Executive summary

WOMEN AND MEN:
GENDER GAPS IN COLOMBIA

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WOMEN AND MEN: GENDER GAPS IN COLOMBIA

THIRD EDITION, 2024

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INTRODUCTION

The full participation of women and girls in all spheres of life is essential to advance towards inclusive and sustainable development. Colombia has firmly committed to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women with the implementation of public policies based on reforms to its regulatory frameworks and evidence-based strategies. However, despite these efforts, significant challenges persist that must be addressed to achieve real change in the lives of women and girls.

One of the relevant challenges has been to make their social conditions visible through a human rights-based approach and a gender and intersectional perspective, using sound statistical data that illustrate the magnitude and nature of gender inequalities. The available information still requires improvement and statistics that take into account the new challenges produced by technological advances, the greater presence and participation of women in the economy and in political life, the effects of climate change and environmental deterioration, as well as new forms of gender-based violence, among other aspects are still needed. Better data will allow a better understanding of the power dynamics and privilege structures that perpetuate discrimination against women and girls in different contexts.

To address these needs, the "Women Count" project has promoted effective collaboration between the Government of Colombia – represented by the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) and the recently created Ministry of Equality and Equity – and UN Women, to improve the availability, accessibility and use of gender statistics.

This joint and coordinated effort has led to the generation of highly relevant knowledge products. Among them, the publication *Women and Men: Gender Gaps in Colombia*, which in its third edition offers a broad analysis of the situation and social condition of women and girls in the country. Using a series of indicators from different official sources of information, it reveals the progress and challenges faced by different sectors of Colombian society towards achieving substantive equality between women and men.

This publication seeks to create an enabling environment to strengthen the practices that govern the production of gender statistics and to encourage their use throughout the policymaking cycle and within the different sectors of government. It also aims to facilitate the dissemination of empirical evidence using a common language, and to serve as a monitoring and accountability mechanism for the commitments of Colombia's National Policy on Equality between Women and Men, and other international commitments embodied in international conventions and treaties.

This third edition, like previous ones, is being presented at an opportune time. First, at just five years from the deadline for the 2030 Agenda and almost a year from the 30-year anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, it is important to evaluate the progress made and, where appropriate, adjust the course to ensure the successful fulfilment of both agendas to advance progress for women in a context of sustainable development. Secondly, the 5th United Nations World Data Forum, being held from 12–15 November 2024, in Medellín, Colombia – the first time in a Latin American country – is convening data and statistics experts from governments, civil society, the private sector, national and international agencies, the media and academia, becoming a key meeting point for capacity-building in data-generation, including for gender data.

The third edition of *Women and Men: Gender Gaps in Colombia* is an example of the country's commitment to building a more equal and fair society, highlighting the progress made by girls and women and pointing out the challenges that must be overcome so that they can fully exercise their rights and enjoy a present and future free of violence and discrimination. With the collaboration of all sectors, Colombia will continue to advance on its path towards gender equality, ensuring that no one is left behind.

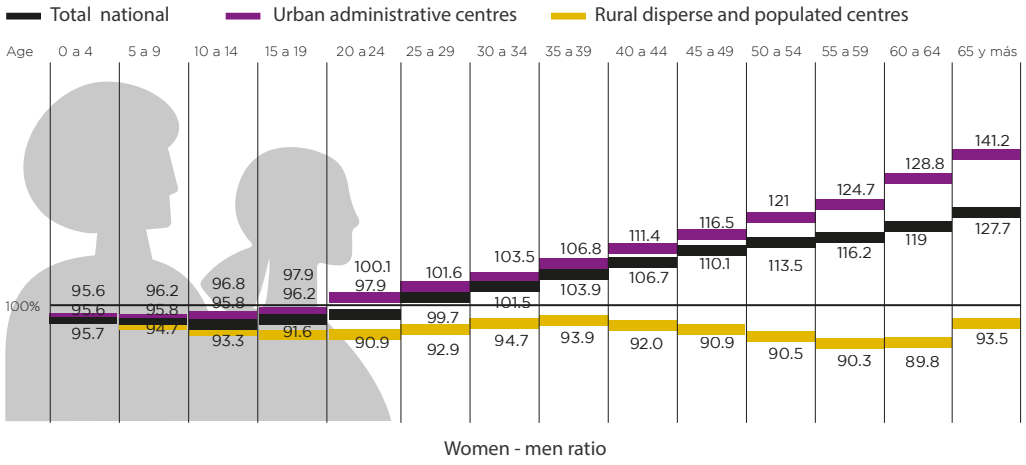
WOMEN WITHIN THE COLOMBIAN POPULATION

Colombia is at an advanced stage of demographic transition, marked by declining fertility and mortality, coupled with an increase in life expectancy. This has led to a concentration of the population in productive ages, with a tendency towards aging.

According to DANE population projections adjusted after the impacts of COVID-19, it is estimated that in 2024 Colombia will have a total of 52.7 million inhabitants, of which 51.2 per cent are women and 48.8 per cent are men. This means that for every 100 men there are 105 women nationwide; with a breakdown in urban areas of 109 women, compared to 93 women per 100 men in rural areas.

FIGURE 1.

RATIO OF WOMEN TO MEN, BY AGE GROUP AND ACCORDING TO URBAN OR RURAL RESIDENCE, 2024

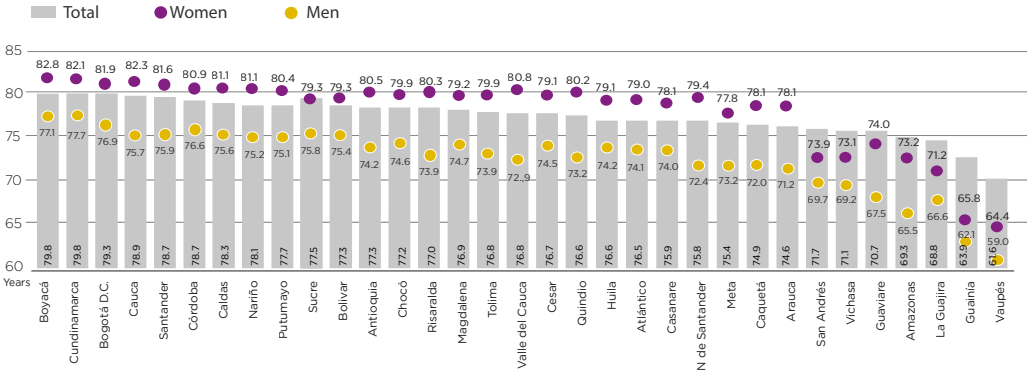


Source: DANE. 2018. Population projections derived from the National Population and Housing Census.

The increase in life expectancy has been progressive, reaching 77.4 years in 2024. According to population projections, by 2030 this indicator will reach 78.8 years and 82.4 years by 2050. There are differences within the country; for example, the departments with the highest life expectancy at birth are Boyacá (79.8 years), Cundinamarca (79.8 years) and Bogotá (79.3 years), while in Amazonas, La Guajira, Vichada and Vaupés life expectancy is less than 70 years.

FIGURE 2.

LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH, BY SEX AND DEPARTMENT, 2024.



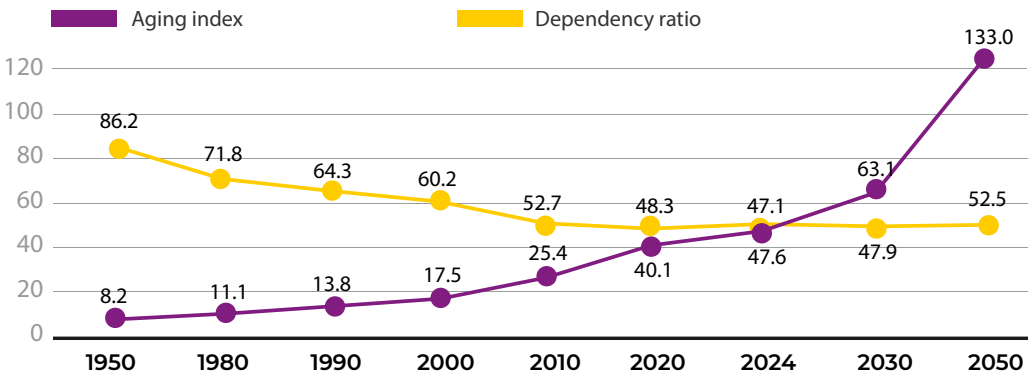
Source: DANE. 2018. Main indicators of demographic change based on population projections derived from the National Population and Housing Census.

Colombia is at a moderately advanced ageing process (with a total fertility rate of less than 2.5 children per woman and an elderly population of between 10 and 14 per cent)[1].

The ageing index[2] reveals how the ageing of the population has accelerated in the 21st century, increasing from 18 older adults for every 100 children in 2000 to 47 people aged 65 and over for every 100 people between 0 and 14 years by 2024. Consequently, the demographic dependency ratio in the Colombian population has also changed.

FIGURE 3

AGING INDEX AND DEPENDENCY RATIO, 1950–2050.



Source: DANE. 2018. Population projections derived from the National Population and Housing Census.

Population aging varies at the subnational level. As of 2024, the departments with the highest aging rates are: Quindío (84), Caldas (79) and Risaralda (70), followed by Boyacá (61). In contrast, the least-aged departments are: Guaviare (21), Amazonas (15), Vichada (14), Guainía (11) and Vaupés (10).

Migratory movements in Colombia have been a constant phenomenon throughout its history. According to the Consular Registry[3], as of August 2024, there were more than 1.5 million international Colombian emigrants, of which 847,208 (54.6 per cent) are women, 701,087 are men and 7 identify as non-binary people. The majority of international emigrants are in the age range considered productive (15–64 years).

In terms of international immigration, the largest in-flow into Colombia continues to be the Venezuelan population, which has been increasing for a decade. As of May 2024, 2.8 million Venezuelan immigrants were registered in the country. The majority (51.8 per cent) are women.

CONCLUSIONS

The country has been experiencing an accelerated demographic transition since the mid-twentieth century. This has led to most of the population currently being concentrated in productive ages (15–64 years) with evidence of a population ageing process, wherein the percentage of the population over 60 years of age is constantly increasing.

[1] Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO). 2023. Perspectivas demográficas del envejecimiento poblacional en la Región de las Américas.

[2] The aging index corresponds to the number of people aged 65 and over per 100 people aged 0 to 14 years.

[3] The Consular Registry of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has information on the Colombian population that is resident and registered in different consular missions abroad. There are some 3,005 people in this Registry who do not report their gender.

Previous editions of *Women and men: Gender gaps in Colombia* had already pointed out that population ageing poses a challenge for the country, requiring it to strengthen its social protection system and public policies to meet the growing needs of an increasingly ageing population. In addition, it is essential that this system applies a differential gender perspective not only because there are more women in the country, but these women also have a longer life expectancy.

