

The Gender of Work

Executive Summary



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¹ This document is an executive summary of the book “El género del trabajo. Entre la casa, el sueldo y los derechos” (Díaz Langou, De León, Florito, Caro Sachetti, Biondi & Karczmarczyk, 2019). The book was written at CIPPEC, in partnership with the International Labor Organization (ILO), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It also constitutes the flagship document of the project Women in the Labor Market. Debts and Opportunities (“Mujeres en el Mercado de Trabajo: una Deuda y una Oportunidad”), led by the Social Protection Program at CIPPEC in alliance with other organizations. The analysis and policy recommendations offered in the book and in this executive summary, however, are not necessarily aligned with the institutional positions of the ILO, UN Women or UNDP, their Executive Boards or member states, as well as with the opinions of all of CIPPEC’s members. The book (in Spanish) is available at www.cippec.org/egdt.

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Introduction

The Gender of Work is the result of a joint initiative between CIPPEC, the International Labor Organization, UN Women and the United Nations Development Program. It focuses on diagnosing the gender gaps that violate the economic rights of women in Argentina, and to present policy suggestions for removing the obstacles that make it impossible for women's trajectories in the labor market to be substantively equal to those of men.

In the Latin American context specifically (but not exclusively), there are three key issues that public policies should take into account when attempting to close the gender gaps in the exercise of economic autonomy. These can be summarized as (1) a human-rights perspective on substantive gender equality, that connects it with sustainable development priorities as described in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and approved by the United Nations in 2015; (2) the acknowledgement of intersectionality and interculturality when tackling discriminative societal structures and (3) the principle of integrality as fundamental to the achievement of physical, decision-making, and economic autonomy.

In order to achieve this purpose in consideration of these three main issues, the book and, consequently, this executive summary, are organized as follows. The first section makes a conceptual introduction to the problem of women's economic autonomy. It includes both definitions and arguments for action. The second section identifies the main gender gaps in the Argentine labor market, which can be classified in three main categories: (1) access to the labor market, (2) quality of employment and work trajectories, and (3) access to leadership positions. The section closes with an analysis of the three main causes behind the gender gaps, mainly, care and unpaid domestic work, gender norms and education. Next, the third section analyses the role of the Argentine State, both at the institutional and at the policy level. Finally, the fourth section summarizes lessons and recommendations to close gender gaps, and it reflects about possible ways forward.

Section I: Women's Economic Empowerment and Autonomy: Framework and Call for Action

Gender, understood as the collection of norms, characteristics, behaviors, and expectations socially assigned on the basis of sex, has an impact on the autonomy of all members of society. In particular, women face structural barriers in multiple aspects of their lives solely because of their gender identity. The economic sphere is one of them. Women face restrictions in the access, accumulation, and use of resources, which has strong implications for their wellbeing and that of their families.

Patriarchy, defined as the conjunction of social norms that categorize certain behaviors as possible, desirable or punishable according to the gender of each agent, has repeatedly manifested itself across geographic and historical contexts. From the torture and imprisonment of single women and widows during the Salem Witch Trials of the 17th century, to the situation of housewives described by Betty Friedan in the post-war era of the United States, to more contemporary issues, including the violation of legal rights to the interruption of pregnancy in some hospitals in Argentina, patriarchy impedes the autonomy of women in conditions of substantive equality.

Autonomy is defined as “the capacity of people to make free and informed life decisions in such a way that allows them to exist and pursue their aspirations within the context that makes these aspirations possible” (Gender Equality Observatory for Latin American and the Caribbean [OIG], 2011). There are three spheres of autonomy: physical, political and economic. Economic autonomy implies that women are able to manage their own income and the resources that allow them to overcome poverty, freely manage and organize their time, access the labor market, develop professionally and personally, actively participate in social and political life and dedicate themselves to their loved ones, but without that necessarily becoming an obstacle for the achievement of their own personal aspirations (CEPAL, 2016). *The Gender of Work* focuses on the sphere of economic autonomy to understand why it is precisely on this dimension that recent advances have been more disarticulated, both in the design and implementation of public policies and in the academic literature.

An important instrument to close gender gaps is economic empowerment. As defined by Naila Kabeer (1992), economic empowerment is the process through which one can achieve economic autonomy. Therefore, women's economic empowerment would contribute to the removal of the obstacles than women have to face in order to participate and thrive in the labor market and, consequently, promote economic autonomy.

The term “empowerment” is used in a broad range of ways in relation to substantive gender equality. Most conceptualizations of empowerment share four characteristics: (1) its reference to a group in an inferior position in the asymmetrical balance of power, (2) the idea that it is an internal, individual, and collective process, (3) the implication that it involves a transition from a lack of autonomy to a capacity for free decision-making, and (4) that it has no concrete result but is rather a continuous, and potentially reversible, process (Mosedale, 2005). One additional, more disputed, characteristic is the notion of its universality across historical and geographic contexts.

Although the concept of economic empowerment has been frequently employed in strategies for international development, one limitation of its instrumentalization, Kabeer argues, is that it requires a quantitative operational definition at the loss of some of its nuance and support from feminist theory. Kabeer's (1999) conceptualization of the empowerment of women, then, contains three interrelated components: resources – both economic and social, individual agency, and achievements. In relation to autonomy, it is also important to differentiate between both concepts. While empowerment is a continual process, autonomy is a more static and is, thus, easier to measure; empowerment leads to the exercise of autonomy.

Furthermore, while development literature has traditionally tied economic empowerment to the participation of women in the labor market and the equitable distribution of domestic work, empirical findings have shown that labor market participation does not always empower. The relationship between these two processes is conditional on the quality of employment and the labor trajectories of women. As Kabeer notes, it is necessary to concentrate not necessarily on the differences in the results of decisions, but rather on the conditions in which these decisions are taken and in the degree to which they are made freely.

In order to move forward in that direction, it is critical to address the gendered division of labor. This is understood as the functional specialization of women and men in different kinds of work and both inside and outside the household, which represents a key point in the asymmetrical situation between the genders. This has clear consequences on the opportunities available to women in accessing and managing resources and income; in other words, on their ability to be economically autonomous.

Arguments for action

Closing gender gaps contributes to the accomplishment of the 2030 Agenda and guarantees the exercise of women's rights. Substantive gender equality does not need further justifications.

Human rights have individual and collective dimensions and States are responsible for guaranteeing social, economic, cultural, civic and political rights to all people, regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity, or any other characteristics. Therefore, guaranteeing full access to human rights for everyone is a necessary condition for inclusive development. In order to achieve this, it is not only important for states to develop concrete policies to address gender gaps specifically, but also to revise existing initiatives from a gender perspective. The formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies should, accordingly, be driven by a series of principles, which include non-discrimination, integrality, institutionalism, participation, and accountability (Abramovich, 2006; Cecchini, Filgueira, Martínez, & Rossel, 2015; Pautassi, 2007).

Moreover, achieving substantive equality is also beneficial for economic and social outcomes. There are four subsidiary and development-guided arguments that provide additional leverage for promoting substantive gender equality. Firstly, Argentina is currently in the second stage of its demographic transition, in which the birth rate has begun to fall and has generated an increase in the adult population. Such conditions are known as the "demographic window of opportunity" and are characterized by a relatively larger proportion of economically active population and a lower dependency rate. This situation offers a great opportunity for investing in development-oriented policies, given the size of the working-age population and the relatively lower costs associated with those who are inactive (children and older people). This "demographic bonus" will end around 2040 (Gragnotati, Rofman, Apella, & Troiano, 2014), and, at that point, conditions will shift and the country will present a larger dependent population of older people requiring care policies and access to retirement funds.

The benefits of this demographic bonus, however, are not automatic. In order to profit from this opportunity, Argentina must implement specific policies to leverage the bonus and extend the window of opportunity (Filgueira & Aulicino, 2015). For instance, by promoting convergent birth rates across socioeconomic levels to avoid the reproduction of inequalities, enhancing the quality of public education to prepare future generations for the future of work, and maximizing the labor market participation rate. Additionally, a stable social, economic, and legal context is necessary to guarantee productive investments and to provide adequate social protection for everyone.

Women in Argentina represent the majority of the working-age population who are outside the labor force. Moreover, among those who do enter the labor market, women suffer higher rates

of unemployment and are mainly employed in less dynamic and lower-paid positions than their male counterparts. Women are also, paradoxically, those who, on average, complete more years of education, which would be expected to correlate positively with productivity levels. The inclusion of women in the labor force during this demographic window of opportunity, along with the social redistribution and recognition of the value of unpaid domestic work, can act as a strong impulse for economic growth. Nonetheless, in order to strengthen the access of women to economic opportunities during this period, it is necessary to promote job opportunities with decent working conditions, to encourage greater co-responsibility with regard to care, and to provide quality care policies for children, older persons and other dependent populations.

The second argument revolves around the positive correlation between substantive gender equality in the labor market and economic development. Given the underutilization of talent generated by gender gaps in the labor market, there is a lower investment in the human capital of women and their negotiation power within the household is negatively affected as well (Díaz Langou & Brest López, 2018). Closing these gender gaps and promoting substantive gender equality can yield economic returns on both the micro and macro levels. On the micro-level and in contexts favorable to diversity, the participation of women in the labor market is associated with a higher level of productivity, higher incomes (Turban, Wu, & Zhang, 2019), and with a positive relationship on business profits via the impact of diverse profiles on conflict resolution, innovation and creativity (Page, 2007; WEF, 2016). On the macro-level, evidence shows that guaranteeing economic rights to women could increase annual global GDP by 28 billion USD (McKinsey Global Institute, 2015), reduce poverty and inequality, and enhance productivity and human development (Díaz Langou & Brest López, 2018).

In Argentina in particular, CIPPEC has found evidence which suggests that implementing policies with a gender perspective can reduce the strain of care, which falls disproportionately on mothers (Díaz Langou, Caro Sachetti, Karczmarczyk, Bentivegna, & Capobianco, 2019). The study focuses on the provision of early childhood education and care services, as well as on the universalization of social transfers to families with kids, and finds that the implementation of these policies would produce an increase in employment rates ranging from 0.7% to 6.4%, and an increase in national GDP ranging from 0.7% to 5.3%, while only requiring an initial investment of 0.5% to 3.6% of GDP, much of which can then be recovered through taxes. Prioritizing policies that close the gender gaps can, therefore, also contribute to reversing cycles of economic recession.

Thirdly, the economic literature also shows a reinforcing relationship between substantive gender equality and the reduction of poverty. On the one hand, poverty increases gender gaps and, on the other, gender gaps can be an obstacle for improving one's quality of life (Duflo, 2012). In this sense, economic autonomy for women is not only a goal in itself but also a means by which to reduce poverty. The idea of the "feminization of poverty" has lately gathered greater relevance in the field of gender studies. In Latin America between 2002 and 2014, while economic growth and the expansion of social protection coverage contributed to the reduction of poverty for the population in general, the proportion of women living in vulnerable contexts has increased (UN Women, 2017). In Argentina, this discrepancy is even more pronounced in single-parent households, creating a vicious cycle between low labor force participation and vulnerability.

In recent decades different initiatives for poverty reduction have focused on women, such as conditional cash transfer and microcredit programs, with positive impacts on the well-being of household members (Duflo, 2011). However, these kinds of policies do not usually mainstream the gender perspective and, therefore, in many cases reinforce traditional gender roles. On the same note, while guaranteeing the access of women to education and the labor market is a necessary condition for the provision of income and to reduce the risk of vulnerability, it is also important that policies incorporate a comprehensive gender perspective, encouraging co-

responsibility of care as a means of reducing the burden of unpaid work that falls disproportionately on women.

Lastly, the labor market in Argentina is also currently undergoing a strong transformation, both with regard to the emergence of automated technology and artificial intelligence, as well as owing to the demographic transition towards a final stage marked by greater dependency and a greater need for care services. While women have increased their labor market participation in recent decades, despite still facing multiple obstacles, they are still responsible for the overwhelming majority of care work, both paid and unpaid. This is known in the literature as the “asymmetric gender revolution”, (Wainerman, 2005; England, 2010; Lekfuangfu & Lordan, 2018), and refers to the fact that while women have increased their participation in the public sphere, their male counterparts have not registered any significant change in their role within the household.

Regarding future of work trends, Argentina is one of the few countries in the world that has a virtually nonexistent gender gap in the use of technology (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos [INDEC], 2019; GSM Association [GSMA], 2019). Accordingly, the consolidation of the technology sector should take place with a strong gender perspective in mind in order to promote equal access to decent work opportunities, particularly those offering greater flexibility on digital platforms; mitigate the uncertain effects of automatization and avoid the reproduction of traditional gender norms and biases in the labor market. This implies increasing the participation of women in the most productive sectors, as well as implementing public policies that facilitate the permanent access of women to the labor market with strong guarantees against precarious labor conditions.

In conclusion, both the national and international evidence suggests that closing gender gaps in the labor market is both an imperative in terms of human rights as well as a necessary condition for achieving sustainable development.

Section II: Gender Gaps in the Argentine Labor Market and Their Determinants

The goal of this section is to identify the gender gaps in the Argentine labor market and to study their causes. Each of the three main obstacles that women face structures one of the sub-sections of this part. These are: access to the labor market, quality of work and employment trajectories, and access to leadership positions. Finally, the last part of this section discusses the three main issues that determines women's role in the labor market: care and unpaid work, gender norms, and education.

Women's Access to the Labor Market

In processes of economic development, the participation of adult women in the labor market has followed a three-staged U-curve: firstly, women's participation rate is high when the income level is low, then decreases with technological development and the initial increase of income levels when it is replaced by unpaid domestic work and, ultimately, it increases once again with the increase of education levels among women and with the increased demand for women in the labor market (Goldin, 1995).

In this context, the majority of countries that experienced early industrialization saw a significant increase in labor market participation rates during the 20th century, and especially by 1960 (Heckman & Killingsworth, 1986). Latin America was no exception in this regard. This is reflected in the fact that currently, for the first time and on average, women in the region dedicate a larger part of their time to labor market activities than to domestic work (Gasparini & Marchionni, 2015). Nonetheless, still today, and at a global level, the labor market participation of women continues to be significantly lower than that of men (48.5% compared to 75%) (ILO, 2017). Recent trends are also not favorable: since 1990, this gap was only reduced by 2% and the pace of this reduction has fallen since 2009. Some estimates even suggest that in the next few years, progress may stop altogether or even reverse itself, implying a renewed increase in the gender gap of labor market participation (ILO, 2017).

The Argentine case is not exceptional from a regional perspective, although it does present some particularities. The labor market participation rate among women has followed a positive trend since 1960, especially among middle-aged women (25 to 59 years) and, in particular, between 1980 and 1990. Within the province of Buenos Aires, the rate of economically active women aged 15 to 64 increased from around 35% in 1974 to over 55% in 2003, above the average for the region (Beccaria, Maurizio, & Vázquez, 2017). However, this growth plateaued during the first part of the 2000s, currently oscillating stably around 56% (Beccaria, Maurizio, & Vázquez, 2017). It is worth noting, however that these trends mask heterogeneities that are revealed when disaggregated by age, education level, and parental status.

The recent plateau, along with the identification of factors to overcome it, is one of the focal points of the analysis of this book. While the initial and relatively simpler phase of the incorporation of women into the labor market has already been accomplished after the fall of birth rates and the increase in education levels reached by women, the current stagnancy implies daunting challenges. At this stage it is necessary to address the lack of structural changes in the gender division of labor both inside and outside the households, including the role of the market and the state in the provision of care; the strong socioeconomic stratification in the access to the necessary conditions for the autonomy of women; and, finally, the economic cycles that conditions the long-time sustainability of public interventions. Policies in this stage thus require a transformation in the relationship between the state, market, and family, as well as between men and women in the division of wellbeing and care (Filgueira & Franzoni, 2019; Blofield et al., 2018).

Labor Market Participation

Currently, in Argentina, 62% of women between 16 and 59 years of age participate in the labor market, which represents a gap of 19 percentage points with respect to men (81%), according to data from the national households survey, *Encuesta Permanente de Hogares* (EPH) (INDEC, 4th quarter 2018). A longitudinal quarterly analysis over the last 15 years, for its part, shows a stagnancy in this indicator around 60% and the continuity of the gender gap across time.

When this same longitudinal analysis is replicated but disaggregated by age group, the situation becomes more complex. The data shows that, over the last 15 years, men between 25 and 59 years of age (those who are between college years and retirement) have high and stable labor market participation rates (around 93%). Conversely, for women in the same age the market participation rates varied between 60 and 80%, with pronounced oscillations through periods. The same differences are observed when comparing the participation rates of men and women between 18 and 24: women's participation in the labor market is consistently lower and less stable than that of their male counterparts. This evidence suggests the intersection between age and gender has negative impacts on women's paid work.

The literature and data analysis suggest the increased levels of involvement in educational studies as the primary factor associated with the decrease in the rate of labor market participation among young women. In the case of economically inactive young women, the proportion of these women who were studying increased significantly in recent years (currently 66% in contrast to 59% in 2003) (INDEC-EPH, 2003 - 2018). However, recent trends regarding the pursuit of educational studies also point to care responsibilities as an important occupation that takes a big portion of young women's time, and therefore limits their opportunities both for work and study (De León, 2017). Consequently, the gender gap in labor market participation is higher among those between 18 and 24 years of age.

