

*A Gendered Pandemic: Covid 19 and Questions of Gender (in)equalities*

Call for Papers for Online Symposium

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The 2020 pandemic offers both threats and opportunities to the redress of gender inequality. Popular early ideas about how a refashioning of the workplace with remote working and a renegotiation of care in the face of men's greater presence in the home has been tempered by job losses in sectors predominated by women, and a re-inscription if not an exacerbation of the domestic division of labour, alongside increases in rates of violence against women. Parliaments around the world have had to respond to the public policy and institutional challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. On the ground, and guided by public health regulations and guidance, parliaments like other large workplaces have also had to revise how politics is 'done' – this has included social distancing and the greater use of technology to aid remote participation. INGOs such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), and UN women have moreover offered insights on how parliaments must act in a gender sensitive fashion, again both policy and institutionally speaking.

This online symposium offers an opportunity to reflect on women's differentiated experiences of the pandemic, and to galvanise research around the impact of COVID\_19 on gender inequalities. Following the various social distancing and 'lockdown' measures in response to the COVID\_19 pandemic, the past six months have borne witness to a range of rapid and significant social, economic and cultural shifts – some of which have taken place with little public deliberation or sufficient scrutiny. One of the most notable of these is the extent to which pre-existing social inequalities have intensified during the pandemic. In particular, a growing body of research has begun to reveal the detrimental impact of COVID\_19 on the everyday experiences of women. Early research findings (ONS, 2020), show that women were disproportionately affected by the closure of childcare facilities and schools, and that mothers continued to shoulder the bulk of unpaid domestic labour including childcare, even where paid work arrangements are the same as that of fathers. Other research has shown that significantly more mothers than fathers have suffered career setbacks, including being 'furloughed' or made redundant, and having work hours cut as a direct consequence of the removal of childcare facilities. Research shows that BAME women are especially vulnerable to the impact of COVID\_19; that they have suffered a greater financial and psychological impact and that recorded levels of life satisfaction and happiness are lower for BAME women (Women's Budget Group, 2000). Furthermore, low-income women are also more likely to be impacted by COVID\_19, particularly in terms of working in high-risk jobs. For women academics, early data shows that women's research outputs decreased significantly during lockdown while the submission of journal articles from men increased. The COVID\_19 pandemic has been accompanied by a blurring of the usual boundaries between domestic and paid work.

As the first wave eases, it is timely to reconsider some of the feminist theoretical positions exploring gender, work, the family and domestic life. This online symposium will bring together researchers interested in exploring the relationships between gender and COVID\_19, and to contribute to debates about future directions for research. We particularly welcome papers from BAME scholars and encourage submissions that explore the gendered impact of COVID on BAME groups. We anticipate that the symposium will bring together scholars from all career stages who are researching a wide

range of associated themes. The intention is to invite presenters to write up their papers for a special edition of a leading social science journal which will then be launched at an event in Parliament.

Possible themes include but are not limited to:

- Paid work and employment
- The time squeeze or 'second shift'
- Boundaries between domestic and paid work
- Domestic labour, childcare and homeschooling
- Parenting, motherhood and fatherhood; the family
- Stigma and surveillance
- Institutions: parliaments and public spaces; workplaces; the universities
- Methodological innovations for socially distanced feminist research

*We invite abstracts of 250 words to be sent to [GenderPandemic@yahoo.com](mailto:GenderPandemic@yahoo.com) before 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020.*