



# The division of paid and unpaid labor within the household before and during Covid-19

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# Household division of labor during COVID-19

- Facts: The COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent lockdowns have brought two crucial changes to households members' lives
- It has forced women and men to adapt to new working arrangements
  - Work from home
  - Interruption in or loss of employment
- School closures have required parents to spend more time on housework and childcare (also because of the loss of grandparents' help)

# Household division of labor and COVID-19

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## Research Questions:

1. Did the pandemic and associated lockdowns have any effect on the division of labor within the household?
2. Do new working arrangements impact the time spent in housework and childcare provided by women and their partners?
3. Did the gender gap in time allocations within the family increase or decrease?

## Household division of labor and COVID-19

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Two potential changes might be expected:

1. Women may take on most of the extra burden of work, therefore widening the gender gap in housework and childcare
2. The shift to remote work could provide an opportunity for men to be more involved in household activities, therefore decreasing the gender gap

# Outline

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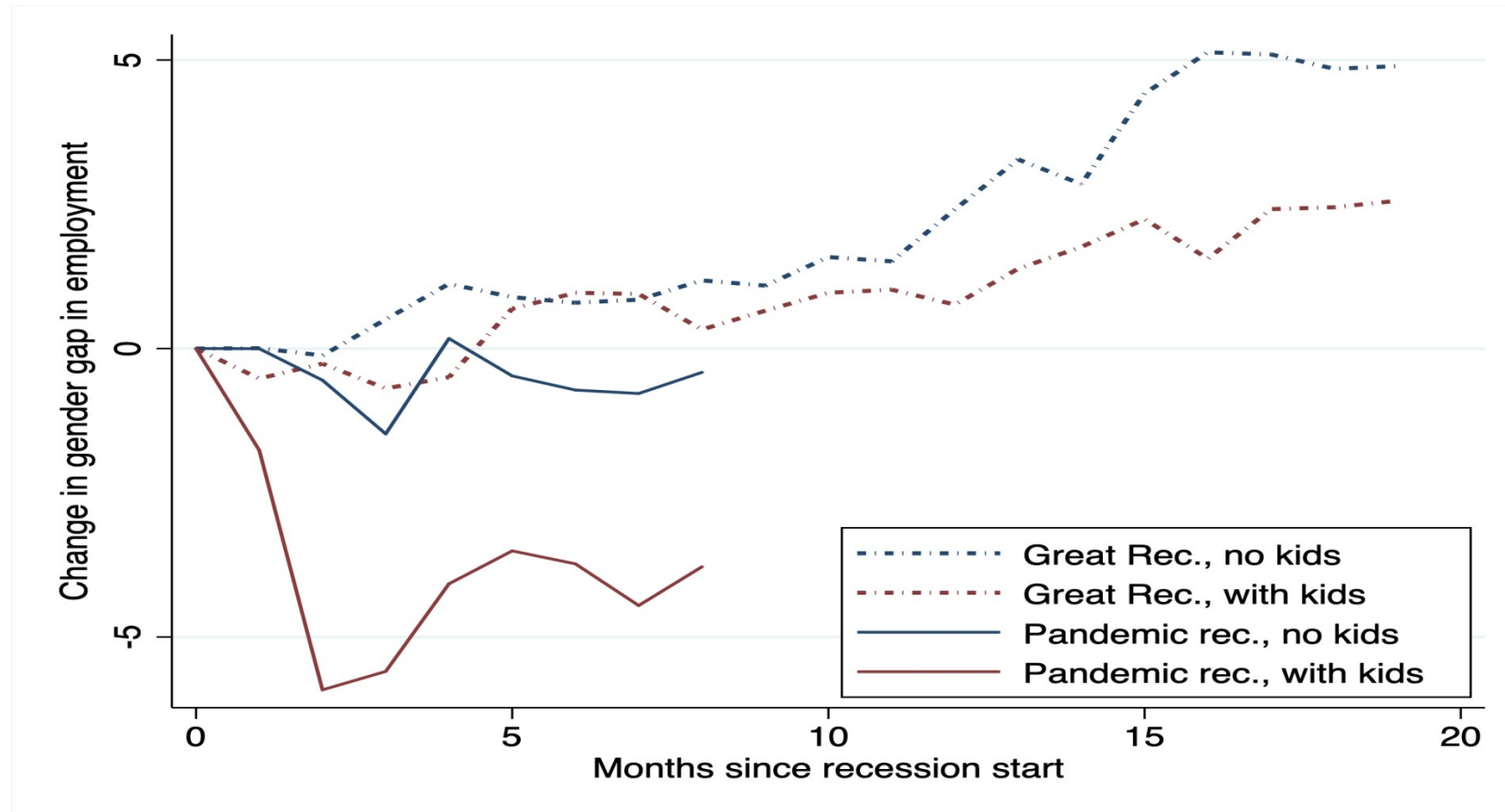
1. Recent literature
2. Our research
3. Working arrangements, housework and childcare
4. Results
5. Conclusions and Policies
6. Follow-up

