

REFLECTIONS ON THE USE OF LABOUR MARKET  
INDICATORS IN DESIGNING POLICIES  
WITH A GENDER-BASED APPROACH

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## ABSTRACT

The profound transformations undergone by the economies of Latin America and the Caribbean in recent decades have combined with a massive increase in the number of economically active women to produce significant changes in the labour market. Nonetheless, the indicators used to measure and describe this market have remained unchanged, despite the fact, which it is important to bear in mind, that they were designed for circumstances distinct from today's, with different participants and requirements in policy terms.

Although the importance of measuring the share in economic activity accounted for by male and female workers has been reiterated in international conferences and studies, we have still not reached the point where existing statistics are broken down systematically by sex, or where the gender aspect is incorporated into basic indicators. These failings become more serious when we consider the imbalance that exists between the way men and women participate in the labour market. It is difficult to design policies and strategies to improve the working situation of vulnerable groups if the basic information needed to produce timely and reliable diagnoses is not forthcoming. Again, there is a lack of awareness about the limitations of the most commonly used labour indicators as tools for measuring the economic activity of the female workforce.

The limitations referred to have at least two significant implications for public policy-making. The first of these is related to the cost represented by the loss of economic and social efficiency that results from resources being allocated inefficiently. The second is linked to the problem of equity, which results from failure to recognize the real role of women, a failure that in turn reflects the lack of indicators capable of providing a comprehensive picture either of the contribution women make or of the benefits they receive in exchange for this.

The main objective of this document is to look at the indicators that now exist and are published in the region, and that serve as a basis for designing policies and programmes aimed at improving the lot of vulnerable groups. Their limitations as a tool for measuring the labour market participation of men and women are pointed out, with particular emphasis being laid on their shortcomings as regards the activity of women. Proposals are put forward for indicators better able to measure women's activity in the labour market and to serve as inputs for policies and programmes. The document is intended for users who, without being experts in the labour market, need to analyse labour market variables and design policies to improve access to this market for men and women. It is hoped that this document will thus help ensure that diagnostic studies are carried out with greater awareness of the limitations of the indicators being used, especially in the case of comparative analyses, be these between men and women, between rural areas and urban ones, between regions, or between countries.



## INTRODUCTION

The economies of Latin America and the Caribbean have undergone profound transformations in recent decades, and the labour market has changed significantly as a result. Furthermore, there has been a massive increase in the number of economically active women, which has led to a new situation in the labour market. Nonetheless, the indicators that are used to measure and describe this market have remained unchanged, and indicators that were designed for different circumstances, with different participants and with other requirements in terms of policy, continue to be employed.

The importance of measuring the share of male and female workers in economic activity, and measuring it well, has been reiterated in studies and at international conferences. A concern to improve the measurement of female participation and its linkage with poverty and resource allocation policies has been clearly expressed at every conference dealing with women's issues. Nonetheless, we have still not reached a stage where existing statistical data are broken down by sex, or where basic indicators incorporate a gender viewpoint. These failings become more serious when we consider the imbalance that exists between the way men and women participate in the labour market. It is difficult to design policies and strategies to improve the working situation of vulnerable groups if the basic information needed to produce timely and reliable diagnoses is not forthcoming. Again, there is a lack of awareness about the limitations of the most commonly used labour indicators as tools for measuring the economic activity of the female workforce.

Over recent decades there has been increasing recognition of the important contribution made by women to the development process, but it has also been accepted that there is an imbalance between the contribution they make and the reward they receive. Studies on the role of women in the labour market have proliferated, but these have used the indicators available which, in many cases, are not comparable; nonetheless, they form the basis for policy-making. Almost all the countries of the region have set up women's bureau to make their contribution more manifest and improve their working conditions. Nonetheless, a number of deficiencies can be identified in the information available for diagnostics and policy decision-making.

The main objective of this document is to look at the indicators that now exist and are published in the region, and that serve as a basis for designing policies and programmes aimed at improving the lot of vulnerable groups. The ultimate aim is to set forth explicitly the limitations of these indicators as tools for measuring the labour market participation of men and women, with particular emphasis on their shortcomings as regards the activity of women. Setting out from this critical analysis, proposals are put forward for indicators better able to measure the activity of women in the labour market, with a view to these serving as inputs for policies and programmes aimed at this market. The objective is to introduce changes that incorporate the gender aspect and that take account of the way women work and of the transformations undergone by the labour market in recent times. One of the intentions behind this document is that it

should be of service to users who, while not being experts in the labour market, need to analyse labour market variables and design policies to improve participation in this market by men and women. It is hoped that this document will thus help ensure that diagnostic studies are carried out with greater awareness of the limitations of the indicators being used, especially in the case of comparative analyses, be these between men and women, between rural areas and urban ones, between regions, or between countries.

This work contains five sections. The first gives some background information on the subject to show why better measurement of labour market variables, and greater dissemination of these, is necessary. The second part looks at the indicators most commonly used in analyses of the labour market in the region. A critical review of these indicators is carried out, with emphasis being laid on their usefulness as tools for measuring women's participation in the labour market. In this part, the main indicators are briefly defined, with the principal shortcomings that prevent them from being fully applicable to the economic activity of women being examined at the same time. The third section contains an analysis of the main limitations of the indicators found in the official publications of the countries as instruments for measuring the activity of women. These limitations arise both from the way information is compiled and from the definitions and concepts employed. In the fourth section, existing indicators are used to analyse the current labour situation, as a way of contributing to policy design. The final section contains proposals for labour market indicators better able to measure women's participation in economic activity and to provide guidance when policy decisions are being made and programmes formulated with the objective of reducing levels of household poverty by enabling women to participate more efficiently and fairly in the workforce.

## I. BACKGROUND

The more rapid rate of growth in the numbers of economically active women over the past decade has combined with greater labour market flexibility and economic globalization to produce a new situation, one that ought to be reflected in the design of the indicators used to measure the way men and women participate in the labour market. As women have become economically active, so the labour market has changed, since women work in a different way and in different activities, and in some cases what men would regard as work is hardly separable from domestic activity as far as women are concerned. Despite the changes that have clearly occurred both in the role of women and in the economies of the region, and the labour market in particular, the indicators that are used to measure workforce participation have remained the same. These were designed to measure economic activity carried out mainly by men in the formal or "modern" sector of the economy. For this reason a gap has arisen between the realities of the labour market, the indicators that profess to measure and describe this market, and policies and programmes designed to offer greater opportunities to more vulnerable groups.

Although the number of economically active women in Latin America and the Caribbean has been growing at a rapid rate over the last decade, there are still limitations both in the way statistical information is compiled and in the definitions and concepts on which the indicators most commonly used for evaluating their participation are based. These limitations have resulted, on the one hand, in the actual role of the female labour force in the development process being underestimated and, on the other, in mistaken views being held by policy makers as regards the type of contribution made by women to the process, and the scale of this contribution.

This has at least two significant implications for public policy-making. The first of these is related to the cost represented by the reduced economic and social efficiency that results from resources being allocated inefficiently. The second is linked to the problem of equity, which arises as a result of failure to recognize the real role of women, a failure that in turn reflects the inability of the indicators now in use to fully convey the contribution made by women and the benefits they receive from the development process.

One question that arises is why there is this interest in measuring the real contribution made by women to the development process or, in this case, economic activity. If it is accepted that one of the objectives of economic policy is to improve people's quality of life and reduce poverty levels, the results of studies into the way women spend their incomes more than justify research into the labour market of the region from a gender standpoint. The way in which women use their income to improve the welfare of their families differs substantially from the approach taken by men. Studies in the region reveal that women put more resources into feeding and educating their children when they have their own incomes or are responsible for generating the family income as heads of households. Furthermore, a number of studies show that

resources are not distributed equitably within the family, that households headed by women are more vulnerable to poverty than those headed by men, and that there are more women than men in poor families.

Although governments have made efforts to close the gap between the sexes, and to reduce poverty, the question arises as to why the problem is persisting and, in some cases, getting worse. Although this problem is beyond the scope of this study, one necessary precondition for people's quality of life to improve is that resources should be distributed equitably among the population and, in particular, among the different population groups. A necessary precondition is gender equity.

There is now a general consensus that growth is not enough on its own to bring about a reduction in poverty among the population at large. Two conditions need to be in place at the same time if people's living conditions are to improve: economic growth, and equity. In other words, the fruits of development need to be distributed equitably, in such a way that the changes required for the most vulnerable groups to escape from their position of indigence can come about. The way resources are allocated is one of the factors that determine how production, the benefits deriving from the development process in particular, is distributed.

The importance of the economic activities carried out by women has been abundantly analyzed, and it is now held that an increase in female incomes is a *sine qua non* if household poverty levels are to be reduced, which means that the countries need to invest in women. Investing in women leads, on the one hand, to increased productivity and more efficient use of resources and, on the other, to significant social returns with long-term consequences that will have positive effects in future generations. Increasing the opportunities for women to gain access to economic activity raises economic efficiency and, furthermore, reducing wage differentials between men and women helps bring about greater efficiency in the allocation of resources.

There is a wide range of research dealing with the disparities that exist both between the respective contributions made by men and women to development and between the benefits that they receive from it. At the current stage of the process, there is agreement on the need to incorporate the gender aspect into macroeconomic and sectoral policies and into the formulation, design and execution of programmes and projects, if the goal is economic growth with equity. Nonetheless, policies, programmes and projects need to be supported by thorough diagnoses that show the real situation of population groups, the obstacles they face, their degree of vulnerability, and their specific characteristics. The problem here is that many of these analyses are still being based on indicators and statistical information that were produced to deal with circumstances different from today's. In other words, the concepts on which many of the indicators are based reflect situations which no longer exist, and in some cases are founded upon erroneous suppositions about the state of affairs. Labour market indicators provide one of the most concrete examples of this.

The need to bring an end to the invisibility of women in national statistics was officially recognized as long ago as 1985, in the document "Nairobi forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women", presented at the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (Nairobi, 1985). That document recommended that efforts be made to measure the contribution of women to the development process, taking into account both their paid work and their unpaid activities. This concern is still felt, as can be deduced from the strategic actions proposed in the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001, approved by the member States during the sixth session of the Regional Conference on the

Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Mar del Plata from 25 to 29 September 1994. That document laid down the following aim in strategic action III.1.i: "Redoubling efforts to generalize the use of statistics disaggregated by sex and to ensure that they include gender and ethnic indicators, and promoting the incorporation of analyses differentiated by sex into statistical systems, thereby facilitating the conduct of more precise studies of the needs of women and men; and ensuring the provision of the necessary technical and financial resources for that purpose" (ECLAC, 1995a).

Concern about the economic role of women in a context of equity was one of the central features of the Fourth World Conference on Women. Among the critical areas of concern were the growing burden of poverty being borne by women and the inequalities they face in terms of access to education and training, to economic structures and policies, to all forms of productive activities and to resources, and the inequality between men and women in the distribution of power and at every level of the decision-making process. To address these areas of concern, the Platform for Action set strategic objectives with the aim of achieving these goals. Growing participation by women in the labour market under discriminatory conditions as regards access to productive resources, the earnings they receive, inadequate sharing of family responsibilities, insufficient child-care support services and inflexible working hours all add up to an inefficient and inequitable development process. Mention was also made of the extra opportunities that have accrued to women from economic globalization, but it was recognized at the same time that this tendency has exacerbated the inequalities between men and women.

Considering that inequalities and progress coexist, the Beijing Platform for Action concluded that it was necessary to rethink employment policies in order to incorporate gender aspects and draw attention to a wider range of opportunities, while taking into account any negative gender connotation that current patterns of work and employment may have. For full equality to be achieved between men and women as regards their contribution to the economy, active efforts need to be made to secure the recognition that is due to their respective contributions, and an appreciation of the influence that both men and women have in society by virtue of their work, experience, knowledge and values.

The Platform affirmed that for this to be achieved, both governments and other agents needed to promote an active and visible policy directed towards incorporating gender considerations into all policies and programmes, whereby before decisions are adopted an analysis is carried out of the effects they will have on men and women respectively.

The work-related strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform were regarded as a necessity for the region. Their main components are summarized below.

- 1) To promote the economic rights and independence of women, including access to employment and suitable working conditions and control over economic resources.
- 2) To help bring about equal access for women to resources, employment, markets and trade.
- 3) To provide commercial services, training and access to markets, information and technology, particularly to women with low incomes.
- 4) To strengthen women's economic capabilities and their commercial networks.
- 5) To do away with work segregation and all forms of employment discrimination.
- 6) To work for harmonization of the responsibilities of women and men in relation to work and the family.

To achieve the strategic objectives listed above, a series of actions were planned, to be implemented by governments and the private sector, non-governmental

organizations, unions, women's organizations, employers' associations and international bodies. For the above initiatives to be put into effect, it is necessary to know what the position of men and women in the labour market actually is.

According to a study by Benería (1991), it is in four areas of activity that the contribution made by women to the economy has been particularly underestimated: subsistence production, unpaid work, domestic production and related tasks, and voluntary work. There has been a tendency to underestimate the female labour force engaged in subsistence production and unpaid activities, while in respect of domestic production and voluntary work a conceptual problem has arisen, with activities of this type not being regarded as "economic". As a result, they are not included in the statistics that measure people's contribution to output. Only paid activities are regarded as a contribution to output, so that a great number of tasks, carried out in particular by women, are excluded from recorded output. This tendency to underestimate activities carried out primarily by women has been analysed on many occasions (Boserup, 1970; Anker, 1987; Benería, 1982 and 1991; Blades, 1975; Dixon-Mueller and Anker, 1988; Lutz, 1989; Wainerman and Recchini de Lattes, 1981).

The general conclusion is that, although methods of compiling information have improved in both their methodological and conceptual aspects, there is still a great deal of work to be done in developing systematic statistics that incorporate the contribution made by women to the development process. The way the activities of women are overlooked and underestimated is a very serious obstacle to the success of efforts to formulate, design and implement policies and programmes that genuinely consider women in their role as producers. Failure to recognize the real role of women translates into a reduced ability to achieve economic efficiency and equity, two complementary aspects that are of high priority for the development process in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Hitherto, policies have been neutral in terms of gender. If the gender viewpoint is really to be incorporated into policies, it is necessary to have information broken down by sex. Furthermore, indicators must be comparable if we are not to arrive at distorted conclusions by treating as equivalent indicators that employ different definitions without explaining this.

To sum up, there are still obstacles that hinder efforts by women to gain access to the benefits of the development process on the same terms as men. The causes are manifold, but one very significant one is the way the real role played by women in the process is overlooked. This can be explained, in part, by the fact that very little information reaches decision-making levels in a form that enables an awareness of the issue to be developed and that helps the authorities to design strategies, programmes and projects to bring women more fully into the development process. Most of the processes used for compiling labour force statistics are impaired by problems of definition and procedure, and this is true in both developed and developing countries. Nonetheless, the greatest deficiencies in this respect are to be found in the case of women.

