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Differences in unpaid household work between men and women
Recent trends for Latin America from Time Use Surveys

Abstract

Latin American families have changed significantly over the course of the last two decades, owing to marked declines in fertility, an increase in female labor force participation, and shifting attitudes and norms regarding cohabitation. However, our understanding of the relationship between family conformation, family socioeconomic status, and gendered differences in unpaid work, particularly in developing countries, remains poor. Using recent data from Time Use Surveys from seven countries, we investigate differences in unpaid work between men and women according to family type and socioeconomic position. Although specificities exist, women bear a disproportionate amount of domestic and care work in comparison to men. Moreover, while women's care and domestic workload varies considerably according to the type of family, the socioeconomic level and the stage of the lifecycle, men show comparatively less variability. This points to the possibility of a regional pattern that may respond to similar social, economic and cultural processes.

Introduction

The family is the space in which the most basic dimensions of human security and well-being are defined: the processes of material reproduction and social integration (United Nations Development Program, 1998: 192). In most policy analyses and proposals, the family is given a central role, both in explaining individual behaviors and in providing safeguards against various social problems and shocks, or more generally in providing for their members' well-being.

Latin American families have changed significantly over the course of the last two decades, owing to marked declines in fertility throughout the region, an increase in female labor force participation, and shifting attitudes and norms regarding cohabitation. These changes have drawn attention to policies acting at the intersection of family living strategies, labor market dynamics and the distribution of paid and unpaid work between men and women. Much of the body of research in this latter area has focused on the determinants of the unequal division of unpaid work between men and women, with the general finding that women spend more time performing unpaid work than men.

This is viewed as problematic because time allocated to unpaid household work is usually at the expense of devoting time to other activities such as self-care, recreational activities and, most of all, income-generating activities. More specifically, in the absence of support, particularly from male household members, and adapted and affordable care and domestic services, unpaid care and domestic work is often overwhelmingly provided by women at the expense of income generating activities. Studies on the determinants of time use often consider factors such as the woman's age, education level, and marital status (see for example Newman, 2002), but comparatively less attention has been paid to the conformation of the family or to the socioeconomic condition of the family, and the studies that do, typically tend to investigate these issues in the context of developed countries. Despite the fact that isolated studies have taken advantage of recent Time Use Surveys from the Latin American region (see for example Gammage, 2010; Gammage and Orozco, 2008; Newman, 2002), there has not been to date, a systematic analysis of gendered differences in unpaid work by these two variables that are highly relevant in the Latin American region - family composition and socioeconomic status.

As noted above, although it has undergone important changes, the institution of the family is still a cornerstone of Latin American societies and the target of social policies aimed at improving

the well-being of its individual members. As for the economic and social situation of Latin American families, there has been a relatively favorable situation in recent years, with overall declines in poverty and even inequality (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2014), yet Latin America is still characterized by considerable income inequality, high labor informality and low levels of access to basic social protection for a significant part of the population.

With this as a backdrop, we will examine the distribution of unpaid work between men and women and address the following questions:

1. How have family structures changed in Latin America over the course of the last decades?
2. How have these changes occurred for families of different socioeconomic levels?
3. Which types of households have the heaviest loads of unpaid household work?
4. Which households present the biggest gaps in unpaid household work between men and women?

Data and Methods

The data used in the analysis are drawn from two sources.

In order to trace the evolution of family types in the region and to examine patterns of change among families in different socioeconomic strata, we use national household surveys from eighteen countries of Latin America and the Caribbean: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. We gathered the closest surveys available to us around three moments in time: around 1990, 2000, and 2010. The regional average for each round is weighted using the expanded population of each country, according to each survey. These surveys are typically conducted by National Statistics Offices or Ministries of Finance. For more information about these surveys see Appendix 1.

In order to investigate the distribution of unpaid housework between different types of families, and the gendered division of unpaid housework within these families, we use recent Time Use Surveys from seven countries in the region: Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay. This sample of countries reflects the cultural, economic, social, and demographic diversity of countries in the region. Although the results cannot be compared across surveys, due to differences in methodology, they can help us to identify overall trends in the distribution of unpaid housework, as well as similar patterns observable in different

national contexts. The surveys are either stand-alone surveys, or modules of larger household surveys. In order to facilitate comparability across categories, the surveys were harmonized using the CAUTAL (Clasificación de Actividades de Uso del Tiempo para América Latina y el Caribe) classification of activities framework proposed by the Gender Affairs Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (Aguirre and Ferrari, 2013). For the purposes of this analysis, unpaid household work includes household tasks (such as cooking, cleaning, mending) as well as care-related activities (for both children and other household member). For more information about these surveys see Appendix 2.