## Recent literature

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- While past economic crises, such as the Great Recession, have had a greater negative effect on men's employment since they largely impacted manufacturing industries in which men are over-represented.
- The economic crisis following COVID-19 has hit women equally or more hard since the largest impact has been on service sector employment, in which women are over-represented (Alon et al.2021, Albanesi and Kim, 2021)

# Women's versus Men's Employment in Great Recession versus Recession Covid-19 (Alon et al (2021), US)



## Recent literature

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- During the Covid-19 crisis, instead, women employment decline compared to men, especially women with children.
- On the supply side, women with children were less able to supply time to the labor market due to the impossibility of using formal (schools and nurseries) and informal (grandparents and babysitters) childcare.
- They find that in countries with longer school closures, fewer jobs that can be done from home, the negative impact on women's employment has been greater



## Recent literature

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- The role of school closures has been studied more closely
- Amuedo-Dorantes et al (2021) show that intensity of school closures affects the labor supply of mothers and fathers of young school-age children in the US .
- They find evidence of labor supply reductions, particularly among mothers and that additional time for childcare done by women is much less sensitive to their employment status than it is for men. Sevilla and Smith, (2020) for the U.K and Piccoli and al (2020) for Italy and France.

## Comparative literature

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- In a comparative analysis, Biroli et al (2020) show that **in countries characterized by a more unbalanced division of labor within the household before Covid,** there are stronger negative consequences of COVID-19 on gender gaps.
- Evidence from Spain (Farré and Gonzalez, 2020) characterized by a more unbalanced division of labor within the household shows that most of the extra work in the household caused by the first lock down has fallen on women
- Evidence from French data Champeaux and Marchetta show that working from home did not offer an opportunity to rebalance the gender gap in the division between the partners. Men only increased their participation in household chores in activities like shopping or playing with children.

## Comparative literature

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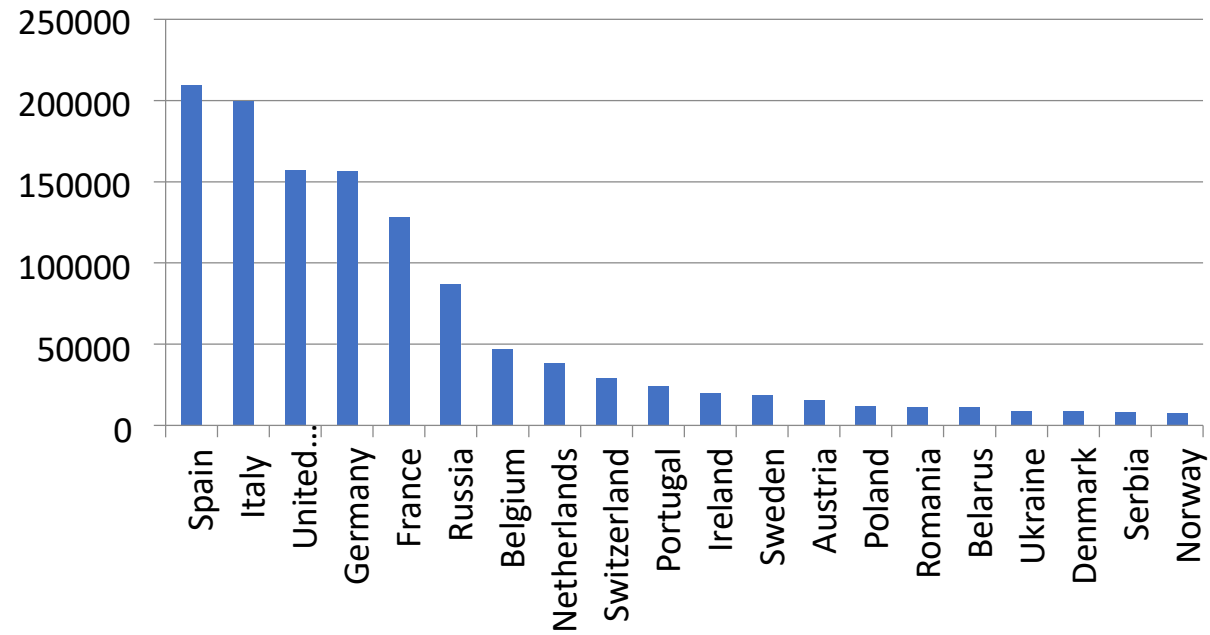
- Analyzing French data Champeaux and Marchetta show that the lockdown did not offer an opportunity to rebalance the gender gap in the division between the partners. Men only increased their participation in household chores in activities like shopping or playing with children.
- Others show that (the early) effects of the pandemic on the labour markets may have been gender-neutral in some contexts (e.g., Hupkau and Petrongolo 2020 for the United Kingdom; Galasso and Foucault 2020 for a cross-national comparison).
- Biroli et al 2021 comparing UK, US and Italy document that an unbalanced division of the increased household chores during the lockdown is directly linked to an increase of the intrahousehold conflicts.