Although the population at the national level is ageing, it is necessary to consider the variations at the territorial level. There are still departments with young populations that will enter an ageing process at a later time and whose requirements in terms of care are still more focused on children. Those departments with younger populations are also those whose populations has a greater concentration of ethnic minorities.

Finally, migratory movements, especially from Venezuela, have an impact on the demographic structure. These migrant women and their families can be an opportunity for Colombia in terms of the gender demographic bonus. To achieve this, it is important to increase migrant women's access to basic services and reduce the barriers they face in entering the labour market and accessing decent jobs, to enable them to contribute to the social and economic strengthening of the country.

EMPLOYMENT, POVERTY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION: THE ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF INEQUALITY

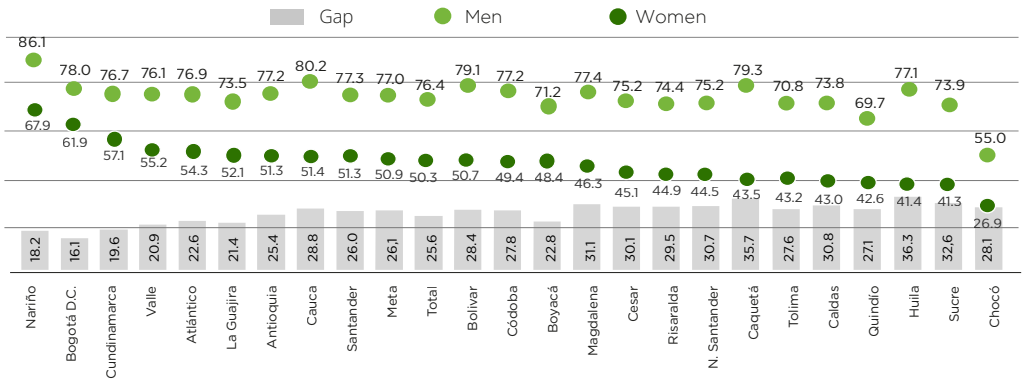
Women's economic inclusion is essential for inclusive social development and economic growth.

In Colombia, this can be seen through increases in the labour force participation rate (LFPR) between 2008 and 2023. Although it has increased slightly more for women (6.2 percentage points, reaching 52.6 per cent) than for men (5.5 percentage points, reaching 76.6 per cent), the gap between the two remains large, at around 24 percentage points.

Women's economic participation differs across departments. While in Nariño about 7 out of 10 women are active in the labour market, in Chocó this figure is around 3 out of 10, evidencing the existing gaps between women in different locations and the need for public policies to address them by incorporating a differential and intersectional approach. In all departments, the LFPR of women is lower than that of men; however, Caquetá, Huila, Sucre, Magdalena and Caldas register the largest gender gaps.

FIGURE 4.

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE, BY SEX AND DEPARTMENT, 2023.



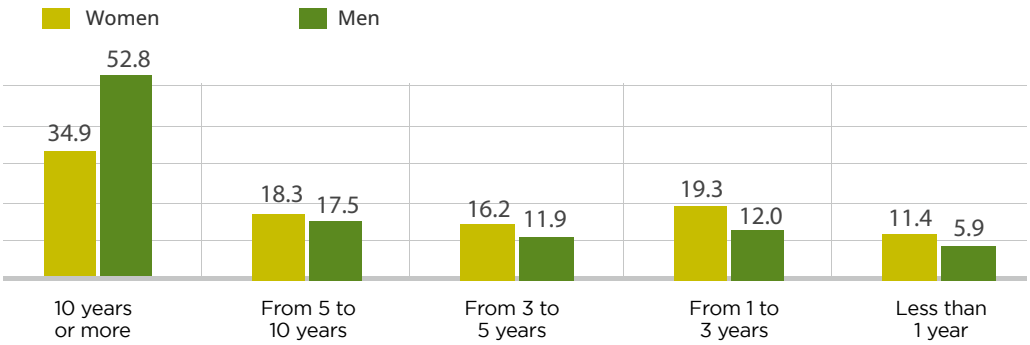
Source: DANE. 2023. Great Integrated Household Survey (GEIH). Labour market, by department and by sex.

Note: Departments are ordered from those with the highest to lowest overall labour force participation rate of women. The LFPR at the national level corresponds to the average of the four quarters of 2023.

Entrepreneurship is key to women's economic autonomy, but large inequalities persist in this area. According to the Micro-business Survey (EMICRON) in 2023, there were 5,188,402 micro-businesses in the country, of which 35.5 per cent were owned by women and 64.5 per cent by men. The survey revealed that women's micro-businesses are newer than men's: more than half of men's businesses are 10 years old or older, while only 35 per cent of women's businesses are that old. In contrast, 31 per cent of women's businesses are less than 3 years old, compared to 18 per cent of men's businesses.

FIGURE 5.

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF MICRO-BUSINESSES, BY SEX OF OWNER AND LENGTH OF OPERATING TIME, 2023.



Source: DANE. 2023. Micro-business Survey (EMICRON).

The gender pay gap is a key indicator of women's economic autonomy, as it stems from multiple factors linked to the prevalence of discrimination in the labour market, such as vertical and horizontal job segregation, and women's concentration in lower-productivity sectors and informal jobs. Colombian women earn 6.6 per cent less than their male counterparts (average monthly labour income)[4]. This gap varies according to personal characteristics, but also to the labour market.

Women's autonomy requires not only the ability to generate their own income through paid work, but also to access and use productive assets. In this regard, the Bank of Opportunities and the Financial Superintendence of Colombia have been preparing the Financial Inclusion Report for several years, which measures access to and use of financial products and services in the country. In 2023, 36.1 million adults had at least one financial product, representing 94.6 per cent access. When data are broken down by sex, access for women was 91.0 per cent and for men 97.7 per cent, while the percentage of use was 79.4 per cent for women and 83.9 per cent for men.

A reality that reflects deep gender inequalities and their interaction with other forms of discrimination is that women are more affected by poverty. In Colombia, women are almost three times more likely (30.4 per cent) than men (11.7 per cent) to not have their own income.

In departments such as Chocó (41.4 per cent), Huila (40.8 per cent) and Caquetá (39.4 per cent), around 4 in 10 women are economically dependent on another person. The widest gender gap is recorded in Huila, at 30.7 percentage points. In contrast, Nariño (22.2 per cent) and Bogotá D.C. (22.8 per cent) have the lowest proportions of women without their own income, and the smallest gender gap is identified in the department of La Guajira, with 9.7 percentage points.

[4] This figure corresponds to DANE estimates for 2022 for this publication. DANE is already working on the fourth edition of the Statistical Note on the wage gap in the country, which presents this important indicator disaggregated for a wide range of socioeconomic variables.

The femininity index for poverty shows that women are overrepresented in poor households. In 2023, at the national level, there were 121 women for every 100 men in poverty. This trend is accentuated in departments such as Caquetá and Valle del Cauca, where the proportion is 139 and 138 women, respectively, for every 100 men in this situation.

CONCLUSIONS

Women continue to confront significant barriers to accessing, remaining and advancing in the labour market. Available data reveal the persistence of gender gaps, including segregation in employment, higher unemployment rates and wage inequalities. The feminization of poverty and their still low participation in the labour force are coupled with the greater presence of women in unpaid labour market activities and in precarious jobs. These gaps have been documented in all three editions of *Women and Men: Gender Gaps in Colombia*.

The first publication reported the increase in women's LFPR from 2008 to 2019, which rose by 6.7 percentage points, from 46.4 to 53.1 per cent. The most significant growth in women's LFPR occurred between 2008 and 2012. Subsequently, it stagnated around the level observed in 2019. During the same period, the gender gap narrowed by almost 4 percentage points, from 24.7 to 20.8 percentage points.

In the second edition, the quarterly rates for 2021 and the first quarter of 2022 were reported, noting the recovery of economic participation following the pandemic. In this regard, in 2020, women's LFPR dropped to 48.2 per cent. The decline among men was smaller, and as a result, that year, the gap increased to 25.5 percentage points.

Finally, in 2023, the recorded LFPR was 52.3 per cent, and the gap was 24 percentage points. Therefore, although post-pandemic levels are returning to previous behaviour, there are no significant changes, suggesting that women's participation will grow or that the gap will decrease in the short term.

Women earn lower incomes than men. This is due, among other factors, to their lower participation in the labour market, their concentration in lower-productivity sectors and informal jobs, and to discrimination in labour markets. In the first edition of this publication, the reported wage gap in 2018 was 12.1 per cent, which, expressed differently, meant that women earned 87.9 per cent of what men earned. In the second edition, a wage gap of 12.9 per cent was reported for 2019 and a gap of 5.8 per cent for 2020 – an atypical year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this latest edition, the reported wage gap for 2022 was 6.6 per cent. This indicates that although the gap has increased compared to 2020, it remains well below pre-pandemic levels.

Women's achievements in other areas, such as education, do not translate into greater insertion in the labour market or into the better quality of the jobs they enter. Rather, gender gaps generally tend to be reduced as educational levels increase.

Likewise, despite the reductions in the incidence of poverty, which is undoubtedly a positive result for society, the femininity index of poverty has not shown improvement. In the first edition, it was reported that, in 2018, the percentage of poor women was 18 per cent higher than men in the same condition. Another way to interpret the gender index is that for every



100 men in poor households, there were 118 women. It was also reported that this index had shown an increasing trend over time, even though the incidence of poverty had fallen, indicating that achievements in combating poverty reduction have not benefited women and men equally.

For the second edition, the gender index of poverty had decreased slightly, to 116 women for every 100 men in poor households in 2020. In the third edition, the most recent data point to a return to the increasing trend observed in previous years, with a gender index of 119 in 2022 and 121 in 2023. This shows that the fact that women are overrepresented in poor households has not been reversed.

Therefore, it is essential to design public policies aimed at reducing poverty with a gender perspective. This requires considering the sexual division of labour, family structures, social practices and access to productive resources – aspects that continue to be largely determined by social norms and gender stereotypes. The data also allude to the need to continue transforming the world of work to achieve true inclusive social development and guarantee the economic autonomy of women until old age, for the benefit of the entire society.

