



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

UNPAID CARE WORK IN TIMES OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS

UN Expert Group Meeting

“Families in development: Assessing progress, challenges and emerging issues. Focus on modalities for IYF + 30 and parenting education”

Dr Esuna Dugarova

Gender Specialist, UNDP

New York, 18 June 2020

COVID-19

Multidimensional

Crisis

Health: nearly 7 million cases, over 400,000 deaths globally - largest gender gaps among those aged 60-74

Economy: 305 million jobs globally to be lost, including in informal sector with women 90% in South Asia and SSA

Education: schools closed in over 190 countries, affecting 1.6 billion students, with impacts on gender digital divide

Food: 265 million facing acute food insecurity – women and girls play a key role in the food system

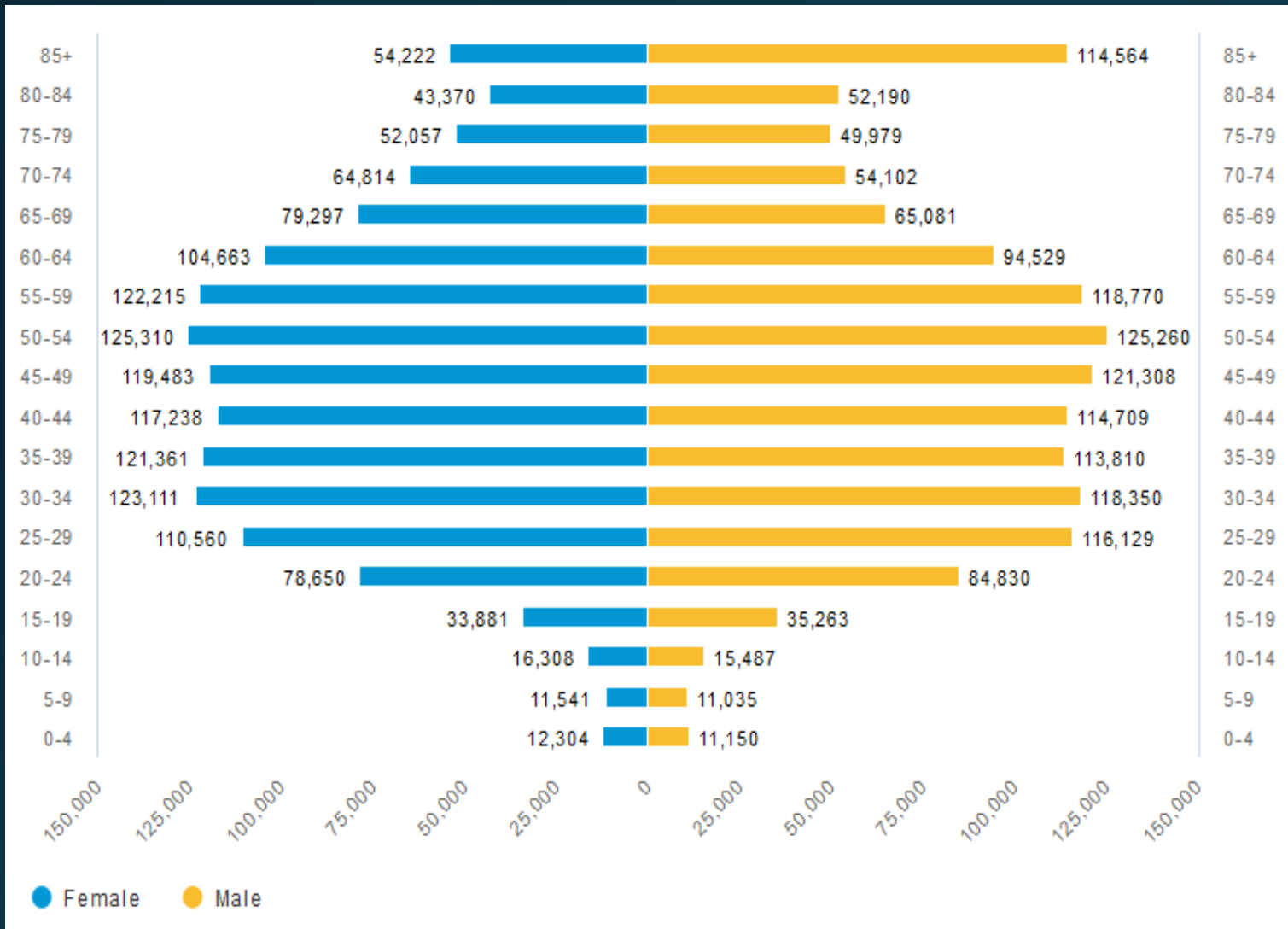
Poverty: over 160 million people to fall in extreme poverty by 2030

