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Career or Family: A Woman's Difficult Choice (On the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2023)

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the achievements of the 2023 Nobel laureate in economics, Harvard University professor Claudia Goldin. The obstacles to women's employment related to the fact that the initially established structure of jobs was focused on male labor are considered. The "quiet revolution" discovered by the laureate and consisting of a sharp increase in the age of first marriages and a switch in women's motivation from earnings to careers is analyzed. The importance of flexible working conditions when women choose a place of work and increasing women's participation in the economy was highlighted. As an example of maximum effort and approach to working conditions convenient for women, the laureate cites the pharmaceutical sector, both industry and trade. The problems of the existence of a "natural level" of women's participation in the economy are touched upon. Finally, the impact of the 2021–2022 pandemic on women's choice between career and family is examined.

Keywords: women's work and labour; inequality; career; family; employment; family responsibilities; natural level; flexible working conditions; time of marriage; contraceptives; abortion; pandemic

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INTRODUCTION

Claudia Goldin, a professor at Harvard University, began to be positioned as a potential winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics just a few days before the Nobel Committee decided in her favour. Earlier, Edward Glaser, a professor at the same university, with work on urban economics, led the predictions. The two contenders for the 2023 prize had joint papers. The most famous one is on the fight against corruption in the United States from 1870 to 1920, where they act as editors [1].

And if E. Glaser had been chosen, the Nobel Committee would have even then shown its insistence not to interfere in politics — political tensions come and go, while economic science moves forward, trying not to intersect with them. It would be illogical to give the prize to two researchers, since the main directions of their work are devoted to completely different topics.

The research interests of 2023 Laureate Claudia Goldin are not dependent on current events — no matter what happens in the world, women's labour issues will remain on the agenda for a long time to come.

With its choice, the Nobel Committee reaffirms its commitment to separating economics from politics. In the Soviet Union, V.I. Lenin's thesis was popular: "Politics is the concentrated expression of economics" [2], but now not only the Nobel Committee, but even the leadership of Communist China says: "Economics is one thing, but politics is quite another".

In my opinion, the main achievement of the winner of the 2023 Nobel Prize in Economics is that she has taken the problem of women's labour and women's place in the economy out of the political sphere with its demonstrations, slogans and demands into the sphere of natural regularities and quiet practical solutions.



No less importantly, it has shown how many diverse and intersecting processes can be hidden in the dynamics of just one indicator, using the specific example of differences between men's and women's wages.

MALE BARRIERS

The main problem with pay differentials lies in the fact that initially there were fewer women in the workplace than men. This is due to two important circumstances.

Firstly, the workplaces where women came to work were originally formed for men: in terms of the daily regime, physical load, level of regulation and other parameters. The standard packing of 40–50kg bags of sand or cement was clearly designed to be lifted by men. The working day from start to end is convenient for the organisation of production, but during this time it requires a complete renunciation of any family and parental concerns.

Less well known is such a characteristic as weak regulation. Let me give an example from my personal experience. One day, the management of the industrial association where I was working at the time, set the task of reducing defects in the manufacture of switch cabinets. It turned out that the main source of defects — errors in the installation supervision (from the back side — the contacts between the circuit boards of the cabinet are connected by wires). The assembler looks at the drawing, which shows the connections, and in accordance with it the assembler performs the work. But as his eyes move from the cabinet to the drawing and back again, he may forget what he has just seen. Then we came up with the idea that the instructions for each micro-operation should be recorded on a voice recorder. To our surprise, after a couple of months of defect-free work, the male installers started to quit — they couldn't bear to listen to the instructions all day long. They were replaced by women who were grateful for the step-by-step instructions.

Second, men were not interested in women taking their places, even if they had sufficient

qualifications to do so. The entry of women into these jobs may be a signal to other women. As a consequence, competition will increase, and it is quite possible that starting salaries and then all salaries will be reduced. Therefore, the struggle for the “purity” of the profession, against its “pollution” begins.