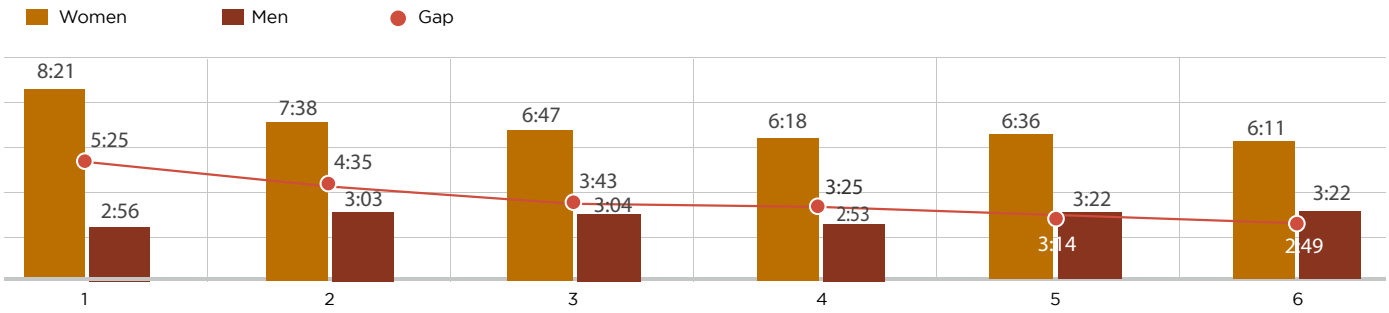
INEQUALITY IN THE SOCIAL DISTRIBUTION OF UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK

Data consistently show that unpaid care and domestic work (UCDW) falls mainly on women. According to the 2020–2021 National Time-Use Survey, at all ages, women's participation in UCDW and the time spent on this work exceeds that of men.

Gaps appear from childhood: 79.4 per cent of girls and adolescents aged 10–17 perform UCDW, compared to 61.4 per cent of boys in the same age group. This gap widens among adults aged 45–59, where participation is 94.3 per cent for women versus a mere 60.9 per cent for men.

This gap also decreases with an increase in socioeconomic status – a reduction that is mainly due to the decrease in the time women dedicate to unpaid work. While the time spent by men increases in higher strata, these increases are relatively small. For women, moving from stratum 1 to stratum 6 results in a reduction of 2 hours per day dedicated to unpaid work. For men, this change represents an increase of approximately 25 minutes.

FIGURE 6.
AVERAGE DAILY TIME DEDICATED TO UNPAID DOMESTIC AND CARE WORK, BY SOCIOECONOMIC STRATUM OF HOUSING AND SEX, 2020-2021



Source: DANE. 2021. National Survey on Time Use (ENUT) 2020-2021. Specialized annex on care.

Approximately half of women dedicate the equivalent of a full-time workday or at least a part-time workday to UCDW. In contrast, only 10 per cent of men are in the same situation.

It is essential to measure the contributions of women to society. In this sense, the Satellite Account of the Care Economy reveals that the value of women's UCDW was equivalent to 19.6 per cent of Colombia's Gross Domestic Product in 2021.

DANE has developed a study of National Transfer Accounts and National Time Transfer Accounts to make the time that women dedicate to care more visible. Some findings of this study include the average annual income profile by age and sex for 2021 in Colombia, which shows that workers reach their maximum average annual income at age 37, with a value of $24,805,033 Colombian pesos (USD 5,765). For women, the maximum income level occurs at age 36, with an average of COP $21,197,216 (USD 4,927), while men reach their maximum income at age 39, with an average of COP $29,200,658 (USD 6,787). This difference reveals a gap in maximum income of COP $8,003,442 (USD 1,860) in favour of men.

When analysing the annual production and per capita consumption of household activities in millions of pesos, it is observed that, at the maximum point of production in 2021, the monetary value of these activities reached $8,912,872 pesos for women (USD 2,071), while for men it was $3,486,722 pesos (USD 811), which generates a difference of $5,426,150 pesos (USD 1,262). Throughout the life cycle, the average difference between the production of men and women is $3,720,029 pesos (USD 865).

Throughout their lives, women provide more unpaid care than men, dedicating on average 0.5 hours more. One hour of care and support for household members has an average remuneration of $6,163 pesos (USD 1.43). At age 27, women had a maximum production of $1,120,045 pesos (USD 260) in 2021, of care, which is almost entirely consumed by minors. In contrast, men produce a maximum of $544,887 pesos (USD 127) worth of production of care, at age 34. Given this scenario – and having recognized that these inequalities are not only unjust, but unsustainable and inefficient – Colombia is now building its National Care System.

Law 2281 of 2023 created the Ministry of Equality and Equity and also dictated the creation of a National Care System, through which existing and new services, regulations, policies and technical and institutional actions are coordinated, with the objective of responding to the care demands of homes in a co-responsible manner between the public and private sector, civil society, communities, and between women and men, in all their diversity, to promote a new social organization of care in the country and to guarantee the human rights of caregivers.

In 2024, the Ministry presented the National Care Programme, whose objective is to advance towards the guaranteeing of the right to care under dignified conditions, as well as the recognition and strengthening of the forms of care as a vital interdependent social function for sustaining life.

CONCLUSIONS

Care is an indispensable and universal dimension that affects all people at some point in their lives. For this reason, it is essential to have statistical information based on indicators related to care that allows us to understand its magnitude, distribution and the interactions between the different actors in society around this issue.

In the three editions of *Women and men: Gender gaps in Colombia*, analyses have been based mainly on the National Time-Use Survey, which confirm that UCDW is not distributed equally but falls mainly on women, which hinders women's incorporation into the labour market and leads them to modify their educational and work trajectories.

The overall workload combines the average time allocated to both paid and unpaid work for those engaged in both types of work. As shown in the second edition of this publication, women's daily workload was nearly three hours greater than

that of men (13 hours and 31 minutes compared to 10 hours and 41 minutes) in 2021. It also revealed that the gap between women and men had increased by 49 minutes compared to what was presented in the first edition of this publication (13 hours and 9 minutes compared to 10 hours and 8 minutes in 2017), partly due to the additional burdens of unpaid work resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Colombia is currently defining its National Care System, whose bases are already being established and include the right to care, to be cared for and to self-care, in conditions of equality, dignity and co-responsibility, with an emphasis on the community, ethnic-racial and territorial dimensions. It also incorporates elements of the transformation of social norms that underpin the changes that should eventually be observed as a result of a planned, expanded and improved provision of care and support services.

WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING, GOVERNMENT, THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND HOUSEHOLDS

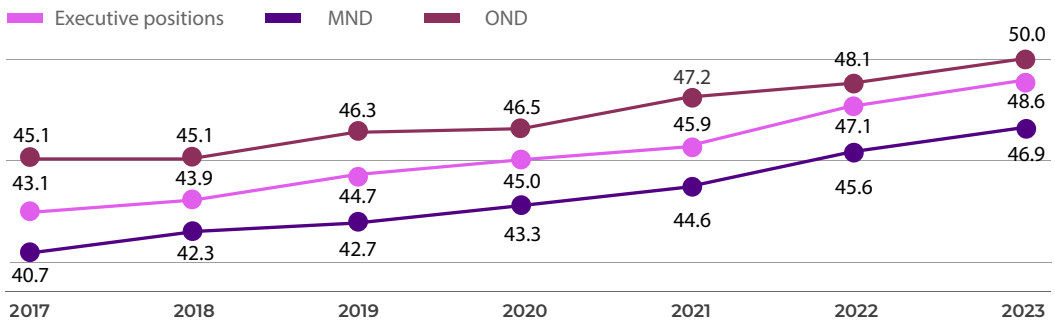
Female leadership and women's participation in decision-making positions, both in government and in business, remain limited.

Currently, the State employs 1,339,597 people, of which 52.6 per cent are women. Between 2017 and 2023, the percentage of women who held positions at Maximum Decision-Making Level (MND according to its initials in Spanish) and Other Decision-Making Levels (OND according to its initials in Spanish) in the Colombian State increased gradually to reach 48.6 per cent[5].

In the case of MND positions, 46.9 per cent are held by women, while half of OND posts are held by women. The percentage for ONDs has been higher than that for MNDs every year, but the gap has closed to almost converge on parity.

FIGURE 7.

EVOLUTION OF THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN EXECUTIVE POSITIONS WITHIN THE COLOMBIAN STATE, 2017–2023



Source: Civil Service. 2023. Quota Law Report.

Note: the percentage of management positions is an aggregate indicator of MND and OND positions.

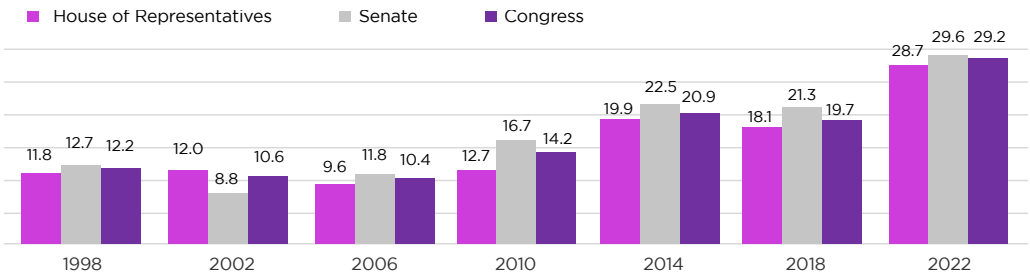
As for Congress, the 2022 results show that women accounted for almost 30 per cent of seats in both legislative bodies. In the House of Representatives, they occupied 28.9 per cent (54 of 187 seats) and in the Senate 29.6 per cent (32 of 108 seats), resulting in an aggregate participation of 29.2 per cent (86 of 295 seats). These results place Colombia below the Latin American average (of 35.8 per cent) and countries in the region such as Chile (35.5 per cent), Argentina (42.4 perent)

[5] Through its website, Colombia's Civil Service avails an interactive consultation viewer with information on the participation of women in management positions in the Colombian State from 2017 onwards: https://www1.funcionpublica.gov.co/web/sie/ley-de-cuotas.

and Mexico (50.4 per cent), although it surpasses others such as Brazil (17.5 per cent) and Uruguay (25.3 per cent)[6].

FIGURE 8.

EVOLUTION OF THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN COLOMBIA'S CONGRESS, 1998–2024



Source: The percentages for 2006 to 2018 are taken from the publication: UN Women and Registraduría Nacional del Registro Civil 2019. *The road to parity in the Colombian Congress: the political representation of women after the 2018 elections.* The percentages for 1998 and 2002 are from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) historical archive "Women in National Parliaments". The percentage for the House of Representatives for 2022 was constructed from the directory on the House of Representatives' website.

In the 2023–2024 legislature, women occupied 26.5 per cent of the boards of directors of plenary sessions and constitutional commissions, and they tended to participate more as vice-presidents than as presidents. None of the boards are gender equal. The closest, with 42 per cent women, is the Seventh Senate Commission, which addresses labour, recreation, sports, health, housing and women's and family issues[7].

In the Judicial Branch, for every 100 employed men, there are 128 women. However, this ratio varies according to the hierarchical level. In municipal judge positions, there are 98 women for every 100 men. This proportion decreases to 90 women in the position of district judge and is further reduced in magistrates' positions. In the positions of magistrate of the Court or Sectional Council, for every 100 men there are only 59 women. Of the 91 High ("*Alta Corporación*") magistrates, only 27 are women.

