

COVID-19 and the Distribution of (Un)Paid Labour between Men and Women in Austria

Sophie Achleitner^a

Alexander Huber^b

^aMomentum Institut, Vienna, Austria, sophie.achleitner@momentum-institut.at

^bMomentum Institut, Vienna, Austria, alexander.huber@momentum-institut.at

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated and caused numerous social and economic inequalities in society. Many of the observed inequalities already existed before the outbreak of the pandemic, but the unprecedented health and economic crisis has made them clearly visible. In this paper, we focus on gender inequality in Austria in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, we aim to answer research questions relating to the distribution of paid and unpaid labour between men and women during the COVID-19 crisis and lockdowns. The first research question we ask is whether the outbreak of the pandemic has led to unequal reductions in working hours between men and women. First results indicate that women reduced their (paid) working hours more than men during lockdowns. Time spent by women – and especially mothers - in Austria on unpaid activities such as childcare or housework intensified. We also analyse how working in a specific industry or sector influences the shares of men and women working from home during the pandemic. Taking the analysis one step further by exploring the reasons for female work hour reductions, we ask whether the COVID-19 pandemic (and especially the lockdowns) led to changes in the ratio of unpaid work between men and women and whether there is a difference between urban and rural areas in Austria, e.g. whether there is a difference between Vienna and the federal states in the distribution unpaid work hours by gender. In order to assign a monetary value to the unpaid hours worked, we estimate the lost contribution to Austrian economic output (measured by GDP) and foregone income from unpaid work for men and women.

We employ two different datasets to answer our research questions, namely the Austrian Microcensus and the Austrian Corona Panel Project (ACPP). The ACPP dataset was collected in a total of 24 waves during the Corona crisis from March 2020 up until July 2021 and contains pandemic-specific data on the distribution of time spent per day on various activities (e.g. hours worked, time spent on child care activities, other types of unpaid care work activities) during lockdowns. We combine this dataset with individual income and household variables, information on the actually worked hours per week and the reduction in working hours due to the pandemic, the distribution of childcare activities between men and women, and an indicator for the changes in workplace arrangements such as home office opportunities from the Austrian Microcensus.

Our results underscore the substantial gender inequality that has been exacerbated by the lockdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic in Austria and are relevant for Austrian policy measures to fight the aftermath of the crisis. We conclude with according policy recommendations.

Keywords: COVID-19; paid and unpaid labour; gender; distribution; inequality

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1 Introduction and Context

Past crises and recessions have typically resulted in women increasing their paid work while men's time in paid work has decreased. A reason for this is that men are more likely to work in sectors and occupational fields that are more severely affected by recessions, such as manufacturing or construction. Women, on the other hand, are more often employed in crisis-proof, system-preserving or educational professions. Studies find that women have increased their labour force participation or working hours during economic downturns to support and increase family financial security (Alon et al., 2021). When it comes to the gender distribution of unpaid work in past crises, the empirical results are ambivalent. A study from the USA (Khitarrishvili & Kim, 2014) documents a decrease in unpaid working hours for women during a recession in the USA, while MacPhail (2017) reports the opposite for Canada. For paid work, past crises have tended to reduce gender inequality on the labour market through increased female employment rates (Nivakoski & Mascherini, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic, on the other hand, is a special case compared to previous crises and recessions. In many countries, the female labour force participation rate has declined due to demand and supply side factors. Sectors such as gastronomy, tourism, and cleaning, which are predominantly female, were severely affected by the COVID-19 closures, which influenced the labour force participation of women in these sectors (Eurofund, 2021). Alon et al. (2020) also point to the higher opportunity cost for men to leave a (better) paid job than women, resulting in women being more likely to leave the labour market.

In addition, unpaid work has increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic - especially for women and mothers. This is because women and mothers in particular have taken on the additional childcare responsibilities that have arisen as a result of the school closures and have performed significantly more unpaid household chores than men or fathers. Even before the pandemic, caregiving responsibilities, such as caring for relatives and housework duties were predominantly performed by women (Eurofund, 2017). Across the EU, the average weekly time that parents spent on childcare in 2016 was 31 hours for women and 16 hours for men. The closures of childcare facilities and schools as part of the COVID-19 measures exacerbated the unequal gender distribution of these unpaid chores. Nivakoski & Mascherini (2021) use the second wave of the Eurofund survey on "Living and working during COVID-19" to calculate the average weekly hours that parents spent on childcare in the summer of 2020: the average for women is 37 hours per week, the average for men is 23 hours per week.

In order to be able to pursue the increased unpaid work such as care responsibilities and housework, women and especially mothers have reduced their paid working hours. A larger proportion of women are employed in sectors in which telework or home office is better possible. Women in the EU work significantly more often in sectors that are more compatible with working from home than men: 45 percent for women compared to 30 percent for men. For example, at the beginning of the pandemic, about 41 percent of women and only 37 percent of men worked remotely (Sostero et al., 2020). The opportunity to telework theoretically improves the work-life balance and can therefore also have a positive impact on gender equality on the labour market, in the best case it can even reduce the gender pay gap (Bloom et al., 2015; Dockery & Bawa, 2018). However, the increased teleworking hours for women and mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a worse work-life balance. The reasons for this were the increased take-up of unpaid activities, even while teleworking, such as care responsibilities and housework (Eurofund, 2020). Based on these facts, it can be assumed that the COVID-19 pandemic has reduced

gender equality in both paid and unpaid work settings.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 describes the data sources and variables employed in the analysis, namely the Austrian Corona Panel Project (ACPP) and the Austrian Microcensus Survey. Section 3 deals with paid work during COVID-19 in Austria, where we first touch upon the concept of teleworking and home office during the pandemic, evaluate the distribution of the use of home office between men and women and then turn to analyse different economic sectors and occupational fields with respect to their home office opportunities. The remainder of Section 3 focuses on the analysis with the ACPP and the Microcensus about paid work time reductions between men, women, mothers and fathers during the pandemic. In this context, an estimate of foregone earnings due to work time reductions is calculated as well. Section 4 presents the results for unpaid work during the pandemic. It sheds light on differences between men, women, mothers and fathers in terms of their unpaid work activities and evaluates differences between urban and rural areas in Austria. The last part of Section 4 presents a monetary valuation of unpaid work using two different calculation approaches, which also put a monetary value on the volume of unpaid work during the pandemic and finishes with an estimation of foregone GDP due to unpaid work. Lastly, Section 5 concludes and embeds our findings into according policy recommendations.

2 Data

For our analysis, two datasets are employed: namely, the Austrian Corona Panel Project (ACPP) and the Austrian Microcensus Survey. The specific attributes of the data and variables are described in more detail in section 2.1 and 2.2. First, we give an overview of the COVID-19 measures, such as lockdowns and school closures during the considered time period.

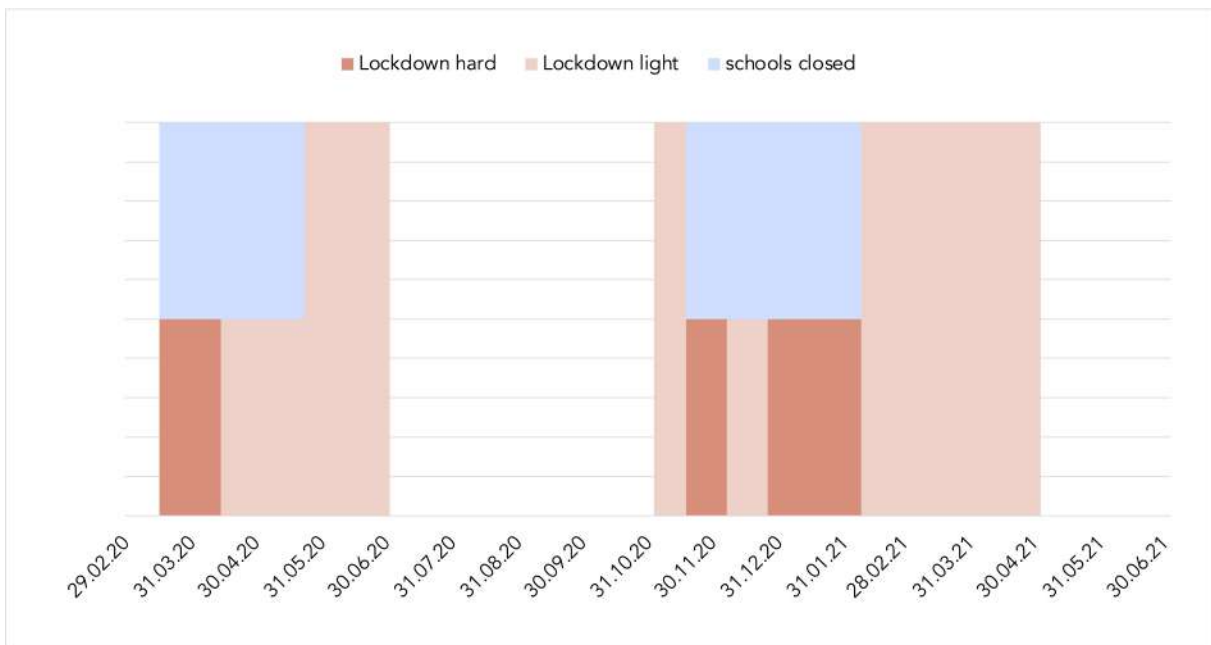


Figure 1: Chronology of COVID-19 measures in Austria

The time period of interest spans from March 2020 until July 2021. This is the time period, where most major lockdowns, COVID-19 measures and school closures were enacted in Austria. At the same time, the

first 24 waves of the ACPP cover this time period. The month of February 2020 is most often used as a reference month, or pre pandemic control. Moreover, there is a distinction between types of lockdowns. A ‘hard lockdown’ refers to a lockdown, where measures in response to the Corona crisis were the strictest, e.g. shut down of all non-essential establishments, curfews, school closures and distance learning and home-office wherever possible. A ‘lockdown light’ refers to a softer version of a lockdown, where some establishments were allowed to reopen under certain conditions (for example gastronomy in outside areas or to-go schemes, gym and sport events outside etc.) and schools were partly opened up again – especially for the younger school children. The chronology of measures, split in ‘lockdown hard’, ‘lockdown light’ and ‘schools closed’ are depicted in Figure 1, a more detailed timeline can be found in the Appendix.

2.1 Austrian Corona Panel Project (ACPP)

The Austrian Corona Panel Project (ACPP) database comprises a total of 24 survey waves, which are constantly updated. All waves are considered, however, some required variables used in the analysis are only available for waves 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20 and 23. Waves 1-3, 17 and 19 coincide with ‘hard lockdown’ periods, when COVID-19 measures were the strictest. These waves also match a part of the nationwide school closures. Thirteen other waves (4-12, 18 and 20-22) cover so-called “lockdown lights” in which, for example, gastronomy and hotels, or other tourism facilities and shops were partially open. School closures occur in waves 1-8 and 17-19. Only during waves 13 - 16, which fall into summer 2020, and during wages 23 and 24, which were surveyed in May 2021, were schools not closed, nor were there (strict) lockdown or COVID-19 measures in Austria. These waves therefore represent suitable comparison periods.

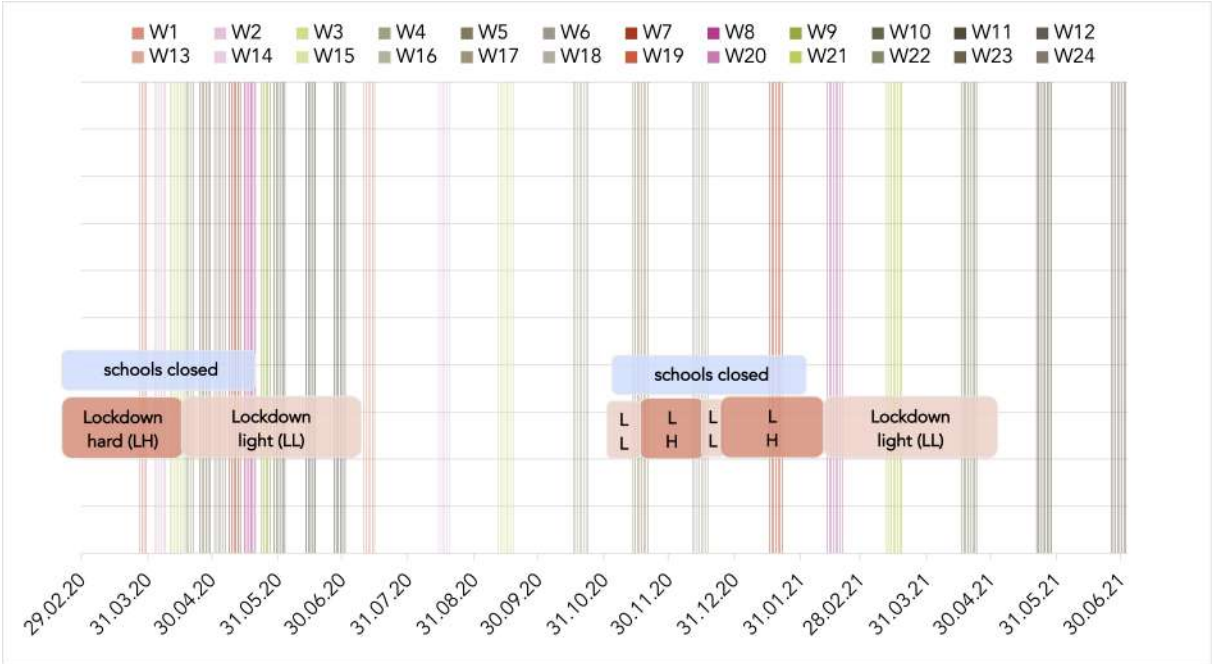


Figure 2: COVID-19 measures for all ACPP waves

As mentioned, for some calculations, the needed variables are only available for the ACPP waves 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20 and 23. Thus, the Corona measures that were in place during the according waves are depicted in Figure 3.

