COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker

Methodological note[1]

Introduction

The *UNDP and UN Women COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker* monitors, from a gender perspective, policy measures that have been planned and/or implemented by governments worldwide in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to policy measures, the tracker also monitors women's leadership and participation in COVID-19 task forces.

The purpose of the tracker is to assess the gender sensitivity of policy measures. It is based on publicly available information, including official government documents, media coverage, and existing policy repositories that track government responses to COVID-19. Data on measures was also provided by UNDP and UN Women country offices. The tracker assesses the available information on the design features of policy measures. It does not conduct assessment of the gender impact of these measures, nor does it make a ranking of countries based on their policy responses.

In the context of the tracker, gender-sensitive measures are defined as those that seek to directly address the risks and challenges that women and girls face during the COVID-19 crisis, notably violence against women and girls, unpaid care work, and economic insecurity. The measures currently included in the tracker fall under four categories: (i) social protection, (ii) labour markets, (iii) violence against women, and (iv) fiscal and economic policies (see annex 1). Across these categories, data collection focuses mainly on measures taken by governments at the national/federal level. Measures are classified by country, region, policy measure category, type and sub-type.

The tracker was conceived as a living database with measures being continuously added, updated and validated throughout 2020 and 2021.[2] The last update took place in November 2021. Like all policy trackers, there may be gaps or biases due to a lack of available information, underreporting of measures being announced, overreporting of measures that have been suspended, or the lack of data on the gender components of existing measures. Overall, findings should be interpreted with caution.

In addition, when considering the number of individual measures, it is important to note that policy responses to COVID-19 and its socioeconomic ramifications vary depending on the nature and timing of the crisis as well as country-specific circumstances. Measures included in the tracker vary in scope, scale, and duration within and across policy categories. Such differences reflect variations in the capacities,

[2] Due to the sheer speed, dynamic nature and scope of the response to the pandemic, a full validation process is not always feasible in the COVID-19 context. To provide information on national measures to be included in the UNDP-UN Women COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, please contact **COVID.gender.helpdesk@undp.org**.

resources, priorities and challenges that countries in different contexts have to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. Therefore, some measures registered can be relatively small-scale, whereas others are larger in reach and scale. Likewise, in terms of gender equality, the baseline policy landscape differs significantly. For example, countries with few COVID-19 related measures may have pre-existing gender-sensitive policies in place that help mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic. The relative performance of countries in incorporating gender into their COVID-19 response is therefore not necessarily a reflection of a country's aggregate support for gender equality. Further, the aggregate number of measures taken might not provide an accurate picture of support for gender equality in a given country. One significantly proactive and well implemented gender sensitive measure may outweigh the impact of several piecemeal, or primarily reactive, measures. One way of establishing a baseline of where countries stood prior to the COVID-19 crisis is by checking the UNDP Human Development Report Office's Gender Inequality Index, while building upon key indicators on gender inequalities and COVID-19.[3]

Co-created by the two agencies, the tracker is coordinated by UNDP, with substantive leadership and technical contributions from UN Women. The data in the tracker have been compiled from several sources, including the Council of Europe, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the International Labor Organization (ILO), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Bank, as well as the contributions of UN Women's and UNDP's country and regional offices. Original data on COVID-19 task forces was collected in partnership with the Gender Inequality Research Lab (GIRL) at the University of Pittsburgh. We are also thankful to the research support of our team of UN Online Volunteers. These contributions are gratefully acknowledged.

Accessing the database
Both datasets are available for download from the tracker website. See the "Download the data" button below the tracker dashboard.

Contact details
For comments and questions related to the tracker, please contact Aroa Santiago (aroa.santiago@undp.org) and Esuna Dugarova (esuna.dugarova@undp.org) at UNDP and Silke Staab (silke.staab@unwomen.org) and Constanza Tabbush (constanza.tabbush@unwomen.org) at UN Women.

Database details

Classification of countries and territories

Countries and territories are classified by region, income group, human development group, and fragile and conflict-affecting settings. The classification of geographic regions is based on the Standard Country or Area Codes for Statistical Use of the United Nations Statistics Division. The income group is based on the World Bank classification of economies by income level. For the classification of countries by the level of human development (HD), the tracker is using the UNDP Human Development Report Office classification. Fragile and conflict-affected countries are defined based on the OECD states of fragility classification. The tracker contains information for a number of countries and territories with no income group, human development or fragility level assigned. When aggregate information based on the above classifications is provided, countries with no assigned level are excluded.

