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# Gender Assessment



WORLD BANK GROUP



# COLOMBIA

## Gender Assessment





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# Acronyms

<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>CT</b>	Cash Transfer
<b>CCT</b>	Conditional Cash Transfer
<b>DANE</b>	National Administrative Department of Statistics
<b>DHS</b>	Demographic and Health Survey
<b>ECLAC</b>	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>ELN</b>	National Liberation Army
<b>ENDS</b>	Encuesta Nacional de Demografía y Salud
<b>FARC</b>	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
<b>GA</b>	Gender Assessment
<b>GEIH</b>	Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>IDB</b>	Interamerican Development Bank
<b>ILO</b>	International Labor Organization
<b>LAC</b>	Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>NEETs</b>	Youth who are not in employment, education or training
<b>PISA</b>	Program for International Student Assessment
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development
<b>SABER</b>	System Approach for Better Education Results
<b>SEDLAC</b>	Socio-Economic Database for Latin America And the Caribbean
<b>SENA</b>	National Service of Learning
<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
<b>TEA</b>	Total Early Stage Entrepreneurial Activity
<b>UMI</b>	Upper-middle income country
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Program
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>WDI</b>	World Development Indicators

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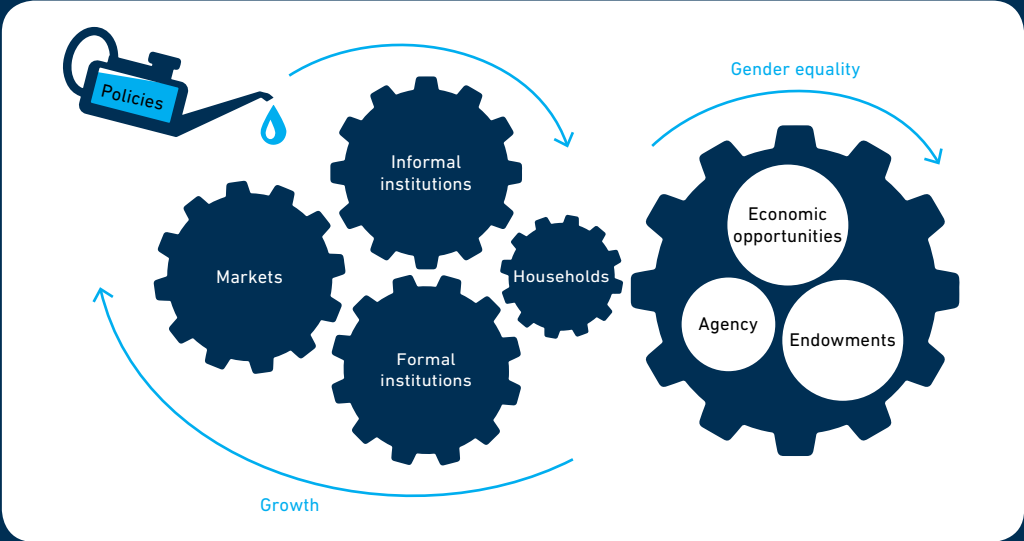
# Overview

Achieving gender equality in Colombia is critical to the country's future economic development and social cohesion; yet it remains an ongoing challenge. The government of Colombia recognizes the importance of closing the country's

gender gaps and is working on multiple fronts to realize this objective. However, and although preliminary findings indicate that substantial progress has been made over the last two decades, a number of challenges remain.

BOX 0-1: The WDR 2012 Framework for Gender Equality

The interplay between households, markets and institutions is central to understanding gender outcomes and their associations with development.<sup>1</sup> The decisions of households are based on preferences, incentives and constraints, which are largely shaped by informal institutions such as social norms or networks, formal institutions and markets. Markets, institutions and households interact to shape the status of women vis-à-vis men with regards to agency (the capacity to decide on own life), endowments (accumulation of human capital in the form of education and health) and economic opportunity (access to employment and income generation activities). It is then crucial to look into the functioning and structure of these and the role that public policy has in shaping them, to gain a proper grasp of the challenges that any country faces in closing the gender divide.



1 World Bank (2012)

Using the framework provided by the 2012 World Development Report (see Box 0-1), this assessment allows identifying the main existing gender gaps across the areas of agency, endowments and economic opportunity, and the major driving factors with regards to households, institutions and markets (chapters I, II, III, and IV). Based on this diagnostic, chapter V provides some policy recommendations that may help to close the existing gender gaps.

*Colombia has taken a number of important steps to correct the country's historic gender imbalances...*

**The centrality of gender equality is now recognized in the Colombian law and public institutions, while some advances in women's agency can be highlighted.** As the result of changes to the national legislation over recent years, Colombia now boasts one of the most comprehensive legal frameworks in Latin America and the Caribbean when it comes to women's rights and gender parity. At the household level, women are increasingly gaining space in decision making. As an example, the proportion of women who reported that the final decision about their own health fell to their partner or someone else halved (from 12 percent to 6 percent) between 2000 and 2015. This trend is most marked among urban women, especially those with high levels of education.

**Colombia has also notched up some notable achievements in women's health, and now compares favorably to other countries in the region.** In recent decades, the number of women dying during pregnancy or as a consequence of giving birth has dropped substantially, from 118 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 64 in 2015. In tandem, women are benefiting from more widespread access to maternal health services – around 96 percent of Colombian women had access to a skilled professional during delivery and 90 percent to prenatal checkups in 2015. Likely in connection with a sharp increase in contraceptive use, adolescent fertility rates have dropped

considerably, from 80 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 years old in 1990, to 50 in 2016. This enables young women to remain in education and thereby improve their life chances.

**In addition, gender gaps in education have decreased over time.** Not only gender gaps to the advantage of men have been closed, but now differences to their detriment are observable in enrollment and attainment. As an example, 82 percent of girls compared to only 76 of boys are enrolled in secondary education in Colombia. The same trend can be observed for tertiary education: 63 percent of women are enrolled in this level compared to 54 percent among men.

**Economic opportunities for Colombia's women have also grown over time.** While certain inequalities still persist in the country's labor market, employment opportunities for women have opened up considerably in recent years. Far more women are now in active paid employment as a consequence: In 2017, labor force participation (18 years of age and above) was 57.7 percent for women and 80.8 percent for men. This has probably led to a decrease in income inequality between men and women, resulting in positive ramifications for female agency. Based on the scarce data available, levels of entrepreneurial activity and business ownership among Colombian women can also be considered relatively high.

**It must also be noted that women have played a central role in the peace process.** For many decades, Colombia's long-running civil conflict impaired the rights of women and exacerbated gender inequalities. Since the peace agreement two years ago, women have been heavily involved in the peace process. Colombia's women's movement was also instrumental in ensuring that the final peace agreement prominently reflected gender-related issues. Going forward, women's groups continue to provide a vocal and constructive input to discussions about the shape of the country's post-conflict future.

*...yet persistent and important gender gaps remain, especially in rural areas*

**Everyday practice is taking time to catch up with improvements on paper, resulting in severe limitations in women's capacity to both make decisions and to act on them.** This is evident in their ongoing exclusion from the decision-making process in public spaces and firms. As an example, despite the existing 30 percent quota in candidates' lists, fewer than one in five (18 percent) members of parliament (MPs) were women in 2018, one of the lowest shares in the whole LAC region. Another concerning manifestation of limitations on agency is the continued high incidence of child marriage in Colombia. Around five percent of Colombian girls are married before they turn 15 years old and 23 percent before they are 18 years old (2015). Legislative and enforcement gaps appear to account for the incidence of this phenomenon.

**Gender violence also remains a prevalent issue across Colombia.** High levels of violence have characterized the recent history of Colombia for men and for women. However, while the onset of the peace process has led to a fall in the likelihood of men being victims of violence, the risks to women and girls appear to remain high. Violence against women is perpetrated primarily in the home. Almost one in two (48 percent) and more than one in four (27 percent) married women or in union reported experiencing emotional and physical violence by their partners in Colombia (2015), respectively. Important institutional weaknesses seem to stand on the way to reducing the incidence of this type of violence.

**Despite advances in the accumulation of education endowments, relevant gaps still remain.** Although the participation of girls in primary education has gradually increased over the years, the transition to higher levels of education is proving problematic, with female absenteeism and dropout rates commonplace during this period. Girls who are subject to patriarchal social expectations at home or who are heavily involved

in family and household care activities are most at risk of having their education disrupted. The share of young women aged 16-24 who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) is as a result twice that of men - 33.6 percent compared to 14.2 percent, in 2017.

**Persistent patriarchal social attitudes also carry implications for the health of Colombia's women.** A notable case in point relates to the use of contraception. While this has gradually increased over the years, a significant proportion of women (20 percent) still decline to use any form of contraception. The reasons that female teenagers cite for that are a further reflection of their limited agency when deciding about their sexual and reproductive health: 18 percent of urban and 29 percent of rural female teenagers report that their main reason for the non-use of contraception is opposition from their partners or someone else. In addition, and despite sexual relationships with minors being illegal, the number of children born to girls aged between 10 and 14 years old increased by more than 4 percentage points between 2016 and 2017.

**Colombia faces considerable demographic challenges, which have implications for gender equality.** As is the case across much of Latin America and the Caribbean, Colombia is experiencing an aging population. This demographic risk could lead to a slowdown in economic growth if the necessary precautions are not taken. In order to prevent such slowdown and to take advantage of the so-called second demographic dividend, Colombia will need to take advantage of the untapped reservoir of labor represented by the large share of inactive and unemployed women, and to increase the labor force productivity of both men and women through adequate investments in human capital.

**Colombian women do not have the same opportunities for economic participation as men.** With only six in ten (61 percent) of women in work, Colombia still trails some countries of the region in regard to female inclusion in the labor market. Colombian women also register the highest

unemployment rate in the region, at around 12 percent in 2017. A major contributing factor for women's low participation rates is the disproportionate responsibility they have for household tasks and care work. When women do find paid employment, it tends to be of low quality and poorly paid. Existing research suggests that gender discrimination accounts for a significant proportion of the wage gap experienced by women.

**Their exclusion from the labor market has direct ramifications for women, but also important economic implications for the Colombian society.** One telling statistic relates to the incidence of poverty among women, which appears to be higher among those in the prime working-age group. In addition, just over one third of women pay into a pension fund at present, compared to more than half of men. This trend is especially concerning given the higher share of women among the elderly population. Equal inclusion in the labor market will benefit Colombia's economy as well as advance gender equality. Not only women outnumber men, but their skills and preparation are now as high as those of men if not higher. It has been estimated that the potential economic losses over the long term due to gender gaps in Colombia's labor market amount to 17.6 percent in gross income per capita.<sup>2</sup>

**Gender gaps in general seem to remain more substantive in rural areas than in cities, especially in relation to endowments.** Even in dimensions such as education and health, where overall progress has occurred, the gains have been significantly lower for rural women than for their urban counterparts. As an example, almost all the births in cities were attended by skilled professionals compared to 88 percent in the countryside in 2015. In addition, more than

half of women between 13 and 24 years old are not attending any educational institution in rural areas, compared to around 37 percent of similarly-aged women in urban areas. Unlike girls and young women in Colombia's cities, those in rural areas are more likely to cite child pregnancy or marriage as the main reason for not attending school or university. For rural girls in school, grades tend to be sub-standard, especially in math. Partly as a result of all these, four in ten (40.7 percent) young women are not in education, employment or training in rural areas.

**The rural-urban divide is also clear in the area of economic opportunity.** There is a sizeable gap in labor market participation rates between rural and urban women (of between 27 and 22 percentage points for women 25-40 years old). Women in towns and cities are twice as likely to be in paid employment (55 percent) as compared to their non-urban counterparts (24 percent). Occasional paid employment is the reality for many (38.6 percent) rural women, more than double the national average (18.8 percent). This type of work is more prevalent in the agriculture sector, which represents the predominant employment opportunity for rural women. Despite rural women's growing role in farming, they continue to have limited access to, and control over, productive resources. This has negative knock-on effects for their agency and decision-making capabilities. The result of all these factors combined is widespread poverty and lack of opportunity among the female population of Colombia's rural areas. More than one in three (37.6 percent) rural women are currently in poverty (compared to one in four – 24.9 percent – in urban areas).

**The reasons for the imbalance between rural and urban women are multiple and complex.** However, high on the list must be Colombia's decades-long conflict, the worst effects of which were felt in the countryside. As repeatedly referenced throughout this report, another major contributing factor is the higher prevalence of patriarchal and traditional social norms in rural areas. This goes a long way to explaining why the participation of women in household deci-

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2 Cuberes and Teignier (2016). About one fifth of this loss in GDP per capita derives from distortions in occupations held by women relative to men. The model estimation implies that two factors lead to the income loss. First, a misallocation of entrepreneurial talent which affects the productivity of the economy. Second, women's lower participation in the market leads to the underutilization of the available human capital.



sions has not increased in rural households and contrasts with the increasingly greater voice that urban women have begun to enjoy over the last two decades. The burden for household chores, for instance, falls particularly heavily on rural women, more than half (56 percent) of whom describe themselves as being “mostly engaged” in domestic tasks. The corresponding figure for urban women is 37 percent. In view of the marked gaps between rural and urban women in Colombia, prioritizing gender issues when considering Colombia’s rural economic development and social inclusion represents a manifest imperative.

**Women living in rural areas where armed conflict persists, and Venezuelan female immigrants, face an additional layer of risk.** Recent reports indicate that many female civil-society leaders in rural communities are either withdrawing from the peace process or moving away entirely for their own safety. A second major risk factor for women is the massive and sudden immigration flows from neighboring Venezuela. Both these phenomena put women and girls at serious risk of sexual assault, human trafficking, and forced labor or prostitution. These risks are highest for those women and girls who already find themselves in vulnerable situations.

*Based on the analysis presented here, several policy recommendations can be made moving forward.*

## **Enhancing women’s voice and agency**

**Ending institutional fragmentation for gender equality.** The clear attribution of responsibilities and accountability to sectoral and territorial organizations in the development plan would be necessary for this purpose; these should be linked to specific and well-defined objectives and indicators. Results-based programs and gender-sensitive budgeting represent important tools to effectively advance this agenda.

**Putting in place the necessary institutional capacity to plan, monitor and implement policies, and to ensure the enforcement of the law.** Enhancing the capacity – financial resources and qualified staff – of the institutions in charge of planning, monitoring, implementation, oversight and evaluation of gender equality policies would also be important. Special attention should be given to strengthening the agenda’s security and justice capacities to effectively enforce existing legislation on gender equality.

**Advancing women’s participation in decision making.** Moving towards this objective would require ensuring the effective enforcement of the existing 30 percent quota, the eventual legal mandate of parity (50-50) in public institutions, and the establishment of incentives or quotas to encourage a more equal representation of women in decision making in private companies.

**Eliminating all forms of gender-based violence.** This goal would particularly demand strengthening the institutions that provide protection and assistance to women victims, legislating against all types of child marriage, and improving the legal framework to fight gender-based violence – and, more importantly, its enforcement. For the later, a better understanding of what is driving the current low levels of conviction would be necessary.

**Prompting and sustaining a positive change in social norms.** This would require a combination of diverse interventions across sectors centered on education, seizing the opportunities offered by ICTs and social media, ensuring a focus on adequately engaging men and boys and making use of role models. Pedagogical campaigns will be necessary in the short term to improve the general knowledge of what gender equality is about.

## Enhancing investments in endowments and ending the rural-urban divide

**Narrowing the gap in the coverage and quality of basic services provision.** Providing additional revenue-raising powers to the territories or introducing results-based financing that considers gender objectives could help in this regard. Improving the monitoring and evaluation system of service delivery particularly paying attention to gender equality objectives would be in any case required. Measures to generally improve the quality of the education system would need to center on rural areas.

**Addressing gaps in access to education and dropout.** The reverse gender gap in access to higher education should be monitored. Special attention to transitions would be required among boys in lower-secondary education and girls in higher levels, and more so in rural areas, through subsidies, academic or financial support or skills leveling programs that cater to their needs.

**Improving access to health services by women and girls, especially in rural areas.** Addressing the existing differences will likely require efforts to improve the coverage and quality of services, and their gender sensitivity. Access to sexual health information appears to be necessary for girls and women especially in rural areas of the country.

**Continuing efforts to attain sustainable peace.** Some measures to be considered in this area include establishing a protocol to dismantle the structures that have supported the dispossession of land, ensuring a sustainable implementation of the Victim's Law, with a particular focus on women, and investing in connectivity infrastructure, among others.<sup>3</sup>

**Addressing the gender implications of the Venezuelan migrant crisis.** Further dissemination of information on service availability among mi-

grants, and a special focus on providing protection for women and girls at risk – at a minimum through their regularization – would be necessary. The provision of support services to victims of violence is also important.

## Ensuring women's access to economic opportunity

**Easing the transition to work.** Expanding access to work for young women would require consolidating youth programs under a unified framework, paying special attention to the specific needs of girls and women, and establishing a skills agency that similarly considers such differentiated needs.

**Preventing and sanctioning gender-based discrimination in economic opportunity.** Legal and institutional measures would be key in this area, including prohibiting prospective employers to enquire about the family status of women, establishing the principle of equal pay for equal work, or setting up anti-discrimination commissions.

**Promoting a more balanced distribution of responsibilities over work and care through parental leave policies.** This would require the establishment of adequate parental policies that encourage fathers to effectively share family responsibilities with mothers, following the example of best practice countries such as Sweden.

**Enhancing effective access to quality childcare to ease the burden of care on women.** Access to quality childcare is a pre-condition for women to join the labor market. Affordability tends to be a central barrier in this area. Making payments for childcare tax deductible could thus improve access to these services. Introducing a quality assurance system for ECD would also be recommended.<sup>4</sup>

**Expanding access to productive assets and promoting entrepreneurship.** Female entrepreneurship should continue being promoted

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3 Ibid.

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4 Ibid.

through targeted programs that facilitate access to mentoring, training, finance and networks. Ensuring land reintegration to women under the peace accord, or providing financial instruments specifically tailored to rural women would be recommended.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.





# THE AGENCY OF WOMEN

*This chapter presents an overview of the current status of women's agency in the country. The concept of agency is used here to refer to the capacity of women and girls to make decisions for themselves and to act on those decisions. Agency is not only important in and of itself, it is also instrumental for other dimensions of gender equality; when agency is weak, it translates into unequal outcomes in other areas. To evaluate the situation in Colombia, the chapter looks at different areas that are considered manifestations of (the lack of) agency: legal and institutional framework for gender equality; political representation and voice; decision-making capacity within the family; exposure to violence; child marriage; and social norms. Some important advances can be highlighted. For instance, although certain gaps exist in the legal framework for gender equality, Colombia is considered a frontrunner in this area among Latin American and Caribbean countries. However, the current institutional capacity appears to be inadequate to enforce the existing laws or to fulfill the ambitious Colombian gender policy agenda. Largely as a result, and despite the positive progress on paper, the agency of Colombian women remains severely constrained in practice. A particularly extreme reflection of women's lack of agency is the high incidence of all forms of gender-based violence, which acts as a barrier to the country's social and economic development. Child marriage is also a common phenomenon. The weak empowerment of women in Colombia is further evidenced by their limited representation in decision making, especially in public spheres. Evidence exists that negative outcomes for women are correlated with traditional and patriarchal norms.*



## I. Legal framework for gender equality

**Colombia has made important positive advances in the development of an adequate legal framework for gender equality.** Indeed, the country is considered a “pioneer in legislation and jurisprudence with respect to women’s rights” and is recognized, in particular, for developing a comprehensive framework to address violence against women.<sup>6</sup> The country is part and signatory to the main international initiatives in this area, including the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1996), the Belém Do Pará Convention to Prevent, Sanction, and Eradicate Violence against Women<sup>7</sup> (ratified in 2014),

the Mexico<sup>8</sup>, Quito<sup>9</sup> and Brasilia<sup>10</sup> consensus, and

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6 Bouvier (2016)

7 Approved in 1995, it recognizes that gender-based violence constitutes a serious violation of human rights that the States need to prevent, punish and eradicate.

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8 Regional Consensus adopted after the Ninth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean held in Mexico City in June 2004. The governments of the region renewed their commitment to continue adopting measures aimed at the advancement of women’s rights, incorporating a gender perspective into public policies, adopting proactive policies for job creation, recognizing the economic value of domestic work, guaranteeing sexual and reproductive rights, curtailing violence against women, or addressing HIV/AIDS, among others.

9 The Consensus followed the Tenth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean held in Quito, Ecuador, in August 2007. The Consensus focused on two strategic issues: i) political participation and gender parity in decision making at all levels, and ii) the contribution of women to the economy and social protection, especially in relation to unpaid work. Representative governments established specific measures to overcome gender discrimination in political participation, employment, education, health, and the economy.

10 Government leaders agreed to facilitate women’s access to new technologies, promote a democratic and

Table I-1: Colombia in 'Women, Business and the Law 2018'

		Latin America & Caribbean	OECD High Income	Global
<b>Accessing institutions:</b> examines women's legal capacity, agency, and freedom of movement.	100	97	100	91
<b>Using property:</b> examines women's legal ability to manage, control, and inherit property.	100	98	99	83
<b>Getting a job:</b> monitors restrictions on women's employment and parental leave policies.	68	68	90	67
<b>Providing incentives to work:</b> examines laws around childcare and personal income tax liabilities.	80	77	86	66
<b>Going to court:</b> considers the ease and affordability of accessing justice.	50	67	86	68
<b>Building credit:</b> examines nondiscrimination in access to finance and the inclusiveness of credit reporting systems.	50	41	52	30
<b>Protecting women from violence:</b> examines sexual harassment and domestic violence laws.	80	61	75	54

Source: World Bank (2018)

other international commitments such as the Beijing Platform for Action,<sup>11</sup> the Millennium Development Goals (2000) and the Sustainable Development Goals (2015). In 2009, Colombia also became subject to the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, whose Rome Statute includes sexual and gender-based crimes as war crimes and crimes against humanity. The country has also translated such commitments into national laws and has a very comprehensive and advanced legal framework for gender equality in place. This framework includes legislation preventing all forms of discrimination in the economic, social, and political spheres. Among other guarantees, it ensures women's rights are on an equal footing with men and sanctions any type of

violence against women (see Annex 1 for further details). Indeed, as shown in Table I-1, the country has been assigned the maximum score in the Women, Business and the Law assessment (2018) regarding access to institutions and the use of property.

**Despite the progress registered over the last decades, some legal barriers to women's full inclusion still exist.**<sup>12</sup> In the international sphere Colombia has ratified some of the main ILO Conventions pertaining to gender equality issues (Convention 100 on the right to equal pay, since 1964; 111 on the right to not be discriminated against, since 1969; and 189 on domestic work-

non-discriminatory media, improve health and sexual and reproductive rights of women, and promote international and regional cooperation for gender equity.

11 The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, China, 1995), flagged 12 key areas where urgent action was needed to ensure greater equality and opportunities for women and men, as well as girls and boys. It also laid out concrete ways for countries to bring about change.

12 Women, Business and the Law measures gender equality in the law across 189 economies, including Colombia. The dataset identifies barriers to women's economic participation and encourages the reform of gender-differentiated laws across seven indicators. To understand where laws facilitate or impede women's economic participation, Women, Business and the Law 2018 provides economy scores for each of the seven indicators covered. Scores are obtained by calculating the unweighted average of scored questions within that indicator and scaling the result to 100.



ers in 2014). Other international Conventions remain unratified, however (156 on workers with family responsibilities or 183 on the protection of maternity). At the domestic level, relatively important gaps also appear to exist in some critical areas relating to labor market inclusion, protection against violence, and, in particular, access to justice and credit. These gaps will be discussed in further detail in the next paragraphs.

**Although the main legislative measures for the promotion of gender equality in labor markets are now in place in Colombia, some weaknesses can be highlighted.** As an example, Colombian law does not explicitly prohibit prospective employers from asking a woman about her family status during the hiring process. Other legal shortcomings include the lack of entitlement to flexible work arrangements for parents and the absence of the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value. Gaps relating to parental rights are also in evidence. At present, for instance, no legal provision exists for paid parental leave to be shared between both mother and father. Nor are payments for childcare currently tax deductible, discouraging participation in pre-school education.<sup>13</sup> Finally, the law does not guarantee mothers an equivalent position after returning from maternity leave nor does it entitle employees to paid or unpaid leave in order to care for sick relatives.

**Room also exists for improvements regarding the legislation on access to justice and finance, as well as in the legislative framework against gender-based violence.** At present, there is no legal mandate in Colombia for legal aid in civil/family matters, nor does the country have any anti-discrimination commissions in place. Colombian law does not prohibit discrimination based on gender or marital status in respect of access to financial services. In addition, the provisions of the Domestic Violence law (Law 1257 2011) do not extend to former spouses or unmarried intimate partners. Child marriage –

at 14 years old and above – is permitted in exceptional circumstances with parental consent. In all other circumstances, child marriage is considered void. However, no penalties exist for those knowingly involved in it. As regards sexual harassment, women have legal protection from such practices in their places of work, although not in public spaces.<sup>14</sup>

## II. Institutions for gender equality

**The main Colombian entities that are responsible for gender equality in Colombia are summarized in the Table I-2.** While planning and oversight functions are with the National Department for Planning and the National Presidential Council for Women, implementation lays with a multiplicity of institutions at the national level, including all line ministries<sup>15</sup>, a variety of departments<sup>16</sup>, agencies<sup>17</sup>, institutes<sup>18</sup>, and others (i.e., the School of Public Administration, the Historic Memory Center, the General Attorney Office, the National Police or the Council for Human Rights).

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14 Ley 599 de 2000, Art. 210A; Ley 1010 de 2006; and Ley 1257 del 2008, Art.29.

15 In the former Plan (2013-2016): Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism, Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Mines and Energy, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of ITCs, Ministry of Employment, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of International Affairs, Ministry of Health and social protection, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Interior, Ministry for Housing.

16 In the former Plan (2013-2016): Administrative department for Sports and Spare Time, Department for Statistics, Department for Social Prosperity, Administrative Department for Science technology and Innovation, National service for learning, National Department for Planning, Administrative Department for civil Service

17 Agency for the renovation of the territory, Agency for the Reintegration of persons and groups in arms, Agency for Rural development.

18 Colombian Institute for Family Wellbeing, National Institute for Health, National Institute for Legal Health and Forensic Sciences.

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13 Colombia records a score of 50 for its pre-school and primary education.



Table I-2: Main national institutions involved in Gender Equality in Colombia

<b>Planning</b>	National Department for Planning. National Presidential Council for Women - <i>Consejería Presidencial para la Equidad de la Mujer</i>
<b>Implementation</b>	Multiplicity of national entities. Inter-sectoral Commission.
<b>Oversight and evaluation</b>	National Department for Planning.

