October 2019
Number 21

ECLAC / ILO

Employment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean

Evolution of and prospects for women's labour participation in Latin America

October 2019
Number 21

ECLAC / ILO

Employment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean

Evolution of and prospects for women's labour participation in Latin America

UNITED NATIONS
ECLAC
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WITH EQUALITY
1919-2019
SOCIAL JUSTICE DECENT WORK

Employment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean is a twice-yearly report prepared jointly by the Economic Development Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Office for the Southern Cone of Latin America of the International Labour Organization (ILO), headed by Daniel Titelman and Fabio Bertranou, respectively. Work on the document was coordinated by Gerhard Reinecke, Senior Expert on Employment Policies of ILO, and Jürgen Weller, Chief of the Employment Studies Unit of the Economic Development Division of ECLAC.

The first section of this report was prepared by Juan Jacobo Velasco and the second by Sonia Gontero, with the collaboration of Sonia Albornoz and Emanuel Menéndez. The Labour Analysis and Information System in Latin America and the Caribbean (SIALC), under the coordination of Bolívar Pino, assisted with the preparation of statistical data.

United Nations publication
LC/TS.2019/66
Distribution: L

Printed at United Nations, Santiago
S.19-00832

This publication should be cited as: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)/International Labour Organization (ILO), "Evolution of and prospects for women's labour participation in Latin America", *Employment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean*, No. 21 (LC/TS.2019/66), Santiago, 2019.

Contents

Foreword

Gender equality is one of the most important elements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that guide the work of all the institutions of the United Nations system. As recognized by SDG 5 (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. In particular, as discussed in this, the twenty-first edition of the report prepared jointly by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), equal access to the labour market by men and women does not necessarily mean equal rates of participation; rather, if rates of female labour participation are lower, it means ensuring that this is the result of genuine preferences and not of cultural conditions, expressions of unequal power among household members, market restrictions or other limiting factors.

Access to the paid labour market is related to women's autonomy in the broadest sense. Economic autonomy is a cornerstone of women's personal development and, by definition, requires women to receive enough income to overcome poverty and have enough free time for training, entry into the labour market, personal and professional development, active participation in society and caring for loved ones without it becoming a barrier to realizing their own aspirations. Consequently, increasing women's access to paid activities and reducing existing gaps in the labour market is crucial for boosting growth, achieving equality and reducing poverty in the region, and is therefore imperative for making progress towards attainment of other SDGs such as ending poverty (SDG 1), ending hunger (SDG 2), improving health and well-being (SDG 3), ensuring quality education (SDG 4), promoting decent work (SDG 8) and reducing inequalities (SDG 10).

As discussed in the second part of this report, one the most significant trends seen in the labour market in Latin America is the surge in women's participation in paid activities. Over the past 30 years, the average participation rate in Latin America for women aged 15 and over increased by 11 percentage points, a higher rate than in other regions of the world. However, there are still large differences among countries of the region, both in terms of the rate of growth and in the levels of female labour participation achieved, and the region still lags well behind the developed countries. Moreover, despite narrowing recently, the gap between women's and men's participation rates still averaged 25.9 percentage points in 2018.

In order to understand the evolution of the female labour participation rate in Latin America and analyse future expectations, the impact of several factors must be considered. The decision to participate in paid activities is influenced by a variety circumstances and, in turn, affects other decisions, mainly those related to investment in education and to the family. In this regard, the region

has made progress in fostering many of the factors that have a positive impact on the decision to participate in the labour market, such as equal access to education, declining fertility rates, higher average income levels, and access to technologies that reduce the time needed to carry out domestic chores and that improve reproductive health services. Progress has also been made in terms of political rights and social norms. However, the region still lags behind in some areas that could inhibit the growth of labour participation, including gender gaps in expected economic returns on education and cultural attitudes that promote women's reproductive and caring roles.

Meanwhile, the incorporation of new technologies could lead to an increase in the participation of women in paid activities. Digital labour platforms could be advantageous for those people seeking to reconcile work and family, or work and studies, by providing greater flexibility in the form, modality and place of work. However, greater participation does not necessarily mean better quality employment or a better quality of life. Policies must be adopted to avoid greater job insecurity and work overload, to ensure that existing gaps do not get wider. This will pose a significant challenge because it requires progress to be made in various areas, such as improving women's access to and use of new technologies; breaking down stereotypes in fields of study; designing regulations to ensure that greater flexibility does not mean lower job quality; and adapting social security systems to new forms of employment.

The first part of this report includes analysis of the performance of the labour market during the first half of 2019. The regional urban unemployment rate remained stable compared to the same period in 2018, averaging 10.1% for 15 Latin American countries, while the average weighted national unemployment rate increased slightly, up to 8.9%. The low economic growth of the first half of the year affected both job creation and working conditions. On the one hand, in this six-month period, own-account work (which tends to be lower quality employment) continued to grow more than wage-paying jobs. On the other hand, the consolidation of the service sector continued apace, while the job growth seen in the industrial sector since 2017 began to decelerate and decrease. Lastly, formal employment growth was also slower. In summary, the sectors and categories that tend to generate better quality employment have lost ground over the course of 2019, compared to sectors in which jobs with more informal working conditions are likely to be created.

At the same time, the average real wage of formal employment and the minimum real wages have increased over the first half of the year, albeit at a slower rate than in previous years.

Given the modest prospects for both global and regional economic growth in 2019, the year is expected to end with a slight increase in regional unemployment rates, to around 8.1% at the national level and 9.4% for the urban sector.

Alicia Bárcena
Executive Secretary
Economic Commission for Latin America
and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

Juan Hunt
Regional Director a.i.
Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean
of the International Labour Organization (ILO)

I. Employment situation in the first half of 2019

Introduction

During the first half of 2019, a time of economic slowdown, general conditions in the labour market suffered the impact of lower economic growth. Between the end of 2017 and the third quarter of 2018, Latin America's economic growth recovered, which offset the negative performance of the region's labour markets up until 2016. Since the second half of 2017, the regional employment rate has recovered sufficiently to offset the increase in the urban unemployment rate recorded in 2018. The first half of 2019 saw changes in that trend. In particular, there were moderate rises in the unemployment rate, the result of the economic deceleration seen in the region since the end of 2018. This report provides data on both urban unemployment and national unemployment. Those two variables differ: the former is generally higher, while the latter is lower since it includes rural unemployment, which runs at lower rates.

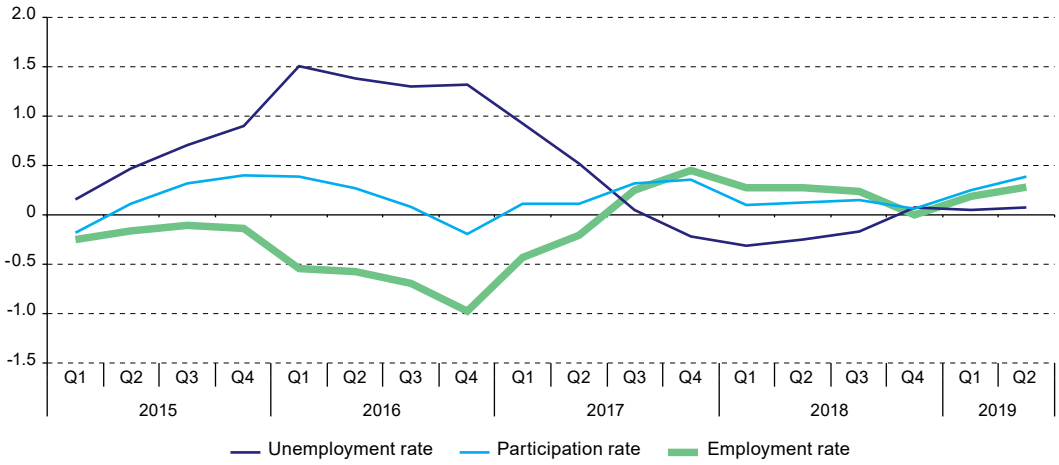
This section of the report analyses the evolution of the main labour market indicators for Latin America and the Caribbean during the first half of 2019. Although jobs are still being created in the region, own-account employment is still growing faster than wage work. Moreover, new jobs continue to be concentrated in the services sector, while the expansion in industrial jobs seen since 2017 is beginning to weaken and decelerate. Thus, the sectors and categories that tend to create better quality jobs are losing ground to those sectors where jobs with more informal working conditions predominate.

A. Regional unemployment rate trends are beginning to change as a result of more moderate economic performance[1]

The regional unemployment rate rose slightly in national terms during the first half of 2019. This change in labour-market performance reflects the deceleration in the region's economies, which is in turn related to an international economic climate marked by less dynamism and greater uncertainty (ECLAC, 2019). As figure I.1 shows, the regional unemployment rate began to fall in the fourth quarter of 2017, and this trend has continued for four consecutive quarters. This was positive in light of the constant decline in the demand for employment, the result of the region's economic deceleration, which was partly behind the increase in unemployment between the first quarter of 2015 and the third quarter of 2017. The improved performance of the labour market that began in late 2017 and continued into 2018 was characterized by a slight fall in unemployment and by greater growth in the employment rate than in the participation rate. The percentage change in the first variable over this period was U-shaped, indicating that the decrease began to revert and evolved into a slight increase as of the fourth quarter of 2018. That occurred alongside an increase in the participation rate that was higher than that of the employment rate. Therefore, based on the —still incomplete– data available at this time, there are indications that the downward trend in the unemployment rate seen since late 2017 is coming to its end.

[1] The data presented in this section cover a set of countries that generate and publish labour information quarterly. The rates of this group of countries differ from the annual figures published by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in other contexts as they include an additional group of countries.

Figure I.1
Latin America and the Caribbean (13 countries):[a] year-on-year change in employment, participation and unemployment rates, 2015–2019
(Percentage points)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of official figures.
[a] Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

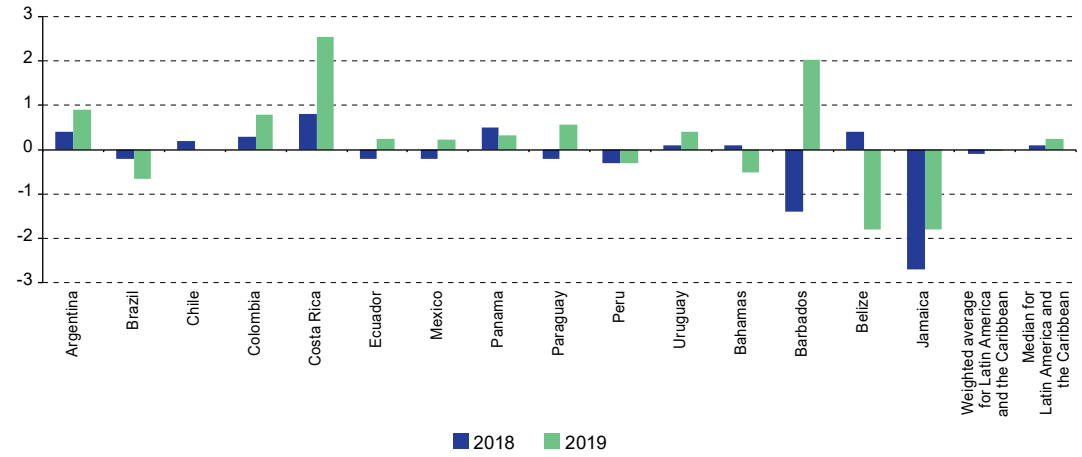
The regional participation rate, meanwhile, has increased since the second half of 2017, and it remained steady (with a variation of around 0.3 percentage points on average) in the first half of 2019. Thus, the region's labour supply has been growing for eight consecutive quarters. At the same time, the employment rate rose more than the participation rate between the fourth quarter of 2017 and the third quarter of 2018. Since then, while the employment rate has continued to rise, that growth has been lower than that of the participation rate.

The steadily increasing supply of labour and a still rising (albeit more slowly) employment rate meant that regional unemployment rates in Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of national figures, edged up from 8.8% to 8.9% between the first half of 2018 and the first half of 2019. The behaviour of the unemployment rate is slightly different, however, when the figures for urban unemployment are examined: thus, in those countries for which information is available, the urban unemployment indicator remained steady at 10.1% over the period in question.

As shown on figure I.2, the weighted average regional urban unemployment rate remains relatively stable, but in a context that is differentiated by the regional breakdown and by the number of countries in which the indicator is rising. Thus, while the urban unemployment rate fell in seven countries between the first half of 2017 and the first half of 2018, it fell in five between the first halves of 2018 and 2019. Similarly, whereas the indicator fell in Mexico, four South American countries and two Caribbean States over the 2017–2018 period, reductions were reported in two South American countries and four Caribbean States in the first half of 2018, in the first half of 2019 this occurred only

in two South American and three Caribbean countries. In particular, Brazil's performance during the first half of 2019 was especially notable and, given that country's weight in the regional average and the size of the drop in its unemployment rate (0.7 percentage points), it offset the general —and, in many cases, growing— increase seen in the unemployment rates of nine of the region's countries. In contrast, an analysis of the median urban unemployment rate points to a more general upward trend in the indicator.

Figure I.2
Latin America and the Caribbean (15 countries): year-on-year change in regional and national urban unemployment rates, 2018 and 2019[a]
(Percentage points)

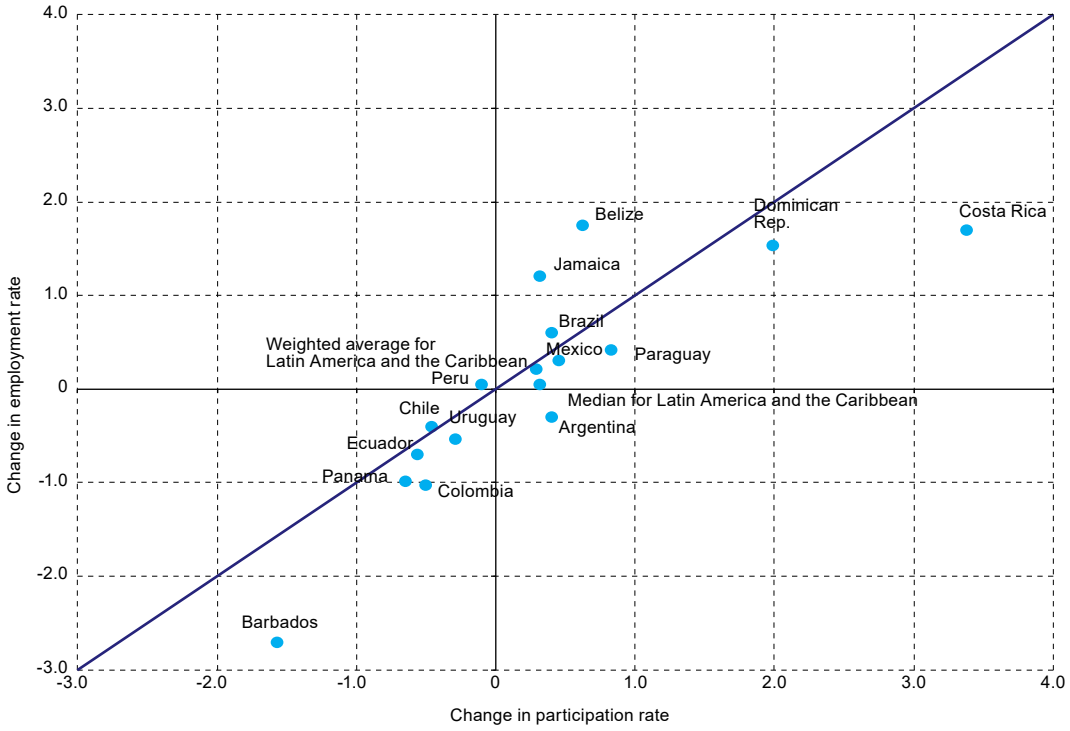


Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of official figures.
[a] Refers to the change between the first haif of 2018 and the first half of 2019.

Although certain patterns can be seen in the variations in the unemployment rates, those changes are due to different labour supply and demand contexts in each country. As shown by figure I.3, seven of the region's countries reported increases in their employment and participation rates between the first half of 2018 and the first half of 2019, whereas six countries saw a drop in that indicator. In Argentina, meanwhile, the employment rate fell while the participation rate increased, whereas in Peru the opposite occurred. There were also differences in the intensity of these behaviours. Given that the 45-degree line indicates that the change in the participation and employment rate is equal, in the ten countries located beneath that line the participation rate performed better than the employment rate: in other words, participation increased more than employment or, when the participation rate fell, it did so less sharply than the employment rate. The opposite occurred in the five countries located above the line: either the employment rate rose more than the participation rate, or its decrease was less pronounced.

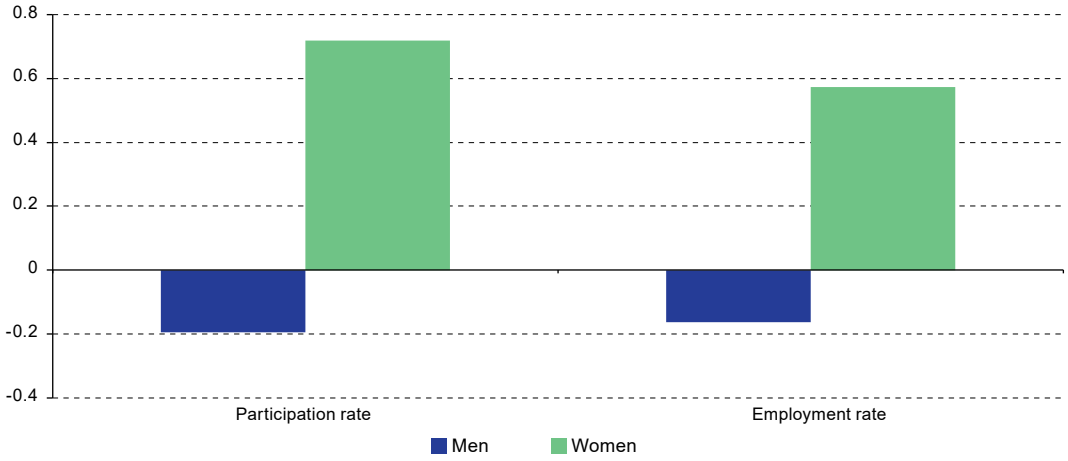
The general trends in the main labour market variables differ between the sexes. Figure I.4 shows year-on-year changes in participation and employment rates for men and women. In line with the long-term trend, in the 15 countries for which information is available, participation fell among men and rose among women. At the same time, the employment rate also increased robustly among women but decreased among men. The result, therefore, is that male participation and employment indicators are experiencing moderate declines, while the figures for women are reporting growth and greater dynamism.

Figure I.3
Latin America and the Caribbean (15 countries): year-on-year change in regional and national participation and employment rates, 2018–2019[a]
(Percentage points)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of official figures.
[a] Refers to the change between the first haif of 2018 and the first half of 2019.

Figure I.4
Latin America and the Caribbean (15 countries):[a] weighted average of year-on-year change in the participation and employment rates of men and women, 2018–2019[b]
(Percentage points)

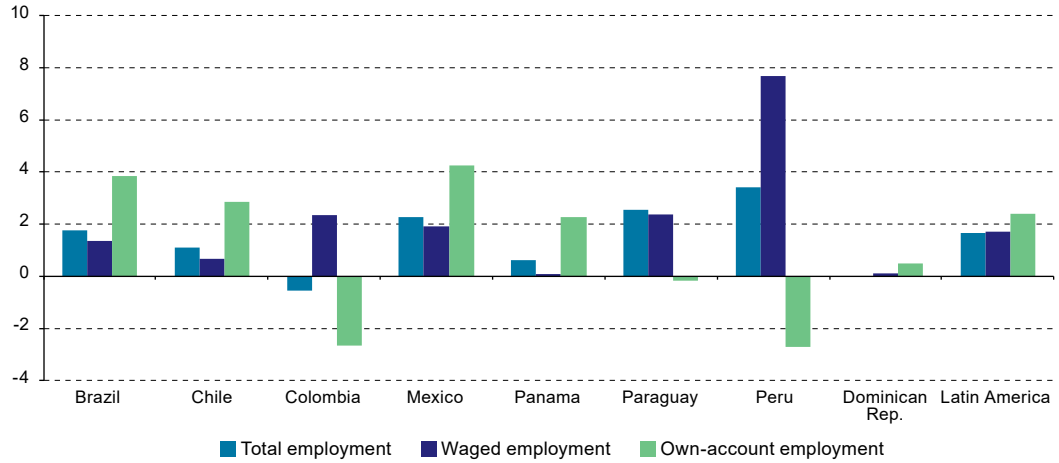


Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of official figures.
[a] Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.
[b] Refers to the change between the first haif of 2018 and the first half of 2019.

