypical fields can be effective in breaking down horizontal segregation and promoting women's access to higher-paid jobs (see Section 2.4)

Another way that governments can promote greater gender diversity in business leadership is by giving due recognition to companies that have made strides towards achieving it. National awards for companies' achievements in gender diversity, or to highlight the success of outstanding women leaders, can help to motivate other companies and give visibility to female role models.³¹

Supporting and scaling up women-owned businesses

Government intervention is essential for creating an enabling environment for women's entrepreneurship, helping to address the under-representation of women in this field and unlocking the immense potential of female business talent. This means addressing the

barriers women face in starting, developing and expanding a business, including traditional social and cultural attitudes, limited access to finance, narrow entrepreneurial networks and less developed entrepreneurial skills.³²

National entrepreneurship policies have led to an increase in services that link education, skills development, technology and innovation, business plan development, business mentoring and allowances, dedicated agencies offering advice and counselling, and networking and professional development for women's start-ups and women entrepreneurs.³³ Integrated programmes that combine entrepreneurship training, lifelong learning and support for market access and control of resources – in particular credit, land and ICT – are particularly effective.³⁴ These programmes should be inclusive of all of women, regardless of age, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, marital status and ability/disability.

The ILO has set up the [Women's Entrepreneurship Development \(WED\) Programme](#) to work with governments, workers, employers and service providers to empower women entrepreneurs who want to start, manage and grow their businesses. ILO-WED uses a series of tools to create an enabling business environment for WED, foster gender-responsive business support and strengthen women's business skills and attitudes. The WED strategy also advocates for enabling policies in favour of women entrepreneurs.³⁵ UN Women also makes recommendations to governments on supporting women entrepreneurs and women-led SMEs, including in times of crises (Box 5).

Box 5. UN Women's key recommendations to governments on supporting women entrepreneurs for a gender-responsive and inclusive recovery

- **Provide gender-specific financial support services for women entrepreneurs**, including debt relief, cash inflow, and support related to care and domestic work, as well as re-skilling to meet current demands related to health needs (such as medical supplies).
- **Boost the access of women entrepreneurs to ICT and financial services**, including through gender-specific low-interest loans, deferred payments and tax exemptions.
- **Remove discriminatory laws, policies and customs** that block women's access to and control of financial services, land ownership, and other assets.
- **Prioritize training, leadership and mentorship programmes for women** to help them address the COVID-19 crisis as well as other ongoing requirements.
- **Ensure the collection of disaggregated data related to the outbreak** by sex, age and disability including related to SMEs in order to identify and eliminate gender-based constraints on women entrepreneurs.
- **Reach out to women entrepreneurs in remote and rural areas** to make sure they are informed about any responses to COVID-19 as well as opportunities related to stimulus packages and other recovery measures.
- Work with communities to develop support services for women entrepreneurs.
- Promote the formalization of informal businesses so that more women-run SMEs can benefit from financial services and government subsidies.
- Ensure that financial service providers address the needs of women entrepreneurs and refrain from any gender bias.

Source: UN Women 2020, [Guidance for Action: Supporting SMEs to ensure the economic COVID-19 recovery is gender-responsive and inclusive](#).

Expanding gender-responsive procurement (GRP)

Public procurement policy is another area in which governments can support women's leadership in business and entrepreneurship. An evaluation of government procurement policies in OECD countries found that 24 percent of governments have a policy in respect of women-owned businesses.³⁶ Globally, however, women-owned businesses attract less than 1 per cent of the monies that large corporations and governments spend on products and services.³⁷ Public procurement laws that prioritize the awarding of contracts to women-run and women-owned businesses can be very effective in levelling the playing field for women and men, facilitating women's access to finance and more lucrative contract opportunities.³⁸

The ILO and UN Women make recommendations to governments and companies on responsive and impactful procurement. These include quantifying the proportion of spending directed to women's and gender-responsive enterprises, carrying out reviews of legislative frameworks and advocating for reform, adopting frameworks and certifications, seeking guidance from employers' organizations and encouraging existing suppliers to become more gender-responsive.³⁹ This approach is grounded on a threefold strategy for efficient gender-responsive procurement ecosystems, namely:

1. buying from women-owned businesses to drive women's entrepreneurship development;
2. buying from gender-responsive enterprises to drive full and productive job creation for all;
3. applying a gender perspective to procurement ecosystems for inclusive and sustainable growth.

2.4.3 Illustrative practices

Rewarding gender-responsive companies (Australia)

The Australian Government's Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency gives annual awards in recognition of companies that are excelling on gender equality. Awards include recognition for Leading Organization for the Advancement of Women, Diversity Leader for the Advancement of Women, and Outstanding Equal Opportunity Initiative or Result for the Advancement of Women.⁴⁰ The agency also frequently highlights on its website companies that are taking a lead on gender equality.⁴¹

Growing women-owned businesses through international trade services (Canada)

The Trade Commissioner Service in Canada has established a number of programmes to help businesses owned by under-represented groups (such as women, indigenous peoples, youth, and individuals of all sexual orientations and gender identities) achieve success in exporting.⁴² The Business Women in International Trade programme was created in 1997 and connects women-owned businesses (defined as being owned and managed by at least

51 per cent women) with private and public-sector partners and trade commissioners in 160 cities around the world.⁴³ The programme offers resources to assist women in penetrating the global market, such as success stories, guides, webinars, information on existing trade deals and a LinkedIn group for networking.

The growth of women-owned businesses, which in 2012 were employing 1.5 million Canadians, is crucial to the Canadian economy.⁴⁴ These businesses also add about CAD 150 billion to the national economy (in 2011),⁴⁵ a clear boost for GDP. The share of women-owned SMEs did not change significantly between 2011 and 2017, standing at 15.6 per cent of SMEs. Despite this, the proportion of women-owned SME exporters has doubled from 7.4 per cent to 14.8 per cent.⁴⁶

Mandating gender-diverse boards (France)

On 13 January 2011, France's Cope-Zimmerman Law was passed, coming into full effect in January 2017 and mandating a quota of at least 40 per cent for both genders on company boards.⁴⁷ The binding quota applies to publicly traded companies, or those with more than 500 employees and a turnover of more than €50 million in the previous three years.⁴⁸ In 2012 and 2014, two supplementary laws extended the quota to leadership in governmental bodies, social security organizations, and the cultural and sports sectors.⁴⁹

The proportion of women on the boards of France's largest publicly listed companies increased by almost 32 per cent between 2010 and 2018.⁵⁰ As a result of the law, France stands out from the rest of EU in terms of the proportion of women serving on company boards, with the highest level among EU Member States as of April 2016 – an impressive result achieved even before the law came into full effect.⁵¹

Supporting women's entrepreneurship (France)

France's Women's Entrepreneurship Plan (*Plan Entrepreneuriat des femmes*) is a comprehensive government programme that aims to increase the proportion of women in new business start-ups. It was launched in 2013 by the Ministries of Women's Rights, National Education, Higher Education and Research, as well as the Delegate Ministry for SMEs, Innovation and the Digital Economy. The programme offers multifaceted support for female entrepreneurs based on a three-pillar approach: knowledge-sharing, skills and network development, and improved access to finance.