The term “pollution” was introduced in this context by M. Douglas, a professor at Northwestern University (USA), one of the representatives of social anthropology who established it as an independent science. In her 1966 book, she noted that in many cultures women were separated from men as “unclean creatures” [3]. These prejudices have almost disappeared and then spread again, but they have almost always existed in the realm of production and consumption. Even when changes in technology allow women to work in new jobs, men do not approve of it.

In the concept of “pollution” gender discrimination is a consequence of men's desire to prevent competition from women for their jobs and incomes [4].

The prestige of a profession in this case exists only for that part of society that is interested in maintaining the status quo, and it is not connected with any objective requirements regarding qualifications and skills. But prestige can be undermined (“contaminated”) by hiring those who belong to a different social group: by nationality, race, degree of family wealth, etc. Differences by gender are not unique here, but only one of many [5]. They are only more frequent and more visible.

According to the “pollution” concept, sex segregation will be greater where skill requirements and earnings are higher than the median values for jobs to which women are already admitted. Since this median is movable, segregation into “male” jobs will not change monotonically in the future.

A NEW KIND OF ASYMMETRICAL INFORMATION

Overlaid on the problem of men protecting their workplaces is one of its modes — “asymmetrical information”. It is, according to Claudia Goldin,

a key element in the concept of “pollution”. But the interpretation of asymmetric information is different from that developed by other Nobel laureates in economics — when a seller or buyer has more information about a product or service than the other party to the transaction. George Akerlof, Michael Spence, and Joseph Stiglitz won the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2001 for introducing the category of asymmetrical information into economic analysis.

The first of them showed that asymmetrical information can lead to backward selection of goods. Due to incomplete information, tenants with low ability to pay and sellers of low quality cars start to dominate the market. M. Spence demonstrated how well-informed market participants can increase their market turnover by “signalling” to those who are worse informed.

Joseph Stiglitz noted that an uninformed market participant is sometimes able to obtain information from an informed one, for example, through constant monitoring of advertising or by choosing a specific form of contract for a transaction from a list of possible ones. The 2001 laureates proved that asymmetrical information is present everywhere: some market participants are more informed than others.

The “pollution” theory continues this line of research. Men who put up barriers to women applying for “masculine” jobs are aware that they will do well with their responsibilities. But just in case, they don’t report it. Highly demanding jobs continue to be held by men, where they are also trained [6].

Some hierarchical models have introduced bonuses for men if they work together with women who are higher up in the hierarchy. In some cases, there has been a decline in performance in a mixed team due to flirtation, poor rapport or mutual understanding, ambiguity, or tension in the relationship [7]. A long-standing paper on the British coal industry in the early twentieth century indicated that one of the reasons women were not allowed to work in mines was that darkness and solitude when tired or agitated led to “unworkable

relationships” [8]. In other words, the reason for not allowing women to work underground was more insinuation and gossip than concern for women’s health.

“THE QUIET REVOLUTION”. POSTPONED WEDDINGS

The radical change in the role of women in the economy, which affected many areas of life, occurred in such a short period of time that Claudia Goldin called it the “Quiet Revolution”. The essence of it is that instead of focusing only on earning money, women began to prioritise their careers and to get married later in life.

In 1966, nearly three-quarters of US women who graduated from college were in majors where women were in the majority; only 10% were in majors where men were in the majority; and the remaining 15% were in majors where both sexes were roughly equally represented (mathematics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, history, and music). In the early 1970s, the difference between “male” and “female” specialities was noticeably erased. The most likely reason for this was that women began to study business and management, and there was an outflow of women from school education.

Obtaining education, the attitude to which was consumerist, has now become an investment. Previously, it was typical only for men.

According to the results of research by C. Goldin, the “quiet revolution” began in the USA in the late 1960s and for female college graduates it ended in the second half of the 1970s. For other (in terms of education level) categories of women it lasted until the mid-1980s.

