

# Labor and women: A gender-focused recovery

Gender equality in the workplace has deteriorated after the COVID-19 pandemic. Women's already vulnerable employment conditions have made them more sensitive to labor market upheavals, leading to disproportionate job and income losses. In addition to the economic strain, the pandemic also increased unpaid care and domestic duties for women. With children out of school and heightened care demands for family members, many women have been pushed outside the labor market, and their availability to bounce back has been compromised due to these underlying conditions.

This policy brief provides a general outlook of women's economic recovery in the labor market two years into the COVID-19 pandemic. It offers a glimpse into governmental policies and measures to mitigate the impact that the pandemic has had on female employment and participation. Lastly, it advocates for a gender-focused recovery, featuring gender-responsive policies to help counteract the negative effects that threaten to backtrack gains in gender equality.

## Part I:

# COVID-19's impact on the female labor market

## The COVID-19 Gendered Impacts on Global Labor Markets

Two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, women are facing a greater risk of losing their jobs not only because they are disproportionately employed in sectors affected by the lockdown (such as hospitality and food services, and retail trade)<sup>1</sup>, but also because of pre-existing gender inequalities, where women also tend to hold less secure jobs, including part-time work, higher participation in the informal sector with less job security, lower social protection, and lower pay<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, they are at greater risk of physical and mental distress<sup>3</sup> because of their overrepresentation among key workers in the health and care sectors, and because of the impact lockdown and closure of childcare centers had on women—who already accounted for the majority of unpaid care and domestic work before COVID-19—and ended up taking on even more unpaid household work and childcare<sup>4</sup>.

Many gains in decent work made before the pandemic have been significantly impacted, and pre-existing decent work deficits are dampening the prospects of a sustainable recovery in many regions. In 2019, just before the pandemic took off, women accounted for 39.4 per cent of total employment; by 2020, female employment reached nearly 45 per cent of global employment losses<sup>5</sup>. The pandemic had a near-immediate effect on women's employment, especially on working mothers who left the workforce at alarming rates to take care of their newly added care chores<sup>6</sup>. In 2020 about 113 million women aged 25–54 with partners and small children were out of the workforce, a number particularly rough when compared to their male peers: 13 million<sup>7</sup>. As shown in Figure 1, the decline in women's participation rates is observed across regions, irrespective of pre-pandemic levels. Latin America and the Caribbean in particular saw a precipitous fall, from 56.4% in 2019 to 51.5% in 2020 (a 4.9 percentage-point decrease compared to 2.7 percentage points for men).

---

<sup>1</sup> Alon and others. 2021. 'Employment in Regular and Pandemic Recessions. (Massachusetts). Accessed May 2022.

<sup>2</sup> IMF, UNDP, UN Women. 2021. 'Gender Equality and COVID-19: Policies and Institutions for Mitigating the Crisis' (New York). Accessed May 2022.

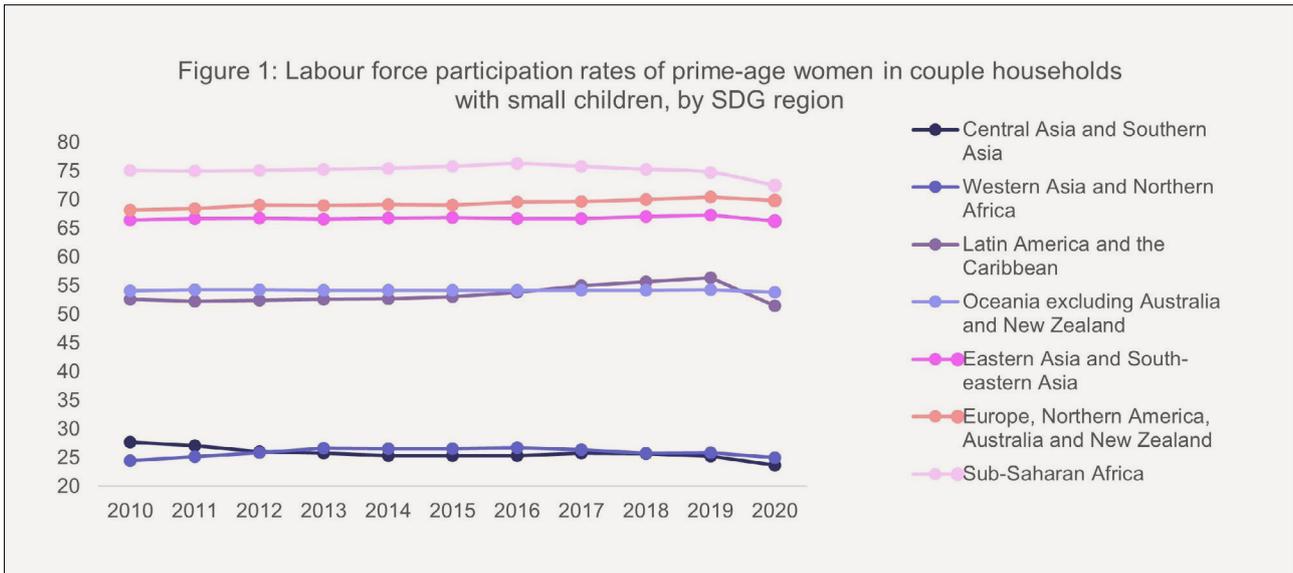
<sup>3</sup> UN Women. 2021. 'New data show women and girls far less likely to receive COVID-19 relief'. Accessed May 2022.

<sup>4</sup> UN Women. 2020. 'Whose Time to Care? Unpaid Care and Domestic Work During Covid-19'. (New York). Accessed May 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Sodergren and others. 2022. 'COVID-19 and the SDGs: Reversing progress towards decent work for all'. (Geneva) Accessed May 2022.

<sup>6</sup> McKinsey. 2021. 'Seven charts that show COVID-19's impact on women's employment'. Accessed May 2022.

<sup>7</sup> ILO. 2022. 'Over 2 million moms left the labour working force in 2020 according to new global estimates' (Geneva). Accessed May 2022.



Source: Self-constructed from ILO modelled estimates, ILOSTAT

For East Asia, levels of participation seem to hold onto with around a 3 per cent decrease. Therefore, a major concern about COVID-19's economic impact is the rising gender imbalance in the labor market.

For all of these reasons, it's critical that employment impact evaluations reflect the diversity of circumstances and consider how gender intersects with other causes of vulnerability when determining conditions of inclusion (or exclusion) in labor markets. To prevent perpetuating gender and other inequities, economic recovery measures must consider the reasons of pre-existing uneven gender patterns in the workplace and contextualize them to the current different realities women are going through post COVID-19.

### Overview of Korean female employment

The Korean labor market has made a strong recovery from the initial employment shock of the global COVID-

19 pandemic in 2021. As Table 1 shows, the latest seasonally-adjusted employment data has recorded growth for 8 consecutive months, having reached, as of December 2021, 99.9% of pre-crisis (February 2020) levels.

