

# Regional Gender Equality Profile

for Latin America  
and the Caribbean



UNITED NATIONS  
REGIONAL COLLABORATIVE  
PLATFORM  
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LATIN AMERICA  
AND THE CARIBBEAN



**United  
Nations**

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## REGIONAL GENDER EQUALITY PROFILE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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**Authorship of the study:** This document has been prepared by the United Nations system within the framework of the Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls of the Regional Collaborative Platform in Latin America and the Caribbean (RCP LAC), composed of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), with the collaboration of Claudia Briones Smith, international consultant of the UN Women Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean.

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The Regional Gender Equality Profile has been prepared in collaboration with the Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean (RCP LAC LAC).

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**Citation:** United Nations and RCP LAC (2024). Regional Gender Equality Profile for Latin America and the Caribbean.

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2024

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# Table of Contents

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Acronyms and abbreviations	3
<hr/>	
1. Preface	6
<hr/>	
2. Regional Gender Equality Profile: Latin America and the Caribbean	8
<hr/>	
3. General regional context	13
3.1. Global and regional normative frameworks on gender equality and women's empowerment	14
3.2. Global indices and rankings	18
3.3. General demographic indicators	22
<hr/>	
4. Gender inequalities in the region	28
4.1. People	29
• Poverty eradication	29
• Social protection	34
• Care	36
• Food and nutrition security	42
• Health	45
• Education	53
4.2. Planet. Multiple Environmental Crises and Resilience	56
4.3. Prosperity	62
• Decent work and economic growth	63
• Human mobility	68
4.4. Peace	73
• Eradicating gender-based violence, stigmas and stereotypes	73
• Peaceful and Inclusive Societies	82
4.5. Alliances, partnerships and financing for development and gender equality	86
<hr/>	
5. Conclusions	91
<hr/>	
6. Glossary	102
<hr/>	
7. Bibliography	111
<hr/>	
Endnotes	127

# Acronyms and abbreviations

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<b>AFP</b>	United Nations agencies, funds and programmes
<b>ALC</b>	Latin American and Caribbean
<b>CBD</b>	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
<b>CEFMU</b>	Child, early and forced marriages and unions
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CIM</b>	Inter-American Commission of Women
<b>ECLAC</b>	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>ECCE</b>	Early Childhood Care and Education
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>GB</b>	Gender Budgeting
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>LAC</b>	Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>MM</b>	Maternal mortality
<b>MMR</b>	Maternal Mortality Ratio

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<b>MoF</b>	Ministries of Finance
<b>MSM</b>	Men who have sex with men
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>OCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PAHO</b>	Pan American Health Organization
<b>RCP</b>	Regional Collaborative Platform
<b>Regional GIG</b>	Regional Gender Interagency Group
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
<b>TFR</b>	Total Fertility Rate
<b>UNAIDS</b>	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
<b>UN DESA</b>	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund

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<b>UN Habitat</b>	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNIFEM</b>	United Nations Development Fund for Women
<b>UNISDR</b>	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>UNOPS</b>	United Nations Office for Project Services
<b>UNV</b>	United Nations Volunteers Programme
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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# 1. Preface

Current UN reform efforts aim to strengthen coordination among agencies, funds, offices and programmes to better address complex global challenges and deliver more coherent and effective assistance to countries. These efforts require sustained commitment from Member States, UN agencies and other stakeholders to ensure that the UN remains responsive and relevant in an evolving global landscape.

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As part of the commitment to streamline UN operations by improving collaboration among UN agencies, reducing duplication of efforts and increasing the impact of aid at the country level, the Regional Collaborative Platform (RCP) provides a framework for improving the coordination and coherence of operational activities of the UN system. It builds on previous reform efforts and seeks to address new challenges and opportunities in the delivery of development assistance. Its working mechanisms include the substantive Coordination Mechanisms, most notably the Coalitions and Thematic Working Groups. Among these, under the leadership of UN Women and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), is the Thematic Group on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls.

In this context, the Regional Gender Interagency Group (Regional GIG) for Latin America and the Caribbean, composed of agencies, funds and programmes (AFPs), has decided, as part of its work plan and in alignment with the strengthening of inter-agency coordination, to establish a set of priorities to address the complex challenges faced by women and girls. This collaborative effort aims to consolidate knowledge, resources and capacities to provide accurate, reliable and quality information to promote and contribute to the gender equality agenda in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The launch of this Regional Gender Profile for Latin America and the Caribbean is therefore a milestone, resulting from the close coordination among 15 UN AFPs that make up the Regional GIG, demonstrating the collective commitment to address entrenched inequalities and promote gender equality.



In line with international, regional and national gender equality commitments, it provides a comprehensive analysis of the status of women in the region, supported by statistical and qualitative data. Its main objective is to examine gender inequalities in the region across the five dimensions of the 2030 Agenda: people, prosperity, planet, peace and partnerships, also known as the “5 Ps”. This analysis is carried out from an intersectional perspective, exploring how gender inequality intersects with other forms of discrimination. In this way, it provides a detailed overview of the dynamics, challenges, and progress that characterize the gender equality landscape in Latin America and the Caribbean.

This profile is presented as a strategic tool to strengthen understanding and advocacy for gender equality, as well as to support evidence-based programming. It is therefore a key resource for overcoming obstacles and driving progress on gender equality at national, regional and global levels.

**María Noel Vaeza**  
**Regional Director of UN Women**  
**for the Americas and the Caribbean**

## 2. Regional Gender Equality Profile: Latin America and the Caribbean

## Introduction and objectives

In the diverse social landscape of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), operating under the United Nations umbrella, the Regional Gender Interagency Group (Regional GIG) seeks to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls through a coordinated and effective approach aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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In this context, this Profile is intended as a guide to analyze the dynamics, challenges and progress that define the gender equality landscape in LAC and is presented as a strategic tool to position and strengthen understanding in relation to the advancement of international and regional commitments towards gender equality and women's empowerment in the region.

It represents a key tool in the promotion of gender equality, as well as for ensuring evidence-based programming by stakeholders, international development partners and the UN System to drive progress and overcome obstacles at national, regional and global levels.

Beyond being a Regional Profile on the state of gender equality, this document also stands as a dynamic testament to the collective commitment to address entrenched inequalities and advance gender equality. Led by UN Women, this Profile has been jointly produced by: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

## Structure

This report is divided into three sections. The first addresses the regional context and sets the framework for assessing issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment. It includes the global and regional policy framework, global indices and rankings to contextualize the region's position, along with general demographic indicators that establish the context for analyzing gender equality issues.

The second and main section focuses on gender inequalities in the region, divided according to the five dimensions of the 2030 Agenda: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships (also known as the "5 Ps"). These inequalities will be explained with an intersectional view, with the aim of deepening the analysis of the interaction of gender inequality with other forms of discrimination.

In the context of the 30th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, each of the "5 Ps" will be linked to the twelve Beijing critical areas of concern<sup>1</sup>, which have been grouped into six thematic areas:

- **Area 1:** Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work
- **Area 2:** Poverty eradication, social protection and social services
- **Area 3:** Freedom from violence, stigmas and stereotypes
- **Area 4:** Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions
- **Area 5:** Peaceful and inclusive societies
- **Area 6:** Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation

Finally, the document concludes with lines of action aimed at strengthening public policies, legislative and institutional reforms, improving financing and implementation, and promoting social change. These guidelines seek to promote tangible measures to tackle the identified inequalities and drive significant progress in gender equality in the region.

## Methodology

The profile was developed through a comprehensive literature review of statistics and available information up to January 2024.

To ensure quality and close coordination among UN AFPs, lead agencies and peer reviewers were assigned to each chapter and sub-chapter. This approach ensures a critical and collaborative review, enhancing the coherence and reliability of the report through the combined expertise of multiple AFPs.

The intersectional approach has been instrumental in shedding light on the interaction of various forms of discrimination, including gender, age, geographic location, disability status, class, and ethnicity. This holistic approach enables a thorough and accurate analysis of the intricate dynamics that influence gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

## Scope and limitations

In terms of consolidating information, the Regional Gender Equality Profile has a defined scope in terms of:

- **Information:** the collection of information was carried out in a participatory manner and ensures data linkages across different sections of the document.
- **Trends:** knowledge management enables the identification of trends and patterns across various socio-economic aspects such as health, education, and employment, among others. This allows for a better understanding of the primary challenges that limit gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in LAC.
- **Public policies:** regional data can serve as a basis for the design and implementation of public policies aimed at addressing challenges and promoting development in specific areas.
- **Comparisons:** consolidating information by dimensions facilitates comparison between different subregions within LAC, which allows for the identification of

disparities and similarities, building lines of action based on lessons learned within the same region.

- **Intersectionality:** this approach helps to identify and better understand the disparities and inequalities that exist within the region.

On the other hand, the Regional Gender Profile has been elaborated on the basis of certain limitations:

- **Absence and/or limitations of gender statistics in several areas of interest:** In some subregions of LAC, the availability of data is limited or incomplete, which makes it difficult to carry out a comprehensive and accurate analysis.
- **Changes over time:** statistical data can quickly become obsolete due to changes in socio-economic, political or environmental conditions, requiring regular updates.

## 3. General regional context

### 3.1. Global and regional normative frameworks on gender equality and women's empowerment

The implementation of gender equality global and regional normative frameworks in LAC and their incorporation into the countries' legal-normative frameworks shows progress and setbacks in most countries in the region.

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Although gender inequality continues to be entrenched in social, political and cultural practices in the region, it is also true that with the effective application of gender-sensitive laws and public policies in recent decades, progress has been made in relation to the political participation of women, their access to education and the reduction of maternal mortality.

The existence of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean for the past 45 years is a characteristic of the region that demonstrates the continued commitment of countries and the strength of the feminist and women's movement. This has enabled the development of a solid and articulated Regional Gender Agenda that *"recognizes women's rights and gender equality as central and cross-cutting elements of all state action to strengthen democracy and enable a new kind of sustainable development with equality"* (Güezmes & Vaeza, 2023).

In the same years that the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean was being consolidated, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. CEDAW comprehensively addresses the human rights of all women and girls and is the first binding treaty agreed upon by the international community in this regard. It is based on three interrelated guiding principles: the principle of substantive equality, the principle of non-discrimination and the principle of state obligation.

Although all States in LAC have ratified CEDAW, gender equality between women and men continues to be a great challenge. Formal equality between women and men is endorsed by practically all political constitutions in the region, however, women and girls continue to face situations of inequality and discrimination that



hinder the exercise of their rights and increase their vulnerability to violence in all countries. Legislative frameworks that generate direct or indirect discrimination, affecting women's lives, are also still persistent in the region (Sallé, Molpeceres and Infante, 2018).

In addition, in the year 2000, CEDAW's Optional Protocol entered into force, an independent and optional treaty open to States Parties that introduces two new procedures: the possibility for individuals or groups of individuals to submit complaints to the Committee in relation to the violation of rights established in the Convention and an enquiry procedure that allows the Committee to initiate an investigation into situations of grave or systematic violation of the rights established in the Convention. The Optional Protocol to CEDAW has been ratified in the region by 18 countries and 2 countries have signed but not ratified it.

Most recently, in 2022, the CEDAW Committee adopted General Recommendation No. 39 on the Rights of Indigenous Women and Girls, that requires States to protect the individual and collective rights of indigenous women and girls under the principles set out in the Convention. In 2016, the Committee on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities also issued General Comment No. 3 on the responsibilities of States Parties to promote, protect and fulfil the human rights of women and girls with disabilities.

The year 2025 will mark the 30th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remains the most comprehensive and visionary agenda for achieving gender equality and the empowerment and autonomy of all women and girls. The twelve critical areas of concern that articulate its transformative proposal are a roadmap for achieving the full realization of human rights by all women and girls.

On the other hand, the adoption in 2015 by the General Assembly of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), establishes a blueprint for achieving economic, social and environmental sustainability. Gender equality and women's empowerment is an inherent part of the 2030 Agenda, highlighting that sustainable development cannot be achieved without 50 per cent

of the population. In addition to a specific SDG, SDG 5, which focuses on achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, a set of associated targets and indicators to promote this goal are consistently integrated across other SDGs.

In LAC, the Regional Gender Agenda emanating from the Regional Conference on Women has led to the adoption of a series of instruments that have allowed for the translation of international commitments in the regional sphere in 15 Regional Conferences on Women that have been organized over the last 45 years. This Regional Gender Agenda is made up of the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean 1995-2001 (1994), the Santiago Consensus (1997), the Lima Consensus (2000), the Mexico City Consensus (2004), the Mexico City Consensus (2004), the Lima Consensus (2000), the Santiago Consensus (1997), the Lima Consensus (2000), and the Mexico City Consensus (2004), the Quito Consensus (2007), the Brasilia Consensus (2010), the Santo Domingo Consensus (2013), the Montevideo Strategy for the Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030 (2016), the Santiago Commitment (2020) and the Buenos Aires Commitment (2022) (ECLAC, 2023a).

At the same time, the Inter-American Human Rights System, through the Inter-American Commission on Women (CIM), was a pioneer in advancing a regional instrument focused on eliminating violence against women. Within this framework, and after a consultation process, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, also known as the Convention of Belém do Pará, was adopted in 1994. This Convention calls for the establishment for the first time of mechanisms to protect and defend women's rights as essential to combating violence against women's physical, sexual and psychological integrity, whether in the public or private spheres, and for asserting those rights within society. The Follow-up Mechanism of the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI), created in 2004, promotes its implementation by analyzing the progress and challenges of States Parties.

On the other hand, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has developed a normative framework that promotes equality between women and men in the world of work through conventions. The most important Conventions in this regard are [Convention No. 100](#) on Equal Remuneration (1951), [Convention No. 111](#) on

Discrimination in Employment and Occupation (1958), [Convention No. 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities](#) (1981), [Convention No. 183 on Maternity Protection](#) (2000), [Convention No. 189 on Domestic Workers](#) (2011) and [Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work](#) (2019).

In the area of social protection, in addition to [Convention 183 on maternity protection](#), [Convention 102 on social security \(1052\)](#) sets minimum standards in the nine principal branches of social security - medical care, sickness, unemployment, old-age, employment injury, family, maternity, invalidity and survivors' benefits.

In addition to the Conventions, the International Labour Conference, the ILO's decision-making body, has also adopted a series of Resolutions and Recommendations to strengthen gender equality in the world of work: the [Resolution concerning the promotion of gender equality, equal pay and maternity protection](#) (2004) or the [Resolution concerning gender equality at the heart of decent work](#) (2009) as well as in social protection: [Recommendation No. 202 on social protection floors](#) (2012) or [Recommendation No. 204 on the transition from the informal to the formal economy](#) (2015). While these instruments are not binding, they provide guidance for strengthening countries' efforts to promote gender equality in the world of work.

In the area of population and development, worth highlighting is the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo in 1994, that adopted a Programme of Action that defined a bold agenda that places people's human rights at the center of development. At the regional level, the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, adopted in 2023, is the most important intergovernmental agreement in LAC on population and development, and the means by which the region conducts follow-up to the Cairo Programme of Action. It is a progressive and comprehensive instrument because it includes key elements for the implementation of policies that guarantee the full exercise of human rights in relevant issues such as sexual and reproductive health, population ageing, international migration, Indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants, among others.

In the area of human mobility, the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration represent two milestones at the global level that seek to promote comprehensive and gender-sensitive responses to

the current challenges of migration and forced displacement. At the regional level, intergovernmental processes such as the Quito Process, the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM), the Regional Integrated Framework for Protection and Solutions (RIFPS), have also promoted technical exchanges between authorities in different countries to promote gender-sensitive humanitarian responses.

Finally, and more recently, the relationship between gender and the environment has also been recognized in both environmental and gender equality international agendas. The 1993 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the 1994 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the 2015 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction are some of the main instruments that recognize this nexus, noting the differential and disproportionate impacts of the climate crisis on women and the critical role they play as agents of change in the achievement of sustainable development, climate action, resilience building, protection, environmental conservation and disaster risk reduction.

## 3.2 Global indices and rankings

With only six years to go before the deadline set by the 2030 Agenda, there are still significant data gaps that make it difficult to determine the level of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at both regional and global levels. At the global level, progress has been recorded in 138 of 169 targets (United Nations, 2023), while in LAC only 126 targets have been monitored (ECLAC, 2023b). In relation to gender equality and women's empowerment, the region only has information on half of the SDG 5 indicators (ECLAC, 2023b).

In spite of this challenge, available data reveals that globally none of the SDG 5 targets have been achieved or are on track to be achieved (UN Women and UN DESA, 2023). For LAC, only target 5.c, which addresses strengthening enforceable policies and laws to promote gender equality at all levels, has been or is likely to be achieved by 2030 if current trends persist. For the rest of the SDG 5 targets, although trends in the region are adequate, progress is insufficient to achieve them (ECLAC, 2023b).

## Extreme poverty

Globally, progress towards ending poverty needs to be 26 times faster to achieve the 2030 poverty eradication target. In 2023, 1 in 10 women were living in extreme poverty, defined as a daily income of less than US\$2.15. Despite the significant challenges facing LAC in this regard, the region with the highest percentage of women living in extreme poverty was Sub-Saharan Africa, with 4 out of 10 women living in extreme poverty. In contrast, Oceania had the lowest percentage (UN Women and UN DESA, 2023).

If current trends persist, it is projected that by 2030 8% of women around the world will continue to live on less than USD 2.15 a day, with the majority of them living in sub-Saharan Africa. In LAC, the rate of extreme poverty among women is expected to decrease by 1.6 percentage points by 2030, but increase by 0.4 percentage points compared to 2015, making it the region with the second largest increase in poverty compared to 2015 (UN Women and UN DESA, 2023).

## Food insecurity

To achieve the goal of zero hunger by 2030, progress must be 33 times faster. In 2022, 27.8% of women and 25.4% of men worldwide experienced moderate or severe food insecurity (UN Women and DESA, 2023). This problem is exacerbated in LAC, where between 2020 and 2022, on average, 43.8% of women and 33.7% of men faced this situation (FAO, IFAD, PAHO, WFP and UNICEF, 2023a).

Projections show that LAC will be the region with the third lowest reduction in the proportion of women who are moderately or severely food insecure between 2015 and 2030, with a decrease of only 2.5 percentage points, while globally a reduction of 5.5 percentage points is estimated (UN Women and UN DESA, 2023).

In addition, by 2050, the effects of climate change are expected to place hundreds of millions more women and girls at risk of poverty and food insecurity. In a worst-case scenario, it is estimated that globally the number of women who will experience food insecurity due to climate change will increase by 235.9 million. In LAC, this impact translates into 13 million more women pushed into poverty and 19.8 million more women will be food insecure (ibidem, 2023).

## Education

Access to education is increasing among girls and boys. However, globally, in 2022, the proportion of girls, adolescent girls and women aged 15-24 who are not in education, employment or training was twice that of men (32.1% compared to 15.4%). In LAC, similar data is recorded, with 26.9 per cent of females and 13.9 per cent of males in this situation. The region with the highest percentage of women who are not in education, employment or training is South and Central Asia (UN Women and UN DESA, 2023).

## Maternal mortality

Globally, progress must be six times faster to achieve the 2030 maternal mortality reduction target. Between 2000 and 2020, the maternal mortality ratio fell by 34%, from 339 to 223 per 100,000 live births. However, global progress has stagnated since 2015, and in LAC, the rate increased by 13 percentage points between 2015 and 2020. The region with the highest maternal mortality ratio in 2020 was sub-Saharan Africa (UN Women and UN DESA, 2023).

## Access to drinking water services

In 2022, around the world, 27.1% of all women lacked access to safely managed drinking water services. In the same year, fewer than one in three women in sub-Saharan Africa had access to safe drinking water (31.3 per cent), compared to regions such as Central and South Asia (67.5 per cent), Latin America and the Caribbean (75.2 per cent), and North Africa and West Asia (76.9 per cent). In LAC, around 7 million women and girls were drinking water from unimproved sources or surface water in 2022, significantly less than the 22 million women who consumed this water in the year 2000 (UN Women and UN DESA, 2023).

## Access to clean energy and fuels

In 2023, globally, 91% of the population had access to electricity and 73% relied mainly on clean technologies and fuels. In LAC, these percentages stood at 100% and 89% respectively. The region with the lowest percentages of the population with access

to electricity and clean fuels was Oceania (except Australia and New Zealand) with 41% and 15% respectively (UN Women and UN DESA, 2023).

### Political and managerial positions

In LAC, in 2023 the participation of women in national parliaments exceeds the global average by 9.3 percentage points (United Nations, 2024). However, progress in relation to women's participation in local governments is not as positive, as women's representation was 8.3 percentage points below the global average of 35.5%. Finally, in the private sector, 36.9% of managerial positions in LAC were held by women in 2021, a figure that exceeded the global average of 28.2% (UN Women and UN DESA, 2023).

### Wage gap

Globally, for each dollar earned by men in 2019, women earned only 51 cents. A wage gap that was greater in LAC, where for each dollar of labor income earned by men, women received 58 cents. The regions with the smallest labor income gap were Europe and North America, and Oceania (Australia and New Zealand only). The region with the largest gap was Central and South Asia (UN Women and UN DESA, 2023).

### Violence against women

Despite the high prevalence of physical and sexual violence against women in LAC, the number of women who were subjected to physical or sexual violence in their lifetime was 2 percentage points lower than the global average. In the case of the number of women who experienced physical and sexual violence in the last twelve months, it was 5 percentage points lower than the global average. The region with the highest prevalence of violence against women was South Asia (35%) when considering lifetime prevalence, and Sub-Saharan Africa (20%) when considering prevalence over the past 12 months (WHO, 2021a).

On the other hand, there is a downward trend in global female homicide rates, that experienced a reduction from 2.40 per 100,000 people in 2010 to 2.24 in 2021. This decrease was also reflected in LAC, where the rate fell from 4.24 in 2010 to 3.72 in 2021. The region with the highest rate was Sub-Saharan Africa (UNODC, 2023).

### 3.3 General demographic indicators

LAC has experienced significant transformations in its demographic dynamics over the past 50 years. Most countries in the region have completed the demographic transition from population patterns with high birth and death rates to modern patterns characterized by low birth and death rates. These changes, influenced by variations in marriage patterns, human mobility, female autonomy, urbanization, as well as economic and family structure transformations, have reshaped the region's population dynamics and social and economic structures.

It is also worth noting the coexistence of different demographic realities. In LAC there are still large disparities between and within countries. Even between different population groups. Analyzing, understanding and anticipating these changes and dynamics is therefore necessary to strengthen the demographic resilience of countries in the region, to mitigate possible adverse impacts, as well as to take advantage of the opportunities it offers for the well-being of people, prosperity and the sustainability of the planet.

#### Birth and mortality rates

By the 1990s, after years of policies aimed at containing the explosive population growth of the 1960s and 1970s, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) had already fallen significantly from 6 to 3.25 children per woman (ECLAC/CELADE, 2024). This decline was largely driven by women's increased rights to reproductive autonomy, including access to modern contraceptive methods. The availability of the contraceptive pill has been a determining factor in women's reproductive autonomy, which in turn has enabled their increased participation in the labor market and created significant long-term impacts on the population structure.

Today, 30 years after the influential Cairo Conference on Population and Development in 1994, which emphasized the continued importance of sexual and reproductive rights and women's empowerment for sustainable human development, the fertility pattern in the region has changed dramatically. It now closely resembles that of developed regions that have also completed their demographic transition and face the consequences of sub-replacement fertility with fertility rates of 2.1 children per



woman (ALAP, 2014). Estimates for 2023 indicate a total fertility rate in LAC of 1.8 children per woman. This declining trend is expected to continue, with a projected fertility rate of 1.68 children per woman by 2100 (ECLAC/CELADE, 2024).

In addition to declining fertility levels, the demographic transition in LAC has also been characterized by a steady decline in mortality since the first half of the 20th century, reflected in the continued increase in life expectancy at birth and reductions in maternal and infant mortality. This increase in life expectancy at birth, which was particularly evident between 1950 and 2019, driven by improvements in nutrition, urban infrastructure, access to medical services and advances in health, reached 75.8 years for both sexes in 2023 - 79.4 years for women and 72.7 years for men (ECLAC/CELADE, 2024).

