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**The Impact of the Corona Crisis on the  
Gender Gap in Care Work And Housework**

Patrizia Kolb



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# The Impact of the Corona Crisis on the Gender Gap in Care Work And Housework

Patrizia Kolb

## Abstract

This paper examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the gender gap in unpaid care work and housework in Berlin. Utilizing quantitative data from a survey, it explores how pandemic-induced changes in work and family dynamics have influenced the distribution of unpaid labour between genders. The findings reveal that women, particularly mothers, have disproportionately shouldered the burden of increased unpaid work, reflecting and amplifying pre-existing gender inequalities. The study highlights the role of sociodemographic factors, including income and employment status, in shaping the division of unpaid labour and suggests that pandemic measures have reinforced traditional gender roles, despite previous policy efforts towards gender equality. The paper calls for policies that address these disparities and support a more equitable division of unpaid work.

**Keywords:** COVID-19 pandemic | care work | gender gap

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Patrizia Kolb is a master's student of sociology at the Institute of Sociology at Freie Universität Berlin. She graduated with her bachelor's degree in sociology from the Universität Konstanz in 2021. Her focus of research lies in the field of inequality, especially concerning gender and education.

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## 1. Introduction

The pandemic caused by the coronavirus has changed the lives of people all around the globe – and it is still doing so. The crisis is not over yet, and its effects ought to be investigated. Several recent studies point towards the heavy burden that women, particularly mothers, had to shoulder due to the implemented measures and policies. Globally, women still do most of the unpaid work. The corona crisis amplified this. Basically, it increased the inequality between genders in care work and housework. This is what I want to investigate in this paper; How did the corona crisis impact the gender gap in care- and housework in households in Berlin?

Although the virus affected the entire world, each country implemented different measures, which reflect the distinct type of welfare state they can be ascribed to. Considering Esping-Andersen's typology of welfare states allows the investigation of how the pandemic amplified already existing inequalities that differ among the welfare types. Each type differs regarding the interaction of state, market, and family. The author distinguishes between three major types of regimes: the liberal, the conservative, such as Germany, and lastly, the social democratic welfare type. The feminist critique of Esping-Andersen's typology will be considered, to reflect on the special role of women in the different regime types and, especially, why it is essential to consider. In particular, the gender dimension, including gender inequality and women's economic dependency on men, is not considered in his typology. Additionally, Esping-Andersen does not consider the role of unpaid work, which mostly women shoulder.

It is expected that women, especially mothers, took on more of the housework and care work. This effect of the crisis can play out differently in the distinct welfare states. Due to women's role as primary caregiver and the attributes of the corporatist regime Germany can be classified as, this effect might be stronger. Additionally, it is expected that there are differences due to influencing factors such as work constellations within households, levels of education as well as the presence of children. The results of the analysis go beyond the discussion of the gender gap and include a reflection on the inequalities among women, for instance due to varying income levels, as well as the perception of the division of unpaid labour.

To answer my research question, I will use quantitative data from the survey "Auswirkungen der Covid-19-Pandemie auf Konvivialität und Ungleichheiten in Berlin", conducted by the Institute for Latin American Studies at Freie Universität Berlin as part of the research project of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre: Conviviality-Inequality in Latin America (Mecila). The survey encompasses three waves, all conducted in 2022 and includes 2,502 respondents living in Berlin. For the data analysis, frequency and correlation tables were produced.

The results show that women are responsible for most unpaid work, reflecting the norms of Germany's type of welfare state which encourages a traditional division of labour. The analysis of sociodemographic factors shows that there are differences regarding the level of income, where there is a more equal distribution of unpaid work in the highest income bracket. For full-time working women, for instance, the results show the higher the income, the fewer report that she does most of the housework herself. Furthermore, the findings indicate that for full-time working respondents the division is more equal. Nonetheless, even when both partners work full-time, gender seems to be the decisive factor in the division of housework. Moreover, in childless households the division is more equal. Especially the presence of young children marks the mother as the main caregiver and reinforces a traditional work allocation. For most of the respondents, the division of housework did not change due to the pandemic. For the minority, where the division changed, it turned more equal. The analysis shows a gender disparity in the perception of the division of both care work and housework. Men are more inclined to answer that the father does most of the care work, helps with the children's homework and that the division of both care- and housework is equal. This gendered perception of care work is even more pronounced in low-income households. This could allude to the undervaluing of unpaid work, where men do not see all the unpaid labour the woman does.

The findings show that the pandemic measures that were implemented ended up encouraging a more traditional division of unpaid work, as expected from a conservative regime type. Although, generally, Germany had implemented more supportive work and family policies to promote a dual-earner and dual-career model in the past, this did not translate into the pandemic measures. Especially through the long closure of childcare facilities parents, particularly mothers, were urged to provide the additional care work. The unpaid work is still divided in a more traditional way, in which women shoulder more. The policies of the respective states should take notice of how their measures affect women. The implementation of policies can facilitate a more egalitarian balance within households. Therefore, they ought to aim for a more equitable division of unpaid labour between women and men.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

### **2.1 The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism**

A classic source on welfare state regimes is Esping-Andersen's *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Esping-Andersen 1990). The author distinguishes between three major types of regimes. Each is "organized around its own discrete logic of organization,

stratification, and social integration” (Esping-Andersen 1990: 3). The main principles he analyses are citizens’ rights and the way the state interacts with the market and family through social provision (Esping-Andersen 1990: 21). The different arrangements between state, market, and family lead to the formation of distinctive regime clusters. Another important concept Esping-Andersen uses is de-commodification, which “refers to the degree to which individuals, or families, can uphold a socially acceptable standard of living independently of market participation” (Esping-Andersen 1990: 37). The differences between the regime-types show the various reactions towards a greater demand for de-commodification. Esping-Andersen’s typology of welfare states is important to consider here since the pandemic measures implemented during the crisis relate to the regime type of a country and consequently reflect its main values and principles. Although the virus affected the entire world, countries implemented different measures grounded in the varying arrangements of state, market, and family reflected in the welfare type. Consideration of Esping-Andersen’s typology is useful for investigating how the pandemic amplified already existing inequalities and attributes, which differ among the regime types. Essentially, his typology builds the base on which the already existing inequalities were influenced or amplified by the crisis.

The first regime type Esping-Andersen distinguishes is the liberal welfare state, “in which means-tested assistance, modest universal transfers, or modest social-insurance plans predominate” (Esping-Andersen 1990: 26). The benefits mostly go to citizens in the working-class with low incomes. The development of social reform is confined through liberal work-ethic norms, which is why receiving these benefits is stigmatized. Furthermore, the state supports the market, for instance through only granting a minimum of benefits. Consequently, de-commodification effects are reduced. The social stratification in these liberal states is characterized by “relative equality of poverty among state-welfare recipients, market-differentiated welfare among the majorities, and a class-political dualism between the two” (Esping-Andersen 1990: 27). Examples of such states are the USA, Canada, and Australia. Here, “concerns of gender matter less than the sanctity of the market” (Esping-Andersen 1990: 28).

The second regime-type is the conservative or corporatist welfare state. In contrast to the liberal state, the provision of social rights was never questioned. Here, the state is the provider of welfare, not the market. Most entitlements are employment-based. Furthermore, status differences are maintained and attached to the respective class, which renders the regime’s “redistributive impact [is] negligible” (Esping-Andersen 1990: 27). States that are clustered in this regime-type, such as Germany and Italy, were strongly shaped by the church. Thus, family tradition is preserved, and policies encourage the mother to do the care work. The family is the salient provider of social welfare. Hence, family services are underdeveloped. This is because “the state will



only interfere when the family's capacity to service its members is exhausted" (Esping-Andersen 1990: 27). This is the principle of subsidiarity.

