



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

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# Standing Committee on the Status of Women

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 010**

Thursday, December 10, 2020

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Chair: Ms. Marilyn Gladu





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• (1105)

[English]

**The Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC)):** I want to welcome everyone to meeting number 10 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House Order of September 23, 2020. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. The webcast will always show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee.

In order to have an orderly meeting, let's talk about a few rules.

Members and witnesses may speak in the official language of their choice. Interpretation services are available, and at the bottom of your screen you can choose “floor”, “English” or “French”.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. If you're on a video conference, please click on the microphone icon to unmute your mike. For those in the room, your microphone will be controlled as normal by the proceedings and verification officer.

I offer a reminder that all comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair.

Now we'll go into our panel on unpaid work.

Today as witnesses we have Andrea Doucet, who is a professor and Canada research chair in gender, work and care, and from the Vanier Institute of the Family, we have Nora Spinks, who is the president and CEO.

Each of you will have five minutes to make your opening remarks and after that we'll go into our round of questions.

Andrea, we'll start with you for five minutes.

**Professor Andrea Doucet (Professor and Canada Research Chair in Gender, Work and Care, As an Individual):** Thank you for inviting me to speak on this timely topic of women's unpaid work. I am speaking as the Canada research chair and project director of a new seven-year partnership grant funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. This grant is focused on policies, especially child care, parental leave and employment policies that support families' paid and unpaid work.

I am pleased to say that three of our grant partners are here today, Women and Gender Equality Canada, Statistics Canada and the Vanier Institute of the Family.

My short remarks are also informed by my 25 years of research on caregiving fathers and my methodological writing on how we measure unpaid care work.

I frame my remarks around what British feminist economist Diane Elson calls the three Rs for analyzing unpaid work: recognize, reduce and redistribute.

I will turn now to recognize. We recognize that care and the care economy underpins and makes possible the so-called real or essential economy. We recognize that our economy, in the words of my colleague Nancy Folbre, is actually taking a free ride on the care economy. Society gets a pass while women, especially mothers, take on the work and the costs of care. We recognize that care is a human, not a female, capacity. Men's involvement in care can be transformative for men, for families and for societies. We recognize the extraordinarily high socio-economic value of unpaid care work and the high economic value of investing in high-quality paid care work, including elder care and child care.

The economic benefits of investing in child care are well detailed in recent studies from the U.K. Women's Budget Group and from Jim Stanford of the Centre for Future Work. These economic benefits include, for example, direct and indirect job creation, increased tax dollars and increased GDP.

That brings me to my second point, reduce. How does one reduce unpaid work? In the global north, including Canada, a key social infrastructure to reduce women's unpaid work and to facilitate their paid work is child care. As well said in the recent throne speech, the time is now for significant, long-term, sustained investment in high-quality, affordable, accessible child care.

I will turn now to redistribute. A 2019 report by the International Labour Organization on unpaid care work analyzed time use surveys from 23 countries around the globe, including Canada. They concluded, “Across the world, without exception, women carry out three-quarters of unpaid care work, or more than 75 per cent of the total hours provided.... There is no country where women and men perform an equal share of unpaid care work.”

To redistribute unpaid work, there are at least two things to consider. First, how do we support father's involvement in unpaid work? One important argument repeatedly made by parental leave scholars, including myself, is that fathers' take-up of parental leave is a lever for gender change in paid and unpaid work. Just as the federal government is looking to the Province of Quebec for lessons on child care, we should look to Quebec for lessons on policy design that will support more fathers taking parental or paternity leave. I am happy to discuss this more in the question period.

A second point about redistributing unpaid work is how to measure it. The 1995 Beijing platform for action called upon countries to make visible and to measure unpaid work through time use studies. However, time use studies can only go so far in measuring unpaid work. They measure care and housework tasks, but they do not measure responsibilities for unpaid work. As I have argued for 25 years, it is the responsibilities for unpaid work that are extremely difficult to shift.

We need stronger methodological tools for measuring the responsibilities for unpaid work, for example, combining time use diaries with qualitative research on people's stories about how they use time and live time, or time diaries that include open-ended questions that tap into socio-cultural norms that underpin gendered responsibilities for unpaid work. We also need disaggregated data so that we can track diversity, equity and inclusion in unpaid work.

To conclude, according to the ILO, it will take around 210 years to close the gender gap in unpaid care work. The time to act is now.

Canada has been a leader on gender equality. It needs to act now on child care and parental leave. We need more and stronger data, and we need to harness that data in policy development.

Thank you.

• (1110)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Now we'll go to Ms. Spinks for five minutes.

**Ms. Nora Spinks (President and Chief Executive Officer, Vanier Institute of the Family):** Good day and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony here today. I would like to first acknowledge our meeting on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people and pay my respects to indigenous elders past, present and emerging.

It's an honour to appear today with my fellow panellists. I'm the president and CEO of the Vanier Institute of the Family. The institute is a research and education organization dedicated to understanding the diversity of families and the complexity of family life in Canada.

We are here today to discuss the critically important role women play in our families, communities, society and economy. To understand the valuable contributions women make, we need to frame women's paid and unpaid work caring for and supporting children, youth, adults and seniors within Canada's care economy. We need to deepen our understanding of and increase our investments in the care economy.

Historically, Canada, like most countries, has focused on creating a vibrant and prosperous market economy. Historically, care was largely provided by women in private homes. Today, the systems of care have become much more complex and more diverse. COVID has highlighted the strengths and vulnerabilities in our market economy and the need for a strong dynamic care economy.

Developing a strong, adaptable and vibrant post-pandemic care economy will make it possible for the Canadian government to meet domestic and international commitments and to meet or exceed public and global expectations. Today in Canada, as in most countries, care is still provided largely by women—care to family and friends, care provided through civil society, in the non-profit and philanthropic sectors and care delivered through government services such as hospitals and health science centres.

The market economy is our traditional frame of reference. A care economy is our emerging complementary intertwined economic force. The market economy has a financial focus based on the movement of financial capital and markets in businesses. The care economy has a human focus based on the movements of human capital between homes and communities. The market economy measures success by growth and wealth. The care economy measures success by growth and health.

When you buy a wheelchair, you make a purchase in the market economy. The wheelchair is a commodity. However, the occupational therapist who measures you for optimum fit, teaches you how to use it and supports you to integrate it into your life is part of the care economy. The care economy is driven by humanity and compassion, is based on dignity and respect and is framed around equity and fairness.

In the market economy, someone sells and someone buys goods or services. Goods and services have a cash or monetary value. In the care economy, someone provides and someone receives care. Care has intrinsic value. The market economy is based on cash transactions, on competition, market share and ownership. The care economy is based on relationships, compassion, sustainability and equity.

The market economy is based on private gain, measured by gross domestic product, or GDP. The care economy is based on public good, measured by gross domestic experience, also known as the human well-being index. The two economies together are required to maximize our national potential. The two economies together are core to our social and economic well-being. They are intertwined.

The two economies impact and are impacted by families. The two economies are influenced by cultural, political and environmental factors. They are interdependent. Either of the two economies can't function effectively without the other. They are like a ladder, with the two side rails being the market economy and the care economy, and the rungs of the ladder represented by the various systems—our monetary system, health care system, child care system and justice system, just to name a few.