On the other hand, 45 women participated in the 2023 race for governor positions, more than double the number in 2019. In percentage terms, the number of female candidates increased from 12.2 to 18.3 per cent. However, in 2023 there were still eight departments without female candidates. In Colombia, there are currently six female governors, which represents an increase of four departments compared to the 2019 elections.

Some 978 women competed for mayoralties in 2023; an increase over four years ago, when there were 781. In percentage terms, women represented 16 per cent of candidates in the last elections, a higher percentage than in the previous race (15.2 per cent). Of 1,102 municipalities, 469 (42.5 per cent) did not have any female candidates for the position of mayor in the 2023 elections. In Colombia, there are 146 female mayors, representing 13.2 per cent of all municipalities.

From the perspective of the voting population, the participation of women (61.8 per cent) in the 2023 territorial elections is six percentage points higher than that of men (56.1 per cent). This difference in favour of women was observed in all departments[8].

[6] Data taken from the SDG section of the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean of ECLAC (SDG indicator 5.5.1a), updated as of September 2023. It corresponds to the proportion of women who hold positions in national parliament. For international comparisons, only the lower house or sole chamber is generally used.

[7] UN Women. 2024. Women Political Leaders 2024.

[8] UN Women, National Registry of Civil Status and National Electoral Council. 2024. *Avances hacia la igualdad entre hombres y mujeres en los cargos de elección territorial. La representación política de las mujeres después de las elecciones territoriales 2023.*

For its part, the Colombian Network of Chambers of Commerce reports that according to data from the Single Business and Social Registry, of the total number of natural persons registered as business-owners in 2023 in Chambers of Commerce, 59 per cent are women, but in companies incorporated as corporations, only 13 per cent have female participation in the share capital of more than 50 per cent, or have a woman as their legal representative.

Furthermore, when analysing social capital, women have limited representation since they only own 16 per cent of the capital on average, and in more than 75 per cent of companies their participation is less than 10 per cent. Likewise, the Network reports that, although the majority of companies are legally represented by women (regardless of the type of legal organization or the size of the firm), their owners are men[9].

CONCLUSIONS

Given that women make up more than half the population, their participation in shaping governments and defining the direction of a country is essential for a strong democracy, whether as appointed or elected public officials, or as citizens freely exercising their rights.

Moving towards equal power spaces is a process that goes beyond numbers; it has to do with transformative change that redefines gender relations. As more women access and exercise leadership positions at all levels of political, economic and public life, the balance of power that has historically favoured men is slowly being altered.

Since the first edition of *Women and Men: Gender Gaps in Colombia*, the representation of women in State institutions has been analysed, based on the annual reports of the Civil Service.

Regarding the presence of women in management positions in the Colombian State, the first edition of this publication, based on the report published annually by the Public Function Office, indicated that 44.7 per cent of these positions were held by women in 2019. By the second edition, based on data from 2022, women occupied 46 per cent of management positions – an increase compared to 2019 and surpassing the target set for that year within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this third edition, 2023 data confirm a continued upward trend, reaching a value of 48.6 per cent. Additionally, in 2023, parity was achieved in OND positions, while women's representation in MND-level positions had surpassed 45 per cent.

The conclusions in these three editions have underlined the importance of having established temporary special measures, such as the quota of at least 30 per cent women in management positions. However, in other areas, progress has been slower. In Congress, women's participation has not exceeded 30 per cent, and there are still departments with no women elected to the House of Representatives.

The first edition presented the results of the 2018 legislative elections, where women's representation reached 19.7 per cent in Congress: 18.7 per cent in the House of Representatives and 21.3 per cent in the Senate. This result, which was lower than that observed in 2014, placed Colombia at that time below the average for Latin America (29.7 per cent). In the second edition, the electoral results for 2022 were preliminary but indicated significant progress. In the third edition, definitive data show that women now have representation in Congress of 29.2 per cent (28.9 per cent in the House of Representatives and 29.6 per cent in the Senate). However, Colombia still falls short when compared to the regional average (35.8 per cent).

In local governments, the 2020 edition reported the electoral results of 2019, where two women were elected as governors and 132 as mayors (12 per cent). In the most recent edition, the results of the 2023 territorial elections are reported. In this regard, the number of female governors increased to 6, and the number of female mayors rose to 146 (13.2 per cent). In both cases, the indicators showed positive albeit small changes, and women's participation in the territories continues to be low.

[9] Confecámaras. 2024. *Panorama de las mujeres en el ámbito laboral y empresarial.*

A similar situation is observed in the business world, where women's talent is wasted with few opportunities for them to reach leadership and decision-making positions.

It is crucial to pay attention to the inertia and resistance that still exist and to transform the social norms that devalue women's capabilities and merits. Otherwise, existing narratives that support the underrepresentation of women in decision-making spaces will continue to suggest that there are not enough women who are capable of, or interested in, assuming significant political and business roles.

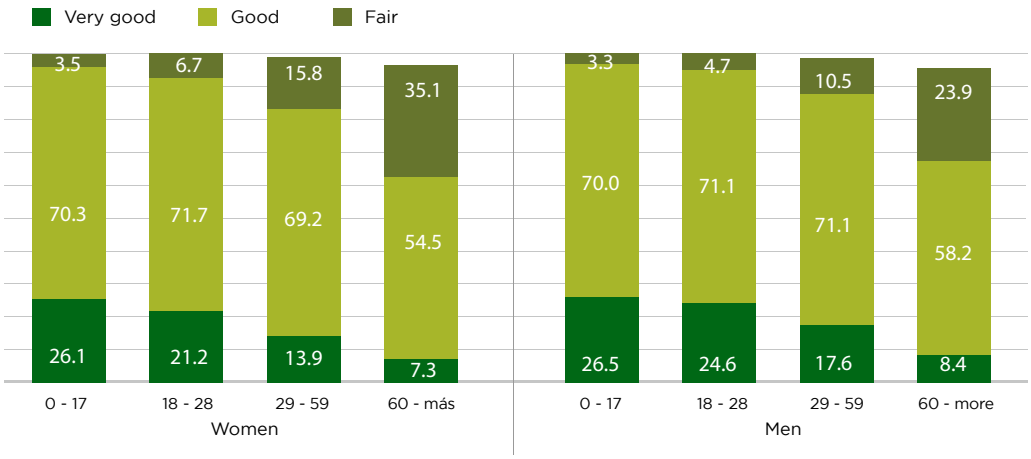
WOMEN'S ACCESS TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH CARE, AND INEQUALITIES IN THEIR PARTICIPATION IN SPORTS, RECREATION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Sex and gender interact differently in different people. Sex influences risk-taking, progression and general health status through genetic factors, which can generate differences in susceptibility to certain diseases, as well as in the effectiveness of treatments. On the other hand, gender norms, roles and relations affect access to and control over health resources, which causes disparities in vulnerability to diseases, the behaviour of certain conditions, and the availability of health services, as well as the possibilities of obtaining information and treatment.

Self-perception of health is an individual and subjective concept that allows people to evaluate their general well-being, both physical and emotional, in a simple way[10]. In Colombia, as age increases, satisfaction with one's own state of health decreases, for both women and men. But the deterioration is more pronounced among women: the percentage who consider their health status to be "fair" (compared to "good" or "very good") exceeds that of men in all age groups. This difference is especially marked in the age groups of 29–59 years and 60 years and older. This result may be due in part to greater female life expectancy.[11]

FIGURE 9.

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION ACCORDING TO HEALTH STATUS ASSESSMENT, BY SEX AND AGE GROUP IN COLOMBIA, 2023



Source: : DANE. 2023. National Quality of Life Survey.

Note: The columns do not add up to 100 because the percentage for the response "bad" is not included, since it only exceeded 1 per cent for those over 60 years of age – at a rate of 3.1 per cent of women in that age group and 3.5 per cent of men.

[10] Rañó-Santamaría et.al. 2022. Health self-perception is associated with life-styles and comorbidities and its effect on mortality is confounded by age. A population based study.

[11] Pan-American Health Organization. 2023. Esperanza de vida y carga de la enfermedad en las personas mayores de la Región de las América.

Regarding chronic non-communicable diseases, the 2023 National Quality of Life Survey indicates that 14 per cent of women and 9.8 per cent of men have been diagnosed with a chronic disease in the last 12 months. Women in all age groups, with the exception of children, have been diagnosed more frequently. The widest gap, of almost 7 percentage points, is recorded in the group aged 60+: 39.6 per cent for women and 32.8 per cent for men.

14 per cent of women and 9.8 per cent of men have been diagnosed with a chronic disease in the last 12 months.

Regarding sexual and reproductive health, in Colombia, the total fertility rate has shown a downward trend over time, and it is estimated that it will continue to decrease to stand at 1.59 in 2030 and 1.47 in 2050.

This indicator has displayed very different behaviour throughout the territory. In 2024, at the national level, the TFR was 1.69. Nine departments have a lower rate and another nine have rates higher than the replacement rate. At the extremes are Bogotá, with 1.32 daughters/sons per woman, and Vaupés with 4.23.

The 2023 figures also begin to show changes in adolescent fertility. That year, the highest proportion of births was to mothers aged 20–34, representing 71.5 per cent of the total births. This differs from what was observed in 2019 and 2021, when the highest volumes were concentrated among mothers aged 15–29. Likewise, with respect to 2022, the 2023 figures show a decrease in the number of births for all ages from 10 to 17 years. Finally, specific fertility rates in 2023 maintained the downward trend for all five-year age groups.

It is worth highlighting the difference between rural and urban areas; in the former, more than a fifth of adolescents aged 15–19 years report having been pregnant at some point; in the latter, less than a tenth. In the 20–24 age group, the rural-urban difference is greater, 30 percentage points (86.4 vs. 62.9 per cent, according to data from the National Quality of Life Survey 2023).

A key indicator of social development is maternal mortality. This is a figure that accounts for women's access to adequate and timely medical services during pregnancy. In Colombia, the historical trend from 2007 to 2023 is downward. In 2020 and 2021, there was an increase in the maternal mortality ratio (MMR)[12] related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The data for 2022 are positive in that the observed level (48.8) is lower than that recorded in 2019, but still higher than the minimum value reached in 2018 (45.3). The National Institute of Health (INS) estimates an MMR for 2023 of 44.5 deaths per 100,000 births.

In addition to knowing women's general state of health and the exercise of their sexual and reproductive rights, analysing women's health involves evaluating other conditions that are important for their physical and mental well-being.

According to the National Institute for Health, depression is the most common mental illness in Colombia, affecting 4.7 per cent of the population, and it is responsible for 1.6 per cent of the total years of healthy life lost. In 2022, 233,795 cases of depression were treated, of which 171 thousand were women (73 per cent). People with depression are 20 times more likely to die prematurely by suicide[13].

