

Women's and men's work, housework and childcare, before and during COVID-19

Daniela Del Boca

Collegio Carlo Alberto

(with Noemi Oggero, Paola Profeta, Maria Cristina Rossi)

February 10, 2021

European Commission

Joint Research Centre

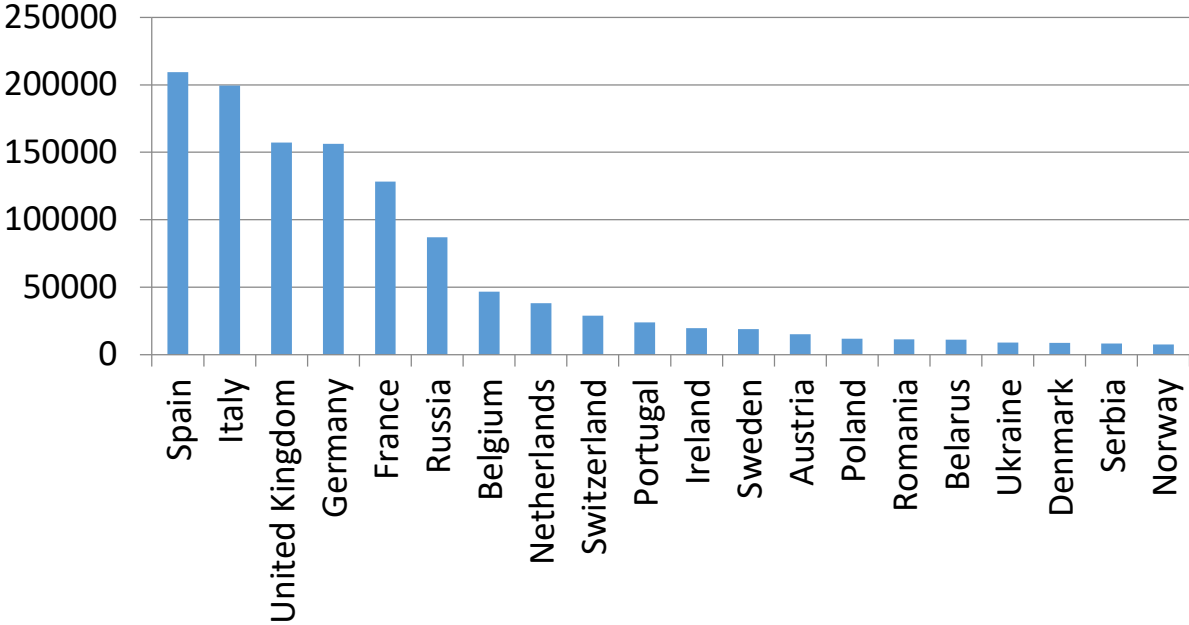
Motivation

- The current COVID-19 crisis have affected the lives of millions of people around the world damaging economic, health and educational outcomes.
- Social distancing measures adopted by most governments to fight the spread of the virus, (working from home and school closures), have placed an additional burden on families.
- Several recent studies have investigated the consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak on female and male employment, housework and childcare in different countries and in a comparative framework

This paper

- In our research we investigate the effect of COVID-19 on work, housework and childcare of women and their partners in Italy
- We investigate whether the impact of COVID-19 on family division of work is related to the time that couples have to spend at home
- Italy, especially in the North, was the first European country to report people infected and one of the countries with the highest number of cases and death rates

Number of COVID-19 cases by EU country (April 2020)



