



UNDP LAC C19 PDS N°. 18

The Coronavirus and the challenges for women's work in Latin America

Diana Gutiérrez, Guillermina Martin, Hugo Ñopo*

Abstract

The Coronavirus pandemic has spread throughout the world and Latin America has not been able to escape from its health, economic and social impacts. The economic shutdown as a result of a combination of stringent measures (self-quarantines, mandatory quarantines, limited capacity of people in commercial stores, factories and offices, border closures, etc.), is generating profound economic and social impacts. In the labor market this means shocks to both supply and demand. Within households, this means an increase in the unpaid workload that falls disproportionately on women, further limiting their availability of time to carry out productive activities. The impacts and deepness of the crisis are different for women and men, so generalized formulas must be avoided as they can widen gender gaps. In this paper we explore the impacts of the crisis on employment in sixteen countries of the region. Additionally, we analyze gender impacts with four lenses: young people, people living in poverty, rural people and heads of household. We present a set of policy options aimed at integrating the gender approach in all the cycle of the socio-economic response to the pandemic and in the post-pandemic. Emphasizing that solutions must be cross-cutting, we propose policies in three main areas: homes, work and the spaces between work and home. Thus, socio-economic recovery policies will not only help to ease the impact in the short term, but also to make progress in equal opportunities for women and men in the medium and long term.

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Introduction to the series:

Evidence, Experience, and Pertinence in Search for Effective Policy Alternatives

The Covid-19 pandemic is one of the most serious challenges the world has faced in recent times. The total cost in terms of human lives is yet to unfold. Alongside the cost of lives and deep health crisis, the world is witnessing an economic downfold that will severely impact the wellbeing of large parts of the population in the years to come. Some of the measures that are currently being used to counteract the pandemic may impact our future lives in non-trivial ways. Understanding the association between different elements of the problem to broaden the policy space, with full awareness of the economic and social effects that they may bring, is the purpose of this series.

Thus far, the impossibility of targeted isolation of infected individuals and groups has led to policies of social distancing that impose a disproportionately high economic and social cost around the world. The combination of policies such as social distancing, lockdowns, and quarantines, imply a slowdown or even a complete stop in production and consumption activities for an uncertain period of time, crashing markets and potentially leading to the closure of businesses, sending millions of workers home. Labor, a key factor of production, has been quarantined in most sectors in the economy, borders have been closed and global value chains have been disrupted. Most estimates show a contraction of the level of output globally. For the Latin America and Caribbean region, the consensus forecasts are at -3 to -4%, and it is not until 2022 that the region is expected to go back to its pre-crisis output levels in scenarios that foresee a U-shaped crisis pattern. According to ECLAC, more than 30 million people could fall into poverty in the absence of active policies to protect or substitute income flows to vulnerable groups.

We face a crisis that requires unconventional responses. We are concerned about the level-effect: the impact of the crisis on the size of the economies and their capacity to recover growth after the shock. But we are equally concerned about the distributional impact of the shock. The crisis interacts with pre-existing heterogeneity in asset holdings, income-generation capacity, labor conditions, access to public services, and many other aspects

that make some individuals and households particularly vulnerable to an economic freeze of this kind. People in the informal markets, small and micro entrepreneurs, women in precarious employment conditions, historically excluded groups, such as indigenous and afro-descendants, must be at the center of the policy response.

UNDP, as the development agency of the United Nations, has a long tradition of accompanying policymaking in its design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It has a mandate to respond to changing circumstances, deploying its assets to support our member states in their pursuit of integrated solutions to complex problems. This series aims at drawing from UNDP's own experience and knowledge globally and from the expertise and capacity of our partner think tanks and academic institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is an attempt to promote a collective reflection on the response to the Covid-19 health crisis and its economic and social effects on our societies. Timeliness is a must. Solutions that rely on evidence, experience, and reasoned policy intuition – coming from our rich history of policy engagement – are essential to guide this effort. This series also contributes to the integrated approach established by the UN reform and aspires to become an important input into the coherent response of the United Nations development system at the global, regional, and national levels.

Ben Bernanke, former Governor of the US Federal Reserve, reminds us in his book *The Courage to Act* that during crises, people are distinguished by those who act and those who fear to act. We hope this policy documents series will contribute to the public debate by providing timely and technically solid proposals to support the many who are taking decisive actions to protect the most vulnerable in our region.

Luis F. Lopez-Calva

*United Nations Development Programme
Regional Director, Latin America and the Caribbean
New York, March 2020*



Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has already affected multiple dimensions of people's lifestyle from their income levels, accumulation of human capital, their consumption patterns, lifestyle, their mental health and their emotional well-being. Without a doubt, among the most important is work, where three-quarters of the income of Latin American households is generated (the rest comes from income and transfers) (ILO, 2019b). In this document we will focus precisely on the labor dimensions of the impacts, emphasizing the links that these have with the dynamics within households.

The current conditions of confinement of people in their homes, and closing conditions of multiple services, including schools, place serious limitations on the possibility of working. Added to this are the structural barriers that women constantly face, at home and in the labor market, accentuating the challenges due to this crisis. Meanwhile, in household's confinement impose an extra burden associated with unpaid care and domestic work, which is unevenly distributed, especially overburdening women and girls. Special mention should be made of domestic violence, that runs the risk of being exacerbated. Never before has the relationship between work life and home life been so evident.

The productive fabric as a whole, due to the breakdown of the global supply chains, the closure of borders and the operational closures of non-essential industries, has had a cross-cutting impact on all sectors. It is estimated that two thirds of the companies in the world have already suffered a moderate impact and a quarter of them a negative impact on labor productivity due to this crisis. For Latin America, the figures follow the same trend (Mercer, 2020). By the end of the confinements, a good number of work centers will have had to close, and others will have to cut staff, consequently impacting on household income.

Here we present some estimates of the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment and salaries, based on household surveys for the 2018-2019 period in 16 countries in the region¹. We have found that as a result of the voluntary and mandatory confinements, 33% of women and 30% of men, who worked before the pandemic, were unable to go out to work. Some of these people went unemployed, others left the economically active population. In the aggregate, this translated into a 22% loss of employment income for women and 26% for men. We also find that intersectionality is very important to understand the differentiated impacts of the crisis. Women in poverty, youth, heads of households with dependent minors and those living in rural areas face shocks with stronger impacts than those of their male peers, both in terms of employment and labor income.

Everything indicates that by the time these restrictions on mobility are lifted, economies will have entered a recession such that the availability of jobs will have been significantly reduced. Estimates from various multilateral organizations and international agencies reveal impacts that will transcend for a few years, generating profound changes in the productive structure.

Indicators of female employment show greater vulnerability than male before the pandemic: higher informality, higher incidence of part-time work, lower salaries, lower social protection and greater volatility in the face of fluctuations in the economy. Several of these factors, in turn, are linked to the reduced availability of women's time due to the burdens of unpaid care work. This situation could exacerbate gender gaps in employment and salaries if the necessary measures to protect the employment and income of women in greater vulnerability are not taken. In this document we explore to what extent that could be the case, proposing a set of policies that could alleviate and create conditions for the resilience and economic recovery of women in Latin America and the Caribbean in the context of the pandemic and the post- pandemic.

¹ Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Paraguay, Dominican Republic, and Uruguay.



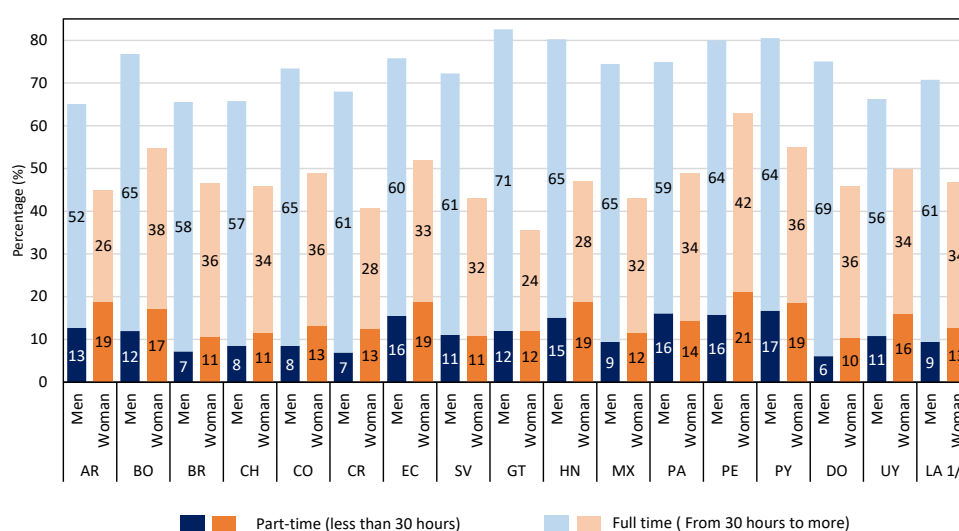
The COVID-19 pandemic demands a lot of care work by households and this reduces the possibilities of working and looking for work. As is well known, these care tasks are disproportionately overloaded in women. For this reason, paying attention to care tasks and their distribution is key in the design and implementation of relief policies for households. That is why we propose a set of policies that, in addition to generating equity in the world of work, also do so outside of it.

In this document, we first present a brief overview of the conditions of female employment in the region prior to the arrival of the pandemic. Then we present estimates of the short-term impacts, both on jobs and people's salaries. Third, we explore some intersectionalities, presenting the differentiated impacts for women and men under four lenses (low-income, youth, rural, and heads of households with minors). Finally, the document closes with a set of recommendations, and clues for the way forward, both for public policy, as well as for the business sector and households. The estimates in the first sections of this document are based on household or employment surveys of 16 Latin American countries with the most recent information available, between 2018 and 2019. See Appendix 1 for details of the corresponding year and period in each country.

Pre-pandemic conditions

Although in Latin America and the Caribbean female labor insertion has been increasing for several decades, but with some heterogeneities, it is still lower than labor insertion of men (ILO, 2019b). About half of the women are working, while this is the case with three out of four men. Added to this gender gap in employment is a very important gap in the use of time and its consequent availability for paid work. In this sense, part-time work (30 hours or less of weekly work) is higher in women than in men. In the region one in four women who work, does so part-time, while this happens only with one in eight men (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Latin America (16 countries): Employment rate by weekly working time according to countries – in percentage (circa 2019)



Source: Latin American Household and Employment Surveys 2018 and 2019 (see Appendix 1).

Notes: The Economically Active Population (EAP) is considered occupied from 15 years or more.

AR: Argentina, BO: Bolivia, BR: Brazil, CH: Chile, CO: Colombia, CR: Costa Rica, EC: Ecuador, SV: El Salvador, GT: Guatemala, HN: Honduras, MX: Mexico, PA: Panama, PE: Peru, PY: Paraguay, DO: Dominican Republic and UY: Uruguay.

