



PRESS RELEASE

COVID-19 recovery takes priority over closing gender inequality globally, while women bear the brunt of the pandemic

International Women's Day 2021

London, 8th March 2021 — A new global study carried out in 28 countries by Ipsos, in collaboration with the Global Institute for Women's Leadership at King's College London for International Women's Day shows that:

- People believe the gender pay gap is real and important, but are divided over whether it should be a top priority right now
- More flexible working practices and support for women and girls facing violence and abuse are seen as key to ensuring the recovery from Covid-19 addresses issues facing women

GENDER PAY GAP SEEN AS REAL AND IMPORTANT ISSUE, BUT DIVISIONS OVER WHETHER IT IS A TOP PRIORITY RIGHT NOW

While studies highlight the disproportionate economic impact of the pandemic on women¹, people are divided over whether closing the gender pay gap should be a top priority right now. Two in five (42%) think that closing the gender pay gap is important but should not be a priority right now compared with 36% who think it should be one of the top priorities in their country. Women are much more likely to say that it should be a priority now than men; 41% vs 31% of men.

Countries where closing the gender gap is seen to be a priority more than the global country average are Chile (53%), South Africa (52%) and France (51%).

Despite these divisions, there is broad sympathy for the need to address the gender pay gap with half of people (50%) across the 28 countries saying that concerns about the gender pay gap are a response to a real problem. But there is a sizeable minority of around one in five (19%) who believes that concerns about the gender pay gap are an example of political correctness gone too far and a similar proportion (18%) believes that reports about the gender pay gap in the media are fake news. Men are more likely to think that reports about the gender pay gap are fake news compared with women (21% vs 16% for women).

There is majority support for greater transparency over pay. Over half (56%) support the right for people to know what colleagues who are doing similar work are being paid. And support to know this information is slightly higher among women than men (58% vs 54%). One in five (20%) do not think people should have the right to know what colleagues doing the same work are being paid.

Countries where calls for transparency is greatest are Chile (70%), Peru (67%), Argentina (66%) and Hungary (65%).

¹ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/9/feature-covid-19-economic-impacts-on-women>

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MORE FLEXIBLE WORKING PRACTICES AND SUPPORT FOR WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE AND ABUSE ARE KEY TO ENSURING THE RECOVERY FROM COVID-19 ADDRESSES ISSUES FACING WOMEN

More flexible working practices (40%) and more support for women and girls who face violence and abuse (36%) are the top priorities for ensuring that the programme for recovery addresses issues facing women. This is followed by better access to health care services (33%), social assistance (e.g. cash/food support/unemployment/health care/care workers) at 30% and investment in job creation programmes (29%).

Countries where more flexible working practices, such as working from home and working part-time are higher than the global country average are Chile (49%), Australia, Canada, Japan and South Korea (all 48%), The Netherlands (47%) and Great Britain (46%). They are considered relatively less important in Brazil (28%), France and South Africa (both 32%) and in Argentina (33%).

Respondents in Turkey (56%), South Africa (52%) and Peru (51%) are much more likely to prioritise support for women and girls who face violence or abuse than the global country average. In contrast, this is seen as less of a priority in Russia (24%), The Netherlands (23%) and Italy (21%).

However, as countries recover from the pandemic, half (52%) think that gender equality between men and women will revert to what it was before the pandemic. And opinion is split as to whether gender equality will improve or get worse; one in ten (11%) think women will become more equal with men and the same proportion (11%) think women will become less equal. Women are slightly more pessimistic than men on this measure with 13% saying they will become less equal with men compared with 9% of men who think this.

PUTTING PEOPLE BEFORE POLITICS IS KEY TO RECOVERY

The study shows that the most important quality that people want from their political leaders in order to do a good job in handling the recovery from the pandemic is to put their country's needs before politics – mentioned by a third of people (33%) and equally likely to be picked out by men and women. This is followed by being honest with the public (29%), understanding the problems facing ordinary people (28%), taking into account the impact on the economy as well as health (25%) and making the right decisions at the right time (25%).

Women are slightly more likely to pick out the following over men:

- For political leaders to understand the problems facing ordinary people (30% for women vs 26% for men);
- To take into account the impact on the economy as well as health (27% for women vs 22% for men); and
- To act quickly to protect people in their country (26% for women vs 22% for men).