The third type of regime is the social democratic state, which exceeds the former insofar as "the principles of universalism and de-commodification of social rights were extended also to the new middle classes" (Esping-Andersen 1990: 27). Social reform was shaped by social democracy, where a welfare state that grants equal standards for everyone was the goal. There is a universal insurance system, where the benefits adjust to the earnings. Essentially, there is a "mix of highly de-commodifying and universalistic programs" (Esping-Andersen 1990: 28). As opposed to the corporatist model, the state is not only adjusted to the family's needs but gives women the freedom to work. Hence, the state takes over the responsibility of caring for children and the elderly. Family costs are socialized, to grant the independence of the individual. This regime cluster encompasses mostly Scandinavian countries (Esping-Andersen 1990: 28).

## 2.2 Feminist Critique

Esping-Andersen's classification of welfare states has been criticized on different grounds. Here, I will focus on the feminist critique. Generally, it is criticized that, just like in other typologies, "the gender dimension has been conspicuously missing" (Sainsbury 1996: 1). The first major point of critique is that gender inequalities and women's economic dependency on men is neglected. Esping-Andersen's work is seemingly gender neutral, but the worker or the notion of de-commodification is grounded on a male outlook (Orloff 1993: 307). Noticeably, the welfare state pertains to men and women in diverging ways. This is due to women "facing unique hazards to their bodies in the private and public spheres [...] which have hampered their full participation as autonomous individuals in the economy and civil society" (Benoit and Hallgrimsdottir 2011: 9). Women's relation to the welfare state does not depend on their status as individuals, as is the case for men, but ultimately on their role in the family (Lewis 1992). Although women's dependency on men has noticeably lessened, they still are dependent on the welfare state. Hence, the welfare state is not gender neutral.

Ann Shola Orloff states that the ability to maintain an autonomous household should be included (Orloff 1993: 319). This is because it helps women out of a state of economic vulnerability and dependence on the male breadwinner (Orloff 1993: 321). Furthermore, Orloff points towards a second dimension, the "access to paid work" (Orloff 1993: 318). Encouraging women to work bestows them more bargaining power within their family. Through these added dimensions de-commodification can address women's situation "and the conditions for their emancipation" (Sainsbury 1996: 36).



The concept of bargaining expresses how a household decides on time allocation for work, uncovering the existing power relations in couples. Bargaining power entails individual characteristics and how these affect the division of unpaid work. This encompasses the relative resources or income, gender, and the free time the partner has (Tamilina and Tamilina 2014: 826). For example, low-income women spend the most time on indirect forms of care work (Lightman and Kevins 2021: 798), exemplifying the influence of gender and income on this allocation of time spent on paid and unpaid work. More generally, the wealthier the household, the more equal the distribution of care work, due to the outsourcing of this work (Lightman and Kevins 2021: 782). Basically, through bargaining, the person in the couple who earns more money can opt out of doing housework (Grunow 2019: 270).

These individual attributes, however, have to be seen in the context of macro-level factors, namely the context in which these individual characteristics are embedded. This includes, obviously, the welfare state regime and, furthermore, state provisions, employment opportunities, family policies, but also the degree of gender equality in the country (Boje 2007: 375; Grunow 2019: 254). Moreover, the strategies employed in households to decide who is responsible for unpaid work are also influenced by cultural values and gender roles (Boje 2007: 375). Mikael Nordenmark's study investigated the effect of gender ideology, which encompasses the values and attitudes toward gender roles (Nordenmark 2004). The findings show that women adhering to more traditional gender ideology do less paid work and more housework compared to women with an egalitarian ideology. A similar effect holds true for men; a more egalitarian gender ideology corresponds to a higher share of household labour. In this vein, the concept of "doing gender" (West and Zimmerman 1987) illustrates the apparent internalization of these gender values, where housework is still attributed to femaleness. Namely, doing most of the unpaid work relates to "doing gender" and hence reproduces "gendered power relations" (Neilson and Stanfors 2014: 1069). Thus, some women may choose to do more housework, as this is in concordance with their gender role (Grunow 2019: 270). In conservative states, such as Germany, people harbour more traditional gender roles in comparison to the other welfare types. Additionally, gender ideology can explain some of the cross-national variations in the involvement in paid and unpaid work (Nordenmark 2004: 241). Thus, the pervasive influence of the varying gender ideology on the distribution of unpaid work becomes apparent.

Jane Lewis criticizes that Esping-Andersen's definition of work disregards unpaid work, which mostly women shoulder (Lewis 1997: 162). Women spend more time doing unpaid work compared to men (UNIFEM 2000). Especially for care work, this disparity perseveres, even if women are employed full-time (UNIFEM 2000). Women especially do more so-called routine housework, such as cooking or cleaning. The gender

imbalance thereof is “seen as a main driver of gender disparities in other spheres of life, including paid work and political representation” (Grunow 2019: 261). Hence, they contribute to the more general gender disparities. A higher share in performing these tasks is linked to less availability for employment, higher depression, and career development. However, men’s share of care work is increasing. This growth benefits women and leads to an increase in their involvement in paid work (Orloff 2009: 329).

The relationship between unpaid work and the welfare state is important to consider, since “the family has historically been the largest provider of welfare” – and still is (Lewis 1997: 162). One could consider unpaid work as being devalued in its provision of welfare (Lewis 1992: 160). Furthermore, social policy must be considered. Its character “affects women’s material situations, shapes gender relationships, structures political conflict and participation” (Orloff 1993: 303). Some policies can push for equality, while others may not (Orloff 1993: 310). This renders them crucial in determining women’s circumstances. Naomi Lightman and Anthony Kevins, for instance, find an association between larger family policy expenses and a higher gender balance in housework (Lightman and Kevins 2021). This effect was most noticeable for those with less income. Walter Korpi et al. also show that the effects of such family policies are particularly “visible among women without university-level education” (Korpi et al. 2013: 28). The effect of family policy is also apparent in Larisa Tamulina and Natalya Tamulina’s study (Tamulina and Tamulina 2014). Namely, the introduction of policies can support an egalitarian equilibrium in households. Thereby, policies related to the education and labour market foster the emergence of new values, thus affecting the ideological component. Policies affecting childcare or poverty affect the behavioural component, indicating how in tune the behaviour is with the proposed values. Moreover, David S. Pedulla and Sarah Thébaud show that decreasing “institutional constraints through policies supportive of dual-earner, dual-caregiver arrangements can have important implications for relationship structure preferences” (Pedulla and Thébaud 2015: 132). Namely, women’s preferences are responsive to supportive work-family policies, insofar as they are less likely to choose a relationship structure where there is a traditional division of the male as the breadwinner and the wife as the caregiver. Rather, women are more likely to choose an egalitarian structure when such supportive policies are available.

Through the implementation of new family policies, Germany tries to advance a more gender-equal division of unpaid and paid work, although conservative elements are still part of the policies (Grunow 2019: 255). As illustrated above, Germany is considered a corporatist welfare state in which a traditional division of paid and unpaid work is encouraged. Generally, Germany has a long history of the arrangement where the man is the main breadwinner and the woman works part-time and functions as the

main carer (Rosenfeld et al. 2004). Thus, women's dependency on their partner as a breadwinner was strengthened with preceding policies, such as long maternity leave or scarce childcare for young children. In comparison with other EU-countries Germany's provision of childcare for young children is lacking (Veil 2010: 219). Some of these policies are still in place today, such as the joint system of taxation for married couples, called "*Ehegattensplitting*", which encourages one partner, usually the husband, to function as the main earner to benefit regarding tax payment (Gottfried and Witczak 2006). Hence, the appeal of dual-earner partnerships is lessened, which discourages particularly mothers as secondary earners.

