

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”*

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Structure

Covid-19 multidimensional crisis



Gendered impacts of COVID-19



Unpaid care work: key facts, COVID-19 effects, and new evidence



Care policy responses to COVID-19, emerging challenges and opportunities



Policy recommendations post COVID-19

COVID-19

Multidimensional

Crisis

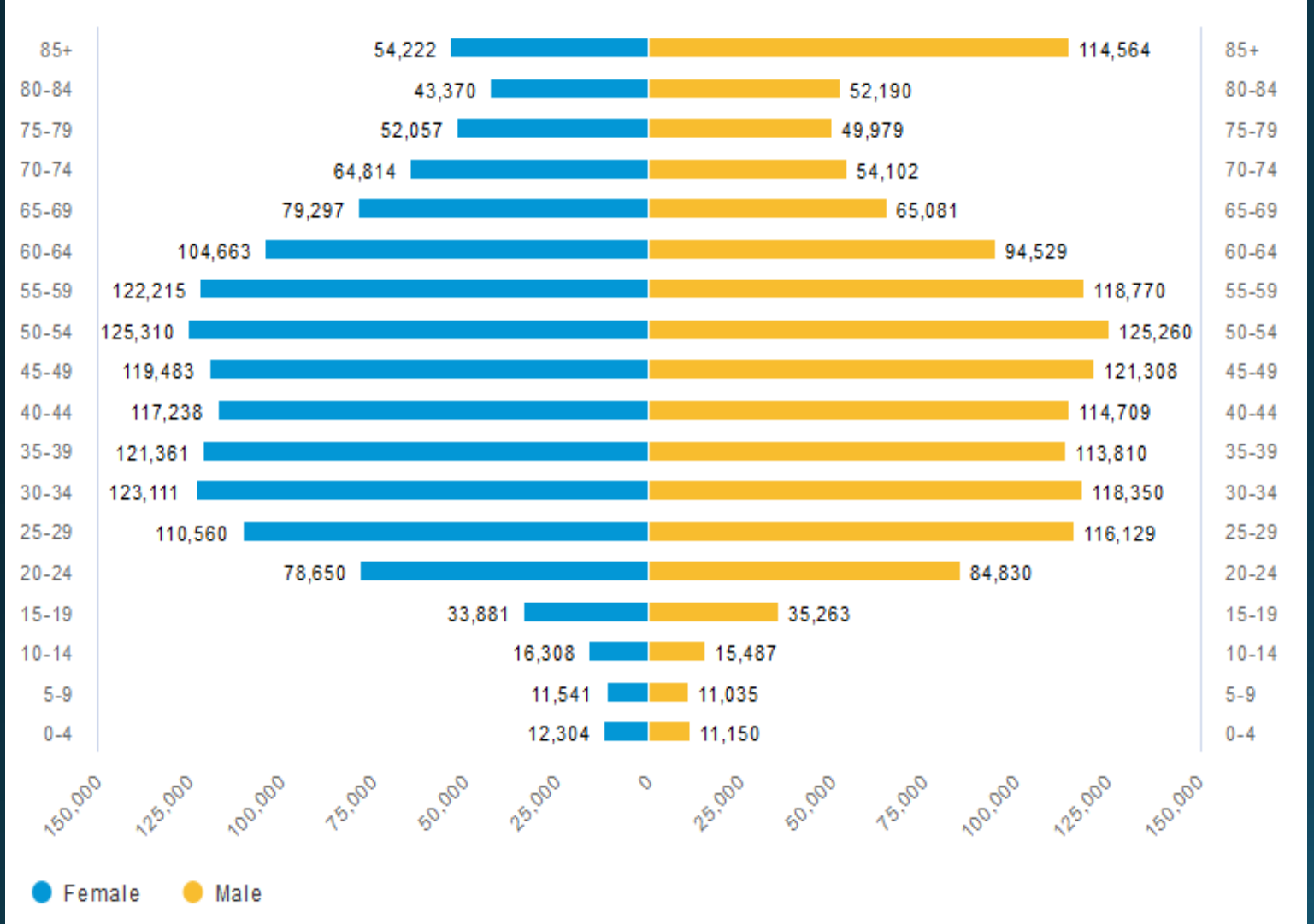
Health: 8.4 million cases, 450,000 deaths globally - largest gender gaps among those aged 60-74