## This research

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- Our research analyzes how the division of labor in Italy has changed since the pandemic and compares the two waves
- Italy was the first European country to report people infected by Covid-19, and one of the countries with the highest number of cases and death rates.
- The first school closures started on February 25th, 2020 and lasted longer than in other countries (37 weeks)
- In order to reduce the spread of the virus, a full lockdown was imposed between March 9th and May 3rd.

**Figure 1. Number of COVID-19 cases by EU country (April 2020)**

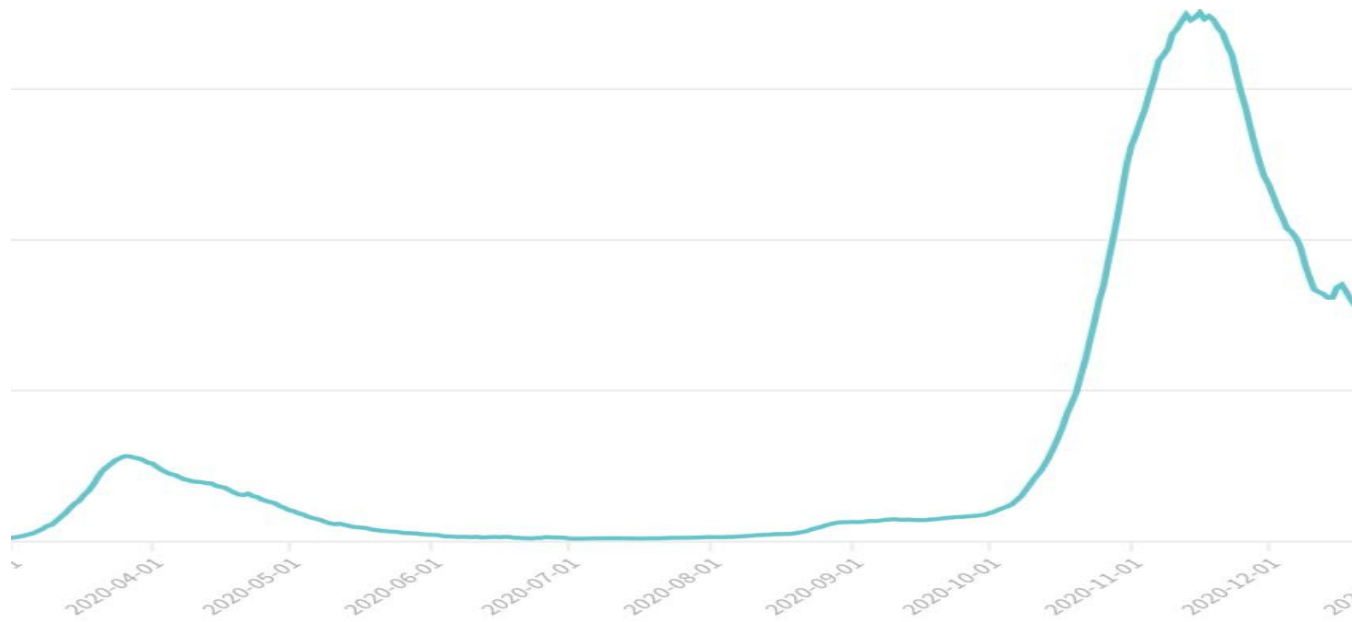


# The Italian case

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- The pandemic in Italy was characterized by **two waves** in 2020.
- The first wave was shorter and involved fewer cases and less death rates
- The second one lasted longer and involved many more cases.
- However, the lockdown during the first wave was much stricter than the one imposed in the second wave.
- This difference is important in interpreting our results.