After the introduction of a new work-family policy in the 2000s, Germany encouraged more of a dual-earner and dual-carer model, like it is implemented in the social democratic welfare type. This so-called "*Nachhaltige Familienpolitik*", or sustainable family policy, has the objectives of reducing families' poverty by increasing women's participation in the labour market and increasing fertility through the better support of both parents as workers (Ostner 2010). The policy invests in children through early childhood education and, thus, tries to lessen social inequalities and generate human capital. Hence, new implemented policies target the increase of childcare facilities, especially for young children or promoting the dual-earner family (Ostner 2010). Thus, it produces more gender egalitarian policies. For example, the "*Kinderförderungsgesetz*", or Child Support Act, guarantees all children over one year old a place in childcare (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend 2018). Additionally, this type of childcare provided by the public sector is more helpful in supporting mothers' paid work than childcare provided by the private sector because it is more accessible and affordable (Korpi et al. 2013: 29). Before, Germany had seen care work in privatized terms, contrary to other European countries where it is seen rather as a collective responsibility resulting from "the persistent cultural tradition of subsidiarity" (Rosenfeld et al. 2004: 121). Another example is the new parental leave program where both mother and father can take a few months of paid leave after the birth of their child (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend 2021). These new policies are similar to the ones implemented in the social democratic welfare model, considering that they aim to aid working parents in dual-earner households, engage fathers in childcare, expand the number of preschool facilities, and improve early childhood education (Collins 2019: 116).

The previously outlined unequal distribution of unpaid work can be perceived differently. Especially regarding gender, there can be found differences in the perception of work. Tsui-o Tai and Janeen Baxter's study investigates the perception of fairness in the allocation of housework (Tai and Baxter 2018). Seemingly, "perceptions of housework divisions are gendered" (Tai and Baxter 2018: 2463). Namely, women do not always

see this unequal allocation as unfair. Those who do, however, long for a change in the division, while, not surprisingly, men prefer to uphold the status quo (Tai and Baxter 2018: 2463). Furthermore, the results indicate that the perception of the housework division mediates the relationship between housework division and disagreement. Especially the perception of fairness is important here. More precisely, these findings imply that if women consider the division as fair, even when doing the larger share, the arrangement will not change. Nevertheless, when women consider it unfair, this leads to conflict and disagreement, which in turn offers the possibility of a better arrangement (Tai and Baxter 2018: 2478). Additionally, this connection is moderated by relative income. Hence, “social contexts provide important information in understanding interpersonal power dynamics and relationships within households” (Tai and Baxter 2018: 2479). This points us back in the direction of the larger societal context, which encompasses welfare regimes, policies and gender ideology, and the individual level with power bargaining. Another qualitative study goes more in depth in analysing this perception of fairness. Peter Walters and Gillian Whitehouse’s study portrays how women, who do more share of unpaid housework, view this inequality (Walters and Whitehouse 2012). Generally, the women were aware of this inequity. They reflected the gendered roles they fulfilled in their respective household and the inequality that ushered them to these roles.

Lastly, the feminist critique points out that different family models are not considered. These entail different normative assumptions concerning how paid and unpaid work should be divided and especially who should be responsible. In the male-breadwinner model prevails a traditional division of labour, where the husband is the head of the household who provides for the family. The wife is responsible for the unpaid work, caring for children and the household (Sainsbury 1996: 41). This ideology is reflected in the policies and family laws of the respective country. Lewis points out that “modern welfare regimes have all subscribed to some degree to the idea of a male-breadwinner model” (Lewis 1992: 162). In a more recent work, Esping-Andersen points out that “women’s employment is becoming key to household living standards” (Esping-Andersen 2003: 600). In many countries, it is not sufficient anymore for only the man to work. In contrast to this model stands the individual model, which does not have a favoured family form. Both adults “share the tasks of financial support and care of their children” (Sainsbury 1996: 42). Generally, in Europe, the male breadwinner model is slowly being replaced by a dual wage earner model, where both adults work. This shift is particularly apparent in the Scandinavian countries. Given the introduction of new family and work policies, as they were talked about prior, Rachel A. Rosenfeld et al. claim that, gradually, Germany will shift into a dual-earner and dual-carer society (Rosenfeld et al. 2004). However, given the incongruous incentive structures that are in place today “a fully gender-symmetrical arrangement is unlikely” (Rosenfeld et al.

2004: 121). Hence, a concordant work-family policy is still needed to move to such a gender-egalitarian society. Essentially, although Germany implements more egalitarian gender policies, “a traditional gendered division of labor [...] prevails” (Bariola and Collins 2021: 1684). Seemingly, this change has not yet completely transcended into the distribution of unpaid work (Boje 2007: 390). What changed, however, is that the dual-earner model led to the development of more care services (Orloff 2009: 325). These public services for childcare are especially important for the employment of mothers. Particularly single mothers are vulnerable to poverty, due to the loss of their man’s income (Orloff 2009: 327). Conversely, this dire situation of lone mothers could serve as an example for women to stay within their marriage. Thus, if single mothers would have better circumstances and protection, partnered women could have more power within their marriages. Additionally, the situation of lone mothers can be seen as a reflection of the welfare’s ability to attend to women’s vulnerabilities (Orloff 2009: 327).

Nino Bariola and Caityln Collins pick up these points of critique and analyse the gendered politics of pandemic relief in the corona crisis (Bariola and Collins 2021). They compare the different strategies of three countries, namely Denmark, Germany, and the United States, which fit into one of the regime-types (Bariola and Collins 2021: 1672). Their findings show that corporatist and particularly social democratic countries have more charitable support compared to liberal states (Bariola and Collins 2021: 1672). They illustrate that the implemented policies reflect cultural expectations relating to the state, market, and family.

The pandemic in Germany was marked by lockdowns and the closure of public institutions and cultural facilities (Bariola and Collins 2021: 1681). People’s work life changed, especially those jobs affected by the implementation of social distancing measures, leading to decreased work hours or, if the job allowed, working from home (Hipp and Bünning 2021: 659). What affected families most was the long shutdown of schools and childcare institutions (Bariola and Collins 2021: 1683). The implemented measures reflect the corporatist regime, where the family, particularly mothers, are expected to provide unpaid work (Bariola and Collins 2021: 1681). Lena Hipp and Mareike Bünning go so far as to state that these pandemic measures revived this type of welfare state, as the policies implemented before the crisis were oriented towards promotion of a dual-earner and dual-carer model (Hipp and Bünning 2021: 659).

Studies analysing the first few months of the first implementation of pandemic measures in Germany show, that, generally, women still did most of the unpaid work. Katja Möhring et al., for instance, looked at the time after the first implementation of pandemic measures, from March and April 2020 (Möhring et al. 2020). Their results indicate that most parents took care of their children at home and in half of the cases



the mother took over the care by herself. In this vein, Christian S. Czymara et al. showed that in the first few weeks of the lockdown, women addressed childcare more frequently than men, who were more invested in talking about paid work (Czymara et al. 2021). Hipp and Bünning's study shows comparable results (Hipp and Bünning 2021). Their results from survey waves between March and August of 2020 show that there had been minor changes in the division of additional childcare that was needed due to the measures. Nonetheless, mothers still did more unpaid work in comparison to fathers. The study also investigated the division of housework, which did not change in this period. Additionally, regarding work, the results of Möhring et al. show that about a quarter of workers worked from home, and these respondents were disproportionately better educated and well-paid (Möhring et al. 2020). However, roughly half of the workers continued working from their usual workplace. The workers most affected by job loss were people with less income.

Globally, women shoulder more unpaid care work than men. This gendered division of labour in the household is only changing slowly (Bahn et al. 2020: 696). With the closure of care institutions, this workload increased, making the family take over more of these tasks. Basically, the pandemic intensified the existing inequalities. The OECD talks about a "momcession", implying that mothers were especially affected by the crisis, making them carry the bulk of the care work (Scarpetta et al. 2021: 3). The paper shows that the pandemic's results "reflect[s] longstanding inequalities in unpaid work, women's weaker labour force attachment, and women's relatively lower wages" (Scarpetta et al. 2021: 14). All these marked women as the main caregiver. Essentially, the corona crisis exacerbated the gender gap and inequalities.

