

# GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN WOMEN'S LABOR RELATIONS IN MEXICO

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## Abstract

*The economic crisis caused by the pandemic due to the virus that produces the disease called COVID-19 has caused unemployment to affect people who had some work activity, whether in stores, offices, cab drivers, or official agencies, among others. This global situation caused health authorities to order the closure of workplaces, negatively impacting employment and working conditions in Latin America and the Caribbean, causing a setback of more than a decade in progress achieved in labor participation. Furthermore, it is assumed that inequality and discrimination against women in the economy and the labor context in this confinement stage due to the pandemic generated by the SARS-CoV-2 virus have impacted gender violence against women in Mexico.*

**Keywords:** *Pandemic, confinement, unemployment, women, gender inequality.*

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## 1. Introduction

The study consisted of exploratory research to determine the impact that confinement has had on women, according to the remunerated work they had been carrying out regularly, since as a result of the pandemic generated by the SARS-CoV-2 better known as coronavirus, the health authorities decreed as a preventive measure to avoid contagion the confinement of people in homes. In this line of ideas, we intend to establish a comparative parameter in order to indicate whether women have been violated or restricted in the development and entire exercise of their trades or professions under the paradigms or roles of behavior that, according to structural idealizations of society a woman should have; and thus to measure its significance to be able to clarify whether actions have been committed that may consist of gender violence. This exploratory research has qualitative and

quantitative approaches and indirect instruments; it also has the possibility of leaving some lines of knowledge generation for comparison in the future.

The incorporation of women into paid work has taken place in a slow and tortuous manner, experiencing evident wage discrimination, as well as other marginalizations exercised in this context, derived from gender issues. Currently, theoretical and international debates have brought to the table the analysis of the intersectionality of inequality, understood as how inequitable relations permeate society and legitimize situations of injustice (Tello et al., 2020).

It can be affirmed that, when approaching the world of work, women are the ones who have to do the most work, finding themselves in many cases in situations where their work is neither recognized nor well remunerated, being an example of this a professional who has a full working day, but at the end of it must continue with a day that is not recognized at a sociocultural level as a housewife, or a full-time housewife, who is considered that because she does housework, she does not have a real job.

This problem is a social reality, having its origins in the patriarchal culture, where women are seen as inferior, dependent and confined, being this culture adopted by society for a long time. In Mexico, patriarchal education still prevails, causing Mexican society an abysmal difference between men and women in terms of work based on gender, behavioral roles that have been imposed on women over the years, a place of subordination to men with the logical consequence of an apparent inequality in access to opportunities and, consequently, inequality in obtaining promotions and better benefits.

Before the pandemic, there were already marked differences between women and men in the labor market, but SARS-CoV-2 was accentuated, presenting an increase of 2.7 million women who did not perform economic activities and who were not looking for work (INEGI, 2020). In this frame of reference, we can infer that the differences described above have been accentuated due to the pandemic that is ravaging the entire planet since the World Health Organization, in cooperation with the health authorities of each country, reduced the contagions generated by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, sent the population to home confinement, thus generating a situation that today's women have had to face since then, finding themselves on many occasions between the proper exercise of their work issues, and household chores or the loss of their jobs.

Although the Mexican government has implemented measures to control the spread of SARS-CoV-2 in the country, these have impacted working conditions and the entry and exit of people in the labor market, negatively affecting women (Escoto et al., 2021).

Before the pandemic, the conditions of access to the labor market in Mexico were strongly marked by gender inequality, where only 44.9% of women aged 15 years and older had a paid job, while the participation of men amounted to 76. During the beginning of the pandemic, there was a drastic decrease in labor participation and only 35% of women and 61.3% of men were able to keep their jobs; from June 2020, with the gradual economic recovery, a slow recovery was observed, by September the rates were 40.2% for women and 72.7% for men (INMUJERES, 2020).

Under this scenario, in a social, political, cultural and economic context such as in Mexico, in which historically, because they were born women, their rights, opportunities and spaces to develop their life projects and even to decide about their bodies and existence itself have been limited, it is logical that the effects of the pandemic have affected, affect and will affect them substantially (Rodriguez, 2020).

