

60

Number of confirmed cases in Botswana

26,800

Number of tests carried out,
26,758 negative

24

Number of recoveries.
36 active cases

1

Number of lives lost to an infection of COVID-19

Above figures are as of 14 June.

Adapted from UN Women

How COVID-19 impacts women and girls



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A profound shock to our societies and economies, the COVID-19 pandemic underscores society's reliance on women both on the front line and at home, while simultaneously exposing structural inequalities across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection.

In times of crisis, when resources are strained and institutional capacity is limited, women and girls face disproportionate impacts with far reaching consequences that are only further amplified in contexts of fragility, conflict, and emergencies. Hard-fought gains for women's rights are also under threat. Responding to the pandemic is not just about rectifying long-standing inequalities, but also about building a resilient world in the interest of everyone with women at the centre of recovery.

Violence against women

Economic and social stresses combined with movement restrictions and cramped homes are driving a surge in gender-based violence. Prior to the pandemic, it was estimated that one in three women will experience violence during their lifetimes, a human rights violation that also bears an economic cost of USD 1.5 trillion. Many of these women became trapped at home with their abusers and faced an increased risk of other forms of violence. Women — especially essential and informal workers, such as doctors, nurses and street vendors — are at heightened risk of violence as they navigate deserted urban or rural public spaces and transportation services under restricted movement. The pandemic's economic impacts are likely to increase sexual exploitation, leaving women and girls in fragile economies and refugee contexts particularly vulnerable. In

April, UN Secretary-General António Guterres appealed to end all forms of violence¹ everywhere, from war zones to people's homes, and to focus efforts on ending the pandemic.

Domestic violence

Emerging data shows a deeply concerning trend: COVID-19 is driving a spike in domestic violence and is being compounded by money, health and security stresses, movement restrictions, crowded homes and reduced peer support. According to the Botswana Gender-Based Violence Indicators Study (2012), 67% of women in Botswana had experienced some form of gender violence in their lifetime including partner and non-partner violence. In a number of countries, domestic violence reports and emergency calls have surged upwards of 25 per cent² since social distancing measures were enacted. Such numbers are also likely to reflect only the worst cases. Prior to the pandemic, less than 40 per cent of the women who experienced violence sought help of any sort. Now, quarantine and movement restrictions further serve to isolate many women trapped with their abusers from friends, families and other support networks. And, the closure of non-essential businesses means that work no longer provides respite for many survivors and heightened economic insecurity makes it more difficult for them to leave. For those who do manage to reach out, overstretched health, social, judicial

and police services are struggling to respond as resources are diverted to deal with the pandemic.

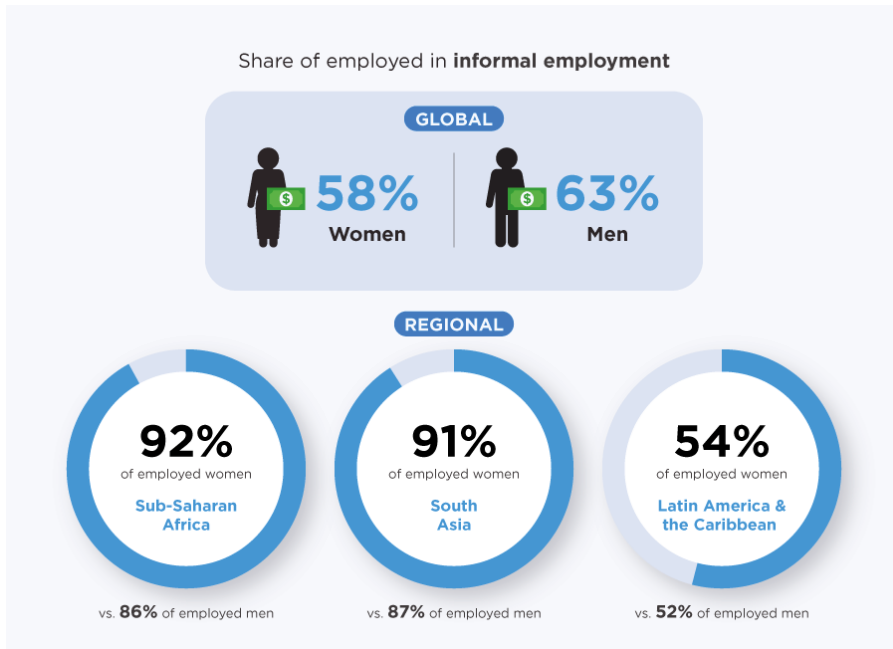
The 2018 Botswana Relationship Study disclosed that a minimal fraction of gender-based violence cases are reported, generally. With the present conditions when many people had to stay home with their perpetrators, domestic violence cases have been on the rise.