However, it should be noted that there are marked differences in people's life expectancy, influenced among other factors by inequalities in access to health care, in the exercise of rights and in quality of life. There is also stagnation and setbacks in some cases due to factors such as homicides and femicides, which have had a significant impact on the mortality of young men and women, particularly among Afro-descendants, indigenous people and those living in peripheral areas, as well as the emergence of infectious diseases, including influenza, cholera, antimicrobial resistance and vector-borne diseases.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic generated a dramatic change in mortality trends, exacerbating socioeconomic and health inequalities in the region. LAC was the most affected region, losing 2.9 years of life expectancy at birth in 2021 compared to 2019 (ECLAC, 2022a). This loss is not only attributed to direct deaths from COVID-19, but also to indirect factors related to the pandemic. Although transitory, the magnitude of the losses is irreparable, revealing profound inequalities in the region. The disparity in life expectancy between countries is obvious, with Chile registering the highest life expectancy and Haiti, Bolivia, Guyana and Guatemala the lowest (Figure 1).

**Graph 1: Life expectancy in Latin America and the Caribbean**

10 countries with the lowest life expectancy at birth			10 countries with the highest life expectancy at birth		
Country	Men	Women	Country	Men	Women
Haiti	61,8	67,8	Guadeloupe	79,7	86,4
Bolivia (Pl. State of)	66,2	71,5	Martinique	80,4	86,1
Guatemala	67,3	73,1	Puerto Rico	75,8	84
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	67,9	73,1	Chile	78,8	83,4
Guyana	66,4	73,3	Costa Rica	77,9	82,7
Jamaica	70,1	74,6	Uruguay	74,3	81,8
Saint Kitts and Nevis	68,8	75,8	Antigua and Barbuda	76,7	81,8
Honduras	71	76	Virgin Islands	70,7	81,7
Suriname	69,4	76,2	Panama	75,6	81,6
Paraguay	71,4	77	Argentina	74,6	81,3

Source: ECLAC / CELADE Data consulted in January 2024, own tabulations.

## Age structures and demographic dividend

In the 1950s, population growth was recorded in practically all age cohorts, with a notable increase in the population of children and adolescents under 15 years of age. Meanwhile, throughout the period from 1950 to 2022, population growth was observed in all age groups in the region (ECLAC, 2022b).

In the current decade, the number of people under 25 years of age is projected to decline, while positive growth is anticipated in the region's adult population, especially among those over 65 years of age. If assumptions on population projections are fulfilled, these patterns indicate that by the year 2052 people aged 65 years and over will be the only group to experience growth, especially among the female population that have a longer life expectancy compared to men. This will mark the beginning of

a demographic period characterized by an ageing population and the feminization of old age in society. Towards the end of this century, the only population group that is expected to continue to increase at the regional level will be people aged 80 and over (ECLAC, 2022b).

This scenario suggests a significant transformation in the demographic structure. Falling fertility levels can create opportunities for countries to reap a demographic dividend, economic growth resulting from an increase in the number of working-age people and a decrease in the number of dependents. However, it also has substantial implications for comprehensive care policies and services for an aging population and requires greater investment in the human capital of young people and the inclusion of women in formal labor markets.

In this context, it should be noted that each country experiences the various stages of demographic transition at different times, with rates of ageing varying not only between countries, but also between provinces within the same country. Countries that are in an advanced stage of ageing, with a predominantly adult population, include Colombia and Brazil. In contrast, those that have already reached a fully aged society include Chile, Uruguay, Costa Rica and Cuba. On the other hand, there are countries that are below the regional average and are in very early stages of ageing, such as Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Haiti (ECLAC, 2022b).

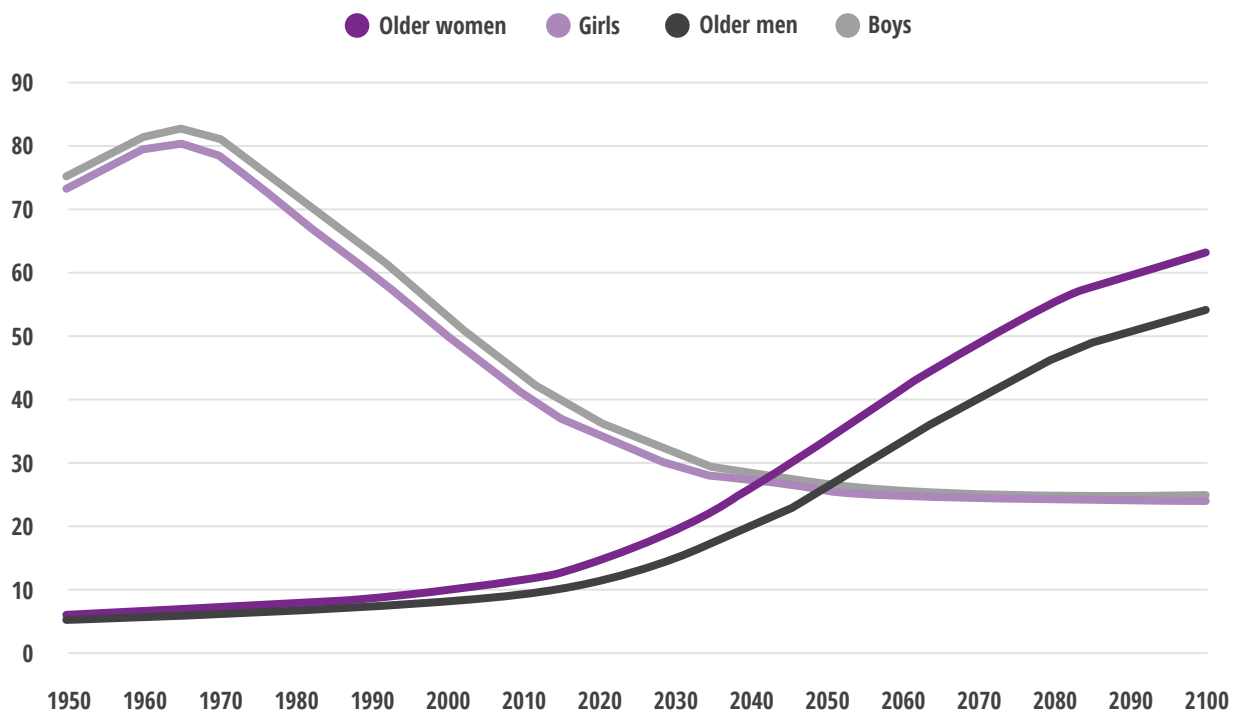
Inequalities are also observed within countries between urban and rural areas and between cities and metropolis, as well as within them. Urbanization in the region is remarkable, with 82.2 % of the population being urban in 2022 (ECLAC/CELADE, 2024). However, it should be noted that large cities have experienced a decline in their migration attractiveness, while medium-sized cities show increasing popularity.

Another crucial aspect, persistent throughout the history of LAC countries, is human mobility which has contributed to the demographic diversity and spatial distribution of the population in the region. In 2023, the annual migration rate was estimated at 0.2 negative which indicates that the region has a negative migration balance, with more emigration than immigration<sup>2</sup>. However, this situation exhibits diversity, since in some countries the immigration rate exceeds the emigration rate (ECLAC/CELADE, 2024). It is important to note that, in many cases, the population that arrives in these countries

as migrants is relatively young and of working age. The arrival of young migrants can be highly beneficial in addressing the demographic transition, as long as this active migrant population manages to fully integrate into the labor market, thus contributing to income generation and the strengthening of social security systems. This phenomenon highlights the importance of understanding the dynamics of human mobility and its potential impacts on the demographic and economic context of the region.

Despite these variations, LAC is currently experiencing one of the most rapid ageing processes, with projections pointing to 2047 as the year when the relative weight of the older dependent population will exceed that of children in general (Figure 2) (ECLAC/CELADE, 2024). As mentioned above, an in-depth look at this same data disaggregated by sex reveals that this change will be more pronounced among the female population given that women often have a longer life expectancy, which implies greater challenges in terms of pensions and long-term health care. In addition, unpaid care responsibilities, which fall disproportionately on women, may increase in an ageing population.

**Graph 2: Demographic dependency ratio, by dependent groups, by sex in Latin America and the Caribbean 1950-2100 (percentage)**



Source: ECLAC/CELADE. Data consulted in January 2024, own tabulations.

In the coming years, we will find ourselves in a crucial period in which demographic trends will play a fundamental role in shaping our social environment. The end of the so-called 'demographic dividend' and process of an ageing population will generate substantial repercussions in terms of public policies, which will require innovative responses in areas such as gender equality, work, health, social protection and care (ECLAC, 2022b).

## 4. Gender inequalities in the region

## 4.1. People

The notion of “People” implies the ability of each individual to reach their full potential with dignity and equality in a healthy environment. Thus, the following chapter discusses gender approaches in those dimensions that are considered essential for human development.

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This chapter begins by examining poverty in the region, elaborating on its complexity and introducing several gender dimensions that will be explored in more detail later in the report. This then leads to an examination of the challenges facing social protection systems in the region, highlighting the urgency of developing inclusive care policies for older people. Here, it delves into care as a crucial element in women’s personal development.

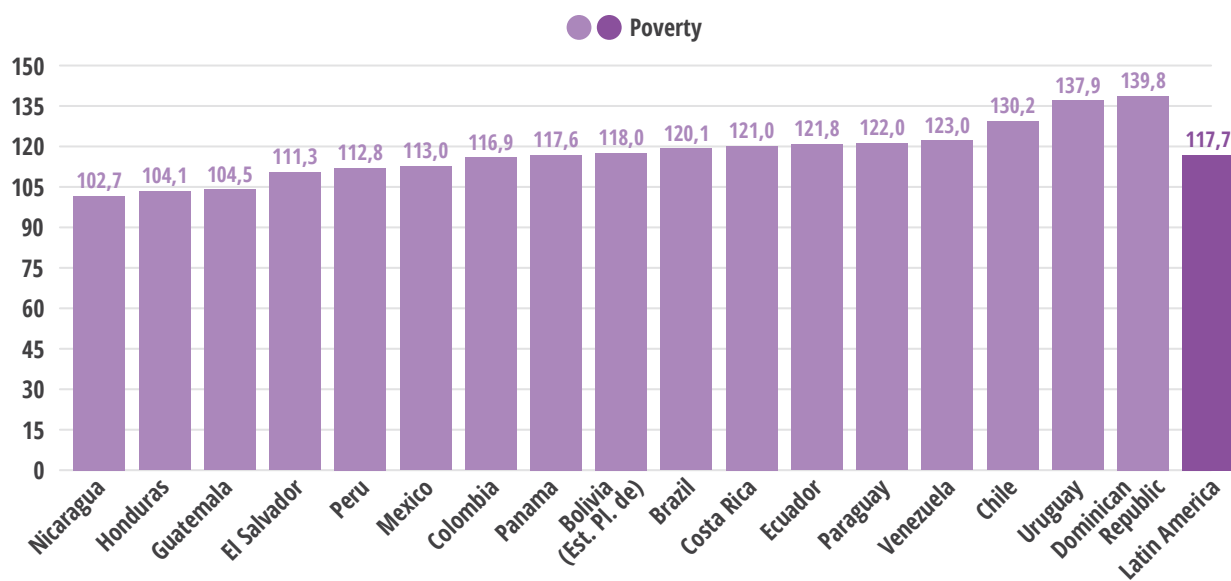
Continuing with other key issues, it addresses food and nutrition security, as well as the main health challenges affecting women. This leads to a reflection on education as an essential strategy to promote gender equality and development in the region.

Through this analysis, the Regional Gender Profile seeks to better understand the various gender dimensions that impact people, especially women in their diversity, and how to address them comprehensively in efforts to achieve inclusive and sustainable development.

### **Poverty eradication**

In the region, there is a clear growing trend towards the over-representation of women in households living in poverty, which is reflected in the femininity index of households living in poverty<sup>3</sup> and extreme poverty. In 2002, according to this index, which considers data from 17 countries, there were 105 women living in poor households in the region for every 100 men, a figure that increased in 2022 to 118 women for every 100 men (ECLAC, 2023c).

**Graph 3: Latin America (17 countries): Femininity Index in poor households, latest available period (Index)**



Source: ECLAC. Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean. Calculated on the basis of the Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG).

The data reflected in the graph above (Figure 3) show disparities in the incidence of poverty between women and men in countries of the region. Moreover, the upward trend this indicator has experienced over time reflects the fact that poverty reduction efforts in the region have not benefited men and women equally, nor at the same pace, and that, households in poverty continue to concentrate a greater proportion of women in ages of greatest productive and reproductive demand.

On the other hand, when analyzing women’s poverty, it is important to consider that they are not a homogeneous group, so it is essential to incorporate an intersectional approach that takes into account the interaction of multiple discriminations women face based on variables such as age, ethnicity, race, socio-economic status, sexual orientation and disability, among others. For example, in LAC, the incidence of multidimensional poverty among women varies according to the territory in which they live: 52.9% of rural women, compared to 25.3% of urban women<sup>4</sup> (UNDP, 2023d).

Although women’s poverty is a complex and multi-causal phenomenon, this section briefly analyses some of the main dimensions that have been identified as having an



impact on women's impoverishment, which are discussed in greater depth in other chapters of this report and provides data on regional trends in this area.

### Labour market

Gender gaps in labor markets, which arise due to the sexual division of labor, limit women's economic autonomy and negatively affect women's poverty levels (UNDP, 2022). According to these gaps, women participate less than men in the labor force; and when they do, they work fewer paid hours than men. They also have higher unemployment rates than men and face higher informality rates in most countries in the region (UNDP, 2021a).

In addition to this, horizontal and vertical gender segregation of the labor market deepen gender gaps. As a result of horizontal segregation, women are mainly concentrated in certain occupations and sectors where there tends to be less recognition, greater instability and lower wages, which often leads to increased poverty. This is due both to gender discrimination and, in many cases, to women's need for flexible jobs, which allows them to fulfil unpaid care roles. On the other hand, due to vertical segregation of the labor market women are under-represented in leadership positions. These factors have a direct impact on the gender pay gap, according to which women in the region earn a lower average hourly wage than their male counterparts.

### Time use and care

In LAC countries for which data is available, women's time spent on unpaid care work is much greater than men's. The overload of unpaid work that falls on women acts as a barrier to their participation in the labor market on equal terms with men, as well as to their access to economic resources that would allow them to achieve a greater degree of autonomy (ECLAC, 2020a).

In fact, when analyzing two resources for women's economic autonomy: income and time, it can be seen that the asymmetries between men and women not only have a monetary component, but also a component in the allocation of the activities required in the household that accentuates the gender gap within households. In the group of women with no income of their own, unpaid working time is between 16% and

56% greater than the unpaid working time of women who do have their own income (ECLAC, 2020b).

In some cases, low wages mean that women are in poverty despite being employed and earning an income. This situation particularly affects domestic workers, with one in four women working in this sector living in poverty (ECLAC, 2023c).

## Violence and health

Women's physical autonomy - which refers to their ability to make decisions about their health, especially their sexual and reproductive health - has been shown to be negatively related to poverty. Moreover, violence, which can be physical, emotional/psychological, sexual or economic, not only threatens women's lives, personal integrity and health, but also affects their autonomy in decision-making, their participation in education and formal work activities, and can result in loss of income and assets, among others (UNDP, 2023a).

Additionally, child, early and forced marriages and unions (CEFMU), defined as harmful practices as they constitute a form of violence against women and children, disproportionately affect girls and adolescent girls in rural areas and poor households, being both a cause and a consequence of limited economic autonomy (ECLAC & UNFPA, 2023).

## Education

In Latin America and the Caribbean, there has been significant progress in terms of girls', adolescent girls' and women's access to education. For example, in 2018, gender parity was achieved in the gross enrolment rates at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels (UNESCO, 2019). In this sense, it is currently necessary to move beyond addressing barriers to access, and focus efforts on guaranteeing gender equality in educational pathways and the inclusion of an intersectional approach, given indigenous women, Afro-descendent women, sexual and gender diverse women, women with disabilities and/or women in situations of human mobility continue to be more likely to be outside the educational system.

On the other hand, there are significant gender gaps in the region in terms of both the acquisition of digital skills and participation in fields related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). In this sense, education is a key element to ensure women's full participation in economic, political and social life in the digital age (ECLAC, 2023d).

### Access to technology

In Latin America, there are also gender gaps in internet access. In Chile, for example, 3.2% of women lived in households without internet access in 2022; this figure reached 62.7% of women in El Salvador the same year (ECLAC/ CELADE, 2024). Evidence also indicates that there are gaps of between 11 and 7 points in favor of men in terms of internet use for work-related activities and administrative or public procedures. These factors are aggravated by the lack of digital skills and use of digital tools, which affects women more (IDB, 2020).

For women to be able to take advantage of the benefits of digitalization, it is necessary to create conditions of equality and protection in the digital world and opportunities for the development of the necessary skills and abilities in a changing context. In particular, ensuring women's access to and use of ICTs is essential to promote their economic empowerment.

### Housing and services

The quality of housing construction, as well as its safety levels and the environment in which it is located, have a direct impact on people's well-being. In particular, precarious housing conditions have an impact on the amount of unpaid domestic work, which generally falls on women (CONEVAL, 2012). One example is households that do not have access to drinking water for domestic use, which generally results in women and children needing to fetch water from a source of water or incurring in costs if they have to buy it.

Other factors, such as overcrowding, housing conditions and access to electricity, cooking fuel and/or clean heating in cold countries, are issues that affect health. This also has an impact on household poverty, especially affecting women who spend more time at home due to traditionally assigned gender roles (UNDP, 2023a). (UNDP, 2023a).

## Social protection

Social protection has a long history in LAC. In fact, in some countries, the development of social protection systems began more than a century ago. Over the last three decades, social protection systems have undergone significant changes and today face important challenges, mainly related to gaps in coverage, insufficient benefits and sustainability risks (ILO, 2023).

In relation to coverage gaps, challenges related to the persistence of informality in the region's labor markets, which limit *"the development of contributory systems that can provide universal coverage and adequate benefits"* are particularly relevant. On the other hand, with regard to benefits, tax policies and fiscal space present a challenge in this area because of their essential role in *"generating sufficient resources for the development of non-contributory cash transfer programmes"* (ILO, 2023). In addition, social protection also faces the challenge of the demographic transition and ageing population discussed in the previous chapter. This situation puts greater pressure on pension systems, endangering their sustainability and highlighting the urgent need to develop care policies that integrate older persons (ILO, 2023).

### Women's employment, care and social protection

Unpaid care work has determined women's relationship with social protection from the origins of these systems, which envisaged a household composed of a male provider and a female carer of children. Under this scheme, men access social protection in a contributory and direct way, while women do so as dependents and in an indirect way, with limited access to benefits.

The prevalence of this social organization of care, which assigns women the responsibility of care responsibilities within the family, means that many women are unable to access the labor market and, consequently, contributory social protection. Many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean now have non-contributory programmes that provide cash benefits for those who cannot access social protection in a contributory way, but the amount of such benefits tends to be significantly lower.

On the other hand, as mentioned above, unpaid care work also influences the employment of women, who tend to opt for shorter working hours or to interrupt their career paths in order to take on care work. This, together with the inequality in income received, has a direct impact on the density of their contributions, limiting their eligibility for some benefits, such as old-age benefits, or compromising the adequacy of such benefits.

Data available at the regional level illustrates this situation. When it comes to old-age benefits, women have lower levels of effective coverage than men in all countries of the region. On average, more than half of women over the age of 65 do not receive any labor income or pension, while a quarter of men are in the same situation (ILO, 2022a). Figures on the lack of income vary significantly from country to country. Thus, in Argentina or Brazil, women over 65 with no source of income account for around 20%. This is the situation of about 30% of women in that age range in Uruguay. In contrast, in the rest of the countries this percentage exceeds 50% and in some cases, such as Guatemala, Mexico or El Salvador, it is close to 80% (ILO, 2022a).

Against this backdrop, it is crucial to develop universal social protection systems that are not based exclusively on people's employment history, and that are integrated in a coordinated manner with care systems with a gender perspective. International experience identifies key strategies such as extending social protection to women in the informal economy, closing income gaps, recognizing time spent on care work in the calculation of years of work for pension eligibility, guaranteeing maternity-related rights and benefits, and promoting transformative care policy packages (ILO, 2022b).

### **Particularly unprotected sectors: paid domestic work**

The deficit in contributory social protection coverage is particularly high in some occupations with high female participation. This is the case of paid domestic work, which accounts for most of the female labor force in Latin America and the Caribbean (ILO, 2021).

This occupation has been historically characterized by a lack of decent work. For a long time, labor regulations of countries recognized guarantees and rights that were below general standards for these workers. In recent decades, and particularly after the

adoption in 2011 of Convention No. 189 on domestic workers, numerous legal reforms have been adopted in the region aimed at formally equalizing rights. However, access to social protection still lags far behind. Although in most LAC countries affiliation of domestic workers is compulsory, in practice coverage remains low. Only 23.3% of women working in employer households are contributing to or affiliated to social security systems<sup>5</sup>. This is the sector of the care economy that lags furthest behind in terms of rights and social protection. Indeed, in the health and education sectors, the average affiliation rate for women is 79.2% and 83.5% respectively (ECLAC, 2022c).

In addition to high rates of informality, there are several additional factors that may explain this low coverage. One of them is that social protection systems sometimes do not respond to the characteristics of paid domestic work. Currently, hourly work or multiple employers are common in this occupation. In this sense, when affiliation schemes do not provide for partial affiliation or the possibility of accumulating contributions from different employers in order to reach the minimum contribution, they exclude a good number of workers. In addition, the culture of non-compliance is widespread, and there are few inspections and sanctions in this area. Efforts to inform workers and employer households about their rights and obligations are also scarce. Addressing these factors is therefore urgent to ensure access to social protection for thousands of women workers in LAC.

## Care

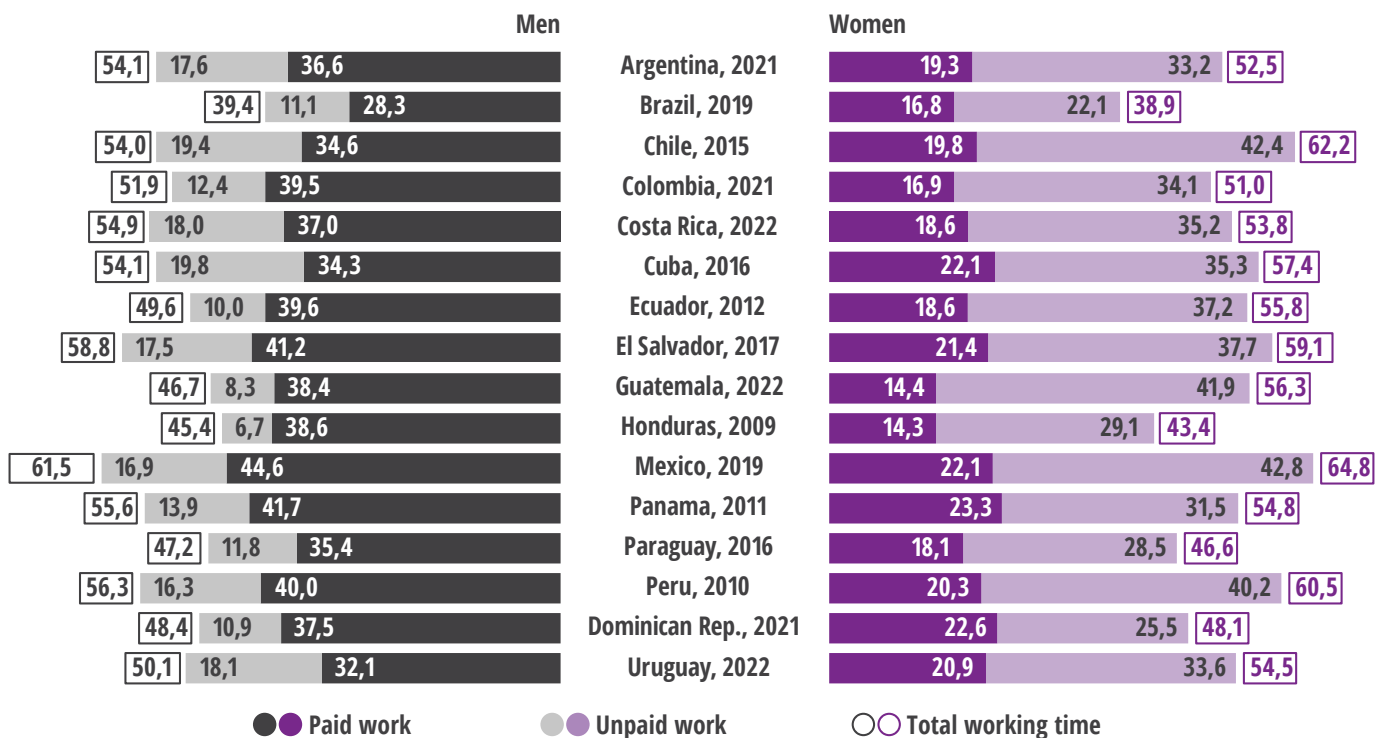
Care, in addition to accompanying the life cycle of individuals and being a key factor of personal development, is also an essential component of the reproduction of society, as it allows for the sustenance of life and the functioning of activities as a whole (UN Women and ECLAC, 2021).

