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A Patriarchal Pandemic: Analyzing the Global Impacts of COVID-19 on Women and the Gendered Dynamics of Policies

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A Patriarchal Pandemic: Analyzing the Global Impacts of COVID-19 on Women and the
Gendered Dynamics of Policies

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
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Abstract

Utilizing empirical and contemporary research, this Senior Project aims to explore the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impacted women through social, economic, and policy avenues. This project starts by identifying the unequal effects on health, gender based violence, economic security and unpaid care the pandemic had on women. It then transitions to establish historical and systematic occurrences of gender bias in macroeconomic policies. It lays out the specifics of policy implementation during the COVID crisis, and outlines the numerical and regional variations in gender-sensitive policies. It surmises that, overall the gendered policy response was subpar, given the disproportionate effects the pandemic had on women. This project concludes with linear regression analyses that aim to identify what variable impacted the percentage of gender sensitive policies put forth by governments, and attempted to explain regional differences in policy implementation. The regressions indicate that GDP per capita and Women's Political Participation Index were the most significant of the independent variables tested. The regional statistics show that Northern America, Latin America and the Caribbean and Oceania fared better than the base region of Europe in percentages of gender sensitive policy implementation.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic was an unparalleled time for everyone across the globe. Lockdowns, a shift to life online, and the immediate suspension of most production and consumption left the economic and social state of the world in crisis. It was an experience like no other, but it also had an unrivaled impact on the most vulnerable. In most crises, there are unequal impacts felt throughout populations, economics statuses, and gender. However, what makes this pandemic so unique is the way in which it disproportionately affected women in almost every way, even down to the policymaking that followed.

This paper aims to identify to what extent COVID-19 impacted women's economic and social well-being through an analysis of research and long-standing gender norms. It then shifts this narrative to advocate for the type of gender sensitive policy implementation that should have occurred as a result of these impacts. This advocacy leads to a holistic and historical perspective that investigates the gender biases that are present in macroeconomic policy, and what can be done to more accurately include women in the aim of fiscal and monetary decisions. Focusing again on COVID-19, the specific gender sensitive policies are explored, and an overall outline of categorical and region distributions is established. The essay concludes an econometric approach to identifying what factors actually contributed to a higher level of gender sensitive policy implementation. Previous research has attempted to observationally identify the defining factors of a better gender-equitable policy regime, but this project puts these factors in statistical practice. Additionally, this paper aims to identify regional policy distribution beyond just surface level observations, and demonstrates comparative econometrics using dummy variables. The consistent effort throughout this work is to establish just how disproportionately women were impacted by COVID-19, and how policy work never adequately kept up. It aims to provide

lessons and goals for policymakers, the rampant gender bias that occurs throughout political advocacy, and the steps that can be taken to more actively work to remedy gender gaps.

Chapter 1: Assessing a Gendered Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented time of social isolation, economic stillness, and unending social anxiety on a global scale. The strict lockdown rules, and a switch to virtual life brought the time of economic expansion for many countries to a halt. The United States alone saw employment fall by over 8.8 million people, and the unemployment rate skyrocketed to over 13% throughout the second quarter of 2020 (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS]). Unemployment around the world increased by 33 million people, and averaged between 10%-30% in developing nations (International Monetary Fund [IMF]). This global unemployment came as a result of the lockdowns, and limited consumer spending that caused many businesses to fail. There are countless other statistics that showcase how detrimental the pandemic was to economic and social life across the globe. However, this suffering was disproportionately felt among men and women. The pandemic has deepened the repression and inequality faced by women, as they have felt the brunt of the effects brought on by COVID. Through gendered job losses, an increase in violence, regression in reproductive rights, and more, it is easy to see how disproportionality this pandemic transpired between genders.

To understand why this so-called “pandemic patriarchy” occurred, the concept of gender regimes and human rights must be explored (Brysk, 2022). Quite plainly, gender regimes are the assembly of gender relations of a particular time. In a modern context, gender regimes and the construction of modern gender norms, give way to structural patriarchy that manifests within patterns of gender roles, beliefs, and rules. In other words, the way that gender relations was conducted, both pre and post COVID, gave way to social patriarchy, and the continued subjugation and devaluing of women and their rights. Prior to the pandemic, the idea of human

rights was highly contested, between complacency and bitterness, and while the concept of rights is universal, the access and fulfillment to these rights is determined by an intersection of gender, race, class, and migration status. Therefore, in practice, human rights never really reach those most in need. This was seen in a modern context during COVID when women of all types faced the impacts on a much deeper level. This concept of gender regimes and structural patriarchy, coupled with the historical struggle for human rights, is ultimately what created the large gender gaps in pandemic impacts.

Health Impacts

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, women all over the globe lacked sufficient access to healthcare, particularly poor women, and a global health crisis only served to highlight and deepen this gap. The reason for this lack of healthcare? Being a woman. The “pre-existing condition” of being able to become pregnant alone raises the cost of insurance for women, not to mention the heightened costs associated with giving birth. Additionally, women, on average, face more need for medical attention in their lives than men, which leads to increased costs. This is especially tough for poorer women because they often have to forgo getting treatment in order to save money. Women are more likely to live in poverty than men, particularly women of color and indigenous women, thus the costs of healthcare are insolvent for more women than men. Women across the globe face unequal access to female specific doctors, reproductive and prenatal care, and uncostly doctor visits. In every corner of the healthcare system, women face obstacles and increased costs of care universally. This disproportionate access to healthcare and affordable treatment came to the forefront during the two years following the start of a global pandemic in 2020. In fact, the Global Gender Gap, which is an index designed to measure gender

equality, regressed more than half a percentage point in the first year of the pandemic. This drop in equality was driven by the intensified deterioration of women's health around the globe.

Women's vulnerability to illness and care has increased even more through the COVID-19 pandemic. Allison Brysk, a key researcher in the inequality of the COVID crisis, writes "Although male mortality rates from COVID-19 are higher, women in many places are more exposed COVID-19 due to the concentration of women workers in front-line health and caretaking roles with generally lower access to protective equipment" (Brysk, 2022, p.293). As Brysk highlights, women make up a majority of healthcare workers, who were most exposed to COVID during the outbreak. More than 80% of nurses and elderly health care aides in Europe are women, with similar numbers throughout the Western world. Brysk also mentions that by the middle of 2020, the CDC reported that "almost three-fourths of healthcare workers infected were women" (Brysk, 2022, p.293). This disproportionate number of women care workers working the frontlines of the pandemic, means that women became more infected. Despite their immediate mortality rates being lower than men's, women are more likely to suffer from long-lasting COVID effects, which has also kept them out of the labor force. There is not much evidence in terms of women healthcare workers for the developing world, but given the pattern among developed countries, it is easy to conclude there is likely a similar, or even greater, imbalance within developing societies. Women's dominance as essential workers put them at larger risk of stress, sickness, mental health impairment, and burnout. Coupled with unemployment and domestic care increases during COVID, it is not shocking that women faced more emotional distress than men, and have continued to feel the lasting effects throughout COVID recovery.

Similarly, the closure of medical facilities, diversion of medical resources and lockdowns only served to further the struggle of healthcare access for women. The pre-pandemic healthcare access flaws disproportionately targeted poor, minority women, and the shifts in the global healthcare system during the pandemic were no different. First, the closing of medical facilities, and lockdown restrictions, limited the supply of healthcare against a growing public demand. This left those with the least access to care, women, completely stranded. Women's family planning and pregnancy prevention methods also became disrupted among these closures and lockdowns, particularly within developing countries. Access to abortion pills was heavily limited due to supply chain and lockdown issues, Brysk cites that "Kenya and Uganda [faced] a shortage of medical abortion pills and other contraceptive supplies because they depend on imports" (Brysk, 2022, p.294). Without sufficient access to birth control methods, abortion, and sexual health care, the future of unintended pregnancies and women's health became grim. The U.N projected that the unmet family planning needs of 47 million women in developing countries due to lockdowns, would lead to seven million unplanned pregnancies (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2020). At the same time, the diversion of medical resources would only serve to hinder women's health even more. In response to COVID-19 and its urgency, health care resources were being reallocated away from non- COVID patients, and heavily prioritized infected patients over others. These pandemic related shifts in the healthcare system interacted with these longer standing gender regimes and societal patriarchy. Additionally, in countries where unsafe abortions are the leading cause of maternal death, these closures and redirection of services were increasingly grim for pregnant women. This meant that the reallocation of medical resources put medical care even further out of reach for women, and the prioritization and ranking of patients within medical facilities led to increased minority deaths and vulnerability for

pregnant women. The fact that minority and poor women face little to no access to healthcare outside of a pandemic, only meant that they were the last to receive help when a global health crisis ensued.

Perhaps the most pressing, and long-lasting impact of gendered healthcare among the pandemic is the effects on reproductive rights. As touched on above, there was an decreasing access to sexual health and pregnancy prevention methods for women during the pandemic, which put their reproductive rights at the forefront of political and medical debates. The legality of abortion suddenly became an area of concern amid the chaos of the COVID pandemic. Countries, like Poland, with very strict abortion laws took advantage of the shifts in the healthcare system, and the surge of new pandemic policies to push through an almost total ban on abortion. Even in places where abortion is legal, it became heavily restricted due to COVID travel and health measures. Women who live in less populated areas, away from medical hotspots, were unable to travel to get the abortion and prenatal care they needed. This was particularly impactful in lower income countries where, once again, access to women-centered care is already limited. Through limitations of abortion access across the globe, the discussion of its legality came to the forefront again for many countries. Abortion, essentially, became illegal and limited once again through these COVID restrictions, and women no longer had a choice in their pregnancy. This gave conservative politicians and lawmakers across the globe the ability to question the legality of abortion all together, the biggest manifestation of this occurring in the United States with the overturning of *Roe v Wade* in the summer of 2022. COVID health restrictions led to an immediate elimination of women's body autonomy, which gave law-making institutions even more incentive to control reproductive rights, even after the global health crisis had calmed.

Gender based violence

The COVID-19 pandemic gave way to an unprecedented amount of time spent at home, either individually or with family. For women, however, this gave way to a massive increase in domestic violence. Another clear example of the gender norms and structural patriarchy, this gender based violence became a shadow pandemic. Already a massive issue pre-pandemic, with stay at home orders issued across the world, and decreased access to support and police services, violence against women and girls rose to unprecedented amounts. Gender assessments quickly confirmed this, reporting rates of domestic violence as high as 80% in some countries (United Nation [UN] Women & United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2022). This was not just an issue of developing countries either, all across the globe there were massive increases in reports of violence against women and girls. Brysk adds, “a longitudinal regression study from the U.S shows a 22% greater likelihood of residential domestic violence during pandemic period compared with the previous year, with a 64% increase following lockdown” (Brysk, 2022, p.289; Mclay 2021). The causes of this increase in violence range from gender inequity among households, the economic displacement and losses of men, as well as locking women in with their abusers and restricted access to support. For many women in abusive relationships, who are able to find solace when their partners go to work, or they themselves leave the house, mobility restrictions caused by COVID left them stuck in their homes with perpetrators. For some, even if their partners were not previously abusive, job loss, economic losses, and isolation caused by the pandemic could have caused them to take their frustrations out on the women in their households, who are left with no way out. Whatever the reason, the evidence makes it clear that the pandemic made gender based violence increase globally.

In addition to this surge of domestic violence, the COVID-19 crisis has been connected to an uptick in human trafficking and, forced and child marriages. As the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime highlights, the pandemic caused massive unemployment and income loss, especially among low wage labor, and the informal sector. This left relatively poorer individuals at even more of a risk for welfare loss and homelessness. This heightens the chances for exploitation and trafficking, as these individuals may end up on the streets, or turning to alternative forms of work to get by. These low wage industries, like garment workers, agriculture, manufacturing and domestic work, which already see high levels of trafficking among workers, are heavily female dominated sectors. Thus, leaving women most at risk for involvement in trafficking avenues. Additionally, the limited capacity, and reallocation of resources among organizations and legal entities prevented them from investigating, and aiding the victims of trafficking. Although trafficking and labor exploitation among workers and children was increased universally among the pandemic, it disproportionately impacted vulnerable populations and sectors that compromised almost exclusively women, and left them with no resources for help.

Forced and child marriage is another avenue in which women and young girls are disproportionately represented and impacted. Decline in family income, school closures and mobility restrictions of families have had the most impact on increasing the amount of forced and child marriages during the pandemic. Brysk notes that, “One study shows that the decline in family income accounts for about 30% of the risk of child marriage in the poorer quintiles of the population...” (Brysk, 2022, p.289; UNFPA, 2020). She also highlights that an additional 500,000 girls were put at risk of forced early marriage in 2020. With little economic and social stability, and a decrease in educational access during the pandemic, early and forced child

marriages came to the surface for parents. Since they were no longer being educated, it was the perfect opportunity for families to wed their daughters off, and offered a chance to limit the financial burdens placed on their families. It is clear that the pandemic conditions, economic crises, and social isolation of families made girls in poorer societies even more susceptible to forced marriages.

Labor and Social Rights

Outside of the pandemic, women are already restrained among social and economic spheres worldwide. Through the feminization of poverty, unequal treatment and access across all job sectors, increased vulnerability to sexual harassment, unequal pay and share of domestic work, there is no doubt that the labor market is inherently biased against women. Now framing all of this under the COVID crisis constraints, the conditions have only intensified. Despite cyclical unemployment recessions traditionally affecting male employment more, the type of unemployment during COVID, targeted female-dominated sectors, especially domestic work, the most. UN Women and UN Development Program estimate that in 2020, women lost a total of 46.6 million jobs, a 3.6% percent loss compared to the 2.9% loss for men, (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). Oxfam International, additionally reports a total income loss of \$800 billion among women alone (Oxfam International, 2021). These job losses were particularly concentrated in service sectors, like retail, tourism, and hospitality, all of which are areas in which women are overrepresented. Additionally, with the prolonged closures of schools and childcare centers, women either left the workforce altogether, or faced delayed reemployment, and subsequent delayed wage increases that resulted from extended childcare and homeschooling responsibilities. The U.S Department of Labor provides an overview of evidence on

unemployment numbers for women in these specific sectors. 1.4 million women retail workers lost their jobs between February and April of 2020, and 4.4 million women in leisure and hospitality faced job losses. (U.S Department of Labor, 2022). These were jobs that could not shift to remote work, or were lost with the downsizing of in-person businesses. On top of this disproportionate job loss of women is the intersection of race. Women of color were impacted far more in job losses. The unemployment rate of white women sat at below 6%, compared to that of Black and Hispanic women, which were in the double digits (U.S Department of Labor, 2022). The reason for this unequal distribution of unemployment is these women-dominated industries that faced rapid job loss. These are low-wage jobs that do not require education, in which there are large concentrations of minority and immigrant women workers. When the pandemic hit and job losses increased, these “expendable” workers were the first to be let go. Although, overall, the unemployment of women increased more than men, there is a deeper, more intersectional lens among this job loss.

