

# COVID & WORK

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# INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a huge impact in economic activity, employment, and our way of working. It has resulted in both positive and negative consequences. Through this presentation, we aim to look at the impact it has on work and how it has affected people of different gender and class.

# MENTAL HEALTH

The outbreak, which rendered many people unable to think, act, or react has become this generation's worst frustrating experience.

The coronavirus outbreak has caused increased fear and trauma due to widespread media coverage.

- Prolonged lockdowns,
- Both qualitative and quantitative job insecurities
- Unemployment due to downsizing or bankruptcies,
- Shortage of food,
- Inability to receive basic healthcare,
- Fear of death, or causing the death of a loved one were primary factors are worsening the trauma.

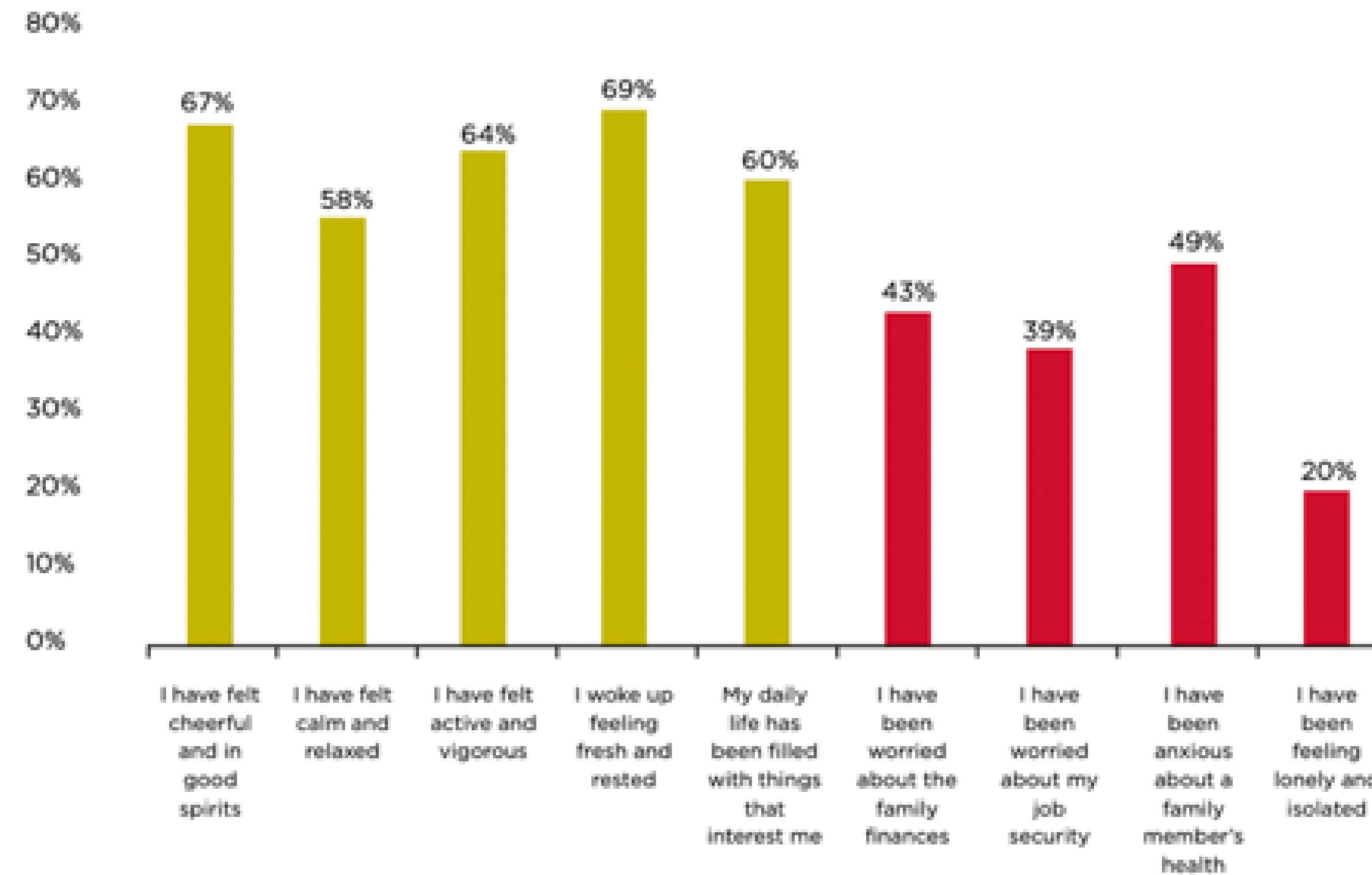
# EMPLOYEES

- Working from home
- In isolation
- Without the social support and interaction that comes from working in an office environment
- Great deal of uncertainty and fear for many people, including concerns about job security and financial stability
- Strict management control and excessive job demand during teleworking can lead to emotional exhaustion and stress
- Reduced work engagement during teleworking can cause employees' psychological distress



## Emotional health of all employees

N=922



# What should be done?

- Return to Work strategies
- Companies should also not put undue work pressure on their employees as the external uncertainties put enough pressure.
- Clear steps to reach out and include employees in company matters even as they work from home, because half the people feel left out of key decisions.

# What is the current scenario?

Companies in India are doing well in engaging with their employees even when they had to work from home. Most important is the extraordinarily high number of people who felt valued by their company and were motivated to give their 100%.