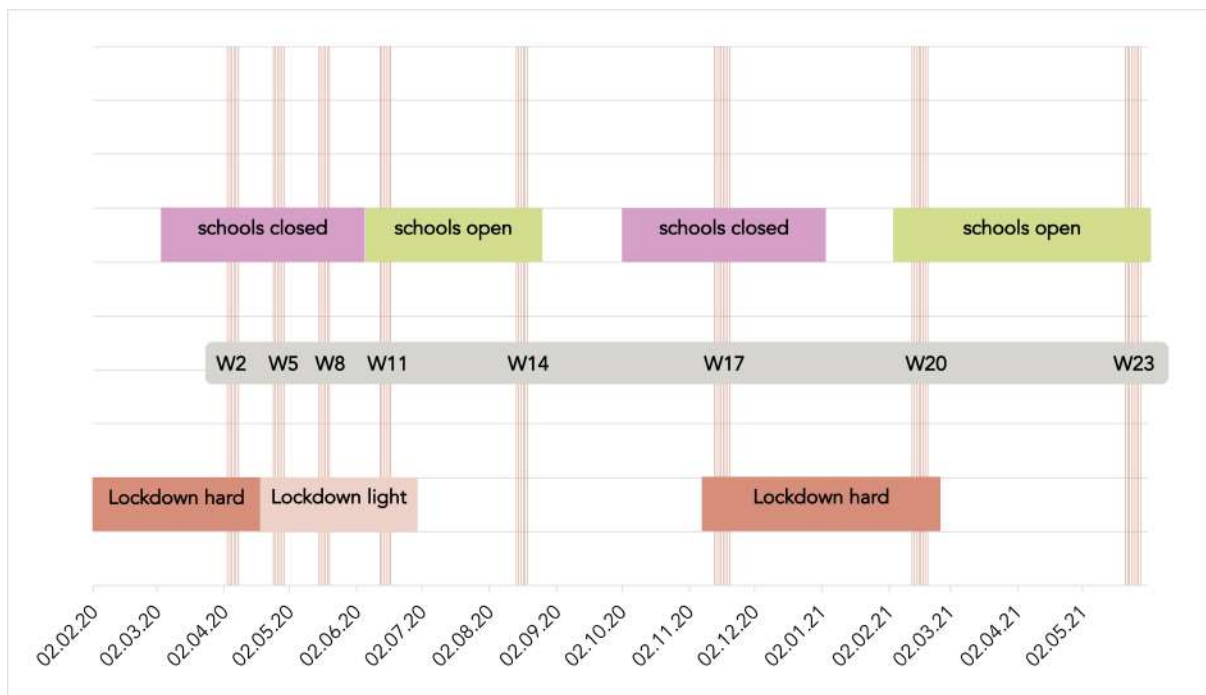


Figure 3: COVID-19 measures for ACPP waves 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20 and 23

2.2 Austrian Microcensus Survey

The Austrian Microcensus Survey is conducted over the whole year and released quarterly. Each yearly sample is comprised of the four quarterly samples consisting of around 20,000 households each. The survey is structured as a panel with each household being part for five consecutive quarters. Variables of interest for our calculations comprise working hours in the reference week, working hours in a normal week, as well as reasons for working shorter hours than normal. We use the quarterly and yearly samples for the years 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020. Apart from the two ACPP and the Austrian Microcensus Survey, there is also a range of COVID-19-related variables included in the 2020 EU Statistics of Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). However, we decided against applying EU-SILC data for the analysis since sample sizes reduced to a small number when focusing on COVID-19-related variables solely.

3 Paid Work during COVID-19 in Austria

The pandemic has had a significant impact on labour markets all over the world – including Austria. While (school) children and students were sent home for distance learning on March 16, 2020 due to nationwide school closures, people in employment were confronted with difficult working conditions, short-time work and layoffs.

Unemployment due to COVID-19 skyrocketed in Austria. In April 2020, the highest level of additional unemployment (230,000 people) was reached. At that time, more than half a million people were registered as unemployed or in training. The short-time work model saved many people from unemployment in Austria. At the peak of unemployment, the short-time work model secured jobs for more than a million people (about a third of all employees). In addition to putting a brake on the decline in employment, the short-time work model should also take away pressure on companies and ensure that a reduction in working hours is only accompanied by relatively small salary losses. Nevertheless, the situation was

particularly tricky for many, for example low-income earners, single parents and women.

The noticeable changes in the labour market as a result of the COVID-19 crisis also become clear when looking at the employment rate: the employment rate for men and women in Austria fell enormously in the crisis year 2020 – that of men even more.

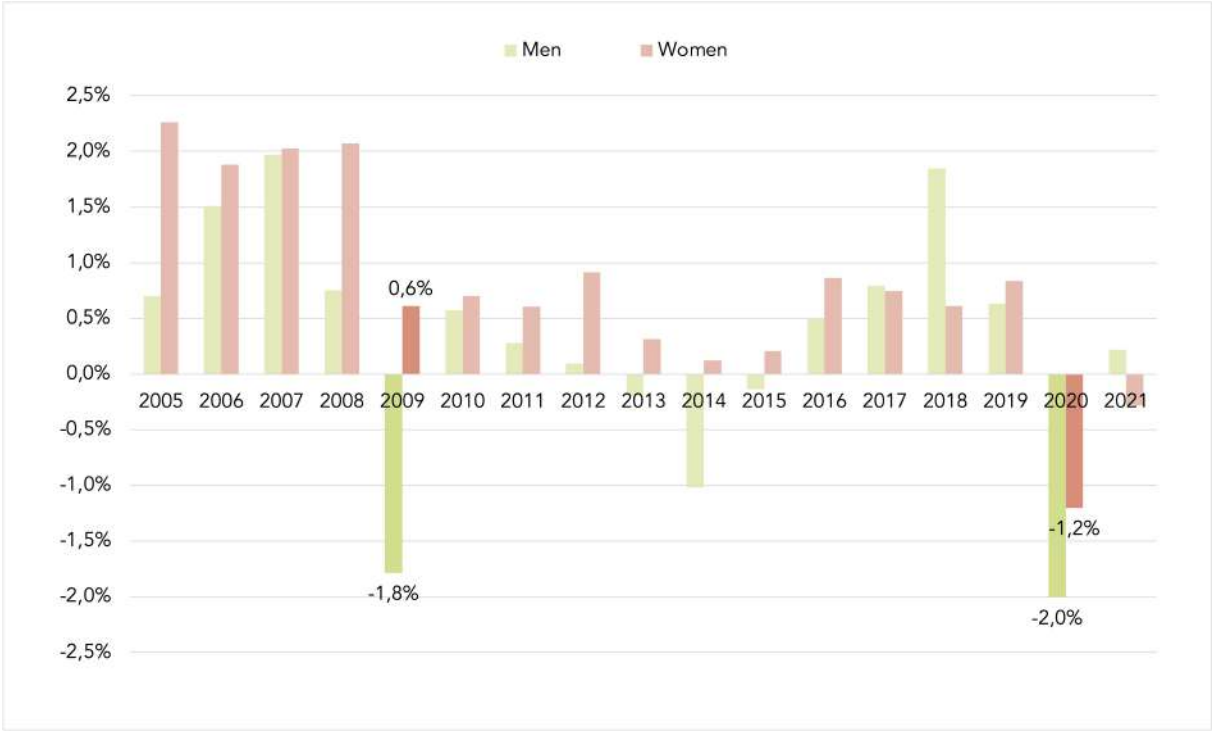


Figure 4: Change in employment rate per year for men and women in Austria

A comparison of the female employment rate in the two crisis years of 2009 and 2020 yields interesting results. While the male employment rate fell to a similar extent in both crises, the opposite effects of the various crises can be observed for women. In 2009, the peak year of the financial crisis, the employment rate for women rose by around 0.5 percent. This observation supports the theoretical assumption that women increase their labour force participation during recessions and economic downturns to provide additional financial security (Alon et al., 2021). It is also clear that sectors which are male-dominated are less crisis-proof than those in which women tend to work. The labour force participation rate for men fell by almost 2 percent in 2009. Looking at the first pandemic year 2020, the picture changes. While the employment rate for men fell by 2 percent, women’s employment rate also fell by around 1.2 percent. This also supports the thesis that the Corona crisis represents a “special case” when considering past crisis effects on employment. Many sectors dominated by women, such as gastronomy or tourism, were hit particularly hard by the closures.



Figure 5: Change in female part-time employment rate in percent for crisis years

When looking at the part-time rate of women in Austria, broken down by age group, it becomes clear that during crises, mothers worked more part-time. In both 2009 and 2020, the proportion of part-time workers in the age group of “potential mothers with children who need to be looked after”, i.e. women between 35 and 54, increased. While the significantly higher increases in part-time rates during the financial crisis tend to point to the theory of mothers being “extra earners” in times of crisis, the noticeably lower increases in part-time rates in the Corona year 2020 are more likely to be due to a reduction in working hours, e.g. full-time employment to part-time employment, because of increased childcare duties.

3.1 Teleworking

Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the concept of “home office” was hardly used by most employees and companies. In 2015, only around 13 percent of all employees in Austria (partly) worked from home. Women and men took up the opportunity to work from home at about the same extent and the sectors in which teleworking was most popular were limited to education (including teachers) and ICT. From a regional perspective, the home office option was more popular among workers in eastern Austria, but before the pandemic hit, very few people worked regularly from home in general. The Austrian Institute for Economic Research WIFO (Bock-Schappelwein, 2020) calculates a theoretical home office potential in Austria of 45 percent. This means that around 45 percent of employees in Austria work in sectors in which (regular or complete) teleworking would be possible in principle. Women are increasingly working in industries and professional fields that are easier to combine with telework, which is why the home office potential value for women in Austria is higher at 47 percent than for men at 43 percent.

For the first lockdown, Pichler et al. (2020) show that women in Austria worked more from home than men. The first wave of the Austrian Corona Panel Projects (ACPP) shows that 39 percent of those working from home were women, while around 33 percent of men switched to teleworking due to the outbreak of the pandemic. This result is consistent with the EU-wide picture that women generally work

more often in sectors and professional fields that are more compatible with working from home than men. In Austria, too, the proportion of people working from home was particularly high in the information and communication sector, in financial and insurance services and in education during the pandemic. However, the gender ratio in the home office changed between the first lockdown in spring 2020 and the second lockdown in autumn 2020 (Stelzer-Orthofer, 2021). While more women were initially working from home, the gender ratio in teleworking was roughly balanced out until the second lockdown (Statistics Austria, 2020).

Many people are currently returning from their home offices to their usual workplace establishments. Nevertheless, the proportion of people working from home is still significantly higher than before Corona. In the first quarter of 2022, 19.2 percent of women and 17.7 percent of men were teleworking. Overall, around 18.4 percent of those in employment worked from home (Statistics Austria, 2022).

In our employed data from the Austrian microcensus, the distribution of teleworking between men and women in Austria and between different occupational fields and sectors shows as follows. Figure 6 depicts the distribution of home office opportunities and use of them between men and women during the first crisis year 2020. In January 2020 – pre Corona – roughly 10 percent of men said to work from home often. In comparison, 12 percent of women said to work from home regularly. The peak of roughly 30 percent of both men and women saying they worked from home regularly during the first lockdown period, is clearly evident. During the summer months of the first pandemic year, the share of people working from home sank for both genders and increased again when the second lockdown occurred in autumn 2020. Throughout the whole time period, the women’s share working from home on a regular basis was always slightly higher than the male share.