**Figure 2. Number of COVID-19 cases in Italy (New cases, daily)**



## Figure 3 Stringency Index Italy (composite indicator of several restrictions)



## This research

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- We use a unique source of datasets to explore our research questions.
- A sample representative of **1500** Italian working women was surveyed before the lockdown (April 2019) (European Project CLEAR)
- We repeated the survey during two periods of restrictions
- These surveys were administered at the end of April 2020 and at the end of November 2020.

# The sample: Summary statistics

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	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Age	44.96	9.50	26	65
Having a degree	0.46	0.50	0	1
North	0.55	0.50	0	1
Centre	0.20	0.40	0	1
South	0.25	0.43	0	1
Having children	0.55	0.50	0	1
Having a partner	0.72	0.45	0	1
Working at the usual workplace	0.58	0.49	0	1
Working from home	0.24	0.43	0	1
Not working or other	0.18	0.38	0	1

## This research

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Besides demographic and socio-economic data working women were asked about:

- Their own working arrangements and those of their partners
- Whether they were still working at the usual place at the time of the survey
- Whether they were working from home or were currently not working.
- How much time they spent on housework and childcare

# Goals

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- Measuring the gender gap in housework and childcare, and its evolution over the two periods
- Assessing the role of working arrangements of both partners (working from home, at the usual workplace, or not working) on the division of housework and childcare

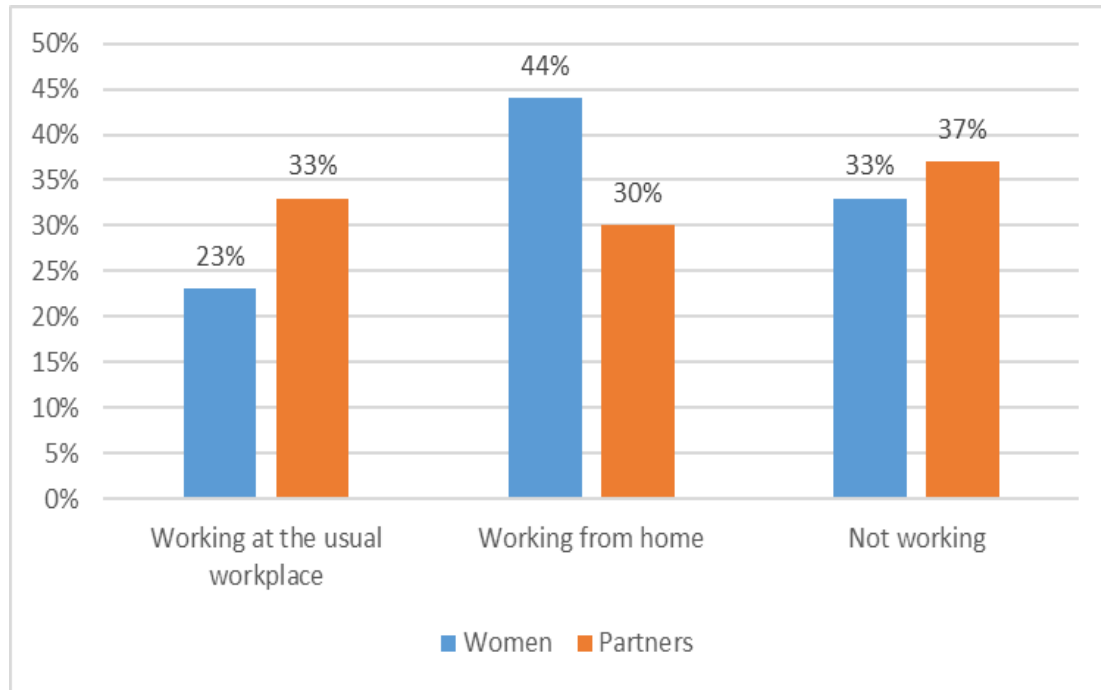
## Results: Working arrangements I and II