# HEALTHCARE WORKERS

## Why are they stressed?

- fear of infection
- long hours
- Difficult working conditions



"A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that healthcare workers who cared for COVID-19 patients reported high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression."

## What are the short term and long term impacts?

- Emotional exhaustion
- Addictions

# STUDENTS

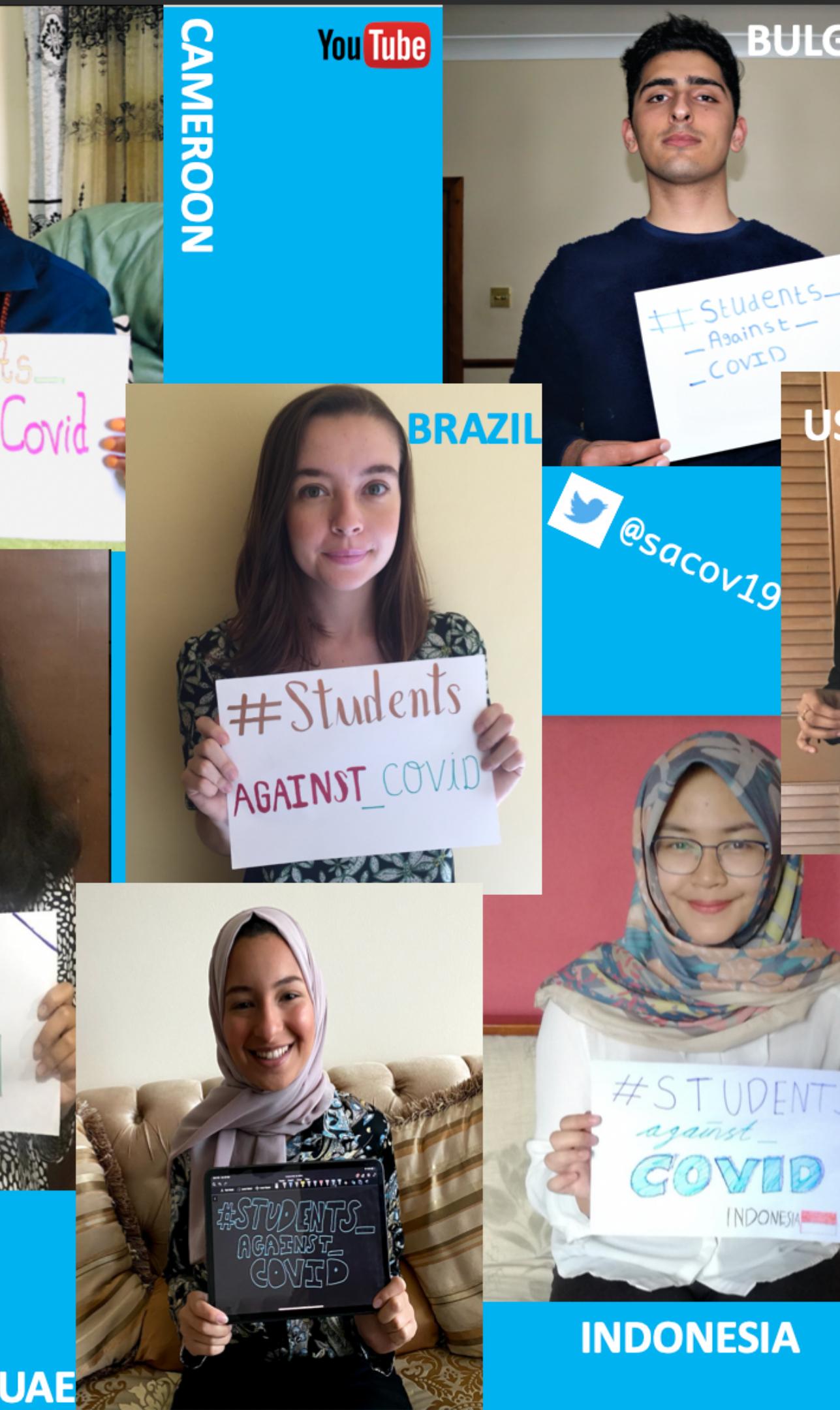
## How has Covid impacted the mental health of a student?

- Psychological problems including
  1. Frustration
  2. Stress
  3. Depression
- Difficulty with time management and self-motivation
- Increased stress and anxiety due to social isolation and uncertainty
- Financial Insecurities



# What is the need of the hour?

- Prioritizing mental health:
  1. Awareness
  2. Counselling
  3. Therapy
- Acceptance
- Emotional Support