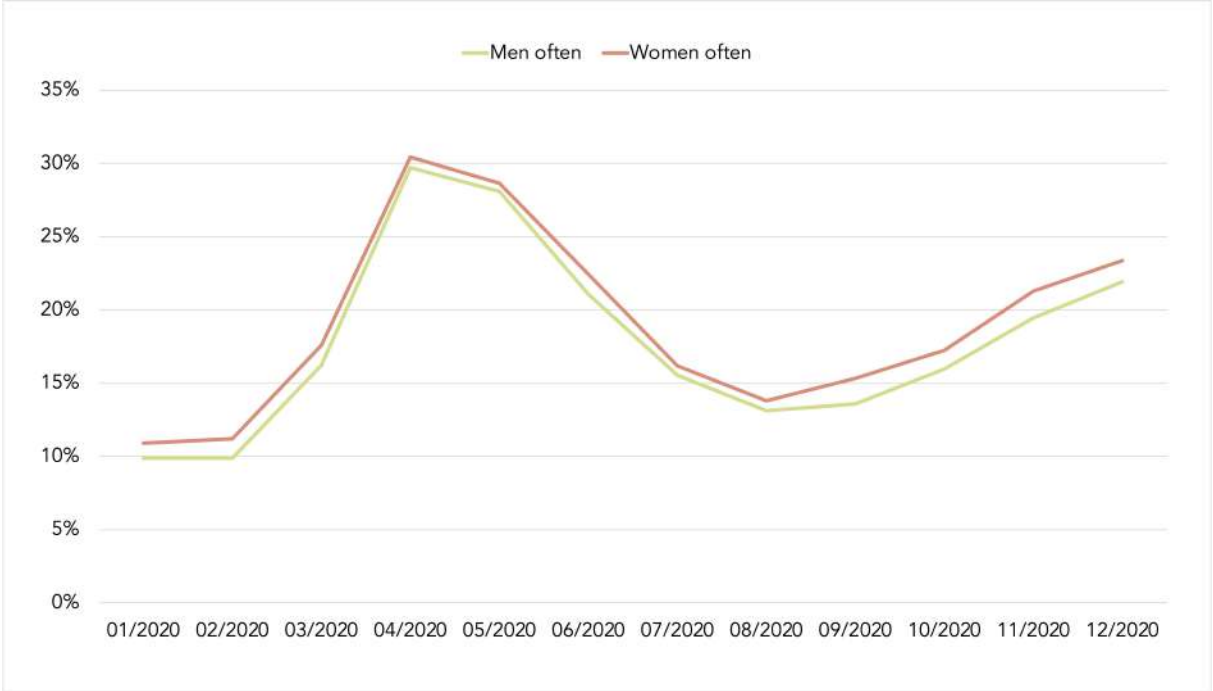


Figure 6: Shares of men and women saying they worked from home “often”

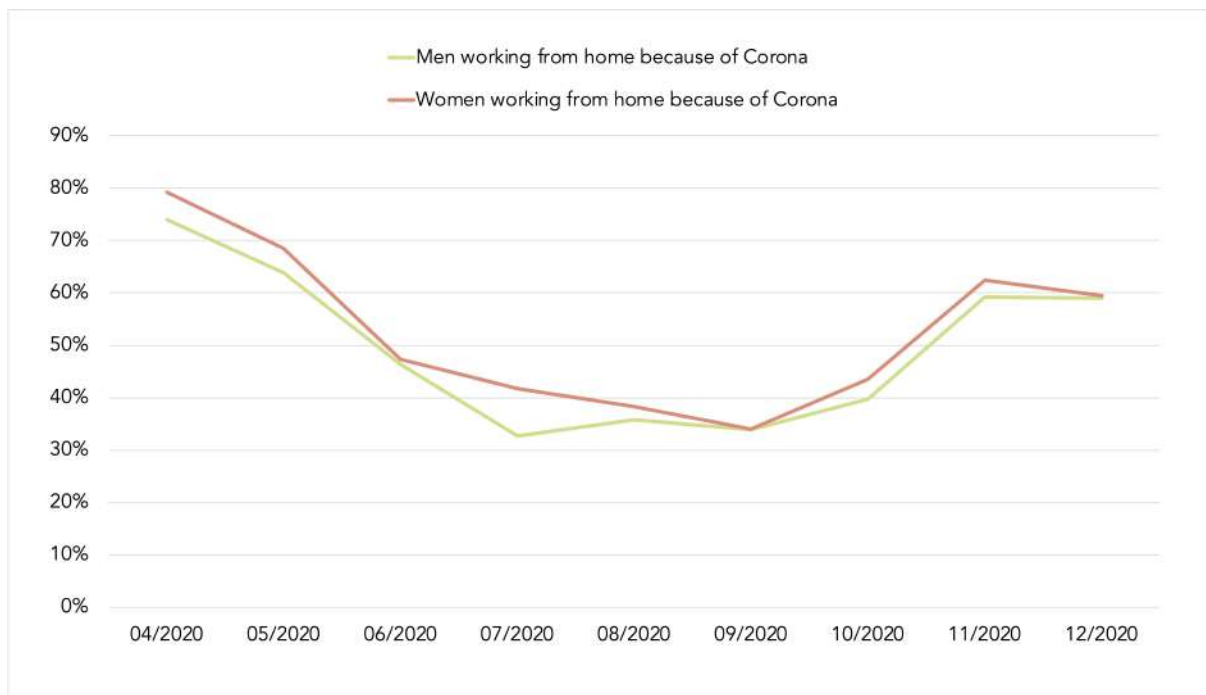


Figure 7: Shares of men and women saying they worked from home “because of Corona”

When asked about the reasons for working from home, at the peak of the first lockdown, 80 percent of women said that they worked from home because of the pandemic. The men’s share was slightly lower at 75 percent. Again, the share decreased for both genders during the summer months and increased again upon the second lockdown and again, the women’s share was always higher than the one for men.

Split into different (economic) sectors and occupational fields, our expectations are confirmed. People working in sectors that already had a high share of regular home office workers (such as education and teaching professions) increased their home office share during lockdowns even more. At the same time, these are naturally also the professions which are most compatible with working from home. The difference is especially noticeable when comparing a ‘home office compatible’ profession, such as teaching, with a profession, where working from home is nearly impossible due to the nature of the work, such as construction.

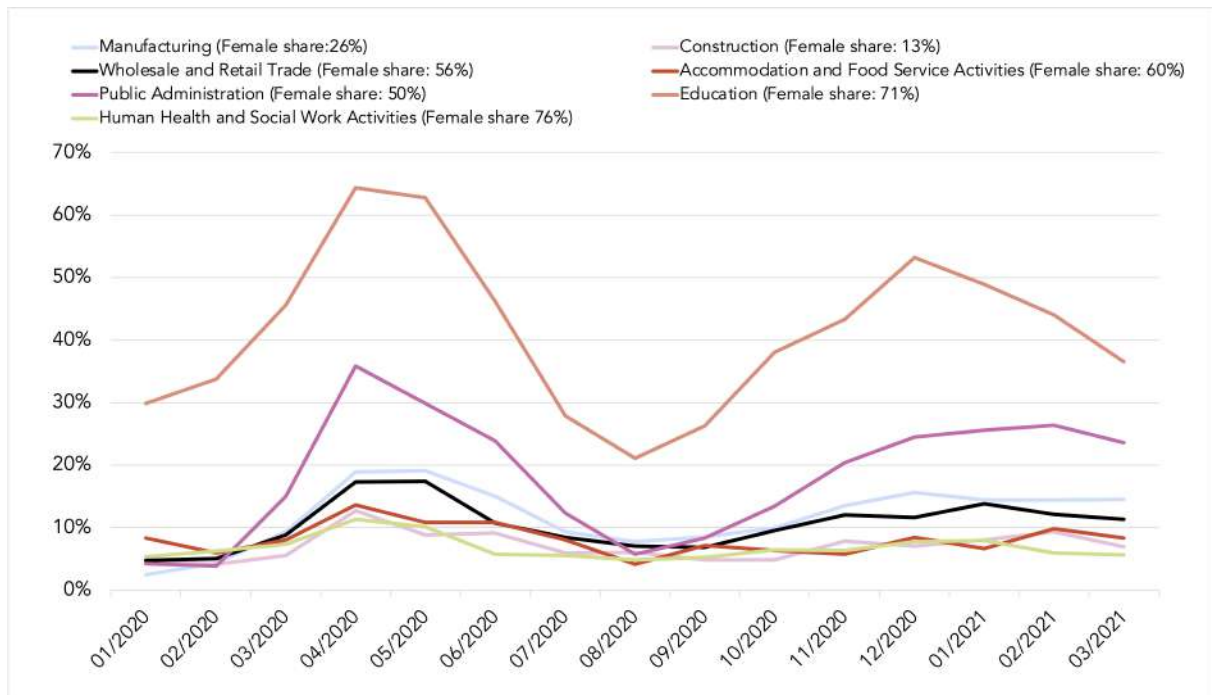


Figure 8: Sectors classified by NACE definition

The differences become even more evident when looking at specific occupational groups as they are defined by the ISCO-08 classification. Around 40 percent of teaching professionals already worked from home pre pandemic, but they were able to increase their home office share up to roughly 75 percent during the first lockdown, and up to 60 percent during the second one in autumn 2020. In comparison, the home office share for cleaners and helpers and for personal care workers stayed close to zero percent throughout the whole time period considered.

Another characteristic that becomes evident is the fact that home office opportunities are more often available for women, as they work in professions and sectors that are more home office compatible. The professional fields of teachers and general or keyboard clerks show female shares of 71 and 84 percent, i.e. they are very female dominated. This is in accordance with the aforementioned finding across the European labour market, that women tend to work in sectors that are more compatible with working from home.

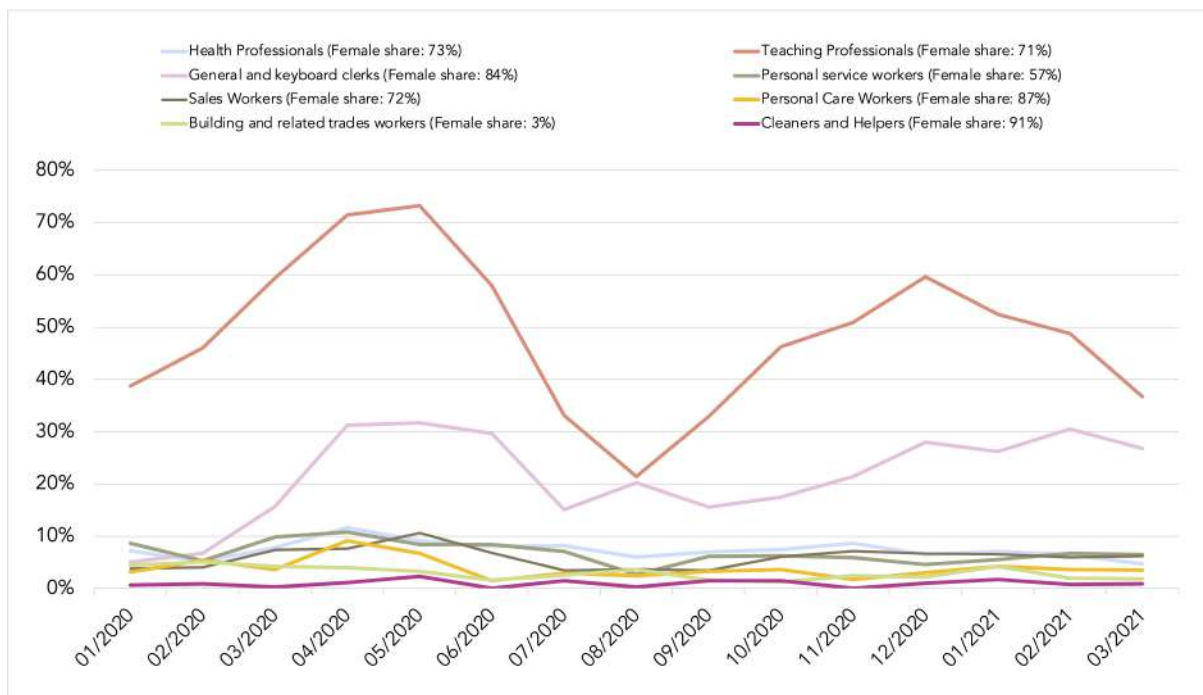


Figure 9: Professions classified by ISCO-08 definition

3.2 Results Paid Work

The first research question we ask is whether the outbreak of the pandemic has led to unequal reductions in working hours between men and women. Our results of the analysis with the ACPD data confirm that women and especially mothers reduced their (paid) working hours more than men during lockdowns in Austria. The average reduction in working hours for the considered time period amounts to 2.4 hours for men, 3.9 hours for women and 2.5 and 3.9 hours for fathers and mothers respectively.

Spread out across the ACPD waves, Figures 10 and 11 show that while men reduced their working hours drastically upon the first lockdown period but increased their work hours quickly, mothers' work time reduction was more permanent. It is especially noticeable in the second lockdown period in autumn 2020 when mothers' working hour reduction was the highest. In July 2021, when wave 24 of the ACPD was conducted, mothers ended up showing the most pronounced work time reduction.