Some of the causes of this are related to the definitions of economic activity used in international regulations. Others have to do with the selective way these criteria are applied, for example when certain activities are not regarded as being labour force activities; when questions are formulated in a way that leads women to classify themselves as wives or "housewives", even when they do paid work; or when interviewers simply assume, on the basis of mistaken social stereotypes, that wives are not economically active (United Nations, 1995a).

## II. MOST COMMON LABOUR MARKET INDICATORS

The indicators traditionally used to measure participation in the labour market were designed in response to circumstances different from today's. Nonetheless, they are still in use, and this makes it difficult to formulate policy from a gender standpoint. There is, therefore, a need to revise the most commonly used indicators in order to identify their shortcomings and either propose changes to them as they now stand or design new ones, so that instruments are available to cope with the new circumstances that characterize economies, the role of women and the labour market at the present day. The main indicators now in existence are reviewed in this section.

### 1. Workforce or economically active population

The workforce, labour force, or economically active population, is defined as all those people who offer their labour for the production of economic goods and services that count as income for the purposes of national income statistics.

This concept of income is based on a questionable definition of economic activity, one that ignores the activities most commonly performed by women. The distinction between economic and non-economic activity is based on a distinction between economic and non-economic use of time, something that is complicated to establish. A more complicated task still is to define these concepts for different countries with different cultures and at different stages of development. Thus, certain tasks are regarded as leisure in some countries, and as work in others; for some types of "work" it is difficult to distinguish what part of a process is work and what part leisure. One example that may be cited of this are activities in the rural sector, in particular activities relating to subsistence agriculture.

The above problems have been solved in part by equating the concept of economic activity with that of paid employment. Nonetheless, this approach leads to the economic activity of women being underestimated, since a great many tasks that women traditionally carry out, but for which they receive no payment, are thereby excluded. As examples of activities of this type, mention may be made of domestic tasks, the rearing of children, the carrying of water or wood for family consumption, voluntary work in schools or hospitals, caring for the sick and elderly, etc.

For these reasons, it would appear that the indicator for the labour force underestimates the contribution made by women, in that it fails to include many of the activities that they carry out. In other words, if it is established that the female labour force is 30% in one country and 35% in another, this would mean only that one country has a greater proportion of women than the other engaging in economic activity as thus defined (paid occupation). Yet, if one of these countries is of a rural type and a large proportion of its population works in subsistence agriculture, while the other is of an urban type, it is probable that a high proportion of the labour that exists, and in

particular the proportion of women, will not be included in the figures for the labour force or the economically active population.

The labour force is subdivided into those in work, those who are out of work, and those seeking work for the first time. The problem of comparability arises, however, because the countries use different criteria to define what it means to be in work, these criteria being defined in each case in relation to certain variables.

In addition to the problem of defining economic activity, there are other problems of comparability which are due to the use of different criteria for deciding which population groups are active.

**a) *Labour force in work***

This refers to active workers who are employed, or who were employed for a given period of time (this differs depending on the country and the type of survey) during the week, the month, or some other interval of time prior to the survey.

**b) *Inactive population***

People are defined as inactive when, being of working age, they are neither working nor seeking employment. The majority of inactive people are students and "housewives".

**c) *Out of work***

People are out of work when they have entered the labour market, i.e. have had paid employment, but no longer have it. They are people who are seeking work in order to take part in economic activity once again.

**d) *Unemployment***

People are regarded as unemployed when they are economically active but are not working in accordance with the definition of employment. Such people may be out of work (having worked previously, but being now without employment), or they may be seeking work for the first time.

Rates of unemployment vary in line with factors such as age, education, aptitudes and place of residence, and generally differ considerably between women and men. Women and men tend to work in different activities and occupational groups, and are affected in different ways by labour market practices and regulations.

Unemployment data have a number of limitations and are not totally comparable between different countries. Most of the countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region do carry out systematic labour force surveys, but these are centred on urban areas. Some surveys are done in rural areas. It is difficult to make precise comparisons even between countries that measure unemployment carefully, due to the different sources used.

The way unemployment is generally measured tends to prevent women from being counted as unemployed. In the definition produced by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1982, the term unemployed covers anybody who, during the

reference period: a) was "without work", i.e., did not have paid employment or own-account employment as specified in the international definition of employment; b) was "currently available for work", i.e., was available for paid employment or for own-account employment during the reference period, or c) was "seeking work", i.e., had taken concrete measures to find paid employment or own-account employment in a recent period.

Nonetheless, many people who are without work —and women more than men— do not actively seek work if they believe they are not going to find any within a given time, so they do not count as unemployed. In rural areas, it may be the case that employment opportunities for women are particularly limited, apart from those that become available during seasonal harvest times. And in many countries women do not have easy access to official channels, such as public offices and bodies concerned with unemployment, and often face obstacles of a social and cultural nature when seeking employment. In these circumstances, a more appropriate and less limiting criterion is that of being "available for work", without necessarily "seeking work".

If the broader definition of availability is used, a higher rate of unemployment is obtained —considerably higher in some countries— and the effect is always greater for women than for men in all the countries studied. The percentage of those not seeking work, i.e. of workers who are available for work but are not actively seeking work, tends to be higher for women

#### e) *Seeking employment for the first time*

This refers to people who are of working age, are entering the labour market for the first time and are currently seeking employment. Most of these are young people who are entering the labour market for the first time upon completing their studies, or women who decide to work once they have finished bringing up their children.

## 2. Participation rate

The indicator that is used most frequently to measure participation in "economic activity" is the labour force participation index, which shows the proportion of men and women who are economically active, i.e. who are of working age and are employed or currently seeking employment.

For the purposes of measuring labour activity, a person will only be considered as working if they are performing an "economic activity". The problem lies in trying to define an activity as economic, since in industry, services and agriculture alike women and men have different responsibilities and activities. For most women, family and work are permanently related. For most men, work signifies a job outside the house with fixed hours that brings in income. According to international statistical standards, economic activity includes all work that is treated as such in the System of National Accounts (SNA) (United Nations, 1970). Nonetheless, national practices can differ and include or exclude certain activities, as often happens with a great number of activities that tend to be carried out by women, such as carrying water or growing food for the family (United Nations, 1995a). Unpaid work, which consists mainly in domestic work, is excluded from measurements of economic activity and output under international standards.

In poor agricultural societies, women work in the fields and carry out the domestic activities. Traditional female activities, such as growing and making the food that their families consume, collecting wood, transporting water and cooking, are unpaid. Men generally concentrate on producing and selling cash crops. In more developed areas, a larger and larger proportion of women have paid work, but retain their household and family responsibilities. Thus, many of the activities that are carried out by women are not categorized as economic activities (United Nations, 1995a).

A shift is going on in the way economic activity is defined. Thus, in the review of the System of National Accounts (SNA) carried out in 1993, it was recommended for the first time that all goods which households produced for their own consumption should be included in the measure of economic output, although the services that households produce for their own benefit, including childcare, care of the elderly and cooking and cleaning tasks, are still excluded. One of the main arguments for excluding services within the home from economic activity has been the problem of how to compare them directly with services that are sold. As economies become more services-oriented, however, and the services sector becomes ever more competitive, production inside and outside the home is becoming more and more of a trade (United Nations, 1995a).

The tendency towards trade can be observed in a more pronounced form in the developed countries, where services such as health care, food, care of the elderly, cleaning of the home, transport and recreation services are now provided in a mixed form from within the home and through the market and the government.

The methods used to calculate participation in the labour force are based on the experience of the developed countries, which is not always appropriate to developing countries, where workers are more likely than they are in industrialized countries to be working on their own account or to be unpaid family members, rather than wage earners; to work seasonally, rather than all year round; to be underemployed rather than formally unemployed; and to pursue a variety of economic activities at the same time. On the other hand, the boundary between domestic production for the household's own consumption and economic activity for sale or trade is much more blurred in developing countries, particularly in rural areas, and above all among women.

To sum up, the traditional definitions of economic activity that are used in the Latin America and Caribbean region tend to leave out a large proportion of the work done by women, and this can be attributed chiefly to the fact that economic activity is defined as an activity for which payment is received. For this reason, women's work is underestimated in the indicators of participation.

### **3. Underemployment**

In the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ILO, 1990b), the term "underemployment" is used to indicate inadequate employment in relation to specific standards or alternative forms of employment to which the person's qualifications are suited; for example, insufficient work ("visible underemployment") or imperfect distribution of labour resources ("invisible underemployment").

In the countries of the region, underemployment is in many cases a greater problem than out-and-out unemployment. Underemployment is greatest in rural areas, and for the most part affects vulnerable groups such as women and young people. The causes behind the high percentage of this index in Latin America and the Caribbean derive on the one hand from a lack of unemployment insurance schemes, which means

that people are obliged to take any work they can find in order to survive, and on the other hand from the large scale of own-account working. In many cases, own-account activities are commenced as a way of surviving until other employment can be found. In the case of women, it is found that the most dispossessed groups among them are concentrated in informal own-account activities, which they work in on a part-time basis.

Under one definition of employment, it is enough for a person to be employed for one hour during the reference period for them to be regarded as employed. Furthermore, this definition embraces a whole range of partial employment possibilities. Two types of underemployment are distinguished: visible underemployment and invisible underemployment. The first refers to insufficiency in the quantity of employment, and the second to low incomes, under-utilization of people's capabilities or skills, low productivity, etc.

**a) *Visible underemployment***

Different criteria are used to measure visible underemployment. One of these is that a person must have worked for less time than is considered normal for the activity concerned. To be visibly underemployed, the person must want to work a longer day, but be unable to do so. This indicator is difficult to measure due to the problems involved in defining what a normal amount of time is for a given activity, but it is the most widely used in the countries of the region. As regards the measurement of female underemployment, research shows that they are more likely to be in this position than men, and this statistic is therefore a vital one for orienting policy. It is not enough simply to produce and publicize unemployment data. Open unemployment may be reduced, and a high level of underemployment continue to exist nonetheless. Different policies and programmes will be needed depending on whether the beneficiary group has problems of unemployment or of underemployment.

**b) *Invisible underemployment***

This is an analytical concept that seeks to measure poor allocation of human resources. It reflects low incomes, under-utilization of qualifications and low productivity. People are in a position of invisible underemployment when their earnings provide them with a very low income in relation to their productivity, or when they carry out tasks that require a lower standard of education than they actually possess. This type of underemployment affects female workers very directly as a result of cultural factors of discrimination. It is common to find that female workers in a given job have better qualifications than male workers in the same job. This aspect is of great importance when policies come to be designed and formulated; if invisible underemployment can be properly measured and broken down by sex, these policies can then incorporate measures to make better use of the female workforce, in line with their qualifications. This would mean greater efficiency in the use of human resources, whence higher growth and, in turn, greater equity.

In developing countries, only a limited number of workers are protected by unemployment insurance or other types of welfare provision. Under these conditions, very few people can afford the luxury of being unemployed for any period of time. Most people have to be carrying out some economic activity at all times, however marginal it

may be. Although they may be looking for other work or additional work at the same time, they will not be counted as unemployed. As a result, unemployment data in developing countries need to be complemented by data on underemployment, especially where women are concerned, since it is more usual for women than for men to spend their time working within the home, growing food on the family plot or carrying out seasonal agricultural work. According to the definition of economic activity, these women are economically active and are "employed", but their situation in terms of earnings, the use made of their aptitudes, and productivity, is closer to the definition of unemployment than to that of employment.

#### **4. Informal sector**

The statistics give a better picture of the "formal" market. The problem that arises in the case of "informal" activities is the absence of statistics that collect the information needed to measure the size of this sector in a systematic way. Research shows that women are concentrated in this sector, and particularly women from poor and indigent homes (Pollack, 1993). The difficulties involved in measuring this sector or, even more seriously, the lack of systematic official estimates for this indicator, mean that a skewed picture is being shown, one that does not reflect the real situation in the labour market and that ultimately distorts the information required for policies to be oriented and for programmes to be devised with a view to improving the situation of working people and, in particular, of women members of the workforce. Another factor that complicates this analytical work is that there is no one definition of the informal sector. Numerous definitions and concepts are used for informal work, and this limits the effectiveness of measurements not just in a particular country or region, but in comparisons between countries as well. In Latin America and the Caribbean, there is no systematic information on the sector. Rather, there are one-off studies that reveal the importance of the sector, particularly as regards groups from the poorer levels of society, and women.

The concept of the informal sector began to be used at the turn of the century when it was realized that a large proportion of people engaging in economic activities were not recorded or accounted for in the official statistics. Subsequently, as concern grew about the fact that the labour force in developing countries was not being absorbed by the formal or modern sectors, there began a search for strategies and policies focusing on the deficiencies of the labour market. The view was held that one of the main causes of poverty was the way people participated in the labour market, with the informal sector being prominent. The informal sector began to be dealt with in a systematic way in the 1970s, and was brought into greater prominence by the work of the ILO and the Regional Employment Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean (PREALC). Hitherto, though, different definitions have been used and different approaches to measurement taken. There is no consensus on how to define the sector, still less on how to measure it.

One of the most commonly used definitions is the one employed by the ILO. According to this definition, the sector is comprised of activities having a production logic of their own which is different from that obtaining in the visible part of the economy (PREALC, 1982; Tokman, 1987). This approach, known as production rationality, is centred on the characteristics of the labour market and includes a heterogeneous set of productive activities whose main feature is that they employ a number of people who would be unable to find employment in the modern sector and who are obliged to be underemployed, with relatively little access to factors of

production that complement labour (Mezzera, 1988). According to this approach, most people who work in this sector do so because there are not enough employment opportunities available in the formal sector. The sector is characterized by the low capitalization of productive units, a low technological level, lack of linkage with formal financial systems, and very low barriers to entry.

A second approach to defining the informal sector is one that puts emphasis on institutional legal conditions, and is known as the legality approach. In this case the sector is defined as a set of activities that do not comply with the regulations governing the economic ambit (de Soto, 1987).

A third approach is the one known as market rationality. According to this approach, the activities of the urban informal sector are typical of capitalism, form part of the modern economy and are not exclusive to developing countries. Decentralization of production, flexible work contracts and subcontracting all form part of a set of circumstances that are mutually reinforcing. The formal and informal economies are linked through subcontracting (Jusidman, 1993).

After the first discussions about the informal sector had taken place, the labour market underwent changes, with certain of the characteristics remaining in place while some new ones appeared. The result was that the heterogeneity of the sector increased, which makes it difficult to devise policy proposals for the sector.