Such widespread social change cannot be due to a single cause — there are several factors at play, including changes in the law. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act included an article prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex in layoffs and promotions. In 1972, the Education Act was amended to provide equal access for women and men. The resurgence of feminism through its integration with the civil rights movement and



the rise of anti-war sentiment had some impact. The “Quiet Revolution” was preceded by a “Noisy Revolution”, when feminism as a movement for women’s equality developed in isolation.

The “Quiet Revolution” was launched by the generation born in the late 1940s. “They were unwitting soldiers of a coup that transformed women’s employment, education and family life” [9].

An important point was the increase in the age of first marriage. For college-educated women born between 1929 and 1949, the median age of first marriage was 23. For those born in 1957, it increased by two and a half years, and in 1965 it increased by another year. The increase in the age of marriage affected all groups of women, but it was greatest for those who had graduated from college.

At the same time, there were shifts in the choice of speciality. By 1970, the attractiveness of traditionally “female” professions, such as teacher, librarian, nurse, and social worker, had fallen sharply, and by 1990 it had reached a minimum. Other specialties began to attract women to a greater extent: doctor, lawyer, manager, and university teacher. This process was most rapid in the 1980s, involving women born between the early 1950s and the mid-1960s, who became leaders in many fields. Many of them changed the speciality in which they were trained, based on their expectations of their future careers. And this psychologically pushed back the desire to marry.

This generation of women has faced many demographic changes. They were born during a fertility spike, which is usually accompanied by an increase in the proportion of girls born. When they reached the age of marriage, competition for a chosen mate was stronger than usual, which was another factor in favour of choosing a career over starting a family.¹ The same circumstance raised the average age at first marriage. The impact of the economic downturn in the mid-1970s should also be added to the mix.

¹ Joshua Angrist, winner of the 2021 Nobel Prize in Economics, has also addressed this problem.

CONTRACEPTIVES AND ABORTIONS

This decline in the United States was compounded by the legal authorisation of free sales of the contraceptive pills (this important factor in the Quiet Revolution, Claudia Goldin has noted repeatedly and quite thoroughly). For many years, in most states, only married women could buy them; unmarried women were forbidden to do so. Then suddenly a law came out allowing contraceptives to be sold to everyone. It is hard to say whether this was a result of the feminist movement for equal rights, but it affected all women, regardless of their level of education or skin colour [10]. The impact of this law on the choice between career and family has been more significant than those against gender discrimination. Statistics show a sharp rise in women’s demand for jobs. At the same time, the number of divorces increased, and the number of marriages decreased. All three indicators showed an increased desire of women to lead an independent life.

Investments in paid education, which gives an opportunity to make a career, have also increased. C. Goldin and other researchers argue that women became less interested in increasing the family budget when choosing a place of work — they were employed even if their earnings were significantly lower than those of their husbands. As real incomes grew, the share of married women among employed women increased, even though their incomes increased less in comparison with their husbands’ incomes.

This is one of the results of applying the original methodology of Claudia Goldin — it combines time series analysis with the analysis of ratios of indicators in certain periods of time. Compared to correlation analysis, this is a more sophisticated method (cross-analysis), in which periods of consistent change in the indicators themselves and the relationships between them are distinguished in a meaningful rather than formal way.

However, the “Quiet Revolution” has not eliminated the gender pay gap. In her work “The Great Gender Convergence. Its Last Chapter” [11]

Claudia Goldin noted that the main result of the movement towards gender equality in the United States and other developed countries was only a reduction, not elimination, of the gender pay gap. The latter is unattainable because men and women occupy different jobs.

Voluntary avoidance of motherhood is a powerful factor in women's participation in the economy. The opportunity for this varies from country to country, as does the practice of abortion.

According to research by Claudia Goldin and her husband, from 1972 to 1979, the proportion of college graduates who married within two years of earning a degree declined [12].

Contraceptives directly and immediately lowered the barriers to choosing a long-term career over family. They gave almost complete certainty of freedom from possible accidental pregnancy. Postponement of marriage for one or two years at first, and then again and again, is accompanied by a switch to regular contraceptive use. Thus, the proportion of women in all training and retraining programmes has increased dramatically since the 1970s.

