

# The Labor Is Titanic

Magdalena Rivera

## BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Look at the image of Atlas on the next page and read the caption. What do you think “titanic” means?
2. Look at the image of the woman juggling lots of tasks. What kind of labor do you think this article will be about?

## A Thousand Questions

One day I woke up feeling that spring had been stolen from us. The pandemic forced me into confinement with a 10-year-old boy who was asking me a thousand questions that were difficult for me to answer. Like many other people, I was facing social isolation, changes in the way we work and study, and job loss. These factors destabilize

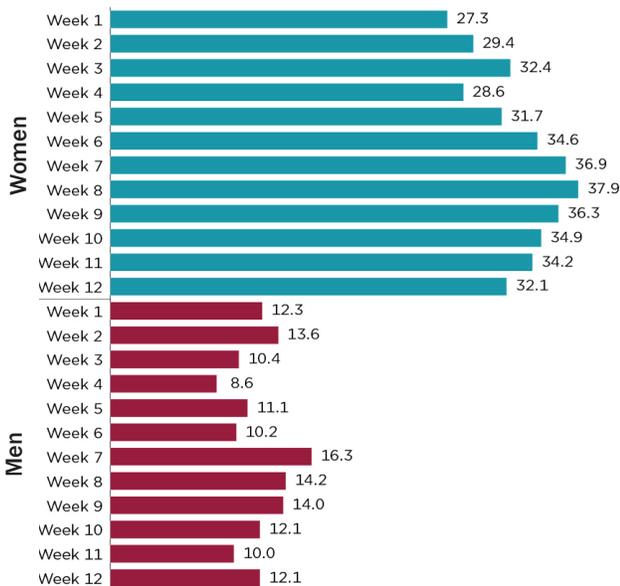


our inner world, and each of us is trying to find a way to maintain physical and mental balance. This is my case, too.

In the blink of an eye, I found myself being a full-time teacher, and I realized the great responsibility that I had at this moment in time. Remote learning has been a great challenge. The labor is titanic. But all of us – teachers, students, and parents – had to learn a new kind of education. After nine months, we work together as a team. For example, the school district gave Chromebooks to all the children who did not have them. They made sure that everyone had access to remote learning. The teachers were always ready to help both parents and children, regardless of the day or time.

Another great personal impact was that I was laid off from my job. This has made me feel unproductive; work is a vital need for me. In my case, I wasn't eligible to collect unemployment since I had started working at my new job only 15 days before the pandemic. My husband has started working overtime every day to help us pay expenses. It is not something that makes me feel very good.

### Percent of Adults Not Working Due to Covid-19 Childcare Issues



Note: This data includes adults, ages 25-44. The percentages are non-working adults with children excluding those who are retired or not interested in working. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Week 12 ends July 21, 2020. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2020/08/parents-juggle-work-and-child-care-during-pandemic.html>

When discouragement and impotence come to visit me, the best therapy I have is walking. It is here where I meet myself. It is here where I renew my priorities, and my highest priority is my family.

### Coffee, Nature, Community

The stability of the whole family depends on my stability, so I started thinking about what else I could do to take care of myself. First, I gave myself 20 minutes at five in the morning during which time, accompanied by silence, I prepare coffee. Those moments are mine only, and they give me the charge that I need for my daily journey of being a mother, teacher, cook, wife, counselor, housekeeper, sports coach, and all of the many other titles that I forget at this moment.

During this time, both my family and I have tried to find the positive side of being together. We have reconnected around the table during breakfast and lunch, something that was not possible before the coronavirus, due to the fast pace of life, school, and work. Nature has been a great ally. We got hold of it, or, maybe, she got hold of us. She has given us the best gifts. I am sure that when all of this is over, I will miss the games and the laughter of our quarantined family time.

For our own health and the health of our community, we found ourselves doing acts of solidarity with others. We were part of an online “marathon” to raise money for Feed America. We made donations of winter clothing, and we support local businesses to help them survive the pandemic.

During the pandemic, we have all experienced negative feelings. This is part of life in times of crisis. However, we have done our best to turn it into something positive, not just for ourselves, but for others as well. In a moment of crisis, we are all responsible for looking out for those who are most in need. Now is the time when each of us could play a role in helping to cope with the effects we are experiencing. I like to dream of a better world.



*The Titans were a group of very large, powerful gods in Greek mythology. Atlas, one of the most famous Titans, is often shown carrying the world on his shoulders.*

**AFTER YOU READ:** What does the bar graph say about the difference in ways women and men have been affected by Covid-19? What might be some long-term effects of these differences?

Magdalena Rivera is a student at the Ludlow Area Adult Learning Center in Ludlow, MA. She is a daughter, a sister, an aunt, a wife and, most important, she is a mother. She received her Master’s degree in psychology in Ecuador (where she is from) and her Bachelor’s degree in philosophy in Italy (her second home). For her, the most satisfying job is the one that has a positive effect on her life and the lives of other people.