COVID-19 cases by age and gender

Largest gender gaps among those aged 60-74



Reduced provision of care provided by older women



Source: UN Women

Gendered impacts of COVID-19

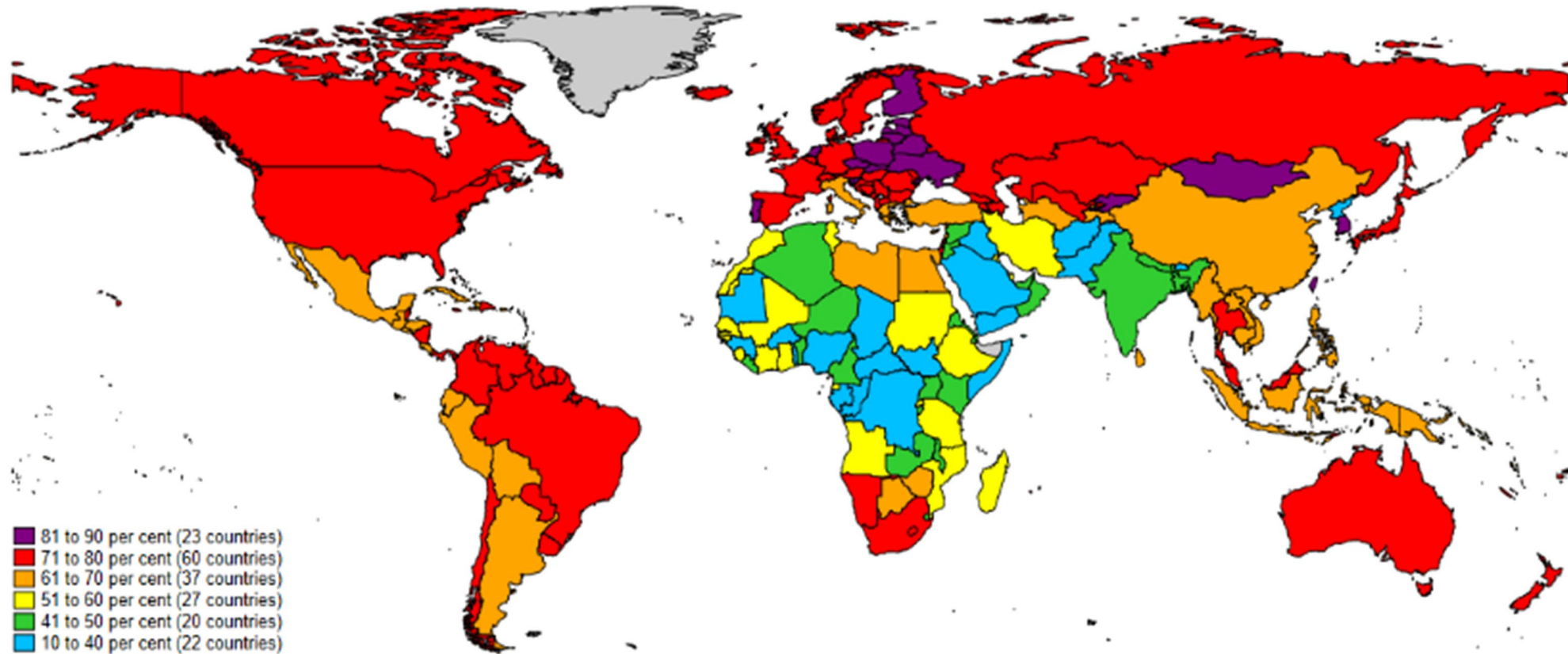
Economic sectors with large share of female employment

Food/accommodation suffer from full closures – **144 million workers with over half women**

Women healthcare workers on frontline of COVID-19 response

96 million or 70.4% of total workforce in health/social work sectors are women

Share of women among all workers in health and social work, 2020



Source: ILO

Unpaid care work

Economic value of unpaid care work accounts for **40% of GDP**.

