

COVID-19 GLOBAL GENDER RESPONSE TRACKER

Factsheet: Europe, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand

Version 1 (September 28, 2020)

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in at least 27 million cases and over 900,000 deaths worldwide.¹ Despite their enormous contributions to mitigating the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the crisis is threatening to erase decades of progress for women and girls. While men have been most affected in terms of fatalities, COVID-19 has exacerbated economic crises, care deficits and the 'shadow pandemic' of gender-based violence, with disproportionate impacts on women.² Inequalities between groups of women based on race, disability, income, age and more have also been starkly apparent in both the spread and the impact of the virus. Based on a unique database compiled by UNDP and UN Women, this factsheet provides an overview of the COVID-19 response so far of governments in Europe and Northern America, Australia and New Zealand, with a focus on measures aimed at addressing threats to gender equality across three key dimensions: the surge in violence against women and girls, the unprecedented increase in unpaid care work, and the economic insecurity caused by the large-scale loss of jobs, incomes and livelihoods.³

BOX 1: COVID-19 GLOBAL GENDER RESPONSE TRACKER

Information in this factsheet is based on the [UNDP-UN Women COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker](#), which monitors policy measures enacted by national governments worldwide to tackle the COVID-19 crisis, and highlights responses that are gender-sensitive. Co-created by the two agencies, the tracker is coordinated by UNDP, with substantive leadership and technical contributions from UN Women. It is a living database with countries and measures being regularly added and updated.⁴ Like all policy trackers, there may be gaps or biases due to a lack of available information, underreporting of measures being announced, overreporting of measures that have been suspended, or the lack of data on the gender components of existing measures. Overall, findings should be interpreted with caution. When considering the number of individual measures, for example, it is important to note that countries with few or no COVID-19-related measures may have pre-existing gender-sensitive policies in place that help mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic. Measures also vary significantly in scope. This factsheet therefore also provides information on the content of the measures, which should be considered alongside the aggregate totals. No attempt is made to rank countries, but there is great potential for countries to learn from one another to improve their policy responses for women and girls. More information about the classification of policies, the definition of gender-sensitive measures and the data collection and analysis process can be found in the [methodological note](#).

¹ As of 10am CEST on 6 September 2020. WHO Weekly Epidemiological Update. https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200907-weekly-epi-update-4.pdf?sfvrsn=f5f607ee_2

² UN Women. 2020. "From insights to action: gender equality in the wake of COVID-19." <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/09/gender-equality-in-the-wake-of-covid-19>

³ Asia-Pacific Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group. 2020. "The COVID-19 Outbreak and Gender: Regional Analysis and Recommendations from Asia and the Pacific." May. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GiHA%20WG%20analysis%20%20brief.pdf>

⁴ To provide information on national measures to be included in the UNDP-UN Women COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker please contact covid.gender.helpdesk@undp.org.

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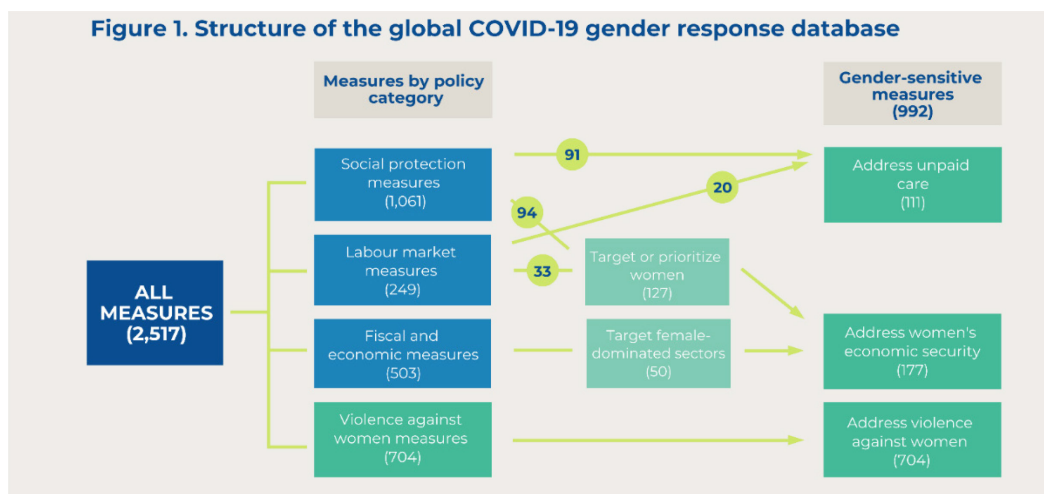
Overall, the gender response in this region has been uneven across countries and dimensions. More than a quarter of countries in Europe, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand have put in place a holistic gender response, and the region registers a relatively high number of measures to address violence against women and unpaid care. However, only a small proportion of measures target women's economic security. Despite this, examples of innovative, gender-responsive measures continue to be implemented in a range of contexts.