On the other hand, physical activity and sport can improve people's lives and strengthen communities by promoting health and well-being, as well as reinforcing social connections and encouraging teamwork, cooperation, discipline and respect, and even creating a sense of belonging to a group and the community[14].

[12] Refers to the number of maternal deaths that occur during pregnancy, childbirth and the 42 days after the end of gestation per hundred thousand live births, also known as early MMR.

[13] National Institute for Health (INS). 2023. *Identificación de barreras de la depresión no atendida en Colombia y recomendaciones de política*

[14] UNESCO. 2024. The social impact of sport, unlocking the potential of sport to drive social transformation.

In Colombia, according to data from the National Time-Use Survey 2020–2021, 8.4 per cent of women freely practice some sport (dancing, yoga, physical exercise or going to the gym), while among men, 14.8 per cent do so. This gap is particularly wide (15.2 percentage points) among children and adolescents aged 10 to 17 and almost 10 percentage points among women and men aged 18 to 29.

The gaps begin at an early age. Almost a quarter (24.3 per cent) of children aged 5–17 participate in sports courses or practices, a proportion that is halved for girls (12.2 per cent).

CONCLUSIONS

Talking about women's health involves addressing inequalities that begin at an early age and accumulate throughout life, negatively affecting the exercise of their rights in a broader context.

Sexual and reproductive health has been a recurring theme in all three editions of *Women and men: Gender gaps in Colombia*. One of the key aspects in the analysis is teenage pregnancy, due to its serious consequences on the health and life trajectories of girls and young women. In particular, this edition reports a downward trend in the adolescent fertility rate; however, the results are mixed across the territory.

Pregnancy and motherhood in adolescence largely determine the educational and labour trajectories of women, affecting the outcomes they can achieve and accumulating disadvantages throughout their lives. Since the first edition of this publication, DANE's Vital Statistics have been consulted to analyse this issue. In 2018, 19.8 per cent of all births were to mothers under 20 years old. In the second edition, this percentage for 2020 was 18.3 per cent, and for the third edition, where preliminary data for 2023 are reported, a value of 16 per cent was noted. In all three editions, this percentage varies significantly when reviewing the indicator by department.

Additionally, all three editions of this publication have analysed the adolescent fertility rate, an SDG indicator for which Colombia set a target of reaching fewer than 46.0 births per thousand women by 2030. In the first edition of this publication, the reported fertility rate for 2018 was 58.8. By the second edition, according to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the rate was less than 54 births. And the most recent data available from 2022 show a greater decrease, reaching 47.2 births per thousand women.

Regarding the indicator of avoidable maternal mortality, within the framework of the SDGs, Colombia established a target of 32 deaths per 100,000 live births. The first edition of this publication showed that, in 2018, the maternal mortality ratio was 45.3. The second edition drew attention to the increase observed between 2018 and 2019, when a ratio of 50.7 was recorded, which worsened in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, reaching a ratio of 65.8 deaths per 100,000 live births. This third edition shows a new increase in 2021 (83.2) before decreasing in 2023 to levels below those recorded before the pandemic (48.8).

In this same sense, monitoring the maternal mortality indicator is essential, although it has shown a downward trend. In several departments, the rate in 2022 exceeds that recorded before the pandemic in 2019.

With the aim of expanding the analysis within the gender profile in this edition, a section on mental health was included. The analysis showed that depression is more prevalent

among women and is one of the leading causes of years lived with disability among women. Also striking is the increasing trend in suicide attempts and suicides, which, although affecting both sexes, have seen greater recent increases among women.

In conclusion, the recognition and understanding of health-related phenomena from a gender perspective is particularly important if we seek to strengthen health and social protection systems by transforming them into more egalitarian, sensitive and, therefore, efficient and sustainable systems.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, AN OBSTACLE TO PROGRESS AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

In the last decade, there has been a clear transformation in the Colombian regulatory framework in relation to the protection, care and access to justice for women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence. In addition, the collection of relevant, timely and quality statistical information has been promoted to measure the scope of this type of violence in the country.

In 2023, the National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences (INMLCF) recorded 21,293 non-lethal injuries from external causes caused by domestic violence, where 6 out of 10 victims are women. In acts committed against women, the aggressors are mainly men; however, there is a significant difference in the percentage of female aggressors when it comes to minors, where they represent almost 40 per cent (33 per cent of aggressors against male minors and 45 per cent against female minors). This participation of women and men in domestic violence reflects violent contexts in homes, in which gender-based violence continues to be the most recurrent.

Also in 2023, the INMLCF recorded 42,689 cases of non-lethal intimate partner violence, of which 86.1 per cent of the victims were women. This violence is concentrated in women of legal age, with only 2.0 per cent of victims are under 18 years old. Young women aged 18–28 represented 38.5 per cent of the victims, while women aged 29–59 years old comprised 57.7 per cent.

Injuries inflicted on women by their partner or ex-partner occurred mainly in the home, with 7 out of 10 cases reported in this context. Half of the women were attacked by those who live with them daily, while the other half were attacked by ex-partners.

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Of the cases attended to, 71.9 per cent (26,447 women) received a "medical-legal incapacity" due to the gravity of their injuries. Almost all of these incapacities were for a period of 1 to 30 days, with 503 women receiving an incapacity ranging from 31 to 90 days and seven women for more than 90 days. These data underline the seriousness of the attacks and show that violence not only violates the physical and emotional integrity of the victims, but also interferes with their daily lives, resulting in the loss of healthy days that could have been dedicated to study or paid work.

Although disappearances can be due to multiple causes and circumstances, in the context of violence against women it is essential to consider them. In Colombia, a total of 52,286 disappearances of women were recorded in the last 25 years (1999–2023)[15], of which 4,920

[15] The historical figures are available in the INMLC Open Data and correspond to the historical data in the Information System Network of Missing Persons and Corpses (SIRDEC) since 1930.

are presumed to be forced disappearances. Throughout the period analysed, the majority of missing women have been young people between the ages of 12 and 17: this age group comprises between 50 and 60 per cent of the total; as well as young women, aged 18 to 28, who represent between 18 and 22 per cent in the period analysed.

The proportion corresponding to adult women aged 29 to 59 has fluctuated between 13 and 18 per cent of the total.

Continuing with the types of violence, in 2023 the INMLCF carried out 23,612 examinations for alleged sexual crimes. Practically 9 out of 10 were carried out on women (20,774), of which, in turn, 8 out of 10 were on girls and young people under 18 years old (16,711), and of these, 8 out of 10 were on girls aged 0 to 14 (13,713). In 2023, for every male victim of an alleged sexual crime, there were seven female victims. Among male minors, childhood is the stage in which most alleged sexual crimes generally occur, while for women, adolescence is the stage of greatest risk.

TABLE 1.

COLOMBIA: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF EXAMINATIONS FOR ALLEGED SEXUAL CRIMES, BY AGE GROUP (MINORS AND ADULTS), BY SEX, 2019–2023

	Men					Women				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Minors	**91.7%**	**91.0%**	**89.7%**	**88.9%**	**87.4%**	**85.6%**	**84.2%**	**80.7%**	**81.5%**	**80.4%**
Early childhood (0–5)	24.3%	23.5%	21.7%	19.4%	20.5%	13.2%	12.0%	9.9%	8.5%	8.6%
Childhood (6–11)	41.2%	40.8%	37.8%	38.3%	37.2%	30.4%	27.9%	24.0%	23.4%	24.3%
Adolescence (12–17)	26.3%	26.7%	29.6%	31.2%	29.7%	42.1%	44.3%	46.8%	49.6%	47.5%
Adults	**8.3%**	**9.0%**	**10.9%**	**11.1%**	**12.6%**	**14.4%**	**15.8%**	**19.3%**	**18.5%**	**19.6%**
Youth (18–28)	5.4%	6.0%	7.1%	7.2%	8.2%	9.3%	10.7%	12.1%	11.6%	11.6%
Adulthood (29–59)	2.6%	2.7%	3.5%	3.5%	3.9%	4.7%	4.7%	6.9%	6.4%	7.4%
Senior citizens (60+)	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.5%	0.6%

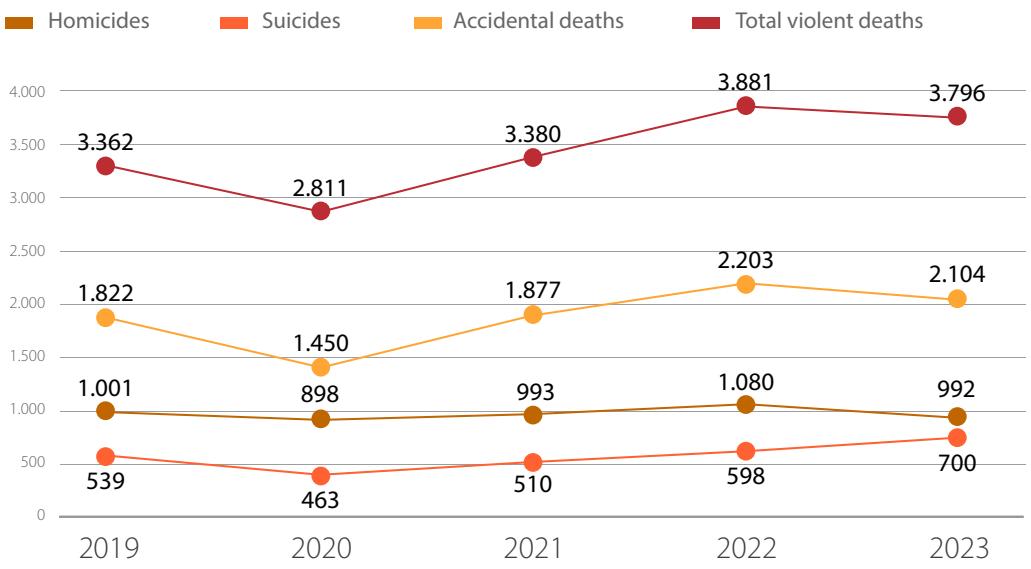
Source: INMLCF. 2023. Non-lethal injuries from external causes 2023 (preliminary).

In sexual assaults committed against men, 40.3 per cent of the aggressors were known people, 49.2 per cent were family members and 8.9 per cent were strangers. In assaults against women, the situation changes; it is much more common for a family member (60.2 per cent) to be the aggressor. In addition, partners and ex-partners represent a significant proportion (16.6 per cent), which means that 8 out of 10 sexual assaults against women are committed by people very close to them.

Regarding crimes against women's lives, almost half of the women murdered in the period 2019–2023 were aged 29–59 and a third were aged 18–28. The place where homicides occur varies between men and women. More than 80 per cent of homicides of men occur in public spaces, while, in the case of women, this percentage does not exceed 61.5 per cent in any of the years analysed. Between 35 and 40 per cent of homicides of women occur at home.

