

Gender Differences in the Impact of COVID-19

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Introduction

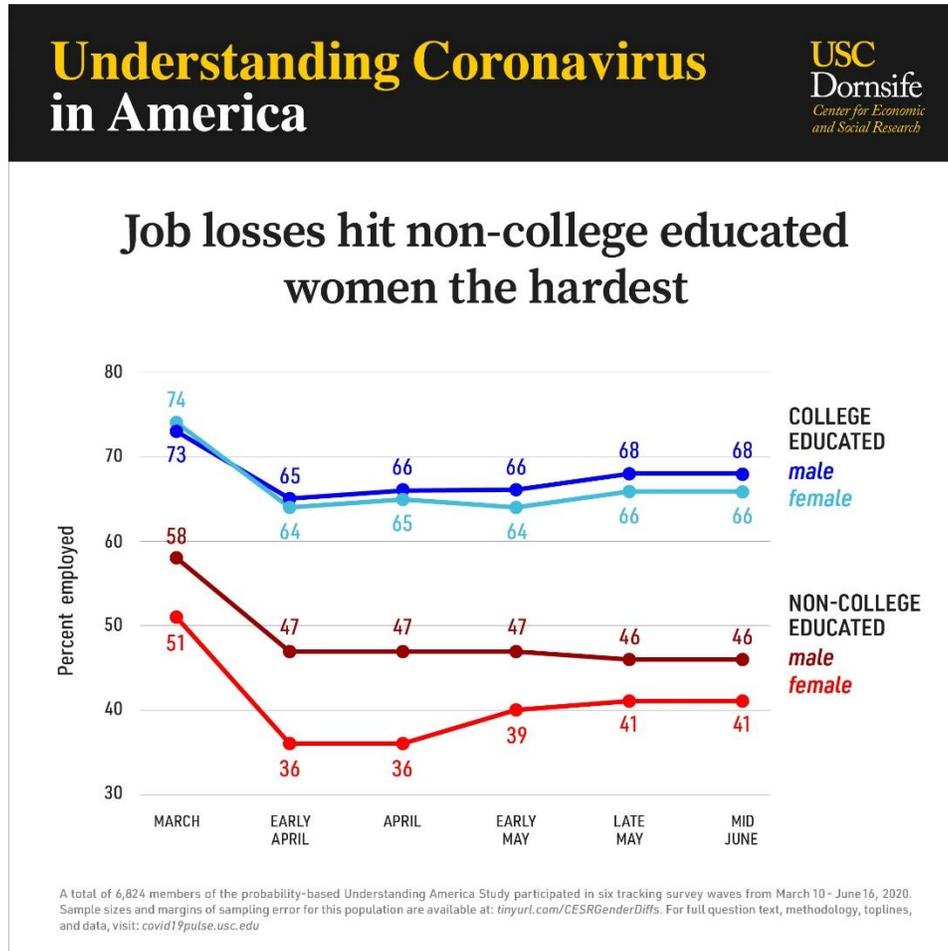
There are several reasons to believe that the current COVID-19 crisis would disproportionately affect women compared to men (Alon et al., 2020). First, while prior recessions have affected traditionally male-dominated sectors like manufacturing, construction or trade, the COVID-19 crisis and its social distancing requirements had its biggest effect on sectors that are more female-dominated, namely the service industry. Second, as schools and day care centers have closed around the country, childcare needs have soared. Given that women already carried a heavier load than men in the provision of childcare before the crisis (Schoonbroodt, 2018), it is expected that women will continue to carry a heavier load due to the increased childcare responsibilities that have resulted from the crisis. Finally, social-distancing and stay-at-home orders have made it difficult if not impossible for informal care providers, like grandparents or other family members, to help with childcare responsibilities. For all these reasons, the COVID-19 crisis could likely have a major impact on women, especially working mothers.

We use data from the USC Dornsife Center for Economic Research's [Understanding Coronavirus in America tracking survey](#) to understand gender differences in the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. This document describes our key descriptive results after six waves of survey administration.

