

TURNING KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION

Including Women in the Post-COVID-19 Economic Recovery

It's clear that in Latin America and the Caribbean, COVID-19 hit women harder than men. [LACGIL research](#) ([Portuguese](#), [Spanish](#)) shows that two months into the lockdowns, 56% of women who worked prior to the COVID-19 outbreak had stopped working. Among men this share was 39%. This research was featured by [The Economist](#), [El País](#), and the [Financial Times](#). While employment recovered since May 2020, deep gender differences remain.

A combination of structural factors drives the gender disparity in job losses:

- **Women tend to work in sectors that rely heavily on face-to-face interactions**, such as personal services and retail, and are thus more vulnerable to social distancing measures.
- **Women are more likely to be employed in the informal sector** and in other vulnerable forms of employment.
- **Social norms unevenly distribute caregiving**. LACGIL [research](#) finds that having a school-aged child negatively affected the probability of remaining employed for women, but not for men.

How to address the gendered effects of COVID-19 on labor market outcomes?

Without bold policy action, there is a risk that many years of progress in gender equality are permanently undone. A [webinar](#) organized by the WBG country teams for Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, and Peru reflected on this issue. Short-term priorities include:

Economic reactivation focusing on sectors hit hardest by COVID-19, many of which are female dominated, and on re-opening of schools and childcare facilities. [LACGIL research in Chile](#), for instance, shows that childcare centers have come under financial strain. Their survival and re-opening are not guaranteed, with potentially significant implications for women's return to work.





Continued provision of social protection programs that address the specific constraints of families, such as layoffs and income reductions. In Bolivia, the WBG's [COVID-19 Crisis Emergency Social Safety Nets](#) project expands adaptive cash transfers to vulnerable parents and most beneficiaries are women.

Considering gender in vaccination strategies. A WBG Ecuador project is considering the development of a vaccination information campaign as part of its COVID-19 emergency response. In fact, a [recent article](#) in the LANCET argues that “Vaccine uptake partly depends on the free labour of women within the household, impacting women’s economic and personal security [... And] women will typically have the responsibility for arranging when and how children and wider family members, such as older relatives, get immunised.”



Medium to long-term interventions that **promote structural changes and target social norms** are needed to:

- Re-balance caregiving and household responsibilities of women and men.
- Address the constraints women face to successfully enter more profitable sectors and secure positions [dominated by men](#).
- Tackle [women's mobility](#) and work decisions in transport planning

[JOIN a webinar about childcare and changing fathers' attitudes on April 21 here!](#)

The potential [payoff](#) to such actions is high. Not only for women, but also for families, the economy, and society.

The Latin America and the Caribbean Gender Innovation Lab (LACGIL) supports impact evaluations and inferential studies to find out what works to close gender gaps in human capital, economic participation, social norms, and agency. The LACGIL works in partnership with units across the World Bank, aid agencies and donors, governments, non-governmental organizations, private sector firms, and academic researchers. This work has been funded in part by the [World Bank Group's Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality \(UFGE\)](#), a multi-donor trust fund administered by the World Bank to advance gender equality and women's empowerment through experimentation and knowledge creation to help governments and the private sector focus policy and programs on scalable solutions with sustainable outcomes. The UFGE is supported by generous contributions from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund.

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