Faced with this situation caused by the pandemic, people have had to seek a balance between life and work, so the excessive workload and gender gaps have caused an imbalance that affects people's performance, putting women at a disadvantage (Martínez et al., 2021). The present research work aims to determine how women have been affected in the workplace, particularly those who perform paid work in the context of the economy and who, because of their gender, become a vulnerable sector as a result of the pandemic derived from COVID-19 and the confinement ordered by the federal government.

## 2. Theoretical references

The pandemic has had a great impact on all human beings since the health emergency was declared by COVID-19, affecting the entire population, but particularly working women in all senses,

since, being a surprising phenomenon, it caught humanity unawares, slowing down the containment to prevent the spread of the virus.

In Mexico, this phenomenon forced the Mexican population, since March 2020, to suspend work and other activities ordered by the health authorities, causing total confinement, which has affected various aspects of human life, such as income levels, lifestyle, as well as mental and physical health and emotional wellbeing of Mexicans. In this order of ideas, one of the most serious affectations that society, in general, has experienced due to the situation that has been described is located in paid work, being the activity that generates economic income, it generates a direct impact on the enjoyment of a decent life, to which all human beings have the right.

The purpose of this research work is limited to the context of labor activities about the impact generated by the current pandemic derived from COVID-19, specifically on women, deepening the existing gender inequalities and significantly affecting the links within and outside the home. It can be stated, then, that the pandemic generated by the spread of the virus, with its various variants, led the Federal Government to issue a pronouncement on most of the activities, sending to confinement all people, including working women, who were affected mainly by traditional causes of gender paradigms.

However, the current measures of confining people to their homes tend to protect the population from the virus and thus achieve public health and avoid the collapse of health services. These measures implied the closure of multiple services considered non-essential, as well as public and private educational institutions at all levels of schooling, causing an increase in domestic work for women,


In this frame of reference, it is here when the problem begins, since not all people have the privilege of being able to receive a salary from the “comfor” of their home, in what is known today as Telework or Home Office. Although many people indeed consider it a virtue to work under this modality from their homes, it is also true that in the eyes of many go unnoticed the problems involved in performing work functions at home; it is also true that in the eyes of many go unnoticed the problems involved in performing work functions from home since this is the space where virtually everything happens, causing an extra burden that is associated with domestic work and unpaid work, education, socialization.

In this order of ideas, we can deduce that the workload in the home that should be joint with the members of the same falls specifically on women, generating gender violence; it is important to mention that outside the home, women generate their income with domestic work remunerated, as well as in the health sector, either as nurses, doctors, social workers, cleaning staff, administrative staff, to name a few. These are the ones that have the greatest impact as they are the primary activities with which we face this pandemic, and that in turn, these women, being intimately linked to the health sector, are exposed to greater risk of infection, but despite this they have to continue with their work so as not to be affected in their economy and consequently in the running of their home.

To this effect, the Inter-American Commission of Women states: “Women represent a large proportion of the informal economy in all countries and data indicate that the sectors of the economy most affected by social isolation measures have a significant impact on women. Therefore, regardless of the sector, the effective participation of women in paid work that recovers post-COVID-19 will be necessary for economic empowerment and the countries’ economic reactivation” (OAS, 2020:5).

Mexico has a particularity in terms of its labor market since, of the entire region, it is one of the countries with the lowest female participation (Amaya, 2019). However, women who manage to be economically active many do so in the informal sector, and even the percentage of women who are in the informal labor market is higher than that of men, so the economic and food uncertainty worsened as a result of the pandemic (ILO, 2020:8).

Due to gender issues, women are the ones who have to do the most work, and this work is often not recognized or well paid. The pandemic made us visualize this social problem, even more, in which women are the most affected by confinement, but even more, the groups of migrant women, those who are deprived of their freedom, heads of household, domestic workers, single mothers, those who work in commerce and those who are in rural areas, have the highest rate of affectation.



Work is affected by all those women who do not have a fixed salary, who have to leave home even with the pandemic, to be able to contribute economically to their home with a little economic resource and attend to their basic needs, and if they have a family, the expenses are even greater. Therefore, this health emergency implies a more significant problem for the groups of women mentioned above since more expenses are generated by having to be locked up all day at home, also taking into account the expenses that are generated by taking distance education, triggering expenses in electric energy, internet or in their case, having cellular data, having the material to take online classes or work from home, even looking for an opportunity to find a phone that has the basic technology to use the necessary tools to work online.