# **GENDER AND COVID:**

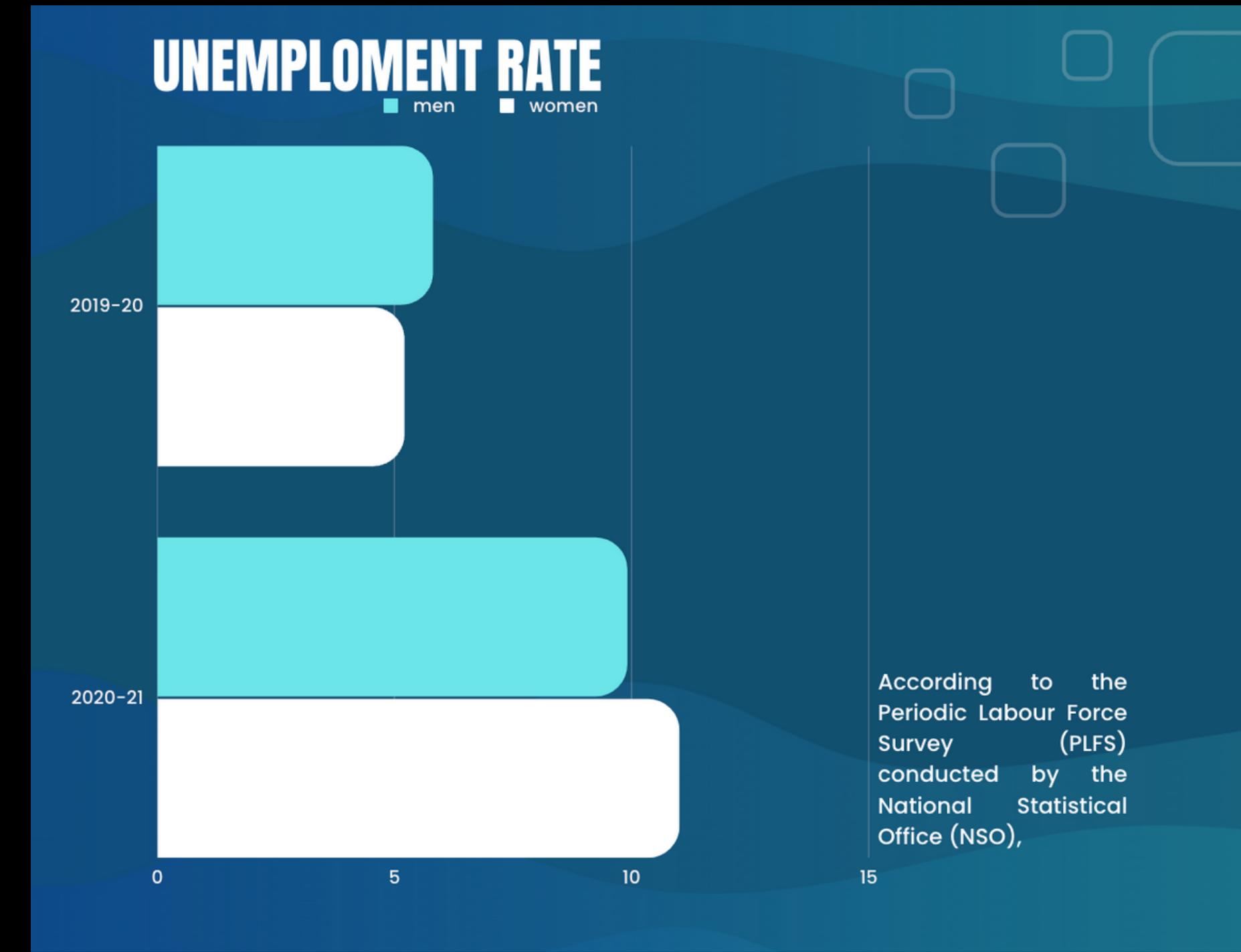
## *Analysing gender disparity in work and education*

The pandemic has a strong gender dimension, with women at the frontline as health and care responders, at the same time experiencing the knock-on impact on a number of fronts, including their sexual and reproductive health. We have seen communities that have resorted to negative coping mechanisms such as child, early and forced marriages. We have also seen escalating levels of domestic violence and abuse. The consequences being a denial of women and young girls' health, rights and socio-economic prospects.

## 1. A higher percentage of women experienced job losses

A This indicates that both men and women have been affected by job losses during the COVID-19 pandemic, but women have been affected more severely than men.

The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) estimated that the labor participation rate for women in the informal sector fell from 24% in 2019-20 to 17% in 2020-21.



## **2. Women faced a greater loss in income during COVID-19**

On average, women lost over two-thirds of their incomes and experienced deeper loss and slower recovery in paid work when compared to men. Women started at a much lower baseline of INR 5,000, as opposed to INR 8,000 for men, which significantly impacted their ability to withstand the shock of income loss.

## **3. Unpaid labour and care work increased for women**

Even before the pandemic, Indian women engaged in nearly 6.5 hours a day of unpaid work, which is three times more than the time spent by Indian men on such work. The survey showed a dramatic spike in this figure, with a 47 percent increase in unpaid labour for women and a 41 percent increase in unpaid care work for women during COVID-19.

## **4. Education and Impact on Students**

According to a survey conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO), around 8% of school-going children aged 6-17 years dropped out of school during the pandemic.

A report by UNESCO suggests that girls are more likely to drop out of school due to the pandemic compared to boys, particularly in rural and marginalized communities, because girls are more likely to be affected by increased domestic responsibilities

## **5. Areas where men have been more affected than women**

- Employment in certain industries: Men are more likely to work in industries such as manufacturing, construction, and transportation, which have been severely impacted by the pandemic.
- Mental health: While women have reported higher levels of anxiety and depression during the pandemic, men have been more likely to experience other mental health issues such as substance abuse and suicide.

## **6. Impact on LGBTQ community :**

- Economic : LGBT persons disproportionately rely on the informal sector for income. When formally employed, LGBT persons are more likely to work in industries highly disrupted by the pandemic, such as restaurants and food service, retail, grooming, public sector education, hospitals, and sex work.
- Health : LGBT persons experiencing homelessness are now compelled to rely on unsafe social housing and shelter programs for stigmatized populations. They also face the dilemma of living in cramped communal spaces (which creates health concerns) or being compelled to return to hostile families and communities.

Overall, while the COVID-19 pandemic has affected both men and women in India, it has disproportionately affected women. Addressing these disparities requires a gender-sensitive approach to policymaking and healthcare interventions.