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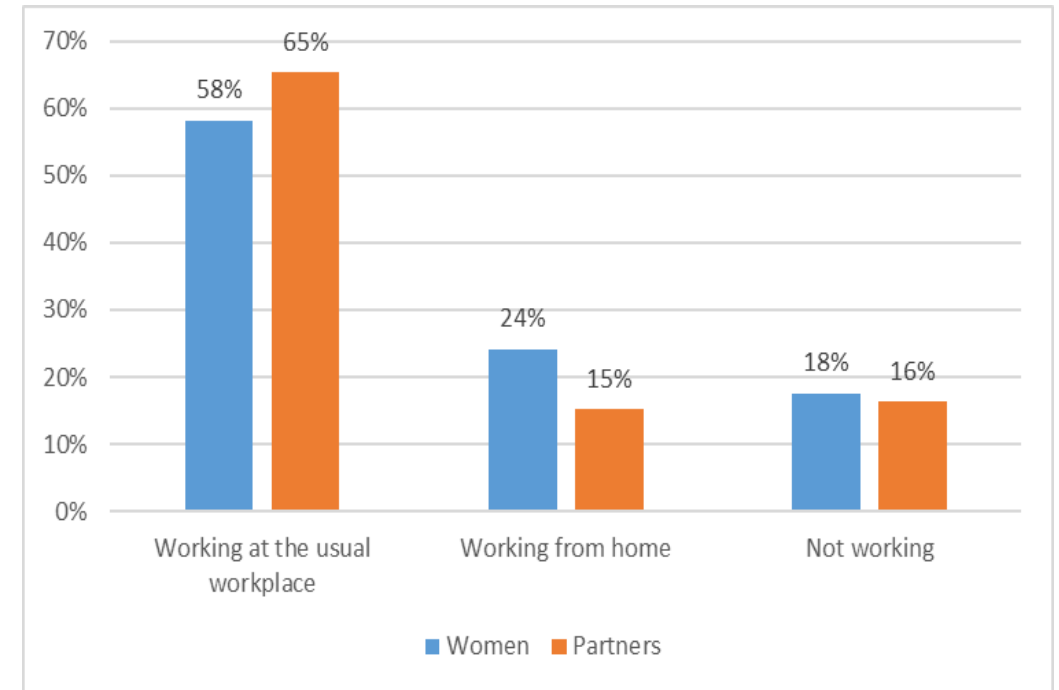
- We first compare the two waves:
- Given the less strict measures adopted in the second wave:
  - More individuals remained at their usual workplace (65% of men versus 58% of women),
  - Fewer individuals worked from home (24% of women versus 15% of their partners).
  - Fewer individuals stop working in the second wave (16% of men versus 18% of women).