Also of importance to note, as discussed earlier, are the labor effects of “long-COVID”. For some individuals, COVID symptoms and their health impacts lasted a long time, and people are still facing the consequences two years later. Utilizing data from the Minneapolis Fed, The United Kingdom’s Trade Union Congress, and Lancet, a Brookings report finds the average number of workers out of the labor force due to long COVID to be 3 million, 1.8% of all civilians in the U.S labor force (Bach, 2022). These findings are consistent with comparable economies across the world. This report also specifies that these numbers are consistent with the current labor market experiences in the U.S: industries like education, food service, hospitality, health and social care are facing labor shortages (Bach, 2022). As seen above, these industries are traditionally female dominated, and they are the ones being impacted the most from long

COVID and health impacts. These face-to-face industries, in which there is a majority of women workers, have more exposure to COVID, and therefore face the risk of long COVID impacting their future labor force participation.

Drawing back to this increase in child and home care, women not only faced increased domestic and care work compared to men, they also saw a 5% decrease in work hours, while fathers' remained unchanged (Fisher & Ryan, 2021). This unequal distribution of unpaid domestic work that was exacerbated through pandemic changes connects back to the health and well being of women. On top of job loss and economic insecurity, the extra weight of increased childcare responsibilities brought on through stay at home measures has largely impacted the wellbeing and mental health of mothers. They have more responsibility and obligations within their home, which increases their psychological stress. Outside of the pandemic, caregiving work is already associated with an increase in psychological stress, so there is no doubt it has been exacerbated during the pandemic when kids and families spent an unprecedented amount of time at home (Fortier, 2022). Furthermore, a study by Kizilirmak and Memis (2009) shows that women's, and not men's, responsibilities for care work, and any increase in care work, intensifies along with the depth of their poverty. So once again, these pandemic consequences equally affected those women who were already less fortunate. These unshared duties of unpaid domestic and home care, also known as the "second shift", draws back to this structural and societal patriarchy touched on earlier. Through centuries, men have unequally contributed and been accountable for domestic work and childcare within households. Instead they have been responsible for the financial aspects of family life. Therefore, when pandemic reemployment and recovery began, men's economic and job recovery took precedence over women because they needed to stay home.

This is why women with young children feared even worse during the pandemic, as they were forced to leave the labor force. A collaboration between the International Labor Organization [ILO] and UN Women indicates that even before the pandemic, women with at least one child under the age of 6, were lagging behind women's overall labor force participation rate. They continue on to say that "About 113 million women aged 25-54 with partners and small children were out of the workforce in 2020" (ILO, 2022). Compared to just 13 million men, the number of women is staggering. Countries all over the world saw a decreasing percentage of women with small children in the labor force in 2020, with the greatest drops being in Latin America and the Caribbean (ILO, 2022). Moreover, this decision to step away from the workforce was not a conscious one for many of these women, as the issues discussed previously created involuntary unemployment. An increase in care needs, as well as the shutting down of schools and daycare centers made work nearly an impossible option for women with small children, who do not have the luxury of child independence. These mothers were forced to leave the labor force, switch jobs, or reduce their working hours, all of which impacted their income. In 2022, these problems still emanate for some mothers, as new strains of the virus continue to put pressure on school and care center closures. These continuous child and domestic care needs make it difficult for mothers of young children to return to work full time. In short, the domestic and care work of all mothers increased drastically with pandemic restrictions, making it difficult for women to work. However, women with younger children were hit much harder than, say, women with high school aged children, who did not need constant childcare.

In addition to this increase in women's domestic and childcare, was the impact on single parent households that the pandemic brought on. According to the International Labor Organization, single parent households across all regions are more likely to be headed by

women. During the early months of the pandemic, “unemployment of single mothers more than tripled, moving from 4.1% to 15.9%”, and before the pandemic single mothers were more likely to experience severe poverty compared to any other group (Fortier, 2022, p. 80). These single mothers not only faced unemployment and wage losses, they also experienced more childcare responsibilities that the pandemic brought on. Even when some single mothers did not face unemployment, they had to decide between their household and childcare responsibilities, or work and income responsibilities. In both scenarios, the well-being and family integrity of single mothers were compromised.

Furthermore, domestic care can extend outside of just personal family roles, it can include childcare by other women, elderly care, and cleaning. These jobs are invisible to the private sphere of work because they do not occur in the formal labor market. The International Labor Organization estimates that at least 55 million domestic workers lost their jobs in the aftermath of the pandemic, and over 70% of these workers suffered major income loss (ILO, 2021). The majority of domestic workers worldwide are migrant women, which shows how this job loss among domestic workers has more exclusively affected minority women. The overrepresentation of women in household work, as well as informal, low-wage domestic labor created major unemployment and wage losses for women, especially when compared to men.

Women faced unequal labor conditions outside of job loss and domestic care. Around the world, the majority of therapists, social workers, and school teachers are women (BLS, 2020; ILO, 2020). These are occupations that were protected from job loss and have allowed for work from home situations, but “the rapid change from in-[person] to online work has created an additional set of challenges for these employees” (Carli, 2020, p. 650). Most teachers were not well equipped or trained for online teaching, which proved difficult for the success of their jobs,

and an increase in child and elderly care made it harder for them to focus on their work. These types of jobs, as well, have an additional caretaking aspect to them, teachers, social workers and therapists all must be role models and guides to their patients and students. Many teachers and social workers were dealing with anxious or depressed kids, with whom they had to console and spend more time reaching out and engaging with. This, combined with their own domestic and mothering responsibilities added additional pressures that did not exist pre-pandemic. Therapists and mental health professionals also faced this increase in mental distress among their patients, and had difficulty finding that confidentiality and comfortness that comes from being in a room together. The switch to online work was difficult. Although many women focused, face-to-face jobs were lucky enough to be able to keep working, they found it difficult to be engaging and successful with their work, and they also faced an increase in engagement with the kids and patients they work with. Women's labor conditions were not just categorized by loss during the pandemic, they also faced difficulty within occupations in which they were the front line for the mental and emotional well being of the most vulnerable.

This unequal impact on women's wages, unemployment, and second shift work has caused this economic downturn globally to be labeled a "shcession". For the first time in a while, women's unemployment rate in the U.S exceeded men's, with Latinx women comprising about 20% of the unemployment rate (Brysk, 2022). Globally, women's unemployment rate exceeded that of men's in the second half of 2020, coming in at around 9.6%, compared to 7.9% for men (World Economic Forum, 2022). Both of these measures indicate a disproportionate number of job losses for women compared to men, which has been explored throughout this paper so far. At the same time, women are more concentrated as essential workers and low wage laborers, who were unable to, or could not afford to take time off from work. This puts them

more at risk for infection, as touched on earlier, which led to forced, unpaid, time off from work. Most of these jobs, additionally, have limited access to insurance and sick leave. In general, women not only faced an unprecedented and unequal increase in unemployment, they also made up the majority of workers who were unable to stop working during COVID, leaving them more exposed to sickness and the potential loss of income.

Simultaneously, much like domestic work, sex work exists invisibly in the private sphere. Sex work, again, is dominated by women, particularly poor women. Due to quarantines and social restrictions, most sex workers were unable to find work, and many found themselves in dangerous situations: punished for breaking lockdown rules, or illegible for relief programs. As Brysk cites, the quarantining of sex workers threatened their access to food and healthcare, because they no longer had a flow of income, and the, limited, amenities provided through their work. This is continuous through all avenues of work dominated by women that were impacted by the pandemic, they no longer had access to steady income. The economic security of women all over the world was compromised. Overall, women's labor and economic security became increasingly jeopardized during the pandemic because of heightened layoffs of female dominated work sectors, and, essentially, the elimination of informal domestic and sex work.

How to Respond

Through empirical analysis, the ways in which COVID-19 disproportionately impacted women have been presented. This identification is crucial in recognizing how governments need to respond in this post-crisis era. The most obvious of these resolutions, perhaps, is to increase the number of women in leadership and policy-making globally. Alexandra Fisher and Michelle Ryan cite a study that showed countries with female leaders performed better in the early stages

of the pandemic than those with a majority of male leaders. Additionally, the United Nations Women, and Development Program cites the need for more women on COVID task forces, and feminist leadership cooperation with the government in order to ensure proper gender sensitive measures are taken in recovery processes. They also say, “during the pandemic, tight networks between these [women’s policy agencies], feminist movements and/or [Civil Society Organizations] enabled a rapid identification of problems and a strong basis for coordinating response efforts” (UN Women & UNDP, 2022, p.49). They cite Argentina as an example, who had been strengthening their budget around WPAs and feminist movements since 2015, and resulted in much better gender focused policies during COVID. It is crucial that governments expand the inclusion of women in leadership and policy decisions globally, especially during pandemic recovery, coupled with an increase support and mobilizations of feminist movements. Since women suffered at much greater rates than men during COVID, the only way to enact meaningful gender policies is to include women within political and social leadership.

Another way in which governments needed to respond to COVID imbalances is by establishing gender sensitive monitoring of impacts caused by crises. The COVID-19 pandemic is not the only plight that disproportionately hits women. Changing political attitudes, humanitarian crises, climate shifts, and many more, all impact the most disadvantaged groups the most, and in every part of the world, women are the most vulnerable. The response to these crises is always path-dependent, building on existing structures and tracking measures to implement help. These processes are very rarely gender sensitive. An important step moving forward through the aftermath of COVID-19 is for governments and institutions to shift the way they monitor and track crisis impacts to be more gender aware. The United Nations cites some of the issues with policy impacts, “ By May 2020, however, not one of the global policy trackers

included a gender perspective. Public health trackers-such as the WHO COVID-19 Health System Monitor-focused squarely on first order responses, ignoring measures to address second-order effects such as the intensification of VAWG” (UN Women & UNDP, 2022, p.126). It also touches on the lack of gender job loss tracking, women’s heightened risk of poverty, and the increase in domestic care. All of this tracking significantly missed a gender specific aspect, and did not account for the differing impacts that the pandemic would have on men and women. This is why there were insufficient gender sensitive policies put forth from countries, which will be explored later. The UN provides insight into a better system of tracking, and explains that themselves, feminist organizations, individuals and governments drew on research and effects from previous crises, and immediately began collecting gender specific data on impacts of the pandemic, and the scope of policies being implemented. In order to break the path dependency, and create new gender sensitive policies, governments and institutions have to establish new monitoring systems that are gender specific, and track the impacts of the crisis on a basis of gender.

A different approach to pandemic recovery is the need for governments to redirect fiscal spending on public investment targeted at women’s economic security. Governments can invest in new types of higher paying jobs, and ensure that women get equal opportunities at these jobs. Given a history of under-resourcing support centers for victims of gender based violence, and a sharp increase in this violence during the pandemic, governments must invest in these types of response and support systems. The only way to protect women from domestic violence, is to create a robust system of gender based help and resources that can provide services in even the toughest of situations like a pandemic.

In addition to just job creation and violence protective services, governments can provide investment in care work, and reproductive health. Research suggests that “governments must provide high-quality childcare to all families. Doing so is especially vital for the wellbeing of single-parents as it will allow them to maintain the family’s only source of income” (Fortier, 2020, p.83). The increase in unpaid domestic labor is undoubtedly one of the most significant impacts that COVID had on the lives and wellbeing of women, especially for lower income single mothers. Governments need to invest in providing more accessible childcare services, more direct funding for families with young children or at the poverty level, as well as provide paid family leave for both men and women. Overall, by investing, and creating policies that force employers to provide paid time off and parental and sick leave, governments would more accurately account for the needs of working mothers. Women would no longer have to choose between work and childcare in times of crisis, and it would relieve some of the burden on domestic work if husbands were granted more freedom in their employment. These are short term solutions, however, to the pandemic, in order to prevent further economic insecurity among women in crises, institutions need to work towards closing the gender wage gap, and formally establishing the value of unpaid domestic labor. Not only would this acknowledge domestic labor within the labor market, but it would also allow policy makers to take it into account in the future.

Lastly, in addition to domestic labor investments, government and institutional policies and spending should more accurately invest in women’s health. First of all, governments need to enact policies and spending measures that will better ensure the accessibility and reach of adequate health insurance and services to everyone, especially the poor. Since women face a lack of healthcare access due to economic insecurity more, these types of policies will directly impact

women, both during and out of times of crises, especially in poorer countries. Building on this, an expansion on the availability of contraception, abortion, and reproductive health for women is needed. The detrimental effects of a lack of sexual health measures and reproductive care from COVID on women have been directly observed. Also, the restrictive measures placed on contraception and abortion have had a greater impact on the overall reproductive freedom and stripping of human rights for women, even in the most developed countries. By providing universal health care access and reproductive health measures to women both outside and in a crisis, it allows for overall better health of women, and it establishes the validity and acknowledgement of the importance of women's wellbeing and human rights. The feminization and gendered nature of poverty, domestic work and health crises across the globe make it crucial for governments to target their fiscal spending in gendered investments that will help improve the lives and wellbeing of women.

All of the suggestions above encompass different steps in which governments can more accurately see the gendered impacts of the crisis, and in turn more accurately produce gender based policies. What classifies a policy as gender sensitive is one that accurately incorporates the experiences and specific needs of women and girls within a country, and directly addresses their vulnerability and pre-existing gender structures. These policies encapsulate levels of intersectionality, and work on targeting specific missteps and needs on the basis of gender. For example, in recognizing the dominant level of minority women in poverty, a gender sensitive policy would specifically establish a way to target women in poverty or lower wage jobs. Policies that account for, and recognize the gender inequality that is present and work towards fixing that are gender sensitive. In evaluating this idea, and the way that COVID has disproportionately affected women, it is clear that policy making institutions need to enact

gender sensitive policies in order to accurately aid the needs of women and girls across the globe.

Chapter 2: Evaluating the Gender Neutrality of Macroeconomic Policies

Through a gendered analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the crucial need for gender-sensitive policies has become evident. In order to evaluate and discuss the policies put forth to help lessen the impacts of the shutdowns, the gendered history of macroeconomic policies must first be debriefed. These macroeconomic policies can be explored through three types of policy categories: globalization policies, fiscal policy, and monetary policy. The goal here is to establish to what extent macroeconomic policy has historically included women.

Globalization Policies

Of these macroeconomic policies, particularly in developing economies, globalization is at the center. Economic globalization focuses on increasing the interdependence of global markets through cross-border trade, investment, and flow of capital. This pull towards globalization has increased drastically alongside the advancement of technology. For developing countries in particular, globalization is a key factor in growth, becoming economically competitive, and gaining capital and infrastructure. These globalization policies represent themselves through things like capital account liberalization, cross-country financial flows, as well as the erosion and decentralization of wage and labor regulations with the goal of creating a more productive and trade centered economy (Standing, 1999). These policies utilize techniques like foreign direct investment, elimination of trade barriers and employment policies to spur free and competitive trade, as well as financial liberalization to encourage globalization and

investment. Despite the positive impacts of these globalization policies on growth and economic freedom, they consistently showcase negative effects on women, and fail to accurately address the economic and social deprivations of women.