# **CLASS AND COVID:**

## *How the less affluent face double risks*

The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a harsh light on inequality. **COVID has made class divides even deeper.**

- People living paycheck to paycheck in service sector jobs are in a very different position to those working in salaried jobs they can do from home.
- People with money are likely to find it easier to put distance between themselves and others.
- They may also be more able to get food and supplies brought to their door, and stockpile some necessities.

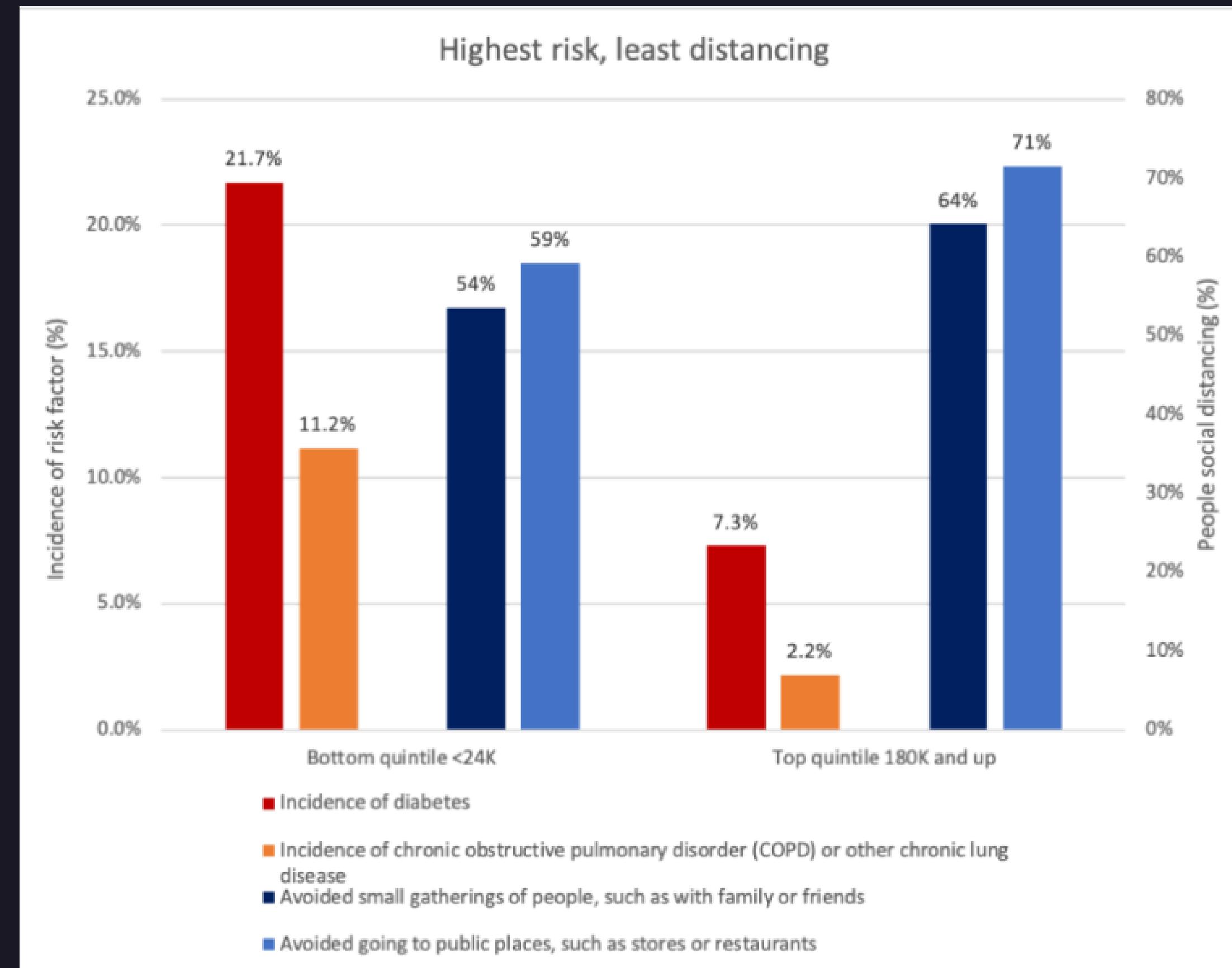
**The students from the less privileged backgrounds have experienced larger negative impacts due to Covid-19.** Reduction in family income, limited access to digital resources, and the high cost of internet connectivity have disrupted the academic life of the students.

**The worst-hit however are the workers with insecure employment,** the marginalized section- there is a lot of heterogeneity even within this section and this has resulted in a huge economic impact. Access to benefits from the employer is almost non-existent for the temporary workers.

For eg: Domestic help, construction workers and other daily wage workers like idol makers, small scale fabric makers.



# Comparison between lower and upper classes



Daily wage workers, small roadside vendors, workers at non-essential shops among others have been hit hard as the non-essential shops had to be closed for months.