Gundula Zoch et al.'s study illustrates that this exacerbation of gender inequality in unpaid work affects subjective well-being (Zoch et al. 2022: 1970). In Germany, just like in other countries, women were most encumbered by the closure of schools and other childcare facilities (Zoch et al. 2022: 1971). Due to the heightened care work and reduction of social life, mothers' life satisfaction decreased strongly. This harsh decline corroborates the claims that the pandemic was characterized by a gendered division of care work and may even exacerbated this (Zoch et al. 2022: 1986). Hipp and Bünning's study supports this claim; their findings show that women—mothers in particular—were less satisfied than men were with their jobs, families, and life in general at the start and midpoint of the lockdown, and that this difference in satisfaction with work persisted until the end of the lockdown (Hipp and Bünning 2021). Furthermore, Zoch et al. show that fathers' work satisfaction decreased, due to the curtailing of working hours and the resulting decrease in income (Zoch et al. 2022). This involuntary reduction, which commonly leads to a loss of income, hits men harder as they still strongly identify with the role of the main breadwinner, especially in the German conservative welfare

regime (Zoch et al. 2022: 1973). Seemingly, the crisis affected subjective well-being on account of gender-specific contexts (Zoch et al. 2022: 1985).

### **3. Data Analysis and Discussion**

This chapter is structured along the most important points for discussion. All tables not included in the text can be found in the appendix. Firstly, I will discuss the results of the gender gap in both housework and care work and changes in their distribution due to the pandemic. Reflecting on the theoretical part, which showed that women are shouldering most unpaid work, it can be anticipated that this would also be reflected in the data. Thus, I expect that women were mostly responsible for both care work and housework.

Regarding changes due to the pandemic, it is expected that the distribution will become more unequal. This is because the corporatist welfare state encourages this division of labour, where the woman is responsible for the unpaid work and the man for the paid work. Germany's measures to contain the coronavirus were marked by a long closure of care facilities. Therefore, the state relied on the family even more to provide care work. It is expected that women, particularly mothers, needed to shoulder more. The mother is marked as the primary caregiver, as the policies in a corporatist regime encourage traditional families. Thus, the crisis magnified the burden on women, resulting in rising gender inequality.

Secondly, the influence of sociodemographic factors will be analysed. The variables relating to unpaid work will be correlated with sociodemographic variables, including occupation, income, education, and the presence of children in the household to see how they influence the division of unpaid work. It is expected that for respondents with children, the distribution is less equal. This is because of the existing policies that encourage the mother to take on most of the caregiving. For education, it is expected that respondents with higher education also have a more equal distribution of unpaid work. Due to the bargaining theory, it can be hypothesized that a person with higher education would have more job opportunities and a higher income and, hence, more power to demand an equal distribution of unpaid labour. For occupation, it is expected that full-time workers would have a more equal distribution. Due to people with higher incomes being able to work more often from home, the unpaid work could be split up more equitably. Additionally, the bargaining power of women with more income could apply here as well.

Furthermore, I will analyse diverse groups of women, for instance, based on different incomes. This will allow me to make comparisons and see how the pandemic affected them, as the measures and policies affect certain groups of women differently. Therefore,



my data will allow me to consider diverse groups of women and the pandemic's effect on the arrangement of care- and housework. Lastly, the gender disparity in perception of the division of both housework and care work will be analysed and discussed.

To answer my research question, I use data from the research "Auswirkungen der Covid-19-Pandemie auf Konvivialität und Ungleichheiten in Berlin". It was gathered for the Institute for Latin American Studies at Freie Universität Berlin as part of the research project Mecila - Maria Sibylla Merian Centre: Conviviality-Inequality in Latin America. The project analyses the social, economic, political, and cultural consequences of Covid-19 and compares the countries Argentina, Brazil, Germany, and Mexico. For my analysis, I drew on three survey waves of a telephone survey that were collected from January to June 2022. The survey asked a wide range of questions on respondents' everyday experiences during the pandemic. The respondents were over 18 years old and living in Berlin. Altogether, 2,502 individuals were interviewed by telephone for about 20 minutes. The statistical program STATA was used for analysis of the data collected. Here, frequency tables and correlation tables were produced with column percentages. Depending on the characteristic of the variable, meaning how many categories it encompasses, either Cramer's V (for variables with multiple categories) or Phi (for binary variables) was calculated as the correlation coefficient, indicating the strength of the relationship between the two variables. These measures of association were used due to nearly all the variables being nominally scaled.

### 3.1 Gender and the Division of Unpaid Work

**Table 1. Frequency table, Mother does most of the care work**

Mother does most care work	Frequency	Percent	Cumulated
No	188	36.22	36.22
Yes	331	63.79	100.00
Total	519	100.00	

Firstly, the results show that women are responsible for most unpaid work. As anticipated, women are mostly responsible for care work. Here, I looked at two variables. The first one shows how many respondents stated that the mother was responsible for most of the care work when schools and kindergartens were closed, which amounted to 63.78% of respondents (Table 1). This variable only included respondents with children (0-17 years old) in their household.

**Table 2. Frequency table, Who helps with the children's homework?**

Person helping with homework	Frequency	Percent	Cumulated
Father	47	12.74	12.74
Mother	195	52.85	65.58
Parents equally	76	20.60	86.18
Other family member	14	3.79	89.97
Other/None	37	10.03	100.00
Total	369	100.00	

The second variable asked respondents, only including those who have children of school age (6-17 years old) in their household, about who helps the child with their homework. Here, mostly mothers, namely 52.85%, are responsible as well (Table 2).

**Table 3. Correlation Table with column percentages, Person doing the most housework and gender**

Person doing most of the housework	Female	Male	Total
Her/himself	60.27	19.27	42.83
Partner	6.89	36.38	19.43
Mother	1.85	4.32	2.90
Father	0.12	0.50	0.28
Children/other	0.49	0.17	0.35
Equal division	30.38	39.37	34.20
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.4671

The results of the distribution of housework point in the same direction (Table 3). As expected, 60.27% of women answered that they do the most housework. This stands in contrast to 19.27% of men who said they do the most housework. A larger portion of them said that their partner is responsible for most of it. Assuming a heterosexual partnership, the responses by men imply that, again, their female partner does most of the housework. There is a moderate to strong correlation between housework and gender, with a coefficient of 0.4671. This coefficient is one of the highest coefficients throughout this study, demonstrating that being female means doing most of the housework.

Generally, these results for the distribution of both housework and care work are in line with the assumed expectations as well as the canon of the literature. Furthermore, they reflect the norms in Germany's type of welfare state. In a corporatist welfare state, women are expected to be responsible for unpaid work, as a traditional division of

labour is encouraged. Gender helps in predicting who does most of the housework. The pandemic measures that were implemented amplified this traditional division. These measures can be seen as a step backwards toward the reviving of this traditional arrangement, standing in contrast to the dual-earner and dual-carer policies that were implemented in Germany in the last years. Certain policies can push for equality, while at the same time others do not (Orloff 1993). Hence, they are crucial for women's circumstances, and here, especially the arrangement of paid and unpaid labour.

### 3.2 Sociodemographic Factors and the Division of Unpaid Work

**Table 4. Correlation Table with column percentages, help with homework and income in euro**

Person helping with homework	Up to 1,000	1,001-3,000	3,001-6,000	6,001-10,000	Over 10,000	Total
Father	14.29	11.11	14.37	10.87	18.18	13.01
Mother	42.86	55.56	54.02	50.00	45.45	53.47
Parents equally	14.29	20.37	19.54	17.39	27.27	19.65
Other family member	0.00	6.48	2.30	4.35	0.00	3.76
Other/None	28.57	6.48	9.77	17.39	9.09	10.12
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.0933

Furthermore, the sociodemographic factors analysed also affect the distribution of unpaid work. Firstly, there are differences regarding the level of income. The variable income was calculated as the net monthly income of a household, after deducting taxes and social insurance, but including things such as pensions, public, child or unemployment benefits. Regarding the division of housework, the findings show a more equal distribution in the highest income bracket, while the opposite holds for the lowest segment (Table 4).