Women dedicate on average **3.2 times more hours** to unpaid care work than men.

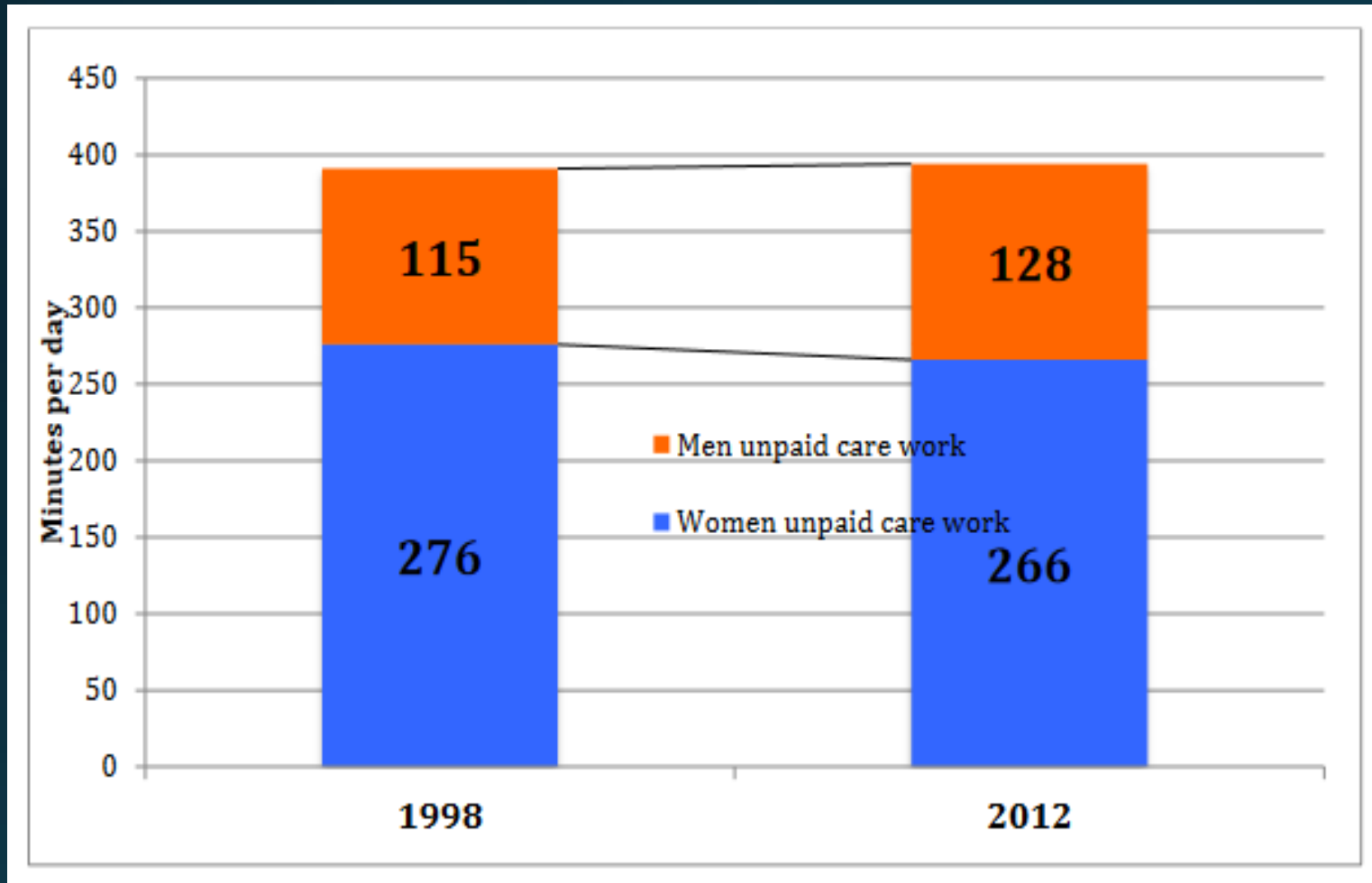
Grandmothers spend **over 5 hours** on a daily basis.