Prior to 1973, abortion in the United States was legal in only a few states. This federal decision did not mean that it would quickly become widespread, due to the practice of using the pill [13].

This was not the case in Japan, where the average age at marriage rose steadily until 1999, with no significant increase in contraceptive use and women's choice of career over family. Nevertheless, the number of abortions increased, and the birth rate declined. The very possibility of using the contraceptive pill allowed women to better plan their future labour market path at the very beginning, and this was taken into account not only by them but also by employers.

The late 1960s and early 1970s saw major changes in American society, catalysed by the Vietnam War. The anti-war civil rights movement led to a resurgence of feminism. As early as 1968, the vast majority of girls in the United States expected to follow their mothers' life path, but within a few years their preferences had radically

changed in favour of choosing their own future. Without denying the role of new phenomena in public life, Claudia Goldin believes that the decisive role here was played not by changes in public consciousness, but by the availability of contraceptive pills, i.e., mass individual decisions were more important than the public mood in general or political demands and changes.

WOMEN'S LABOUR AND FLEXIBLE WORKING CONDITIONS

In fact, through her research, Claudia Goldin has moved the discussion of pay inequality beyond the usual references to sexism. She showed that this gap is explained by "temporal flexibility", women's need for flexible working conditions or shorter working hours in order to be able to fulfil their family responsibilities.

Based on the results of many years of research, Claudia Goldin concluded that "if some women are less active in demanding flexible working arrangements, not much will change" [14]. In her view, it should be a question of creating a new structure of workplaces that are more likely than at present to allow for the introduction of flexible working conditions, for both women and men. These shifts are already under way in areas such as applied and fundamental science and health care.

Of all labour conditions, flexible working hours and reduced working hours are the most important for women workers. C. Goldin notes that in the 2010s, demands for shorter or contractual working hours and a ban on overtime hours became popular in the labour movement.

Employers in the retail sector, where demand depends on the weather, upcoming holidays, etc., have been the most accommodating in this respect. Some female workers in this sector have been attracted to work "on demand" — when sales are at their peak.

It is well known that irregular working hours, when workers are obliged to stay at their workplace when necessary, result in higher wages.

Women are significantly more likely than men of the same age to work reduced working hours.



For some of them, very specific hours and days are preferred, for example, if they are studying or have to accompany their children to school or kindergarten. For such workers, “on-call” work is unacceptable. The inability to plan for family responsibilities cannot be compensated for by high earnings. It is difficult to identify the preferences of all women workers — such statistics are not available, and the existence of these one-off surveys is short-lived.

A general comparison of men’s and women’s wages tells us little. There are many associated factors related to working conditions and daily routine. If all workers with equal labour productivity were to receive the same wage for the same work, the difference in pay would still remain and would not only concern differences by gender.

From the results of research by C. Goldin, it follows that the longer the average length of a labour day, the higher the hourly wage. This correlation is more clearly observed in business, finance, and legal services; it is weaker in some sectors of the economy due to the development of information technology, but it is present almost everywhere else.

Skilled workers with high wages receive a premium to their hourly wage if they work more than 50 hours per week. The pattern is slightly different for low-wage workers. They have a substantially lower increase, but their hourly wage declines if they start working less than 40 hours per week.

Taking these features into account, C. Goldin concludes that the shorter the working day, the lower the hourly wage, and for both sexes. But since women’s working day is shorter on average, the wage gap becomes larger due to this [15]. The differences in wages that can be attributed to the influence of this factor are quite significant.

But this also conceals a huge functional variety of workplaces and the possible organisational conditions for working in them. Some have to be occupied around the clock, e.g., operator positions in continuous production units, while others have to be occupied only in one shift. The latter are more attractive to women.

