



MAIN OUTCOMES OF THE WOMEN'S FORUM BAROMETER 2021 EDITION

Ahead of the G7 summit, an urgent call for an inclusive recovery

A few days ahead of the G7 Summit, taking place on 11-13 June 2021 in the United Kingdom, the Women's Forum is publishing the results of a survey focused on the level of the gender gap within the G7 countries. It highlights the fact that women have been adversely affected by the impacts of the pandemic. In order to allow society and the economy to recover from this severe crisis, putting women at the centre of recovery strategies is the most efficient strategy.

For carrying out this survey, Ipsos questioned 3500 citizens of the G7 countries. It used a representative sample of the national population aged 18 and over from each of the seven G7 countries (quota method). The survey was conducted online between 8 and 20 April 2021.

01 • The pandemic is devastating for men but much more so for women

The populations of the G7 countries have been severely impacted by the pandemic. Among the richest economies in the world, a large portion of the population of these countries has been affected in various ways, more so than one year ago. This has happened despite the strong measures put in place by the G7 governments.

- 70%** of the respondents from the G7 countries (both men and women) have experienced **fear of the future** since the start of this pandemic (+2 points compared to last year).
- 59%** have been **afraid to go to hospitals** (+1 point).
- 55%** have experienced **burnout, anxiety or depression** (+2 points).
- 50%** are convinced **they do not take enough time to make sure they are in good health** and this is increasingly the case (+4 points).
- 45%** have had the feeling that **no one is helping them** (+2 points).

Italians especially appeared severely affected by the pandemic, both psychologically (79% say they experienced fear of the future, 76% fear of going to hospitals, 60% have experienced burnout, anxiety or depression, 58% the feeling no one was helping them), but also economically (66% report a decrease in their purchasing power compared to 39% in the UK).

However, women have been more affected than men in many ways.

75% (+2 points compared to last year) **of women report being afraid of the future, compared to 65% of men – 10 points more.**

The women who experienced the more difficult situation are Italian. Indeed, 85% of them report being afraid of the future compared to 73% of Italian men. In the UK, the gap between women and men is even larger (16 points) with 74% of British women experiencing fear compared to 58% of British men. The country where the situation worsened the most for women is Germany, with 71% of German women afraid of the future (+15 points), significantly more than last year

59% of the women respondents have experienced burnout, anxiety or depression, compared to 50% of men (9 points more).

Women in Canada have especially been affected, with 72% (+4) saying they suffered from these problems. In Canada, but also in the UK, France and Germany, men were much less impacted (14 points less on average).

32% of women have experienced extreme tiredness and stress, given all they had to do (at work and home), compared to 22% of men.

The gap is even greater in Canada and France (16 points difference between men and women). Being a parent has different consequences for men and women. Thus, 47% of women with at least a child below 18 regularly feels exhausted, compared to 34% of fathers. For women having children below 6 years old, the gap is even bigger. Indeed, 56% of mothers of young children feel regularly overwhelmed, compared to 34% of fathers of children of the same age (22 points less).

These impacts, experienced to a higher extent by women, add up to create significant overall inequalities between them and men. They threaten the progress made in the last years towards more gender equality, with durable impacts on women's lives and careers.

Many of the women respondents have been strongly affected and doubt being able to bounce back. Some of them anticipate it will be very difficult to recover. This is especially true for young women and women with children since they are at a crucial time in terms of choices for their future career.

To cope with this burning issue which is likely to become even more widespread after the pandemic, the Women's Forum has called the G7 Leaders to acknowledge mental health issues as a critical disease and a pressing social and economic challenge. One important step is to collect accurate gender-disaggregated data to refine the understanding of a global audience on this issue. In parallel, the governments should work to build an open culture to ensure that mental health is fully taken into account as it should.

Furthermore, effective instruments to recognise, diagnose and treat mental health problems should be developed. In addition, a legal framework within companies and public institutions to better entrust empathy and support employees in their feeling of distress should be enacted. Finally, the necessary financial resources to cover the expenses related to mental health to the same extent to other diseases should be allocated by the G7 Governments

66% of the women of the G7 countries consider their physical health has been affected by the pandemic and 36% of them think it will be tough to overcome this crisis.

This is the case of 52% of single mothers, 50% of mothers of children below 6 years old (compared to 34% of fathers of children of the same age) and 42% of women with low income (compared to 33% of men with low income).

Their psychological health has been more impacted, with 74% of them considering they were affected and 42% thinking it will be difficult to recover.

Only a share of 33% of men have the same feeling, 59% of single mothers, 52% of mothers of children under 6 years old (compared to 34% of fathers) and 51% of women under 35 (compared to 37% of young men).

02 • The risk of women going back to traditional roles with the pandemic is greater given that gender stereotypes remain largely widespread

Traditional models remain prominent in the G7 countries, especially when it comes to the role of women and the trade-off between their role of mother and career. Many respondents have integrated that a woman has to choose between them:

- 64%** of the respondents believe that **“it is more difficult for a woman than for a man to have a successful career because she has to agree to sacrifice part of her family life”** (70% of women).
- 50%** still believe that **“you can’t have it all – if you want to be a good mother, you have to agree to sacrifice part of your professional career”** (49% of women).
- 26%** think that **“a woman will always be happier in her role as a mother than in her professional life.”**

These models are very strong for many of those surveyed. Therefore, they mask the existence of gender inequalities and the mechanisms through which these inequalities are perpetuated:

- 46%** believe that **“people exaggerate gender inequalities”** (53% of men and 39% of women).
- 43%** believe that **“women don’t choose the same careers as men out of their own choice and free will”** (48% of men and 39% of women).

