



## Care Work and the Global Economy

(Updated February 2022)

Care work, both paid and unpaid, underpins the global economy and society as a whole. The majority of care work is performed by women—especially those living in poverty and those who experience social and economic discrimination based on their gender identity, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, ability, migration status, sexuality, and class.<sup>1</sup> The devaluation of care work leads to low pay, precarity, and occupational segregation. Poverty and exclusion are key drivers of care inequalities among women.

The Global Day of Action for Care is October 29, when workers around the world take action to demand governments invest in the care economy to fund essential, community-sustaining jobs and increase gender equity. Workers in the care sector, whether formal or informal, deserve decent working conditions, fair wages and social protections, and all workers benefit from access to quality public health and care services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the disparities in women and men's engagement in both paid and unpaid care work.

- Women perform [76.2 percent](#) of unpaid care work.
- The unpaid care work that women perform globally is valued at [\\$10.8 trillion](#).
- The burden of unpaid care work and opportunities to find support, such as affordable child and eldercare, is a [key factor](#) in determining whether women enter and remain in employment, and the quality of the jobs they perform. Childcare and elder care create [time constraints](#) that inhibit women's engagement in the workforce. Globally, women spend [more than three times](#) as much time on unpaid care work for family members as men.
- The global paid care workforce is also dominated by women: [249 million women versus 132 million men](#).
- Many paid care workers are [migrants and in the informal economy](#), where poor working conditions and low pay is the norm.
- According to ILO estimates, there are about [67 million domestic workers worldwide](#), [80 percent](#) of which are women. At least [11 million](#) of the world's 67 million domestic workers are migrants.

### Additional Resources:

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<sup>1</sup><https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621287/bp-care-policy-scorecard-240921-en.pdf;jsessionid=18F58A6B52FDCB9D5EEAAF81D2BD818A?sequence=17>



International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) campaign page: [Invest in Care: Decent Work for Domestic Workers](#)

IDWF resource page: [Resources on Care Work](#)

International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) campaign page: [Investments and Decent Work in Care](#)

ITUC Webinars:

[Investments and Decent Work in Care - Voices from Europe and Asia Pacific](#)

October 29, 2021, *in English, French and Spanish.*

[Investments and Decent Work in Care - Voices from the Americas and Africa](#)

October 29, 2021, *in English, French and Spanish.*

Oxfam, [Care Policy Scorecard: A tool for assessing country progress towards an enabling policy environment on care](#)

*The scorecard is a tool to assess and track the extent to which government policies related to care are adopted, budgeted for and implemented, and the extent to which they will have an effect on care.*

International Labor Organization, [Building Forward Fairer: Women's rights to work and at work at the core of the COVID-19 recovery](#)

ITUC, [Investing in the Care Economy: Simulating employment effects by gender in countries in emerging economies](#)

*This 2017 study demonstrates that investment in the care economy would boost employment, stimulate economic development and reduce gender inequality.*

Rutger's Center for Women's Global Leadership, [A COVID-19 Feminist Recovery Plan to Achieve Substantive Gender Equality](#)

New York Times, Interview with feminist Silvia Federici [The Lockdown Showed How the Economy Exploits Women. She Already Knew](#)