



Work and Care: Gender Inequalities in the COVID-19 pandemic In a Central American Country

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Abstract

Care work is vital for social reproduction but relies almost exclusively on women; in addition to this, social reproduction activities are generally unpaid, undermining their role in sustaining the economy and life itself. This historic burden on women impact their access to the labor market, the quality of their jobs, and their physical, mental, and emotional health. In this paper, we analyze information from household surveys to find evidence of gender inequalities in the labor market and their relationship with time allocation and unpaid care work, before and during the COVID-19 pandemic in El Salvador, a Central American country. According to the results, in 2019, female workers allocated 22.6 hours per week to care activities and 26.8 hours when they had children, while men spent 7.6 hours per week and 8.8 when they had children. This shows that women work three times more per week in care activities than men, and even more when they have children. Additionally, the care workload increases to up to 36.2 hours per week for women with children of 5 years old or younger. Since many women had to work from home during the pandemic, social reproduction activities overlapped with their job responsibilities. In fact, in 2020, the care workload demanded up to 24 hours per week from female workers' time, 28 if they had children, while men allocated 7 to 8 hours per week to these activities. This work intensity requires women to find jobs in informality, as self-workers, or stop working.

Keywords: Economics, El Salvador, time allocation, social reproduction, women