The ILO definition includes primarily non-wage earners or own-account workers (not professionals), unpaid family members, wage earners in establishments employing less than five workers, and employers of less than five workers. Nonetheless, there are other ways of measuring the sector, and the measurements arrived at differ greatly depending on the definition used. As regards the participation of men and women, the proportion of men and women working in the sector varies enormously depending on the definition used. Women have a large presence in the micro-enterprise sector, but do not make up such a large proportion of wage earners. Thus, if the definition only includes non-professional own-account workers, the proportion of women in informal work is very much higher than it is if wage earners are included in the measure (see table 1). Another approach used to measure the informal sector is to include workers whose earnings fall below a certain income level. This method produces a higher proportion of women than any other form of measurement (Jusidman and Pollack, 1995).

The informal sector has recently come to include new systems of labour market participation, which are very important in some countries of the region. One example of this is assembly work in the home, which includes types of work carried out for the most part by women.

Informal activities may be of an autonomous type, or they may have a function in the workings of the formal sector. In the former case, the activities concerned exist independently of developments in the modern sector. In the latter, the informal activities in question develop as the formal sector develops, and this enables them to reduce their operating costs. These workers supply services to formal activities.

There is no consensus about the workings of the informal sector, which depend on the economic context, the country and its composition (Pollack, 1993). Nor is it clear that people working in the informal sector wish to work in the formal one (Jusidman, 1993). This sector generally offers the only opportunity people have of entering the labour market. This is very often true for women, who need to reconcile their productive and reproductive roles.

Domestic work is sometimes included in the informal sector, sometimes not. There is no consensus about how domestic work should be categorized. Considering that around 25% of the female labour force in the region work in domestic service, it is

vital for their position in the labour market to be defined. This issue is of particular importance for policy-making, as the occupational category concerned is one of the most significant for the female labour force. Those working in it are among the groups least protected by labour legislation, since in general they are not covered by the same legislation as those working in other activities. Furthermore, they are often treated as part of the informal sector, when in reality they have different characteristics, and they have no access to policies and programmes for improving the position of workers in the informal sector.

Table 1  
POPULATION EMPLOYED IN THE URBAN INFORMAL SECTOR, 1992

Country	Total	Employers of fewer than 5 people	Wage earners in establishments employing fewer than 5 people <sup>a</sup>	Own-account and family workers <sup>a</sup>	Domestic employees
Argentina					
Men	45.9	5.0	16.1 <sup>b</sup>	24.0 <sup>b</sup>	0.3
Women	51.9	1.9	13.0 <sup>b</sup>	25.4 <sup>b</sup>	11.6
Bolivia					
Men	48.1	5.2	14.9	27.5	0.5
Women	62.5	1.7	1.6	51.3	7.9
Brazil					
Men	48.8	6.6 <sup>b</sup>	21.2 <sup>b</sup>	20.6	0.4
Women	52.3	2.4 <sup>b</sup>	12.2 <sup>c</sup>	22.5	15.2
Chile					
Men	37.6	3.1	14.1	20.2	0.2
Women	49.9	1.9	11.3	18.1	18.6
Colombia					
Men	-	-	-	26.8	0.2
Women	-	-	-	24.5	11.9
Costa Rica					
Men	30.5	4.4	9.6	16.5	0.0
Women	36.9	1.4	9.7	16.5	9.3
Honduras					
Men	43.4	1.0	13.2	28.8	0.4
Women	54.7	0.4	5.1	33.5	15.7
Mexico					
Men	41.0	4.6	20.5	15.4	0.5
Women	48.5	2.0	16.1	21.6	8.8
Panama					
Men	39.0	3.4	6.1	28.9	0.6
Women	35.0	1.3	4.3	11.6	17.8
Paraguay					
Men	41.3	5.9	14.4	20.6	0.4
Women	59.8	3.7	7.7	24.1	24.3
Uruguay					
Men	34.4	3.6	10.3	20.4	0.1
Women	46.2	1.3	8.4	19.8	16.7
Venezuela					
Men	44.3	6.9	14.0	21.7	1.7
Women	44.2	1.8	10.3	20.8	11.3

Source: ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America, 1995 Edition* (LC/G.1886-P), Santiago, Chile. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.11.G.17, on the basis of tabulations of data from household surveys.

<sup>a</sup> Excludes professionals and technical occupations. <sup>b</sup> Includes professionals and technical occupations. <sup>c</sup> Workers without an employment contract.

### **III. THE LIMITATIONS OF LABOUR MARKET INDICATORS**

There are shortcomings in the way labour market indicators measure the activity of both men and women, although the problems involved in measuring female activity are more numerous. This is due to the fact that indicators and the system for gathering basic data were designed for a set of circumstances that has undergone changes; in particular, they were designed for a predominantly male labour market. The main shortcomings are summarized below.

#### **1. Gathering data**

A number of factors contribute to the shortcomings evinced by the indicators used to measure the working activity of women. One of these factors is the questionable validity of data obtained by means of household surveys. The surveys that are carried out to measure employment and the way people participate in the labour market were designed at a time when the economic activity of women was relatively insignificant. As a result, many of the shortcomings in the way women's participation in the labour market is measured stem from the definition used, which was designed to measure activities carried out by men, as it was men who were carrying out these tasks when this definition was devised. The change in the roles traditionally assigned to men and women is not reflected in the indicators used to measure the contribution of men and women and the way they participate in the labour market. Furthermore, increasing flexibility in the labour market has brought with it a number of changes which are barely reflected in the indicators for the sector. Temporary work and the subcontracting of labour are two mechanisms that are now widely used and that are not recognized by existing indicators, even though substantial percentages of the labour force, and of women in particular, work in this way.

#### **2. Publication and publicizing of indicators**

In most of the countries of the region, statistical information is collected and published by governmental bodies, the aim being to monitor the development process. Nonetheless, the figures published for these data and indicators are not usually broken down by sex, and as a result many of the disparities revealed by these studies cannot be discerned from the indicators used by governments to lay down the bases of policy. The ability of governments to identify areas of priority for action and devise policies, programmes and projects to reduce the differences between the sexes will depend on whether the information available reflects both these disparities and the obstacles that exist and that influence this situation.

### **3. Differing definitions of indicators**

Another of the factors limiting the usefulness of traditional indicators when they are employed as inputs into policy decision-making is the variety of definitions used, as these may differ not only between countries, but within a single country at different times. Furthermore, even where definitions agree, another problem that may arise is that all information is not equally reliable. It should be noted that in some countries the systems used for gathering information are at a very advanced stage, involving the use of sophisticated instruments with comprehensive coverage.

### **4. Interviewers, respondents and stereotypes**

Most of the survey agents in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean are men, and this tends to skew survey results for the reason that most of them regard women as "housewives", and therefore tend to guide responses towards what they consider normal. Even if the interviewers are women, this bias still exists. Most respondents tend to be men, which means that the answers given in relation to women tend to deal only with their domestic work. In many cases women do not regard their productive labours as work, but as part of their domestic responsibilities. In addition, the training received by interviewers differs between countries. Some of them are aware of gender issues, but most are not. This divergence results in different answers being given in relation to the participation of women, so that although the participation of women appears to vary between countries, these differences could diminish if the results were adjusted for these factors.

### **5. Reference period**

A person is regarded as employed if they were employed during a given period of time prior to the survey. This period differs between countries and within individual countries at different times, as definitions change. The reference period for measuring employment may be the week, the month or another period prior to the time the survey is carried out. In some cases, for the respondent to count as employed it is enough for them to have worked for one day in the week prior to the date of the survey. The reference period is a determining factor for the scale of employment, since a person is more likely to have been employed for a short period of time than for a long one. In consequence, when comparing countries it has to be borne in mind that employment and unemployment rates are indicators that need to be treated with caution, especially in the case of women. It is more common for women than for men to work sporadically, part time or as temporary workers. The statistics that compare rates of employment between the sexes, even within a single country, need to take this limitation into account. Women participate in the labour market in a different way from men, but survey questionnaires were designed to deal with male employment, as men were more likely to be employed at that time.

Women, in general, enter and leave the labour market more frequently than men. As a result, the effects of the reference period are greater for the female than for the male workforce, and this has significant implications for comparisons of unemployment between men and women, between countries and between rural and urban areas.

## **6. Under-recording**

In certain countries, unpaid family members —and especially women, in the case of agriculture— are systematically excluded from the economically active population. This results in the size of the agricultural labour force as a whole being systematically under-recorded, and in the percentage of agricultural workers who are women being underestimated. In other countries, women appear and disappear from one census or survey to the next (United Nations, 1995a). It is most probable that the inconsistencies in calculations of the economically active population affect women, and especially women working in agricultural occupations, where unpaid family members predominate.

Men who are in the age groups where working activity is at its highest are almost always regarded as economically active, regardless of what definitions or procedures are used to collect data. But the decision as to whether or not women should be counted as economically active is up to the interviewer and the respondent, and is influenced by the prejudices about women's work that are built into society.

## **7. Bias in survey questions**

The way in which questions about economic activities are phrased in censuses and surveys condition the responses, and thence the statistical results. Terms such as "employment", "job", "work" or "main occupation" have very different meanings for different people. The order in which these questions are put, the size of the sample, the reference period used, the minimum number of hours used to determine whether unpaid workers are included in the labour force and the assumptions made by interviewers and respondents are all factors that contribute towards determining whether the person will be classified as economically active or not.

## **8. Discouraged workers**

A "discouraged worker" is considered to be one who is economically active and wants to work, but is not actively seeking employment because he has lost the incentive to do so for one reason or another. One such reason may be that he has been seeking work unsuccessfully for a long time. Another may be that low self-esteem causes him to assume from the outset that it would be difficult to find work. The difficulties involved in obtaining paid work tend to be greater for low-income groups, and in particular for women and young people.

The unemployment indicators do not include discouraged workers, who are considered inactive (neither employed nor seeking employment) for the purposes of the survey. Nonetheless, it is very important for this factor to be taken into account in any strategy to improve the participation of women in the labour market. If opportunities to find work are increased and working conditions improved as a result of policies and programmes, it is very likely that a substantial number of women will be able to engage in economic activity. This has occurred on a number of occasions when the countries of the region have implemented emergency employment programmes. In these cases, the number of women applying for the jobs offered by these programmes surpassed all expectations, as many women who had been regarded as inactive were among the applicants. What happened was that large numbers of these women re-entered the labour force when new employment opportunities arose, and participated in the job

programmes. In some cases, the programmes had been set up to create work for unemployed men, most of whom were heads of households, and the massive influx of women was regarded as a drag on the success of the programme.

Failure to take account of the fact that it is not only unemployed women who will take part in economic activity at times of growth or greater employment opportunities, but a certain proportion of inactive women as well, leads to the figures for labour available for work being underestimated. This factor is more significant in the case of women than in that of men.

## **9. Main and secondary occupations**

Questionnaires dealing with employment and unemployment divide people into those who are active and those who are inactive. To determine whether a person is employed, that person is asked what their main occupation is. One question they may be asked is how they spend most of their time, another is what their main occupation is. In the case of women, the answer tends to be that they spend most of their time in household activities, even when they also work in activities that are regarded as economic ones for the purposes of the survey concerned. Studies dealing with this issue have shown that many women who work on a permanent basis have replied that their main occupation is as a "housewife". In the case of men, it is more likely that they will give their work as their main occupation, and this means that the results are skewed against the participation of women in the workforce.

## **10. Key words**

The word "work" is generally equated with the idea of "paid employment". Problems arise because both interviewers and respondents regard a wide range of activities, aside from domestic activities as such, as belonging to the category of household tasks, even when they provide income, especially when their main objective is subsistence. This is yet another factor that leads to the economic activity carried out by women being underestimated, a problem that is more acute in the rural sector than in towns.

## **11. Participation in the agricultural and urban sectors**

Different activities are regarded as being economic ones in the rural and urban sectors. In the rural sector it is more complicated to separate activities carried out for the market from those carried out for home consumption. Consequently, the way people participate in economic activity should also be measured differently in the rural and urban sectors. Although this problem exists for the entire active population, it is more pronounced in the case of women, who generally carry out a large proportion of the work whereby goods are produced for family consumption. As a result, it is a more complex task in the rural sector to distinguish between the economic activities that women carry out and the activities that are for family consumption. Women tend to engage in activities such as rearing animals, producing food for the family, etc., that are not counted as economic activities, but rather as domestic responsibilities (United Nations, 1995a).

Agricultural surveys normally concentrate on production and the use of land, attributing less importance to human resources and the role of family members.

Population censuses and labour force surveys, which do concentrate on people and the work they carry out, generally overlook the agricultural work done by women, as this is usually unpaid, and they normally include *[sic]* activities such as the preparation of foodstuffs and the provision of water and fuel, which are considered to be domestic duties. Furthermore, much of the agricultural work done by women is to grow subsistence crops and not cash crops, but very few women grow subsistence crops and nothing else. Most farming families in developing countries consume food that in the main has been produced on the family property, but the volume of production for the market varies considerably (United Nations, 1995a). A study carried out on the role of women in food production in Latin America and the Caribbean (Pollack, 1990) used case studies to conclude that the participation of women in the rural economy is underestimated, especially in economies that are primarily agricultural.

### **12. Illegal activities**

Activities that are regarded as illegal can hardly be included in measurements of economic activity. On the one hand there are activities that are against the law, such as prostitution, drug trafficking, etc. On the other hand there are activities that, while not illegal, do not adhere to the provisions of legislation, and that therefore cannot be included in the national accounts. In both cases this leads to underestimation not only of what is produced by the people carrying out this activity, but also of the size of the economically active population. In countries where the proportion of illegal activities is high, this must be leading to underestimation of the level of participation in the labour force and the type of participation.

### **13. Age limits**

Not everybody is included in the active population. People below a certain age are regarded as too young to carry out economic activities, and this is because all the countries have established age limits for inclusion in the labour force. The limits depend on various factors. Among the most important are those connected with legislation and years of compulsory schooling. These limits differ between countries, and in individual countries at different times. Age limits need to be considered when comparisons are made between the economically active populations of different countries, or within a single country at different times. If this is not done, erroneous conclusions may be drawn, and these in turn may lead to mistaken policies.

In some countries there is also a maximum age limit above which people are not considered active. In the case of Latin America, Mexico is the only country to have instituted an upper age limit, of 65 (ILO, 1990a).

### **14. Unpaid work**

Employment surveys are best at measuring the labour market participation of people who receive an income. Questionnaires and definitions of economic activity are mainly designed to measure this type of activity. Nonetheless, there is a proportion of workers, most of them women and young people, who work as "unpaid family members", i.e. who help out their spouse or partner, but without receiving any pay. In surveys,

answers concerning unpaid activity tend to be less precise than those given in respect of paid activities. Unpaid family members do not regard what they are doing as "work", but as an activity carried out to support the person apparently responsible for the work. As a result, this indicator too needs to be treated with caution, since it is probable that the percentage of "unpaid family members" is higher than it appears to be from surveys. Given that the majority of those falling into this occupational category are women, it is important for it to be taken into account in policies to improve their participation in the labour force and, in particular, in measurements of their real contribution to development.