1. Non-college-educated women suffered the highest drops in employment during the COVID-19 crisis.

- Overall, female employment dropped 13 percentage points between March and early April – from 59% to 46% -- while male employment dropped 10 percentage-points – from 64% to 54%.
- Non-college-educated women were hit the hardest by job loss. They suffered a 15 percentage-point drop in employment, from 51% in March to 36% in early April, while non-college-educated men suffered an 11 percentage-point drop, from 58% to 47%.
 - Among non-college-educated workers employed in March, women reported more job losses than men. Nineteen percent of women reported a permanent or temporary lay-off by early April compared to 14% of men.
- Relative to women without a college degree, college-educated men and women suffered a much smaller, 9 percentage-point drop in employment.
 - There are no significant gender differences in employment rates among those holding a college degree.
 - Among college-educated workers employed in March, men suffered a higher rate of job loss than women. Nine percent of men reported a permanent or temporary lay-off by early April compared to 6% of women. In contrast, a higher proportion of women declared being on leave or other by early April --8% of women compared to 5% of men.

- By late May/early June, employment rates had not fully recovered. For non-college-educated women, employment rates were 41%, still 10 percentage-points lower than the employment rate in March.
- The main impact of the pandemic on employment happened in early April 2020, and the employment status of men and women has remained relatively stable since then.

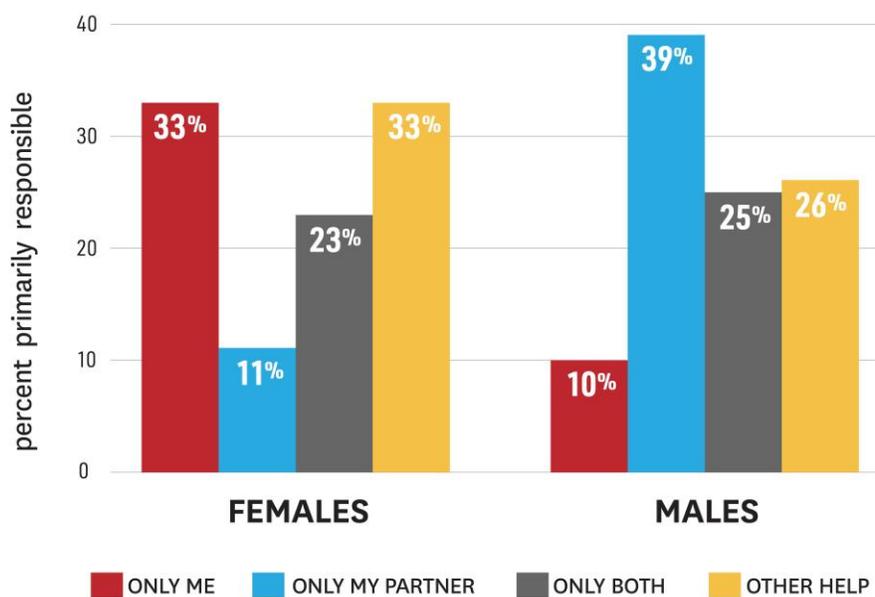


2. Women carried a heavier load than men in providing childcare during the COVID-19 crisis, even when still working.

- Among respondents married or living together with a partner and school age children in the household, women carried a heavier load than men in providing childcare after schools closed due to Covid-19. Compared to 14% of men, 44% of women reported being the only one in the household providing care in early April.
- Among working respondents married or living together with a partner and school age children, women were still the main providers of childcare. Compared to 10% of working fathers, one-third (33%) of working mothers reported that they were the only provider of care for their children.
- Similar patterns are observed in later waves when the question was included in late April and early May, and not reported here.

Who has primary responsibility for providing care when school is closed?

(Among those currently working – early April 2020)



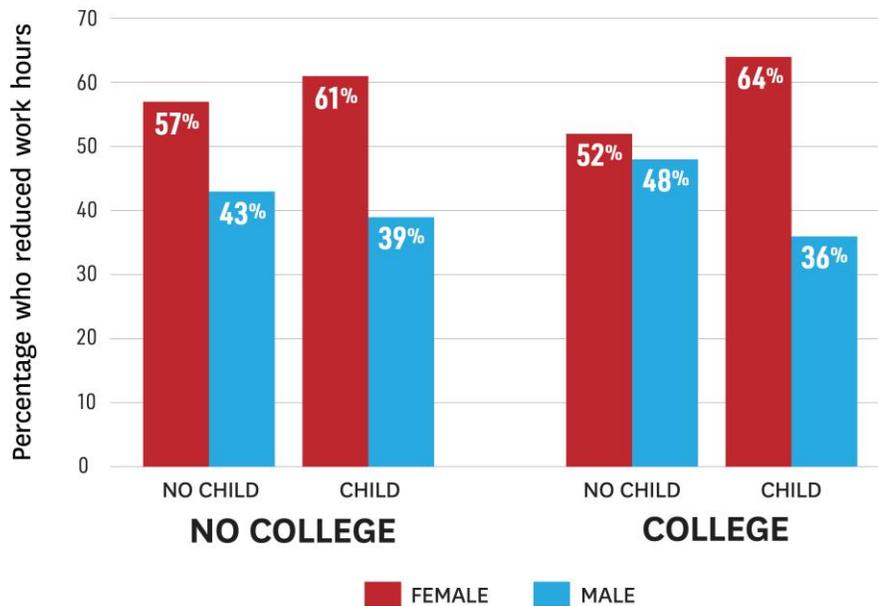
Note: A respondent is considered to have children in the household if he/she reports living with a school age child (Kindergarten to 12th grade) or having a child in daycare or preschool.