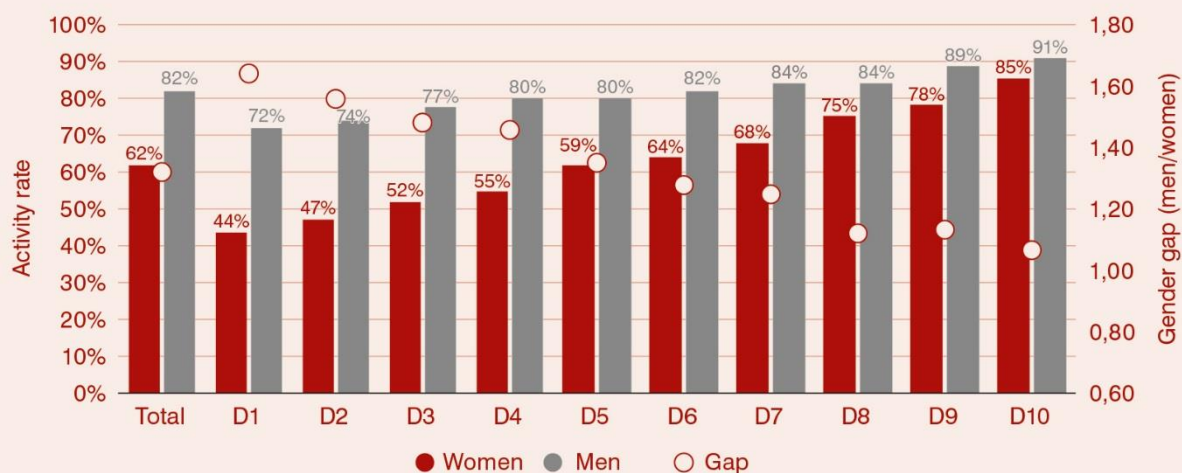
In addition to the heterogeneity resulting from differences between age groups, the geographic region of the country under analysis also plays a key role in determining gender gaps in the labor market. Women have higher participation rates in the City of Buenos Aires (CABA), where the gender gap is notably smaller than in all other regions of the country.

It is also worth noting that women's labor market participation show a statistically significant and positive trend in the last eight quarters for which there is available data, which coincides with Argentina's recent and current economic crisis. This evidence supports the theory of the "additional-worker effect" which suggests that during economic crises, as a consequence of the decrease of household income, women tend to increase their labor market participation in an attempt to offset the impact of the crises.

When taking into account income levels, labor market participation rates are usually lower among women with lower incomes and increase along with socioeconomic level (**Figure 1**). The gender gap also decreases along with the increase in income levels. Moreover, the educational level is also strongly correlated with the gender gap in labor market participation rates: the participation of women in the labor market increases in subgroups that reach the highest education levels, where the gender gap is also the lowest.

FIGURE 1

Activity rate by sex and per capita family income distribution. Population between 16 and 59 years old. Urban agglomerations. 2003-2018.



Source: CIPPEC based on INDEC (EPH)

The connection between socioeconomic level and labor market participation is quite telling. While women in higher socioeconomic standing have reached a glass ceiling in their participation levels with respect to men, women with lower income face much greater structural barriers. Meanwhile, participation rates among middle-class women are strongly conditional on their access to care infrastructure or their economic ability to afford hiring care services. The presence of children below the age of 18 in the home, as well as the number of children present, also coincide with lower labor market participation rates among women and an increase in the related gender gap (Table 1).

TABLE 1

Head of household's labor market participation rate, by sex, parental status and number of children. Urban agglomerations. 2018.

	Women	Men	Gap (Men/Women)
Total	69%	95%	1,37
Without children	72%	91%	1,26
With children	67%	97%	1,46
1 child	72%	97%	1,35
2 children	68%	98%	1,44
3 children	58%	97%	1,68
4 children	46%	96%	2,10
5 children	40%	95%	2,36
6 or more children	38%	100%	2,65

Note: after four children, the differences in the labor market participation rate are not statistically significant with respect to the number of children nor between genders.

Source: CIPPEC based on INDEC (EPH).

Nonetheless, the evidence suggests that the division of care within homes with more than one child acquires particular characteristics, especially in conditions of greater vulnerability. In these cases, older children (most often girls and young women) share the responsibilities of care of their younger siblings along with their mothers (Repetto, Díaz Langou, & Aulicino, 2012). The gendered division of labor, then, materializes at early stages of life. Moreover, among the young women aged 16 to 17 that participated in the labor market, 17% worked in the care of “children, older people or the sick outside of their homes for compensation”, while only 0.3% of young men did the same (INDEC-EANNA, 2018).

Finally, marital status was also a predictor in the distinct profiles of labor market participation by gender. Married couples and people living in civil unions or as domestic partners showed greater gender gaps in economic activity, while these gaps were significantly less among separated or divorced people and people who are single.

Employment

Among women who participate in the labor market, some remain unemployed because they cannot find job opportunities, while others are able to effectively find work. The employment rate captures the situation of this latter group, which still experiences gaps and obstacles with respect to men.

Currently, 55% of women between 16 and 59 years of age are employed, compared to 75% of men of the same age. This gender gap reached its higher point between 2007 and 2012, when employment levels were relatively higher for men but not for women. This relative persistence of the gender gap, at a time when aggregate employment levels show no significant change, shows a similar trend to labor market participation in Argentina and the Latin American region as a whole. This is explained by the high correlation between both indicators.

In terms of age, employment rates are highest for women between 30 and 50 years, while men are able to reach peak employment rates earlier. This relates to the fact that men become economically active at an earlier age, especially those in families with lower incomes, while women are often more likely to continue in their educational tracks and/or begin to dedicate a significant part of their time to unpaid domestic work and care.

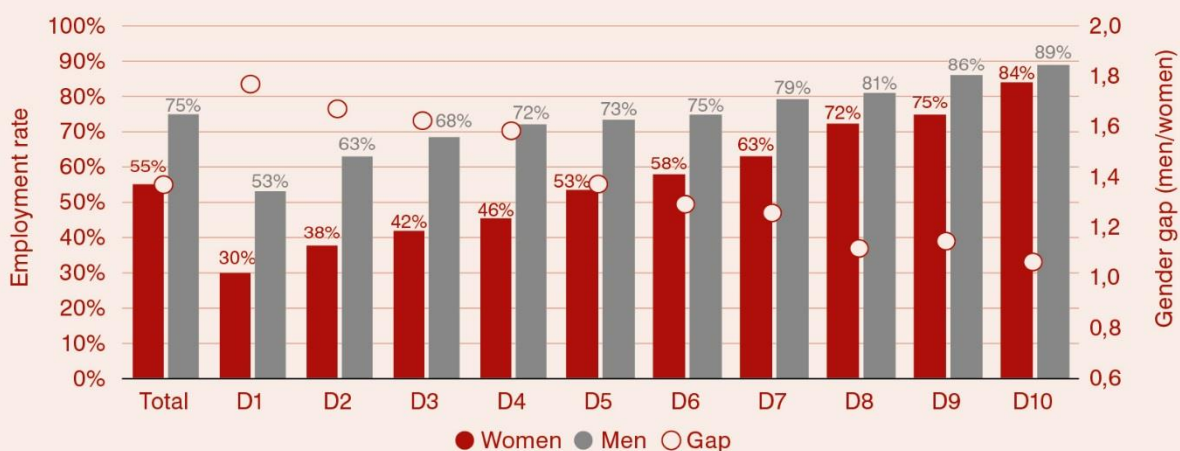
Income levels are a strong predictor of the gender gap in employment rates between men and women. The population living with lower levels of income show lower levels of employment, both for men and women and with a wider gap between them, while the gap between the two narrows as income levels rise and employment rates increase (**Figure 2**).

In terms of educational attainment, the gender gap in employment rates between men and women tends to decrease as educational credentials increase. For those who have reached an incomplete basic or higher education, the gender gaps in employment rates are higher than those in labor market participation rates. In other words, even though greater development in human capacity appears to contribute to higher labor market participation among women, it does not necessarily guarantee equivalent results in terms of employment. There are additional barriers, possibly connected to discrimination in the labor market, that exclude women from the access to secure job positions, even when they are actively searching for employment.

Finally, as with labor market participation rates, parental status emerges as one of the main factors associated with a greater gender gap in employment rates. Employment levels are higher for women without children, while the opposite is true for men.

FIGURE 2

Employment rate, by sex and income level. Population between 16 and 59 years old. Urban agglomerations. 2018.



Source: CIPPEC based on INDEC (EPH).

Labor Market Intermittency

For those women who successfully find work, remaining in the labor market in the long-run is less of a guarantee than for their male counterparts. In many cases, there are moments of access to the labor market that are either not permanent or are associated with very poor working conditions which, many times, can lead women back to economic inactivity.

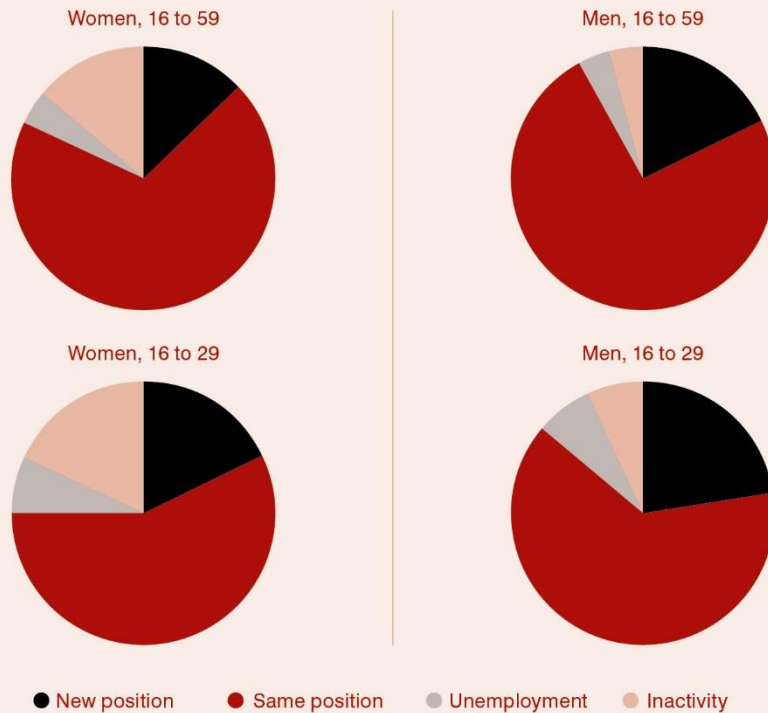
In Argentina, there is no representative diagnosis regarding career advancement among working women in the economy. The EPH, however, provides data that shows the differences in the labor situations of different population subgroups from one period to the next, one and a half years later. This allows for an analysis of labor transitions of each group in a given period.

When looking at the average transitions in the 2004-2018 period, the first fact to emphasize is that most employed people remained employed in the same position. However, women show less stability than men. This stability gap between men and women is greater among the young (16 to 29 years old), where only 57% of women can keep their same position, in contrast to 70% of women in the broader age range from 16 to 59 (Figure 3).

In addition to less permanence in the same jobs from one period to the next, women also have a greater probability to transition from employment to inactivity than their male counterparts. In contrast, the majority of men rotate to a different job position, while still remaining employed. Moreover, the evidence shows that this gap is widest for those with the lowest income the gap, revealing once again how the intersection between gender and socioeconomic level segmentates women's opportunities. While women in the lowest quintiles of income distribution transition almost five times more often than men from employment to inactivity, those in the highest quintile do so less than three times more often than men.

FIGURE 3

Transitions from employment. Men and women between the ages of 16 and 59, and 16 and 29. Urban agglomerations. 2004-2018.



Source: CIPPEC based on INDEC (EPH).

Finally, parental status is also a determinant in the amplification of the gender gap from employment to inactivity. The presence of children younger than 6 years old in the home radically increases the distance between how often employed women and men transition to economic inactivity. In particular, women between the ages of 16 and 29 with children are the most at risk, given that their transition from employment to inactivity is 23 times larger than that of their male counterparts. This serves as evidence of their greater vulnerability to changes in organizational schemes of care and of the weight of unpaid work in the home (De León, 2017). As a whole, for women between the ages of 16 and 59, the difference is somewhat less stark (18 times more often). However, these figures are nonetheless much higher than those corresponding to the same age groups (6 and 5 times more often respectively) but for those without children younger than 6 years old in the home.

Women’s Employment Trajectories

In both the public and private sector, women have divergent trajectories resulting from the barriers that they face. The social responsibilities of care, stereotypical gender norms, and education contribute to the gendered division of labor: women undertaking the majority of domestic and care work, while simultaneously facing more obstacles in sustaining labor trajectories and finding decent work opportunities. Women tend to take on more precarious employment positions, mainly via part-time jobs, which offer less access to social protection and other labor rights, as well as through increased participation in less dynamic and lower-wage economic sectors among other variables. In this context, it is critical to emphasize the dimension related to the quality of employment, defined as the sum of labor conditions that contribute to the well-being and satisfaction of women in the workplace.

This situation of a greater vulnerability of employed women is not exclusive to Argentina. Today, in Latin America, five out of every hundred women are underemployed, while only three out of every hundred men are. Underemployment rates, as well as full employment rates and the number of hours worked, do not show strong fluctuations over the last ten years, however relative differences in these rates emerge between Latin American countries. Argentina, for its part, has the highest proportion of women working part-time (34.7%, which is 10 points above average) and, consequently, has the least amount of hours worked on average (34/week) (Marchionni, Gasparini & Edo, 2019). It is important to note, however, that the differences between countries regarding labor market participation and employment rates could impact the differences observed in the characteristics and quality of work. In addition to vulnerabilities related to working time, the difficulties for women are amplified by both their horizontal segmentation in the commercial, education, health, and domestic service sector, where 60% of women are employed (Marchionni, Gasparini & Edo, 2019), as well as by their overrepresentation in the informal labor market.

Decent work opportunities are a necessary condition for the effective exercise of women's rights and for achieving economic empowerment. Consequently, it is important to analyze the labor market participation of women and men in relation to distinct indicators related to quality employment and a decent work trajectory: unemployment, extension of the workday, informality, independent work, horizontal segmentation, income gaps, and atypical forms of employment.

Unemployment

Despite their growing participation in the labor market, women that decide to look for a job position face larger difficulties in achieving their goal. Unemployment, which includes people without a job who are available and actively looking for one, has been consistently higher among women in Argentina for the past 15 years, although the gender gap has steadily decreased.

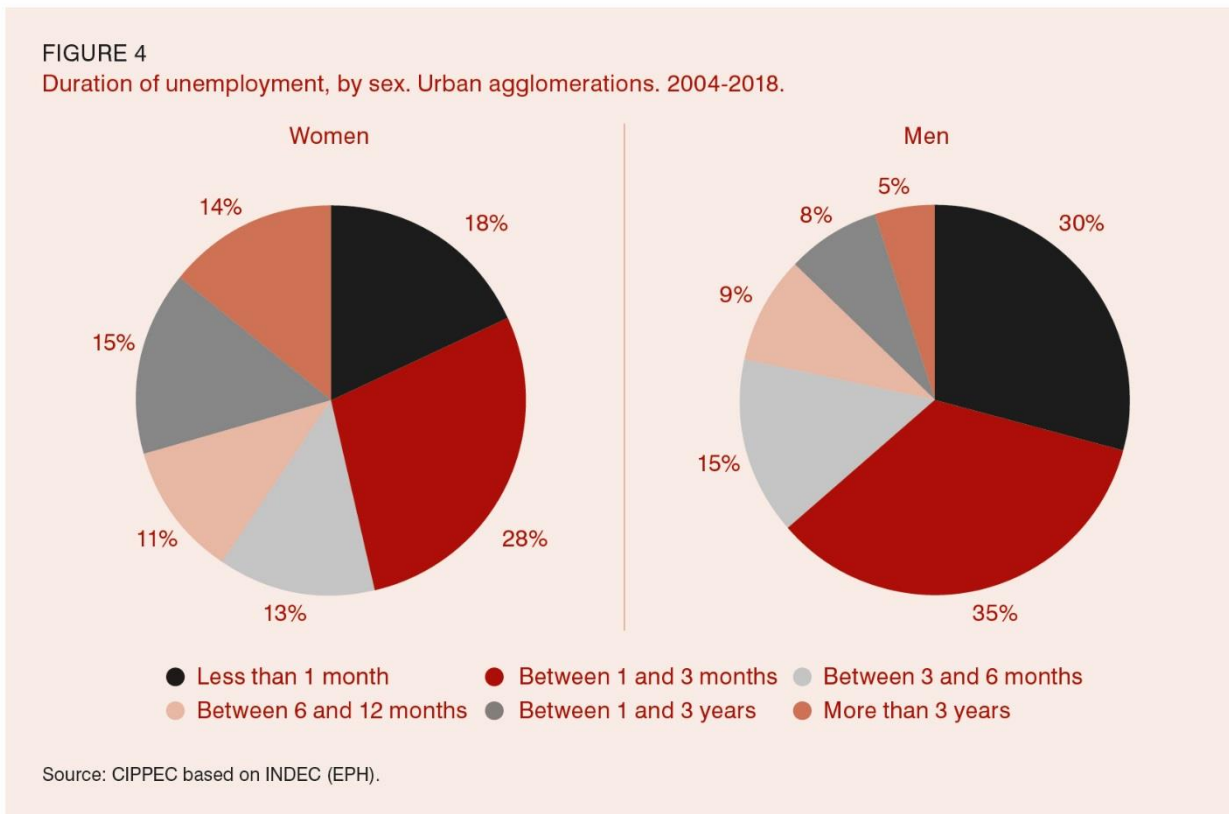
The unemployment situation becomes even more pronounced for the poorest quintiles of the population, which register an above-average unemployment rate, which affects women even more. Considering that there is a phenomenon of double causality between income level and unemployment, the negative correlation between both variables gives insight into the difficulties that the most vulnerable sectors face in finding a job, which constitutes an obstacle for overcoming poverty.