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

Gendered impacts of COVID-19

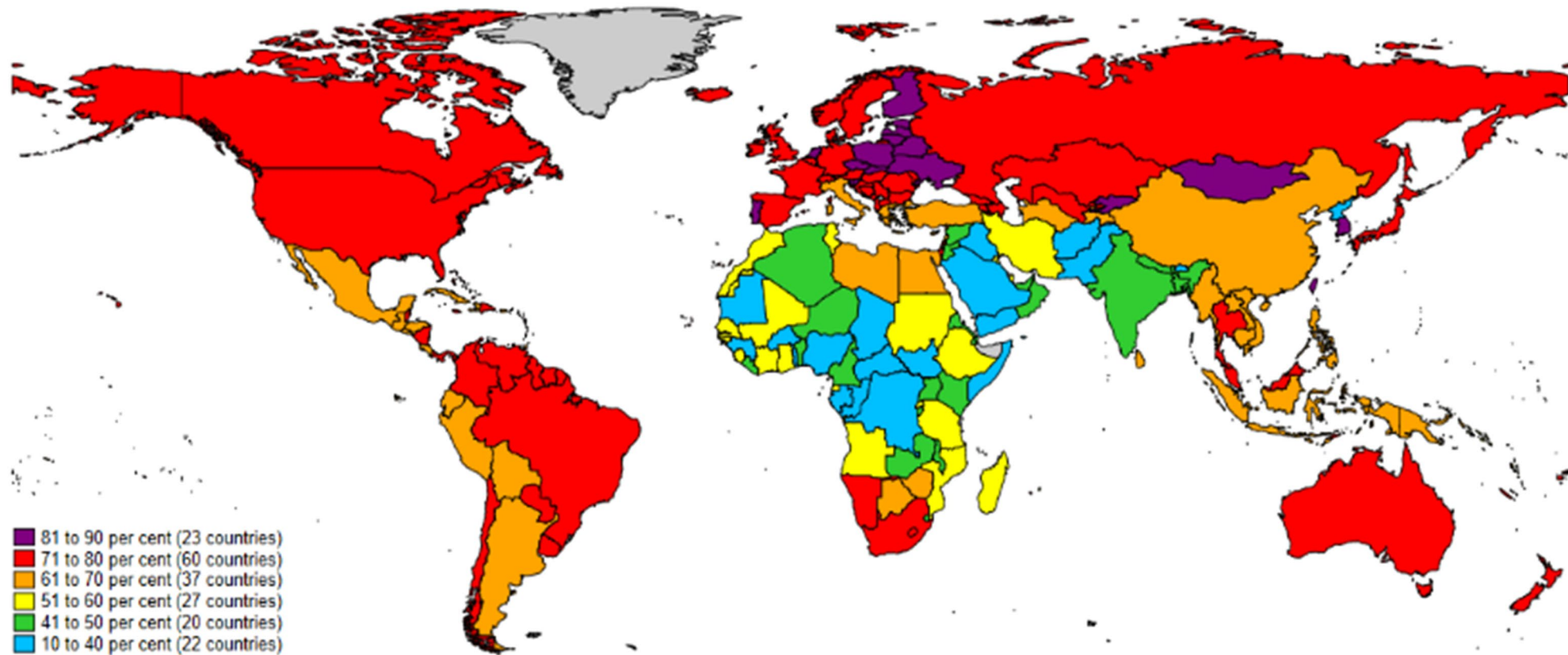
Economic sectors with large share of female employment

Food and accommodation sectors suffer from full closures in many countries – **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, but face wage gaps & occupational segregation