**Table 5. Correlation Table with column percentages, Person doing the most care work and income in euro**

Person doing the most care work	Up to 1,000	1,001-3,000	3,001-6,000	6,001-10,000	Over 10,000	Total
Mother	44.44	43.70	30.25	28.26	27.27	34.40
Father	22.22	26.67	34.87	30.43	36.36	31.66
Other family member	0.00	0.74	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.23
Friends/ neighbours	11.11	2.96	2.10	4.35	0.00	2.73
Official alternatives	11.11	6.67	12.61	6.52	9.09	10.02
Children alone at home	11.11	19.26	20.17	30.43	27.27	20.96
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V= 0.1065

Regarding care work, there emerged a similar pattern. Namely, the percentage of respondents answering that the mother does most decreases with higher income (Table 5). The mother does most in the lowest segment, namely 44.44% of respondents here answer that the mother does most care work. The least answer that in the highest segment, namely 27.27%. The reversible effect can be found for fathers, namely in the highest salary segment respondents answered that the father does most care work, namely 36.36%. For the lowest income group, this is 22.22%. There is a weak correlation between both variables. A higher income indicates the mother is less responsible for doing most of the care work. This is in line with the results by Möhring et al. (Möhring et al. 2020). Namely, with rising income the percentage of shared care and care provided only by the man increases as well. The researchers state that this could be explained by the fact that people with higher income were more likely to work from home and, therefore, were able to split up caregiving between themselves and their partner. This could also explain the results for housework, as those with higher incomes were more likely to work from home and thus were able to divide the housework more equally. These findings can also be explained by the bargaining power of the women with more income, namely that they can opt out of doing most of the care work, either through outsourcing this or through convincing their partner to do more.

**Table 6. Correlation Table with column percentages, Mother does most of the care work and work**

Mother does most care work	full-time	part-time	not working	housewife	Total
No	40.00	27.27	40.85	18.75	36.22
Yes	60.00	72.73	59.15	81.25	63.78
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.1331

Secondly, the type of work, such as whether a respondent works full-time, part-time, or not at all, affects the distribution as well. Generally, regarding care work, more part-time workers (72.73%) said that the mother does most of the care work, compared to full-time workers (60%) (Table 6). The highest percentage of respondents answering that the mother does most can be found for housewives. The coefficient of 0.1331 shows a small correlation between both variables. As mostly women are working part-time, they are responsible for caregiving as well.

**Table 7. Correlation Table with column percentages, help with homework and work**

Person helping with homework	full-time	part-time	not working	housewife	Total
Father	16.44	6.45	6.52	18.18	12.74
Mother	49.32	56.99	59.52	72.73	52.85
Parents equally	21.92	21.51	15.22	9.09	20.60
Other family member	1.83	6.45	8.70	0.00	3.79
Other/None	10.50	8.60	13.04	0.00	10.03
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.1320

Regarding the second variable related to care work, namely helping with homework, the results show that full-time workers report less so that the mother helps with homework (49.32%). These percentages are higher for part-time workers (56.99%) and others, such as those not working (56.52%) (Table 7). There is a weak correlation, where with rising time due to working less the mother does most of the care work. This can be explained by the higher percentage of women being part-time workers, which causes them to take on more of the care work due to the partner working more. Obviously, full-time workers also have less time to help their children with homework. What is more, through the shift to remote work, as mentioned earlier, the distribution of care work could become more equal. For instance, Thomas Lyttelton et al. show with US data, that when working from home the childcare hours of fathers increased (Lyttelton et al. 2022: 246).

**Table 8. Correlation Table with column percentages, Person doing the most housework and work**

Person doing most housework	full-time	part-time	not working	housewife	Total
Her/himself	34.44	60.27	44.18	79.31	42.84
Partner	24.32	8.22	18.93	0.00	19.41
Mother	2.27	2.28	4.14	0.00	2.89
Father	0.15	0.46	0.39	0.00	0.28
Children/other	0.15	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.35
Equal division	38.67	28.77	31.56	20.69	34.23
Total	100.0	100.0	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.1390

There was also an effect of the type of work on the distribution of housework (Table 8). When respondents work full-time the division is more equal. 38.67% of full-time workers say that housework is divided equally, in comparison to 28.77% of part-time workers. The correlation between these two variables is weak, with a coefficient of 0.1390. One reason could be that when both partners work full time, they subscribe more to the dual-earner model and hence hold more egalitarian attitudes which leads to a more equal division. This does not mark one person, mostly the one not working full-time which often is the woman, as the one responsible for most unpaid work.

**Table 9. Correlation Table with column percentages, Person doing the most housework and gender for full-time working respondents**

Person doing most housework	Female	Male	Total
Her/himself	53.50	15.66	34.49
Partner	10.03	38.55	24.36
Mother	2.43	2.11	2.27
Father	0.30	0.00	0.15
Children/other	0.30	0.00	0.15
Equal division	33.43	43.67	38.58
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.4441

To further explore this more equal arrangement of housework for fully employed respondents I investigated the answers of full-time workers more closely. For all full-time working respondents, the results show that females still say they do most of it, namely 53.50%. This stands in contrast to 15.66% of full-time working males stating that they do most of the housework (Table 9). Thus, even when working full-time, women claim that they still are responsible for most of the housework. With 0.4441, the

correlation coefficient points towards a moderate to strong correlation between who spends most time on housework and gender for full-time working respondents. With being female, the percentage of women answering that they do most of the housework increases as well. Hence, even when both partners work full-time, gender seems to be the decisive factor in the division of housework. Generally, this holds true for care work as well, where the gender gap persists, even when women work full-time (UNIFEM, 2000).

A mechanism through which this finding can be explained is deviance neutralization. Namely, when the woman earns more than their partner, she does more unpaid work to neutralize this non-normative division (Grunow 2019: 270). This could also be the case when the woman works full-time, standing in contrast to the traditional and widely common male main earner and woman part-time earner arrangement in Germany. Moreover, this unequal division could be a way to solidify their female gender identity; when women have a similar or higher salary than their male partner, “they may still take on a greater share of childcare and household duties to enact and maintain gender identities” (Hipp and Bünning 2021: 662). Some women may do more housework, to conform to their gender role. As there are more traditional values in Germany than in other countries, this could mean that people harbour more of such values. Thus, while couples may not adhere to the traditional gender roles as they both work full-time, the prevailing gender ideology can still influence the division of housework in the household.

**Table 10. Correlation Table with column percentages, Person doing the most housework and monthly income in euro for full-time working female respondents**

Person doing the most housework	Up to 1,000	1,001-3,000	3,001-6,000	6,001-10,000	Over 10,000	Total
Her/himself	66.67	59.76	54.34	46.00	37.50	54.11
Partner	0.00	4.88	12.72	8.00	25.00	10.13
Mother	0.00	4.88	0.58	4.00	12.50	2.53
Father	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	0.32
Children/other	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	0.32
Equal division	33.33	30.49	32.37	38.00	25.00	32.59
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V= 0.1451

Considering these results, I now only looked at full-time working female respondents and income. This is because, as illustrated earlier, there were differences in distribution for the income levels. For the arrangement of housework, the higher the income, the less frequently a woman reports that she does most of the housework. And, reversely, the response that the partner does the most housework when a woman's salary fits



into the highest income segment and least in the lowest income segment (Table 10). The percentage of women answering that they do most of the housework continuously decreases when income increases; 66.67% of female respondents answered that they do most of the housework themselves in the lowest income bracket, while 37.50% answered this in the highest income bracket. The most equal division between partners are for respondents earning 6,001€ to 10,000€ per month, namely 38% of women reported an equal division. The results indicate a weak correlation between income and housework for full-time working women, indicating that rising income indicates the percentage of the partner doing the most housework increases as well, while the percentage of women doing the most housework decreases. A reason for this could be that the woman outsources the housework, which women with a lower salary are not able to do. Additionally, when the woman earns more, she has more bargaining power to advocate for her partner to be responsible for the housework. Moreover, this finding could also be due to people with higher incomes adhering to more egalitarian views, due to both working or even only the woman being the main breadwinner, which stands in contrast to the male-breadwinner model a conservative welfare state like Germany advocates. However, the data shows that for equal division, the results are not that continuous and clear-cut. Namely, the female respondents claimed an equal division was highest when earning 6,001€ to 10,000€. However, this is the second-highest salary segment, hence could still support this interpretation. Interestingly enough, after that followed the lowest segment, where 33.33% of women stated that the housework is distributed evenly.