I. What is a gender-sensitive measure?

The set of all measures contained in the global tracker consists of 2,517 measures taken in response to COVID-19. These measures fall into four main policy categories: social protection, labour markets, fiscal and economic policies and measures to address violence against women and girls (Figure 1). These measures were partly imported from other existing databases and partly collected by UNDP and UN Women (see [methodological note](#)). Gender-sensitive measures (992 in total) are a subset of all measures – those that seek to directly address the specific risks and challenges that women and girls face as a result of the pandemic, including:

- all violence against women measures are categorized as gender-sensitive by default
- social protection and labour market measures are defined as gender-sensitive if they target women's economic security or address unpaid care
- fiscal and economic measures are defined as gender-sensitive if they provide support to female-dominated sectors of the economy, on the assumption that this is likely to protect women's employment and thereby their economic security.⁵

Figure 1. Structure of the global COVID-19 gender response database



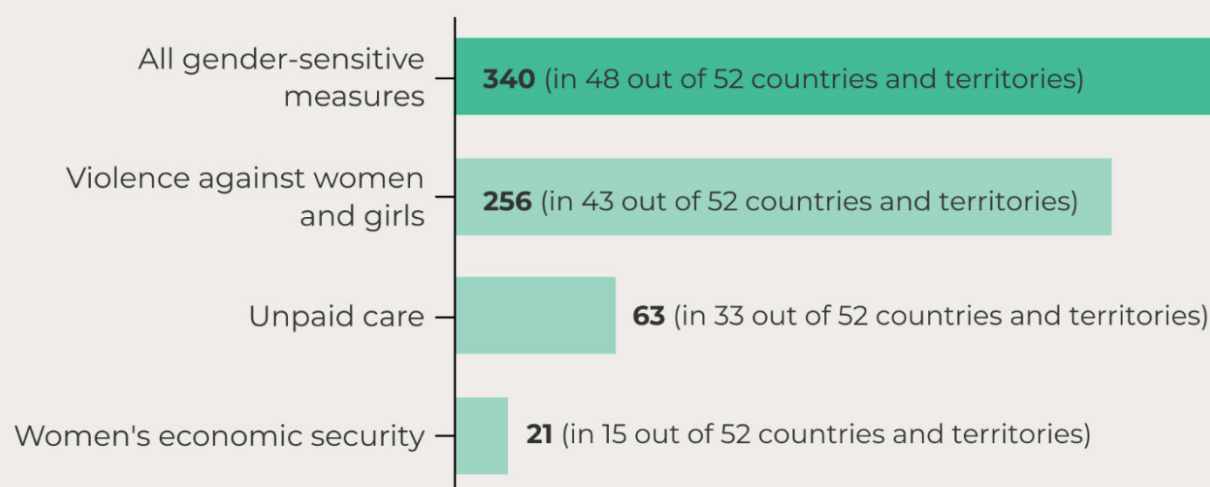
⁵ Given the different data collection and analysis processes used for identifying violence against women measures, on the one hand, and women's economic security and unpaid care measures, on the other, the three areas are not strictly comparable. While women's economic security and unpaid care measures have been located within a broader universe of social protection, labour market, fiscal and economic measures, violence against women measures have no such point of reference.

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The assessment is conducted based on the available information about policy design. An assessment of the implementation or gender impact of these measures is not included.

