

Update on Gender Differences in the Impact of COVID-19

Gema Zamarro*

**Professor at the Department of Education Reform, University of Arkansas and Adjunct
Senior Economist at CESR, University of Southern California**

Maria Jose Prados

Economist at CESR, University of Southern California

December, 2020

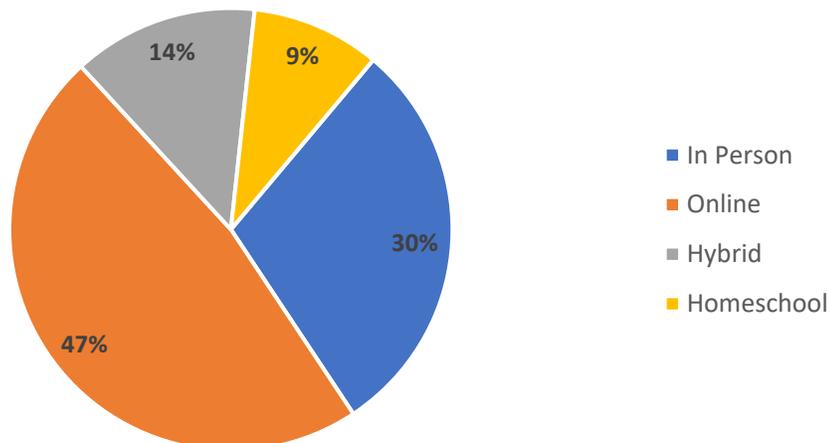
***For questions contact: Gema Zamarro. Email: gzamarro@uark.edu**

Update in Gender Differences in the Impact of COVID-19

In our prior [press release from June 2020](#), we used data from the *Understanding Coronavirus in America tracking survey* and documented important gender differences in the effects of the current COVID-19 crisis related to gender imbalances in the share of childcare responsibilities, employment, and psychological distress. In this brief we examine whether these issues may have changed over the summer and fall, using data collected through November 2020. Increased care responsibilities for parents remains an important issue, as a majority of families with school-age children are still doing some form of remote learning.

Percentage of households with children receiving different types of school instruction

October 2020



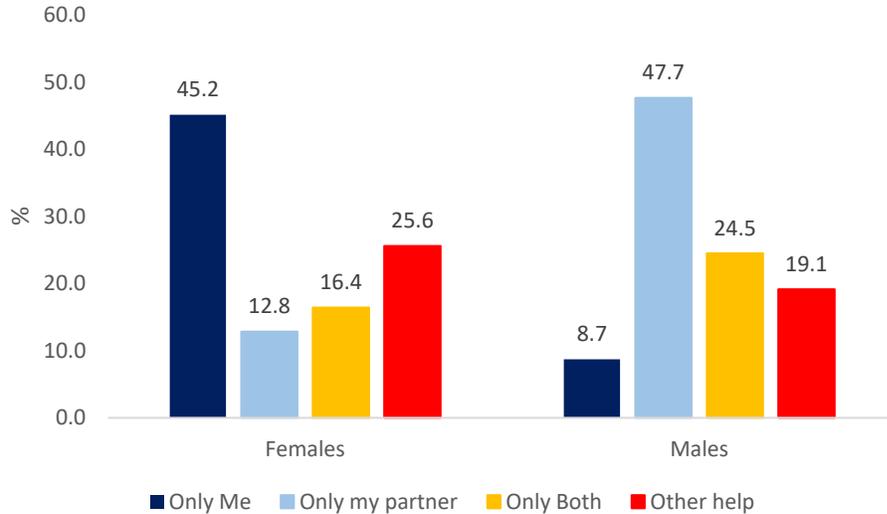
White parents are more likely to report that their children have returned to school in-person than non-white families. Just over half (54%) of White parents reported online or hybrid schooling compared to 72% of Hispanic parents and 68% of African American parents.

1. **Women carry an increasingly heavier load than men in providing childcare and educational support to their children during this COVID-19 crisis, even while still working.** Last spring, one third (33%) of working moms and 10% of working dads reported being the only one in the household providing childcare and help with schoolwork to their children. The proportion of working mothers who are the sole providers of care to children has increased to 45% as of October 2020, while the proportion of working fathers remains at 9%.

Who is Primarily Responsible for Providing Care and Help with School Work?