FIGURE 10.

VIOLENT DEATHS OF WOMEN IN COLOMBIA, BY TYPE OF DEATH, 2019–2023



Source: INMLCF. 2023. Fatal injuries from external causes, 2019-2023.

Regarding the relationship with the aggressor, 7 out of 10 homicides of men are committed by strangers, while this characterizes only half of the homicides of women. The partner or ex-partner is responsible for the homicide of women in 20 to 30 per cent of the cases, in contrast to less than 1 per cent of the homicides of men.

Regulatory advances and protocols for the care, prevention, prosecution and punishment of crimes related to violence against women and girls have been significant in recent decades. Despite this, there have been no major reductions in the different manifestations of violence against women. According to annual figures for medical-legal assessments in 2023, 3 women are murdered every day; 101 injured by their partner; and 46 girls are sexually assaulted every 24 hours[16].

The most extreme expression of violence against women and girls – femicide – tragically reveals the persistence of the structural connections between gender inequality, discrimination and violence against women and girls. The Attorney-General's Office reports that 579 femicides were recorded in 2019; there were 450 in 2020; 599 in 2021; 585 in 2022 and 607 in 2023[17].

CONCLUSIONS

In Colombia, regulatory advances and protocols related to the care, prevention, prosecution and punishment of crimes linked to violence against women and girls have been achieved in recent decades. Although these advances are reflected in the greater availability of data on cases of violence, there is still no interoperability of the information systems used by the protection, health and justice sectors to carry out their prevention and monitoring activities.

[16] Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses. 2023. Boletín mensual, december 2023.

[17] Based on the Open Data of the Attorney-General's Office, selecting in the search criteria "feminicides under Article 104 of the Penal Code". These are the criminal notes for the crime, including those committed and those attempted.

The analysis of domestic violence indicates that, often, those who should protect girls and adolescents become the most frequent aggressors. In addition, the dissolution of relationships is identified as a risk factor for experiencing violence.

Sexual crimes predominantly affect women; in the case of minors, the attacks come primarily from family members and people close to them. For adult women, partners and ex-partners make up a significant percentage of perpetrators of sexual assaults.

Regarding disappearances of women, decreases have been observed since 2009. However, special attention must be paid to the high proportion of girls and young women among the victims of disappearances: between 5 and 6 out of 10 females were between the ages of 12 and 17.

All three editions of this gender profile have used data published by the National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences. These data correspond to information from cases known to the Institute. Besides the quantity, the data include contextual characteristics about the events.

In the first edition, the occurrence of 1,001 homicides of women was reported, with a national rate of 3.96 homicides per 100,000 women for the year 2019. After the pandemic, the number of homicides in 2021 was 978, for a rate of 3.74. In this third edition, there was another reduction in the rate, to 3.68 homicides per 100,000 women, reflecting a total of 992 homicides of women.

In the 2020 publication, cases of non-lethal injuries committed by partners (or ex-partners) were also presented. For 2019, 42,134 cases were recorded, resulting in a rate of 166.72 per 100,000 women. In 2021, medical evaluations under this type of violence decreased to 29,609, and with this, the rate also fell to 113.21. However, unlike the decrease observed in homicides for 2023, during the same period, there was an increase in cases of non-lethal injuries committed by partners (or ex-partners), reaching 36,768 cases, for a rate of 136.29.

Regarding medical-legal examinations for alleged sexual offenses, the first edition of the gender profile reported 22,523 in 2019 (a rate of 89.12 examinations per 100,000 women). Similar to reported partner violence, the number of examinations fell due to mobility restrictions and preventive isolation policies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the second edition showed a decrease in 2021 (18,726 examinations for a rate of 71.6 per 100,000 women) compared to 2019. In this edition, the figure for 2023 reveals an increase compared to 2019, with 23,612 examinations (a rate of 83.57 examinations per 100,000 women).

Finally, as the highest expression of violence against women, femicides continue at an alarming rate in Colombia. Between 2021 and 2023, the Public Prosecutor's Office classified 2,089 homicides against women as femicides and, in the first four months of 2024, that figure rose to 220. Violence against women and girls does not subside. Updated statistics are needed to support transformative public interventions, covering multiple areas and sectors to ensure prevention and care for survivors. At the same time, it is crucial to change unequal gender relations and to empower women economically, politically and socially.

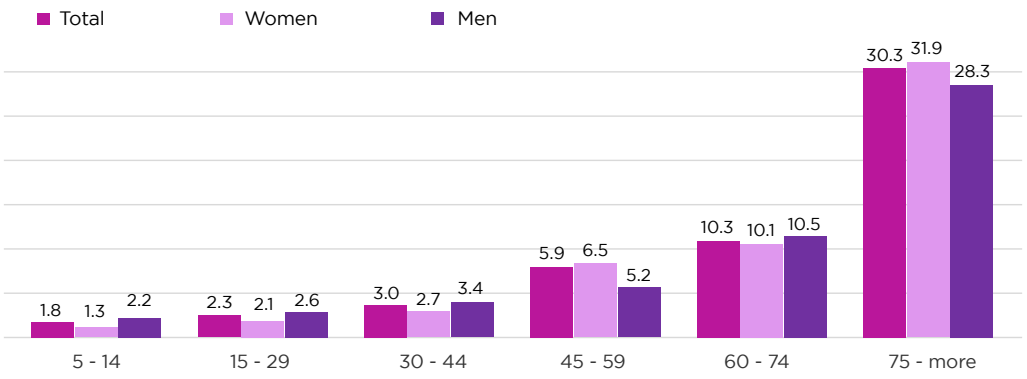
INTERSECTIONAL DISCRIMINATION: DISABILITY, MIGRATORY STATUS AND RECOGNITION OF THE PEASANTRY

The existing gaps between women, as well as their great diversity, make it necessary to take into account a differential and intersectional approach since this allows the analysis of phenomena and gaps based on the interactions between the various structures of power and discrimination.

According to Colombia's National Quality of Life Survey 2023, 2.5 million people aged 5 years and older (5.2 per cent) are disabled, that is, they have a high degree of difficulty in carrying out daily activities or are unable to do them. Of these people, 52.5 per cent are women and 47.5 per cent are men. Disability is more common among women, both nationally (5.3 vs. 5.1 per cent in men) and in urban areas (5.6 vs. 5.1 per cent in men). In rural areas, disability is more frequent among men (4.9 vs. 4.1 per cent in women).

FIGURE 11.

PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE AGED 5 YEARS AND OVER WITH DISABILITIES, BY SEX AND AGE GROUP, 2023



Source: DANE. 2023. National Quality of Life Survey (ECV).

When it comes to education, women with and without disabilities are in a better situation than men. However, when comparing the percentage of people with higher education and postgraduate studies, there is a significant difference of almost 10 percentage points between those with disabilities and those without (13.3 vs. 22.8 per cent). For women, this gap is even greater, at almost 13 percentage points (13.8 vs. 28.6 per cent). This indicates that, although women achieve higher levels of education on average, their disability greatly affects their access to higher education.

In general, people with disabilities report working much less frequently (20.1 per cent) than those without disabilities (50.7 per cent). Additionally, more than a third of people with disabilities are permanently unable to work. The percentage of women with disabilities who work is lower than that of men. However, the gender gap in labour force participation among the population without disabilities is wider (30 percentage points) than among the population with disabilities (12 percentage points)[18]. The existence of a gender gap in both cases indicates that women are at a disadvantage when it comes to generating their own income through paid work.

[18] According to the GEIH (National Household Survey), the Labour Force Participation Rate of women with disabilities stands at 19.4 per cent, while that of men with disabilities is 30.7 per cent.

According to the National Quality of Life Survey 2023, 26.3 per cent of Colombia's population of 40.6 million people aged 15 and over identify themselves as peasants.

In May 2024, Colombia registered 2.8 million immigrants from Venezuela, of which just over half were women. Despite the regularization efforts of the Temporary Protection Statute for Venezuelan Migrants, this population faces serious obstacles to their socioeconomic integration, which prevents them from generating income and meeting their basic needs. According to the 2023 Migration Pulse Survey (EPM), 52.9 per cent of migrants have had difficulties finding work in Colombia, with women being the most affected (54.6 per cent, vs. 51.2 per cent of men).

At least 58.4 per cent of the migrant population reported working the week before the EPM 2023. This percentage varied by sex: 76.3 per cent of men worked for pay, compared to 40.7 per cent of women, a gap of almost 36 percentage points. One fifth of the migrant population was engaged in household chores the week before the survey, with 39.5 per cent of women doing this unpaid work, compared to only 3.6 per cent of men. This reflects a sexual division of labour that greatly affects migrant women.

Discrimination is a problem that affects the well-being and integration of migrants. Three out of 10 migrants reported feeling discriminated against since their arrival in Colombia, the sentiment being more common among women (30.9 per cent) than among men (24.7 per cent). The places where they feel most discriminated against are workplaces and public spaces. Men experience it more at work, while women face it more in public spaces, schools and health services.

Another very important population group in Colombia is the peasantry, which has been fundamental in the country's history and development, being responsible for a large part of agricultural production and the maintenance of the rural economy. However, this sector has faced numerous challenges over the years, such as a lack of access to resources, inequality in the distribution of land and the presence of armed conflict in rural areas, which has led it to be understood as a population with high levels of vulnerability.

According to the National Quality of Life Survey 2023, 26.3 per cent of Colombia's population of 40.6 million people aged 15 and over identify themselves as peasants. About 64 per cent of these people live in rural areas, while about 36 per cent live in urban areas. Regardless of the area, more men than women identify themselves as peasants. The percentage of people who define themselves as peasants increases with age range, in all areas and for both men and women. The population aged 15 to 25 years has the lowest percentage, while those aged 65 and over have the highest percentage[19].

At the national level and in rural and urban areas, women have lower percentages of peasantry self-identification at all ages. The largest difference is 8.5 percentage points between men (37.4 per cent) and women (28.9 per cent) in the age group of 65 years and older at the national level. Traditional gender roles are stronger in the peasant population. Peasant women are mainly engaged in unpaid domestic and care work.

In urban areas, 56.3 per cent of women are engaged in housework, compared to 12.5 per cent of men. In rural areas, 69.7 per cent of women perform domestic work, compared to 8.2 per cent of men. According to the April–June 2024 Integrated Household Survey, the gender gap in labour force participation is much greater for the rural population: the overall participation rate for men is 78.5 per cent versus 41.0 per cent for women (a gap of 15 percentage points compared to the participation of non-rural women). In terms of the employment rate, the

[19] The first peasant self-identification exercise was carried out in the 2019 National Quality of Life Survey. Since then, it has been observed that peasant self-identification is lower among young people compared to adults and older adults. In 2019, 72.7 per cent of people aged 15 to 25 in rural areas identified themselves as peasants, while 87.5 per cent of those over 65 did so. This suggests a possible change in the construction of identity among younger people.

pattern is similar: in all cases the rate for men is higher than that of women, with the gap being greater among the rural population, where the employment of men is more than double that of women.