The main unit of analysis for our investigation is the family, yet the family unit can be studied and defined from a variety of perspectives. Although families involve intense emotional, power, geographical and economic links between its members that are difficult to measure, household data allows us to grasp part of that reality from the perspective of common residence and subsistence. In our investigation we examine Latin American families by their structure according to the categories described in Table 1 and to their stage in the lifecycle, described in Table 2.

Table 1. Definition of family structure types

	Description
Unipersonal	Households with one person
Nuclear	Households with one or both parents with at least one child
Extended	Households with one or both parents, with or without children, and other relatives
Composed	Households with one or both parents, with or without children, with or without other relatives, and other non-relatives

Based on Arriagada 2001.

Table 2. Definition of family life cycle stage*

	Description
Young couple without children	Cohabiting couple where the woman is younger than 40 years of age
Initial stage	Households with children under the age of 6
Expansion stage	Households with children in which the oldest child is between 6 and 12 years
Consolidation stage	Households with children between 13 and 18 years; can also

	have younger children present in household
Exit stage	Households where children are over 18 years of age
Older couple withouth children	Cohabiting couple without children where the woman is older than 40 years of age

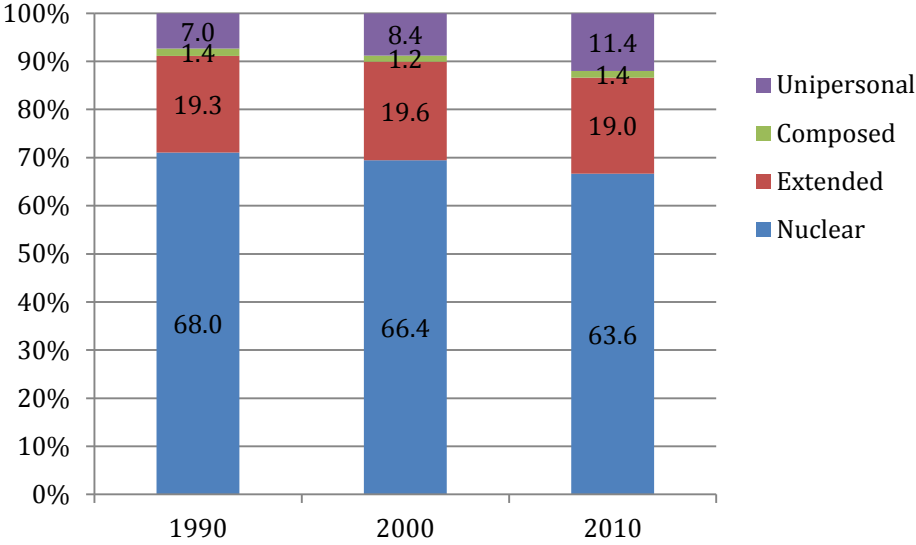
Based on Rico and Maldonado, 2011.

*By definition this typology excludes unipersonal households and households with members lacking a conjugal link.

Results

As illustrated in Graph 1, Latin American families have experienced important changes in the past 20 years. The most striking change is the steady decline in nuclear households and the increase in unipersonal households. The proportion of extended families has not changed significantly and this type of family configuration continues to be very prevalent, accounting for almost 1 in 5 families in the region.

