

Executive Summary

The current report, "The Value of Care: A Strategic Economic Sector. A measurement of Unpaid Care and Domestic Work in the Argentine GDP," estimates the contribution of care work to the Argentine economy and how it changed under the Covid-19 lockdown during 2020. The National Directorate of Economy, Equality and Gender, headed by Dr. Mercedes D'Alessandro, presented the report in August 2020.

The report found that Unpaid Care and Domestic Work (UCDW) amounts to 15.9% of the GDP and represents the largest sector in the entire economy, followed by industry (13.2%) and commerce (13%). If the vast amount of domestic tasks carried out in Argentine homes everyday were remunerated, the sector would contribute U\$S 67,438 million dollars to the GDP.

The work is not distributed equally, however. The report found that 75,7% of the tasks are carried out by women -- who carry out 96 million hours of unremunerated household and care work.

The report also analyzes how the sector's importance within the GDP grew during the pandemic: while many productive sectors decreased activity, care work increased to 21.8% of the GDP and increased by 5.9 percentage points over the pre-pandemic measurement. The care economy took on unprecedented importance during the pandemic lockdown, and sustained social functioning.

The burden of increased UCDW falls mainly on women and follows a logic of inequality. A grave so-called "care crisis" pre-dates Covid-19. Pandemic-spurred changes in UCDW reinforce the urgent need to address the issue, as a condition for female labor insertion and to close inequality gaps.

The pandemic heightened specific challenges already faced by women. The burdens of unpaid care and domestic work increased exponentially due to lockdowns. Additionally, many so-called "essential" jobs are feminized: women are the majority of nurses, cleaning service at hospitals, teachers, workers in the food industry and cashiers at supermarkets, heads of community soup kitchens. The domestic service sector, the most important source of employment for Argentine women, is one of the most affected by the COVID-19 crisis. For many women, sustaining a work activity in-person or remotely while simultaneously attending to care demands is unsustainable in the long-term, a fact that has consequences both on productivity and on their employment possibilities.

UCDW is a sector that produces essential goods and services for social, economic and productive activity. Understanding this fact is a necessary step to value these tasks, redistribute their load, strengthen their infrastructure and guarantee that they are carried out in a way that contributes to improving quality of life. This report considers the care system a strategic sector for Argentina now and in the future.