Self-reports of respondents living with a spouse or partner and currently working

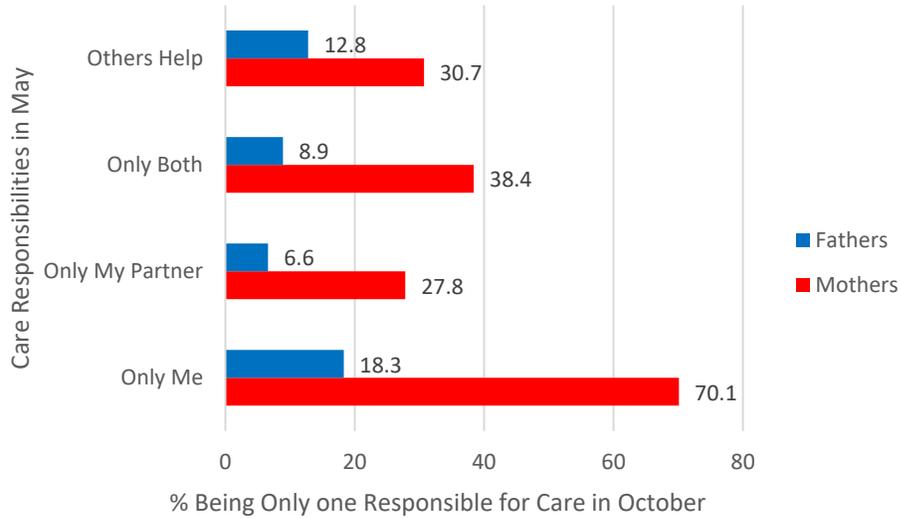
October 2020



The panel design of this survey allows us to track changes among the same sample of parents over time. The chart below shows, within each care arrangement in May, the percentage of parents who became the main childcare provider by October. Women were much more likely to become the main childcare provider by October than men, regardless of what the childcare arrangement was like in May. Less than 30% of mothers who reported being the sole provider of care in May (Only me) said they no longer are the only source of care. On the other hand, a sizeable fraction of women who were not the main childcare provider in May are so in October: 38% of mothers who were sharing responsibility with a partner last spring, plus 31% who were sharing responsibility with someone else, and 28% of those whose partners were caring for the children are now reporting being the sole providers of care. In contrast, roughly the same proportions of fathers assumed sole responsibility and left sole responsibility for childcare in October as compared to May, leaving the overall proportion of sole-providing fathers mostly unchanged at 9%.

Percentage of Parents with Differing Care Responsibilities in May 2020 Who Became Primarily Responsible for Care and Help with Schoolwork in October 2020

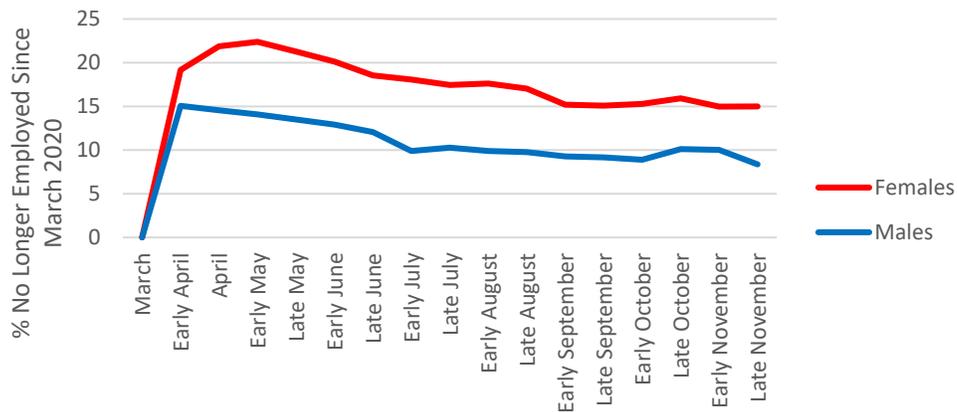
Self-reports of respondents living with a spouse or partner



- Increased childcare responsibilities could make it harder for women to recover from employment lost during this COVID-19 crisis.** During the pandemic, women have lost jobs at a higher rate than men, and twice as many remain unemployed compared to men. Among those married or living together with a partner who were employed in March 2020, 19% of women lost their employment back in April compared with 15% of men. Of these, 15% of women remained without a job in late November as compared with 8% of men.