Figure 2: Number of gender-sensitive measures in Europe and Northern America, Australia and New Zealand, by dimension



II. The regional picture

Across Europe and Northern America, Australia and New Zealand, the tracker registers 48 out of 52 countries and territories (see Annex I for the full list) with a total of 340 gender-sensitive measures in response to COVID-19. Echoing global trends, most measures taken in this region address violence against women (256 measures across 43 countries), followed by measures to address unpaid care work (63 measures across 33 countries), with comparatively fewer measures to address women's economic security (21 measures across 15 countries).

Measures that target women's economic security and address unpaid care also make up only a fraction of the total social protection and labour market response, on the one hand, and the fiscal and economic response, on the other:

- In total, 50 countries and territories in Europe and Northern America, Australia and New Zealand have adopted 343 social protection and labour market measures in response to COVID-19. Of these measures, 21 per cent (73) are gender-sensitive in that they strengthen women's economic security or address unpaid care (Figure 3) – a comparatively higher share than in other regions.

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- Similarly, 41 countries and territories in Europe and Northern America, Australia and New Zealand have adopted 233 fiscal and economic measures to help businesses weather the crisis, but less than 5 per cent of these measures (11) have aimed to strengthen women's economic security by channelling resources to feminized sectors (Figure 4).

A total of 13 countries in this region register a holistic response with measures that span at least three dimensions – including Australia and Spain (see Annex I and II). Three out of the 52 countries and territories analysed register no gender-sensitive measures at all in response to COVID-19.

Figure 3. Proportion of gender-sensitive measures out of total social protection and labour market response in Europe and Northern America, Australia and New Zealand

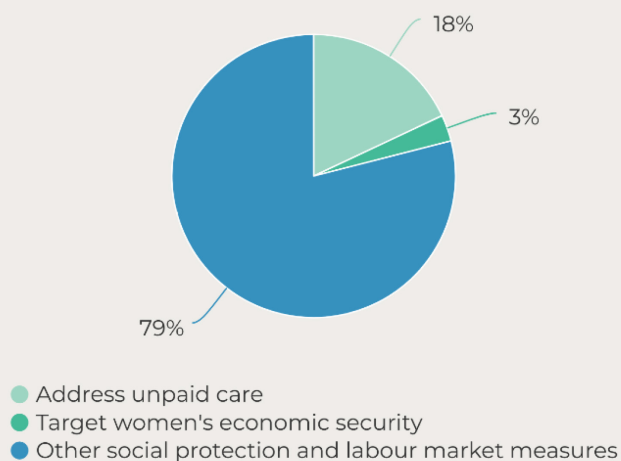
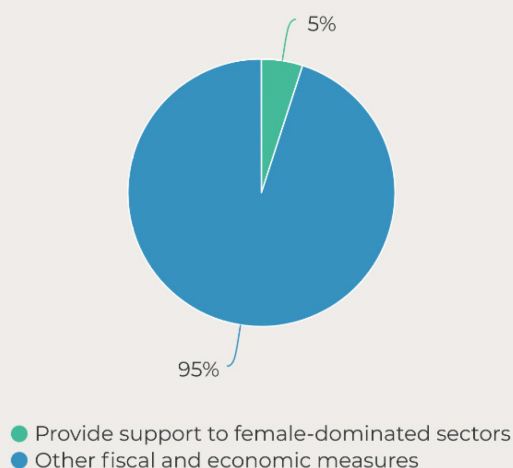


Figure 4. Proportion of gender-sensitive measures out of total fiscal and economic response in Europe and Northern America, Australia and New Zealand



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III. Which gender policies are governments prioritizing?

Violence against women and girls (VAWG)