B. Waged jobs are still being created, although own-account work is growing more rapidly

Despite the reduced dynamism of the regional economy, jobs are still being created in Latin America. Figure I.5 shows that in the eight countries for which up-to-date information is available, total employment rose by an average of 1.7% in the first half of 2019 compared to the same period in 2018. Although this was generalized behaviour, the increase in employment in Peru (3.4%) was particularly notable; in contrast, employment reported no change in the Dominican Republic and it fell by 0.6% in Colombia. In turn, waged employment grew at a similar rate as total employment during the period under review (1.7% on average). All the countries reported increases in waged work, albeit with differences of degree: there was a significant rise in Peru (7.7%), a very modest one in Panama and the Dominican Republic (0.1%), and results closer to the regional average in the remaining countries.

Figure I.5
Latin America and the Caribbean (8 countries): year-on-year change in total, waged and own-account employment 2018–2019[a]
(Percentages)



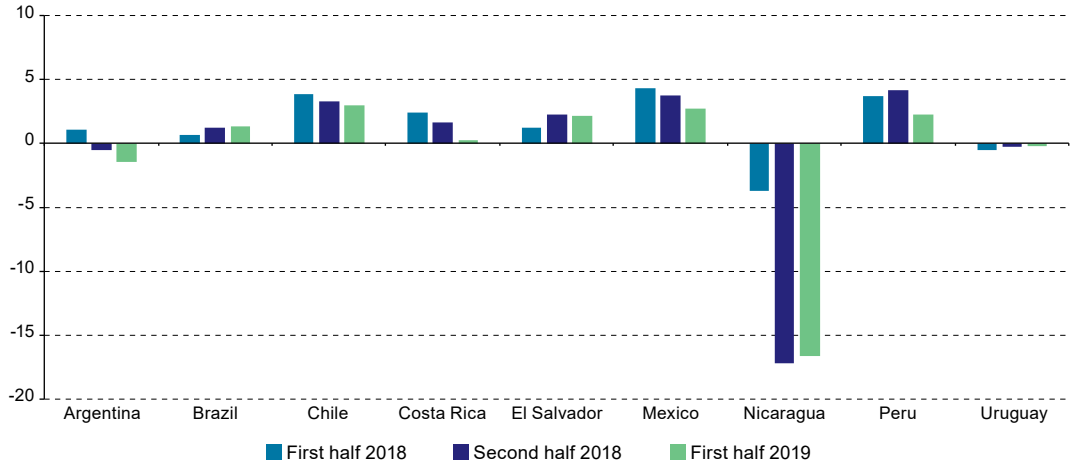
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of official figures.
[a] Refers to the change between the first haif of 2018 and the first half of 2019.

Although the expansion of own-account work in the region as a whole (2.4%) was greater than that of waged employment, at the country level own-account work reported widely varying rates of change. In particular, there was a major increase in own-account work in Mexico (4.2%) and Brazil (3.8%), in contrast to reductions in Colombia and Peru (2.7% in each). In spite of the more rapid growth in own-account work, increases in waged employment remained positive in the first half of 2019.

At the same time, the regional labour market is also experiencing changes in the dynamics of registered employment. Although registered employment —its creation or destruction, as well as its composition— is related to the evolution of general employment, it also responds to the dynamics whereby informal employment is formalized or formal employment is deformalized in each country. Registered employment is therefore a good indicator of shifts in the composition and quality of labour demand.

As can be seen on figure I.6, in the first half of 2019 registered employment continued to behave in the heterogeneous manner observed since 2018. At the subregional level, registered jobs are still being created in Mexico and in several countries of South America (Chile, Peru and Brazil) and Central America (Costa Rica and El Salvador). Nevertheless, in five of these countries, the expansion of registered employment slowed down in the first half of 2019. A significant contraction of registered employment continued in Nicaragua, with rates that, since the second half of 2018, have fallen to levels close to 17%. Contractions, albeit more moderate, were also reported in Argentina and Uruguay.

Figure I.6
Latin America and the Caribbean (9 countries): year-on-year rates of change in registered waged employment, 2018 and 2019
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of official figures.

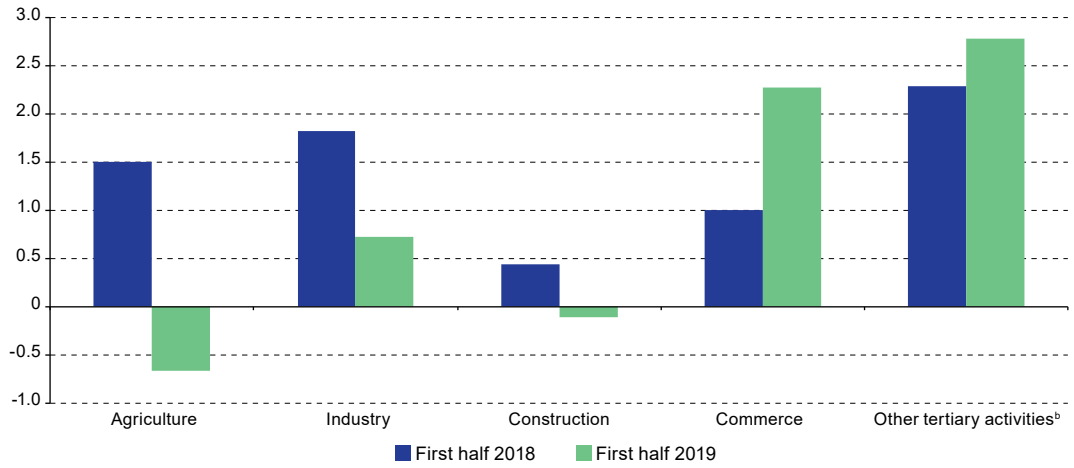
C. Job creation in the region has mainly been in the tertiary sector

An analysis of the changes in the composition of employment by type of activity in the 11 countries for which information is available (see figure I.7) reveals that, during the first half of 2019, employment in the tertiary sector (commerce and other service sectors) continued to expand. Twenty per cent of total employment was in commerce, and the average variation in this sector was 2.3% between the first half of 2018 and the first half of 2019 —more than the year-earlier variation (1.0%). In particular, employment in this sector grew robustly in the Dominican Republic, Paraguay and Mexico. The average year-on-year variation in the other tertiary branches of activity combined (transport, financial services and community, social and personal services) was 2.8%. These service branches account for almost half of total employment and are characterized by high levels of informal work and female workers. Employment in these sectors grew strongly in Costa Rica, Paraguay and Panama.

Although employment in manufacturing industry also increased during the period under review (by 0.7%), there was a deceleration compared to first half of 2018 (1.8%) and, in general, compared to the robust job creation dynamic that the sector had been reporting since 2017. The year-on-year change in industrial employment in the first half of 2019 was driven by the increases seen in the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica and Mexico, despite the falling employment in the sector reported by Ecuador, Uruguay and Paraguay. Particularly noteworthy is the contraction in the agricultural sector: the average variation in that sector's employment in the first half of 2019 compared to the same period in 2018 was -0.7%, which indicates a major adjustment in the sector following a rise

of 1.5% over the same period the previous year. Particularly noteworthy were the reductions in agricultural employment in Panama, Paraguay and Colombia. Employment in the construction sector also contracted (by 0.1%), although this was not a uniform result across all the countries: it fell in seven countries, including Ecuador and Paraguay, while it rose in four, led by Colombia.

Figure I.7
Latin America and the Caribbean (11 countries):[a] simple average of year-on-year change in employment, by sectors, 2018 and 2019
(Percentages)



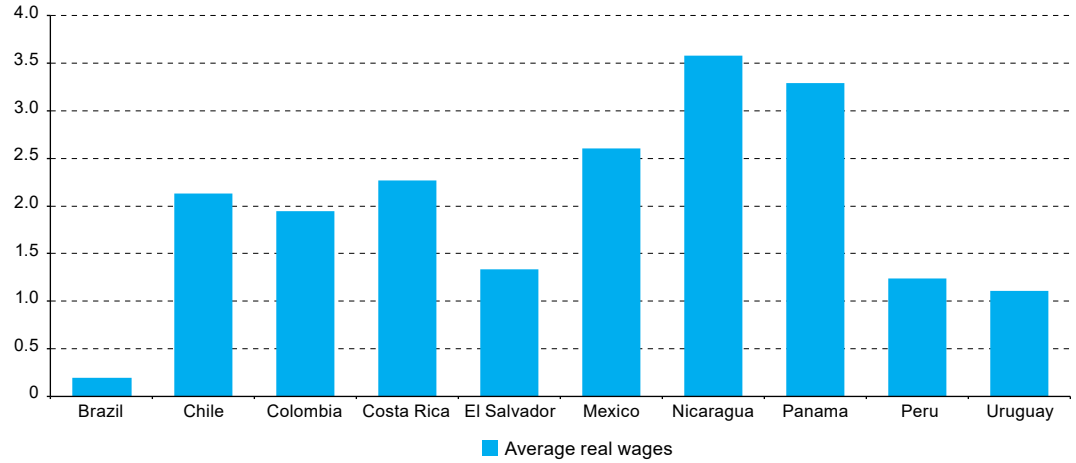
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of official figures.
[a] Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.
[b] Transport, finance, and community, social and personal services.

D. Real wages have risen moderately in most of the countries

Between the first half of 2018 and the first half of 2019, real wages in the formal sector rose in the ten countries for which information is available (see figure I.8). The largest wage rises were in Nicaragua (3.6%), Panama (3.3%) and Mexico (2.6%), in contrast to a more moderate increase in Brazil (0.2%).

The simple average change in those ten countries for which information is available was a 2.0% increase between the first halves of 2018 and 2019, which is notable against the backdrop of decelerating economic growth (ECLAC, 2019). It should be noted, however, that those data only record wage variations in the economy's formal businesses and that as already noted, the largest increases in employment were in the form of own-account work, where earnings could have evolved differently.

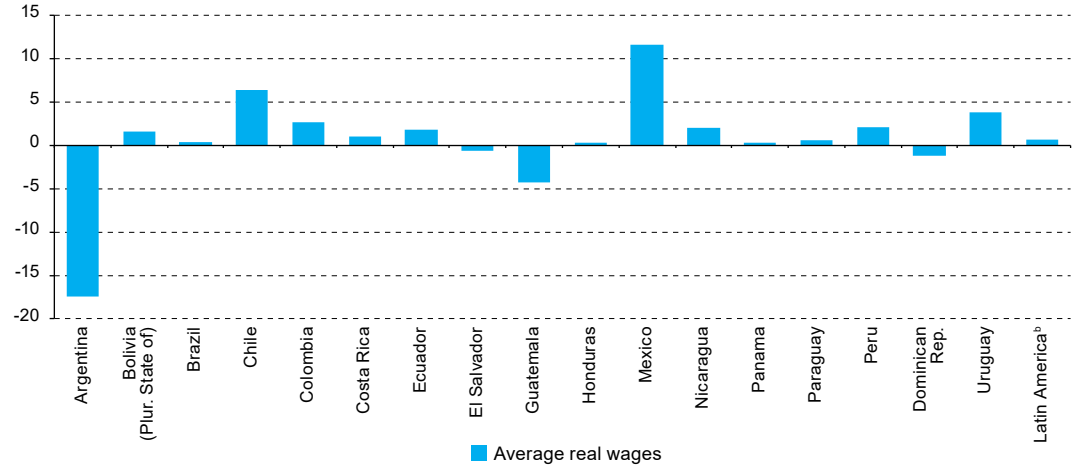
Figure I.8
Latin America and the Caribbean (10 countries): year-on-year rates of change in average real wages of registered employment, 2018–2019[a]
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of official figures.
[a] Refers to the change between the first haif of 2018 and the first half of 2019.

The region's real minimum wages performed less uniformly. As shown by figure I.9, real minimum wages fell in four countries; the case of Argentina is especially notable, where inflation caused a drop of 17.4%. In addition, there was a slight positive adjustment in another four countries, a moderate positive increase in six, and robust growth in excess of 4% in three, with Mexico posting the best result (11.6%). Overall, the region's simple average minimum real wage rose by 0.7%, which indicates a more subdued dynamic than that observed in previous years.

Figure I.9
Latin America and the Caribbean (17 countries): year-on-year change in real minimum wages, 2018–2019[a]
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of official figures.
[a] Refers to the change between the first haif of 2018 and the first half of 2019.
[b] Simple average.

E. Outlook

According to the behaviour patterns observed during the first half of 2019, the economic deceleration will most probably cause a rise in the unemployment rate. The regional trend is largely defined by the evolution of the Brazilian labour market, an economy where slight growth is predicted (0.8%). That figure is only slightly higher than the 0.5% forecast for Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole (ECLAC, 2019), eight tenths of a percentage point lower than the forecast given in the May 2019 joint report by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the International Labour Organization (ECLAC/ILO, 2019). The ongoing economic deceleration will have an impact on job creation, albeit not immediately.

Although the job creation indicators provide some good news, it is likely that the demand for labour will begin to feel the effects of the deceleration phase in the economic cycle. This will be seen in a change in the employment rate trend observed during the year to date. Neither are the main trends in employment composition expected to change. In particular, the bulk of new jobs created in the region will continue to be in own-account work. The labour force participation rate is also expected to carry on rising moderately, since this indicator is associated with the persistence of the contractionary phase in the business cycle and the upward trend in female labour force participation. Calculations indicate that the open urban unemployment rate for 2019 as a whole will rise by around 0.1 percentage point over the 2018 result, to reach 9.4%, and that national unemployment rates will increase by the same amount.

Bibliography

ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) (2019), *Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2019* (LC/PUB.2019/12-P), Santiago.

ECLAC/ILO (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean/International Labour Organization) (2019), "The future of work in Latin America and the Caribbean: old and new forms of employment and challenges for labour regulation", *Employment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean*, No. 20 (LC/TS.2019/31), Santiago, May.

II. Developments and outlook for women's labour market participation in Latin America

Introduction

One of the first gaps between men and women in the labour market is in the decision whether and when to take part in it or (for the most part) to work in the household. That decision is influenced by other factors, especially those related to the decision about having a family and the decision about investing in education. Matters to do with the economic, social, institutional and technological context, as well as personal and social preferences and values, also impact those decisions. The interaction of all these factors will shape the paths that women's lives follow, their integration into the labour market and, hence, the society in which they live. It is important to quantify the impact of these factors in order to evaluate public policy options that might narrow the labour market participation gaps between men and women that have significant repercussions in other areas. Thus, the quest for greater participation by women in the labour market not only pursues gender equity goals, by promoting their economic autonomy; but is also driven by a broader social and economic rationale.

As Sustainable Development Goal 5 establishes, gender equality is not only a fundamental human right. It is also a prerequisite for achieving a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Equal access to the labour market does not necessarily imply equal participation rates. It means ensuring that the low labour market participation rates of women are the result of genuine preferences and do not reflect cultural conditioning, different levels of empowerment within households, market constraints or other limiting factors (Marchioni, Gasparini and Edo, 2018).

As regards social aspects, women's engagement in paid activities has a substantial impact on family dynamics and significantly alters the communities concerned. Accessing the labour market means that less time is available for taking part in other community activities, such as volunteer work, participation in neighbourhood activities, and so on. It also entails gaining access to financial resources, which advances women's empowerment and autonomy and often enables them to decide on other matters, such as how many children to have and how to bring them up (parenting) and may lower their exposure to risk factors, such as violence and dependency in old age. Broader participation by women in the labour market produces, —and, in turn, necessitates— major changes in society. For instance, it requires altering the currently prevalent distribution of unpaid activities within the household; otherwise, greater participation in the labour market can double women's actual workload.

Economically, women's greater participation in the labour market is associated with more growth, lower income inequality, and more robust economic resilience. Assessing the macroeconomic impact of the increase in women's labour market participation rate is complicated by the difficulty of establishing causal links. Some global estimates of a "full-potential" scenario, in which women's participation in the economy is identical to that of men, find that it would add up to US$ 28 trillion, or 26% of annual global GDP by 2025, compared to a business-as-usual scenario (McKinsey, 2015). A recent study by Novta and Cheng Wong (2017) estimated that, on average, Latin American countries could achieve a 4% to 14% increase in their GDP if they managed to attain the rate of women's participation in the labour market found in Nordic countries or gender parity (women and men participating equally in the labour market). Demographic reasons have also been cited: due to the decline in the rate of population growth and increased life expectancy, societies need to increase the workforce in order

to maintain the living standards of older persons. This is an especially critical issue in developed countries (Grigoli, Koczan and Topalaova, 2018; Fernández and Martínez, 2018) and could begin to be important for the region (Balgrave and Santoro, 2017), above all owing to the reduction of the demographic dividend (Martínez, Miller and Saad, 2013).

This section highlights the principal trends in the rate of women's integration in the labour market in the past few decades in Latin America. It then proposes an approach for analysing the determinants of that indicator and examines pertinent evidence gathered in the region. Finally, reflections are offered on the potential impact that digitization, especially in platform work, could have on women's integration in the labour market in the region.

A. Trends in the rate of women's integration in the labour market in the past few decades in Latin America

1. In recent years women's integration in the labour market has expanded significantly

Since the early 1990s, in most Latin American countries, the number of women in the labour market has increased significantly. In fact, the share of women aged 15 years or more, in 18 countries in the region, has increased on average by 11 percentage points, from 41% at the beginning of the 1990s to nearly 52% in 2018 (see figure II.1).[1] That compares with a 5 percentage point increase in the average participation rate for women in the same age group and period for 28 developed countries (albeit from much higher initial levels).[2] In Latin America, that increase even outpaced the growth rate of prior years.[3]

That increase in labour market participation rate among women, together with the slight decline in that indicator for men, above all since the early 2000s, led to a narrowing of the gap between men's and women's participation in the labour market. Indeed, the gap went from almost 40 percentage points at the beginning of the 1990s to a 26 percentage-point gap at the end of the 2010s: a major improvement in women's access to paid activities. That shift has had a crucial impact on countries in the region, altering the dynamics of labour markets and influencing a number of well-being indicators. Extensive incorporation of women in the labour force has huge social and cultural consequences by transforming families' day-to-day lives, the models and aspirations of new generations, and the way men and women interact. The changes induced by this trend run so deep that they have even been dubbed a "quiet revolution" (Goldin, 2006).[4]

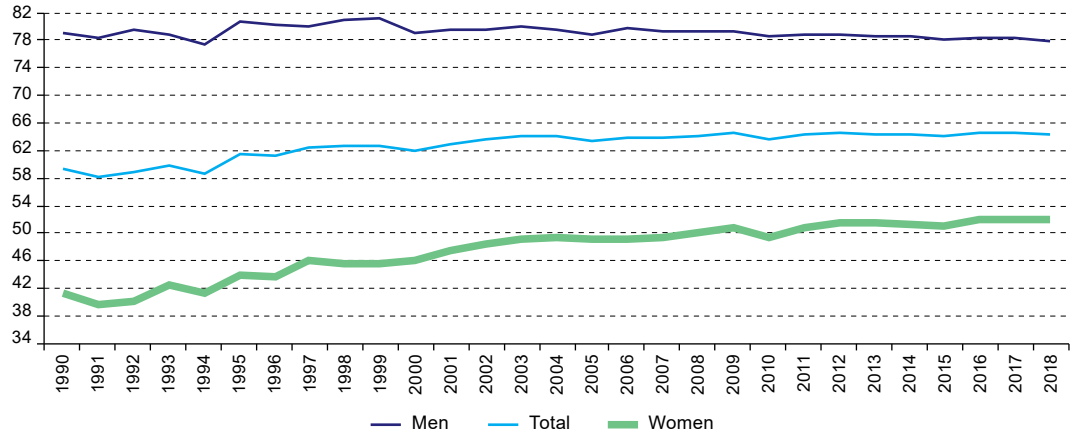
1 The data used are those gathered by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the "labour force participation rate" is defined as the sum of employed and unemployed persons of 15 or more years of age as a percentage of the total number of persons in that group. Caution is called for in analysing this indicator over time for both operational reasons (coverage) and conceptual reasons (there may have been differences in the way labour force participation was measured).