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[3] See http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii and http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-and-COVID-19-crisis-human-development-perspective

Structure of the database

The tracker monitors two separate aspects of the gender response to COVID-19: the gender components of government policy measures and women's representation in COVID-19 Task Forces. These have been collected and analyzed separately and are reflected in the dual structure of the tracker's database.

Figure 1. Structure of the policy measures in the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker Database gender response database
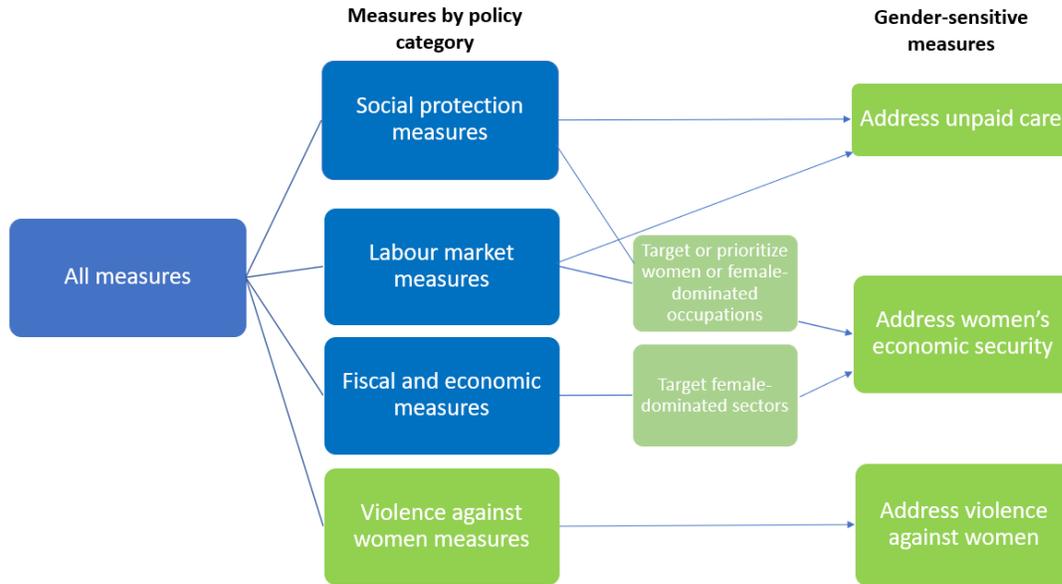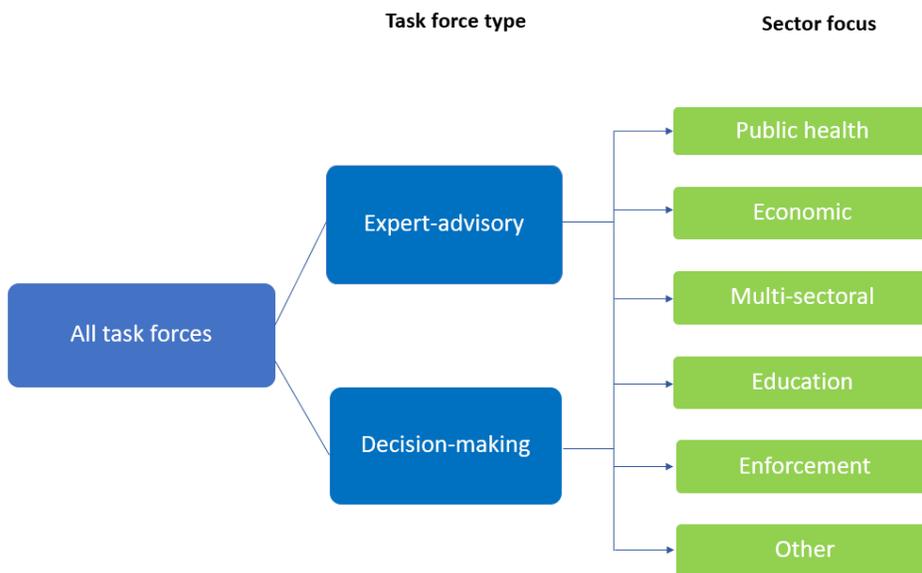
Measures by policy category