As previously mentioned, today and at the global level, most contributions to care are made by women, from the domestic sphere and in an unpaid manner. In the case of LAC, available information gathered through surveys or time-use modules in 16 countries over the last 12 years shows that women spend between 12% (Brazil) and 24.7% (Chile) of their time on unpaid domestic and care work, while men spend between 3% (Honduras) and 12.5% (Cuba) of their time on the same activity (UN Women and ECLAC, 2024).

This disproportionate burden of unpaid care work borne by women and adolescent girls, as well as the lack of public provision of care solutions, greatly limits their opportunities and access to the labor market (ILO and ECLAC, 2023) and compromises the possibilities of developing a full life, both for those who require care and for those who provide it (ECLAC, 2021a).

In fact, an analysis of total working time (adding weekly hours dedicated to unpaid and paid work combined) also shows that in 8 out of 16 countries women work more hours per week than men, and in the remaining 8 they work a similar amount (see Graph 4). As a result, women earn less income for time worked than men, as they spend more hours on unpaid domestic and care work (UN Women and ECLAC, 2024).

**Graph 4: Latin America and the Caribbean (16 countries) Average hours per week spent on unpaid and paid work combined (total workload), disaggregated by sex. Population aged 15 and over (2023) (SDG C-5.4)**



Source: UN Women and ECLAC (2024) Calculations based on data from the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC (2023).

This disproportionate share of unpaid care work, together with the lack of public provision of care solutions, disproportionately affects women in lower income households, the so-called “sticky floors”, (UN Women, 2017) who spend on average 42 hours per week on unpaid work compared to women in the “glass ceilings” (quintile 5), who spend 33.13 hours per week.<sup>6</sup> A reality that points to the linkages between issues of care, poverty, precariousness and exclusion (Coello, 2013, UN Women and ECLAC, 2020). On the one hand, those who are in a worst economic situation are less likely to be able to hire paid care services, having to carry out this work themselves. In turn, the more care work they perform, the more difficulties they face in overcoming poverty because time poverty limits their opportunities to enter the labor market, a particularly serious situation for female headed single-parent households (UN Women and ECLAC, 2021).

According to ECLAC data (2021a), around 60% of women aged 20-59 in households with children under 15 years of age declare they do not participate in the labor market because of family responsibilities, while in households without children in the same age group, this figure is close to 18%. In addition, a global survey showed that, on average, less than half of young women aged 15-29 who are mothers report not participating in the labor market because of family responsibilities, while for young fathers the figure is more than 80 per cent. The study also found that about 40 per cent of young women in Latin America who were not in the labor market, cited pregnancy or family care needs as the reason. More than 80 per cent of those who were also out of school expressed a desire to enter (or re-enter) the labor market (Elder and Kring, 2016, cited in ILO and ECLAC, 2023).

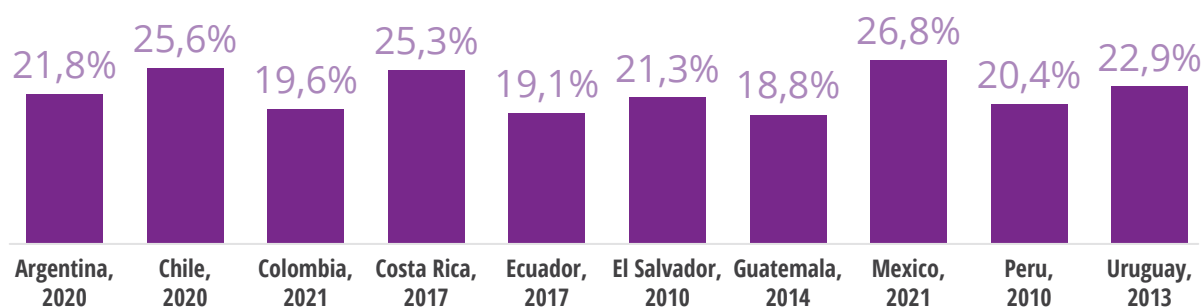
Consequently, an analysis of the 13 countries for which data is available in the region reveals that the highest rate of households in poverty is found in those categorized as extended and composite, where the care demands of different generations (children and older adults) generally converge. These are followed by single-parent households, where the uniqueness lies in the fact that only one adult is the economic and care provider at the same time. In almost 90% of cases, these households are under the responsibility of a woman (Scuro, Alemany and Coello, 2022).

On the other hand, the magnitude of unpaid domestic and care work in relation to GDP shows the relevance of this work at the economic level. According to measurements



in Latin America, unpaid domestic and care work contributes between 18.8 and 26.8% of gross domestic product (GDP), of which 74.5% is contributed to by women (see Figure 1) (ECLAC, 2022c).

**Figure 1: Latin America (10 countries): Economic value of unpaid household work relative to national gross domestic product (GDP) (2010-2021). (Percentages)**



Source: Information updated as of 05 September 2023 and calculated on the basis of the valorization of unpaid work from lead agencies national accounts in each country, except for the following where the lead agency did not participate and whose calculations were based on: Argentina: National Directorate of Economy, Equality and Gender of the Ministry of Economy, including the effects of the pandemic, “Care, a strategic economic sector. Medición del aporte del trabajo doméstico y de cuidados no remunerado al Producto Interno Bruto”, Buenos Aires, 2020; Uruguay: S. Salvador, “La valoración económica del trabajo no remunerado”, Los tiempos del bienestar social: género, trabajo no remunerado y cuidados en Uruguay, K. Batthyány (ed.), Montevideo, Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres (INMUJERES), 2015.

### Paid domestic work

According to 2020 data, in 12 countries in the region for which information is available, highly feminized sectors of the care economy show significant gender gaps in labor income and a lower proportion of women working in high-skilled jobs (Scuro, Alemany and Coello, 2022).

Despite legislative advances in response to the adoption of ILO Convention No. 189 on domestic workers, this sector remains subject to high levels of precariousness. In the region, around 72.3% of domestic workers are in a situation of informality, earning 44.7% of the monthly wages of other wage earners (ILO, 2021). Consequently, as previously described, despite some improvements, their access to and coverage of social security is poorly correlated with the levels of development and formalization of the wage-earning population (UN Women, ISSO and ILO, 2022).

This situation results in women domestic workers in Latin America being over-represented among poor households (UN Women, ISSO and ILO, 2022). While poverty rates have improved, a significant gap persists for those in domestic work. In 2019, 23.8 per cent of paid domestic workers were living in poverty, much higher than the figure for women who are wage earners (10.3 per cent) (Valenzuela, Scuro and Vaca-Trigo, 2020).

This is particularly relevant for the region, given 14.8 million people in LAC are engaged in paid domestic work, 91.1% of whom are women. This means that one out of every nine employed women (11.3%) is a domestic worker (ILO, 2021). Many of these workers are Afro-descendent, indigenous and/or migrant. In fact, ECLAC estimates show that the weight of paid domestic work among employed Afro-descendent women in Latin America and the Caribbean is 17.3%, more than double that of non-Afro-descendant women (8.5%) employed in this sector (ECLAC and UNFPA, 2021). Likewise, in the region, one third of women who migrate (35.3%) are engaged in paid domestic work (ILO, 2016), forming part of what have come to be known as “global care chains”.

### Care in the face of demographic, social and economic changes

The current care crisis is further exacerbated by an ageing population, changing epidemiological trends and the effects of environmental shocks such as climate change, with predictions indicating a sustained increase in demand for care work (UN Women and ECLAC, 2024). In addition, a reduction in the time and number of people available for unpaid care is expected (ECLAC, 2022c).

Unlike other sectors, where productivity improvements can reduce the need for labor, the care sector is expected to see an increase in total employment demand, even with the incorporation of new technologies (ECLAC, 2022c; ILO, 2019). An estimate for eight OECD countries shows how employment generated by investing in care can be up to three times higher than if investing the same amount in the construction sector (De Henau and Himmelweit, 2021).<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, according to ILO (2022b)<sup>8</sup>, globally, investment in universal childcare and long-term care services could generate up to 280 million jobs by 2030 and another 19 million by 2035: 96 million direct jobs would be generated in childcare, 136 million in

long-term care jobs and 67 million in indirect jobs. It is estimated that 78% of these jobs would be filled by women and 84% would be formal employment. Specifically, investment in childcare licensing and early childhood care and education (ECCE) services could increase the employment rate of women globally on average from 46.2 per cent in 2019 to 56.5 per cent in 2035, and reduce the global gender gap in monthly earnings from 20.1 per cent in 2019 to 8 per cent in 2035 (ILO, 2023a).

In turn, for the region, with an estimate based on 7 countries, an increase of 25.8 million direct and indirect jobs is calculated. Specifically, it would boost the generation of 11.3 million jobs in Brazil, 2.2 million in Argentina, 2.8 million in Colombia, 6.5 million in Mexico, 1.8 million in Peru, 893,000 in Chile and 248,000 in Costa Rica (ILO, 2022b).

In short, investment in care systems not only helps to break the vicious circle of poverty and exclusion but can also be transformed into a virtuous circle that generates multiple social and economic returns through the so-called triple dividend of investment in care (UN Women and ECLAC, 2021). Firstly, because it contributes directly to people's well-being through access to quality care services, which generate a more efficient use of health and education systems. Secondly, by alleviating women's care overload and enabling their full and equal participation in the labor market, thus promoting their economic, physical and political autonomy. And finally, through their capacity to generate jobs and energize other interrelated sectors of the economy, which in turn would allow for increased fiscal revenue through taxes and social security contributions (UN Women and ECLAC, 2021).

Ultimately, strengthening the care sector in the economy, through the ILO's 5Rs framework (2019) - recognizing, redistributing, reducing, rewarding and ensuring representation in social dialogue and collective bargaining for care workers, is key to achieving gender equality and social justice and fostering economic growth.

### Towards a care society

At the regional level, care has been recognized by governments as a right, highlighting the key social function that care has in the production and reproduction of life and well-being of societies (UN Women and ECLAC, 2021). In this sense, over the last 45 years, in the framework of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and

the Caribbean, governments have approved a series of agreements that include measures on the design of care policies and the call for increased co-responsibility between the State, the private sector, families and the community.

These are agreements that promote the generation of information on time use and care work, as well as on its economic value, and the commitment to develop comprehensive care systems from a gender, intersectional, intercultural, human rights and gender-sensitive approach. From a human rights perspective, the concept of the right to care is introduced as a right that States are obligated to guarantee and protect (Güezmes, Scuro and Bidegain Ponte, 2022).

In response to these commitments, comprehensive care systems have been gaining concreteness, with Uruguay being a pioneer in this respect. At present, countries such as Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and the Dominican Republic, with varying degrees of development, are making progress in their implementation. Uruguay, Venezuela and Ecuador already have specific legislation and Argentina, Mexico, Paraguay and Peru have bills under discussion that propose the creation of these care systems (Güezmes and Vaeza, 2023).

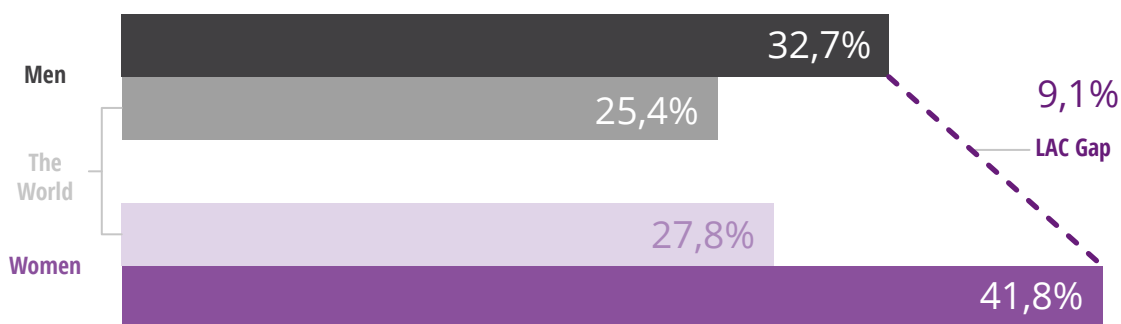
A basic condition for making progress in comprehensive care systems in the region lies in finding ways to make their financing viable and sustainable, while complying with the premises of universality, territorial equity, intergenerational solidarity, co-responsibility and a gender perspective. It is not possible to finance the well-being that all people deserve if there is no effective contribution from society as a whole, especially from those with greater economic capacity. But above all, it shows empirically that this is a viable path followed by societies that today boast the highest levels of human development.

## **Food and nutrition security**

In Latin America and the Caribbean, accelerated changes in agrifood systems have contributed to a nutritional transition from a predominantly undernourished population to one suffering from the effects of the triple burden of malnutrition, and communities experience the effects of undernutrition, anemia and overweight or obesity simultaneously (FAO, IFAD, PAHO, WFP and UNICEF, 2023a).

In 2022, food insecurity affected women more, with a gap of 9.1 percentage points over men. The region showed greater gender disparity compared to other parts of the world. Approximately 57 percent of this gap is attributed to inequalities in access to education, full-time employment and labor participation (FAO, IFAD, PAHO, WFP and UNICEF, 2023b).

**Figure 2: Food and nutrition insecurity in Latin America and the Caribbean**



Source: WFP own elaboration based on information from FAO, IFAD, PAHO, WFP and UNICEF, 2023b.

In the region, obesity is feminized, as it is estimated that of the 105 million adults suffering from obesity in 2016, 59% or 62 million were women (FAO, PAHO, WFP and UNICEF, 2019). In children and adolescents, the rate of overweight and obesity is even more concerning. Some 30.6 per cent of girls and adolescent girls aged 5-19 years are overweight, exceeding the global prevalence of 18.2 per cent (UNICEF, 2023a).

Anemia, a key indicator of micronutrient deficiencies and dietary diversity, also particularly affects women aged 15-49. Although below the global average, 17.2% of women in the region were anemic in 2019, going up to 29.2% in the Caribbean. Anemia increases the risk of disease, maternal mortality and risks to the fetus, such as miscarriage, fetal death, premature birth or low birth weight, predisposing to malnutrition (WHO, 2014). Exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months of life in the region in 2020 was 37 %, well below the global average of 44%.

Chronic undernutrition causes stunted growth and cognitive development in children and reduced responsiveness to disease (FAO, IFAD, PAHO, WFP and UNICEF, 2023a). In the long term, the double burden of malnutrition causes socio-economic losses equivalent to 16% of annual GDP (ECLAC and WFP, 2020), through loss of future productivity due to premature mortality, disability and lower educational attainment.

## Structural causes of gender gaps in food insecurity

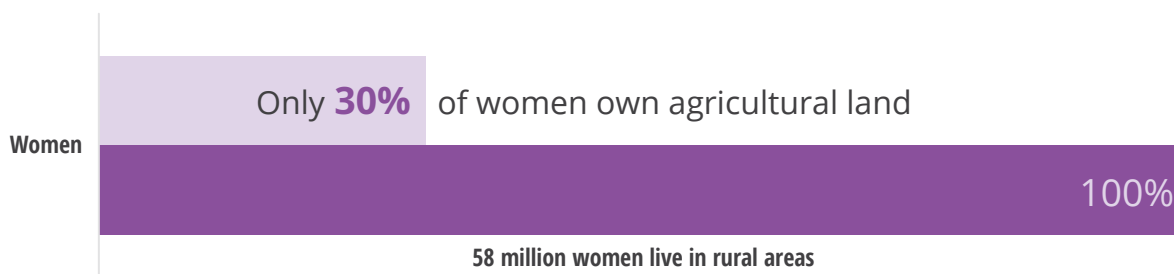
Women make up 36% of all workers in agrifood systems in LAC; constituting, for example, up to 54% of workers in these systems in the Plurinational State of Bolivia (FAO, 2023). However, women do not benefit as much as men from the opportunities provided by agricultural work, as they tend to have lower levels of education, lower labor force participation and come from lower-income households (FAO, 2023).

In addition, among rural women, the significant share of unpaid domestic and care work, often compounded by water collection tasks, perpetuates inequalities in women's labor participation in agri-food systems. These inequalities translate into a wage gap in agriculture, with women earning on average 82 cents for every dollar earned by men globally (FAO, 2023) with multidimensional poverty affecting rural women almost three times more than urban women (UNDP, 2023a).

Although rural women in all countries of the region are more likely to experience multidimensional poverty, the gap between rural and urban areas varies. In Uruguay, the Dominican Republic, Bolivia, El Salvador and Honduras, the incidence of multidimensional poverty in rural areas almost doubles that of urban areas, while in Costa Rica, Mexico and Panama it is three times as high. Chile and Colombia have the widest gap, with rural women experiencing four times the proportion of multidimensional poverty than urban women. In Bolivia, Honduras and El Salvador, almost 90% of rural women face multidimensional poverty, and the poverty intensity, measured as the average proportion of deprivation among poor women, in Honduras and El Salvador reaches 58% (UNDP, 2023b). In Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, 34% of indigenous women live in poverty compared to 26% of non-indigenous women (ILO, 2022c), highlighting how intersectionality affects the vicious circle of poverty.

Furthermore, in all countries of the world, men have greater ownership or tenure rights over agricultural land than women. In the case of LAC, 58 million women live in rural areas, of which on average only 30% own agricultural land (see Figure 3) (OXFAM, 2023a). In general, these plots are smaller, of poorer quality and in more insecure conditions, and only 5% have access to technical assistance. Many face difficulties in exercising ownership of the land they cultivate and in using natural resources, including water, to irrigate their fields (FAO, 2023).

**Figure 3: Ownership of agricultural land in Latin America and the Caribbean**



Source: WFP own elaboration based on information from OXFAM, 2023a.

Additionally, rural women are more susceptible to losing family assets in the event of the death of their spouse. This gender gap is particularly wide and statistically significant in Central America, where on average 25% of men versus 36% of women feel they would be insecure in this scenario (Prindex, 2023). To overcome this situation, it is necessary to implement legislation to end the provisions of civil and family codes that discriminate against the equal rights of joint administration and inheritance of spouses and descendants, both in marriage and in de facto or cohabiting unions, giving way to mandatory joint registration of all rural and urban real estate of married and cohabiting couples, as well as land funds that favor equal access and include a budget line with a commitment by states in the medium and long term (FAO, 2024).

Likewise, in order to close gender inequalities in access to land and other productive resources, it is urgent to implement a strategy of economic empowerment, and financial and productive inclusion of women as an integral part of social protection programmes that include subsidies, credits and preferential rates for the purchase of real estate, property and production insurance, and for the formalization of property, among others.

## Health

In addition to the nutritional deficiencies discussed previously in this report, the stigmatization of women's sexuality driven by conservative forces in the region, as well as the privatization and segmentation of health systems and the lack of recognition of women in the health sector (where despite having a majority presence they are under-represented in decision-making spaces) are some of the main problems affecting

women's health. Women's health is determined by the intersection of gender inequality with other factors of exclusion, such as class, race, disability, ethnicity, age, gender identity and/or sexual orientation, impacting on the social determinants related to women's morbidity and mortality.

## Maternal health

Maternal mortality (MM) is a serious public health problem that violates the right to health and the right to life of women and people with the capacity to bear children. About 8,400 women die each year in the region from complications in pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period (WHO, 2023a).

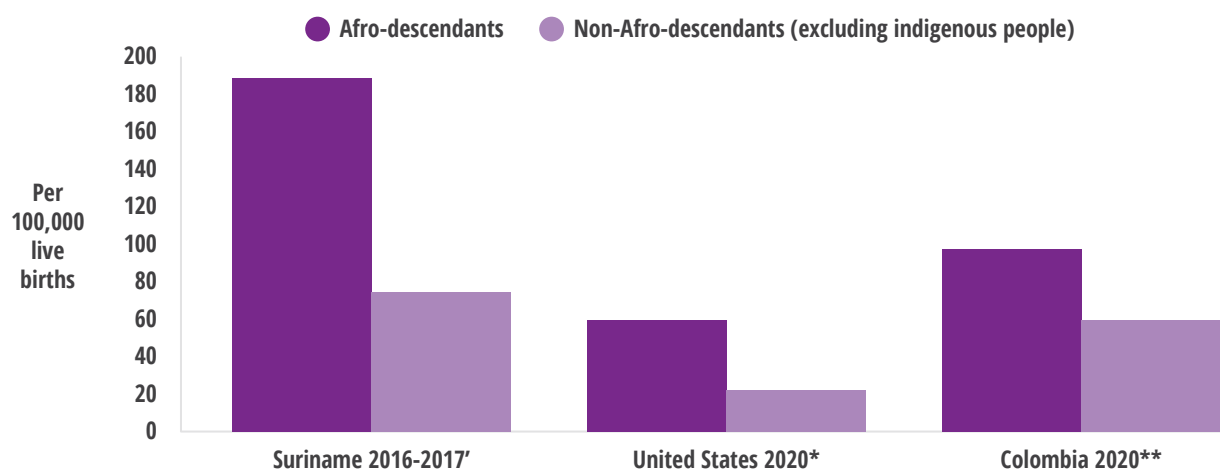
The reduction in MM recorded over the past two decades was slowed down by the COVID-19 pandemic, which increased the rate in the region by 9%. Preliminary estimates for 2021 indicate a maternal mortality ratio (MMR) of 113 deaths per 100,000 live births: a setback of about 20 years (GTR, 2022).

Hypertension in pregnancy, hemorrhage and complications from unsafe abortion are the most common causes of MM. An estimated 6.5 million unsafe abortions are performed annually in the region, with MMR due to abortion being three times higher in Latin America and the Caribbean than in developed regions. It is estimated, however, that nine out of ten of these deaths could be prevented with improved quality of care, access to contraception and reducing inequalities in access to care (GTR, 2023).

It should also be noted that racism, structural discrimination and sexism in the provision of health services and medical education constitute an obstacle in the access and provision of quality and culturally relevant comprehensive care, which translates into countries with the largest indigenous and Afro-descendant populations having the highest levels of MM in the region. In Panama, MM in indigenous women is six times higher than among non-indigenous women (UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women, 2018). In Suriname and Colombia, the MMR among Afro-descendant women is 2.5 and 1.6 times higher than among non-Afro-descendant women (UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women, PAHO and NBEC, 2023).



**Graph 5: Maternal mortality ratio among women aged 15-49, by race and origin**



Source: Chart extracted from UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women, PAHO and NBEC (2023).

### Access to modern contraceptive methods

Contraceptive use increased from 40 per cent to 55.7 per cent between the 1990s and 2022, and unmet need for contraception declined steadily, but more among married women than among women of childbearing ages overall (UNFPA, 2022).

The adolescent population has greater difficulties in accessing contraceptives due to access barriers (legal, institutional and social), which generate an unmet need two to three times greater compared to national averages. Although the proportion of adolescents aged 15-19 who meet their family planning needs with modern methods is higher than the global average (72 per cent compared to 60 per cent), almost 30 per cent of their needs remain unmet (UNICEF, 2023b). Similarly, adolescents have limited knowledge about sexual and reproductive health and often do not receive comprehensive sexuality education.