In this context, the quarantine caused by the pandemic has greatly impacted counterproductive effects since not all Mexican households have the necessary economic resources to solve the problems resulting from this contingency. Therefore, speaking exclusively of Mexico, the country's structural vulnerabilities were multiplied because not all the population lives in a stable socioeconomic situation; many factors affect citizenship, which is noticed from the beginning of the same, in particular, the problem that not all the people respected the security measures indicated by the Federal Government, since in the cases of the people living in a street situation, or the people living from jobs in the informal economy, they could not comply with the sanitary containment measures, being deeply affected by the provisions issued by the health authorities of the Federal Government as well as the State Governments.

As a vulnerable group, women are the ones who have had the highest level of unemployment due to the pandemic; some of them have decided to resign to devote themselves to household chores and take care of their families, and others have had no choice, either because they have been laid off due to the economic crisis of the businesses that have closed, or because they are the owners of the businesses. In addition, those who have been laid off because they are not involved in essential activities have been forced to close, as well as those who have been laid off because they belong to the elderly or those who suffer from an illness that can be complicated if they become infected with COVID-19, those who work in informal commerce, migrants, and even those who have been infected with COVID-19 and who, for the reasons mentioned above, end up being laid off.

Many of these factors affect women's economy but also cause damage to their mental health, all of which must be taken into account to objectively consider the degree of vulnerability in which women find themselves in the context of the confinement motivated by the pandemic and how they are facing it, in the multiple scenarios exposed. Being a woman is not easy, even less so with the burden of being the head of the household, and even more so if the problems of this pandemic are added to the problems of inferiority that gender paradigms have traditionally dragged along. According to social stratification, being a woman at the professional or labor level, about labor rights is more difficult to achieve.

### 3. Context Gender violence

The research design is considered relevant because it is a social problem that affects, due to confinement in the social and labor environment, in which women have suffered a loss of paid work, and currently, this problem is still in force in the country. It is intended that the results obtained allow us to clearly and precisely identify whether the confinement caused by the pandemic has significantly affected women, determining the degree of affectation either because they have been dismissed, because they have had to resign from their jobs in order to take care of their families, or because their workplaces have closed in order to preserve the health of their employees.

The problem addressed in this research is limited to the affectation of women's homes in Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas, Mexico, establishing these citizens as the Target Group to determine whether women, being in one of the causes described above, suffered actions that may constitute gender violence, and thus establish parameters for their attention through the application of programs consisting of various affirmative actions.

The key characteristics of the problem are the description, formulation, justification and delimitation of the research problem. This allows configuring a scientific characterization of the problem with relevant aspects that must be taken into account in the development of the thesis

(Schwarz, 2018:4); these last two must be current and if the subject has the feasibility to carry out the study and finally to solve the problem that arises, in social terms, the present research is constricted to the work environment which will aim to highlight how gender paradigms subsist and are enhanced during the confinement in the target group, as well as the character of women as workers and in many occasions household provider, is enhanced and translated into gender violence.

With the pandemic, in addition to the group of women who, as we have said, for different reasons, have been affected in labor matters, it should also be considered that the group affected may increase if we consider the effects on migrant women, women deprived of their freedom, women heads of household, domestic workers, single mothers, women engaged in commerce and women in rural areas.

The National Healthy Distance Journey of the Ministry of Health and social isolation are part of the main measures to mitigate COVID-19 applied by the Federal Government in Mexico, which led to the immediate suspension of non-essential activities from March 30 to April 30, 2020 (SEGOB, 2020). From the censuses practiced, Mexico registered households are 18, 502,09 households, of which more than 50% have a person under 16 years old and in this exact order of ideas, 9,275, 691 households have at least one person under six years old (INMUJERES, 2019:8).

In other words, confinement as a preventive health measure to contain the spread of the virus will have important effects on women with their work.

#### 4. Methodology

The type of research that will be used is exploratory with a qualitative-quantitative approach, the exploratory research, this type of research has been chosen in the framework of qualitative research, focusing on the type of study *exp post facto* or on facts fulfilled (Monje, 2011:103) since what is sought is to establish whether the confinement, or containment within the home, defined as “stay at home” provided by the Health Authority to avoid contagion of the disease known as COVID-19, as a means of containment of the referred pandemic, and whether such confinement, has caused loss of work, the majority of women in Mexico, in a mixed approach, that is to say, qualitative and quantitative, to apply to the Target Group constituted by economically active women who perform paid work, which constitutes gender violence.