Unemployment is also higher among younger age groups, both for men and women. Between the ages of 18 and 24, the percentage of female unemployment shows a significant disparity with that of male unemployment. However, among older age groups, the gender gap in the unemployment rate declines, even increasing for men, which could be explained by the difference in retirement age for men and women.

Considering solely the unemployment rate for heads of households and their spouses, we find that women with children under 18 exhibit a higher unemployment rate than the rest. Having a child, with the amount of domestic and care work that it entails and the existing discrimination against motherhood in the labor market, could imply an additional obstacle to finding employment. In contrast, fatherhood constitutes an accelerator to finding employment given the traditional role of men as breadwinners and, more importantly, the lack of co-responsibility and conciliatory measures that help distribute the burden of unpaid work more evenly.

Another relevant issue is the average time that women and men remain unemployed. Data shows that almost 3 out of every 10 women (29%) spend more than a year looking for work, in comparison to 13% of men. This has three possible and non-exclusive explanations: men may be

less selective when accepting a job; women may suffer discrimination in the processes of selection; or women may experience less discouragement and continue their job search for longer (Figure 4).



Workday

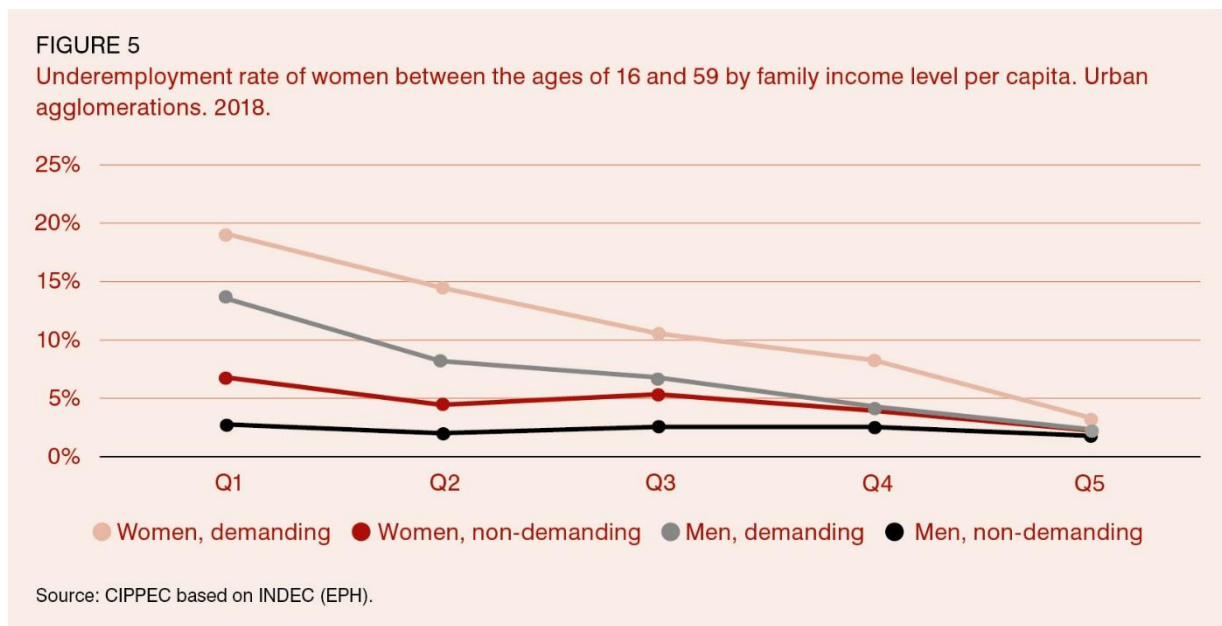
The length of the workday has strong implications for both workers and employers. In this regard, the ILO has recognized the importance of regulating working time in the labor market since its first convention in 1919. Although the majority of the population works full time, different reasons have contributed to the development of part-time work, which includes those who work one or more jobs adding up to less than 35 hours per week, whether that be through traditional employment or self-employment schemes.

For workers, reduced workdays are an option that allows them to reconcile time with family, errands, and educational activities. However, part-time work may be either a voluntary decision (the worker prefers to work fewer hours) or an involuntary one, in the case that workers are not able to find full-time employment. The underemployment rate encompasses those working less than 35 hours per week but who would like to work more. It can be either demanding (when people actively seek to work more) or non-demanding (when people do not seek to work more).

Out of the total proportion of employed women, almost one out of every two works less than 35 hours per week, while only 30.6% have full-time employment or multiple jobs totaling 45 hours per week. In contrast, three out of every four men are employed at least 35 hours per week. This may be explained by the strong difficulties faced by women when reconciling their work and family life, which put barriers in their employment trajectories in the labor market (ILO, 2018b).

When studying the rate of underemployment for Argentina, data reveals that this situation affects women to a greater extent. While underemployment has decreased on average since 2003, in recent years this trend has stagnated at around 10%. The rate of underemployment among women, however, consistently remained around 4 percentage points above the average for men for most of this time, until mid-2018, when the gap increased to 5 percentage points in the fourth quarter. The majority of underemployment is also demanding for both men and women, with data showing an increase in this indicator over the five years, although women showed greater fluctuations in this regard.

The underemployment rate also increased for groups of women in situations of greater economic vulnerability. According to data from 2018, women in the poorest two quintiles of income distribution faced an underemployment rate up to four times higher than those of the wealthiest quintile. Women in these lower quintiles are precisely those that are more likely to look for more work but not find adequate employment (Figure 5).



Underemployment rates vary for distinct age groups. On average, for women older than 16, the underemployment rate is at 15% and this remains relatively constant for all age groups, except after the age of retirement, when demanding underemployment decreases strongly and non-demanding underemployment increases. For men, on the other hand, underemployment is just over 13% for young men, but it begins to decrease after 24. This could indicate both greater discrimination, implicit or explicit, towards women during their economically active lifetime, or their difficulties in achieving longer employment. Data reveals that having children, however, has no significant impact on the underemployment rate.

Additionally, underemployment varies with respect to the education level of both women and men. While almost 20% of women that leave school before finishing their secondary education are underemployed, underemployment reaches less than 10% of women that have completed higher education. Women that do not complete a basic education face critical difficulties in finding adequate employment. This same trend emerges in the case of men. However, underemployment rates are approximately half those of women for all education levels.

Underdevelopment rates can be distinguished further for distinct regions within the country. A concerning finding is that for regions in which female underemployment rates are highest—such as Cuyo, the greater Buenos Aires, and the Pampa—the gender gaps are wider. In contrast, CABA and Patagonia register the lowest underemployment rates for both genders and a smaller gap of 3%. Moreover, the rate of non-demanding underemployment is considerably higher for women in some regions, which may be a result of the greater difficulties that women in these regions have with reconciling productive and reproductive work, as well as with finding time to look for a job.

Informal Labor and Social Protection

Informal labor, the unregistered labor or work in the informal sector, is associated with more precarious employment contexts. In general, those who work under informal conditions face poorer work conditions (lower incomes, longer workdays, more instability, and unsafe workspaces) and limited access to social protection. These workers find themselves in more vulnerable socioeconomic situations and count on fewer tools to balance productive and reproductive life.

There are different terms related to informality that are often used interchangeably. However, three basic concepts should be distinguished:

- Informal sector: small units of production that are neither registered nor societally established, including both businesses run by people as independent contractors, as well as by employers who hire informally;
- Informal employment: job positions where a person performs unregistered work and lacks access to social security and legal protection (this can occur both in the formal or informal sector);
- Informal economy: all economic activities carried out by workers or economic units that are not covered by formal systems or are covered but in an insufficient manner. This last concept reflects the sum of both the informal sector and all informal employment.

Taking these definitions into account, in 2018, 40% of the Argentine population between the ages of 16 and 59 worked in the informal sector of the economy, while 47.5% of employment was informal, and more so for women (48.3% vs. 46.9%). Moreover, out of all informal employment positions, 15% of them took place in the formal sector.

While the ratio of employed women with salaried positions is greater than that of men (79.5% v. 75.5%), given their lower labor market participation, they represent less than half of total salaried positions and 35% of the labor force in the private sector. While the rate of informal salaried positions decreased after Argentina's 2001 financial crisis up to 2011, the increase in the gender gap since 2016 suggests that women are more likely to find informal employment in periods of economic stagnation.

For some groups, informality is an even larger problem. More specifically, the gender gap of unregistered work increases as income level decreases, with informal employment reaching up to 60% of women in the second quintile. By contrast, the gap is almost nonexistent in the highest income level quintile, where the rate of unregistered work is 15% on average. The differences in informal employment between genders also increase with age. While the gender gap is smaller for those above 65, people in this age group have higher rates of unregistered work as a whole, likely as a result of the difficulties that this group has in finding decent work once retired.

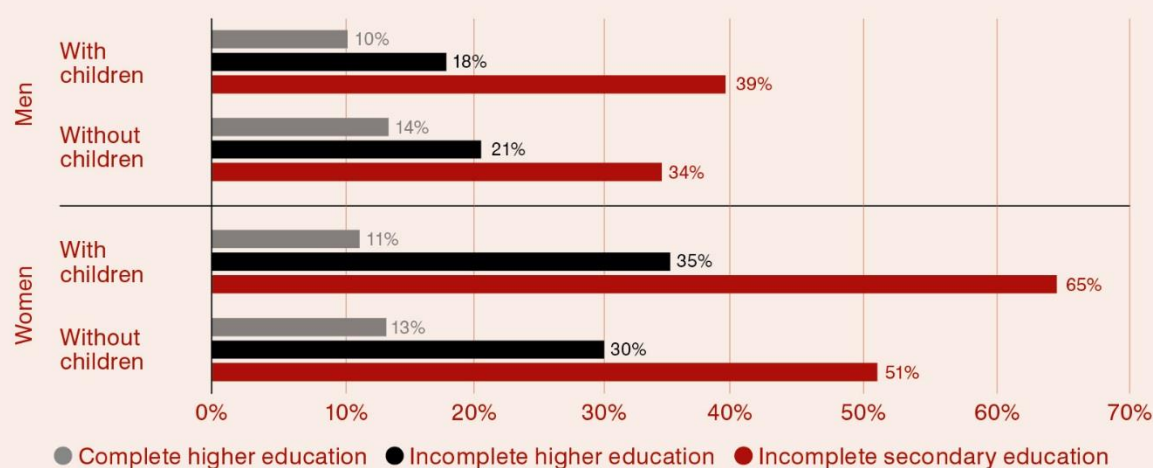
Among those who declare themselves heads of household and their spouses, women who live in homes with children are employed in informal positions to a greater extent. The gap between those that have children younger than 18 and those that do not is just below 6%. This finding also emerges in the case of men but in much smaller magnitudes.

With respect to education level, informal employment is more prevalent among those that have an incomplete secondary education or less and the gender gap with regard to this indicator exceeds 15%. By contrast, among those who have completed university or tertiary education, the gap is non-existent and, on average, the rate of informal employment is around 13%. Education level, which is often understood as a proxy for socioeconomic level, exhibits a positive correlation with formal employment. Moreover, the gender gap among different educational levels widens when taking parental status into account (**Figure 6**). While women, with or without children, show higher rates of informal employment, parental status is what makes most of the difference compared with men. Among those with higher socioeconomic levels, however, the gap is virtually non-existing, probably because domestic partners have greater possibilities of resolving gendered differences in the responsibilities of care through the hiring of services in the market and, therefore, women face fewer domestic responsibilities.

With respect to different economic industries, data suggests that the rate of informal employment varies within them. Domestic work, which employs 16% of the female labor force, and is composed of 98% female workers, has the highest rate of informal employment at 75%. This indicates that the greater part of women that work in the labor market performing domestic and care tasks lack access to basic social security and to protection against risks at work. The same is true of the industrial and commercial sectors, in which women make up a considerable portion of the labor force, while in the public administration and social service sectors, the gender gap in informal employment favors men.

FIGURE 6

Unregistered employment rate by sex, level of education, and parental status in the population between the ages of 16 and 59. Urban agglomerations. 2018.



Source: CIPPEC based on INDEC (EPH).

Historically, high rates of economic inactivity and informal employment among women, along with lower wages and more frequent labor interruptions, have had a negative impact on their access to social security once they reach the age of retirement. As shown in **Figure 8**, this situation changed after the 2000's reforms to the pension system. Given the increased public spending on social security as a percentage of GDP, the change of a private to a public system, and the introduction of a pension moratorium, women's access to retirement improved exponentially. These measures had a disproportionately greater impact on women than on men: it is estimated that 87% of those who benefited from these reforms were women and that 75% did not previously receive any pensions (Amarante, Colacce, & Manzi, 2016).



The moratorium, which was originally set to expire in September of 2016, was initially extended until July 2019. Recently a new extension was granted for three more years for women between the ages of 60 and 64 who have not been able to make the necessary contributions to social security. In addition, for those who were not able to complete the legally required years of social security contributions for being entitled to a pension upon retirement, the Historical Reparation Law (*Ley de Reparación Histórica*) guarantees a universal pension for older people, which grants an amount equivalent to 80% of the minimum wage.

The increase in the female rate of informal employment in recent years is concerning, given that informality reinforces the existence of a gendered income gap both during working years and after retirement. Greater economic vulnerability in homes with female heads of households also has implications on the gender gaps in poverty rates.

Independent Work

Independent or self-employed workers are defined as those who manage and organize their own economic activities, professions or trade (PNUD, 2010). This group can be divided into four subgroups: employers, freelancers, members of productive cooperatives, and auxiliary family workers. In Argentina, this kind of work represents a fourth of the total employment and its relevance becomes even higher in times of low job growth in salaried positions. However, despite

the essential role of independent work in the economy, challenges persist with regard to access to social and labor protection for these workers.

Disaggregated by gender, out of the total number of people who work as freelance employers, 39% are women. However, as the size of the business enterprise increases, this percentage decreases: only 22% of firms with anywhere between 40 and 200 employees belonged to a woman. Data from a public survey (ENAPROSS II, 2015) also show that while 65% of female independent workers work informally, this figure is only 59% for males.

Both female and male independent workers tend to employ themselves in technical and operational positions, however, women do so to a greater extent than men. The ratio of self-employed women working in professional roles is almost twice that of men, but the percentage of men that work as employers vastly surpasses that of women. **Table 2** further deconstructs the substantial differences in the education level of women and men according to each type of employment.

Regarding income levels, in the highest quintiles of this distribution, the percentage of independent work decreases, both for women and men. This situation may be explained by the fact that those in more vulnerable socioeconomic situations have greater difficulties in finding salaried employment and find it necessary to work in a self-employed manner.

The proportion of people who work in self-employed schemes, especially men, also increases with age. This may be explained by both the opportunities that independent work offers people over 50 to continue to work for a longer period of time (Bertranou, 2007), and the inexperience that forces most young people to work as traditional employees, whether that be formally or informally (Tornarolli & Conconi, 2007).

Task qualification \ Level of education	Women			Men		
	Incomplete secondary education	Complete secondary education or incomplete higher education	Complete higher education and beyond	Incomplete secondary education	Complete secondary education or incomplete higher education	Complete higher education and beyond
Employer	14,5%	45,2%	40,3%	26,5%	41,1%	32,4%
Professional self-employed	0,5%	8,1%	91,4%	3,6%	16,4%	80,0%
Technical or operational self-employed	33,3%	48,5%	18,2%	51,5%	40,4%	8,1%
Unqualified self-employed	62,3%	30,2%	7,5%	69,1%	27,9%	3,0%
Total	28,1%	43,6%	28,3%	45,2%	38,6%	16,2%

Source: CIPPEC based on INDEC (EPH)

Parental status is also associated with higher rates of independent work for women, and with lower rates of independent work for men, particularly for those who work as freelancers. The proportion of men working as employers, however, remains stable regardless of parental status. Additionally, while years of education do not reveal consistent differences in the rates of independent work, there are significant regional differences in this respect. While the self-employed are a majority in the Northeast, Cuyo, and La Pampa regions, they are a minority in

the City of Buenos Aires, where there is no gender gap in independent work in general, but the proportion of people working as employers in particular is the highest in the country and registers the widest gender gap.