In particular, these macro policies have impacted the scope of women's work. The push for globalization policies and strategies, has led to an increase in employment across the globe. Specifically, there has been what is known as a 'feminization of employment', particularly within export oriented industries. Stephanie Seguino highlights the direct link between trade liberalization and increased demand for female workers. She pulls on work by Guy Standing, who explains the global push for a female labor force, alongside growing economies and increased trade policies. He explains that countries have implemented supply side policy changes to increase the availability of goods and services, which generates a greater labor force and contributes to globalization. Governments have taken actions to increase competitiveness and production, like the deregulation of industries, and lower income taxes. In turn, more investment in the economy is stimulated, which increases trade and export competitiveness. However, the rapid need for more workers means that women are thrust into the workforce with little experience and find themselves within low wage jobs. Combined with the deregulation of industry and labor laws brought on through globalization, women become placed at the bottom of the employment tower, in the lowest paying jobs with the worst of conditions.

A real-world example of this is the garment industry in Bangladesh. A \$30 billion industry that accounts for 83% of Bangladesh's total export revenue, the ready-made garment industry has seen massive growth since the 1970s. This sector alone has accounted for a significant rise in women's employment, but it is not pleasant work. These women workers are often subject to long work hours, cramped and dangerous work spaces, susceptible to sexual

harassment, and stripped of basic rights including maternity leave and unionization (Thelwell, 2020). Additionally, between 2010 and 2018, women's participation in this industry decreased from 63.5% in 2010 to 60.4% by 2018 (ILO, 2020). This indicates that as economies grow and sectors become more industrialized and revenue generating, women's jobs are being replaced by men. The garment industry is a prime example of the ways in which globalization has created low-wage and dangerous work for women. The foundation of globalization policies is the increased need and reliance on low wage work in order to rapidly produce goods and services, while costing employers the least amount possible. As explored earlier in this paper, women make up the majority of low-wage work across the world. Therefore, as the economic security of unionized male workers is being eroded through supply side policies, with an increased need for low-wage labor, women have been thrust into the labor force at a rapid pace.

Although this has a positive impact on women's labor force, it has to be approached with some wariness. Stephanie Seguino explains that firms have faced a lot of globalization, and in turn have adopted "flexible and informal work arrangements that are temporary, seasonal, casual, and based on unregulated labor contracts" (Seguino, 2017, p. 23). Despite women receiving more jobs through the process and policies of globalization, it is not meaningful work. Women have been forced into these cyclical low wage jobs that offer no real economic security, and provide very low wages. These jobs also provide little no opportunity for skill development or occupational climbing causing women to get stuck in the informal labor sector, and leaving them without employment in the inevitable event of layoffs. Bangladesh is a perfect example of this.

Seguino also points out that these trade liberalization and globalization policies countries focus on, in the long term, hurt women's employment. As countries transition into becoming more industrialized, the concentration of jobs is no longer reliant on women. There is a gradual

shift away from low-wage labor, and gender roles help push employers towards the hiring of male workers. Seguino cites a study by Bussolo and De Hoyos in 2009 that identifies labor-intensive manufacturing jobs, which are dominantly held by women, were lost in several African countries as a result of trade liberalization. (Bussolo & De Hoyos, 2009). Circling back to Bangladesh, there is another example of this. Between 2010 and 2018, women's participation in the ready made garment industry decreased from 63.5% in 2010 to 60.4% by 2018 (ILO, 2020). As developing countries become more industrialized and revenue generating, there is a push away from low-wage, informal work, as traditional gender roles take hold of labor market decisions. Women's work is no longer desirable and they lose their jobs to men. Overall, globalization and trade liberalization policies present increased desire for low-wage, female workers. Despite growing employment opportunities for women, the jobs are low-paying and quickly replaced when countries become more industrialized.

Another gendered impact that globalization policies have is on unpaid labor and time allocation of women. As has previously been established, informal labor and unpaid care make up a large portion of the economy, but are not recognized in mainstream macroeconomic analysis. This informal production is especially prevalent in developing nations, and includes farming, gathering food and water, housework and child care, community management and organization, among others. (Floro, 1995). The majority of this work is taken on by women and girls. Globalization policies and economic restructuring can have a massive impact on this informal sector and alter the time allocation of unpaid labor. One historical example of this is the switch to export cropping in the Philippines. One main goal of globalization is the increase in access to larger trading sectors, increasing both imports and exports to generate growth and financial capital. As countries undertake these globalization strategies, they may shift their

cropping and farm productivity to be more marketable to trade. Evidence from an article by Maria Floro highlights this increase in export cropping in the Philippines has led to a decline in women's participation in formal rural farming, and a push toward female-centered, informal family farming. This switch to export-centered agriculture has intensified the labor requirements and costs, and employers have become more inclined to substitute male-hired labor for informal, cheaper, female labor. (Floro, 1995). This push in globalization and export-oriented growth has shifted the demand for formal, higher-wage labor to informal and low-wage female labor, intensifying women's time spent on informal labor, while also dealing with care work.

Additionally, there is evidence to suggest that globalization policies reduce public sector spending, which results in increased unpaid care labor for women. For governments to enact public sector reforms, they need a substantial tax base, however globalization aims to keep taxes low. Raising taxes increases the cost of labor and reduces the competitiveness of products both domestically and foreignly. The existence of imports alone draws a desire for firms to be highly productive, and make the cost of their products as low as they can. A simultaneous push for an increase in export production and lower costs means that firms want to keep additional expenditures down. An increase in taxes would lessen the availability of funds for firms to pay their workers sufficiently, and keep the cost of production down. Additionally, lower taxes attract foreign investment and higher-skilled workers, which serves to increase trade and exchange rate competitiveness for globalizing countries. Therefore, increasing taxes necessary for public sector spending would counteract the main goals of globalization and trade openness policies (Kaufman, Segura-Uberigo, 2001). Governments want to stray away from public sector spending when enacting globalization tactics, and women's unpaid care labor time will in turn increase. Cuts in social sector budgets have the potential to increase the care burden for women, because

they have to replace the resources that are not being publicly provided (Seguino, 2017). This increases the amount of time they are spending in the household, decreasing women's access to meaningful employment, and diminishing their chance for assets. At the same time, mothers who may not have an option to forgo their income to take care of unpaid labor, may have to sacrifice care for their children. Overall, the changes in productivity and the potential for public sector cuts brought on by globalization policies negatively impacts both the informal production and unpaid care labor that women disproportionately undertake.

The key issue here is that governments must evaluate the costs of globalization policies as it pertains to gender equality. Although, it seems as though when they are given the opportunity, globalization policies and goals become the government's focus. Unfortunately, the scarcity of data relating to time allocation of informal work makes it difficult to track the long-term macroeconomic impacts of globalization on labor markets. Globalization remains the tangible way in which governments can create economic growth and competitiveness. On the other hand, even in the short run there are positive demand-side impacts of gender equality and even more opportunities for economic stimulation, growth, resilience and development. Recognizing the layered impacts of development and macro growth policies on gender dynamics and overall well-being is key for policymakers, but it seems that they have yet to determine the consequences of globalization

Similar in practice to globalization, financial liberalization policies are another type of approach that have seen increased implementation over the past two decades. These policies allow for the free movement of capital, and focus on keeping inflation and exchange rates low in order to attract investment, capital and integrated financial markets. These policies are particularly appealing to developing economies that want to bolster their financial account and

increase economic activity domestically. This, in turn, helps to enhance economic efficiency and spur growth. These policies typically consist of aspects like the removal of interest rate controls and barriers to entry, bank privatization, and expanding the means by which firms and financial agents can get funds. (Ghosh, 2005).

There is a plethora of research that has showcased the impact that financial liberalization policies have on gender inequality. Stephanie Seguino cites studies from Elson and Cagatay, and Braunstein. They argue that these policies increase economic volatility, and women are more susceptible. The reason that financial liberalization policies can create crises, particularly in developing countries, lies within the imbalances of developing economies, and global financial markets, as explained by Braunstein. She outlines the idea that developing countries need to turn to international financial markets for capital accumulation and development. However, this exchange creates a relationship between ‘unequal partners’, as the developing entities do not have the financial resources and infrastructure to support their level of international intake (Braunstein, 2012). The article continues to detail why developing countries are subject to volatility, citing three main reasons. First, because developing economies often have undesirable and uncompetitive currency, they can not issue debt in the domestic currency. Therefore increasing international borrowing always poses a risk because it creates more loans and debt within the debtor country that they may not have the means to pay back. Large levels of debt can lead to economic instability and a lack of confidence from investors, resulting in volatility and crisis. Secondly, the article explains that there is limited growth of domestic financial and capital markets within developing countries, therefore as they grow and intake more capital flows, the long-term financial markets will not be able to support the development. Underdeveloped economies do not have the long term means to sustain intense financial liberalization, which

inevitably leads to crises and volatility. Lastly, developing nations have relatively small financial markets, and so getting involved in the international markets places large speculative pressures on the economy of the country. These pressures include investors and traders speculations of currency value, exchange rate, and capital accumulation. These conjectures are all being placed on the financial markets of developing nations, which are not equipped to deal with quick shifts and mood changes about their economies. (Braunstein, 2012).

In the face of this volatility, women are the most vulnerable to economic insecurity, just like in most crises. This is because women typically have fewer assets and savings to help compensate during financial downturns. There are a variety of reasons why women typically hold less assets than men, especially in developing countries. Women tend to hold less jobs than men, the gender wealth gap makes it difficult for women workers to earn as much, and typical gender ideas force financial institutions to favor men, among others. Additionally, just like in the COVID-19 pandemic, when crises hit, the care and unpaid labor responsibilities increase for women. Lastly, economic volatility leads to job losses for men, which propels women into the labor force to take on more precarious, lower-waged jobs that become available. Financial liberalization policies have a chance to create more economic volatility, and a potential for financial crises. When these crises hit, more vulnerable populations, like women, become increasingly susceptible to economic insecurity. Despite a massive push for financial liberalization policies to help spur global development, the economic risks and gender inequality are not productive.

Financial liberalization policies and the push for open flow of capital through financial markets have become more and more prevalent policy initiatives for governments in the past twenty years. However, as explored above, the creation of economic instability and the

decentralization of the financial institutions, has a large potential to create crises and downturns, especially in developing economies. These outcomes have a dramatic and disproportionate effect on women's responsibilities and economic security. Therefore, it is clear that these macroeconomic policies centered around financial liberalization are not historically gender sensitive, and do not take into account women's economic status, unemployment, and contribution to the unpaid, informal care sector.

Fiscal Policy

Fiscal policy is concentrated on government's spending and taxation, and how that can be manipulated to slow down or speed up growth. Up until twenty years ago, fiscal policy was considered gender-neutral in its impacts, but this changed as research moved to explore the gender impact of structural and financial changes in developing countries, particularly in the wake of the 2007-2009 financial crisis (Seguino, 2017).

The first aspect of fiscal policy that has been explored in relation to its gendered effects is public investment in physical infrastructure. Public investment is a key factor in governments' fiscal policy agendas. These policies involve spending and investment in nationwide infrastructure like roads, railways, airports, bridges, etc. Additional spending concentrates on innovative activity, like research, as well as education, job training and green investments (Bivens, 2012). This public investment focuses on raising productivity and living standards nationally. Overall, public investment has major benefits for the economy, by creating long term fiscal space, lowering inflation, and the potential for the government to address and fix inequalities and discrimination. Seguino cites several studies that showcase the opportunity for public investment to reduce care burden and raise potential earnings for both men and women.

For example, if a country, particularly a developing one, decides to invest in the building of a road, this helps to reduce the time a mother would spend on getting her children to school, or fetching water for the home. In this case also, the building of a road would create the need for the acquisition of personal transportation, leading to the increase of personal assets. This physical infrastructure also helps men because it not only creates more jobs necessary for building these investments. It also reduces commuting times, leading to the potential for more earnings for the family, and the availability of men to partake in caretaking because of their increased availability in the home. Overall, the building of physical infrastructure by governments has the potential to increase family earnings and assets, as well as reduce care work responsibilities for women.

Despite the ability for public investment to aid in relieving women of care work and provide them more economic opportunities and potential earnings, it does not necessarily reduce the employment gap between men and women. Work by Chakaraborty explains that research in India showcases that infrastructure investment lessened the time stress of unpaid care labor, but women's employment still did not increase. (Seguino, 2017; Chakaraborty, 2010). Chakaraborty explains that complementary employment policies are needed alongside infrastructure investment, to ensure the inclusion of women into the labor market, in lieu of care work. In order for gendered employment gaps to shrink, particularly in lower income nations, there needs to be simultaneous guarantee of female employment alongside public investments. Creating public infrastructure can aid in relieving care work, but if there are no employment opportunities to substitute this care work with, it is meaningless to gender equity. It is clear that although investment in physical infrastructure raises the productivity, employment and efficiency of a society, these policies are not necessarily gender sensitive. The relief of care burden, and increase in potential assets for women, simply comes as a byproduct of these fiscal policy

measures around physical investment, there is still a lack of awareness and measures taken to ensure the employment and inclusion of women in the formal labor market. In order to accurately ensure the elimination of gender discrimination in the workforce and economy, countries need to be directly enforcing policies that address the inequality of women, and the unequal treatment they receive in the labor and financial markets. Instead, they implement policies that reduce women's care work, and allow them more economic security, but only as an offhanded result of an overall increase in national productivity.

Another aspect of fiscal policy that needs to be assessed for gender sensitivity is investment in 'social infrastructure'. Essentially, these policies are social expenditures, and include investment in people's capabilities. These policies encompass investment and creation of things like healthcare, social services and public education, all of which allow individuals to meet their potential, and have the resources necessary to be successful. These investments, in turn, have a positive spillover effect on economy-wide productivity as a whole. By investing in the capabilities of people, and allowing them to be the most productive they can be, these investments generate a flow of revenues in the future, and convert human capital and abilities into higher incomes and profits. (Seguino, 2017).

There is a clear path here to see how social infrastructure investment can help to promote gender equality. If anything, by offering every individual an investment in their capability, it raises the productivity of the economy to the max, and leads to long term revenue flows. There is countless global evidence that indicates closing the education gap between boys and girls has a positive and significant impact on economic growth of a country. Additionally, these social investment policies also have the potential to provide gender equitable access to income and jobs. A report by İlkaracan, Kim, and Kaya lays out the potential employment opportunities

presented from investment in childcare centers and preschools in Turkey. This report details the low labor force participation rate that Turkey faces among both men and women. They explain that during the 2000s, men's participation rate has stabilized at just about 70%, and for women it has remained at just above 30% since 2014, in which it increased from 2008. (Illkkaracan, Kim, Kaya 2015). Despite an overall low labor force participation rate for men and women in Turkey, it remains low for different reasons. “ The declining trend in the male participation rate can be attributed to an increased number of years of schooling and higher rates of retirement, while the declining trend in the female participation rate was driven to a large extent by rural to-urban migration patterns and the transformation of women from unpaid family farm workers to urban homemakers” (Illkkaracan, Kim, Kaya 2015, p.18). The primary difference here is that, despite movement from rural to urban sectors, women still primarily remain doing unpaid, informal care work, and out of the labor force. Seeing this data, particularly for a lower income country, it is clear that fiscal policy and social infrastructure investment can be utilized to alleviate some of this care burden, and create equal employment opportunities. The study by Illkkanarcan estimates, utilizing other research and developments, that investing 20.7 billion Turkish lira into the building of public preschools and childcare centers in Turkey, would help to generate 719,000 new jobs in the early child care and preschool education (ECCPE) sector.