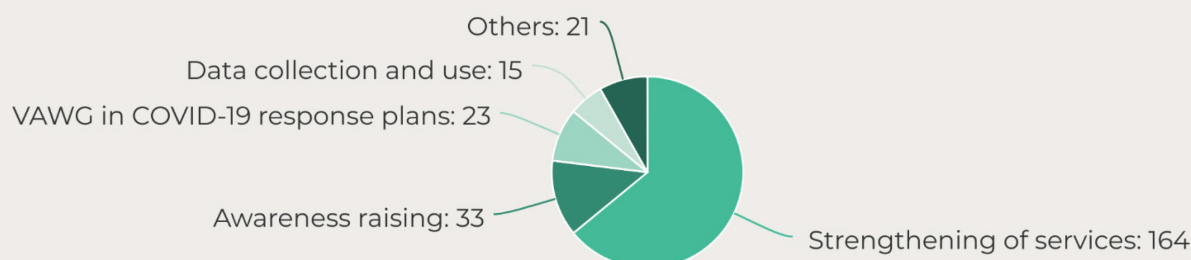
Some 75 per cent of all gender-sensitive measures in Europe and Northern America, Australia and New Zealand (256 measures in 43 countries) focus on preventing and/or responding to violence against women and girls. Almost two-thirds of all VAWG measures in the region (164 in 41 countries) aim to strengthen services for women survivors (Figure 5), including through helplines and other reporting mechanisms (49 measures in 27 countries), shelters (38 measures in 26 countries), police and judicial responses (29 measures in 20 countries), coordinated services (28 measures in 21 countries) and provision of psychosocial support (13 measures across 11 countries). For example:

- In **Belgium**, three Sexual Violence Care Centres continue to support survivors 24/7 and offer medical and forensic care, as well as psychological support and follow-up. While psychosocial and legal consultations are only provided by telephone, urgent gynaecological consultations have been maintained. Emergency contraception and abortion care continue to be available from family planning centres and abortion centres.
- In **Canada**, up to CAD 30 million (USD 22.5 million) of the COVID-19 emergency response funding will be provided to shelters and sexual assault centres to address immediate needs. In addition, CAD 10 million (USD 7.5 million) is specifically provided to Indigenous Services Canada's network of 46 emergency shelters on reserves and in Yukon, to support Indigenous women and children who are fleeing violence.
- In **Czechia**, mail-delivery personnel of the Czech post will be trained to recognize signs of domestic violence, communicate with the survivor and offer help.
- In **France**, as shelters exceed capacity, alternative accommodation is being provided in hotels for domestic violence survivors. The French Gender Equality Minister said the Government would pay for 20,000 hotel nights. Pop-up violence against women counselling centres have also been established in supermarkets, through a partnership with the Government, mass retail chains and local associations.
- In **Luxembourg**, the Ministry of Equality between Women and Men, along with partners, have set up a joint helpline and email address for use by survivors of violence during the lockdown period.
- In the **Netherlands**, the Public Prosecution Service ('*Openbaar Ministerie*') is prioritizing cases involving sexual violence and vulnerable survivors.
- In **New Zealand**, the Ministry of Justice has a resource website that gathers a range of support services and information for survivors. The Ministry of Social Development has issued guidance for family violence and sexual violence crisis workers who provide support to survivors during COVID-19, on how to provide support while meeting health and safety requirements.
- In **Ukraine**, the Government launched the hotline "15-47" – a 24-hour government hotline for survivors of domestic violence, providing legal aid and psychological support.

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Figure 5. Number of violence against women measures in Europe and Northern America, Australia and New Zealand, by type



The second most common type of measure taken in this region was awareness-raising and campaigns (33 measures in 23 countries). For example:

- In **Belgium**, an awareness campaign on radio, television and on social networks has been launched, aimed at both perpetrators and survivors, including access to a hotline and a chat service. The campaign uses the slogan “Nothing justifies domestic violence” and is accessible to people who are deaf and/or hard-of-hearing.
- The website of the initiative *#strongerthanviolence* developed by the Government of **Germany** brings together existing support services for women who are affected by violence, and offers practical solutions. As part of this initiative, the Government has launched the nationwide “Not safe at home?” campaign in supermarkets, with the aim of informing people who experience domestic violence and their friends and family about available help and support services.
- **Portugal** has launched the *#SegurançaEmIsolamento* campaign. Taking advantage of social media, television, radio and press, it reminds survivors that they can ask for help, lets them know about support services and alerts the community to be vigilant.

Thirteen countries in this region have taken fifteen measures to improve the collection and use of violence against women data in the COVID-19 context. For example:

- The **Australian** Institute of Criminology is conducting a survey of 15,000 women to build a national picture of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the prevalence and nature of domestic violence and help-seeking behaviours.
- In **Serbia**, the Ministry of Justice conducted a rapid assessment of survivors needs and the obstacles facing institutions in providing services and issued a set of recommendations.
- In **Norway**, weekly statistics on reported crime, including domestic violence, are issued.