The plan provides information on the resources available to female entrepreneurs through its website (www.ellesentreprennent.fr/), as well as conducting campaigns such as Entrepreneurship Awareness Week. The programme has set up fourteen regional support networks for women entrepreneurs, to strengthen their networks and provide opportunities for mentoring. To facilitate access to finance, the programme organizes networking events

in partnership with the *Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations*, the BPCE bank, BNP Paribas, and the “France Active” and “Initiative France” financial networks. By setting up a Guarantee Fund for Women (*Fonds de garantie à l’initiative des femmes* (FGIF)), the government also facilitates loans for women entrepreneurs of up to €45,000.

The Women’s Entrepreneurship Plan has created networks of women entrepreneurs, drawn in thousands of young women with entrepreneurial aspirations, and organized 400 events in 2015 alone. Additionally, through the FGIF initiative, in 2015 over 2,000 women received loans to start a business, which created over 3,000 jobs.⁵²

Boosting women-owned businesses among refugees and rural women (Germany)

Germany has introduced new programmes to stimulate the economy, at the same time empowering different groups of women. The “Female Refugees: Start your own business!” programme (*Frauen mit Fluchterfahrung gründen*)⁵³ ran from 2017 to 2019 in the Rhein-Main region.⁵⁴ Funded by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ), the programme is free for users and provides refugee women with a mentor and access to workshops, networking, financial resources and legal information to enable them to develop a business idea and set up a business in Germany.⁵⁵ This programme came about after the success of the 2015-2016 “Migrantinnen gründen”, born of a concern that 33 per cent of refugees living in Germany are women, yet their employment rate is only 5 per cent.⁵⁶

Another national programme, “Self-Reliant Women – Women-led Start-ups in Rural Areas” (*Selbst ist die Frau -Existenzgründung von Frauen im ländlichen Raum*), aims to foster entrepreneurship among rural women. Running from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2020,⁵⁷ its purpose is to train rural women who already own successful businesses to become mentors to other rural women, who are often well-educated but lack stimulus and advice.⁵⁸ The workshops and online programmes give rural women the skills to start their own business. The BMSFSJ also funds this programme, which is run by the German Association of Rural Women.⁵⁹

Promoting women in economic and political leadership positions (Italy)

Italy is another country that has established legal quotas to promote women into higher leadership positions within companies. In 2005, the proportion of Italian women in economic leadership roles were extremely low: only 3 per cent of company board members were women. To take one example, the Central Bank board consisted exclusively of men.⁶⁰ To rectify this situation and achieve gender parity, the Italian Government passed laws requiring greater gender diversity on company boards. The law passed in 2011 established a 1/5 quota for gender representation,⁶¹ and in 2012, this quota was extended to companies not operating in regulated markets.⁶² Finally, in 2016, the Italian government increased the quota to 1/3 board members in publicly listed companies.⁶³

These quotas have strengthened women's economic leadership in Italy. In 2018, women accounted for 22 per cent of the board of the Central Bank. In 2019, women made up over 36 per cent of the membership of the boards of publicly listed companies, the second highest figure among G7 countries.⁶⁴ The Department for Equal Opportunities is the designated monitoring body and has so far initiated 391 administrative proceedings against non-compliant companies.⁶⁵

Since 2014, Italy has also enacted numerous pieces of legislation to promote women's quotas in local government, the federal government and its representation in the European Parliament.⁶⁶ A 2017 law stipulates that no more than 60 per cent of representatives in a uninominal electoral college can be of the same sex. Both chambers of the national Parliament also have gender-balance mandates as a result of this law. Consequently, there has been a significant improvement in gender parity in political representation. The Italian legislature at the time of this publication (2020) had the highest representation of women parliamentarians in Italy's history (35.7 per cent). This proportion has doubled over the last ten years.⁶⁷ The World Economic Forum's ranking of Italy in terms of political empowerment rose from 72nd (out of 115 countries) in 2006 to 46th (out of 144 countries) in 2017.⁶⁸

Promoting gender parity in parliament through voluntary gender quotas (Sweden)

In Sweden's unicameral parliament, all the political parties represented have set voluntary gender quotas. The quota arrangements vary from party to party. Some use party lists that alternate the sexes, some simply set a 50 per cent quota, while another requires that two men and two women occupy the top four positions.⁶⁹

In 2020, Sweden almost reached gender parity in parliament, with women holding 47 per cent of seats. Globally, it is listed among the top countries for women's representation in parliament (7th in 2020), and as the leading country in the EU.⁷⁰ Sweden's success in achieving gender equality has been linked to the gender balance it has achieved in its political institutions, which has led to transformative policies in respect of parental leave, childcare, health and non-discrimination at work.⁷¹

Supporting women-owned small businesses through public procurement (United States)

In 2000, the American Federal Government established a Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contracting programme, overseen by the US Small Business Administration. It set a goal for federal agencies to allocate 5 per cent of their contracts (by value) to Women-Owned Small Businesses ("WOSBs"), and in 2010 economically disadvantaged women-owned small businesses were added as a subset of WOSBs.⁷²

The programme's 5 per cent goal was not met for the first 15 years of the programme. The achievement of the target in 2015 was the result of a bipartisan advocacy strategy, awareness-raising and other services to assist female entrepreneurs in meeting public procurement criteria and becoming certified as suppliers. Each federal agency must also publish a "small-business scorecard", stating the volume and percentage of contracts awarded to WOSBs.⁷³

Between 2009 and 2015, contracts worth USD117 billion were awarded to WOSBs. Whereas in 2006 WOSBs received only 3.41 per cent of public procurement, valued at USD11.6 billion, by 2015 the proportion had risen to 5.05 per cent and the total value to USD17.8 billion.⁷⁴

2.4.4 Policy measures in the context of the COVID-19 crisis

The ILO estimates that worldwide around 436 million enterprises in the sectors hardest-hit by the COVID-19 crisis are facing serious disruption.⁷⁵ In particular, SMEs are suffering immensely as they have less capacity to absorb the shocks to supply chains and customer revenues. Preliminary research on the global state of small business confirms that women-led SMEs have been disproportionately affected, being 7 percentage points more likely to be closed at the time of the survey compared with men-led SMEs.⁷⁶ Another survey shows that over 90 per cent of women entrepreneurs suffered a decrease in sales during the pandemic and have less than three months of cash flow remaining.⁷⁷ These challenges reflect the fact that women-owned businesses are more concentrated in the sectors most affected by lockdowns, increased care demands that have reduced their ability to focus on their businesses and generate income, and difficulty in adapting quickly to digital operations.⁷⁸

The severity of the crisis where women are concerned makes it all the more important that women's voices are equally included in decision-making when it comes to COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. Women leaders and women's organizations have already demonstrated their ability to lead in policy responses. However, CARE found that the majority of national committees established to respond to COVID-19 do not have gender-equal representation.⁷⁹ Among the 30 countries surveyed which had established such committees, 74 per cent had less than one-third female membership. Governments with lower levels of women's leadership are at risk of formulating COVID-19 response plans that fail to address (if they do not worsen) the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women, with short- and long-term consequences for achieving gender equality at work. They should therefore should prioritize strengthening women's leadership at all levels of the COVID-19 response structure.