On another note, data from the EPH reveals that businesses belonging to male independent workers tend to remain in operation for more years than those of women. A recent study by CIPPEC also finds that women and men working independently tend to declare different financing sources with regard to the launch of their businesses (Caro Sachetti, Karczmarczyk & Florito, 2018). While the majority of both genders claim personal savings as their primary source of initial capital financing, 16% of women cite their spouses' funds as a relevant source, while only 4% of men do.

Horizontal Segmentation

In their labor trajectories, women run into “glass walls”, invisible barriers that segmentate their educational and occupational development and concentrate them in less dynamic and poorly paid sectors of the economy. Such segregation is a result of social dynamics that begin to operate from childhood, and they illustrate the feminization of industries like those of domestic work, education, and health, which reflect the extension to the paid labor market of activities that women traditionally are in charge of inside their homes.

With regard to the early origins of these norms about work for women and work for men, a recent study for the City of Buenos Aires reveals that between the ages of six and eight, nine out of every ten girls already associate engineering with masculine abilities (UNESCO, 2017). Moreover, while at that same age about 30% of both boys and girls considered themselves good at math, at nine and ten years of age this percentage drops to 20% for boys and, more worryingly, to only 11% for girls. These statistics reflect the power that stereotypes and gender roles have on the conduct and expectations as established from childhood and adolescence.

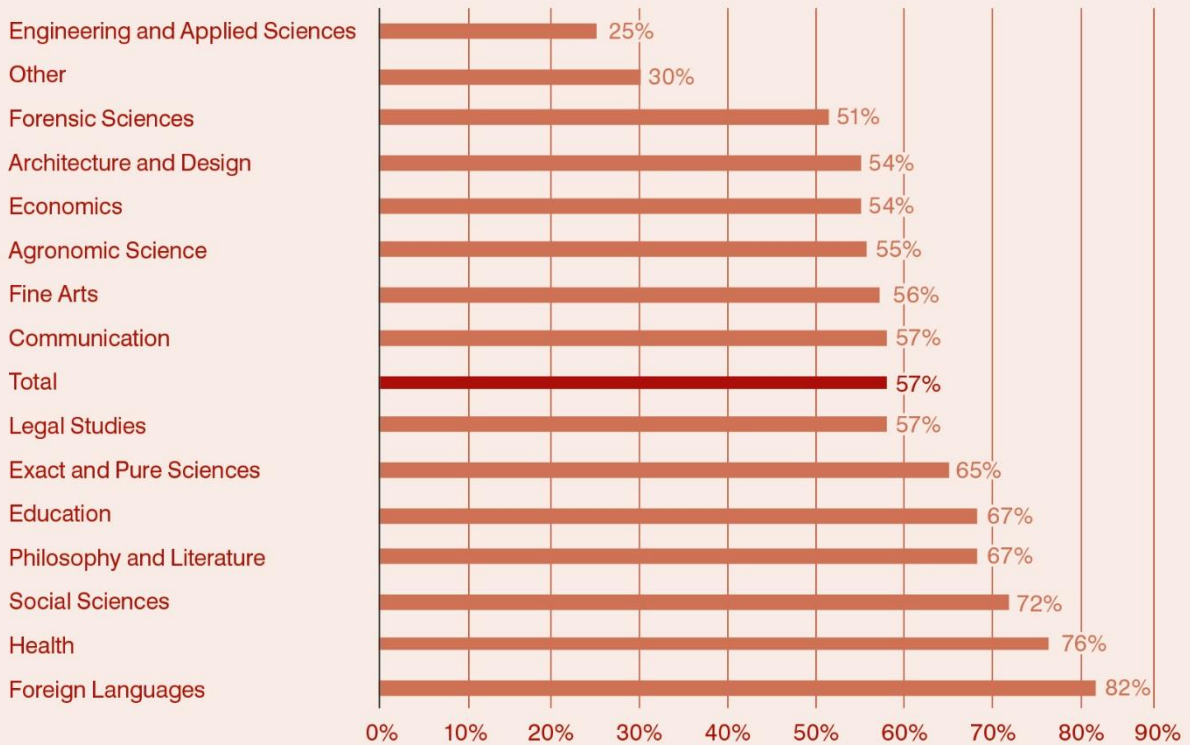
Data from the EPH for 2018 shows that 60% of women are concentrated in four sectors: commercial (18%), domestic work (16%), education (15%) and health (9%). By contrast, women have low participation in other sectors, like the industrial and construction sectors where they represent only 3% of workers.

These segmentation patterns can also be found in higher education. Data from higher education in Argentina reveals that six out of every ten students are women (**Figure 8**). However, they represent only 25% of engineering and applied science students and 15% of programming students (Chicas en Tecnología & Medallia, 2015). By contrast, they are the large majority in courses of study related to languages (82%), health sciences (76%) and social sciences (72%).

The current exclusion of women from certain sectors, particularly more dynamic ones, negatively affects the fulfillment of their rights and the realization of their own autonomy, as well as the possibilities for economic development, both at the micro and macro levels.

FIGURE 8

Proportion of female students in university by area of knowledge. Urban agglomerations. 2015.



Source: Secretariat of University Politics (2015).

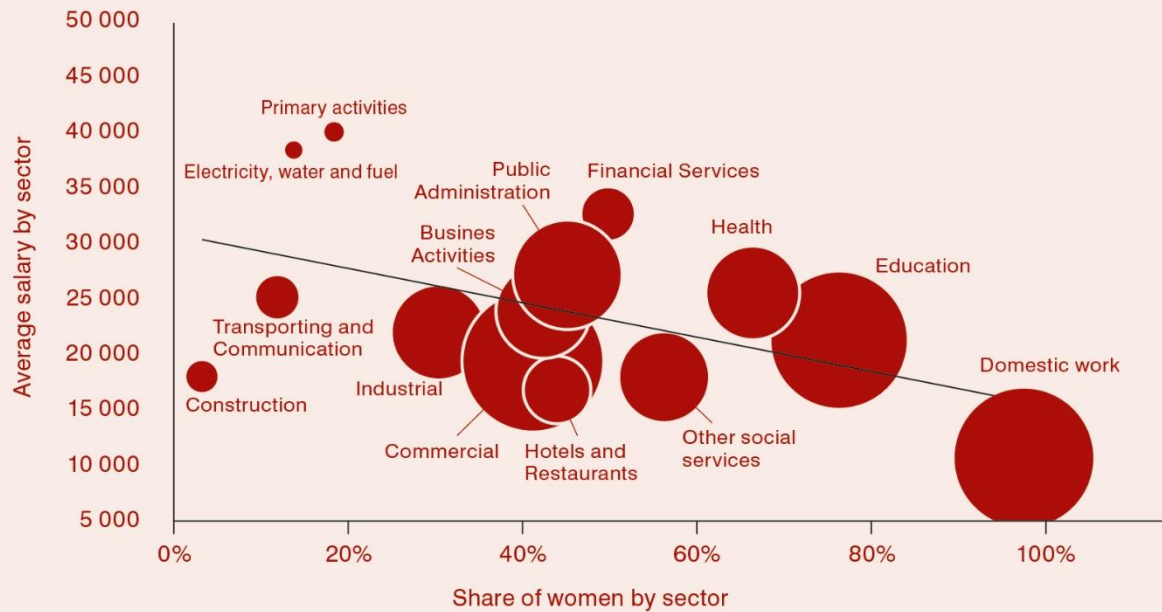
Wage gap

One of the most widespread indicators in the relationship between gender gaps and the labor market is the wage gap, understood as the difference in salary between men and women as a percentage of men's average salary, which currently stands at 24% to 35%. The evidence for Argentina suggest that the wage gap is the result of the existing differences in the quality of men and women's jobs. Therefore, it is a sign of other previously mentioned problems: women work less hours and in less-dynamic sectors, with higher rates of non-registered work and lower representation in managerial positions. Notwithstanding, this wage gap hides an even bigger income gap, given the unpaid work women realize within the home.

In this regard, data shows than feminized sectors have lower wages. Sectors with a greater proportion of women, and those which employ close to 50% of the female workforce grant considerably lower average salaries than more masculinized sectors. **Figure 9** shows the resulting negative correlation between the proportion of women employed in a given sector and the average salary of that sector.

FIGURE 9

Average salary, women's share and feminization rate by economic sector. Urban agglomerations. 4th quarter of 2018.



Source: CIPPEC based on INDEC (EPH)

Atypical Forms of Employment

Atypical forms of employment encompass different forms of labor that differ from standard employment. Technological transformations, among other factors, have increased the share of these forms of employment in recent years, given the greater flexibility and innovative forms of organization that they offer women and men in the labor market. Labor practices may be considered atypical given particularities in the duration and/or organization of the work in question, such as part-time work, and seasonal/intermittent work (Maurizio, 2016).

For its part, temporary work through contracts has a higher prevalence among younger workers. However, there many different types of employment under fixed-term contracts, and the share of these different types vary by sex and age group. For example, older women register higher participation in employment programs, while younger women typically find fixed-term jobs through internships.

In terms of atypical organization, examples include multi-party employment, employment through contracting agencies, and work through digital platforms. One common characteristic of this group is that its labor arrangements can expose workers to greater risks and instability, less compensation, and reduced access to social protection. Technological advancements have had a particular impact on the rise in work through digital platforms in the last decade. This kind of work counts on digital platforms to act as an intermediary between workers and their potential clients.

There is a clear gender gap in the labor force employed through digital platforms, with only one out of every four workers being female (Madariaga, Buenadicha, Molina & Ernst, 2019). One of the most noted benefits of this type of work is the working schedule flexibility it offers to those who must tend to domestic tasks and care responsibilities, who, as was mentioned previously, are mostly women (Rodríguez Fernández, 2017). However, this does not imply advances towards substantive gender equality, given that the work of domestic care still conditions the possibilities

of female employment. Moreover, as previously mentioned the lack of benefits associated with this type of work further amplifies the gender gap in terms of labor conditions.

Access to Leadership Positions

Throughout their trajectories, women come across glass ceilings which have traditionally prohibited, condemned and punished their exercise of power, despite some notable exceptions. This term, conceptualized by feminist academia, refers to the systemic blockade that prevents women from participating in decision-making processes, both in private and public affairs.

There is widespread empirical evidence to support a “business case” for greater gender diversity in decision-making organisms (Brest & Díaz Langou, 2018). The finding developed in much of the evidence is that a greater presence of women on boards of directors or executive positions translates into greater financial earnings and business sales (Hoobler, Masterson, Nkomo, & Michel, 2016). There is also some evidence that the participation of women in elected positions motivates girls, adolescents and women to become involved in politics (Beaman, Duflo, Pandre, & Topalova, 2012).

In the private sector, despite having reversed the traditional gender gap regarding the maximum education level attained, women continue to show a lower relative participation in leadership and executive positions in the business sphere. Only 5.6% of salaried women employees who have at least completed secondary education are in executive or management positions, while this figure rises to 11.4% among their male counterparts. **Table 3** shows the full distribution of men and women in salaried positions by skill level.

The data also shows a vertical segregation as a function of sex in certain categories. Men achieve a greater proportion of executive and leadership charges, even in the case of administrative tasks, in which, otherwise, the proportion of women surpasses that of men. When further analysis is disaggregated by sector, as in **Table 4**, a striking combination of vertical segregation and horizontal segregation emerges.

Qualification	Women		Men		Total	
	(in thousands)	(%)	(in thousands)	(%)	(in thousands)	(%)
Professional	363	8	352	6	715	7
Technical	950	21	764	14	1714	17
Operational	1840	41	3494	62	5334	53
Unskilled	1295	29	958	17	2252	22
Non-specified	19	0	26	0	45	0
Total	4467	100	5594	100	10 061	100

Source: CIPPEC based on INDEC (EPH)

Decision- marking roles Sector	Total Distribution		Leadership		Administration Leadership		Production Leadership	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
Manufacturing	22%	78%	21%	79%	35%	65%	16%	84%
Construction	8%	92%	15%	85%	36%	64%	8%	92%
Commerce, restaurants, hotels	36%	64%	23%	77%	43%	57%	30%	70%
Transportation, warehousing, telecommunications	13%	87%	29%	71%	30%	70%	13%	87%
Social services	35%	65%	24%	76%	35%	65%	21%	79%
Financial and loan services	65%	35%	60%	40%	55%	45%	44%	56%

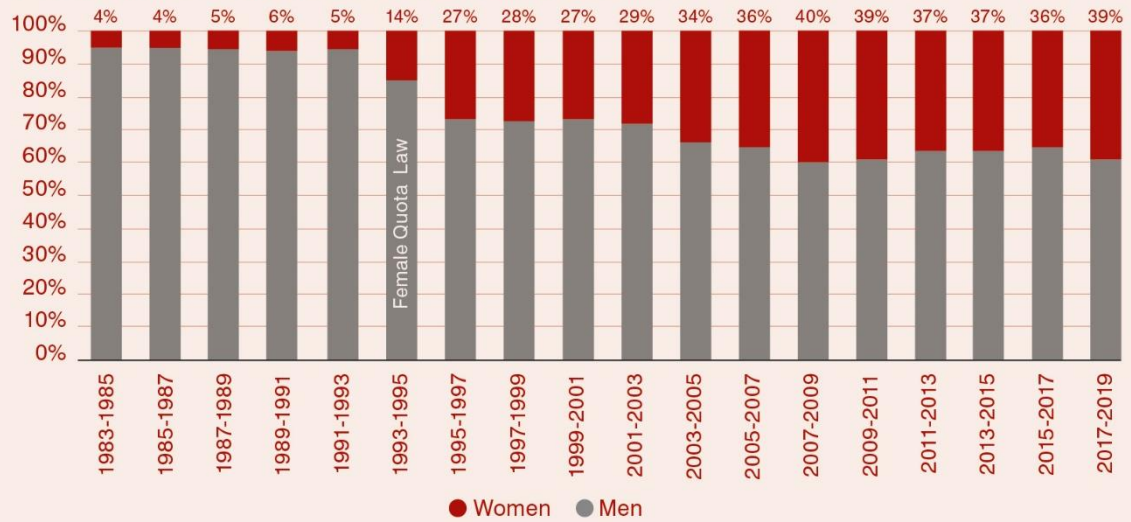
Source: Labor Indicators Survey, Ministry of Production and Labor.

In the International Business Report (IBR) published by Grant Thornton in March 2018, survey data revealed that, globally, the percentage of businesses with at least one woman in a high executive position went from 66% in 2017 to 75% in 2018, while the proportion of senior charges occupied by women dropped from 25% to 24% in the same period. For Latin America in 2018, these figures were 65% and 30% respectively and, for Argentina specifically, they were 58% and 23% respectively, below both the global and regional average. In 2017, the consulting firm Mercer, published a similar diagnostic, and it suggested that progress towards the inclusion of more women in hierarchical positions could advance more rapidly. One concerning result from this analysis found that, in areas where the manager was a man, there was a lower percentage of women in the organization as a whole. This could indicate bias at the moment of hiring or awarding promotions. Finally, although this situation is not specific to large companies, smaller enterprises evidence more favorable gender compositions.

The gender disparity in leadership positions is also reinforced in the public sector. In this area, in 1991 Argentina was a pioneer in the Latin American region with the passing of the National Electoral Code Law 24.012, also known as the Female Quota Law, which required the nomination of at least 30% of women on national legislative lists for all political groups. The law paved the way for similar laws in other countries of the region and in the provinces of Argentina since the 1990s. The effects of the law on the lower house of parliament (called Chamber of Deputies in Argentina) is shown in **Figure 10**, while a similar effect can be observed in the upper house (the Senate) where women currently occupy 42% of seats. These figures are lower, however, for the proportion of legislative committees presided by women (35% and 27% respectively). Women also remain highly concentrated in feminized committees, like education, social protection, and public health.

