

Income and unpaid work in Latin America: intersection of gender and race inequalities (ECLAC)



Key points

- In 2017–2018, indigenous women in countries with available data in the Latin America and the Caribbean region earned less than women and men of other ethnicities and racial groups, regardless of their education level. Income levels of men were higher in the region than those of women.
- Indigenous people tend to be part of larger households, with an average of 4.7 people per household, compared with an average of 3.9 for those who are neither indigenous nor Afrodescendants. The presence of children in the household often increases the hours of unpaid work, particularly for women.
- The gender gap in the amount of time spent on unpaid work is the largest among indigenous populations. Indigenous women are overburdened by unpaid work culturally assigned to them: in Ecuador and Mexico, indigenous women may spend up to six additional hours per week on unpaid work than non-indigenous women.

Background

As stressed in the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, it is crucial to take measures to promote opportunities in the development process for women belonging to ethnic and racial minorities and for indigenous women in order to eradicate dimensions of poverty that affect them.¹

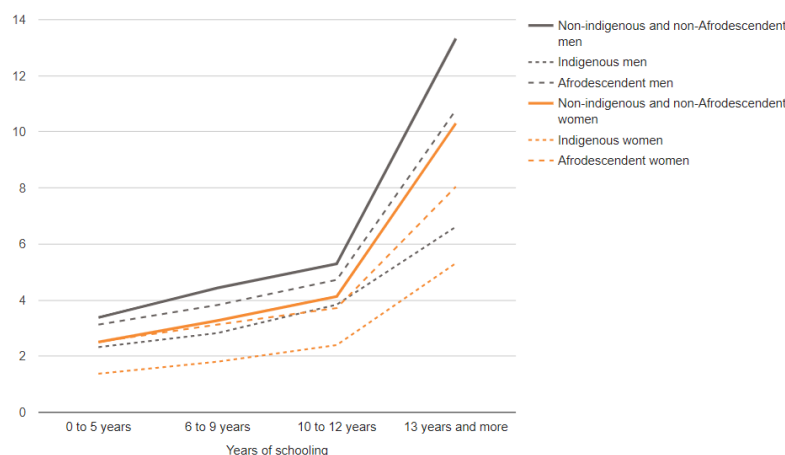
Given that patriarchal cultural patterns and racism are still prevalent in the Latin America and Caribbean region, the intersection of gender, race and indigenous background translates into different levels of income for women and men and people of different races with the same level of education.

Current situation

Gender inequality intersects and is exacerbated by ethnic-racial inequalities²

Data for six countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region for the period 2017–2018 on hourly labour income, disaggregated by sex, ethnicity and race and years of schooling, show that indigenous women have lower income levels, regardless of their education level (see figure I). Although academic achievement is associated with higher income levels,³ other factors play an influential role, including gender: income levels are statistically higher for men than for women — a manifestation of gender inequality. The difference between the wages earned by the most highly educated women and those of their male counterparts is more pronounced when ethnicity and race are factored in: with 13 years of schooling or more, men who are neither indigenous nor Afrodescendants earn the highest incomes, followed by Afrodescendent men, non-indigenous and non-Afrodescendent women, Afrodescendent women, indigenous men and, lastly, indigenous women, who are the most disadvantaged.

Figure I: Hourly income of employed persons in the Latin American and Caribbean region aged 15 or older by sex, years of schooling and ethnicity/race: 2017-2018 (latest available) (International dollars)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2020. Special tabulations of data retrieved from the following household surveys: Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua (Brazil, 2018), Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (Colombia, 2018), Encuesta de Empleo, Desempleo y Subempleo (Ecuador, 2017), Encuesta de Mercado Laboral (Panama, 2018), Encuesta Nacional de Hogares - Condiciones de Vida y Pobreza (Peru, 2018), and Encuesta Continúa de Hogares (Uruguay, 2018).

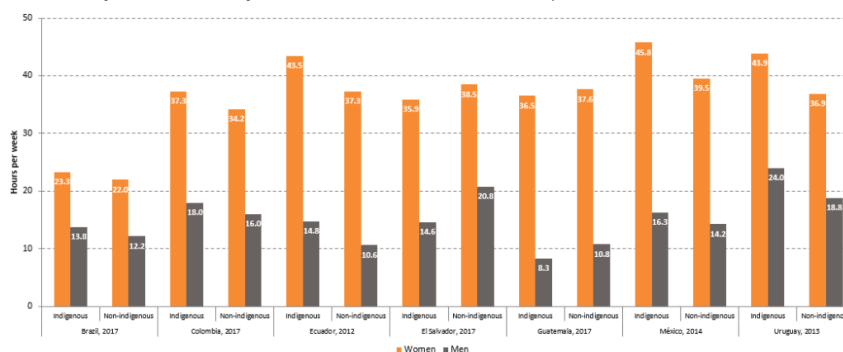
Note: In general, the categories could be associated with the educational levels defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The age 0-5 group would correspond to International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) level 1, the age 6-9 group to ISCED level 2, the 10-12 group to ISCED level 3 and the age 13 and older group to ISCED levels 5-8. The data for Brazil, Colombia, Panama, Peru and Uruguay refer to 2018 and the data for Ecuador correspond to 2017. To make monetary amounts from different countries comparable, currency conversions to international dollars have been made based on the purchasing power parities (PPP) (conversion rates between currencies that take into account both exchange rate and price level differences between countries).