Policy measures for recovery and resilience should prioritize support for at-risk workers, women's jobs and incomes, and women-owned enterprises.⁸⁰ Research from Canada shows that many such programmes fail to take women's needs and the characteristics of women-owned SMEs into account.⁸¹ Macroeconomic, sectoral and labour market policies must put gender equality at the core of the recovery effort so as to avoid long-term damage to women's jobs and build a better future for women at work.⁸² In particular, public policies should:

- ▶ implement employment retention measures to prevent women from losing their jobs, and focus on gender-responsive employment and entrepreneurship;
- ▶ sustain business operations, especially MSMEs, in order to preserve and scale up women entrepreneurs' contributions to growth and sustainable development during recovery;⁸³
- ▶ use GRP to ensure that large contracts and new investments for economic recovery are distributed equally, and that women benefit from the government's buying power;⁸⁴
- ▶ invest in the care economy to support more and better-quality care jobs, which are crucial in times of both crisis and prosperity.

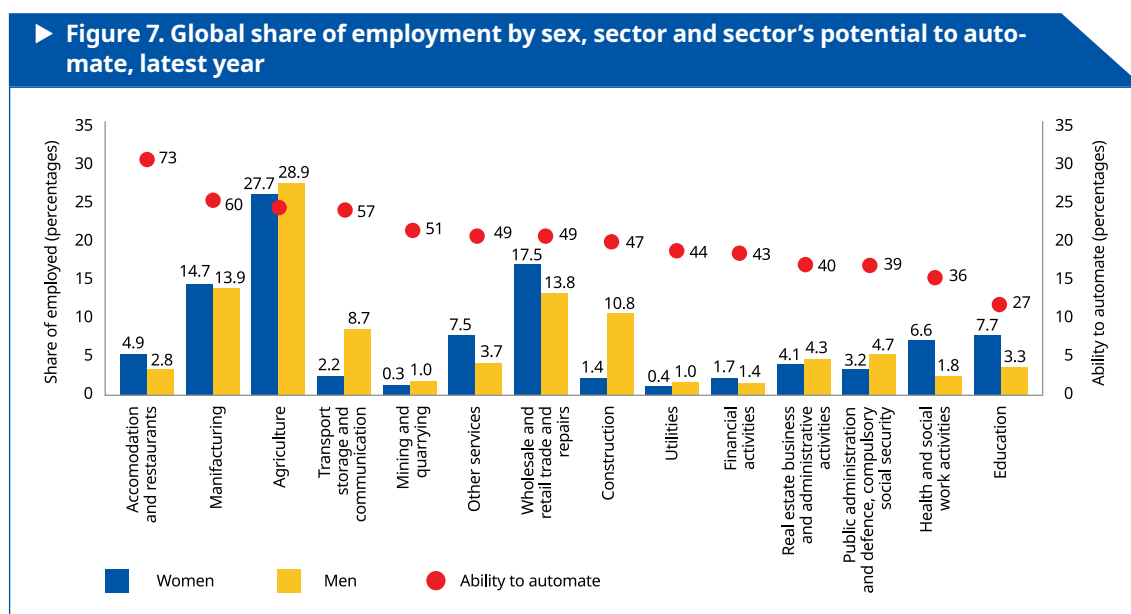
Box 6. Measures to protect and support SMEs and women's businesses in times of crisis

- **Canada** was the only country among 30 surveyed by CARE that had women's representation in a national COVID-19 response committee above 50 per cent. It was also the only country to announce funding and policy commitments in all the areas of gender response: gender-based violence prevention and response programmes; sexual and reproductive health services; childcare support; and funding that specifically recognizes the economic effect of the pandemic on women, including support for women entrepreneurs.⁸⁵
- **All EU countries** have been making grant payments to businesses, including SMEs and the self-employed, to cover ongoing operating costs during the pandemic. These measures have been funded by a €540 billion emergency rescue package adopted by the **European Union** in April 2020. It includes a pan-European Guarantee Fund established by the European Investment Bank, which provides €200 billion in finance for companies, particularly SMEs.⁸⁶
- In **Austria**, for instance, a Federal Government Hardship Fund makes grants to the self-employed to cover their personal living expenses (up to €2,000 per month until December 2020).⁸⁷
- **Iceland** is requiring that line ministries assess how potential investments might benefit women and men differently. This information is taken into account in the decision-making process so as to better understand the impact of policy responses on gender equality objectives.⁸⁸
- In **Ireland**, through the Restart Grant, the government is providing direct grant aid to micro and small businesses to help offset the costs associated with reopening and re-employing workers following COVID-19 closures.⁸⁹
- **Germany** has protected jobs by expanding access to its well-tested and institutionalized short-term work (Kurzarbeit) programme, which covers workers' wages in companies in crisis. This measure has been extended until the end of 2021.⁹⁰ It is also providing an emergency one-off grant (€9,000–15,000) to freelancers and micro-entrepreneurs (up to 10 employees).⁹¹ Effective existing institutions and mechanisms have enabled smooth and rapid implementation.
- **Spain** is providing financial support in addition to unemployment benefits to the self-employed, members of cooperatives and workers whose employment has been temporarily suspended.⁹²

2.5 Building a future of work that works for women

In levelling the playing field for women and men, governments face the ongoing challenge of the global transformations arising from new technology, demographic shifts and climate change. In particular, rapid technological advances in automation, artificial intelligence, robotics and the digital economy are transforming the world of work, with mixed implications for the future of gender equality.¹

Persistent occupational segregation means that women and men are likely to be impacted differently by automation. ILO research shows that the impacts of automation are likely to vary substantially across sectors, with women predominant in sectors that are both at highest risk (accommodation and restaurants, manufacturing) and lowest (education, health and social work) where job losses are concerned (Figure 7).



Note: Data on share of employed by sector are from 2018 and data on ability to automate are from 2017.

Sources: ILO calculations based on ILO modelled estimates, November 2018, and McKinsey Global Institute, 2017.