Using the definitions of the 1993 revised version of the System of National Accounts (SNA), unpaid work in the home may be divided into three categories: a) household tasks, childcare and other family-related services that the SNA does not recognize as economic activity, b) non-commercial subsistence activities, such as agricultural production for home consumption and the imputed rent of owner-occupied dwellings, which the SNA does treat as an economic product, but which are valued on the basis of the market value of similar services produced for sale and c) domestic enterprises, which produce for the market, and to which more than one member of the family contributes unpaid work. These enterprises provide the entire family with an income, and their earnings and/or output are quantified in the SNA, using transaction values. The first two categories are difficult to evaluate, and few statistics can be gathered or compiled on the first category.

In the three above categories, the production of goods and services and the earnings thus generated are difficult to apportion between unpaid family members using existing methods of data gathering. Women, in particular, take part in many types of domestic activities of an economic and non-economic nature which are difficult to separate from those carried out by other members of the family (United Nations, 1995a).

#### **IV. THE MALE AND FEMALE LABOUR MARKETS: THE NEW CIRCUMSTANCES**

Both the statistics and the indicators that are used in the region to measure the working activity of men and women have significant limitations, and special attention needs to be paid to these when comparisons are made between countries or regions, and in particular when they are made between men and women, since these limitations have a more severe impact on measurements of women's working activity. There are factors characteristic of the way women engage in the labour market that make it more difficult to measure the activity of women workers using the same approaches and indicators as for male workers. Official indicators and statistics measuring participation in the labour market were devised and defined for a particular set of circumstances. Although these circumstances have been changing, the official statistics and the indicators that are produced are still the same, having hardly been updated at all. There is now a consensus that the labour market has undergone profound changes, among the most fundamental of them being the massive influx of women into all kinds of activities. Other important changes have taken place in the systems of contracting, which are showing a large increase in subcontracting and temporary work, with the informal or unstructured sector rising to prominence. These new situations are not clearly shown up when the traditional indicators are used, and sometimes it is even difficult to devise new indicators with the statistical data available.

With the statistics that now exist, and the indicators used in the region, it is possible to give a picture of the new circumstances under which men and women operate in the labour market. Below, examples are given to illustrate some situations that do not emerge at all clearly if the bare statistics are used, as certain adjustments are needed if we are to understand what labour market conditions for men and women are really like. Only if there is a diagnosis available that shows how people actually participate in the labour market can policies incorporating the gender dimension be proposed to improve this.

##### **1. Participation rate**

Women have increased their participation in working activities over recent decades, to attain levels as high as 68% in Jamaica, 61% in Barbados and 57% in Grenada. In other countries of the region the levels are still low: 22% in Colombia, 24% in Costa Rica, 18% in Guatemala, 16% in the Dominican Republic (see table 1). Nonetheless, the trend is upwards, and women now make up a third of the region's labour force.

The level of participation, by men as well as women, varies depending on whether the area is urban or rural, and also as a function of age, educational level, income level and sex (see tables 2 to 9). In the countries of the Caribbean, women have a higher level of participation than they do in the Latin America region (see table 2). There are

Table 2  
**PARTICIPATION RATES IN LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES**

Country or Area	Economic activity rate of adults aged 15 and over (%)				Women in the adult workforce (aged 15 and over)	
	1980 estimates		1994 projections		1980	1994
	W <sup>a</sup>	M <sup>b</sup>	W <sup>a</sup>	M <sup>b</sup>	Estimates	Projections
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>						
Antigua and Barbuda	-	-	56	74	-	46
Argentina	27	76	28	74	27	29
Bahamas	38	78	39	82	34	34
Barbados	59	76	61	78	47	46
Belize	28	82	29	81	25	26
Bolivia	23	85	26	82	22	25
Brazil	30	82	31	80	27	28
Chile	26	73	29	75	27	29
Colombia	22	77	22	79	23	23
Costa Rica	23	84	24	83	21	22
Cuba	32	73	38	76	31	33
Dominica	-	-	43	75	-	42
Ecuador	19	83	20	81	19	19
El Salvador	29	87	29	83	26	28
French Guyana	-	-	51	75	-	38
Grenada	-	-	57	71	-	49
Guadeloupe	49	72	56	75	42	44
Guatemala	14	85	18	83	14	18
Guyana	26	84	29	85	25	26
Haiti	61	84	54	83	44	41
Honduras	17	87	23	86	17	21
Jamaica	65	83	68	83	46	46
Martinique	47	71	53	73	42	44
Mexico	30	83	30	82	27	28
Netherlands Antilles	41	73	43	75	38	39
Nicaragua	23	84	30	81	22	30
Panama	29	79	31	79	26	28
Paraguay	23	89	23	88	20	20
Peru	25	80	25	79	24	24
Puerto Rico	26	68	26	68	29	29
Saint Kitts and Nevis	-	-	-	-	-	-
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	-	-	44	81	-	36
Saint Lucia	-	-	-	-	-	-
Suriname	27	71	31	75	28	30
Trinidad and Tobago	31	79	34	81	29	30
Uruguay	31	76	32	74	30	32
United States Virgin Islands	-	-	60	72	-	48
Venezuela	29	81	32	81	26	28

**Source:** United Nations, *The World's Women. Trends and Statistics*, Statistics and social indicators, K series, No. 12 (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.K/12), New York, 1995. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XVII.2, on the basis of special tabulations of data from household surveys carried out by the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat from International Labour Office estimates and projections, using 1990 censuses.

<sup>a</sup> Women. <sup>b</sup> Men.

differences between the participation rates of women and men aged from 15 to 64 and from 10 to 19 (see table 3). It is instructive to note that women who should rather be described as girls, aged from 10 to 19, participate actively in the labour market in Latin America and the Caribbean. The highest level of participation is seen in Haiti, where some 29% of girls participate in working activities. In the rest of the countries for which information is available, the proportion varies between 5% in the Dominican Republic and 13% in Argentina and El Salvador.

Table 3  
ECONOMIC ACTIVITY RATES AMONG THOSE AGED 15 AND OVER, BY SEX,  
1970-1990

	1970		1980		1990 <sup>a</sup>	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>						
Latin America	22	85	25	82	34	82
The Caribbean	38	81	42	77	49	72

**Source:** United Nations, *The World's Women. Trends and Statistics*, Statistics and social indicators, K series, No. 12 (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.K/12), New York, 1995. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XVII.2. Series on 1970 and 1980 prepared by the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat on the basis of estimates of economic activity rates in Economically Active Population - Estimates, 1950-1980, Projections, 1985-2025, six volumes (Geneva, International Labour Office, 1986); the series for 1990 was prepared by the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat on the basis of ILO, Yearbook of Labour Statistics, various years up to 1983 (Geneva) and national censuses and reports on surveys.

<sup>a</sup> Based on data from national population censuses and surveys published by countries and not adjusted for the purposes of comparison on the basis of the definitions recommended for international use. Covers less countries than are included in the ILO estimates for 1970 and 1980.

Participation by men in rural areas is greater than it is in urban areas (see tables 4 and 5), while the opposite is true of female participation. Official data show that women participate more in urban areas. Nonetheless, as explained earlier, the activity of women in the agricultural sector is difficult to measure on the basis of traditional surveys.

Male participation in the labour force increases with age and reaches a peak between the ages of 35 and 49. Historically, statistics have shown different patterns of participation for women, with most women leaving the labour force upon getting married or having children. As a result, it was thought that the participation rates of women fell at the reproductive ages. The figures available tell a different story. In tables 4 and 5 it can be seen that the highest level of female participation occurs at those very reproductive ages, with rates of around 50% to 60% being attained in urban areas, the figure being as high as 71% in Uruguay.

Table 4

**PARTICIPATION RATES, 1995<sup>a</sup>**  
(Percentages)

	Aged 15 - 64		Aged 10 - 19	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Argentina	80	32	25	13
Bolivia	78	25	26	12
Brazil	82	33	31	14
Chile	83	33	13	6
Colombia	81	23	18	9
Costa Rica	87	26	28	8
Cuba	84	42	15	7
Dominican Republic	87	18	27	5
Ecuador	79	20	24	7
El Salvador	87	29	33	13
Guatemala	85	19	34	8
Haiti	79	51	33	29
Honduras	87	24	41	8
Jamaica	86	75	23	17
Mexico	83	32	26	12
Nicaragua	88	32	32	12
Panama	83	34	22	8
Paraguay	89	24	36	10
Peru	78	26	17	9
Puerto Rico	75	29	13	4
Trinidad and Tobago	92	39	22	8
Uruguay	83	39	28	12
Venezuela	81	33	21	6

**Source:** ILO, World Development Report 1995. Workers in an Integrating World.

<sup>a</sup> The participation rates represent the percentages of the age groups specified (15-64 and 10-19) that are economically active.

Table 5

## PARTICIPATION RATES IN URBAN AREAS BY AGE GROUP, 1992

	Men					Women				
	Total	15-24	25-34	35-49	50 +	Total	15-24	25-34	35-49	50 +
Argentina	77	64	96	97	57	39	41	51	55	21
Bolivia	75	49	92	97	63	46	34	56	61	33
Brazil <sup>a</sup>	82	78	96	95	58	45	49	56	53	21
Chile	75	51	95	96	61	37	32	49	48	21
Colombia	80	59	97	97	66	50	44	67	61	23
Costa Rica	74	56	95	95	51	37	34	49	50	16
Guatemala <sup>b</sup>	54	69	97	97	78	43	42	50	49	29
Honduras	80	62	94	97	76	44	37	56	55	31
Mexico	79	63	94	95	66	36	34	43	43	19
Panama	74	58	95	96	52	43	37	59	59	18
Paraguay	83	72	98	98	70	51	52	62	63	29
Uruguay	74	69	97	98	52	46	48	71	70	23
Venezuela	80	58	95	97	71	39	28	53	53	23

**Source:** ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America. 1995 Edition* (LC/G.1886-P), Santiago, Chile, 1995. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.II.G.17, on the basis of special tabulations carried out from household surveys.

<sup>a</sup> 1990.

<sup>b</sup> 1989.

<sup>c</sup> 1991.

Another of the significant changes undergone by the labour market is the increase in the educational levels of the labour force, something that is more marked among women. In tables 6 and 7 it can be seen that as women's educational level increases, so does their participation. Women who have spent more than 13 years in education attain participation levels in urban areas that are very close to the rates seen for men in several of the countries.

Table 6

## PARTICIPATION RATES IN URBAN AREAS BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION, 1992

	Men						Women					
	Total	Years of study					Total	Years of study				
		0-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13 +		0-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13 +
Argentina <sup>a</sup>	77	-	-	75	87	84	39	-	-	33	49	67
Bolivia	75	73	87	73	70	75	46	49	51	40	38	56
Brazil <sup>b</sup>	82	76	83	83	87	91	45	33	41	46	61	77
Chile	75	64	75	70	77	84	37	22	28	30	38	64
Colombia	80	75	84	73	81	88	50	39	44	43	56	76
Costa Rica	74	58	80	71	77	76	37	17	32	34	43	61
Guatemala <sup>c</sup>	84	90	89	65	81	87	43	38	41	37	57	77
Honduras	80	82	89	56	83	77	44	37	46	31	58	58
Mexico <sup>d</sup>	79	-	77	83	73	80	36	-	28	36	39	60
Panama <sup>e</sup>	74	67	78	69	73	81	43	21	31	37	49	71
Paraguay	83	64	89	79	83	89	51	28	55	47	49	74
Uruguay	74	45	73	80	83	82	46	19	37	51	60	73
Venezuela	80	73	87	76	76	80	39	23	35	37	48	61

**Source:** ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America. 1995 Edition* (LC/G.1886-P), Santiago, Chile, 1995. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.II.G.17, on the basis of special tabulations carried out from household surveys.

<sup>a</sup> In Argentina the educational categories are: completed primary but not secondary, completed secondary or higher.

<sup>b</sup> 1990.

<sup>c</sup> 1989.

<sup>d</sup> In Mexico the educational categories are 0-5 years, 6-9 years, 10-12 years and 13 years or more.

<sup>e</sup> 1991.

Box 1  
**PARTICIPATION RATE BY AGE: THE CASE OF PERU**

In the National Report on Peru prepared for the Fourth World Conference on Women, an analysis was carried out to determine what happened to rates of participation by women in the workforce in different age groups. According to the study, changes in activity rates by age group reveal that women aged between 30 and 44 —most of them married— increased their participation in the labour force by 7.2% between 1981 and 1993, the next largest increase, of 4.3%, being in the 15 to 29 age group. Among women aged 45 or over the increase was small. This trend in the indicators for women contrasts with what was seen in the case of men, whose activity rates fell for all age groups.

**PERU: ACTIVITY RATES OF PEOPLE AGED 15 AND OVER, 1981-1993**  
(By sex and age group)

	1981		1993	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Total	79.7	25.5	73.4	29.7
15 to 29	65.0	25.7	61.0	30.0
30 to 44	98.1	29.2	91.6	36.4
45 to 64	95.6	24.9	83.9	25.8
65 and over	63.5	12.0	52.3	13.7
EAP (thousands)	3,911.8	1,278.9	5,004.8	2,104.8

**Source:** National Report on Peru prepared for the World Conference on Women on the basis of information from the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI), National Censuses of 1981 and 1993.

Table 7  
**PARTICIPATION RATES IN RURAL AREAS BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION, 1992**

	Men						Women					
	Total	Years of schooling					Total	Years of schooling				
		0-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13		0-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13
Argentina (1990)	91	89	94	89	94	90	41	36	46	45	66	77
Costa Rica (1992)	85	74	92	77	86	84	28	15	28	32	41	70
Chile (1992)	79	69	85	81	80	84	19	11	18	20	26	58
Guatemala (1989)	93	95	92	71	76	88	19	17	23	24	57	66
Honduras (1992)	89	91	93	50	86	-	28	25	29	14	63	-
Mexico <sup>a</sup> (1992)	86	-	90	89	65	79	26	-	24	28	37	57
Panama (1991)	84	82	90	73	76	81	24	10	21	25	42	64
Venezuela (1992)	87	89	91	78	76	77	23	18	25	24	36	58

**Source:** ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America. 1995 Edition* (LC/G.1886-P), Santiago, Chile, 1995. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.II.G.17, on the basis of special tabulations carried out from household surveys.

<sup>a</sup> In Mexico the educational categories are 0-5 years, 6-9 years, 10-12 years and 13 years or more.

