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## **‘Digital Caregiving’ in the Era of Digitalised Public Services: A New Form of Gendered Domestic Labour?**

The digitalisation of public services, a process which was accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, has emerged as a global phenomenon. This transition requires service users to engage with providers through web and smartphone applications. In Western welfare state systems, it also requires service users to assume tasks that were previously managed by the state, such as booking GP appointments through online interfaces. This socio-technical transformation can, therefore, be conceptualised as a new form of recommodification. Technological change and evolving patterns of decommodification and recommodification have been shown to impact the structure, organisation, and gender division of unpaid social reproductive work, including domestic labour. However, the specific effects of the digitalisation of public services on domestic labour remain understudied.

This paper addresses this gap by examining the impact of digitalisation in primary healthcare and social housing services on the domestic labour of migrant families living in the UK. Drawing on in-depth interviews with 50 first-generation migrants and 48 adult children of first-generation migrants residing in England and Scotland, our analysis is underpinned by a critical realist intersectional approach. This approach acknowledges that organisational systems and processes are deeply influenced by societal power dynamics and it views individuals as members of multiple groups rooted in embodied and inseparable categories of social difference.

Our paper makes two key contributions to the literature. First, we found that many first-generation migrants are unable to navigate digitalised services independently and are, therefore, reliant on informal support from their adult children, who provide language, administrative, and digital assistance. We term this emergent form of support ‘digital caregiving,’ following Tronto’s ‘phases of care’. Second, we identified gendered differences in the experience of digital caregiving. Male adult children of migrants were more likely to report digital caregiving to be fulfilling and meaningful than female adult children, who more commonly experienced it as burdensome, reporting increased mental load, heightened stress, and reduced self-care capacity. We argue that these gendered experiences of digital caregiving can be explained by the intersecting disadvantages faced by women with migrant backgrounds.

This paper aligns with the conference theme by exploring the long-term implications of Covid-19 and digitalisation.