2 See also ILO (2019b). The 28 countries considered are the 23 developed and 5 Nordic countries covered in figure II.7.

3 Statistics available for the region support analysis of labour market participation trends since the early 1990s. For reference only, the study by Psacharapoulos and Taznnatos (1992) (cited in Duryea and others, 2001), which was one of the first to gather information on labour market participation by sex in the region, analyses data for 15 countries and finds an increase in women's integration in the labour market from 24%, on average, in the 1950s to about 33% in the 1980s.

4 The Goldin study (2006) analyses the trend in women's labour market participation rate in the United States in the twentieth century and changes in other indicators of women's economic autonomy and empowerment.

Figure II.1
Latin America (18 countries): labour market participation rate of the population aged 15 or over by sex, 1990–2018[a]
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of ILOSTAT Database [online] https://ilostat.ilo.org/.

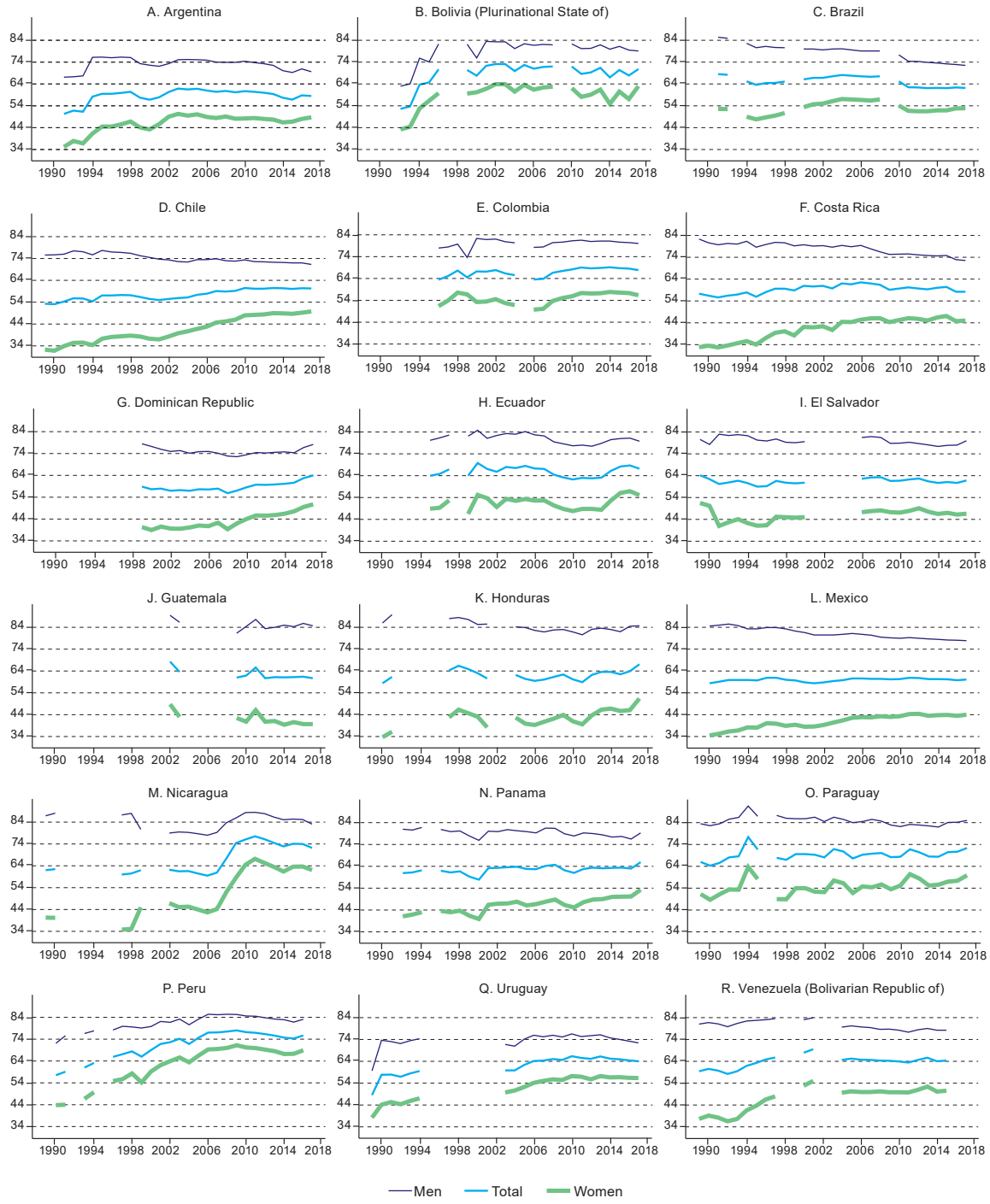
[a] Simple average for the 18 countries: Argentina, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay. Data for Peru are included up to 2017 and for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela up to 2016.

This increase in women's labour market participation rate reflects a larger hike in the female labour supply in all countries in the region (see figure II.2). The Plurinational State of Bolivia, Nicaragua and Peru are the countries with the steepest increases (of more than 20 percentage points). In Argentina, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Panama and Uruguay the female labour supply increased by more than 10 percentage points. The only countries with more modest increases in women's participation rates were Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico and Paraguay. While a number of countries have seen women's participation rates grow steadily over the years, in some that pace of growth in the female labour supply has been especially marked (more than 11 percentage points in Chile, Costa Rica, and Peru).

It is important to bear in mind that the data shown are national average for each country and that, in the region, urban averages are always higher than those for rural areas, mainly owing to the invisibility in the official statistics of the work women perform in those areas.[5] This is because surveys do not enquire into the work women do on family farms as unpaid workers or as own-consumption producers owing to the difficulty of gauging that economic activity and distinguishing it from household chores. Nevertheless, there is also evidence of an increase in rural women's paid activities between 2005 and 2014 by 2 percentage points on average for the 16 countries for which information is available. The countries in which the rate of women's participation in the labour market increased most in rural areas were Nicaragua (13.4 percentage points), El Salvador (10 percentage points), Honduras (5.6 percentage points), the Dominican Republic (4.9 percentage points); meanwhile the rate decreased in Brazil (-7.8 percentage points), Ecuador, Paraguay, Guatemala and Peru (ECLAC/ILO, 2016: table II.2).

[5] In the case of Argentina only, the figures correspond to urban data.

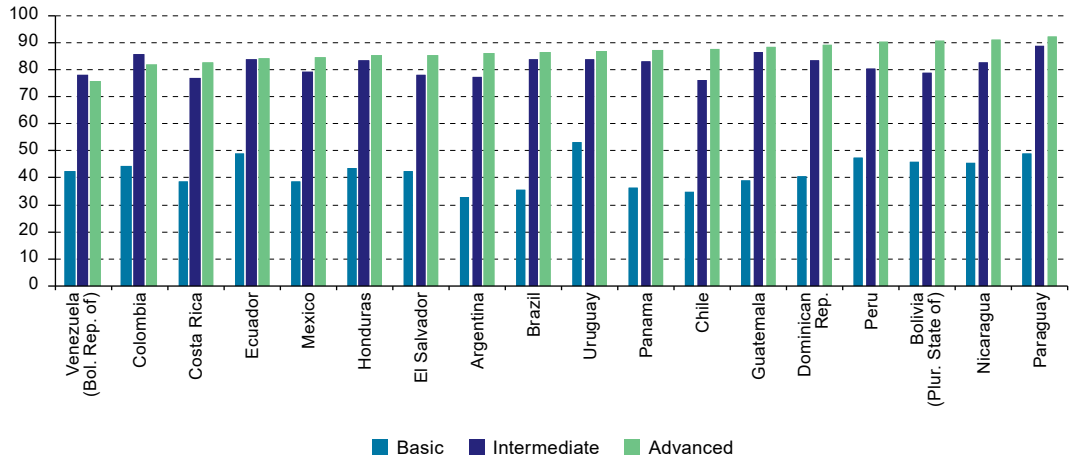
Figure II.2
Latin America (18 countries): changes in the labour market participation rate of the population aged 15 or over, by sex and by country, 1990–2018
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of ILOSTAT Database [online] https://ilostat.ilo.org/.

A higher level of education was one of the main factors underpinning women's greater participation in the labour market, as indicated by the positive correlation between that rate and years of schooling completed (Gasparini and others, 2015). In all the countries (with the exception of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), the labour market participation rate of women with an advanced level of education surpassed 80%, and even 90% in Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Nicaragua and Paraguay (see figure II.3). However, the gap vis-à-vis the participation rate of women with low levels of education is stark: more than 50 percentage points in Argentina, Brazil, Panama and Chile. In most of the countries, the participation rate of women in the latter group is less than 45%.

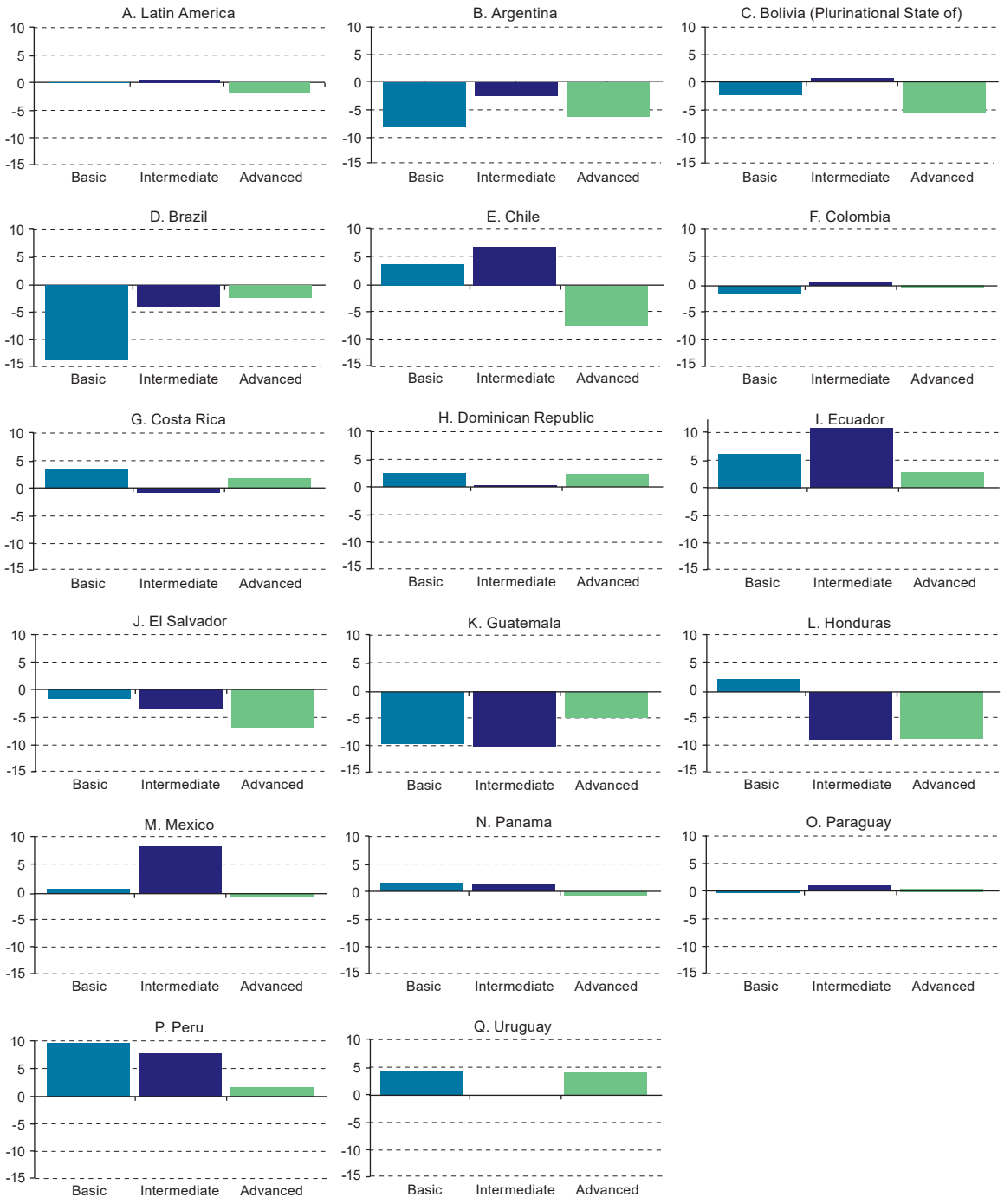
Figure II.3
Latin America (18 countries): labour market participation rate of women aged 15 or over, by educational level, 2017
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of ILOSTAT Database [online] https://ilostat.ilo.org/.
Note: Basic education means completed primary and incomplete secondary education; intermediate education means completed secondary education and incomplete tertiary education; higher education refers to completed tertiary education.

Owing to limitations in the data, it is only possible to analyse the trends in the labour participation rate by educational level from the early 2000s to the present. For the region as a whole, the only increase is in the participation rate for women with an intermediate level of education. That is the case in Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and the Plurinational State of Bolivia (see figure II.4). On the other hand, the participation rate for women with advanced education declines slightly in that period, based on observations in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama and the Plurinational State of Bolivia. While the regional average participation rate for women with a low level of education remained fairly stable, it declined sharply in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala and Paraguay and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and increased in Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Peru and Uruguay.

Figure II.4
Latin America (16 countries): changes in the labour market participation rate of women aged 15 or over, by educational level, 2000–2017
(Percentage points)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of ILOSTAT Database [online] https://ilostat.ilo.org/.
Note: Basic education means completed primary and incomplete secondary education; intermediate education means completed secondary education and incomplete tertiary education; higher education refers to completed tertiary education.

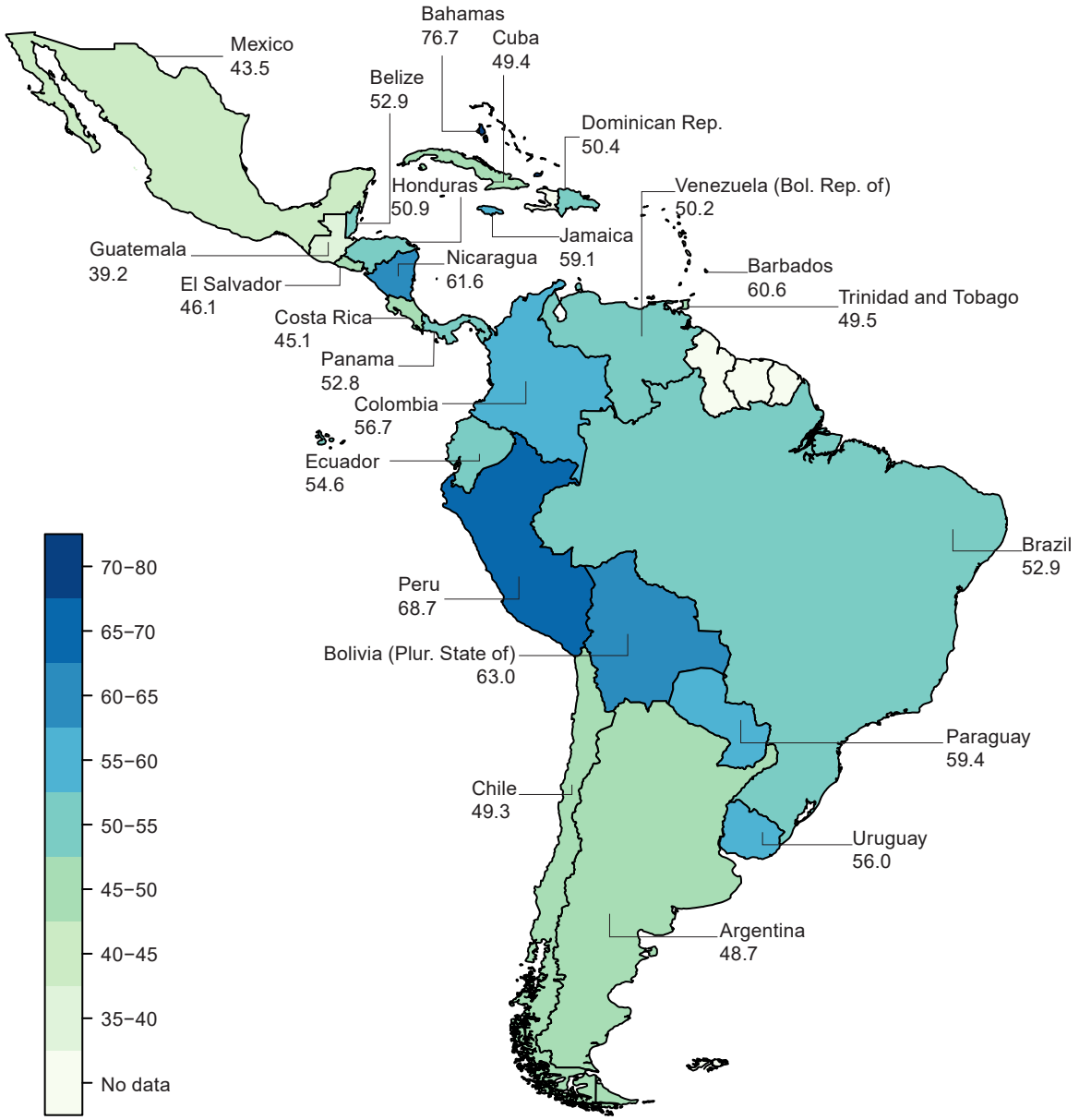
The decline in the labour market participation rate of women with a low level of education in some countries could be related to monetary poverty and lack of time, which, in some low-income households, form a vicious circle that is very difficult to break. Households in the lower (income distribution) deciles are, generally speaking, those with a larger number of dependants (children, and persons with disabilities or chronic illnesses). The women in such families tend to have to devote more time to domestic chores and caregiving, which limits their ability to look for a job; restricts their chances of integration in, and of staying in, the labour market; or else leads them to accept poor quality jobs because they are close to home or allow for more flexible working hours. Ultimately, the unpaid work load hampers access to the labour market precisely in the poverty-stricken families that most need to increase their income (ECLAC, 2016b). Moreover, the women in those households may be more exposed to other risk factors, such as situations of violence or a more traditional division of labour in the family.

2. There are still big differences between countries in terms of the percentage of women in the labour market

In 2018, the average rate of participation rate in the labour market by women aged 15 or over, in 18 Latin American countries, was 52.7%. Despite the significant increase in that indicator in recent decades in all countries in the region, major gaps between them persist (see map II.1). The countries with the highest labour market participation rate for women aged 15 or over are Peru (68.7 %), the Plurinational State of Bolivia (63%), Nicaragua (61.4%) are Paraguay (59.4%); those with the lowest rate are Guatemala (39.2%), Mexico (43.5%) and Costa Rica (45.1%).