For people to grow, to prosper and to progress up the ladder, all components need to be present and function well together. Investments in a care economy will benefit all Canadians regardless of socio-economic status, gender, abilities, immigration status or cultural background, but those who will benefit most in those investments are women.

• (1115)

In conclusion, if we recognize that women's unpaid and paid labour is critical for our social and economic well-being, if we frame women's contribution as part of the care economy rather than simply a subset of the market economy, and if we focus on the importance of relationships of care within the care economy, then together we will be able to optimize women's well-being.

I look forward to our conversations today. Thank you.

**The Chair:** That's very good. Thank you so much.

Now we're going into our first round of questions, starting with Ms. Wong for six minutes.

**Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair; and thank you to all of the panellists on a very important topic.

COVID-19 has served to highlight the critical intersection of family, aging and care work, especially for women. As we know, seniors are the most vulnerable and have borne the brunt of serious cases of COVID, including deaths.

Prior to hospitalization, many of these seniors were recipients of caretaker support, both formal and informal, as indicated by both of our panellists. Actually, those who have managed to avoid hospitalization are also receiving caretaker support.

My question is addressed to our second panellist.

On your website, you have a fair amount of literature discussing the impact of COVID-19 on the family. Has your organization done

any research specific to informal caregiver support? If you have, what have you found? If not, is this something your organization would consider looking at in the future?

I have learned so much from both of you. As a former researcher myself, I'll say we've definitely gone to a new paradigm right now.

**Ms. Nora Spinks:** Thank you for that great question.

It has been a really important period of time for social research. We have this unexpected opportunity to deeply understand the dynamics and the interplay with families and community. A big part of that is the role that caregivers play.

When we talk about care, we talk about two distinctive groups. Often both groups represent women largely, the caregivers and what is often referred to as the informal care providers. We don't like the idea of "informal". There's nothing informal about it. They're giving care and they give it without any recognition, without any support and without any acknowledgement in a lot of cases. They give care. Care providers provide care. They're paid. They're structured. They might be volunteers, but they are associated with some type of entity.

During COVID, going back to March, we started working with some partners to poll families week over week. Since then, we have been exploring all aspects of COVID and the impacts it has on family.

One of the most significant ones is the challenge that families face in either being locked in or locked out during lockdown with respect to senior care. I might be locked in and not have access to supplementary care. Over the summer, I was providing palliative care. I was locked in providing senior services. The care sector was locked out. They couldn't come in. The palliative care nurses stopped coming. The personal support workers stopped coming. They weren't available to me. My colleague was locked out of the long-term care facility that her mother was in. She used to go regularly. She used to attend. She used to provide supplementary supports.

The research shows that both those experiences are real and have a huge impact on our ability to participate in the paid labour force, but also in the quality of the experience that seniors have. Whether you're locked in or locked out, there are excruciating decisions that need to be made. There are circles of support that need to be in place in order for that to happen. We've seen women having to leave paid employment for periods of time, if not permanently, in order to fulfill their care responsibilities. Therefore, it is a really important thing that we need to continue to monitor as we go forward.

• (1120)

**Hon. Alice Wong:** Thank you very much.

You already answered part of my second question. That's about the impact of COVID on being locked in and locked out and the social isolation. Seniors are probably the hardest hit, as I mentioned in my first question. Because of the death toll in homes for seniors and long-term care homes, a lot of families are reluctant to even send their seniors back to care homes. Now you have additional family care duties for the caregivers, whether they be parents, children or even young people.

My focus is on caring for the carers. They put so much passion and human value into it, which is exactly what our panellists just mentioned. My focus is on caring for the mental health especially of our caregivers. Do you have any insight on this, please?

**Ms. Nora Spinks:** Research is showing very clearly that connections make the difference. You can be living alone in a single-person household, but if you have connections, whether it's over the phone, online or in person, you will be in a position to achieve greater success and to experience less isolation and loneliness.

**The Chair:** Very good. That's time.

We'll go now to Ms. Dhillon for six minutes.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.):** Thank you to our witnesses for being here this morning.

I'll start with Andrea Doucet, who spoke very eloquently about the role of men when it comes to caregiving.

First, you spoke about the throne speech and our government's commitment to have high-quality care. What suggestions would you make to the committee on how we can give people good-quality care and fulfill our throne speech promise?

**Prof. Andrea Doucet:** On good-quality care, are you talking about child care in particular or just more broadly?

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** In general.

**Prof. Andrea Doucet:** If we look at the different policy domains and start with child care, we need well-paid child care workers. In the same way COVID-19 revealed the problems with marketized private elder care homes, where the care workers were moving between sites and were not supported, it's the same with child care. It's a low-paid occupation. Because it's low paid, a lot of men don't go in to it. There are a lot of arguments about how to change the social norms around care. It would be good to have men also involved in the early years of care.

It's about well-paid care. In same way that Nora was drawing the intraconnections between paid work and unpaid care work, which I think we both agree on, the ILO has what's called the "unpaid care work, paid work, paid care work circle". The paid care work is really, really important. Why are these workers so devalued? If we're going to value care work, it also means paying well the care workers, such as elder care workers and child care workers. That is how you recognize their work. You don't just praise them or clap for them at the end of the day, the way people do for health care workers. It's great, but it's not enough. We need to put money behind that.

That would be one answer in terms of how to recognize and value unpaid care work. Allow people to have a livable wage where they can work one job.

• (1125)

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** Perfect.

You spoke also about men providing care. Have you noticed, between the care men provide and women provide, if...? It's very curious, because care does end up falling to women, whether it's child care, an elderly parent, a sick spouse or anything like that. This is how it happens. We've noticed with COVID how much more intense that's become. Do you find that when men are doing the same care, they are facing the same challenges women are facing, with the same diminishment of funds, or even poverty, or getting to that line? Are men also facing that?

You said earlier that giving care is human work, that it shouldn't be men's work or women's work; it's human work. I found that very interesting. It speaks to equality as well. Do men become as disadvantaged or sacrifice in the same way women do when they have to leave their workplace? It would be very interesting to know that. We don't talk much about men giving care, because it's predominantly women.

**Prof. Andrea Doucet:** Thank you for the question.

Absolutely, to care is a human capacity. I would just make that point again. Thank you for picking up on it.

I've studied stay-at-home fathers, single fathers and LGBTQ fathers or gay father households. When men leave work to care, they face the same disadvantages as women in some ways, but one of my colleagues, R. W. Connell, argued many years ago that there is still a patriarchal dividend, so for men, even when they leave work, there is still an assumption that men are primary breadwinners, that there are still connections between men and power and public life.

They don't experience it in the same way socially, but certainly when men leave paid work to care, they do face some of the same disadvantages. Also, having studied this for over 25 years, I'd say they face different challenges, because in communities when fathers go into playgroups and these sorts of what I've called maternal-dominated spaces, it can be very challenging for them. We need to change the social norms. That's why parental leave and paternity leave have been very important to me as a scholar, because when you see men walking around with strollers, as you do in the Nordic countries, it begins to shift the idea that it's only women who can do that work, especially with young children.