In Latin America, the notions of race and ethnicity that are part of the political identity of Afrodescendants and indigenous people have made it possible to create the basis for these populations to self-identify in censuses and surveys, and thus to overcome the statistical invisibility that is another form of discrimination.⁴ Data disaggregated by ethnicity and race have shown that average **fertility rates** for Afrodescendants and indigenous populations are statistically higher than national averages and that of the rest of the population.⁵ Indigenous people tend to be part of larger households, with an average of 4.7 people per household, compared with an average of 3.9 for those who are neither indigenous nor Afrodescendants. The presence of children in the household often increases the hours of unpaid work of women, and also of men, although not by comparable levels.⁶

Traditionally, and from early ages, indigenous women, especially in rural areas, are expected to carry out numerous daily tasks that require a large investment of time, such as caring for members of the family and the community, providing households with basic supplies (fetching water or gathering firewood), caring for animals and collaborating on agricultural work. This burden of **unpaid work** limits women's ability to fully **participate in the labour market**. In addition, as has been well documented, indigenous women, in particular, are overrepresented among the poor and have less access to productive resources and **land ownership**.⁷

Time-use surveys show that the gender gap in terms of time spend on unpaid work is wider within indigenous populations in all countries in Latin America and the Caribbean with available data (see figure II). Indigenous women may spend up to six hours more per week on unpaid work than non-indigenous women, which is the case in Ecuador and Mexico. This underscores the importance of considering the strict gender division of labour in indigenous households, the need for care policies and basic infrastructure to support indigenous families, particularly those living in rural areas, and the barriers to women's economic autonomy. For further information on the intersection of gender, household type and unpaid work, the report on the **impact of unpaid work on the economy of Mexican households** provides in-depth analysis.

Figure II: Time spent on unpaid work by persons in the Latin America and the Caribbean region aged 15 and older by sex and ethnicity: 2012-2017 (latest available) (Hours per week)



Source: ECLAC, 2020, Special tabulations of data retrieved from the following time-use surveys: Módulo en la Encuesta Nacional de Hogares Continua (Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Continua o PNAD-C) (Brazil, 2017); Encuesta Nacional de Uso del Tiempo (Colombia, 2017); Encuesta Específica de Uso del Tiempo (Ecuador, 2012); Encuesta Nacional de Uso del Tiempo (El Salvador, 2017); Módulo en la Encuesta Nacional de Empleo e Ingresos (Guatemala, 2017); Encuesta Nacional sobre Uso del Tiempo (Mexico, 2014) Módulo en la Encuesta Continua de Hogares (Uruguay, 2013).

Note: In light of the heterogeneous nature of data sources, comparisons between countries are still not possible. The aim of figure II is to show gender differences within each country. In Brazil, indigenous people identified themselves in the survey in accordance with their colour or race. In Colombia, the population was selected according to the cultures, towns or physical features recognized as indigenous. In Ecuador, the population that self-identified as indigenous according to their culture and customs was selected. In Guatemala, indigenous people identified themselves in the survey. In Mexico, indigenous people identified themselves in the survey in accordance with their culture.

About the data

Definitions

- **Hourly income** : Average hourly income of employed persons.
- **Average time spent on unpaid work**: Work done without payment and is measured by quantifying the time a person spends on own-use goods production work, unpaid domestic work, unpaid care of household members and unpaid work for other households or for the community and volunteering.

Coverage

Women and men aged 15 and older in paid and unpaid work in countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

Availability

- **Hourly income**: Data analysis of hourly income (latest available), with data disaggregated by ethnicity/race and by years of schooling, from household surveys conducted in six countries: Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Uruguay (2017–2018).
- **Time spent on unpaid work** : Data analysis of time spent on unpaid work (latest available), with data disaggregated by ethnicity, from time-use surveys conducted in seven countries: Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and Uruguay (2012–2017).

Limitations

Although time-use surveys in the Latin America and the Caribbean region include questions that allow the self-identification of Afrodescendants, each question poses difficulties for analysis for various reasons, including: sample size (Uruguay); lack of cultural relevance of the questions and activities included in the questionnaires (Colombia and Ecuador); and the lack of measuring care as a component of unpaid domestic work (Brazil). With a view to ensuring that the information obtained describes time-use in Afrodescendent populations, race should be a focus of analysis from the design stage of measurement tools and methodologies.

Footnotes

1. Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 58 (q).
2. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Women's autonomy in changing economic scenarios (LC/CRM.14/3), Santiago, 2019 and Social Panorama of Latin America 2016 (LC/PUB.2017/12-P), Santiago, 2017 .
3. ECLAC, Social Panorama of Latin America, 2019 (LC/PUB.2019/22-P/Rev.1), Santiago, 2019 .
4. ECLAC, The social inequality matrix in Latin America (LC/G.26go(MDS.1/2)), Santiago, October 2016 .
5. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Women's autonomy in changing economic scenarios (LC/CRM.14/3), Santiago, 2019; ECLAC, Situación de las personas afrodescendientes en América Latina y desafíos de políticas para la garantía de sus derechos, Santiago, 2017 ; ECLAC, Afrodescendent women in Latin America and the Caribbean: Debts of equality, Santiago, 2019 ; and ECLAC, Mujeres indígenas en América Latina: dinámicas demográficas y sociales en el marco de los derechos humanos, Santiago, 2013
6. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Women's autonomy in changing economic scenarios (LC/CRM.14/3), Santiago, 2019 .
7. ECLAC, Mujeres indígenas en América Latina: dinámicas demográficas y sociales en el marco de los derechos humanos, Santiago, 2013 .