Services to respond to and prevent VAWG must be treated as essential services and an integral part of national and local COVID-19 response plans. According to the tracker, 19 countries in this region have taken 23 measures in this direction.

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- In **Greece**, the National Programme on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women, which is the first comprehensive and coherent national action plan against gender-based violence, has been scaled-up and adapted to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In **Kosovo**⁶, measures to address VAWG have been integrated into response plans at both the national and local levels, through provision of technical and financial support.
- In **New Zealand**, the Minister for Women announced a NZD 1 million (USD 662,000) fund for organizations that support women and girls as part of the Government's COVID-19 response. The Fund is for organizations whose services are in increased demand or that lack resources to respond due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The tracker registers very few measures to address online violence in this region, which evidence shows has increased during the pandemic,⁷ and few measures to reach the most marginalized women. Exceptions include:

- **Bulgaria**, where the Cybercrime Department at the General Directorate for Combating Organized Crime, under the Ministry of Interior, offers a specially created platform (www.cybercrime.bg), which victims of online violence against women and children can access from home. Reports of violence can also be submitted on the website of the Directorate.
- **Canada**, where women, transgender and non-binary people experiencing violence are exempt from social distancing measures.

Women's economic security

Out of the 576 fiscal and economic, social protection and labour market measures registered for more than 50 countries and territories in Europe, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand, 21 measures across 15 countries and territories address women's economic security – amounting to just 4 per cent of the total fiscal, economic, social protection and jobs response.

Nine of these measures fall under the **social protection** category (Figure 6); mostly cash transfers that either prioritize women as the main recipients or provide benefits to all citizens or members of an age group (women and men). For example:

- In **Albania**, recipients of the flagship cash-transfer programme (Ndihma Ekonomike) will receive double their usual benefit. Parents of two or more children are among the eligible groups, and in such households, mothers are primary recipients. Other eligible groups include survivors of trafficking and domestic violence.

⁶ All references to Kosovo are made in the context of UN Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

⁷ UN Women. 2020. "Brief: Online and ICT-facilitated violence against women and girls during COVID-19." April.

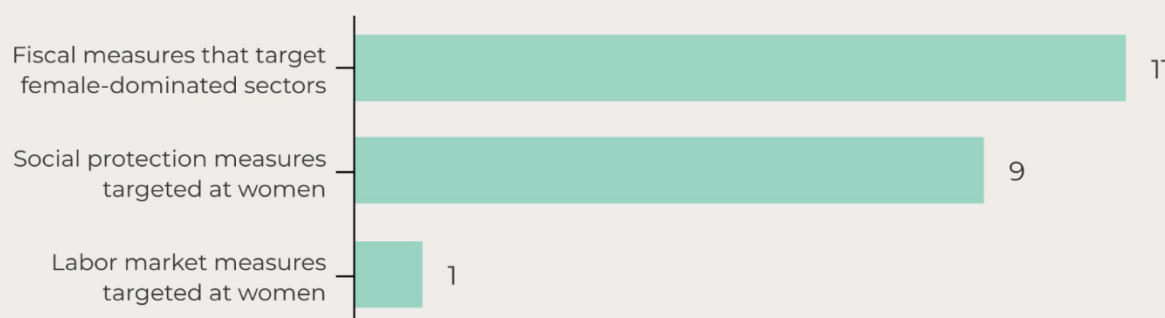
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/brief-online-and-ict-facilitated-violence-against-women-and-girls-during-covid-19>

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- In **Slovenia**, vulnerable groups of women (older women, migrant women, women with disabilities, for example) that are already recipients of financial social assistance and care allowance will receive a one-time allowance of EUR 150 (USD 175).

Figure 6. Number of measures in Europe, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand that address women's economic security, by policy category



The tracker registers only one measure in the **labour market** category that targets women's economic security.

- **Romania** provides vocational counselling and training to domestic violence survivors and is currently assessing extending this service to women at risk of violence due to COVID-19.