I know there are cultural differences around this that we need to be really sensitive to. It means really looking at the social norms and how they are changing, but I would say, having studied men in caregiving, that when men do it, they change enormously, and it has benefits for women, for children and for families. They can do it as well as women can. There should be no difference. Sometimes it's in the eyes of the viewer that they see the difference.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** That's perfect. I just want to say—

**The Chair:** That's your time.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Larouche, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

My thanks to the witnesses for their presentations. It was a pleasure hearing what they had to say.

When you hear my questions, you will understand that I have been following this issue for a very long time and that it is very close to my heart.

However, witnesses and colleagues, I apologize because I would like to begin by introducing a notice of motion on an issue that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women may be considering in the near future. The issue was in the news this week and has affected us all very much. I'm sure you'll understand.

I'm just introducing a motion. I'll ask my questions right afterwards.

Let me read the motion once and then I will forward it to you after the meeting:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study on the sexual violence and exploitation experienced by women resulting from the distribution of pornography and child pornography for electronic commerce purposes by Canadian companies and companies that distribute pornography, including child pornography on Canadian soil with total impunity and under no Canadian legislative framework; that the committee examine as part of its work: (a) the case of the Pornhub digital platform that is owned by the Canadian business, MindGeek, whose headquarters are in Montreal, and that globally distributes pornography, including child pornography, produced and distributed with total impunity and without restrictions—

• (1130)

[*English*]

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.):** On a point of order, Madam Chair, does this relate to the topic of the study?

**The Chair:** My understanding is that she can bring the notice of motion, but there will be no debate on the motion. She just wants to

make sure it's on the record so that we can discuss it at the January meeting.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** We will indeed have other opportunities to debate the motion. I will finish reading it before asking my questions:

... (b) the devastating psychological effects on victims of sex crimes and the effects on the lives of women who appear in pornographic videos produced or distributed without their consent; (c) the legislative measures that could be taken to prevent the production or distribution of non-consensual pornography and all child pornography...

I will forward the motion to you after the meeting. Thank you very much for giving me the time to introduce this motion. I think it is an important issue.

I apologize again to the witnesses.

Since I do not have much time left, I will get right to the heart of the matter.

I was involved in the creation of the first Maison Gilles-Carle Foundation home, which provides care for caregivers. In my riding, in Granby, we also have the Maison soutien aux aidants, which does exceptional work.

It is essential to help caregivers, but I would like to know how it can be done if we do not have studies on the phenomenon. As you mentioned, it is important to measure the impact of invisible work. Questions prompting more information about invisible work may have been removed from the long form of the Statistics Canada census, and that's certainly not without consequences.

I'd like to hear what both witnesses think about this issue.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Doucet.

**Prof. Andrea Doucet:** Statistics Canada has been collecting the time use surveys, the time use studies, and has received high praise for doing that really well. It has been doing it for decades. Certainly since the 1995 Beijing platform for action, it has been accelerating on this. It's only every five years. The United States collects time use data every year. There is a question of whether or not we could collect it more often, but it is done with the census.

As I said in my remarks, I think we could do more. I think time use data tells us a lot about the activities and tasks that people do. There are ways to do it better especially if people are keeping time diaries during the day, rather than doing them retrospectively even within a day. I also believe that we should combine those with qualitative research, where we're interviewing people and shadowing people, spending time with them to see how they actually spend their days.

I think that's especially important with diverse populations. I think in indigenous populations there may be different conceptions of time. There's a lot that we could still tap into and do a better job of looking at how people live their everyday lives, but you can only get so much of that through numbers and through statistics. I think some of it is through stories and narratives, through talking to people and listening to people, and then telling those provocative, compelling stories, so that people understand and can create social change from those stories.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** We also discussed the importance of designating a day to raise public awareness about invisible work. Do you think that's a good idea?

[*English*]

**Prof. Andrea Doucet:** I think we already have a carers day in Canada. There is one day devoted to carers. Is that correct, Nora?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** No, there's no day specifically devoted to invisible work. The issue is much broader than just the work of caregivers. It also includes work in the family and volunteer work.

[*English*]

**Prof. Andrea Doucet:** That's a very good point. Volunteer work is a very, very important part of unpaid work. We've seen it through the pandemic. It's an important part of caring for our neighbours. I think with the climate crisis, the work that we need to do, the volunteer and community work that we need to do to care for our planet is going to become more important.

I think it's a great idea to have a larger carer day that recognizes all the invisible work that mainly women do. I like that idea.

**The Chair:** Okay.

We'll go to Ms. Mathysen for six minutes.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the witnesses.

The Vanier Institute did a study which stated that over their lifetimes, 30% of employed women caregivers report missing at least one full day of work; 6.4% retire early or they quit or lost paid jobs; and 4.7% turn down job offers or promotions because they were trying to balance paid and unpaid care work.

During the pandemic, New Democrats pushed the government for some paid sick leave to cover COVID-related illness and time off that was required and we were successful. How could a permanent paid sick leave program and those kinds of provisions help with the balance and the stresses that a lot of people, mainly women, experience because of these responsibilities placed upon them?

• (1135)

**The Chair:** Whoever wants to answer, it's fine.

**Ms. Nora Spinks:** Madam Chair, I think the question about managing multiple responsibilities at home, work and in the community is critically important for us to understand. There are public supports and then there are workplace supports. Andrea can speak specifically about some of the leave provisions, but one of the

things we've been exploring together is the concept of top-ups. We're all in this together, so if you're going to be on leave and you're going to be receiving benefits, a portion comes from the government through EI and often employers will top that up and either match or increase the amount of funds available for that employee when they are away.

That's one part. That's the predictable planned leave that we can manage in advance.

Then there are the short-term ones or the intense ones that are harder to manage and are harder to predict, but are often either the trigger or the final straw that results in somebody leaving the paid labour force. It's those unplanned, unexpected issues, like COVID, like mom breaking her hip or like a spouse having heart surgery.

Those kinds of situations you can't always predict are where we have a fairly big gap, and it's where the employee ends up bearing the brunt of that. They have to take time off, sometimes unpaid. They have to sometimes step right out of their career and take an unpaid leave or leave the workforce entirely. Often it's women and often, when it's related to elder care, it's later in their career path—not exclusively, but often—so it's a bigger financial hit, a bigger impact on their pensionable earnings and on their future earnings.

I think governments and public policy, but also employers and the labour movement, can work together to fill those gaps.

**Prof. Andrea Doucet:** To build on what Nora said, as you know, there are special benefits under EI—maternity and parental, compassionate and leave to care for a disabled family member—but as Nora said, the pandemic has demonstrated that we need a broader suite of special benefits if we're thinking about public policy.

In terms of parental leave, for example in Sweden, parental leave can be taken up to the child's age of eight, so they can respond to particular emergencies in the household, especially caregiving responsibilities, if the child is dealing with any mental health issues. This kind of thinking about leave beyond just the beginning and the end of life....



We've seen with the pandemic that all the way through life there are those moments of uncertainty. Women should not have to pay that high cost of leaving work, reducing work or jeopardizing their long-term economic earnings and pensions because of those uncertainties. I think public policy-wise, we could think more creatively about special benefits in a broader way.