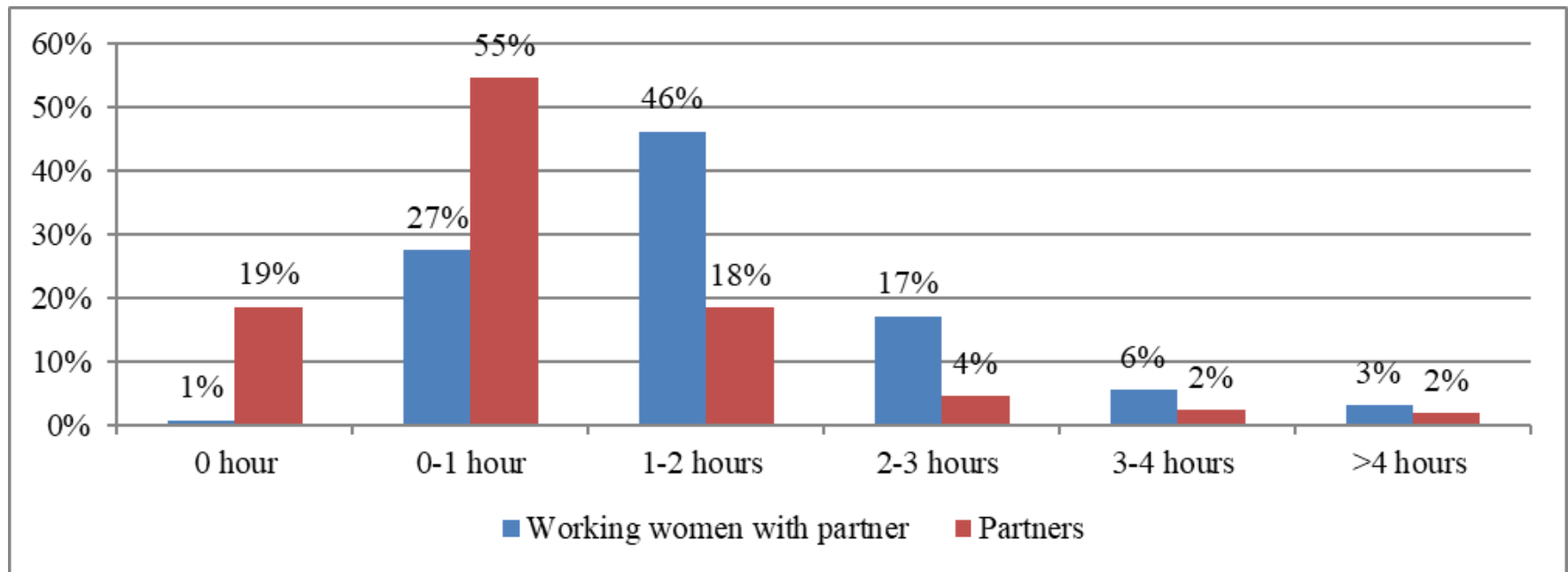
This paper

- In Italy the impact of COVID-19 on our variables of interest are expected to be very significant since:
 - Stricter and longer lockdown measures
 - Longer school closure time
 - Reduced grandparental child care (before was 40%)
 - Traditionally high gender gap in the division of housework and childcare

- Focus on working women whose partner was working before the emergency (N=520).
- What was the situation before the emergency?
- Women spent significantly more time on housework than their partners. More than 70% women spend more than 1 hour a day doing housework and less than 30% men.
- What happens to working arrangements during the first wave of Covid19?
- Women are less likely to remain at the usual workplace and more likely to work from home