These traditional models are especially strong in Germany and in Japan where a clear division is still operated by many between the social roles of men and women. This is less the case in countries such as France or Italy, where populations are rather well aware of gender inequalities and adverse to gender stereotypes.

The most efficient strategy to fight against stereotypes is to increase drastically the number of women in politics at a local, regional and national level. Thus, the Women’s Forum has called the G7 Leaders to be pioneers and lead the change worldwide, promoting women’s leadership and ensuring an equal representation in policy-making, starting with national Parliaments and Governments by 2030.

In addition, it recommended to the G7 Leaders to achieve a full gender balance in the governance of public and private companies by 2030. Under this framework, they should also set up a powerful pipeline for women in governance, in particular in fields where they are under-represented and which are at the heart of the jobs of the future, such as STEM fields.

03 • There is a full agreement among the respondents of the G7 countries on the fact that gender inequalities are still very marked and should be strongly fought

Almost all of the people interviewed agree that gender inequalities exist. The majority are convinced there are widespread, in the G7 or in their country.

Less than 1% of the people interviewed consider that gender inequalities are inexistent today, be it in the world, the G7 countries or their own country.

On a scale of 0 to 10 (0 meaning these inequalities are non-existent and 10 that they are extremely widespread), they rate the level of inequalities on average at 7/10 globally, 5.9/10 for the G7 countries and 6 in their own country.

In Italy, the USA and Japan, people consider that the level of gender inequality is higher in their country than in the rest of the G7.

Witnessing these persistent inequalities, citizens of the G7 countries think that reducing them should be a priority:

90% of the people surveyed believe that closing the gender gap is important, and 29% even see it as an absolute priority (32% among women).

This expectation can be witnessed in every country but is stronger in Italy (95%, 50% of Italian women think it should be a top priority), France and Germany (93%).

However, nearly all the respondents consider that it is going to be more difficult now, with the crisis, to close the gender gap:

97% of the people surveyed consider that **the shock of the pandemic will make this goal more difficult to attain, at least to some extent.** On average, on a scale of 0 (no impact) to 10 (much more difficult) **they rate the increase of difficulty to 5.4, with Italians being especially worried of the impact of the pandemic (6.8).**

04 • The G7 respondents are convinced that reducing gender inequalities would be for the common good

There is a broad consensus on the fact that integrating women into every decision-making level would be highly beneficial:

90% of G7 respondents believe that **the outcomes of decisions are positive when women and men are involved in decision-making** (men and women being equally convinced).

A significant majority believe that better access to senior management roles for women would have positive effects, with 78% agreeing in terms of the ability to innovate and to think differently, and 70% convinced on the positive impacts on the company's growth.

The vast majority believe that if women had better access to employment in technology-based companies (STEM and AI), the impact would also be positive: 80% agree on the positive impact on society and on economic growth, and 72% on the efficiency of technological applications and AI tools.

Indeed, the work of the Women's Forum is largely focused on this important topic. Therefore, one key recommendation to the G7 Leaders is to implement a strategy to engage girls in STEM skills and education to ensure that women are at the heart of the jobs of the future and can benefit from them. The objective should be to attract girls and women in a lifelong journey in STEM, from schools to boardrooms, and launch plans of action to develop reskilling, cross-skilling and upskilling programs for women in STEM fields.

Furthermore, the G7 Leaders are strongly encouraged by the Women's Forum to promote the development of inclusive technology that has a positive impact on humanity as a whole and make sure that a gender lens is applied in the conception and deployment of Artificial Intelligence. One important step is to acknowledge companies that ensure diversity in AI applications, for instance by allocating a specific research tax credit.

Looking at a wider picture of narrowing the gender gap, the vast majority of men and women report that ending gender inequalities would have positive consequences for all. A large majority believe that if women had the same opportunities as men, this would have positive consequences on:

Society as a whole: 79% (85% of women and 73% of men)

Employment: 74% (81% of women and 67% of men)

Economic growth: 74% (81% of women and 65% of men)

Overall wages: 73% (81% of women and 64% of men)

The proportion of men thinking it would have positive impacts has however slightly declined (-3 to -6 points) compared to last year, as some of them might feel threatened in these unstable times, and therefore less likely to support the promotion of women.

When it comes to the fight against climate change, G7 populations are also ready to support the green initiatives led by women. This seems to be effective to make things change since women have more often than men taken actions to be more sustainable.

Only 32% of people believe that women are doing more than others to promote action against climate change.

Yet 47% of women have changed their consumption habits to be more sustainable (compared to 36% of men).

Globally, women are also more likely to be negatively affected by the impacts of climate change than other people. However, only 33% of the people surveyed are aware of this fact.

A majority are however ready to support green initiatives led by women: 65% say that between two projects addressing climate change with the same level of relevance, they would favour the one led by a woman and 56% (60% of women) would invest in a green fund for women, to facilitate investment by women in green initiatives.

72% of the respondents would advocate for the nomination of women CEOs of leading groups in the field of energy.

In order to reach these crucial objectives, the Women's Forum has called the G7 Leaders to acknowledge women as key actors in the fight against climate change and reinforce a gender lens in environmental strategies in light of the lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis. In addition, it asked the G7 Leaders to support and scale up effective initiatives led by women and that positively impact them. The creation of an international Women and Climate Fund to drive investments in performing sustainable projects empowering women is a key to success.

Click [here](#) to read the full report.

This paper was prepared under the leadership of Ms Audrey Tcherkoff, Managing Director of the Women's Forum for the Economy & Society, and by Ms Nadia Caïd, Scientific Director. Particular thanks are due to Mr Matteo Cadenazzi, Public Policy Advisor, and Ms Delphine Marçais de Segonzac, Executive Director.



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