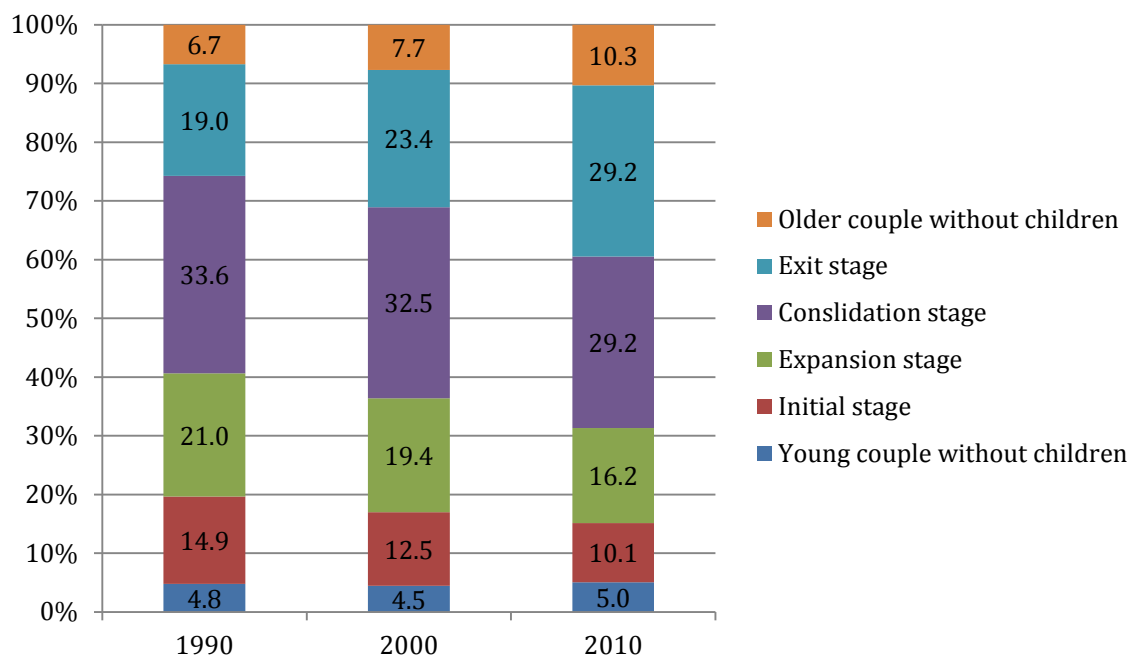
Graph 1. Latin America (18 countries): Evolution of family type, 1990, 2000, and 2010 (In percentages)



Source: Based on special tabulations of household surveys in the region. See Appendix 1 for more details.

It is also true that in the same period, the proportion of families with children under 19 declined, as evidenced by the decrease in families in the initial, expansion, and consolidation stages (Graph 2). There was a commensurate increase in families without children under 19 present in the household, namely, couples, both young and older without children, and families in the exit stage.

**Graph 2. Latin America (18 countries): Evolution of family by life cycle stage, 1990, 2000, and 2010
(In percentages)**



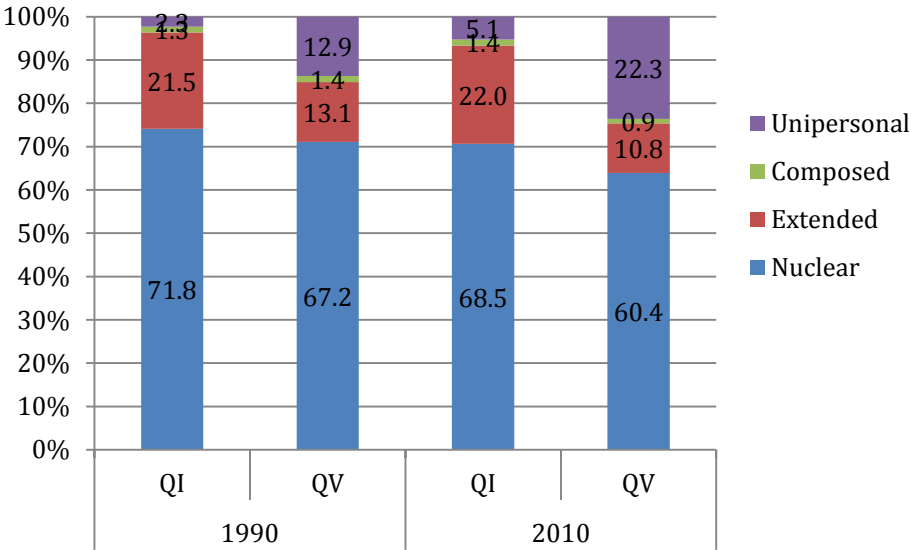
Source: Based on special tabulations of household surveys in the region. See Appendix 1 for more details.