DANE has incorporated peasantry identification in several statistical projects, including the Political Culture Survey, which reveals that 61.3 per cent of the rural population considers that their rights are not protected or guaranteed (60.1 per cent of men and 62.7 per cent of women). Additionally, the rural population considers that their rights are the least fulfilled, highlighting their vulnerability and lack of protection. The rights of ethnic and social minorities and women's rights are perceived as the next-least guaranteed, with women perceiving this lack of guarantee more strongly.

CONCLUSIONS

Women face multiple inequalities and forms of discrimination with interdependent experiences of exclusion. Therefore, it is crucial that statistical information allow disaggregation by characteristics other than sex. This approach recognizes that the interaction of sex and gender with other identities allows for a more in-depth visualization of the gaps between women and men, but also brings to the table the gaps between women.

This approach has guided the development of all three editions of Women and men: Gender gaps in Colombia, highlighting the need for intersectionality in the analysis of statistical data and recognizing the advances of DANE and other State entities in this area.

In the case of the population with disabilities, it is essential to design and implement participatory public policies that guarantee their social and economic inclusion, and that address significant barriers to their accessing education and employment. The economic inclusion of women with disabilities is challenged by the fact that in addition to performing unpaid domestic and care work, they are also caregivers, which must be made visible and recognized.

The Venezuelan migrant population faces challenges related to discrimination, regularizing their immigration and accessing employment opportunities. Migrant women have a greater burden of care, while experiencing greater job insecurity and limited access to basic services, which highlights the need to promote their social and economic integration. They are also exposed to other violations linked to being a woman, related to the social structure and the reproduction of roles and stereotypes, in addition to the risks associated with gender-based violence.

The rural population, despite its fundamental contribution to the economy, continues to face historical difficulties, such as poverty and limited access to basic services. Rural women are burdened by traditional gender roles, which limits their economic, political and social participation.

To address these structural inequalities, it is essential that public policies in Colombia include a differential and intersectional approach that considers and makes visible the multiple layers of vulnerability faced by these groups.

AN INTERSECTIONAL GENDER APPROACH FOR UNDERSTANDING AND MAKING VISIBLE THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON WOMEN

Colombia has made important commitments on confronting climate change and environmental degradation, as well as on achieving gender equality. In recent years, work has been done on the interrelation of these agendas, recognizing the need to integrate the roles and needs of women and men in the adaptation and mitigation of climate change, adopting an intersectional approach for a sustainable future.

The ultimate goal is to build an equitable, resilient and sustainable society that takes firm steps towards gender equality.

These efforts notably include the creation of tools and the strengthening of capacities for the implementation of gender and climate change policies in sectoral entities that are responsible for managing environmental goals. This, in accordance with international commitments and national circumstances. The established end goal is to build an equitable, resilient and sustainable society that takes firm steps towards gender equality[20].

This normative and programmatic framework will be further strengthened and bolstered by the use of gender indicators that will allow more systematic monitoring of the actions already being implemented in the short, medium and long term. Having specific statistics will show how climate change is not gender-neutral and will highlight the fact that women and men have different needs, roles, skills and interests in the face of the impacts of climate change, but also in action for its management[21].

Colombia already has important elements to continue building a framework of gender and climate change indicators. DANE, for its part, has strengthened the dissemination of statistics disaggregated by sex and for other population groups, produced with a gender perspective, in different statistical projects, ranging from the labour market and access to fundamental rights, to issues of political culture.

Instruments developed by the Government, in particular Strategy 2050, more clearly outline the actions being undertaken or forthcoming, while explicitly highlighting the participation and contributions of women.

The generation of knowledge at a global level will facilitate the development of instruments appropriate to the Colombian context, taking advantage of existing achievements, accumulated learning and the initiative that DANE and different entities of the Colombian Government, such as the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, have demonstrated in the collection, analysis and dissemination of information on the particularities of the country's different population groups.

Climate change can increase the time needed to obtain water, either by walking to places where it can be collected or by waiting for water to be delivered to homes by land transport. The additional time that people spend on these activities takes away opportunities for education, training, income-generation and even self-care. In addition, without access to and control over natural resources, in this case water, women are in a disadvantaged position compared to men in facing the challenges of climate change, even more so considering that they have largely been assigned the responsibility for care within their homes.

Regarding the availability of cooking fuel, according to data from the National Quality of Life Survey 2023, in urban areas 95 per cent of households use natural gas connected to the public grid (83 per cent) or propane/LPG gas in cylinders or pipettes. In rural areas, energy sources are diverse: propane/LPG gas is the most common (45 per cent), followed by firewood or wood (35 per cent), and only 17 per cent of households use natural gas.

Having access to cleaner and safer fuels and technologies is essential to reduce the difficulties associated with the collection and handling of firewood, as well as to reduce

[20] The mechanisms considered milestones are: The National Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change of 2016; Law 2169 on Climate Action, passed at the end of 2021; the biennial reports to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); the various updates to Colombia's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC); the Gender and Climate Change Toolbox; the E2050 Strategy; and the Gender and Climate Change Action Plan.

[21] Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, UNDP, CASAS. 2021. *Guía para la integración de enfoque de género en proyectos, programas, planes y políticas para la gestión del cambio climático en el Sector de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible.* [Electronic resource]. Bogotá D. C., Colombia: Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible.

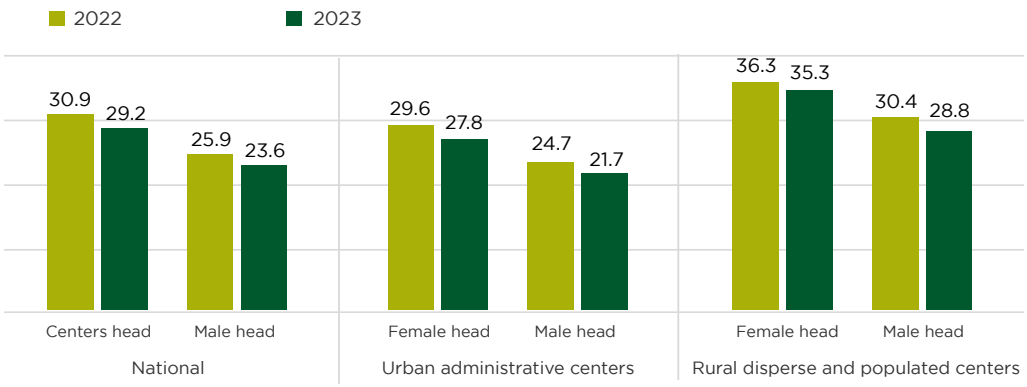
exposure to smoke – which can severely affect health while increasing environmental problems[22].

Among the effects of climate change is the decrease in crop yields, which generates shortages, increases in the prices of agricultural products and even brings on social conflicts. In this regard, in Colombia, the prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity is higher in households headed by women (29.2 per cent) compared to those headed by men (23.6 per cent). Although these differences are also present in urban areas, levels of food insecurity are particularly high in rural households headed by women (35.3 per cent). In 2023, the probability of experiencing food insecurity was reduced in all cases, compared to 2022, but the reductions were greater in households headed by men.

Furthermore, food insecurity affects 43.7 per cent of households headed by Indigenous women, and, in households headed by women who are black/Afro-Colombian/Raizal/Palenquera, 41.3 per cent are food insecure.

FIGURE 12.

PREVALENCE OF MODERATE OR SEVERE FOOD INSECURITY IN COLOMBIA, BY SEX OF HOUSEHOLD HEAD AND AREA OF RESIDENCE, 2022 AND 2023.



Source: DANE. 2023. Technical bulletin: "Inseguridad alimentaria a partir de la escala FIES."

Note: The 1-percentage-point reduction in the prevalence of food insecurity in rural households headed by women (from 36.3 to 35.3 per cent) is not statistically significant.

The adoption of practices related to environmental care and efficient energy use varies according to the area of residence and, to a lesser extent, by the sex of the person heading the household, although slightly higher percentages of adoption of these environmental practices are observed in households headed by women. For example, water reuse is carried out by 31.3 per cent of households headed by men, compared to 35.6 per cent of those headed by women.

Climate actions require innovation, technology and human capital to develop, adapt and implement solutions to diverse contexts. This requires equal access to climate education, based on scientific and environmental disciplines. Promoting the participation of more women in these types of careers is a way to reinforce climate strategies.

[22] UN Environment. 2020. *Género y medio ambiente: un análisis preliminar de brechas y oportunidades en América Latina y el Caribe.*

CONCLUSIONS

Just as women and men have different access to education, work and free time, they also relate differently to the environment. In particular, there is gender dimension in the way in which women and men access land and natural resources, participate in environmental management and confront risks and vulnerabilities in the face of environmental challenges. For this reason, this third edition of *Women and men: Gender gaps in Colombia* includes a section on the interrelation between gender and the environment for the first time.

Moving forward jointly and in an coordinated manner on climate change and gender agendas is no small challenge, but Colombia is taking firm steps in this regard. The construction of normative and programmatic tools in line with international standards and the establishment of ambitious goals lay the foundations for developing interventions that respond to both climate change and gender equality challenges.

In this process of construction, women's voices have been incorporated and the country recognizes that gender inequalities are being aggravated by climate change, not only by its effects, but also because women often lack access to the resources and technologies needed to face these challenges. In Colombia, this disadvantage is visible. At the same time, there is a recognition of women as agents of change and leaders who promote positive transformations. It is essential that they form part of solutions, including on environmental management teams, in the conservation of biodiversity and in the fight against desertification.

Although, the production of gender indicators in this area is challenging, Colombia has advanced and cutting-edge statistical production. Moreover, its statistical projects can, in the short and medium term and through conceptual and contextual reviews, generate indicators to facilitate the monitoring of environmental policies.

Finally, it is worth highlighting the joint work of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development and DANE to build a set of indicators that illustrate the differentiated environmental effects on women and to be at the forefront of the issue in Latin America.



FINAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Achieving gender equality is, without a doubt, a fundamental part of the Colombian public agenda. The gender dimension is increasingly being integrated into discussions within the public administration, and more women are in decision-making spaces, exercising their rights and contributing to closing gaps and eradicating gender discrimination and violence. However, more knowledge is needed about the progress and challenges on Colombia's commitments to achieve equality between women and men, and to eliminate gender violence and discrimination.

In order for these commitments to translate into real and sustainable changes, public policies must be evidence-based. Gender indicators are essential to identify inequalities, their magnitude, the most affected populations, the urgency of attention and to flag possible setbacks, as well as to point out progress made. These indicators are also powerful tools to accelerate the transformations that are necessary for women to live in better conditions and exercise their rights with greater freedom and security.