One explanation of this difference in women's labour market participation rates has to do with the countries' different levels of economic development. Some studies found an "inverted U" relationship between the participation rate and countries' income level (Klasen and others, 2019; Goldin, 1994), associated with three stages of development. In the first stage, when agriculture is a prominent part of the economy, women tend to combine unpaid domestic work with work outside the home. In countries with low levels of development, women's income constitutes a major part of household expenditure, so that they tend to play an active part in paid work. In the second stage, as urbanization expands and the role of small farmers in the economy declines, women's integration in the labour market also declines because men's income grows and because of women's lower level of education and social barriers restricting their chances of being integrated in the labour market. While women's potential income remains low, so, too, does their participation in the labour market. In the third stage, a positive relationship resumes between development and women's labour market participation, to the extent that countries reach higher income levels, women's educational levels are higher, work is generated in sectors fostering the employment of women, and opportunities for working in care services open up (Marchioni, Gasparini and Edo, 2018; Novta and Chen Wong, 2017). However, the data do not conclusively demonstrate the behaviour depicted in the explanation and, in some cases, only a very weak connection is found between women's labour market participation rate and per capita GDP, which suggests the importance of idiosyncratic, rather than economic, factors (Klasen and others, 2019).

Map II.1
Latin America (18 countries): labour market participation rate of women aged 15 or over, by country, around 2018
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of ILOSTAT Database [online] https://ilostat.ilo.org/.
Note: The data for Peru correspond to 2017; those for Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela (Bol. Rep. of) are for 2016. The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Women's labour market participation rates do not appear to correlate very significantly with per capita GDP in Latin America (Marchioni, Gasparini and Edo, 2018).[6] Indeed, there are countries with relatively high income that have very different women's labour market participation rates, such as Chile and Uruguay, where the rates for women aged 25–54 are 67% and 80.5%, respectively: a difference of 13 percentage points. Likewise, countries with similar, but lower, per capita income also show very different women's labour market participation rates. That is the case of the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Guatemala, where the rate for women aged 15–54 is 68% and 50%, respectively: an 18-percentage-point difference.

The large disparities between countries in terms of women's labour market participation were recently analysed in Marchionni and others (2019). They analyse the case of Peru and Mexico as countries that are similar in several respects (percentage of rural population, size of households, adult women's years of schooling, poverty level and income inequality) but whose labour market participation rates for women aged 25–54 are very different: 58.5% in Mexico and 79.6% in Peru, in 2014. The findings show that the biggest differences between the two countries are associated with the labour market participation patterns of women with a low level of education, who are married and have young children and spouses with low income levels. The authors attribute part of the gap to differences between the two countries with respect to educational, productive and employment structures. After testing simultaneously for a range of variables (education, age, ethnicity, marital status, children, labour and non-labour household income and access to technology), they find that the difference in the two countries' participation rates is essentially because of differences (non-observable factors) in women's behaviour, not because their characteristics differ. This is above all the case in rural areas: only 11% of the urban differential and less than 3% of the rural differential in participation rates can be attributed to the women in the two countries possessing different characteristics. The authors also analyse the impact of other household income and find a possible disincentive to enter the labour market among women in rural Mexican households, because of men's higher wage earnings and the larger volume of cash transfers under social programmes and from remittances from abroad.

In short, the evidence shows that level of development (measured in terms of GDP) does not in itself suffice to explain the large differences between the two countries with respect to women's participation in the labour market.

3. The average pace of growth of women's participation in the labour market is slowing

While the size of the female labour force is still growing in the region, the pace of that growth appears to be slowing. On average, the participation rate rose by 3.6 percentage points between 1990 and 2000, by 3.2 percentage points in the 10 years thereafter, and by 2.5 percentage points between 2010 and 2018 (see table II.1). While this slowdown has occurred in a majority of the countries, in some —the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama and Paraguay— this indicator has continued to grow fairly briskly in the past 10 years.

[6] Novta and Chen Wong (2017) examine this link in countries all over the world in recent decades and find that the increase in women's labour market participation rate is higher in Latin American countries than in most countries in other regions with similar GDP.

Table 1.1
Latin America (17 countries): growth of the labour market participation rate, by country, 1999–2018
(Percentage points)

	1990–2000	2000–2010	2010–2018
Argentina	8.9	4.0	0.6
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	16.4	3.2	0.2
Brazil	0.8	3.5	-1.2
Chile	4.4	7.7	3.8
Colombia	0.7	-1.7	1.3
Costa Rica	4.6	6.1	0.7
Dominican Republic		1.7	8.7
Ecuador	-2.4	2.3	6.3
El Salvador	2.1	2.5	-1.1
Honduras	9.5	-0.8	7.5
Mexico	3.1	3.6	1.0
Nicaragua	10.8	13.6	3.6
Panama	0.3	4.9	7.0
Paraguay	0.6	-0.5	6.4
Peru	12.5	7.9	-2.3
Uruguay	5.3	5.8	0.9
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	16.3	-3.0	0.7
Latin America (women)	3.6	3.2	2.5
Latin America (men)	0.2	-0.4	-0.8

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of ILOSTAT Database [online] https://ilostat.ilo.org/.

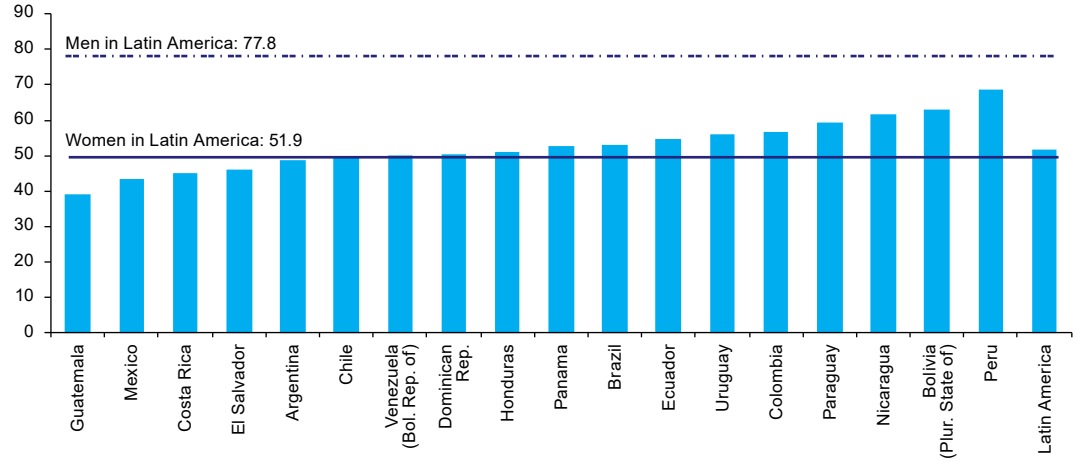
One possible explanation for the overall trend is that women's labour market participation rate in the region has reached a ceiling, and that, from now on, the pace of women's integration into the labour market will be more moderate, barring any major cultural shifts or robust policies to encourage it (Gasparini and Gluzmann, 2015). Men's participation rate increased slightly in the 1990s and declined in subsequent decades, possibly indicating that, for that indicator, too, a ceiling may have been reached (see table II.1).

4. The gap is large with respect to both men's participation in the labour market in the region and women's participation in developed countries

Despite the significant increase in women's participation in the labour market in the region, the gap vis-à-vis men's participation is still considerable. In 2018, while the participation rate of women aged 15 or over averaged 51.9%, the rate for men was 77.8%: a 25.9-percentage-point difference (see figure II.5). The gap in the participation rate is much large than the aforementioned average in Guatemala (where it is 45 percentage points), Mexico (34 percentage points), Honduras (33.3 percentage points) and El Salvador (33 percentage points), as well as in Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (approximately 27percentage points) (see figure II.7).

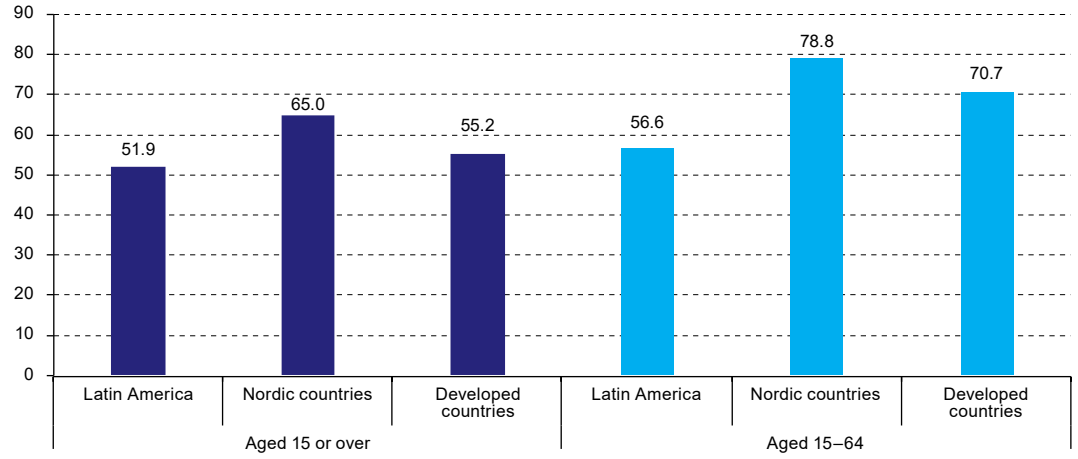
The labour market participation rate for women in developed countries is, likewise, higher than the rates found in the region. In 2018, the difference between the average participation rate in Latin America and that for 23 developed countries was 3.4 percentage points in the case of women aged 15 or over and 14.1 percentage points in the case of those aged 15 to 64 (see figure II.6). When compared with Nordic countries, the differences are even greater, reaching 13.1 percentage points for women aged 15 or over and 22.3 percentage points for those aged 15 to 64.

Figure II.5
Latin America (18 countries): labour market participation rate of women aged 15 or over, 2018
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of ILOSTAT Database [online] https://ilostat.ilo.org/.

Figure II.6
Latin America, Nordic countries and 23 developed countries:[a] labour market participation rate of women aged 15 or over and 15–64, 2018
(Percentages)

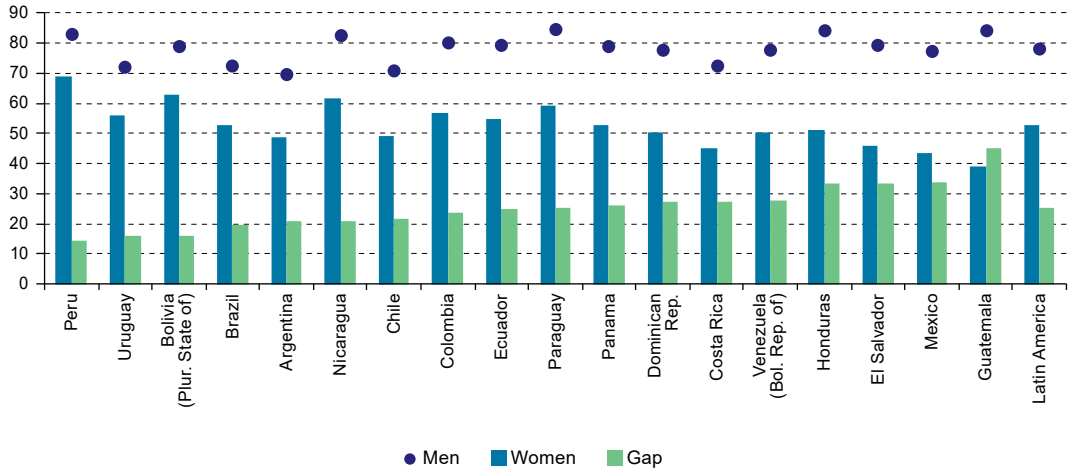


Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of ILOSTAT Database [online] https://ilostat.ilo.org/.

[a] The Nordic countries are: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The 23 developed countries are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czechia, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

In some countries with a very high participation gap, a very low rate of women's participation in the labour market is combined with a relatively high rate of men's participation. That is the case in Guatemala and Honduras, where the latter rate was 84.2% (see figure II.7).

Figure II.7
Latin America (18 countries): labour market participation rate of women and men aged 15 or over, and the gap between them, by country, around 2018
(Percentages)

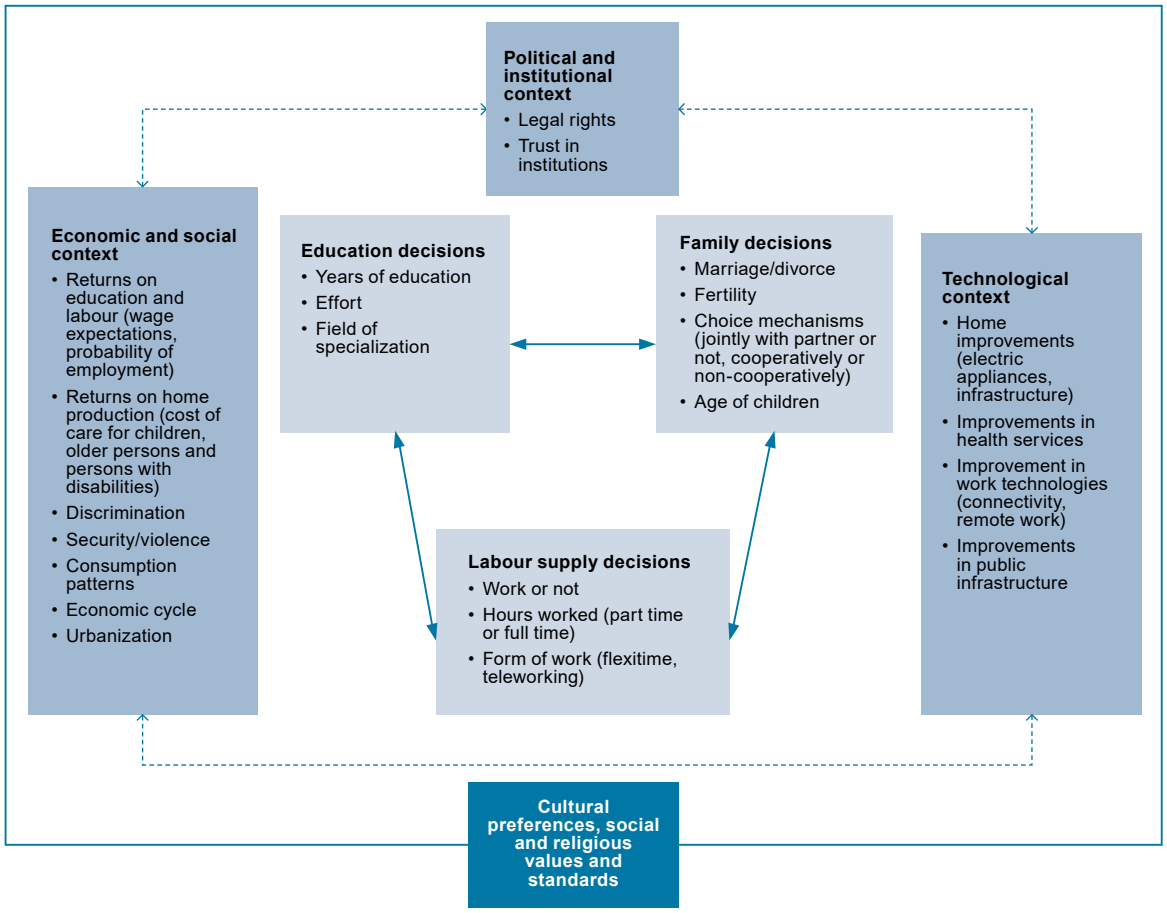


Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of ILOSTAT Database [online] https://ilostat.ilo.org/.

B. Determinants of female labour market participation: progress and still pending issues

To acquire a better grasp of the significant increase in women's participation in the labour market and to analyse expectations in that regard, it is vital to consider what drives it. That is no easy task, because the decision to take part in the labour market, as with all personal and in this case also family decisions, is influenced by multiple factors and causal connections that are not always easy to discern. For simplicity's sake, it may be assumed that other decisions may have a (reciprocal) bearing on the decision to engage in paid activities, especially decisions related to investing in education or bringing up a family. Those decisions, in turn, will be shaped by the social, economic, political, and technological context in which they are taken. Moreover, it has to be borne in mind that, even in similar contexts, life-shaping decisions may differ and be influenced by personal and social preferences, values and customs. These factors are interrelated and none on its own may suffice to explain women's share of the labour supply (see diagram II.1).

Diagram II.1
Determinants of women's participation in the labour market



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of M. Busso and D. Romero, "Determinants of female labor force participation", *Bridging Gender Gaps? The Rise and Deceleration of Female Labor Force Participation in Latin America*, L. Gasparini and M. Marchionni (eds.), La Plata, Centre for Distributive, Labour and Social Studies (CEDLAS), 2015.

1. Decisions taken in the course of a lifetime: training, family and work

The decision to take part in paid activities, be it as a personal choice or as part of a family agreement, is shaped by other life-altering decisions, such as whether to invest in education or have a family. The links between education and labour market participation have been studied extensively. The studies that have focused on analysing women's labour market participation in Latin America over the past few decades have found evidence of a positive correlation between that participation and higher levels of education and other demographic factors, such as the decline in the fertility rate (Marchionni, Gasparini and Edo, 2018; Busso and Romero, 2015; Gasparini and others, 2015).[7] Those factors explain the major increase in the participation rate shown in figure II.1.

[7] Most of these studies suffer from limitations related to access to the data gathered in household surveys.

Equal access to education for men and women is, indeed, a right that is extensively recognized in the region. In recent decades, some educational indicators point to a marked narrowing of the gender gap. For example, between 1970 and 2015, the average number of years of schooling for women and men increased from 3.7 to 8.6 and from 4.37 to 8.71, respectively, and the number for women is higher than the number for men in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Honduras and Uruguay (see figure II.8). Recently, gender disparity indicators have reversed course: women now enjoy higher rates of access to, retention in and completion of education (Marchioni, Gasparini and Edo, 2018). Consequently, women's higher levels of education may be expected to trigger expectations of their receiving higher wages and to raise the opportunity cost of performing unpaid chores and the likelihood of their being integrated in the labour market (Busso and Romero, 2015).[8]

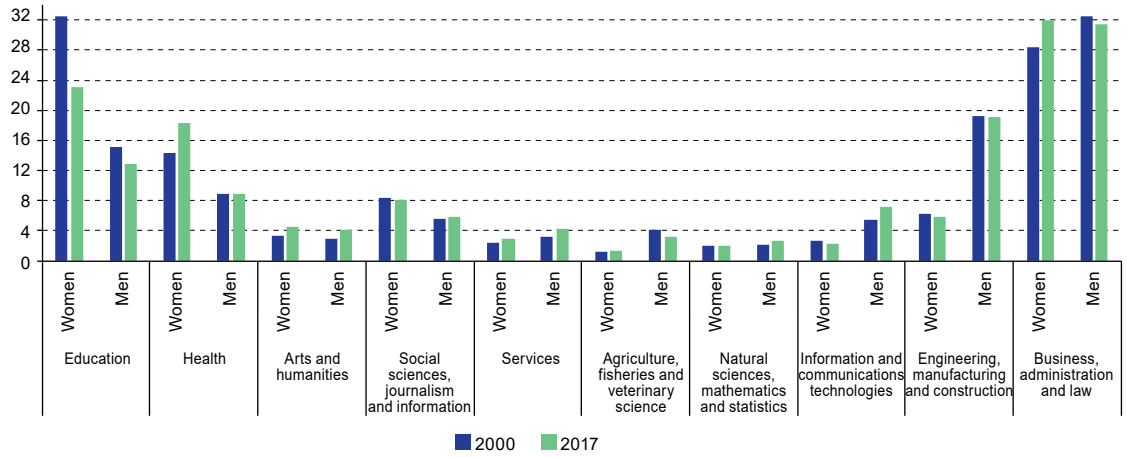
Figure II.8
Latin America (18 countries): changes in average length of schooling, by sex and country, 1970–2015
(Number of years)

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UIS.Stat [online database] http://data.uis.unesco.org/ and Barro Lee [online] http://www.barrolee.com/.

While women's average educational level has increased substantially in Latin America, there are still certain biases that could be slowing gains in the returns on education and hence the rate of growth of women's participation in paid activities. For example, the choice of careers is heavily slanted, with women predominating in areas relating to education, health care and services, while men dominate in fields related to mathematics, the natural sciences, statistics and information technologies (see figure II.9). This trend does not appear to have changed significantly in recent years and may be impacting women's expectations with respect to wages and, hence, their decisions as to whether to enter the labour market.