1 / LA: Latin America. Weighted average. The weighting in household surveys corresponds to the local expansion factor in each

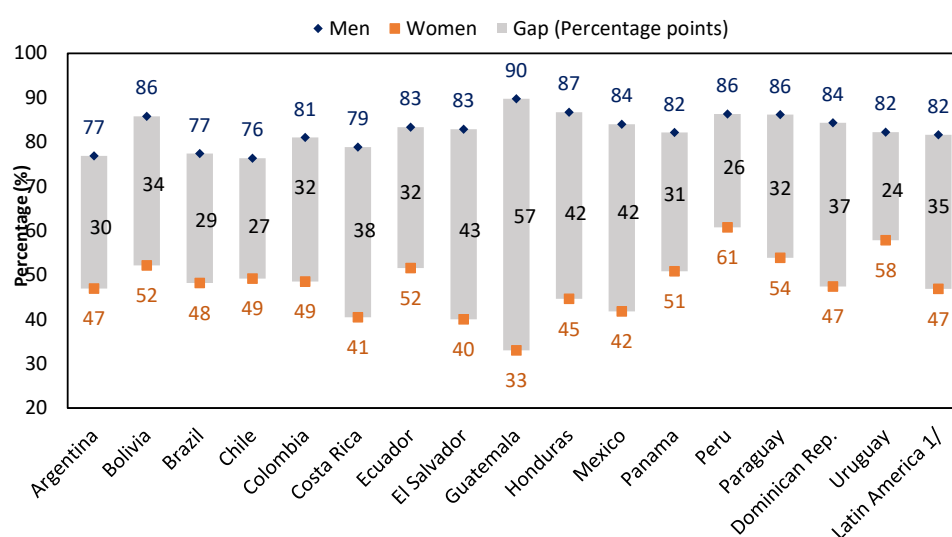


In the region, women spend most of their time in unpaid work and men in paid work (ILO, 2019a). Thus, the gender gaps in the employment rate and the greater female dedication to part-time work are correlated with decisions that take place within households, outside the labor markets (but with implications there). These decisions are related with unpaid domestic and care work (particularly of minors, the elderly, and people with disabilities, among others), which largely occurs in households.

For this reason, for a better understanding of the possibilities of labor insertion of women it is essential to pay attention to the composition of households. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 39% of households are headed by a woman and 26% are single-parent households headed by women. In contrast, 12% of single-parent households have a man as the head of the household. Therefore, the condition of women in the home, and especially the presence of minors who require care, are key determinants of the active insertion and permanence of women in the labor markets.

In Figure 1 we saw that the difference between the female and male employment rate is 24 percentage points. This gap in all households in the region begins to widen as other variables related to the life cycle are added, such as the presence of minors (6 years old or less) in the household. Households with at least one girl or boy under 6 years old, the gap reaches 35 percentage points. This can be explained by several factors, but mainly because the proportion of men in the employed labor force is increasing (Figure 2). In households where there are no girls or boys, the gender gap in employment rates is smaller, reaching up to 20 percentage points (Appendix 2). Such increase in the gaps in the employment rate associated with the presence of girls and boys under 6 years old is greater in Central American countries, especially in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico.

■ **Figure 2.** Latin America (16 countries): Employment rate with the presence of girls and boys under 6 years of age in the home by sex, by country – in percentage (circa 2019)



Source: Latin American Household and Employment Surveys 2018 and 2019 (see Appendix 1).

Notes: The occupied EAP from 15 years and older and young children from 6 to less years old are considered at home.

1/ Weighted average. The weighting in household surveys corresponds to the local expansion factor in each country. In countries with quarterly surveys, the simple average is considered to obtain annual data.



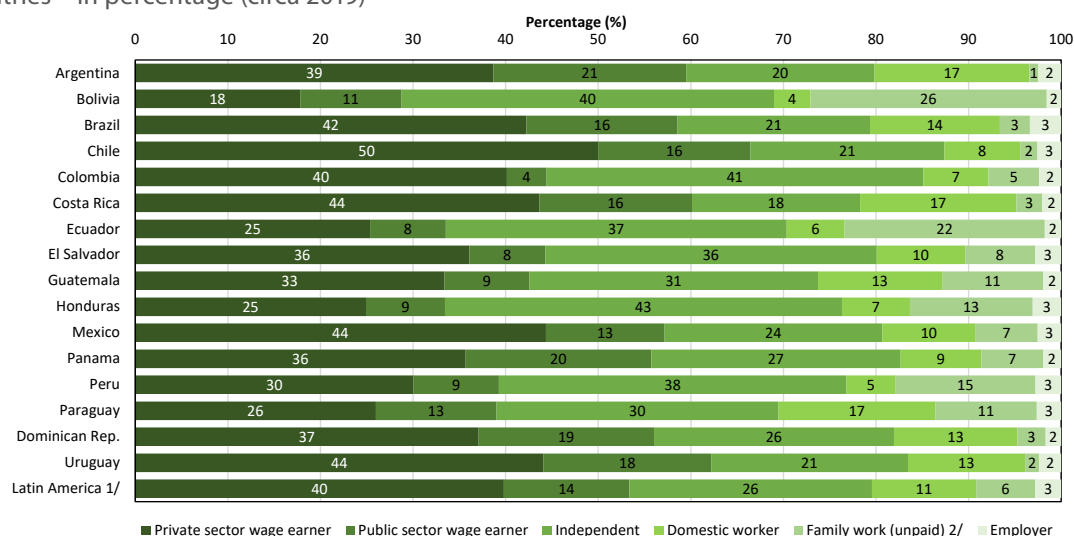
Looking at this deepness in the employment gaps that affect to a greater extent to women, it is worth asking why and in what situation are women in the labor market.

Women in the employed labor force are mostly salaried in the private sector (40%), as self-employed (26%), in the public sector (14%), as domestic workers (11%), unpaid family workers (6%) and as employers (3%) (Figure 3). Men, in contrast, are employed mainly in the private sector (53%) and are in a higher proportion employer (5%) but are employed less in the public sector (8%) and much less as domestic workers (1%). This already provides initial structural barriers that women face in relation to the enjoyment of the benefits of health insurance or social protection, which are part of formal employment in the private sector.

Salaried employment is predominant in half the countries of the region (Chile, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Panama and Dominican Republic). Independent work is the livelihood for 4 of 10 women in Honduras, Colombia, Peru and El Salvador. While women with unpaid family work in Bolivia are a quarter of the employed female population and a fifth in Ecuador (Figure 3).

An important dimension of the quality of employment is access to social protection in old-age pensions. This grants autonomy and economic security, so women have a decent income that reduce the risk of falling into poverty (ILO, 2019a). In our estimates we find that only half of the women contribute to pension insurance. But they also do not have access to other rights, such as maternity leave, unemployment insurance or in some countries access to health, as they do not have a formal employment contract. We estimate that half of salaried women in the private sector have a written contract. But even there, important differences can be found between fixed-term and indefinite term contracts. In the context of this crisis, short-term fixed-term loans will probably come to an end and will not be renewed. Therefore, the depth of the impacts of labor informality on the quality of employment, particularly of women, are multiple and are closely linked to a greater exposure to risk or greater vulnerability to the occurrence of a crisis, such as the one we are experiencing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 3. Latin America (16 countries): Female employed population by occupational category according to countries – in percentage (circa 2019)



Source: Latin American Household and Employment Surveys 2018 and 2019 (see Appendix 1).

Notes: The EAP is considered occupied from 15 years or more.

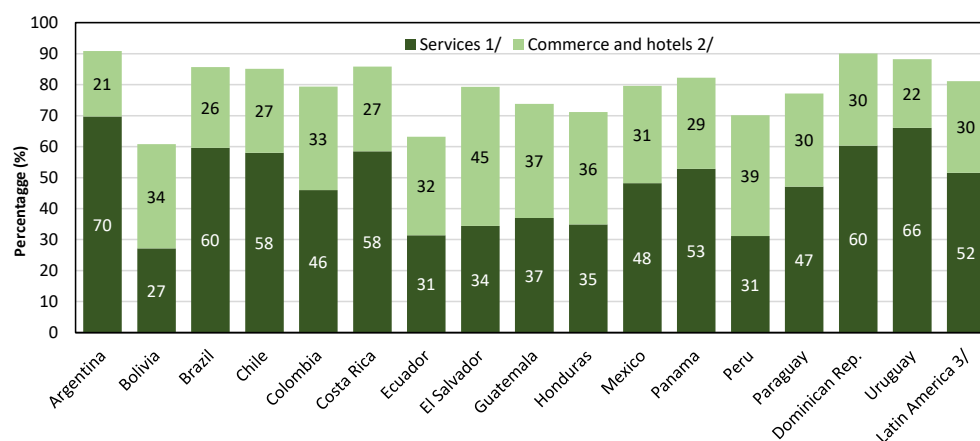
1/ Weighted average. The weighting in household surveys corresponds to the local expansion factor in each country. In countries with quarterly surveys, the simple average is considered to obtain annual data.

2/ Includes other categories not defined in Bolivia, Colombia, Honduras, Panama and Uruguay.



The degree of vulnerability increases when we incorporate other variables, such as the industry where female employment is concentrated. The health and economic crisis associated with the stringent measures to control the spread of the outbreak have profoundly affected the commerce and services sectors, where a very high proportion of women is concentrated, resulting in a high risk of losing their strength of work (ILO, 2020a; ILO, 2020b). This particularly affects women in Latin America, where 8 out of 10 work in the service, commercial and hotel sectors (Figure 4). In Argentina, Dominican Republic and Uruguay 9 out of 10 women work in these sectors, mainly in the service sector.

■ **Figure 4.** Latin America (16 countries): Female employed population in the service and trade sectors by country – in percentage (circa 2019)



Source: Latin American Household and Employment Surveys 2018 and 2019 (see Appendix 1).

Notes: The EAP is considered occupied from 15 years or more.

1 / Includes activities: electricity, gas and water; transportation, storage and communications; financial services to companies; community, social and personal services, and unspecified service activities.

2 / Includes restaurants activity.