BOX I-1: Thematic lines of the department for Gender Equity

The Department for Gender Equity works along six specific thematic lines. These were defined by the Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social (National Advisory Board for Economic and Social Policy, CONPES) in 2013.<sup>19</sup> The department's themes include: (1) cultural transformation and peace building; (2) economic autonomy and access to assets; (3) participation in power scenarios and decision making; (4) health and sexual and reproductive rights; (5) gender focus in education; and, (6) a comprehensive plan to guarantee women a life free of violence. In addition, it works on preventing teenage pregnancy and supporting victims of the armed conflict.

All these were coordinated for the implementation of the previous gender plan (2013-2016) by the Inter-sectoral Commission created for that purpose in 2013.

**The Presidential Council for Gender Equity (Consejería Presidencial para la Equidad de la Mujer)<sup>20</sup>, which is part of the Administrative Department of the Presidency, is in charge of the planning and monitoring functions.<sup>21</sup>** The Council is tasked with assisting the President and the national government in the design, management, and monitoring of pro-equality public policies. Its mandate also includes promoting and strengthening research concerning women's status (see Box I-1). The Council achieves this through part-

nerships with the private sector, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and centers of investigation. This unit is also responsible for dictating the umbrella principles or main lines for gender equality policies to be developed at the ministerial or local level.

**However, the capacity of the Council has been limited.** As the diagnosis of the new National Development Plan (2018-2022) highlighted, the budget allocated to this agency is low relative to other countries in the region.<sup>22</sup> The budget allocated to the Council accounted to only 0.000178 percent of the total in 2016, compared to for instance 0.02 percent in Mexico or 0.001 percent in Chile.<sup>23</sup> In addition, it has been decreasing: it fell by 63 percent between 2013 and 2017.<sup>24</sup> The managerial and technical capacities of the Council also appear to be weak, while one of the main

19 See Document No. 161, 'Gender Equity for Women' (<https://colaboracion.dnp.gov.co/CDT/Conpes/Social/161.pdf>)

20 Alta Consejería para la Equidad de la Mujer (<http://www.equidadmujer.gov.co/Paginas/equidad-mujer.aspx>)

21 DAPRE for its name in Spanish

22 Government of Colombia (2019)

23 Proyectamos Colombia SAS (2017)

24 Government of Colombia (2019)

Table I-3: National entities with gender units/groups in the last gender plan cycle

<b>Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development</b>	Rural Women Direction (Decree 2369 – 2015)
<b>Ministry of Education</b>	Women and gender Committee
<b>Ministry of Justice and Law</b>	Gender Group (Resolution 0737 – 2013)
<b>Ministry of Mines and Energy</b>	Labor Gender Equity Committee (Resolution 90014 -2015)
<b>Ministry of Employment</b>	Labor Gender Equity (Resolution 162 – 2012). Working group on Gender Equity.
<b>National Statistics Administrative Department</b>	Internal Group for Gender Statistics (Resolution 1567- 215).
<b>National Department for Planning</b>	Gender Sub-direction (Decree 1163 -2013)
<b>General Attorney's Office</b>	Working Group on Gender and Differentiated Approaches (Resolution 2530 -2016)
<b>National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences</b>	Gender-Based violence group ( <i>Oficio</i> 056-2017)
<b>Colombian Agency for Reintegration</b>	Group for Programmatic Direction Design
<b>National Center for Historic Memory</b>	Working Group for Gender Approach
<b>Administrative Department for Sports and Spare Time</b>	Social Community Sport Dependency
<b>Presidential Council of Human Rights</b>	Gender table
<b>Ministry of the Environment and Development</b>	Working group on gender
<b>Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism</b>	Gender table
<b>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</b>	Gender table
<b>Ministry of Health</b>	Informal gender table
<b>National Police</b>	Gender instance
<b>National Service for Learning (SENA)</b>	Focal points in three directions.

Source: Proyectamos Colombia SAS (2017)

dependent agencies – the Gender Observatory – lacks the necessary staff and technologies to fulfill its legal mandate.<sup>25</sup> Civil society organizations systematically claim that the role and capacity of this institution should be notably strengthened.<sup>26</sup>

**In order to adequately fulfill its mandate, the Council has promoted the creation of gender equality units or working groups within ministries and other relevant national agencies to implement the gender agenda.** The limited resources – and especially staff – of the *Consejería* make it impossible for it to ensure gender mainstreaming in all policies, and across different sectors. In order to make this possible, the creation of units or working groups in each of the

agencies involved in the implementation of the gender plan has been encouraged. In 2017 out of the 32 entities involved in the implementation of the gender plan 19 (59 percent) had created a group, table, committee or any other instance devoted to gender affairs. However, out of these only 9 had been institutionalized through a resolution, circular or decree (see Table I-3).<sup>27</sup>

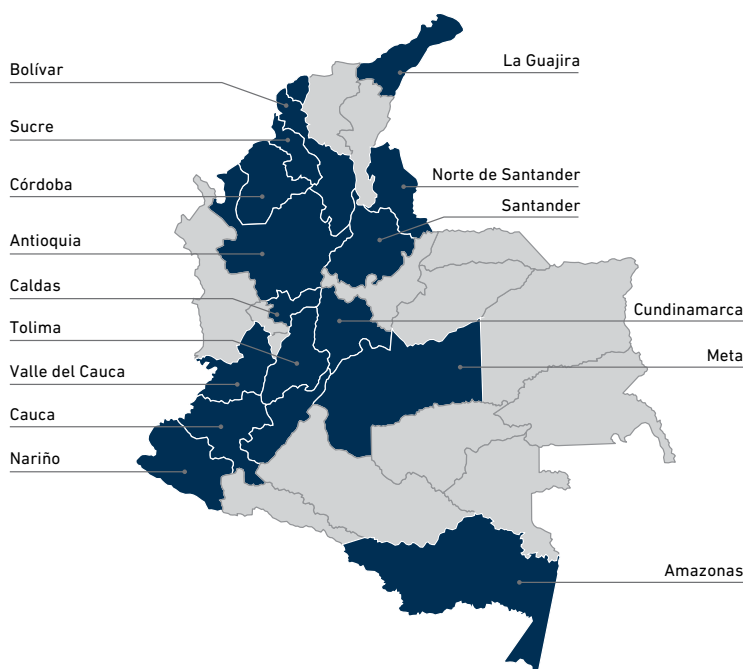
**The Council is currently promoting the creation of especially dedicated gender offices at the territorial level.** Out of the 32 regions (*departamentos*) today around half have an institution dedicated to gender equality issues at the highest decision level - in the form of a women's secretary (see Figure I-1). Others have gender equality or women's offices within other main

25 Ibid.

26 Proyectamos Colombia SAS (2017)

27 Ibid.

Figure I-1: Regions with a secretary of women



Source: Own elaboration.<sup>28</sup>

Note: Santander and Tolima, in process.

secretaries or departments. At the local level, only 11 out of 32 capital cities have a woman's secretary (see Figure I-1). The creation of gender-dedicated municipal offices depends on the existence of resources; in some instances, and when such resources are not available, the task of supervising the application of gender policies is integrated in the social policy secretary.

**The sectoral mechanisms for gender equality present specific weaknesses and strengths.**

Reports from the entities where these groups operate indicate that challenges persist with regards to their composition (biased either towards management or towards technical levels with little power), the low levels of training of the members, their high workload and the high rotation rates among the personnel. On the other hand, reports also indicate that these groups appear to have been successful in improving awareness on the issue across entities, advanc-

ing gender mainstreaming, strengthening the knowledge of the technical teams, improving the internal articulation of the topic and making the dialogue with the citizenship more fluid.<sup>29</sup>

**Due to the multiplicity of actors involved at the national level, an Inter-sectoral Commission was set up in 2013.**

The main objective of this entity was to coordinate the implementation and follow up of the last national policy on gender equality. The Commission was also meant to provide guidance on the mechanisms that guarantee the implementation of the Action Plan and oversee the development of a control system that allowed following up the objectives of the plan, among others. The commission convened every three months at the request of the Counselor for Gender Equity and was integrated by the main ministers or their delegates,<sup>30</sup> the General Direc-

29 Ibid.

30 The Minister (or his/her delegate) of Justice; Agriculture and Rural Development; Health and Social

28 Created using DataWrapper.

Table I-4: Municipal mechanisms for the implementation of gender equality policies in capital cities

	Women´s/equity secretary	Other
Amazonas – Leticia		X
Antioquia – Medellín	X	
Bogotá – Bogotá	X	
Bolívar – Cartagena de Indias		X
Boyacá – Tunja	X	
Caldas – Manizales		X
Caquetá – Florencia	X	
Casanare – Yapal		X
Cauca – Popayán	X	
Cesar – Valledupar		X
Chocó – Quibdó	X	
Córdoba – Montería		X
Cundinamarca – Bogotá	X	
Guainía – Inírida		X
Guaviare – San José del Guaviare		X
Huila – Neiva	X	
La Guajira – Riohacha		X
Magdalena – Santa Marta		X
Meta – Villavicencio	X	
Nariño – San Juan de Pasto	X	
Norte de Santander – San José de Cúcuta	X	
Putumayo – Mocoa		X
Quindío – Armenia		X
Risaralda – Pereira		X
San Andrés y Providencia – San Andrés		X
Santander – Bucaramanga		X
Sucre – Sincelejo		X
Tolima – Ibagué		X
Valle del Cauca – Cali		
Vaupés – Mitú		X
Vichada – Puerto Carreño		X

Source: Own elaboration.

tor of the Planning National Department and of the Administrative Department of the Presidency (who headed it), and other high-level officials.<sup>31</sup>

**Specific challenges constrained the effective functioning of this entity.** These included the low participation of high-level decision makers, since the representation was most usually delegated to technical staff with little or no decision making competencies, its use for accountability and reporting on advances rather than as the deliberative strategic space that it was originally intended to be, the high rotation of the staff taking part in these meetings, and the lack of important institutions including the National Police or the General Attorney's Office as permanent members.<sup>32</sup>

**Relevant actions have been adopted to strengthen the institutional and policy framework for gender equality in recent years.** In order to ensure that the territorial entities understand the relevance of adopting a gender lens in policy making, all new governors and mayors will undertake a course that includes a gender equality module. In addition, the National Department for Planning will provide a "territorial kit" where the main priority lines on gender will be explained. The new National Development Plan has established that activities and resources devoted to gender equality within broader projects or interventions would be tagged as such. The secretaries are expected in this context to make sure that these resources are effectively used for that purpose. Gender tags of actions or resources, however, do not entail in any case an increase in the existing budget of territorial entities. The specific institutional architecture for gender equality in Colombia should be seen as a first effort to help to strengthen the Council.

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Protection; Employment; Education; ITCs.

31 The Director of the national Institute of Family Well-being, the Director the Director of the Administrative Department of Civil Service, the Director of the Presidential Program for Human Rights, and the Director of the Administrative Department for Social Prosperity.

32 Proyectamos Colombia SAS (2017)

**However, important challenges remain.** Although central gender institutions located within the office of the head of government, as in Colombia, afford access to decision-making and facilitate coordination, monitoring and accountability,<sup>33</sup> the Colombian Council, which remains absent from the council of ministers, does not have the necessary authority or decision-making capacity. In addition, and although the Colombian model has not been evaluated to date, various reports indicate that the high degree of fragmentation that characterizes the Colombian institutional framework for gender equality entails very relevant coordination challenges. These features operate as major obstacles to the effective implementation of a comprehensive gender-equality policy in Colombia. In addition, various sources indicate that the capacity of the institutions involved in the implementation of gender-related policies in Colombia remains limited, particularly in connection with the necessary skilled staff.<sup>34</sup>

**Ensuring effective coordination across bodies is central to ensure the implementation of gender equality initiatives.** The main principles for setting up an effective institutional structure for gender equality include: defining clear responsibilities, roles and lines of accountability among the different agencies in charge; bolstering the capacity and resources of gender equality institutions; ensuring their capacity to integrate gender equality perspectives in their activities; and strengthening coordination mechanisms – both vertical and horizontal – for policy coherence.<sup>35</sup> International experience indeed indicates that formal coordination mechanisms are key to ensure that all actions are aligned with a broader, common, vision.<sup>36</sup>

**A survey of OECD countries<sup>37</sup> identifies "the**

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33 OECD (2016)

34 Government of Colombia (2019); Departamento Nacional de Planeación (2017)

35 Ibid.

36 OECD (2014)

37 OECD Survey on National Gender Frameworks, Gender Public Policies and Leadership

**ability to advance gender equality objectives on a whole-of-government basis” as a key factor for success.** This type of integral and cross-sectoral approach requires: <sup>38</sup> (1) Central gender institutions that are properly resourced and staffed, and with authority to oversee and ensure an overarching view; (2) Line ministries and sectoral agencies with clearly defined responsibilities and sufficient capacity to implement gender initiatives and analyze the gender impacts of other policies; (3) Robust coordination and monitoring mechanisms to ensure policy coherence and data-collecting to improve gender sensitive and gender impact indicators; and (4) Adequate evaluation, accountability and oversight in order to encourage compliance, for instance through gender equality commissions or legislative committees.

**Moreover, gender-responsive budgeting and results-based programs are important tools to achieve gender equality.** Gender-responsive budgeting signals a particularly strong commitment to the gender equality agenda. Gender budgeting practices encompass many different forms, but generally entail an effort to formulate fiscal policies and/or public financial management tools in a way that promotes gender equality objectives, and/or the allocation of adequate resources for achieving them. More in particular, performance-based budgeting - where the focus shifts from inputs to objectives - lends itself better than input-based approaches to incorporating policy-related objectives including gender into the budgeting process.<sup>39</sup>

### III. Policies for gender equality

**The National Development Plan 2018-2022 includes for the first time a chapter on Gender Equity.** The main pillars of the agenda include: increasing the educational and economic em-

38 Ibid.

39 IMF (2016), IMF (2017).

powerment of women to eliminate gaps in labor markets; the articulation and coordination of systems and policies related to care; the political empowerment of women; the promotion of women's welfare and health (especially with regards to their sexual and reproductive rights); the promotion of the right to a life free of violence; the recognition of rural women as pillars of development; and, gender equity for peace building. The two other priorities for the next four years are gender-based violence, and teenage pregnancy and child marriage.

**The new Plan prioritizes strengthening the institutional framework for gender equality in Colombia.** Specific measures include redesigning the Gender Observatory, and mainstreaming gender equality across all other sectors and areas. The plan also anticipates the establishment of an inter-sectoral mechanism in charge of gender violence.<sup>40</sup> To strengthen the role of the Council as the main mechanism for the advancement of women in the country, the budget of the entity was increased by 746 percent between 2018 and 2019.<sup>41</sup> Recently, the Government has also launched the so-called *High Instance for Gender* (Alta Instancia de Género), comprised by representatives from the Presidency, the Council, and other agencies. Its mission is to coordinate and ensure the application of a gender approach in the implementation of the peace agreement.

### IV. Voice and decision making

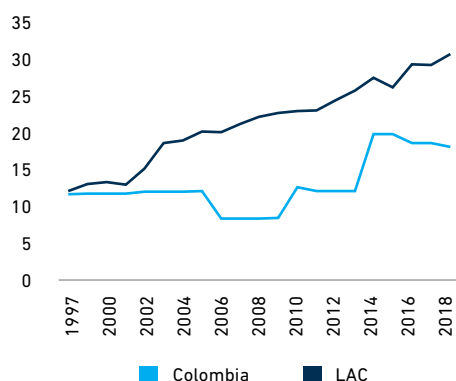
**The Constitutional Court in Colombia requires all political parties to have a minimum quota of women on its electoral lists.**<sup>42</sup> The quota, which is set at 30 percent, is designed to increase fe-

40 Ibid.

41 <http://mlr.vicepresidencia.gov.co/100/Equidad-Genero.html>

42 <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/Women-s%20Empowerment/ColombiaFinal%20-%20HiRes.pdf>

Figure I-2: Percentage of Women members of parliament



Source: UN Women/UNDP; ECLAC.

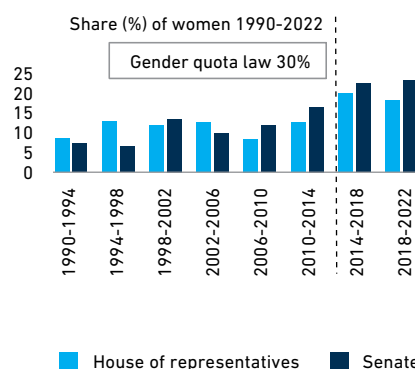
male representation in public decision-making positions. Quotas generally strengthen the position of women in political parties, increase the number of capable, educated women with the necessary professional experience in the field of politics and management of states and have a symbolic function in terms of women's political participation.<sup>43</sup>

**Despite this measure, fewer than one in five (18 percent) members of parliament (MPs) were women in 2018.** This is one of the lowest rates in Latin America and the Caribbean. As a consequence, women's organizations are advocating even more strongly for the effective implementation of gender parity in electoral lists.<sup>44</sup> At the same time, it must be noted that women's representation in the House of Representatives and the Senate has increased substantially over time. Between 1990-1994, women only represented 9 and 7 percent of the two chambers, respectively. Today, women make up 18 percent

43 Poskočilová (2015)

44 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-colombia-women-politics/colombia-shatters-glass-ceiling-with-gender-equal-cabinet-idUSKBN1KG2HM>

Figure I-3: Percentage of Women in house of representatives and senate



Source: UN Women/UNDP; ECLAC.

of the House of Representatives (See Figure I-2) and 23 percent of the Senate (See Figure I-3).

**Similarly, despite positive progress over time, the 27-percent share in ministerial cabinet positions that women gained in the last electoral mandate was low** (See Figure I-4). However, it should be pointed out that the recently appointed government includes as many women as men. This marks a historic first for Colombia. Moreover, women are present in ministries that have traditionally been managed by men, such as the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.<sup>45</sup>

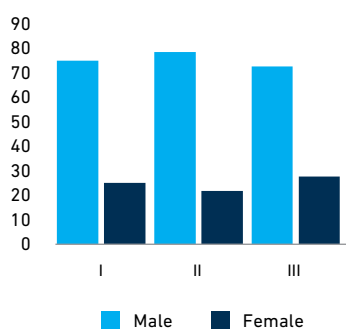
**At the local level the situation is even less positive.** Here, the share of women mayors and local councilors has remained systematically very low and is still below average for Latin America and the Caribbean (see Figure I-5 and Figure I-6).

**Different obstacles prevent women from participating in politics in Colombia.** First, the quotas established by law are often not enforced due to the lack of effective sanctions. Second, a

45 <https://www.eltiempo.com/politica/gobierno/el-gabinete-de-ministros-de-ivan-duque-para-su-gobierno-ultimas-noticias-243018>

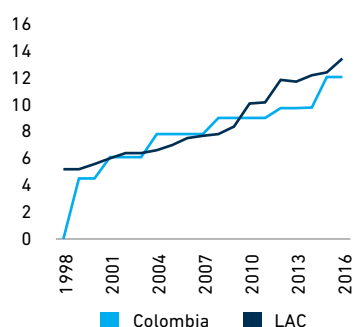


Figure I-4: Percentage of Women in Ministerial cabinet positions



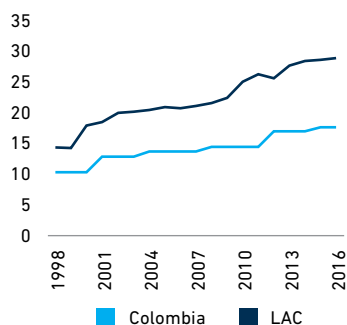
Source: UN Women/UNDP; ECLAC.  
 Note: I: 2006-2010 II: 2010-2014 III: 2014-2017

Figure I-5: Percentage of women Mayors



Source: ECLAC

Figure I-6: Percentage of Women Local Councilors



Source: ECLAC

male-dominated political culture and the prevalence of patriarchal social norms dissuade women from engaging in political activities, especially at higher levels.<sup>46</sup> In addition, indications exist that political violence against women is widespread across Colombia.<sup>47</sup> According to a recent study, nearly two thirds (63 percent) of women in politics report receiving some form of aggression due to their gender. Common manifestations of aggression include restrictions on women speaking and the refusal to grant them the full financial and administrative resources required for their public duties.<sup>48</sup>

**Women are also poorly represented in decision-making positions in the private sector.**

Only 12 percent of firms had a female manager in 2010. By comparison, the regional average in 2017 was 21.3 percent, which is in line with the average for upper-middle income (UMI) countries (20 percent) for the same year (Table I-6). The same trend is reflected in the boardroom, with women making up fewer than one in ten (9 percent) board directors in listed companies in Colombia in 2012.<sup>49</sup> Research from 2016 indicates that the situation is not improving.<sup>50</sup> According to Catalyst data, however, 14.5 percent of the seats in boards in Colombian companies were occupied by women in 2016, compared to only 7.2 percent on average in LAC<sup>51</sup> There is also evidence that women in decision-making positions earn lower salaries than men.<sup>52</sup>

**Yet, firms with high inclusion of women in decision making are shown to perform better.**

- 46 [http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/Women-s%20Empowerment/Colombia Final%20-%20HiRes.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/Women-s%20Empowerment/Colombia%20Final%20-%20HiRes.pdf)
- 47 ONU Mujeres (2016)
- 48 <https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/el-63-de-las-mujeres-que-hacen-politica-en-colombia-son-victimas-de-violencia-de-genero-articulo-684343>
- 49 Marrugo Salas (2016)
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 <https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-in-the-workforce-latin-america>
- 52 Aequales (2017)



Companies with above-average representation of women on their boards throughout the world tend to be rated higher for corporate social responsibility, for example.<sup>53</sup> The same extends to financial performance.<sup>54</sup> Zhang (forthcoming) highlights that the effects of gender diversity in the company's leadership on performance are determined by the normative and regulatory acceptance in the institutional environment. In addition, companies with greater gender diversity among their management are shown to have a higher survival rate than those with male-dominated management.<sup>55</sup>

Table I-5: Women in business management

	2010	2017
Colombia	12.1	..
LAC	..	21.3
UMI	..	20.1

Source: World Development Indicators (WDI)  
<http://databank.worldbank.org/>  
 (Accessed October 2018)

**The evidence of the effects of different factors for the higher representation of women in boards is diverse.** Some studies highlight the important role of shareholder's advocacy and legislative support.<sup>56</sup> Others point to institutional and cultural factors,<sup>57</sup> or to circumstantial needs – e.g., in times of crisis boards seem to be more open to gender diversity.<sup>58</sup>

**Public strategies to increase the participation of women at the top of companies are in any case becoming more common across countries, especially in Europe.** Quotas, in particular, seem to especially serve that purpose. Norway is the most paradigmatic example of this type of

measures. Since 2008, the country requires all boards to have at least 40 percent female representation. In 2002, less than 10 percent of board members in the largest publicly listed Norwegian companies (known in Norway as *Allmennaksjeselskap*, or ASA companies) were women. By January 2008, women made up more than 40 percent of the board members of ASA companies.<sup>59</sup>

**More positively, women's participation in household decisions has witnessed an increase in Colombia over recent years.** In 2000, around one quarter (27 percent) of women reported that their partner or someone else had the final say on decisions regarding large household purchases (see Figure I-7). By 2015, this had fallen to less than one fifth (18 percent). Similarly, the proportion of women who reported that the final decision about their own health fell to their partner or someone else halved (from 12 percent to 6 percent) over the same time period. Yet decisions on purchases are to a larger extent made solely by a partner or someone else.

**The higher a woman's education level, the less likely it is that her male partner or someone else takes the household decisions.** Around one third of women with no education report that their partners or some other person have the final say on decisions pertaining to household's purchases for daily needs (Figure I-8). Among women with a higher education, however, this percentage decreases to one tenth. A similar pattern is observed in respect of decisions about large household purchases as well as decisions about women's health. In the case of the latter, the differences are especially stark. Only 3 percent of women with a high education report that health decisions are taken by their partners, compared to 21 percent of women with no education – a sevenfold difference.

53 Harjoto *et al.* (2015); Soares *et al.* (2015)

54 <https://www.catalyst.org/research/why-diversity-and-inclusion-matter-financial-performance>

55 Women's Age, Telefonica Open Future - <https://soyempreendedor.co/estidio-open-future/4442>

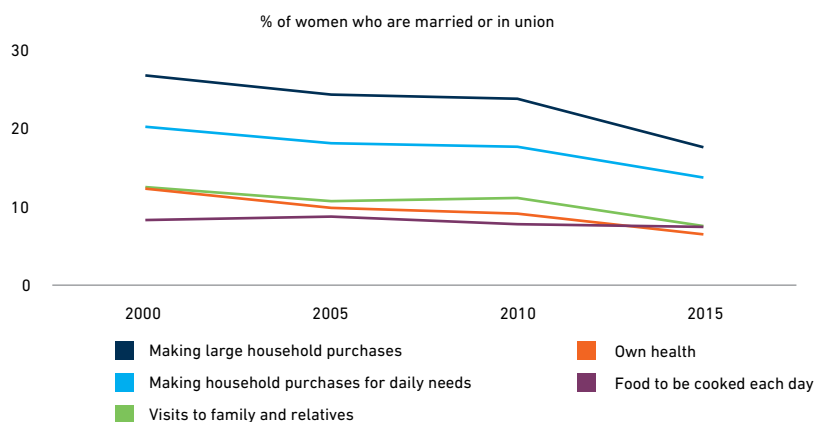
56 Perrault (2014)

57 Grosvold and Brammer (2011), Carrasco *et al.* (2015)

58 Sun *et al.* (2014)

59 Smith (2018)

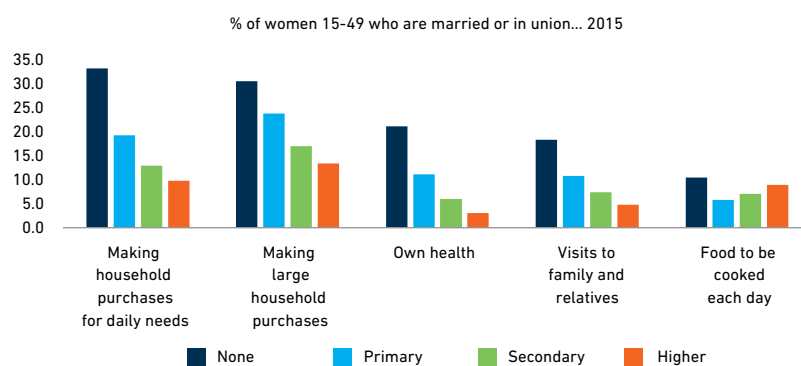
Figure I-7: Decision Making in the household (share of women who report that these decisions were made solely by their partners or someone else)



Source: DHS 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015.

Note: Women 15-49 years old who are in a union or married.