The hypothesis is a forecast or an assumption that, according to the preliminary data, the researcher assumes he will obtain as a result. While (Hernández et al., 2014:104) define it as “Hypotheses are like guides for an investigation, since they indicate what is being sought or tried to prove and are defined as tentative explanations of the investigated phenomenon, formulated as the proposition,” points out the same author that one or several hypotheses can be formulated.

The hypothesis of the referred research work is about how the confinement in homes motivated by the pandemic has increased the number of women who have lost their paid work or the closure of their businesses to men, so it constitutes a form of gender violence. The hypothesis that is designed is analogical because it links different facts with others that are supposed to be obtained; according to Monje (2011:83), the hypothesis is a link between theory and real-world situations; in terms of the author cited, the hypothesis that is designed is descriptive because it predicts the occurrence of certain events, which in the case at hand consist of the number of women who have lost their jobs or have had to abandon them due to confinement about men, the closure of businesses and dependencies, to work in the home in various categories, performed by the women in the Target Group.

As has been established in the problem statement of this research, it is evident that the crisis caused by the pandemic derived from the SARS-CoV-2 virus contagion has had an impact on the employment and working conditions of women, not only in Mexico but also in the perspective of Latin America and the Caribbean, being a current problem to date, which shows a setback in the advances that had been obtained in labor participation. It is important to mention that emphasis is placed on Latin America, where Mexico and the Caribbean are immersed.

The labor participation rate for women stood at 46% in 2020, while for men, it was 69% (in 2019, they reached 52% and 73.6%, respectively). It is further estimated that the unemployment rate for women will reach 12% in 2020, which rises to 22.2% assuming the same labor participation rate for women in 2019. In 2020, the study explains, there was a strong outflow of women from the labor

force, who, because they had to meet the demands of care in their homes, did not resume their job search.

According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) document, 56.9% of women in Latin America and 54.3% in the Caribbean are employed in sectors where the pandemic is expected to have the greatest negative impact on employment and income.

According to the consultations carried out for this research, the crisis emanating from COVID-19 has caused a delay in financial matters, which it is hoped can be overcome, especially in terms of the economy of the families. While it is true that in most households, there are situations of economic precariousness as a result of the pandemic, there are also households where the precariousness is more marked due to the marginalization of women in access to paid employment in the margin of the pandemic since men are preferred to be hired because they are considered more “ap” or because they do not present problems of care for the family, being able to detach themselves entirely from the family nucleus to perform paid work. This is in contrast to a woman, especially if there are children or adolescents in her home to care for and look after since the burden of the psycho-emotional development of infants is always linked to the woman. If to this situation we add the fact that many women are heads of family, and these were dismissed or voluntarily resigned because there is no possibility of teleworking, we will find a bleak picture for them, where the wage marginalization will increase even more than that of a woman with shared work with the spouse.

It is important to point out that during the eighties and nineties of the late twentieth century, there was an increase in the number of women who joined the labor market; this social phenomenon was generated by the economic crisis of those decades, in which women were in the imperative need to leave their homes to get a job and be able to contribute to household expenses. While it is true that women at that time emerged into the labor market due to a financial affectation on their families, it is also true that an unprecedented evolution was created throughout history, which caused women to take on the role of economic providers; however, this progress experienced a setback since March 2020, when the Federal Government decreed the sanitary emergency due to the proliferation of the virus that causes COVID-19, at the same time as the declaration issued by the World Health Organization.

In this frame of reference, it is assumed that the confinement ordered by the health authorities caused an affectation on women, not only in terms of labor issues, but by being in the bosom of their homes all the time, domestic tasks proliferate on a larger scale. Furthermore, this has increased the burden of family care, such as making additional meals because the children in their care increase their food due to the anxiety generated by being isolated in their homes, in addition to the management of their distance education, as well as the organization of the little free time to carry out work functions and activities.

The authors of the present research have deduced that the hypothesis is a forecast or an assumption according to the preliminary data the researcher assumes he will obtain as a result. While Hernández et al. (2014:104) define it as “Hypotheses are like guides for an investigation, since they indicate what is being sought or tried to prove and are defined as tentative explanations of the investigated phenomenon, formulated as the proposition” points out the same author that one or several hypotheses can be formulated.