[8] Indeed, the causal links may work in both directions: women may be more likely to work because they are better educated or they may be more likely to study because they aspire to work in higher positions and for higher wages.

Figure II.9
Latin America (14 countries):[a] graduates of each sex, by field of study, 2000 and 2017
(Percentages)

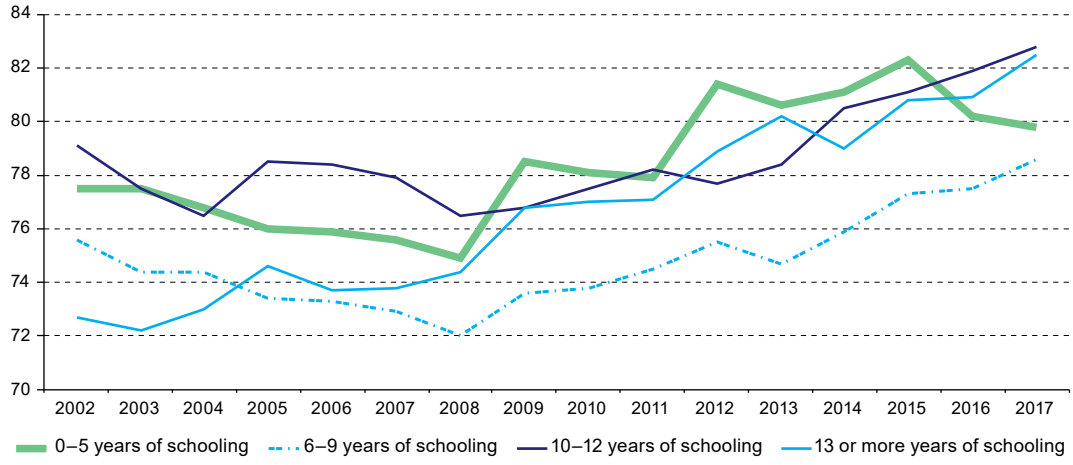


Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UIS.Stat [online database] http://data.uis.unesco.org/.

[a] The countries considered are: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Uruguay. For the Dominican Republic and Peru, only 2017 data are considered.

While the wage gap between men and women has narrowed in the region, the average wage for women is still lower than that for men, above all the lower educational levels (see figure II.10). According to recent estimates, for each hour worked, women's earnings are on average 17% below those of men of the same age, education, number of children in the household, the presence of other sources of household income, rural status, and type of work (ILO, 2019a).

Figure II.10
Latin America (18 countries): relation between the average urban wage for men and women and the number of years studied and graded as passed, 2002–2017
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), CEPALSTAT database [online] http://estadisticas.cepal.org/cepalstat/portada.html?idioma=english.

Note: The proportion of the average salary of urban, wage-earning women aged 20 to 49 who work 35 hours or more per week, compared to the salary of men of the same cohort.

Likewise, women's access to better-paid management positions is also limited. A recent ILO survey reveals that, while there has been progress at the global level, the number of women in senior management positions is still very low (ILO 2019b, p. 43). In Latin America, on average, women's share of (both higher and middle) management positions was 38% in 2017. According to World Bank Enterprise Surveys, on average, 19.9% of firms in the region have a female general manager: a proportion that declines for larger enterprises (down to an average of 8.7% for large enterprises as a whole). Likewise, fewer than half (45.3%) of all enterprises have at least one woman shareholder or owner (Vaca Trigo, 2019, p. 27).

At the same time, factors related to decisions on having a family, such as marital status and the number of children, have also evolved in a way that could explain women's greater participation in the labour market in recent decades. In general, married women are expected to participate less in paid activities, since they take their partner's income into account in their decision.[9] If they also have children, they may take the cost of caregiving activities into account. Therefore, it is to be expected that the lower the share of married women or the fewer the children, the greater women's participation in the labour market is likely to be.

In recent decades, the average percentage of women aged between 15 and 19 who are married or in a civil union or partnership in the region has declined slightly: from 58% to 54%. Nevertheless, there are countries (Brazil, Chile, and Costa Rica) in which it has fallen by more than 10 percentage points.[10] In addition, while the evidence suggests a robust, positive correlation between women's participation in the labour market and the legalization of divorce (Bargain and others, 2010), the feasibility of legal divorce is still relatively recent in the region, either because the laws were passed not long ago (Colombia in 1992, Chile in 2004) or because real implementation of those laws has been delayed.[11] Moreover, the proceedings are often lengthy and most of the laws were not drafted with a gender perspective.

The sharpest change appears to have been found in the number of children per household. Indeed, the fertility rate in Latin America has fallen significantly and has reached levels similar to those in developed countries. According to data of the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE), between the mid-1950s and the mid-1980s, the average number of children per woman in the region fell from 6 to 3.4, and to 2 on average in the past five years (see figure II.11). In some countries the reduction has been especially marked, such as Honduras, in which the number of children per woman fell from 5.4 to 2.1; Nicaragua, from 5 to 2.1; and Guatemala, from 5.6 to 2.6.[12] This trend surely explains much of the increase in women's labour market participation rate during this period. Tortarolo (2014) uses census data in Latin America and finds evidence of a negative correlation between the fertility rate and women's participation in the labour market.

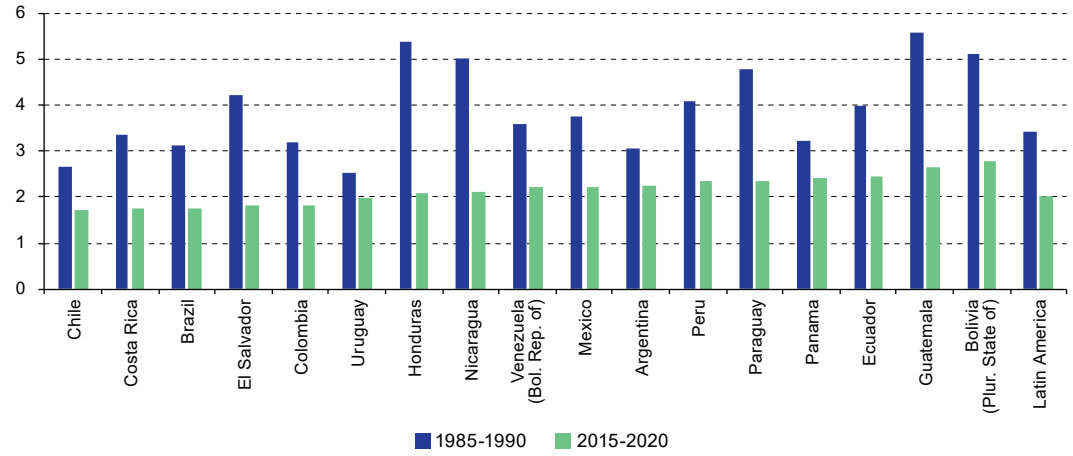
9 In this document, "married" women is construed to mean those living with another person (partner/spouse).

10 See United Nations Population Division, "Estimates and Projections of Women of Reproductive Age Who Are Married or in a Union: 2018 Revision" [online] https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/theme/marriage-unions/marriage_estimates.asp.

11 See Cabella (1999), with regard to Uruguay, or Tamez and Riberiro (2016), with regard to Mexico.

12 The trend toward fewer children per household has a direct impact on labour market participation, but also an indirect impact, as it is a determinant of the reduction in inequality and poverty in the region (Badaracco, Gasparini and Marchionni, 2017).

Figure II.11
Latin America (17 countries): total fertility rate, 1985–1990 and 2015–2020
(Number of children per woman)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), CEPALSTAT database [online] http://estadisticas.cepal.org/cepalstat/portada.html?idioma=english.

It is estimated that in the coming years the number of children per woman will stay at around two, so that it is possible that this demographic factor will become less important as an explanation of any increase in women's participation in the labour market. Moreover, the decline in fertility has apparently not been accompanied in Latin America by any significant increase in the age at which people get married or when their first child is born, as it has been in other parts of the world. According to United Nations data, the average age at which people get married for the first time only increased from 21.5 to 23 between 1970 and 2015 in Latin America, whereas it rose from 22 years of age to 29.6 in developed countries. Also worrisome are the persistently high levels of teenage maternity, particularly in such countries as Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Honduras and Ecuador, where between 17% and 20% of women aged 15–19 are mothers. The rates for this indicator in Colombia, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, El Salvador and Panama are also high.[13] Marrying and having a family at an early age could have a negative impact on women's participation in the labour market because it is generally associated with dropping out of school and because there is less likelihood of generating enough income to offset care costs.[14] In a recent study, Berniel and others (2019) assessed the effect of the birth of the first child on the labour market in Chile. Taking the longitudinal data of the Social Protection Survey as their basis, the authors applied the methodology used to study events to estimate the causal impact of maternity and paternity on labour market participation outcomes for women and men who had their first child between 2002 and 2016. They found a marked, negative and persistent impact on mothers' participation, but not the fathers'. One year after the birth of their first child, Chilean mothers' labour market participation is 17% below what it was prior to pregnancy; the likelihood of their being employed declines by 20%; they work 5% fewer hours; part-time work

[13] See Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean "Teenage maternity" [online] https://oig.cepal.org/en/indicators/teenage-maternity.

[14] Direct policies have been proposed to reduce rates of adolescent pregnancy in the region. These range from supporting multisectoral prevention programmes that target the most vulnerable groups, to increasing access to contraceptives and sex education, among other things (PAHO/UNFPA/UNICEF, 2018). For example, Velázquez (2015) found that the increase in mandatory schooling from 7 to 10 years adopted in Argentina in 1993 helped lower the adolescent fertility rate.

increases by 40%; and their hourly wages fall by between 10% and 15%. For the most part, those effects are still felt 10 years later. It has also been calculated that having more than two children has a significant negative impact on the female labour supply in Argentina and Mexico (Cruces and Galiani, 2007, cited in Busso and Romero, 2015). Here it is important to mention that in Latin America parental leave is extended mainly to women and only very rarely for fathers (Marchionni, Gasparini and Edo, 2018).

Finally, it would be worth considering how decisions are taken within the family. Thus, the decision to participate in the labour market may be taken by the household as a unit or separately by each of the spouses, and the decision may or may not be taken cooperatively. For example, the woman's decision on whether to participate, what type of work she will do and the time she will devote to it, it may be taken after her husband has taken his decision, or it may be made without any kind of negotiation (Busso and Romero, 2015). The various types of agreement reached within the family will influence women's behaviour regarding their participation in the labour market. Thus, it warrants mentioning that the percentage of women regarded as secondary workers has declined in the region and there has been an unprecedented increase in the number of female heads of household thanks to the fact that many are now identified as such even though, from an economic point of view, they may not be the main source of income (Marchioni, Gasparini and Edo, 2018). However, the effects of these changes on the configuration of roles and allocation of tasks in the household have not yet been thoroughly researched in the region, probably owing to the relative scarcity of data.

2. Economic, social, institutional and technological context

As mentioned above, decisions about participation in the labour market, education and family are taken in a variety of economic, social, institutional and technological contexts that affect expectations. These factors are crucial inasmuch as they can open up opportunities to incorporate or reinforce public policies to promote women's participation in the labour market.

Noteworthy aspects of the economic and social context in which decisions are taken include expectations of the return on education (the lower the rate of unemployment and wage gaps, the higher the return on investment in education); the costs associated with child care or with looking after older persons or persons with disabilities; and aspects to do with discrimination and security. The following economic and social factors have a positive impact on women's participation in the labour market: (i) changing consumption patterns, whereby people need more material goods and more income has to be generated in the household; (ii) low economic growth, which increases the share of so-called secondary workers; (iii) increased security in a society, which facilitates transportation to the workplace; or (iv) urbanization. For example, Adsera and Menéndez (2009) have assessed the relationship between fertility and the economic cycle in Latin America and have found evidence that periods of relatively high unemployment are associated with lower fertility rates and the postponement of maternity, especially among younger, educated women in urban areas. Novta and Cheng Wong (2017) analyse the effect of a decline in GDP and find a major countercyclical impact of women's participation in the labour market. That is to say, in periods of economic crisis, women become additional workers in order to increase, or offset declines in, family income.

Noteworthy aspects of the political and institutional context that could affect women's participation in the labour market include the legal empowerment of women and trust in the country's institutions. As regards the former, Novta and Cheng Wong (2017) use 11 variables taken from the World Bank's report *Women, Business and the Law* relating to countries in Latin America and find evidence of a positive link

between women's legal rights and their participation in the labour market.[15] That study also evaluates the impact of contextual variables, such as road quality, tax deductions for children and maternity leave arrangements and concludes that all those variables have positive (albeit not significant) impacts.

Finally, access to certain technologies, or the lack of it, may affect a woman's decision to participate in the labour market. For example, household appliances that facilitate home maintenance, access to new reproductive health devices, access to means of transport (cars), connectivity and public transportation infrastructure, and so on, are all factors that may facilitate women's participation in the labour market.

In recent decades, the contexts that have evolved in most countries should facilitate participation in the labour market. However, in recent years GDP has grown by less than 2%, which has curtailed opportunities for creating jobs (ECLAC, 2019). Between the early 2000s and 2014, poverty and extreme poverty rates in the region fell sharply, but have since remained stagnant (ECLAC, 2018). Numerous factors still need to be improved, such as the levels of violence and insecurity and widespread discrimination. In the region, discriminatory behaviour has not been eliminated in the workplace. Thus, one of the achievements of the International Labour Conference of ILO in June 2019 was adoption of the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190).[16] Nor has any improvement been ascertained in indicators of social cohesion. For example, the share of the population that distrusts institutions averaged 70% in the countries of the region in 2017.[17]

3. Personal and social preferences and values

Multiple cultural factors and personal and social preferences influence the decision to participate in paid activities, advance one's education and have a family. Such factors are harder to measure and to build into economic models. For instance, Fernández and Fogli (2007) analysed the effects of culture on married women's participation in the labour market in the United States, using the participation rate and fertility rate of women in the country of origin of their ancestors as a proxy for "culture". The findings showed that, even after checking for possible indirect effects (education and characteristics of the husband), there is a positive and significant correlation between the variable that represents culture and labour participation that is more marked among ethnic groups tending to live in the same neighbourhood.

Even though data are scarcer in Latin America, there are some indicators that enable us to gauge how preferences and values may affect women's participation in the labour market. Among the factors that may positively influence that participation rate is women's empowerment in terms of realizing their personal and social expectations. This could also be the outcome of women's greater participation in the labour market. The evidence suggests that young women who were brought up in a household in which the mother worked outside the home are more likely to do the same (Sieverding, Roushdy and Gadallah 2017; Cunnigam and others, 2005). In the same vein, increased access to managerial positions and political participation could positively affect women's outlook, not just as workers, but also as leaders, as persons aiming to advance their professional development and as decision makers.

[15] Indicators considered include: the property rights of married and unmarried women; the possibility of initiating legal proceedings without the husband's consent; the possibility of married women signing contracts, opening bank accounts, obtaining employment (having a profession) and being head of the household or family; rights to inherit the husband's property; equal inheritance rights for sons and daughters; and constitutionally guaranteed gender equality.

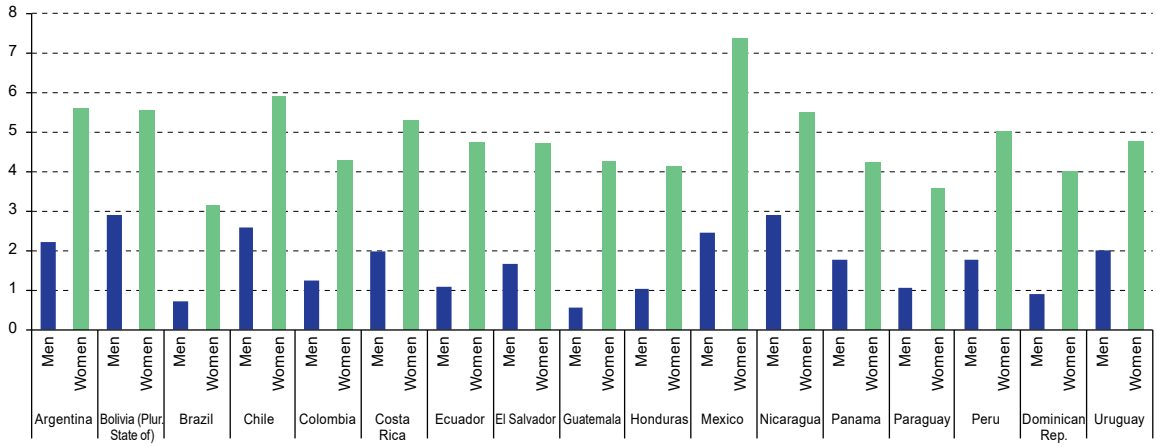
[16] This international Convention recognizes that violence and harassment in the world of work may constitute a human rights violation and pose a threat to equal opportunity. It also establishes that violence and harassment constitute behaviour, actions, or threats that "aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm." The Convention seeks to protect workers and employers, irrespective of their contractual status.

[17] CEPALSTAT data available [online] https://estadisticas.cepal.org/cepalstat/web_cepalstat/estadisticasIndicadores.asp.

It is also likely that lower adherence to traditional religious norms has a positive impact on women's participation in the labour market: as may well have occurred in the region. Latinobarómetro survey data show, for example, that for 18 countries in Latin America the average percentage of citizens stating that they have a high level of trust in the church fell from nearly 52% in 1995 to 30.6% in 2018.

However, there are also cultural factors that could be limiting the growth of women's participation in the labour market. Time-use surveys in the region show that, compared to men and even if they work outside the home, women devote a much larger share of their time to domestic and caregiving tasks, and that the gaps are more pronounced when there are children (see figure II.12). It is also worth noting that those patterns are similar for all socioeconomic strata, even though the goods and services that lighten the burden of domestic chores (home appliances and paid care services) are more affordable for higher-income households. That asymmetrical allocation of time devoted to care and domestic chores stems from cultural norms that appear to have barely changed in the region in the past few decades (Marchioni, Gasparini and Edo, 2018).

Figure II.12
Latin America (17 countries): time devoted to domestic chores and unpaid care work, by sex, 2017
(Number of hours per day)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of data from time use surveys.

One factor examined in Fernández (2013) is a society's attitude towards women who work. For instance, that author looked at changes over time in answers given in the United States to the following question: Do you approve of married women earning money if they have a husband who can maintain them? The author points out that whereas in 1945 only 20% of those answering replied in the affirmative, compared with over 80% by 1998. Latinobarómetro survey data show that on average, for 18 countries in Latin America, 43% of those surveyed concurred with the statement: "When a mother works, the children suffer". The figures for those surveyed in Brazil, Ecuador and Mexico were 62%, 60% and 44%, respectively.[18] Nevertheless, data from the same survey show a high percentage of those surveyed agreeing with the following statement: "Having a job is the best way for a woman to be independent". More than 70% of those surveyed agree with that statement in Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Uruguay, as did over 60% in Argentina, Mexico and Peru.

[18] By comparison, the percentage of respondents who agree with that statement is 75% in the Middle East, 76% in South Asia, 42% in Sub-Saharan Africa, 38% in Asia and the Pacific, and 25% in North America (Marchioni, Gasparini and Edo, 2018, table 4.1.16).

A counterpart mention could be made of social attitudes to care tasks performed by men and the extent to which society values them. The leave granted men in the region following the birth of a child is usually only for a few days, but there is no evidence that a longer leave would necessarily entail a more active role for men in this regard. Since 2011, Chile has allowed for the possibility of transferring days of leave given to mothers to the father, but currently very few fathers are in fact making use of that option. Since that option was implemented, the percentage of leave days transferred to the father has declined. In 2016, it amounted to just 0.18% of all leave granted (BCN, 2018). That being so, it is worth underscoring the major links between the cultural role of maternity, paternity and upbringing and the values and customs associated with the ideal worker that characterize Latin American societies, along with the need to take those factors into account when crafting public policies designed to encourage women's participation in the labour market (Tribin and Vargas, 2015).

