

COSME

Committee on the situation
of women in economics

Newsletter 2020: Research summary

The effects of covid-19 on gender inequality in paid and unpaid work in Spain Libertad González (UPF)

We study how covid-19 is affecting gender inequality in Spain, focusing on both market and household work. Standard data sets with labor market information, such as the Spanish Labor Force Survey, document employment status and work hours, but they do not ask about time spent on domestic chores or childcare. The Spring 2020 lockdown reduced hours in paid work while increasing the volume of household work, including childcare. We conducted a representative household survey in early May of 2020, with 5,000 respondents aged 24 to 50. We collected detailed information on time spent on both paid and unpaid work, as well as the distribution of housework between partners. We asked retrospective questions about the situation before the lockdown, as well as questions about the current situation. We then conducted a second wave of the survey in November 2020, in order to document the persistence of changes.

We then analyze the changes in the within-household allocation of market and household work. We find that the pandemic led to employment losses for both men and women, most of which were covered by furloughs. The shock affected low-educated workers differentially, but we find no evidence of a significant gender gap in the effect of the crisis on employment, unlike in other countries, where the fall in employment was more pronounced among women. This is confirmed with Labor Force Survey data.

We also document a large increase in working from home, especially among university-educated workers and women.

As for unpaid work, we find a large increase in the time devoted to household work for both men and women, especially in families with children. Before covid-19, women devoted much more time to childcare and housework than men. During the Spring 2020 lockdown, both men and women increased their involvement in the different tasks, but the strong, pre-existing gender imbalance remained. The only important change was that during the lockdown, men were on average more likely to be in charge of grocery shopping.

In May 2020, the gender gap in total hours worked per week had increased, with women with children working 12 hours more than men. This is due to women's hours of paid work not falling enough to compensate the large increase in childcare time.

Preliminary results from the November wave illustrate the partial recovery in employment, as well as some persistent effects in the incidence of working from home and the increase in childcare and housework work, especially among women.

Reference

[“How the COVID-19 Lockdown Affected Gender Inequality in Paid and Unpaid Work in Spain”](#) (with Lúdia Farré, Yarine Fawaz and Jennifer Graves). *IZA Discussion Paper* No. 13,434 (July 2020).