For the author, an example of such fundamental restructuring of workplaces remains the real promotion of the “8–24” principle developed in the 1970s by Vladimir Ivanovich Rusaev, director of the Research Institute of Complete Electric Drive in Novosibirsk. The principle was deciphered as “8 hours of people work, 24 hours of equipment work”. This implied the developers’ orientation to create such equipment, which after maintenance during the first shift could work the remaining 16 hours a day only under the supervision of a small number of specialists.² Obviously, the resulting new workplace structure would be more suitable for women.

As real incomes increase, married women participate more actively in the economy, even when their earnings growth is substantially lower than that of men.

But, as in the case of changes in the structure of jobs, things are not easy here either. As it turns out, families can be divided into “contractual” and “altruistic” families. In “contractual” families, the expediency of employing a housewife is discussed, while in “altruistic” families the decision is made regardless of how much it will improve the family budget: if a woman wants to work, how can we not meet her needs? This division exists to a greater extent in theory than in life, because in one situation the family manifests itself as “contractual” and in another situation as “altruistic”.

In the case of the first category of families, the science has developed to its full potential [16]. All the developments in the field of economic equilibrium, made for research in macroeconomics, began to be applied to contractual relations within the family. The Nash equilibrium — when none of the participants can increase its benefits by unilaterally changing its decision — became the most popular. In this particular case, researchers use modelling of two situations: when a family

² For many reasons, this principle was practically implemented in the Soviet electrotechnical industry (in the structure of which the Institute was located) only fragmentarily. Twenty years later, this principle was taken up and more fully implemented by the Japanese company Hitachi.

woman is preparing to make a decision on employment and when such a decision has already been made and approved of [17].

These processes, as C. Goldin has noticed, are accompanied by reverse processes: a decision is made to leave work and concentrate on the family. There is also a division of families into “contractual” and “altruistic” families. But the difference between them is different [18].

WORKPLACES OF “GOODNESS AND EQUALITY”

In the mid-2010s, Claudia Goldin and her husband asked themselves which sector of the economy could serve as an example of maximising equality between women and men. It turned out to be the pharmaceutical industry [19].

In 1970, on the eve of major changes, the pharmaceutical industry had relatively low wages for people with secondary specialised education, and the pay gap between men and women was not so low. Male pharmacists were most often self-employed, with their working hours being about the same as those of full-time employees. The self-employed received a decent bonus based on good performance over a specified period, and women with children in part-time employment (reduced hours or part-time working week) received substantially less than men, among whom full-time employment was maximised. But women in the pharmaceutical industry make up the majority of employees. And there is an explanation for this.

This industry has the smallest gap between men’s wages, which is accompanied by two other specific characteristics: the wage gap is also lower for other categories involved in the business, and wage differences between workers with different levels of education are smaller.

Executives at all levels (at full-time employment) receive only 7% more than rank-and-file employees, and each owner receives only 12% more dividends than the average employee. In addition, the industry has the highest proportion of part-time employment (part-time of permanent employees + outsourced self-employed). As the

prevalence of part-time work has increased, the proportion of women has begun to rise. There are no differences in hourly wages between full-time and part-time workers — they have been consistently decreasing for forty years.

At the same time, there was a sharp expansion of the assortment, which contributed to the unification of the process of servicing potentially or actually sick customers, standardisation of sold goods and active use of information technologies. Large wholesale consumers appeared on the market: hospitals, polyclinics/out-patient clinics, counselling centres.

As a result, the share of independent pharmaceutical companies and pharmacies was decreasing, the number of allowable claims of owners to receive large (compared to salaries) profits and dividends was reduced. Supply began to exceed demand on average, and the proportion of part-timers increased. All these changes reduced the gap in hourly wages between men and women.

As a result, pharmacists in the United States are the most gender-equal profession in the world. C. Goldin and L. Katz emphasise that the transformation of the industry has not been through anti-discrimination policies or even through regulatory measures that are unique to the pharmacy profession. It was more about changing the structure of the workplace, increasing the demand for pharmacists and reorganising work so that the industry became as family- and female-friendly as possible.