Also, to build on what Nora was saying, the workplace policies are also really important. Nora Spinks and I are both involved in a project that is trying to put in place a caregiver standard in workplaces where employers would have a consistent way of working with employees when they have these caregiving responsibilities on a regular basis, if they're caring for an elderly person at home or a disabled family member. There needs to be some standard for this in workplaces so they, too, can accommodate workers, especially women, but hopefully men as well.

● (1140)

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** I do understand, because EI is so limited now, it has been cut back so much that expansions on that 55% are certainly not enough for the majority of people just to get by, so I understand. That is an excellent point.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** We will now go to our second round of questions.

Ms. Shin, you have five minutes.

**Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC):** Thank you so much.

I thank our witnesses this morning for providing us with their useful information, and things we need to step back and think more thoroughly through.

My first question has to do with mental health.

I recognize that a lot of unpaid care work comes through women who are not employed and in the workforce as well. They don't have access to workplace benefits, like mental health care and counselling services. There's probably a lot of stress and pressure. It's not easy taking care of people who are sick or going through hard times.

How do women who are unemployed but are providing this kind of care at home access support for mental health or support systems, especially during times, as you said, when these services are locked out? How are they accessing it? Are they accessing it? Are there any specific areas of mental health challenges they're expressing?

**Ms. Nora Spinks:** Mental health has been a concern for a long time. COVID has magnified, amplified and intensified the need for our understanding and recognition of the importance of mental health.

The research is clear. People who are trying to balance work and family and provide care during COVID are indicating their mental health has been impacted. We need to know where people are going for help. The first place they tend to go is their personal circle of support—their friends, colleagues, family members and extended family members. They're reaching out to each other. Then they go to their first circle of public support—usually their family physi-

cian. The family physicians are often the ones who have to give them the bad news that mental health services and treatment are really difficult to access. It's then that the pressure starts to build on these individuals and their families.

We have been conducting a study with family therapists across the country, and asking them what's coming through their doors. We're asking how well the therapists are doing, caring for those caregivers and those individuals dealing with their loneliness, anxieties and depression. We're seeing that family therapists, psychologists and sociologists across the country providing these services are finding that e-health and telehealth, providing counselling over the phone or over the Internet, is making it more accessible to more people. They're increasing access.

For some, they're indicating that it's increasing their effectiveness by being able to schedule these routines. They are also able to provide therapy while people are in their own environment. It provides them with a lot of information they wouldn't otherwise receive.

It's something we need to continue to monitor. Clearly, there is a shortage of mental health services. Certainly, from the COVID experience, telehealth and tele-counselling experiences are going to reshape mental health services for decades to come.

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** Professor Doucet, do you have anything to add?

**Prof. Andrea Doucet:** The mental health dimensions of unpaid work are not looked at enough. I would go back to the issue of measurement and data. Time use studies have looked at people's stress in terms of time. Again, if we did follow-up qualitative work, we could tap into people's stresses around time pressures and not being able to get through everything they need to get through in the day because of all the demands on them.

The mental health part of this is critical. I agree with Nora that it's been revealed even more through COVID.

● (1145)

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** Along the same lines, I would like to talk about respite and the opportunities for care workers, who are unpaid, to get a break. I've run into some single mothers in my constituency and other places. They have a very high need—

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, you're out of time.

We'll go now to Ms. Sidhu for five minutes.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to give some information. For mental health issues, especially for seniors who are in isolation, I am listening a lot, and I have talked to people in long-term care. I was so glad when the Prime Minister announced \$240 million to develop, expand and launch virtual care, which is the Wellness Together portal. When adults need a helpline they can text front-line workers at 741741. I'm getting a lot of positive feedback on the virtual care.

My question is for Ms. Spinks and anybody else.

There are federal support initiatives, such as the Canada child benefit. I want to let you know that in my riding of Brampton South, the Canada child benefit has helped over 24,000 children a year. I know other members have heard that too. For example, in Ms. Sahota's riding, 37,000 children are getting the benefit.

Has your research indicated that the Canada child benefit has helped families to access child care so that parents are more able to participate in the workforce instead of being dependent? I know mostly women are taking on child care and are not being paid.

Madam Chair, I want to share my time with Marc after this question is answered.

**Ms. Nora Spinks:** The child care benefit has certainly had a positive impact on families and family life.

What we've been asking during COVID.... In the early days of COVID, one of the highest levels of stress and anxiety was related to financial stress. People were worried they weren't going to have adequate income. That was their number one stress.

Once the CERB, the CCB and the supplementary benefits started to roll out, the financial anxiety started to decrease and other anxieties started to increase because of isolation. As somebody mentioned earlier, there was a need for respite, breaks and rest.

One of the things we have been documenting very clearly over the last several months is that people are running full out, non-stop. There are no breaks. There is no rest. There are no weekends. People are working. If you're working outside the home in the service sector or the health care sector, your hours have gone up; the demands on you have gone up and your number of shifts has gone up. If you're working from home, you are working well into the night and over weekends.

We really need to understand how significant financial assistance is in tempering the anxiety that people are feeling. This is the CERB, the CCB and some of the EI benefits that Andrea mentioned, with the extension of some of the available caregiver relief benefits that are targeted specifically to either veteran families or low-income families. Financial security makes a huge difference.

**The Chair:** Monsieur Serré.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Sidhu.

[*English*]

I am really proud that our government brought in shared parental leave. That's very important.

In 1994 and 1997, with the birth of my two girls, I was eligible for only 10 weeks of parental leave because my wife and I chose her to stay at home. She was eligible, at the time, for 25 weeks, so it was not even equal. I wondered why women could access 25 weeks and men couldn't access 25 weeks. I had only 10 weeks.

I want to know get your perspective. I don't have much time right now, with 30 seconds left, but can you provide the committee with any data or recommendations on why men should have an equal amount of parental leave? If women finish after six months, why can't the men access the other six months? Why is it not equal for men and women? As everyone says, men have to be part of this, but the system discriminates against men, if I may say it that way.

• (1150)

**The Chair:** Now you're out of time.

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Can you provide the committee—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry.

Now we'll go Madam Larouche for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

My thanks to the witnesses again.

Earlier, you touched on a subject that Mr. Serr  has just mentioned again, namely the role of men and how they can contribute to the family environment and do the invisible work.

I would also like to highlight the incredible success of paternity leave in Quebec. The numbers are impressive. Until 2006, only one Quebec father in five took a few days of parental leave; outside Quebec, only 10% to 15% of Canadian fathers took it. Today, 80% of Quebec fathers stop working when a child is born to care for the child for several weeks.

So the Quebec parental insurance plan, which replaced the Canadian parental leave in Quebec, has made a big difference for new fathers. It created a paternity leave reserved for them alone, which is not even transferable to the mother. This was an extraordinary step forward.

What measures could be created at the federal level to further encourage fathers? What other barriers could be removed to help fathers play more of a role in the family and do more of the invisible work?

[English]

**Prof. Andrea Doucet:** Thank you for raising the issue of fathers and paternity leave and highlighting how well Quebec has done on that front. You're absolutely right. More than eight out of 10 fathers take leave in Quebec, and one in 10 fathers in the rest of Canada.