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) finds that women workers in the United States are more at risk of losing their jobs due to automation than men (28.9 per cent as against 19 per cent), a gap that is even more pronounced for women of color.² Furthermore, the feminized occupations at high risk of automation are those that pay better for women, such as secretarial work, accounting and administrative roles, which carries broader negative implications for gender equality at work.³ The under-representation of women in medium and high-skilled occupations in specific industries, together with robotization, is likely to exacerbate the gender pay gap, especially in countries where gender inequality is most pronounced. A new study taking in 20 European countries forecasts that a 10 per cent increase in robotization will lead to a 1.8 per cent increase in the gender pay gap.⁴

New technologies have also increased employment mediated through digital platforms (platform employment or crowdwork), which often precludes access to basic labour and social protections.⁵ The incidence of such work as a proportion of total employment is estimated to vary from 0.5 per cent in the United States to 5 per cent in Europe.⁶ Women are less likely than men to engage in digital employment (in high-income countries, one in three crowdworkers is a woman) and, when they do, they tend to take up gigs with lower added value, in order to combine paid work with care responsibilities.⁷

These gender gaps also reflect the fact that women are significantly under-represented in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, which generate high-paying jobs that are shaping the future of work. Women are less likely to have digital skills,⁸ and the digital skills they do have earn lower returns than those of their male counterparts.⁹ In EU countries, women comprise only 17 percent of people on ICT courses and in ICT careers¹⁰ and only 36 per cent of STEM graduates, although girls were outpacing boys in digital literacy in 2018.¹¹ In G7 countries, too, women continue to be under-represented among STEM graduates. This gap in tech education has knock-on effects in the labour market. Women are less likely to be employed in the ICT sector and, when they do get a digital job, they face a gender pay gap significantly larger than the gender pay gap for the overall economy (Table 12).¹²

► **Table 12. Key indicators of gender equality in ICT in G7 countries, latest year**

Country	Female share of STEM tertiary graduates (%) (2016)	Female share of ICT sector (%)	Gender pay gap in ICT sector** (%)
Canada	31.4	N/A	N/A
France	31.8	31	16
Germany	27.1	33	24
Italy	39.5	29	N/A
Japan	N/A	26	24
United Kingdom	34.0	28	24
United States	38.1	31	N/A

Source: The World Bank, [DataBank: Gender Statistics](#), accessed 9 October 2019. ILOSTAT, [Tech's persistent gender gap](#), accessed 14 November 2019.

The COVID-19 crisis has confirmed that care jobs are and will remain a significant and essential source of employment. Since the care workforce (including domestic workers) is highly feminized, revaluing these jobs and improving their working conditions also improves women's position in the labour force and workers' overall working conditions. It also contributes to breaking sectoral segregation by attracting more men into care jobs. Technological improvements and automation can also help to make care jobs better and safer.¹³

New technologies have also stirred concerns about privacy and gender bias in artificial intelligence and robotics, and about accountability and transparency, including the amplified exposure of women and girls to the risk of violence and harassment in technology-enabled spaces.¹⁴ Women in the United States, for instance, are more likely to experience the most severe forms of online harassment, including cyberstalking and physical threats.¹⁵ These types of harassment cause harm and reduce women's voice and presence online, as they self-censor to avoid becoming targets.¹⁶

Governments, in close collaboration with employers' and workers' organizations, enterprises and other stakeholders, have a key role to play in overcoming the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and building a future of work that works for both women and men. Immediate response measures include using digital technology to provide accessible and flexible online solutions that decrease administrative friction and help women access benefits and adopt new business models.¹⁷ Medium- to long-term responses should focus on investing in gender-responsive employment policies, social protection and the care economy.¹⁸

2.5.1 International Labour Standards and other key instruments

The ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, adopted in 2019, focuses its "human-centred approach" on three areas of action: 1) Increasing investment in people's capabilities; 2) Increasing investment in the institutions of work; 3) Increasing investment in decent and sustainable work.¹⁹ The Declaration recognizes the challenges posed by technological innovation, demographic shifts, climate change and globalization, and commits the ILO to focusing its efforts on "promoting the acquisition of skills, competencies and qualifications for all workers throughout their working lives as a joint responsibility of governments and social partners". Specific areas for action include addressing existing and anticipated skills gaps; ensuring that education and training systems are responsive to labour market needs, taking into account the evolution of work; and enhancing workers' capacity to make use of the opportunities available for decent work. The Declaration also calls for the achievement of gender equality at work through a transformative agenda that includes the promotion of investment in the care economy.

The MNE Declaration calls on governments to develop national policies for vocational training and guidance, closely linked with employment, in cooperation with the national authorities, employers' and workers' organizations and the competent local, national and international institutions. An enabling policy environment is essential if companies are to provide relevant training and lifelong learning for all levels of workers, to meet the needs of enterprises and further the development of host countries.²⁰

The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-25 aims to address gender gaps in STEM-related occupations through the "[Updated Digital Education Action Plan](#)" and the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration of commitment on "[Women in Digital](#)".²¹ The aim of the

Declaration is to encourage women to play an active and prominent role in the digital and technology sectors.²² In addition, the new “[European Skills Agenda](#)” places “access to education, training and lifelong learning for everybody, everywhere in the EU” at the heart of building resilience in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis. It focuses on skills and upskilling initiatives, increasing the numbers of STEM graduates and fostering entrepreneurial and transversal skills (Action 7).²³ The EC has put forward a proposal for an “EU Council recommendation on vocational education and training”, which would address horizontal segregation and gender stereotypes.²⁴

2.5.2 Guiding principles for governments

Technology has the potential to improve the lives of women and girls and to accelerate the achievement of women’s economic empowerment. However, there is a risk that if these transitions are not adequately managed and regulated, technologies could aggravate existing gender inequalities at work.²⁵ Governments need to prioritize interventions that ensure that all women and girls benefit equally from technological advances by closing the gender-related digital divide, enabling women’s equal participation in the design of new technologies, and implementing laws, policies and regulations that value jobs in the care economy.²⁶ This is even more important in the context of COVID-19 policy response and recovery. The pandemic has shown how technology can facilitate ways of working that were previously considered unfeasible, allowing for greater flexibility and possibly also sustainability.

Government policies can help to achieve a future of work that is more gender-equal and contributes to the economic empowerment of women by:

1. facilitating lifelong learning;
2. closing the gender-related digital divide;
3. creating and protecting quality jobs in the care economy; and
4. harnessing technology to promote decent care work.

Facilitating lifelong learning

The rapid pace of change in the world of work means that workers need to be constantly acquiring new skills. Providing lifelong learning opportunities enables workers to acquire, update and improve their skills. Lifelong learning includes both formal and informal education, early-childhood and basic education, and adult learning and training.