It is important to note that the changes in family structure described above have not occurred uniformly across the income distribution. In other words, certain types of households are more prevalent among poorer compared to wealthier households, as is clearly shown in Graph 3.

There are some significant differences in family structure between poor and wealthy households. First, although unipersonal households have increased across the board, this type of household is much more prevalent among the wealthy, accounting for over 1 in 5 of households in the richest income quintile compared to just over 5 percent among the poorest households. While

nuclear families are still the most common type of household overall, the decline in nuclear families has been more pronounced among wealthier households. Finally, extended households are much more prevalent among poorer households than richer ones, indicating the continued importance of this family type in safeguarding against adverse shocks of various types among poorer households. Thus, households in the lower end of the income distribution are dominated by nuclear and extended families, while wealthier households are primarily nuclear families and unipersonal households. These divergent profiles of family structure along the income distribution result in the need for tailored social policies aimed at addressing the different challenges faced by these families.

Graph 3. Latin America (18 countries): Composition of first and fifth income quintile according to family type, 1990 and 2010 (In percentages)



Source: Based on special tabulations of household surveys in the region. See Appendix 1 for more details.

How is unpaid work distributed among men and women in the different family types and by lifecycle stage?

As illustrated in Graph 4, independently of household type, across the different countries in the region, women dedicate more hours per week to unpaid household work than men. Compared to men in other types of households, men in unipersonal households spend the most time on unpaid household work weekly, while in almost all of the countries, women in nuclear families spend the most time on unpaid household work. Not surprisingly, therefore, for all of the countries examined the gap between men and women in the weekly hours dedicated to unpaid work is smallest for those in unipersonal households and greatest in almost all cases, among nuclear households. The magnitude of these differences is also striking. In Colombia, for example, men in nuclear families spend on average 7 hours per week on unpaid house work, while women spend just under 31 hours, a difference of almost 24 hours weekly on unpaid household work.

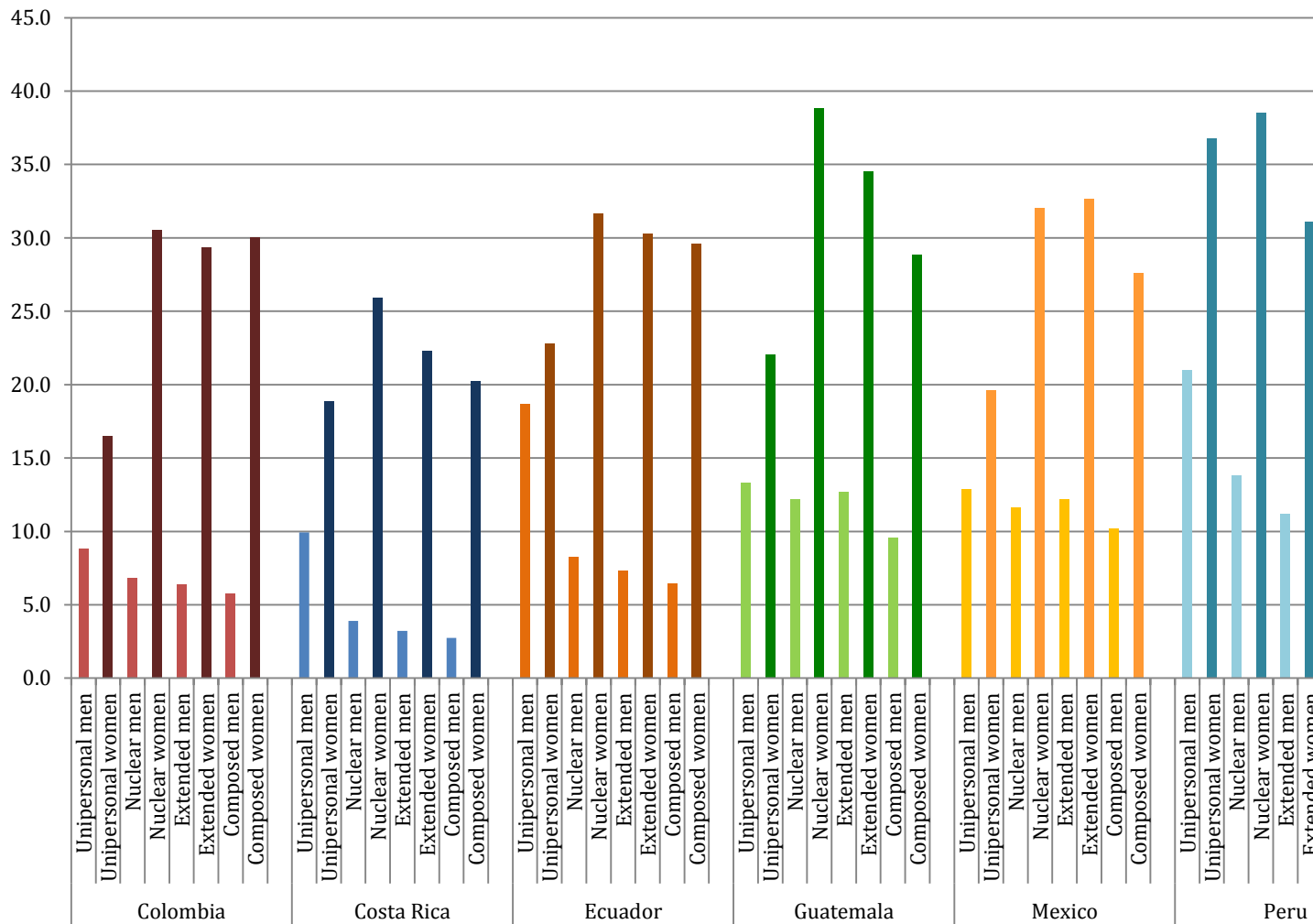
With regard to stage in the family lifecycle (Graph 5), across all countries, for women there is a marked increase in the time spent on unpaid household work between young women in households without children and women in the initial and expansion stages, both of which include children.