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



Source: ILO

Unpaid care work: key facts

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

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

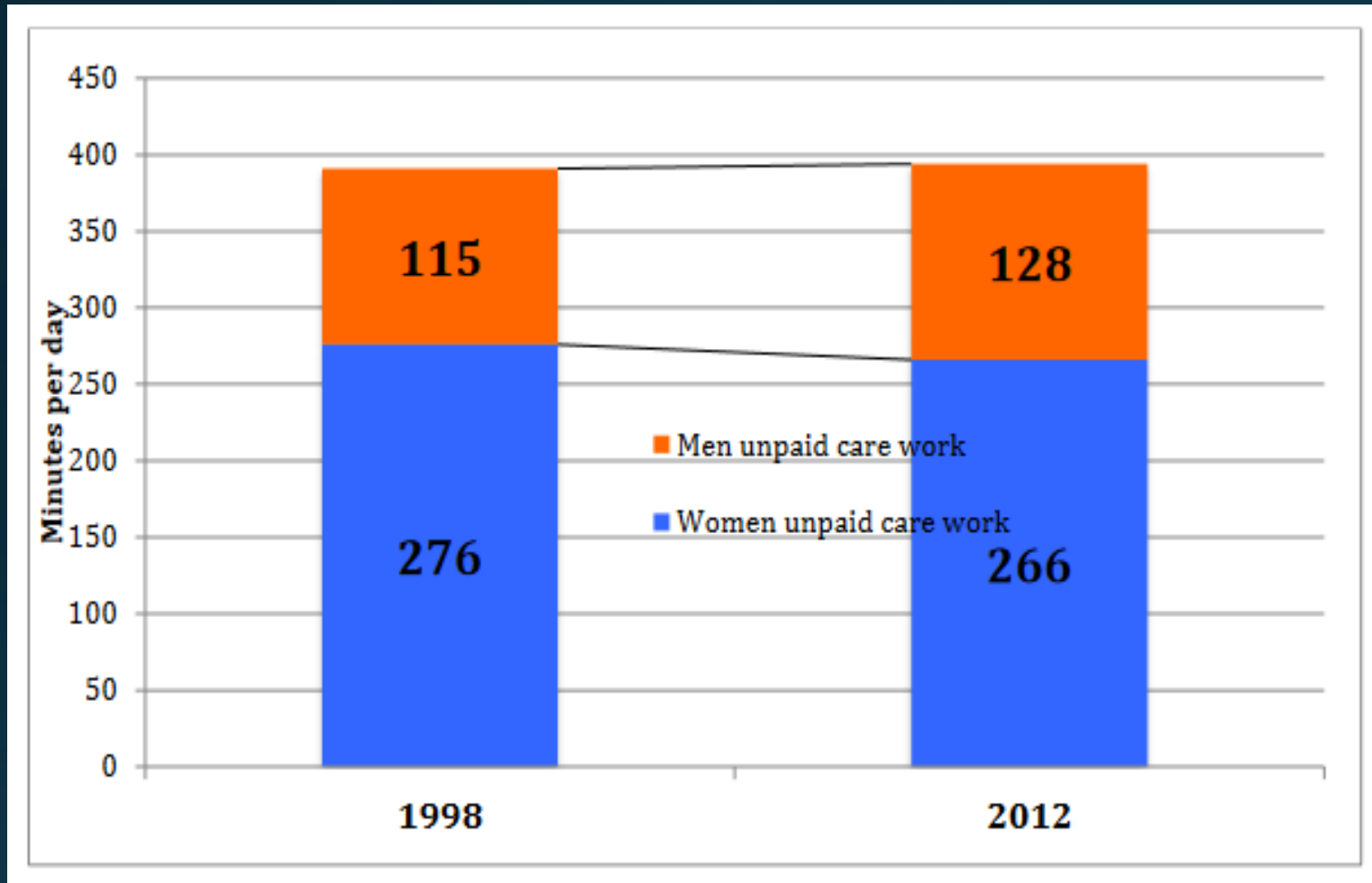
Grandmothers spend **over 5 hours** on a daily basis.

No country achieved equal share of unpaid care work.