**“We have to skip meals...give me a job.”**

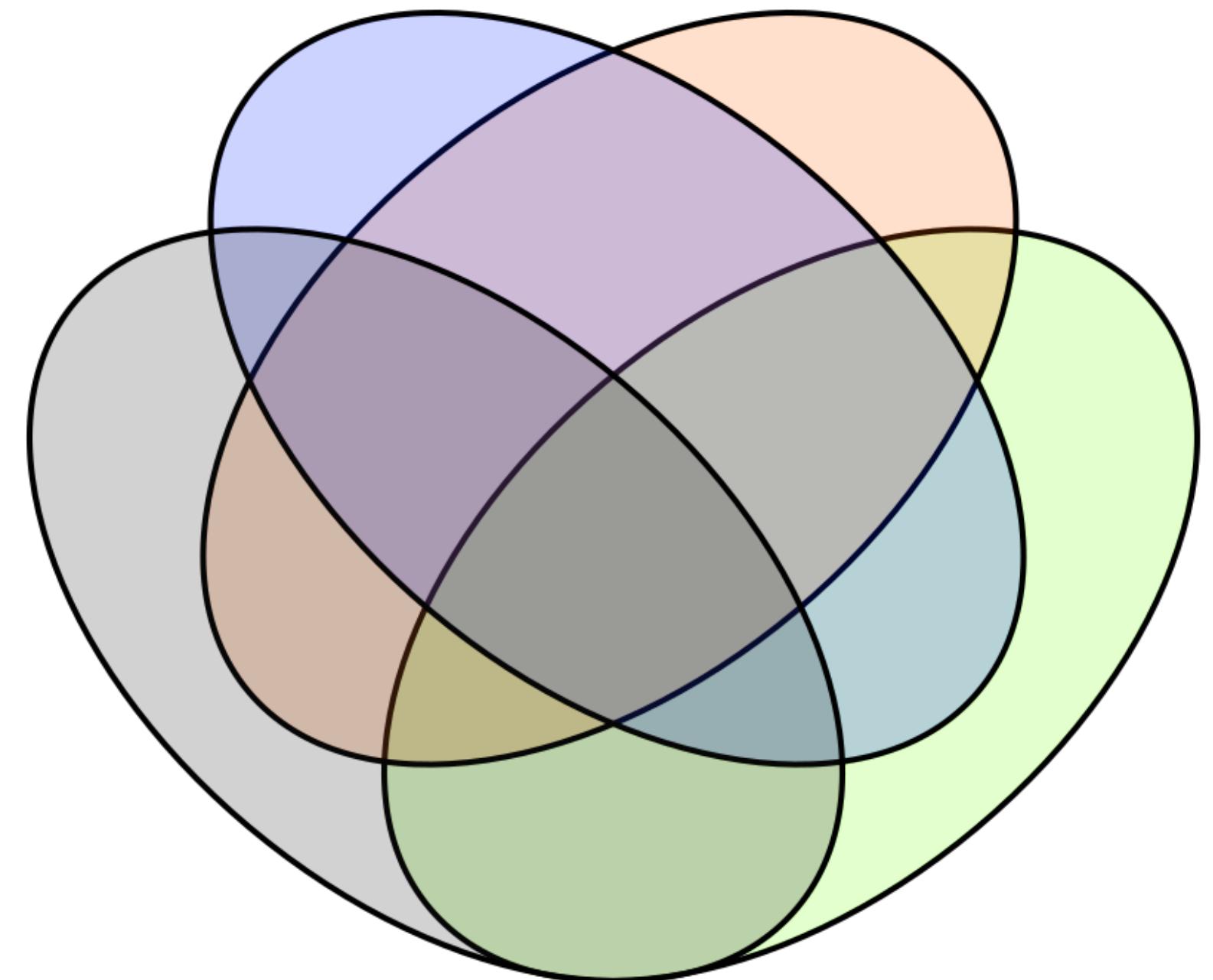
**“This pandemic has made our lives hell and I hope that the lockdown ends soon and I get some work so that I can earn for my family”**

**“Business has suffered, every day we have to look for an alternate source of income”**

**“I am not able to pay school fees of my children”**

For this low income segment with little or no savings, it is a vicious circle and when they are rendered jobless, pushing them and their families into a struggle for basic survival with uncertainty as to the duration of this misery aggravating their plight.

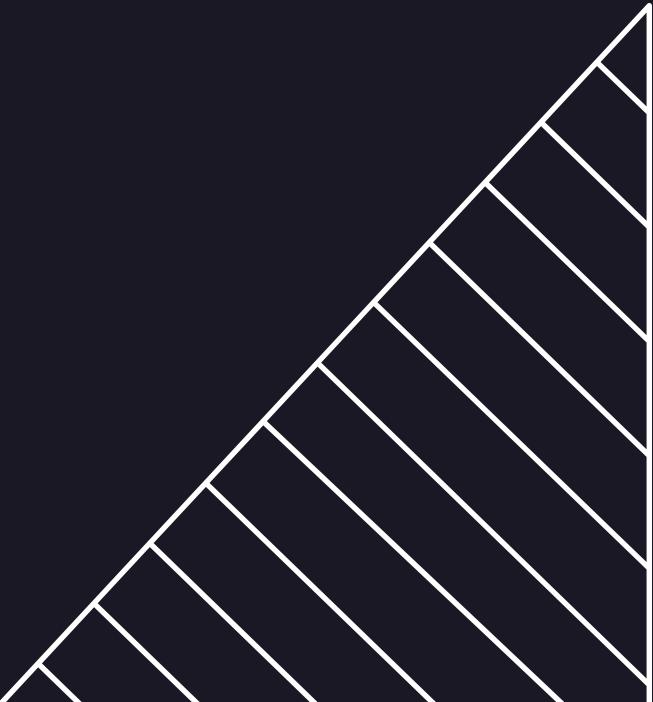
# WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY?



# INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

For example, the lived experiences of discrimination of a black woman would be different from that of a white woman or a black man.



# PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS

Recalling our previous talks about intersectionality

We had earlier discussed about the combined effects of discrimination with respect to **gender and class**.