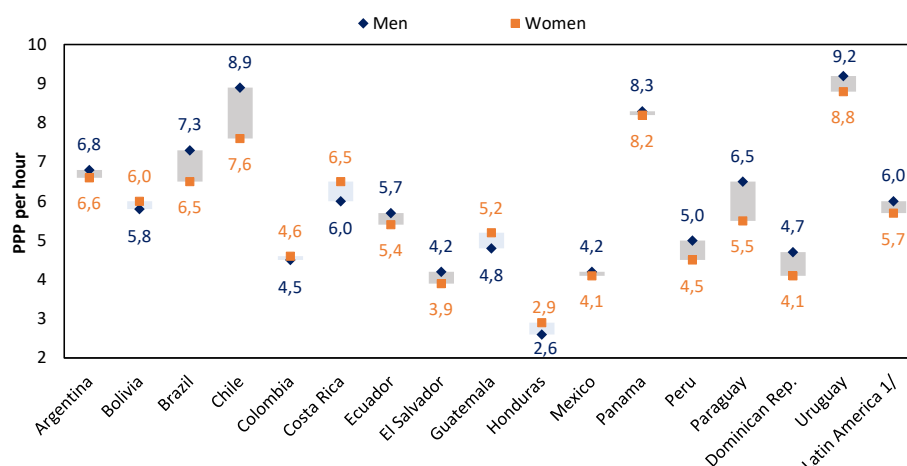
3 / Weighted average. The weighting in household surveys corresponds to the local expansion factor in each country. In countries with quarterly surveys, the simple average is considered to obtain annual data.

In this pandemic, occupational segregation also takes its toll. Two segments of the labor market in which the demand for labor is notably increasing are health and paid domestic and care work. Both are predominantly for female. Our estimates indicate that seven out of ten workers in the health and social care sector are women. They are in the front line of pandemic care mainly as nurses, nursing assistants, reception staff and developing other activities that expose them to a greater extent to a risk of contagion from exposure to fluids. However, this segment only represents 4% of the Economically Active Population (EAP) employed. Something similar happens with housework. In this case, nine out of ten employed persons are women, but this segment represents only 5% of the employed EAP in the countries of the region.

In addition to the marked gaps in full-time and part-time labor participation, as well as occupational segregation, there are also persistent gaps in pay. Because women spend fewer hours per week in paid work, the gap in hourly earnings is smaller than the gap in monthly earnings. While the first is around 5%, the second reaches 19% (Figure 5). It is important to note that these gaps do not take into account the job characteristics that make people productive. When this is taken into consideration, the gaps are much higher. For a more detailed analysis of this, see (ILO 2019a) which concludes that a part of the pending work is in households throughout the entire income distribution.



■ **Figure 5.** Latin America (16 countries): Hourly labor income of the Employed Population by sex, according to country – constant international dollars 2011 – PPP (circa 2019)



Source: Latin American Household and Employment Surveys 2018 and 2019 (see Appendix 1); IMF; 2020a.

Notes: The EAP is considered occupied from 15 years or more. The monthly labor income by main activity of the employed EAP is considered excluding unpaid family workers and the employed EAP without income. The PPP conversion factor and average inflation per country are considered.

1/ Weighted average. The weighting in household surveys corresponds to the local expansion factor in each country. In countries with quarterly surveys, the simple average is considered to obtain annual data.

The widest gaps are experienced by women in Chile, Paraguay and Brazil. In contrast, the smallest gender differences in hourly salaries are in Colombia, Mexico and Panama. However, as explained above, gender pay gaps are largely explained by the lower dedication of time by women to paid work. This opens the discussion of the importance of quantifying, recognizing and revaluing the unpaid care work that happens in households, since it is an enabler for both men and women to go out into the world of paid work. Either way, if this social organization of care does not exist, someone has to pay for it.

This section on pre-existing conditions cannot close without mentioning a serious problem in the lives of Latin American women: domestic violence. In regular times, in Latin America and the Caribbean, one in eight women who have ever had a partner claims to have experienced physical or sexual violence in the last 12 months, these are 19.2 million women between 15 and 49 years old. In 2019, more than 3,800 women were murdered simply because they were women (UN Women, 2020b). Furthermore, one in twenty claims to have experienced sexual violence by their current or former partner in the same period (UNDP, 2017). During quarantines, with confined homes, this domestic violence already shows worrying signs of its exacerbation. Some preliminary statistics account for this. For example, in Argentina the average number of inquiries to the hotline for gender violence in March 2020 increased 39%, in Brazil a 50% increase in complaints was reported in Rio de Janeiro, in Bolivia more than 1,200 cases of violence against women had been reported in April 2020, in Colombia 12 women were murdered in a period of only 16 days between March 20 and April 4, 2020, where complaints increased by 51% in the first days after the quarantine, while in Mexico only in the state of Nuevo León there was an increase of 30% in reports of cases of family violence (UN Women, 2020b). After the emergency, the magnitude of this problem can be analyzed, but in the meantime, this requires concrete and urgent actions to preserve the lives and well-being of women.



Possible impacts on employment and salaries as a result of the pandemic

Impacts of confinement on people and households

Between mid-March and June 2020, the governments of the region adopted different confinement measures with consequent restrictions on people's mobility and social interaction, in order to slow down the spread of COVID-19. These measures, which have varied from country to country, and which have been applied in a differentiated way, combine voluntary quarantines, curfews, mandatory confinements, operational closures of non-essential industries, shutdown of public works, among others.

In circumstances like this, temporary contracts are the first to fade. The cost of dismissal is lower, and even in some cases, non-existent (ILO, 2019b), especially in the context of economic emergency decreed by governments. In most countries, the continuity of the employment relationship has required salary adjustments. To compensate, at least partially for the impacts of the loss of salaries, alternatives to labor income were established, such as: i) access to unemployment insurance, in countries where such an instrument exists, ii) payment for early vacations, iii) expansion of cash transfer programs, iv) fiscal and financial relief such as deferred payments of social security contributions or staggered tax payments, v) government cash transfers to pay formal workers and SMEs, and vi) payment relief of essential public services such as freezing of electricity rates or subsidized drinking water rate (UNDP, 2020).

Among the measures to contain the epidemic, governments urged citizens to stay at home and the business sector to accompany these efforts, especially those in non-essential activities. Non-essential economic sectors have slowed down their operations, since to a large extent many of them cannot operate with their workforce from home, which has had a deep impact on the conformation of the labor structures associated with these industries. Consequently, companies have been forced either to suspend contracts, grant paid or unpaid early vacations, or lay off the workforce in the worst case.

The sectors most affected by the crisis in the region include i) wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; ii) manufacturing industries; iii) hotel and restaurant activities; iv) real estate activities; v) arts, entertainment and recreation, and vi) transportation and storage and communication (ILO, 2020a; ILO, 2020b). The details of the policies implemented until May 2020 can be reviewed in ILO (2020c), as well as in the Global Tracker of Responsive Gender Socioeconomic Policies developed by UNDP with support from UN Women². In the regional aggregate, in these non-essential activities, just over 4 out of every 10 workers are women (Appendix 3).

Given the adoption of these measures, the key question is how many jobs were lost and how much income from work was lost during the pandemic? Based on the data between 2018 and 2019 for Latin America, we estimate that in the various job categories, there is a loss of jobs, and consequently a loss of incomes. This happens both with dependent work (with or without a contract), and with independent work.³

Thus, in the aggregate, those who have lost the possibility of working during the pandemic are people employed with a temporary written contract, people employed without a written contract in non-essential activities and people who work on their own account and in non-family activities.

² See www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/covid-19-gender-dashboard.html

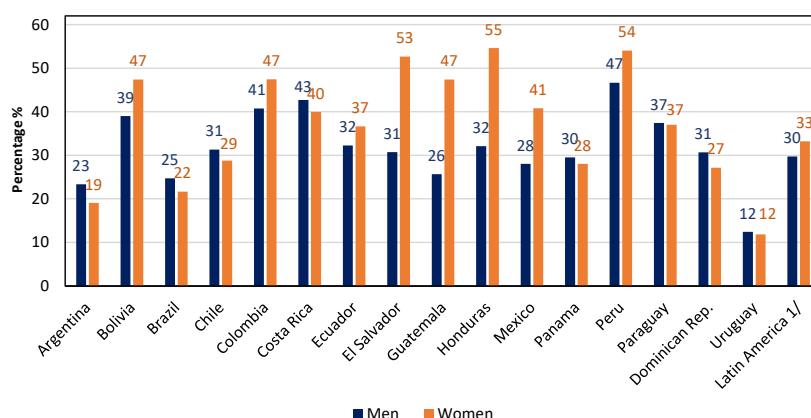
³ In Costa Rica and Honduras there is no information on the type of contract, so the entire workforce is considered in non-essential activities that are unable to work. In Paraguay, in the absence of more detail on the sectors, the non-essential activities considered are: manufacturing industry; commerce, restaurants and hotels; and transportation, storage and communications.



Our estimate based on household surveys in the countries of the region shows that 43 million men and 35 million women work in non-essential activities. This means that 33% of women and 30% of men in the pre-pandemic busy EAP are either teleworking or unable to work during the pandemic. This increases the gender gap in the employment rate in the regional aggregate by 6 percentage points. While in some countries the depth of the impact of the crisis on women is greater, particularly in Peru, El Salvador, Guatemala, Bolivia and Colombia, where half of the women are unable to work (Figure 6).

In total, 52 billion dollars constant of 2011 (PPP) were lost, of which 67% are generated by men (35 billion dollars) and 33% by women (17 billion dollars). This means that women stopped generating 22% of what they were getting before the pandemic and men 26%. These differences, as noted above, are partly due to the availability of time for women and men for paid work, which is greater in the case of women. In some countries, women stopped generating income in a higher proportion than men, such as in Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru (Figure 7).

■ **Figure 6.** Latin America (16 countries): Employed population unable to work due to the pandemic, by sex, by country – in percentage (circa 2019)

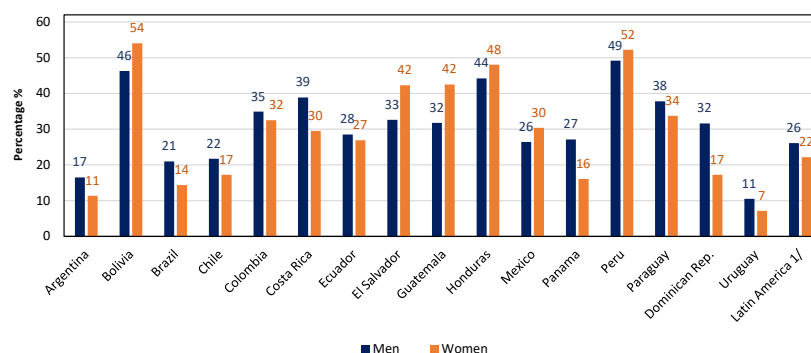


Source: Latin American Household and Employment Surveys 2018 and 2019 (see Appendix 1).

Notes: The EAP is considered occupied from 15 years or more.

1/ Weighted average of the countries considered. The weighting in the household surveys corresponds to the local expansion factor in each country and in the quarterly surveys the simple average is considered for the annual data.

■ **Figure 7.** Latin America (16 countries): Loss of the wage mass of the employed EAP by sex, by country - in percentage (circa 2019)



Source: Latin American Household and Employment Surveys 2018 and 2019 (see Appendix 1).