FIGURE 10

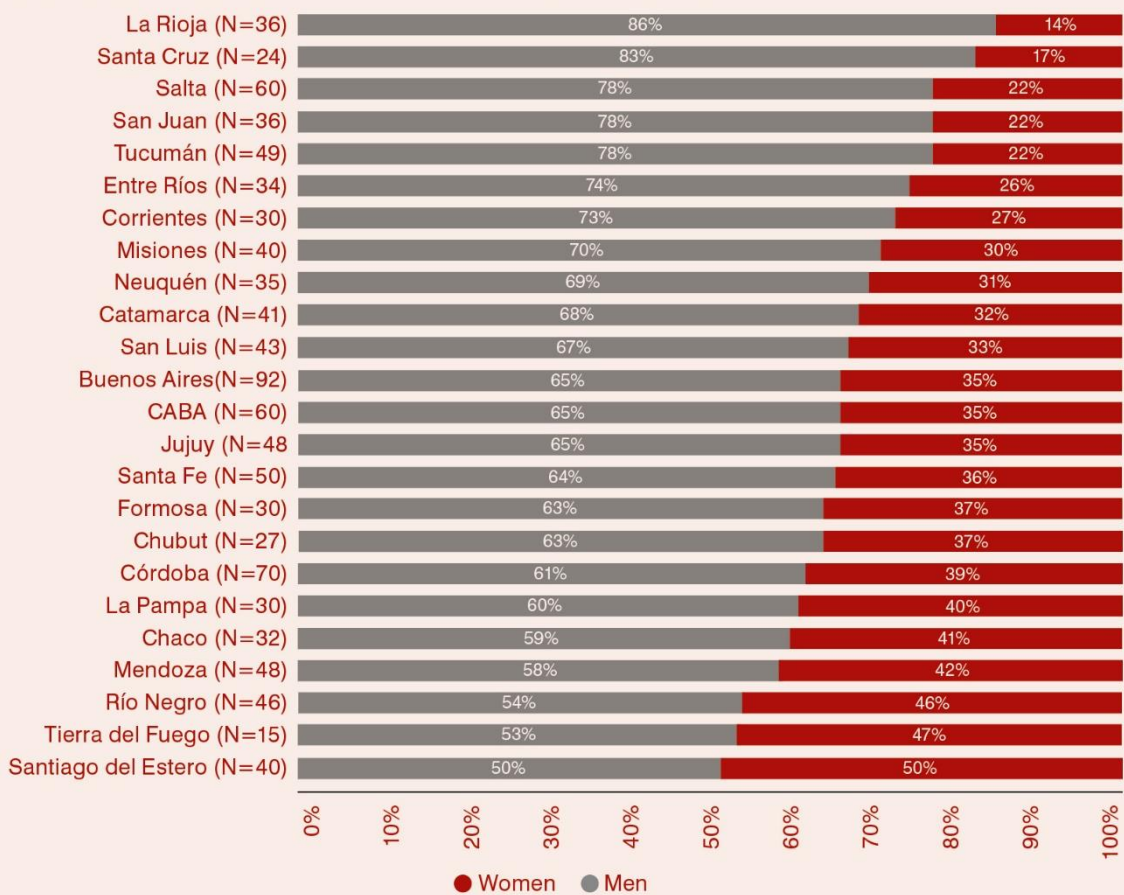
Women in the national Chamber of Deputies. Argentina. 1983-2019.



Source: CIPPEC based on Marx, Borner & Caminotti, 2007; and Interparliamentary Union (2018).

FIGURE 11

Women in the provincial Chambers of Deputies. Argentine provinces. 2018.



Source: CIPPEC based on data from the provincial Chambers of Deputies (2018).

Women are also underrepresented in the executive bodies of political parties: they occupy, on average, only 28% of the highest national executive bodies (PNUD, 2017). At the highest national executive position, the Presidency, women have only been present on two separate occasions: Maria Estela Martínez de Perón (1974-1976) and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007-2015).

At the provincial level, women represent, on average, only 33% of members of the provincial Chambers of Deputies (**Figure 12**) and 24% of the provincial Senates. In the 2017 elections, only 2 out of every 10 candidate lists for provincial deputies was headlined by women, and they were leaders in only 26% of the candidate lists in the provinces that elected senators in the same election. In executive charges, women occupy only 4 out of 24 governor positions and around 10% of municipal positions (118 mayors over 1163 municipalities). With regard to unelected positions, from 1983 to 2018, on average, 10% of women were appointed as ministers. In 2019, only two of the ten ministries were led by women, while only 9% of all ministerial appointments made by President Mauricio Macri were women. At the same time, in 2017 only 31% of senior management positions were occupied by women, while at the same time both vertical and horizontal segregation were reinforced at the ministerial level as well. Finally, out of a total of 51 public enterprises, only 2 were presided by women.

Among trade unions, it is also possible to observe glass ceilings for women. While the Female Union Quota Law 25.674 was sanctioned in 2002, seeking to work as an affirmative action initiative that guaranteed at least 30% female executive leadership, women are today only in charge of 18% of trade union secretariat, assistant secretariat and prosecutor positions. There are even four unions – oil technicians, drivers, loggers, and chemists – which include no women in decision-making positions. Again, horizontal segregation can be observed in this regard, given that 74% of these hierarchical positions occupied by women are tied to stereotypically feminized issues, including gender equality, social services, family and childhood. Finally, women also exhibit low participation in collective decision-making commissions, being absent from 30% of negotiations by such union commissions. This figure rises further to 49% in the business sector.

Determinants of Women's Economic Participation

The determinants of the major barriers that women face in gaining access to the paid labor market in conditions of substantive equality are a collection of multi-varied factors. These multiple variables interact dynamically to generate the architecture of inequality presented in previous sections. Based on evidence from robust studies, the determinants of gender gaps in the labor market can be classified under three groups: care and unpaid domestic work, social norms and biases and educational trajectories.

It is important to emphasize that, although this section focuses on each of the three determinants individually, empirically the determinants do not operate independently. Rather, the architecture of inequality, which stymies the economic autonomy of women and their rights in the labor market, is the result of the dynamic interaction between these factors over time.

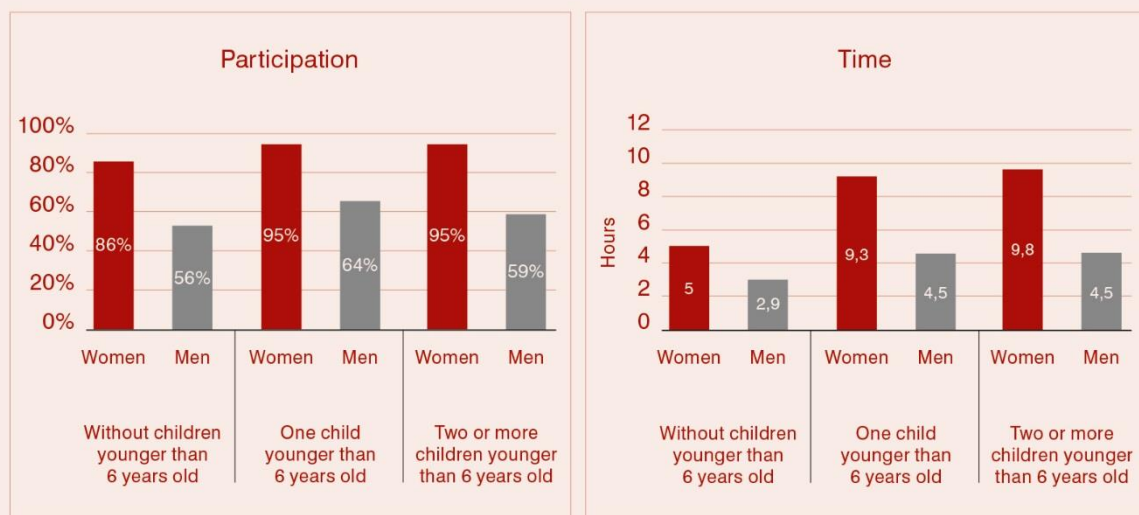
Care and Unpaid Domestic Work

Care is defined as the “collection of activities and relationships oriented towards fulfilling the physical and emotional requirements of children and dependent adults, within the normative, economic, and social terms in which they are assigned and undertaken” (Daly & Lewis, 2000). Feminist economists have highlighted the importance of addressing “care” as a relevant dimension of well-being and of state responsibility. The central argument is that reproductive work supports the economic participation of workers and maintains adequate living conditions both for the current and future labor force (Esquivel, 2011; Rodríguez Enríquez, 2015).

Feminist criticism to the welfare state outlined that, in its original formulation, it ignored a basic dimension of well-being: the production of care, which mainly occurs inside the family sphere through the (unpaid) work of women (Sainsbury, 1994; Orloff, 1996; Lister, 1997). Women are responsible for the majority of care and domestic work, which is noted in the differential rates of hours dedicated to unpaid work. In Argentina, while nearly 89% of women participate in these tasks, only 58% of men do. Moreover, on average, women spent 6,4 daily hours on these activities, while men only do so for an average 3,4 hours. In addition, the presence of children below the age of 6 in the home increase the burden of care activities, particularly for women. While women’s daily contribution increases from 5 hours to 9.34 when there is one child younger than 6 years old in the household, for their male counterparts the increase is quite lower: from 2,9 to 4,5 hours (Figure 12).

FIGURE 12

Participation (in percentage) and use of time (in hours) in unpaid work by sex and the presence of children younger than 6. Men and women older than 18 years old. Urban agglomerations. 3rd quarter of 2013.



Source: CIPPEC based on INDEC (EPH).

The relative inelasticity of the behavior of male partners with respect to care activities was nevertheless accompanied by an increased participation of women in the labor market. As previously mentioned, this phenomenon is known as the “asymmetric revolution” (Wainerman, 2005), and it creates a double burden of work for women, which consists of the unpaid working day inside the household, together with another paid working day outside, in the labor market. This situation affects women’s availability of time and their quality of life.

What is more, the changes in women’s labor market participation were accompanied by significant transformations in the structure of households and families. On the one hand, compared to the 1980s, households with a single male provider decreased significantly (from 65% to 35% in 2018), while the number of households with two providers increased during the same period (from 29% to 40%) (INDEC-EPH, 1986 - 2018). Furthermore, while in the year 2000 in Argentina 30% of women older than 15 exclusively managed domestic tasks, this percentage dropped to 20% in 2014 (Marchionni, Gasparini & Edo, 2019). On the other hand, relevant changes in the composition of homes also occurred. The traditional structure of the nuclear family, composed of a heterosexual couple with children, gave way to an expansion of single-person

homes, couples without children, single-parent households, joint living situations, and same-sex couples with or without children among others. In the last 30 years, nuclear families went from constituting nearly half of all households (47%) to a little more than a third (35%), meanwhile, single-person homes more than doubled (from 9% to 20%) and single-parent households increased by 50%.

These changes occurred in the context of wider demographic changes, such as an increase in life expectancy, the expansion of education, and the global decrease of fertility rates (Pecheny, 2017). Nonetheless, these trends hide more diverse realities, given that fertility rates exhibit a stratified behavior according to socioeconomic class. While women with higher education levels tend to postpone marriage and having kids, or decide not to have them at all (Wainerman, 2005), those sectors with the lowest income and education levels show a much higher incidence of teen pregnancy relative to other countries around the world. The fact that 7 out of 10 of these pregnancies taken to full-term are not intentional (SIP, 2015), warns about the deficit in the access and quality of sexual and reproductive rights policies. Pregnancy –and, particularly, unplanned pregnancy– at a young age negatively affects the pursuit of educational and labor projects by adolescents (De León, 2017).

While the drop in fertility rates has had a positive effect on the economic participation of women in the whole world (Gasparini & Marchionni, 2015), it is important to note that public policies regarding care, work-life balance and co-responsibility have the potential to generate positive effects on women's labor market participation. The evidence presented suggests that it is not the responsibility of care in itself what determines women's economic participation, but rather the familiarization and feminization of these responsibilities. In countries where the state intervenes and socializes these responsibilities, the gender gaps in labor market participation are reduced (De León, 2018) and fertility rates have been able to be sustained at values around the replacement rate.

Specialized literature has categorized public policies of care into those that ensure the availability of time, grant money or provide services that alleviate the burden of care on families (Ellingstaeter, 1999; Lister, 1997). These include paid leave regimes, cash transfers and public infrastructure dedicated to early childhood education and care services for other dependent populations. A more comprehensive vision includes developing a system of regulations and incentives to promote a more equitable gendered division of labor and co-responsibility (CEPAL, 2009). Moreover, prospective policies should include a greater formalization and hierarchy of those who work in paid care services. Recently, diverse agencies within the UN emphasized that the objective of care policies should be the recognition, reduction, redistribution, and representation of work between the state, family and the market, as well as between men and women (UN Women, 2017; ILO, 2018c).

Social Norms, Gender Biases, and Gender Stereotypes

Social norms can be conceptualized as collective definitions of acceptable social conducts that impose certain rules or ideals to each specific social group (Pearse & Conell, 2016). Gender norms are, then, defined as a sub-group of social norms that express the expected behaviors of people belonging to a particular gender (understood in its binary form) in a socially specific context. When patriarchal and restrictive, these norms reproduce inequalities in the social, political, and economic spheres through their socialization and internalization, which is the basis of stereotypes and unconscious biases that then materialize in both the individual conscience and externalize themselves in cultural representations (Cislaghi, Manji, & Heise, 2018).

There are different disciplines that seek to explain gender norms and stereotypes, including those of feminist economic literature, gender studies, and sociology. This collective literature offers evidence regarding the role that at least five distinct groups of social norms and stereotypes

have on the observed gaps between men and women in the labor market: (1) norms associated with the gendered division of labor; (2) norms associated with cultural constructs around working men and women, as well as maternity and paternity; (3) norms associated with appropriate work for men and women; (4) norms associated with respect, decorum, and mobility based on social and cultural contexts; and (5) discriminatory norms associated with property and control of physical assets, which may reduce women's access to economic resources.

It is possible to distinguish between three types of regulations that have an effect on the full enjoyment of economic autonomy for women: current laws with openly discriminatory; the absence of anti-discriminatory clauses in the access and use of production supplies by women, such as credit; and the presence of formal norms that, given their composition, reproduce gender inequality and have negative collateral effects on the participation of women in paid work. Despite the formal recognition of the legal equality of women, certain pieces of legislation persist that put women in an inferior position with respect to men.

For instance, in terms of openly discriminatory laws currently in place in Argentina, articles 10, 11, and 19 through 24 of Law 11.317, known as the Legal Regime for the Work of Women and Children, from 1924, are still valid and can restrict women from taking part in certain tasks, such as in those that could be considered dangerous or unhealthy. This language is a clear example of a paradigm that treated women as an incapable subject in legal terms. While some of these regulations may have fallen out of use, their legal validity can affect the labor opportunities for women. For example, certain employers could prefer to exclusively hire male workers, with the aim of avoiding legal problems.

The inequality stemming from social conceptions of gender roles is so deeply embedded into laws, regulations, and public policies that even those that do not address the situation directly reproduce biases in their daily operation. Public policies, such as those establishing asymmetrical parental leave upon having a child or differential minimum ages for retirement, can lead to employer biases against hiring women, limit women's access to accumulating capital, and/or reinforce the gendered division of labor, in general terms.

Education

Education should be noted as a matter for prioritized public policy intervention for various reasons, including the state's responsibility to education as a universally recognized fundamental right and the critical importance of human capital development for any strategy of economic development. There is great consensus among experts around the correlation between years of quality education and economic growth (CAF, 2016; Heckman, 2008). Moreover, the effective development of cognitive and socio-emotional abilities during schooling are known for its effect in improving educational prospects, access to the labor market in decent conditions, and higher incomes (Acosta, Muller & Sarzosa, 2015).

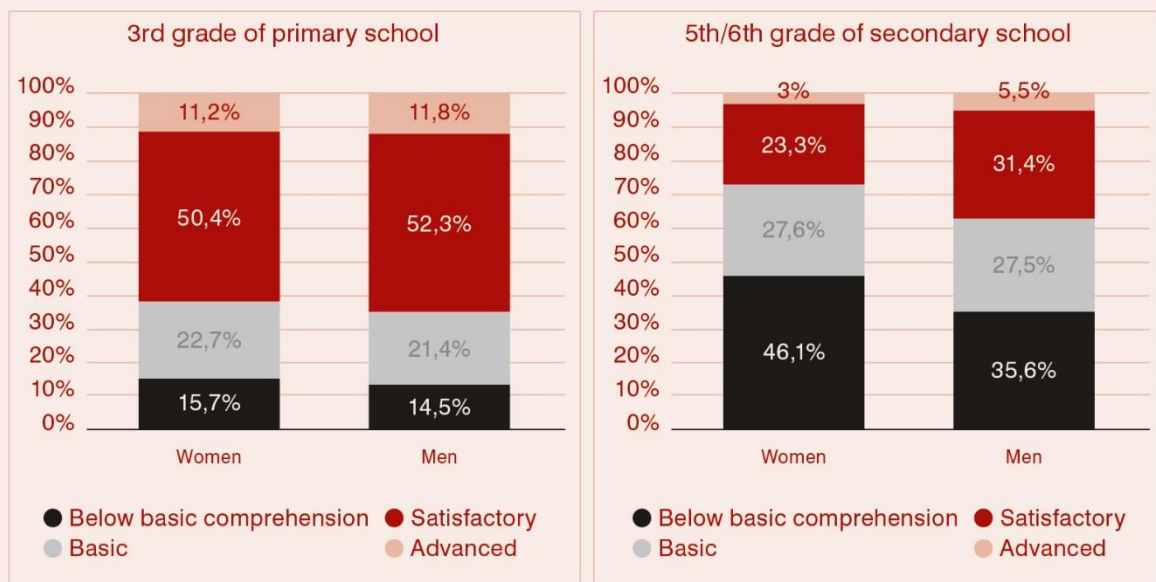
Moreover, even though ensuring quality in education is critical, completing mandatory education in and of itself is also important for obtaining better jobs and higher wages. In Argentina, women surpass men in terms of educational completion. It is important to note, however, that the deficits in educational completion are high for both genders, especially for those coming from lower-income homes. This tendency then impacts on labor market results, but the reasons for these deficits is different according to gender; namely, because of the differential impact that care responsibilities have on the possibility of men and women to continue their studies. In this regard, some of the factors explaining school dropout rates are strongly related to the stereotypical gender roles of women and men in the household and in the market. For men, they center on the opportunities available to them in the labor market (Doll, Eslami & Walters, 2013), while, for women, they revolve around family responsibilities. These differential factors

and the resulting trajectories after abandoning school must be considered when designing public policy strategies for each group.