Comparatively they estimate that if an equal amount of investment was placed into the construction center, it would generate 290,000 new employment opportunities. Additionally, they cite that 73% of jobs in the ECCPE sector would be given to women, compared to only 6% in the construction sector, or other male dominated fields. (Illkkanarcan, Kim, Kaya 2015, 9). Utilizing fiscal policy to invest in early childhood education not only helps to eliminate gender based employment and income discrepancies in the future, but it helps to generate jobs in a women

dominated sector. This investment can also provide relief from excessive unpaid care labor that women take on, allowing them the time to seek employment.

This research goes beyond developing nations as well, as studies focused on advanced economies predict the same result for fiscal spending focused on social and welfare industries. Investment in healthcare, education and childcare bring effects over the short term, medium term and long term. In the short term women's unpaid work falls because there are more resources to assist with child and long term care, and more jobs are created in sectors that are predominantly filled by women. In the medium term, wages in the care sector rise as more investment takes place, leading to increased income of women and families. This allows more men the opportunity to enter care work, as they do not have to work as much to substitute for single income. In the long term, gender roles surrounding care work subside and employment and productivity benefits grow. (Seguino, 2017). Overall, both in developing and advanced economies, fiscal spending focused on social assistance and infrastructure has the potential to target gender inequality directly, and help to alleviate and eliminate the unequal care work endured by women, and the gender employment and wage gaps. Investment in social infrastructure creates more employment opportunities for women because it generates jobs in female-dominated sectors. In turn, women's income increases, allowing men to work less and contribute to care labor. The investment in things like childcare centers, early childhood education, healthcare and elder care, would provide relief for women when it comes to unpaid, informal care labor. The goal of social infrastructure investment is to raise human capabilities and productivity, in order to create profit and fiscal space in the long term.

Although social infrastructure investment seems like an easy fix to decades long gender inequality and discrimination in the labor and financial markets, in reality fiscal spending is not

sufficient enough to target gender issues. Many countries are thought to lack sufficient fiscal space to undertake the level of public investment needed to see the potential gendered benefits. This space is determined by limits placed on a country's public debt relative to GDP. If a country has a high debt, and little GDP, as is the case in many developing countries, then they lack the fiscal space to undertake investment in social infrastructure. If countries do want to increase their fiscal space, the IMF identifies the chance through rearranging expenditure, which implies cuts, raising taxes, and increasing borrowing, among others (Heller & IMF, 2005). Although these methods are thought to be useful for freeing up fiscal space, when put in the context of developing nations, it does not appear that way. First, raising taxes, both in developing and advanced economies, disproportionately impacts women and minorities. When taxes are raised, income decreases, which places a larger care burden back onto women, as they or their husbands have to work more to make up for the lost income. Additionally, when taxes are raised those laborers in the lowest wage jobs, women, are not able to have sufficient income to support themselves because more is given to the government to fund fiscal spending. Secondly, many developing nations have already increased their government spending in recent decades, much of which has focused on agriculture, education and health, but they still lack sufficient financial capital to truly make an impact. (Lindauer & Velenchik, 1992). When compared to developed nations, this government spending does not compare. Overall, there is a clear opportunity for social infrastructure investments and fiscal policy to help in aiding gender inequities, but many countries lack the fiscal space to execute it. In developing nations specifically, the financial institutions are not sufficient enough to account for large levels of fiscal spending, especially when most of their resources come from foreign direct investment and debt to others. When countries do attempt to make fiscal space for spending, they have to make expenditure cuts, and

raise taxes, leaving women and marginalized groups in even worse conditions. There is not enough spending available to allocate enough fiscal policy resources towards social infrastructure investment and social services. Instead fiscal policy focuses more broadly on job creation and productivity, and does not have the means to focus specifically on women centered issues, like care work and employment gaps, particularly in developing nations.

Overall, it seems as though fiscal policy focused on public and social investment are the most gendered-centered of traditional macroeconomic policies. These expansionary policies have the opportunity to create fair employment and wage opportunities, reduce the care burden for women, and generate economy wide long-run productivity. For both developing and advanced countries, fiscal policy can be a way to alleviate inequality and work towards having more gender neutral market outcomes. However, developing nations often lack the fiscal space and financial capabilities to truly invest enough, and developed nations focus their spending on more broad, less gendered production policies.

Despite the potential benefits, fiscal policy can not be viewed as holistically good because of contractionary policies. When countries need to counteract the effects of productivity they turn to contractionary policies that raise taxes, as well as sell government securities, among others. Although more research is needed in order to determine the true gendered impacts, it can be concluded that when governments reduce spending and productivity, the most vulnerable populations are affected. If gender equity can be achieved through expansionary fiscal policies, it can just as easily be decreased when the government is reducing spending. Women's jobs, health, income and care assistance are sure to suffer when the government has to prioritize spending. Additionally, women's care work has the potential to rise alongside tax increases, as both female

and male income is reduced, and men can longer take part in informal labor. Fiscal policy has the potential to help reduce gender inequality, but it just as easily can increase it.

Monetary Policy

Monetary policy focuses on controlling and manipulating the money supply of a country in order to generate or reduce growth. The main goals of this policy type is to sustain a level economy, reduce unemployment, maintain currency value and economic growth. Monetary policy is achieved through manipulation of interest rates by the Federal Reserve; open market operations, or the buying and selling of bonds to manipulate interest and inflation rates; and shifting reserve requirements to increase or decrease the capital available for loans.

Since the 1980s, monetary policies have largely strayed away from employment creation and instead focus on inflation reduction strategies for price stability. The idea is that high inflation has long-term detriments to the economy, and reducing inflation can spur growth and employment. Countries aim to achieve inflation reduction through targeting of interest rates, in this case raising the short term rates to slow down investment and consumption domestically. However, the cost of fighting inflation and this monetary policy is unevenly distributed. In most cases, a reduction in inflation means a reduction in economic growth, investment and consumption, as monetary policy is working towards reducing the money supply and growth. This reduction in inflation, is simultaneous with a contraction in employment, as employers see less consumption and an overall decrease in productivity. Braunstein and Heinz, in their study regarding gender bias and central bank policy, find that this contractionary monetary policy impacts women's employment more. When controlling for long-term trends in employment, they cite that the ratio of women's to men's employment tends to decline during these periods of

inflation reduction. (Braunstein & Heinz, 2008). They continue to say, “in terms of monetary policy, [we] find that countries that respond to inflation by raising real interest rates or tightening the real money supply (both relative to their long-run trends) are also more likely to experience employment contractions, with concomitantly higher costs for women’s employment” (Braunstein and Heinz, 2008, p. 174). Overall, any contractionary monetary policy action that aims to reduce inflation has disproportionate impacts on women’s unemployment. Why exactly this is the case, well it has been argued several times thus far in this essay. First and foremost, gender discrimination and traditional views already place limitations on employment availability for women. The central idea that men should bear larger fiscal responsibilities than women result in larger unemployment trends for women. Thus, in times of employment contractions, women are laid off first because employers feel that men should be fulfilling their fiscal responsibilities. Other work by Stephanie Seguíno finds a similar conclusion of a disproportionate increase in female unemployment as a result of contractionary monetary policy in all U.S states (Seguíno & Heintz, 2012). This work focuses on contractionary monetary policy, and the tightening of the money supply. There is not a large body of research specifically on how monetary policy impacts gender and why, but the pioneering research by Braunstein and Heintz, and Seguíno correlates inflation reduction and a contracting money supply with an increase in female unemployment.

As for expansionary monetary policy, which includes lowering interest rates, increasing reserve requirements and expanding the money supply, there is little research for the impact on gender. One article details the gender impact of these types of policy, dealing first with interest rate decreases. Phyllis Papadavid and Laetitia Pettinotti speak about expansionary policy, and how it has the potential to positively impact women’s employment. They write that lower interest rates affect aggregate demand, reduce debt, and stimulate business borrowing and employment.

Naturally, this has the potential to benefit some groups of women, especially if employment and growth takes place in sectors that primarily employ women. What remains a critical point here however, is the availability and types of employment created. Quality jobs, equal access and opportunity, and substantial wages are all critical in bridging gender gaps (Papadavid & Pettinotti, 2021). Expansionary monetary policy has the potential to benefit women and increase their employment, it is also key that they receive meaningful and lasting jobs if real strides in gender equity are to be seen. Another aspect of expansionary monetary policy that the article speaks about is liquidity management strategies like lending terms and loan guarantees. There is no direct evidence of this occurring, but the work specifies that if the central bank were to ease lending restrictions and provide incentives to loaning to specific groups like: small enterprises or sectors where women are the primary workers, it could help to generate equality. Access to credit is more difficult for small businesses, and women-owned companies tend to be smaller enterprises that can lower the cost of credit for women who own these businesses and allow them better access to financial resources (Papadavid & Pettinotti, 2021). This could be increasingly important in developing nations, where access to credit is limited for everyone, it would give women an increased opportunity for financial growth. This type of policy is speculation from the author, and there is no direct evidence as to the effects of this liquidity management tool, however it is important to highlight the potential for monetary policy to influence and help women entrepreneurs.

Expansionary monetary policy has the potential to generate assets and employment opportunities for women, and has been utilized for these purposes historically, especially in times following crises. However, the key focus with monetary policy should not just be on growth, but on the types of employment and revenue that women are receiving. There needs to be an explicit

focus for governments on generating meaningful jobs for women, and creating equal opportunities and access for employment, especially in developing nations. The focus of expansionary monetary policy needs to broaden from inflation rate stability and interest rate manipulation, to include policies that focus on creating employment opportunities for all, and providing assistance and loans to women.

Chapter 3: Exploration of Gender Sensitive COVID-19 Policies

A wider view of economic policies all together allows for a pull back to the disproportionate way in which the COVID-19 pandemic affected people across the globe. Since it is clear that this was a gendered pandemic, as highlighted in the first section of this paper, then this, no doubt calls for gender-sensitive recovery policies.

The question posed here is how gender sensitive were policies this time around? The answer, in simple terms, is not much. Using data provided from the UN Women and UN Development Program, it can be seen that of all 4,516 policies that were implemented following the onset of the pandemic, only 1,494 of them were categorized as gender sensitive. That is only 33% of all policies, and when compared to the statistics in the first section on how significantly women suffered, it is clear that countries did not do enough to fulfill the need for gender sensitivity in their policy making. Overall, this is not a surprising finding, given the historical gender bias of economic policies, but what is of interest is what specifically these policies contained.

The United Nations Women, and the United Nations Development Program created an in-depth report on governmental responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, which form the basis for much of the research and evidence cited in this paper. This report analyzes the impact that

COVID had on women through three specific lenses, violence against women and girls, women's rising economic insecurity, and increasing unpaid care labor. These categories laid the groundwork for their policy analysis. In the report, policies were considered gender-sensitive if they addressed any of these three key issues, and specifically focused on targeting and aiding women. Any policies that were overarching measures and did not target women's issues were labeled not gender sensitive. From there, they investigated how governments responded to each issue, what created a more comprehensive and gender sensitive response within countries, and lessons and next steps. In each of these sections, they provide ample evidence to showcase what was done to help women, on what level, and how. Their findings, along with personal research, will be laid out, in order to help reveal on what scale, or lack thereof, gender sensitive policies were implemented.

The distributional differences among the implementation of these three policy types is also revealing for the type of gender-sensitive work that was truly done in the wake of the pandemic. Figure 1 in the Appendix provides a histogram for the distribution of the three types of policies. The data showcases the largest focus for policies was centered around violence against women and girls, with 852 of the 1,494 gender sensitive policies being focused on this. The next highest concern was women's economic insecurity, with 530 policy implementations, and lastly women's unpaid care with only 228 policies. Over 50% of all gender-sensitive policies detailed by the United Nations addressed Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), and although the report does not specify why exactly this is the case, inferences can be made. For starters, VAWG is, perhaps, the most tangible and conceivable of all the issues presented in these policies. Women actively called helplines and sought shelter from their abusers, long before the pandemic even began. Seeing the direct impacts of violence on women may have had a larger

impact on policy makers and activists. On the contrary, women's economic insecurity and care burden are issues that are more hidden in everyday gender norms and continuous policy and systematic gender bias. It was a way for policymakers to directly address a gendered issue, without having to deeply impact economic and social structures.

Violence Against Women and Girls

As explored earlier in this paper, violence against women and girls became somewhat of a “shadow pandemic” amidst the global pandemic. Various factors increased this violence towards women, like their economic insecurity, limited health and safety resources, stay-at-home orders, among many others. The necessary responses to this increase in violence involve legal reforms and policy changes; support for survivors; increased data tracking and a shifting of social attitudes and education (UN Women & UN development, 2022). Taking this into account, governments, in general, made significant strides in enacting policies that helped to violence against women and girls.

Violence against Women and Girls had the most policy measures enacted across 223 countries and territories, according to the UN Global Gender Response Tracker. There were a total of 852 total measures enacted, which showcases a significant response among governments. Most of these measures were enacted early on, with over 50% of them being adopted between the first two months of the pandemic (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). This indicates a concentrated response from governments on reducing this type of violence, and a heightened awareness of the increase in violence against women and girls that would come from the restrictions. After understanding the scope of policy enactment that took place to combat violence against women

and girls during the pandemic, it is next important to understand just what type of measures were created, and what makes them gender- sensitive

The main area of focus for many VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls) measures was strengthening resources for survivors, 64 percent of all measures centered around survivor support (UN Women and UNDP, 2022). Many of these policies involved increasing staffing and hours for helplines that would assist in-danger women with both psychological, and resource based help. For example, in Belgium, they implemented a policy that increased accommodation spaces for survivors accompanied by psychological consultation and help. Additionally, in Peru, they developed several measures centered around outreach. The government created a radio segment about women-centered issues such as prevention of gender based violence, self-esteem, economic stability, and resources for survivors. The Director of the Ministry and Vulnerable Populations in Peru also established the treatment and prevention of domestic violence as essential to ensure the continued resources and help to survivors (UN Women & UNDP). These policies were classified as gender sensitive as they specifically targeted gender based violence and provided resources exclusively to women. Both Belgium and Peru were among the countries with the most number of policies that addressed VAWG, with 13 and 14 respectively. They, therefore, provide fitting examples of the types of policies that governments were putting forth to deal with this shadow pandemic. These three examples are by no means exhaustive, and there were many different ways that countries aimed to reduce gender-based violence.

Despite this large effort to enact and strengthen help resources for survivors, there were gaps in implementation. Much like most economic and social policies put in place, low-income and rural women fell through the cracks. Due to the limited data collection available to policymakers on the existence of VAWG, women of lower income were left out of the data, as

they have limited access to phone services, internet access and are more susceptible to power outages (UN Women and UNDP, 2022). Not only were these women in less developed areas left out of data collection surrounding gender-based violence, they were unable to benefit from technology centered solutions. Policies that involve the use of computers, internet, and phone, make women in rural areas and of lower-income households unable to benefit from these improvements because they have virtually no access to technology. Data from IMF indicates that less than half the population in developing countries has internet access, with as little as zero to twenty users per one hundred inhabitants across several African countries and parts of Asia (IMF, 2020). It is clear that even though there was significant action by governments in the implementation of policies based around aiding Violence Against Women and Girls, these solutions are still not inclusive. This is where pandemic relief missed the most, as explored before, it is clear that women in low income countries and spaces have suffered the most from the effect of the pandemic, yet government actions and policies still fall short of including them.