Finally, nine countries in this region register a total of 11 **fiscal and economic measures** to support feminized sectors of their economies, that is, sectors that absorb a higher proportion of women's employment, compared to that of men. These measures account for around 5 per cent of all fiscal and economic measures adopted in this region. For example:

- Under the assistance package approved by the Government of **New Zealand**, for NZD 12.1 billion (USD 8 billion), there is a NZD 500 million (USD 331 million) boost for health services. The scheme aims to limit the risk associated with issuing financing or restructuring loans to those companies that are most severely affected by the economic impact of COVID-19. Since there is a 15-percentage point gender gap in employment in human health and social work activities, this may help protect women's employment in that sector.
- In the **United States of America**, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, includes, among others, USD 340 billion for the health sector, including USD 100 billion in grants to support strained health-care providers and USD 16 million to stockpile medicines. This support is disproportionately likely to benefit women, since the health sector absorbs 23.8 per cent of women workers, versus 5.9 per cent of men.

Overall, the low number of labour market, fiscal and economic measures aimed at strengthening women's economic security or support the sectors that employ them signals a major gap in the response so far. Stronger action is needed to ensure that women can keep their jobs or re-enter the labour market if they have become unemployed as a result of the pandemic.

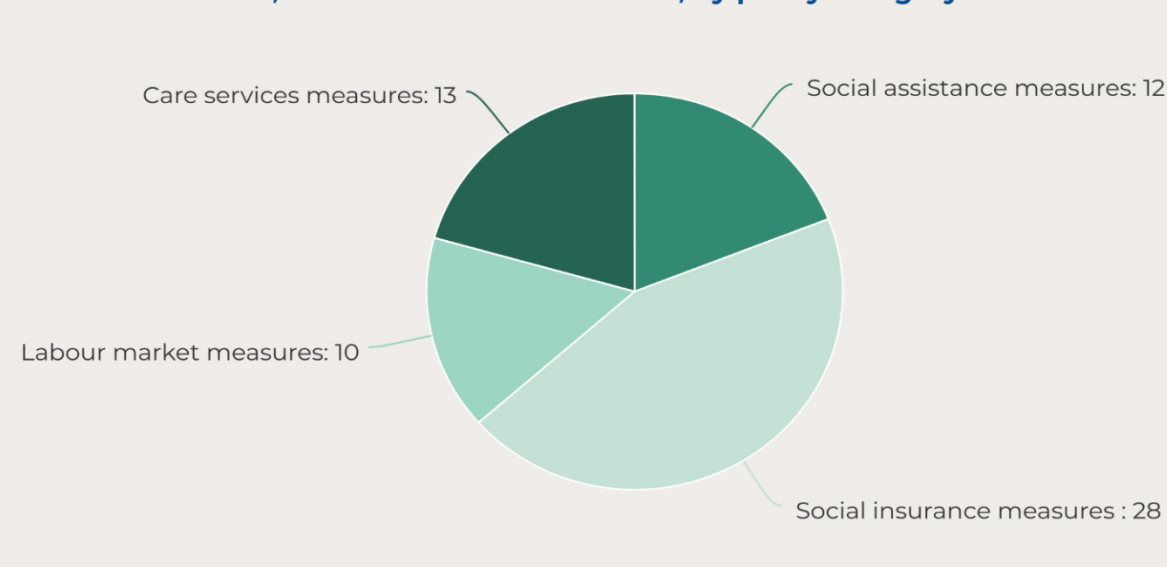
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Unpaid care

A total of 33 countries in Europe, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand register 63 measures to address unpaid care. While these absolute numbers are high compared to most other regions, unpaid care measures account for just under 18 per cent of the total 343 social protection and labour market measures in this region.

Figure 7. Number of measures that address unpaid care in Europe, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand, by policy category



Most of the measures fall into the **social protection** category and are related to family and sick leaves (25 measures in 24 countries) and cash-for-care payments to compensate parents for school and day care closures (nine measures in eight countries). For example:

- In **France**, people placed in isolation will benefit from “sick leave and daily benefits” of up to 20 days without a “waiting period”. The measure also applies to parents whose children are subject to isolation and who cannot go to work.
- In **Latvia**, the State will fund sick leave from the second day of illness for adults who, among other criteria, are taking care of sick children.
- In **New Zealand**, workers who are unable to work because they are caring for a dependent who is sick or self-isolating are entitled to paid leave under the “COVID-19 Leave Support Scheme”. This is paid by the State through the employer at NZD 585.80 (USD 388) per week for a full-time employee. Employers are encouraged to top-up payments to at least 80 per cent of earnings.
- In **Poland**, a special allowance will be paid for parents to take care of children in case childcare facilities are closed.