Finally, it is important to mention the subject of the violence to which women are subjected in both the private and public sphere. As regards the former, for example, official data for 19 countries show that there were 2,559 victims of femicide (murders of women by their partner or former partner)[19] in 2017 (ECLAC 2016a, 2015a and 2015b). In the work sphere, discrimination against women employees in the form of workplace abuse and harassment has prompted new legislation. For example, in Ecuador, Haiti and Saint Lucia, sexual harassment in the workplace is an offence included in the Criminal Code (ECLAC, 2016b). However, discrimination and harassment are a reality in many countries of the region and could have a bearing on the likelihood of women participating in the labour market.

C. The impact of new technologies on women's participation in the labour market

As mentioned above, the technological progress achieved in various areas in recent years has affected the context in which labour market participation decisions are taken, because that progress has shortened the time taken to perform household chores, because of the improvements it has brought to connectivity and transportation, or because it has increased access to reproductive health care services. All those developments have increased the amount of time that can be devoted to paid activities outside the home.

One specific area in which technological progress has generated expectations in recent years is the impact that digitization or the consolidation of business models based on digital platform work could have on women's participation in the labour market. The possibility of running one's own business or working remotely for local employers or employers in other countries through digital platforms has given rise to new forms of employment offering greater flexibility with respect to both working hours and workplace and a chance to combine work with studies or household responsibilities.

Generally speaking, there is evidence that women would be more disposed to participate in the labour market if conditions afforded them greater flexibility (Duchini and Van Effenterre, 2018), and that they would even be prepared to pay a penalty (in the form of lower wages) in return for such flexibility. For example, Salas (2019) conducted an experiment to examine non-professional women's preferences in Bogotá when offered labour contracts with various types of flexibility as to working hours and the number of hours worked. The findings showed that women were ready to sacrifice a significant portion of their wages in exchange for being able to adjust their working hours. The authors attempted to measure those workers' productivity and found that those who had flexible working

[19] See Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean "Femicide or feminicide" [online] https://oig.cepal.org/en/indicators/femicide-or-feminicide.

hours posted fewer absences, asked for less leave, and worked more hours. Persons hired full-time, but with a flexible schedule, worked more hours per day, produced more and made fewer mistakes.

Nevertheless, that greater work schedule and workplace flexibility may also entail worse working conditions, when they translate into longer hours worked and issues with separating private lives from work, leading to more emotional stress and less free time. It is important to bear in mind that these new forms of employment must not be associated with more precarious working conditions. The outcome will depend on the following factors: (i) whether the decision is voluntary or not; (ii) whether there is more autonomy or less; and (iii) whether there is more or less job security (OECD, 2017).

The data show no clear trend of greater participation by women in platform-based jobs. Rather, they suggest that it depends on the type of service offered by the platform. For instance, a survey conducted by ILO in 75 countries of persons working in five English-speaking microtasking platforms found that only one in three workers was a woman and that in developing countries, only one in five workers (Berg, 2018).[20] Likewise, a survey conducted in 14 European countries shows that the proportion of female workers decreases as the intensity of platform work increases.[21] In particular, women account on average for 47.5% of employment outside platforms, 40.2% of platform work that is not significant in terms of income earned, 31.2% of the significant (but not main) platform work, and only 26.3% of the main and highly significant platform work (Pesole and others, 2018). In Latin America, a survey was conducted of platform workers in Argentina, where a large majority of the workers surveyed (73.7%) identified as male, although that proportion varied significantly from one platform to another and depending on the services each one provided. The platforms with the highest proportion of male workers are IguanaFix (100%), Cabify (97%), Rappi (97%), Glovo (95.5%) and Uber (94%). At the other extreme, Zolvers is the only platform in which 100% of those surveyed self-identified as female (Madariaga and others, 2019).[22]

However, the evidence suggests that most platform economy workers, especially women, work in order to supplement household incomes or to balance their personal and work lives (OECD, 2017). In a survey conducted in the United States, Katz and Krueger (2016) point to the significant increase in women's participation in the labour market with respect to jobs offering special arrangements. In the ILO survey mentioned earlier, the motives most often cited for people to do platform work were "to supplement earnings from other jobs" (32%) and a "preference for working from home" (22%). A major gender difference was observed for those who answered that they could work only from home owing to their obligation to care for others: for women that percentage was 13%, for men 5%. The survey conducted in Argentina likewise found that the main motivation of those surveyed to start working in platforms was the opportunity to earn extra money (30.2%), followed by the ease and flexibility that platforms offer with respect to working hours (29.1%), and, third, difficulty finding other work (17.3%).

In short, the existence of more employment options thanks to digitization and platform work does not in itself appear to be a major factor boosting women's participation in the labour market. For that tool to achieve its maximum potential without exacerbating existing gaps, it would need to be accompanied by other policies (ECLAC/ILO, 2013, 2017a and b; ILO, 2019a).

[20] Survey on labour conditions conducted by ILO in respect of 3,500 workers in 75 countries.

[21] The *Collaborative Economy and Employment Survey* conducted by the European Commission found that the percentage of the adult population that had ever provided services via a platform ranged from nearly 16% in Portugal to 7% in Finland. The countries participating in the survey were Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

[22] IguanaFix is a platform providing household assistance, maintenance and repair services, technical and repair services for motor vehicles, cleaning, masonry, plumbing, electricity and gas, and other services, while Zolvers provides home and office cleaning and maintenance services.

Box II.1

The impact of automation on the outlook for women's participation in the labour market

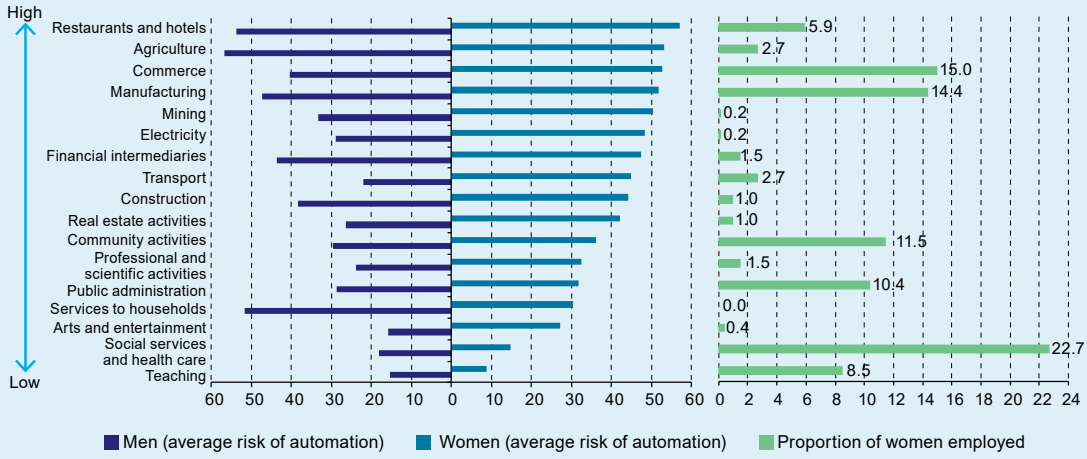
One of the core topics in the debate about new technologies is job destruction and creation. How will digitization and automation affect the labour market for women and men? To answer that question, a number of exercises have been conducted for different branches of activity and occupations, along with analyses of the tasks that the two sexes perform most frequently.

The usual assumption is that the effect of automation on employment by sex will depend on the occupational distribution of men and women and on the economic sector. The evidence gathered in developed countries shows that while industrial automation processes in the framework of Industry 4.0 are initially mostly found in the manufacturing industry and impact mainly men, some of the transformations expected in the services sector (e.g. in administrative work or sales) would predominantly affect women. At the same time, some branches of activity in the tertiary sector that are less prone to labour substitution or automation, such as education and health care, are characterized by a high proportion of female labour (Brussevich and others, 2019; Mc Kinsey, 2019 and 2018; World Economic Forum, 2018a).

The evidence for Latin America suggests that the proportion of employment at risk of being substituted is relatively high (over 60%) and roughly the same for both men and women (World Bank, 2016). A regional study by Weller, Gontero and Campbell (2019) proposes an adjustment to Frey and Osborne's original method for estimating automation in order to take into account the duality of labour markets in the region in which a dynamic large-enterprise sector and a public sector coexist alongside a low-productivity sector far removed from the technological cutting edge. Using the adjusted methodology, they calculated that, on average for 12 countries in the region, 17.5% of male employees and 14.1% of female employees are in jobs at risk of being substituted by automation. This lower proportion of women in sectors at high risk of automation stems from the fact that they are overrepresented in low-productivity segments. This indicates that low likelihood of automation is no guarantee of higher quality work.

Major differences have also been found between branches of activity. It transpires that, compared with men, women work in a larger number of activities at high risk of substitution (see figure). For example, the percentage of occupations at high risk of technological substitution is larger for women in mining; the provision of electricity, gas and water; commerce; transportation; real estate activities; communal services; art; entertainment; and recreational activities. However, in such sectors as public administration, education and health care, in which the share of female labour is high, the likelihood of substitution is relatively low. That factor, plus the fact that these are sectors with better quality jobs and in which the demand for workers is expected to increase, could signal an opportunity for women's professional development.[a]

Latin America (12 countries): proportion of occupations at high risk of substitution, by branch of activity and sex (simple average), and proportion of women employed in these segments (weighted average), 2019
(Percentages)



Source: J. Weller, S. Gontero and S. Campbell, "Cambio tecnológico y empleo: una perspectiva latinoamericana", *Macroeconomics of Development series*, No. 201 (LC/TS.2019/37), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2019.

Box II.1 (concluded)

Discussion has focused not just on sectors, but also on the types of jobs susceptible to automation and on the share of men and women engaged in them. Many jobs involving tasks requiring only low or medium-level qualifications are currently being automated and will no doubt continue to be automated in the future. Accordingly, to gather evidence, workplace surveys have been used for information at the level of the individual. For example, Brussevich and others (2019) used data from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) for 20 countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and found that, on average, women perform more routine or encodable tasks susceptible to automation. Likewise, women are less likely to perform tasks requiring abstract or analytical thinking, in which technological change generally complements human work and may even help trigger increases in productivity. The findings show that 11% of women and 9% of men in 30 OECD countries are at high risk of being substituted in the next 20 years.

For Latin America, it is only possible to approximate this analysis by examining occupations, the data for which appear to show that, since the start of this century, routine occupations have declined more for women than for men. Nevertheless, the decline in such occupations was offset by an increase in employment in low-qualification occupations in services and commerce and, to a lesser extent, in abstract occupations (ILO, 2019a, p. 122).

Although the data on the sex-differentiated effect of automation are uncertain, a key factor for avoiding the risk of increased inequality is creating the conditions required for both men and women to have access to high-quality education and equal access to new technologies and life-long learning opportunities, so that they can develop the social, emotional and digital skills they need to confront the challenges posed by technological change.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of M. Brussevich and others, "Gender, Technology and the future of work", *IMF Staff Discussion Note*, No. 18/07, Fiscal Affairs and Human Resources Departments, 2018; World Economic Forum, "Artificial intelligence could hardwire sexism into our future. Unless we stop it", 2018 [online] https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/12/sexist-bias-hardwired-by-artificial-intelligence/; World Bank, *World Development Report 2016: Digital Dividends*, Washington, D.C., 2016; J. Weller, S. Gontero and S. Campbell, "Cambio tecnológico y empleo: una perspectiva latinoamericana: riesgos de la sustitución tecnológica del trabajo humano y desafíos de la generación de nuevos puestos de trabajo", *Macroeconomics of Development series*, No. 201 (LC/TS.2019/37), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2019 and International Labour Organization (ILO), *Panorama Laboral Temático 5: mujeres en el mundo del trabajo. Retos pendientes hacia una efectiva equidad en América Latina y el Caribe*, Lima, Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2019.

[a] The higher quality of employment in these sectors derives from the fact that the wage gap is narrower and employment is more likely to be formal. An IDB (2019) study estimates that, on average, 89% of teachers, 84% of physicians and 86% of nurses in Latin America and the Caribbean contribute to social security funds (a substantially higher proportion than that found for professionals in other occupations) and that the earnings gap between women and men —the "wage penalty" for women— is significantly smaller in education and health care than in other occupations.

D. Concluding remarks

One of the most significant trends seen in the labour market in Latin America is the large increase in women's participation in paid activities. Over the past 30 years, the average labour market participation rate in the region for women aged 15 or over has increased by 11 percentage points: a faster pace of growth than that for other parts of the world. Nevertheless, there are still marked differences between countries, in terms of both the pace of growth of women's participation in the labour market and the level reached. Likewise, the gap between women's and men's participation rates averaged 25.4 percentage points in 2018.

Increasing women's participation in paid activities has become a policy objective both for equity-based reasons and for economic and social ones. Accessing the paid labour market increases women's autonomy in the widest possible sense and has a direct impact on multiple facets of society. Economic activity is a fundamental pillar for women's personal development and, by definition, requires them to receive enough income to overcome poverty and have enough free time for training, entry into the labour market, personal and professional development, active participation in social and political life and caring for loved ones without it becoming a barrier to realizing their own aspirations

(ECLAC, 2016b). Accordingly, enhancing women's access to paid activities and narrowing current gaps in the labour market is vital for growth, equality and poverty reduction in the region and, hence, for attaining many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): not just that relating to gender equality (SDG 5), but also those to do with poverty reduction (SDG 1) and eliminating hunger (SDG 2), improvements in health and well-being (SDG 3) and in quality of education (SDG 4), decent work (SDG 8) and reduction of inequalities (SDG 10).

To acquire a better grasp of the significant increase in women's participation in the labour market in Latin America and to analyse expectations in that regard, it is vital to consider the factors influencing the decision whether to engage in paid employment. That is no easy task because, like any personal and family decision, it is influenced by multiple factors, in which causal links cannot always be identified. In order to simplify the analysis, this paper asserts that the decision to participate in the labour market is both influenced by other decisions, above all the decision to invest in education and the decision to have a family, and has an impact on those decisions. Those decisions will be shaped by the social, economic, political and technological context in which they are taken, as well as by personal and social preferences, values and customs, and by existing power relations. These factors are interrelated and none of them on its own suffices to explain women's share of the labour supply.

Evidence has been shown that the region has progressed with respect to many of the factors that have a positive impact on women's decision to participate in the labour market, such as equal access to education and the decline in the fertility rate, higher average income and greater access to technologies that shorten the time needed to perform domestic chores and improve reproductive health care services. Progress has also been made in terms of political rights and social norms. Nevertheless, there are still lags in some areas that could limit the growth of women's participation in the labour market. They include, for instance, gender gaps in the return expected on education and cultural factors that stress women's reproductive and caregiving role.

Over the coming years, the incorporation of new technologies could have a positive impact on women's participation in paid activities. Platform work, for example, could benefit people seeking to balance work with family and studying, by allowing them more flexibility as to how, when and where they work. However, greater participation does not necessarily guarantee higher quality of employment or living. Ultimately, certain policies are needed to avoid an increase in precarious forms of work or excessive workloads and to prevent even wider gaps than those that already exist. The challenges we face are daunting. They call for action on several fronts, such as enhancing women's access to new technologies and making more use of them; reducing stereotypes in the choice of fields of study; introducing regulations to ensure that more flexibility does not result in lower quality; and tailoring social security systems to the new forms of employment.

Bibliography

Adsera, A. and A. Menendez (2009), "Fertility changes in Latin America in the context of economic uncertainty", *IZA Discussion Paper*, No. 4019, February.

Badaracco, N., L. Gasparini and M. Marchionni (2017), "Distributive implications of fertility changes in Latin America", *Documento de Trabajo*, No. 206, La Plata, Centre for Distributive, Labour and Social Studies (CEDLAS), January.

Bargain, O. and others (2010), "Female labor supply and divorce: new evidence from Ireland", *IZA Discussion Paper*, No. 4959, May.

BCN (Library of the National Congress of Chile) (2018), "El rol del hombre en el cuidado del recién nacido: ¿Cómo está Chile en la región?", Programa Américas [online] https://www.bcn.cl/observatorio/americas/noticias/el-rol-del-hombre-en-el-cuidado-del-recien-nacido-como-esta-chile-en-la-region.

Berg, J. (2019), *Las plataformas digitales y el futuro del trabajo. ¿Cómo fomentar el trabajo decente en el mundo digital?*, Geneva, International Labour Organization (ILO).

Berniell, I. and others (2019), "Gender gaps in labor informality: the motherhood effect", *Documento de Trabajo*, No. 247, La Plata, Centre for Distributive, Labour and Social Studies (CEDLAS), June.

Blagrave, P. and M. Santoro (2017) "Labor force participation in Chile: recent trends, drivers, and prospects", *IMF Working Paper*, February.

Busso, M. and D. Romero (2015), "Determinants of female labor force participation", *Bridging Gender Gaps? The Rise and Deceleration of Female Labor Force Participation in Latin America*, L. Gasparini and M. Marchionni (eds.), La Plata, Centre for Distributive, Labour and Social Studies (CEDLAS).

Brussevich, M. and others (2018) "Gender, Technology and the future of work", *IMF Staff Discussion Note*, No. 18/07, Fiscal Affairs and Human Resources Departments.

Cabella, W. (1999), "La evolución del divorcio en Uruguay (1950-1995)" [online] http://cienciassociales.edu.uy/unidadmultidisciplinaria/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2014/06/La-evoluci%C3%B3n-del-divorcio-en-Uruguay.pdf.

Cunningham, M. and others (2005), "Reciprocal relationships between attitudes about gender and social contexts during young adulthood", *Social Science Research*, vol. 34, No. 4.

Duchini, E. and C. Van Effenterre (2018), "Do women want to work more or more regularly? Evidence from a natural experiment" [online] https://www.parisschoolofeconomics.eu/docs/vaneffenterre-clementine/jmp_vaneffenterre.pdf.

Duryea, S., A. Cox Edwards and M. Ureta (2001), *Women in the Latin American Labor Market: The Remarkable 1990s*, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) (2019a), *Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2019* (LC/PUB.2019/12-P), Santiago.

___(2019b), *Social Panorama of Latin America, 2018* (LC/PUB.2019/3-P), Santiago.

___(2016b), *Equality and women's autonomy in the sustainable development agenda* (LC/G.2686/Rev.1), Santiago, December.

___(2016a), "Infographics about femicide in Latin America and the Caribbean" [online] https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/infographic/files/feminicidios_final_ingles_0.pdf.

___(2015a), *Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean. Annual Report 2013-2014. Confronting violence against women in Latin America and the Caribbean* (LC/G.2626/Rev.1), Santiago.

___(2015b), "Sexual harassment in public spaces: the city in debt with the rights of women", *Nota de Igualdad*, Santiago [online] https://www.cepal.org/en/notas/acoso-sexual-espacio-publico-la-ciudad-deuda-derechos-mujeres.

ECLAC/ILO (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean/International Labour Organization) (2017a), "Labour immigration in Latin America", *Employment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean*, No. 16 (LC/TS.2017/30), Santiago, May.

___(2017b), "The transition of young people from school to the labour market", *Employment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean*, No 17 (LC/TS.2017/86), Santiago, October.

___(2016), "Recent improvements and persistent gaps in rural employment", *Employment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean*, No. 14 (LC/L.4141), Santiago, May.

___(2013), "Advances and challenges in measuring decent work", E*mployment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean*, No. 8 (LC/L.3630), Santiago, May.

Fernández, R. and A. Fogli (2007), *Culture: An Empirical Investigation of Beliefs, Work, and Fertility*, New York University.

Fernández, R. (2013), "Cultural change as learning: the evolution of female labor force participation over a Century", *American Economic Review*, vol. 103, No. 1.

Fernández, C. and D. Martínez Turégano (2018), "Labour market participation rate in the Euro area: performance and outlook, a long-term view", *Economic Bulletin*, 1/2018, Banco de España, January.