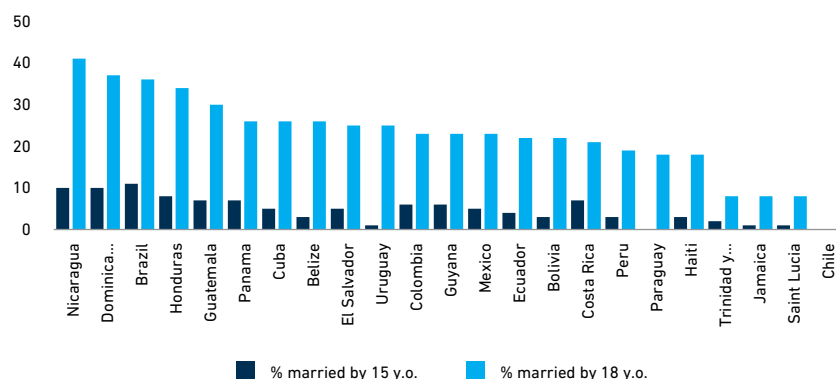
Figure I-8: Decision Making in the household by education level (share of women who report that these decisions were made solely by their partners or someone else)



Source: DHS 2015.

Note: Women 15-49 years old who are in a union or married.

Figure I-9: Child Marriage in Latin America and Caribbean (2008–2014)



Source: UNICEF, Global database

Note: The figure reports the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years old who were first married or in union before the ages of 15 and 18.

## V. Child marriage

**Child marriage continues to be a common phenomenon in Colombia.** UNICEF data (Demographic and Health Survey, 2015) indicate that around five percent of Colombian girls are married before they turn 15 years old and 23 percent before they are 18 years old (see Figure I-9). Colombia ranks 20<sup>th</sup> in the World with respect to the share of girls married before their fifteenth birthday. Compared to other Latin American and Caribbean countries, Colombia also ranks among the highest.<sup>60</sup> Existing legislation facilitates early marriages in the country. Although the legal age for getting married is 18 years old, the law permits both boys and girls to marry since they turn 14 years old with parental consent.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, as stated above, no penalties exist for those involved.

**Education and income affect the age that women enter their first marriage.** An important de-

cline in the share of women who got married or had their first child at or before they were 18 years old is observed as education increases. Higher education also impacts the age of first intercourse, although the increase is less marked (See Figure I-10). In 2015, the average age at which women in the highest quintile of income entered into marriage was 24.4 years old, according to the World Bank's World Development Indicators. This compares to an average of 19.3 years old for women in the lowest quintile. A recent study also shows that both men and women from families with more resources and where the accumulation of human capital is promoted tend to stay single for longer.<sup>62</sup>

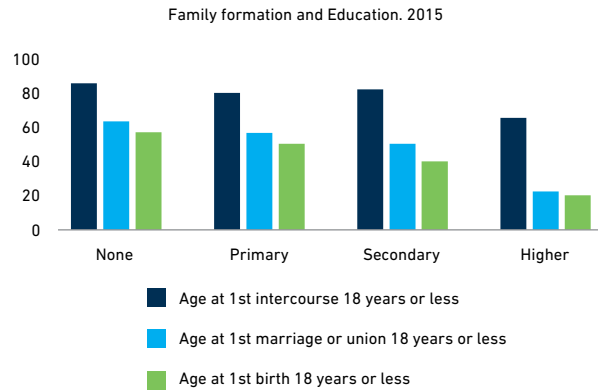
**Adolescent marriage is associated with the level of education of girls and with an age gap between the bride and the groom.** The percentage of adolescents married or in union has remained relatively constant over recent decades. In 2015, 16 percent of adolescents were married or in union – down 2 percentage points from 2000. However, differences in incidence exist depending on women's educational level (37.5

60 <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Child-marriage-in-LAC-Español-08.2017-1.pdf>

61 <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/colombia>

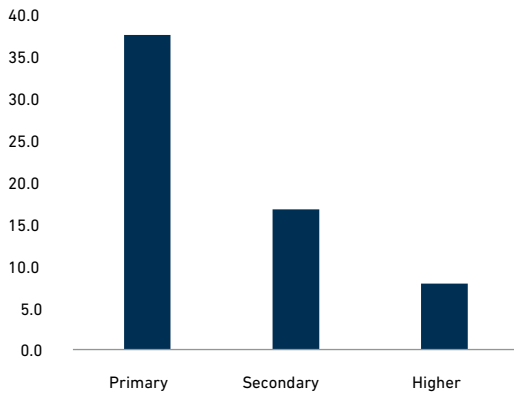
62 Rios Piñerez (2016)

Figure I-10: Percentage of women 15-49 who reported age at first marriage, intercourse or birth 18 years or less by education level



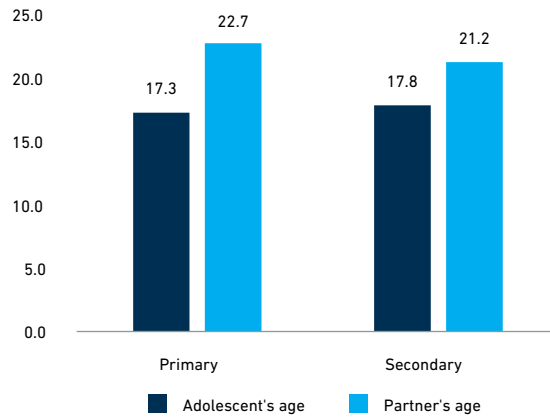
Source: DHS 2015.  
Note: Women 15-49 years old.

Figure I-11: Adolescents (percent) who are married or in union by education 2015



Source: DHS 2015.  
Note: Women 15-19 years old

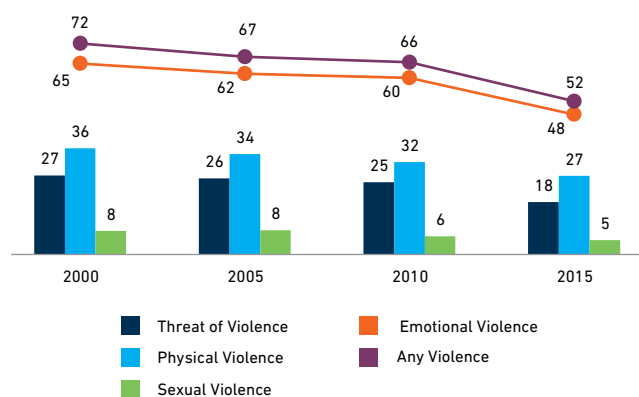
Figure I-12: Age of partner in Adolescent's couples by education 2015



Source: DHS 2015.  
Note: Women 15-19 years old

Figure I-13: Violence against women in Colombia  
(% of women 15-49 y.o. married or in union who have experienced any form of...)

Violence Against Women (% of women 15-49 y.o. married or in a union who have ever experienced any form of ...)



Source: DHS 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015.

Note: Women 15-49 years old married or in an union

percent among adolescents with primary education, compared to 7.9 percent among those with higher than secondary) (See Figure I-11). In addition, the male partners are 3.7 years older on average. This age gap is also more predominant among adolescents with only primary education (See Figure I-12). Such difference in age may contribute to further unbalancing power relationships within the couple. Indeed, there is evidence that having a much older partner can increase the risk of intimate partner violence.<sup>63</sup>

**Child marriage has significant impacts on a wide range of development outcomes for girls who are married early, as well as for their children, their families, and for society at large.** Globally, girls married before the age of 18 are at a greater risk on a number of fronts. For instance, compared to their peers who marry at later ages, they are more likely to experience poor health outcomes, have children before they are ready to do so, drop out of school, earn less over their lifetimes, and live in poverty. Also, the likelihood of child brides experiencing intimate partner violence tends to be higher. The same

is true for restrictions in their physical mobility and limitations in their decision-making abilities. Most importantly, child brides may be disempowered in ways that deprive them of their basic rights to health, education, and safety.<sup>64</sup>

## VI. Violence against women

**There is evidence of persistently high levels of violence against women in Colombia.** The DHS captures information on levels of emotional, physical and sexual violence, as well as the threat of such violence by an intimate partner.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Wodon *et al.* (2017)

<sup>65</sup> Emotional violence refers to attitudes that undermine women or reflect a controlling behavior from the partner, such as accusations of infidelity, restricted access to family and friends, and being ignored. Physical violence refers to attitudes or actions of physical aggression. These range from being pushed, slapped or hit through to being threatened or actually attacked with a knife or gun. Sexual violence refers to the act of coercive sex. Threat of violence refers to behaviors reflecting intimidation or economic abuse by a woman's partner. Examples include threatening to take the children away from home or to withdraw economic support

<sup>63</sup> Klugman *et al.* (2014)

Emotional violence is the most frequent form of violence experienced by women in Colombia. Between 2000 and 2010, around two in every three Colombian women (63 percent) who were married or in union admitted to having experienced some form of emotional violence from their partners. Although this figure declined to around half (48 percent) of all married or in-union women by 2015, emotional violence continued to rank as the most common form of violence against women. The most frequent manifestation of emotional violence is men accusing their female partners of infidelity.

**After emotional violence, the most prevalent form is physical violence, followed by threat of violence and sexual violence** (Figure I-13). Figures for 2015 show that more than one in four (27 percent) women reported experiencing physical violence and nearly one in five (18 percent) reported being threatened with violence. The National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences has been warning over the last years about the high and growing incidence of sexual abuse of children, especially girls and in the age range 10-14 years old. Instances of sexual abuse against girls aged 10 to 14 years old averaged 21 per day in 2016.<sup>66 67</sup>

**Femicide also represents a concerning phenomenon across Latin America and the Caribbean.**<sup>68</sup> Current data point to the fact that the region has one of the highest rates of femicide in the world, especially in Central American countries.<sup>69</sup> The increase in violent female homi-

cides committed by men over recent years has led Latin American countries to adopt special measures to fight the phenomenon, especially after the 1994 Convention of Belém do Pará.<sup>70</sup> One primary focus here has been the inclusion in national legislation of “femicide” as a specific aggravated crime.

**Femicide is also a major social challenge in Colombia.** According to the National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences, every three days a woman was murdered by her partner or ex-partner in 2017.<sup>71</sup> This rate is similar to the one observed in LAC as a whole.<sup>72</sup> In 2016, the number of medical examinations for homicides that were allegedly carried out by the victim’s partner or ex-partner amounted to 172. Of these, 128 corresponded to femicides, a 12.3 percent increase on the previous year.<sup>73</sup> In LAC at least 2,795 women were victims of the same crime in 2017 in 23 countries of LAC – an average of 121 per country.<sup>74</sup> It must be however noted that the homicide rate is much higher among men, and especially young men (in 2016 the intentional homicide rate was 47.5 per 100,000 men compared to 4.2 per 100,000 women)<sup>75</sup>.

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measuring and comparing the incidence of femicide across countries due to lack of capacity, under-reporting, and so forth.

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66 UNICEF (2016).

67 These figures are based on the examinations conducted by the Institute.

68 Femicide is generally understood to involve the intentional murder of women because of their sex. The crime is most usually carried out by the victims’ current or former partners (e.g., WHO - [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.38\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=452C0BE0A8EDF2FF-67B250276C52F8BC?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf;jsessionid=452C0BE0A8EDF2FF-67B250276C52F8BC?sequence=1)).

69 See: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/events/2018/09/event-spotlight-on-femicide-in-latin-america>. Note: numerous difficulties exist in

70 <http://www.oas.org/en/mesecvi/convention.asp>

71 Corporación SISMA Mujer (2017)

72 <https://www.cepal.org/es/comunicados/cepal-al-menos-2795-mujeres-fueron-victimas-femicidio-23-paises-america-latina-caribe>

73 Colombia’s National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences does not categorize all homicides of women as femicides. The definition of femicide is based on the Law 1761 of 2015 (better known as ‘Ley Rosa Elvira Celis’). For the murder of a woman to qualify as a femicide, the victim must be related to the aggressor or have an intimate or coexistence relationship with him. In addition, evidence is required of physical, sexual, psychological, or patrimonial violence prior to the crime.

74 <https://www.cepal.org/es/comunicados/cepal-al-menos-2795-mujeres-fueron-victimas-femicidio-23-paises-america-latina-caribe>

75 World Development Indicators

**At the societal level, violence against women seems to bear important economic implications.** According to some studies not only domestic violence tends to affect the poorest and least educated women, but it also increases their economic and social disadvantage.<sup>76</sup> Londoño and Guerrero (1999) find that violence in general, including domestic violence, represents a cost to the economy equivalent to 11 percent of the GDP. Rivero and Sánchez (2004), in addition, estimate that the economic cost of domestic violence alone amounts to 4 percent of GDP.

**Based on the existing literature, access to economic opportunity is associated with the persistence and incidence of violence against women in Colombia.** On the one hand, there is evidence that Colombian women's economic independence may reduce the persistence of domestic violence.<sup>77</sup> On the other, a recent study focused on rural women indicates that it may help to reduce its incidence too, but only in certain activities: increased women's earnings in coffee, fruits, industry and trade led to a decrease in violence, whereas among women in services they appeared to be associated with an increase.<sup>78</sup>

**The Family Police Offices are the main entity for the prevention of violence and assistance to victims.** These administrative entities are in charge of preventing, guaranteeing, re-establishing, and repairing the rights of family members that have been victims of domestic or family violence. Family Police Offices are spread over all the national territory. In the capital, Bogotá, for example, there are 36 in total.<sup>79</sup> However, as recognized in the National Development Policy, their existing information and monitoring systems do not give an accurate picture of the assistance provided. Nor is the performance of these

offices guaranteed in any significant way. Indeed, there is wide variation in the way they function across municipalities, since they depend entirely on local governments and the resources allocated to them at that level. There are reports that suggest the mission of the offices is not being fulfilled due to their lack of capacity.<sup>80</sup>

**The level of conviction of reported aggressors remains very low.** The share of women who reported violence or asked for help in Colombia has increased in 2015 with respect to previous measures; however, only 21 percent of the cases taken to the police ended in sanction for the aggressor.<sup>81</sup>

**Receiving monetary support from a Cash Transfer (CT) program seems to reduce domestic violence in Colombia.** In her recent study of *Familias en Acción*<sup>82</sup> and its impact on domestic violence at the municipal level, Rodríguez (2015) investigated the exogenous variation in time and place of the transfers received. Her findings show that the rate of domestic violence decrease by 6 percent during the months in which women received monetary transfers. The study draws on data about domestic violence cases reported by the National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences. These cases include physical violence directed by men against their partner, their children, or other members of their family in the household.<sup>83</sup>

**Yet the international evidence concerning the impact of CTs on domestic violence remains mixed.** In the case of the *Oportunidades* CT program in Mexico, for example, female beneficiaries are shown to be less likely to suffer physical violence but more likely to receive violent threats with no associated physical violence.<sup>84</sup>

76 Gaviria and Vélez (2001); Friedmann-Sánchez and Lovatón (2012)

77 Gáfaró and Ibañez (2012)

78 Iregui-Bohórquez *et al.* (2019)

79 <http://www.integracionsocial.gov.co/index.php/noticias/95-noticias-familia/2298-sabe-usted-como-funcionan-las-comisarias-de-familia>

80 Government of Colombia (2019)

81 ENDS (2015)

82 *Familias en Acción* is a Conditional Cash Transfer program implemented in Colombia since 2002.

83 The authors use data from the National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences.

84 Bobonis *et al.* (2013)



Another study suggests that violence decreases towards women who receive small transfers, but increases for those receiving large transfers (particularly when their partners hold traditional views about gender roles).<sup>85</sup> In Peru, meanwhile, evidence from the CT program Juntos shows a short-term reduction in physical and emotional violence against female recipients.<sup>86</sup>

**Results from an unconditional CT program in rural Ecuador suggest that women’s education matters for the direction of the impact.** Evidence from this program shows that a significant decrease in psychological violence is registered for women who have education beyond primary school level. However, women with primary education or less typically encounter an increase in emotional violence when their level of education exceeds or equals that of their partners.<sup>87</sup>

## VII. Attitudes and gender norms

**Attitudes towards the role of women in society show a mixed picture, with traditional norms appearing to be more prevalent in rural areas.** On the one hand, women widely reject patriarchal views of women’s social role. For example, the World Value Survey 2010-14 asked women whether they agreed or disagreed that men make better political leaders or business executives. More than seven in ten of those questioned said that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed. At the same time, when presented with statements characterizing the role of women as that of a housewife or care provider, around half agreed that these traditional assumptions were justified (Figure I-14). A wide majority of respondents in the ENUT (Encuesta Nacional del Uso del Tiempo) 2015-2016 also believe that women are better qualified to carry out domestic work than men. Differences are evident between ur-

ban and rural areas: while the share of rural respondents that agreed with that view amounted to 78.7 percent, the percentage drops to 65 percent in urban areas.<sup>88</sup>

**The prevalence of patriarchal values and beliefs may explain some of the observed gaps in outcomes.** Research has found a strong association between social norms and female labor force participation in Latin American and Caribbean countries.<sup>89</sup> As shown in Figure I-15, there is a clear, positive correlation between the share of women in employment across the region and the share of Latinobarómetro respondents who believe that women should only work when men do not make enough money.<sup>90</sup>

**More in particular, a low share of Colombian women justify wife beating, although women’s attitudes differ according to education levels.** Wife beating is justified to a larger extent by women with no education. According to women, the main justification for this is their neglect of their children. Among women with no education, 10 percent agree that wife beating is justified if women neglect their children. This figure falls to 1.2 percent among women with a higher education (Figure I-16).

**Social views on abortion also indicate the prevalence of traditional norms in this area.** In 2010, Colombia legalized abortion under three circumstances: (1) if the continuation of the pregnancy constitutes a danger to the life or health of the mother; (2) in the case of life-threatening fetal malformations; and (3) if the pregnancy is the result of a sexual assault, incest, or a non-consensual artificial insemination.<sup>91</sup> Most men and women (over 60 percent) agree with the depenalization of abortion in certain cases, with the exception of the mother’s mental health, incest

85 Angelucci (2008)

86 Hidrobo (2013)

87 Ibid.

88 [https://www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/boletines/ENUT/Presentacion\\_ENUT\\_2016\\_2017.pdf](https://www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/boletines/ENUT/Presentacion_ENUT_2016_2017.pdf)

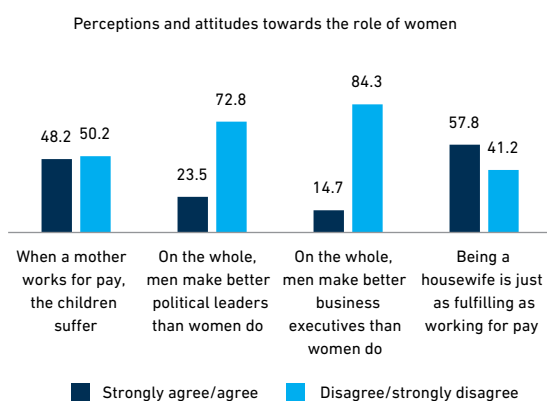
89 Fortin (2005); Goldin (2006); Fernández and Fogli (2006)

90 Muller and Sousa (2018)

91 Burgos (2015)

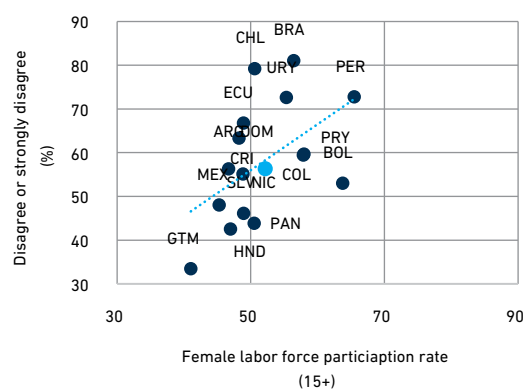


Figure I-14: Perceptions and Attitudes towards the role of women (% of people who agree with the following statements)



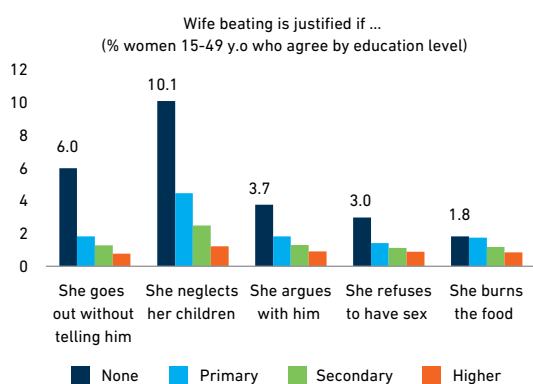
Source: WVS. 2010-1014. (<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>)

Figure I-15: Perceptions and Attitudes towards the role of women: Correlation with employment outcomes



Source: Muller and Sousa (2018) calculated based on WDI and 2015 data of Latinobarómetro Database. Note: The x axis reports the female labor force participation rate in 2014 (+15). The y axis the share of adults who disagreed or strongly disagreed that women should only work if the partner does not earn enough.

Figure I-16: Situations under which wife beating is considered justified by education



Source: DHS 2015. Note: Women 15-49 years old.

and when she is under 14 years old. However, less than 15 percent of the population appears to agree with its full des-penalization. The largest shares of population disagreeing with abortion under the legal circumstances are found among lower income and lower educated women and men.<sup>92</sup>

**Different sectors and actors need to be involved in efforts to change social norms around gender.** As shown by a growing body of evidence, access to information and the role of mass media are key in this regard. Roles models and leaders also play a central role, as does education.<sup>93</sup> Legal reforms, policies and programs can drive changes in gender norms by introducing news standards or licensing changes occurring in practice.<sup>94</sup> However, this "top-down" strategies need to be complemented and integrated in a balanced manner with "bottom-up" initia-

92 ENDS (2015)

93 Marcus et al. (2015)

94 Marcus et al. (2015)

tives such as community dialogues, youth associations or communication activities.<sup>95</sup> Inclusive social mobilization processes that enlist men and boys as critical partners are also needed. Information campaigns to support positive change could be strengthened through ‘edutainment’, a

particular type of media initiatives that promote positive stories and messages around gender roles and norms.<sup>96</sup> The growing penetration of social media offers special potential among younger population groups.

**Final remarks:** The information presented in this chapter indicates that, despite the progress made in developing a comprehensive legal and institutional framework for gender equality in Colombia, much room for improvement remains. Guaranteeing women’s rights and ensuring gender equality in practice will require Colombia to transcend its commitments on paper, by: first, having in place the necessary capacity to enforce them; second, promoting women’s voices and enabling them to make decisions and act as free individuals (e.g. free in the sense of who and when to marry, for example, or free from violence and its threats); and third, promoting and sustaining positive change in social views and norms around gender roles and related attitudes. Constraints in agency prevent women from making free decisions and inhibit investments in their accumulation of crucial endowments such as education and health, which are essential for ensuring their equal economic participation. Adequate investments in health and education, in turn, will help remove the existing barriers to women’s agency in Colombia. Given the vital importance of education and health outcomes in evening up the imbalance between men and women in Colombia, it is to these two themes that the next chapter will turn.

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95 Watson (2014)

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96 Watson (2014)



# ENDOWMENTS

*Women's limited access to health services and education can have important consequences for their accumulation of human capital, therefore influencing their ability to fulfill their potential as individuals and as members of society. In the context of an ageing, late dividend country such as Colombia, investments in human capital become even more crucial. This is especially the case with regards to inactive women, who comprise an important reservoir of untapped labor (see Chapter 3). This chapter reviews the situation of women vis-à-vis men in relation to the crucial endowments of health and education. As will be seen below, significant progress has been made by Colombian women in these two areas. With regards to health, this is manifested in women's improved access to maternal health services, the rise in contraceptive use, and the rapid decline in the adolescent fertility rate registered over the last two decades. With regards to education, Colombian women are not only better educated today as compared to two decades ago, but they also outnumber men in enrollment and attainment at higher educational levels. Despite this positive record, however, some gaps deserve special attention. Demographic trends, for instance, are leading to a rapid population ageing process that affects women in particular. Adolescent fertility rates still remain comparatively high, while constraints on adolescents' capacity to make decisions about their reproductive health persist. With regards to education, women still face higher absenteeism and dropout rates than men, while gender gaps in performance and segregation by field of study remain common. In addition, the share of female NEETs is much higher than that of men. This chapter will analyze these and other related challenges in further detail.*



## I. Health

### a. Life expectancy, fertility, and ageing

**Demographic changes can have relevant gender implications.** Variables such as fertility rate and life expectancy determine the age and sex composition of a country's overall population. The fact that the sex composition is unbalanced across age groups can, in some instances, serve as a reflection of prevailing gender disparities, such as sex selection at birth. It can also provide an indication of further potential challenges, such as the coverage of elderly women vis-à-vis men by social protection instruments; or of opportunities for development, such as the existence of a large reservoir of working-age, inactive women.

**The fertility rate in Colombia has decreased since the 1960s, as in all other Latin American and Caribbean countries.** The decline in the fertility rate up until the 1980s has been mostly at-

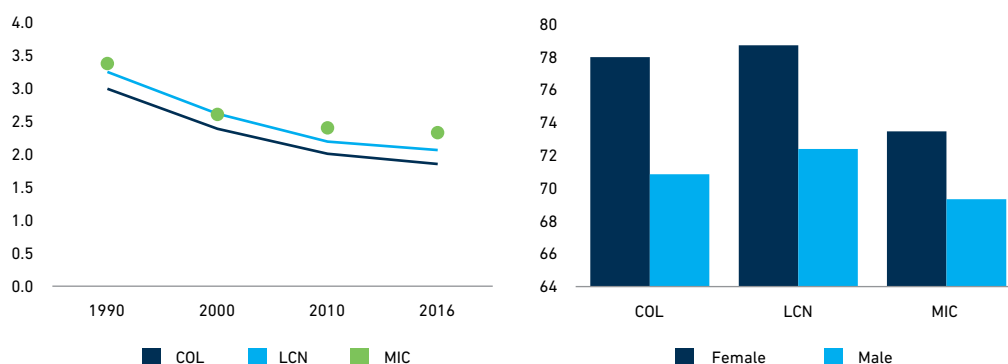
tributed to the increased availability of modern contraceptives.<sup>97</sup> More recently, there has been a shift in the timing of motherhood and a postponement of second births. These changes are most marked among women with a university education, but they are also apparent among women with lower educational levels.<sup>98</sup> Between 1990 and 2016, the fertility rate dropped from three to fewer than two children per woman (1.9). This is below the average for both middle-income (2.3) and Latin America and the Caribbean countries (2.1), as well as below the replacement rate (See Figure II-1).