### Teenage pregnancy

Although the specific adolescent fertility rate in LAC has declined significantly in recent years - from 73.1 children per 1,000 women aged 15-19 in 2010 to 51.4 in 2023 (ECLAC, 2023e) - it still exceeds the world average (41.3 children per 1,000 women). In fact, 17 countries of the region are among the 70 in the world with the highest

adolescent fertility rates (ECLAC, 2023e). In this regard, it should be noted that fertility rates among the 10-14 age group has experienced the least reduction in relation to the rest of the age groups, which is concerning given that this is linked to high rates of sexual violence among this sector of the population, that reaches 12%, double the global average (PAHO, 2021), as well as to child and forced unions, that reach 23% in the region (ECLAC, 2023e).

Poverty, lack of opportunities and the interaction of factors of exclusion and inequality have a direct impact on the incidence of adolescent pregnancy, which mainly affects indigenous, Afro-descendant, migrant, rural and coastal girls and adolescent girls. Adolescent pregnancy reproduces intergenerational inequality, as it impacts the life plans of adolescent girls, negatively impacting their years of schooling and forcing them to enter the labor market earlier and in more precarious jobs.

Adolescent pregnancy also carries serious health risks. Adolescent girls under the age of 15 are at increased risk of dying from pregnancy-related causes, with perinatal deaths being 50 per cent more likely among mothers under the age of 20 compared to the 20- 29 age range (UNFPA, 2018). Additionally, of the estimated 2.1 million adolescent pregnancies in the region in 2019, 876,000 resulted in abortions, most of them in unsafe conditions (PAHO, 2020).

Moreover, the impact of adolescent pregnancy on countries' economies is considerable as it undermines efforts to achieve sustainable development and increases opportunity costs. Economic losses in terms of health expenditure, lost years of education, women's earnings and tax revenues have been estimated at 0.38% of GDP (UNFPA, 2020).

Although many countries have policies to prevent adolescent pregnancy, there has been a significant decline in recent years in the number of countries incorporating comprehensive sexuality education into the educational curriculum, among other factors, due to opposition from anti-rights groups.

## Abortion

The proportion of pregnancies that end in abortion has increased in LAC between 2010 and 2014, from 23% to 32%. This is higher than the average number of abortions

in Europe and North America, which is estimated at 17 abortions per 1,000 women (Guttmacher Institute, 2018).

Abortion research in the region is a complex issue, that triggers multiple adverse reactions so available statistics are probably not accurate as a result of underreporting. Nevertheless, it is estimated that 6.5 million abortions are carried out in unsafe conditions each year. Unsafe abortion, which mainly affects vulnerable women, is one of the leading causes of maternal mortality in the region, with the MMR for abortion being three times higher than in developed regions (GTR, 2017).

Access to abortion in LAC is also very unequal. As of 2022, abortion was regulated in 31% of countries in the region and post-abortion maternal care in 75% of countries. According to a comparative study, regulatory models for abortion access are categorized into three groups: those that criminalize all abortions (Honduras, El Salvador and Dominican Republic), those that allow some abortions for a health/life reason (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica and Mexico), sexual violence (Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Uruguay), fetal health (Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Colombia, Uruguay and Mexico), non-consensual insemination (Colombia, Mexico) - known as *grounds* - and those that have legalized voluntary abortion up to a certain gestational age (Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Uruguay) (ECLAC, 2023e).

### Inequality and HIV

Gender inequalities increase vulnerability to HIV, as women who experience intimate partner violence are up to 50% more likely to experience HIV transmission (UN AIDS, 2023).

Moreover, in Latin America HIV prevalence is more than 30 times higher among transgender people than among the cisgender population, and between 10 and 19 times higher among gay men and men who have sex with men (MSM) in the Caribbean (UN AIDS, 2023).

Progress in relation to the HIV response has been strengthened with the adoption of legal and policy frameworks. If underlying HIV-related inequalities and barriers, including HIV-related stigma, are addressed, treatment coverage and outcomes are likely to improve further.

In 2022 and 2023, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados and Saint Kitts and Nevis decriminalized same-sex sexual relations. However, LGBTIQ+ communities continue to face discrimination and violence and some Caribbean countries continue to criminalize same-sex conduct (UN AIDS, 2023). Evidence shows that criminalization of people living with HIV and key populations reduces access to services and increases HIV incidence.

## Healthy ageing

Current epidemiological and demographic changes require a life course approach to women's health, highlighting factors that affect or protect their well-being beyond the reproductive age (PAHO, 2021). Women live longer than men - 6.2 years longer on average in the region of the Americas - but do so in poor health for 15.5% of their lives, as a consequence of inequalities experienced throughout the life course and evidenced strongly in old age (PAHO, 2023a).

Older women tend to experience poverty to a greater extent and to have an economic coverage three percentage points lower than men. These factors are related to social determinants of health that affect older women more, such as lower levels of schooling, less access to pensions or the need to remain tied to precarious or informal work (PAHO, 2023b).

Women are also the family caregivers and caregivers of dependent persons in the home - they provide more than 70 per cent of the care for the elderly; and they have the highest dependency ratios, because women are more likely to suffer from very debilitating illnesses, albeit with low mortality rates (PAHO, 2023c).

## Communicable diseases

Communicable diseases caused by viruses, bacteria and parasites especially affect marginalized populations, with women being particularly vulnerable to several of them.

Regionally, in the Americas, 74,410 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year and 37,925 die from cervical cancer related to prolonged and persistent human papillomavirus infection (Espinal, et al. 2022). Additionally, it is estimated that, in 2020, 48% of new cases of syphilis (1.2 million out of 2.5 million cases) (PAHO, 2022) and

44% of new cases of gonorrhoea (4.3 million out of 9.8 million) occurred in women (Espinal, et al. 2022).

Moreover, women account for 43% of the 21,038 leprosy cases worldwide (WHO, 2022) and women under 15 years of age account for 33% of the 242,000 new and relapsed TB cases reported in 2022 (WHO, 2023b). Approximately 1.1 million women of childbearing age are infected with Chagas disease and 9,000 newborn children are infected each year during pregnancy (WHO, 2015a).

### Non-communicable diseases

Non-communicable diseases in women are strongly related to socio-economic and gender inequalities. Hypertension and cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and cancer are closely related to environment and lifestyle: poverty, environmental degradation, unsafe working conditions and lack of access to services influence their prevalence (De Maio, 2011).

As previously described, women in LAC have a higher prevalence of overweight and obesity, as well as diabetes, compared to men, a factor that contributes to cardiovascular diseases being the most important cause of death among women in 2019, accounting for 29% of all female deaths. In turn, breast cancer is recorded as the most critical cause of cancer related deaths, with a mortality rate of 16 per 100,000 women (PAHO, 2023d).

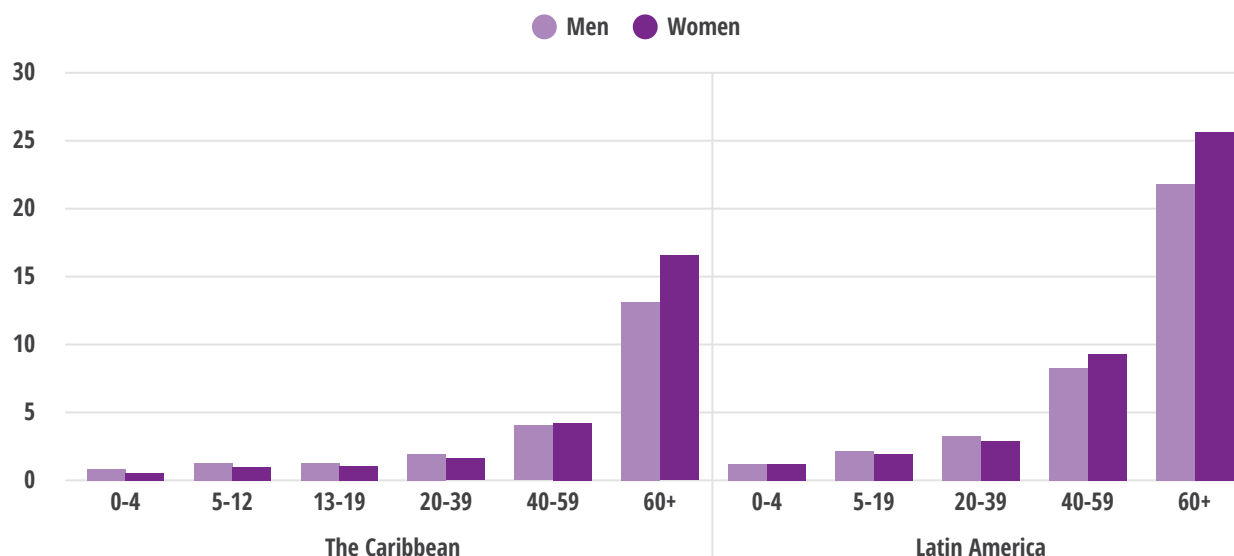
Moreover, in the Americas, it is estimated that up to 7.7% of the female population suffers from anxiety disorders compared to 3.6% of men, with depression also being more prevalent among women (5.1%) than men (3.6%), representing the second highest prevalence in the world (WHO, 2017). Mental, neurological and substance use disorders meanwhile account for 18% of the cause of disability among women (PAHO, 2017).

### Women and girls with disabilities

Almost 12% of the LAC population lives with at least one disability, representing some 66 million people. The experience of disability is strongly intertwined with structural

discriminations, and therefore women are more likely to have a disability than men. This gap is accentuated among indigenous women (ECLAC, 2021a) and with older age.

**Graph 6: Prevalence of disability by age and sex in 2019 (in percentages)**



Source: Cecchini, S., Holz, R., and Soto de la Rosa, H. (2021). Calculated on the basis of: Population and Housing Census of Argentina, 2010; Population and Housing Census of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, 2012; Population and Housing Census of Brazil, 2010; National Socioeconomic Characterization Survey of Chile, 2011; Population and Housing Census of Costa Rica, 2011; Population and Housing Census of Cuba, 2012; National Multipurpose Household Survey of Dominican Republic, 2013; Population and Housing Census of Ecuador, 2010; Population and Housing Census of Honduras, 2013; National Household Income and Expenditure Survey of Mexico, 2012; Population and Housing Census of Panama, 2010; First National Specialized Survey on Disability of Peru, 2012; Population and Housing Census of Uruguay, 2011; Population and Housing Census of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, 2011. For the Caribbean, data were obtained from the 2010 Population and Housing Censuses of: Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, Trinidad and Tobago.

Additionally, globally, women with disabilities tend to have poorer health than men with disabilities (UN DESA, 2018), explained among other factors by their lower access to health services compared to men (WHO, 2015b). Women and girls with disabilities in fact face various barriers when trying to access health services, including: stigma and discrimination, lack of physical accessibility and equipment, economic and communication barriers, as well as a lack of inclusive services and adequate public health provision. Persistent structural discrimination and stereotypes, together with a lack of training of health personnel, hinder the quality of care and hamper the physical autonomy of women with disabilities, subjecting them to procedures without their consent, reduced access to sexual and reproductive health information,

forced sterilizations, gynecological-obstetric violence as well as increased likelihood of institutionalization (Hellum Braathen, Rohleder and Azalde, 2017).

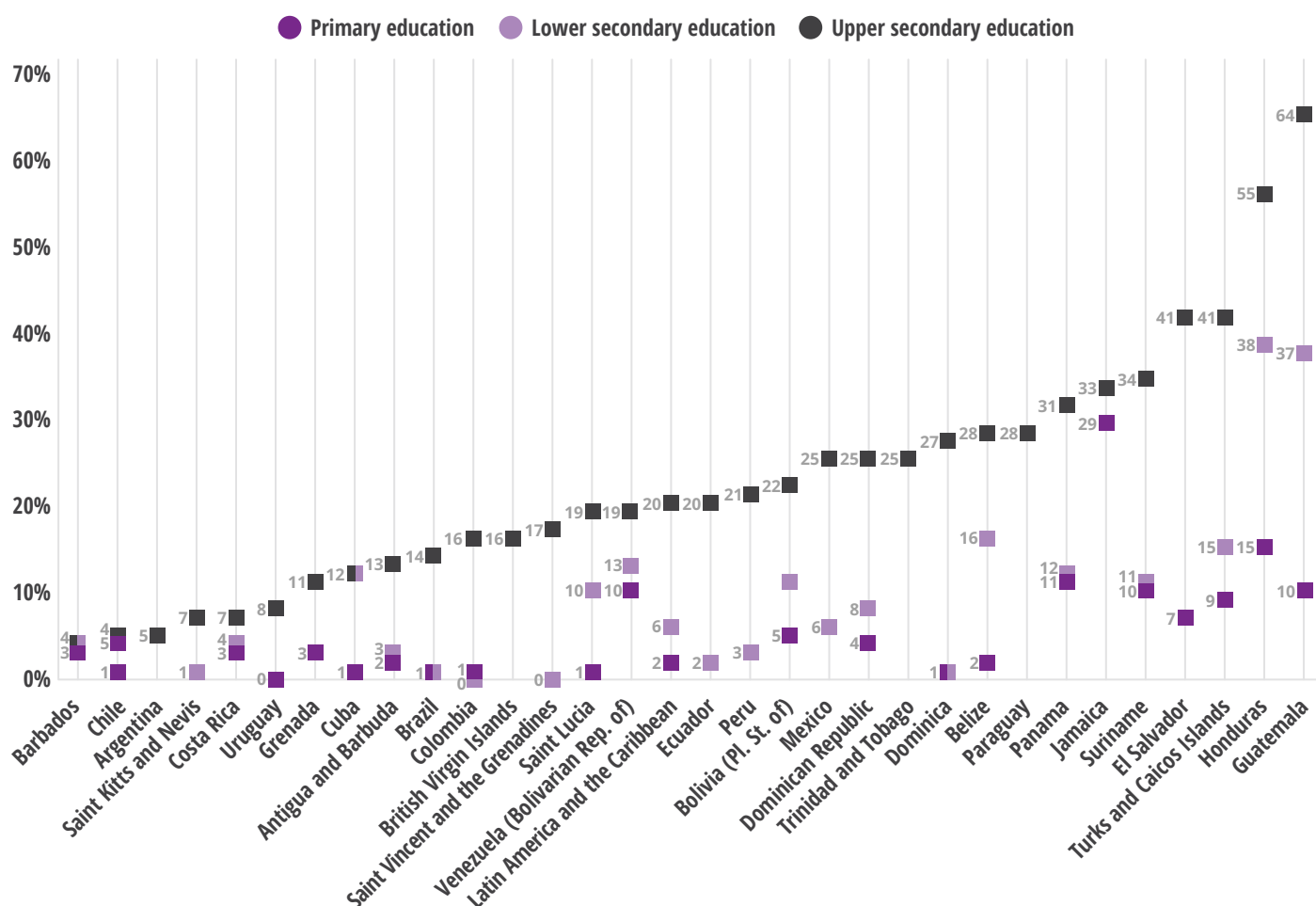
Finally, it is important to underline that data on the health of women and girls with disabilities in the region is scarce and not systematized, which limits the ability to identify inequality gaps.

## **Education**

Promoting adolescent girls' secondary education is one of the most transformative development strategies that countries can invest in for economic and social development. Schools also serve as a key platform for ensuring other services, such as health promotion, comprehensive sexuality education and menstrual health and hygiene, as well as protection against child marriage and early unions.

However, while only 2 per cent and 6 per cent of primary and lower secondary school-age girls respectively are out of school in Latin America and the Caribbean, on average, 20 per cent of upper secondary school-age adolescent girls are out of school. In Guatemala and Honduras, the proportion of out of school adolescents in lower and upper secondary education is of particular concern: 37 per cent and 38 per cent do not attend lower secondary school, respectively, while 64 per cent and 55 per cent do not attend upper secondary school (UNICEF, 2023b).

**Graph 7: Percentage of adolescent girls out of school, by level of education (SDG indicator 4.1.4), 2013-2022**



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022 (UNICEF, 2023b).

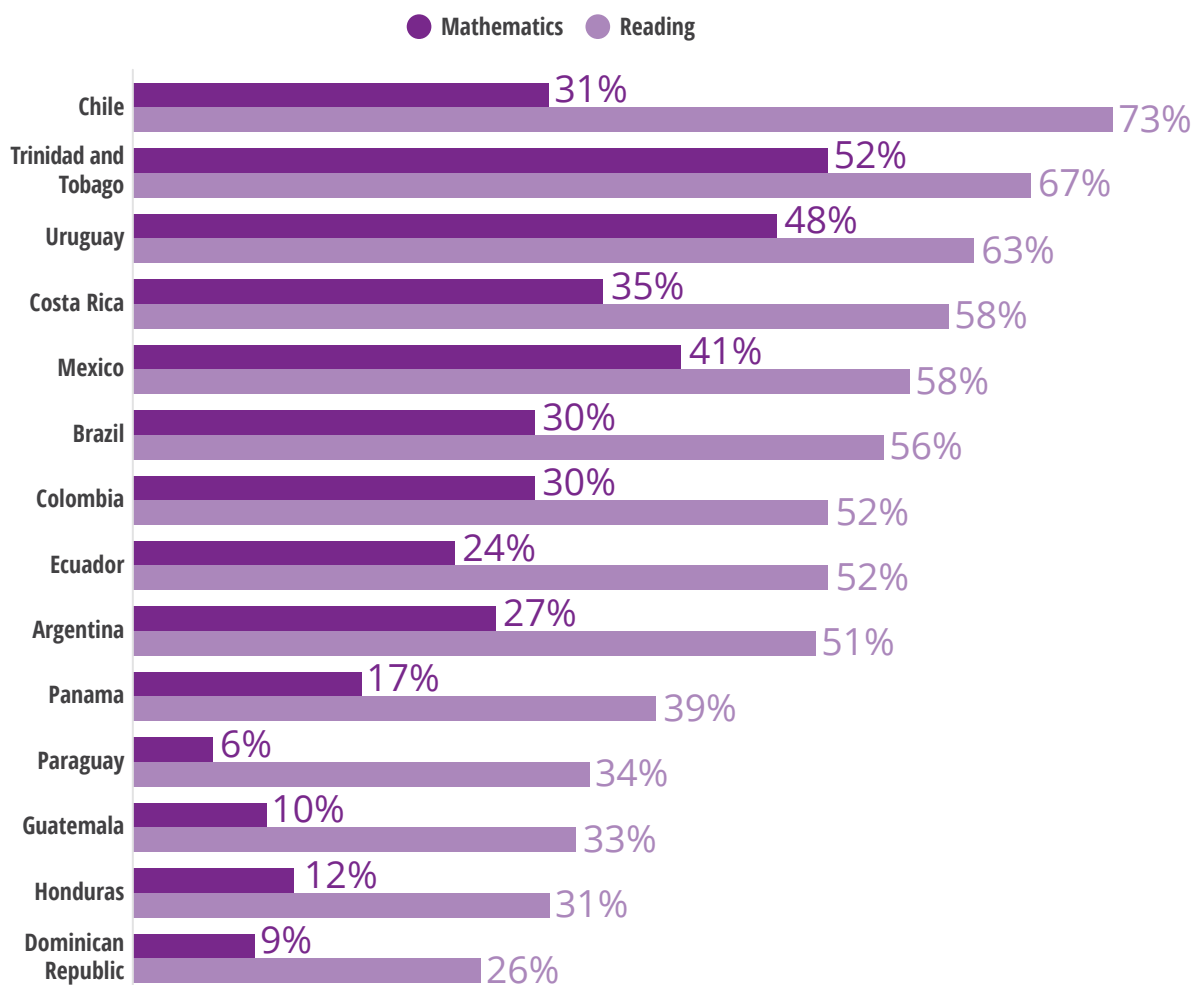
Completing secondary education brings important benefits to adolescent girls and societies, from increased lifetime earnings to reduced adolescent childbearing, child marriage, stunting and child and maternal mortality. On average, 70 per cent of adolescent girls and young women complete upper secondary education across the region, although there are large differences between countries. For example, about 25 per cent or fewer adolescent girls and young women complete upper secondary education in Guatemala, Haiti and Suriname compared with 75 per cent or more in Barbados, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Turks and Caicos Islands and Saint Lucia (UNICEF, 2023b).



## Quality education

Completing secondary education is not enough if adolescent girls do not receive a quality education that includes competencies in reading and mathematics. In all countries for which data is available in the region, adolescent girls show significantly higher proficiency in reading than in mathematics at the end of lower secondary school - less than 50 per cent in all countries (with the exception of Trinidad and Tobago) and less than one third in ten countries reach a minimum proficiency level in mathematics (UNICEF, 2023a).

**Graph 8: Percentage of adolescent girls who, by the end of lower secondary education, have achieved at least a minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics (SDG indicator 4.1.1), 2015-2019**



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), 2023 (UNICEF, 2023b).

## Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

Mathematics proficiency in secondary education is a fundamental building block for specializing in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields at the tertiary level of education and for pursuing a career. However, in all but one country in the region for which data is available (Peru), young women graduating from tertiary level are under-represented in these fields. In Ecuador, for example, where only 24 per cent of adolescent girls have reached a minimum level of proficiency in mathematics, by the end of secondary education young women account for about 30 per cent of STEM graduates at the tertiary level (UNICEF, 2023).

### 4.2. Planet. Multiple Environmental Crises and Resilience

The protection our planet, closely linked to human development, implies safeguarding it from degradation through sustainable consumption and production practices, responsible management of its natural resources and an urgent response to climate change.

This section examines how, despite affecting the entire population, the multiple environmental crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and waste, and disasters, have a more significant impact on women and on those population groups that experience various forms of exclusion and discrimination, whether due to gender, ethnicity, race or socioeconomic status. The causes of this phenomenon are analyzed, as well as the way in which this problem is particularly relevant in LAC, a region characterized by growing social and economic inequality. The importance of recognizing women as agents of change and of visibilizing their contributions to environmental solutions is also highlighted.

### Differentiated impacts of the multiple environmental crises on women and girls

Environmental crises have differentiated impacts on women and girls in all their diversity as they interact with and exacerbate existing inequalities, in turn deteriorating women's resilience to future crises (Castellanos et al, 2022).

In LAC, a significant data gap makes it difficult to understand the real magnitude of these differentiated impacts. However, we know that especially in rural areas, many women's livelihoods depend heavily on natural resources. In 2021, 8% of all women in the region were employed in environmental sectors such as agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing, sectors that are particularly vulnerable to the effects of the multiple environmental crises. In some countries such as Haiti, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, this figure was as high as 30% (World Bank, 2024).

Women also perform various activities related to water management and biomass collection for activities such cooking and heating at the household and community level (ILO, 2023b; UN Women, 2022). Therefore, their workload, including that of unpaid care work, as well as their food and water security are highly affected when natural resources are degraded by climate change, biodiversity loss, disasters or pollution.