According to data by the Center for Labor Trends Analysis<sup>8</sup>, when analyzing recovery of employment in young cohorts by gender and age, employment rate growth in women in the early 20's cohort enjoyed far greater employment gains than men. Women's employment growth was concentrated in the ICT, health, and social services sectors, whereas men saw their employment conditions continue to stagnate in the food and lodging, arts, sports and leisure industries. Their peers in their early 30s sustain a similar trend. Employment growth for men the early 30s cohort was concentrated in the non-face-to-face service sectors, but employment continued to fall for men in the late 30s cohort in the manufacturing and wholesale and retail

<sup>8</sup> KLI Center for Labor Trends Analysis, 2022. '2021 Labor Market Review and 2022 Outlook working paper. (Seoul) Accessed May 2022.

**Table 1. Summary of economically active pop. by gender during the first quarter pre and post pandemic**

| Item   | 2019.1/4 (PRE-PANDEMIC) |        |        | 2020.1/4 |        |        | 2021.1/4 |        |        | 2022.1/4 |        |        |
|--|-------------------------|--------|--------|----------|--------|--------|----------|--------|--------|----------|--------|--------|
|  | Total                   | Male   | Female | Total    | Male   | Female | Total    | Male   | Female | Total    | Male   | Female |
| Economically active population (Thousand Person)   | 27,702                  | 15,920 | 11,782 | 27,911   | 15,958 | 11,953 | 27,748   | 15,905 | 11,843 | 28,360   | 16,155 | 12,204 |
| Employed persons (Thousand Person)                 | 26,461                  | 15,212 | 11,249 | 26,749   | 15,314 | 11,435 | 26,369   | 15,169 | 11,200 | 27,369   | 15,640 | 11,729 |
| Unemployed persons (Thousand Person)               | 1,241                   | 708    | 534    | 1,162    | 644    | 518    | 1,380    | 737    | 643    | 990      | 515    | 475    |
| Economically inactive population (Thousand Person) | 16,668                  | 5,886  | 10,782 | 16,781   | 6,032  | 10,749 | 17,239   | 6,254  | 10,986 | 16,851   | 6,096  | 10,755 |
| Labor Force Participation rate (%)                 | 62,4                    | 73,0   | 52,2   | 62,5     | 72,6   | 52,7   | 61,7     | 71,8   | 51,9   | 62,7     | 72,6   | 53,2   |
| Unemployment rate (%)                              | 4,5                     | 4,4    | 4,5    | 4,2      | 4,0    | 4,3    | 5,0      | 4,6    | 5,4    | 3,5      | 3,2    | 3,9    |
| Employment to population ratio (%)                 | 59,6                    | 69,8   | 49,9   | 59,9     | 69,6   | 50,4   | 58,6     | 68,5   | 49,1   | 60,5     | 70,3   | 51,1   |

Source: Self-constructed from Statistics Korea, 「Economically Active Population Survey」, raw data, each year's first quarter

sectors. The growth in the number of women in the early 30s cohort employed in the health and social welfare sectors was particularly notable. (Appendix Table 2)

While increasing employment rates is a generally positive sign of economic recovery, it does not necessarily translate to equal or inclusive recovery. As shown in Table 1, while women's employment might be rising, pre-pandemic levels showed a substantial gap with its male counterpart in indicators such as labor force participation and even the number of employed people. In addition, when talking about recovery, it is also important to analyze other values such as wages and hours worked to have a strong overview of the status of the labor market to create adequate policy making.

For example, when looking at the hours worked by Korean women from the first quarter of the years pre and post pandemic (2019-2022), data shows that women tend to work from 1-17 hours and 18-35 hours per week, which does not complete a standard 40-hour labor week; they also occupy more numbers for the

“less than 36 hours” indicator. On the other hand, men's working hours is higher around the 36-44 hours to 45-53 hours per week mark, employing more people that work “more than 36 hours” (Appendix Table 3). This could suggest that women might technically be employed, but perhaps earning lower wages in informal jobs which tend to be less stable. This is constant throughout all these years. Therefore, while one indicator can show great results, to achieve a sustainable and robust recovery, the analysis of gender disaggregated data is of utmost relevance.

## Part II:

# Gender responsive policies

## Labor Policy Responses

As the world enters its recovery stage, governments have been diligently implementing policies in their respective countries to address immediate needs and support the reconfiguration of productivity in response to COVID-19's impact on the labor market. For example, in Belize and Costa Rica, governments allowed employers to reduce working hours for a set period of time to maintain workers in their jobs, while supporting employer's financial struggles. Telework was another measure executed across the world; as countries navigated unexplored challenges due to lockdowns, allowing companies and workers to switch to remote work helped productivity remain afloat. The same is true for measures that aimed at maintaining workers' attachment to the labor force and discouraged total exit: countries across Europe offered access and extension of unemployment insurance for workers.

And while these are all policies of utmost importance, there seems to be relatively few measures focused on addressing the emergency of supporting women's place in the labor market. In a joint effort to provide more context and evidence for these issues, UNDP,

along with UN Women, co-created the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, which monitors responses taken by governments worldwide to tackle the pandemic, and highlights those that have integrated a gender lens.

## Mapping Current COVID-19 Related Gender-Responsive Policies

So far, the tracker records 226 countries and territories that have taken 4,968 measures in response to COVID19 at the global level, where many of these policies have some sort of gender component but are not specifically gender focused. On a micro level, 1,605 measures across 196 countries and territories have been identified as 'gender-sensitive' which are targeted towards specific risks or challenges that women and girls face as a result of the pandemic. **Gender-sensitive policies refer to those that counterbalance the gender-specific effects of the COVID-19 crisis.**

According to the tracker's factsheet<sup>9</sup>, 'Gender-sensitive' measures vary across countries and degree of implementation. For Korea, out of 35 general policies

---

<sup>9</sup> UN Women, 2021. 'Covid-19 Global Gender Response Tracker: Global Factsheet, (Seoul) Accessed June 2022.