Notes: The EAP is considered occupied from 15 years or more. The wage bill considers the monthly labor income by main activity of the EAP employed with income.

1/ Weighted average of the countries considered. The weighting in the household surveys corresponds to the local expansion factor in each country and in the quarterly surveys the simple average is considered for the annual data. Income is converted into constant 2011 international dollars (PPP) of the year corresponding to the information gathering.



After the confinement, we will return to work. But we will do it in a completely different job market than the pre-pandemic. The pandemic with its impacts on health, the months of confinement and restricted mobility will have wreaked havoc on all social and economic life, with lasting effects that are revolutionizing the world of work. It is clear that in the face of a drop in economic activity, not all jobs will return to their activities and the world of work will have to implement changes to adapt to the crisis, which could be permanent in the long term. For example, the widespread use of time and workspace flexibility measures such as teleworking, the acceleration and transformation of the digital economy and in particular platforms, or the use of new distributed manufacturing methods, which could change for always the concept of large manufacturing factories, among others. Therefore, it is essential to analyze in detail the differentiated impacts between women and men, since changes in the productive matrices of the economies of the region could deepen the gender inequalities that already existed before the pandemic.

Some intersectionalities: low income, youth, rurality and heads of household

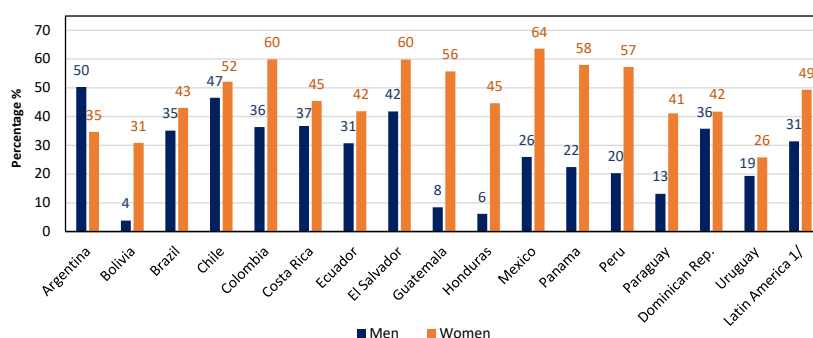
Recognizing the heterogeneity of labor markets, below we present the differentiated effects according to four intersectional views: (i) low-income women and men, (ii) young women and men aged 15 to 24, (iii) women and men heads of household with young boys and girls (6 years old or less), and iv) women and men located in rural areas.

In each intersectional analysis we estimate the percentage of people who have lost their jobs and consequently their income during the pandemic, adding data at the regional level and observing the differences between countries. Then, we estimate post-pandemic job destruction in aggregate for Latin America.

Economic impacts of Covid-19 for low-income women

Before the pandemic, in Latin America and the Caribbean we estimated 10.7 million workers and 14 million women workers in the first decile of labor income in each country. During the pandemic, 49% of low-income women were unable to work compared to 31% of men, which translates into a gender gap of 18 percentage points between the sexes, or 3% if we take as basis the loss of employment of men. In Mexico, El Salvador, Colombia, Panama, Peru and Honduras, 6 out of 10 women living in poverty will have been unable to work, with gaps between women and men that fluctuate between 7 (Argentina) and 48 percentage points (Guatemala) (Figure 8). It is worth noting that this measurement does not refer to workers living in households below some poverty line (moderate or extreme). To facilitate comparison between countries, these are those that are in the lowest decile of labor income in each country.

■ **Figure 8.** Latin America (16 countries): Employed population in income decile 1 unable to work due to the pandemic by sex, according to country - in percentage (circa 2019)



Source: Latin American Household and Employment Surveys 2018 and 2019 (see Appendix 1).

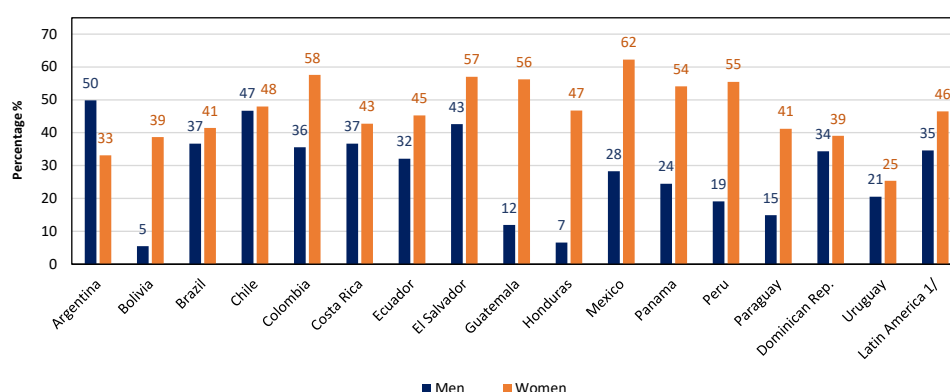
Notes: The EAP is considered occupied from 15 years or more. For the deciles, labor income by main activity is considered without considering workers without income.

1/ Weighted average of the countries considered. The weighting in the household surveys corresponds to the local expansion factor in each country and in the quarterly surveys the simple average is considered for the annual data.



The impacts on income show the same heterogeneous behavior. The 46% of low-income women stopped receiving their salaries as a result of the crisis, compared to 35% of men, which is equivalent to a gap of 11 percentage points or 2.86% if we take as reference the loss of income of men. In Mexico, Colombia, El Salvador, Peru and Guatemala the figures are higher to the detriment of women with gaps that fluctuate between 44 (Guatemala) and 4 (Uruguay) percentage points (Figure 9).

■ **Figure 9.** Latin America (16 countries): Loss in the wage mass of the employed low-income EAP by sex, by country - in percentage (circa 2019)



Source: Latin American Household and Employment Surveys 2018 and 2019 (see Appendix 1).

Notes: The EAP is considered occupied from 15 years or more. The wage bill considers the monthly labor income by main activity of the EAP employed with income. For the deciles, labor income by main activity is considered without considering workers without income.

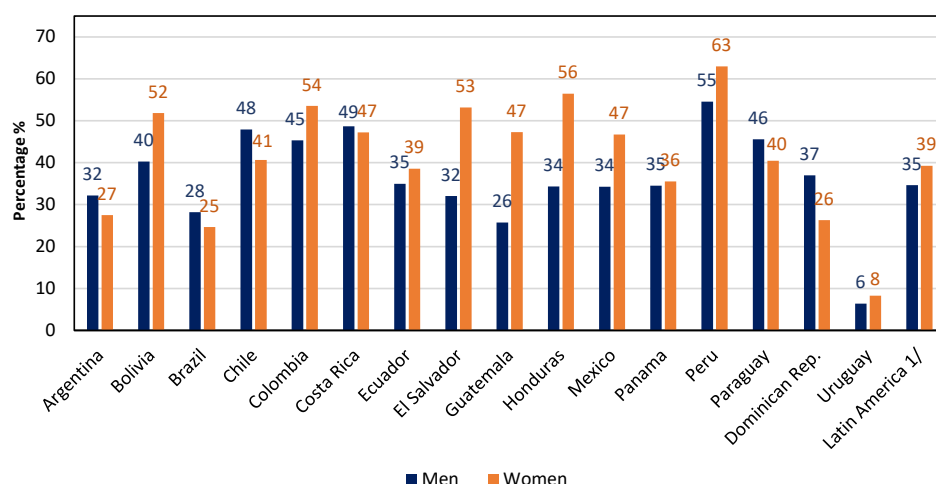
1/ Weighted average of the countries considered. The weighting in the household surveys corresponds to the local expansion factor in each country and in the quarterly surveys the simple average is considered for the annual data. Income is converted into constant 2011 international dollars (PPP) of the year corresponding to the information gathering.

Economic Impacts of COVID-19 for Young Women

It is estimated that in the region we have 37 million young people (15 to 24 years old) who make up the Latin American labor force, that is, 23 million men and 14 million women. During the COVID-19 crisis, 39% of young women lost their jobs, compared to 34% of men. When observing the differences between countries, we see that young women in Peru, Honduras, Colombia, El Salvador and Bolivia are the most affected in the region (Figure 10), who experience gender gaps associated with job loss between 65% (Honduras) and 20% (Colombia), when the loss of employment of young men in those countries is taken as a basis. This problem is particularly relevant in the case of women of childbearing age, for whom labor insertion is more difficult (Tribin et al., 2019), due to factors associated with the disruption of the labor trajectory, the burden of caring for minors, internal biases in organizations where these women work, among others.



Figure 10. Latin America (16 countries): Youth employed population unable to work due to the pandemic, by sex, by country – in percentage (circa 2019)



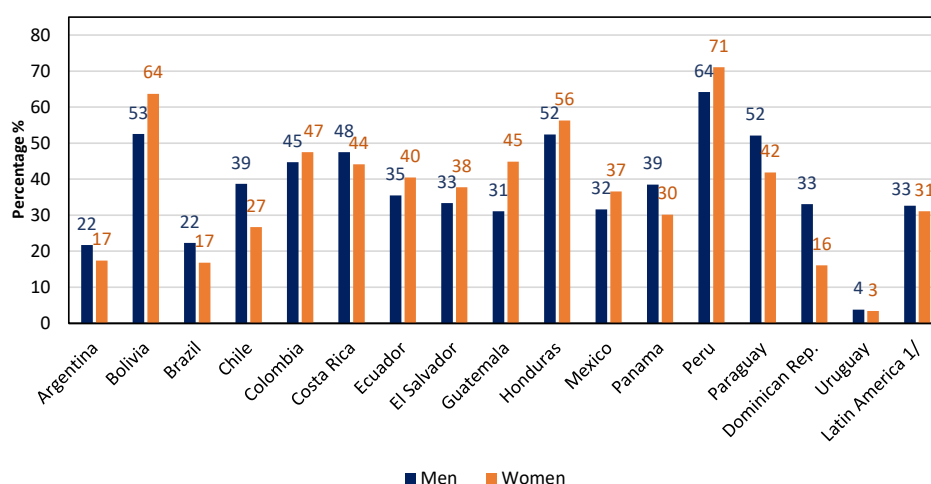
Source: Latin American Household and Employment Surveys 2018 and 2019 (see Appendix 1).

Notes: The EAP is considered occupied from 15 years or more.

1/ Weighted average of the countries considered. The weighting in the household surveys corresponds to the local expansion factor in each country and in the quarterly surveys the simple average is considered for the annual data.

On the other hand, the impacts on income are less intense. During the pandemic, young women stopped generating 30% of the income they obtained before the crisis and men 33%. Some relevant differences are observed between countries, such as Guatemala and Bolivia, where the gender gaps in labor income widened, reaching a gender salary gap of 45% in Guatemala and 21% in Bolivia, based on the loss of salaries of young men (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Latin America (16 countries): Loss in the wage bill of the employed youth EAP by sex, according to country – in percentage (circa 2019)



Source: Latin American Household and Employment Surveys 2018 and 2019 (see Appendix 1)

Notes: The EAP is considered employed from 15 years or more. The wage bill considers the monthly labor income by main activity of the EAP employed with income.