A gender-responsive approach to the design of lifelong learning opportunities is crucial to removing the barriers and inequalities that stymie gender equality and women’s economic empowerment.²⁷

In Europe, 11.8 per cent of women participate in lifelong learning activities, while the corresponding figure for men is 10 per cent.²⁸ These numbers are low for both groups, but the barriers that prevent workers from engaging in lifelong learning vary greatly between men and women. While work schedules were identified as barriers to lifelong learning for 37.6 of women and 42.6 per cent of men, family responsibilities represented a greater obstacle for women (39.8 and 24.2 per cent respectively), especially in Germany and Italy.²⁹

Governments can invest in accessible, equitable and high-quality lifelong learning programmes, creating “learning ecosystems” that are gender diverse and offer a range of skills-acquisition or retraining opportunities.³⁰ Lifelong learning policies that encourage young women to venture into STEM fields are particularly helpful in preparing women to meet the challenges associated with the changing world of work.

Subsidized training programmes directly tied to employment opportunities, targeting women and men who are beginning their studies or are preparing to enter the labour market, can be particularly effective in breaking down horizontal segregation. This is of particular importance for fields in which women and men are traditionally over-represented (respectively STEM-related jobs and the care economy) and also contributes to eroding gender stereotypes.

Closing the gender-related digital divide

Digital technologies and the related trends in employment have immense potential for bringing about positive social and economic change, but there is also a danger that inequalities will be perpetuated if the gender gap in digital skills is not closed. The “gender digital divide” encompasses the various gender-related inequalities preventing equal access to, use of and benefit from ICTs. The barriers also include social norms and stereotypes.³¹

The unequal gender balance in the tech sector has a negative impact on the economy and social life, not only because it reinforces existing labour market inequalities, but also because digital skills are in demand. Since thousands of digital jobs are created each year, this skills shortage risks holding back economic growth.³² Accenture estimates that the G20 countries will miss out on as much as USD1.5 trillion in economic growth over the next 10 years if they fail to bridge the skills gap.³³ In the EU, these gender-related gaps may be causing productivity losses of about €16.1 billion each year (2 per cent of the EU’s economy).³⁴

Closing the gender digital gap depends on facilitating the entry of women and girls into STEM fields and careers, and breaking down the gender stereotypes and societal expectations that prevent women and men from pursuing non-traditional studies and occupations. Government policy should ensure that girls and boys see study for and entry into non-traditional fields (e.g. STEM occupations for women and care jobs for men) as a feasible option. This means ensuring that school curricula are free of bias that might reinforce gender stereotypes and the unconscious belief that there are inherently gendered spheres of work.

The under-representation of women in STEM fields begins early, as they tend not to study STEM subjects at school. Girls are only half as likely as boys to see themselves in a STEM-related career and the gap is even wider in ICT. Young women are less likely to study STEM subjects in higher education and, even when they do earn STEM degrees, less than half of female STEM graduates go on to have a career in a STEM-related field, as compared with 71 per cent of male graduates.³⁵ In the European Union, only 7 per cent of women work in STEM industries, as opposed to 33 per cent of men.³⁶

Creating and protecting quality jobs in the care economy

The health, care and economic crises generated by the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the vital role that both paid and unpaid care work plays in the smooth functioning of societies and economies. The pandemic has also highlighted an urgent need to reverse the underfunding of the health, social work and education sectors, which has weakened public services and led to a shortage of care workers and a deterioration of their working conditions.³⁷

Now more than ever, in response to the crisis, investment in the care economy, as called for of the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, should be a priority. Investing in care work would not only boost gender equality and address the needs of rapidly ageing and vulnerable populations, but would also have considerable benefits in creating jobs. The ILO estimates that increasing investment in care services to achieve the SDGs would create 117 million more jobs in the care economy by the year 2030.³⁸

Labour and social security legislation should also be designed to guarantee equal protection for care workers, including migrant workers and those in the informal or platform economy.³⁹ Such protections, including national minimum wage coverage, are crucial for domestic workers: globally, in 2010, only 10 per cent of domestic workers enjoyed the same labour rights as other workers.⁴⁰

Guaranteeing the right to equal pay for work of equal value in the care sector is also essential. This means adequately valuing and rewarding care work. In OECD countries, for instance, where a majority of ECCE teachers are required to complete tertiary education, such teachers typically receive only 78 per cent of the salary of an average tertiary-educated full-time worker aged between 25 and 64, and their pay is lower than that of primary and secondary teachers.⁴¹ This reflects the low value and lack of recognition accorded to this profession, its very high level of feminization and very low unionization rate.

Valuing care work will also go a long way to breaking down occupational segregation, by not only by encouraging men to enter these female-dominated occupations, but also by reducing the existing inequalities between women and men deriving from the concentration of women in certain lower-paid occupations.

Harnessing technology to promote decent care work

While there is a lower risk of automation replacing care workers than workers in many other occupations,⁴² the quality of care jobs can be enhanced by adopting technologies that simultaneously benefit care workers, care recipients and unpaid carers. Government investment in the digitization of certain aspects of care work, such as automotive and self-monitoring technologies, can help tackle the most arduous and monotonous tasks involved. For instance, care robots have the potential to eliminate or reduce occupational injuries and allow care workers to focus on relational and other higher-skilled care tasks.⁴³

To improve the quality of care work, government-funded digital and ICT training can help care workers, especially those faced with language barriers or working in rural areas, to improve their skills, thereby increasing the value of this industry.⁴⁴

Online portals that match demand for and supply of care work are an increasingly common solution for childcare needs. Governments have a role to play in ensuring that the care jobs facilitated by these platforms are formal, decent and skilled, thus making quality care synonymous with quality care jobs.⁴⁵

Governments can regulate the use of these technologies, ensuring that they are tailored to the needs of all the parties involved in the care relationship, are gender-responsive and age-specific, and respect privacy and labour rights.

2.5.3 Illustrative practices

Increasing women's and girls' access to and participation in the digital world (G20)

Under Germany's G20 presidency in 2017, the [#eSkills4Girls](#) initiative was launched to address the gender digital divide, particularly in low-income and developing countries. The programme is run by a partnership of G20 member governments, the ITU, the OECD, UNESCO, and UN Women.⁴⁶ The aim is "to globally increase women's and girls' access to and participation in the digital world and to boost relevant education and employment opportunities in emerging and developing countries".⁴⁷ The initiative is primarily a knowledge-sharing platform, offering resources, opportunities, good practices and policy recommendations to a variety of stakeholders committed to closing the gender digital divide.