## UNDP-UN Women COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker

Gender-sensitive measures are a subset of all measures that aim to address pressing issues faced by women due to the pandemic, particularly:

- all measures for violence against women are categorized as gender-sensitive by default
- social protection and labor market measures are defined as gender-sensitive if they target women's economic security or address unpaid care
- fiscal and economic measures are defined as gender-sensitive if they provide support to female-dominated sectors of the economy, on the assumption that this is likely to protect women's employment and thereby their economic security

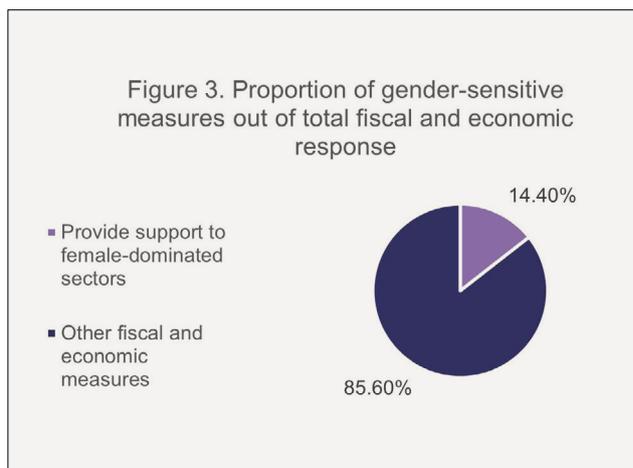
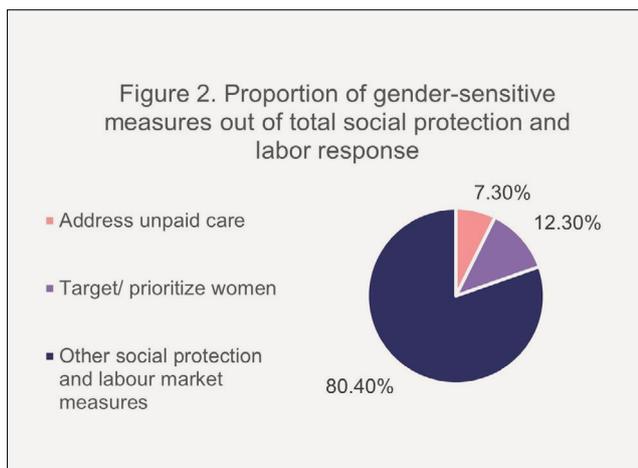
responding to COVID-19, 23 of them corresponded to social protection measures, out of which only 5 policies were deemed to fulfill the requirements to be classified as gender-sensitive. In the case of labor market and fiscal and economic measures, only two and one policies respectively were found to fall under the same category, which included: 1) offering family members or relatives of elderly people a standardized salary and training to act as health carers; 2) offering working parents financial subsidies to aid the added childcare expenses as well as paid and unpaid family leaves (depending on company's criteria); 3) assuring women's market re-insertion through re-employment centers providing career-interruption prevention services for women in the workforce, as well as vocational training, among others (Appendix Table 1).

This trend can also be seen in the totality of policies as measures that target women's economic security and address unpaid care continue to make up only a fraction of the total social protection and labor market response, on the one hand, and the fiscal/economic response, on the other:

- In total, 3,099 social protection and labor market measures have been adopted throughout several countries. However, only 19.6 per cent of these measures (606) are gender-sensitive in that they target women's economic security or address unpaid care. (Figure 2)

- Similarly, out of 1,016 fiscal and economic measures to help businesses weather the crisis, only 14.4 per cent of these measures (146) aim to strengthen women's economic security by channeling resources to female-dominated sectors (Figure 3).

These patterns show the shortcomings in the global response to COVID-19 regarding gender-focused policies. There is a clear policy gap with unbalanced responses to women's economic security and unpaid care work. This suggests that countries must still put efforts in affirming their commitment to fulfilling women's basic needs and rights through more and better actions, as well as adding a gender-lens or a gender component to the 'general' policies. Gender-responsive policies that focus on counterbalancing the negative effects COVID-19 has brought upon women,



Source: COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, Global Factsheet.

are essential to the next step towards an inclusive recovery.

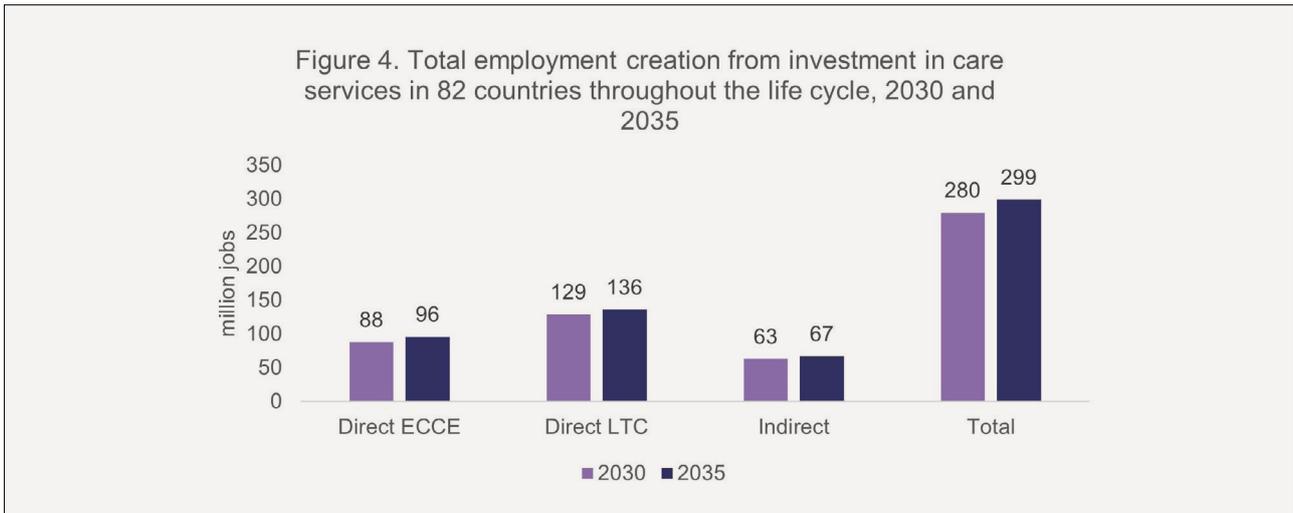
Leading countries are already on the lookout for cohesive policies that ensure economic productivity while answering social needs to guarantee an equitable future. One example is the United States whose government launched its “Building Back Better” bill. This bill focuses on creating higher-paying jobs and enabling Americans to join and remain in the labor force by increasing public expenditure in child and eldercare services, providing tax cuts for families with children and childcare support, offering paid family leave and reducing costs and expand access to education<sup>10</sup>. This initiative to invest in the care economy serves as a potential strategy to achieve an inclusive and gender-focused recovery. While there is heavy skepticism over this approach towards recovery, studies show that expanding care services not only has the potential to directly generate jobs, especially for women, but it is

also critical for achieving the goal of equalizing responsibility for unpaid domestic work and promoting women’s ability to participate in other types of paid work, community decision-making, and training activities<sup>11</sup>.

Research has shown positive effects in care investment and employment. Simulated scenarios from the ILO estimate that globally investing in the care policy package to provide adequate care leave provisions (maternity, paternity and parental), breastfeeding breaks, early childhood care and education (ECCE), universal childcare and long-term care (LTC) services could generate up to 280 million jobs by 2030 and a further 19 million by 2035, for a total of 299 million. This job creation potential by 2035 would be driven by 96 million direct jobs in childcare, 136 million direct jobs in long-term care, and 67 million indirect jobs in non-care sectors (Figure 4). Of the total net employment creation in 2035, 78 per cent is expected to go to women and 84

<sup>10</sup> The White House. 2021. ‘Build Back Better Framework’. (USA) Accessed May 2022.