1/ Weighted average of the countries considered. The weighting in the household surveys corresponds to the local expansion factor in each country and in the quarterly surveys the simple average is considered for the annual data. Income is converted into constant 2011 international dollars (PPP) of the year corresponding to the information gathering.

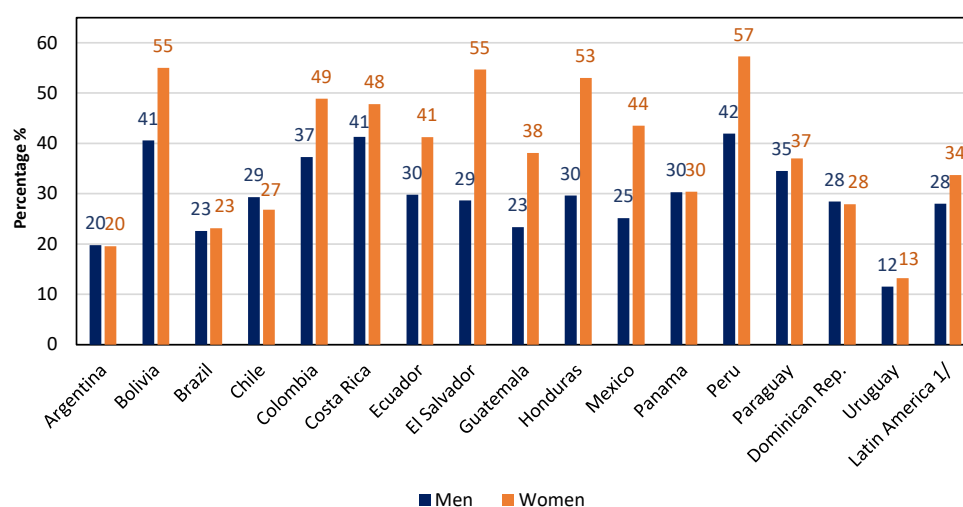


Economic impacts of COVID-19 for women heads of households with minors at home

Being the head of the household with minors under 6 years old is an important characteristic that reveals the structural barriers that women experience as a result of long working hours and the double workload and care at home. It is likely that these women also face greater problems for their labor insertion and permanence (Alon and others, 2020), among other factors due to less time availability, information asymmetries and the inefficiency of their social support networks.

It is estimated that in the region we have 34.3 million heads of households, of which 25.9 million are men and 8.4 million are women heads of households, with young children. Due to the effects of the pandemic it is estimated that 34% of women heads of households lost their jobs, compared to 28% of men heads of households. In Peru, El Salvador, Honduras and Bolivia the dimension of this problem is much deeper, more than half of women heads of households with children under 6 years old have had their ability to work limited (Figure 12).

■ **Figure 12.** Latin America (16 countries): Employed population head of household and with young girls and boys unable to work due to the pandemic, by sex, by country – in percentage (circa 2019)



Source: Latin American Household and Employment Surveys 2018 and 2019 (see Appendix 1).

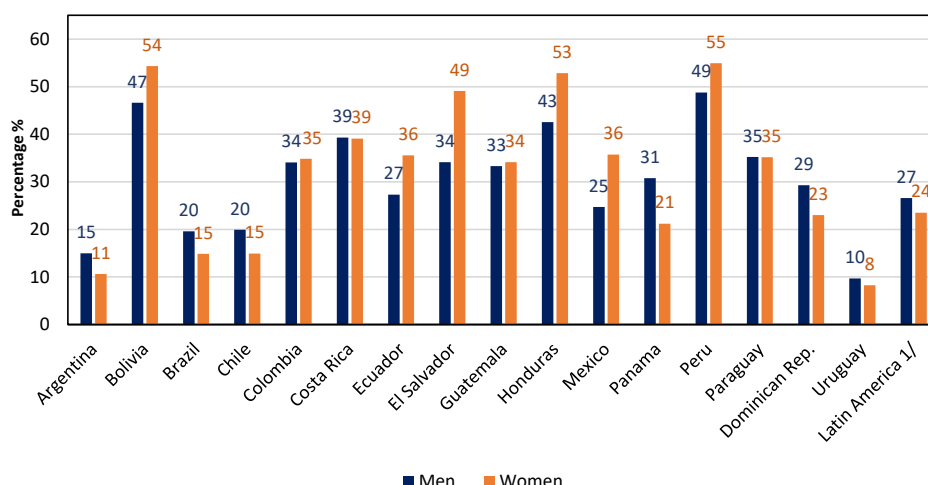
Notes: The occupied EAP from 15 years of age and older and young children from 6 to less years of age are considered at home.

1 / Weighted average of the countries considered. The weighting in the household surveys corresponds to the local expansion factor in each country and in the quarterly surveys the simple average is considered for the annual data.

We estimate that women stopped generating 24% of labor income and men 27%, so we can observe a gender pay gap in income loss of three percentage points or -11.11% to the detriment of men. The impacts on income are greater in women in Peru, Bolivia, El Salvador and Honduras, since the gender gaps are between 34% and 36% (Figure 13).



■ **Figure 13.** Latin America (16 countries): Loss of the wage bill of the employed EAP as head of household and with young girls and boys by sex, according to country – in percentage (circa 2019)

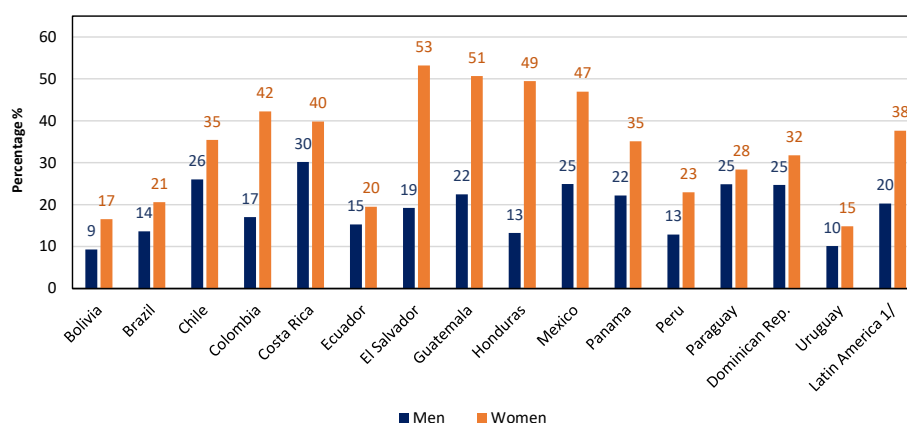


Source: Latin American Household and Employment Surveys 2018 and 2019 (see Appendix 1).
Notes: The occupied EAP from 15 years old and older and young children from 6 to less years old are considered at home. The wage bill considers the monthly labor income by main activity of the EAP employed with income.
1/ Weighted average of the countries considered. The weighting in the household surveys corresponds to the local expansion factor in each country and in the quarterly surveys the simple average is considered for the annual data. Income is converted into constant 2011 international dollars (PPP) of the year corresponding to the information gathering.

Economic impacts of COVID-19 for women in rural areas

In rural areas of the region, before the pandemic there were an estimated of 40.9 million workers and 22.6 million women workers. During confinement 38% of the women lost the possibility of going out to work compared to 20% of the men. In Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico) half of the women in rural areas lost their source of employment (Figure 14). This is equivalent to a gender gap in employment of 90% to the detriment of women, when the reference of the loss of employment of men is taken as a basis.

■ **Figure 14.** Latin America (15 countries): Rural employed population unable to work due to the pandemic by sex, by country – in percentage (circa 2019)

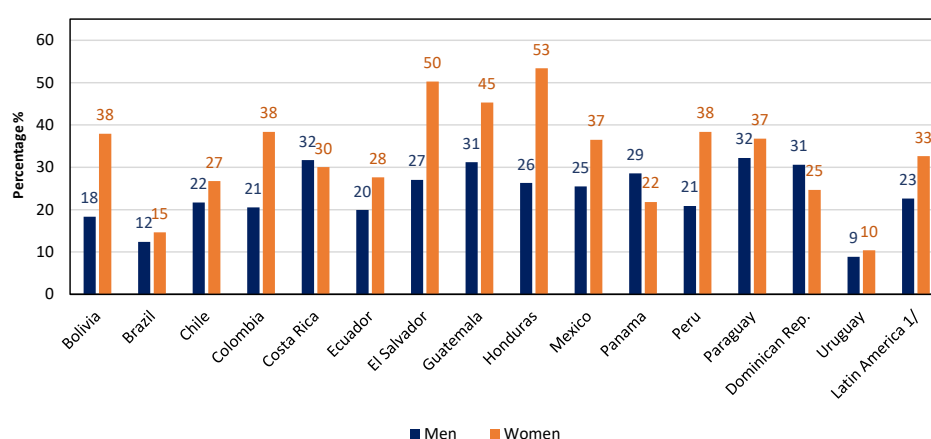


Source: Latin American Household and Employment Surveys 2018 and 2019 (see Appendix 1).
Notes: The occupied EAP from 15 years old and older and young children from 6 to less years old are considered at home.
1/ Weighted average of the countries considered. The weighting in the household surveys corresponds to the local expansion factor in each country and in the quarterly surveys the simple average is considered for the annual data.



According to our estimates, women stopped generating 33% of their labor income before the pandemic and men 23%. In Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, women stopped generating half of their labor income, which is why urgent policy responses are required to protect income in rural areas (Figure 15). Under this lens, the gender gap in income stands at 43% to the detriment of women, based on the decrease in salaries for men.

■ **Figure 15.** Latin America (15 countries): Loss of the wage bill of the rural employed population by sex, according to country – in percentage (circa 2019)



Source: Latin American Household and Employment Surveys 2018 and 2019 (see Appendix 1).
Notes: The EAP from 15 years old and older and young children from 6 to less years old are considered at home. The wage bill considers the monthly labor income by main activity of the EAP employed with income.
1/ Weighted average of the countries considered. The weighting in the household surveys corresponds to the local expansion factor in each country and in the quarterly surveys the simple average is considered for the annual data. Income is converted into constant 2011 international dollars (PPP) of the year corresponding to the information gathering.

Public policy challenges and recommendations

A profound impact of this pandemic is glimpsed on employment and consequently on household income, with a greater depth in poor, rural, single-parent and young households. Although the short-term impacts do not show many gender differences in employment and salaries, it is to be expected that the gaps will later widen as a result of the unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities.