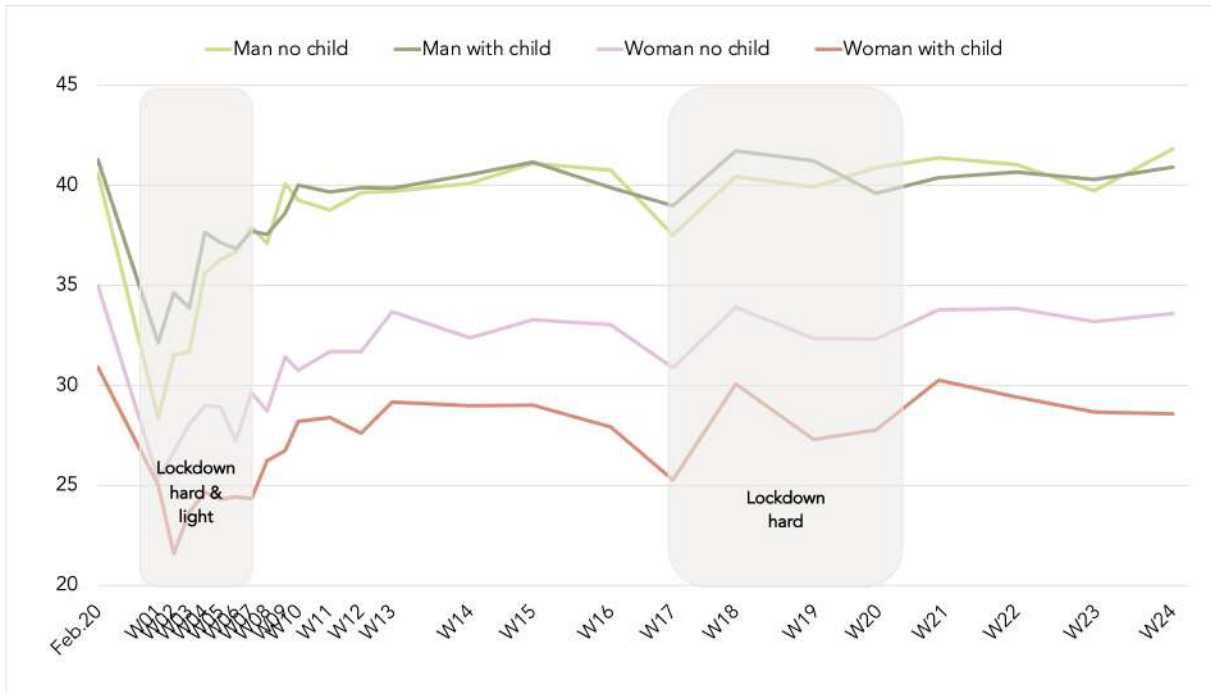


Figure 10: Weekly work time in hours for men, women, mothers and fathers

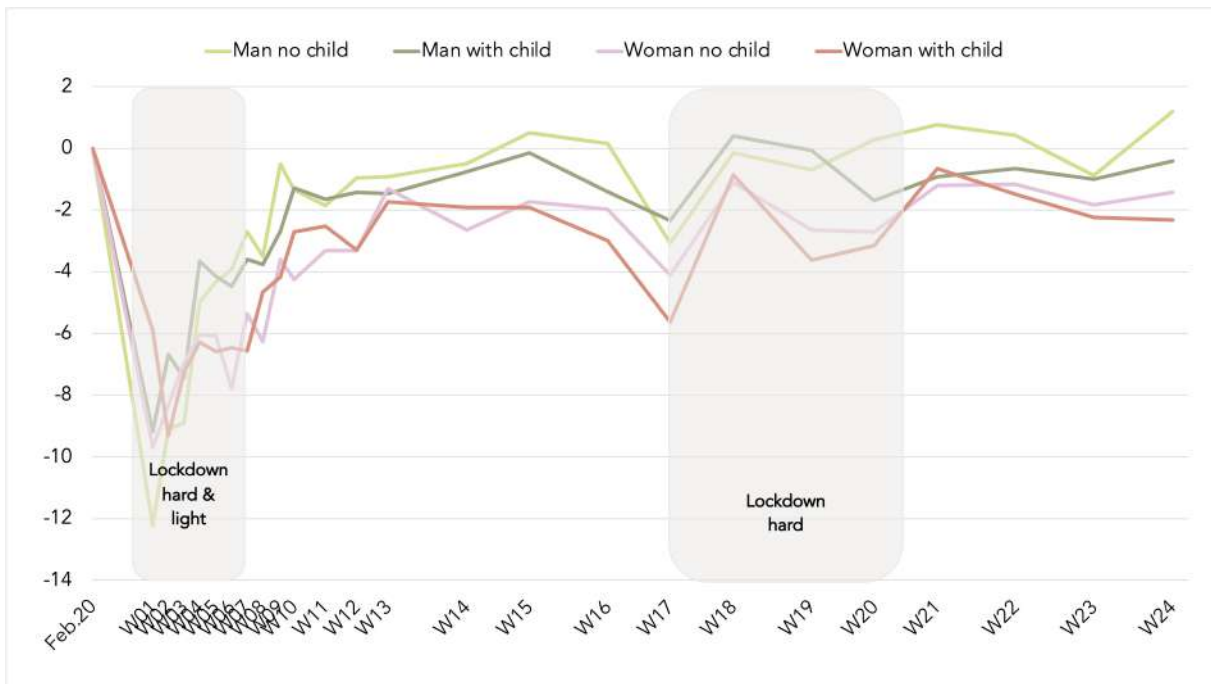


Figure 11: Average reduction in work time (in hours) per week compared to February 2020

As shown, particularly for mothers, the reductions in working hours are clearly visible. Compared to all other groups of people – women, men and fathers – mothers were the ones who reduced their working hours the most. While men and fathers ended up working roughly the same amount of hours per week in July 2021 compared to pre Corona, both women and mothers ended up working less than in the reference month of February 2020.

The same analysis with data from the Austrian Microcensus yields – as expected – similar results. Figure 12 shows the percentage of work time reduction for the time period of April 2020 until December 2020. Due to the Microcensus being conducted as a panel, the reduction is measured at the personal level with Q1 2020 being the baseline. Observations after the start of the first COVID-19-lockdown in Austria are dropped. We only look at men and women that actually did reduce their working hours while filtering those who named short-time work as reason for reducing working hours. Again, while both men and fathers reduced their work time per week rather drastically during the first lockdown, they just as fast increased their working hours again during the early summer months, while women and mothers’ work time reduction stayed between 33 percent and 84 percent throughout the whole period. Especially mothers’ work time reduction during the second lockdown is clearly visible: they reduced their weekly working hours by more than 70 percent.

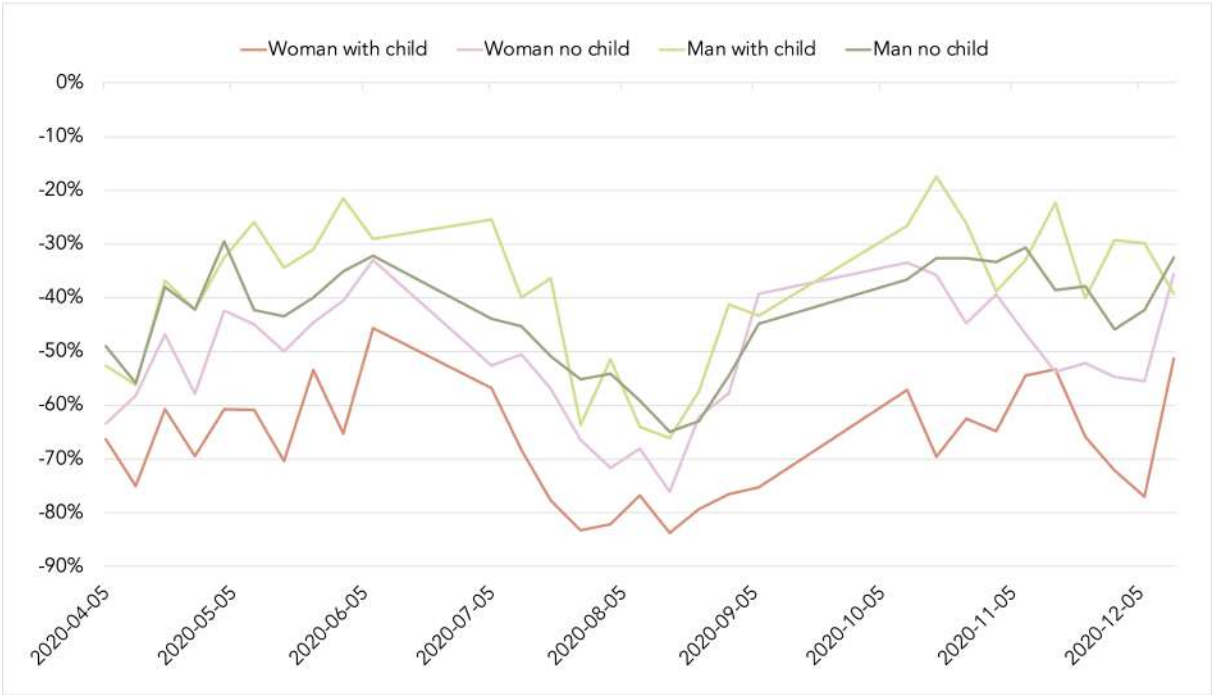


Figure 12: Percentage change in work time for men, women, fathers and mothers

One last interesting insight into the matter of paid work time reduction yields Figure 13. It shows an average of changes in worktime per month for mothers for the pre crisis years 2017, 2018 and 2019 compared to the crisis year 2020. While the reduction during the summer months are in accordance with the ‘normal’ seasonal changes in work time reduction, the first lockdown period from March until May clearly shows a sharp, unusual reduction in working hours per week, which do not correspond to the rather constant working hours in those months in pre crisis years. Once again, this underscores the drastic reductions in working hours per week by mothers compared to all other groups considered (e.g. men, women and fathers). The worktime reduction by mothers during the second lockdown period are also visible in this figure. The lines that represent the working hour reductions in November and December 2020 are more steep than in pre-crisis years, thus, they do not accord with ‘normal’ changes in working time and could be attributed to the pandemic.

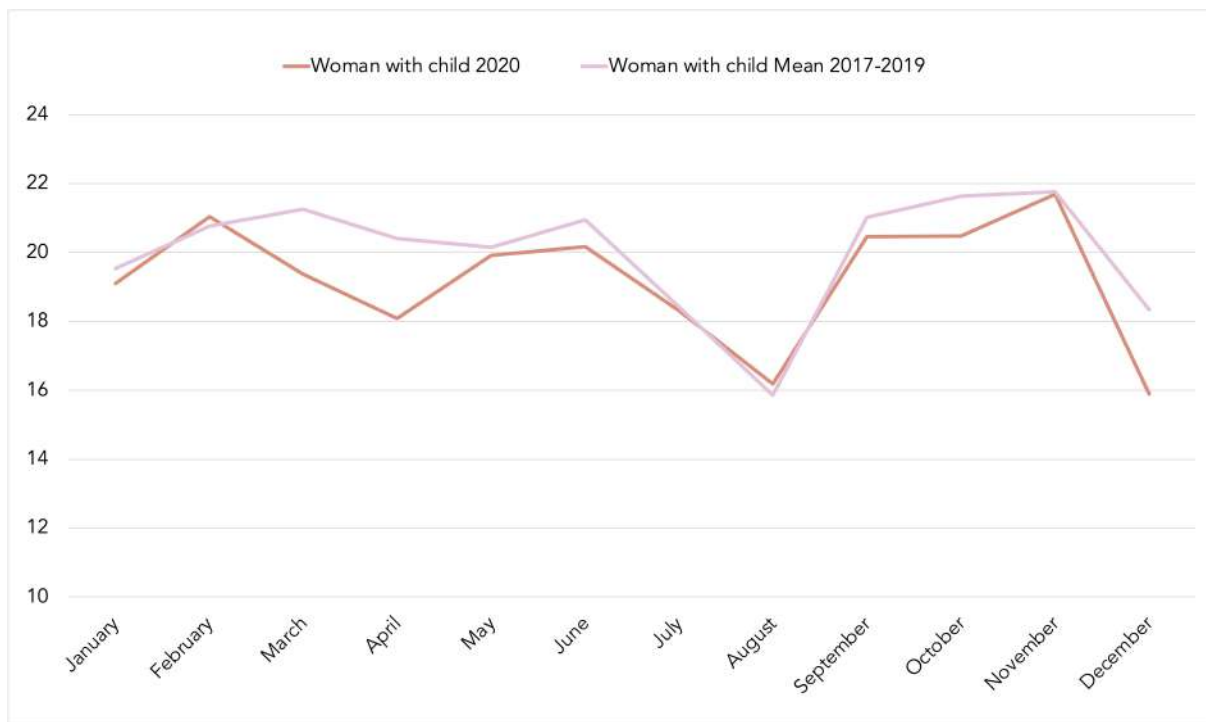


Figure 13: Change in work time for fathers and mothers pre-crisis vs. crisis year 2020

3.2.1 Foregone Income due to Work Time Reduction

This calculation is based on the results of the ACPD dataset. As shown, the reduction in work hours per week differed between men and women. While men reduced their paid working time by only 2.4 hours per week, women reduced theirs on average by almost 4 hours. These hours not worked result in an income loss, i.e. foregone wages. Assuming these hours of work time reduction, the estimated loss of wages per week amount to roughly 39 euros for men and around 54 euros for women – assuming a median gross hourly wage of 16.26 euros for men and 13.43 euros for women as stated by Statistics Austria. Even though women earn less per hour than men, plus the female work time reduction was higher compared to that of men, the difference in total loss across the whole time period is substantial. Had men and women remained at their average weekly working hours, they would have earned 2,560 euros and 3,500 euros, respectively. For all men and women in Austria (only the working age population is considered), that means there is a cumulated volume of foregone wages of 17.2 billion euros in total: 6.9 billion euros for all men and 10.3 billion euros for all women.

Table 1: Foregone Paid Work - Income Loss

	Gross hourly wage (median)	Reduction in work time per week (average) in hours	Loss of wages because of work time reduction per week	Total loss across the whole time period	Total volume of foregone wages for all men and women
Men	€ 16.26	-2.38	€ 38.77	€ 2,559	€ 6.9 bn
Women	€ 13.43	-3.95	€ 53.56	€ 3,500	€ 10.3 bn

4 Unpaid Work during COVID-19 in Austria

4.1 Results Unpaid Work

When looking at unpaid work activities, the ACPD distinguishes between carework, i.e. looking after children or other persons needing care, and housework, i.e. cooking, washing, cleaning etc. Naturally, the

shares of unpaid carework are especially high for mothers and fathers, while the amount of time dedicated to carework activities for men and women without children remain relatively low throughout the entire time period. How much time was spent per day on these unpaid work activities was only surveyed during waves 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20 and 23 of the ACPP, which is why our analysis focuses on these waves only for this part. We later combine these two activities into one indicator for unpaid work activities and look at regional differences within Austria, i.e. evaluate whether there was a difference in hours spent on unpaid work activities between men, women, mothers and fathers in rural and urban areas. For this purpose, we split up the nine federal states in Austria into urban and rural regions. As the capital of Austria, Vienna, is the largest city by far in terms of inhabitants (and is also defined as a federal state), a distinction between Vienna and non-Vienna makes most sense for this analysis, as there is no other urban region that is comparably big.