No country achieved equal share of unpaid care work.

Progress in reducing the unpaid care gap has been **slow**.

Men are more involved in unpaid work than ever (mainly in household activities e.g. shopping, house repairs).

Global trend in time spent in unpaid care work in 25 countries, 1998-2012

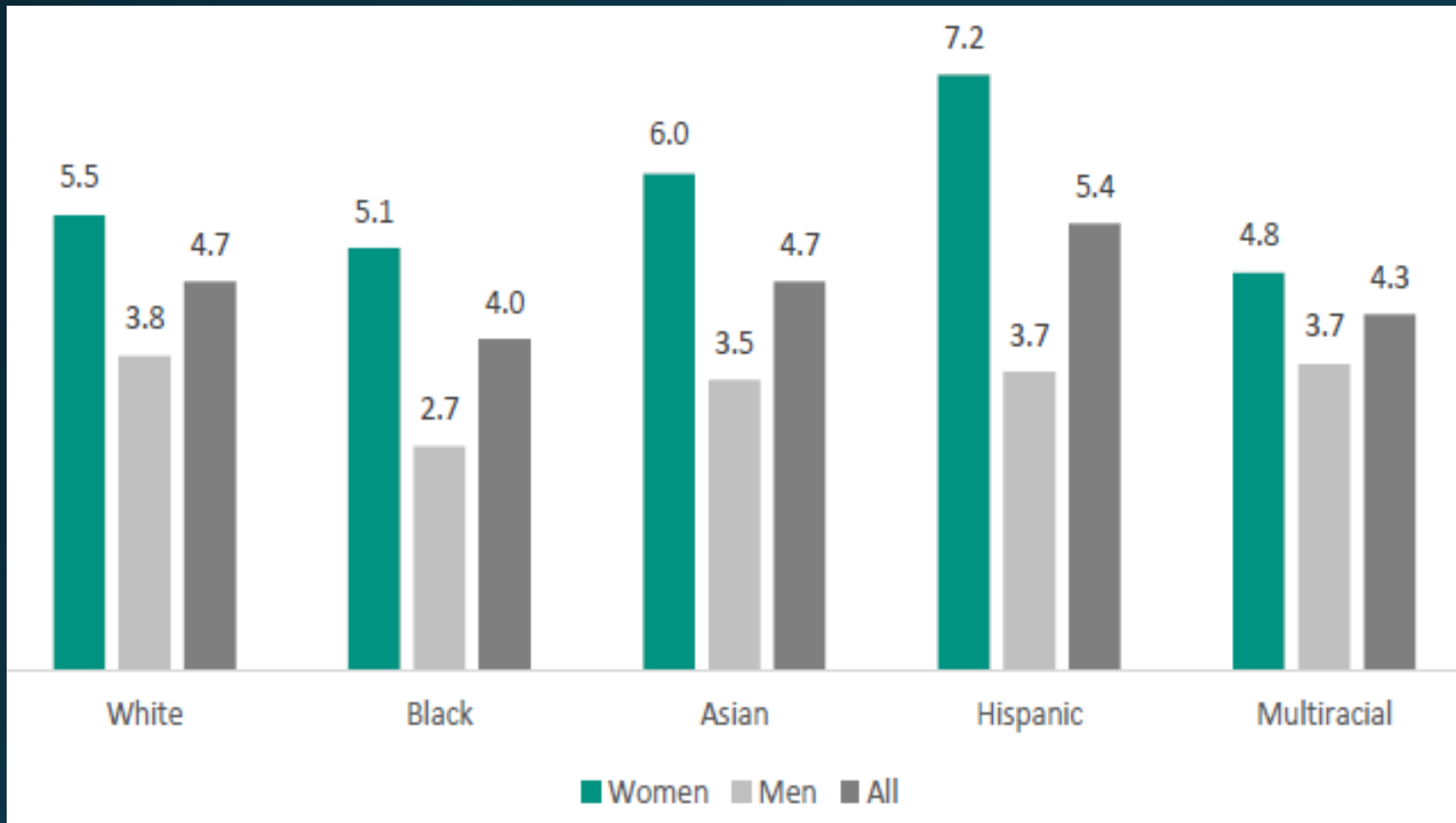


Charmes (2019)

Over 15-year timespan:

- women's unpaid care work decreased by **10 minutes**
- men's unpaid care work increased by **13 minutes**
- **women spend more time** on unpaid care work than men.

Average hours per day spent on unpaid care work, by gender and race/ethnicity, USA, 2018



Intersectionality:

In USA, women in **Hispanic and Asian couples** spend more time on unpaid care work.

COVID-19 impacts on unpaid care work:

negative

➤ Re-traditionalization of care

- In USA, UK and Germany during the lockdown, women spend significantly more time caring for children (Adams-Prassl et al. 2020).
- Homeschooling – a new domestic task for many families. Mother's responsibility – create educational content for children (Carlson et al. 2020).
- Working mothers spend less time on paid work but more on household work. Even when working mothers earn more, they do more childcare than working fathers (Andrew et al. 2020).

**COVID-19
impacts on
unpaid care
work:
positive**

➤ **More egalitarian care arrangements**

- In USA, share of families with equal sharing of unpaid work increased – due to fathers spending more time on domestic work (Carlson et al. 2020).
- In Spain, men increased their participation in household tasks e.g. grocery shopping (González and Farré 2020).
- In UK, gender childcare gap narrowed from 30.5 to 27.2% – due to men's availability to participate in childcare (Sevilla & Smith 2020).
- Fathers doubled their time on childcare when they lost their job in UK (Andrew et al. 2020).
- In Germany, fathers with higher earnings working from home provide more care support (Möhring et al. 2020).

Key factors in redistribution of unpaid care work

- i. employment status of parents: whether or not mother and father are in paid work
- ii. parents' working conditions: whether parents have flexible work arrangements and whether father can work from home