**Table 11. Correlation Table with column percentages, Mother does most of the care work and monthly income in euro for full-time working female respondents**

Mother does most care work	Up to 1,000	1,001-3,000	3,001-6,000	6,001-10,000	Over 10,000	Total
No	0.00	39.02	42.11	52.17	33.33	42.36
Yes	100.00	60.98	57.89	47.83	66.67	57.64
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.1158

**Table 12. Correlation Table with column percentages, Mother does most of the care work and degree-holding for full-time working female respondents**

Mother does most care work	No degree	Degree	Total
No	52.94	40.00	43.06
Yes	47.06	60.00	56.94
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Phi = 0.1297

Given the special case of full-time working women regarding the division of housework, I also looked at care work more closely. When only considering the answers of full-time working women regarding different incomes, we see that most of them answer that the mother does most in the lowest salary segment (Table 11). This may be due to the partner being the main breadwinner, as the salary of the woman is low. Additionally, this implies less bargaining power to challenge this arrangement. For low-income mothers, raising children can be a way of demonstrating competence and self-worth and gaining validation for being a mother (Edin and Kefalas 2005). The lowest income bracket follows the highest paid segment with 66.67% of women answering that they do most of the care work, which was a surprising finding. The trend of high-income women increasing their time spent on childcare, as Lightman and Kevins point out, could explain this (Lightman and Kevins 2021). Moreover, those with more income and better education are generally more able to work from home (Möhring et al. 2020). Thus, these women could have more time to take on the care work. This could also be a reason for the result that full-time working women with a university degree report that they do most care work, more so than those without (Table 12). There is a weak correlation between the variables, meaning that for full-time working women, more income indicates a smaller percentage of women answering that they do most of the care work. However, there is no clear-cut and continuous distribution among income as is the case with housework, where the higher the income the less women answer that they do most of the care work.

**Table 13. Correlation Table with column percentages, Person doing the most housework and children**

Person doing most housework	Child	No Child	Total
Her/himself	53.02	37.35	42.84
Partner	16.53	20.96	19.41
Mother	2.22	3.26	2.89
Father	0.40	0.22	0.28
Children/other	0.40	0.33	0.35
Equal division	27.42	37.89	34.23
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.1543

The presence of children in the household influences the arrangement of unpaid labour as well (Table 13). Generally, the data shows that there is a more equal division of housework in childless households. Namely, 37.89% of childless respondents state that there is an equal division compared to 27.42% of those with children. Moreover, respondents with children say that they do most of the work themselves (53.02%), more so than childless respondents (37.35%). The coefficient points towards a weak

correlation, indicating that having no children means an increase in the percentage answering that there is an equal distribution.

**Table 14. Correlation Table with column percentages, Person doing the most care work and young children**

Person doing the most care work	With young children	No young children	Total
Mother	32.52	50.88	34.76
Father	31.30	31.58	31.33
Other family member	0.00	1.75	0.21
Friends/neighbours	2.69	1.75	2.58
Official alternatives	9.54	12.28	9.87
Children alone at home	23.96	1.75	21.24
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's  $V = 0.2278$

Regarding care work, especially the presence of young children (defined as children up to three years old) affects the arrangement. 50.88% of respondents with young children answer that the mother does most of it, corresponding to 32.52% for those without (Table 14). The respondents answer that fathers do most of it stays almost the same, whether there are young children or not. There is a weak to moderate correlation between the variables, with a coefficient of 0.2278, indicating that having a young child increases the percentage of mothers doing the most care work. These results imply that for young children, mothers do most of the care work. Especially young children in a household reinforce a traditional work allocation (Neilson and Stanfors 2014: 1067). Michael Kühhirt's study shows that the birth of a child leads to a rise in the domestic work women do and, conversely, decreases their contribution to paid work, while men's allocation stays relatively constant (Kühhirt 2012: 575). Hipp and Kathrin Leuze show that as soon as a couple becomes parents the woman starts working less (Hipp and Leuze 2015). Hence, it is important to consider the importance of the partners' relative resources and income potential in determining who is employed and to what extent (Hipp and Leuze 2015: 678). When the woman works less, naturally, she is expected to take on more of the unpaid labour. This can leave mothers economically dependent on men, especially considering the lack of provision of childcare in Germany. Although it expanded with the last implemented family policies it is still improvable and this lack was exacerbated by the closing of care facilities due to the pandemic. Especially for young children public childcare is lacking (Veil 2010: 219), leading the mother to take over most of the care. Thus, this traditional allocation of care work was pronounced. The results of housework could be connected to this. As mothers stay home to take care of their child, they are expected to do most of the housework as well. Furthermore, there is also more housework with a child in the household, especially young ones.

**Table 15. Correlation Table with column percentages, Person doing the most housework and degree**

Person doing most housework	No degree	With degree	Total
Her/himself	51.81	39.08	42.80
Partner	19.17	20.24	19.92
Mother	1.55	1.82	1.74
Father	0.26	0.21	0.23
Children/other	0.52	0.21	0.30
Equal division	26.68	38.44	35.00
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.1298

The variable degree influences the arrangement of housework as well. A degree here is defined as a university degree, including bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees. The results indicate that respondents with a degree (38.44%) report a more equal division (26.68%) than those without (Table 15). Furthermore, for those without a degree, 51.81% report her or himself doing most of the housework, for no degree this was 39.08%. There is a weak correlation between housework and degrees, indicating that respondents with a degree report a more equal division. This could be explained by the bargaining theory as well, as through a higher education a person has more opportunities in the job market and a higher salary, thus leading to more power to demand a more egalitarian distribution of unpaid labour in the relationship. Additionally, this gives women the opportunity to focus more on paid work (Hipp and Leuze 2015: 662). Moreover, it could be hypothesized that men with higher education hold a more egalitarian gender ideology and thus their share of housework is higher.

### 3.3 The Pandemic's Influence on the Division of Unpaid Work

**Table 16. Frequency table, Did the housework distribution change during the pandemic?**

Distribution changed	Frequency	Percent	Cumulated
Changed	196	13.83	13.83
No change	1221	86.17	100.00
Total	1417	100.00	

**Table 17. Frequency table, If distribution changed, it became more equal/unequal**

Distribution became more	Frequency	Percent	Cumulated
Equal	128	65.64	65.64
Unequal	67	34.36	100.00
Total	195	100.00	

But how did the pandemic affect this distribution of unpaid work? For the division of housework, the results indicate that for most respondents, namely 86.17%, the division did not change (Table 16). However, if it changed, most respondents (65.64%) said that it became more equal (Table 17), thus talking about a positive change. This was an unexpected finding, as I assumed the distribution to worsen due to the crisis. However, one must dig deeper here. As most people answered that the distribution did not change, one can suspect that women still do more unpaid work. Also, it could be the case that the amount of housework increased, and thus the person normally responsible for most of the work, namely women, had to shoulder even more of it. Thus, although the distribution may not have changed, the intensity and workload may have worsened, which, sadly, was not possible to see from the data. Furthermore, only 196 of the 2502 respondents answered that it changed, therefore the validity of this variable must be kept in mind (Table 16).