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Another 10 measures across nine countries fall into the **labour market** category, including reduced working time or telework and extra wage subsidies for workers with care responsibilities.

- **Italy** has allowed parents working in the private sector, with children below the age of 14, to work from home.
- **Montenegro** announced new wage subsidy measures for businesses that include of 70 per cent of the gross minimum wage for each employee who had to stay home to care for a child under the age of 11 during April and May.
- **Spain** has made working conditions more flexible, encouraging telework and reducing working hours for workers that must take care of children, older persons or persons with disabilities.

Finally, 13 countries in this region have taken measures to strengthen **care services**, including childcare (eight measures) and long-term care for older persons and persons with disabilities (five measures).

- In **Australia**, the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package is a payment to support childcare services, including centre-based day care, family day care, outside-school-hours care and in-home care, to remain open (see In Focus section).
- **Canada** has established childcare centres for essential workers in the areas of Calgary, Edmonton, Devon, Fort McMurray, Fort Saskatchewan, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer and Stony Plain.
- In the **United Kingdom**, care workers have been recognized as key workers, hence their children can continue to attend school if they cannot be looked after at home.

Given that 19 out of the 52 countries and territories across Europe, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand have not taken any measures to address unpaid care at all, the response is largely inadequate to meeting the challenge of the severe care crisis that COVID-19 has catalysed.

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Annex I: Number of gender-sensitive measures registered by type and country/territory

Country	Women's economic security	Unpaid care	Violence against women	Total gender-sensitive
Albania	1	1	9	11
Andorra	0	1	0	1
Australia	0	4	12	16
Austria	0	3	14	17
Belarus	0	1	0	1
Belgium	1	0	12	13
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	1	3	4
Bulgaria	0	0	5	5
Canada	1	2	9	12
Croatia	0	0	5	5
Czechia	0	3	8	11
Denmark	0	1	3	4
Estonia	0	0	2	2
Finland	0	1	4	5
France	0	2	10	12
Germany	0	2	6	8
Greece	0	2	12	14
Greenland	0	0	1	1
Hungary	0	1	0	1
Iceland	0	0	2	2
Ireland	0	0	8	8
Italy	1	3	4	8
Kosovo	1	0	4	5
Latvia	1	3	3	7
Lithuania	0	1	7	8

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Cont'd, Number of gender-sensitive measures registered by type and country/territory

Country	Women's economic security	Unpaid care	Violence against women	Total gender-sensitive
Luxembourg	0	2	4	6
Malta	1	2	5	8
Monaco	0	0	6	6
Montenegro	0	2	0	2
Netherlands	1	1	6	8
New Zealand	1	2	7	10
North Macedonia	0	2	2	4
Norway	0	1	9	10
Poland	0	2	6	8
Portugal	0	0	13	13
Republic of Moldova	0	0	2	2
Romania	1	2	9	12
Russian Federation	5	1	1	7
San Marino	0	0	2	2
Serbia	1	4	5	10
Slovakia	0	2	0	2
Slovenia	1	1	3	5
Spain	1	5	10	16
Sweden	0	0	5	5
Switzerland	0	0	1	1
Ukraine	0	0	3	3
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	0	1	11	12
United States of America	3	1	3	7
TOTAL	21	63	256	340

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Annex II: Countries in focus

Spain

The tracker records 30 measures taken by Spain in response to COVID-19, of which 16 have been defined as gender-sensitive. Of the gender-sensitive measures, one targets women's economic security, five address unpaid care work, and 10 address violence against women and girls. Spain has been hit hard by the pandemic, and as of 18 September, had recorded 30,405 deaths.⁸

A range of measures have been taken to address unpaid care work. Firstly, a family benefit has been introduced for parents who must take care of their children during the school closures required by the COVID-19 crisis. The Government has introduced measures to ease conditions of temporary layoffs, allowing workers to adapt and reduce their working hours by as much as 100 per cent, if they need to provide care to dependents. More broadly, the Government has allowed the flexibilization of working conditions, encouraging telework and the adjustment of working hours around care responsibilities.