Governments already face various tradeoffs in decision making. In order to make an informed decision, it is necessary to have data and evidence to carry out combining the different variables of the crisis: (i) health, (ii) economic and (iii) social and care (UNDP, 2020). In addition, efforts must be coordinated between the different levels of government (national, provincial and local) in an articulated manner, as well as creating coalitions among all actors (public, private, union and social), to leverage the experiences, resources and capacities to solve the crisis and build a sustainable, resilient and promising future.

The calculations indicate that some segments of women in situations of poverty and vulnerability will experience more accentuated impacts due to the crisis. Firstly, this happens due to the lower availability of work for them and secondly, to the lower availability of time to work. This second factor is linked to the disproportionate burden of unpaid domestic responsibilities, which has increased considerably during the pandemic. This increase occurs mainly for two reasons: (i) due to confinement measures that cause a high proportion of people to work from home or are in suspension of their employment contract, and (ii) due to the impossibility of having care services and of paid domestic



workers, who are equally forced to stay at home. This brings with it some challenges that are overlayed on those that already exist, so that the starting structural barriers of gender are a factor that puts women at double or triple risk.

Thus, we organize the challenges into three large groups, according to the area in which they operate: (i) at home (ii) between home, study and work and (iii) at work. In all of them there is both a role and a responsibility for the Governments, as well as for the private sector and trade unions, as well as for households and communities. In this list of recommendations, we try to prioritize those that have some connection with the pandemic, without neglecting some others that in these circumstances are worth continuing to promote, especially in the framework of a new economic reality. In the same way, we have tried to prioritize those for which we have quantitative evidence in the diagnosis of this note, but we have also added some that, experience tells us, should not be neglected. To minimize the potential negative impacts that are envisioned, below we synthesize a series of key recommendations for the design and implementation of public policies for the pandemic and post-pandemic.

(i) In households

We are already spending more time in our homes as a result of mandatory and voluntary confinements, curfews and other measures of physical distancing, with which we seek to contain the expansion of the of COVID-19. This is already followed by a significant increase in the burden of domestic and care work, as well as domestic and intra-family violence. Households now need more frequent cleaning and adaptation of the spaces for new activities, girls and boys need more support with their school life, food purchases for the house (which increased in volume and frequency) must now follow certain protocols health care providers, older people need more care, and a long list of etcetera's adds to the burden of unpaid care work.

In pre-pandemic times, according to ECLAC estimates (2020), women spent more than three times as much time as men in unpaid domestic and care work. In fact, for women without their own income, unpaid work time exceeds between 26% and 55% the unpaid work time dedicated by women who do have their own income. The former dedicates an average of 46 hours per week to unpaid work, compared to the 33 hours on average that the latter dedicate (UN Women, 2017). Although there is still no data that allows us to test the hypothesis of an increase in the burden of unpaid care in times of pandemic, a significant increase is expected based on the starting point and the amount of time that people now dedicate to telework. This could have gender-differentiated impacts that could deepen the structural barriers associated with care that affect women.

In the absence of interventions aimed at promoting co-responsibility of care and a better gender balance in the distribution of domestic tasks, this is most likely to result in more hours of unpaid work for women. The absence of labor policies that make possible to balance family life with work, not only reduces the number of hours that women can work, but it also undermines the productivity that they could have for each hour worked (ILO, 2019).

An increase of about 30% in cases of domestic and partner violence is also estimated, as recorded in some countries, according to the report of cases in state hotlines for the protection of victims of violence compared to the reporting statistics. in the pre-pandemic (UN, 2020). The confinement situation creates a perfect setting for women to find it virtually impossible to break the cycles of violence, having to live with their aggressor 24 hours a day, without the daily life allowing to temporarily break the dynamics, coupled with a minor access to public or private support networks as effects of sanitary measures. This has direct repercussions in many areas ranging from physical and mental health to labor productivity, limiting the possibilities of preserving economic autonomy.



Taking these considerations into account, we recommend a combination or basket of policies aimed at:

- **Promote cash transfer programs (CTP) and social protection policies to guarantee the availability of household income.** One of the main strategies to mitigate the impacts of the socio-economic crisis produced by the COVID-19 Pandemic have been the Cash Transfer Programs. It should be noted that almost all the countries in the region have implemented this type of policy. From a gender perspective, it is recommended: (i) suspend all conditionalities of the cash transfer programs, (ii) ensure the inclusion of women in situations of greater vulnerability as beneficiaries, (iii) ensure alternative mechanisms that minimize displacement and avoid agglomerations, (iv) promote complementary programs of income generation for women, and (v) promote the participation of women's organizations in the design and implementation of CTPs and other measures (UN Women, 2020)⁴.
- **Promote co-responsibility for caregiving and the redistribution of roles at home with a view to achieving a more equal balance of domestic responsibilities.** This is a recommendation whose statement is simple, but its content not so much. The unequal distribution of domestic and care tasks has a very long history. To a large extent, it is rooted within the customs of the Latin American peoples, the social norms and patriarchal patterns that still prevail in the region's societies, and as such it will not be eradicated overnight. In addition, to the tasks assigned almost automatically to women in pre-pandemic times, are added those of the new normal within homes (such as caring for babies and toddlers, tutoring girls and boys who study from home, the need to clean the house more frequently and a long list of etcetera's). However, it would be worth taking advantage of this opportunity in which people are confined to their homes to make visible, quantify and revalue domestic and care work that is usually invisible. An essential first step to make this possible is awareness of inequalities in the distribution of the burden of care. A massive communicational and educational work that points to such awareness and that encourages changes in the management of the households could be very useful. Along the same lines as domestic and care tasks, it is important not to fail to recognize the contributions of paid domestic workers, that in many countries they are mostly migrants, many of them in an irregular situation, which is why they suffer greater precarious employment conditions. Here it is necessary to advance in the regulation and protection of paid domestic work and care.
- **Provide households with sanitary tools to face care tasks more safely.** Health care equipment and medicines, for their part, have begun to become scarce and more expensive in some countries, so it makes sense to propose a policy to supply basic health and cleaning equipment to treat people at home, especially the sick, and thus prevent contagion for women who are more involved in care work during the crisis. A longer-term task is to improve household infrastructure, since the overcrowded conditions of households, especially those living in poverty and those in peri-urban and rural areas, make it virtually impossible to meet the fundamentals of prevention, social distance and wash hands regularly.
- **Ensure access to essential basic services, especially for women, and particularly those in situations of greater vulnerability.** This includes various types of services. First, the guarantee of the supply of essential services such as drinking water, energy and gas, necessary to ensure compliance with sanitary measures and to ensure subsistence. Second, the delivery of food products to households, following the sanitary protocols. Third, reliable access to the Internet, which is progressively becoming an essential enabling service for the world of work and the search for relevant information to face the pandemic. Last but not least, within the basic services must also be the products that allow the full exercise of sexual and reproductive rights, such as pre and postnatal care, the supply of

⁴ As the rate of new COVID-19 cases accelerates, it exposes the potentially devastating costs of job and income loss. Unconditional emergency cash transfers can mitigate the immediate worst effects of the COVID-19 crisis on poor or vulnerable households with no access to social protection. UNDP produced the following document and provides estimates for a Temporary Basic Income (TBI), a guaranteed minimum income above the poverty line for vulnerable people in 132 developing countries. UNDP: www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/transitions-series/temporary-basic-income-tbi-for-developing-countries.html



menstrual products, and contraceptives. For this, it is necessary to strengthen public services and health insurance coverage that serve to the specific needs of women. And particularly to women and men with HIV, for whom it is necessary to guarantee the supply in safe conditions of health services and the supply of prophylactic kits that guarantee adequate protection of their health.

- **Protect women, girls and boys and other high-risk groups from exposure to intimate partner and domestic violence.** On days of confinement at home, violence can be exacerbated, as seen above, so LGBTI women, girls and boys, lesbians, gays, transsexuals and bisexuals are at high risk. For this, it is necessary to redouble efforts to strengthen the surveillance, prevention and protection mechanisms, it is recommended: (i) keep the telephone and online hotlines active, (ii) strengthen the care and protection centers to help victims of gender-based violence, (iii) keep police and medical personnel trained to deal with situations appropriately, (iv) transmit safe reporting mechanisms and build clear service routes to which victims can go, including articulation with services provided by social organizations, and (v) strengthening community surveillance mechanisms in neighborhoods and remote rural areas, especially in foster homes and hotels for migrant persons. Therefore, it is crucial to promote community approaches in the prevention and detection of violence. This may include the strengthening of shelters and other care measures, such as prioritizing cash transfers and active employment policies that promote the labor insertion of victims of violence, as well as the provision of essential services, to the extent that women victims of violence require a safe space and economic support outside the home. (UNDP 2020).
- **Make the protection of women, adolescents and girls a task for everyone.** It is important to make the safety of women, young people, adolescents and girls in risk of acts of violence a task for everyone. To achieve this, it may be useful to increase access to information, communication campaigns and other contact points of these services to improve their access and thus motivate victims of violence to report their cases. But in addition to this, it is important to mobilize communities so that community surveillance mechanisms generate early warnings with which the victim protection mechanisms can be more easily activated. In cases where the victim is not in a position to report, the community should secure their integrity and communicate to the authorities. It is also important to pay attention to signs of school drop-out and changes in behavior, especially of girls, boys, adolescents and young people. At this time when girls and adolescents dedicate more time to domestic tasks, it is possible that they neglect their school responsibilities, which in the medium term could lead to dropouts.
- **Promote the integration of households in their communities, but always following health and safety protocols.** The activation of social and community mechanisms that alleviate the burden of care and, as mentioned above, reinforce the protection of women, adolescents and girls in situations of risk of violence is imperative. Social and care infrastructures, networks of community mothers, and early warning systems for gender violence are all mechanisms that must be strengthened locally, both in urban and rural settings. This brings a return to the neighborhood activities of a few decades ago. This, in addition to requiring adjustments in the mobility policies of the cities, will require a broad promotion of community care and local arrangements between public and private care service providers.
- **Make the invisible visible, with objective and verifiable evidence.** To the extent that domestic work is invisible, it is necessary that national statistical systems continue to contribute to making it visible. To do this, it is necessary to continue collecting information and data disaggregated by sex on the situation of women at home, collecting the diversity of existing family arrangements. Time use surveys and national accounts with a gender perspective are increasingly necessary. In the short term, it is also necessary to estimate the impacts of the pandemic on the distribution of tasks within households. This will help in the design of interventions, both public and private, to address the differentiated impacts.