- iii. type of job performed by mother: whether it is essential services



- *Fathers who work from home or lost their job have more availability for unpaid care work.*
- *Mothers continue to do more unpaid care and domestic work regardless of employment and working conditions.*



Care policy responses to COVID-19

(i) Parental leave: supporting working parents' care work during school/childcare closure

- **Norway** – childcare leave doubled to 20 care days; **USA** – 12 weeks of paid family leave; **Ireland** – flexible work for public sector employees

(ii) Care services: care support for essential service workers

- **Austria, France, Netherlands** – childcare facilities for essential workers; **Australia** – childcare fee relief for families; **Iran** – new nursing homes

(iii) Financial support: income support to parents

- **Italy** – €600 to cover babysitting; **Cuba** – childcare benefit at 100% of basic salary; **Japan** – subsidies to firms with paid-leave systems

(iv) Utility support: free/subsidized household utility bills

- **Colombia** – water services free of charge for low-income families; **India** – free cooking gas to women in rural areas.

Unprecedented impacts on unpaid care work

1

Increased unpaid care work reinforces existing gender inequality.

2

Grandmothers provide less care, relying on family or social workers.

3

Impact on women's workforce, labour productivity, economy.

4

Potential positive shift to more egalitarian share of unpaid care work.

Policy recommendations

National care systems

- enhance support to working parents through paid leave
- universal provision of quality care services
- expand family/child benefits
- increase investments in social and physical infrastructure

Labour market policies

- support (re-)integration of unpaid carers into the labour force
- offer flexible work arrangements with option of home-based work
- improve workplace hours to allow more time for self-care

Supported by macroeconomic environment with adequate fiscal and monetary policies to fund care and labour market policies

Thank you!

For questions and comments:

esuna.dugarova@undp.org



@Esuna_Dugarova