**In addition, the life expectancy of Colombians has notably increased, with women outliving men by an average of over seven years.** The life expectancy of Colombian women has grown from 72 to 78 years old between 1990 and 2016; today it is almost at par with the regional av-

97 Batyra (2016)

98 Ibid.

Figure II-1: Fertility and Life expectancy at birth (total years)



Source: World Development Indicators (WDI) <http://databank.worldbank.org> (Accessed October 2018)

Note: COL refers to Colombia. LAC refers to Latin America and the Caribbean. MIC refers to Middle-Income Countries

erage, and five years above the average among MICs. The difference with males – whose life expectancy was almost 71 years old in 2016 – is also at par with the regional average, but higher than the gap registered in MIC countries: namely, seven years compared to only four (See Figure II-1). Survival at age 65 for women is also higher in Colombia relative to all middle-income countries: 85 compared to 80 percent in 2016. Likely in connection with these trends, the population growth rate for women has been 2 percentage points higher than that for men. Today, there are 95 men in Colombia for every 100 women.<sup>99</sup>

**As a result of these demographic changes, population ageing has proceeded at a fast pace in Colombia, and it is more visible among women than men.** The share of Colombians aged 65 years old or over has increased notably over the last years and is projected to reach over 11 million (out of Colombia's total population of 54.7 million) by 2050.<sup>100</sup> Population aging has important implications across diverse areas, including

health, social security, education, socio-cultural activities, family life, and the labor market.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, although men tend to outnumber women in younger cohorts, women are more numerous in older cohorts (see Figure II-2). One important gender dimension of this phenomenon is that most Colombian women have never contributed to a pension fund. This renders them particularly vulnerable to poverty in old age.

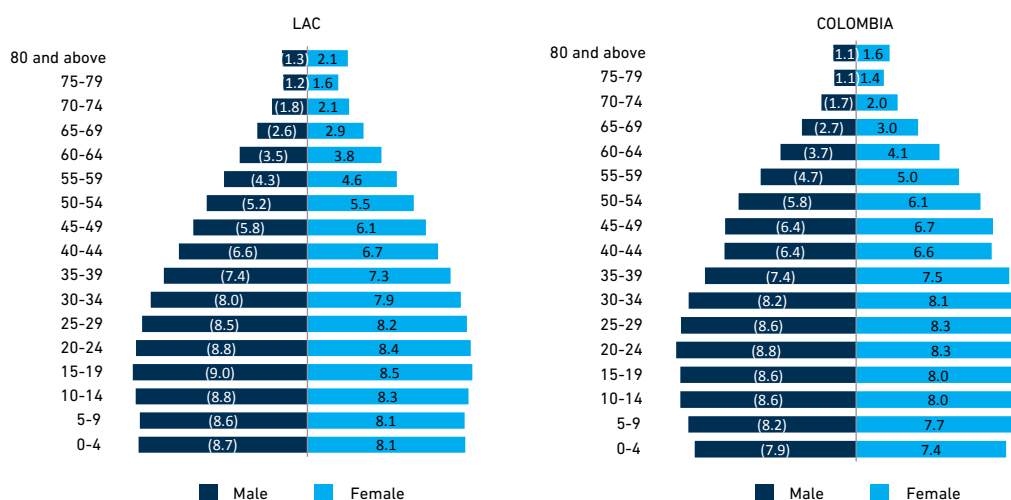
**Women should play a crucial role in the process of reaping the economic benefits of the second demographic dividend.** In order to counteract the risks of economic deceleration that population ageing entails (mainly due to the shrinking size of the workforce) and to prompt the second demographic dividend in Colombia, economically inactive women would need to join the labor market in increasingly large numbers. The fact that women represent a greater share of the overall population makes this especially pertinent. For this purpose, it is necessary to continue to build women's human capital through adequate investments in education and health. This will also have the benefit of boosting productivity growth. The next sections will examine the accumulation of education and health endowments

99 The Colombian population as a whole increased in size by around 42 percent between 1990 and 2016. During this time, the female population rose from a total of 17,250,802 to 24,708,400 people, whereas the male population rose from 17,020,763 to 23,945,019.

100 UN Population Division

101 Ince Yenilmez (2015)

Figure II-2: Population Pyramid Latin America and the Caribbean and Colombia 2016



Source: World Development Indicators (WDI) <http://databank.worldbank.org/> (Accessed October 2018)

by women vis-à-vis men.<sup>102</sup>

### b. Maternal health

**Maternal health has significantly improved over the last 15 years in Colombia.** This change has been characterized by a decline in the maternal mortality ratio (i.e. the number of women who die from pregnancy-related causes while pregnant or within 42 days of pregnancy termination per 100,000 live births). In 2015, Colombia's maternal mortality ratio stood at 64, down from 118 in 1990. This is nearly one third of the average of middle-income countries, which was 180 in 2016 (Figure II-3). Unsafe abortion is considered one of the leading causes of maternal mortality in Colombia. Women who survive unsafe abortions are likely to suffer long-term health complications.<sup>103</sup>

**The decrease of maternal mortality is likely to be associated with improved access to maternal health services over the period.** As an example, the share of births attended by skilled health staff increased from 86.1 percent in 2000 to 95.9 percent in 2015. This puts Colombia con-

siderably above the average among middle-income countries, which stood at 83 percent in 2014 (Figure II-3). Similarly, around 90 percent of women had access to at least four prenatal controls in 2015.

### Since 2006, different policies aimed at decreasing maternal mortality have been implemented.

Among the principal policies are new models for emergency obstetric care for the monitoring of extreme maternal morbidity. In addition, a 2010 strategy to strengthen compliance with the processes that govern the provision of assistance to pregnant women has been introduced. In 2006, meanwhile, Colombia adopted a separate strategy for dealing with vulnerable populations, as well as a new protocol for assisting the victims of sexual abuse.<sup>104</sup>

### c. Adolescent pregnancy

**Although the adolescent fertility rate has decreased over the last two decades in Colombia,<sup>105</sup> it still remains above the average for upper-middle-income countries (UMCs).** The

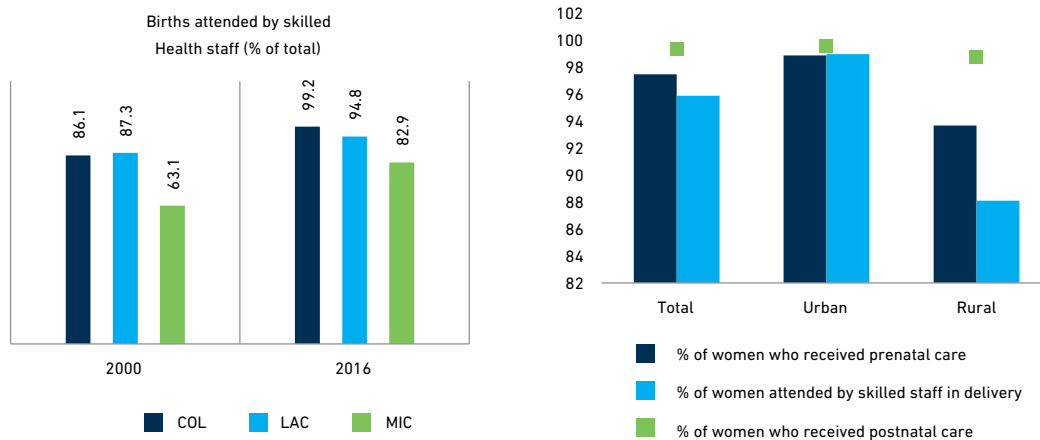
102 World Bank (2016)

103 Haddad and Nour (2009)

104 Burgos (2015)

105 The adolescent fertility rate is the number of births per 1,000 women aged between 15 and 19 years old.

Figure II-3: Access to Maternal Services in Colombia



Source: World Development Indicators (WDI) <http://databank.worldbank.org/> (Accessed October 2018); ENDS 2015  
 Note: Data for MICS and LAC is from 2014. Women in graph 2 between 13 and 49 years old.

fertility rate among Colombian adolescents has decreased at a faster pace than the regional average in recent years: from 80 births per each 1,000 women aged 15-19 years old in 1990, to 50 in 2016. The figures for Latin American and the Caribbean are 85 and 62, respectively (see Figure II-4). It should be noted, however, that the number of children born to girls aged between 10 and 14 years old increased by more than 4 percentage points between 2016 and 2017 (DANE, 2017). This increase comes despite sexual relationships with minors being illegal.<sup>106</sup>

**Teenage births can have negative consequences for the mother and the baby.** Evidence suggests that adolescent mothers aged between 10 and 19 years old have higher risks of eclampsia, puerperal endometritis, systemic infections, low birth weight, preterm delivery, and severe neonatal conditions.<sup>107</sup> Studies have shown that mothers' education and age are positively associated with birth weight, for example.<sup>108</sup> In the case of Colombia, however, Meisel-Roca *et al.* (2017) demonstrate that a mother's age

alone does not significantly determine low birth weight. Of greater relevance is the age of the father, research suggests. If the mother is aged 9 to 14 years old and the father is aged over 18 years old, then the probability of low birth weight increases by one percentage point – compared to when the father's age is lower than 18 and thus closer to that of the mother.<sup>109</sup>

**Conditional cash transfers (CCTs) may be an effective instrument for reducing teenage child-bearing.** In Latin America, studies suggest a positive impact of CCTs on teenage pregnancy, even though the mechanisms behind the results are still uncertain. A CCT can positively impact teenage pregnancy by increasing school attendance, reducing household poverty, and encouraging more frequent health checks (which gives adolescents the opportunity to access information about contraceptive methods).<sup>110</sup> In Peru, an increase in CCT-related spending at the district level was associated with a reduction in the adolescent fertility rate.<sup>111</sup> Cortes *et al.* (2015) examine the impact of two different CCT programs im-

106 Government of Colombia (2019)

107 Ganchimeg *et al.* (2014)

108 Currie and Moretti (2003); Siza (2008); Ganchimeg *et al.* (2014)

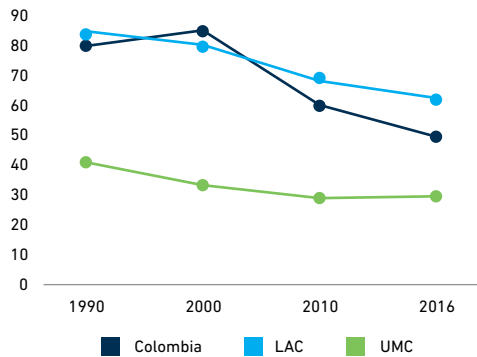
109 In Colombia, sexual intercourse with a minor under 14 years of age is a crime (Codigo Penal. Art 208)

110 Azevedo *et al.* (2012)

111 Ibid.



Figure II-4: Adolescent fertility rate



Source: World Development Indicators (WDI) <http://data-bank.worldbank.org/> (Accessed October 2018).

plemented in Bogotá. Their results suggest that average teenage pregnancy rates reduce most significantly when a CCT program's renewal is conditional on school success.

#### d. Contraceptive use

**Contraceptive use in Colombia is above the regional average.** In 2015, an average of around seven in every ten (71 percent) women of reproductive age in Latin America and the Caribbean were using some form of contraception. Rates varied largely across the region, however. The level of contraceptive use was 62 percent in the Caribbean, for example, while it measured 71 percent and 75 percent for Central America and South America, respectively.<sup>112</sup> In 2015, around four-fifths (81 percent) of Colombian women who are married or in union reported using a contraceptive method of some kind. Around three-quarters (76 percent), meanwhile, reported using a modern contraceptive method.<sup>113</sup>

**While geographical area is not a determinant of contraceptive use, education seems to be.** The use of contraceptive methods is similar for

urban and rural women. In 2015, the prevalence of contraceptive use among married or in-union women was 79 percent in rural areas and 81 percent in urban areas. However, it is higher for women with secondary education than for those with no education: 82 percent of women with secondary education use contraception, compared to 70 percent of those with no education – a difference of 12 percentage points.<sup>114</sup>

**Among adolescents, contraceptive use does not vary by urban-rural location either, but by marital status.** The prevalence of contraceptive use among adolescents (15 to 19 years of age) is 30 percent in both urban and rural areas. However, differences can be observed between those teenagers who are married or in a relationship (61 percent of those girls and boys use contraception) and those who are not (76 and 85 percent). The share of married female teenagers using contraception is the lowest. The most common contraceptive methods used by Colombian adolescents are injections (29 percent), followed by condoms (23 percent) and the pill (12 percent).<sup>115</sup>

**The most common reasons for women overall not to use a contraceptive method are hysterectomy, menopause, and infertility.** In 2015, half of all the women who reported not using a contraceptive method said their decision was motivated by a hysterectomy, the menopause, or infertility. A further 13 percent said it was due to infrequent sexual intercourse or not being married. Among the other reasons (which in total account for 21 percent) were lack of time and health concerns, followed by the practice of same-sex relations. Lack of knowledge or opposition are cited as reasons for not using a contraceptive method by only 6 percent of women (Figure II-5). In countries with low fertility rates, two reasons tend to account for the non-use of contraception: either women do not want more children, or they are infertile. In countries with high fertility rates, in

112 United Nations (2015)

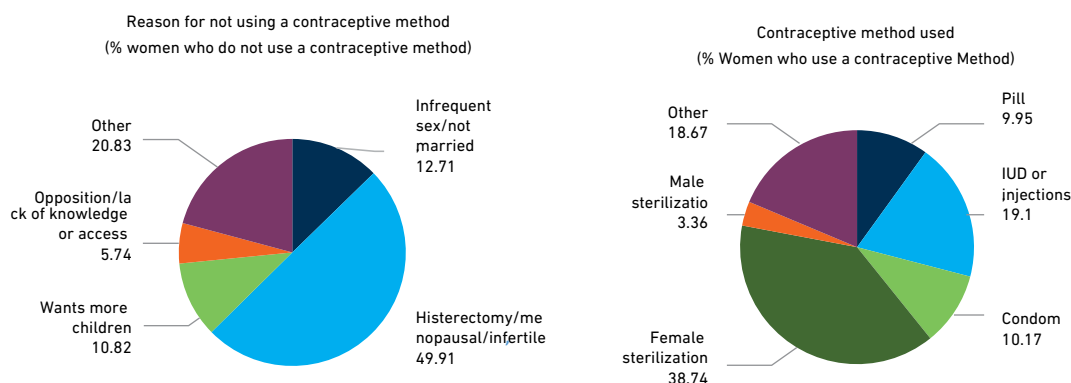
113 Demographic and Health Survey, DHS

114 It is important to point out that a small share of women have no education.

115 Government of Colombia (2019)



Figure II-5: Contraceptive use among Women 15-49 years of age 2015



Source: DHS 2015.

Note: Women aged 15 to 49 years old, either in an union or not in an union

contrast, the primary reasons typically center on lack of access to contraceptive methods and opposition to contraception.<sup>116</sup>

**The reasons for not using contraception among adolescents indicate the prevalence of constraints to girls' agency.** Based on 2015 DHS data, the most common reason among teenagers not to use contraception in urban areas is the desire to have more children (20 percent). However, this is followed closely by opposition from their partners or other people (18 percent). Among adolescents residing in rural areas, the order reverses. Here, the most frequently cited reason for the non-use of contraception is opposition from their partners or someone else (29 percent), while not wanting more children marks the second main reason (15 percent). The fact that as many as 29 percent of non-users in rural areas and 18 percent in urban areas report opposition by a partner as the main reason for not using contraception is particularly telling as it provides an indication of how constrained the capacity of girls is to make decisions on their own reproductive health.

#### Female sterilization is the most commonly used

**contraception method among Colombian women.** Colombian women employ long-term contraceptive methods extensively, with nearly four in ten women (39 percent) reporting the use of female sterilization (according to the DHS 2015). Although female sterilization is common in Latin America and the Caribbean, its use is particularly high in Colombia (see Box II-1). According to the 2015 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), female sterilization acts as the country's most common contraceptive method (at 39 percent). Its widespread use contrasts with male sterilization, which represents the least-used method of contraception (at 3.4 percent). Both condoms and the pill are used by 10 percent of women, while 20 percent of women used intrauterine contraceptive devices (IUDs) or injections (Figure II-5). Worldwide, two long-term contraceptive methods – female sterilization and IUDs – are most common among married women and those in a union. Latin America and the Caribbean is the region with the highest use of female sterilization in the world, with around 27 percent of women relying on the method. Next in line is Asia, where 23 percent of women depend on this form of long-term contraception.<sup>117</sup>

116 Florez and Soto (2008)

117 United Nations (2015)

## BOX II-1: Female sterilization in Colombia

Globally, female sterilization is one of the most commonly used long-term contraceptive methods for birth control. This is particularly the case in lower-income countries.<sup>118</sup> Studies show there is a high acceptance of female sterilization among women, particularly in non-Islamic countries. Yet, demands for more information are also high.<sup>119</sup> Women who are considering this type of contraception need to be properly informed and should be offered other long-term alternatives that are more easily reversible.<sup>120</sup>

In 2010, Colombia passed a law (Law 1412 of 2010) that promotes female and male sterilization as a way of encouraging responsible motherhood and fatherhood. Under the law, everyone aged 18 years old or above can be sterilized free of charge. No restrictions or conditions are applied. When an individual requests sterilization, doctors are required to provide him/her with details about the procedure. Medical staff must also bring to patients' attention the consequences and benefits of sterilization, as well as inform them about alternative methods.

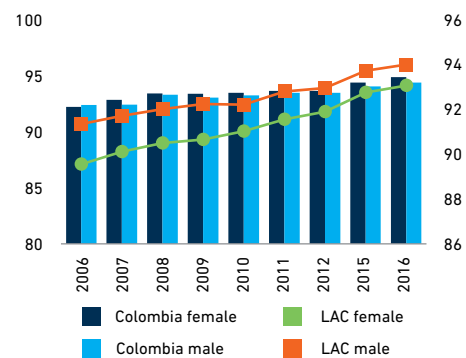
## II. Education

### a. Enrolment and literacy

**The gender gap in literacy rates has been almost negligible over the last two decades in Colombia, especially when compared to the regional trend.** Both Colombian women and men show much higher rates of literacy than the average for Latin America and the Caribbean. Meanwhile, the literacy gap between Colombian men and women is minimal, albeit with a slight advantage in women's favor (a positive difference of 0.34 percentage points). This bucks the trend for the region as a whole, where male adult literacy is on average one percentage point higher than that of women (see Figure II-6).

**With regards to enrollment rates, gender gaps are small across all levels of education.** On average, primary education enrollment rates are lower for both boys and girls in Colombia than they are in Latin American and the Caribbean as

Figure II-6: adult literacy rates in Colombia and in LAC



Source: World Development Indicators (WDI) <http://data-bank.worldbank.org/> (Accessed October 2018).

a whole. Yet, the enrollment gap between boys and girls is smaller in the case of Colombia (see Figure II-6). In Colombia, the existing gender gap in enrollment at the primary level advantages boys. In secondary and tertiary education, the situation changes. The gender gap not only becomes slightly larger, but it switches to girls' advantage (Figure II-7 and Figure II-8). In both

118 Joshi *et al.* (2015)

119 Kohls *et al.* (2017)

120 Joshi *et al.* (2015)

Figure II-7: Primary education enrollment rates in Colombia and LAC (net) rates in Colombia and LAC

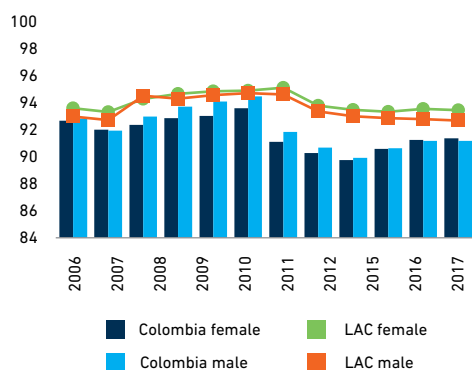
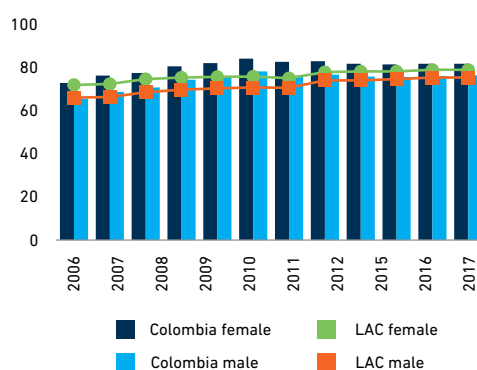


Figure II-8: Secondary education enrollment rates in Colombia and LAC education completion rates in Colombia and LAC



Source: World Development Indicators (WDI) <http://databank.worldbank.org/> (Accessed October 2018).

cases, enrollment rates among women and men are generally higher in Colombia than in the region on average – except for male enrollment in secondary education.

**Colombia compares favorably to the regional average with regards to gender gaps in enrollment in higher education but still lags behind the OECD average.**<sup>121</sup> Based on WDI data for 2016, enrollment in secondary education in Colombia (at 82 for girls and 76 for boys) is above the average for Latin America and the Caribbean (of 78 and 75, respectively). However, Colombia’s performance is much below the enrollment rates observed in the OECD (registered at 90 and 91, respectively). In addition, the existing gender gap is larger in the case of Colombia. The difference is also noticeable when looking at the case of Chile: enrollment rates at the secondary level are 89 and 86 for both girls and boys. Mexico on the other hand has a lower enrollment rate (79) among girls. The same trend can be observed in enrollment rates at the tertiary education level. Colombia has a higher female and male enroll-

ment rate (at 63 and 54 percent respectively) than the regional average (55 and 42 percent) and the average for Mexico (37 and 36 percent). That said, Colombia compares poorly to the OECD average of 78 percent among women and 67 percent among men. It also falls far behind Chile.

#### b. Attainment

**A relatively large reverse gender gap in completion exists at the secondary level.** At the primary level, the gender gap is almost non-existent (see Figure II-9). However, while 78 percent of young women in Colombia are expected to graduate from upper secondary education at some point in their lives, the same is true for only 62 percent of men. This 16 percentage-point gap is one of the highest among all OECD and partner countries.<sup>122</sup> It is also above the average for Latin America and the Caribbean (see Figure II-10).

**However, absenteeism and dropout among women remain an issue at higher grades.** Out of the total adolescent and young women between 13 and 24 years old, as many as 40.5 percent

121 Invited to become a member of the OECD in 2018, Colombia will be the third LAC country in this association, together with Mexico and Chile.

122 [http://gpseducation.oecd.org/Content/EAGCountry-Notes/EAG2016\\_CN\\_COL.pdf](http://gpseducation.oecd.org/Content/EAGCountry-Notes/EAG2016_CN_COL.pdf) - OECD (2016)

Figure II-9: Primary education completion rates in Colombia and LAC

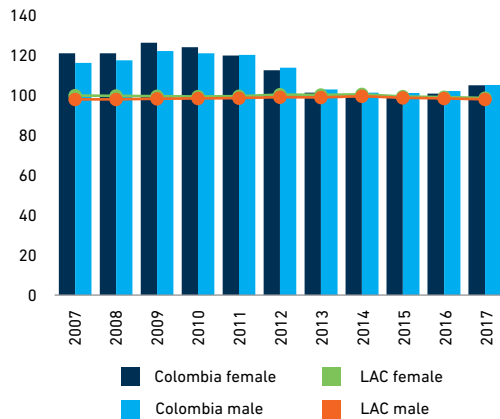
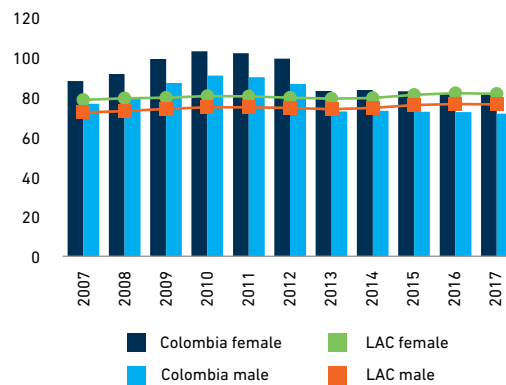


Figure II-10: Lower-secondary education completion rates in Colombia and LAC



Source: World Development Indicators (WDI) <http://databank.worldbank.org/> (Accessed October 2018).

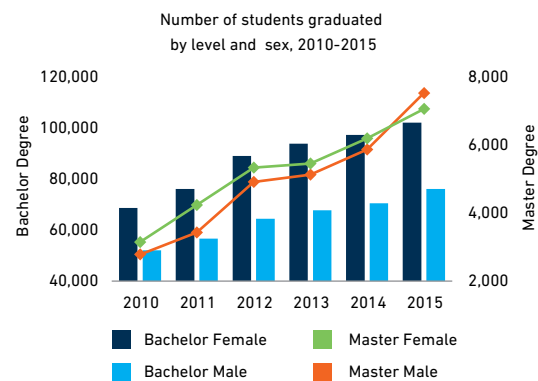
is not attending any educational institution; that is, for every three women of schooling age who attend education, another two do not. The highest index of absenteeism or dropout is observed among women with complete secondary education. This provides an indication of the difficulties in entering university that women face. At grade 7, there is a gender gap of three percentage points in the probability of survival among all adolescents – both urban and rural. This gap increases to seven percentage points at grade 11. Among the main factors associated with survival throughout secondary education are a person's gender, his/her socio-economic strata, and whether he or she receives a CCT.<sup>123</sup>

**The reasons for not attending school or university are different for men and women.** Almost 7 percent of girls who were not attending school in 2015 cite pregnancy as the main reason, especially among those who completed primary or secondary education. Difficulties in covering education-related costs and the need to make money are also mentioned by 7.3 and 5.3 percent of girls. Among men, on the other hand, the main reason for not studying is the need to make money. This is the case in both urban (11.5 percent)

123 Sanchez *et al.* (2016)

and rural (11.8) areas.<sup>124</sup>

Figure II-11: Number of student graduates by level and gender



Source: Ministerio de Educación Nacional. 2016.

**In 2015, more women than men graduated with a bachelor's or master's degree.** For every man graduating with a bachelor's degree, there were 1.4 women in 2015. The number of students who graduated from a master's degree course was slightly higher among women than men (7,500 and 7,000, respectively). Between 2010 and

124 Government of Colombia (2018)

## BOX II-2: The Ser Pilo Paga program

The program Ser Pilo Paga, initiated in 2015, aims to help the best low-income students to join higher education in Colombia. The program provides financial support in the form of a condonable credit for the students. This covers the registration fee and additional basic expenses. The precise level of maintenance support is determined case by case and depends on whether the student needs to move or travel to study. The program targets students who completed level 11 and scored above 342 in the SABER exam. Successful applicants also need to have been admitted to a higher education institution and program. Selected students must fulfill their obligations in order for the credit to be condoned. If not, they are obliged to return the credit to the educational authorities.<sup>127</sup>

2015, the number of women graduating from a master's degree increased by 63 percent. The equivalent increase for men was 55 percent (Figure II-11). Out of the total students that graduated in rural areas and completed that transition successfully, over 77 percent are enrolled in tertiary education programs in a different locality. According to the ENDS 2015, only 12 percent of men and 15.7 percent of women in rural areas that finalized their secondary education studies are currently enrolled in the next level; these figures double in urban areas.<sup>125</sup> To improve access to higher education by lower income students, the government introduced the Ser Pilo Paga program back in 2015<sup>126</sup> (see Box II-2).