- **Quantify and integrate the value and dimension of the care economy in the national accounts.** Unpaid domestic work has been systematically made invisible from national accounts systems, because it seems that there is a magic or invisible hand doing it. The pandemic creates a scenario in which now that we are at home, women and men feel the burden of unpaid domestic work. This creates an opportunity to open a dialogue with the statistical institutes and the ministries of production and economy, for the quantification, revaluation and integration of its value in the national accounts. Because care work enables people to integrate into the labor market, even if the contributions of housewives to the economy are not traditionally perceived. It is clear that this work does have a value and that someone pays for it, so the revaluation of it, accompanied by the appreciation of the experiences acquired by women when developing it, is also an enabler for the productive and labor inclusion of women. Certification schemes of labor competencies for time management, home economy management, cleaning and disinfection, cooking and gastronomy, among others, are a highly valued package of experiences in various industries.

(ii) Between home, study and work

Although the virtuality that is being imposed these days, allows workers an instantaneous transition from home to work and vice versa, this condition is not the same for all people. As well as the reduction in transportation times between home and work due to a reduction in the mass transport systems and particularly, due to mobility restrictions. Furthermore, with the return to normality, there will be an increasing need to make use of means of public and private transport, individual and mass, to go and return to the workplace. But in order to be able to enter the working day, it is necessary to solve ecosystem problems that challenge permanence, such as the care infrastructure, the availability of childcare facilities for minors, care services for the elderly, the schedules of various providers of goods and services (public and private). All this, obviously, with the sanitary measures that are required in the framework of this pandemic. For this reason, it is essential to activate the availability of services that enable households and those who make them up, to better participate in labor markets. For this to be possible we recommend:

- **A reliable and safe public transport in cities, transporting people but not the virus.** The vast majority of people in Latin America who live in cities move by public transport, especially women. This is the most cost-efficient way to do it. But at the same time, the public transport network has also been a way of transmitting the virus in the main cities of the world. For this reason, it is necessary to display logistical measures to reduce the density of users of transport services and respect health protocols. It is worth realizing that the mobility patterns of women are different from those of men, since they move between shorter distances, but take longer on average since they use public transport to a greater extent, instead of means of transportation. private transportation. Therefore, their itineraries are more complex and less direct because the part of their mobility is aimed at solving care responsibilities (shopping for the home, dropping off / picking up children at educational centers, medical visits, etc.). Therefore, it is crucial to incorporate gender analysis in the design of transport, security and city management policies for the pandemic and post-pandemic. A comprehensive list of policies and a combination of them that contribute to these objectives is beyond the scope of this note, but the following considerations should certainly be taken into account: (i)improve the predictability of arrival times at each bus stop, (ii)design smart policies to maintain social distances, (iii)implement express trunk routes with higher frequencies, (iv)improve the integration of various means of transport (not only subways, buses, and feeder cars; but also bicycles and other less congestive means), and (v)promote and adapt infrastructure for the use of bicycles. Finally, mobility patterns have changed significantly compared to those of the pre-pandemic, so it is crucial to work in coordination with the public and private sectors to avoid congestion of transport systems in the cities during the economic reactivation processes by phases or total, and take advantage of more efficiently the combination of blocks and entry and exit times by zones, sectors (productive and educational), among others.



- **A transport network that allows better integration of all territories.** Improving transport in cities is not enough, integration with surrounding territories must also be improved. Let us remember that in our region, more than a third of the households live outside the cities and the relationship that exists between the urban and the rural is very fluid. To ensure access to health services or other services in the event of emergencies, it is necessary for the entire network to function reliably.
- **Strengthen care services, both for boys and girls, as well as for adults and people with disabilities.** Effective female labor participation requires structural solutions to the problem of care. A first line of work in this regard should be the equal distribution of care burdens within households. As we have previously underlined, a more equitable distribution of tasks must take place there but recognizing that this cultural change will not happen overnight, short-term solutions must also be provided outside the home. Therefore, working simultaneously in the construction of a new and renewed model of masculinity, conscious, healthy and positive, is an imperative that will allow progress towards the transformation of the social norms that currently prevail based on patriarchal models, where masculinity and manhood are weakened when men do housework. Additionally, the strengthening of care systems outside the home, which include infrastructure, services, public, private and community providers is absolutely essential as enabling factors for women in the labor market. The services of nurseries and early childhood care centers, care for the elderly and people with disabilities will be central in the redesign of the social organization of care. For this to be possible, it is necessary, as far as sanitary is possible in the context of the pandemic, to extend the working hours of the existing centers, making them compatible with the working hours of those who use the centers, as well as increasing territorial coverage of the services. This can be done by combining the private and public provision of such services through a Comprehensive Care System that integrates a Network of Care Service Providers, which subsidizes access to their services to those with less income.
- **Advance in the reopening of the education system and its training centers to preserve and strengthen the human capital required today and in the future.** Measures of physical distancing to preserve health, in combination with low internet connectivity in remote towns and cities and peri-urban areas, along with limited access to computer equipment and tablets that adequately enable online training, plus weak ones Digital abilities of certain population segments beyond the use of smart phones or social networks, are generating a high risk of dis-accumulation of human capital in times of pandemic with lasting effects in the post-pandemic. This dis-accumulation will be more marked in vulnerable groups, deepening the gaps⁵. The public policy baskets must consider several aspects: (i) the necessary universality and democratization of access to internet connectivity with cross-subsidies for the coverage of service rates and access to equipment, (ii) the development of skills as a tool for the development of increased capacities, which must be worked under the life cycle approach from early childhood⁶ to advanced adulthood (iii) the development of increased capacities, which allow the development of productive activities, among others. Beyond its direct impacts on the benefit of children, adolescents and young people who will be able to continue their academic growth, this will also facilitate the return to work for women, releasing part of their care responsibilities at home. Along the same lines, it will be necessary to adapt school schedules or certain extracurricular programs, and articulate face-to-face and virtual care services, appropriately balancing educational and health objectives (see recommendation on urban public transport, lines above).

⁵ See UNESCO Interactive Map (2020) of the impacts of COVID-19 on education en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse

⁶ See the Lego Robots for Kids Program at www.lego.com/en-gb/categories/robots-for-kids



(iii) At work

Finally, and in the focus of what this note intends to discuss, in the world of work there are many policy options. Here we list some that have the potential to facilitate a better participation of women in the world of work, taking advantage, as much as possible, of their productive potential. In this sense, this list can be seen as a set of enablers for the entry and permanence in the labor market of women. Not all the recommendations are relevant to all economic sectors, nor to the companies that comprise them, nor to all sizes. Therefore, it is recommended that governments and companies⁷ adopt these measures in an exploratory way in iterative cycles of human-centered design (prototyping, testing, evaluation and scale), as policy baskets, gradually testing and expanding them according to the successes and learning that they are obtaining. There are no universal recipes, or one-size-fits-all dresses.

For the government:

- **Promote that employment policies for the formal sector extend to informal workers in general and paid domestic workers in particular.** In this sense, and as the document demonstrates, it is necessary to recognize that the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis are based on a previous and unfair sexual division of labor that deepened an over-representation of women in informality, in precarious and part-time jobs, and in small companies (or self-employment) in most Latin American and Caribbean countries. The insertion of women in this type of job allows them to reconcile paid work with care responsibilities, but it implies, in addition to a double working day, greater job insecurity and negative impacts on their work trajectories and professional development. In turn, this results in the majority of women not having contributory social security. The usual benefits of formal employment do not reach a high proportion of women. In the emergency, the fundamental task is to protect those who need it most, ensuring that no woman is left behind, primarily those who do not enjoy the benefits of formality⁸. In the medium term, it is necessary to ensure a universal social protection floor (income, health, pensions and care), regardless of the type and mode of labor insertion. Finally, promoting social protection within a framework of universality rather than access to formal employment, will bring benefits to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women. As well as adopting and implementing ILO Convention 189⁹ for the regulation of domestic workers, leading to the establishment of necessary measures for the health care of them and their employers.
- **Ensure the inclusion of women in policies for the reactivation of employment with the ultimate objective of facing the crisis without leaving anyone behind.** In the first place, as has already been documented, and has also been happening in the framework of this pandemic, in periods of crisis female leaderships are effective¹⁰. In times like the ones we live in, women can be very effective in managing crises, facing uncertainty and addressing a multiplicity of objectives. Second, this will be useful to better capture the specific needs and strategic interests of women, making it possible to estimate gender gaps both in the effects of the crisis, and in the depth of its impacts, as revealed in this paper. To include women effectively, it is recommended to incorporate them in social dialogues with plural representation, as well as to implement initiatives that promote gender equality in the labor market¹¹.

⁷ To support the business sector in this transition, UNDP has developed a set of instruments leveraged on the Seals of Gender Equality in the Workplace. See www.selloigualdadgenero.org and americainagenero.org/newsite/index.php/es/iniciativas-destacadas/empresas-por-la-igualdad.

⁸ When disaggregating the data, the evidence indicates that the women in the higher situation of vulnerability are poor women and older adults, female heads of households, young people, belonging to indigenous or Afro-descendant peoples, and migrant and refugee women.

⁹ Convention 189: www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/es/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:2551460

¹⁰ See Avivah Wittenberg-Cox (2020), What Do Countries With The Best Coronavirus Responses Have In Common? Women Leaders. Accessed June 29, 2020 at www.forbes.com/sites/avivahwittenbergcox/2020/04/13/what-do-countries-with-the-best-coronavirus-reponses-have-in-common-women-leaders/#4d3146ed3dec

¹¹ The Seal of Gender Equality in the Workplace for the Private Sector supported by UNDP, the Principles of Women's Empowerment promoted by UN Women and the United Nations Global Compact # or the We Empower or Win-Win Program in America Latina developed in partnership between the European Union, the ILO and UN Women). See www.empowerwomen.org/en



Additionally, the government, companies and trade unions can collaborate with women's organizations to analyze the dimension of the impact on gender and the search for solutions in their own environments.

- **Protect people, their income and their job, regardless of the contractual modality of the workforce.** The protection of workers and each job during the pandemic, including those derived from temporary closures of operations is a priority. However, the stressful circumstances on the viability of companies varies from industry to industry, and according to the size of the company. It is a time when the support of the private sector is required to take employment protection measures combining those that can range from reduced working hours, to temporary contract suspensions, to early paid vacations, among others. Several countries in the region have adopted policies to support the private sector with the aim of protecting income with temporary cash transfer schemes that include a gender analysis, as seen above, as a grant or loan to protect households more exposed to the effects of the crisis, including cash transfers to women who are in situations of domestic violence.