Compared to other women, women in these two stages report the highest number of hours on unpaid household work. While there is a decline in the number of hours spent on unpaid household work in the subsequent stages, even after children under 18 are no longer present in the household, in the exit stage and for older couples without children, the amount of time women spend on unpaid household work remains high, and in most cases does not return to the levels observed for young women in households with no children. For men, the pattern is similar, but at much lower levels. The greatest gaps between men and women on unpaid household work is in the initial and expansion stages, namely in households with dependants aged 12 and below.

Looking more specifically at households with children under 5 (Graph 6), unsurprisingly, both men and women in households with children under 5 spend more time on unpaid household work than their counterparts in households without young children. This difference, however, is much larger for women in both relative and absolute terms.

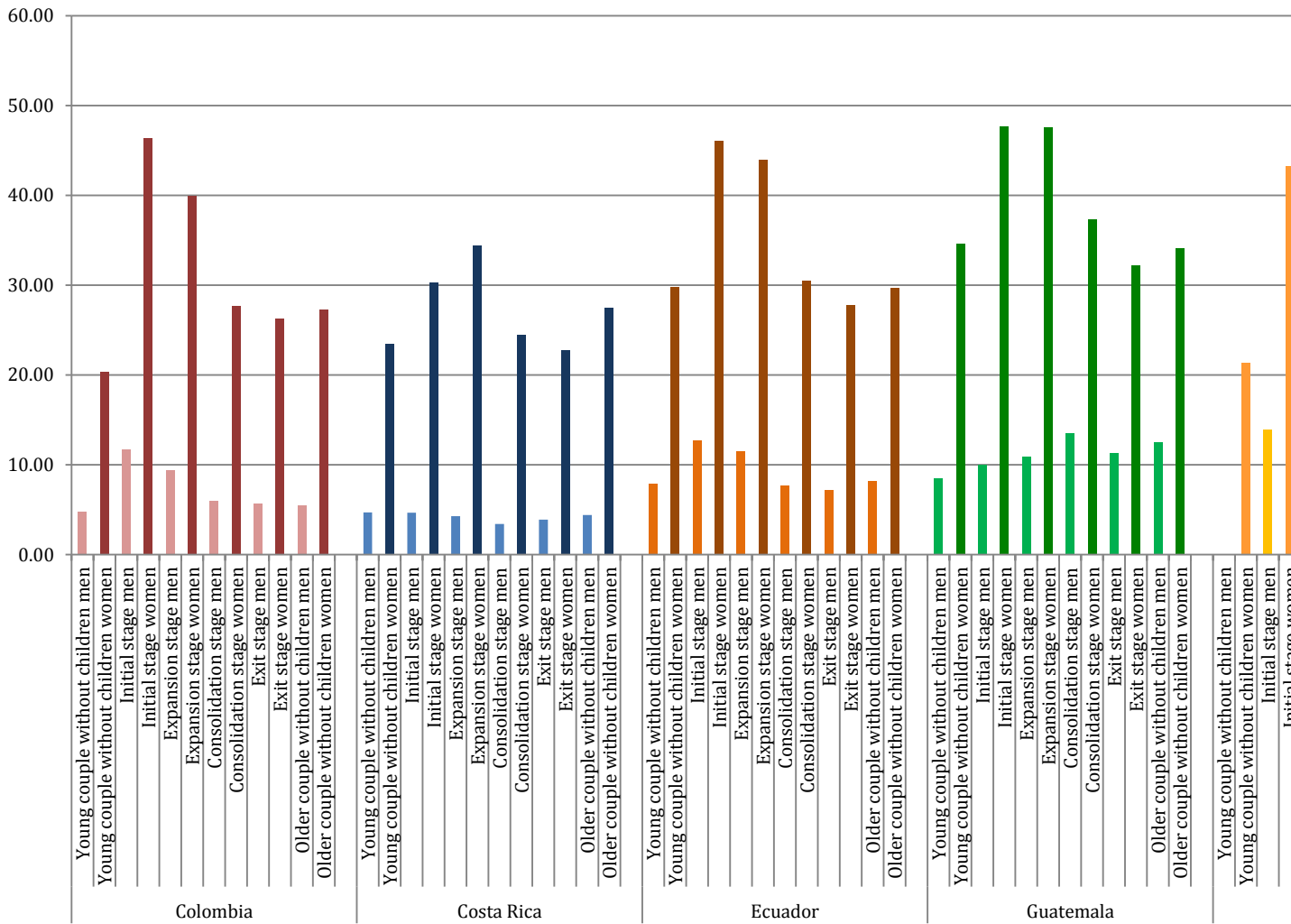
Finally, when we examine the distribution of unpaid work between men and women by socioeconomic status (Graph 7), defined here according to the household's income quintile, we see an inverse relationship in the number of hours spent on unpaid work for women – as socioeconomic status increases, the number of hours women spend on unpaid house work decreases. For men, the trends are less clear. In some countries, like Guatemala and Peru, the pattern follows the inverse relationship observed for women. In others, like Colombia and Uruguay, men appear to spend the same amount of time on unpaid house work, irrespective of socioeconomic level. And yet in others, like Ecuador and Mexico, there is no clear pattern. The pattern shared in all cases however is a much lower number of time devoted by men to domestic and care work in comparison to women. In all cases, the gap between men and women in unpaid work is greatest for those in the first (poorest) income quintile.

**Graph 4. Latin America (7 countries): Number of weekly hours dedicated to unpaid household work by household type and sex, around 2010
(In hours per week)**