Another challenge in terms of gender is the aforementioned horizontal segmentation that is strengthened by higher education but has its origins at a much earlier educational stage. One recent study found that girls as young as 6 years old were less likely to consider that others of their own gender were truly intelligent (Bian, Leslie & Cimpian, 2017). Social norms that associate men with analytical and logical fields, like mathematics, and women with sociocultural fields, like linguistics, also contribute to reproducing biases and establishing expected fields based on gender, regardless of the individual capacity of each person. Finally, an interesting phenomenon, known as the paradox of gender equality, indicates that in more equal countries, where women have the economic and legal liberties to pursue careers with lower economic returns, they are underrepresented in STEM fields; while in other countries, where gender equality is much more compromised, the opposite is true as financial liberty through these fields offers a window to security (Stoet & Geary, 2018).

In terms of horizontal segmentation, the results from standardized Argentine tests allows us to observe how the gender gap in mathematics performance increases parallel to age. **Figure 13** presents these results by sex for primary and secondary school students. The results demonstrate that, despite having virtually equal scores when tested in the third year of primary school, in secondary school there is already a 10-point gap between male and female students who received a “below basic” score in mathematics in secondary school, and an overrepresentation of young men in the highest scoring categories. This shows the impact that the stereotype threat can have on concrete results in specific disciplines, when one specific group (young women and girls, in this case) are repeatedly exposed to gender norms that dictate that they are not or cannot be good in STEM fields, for instance (Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999).

FIGURE 13
Results of the “Aprender” test in Mathematics administered to students in the 3rd grade of primary school and the 5th and 6th grades of secondary school by sex. Argentina. 2016.



Source: Pruebas Aprender, Result Report (2016).

Section III: The Role of the State: Laws, Institutions and Policies for Gender Equality

Regulatory and Institutional Framework for Substantive Gender Equality

In Argentina, the legal framework upholding women's rights, in particular their economic rights, is extensive. The country has subscribed to various international treaties and conventions that promote substantive gender equality. These instruments recognize gender inequality as an injustice targeting the collective and individual rights of women that consequently requires the intervention of the state for prevention and reparation.

In 1979, the UN General Assembly established the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Ratified by 187 countries, the convention urges states not only to cease discrimination, but to take concrete actions to modify the traditional role of men and women in societal and familial structures. Internationally ratified in 1985, Argentina included CEDAW in article 75 subsection 22 of the National Constitution in 1994.

In terms of physical autonomy, the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1994 approved the Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Sanction, and Eradicate Violence Against Women. This was the first proposal on a regional level to develop mechanisms for the protection and defense of women as a fundamental means to fight against physical, sexual, and psychological violence. Several other international conventions also remain relevant. The International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) and the Fourth Global Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) sought to ensure female access to labor markets, reproductive and family planning services, and achieving a better balance between family and work. Additionally, the Conventions of the ILO presented a set of principles and recommendations of ethical labor practices. This includes pay equality, non-discriminatory policies, protections for workers with family responsibilities and state protections for domestic workers, all of which were ratified by Argentina.

In addition, in 2015 the UN launched the Sustainable Development Goals. While gender equality is a transverse goal of every SDG, as a desired and necessary outcome of all development strategies, SDG 5 specifically aims to establish gender equality in terms of access to education, sexual and reproductive health services, access to the labor market and economic rights, along with opportunities for participation and decision making in both the private and public spheres.

On the national level, the National Constitution consecrates the rights of every citizen of the nation, with equality of opportunity specifically mentioned in Article 75 Subsection 23. Physical autonomy, mentioned in section I is guaranteed by Law 26485 on the Comprehensive Protection to Prevent, Punish, and Eradicate Violence Against Women. It defines the different types of violence: physical, psychological, sexual, domestic and economic. Additionally, the National Plan of Action for the Prevention, Assistance, and Eradication of Violence Against Women 2017-2019 advances a comprehensive plan to combat gender violence through 3 approaches: building a gender perspective at all levels, institutional coordination and articulation, and monitoring and evaluating interventions.

Sexual and reproductive health rights are principally addressed by two laws: the Sexual Health Law 25673 and the Comprehensive Sex Education Law (*Educación Sexual Integral*, ESI, for its Spanish acronym) 26150. The former sets objectives for increased female participation and decisional autonomy, better educational infrastructure, and improved health outcomes to generally promote responsible procreation. The latter established the rights of children and adolescents to receive comprehensive sex education in private and public educational institutions, with a focus on rights awareness, gender equality, respecting diverse lifestyles, care for body and health, and emotional development.

Decisional autonomy is bolstered through instruments both for the legislative power and for unions. For the former, the 1992 law 24012, commonly known as the Female Quota Law, was a landmark in women's political representation, mandating at least 30% of all candidates on party lists be female. 2017 saw another substantial advancement with Law 27412 on Gender Parity, stipulating the representation of female candidates in national legislatures and in the Parliament of Mercosur at 50%. Presently, 13 provinces and CABA have gender parity laws. In the union sphere, according to 2002's Law 25674 on Union Women's Quotas, all labor organizations must maintain a level of female membership equal to the rate of female participation in their industry.

In terms of access to paid work, national legislation maintains a principle of no labor discrimination, whether on the grounds of sex, race, nationality, religion, politics, association, or age. Furthermore, decrees from the Ministry of Work, Employment, and Social Security (*Ministerio de Trabajo, Empleo y Seguridad Social*, MTEySS, for its Spanish acronym) - currently called Ministry of Production and Work (*Ministerio de Producción y Trabajo*) - have established specific measurements for participation in employment programs and access to professional development among others as part of the Plan for Equality of Opportunity between Men and Women in the Labor World (*Plan de Igualdad de Oportunidades*, PIOD, for its Spanish acronym). This plan seeks to design policies that promote the incorporation of women to work while guaranteeing equality of opportunity with men. Additionally, the 2019 Law 27499, known as the Micaela Law, established mandatory gender trainings for all state employees, and designated the National Women's Institute (INAM, for its Spanish acronym) as the entity tasked with implementation.

It remains noteworthy, however, that while Argentina has made great strides at the normative level, there still exist important gender gaps. For the body of laws to be translated into concrete actions that improve the state of women's rights, adequate institutionality is needed. This entails ensuring sufficient hierarchy of the area commanding gender equality efforts within the state's bureaucratic structure, and an adequate budget, organizational structure, technical and operational capacity that enables it to implement key policies, as well as to coordinate initiatives from other relevant sectors, to achieve greater substantive gender equality in the workplace (EIGE, 2014).

According to the paradigm developed in the 1980s that understood gender inequality as an institutionalized system based on power asymmetries, female empowerment requires mainstreaming of gender through the entire public policy cycle, from the establishment of the state agenda, to formulation, implementation, and evaluation. This focus has grown to become an issue of global concern in the following decades, but has achieved limited tangible impact in practice.

The return of democracy in Argentina brought sweeping changes to the body of laws and institutions related to gender equality. In 1992, decree 1426 created the National Women's Council (CNM) and stated the need for full implementation of CEDAW recommendations. In 2017, the CNM became the INAM: a decentralized agency under the umbrella of the Ministry of National Social Development, with oversight over its own budget. INAM works to strengthen institutions at the local, state, and national level to promote female participation in development, produce information about new public policy, and seek to eliminate violence and discrimination against women.

While 1998 saw the creation of the Tripartite commission on equality of treatment and opportunities between men and women in the work world (CTIO), and 2007 the emergence of the Coordination of Gender Equity and Equal Opportunities at Work (CEGIOT), both focusing on improving female integration into unions along with workplaces in the public and private sectors, one of Argentina's greatest institutional achievements came in 2018. The Plan for Equality of Opportunities and Rights (PIOD) established a coordinated vision toward gender equality, an

already common advancement of governments in the region, in which Argentina was lagging behind.

In conclusion, despite some promising progress in recent years and a history of a progressive and pioneering body of laws, the gender agenda does not yet have a large enough standing in the ministerial structure or agenda to implement high-impact policies. Argentina must rectify these failures to effectively transition from formal equality to substantive equality.

National Public Policies and Gender Gaps in the Labor Market

This section seeks to complete the diagnosis of substantive gender equality in Argentina's labor market, this time with a focus on existing policy initiatives. While not exhaustive, it will focus on four of the most relevant spheres: (1) policies related to care, work-life balance and sexual and reproductive rights; (2) employment and social protection policies; (3) socio-educational programs; and interventions for cultural change.

Care, Work-Life Balance and Sexual and Reproductive Rights

In terms of care, the state has implemented policies with a potentially positive impact on gender equality. The early childhood education and care services are an important part of this strategy. They take the forms of public, private, and community spaces variously regulated at the local, regional and national levels. While the exact number remains unknown, the national registry reports 4500 nationwide, and unfortunately they only cover 32% of all Argentinean children aged 0-5. These spaces are part of the Early Childhood program (*Plan Nacional de Primera Infancia*) that also includes other initiatives, such as family intervention programs. While it remains unclear if this service has escalated its coverage rate in recent years, the program did receive greater prioritization in the 2018 national budget, a sign of greater potential capacity. For dependent children older than five years old the national education system provides compulsory kindergarten and primary education in a simple school-day, which constitutes only 4 hours. Extending this could be useful for both the students and the parents, improving child development outcomes and reducing the burden of care on families and women.

Another important aspect of care service policy is that related to the 13% of Argentina's population living with some form of disability (Venturiello, 2016). In 2017, the establishment of the National Disability Agency (AND) intended to unite national disability policy under a National Plan for the Disabled, with two key programs which are of relevance regarding the labor force participation of women. First, day centers for people with disabilities, which are spaces offering cultural, educational and other kinds of activities. Second, alternative systems to the family group, which are residences of all sizes in which people with disabilities can live and receive care when they cannot remain with their original family. These policies are, unfortunately, still in the earlier stages of design and implementation, with significant gaps with regard to their coverage and quality and, therefore, much to do in terms of guaranteeing the rights of people living with disabilities.

As for the case of older people with dependency, most care is again performed by families: 78% of elderly dependents reported they have a relative (usually a daughter) who helps take care of them (INDEC-ECVAM, 2014). This clearly shows the coverage of care infrastructure is insufficient, but without a unified network or clear national records on these institutions, designing and implementing appropriate responses remains difficult. In general, however, although the data demonstrates high demand for services and care spaces for older people, there is no information about the effective coverage of these centers. Its regulation is heterogeneous and does not have the same quality standards throughout the country.

Besides care services, maternal and paternal leave policies are also key to ensuring co-responsibility in care provision for children, both within families and between social sectors. In Argentina the parental leave scheme is remarkably heterogeneous, segmented and fragmented by region and sector. The standard for the private sector is 90 days of paid maternity leave but only 2 days of paternity leave, which must be covered by the employer and is not funded by social security. The evidence suggests that leave policy can positively influence female career paths, but only once abandoning the assumption of primary maternal responsibility. Failure to do so, such as granting women many more days of leave than men, like the current scheme does, can actually reinforce already existing gender gaps and inhibit co-responsibility arrangements in care provision, which are critical for promoting sustained trajectories for women at work. Other work-life balance policies besides leave are nonexistent in the country at the national level or are very limited in their reach.

Despite existing initiatives, large-scale and quality comprehensive care policy remains elusive. Insufficient data for monitoring and evaluation also means that it is difficult to gauge the problem, define criteria or objectives, and prioritize specific projects. Furthermore, the care center policy that does exist focuses on education and childhood development without mainstreaming a gender perspective that would allow for a design that can successfully contribute to gender equality. In addition, many of the initiatives can reinforce gender stereotypes and the sexual division of labor, since they facilitate the work-family balance of women and not that of men. This imbalance obviates the need to promote co-responsibility.

Beyond care policies, guaranteeing women's sexual and reproductive rights is also critical, so that decisions about the beginning of reproductive life can be taken freely and safely, with access to the best information and services. The impossibility of fully deciding whether and when to have a child, for many women in Argentina, seriously undermines their autonomies, especially given the restrictive framework for access to voluntary termination of pregnancy and the strong familiarization and feminization of social care responsibilities. Furthermore, unintended pregnancies are associated with increased educational and professional barriers. In Argentina, the majority of women (59.1%) in the public health system reported their pregnancy was not planned (SIP-G, 2015). This rate jumps to 68% for adolescent mothers.

Many policies to address this issue are implemented in the Ministry of Health and Social Development, while others come as part of the National Program of Comprehensive Sex Education (ESI, for its Spanish acronym) from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, and Technology. The latter focuses not just on bodily health, but also on gender and diversity and as such will be discussed in the section on cultural change. However, the right of women to their sexual and reproductive health today varies in terms of accessibility and availability of services. In the case of adolescents in particular, the National Plan for the Prevention of Unintended Pregnancies in the Adolescence (Plan ENIA, for its Spanish acronym), has made great progress in guaranteeing rights, but there still persist difficulties regarding the access to quality reproductive and sexual health services for all ages, especially in the case of women from more vulnerable contexts and in specific regions of the country.

Employment and Social Protection Policies

In Argentina there has been no systematic approach to employment policies with a gender perspective that has taken into account the determinants of women's labor insertion in a structural way. The interventions of this group of policies address the situation of women and men interchangeably, without considering discrimination or the particular determinants that affect women. In some specific interventions, especially from the Ministry of Production and Labor, there have been efforts to mainstream the gender perspective in public employment or training services; or in specific pilot initiatives in some regions. But these are actions that did not

permeate in the set of policies and effectors of employment policies in the country in a systematic way.

Many such policies focus on youth, such as the Youth with More and Better Work Program (*Jóvenes con Más y Mejor Trabajo*), Future Fairs (*Ferias Futuro*), Collaborative Work Spaces (*Casas de Trabajo Colaborativo*) and other programs designed to improve the skills and employability conditions, especially of vulnerable youth. The Ministry also offers private sector incentives for both apprenticeship programs and to directly hire more staff.

The implementation of the employment and training programs is carried out in a decentralized manner. The national level does not have an institutionalized program of vocational training or employment services, but depends on the programs of provinces and municipalities. However, the Ministry has promoted and strengthened both the Public Employment Services Network and the Continuing Training System that constitute central institutional pillars in the management of employment policies.

There are also programs to support employment generation through entrepreneurship. The Independent Employment Program provides support, guidance and means to develop enterprises. Additionally, the Secretariat of Entrepreneurs and Small and Medium Enterprises develops the Financing Program for Entrepreneurs that facilitates access to financing. It has three funds each addressing a different stage in the growth process. These programs aim to solve one of the most important restrictions faced by independent workers, restrictions aggravated by the small size of the local financial system.

Unfortunately, the lack of data impairs the identification of its results and the control and monitoring of the programs by civil society. Furthermore, structural differences, gender gaps and the potential digital divide for some socio-economic sectors limit the ultimate impact in terms of equality. In this sense, it would be relevant to move towards a more inclusive system, with bias-free selection processes and use of alternative approaches. The Ministry of Labor and Employment, in consortium with private partners, seeks to guide companies to reduce their biases and help to reconcile work and family life of their workers, foster shared parenting, and become more diverse and inclusive spaces, but progress is still limited, mostly occurring in larger companies which are sensitive to the challenges.

In summary, employment promotion programs, both of the Ministries of Production and Labor and Social Development, face multiple challenges, including: poor coverage and lack of data disaggregated by gender, fragmentation of benefits with direct impact on its quality, weakness of information systems on its results, and lack of a gender mainstreaming approach.

On the other hand, social protection policies refer to a set of interventions that aim to achieve a basic level of well-being for everyone, based on guaranteeing basic income and access to essential social services, regardless of participation in the labor market and traditional contributions to social security.

Income transfer policies can boost female autonomy, as they can allow them to have a guaranteed income in recession contexts or to support their disposable income whilst looking for employment, while simultaneously allowing for an improvement in the material conditions in which care is provided in the household, sometimes allowing for a reduction in the time that certain tasks demand from families (UN Women, 2017). One of the major social protection policies implemented in Argentina is the set of cash transfers directed at families with children and adolescents. These take the form of Familial Assignments (*Asignaciones Familiares*), the Universal Assignment per Child (*Asignación Universal por Hijo*, AUH, for its Spanish acronym), along with a series of tax deductions for families caring for children and adolescents. These systems together target 89.4% of the children in the country.