### c. Performance

**According to the PISA 2015 results, Colombia performs poorly from an international perspective.** Colombian boys and girls score below the OECD average in the PISA mathematics and verbal tests, and in particular below the levels reached by boys and girls in Mexico and Chile (the two other OECD members in Latin America and the Caribbean).

**Differences in performance exist between boys and girls.** For mathematics, Colombian girls score ten points lower than boys and as much as 100 points lower than OECD girls, on average. However, the gap in mathematics has decreased over time, with increasingly more girls having scores comparable to those of boys.<sup>128</sup> Colombian girls also achieve lower scores than their peers in Mexico and Chile. In the verbal test, Colombian girls score 15 points higher than boys, but nearly 80 points lower than OECD girls, on average (Figure II-12).

**The nationwide high school exam, known as SABER 11, reveals similar results.** SABER 11 is the national standardized exit exam for high-school students. Depending on their graduation date,<sup>129</sup> high-school seniors take the exam either in the spring or the fall.<sup>130</sup> Figure II-13 shows the difference between boys' and girls' scores on the verbal and math tests. During the period analyzed (2014-2016), the girls' scores in mathematics were three points lower than that for boys, on average. For the verbal test, the difference was around 0.5 points in favor of girls. Rural girls show the lowest math test scores.

125 Ibid.

126 Program *Ser Pilo Paga* was replaced by program *Generación e* in 2019

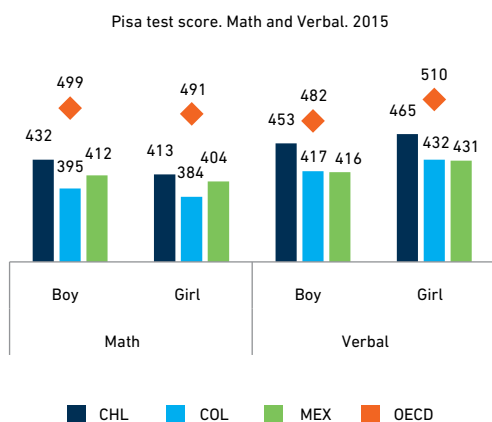
127 <https://www.icetex.gov.co/dnnpro5/en-us/fondos/programasespeciales/serpilopaga3.aspx>

128 Government of Colombia (2019)

129 The majority of students take the exam during the Fall semester

130 In Colombia, there are two graduating cohorts per year.

Figure II-12: PISA scores for Math and Verbal test 2015



Source: OECD data base.

Note 1: Colombia has been provisionally accepted as an OECD member, yet it will only become an official member once all treaties are ratified. Until this occurs, the country will not appear in the statistics for OECD countries.

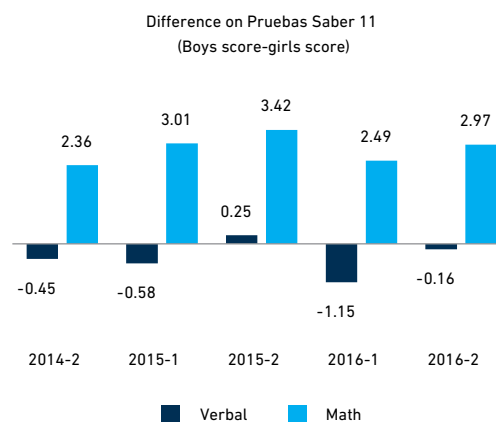
Note 2: 'OECD' here refers to the average among the 36 OECD countries excluding Latvia, for which no data were available.

#### d. Segregation in higher education

**Gender segregation by field of study can be observed at the tertiary level.** While there are 1.4 women studying business and administration for every man studying the same, the rate for engineering is 2.3 men for every one woman. Of all female students enrolled in tertiary education, 52.2 percent choose either business, administration or law, whereas only 10.8 percent select engineering, manufacturing, or construction. In the arts and humanities, nearly as many women as men typically enroll. A notable gender gap is evident in the areas of education, social sciences, journalism, and health and welfare. In these subjects, the number of women enrolled is much higher than the number of men (Figure II-14). Women remain clearly under-represented in most STEM fields of study, except for fields related to health and biology. In mathematics, for instance, only 29 percent of enrolled students are women.<sup>131</sup>

131 Government of Colombia (2019)

Figure II-13: Difference on SABER 11 by sex



Source: Subdirección de Educación-Departamento Nacional de Planeación

Note: From fall 2014 onwards, the methodology changed and hence only information from that moment onwards is used. The exam covers five areas: verbal, math, social sciences and English. The scale goes from 0 to 100, with mean 50 and standard deviation 10. All differences in the left-hand panel are statistically significant.

**However, gender segregation by field of study remains more limited in Colombia than in most OECD countries.** Compared to OECD countries, Colombia displays good gender balance in almost all fields of study at the tertiary level. As an example, there are two female graduates for every male graduate in the field of education in Colombia. This compares with the OECD average of four women for every man. Similarly, and as seen above, two men graduate for every woman in engineering in Colombia, compared with an average of three men for every woman in OECD countries.<sup>132</sup>

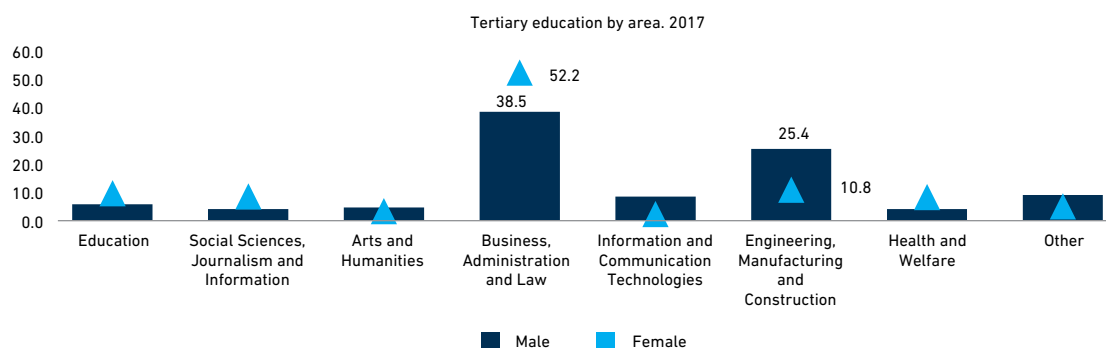
#### e. The transition to work

**The proportion of female NEET (youth who are not in employment, education or training)<sup>133</sup> is four times that of men in Colombia.** Women are

132 [http://gpseducation.oecd.org/Content/EAGCountry-Notes/EAG2016\\_CN\\_COL.pdf](http://gpseducation.oecd.org/Content/EAGCountry-Notes/EAG2016_CN_COL.pdf) - OECD (2016)

133 NEET refers to youths (16-24 years old) who are not in employment, education or training.

Figure II-14: percentage of men and women enrolled in tertiary education by area 2017



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>, November 17, 2018

overrepresented among the young population who are out of school and not in work (25.5 percent compared to 5.9 percent of men ages 16-24 in 2017). This is despite the fact that the survival rate at grade 11 is higher for Colombian women than for men and that more women graduate with a bachelor's degree. These imbalances have persisted since 2010.

**The reasons for not working neither studying appear to be different among Colombian men and women.** A recent study on this phenomenon in Colombia<sup>134</sup> highlights that while a relevant share of male NEETs is unemployed, 92 percent of the female NEETs are dedicated to household tasks. Over 85,000 NEET fathers who took part in the study do not dedicate any time to the household chores or to taking care of children. Only 10 percent of the total of male participants reported taking part in these activities, compared to 52 among women. In addition, low educational levels are a determinant factor in the ability of female NEETs to integrate in the labor market, which is increasingly specialized. When they manage to find a job, it is oftentimes as lower-skilled workers with poor working conditions and low salaries.

134 Universidad del Rosario (2017)

**Factors such as teenage pregnancy and perceptions about women's social role can influence women's education and labor decisions.** A study of 15-24-year-olds in Bogotá by the Inter-American Development Bank shows that variables such as age and poverty level are weakly correlated with women's decisions about employment and education.<sup>135</sup> In contrast, teenage pregnancy and perceptions of women's social role strongly correlate with such decisions. Research by Machado and Muller (2018) in Brazil demonstrates that internal barriers related to aspirations and motivations often derive from deeply-rooted views about gender roles and stereotypes. These barriers strongly impact efforts by young women to engage in education and work.

**Several programs aimed at facilitating access for young adults aged 18-28 years-old to the labor market have been implemented in Colombia in recent years.** The goal of these programs is to raise the quality of education and to facilitate young people's transition to the labor market. These include: (1) the extension of the school day (*Jornada Unica*);<sup>136</sup> (2) the *Todos*

135 Bernal *et al.* (2018)

136 The school day was extended from five to eight hours, although the measure is not yet implemented in all



The number of youths (15-24 years of age) in Latin America and the Caribbean who were out of school and out of work amounts to nearly 18 million. Of these, 12 million are women. At around one fifth of the population of that age, the proportion of NEETs in the region has remained relatively steady over time. In 1990, the proportion stood at 23.4 percent. By 2010, it had fallen to its present level of 20 percent. As in Colombia, NEETs in Latin America and the Caribbean are more commonly found in rural areas (21 percent) than in urban areas (17 percent).<sup>139</sup>

The proportion of NEETs in Latin America is similar to that in Europe and Central Asia (19 percent) and Sub-Saharan Africa (24 percent), but it is lower than the proportion in the Middle East and North Africa (32.3 percent) or in South Asia (30.3 percent). A possible explanation for the relative steadiness in the proportion of NEETs over time is a lack of employment opportunities, which delays young people's entry into the labor market. This delay comes at a time when schooling levels are improving.<sup>140</sup>

The increase in the number of male NEETs between 1992 and 2010 accounted for almost the entire growth in the NEET's population throughout the period (1.8 million individuals). This carries especially relevant implications within a context of increasing criminal activities because the raise in the number of male NEETs appears to be correlated with crime and violence. The main driving force behind the persistently high shares of NEETs in the region seems to be the limited opportunities for entry into the labor market. However, this pattern applies more to men than women. For women, meanwhile, there has been a more significant decline in the NEETs' share. This is the result of their increased school attendance and relatively stable rate of working.<sup>141</sup>

a *Aprender* program, which aims at improving teaching practices; (3) the *Colombia Bilingue* 2014-2018 program, which is designed to improve English learning in primary and middle school; (4) the middle-school articulation with the *Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje* (SENA),<sup>137</sup> which focuses on strengthening technical education;<sup>138</sup> and *Transfórmate*, a program that helps 16-28 years old people that have been victims of the conflict to reintegrate into the labor market. In 2016, a law was passed to promote

employment and entrepreneurship among youth (Law 1780 of 2016, better known as *Ley del Primer Empleo*). Following this, programs such as 40 mil *Primeros Empleos* have been established to facilitate access to formal employment in private firms through subsidies or tax exemptions. As yet, however, no impact evaluation has been conducted to assess the outcomes of this program. The law also promotes remunerated internships in the public sector.

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public schools.

137 SENA is the government agency in charge of developing vocational training programs.

138 Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo (2018)

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139 De Hoyos *et al.* (2016)

140 Ibid.

141 Ibid.



**Final remarks:** The analysis presented in this chapter confirms the commendable progress that Colombia has been made to eliminate gender differences in health and education in recent decades. Maternal mortality rates have been curtailed, while the coverage of maternal services has become almost universal. The analysis also indicates that parity has long been achieved in educational enrollment, even to the disadvantage of boys and young men. Yet, and at same time, some relevant gaps persist. Teenager´s agency over their sexual and reproductive health appears to be limited, as indicated by the still large share of them who report not using contraception due to opposition by their partners or someone else. Teenage pregnancy, although to a lesser extent, still remains a challenge in the country. With regards to education, gender gaps to the detriment of girls still persist in dropout and absenteeism, and in performance, while segregation by field of study remains common. In addition, the overall large number of Colombian female young people who do not work nor study – and the large share of women in this situation – suggests that women face particular barriers in the transition to work. The next chapter will explore this hypothesis in more detail. More broadly, it will assess whether the investments that Colombia has made in health and education over recent years are translating into improved economic participation for the country´s women.





# ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

*Access to economic opportunity refers to the possibility for women to take part in the same paid and productive employment as men and to have the same opportunities for participation in entrepreneurship, business management and ownership, or to access productive assets such as land. Gender equality across these areas can have large impacts not only on women's lives and those of their families, but also on an economy's productivity.<sup>142</sup> It has been estimated that the potential economic losses over the long term due to gender gaps in Colombia's labor market amount to 17.6 percent in gross income per capita.<sup>143</sup> The estimated productivity loss from women staying out of labor market amounts to 5.7 percent of the current GDP.<sup>144</sup> Colombian women have joined the labor market in increasing numbers over the last decades. However, women in Colombia are more likely to be unemployed, and those in employment typically have lower quality jobs than men. Partly as a result of these trends, only one third of employed women contribute to a pension fund. This is especially concerning given the fact that women tend to live longer than men, and also to retire earlier.<sup>145</sup> A major factor for women's poorer inclusion in the labor market is domestic and household-related work, the primary responsibility for which falls on women's shoulders. Gender discrimination in the labor market is also evidenced by the rather large and unexplained gender wage gap. Likely as a consequence of all the former, poverty rates appear to be higher among working age women than men in Colombia. This chapter will review these and other issues in order to assess whether greater investments in women's endowments are ultimately translating into the improved economic participation and empowerment of Colombian women.*

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142 World Bank (2012)

143 Cuberes and Teignier (2016). About one fifth of this loss in GDP per capita derives from distortions in occupations held by women relative to men. The model estimation implies that two factors lead to the income loss. First, a misallocation of entrepreneurial talent which affects the productivity of the economy. Second, women's lower participation in the market leads to the underutilization of the available human capital.

144 Mateo Díaz and Rodríguez-Chamussy (2016).

145 Their legal retirement age is 57 vis-à-vis 62 for men since 2014.



## I. Labor force participation

**Female labor force participation in Colombia is high in international comparison.** Colombia has increased its female labor force participation at a high rate over the last two decades,<sup>146</sup> and as shown in Figure III-1, it performs above the LAC average in this area. In 2017, labor force participation (18 years of age and above) was 57.7 percent for women and 80.8 percent for men. Moreover, at 23.1 percentage points, the gap between men and women in Colombia is smaller than in many other Latin American and Caribbean countries.

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146 See Mateo Díaz and Rodríguez-Chamussy (2016).

**Female labor force participation varies slightly by age group.** Women's labor force participation is higher among women aged 25-40 years old. The highest rate is observed for young women (25-40 years of age), whose participation stood at 73 percent in 2010 and 76 percent in 2017. Among women aged 41 to 59 years old, participation rates are also high, measuring 64 percent in 2010 and 67 percent in 2017. The lowest participation rates are observed among the elderly (60 years old and above).<sup>147</sup>

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### Civil status, children, education and socio-economic

147 Labor force participation is defined as the economically active population over working-age population. Working age is defined as 12 years of age or older for urban areas, and 10 years of age or older for rural areas. For this analysis, we only focus on women aged 18 years old or above.

**conomic background are all correlated to Colombian women's participation in the labor market.** Women who were in a union (separated, divorced, or widows) are most likely to work (75.6 percent of all women workers), followed by women in a union (57.8 percent), and finally by single women (38.5 percent). Women without children are found to be working less frequently than those with children. Among mothers, the frequency of occupation decreases with the number of children. With regards to education, it is women with either tertiary (68.9 percent) or primary education (51.3 percent) who are most frequently found working. Women with secondary education are even less likely to work (44 percent) than those without any education (49 percent). Women from the highest income quintile (61.2 percent) are also found to be working more frequently than those from the lowest quintile (39.1 percent).<sup>148</sup>

## II. Time use

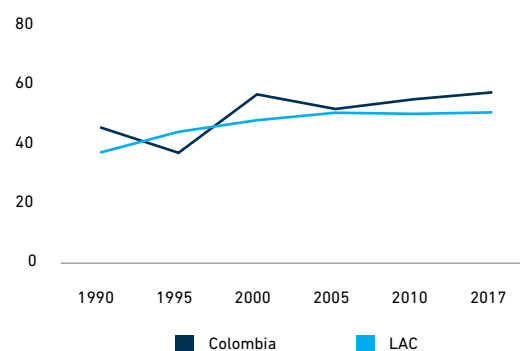
**Women take on the lion's share of care and household work in Colombia.** In 2017, over 82 percent of women participated in non-remunerated domestic and care work. This compared to only 37 percent of men. On average, women work on these tasks 34.1 hours per week, compared to 18.4 hours among men. In all age groups, women dedicated more hours to care and household tasks than men, on average. The largest gap exists among younger women (aged 18-24 years old), where the difference between men and women amounts to 19.3 hours per week (Figure III-2).<sup>149</sup>

**The gender gap in domestic and household-related work seems to be a fundamental factor that keeps women out of the labor force, especially in rural areas.** More women than men cite family reasons as the motivation for not looking for a job. In 2017, 28.6 percent of women and

148 ENDS (2015)

149 Perfetti del Corral *et al.* (2018)

Figure III-1: Labor force participation in LAC, 2017



Source: World Development Indicators (WDI)  
<http://databank.worldbank.org/> (Accessed March 2019)

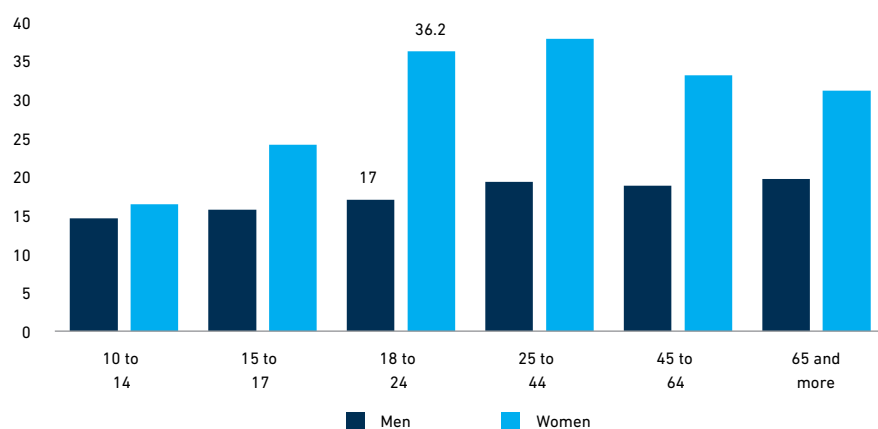
1.1 percent of men said that family reasons prevented them from looking for a job (see Figure III-3). Gender differences are also evident in the freely available time that people have. Around 13 percent of women reported feeling that they had insufficient time, compared to 8 percent of men. Box III-1 provides a summary of the challenges of care in Colombia.

**Parental leave policies can contribute to enhancing the gender balance in the distribution of family and household responsibilities.** Maternity leave extensions have been less successful than the enactment of paternity leave in increasing female labor force participation. Elements such as wage replacement or the level of obligation to share it with their partners are important in this regard.<sup>150</sup> Changing the views of employers and employees seems to be the most promising approach. Sweden, which is considered to represent a typical dual earner/dual caregiver regime, is the main international reference in this area (see Box III-2). Job protection also leads to substantial increases in participation of mothers with children under the age of 6.<sup>151</sup>

150 Schonberg and Ludsteck (2014)

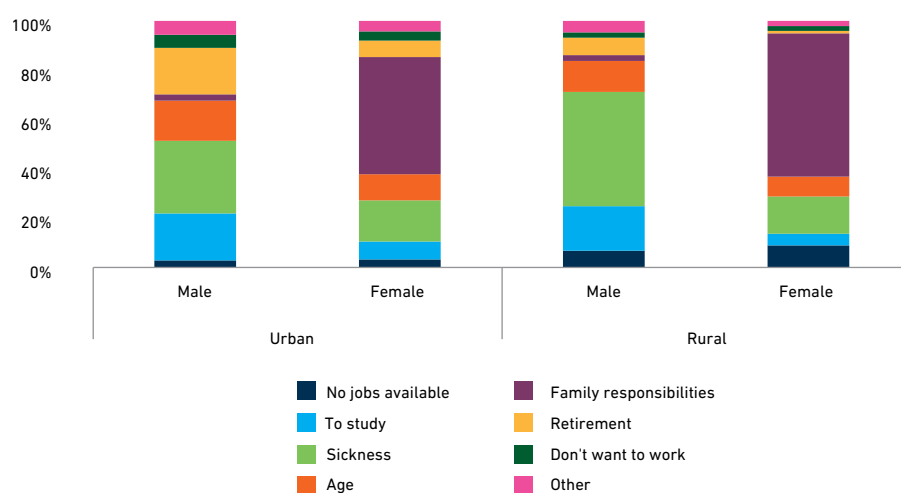
151 Low and Sánchez-Marcos (2015)

Figure III-2: Hours per week dedicated to non-remunerated domestic and care work 2017



Source: Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (GEIH). 2010-1017.

Figure III-3: Reasons For not looking for a job 2017 by sex and location



Source: Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (GEIH). 2017.

Note: Reasons for not looking for a job are computed over inactive population.

### BOX III-1: The challenges of care

The World Bank has recently developed a package of activities aimed at increasing gender-relevant data and evidence to inform care-related policies in Colombia.<sup>152</sup> It did so based on a demand and supply analysis of care services. This analysis revealed that almost 40 percent of the Colombian population (equivalent to around 18,049,451 people) depend on care for reasons of age and/or disability. Indeed, almost 80 percent of households in Colombia have at least one member in need of care (either because of young age, old age, or disability).

At around 80 percent, the majority of caregivers are women. Female caregivers mostly declare household activities as their main activity, while more than 50 percent of male caregivers declare that they also work outside the home. Female caregivers tend to belong to households from the two poorest quintiles. Around 12 percent of care providers are also subjects of care, most of whom are women. Provision of care happens predominantly within the family. Unpaid caregivers spend between 35 and 45 percent of their daily working time (6 hours out of 16 hours per day) providing general home care or care to specific members of the household. In addition to this workload, between 32 percent and 45 percent of the unpaid caregivers list a paid job outside of the home as their main activity.

Public and private-sector supply of services at the national and local levels are divided into transfers (money and in-kind) and services (direct, including care institutions, and indirect, such as trainings and workshops). Households with only elderly people and households with two or more members in need for care are the most vulnerable, as they present the highest dependency rates and the highest rates of unmet care needs. This makes them a priority for the design of policies aiming to alleviate the care burden and improve the quality of care. Demand for care services is expected to increase in the future due to demographic reasons (i.e. aging society), suggesting that the dual challenge of increasing coverage and quality of care (including, among other things, in the definition of standards for care) will be at the forefront of the policy agenda.

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152 Abreu et al. (2018)

## BOX III-2: Parental leave policies in Sweden

Sweden shows one of the strongest positions of women on the labor market, one of the highest fertility rates among Western countries, and very low levels of child poverty. These very positive outcomes are largely attributed to the ambitious family policies package that exists in the country, which combines flexible leave and working hours for parents with young children, affordable, high-quality childcare, and generous spending on family benefits.<sup>153,154</sup>

In particular, Sweden has one of the most advanced and generous leave systems. In 1974 Sweden became the first country in the world to allow both parents to take time off from work to take care of their children, promoting the involvement of men in childcare and of women in the paid labor market.<sup>155</sup> For children born in 2016 or later each mother and father has the right to 3 remunerated months of leave that cannot be transferred (mammamånader or 'mother's quota' and pappamånader or 'father's quota'), while there is flexibility to distribute the remaining 10 months between them.<sup>156</sup> Out of the 64 weeks or 16 months of parental leave, 13 months are remunerated at 80 percent of the most recent salary, with a ceiling of 51,000 euros per year in 2016; the rest are remunerated at a fixed rate of 21 euros per day.<sup>157</sup> A particularity of the Swedish system is the so-called "speed premium".

Different reforms have been made over time to promote fathers' leave uptake. Given that a minimum for fathers did not exist, when the systems started to be implemented, they barely took parental leave: only about 0.5 percent of fathers doing so in the first year. In 1995 a minimum of one month was established for fathers and mothers that was not transferable.<sup>158</sup> This minimum was extended to 2 months in 2002, up to the current 90 days since January 2016. The generosity of the system has also grown over time.<sup>159</sup> Both the introduction of the one-month father's quota in 1995 and its extension in 2002 led to more fathers taking more leave.<sup>160</sup> In 2008, a gender equality bonus<sup>161</sup> was established. A study on the effects of these reforms found that the reservation of the first month to the father was the most effective, while the bonus did not show any impact.<sup>162</sup>

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153 <https://www.perfar.eu/policy/family-children/sweden>

154 Andersson (2008), Lofstrom and Westerberg (2002), Thévenon (2011)

155 Wells and Bergner (2014)

156 European Platform for Investing in Children, Sweden profile

157 European Platform for Investing in Children, Sweden profile

158 <http://qz.com/587763/how-swedens-daddy-quota-parental-leave-helps-with-equal-parenting/>

159 Duvander y Johansson (2012)

160 Duvander y Johansson (2012)

161 Couples that shared the leave would obtain a fiscal credit: for each day that the mother returned to work and the father took the leave the mother would accumulate a fiscal credit of 10 euros to be used next year.