Economic Insecurity

Following the onset of the global pandemic in 2020, there was a massive economic shock around the world. Governments unleashed unprecedented responses to this shock, with a fiscal expenditure that totaled four times higher than that of the global financial crisis of 2008-2009 (UN Women and UNDP, 2022). However, the focus of this outlay has largely ignored the economic insecurity of women. As explored previously in this paper, the global pandemic brought upon unprecedented levels of unemployment and economic turmoil for women, and globally women faced more severe economic consequences than men. Yet, somehow, economic policies still seemed to leave the economic targeting and protections for women out. The United

Nations Women highlights in their report that, globally governments adopted over 1,000 business support measures, but only 146 of them have targeted female-dominated sectors. Parallely, out of 3,099 social protection and labor market policies implemented globally, only 380 measures prioritized women or female dominated occupations as the recipients of cash transfers or wage subsidies (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). Of all economic and labor market protection measures taken globally, that is only 14 and 12 percent, respectively. These percentages are shocking, given the significant differences between men's and women's economic insecurity and unemployment rates during COVID.

Large business support measures are critical to the recovery of countries during financial crises, and are necessary allocations of governmental resources. The issue, however, is that they target large sections of the economy, and therefore reach workers, in this case women workers, in an indirect capacity. Even measures that targeted workers directly, it is doubtful that they trickled down to those who occupy lower wage occupations, like women. Given these caveats, it is difficult to track which policies specifically targeted women workers during the pandemic. The United Nations focuses their report on measures that protect jobs and income, and judge the extent in which those policies supported women's economic security. Using these boundaries, examples of the type of gender-sensitive policies targeted at women's rising economic insecurity can be explored. The most common type of measure that was aimed specifically at women's economic security was cash transfers. Almost all of these cash transfers, additionally, were implemented within the Global South. This is because for these countries, cash transfers were already a part of their poverty reduction strategies pre-pandemic, and so when COVID ensued, they were able to continue this pre-existing policy. These cash transfers target women primarily in their family roles, as mothers, and provide them cash in the hopes they utilize it to provide for

their family and children. Targeting women in this way has its drawbacks, it only acknowledges the economic insecurity of women as mothers, not as workers, however they still classify the policy as gender sensitive. These cash transfers provide women money in a domestic capacity, but often fail to address the economic emergency they faced as workers (UN Women & UNDP 2022). Despite this, these programs were crucial in providing women with relief, even if the coverage was low overall. Additionally, these policies had positive effects on women's mental and emotional health. The UN writes, "Women who reported receiving cash relief were 11 percentage points less likely to report increased mental stress compared to those who did not receive relief"(UN Women & UNDP, 2022, p. 66). It was not just enough for countries to have gender-sensitive labor measures, these cash relief programs directly lessened mental and emotional stress of women globally. This highlights the importance of implementing policies that directly target women and the heightened emotional and mental burden they face.

In addition to the pre-existing cash transfer programs that many countries built upon, at least 15 countries implemented new transfers for informal workers, with special provisions for women (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). Countries like Brazil, Togo, Burkina Faso, and Bangladesh were innovative in their approach to making cash transfers more gender-sensitive and worker based. Both Brazil and Togo, for example, implemented an extra cash transfer program for women in the informal economy, as well as a cash transfer to mothers. This allowed for the gender-sensitive recognition of the presence of women in the informal sector, and the way they have been disproportionately affected by COVID.

Despite these continuations and advances of cash transfers, there were still limitations and problems. For starters, the conditionality of providing cash relief to women as *mothers* not only places limits on who can receive relief, but also reinforces long-standing gender biases.

Secondly, most of these cash transfers were short-lived. Just like many policies targeting violence against women and girls, the duration for many cash transfer measures was about 4.5 months (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). Despite the short-lived nature of cash transfers, women's unemployment and economic insecurity lasted well beyond 4.5 months, especially for women of lower income. Perhaps the biggest problem with the duration of these cash transfers, is that they make up the majority of gender-sensitive policies implemented globally to address women's economic security. As the United Nations points out, overall, the majority of transfers were insufficient compared to need. They cite evidence from 45 countries that showcases that despite all efforts, women were significantly less likely than men to receive government cash relief, despite the gender differences in unemployment numbers (UN Women & UNDP, 2022).

Although the aim to implement gender-sensitive economic security policies was accomplished for many countries, there is still a clear gender difference in the level of economic assistance provided from the government despite the glaring variations in need between men and women.

Cash transfers were not the only type of measures that were taken to provide support to women economically. Governments also executed policies that provided wage subsidies and income support to women; food and other non-monetary support; employment activation and training for women; paid sick leave; and health insurance support. A broad range of these job loss prevention and wage replacement measures were not gender-sensitive, and only broadly targeted worker's wages and work benefits through subsidies. However, there was a subset of 5 (14 percent of the total) income replacement and wage subsidy policies that were considered gender sensitive. These policies focused on hard-hit, women dominated sectors. Like in the Caribbean, several countries took measures to support the tourism sector, and provided a safety net to low-ranking workers while creating job retention (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). Tourism is

a sector in which women predominantly hold the jobs. Several other countries, like Barbados, provided direct wage subsidies to lower wage jobs that were held mostly by women. These types of policies aimed specifically at informal and low-wage sectors were key in targeting women workers and contributing to their economic security.

In addition to wage subsidies, there were several gender-sensitive measures that focused on protecting essential workers' rights. Women make up about 70% of all healthcare workers globally, who all continued to provide essential services throughout the pandemic. 31 countries introduced wage top-ups or one-off bonuses aimed at health sector workers. The goal was to compensate for extra hours spent working, and extra risks endured. Many countries like Algeria, Malaysia, the Philippines and Moldova implemented one of these two types of policies (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). Despite the specific targeting of healthcare workers, there were still large gaps in implementation, just like other policy measures. Very few of these policies reached low-income earners, and many reproduced gender hierarchies and wage gaps. In Russia as an example, lump-sum cash payments for medical staff working directly with COVID-19 patients were issued between April and September 2020. Nurses received half the amount of cash payment of doctors, despite working more and being just as at risk. (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). This only served to reinforce the idea not only that women make less than men, but that their jobs are not important. This is especially jarring given the disparity of the effects of the pandemic between genders.

Less visible than healthcare workers, many women provided essential services to their communities through street food vending, food preparation, waste pickup, or informal care arrangements. Only a few countries provided these types of essential workers with income support, and many women were forced to keep working, risking themselves and their families

(UN Women & UNDP, 2022). Overall, even though there were some positive measures, informal workers continued to face income declines alongside limited access to safe and clean working conditions. There was a clear lackluster policy response aimed at securing the economic and social wellbeing of low-wage, essential and informal women workers.

The final group of measures that were put forth dealing with economic security consisted of enabling women to return to work. Women returned to their jobs at a much slower pace than men as the pandemic continued. Meaning, they faced prolonged unemployment, income loss and care work, with not much compensation. Only 30 countries had active labor market measures to help women regain employment, more than half in Latin America and the Caribbean (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). Many countries provided training programs for women to help them become more financially and digitally literate that would allow them to move their businesses online. However, only a handful of countries really targeted the most important step in helping women to get back to work: generating jobs. Without the availability and accessibility of jobs, measures to help women be more successful workers is not helpful. Argentina, Colombia and Chile provided larger wage subsidies to companies that hired women, as a way to incentivize them to hire. Other countries implemented public works programs aimed at women workers that included offering employment alternatives or establishing gender quotas, like in Cuba, Kenya and Grenada (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). The focus of these policies was creating new employment opportunities for women, and making jobs more accessible to them. Although many of these employment creation measures had low coverage, it was still a step in the right direction toward ensuring women return to work.

Overall, there were a multitude of different policy measures aimed specifically at targeting and helping women's rising economic insecurity. Some were more successful than

others, and had broader scopes of implementation, but wage subsidies, employment creation and cash transfers seemed to benefit women in some way. Despite all of this, there still remains a lot of work to be done in better equipping women to face economic challenges and unemployment. While it is important to acknowledge the strides that were made in establishing gender sensitive labor and economic policies, given the overall level of economic insecurity that women faced during the pandemic the number and scope of policies fell short.

Unpaid Care

With the presence of shutdowns and reduced in-person life, the care work burden for women rose parallelly. Building on an already unequal share of domestic and care work, women only faced more and more of this work as life shifted to at home. Yet, unpaid care was the area with the least amount of gender-sensitive policies geared towards it. The UNDP-UN Women Global Gender Response Tracker identified 228 social protection and labor market measures that supported unpaid care work. Only 7 percent of the 3,099 policies that were adopted between January 2020 and August 2021. Only 41 percent of all countries globally had at least one measure dedicated to unpaid care work (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). These statistics reveal the meager effort that was made globally to help and protect women against the unbalanced burden of care work.

It is important, however, to highlight and detail the type of policies that were enacted to aid in the increased care work women faced as the pandemic continued on. The UN categorizes these policies into three categories: time for care, care services, and cash benefits. Time-related measures included things like family leave, paid sick leave and reduced work hours or telework accommodations. These types of policies accounted for 83 of all 228 total care response

measures taken, or 37 percent, the highest of all three categories (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). These time-related measures were not widespread, however, they were mainly concentrated in higher-income countries. Family leave is exclusive to the social protection actions of high-income countries, so when the pandemic hit, they were able to bolster and expand pre-existing time-related infrastructure. For instance in places like Germany and Norway, who already offered comprehensive paid family leave, both doubled the amount of paid leave for workers during the pandemic. Germany extended leave up to forty days for single parents, and Norway offered forty days per child during school and day-care closures. (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). There were several other higher-income countries that increased and modified their preexisting time-related measures for care work during the pandemic, like Argentina and Belgium. The caveat here, however, is that they already had the policies and infrastructure to build on, which was not the case for lower-income countries. Take many African countries for example, most of them had little to no policies enacted that targeted care work during the pandemic because they had no previous programs that focused on this.

A large amount of these time-related measures that were expanded or implemented were gender-neutral, meaning they benefited both mothers and fathers. Cuba, Austria, Belgium, Canada and Norway, all of which had gender neutral care work policies pre-pandemic, offered extended leaves to all types of caregivers (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). Although this approach seems progressive, it also has its drawbacks. Yes, it recognizes all types of care, and gives both men and women the same benefits in an attempt to equalize care work. On the other hand, it ignores the fact that women take on a larger portion of the care work by giving equal care opportunities to men and women. Also, as explored in the first chapter, even when men's time at home increased during the pandemic, it did not necessarily increase the amount of care work

they participated in. Therefore, increased paid family leave is beneficial to all parties, but it does not necessarily decrease the amount of domestic work that women undertake. On the contrary, other countries targeted family leave specifically at mothers. In Egypt, for example, they granted exceptional leave to women who were pregnant, mothers with children under 12 years old and people with chronic diseases. Similar policies were enacted in Turkey as well (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). This type of gender-sensitive policy, which specifically targets mothers, is a step in the right direction for care work policies. Not to say it also does not have drawbacks. It reproduces a feminine approach to care, reinforcing the idea that only women are responsible for care at home. Additionally, even if they do not pull an equal weight in childcare and domestic work, having the access to paid parental leave is beneficial to pandemic relief as a whole, and encourages men to partake in care work. It seems as though both mother-centered and universal time-related measures have a downside to them in terms of gender norms. Both types were fundamental to gender sensitive policy implementation and the overall well-being of women during the pandemic. Overall, for care-work centered pandemic relief policies, time-related measures were heavily implemented across the globe, often drawing on pre-existing structures and programs. However, despite the increase of paid leave, these measures failed to address the true problem of the pandemic, which was the unequal distribution of unpaid domestic work that is taking place.

In addition to time-related measures, many countries focused on providing care services in the wake of closures and lockdowns. These care service policies included resources focused on childcare services, and long-term care and disability services. However, they made up only a small portion of relief measures taken, registering only 86 measures globally (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). The need for these types of policies was grounded in the fact that in 2020, more

than 2 million mothers left the labor force, as they were faced with increased childcare responsibilities, as lockdowns and school closures were prolonged. Either that, or mothers were forced to return to work, leaving their children at home, or bringing them along (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). The onset of the pandemic made the need for childcare services especially present, but governments did not always rise to the occasion.

Governmental support for childcare services was represented in three main ways: the providing of childcare for essential workers, subsidies or waivers for parents relying on fee-based childcare services, and financial support for childcare providers. Many countries, including France, Latvia, Costa Rica, Japan, and several others took approaches that guaranteed childcare services to essential workers throughout the first wave of the pandemic. Additionally, to avoid food insecurity that would come from school closures, lower-income countries adopted school feeding programs like “take-home rations, door-step delivery of ingredients or cash transfers for food” (UN Women and UNDP, 2022, p.91). Governments also took financial perspectives to childcare relief, aiming to subsidize or provision childcare fees. In Estonia, for example, parents of children in public kindergarten were exempted from fees, and private- school parents were granted allowances equal to those fees. Similar measures were taken in Slovenia and the Netherlands, the goal of all of them was to relieve some of the financial burden of childcare costs, especially during school closures (UN Women & UNDP, 2022).

Shifting the focus from child-care specifically, policies were also enacted to assist in long-term care services. One of the key issues in the long-term care sector during the pandemic was ensuring continued care, while minimizing health risks. For long-term care patients, like the elderly or individuals with chronic illnesses, the travel and visitation restrictions also increased loneliness among patients, and a deterioration of mental health. Both the issue of continued care

amongst health risks, as well as patient well-being were the target of long-term care measures. Many governments rolled out new financial support for long-term care facilities, in order to assist in implementing new protocols and strengthening home-based care for the elderly and disabled. In the Netherlands specifically, they introduced reimbursements for the costs experienced by the nursing home sector, as well as compensation for revenue lost (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). Countries took these financial measures in order to ensure the continued existence of long-term care services. Although not explicitly targeted at women, many of these policies were seen as gender-sensitive because they targeted both informal and formal care and work that occurred mainly through the labor of women.

The last avenue through which governments attempt to target care labor was with cash benefits. Similar to the measures taken in response to economic insecurity, governments opted for cash-transfer methods to aid with some of the care burden brought on by the pandemic. By August 2021, 35 countries had enacted 39 cash-for care measures and 5 wage subsidies policies, with special allocations for workers with care responsibilities (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). The goal here was to compensate parents for lost earnings or a reduction in working hours due to the pandemic, not necessarily to support childcare services. Many of these measures, like most gender-sensitive policies explored already, built on pre-existing benefits, simply increasing amounts or adjusting eligibility requirements in the wake of the pandemic. In many countries like Canada, Poland, and Germany, governments provided stipends and compensation to parents of young children who lost working hours and income as a result of increasing child care demands. Other cash-for-care programs focused on exchanging cash for leave periods, or attempted to reach self-employed workers with no access to leave. In Belgium, for instance, a temporary parental allowance was provided to self-employed workers with young children, or

with a disability (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). These workers were unable to return to full-time self-employment due to childcare responsibilities, so the government provided them compensation. Similar measures were enacted in other countries, like Chile, and focused on reaching self-employed workers and compensating for lost income due to child care. Less common measures were taken in some countries, like Italy, cash-for-care vouchers to purchase care services were put in place. Workers with children below 12 who did not take parental leave could receive a voucher to pay for child care services. (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). Overall, the goal of these cash-transfers policies was to provide money that would make up for lost income, and could be used for childcare services.