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

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

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

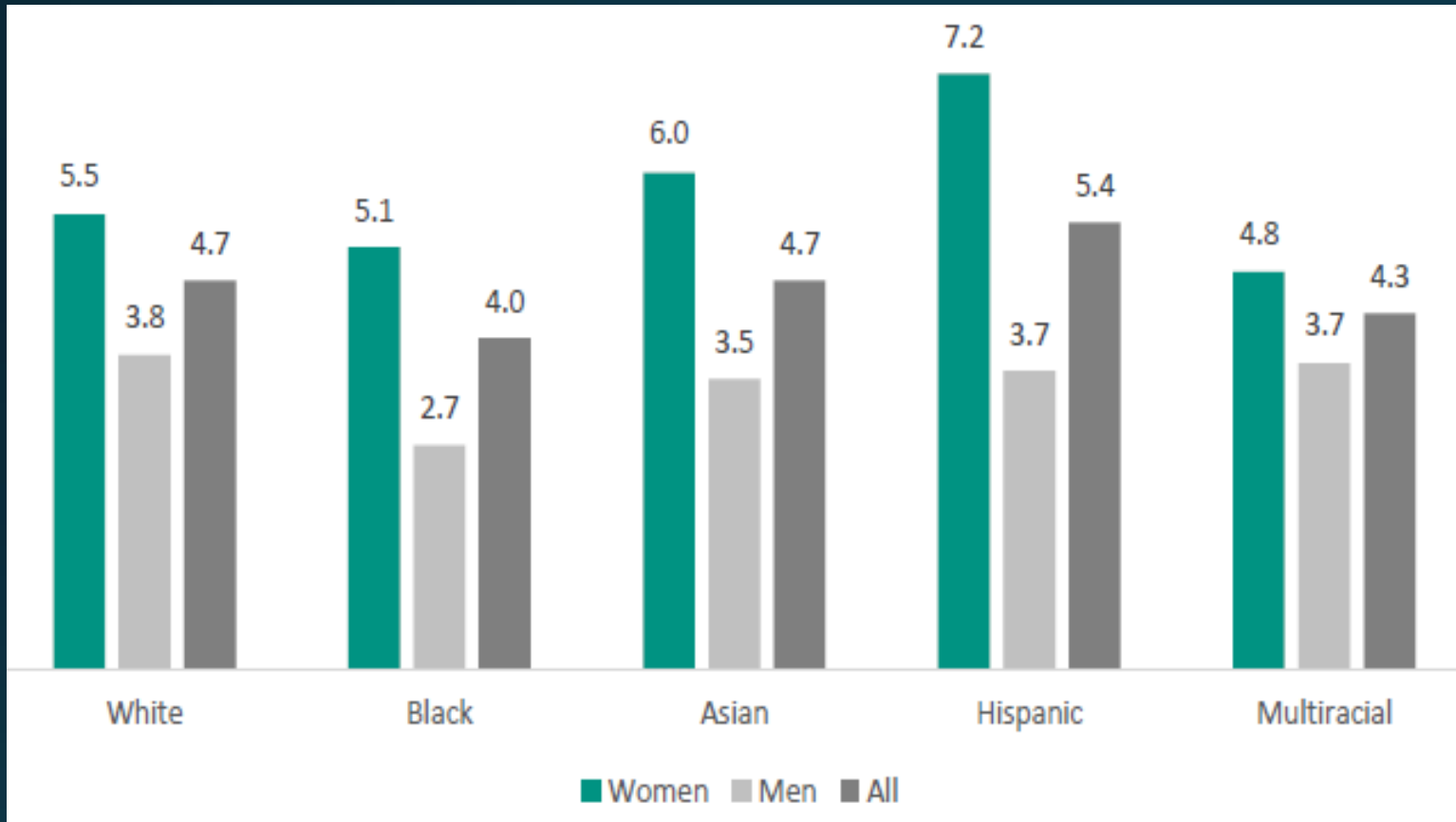


Charmes (2019)

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.

Hess et al. (2020)

COVID-19 impacts on unpaid care work:

negative

➤ Re-traditionalization of care

- In USA, UK and Germany, women spend significantly more time caring for children during the lockdown (Adams-Prassl et al. 2020).
- Homeschooling – a new domestic task for many families during COVID-19. 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 impacting redistribution of unpaid care work

Summary of research findings

- 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.

COVID-19 impacts on unpaid care work: emerging challenges and opportunities

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!