Breaking down occupational segregation in the care workforce (Belgium)

The European Social Fund sponsored a project entitled "Men into Childcare" (2001-2003), to increase the proportion of men working in ECCE, as part of a broader ten-year plan initiated by the European Commission Network on Childcare.⁴⁸ The objective was to increase gender-

neutral professionalism in the childcare sector so as to decrease gender-related bias and social expectations.⁴⁹ One significant outcome of this project was the shift to a gender-neutral, less emotional term for the members of the profession: “Kinderbegeleider”, meaning “companions of children”.⁵⁰

In 2002, the Government of the Flanders region of Belgium mandated a more diverse hiring protocol, emphasizing the need for gender and ethnic diversity in hiring.⁵¹ The training was reformed to be more inclusive of men, and the salaries of all employees in daycare centres were increased.⁵² To encourage men to work in childcare, the Government of Flanders also sponsored media campaigns and distributed marketing materials.⁵³ Although the proportion of men working in ECCE in Flanders rose from 0.9 per cent in 2002 to 3.4 per cent in 2010,⁵⁴ the EC’s goal of having 20 per cent male representation in this sector was not achieved.⁵⁵

In 2012, the Government adopted a new Childcare Law, which established minimum qualifications for working in ECCE, thus creating new skills development opportunities.⁵⁶

Promoting women’s participation in STEM and non-traditional fields (Canada)

Canada has launched a “Choose Science” initiative to encourage women to explore and enter STEM fields. The programme aims to create a network of role models and mentors for young women in science.⁵⁷ An online platform offers a variety of resources, including a number of activities for parents, STEM-related learning modules and tools for teachers, STEM initiatives for young women to explore, video interviews with female role models, and a blog that shares the experience of Canadian women working in the STEM field.⁵⁸ The initiative aired digital ads, which were viewed by over 500,000 Canadians, and created a poster that was downloaded over 900 times.⁵⁹

Canada is also promoting programmes, such as the “Apprenticeship Incentive Grant for Women” (2017), to diversify other non-STEM occupations in which women, especially from minority groups, are under-represented. For instance, while women account for 17 per cent of the workforce in the natural resources sector, 17.9 per cent in mining and 25.2 per cent in utilities,⁶⁰ women from minority groups account, respectively, for only 2.8 per cent and 4.2 per cent of the personnel working in these industries.⁶¹ Moreover, in 2017 only 14 per cent of certifications were held by women.⁶²

The Canadian Government has initiated a number of such projects. Established in 2018, the “Women in Construction Fund” aims to get more women involved in the building trade.⁶³ Similarly, a 26-month initiative involving the Government, the Canadian Institute of Forestry, NGOs, the private sector, academia and indigenous groups, aims to increase women’s participation in forestry by improving recruitment, retention and promotion.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, AgriDiversity, a programme scheduled to continue until early 2023, works on knowledge sharing, skills development and entrepreneurship to diversify Canadian agriculture. The

Royal Bank of Canada predicts that the inclusion of women in agriculture will increase national GDP by 4 per cent.⁶⁵

Expanding tele-homecare (Canada)

The Government of Ontario complements primary healthcare services and redistributes care tasks through its online Tele-homecare Centre.⁶⁶ Using advanced technologies and health-coaching techniques, qualified, specially trained nurses – who comply with the regulations of the College of Nurses of Ontario – can remotely monitor and follow up on the health status of patients. These are typically older people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), heart failure and related comorbidities, which are the principal conditions accounting for hospital readmissions across Canada.⁶⁷

The most salient impact of this programme is on public health. The system reports a 70 per cent reduction in emergency visits, along with a 76 per cent reduction in readmissions, for individuals who have been hospitalized in the past.⁶⁸

Tele-homecare technology also has a trailblazing gender dimension, due to the high proportion of women in the nursing profession and in other forms of paid and unpaid care work.⁶⁹ Nurses develop digital skills through specialized training, and efficiency increases as monotonous tasks are reduced, making healthcare work more attractive and rewarding. Nurses report that tele-homecare is useful and facilitates their work.⁷⁰ Women providing unpaid care work also benefit from this service, since time devoted to repetitive monitoring tasks when assisting family members is reduced.

As a result of Tele-homecare, some hospital partners in this programme have been recognized by the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario as Best Practice Spotlight Organizations.⁷¹

Supporting lifelong learning (Denmark)

The Government's lifelong learning policy provides adult education in a variety of formats, from informal learning programmes, e-learning and vocational training to formal programmes delivered in adult education centres.⁷² The programme is overseen by five government ministries, and performed in partnership with municipalities, non-profit organizations, research centres and social partners.⁷³

Adult vocational training programmes target both low-skilled and skilled workers, to enable them to maintain their skill levels, up-skill, and acquire new skills as required by the labour market. Some 3,000 adult vocational programmes on 200 different subjects are on offer, ranging in duration from half a day to six weeks. All adult vocational programmes are publicly financed, developed by social partners and approved by the Ministry of Education. Participants who are in employment may have to pay modest user fees, which are typically reimbursed by their employers, while the unemployed are exempted. Providers of the

training programmes are required to measure and publicly report the satisfaction rates of participants, which serves to maintain high standards.⁷⁴

The lifelong learning opportunities provided by the general adult education programme are taken up by approximately 90,000 adults each year, with numbers having increased in recent years.⁷⁵ Non-formal education programmes attract approximately 700,000 participants annually.⁷⁶

Reducing the gender digital divide (Estonia)

Estonia's "Welfare Development Plan" (2016-2023) aims to tackle economic, health-related and digital inequalities across the country. One of the objectives is to reduce the gender pay gap from 22.5 per cent in 2013 – the largest gap in the EU – to 18.5 per cent by 2023.⁷⁷ The Plan is financed by the EU and coordinated by various government departments. It includes programmes focusing on different aspects of women's economic empowerment, such as care policy, entrepreneurship, lifelong learning and digital skills.⁷⁸

Under the Plan, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications launched the "ICT is everywhere" programme to increase the proportion of women in ICT jobs (from 29 per cent in 2018).⁷⁹ Since national research has found that social stereotypes were a powerful factor in women avoiding STEM career paths, the initiative focuses on events and workshops in schools and online to make ICT careers more appealing to young girls.⁸⁰

Technology has enhanced life in Estonia and is also being used to address violence and harassment against women. A free bilingual 24/7 hotline ("Tugitelefoni") provides emotional and legal support, together with information about other resources (see also Section 2.2).⁸¹ In 2019, Estonia was listed as the number one country (out of 68) for the quality of its digital life, and number 11 for its family life, by the Digital Life Abroad Report.⁸² The Government has moved 99 per cent of its services online.⁸³ This has been well received by the public, with 94 per cent of Estonians finding it easy to access government resources in this way.⁸⁴

Offering STEM training and re-entry programmes (Germany)

Germany's WING programme was launched in 2011 to support women engineers and scientists returning to work after a family-related career break. The initiative provides training, networking and certifications to encourage more women to resume their careers in STEM after taking leave.