In general, unpaid labor in the form of care work received the least amount of gender sensitive policies. There were a variety of these care policies in the form of time-related measures, care measures and cash benefits, but they were mainly concentrated in higher income countries. These measures did assist in providing women with some care relief and income compensation, but they need to be more geographically wide-reaching. Providing relief in countries where women already have more financial and care resources is useful, but not the main focus when it comes to intense care burden. Overarching gender norms and stigmas that existed long before the pandemic will continue to impact the recognition and remedy of women's unequal care work. Overall, the unpaid care policy implementation was underwhelming considering the magnitude at which women unequally bear the work of informal care both in and outside of a pandemic.

Distribution of policies

There has been a clear exploration of the type of gender-sensitive policies and relief measures taken during the pandemic. These policies fall into three main aid categories: violence against women and girls, women's increasing economic insecurity, and the burden of unpaid care work. In order to understand the true impact of these policies, it is important to look at the numerical distribution of these measures. This was touched on a bit throughout the paper thus far, but a clear outline of the percentage of gender sensitive policies will be detailed.

The United Nations Global Gender Response Tracker outlines the policy steps taken by numbers. As explored before, gender-sensitive measures made up only 33% of all response policies taken. To break it down even farther, Figure 2 in the Appendix outlines the specific distributions for each policy type. It shows that violence against women and girls, which had over half of all gender-sensitive policies under it, makes up only 19% of all response measures taken. This is an alarmingly low percentage given the investigations of gender inequity discovered throughout this work. The percentages only decrease from here, with women's economic security and unpaid care support accounting for 12% and 5% of all policies, respectively. These two classifications of policies also made up small portions of the gender-sensitive responses, with 33% consisting of economic security, and a meager 14% targeting unpaid care. These numbers reveal a global lack of awareness surrounding the true economic and physical impacts of the pandemic.

Additionally, on top of a low distribution of gender sensitive policies, there were also regional aspects to the implementation of these policies. In the United Nations report they detail the differences and presence of the amount and types of policies implemented in various regions. For gender sensitive policies as a whole, the regions of Europe, Northern America, Australia and

New Zealand implemented the most amount. As shown by Figure 3 in the Appendix, there were 494 measures across 56 countries. Latin America and the Caribbean had the second most gender sensitive policies, with 414 across 46 countries. The third region with the highest number of gender sensitive measures is Sub-Saharan Africa, with 221 policies across 50 countries. Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and Oceania, Northern Africa and Western Asia, and Central and Southern Asia make up the bottom three with 188 measures, 153 measures and 135 measures respectively (UN Women & UNDP, 2022).

Violence against women and girls accounted for the majority of gender sensitive policies in all regions, except sub-Saharan Africa and Northern Africa and Western Asia. The regions with most policy measures that addressed VAWG were Europe, North America and Australia and New Zealand. Countries and territories in these areas enacted a total of 279 VAWG policies, with the next highest being 214 in Latin America and the Caribbean. Figure 4 in the Appendix provides an overview of the number of policies put forth in each region. It is important to note here as well, that Northern Africa and Western Asia, the region that had the lowest number of policies, had the highest measure density of 6.8. This implies that an average of 6.8 measures were put forth per country in that region. However, there are only 14 countries that are classified into this region, but it is still interesting to highlight that despite putting forth the lowest number of policies aimed at VAWG, this region still produced a significant amount given the low denominator of countries (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). Having a high number of policies is great, but what is more important is the comprehensiveness of these policies. Comprehensiveness covers how wide ranging and inclusive policies are. If policies are restrictive or limited to only women in certain types of situations, then they are not thought to be comprehensive and inclusive. The regions that had the most comprehensive response to VAWG were Europe and

Latin America, which were two regions with the most amount of policies. This indicates that not only did countries in these regions place a large focus on addressing violence against women and girls, but they also focused on making sure these policies were comprehensive, inclusive and accessible to all.

Women's economic insecurity policies saw similar and different regional trends in policy implementation. There was really a divergence between the Global North and Global South, particularly when it came to the type of policies put forth. For measures that focused on social protection and labor market response, Europe, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand put forth the most amount with 876 policies, however not all of these are gender-sensitive, and aimed at aiding women in particular. Policies geared specifically towards supporting women's economic security, the inverse pattern emerges. The Global South enacted more policies overall that protected women specifically, with Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa accounting for the most with 139 and 72 measures respectively. Latin America and the Caribbean has a long history of prioritizing women in the household, specifically through cash transfers, and had the highest measure density, with an average of 3 per country. Europe, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand rank 4th on the list of regions, with 48 policies (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). One of the main reasons for this divergence is the reliance on broader labor market and social protection instruments, like wage subsidies or unemployment insurance for developed nations. These policies do not specifically target women, but still reach a large share of the population. (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). The Global North, because they have more developed social and financial infrastructure, already had social and welfare institutions in place prior to the pandemic, so they only had to reaffirm these policies. The issue here is that they are not gender specific policies, and many of the labor market protections lack targeting of informal and unpaid labor,

which suffered the most during the pandemic and is women dominated. (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). On the contrary, less developed countries of the Global South, who did not rely on pre-existing social and welfare systems, were presented an opportunity to enact policies specific to the pandemic that would target women directly.

Measures focused on unpaid care also had regional trends, with a large concentration of measures in higher-income countries. 62% of all care measures were taken in the regions of Europe, North American, Australia and New Zealand, with a total of 139 policies. Following pre-established regional trends, Latin America and the Caribbean were the second highest regional clusters, with 33 care measures, but these numbers do not come close to those of the higher income countries (UN Women and UNDP, 2020 85). Figure 5 in the Appendix outlines the rest of the regional policy distribution for care measures. These policies were concentrated almost entirely in higher income countries, who were able to build on pre-existing child care services and leave structures. What is unique here, is that most care policies are already gender-sensitive because they focus on women and mothers as the primary caregiver for the household. Which is why these higher income countries could rely on already established services and care systems, and have them be impactful towards women during the pandemic. (UN Women & UNDP, 2022).

What Accounts for these Differences

There are clear regional differences in the density and number of gender sensitive policies put forth during the pandemic across the globe. What still remains is the question of why these differences took place. This essay has already explained some of these differences occur because

of country income and pre-existing welfare systems that are in place, but the United Nations delves into this question even further.

First, for policies that addressed violence against women and girls, feminist mobilization was a key influence. Both the presence and assembly of feminist organizations were key in creating policy implementation. In Latin America and the Caribbean, which is the region in the Global South with the highest number of VAWG measures, mobilizations against this violence had escalated since 2015 on the back of a long history of activism in the region. In 2019, the year prior to COVID, this region also registered the highest number of VAWG protests, and continued during 2020, among the Global South (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). There is an obvious correlation established here between feminist mobilization and protests, and the number of VAWG policies that were put in place when the pandemic ensued. Additionally, the United Nations finds a significant association between strong feminist movements prior to the pandemic, and action taken towards violence against women and girls during the pandemic. They write, “25 per cent of countries with weak feminist movements took no measures on violence against women and girls during the pandemic, compared to only 3 per cent of countries with the strongest autonomous feminist movements” (UN Women & UNDP, 2022, p. 48). They also cite that countries with the strongest movements adopted, on average, 2.8 more measures addressing VAWG than those with weak movements (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). These statistics indicate that the presence and mobilization of feminist movements within countries both prior to and at the onset of the pandemic was critical in influencing government action in preventing violence against women and girls when it increased during COVID.

Additionally, the United Nations highlights the importance of women’s policy agencies (WPAs) as a response to feminist movements. These organizations provided a way for feminist

organizations to engage with the state and policymakers. In the pandemic, tight networks between these WPAs and feminist movements allowed for a quick identification of problems and a way to coordinate response efforts (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). Several countries like Argentina and Fiji, for example, have a history of increasing funding for these agencies, and solidifying the relationship between feminist movements and WPAs, especially in the wake of growing protests in the past decade. These countries with strong ties to WPAs and feminist movements, in turn, had a large number or density for measures preventing violence against women and girls during the pandemic. It is not just the existence of these WPAs that is important however, they need to have a strong connection to feminist organizations, as well as political power and status to influence policy making. In many countries these agencies lack the political clout necessary to make changes, or found themselves excluded from pandemic related decision making. In Brazil specifically, when created in 2003, WPAs had a strong influence in violence policies and had tight ties to feminist organizations. However, since changes in leadership and status began in 2016, these agencies no longer had the connections and pull to influence policy during the pandemic. Additionally, in Kenya VAWG prevention advocates as well as WPAs began to work with the State Department of Gender in early March of 2020, but this department was not included in the emergency committee, which led to massive delays in the VAWG response (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). Overall, what was most impactful for implementing policies that addressed VAWG, especially in developing nations, was the mobilization of feminist movements, and the connection they had to political influence and policymaking during the pandemic. Without sufficient advocating and tight relationships with political agencies, violence against women and girls measures were almost impossible to achieve among the intersecting issues of the pandemic.

For policies aimed at women's rising economic insecurity, one of the key influences on policy implementation was pre-existing infrastructure. As explained earlier in this essay, countries that already had pre-existing policies and achieved more widespread social protection coverage prior to the pandemic were able to handle the shock, and provide higher levels of protection, but this did not necessarily mean they were gender-sensitive actions. What is most important here for successful gender-sensitive policy implementation is gender mainstreaming. This concept is similar to what has been discussed here, and just indicates a form of policy making that more accurately accounts for gender inequality and strives to meet both the needs of men and women. Poor gender mainstreaming, and biases in policy design have been in existence long before the pandemic. Structural inequalities, like women's lesser access to economic resources as well as unbalanced responsibilities for care work, are rarely acknowledged or addressed in policy making. (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). Poor policy inclusion has been a large obstacle for many countries, and has had a large impact on the implementation of policies surrounding women's economic insecurity. Not to say it has not been overcome, especially with less than ideal financial capital and social spending, Morocco was able to push forth innovation policies. Half of Morocco's pandemic spending was geared towards gender-sensitive interventions, like the inclusion of women and informal workers in policies targeting enterprises (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). This just goes to show that even with limited spending ability and policy infrastructure, countries could push for stronger economic security measures for women, if they allocated funds correctly. Poor gender mainstreaming and strong policy biases heavily influenced the gender-sensitivity of policies put forth to protect women's economic security. Countries that successfully integrated gender equity into their social protection and employment policies saw more enactment of gender-sensitive economic security measures.

Secondly, much like for VAWG policies, women's participation and leadership was key to pushing out economic protection measures. In places where political executives were more open to feminist ideas, or actively supported women's rights, there was more success in generating policies towards protecting women's economic presence. In Argentina, for example, their national director of gender equality within the Ministry of the Economy is a women and long standing feminist activist. She was able to shape the design of the emergency family income plan for informal workers, to specifically include domestic workers and prioritize women as household recipients. This program was able to more accurately reach women in all facets of work, and by July of 2020, they accounted for 56% of recipients of the emergency family income system in Argentina (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). In addition, similar to other policies, connections between state actors and societal organizations were pivotal during implementation and advocating for more gender-inclusive measures. Women's groups, informal worker organizations, and trade unions were at the forefront of advocacy and implementation of policies throughout the Global South (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). Social dialogue, advocacy groups, and high government support was key in gaining economic protection measures for women all across the globe, but the Global South in particular.

Lastly, for care work policies, there was a large influence of previous social protections and care systems, as elaborated on before. Governments tend to respond to crises by utilizing existing policy and social infrastructure to help ease some of the burdens. In turn, countries with more robust and comprehensive social and care services, had a better time deploying care work policies when the pandemic began. In contrast, countries with little to no social infrastructure and pre-existing policies saw major setbacks in the implementation of care measures. The UN states, "about one third of countries with high social protection coverage took no measures; in contrast

87 per cent of those with low social protection coverage took no measures...” (UN Women & UNDP, 2022 96). Only a fraction of countries with large social protection took no measures. They cite more examples of the importance of pre-existing policies in influencing the number of care measures that were put forth during the pandemic. This was a key factor in accounting for the regional differences of care policy implementation.

Once again, a strong determinant of care policies was women’s participation and leadership. Both strong feminist movements, and women’s presence in parliaments and leadership were influential in achieving measures that aiding in child care. Information from the UNDP-UN Women gender tracker indicates that countries with higher representation of women in parliament put forth more care measures in response to the pandemic, than countries with low female political representation. (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). Mexico is a great example of this, they achieved gender parity in both chambers of their government by 2018, in 2020 they approved an initiative to include the right to care as a constitutional right. In 2021, they introduced another bill to create a care system into the Senate. (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). It is made clear that having a higher number of women in leadership and influential political positions is pivotal in implementing care legislation, both in and out of crises. Although feminist movements and protests did not have as much of an influence on care policies than they did on violence measures, they still play a big role in vocalizing and publicizing gender inequalities in care work. More research is needed, but data from the gender tracker draws a correlation between the presence of feminist movements and better care policies. When feminist organizations and government leaders work together and form strong connections is where the most unpaid care measures happen. Countries like Argentina, Mexico, Canada, among others all have a strong history and presence of feminist movements, as well as larger representations of

women in governmental leadership. Over 50 percent of Mexico and Argentina's policies were gender-sensitive, and Canada put forth the largest number of care policies out of all the countries studied. It is clear that having women voices in leadership, and advocating and protesting in society were key influences in a stronger implementation of care work policies.

Outside of any specific policy type, democracy level was shown to also impact the amount of gender sensitive policies that took place. The better the state of democracy a country has, the more gender focused policy they were likely to put forth. The UN cites that “92 per cent of countries with higher levels of democracy deployed a moderate or strong gender response, followed by 62 per cent of those with medium levels of democracy and 42 per cent of those with lower levels of democracy” (UN Women & UNDP, 2022, p. 24). Additionally, more countries with higher democracy levels had COVID task forces that included women, compared to lower democratic countries. Democratic processes and institutions provide an inclusive environment for the voicing of societal demands into the ears of policy makers (UN Women & UNDP, 2022). Individuals are given more of a say in who they put in power, and the type of change they want to see enacted.

There are several reasons that account for the cross-country and regional variations in the implementation of gender sensitive policies during the pandemic. What remained key in all three policy types, however, was the political participation and activism of women, the pre-existing measures a country had, and the state of democracy of the country. What these three factors boil down to is women’s political freedom, a country’s stage of development, and democracy index overall affect the policy-making of a country, both in and out of crisis. These variables, among others, will be more closely examined in the following section of this work, but what is most important to recognize here is that, in general, there was an underwhelming execution of gender

sensitive policies during the pandemic. Long-standing gender norms and biases create inequity in both policy comprehensiveness and implementation, and without a proper reform of policy makers and strategies, women and minority groups will continuously be left out of social and economic systems, especially in developing countries.