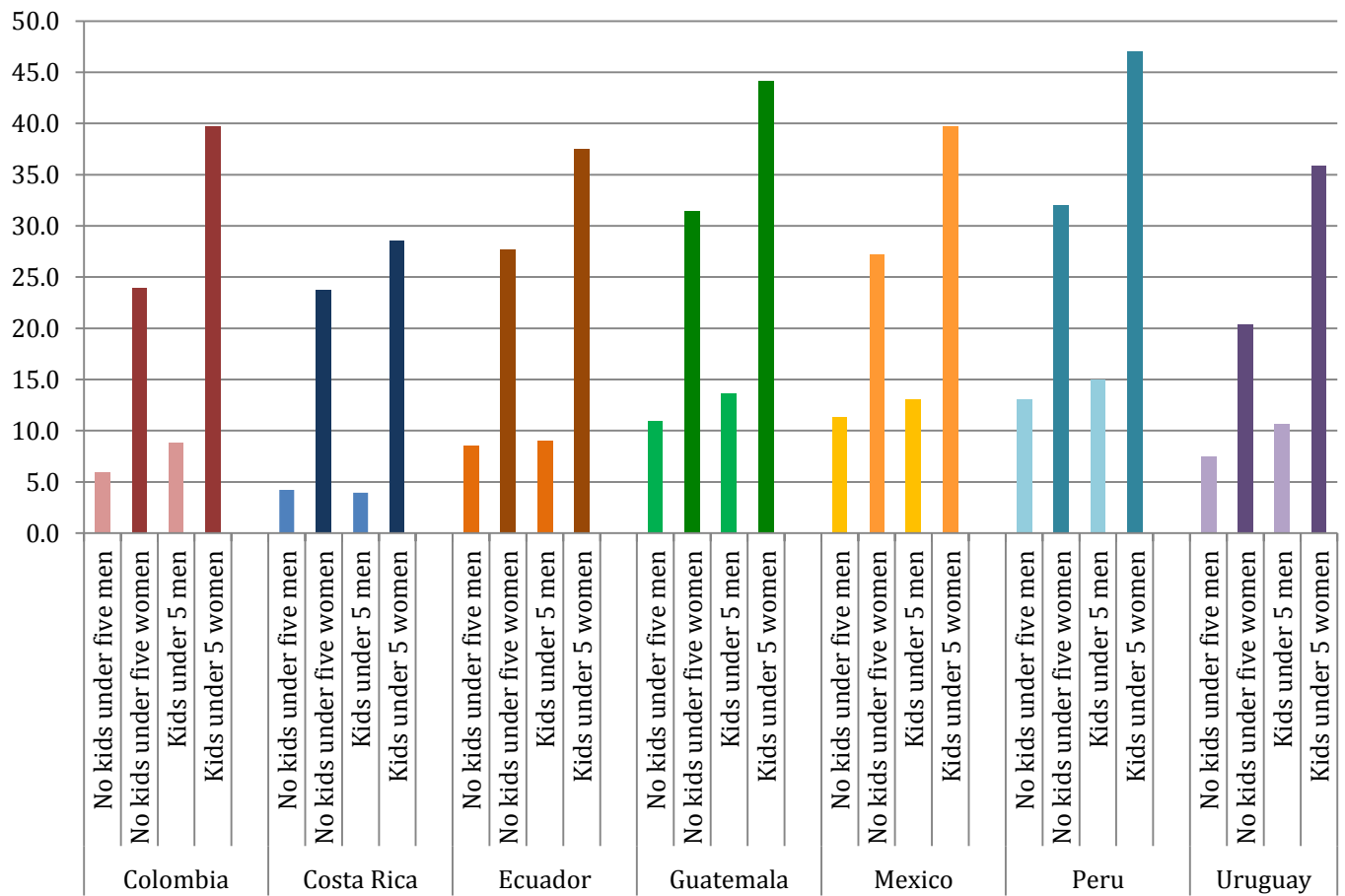
Source: Based on special tabulations of household surveys in the region. See Appendix 2 for more details.

**Graph 5. Latin America (7 countries): Number of weekly hours dedicated to unpaid household work by family life cycle phase and sex, around 2010
(In hours per week)**