Economic shock

When crises strike, women and girls are harder hit by economic impacts. Around the world, women generally earn less and save less, are the majority of single-parent households and disproportionately hold more insecure jobs in the informal economy or service sector with less access to social protections. This leaves them less able to absorb the economic shocks than men. For many families, school closures and social distancing measures have increased the unpaid care and domestic load of women at home, making them less able to take on or balance paid work.

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/make-prevention-and-redress-violence-against-women-key-part>

² <https://data.unwomen.org/resources/covid-19-emerging-gender-data-and-why-it-matters>



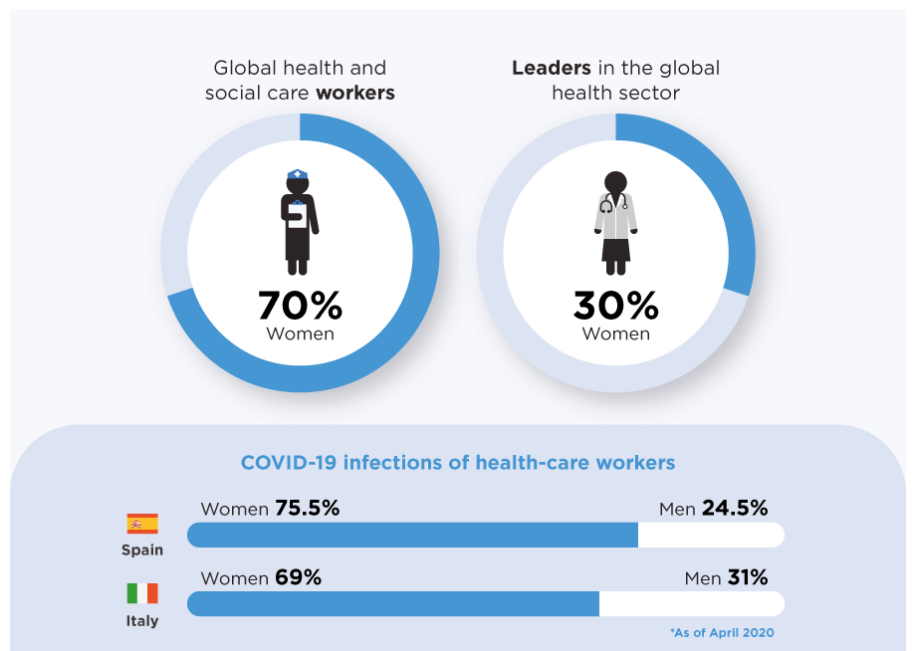
The situation is worse in developing economies, where a larger share of people are employed in the informal economy in which there are far fewer social protections for health insurance, paid sick leave and more. In Sub-Saharan Africa³, for example, around 92 per cent of employed women are in informal employment compared to 86 per cent of men. It is likely that the pandemic could result in a prolonged dip in women’s incomes and labour force participation. The ILO estimates⁴ global unemployment to rise between 5.3 million (“low” scenario) and 24.7 million (“high” scenario) from a base level of 188 million in 2019 as a result of COVID-19’s impact on global GDP growth. By comparison, global unemployment went up by 22 million during the 2008-9 global financial crisis. Women informal workers, migrants, youth and the world’s poorest, among other vulnerable groups, are more susceptible to lay-offs and job cuts. As of 2018, according to statistics published by Statistics Botswana, there were a total of about 1.17 million women in the country, and 1.09 men. As of 2019 Statistics Botswana data shows there

are more women than men in the country, with about 1.17 million women and 1.09 million men. In a 2016 article published by Professor T. Modesto, titled *Women and Leadership in Botswana Agriculture*, in which it was shared that agriculture provides for, and account for the livelihood of more than 80% of the population, which shows that women in Botswana, as in most African countries, dominate the informal sector. Women also comprised 88.1%

of informal sector workers. In addition to this, women make up 77.1% of ‘hotels and restaurant’ workers. This illustrates that women who also dominate the informal sector are more susceptible to economic impacts.