4.1.1 Unpaid Carework

First, we look at unpaid carework activities during the aforementioned waves of the ACPP. Lockdowns (hard or light) occurred during waves 2, 5 and 17 in this selection of waves, as well as school closures. This is important, as especially during school closure periods, the increase in unpaid carework for mothers and fathers is more likely visible.

On average, men spent 0.3 hours daily on carework, while women dedicated 0.7 hours per day. However, the stark contrast in the distribution of unpaid carework activities shows when looking at mothers and fathers: While fathers were occupied for about 3.5 hours daily with carework activities, mothers spent 7.5 hours per day.

Figure 14 shows the daily time spent on unpaid carework activities for men, women, mothers and fathers over time. Especially striking are the hours spent on unpaid carework activities during lockdown periods (waves 2, 5 and 17) by mothers. At the peak of the first lockdown, mothers dedicated approximately 9,5 hours per day looking after and caring for children or other relatives, while fathers spent about 4.5 hours per day doing so.

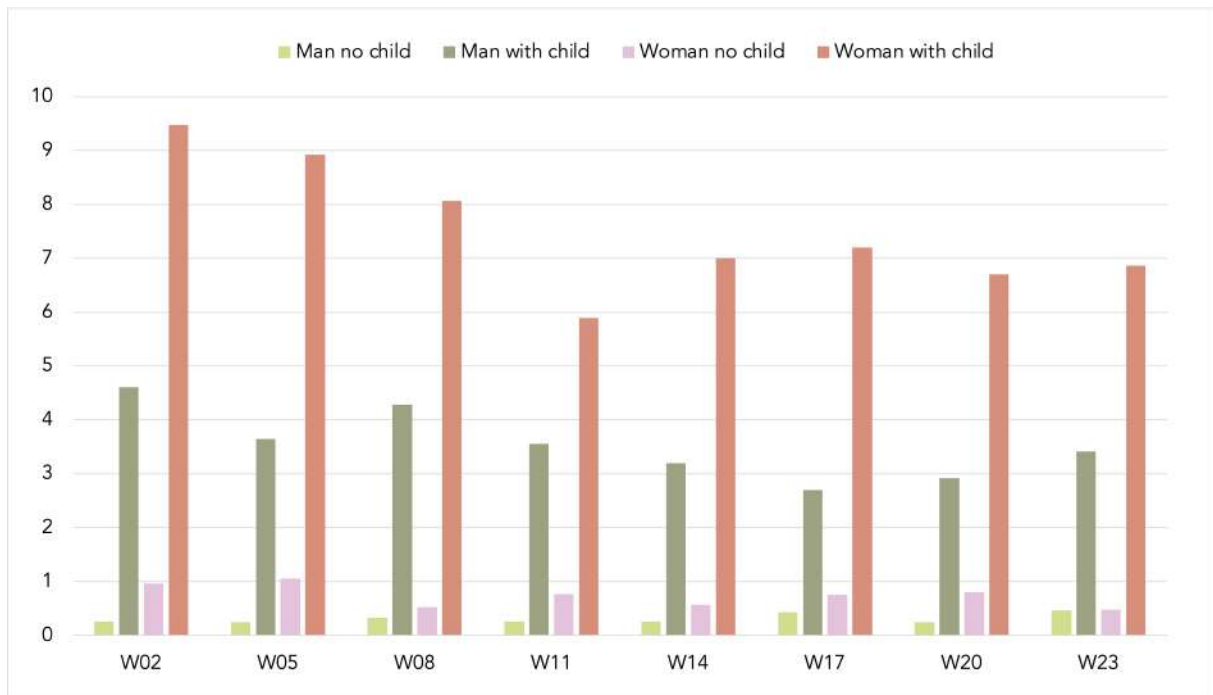


Figure 14: Daily hours spent on unpaid carework activities

4.1.2 Unpaid Housework

Next, we evaluate the distribution of unpaid housework activities between men, women, mothers and fathers. It should be noted, that compared to time spent on carework, the daily hours spent on housework are far less for both genders. Nevertheless, differences are visible.



Figure 15: Daily hours spent on unpaid housework activities

A man spent roughly 1.5 hours a day on housework, while a woman spent 2.3 on average. Again, the amount of hours dedicated to housework are higher for mothers and fathers: fathers spent on average 1.7 hours per day on housework and mothers spent 2.5 hours per day. Mothers again did the lion’s share of the unpaid housework, especially during lockdown periods. This is shown in Figure 15. During the first lockdown period, mothers spent almost twice as many hours on housework than fathers.

4.1.3 Unpaid Work

When carework and housework are combined, we get an estimate of the daily hours spent on unpaid work activities in total.

On average, men dedicated roughly 1.9 hours per day to unpaid work activities, while women spent 3 hours per day. Fathers spent 5.3 hours daily - mothers on the other hand carried out twice as many hours in unpaid work (roughly 10 hours per day). The fact that women and especially mothers did the lion’s share of unpaid work during the pandemic and most importantly during lockdown periods, is visible in Figure 16. It shows the average daily hours spent on unpaid work activities during the respective waves of the ACPP. At the peak of the first lockdown, mothers basically spent the whole day – around 12 hours – doing care and housework activities, while fathers’ share of unpaid work remained at around half of that of mothers between 5 and 7 hours.

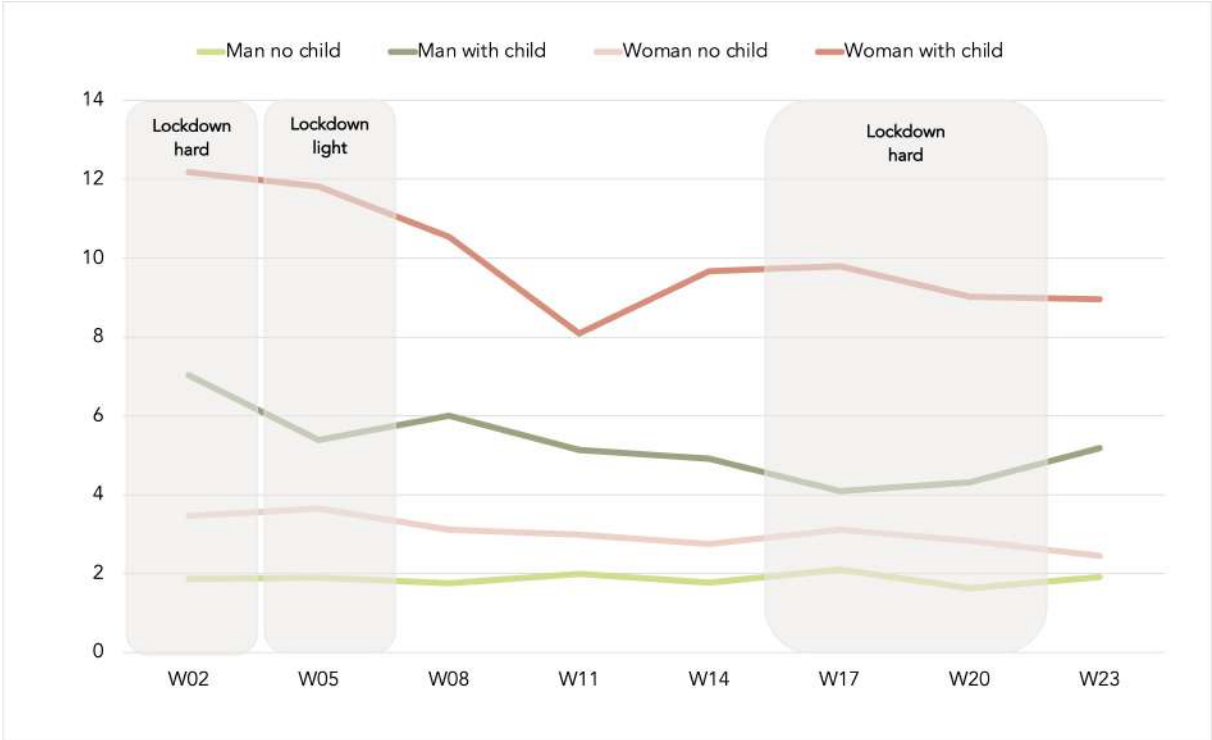


Figure 16: Daily hours spent on unpaid work activities

4.1.4 Unpaid Work in Urban and Rural Regions

Now, we turn to regional differences in the distribution of unpaid work activities. The reason for this analysis by regions is that Austria is quite divided into one large urban area, namely the capital city and federal state Vienna, and eight other federal states – none of which has a comparably large city. Thus, life is very concentrated in and around Vienna, while some rural areas are rather secluded from infrastructure,

public transport and further away from larger villages or cities.

During lockdowns or when infection numbers were skyrocketing, some rural areas or villages were even cut off because of such strict COVID-19 restrictions and measures. At times, this meant that one needed a negative COVID-19 test to pass from one area into another, making life more difficult for people commuting because of work or school from these affected areas into others, which are for example closer to a bigger city. At some points in time, parents were allowed to send their children to school despite a light lockdown period – if they had nowhere else to leave the child. We thus assume that especially during those semi-official school closures, unpaid carework activities were higher in rural areas, as parents might have been more reluctant to drop their children at school, which might be far away from home with a long commute. In a city such as Vienna, where schools are in most cases close to home, parents might have been more likely to send their children to school anyways, thus minimizing their own unpaid carework.

Another aspect that plays a role here is the fact that life in rural areas in Austria is often shaped by traditional gender roles, such as the male bread winner supporting the family financially, while women or mothers stay home to look after the children and do the housework. This is another reason why we assume unpaid work activities to be higher in rural areas in general.

The following three tables show the average hours per day spent on unpaid carework, housework and unpaid work in general for men, women, mothers and fathers in urban and rural areas of Austria. It becomes evident that mothers in rural areas always spent the most hours on the mentioned unpaid activities on average. For example, while fathers in rural areas spent 3.4 hours on average on carework, mothers in rural areas spent roughly 7.9 hours per day. The same applies for housework and unpaid work in general: mothers in rural areas dedicated 2.5 hours on housework per day and spent 10.4 hours in total on unpaid activities. Fathers on the other hand spent 1.8 hours on housework per day and only 5.3 hours on unpaid work in total.

For men and women without children, the differences are not so stark, yet still visible. The general pattern that women carried out more unpaid work activities than men is true for both rural and urban areas in Austria.

Table 2: Average hours per day of unpaid carework for men, women, mothers and fathers in urban and rural areas

Man				Woman			
<i>Rural</i>		<i>Urban</i>		<i>Rural</i>		<i>Urban</i>	
No child	With child	No child	With child	No child	With child	No child	With child
0.32	3.54	0.28	3.56	0.62	7.85	1.43	6.10

Table 3: Average hours per day of unpaid housework for men, women, mothers and fathers in urban and rural areas

Man				Woman			
Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban	
No child	With child	No child	With child	No child	With child	No child	With child
1.54	1.81	1.57	1.35	2.32	2.54	2.21	2.35

Table 4: Average hours per day of unpaid work for men, women, mothers and fathers in urban and rural areas

Man				Woman			
Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban	
No child	With child	No child	With child	No child	With child	No child	With child
1.86	5.34	1.85	4.91	2.94	10.39	3.64	8.45

Over time, the distribution of unpaid work between men, women, mothers and fathers in rural and urban areas are depicted in Figures 17 and 18.