But making the workplace structure women-friendly is a costly endeavour. And Claudia Goldin has worked to get at least a rough estimate of such costs [20]. Then it would be possible to understand how the economy would benefit from the increased attractiveness of transformed workplaces for women who combine work and family care. The innovations that C. Goldin considered were divided into three types: breaks during the working day, reduced working hours for a certain period of time and flexible working hours during the day.

Particular attention has been paid to the transition from employment to self-employment, which



is seen as a private but significant way of changing the structure of jobs. For some professions, such as dentists, pharmacists or those working in retail, this involves making an initial investment and often results in longer working hours. For other professions (e.g., counselling), the transition to self-employment does not require significant investment or recruitment, giving women the opportunity to set their own hours of work, start and end times, which are acceptable to them.

In fact, the choice is not between working conditions — it is the cost of moving to a more attractive, flexible schedule. And the costs vary considerably depending on the type of work and industry.

C. Goldin uses the term “vignette” to describe the subtleties in working conditions, which can be translated as “curl” or “particularity”.³

The cost-effect of providing more convenient working conditions was monitored by several parameters: the proportion of women in an occupation or specific speciality, the wage gap between women and men, the proportion of underemployed and self-employed (private practice).

Many high-paying jobs requiring high qualifications have already undergone stages of transformation towards more flexible working conditions. And the demand for such changes persists despite this. In the studies, out of the 90 occupations surveyed, only in a few people dared to make personal investments for the sake of better working conditions. The most attractive improvement was the possibility to take breaks during the working day for one or two hours. During this time, a woman can fulfil some of her family duties: picking up her child from school, walking him to the sports centre, etc.

In addition, I would like to give an example from my own applied research experience. It is from a completely different field, although the practical goal of the research results is the same —

to create more flexible working conditions for women and thereby increase the attractiveness of such work for them.

In the 1960s, I was seconded to Vladivostok to promote the rise of Far Eastern sociology. Of the many empirical studies that could be undertaken at that time, the most extensive was a survey of the crew and women workers of the “Kraboflot” organisation. It was expected that the results of the sociologists’ work would help reduce staff turnover and increase labour productivity in this important industry for the region.

On the floating bases (fish factories) of “Kraboflot” exclusively women worked, processing crabs delivered by fishing vessels, where exclusively men worked. Our sociological team encountered problems that no one expected. It turned out that in women’s collectives all female workers synchronise their menstrual cycle after a short time. Working on crab processing factory is physically demanding, so during the critical days common to all women’s teams, labour productivity dropped noticeably. The male miners were indifferent to this — they delivered the same amount of crab as always.

The “Kraboflot” management accepted our proposals for a short-term reduction in crab catches, albeit begrudgingly. For this purpose, we had to find an adequate woman among the instructors of the Regional Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. However, it was not without warnings about inadmissibility of such measures in a planned economy. The plan for fishing vessels in critical days began to be officially reduced. Later, I had to contact and exchange experience with sociologists from Ivanovo, where similar problems were faced by textile enterprises.

Now, when I look at the work of Claudia Goldin, Nobel Laureate in Economics 2023, I begin to realise how lucky I was to have encountered the laboratory version of the problems she was working on. But Laureate was also studying aspects of the problems we hadn’t gotten to: what the transition to new labour conditions would cost.

³ More precisely, “vignette” means to highlight some part of a photograph (such as its centre) by artificially increasing its brightness. So, the term is very accurate, although it does not lend itself to direct translation.

After this slightly exotic “vignette” example, we can move on to trying to answer the next question:

IS THERE A “NATURAL LEVEL” OF WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN THE ECONOMY?

The proportion of working women changes over time. Claudia Goldin wondered whether there is a level of female employment that can be called natural, similar to the unemployment rate, which is considered natural if it is within 3–4 per cent of the working-age population.

The proportion of women in full-time employment is not currently (since 1990) increasing (although it had been increasing for almost a hundred years before that). This applies to women of any age, with any level of education, both married and unmarried. For example, employed married women who are college graduates in their 30s have been 76% since 1990. Is it possible that this is the “natural participation of women in the economy”?