<sup>11</sup> Addati, L., Cattaneo, U., Esquivel, V., Valarino, I., 2018. ‘Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work’. (Geneva)



Source: ILO. Investing in care leave and services for a more gender equal world of work

per cent is expected to be formal employment<sup>12</sup>.

### Care Policies Around the World

Investment in care economy not only benefits parents and carers, but it also has the potential to create more jobs, as well as establish a better work life balance that was not even considered pre-pandemic. Some countries have taken strong actions in this line of strategy such as reforming paternity leave legislation to increase the length of leave (e.g., North Macedonia, France<sup>13</sup> and Italy<sup>14</sup>), while others have started to provide employment services for mothers and have increased the availability of childcare facilities for unemployed parents and low-income families (e.g., Republic of Korea and the United States<sup>15</sup>). All of these measures aid the goal of women rejoining the work force in the best of possible conditions.

Policies that also aim at workers in the informal sector can also substantially help women move up the ladder as women are more exposed to informal employment in most low- and lower-middle income countries and are more often found in the most vulnerable situation<sup>16</sup>. Examples such as the “Emergency Family Income” bill in Argentina are evidence of inclusive, job-focused and gender-sensitive policies. The government introduced a non-contributory program that delivers a lump sum payment of 10,000 Argentine pesos (US\$155) to one member of the family. Informal workers and domestic workers (registered or not) were eligible beneficiaries. Initially, this transfer was provided during April 2020 to 3.6 million families. This was later extended in June and August for a second and third round, covering 9 million people. The benefit is paid to a member of the family, giving priority to women. According to data from the

<sup>12</sup> ILO. 2022. ‘Care at work: Investing in care leave and services for a more gender equal world of work’. (Geneva) Accessed May 2022.  
<sup>13</sup> N26 Mobile Banking. 2021. ‘Your guide to paternity leave in France’. (Berlin) Accessed May 2022.  
<sup>14</sup> Lockton Global Compliance. 2021. ‘Italy increases paternity leave’. (London) Accessed May 2022.  
<sup>15</sup> UNDP–UN Women COVID–19 Global Gender Response Tracker. 2022. Data extracted from database. Accessed May 2022.  
<sup>16</sup> ILO. 2018. ‘More than 60 per cent of the world’s employed population are in the informal economy’. (Geneva). Accessed May 2022.

Ministry of Economy, as of June 2020, 57% of those who received the Emergency Family Income were women<sup>17</sup>.

potential. And so, there is a need to continue prioritizing these investments in the future.

Indirect conditions such as domestic violence can also have huge negative impacts on women's employment and labor participation<sup>18</sup>. Not only can it mentally take a toll on a worker's health, but it also threatens to disrupt the working space. With the rise of domestic violence cases during the pandemic, governments have worked on different measures to counteract these devastating situations and turn them into opportunities for physical, mental, and financial freedom. Armenia alone has over five policies focused on assisting victims of domestic violence through helplines and criminal investigations, as well as providing economic support for new beginnings<sup>19</sup>.

Overall, governments across the world have recently started to place care as a priority of national laws, policies and budgets. Despite this initial commitment, there is an urgency for cathartic action at the national level to improve the issue of care. Policies that support the right to care and be cared for, as well as decent labor and gender equality, are critical for the future of work. Gender equality demands a transformational plan that includes investments in the care economy and a more equitable distribution of family duties.

Care policies that are designed to meet the needs of working parents and families are based on social dialogues and representation of care workers. They also are a combination of a gender-responsive package of rights, leave policies, benefits, and high-quality services that strive to achieve the greatest transformative

---

<sup>17</sup> UNDP– UN Women COVID–19 Global Gender Response Tracker, 2022. Data extracted from database. Accessed May 2022.

<sup>18</sup> ILO. 2020. 'Domestic violence and its impact on the world of work'. (Geneva). Accessed May 2022.

<sup>19</sup> UNDP– UN Women COVID–19 Global Gender Response Tracker, 2022. Data extracted from database. Accessed May 2022.

## Part III:

# A gender-focused recovery

Recognizing that employment outcomes depend on a wide array of factors, it is essential that extraordinary policy efforts are implemented to not only counteract the negative effects that this crisis has had on female employment but also to go one step further and aim to surpass pre-pandemic levels of labor participation and employment rates. To achieve gender equality, these policies must be given priority and a broad range of measures across different policy levels and dimensions with a holistic approach on gender and labor is required.

## Policy Measures

- **Invest in the care economy.** Accelerating support for investment in the care economy is a cornerstone of the transformative agenda for gender equality. Care economy possesses the potential to be an inclusive strategy that profits on the pressing social needs of care to not only boost the demand for care services but at the same time, have a role in supplying such demand in the care sector, thus, generating higher-paying jobs in an area mostly occupied by women. Investing in care policies is a bold commitment that governments, private

sector, workers, and employers collectively need to take for meaningful recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and for rapid progress. It can prove to be a challenging process as it demands restructuring tax revenues, public expenditure, and social planning, as well as normalizing a radical change in culture. Nonetheless, expanding the coverage of care policies including parental leave and arranging new work modalities for flexible working will be part of a transformative recovery road from the COVID-19 crisis.

- **Promote gender-responsive employment policies.** Employment is a key component of any economic recovery. As COVID-19 has hit women in unexpected ways, it is crucial to have gender-responsive employment policies that focus on resolving the issues that caused major damage to women's economic and labor stance in this pandemic such as 1) Re-insertion of women (particularly mothers) to the labor market through upskilling or reskilling measures<sup>20</sup>; 2) Retention and creation of new jobs through increased fiscal and monetary stimulus packages -such as cash transfers, payment extensions, business loans, etc.- that engulf regulatory measures to support female

<sup>20</sup> ILO. 2020. 'COVID-19: Public employment services and labour market policy responses' (Geneva). Accessed May 2022.

employment, unemployment and informal work<sup>21</sup>; 3) Support traditionally female sectors and occupations but also identify promising sectors in line with long term policy goals of gender equitable structural transformation, for example: Providing financial and technical support to women-managed informal SMEs (e.g., e-commerce) or extending digital infrastructure and reducing gender gaps in access<sup>22</sup>.

• **Advocate for equal pay for work of equal value.**

COVID-19 has exposed how much women are underpaid, or not paid at all, especially in the care sector. Measures that address this issue such as pushing for ‘salary transparency’ within companies accompanied with inclusive laws would help tackle the gender disparity in wage<sup>23</sup> and prevent wage discrimination based on sex, race, or age.