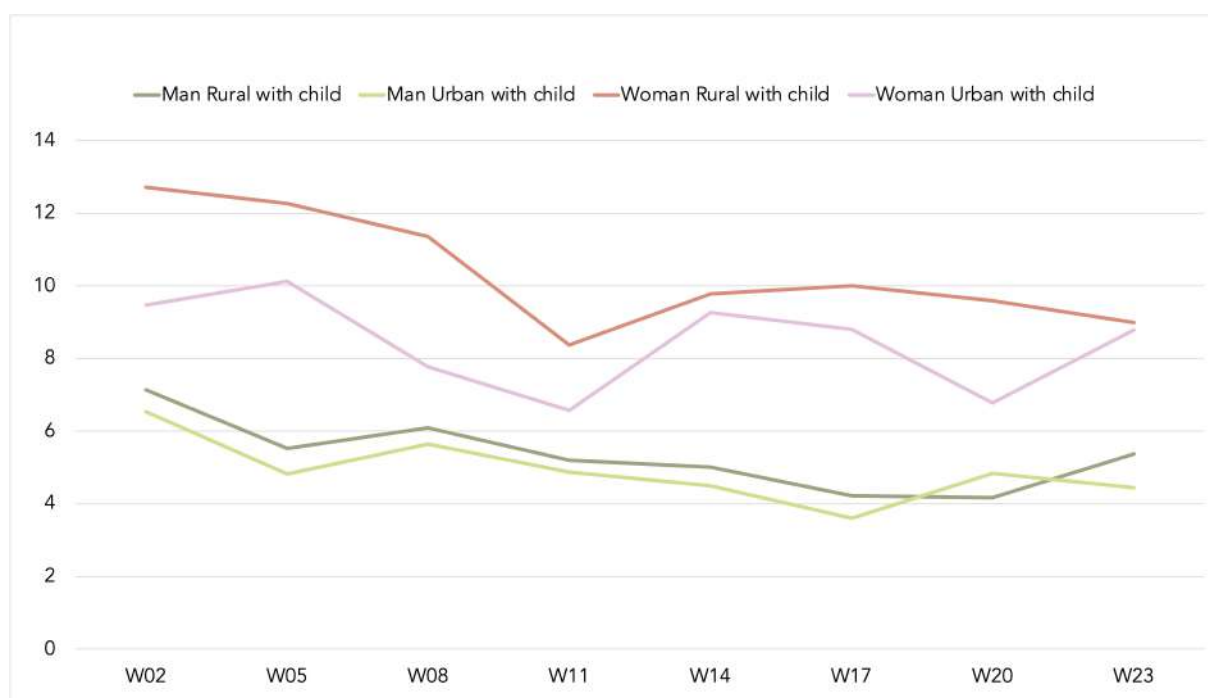


Figure 17: Daily hours spent by fathers and mothers on unpaid work activities in rural and urban areas

When looking at Figure 17, where the differences in time spent on unpaid work between fathers and mothers in urban and rural areas are depicted over time, the pattern of mothers in rural areas working more hours unpaid especially during lockdowns remains. Mothers in rural and urban areas both work more unpaid hours than fathers do – independent of their place of living.

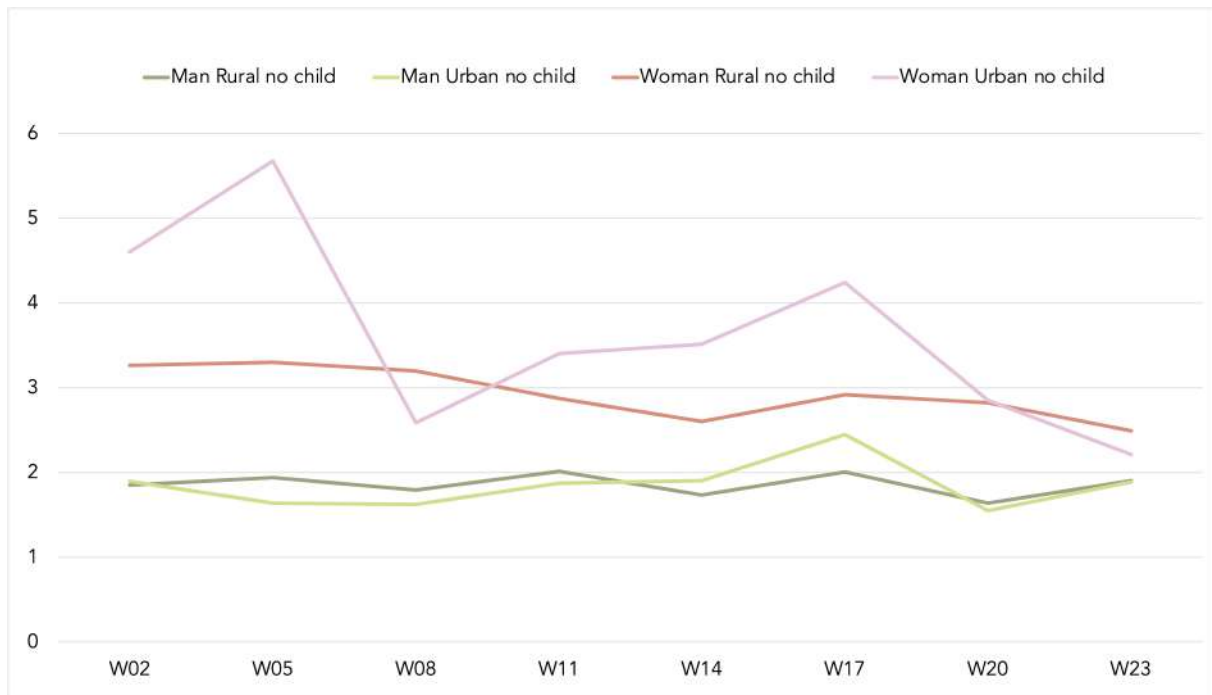


Figure 18: Daily hours spent by men and women on unpaid work activities in rural and urban areas

However, when analysing the hours dedicated to unpaid activities for men and women without children, women in urban areas worked even more unpaid hours than woman in rural areas. Again, both women in urban and rural areas worked more unpaid than men in urban or rural areas.

4.1.5 Unpaid Work vs. Paid Work

Lastly, we look at the distribution between paid and unpaid work during our considered time period of the Corona crisis. Looking at the averages of paid work, it becomes clear that there is no difference in paid working hours between men without children and fathers. Both spent 7.2 hours per day on paid work on average. For women and mothers, there is a slight but negligible difference in paid working hours. Interestingly, mothers spent slightly more time on paid work than women without children. Looking at the difference in paid working hours between men and women, and fathers and mothers in general, the differences are roughly the same, but very small. Women and mothers worked slightly less than men and fathers.

Turning to unpaid work, the picture changes. Figure 19 clearly shows that mothers and fathers spent significantly more time on unpaid work activities than men and women without children. However, there is also a substantial difference between men and women without children of roughly 1 hour per day that women spent more time on unpaid work than men. Here, the gender differences are more visible. While there is a difference in unpaid working hours of 1.1 hours for men and women without children, mothers worked 4.7 hours more unpaid than fathers.

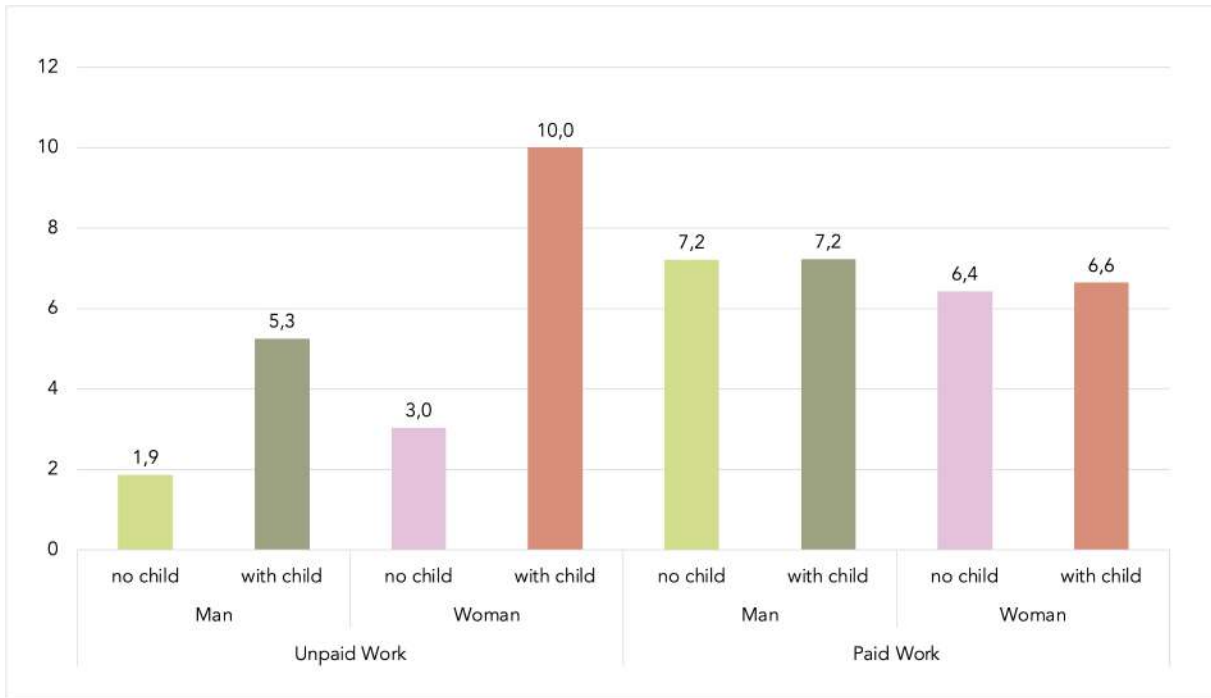


Figure 19: Average of daily hours spent by men, women, fathers and mothers on unpaid work vs paid work

Across time, it again becomes evident that women’s daily hours spent on paid work decreased during lockdown periods while their unpaid working hours increased. For men, there is hardly any effect visible as such. Their paid working time increased after the first lockdown again, while their share of unpaid work remained constant during the whole time.

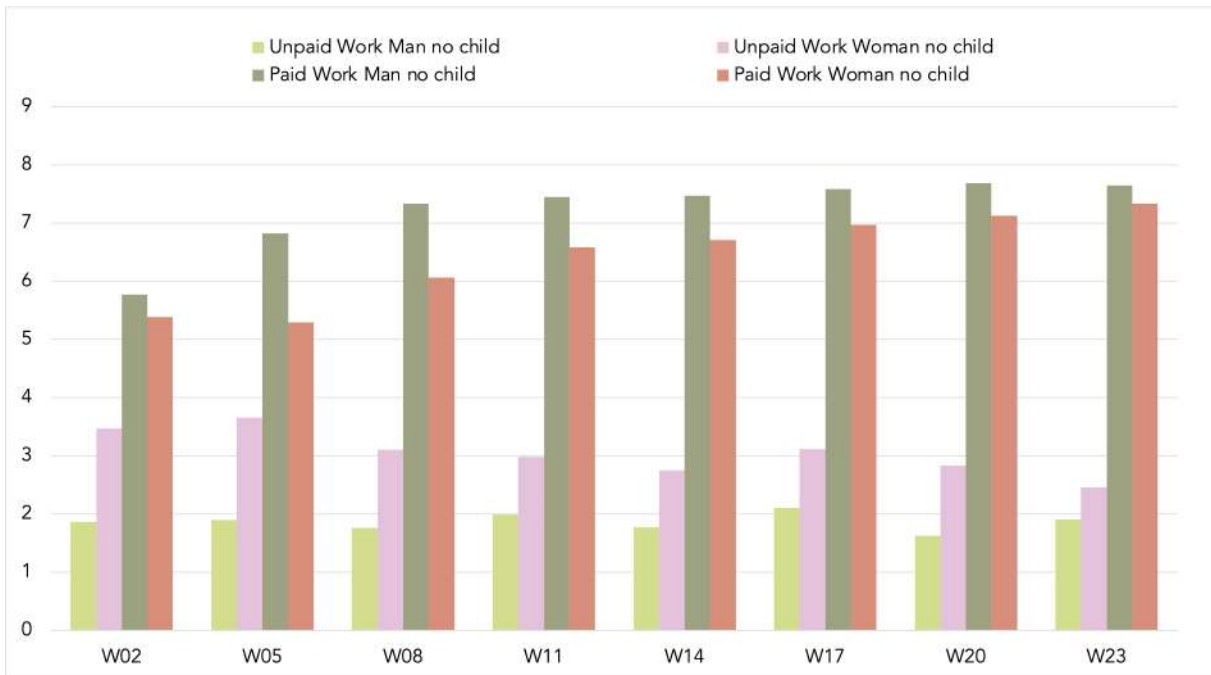


Figure 20: Daily hours spent by men and women on unpaid work vs paid work across time

For mothers and fathers, the increased unpaid work of mothers is visible in all waves of the ACP, especially during the first two waves, which coincide with the first nationwide lockdown. This is also the same time period, in which fathers' unpaid work time was higher compared to the rest of the time period. Looking at time spent on paid work by mothers and fathers, the differences are not that evident. During wave 8, mothers spent even more time in paid work than fathers. The biggest differences in time spent on paid work between mothers and fathers occurred during wave 2 and wave 17, both of which coincided with hard lockdown time periods. During those waves, fathers clearly spent more time in paid work than mothers. Ultimately, the most drastic difference remains the time spent by mothers on unpaid work throughout all waves of the ACP.