162 Duvander y Johansson (2012)



### BOX III-3: The effects of childcare provision for FLFP

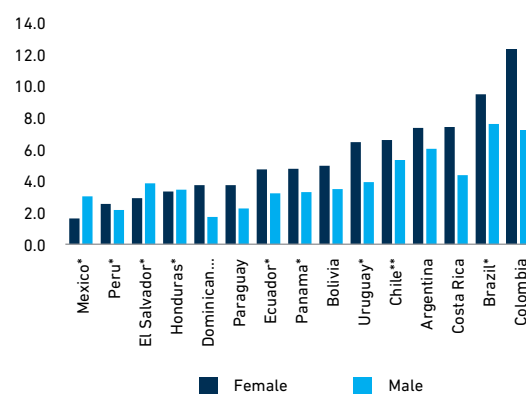
The expansion of access to early childcare and pre-schooling services consistently lead to higher female labor force participation across countries. Lokshin (2004) and Fong and Lokshin (2000) conclude that mothers' labor force participation and working hours are responsive to changes in the price of childcare in Russia and Romania, respectively. Indeed, the introduction of free public preschool for children aged 3 and 4 in Israel led to a sharp increase in Arab mothers' labor supply (Scholsser 2011). Barros et al. 2011 also find that access to free publicly provided child care services led to a considerable increase in mothers' employment (from 36 to 46 percent) in Brazil. Medrano (2009) finds that the expansion of ECC in Chile increased female labor force participation by 2.6-10 percentage points. Additionally, a childcare subsidy induced by a program aimed at expanding pre-primary school facilities in Argentina was found to increase maternal employment (Berlinski and Galiani 2007). Moreover, the proportion of children 0–3 attending childcare and rates of female labor force participation (FLFP) are strongly correlated in both Europe and LAC. The relationship is stronger for children 0–3 than for children 3–5, suggesting that easing barriers to FLFP is strongly related to the competing demands for mothers' time.<sup>167</sup>

#### The provision of adequate childcare also contributes to keeping women in the labor market.

The evidence of the impacts of childcare for female labor market inclusion is broad from across countries (see Box III-3). For the case of Colombia, Attanasio and Vera-Hernandez (2004) show that the probability of female employment increased from 0.12 to 0.37 as a consequence of the community nursery program in rural Colombia. Cardona and Morales (2015) also analyze the case of Medellin and find that in those areas where there are no child care centers, only three out of ten women participate in the labor market. In contrast, twice as many women participate in areas where there is a center 500 meters away or less. Colombia's landmark community nurseries program "Hogares Comunitarios" has evolved into a more structured early childhood development strategy. Although there is diverse evidence of the positive effects of this expansion on children's developmental outcomes,<sup>163</sup>

163 Bernal and Fernández (2013), Bernal and Ramírez (2018).

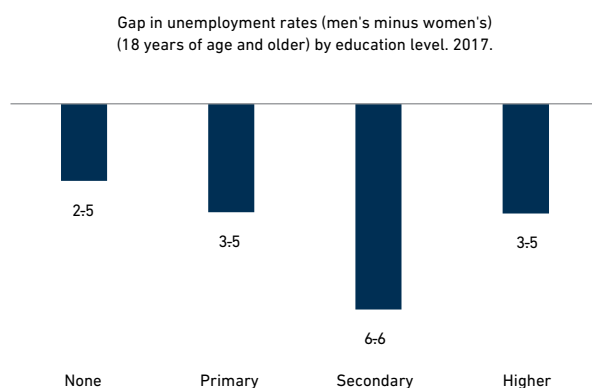
Figure III-4: Women's Unemployment rate in LAC



Source: SEDLAC

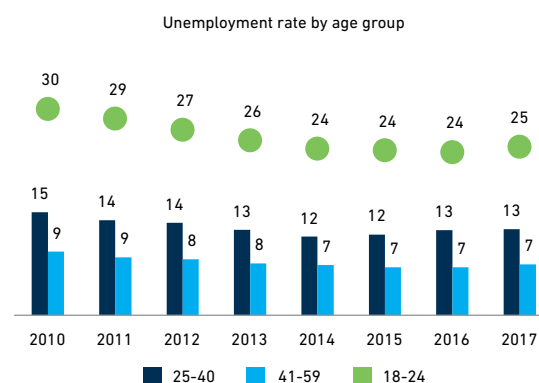
Note: \* 2016, \*\* 2015; data for Colombia come from the Encuesta de Hogares.

Figure III-5: Gap in unemployment rates 2017 by education level



Source: Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (GEIH) 2017. Note: Gap is defined as men's unemployment rate minus women's unemployment rate. It is calculated for those 18 years of age and above

Figure III-6: Women's unemployment rate by age group 2017



Source: Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (GEIH). 2010-2017.

studies on the effects that this measure had for mothers, and in particular with regards to their labor market inclusion, are scarcer. Flexible work arrangements and after-school programs could also help parents better balance work and family responsibilities.

### III. Unemployment

**The unemployment rate for women in Colombia is the highest in Latin America and the Caribbean.** In 2017, the unemployment rate was 12.3 percent for women and 7.2 percent for men. As shown in Figure III-4, the female unemployment rate is by far the highest in the region, and even higher than those registered in Latin American and Caribbean countries with much lower income levels, such as El Salvador or Honduras. This trend can have multiple interpretations, however, since it also means that many Colombian women who may have otherwise been simply inactive were looking for a job. The gap in the unemployment rate between men and women is also the largest in regional perspective and one

of highest in OECD countries.<sup>164</sup>

**Women's unemployment rates are highest among young women aged 18 to 24 years old, living in urban areas, and regardless of the educational level.**<sup>165</sup> The unemployment rates for women 18-24 years of age have been around 13 percentage points above the average since 2010. In 2017, women's unemployment rate was on average 12 percent, compared to 25 percent for those 18-24 years of age. The difference in unemployment rates is around -3 percentage points across all education levels with the exception of secondary education (Figure III-5). The gender gap is larger in rural areas (see Figure III-6), likely because of the more prominent role of women in the care economy and in non-remunerated family activities.<sup>166</sup>

#### Having a professional or technical degree de-

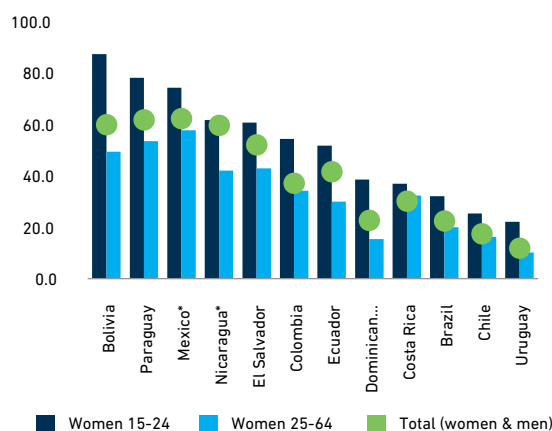
164 Government of Colombia (2019)

165 In Colombia, unemployment rate is defined as total number of unemployed over total economically active population.

166 Ibid.

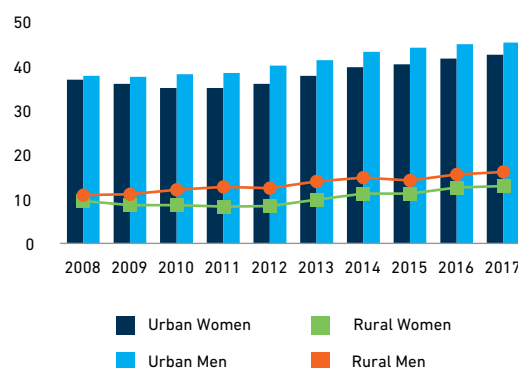
167 Mateo Díaz and Rodríguez-Chamussy (2016).

Figure III-7: Informality rates in Latin America 2015



Source: SEDLAC (CEDLAS and WB).  
 Note: Share of salaried workers in informal jobs. The legal definition of 'informal' refers to a worker who does not have the right to a pension when retired. \*For Mexico and Nicaragua, figures correspond to 2014.

Figure III-8: Workers who contribute to a pension fund by sex



Source: Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (GEIH). 2008-2017.  
 Note: Percentages are calculated as the ratio of # working women (men) who contribute to a pension fund/# working women (men). It does not include individuals who are already retired. Computed among those 18 years of age and above

**creases the duration of unemployment for women, while the presence of children under two years of age increases it.** According to Arango *et al.* (2016), women with a technical degree tend to experience shorter unemployment periods. The number of years of education appears to increase the duration of unemployment for both men and women, although the elasticity is larger for men. For women, having a technical degree decreases the duration of unemployment by 0.06 percent; no statistically significant coefficient is found for men. The presence of family members under two years of age decreases the duration of unemployment for men but increases that of women. This result is aligned with the different roles of men and women with regards to care and household chores.

## IV. Quality of employment

**Informality is common among Colombian working women.** The rate of informality of women in

Colombia is within the average for Latin America and the Caribbean. As across the region in general, the highest informality<sup>168</sup> rates are observed among young people (15-24 years of age). This is true for both men and women. In particular, over half (54.2 percent) of the women in this age bracket are informal workers (Figure III-7). For the working population as a whole, around half of employed men (52 percent) and a slightly higher proportion of employed women (55 percent) had a contract in 2017. Yet, in rural areas, only one third of employed workers have a contract. In the case of women, 60 percent of those in urban areas have a contract, compared to 30 percent in rural areas.<sup>169</sup>

**Working women are also less likely to contribute to a pension fund compared to working men.** Only around one third of working women contributed to a pension fund since 2008. In

168 Legal definition: a worker is considered informal if (s) he does not have the right to a pension when retired.  
 169 GEIH (2017)

contrast, half of working men did. The share of both working women and men contributing to a pension fund has slightly increased over time, however: in 2017, around 38 percent of women and 52 percent of men contributed to a pension fund compared to only 33 and 47 percent in 2008, respectively. Rural male (16 percent) and female (13 percent) workers are less likely to contribute to a pension fund. However, between 2008 to 2017, an increase of 15 percent has been registered in the share of working women who contributed to a pension fund in urban areas. The increase was even greater for women in rural areas, at 35 percent (Figure III-8). Moreover, the legal retirement age for Colombian women is lower than that of men, and, as seen above, they tend to live longer. All these combined represent a large challenge, as it is not clear how these women will be sustained in old age.

## V. The gender wage gap

**A gender wage gap has been identified in Colombia.**<sup>170</sup> In OECD countries, the average wage gap (defined as the difference between the median earnings of men and women relative to the median earnings of men for full-time employees) remained steady at 14 percent in the three years up to 2016. The gender wage gap in Colombia was below the OECD average during this period. The gap grew between 2013 to 2015, from 7.1 to 11.1 percent. In 2016, the gap returned to 2013 levels (Figure III-9). One possible explanation for this decrease may be the deterioration of labor market conditions in urban areas over the last two years. When defined as the percentage of men's monthly wage that is not earned by women,<sup>171</sup> the gender wage gap has averaged around 20 percent since 2008 (although in 2017 it measured 17.6 percent). It should be noted, however,

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170 *Gender wage gap* = 
$$\left( \frac{\text{median wages of men} - \text{median wages of women}}{\text{median wages of women}} \right) * 100.$$

171 *Gender wage gap* = 
$$\left( \frac{\text{median wages of men} - \text{mean wages of women}}{\text{median wages of women}} \right) * 100.$$

that the figures presented so far do not control for any covariate and must therefore be interpreted with caution.

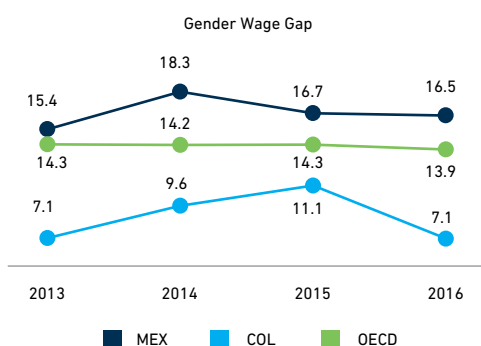
**The existing literature on the topic confirms the existence of a rather large gender wage gap that is largely unexplained by observable characteristics.** Hoyos *et al.* (2010) found that men's hourly wages were 18.3 percent higher than those of women during the period 1994-1998. Most of this difference cannot be fully explained by socio-demographic characteristics. This gap decreased to 13.8 percent in 2000-2001 and to 13.5 percent in 2002-2006. Tenjo and Bernat (2018) also contend that the gap has been decreasing over time and that it is larger among self-employed people. They conclude that if the unobservable factors were not in place, women would earn between 12 and 15 percent more than men given that women's productivity indicators are better. Earlier studies also found a gender wage gap that was not explained by observable characteristics, but by different remunerations to the same attributes. To a certain extent, this could be attributed to gender discrimination.<sup>172</sup> According to Abadia (2005), however, wage discrimination in Colombia only exists in the private sector and tends to be more noticeable among women who are married or in a union.

**The wage gap in Colombia appears to be largest at the extremes of the income and education distributions.** A study on the National Household Survey 1982-2000 (Angel-Urdinola and Wodon, 2003) found that the gap among unskilled workers averaged 8 percent over the period under investigation. For those with tertiary education, the average gap increased to 10 percent. However, it was close to zero for workers with incomplete tertiary and technical education. According to Hoyos *et al.* (2010), the wage gap is most pronounced among those with lower and higher incomes, as well as among those with lower and higher education. Glavis (2011) reinforces the

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172 Tenjo (1993); Tenjo *et al.* (2005); Bernat (2009); Glavis (2011)

Figure III-9: International Comparison of Gender Wage Gaps



Source: OECD data base.

Note: Colombia has been accepted to be an OECD member, yet it will only be a member once all treaties are ratified. The gender wage gap is defined as the difference between median earnings of men and women relative to median earnings of men. Data refer to full-time employees

conclusion that gender wage gaps are more significant in the lower-income group. In contrast, Bernat (2009) finds that the gaps are largest among women with higher education and with more years of professional and management experience. Other studies also find evidence that the wage gap is more relevant in the lowest and highest income percentiles.<sup>173</sup> Badel and Pena (2010) describe this phenomenon as the “glass-ceiling” and the “quick-sand floor” effects.

## VI. Entrepreneurship and assets

**Access to finance appears to be low for regional standards among both men and women.** The share of men and women with an account at a financial institution or with a mobile-money provider has grown substantially since 2011, while the difference between them has decreased over

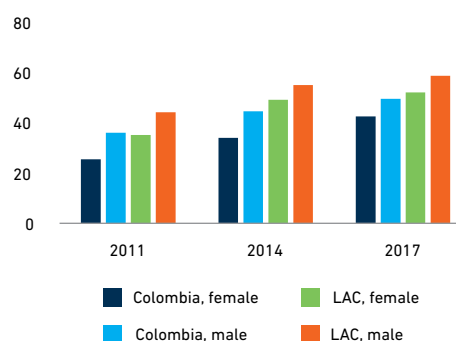
173 Fernandez (2006); Badel and Pena (2010)

Table III-1: Women in business ownership

	2006	2010	2017
Colombia	43	35.3	..
LAC	..	..	44.3
UMI	..	..	37.8

Source: World Development Indicators (WDI) <http://databank.worldbank.org/> (Accessed October 2018)

Figure III-10: Account ownership at a financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider

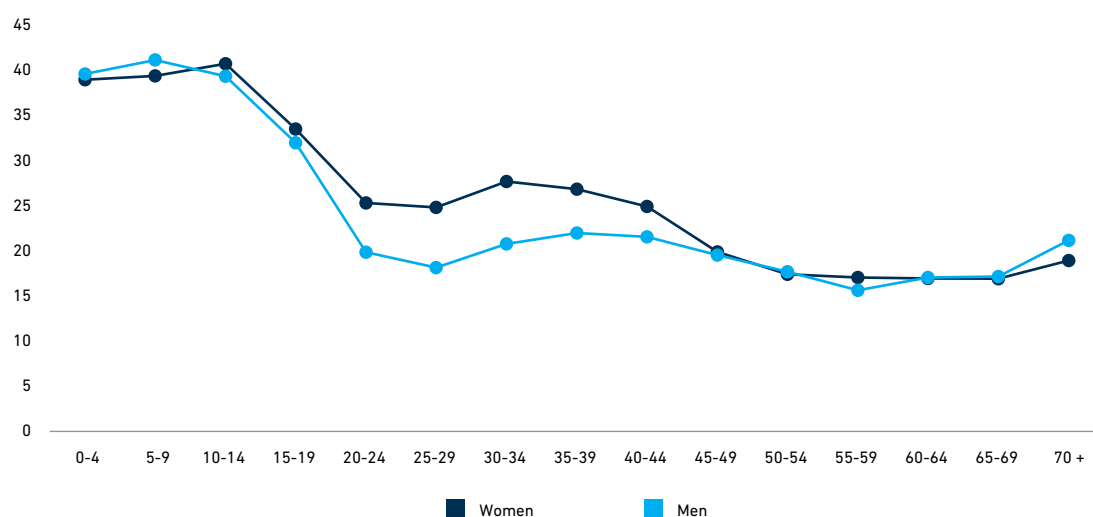


Source: World Development Indicators (WDI) <http://databank.worldbank.org/> (Accessed October 2018)

this period. Data for 2017 indicate that the gap in Colombia is similar to the average for Latin America and the Caribbean (see Figure III-10).

**Based on the most recent WDI data the representation of women in business ownership appears to be comparatively high, although it has declined over time.** The last WDI data available indicate that the share of firms with female participation in ownership in Colombia in 2006 (at 43 percent) was very high for regional standards (see Table III-1). Over ten years later, the average for Latin America and the Caribbean was still 44.3 percent. Yet, by 2010 the share of Colombian women in business ownership had

Figure III-11: Poverty rates and gender poverty gap by age groups 2017



Source: World Bank staff's calculation based on GEIH 2017

decreased, dropping to 35 percent.

**Other sources seem to confirm that Colombia compares favorably to other countries in this area.** Based on the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, Colombia has made important progress with regards to female entrepreneurship. According to this report, Colombia was the Latin American and Caribbean country where the number of women entrepreneurs registered the highest increase between 2014 and 2015: from 15 to 25 percent of the total female population, an increase of around 68 percent. Over this same period, the regional average only increased by 1 percent. The female/male total early stage entrepreneurial activity (TEA) ratio<sup>174</sup> was also high (89 percent), and Colombia ranked 14 among all 64 countries examined. Regarding the female/male opportunity ratio, however, the country only ranked 42.<sup>175 176</sup>

174 The central indicator of GEM is the Total Early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) rate, which measures the percentage of the adult population (18 to 64 years) that are in the process of starting or who have just started a business.

175 Perception of opportunity for entrepreneurial activity.

176 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2016-2017)

## VII. Poverty

**Around 27 percent of Colombians live in poverty<sup>177</sup> and women represent more than half (52 percent) of the poor.** In 2017, there is a small and non-significant difference between male and female poverty rates (26.2 and 27.6 percent, respectively). However, this small difference (disaggregated by sex alone) reflects the facts that: (i) poverty is measured at the household level and by definition all household members are classified as either poor or non-poor; and (ii) the ratio of males to females is roughly 50/50 in both poor and non-poor households.<sup>178</sup> Although poverty rates for both women and men have decreased over time, there is still more than a quarter of men and women living in poor households.

**There are differences in the incidence of poverty between men and women across age groups.** Girls and boys are consistently poorer than adults and seniors. Between the ages of 20 and 39 years old, men and women diverge significantly with respect to their relative poverty,

177 All numbers in this note are based on official moderate poverty line. This is US\$ 5.4 a day (2011 PPP).

178 Buitrago *et al.* (2018)

in favor of men (see Figure III-11). This difference coincides with the peak productive and reproductive ages of men and women. In addition, when looking at data for marital status, the poverty rate is twice as high for divorced women as for divorced men.<sup>179</sup>

**The interaction between educational attainment or family composition and poverty is more important for women.** The likelihood of being poor diminishes with formal education, for both women and men. Nevertheless, as the level of formal education increases, the share of women among

the poor population also increases. Poor women represent 52 percent of the total poor population aged 15 years old and above who have no formal education. This share becomes larger as the education level increases (i.e. 55 percent in the case of women with secondary education and 61 percent for those with tertiary education). Children and dependents are an important vulnerability factor, particularly for women. Among the households composed solely of adult women (either one or more), those with children have an average poverty rate that is five times higher than those without.<sup>180</sup>

**Final remarks.** As the analysis summarized in this chapter indicates, gender gaps are especially evident in the area of economic opportunity in Colombia. Despite advances to improve women's health and education outcomes in recent decades, a large share of Colombian women still remains excluded from the labor market. For those who work, the quality of jobs and the associated conditions tend to be lower. This may serve as a disincentive for many inactive women to join the labor market. The existing gaps appear to be strongly related to the prevalence of traditional social views and the central role of women in the household and in care. All these challenges represent a high cost to the Colombian society, not only in the form of wasted investments in human capital, but also in terms of the opportunity costs of misallocating a large share of the population. Working towards the full inclusion of women in economic activity will be key in future years if Colombia is to reap the benefits of a second demographic dividend. If Colombian women are to participate in the economy on equal terms with men, further efforts will be required. These include ensuring that they can choose to work if they wish. Making sure that investments in education pay equally is also essential. Finally, it is important to bring about a fairer gender balance in the distribution of care and household tasks, and to guarantee equal access to productive resources.

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179 Ibid.

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180 Buitrago *et al.* (2018)





# IV

## THE RURAL-URBAN DIVIDE, THE CONFLICT AND THE MIGRATION CRISIS – ISSUES PARTICULAR TO THE COLOMBIAN REALITY, AFFECTING GENDER EQUALITY ACROSS DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS

*Colombia presents three specific phenomena with relevant gender implications across all areas explored in previous chapters, which deserve special attention and analysis. First, the clear rural-urban divide across all areas and outcomes, which indicates that rural women find themselves in a much more disadvantaged position compared to both rural men and urban women in Colombia; second, the decades of conflict between armed forces, the paramilitary and the guerrilla, which has deepened gender gaps on many fronts, and especially so with regards to gender violence and in rural areas of the country; and third, the recent mass migration flows from neighboring Venezuela. The large observable differences between women living in cities and in the countryside are of considerable significance as they indicate the co-existence of two different and distinctive 'countries' within Colombia: rural Colombia and urban Colombia. The two major crises represented by the conflict and the mass migration from Venezuela have rendered women and girls, and especially those living in conflict-affected areas and irregular migrants, especially vulnerable to abduction, sexual assault, or trafficking by the criminal and armed groups operating in much of the Colombian countryside and in border regions. Access to basic services such as health and education for these girls and women is especially challenging given the existing lack of capacity of institutions in remote conflict affected areas and the likely strained resources and services as a result of the large inflow of Venezuelans into towns and cities. Their more vulnerable situation makes these women and girls also less susceptible to engage in productive work or entrepreneurial activities, and in many instances leaves them exposed to poverty and prostitution. This section will provide further details on the gender-related aspects and challenges of both the armed conflict and Venezuelan immigration inflows, as well as the details of the rural-urban divide in gender gaps and outcomes.*





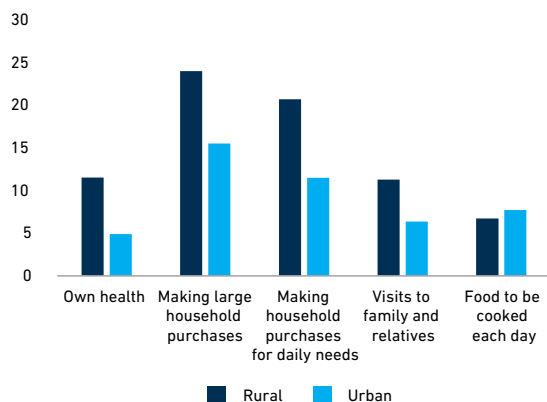
## I. The rural-urban divide

**Limitations to women’s agency are more evident in rural areas of Colombia.** As an example, the share of women who report that household decisions are made solely by their partners or others is higher for all categories in rural areas. This gap is particularly striking in decisions related to women’s own health. For instance, 11.5 percent of rural women see those decisions made by someone else, compared to 4.8 percent of urban women. The difference is also especially large with regards to the decisions on large and daily household purchases. Around 43-44 percent more women in rural areas than in urban areas report that these decisions are made by their partners or other persons. On the other hand, slightly fewer women in rural areas report having decisions on food to be cooked

made by someone else as compared to urban areas (Figure IV-1).

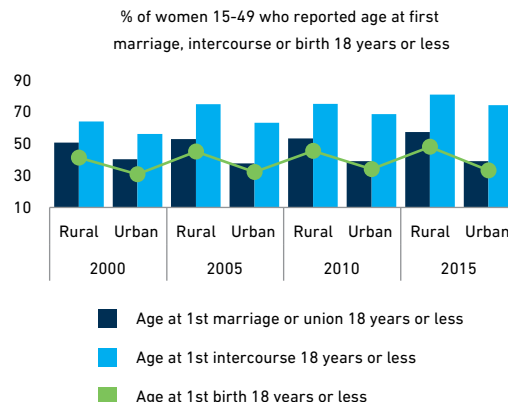
**Child marriage and related practices differ according to residence.** The share of women in rural areas that married at, or before, they turned 18 years old has increased over time. This is in parallel with the share of women who have their first intercourse and their first birth at, or before, the age of 18. This may indicate a relationship in Colombia’s rural areas between practices of marriage, first intercourse, and child bearing, and it may suggest that they are becoming less protective of girls’ rights. On the other hand, in urban areas, it is only the share of women having their first intercourse at, or before, 18 years old that has increased over time. In contrast, the share of women getting married and having their first child at, or before, age 18 has decreased

Figure IV-1: Decision Making in the household by location (share of women who report that these decisions were made solely by their partners or someone else)



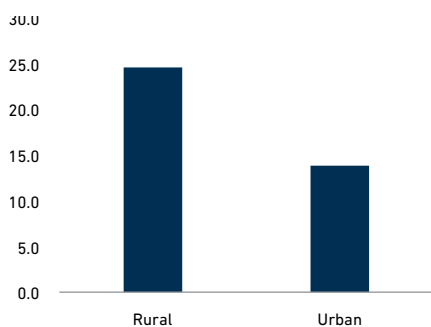
Source: DHS 2015.  
Note: Women 15-49 years old who are in a union or married.

Figure IV-2: Percentage of women 15-49 who reported age at first marriage, intercourse or birth 18 years or less by location



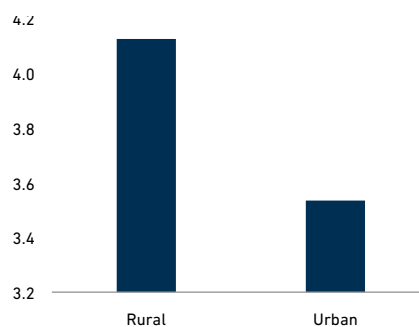
Source: DHS 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015.  
Note: Women 15-49 years old who are in a union or married.

Figure IV-3: Share of adolescents married or in union by rural-urban residency 2015



Source: DHS 2015.  
Note: Women 15-19 years old

Figure IV-4: Age gap between the bride and the groom by rural-urban residency



Source: DHS 2015.  
Note: Women 15-19 years old

(See Figure IV-2). The share of married adolescents varies between rural and urban areas (24.6 percent vis-à-vis 13.8 percent) (See Figure IV-3). In addition, an age gap with the groom is also more predominant among rural adolescents (See Figure IV-4).

**Women in rural areas are more likely to have experienced some form of violence by their partners.** In 2015, the percentage of rural women who reported experiencing physical violence was 27.3 percent, compared to 26.7 in urban areas. In the case of threat of violence, the figures were

19.1 percent in rural vis-à-vis 17.5 percent in urban areas. However, emotional violence seems to be more common – or reported to a larger extent – among urban women: 49.1 compared to 43.7 for rural women.<sup>181</sup> The higher prevalence of violence in rural areas of the country could be related to the decades of armed conflict and related overall violence. However, the existing evidence does not confirm that point; on the contrary, a recent study concludes that the presence of armed groups in the municipality was not associated with intrahousehold violence. The authors argue that this result may be related to the fact that the period of study corresponds to the de-escalation of the conflict (2009-2013).<sup>182</sup>

**Women's attitudes with regards to violence also differ according to geography.** The difference in the incidence of gender-based violence between urban and rural areas could also be related to the higher prevalence of patriarchal social norms in the latter. Indeed, wife beating is justified to a larger extent by rural than urban women. The main justification for this is their neglect of their children, which is cited by 4.4 percent of rural women and 2 percent of urban women (Figure IV-5).