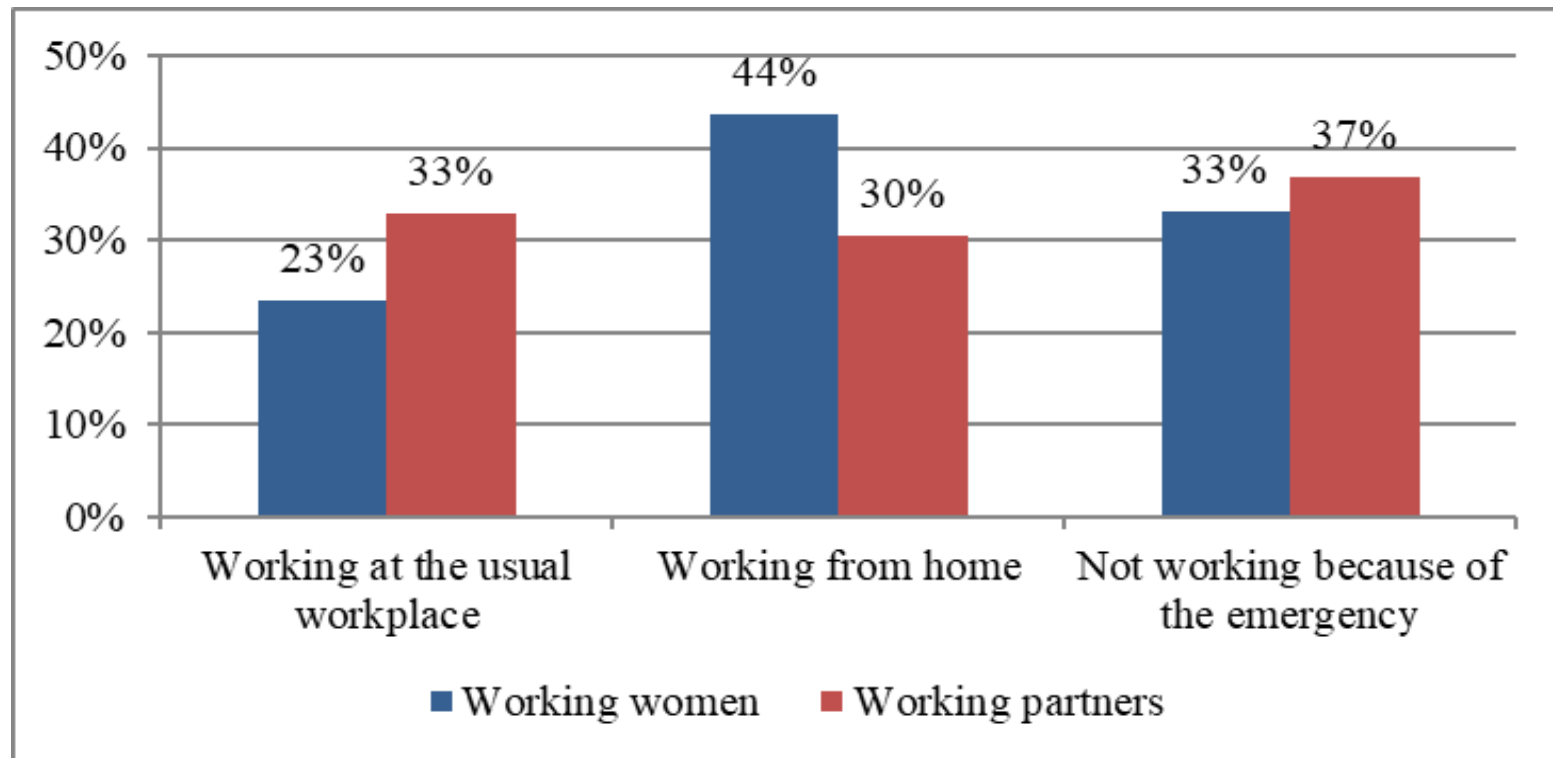
Descriptives

Percentage of working women and their partners by hours of housework per day before the COVID-19 emergency.



Descriptives

Percentage of working women and their partner by working arrangements during the COVID-19 emergency.



Descriptives

- How does the division of labor within the household relates to the working arrangements of each partner?
- Women always increase housework more than men except in two cases:
- In couples where the woman works at the usual place and her partner works from home, 55% of men increase their participation to housework against only 40% of women.
- In couples where the woman works at the usual workplace and her partner work from home, 54% of men increase their time spent on childcare versus only 31% of women.

- These results suggest that working from home for men have some positive implications on their involvement in housework and childcare, potentially alleviating the gender gaps.
- In symmetric situations, however, when both partners work at home, the extra burden falls clearly on women:
- 65% of women increase their housework versus 40% of men.
- 77% of women increase child care versus 60% for men.

Empirical analysis/ Methodology

- We estimate the determinants of changes in housework, childcare, conditional on several characteristics (women's education, age, number and age of children..)
- Dependent variables: dummies taking value 1 if the woman and partner (compared to the pre-COVID situation) has spent:
 - More time devoted to housework
 - More time devoted to childcare
 - More time devoted to home schooling
- We estimate the regressions using linear probability models and the results are confirmed by probit marginal effects.

Estimation results: Housework

| | Women doing more housework | Partners doing more housework |
|--|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Woman working at the usual workplace | -0.283*** | 0.130** |
| Woman working from home | -0.073 | 0.104** |
| Partner working at the usual workplace | 0.062 | -0.284** |
| Partner working from home | -0.004 | -0.175* |
| Observations | 520 | 520 |

Controls: woman's age, woman having a degree, woman having children, north, centre.

- No difference in the increased amount of housework between women who keep working from home and those who are not working because of the emergency.
- Conversely, men working at their usual workplace and those working from home are less likely to increase the number of hours spent on housework.
- Women's housework is not affected by their partners' working arrangement during the emergency; the opposite holds for men.

Estimation results: Childcare

| | Women spending more hours in childcare | Partners spending more hours in childcare |
|--|--|---|
| Woman working at the usual workplace | -0.270*** | 0.018** |
| Woman working from home | -0.066 | 0.018 |
| Partner working at the usual workplace | -0.000 | -0.215*** |
| Partner working from home | 0.065 | -0.075 |
| Observations | 350 | 350 |

- Both women and men are less likely to spend more time on childcare when they keep work at their usual workplace.
- Men spend more hours on childcare when women work at the usual place while no change for women

Estimation results: Homeschooling

| | Women doing more home schooling | Partners doing more home schooling |
|--|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Woman working at the usual workplace | -0.123* | 0.047* |
| Woman working from home | -0.098 | 0.024 |
| Partner working at the usual workplace | -0.011 | -0.191*** |
| Partner working from home | 0.062 | -0.106 |
| Observations | 350 | 350 |

- Both women and men are less likely to spend more time on homeschooling when they keep work at their usual workplace.
- Men spend more hours on helping children in home schooling when women work at the usual place while no change for women

Concluding remarks

- Compared to their partners, working women bear most of the increased time needed for housework and childcare during Covid19 crisis.
- Our results show that changes in housework, childcare and home schooling depend on partners' working arrangements coherently with research on other countries (Sevilla and Smith 2020, Farrè et al 2020, Biroli et al 2020)
- Men are more likely to increase housework, childcare and home schooling time if women work at the usual place with potential implications for gender equality.

Concluding remarks

- These results have potential policy implication for supporting more parental and paternity leave
- In this empirical analysis we also analyzed the effect of parents' education on childcare and show that:
- Mothers holding a degree and their partners spend much more time on their children's education, even after controlling for their work arrangements.
- Follow-up
- We have now interviewed the same sample in December 2020 and plan to analyze the impact of the second COVID19 wave.