Race, gender and class combine to create complex and oppressive situations for women of color. This means that women from middle and lower classes are severely affected by oppression and discrimination.

Intersectionality is distinct from the idea of additive discrimination. It is not simply the addition of racial discrimination and gender discrimination.

# COVID AND INTERSECTIONALITY

Covid-19 is a clear example of an intersectional phenomenon; the impact of individual and community exposure to Covid-19 is the result of multiple and interrelating structures of inequality.

Like other more recent pandemics such as the Spanish flu in 1918 or HIV in the '80s, the virus spread more easily among the vulnerable population.

Furthermore, the economic consequences of social distancing measures are leading to an **increase of inequalities compared to pre-pandemic times** and interact with pre-existing inequalities along dimensions such as gender, age, socio-economic conditions, geography.

In the United Kingdom, women, young and low-paid workers are those that suffered the most from the lockdown.

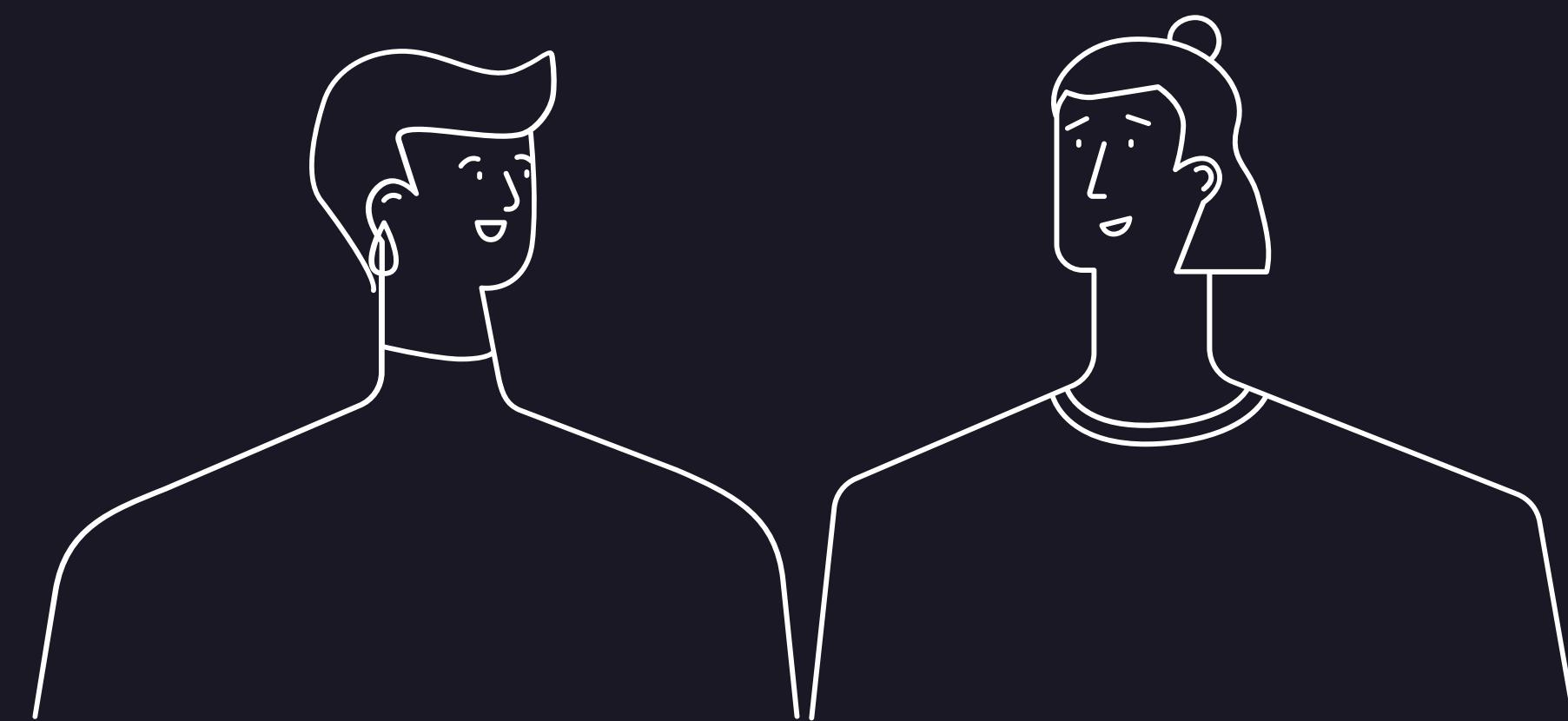
In Italy, adverse effects were observed on blue collars, low-educated workers and low-income services workers as well.

Social distancing implied more significant job losses among ethnic minorities in the United States, especially Hispanics.



# INTERSECTIONAL FEMINISM

Intersectional feminism takes into account the many different ways each woman experiences discrimination. “White feminism” is a term that is used to describe a type of feminism that overshadows the struggles women of color, LGBTQ women and women of other minority groups face.



# INTERSECTIONAL FEMINISM

## *Instances of discrimination against women*

While men still hold most senior or leadership positions in the health sector, women are the ones standing on the front line of the fight against COVID-19, making up an estimated two-thirds of the health workforce worldwide.

Despite their key role in combating the pandemic, with great personal risk of infection, female health professionals receive on average 28 percent less than their male counterparts.

Mothers were more likely than fathers to exit the labor force during the pandemics and, significantly, mothers of the youngest children reduced their working hours five times more than fathers.