Gender-sensitive measures

All measures

Social protection measures

Labour market measures

Fiscal and economic measures

Violence against women measures

Target or prioritize women or female-dominated occupations

Target female-dominated sectors

Address unpaid care

Address women's economic security

Address violence against women

Figure 2. Structure of COVID-19 task forces in the COVID-19 Global Gender Tracker Database

Task force type

Sector focus

All task forces

Expert-advisory

Decision-making

Public health

Economic

Multi-sectoral

Education

Enforcement

Other

Policy measure dataset

Classification of policy measures and gender sensitivity assessment

The tracker combines two approaches in determining what constitutes a gender sensitive measure (Figure 1).

The first approach consists of tracking policy measures taken to tackle violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the COVID-19 context. These measures are defined as gender-sensitive by default and include the integration of VAWG in COVID-19 response plans, awareness raising, strengthening of services, and collection of data (see annex 1).[4] Evidence suggests violence against women and girls has intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic in part due to economic and social stresses and measures to restrict contact and movement. Measures under this policy category recognize this risk and are aimed at prevention and response as well as the generation of evidence on incidence, needs and readiness to respond.

The second approach consists of looking at a broad range of social protection, labour market, economic and fiscal measures taken in response to COVID-19 and identifying a subset of gender-sensitive measures. Social protection and labour market measures are defined as gender-sensitive if they target women's economic security or address unpaid care, or if they target specific occupations where women are overrepresented (garment industry workers in some countries, domestic workers, school teachers, health and long term care workers). Fiscal and economic measures are defined as gender-sensitive if they provide support to female-dominated sectors of the economy, on the assumption that this is likely to protect women's employment and thereby their economic security. The assessment is conducted based on the available information about policy design (for more details on how these definitions were operationalized see Table 1). An assessment of the implementation or gender impact of these measures is not included.

Some of the measures in the tracker go beyond the immediate response to COVID-19 and include longer-term efforts aimed at building back better and increasing resilience to future shocks. The adoption of new bills or national action plans addressing VAWG, for example, were included under "other measures" when it was deemed that their adoption was at least in part driven by the increased attention to VAWG as a result of the pandemic.

Table 1. Operational definition of gender-sensitive measures by policy category

	Measures that support **women's economic security** are defined as:	Measures that support **unpaid care** are defined as:
Social protection	Measures aimed at putting resources in cash or kind directly into women's hands by: • Targeting women or specific groups of women (e.g. rural, indigenous, migrant, ethnic minority, pregnant/lactating).	Measures aimed at addressing the rising demand for unpaid care by: • Compensating parents or other family members that provide care to children, older persons or

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[4] While data is a key component to evidence-based decision making to end VAWG in the context of COVID-19, it is imperative that data collection, analysis and use always adhere to survivor-centered, ethical and safety standards. For recommendations on VAWG data collection during COVID-19, see https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/issue-brief-violence-against-women-and-girls-data-collection-during-COVID-19 and https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/07/decision-tree-data-collection-on-violence-against-women-and-COVID-19.

	Measures that support **women's economic security** are defined as:	Measures that support **unpaid care** are defined as:
	• Targeting specific occupations where women are overrepresented, specifically: garment workers, domestic workers, health workers (including nurses), school teachers, and long term care workers. [5] • Prioritizing women as the main recipients of household level benefits or child benefits. • Providing individual universal services or income support covering all citizens/residents. • Including quotas for women (e.g. public works programs). [6]	persons with disabilities with cash transfers ("cash-for-care"). • Providing paid leave for those with care responsibilities. • Strengthening services for populations with intense care needs (e.g. children, older persons, persons with disabilities).[7]
Labor market	Measures aimed at ensuring women's continued access to wage payments during the pandemic, as well as decent working conditions, occupational health and safety, access to paid employment, training and entrepreneurship opportunities by: • Targeting women or specific groups of women (e.g. rural, indigenous, migrant, ethnic minority, pregnant/lactating) • Targeting specific occupations where women are overrepresented, specifically: garment workers, domestic workers, health workers (including nurses), school teachers, and long term care workers. • Including quotas for women (e.g. in training programmes).	Measures aimed at protecting or supporting workers with care responsibilities by providing them with one of the following: • Flexible/shorter work hours. • Additional wage subsidies. • Protection from dismissal. • Childcare services as part of training programmes.[8]
Fiscal and economic measures	Measures on fiscal and economic support that target sectors with a larger share of women's compared to men's employment: • Economic activities in which women are overrepresented, as compared to men (e.g. health, retail, hospitality globally; garment in Southeast Asia; agriculture in parts of South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa).[9] • Types of sectors or enterprises in which women are overrepresented (e.g. public	