The hypothesis of the referred research work is about how the confinement in homes motivated by the pandemic has increased the number of women who have lost their paid work or the closure of their businesses in relation to men, so it constitutes a form of gender violence. The hypothesis that is designed is analogical because it links different facts with others that are supposed to be obtained; according to Monje (2011:83), the hypothesis is a link between theory and real-world situations; in terms of the author cited, the hypothesis that is designed is descriptive because it predicts the occurrence of certain events, which in the case at hand consist of the number of women who have lost their jobs or have had to abandon them due to confinement about men, the closure of businesses and dependencies, to work in the home in various categories, performed by the women in the Target Group.

Women’s participation in the workplace and their experience within it is overshadowed by the social and behavioral roles assigned to them by traditions governed by patriarchy and machismo in Mexico,

which translates into a restriction of women's autonomy. Despite the evolution and efforts made by women over the years to balance household responsibilities among the different members of the household, it is women who continue to bear these responsibilities. This is because women are prioritized in the domestic sphere, such as caring for children, geriatric or disabled people, feeding and the tasks involved in keeping the home in habitable conditions (Amilpas, 2020).

The pandemic came to deliver more burdens to women, bringing with it a prevalence and increase in terms of gender paradigms, establishing a relationship of subordination of women to men in the home, and not only in the family, but these paradigms are transferred to the workplace where women suffer discrimination, lower wages prevail compared to men. Nevertheless, in many cases, they perform the same functions and it should be added that many women experience harassment and sexual harassment at work as sexual harassment.

Women not only suffered greater loss of income and jobs but also recovered them less than men and had to bear an enormous overload of care tasks, most of which fall under their responsibility, the persistence of these social norms is largely because they are transmitted generationally. These norms are transmitted generationally by men and women who grew up with them, and because they are so deeply rooted in daily life, they go unnoticed by both the perpetrators and the victims, normalizing gender-based violence as a normal part of daily life in the family nucleus. This type of social norm affects all women regardless of social rank, economic position, level of education, etc., but it can be observed that the women who suffer most from these actions that constitute gender violence are those who live in rural areas.

The United Nations (UN) has pointed out on several occasions that the pandemic disproportionately affects women, and last March, the UN re-emphasized this with an overwhelming phrase: "Covid-19 is a crisis with a woman's face". In Latin America, which is the region most affected by the pandemic in the world, women are experiencing this phenomenon, both in political and social systems as well as in economic ones, the UN added. Mexico is the country that most recently released figures reflecting gender disparities in terms of economic impacts.

The National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) reported in March 2020 that 7 out of every 10 jobs lost between the first quarter of 2020 and the same period of 2021 belonged to women. It detailed that, in the first quarter of last year, the employed population in Mexico was 55.1 million people. However, in the January-March 2021 period, it decreased to 53 million. This means that 2.1 million became unemployed in one year. Moreover, of this total, 1.5 million were women, 71% or seven out of 10, and the remaining 604,000 were men.

Before the pandemic, 75% of women, compared to 50% of men, worked in service provision activities, retail trade and tourism (tertiary sector), which has been particularly affected by the measures of confinement and social distancing. The International Labor Organization classified the sectors of economic activity most impacted by the pandemic as medium-high, medium-low, medium and low; the sectors most at risk due to the crisis are accommodation and food service activities, manufacturing industries, real estate activities, administrative and commercial activities, and retail and wholesale trade (Rincón, 2021).

Furthermore, as has been mentioned, not all citizens have the same privileges; middle-class women and those living in poverty must go out to work in fear of being infected, thus infecting their families; many factors have influenced people's lives since this pandemic was declared. It is on women that the burden of work is placed on the care and attention of households, thereby reducing the chances of finding a job or even being employed by starting a business.

Of course, no people in the world were prepared for a pandemic like the current one; in this sense, the governments of each country established emergency sanitary measures, as well as implemented programs to prevent the spread of the virus; as for the pharmaceutical companies, they devoted themselves to the creation of different vaccines under the direction of different brands, which achieved successful advances, creating vaccines that were applied throughout the world.

Undoubtedly, the pandemic caused by the virus above continues to generate a setback in women's labor participation worldwide.

## 5. Results

### Information obtained from the statistics of the national survey of occupation and employment in Mexico 2019 published by INMUJERES.

