

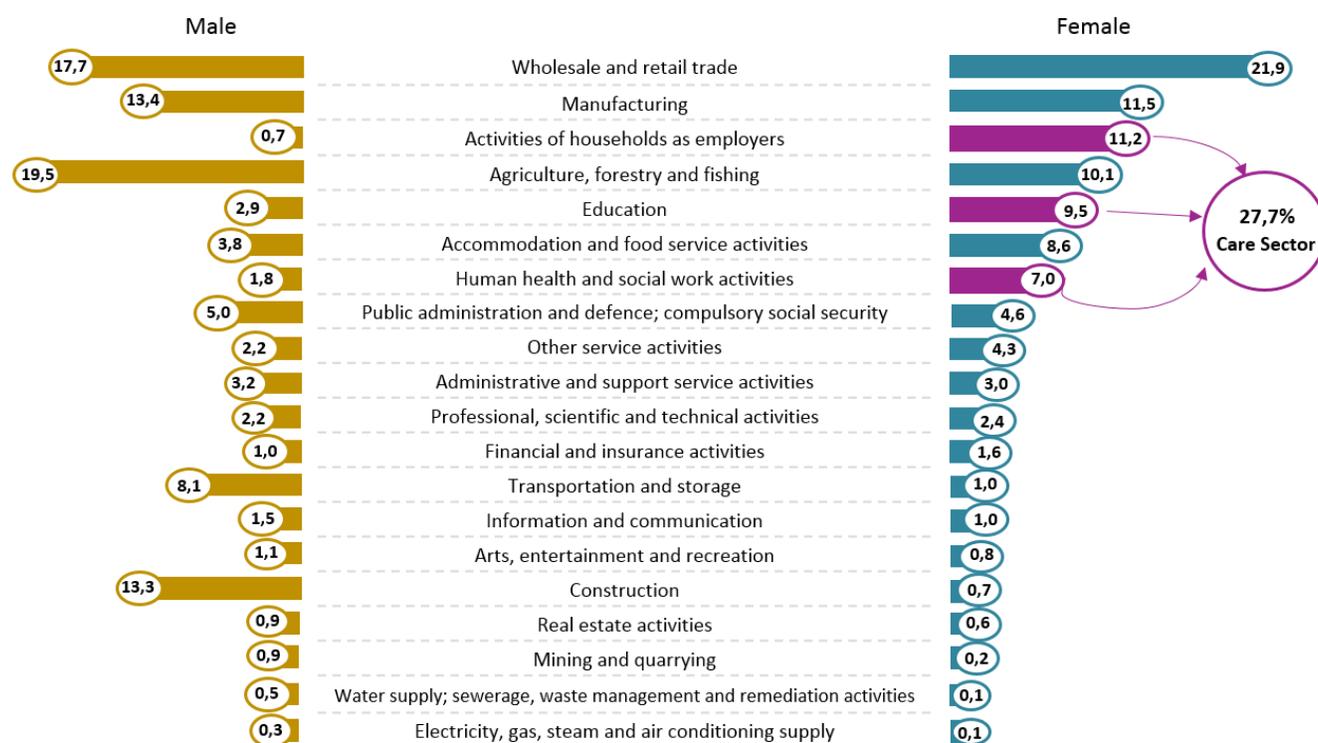
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Women in the future of work

The segmentation of Latin American labour markets - a consequence of the high degree of structural heterogeneity and the persistent sexual division of labour - limits women's employment and concentrates them in certain sectors and occupations of the economy, as shown in the figure below. The accelerated changes product of the adoption of digital technologies pose new scenarios for the world of work. In addition, the ongoing process of population aging presents challenges and opportunities for women's autonomy and for the achievement of a more equal participation in the labour market.

The dynamics of technological change generate concerns and uncertainty about the possible effects on the quantity and quality of jobs. It is important to analyse the impacts on how the labour market will be organized: the dynamics of the elimination and emergence of jobs, the characteristics of future jobs and the skills required for them. Therefore, it is important to eliminate skills' and abilities' gaps related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) - which are areas that are predicted to be of greater employability - as well as to anticipate automation processes to avoid job displacement that disproportionately impact women.

Latin America (weighted averages of 16 countries): distribution of the employed population by sector of economic activity, around 2016^a.
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of the Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG).

^aThe data are for 2016 in the cases of Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru and Uruguay, 2015 in the cases of Brazil, Chile and the Plurinational State of Bolivia and 2014 in the cases of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Guatemala and Nicaragua.

In the region, **care sector** (education, health, social assistance and domestic employment) is the largest source of employment for women. It accumulates 27.7% of occupied women. This is explained as an extension of the role assigned to them as caregivers to the labour markets. While the probability of automating some activities related to care is low, given its relational nature, arbitrary inequalities persist towards female workers, that demonstrate the persistence of patriarchal cultural patterns in the region, regarding wage gaps, precarious working conditions, limited access to decision-making positions and other discriminations. Population ageing provides grounds for anticipating greater demand for care services, creating an opportunity to employ more women. However, it is essential to recognize the importance of care work as a social foundation of life and to improve the conditions of those who provide care, paid and unpaid. It is also predicted that a part of the population in charge of care will have to start interacting with new technologies mainly associated with smart devices for home and health.

According to the specialized literature, **trade** and **manufacturing** sectors have a high probability of automating activities and thus more intensely replacing jobs in these areas. These two sectors jointly represent 33.5% of employed women.

The development of electronic commerce will generate deep restructuring of jobs. Research has concluded that the trade sector has occupations with high risk of automation, such as cashiers and the areas of telesales and telephony services, which concentrate a high proportion of women in the countries of the region.

The manufacturing sector concentrates on average 11.6% of employed women and 53% of them are employed in occupations classified as officers, workers and artisans of mechanical arts and other crafts, in large part through maquilas, systems that are especially common in countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua. Those occupations, in addition to historically precarious working conditions, have high concentration of routine tasks that do not require high qualifications and therefore are at high risk of replacement by robots.

Given the current characteristics of the labour market and the cultural patterns that still consider women responsible for unpaid domestic and care work, it is worth asking whether new business models based on digital platforms will allow more flexible forms of work and will serve to improve the women's participation in the labor market, or if they will generate more precarious working conditions, overloading women's working time and reducing their linkages with social protection systems.

In a context of accelerated technological changes, the widening or closing of gender gaps in the labour market will depend on policy actions to address the structural challenges of inequality in a comprehensive way and thus ensure decent jobs for men and women.

Public policies for equality in the future of work:

- Strengthen the public offer of quality care, safeguarding better working conditions for the workers and promote co-responsibility for care, dismantling the sexual division of labour in both the public and private spheres.
- Develop programs to build women's capacities to meet the demands of the new scenarios of the future of work, in particular, to level the participation of women and men in STEM fields.
- Promote universal access to social protection considering the different forms of work and attending to diverse conditions of people.

"Without gender equality, sustainable development is neither development nor sustainable"

ECLAC Division for Gender Affairs

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

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

<https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/44396-social-panorama-latin-america-2018-briefing-paper>