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[5] In the case of health care work, a measure is considered gender-sensitive when for every man employed in the sector, there are at least 1.5 women employed. Garment industry, domestic work and school teaching, and long-term care are considered female dominated occupations by default.

[6] Measures that may benefit women disproportionately, but do not explicitly target them, such as those aimed at supporting demographic or vulnerable groups in which women are likely to be overrepresented are excluded..

[7] Healthcare measures as well as measures that provide indirect support for unpaid care, such as school feeding programs, child benefits or cash transfers for families with children are excluded as they do not *explicitly* aim to address extra care burdens amid COVID-19.

[8] Healthcare measures are excluded.

[9] A sector will be classified as female-dominated when there is a 5 percentage point gap (favorable to women) between female and male employment in the sector, or, alternatively, when for every man employed in the sector, there is at least 1.5 women.

	Measures that support **women's economic security** are defined as:	Measures that support **unpaid care** are defined as:
	sector; agriculture; textile manufacturing; informal enterprises in some countries)[10]	

The full set of measures contained in the tracker is captured by the "all measures" category in Figure 1 and includes:

a) The full dataset of social protection and labour market measures contained in the World Bank's Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19 ("Living paper" version 15; 14 May 2021);

b) The dataset of economic, financial and fiscal measures contained in the World Bank Tracker of Subsidies and State Aid to mitigate COVID-19 effects (downloaded June 2021);

c) Additional measures, collected by UNDP and UN Women, in two areas that are critical for gender equality, but not currently monitored in a systematic way: violence against women, and unpaid care (including cash-for-care, family leave, and care services, which were classified under the social protection).

d) Complementary measures gleaned from other data sources (see below).

The compiled and collected data were validated to the extent possible by UNDP and UN Women at the global, regional and country level.

Data on dates

Data on the start and end dates of policies is available as of the November 2021 update. Where data about policy timelines were available, the start and end date of implementation was included in the dataset. In cases where start dates were not available, date of policy announcement was used. Where dates were researched but publicly available information could not be found, "n.d." is entered to represent no data. Cells left blank are those pending additional research.

Data sources for policy measures

Data sources for labour market and social protection measures include official information provided on government websites, in global and national news coverage, as well as global and regional databases listed below. Information on measures to address violence against women was initially collected through a survey to UN Women and UNDP regional and country offices, and additional consultations for each round of updates, self-reporting by Member States in their submissions to UN Women for the Secretary General's reports on "Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women" and "Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development". These sources were complemented by information from global and regional reports and databases (listed below) as well as country-level desk research conducted by UN Volunteers, using ministerial websites and news media.

- ACAPS COVID-19 Government Measures Dataset: https://www.acaps.org/COVID19-government-measures-dataset
- Asian Development Bank COVID-19 Policy Database: https://COVID19policy.adb.org/policy-measures
- Council of Europe COVID-19 Response: https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/promoting-and-protecting-women-s-rights#%7B%2263001324%22:%5B%5D%7D

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[10] Following this statement, a sector will also be classified as female-dominated when the share of the sector in female employment is higher than 70%.