For the private sector:

- **Develop a Corporate Inclusive and Gender Responsive Framework for Managing the COVID-19 Crisis.**¹²
(i) Set up a Crisis Committee led by senior management and with the plural participation of staff (including union members if possible), where it is guaranteed that women's voices are incorporated. It can be a new body or an existing one to which crisis management functions are assigned, (ii) Develop a policy framework or strategy for managing the COVID-19 crisis, whose purpose is to adequately navigate the crisis, mitigate its effects especially on the most vulnerable segments linked to the business and its value chain, compensate for the disadvantages suffered by specific segments, and build resilience to future shocks and crises. This should address both impact actions in the workplace, impact actions in the value chain and solutions to share with the community, (iii) Formulate a COVID-19 Crisis Management Action Plan with results, goals, indicators and specific activities associated with each area, with responsible units, times, and assigned budget. For this, it is essential to execute the action plan and implement improvements along the way as required and measure its progress, identifying opportunities for improvement and planning continuous improvement actions.
- **Ensure greater labor flexibility for all working people, not only women.** In order to ensure that joint responsibility for household chores, care work and increased domestic work does not disproportionately burden women, they must adopt equal opportunities measures that benefit all staff. Likewise, working on time with men on elements that shape a new, conscious and healthy masculinity, in which they begin to assume their domestic responsibilities are crucial. This will hardly change in the short term, so successful workplaces will be the ones that manage to adapt, and co-create measures focused on the strategic needs and interests of their staff. Some of the recommended measures include the adoption of telework and its regulation, flexibility of time and schedules, redesign and adaptation of workspaces with a biosafety approach that includes the specific needs of women and men and results-oriented work schemes rather than processes-oriented work¹³. The transformation of cultural patterns and social norms is a task that must also concern the business sector, challenging traditional gender roles. Along with these measures, it should take advantage of the opportunity to promote social co-responsibility for care.

¹² See www.businessforsustainabledevelopment.org.

¹³ In this regard, the Agile methodologies may be useful, the Agile Manifesto developed by elaborated by 17 critics of process-based production models, in Utah in 2001, where the term "agile methods" was coined as an alternative to the development of software with formal or traditional methodologies. Consulted at agilemanifesto.org/iso/es/manifesto.html and see OBS Business School (2020), Agile Methodology What are the 12 principles of your model ?, consulted on June 29, 2020 at obsbusiness.school/int/blog-project-management/agile-methodologies/agile-methodology-which-are-the-12-principles-of-your-model

UNDP has developed a series of alliances with great allies that offer digital content for the development of digital skills, socio-emotional and technical skills (Coursera, HP Life, among others). See IFC (2020), Childcare in the COVID-19 Era: A Guide for Employers, Accessed June 30, 2020 at www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/topics_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/gender+at+ifc/resources/childcare+and+covid+guidance+for+employers and IFC (2019), Guide for Employer-Supported Childcare, developed in partnership with UNDP together with about 30 organizations, Accessed June 30, 2020 at www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/topics_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/gender+at+ifc/resources/guide+for+employer-supported+childcare



- **Offer tools for the development of human capital unable to work from home during mandatory quarantines.** This includes the modalities of virtual training and digital skills that contribute to the qualification of the occupational profile of workers who are forced to stay at home. For this, it is recommended to develop alliances with training systems for work, as well as with content providers. For this, it is crucial to develop new human capital development schemes based on training cycles and training for the new economic normality. Beyond proposing training in areas that will have effective demand in the immediate future, it is necessary to take into account, more and more, that jobs will incorporate digital tools in their daily lives, so digital literacy must be central in any business strategy of development of labor competencies. Thus, the need to update knowledge must be conceptualized across the different occupations of people.¹⁴
- **Offer care solutions in the workplace and adopt other measures to facilitate joint responsibility for care.** (i) Adopt paid and unpaid leave, both for mothers and fathers, and for various concepts, beyond maternity, paternity and parental leave, (ii) Develop care solutions supported by workers¹⁵, directly or through third parties, including special care solutions such as disability or sick leave, and (iii) Develop processes for changing social norms by promoting joint responsibility among staff and conscious and healthy masculinities.
- **Transformation of social norms and pay renewed attention to communication channels.** The greater flexibility required in the workplace must go hand in hand with a renewal of communication channels with the person and with other central actors in the value chain, including suppliers of goods and services. As has already been widely documented, women use less initiative than men to negotiate for themselves, in fact there is evidence that they negotiate better for a third party than in favor of their own interests. For this reason, it is essential to open multiple channels of communication with management, with the areas of human resources and welfare and other institutional channels. This includes salaries and promotions, but also other working conditions such as flexibility of time and workspace, presented in the previous point, as well as opportunities for professional development, among others.
- **Have information and evidence for proper decision making. Markets work best with information, and labor markets are no exception to this rule.** Having greater availability of labor market data disaggregated by sex and other demographic variables is essential. This includes not only information on the organizational policies to guarantee the well-being of the staff in times of the pandemic, but also information on the effects of the crisis on the staff and their family environment, geolocated job vacancies and the prospect of future jobs. among others. It will also have more information on the economic effects, burden of differentiated care, and barriers to accessing resources for work. This will help government workers in charge of designing policies to more clearly identify the segments of the labor markets in which their action is a priority, and so that decision making in the company is more accurate, facilitating the timely implementation of corrective actions.

¹⁴ UNDP has developed a series of alliances with great allies that offer digital content for the development of digital skills, socio-emotional and technical skills (Coursera, HP Life, among others).

¹⁵ See IFC (2020), Childcare in the COVID-19 Era: A Guide for Employers, Accessed June 30, 2020 at www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/topics_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/gender+at+ifc/resources/childcare+and+covid+guidance+for+employers and IFC (2019) Guide for Employer-Supported Childcare, developed in partnership with UNDP together with about 30 organizations, Accessed June 30, 2020 at www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/topics_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/gender+at+ifc/resources/guide+for+employer-supported+childcare



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Appendix

■ **Appendix 1.** Latin America (16 countries): Description of the household and employment surveys by country, 2018 and 2019.

Country	Survey	Year and period considered
Argentina	Encuesta Permanente de Hogares	2019, quarters I, II, III y IV
Bolivia	Encuesta de Hogares	2018, annual
Brazil	Encuesta Nacional por Muestreo de Domicilios	2019, quarters I, II, III y IV
Chile	Encuesta Suplementaria de Ingresos de la Encuesta Nacional de Empleo	2018, annual
Colombia	Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares	2019, database from January to December
Costa Rica	Encuesta Continua de Empleo	2018, quarters I, II, III y IV
Ecuador	Encuesta Nacional de Empleo, Desempleo y Subempleo	2019, quarters I, II, III y IV
El Salvador	Encuesta de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples	2018, annual
Guatemala	Encuesta Nacional de Empleo e Ingresos	2019, semesters I
Honduras	Encuesta Permanente de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples	2018, annual
Mexico	Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo	2019, quarters I, II, III y IV
Panama	Encuesta del Mercado Laboral	2018, annual
Peru	Encuesta Nacional de Hogares	2019, annual
Paraguay	Encuesta Permanente de Hogares	2018, annual
Dominican Republic	Encuesta Nacional de Fuerza de Trabajo	2018, annual
Uruguay	Encuesta Continua de Hogares	2019, quarters I, II, III y IV

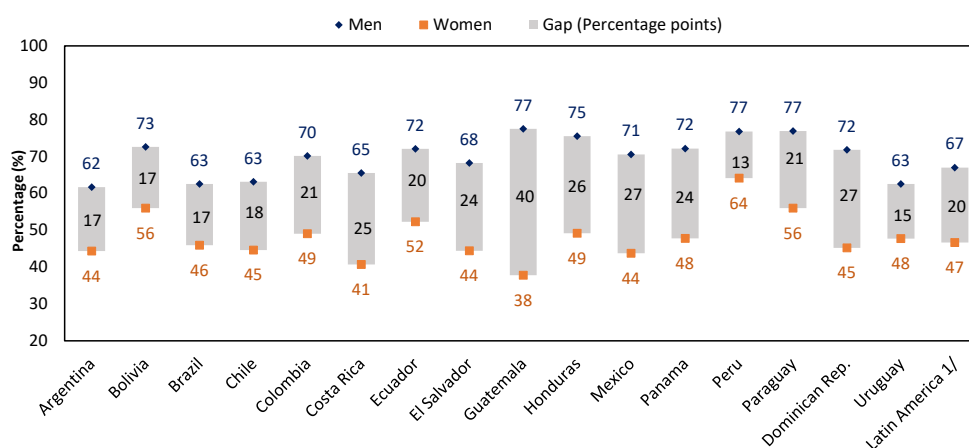
Source: Latin American Household and Employment Surveys.



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■ Appendix 2. Latin America (16 countries): Occupancy rate without the presence of young children in the home by sex, according to countries – in percentage (circa 2019)

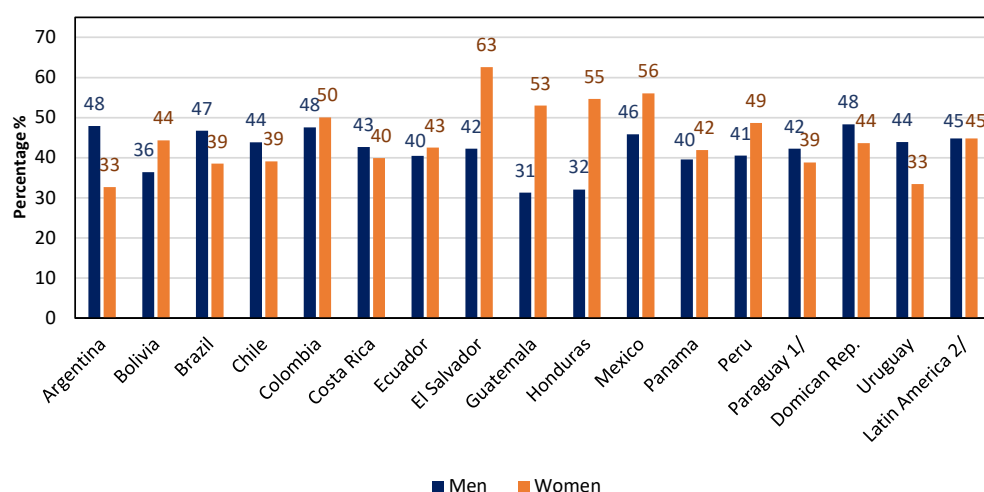


Source: Latin American Household and Employment Surveys 2018 and 2019 (see Appendix 1).

Notes: The employed EAP from 15 years old and older and young children from 6 to less years old are considered at home.

1 / Weighted average. The weighting in household surveys corresponds to the local expansion factor in each country. In countries with quarterly surveys, the simple average is considered to obtain annual data.

■ Appendix 3. Latin America (16 countries): EAP employed in non-essential activities by sex, by country – percentage (circa 2019)



Source: Latin American Household and Employment Surveys 2018 and 2019 (see Appendix 1).

Notes: The EAP is considered occupied from 15 years old or more.

1 / In Paraguay, there is no greater detail by economic activities, therefore the manufacturing industry branches are considered; commerce, restaurants and hotels; and transportation, storage and communications.

2 / Weighted average. The weighting in household surveys corresponds to the local expansion factor in each country. In countries with quarterly surveys, the simple average is considered to obtain annual data.

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