Healthcare workers

The pandemic is a reminder of the essential contribution that women make at all levels. As health professionals, community volunteers, transport and logistics managers, scientists, doctors, vaccine developers and more, women are at the frontlines of the COVID-19 response. Globally, women make up 70 per cent of the health workforce⁵ especially as nurses, midwives and community health workers, and account for the majority of service staff in health facilities as cleaners, launderers and caterers. Despite these numbers, women are often not reflected in national or global decision-making on the response to COVID-19. Further, women are still paid much less than their male counterparts and hold fewer leadership positions in the health sector. Masks and other protective equipment designed and sized for men leave women at greater risk of



³ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_626831.pdf

⁴ https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_738742/lang--en/index.htm

⁵ <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/311314/WHO-HIS-HWF-Gender-WP1-2019.1-eng.pdf>



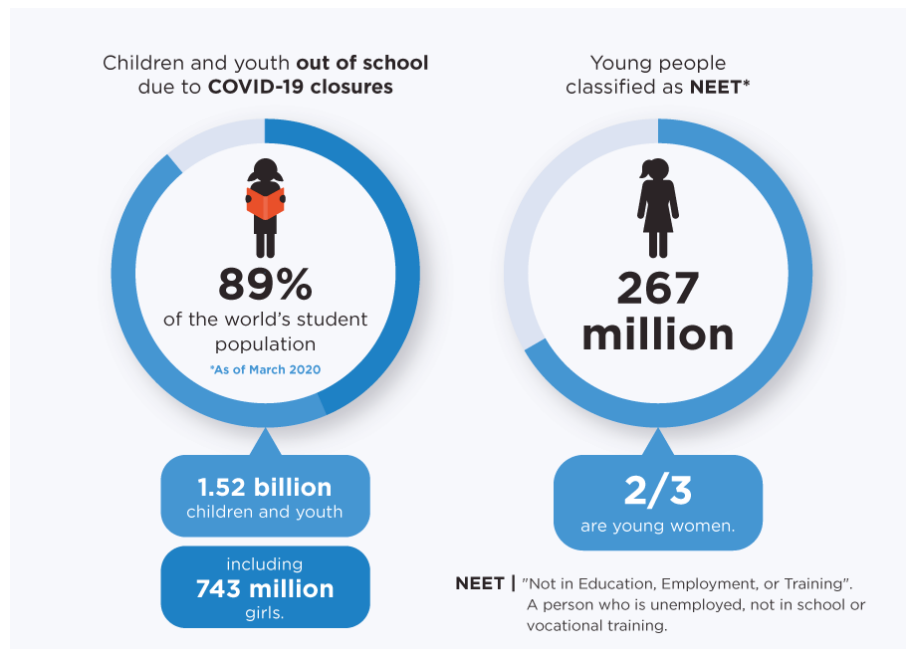
exposure. The needs of women frontline workers must be prioritized:

This means ensuring that health care workers and caregivers have access to women-friendly personal protective equipment and menstrual hygiene products and are afforded flexible working arrangements to balance the burden of care.

Young women and girls

From running awareness campaigns to volunteering support for the elderly to working on the front line, young people are joining efforts at all levels to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

By the end of March 2020, UNESCO estimated⁶ that over 89 per cent of the world's student population were out of school or university because of COVID-19 school closures, forcing many learners online with large parts of the population in low-tech or no-internet environments at a severe disadvantage. Young women and girls living in poverty, with disabilities or in rural, isolated locations are more likely to be pulled out of school first to compensate for increased care and domestic work at home. They are also more prone to child marriage and other forms of violence as families find ways to alleviate economic burdens. Unemployment, too, will hit young people particularly hard: Following the 2008 economic recession, youth



Yet, youth, especially young women, indigenous peoples, migrants and refugees, face heightened socio-economic and health impacts and an increased risk of gender-based violence due to movement restrictions, discrimination and more. School closures and overstretched health care systems will also have acute effects on young women and girls.

unemployment rates were significantly higher in many places than overall averages, and the recent expansion of the gig economy will likely heighten this disparity. Before the pandemic even hit, there was already an upward trend in the number of youth not in employment⁷, education or training (NEET). Out of the some 267 million young people globally classified as NEET, two-thirds, or 181 million, are young women.

⁶ <https://en.unesco.org/news/covid-19-school-closures-around-world-will-hit-girls-hardest>

⁷ https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_737053?lang=en



Unpaid care and domestic work

The world's economies and maintenance of our daily lives are built on the invisible and unpaid labour of women and girls. Before the crisis started, women did nearly three times⁸ as much unpaid care and domestic work as men. Social distancing measures, school closures and

overburdened health systems have put an increased demand on women and girls to cater to the basic survival needs of the family and care for the sick and the elderly.