- ECLAC COVID-2019 Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean: https://www.cepal.org/en/topics/COVID-19
- European Commission "Policy measures taken against the spread and impact of the coronavirus – 6 April 2020": https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/coronovirus-policy-measures-6-april_en_1.pdf
- Gentilini, U., Almenfi, M., Orton, I. and Dale, P. 2020. Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19: A Real-Time Review of Country Measures. World Bank, Washington, DC. "Living paper" version 15 (14 May 2021), https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/281531621024684216/pdf/Social-Protection-and-Jobs-Responses-to-COVID-19-A-Real-Time-Review-of-Country-Measures-May-14-2021.pdf
- HelpAge: https://www.helpage.org/what-we-do/coronavirus-COVID19/
- ILO Social Protection Responses to COVID-19 Crisis around the World: https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/ShowWiki.action?id=3417
- International Long-term Care Policy Network LTC Responses to COVID-19: https://ltcCOVID.org/category/country-reports-on-ltc-COVID-19-situation/
- ISSA coronavirus country measures: https://ww1.issa.int/coronavirus/country-measures
- OECD Coronavirus Country Policy Tracker: https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/country-policy-tracker/
- OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus, COVID-19 crisis in the MENA region: impact on gender equality and policy responses: http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/COVID-19-crisis-in-the-mena-region-impact-on-gender-equality-and-policy-responses-ee4cd4f4/
- UNODC report on "The Impact of COVID-19 on Criminal Justice System Responses to Gender-based Violence Against Women: A Global Review of Emerging Evidence" https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/Assessment_COVID-19_and_CJS_responses_to_GBVAW_23Mar2021.pdf
- UN Women Ecuador (2020) Global review of care-related measures in response to COVID-19, last updated 15 May 2020.
- World Bank of Subsidies and State Aid to mitigate COVID-19 effects: https://dataviz.worldbank.org/views/AID-COVID19/Overview?:embed=y&:isGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&:display_count=n&:showAppBanner=false&:origin=viz_share_link&:showVizHome=n
- World Bank Group: Women, Business, and the Law 2021: https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/wbl-data
- "Yale Program on Financial Stability, COVID-19 Financial Response Tracker" https://som.yale.edu/faculty-research-centers/centers-initiatives/program-on-financial-stability/covid-19-crisis
- Other secondary sources, including reports and policy briefs by international agencies and civil society organizations.

COVID-19 task force dataset

The methodological guidelines for data collection on COVID-19 Task Forces were established by the Gender Inequality Research Lab (GIRL) at the University of Pittsburgh. The data were compiled by GIRL, UNDP, and UN Online Volunteers. The data are based on desk research of country ministerial websites, news media sources, UNDP/UN Women Country Offices, and academic or third-party agency reports (see below). Gender of task force leaders and members was determined using online biographies, prefixes, pronouns, and photographs. All task force data previously included in the March 2021 update of the tracker were updated and verified with country-level desk research as of September 2021.

Definition and classification of COVID-19 task forces

For the purpose of this study, COVID-19 Task Forces refer to any executive branch institution (ad hoc or permanent) that was created by the national government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Institutions that oversee the pandemic response but were created prior to December 2019 were not included, except for cases where a COVID-19-specific sub-committee was identified. Task forces that are part of a subnational, regional, or international response were not considered in the analysis. All COVID-19 task forces for which gender-disaggregated data on leadership or composition were found have been included in the analysis.

Each task force is classified in two ways: taskforce type and sector focus.

- **Task force type corresponds to the function of the task force which is determined based on membership**. Task forces that contain members of government are considered as *decision-making* as they are responsible for implementing government response, while task forces exclusively composed of members from outside of government are classified as *expert-advisory* and provide recommendations for action to the government
  o *Decision-making* task forces are typically composed of ministers, public health officials, or other high-level representatives across government. Any task force with more than one government official is considered decision-making.
  o *Expert-advisory* task forces are typically composed of academics, medical doctors or other public health experts from outside of government agencies.

- **Sector corresponds to the thematic focus of the task force.** There are six sector categories used in the analysis.
  o *Public health:* Focused on providing policy guidance or response on topics related to public health.
  o *Economic:* Focused on facilitating socio-economic response or recovery in a country.
  o *Multi-sectoral*: Focused on overall government coordination and response across several sectors of public life.
  o *Enforcement:* Focused on monitoring compliance with government public health regulations.
  o *Education:* Focused on providing guidance on school closures and safety recommendations.
  o *Other:* All task forces that do not fit into one of the five distinct categories based on their overall aims. Some examples include youth-oriented or anti-corruption task forces.