3. Working college-educated mothers, with school-age children in the household, are reducing their working hours compared to college-educated women without young children and compared to men, as a result of the crisis.

- Gender differences in the provision of childcare don't appear to be due to differences in the ability of working from home. There are no gender differences in the possibility and requirement of men and women to telecommute for work.
- Mothers might be reducing their working hours to be able to provide childcare. Among those holding the same job since March, 64% of college-educated mothers reported by early June that they had reduced their working hours at some point since March, compared to 36% of college-educated fathers and 52% of college-educated women without young children.
- Among non-college-educated workers holding the same job since March, we also observe gender differences in the percentage who report having reduced their hours at some point since March. Compared to 39% of non-college-educated fathers, 61% of mothers report having reduced their hours.
- Among non-college-educated workers without school-age children, we observe a smaller but still substantial gender difference in the reduction of hours. Compared to 43% of men, 57% of women report a reduction in hours. However, we do not observe a statistically significant difference between non-college educated moms and non-college educated women without young children in the household.
- The gender gap in hours reduction is the largest among college-educated parents of young children (28 percentage points).

Percentage of continuously employed workers who reduced their hours at any point since March 2020 and early June 2020

(by gender, education, and children in the household)



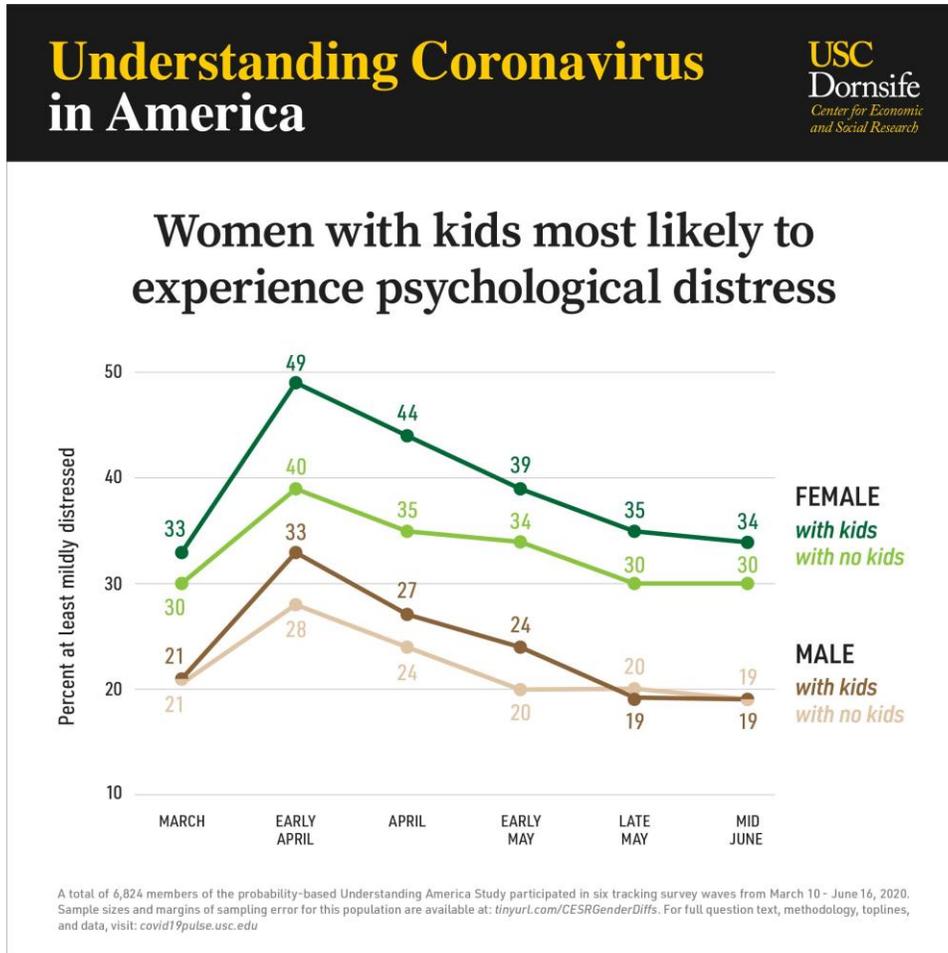
Note: A respondent is considered to have children in the household if he/she reports living with a school age child (Kindergarten to 12th grade) or having a child in daycare or preschool.