Chapter 4: Econometric Approach to Distributional Effects

There has been a clear and thorough investigation in this paper about the types of policies that were implemented following the COVID-19 pandemic, and the gender-sensitivity of these measures. What is important to analyze next, and is an independent contribution to this study of policy, is what variables truly influence the number of gender sensitive policies that were implemented globally. As well as, any regional variations and what might account for the policy differences among countries in the same regions. These analyses took place utilizing several regressions in order to determine the correlation between variables for each country and the number of gender sensitive policies implemented in that country. The goal here was to identify if the stage of development (measured by GDP per capita), democracy index, women's political empowerment and political corruption index had an impact on the percentage of gender sensitive policies each country administered. The inclusion of these variables was to further explore previously established impacts (as done by the UN), while also including new variables that may impact policy making. GDP per capita was selected to indicate the stage of development and infrastructure of a country, democracy index showcases the type of governments in place and how policymaking may be done, women's empowerment index was used as a measure of patriarchy and to indicate the treatment of gender, and political corruption index goes hand in hand with democracy index and may indicate additional variables like protests and civilian

unrest. After analyzing those four explanatory variables, the analysis then focused on regions to compare the true variations among them, and how they impacted gender sensitive policies.

Results

The initial regression aimed to highlight any if five independent variables affecting the percentage of gender sensitive measures for each country. The regression was as follows:

$$i = \alpha + \beta_1 + \beta_2 + \beta_3 + \beta_4 + U_i$$

$$i = \text{country}$$

The results are highlighted in Table 1 of the Appendix. From these results, it can be concluded that only one of the variables analyzed had an impact on the percentage of gender sensitive policies that were put in place. The Adjusted R-squared indicates a very weak correlation between the dependent and control variables. The Adjusted R-Squared for this regression was .0631, meaning that only 6.3% of the variance in the dependent variable is accounted for by the independent variables. The variables selected in this regression minimally impacted the percentage of gender sensitive policies put forth globally.

Focusing first on GDP per capita, each control variable's impact on the dependent variable is detailed in Table 1. GDP per capita is a measure of economic output per person, and is calculated through dividing Gross Domestic Product, revenue of production within a country, by its population. GDP per capita is representative of the stage of a nation's development, and allows for easy comparison between different countries. Therefore, countries with lower GDP per capita, as compared to others, will be less developed, and vice versa. The data for GDP per capita was collected prominently from The World Bank and is from 2019. The reasoning behind the selection from 2019 was to see the state of the country in the year prior to the pandemic,

because that would have impacted the ability of policy making in 2020. As for how this variable impacted the percentage of gender sensitive policies, it was the only significant one out of all control variables tested. For the first, broad regression (Table 1), the P-value for GDP per capita was 0.008, which compared to the base value of .05, is less than, making it a significant variable. It can firmly be established that GDP per capita, or stage of development of a nation, highly impacts the percentage of gender sensitive policies put forth by governments. What is particularly interesting here is that the regression actually creates a negative correlation between policies and GDP per capita. Looking at the coefficient measure, it is very small, but it is still negative. A negative coefficient indicates that as GDP per capita, the independent variable, increases, the percentage of gender sensitive policies, the dependent variable, decreases. Although it is a very small decrease, it can be inferred from this negative coefficient that a higher GDP per capita actually results in less gender sensitive policies. This could be because, as explored thoroughly above, higher income countries have pre-established social welfare systems that they were able to turn to at the start of the pandemic. These higher income countries neglected to implement as many gender-sensitive policies because they have more broad welfare policies. Additionally, viewing the data gathered from the UN gender and policy tracker, it is observed that all of the countries that had over 50% gender-sensitive policies were low to middle income countries, with relatively low GDP per capita. Some of these countries include Argentina, Bangladesh, El Salvador and South Sudan, among others. Overall, the regression analysis and additional observations and inferences show the level of development of a country, as represented by GDP per capita significantly mattered when it came to gender sensitive policy making.

In regards to the other explanatory variables included in the regressions, none of them posed P-values under .05, or close enough to it, and therefore can not be considered significant in the study. What was interesting here is that the United Nations, among other research, has concluded that the democracy index has an impact on gender policy making. This was not the case when it came to the regression analysis. The democracy index variable was insignificant, with a p-value of .54. This showcases that although it seems as though democracy stage may have an impact on gendered policy implemented, it could be alternate factors within democracy that are influencing it.

One of the variables explored, Women's Political Empowerment Index, was broken down in three different indices, which were put through regression analysis. The regressions are represented in Tables 2, 3 and 4 in the Appendix . The first of these indices is Women's Civil Liberty Index, which according to the V-Dem, indicates the level at which women have freedom of domestic movement, the right to private property, freedom from forced labor and access to justice. The data on this index was collected from the V-Dem dataset, and is from 2019. It is important to note here as well, the V-Dem dataset did not include data from a portion of the countries and territories whose policies were explored, so there are some missing indices in the dataset utilized in the regressions. In this regression analysis, Table 2, the P value for the variable is .670, which is greater than .05, making it not statistically significant. In addition, the other variables included in this regression, GDP per capita democracy index and political corruption, remained the same from the regression above, with GDP per capita being the only significant variable. Thus, this regression showcases that women's civil liberty index was not influencing in determining the percentage of gender sensitive policies for each country. Moving on to the second indice that makes up the women's political empowerment index, is women's civil society

participation index. This encapsulates the extent to which women openly discuss political issues, participate in civilian society organizations and are represented in the ranks of journalism. For this regression, Table 3 in the Appendix, the P-value is the same as the civil liberty index, .670, which is greater than the base value of 0.05. This means that this independent variable is also not significant when it comes to explaining gender sensitive policy implementation. This is a bit shocking, given the fact that in exploring what impacted policy in the previous chapter, it was clear that feminist movements and the presence of women voicing key issues impacted gender policies for certain countries. However, when placed in a global context, it may have been impactful for some countries, but not enough to be significant. Once again for this regression, there are identical non-significant variables to the ones before, only GDP per capita is significant. The last indice measure included in women's political empowerment index is women's political participation index. This measures women's representation in legislature and an equal share of the overall distribution of power. Table 4 shows this regression analysis, in which the p-value sits at 0.059. This value sits just marginally above the comparative value of 0.05, and given that it is within 10% of the comparative value, the null hypothesis can be rejected. Meaning that the women's political participation index was significant in determining the percentage of gender sensitive policies put forth. Out of the three empowerment dimensions explored, this is the one that matters the most in determining the construction of gender sensitive policies. The regression indicates, as well, a relatively big coefficient, meaning that gender sensitive policies would positively shift by 15 percentage points as women's political participation increases. This finding aligns with the conclusions drawn from the other data presented earlier in this essay, and research done by the United Nations about the importance and impact of women's political leadership on policy making, both during and outside of crisis. This

reveals just how critical it is that women be equally represented in governments and political positions in order to work towards limiting and erasing gender inequality in all parts of the world.

Overall, although there were two only independent variables that yielded significant results, these regression findings still help to explain what truly had an impact on gender sensitive policy percentage, instead of just speculation. The regressions revealed that stage of development, measured through GDP per capita, and women's political participation index were influential in generating more gender sensitive policy regimes. These results are significant to the focus of this essay, in highlighting how gender equality within political institutions can only help to advance women's economic and social freedom and equitability. By focusing on development advancements and women's political participation, it can help better equip countries for gender neutral policy making when crises do hit.

On top of economic development, women's empowerment and corruption and democracy measures, this research attempted to statistically explain the true regional variations in policy implementation. The regional differences of policies has already been explored in this essay, but it is taken one step further by utilizing regressions to find a statistical correlation between regions and compare how they did in terms of gender sensitive policy implementation. The countries/territories included in the data set were gathered from the United Nations Global Gender Response Tracker, and include all areas that implemented at least one policy measure (gender sensitive or not) during COVID. The 223 countries and territories included in this data set were broken up into 6 different regions. Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern America and Oceania. It is important to point out here that many countries in Latin America/ Central America can be included in "North America" but were grouped within Latin

America as a whole to better fit within the income and development stages of countries around them. In order to statistically compare these sub variables, dummy variables were created. Utilizing Europe as the base region, all countries within this region were given the value of 1, and all other countries were given 0. Europe was chosen as the base because it had one of the largest sample sizes, and consisted of mainly middle to higher income countries. The regression is represented by Table 5 in the Appendix below, and includes the four original independent variables. The region's impact on gender sensitive policy percentage was measured. What is important to focus on in these regression results is the coefficient because this indicates the relationship to our base region, Europe. Starting first with Africa, the results observe that it had a negative coefficient of -6.549605. A negative coefficient, in this case, means that in terms of gender sensitive policy execution, African countries did worse in gender policies than European ones, by 6.5 percentage points. Another regional cluster that had a negative coefficient was Asia, at -3.18029. Once again, this negative coefficient indicates that on the basis of gender sensitive policy percentage, countries in Asia performed worse than those in Europe. All of the other regions fared better than Europe, with Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern America, and Oceania all having positive coefficients. Northern America has the highest of these coefficients 7.03565, meaning countries in Northern America enacted on average 7 percentage points more gender sensitive policies than those in Europe. However, interpreting the p-value, none of the dummy variable regions in the regression have significant p-values, they are all greater than 0.05. This means that the differences between regions should not be considered statistically significant in our regression, ultimately meaning these dummy variables could be dropped as predictors in the model. Despite the insignificance of the variables in predicting the dependent variable of gender sensitive policy percentage, the true aim of the dummy variables was to see

how they compared to the base region. Focusing on this, the results have made it clear that the regional clusters of Africa and Asia, in general, implemented fewer gender sensitive policies than in Europe, and the regions of Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern America, and Oceania had more gender sensitive policies. It is clear that these three regions prioritized policies targeted at helping women. Contributing factors may include those discussed above: GDP per capita, women's political status, as well as the depth of pre-existing policies for each country. It is still important to highlight that Europe had only 32% of its policies categorized as gender sensitive, so there was still not an overwhelming concentration on gender sensitive policies, even in these regions that performed better. Overall, these results showcase the statistical differences among regional groups in terms of policy implementation, but fail to correlate a significance in original regression. Meaning that, in general, region was not a predictor of gender sensitive policy percentage, but there were significant differences among regions themselves. The latter is more relevant to this study, which aimed to explain the regional variations of gender sensitive policies.

This data is by no means exclusive, and requires a lot more development and research to truly identify the regional and variable significance of gender sensitive policies, but it is a good start to see the scope of impacts on gendered policies. This opens the doors to understanding and interpreting variables that impact the gendered nature of policy decision making, and provides provisional information into the significance of certain factors. Although the hope of this data exploration was to find more significant variables that impacted gender sensitive policy numbers, it did find impacts of two explanatory variables, as well as comparative statistics for regional differences. It provides a clear identification of what factors contributed to a more gender sensitive policy regime, as well as highlights numerical differences in policy implementation

among regions. These results showcase which countries prioritized women's well-being in the aftermath of the COVID crises, as well as how impactful GDP per capita and women's political involvement can be. Even though these results revealed some significant findings that aid in identifying what can lead to a more equitable approach to policy making, they still showcase the overall subpar gender response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the urgent need for better acknowledgement of gender bias.

Conclusion

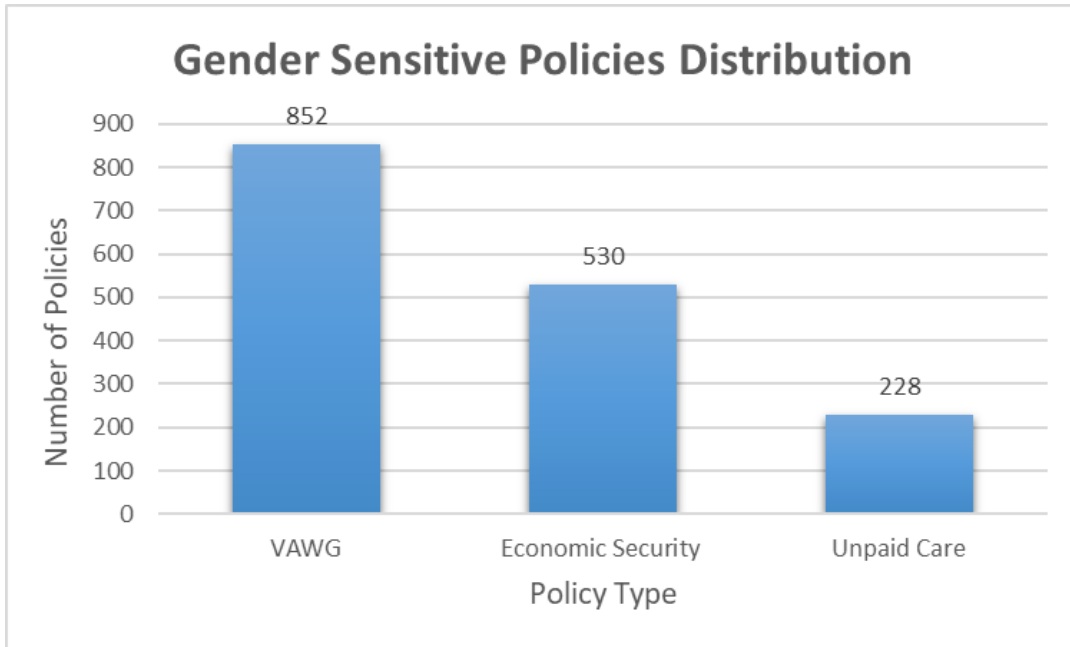
There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic had unpredictable and unequal impacts on women. Women saw unparalleled health and economic security risks, as well as an increase in gender based violence and unpaid care. The pandemic elevated already deep gender biases and divides to the surface, and governments and societies still did not pay attention. The process of the project was to bring light to these gender inequities, and explore policymaking so that governments are more equipped to protect the most vulnerable in the event of another crisis.

Building on this foundation of gender disparity during the COVID-19, the essay was able to ground these findings in a broader, historical evaluation of macroeconomic policies. In order to understand how to move forward in the future, the past had to be explored. Through an evaluation of globalization, fiscal and monetary policies, it became clear that traditional economic policy is harmful to women and not gender-sensitive. However, it has the potential to aid in fixing gender inequality if governments shifted their focus. Building from there, an establishment of the gender sensitive nature of COVID policies was explored, as well as distributional and regional variations. This research highlighted the types of gendered policy that were put forth and overall found that the response was underwhelming given the magnitude of

how women were impacted from the pandemic. The next logical step was to explore what truly enabled a better gender policy response through econometric analysis. This exploration showed that stage of development and women's political participation were key influences in policy making. It also disproved some previous conclusions on factors that led to a more gender sensitive response. Regional variations were also explored econometrically and showcased the statistical differences in policy implementation among regions.