Gasparini, L. and others (2015), "Characterizing female participation changes", *Bridging Gender Gaps? The Rise and Deceleration of Female Labor Force Participation in Latin America*, L. Gasparini y M. Marchionni (eds.), La Plata, Centre for Distributive, Labour and Social Studies (CEDLAS).

Gasparini, L. and P. Gluzman (2015), "Female participation and the economic cycle", *Bridging Gender Gaps? The Rise and Deceleration of Female Labor Force Participation in Latin America*, L. Gasparini and M. Marchionni (eds.), La Plata, Centre for Distributive, Labour and Social Studies (CEDLAS).

Grigoli, F., Z. Koczan and P. Topalova (2018), "Drivers of labor force participation in advanced economies: macro and micro evidence", *International Monetary Fund Working Paper*, No. 18/150.

Goldin, C. (2006), "The quiet revolution that transformed women's employment, education, and family", *NBER Working Paper*, No. 11953, January.

___(1994), "The U-shaped female labor force function in economic development and economic history", *NBER Working Paper*, No. 4707, April.

IDB (Inter-American Development Bank) (2019), "Educación y salud: ¿los sectores del futuro?", *El Futuro del Trabajo en América Latina y el Caribe*.

ILO (International Labour Organization) (2019a), *Panorama Laboral Temático 5: mujeres en el mundo del trabajo. Retos pendientes hacia una efectiva equidad en América Latina y el Caribe*, Lima, Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.

___(2019b), *Women in business and management: the business case for change*, Geneva.

Katz, L. and A. B. Krueger (2016), "The rise and nature of alternative work arrangement in the United States, 1995-2015", *Working Paper*, No. 22667, September.

Klasen S. and others (2019), "What drives female labor force participation? Comparable micro-level evidence form eight developing and emerging economies", *IZA Discussion Paper Series*, No. 12067, January.

Madariaga, J. and C. Ernst (2019), "Economía de plataformas y empleo ¿Cómo es trabajar para una app en Argentina?", Buenos Aires, Public Policies for Equity and Growth Implementation Centre (CIPPEC)/Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)/ International Labour Organization (ILO).

Marchionni, M. and others (2019), *Participación laboral femenina. ¿Que explica las diferencias entre países?*, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)/Centre for Distributive, Labour and Social Studies (CEDLAS).

Marchionni, M., L. Gasparini and M. Edo (2018), *Brechas de género en América Latina: un estado de situación*, Development Bank of Latin America (CAF).

McKinsey (2019), "The present and future of women at work in Canada", July.

___(2018), "Women and the future of work: a window of opportunity in Western Europe?", November.

___(2015), "The power of parity: How advancing women's equality can add $12 trillion to global growth", September.

Martínez, C., T. Miller and P. Saad (2013), "Participación laboral femenina y bono de género en América Latina", *Project Documents* (LC/W.570), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Novta, N. and J. Cheng Wong (2017), "Women at work in Latin America and the Caribbean", *IMF Working Paper*, February.

OCDE (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) (2017), "Going digital: the future of work for women", *Policy Brief on The Future of Work*, Paris, OECD Publishing.

PAHO/UNFPA/UNICEF (Pan American Health Organization/United Nations Population Fund/United Nations Children's Fund) (2018), *Accelerating progress toward the reduction of adolescent pregnancy in Latin America and the Caribbean. Report of a technical consultation: 29–30 August 2016*, Washington, D.C.

Pesole, A. and others (2018), "Platform workers in Europe. Evidence from the COLLEEM Survey", *JRC Science for Policy Report*, European Commission.

Ramírez, N., A.M. Tribin and C. Vargas (2015), "Maternity and labor markets: impact of legislation in Colombia", *Borradores de Economía*, vol. 870, Banco de la República de Colombia.

Salas, L. M. (2019), "¿Cómo ajustar el mercado laboral al auge de alternativas de trabajo no tradicional?", Foco Económico [online] https://focoeconomico.org/2019/05/21/como-ajustar-el-mercado-laboral-al-auge-de-alternativas-de-trabajo-no-tradicional/.

Sieverding, M. R. Roushdy and M. Gadallah (2017), "The effects of mother's employment on youth gender role attitudes: evidence from Egypt", *Working Paper*, No. 1125 [online] http://erf.org.eg/publications/the-effect-of-mothers-employment-on-youth-gender-role-attitudes-evidence-from-egypt/.

Tamez, B. and M. Ribeiro (2016), "El divorcio, indicador de transformación social y familiar con impacto diferencial entre los sexos: estudio realizado en Nuevo León Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, México", *Papeles de Población*, vol. 22, No. 90, Toluca, October-December.

Tortarolo, D. (2014), "Female labor supply and fertility: causal evidence for Latin America", *Documento de Trabajo*, No. 166, La Plata, Centre for Distributive, Labour and Social Studies (CEDLAS), August.

Vaca Trigo, I. (2019), "Oportunidades y desafíos para la autonomía de las mujeres en el futuro escenario del trabajo", *Gender Affairs series*, No. 154, Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Velázquez, C. (2015), "El impacto de la Ley Federal de Educación Argentina sobre la Fecundidad Adolescente", *Documento de Trabajo*, No. 179, La Plata, Centre for Distributive, Labour and Social Studies (CEDLAS), February.

Weller, J., Gontero, S. and S. Campbell (2019), "Cambio tecnológico y empleo: una perspectiva latinoamericana", *Macroeconomics of Development series*, No. 201 (LC/TS.2019/37), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

World Bank (2016), *World Development Report 2016: Digital Dividends*, Washington, D.C.

World Economic Forum (2018a), "Artificial intelligence could hardwire sexism into our future. Unless we stop it" [online] https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/12/sexist-bias-hardwired-by-artificial-intelligence/.

___(2018b), *The Global Gender Gap Report 2017* [online] https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2017.

Annex A1

Table A1.1
Latin America and the Caribbean: annual average urban unemployment rates by sex, from 2009 to the first half of 2019
(Percentages)

Country	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018[a]	First half	
											2018[a]	2019[a]
Latin America												
Argentina[b]	8.7	7.7	7.2	7.2	7.1	7.3	6.5	8.5	8.4	9.2	9.2	10.1
Men	7.8	6.7	6.3	6.1	6.1	6.5	5.7	7.8	7.5	8.2	8.0	9.2
Women	9.9	9.2	8.5	8.8	8.5	8.4	7.6	9.4	9.5	10.5	10.6	11.2
Bolivia (Plurnational State of)[c]	6.8	…	3.8	3.2	4.0	3.5	4.4	4.7	5.1	4.9	…	…
Men	…	…	3.1	2.2	3.2	2.5	3.5	4.1	4.6	4.8	…	…
Women	…	…	4.7	4.4	5.1	4.9	5.6	5.4	5.7	5.1	…	…
Brazil[d]	8.1	6.7	6.0	8.2	8.0	7.8	9.3	13.0	14.5	14.2	14.7	14.0
Men	6.5	5.2	4.7	6.8	6.6	6.7	8.1	11.6	13.0	12.5	13.0	12.1
Women	9.9	8.5	7.5	9.9	9.7	9.1	10.7	14.7	16.2	16.1	16.6	16.2
Chile[e]	10.2	8.5	7.4	6.7	6.2	6.7	6.4	6.8	6.9	7.3	7.3	7.3
Men	9.7	7.6	6.5	5.7	5.5	6.4	6.1	6.6	6.7	6.8	…	…
Women	10.9	9.8	8.7	8.0	7.0	7.0	6.9	7.1	7.2	7.8	…	…
Colombia[f]	13.2	12.7	11.8	11.4	10.7	10.0	9.8	10.3	10.5	10.9	11.3	12.1
Men	11.1	10.6	9.6	9.2	8.7	8.1	7.9	8.4	8.6	8.9	9.3	10.0
Women	15.7	15.3	14.4	14.0	12.9	12.2	11.9	12.4	12.7	13.2	13.7	14.6
Costa Rica[g]	8.5	7.1	7.7	9.8	9.1	9.5	9.7	9.6	9.0	10.3	9.4	11.9
Men	6.5	6.0	6.3	8.9	8.3	8.3	8.3	8.3	7.7	8.7	7.6	10.2
Women	9.2	8.8	9.7	11.5	10.5	11.3	11.7	11.5	10.9	12.6	12.0	14.3
Cuba[h]	1.7	2.5	3.2	3.5	3.3	2.7	2.5	2.0	1.7	1.7	…	…
Men	1.5	2.4	3.0	3.4	3.1	2.4	2.4	1.9	1.7	1.8	…	…
Women	2.0	2.7	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.1	2.6	2.2	1.6	1.6	…	…
Dominican Republic[i]	5.8	5.7	6.7	7.2	7.9	7.2	7.9	7.9	6.1	6.1	…	…
Men	4.5	4.8	5.4	5.8	5.9	5.4	5.8	5.6	4.4	3.9	…	…
Women	7.8	7.1	8.5	9.3	10.7	9.8	10.9	11.0	8.3	9.1	…	…
Ecuador[j]	8.5	7.6	6.0	4.9	4.7	5.1	5.4	6.8	5.7	5.2	5.4	5.7
Men	7.1	6.3	5.1	4.5	4.2	4.5	4.4	5.6	4.5	4.3	4.4	4.7
Women	10.5	9.4	7.2	5.5	5.4	6.0	6.7	8.5	7.1	6.4	6.9	7.1
El Salvador	7.1	6.8	6.6	6.2	5.6	6.7	6.5	6.9	6.8	5.9	…	…
Men	9.0	8.3	8.7	8.0	6.8	8.5	8.1	8.2	8.3	7.2	…	…
Women	4.9	5.1	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.6	4.6	5.2	5.1	4.7	…	…
Guatemala[k]		4.8	3.1	4.0	3.8	4.0	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.4	…	…
Men		4.4	2.8	3.7	3.9	3.9	2.9	3.1	2.8	3.3	…	…
Women		5.2	3.7	4.5	3.7	4.2	3.6	3.8	3.8	3.7	…	…
Honduras	4.9	6.4	6.8	5.6	6.0	7.5	8.8	9.0	8.2	8.0	…	…
Men	4.6	5.9	6.2	5.3	5.7	6.9	7.0	7.0	6.8	7.6	…	…
Women	5.2	7.1	7.6	6.1	6.3	8.3	10.9	11.3	9.8	8.4	…	…
Mexico	5.9	5.9	5.6	5.4	5.4	5.3	4.7	4.3	3.8	3.6	3.5	3.8
Men	6.0	6.1	5.8	5.5	5.4	5.4	4.7	4.3	3.7	3.6	3.6	3.8
Women	5.7	5.5	5.5	5.3	5.3	5.2	4.7	4.2	3.8	3.6	3.4	3.7
Nicaragua	10.5	10.5	8.1	8.7	7.7	8.5	7.7	6.3	5.2	7.5	…	…
Men	…	11.0	8.4	8.7	8.1	8.6	7.8	6.5	5.5	8.6	…	…
Women	…	10.0	7.7	8.6	7.2	8.5	7.5	6.1	5.0	6.7	…	…
Panama[l]	7.9	7.7	5.4	4.8	4.7	5.4	5.8	6.4	6.9	7.1	6.9	7.2
Men	6.3	6.5	5.3	4.2	3.9	4.7	5.1	5.7	5.8	6.0	5.4	5.9
Women	9.9	9.3	5.4	5.5	5.7	6.4	6.7	7.5	8.4	8.4	8.8	8.9

Table A1.1 (concluded)

Country	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018[a]	First half	
											2018[a]	2019[a]
Paraguay[m]	8.2	7.4	6.9	7.9	7.7	7.8	6.5	7.7	6.9	7.1	7.3	7.9
Men	7.9	6.7	6.1	6.5	6.1	6.3	5.5	6.3	6.0	6.5	6.8	7.4
Women	8.7	8.2	7.8	9.6	9.4	9.6	7.6	9.3	7.9	7.8	8.1	8.6
Peru[n]	5.9	5.3	5.1	4.7	4.8	4.5	4.4	5.2	5.0	4.8	6.5	6.2
Men	5.6	4.6	4.8	4.0	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.9	4.8	4.3	5.5	5.5
Women	6.2	6.0	5.5	5.5	5.6	5.0	4.5	5.6	5.4	5.4	7.8	7.2
Uruguay	8.2	7.5	6.6	6.7	6.7	6.9	7.8	8.2	8.3	8.6	8.7	9.2
Men	6.1	5.7	5.3	5.3	5.4	5.5	6.8	6.9	7.0	7.4	7.6	7.6
Women	10.5	9.5	8.1	8.3	8.3	8.5	9.0	9.6	9.7	10.1	10.1	10.9
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)[o]	7.8	8.6	8.3	8.1	7.8	7.2	7.0	7.3	7.2	…	…	…
Men	7.4	8.2	7.7	7.4	7.1	6.7	6.6	7.1	6.3	…	…	…
Women	8.5	9.2	9.3	9.0	8.8	8.0	7.7	7.8	8.4	…	…	…
The Caribbean												
Bahamas[p]	14.2	…	15.9	14.4	15.8	14.8	13.4	12.2	10.0	10.4	10.0	9.5
Men	14.0	…	…	15.0	15.6	13.5	11.8	10.3	8.6	10.1	10.1	9.2
Women	14.4	…	…	13.7	16.0	15.8	15.0	14.2	11.0	10.7	10.0	9.9
Barbados[o]	10.0	10.8	11.2	11.6	11.6	12.3	11.3	9.7	10.0	10.1	9.0	11.0
Men	10.1	10.9	9.8	10.9	11.7	11.8	12.3	9.0	9.8	9.9	8.5	12.6
Women	9.8	10.6	12.6	12.3	11.6	12.8	10.3	10.1	10.1	10.3	9.4	9.3
Belize[q]	13.1	12.5	…	15.3	13.2	11.6	10.1	9.5	9.3	9.4	9.4	7.6
Men	…	…	…	10.5	10.6	6.3	6.8	5.6	5.9	5.6	5.6	5.3
Women	…	…	…	22.3	20.0	19.9	15.4	15.6	14.6	14.9	14.9	11.0
Jamaica[o]	11.4	12.4	12.6	13.9	15.2	13.7	13.5	13.2	11.7	9.1	9.7	7.9
Men	8.5	9.2	9.6	10.5	11.2	10.1	9.9	9.6	8.5	6.7	7.3	5.8
Women	14.8	16.2	16.8	18.1	20.1	18.1	17.9	17.4	15.4	11.9	12.4	10.4
Trinidad and Tobago[o]	5.3	5.9	5.1	5.0	3.7	3.3	3.4	4.0	4.8	…	…	…
Men	…	…	…	…	…	2.8	2.9	3.9	4.2	…	…	…
Women	…	…	…	…	…	4.0	4.2	4.0	5.6	…	…	…
Latin America and the Caribbean[r]	**8.8**	**8.2**	**7.4**	**7.2**	**7.1**	**6.9**	**7.3**	**8.9**	**9.3**	**9.3**	**10.1**	**10.1**
Men	…	…	…	…	6.1	6.1	6.4	7.9	8.2	8.3	9.0	8.9
Women	…	…	…	…	8.3	7.9	8.4	10.1	10.6	10.9	12.0	12.0

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of information from the household surveys conducted in the respective countries.

[a] Preliminary figures.

[b] Includes data for 30 urban centres. The National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) of Argentina does not recognize data corresponding to 2007–2015 and is in the process of reviewing them. Therefore, these data are preliminary and will be replaced when the new official figures are published. 2015 data correspond to the average of the first three quarters and 2016 data correspond to the average of the second, third and fourth quarters. Data for the first half of 2018 and of 2019 correspond to the first quarter.

[c] From 2016 onwards, data from the Continuous Employment Survey of the Plurinational State of Bolivia (data are not comparable to those of previous years).

[d] Up to 2011, data for six metropolitan areas are included. From 2012 onwards, data for 20 metropolitan areas are included (data are not comparable to those of previous years).

[e] From 2010 onwards, a new form of measurement is applied (data are not comparable with those of previous years).

[f] Data correspond to municipal capitals. Hidden unemployment is included.

[g] From 2012 onwards, a new form of measurement is applied (data are not comparable to those of previous years).

[h] Data correspond to the national total.

[i] From 2015 onwards, a new form of measurement is applied (data are not comparable with those of previous years).

[j] Hidden unemployment is included.

[k] From 2011 onwards, a new form of measurement is applied (data are not comparable with those of previous years).

[l] Hidden unemployment is included. Data for the first half of 2018 and of 2019 correspond to March.

[m] Between 2010 and 2016, data correspond to Asunción and urban areas in the Central Department.

[n] Data for the first half of 2018 and of 2019 correspond to the first quarter.

[o] Data correspond to the national total. Hidden unemployment is included.

[p] Data correspond to the national total. Hidden unemployment is included. Data for the first half of 2018 and of 2019 correspond to May.

[q] Data correspond to the national total. Hidden unemployment is included. Data for 2018 and for the first half of 2018 and of 2019 correspond to April.

[r] Weighted average with adjustments for lack of information and methodological differences and changes. Includes data adjustments for the exclusion of hidden unemployment in Colombia, Ecuador, Jamaica and Panama.