Table 8

**PARTICIPATION RATES IN URBAN AREAS BY INCOME BRACKET, IN TOTAL AND FOR HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD**

	Men				Women			
	Total	Indigent	Non-indigent poor	Non-poor	Total	Indigent	Non-indigent poor	Non-poor
Argentina								
Total	77	65	65	78	39	25	18	41
Heads	81	71	66	82	43	72	31	44
Bolivia								
Total	75	66	74	78	46	33	42	53
Heads	88	80	89	91	66	61	67	67
Brazil								
Total	82	74	83	84	45	33	41	50
Heads	86	79	85	87	50	42	45	55
Chile								
Total	75	71	75	76	37	22	25	42
Heads	85	86	88	84	44	40	44	45
Colombia								
Total	80	80	80	81	50	38	43	55
Heads	90	93	91	89	59	57	60	59
Costa Rica								
Total	74	47	73	76	37	23	25	42
Heads	83	54	84	84	48	27	49	53
Honduras								
Total	80	78	81	82	44	33	44	58
Heads	92	90	91	94	56	52	57	62
Mexico								
Total	79	82	80	78	36	20	31	39
Heads	89	92	88	89	53	62	58	51
Panama								
Total	74	74	76	74	43	28	36	49
Heads	81	85	87	79	51	40	49	55
Paraguay								
Total	83	80	85	83	51	35	38	57
Heads	87	82	89	88	51	43	43	56
Uruguay								
Total	74	79	78	73	46	47	42	46
Heads	75	88	83	74	39	73	47	38
Venezuela								
Total	80	64	74	83	39	20	27	47
Heads	90	76	85	94	51	29	43	63

**Source:** ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America. 1995 Edition* (LC/G.1886-P), Santiago, Chile, 1995. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.II.G.17, on the basis of special tabulations carried out from household surveys.

Another significant difference between the ways men and women behave in the labour market is the impact that their level of income has on their participation. In the case of men, this is not a significant factor, whereas in the case of women it is. In tables 8 and 9 it can be seen that female participation increases in the higher income brackets, while participation by men remains constant. This fact well illustrates the need for policies to support working women from poor households, as the lack of support for childcare and domestic work would appear to be one of the main reasons behind the low participation rates of low-income women.

Table 9

**PARTICIPATION RATES IN RURAL AREAS BY INCOME BRACKET, IN TOTAL AND FOR HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS**

	Men				Women			
	Total	Indigent	Non-indigent poor	Non-poor	Total	Indigent	Non-indigent poor	Non-poor
Brazil								
Total	91	89	89	93	41	38	37	46
Heads	92	91	89	94	44	52	32	48
Chile								
Total	79	69	77	80	19	9	10	24
Heads	83	81	86	83	22	14	20	24
Costa Rica								
Total	85	59	79	88	28	15	17	32
Heads	88	61	87	92	40	23	45	46
Honduras								
Total	89	90	85	89	28	24	28	43
Heads	94	96	91	94	45	51	31	46
Mexico								
Total	86	88	88	84	26	19	23	31
Heads	90	92	92	89	60	63	58	60
Panama								
Total	84	83	86	83	24	14	19	30
Heads	87	84	91	86	33	22	30	39
Venezuela								
Total	87	80	85	89	23	12	15	30
Heads	93	88	93	94	39	26	35	47

**Source:** ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America. 1995 Edition* (LC/G.1886-P), Santiago, Chile, 1995. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.II.G.17, on the basis of special tabulations carried out from household surveys.

Box 2

**ADJUSTING THE FEMALE PARTICIPATION RATE:  
THE CASE OF PARAGUAY**

The National Report on Paraguay presented to the Fourth World Conference on Women contains an analysis of the problem of under-recording of female participation, and participation in rural areas in particular.

The recorded contribution made by women to the productive and reproductive processes can be ascertained from the Population and Housing Census of 1992 and the National Agricultural Census of 1991. The information covers only recorded activity, and even then the work of women is included only when what they produce is traded. The contribution made by women in terms of unpaid domestic work or subsistence agricultural work does not form part of economic output, or is not recorded.

The 1992 National Population and Housing Census regards as forming part of the "economically active population (EAP) everybody aged 10 and over who was employed or unemployed during the reference period adopted (16 to 22 August)". The employed population is defined as everybody who: a) carried on an occupation for which they received payment in money or kind during the reference period, b) carried on an occupation, whether paid or unpaid, producing goods or services in an enterprise run by a member of their family, c) had an occupation but temporarily ceased to exercise it for reasons of illness, holiday, strike, temporary work stoppage or any other reason not entailing permanent cessation.

On the basis of these definitions, the female participation rate, expressed as a percentage for the EAP out of the population of working age (PWA) aged 10 and over, is less than one third (22.1%) of the rate for male participation (78.6%), despite the fact that the male and female PWAs are roughly equal.

In order to bring to light the contribution made by women, alternative estimates were produced for female work. Different readings of the 1992 National Census and the 1991 National Agricultural Census were used. The agricultural work done by women was considered on the basis of the latter, and for "housework" the figures recorded in the 1992 National Census were taken.

The participation rate of the population aged 10 and over in economic activity (EAP/PWA) showed a slight drop over 30 years from 52.5% to 51.0%. This fall is due to a decrease in participation by men, as this declined from 84.8% in 1962 to 78.6% in 1992, while participation by women remained relatively constant, falling from 22.9% to 22.1%.

Comparing the 1991 National Census figures with those of the 1992 Agricultural Census, important differences can be observed. Permanent female work on agricultural holdings, which represented a female participation rate of just 1.5% according to the 1992 National Census, rose to 20.2% according to data from the 1991 Agricultural Census and stood at 64.5% if occasional female agricultural workers are added to permanent ones, according to this source.

The under-recording of female participation observed in the rural sector is also a feature of the urban sector. In the latter case it is due to housework, which is unpaid. The 1992 Census showed 819,241 women, or 56.0% of the female PWA, carrying out this activity, and recorded them as being part of the economically inactive population. In addition to people who do housework, this group includes retired people, people whose income is unearned, students and the physically and mentally disabled.

Using this criterion, economic and material reproduction—which includes domestic work as such, including preparation of food and maintenance and care of the home and clothing—is not regarded as work, since on the one hand this activity is for cultural reasons an exclusively female one, and on the other hand the output of this activity is not traded. For these reasons, housework is not considered either as work or as an occupation, and women whose main activity this is form part of the inactive population, whereas unpaid family members, who produce for the market, are treated as part of the EAP.

Box 2 (concl.)

In the following calculation, those whose occupation is housework will be treated as part of the economically active population. Although the output from this work is not traded in the market, it represents a saving for whoever consumes it or an opportunity cost for whoever carries it out. If the results of the 1991 National Census and the 1992 Agricultural Census are combined, we find that 482,757 women carry out female household work (paid and unpaid). That is to say, 32.8% of the female PWA, obtained by adding together the 5.9% recorded in the EAP and 26.8% recorded in the economically inactive population. Using this approach, domestic work is increased sixfold.

Thus, 7.7% of the enlarged EAP corresponds to the EAP carrying out domestic tasks (paid and unpaid), while 34.8% of the enlarged EAP corresponds to those carrying out unpaid housework, who do not form part of the EAP according to the definitions used for the 1992 National Census. Thus the participation rate of the enlarged EAP is 42.5%.

According to these calculations, the number of women in rural areas whose sole occupation is housework is considerably smaller than it is in urban areas. This result is due to the fact that the number of women recorded by the 1991 Agricultural Census as carrying out agricultural activities on a permanent or occasional basis (423,604) was subtracted from the total of women recorded by the 1992 National Census as carrying out housework (477,434). In the case of occasional work, women divide their energies between this type of work and housework. Nonetheless, for the sake of simplicity, only the agricultural work done by the women concerned has been considered. But it is clear that this approach could lead to the participation by women in this sector being underestimated.

The rate of female activity (EAP/PWA) ranges from 22.1% if the 1992 National Census figures are used and 77.1% when in addition to the permanent and occasional agricultural work done by women (as per the 1991 Agricultural Census), domestic work, both paid and unpaid (housework), is included.

Participation by women in the labour force has been increasing over recent decades, in both Latin America and the Caribbean (again, see table 2), a trend which is set to continue, and this means that it is crucial for the current situation to be measured with a reasonable degree of accuracy to underpin policy strategies aimed at improving the conditions whereby women enter the labour market, so that their contribution is rewarded with commensurate benefits.

## 2. Segregation and inequality in employment

Women and men tend to be concentrated in particular occupations, occupational categories and job positions. Throughout the region it is found that women are concentrated in the lower-productivity and lower-income sectors. This produces segregation in employment and, at the same time, a number of inequalities in the way men and women participate in the labour market. Not only do men have higher incomes, but they also tend to hold the most senior positions.

In Latin America, roughly speaking, 55% of women work in clerical jobs, as sales assistants or in services, compared to only 25% of men. Most men, on the other hand, work as production workers (36%) and in agricultural jobs (25%) (see table 10). The tendency for women to be concentrated in less well paid positions is illustrated in table 11, which shows the proportion of women in three occupational categories: employers and own-account workers, unpaid family members, and employees. It can be seen that

women account for the majority of unpaid family workers in almost all the countries, in other words they work but do not receive remuneration, since they do it to help their partner or the family business. On the other hand, they form a minority in the category of employers and own-account workers.

Table 10  
**PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE FEMALE AND MALE LABOUR FORCES BY MAIN OCCUPATIONAL GROUP, 1970 AND 1990**

	Professional and technical; administrative and managerial		Clerical, sales and service workers		Agricultural and related workers		Production workers	
	1970	1990	1970	1990	1970	1990	1970	1990
Women								
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	13	15	54	55	11	5	15	14
Men								
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	6	11	16	25	44	21	27	36

**Source:** United Nations, *The World's Women. Trends and Statistics*, Statistics and social indicators, K series, No. 12 (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.K/12), New York, 1995. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XVII.2.

One of the most notable aspects of this concentration of women in the labour market is the way they are concentrated in the services sector (see table 12). In all the countries of the region, women work mainly in the services sector, the proportions being in most cases over 70%, with the sole exception of Haiti, where women are concentrated in the agricultural sector. Female participation in the industrial sector is very low, and when women do work in this sector it is in the lowest-productivity and lowest-paid positions, or in assembly plants in countries that have them (Jusidman and Pollack, 1995; UNIDO, 1994).

Another noteworthy aspect of the position held by women in the labour market is their high level of participation in domestic jobs. Table 13 shows the distribution of employed people in urban areas by occupational category, and it transpires that in all the countries for which information is available it is almost exclusively women that work as domestic employees. The rates of male participation stand at less than 1%, while the percentages of female participation range from 7.9% (Bolivia) to 24.3% (Paraguay and Panama).

Table 11  
**PROPORTION OF WOMEN IN THREE OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES IN LATIN  
 AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

Country or area	Employers and own- account workers	Unpaid family workers	Employees
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>			
Antigua and Barbuda	-	-	-
Argentina	-	-	-
Bahamas	37	72	48
Barbados	31	67	45
Belize	-	-	-
Bolivia	49	79	27
Brazil	29	46	37
Chile	24	42	33
Colombia	33	74	41
Costa Rica	18	34	32
Cuba	7	5	33
Dominica	30	50	44
Dominican Republic	20	43	35
Ecuador	22	27	31
El Salvador	56	58	38
French Guyana	24	-	37
Grenada	-	-	-
Guadeloupe	-	-	-
Guatemala	25	21	27
Guyana	-	-	-
Haiti	38	37	44
Honduras	-	-	-
Jamaica	-	-	-
Martinique	-	-	-
Mexico	14	11	28
Netherlands Antilles	21	80	38
Nicaragua	-	-	-
Panama	14	15	38
Paraguay	43	24	41
Peru	40	64	32
Puerto Rico	14	73	40
Saint Kitts and Nevis	-	-	-
Saint Lucia	-	-	-
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	27	42	37
Suriname	29	42	41
Trinidad and Tobago	23	54	36
United States Virgin Islands	-	-	-
Uruguay	25	40	35
Venezuela	23	34	35

**Source:** United Nations, *The World's Women. Trends and Statistics*, Statistics and social indicators, K series, No. 12 (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.K/12), New York, 1995. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XVII.2, on the basis of special tabulations from household surveys carried out by the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat and series on labour in industry, supplied by the Statistical Office of the International Labour Office, based on current estimates and projections now being prepared.

Table 12  
**PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF LABOUR BY SEX AND BY SECTOR OF ECONOMIC  
ACTIVITY, 1994**

Country or area	Agriculture		Industry		Services	
	W	M	W	M	W	M
Latin America and the Caribbean						
Antigua and Barbuda	-	-	-	-	-	-
Argentina	2	13	12	41	86	45
Bahamas	2	16	4	26	94	58
Barbados	9	6	18	24	73	69
Belize	2	16	4	26	94	58
Bolivia	28	45	11	22	61	34
Brazil	10	21	19	37	71	42
Chile	2	14	9	27	89	60
Colombia	3	37	20	25	77	38
Costa Rica	4	24	22	28	74	48
Cuba	13	23	21	35	66	41
Dominica	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dominican Republic	5	41	3	19	92	40
Ecuador	11	31	11	21	78	48
El Salvador	5	42	18	27	77	32
French Guyana	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grenada	-	-	-	-	-	-
Guadeloupe	5	13	5	33	90	54
Guatemala	8	60	17	17	74	23
Guyana	7	27	18	26	76	47
Haiti	54	73	9	10	38	16
Honduras	8	66	34	15	58	19
Jamaica	18	41	8	22	75	38
Martinica	6	11	5	29	89	60
Mexico	12	38	35	34	53	28
Netherlands Antilles	2	16	4	26	94	58
Nicaragua	8	52	14	17	79	31
Panama	7	27	7	23	86	50
Paraguay	11	53	16	22	73	25
Peru	26	36	9	22	65	42
Puerto Rico	1	5	31	36	68	58
Saint Kitts and Nevis	-	-	-	-	-	-
Saint Lucia	-	-	-	-	-	-
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	-	-	-	-	-	-
Suriname	15	15	9	23	76	62
Trinidad and Tobago	4	7	22	48	74	45
United States Virgin Islands	-	-	-	-	-	-
Uruguay	2	18	21	33	76	49
Venezuela	4	13	17	35	79	52

**Source:** United Nations, *The World's Women. Trends and Statistics*, Statistics and social indicators, K series, No. 12 (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.K/12), New York, 1995. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XVII.2, on the basis of special tabulations from household surveys carried out by the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat, supplied by the Statistical Office of the International Labour Office, based on current estimates and projections now being prepared.

W: women; M: men.