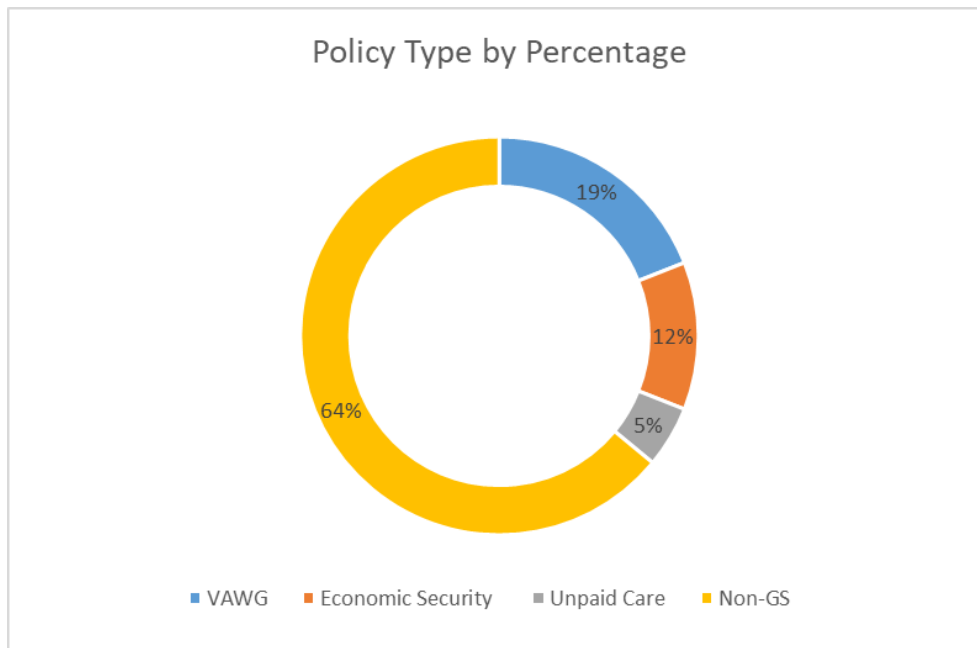
The research done throughout this project is key in understanding the gender biases that control women's health and social and economic well-being. It is important to recognize the steps that governments and policymakers can take to remedy these inequities because crises are a never ending cycle, and governments can be better equipped to manage the impacts. The discoveries made in this project are the first step in understanding the underlying gender dynamics of crises, as well as policymaking, and set the stage for future research. Recognizing the gendered impacts of disasters and policies, both personally and publically, is the first step for politicians, governments and financial institutions to work towards eradicating systemic gender inequality.

Appendix



Source: United Nations Global Gender Response Tracker

Figure 1



Source: United Nations Global Gender Response Tracker

Figure 2

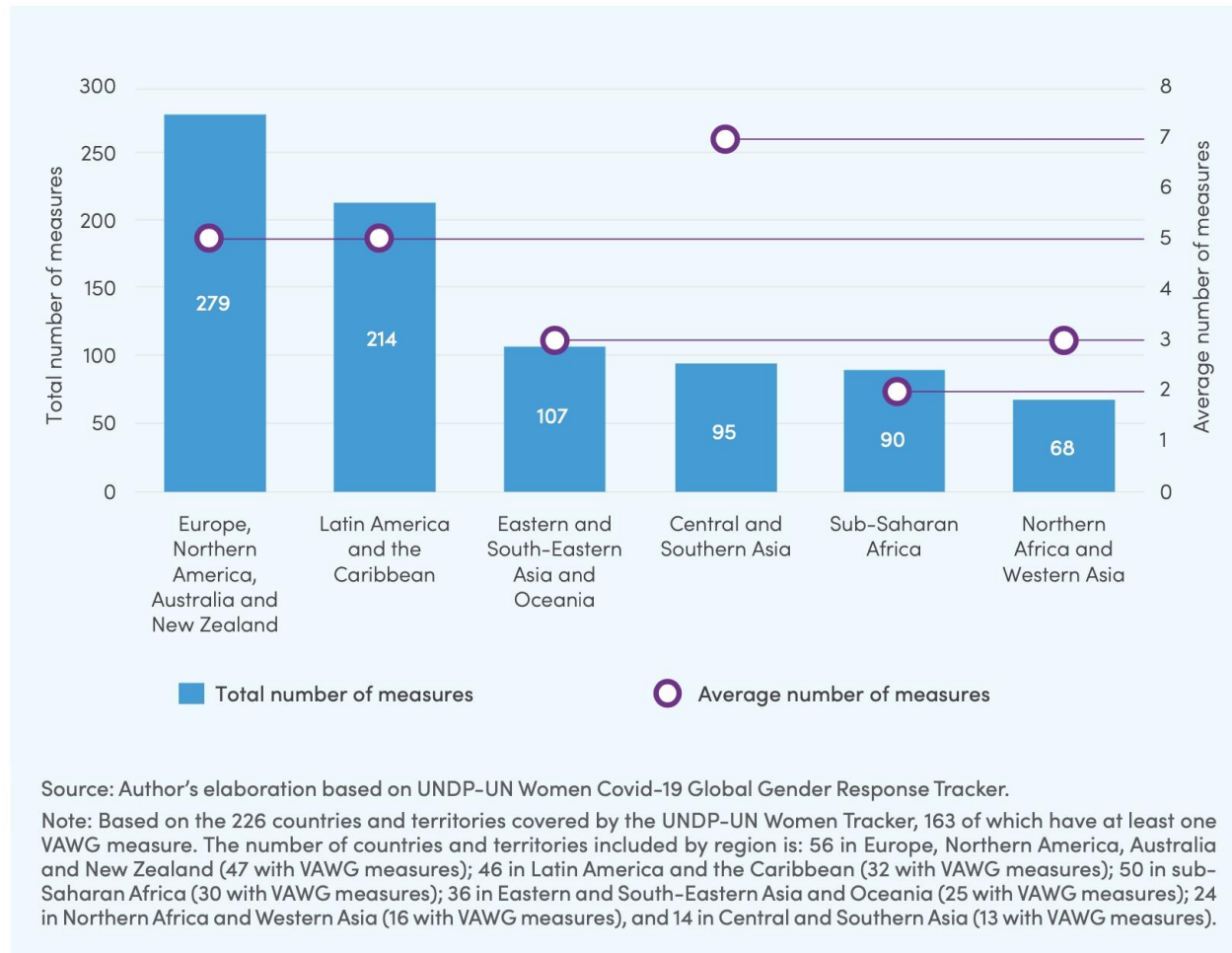
Gender-sensitive measures by type and region



Source: UN Women & UNDP

Figure 3

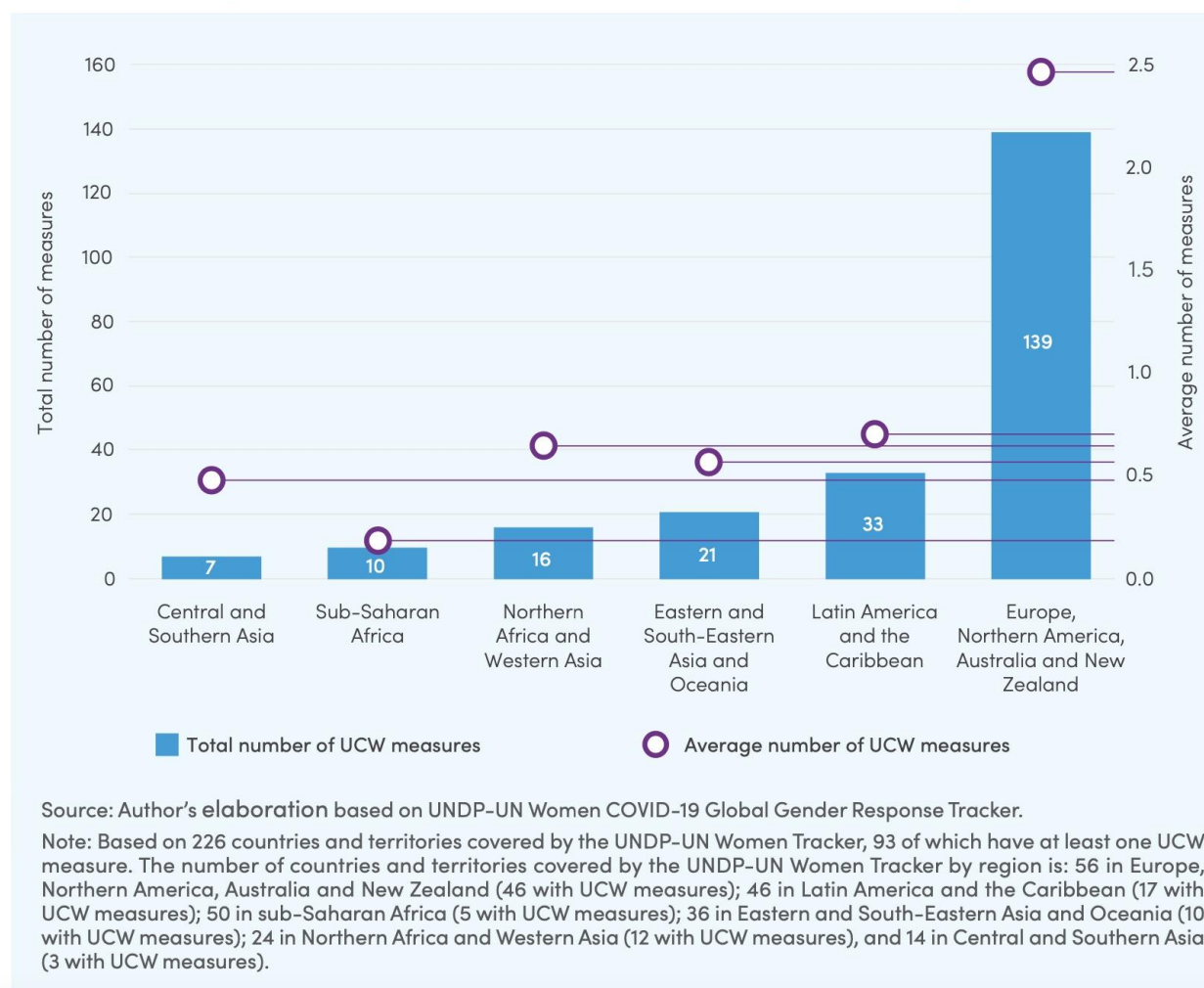
Total and average number of VAWG measures by region



Source: UN Women and UNDP

Figure 4

Total and average number of unpaid care work (UCW) measures by region



Source: UN Women and UNDP

Figure 5

. regress GSx100 GDPC DI PCI WPEI

Source	SS	df	MS			
Model	4083.86518	4	1020.96629	Number of obs =	173	
Residual	44037.9603	168	262.130716	F(4, 168) =	3.89	
Total	48121.8255	172	279.778055	Prob > F =	0.0047	
				R-squared =	0.0849	
				Adj R-squared =	0.0631	
				Root MSE =	16.19	

GSx100	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
GDPC	-.0001996	.0000749	-2.66	0.008	-.0003476	-.0000517
DI	1.295999	2.389557	0.54	0.588	-3.42143	6.013428
PCI	2.892251	7.229528	0.40	0.690	-11.38017	17.16468
WPEI	20.90838	11.30136	1.85	0.066	-1.402592	43.21935
_cons	18.12155	9.623759	1.88	0.061	-.87753	37.12064

Table 1

. regress GSx100 GDPC DI PCI womenscivilliberitiesindex

Source	SS	df	MS			
Model	3235.27115	4	808.817788	Number of obs =	173	
Residual	44886.5543	168	267.181871	F(4, 168) =	3.03	
Total	48121.8255	172	279.778055	Prob > F =	0.0192	
				R-squared =	0.0672	
				Adj R-squared =	0.0450	
				Root MSE =	16.346	

GSx100	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
GDPC	-.0002052	.0000757	-2.71	0.007	-.0003546	-.0000558
DI	3.208202	2.470727	1.30	0.196	-1.66947	8.085875
PCI	1.917106	7.461418	0.26	0.798	-12.81311	16.64733
womenscivilliberitiesindex	4.114471	9.644879	0.43	0.670	-14.92631	23.15525
_cons	28.37919	8.608996	3.30	0.001	11.38344	45.37494

Table 2

. regress GSx100 GDPC DI PCI womenssocietypartindex

Source	SS	df	MS			
Model	3235.27115	4	808.817788	Number of obs =	173	
Residual	44886.5543	168	267.181871	F(4, 168) =	3.03	
				Prob > F =	0.0192	
				R-squared =	0.0672	
				Adj R-squared =	0.0450	
Total	48121.8255	172	279.778055	Root MSE =	16.346	

GSx100	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
GDPC	-.0002052	.0000757	-2.71	0.007	-.0003546	-.0000558
DI	3.208202	2.470727	1.30	0.196	-1.66947	8.085875
PCI	1.917106	7.461418	0.26	0.798	-12.81311	16.64733
womenssocietypartindex	4.114471	9.644879	0.43	0.670	-14.92631	23.15525
_cons	28.37919	8.608996	3.30	0.001	11.38344	45.37494

Table 3

. regress GSx100 GDPC DI PCI womenspoltpartindex

Source	SS	df	MS			
Model	4135.14673	4	1033.78668	Number of obs =	173	
Residual	43986.6787	168	261.825469	F(4, 168) =	3.95	
				Prob > F =	0.0043	
				R-squared =	0.0859	
				Adj R-squared =	0.0642	
Total	48121.8255	172	279.778055	Root MSE =	16.181	

GSx100	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
GDPC	-.0002036	.0000748	-2.72	0.007	-.0003513	-.0000559
DI	2.484705	2.078282	1.20	0.234	-1.618209	6.587619
PCI	1.104257	7.163113	0.15	0.878	-13.03705	15.24557
womenspoltpartindex	15.01914	7.891013	1.90	0.059	-.5591781	30.59747
_cons	19.77707	8.915351	2.22	0.028	2.176517	37.37763

Table 4

```
. regress GSx100 GDPC DI WPEI Africa Asia LatinAmericaCaribbean NorthAmerica Oce
> ania
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Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs =	173
Model	6379.54751	8	797.443439	F(8, 164) =	3.13
Residual	41742.2779	164	254.526085	Prob > F =	0.0025
Total	48121.8255	172	279.778055	R-squared =	0.1326
				Adj R-squared =	0.0903
				Root MSE =	15.954

GSx100	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]
GDPC	-.0002401	.0000735	-3.26	0.001	-.0003853 - .0000949
DI	-.25341	2.209454	-0.11	0.909	-4.616052 4.109232
WPEI	17.13657	11.43883	1.50	0.136	-5.449793 39.72294
Africa	-6.549605	4.39216	-1.49	0.138	-15.22208 2.122866
Asia	-3.18029	4.272561	-0.74	0.458	-11.61661 5.25603
LatinAmeric~n	4.979928	4.471792	1.11	0.267	-3.849781 13.80964
NorthAmerica	7.03565	11.57759	0.61	0.544	-15.8247 29.896
Oceania	3.424415	6.728814	0.51	0.611	-9.861862 16.71069
_cons	27.71247	8.529454	3.25	0.001	10.87076 44.55417

Table 5

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