Table A1.2
Latin America and the Caribbean: annual average labour force participation rates by sex, from 2009 to the first half of 2019
(Percentages)

Country	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018[a]	First half	
											2018[a]	2019[a]
Latin America												
Argentina[b]	59.3	58.9	59.5	59.3	58.9	58.3	57.7	57.5	57.8	58.5	58.5	58.9
Men	72.1	72.3	72.9	72.2	72.0	70.9	70.1	69.4	69.7	69.6	69.8	69.8
Women	48.0	47.0	47.4	47.6	47.1	46.9	46.4	46.9	47.6	48.7	48.5	49.0
Bolivia (Plurnational State of)[c]	65.1	…	65.9	61.1	63.4	65.8	61.0	66.0	67.4	70.9	…	…
Men	73.3	…	74.7	70.4	72.6	75.0	72.1	76.4	76.8	79.1	…	…
Women	57.4	…	57.5	52.6	54.8	57.1	50.4	56.1	58.3	63.0	…	…
Brazil[d]	62.1	…	60.0	61.4	61.3	61.0	61.3	61.4	61.7	61.6	61.5	61.9
Men	72.3	…	70.8	73.1	72.9	72.5	72.4	72.3	72.0	71.7	71.7	71.6
Women	52.7	…	50.1	50.8	50.7	50.6	51.2	51.4	52.3	52.5	52.3	53.1
Chile[e]	55.9	58.5	59.8	59.5	59.6	59.8	59.7	59.5	59.7	59.7	59.9	59.4
Men	71.0	72.1	72.7	71.9	71.8	71.6	71.5	71.3	71.2	70.6	71.0	70.0
Women	41.3	45.3	47.3	47.6	47.7	48.4	48.2	48.0	48.5	49.1	49.2	49.2
Colombia[f]	61.3	62.7	63.7	64.5	64.2	64.2	64.7	64.5	64.4	64.0	63.7	63.2
Men	73.4	74.2	75.1	75.4	74.9	74.9	75.2	74.9	74.8	74.6	74.4	73.8
Women	49.8	51.8	52.8	54.1	53.9	54.0	54.8	54.5	54.5	53.8	53.5	53.1
Costa Rica[g]	60.4	59.1	58.4	62.5	62.2	62.6	61.2	58.4	58.8	60.7	59.3	62.7
Men	71.5	75.4	73.6	76.2	75.5	75.9	74.3	72.4	73.0	74.3	73.7	74.8
Women	42.1	45.9	44.2	48.4	48.6	49.2	48.1	44.3	44.5	46.9	44.8	50.5
Cuba	75.4	74.9	76.1	74.2	72.9	71.9	67.1	65.2	63.4	63.8	…	…
Men	88.4	87.7	90.0	89.5	87.1	86.2	80.4	78.2	76.2	76.9	…	…
Women	61.0	60.5	60.5	57.4	57.3	56.3	52.6	50.9	49.4	49.5	…	…
Dominican Republic[h]	55.2	56.5	57.8	59.0	58.7	59.1	61.8	62.3	62.2	63.6	62.9	64.9
Men	72.5	72.1	73.1	74.4	74.1	74.6	76.3	76.6	76.1	77.8	76.7	78.8
Women	39.0	41.7	43.7	44.0	43.7	44.0	48.1	48.9	49.0	50.4	49.9	52.0
Ecuador[f]	65.3	63.7	62.5	63.0	62.9	63.2	66.2	68.2	68.8	67.0	67.2	66.7
Men	80.2	78.9	77.9	78.1	77.6	78.8	80.5	81.0	81.0	79.7	80.1	78.9
Women	51.3	49.4	48.1	48.8	48.9	48.5	52.7	56.2	56.9	55.0	55.0	55.0
El Salvador	62.8	62.5	62.7	63.2	63.6	62.8	62.1	62.2	61.9	61.3	…	…
Men	81.0	80.9	81.2	81.4	80.7	80.7	80.2	80.1	80.6	79.5	…	…
Women	47.6	47.3	47.0	47.9	49.3	47.8	46.7	47.3	46.3	46.1	…	…
Guatemala[i]	…	62.5	61.8	65.4	60.6	60.9	60.7	60.8	61.0	60.6	…	…
Men	…	84.7	84.6	87.6	83.4	83.8	84.7	84.0	85.3	85.0	…	…
Women	…	42.9	40.4	45.7	40.6	40.6	38.9	40.1	39.2	39.1	…	…
Honduras	53.1	53.6	51.9	50.8	53.7	56.0	58.3	57.5	59.0	60.4	…	…
Men	72.3	71.0	70.4	69.2	72.1	73.6	74.0	74.0	76.0	76.3	…	…
Women	35.9	37.4	34.9	33.8	37.2	40.5	43.9	43.0	43.8	46.0	…	…
Mexico	59.9	59.7	59.8	60.4	60.3	59.8	59.8	59.7	59.3	59.6	59.4	59.8
Men	79.0	78.7	78.5	78.8	78.5	78.3	78.0	77.7	77.6	77.4	77.3	77.0
Women	42.8	42.5	42.8	43.9	43.9	43.1	43.4	43.4	43.0	43.5	43.2	44.3
Nicaragua	66.6	71.2	75.6	76.8	75.8	74.0	72.4	73.6	73.5	71.7	…	…
Men	83.2	85.4	87.9	87.7	87.2	85.8	84.6	84.9	84.7	82.6	…	…
Women	51.5	58.1	64.0	66.6	65.1	63.0	60.9	63.1	63.3	61.6	…	…
Panama[j]	64.1	63.5	61.9	63.4	64.1	64.0	64.2	64.4	64.0	65.4	66.6	65.9
Men	80.9	80.4	79.2	80.1	79.7	79.4	78.4	78.6	77.6	78.8	79.6	78.4
Women	48.3	47.5	45.8	48.2	49.4	49.8	50.8	51.1	51.2	52.8	54.2	54.3

Table A1.2 (concluded)

Country	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018[a]	First half	
											2018[a]	2019[a]
Paraguay[k]	63.1	60.8	61.1	64.4	63.3	62.3	62.1	62.6	71.0	71.9	71.6	72.4
Men	76.4	73.9	73.2	75.1	74.0	74.6	74.1	74.5	84.4	84.6	84.7	85.0
Women	49.6	47.4	49.0	53.7	52.7	50.1	50.2	50.8	57.8	59.4	58.7	60.1
Peru[l]	74.0	74.1	73.9	73.6	73.2	72.3	71.6	72.2	72.4	72.3	73.0	72.9
Men	83.1	82.7	82.7	82.4	82.0	81.4	81.0	81.2	81.0	80.7	82.0	81.5
Women	65.0	65.7	65.2	64.8	64.5	63.3	62.3	63.3	64.0	64.0	64.1	64.4
Uruguay	63.4	62.9	64.8	64.0	63.6	64.7	63.8	63.4	62.9	62.4	62.3	62.0
Men	74.1	73.1	74.7	73.5	73.9	74.3	73.0	72.2	71.6	70.7	70.8	70.1
Women	54.3	54.0	55.8	55.6	54.4	55.9	55.4	55.4	55.0	54.9	54.6	54.6
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)[f]	65.0	64.6	64.4	64.0	64.3	65.1	63.7	64.0	66.3	…	…	…
Men	79.4	79.0	78.6	77.8	78.1	79.1	77.9	77.9	80.0	…	…	…
Women	50.9	50.1	50.3	50.1	50.6	51.3	49.8	50.2	52.7	…	…	…
The Caribbean												
Bahamas[f]	73.4	…	72.1	72.5	73.2	73.7	74.3	77.1	80.5	82.8	…	…
Men	…	…	…	75.8	76.9	77.8	79.5	81.7	83.6	85.5	…	…
Women	…	…	…	69.5	70.1	70.1	71.7	73.1	75.1	76.7	…	…
Barbados[f]	67.0	66.6	67.6	66.2	66.7	63.9	65.1	66.5	65.3	64.8	64.2	62.6
Men	72.3	71.8	72.7	71.9	72.0	67.7	68.7	70.4	69.6	69.4	69.4	66.9
Women	62.2	62.0	63.0	61.0	62.0	60.4	61.7	62.8	61.4	60.6	59.5	59.0
Belize[m]	…	…	…	65.8	64.2	63.6	63.2	64.0	64.1	65.5	65.5	66.2
Men	…	…	…	79.2	78.4	78.2	77.8	78.0	78.2	78.3	78.3	79.6
Women	…	…	…	52.6	50.1	49.2	48.8	50.2	50.2	52.9	52.9	52.9
Jamaica[f]	63.5	62.4	62.1	61.9	63.0	62.8	63.1	64.8	65.1	64.1	64.1	64.5
Men	71.8	70.4	70.1	69.2	70.0	70.0	70.3	71.2	71.3	70.4	70.4	70.7
Women	55.7	54.8	55.0	54.9	56.3	55.9	56.3	58.6	59.1	57.9	58.1	58.4
Trinidad and Tobago[f]	62.7	62.1	60.8	61.9	61.4	61.9	60.6	59.7	59.2	…	…	…
Men	…	73.5	72.3	72.1	71.6	72.2	71.2	69.5	…	…	…	…
Women	…	50.9	49.4	51.7	51.1	51.8	50.0	50.0	…	…	…	…
Latin America and the Caribbean[n]	**62.5**	**62.3**	**62.2**	**62.2**	**62.1**	**61.9**	**61.9**	**62.0**	**62.3**	**62.2**	**61.9**	**62.2**
Men	75.6	77.4	75.1	75.9	75.6	75.5	75.1	75.0	75.1	74.7	74.2	74.0
Women	49.6	48.0	49.1	49.8	49.7	49.5	49.6	49.9	50.4	50.7	50.6	51.3

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of information from the household surveys conducted in the respective countries.

[a] Preliminary figures.

[b] Includes data for 30 urban centres. The National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) of Argentina does not recognize data corresponding to 2007–2015 and is in the process of reviewing them. Therefore, these data are preliminary and will be replaced when the new official figures are published. 2015 data correspond to the average of the first three quarters and 2016 data correspond to the average of the second, third and fourth quarters. Data for the first half of 2018 and of 2019 correspond to the first quarter.

[c] From 2016 onwards, data from the Continuous Employment Survey of the Plurinational State of Bolivia (data are not comparable to those of previous years).

[d] From 2012 onwards, a new form of measurement is applied (data are not comparable with those of previous years).

[e] From 2010 onwards, a new form of measurement is applied (data are not comparable with those of previous years).

[f] Hidden unemployment is included.

[g] From 2012 onwards, a new form of measurement is applied (data are not comparable to those of previous years).

[h] From 2015 onwards, a new form of measurement is applied (data are not comparable to those of previous years).

[i] From 2011 onwards, a new form of measurement is applied (data are not comparable to those of previous years).

[j] Hidden unemployment is included. Data for the first half of 2018 and of 2019 correspond to March.

[k] From 2017 onwards, a new form of measurement is applied (data are not comparable to those of previous years).

[l] Data for the first half of 2018 and of 2019 correspond to the first quarter.

[m] Data correspond to the national total. Hidden unemployment is included. Data for 2018 and the first half of 2018 and of 2019 correspond to April.

[n] Weighted average with adjustments for lack of information and methodological differences and changes. Includes data adjustments for the exclusion of hidden unemployment in Colombia, Ecuador, Jamaica and Panama.

Table A1.3
Latin America and the Caribbean: annual average employment rates by sex, from 2009 to the first half of 2019
(Percentages)

Country	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018[a]	First half	
											2018[a]	2019[a]
Latin America												
Argentina[b]	54.2	54.4	55.2	55.0	54.7	54.0	53.9	52.6	52.9	53.1	53.2	52.9
Men	66.5	67.5	68.3	67.9	67.6	66.3	66.1	64.0	64.4	63.9	64.1	63.4
Women	43.3	42.7	43.4	43.4	43.1	42.9	42.9	42.5	42.7	43.6	43.4	43.5
Bolivia (Plurnational State of)[c]	63.0	...	64.2	59.7	61.5	64.3	58.9	63.8	64.9	68.4	...	...
Men	71.4	...	73.1	69.2	71.0	73.7	70.0	74.0	74.3	76.4	...	...
Women	54.9	...	55.7	50.9	52.8	55.3	48.2	53.9	56.0	60.8	...	...
Brazil[d]	56.9	...	56.0	56.9	56.9	56.8	56.1	54.3	53.8	54.1	53.7	54.3
Men	67.8	...	67.3	68.7	68.7	68.3	67.1	65.0	63.9	64.0	63.6	64.0
Women	46.8	...	45.5	46.1	46.2	46.4	46.0	44.6	44.7	45.1	44.6	45.4
Chile[e]	50.5	53.7	55.5	55.7	56.0	56.0	56.0	55.6	55.7	55.5	55.7	55.3
Men	64.5	66.9	68.3	68.0	68.0	67.3	67.4	66.9	66.7	66.0	66.4	65.5
Women	36.9	41.0	43.2	43.8	44.4	45.1	44.9	44.7	45.0	45.3	45.3	45.4
Colombia	53.9	55.4	56.8	57.9	58.0	58.4	59.0	58.5	58.4	57.8	57.3	56.3
Men	66.5	67.6	69.0	69.5	69.4	69.7	70.1	69.6	69.4	69.1	68.6	67.5
Women	41.9	43.7	45.2	46.7	47.1	47.6	48.3	48.0	47.8	47.0	46.5	45.6
Costa Rica[f]	55.4	54.8	52.5	56.2	56.4	56.6	55.4	52.8	53.5	54.4	53.7	55.4
Men	66.8	69.6	67.2	69.2	68.9	69.7	68.3	66.6	67.5	68.0	68.1	67.6
Women	38.0	40.8	38.5	43.5	43.8	43.2	42.2	38.9	39.4	40.7	39.2	43.1
Cuba	74.2	73.0	73.6	71.6	70.5	70.0	65.4	63.8	62.4	62.7	...	...
Men	87.1	85.6	87.3	86.4	84.4	84.2	78.5	76.7	75.0	75.7	...	...
Women	59.8	58.9	58.4	55.3	55.3	54.6	51.2	49.8	48.6	48.6	...	...
Dominican Republic[g]	52.3	53.6	54.5	55.2	54.6	55.4	57.3	57.9	58.7	60.0	59.5	61.1
Men	69.5	69.2	69.7	70.3	69.9	70.6	72.3	72.9	73.1	75.1	74.2	75.9
Women	35.9	38.8	40.1	41.1	40.4	41.0	43.1	43.8	45.2	45.9	45.8	47.3
Ecuador	61.1	60.1	59.6	60.4	60.3	60.4	63.3	64.6	65.5	64.3	64.4	63.7
Men	76.0	75.3	75.0	75.3	74.9	75.9	77.6	77.5	78.2	77.0	77.4	75.9
Women	47.0	45.9	45.3	46.5	46.6	46.0	49.8	52.4	53.6	52.2	52.0	51.9
El Salvador	58.2	58.1	58.6	59.4	59.9	58.4	57.8	57.9	57.6	57.4	...	...
Men	73.7	74.1	74.6	75.4	75.1	73.7	73.5	73.6	73.9	73.6	...	...
Women	45.2	44.8	45.0	45.8	47.0	45.5	44.4	44.7	43.9	43.8	...	...
Guatemala[h]	...	60.2	59.2	63.5	58.7	59.1	59.2	59.2	59.4	59.1	...	...
Men	...	81.7	82.2	85.5	81.1	81.6	83.0	82.2	83.6	83.2	...	...
Women	...	41.1	37.7	44.1	39.1	39.2	37.5	38.7	37.8	38.0	...	...
Honduras	51.5	51.5	49.7	48.9	51.6	53.1	54.0	53.2	55.1	57.0	...	...
Men	70.4	68.7	68.1	67.2	69.7	70.3	70.8	70.2	73.0	72.8	...	...
Women	34.4	35.4	32.8	32.2	35.3	37.8	38.8	38.4	39.1	42.6	...	...
Mexico	56.7	56.5	56.7	57.5	57.3	56.9	57.2	57.4	57.3	57.6	57.4	57.8
Men	74.8	74.5	74.4	74.9	74.6	74.4	74.7	74.7	75.0	74.9	74.8	74.4
Women	40.5	40.3	40.6	41.7	41.7	41.0	41.4	41.7	41.4	42.0	41.8	42.7
Nicaragua	61.3	65.6	71.2	72.3	71.5	69.1	68.1	70.2	70.8	67.8	...	...
Men	77.5	79.2	83.1	83.0	82.3	80.5	79.9	81.3	81.7	78.1	...	...
Women	46.9	53.0	59.8	62.2	61.2	58.5	57.1	60.1	60.8	58.2	...	...
Panama[i]	59.9	59.4	59.1	60.8	61.5	60.9	60.9	60.8	60.1	61.5	62.7	61.7
Men	76.8	76.1	75.8	77.4	77.1	76.2	75.0	74.9	73.7	75.0	76.1	74.5
Women	44.0	43.5	43.5	45.8	46.8	46.8	47.6	47.7	47.2	48.8	49.9	49.8
Paraguay[j]	59.1	57.3	57.7	61.5	60.1	58.6	58.7	58.9	66.7	67.4	66.8	67.2
Men	72.3	70.6	70.0	72.4	70.7	71.1	70.5	70.8	80.1	80.0	79.8	79.6
Women	45.7	43.9	45.4	50.6	49.7	46.0	47.2	47.0	53.4	55.0	54.1	55.0

Table A1.3 (concluded)

Country	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018[a]	First half	
											2018[a]	2019[a]
Peru[k]	70.7	71.1	70.9	70.8	70.3	69.6	69.1	69.2	69.5	69.4	69.2	69.3
Men	79.5	79.7	79.6	79.8	79.2	78.5	78.2	78.1	77.8	77.6	78.3	77.8
Women	61.9	62.6	62.4	61.9	61.5	60.7	60.1	60.4	61.1	61.1	60.1	60.7
Uruguay	58.5	58.4	60.7	59.9	59.5	60.4	59.0	58.4	57.9	57.2	57.1	56.6
Men	70.0	69.3	71.0	69.8	70.2	70.5	68.4	67.5	66.9	65.8	65.8	65.0
Women	48.7	48.9	51.3	51.1	50.0	51.3	50.5	50.1	49.8	49.4	49.1	48.8
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	60.0	58.9	59.0	58.7	59.3	60.4	59.2	59.3	61.5	…	…	…
Men	73.5	72.3	72.6	72.1	72.6	73.8	72.7	72.4	74.9	…	…	…
Women	46.6	45.6	45.6	45.6	46.1	47.1	46.0	46.3	48.3	…	…	…
The Caribbean												
Bahamas	63.0	…	60.6	62.1	61.6	62.8	64.4	67.7	72.5	74.2	…	…
Men	…	…	…	64.4	64.9	67.2	70.1	73.3	76.0	76.9	…	…
Women	…	…	…	59.9	58.8	59.0	61.0	62.7	66.8	68.5	…	…
Barbados	60.3	59.5	60.0	58.5	58.9	56.0	57.7	60.0	58.8	58.3	58.5	55.8
Men	65.0	64.0	65.6	64.1	63.6	59.7	60.2	63.9	62.8	62.5	63.5	58.5
Women	56.1	55.4	55.1	53.5	54.8	52.6	55.3	56.5	55.2	54.4	53.9	53.5
Belize[l]	…	…	…	55.7	55.7	56.3	56.8	57.9	58.1	59.0	59.4	61.2
Men	…	…	…	70.9	72.3	73.3	72.5	73.6	73.6	73.9	73.9	75.4
Women	…	…	…	40.9	39.6	39.4	41.2	42.4	42.9	45.1	45.1	47.0
Jamaica	56.3	54.7	54.4	53.3	53.4	54.2	54.6	56.2	57.5	58.2	58.1	59.3
Men	65.7	63.9	63.6	61.9	62.1	62.9	63.3	64.3	65.2	65.6	65.6	66.6
Women	47.4	45.9	45.8	45.0	45.0	45.8	46.2	48.4	50.0	51.0	50.9	52.3
Trinidad and Tobago	59.4	58.4	58.2	58.8	59.1	59.9	58.5	57.4	56.3	…	…	…
Men	…	69.7	69.5	69.2	69.5	70.1	69.2	66.8	…	…	…	…
Women	…	47.3	46.3	48.5	48.8	49.7	47.9	48.0	…	…	…	…
Latin America and the Caribbean[m]	57.7	57.7	57.9	58.2	58.1	58.1	57.8	57.2	57.3	57.3	56.5	56.8
Men	71.0	71.0	71.2	71.8	71.6	71.4	70.9	70.0	69.9	69.6	68.6	68.5
Women	45.2	45.2	45.2	46.0	45.9	45.9	45.7	45.4	45.7	45.9	45.4	45.9

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of information from the household surveys conducted in the respective countries.

[a] Preliminary figures.

[b] Includes data for 30 urban centres. The National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) of Argentina does not recognize data corresponding to 2007–2015 and is in the process of reviewing them. Therefore, these data are preliminary and will be replaced when the new official figures are published. 2015 data correspond to the average of the first three quarters and 2016 data correspond to the average of the second, third and fourth quarters. Data for the first half of 2018 and of 2019 correspond to the first quarter.

[c] From 2016 onwards, data from the Continuous Employment Survey of the Plurinational State of Bolivia (data are not comparable to those of previous years).

[d] From 2012 onwards, a new form of measurement is applied (data are not comparable with those of previous years).

[e] From 2010 onwards, a new form of measurement is applied (data are not comparable with those of previous years).

[f] From 2012 onwards, new forms of measurements are applied (data are not comparable to those of previous years).

[g] From 2015 onwards, a new form of measurement is applied (data are not comparable to those of previous years).

[h] From 2011 onwards, a new form of measurement is applied (data are not comparable to those of previous years).

[i] Data for the first half of 2018 and of 2019 correspond to March.

[j] From 2017 onwards, a new form of measurement is applied (data are not comparable to those of previous years).

[k] Data for the first half of 2018 and of 2019 correspond to the first quarter.

[l] Data for 2018 and the first half of 2018 and of 2019 correspond to April.

[m] Weighted average with adjustments for lack of information and methodological differences and changes.

Changes in the regional labour market during the first half of 2019 reflected a new downturn in economic activity. While there were differences among countries, the sluggishness of the regional economy was clear from, among other things, the anaemic creation of wage employment —specifically, formal employment— and the slight year-on-year increase in the weighted average of national unemployment rates. This situation is not likely to improve over the course of the rest of the year; rather it is expected that the unemployment rate will edge up and that average employment quality will deteriorate further.

One of the most significant trends observed in recent decades in the labour market in Latin America and the Caribbean is the surge in women's participation in paid activities, which has changed both labour and family dynamics considerably. Trends in female labour participation in the countries of the region and key factors that will shape it in the future are analysed in the second part of this report.

ECLAC
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL)
www.eclac.org