What we can learn from Quebec is that the parental sharing benefit the federal government put in was a great move, but it didn't go far enough. The wage replacement rate is low compared to international standards. International commentators have argued that it should be at least 70% so that fathers can actually bargain with their workplaces and can actually take it or can feel that the family can afford for fathers to take leave.

The parental sharing benefit in Canada, unlike the QPIP benefit in Quebec, is not an individual non-transferable entitlement. It's actually dependent on the first parent or the mother. If the mother takes leave, then the father can take the parental sharing benefit, but we know that one-third of mothers in Canada do not receive benefits. There's already a disadvantage built in, and less economically advantaged families will be affected by that. We need to learn more from Quebec. I really think that we should just adopt a very similar model.

**The Chair:** Very good.

Now we'll go to Ms. Mathysen for two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Thank you.

I'd like to pick up where we left off on the extension of programs and benefits and looking at different alternatives. Certainly, for low-paid workers, having a guaranteed livable wage is key. New Democrats have been putting forward the idea of a basic income, a livable wage, so I wouldn't mind hearing you guys talk about that.

Also, there was mention of the ILO. They have had, since 2011, recommendation number 189 for countries to take on. It discusses and addresses unpaid work and domestic work. Canada hasn't signed on. I'm wondering how that would help to provide direction to Canada on this for unpaid work and care workers.

Thank you.

**Prof. Andrea Doucet:** They should definitely sign on to the ILO convention. Thank you for raising that point.

On the basic income, as you know, through COVID because of CERB there's been a really rich conversation. There's a UBC study that is about to come out soon, which looks at about five different models of the basic income or a minimum acceptable income. I'm looking forward to the research on this to see what version of this might work in a Canadian context.

I'll turn it over to Nora to see if she has anything to add.

• (1155)

**Ms. Nora Spinks:** No, I have nothing to add. Thank you.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** We've heard about the child tax benefit. It certainly has helped some, but it doesn't help all. Moreover, how would a universal affordable child care system, with an act attached for provinces to ensure that universality, better impact families and parents in this economy?

**Prof. Andrea Doucet:** Well, you need both. The child benefit increases were so widely praised and accepted. It's a very important initiative, especially for low-income families and single-parent families, but it doesn't replace a national child care program. They need to go hand in hand in the same way that we need to improve and enhance our parental leave system. They all work together so that families can care for their children, be financially supported to care for their children and are assured that their children are well cared for.

In the Nordic countries, it's a right for children to have good care. In Sweden, for example, there's no gap between the end of parental leave and the beginning of child care. It's a child's right to good care. I would love to see Canada take that approach, which is looking through a child's rights approach that all people should have good care, especially children.

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, we're out of time for the panel.

I want to thank our witnesses. You've been tremendous.

I want to inform the committee that we're going to suspend briefly to do another sound check before the next panel starts. Just hang tight.

• (1155)

(Pause)

• (1200)

**The Chair:** I want to welcome everyone back for our second panel on our study on unpaid work.

We have with us from Statistics Canada, Josée Bégin, director general; Vincent Dale, director, labour market information; and Tina Chui, acting director, diversity and sociocultural statistics.

They have quite a bit of information to give, so they've requested to speak for 10 minutes. Because StatsCan is our only witness, I think it would be fine, unless there is an objection from the committee.

With that we'll go ahead for 10 minutes.

Are we starting with you, Mr. Dale?

• (1205)

**Ms. Josée Bégin (Director General, Labour Market, Education and Socio-Economic Well-Being, Statistics Canada):** No, Madam Chair. We are starting with me. I will be presenting on our behalf.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** That's great. You can go ahead.

**Ms. Josée Bégin:** Madam Chair, committee members, I would like to thank you for the opportunity today to share with you some observations on women's unpaid work.

In the time I have, I would like to begin with a portrait of unpaid work in Canada, including caregiving. The second part of my presentation will focus on the situation of health care support workers.

According to the most recent data from the general social survey, women spend more time than men doing unpaid work. Every five years, the results of this survey provide insights into the time use of Canadians, including time spent on unpaid work, which shed light on how Canadians make use of their time and what contributes to their well-being and stress levels. The most recent data on time use are from 2015.

In this survey, unpaid work is defined as the time spent doing housework, performing routine tasks related to the physical care of children, and providing care to an adult family member or friend.

In 2015, women spent an average of 2.8 hours per day on housework—54 minutes more than men, who spent 1.9 hours per day.

Women were more likely than men to perform routine tasks related to the care of children: 76% of women versus 57% of men. In addition, women spent almost one hour more per day than men on these tasks.

The proportion of women who provided care to an adult family member or friend on any given day was three times higher than the proportion of men in 2015. It was 3% for women compared with 1% for men. Among those who provided this care, women spent an average of 42 minutes more than men.

While women tend to spend more time than men on unpaid activities, they are less likely to be in the labour force. And for those who are, they are more likely to have a part-time job. According to data from the labour force survey, 57% of women in Canada were employed in 2015, compared with 65% of men.

In addition, women who were employed generally spent on average 6.9 hours less per week at work than men, all jobs combined. This was 29.6 hours versus 36.5 hours.

The situation in November was similar: 56% of women were employed, compared with 65% of men. What is more, women worked 5.8 hours less per week than men, based on seasonally unadjusted data from the labour force survey.

It is important to recognize that the disproportionate unpaid work done by women for their families favours the higher labour force participation rate and longer working hours of men.

Reflecting this disproportionate share of unpaid work, women were also more likely than men to feel time pressures. In 2015, 49% of women aged 25 to 54 in Canada reported that, at the end of their day, they had often not accomplished what they had set out to do, compared with 43% of men. In addition, 69% of women said they felt stressed when they didn't have enough time, versus 60% of men. Finally, 46% of women reported feeling constantly under stress trying to accomplish more than they can handle, as opposed to 40% of men.

• (1210)

In April, Statistics Canada conducted a voluntary data collection survey on mental health during the pandemic. The results show that the women who took part in the survey were more likely than men to say that their life had been moderately or severely stressful. More precisely, 30.5% of part of women surveyed said that their life had been moderately or severely stressful during the COVID-19 pandemic, compared to 24% for men.

It's possible that some women reported higher anxiety than men because the quarantine heightened the unequal sharing by women and men of unpaid family work, by which we mean caring for children and household work. The closing of daycare centres, schools and businesses like restaurants and dry cleaners may have led women to do additional unpaid household tasks that would normally have been sent out to paid services, or for which they could formerly rely on help from parents or friends.

Furthermore, according to the findings of the Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 3: Resuming Economic and Social Activities During COVID-19, employment and the workplace, both of which have been considerably affected by the pandemic, have an impact on how couples share parenting tasks.

More specifically, when men were unemployed or working at home, it appeared to encourage sharing more of the parenting tasks, because men in such situations were more likely to say that parenting tasks had been shared equally, compared to men who had a job and were working away from home. However, when the opposite was the case, with the women out of work or working at home, they were more likely to say that they were mainly responsible for parenting tasks and less likely to say that these were shared equally.

I would also like to mention the circumstances of paid work for women, and more specifically support workers in the health field. These workers contributed enormously in recent months in the combat against COVID-19, and the vast majority of them are women.