Defining gender parity and composition in COVID-19 task forces

Parity on task forces is defined based on the UN Secretary General's System-Wide Strategy on Gender Parity which considers parity to be within the 47-53% margin, recognizing that this should not be a ceiling for women's representation given their historical discrimination in decision making positions. Task forces dominated by men are those with less than 47% women and task forces that are dominated by women are those with more than 53% women.

Methodological considerations for task force data

The share of women's representation reflected on the dashboard and factsheets for each country and region is calculated as a simple average based on women's representation across all task forces within a country. It does not reflect any weighting for country population or task force size. This methodology is employed in order to reflect the large range in the number of task forces that each country has (ranging from 1 task force to 14).

As with the policy measures, the COVID-19 task force dataset is a living database with task forces regularly being added and updated. Data collection on COVID-19 task forces faces particular challenges due to changes in governance associated with events such as elections, changing administrations or staff, or political instability. Additionally, governments may have amended original task force membership due to the evolving nature of the pandemic. Task forces were updated to reflect the most recent membership data where such information was available, but original data from the March 2021 update was preserved in cases where there was no clear evidence of task force dissolution, reconfiguration, or other membership change.

It is important to note that the existence of COVID-19 task forces does not necessarily correspond to the quality of government response, as the task forces may be ineffective or inactive, or countries may have pre-existing institutions that oversee the pandemic response.

To provide information on new task forces to be included in the UNDP/UN Women COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker please contact COVID.gender.helpdesk@undp.org.

Data sources for task forces

Data sources for COVID-19 task forces come from official information provided on government websites, global and national news coverage, as well as existing academic and policy resources which are listed below.

- Cheng, Cindy, Joan Barceló, Allison Hartnett, Robert Kubinec, and Luca Messerschmidt. 2020. COVID-19 Government Response Event Dataset (CoronaNet v1.0). https://www.coronanet-project.org
- CARE International. "Where are the Women? The Conspicuous Absence of Women in COVID-19 Response Teams and Plans, and Why We Need Them." (2020) https://www.care-international.org/files/files/CARE_COVID-19-womens-leadership-report_June-2020.pdf
- Rajan, Dheepa, Kira Koch, Katja Rohrer, Csongor Bajnoczki, Anna Socha, Maike Voss, Marjolaine Nicod, Valery Ridde, and Justin Koonin. "Governance of the COVID-19 response: a call for more inclusive and transparent decision-making." BMJ Global Health 5, no. 5 (2020): e002655
- van Daalen, Kim Robin, Csongor Bajnoczki, Maisoon Chowdhury, Sara Dada, Parnian Khorsand, Anna Socha, Arush Lal et al. "Symptoms of a broken system: the gender gaps in COVID-19 decision-making." BMJ global health 5, no. 10 (2020): e003549

Annex 1. Policy measure classification

Measure category	Measure type	Measure subtype
Social protection	Social assistance	• Cash transfers (conditional and unconditional) • One-off cash • Cash for care • Public works • In-kind support • Social pensions • School feeding • Utility, housing, financial support, etc.
	Social insurance	• Paid sick leave • Family/parental/childcare leave • Healthcare insurance support • Pension • Social security contribution waiver/subsidy • Unemployment benefit
	Care services	• Childcare services, including for essential workers • Long-term care for older persons and care for persons with disabilities
Labour market	Wage subsidy and income replacement for self-employed	• Not specified
	Activation and enterprise development	
	Labor regulatory adjustment	
	Reduced work time and telework	
Fiscal and Economic	Tax cuts/exemptions/credits	• Not specified
	Tax deferrals	
	Loan guarantees	
	Equity injections: public sector loans to businesses	
	Equity injections: public sector subsidies to businesses	
	Credit/loan deferral, restructuration or renegotiation	
	Credit lines or additional liquidity by financial institutions	
	Multiple measures	

	Integration of VAWG in COVID-19 response plans	• Not specified
	Awareness raising campaigns	• Not specified
Violence against women and girls	Services	• Hotlines and other reporting mechanisms • Continued functioning / expansion of shelters • Psychosocial support • Police and justice • Health sector response • Coordinated and accessible services
	Collection and use of data	• Not specified
	Other measures	• Not specified