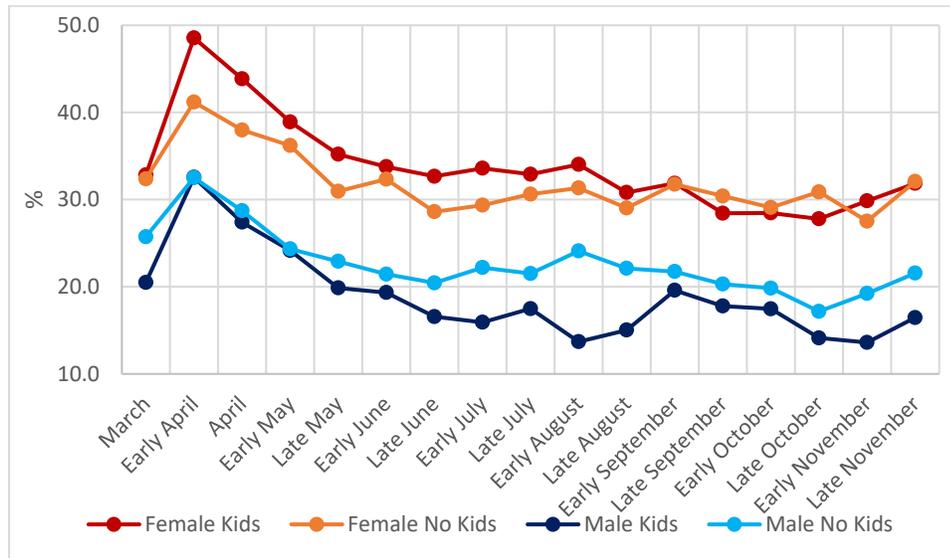
Percentage of Respondents Employed in March 2020 Who Are No Longer Employed, By Gender

Self-reports of respondents living with a spouse or partner



3. **Despite increased childcare responsibilities, the gap in emotional distress observed in April among married or partnered women with and without children in the household has closed** so that we no longer observe higher psychological distress among women with children compared to childless women. On the other hand, during the summer, men with children began to present significantly lower levels of emotional distress than men without children in the household, a situation that has persisted through late November. Even though the fraction of individuals experiencing psychological distress has decreased over time, the gender gap in psychological distress among parents is larger than among non-parents, and it remains at the same level in November as it was in April: Mothers were 16 percentage points more likely than fathers to experience psychological distress at both points in time.

Psychological Distress, By Gender and Whether Children Live in the Household
Among respondents living with a spouse or partner



Survey Methodology

This report is based on data from seventeen waves of the Understanding Coronavirus in America Tracking Survey, administered by the USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research (CESR). Participants are members of CESR’s Understanding America Study (UAS) probability-based internet panel who participated in tracking survey waves conducted between March 10 and November 25, 2020. The survey is conducted in English and Spanish. Results are weighted to CPS benchmarks, accounting for sample design and non-response. This analysis focuses on those who reported living with a spouse or partner, ages 18 to 64 years old. Sample sizes for each sample survey wave in this report range from 2,825 to 3,605 and estimates based on overall results have a margin of sampling error (MSE) of +/- 2 percentage point for each wave.

Participants were recruited for the UAS internet panel using an ABS household sample; we provide internet connected tablets as needed. Graphical results and full methodological details for the tracking survey are available [here](#). Questionnaires with full text of questions, topline, data files, and press releases are available at <https://uasdata.usc.edu/page/Covid-19>. Methodological details for the UAS panel are available at <https://uasdata.usc.edu>. The collection of COVID-19 tracking data is supported in part by grant U01AG054580 from the National Institute on Aging and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Sample sizes and MSE for subgroups in each section of this analysis:

Section 1: Analysis in this section is based on 1,315 respondents with school-age children, of whom 911 are currently working, who participated in the study between September 16 and October 14, 2020 (Wave 14). MSE of +/- 3 percentage points in both overall subsamples.

Section 2: Analysis in this section is based on respondents who reported to be living with a spouse or partner and who were employed in March 2020. Sample sizes by wave of between 1,976 to 2,614. Overall MSE of +/- 2.

Section 3: We analyzed the subset of between 2,825 to 3,605 participants who reported living with a spouse or partner across the seventeen survey waves. Overall MSE for these samples are +/-2 percentage points for each wave.