Regarding care services, an extraordinary contingency fund has been started with EUR 300 million (USD 350 million) to support social services, with special attention to older persons and dependents. The multiple objectives of this measure are: to reinforce home-care for older persons, dependent persons or persons with disabilities affected by the closure of day centres or social centres; increase the number of workers of social service centres and nursing homes; and increase the number of beds in care centres.

To bolster women's economic security during the pandemic, Spain has announced it is introducing a means-tested unconditional cash transfer, billed as 'Guaranteed Minimum Income', for around 5 million low-income people, among whom women are overrepresented. There is a proposal, not yet implemented, for an additional EUR 100 (USD 117) to be provided per child for single-parent households.

Regarding measures to end gender-based violence, Spain has a comprehensive package of 10 measures across multiple areas. The Ministry of Equality has promoted a Contingency Plan against Gender-based Violence during the COVID-19 crisis, which includes declaring services to address such violence as essential. In practice, this means that the Government has put in place a telephone hotline to advise on available resources and rights of survivors, a legal services hotline and an emotional support WhatsApp service. A campaign entitled "We are with you. We stop gender violence together" has been disseminated through social media, phone calls, support services, community groups and in public spaces to raise awareness. The Ministry for Home Affairs has launched the "SOS Button" of an app, 'Alert Cops'. The new functionality allows both health staff and survivors of gender-based violence to call for immediate assistance from the police. Finally, the Ministry of Equality has published the *Guide for action for women who are experiencing gender-based violence during the COVID-19 lockdown*, with questions and answers on key topics around gender-based violence.

⁸ <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-deaths?country=~ESP>

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Australia

The tracker records 36 measures taken by Australia in response to COVID-19, of which 16 have been defined as gender-sensitive. After an initial spike in COVID-19 cases in March–April, numbers dropped to relatively low levels, but have increased again in recent months, with 832 confirmed deaths as of 18 September.⁹ From a gender perspective, Australia initially demonstrated a particularly innovative response regarding unpaid care work (4 measures), with a free childcare scheme for the children of essential workers, as well as a strong response to addressing the rise in violence against women during lockdown (10 measures).

In terms of support for unpaid care work, the “Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package” was a payment to support childcare services, including centre-based daycare, family daycare, outside-school-hours care and in-home care, to remain open during the lockdown period. To receive these payments, child support services must prioritize care to essential workers, vulnerable and disadvantaged children and previously enrolled children, and must not charge any fees. This was highly significant not only for key women workers, who could access free childcare, but also for ensuring the ongoing employment of childcare providers, the majority of whom are women. However, the emergency childcare package has now been significantly scaled back.

In addition, various measures have been taken to support families caring for sick family members, namely an expansion of income support payments and a guarantee of two days of unpaid carer’s leave. Workers (including casual workers and self-employed) can now receive the JobSeeker payment if they care for someone who is affected by COVID-19, and those not entitled to this payment can receive the Crisis Payment (Special Benefit) if they are caring for someone required to be in quarantine or self-isolation.

Regarding measures to end gender-based violence, Australia has a comprehensive package of 12 measures across multiple areas. As an overarching response, the Government announced an AUD 150 million (USD 107 million) Domestic Violence Support Package to help family and domestic violence support services meet the growing demand as a result of the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. This package includes funding for the legal assistance sector, as well as for the national domestic, family and sexual violence hotline, 1800RESPECT. The “Help is Here” campaign was also launched as part of this package, providing clear information about where to seek help for family, domestic and sexual violence. In addition, a dedicated COVID-19 family and domestic violence taskforce was set up within the Department of Communities, to work with police and service-providers to ensure services remain open during the pandemic. Regarding access to justice, survivor protection and support facilities have been granted extended powers of representation for survivors of violence, to a limited extent, for the duration of COVID-19. Some judicial services have been moved online, including online access to restraining orders.

⁹ <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-deaths?country=~AUS>