This is a hasty conclusion, since the general development of the economy must be taken into account: when the economy is booming, the proportion of employed women increases, while in a downturn it decreases.

The reason why the data do not support the concept of the natural rate of female employment is also due to changes in demography. With the increase in the age of marriage and the delay in having a first child, women in their 30s are now more likely to have a child under the age of 6 than they were a quarter of a century ago. Despite increasing childcare burdens, employment of women over 30 is higher today than in the early 1980s and much higher than in the 1960s. In 1965, only 40 per cent of the employed were women, of whom 57 per cent had children under 6 years of age. Until 1999, the proportion of women in employment increased at about the same rate as the proportion of mothers with pre-school children among working women. After that, the increase stopped. Most likely, these two overlapping processes suggest that women worked and were educated before the age of 30

and had their first child when they already had labour experience.

Thus, it is clear from Claudia Goldin’s research that there is hardly a once and for all “natural rate” of women’s employment. Women’s labour serves as a buffer through which total employment adjusts to fluctuations in economic growth.

FEMALE LABOUR AND THE PANDEMIC

The coronavirus epidemic was seen by Claudia Goldin as a natural experiment, the expected result of which would be a reduction in the number of working women as the quarantine and school and nursery closures increased the burden on them in the household.

C. Goldin pointed out, first of all, that during the pandemic it became more evident than ever before in the history of the United States: the economic development of the United States was radically dependent on women’s labour.

The pandemic has put real pressures on women and families that should not be ignored. But this impact has been significantly different from what was expected. In the US, the number of working women with college graduates and children under age 4 in spring 2021 was even slightly higher than in spring 2018, while roughly the same proportion of mothers with children of similar age had their work status downgraded. They “chose to stay at work” despite the demotion and increased burden of caring for children and elderly relatives because work brings a sense of security in the face of unreliable future earnings.

At the same time, women who had not graduated from college were twice as likely to quit their jobs during the pandemic as those with a college degree. This was partly due to the fact that the latter had more opportunities to work remotely.

In addition, C. Goldin noted a surge in activity in the US of organisations that can reduce the burden on women in the family: after-school groups, sports clubs, home-delivered meals, and so on. This indicates an increased demand for such services and a willingness to pay more for them. The demand for all kinds of additional education



has also increased: legal, accounting, etc., which expands opportunities to work remotely without losing part of their earnings.

The researcher's general conclusion is that for many, getting married and having children means increased stability. For this reason, the coronavirus pandemic did not reduce marriage rates or shift working mothers to solely family responsibilities.

Compared to other downturns in the global economy, the coronavirus epidemic has affected working women more than men. But it is not possible to unequivocally assess differences in the proportions who left work. The ability to reconcile family care and continue working varies significantly by education, location, and skin colour. The more educated have more opportunities to work from home. Those who provide services that require face-to-face contact, however, have had to leave. African-American women, who were not very good at their jobs before the pandemic, saw the coronavirus as a good reason to leave them.

Real-life cases of decision-making by working women after the outbreak of the coronavirus epidemic show that they experienced high levels of stress when their children were in school, their

grown-up daughters were working, and their parents needed constant care. But even such women did not always make the decision to leave their jobs [21].

It is interesting that studies as close as possible to those conducted by C. Goldin were carried out in Russia by scientists from the Academy of National Economy, but there is nothing in them concerning the economy or attitudes to labour. It is simply noted that there are more permanent partners and fewer casual connections [22]. Such studies are also needed, but it is unlikely that they will win an economics prize. However, these results do not contradict, but rather complement the conclusions made by Claudia Goldin.

CONCLUSIONS

The author has the feeling that this article does not fully reflect the personal contribution of Professor Claudia Goldin, for which she, in fairness and rightly, won the Nobel Prize in Economics. But it so happens that the very problems to which her research is devoted are poorly known to the domestic reader. But, if you wish, you can turn to the original source.

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