Based on these indicators, this and all other editions of *Women and Men: Gender Gaps in Colombia* provide a broad overview of the situation of women and men in different areas and outline the challenges that public policies have to overcome in order to achieve gender equality.

Transforming the world of work into an equal and empowering space and redistributing unpaid care work, with a gender and intersectional perspective

Women are increasingly entering the labour market, but their conditions are marked by prevailing gender discrimination. These inequalities negatively impact women's economic autonomy, leaving them three times more likely to not have their own income. When they are heads of household, they are also more likely to live in poverty.

Reading data with a gender perspective implies a shift in the interpretation of economic indicators. Women are not outside the labour market because of a lack of interest or training, but because they face countless obstacles to entering and staying in the labour market, which translates into their low participation rates.

One of the tasks they must sort out individually and exclusively is care. This must be a shared responsibility among members of the household, but it is usually assumed exclusively by women from an early age. To this end, the intervention of the State through public policies that facilitate and protect the participation of women in the labour market becomes relevant in order to close the gender gap in labour insertion and income received.

Barriers in the labour market cannot be understood without considering the distribution of unpaid care and domestic work. Women's time is a valuable productive asset, but its use faces restrictions that cannot be overcome solely with more education or greater social support. This situation is symptomatic of a social construction in which women continue to be seen as the main people responsible for the care of others, responsibilities that they assume at the expense of their education and careers.

A public policy of such importance as the National Care System requires indicators that allow monitoring both of management and results as it is implemented. It is essential to establish a set of key indicators that reflect the activities of all instances involved. It will also be necessary to have information that covers management in terms of coverage and budgets, as well as from the perspective of the users – those people who receive care and support – as well as the

caregivers, who are also part of the interventions. It is also essential to monitor the working conditions of those who provide services in institutions to avoid reproducing inequalities, such as the undervaluation of care-related work. Finally, medium- and long-term performance indicators must be established based on the objectives set for the National Care System.

In parallel and as a necessary condition for redistributing care work, it is essential to continue improving the basic services that are essential for the provision of care in homes. Data show significant inequalities, both within the territory and between different groups; for example, rural households have significant gaps in the availability of basic services in their homes. This improvement is essential not only to improve the general living conditions of this population, but to reduce the burden of care and domestic work.

In terms of statistics, the National Time-Use Survey is a consolidated exercise, as is the Satellite Account of Unpaid Work and the review of National Transfer Accounts and National Time Transfer Accounts. The implementation of the National Care System will most likely require the collection of other types of information, such as geostatistical mapping of the local supply and demand for care services, accessibility and use of services, and the working conditions of the care workforce, among others.

Strengthening the real redistribution of power through the principle of parity

Women's presence in managerial positions within the public administration has increased. The Quota Law and the goals set by the Colombian State have served to achieve greater participation of women in decision-making positions.

In general, more changes can be seen in favour of women in designated positions, with some exceptions, such as the Judicial Branch, where women occupy more than half of positions, but their presence falls considerably as the hierarchy increases. This includes the still-low participation of women in the Supreme Court of Justice, which is lower than the average in Latin America. It would be important to analyse the barriers in judicial careers that prevent more women from ascending to positions of judges and magistrates, and to identify how to incorporate temporary special measures in the nominations, selections and appointments of such positions.

In elected positions, the results are still far from equal. To continue advancing towards parity, it is essential to review the legislation to strengthen the principle of parity, incorporating alternation. The integration of lists and the designation of candidates can be analysed in detail to avoid maintaining regulatory gaps that exclude women. It is also necessary to evaluate the state of access to justice when women's political rights are violated, including cases of gender-based political violence. Having statistical information in this regard would allow decisions to be made, especially on prevention.

Participating in political training is key to acquiring the skills and necessary tools to intervene in and influence the political arena. The training and accompaniment of women leaders allows them to promote their causes and contribute to the construction of public policies. However, this is not enough for them to be able to access positions and exercise them on equal terms. And this responsibility cannot fall solely on them. Therefore, as in other spheres, it is necessary to promote social and cultural transformations that recognize the value and capabilities of women, as well as the exercise of their political-electoral rights.

In the business sphere, Boards of Directors are predominantly male spaces. In this context, alliances between the public sector, private sector, international organizations and civil society

can be valuable in promoting gender equality from the highest decision-making levels. The motivation and leadership of senior management allows for the coordination of corporate strategies that transversally integrate the different areas of organizations and adopt objective and transparent metrics related to gender equality.

Promoting healthier and Fuller lives for women, throughout the life cycle

Exercising the right to health enables other human rights, including the right to equality. The right to health is a clear example of the interdependence of human rights, and also of how the interaction of sex, in the biological sense, and gender can result in differentiated outcomes for women and men and for women from different contexts.

These results invite us to reflect on the aging of the population and the growing need for care for older adults. It is therefore crucial to improve access to health and to promote preventive measures that allow the population reaching old age to do so under better conditions. This should be done with gender considerations in mind, since morbidity is not the same for women and men, nor are attitudes and behaviours towards health care.

Self-perception of health indicators reveal a deterioration in assessments of health as age advances, an effect that is more pronounced among women, especially after age 60. This reflects the feminization of the older adult population and suggests that although an increase in life expectancy is desirable, it is also essential to ensure quality of life during these years.

To strengthen women's economic autonomy and decision-making, it is essential to guarantee their sexual and reproductive rights. Although data indicate that pregnancy in girls and adolescents is falling, there are still territories where this problem persists, with more than a fifth of births to teenage mothers. Public interventions and social changes that can facilitate access to information and empower young women have not been developed uniformly across the country. It is thus important to analyse the exercise of rights using an intersectional approach, and with a better understanding of contexts, including environments of violence and discrimination.

Maternal mortality in Colombia shows a downward trend, but it is still far from the goal established for 2030 and this situation is not homogeneous throughout the territory.

Mental health is a complex issue, as physiological, genetic and social interactions result in different experiences for women and men, which are not easy to unravel. As an integral part of a mental health and well-being policy, it is relevant to pay attention to sports and physical activity. In this sense, it is essential that public interventions and actions begin from an early age, with a special emphasis on the transition to adolescence. Sports and physical activity are valuable tools, since, in addition to promoting a healthier lifestyle, they contribute to fostering values such as tolerance, respect and solidarity. They can also be a vehicle to question and transform gender stereotypes and to sustain the mental health of young people.

Preventing and addressing violence against women, with a special emphasis on girls and young women

Violence against girls and women cannot continue; it is a widespread and normalized scourge that threatens the integrity and development of many women. Colombia has taken important steps to build a regulatory framework that firmly recognizes this serious problem, as well as different protocols for its identification and attention; however, the incidence of this violence shows that existing prevention and care measures must continue to be strengthened.

Domestic violence, without considering intimate partner violence, reflects widespread violent environments where gender-based violence originates, is reproduced and is tolerated. In terms of intimate partner violence, when designing awareness-raising, training and care interventions, it is essential to recognize that the dissolution of relationships does not guarantee women's safety or integrity. Around half of the alleged victims of intimate partner violence are attacked by ex-partners, ex-husbands and ex-boyfriends, which indicates that separation itself can be a risk. Therefore, women's protection must include specific measures for such situations.

Sexual violence is primarily committed against women, mostly girls and young women, who are primarily attacked by people close to them, including family members, in their own homes. These attacks affect their physical and emotional integrity throughout their lives. The incidence of these crimes is a clear example of the urgent need to protect minors and to change the social norms that perpetuate discriminatory and violent cultural patterns.

The differential analysis of data on the homicides of women since the first edition of this publication is key to supporting, with objective information, how violence is not manifested in the same way towards women and men. The indicators analysed with a gender perspective reveal that women are more frequently murdered by people they know and that these homicides often occur in their homes. In addition, the mechanisms are different; for example, a greater use of asphyxiation and blunt objects is observed in the homicides of women compared to those of men.

Between 2019 and 2022, there was an increase in the percentage of homicides of women in the context of interpersonal violence, along with a decrease in the proportion of cases in which forensic examinations indicated femicide. At the same time, there has been an increase in homicides of women with unknown aggressors, while cases where the partner or ex-partner is the alleged aggressor have decreased. This is crucial to investigate, as it could reflect a change in the patterns of violence, with an increase in murders of women due to generalized violence, as well as possible changes in how cases are recorded and investigated. It is difficult to claim that, despite persistent levels of domestic and partner violence, homicides in the context of femicide violence have decreased.

There have been efforts to have the different institutions generate and disseminate statistics on gender-based violence in its different forms, but there is a lack of information that would allow the traceability of cases, which requires the interoperability of systems. Addressing this challenge is crucial, as it would improve the early identification of violence, preventing it from escalating in severity and lethality and allowing more effective measures to be implemented to eradicate it.

Integrating women's knowledge, experiences and leadership in climate management

Women are more affected than men by climate change and the discrimination they face intensifies the consequences that it has on their food, homes and livelihoods. The environmental crisis and the loss of biodiversity cannot be reduced to natural problems; they affect all human activities. Therefore, it is crucial to address these issues by recognizing the interrelationship between gender and the environment. This connection offers an opportunity to create resilient, inclusive and peaceful societies.

Colombia has made commitments in relation to the management, adaptation and mitigation of climate change, as well as gender equality. In recent years, there has been a notable effort

to interconnect these agendas, recognizing the relevance of integrating the roles, needs, skills and interests of women and men in understanding climate change adaptation and mitigation.

In building the normative and instrumental framework, the country has decided to include women in its definition, both as subjects of attention and as change-agents for the benefit of their families, communities and the country as a whole. The participation of women is fundamental, as they possess valuable knowledge and experiences that have contributed to the care and preservation of the environment and biodiversity. In addition, their voice is essential for the exercise of their rights and for their involvement in all decision-making spaces that affect their lives.

As for indicators, there is still a long way to go. To this end, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development and DANE are working in a coordinated manner to develop a set of indicators that also seek to position the country at the forefront of this issue in Latin America.

In parallel, it is possible to review the statistical projects and measurements that already exist to identify aspects that fit into the climate and gender agenda. For example, the availability of public services, such as water and drainage and fuel for cooking, waste management, household practices to reduce energy consumption and food insecurity, as well as the creation of green jobs.

Considering the importance of unpaid care and domestic work, it would be useful to include it in the satellite accounts for health and the environment. Women, who perform much of the work in the health sector, also contribute significantly through unpaid work in their homes, but this work is not reflected in the economic activities of the sector.

Taking advantage of time-use surveys and other data sources to better understand the relationship between the labour market and unpaid work (the latter mostly borne by women) is a challenge. However, addressing this ongoing challenge will allow producers and users of information to improve the production, analysis and foundation of public policies with a gender perspective.











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