Table 13  
**DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYED LABOUR IN URBAN AREAS BY OCCUPATIONAL  
 CATEGORY, 1992**

Country	Total	Employers	Professional and technical <sup>a</sup>	Public sector wage earners	Private sector wage earners	Own- account and unpaid family workers	Female domestic employees
<b>Argentina</b>							
Men	100	7.3	-	-	68.4	24.0	0.3
Women	100	2.4	-	-	60.6	25.4	11.6
<b>Bolivia</b>							
Men	100	7.8	14.1	10.7	39.4	27.5	0.5
Women	100	2.6	12.2	4.9	21.1	51.3	7.9
<b>Brazil <sup>b</sup></b>							
Men	100	6.6	5.7	-	66.7 <sup>c</sup>	20.6	0.4
Women	100	2.4	14.9	-	45.0	22.5	15.2
<b>Chile</b>							
Men	100	4.1	11.9	-	63.6 <sup>c</sup>	20.2	0.2
Women	100	-	17.0	-	43.1	18.1	18.6
<b>Colombia</b>							
Men	100	5.2	12.7	5.6	49.5	26.8	0.2
Women	100	1.9	14.0	5.4	42.3	24.5	11.9
<b>Costa Rica</b>							
Men	100	6.3	17.9	14.7	44.6	16.5	-
Women	100	1.6	24.2	11.2	37.2	16.5	9.3
<b>Honduras</b>							
Men	100	2.1	15.1	7.1	46.5	28.8	0.4
Women	100	0.8	18.0	6.3	25.7	33.5	15.7
<b>Mexico</b>							
Men	100	6.1	7.1	-	70.9 <sup>c</sup>	15.4	0.5
Women	100	2.2	8.8	-	58.6	21.6	8.8
<b>Panama</b>							
Men	100	4.4	11.6	16.7	37.8	28.9	0.6
Women	100	4.8	15.5	5.9	25.4	24.1	24.3
<b>Paraguay</b>							
Men	100	8.3	17.7	8.8	44.2	20.6	0.4
Women	100	4.8	15.5	5.9	25.4	24.1	24.3
<b>Uruguay</b>							
Men	100	6.2	9.3	16.1	47.9	20.4	0.1
Women	100	2.0	18.6	9.0	33.9	19.8	16.7
<b>Venezuela</b>							
Men	100	10.5	8.8	10.2	47.1	21.7	1.7
Women	100	2.2	22.3	13.7	29.7	20.8	11.3

**Source:** ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America. 1995 Edition* (LC/G.1886-P), Santiago, Chile, 1995. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.II.G.17, on the basis of tabulations carried out from household surveys.

a Includes own-account professionals and technical workers and salaried professionals and technical workers in the public and private sectors.

b 1990.

c Includes wage earners in the public sector.

Employment segregation is also found in the Caribbean (see table 14). Women in the Caribbean have greater access to managerial and administrative posts than in Latin America, but they are still trailing by comparison with the access men have. The same is true of the proportions of men and women working on their own account and as employees.

Table 14  
**PROPORTION OF PEOPLE EMPLOYED IN ADMINISTRATIVE AND  
 MANAGERIAL POSITIONS AND IN BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS  
 IN CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES, 1992**

	Administrative and services positions		Commercial establishments	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Anguilla	36	64	18	82
Antigua and Barbuda	26	74	-	-
Bahamas	31	69	38	62
Barbados	38	62	42	58
Dominica	54	46	-	-
Dominican Republic	-	-	51	49
Guyana	-	100	-	-
Jamaica	-	-	18	82
Montserrat	54	46	53	47
Netherlands Antilles	25	75	-	-
Saint Kitts and Nevis	33	67	43	57
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	39	61	34	66
Turks & Caicos	-	-	23	77
Virgin Islands	41	59	-	-

Source: ECLAC/CARICOM/UNIFEM (1994).

Table 15  
**PROPORTION WORKING AS EMPLOYERS AND OWN-ACCOUNT WORKERS IN  
 CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES, 1992**

	Women	Men
Anguilla	18	82
Barbados	29	71
Dominica	42	58
Netherlands Antilles	24	76
Saint Kitts and Nevis	33	67
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	26	74
Saint Lucia	29	71
Trinidad and Tobago	28	72

Source: ECLAC/CARICOM/UNIFEM (1994).

### 3. Differences in wages and incomes

One of the most striking differences between the ways men and women participate in the labour market is the disparity in the incomes they receive for the same jobs. In all the countries, women receive lower incomes than men, and these differences become more marked as the educational level increases (see tables 16, 17, 18 and 19). These differences have traditionally been explained by the lower educational level of women, by their household and child-care responsibilities, by their preference for part-day work and by the type of posts they work in, which generally carry less responsibility and seniority. Nonetheless, it has been established through a number of studies that the differences persist even where the job and the woman's experience and educational level are the same, so it would appear that these differences are due to discrimination based on factors of a cultural nature (World Bank, 1988). In fact, all the above explanations can be refuted, or already have been in previous studies (Arriagada, 1994).

The differences in men and women's remuneration still persist, despite the fact that most of the countries have passed equal pay laws. The problem is not so much with the legislation as with enforcement. In cases where the labour market is highly segregated, laws on equal pay tend to have little effect on wage differences.

The branch of activity where female pay comes closest to male pay is transport and communications (75.15%), followed by industry (72.0%), trade (72.0%) and insurance and finance (71.0%). On the other hand, the level of pay is low in services (51.0%), electricity and water (59.0%) and agriculture and stock breeding (67.0%). Despite the disparities observed, the levels for 1990-1994 were found to be generally higher than the average for 1983-1986.

Although the average female income can be seen to be increasing in relation to male earnings, women are still receiving less than men. This does not tally with the educational level of the economically active female population. At national level, the educational level of the economically active female population in 1992 was higher than that of the economically active male population, and between 1982 and 1992 it rose markedly. 1992 censuses show that only 3.0% of the female EAP is without schooling, compared to 5.2% of the male EAP. Women with secondary schooling account for 32.5% of the female EAP, while the equivalent figure for men is only 23.9%. Furthermore, 10.4% of the female EAP has been educated to university level, compared to 4.9% of the male EAP.

The disparities in pay between the sexes can no longer be justified by a lower level of qualifications in the female EAP. These inequalities are rather due to the fact that, on the one hand, the work done by women outside the home is regarded as a complement to the work of men and, on the other, the proper sphere of women is unpaid work in the home.

Table 16  
**INCOME <sup>a</sup> DISPARITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION IN  
 URBAN AREAS, 1992**

	Total	0-3 years	4-6 years	7-9 years	10-12 years	13 years and over
Argentina	63	63	-	61	51	-
Bolivia	53	59	52	60	66	50
Brazil (1990)	55	45	45	50	49	49
Chile	66	68	68	68	73	50
Colombia	69	69	65	72	68	63
Costa Rica	72	59	56	59	69	72
Honduras	64	57	62	63	71	62
Mexico	55	-	52	66	63	47
Panama (1991)	80	45	55	67	80	72
Paraguay	65	67	65	70	68	70
Uruguay	57	44	51	55	58	42
Venezuela	69	59	58	66	64	71

**Source:** ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America. 1995 Edition* (LC/G.1886-P), Santiago, Chile, 1995. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.II.G.17, on the basis of special tabulations carried out from household surveys.

<sup>a</sup> Difference between the total incomes of the population in work, expressed as the percentage ratio between the average female income and the average male income.

Table 17  
**WAGE DISPARITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION IN URBAN  
 AREAS, 1992<sup>a</sup>**

	Total	0-3 years	4-6 years	7-9 years	10-12 years	13 years and over
Argentina <sup>b,c</sup>	73	-	-	-	-	-
Bolivia	62	46	36	49	71	58
Brazil (1990)	65	55	51	57	54	51
Chile	69	72	69	66	74	53
Colombia	82	87	85	83	82	69
Costa Rica	81	59	67	69	77	76
Honduras	76	60	68	73	79	64
Mexico <sup>c</sup>	72	-	70	80	79	61
Panama <sup>d</sup>	80	45	52	66	78	76
Paraguay	77	74	78	66	78	60
Uruguay	61	45	51	58	63	48
Venezuela	73	63	62	72	74	73

**Source:** ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America. 1995 Edition* (LC/G.1886-P), Santiago, Chile, 1995. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.II.G.17, on the basis of special tabulations carried out from household surveys.

<sup>a</sup> The wage disparity consists in the differences between the earnings deriving from the wages of men and women, expressed as the percentage ratio between the average female wage and the average male wage.

<sup>b</sup> In Argentina the educational categories are: 0-6 years, 7-9 years and 10 years or more.

<sup>c</sup> In Mexico the educational categories are 0-5 years, 6-9 years and 13 years or more [*sic*].

<sup>d</sup> 1991.

Table 18  
**INCOME DISPARITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN BY AGE GROUP IN URBAN AREAS,  
 1992<sup>a</sup>**

	Total	15-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55 years or more
Argentina	63	65	67	55	61	64
Bolivia	53	63	63	45	60	41
Brazil (1990)	55	73	64	54	46	35
Chile	66	86	77	59	68	52
Colombia	69	95	75	67	58	59
Costa Rica	72	88	76	70	62	48
Honduras	64	78	72	66	53	42
Mexico	55	83	65	61	34	32
Panama	80	76	90	83	73	74
Paraguay	65	66	72	66	69	57
Uruguay	57	75	63	55	52	45
Venezuela	69	83	77	66	60	55

**Source:** ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America. 1995 Edition* (LC/G.1886-P), Santiago, Chile, 1995. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.II.G.17, on the basis of special tabulations carried out from household surveys.

<sup>a</sup> The wage [*sic*] disparity consists in the differences between the total incomes of the working population, expressed as the percentage ratio between the average female income and the average male income.

Table 19  
**WAGE DISPARITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN BY AGE GROUP IN URBAN AREAS,  
 1992<sup>a</sup>**

	Total	15-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55 years or more
Argentina	73	94	70	64	73	71
Bolivia	62	65	77	59	69	47
Brazil (1990)	65	77	72	63	56	51
Chile	69	87	79	63	56	51
Colombia	82	103	90	76	69	74
Costa Rica	81	92	85	78	71 <sup>a</sup>	59
Honduras	76	83	78	82	62	66
Mexico	72	89	80	70	64	56
Panama	80	71	89	86	74	67
Paraguay	77	87	82	68	66	77
Uruguay	61	77	66	59	55	49
Venezuela	73	85	79	65	60	57

**Source:** ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America. 1995 Edition* (LC/G.1886-P), Santiago, Chile, 1995. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.II.G.17, on the basis of special tabulations carried out from household surveys.

<sup>a</sup> The wage disparity is the difference between the incomes that men and women obtain from their wages, expressed as the percentage ratio between the average female wage and the average male wage.

## Box 3

## WAGE DIFFERENCES IN PARAGUAY

In the National Report on Paraguay prepared for the Regional Conference in Preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, the problem of wage discrimination in that country is analysed.

The most important source of statistics, and perhaps the only one that gives a relatively accurate picture of economic disparities, is the household survey.<sup>1</sup> This reveals the differences between average male and female incomes by type of activity and economic sector. Analysis of this source shows that the remuneration of women is lower than that of men, even when they are doing the same job. The basis used for this analysis was the Metropolitan Area of Asuncion.<sup>2</sup>

Although the average income of women increased as a percentage of that of men, the discrimination referred to continued. While in the years 1983-1986 women earned only 52.5% of what men received, this ratio increased to 62.5% in the first half of the decade. Female labourers and workers earned almost the same as men did (96.0%), while female clerical employees earned 85% as much as men did. Professionals, technical staff and the like received just over half (54%) and those working in farming, stock breeding and the like got just over 2/3 (69%). The women who earned least by comparison with the male sex were transport drivers, an occupation which does not include many women. In the personal services sector, earnings were also low (52%) by comparison with the male sex.

**PARAGUAY: AVERAGE FEMALE INCOME AS A PERCENTAGE OF MALE INCOME BY OCCUPATIONAL GROUP, METROPOLITAN AREA**  
(Percentages)

	1983	1986	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	Average	
								1983-1986	1990-1994
Professionals, technicians and the like	52.2	65.8	44.2	44.8	59.1	68.8	51.9	64.0	53.8
Managers, administrators, etc.	50.5	48.2	51.8	72.8	78.0	76.4	67.3	49.4	69.3
Clerical employees	66.8	71.7	56.2	81.1	87.4	113.0	86.8	74.3	84.9
Traders, sales staff and the like	56.1	55.9	59.2	61.8	80.6	77.6	58.8	56.0	67.6
Farmers, stock-breeders and the like	...	51.0	58.9	49.7	85.8	99.5	49.9	61.0	68.8
Transport drivers							32.3	37.9	32.3
Artisans and operators	37.9	64.5	51.0	69.1	69.4	89.8	69.6	55.8	71.8
Workers and labourers	47.0	98.5	94.6	89.1	88.4	112.2	94.9	49.3	95.8
Professional services	47.5	35.9	53.9	49.1	46.6	53.7	55.4	41.7	51.7
Others	59.0	48.4	97.0	...	...	...	...	53.7	97.0
Total	54.2	50.8	56.0	54.0	57.0	69.6	58.0	52.5	62.5

**Source:** National Report on Paraguay, prepared for the regional meeting to prepare for the Fourth World Conference on Women, on the basis of the Dirección General de Estadística, Encuestas y Censos, Household Survey, years 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1994. Institute for Women's Studies/Ministry of Social Affairs of Spain/Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), *Mujeres latinoamericanas en cifras: Paraguay*, Santiago, Chile, 1993, own amendments.

**Note:** In some cases, for reasons connected with inconsistencies in the results of the Household Survey, certain changes were made to the results in order to obtain a more reliable set of statistics.

<sup>1</sup> In some cases, the results of the Household Survey (labour) by the Dirección General de Estadísticas [sic], Encuestas y Censos concerning the remuneration of women by comparison with that of men were amended due to the results in the official statistics being distorted by lack of information.

<sup>2</sup> In the Household Survey from 1983 to 1993 the Metropolitan Area was held to include Asuncion and the rest of the Area (comprised of the districts of Fernando de la Mora, Lambaré, Limpio, MR Alonso, Nemby, San Lorenzo, Villa Elisa and the Urban Area of Villa Hayes). The 1994 Survey covered Asuncion and all the urban districts of the Central Department, which is not a significant change for the purposes of this analysis.

#### 4. Informal sector

In all the countries of the region, women are concentrated in the urban informal sector, and within the informal sector they work in the categories with the lowest productivity and income. As table 20 shows, they are concentrated in the categories of domestic employees, own-account workers and unpaid family members, these being the categories that earn the least. Men, on the other hand, mainly work in the informal sector as wage earning employees and employers in small establishments and as own-account workers. These results are based on a particular definition of the informal sector. Nonetheless, caution is needed, as there are many definitions of this sector, and its size and characteristics vary depending on which one is chosen. The problem of measuring the informal sector, about which a great number of publications have been produced, is exacerbated when it comes to measuring the activity of women. In a recent study on the informal sector in Mexico (Jusidman and Pollack, 1995), in which different definitions of the sector were used, it was concluded that the size of the sector varies substantially depending on which definition is chosen, and the source of data.