# Working arrangements

## First wave



## Second wave



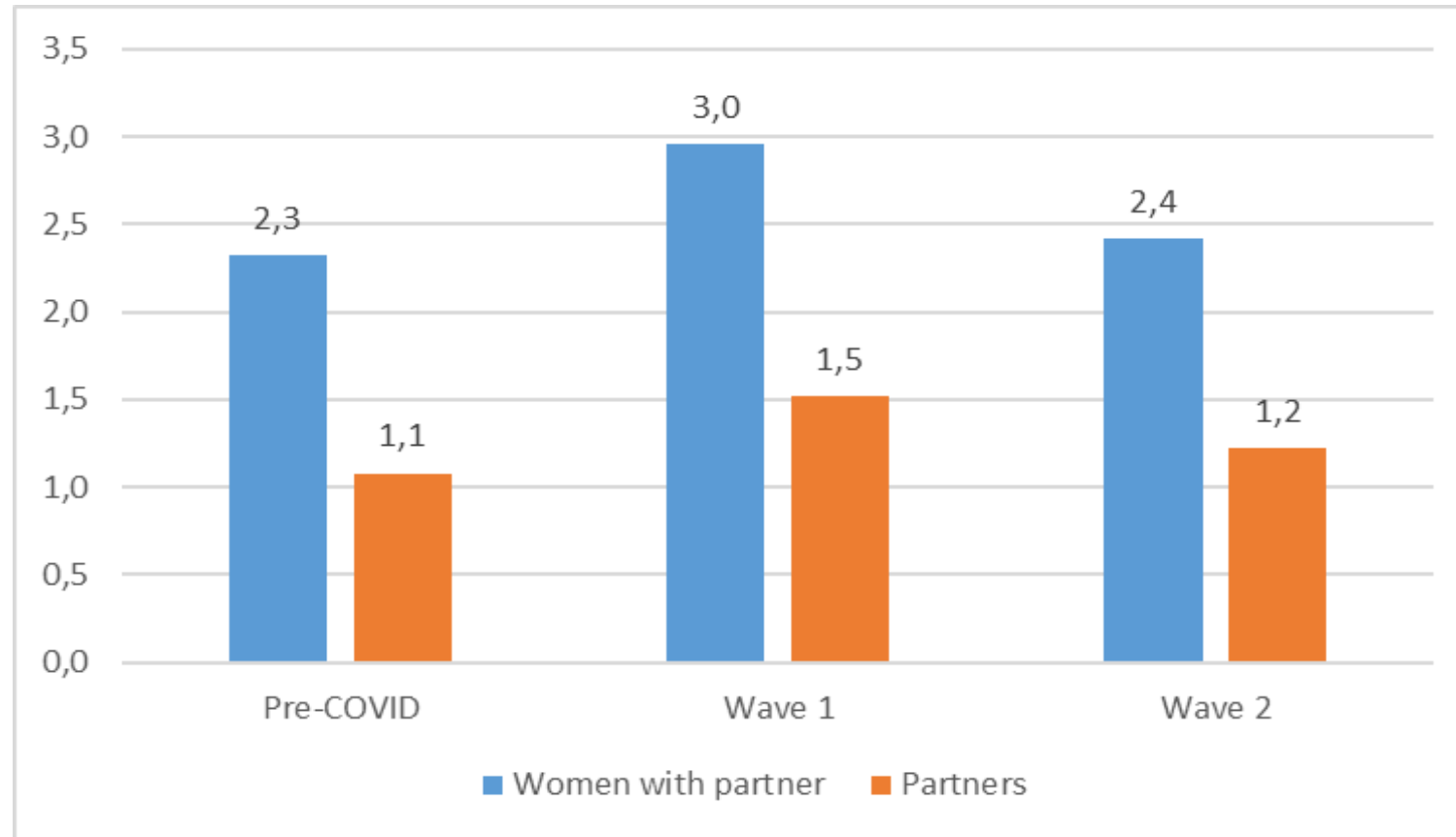
## Results: Housework

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- The distribution of the daily hours of housework during the two waves of COVID-19 shows that as a consequence of less restrictive measures implemented during the second wave:
  - Both women and their partners dedicated less time to housework during the second wave than the first
  - But women always spent more time than men on housework

# Housework (daily number of hours)

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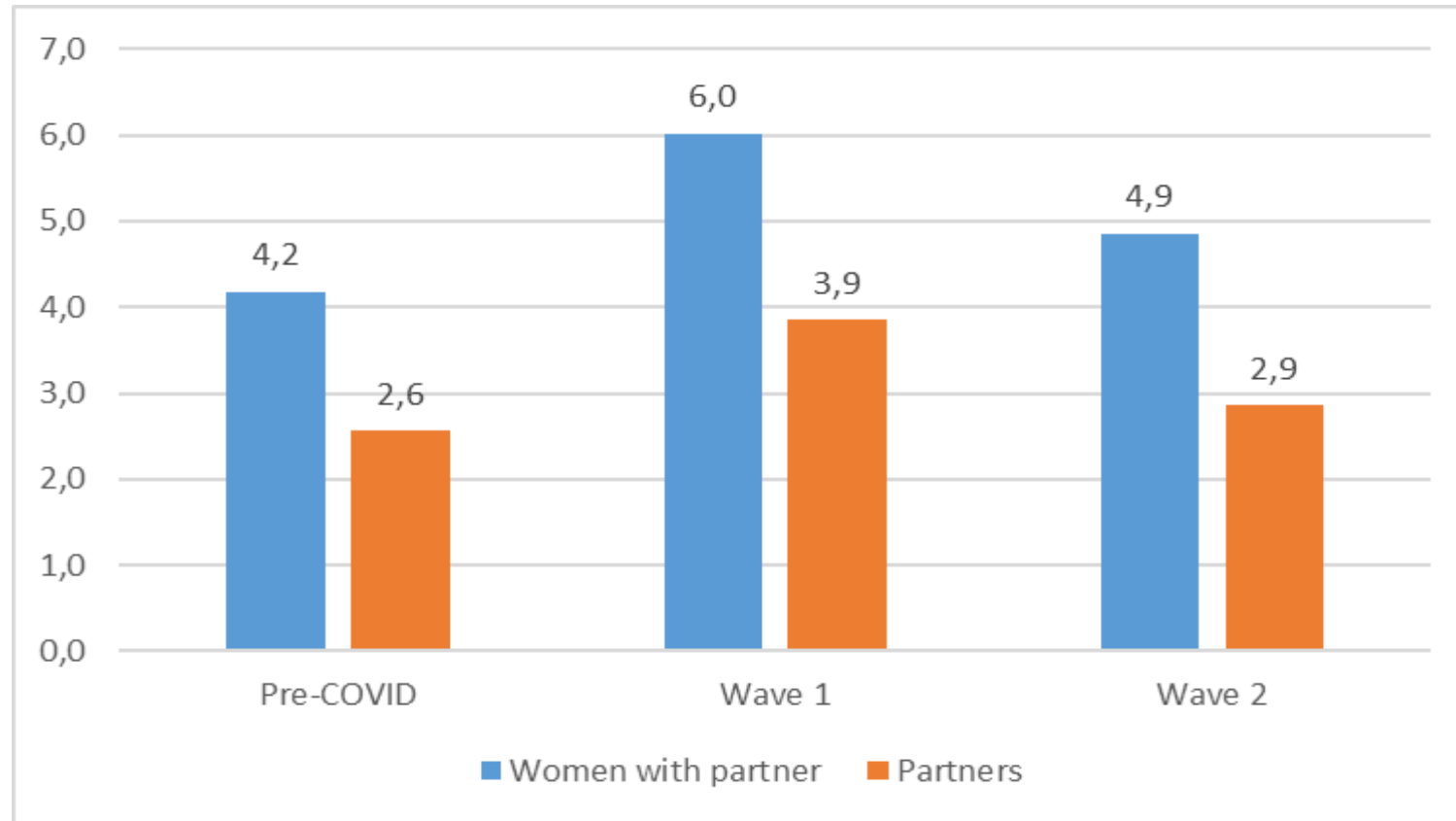
## Results: Childcare