To boost their job applications, participants can take various courses to enhance their skills sets, earning certificates on completion of training. They can also take advantage of networking opportunities, such as round tables and meetings with representatives of the German Association of Women Engineers. The Government covers much of the cost of the programme, with participants contributing a fee of around USD800.⁸⁵

Harnessing robotics to mitigate the physical workloads of care workers (Japan)

Technological innovation is the rapidly evolving strategy adopted by Japan's care industry to meet the future long-term care needs of an aging population and cope with a potential decrease in the labour force.⁸⁶ The Japanese Robot Strategy, implemented by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) in conjunction with the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), is developing robotic nursing equipment and care robots to mitigate workloads and create a better working environment for care workers, help older people live independently, and reduce the amount of unpaid care work provided by family members. To maintain the efficiency and high quality of the work done by individuals, the robots assist in tasks such as the lifting, bathing, mobilizing and monitoring of care recipients.⁸⁷

A prototype social robot called "PARO" helps older individuals living with dementia by providing cognitive stimulation.⁸⁸ Positive outcomes have been noted where patients' mood and levels of stress are concerned.⁸⁹ To further the use of technological innovations in the care sector, in 2016 the MHLW asked the Collaboration and Liaison Council for Studying Needs and Seeds to consider how the needs of care providers can be better met by developing robots' capabilities.⁹⁰

Promoting decent work for home-based care workers (United States)

In the United States, long-term care workers deliver most of the hands-on, personal care and assistance provided in care facilities and private homes, often as domestic workers as defined by the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189). Domestic workers employed by households account for 0.5 per cent of the national workforce. Most of them (95 per cent) are women, and the majority (54 per cent) are from ethnic-minority backgrounds. Almost half (44 per cent) are foreign-born, and 31 per cent are non-citizens.⁹¹ These care workers receive little or no training, inadequate employment benefits and low wages, and are subject to high turnover.

In 2015, new regulations issued by the Department of Labor's (the Home Care Final Rule) came into effect. They extended the protections of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) to homecare workers to ensure that they enjoyed the same basic wage protections as most United States workers, including those who provide similar types of assistance to people with disabilities residing in nursing homes and group homes.⁹² The new regulations close a protection gap that previously excluded unlicensed home-based care workers by classifying them as "companion caregivers".⁹³

The provisions of the FLSA now apply to over two million homecare workers in the United States, extending to them the right to the federal minimum wage and to overtime pay at a rate of not less than one and one-half times their regular rate of pay after 40 hours of work a week.⁹⁴ Employers are also required to keep basic employment records and comply with youth employment standards. Homecare agencies providing domestic services such as companion services and live-in care are also required to align to the FLSA.⁹⁵

Conclusions

Since the landmark Fourth World Conference on Women twenty-five years ago, progress towards achieving gender equality has been modest and remains fragile. The devastating health, economic and care crises generated by the COVID-19 pandemic risk reversing many of the hard-won gains of the past two decades. Women and girls are facing acute hardships, including higher rates of poverty, job losses, increased care burdens, and greater exposure to violence. Women are overwhelmingly absent from decision-making on crisis-response and resilience measures.

It is time for governments, employers' and workers' organizations, the private sector and civil society to come together to devise and coordinate urgent, sustainable and gender-responsive policies for building a better future for women at work. The implementation of stimulus packages offers an immediate and unique opportunity to prioritize investment in social protection, quality care and green jobs, and eliminate discrimination, violence and harassment against women.

A recent McKinsey report predicts that if no action is taken to counter the regressive effects of the COVID-19 crisis, global GDP growth could be USD 1 trillion lower in 2030 than it would be if women's unemployment simply tracked that of men in each sector. Conversely, taking action now to advance gender equality could add USD13 trillion to global GDP in 2030, as compared with taking no action. A middle path – taking action only after the crisis has subsided – would boost the economy but reduce the potential opportunity by more than USD5 trillion.¹

This document has highlighted how governments, in coordination with the UN, the G7 and the European Union, can exert their influence to ensure a gender-equal future of work. It is based on a review of the guidance available in the SDGs, international labour standards, and EU, G7 and other international frameworks that provide solid points of reference for formulating short, medium and long-term crisis responses.

The report also builds a clear social and economic case for women's economic empowerment: achieving full gender equality is beneficial for the individual and for society as a whole, leading to higher national incomes, better public health and inter-generational fairness.

It also examined illustrative government policies that address women's economic empowerment through measures that ensure equal pay for work of equal value, prevent and end violence and harassment in the world of work, ensure a healthy work-life balance, empower women in leadership, and prepare women for the future of work. The following Table summarizes the policy guidance on empowering women in the workplace, as addressed to governments.

► **Table 13. Policy guidance on empowering women at work**

Key theme	Guiding principles: Adopt, implement, fund, monitor and evaluate laws and policies to:
Achieving equal pay for work of equal value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure equal opportunity and treatment at work for all • Establish and apply the right to “equal pay for work of equal value” • Promote social dialogue and collective bargaining • Establish and implement wage transparency • Set adequate and inclusive minimum wages
Preventing and ending violence and harassment in the world of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislate the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment • Ensure a broad scope of legal protection • Enact effective enforcement, remedies and assistance • Provide awareness-raising, guidance and training • Mitigate the impact of domestic violence
Promoting work–life balance and equal sharing of care responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide universal maternity protection and inclusive leave policies • Expand quality care services • Guarantee gender-responsive social protection • Provide family-friendly working arrangements • Facilitate work attachment and reintegration
Supporting women’s equal participation in decision-making in the world of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote women’s participation and leadership in political decision-making • Adopt gender-responsive macroeconomic policies • Implement proactive measures to foster gender balance in company leadership and management positions • Support and scale up women-owned enterprises • Expand gender-responsive procurement
Building a future of work that works for women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate lifelong learning • Close the gender digital divide • Create and protect quality jobs in the care economy • Harness technology to promote decent care work

There can be progress in women’s economic empowerment in all countries if the right policies are adopted. The above-listed measures are just a few of the many provisions that governments need to adopt in consultation with employers’ and workers’ organizations and civil society organizations, including those representing women and girls.

The findings presented in this document reflect both successes and areas where greater attention is needed, especially in the context of the current crisis. They point to the need for governments to adopt and implement, as a priority, laws and policies that have proved to be effective in addressing long-standing gender inequalities at work. These include such proactive measures as collecting comparable data and measure the impact of policies or lack thereof, setting targets and quotas to boost women’s representation and leadership in

the world of work, implementing the principle of equal pay for work of equal value through pay transparency, preventing and ending discrimination and GBVH at work by adopting effective workplace measures, and investing in quality care policies, services and jobs as a key recovery strategy to build back better.

As the ILO has noted “[i]t is hoped that this crisis will lay the ground for gender-transformative macroeconomic decisions that prioritize social protection and care; national budgets that are more responsive to the needs and priorities of all women; adjustments to existing social and labour protection systems to ensure that all workers, regardless of their contractual status, are afforded adequate labour and social protection; and the presence of more women in decision-making positions”.²

Achieving gender equality during this turbulent time and building back a better future for all women is not only feasible; it is also an imperative. Governments and other stakeholders in the world of work have the knowledge and the resources required to succeed. It is time to take action, now.



