

BALANCING THE SCALES: A DEEP DIVE INTO GENDER DISPARITIES IN CARE AND DEVELOPMENT

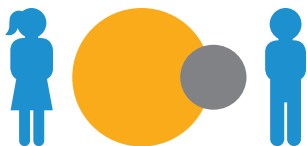
An analysis of the findings from the 2023 Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: the Gender Snapshot

CURRENT SITUATION:

Lack of public investments and biased social norms have relegated a disproportionate share of unpaid care work to women and girls; progress towards a fairer balance has been slow.



Globally women spend **2.8 more hours** than men on unpaid care and domestic work. On the current trajectory, the gap between the time spent by women and men on unpaid care will narrow slightly, but by 2050, women globally will still be spending **9.5% more time** or **2.3 more hours** per day on unpaid care work than men.



32.1% of young women aged 15 to 24 were not in education, employment or training (NEET) compared to **15.4% of young men**. Gaps were largest in Central and Southern Asia (48.7 per cent compared to 15.4 per cent).

Institutional barriers, including workplace discrimination, an unequal division of unpaid care and domestic responsibilities, and an undersupply of decent job opportunities, are among the variables disrupting the school-to-work transition for young women. Investments in care policies, services, jobs and infrastructure are required to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work. Moreover,

scholarships and other supports for those pursuing higher education or other opportunities to build skills are critical to close gender gaps.



In an aging world, care needs are growing fast. In the European Union, at age 65 and over, **33% of women** need long term care compared with **19% of men**. Survey data for 47 countries confirm that women aged 65 and older spend, on average, nearly twice the time performing unpaid care and domestic work tasks as men.

WHAT IF THE TREND CONTINUES:

Active resistance to gender equality and chronic underinvestment are key factors in slow progress and, in some cases, reversing gains already made.

Employment differentials, occupational segregation and the higher likelihood that women will hold part-time jobs and interrupt their careers due to care responsibilities perpetuate gender labour income gaps and cement income inequalities across the life course.



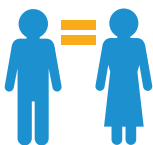
Today, only **28.2% of management positions** in the workplace are held by women. With the current slow pace of change, women's share of workplace management positions will reach only **30%** by 2050.

Gender equality must be the primary objective of these efforts. Gender-blind or gender-neutral intervention focused on employment generation may, for example, support job creation for all. But without a gender focus, these may fail to address biased social norms and childcare needs that prevent women from participating in the labour force. The resulting employment benefits, if any, will inevitably not accrue equitably.

Also, without explicit gender equality objectives and a requisite budget, the programme may exacerbate existing gender inequality instead of mitigating it.

OPPORTUNITIES:

Achieving zero poverty for all women and girls by 2030 will require simultaneously acting on long-standing gender disparities, including in access to land, health care and family planning, education and the labour market.



Three years into the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030), there is an urgent call for the global community to implement multisectoral, synergistic policies that uphold the rights and welfare of women and girls. This includes dedicated support to older women in their roles as income earners and care providers, and ensure their access to lifelong learning, education and training, social protection, health and social care, including long-term care, housing and transportation.



Ending all preventable maternal deaths will require strengthening health systems, closing gaps in care quality and access, and ensuring universal coverage.



Measures to speed progress must include closing gender imbalances in jobs; promoting pay transparency, such as through equal pay audits; and supporting working parents through access to affordable childcare, and paid parental leave for both parents.



Gender quotas are one concrete policy solution proven to increase women's representation in both business and politics. Other policy levers, including flexible work arrangements, mentorship and leadership training are also needed.



Women's unequal status in society and agrifood systems spurs vulnerability to poverty and hunger. Addressing such disparities would both reduce food insecurity and boost global GDP by 1 per cent (nearly \$1 trillion).



Overall, gender-responsive social protection is essential, as is combating gender-based discrimination that limits women's role in society. Over 100 million women and girls could be lifted out of poverty if governments were to employ a comprehensive strategy aimed at improving access to education and family planning, fair and equal wages, and expanding social transfers.



In this critical midpoint moment of the SDGs, financing for development must prioritize policies and programmes committed to closing gender gaps and empowering women and girls. Gender equality must be costed as a separate but synergistic objective in achieving all global goals. \$6.4 trillion per year is needed across 48 developing countries, covering nearly 70 per cent of the population in developing countries. This translates to \$1,383 per person. Spending gap: \$360 billion annually.

As part of the mission to reshape the global care agenda, UN Women has steadfastly promoted care as a pivotal element for gender equality. At the Global level, UN Women convenes the [Generation Equality Action Coalition on Economic Justice and Rights](#) which aims to achieve change through transformation of the care economy. It seeks to increase the number of countries with comprehensive quality public care policies and systems, create 80 million decent care jobs, and quantify the contribution of care work to the economy. Over 100 commitments from across the public and private sector have been made. Additionally, [the Global Alliance for Care](#), emanated from the 2021 [Generation Equality Forum](#), and has been at the forefront of the global discussions on care. The alliance promotes the recognition and support of unpaid care work, emphasizing the need for universal access to quality care and upholding the labor rights of health and care workers. Its advocacy efforts have successfully integrated the importance of care as both a right and a public good into global policy frameworks, underscoring its significance for sustainable development and economic growth.

Complementing this, the UN Women-ILO Joint Programme, "Promoting Decent Employment for Women through Inclusive Growth Policies and Investments in Care," stands as a testament to the commitment towards gender equality in the care economy and the labor market. This initiative, founded on the principles of inclusive growth and gender equality, served as a beacon within the United Nations' response framework to the COVID-19 crisis. A major achievement of this program is the development of a policy tool that aids in identifying care service gaps, estimating public investment costs, providing a forward-looking estimate of the short- and long-run returns of such investments in the social, employment, and fiscal spheres. Implemented successfully in Argentina, Morocco, Nepal, Ethiopia, and Egypt, the program's approach has witnessed widespread adaptation and adoption in over 20 countries, fostering global collaboration and knowledge exchange in the care sector.