**Differences exist between rural and urban areas of the country in the area of health – access to health services and health outcomes.** For instance, the share of women whose delivery was attended by skilled staff was higher in urban areas, at 99 percent. This compares to a share of only 88 percent in rural areas. Similarly, 98.9 percent of urban women received prenatal attention, compared to only 93.7 percent in rural areas. Based on 2015 DHS data, the most common reason among teenagers not to use contraception in urban areas is the desire to have more children (20 percent), followed by opposition from their partners or other people (18 percent). Among adolescents residing in rural areas, the order reverses. Here, the most frequently cited

reason for the non-use of contraception is opposition from their partners or someone else (29 percent), while wanting more children marks the second main reason (15 percent). Although lack of knowledge or access to contraception does not figure highly in the reasons given for non-use, the proportion of adolescents citing either of these last two reasons is higher in rural areas (3.3 percent) than in urban areas (0.8 percent).

**Educational attainment is also lower among rural women, while there are geographical differences in the main reasons not to study.** In 2017, rural women aged 18 to 30 years of age registered an average of 8.8 years of schooling. This compares with 11.6 years for urban women. Absenteeism and dropout among women are higher in the case in rural areas: over 50 percent of women between 13 and 24 years old is not attending any educational institution, compared to around 37 percent in urban areas.<sup>183</sup> The share of girls whose main reason for not studying was pregnancy is higher in rural areas: 9.7 percent, compared to 6 percent in urban areas. Around 2.4 percent of rural women also cite the need to help their family, while 4.9 percent reference marriage. The proportion in both cases for urban women, meanwhile, is a mere 0.9 percent. The most important cited reason for rural men is not having the desire to pursue any studies: 18.8 percent of rural men report this, vis-à-vis 6.7 percent of men in urban areas.<sup>184</sup>

**Important differences between rural and urban areas exist in the transition from lower to higher education levels.** According to data from SNIES – MEN, women were more present in higher education in urban areas in 2016 (53 percent of urban students are female). This situation reverses in rural areas, however, where women comprise only 47 percent of total students. In any case, the number of students in urban areas is around 89 times higher than that in rural areas. The transit rate from secondary to tertiary education is twice as high among students that

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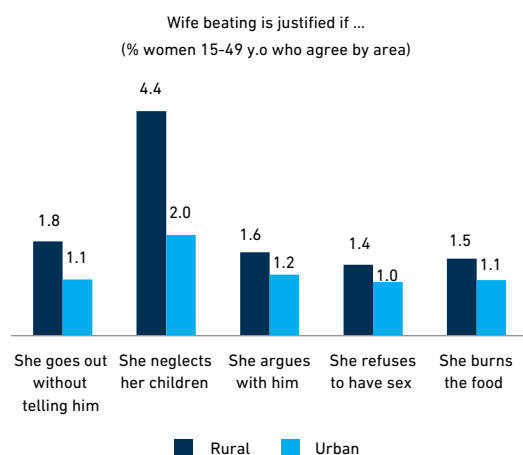
181 Figures based on DHS data; differences are statistically significant.

182 Iregui-Bohórquez et al. (2019)

183 ENDS (2015)

184 Government of Colombia (2018)

Figure IV-5: Situations under which wife beating is considered justified by location



Source: DHS 2015.

Note: Women 15-49 years old.

completed their secondary education in urban areas of the country as compared to those that studied in rural areas.<sup>185</sup>

**Differences in performance between rural and urban areas may indicate variability in the quality of the education services provided.**

As can be seen in Figure IV-6, both rural boys and girls show poorer results in math and verbal tests than their peers in urban areas. Rural girls are systematically those with the lowest results, as compared to both rural boys and urban girls, especially in the math exam. Despite improvements in the coverage of the system and in enrollment, therefore, there seems to be very relevant disparities in the quality of education offered in rural and urban areas of the country. Given most rural students in rural areas will not continue their education, it is very probable that these performance gaps could be reflected in their labor market outcomes later on.

**Finally, the NEET phenomenon is more pronounced among rural Colombian women, largely in connection with lack of economic opportunities and stronger gendered roles.** In rural

185 Ibid.

areas, the proportion of NEET women is six times that of men: a difference of 40.7 percent compared to 6.2 percent (see Figure IV-6). As highlighted by Pardo (2017), in addition to pregnancy and social norms, male but especially female youth in Colombia perceive that opportunities for good-quality economic opportunities are low. This lack of opportunity appears to be particularly discouraging for youth in rural areas. Colombian young rural women also report stronger divisions in gender roles within the household and in farming activities.<sup>186</sup>

**Important differences in labor force participation are also observed between rural and urban areas (see Figure IV-7).**

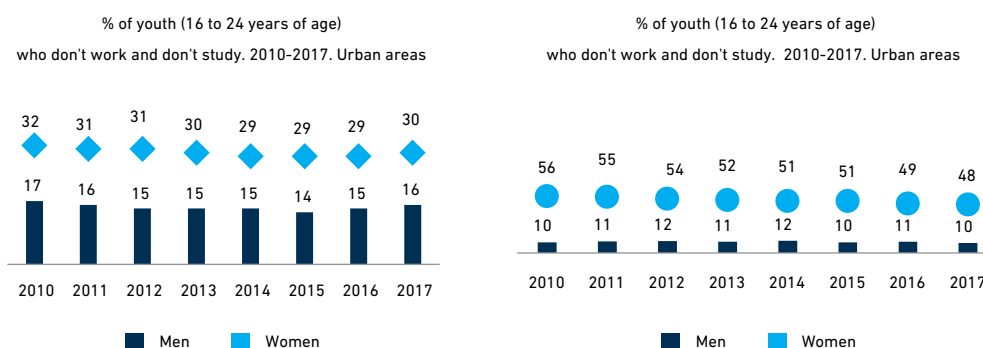
The labor force participation rate of women in rural areas is low as compared to both women in urban areas and rural men. Indeed, the gap between men and women is much larger in Colombia's rural areas than in its towns and cities. Urban women in the age group 25-40 years old have a participation rate that is 27-22 percentage points higher as compared to rural women (79-81 percent compared to 52-59 percent). Rural men appear to join the labor market earlier than any other group and in larger numbers. In addition, their labor force participation is shown to stay quite stable over time. In the case of urban women, a clear declining trend can be observed, especially from the 35-39 years old group onwards. The gap in unemployment rate is also higher among rural women (see Figure IV-8).

**The fact that most women do not join the labor market in rural areas of the country may be related to personal choices and lack of opportunity, but also to the higher prevalence of traditional views on the roles of women and men.**

Consistent with the general findings of this analysis, the situation is different for rural women than their urban counterparts. For example, just over one third (35 percent) of urban respondents (both male and female) to the National Survey on the Use of Time 2015-2016 agree with the statement that "it is the man who must earn the

186 Pardo (2017)

Figure IV-6: Percentage of youth (16-24 years of age) Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETS)



Source: Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (GEIH). 2010-2017.  
 Note: Figures are computed as number of youth who do not work, do not study and are not searching for a job/number of youth aged 16-24 years old.

Figure IV-7: Women's labor force participation by location. 2017.

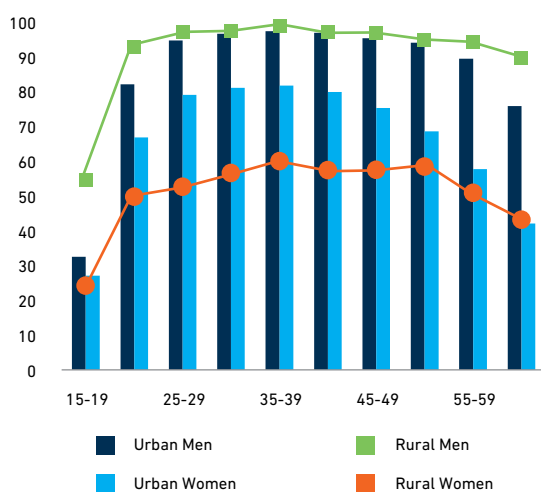
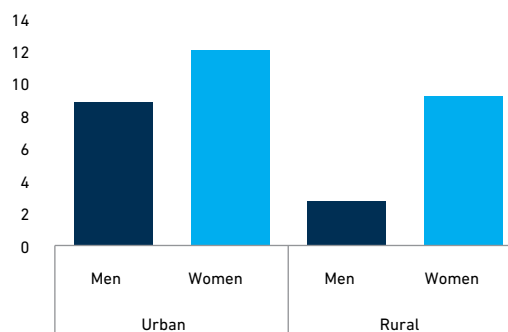


Figure IV-8: Women's Unemployment rate by location. 2017.



Source: Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (GEIH) 2017. Source: Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (GEIH). 2010-2017.

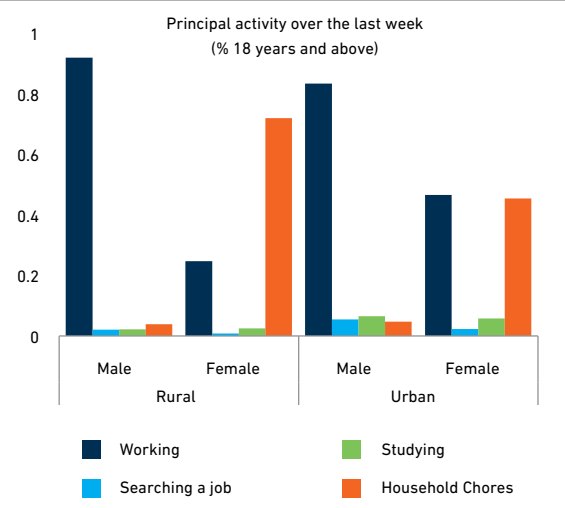


money, while women’s duty is to take care of the home and the family”. The corresponding share in rural areas increases to 54 percent, split between 57 percent of total men and 51 percent of women, respectively.<sup>187</sup> The armed conflict may well also be a determining factor here. Rural areas bore the brunt of Colombia’s five-decade conflict. That said, the data required to prove that hypothesis are not currently available.

**The gender gap in the time dedicated to care activities and household chores is especially pronounced among rural women.** As shown in Figure IV-9, over seven out of every ten men reported working as their main activity over the previous week. Household chores was, on the contrary, the least reported main activity over the last week – only reported in 3.9 percent of cases. In the case of women, however, just over three women out of every ten responded that work was their main activity over the previous week. Their main reported activity was household chores, indicated in over four of every ten cases. Around 11 times more women than men reported that household chores were their main activity in the previous week. When looking only at women in rural and urban areas, it becomes evident that many more rural than urban women (72 percent compared to only 45 percent) are mostly engaged in household chores, while fewer report working as their main activity (24 percent compared to 46 percent).

**Important differences arise in the type of jobs held by rural women compared to urban women.** Among women and men in the formal economy, around half are employed by someone else and half are self-employed. In rural areas, however, women are more likely to be self-employed or unpaid family workers. The share of women who are unpaid workers in rural areas is nearly five times that of women in urban areas. Large differences are also observed in being an employee. Over half (55 percent) of urban women are employees, for example, compared to few-

Figure IV-9: Principal activity over the last week 2017 by sex and location



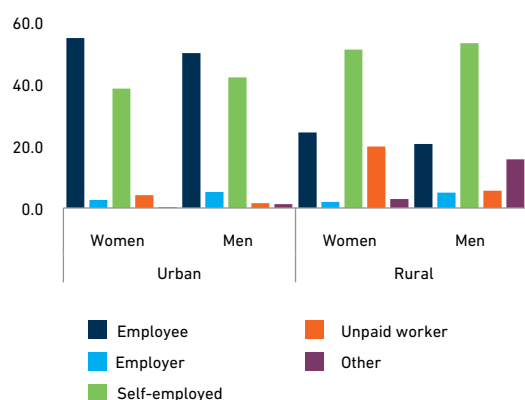
Source: Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (GEIH). 2017.  
 Note: Principal activity rates are computed over working-age population in each group of interest (i.e. men, women, rural women, and urban women).

er than one quarter (24 percent) in rural areas (Figure IV-10).

**The gender differences in the main cited reasons for not looking for a job also appear to be particularly pronounced among rural populations (see Figure IV-11).** As many as 58 percent of women in rural areas reported in 2017 that the main reason for not looking for a job was their household responsibilities. This compares to 2.4 percent of rural men who cited the same reason and 47.5 percent in the case of urban women. Sickness appears to be by far the largest reason cited by rural men for not looking for a job (46.3 percent), followed by studying. In urban areas, sickness and studies are also major reported reasons (in 29.5 and 18.9 percent of cases, respectively). Retirement also appears as a central justification for not looking for work among urban men (18.8 percent).

**The most precarious jobs are held by women in rural areas.** Other indicators of the quality of jobs are their continuity and the type of remuneration. At 19.4 percent, the share of women

Figure IV-10: Women's labor force participation by location. 2017.



Source: Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (GEIH) 2010-2017.  
 Source: Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (GEIH). 2010-2017.  
 Note: Percentages are computed over those who are employed in each group of interest

Figure IV-11: Reasons For not looking for a job 2017 by sex and location



Source: Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (GEIH). 2017.  
 Note: Reasons for not looking for a job are computed over inactive population.

who are not paid increases notably in agricultural work in rural areas. The largest differences observed relate to payment in cash for rural agricultural jobs. This is the case for 87 percent of men, but only 70 percent of women. It is also these types of jobs that are, in many cases, occasional and/or seasonal. While the national share of women who work occasionally is 18.8 percent, it increases to 37.6 percent in agriculture and to 38.6 percent in rural areas. While 71.2 percent of rural men engaged in agriculture work for the entire year, this is only the case for 41.4 percent of women – a large 29.8 percentage points difference.<sup>188</sup> The gender wage gap is almost twice as high in rural areas (Figure IV-12).

**Gender gaps in access to the legal property and in the exploitation of land also appear to be a persistent phenomenon in Colombia.** After decades of violent conflict in rural areas of the country, today the ownership of land is more concentrated than ever before, and most small

producers do not have access to it.<sup>189</sup> Women are at a particular disadvantage. Only one quarter of the land owners in Colombia are women. Moreover, and as a result of the conflict, many women are the sole heads of households today and millions have been displaced. Of these, a large share does not have formal marriage certificates and therefore struggle to assert their claim to land ownership.<sup>190</sup> Although the peace agreement includes the reintegration of land among its main themes, women are not particularly benefiting from these measures as yet. It has been estimated that for every five women who benefit from programs designed to increase land access and legal land management, there are eight male beneficiaries.<sup>191</sup>

**In addition, the productivity of land owned by women tends to be lower.** Most of the units of agricultural production owned by women are

188 ENDS (2015)

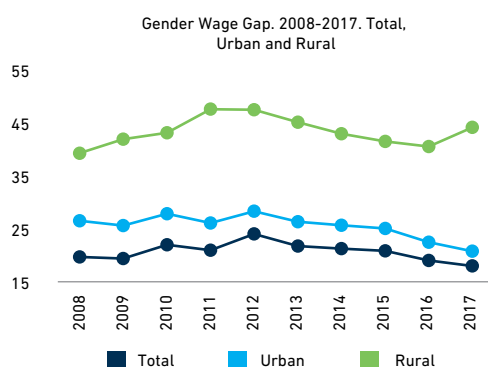
189 Bouvier (2016)

190 Tafur *et al.* (2015)

191 Government of Colombia (2019)



Figure IV-12: Gender wage gap by location



Source: Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (GEIH), 2010-2017.

Note: The gender wage gap is defined as the percentage of men's monthly wage which is not earned by women.

below the five-hectare threshold in Colombia.<sup>192</sup> According to a study in Anzoátegui and San Gil, women in both regions concentrate in small or micro properties below three hectares. There also seems to be some indication that the property of the land does not necessarily translate into land use or land management by women. In addition, the land owned by women in the rural district of Anzoátegui, Tolima, appears to be of lower quality-value than that owned by men. The opposite trend is observed in the more urban case of San Gil, Santander.<sup>193</sup> Moreover, rural women in Colombia have limited access to, and control over, productive resources such as credit. This is despite the increased role of women in agriculture and climate change mitigation.<sup>194</sup>

**Multiple benefits however stem from ensuring adequate access to land by women.** For instance, it has been found that women who own land are eight times less likely to suffer violence

192 Ibid.

193 Perfetti del Corral *et al.* (2018)

194 <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10568/67364/Genero%20y%20Agricultura%20en%20Colombia.pdf?sequence=1>

and 60 percent less likely to suffer abuse from partners. Women with access to land have also four times higher incomes, save more, and have better access to finance.<sup>195</sup> In addition, the educational and health outcomes of their children improve. While women provide 45 percent of household food in Latin America and the Caribbean, they only own 18 percent of the land. Furthermore, inequitable access to other resources makes the productivity of their crops much lower.<sup>196</sup> Limited access to land translates into further constraints to women's productive activities. Cases in point include limited access to finance and low participation in decision-making.<sup>197</sup>

**Although the gender gap in access to credit appears to have declined in Colombia, it appears to be more pronounced among rural women.**

Recently released figures show that women are the main receptors of credit in Colombia. Women received over half (53.6 percent) of all credits given in the first half of 2015, for instance.<sup>198</sup> Meanwhile, women represented a majority (57 percent) of all the clients of the microcredit institution Bancamía.<sup>199</sup> Rural women seem to be under-represented, however. Although around 44 percent of the savings accounts of the Agrarian Bank belong to women, only 20 percent of the Finagro credits for small producers were awarded to female clients.<sup>200</sup>

**Poverty is especially pronounced among rural women, although most female poor are living in urban areas of the country.** The female poverty rate was 37.6 percent in 2017 in rural areas, compared to 24.9 percent in urban areas of

195 [www.land-links.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/USAID\\_Land\\_Tenure\\_LRDP\\_Womens\\_Land\\_Rights\\_Colombia.pdf](http://www.land-links.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/USAID_Land_Tenure_LRDP_Womens_Land_Rights_Colombia.pdf)

196 [https://www.land-links.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/USAID\\_Land\\_Tenure\\_LRDP\\_Womens\\_Land\\_Rights\\_Colombia.pdf](https://www.land-links.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/USAID_Land_Tenure_LRDP_Womens_Land_Rights_Colombia.pdf)

197 Government of Colombia (2019)

198 Experian: [www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-16527871](http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-16527871)

199 [www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-16527871](http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-16527871)

200 Government of Colombia (2019)

Colombia. However, most poor Colombian women live in cities: 71.1 percent, compared to 28.9 percent who live in the countryside. The male poverty rate is also higher in rural than urban areas, although slightly lower than that registered for women.<sup>201</sup> In addition, it must be noted that households headed by women in rural areas are at particular risk. Around 40 percent of rural households with a female head are poor, for example, compared to 35.5 percent of those with a male head.<sup>202</sup>

## II. Gender and conflict

**Millions of men and women have been exposed to the consequences of armed conflict in Colombia over the last five decades, and especially so in rural areas.** As explained in further detail in the Box IV-1, the conflict originated already in the late 1940s over the control of land in rural areas of the country. The main combatants were government armed forces, the so-called 'guerrilla' (the FARC and ELN, primarily) and paramilitary groups. Levels of violence started to decline at the turn of the century. In total, the conflict led to a death toll of 262,197 people and around eight million forcibly displaced – the second largest displaced population after Syria.<sup>203</sup> There were many partial and frustrated attempts at peace over this period. The last negotiation of a peace agreement between the FARC and the government began in 2012 and came to a successful end in 2016. This process represented an opportunity to end the violence that had shattered the country for over half a century.

**Armed conflicts have important gender dimensions, as recognized in different international instruments.**<sup>204,205</sup> Armed conflicts can be expect-

ed to exacerbate gender inequality and deepen structural factors of discrimination.<sup>206</sup> This is because they impose specific gender-based risks, of which the most significant relate to violence and sexual abuse.<sup>207</sup> In different conflicts, girls and women have been singled out for rape, imprisonment, torture, and execution. In particular, women and girls are the primary targets of sexual violence committed in conflict and war. In addition, women can not only be victims, but also active participants in armed conflict. Within the Colombian FARC-EP, for instance, women comprised approximately 40 percent of the guerrilla forces and the organization had many female commanders at the local and regional levels.<sup>208</sup>

**Visible differences exist between the kinds of war crimes that Colombian men and women have suffered.** As shown in Figure IV-13, men have been more likely to be kidnapped, tortured, and forcibly recruited by the different armed actors, while male youths constitute the majority of mortal victims. Women and girls, on the other hand, are more likely to be subjected to sexual violence, forced labor, forced prostitution, and enslavement. These risks are exacerbated by membership in other historically disenfranchised groups of society, such as indigenous peoples. Moreover, women survivors often assume the role of household heads and are more likely to take care of those who were disabled by war. In Putumayo, for instance, organizations working in the field note that one out of every ten women is a widow.<sup>209</sup>

**Of the almost eight million displaced persons registered, around 51 percent were women and girls.** In recent years (2012-2019), this share has

201 Ibid.

202 Government of Colombia (2019)

203 UNOCHA (2019); Centro de Memoria Histórica.

204 Bouvier (2016)

205 The women, peace and security agenda promoted by UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent UN resolutions.

206 Salamanca et al. (2016); Bouvier (2016)

207 ACNUR (2009)

208 Salvesen and Nylander (2017)

209 Bouvier (2016)

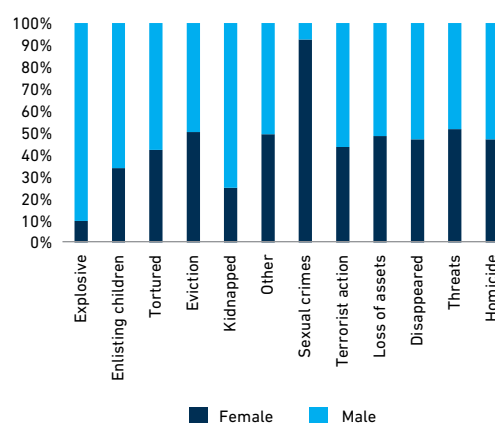
## BOX IV-1: The Colombian conflict

Colombia has endured one of the longest-running armed conflicts in the Western Hemisphere.<sup>210</sup> Confrontations have occurred between the guerrilla (FARC<sup>211</sup> and ELN<sup>212</sup>), the government, and paramilitary forces. The origins of the modern conflict can be traced to La Violencia (1948–1958), a period of civil violence triggered by political disputes and by tensions between landowners and peasants, and, more specifically, by the assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, the leader of the Liberal Party.<sup>213</sup> From the mid-1980s onwards, violence towards civilians escalated as Colombia's armed groups struggled for control of territories suitable for producing and trafficking illegal drugs and for extracting natural resources.<sup>214</sup> The death toll for over half of a century amounted to 262,197 people, most of whom were civilians; around eight million people were forcibly displaced from their land since the conflict ensued, leaving half of Colombia's land in the hands of 1 percent of the population.<sup>215</sup>

increased to 52 percent.<sup>216</sup> Displacement is the source of particular vulnerabilities for poor rural women, who most often lack official land titles, and for indigenous women, whose cultural and spiritual values revolve around land. Displaced people tend to be poor, most often live without access to basic services, and are at heightened risk of having their basic human rights violated. Many of the displaced women also are heads of the household, which makes them and their children even more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.<sup>217</sup>

**It has also been demonstrated that women can play a very important role in peace building processes.** As concluded in a recent study of peace agreements in 42 armed conflicts be-

Figure IV-13: Types of war crimes by victim's gender



Source: Unidad de Víctimas:  
<https://cifras.unidadvictimas.gov.co/Home/Dinamico>.

210 ICTJ (2009)

211 Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia

212 National Liberation Army

213 <https://es.scribd.com/presentation/64041949/Colombia-Conflict-Map>

214 Moya (2018)

215 Bouvier (2016); UNOCHA (2019); Centro de Memoria Histórica.

216 UNOCHA (2019)

217 Bouvier (2016)

tween 1989 and 2011, women's participation in peace negotiations increases the durability and the quality of peace (35% more likely to last at least 15 years) while peace agreements signed by female delegates demonstrate higher implementation rates.<sup>218</sup> According to UN Women, however, women generally remain excluded from peace negotiation and agreement processes around the world. For instance, only 2 percent of mediators and 8 percent of negotiators in all major peace processes between 1990 and 2017 were women.<sup>219</sup> Only 19 percent of peace agreements examined between 1990 and 2017 included references to women and only 5 percent included a reference to gender-based violence.<sup>220</sup>

**The Colombian peace process and agreement (see Box IV-2) are considered among the most inclusive of their kind.** Over decades of generally unfruitful peace negotiations, and even at the beginning of the last peace process in 2012, a gender focus was barely present, and women were largely absent from the table. Yet, as a result primarily of the advocacy work of women's organizations and the support of international actors, the parties ended up recognizing the need to adopt a gender approach and to include women in the process in order to strengthen the legitimacy of the agreement. By 2015, women made up 20 percent of the government's negotiating team and 43 percent of FARC delegates. The final agreement, even in its revised version, reflects the inclusive nature of the process.<sup>221</sup>

**The representation of women and the consideration of gender issues were granted in different ways in the Colombian peace process.** The most innovative institutional mechanism for including women was the gender sub-commission, an official bipartisan group constituted in 2014, which aimed to include the voices of women and review the peace agreements from a gender perspective. Although its decisions were not mandatory,

the commission contributed to raising the profile of gender issues in the negotiations. Among other things, it invited several delegations of women and LGBT+ representatives to the negotiations in Havana, including victims, female leaders, and former female combatants from other peace processes. Women were also represented in the Technical Sub-commission on Ending the Conflict, which was established in 2014 to address issues such as the ceasefire, prisoners, and criminal organizations.<sup>222</sup> At 25 percent of the commission's membership, however, the representation of women was lower in this case.