However, while the high coverage of family transfer programs has the capacity to improve gender equality if designed correctly, the system remains fragmented and inequitable for many reasons. Firstly, the biggest coverage gaps are due to the lack of access of potential AUH holders, which is the most vulnerable population. Second, because transfers are not comparable along all subcomponents of the system (AUH, *Asignaciones Familiares* and tax deductions), and can even be regressive (higher for higher-income families). This is linked to an additional challenge faced by families in "unfavorable areas," defined not according to economic criteria, but to territorial ones (mainly Patagonia and some municipalities in northern Argentina). Finally, only the non-contributory subsystem requires compliance with conditionalities, that reduce the available time of the responsible families - and, above all, of the mothers - of the children and adolescents covered, which is highly unfair given that this increases the burden of care management for those women and families who are most in need of support to guarantee their rights, whereas such demands are not included in the other two subcomponents of the system, which reach higher-income families.

With regard to social protection for older people, in 2005 an unprecedented pension inclusion process began in Argentina. The initiative to extend the coverage of income transfers to the elderly was considered a double strategy. The first of these measures was the Anticipated Pension Benefit (PPA), where retirees receive 50% of what they would earn during their work careers past retirement age. The second of these measures is the Pension Moratorium, which allowed for the access to a reduced amount of pension while simultaneously covering (with the remaining amount) past social security contributions which the worker had not been able to complete before retiring. Currently, owing to the success of these schemes, coverage remains at around 91%, helping reduce the Gini index of the older population, reducing poverty in this group, and also reducing the gender income gap, given that women were the main beneficiaries of these policies, in light of the previous gaps in the labor market.

In conclusion, the public policy landscape in Argentina reveals a fragmented and heterogeneous approach to gender issues, in particular, referring to the economic and labor dimension. In most cases, the differential situation of women is not taken into account in the design, implementation or evaluation of the programs.

Socio-educational Programs

The social and educational sphere are closely related, and each one exercises both a conditioning and enabling influence on the other. In Argentina, where educational and social inclusion challenges persist, socio-educational policies play a fundamental role for labor inclusion. These are initiatives that seek to strengthen the educational trajectories of children, adolescents and young people in vulnerable contexts, promoting educational quality, social inclusion and equal opportunities.

In general, the educational system can reinforce stereotyped patterns in upbringing, since it represents, together with the home, the context where the first evidence of horizontal segregation by gender is observed, which then impacts on higher education results and in the labor market. Despite targeted legislation to ensure pregnant students can continue in school, motherhood is still an impediment to educational completion for many girls. Moreover, through their design, these laws replicate the maternal bias of other policies and regulations analyzed so far, by granting a special regime of absences only to women and, therefore, not promoting co-responsibility between the genders.

Therefore, policies that promote inclusion within the educational field have a fundamental potential to reduce gender gaps in the economy. One of the state's main policies, the Student Support Program of Argentina (PROGRESAR, for its Spanish acronym), encourages educational completion at all levels and sought to promote the subsequent employment of young people

through granting a cash transfer, providing childcare services, and facilitating mentoring. The target population of the program are young people between 18 and 24 who are unemployed or in informal employment, receive a salary which amounts to less than the minimum living wage, and whose family is in a situation of economic vulnerability. Unfortunately, the program did not reach its full potential, since it failed to effectively reach the population that abandoned secondary education, with the majority of its participants being higher-education students.

Additionally, the State currently implements a pilot program called “*Asistiré*” (Spanish for “I will attend”) which seeks to reduce school dropout rates and has, so far, showed strong indicators of effectiveness. This program does not include a gender perspective, but, given the different factors that disrupt the educational trajectories of men and women, their potential to do so with a positive impact is significant. There are also other programs, like the School Trajectories Program and those promoted by the National Youth Institute’s You Transform Commitment Program but their coverage is very limited, mostly concentrated in Buenos Aires, and none of them includes a gender perspective.

In addition to addressing the motivation of young people and adolescents through accompaniment, various other initiatives promote the improvement of educational quality and the development of skills through training courses. These activities have an obvious influence on horizontal segregation, since their contents can contribute to modify or perpetuate the social norms that generate gaps. Many of these programs are run by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (*Ministerio de Educación, Cultura, Ciencia y Tecnología*). They include the National Digital Education Plan: “Learn Connected” (*Aprender Conectados*), whose objective is to guarantee digital inclusion and the learning of technological skills, the Rural Education Improvement Project (PROMER II), and the FINES Plan to complete secondary studies. Despite their potential benefits, however, none of these policies mainstream a gender perspective, and they show challenges regarding the monitoring and evaluation of results.

As mentioned, although women in Argentina show, on average, higher educational attainment than men, the obstacles to completing their education are associated, to a greater extent, with care responsibilities and stereotypes that inhibit their full development. Incorporating these issues into program design becomes essential to ensure that they address the issues that then hinder women’s labor participation.

Interventions for Cultural Change

The existence of social norms that assign different roles to each gender has an impact on the opportunities available to women. Patriarchal culture reinforces and perpetuates gender stereotypes through the sexual division of labor, which relegates women to the domestic sphere and gives rise to gender gaps in the labor market. Policies to address these issues operate on three axes: comprehensive sex education and policies for deconstruction of social gender norms, policies to promote communication with a gender perspective, and policies for affirmative action and the inclusion of women in non-traditional fields.

Comprehensive sex education (ESI, for its Spanish acronym) is “a teaching and learning process based on curricula that deals with the cognitive, psychological, physical and social aspects of sexuality” (UNESCO, UN AIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women & WHO , 2018). Sex education can be taught in formal and non-formal learning environments. Evidence indisputably shows that ESI as defined above does not increase sexual activity or risk behaviors among children and young people who receive it, and it significantly improves their health outcomes. However, comprehensive sex education aspires to do much more than impacting positively on sexual and reproductive health indicators and outcomes. At the same time it provides knowledge on these issues, it emphasizes a much wider range of dimensions linked to a comprehensive and positive approach to sexuality, with emphases on emotional relationships, gender, diversity and

rights, among other learning objectives. Begun in 2006 and expanded in 2008, the program currently operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology. It works at the national level with a team that coordinates the design, implementation and evaluation of initiatives, implemented in coordination with provincial and local teams.

The Ministry of Health and Social Development also carries out other types of programs and specific actions that seek to contribute to the deconstruction of the norms and stereotypes identified as negative for substantive gender economic equality. Specifically, the National Youth Institute (INJUVE) - with the support of UNICEF and the International Youth Organization for Latin America (OIJ) - has implemented, since 2017, the Let's Talk about Everything Program (*Hablemos de Todo*), aimed at providing quality and accessible information to adolescents and young people. The topics covered are: sexualities, contraceptive methods, diversity, non-violent relationships, eating disorders, problematic consumption, suicide prevention, violence in schools (bullying), workplace bullying and virtual sexual harassment.

As for communication, the gender perspective is far from being institutionalized in the Argentine media. On the contrary, in many cases stereotypes and patriarchal structures are internalized and reinforced through the media. The mainstreaming of the gender perspective in communication is desirable and indispensable for informing properly, questioning harmful gender patterns, and promoting greater substantive equality between men and women. There are a few public initiatives that aim to modify sexist behaviors in communication and advertising and to raise public awareness about the subject. Various policies begin by identifying media violence to then promote communication with a gender perspective, and are run out of the INAM (National Institute for Women). Other isolated initiatives serve to promote varying aspects of responsible gender representation in media. Although these actions could be working to promote more equal treatment of women and men in the media, there is strong need for more evidence and information regarding their current state of implementation.

The National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI), in turn, also promotes awareness actions in a gender perspective, addressing the intersectional problems of women who are also indigenous, disabled or deprived of their freedom. INADI also has a complaints center for cases of discrimination, where claims are investigated and non-binding rulings issued. It seeks to contribute to cultural transformation, but without punitive actions and, usually, with significant delays.

To date, evaluations of these policies have insufficiently analyzed their impact in terms of promoting communication with a gender perspective. Additionally, there exists the need to achieve greater coordination between the initiatives and programs of the different agencies.

Finally, cultural change not only implies the need to carry out actions to avoid discrimination against women, but also the need to make women visible in historically masculinized roles. In this sense, affirmative action policies, or positive discrimination, play a fundamental role. In the face of a traditional tacit quota for men in decision-making positions, these actions seek to guarantee the right of women to occupy those places, while making them reference models for other women, adolescents and girls. To this day, only in Congress and in trade unions (with a more limited impact, as mentioned in previous sections) have affirmative action measures been implemented in the country.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

This chapter will describe a series of evidence-based public policy reforms that have great potential to contribute to the closure of gender gaps in the Argentine labor market. This exercise is not intended to be exhaustive: other policies not mentioned here could also contribute to substantive gender equality, but this section does include the most relevant interventions that have shown the greatest impact in other contexts and in research. That being said, the recommended policies fall into five key spheres: alleviating time poverty brought about by the burden of domestic work and unpaid care, promoting decent work opportunities for women and their access to social protection, implementing social education programs that promote inclusion, promoting cultural change towards a more egalitarian society, and setting up the necessary institutional arrangements to move towards greater substantive equality. For calculations of cost and impact, please refer to the full version of the book.

Unpaid domestic and care work

In Argentina, the production and distribution of care is mostly concentrated in the family sphere, and women shoulder most of the burden. Furthermore, the transformations of families (with an increase in low-income, single-parent households headed by women), the divergence of fertility rates among income quintiles, the increase in female labor participation, and the increase in life expectancy foretell a care crisis with serious consequences for social welfare and economic development. This first set of policy recommendations presented here therefore seeks to help counteract this situation.

Strengthening early childhood education and care services as part of the Early Childhood program is paramount. Implementation requires expanding student coverage, building new schools, and employing new teachers and staff at an ambitious, unprecedented scale. While requiring significant investment, the benefits to productivity, along with direct job creation would produce substantial economic benefits. The majority of jobs created would also likely be filled by women, while the initiatives would simultaneously bring a reduction of unpaid care responsibilities. While adapting to the needs of local communities is essential, this must be done in consort with strong regulation to ensure appropriate standards across institutional sub-systems. In any case, expanding kindergarten programs for 3-4 year olds and early childhood spaces for 0-2 year olds must pursue the goal of universalization to achieve maximal impact. This expansion must, however, proceed with the gender perspective at the forefront and from the very start.

Likewise, it is necessary to expand the extended day policy in primary education. Extension of the school day links with better education trajectories for children and improvements in labor indicators for mothers. CIPPEC recommends fulfilling the 30% goal established by Law 26.075 on Educational Financing. The proposal is to extend the current school day by four hours at the primary level, adding time for lunch in the school canteen. There are, however, other ways to extend the school day: through extracurricular athletic, cultural or technical activities that, a priori, would not require an extension of teaching hours.

With regard to other populations requiring care services besides children, it is important to improve the coverage of services and benefits for dependent people with disabilities. First, the State must redouble its efforts to ensure that all persons with disabilities access their Single Certificate, as well as implementing feasible coverage strategies. Second, the effective compliance with the provision to access home assistance established as a right by the Law 26280 is critical, as well as the implementation of day centers and residences for dependent people with disabilities, generating a list of registered, reputable suppliers. Finally, it is necessary to guarantee the regular implementation of INDEC's Study on Profiles of Persons with Disabilities to understand the

challenges that these people face in their daily lives and the public policy vacancies that must be solved for the effective enjoyment of their rights.

The same is true for elderly dependents. First, it is imperative to set aside ageist conceptions about older people by designing public policies aimed to sustain and improve conditions for the active aging of society, having resources to facilitate the participation of the elderly in public life. Second, the State must take a leading role in the redistribution of assistance and care to elderly dependents. It is necessary to expand the registration and regulation of the numerous institutions that provide day center services along with leisure and recreation activities in both the sphere of civil society and the private sector.

Regarding the necessary time for providing care, CIPPEC proposes a gradual extension of the current parental leave scheme for registered workers and the creation of a complementary scheme for workers in the informal economy. Extending a joint family leave, as opposed to distinct maternal and paternal leaves, would reduce gender participation gaps without drawing women out of the labor market. It is suggested that progressive expansion goals be established at up to 98 days of leave each for the primary and secondary caregiver and 60 days of family leave by 2035. CIPPEC insists on the need to contemplate the principles of universality (and its corollary of including the population currently excluded from leave regimes), adaptability (contemplating families in all their diversity), and co-parenting (establishing equal days for both caregivers) as guides for any modification. Additionally, the implementation of flexible working time policies requires further study. While there is ample evidence about the positive effects for both workers and employers of policies that limit working time (ILO, 2018), it is not always found that implementing flexible working time policies generates better conditions for co-responsibility between genders.

Lastly, Argentina must strengthen sexual and reproductive health policies providing quality, available, accessible and acceptable services, given that guaranteeing sexual and reproductive rights is essential for developing economic equality between genders. Currently, access to and quality of services remains quite heterogeneous at the federal level. It varies according to jurisdiction, user age and the health subsystem in question. It is necessary to strengthen access to information for decision making regarding sexual and reproductive rights and to ensure the availability of modern contraceptive methods at all levels of health care, including targeted strategies for coverage of some specific populations such as adolescents, for whom there is wide consensus in medical evidence about the benefits of LARC (Long-acting reversible contraception), that supports the scaling up of initiatives such as Plan ENIA. Proper implementation requires appropriate access to contraceptives, a quality implementation of comprehensive sex education in every school, and full legalization of abortion, in keeping with the most recent recommendations of all human rights international organizations and the generalized evidence about the benefits of this initiative in terms of women's health outcomes and the prevention of deaths from unsafe abortion (Faúndes & Shah, 2015). Availability of services depends upon strengthening the Ministry of Health and Social Development along with provincial and local programs, while accessibility requires, among other initiatives, proper regulations governing and expanding the professional practice of midwives.

Decent work and social protection

The second group of policies seek to reduce gender gaps in the labor market by ensuring access to decent work and social protection. For the proposed policies to be effective, a favorable macroeconomic context for job creation is necessary. However, there is room to implement or improve interventions that have the potential to generate better employment conditions for women, even in recessive periods.

Given the high rates of labor informality in the labor market in general, and for working women in particular, it is imperative to promote their participation in decent work conditions through formalization. CIPPEC recommends 3 main strategies in this sense. Firstly, strengthening employer incentives, both positive and negative, to hire registered labor is paramount. Secondly, to enforce laws related to registered employment, the State must also strengthen labor inspection teams such as the Special Unit for Labor Inspection. Finally, publicity campaigns aimed at employees directly and designed to communicate the benefits of registered employment and its associated protections, are essential as employees themselves are also important agents when deciding between formal and informal opportunities. In this account, interventions for the formalization of domestic work take particular precedence since domestic work constitutes 16% of the female labor force insertion in Argentina and the majority of women in the sector belong to the lowest income strata.

More generally, the State should implement mechanisms to promote women's access to the private sector, eliminate legal restrictions for the participation of women in certain sectors of the economy and strengthen data and evaluation systems to properly measure the results of policy programs. It would also be useful to reinforce private sector implementation of promotion policies that prioritize women. Despite low utilization rates, public employment services in Argentina have been found to be an effective labor force insertion tool (BID, AMPSE & OCDE, 2014). To boost utilization, it is first necessary to promote horizontal governance at the local level, improving the communication between actors, reducing the burden of training for work, and coordinating with the provision of other social services. Secondly, it is necessary to grant a greater role for trade unions and the private sector, to strengthen the bridges between training schemes and the labor market. Concurrently, more job search mechanisms targeting vulnerable individuals should be generated.

Among employers, both public and private, and despite anti-discrimination laws, discriminatory practices remain. It is recommended to promote recruitment and promotion processes that are free of gender biases in the fields of work. The foundation of these improvements remains in strong affirmative action: promoting the hiring of women against equally appropriate profiles to fill vacancies in organizations and thus compensate the structural inequalities that they face in the economy. Additionally, regulating job search ads that use non-gendered language can provide a more diverse set of applicants, improving the possibilities for women. It is also recommended to implement gender awareness strategies, aimed at those responsible for the human resources areas of organizations, to provide management tools to raise awareness about the existence of gender biases and the implementation of measures for removing them. Incentivizing those who improve their practices with symbolic mechanisms, such as the existing Gender Equality Seal (*Sellos de Igualdad de Género*), is another means to bring public awareness about the issue. Within institutions themselves, it is necessary to strengthen the management capacities of public employment services and to mainstream the gender approach in human resources training.

Expanding the scope of professional training is also key to strengthening the skills of women seeking to improve their position in the labor market. In Argentina, these policies remain fragmented among various institutional actors (such as unions, CSOs, provincial and municipal public sector), and among different jurisdictions. There is great need for more coordination between these institutions and private sector actors to create bridges with employment opportunities. In order to allow a greater participation of women in quality training schemes, it is necessary that the schedules of the training be adapted to the needs of the women and that mechanisms be established to remove the obstacles to encourage their participation. Finally, it is important for the focus of employment services to be based on the sectors that will generate the highest labor demand, and thus for the training of women to be carried out in competitive sectors. In this regard, it would be useful to incentivize female participation in non-traditional sectors

including STEM fields, principally through targeted training programs. Strengthening the permanence of women in these careers through mentorship and accompaniment programs, if designed to prioritize leadership opportunities, are highly recommended. It is also necessary to facilitate access to care spaces for participants in training and employment programs, allowing them to fully utilize those resources. It is important to carry out these actions, both with women and with men, to promote co-responsibility in parenting and care provision. In this regard, the intervention should be linked to the recommendation on the reduction and redistribution of domestic work and unpaid care.