**Table 18. Correlation Table with column percentages, Did the housework distribution change and gender**

Distribution changed	Female	Male	Total
Changed	13.28	14.62	13.85
No change	86.72	85.38	86.15
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Phi = -0.0191

Additionally, there does not seem to be a correlation between the change of division and gender (Table 18).

**Table 19. Correlation Table with column percentages, Did the housework distribution change and working status**

Distribution changed	full-time	part-time	not working	housewife	Total
Changed	15.54	13.70	12.06	6.90	13.83
No change	84.46	86.30	87.94	93.10	86.17
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.0540

Most respondents claiming that the distribution changed, which amounts to only a small fraction of all respondents, were working full-time (Table 19). A reason for this could be that the pandemic gave the possibility to work from home, leading to more flexibility, which led to a more equal division of housework as both man and woman are at home. This effect of working from home is especially pronounced for men, where this flexibility leads to taking on more of care work (Alon et al. 2020). However, this effect diminishes when the female partner is able to work from home as well. Moreover, the difference the pandemic made in men's time availability influenced their share of unpaid work immediately. This change in time availability of women, however, did not influence their share in the same way (Hank and Steinbach 2021).

**Table 20. Correlation Table with column percentages, Distribution became more equal and work**

Distribution became more	full-time	part-time	not working	housewife	Total
Equal	69.90	73.33	55.00	50.00	65.64
Unequal	30.10	26.67	45.00	50.00	34.36
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.1576

Furthermore, of those respondents who claimed the distribution changed, which was only a small part of the whole sample of respondents, more part-time workers than full-time working respondents say it turned more equal (Table 20). The correlation coefficient between the distribution and work points towards a weak correlation, where with working more the percentage answering that the distribution became more equal increases. A reason for this could be that full-time working women are bestowed with more bargaining power in their families (Orloff 1993). Bargaining power entails individual characteristics and how these affect the division of unpaid work. Through the individual resource of income, the woman could have more power in the relationship to demand an equal distribution.

What is more is that working couples could harbour more egalitarian gender beliefs, as they do not subscribe to a traditional division of labour. Otherwise, this could also be an indirect influence of gender again, as most full-time workers are men and women perceive the distribution as being less equal. This could allude to an apparent gendered perspective of distribution, which I will talk more about in detail now.

### 3.4 Gender Disparity in the Perception of the Division of Unpaid Work

Throughout the analysis, it became clear that there was a gender disparity in the perception of the distribution of both care- and housework. Tai and Baxter show that women do not always see the unequal allocation as unfair (Tai and Baxter 2018). Those who do, however, long for a change in the arrangement, while men are satisfied with upholding this unequal arrangement. If this unequal division is not considered unfair, it likely will not change. For many women, this unequal division may seem normal, since a corporatist welfare state, such as Germany, encourages this distribution. As Collins states “mothers seemed to find their partners’ comparative lack of involvement normal in their lifeworlds” (Collins 2019: 134). Often, men consider an unequal division of unpaid labour as fair, especially for care work regarding children (Koster et al. 2022: 698).

**Table 21. Correlation Table with column percentages, Mother does most of the care work and gender**

Mother does most care work	Female	Male	Total
No	33.94	40.43	36.29
Yes	66.06	59.57	63.71
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Phi = -0.0649

**Table 22. Correlation Table with column percentages, Father does most of the care work and gender**

Father does most care work	Female	Male	Total
No	74.24	49.47	65.25
Yes	25.76	50.53	34.75
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Phi = 0.2502

The findings for care work show this disparity. Namely, more women than men say that the mother does most of the care work (Table 21). Moreover, more men, namely 50.53% compared to 25.76% of women, stated that the father does most of the care



work (Table 22). There is a weak correlation between the variables, with a coefficient of 0.2520, indicating that males are more inclined to answer that the father does most. Seemingly, there is a great perception difference regarding fathers' participation in care work.

**Table 23. Correlation Table with column percentages, Father does most of the care work and monthly income in euro**

*Income up to 1,000*

Father does most care work	Female	Male	Total
No	100.00	50.00	80.00
Yes	0.00	50.00	20.00
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Phi = 0.5773

*Income 1,001-3,000*

Father does most care work	Female	Male	Total
No	77.36	46.34	68.71
Yes	22.64	53.66	31.29
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Phi = 0.3192

*Income 3,001-6,000*

Father does most care work	Female	Male	Total
No	70.12	48.51	61.89
Yes	29.88	51.49	38.11
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Phi = 0.2199

*Income 6,001-10,000*

Father does most care work	Female	Male	Total
No	74.19	59.09	67.92
Yes	25.81	40.01	32.08
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Phi = 0.1547

*Income over 10,000*

Father does most care work	Female	Male	Total
No	80.00	33.33	54.55
Yes	20.00	66.67	45.45
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Phi = 0.4709

Especially in low-income households, this gendered perception is more pronounced (Table 23). Here, 100% of females say that the father does not do most of the care work, whereas only half of male respondents state so as well. This indicates that women are aware of this unequal distribution. As analysed in Walters and Whitehouse's study, the interviewed women contemplated the gender roles they played in their households, as well as the inequality that led to these roles (Walters and Whitehouse 2012).

**Table 24. Correlation Table with column percentages, help with homework and gender**

Person helping with homework	Female	Male	Total
Father	5.63	24.82	12.77
Mother	61.47	38.69	52.99
Parents equally	17.32	25.55	20.38
Other family member	3.90	3.65	3.80
Other/None	11.69	7.30	10.05
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.3203

Furthermore, this gendered disparity regarding the perception also applies to who helps the child with their homework (Table 24). The data indicates that 61.47% of females say that the mother helps with homework, compared to 38.69% of males. Additionally, about one-fourth of males say the father helps with the homework and only about 5% of females state so as well. Also, more male respondents than female respondents answered that both parents help equally. I found a moderate correlation between the two variables. Male respondents saying more often that the father helps with homework could show that raising children, which this is a part of, is highly valued, especially compared to domestic chores (Walters and Whitehouse 2012). Thus, men may be more inclined to perceive themselves as helping more than the perception of women indicates.

**Table 25. Correlation Table with column percentages, Distribution became more equal and gender**

Distribution became more	Female	Male	Total
Equal	61.11	71.26	65.64
Unequal	38.89	28.74	34.36
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Phi = -0.1063

Regarding housework, however, there emerges a similar pattern. 39.37% of males say that the division of housework is equal, in contrast to 30.38% of women (Table 3). Additionally, a similar outcome can be seen for the statement that the distribution became more equal as a result of the pandemic (Table 25). Both these outcomes show that men, more so than women, view the division as equal. This could be explained by perceptions of unfairness being more pronounced for those who receive less benefit than for those who receive more benefit. Thus, women may feel this fairness more strongly, while men may still perceive this unfairness but feel less strongly about this inequity (Rapson and Hatfield 2012). Moreover, the gendered perception of distribution could allude to the undervaluing of unpaid work. Seemingly, many men do not see all the unpaid labour the woman does. While mothers’ caregiving is supported, both culturally and through policies, women don’t necessarily feel as if their caregiving is truly acknowledged and respected (Collins 2019: 309). Nonetheless, the pandemic’s results, such as men working more often from home, could have affected their view, and revealed to them the unpaid labour women shoulder, which, hopefully, could result in a more gender egalitarian attitude (Reichelt et al. 2021).

As illustrated in the theory section, the measures implemented by the states “are shaped by cultural frames about state-market-family relations” (Bariola and Collins 2021: 1672). For a conservative welfare state like Germany, the data analysed here show that the implemented measures encouraged a more traditional division of unpaid work. Although the work and family policies that were implemented in recent years promote a dual-earner and dual-carer model, the pandemic measures did not reflect this. Especially through the long closure of childcare facilities parents, particularly mothers, were urged to provide the additional care work. The unpaid work is still divided in a more traditional way, in which women shoulder more. A more equal arrangement was noted for childless, higher-income and higher-educated couples.