The COVID-19 pandemic put the spotlight on the key role performed by these workers. In addition to the risk of contamination to which they are exposed, the media described the poor working conditions in which they sometimes had to work, and the shortage of workers in this sector of the economy.

According to the seasonally adjusted data in the Labour Force Survey, there were 300,000 health support workers in November, defined in the survey as nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates. This number was relatively stable compared to the same period last year.

In several respects, however, their working conditions were much worse than for most workers.

In November, their average hourly wage was approximately \$22, about \$8 less than the national average. These employees also worked for approximately three fewer hours per week than average and were slightly more likely to be working in temporary jobs and to have more than one job. More specifically, in November, health support workers worked 29 hours, compared to 32 hours for other employees, and 15% of them were in temporary jobs, compared to 11% for other employees. Furthermore, 6% of health support workers had more than one job, compared to 4% for other employees.

The Labour Force Survey data show that for many immigrants, these professions are a way to enter the labour market. Indeed, four of ten health support workers in November were immigrants, compared to one of four for other jobs. These data also show that these employees are clearly...

• (1215)

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, but your speaking time is up.

[*English*]

We will get the rest of it when we go to questions.

We'll start with Ms. Wong for six minutes.

**Hon. Alice Wong:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

To the panellists from Statistics Canada, thank you for a very detailed report on the statistics that you collected in 2015. It echoes what our two former panellists just said.

My question is about the market rates. Do you have a dollar figure for how much the labour of unpaid care workers would translate to if they were paid market rates? Do you have that data, please?

Either of the panellists can answer this question.

**Ms. Josée Bégin:** Madam Chair, if I understood the question correctly, it's about giving a figure or value in terms of the amount that unpaid work would represent. Is that correct?

**Hon. Alice Wong:** Yes.

**Ms. Josée Bégin:** I can start, and I will ask my colleagues Vincent and Tina if there's anything to add at the end.

The value of household work in Canada was last updated in 1992. Prior to that, it was updated in 1986 and in 1971. As of 1992, the value of household work was estimated to be between 31% and 46% of gross domestic product, depending on the method chosen to evaluate that amount.

It hasn't been measured since then in terms of dollar value. This is in relation to a framework on how we measure gross domestic product. We would be happy to share additional information around that if necessary.

**Hon. Alice Wong:** Thank you.

I remember that in 2015 the ministry for seniors did a study on the loss of productivity for these caregivers who choose not to have full-time jobs or not to have a promotion because of that. I hope some of the data might be still there.

Another question is about the type of data collected. The previous panellist also mentioned qualitative data. Yes, it is important that we put numbers in, as I just asked about on loss of productivity, but there's also the qualitative side of it.

Has Statistics Canada done any qualitative research? Of course, showing caregiving is not that easy, but is there anything even close to that?

**Ms. Josée Bégin:** Madam Chair, I wonder if my colleague Tina could explain the type of qualitative work that has been done around the general social survey.

Tina.

**Ms. Tina Chui (Acting Director, Diversity and Sociocultural Statistics, Statistics Canada):** Madam Chair, thank you for the opportunity to speak.

I agree. Qualitative work is very important. Madam Spinks, from the Vanier Institute of the Family, talked about the dynamic of unpaid work, which is a relationship. It's personal. Therefore, it is very hard to measure or quantify that in a large-scale survey.

At Statistics Canada, whenever we develop a survey, we start with qualitative research. We will still have the survey aspect, asking in the form of questions, but in terms of developing the questions, we use qualitative methods, focus groups and whatnot, to make sure that what we intend to measure is understood by our respondents.

• (1220)

**Hon. Alice Wong:** Thank you.

Next, are there any recommendations that you would make to the government, both on the economic side and on the well-being side of the family caregivers, in terms of what they could have done or what they should do?

It's not meant to criticize, so I think you are pretty safe in speaking freely.

**Ms. Josée Bégin:** Madam Chair, I will start on behalf of Statistics Canada.

I think it would be difficult for us to answer that question. For us, it is key that we do ask questions of our respondents that are well understood and that are meaningful. We do understand that the topic of unpaid work is very important. As Tina mentioned, it is measured by the general social survey.

In terms of recommendations to the government, I think it would be hard for us to answer that question.

**Hon. Alice Wong:** My next question is about labour market.

**The Chair:** Actually, you're out of time, Alice.

We're going to Ms. Zahid for six minutes.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks to Statistics Canada for providing some important information.

You mentioned the data from 2015, and that approximately 76% of women versus 57% of men were spending time with their children and raising children.

Do you have any data after 2015, since the Liberals came into power and implemented the shared parental leave? Has shared parental leave made some difference? Do we see changes in the time being spent by women to raise their kids?

Anyone can take that.

**Ms. Josée Bégin:** Madam Chair, I will turn to my colleague, Tina. She can maybe address the frequency of the general social survey and when would be the next time that we will be measuring the unpaid work.

**Ms. Tina Chui:** Madam Chair, thank you for the questions.

You are correct. The last time we conducted the time use survey, which is part of the general social survey program, was in 2015. This survey is conducted every five years. Actually, at the moment we are developing the content of the survey. The next one that we are planning to collect is in early 2022.

At this point, I cannot answer your question directly. What I can offer you is that through the last time use survey, we are able to conduct some analysis looking at the changes in terms of previous results of the time use survey.

The time use survey was first conducted in.... I think we did the comparison between 1986 and 2015. Based on that analysis, we did find that, between 1986 and 2015, fathers are spending more time on preparing meals and mothers are providing nearly two-thirds of the total hours spent helping and caring for children. Fathers are more likely to engage in household chores, like housework and whatnot. Between that period, from 1986 to 2015, there is an increase in fathers participating in the unpaid work.

• (1225)

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Thank you for that. Once we have the latest survey, I would like to see how the shared parental leave has made a difference.

As a mother, I also spent four years, from 2000 to 2004, raising my two young kids. I started work in Canada in 2004.

My next question is in regard to the ethnic lens. We know that a number of factors can influence the proportion of unpaid work performed in a household between men and women, such as cultural expectations, upbringing, the levels of paid work performed and so on. We also know that these influences can vary by ethnicity. For example, some visible minority populations are more likely to live in intergenerational households, with three generations under one roof. I see many in my own riding of Scarborough Centre.

Has your research looked at differences across ethnic lines? Did you find significant differences? Do you have any data that you can provide to the committee? If not today, maybe you can send in a written submission to provide that data.

**Ms. Tina Chui:** Definitely there are variations when you look at it from the diversity lens. We know that in certain communities there is a higher likelihood of a multi-generational household and that would increase the demand on the caregiver to either the children or a senior in the household.

I cannot provide the data today because there is a challenge with the general social survey. For that type of detailed analysis, we do need the dataset, the sample, to be able to provide robust statistics. At Statistics Canada, we are looking into a way to improve that so that we can provide more on the disaggregated data in a diversity lens.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Do I have time, Madam Chair?

**The Chair:** Thirty seconds.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** No. It's okay.

**The Chair:** Okay. Very good.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Larouche now has the floor for six minutes.

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** I'd like to thank the Statistics Canada representatives for being here today.

Your organization has proved that when you can gather data and numbers about matters like women's invisible work, it makes it possible to suggest measures that can mitigate any related problems.