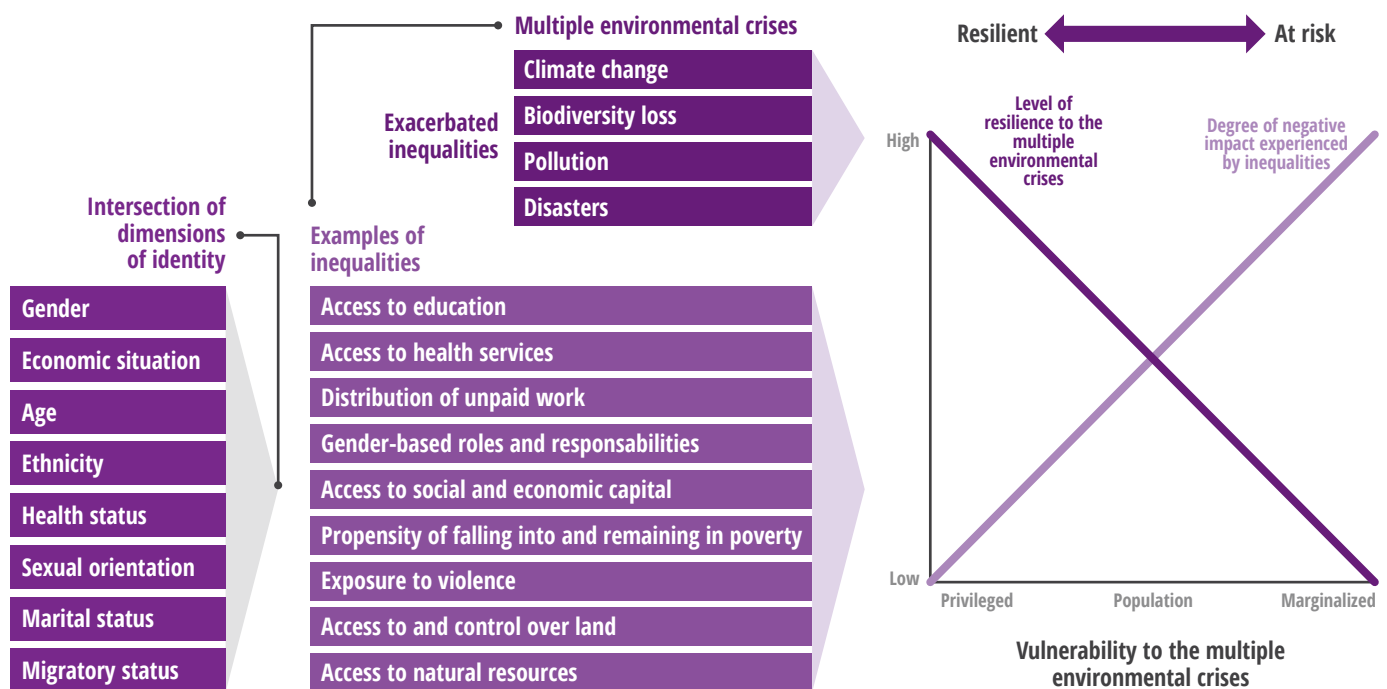
These circumstances are aggravated by situations of poverty and inequality, which are more pronounced among rural, Indigenous and Afro-descendant women, and which reduce the resources available to face the multiple environmental crises (ILO, 2023b). As was previously discussed, women have limited access to and decision-making power over land and natural resources, which not only affects women's economic and food security, but also their resilience to crises, their capacity to implement sustainable agricultural practices and their ability to adopt climate-resilient technologies (FAO, 2023; Oxfam, 2023b).

Women are also more likely to experience various health problems related to environmental crises due to inequalities in access to food, balanced nutrition, and health care (UNEP, 2020). A changing climate also affects the incidence of vector-borne diseases, heat stress and malnutrition (Castellanos et al, 2022). Extreme heat has also been found to be associated with more preterm births and fetal deaths, especially at low socioeconomic levels and in low- and middle-income countries where women often continue performing physically demanding labor during pregnancy, such as collecting water and food and engaging in subsistence agriculture (Chersich et al., 2020). On the other hand, by spending more time within the domestic sphere, women and children are more exposed to indoor air pollution and consequent respiratory diseases (WHO, 2023c). According to data on 31 countries in the region (WHO/PAHO, 2023) it is estimated that 31 out of every 100,000 women died from respiratory diseases in 2019.

Finally, environmental crises can also result in increased school dropout rates for girls, as well as an increase in situations of internal displacement or human mobility (UNHCR, 2022). These situations often have an impact on the incidence and prevalence of child marriage, human trafficking and sexual exploitation, since a reduced adaptive capacity in the face of crises incentivizes negative coping strategies such as these (UNFPA, 2021). Finally, for LAC, a region with high rates of violence against women, it is important to note that sexual and gender-based violence has been found to increase both during and after disasters (UNEP, 2020; UNHCR, 2022).

For women in all their diversity, inequalities are a major factor in increasing risk and decreasing resilience to the multiple environmental crises (see Figure 4).

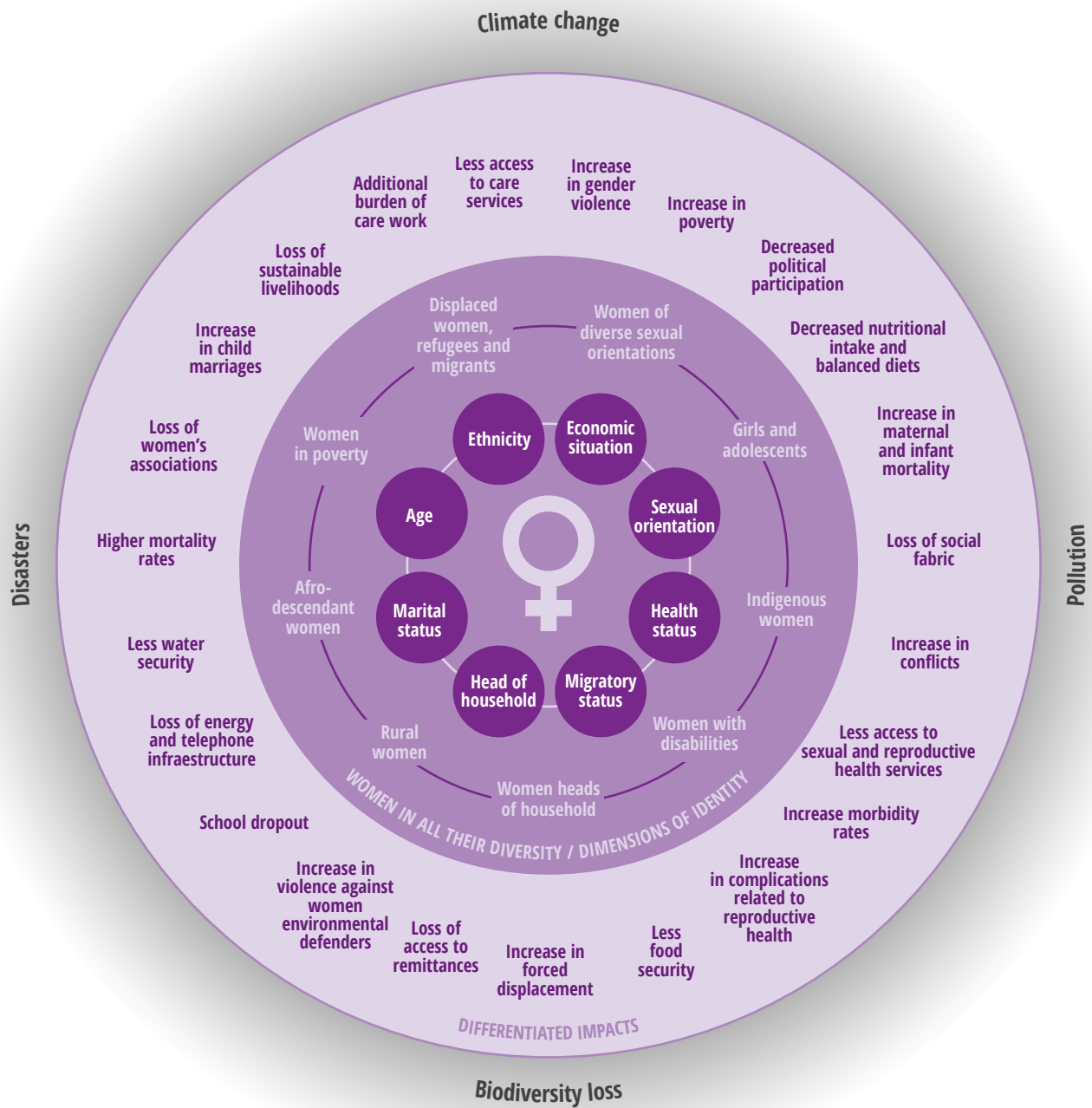
**Figure 4: Vulnerability to the Multiple Environmental Crises**



Source: Adapted from Castellanos et al. (2022) AR6 Climate Change 2022 - Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability.

It must be emphasized that women are not inherently vulnerable to environmental shocks because of their biological sex, but that the differentiated impacts experienced stem from the intersection of different dimensions of inequality experienced by women in all their diversity (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Cloud of differentiated impacts on women in all their diversity



Source: Own elaboration by UNEP for the Gender Profile.

Finally, it is relevant to highlight that the transition to a net-zero emissions future offers significant opportunities for job creation. A study by the IDB and the ILO (2020) finds that, with appropriate policies, the transition to green economies in Latin America could create up to 22.5 million jobs in the region. However, an uneven increase is predicted, with 18.5 million new jobs in male-dominated sectors and only 4 million in traditionally female-dominated sectors. If these patterns of job segregation persist, women may face challenges in accessing the employment opportunities generated by decarbonization initiatives (ILO and European Commission 2023). It is therefore imperative to promote a Just Transition agenda.

### Women's contributions to solutions for the multiple environmental crises and resilience

Despite the disproportionate impacts that women may suffer, it is essential to recognize and value their contributions as agents of change, environmental custodians and sources of transformative solutions to the multiple environmental crises.

Many women in LAC have differentiated knowledge that comes from their direct interaction with the environment and from their traditional or ancestral knowledge and practices. This is particularly the case for indigenous women, for whom there is a profound relationship between their identity, culture and physical survival and the preservation of their ancestral lands (IACHR, 2017; UN Women, 2023a). Therefore, in some cases, women may perceive environmental protection as an extension of their responsibility for the care of their family and community (UN Women, 2023a). It is important to recognize that this may exacerbate the care overload they already experience. Recognizing and valuing the essential contribution of women, and in particular indigenous women, in the preservation of biodiversity and the sustainable management of natural resources (UNDP, 2018a), as well as ensuring that they are able to define their own priorities in the development process, is crucial to ensure the effective and sustainable management of the environment (ILO and European Commission, 2023).

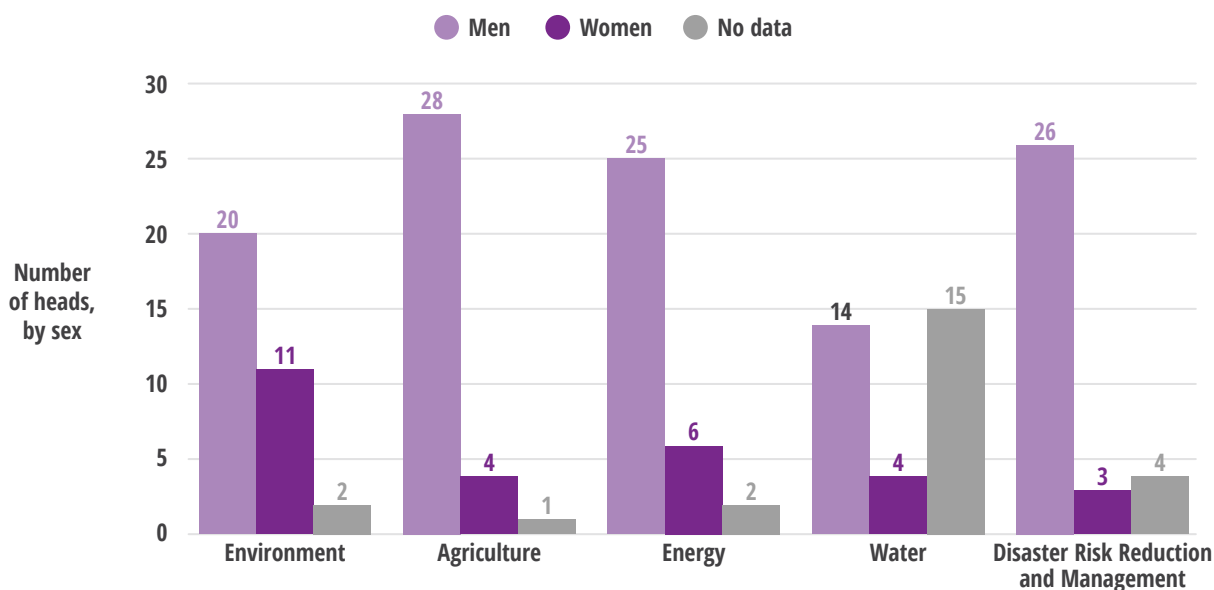
It is important to note that, environmental defenders play a key role in protecting the environment in Latin America and the Caribbean, yet they experience serious threats to their lives and safety. The region ranks first in the world in the murder of people

dedicated to protecting nature. According to the latest available data, 88% (156 out of 177) of the land and environmental defenders killed in 2022 lived in Latin America, and of the 20 women killed that same year, 17 lived in the region. Men represent the majority of those killed. However, women defenders suffer from specific threats such as criminalization, intimidation, sexual assault, and threats to the safety of their families (Global Witness, 2023). There is a correlation between gender-based violence and environmental violence, where gender-based violence is disproportionately used against women environmental defenders to silence them and suppress their power and authority as leaders.

Despite the active participation of women in the protection of environmental and human rights, their voices are often not represented at the same level as those of men in environmental decision-making. In fact, in the public sector worldwide, the environment is one of the sectors with the lowest participation of women (ILO 2023b, UNDP and University of Pittsburgh, 2021). In LAC, women represent about 42% of the people employed in public institutions for environmental protection, a smaller disparity than in other regions (UNDP and University of Pittsburgh, 2021).

An in-depth analysis of regional data, carried out by UNEP for this Gender Profile, reveals that women continue to be underrepresented in decision-making positions, with significant discrepancies between sectors (see figure 9). Environmental ministries or top environmental entities exhibit the highest representation of women, with women holding 35% of the positions. Conversely, entities responsible for disaster risk management show the most pronounced inequality, with only 10% of institutions led by women at the highest level. In the ministries or entities in charge of agriculture, energy, and water, women represent 12%, 19% and 22% of highest-level decision makers, respectively. Comparable data on the racial or ethnic backgrounds of women in these positions is unavailable.

**Graph 9: Gender distribution of the heads of ministries or similar entities in Latin America and the Caribbean, in charge of five sectors related to the multiple environmental crises (as of January 2024).<sup>9</sup>**



Source: own elaboration by UNEP based on latest available data and cabinets in effect as of January 2024.

These results confirm the urgency of increasing the participation and leadership of women, especially Indigenous and Afro-descendant women, in decision-making processes, as well as in discussion forums and negotiation processes related to environmental crises, resilience, and a just transition. The limited presence of women in these areas, both at national and international level, hinders the identification of their needs and the inclusion of their proposals in the formulation of policy and agreements.

### 4.3 Prosperity

The pursuit of prosperity means ensuring that every person has access to a prosperous life, while advancing economic, social and technological development in harmony with nature. As we approach the fourth year since the pandemic began, this section takes a closer look at the region’s macroeconomic landscape and the persistent gender labor gaps, which, despite some progress, remain alarmingly high. At the same time, the region faces a human mobility crisis that is unprecedented in complexity and scale, with increasing numbers of women and girls affected. In this context, an intersectional analysis is undertaken to understand the multiple variables of vulnerability and privilege.



## Decent work and economic growth

During 2022 and 2023, the world economy grew by 3.5 and 3.0% respectively, driven mainly by growth in emerging and developing economies, which grew by 4%, compared to 1.5% in 2023 in advanced economies (ECLAC, 2023c). In the case of the LAC economies, these continued with the recovery initiated in the post-pandemic period, albeit at declining rates with growth of 3.9 % in 2022 compared to the 7 % recorded in 2021 (ECLAC, 2023c).

By 2023, the global context of high inflation and low dynamism in the level of international activity and trade appear as macroeconomic determinants of growth in LAC. In this sense, it is expected that the macroeconomic space that is configured for the region will be characterized by low economic growth rates, limited fiscal space, high inflation rates, high levels of indebtedness and less liquidity in international financial markets.

Along these lines, projections for 2023 point to growth in LAC of between 2.2% (ECLAC) and 2.3% (IMF). For 2024, a low GDP growth dynamic of 1.9 % is foreseen. Estimates by sub-region indicate that all sub-regions would grow less than in 2023: South America would grow by 1.4 % (compared to 1.5 % in 2023 and 3.8 % in 2022); Central America and Mexico by 2.7 % (compared to 3.5 % in 2023 and 4.1 % in 2022); and the Caribbean (excluding Guyana) by 2.6 % (compared to 3.4 % in 2023 and 6.4 % in 2022). (ECLAC, 2023c).

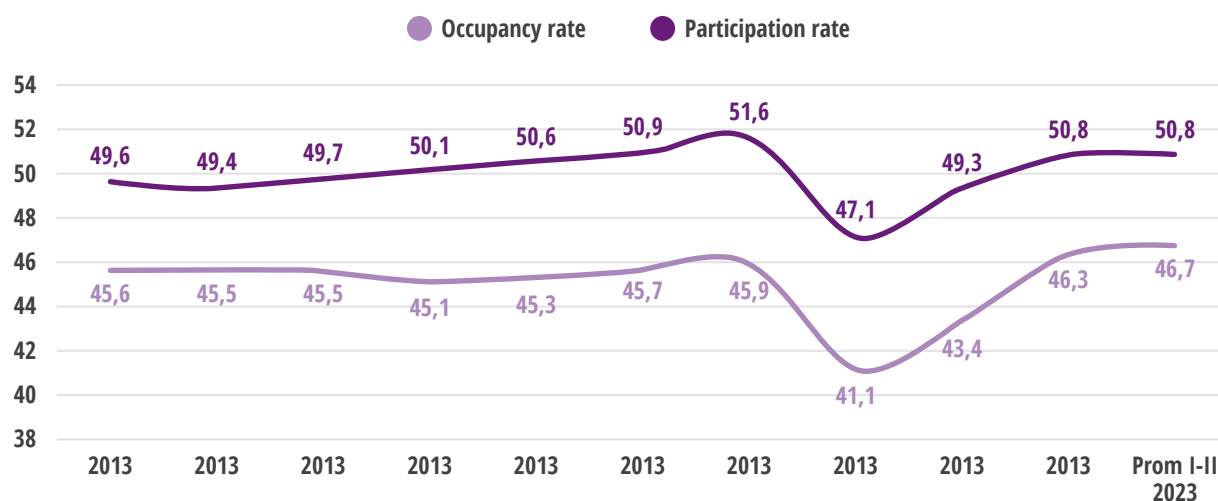
### The dynamics of the labor market in Latin America and the Caribbean

Almost four years after the COVID-19 pandemic, the region as a whole shows recovery in employment and unemployment rates (more pronounced in urban areas) in 2023, but an insufficient recovery in the participation rate. A comparison of the averages of the first three quarters of 2022 with those of 2023 shows a reduction in the unemployment rate from 7.4 % to 6.5 %, accompanied by an increase in the employment rate from 57.9 % to 58.2 %. The participation rate, however, rose from 62.5 % to 62.3 % and still remains slightly below pre-pandemic levels (-1 percentage point) (ILO, 2023a).

However, while the region has not fully recovered to pre-pandemic rates, it has seen a small narrowing of the gender gap, largely due to a slightly stronger recovery for women, who, after suffering the impacts of the pandemic in labor markets to a greater extent, have returned to previous labor force participation rates. The employment rate for women increased by 23% between the second quarter of 2020 and the second quarter of 2023, while for men the increase was 17%. Similarly, the recovery in the labor supply of women was also stronger than that of men (16.2 and 10.8 per cent, respectively) (ILO, 2023a).

However, despite some progress, gender gaps in employment are persistent and remain very high. In the second quarter of 2023, the labor participation rate for women in the region was 51 per cent, 23 percentage points lower than that of men (74 per cent), while the employment rate for women was 47 per cent, 22.5 percentage points lower than that of men (69.6 per cent). The unemployment rate was 7.6 per cent and 5.6 per cent, respectively (ILO, 2023a).

**Figure 10: Evolution of the employment rate and economic participation rate of women in Latin America and the Caribbean (16 countries). 2013-2023**



Source: ILO (2023a).

On the other hand, although all countries in the region recovered the total volume of hours worked before the pandemic, there are also signs of a slowdown, and even declines by the end of 2023, particularly in the domestic service sector. Available

data reveals a reduction in average weekly hours in domestic service relative to pre-pandemic levels in 9 out of 11 countries. In some countries these contractions have been particularly significant, in the order of eight to ten per cent, which partly explains why certain women, particularly those facing additional challenges arising from the intersection of gender and other forms of exclusion, have been left behind in the post-pandemic employment recovery phase (ILO, 2023a).

In addition, the jobs that women have access to continue to be less productive and with worse conditions than those accessed by their male counterparts, in part, as described previously, due to the greater time women spend on domestic and unpaid care activities compared to men. Time-use surveys show that women's increasing participation in the labor market has not been matched by men's increased participation in unpaid domestic and care work within the household (ECLAC, 2023c).

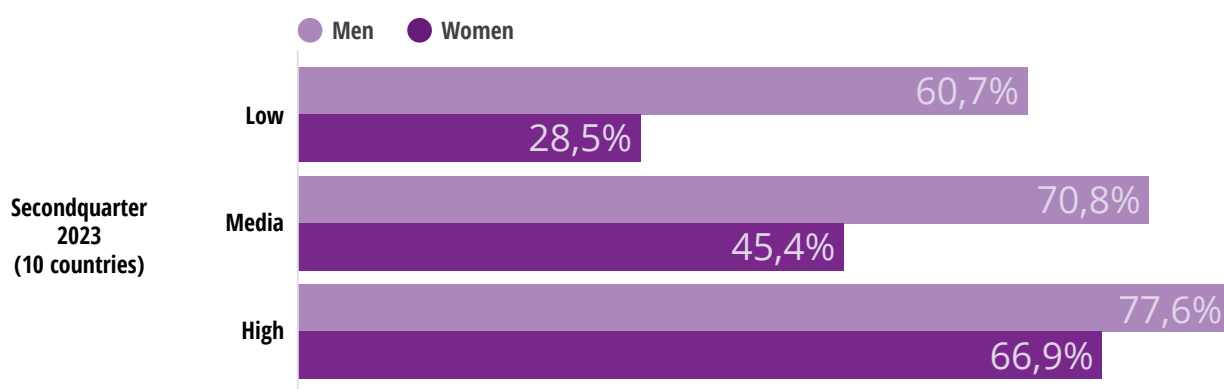
### Composition of the labor market

A regional comparison between the averages of the first two quarters of 2023 and the same periods of 2022, reveals a greater dynamism of salaried employment, with an average increase of 3.5%, compared to an increase of only 0.3 % in non-salaried employment. These developments also differed at the sectoral level. In particular, with the exception of employment in agriculture and construction, all other sectors showed positive variations between 2022 and 2023, particularly in the transport sector, financial services and health services. At the other extreme is employment in domestic services, a sector in which employment clearly lags behind compared to other sectors (ILO, 2023a).

The different speed of recovery of sectors of employment has a direct impact on women's employment opportunities compared to men's. In particular, the domestic service sector accounts for around 10% of women's employment in the region, while construction accounts for a similar percentage of men's employment. Both proportions increase significantly among women and men with lower levels of education. Transport and financial services, in turn, account for a higher share of employment among men than among women. This would partially explain why women with lower levels of education are the group with the largest employment gaps compared to the pre-pandemic situation, even when compared to men with the same level of education (ILO, 2023a).

Thus, the aggregate evolution of employment by gender, averages divergent dynamics within each group according to the educational level of workers. Thus, at the regional level, the employment rate of men with a university level is 11 percentage points higher than that of women with the same level of education. However, the gender gap is even wider at lower levels of education, reaching 32 percentage points. Overall, the employment rate of males with the highest qualifications (78%) is 49 percentage points higher than that of women with low-education levels (29 per cent) (ILO, 2023a).

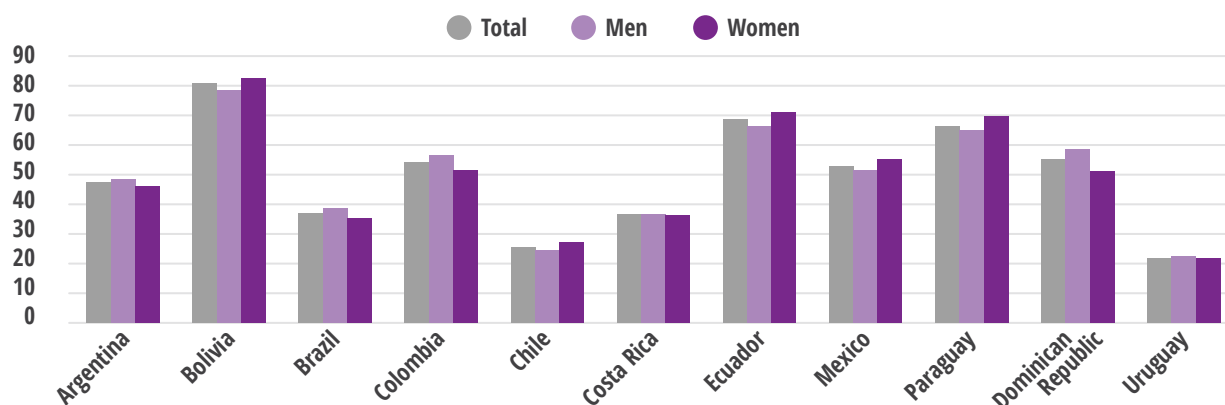
**Figure 6: Employment rate in Latin America and the Caribbean, by gender and educational level**



Source: ILO (2023a)

On the other hand, as noted previously, the sectors of the care economy that are highly feminized in the region, present important gender gaps in labor income (ECLAC, 2022c), as they are driven by a growth of informal employment in most countries. In 5 of 11 countries in the region, the rate of informality in the second/third quarter of 2023 was similar or even higher than that observed in the fourth quarter of 2019. In mid-2023, the rate of informality in the region (using an average of 11 countries) was 48%. In most countries with high levels of informality, informality is even higher among women, reaching 80.84 per cent, than among men (ILO, 2023a).