#### 5. Unemployment and underemployment

Women have greater difficulties than men in obtaining work, and suffer as a result from higher rates of unemployment than men do. Not only do women have greater difficulties in obtaining paid work, but in times of crisis they are the first to be made unemployed, and in periods of recovery in the economic cycle they are the last to be given a job again. This holds true for most of the countries in the region (see tables 21, 22 and 23). It is young people who are the most vulnerable to unemployment, and their jobless rates are double and even treble those of adults aged over 25.

##### Box 4

##### UNEMPLOYMENT IN HAITI

In Haiti, according to the national report presented to the World Conference on Women, male urban unemployment in 1971 was 11.5%, while the figure for women was 17.2%. In 1982, this percentage was 11.2% for men and 13.6% for women. From 1986 to date, due to the recession and political instability, there has been a large increase in open unemployment (not including underemployment), which in 1991 stood at 65% in the capital and 59% in the country as a whole.

In the metropolitan area of Port au Prince, the subcontracting sector, which provided 94.5% of female industrial sector employment in the 1980s, saw a drop in employment of 19.6% between 1990 and 1991. The subcontracting sector was more severely effected than local industries whose employees are mainly men.

After the embargo was established, 40,000 jobs were cut between 1991 and 1992, and as a result 64.2% of the population became unemployed. Women were the worst affected, since most of them are employed in this sector (since 1986, women have accounted for between 70% and 75% of the labour force in the electronic industry and textile sectors). They were the first to be affected by the staff cutting in these industries. To the above must be added the loss of indirect employment, such as the sale of drinks, food, etc., which employed approximately 8,000 people, most of them women.

Table 20  
**POPULATION EMPLOYED IN THE URBAN INFORMAL SECTOR, 1992**

Country	Total	Employers of fewer than 5 people	Wage earners in establishments employing fewer than 5 people <sup>a</sup>	Own-account and family workers <sup>a</sup>	Domestic employees
Argentina					
Men	45.9	5.0	16.1	24.0 <sup>b</sup>	0.3
Women	51.9	1.9	13.0	25.4 <sup>b</sup>	11.6
Bolivia					
Men	48.1	5.2	14.9	27.5	0.5
Women	62.5	1.7	1.6	51.3	7.9
Brazil					
Men	48.8	6.6 <sup>b</sup>	21.2 <sup>b</sup>	20.6	0.4
Women	52.3	2.4 <sup>b</sup>	12.2 <sup>c</sup>	22.5	15.2
Chile					
Men	37.6	3.1	14.1	20.2	0.2
Women	49.9	1.9	11.3	18.1	18.6
Colombia					
Men	-	-	-	26.8	0.2
Women	-	-	-	24.5	11.9
Costa Rica					
Men	30.5	4.4	9.6	16.5	0.0
Women	36.9	1.4	9.7	16.5	9.3
Honduras					
Men	43.4	1.0	13.2	28.8	0.4
Women	54.7	0.4	5.1	33.5	15.7
Mexico					
Men	41.0	4.6	20.5	15.4	0.5
Women	48.5	2.0	16.1	21.6	8.8
Panama					
Men	39.0	3.4	6.1	28.9	0.6
Women	35.0	1.3	4.3	11.6	17.8
Paraguay					
Men	41.3	5.9	14.4	20.6	0.4
Women	59.8	3.7	7.7	24.1	24.3
Uruguay					
Men	34.4	3.6	10.3	20.4	0.1
Women	46.2	1.3	8.4	19.8	16.7
Venezuela					
Men	44.3	6.9	14.0	21.7	1.7
Women	44.2	1.8	10.3	20.8	11.3

**Source:** ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America, 1995 Edition* (LC/G.1886-P), Santiago, Chile. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.11.G.17, on the basis of tabulations of data from household surveys.

<sup>a</sup> Excludes professionals and technical occupations.

<sup>b</sup> Includes professionals and technical occupations.

<sup>c</sup> Workers without an employment contract.

Table 21  
**OPEN UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY SEX AND AGE IN URBAN AREAS, 1992**

Country		Total	15-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45 years or more
Argentina	Total	6.6	12.6	4.5	4.5	5.7
	Men	6.8	13.0	4.2	4.5	6.2
	Women	6.3	11.9	5.0	4.6	4.7
Bolivia	Total	5.5	8.6	5.3	4.3	3.8
	Men	5.4	7.5	5.3	4.5	4.4
	Women	5.6	9.8	5.4	3.8	2.9
Brazil	Total	4.5	8.4	4.4	2.4	1.5
	Men	4.8	8.8	4.7	2.8	1.9
	Women	3.9	7.8	3.8	1.7	0.6
Chile	Total	6.0	14.3	5.4	3.3	2.9
	Men	5.0	12.0	4.2	2.8	3.0
	Women	7.8	17.8	7.4	4.2	2.8
Colombia	Total	9.1	18.7	8.8	5.4	3.3
	Men	6.5	14.9	5.8	3.6	3.0
	Women	12.6	22.7	12.4	7.6	3.9
Costa Rica	Total	4.2	9.0	3.9	2.5	1.9
	Men	3.5	8.2	2.4	2.5	1.8
	Women	5.5	10.4	6.3	2.6	2.1
Guatemala <sup>a</sup>	Total	3.5	7.1	2.9	1.6	1.2
	Men	3.3	7.2	2.6	1.5	1.4
	Women	3.8	7.0	3.4	1.8	0.9
Honduras	Total	5.1	6.9	6.4	3.8	2.4
	Men	5.8	7.1	7.2	4.8	3.3
	Women	4.2	6.7	5.4	2.3	0.8
Mexico	Total	4.3	9.9	2.4	1.2	2.3
	Men	4.4	10.1	2.3	1.4	3.2
	Women	3.9	9.6	2.6	0.7	0.1
Panama <sup>b</sup>	Total	18.6	35.1	20.6	9.5	6.9
	Men	15.9	31.9	16.5	7.4	7.0
	Women	22.8	39.9	26.3	12.5	6.5
Paraguay	Total	5.0	9.7	3.0	4.5	2.6
	Men	6.0	10.7	3.6	6.9	3.7
	Women	3.7	8.7	2.1	1.9	0.5
Uruguay	Total	8.4	21.8	7.7	4.4	3.4
	Men	6.4	18.9	4.9	2.2	2.4
	Women	11.0	26.0	11.1	7.0	4.8
Venezuela	Total	7.3	14.2	7.4	4.3	3.6
	Men	8.1	15.0	8.0	5.0	4.6
	Women	5.9	12.7	6.5	3.0	1.4

**Source:** ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America. 1995 Edition* (LC/G.1886-P), Santiago, Chile, 1995. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.II.G.17, on the basis of tabulations carried out from household surveys.

a 1989.

b 1991.

Table 22

**URBAN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES, 1992**

	Women	Men
Bahamas	12.5	11.0
Barbados	25.7	20.5
Belize	2.1	4.2
Dominica	55.5	42.3
Dominican Republic	43.1	13.6
Grenada	17.3	30.6
Guadeloupe	34.0	11.7
Guyana	18.1	6.4
Jamaica	22.8	9.5
Netherlands Antilles	20.9	13.1
Saint Kitts and Nevis	19.6	30.4
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	7.3	5.1
Saint Lucia	17.4	11.1
Trinidad and Tobago	24.4	18.0

**Source:** a) ECLAC/CARICOM/UNIFEM (1994), for the data on Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the Dominican Republic. b) United Nations, *The World's Women. Trends and Statistics*, K series, No. 12 (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.K/12), New York, 1995. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XVII.2, for the data on the Netherlands Antilles, Bahamas, Guadeloupe and Trinidad and Tobago.

a Curaçao only.

## 6. Access to productive resources

In most of the countries of the region, women have less access to productive resources such as land, credit and training, and for this reason they have greater difficulty in achieving levels of productivity sufficient to enable them to secure a reasonable rate of remuneration.

Access to land has been limited since the agrarian reform processes were implemented in the region, as these resulted in land being distributed to heads of households, most of whom were men. Access to credit has been restricted by the extent to which guarantees and surety are required, as poor women are unable to provide these. Training has also been biased against women insofar as it centres around activities that represent an extension of their domestic roles, without consideration of whether the activities they are being trained for will enable them to engage in work that is profitable from an economic point of view. Many poor women work on their own account in micro-enterprises, and in fact the majority of the micro-enterprises in the region are women. Nonetheless, this situation has still not translated into policies to support these women, but rather into one-off programmes.

Table 23  
**OPEN UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY SEX AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION IN URBAN  
 AREAS, 1992**

Country	Sex	Years of schooling				
		Total	0 to 5 years	6 to 9 years	10 to 12 years	13 years or more
Argentina	Total	6.6	13.0	7.3	5.5	4.1
	Men	6.8	13.0	7.1	5.0	3.7
	Women	6.3	-	7.7	6.2	4.5
Bolivia	Total	5.5	3.6	6.4	6.7	5.4
	Men	5.4	4.4	5.9	6.2	4.7
	Women	5.6	2.9	7.1	7.8	6.6
Brazil	Total	4.5	4.2	6.2	4.5	1.9
	Men	4.8	4.8	6.2	4.5	1.6
	Women	3.9	3.2	6.2	4.4	2.2
Chile	Total	6.0	5.4	6.3	6.4	5.3
	Men	5.0	5.2	5.8	4.9	4.0
	Women	7.8	5.7	7.3	9.4	7.0
Colombia	Total	9.1	7.6	11.6	11.1	5.9
	Men	6.5	6.0	7.8	7.3	4.4
	Women	12.6	9.9	17.0	15.6	7.6
Costa Rica	Total	4.2	4.1	5.3	4.5	1.9
	Men	3.5	3.0	4.2	3.9	1.9
	Women	5.5	6.8	7.6	5.3	2.0
Guatemala <sup>b</sup>	Total	3.5	2.3	4.3	5.9	2.3
	Men	3.3	2.3	4.1	5.3	2.3
	Women	3.8	2.3	4.7	6.5	2.3
Honduras	Total	5.1	4.1	6.2	5.5	3.2
	Men	5.8	5.7	7.1	4.5	2.8
	Women	4.2	1.7	4.9	6.5	3.9
Mexico	Total	4.3	3.3	4.9	3.8	3.7
	Men	4.4	4.2	5.0	4.2	3.1
	Women	3.9	1.3	4.8	2.9	5.2
Panama <sup>c</sup>	Total	18.6	10.7	18.4	24.9	14.8
	Men	15.9	9.6	16.5	20.5	12.9
	Women	22.8	13.9	22.5	30.4	16.6
Paraguay	Total	5.0	7.6	4.6	6.3	1.7
	Men	6.0	11.8	5.6	6.2	1.9
	Women	3.7	2.1	3.4	6.5	1.4
Uruguay	Total	8.4	5.9	9.3	9.4	5.4
	Men	6.4	5.0	7.4	5.8	4.3
	Women	11.0	7.5	12.3	13.3	6.3
Venezuela	Total	7.3	7.7	8.2	7.0	4.9
	Men	8.1	9.2	8.9	7.4	4.5
	Women	5.9	3.7	6.5	6.5	5.5

**Source:** ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America. 1995 Edition* (LC/G.1886-P), Santiago, Chile, 1995. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.II.G.17, on the basis of tabulations carried out from household surveys.

<sup>a</sup> 1990. <sup>b</sup> 1989. <sup>c</sup> 1991.

Box 5

**UNDEREMPLOYMENT IN LIMA**

Underemployment is a more serious problem in the region than unemployment, and affects women particularly severely. An example is given in the National Report on Peru. There, it is concluded that given the conditions of poverty that exist in Peru, it is more relevant to measure underemployment on the basis of earnings than on the basis of time spent working or the length of the working day. This type of underemployment is characteristic of almost the entire labour force. Of the economically active population of Metropolitan Lima, 78.2% of women and 76.7% of men are in this situation. Between 1981 and 1993, the underemployment rate by this definition rose by 48% in the case of women and 59% in the case of men. This means that the incidence of underemployment is almost identical between men and women, but women suffer more from acute underemployment as measured by earnings, which affects 55.2% of economically active women in Metropolitan Lima. The proportion of women in a position of acute and medium underemployment increased by a factor of 10.5 times between 1981 and 1993, while the proportion of women with adequate employment and in a situation of slight underemployment fell by 8.5 times. In other words, women are being concentrated into lower income levels or, what amounts to the same thing, inequality of income distribution among women is increasing. At the other extreme of the earnings pyramid, the proportion of "adequately employed" women, those who receive an income above the minimum, has fallen. In 1981, 50% of women were adequately employed.

**METROPOLITAN LIMA: ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION BY LEVELS OF EMPLOYMENT AND SEX, 1981-1993**

	1981		1993	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Overall unemployment	5.0	11.0	8.3	12.2
Total underemployment	22.4	37.2	77.4	78.6
By earnings	17.7	29.2	76.7	78.2
Acute	2.0	6.4	29.9	55.2
Medium	3.8	9.6	33.7	18.3
Slight	11.9	13.8	13.1	4.7
By time	2.6	4.2	0.7	0.4
Undetermined	2.1	3.2	n.a.	n.a.
Adequately employed	72.6	51.8	14.3	9.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

**Source:** Department of Statistics, Household Surveys 1981 and 1993 and Permanent Commission for the Rights of Women and Children, *National report on women for the Fourth World Conference on Women*, Lima, Ministry of Justice, 1994.

## 7. The cost of reproduction

One of the most important differences in the way women participate in the labour market is linked to the activity of reproduction, which includes procreation and the bringing up of children. Historically, this has resulted in women who wish to work being discriminated against because of the costs which are presumed to fall on employers when they take on a woman. One way of avoiding discrimination in part would be to provide support in the form of child-care and maternity services, as these would contribute towards greater equality of conditions between men and women in the labour market.

There is now provision for maternity leave in all the countries of the region. This is designed as a protection for mothers who work outside the home, and consists in giving women a certain number of weeks leave before and after the birth. Depending on the country, the salary is paid during this period either by the employer, or by social security, or both.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, maternity leave varies from eight weeks in the Bahamas to four months in Costa Rica, and in most of the countries its duration is from 12 to 14 weeks. The level of remuneration paid by social security is generally 100%. Nonetheless, this legislation, which was supposed to benefit working women, has actually led to greater discrimination in terms of women being taken on and promoted. No formula has yet been found that can prevent this discrimination, but efforts are being made to revise these laws in such a way that the cost falls on the State, rather than on employers (United Nations, 1995a).

Below is an example that illustrates the difficulty women have in gaining access to credit (see box 6).

Box 6		
PROPORTION OF MEN AND WOMEN WITH ACCESS TO HOUSING CREDIT AT THE BANCO ECUATORIANO		
In the National Report on Ecuador prepared for the Regional Meeting to prepare for the Fourth World Conference on Women, a set of data was presented which revealed that women's access to housing credit is systematically lower than men's, as can be seen in the table below.		
PROPORTION OF MEN AND WOMEN WITH ACCESS TO HOUSING CREDIT AT THE BANCO ECUATORIANO, 1993		
<i>(Percentages)</i>		
Branch	Women	Men
Ibarra	44	56
Ambato	20	80
Riobamba	20	80
Cuenca	24	76
Sierra	27	73
Manta	40	60
Machala	50	50
Esmeraldas	52	48
Quevedo	44	56
Costa	46	54
Quito	24	76

**Source:** National Report on Ecuador prepared for the Regional Meeting to prepare for the Fourth World Conference on Women.