For example, you said that the statistics had shown the effects of the pandemic on invisible work. The figures established that there were differences between men and women, as well as other comparisons, during the pandemic.

We are still in the midst of the pandemic, but economic recovery is a major issue. I would like to know how we can study the numbers to see how the situation is doing over time. We know that jobs in sectors that will do well during the economic recovery, like infrastructures and construction, are filled by a much higher percentage of men. On the contrary, for sectors in which jobs have a much higher percentage of women, like restaurants and the cultural industry, the recovery will be much slower.

How does Statistics Canada expect the impact of the pandemic on invisible work for women to play out, compared to the situation for men?

**Ms. Josée Bégin:** Thank you for your question.

I'm going to give a two-part answer.

First of all, in my statement, I referred to some statistics from a voluntary data collection survey that was carried out in April. More detailed results will be published next week by Statistics Canada. We'll give you information about this new study, and it could provide you with more details.

More generally speaking, the Labour Force Survey conducted every month gives data about the labour force participation of women. It contains much more detail about industries, occupations and jobs, age groups, and people who are members of visible minorities. We can also provide you with the most recent Labour Force Survey report, if you wish.

• (1230)

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Very good.

You discussed this a short while ago, but could you tell me the dollar value of invisible work in Canada. You said that the most recent figures were from 2012, which is quite a while ago. How can this value be measured?

I think that once we become aware of the dollar value of invisible work, we start to realize just how important it is to provide support to the various aspects of this form of work.

I'm also thinking of the mental stress, on top of everything else. We are living in times when women are having children much later. They are said to represent the sandwich generation: on the one hand, they need to do all the household tasks and care for the children, and on the other, they need to care for their aging parents.

We'd appreciate the additional details you mentioned on how to calculate the dollar value of invisible work. I would also appreciate it if you could explain how this might have an impact on people's awareness of this kind of work.

**Ms. Jos e B gin:** I'd like to clarify something. The last time we determined the dollar value of invisible work was 1992.

I don't have the information with me that I would need to explain how we calculate this value in terms of gross domestic product, or how unpaid work constitutes a production factor in Canada. However, after the meeting, Statistics Canada will certainly be able to give you additional information.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** It's from the standpoint of how the numbers make us more aware of the magnitude of invisible work. The numbers are huge. You spoke about 1992 data. According to my figures, that would represent between \$235 billion and \$374 billion, when volunteer work is included. If we had to pay all these people, it would have an impact on our economy. That's the perspective from which I wanted to address the issue and underscore the importance of updating these figures.

The 1992 data are certainly becoming outdated. We might be impressed to see how far we have come, what percentage of the GDP is represented in 2020 by invisible work, and how many billions of dollars that would amount to.

Do I have any time left, Madam Chair?

[English]

**The Chair:** You have one minute.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Okay, good.

In that case, I'll ask another question.

In order to do something about the inequality between men and women with respect to invisible work, will we have to know more about the causes? How come in 2020 there's still just as much inequality between men and women? How could understanding the causes help?

**Ms. Jos e B gin:** I'm going to ask my colleague, Ms. Chui, to give you some details about the context in which questions about unpaid work are asked in the general social survey.

[English]

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, you're out of time on that one.

Now we'll go to Ms. Mathysen for six minutes.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Can someone tell me why unpaid work has not been re-evaluated since 1992?

[Translation]

**Ms. Jos e B gin:** I can make a start.

It's really a matter of definitions pertaining to production and consumption. There are several schools of thought about how to measure, quantify, and assign a dollar value to, unpaid work.

But on the subject of measurements used to understand the relative context of unpaid work and the repercussions on people who do this unpaid work, we have a collection tool at Statistics Canada which, approximately every five years, measures this important phenomenon, as my colleague Ms. Chui explained.

• (1235)

[English]

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** You have the ability to do it; you just haven't been told to do it since 1992.

[Translation]

**Ms. Jos e B gin:** I can't answer that question because it's not in my field of expertise.

[English]

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** You spoke about the general social survey. It was last done in 2015. You said it is done every five years, but you also said 2022 will be the next one. How are you going to compensate for the significant changes that COVID will have on people's responses? How will those be indicated? How will they impact...? I guess you can't determine the impact, but how will you deal with the impact of COVID?

**Ms. Tina Chui:** For the general social survey program, yes, we want to do more frequent surveys. In the program itself, we have seven themes, and we cycle the themes. In certain years, we have the themes overlap within a five-year cycle. This is only for the purpose of the competing demands for the different content of each cycle.

For the unpaid worker segment, that theme, a lot of the estimates come from the time you survey, but we also have another cycle called caregiving and receiving that will give us a little more about the dynamics of caregiving and receiving. We have a cycle called family dynamics that looks at the relationship within the family, fertility, intentions and whatnot. We also have a survey called giving, volunteering and participation that also measures another aspect of unpaid work. We combine to holistically look at the unpaid economy. We need to look at the relevant cycles of that aspect.

I agree with you that time use, and we use time use a lot to measure the unpaid work, is not an easy survey, because it's diary based and it imposes a lot of response burden on our respondents. For us, can we do it? I think we can, but at the same time, we also need to balance response burden and how much we ask our Canadians to respond to in our survey.

To answer your questions about the impact of COVID, do we have information about the impact of COVID? The general social survey is a regular program at Statistics Canada, but during the initial stage of the lockdown, StatsCan really mobilized to put in other alternate collection mechanisms and platforms like the crowd-sourced survey and the web panel, so we measured the direct impact of COVID. We have more targets in terms of the questions on the impact of COVID whereas, for the general social survey, because we want to measure how social conditions change over time, we have to maintain certain consistency in terms of the content from the previous cycle.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Now we'll go to Ms. Shin for five minutes.

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** Thank you, all, so much for being here and sharing very fascinating data with us.

My question has to do with the overlap of different things you were looking for when you did the survey. For example, regarding unpaid care work, is there an overlap in your survey with any socio-economic groups or ethnic groups or concerning marital status, age, province or rural versus urban areas? Were there any patterns or any predominant overlaps that you noticed?

• (1240)

**Ms. Tina Chui:** Yes, indeed, we have different cycles of the GSS that can measure a certain aspect of the unpaid work. In each of the cycles, we also have a series of socio-economic characteristics that measure for the respondents. I think immigrant status, visible minorities and population group questions that we use derive the visible minority populations, generations or residence of the respondents, from which we derive the rural, urban and whatnot.

The biggest challenge is the sample size, whether we are able to drill down in that level of detail in our analysis so the data is robust and statistically significant. In each cycle, the response rate varied somewhat, so when people ask us those types of questions, we can-

not answer for sure, but have to go to the data to extract the data and look at the level of significance to see whether the estimate is significant.

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** Thank you.

In terms of the response rate, you said some are more difficult to get responses from. What are some of those areas that are difficult to get responses from?

**Ms. Tina Chui:** I mentioned the time use survey because it's a diary-based survey, so it's a lot more challenging to achieve a good response rate. However, at Statistics Canada we are continually looking at ways to improve, how to get better measures and achieve the desired response rate. We are planning as we go. When we collect in the field, we look at where we might need the domains of estimations for certain populations. If the response for that category is not good enough, then we will have follow-up. Let's say, if the survey is an electronic questionnaire, we will have reminder letters. We send out reminder letters and encourage people to respond. We also have a field follow-up by telephone with an interviewer.