**Graph 11: Total labor informality rate and by gender in selected countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Second quarter 2023.**



Source: ILO (2023a).

### The evolution of household income inequality

The dynamics of labor income in total household income largely determine the evolution of poverty and extreme poverty. In this regard, it should be noted that, despite the positive trend in most countries in the region, total real labor income in the second quarter of 2023 had not exceeded values registered at the end of 2019 (ILO, 2023a).

The region also continues to experience a high gender pay gap of around 20% (ILO, 2023a). The greater likelihood of being outside the labor market and the education cycle, of working informally or part-time, as well as the persistence of strong vertical and horizontal segregation that limits women’s access to high-ranking positions, explain this gap.

The most pronounced gaps are identified among lower-income workers, probably as a result of the higher incidence of informality among women in this group, as well as of self-employment, which could be related to the fact that many women enter the labor market as secondary workers through this form of employment to manage their schedules and facilitate the combination of paid and unpaid work.

The disparity in the allocation of family responsibilities and the risks associated with the maternity penalty have an impact on women’s labor income. While women with

children work 24% less than men and women without children and choose different occupations and sectors than men (Goldin, 2014), for men with children there is often a paternity bonus that exacerbates gender wage gaps (Weeden et al., 2016). Moreover, some studies in the region reveal that the probability of having an informal job for women almost doubles after the first child is born, with subsequent costs in terms of social protection, wages and skill accumulation (Berniell, et al, 2019).

## Human mobility

The region faces a human mobility crisis unprecedented in complexity and scale. In recent years, the number of people on the move in LAC has increased significantly, reaching an estimated 73.5 million international migrants (IOM, 2024a) and 22.1 million people forcibly displaced, in need of international protection, or in need of humanitarian assistance (UNHCR, 2024).

In addition, in recent years there is also a growing number of women and girls in contexts of migration, forced displacement and taking part in mixed movements in the region. Of the number of international migrants in the Americas, it is estimated that women represent 51.3 per cent (IOM, 2022); and of the population in contexts of forced displacement, approximately 46 per cent, almost 10 million, are women, adolescent girls and girls (UNHCR, 2023).<sup>10</sup> Moreover, according to available data, of the total of 520,085 persons in contexts of mixed movements, approximately 46%, almost 10 million, are women and girls (UNHCR, 2023). In contexts of mixed movements who crossed the Darién jungle in 2023, 26% were women and 10% girls (Government of Panama, 2023).

It should be noted, however, that there is a general lack of data on women and girls in mobility, which has implications for global migration governance, as well as for migrant and refugee women themselves. The lack of data, for example, makes it difficult to recognize and visibilize women's contributions to the economies of countries of origin and destination and hinders the protection of their rights (IOM, 2024b).

The factors that motivate human mobility and in particular women's mobility are multidimensional, and include family reunification, the search for job opportunities, insecurity, persecution, violence in all its forms - especially gender-based violence - ,

inequality, human rights violations and the deterioration of law and order, as well as the increasing impact of climate change and environmental degradation. These variables can generate temporary or permanent movements.

The profiles of women, adolescent girls and girls in situations of human mobility in the region are also diverse - women moving alone or accompanied by their families; pregnant or breastfeeding; of different educational levels and socio-economic status; as well as women who move regularly or irregularly. The experience of human mobility can be both empowering and disempowering for women and girls, depending on individual, family, social, community and structural variables.

Nevertheless, while the experiences of women, adolescent girls and girls in contexts of human mobility are heterogeneous, it is recognized that in contexts of humanitarian crises, gender inequality gaps and the risk of gender-based violence increase significantly. In addition, intersectional discrimination variables may place women and girls with disabilities, indigenous women and girls, Afro-descendant women and girls, and those with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sexual characteristics at greater risk. An intersectional analysis is therefore essential to recognize the various variables of vulnerability and/or privilege, as well as the specific situations of risk and need for protection of women in mobility (Spotlight Programme, 2021).

### Gender inequality gaps in the context of human mobility

Despite the lack of gender-sensitive data on the experiences and disparities experienced by women and girls at all stages of human mobility, it is known that the gender inequality, discrimination and xenophobia faced by refugee and migrant women represent a major barrier to their full participation in economic, political and social life, as well for the full enjoyment of their human rights.

Living conditions for many of these women are extremely precarious, not only during their travel routes, but also in the countries of destination as a result of the already described overburden of unpaid domestic and care work, which also affects refugee and migrant women alike, as well as the persistent gendered barriers to employment and income generation (R4V, 2023). This situation is often exacerbated by the lack of

documentation and legal identity and the difficulty in completing other administrative procedures, including for the recognition of educational qualifications.

From the surveys conducted with women in transit using the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) in Costa Rica, Panama, Guatemala, Mexico and Honduras during the period of October 2022 to January 2024, the main needs of migrant women that were identified are: access to food, income generation, safe shelters, medical assistance, transportation, protection - security and legal assistance. On the other hand, 71% of the pregnant women interviewed mentioned not receiving any type of perinatal care and 53% did not receive any type of maternal and childcare services during their transit from Panama to Mexico (IOM, 2024b).

Moreover, according to a regional survey of over a thousand women in contexts of mobility, approximately half were in an irregular situation in the country of destination, and one in two women worked outside the home, 92% of whom did so informally (UNHCR and HIAS, 2022). Data from the Inter-American Development Bank (2023) also show that female migrants are more likely to be unemployed (10 out of every 100) than male migrants (5 out of every 100), while globally it is estimated that only 22% of women workers in contexts of human mobility have social protection (UN Women, 2021a).

At the national level, in Brazil, the unemployment rate of refugee and migrant women is 54%, more than double than that of men at 24%. In Paraguay, 64% of women work in the informal sector, compared to 57% of men. On the other hand, in Peru, there is a significant wage gap between refugee and migrant women who earn on average 1,000 Peruvian soles per month, compared to an average 1,299 soles earned by men (R4V, 2023). Similarly, in Colombia, the unemployment rate for Venezuelan women reached 17.2 percent in February 2023 (DANE, 2023).

In addition, it is estimated that many women in contexts of human mobility are engaged in care work, which is often not adequately recognised and does not have fair pay and social security coverage. According to UN Women (2021a), 74% of women in contexts of mobility, work in the care sector of which 40% were overqualified for the position they held. Often these women, who have often been forced to separate from their families and community support networks, also have to delegate the care



of their own families to other women, creating “global care chains”, that have already been mentioned previously (UN Women, ILO and ECLAC, 2020).

Migrant and refugee women, in this context of the naturalization of the feminization of domestic and care work, find in these activities the employment niche that is most available to them and which they are willing to accept despite the poor conditions of employment offered, either because they are unaware of their labor rights or because of their irregular administrative situation, with the sole incentive of having an income that allows them to cover for their own and their family’s basic needs. This sector is the fastest insertion mechanism for migrant women in the countries where they arrive, a situation that is explained by the care deficit in host countries and by the unjust and discriminatory social organization that assigns care work as something exclusive and natural to women (IOM and UN Women, 2023).

Moreover, particularly in Caribbean countries and in countries such as Ecuador, Colombia and Peru, discrimination based on gender and nationality results in “hypersexualized” stereotypes of Venezuelan women (including transgender women), leading to them being denied other forms of employment that push them to resort to risky coping mechanisms, such as the exchange and sale of sex, or exposes them to sexual exploitation (R4V, 2023). Throughout the region, transgender and intersex women in contexts of mobility face additional challenges in finding employment, as they are discriminated against on the basis of their gender identity and sexual characteristics.

Finally, although a problem that has not been documented enough to date, the exclusion of adolescent girls and women in contexts of human mobility from school education is also identified as a barrier in different countries in the region. According to UNHCR’s Global Education Report (2023), the school enrolment rate of refugee children and adolescent girls in the region is generally low. In Costa Rica, for example, only 67% of adolescent refugees are identified as attending secondary education. Inequalities in access to education affect girls and adolescent girls to a greater extent, who also face the burden of domestic work from an early age.

## Exacerbated risks of gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is one of the main drivers of forced displacement and one of the greatest risks faced by women and girls during displacement. Globally, it is estimated that, in contexts of humanitarian crises and armed conflict, 1 in 5 women have experienced sexual violence<sup>11</sup>.

In the region, gender-based violence remains one of the main reasons why women leave their communities and countries. According to official data, in Honduras a total of 380 cases of femicide were registered in 2023 (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras, 2024), and between 2017 and 2023, there were 238 violent deaths of LGBTIQ+ people (Red Lésbica Cattrachas, 2024). In Honduras, girls and young women are forcibly recruited and used to transport drugs and weapons, and are at high risk of experiencing sexual violence as they are harassed and forced to be partners with members of criminal groups. In addition, LGBTIQ+ people suffer physical assaults, sexual violence and are expelled from their communities due to discrimination perpetrated by people linked to criminal groups who use their power and influence. In countries such as Ecuador, Colombia, Honduras and Guatemala, women community leaders and human rights defenders are also particularly vulnerable to violence and persecution because of the role they play in their communities.

Also, during their journey, women in mixed movements face the need to resort to dangerous routes due to obstacles and difficulties of obtaining regular mobility and access to asylum processes, stemming from lack of documentation and resources. These often desolate or highly militarized routes, coupled with the lack of institutional presence, make women, adolescent girls and girls more vulnerable to trafficking for sexual exploitation, violence and forced disappearance (UNHCR, UN Women, UNICEF and UNFPA, 2023).

In the face of the growing number of people in contexts of human mobility, and despite efforts by governments of the region and humanitarian actors, reception conditions at the main transit points also continue to be insufficient, exposing women and girls to high risks of exploitation, abuse and sexual violence. Gender-based violence response services remain limited and not necessarily inclusive, which represents a barrier for women and girls on the move who are survivors of gender-based violence to seek assistance.

Similarly, high risks of gender-based violence are also present in the destination country, with 35% of the women surveyed reporting feeling very insecure or insecure in relation to the risk of gender-based violence. Among the main risk factors, xenophobia (31%), lack of economic opportunities (19%) and lack of information about their rights and available services (16%) were cited. Participants also reported perceiving public spaces (54%), the home (21%) and the workplace (10%) as the most dangerous places (UNHCR and HIAS, 2022). Additionally, the World Bank (2021) has identified that in contexts of displacement the risk of experiencing intimate partner violence increases by 20%.

## 4.4. Peace

This section explores the imperative of promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies in the region, free from fear and violence. It starts from the recognition that sustainable development cannot thrive without peace, and vice versa. On the one hand, it examines gender-based violence, stigma and stereotypes, along with their impact on the region, highlighting the challenges in transforming gendered social norms and the crucial importance of participation, accountability and democratic institutions with a gender perspective. It also highlights the existence of internal conflicts in the region and the urgency of ensuring access to justice for women, as well as accountability for gender-based crimes, as indispensable steps towards peaceful and inclusive societies.

### **Eradicating gender-based violence, stigmas and stereotypes**

Gender-based violence against women and girls is the most pervasive human rights violation in LAC, where it is estimated that an average of two in three women aged 15-49 have been victims of violence and 12% of women have suffered sexual violence, twice the global average of 6% (WHO, 2021a and WHO, 2021b). In 2022, at least 4,050 women in 26 countries in the region were victims of femicide or feminicide, the ultimate expression of gender-based violence (ECLAC, 2023f).

However, gender-based violence is not a phenomenon exclusive to some countries or regions. It is a global phenomenon, and the result of a patriarchal culture founded on structural discrimination and unequal power relations between men and women, aggravated by various forms of oppression, such as racism and discrimination based on race, disability, origin, age and sexual orientation, among others. It is therefore

necessary to understand that the intersections of different forms of discrimination that bring the problem of gender-based violence to even more complex dimensions, deepening already existing inequalities.

In Brazil, for example, Afro-Brazilian women (pretas and pardas) are the majority of victims of femicide or feminicide, and the ones who die the most from unsafe abortions, because of the multiple and structural discriminations they face as a result of the intersection of gender, race and class (Agência Câmara de Notícias, 2021). Women living with HIV are also more likely to have experienced violence, and those who have experienced violence are more likely to have been infected with HIV (UNAIDS, 2009). Meanwhile, for women and girls with disabilities, an analysis of available data reveals that they are three times more likely to experience physical violence, sexual violence and psychological violence compared to women and girls without disabilities (UNFPA and Humanity & Inclusion, 2021). Disaggregating by type of violence, women with disabilities are up to ten times more likely to experience sexual violence – with figures reaching between 40 and 68% of young women with disabilities before the age of 18 (UNFPA and Humanity & Inclusion, 2016).

In addition, it should be noted that there is no time in a woman's life when she is less vulnerable to violence. In the Americas, 21% of young women between the ages of 15 and 24 will have experienced intimate partner violence by the time they reach the age of 25. While 28% of women over the age of 65 report having experienced intimate partner violence (WHO, 2021b).

Moreover, the risk of experiencing violence and harassment at work is particularly pronounced among young women. Available data shows that young women are 5.5% more likely to have experienced violence and psychological harassment at work than their male counterparts, and more than twice as likely to have experienced sexual violence and harassment (ILO, LRF & Gallup, 2022). Women are also victims of a culture that prevents them from occupying certain spaces, such as political and decision-making and leadership positions, and when they do they are often subjected to gender-based violence. Research on women with a public voice in Latin America found that 80% of women in Latin America limited their participation in social media on certain topics due to online violence (Regional Alliance for Free Expression and Information and UN Women, 2022).

In fact, in recent years, as a result of the advancement and spread in the use of technology and media, there has also been a significant increase in gender-based violence in digital spaces. Available data reveals that 73 % of women have experienced some form of online violence and almost 60 % of girls and young women worldwide have been victims of different forms of cyberbullying on social media platforms (MESECVI, 2022a).

Child, early and forced marriages and unions, which affect one in five girls in the region (ECLAC, 2021b) are also a form of gender-based violence. Poverty, structural violence and lack of access to education are among its causes (MESECVI, 2022b), as well as adolescent pregnancy, which in turn is both a cause and consequence of sexual violence, including incestuous sexual violence, rape and early unions. Additionally, lack of information and comprehensive sexuality education, as well as lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services, limits adolescents' options to live their sexuality safely and free of violence.

The consequences of gender-based violence on the well-being and health of women and girls, both in the short and long term, are innumerable. The physical consequences resulting are wide-ranging, from minor bodily injuries to permanent physical damage such as burns, fractures and paraplegia to death. It also has consequences for women's sexual and reproductive health, increasing their risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV and/or having unplanned pregnancies; as well as for their mental health, increasing the likelihood of anxiety and depression or suicidal tendencies. In addition, exposure to violence can increase the risk of smoking, alcohol and drug use, as well as chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer.

However, the consequences are not only borne by the victims and survivors. Violence against women also has detrimental effects on the physical and mental health of their children. Furthermore, growing up in a home where violence against women is present can predispose to violence later in life. Boys who witness gender-based violence as children are more likely to perpetrate violence against their partners as adults, while girls who live in such circumstances are more likely to experience violence in their later relationships.

Gender-based violence also has an impact on society as a whole as a result of direct and indirect costs in terms of lost wages, lost productivity and overburdened health, law enforcement and judicial systems.

### Normative developments at the national level

Currently, 13 countries in the region have comprehensive laws on violence (ECLAC, 2023f). In the year 2000, 65% of the region's 20 countries had legislation specifically addressing domestic violence, by 2021 that number had increased to 97% (30 countries) (World Bank, 2023). On average, countries in the region have adopted 80% of legal frameworks on violence against women (UNICEF, 2023b). In response to the most extreme form of violence against women, 18 countries have enacted legislation criminalizing femicide/feminicide (ECLAC, 2023f). However, in Latin America, only seven countries have legal frameworks and public policies for reparations for children and other dependents of women victims of femicide or feminicide to receive financial compensation and comprehensive care services from the State (ECLAC, 2023).

Over time, states have also developed and adopted legislation to respond to forms of violence that were invisible. By 2021, 22 countries in the region (nine in Central America and the Caribbean) had legislation on sexual harassment in the workplace (World Bank, 2023). Child marriage and early unions are currently prohibited in nine Latin American and two Caribbean countries, in line with international standards. However, 13 countries in the region still allow marriage from the age of 16 with the authorization of parents, legal guardians or a judge (ECLAC, 2021b).

Few are the countries that dedicate significant budgets to effectively implement these normative frameworks. At the national level, resources allocated for policies to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls are generally very low. A review of public expenditures in 35 countries in the Americas and the Caribbean revealed that allocations for this purpose ranged from 0.1 to 1% of the national budget (MESECVI, 2012). The implementation gap of these frameworks represents a culture of impunity for gender-based violence.

It is also important to emphasize the importance of a multi-sectoral response in addressing violence, in which the health sector plays a particularly key role, including for the early

detection of abuse and the provision of immediate and continuous quality care to survivors of violence. A PAHO study (2023e) shows substantial progress in the region in this regard, with 80% of Member States having included violence against women in their health plans or policies and 60% having standard operating procedures, protocols or national guidelines. However, more work needs to be done to strengthen the quality of protocols and align them with the evidence base, to improve early detection procedures and quality data collection, and to strengthen the capacities of health personnel.

### Preventing gender-based violence through the transformation of stigma and stereotypes

Gender-based violence is the extreme expression of patriarchy, a system that, as mentioned previously, establishes the dominance of men over women and all other subjects that do not fit the considered normative standard in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation and other social categories.

From this perspective, understanding that gender-based violence is part of a more complex structure of discrimination against women and girls, eradicating it also requires the eradication of all forms of discrimination, as well as the gender stereotypes and stigmas that underpin them.

Gender stereotypes and gendered social norms, which often normalize discrimination, violence and harmful practices against women are present in all settings- from the home, to schools, to work environments, permeating work, intimate and family relationships. They are so widespread that recent surveys show that up to 90% of the population has at least one prejudice against women, ranging from the belief that men are better business leaders and more right than a woman to a job, to the conviction that it is okay for a man to beat his partner (UNDP, 2023c).

Gender-based violence arises in the context of these harmful gender stereotypes and social norms. Promoting their transformation in all aspects of life contributes directly to the prevention of violence against women and ultimately to advancing gender equality. This will require comprehensive and complementary strategies that seek to empower women and girls; promote non-sexist education; and work with men and boys on positive masculinities.

The strategy of empowering women and girls aims to support the economic, social, psychological and political advancement of women and girls in order to promote their economic independence, improve their relationships and foster equitable gender power relations in households, communities and society. Interventions under this strategy include initiatives to develop women's vocational, financial and life skills; address obstacles to their social, political and economic inclusion, such as unequal inheritance and property rights; and build networks for social and collective action (PAHO and UN Women, 2023).

Meanwhile, promoting non-sexist education is a key and necessary element to eliminate stereotypes and biases that reinforce discriminatory norms, and to promote respectful relationships from an early age. Likewise, working with men and boys to deconstruct masculinities is fundamental to promote their active participation in the transformation of social norms, as well as influence the behavior of the people around them, especially other men, whether through the role they play in families, at work, as bystanders or in various positions of power they hold in society.

## **Participation, accountability and gender-responsive democratic institutions**

As already mentioned, gendered social norms that limit women's choices and opportunities, by regulating their behavior and setting restrictions on what they are expected to do and be, remain in place and - in some cases - have been reinforced.

The difficulty of making progress in the transformation of gendered social norms is taking place in the midst of a human development and governance crisis. The growing number of crises and changes affecting the world and the region, such as pandemics, climate change and the consequences of protracted conflicts, demonstrates that global governance has failed to ensure peace and security, making it necessary to reshape the current system to respond to the growing challenges.

Recent analyses also confirm the increase in disaffection with democracy, which is expressed in *"the low support for democracy, the increase in indifference to the type of regime, the preference and attitudes in favor of authoritarianism, the collapse of the performance of governments and the image of political parties. Democracy in several*



*countries is in a critical state, while others no longer have democracy"* (Corporación Latinobarómetro, 2023). In 2023, only 48% of the population supports democracy in the region, this figure is down 15 percentage points from the 63% registered in 2010. In 12 countries of the region, indifference between democratic and non-democratic regimes increased (peak of 28% in 2023). Less than a third of Latin American citizens are satisfied with democracy (28% in 2023) and 77% think that political parties do not work well and do not respond to the urgent demands of the population (Corporación Latinobarómetro, 2023).

The perceived shortcomings of democracy in producing the goods and services demanded by the population, together with corruption, personalism and the use of power for purposes other than the common good, have contributed to a context of increasing democratic backsliding, disinformation and polarization. This is of particular relevance, considering the interdependence between human rights, democracy and the rule of law (United Nations, 2021), as well as the state of democracy as a framework for the exercise of women's political rights (Llanos, 2019). In recent years, Latin American democracy has been *"the most favorable scenario so far for the advancement (not without resistance, attempts to roll back and pending challenges) of various aspects of women's political rights"* (UN Women, 2021b).

However, in the last decade the region has seen the emergence of trends that seek to roll back rights, together with opposition and threats to the achievements of gender equality policies. Additionally, the region has experienced an increase in violence against women in political and public life and, although 13 countries recognize this form of violence in their regulations and six of them have adopted specific laws, the prevention, protection and effective punishment of political violence against women continues to be a challenge.

There will be no democracy without gender equality. *"Without effective governance and strong institutions that guarantee women and girls the full enjoyment of their rights, including the right to live a life free of violence and discrimination, it will be impossible to regain confidence in democracy in the region"* (Vaeza and Muschett, 2023).

Effective governance means *"thinking about and supporting democratic governance processes that allow for (i) the generation of opportunities for socio-economic development*

*and meaningful participation; (ii) opportunities for institutional transformations and greater efficiency in the response to citizen demands; and (iii) better opportunities for peaceful coexistence and citizen security” (UNDP, 2021b).*

Placing gender equality and non-discrimination at the center of public policy actions and decision-making remains key to expanding people’s choices, the effective enjoyment of their human rights, and achieving a just and sustainable region and world, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, leaving no one behind.

### Women’s political participation

In 1991, Argentina passed the first legislation in the region that stipulated that at least 30% of the candidatures presented by political parties in national elections should be filled by women. After this historic “Women’s Quota Law” and in accordance with obligations assumed in the CEDAW Convention (art. 4 on temporary special measures), most Latin American countries followed this model, ensuring minimum percentages of women’s participation in electoral lists (UN Women, 2023b).

As a result of these measures, women have entered politics in greater numbers than ever before and their influence in high-level decision-making positions has been increasing. Women parliamentarians account for 35.8% of seats at the regional level, although ten countries still do not reach 20% representation of women in parliaments (ECLAC, 2023g); and, in the Americas region, only seven women preside over legislative assemblies (UN Women and IPU, 2023). Nine countries currently have electoral legislation that includes parity and nine others have quotas that call for a gender representation ranging from between 20% and 40% in electoral candidatures (ECLAC, 2023g).

Progress is not homogeneous however: there are large disparities between countries<sup>12</sup> and significant challenges persist for the full political participation of indigenous, rural, Afro-descendant, young, mobile and disabled women, LGBTIQ+ women, among others, as well as between levels of government - only seven exceed 15% female participation in the municipal executive branch (ECLAC, 2024). At the deliberative level, women hold 27.2% of local government seats in the region (UN Women, 2023c). Women ministers represent 28.7% in Latin America and 26.6% in the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2023g), and

women's participation is mostly concentrated in portfolios linked to gender equality, children, family, social affairs and human rights, while men lead the economic and defense portfolios (UN Women, 2023c).