“This report states that in the year of 2019, a total of 472 781 people in Mexico are engaged in nursing, with a degree of specialization of which 79 are women” (INMUJERES, 2019:3).

According to the survey, 319,757 people work as medical professionals in the health sector, 61.6% are physicians and 38.7% are female physicians. Concerning people dedicated to the care of children and people with disabilities, sick and elderly adults with assistance requirements, there are 117 557 in private homes, of which 95.7 % are women and 4.2 % are men (INMUJERES, 2019:4).

“As for people who are engaged in paid work in the home, there are 2.2 million of whom 9 out of 10 are women and it is important to note that 75% do not have any employment benefit” (INMUJERES, 2020). “On the occasion of the cleaning jobs that are hired in the establishments, a total of 1 046 088 people have been censused, 61.7% are women and 38.3% are men, and in this case, it is presumed that they have the minimum labor benefits established by law” (INMUJERES, 2019:5). Now, in the environment of households and their care the census yields the following results:

“63.7% of women spend their time caring for the household and its members (cleaning, laundry, food preparation), of which some underage women are only involved in activities such as carrying, picking up, waiting for health care, 7% must attend passive care, while 51.2% are applied to comprehensive care within the home, as well as 5.6% of women are also engaged in caring for household members aged 60 and over, in passive care is 5.3% (INMUJERES, 2019:6).

Regarding women providing special care to household members due to chronic or temporary illness or disability, it is 9.8%. Of the three previous types of care, the total percentage of women occupying their time is 79.2% (INMUJERES, 2019:6).

Due to the pandemic that sent confinement, in this context, each country decided to assume, as a State policy, a stage of confinement and quarantine according to the statistics of contagions and deaths (Hernández, 2021). To the students and that, in turn, this caused the suspension of classes, the statistics indicate that 25,493,702 students stay at home, students who, due to their age ranges, should be in the care of adults (INMUJERES, 2019:7), from where women will assume the care of these.

From the censuses practiced, Mexico registered figures of 18,502,09 households, which more than 50% have a person under 16 years old and in this same order of ideas, 9,275,691 households have at least one person under 6 years old” (INMUJERES, 2019:8). By analyzing the results contained in the statistics published by INMUJERES, it is deduced that while it is true that the authorities to prevail public health, ordered sanitary measures such as total isolation in homes. However, this measure increased the burden-time ratio for women since, in addition to exercising the functions of housewives, they must develop their work functions without any rest period between one and the other.

The report also points out that in 2018 the economic value of unpaid work of domestic and care work registered an approximate level of 5.5 billion pesos which represented 23.5% of Mexico’s Gross Domestic Product; in this sense, the work of women translates into equivalent to 17.7% which in pesos refers to an amount of 41 billion pesos (INMUJERES, 2019:7). In this line of ideas if we land these results to the current scenario produced by the pandemic, we can determine that there were already economic inequalities towards women since the monetary amount equivalent to the unpaid work they performed had a direct impact on the country’s GDP; however, by increasing this burden of unpaid work to meet health measures such as confinement, we can see that the economic impact that this represents will be even greater than that obtained in 2018, thereby increasing the gap that already existed for women to access a fair income.

In this regard, INMUJERES has generated important reports that highlight the evident level of inequality that has prevailed in women and work, inequality that, as previously stated, has been enhanced by the pandemic and the health measures that resulted from it; in this regard, the agency above notes the following:

Before the pandemic, the conditions of access to the economic market in Mexico were strongly marked by gender inequality, where only 44.9% of women of working age (over 15 years old) were gainfully employed, while the participation of men amounted to 76.4%. However, during the beginning

of the confinement, as a measure to mitigate the spread of the pandemic, a drastic decrease in labor participation was seen; only 35% of women and 61.3% of men could keep their jobs (INMUJERES, 2020).

**Figure 1.**

Women and Men over 15 years old, economic participation rates, January-September 2020.



**Note.** Taken from INEGI (2020) Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo (ENOE) I trim; Encuesta Telefónica de Ocupación y Empleo (ETOE) April-June; ENOE (N) August-September.