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- Our data show that:
  - Both women and men spent less time taking care of their children during wave 2 than during wave 1.
  - Women typically spend more hours per day on childcare
  - This gap between parents increased with the emergency but has not as yet returned to the pre-COVID levels

# Childcare (daily number of hours)

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## Working arrangements and hours in housework (second wave)

- We now examine how women's and men's time spent in housework and childcare vary across different working arrangements of both partners.
- **In almost all possible combinations of working arrangements, women spend significantly more hours doing work at home than their partners.**
- **The largest difference in the time devoted to housework during the second wave was observed when men kept working at the usual place and women worked from home or were not working at all.**
- **Women work more also in symmetric situations.**

# The role of working arrangements: Housework (second wave)

	Partners working at the usual workplace	Partners working from home	Partners not working
women working at the usual workplace	Women 2.31 Partners 1.17 Difference 1.14*** N=241	Women 2.92 Partners 1.40 Difference 1.52*** N=25	Women 2.35 Partners 1.52 Difference 0.84** N=31
women working from home	Women 2.56 Partners 0.75 Difference 1.81*** N=57	Women 2.82 Partners 1.43 Difference 1.39*** N=44	Women 1.91 Partners 1.30 Difference 0.61** N=23
women not working	Women 2.53 Partners 1.04 Difference 1.53*** N=47	Women 1 Partners 3.37 Difference -2.37 N=8	Women 2.68 Partners 1.43 Difference 1.25** N=28

# The role of working arrangements: Childcare (second wave)

	Partners working at the usual workplace	Partners working from home	Partners not working
women working at the usual workplace	Women 3.59 Partners 2.18 Difference 1.41*** N=162	Women 4.56 Partners 3.44 Difference 1.12** N=16	Women 3,3 Partners 3,4 Difference - 0,1 N=20
women working from home	Women 5.85 Partners 2.92 Difference 2.92*** N=39	Women 5.86 Partners 4.03 Difference 1.83*** N=29	Women 5 Partners 4.46 Difference 0.54 N=13
women not working	Women 8.90 Partners 2.86 Difference 4.33***	Women 13.2 Partners 6.4 Difference 6.8	Women 5.58 Partners 3.63 Difference

## Working arrangements and hours in childcare (second wave)

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- Largest differences in the time devoted to childcare are reported when men kept working at the usual place while women worked from home or did not work (2.92 and 4.33)
- In symmetric situations, women are penalized as well: when both partners worked at their usual workplace and when both partners were working from home.

# Housework

	Hours spent on housework by women during the first wave	Hours spent on housework by partners during the first wave	Hours spent on housework by women during the second wave	Hours spent on housework by partners during the second wave
Woman's age	-0.002 (0.010)	-0.037*** (0.010)	0.009 (0.008)	-0.022*** (0.008)
Woman having a degree	0.085 (0.187)	0.157 (0.195)	-0.125 (0.155)	-0.042 (0.156)
Woman having children	0.502*** (0.192)	0.126 (0.199)	0.444*** (0.155)	0.173 (0.156)
Centre	-0.051 (0.233)	0.008 (0.242)	-0.015 (0.196)	0.158 (0.198)
South	1.127*** (0.218)	0.045 (0.226)	0.899*** (0.177)	0.294* (0.178)
Woman working from home	0.050 (0.245)	-0.393 (0.255)	0.070 (0.189)	-0.363* (0.191)
Woman not working	0.567** (0.254)	-0.422 (0.264)	0.125 (0.210)	0.013 (0.212)
Partner working from home	-0.285 (0.236)	-0.045 (0.246)	0.288 (0.221)	0.697*** (0.223)
Partner not working	-0.211 (0.219)	-0.064 (0.228)	-0.190 (0.213)	0.467** (0.215)
Constant	2.420*** (0.526)	3.435*** (0.547)	1.497*** (0.397)	1.928*** (0.401)
Observations	405	405	504	504