## **V. PROPOSALS FOR INDICATORS FOR USE AS INPUTS INTO SECTORAL POLICIES**

Despite the progress made with employment statistics, the point has not yet been reached where indicators capable of supporting efforts to incorporate gender considerations into sectoral policies are published on a systematic basis. In many cases, not even basic data are broken down by sex. If they need to carry out a diagnosis of the employment position of women, researchers have to turn to primary sources, such as household surveys, and subject them to special processing. Nonetheless, these surveys do contain a great deal of information that can be used, without the need to carry out new specialized surveys.

It would be ideal if there were a regular publication containing a series of indicators that revealed the employment situation of men and women, and that enabled policy makers to attain a thorough understanding of men and women's participation in economic activity, and the restrictions they respectively face.

The objective of the following proposal is to construct indicators that take into account aspects which are relevant to the design of policies and programmes for improving the way men and women operate in the labour market, incorporating gender considerations.

In order to throw into relief the specific characteristics of women as regards their participation in the labour market and the obstacles that stand in the way of their entering employment on the same terms as men, the indicators are classified into four groups. The first consists of typical labour market indicators, including the traditional indicators. The second group is comprised of all indicators that in some way differentiate the participation of women in economic activity, due to the conflict that can arise with domestic work when women try to reconcile their productive and reproductive roles. The third group contains indicators covering formal aspects and regulations of the labour market that in some way affect the way women participate in that market. The indicators in the fourth group are those that deal with access by workers to productive resources.

### **A. TRADITIONAL LABOUR MARKET INDICATORS**

#### **1. Participation rate by age and years of study**

This indicator is used to determine in which age groups women participate most in economic activity, so that policies to support working women can be oriented towards those age groups. The number of years of study determines whether or not women need incentives for formal education. In some of the countries, women have more years of education than men. In these cases, it is necessary to analyse why they still have problems in participating in the labour market on the same terms as men. The conclusion is being reached that it is not sufficient for women and men to be educated for the

same number of years if they are to have the same ease of access to the labour market. The type of education and the type of vocational training are sometimes more decisive factors than years of education in determining the way men and women participate in the labour market.

## **2. Rate of unemployment by age and education**

This combination of indicators provides policy makers with information on priority groups. What type of programmes are used to reduce unemployment will depend on the characteristics of the unemployed. Two important characteristics are educational level and age (young people, for example). In some cases the emphasis must be on improving people's level of education. In others, high levels of schooling have been attained, but the type of education needs to be revised. Policies will differ depending on whether the unemployed are mainly young people, older people or women.

## **3. Employed population by income and level of education**

This indicator enables an approximate measurement to be made of wage discrimination. This raw information then needs to be refined to cover different types of occupation, experience, etc. Although it is generally agreed that women are affected by wage discrimination, no-one systematically produces and publishes indicators that reveal the scale of the problem. This indicator will on the one hand reveal the truth about wage discrimination and, on the other, will put an end to a number of myths which are traditionally employed to explain this situation. One of these myths is that the differences in earnings between men and women are due to differences in their levels of education, something that the figures refute in the great majority of cases.

## **4. Employed population by sector of economic activity**

Women are concentrated in certain sectors of economic activity. Consequently, this indicator is a vital input when policies to improve the way women participate in the labour market are drawn up. Nonetheless, this indicator needs to be considered in conjunction with those showing income and education levels. This will reveal where women are concentrated, where they are best off, and where the disparity with men is greatest, facilitating the work of designing and formulating programmes and projects to improve the working position of women, with the main efforts being directed at those sectors where they are concentrated, while incentives are provided for them to enter traditionally male sectors.

## **5. Occupational group by income and level of education**

This combination of indicators is important in that it reveals what type of occupation women tend to participate in, whether there is a relationship with their level of education, and whether pay differences increase or diminish further up the occupational scale.

## **6. Distribution of the employed by seniority of position**

This indicator should be produced for each sector of economic activity in order to determine where men and women are concentrated and then study the causes of the differences between them. One useful breakdown would be between the private and public sectors. Levels of education, age and experience should also be included.

## **7. Earnings from work**

This indicator is vital as a way of measuring labour discrimination. It should be combined with the age and level of education of men and women. It should also be calculated for each sector of economic activity, category and job position. Earnings should be calculated per hour or per working day of a determined length.

## **8. Participation by men and women in industrial branches**

One indicator that can be derived from household surveys, but that is not processed systematically, is the rate of participation by men and women in industrial branches. In all cases women are concentrated in areas such as textiles, clothing and food. Nonetheless, in some cases they are also concentrated in chemicals, earthenware (Chile) and wood and wood products (Paraguay). This indicator is very important for formulating policies to improve women's access to the labour market in leading sectors. The industrial sector absorbs a substantial contingent of women, but in posts that require lower qualifications and have lower productivity than those occupied by men. The growing importance of the assembly industry means it is necessary to design indicators that bring to light the working position of women in these new sectors.

## **9. Labour costs**

This indicator is an important one for showing the reality behind the myth that women are more expensive than men because of the cost associated with maternity. For this indicator to be produced it will be necessary to carry out studies comparing the cost of employing male and female workers over a whole labour cycle.

# **B. GENDER-SPECIFIC LABOUR MARKET INDICATORS**

## **1. Participation rate by number of children**

There are theories which hold that the more children they have, the less women participate in economic activity. If this indicator could be produced systematically, it is likely that this assumption would prove unfounded, as has already happened in countries where this subject has been analysed. Policies to support women in obtaining access to the labour market on equal terms with men will vary

greatly depending on the relationship between these two indicators. Furthermore, the fact that women do not participate less in the labour market as the number of children increases has implications for policies and programmes designed to help them secure easier access to work on the same terms as men, such as the creation of day-care centres, for example.

## **2. Indicators on the home**

A range of indicators could and should be produced using the home as the unit of analysis. The way women participate in the labour market is influenced greatly by the way their families function. What is needed therefore is a range of indicators that describe the members of households and the households themselves. Policies and programmes need to take account of the way the family functions, and so the indicators referred to above need to be designed for members of households, and in particular for male and female heads of households. One of the reasons for wage discrimination by sex is that women's work is regarded as something secondary, whose purpose is to support the earning power of the head of the household. The growing proportion of households headed by women suggests that this myth will have to be abandoned (see tables 24 and 25).

## **3. Sharing of domestic work**

An indicator that would be of great use in revealing the actual employment situation of women would be one that showed how domestic responsibilities are shared out between men and women in the home. This indicator is not produced on a systematic basis, but research has been done on the issue in specialist studies. Some insight into the real workload of women in their homes could help in the design of programmes to support domestic activities or to raise awareness among men so that they are willing to share these activities.

## **4. Labour force participation by civil status, age and number of children**

This indicator is important for identifying the obstacles that women have to overcome when trying to reconcile their roles in the family. This type of information can help to refute another myth about the labour market, which is that women abandon economic activity during their child-bearing years. Furthermore, demonstrating that working women have less children and that a large number of married or single women with children work, helps in an understanding of what is really happening in today's labour market.

Table 24  
**FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN URBAN AREAS, 1992**

Country	Year	Percentage of female-headed households at each poverty level				Distribution of female-headed households by poverty level			
		Total	Indigent	Non-indigent poor	Non-poor	Total	Indigent	Non-indigent poor	Non-poor
Argentina	1992	22	15	16	23	100.0	1.0	6.6	92.4
Bolivia	1992	18	20	17	17	100.0	20.2	27.9	52.0
Brasil	1990	20	27	22	18	100.0	22.4	24.3	53.3
Chile	1992	22	22	21	22	100.0	7.1	19.6	73.3
Costa Rica	1992	24	46	25	22	100.0	14.6	17.8	67.6
Guatemala	1989	22	23	21	22	100.0	24.2	24.3	51.6
Honduras	1992	29	35	30	21	100.0	46.4	28.6	25.0
Mexico	1992	17	14	12	19	100.0	5.6	15.6	78.7
Panama	1991	26	34	29	24	100.0	18.0	22.0	60.0
Paraguay	1992	25	36	24	23	100.0	19.3	21.3	59.4
Uruguay	1992	25	21	18	26	100.0	1.1	4.6	94.2
Venezuela	1992	23	42	27	19	100.0	18.9	25.0	56.1

**Source:** ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America. 1995 Edition (LC/G.1886-P)*, Santiago, Chile, 1995. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.II.G.17, on the basis of special tabulations carried out from household surveys.

Table 25  
**PROPORTION OF WOMEN HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS IN CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES, 1992**

Country	Women
Anguilla	33.2
Bahamas	35.8
Barbados	43.5
Belize	22.0
British Virgin Islands	28.7
Cuba	28.0
Dominica	37.3
Dominican Republic	30.0
Grenada	42.7
Guyana	29.5
Jamaica	42.0
Montserrat	40.0
Netherlands Antilles	34.0
Saint Kitts and Nevis	43.9
Saint Lucia	40.4
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	39.5
Trinidad and Tobago	26.5

**Source:** ECLAC/CARICOM/UNIFEM (1994).

## **C. INDICATORS FOR CATEGORIES OF LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND EXCLUSION**

### **1. Own-account workers**

A large proportion of women are concentrated in informal own-account activities. It is important for the purposes of policy formulation to know what this proportion is, and specifically what activities women generally engage in. If they operate principally as industrial micro-enterprises, attention can be turned to policies to support micro-enterprises; if on the other hand they are itinerant traders, the policies will be different.

### **2. Visible and invisible underemployment**

These two indicators are vital for measuring the way women participate in the labour market. Although they are difficult to measure, an effort must be made to obtain systematic information. The fact, revealed by studies, that women often wish to work more hours (visible underemployment), and that they are educated to a higher level than men in the same occupations, is cause for alarm about the underutilization of female labour, and about the inequity with which the benefits of development are shared out. The problem of underemployment is now more serious than that of unemployment in most of the countries in the region, yet this indicator is not often calculated, and still less is it broken down by sex.

### **3. Profile of female domestic workers**

Given the importance of this occupational category in the case of women, more information should be collected on the profile of these workers (age, hours worked, level of education, earnings, labour protection, etc.). This would enable programmes to be designed to help them improve the conditions under which they work.

### **4. Informal sector**

Although the informal sector has been growing over recent years, the statistics still do not systematize information in a way that enables periodic indicators to be produced on the size and characteristics of this sector. This indicator is vital if an understanding is to be reached of the situation of working women, as this is the sector they are concentrated in. A definition like the one already used by the ILO and ECLAC, which enables the sector to be measured and broken down by sex, should be applied periodically to household surveys so that this information can be obtained.

## **5. Social security cover**

One of the problems confronted by people working in the informal sector is the lack of social benefits. Since a high proportion of women work in this sector, it is women who suffer the consequences of this failing. Furthermore, the fact that women have a greater life expectancy than men is a factor that worsens the situation still further.

## **6. Type of contract and degree of labour protection**

As the labour market becomes more flexible, so the working conditions of men and women are changing. Yet despite this, there are no systematic indicators that can tell us how these changes are affecting the workforce of the region. If policies are to be designed to improve the way women participate in the labour market, there is a great need for indicators that can tell us what types of contract are used, how male and female workers are protected under labour legislation, and to what extent this legislation is complied with.

## **7. Workforce absenteeism**

An indicator that would help to banish the myths surrounding the issue of absenteeism among the female workforce would be one that showed the rate of workforce absenteeism among men and women respectively. Ideally, this indicator should be known for different age groups and levels of schooling. This would enable the causes of absenteeism to be ascertained and make it possible to design programmes to reduce it. It would also help to test the myth that women have higher rates of absenteeism than men.

## **8. Temporary workers**

In the current state of the market, temporary work is of great significance, particularly in the agricultural sector. This type of work is of great importance for women workers, so an indicator that broke down these workers by sex would be of great use in designing policies aimed at these groups. In addition to the numbers or percentages of men and women doing this type of work, a profile of these workers should also be produced: level of education, age, income, etc.

## **9. Workers without contracts**

The proportion of men and women workers without contracts is an indicator of poor job security. A profile of these workers would be of great use as an input when policies aimed at the informal sector are drawn up.

## **D. INDICATORS ON ACCESS TO PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES**

### **1. Poverty levels**

For the purposes of policy design and formulation, the indicators enumerated above should be produced for each level of poverty. Labour market indicators differ in different income groups. In general, unemployment affects poorer groups most severely and participation is higher in higher-income groups. Levels of education and the number of children also differ by income group. It would be useful to have indicators on the labour market broken down by sex and age, as these would provide an important input for formulating suitable policies. Having separate labour market indicators for different levels of household income makes it easier to formulate policies able to reach the poorest in society.

### **2. Access to productive resources**

Productivity at work is determined by a number of factors, among them being access both to productive resources and to land ownership, credit and training. It is generally affirmed that disparities in earnings can be explained by differences in productivity. There is however no information available to determine who has access to what and who does not, and what obstacles have to be overcome if these restrictions are to be removed. One very useful indicator would be a breakdown by sex of loans applied for and those approved. Another indicator that would be of use in this respect would be one showing the type of training received by men and women. At present, various countries in the region have programmes for training young people. There are however no statistics to show the type of training, or the degree of success that people have in securing jobs once trained.

## **VI. CONCLUSIONS**

### **1. Use of existing surveys**

If household surveys and population censuses are thoroughly examined, a great many indicators can be produced simply by carrying out special tabulations of basic data. In fact, a large number of the indicators used in this work were calculated by ECLAC, the ILO and other national and international organizations on the basis of statistics already in existence. Furthermore, there are other statistics produced by other specialist bodies (social security agencies, ministries of agriculture, employers' associations, etc.) containing information that can be of use in producing a sound diagnosis of labour conditions from the gender viewpoint. It must also be recognized that there is a great deal of scope for improving the data obtained from surveys by modifying the questions used in questionnaires so as to refine the data obtained on the participation of women.

### **2. Working conditions**

A subject that has not been dealt with here is that of working conditions. This type of information does not exist at present, except in the form of specialist studies. It would be useful for some type of survey to be designed that gave workers the opportunity to give their opinion of the conditions they work in.

### **3. Database**

One recommendation of an operational nature is that it would be very helpful to have a database holding information broken down by sex and a publication containing the basic indicators proposed that could be distributed periodically to the authorities in the countries of the region. Only in this way will they obtain access to appropriate information that enables them to design strategies and policies to improve the way women participate in the labour force. This would be an important contribution towards achieving the goals set at the Fourth World Conference on Women.



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