To help provide independent income generation and economic autonomy apart from the labor market, it is also recommended to promote access to credit and new markets for women-led enterprises through strengthening technical assistance and mentoring. Facilitating female access to credit through greater requirement flexibility, or the establishment of specific credit lines for women, are essential measures. Integrating women into the world of small and medium enterprises should be based on facilitating the participation of women-led enterprises in fairs, exhibitions, business conferences for the promotion of their products (UNDP, 2014), and generating initiatives that favor women-led companies in public procurement. Establishing and expanding technical assistance, support and mentoring programs specialized in the difficulties faced by women and facilitate access to basic instruments, such as legal status, registration and access to appropriate technology (UNDP, 2014; UN Women, 2017) are also invaluable. Additionally, it is necessary to recognize, value and integrate the workers of the popular economy (*economía popular*) into the national economy. While men concentrate on production for the market (Cabrera & Vio, 2014); women, on the other hand, face the triple-day burden more acutely: the combination of activities for the paid market, domestic work in the sphere of the home, and local community support. CIPPEC proposes initiatives to recognize and value the unpaid work that involves managing goods and services for the neighborhood. This requires making women's activities visible and improving the material conditions in which they perform them. Secondly, it is necessary to prioritize this population when progress is being made in the construction of care spaces for dependent populations and in investment that improves social infrastructure.

As for social protection, monetary transfers to families with children are a key policy and, as such, CIPPEC's proposal aims to universalize coverage, strengthen transfer amounts, and reduce the bureaucratic burden of compliance, verification of joint responsibilities and articulate non-contributory programs with work benefits and professional training. In this regard, expanding transfers to families with children not only have the potential to drastically reduce childhood poverty, but can also protect the income of families from economic instability and prevent women from being forced to enter the labor market in very precarious conditions. Furthermore, it is paramount to reduce bureaucratic restrictions on eligibility to make the program more accessible and strengthen the compatibility between non-contributory income transfer programs and other social, labor, training and educational policies.

Additionally, it is necessary to focus on unemployment insurance, which protects the income of people who were dismissed without cause for a period of time and can be combined with training offers. CIPPEC proposes to review the monetary benefit, so that it can adjust to the minimum living wage, and adequately protect the unemployed person. This would allow workers, in general, and women, in particular, not to be exposed to economic insecurity during unemployment. At the same time, it would enable a job search aimed at reintegration into decent work. For this, effective coordination with public care services is also important, so that the loss of income from dismissal does not translate into a re-familiarization of these responsibilities

Likewise, it remains necessary to guarantee income transfers for the elderly through contributory and non-contributory pensions. Beyond reducing inequality and poverty more generally, this would also serve to reduce the gender income gap, as women have historically

benefitted the most from these policies (Amarante, Colacce, & Manzi, 2016). CIPPEC urges a serious debate based on the principle of equity and progressivity with respect to the Argentine pension system, but also recognizes the need to maintain the moratorium scheme until that debate is settled. In addition, it is essential to point out the principle of non-recoil in the guarantee of rights, so that the future scheme may not imply a reduction in the rights that the elderly population currently enjoys.

Socio-educational Programs

The third set of recommendations refers to socio-educational programs that can contribute to promoting equal opportunities and economic and social development. It is necessary to implement the original design of PROGRESAR's scholarships, which entails not only guaranteeing stipends, but also addressing dropout rates in a holistic way, providing an accompaniment to the students and providing child care services. This can be achieved through the guarantee of absences regimes and special permits for mother and father students (that promote co-responsibility); the offer of child care spaces; the personalized accompaniment of students during pregnancy; the training and awareness of teachers, managers and families; and due compliance with current regulations for these cases. Likewise, it is recommended to expand money transfers to students in situations of income vulnerability. Scholarships to help study are a positive measure to support the trajectories and educational completion of adolescents and young people, but scholarship amounts must be sufficient to cover needs, especially to offset the opportunity cost of leaving education for an early and unprotected incorporation to the labor market. In addition, these stipends must contemplate a gender approach, since, in this way, they can promote the participation of women and men in non-stereotyped spaces and roles.

More broadly, it is important to promote the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in all socio-educational policies. In order for these policies to effectively contribute to encouraging the labor participation of men and women in non-stereotypical jobs, reducing horizontal segregation, both in higher education, as well as in paid and unpaid work, it is important to incorporate the gender perspective and promote the training and awareness of teachers and mentors in this regard. In the absence of this perspective, programs run the risk of reproducing and perpetuating discriminatory patterns that inhibit the full development of women.

Interventions for cultural change

The fourth group encompasses policies that can promote a cultural change towards a more egalitarian society. The first recommendation in this sense is ensuring the full implementation of the ESI, given its potential to bring down stereotypical gender norms. The most basic requirement is to guarantee universal access to the policy. Across all jurisdictions, it is key to ensure uniform implementation and limited discretion in policy application nationwide. In this sense, it is critical to strengthen the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the results and the impact of the actions on related indicators, not only with regard to sexual and reproductive health, but also in connection with gender norms and stereotypes.

Moreover, sex education should be incorporated into institutional curricular projects across all venues of education and include the perspective of children, adolescents and young people who are at the center of the intervention. A mainstreaming approach and implementation – as opposed to ESI being treated as a specific module or subject at school – represents an advantage for its impact on gender norms and stereotypes, given that, through relevant topics, the gender perspective can permeate through the school's curricula. Implementation requires commitment from leadership and management across the education system. Furthermore, CIPPEC highlights the importance of prioritizing the link between the educational institution and the local community, especially the students' families. In cases where the implementation finds resistance

at the local level, it is important to involve local civil society organizations with a track record in the subject and to promote alliances with other actors in the local community.

Beyond education, the promotion of communication and use of language with a gender perspective is essential towards lasting culture change. It is necessary to promote, through the State, awareness campaigns on gender economic gaps. These initiatives should make visible the discrimination suffered by women in the labor market, as well as the unequal distribution of care and unpaid work, the need to promote co-responsibility in households and the need to promote new and alternative paradigms related to masculinity. In order to reach the widest possible audience, it is necessary to disseminate the campaigns in mass media and through public channels.

To combat the persistence of damaging messages in mainstream media, it is also important to sanction existing symbolic and media violence and regulate advertising and programming. The Public Defender of Audiovisual Communication Services, INADI and INAM have a primary role in preventing the dissemination of discourses that naturalize gender inequalities and discrimination. This work involves monitoring and analyzing media content, receiving complaints, identifying cases of symbolic violence, and training journalists. It is necessary to broaden the scope of these policies, not only to what happens in the media, but also to sensitize advertising agencies and artists.

To aid the implementation of the aforementioned programs, it is important to generate data and impact assessments of audiovisual content regulation policies. At present, Argentina lacks the data necessary for proper analysis. It is recommended to publish statistics and data from the observatories periodically and encourage the implementation of impact evaluations of the initiatives, in order to inform decision-making. It may also be productive to organize roundtables of key experts and stakeholders to analyze policy further once the infrastructure becomes available.

In areas of direct representation, implementing affirmative action to promote the participation of women in decision-making positions and make them visible as referential models is essential. To begin, CIPPEC recommends setting gender goals in the Executive and Judicial Powers, to complement existing laws with mandates for elections and Congress. The State should strive to make women leaders visible through all its communication mechanisms, so as to bolster the role-model effect. It is also imperative to follow the example of several European countries on this subject and promote the adoption of affirmative action measures in the boards of public, semi-public and publicly traded companies, while accompanying these with mass awareness campaigns that also engage men.

Institutional arrangements

The final set of policy recommendations seek to strengthen the institutional arrangements, in their direction and coordination functions, which are necessary to move towards greater substantive equality.

To begin, it is necessary to elevate the National Women's Institute (INAM, for its Spanish acronym) to a more significant place in the state structure; one with the political will and power to lead gender affairs and coordinate other ministries. The recommendation of specialized agencies is to place these organisms in the orbit of the chief of the cabinet of ministers or presidency of the Nation (ECLAC, 2001). Ensuring an operational structure with technical competence to coordinate the actions of line ministries is also key to promoting the effective and timely implementation of interventions to promote women's economic autonomy. The design of the Plan for Equal Opportunities (PIOD, for its Spanish acronym), beyond being in itself an instrument for the advancement of the gender agenda, offers an interesting opportunity to

strengthen INAM in the technical dialogue with the ministries. It is also necessary to strengthen the participatory mechanisms that accompany the strategy embodied in the PIOD, and moving forward in the formation and operation of the Advisory Council.

Raising public officials' gender awareness, particularly around the need to move towards women's economic autonomy, is key to achieving commitments that will then push the gender agenda in each policy sector. The experience of other countries shows that, when there is a strong commitment of political decision-makers regarding the need to advance in a public policy area, relevant results can be achieved in terms of resource allocation in specific areas.

It is also quite important to permeate the gender perspective in the information system and public records, and to strengthen the national statistical system to produce sectoral information disaggregated by gender. In Argentina, the last national time-use survey dates from 2013 and, although a new one is being planned, there is no effective commitment to institutionalize these measurements and conduct them periodically as part of the national statistics system. It is necessary to develop more instruments that allow for the measurement of other relevant dimensions for economic autonomy. The inclusion of the gender perspective in the information systems should promote an intersectional analysis, which includes variables that account for the varied characteristics of subgroups of people that can intersect with gender inequalities to produce even greater vulnerability. The INAM must have an active role in this strategy to guarantee that this perspective can be mainstreamed.

Finally, the incorporation of the gender perspective in the public sector budget is paramount. First, it is important to take into account not only the budgetary items allocated directly to policies that have a positive impact on bridging gender gaps, but also analyze how much is spent on policies that can negatively affect substantive gender equality. Second, it is necessary to set-up a process to monitor such progress in the budget over time. Third, it is key to contemplate the dissemination of the methodology and tools for mainstreaming the gender perspective in budgeting at the subnational levels of government, in light of the fact that almost all of the expenditure on education and health is executed by the provinces. Fourth, it is important to take into account the impacts of policies on gender gaps. Finally, it is essential to always consider the purpose of introducing the gender perspective in the establishment of budgets. The goal is not only to make public investment visible on these issues, but also to provide data for critical areas to negotiate greater budget allocation for the achievement of greater substantive gender equality at work.

Final Remarks

Despite the progress achieved over the last decades, in Argentina there still are substantive inequalities between the effective exercises of people's rights depending on their gender. Although gender issues are becoming increasingly central in public discourse, this does not necessarily imply that it is becoming a priority in public policies. However, as political discourses incorporate feminist insight, there will be room for more and better policies that close gender gaps in our society. However, it is essential for these progresses to go beyond the discursive scope and be reflected in the full implementation of State initiatives.

The Gender of Work, in general, and the recommendations made in the previous sections, in particular, are intended to contribute to this process by presenting evidence and concrete ideas regarding policies that can be implemented in Argentina to close gender gaps in the effective exercise of economic rights. All detailed policies are relevant and based on evidence that suggests they would have important impacts. However, it is crucial to consider political, fiscal, economic and technical restrictions, which will inevitably operate on the next government administration, to analyze their feasibility, prioritization and sequencing.

While this book and executive summary provide recommendations that, for the most part, could well be timeless, its publication emerges on the eve of a new administration in Argentina (2019-2023). No matter how organized or well managed the new administration may be, its space for creating consensus around the implementation of ambitious reforms will naturally diminish over time. It is therefore crucial to profit from the first 100 days of government to implement measures that are perhaps more costly in political terms but also most effective, and then ensure the implementation of those other measures which are simpler to set up.

The first necessary condition in this regard is, without doubt, political will. On the institutional front, it is necessary to empower and assign resources to the body that leads the gender agenda. There are two main ways to do so: the first one would entail strengthening the political competencies of the existing National Women's Institute (INAM, for its Spanish acronym); while the second one implies the creation of an entirely new ministry or agency dedicated to substantive gender equality. In any case, it will be key to empower the responsible body, whatever its final institutional design may be, as one of the first measures adopted by the next government. The Equal Opportunities and Rights Plan (PIOD, for its Spanish acronym) conducted by the INAM on previous years provides a good roadmap to identify possible directions for feasible future initiatives.

The second required condition on the way forward is a proper use of data and information. The new administration must have a leading role in the management and use of information, and also in encouraging its generation, if necessary. A leading role in the generation of quality information does not imply overhauling the statistical system, but rather using the information it provides strategically and implementing the necessary actions to correct the direction of policies being implemented, if necessary. It is essential that the agencies responsible for the management of sectoral policies have timely access to evidence and data relevant to their work.

The third condition involves guaranteeing the necessary resources. The clearest representation of political will crystallizes in the allocation and stability of an appropriate budget for the gender agenda. Additionally, it is also vital for the institution leading the gender agenda to have control of the budget used in policies that seek to close the gaps.

In short, the first 100 days must be invested in using the political capital obtained in the general election by prioritizing and institutionalizing the gender economic agenda in an institution that can count on the tools to make a lasting impact. This would enable the necessary conditions to then implement the more specific policies that are required to close the gender gaps in the next administration.

Notwithstanding these suggestions, the evolution of the economic cycle will have a strong impact on the potential of the next administration to move forward in the direction that was outlined above. Over the last few years, Argentina's macroeconomic performance has been quite poor, and the projections for the coming months are not auspicious. Although the magnitudes differ according to the source consulted, they all agree that 2019 will end, again, with a fall in GDP and inflation above 30%. Therefore, it is essential to prioritize two types of policies. First, initiatives that protect the most vulnerable population and that diminish the impact of the recession. Particularly, it is key to guarantee the social protection of families with children. Second, policies that have a greater potential to boost the economy. It will be key to invest the political capital from the beginning of the next government administration to redirect public investment to these kinds of policies.

In this regard, boosting the expansion of care spaces for early childhood and the expansion of the educational day have concrete impacts on the creation of decent employment, on tax collection, and, ultimately, on the growth of GDP. These are powerful policies to reverse the current macroeconomic cycle, but which also contribute to closing gender gaps in the labor market. Of course, implementation is complex and requires a clear vision backed by political capital, and support from civil society, unions, the private sector and local administrators also remains essential.

Once the economic cycle begins to improve and the economy grows again, it will be central to prioritize greater participation of women in employment policies. In Argentina, especially in contexts of macroeconomic recession and political instability, overcoming the current economic crisis or settling the political system become principal goals to the near exclusion of all others. Policies aimed at accelerating cultural change may therefore seem not urgent given the economic context, but they are transcendental and must have a primary role in the agenda as they contribute to ensuring substantive equality in the long term. Without them, the rest of the policies that this book proposes are simply not viable or may not produce the desired effects.

We are witnesses to a transitional period. The boundaries of social acceptability are fluctuating. This change in social norms is also unstable: there are movements that seek to expand rights, but there are also setbacks and movements that seek to reduce them. The protection of women's rights and the closing of gender gaps in their exercise is an essentially political act. The conquest of these rights, is, however, not automatic. Conversely, it must be driven and encouraged by several of the policies presented in this book.

Moving forward on this path is a clear way to grow. It is not about a different distribution of the existing resources, but about increasing those resources. For that to happen, it is crucial to prioritize a population that has had and still has its economic rights violated. The future will come. Its fairness, however, relies on the commitment of everyone.

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About the organizations



CIPPEC (Center for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth) is a non-profit, impartial and independent organization that produces knowledge and offers recommendations to design and implement better public policies.



The only tripartite U.N. agency, since 1919 the ILO brings together governments, employers and workers of 187 member States, to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.



UN Women is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls.



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The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the UN global network on sustainable development that connects people and countries with the knowledge, experience and resources necessary to help people forge a better life.

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The Gender of Work

Executive Summary

Everything in the world began with a yes, Clarice Lispector wrote. Likewise, this editorial project is the result of an affirmation: given the existence of gender gaps in the exercise of economic rights, we considered it was time to act. This initial conviction was followed by doubts and questions. The complexity of reducing a history of inequality to a few hundred pages could only be addressed by the urgent need to portray its multiple dimensions.

In Argentina, women face greater obstacles to access the labor market, and their trajectories tend to be less stable than those of men. In this book we analyze the deep factors that explain these differences, and the way they interact with other dimensions, such as socioeconomic level and family responsibilities. We propose evidence-based public policy recommendations that can contribute to closing gender gaps in the labor market. Moving forward in this direction will not only uphold women's economic autonomy, but also set the bases for an inclusive and sustainable development process.

This research is a joint initiative from CIPPEC, ILO, UN Women and UNDP and was greatly enriched by the numerous contributions made by those who preceded us in this task. The objective is twofold. First, to promote the debate regarding the economic dimension of gender inequality, which is often still ignored in Argentina. Second, to offer input for those who can promote public policies to transform this reality.

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