# Childcare

	Hours spent on childcare by women during the first wave	Hours spent on childcare by partners during the first wave	Hours spent on childcare by women during the second wave	Hours spent on childcare by partners during the second wave
Woman's age	-0.191*** (0.042)	-0.166*** (0.041)	-0.205*** (0.032)	-0.128*** (0.025)
Woman having a degree	0.673 (0.748)	0.151 (0.723)	0.560 (0.568)	0.451 (0.452)
Centre	-1.374 (0.960)	-1.824* (0.928)	-0.301 (0.727)	-0.537 (0.579)
South	1.271 (0.842)	0.535 (0.814)	0.937 (0.643)	0.919* (0.512)
Woman working from home	1.053 (0.972)	0.250 (0.939)	1.601** (0.696)	0.437 (0.554)
Woman not working	3.295*** (0.984)	0.737 (0.951)	1.83** (0.793)	0.215 (0.631)
Partner working from home	0.899 (0.963)	1.314 (0.931)	0.685 (0.824)	1.262* (0.656)
Partner not working	0.528 (0.858)	1.303 (0.829)	-0.616 (0.792)	1.558** (0.630)
Constant	12.041*** (2.197)	10.473*** (2.124)	12.692*** (1.546)	7.747*** (1.231)
Observations	273	273	332	332



## Regression results

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- Regressions results are consistent with the more descriptive analysis.
- Coefficients associated with working arrangements are more significant in the second wave analysis.
- The time spent by women on both housework and childcare does not depend on the working arrangements of the partner.
- Conversely, the time spent by the partner on housework is lower if the woman works from home

# Conclusions

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- The pandemic has imposed new working arrangements, namely working from home, which has the potential of increasing men's involvement in the life of the family
- we have investigated using new data from Italy, a country characterized by high gender conservativeness.
- We have shown that the increased gap in household care-related activities during the first wave became less pronounced in the second wave, but was still larger than the pre-COVID gap.

## Conclusions

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- So far, working from home has not been able to rebalance the asymmetric equilibrium within the couple:
- Both men and women working from home are more involved in all family tasks
- However, the time women spend on housework and childcare does not depend on their partners' working arrangements.
- Instead the time men spend on housework and childcare does depend on their partners' working arrangements

## Conclusions

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- What policies could contribute to re-equilibrate this unbalance?
- The goals of PNRR is to reduce the gender gap in the labor market increasing the investments in early child care from 25% to 33% as well as in scuola d'infanzia.
- This should increase the participation by 4% in 2026
- **Employment rate has been reduced in the last 1,99% sugli occupati maschi, meno 3,36% sulle occupate donne** this
- The growth in the burden of housework and childcare on working women after several months of COVID-19, due to the restrictive measures and school closures impacts also on their labor supply
- ISTAT data show that in the last few months the inactivity rates have increased more among women than among men

## Conclusions

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- **In Italia le donne sono particolarmente presenti nella ristorazione, nel turismo, nella moda, nel commercio al dettaglio.**

## Follow-up

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- Other outcomes are relevant and merit further investigation.
- The growth in the burden of housework and childcare on working women after several months of COVID-19, due to the restrictive measures and school closures is likely to have a negative impact not only on women's employment rates but also on their labor supply
- ISTAT data show that in the last few months the inactivity rates have increased more among women than among men.

## Follow-up

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- **Interventi PNRR definizione di un piano asili nido per avvicinare la percentuale di copertura pari attualmente al 25,5 per cento alla media europea, pari al 33 per cento; potenziamento dei servizi educativi dell'infanzia (3-6 anni) ed estensione del tempo pieno a scuola: 3.6 miliardi**
- **Al di là dell'adeguatezza o meno di questi stanziamenti Il PNRR prende atto di un'evidenza culturale: *curare* è un verbo tutto al femminile.**

## Follow-up

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- **Il Piano non contempla nessuna misura per favorire un coinvolgimento diretto degli uomini come, ad esempio, un ulteriore potenziamento del congedo di paternità**
- **che hanno portato l'Italia ad essere in linea con gli standard europei dei 10 giorni obbliga**



# Follow-up

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## Follow-up

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- We plan another survey for the beginning of Fall 2021
- The purpose is to investigate longer term outcomes of Covid-19:
- potential changes in gender gaps in employment and household activities
- indicators of women subjective well-being
- indicators of children's cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes as potential results of long school closures.

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## **Team di Ricerca:**

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