

# Nothing changes: Lockdown gender gap remains firm

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Credit: Alexander Grey from Pexels

While the world has been thrown into chaos by COVID-19, gender inequality has survived the pandemic intact, according to a report from Oxford's Department of Sociology, with women still carrying out most

housework and childcare, although they are disproportionately exposed to the virus—as the majority of front-line health workers.

Although people throughout the country have been forced to remain at home, the report shows the [gender inequality](#) gap has remained firm during lockdown, with women still undertaking the lion's share of housework and childcare. Men have increased their input in the home, but so have women, so the 'gap' has stayed the same in terms of housework—at around five hours a week.

Women, who form 80% of health and social care workers, have also been more exposed to COVID-19. Meanwhile, in terms of health and well-being, the gender gap has widened. Women and mothers have suffered a dramatic decline in well-being during the lockdown period and display more signs of depression than men. And [single mothers](#), who are least likely to own a house or a car and have the highest risk of depression, have fared the worst in the [labour market](#), with lone parents having seen the largest increase in non-working rates.

Calling for action, the report from Professor Man-Yee Kan and her team, states, 'In a crisis, it is paramount to ensure the safety and livelihood of all. Women, and particularly single mothers, are already severely affected in the [economic downturn](#) as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Policymakers must consider the gendered impacts and their repercussions when implementing measures to tackle the epidemic.'

The report recommends three key measures, 'To prevent the long-term decline in women's economic power, spikes in poverty among [single-parent households](#) in particular and the resulting child poverty.'

These are:

- To secure childcare options, which would enable parents,

especially mothers, to perform paid work tasks in a more efficient way and remove risk of family conflict.

- Prioritise single parent families. Since they suffer disproportionately from the impact of the virus, their vulnerability needs to be reflected in the response.
- Improve the well-being of women, especially single parents. Secure employment is crucial to minimise the negative impact of COVID-19, especially for [women](#), who are more likely to be front-line workers.

The study compares employment, income, time-use and well-being figures reported by the same individuals, aged between 20 and 49, both before and during the lockdown period. The team analysed longitudinal data from the 2020 UK Household Longitudinal Survey COVID study.

**More information:** Gender inequalities: Changes in income, time use and well-being before and during the UK COVID-19 lockdown:  
[osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/u8ytc/](https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/u8ytc/)

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