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** Thank you.

During this COVID pandemic, has it been more challenging to gather information? Could you speak to what it's been like and areas where you found data that was predominant?

**Ms. Tina Chui:** We have a series of crowd source surveys and web panels that were measured during COVID. We have had a very good response, I must say, because I think these issues are really important to Canadians. We have a very concerted effort of communications to encourage people to come to our website to respond to those surveys. In fact, with some surveys we have had a very good response.

Perhaps my colleague, Vince, could speak to his experience with the labour force survey.

**Mr. Vincent Dale (Director, Centre for Labour Market Information, Statistics Canada):** Sure. Thank you for the question.



The labour force survey is conducted every month using a combination of face-to-face and telephone interviews. We have seen a decrease in the response rate over the COVID period, largely because we have suspended face-to-face or personal visit interviews. That has resulted in a drop in the response rate.

The good news is that the quality of the survey remains very high. The LFS is a very accurate reflection of the labour market, but we are taking a series of measures to restore those response rates to where they were pre-COVID.

• (1245)

**The Chair:** Now we'll go to Monsieur Serré.

[Translation]

You have the floor for five minutes.

[English]

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** Thank you very much.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks also to the witnesses.

I'd like to begin by pointing out that 70% of Statistics Canada's employees in Ontario are in Sturgeon Falls, in my riding. I want to thank the bilingual employees who provide Statistics Canada services.

My first question is for Ms. Bégin.

Can you provide the committee chair with a summary of statistics pertaining to rural life in Canada?

**Ms. Josée Bégin:** I'll answer the question briefly. Geography is an important component of our survey...

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Excuse me, Ms. Bégin, But I don't have a lot of time and I have other questions. Could you simply provide a statistical report on rural life to the committee?

**Ms. Josée Bégin:** Yes, we could do that after the meeting.

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Good. Thank you very much.

I will now move on to my second question.

Your last study on women and paid employment was published in 2017. You publish these types of reports from time to time. I would imagine that the next study will be around 2022.

Are you in a position to study the repercussions over the past few years of the changes made to your parental leave system and the Canada child benefit, or will we have to wait until the next study, probably in 2022?

**Ms. Josée Bégin:** I'll answer first, and then my colleague Mr. Dale will provide additional information.

Statistics Canada has information on Canadians' tax returns. Every year, we publish statistics that include the Canada child benefit. We could send this information to the committee after the meeting.

We also have statistics on employment insurance and on those who are eligible for employment insurance benefits, as well as additional data on parental leave. We can certainly provide the com-

mittee with information and compare the situation before the pandemic with what follows.

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Thank you for being willing to send us this information.

[English]

My other question is about our government introducing disaggregated data, which gives us the ability to respond to different populations. The previous government was anti-data, so we introduced this measure.

What kind of impact has that had on your collection of data?

**Ms. Josée Bégin:** Madam Chair, I will turn to my colleague, Tina, to start the response.

**Ms. Tina Chui:** Thank you.

[Translation]

Thank you for your question. I'll reply in English.

[English]

As we are all well aware, the pandemic actually exacerbates the inequalities faced by many communities, vulnerable communities, indigenous populations, racialized communities and whatnot. We have put a number of measures in place for the diversity and inclusion lens, and one involved the work of my colleague, Vince.

In the labour force survey, and since July, we incorporated population questions, group questions, which we could use to derive the visible minority population. We also include in the general social survey the cycle on social identity, which looks at trust, a sense of belonging, trust of institutions, etc.

For that survey, we actually increased, through work with Canadian Heritage, the sample so we can provide estimates on a number of visible minority groups as well as education and income levels. There are a couple of efforts we have already put in place to provide that disaggregated data lens and the diversity and inclusions.

Going forward in the work we are going to do, we hope to, for any of our analyses, include the diversity and inclusion lens analysis. I'm responsible for—

• (1250)

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, but that's your time.

Now we're going to Madam Larouche.

[Translation]

You have two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

This is the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. In 2010, at my home, a large group of women stood against the decision to eliminate Statistics Canada's long-form census, which contained questions about invisible work. These women condemned the situation because they felt that it was essential to measure invisible work so that it could receive social and economic recognition.

I would like your opinion on that. Since 2010, how has the discontinuance of the long-form census had an impact analysis of invisible work?

**Ms. Josée Bégin:** Factors related to unpaid work were measured in the 1996, 2001 and 2006 censuses. These were based on three questions, about household tasks, gardening work and house maintenance.

Following each census, we conduct exhaustive consultations to ensure that questions are included that could address new legislation, new programs, or policy requirements. At the time, it was decided that these questions on unpaid work would not be part of the 2011 census or the national household survey.

We acknowledge the importance of these concepts as they pertain to unpaid work. We feel that the general social survey is the best vehicle because it allows for more questions to respondents and provides more context about the unpaid work of Canadian men and women.

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** As we know, not only does unpaid work take-up personal toll, meaning at home, but it also has a social impact. That's why it's essential for governments to recognize it. This can be done in different ways, for example by creating an invisible work awareness day, by including this work in the GDP calculation, by offering an offsetting benefit or refundable tax credits.

According to you, what link could be established between the statistics you have and the measures that governments might introduce to make people more aware of invisible work?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We'll go now to Ms. Mathysen for two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

We know that child care is becoming increasingly expensive. There's a stat on families spending nearly a quarter of their household income on child care. We heard from you about how many fewer women are taking on that full-time work or how they move to more part-time work because of their responsibilities of unpaid care work. Do you have statistics, as recent as possible, on how much money is lost by women on a yearly basis because they are taking on that additional unpaid work?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Josée Bégin:** We don't have information that would allow us to estimate the total value of foregone income. The labour force

survey provides information about women's work and their place in the labour market. The survey also obtains information about the absence of women in the labour market. However, we do not have information about the financial losses this could represent. It's a question of research—one that we should focus on.

[*English*]

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** If a government were to include that in the future, how would they dictate to StatsCan to make the decision to include that cost analysis?

• (1255)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Josée Bégin:** There's more than one way to decide on research priorities. The Canadian government's priorities clearly dictate Statistics Canada's work, but we also have partnerships in the federal government and provincial governments, as well as outside government.

[*English*]

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** That's fine.

Thank you, Madam Bégin.

**The Chair:** We really don't have time for a full slate for our next two, so I want to thank our witnesses from StatsCan. Please submit the data that has been requested by the various members to the clerk.

Certainly, we are going to have lots of fun things to work on in the new year. When we return in January, we'll be considering our COVID study report on the Tuesday and possibly the Thursday if we need that second day. Then we have pay equity confirmed for February 4, and then we'll continue with our panels on rural and unpaid work, so if you have any witnesses to submit, get them to the clerk.

I want to wish all of our panellists, all of our committee members, the clerk and our analyst a very happy holiday, a very safe holiday. Take some time to rest. It's been a tough year, and we know 2021 will be much better.

Thanks so much.

The meeting is adjourned.







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