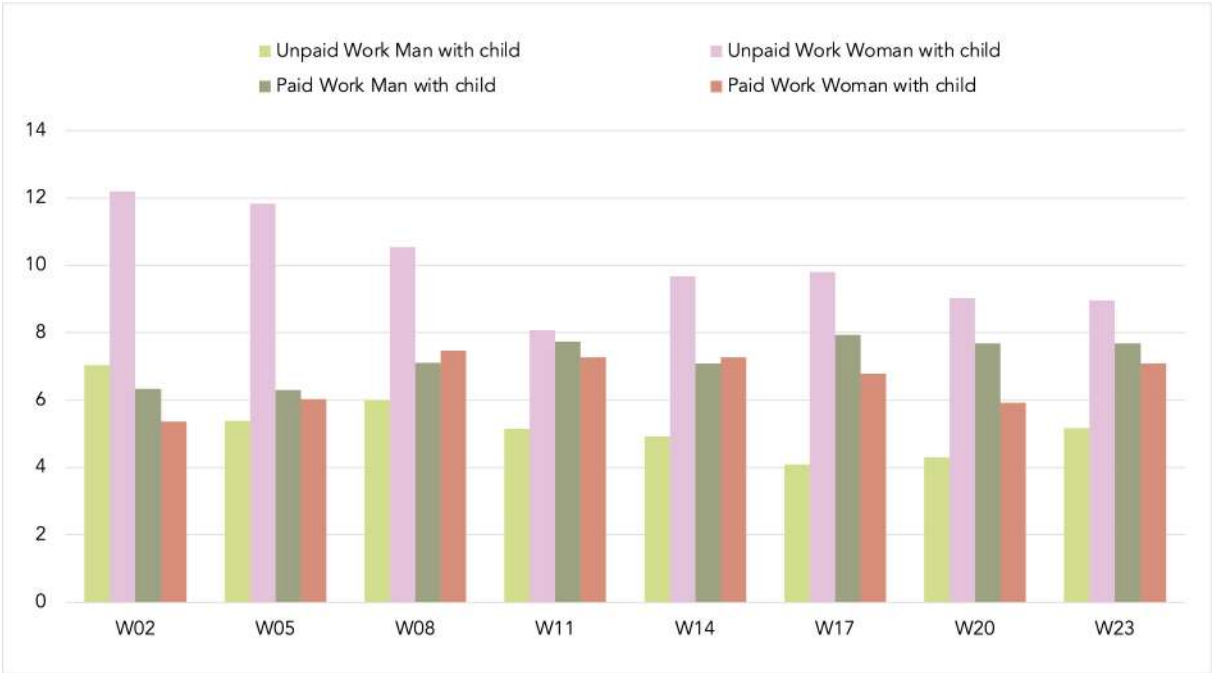


Figure 21: Daily hours spent by fathers and mothers on unpaid work vs paid work across time

4.2 Monetary Valuation of Unpaid Work

There are different approaches to attributing a monetary value to unpaid work. Basically, there are quantitative and value-based evaluation methods, each of which is divided into input and output approaches. Input-oriented methods are clearly more prominent in practice (Schmid et al., 1999; Liepold et al., 2017). This is because the output method is based on the production result of private households. This results from the price assessment of goods and services produced in the household compared to similar goods available on the market. In practice, the necessary information about the type and volume of these goods and services produced in the household is often not available, which is why input-oriented approaches are much more popular. Two of these input approaches are explained in more detail below and the unpaid work that was performed during the pandemic (observation period March 2020 to May 2021 or 426 days) is evaluated according to these methods for both genders.

4.2.1 Market Cost Approach (Specialist Method)

With this method, the unpaid activity is assigned a monetary value that a corresponding replacement worker on the labour market would earn for it. For example, the activity "cooking" is evaluated with

the average wage of a person working in this profession, for example as a cook. In the case of childcare, the average wage of a childcare worker should be used, for manual work the wages of specialized skilled workers, etc. Since a job can often be performed by different professional groups and sectors, equivalence groups are used. The average wages of all occupations that perform this activity are taken into account in the calculation. The aggregate value of unpaid labour is then the sum of these products. For this purpose, the gross hourly wage according to economic activity given by Statistics Austria (structure of earnings survey 2018) is used. Three branches of the economy are relevant: sector P: education and training, sector Q: health and social services and sector S: provision of other services. The occupational groups in these sectors perform paid work on the labour market that comes closest to the corresponding unpaid work. The average gross hourly wage across all sectors of the economy for women and men in Austria is 15.09 euros per hour (median). In order to approximate the gross hourly wages of comparable (equivalence) occupational groups that are remunerated for unpaid activities such as caring for children or adults and housework on the labour market, the gross hourly wages of the three sectors mentioned were summarised to a sector average gross hourly wage of 15.37 euros.

To calculate the total volume of unpaid labour, as well as the per capita amount using the market cost method, the following formula is used

$$\sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{j=1}^T S_{ij} * L_j * G_i * (365 + 61)$$

where N is the sample size, T is the number of unpaid jobs, S_{ij} is the hours spent on job j per day of the i th person, L_j the hourly wage of the occupational groups that perform a similar job as job j and G_i represents the weighting factor.

The period under consideration amounts to 426 days, which is why the value of the unpaid work is always related to this period. The ACPD defines two types of unpaid work: carework, which includes taking care of children and adults in need of care, and housework, which includes any activities that are performed in the household, such as cooking, washing, cleaning, shopping, etc. The volume of the unpaid work is therefore also evaluated individually according to both categories and then summarised in a total volume.

First, all women and men are considered as a whole. On average, women spent around 3.4 hours a day looking after or caring for children and adults and around 2.4 hours a day on housework throughout the considered time period. Men, on the other hand, performed care responsibilities for around 1.7 hours a day and devoted 1.6 hours to housework. Overall, this results in a daily workload of unpaid activities of 5.8 hours for women and 3.2 hours for men. According to this approach, the volume of unpaid work for women corresponds to a total of around 112 billion euros, or around 37,971 euros per woman. Men would have received half as much in compensation for the unpaid work they performed: according to the market cost method, men's unpaid work during the pandemic is worth around 57 euros billion in total, or 20,950 euros per man, which is roughly half of what women contributed.

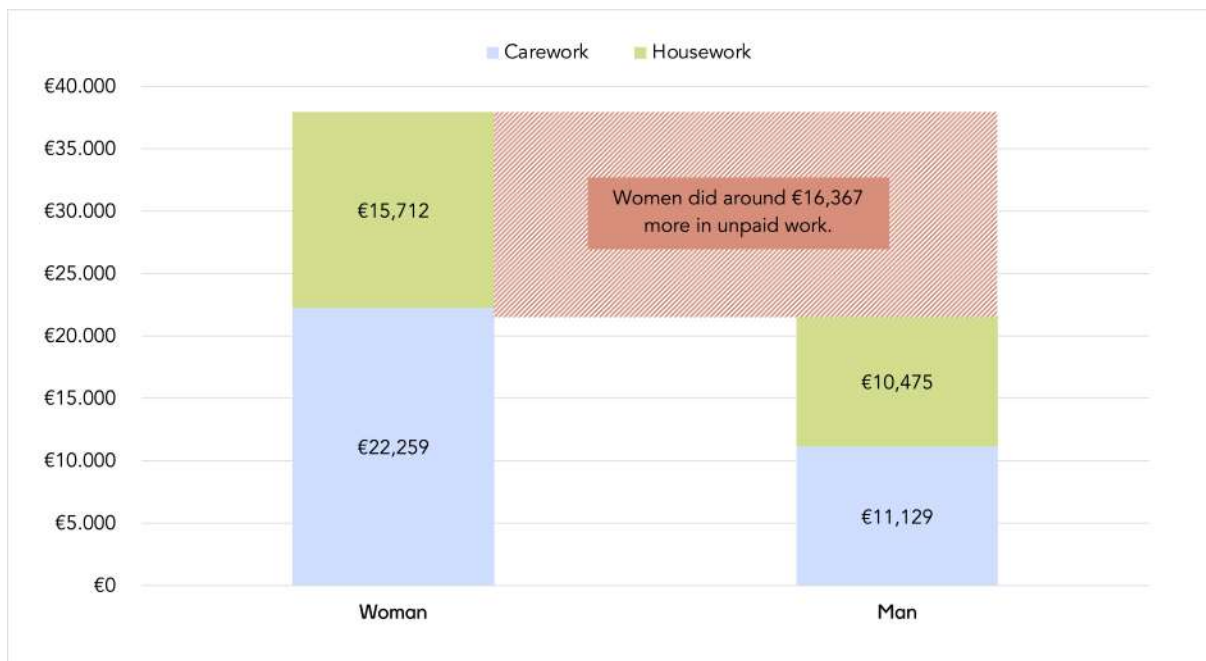


Figure 22: Monetary valuation of unpaid care and housework per person (men and women)

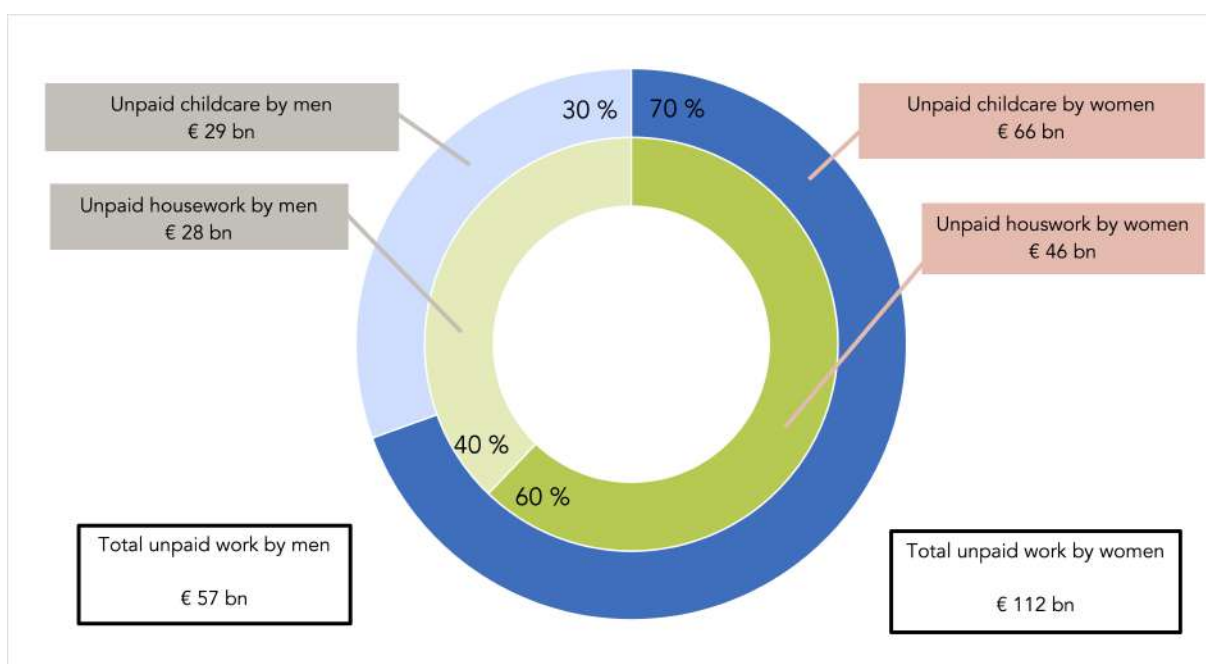


Figure 23: Monetary valuation of unpaid care and housework in total for all men and women

If only people with children are considered, i.e. mothers and fathers, the picture is intensified. While fathers spent an average of 3.5 hours with (child)care and 1.7 hours with household chores during the pandemic, i.e. a total of 5.2 hours a day on average, mothers invested twice as much time in these activities on average. With an average of 7.5 hours of childcare and 2.5 hours of housework, mothers were occupied with unpaid work for 10 hours a day. This is also noticeable in the monetary evaluation of unpaid work: According to this calculation method, a mother performed unpaid work worth around 65,467 euros, while

a father performed only half as much unpaid work worth 34,043 euros. Thus, a mother’s unpaid work is valued at around 31,400 euros more than a father’s unpaid work activities.

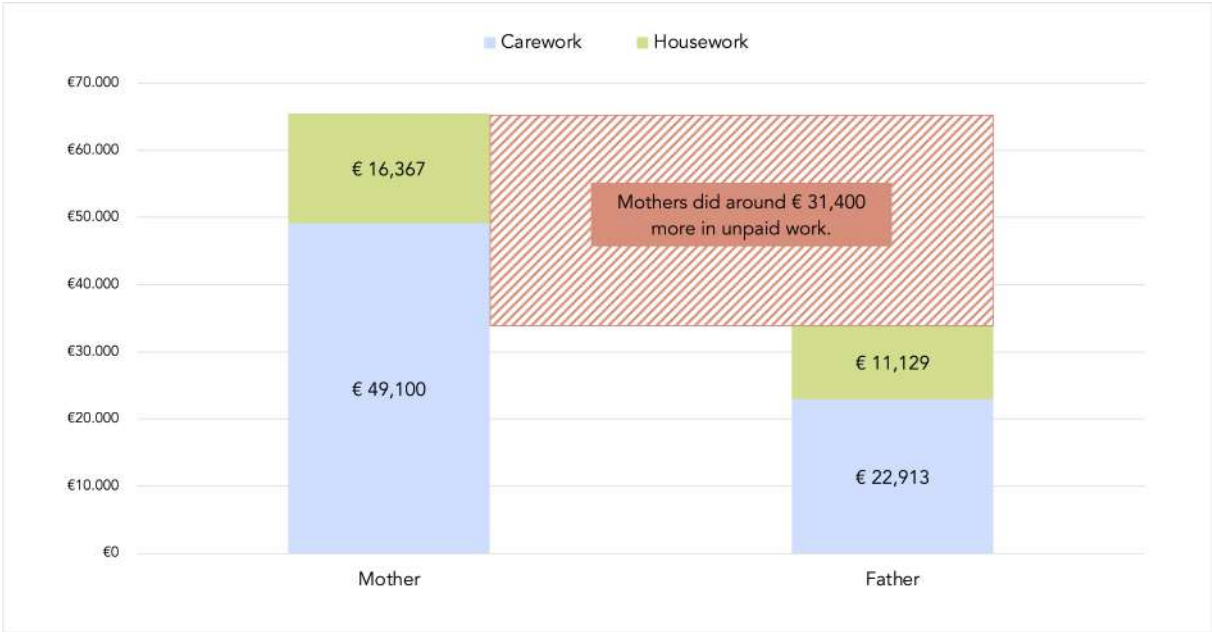


Figure 24: Monetary valuation of unpaid care and housework per person (mothers and fathers)

4.2.2 Opportunity Cost Approach

The opportunity cost approach considers the lost earnings that arise when a person pursues unpaid household chores – i.e. the so-called opportunity costs. Usually, the average wage of all employees is compared with the unpaid working hours in the household and evaluated accordingly. The average gross hourly wage used across all sectors, full-time and part-time employees and both genders for 2018, the year of the last earnings structure survey by Statistics Austria, was 15.09 euros per hour - not far from the gross hourly wage of the sector average as previously calculated. The results of this calculation method therefore largely correspond to those of the market cost approach (see Appendix). With a comparable total volume of unpaid work totalling 165.2 billion euros, women also performed the lion’s share of unpaid work using this method. Women made a loss of 109.6 billion euros in total while the foregone wages for men - 55.6 billion euros - amount to only about a third of the total volume. The value of unpaid work per person amounts to roughly 37,276 euros for a woman while a man carried out unpaid activities worth 20,566 euros. For mothers and fathers, the per person value differs more than half, meaning mothers’ unpaid work is worth twice as much as that of fathers. While a mother carried out care and housework worth 64,269 euros, a father’s unpaid work was worth around 33,420 euros.