• **Disrupt and reimagine traditional gendered patterns of work.** Women’s disproportionate vulnerability to economic and health crises stems from gender norms and stereotypes that result in women sharing the greatest burden for care work, paid and unpaid. This can be seen throughout the labor market as there continues to exist a strong persistence of gender based sectoral and occupational segregation in many countries, despite considerable reductions in gender gaps in both education and labor force participation over time. This is particularly worrisome because gender-based segregation is considered one of the major contributors to gender wage gaps and economic inequalities for women<sup>24</sup>. Thus, targeted

interventions aimed at challenging these preconceived notions are necessary to improve women’s and men’s place in different labor sectors, such as technical programs that invite young women to explore STEM classes aiming to high-paying tech jobs or workshops that challenge the idea of toxic masculinity and show appreciation for male carers.<sup>25</sup>

• **Prevent and eradicate violence and harassment.** Domestic violence hinders a women’s well-being. Not only is domestic violence physically taxing but the spillover can affect a woman’s mental, emotional and financial health. For this, governments must continue opening channels for victims of domestic violence to be heard, as well as provide safe and supportive facilities for access to protection, services, and justice. Moreover, is it important to actively encourage the dialogues of gender with both men and women to redefine the roles of gender and ensure a more inclusive and empathic society.

---

<sup>21</sup> UN Women–ILO. 2021. ‘How to assess fiscal stimulus packages from a gender equality perspective’, UN Women–ILO Joint Programme: Promoting Decent Employment for Women through Inclusive Growth Strategies and Investments in Care (Geneva). Accessed May 2022.

<sup>22</sup> UN Women–ILO. 2021. ‘Assessing the gendered employment impacts of COVID–19 and supporting a gender–responsive recovery’, UN Women–ILO Joint Programme: Promoting Decent Employment for Women through Inclusive Growth Strategies and Investments in Care (Geneva). Accessed May 2022.

<sup>23</sup> Bloomberg. 2022. Salary Transparency Is Good for Everybody. (USA). Accessed May 2022.

<sup>24</sup> UN Women–ILO, ‘Assessing the gendered employment impacts of COVID–19 and supporting a gender–responsive recovery’, 24.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

Appendix

**Table 1. Korea: UNDP-UN Women COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker**

|   | Measure ID | Policy Measure Category | Policy Measure Type                            | Policy Measure Sub-Type | Policy Measure Description   | Addresses VAWG? | Targets Women's Economic Security? | Directly Supports Unpaid Care? | Gender Sensitive? |
|---|------------|-------------------------|--|-------------------------|--|-----------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | 1594       | Social protection       | Social assistance                              | In-kind support         | 2,8 trillion KRW are provided via a 4-month-worth purchase vouchers to households receiving child and social assistance.   | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |
| 2 | 1596       | Social protection       | Social insurance                               | Paid sick leave         | 84 billion KRW to subsidize employers' cost for paid leaves offered to those infected.   | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |
| 3 | 1597       | Social protection       | Social assistance                              | Cash for care           | At the lack of workers volunteering to act as carers, family members or relatives who live with disabled patients can do this work instead. In this case, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare will register them as temporary care workers and they will be paid the same wage as their professional equivalents. They will also be provided with two hours of safety instructions by the quarantine facilities, health centers or hospitals. If families are not able to help disabled patients, then these patients will be able to enter quarantine facilities. | NO              | NO                                 | YES                            | YES               |
| 4 | 1598       | Social protection       | Social assistance                              | Public works            | Create on-line, digital public jobs (10,000 jobs for maximum 6 months).  | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |
| 5 | 1599       | Labour market           | Labor regulatory adjustment                    | Not specific            | Flexibility in the system introduced: (i) extend the employment contract by 50 days for those whose employment terms are approaching; (ii) support replacement of new EPS workers who cannot leave their home countries, (iii) operate EPS-related business through one-stop service, and (iv) extend the job search period for EPS job changers.  | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |
| 6 | 1600       | Labour market           | Activation measures and enterprise development | Not specific            | Further vocational training for job seekers (an increase of training allowance, lowering co-payment rates, lifting the income threshold for job-seeker package, continued provision of training through on-line).  | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |

**CTMS Policy Brief 15. Labor and women: A gender-focused recovery**

|    | Measure ID | Policy Measure Category | Policy Measure Type | Policy Measure Sub-Type                        | Policy Measure Description  | Addresses VAWG? | Targets Women's Economic Security? | Directly Supports Unpaid Care? | Gender Sensitive? |
|----|------------|-------------------------|---------------------|--|---|-----------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| 7  | 1601       | Social protection       | Social assistance   | Public works                                   | Generate open air public works for low-income households (30,000 jobs for maximum 6 months).  | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |
| 8  | 1602       | Social protection       | Social assistance   | Cash transfers (conditional and unconditional) | Income support to those who are not eligible for employment insurance, including self-employers, freelancers in lieu of employment retention/unemployment benefits (only those in a low-wage bracket).  | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |
| 9  | 1605       | Social protection       | Social insurance    | Family/parental/childcare leave                | Parent employees get up to 5 days of leave along with childcare support. This measure is limited to those without receiving paid family emergency leave from their firms.   | NO              | NO                                 | YES                            | YES               |
| 10 | 1606       | Social protection       | Social assistance   | Cash transfers (conditional and unconditional) | Reintroduction of job seekers' allowance for low-income households, with such allowance being increased from 200,000 to 500,000 KRW for up to 3 months.   | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |
| 11 | 1608       | Social protection       | Social insurance    | Family/parental/childcare leave                | The "Comprehensive Measures for Public Welfare and Economy to Minimize the Impact of Corona 19 and Early Overcoming" program targets workers with children under 8 years of age who need family care due to the absence of daycare centers. Family care expenses are 50,000 KRW per person per day and temporary support for up to 10 days. This is associated with the original 90-days unpaid family care leave which can be used for childcare.    | NO              | NO                                 | YES                            | YES               |
| 12 | 1610       | Social protection       | Social assistance   | Cash transfers (conditional and unconditional) | Emergency relief payments of 9,1 trillion KRW to households in the bottom 70 percent income bracket, later extended to roughly 21,71 million households through the universal program. Payments to vary according to household size: The government plans to provide 1 million won to households with four or more members, 800,000 won to three-person households, 600,000 won to two-person households and 400,000 won to single-person households. | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |

CTMS Policy Brief 15. Labor and women: A gender-focused recovery

|    | Measure ID | Policy Measure Category | Policy Measure Type | Policy Measure Sub-Type                      | Policy Measure Description  | Addresses VAWG? | Targets Women's Economic Security? | Directly Supports Unpaid Care? | Gender Sensitive? |
|----|------------|-------------------------|---------------------|--|---|-----------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| 13 | 1611       | Social protection       | Social assistance   | Utility, housing and financial support       | The government will also provide a 1.3 trillion KRW worth of electricity bill payment deferral, which will be given to 3,200,000 small businesses and 1,570,000 low-income households for three months from April to June.  | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |
| 14 | 1612       | Social protection       | Social insurance    | Social security contribution waiver/ subsidy | <p>The government will expand the social security contribution reliefs as it will offer 3-month payment deferrals and 30 percent contribution cuts.</p> <p>1) National HealthCare contributions<br/>           – Give 50 percent cut in contributions for three months to those in the bottom 20 percent income bracket and bottom 50 percent in hard-hit areas<br/>           – Expand to bottom 40 percent and give them 30 percent reduction for three months</p> <p>2) National Pension contributions<br/>           The government will adopt a long installment payment plan rather than a payment exemption, for citizens are to receive their pension benefits according to the contributions they made.<br/>           – Temporarily expand the eligibility for the contribution relief<br/>           – Allow up to 60 month installment payment</p> <p>3) Unemployment insurance contributions<br/>           – Give a three-month payment deferral to small businesses with less than 30 employees: 6,120,000 employees and 2,280,000 businesses.</p> | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |
| 15 | 1614       | Social protection       | Social insurance    | Paid sick leave                              | The Korean social insurance agency will allow for payout of industrial accident insurance to workers who are tested COVID-19 positive.  | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |

CTMS Policy Brief 15. Labor and women: A gender-focused recovery

|    | Measure ID | Policy Measure Category | Policy Measure Type                                   | Policy Measure Sub-Type | Policy Measure Description  | Addresses VAWG? | Targets Women's Economic Security? | Directly Supports Unpaid Care? | Gender Sensitive? |
|----|------------|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|---|-----------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| 16 | 1616       | Social protection       | Social assistance                                     | In-kind support         | The Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) plans to actively run a social safety net to assist those in need while social welfare facilities are shut down, such as flexible delivery of emergency aid and support, implementation of temporary assistance programs for low-income families and provision of pay in advance for those participating in government employment programs.   | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |
| 17 | 1619       | Labour market           | Wage subsidy and income replacement for self-employed | Not specific            | Wage subsidies to those with unpaid leaves in targeted industries (e.g., tourism) to help retain employment. Special Regional Employment Support Aid' will be given to 100 thousand workers, at the rate of 500,000 KRW per month.  | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |
| 18 | 1620       | Labour market           | Wage subsidy and income replacement for self-employed | Not specific            | Increased by 250% of existing indirect employment-cost subsidies (to W400,000 per worker) in the event an employee reduces work hours for COVID-19-related family care, coupled with relaxing eligibility criteria. Increased by W400 billion, to KRW500 billion: This emergency measure introduced a further increase in employment retention subsidies from 66% of wages to 90% for 3 months, April to June (while maintaining the cap of \$66/employee/day). Large firms are subject to the 66% threshold. | NO              | NO                                 | YES                            | YES               |
| 19 | 1621       | Labour market           | Activation measures and enterprise development        | Not specific            | Women's re-employment centers will provide career-interruption prevention services for women in the workforce, temporarily ease criteria for applying for the centers' internship projects after the outbreak of COVID-19 and provide vocational training programs.   | NO              | YES                                | NO                             | YES               |

**CTMS Policy Brief 15. Labor and women: A gender-focused recovery**

|    | Measure ID | Policy Measure Category | Policy Measure Type                                   | Policy Measure Sub-Type                        | Policy Measure Description   | Addresses VAWG? | Targets Women's Economic Security? | Directly Supports Unpaid Care? | Gender Sensitive? |
|----|------------|-------------------------|---|--|--|-----------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| 20 | 3921       | Social protection       | Social assistance                                     | Cash transfers (conditional and unconditional) | South Korea will give gift vouchers to try to combat the economic impact of the Covid-19 (coronavirus) outbreak. The value of the vouchers or online coupons depends on the size of the eligible household. A one-person household can expect to receive 400,000 won (US\$326), a family of four 1 million won. The government said the purpose of issuing vouchers is to ensure that consumption is stimulated. | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |
| 21 | 3922       | Social protection       | Social assistance                                     | Cash transfers (conditional and unconditional) | Emergency relief checks will be offered to about 800,000 people vulnerable to job loss, including company-owned taxi drivers and freelancers.  | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |
| 22 | 3923       | Labour market           | Wage subsidy and income replacement for self-employed | Not specific                                   | Business support including wage support ₩610 billion.  | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |
| 23 | 3924       | Social protection       | Social assistance                                     | Utility, housing and financial support         | Discount coupons and rebates on high energy efficiency home appliances, etc. ₩2.4 trillion   | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |
| 24 | 3925       | Labour market           | Activation measures and enterprise development        | Not specific                                   | Support for job seekers including wage support ₩603 billion.   | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |
| 25 | 3926       | Social protection       | Social assistance                                     | Utility, housing and financial support         | 50% Tax Deduction for Rent Reductions. For commercial property landlords (both individual) who reduce rent receivable from small business owner lessees during the period January 2020 to June 2021, an amount equal to 50% of the reduction in rent is deductible.  | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |
| 26 | 3927       | Social protection       | Social assistance                                     | Utility, housing and financial support         | VAT exemption for "simplified taxpayers" (RSTA §108-5)—Liability to pay VAT is exempted for simplified VAT taxable persons whose annual turnover is between KRW 30M - 48M, until the end of 2020.  | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |

CTMS Policy Brief 15. Labor and women: A gender-focused recovery

|    | Measure ID | Policy Measure Category | Policy Measure Type         | Policy Measure Sub-Type                             | Policy Measure Description   | Addresses VAWG? | Targets Women's Economic Security? | Directly Supports Unpaid Care? | Gender Sensitive? |
|----|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--|-----------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| 27 | 3928       | Social protection       | Social assistance           | Utility, housing and financial support              | For entertainment expenses incurred during the period January to December 2020, the deductible amount limit is temporarily increased (0,35% up to KRW 10bn, 0,25% from KRW 10bn up to KRW 50bn, and 0,06% for amounts exceeding KRW 50bn).   | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |
| 28 | 3930       | Social protection       | Care services               | Childcare services, including for essential workers | Emergency childcare service. The government provided support to ensure that the children of working parents receive both childcare services and online classes. For parents who still must go to work, the Ministry of Education has ordered all 9,762 kindergartens and elementary schools to run an "emergency childcare" service placing teachers on duty. Children in each class must be limited to a maximum of ten. This measure directly supports unpaid care providing emergency childcare services for working parents. | NO              | NO                                 | YES                            | YES               |
| 29 | 3931       | Labour market           | Labor regulatory adjustment | Not specific  | Extend the young adult employment quota (3 percent of the newly hired) and increase new hires in public institutions.  | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |
| 30 | 3932       | Social protection       | Social assistance           | Utility, housing and financial support              | Lower the interest rate for low-income household loan programs from 4,5 percent to 2-3 percent.  | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |
| 31 | 4876       | Social protection       | Social insurance            | Healthcare insurance support                        | During the pandemic, South Korea achieved a temporary, universal health coverage (UHC) model in terms of the extent of population and services covered by insurance. Given the pandemic, the Government eliminated all cost-sharing associated with health services for COVID-19. Measures that support universal access to healthcare for all citizens, independent of labor market status or contributory records are classified as gender-sensitive.  | NO              | YES                                | NO                             | YES               |