Many people who have lost their jobs or businesses were actively looking for work despite health restrictions. At the beginning of the year, the unemployment rate was similar between the sexes (3.4% for women and 3.5% for men). The highest point of unemployment among men was 5.9% in June, while for women, this was in July at 6.3%. As can be seen, job search trends are more stable among men. In the case of women, the reincorporation into the economic market has been mediated by the possibility of having support in caring for their children, who now take classes at a distance (INMUJERES, 2020).

**Figure 2.**

Women and men over 15 have unemployment participation rates January-September 2020.



**Note.** Taken from INEGI (2020) ENOE I trim; ETOE April-June; ENOE (N) August-September.

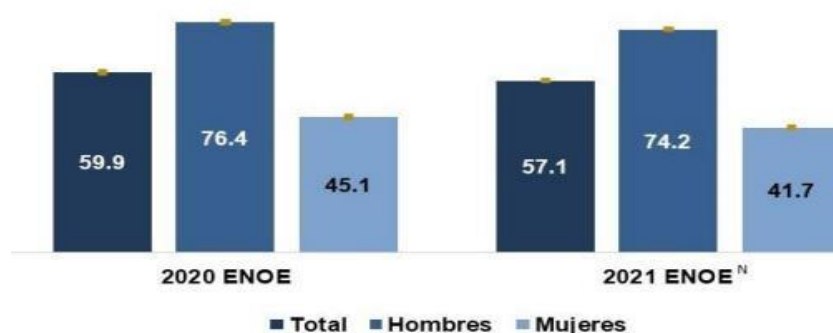
Now, after analyzing the INEGI statistics and considering the data issued before the pandemic and those issued after it, we can have a comparative framework of the direct impact suffered by women and the setback in labor issues suffered by women.

“The ENOE in the first quarter of 2021 reported a decrease of 1.6 million people in the EAP, which is reflected in an Economic Participation Rate of 57.1% concerning the population aged 15 and over, a figure 2.8 percentage points lower than in the same quarter of 2020. In addition, it should be noted that the Economic Participation Rates of men and women resulted in 74.2% and 41.7%, figures 2.2

and 3.4 percentage points lower, respectively, for the corresponding figures for the first quarter of 2021” (INEGI, 2021:2).

During the first quarter of 2021, the employed population was 53 million, 2.1 million less than in the first quarter of 2020. The employed population of men was 32.7 million, lower by 604 thousand, and the employed population of women was 20.3 million, 1.5 million less in the same comparison period (INEGI, 2021:2).

**Figure 3.**  
ENOE participation rate as of the first quarter of 2021 (percentages for the population aged 15 and over).

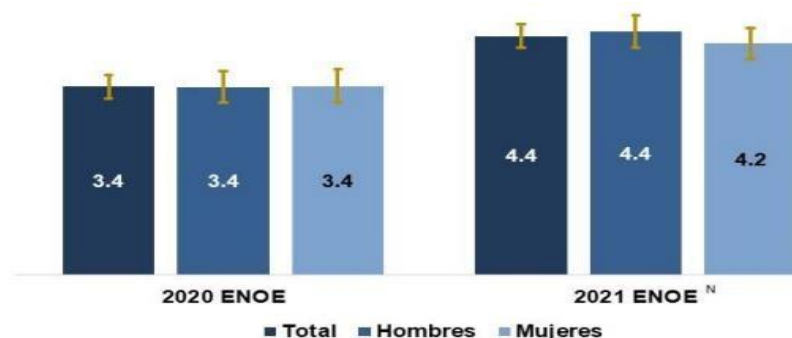


**Note.** Taken from INEGI. ENOE. New Edition, first quarter of 2021. INEGI. ENOE, first quarter of 2020.

The unemployed population, who were available and looking for work in the last month before the interview, was 4.4 percent of the EAP in the first quarter of 2021, compared to 3.4 percent in 2020. In absolute terms, the unemployed population was 2.4 million, an amount higher by 455 thousand people compared to the first quarter of 2020 (INEGI, 2021:3).

The number of unemployed men was 1.5 million, 338 thousand more than in the first quarter of 2020, while the number of unemployed women was 894 thousand, an increase of 117 thousand people in the same period. As a result, the male unemployment rate in the first quarter of 2021 was 4.4%, one percentage point higher than in the same period of 2020, while the female unemployment rate was 4.2%, 0.8 percentage points higher in the same period (INEGI, 2021:16).