With more than 1.5 billion students at home⁹ as of March 2020 due to the pandemic, existing gender norms have put the increased demand for unpaid childcare and domestic work on women. This constrains their ability to

carry out paid work, particularly when jobs cannot be carried out remotely. The lack of childcare support is particularly problematic for essential workers and lone mothers who have care responsibilities. Discriminatory social norms are likely to increase the unpaid workload of COVID-19 on girls and adolescent girls, especially those living in poverty or in rural, isolated locations.

Evidence from past epidemics shows that adolescent girls are at particular risk of dropping out and not returning to school even after the crisis is over. Women's unpaid care work has long been recognized as a driver of inequality with direct links to wage inequality, lower income, and physical and mental health stressors. As countries rebuild economies, the crisis might offer an opportunity to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work once and for all.

BEFORE THE PANDEMIC

Women did nearly **three times as much** unpaid care and domestic work as men.

SINCE THE PANDEMIC

A number of factors have added to women's unpaid work at home. This includes:

School closures

Stretched healthcare systems

⁸ <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/progress-of-the-worlds-women-2019-2020-en.pdf>

⁹ <https://en.unesco.org/news/covid-19-school-closures-around-world-will-hit-girls-hardest>

How can we respond to the pandemic?

Recovery must lead to a more equal world that is more resilient to future crises. Fiscal stimulus packages and emergency measures to address public health gaps have been put in place. It is crucial that all national responses place women and girls - their inclusion, representation, rights, social and economic outcomes, equality and protection - at their centre if they are to have the necessary impacts. This is not just about rectifying long-standing inequalities but also about building a more just and resilient world. It is in the interests of not only women and girls but also boys and men. Women will be the hardest hit by this pandemic, but they will also be the backbone of recovery in communities. Every policy response that recognizes this will be the more impactful for it. To achieve this, the United Nations emphasizes three cross-cutting priorities:

1. Ensure women's equal representation in all COVID-19 response planning and decision-making.


Evidence across sectors, including economic planning and emergency response, demonstrates unquestioningly that policies that do not consult women or include them in decision-making are simply less effective, and can even do harm. Beyond individual women, women's organizations who are often on the front line of response in communities should also be represented and supported.

2. Drive transformative change for equality by addressing the care economy, paid and unpaid

In the formal economy care jobs, from teachers to nurses, are underpaid in relation to other sectors. In the home, women perform the bulk of care work, unpaid and invisible. Both are foundational to daily life and the economy but are premised on and entrench gendered norms and inequalities.

3. Target women and girls in all efforts to address the socio-economic impact of COVID-19

It will be important to apply an intentional gender lens to the design of fiscal stimulus packages and social assistance programmes to achieve greater equality, opportunities, and social protection.



These three cross-cutting priorities reflect the Secretary-General's recent Call to Action on Human Rights, which singled out measures that, if pursued, would have meaningful impact on the rights of women and girls.

These measures have become more vital in the context of the pandemic. Putting women and girls at the centre of economies will fundamentally drive better and more sustainable development outcomes for all, support a more rapid recovery, and place us back on a footing to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.



If you experience or witness gender based violence please contact any of the following organisations.

Stay Safe. Together we can prevent Covid-19. Together we can stop Gender Based Violence.



Botswana Gender Based Violence
Prevention and Support Centre

16510 send "Help"
74265081
75659641

Botswana Gender Based Violence
Prevention and Support Centre



BOSASNet
72659891
3959119
3913490



Women Against Rape
73437147
73437187
6860243 (tollfree)



Stepping Stones
International
73737295
71529999
71470972



LEGABIBO
76391762
76488051
3167425



Men and Boys
For Gender Equality
74711845
3957763



Childline Botswana

72300901
11611
3900900



Emang Basadi
72819197
72172834
3909335

Ark and Mark, Botswana Centre for Public Integrity (BCPI), Botswana Labour Migrants Association (BoLAMA), Putting Women First Trust, Botswana Network for Mental Health (BNMH), Botswana Substance Abuse Network (BOSASNet), Humana People to People (HPP), Charity for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (C.A.R.E.), Molao Matters, Molayakgosi, DITSHWANELO – The Botswana Centre for Human Rights, Friends of Diversity, Inclusive Directions Botswana, Save Widows and Orphans Organisation Botswana, Skillshare International Botswana, Southern African Alcohol Policy Alliance Botswana (SAAPA-Botswana), Youth Alliance for Leadership and Development in Africa (YALDA - Botswana).