**The involvement of women had multiple impacts on the peace process.** Women were instrumental in building coalitions and rallying public support for the continuation of the process. They also mediated in local cease-fires and helped convince guerrillas to lift roadblocks, allowing access to people, food, medicines, and they negotiated the release of prisoners. As a result of their participation, the final agreement has an entire chapter dedicated to gender. In addition, the language used in all the document is gender-sensitive. Many sections also include a gender perspective and secure women's and indigenous peoples' rights, such as those on land and political participation. Women also managed to overturn an amnesty for crimes of sexual violence committed during the conflict.<sup>223</sup>

**However, significant implementation challenges remain.** The implementation of the agreement is somewhat stalled, in many instances due to apparent lack of capacity or the government's absence in affected rural areas.<sup>224</sup> Over five million people still require assistance due to the consequences of the conflict. Adding to existing demands, meanwhile, are the close to two million Colombian returnees and Venezuelan migrants who are escaping from the conflict in

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218 Krause *et al.* (2018)

219 Council on Foreign Relations (2018)

220 *Ibid.*

221 Salvesen and Nylander (2017); Bouvier (2016)

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222 *Ibid.*

223 Council on Foreign Relations (2019)

224 UNOCAH (2019)

Negotiations and attempts to stop the conflict have been going on since the 1990s. Some of these resulted in the demobilization or disarmament of armed groups; others, in particular with the FARC and ELN, were incomplete.<sup>225</sup> Definite negotiations for a peace agreement between the FARC and the Colombian government started in September 2012 in Havana and ended in August 2016 under the presidency of Juan Manuel Santos, who won the Nobel prize as a result. The organization of a National Summit of Women for Peace in October 2013 was pivotal in securing women's participation in the last peace process. However, the agreement was rejected by a narrow majority in a plebiscite held in October that year, partly due to the view that it encouraged a gender ideology that could harm family values. Its revised version, which still includes a strong gender equality focus, was finally ratified in November 2016.<sup>226</sup> This final peace agreement put formally and end to the conflict. From this point on, however, other illegal armed groups have started filling the vacuum left by the FARC and insecurity is concerning. According to figures released by the Defensor del Pueblo<sup>227</sup>, more than 400 civil society leaders have been killed since 2016, while forced displacement and illegal land grabs continue.<sup>228</sup>

the neighboring country.<sup>229</sup> As the Government diagnosis acknowledges,<sup>230</sup> most of the measures foreseen after the peace agreement with an explicit gender focus have not yet been initiated (64 percent). Notable examples relate to land restitution and access to credit and services.<sup>231</sup> Effective programs that provide a response to the reintegration of female ex-combatants seem to be generally lacking.<sup>232</sup>

**Moreover, the reactivation of violence threatens the peace building process.** While at the political level discussions are not moving forward, violence appears to have reactivated in many rural

areas of the country. For example, land grabbing and forced displacement continue to be widespread in the post-agreement era.<sup>233</sup> The ELN continues its activity after failed negotiations with the government. Meanwhile, organizations of dissident *guerrilleros*, mafias, and paramilitary forces are fighting for control over the illegal economies. This is especially the case in the border with Venezuela, where the production of coca is reported to have expanded significantly in recent years. One of the most extreme expressions of the persistence of conflict-related violence is the systematic murder of social leaders in rural areas of the country; only in 2018, 172 social leaders were killed.<sup>234</sup>

**Resumed violence is taking its toll on women and girls.** A total of 1,164 sexual crimes related to the conflict have been registered over the last three years, 90 percent of which correspond to female victims. In regions where illegal mining

225 Ibid.

226 Salvesen and Nylander (2017); Bouvier (2016)

227 <https://justiceforcolombia.org/news/colombian-authorities-423-social-leaders-killed-since-start-of-2016>

228 UNOCHA (2019)

229 Ibid.

230 Government of Colombia (2019)

231 Ibid.

232 Salvesen and Nylander (2017); Bouvier (2016)

233 UN (2018); UNOCHA (2019)

234 Ibid.

and crop production exist there are reports of sexual abuse and exploitation, gender-based violence, and forced enlisting of women and children.<sup>235</sup> On the border with Venezuela, the risk to women and girls of becoming victims of sexual and commercial exploitation has increased with strengthening armed groups. Poverty has become a feminine phenomenon in the North Western part of the country. This is connected with the large share of indigenous and Afro-descendent women living there. At the same time, the new dynamics associated with territorial disputes between armed groups are leading to an increasing incidence and invisibility of prostitution and human trafficking. Many of the indigenous and rural female leaders are choosing to leave or resign due to the general climate of insecurity.<sup>236</sup>

### III. Venezuelan Migration

**Colombia faces an unprecedented migratory inflow of Venezuelans, motivated mainly by the ongoing economic, political, and social crisis in the neighboring country.** According to figures from Migración Colombia, over 1.1 million Venezuelans were living in Colombia in December 2018. In what has been named as one of the largest migration movements in the region's history, close to one million Venezuelans have abandoned their country as a consequence of the recent crisis. Between October and December 2018 alone, the number of Venezuelans living in Colombia increased by 7 percent. Over 70 percent of these migrants are registered as regular (57 percent) or are in the process of becoming so (16 percent). However, the remaining 30 percent are in the country illegally and are therefore more exposed to abuse. Women comprise just under half (47 percent) of the Venezuelans who have arrived in Colombia and have a permanent residence permit.

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235 Ibid.

236 Ibid.

**Venezuelan female migrants face particular vulnerabilities, especially when their residency is not regular.** Those women living in temporary or improvised camps and settlements often lack access to proper facilities, including water and sanitation. Lack of privacy or protection are also significant problems for them.<sup>237</sup> Those women and girls who do not have residency permits are at particular risk of prostitution, forced labor, and human trafficking. There is evidence that some Venezuelan migrants have turned to sex work in order to meet their economic needs and those of their families.<sup>238</sup> Indeed, the arrival of Venezuelan migrants has precipitated a fall in the price of sex work. A study of sex workers in Bogotá,<sup>239</sup> for instance, finds that the vast majority (96.5 percent) are women.<sup>240</sup> Among those sex workers who report being born outside Colombia, almost all (99.8 percent) are from Venezuela. Women and girls who cross the Colombia-Venezuela border and arrive in regions where the conflict is still active face heightened risk of violence and abduction by the various armed groups fighting in these areas.<sup>241</sup>

**Preliminary results of a study conducted by the World Bank suggest that the growing immigration flows can have gender-differentiated impacts.** First, such flows can increase the risk of violence against women.<sup>242</sup> According to the National Health Institute, cases of gender-based violence among the immigrant population increased by 313 percent between 2017 and 2018. This phenomenon has already been observed in other large-scale migration contexts.<sup>243</sup> Second, the national poverty rate in Colombia is increasing as a result of massive immigration, particularly among women; it has been estimated that an increase of 1 percent in the immigration rate

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237 World Bank (2018b)

238 Ibid.

239 Secretaria Distrital de la Mujer (2017)

240 1.8 percent are transgender women.

241 UNOCHA (2019)

242 World Bank (2018b)

243 Ibid.



leads to an increase of 2 percentage points in the national poverty rate.<sup>244</sup> The impacts on the poverty rate are especially high among women, working-age adults (25-54 years of age), and unskilled workers. This may be related to the inability of the labor market to adjust in the short term to the current high levels of immigration. Another contributing cause may be a temporary decrease in local salaries in the areas most affected by immigration. However, the study also concludes that immigration will ultimately have a positive effect on national economic growth once current adjustments are completed.<sup>245</sup>

**The situation of women and girls in contexts of forced displacement requires special attention and responses.** Some potential measures to address gender-based violence in humanitarian crises include: establishing safe spaces for

women and girls, providing capacity-building for health, psychosocial, security and legal service providers that are gender-sensitive and redoubling efforts to disseminate information on how and where to access these.<sup>246</sup> In addition, the authorities of the receiving country need to ensure that the necessary identification and travel documents are available to women, independently of men. Targeted attention will be needed for women who have been victims of sexual violence or forced into survival sex, who are often marginalized or stigmatized.<sup>247</sup> Beyond the emergency response, efforts to integrate these populations with the least friction with local communities will be required, including access to temporary housing and services that, once again, are sensitive to women's needs, and to income generating activities.

**Final remarks.** One consistent finding across all gender equality indicators is the uphill struggle faced by rural women in particular. The agency, endowments and labor market outcomes of women appear to be more constrained in rural than in urban areas. This in principle indicates the need to concentrate efforts and resources in the countryside and particularly in remote areas affected by the conflict, strengthening not only the coverage of relevant service provision, but also its quality, to ensure an equalization of results – for instance in the area of education. In this sense, it is crucial to understand what are the differentiated factors that explain the marked rural-urban divide in the country, in order to assess what interventions would help to address these gaps. The two Colombian-specific crises represented by more than five decades of armed conflict between military, paramilitary and guerrilla forces, and by the recent massive migration inflows from neighboring Venezuela, add to the existing gender-related challenges in the country. As an example, it can be safely assumed that the ongoing violence in Colombia's rural areas has a strong bearing with regards to the more limited access of women to economic opportunities in the countryside. Therefore, appropriately addressing these phenomena and their specific gender dimensions will be crucial to attain gender equality in the country.

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244 The authors used as an instrument the distance between a Venezuelan province and a Colombian department.

245 World Bank (2018b)

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246 UNICEF (2012)

247 Pittaway et al. (2016)







# THE ROAD AHEAD

## I. The challenges

**Gender equality will become an even more important policy objective for Colombia in the coming years.** An upper middle-income country about to become a member of the OECD, Colombia is one of the most developed economies and societies in Latin America and the Caribbean. To consolidate such a position, ensuring greater gender equality will be central in the future. Not only is gender equality a pillar of any advanced society that leaves nobody behind, but also a driver of economic growth and shared prosperity. Increasing female labor force participation and investing in raising women's productivity will be even more important in the context of the current and projected demographic trends in Colombia.

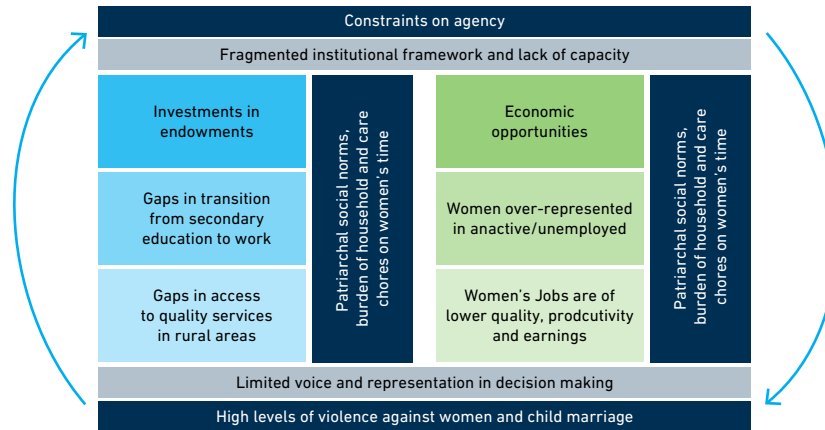
**As seen in the analysis summarized in this assessment, the country is on a good track.** In particular, Colombian women today are better educated and appear to have better health outcomes than ever before. These investments have translated into increasingly higher rates of female

participation in the labor force. This is largely the result of enhancements to the existing legal framework, which today is among the most comprehensive in Latin America and the Caribbean, together with efforts to develop and implement gender-sensitive institutions and policies.

**Yet, overall gender gaps persist.** Violence against women is concerning high, as is the rate of teenage marriages. In addition, the investments registered in education and health have not yet fully translated into a significant improvement access to good jobs for many Colombian women: female unemployment rates are the highest in Latin America and the quality of employment among women is generally lower. A notable gender wage gap also exists. Colombia experiences two country-specific phenomena that render many women and girls especially vulnerable: the conflict that has been going on in rural areas of the country for decades, and the recent massive immigration flows from neighboring Venezuela.

**More noteworthy still is the existence of a large urban-rural divide across all areas, giving raise**

Figure V-1: Summary of gender gaps and challenges



**to two very different countries within Colombia.** Women in rural areas systematically show poorer outcomes than urban women in all dimensions assessed, in particular with regards to education and employment outcomes. In areas where the conflict had been active, it is more likely that access to services is especially limited and that economic opportunities are constrained. Massive Venezuelan migration flows only add to the existing challenges, largely by putting further strain on public service provision.

**Based on the analysis presented in this report, the following challenges seem to emerge as priority areas for policy action.** (1) The still poor agency of women, manifested, as highlighted before, in the high incidence of gender-based violence and teenage marriage, and their low representation in spaces of decision making; (2) the significant gender gaps in the transition from education to employment, as the country registers higher dropout rates among young women, a higher share of female NEETs, and lower female participation in the labor force; (3) the existing gap in access to quality jobs, the wide gender gap in wages and the feminization of poverty; and (4) the large rural-urban gaps in all areas assessed, in connection with the conflict and Venezuelan migration crises.

**Specific causes or driving factors need to be addressed.** The quite advanced legal and institutional framework for gender equality in Colombia has not yet fully materialized into improved outcomes, partly due to capacity issues. The fragmentation of the institutional framework remains a central barrier in this area. With regards to access to economic opportunity, the disproportionate burden of household and care responsibilities on women plays a central role and appear to explain women's difficulties in the transition from education to a large extent. This assessment also demonstrates the importance of pursuing a longer-term preventive approach so as to bring about a fundamental shift in gender norms, especially in rural areas of the country. Discrimination based on such norms appears to be a major factor explaining gaps in wages. Differences in the coverage and quality of services, and more broadly the lack of state presence in some rural areas of the country due to the decades of conflict, seem to largely account for the observed rural-urban divide.

**The assessment also identifies a number of knowledge gaps that would require further analysis or research.** These include:

1. What are the barriers to the effective functioning of the institutional framework for gender equality?
2. What is preventing the enforcement of the comprehensive legal framework in this area?
3. What lays behind the low level of effective sanctioning of aggressors in cases of gender-based violence?
4. What have been the main drivers of the decrease in teenage pregnancy and the increase in the use of contraceptives?
5. What are the factors behind and the impact of the high use of female sterilization in Colombia?
6. What has been the impact (and gender-specific channels) of public policy programs promoting access to formal employment and facilitating young's people transition to the labor market?
7. What has been the impact of the expansion of childcare on female labor market inclusion?
8. What modalities and characteristics of childcare are most valued in rural vis-à-vis urban areas?
9. What is the presence of women in business and entrepreneurship, and what are the main barriers or drivers?
10. What explains the existing rural-urban breach across all areas examined?
11. In particular, what are the gender ramifications of the conflict in the countryside, and how best to address the existing gaps?
12. What are the specific gender implications of the current massive immigration of Venezuelans to the country and its impacts, and what lessons from other contexts would help to tackle them?

## II. Policy recommendations

### Enhancing women's voice and agency

**Ending institutional fragmentation for gender equality.** Establishing clear goals that assign accountability to the specific sectors and territories in the National Development Plan will be crucial to pursue a comprehensive approach to gender equality that puts an end to the existing institutional fragmentation. Creating results-based programs attached to adequate gender equality objectives and indicators, and introducing gender-responsive budgeting mechanisms, could further help to advance this agenda.

**Ensuring the adequate institutional capacity is in place.** First, by improving the capacity of the Women's Council and that of sectoral or territorial institutions to plan, monitor and evaluate the gender impact of policies; adequate data collection and the increased role and capacity of the Gender Observatory would be instrumental in this regard. Second, by putting into place effective oversight and accountability mechanisms such as Equality Commissions, Parliamentary Committees and Ombuds (man/woman) institutions.

**Putting in place the necessary structures for the adequate enforcement of the law.** Special attention should be given to strengthening the agenda's security and justice capacities to effectively enforce existing legislation on gender equality. In particular in the area of gender-based violence the capacity of the Family Police Offices should be enhanced, while adequate supervision mechanisms should be in place. In addition, a mandate for legal aid in all family-related matters would be required. Supporting women's organizations can also be instrumental to ensure legal enforcement in Colombia.

**Advancing women's participation in decision-making.** The effective enforcement of the legal quota in candidates' lists would require

sanctions to parties in order to include female candidates at the top. In any case legislation that helps to ensure real parity (50-50 percent) in all democratic institutions would be required. To increase the presence of women in private companies' top positions, affirmative quotas and other incentives (e.g., fiscal) could also be considered. Educational institutions and the media could play a central role to change the mentality and norms around the role of men and women in this area. Female leadership programs should also be promoted.

**Eliminating all forms of gender-based violence.** Strengthening the institutions and services that provide protection and assistance to women victims is required, and especially so in rural areas of the country that are particularly affected by violence. A stronger focus on prevention, at the same time, would be recommended. Legislative reforms to prohibit and sanction child marriage under any circumstance are required. The provisions of the Domestic Violence law would also need to be extended to former spouses or unmarried intimate partners, while legal protections for women against sexual harassment in all public spaces would need to be put into place.

**Prompting and sustaining a positive change in social norms.** Social and gender norms can only be expected to change over the long term, and as a result of concerted efforts across multiple areas and actors. Long-term measures would revolve around developing an educational curriculum that portrays an equal image of women and men in society, promoting champions and adequate role models or mentors in all public spheres, and training service providers and other government officials on gender issues. In the medium or shorter term, pedagogical or information campaigns deployed through the media to explain what gender equality is, why it is important, and its societal and economic impacts, would be potentially effective measures to start changing the mentality of the population. The spread of the new technologies and social media offer important new avenues for action, especially when aiming at the younger population

groups. Special attention needs to be paid in this context to building alternative masculinity references and discourses.<sup>248</sup>

## **Equalizing investments in endowments and ending the rural-urban divide**

**Increasing the coverage and quality of basic services.** Providing additional revenue-raising powers to the largest departments and municipalities would help to reduce transfer dependency. The provision of technical assistance, the introduction of results-based grants, or the consolidation of an integrated delivery system for social protection programs would also be important measures moving forward. Improving the monitoring and evaluation system of local service delivery outcomes with a gender equality lens would be in any case required in the medium term, as it would be to increase the financial support to build capacity at that level.<sup>249</sup>

**Improving the quality of education services in rural areas.** To improve the quality of the educational system overall, the Government may want to consider using information for decision making, strengthening pedagogical support programs and the socio-emotional skills of graduates, and, in the long run, reforming the upper secondary education system.<sup>250</sup> Ensuring that the educational staff has at least a basic understanding of gender equality notions will be necessary. A special focus in this regard will be required in rural areas, where quality appears to lag behind.

**Improving access to health services by women and girls, especially in rural areas.** It would be first necessary to understand what is driving gaps in access to maternal health service provision in rural areas. Addressing the existing differences will likely require efforts to improve the

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248 Ruiz and Sobrino (2018)

249 World Bank (2018c)

250 For more details please see World Bank (2018c)

coverage and quality of services, and their gender sensitivity. Access to sexual health information appears to be necessary for girls and women especially in rural areas of the country. CCTs appear to have a positive impact in this area.

**Addressing gaps in access to education and drop-out.** It would be important to continue monitoring the growing reverse gap in access to education at the secondary level, which may eventually require measures targeted at boys. Special attention to transitions is required among boys at lower-secondary education, and among girls as the level increases. Subsidies, academic or financial support or skills leveling programs could help the large numbers of students that leave the system every year to continue to the next level.<sup>251</sup>

**Easing the transition to work.** It is of particular importance for both men and women to strengthen the transition to the labor market, through for instance consolidating youth programs under a unified framework or establishing a skills agency with a strong private sector leadership. Rural female students and workers will require particularly targeted measures that adequately account for their specificities.

**Improving access to productive assets, especially in rural areas of the country, and addressing poverty.** Female entrepreneurship should continue being promoted through targeted programs that facilitate access to mentoring, training, finance and networks. Ensuring the effective implementation of the peace accord with regards to land reintegration to women will be crucial in this area. Access to finance could be expanded by developing financial instruments specifically tailored to rural women, who are still one of the most under-served groups in Colombia.<sup>252</sup> Additionally, anti-poverty programs will need to consider working age women, older women without pension rights and female household heads as priority target groups.

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251 Ruiz and Sobrino (2018)

252 Ibid.

### **Continuing efforts to attain sustainable peace.**

The persistence of conflict-related violence in rural areas is likely to continue undermining the position of women vis-à-vis their urban counterparts. Putting a definite end to such violence therefore is of the utmost importance. Some measures to be considered in this area include establishing a protocol to dismantle the structures that have supported the dispossession of land and a judicial police team specialized in land matters; harmonizing the legal framework for demobilization and reintegration, with a focus on female members of armed groups; eliminating illicit crops; ensuring a sustainable implementation of the Victim's Law, with special attention to female victims; and investing in connectivity infrastructure, among others.<sup>253</sup> The measures foreseen under the peace agreement with an explicit gender focus should in any case be implemented.

### **Addressing the gender implications of the Venezuelan migrant crisis.**

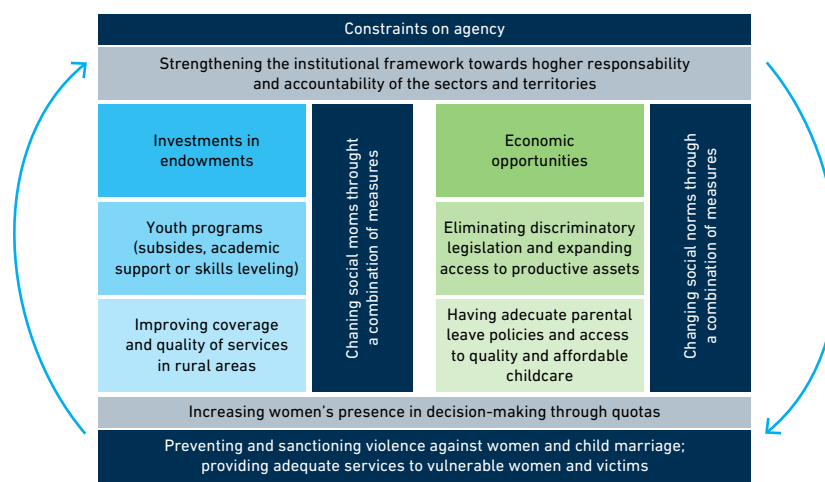
The Government will need to continue coordinating with international actors and local authorities to provide a humanitarian emergency response in the border regions. Additional resources will be required to strengthen the existing structure and service provision in areas covering registration, security, legal assistance, health services, and psychological support, among others, and to make them gender-sensitive. Special dissemination efforts about these services will be required to reach potential beneficiaries. Particular efforts will also be needed to provide targeted and effective support and assistance to women and girls victims of violence. Continuing working towards the regularization of female Venezuelan migrants to prevent their invisibility and therefore provide some level of protection against mafias and potential aggressors would also be key.

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253 Ibid.



Figure V2: Summary of recommendations



## Ensuring women's access to economic opportunity

**Preventing and sanctioning gender-based discrimination, in particular in access to economic opportunity.** Discrimination appears to be a major driver of some of the existing gender gaps observed in labor market outcomes. Curtailing discriminatory practices first requires improving the legislation aimed at fighting this type of practices. In particular, by legally prohibiting prospective employers to enquire about the family status of women and discrimination based on marital status with regards to access to financial services, establishing the principle of equal pay for equal work, or setting up anti-discrimination commissions. Colombia could consider in connection with all these becoming part of the ILO Conventions 156 on workers with family responsibilities and 183 on the protection of maternity. In addition, employers must see women and men as equally costly; parental leave policies are an important tool in this regard.

**Promoting a more balanced distribution of responsibilities over work and care through parental leave policies.** In Colombia there is no legal provision for paid parental leave to be

shared between both mother and father. A recent study on the effects of the 2011 extension of maternity leave in Colombia<sup>254</sup> indeed indicates that complementary policies are necessary to promote a better distribution of such tasks between men and women. A better distribution of leaves between both parents – for instance through the establishment of daddy quotas or bonuses to stimulate the use of shared parental leave can contribute to a more balanced distribution of family responsibilities and to diminishing gender-based labor market discrimination. In addition, it would be important to create the legal entitlement for parents to flexible working arrangements. Guaranteeing mothers an equivalent position after returning from maternity leave will also ensure that women are not further taxed for childbearing.

**Enhancing effective access to quality childcare to ease the burden of care on women.** The provision of quality and affordable childcare is key to allow women – and men – to better manage family and work responsibilities. Access to childcare services in Colombia has improved over time. Indeed, it is relatively high for LAC standards,

254 Ramirez *et al.* (2015)

although it still remains far from the levels observed in EU countries. Factors preventing the use of childcare services can include distance from mother's place of work or the cost of the service (26 percent of per capita household income in the case of Colombia).<sup>255</sup> In order to improve the coverage, quality and affordability of the system the Government could introduce a quality assurance system for ECD, include the costs of ECD in the general transfer system, or establish the fiscal exemption of ECD costs to encourage their use.<sup>256</sup> Particular attention should be paid to the most vulnerable families.

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255 Mateo Díaz and Rodríguez-Chamussy (2016).

256 Ibid.

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# Annex 1: Legislation on the issue of gender equality in Colombia

Law 100 (1993) creates the integral social system that recognizes as special participants of the social security system pregnant women and women after delivery and over breastfeeding, community mothers, and female household heads.

Law 248 (1995) obligates the Colombian state, as a signatory to the OAS Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Sanction and Eliminate Violence against Women, to reduce and eliminate violence against women.

Law 294 (1996) characterizes domestic violence as a crime.

Law 599 (2000) establishes the sanction of abortion for any reason other than danger to the health or life of the mother, malformation, rape or incest; it also assigns penalties for sexual violence.

Law 575 (2000) moves the competency over intra-family violence cases to the family courts and police offices.

Law 581 (2000) establishes a quota of 30 percent of women in all administrative positions.

Law 742 (2002) by which the Statute of Rome is approved.

Law 797 (2003) modifies the retirement ages – for women 55 and for men 60.

Law 882 (2004) increases sanctions for intra-family violence but eliminates sexual maltreatment as behavior causing the crime.

Law 985 (2005), adopts measures against human trafficking and to protect victims.

Law 975 (Ley de justicia y paz) (2005) establishes that the victims of gender violence that re-

port their cases to the Ombudsman will not have to testify before the authorities. Confidentiality will be guaranteed.

Law 1010 (2006) adopts measures to prevent and sanction harassment at the workplace.

Law 1257 (2008), promulgated in 2011, sanctions all forms of violence against women as a violation of human rights, and typifies sexual harassment. The law is comprehensive in scope across the judicial, health, education and labor sectors and guarantees women a life free of violence.

Law 1413 (2010) includes the care economy and non-remunerated care work in the national accounts system.

The Victims and Land Restitution Law (2011, Art. 114-18) establishes preferential treatment for women seeking restitution after having been expelled from their lands and provides specific reparations for women and girl survivors of sexual violence.

Law 1.475 (2011) adopts a quota of 30 percent women in all candidate lists.

Law 747 (2012) to reform the criminal code and sanction human trafficking.

Law 1.639 (2013) to strengthen measures to ensure the protection of the integrity of victims of crimes with acid.

Law 1719 (June 2014) improves women's access to justice, provides protection for survivors of conflict-based sexual violence, holds that sexual violence can be considered a crime against humanity, and expands the range of punishable offenses in the Penal Code.

Law 1719 (2014) modifies articles in others to adopt measures that guarantee access to justice by the victims of sexual violence, especially in the context of the armed conflict.

Law 1761 (2015) creates femicide as a special crime (Law Rosa Elvira Cely).

Law 1.822 (2017) increases maternity leave to 18 weeks and paternity leave to 8 days.