Women continue to be underrepresented (UN Women and IPU, 2023), which impacts - in all aspects - the possibilities for the development of laws, policies and mechanisms that can concretely contribute to closing gaps and to guarantee the full and effective exercise of women's human rights. In response to the persistence of this situation, the UN Committee which oversees the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), is drafting a General Recommendation to provide guidance to States Parties on how to achieve equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems in both the public and private sectors.

Progress in the region in these areas requires strong parity legislation and the strengthening of implementation and sanction mechanisms, as well as guaranteeing the conditions that make it effective, including: a comprehensive approach to gender-based violence in politics; the promotion of co-responsibility and the promotion of comprehensive care systems; and equal funding for male and female candidates.

### Institutionality for gender equality

Although in 60% of Latin American countries and 13% of Caribbean countries there is a high-level national mechanism for the advancement of women to lead and coordinate gender equality policies, these have limited capacity to dialogue with and influence the state apparatus as a whole. Budget data from 2022 for four Latin American countries with a Ministry of Women's Affairs show that these institutions represent only 0.18% of the total national budget for the executive branch (IDB, 2022).

While it is true that the gender architecture has been underpinned by the proliferation of gender units in the institutions of different sectors, including national congresses (Congress of the Argentine Nation, 2020 and 2021), their regulatory norms do not clearly mandate their functions, nor do they give indications on the positions they should occupy in institutional organizational charts in order to carry out their work efficiently (UNDP, 2018b). It should also be noted that, although various experiences

at the national, subnational and local levels stand out, until 2021 only 13% of the countries in the region had systems in place to monitor budget allocations for gender equality (United Nations, 2022).

The year 2025 marks the 50th anniversary of the First World Conference on Women, the 30th anniversary of the historic and progressive global agreement in Beijing and the 35th anniversary of the first women's quota law in the region. It is a timely moment to map progress, identify persistent and emerging challenges, and define appropriate strategies for renewed commitments towards gender equality and parity democracy.

Parity democracy refers to the model of democracy in which substantive equality and parity between men and women are the backbone of the transformations that a responsible and inclusive state assumes. Its main objectives are to establish a) a new social contract and form of organization of society that seeks to eradicate all structural exclusion, particularly of women and girls; and b) a new social balance between men and women in which both have shared responsibilities in all spheres of public and private life. As the Regulatory Framework for Strengthening Parity Democracy points out, *"this is a comprehensive concept that transcends the merely political. This is not a women's issue, or even a gender issue, but an opportunity to decide on the model of state we want for our region"* (UN Women and Parlatino, 2015).

## **Peaceful and Inclusive Societies**

A peaceful and inclusive society is distinguished by the manifestation of fundamental characteristics and practices that nurture social justice, peaceful conflict resolution and citizen security.

### **Armed conflict**

Armed conflict, whether internal or external in nature, has a disproportionate impact on the lives of women, especially on women who face multiple forms of discrimination, exacerbating their vulnerability. In the LAC region, the existence of internal and external conflicts, which are no less violent, generate risks that particularly affect women and girls.

Firstly, sexual violence against women and girls emerges as a brutal tactic of warfare, especially targeting the most fragile groups, disproportionately affecting women from rural, indigenous and Afro-descendant populations. Secondly, the forced recruitment of girls and adolescents involves not only their participation as combatants, but also greater exposure to gender-based violence. Furthermore, within the dynamics of these groups, the imposition of unwanted pregnancies or their forced interruption, as well as the use of contraceptive methods, is also observed, compromising women's sexual and reproductive health. Women combatants or those deprived of their liberty for issues linked to armed conflict, however, do not receive adequate rehabilitation and gender-sensitive remedies and counselling to prepare them for release or for life after incarceration. They therefore often face significant challenges in their reintegration and social reinsertion into the community.

In addition, armed conflict often results in the forced displacement of the population, which, as previously noted, entails exacerbated dangers and risks for women and girls. In Colombia, more than 57,000 women have been victims of forced displacement, particularly in rural areas and indigenous communities. Some 15.8% of these women report having been victims of sexual violence (UN Women, 2024).

These differentiated impacts point to the importance of women's active participation in reconciliation processes in Latin America and the Caribbean to ensure inclusive and just peacebuilding processes that comprehensively address entrenched gender inequalities in the region. Women have often been direct and indirect victims of armed conflict, and their inclusion in reconciliation processes not only acknowledges their unique experience, but also brings crucial perspectives to address the underlying causes of conflict. The inclusion of a gender perspective in these processes is therefore not only a matter of equality, but also enriches the collective understanding of the social and political dynamics that have contributed to conflicts. In this sense, the active participation of women in Colombia's reconciliation processes, supported by the integration of a gender approach, has made it possible to address the shocking human rights violations suffered by women during the armed conflict, such as sexual violence and forced displacement. Furthermore, it has underlined the importance of addressing the structural root causes of gender-based violence and promoting equality in the access to resources and opportunities on the path to sustainable reconciliation in Colombia (UN Women, 2024).

Finally, gender training for law enforcement agencies, such as security and police forces, is critical to dismantling stereotypes and eradicating entrenched gender discrimination and violence in conflict. However, in all the countries of the world it is often lacking, and Latin America and the Caribbean is no exception. The lack of awareness raising leads to victims not trusting these institutions and therefore to lower rates of reporting in situations of discrimination and gender-based violence.

### Access to justice

To achieve peaceful and inclusive societies, another fundamental element is ensuring women's access to justice and accountability for gender-based crimes. In Latin America and the Caribbean, numerous obstacles have been identified as significant barriers to women and girls access to justice. These include direct discrimination, threats of violence or direct acts of violence, illiteracy, lack of knowledge of their rights or mobility restrictions. Other conditioning factors include lack of time due to a disproportionately high domestic workloads, limited access to financial resources and difficulties in formal employment and housing, and biases of criminal justice system operators (UN Women, UNDP, UNODC and OHCHR, 2018).

In the judicial context, the existence of Gender Offices has been identified as a good practice to ensure that the judiciary operates as an institution that can ensure equality and equal access to justice. These offices implement policies that integrate gender perspectives into court operations, conduct awareness-raising and training for judicial officials on gender issues, establish gender-sensitive protocols for access to justice, and collect statistics on judicial composition, performance and cases. Often these good practices are not anchored in institutional systems and risk being eliminated with political changes (UNODC, 2019a).

Furthermore, taking measures to ensure equitable and gender-sensitive justice that does not revictimize women is essential to address systemic inequalities, including situations of vulnerability. Legislation is needed to remove barriers to access to justice and to recognize that a gender perspective is central to this process.

Finally, it is crucial to encourage the representation of women in leadership and decision-making roles in law enforcement and justice. The region has seen an increase in women's

representation as Presidents of Supreme, appeal and constitutional Courts, as well as in positions of attorney general, and is one of the world's regions that has made the most progress in recent years towards equal representation. However, it is important to avoid assuming that the presence of women in these roles will automatically lead to more gender-responsive institutions and structural reforms. Despite this caution, research has shown that the proportional increase of women in law enforcement agencies can transform the organizational environment and culture, reducing the prevalence of discrimination against women. However, the lack of awareness at the judicial level and the implementation of effective mechanisms for gender mainstreaming in the judiciary system remains limited in practice (UNODC, 2019b).

### Trafficking in persons

Trafficking in persons, especially in the context of organized crime, is a problem that affects vulnerable communities, especially women and girls who are subjected to physical or extreme violence by traffickers three times more than other victims, while for girls this situation is twice as high as for adults.

Trafficking in persons is a serious crime that occurs in various parts of the world. The extent of the problem can be difficult to determine due to the clandestine nature of these activities and the lack of accurate reporting. In Latin America, despite a downward trend from 72% in 2004 to 42% today, women and girls still represent the majority of victims identified in North and Central America and the Caribbean (UNODC, 2022).

In addition, there are particular factors in the region that increase this risk, such as socio-economic factors, lack of access to education and job opportunities, as well as gender discrimination, which contribute to creating an environment conducive to the exploitation of women through trafficking.

In the region, some countries have been identified as points of origin, transit and destination of trafficking victims, such as Brazil and the Dominican Republic. In the case of other countries such as Colombia, human trafficking has been more closely linked to illegal armed groups and to the fact that women and girls, especially in areas affected by the armed conflict, are vulnerable to being victims. While in countries such

as Mexico, which is both a place of origin and transit for victims, trafficking is associated with organized crime, including drug cartels. In the Central American region, on the other hand, human trafficking is closely linked to human mobility (UNODC, 2022).

In this context, it is essential to monitor the implementation of comprehensive strategies that address the root causes of women's vulnerability. In addition to fostering regional cooperation on the issue, other actions should include strengthening prevention measures, improving access to education and economic opportunities for women, analyzing the effectiveness of existing legal frameworks to prevent, detect and combat trafficking in persons, and ensuring a gender perspective in law enforcement and justice initiatives.

#### 4.5. Alliances, partnerships and financing for development and gender equality

LAC's population is currently facing the effects of multiple overlapping crises that have exacerbated gender inequalities in countries of the region, affecting, as described throughout this report, to a greater extent women who experience multiple forms of discrimination. In addition to this situation, we are witnessing an unprecedented growth in the concentration of economic and political power, a shrinking fiscal space for countries in the presence of high external debts, significant flows of illicit capital and regressive fiscal structures that disproportionately impact on vulnerable populations, especially women (UNDP, 2023d). Latin America continues to be the region with the highest levels of inequality in the world<sup>13</sup> and the region with the least redistributive effect of its fiscal policy (Lustig, 2017).

On the other hand, new forms of work in digital contexts with diffuse taxation rules have brought an exacerbation of wealth concentration and multiple barriers to the collection of public resources that put the sustainability of fiscal systems at risk. It is also worth noting that LAC is the region with the second highest tax losses associated with illicit financial flows after Africa, averaging approximately US\$ 17 billion per year, or 0.7% of regional GDP, when total corporate income tax collection amounts to about 3.1% of GDP (ECLAC, 2016).



In this scenario, it is essential to strengthen the regional financing agenda for gender equality, taking into account that investment in gender equality is a strategic driver for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in its entirety.

### Gender-sensitive taxation in Latin America and the Caribbean

LAC's fiscal agenda faces challenges in terms of both expenditure and financing, with differentiated impacts on women. Firstly, there is a recurrent threat of the austerity paradigm (Rodríguez, 2024), according to which there are increasing levels of public spending, accompanied by marked inefficiencies (IDB, 2018)<sup>14</sup> and high levels of corruption linked to the exercise of public policy (Statista, 2024)<sup>15</sup>. However, evidence shows that the level of public spending in most countries in the region is moderate, in addition to being highly concentrated in some functions such as social protection, education, health and, to a lesser extent, social welfare spending (Podestá, A., 2023)<sup>16</sup>.

On the other hand, funding for public policies and structures for gender equality, such as comprehensive care systems, systems for the prevention and response of gender-based violence (GBV), active labor policies for women, and the institutionalization of women's mechanisms, remains very limited in the region. Public expenditure on gender issues in the region has represented, on average, less than 1% of GDP (Almeida Sánchez, M. D., 2021).

On the financing side, tax structures in LAC are sustained by indirect taxation (consumption taxes) and with a minimal share of taxes on wealth, high income and the concentration of economic assets (ECLAC, 2021c). In general, countries in the region face political pressures to lower tax burdens. However, their current collection systems are insufficient and inefficient in terms of who bears the burden of this taxation (Rodríguez, 2024). These structures are characterized as regressive and affect women to a greater extent, as they absorb higher tax burdens in proportion to their income (Almeida Sánchez, M.D., 2021).

## Progress on financing the gender equality agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean

LAC has made significant progress in addressing the financing agenda for gender equality. One of the most consolidated initiatives is Gender Budgeting (GB), which arises from the realization that public budgets are not gender-neutral, since both the collection of resources and the exercise of public expenditure can contribute to reducing and reversing social inequalities, or they can reaffirm and deepen them by not taking into account the differentiated needs of women and men and of different population and age groups. GBs seek to analyze and transform public budgets so that expenditures and revenues reflect the recognition of differentiated impacts for men and women, generating changes in the collection and distribution of public resources to achieve positive impacts on gender equality (UN Women, 2023).

The Tagged Federal Budget in Mexico in 1997 is one of the first GB initiatives in the region. In the year 2000, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) office for the Andean Region initiated a programme to support Andean experiences that was later expanded and transformed in 2005 into the regional programme “Gender-Sensitive Budgeting and Citizen Participation: A contribution to democratic governance and gender equality in Latin America”, which supported 28 initiatives. By 2012, 91 initiatives in 17 countries had been identified in the region (UN Women, 2023).

GBs have allowed for a gender analysis of fiscal expenditures, in relation to the destination and potential of these expenditures to positively affect gender inequalities and women’s material living conditions. Expenditure labelling and classification exercises are the most common in the region, providing evidence for advocacy with fiscal departments and ministries of finance at both national and local levels. Another great contribution that the GBs have made is linked to the training of feminist activists and advocacy organizations in budgetary matters, who, by understanding the budget, can advocate for increased resources (Rodríguez, C., 2024).

Although GBs have strengthened the fulfilment of SDG 5 target 5.1.<sup>17</sup>, which measures the efforts of governments to publicly monitor allocations for gender equality throughout the public finance management cycle, they also show room for improvement. Sometimes they are temporary exercises that begin, end and lose their

advocacy capacity (Rodríguez, 2024). It is necessary to consolidate progress with the allocation of powerful public resources, as well as with monitoring and accountability mechanisms (UN Women, 2023). Furthermore, it is important to increase the scope of the analysis of GBs to include the impacts achieved with the resources allocated, the effective execution of resources and the analysis of how public spending as a whole interacts positively or negatively with the existing universe of public policies as a whole.

### **Multi-stakeholder partnerships and innovative financing to leverage capital flows for gender equality**

While national budgets, private sector investment, and national and international financial systems still impact and serve men and women differently, there are financial tools and frameworks that actively seek to address gender gaps and that rely on new partnerships with different actors to promote gender-equitable financing in the region.

Among other initiatives, an integrated national financing framework (INFF) helps countries strengthen planning processes and overcome existing impediments to financing sustainable development and the SDGs at the country level. It sets out the full range of financing sources (domestic and international sources of public and private finance) and enables countries to develop a strategy for scaling up investment, managing risks and achieving sustainable development priorities as identified in the national sustainable development strategy. To ensure that both the global-level methodology and country-level work integrate gender equality into the INFF process, UN Women and UNDP developed a guidance note<sup>18</sup> that provides case examples and entry points for introducing gender analysis into this process. For example, Colombia's INFF builds on the government's previous efforts in gender budget labelling to review, diagnose and propose better ways to channel resources to gender-sensitive projects and programmes.

At the national level, at the different levels of government, coordination between the different agencies involved in the planning and budget cycle is indispensable. Ministries of planning and finance, sectoral ministries, mechanisms for the advancement of women, parliament and civil society all play specific roles in designing, approving, implementing and monitoring public spending for gender equality. Ministries of

Finance (MoFs) are particularly key actors in critical debates, such as those related to financing the SDGs. MoFs have access to privileged information and decision-making that impacts on the rest of the government. Through their influence in the ecosystem of public institutions, they can play a key role as drivers of broader institutional progress towards gender equality (UNDP, 2024).

On the other hand, as part of innovative financing mechanisms for sustainable development, gender impact investments seek to channel non-traditional financing mechanisms, particularly from the private sector to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. In this area, the issuance of gender bonds, as a variant of social bonds, seek to finance specific businesses run or founded by women, or that develop products and/or services for women and promote their leadership. These can, in combination with other thematic instruments, to varying degrees, address gender inequalities. It is worth noting, however, that while there is a growing flow of sustainable and green bond issuance globally, only a negligible amount is gender-targeted. One estimate suggests that only about \$17 billion active are gender-labelled financial products within a global sustainable investment universe of over \$40 trillion (ADB, 2023).

In short, channeling resources towards gender equality requires a public-private financing system that contributes to promoting sustainable development. From the public sphere, these efforts must be based on strengthening revenue collection, the progressivity of the tax structure and the strategic orientation of public spending towards gender equality. This entails the creation of government entities that function effectively, with clear contributions to gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as improving transparency and encouraging citizen participation in fiscal matters.

The concerted effort of multiple actors in the financial and social ecosystems is crucial to promote greater strategic investments in women, more private capital to complement public efforts with innovative financing instruments and investments aimed at breaking down the structural barriers that impede the full exercise of women's rights. All this under the umbrella of a new social and fiscal alliances that integrate the concept of distributive justice and the care society and ensures a stronger connection between financing for gender equality and the broader financing agenda of the 2030 Agenda.

## 5. Conclusions

As part of this document, conclusions of the Regional Gender Profile are presented. They are drawn from research that addresses issues of inequality and how to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Throughout the document, a number of reliable and relevant sources have been used to support the statements and analysis. These sources were carefully selected to provide a solid and verifiable basis for these conclusions, ensuring their reliability and integrity.

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With just a few years to go for the deadline set by the 2030 Agenda, there remains a significant data gap to measure progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, especially with regards to gender equality and women's empowerment. With the available information and from a comprehensive and intersectional gender perspective, the Regional Gender Profile has identified the many challenges facing the region in areas such as extreme poverty, food and nutrition security, education, maternal mortality, access to basic services, economic autonomy and violence against women. In turn, multiple crises, conflicts, climate and human mobility emergencies have exacerbated these challenges, with the most significant impact on women and those population groups that experience various forms of exclusion and discrimination, such as indigenous, Afro-descendant and migrant women. This underscores the need for faster progress and concrete action to address these critical issues and to leave no one behind.

In relation to the implementation of global and regional normative frameworks for gender equality and women's empowerment, LAC has shown progress and setbacks. The ratification of CEDAW by all States in the region represents an important milestone, although challenges persist that have an impact on women's daily lives, with the pervasiveness of legislative frameworks that generate direct or indirect discrimination and insufficient funding for public policies and institutional structures for gender equality. Despite this and the persistence of deep gender inequality gaps in the region, the implementation of gender-sensitive laws and policies has led to important progress in areas such as women's political participation and access to education.

Likewise, the existence of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean for more than 45 years also reflects the continued commitment of

the countries, as well as the feminist movement and networks of indigenous and Afro-descendant organizations, thanks to which this forum has been consolidated. Within this framework, it is worth highlighting the Buenos Aires Commitment, recently adopted in 2022, which proposes the paradigm of the Care Society as a transformative horizon for sustainable development with gender equality.

Moreover, the adoption of regional instruments such as the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women and the development of follow-up mechanisms reflect significant efforts to address gender-based violence. In the area of labor, equality and non-discrimination have been promoted through the ratification and implementation of international conventions and ILO recommendations, while in population and development, agreements such as the Montevideo Consensus have addressed crucial issues such as sexual and reproductive health and the rights of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant women. At the global and regional level, initiatives such as the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, both non-binding instruments, seek to address the challenges of human mobility with a gender perspective.

The interrelationship between gender and environment has also been recognized in international agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Sendai Framework, highlighting the disproportionate impacts of the climate crisis on women and girls and their key role as agents of change for sustainable development, climate action and disaster risk reduction.

Equally important is the analysis of general demographic indicators that set the context for analyzing gender equality issues in the region. In this regard, the Regional Gender Profile notes that LAC has undergone a remarkable demographic transition in the last five decades, moving from high birth and mortality rates to modern patterns with low rates of both. The region is in the third stage of the demographic transition, with fertility declining due to social, economic and cultural changes, such as urbanization, education and an increase in female labor force participation. Mortality rates remain low, although important inequalities persist in mortality and life expectancy of the population influenced by socio-demographic, economic and gender factors.

The main consequence of this phenomenon is the transformation of the age structure, with the region's population in a stage of relatively accelerated ageing, albeit at different rates between countries, with significant implications for public policies and services. In addition, human mobility, especially among the young population, is also key to the demographic dynamics, although LAC is experiencing a negative net migration rate, which means that at the regional level migration does not contribute to population growth, presenting both opportunities and challenges. Thus, there is a need for a comprehensive analysis to understand and anticipate demographic changes in order to strengthen resilience of countries in the region. Achieving this demographic resilience begins with a commitment to not only count the number of people, but also to guarantee opportunities for progress and the removal of barriers that stand in their way.

When analyzing the various gender dimensions related to human development, the data presented in the Regional Gender Profile on poverty and its disproportionate impact on women reveal some trends. In particular, gender inequalities persist in the labor market, where women face a disproportionate burden of unpaid work that limits their economic autonomy and participation on equal terms with their male peers. As a result, women in the region face horizontal segregation, characterized by informality and low-productivity sectors associated with lower levels of education, low wages, low social security coverage and greater job insecurity.

On the other hand, those women who manage to break through in their jobs find it difficult to occupy decision-making positions, impacting on their careers and working conditions, including the existence of recurrent wage gaps. Intersectionality exacerbates the perverse effects of occupational and social exclusion. These inequalities contribute to keeping women in situations of poverty, even when they are employed, pointing to the need for inclusive public policies that comprehensively address gender dimensions in order to achieve substantive equality and sustainable and equitable development.

In the same line of analysis, the Profile provides regional data on violence against women and examines how it negatively impacts on women's health and autonomy, exacerbating the relationship with poverty and women's well-being. This phenomenon takes many forms, including physical, emotional, sexual and economic, limiting women's ability to make decisions and participate in education and work. Child, early



and forced marriages and unions have hardly diminished, disproportionately affecting girls and adolescent girls living in poverty, perpetuating cycles of vulnerability.

Furthermore, despite progress in education for women, gender gaps persist in the acquisition of digital skills and participation in sectors such as science and technology. Disparities in the quality of housing and basic services also impact on the health and well-being of women, who are often relegated to domestic roles and face greater hardship in precarious environments.

Linked to the above, the Profile warns that social protection in LAC faces significant challenges due to gaps in coverage, insufficient benefits and sustainability risks. The persistence of labor informality limits the development of universal contributory systems, while tax policies may hinder the generation of resources for non-contributory programmes. In addition, the demographic transition and aging population put pressure on pension systems, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive care policies.

Women face additional obstacles in accessing contributory social protection because of their increased share of unpaid work, which is reflected in lower levels of old-age coverage and benefits compared to men, and greater vulnerability to poverty and food insecurity. Strategies such as extending social protection to women in the informal sector, closing wage gaps and recognizing care work are crucial to developing universal and equitable social protection systems. In addition, sectors such as paid domestic work have high levels of informality and low social security coverage, requiring reforms to adapt to the characteristics of this type of employment in order to guarantee effective access to social protection.

In relation to unpaid work, evidence indicates that care influences women's educational and employment decisions, being one of the central elements limiting women's participation in the labor market and contributing to the persistence of gender inequality. In addition, the lack of public care services deepens exclusion and poverty, especially for women in low-income households, the so-called "sticky floors", contributing to the persistence of gender inequality. In macroeconomic terms, care work contributes significantly to GDP, but paid care workers, mostly women and migrants, face high levels of informality and job insecurity, particularly in the domestic work sector.

The care crisis is worsening with the aging population and socio-economic changes, highlighting the need to invest in comprehensive care systems to promote gender equality, social well-being and economic growth. This implies recognizing, redistributing and reducing unpaid care work, rewarding decent jobs and ensuring the representation of paid care workers, as well as promoting co-responsibility between the state, the private sector, the community and families. In LAC, several countries are making progress in implementing comprehensive care systems, recognizing care as a fundamental human right and committing to policies that promote gender equality and social well-being. However, in order to make adequate progress, it is crucial to find sustainable financing pathways that ensure universality, equity and intergenerational solidarity in the provision of care services.

Against this backdrop, the Profile points to the global economic dynamics of the years 2022 and 2023, which reflected uneven growth between emerging and developed economies, with a slight slowdown in LAC. The economic context in the region continues to be marked by high inflation rates and limited growth in international trade, so it is expected that the macroeconomic space to be configured for the region will be characterized by low economic growth rates.