CTMS Policy Brief 15. Labor and women: A gender-focused recovery

|    | Measure ID | Policy Measure Category  | Policy Measure Type | Policy Measure Sub-Type | Policy Measure Description  | Addresses VAWG? | Targets Women's Economic Security? | Directly Supports Unpaid Care? | Gender Sensitive? |
|----|------------|--|---------------------|-------------------------|---|-----------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| 32 | 1593       | Economic, financial, and fiscal support for businesses and entrepreneurs | Multiple measures   | Not specific            | 11.7 trillion KRW total package. The measures include for virus prevention, diagnosis and treatment; assistance to help SMEs; emergency support for business operations (through loans and guarantees); business support for small merchants (including wage support); assistance for promoting small business affected including traditional markets; emergency livelihood support including gift vouchers and deduction in national health insurance; Support of epidemic prevention and treatment for designated coronavirus disaster areas. In Korea, wholesale and retail trade is a female-dominated sector: it comprises 14,2% of female employment against 6,6% of male employment. | NO              | YES                                | NO                             | YES               |
| 33 | 1607       | Economic, financial, and fiscal support for businesses and entrepreneurs | Multiple measures   | Not specific            | The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport will not reclaim unused traffic rights and slots; Airport facility fees will be discounted; the ministry will exempt airlines from parking fees for three months from Mar-2020; Air navigation charges: Aircraft operating in Korea's airspace will be exempt from charges for three months from Apr-2020; Landing charges: Reduced by up to 20% for two months from Mar-2020. Ground operators: 20% discount and deferred payment for three months; Airport ancillary services: Inflight meals and refueling payment will be deferred by three months from Mar-2020.  | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |

CTMS Policy Brief 15. Labor and women: A gender-focused recovery

|    | Measure ID | Policy Measure Category  | Policy Measure Type                                  | Policy Measure Sub-Type | Policy Measure Description   | Addresses VAWG? | Targets Women's Economic Security? | Directly Supports Unpaid Care? | Gender Sensitive? |
|----|------------|--|--|-------------------------|--|-----------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| 34 | 1617       | Economic, financial, and fiscal support for businesses and entrepreneurs | Equity injections: public sector loans to businesses | Not specific            | The state-owned Korea Development Bank (KDB) and the Export-Import Bank of Korea (KEXIM) decided on 21st April to provide a 1,7 trillion KRW (\$1,37 billion) loan for Asiana Airlines. In addition, the KDB has granted loans to Air Busan (56 billion), Air Seoul (56 billion), Jeju Air (40 billion), Jin Air (30 billion), T-way (6 billion). For Korean Air, the two lenders will extend a loan of 200 billion won to Korean Air for operating capital, purchase 700 billion won worth of securities backed by future cargo deliveries and buy the carrier's 300 billion won in perpetual bonds convertible into stocks, a KDB official said. | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |
| 35 | 1618       | Economic, financial, and fiscal support for businesses and entrepreneurs | Tax deferrals  | Not specific            | VAT break: The government is providing a VAT break for businesses with revenues of 60 million KRW or less per year. Temporary relief for VAT (RSTA §108-4 & §108-5): VAT imputed in 2020 for small self-employed businesses with annual sales of KRW 80 million (excluding value added tax) or less will be reduced to the level of simplified taxpayers. The base amount of the VAT exemption for simplified taxpayers will be raised to KRW 48 million from KRW 30 million temporarily in 2020.  | NO              | NO                                 | NO                             | NO                |

Source: [COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker 2022](#)

**Table 2. Korea: Summary of economically active pop. by gender and age group during the first quarter of pre and post pandemic years (2019-2022)**