ANNEX

Principles of the ILO MNE Declaration

	PRINCIPLES DIRECTED TO GOVERNMENTS	PRINCIPLES DIRECTED TO ENTERPRISES
General Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further the aim of the Declaration by adopting appropriate laws and policies, measures and actions, including in the fields of labour administration and public labour inspection [paragraph 3] • Ensure equal treatment between multinational and national enterprises [paragraph 5] • Ratify all the Fundamental Conventions [paragraph 9] • Promote good social practice in accordance with the MNE Declaration among MNEs operating in their territories and their MNEs operating abroad [paragraph 12] • Be prepared to have consultations with other governments whenever the need arises [paragraph 12] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect the sovereign rights of the state and obey national laws and respect international standards [paragraph 8] • Contribute to the realization of the fundamental principles and rights at work [paragraph 9] • Carry out due diligence, taking account of the central role of freedom of association and collective bargaining, industrial relations and social dialogue [paragraph 10] • Consult with government, employers' and workers' organizations to ensure that operations are consistent with national development priorities [paragraph 11]
Employment	<p>Declare and pursue, as a major goal, an active policy to promote full, productive and freely chosen employment, and decent work [paragraph 13]</p> <p>Develop and implement an integrated policy framework to facilitate the transition to the formal economy [paragraph 21]</p> <p>Establish and maintain, as appropriate, social protection floors within a strategy to progressively ensure higher levels of social security [paragraph 22]</p> <p>Take effective measures to prevent and eliminate forced labour, provide victims with access to an appropriate remedy, develop a national policy and action plan, and provide guidance and support to employers [paragraphs 23-24]</p>	<p>Endeavour to increase employment opportunities and standards, taking the employment policies and objectives of governments into account [paragraph 16]</p> <p>Before starting operations, consult the competent authorities and the national employers' and workers' organizations in order to keep employment plans, as far as practicable, in harmony with national social development policies [paragraph 17]</p> <p>Give priority to the employment, occupational development, promotion and advancement of nationals of the host country [paragraph 18]</p> <p>Use technologies which generate employment, both directly and indirectly; and take part in the development of appropriate technology and adapt technologies to the needs of and characteristics of the host country [paragraph 19]</p>

	PRINCIPLES DIRECTED TO GOVERNMENTS	PRINCIPLES DIRECTED TO ENTERPRISES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a national policy designed to ensure the affective abolition of child labour, take immediate measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency, and progressively raise the minimum age of admission to employment [paragraph 26] • Pursue policies designed to promote equality of opportunity and treatment in employment, with a view to eliminating any discrimination based on race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin [paragraph 28] • Promote equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value [paragraph 29] • Never require or encourage multinational enterprises to discriminate and provide guidance, where appropriate, on the avoidance of discrimination [paragraph 31] • Study the impact of multinational enterprises on employment in different industrial sectors [paragraph 32] • In cooperation with multinational and national enterprises, provide income protection for workers whose employment has been terminated [paragraph 36] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build linkages with local enterprises by sourcing local inputs, promoting the local processing of raw materials and local manufacturing of parts and equipment [paragraph 20] • Contribute to the transition to the formal economy [paragraph 21] • Complement and help to stimulate further development of public social security systems [paragraph 22] • Take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of forced labour in their operations [paragraph 25] • Respect the minimum age of admission to employment and take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour [paragraph 27] • Be guided by the principle of non-discrimination and make qualifications, skills and experience the basis for recruitment, placement, training and advancement of staff [paragraph 30] • Endeavor to provide stable employment for workers and observe freely negotiated obligations concerning employment stability and social security, promote security of employment, providing reasonable notice of intended changes in operations and avoiding arbitrary dismissal [paragraphs 33-35]
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop national policies for vocational training and guidance, closely linked with employment, in cooperation with all the parties concerned [paragraph 37] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training for all levels of workers employed to meet the needs of the enterprise as well as the development policies of the country [paragraph 38] • Participate in programmes aiming at encouraging skill formation, lifelong training and development, as well as providing vocational training, and make skilled resource personnel available [paragraph 39] • Afford opportunities within the enterprise for local management to broaden their experience [paragraph 40]

	PRINCIPLES DIRECTED TO GOVERNMENTS	PRINCIPLES DIRECTED TO ENTERPRISES
Conditions of Work and Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endeavour to adopt suitable measures to ensure that lower income groups and less developed areas benefit as much as possible from the activities of multinational enterprises [paragraph 42] • Ensure that both multinational and national enterprises provide adequate safety and health standards and contribute to a preventive safety and health culture, including taking steps to combat violence at work and attention to building safety; and that compensation is provided to workers who have been victims of occupational accidents or diseases [paragraph 43] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Across their operations, provide wages, benefits and conditions of work not less favorable than those offered by comparable employers in the country concerned, taking into account the general level of wages, the cost of living, social security benefits, economic factors and levels of productivity [paragraph 41] • Maintain highest standards of safety and health at work, make known special hazards and related protective measures associated with new products and processes, provide information on good practice observed in other countries, and play a leading role in the examination of causes of industrial safety and health hazards. [paragraph 44] • Cooperate with international and national safety and health organizations, national authorities, workers and their organizations, and incorporate matters of safety and health in agreements with representatives of workers [paragraphs 45-46]
Industrial Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply the principles of Convention No. 87, Article 5, in view of the importance, in relation to multinational enterprises, of permitting organizations representing such enterprises or the workers in their employment to affiliate with international organizations of employers and workers of their own choosing [paragraph 51] • Not include in their incentives to attract foreign investment any limitation of the workers' freedom of association or the right to organize and bargain collectively [paragraph 52] • Ensure through judicial, administrative, legislative or other appropriate means that workers whose rights have been violated have access to effective remedy [paragraph 64] • Ensure that voluntary conciliation and arbitration machinery is available free of charge to assist in the prevention and settlement of industrial disputes [paragraph 67] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throughout their operations, observe standards of industrial relations [paragraph 47] • Respect freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, provide the facilities and information required for meaningful negotiations [paragraphs 48, 57 and 61] • Support representative employers' organizations [paragraph 50] • Provide for regular consultation on matters of mutual concern [paragraph 63] • Use leverage to encourage business partners to provide effective remediation [paragraph 65] • Examine the grievances of worker(s), pursuant to an appropriate procedure [paragraph 66] • Seek to establish voluntary conciliation machinery jointly with representatives and organizations of workers [paragraph 68]



Endnotes

PART 1: SETTING THE SCENE: GUIDING FRAMEWORKS FOR GOVERNMENT POLICIES TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AT WORK

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