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WOMEN MORE LIKELY TO BE LOOKING AFTER THEIR HEALTH AND WELLBEING NOW THAN BEFORE THE PANDEMIC

The study asked about a range of things people are doing differently now in their lives compared to before the pandemic started. Women are slightly more likely than men to say that they are taking actions to improve their health and wellbeing than they did before crisis started (50% vs 46%). Countries where people say they are most likely to be taking actions to improve their health and wellbeing now than before the pandemic are Peru (73%), Mexico (69%) and South Africa (68%). On the flipside, countries where people are least likely to be doing this are Turkey (32%) and Poland (29%).

Across the 28 countries, close to four in 10 people (37%) say they are now more likely to spend less time working and more time with their family compared to before the crisis began. A similar proportion (39%) say the crisis has made no difference, whereas almost one in five (17%) say they are less likely to do this now.

Overall, 44% of people in work say they are now more likely to worry about losing their job than they did before the crisis started. A third (34%) say there is no difference while 13% say they are less likely to worry now. Women are slightly more likely to worry about losing their job than men (45% vs 42%). Respondents in South Africa (63%), Mexico (60%) and Peru (58%) are much more likely than the global country average to say they are worried about losing their job.

“WOMEN’S WORK” IS UNDERPAID?

Jobs in caring professions - childcare, nursing, care work - are seen as predominately done by women, and also as underpaid, and the same applies to shop work (although there are also examples of professions that people think on balance are more likely to be made up of men that are also seen as relatively underpaid, such as delivery drivers and police officers). In contrast, politicians and bankers, who are seen as being paid too much, are viewed as predominantly male occupations (although it should be pointed out this is not necessarily seen as a causal link).

- Four in five (82%) think that those providing childcare (such as nursery workers, childminders and nannies) are predominantly women and over half (55%) think they are paid too little for the work they do.
- Around seven in 10 (68%) think that nursing is mostly made up of women (compared with 25% who think it is made up of equal numbers of men and women). Six in ten (59%) think they are paid too little
- 64% say that care worker jobs, such as helping the elderly and those with disabilities are predominantly done by women and the same proportion (63%) thinks they are paid too little for the work that they do.
- Two-thirds of people (66%) across the countries surveyed think that politicians are predominantly male and they are ranked highest for being paid too much for the work that they do - by three-quarters (74%) of people.
- 86% think that construction workers are mostly men. For delivery drivers this figure is 78% and 68% for police officers. For all of these professions, the balance of opinion shows that people think that they are paid too little for the job that they do.



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Julia Gillard, former prime minister of Australia and Chair of the Global Institute for Women's Leadership at King's College London, said:

"It's been said that we're at a coronavirus crossroads: we face a choice between building back better or allowing progress on gender equality to stall or even be reversed. As the world decides which path to take, the good news is that the vast majority of people recognise that closing the gender pay gap is important. The bad news is that in many countries, people are less clear it should be a top priority right now, as we begin to reopen and rebuild society. But if we're to have any chance of ensuring women don't lose out further because of the crisis, we need to keep this issue high on the agenda."

About the study

These are the results of a 28-country survey conducted by Ipsos on its Global Advisor online platform. Ipsos interviewed a total of 20,520 adults aged 18-74 in the United States, Canada, Israel, Malaysia, South Africa, and Turkey, and 16-74 in 21 other markets between 22 January and 5 February 2021.

The sample consists of approximately 1,000 individuals in each of Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, mainland China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Spain, and the U.S., and 500 individuals in each of Argentina, Chile, Hungary, Hong Kong, India, Israel, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, and Turkey.

The samples in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, and the U.S. can be taken as representative of their general adult population under the age of 75.

The samples in Brazil, Chile, mainland China, India, Israel, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Turkey are more urban, more educated, and/or more affluent than the general population. The survey results for these markets should be viewed as reflecting the views of the more "connected" segment of their population.

The data is weighted so that each country's sample composition best reflects the demographic profile of the adult population according to the most recent census data.

Where results do not sum to 100 or the "difference" appears to be +/-1 more/less than the actual, this may be due to rounding, multiple responses, or the exclusion of "don't know" or not stated responses.



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The precision of Ipsos online polls is calculated using a credibility interval with a poll of 1,000 accurate to +/- 3.5 percentage points and of 500 accurate to +/- 5.0 percentage points. For more information on Ipsos' use of credibility intervals, please visit the Ipsos website. The publication of these findings abides by local rules and regulations.