| Item  | Age Group             | 2019.1/4 |        | 2020.1/4 |        | 2021.1/4 |        | 2022.1/4 |        |
|---|-----------------------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
|   |                       | Male     | Female | Male     | Female | Male     | Female | Male     | Female |
| Population, 15 years old and over (Thousand Person) | 15–19 Years old       | 1,365    | 1,307  | 1,282    | 1,233  | 1,199    | 1,156  | 1,144    | 1,115  |
|   | 20–29 Years old       | 3,175    | 3,242  | 3,210    | 3,253  | 3,234    | 3,252  | 3,190    | 3,208  |
|   | 30–39 Years old       | 3,792    | 3,522  | 3,740    | 3,446  | 3,673    | 3,362  | 3,604    | 3,295  |
|   | 40–49 Years old       | 4,232    | 4,111  | 4,197    | 4,061  | 4,169    | 4,021  | 4,127    | 3,989  |
|   | 50–59 Years old       | 4,253    | 4,258  | 4,282    | 4,273  | 4,286    | 4,259  | 4,302    | 4,269  |
|   | 60 Years old and over | 4,989    | 6,125  | 5,280    | 6,437  | 5,598    | 6,779  | 5,884    | 7,083  |
| Economically active population (Thousand Person)    | 15–19 Years old       | 113      | 123    | 92       | 114    | 80       | 100    | 80       | 132    |
|   | 20–29 Years old       | 1,989    | 2,095  | 1,979    | 2,015  | 1,929    | 2,024  | 1,937    | 2,116  |
|   | 30–39 Years old       | 3,481    | 2,211  | 3,426    | 2,227  | 3,337    | 2,136  | 3,287    | 2,129  |
|   | 40–49 Years old       | 3,968    | 2,728  | 3,888    | 2,686  | 3,831    | 2,611  | 3,816    | 2,617  |
|   | 50–59 Years old       | 3,751    | 2,777  | 3,755    | 2,788  | 3,741    | 2,732  | 3,806    | 2,832  |
|   | 60 Years old and over | 2,618    | 1,848  | 2,818    | 2,124  | 2,987    | 2,241  | 3,230    | 2,379  |
| Employed persons (Thousand Person)                  | 15–19 Years old       | 97       | 112    | 81       | 103    | 70       | 87     | 73       | 116    |
|   | 20–29 Years old       | 1,772    | 1,919  | 1,792    | 1,853  | 1,721    | 1,847  | 1,800    | 1,990  |
|   | 30–39 Years old       | 3,371    | 2,129  | 3,330    | 2,146  | 3,213    | 2,036  | 3,211    | 2,064  |
|   | 40–49 Years old       | 3,863    | 2,658  | 3,799    | 2,620  | 3,732    | 2,533  | 3,748    | 2,544  |
|   | 50–59 Years old       | 3,629    | 2,702  | 3,637    | 2,709  | 3,621    | 2,627  | 3,727    | 2,780  |
|   | 60 Years old and over | 2,480    | 1,729  | 2,676    | 2,004  | 2,812    | 2,070  | 3,081    | 2,236  |
| Unemployed persons (Thousand Person)                | 15–19 Years old       | 16       | 11     | 11       | 11     | 9        | 13     | 6        | 16     |
|   | 20–29 Years old       | 216      | 177    | 187      | 161    | 209      | 177    | 138      | 126    |
|   | 30–39 Years old       | 110      | 83     | 97       | 82     | 125      | 100    | 75       | 65     |
|   | 40–49 Years old       | 105      | 70     | 89       | 66     | 99       | 77     | 68       | 73     |
|   | 50–59 Years old       | 122      | 75     | 118      | 79     | 120      | 105    | 79       | 52     |
|   | 60 Years old and over | 138      | 118    | 142      | 120    | 176      | 171    | 149      | 143    |
| Economically inactive population (Thousand Person)  | 15–19 Years old       | 1,251    | 1,184  | 1,191    | 1,119  | 1,120    | 1,057  | 1,064    | 983    |
|   | 20–29 Years old       | 1,186    | 1,147  | 1,231    | 1,238  | 1,304    | 1,228  | 1,253    | 1,093  |
|   | 30–39 Years old       | 311      | 1,311  | 314      | 1,218  | 336      | 1,226  | 317      | 1,166  |
|   | 40–49 Years old       | 264      | 1,382  | 309      | 1,375  | 338      | 1,411  | 311      | 1,371  |
|   | 50–59 Years old       | 502      | 1,481  | 527      | 1,486  | 545      | 1,527  | 496      | 1,437  |
|   | 60 Years old and over | 2,371    | 4,277  | 2,461    | 4,313  | 2,611    | 4,538  | 2,654    | 4,704  |
| Labor force participation rate (%)                  | 15–19 Years old       | 8.3      | 9.4    | 7.2      | 9.2    | 6.7      | 8.6    | 7.0      | 11.8   |
|   | 20–29 Years old       | 62.6     | 64.6   | 61.6     | 61.9   | 59.7     | 62.2   | 60.7     | 65.9   |
|   | 30–39 Years old       | 91.8     | 62.8   | 91.6     | 64.6   | 90.9     | 63.5   | 91.2     | 64.6   |
|   | 40–49 Years old       | 93.8     | 66.4   | 92.6     | 66.1   | 91.9     | 64.9   | 92.5     | 65.6   |
|   | 50–59 Years old       | 88.2     | 65.2   | 87.7     | 65.2   | 87.3     | 64.1   | 88.5     | 66.3   |
|   | 60 Years old and over | 52.5     | 30.2   | 53.4     | 33.0   | 53.4     | 33.1   | 54.9     | 33.6   |
| Unemployment rate (%)                               | 15–19 Years old       | 14.5     | 9.0    | 12.3     | 9.6    | 11.8     | 12.9   | 7.8      | 11.9   |
|   | 20–29 Years old       | 10.9     | 8.4    | 9.5      | 8.0    | 10.8     | 8.7    | 7.1      | 6.0    |
|   | 30–39 Years old       | 3.2      | 3.7    | 2.8      | 3.7    | 3.7      | 4.7    | 2.3      | 3.1    |
|   | 40–49 Years old       | 2.6      | 2.6    | 2.3      | 2.4    | 2.6      | 3.0    | 1.8      | 2.8    |
|   | 50–59 Years old       | 3.2      | 2.7    | 3.1      | 2.8    | 3.2      | 3.8    | 2.1      | 1.8    |
|   | 60 Years old and over | 5.3      | 6.4    | 5.0      | 5.6    | 5.9      | 7.6    | 4.6      | 6.0    |

| Item                               | Age Group             | 2019.1/4 |        | 2020.1/4 |        | 2021.1/4 |        | 2022.1/4 |        |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
|                                    |                       | Male     | Female | Male     | Female | Male     | Female | Male     | Female |
| Employment to population ratio (%) | 15–19 Years old       | 7.1      | 8.5    | 6.3      | 8.3    | 5.9      | 7.5    | 6.4      | 10.4   |
|                                    | 20–29 Years old       | 55.8     | 59.2   | 55.8     | 57.0   | 53.2     | 56.8   | 56.4     | 62.0   |
|                                    | 30–39 Years old       | 88.9     | 60.4   | 89.0     | 62.3   | 87.5     | 60.6   | 89.1     | 62.6   |
|                                    | 40–49 Years old       | 91.3     | 64.7   | 90.5     | 64.5   | 89.5     | 63.0   | 90.8     | 63.8   |
|                                    | 50–59 Years old       | 85.3     | 63.5   | 84.9     | 63.4   | 84.5     | 61.7   | 86.6     | 65.1   |
|                                    | 60 Years old and over | 49.7     | 28.2   | 50.7     | 31.1   | 50.2     | 30.5   | 52.4     | 31.6   |

Source: Self-constructed from Statistics Korea, 「Economically Active Population Survey」, raw data, each year.

**Table 3. Korea: Employed persons by gender and hours worked during the first quarter of pre and post pandemic years (2019-2022)**

| Time                | 2019.1/4 |        | 2020.1/4 |        | 2021.1/4 |        | 2022.1/4 |        |
|---------------------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
|                     | Male     | Female | Male     | Female | Male     | Female | Male     | Female |
| Sex                 |          |        |          |        |          |        |          |        |
| 1–17hours           | 670      | 986    | 726      | 1,045  | 841      | 1,204  | 892      | 1,287  |
| 18–35hours          | 1,191    | 1,901  | 1,377    | 2,023  | 1,481    | 2,185  | 1,525    | 2,226  |
| 36–44hours          | 6,253    | 4,771  | 6,538    | 4,932  | 6,881    | 4,949  | 7,206    | 5,389  |
| 45–53hours          | 4,193    | 2,034  | 4,009    | 1,756  | 3,626    | 1,610  | 3,749    | 1,643  |
| *Less than 36 hours | 1,861    | 2,887  | 2,103    | 3,067  | 2,323    | 3,389  | 2,417    | 3,514  |
| 54 hours and over   | 2,721    | 1,275  | 2,335    | 1,085  | 2,044    | 876    | 1,998    | 842    |
| *36 hours and over  | 13,167   | 8,080  | 12,882   | 7,773  | 12,550   | 7,435  | 12,953   | 7,875  |
| Temporarily absent  | 184      | 282    | 329      | 595    | 296      | 377    | 270      | 341    |

Source: Self-constructed from Statistics Korea, 「Economically Active Population Survey」, raw data, each year

### Center for Transnational Migration and Social Inclusion

Seoul National University Graduate School of International Studies Bldg. 140 Rm. 307,  
1 Gwanak-ro, Gwanak-gu  
Seoul 08826  
Korea

### Contact CTMS

**Website** www.ctms.or.kr  
**Email** ctms.snu@gmail.com  
**Phone** +82-2-880-9220  
**Fax** 82-2-879-1496