4.2.3 Foregone GDP due to Unpaid Work

The gross domestic product (GDP) for the year 2021 was used to assign an economic magnitude to the volume of unpaid work performed by women and men during the pandemic. The GDP that year was about 400 billion euros, the volume of unpaid work was about 168 billion euros according to the market cost method. Thus, the total share of unpaid work measured by GDP corresponds to around 42 percent. In other words, had all the care and housework carried out by men and women during the considered

time period of the pandemic been paid according to the market cost method with an average hourly wage, it would have been worth around 42 percent of total Austrian GDP. While women did around two-thirds of the care and housework and thus contributed 28 percent to Austria’s economic output - assuming that the above-mentioned activities were paid for - the proportion that men contributed by performing unpaid work was only 14 percent of GDP.

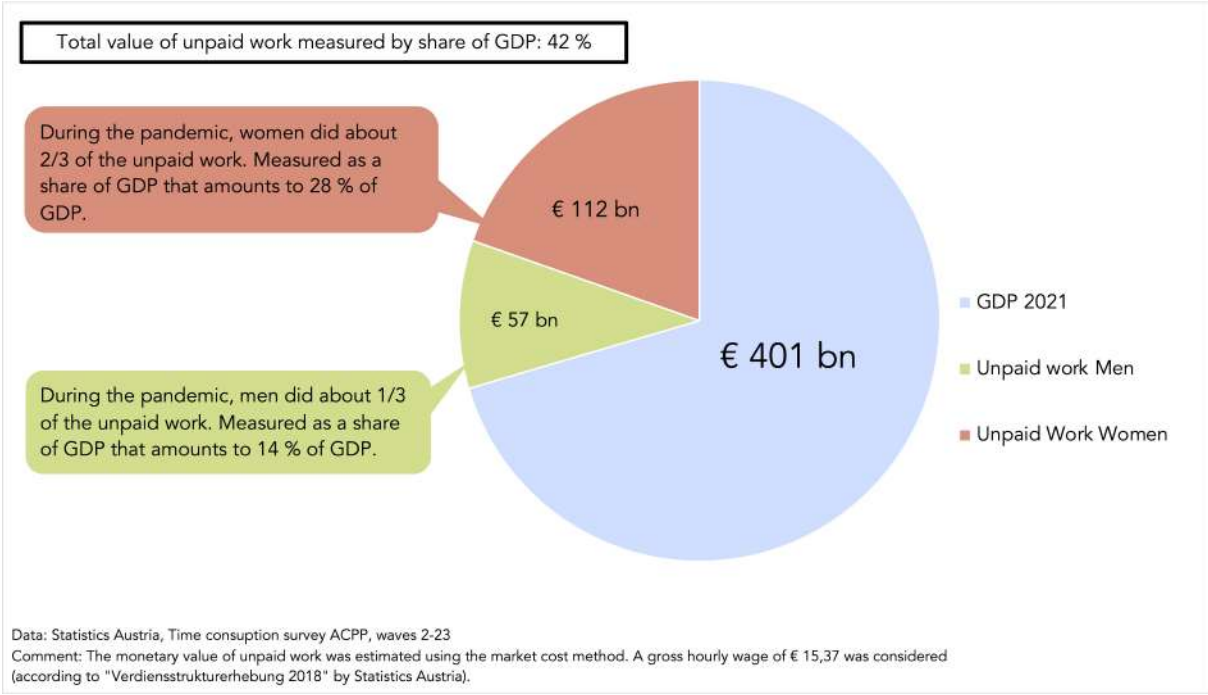


Figure 25: Total value of unpaid work by men and women measured by GDP

5 Conclusion & Policy Recommendations

The purpose of our analysis was to evaluate gender differences during the COVID-19 crisis and lockdowns in terms of the distribution of paid and unpaid work activities. In the context of paid work, we first looked at the theoretical assumption that women tend to increase their labour market participation during times of crisis to support the household financially. However, the Corona crisis is said to be different from any other ‘textbook crisis’ that occurred previously. For Austria, it is visible that women increased their labour market participation during the financial crisis in the year 2009, but the female employment rate fell in 2020. Men’s employment rate fell in both crisis years compared. Additionally, women in the age group of ‘potential mothers’ with children requiring care increased their part-time employment rates way less during the Corona crisis year 2020 compared to 2009. Both observations support the assumption that first, the Corona crisis is in this sense not a normal crisis, which is why the theory of ‘women and mothers being extra earners’ does not apply, and second, that the noticeably lower increases in female part-time rates in 2020 are likely due to a reduction in working hours because of increased (child)care duties.

The analysis on teleworking and home office opportunities yields the result that women worked from home more often than men, which is in accordance with the fact that women tend to work in sectors or occupational fields that are more home office compatible, such as teaching. Indeed, the teaching profession was the one with the highest share of people working from home at all points in time, while it also shows

a female share of 71 percent.

Turning to our analysis on the reduction in paid work time due to the pandemic, our results clearly confirm the assumption that the differences in work time reduction and hours spent on unpaid activities, such as carework or housework, between men and women, but also between mothers and fathers in particular are substantial in Austria. Women reduced their paid working time more than men during lockdown periods and while men returned to their pre-crisis weekly working hours rather quickly (in some cases even increased their work time), women's work time reduction was permanent. With respect to worktime reductions, we calculate an estimate of foregone income for the considered crisis period in our analysis, which amounts to roughly 2,560 euros for a man and 3,500 euros for a woman. In cumulated values for all men and women, work time reductions during the COVID-19 crisis total around 17.2 billion euros. However, women are worse off in this regard: reducing their worktime by more than men did, all women in Austria forego a cumulated income of 10.3 billion euros, while men only 'lose' 6.9 billion euros.

While reducing their paid working time, women and especially mothers also took up the lion's share of unpaid work activities. These hours spent on unpaid work intensified during lockdown and school closure periods. For some lockdown periods, women and mothers worked twice as much unpaid compared to men and fathers. On average, women carried out 3 hours of unpaid work per day, while men did so for roughly 2 hours. The most drastic difference, however, occurs when looking at mothers and fathers: fathers took up about 5 hours of unpaid work per day, while mothers worked twice as much unpaid. Regional differences are also evident: mothers in rural areas of Austria always spent the largest share of unpaid hours worked, on average 10.4 hours per day, while fathers spent about half of this time on unpaid work duties. For men and women without children, the differences are not so stark, yet visible. The general pattern that women carried out more unpaid work than men is true for both rural and urban areas in Austria.

Lastly, we asked the question of how much potential earnings are foregone due to carework and housework being unpaid. To answer this question, a monetary value needs to be assigned to unpaid work activities. Two calculation approaches, namely the market cost approach and the opportunity cost approach, yield similar results. Had a woman been paid for all the unpaid work she carried out during the considered time period of the Corona crisis, then she would have been paid around 37,970 euros. A man would have earned around half as much. A mother would have earned as much as 65,470 euros, while a father would have been paid with 34,040 euros for his unpaid work activities. Altogether our calculation shows that during the pandemic, women did about two thirds of the unpaid work, which would be valued at 112 billion euros. Measured as a share of GDP that amounts to about 28 percent of GDP, while men's unpaid work amounts to only 57 billion euros, which is 14 percent of GDP.

Policy Recommendations

Our results support the thesis that gender inequality has worsened during the first year of the pandemic. Women with children reduced their working hours more drastically which has serious negative effect on their expected life income. With mothers still bearing the lion's share of carework within a family, access to childcare services needs to be facilitated in order to allow women to choose whether they want to return to full-time work or not. Especially in Austria's rural areas, childcare service density is low and opening hours are often not compatible with full-time work.

Concerning the pandemic situation, we have shown that teleworking has increased largely and the possibility that it will remain at a higher level compared to pre-COVID-19 is high. Since knowledge about employment legislation regarding teleworking might not yet be that widespread among workers and employees, concerns arise that women could manoeuvre themselves into situations where they have to carry out unpaid and paid work at the same time. It is therefore all the more important to ensure nationwide, comprehensive and, above all, free childcare options everywhere in Austria in order to guarantee a division between paid work and unpaid carework tasks also while working from home.

Finally, we plead for a stronger monetary valuation of unpaid work. While part-time work is paid lower in general, it also has strong negative effects on pensions in Austria. We argue that schemes for a stronger valuation of part-time work due to carework obligations at home need to be established in order to prevent female old-age poverty.

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Appendix

Table 5: Measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Austria

Lockdown Chronology	Type Lockdown, school closures y/n
16.03.2020 - 14.04.2020	Lockdown hard, school closures y
14.04.2020 - 01.07.2020	Lockdown light, school closures y
03.11.2020 - 17.11.2020	Lockdown light, school closures y
17.11.2020 - 07.12.2020	Lockdown hard, school closures y
07.12.2020 - 26.12.2020	Lockdown light, school closures y
26.12.2020 - 08.02.2021	Lockdown hard, school closures y
08.02.2021 - 02.05.2021	Lockdown light, school closures n

Table 6: COVID-19 Measures and Wave Coverage of the ACP

Waves of the ACP	Start Wave	End Wave	Lockdown hard	Lockdown light	school closures
1	27.03.20	30.03.20	1		1
2	03.04.20	08.04.20	1		1
3	10.04.20	16.04.20	1		1
4	17.04.20	21.04.20		1	1
5	24.04.20	29.04.20		1	1
6	01.05.20	06.05.20		1	1
7	08.05.20	13.05.20		1	1
8	15.05.20	20.05.20		1	1
9	23.05.20	27.05.20		1	
10	29.05.20	03.06.20		1	
11	12.06.20	17.06.20		1	
12	26.06.20	01.07.20		1	
13	10.07.20	15.07.20			
14	14.08.20	19.08.20			
15	11.09.20	18.09.20			
16	16.10.20	23.10.20			
17	13.11.20	20.11.20	1		1
18	11.12.20	18.12.20		1	1
19	15.01.21	22.01.21	1		1
20	12.02.21	19.02.21		1	
21	12.03.21	19.03.21		1	
22	16.04.21	23.04.21		1	
23	21.05.21	28.05.21			
24	25.06.21	02.07.21			

Table 7: Market Cost Method - Value of Unpaid Work

	Carework in h/day	Value of unpaid work per person	Total volume	Housework in h/day	Value of unpaid work per person	Total volume	Unpaid work Total in h/day	Value of unpaid work per person	Total volume
Women	3.4	22,258.72 €	65.5 bn €	2.4	15,712.04 €	46.2 bn €	5.8	37,970.76 €	111.7 bn €
Men	1.7	11,129.36 €	30.1 bn €	1.6	10,474.69 €	28.3 bn €	3.2	20,949.38 €	56.6 bn €
Total (Men & Women)	5.1	33,388.08 €	95.6 bn €	4.0	26,186.73 €	74.5 bn €	9.0	58,920.14 €	168.3 bn €
Mothers	7.5	49,100.12 €		2.5	16,366.71 €		10.0	65,466.82 €	
Fathers	3.5	22,913.39 €		1.7	11,129.36 €		5.2	34,042.75 €	
Total	11.0	72,013.50 €		4.2	27,496.07 €		15.2	99,509.57 €	

Table 8: Opportunity Cost Method - Value of Unpaid Work

	Carework in h/day	Value of unpaid work per person	Total volume	Housework in h/day	Value of unpaid work per person	Total volume	Unpaid work Total in h/day	Value of unpaid work per person	Total volume
Women	3.4	21,851.38 €	64.3 bn. €	2.4	15,424.50 €	45.4 bn €	5.8	37,275.88 €	109.6 bn €
Men	1.7	10,925.69 €	29.5 bn €	1.6	10,283.00 €	27.8 bn €	3.2	20,566.00 €	55.6 bn €
Total (Men and Women)	5.1	32,777.07 €	93.8 bn €	4.0	25,707.50 €	73.2 bn €	9.0	57,841.88 €	165.2 bn €
Mothers	7.5	48,201.57 €		2.5	16,067.19 €		10.0	64,268.76 €	
Fathers	3.5	22,494.06 €		1.7	10,925.69 €		5.2	33,419.75 €	
Total	11.0	70,695.63 €		4.2	26,992.88 €		15.2	97,688.51 €	