Regarding the social democratic welfare states, they already have a universal childcare system. When the pandemic hit, Denmark for instance made a big point to reopen childcare facilities, with some restrictions (Bariola and Collins 2021: 1680), and thus helping working parents in managing care and paid work.

This was far different in liberal welfare states. In the USA, for example, parents had to find a way to balance work and childcare, relating to the “cultural frame of personal responsibility” (Bariola and Collins 2021: 1686). The USA has no large support from institutions to alleviate the conflict between family and work. Schools for instance were closed for an extended period of time. Hence, working mothers were affected most, and urged to cut back on working hours (Bariola and Collins 2021: 1688). A solution often implemented by companies was the shift towards remote work. A study by Lyttelton et al. showed, with data from the USA, that telecommuting helped mothers to maintain their work hours (Lyttelton et al. 2022: 246). Nonetheless, this does not help in solving all the problems.

Generally, the policies of the respective states should notice how their measures affect women, especially mothers. The introduction of policies can support a more egalitarian equilibrium in households. Thus, policies should strive for a more equal distribution of unpaid work between women and men.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This paper has shown the impact the corona crisis had on the gender gap in care work and housework. The theoretical part explained types of welfare regimes, which differ in the way the state interacts with the market and family. These differences are reflected in policies related to the corona crisis. Furthermore, the feminist critique thereof was illustrated. Generally, I argue that the typology overlooks the gender dimension, including inequalities, women’s dependency on men, family models and the devaluing of unpaid work. Additionally, the pandemic is seen as an amplifier of inequalities. In Germany, the long lockdowns led to a long closure of childcare facilities. As expected in a corporatist regime the family, especially mothers, were expected to provide the unpaid work. Germany tries to advance more towards a gender-equal division of unpaid and paid work with the implementation of new and supportive work-family policies. Nonetheless, a congruent incentive structure is still needed, to fully move towards a gender-egalitarian arrangement of a dual-earner and dual-carer society.

The data showed that women are responsible for most unpaid work, including both care- and housework. Furthermore, for most respondents, the division of housework did not change due to the crisis. And if it did, the change was towards a more equal division. Regarding sociodemographic factors, the results show that childless couples, as well as full-time working respondents, those with a degree, and those with a higher income seem to have a more equal division of unpaid work.

For the diverse groups of women, the findings point into a similar direction. Especially mothers with young children do more of the care work. Full-time working women with a

higher income respond less that they do most of the housework, while they report more frequently that their partner does the most. For care work, full-time working women within the lowest income bracket respond most frequently that they are responsible for most of it.

There was a gender disparity in the perception of the distribution of unpaid work. For care work, more men than women stated that the father does most of it. Moreover, more males state that they help the child with homework or that both parents help equally. Regarding housework the pattern is similar. More men state the division is equal, as well as that the distribution became more equal due to the pandemic.

Taking these findings into consideration, the coronavirus crisis did increase the gender gap in some way, namely that mothers had to shoulder more. Otherwise, it also had a slightly positive impact, at least for a minority of people where the division of housework became more equal. For further research, it would be interesting to analyse data from surveys in other countries with different types of welfare states.

## 5. Appendix

**Table 1. Correlation Table with column percentages, Person doing the most housework and degree for full-time working female respondents**

Person doing most housework	No degree	With degree	Total
Her/himself	60.49	50.85	53.31
Partner	7.41	11.44	10.41
Mother	1.23	2.97	2.52
Father	0.00	0.42	0.32
Children/other	0.00	0.42	0.32
Equal division	30.86	33.90	33.12
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.1061

**Table 2. Correlation Table with column percentages, Person doing the most housework and abitur (secondary school completion degree) for full-time working female respondents**

Person doing most housework	No abitur	With abitur	Total
Her/himself	62.50	50.21	53.50
Partner	5.68	11.62	10.03
Mother	0.00	3.32	2.43
Father	0.00	0.41	0.30
Children/other	0.00	0.41	0.30
Equal division	31.82	34.02	33.43
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.1543

**Table 3. Correlation Table with column percentages, Did housework distribution change and children**

Distribution changed	Child	No Child	Total
Changed	20.32	10.33	13.83
No change	79.68	89.67	86.17
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Phi = 0.1382

**Table 4. Correlation Table with column percentages, Distribution became more equal and children**

Distribution became more	Child	No Child	Total
Equal	62.38	69.15	65.64
Unequal	37.62	30.85	34.36
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Phi = -0.0713

**Table 5. Correlation Table with column percentages, Person doing the most care work and degree**

Person doing the most care work	No degree	With degree	Total
Mother	34.51	34.71	34.66
Father	25.66	33.12	31.15
Other family member	0.88	0.00	0.23
Friends/neighbours	3.54	2.23	2.58
Official alternatives	13.27	9.55	10.54
Children alone at home	22.12	20.38	20.84
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.1188

**Table 6. Correlation Table with column percentages, Mother does most of the care work and degree***Respondents with no degree*

Mother does most care work	Female	Male	Total
No	36.36	48.98	41.27
Yes	63.64	51.02	58.73
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Phi = -0.1275

*Respondents with degree*

Mother does most care work	Female	Male	Total
No	33.48	34.48	33.82
Yes	66.52	65.52	66.18
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Phi=-0.0105



**Table 7. Correlation Table with column percentages, Person doing the most care work and *abitur***

Person doing the most care work	Abitur	No Abitur	Total
Mother	35.83	34.39	34.76
Father	22.50	34.39	31.33
Other family member	0.83	0.00	0.21
Friends/neighbours	3.33	2.31	2.58
Official alternatives	10.83	9.54	9.87
Children alone at home	26.67	19.36	21.24
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.1443

**Table 8. Correlation Table with column percentages, help with homework and *abitur***

Person helping with homework	No Abitur	Abitur	Total
Father	9.78	13.72	12.74
Mother	53.26	52.71	52.85
Parents equally	18.48	21.30	20.60
Other family member	8.70	2.17	3.79
Other/None	9.78	10.11	10.03
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.1551

**Table 9. Correlation Table with column percentages, help with homework and degree**

Person helping with homework	No Degree	Degree	Total
Father	10.47	13.60	12.80
Mother	48.84	54.40	52.98
Parents equally	22.09	20.40	20.83
Other family member	9.30	1.60	3.57
Other/None	9.30	10.00	9.82
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.1859

**Table 10. Correlation Table with column percentages, help with homework, degree and gender***Respondents without a degree*

Person helping with homework	Female	Male	Total
Father	0.00	25.71	10.47
Mother	62.75	28.57	48.84
Parents equally	15.69	31.43	22.09
Other family member	11.76	5.71	9.30
Other/None	9.80	8.57	9.30
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.4972

*Respondents with a degree*

Person helping with homework	Female	Male	Total
Father	7.98	24.42	13.65
Mother	60.12	44.19	54.62
Parents equally	17.79	24.42	20.08
Other family member	1.84	1.16	1.61
Other/None	12.27	5.81	10.04
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.2651

**Table 11. Correlation Table with column percentages, help with homework, abitur and gender***Respondents without abitur*

Person helping with homework	Female	Male	Total
Father	1.69	24.24	9.78
Mother	59.32	42.42	53.26
Parents equally	18.64	18.18	18.48
Other family member	10.17	6.06	8.70
Other/None	10.17	9.09	9.78
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.3697

*Respondents with abitur*

Person helping with homework	Female	Male	Total
Father	6.98	25.00	13.77
Mother	62.21	37.50	52.90
Parents equally	16.86	27.88	21.01
Other family member	1.74	2.88	2.17
Other/None	12.21	6.73	10.14
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Cramer's V = 0.3232

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