4. It is well-established that women tend to report higher levels of psychological distress than men. However, when Covid-19 hit the U.S., we saw a new gap emerge between women with and without children, as women with children reported substantially higher levels of distress than women without children. Between men with and without children, a much smaller gap in distress is observed.

- Among married or partnered women with children in the household, the percentage with at least mild symptoms of psychological distress (PHQ-4 measure of anxiety or depression, Kroenke et al. 2009) peaked in early April at 49%, 9 percentage points

higher than the percentage of married or partnered women without children reporting similar symptoms.

- Among married or partnered men, the difference in distress between those with and without children is much smaller: 5 percentage points (33% versus 28%).
- These differences we observed between men with and without children and between women with and without children peak in early April and then disappear by late May.



Survey Methodology

This report is based on data from six waves of the Understanding Coronavirus in America Tracking Survey, administered by the USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research (CESR). Participants are members of CESR's Understanding America Study (UAS) probability-based internet panel who participated in tracking survey waves conducted between March 10 and June 16, 2020. The survey is conducted in English and Spanish. Results are weighted to CPS benchmarks, accounting for sample design and non-response. Sample sizes for each survey wave in this report range from 5457 to 6824 and estimates based on overall results have a margin of sampling error (MSE) of +/- 1 percentage point for each wave.

Participants were recruited for the UAS internet panel using an ABS household sample; we provide internet connected tablets as needed. Graphical results and full methodological details for the tracking survey are available at <https://covid19pulse.usc.edu/>. Questionnaires with full text of questions, toplines, data files, and press releases are available at <https://uasdata.usc.edu/page/Covid-19+Home>. Methodological details for the UAS panel are available at <https://uasdata.usc.edu>. The Understanding Coronavirus in America Tracking Survey has been funded in part by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the University of Southern California, and many others who have contributed questions to individual waves or sets of waves.

Sample sizes and MSE for subgroups in each section of this analysis:

Section 1: Analysis in this section is based on sample sizes of between 1179 to 2162 men or women, with or without college degrees, in each of the six waves, with MSE of +/- 3 percentage points for results based on each of the four categories.

Section 2: Analysis in this section is based on the 819 working parents with school age children at home who participated between April 1 and April 26, 2020 (wave 2); estimates among all working parents have a MSE of +/- 4 percentage points. MSE for working fathers (N=408) and working mothers (N=411) are +/- 6 percentage points in each case.

Section 3: The analysis for this section focuses on the 2,526 participants who reported being continuously employed across the six survey waves. We compute the fraction who reported reducing their work hours at any point in waves two to six. Overall MSE for estimates in that population are +/- 2 percentage points. Sample sizes and MSE for analytic subgroups in the analysis: participants with children who do not have college degrees (N=433, MSE +/- 6); No children, no degree (N=611, MSE +/- 5); Children and a college degree (N=588, MSE +/- 5); Children, no college degree (N=894, MSE +/- 4)

Section 4: We analyzed the subset of between 3,565 and 4,156 participants who are married or living with a partner across the six survey waves. Overall MSE for these samples are +/- 2 percentage points for each wave. Sample size ranges and MSE for analytic subgroups across waves: Women with children (Nr=789-940, MSE +/- 4); Women with no children (Nr=1094-1272, MSE +/- 3); Men with children (Nr=570-663, MSE +/- 5); Men with no children (Nr=1112-1264, MSE +/- 3).

References

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