**Figure 4.**  
Unemployment rate by sex ENOE as of the first quarter of 2021 (percentage of EAP).



**Note:** Taken from INEGI. ENOE. New Edition, first quarter of 2021. INEGI. ENOE, first quarter of 2020.

In the merit of the evidence obtained, it should be noted that this gender stratification is not new; it dates back to the origins of humanity; in this regard is noted, the following conceptualization: “The origin of unequal treatment between men and women in the social environment, has its distant origins in the physical and physiological characteristics between men and women, the basis of the assignments

that society attributes in their behavior or social conduct, to what is known as gender paradigm” (Resendez, 2019:54).

From the analysis of the statistics, it is evident that from the beginning of the pandemic, women were already dedicating long hours to domestic activities and that as the pandemic lengthened, women tripled the number of hours dedicated to these tasks and household care.

From the above, it is deduced that, although indeed, the health measures implemented to prevent the spread of the virus and therefore reduce the wave of infections were necessary to address public health, it is also true that these measures triggered significant changes in the quality of life of women, adding the challenges posed by the increase of unpaid work in households, consisting of digital education of children, domestic shopping, food processing, face-to-face or online work as appropriate, to name a few.

Even now, after several waves of contagion and the mitigation of contagion, the impact of confinement continues to be felt by continuing to register losses in the paid labor market in relation to women. The above shows the importance of creating effective mechanisms to cushion the impact of unemployment on women, as well as the challenges that governments will have to assume in the short term to reduce the rate of this unemployment so that women can be reincorporated into the labor market and thus strengthen their economy, especially those who are heads of household, in order to achieve economic empowerment of the female gender to achieve new solidarity, fair and egalitarian normality.

## 6. Conclusion

As a conclusion of the research conducted, we can identify the level of severity on which the economic life of women has been affected by the pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, as a result of the establishment of contingency measures issued by health authorities, such as the mandatory use of mouth covers and the imposition of healthy distance. However, the measure that brought with it a direct impact on women was confinement in homes. This last measure imposed new normality on the Mexican population, which many were unable to comply with due to labor issues.

This new normality, in addition to bringing sanitary measures, also created a margin of unemployment that had not been seen in many years; some people were laid off when companies were closed or personnel was cut back, with women being the most affected since they represent the highest number of unemployed, as shown in the graphs provided by INEGI. On the other hand, the confinement in homes caused women to carry an additional burden in terms of housework and the care of children and people of priority, such as the elderly.

The unemployment currently experienced due to the pandemic, whether voluntary to dedicate oneself to the care of the family or due to layoffs caused by budget cuts in companies, has resulted in a major crisis in the labor market. However, this crisis has been felt more acutely by women, creating a scenario of inequality in the workplace. The loss of jobs occupied by women is so enormous that this situation has not only impacted Mexico but is prevalent throughout Latin America.

It can be seen that from the beginning of the pandemic, there was already a marked difference in the impact on the jobs held by women in the labor market around the world and that these rates multiplied as the pandemic progressed, widening the labor gap that already existed for men. For example, the International Labor Organization revealed that in Mexico, 50% of women were at risk of losing their jobs due to the pandemic, from which it can be seen that the economic effects of losing approximately half of the working population were devastating.

There was a greater drop in the employment rate of women, which has recovered very slowly compared to that of men, which has managed to recover and sustain itself (UN, 2021). Historically, the role of women in the social sphere has been established in the function of procreator and housewife. When women entered the labor market, they achieved progress in the equitable sharing of domestic duties and child-rearing, but this pandemic meant returning to the historical origins of a woman's role, giving her the role of housewife and caregiver.

The main causes of unemployment or layoffs of women caused by the pandemic can be listed in three main groups, the first of which derives from the mandatory closure of non-essential activities

causing many companies and businesses to close their doors as they were unable to maintain the stability of their finances. The second group can be determined by the layoffs caused by the budget cuts that companies had to make to cushion their finances and survive during the pandemic. Finally, the third group consists of women who had to give up their jobs to carry out the burden of household and childcare since the virtual education that governments established were a challenge in which women assumed full participation.

Within this framework of reference, it is recommended that governments act immediately, through programs derived from public policies aimed at this vulnerable group of women, particularly in the most marginalized sectors, given that this real problem still exists and that health organizations worldwide agree that this phenomenon will continue to impact the lives of women for some years to come.

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