



Tishman Environment
and Design Center



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COVID-19 and the Climate Crisis Affect Women Disproportionately



In celebration of Women's History Month and as we approach the one year anniversary of a worldwide pandemic, we must acknowledge the extra labor that women have contributed during COVID-19 and the widening gender gap caused by the pandemic.

Economic gender equality has worsened, since the pandemic has disproportionately affected women-dominated fields such as food services, retail, public services, hospitality, entertainment, and carework. Women's jobs are 19% more at risk than men's jobs (1). Some other reasons include that women make and save less, they are more likely to be the head of single-parent households, they are more

likely to participate in the informal economy, and they typically have fewer social protections (2).

Moreover, prior to the pandemic, women spent an average of 10 years in their lifetime doing unpaid care work, as opposed to the average man's 4 years but COVID-19 has worsened the proportion of unpaid care work that women take on (3). This disparity is worse in countries whose governments do not offer maternity or parental leave, and do not provide health, child, or elderly care (4). During the pandemic, significantly more women than men were forced to quit their jobs or work fewer hours to accommodate their increased unpaid care work such taking care of children that are attending online school from home (5).



From a global perspective, gender-based violence such as the sale of child brides are more likely to occur during economic crises. As such, the United Nations has proposed targeted support for families with young daughters during the pandemic (6). This is similar to what happens during climate emergencies. [Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson](#), marine biologist and climate justice advocate, summarizes how the climate crisis is a gender issue in her book “[All We Can Save](#)”:

“The climate crisis is not

gender
neutral.
Climate
change is a
powerful
“threat
multiplier,”
making
existing
vulnerabilities
and injustices
worse.
Especially
under
conditions of
poverty,
women and

girls face
greater risk of
displacement
or death from
extreme
weather
disasters.
Early
marriage and
sex work—
sometimes
last-resort
survival
strategies—
have been
tied to
droughts and

floods. There is growing proof of the link between climate change and gender-based violence, including sexual assault, domestic abuse, and forced prostitution. Tasks core to survival, such

as collecting
water and
wood or
growing food,
fall on female
shoulders in
many
cultures.

These are
already
challenging
and time-
consuming
activities;
climate
change can
deepen the

burden, and
with it
struggles for
health,
education,
and financial
security.”

— DR. AYANA ELIZABETH

JOHNSON

The gendered effects of COVID-19 are not anomalies but rather the norm during global crises. During global crises, systems of inequality are worsened and women (especially women of color) often bear the weight of those crises. Both COVID-19 and the climate crisis are global crises that affect women disproportionately. More concerning, COVID-19 is a preview of what could happen as climate change exacerbates global issues.

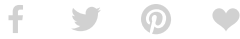
**To hear more from Dr. Ayana

Elizabeth Johnson, stay tuned to the
Tishman Center's Earth Week
events**

References:

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7. Johnson, Ayana Elizabeth, and Katharine Wilkinson, editors. *All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis*. Random House LLC, 2020.



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