On the other hand, despite some progress, gender gaps in employment are persistent and remain very high. Despite the recovery of employment and unemployment rates in 2023, women continue to face less productive jobs and less favorable conditions, influenced by the persistent burden of unpaid care work. Similarly, although all countries in the region recovered the total volume of hours worked before the pandemic, there are also signs of a slowdown and even a fall by the end of 2023, particularly in the domestic service sector, that employs 1 in 9 women in the region's labor force. As a result, the gender gap in labor income remains significant, affecting mainly low-income women and aggravated by the penalization of maternity and the lack of work-life balance policies. This context points to the urgent need to address these structural inequalities in order to move towards decent work and more inclusive economic growth in the region.

Against the backdrop of these inequalities, the data presented in the Profile reveals that food and nutrition insecurity affects men and women disparately, with women facing greater nutritional vulnerability and lack of access to food due to gender gaps

in access to education, employment, and labor and political participation. Women experience higher rates of obesity, anemia and multidimensional poverty, exacerbated by the disproportionate burden of unpaid domestic work and lack of equal access to productive resources such as land and water. Lack of representation in decision-making spaces exacerbates the situation, with additional challenges arising from the intersection of gender with other forms of exclusion. To address these inequalities, measures are needed to promote women's economic empowerment, driven through access to credit, inclusion in social protection programmes and increased co-responsibility for care work, as well as legislative changes to ensure equal rights to property ownership and inheritance.

Likewise, access to modern contraceptive methods and comprehensive sexuality education continue to be challenges, especially for adolescent populations, who face legal, institutional and social barriers to accessing these services. Furthermore, adolescent pregnancy persists as a public health problem, with significant impacts on the health and well-being of young women, exacerbating inequality and reproducing intergenerational cycles of poverty. Unequal access to safe and legal abortion continues to be a problem, with many women facing legal and social restrictions that affect their reproductive health and rights.

Maternal mortality also continues to be a serious public health problem, violating the right to health and life of women, particularly indigenous and Afro-descendant women, as a result of structural discrimination and racism in the provision of health services.

Women and girls with disabilities face significant challenges in accessing health care due to barriers such as stigma, discrimination and lack of inclusive services, resulting in poorer health compared to men with disabilities. Structural discrimination and stereotypes hinder the quality of care and the physical autonomy of these women, exposing them to procedures without their consent and to obstetric and gynecological violence. Furthermore, the lack of systematized data limits the ability to address these inequality gaps and to ensure an inclusive response.

The Profile seeks to highlight how women's health is determined by the intersection of gender inequality and other factors of exclusion, which impact on the social determinants related to women's morbidity and mortality. This is why women,

particularly those from marginalized populations, are particularly vulnerable to communicable diseases such as cervical cancer related to prolonged and persistent infection with human papillomavirus, syphilis or gonorrhoea, and also account for a high percentage of cases of leprosy, tuberculosis and Chagas disease infection. Non-communicable diseases are also strongly related to socio-economic and gender inequalities, with hypertension and cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and cancer being closely related to environment and lifestyle. Moreover, the female population also suffers from higher rates of anxiety disorders and depression compared to their male counterparts.

Secondary education for adolescent girls is key to economic and social development, but the data presented identifies challenges in adolescent girls' schooling in the region, especially in countries such as Guatemala and Honduras. Although a high percentage of adolescent girls complete secondary education, the quality of education is variable, with significant deficiencies in mathematics skills, which impacts on young women's participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields at the tertiary level of education. It is therefore considered imperative to address these gender gaps from an intersectional approach through policies and programmes that promote equitable access to quality education across the region.

Due to the different inequalities discussed in the Profile, as well as their intersection with different dimensions of identity, environmental crises have a disproportionate impact on women and girls. This is especially the case in rural areas where women rely heavily on natural resources for their livelihoods. In addition, the deterioration of natural resources and the environment due to climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and disasters, leads women to face an additional workload in relation to unpaid care work, which in turn disproportionately threatens their food and water security. This vulnerability is compounded by poverty and a lack of access to and decision-making power over land, as well as a lack of access to financial and natural resources. This limits women's ability to cope with crises and may push them to migrate in search of new livelihoods. In addition, women are more susceptible to health problems related to environmental crises, such as malnutrition and respiratory diseases.

Environmental crises can also increase school dropout rates among girls, especially rural, Indigenous and Afro-descendant girls, and exacerbate gender-based violence,

including the incidence and prevalence of child marriage, human trafficking and sexual exploitation, as reduced adaptive capacity in the face of crises encourages such negative coping strategies. Women environmental defenders also experience serious threats to their lives and safety. Finally, women remain underrepresented in environmental decision-making. Recognizing and valuing women's contributions as agents of change, ensuring their participation in decision-making, and integrating them in just transition plans are key steps for addressing the differential impacts of environmental crises and for moving towards a just and sustainable transition.

Human mobility in LAC has reached unprecedented levels, with a significant increase in the number of international migrants and displaced persons, including a notable growth of women and girls in these movements. However, the lack of data disaggregated by gender, as well as by other key dimensions such as ethnicity and race, makes it difficult to fully understand their experiences and needs. Motivations for mobility are diverse and include seeking opportunities, family reunification and fleeing violence and persecution. Migrant and refugee women face multiple challenges, from job insecurity and discrimination to increased risk of gender-based violence, especially in contexts of humanitarian crises. A disproportionate share of domestic and care work, lack of access to basic services such as health care and education, as well as vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking, are recurrent problems faced by women and girls on the move. Despite the efforts of some governments and humanitarian organizations, gaps in adequate protection and support for these women and girls persist, underscoring the urgent need for inclusive policies and programmes that address gender inequalities in the context of human mobility.

The Regional Gender Profile, in turn, appeals to the urgency of promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies in the region, recognizing the interrelationship between sustainable development and peace, as well as the persistent challenges in transforming gendered social norms. The analysis highlights the prevalence of gender-based violence and its multiple manifestations, exacerbated by intersecting discriminations such as age, ethnicity, race, class and disability, highlighting in particular the high prevalence of sexual violence, which is double the global average, as well as the high number of femicide or feminicide in the region. The consequences of gender-based violence on the well-being and health of women and girls, both in the short and long

term, are innumerable, as are the associated direct and indirect costs that impact on society as a whole, undermining efforts to achieve sustainable development.

Against this backdrop, the need to strengthen essential services for women and girl survivors is crucial, including health services, which often represent the first point of contact for women and girl survivors of violence and constitute an important opportunity to identify at-risk groups early and provide them with support. Similarly, strategies to ensure access to justice for women survivors and accountability for gender-based crimes, as well as programmes and interventions to alleviate women's poverty, and to make schools, public spaces and work environments safe, are considered crucial elements in the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence. In addition, the importance of addressing gender stereotypes and social norms that perpetuate discrimination and violence is highlighted, through comprehensive strategies that empower women, promote non-sexist education and work with men and boys to deconstruct traditional masculinities and promote equitable and respectful relationships from an early age.

On the other hand, analyzing political participation from a gender perspective reveals the persistence of gender-based social norms that limit women's opportunities for access to public life and deepens the crisis of human development and governance that affects LAC. An increase in disaffection with democracy and a regression in women's political rights is evident, despite legislative advances such as quota or parity laws. It underlines the importance of effective governance with a gender perspective to guarantee women's rights, and calls for strengthening institutions, promoting women's political participation and guaranteeing equal representation at all levels of government. The analysis also reaffirms the need to invest in effective public policies and mechanisms to close gender gaps and move towards a parity democracy that promotes substantive equality between men and women in all spheres of public and private life.

Another analysis that the Gender Profile identifies as key is how women, especially those facing multiple forms of discriminations, suffer disproportionately from the consequences of armed conflict, including sexual violence, recruitment and forced displacement. It highlights the importance of women's participation in reconciliation processes to address entrenched inequalities in the region and build inclusive peace. In

addition, it analyses the limited access to justice for women, highlighting the importance of implementing measures that remove barriers and promote equitable and gender-sensitive justice. Finally, the Profile emphasizes trafficking in persons, highlighting how socio-economic and gender factors exacerbate the vulnerability of women and girls to recruitment for sexual exploitation, labor and related crimes. It underlines the need to strengthen prevention measures, improve access to education and economic opportunities, and ensure a gender-sensitive approach to law enforcement and justice initiatives to address this serious problem in the region.

In conclusion, the Regional Gender Profile focuses on the importance of adopting a comprehensive gender perspective, with an intersectional approach, in the 5 Ps: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships. To this end, it is essential to create the conditions for all People to develop their potential in a safe and dignified environment, and on equal terms. This will only be possible if we protect the Planet from the multiple environmental crises caused by climate change, considering the differentiated impacts on women and girls in their diversity. In this way, we can achieve Prosperity, which means ensuring that all people, regardless of gender or other variables, have access to a prosperous life, taking into account the different economic and social inequalities faced by women in their diversity. This requires fostering societies that promote Peace, social justice and inclusion, free from fear and violence, where women's equal participation in all spheres of society is guaranteed. Finally, to achieve these goals, it is crucial to establish Partnerships and secure financing that recognizes investment in gender equality as a strategic driver to achieve the full 2030 Agenda and ensure that women and girls in all their diversity are not left behind.

## 6. Glossary



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**Care.** Care work consists of two overlapping activities: direct, personal and relational care activities, such as feeding a baby or nursing an ill partner; and indirect care activities, such as cooking and cleaning.

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**Cisgender.** When the social expectation of one's gender aligns with one's sex at birth. Consequently, there are cis women and cis men. The prefix cis- comes from the Latin "on this side" or corresponding and is the antonym of the prefix trans-, meaning "on the other side".

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**Child marriage/early unions.** Any formal or informal union in which at least one of the parties is under the age of 18.

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**Co-responsibility.** Co-responsibility refers to the redistribution of unpaid work between men and women within families and households. According to the Five Rs approach, this refers to recognizing, reducing, and redistributing care work to achieve co-responsible care models between men and women and between the State, the labor market, the community, and households, including through leave, flexible working hours (daily or monthly) and flexibility in the workplace (teleworking or telecommuting).

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**Comprehensive Care System.** Set of policies aimed at implementing a new social organization of care with the aim of caring for, assisting and supporting people who need it, as well as recognizing, reducing and redistributing care work. which today is mostly carried out by women. from a human right, gender, intersectional and intercultural perspective. These policies must be implemented on the basis of inter-institutional articulation from a people-centered approach, where the State is the guarantor of access to the right to care, based on a model of social co-responsibility. with civil society, the private sector and families. and gender. The implementation of the system implies intersectoral management for the gradual development of its components. services, regulations, training, information and knowledge management, and communication for the promotion of cultural change. that takes into account cultural and territorial diversity.

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**Comprehensive sexuality education.** Curriculum-based education that aims to equip children and young people with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will enable them to develop a positive view of sexuality, within the framework of their emotional and social development.

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**Demographic dividend.** Demographic dividend is the economic growth potential that can be derived from changes in the age structure of a population, especially when the percentage of the population of working age (15-64 years) is higher than that of non-working age (14 years and under, 65 years and over).

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**Demographic transition.** Demographic theory that explains the different patterns of relationship between mortality and fertility and their impact on population growth and age structure over time and space.

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**Femicide/ Femicide.** Gender-related killing (also referred to as “femicide” or “femicide”) is the most brutal and extreme manifestation of the continuum of violence against women and girls, whose expressions are interconnected and overlapping. Femicide is defined as a type of intentional gender-motivated homicide that can be triggered by gender role stereotypes, discrimination against women and girls, imbalances in power relations between women and men, or the existence of harmful social norms.

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**Feminization of migration.** A phenomenon characterized by the changing nature of women’s human mobility, associated with an increased movement of women who migrate or forcibly move independently, rather than as members of a household, and actively participate in the world of work.

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**Fiscal space.** The room for manoeuvre within the public budget to provide resources without compromising the financial sustainability and stability of the economy.

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**Food security.** Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their daily energy needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

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**Forced displacement.** The movement of people who have been forced to leave their homes or places of usual residence (whether within their own country or across an international border), in particular as a result of or to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, human rights violations or natural or human-made disasters.

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**Gender Bonds.** Gender bonds are a promising financing vehicle for institutions committed to addressing and reducing gender inequality by improving women's access to finance, leadership positions and equality in labor markets.

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**Gender-sensitive migration.** Respecting the human rights of women, men, girls and boys at all stages of human mobility, that their specific needs are understood and adequately addressed and that they are empowered as agents of change. It incorporates a gender perspective and promotes gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, recognizing their independence, agency and leadership, without a sense of revictimization.

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**Gender stereotypes.** Simplistic generalizations of gender attributes, differences and roles of women and men. Stereotypical characteristics of men portray them as competitive, greedy, autonomous, independent, belligerent, interested in private goods. Parallel stereotypes of women portray them as cooperative, welcoming, caring, communicative, group-oriented, interested in public goods. Stereotypes are often used to justify gender discrimination more broadly and can be reflected and reinforced by traditional and modern theories, laws and institutional practices. Messages that reinforce gender stereotypes and the idea that women are inferior come in a variety of "packaging". from songs and advertisements to traditional proverbs.

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**Human mobility.** An umbrella term that refers to various forms of population movement, including displacement, migration and planned relocation.

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**Intersex.** A category that describes a person with a disorder of sex development (DSD); a reproductive, genetic, genital or hormonal configuration that results in a body that is often not easily categorized as male or female. It is often confused with transgender, but they are distinct and even unrelated. An intersex person may

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be straight, gay, lesbian or bisexual, and may identify as female, male or neither. The better-known term, hermaphrodite, is considered obsolete and offensive.

**Intersectional approach.** Analysis of the dynamic interaction between various factors such as gender, age, geographical location, persons with disabilities, social class and ethnicity.

**International protection.** The protection granted by the international community to individuals or groups outside their own country, who cannot return because they would be at risk there and whose own country is unable or unwilling to protect them. Risks that give rise to the need for international protection classically include those of persecution or other threats to life, liberty or physical integrity arising from armed conflict, serious disturbances of public order or other situations of violence. Other risks may arise from famine linked to situations of armed conflict, disasters, as well as statelessness. International protection includes measures to ensure that the human rights, safety and well-being of the persons concerned are recognized and safeguarded in accordance with relevant standards, in particular international refugee law, incorporating, inter alia, protection against refoulement, appropriate standards of reception and treatment, and access to solutions.

**Life expectancy at birth.** Represents the average lifespan of individuals in a hypothetical birth cohort, subject at all ages to the mortality risks of the period under study.

**Malnutrition.** A pathological condition resulting from a diet deficient in one or more essential nutrients or from poor assimilation of food.

**Mixed movements.** These are movements of persons travelling together, usually irregularly, along the same routes and using the same means of transport, but for different reasons. These people have different needs and profiles and may include asylum seekers, refugees, stateless persons, victims of trafficking, unaccompanied or separated children, other persons in need of international protection or vulnerability and irregular migrants.

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**Migration crises.** Large-scale, complex migration flows and mobility patterns caused by a crisis that often bring with them considerable vulnerabilities for affected individuals and communities and pose longer-term migration management challenges. A migration crisis can be sudden or gradual, can be natural or man-made, and can take place internally or across borders.

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**Migration rate.** The ratio of the annual net migration stock for a given period to the average population for the same period.

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**Multiple environmental crises.** For this regional study in particular, this concept refers to several interrelated and mutually reinforcing environmental issues of planetary scale, including, but not limited to: climate change, pollution and waste, biodiversity loss, desertification, land degradation and their related disasters. It is important to note that these crises are closely related to the social dimension, including poverty and inequality. It should also be noted that this definition has not been adopted by the United Nations System and is only noted here to explain to the reader the use given to this concept in this study.

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**Paid care work.** Care performed by care workers for remuneration or profit. These include a wide range of personal service workers, such as nurses, medical personnel and personal care workers. Domestic workers, who provide both direct and indirect care in households, are also part of the care workforce.

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**Parity democracy.** Seeks to ensure the equal representation of women and men in spaces of political power, and broadens the basis for women's participation in public decision-making at all levels.

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**Puerperium.** The period following childbirth, lasting approximately 6 weeks, during which the uterus regains its normal dimensions.

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**Refugee.** Any person who meets the eligibility criteria under an applicable refugee definition as set out in international or regional refugee instruments, under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or in national legislation. Under international law and UNHCR's mandate, refugees are persons outside their country of origin who are in need of international protection

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due to fear of persecution or a serious threat to their life, physical integrity or freedom in their country of origin as a result of persecution, armed conflict, violence or serious disturbance of public order.

**Sexual and reproductive rights.** can be understood as the right of all people, young or old, female, male or transgender, heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual, HIV positive or negative, to make choices about their own sexuality and reproduction, as long as they respect the right to the physical integrity of others. This definition also includes the right to information and services necessary to support these choices and optimize health.

**Sexual division of labour.** This is an important concept in basic gender analysis. It helps to understand social relations more deeply as an entry point to sustainable change through development. Division of labour refers to the way in which each society divides labour between men and women, boys and girls, according to socially established gender roles or roles that are considered appropriate and valued for each sex. Anyone planning a community intervention needs to know and understand the division of labour and the distribution of assets along gender and age lines for each community targeted for development interventions. Within the division of labour there are various types of roles:

**Reproductive roles.** Activities necessary to ensure the reproduction of society's labour force. These include work in the home such as cleaning, cooking, bearing and raising children, and caring for family members. These tasks are generally performed by women.

**Community management role.** Activities carried out mainly by women at the community level, as an extension of their reproductive role, to ensure the provision and maintenance of scarce resources for collective consumption, such as water, health care and education. This is unpaid voluntary work carried out in "free" time.

**Community policy role.** Activities carried out primarily by men at the community level, often within the framework of national policies. This officially recognized

leadership role may be directly remunerated or bring with it an increase in power or status.

**Triple role.** This refers to the fact that women tend to work longer and more fragmented hours than men as they tend to take on different roles: reproductive, productive and community work.

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**Social protection.** A universal human right and a key element in ensuring the development of economies and countries and in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. It consists of a set of policies and programmes that focus on preventing and reducing risks, such as poverty or social exclusion, throughout the life cycle.

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**Tax expenditures.** Transfer expenditures granted through the fiscal or tax system to achieve social and economic objectives.

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**Transgender.** Describes a person whose gender identity does not correspond to their birth sex. Concepts included in the English term transgender.

**Transsexuality.** Non-conformity between biological sex and social and psychological sex.

**Transvestism.** Use of clothing and accessories of the other social sex for the pleasure of playing with the double identity and for feeling permanent identification with that other sex.

**Androgyny.** Ambiguity due to external features that are neither sex-female nor sex-male.

**Genderqueer or intergender.** Identification as male and female or neither.

**Cross-dressing.** Wearing the clothing and accessories of the other social sex only because they are characteristic of that other sex and identifying with that other sex only while wearing this clothing.

**Drag kings-drag queens.** Dressing up as a man or a woman in an exaggerated way for artistic or performance purposes.

**Time use.** An important measure of the activities of women and men in their productive, reproductive and community roles. Time use can be measured using surveys to determine activities that people perform during a given period of time (usually a day or a week). Although time-use surveys can and have been used for a variety of purposes, the most common reason for conducting such a survey in developing countries is to provide better information on the work that men and women do, and to highlight the time they spend on unpaid activities, which are often invisible in regular census data. This unpaid work, which includes work for others, is seen as a major contributing factor to gender inequality and women's poverty.

**Total fertility rate.** The average number of children a woman would have in a hypothetical cohort of women who during their childbearing life would bear children according to the age-specific fertility rates of the period under study and are not exposed to mortality risks from birth to the end of the childbearing period.

**Unpaid care work.** Covers all daily activities to maintain our lives and health, such as household chores (food preparation, cleaning, laundry) and personal care (especially for children, the elderly, the sick or disabled). Most commonly, these activities are carried out by women in the home free of charge.



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# Endnotes

- 1 Women and poverty; education and training of women; women and health; violence against women; women and armed conflict; women and the economy; women in power and decision-making; institutional mechanisms; human rights of women; women and media; women and the environment; the girl child.
- 2 No estimate is available for migrant women.
- 3 This index, which is part of the indicators of ECLAC's Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, shows the disparities in the incidence of poverty between women and men in the countries of the region. For more information visit <https://oig.cepal.org/es/indicadores/tiempo-trabajo-no-remunerado-segun-ingresos-propios-sexo>.
- 4 The multidimensional poverty index considers the following dimensions: i) Health and care services, ii) Education and household composition, iii) Economic autonomy, iv) Access to information and communication technologies (ICT), and v) Housing and access to basic services. For more information visit <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/indice-de-pobreza-multidimensional-con-foco-en-mujeres-para-america-latina-y-el-caribe>.
- 5 Weighted average for 13 Latin American countries (2022): Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, El Salvador and Uruguay. Data for Bolivia and Colombia corresponds to 2021. Data processed by ECLAC from the Bases de Hogares de los países (BADEHOG).
- 6 Simple regional average calculated using data from the latest national time-use surveys for 13 countries, available from CEPALSTAT.
- 7 The countries included were Denmark, Sweden, France, Germany, UK, USA, Spain and Italy (plus the EU-28 as a whole).
- 8 The estimates were derived from input-output tables for 82 countries representing approximately 94% of world GDP in 2019 and 87% of the world's employed population (including women and men working in the informal economy).
- 9 Notes on Graph 8: The total number of institutions compared varies according to the organization of government institutions in each country and the availability of information. Especially for the water and disaster sectors, for which often no designated ministries exist, the next highest instances were: vice ministries, directorates, organizations, authorities, agencies or national offices in charge of these issues. "No data" refers to those instances for which no information was available or comparable. Due to the current government reorganization in Argentina, this country was excluded from the analysis.  
\*The number of countries without data is higher in the water sector, as water management is often fragmented among several institutions.

- 10 These figures include the 6.53 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- 11 UNHCR calculation based on metadata available in Vu et al (2014) The Prevalence of Sexual Violence among Female Refugees in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies: a Systematic Review and Meta-analysis.
- 12 Mexico, Nicaragua and Cuba maintain 50 % or more of women's representation in their parliaments, while Argentina and Costa Rica exceed 40 %. Currently, 9 countries do not reach 20% representation of women in parliament: Haiti, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Lucia, Belize, Brazil, Paraguay, Bahamas, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Guatemala. Of these countries, Haiti, considering the latest available data for 2020, is the lowest in the region, with only 2.5% of women elected to national parliaments.
- 13 By 2022, LAC is the most unequal region in the world, with an average GINI coefficient of 45.03, compared to 42.6 in Africa, 34.68 in Asia and 31.58 in Europe. Self-calculation based on the World Bank data, 2022, 2021.
- 14 Inefficiencies in government procurement, public services and targeted transfers could cost up to US\$220 billion a year, or 4.4% of regional GDP.
- 15 The Corruption Perceptions Index is an indicator that reflects each country's scores in areas such as bribery of public officials, bribery in public procurement, embezzlement of public funds and effectiveness of government anti-corruption efforts. The best possible score on perceived corruption is 0, while a score of 100 indicates no perceived corruption. For 2023 data, the regional average of the index for LAC is 43%, with Uruguay being the country with the lowest perception of corruption (73%) and Venezuela the country with the highest perception of corruption (13%).
- 16 The 2030 Agenda established, as part of SDG 5, target 5.c: "adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels". Its indicator 5.c.1: "Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment". This indicator aims to encourage national governments to develop appropriate budget tracking and monitoring systems and commit to making information about gender equality allocations available to the public and civil society.
- 17 The 2030 Agenda established as part of SDG 5 target 5.c. "Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable laws to promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels". In particular, its indicator: 5.c.1: "Proportion of countries with systems in place to monitor gender equality and women's empowerment and the allocation of public funds for this purpose" measures governments' efforts to publicly

monitor allocations for gender equality throughout the public financial management cycle. This indicator aims to encourage national governments to develop appropriate budget tracking and monitoring systems and commit to making information on allocations for gender equality available to the public and civil society (United Nations, 2023).

- 18 For further information see: [https://inff.org/assets/resource/technical-guidance-note-mainstreaming-gender-equality-in-inffs-may-2021-\(1\)-1620399723.pdf](https://inff.org/assets/resource/technical-guidance-note-mainstreaming-gender-equality-in-inffs-may-2021-(1)-1620399723.pdf)