# NEXT STEPS

## *The future of work after COVID-19*

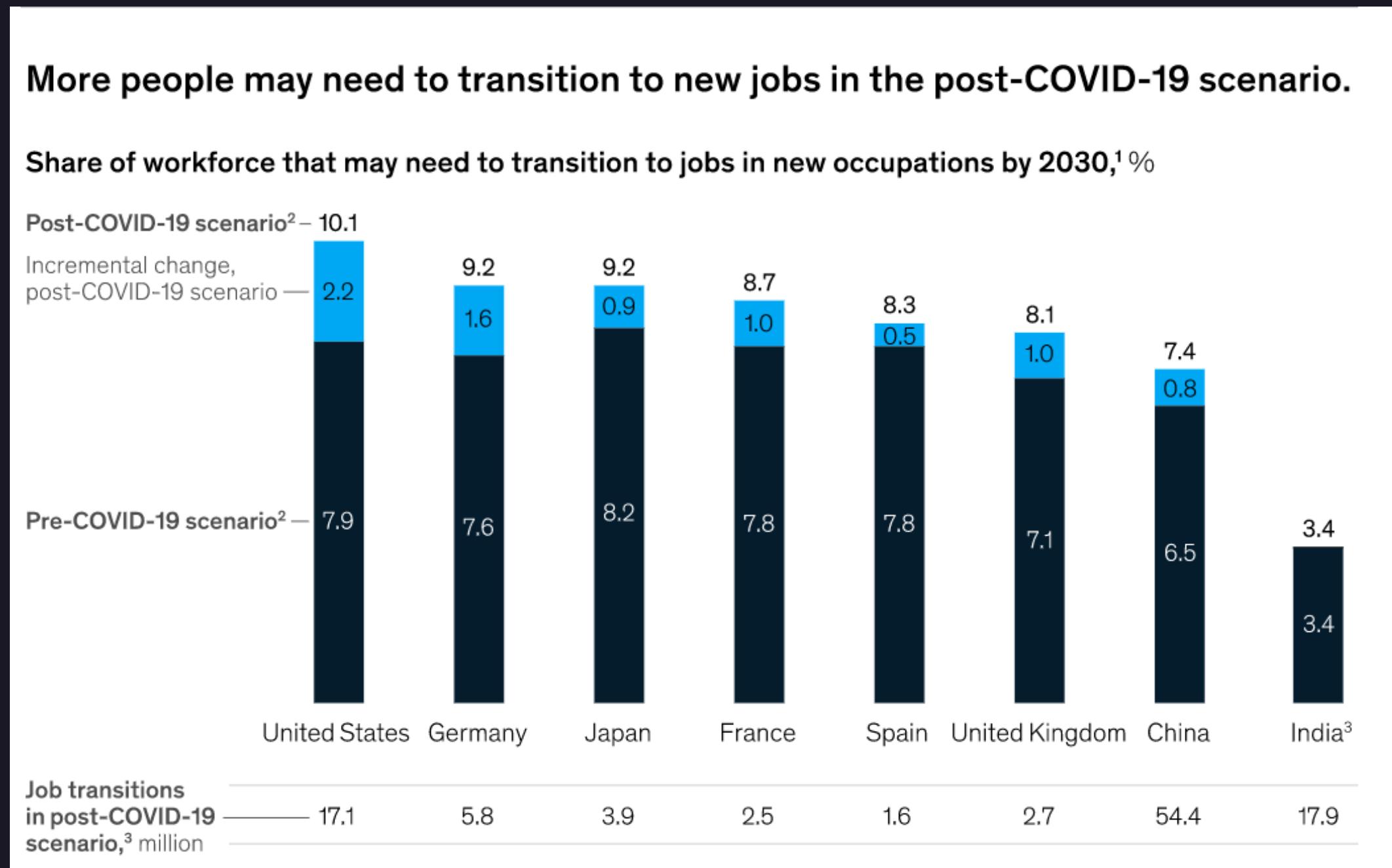
**Remote work and virtual meetings are likely to continue, albeit less intensely than at the pandemic's peak**

About 20 to 25 percent of the workforces in advanced economies could work from home between three and five days a week.

Some work that technically can be done remotely is best done in person, like negotiations, critical business decisions, brainstorming sessions, providing sensitive feedback, and onboarding new employees



The pandemic accelerated existing trends in remote work, e-commerce, and automation, with up to 25 percent more workers than previously estimated potentially needing to switch occupations.



