

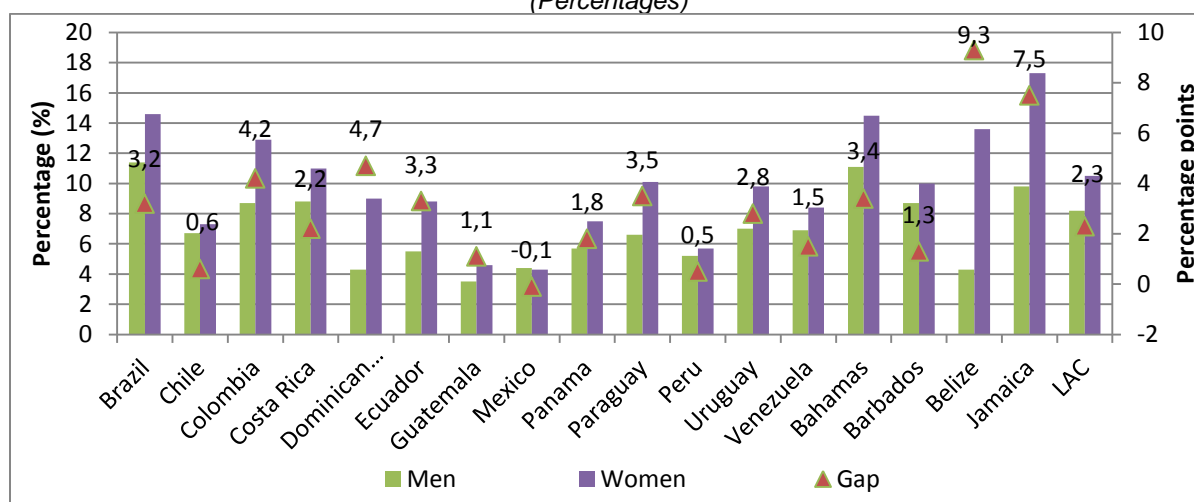
Women: the most harmed by unemployment

During the last decade in Latin America the labour market indicators have shown a positive evolution: labour incomes have risen in the majority of countries of the region and unemployment has reduced. However, the female labour participation rate has stagnated at 53% and these indicators continue to display large gender gaps in access to opportunities and rights. The inequalities are based on a social system that reproduces stereotypes and maintains a sexual division of labour which limits the participation of women into the labour force. These structural factors represent an obstacle to overcoming poverty and inequality in terms of the attainment of women's economic autonomy, more so if the current context of contracting growth is considered.

Despite that the rate of unemployment in Latin America has tended to be low, accumulating a decline of 2.8 percentage points between 2002 and 2013, since 2015 this tendency has reversed. According to data from the Preliminary Overview of the Economies of Latin America and the Caribbean of ECLAC, for that year the rate of unemployment reached 7.4%, with women being the most affected: for them unemployment was placed at 8.6%, whilst for men at 6.6%. In 2016 unemployment reached 9.0%, which represents an increase of 4.1 million people unemployed.

In the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean which have inter-annual data regarding the average for the three first quarters of 2015 and 2016, the rate of urban unemployment grew by an average of 0.5 percentage points between the first and third quarter of the year. The rise for women was 0.7 percentage points, whilst for men it increased 0.3 percentage points, which amplifies even further the already existing gender gap. Facing a universe of women eager to insert themselves into work in order to improve their economic and family conditions, the market and the public policies have not been able to generate suitable responses.

Latin America and the Caribbean (17 countries): Rate of urban unemployment disaggregated by country and sex, preliminary data for 2016.
(Percentages)



Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the Preliminary Overview of the Economies 2016, ECLAC and the Labor Outlook 2016 of Latin America and the Caribbean, ILO.

Regardless of the differences in the rate of unemployment for men and women, the gender gap is always favourable for men, except in Mexico where the male unemployment rate surpasses the female rate by 0.1 percentage points. Countries like Belize and Jamaica display gaps which exceed 7 percentage points; whilst in Peru and Chile the differences do not exceed 0.6 percentage points.

The rates of unemployment have remained particularly high for persons with lower incomes. In the first quintile, in 2013 14.9% of women found themselves unemployed, whilst 10.5% of men found themselves in the same situation. In the third quintile, female unemployment corresponded to 7% and the male rate to 4.9%, whilst in the highest income quintile these percentages reduced to 3% and 2.5% respectively.

Public policy recommendations for equality in the labour market:

- Guarantee that employment policies modify the current structures of inequality and that they are not blind to the existing gender biases in the labour market.
- Generate quality employment that recognizes the competencies and levels of education and productivity of women.
- Design instruments that enable women to maintain their sources of work income without privileging the male salary as a main breadwinner.
- Recognize and redistribute the time dedicated to non-remunerated work, in a way which does not leave the responsibilities of child-care, caring for dependent persons, and elderly adults to fall exclusively on women.

“Without gender equality, sustainable development is neither development nor sustainable”

**Division for Gender Affairs - Division for Economic Development,
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean**

<http://www.cepal.org/en/work-areas/gender-affairs>

<http://www.cepal.org/en/publications/type/preliminary-overview-economies-latin-america-and-caribbean>

<http://oig.cepal.org/en>