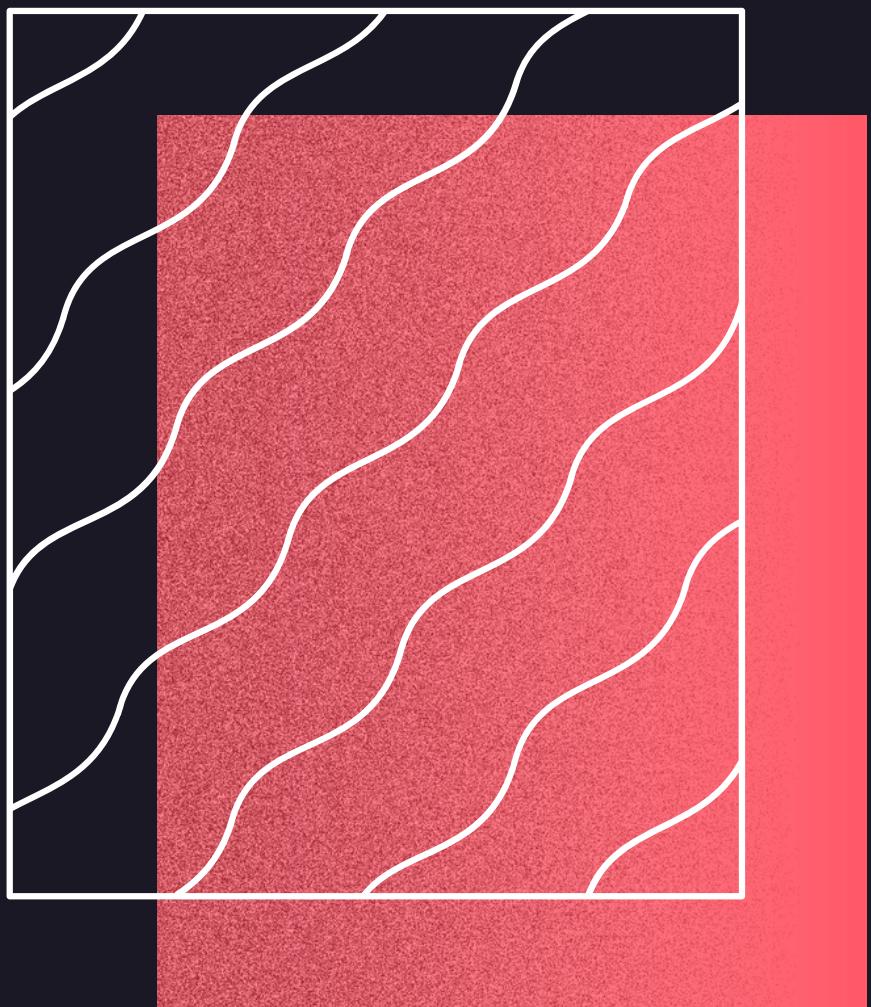
**The scale of workforce transitions set off by COVID-19's influence on labor trends increases the urgency for businesses and policymakers to take steps to support additional training and education programs for workers.**

- Policymakers could support businesses by expanding and enhancing the digital infrastructure (Internet, tech devices etc)
- Governments could also consider extending benefits and protections to independent workers and to workers working to build their skills and knowledge mid-career.
- In the United States, Merck and other large companies have put up more than \$100 million to burnish the skills of Black workers without a college education and create jobs that they can fill.

**The reward of such efforts would be a more resilient, more talented, and better-paid workforce—and a more robust and equitable society.**

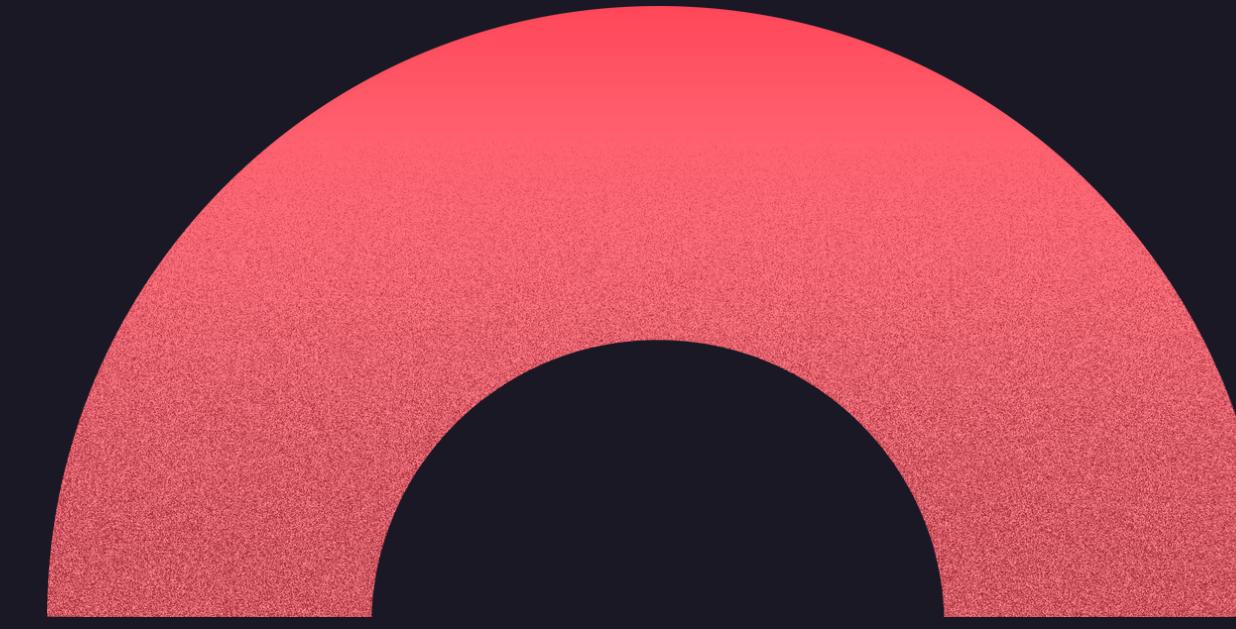
# CONCLUSION

Through this presentation, we have discussed the impact COVID-19 had in the work lives of people. We did a comparative study on how it has impacted people belonging to different class and gender. Moreover, apart from the economic and financial aspect, we have also highlighted the impact it had on the mental health and wellbeing of workers and students. We also talk about intersectionality and how it intertwines with the previously discussed topics. In the end, we look into the future of work after COVID and see what policy changes and decisions can be made to create a better workplace and equitable environment.



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THANK YOU.