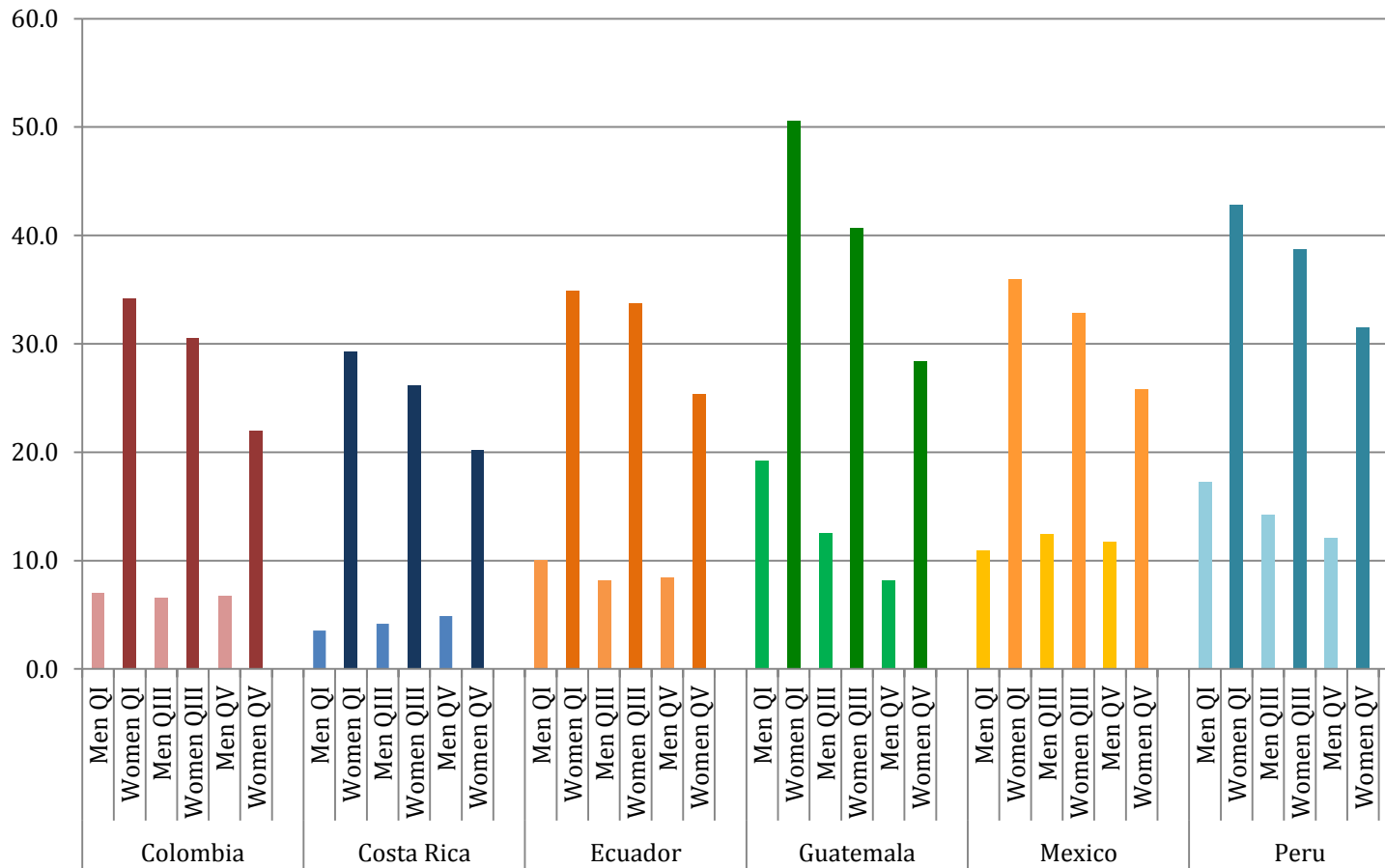
Source: Based on special tabulations of household surveys in the region. See Appendix 2 for more details.

**Graph 6. Latin America (7 countries): Number of weekly hours dedicated to unpaid household work by the presence of children under 5 in the household and sex, around 2010
(In hours per week)**



Source: Based on special tabulations of household surveys in the region. See Appendix 2 for more details.

**Graph 7. Latin America (7 countries): Number of weekly hours dedicated to unpaid household work by income quintile and sex and sex, around 2010
(In hours per week)**



Source: Based on special tabulations of household surveys in the region. See Appendix 2 for more details.

Discussion

Families, regardless of their specific configuration, are central to the socialization and well-being of the individuals that conform them. As family structures change and evolve in response to various economic, social, and cultural transformations it is imperative that policies adapt to these new realities.

The situation of Latin American families is especially worthy of study, since this region is experiencing rapid transformations, with historical particularities in family formation patterns that gave way to divergent family profiles by socioeconomic level, and increasing attention by the governments in the region through social policies, including family policies. Investing in and supporting families can have multiplier effects and help to achieve other social and economic goals. For this to happen, however, policies and programs need to be designed in such a way that they adequately respond to the realities of the family unit. In the Latin American context one reality that was amply documented in this analysis is the unequal distribution of paid and unpaid work between men and women within the household.

Strikingly, although specificities exist and gaps are not the same in absolute and real terms, in all kinds of families, throughout different stages of the lifecycle, and all across the income distribution, women bear a disproportionate amount of domestic and care work in comparison to men. Moreover, while women's care and domestic workload varies considerably according to the type of family, the socioeconomic level and the stage of the lifecycle, men show comparatively less variability. This points to the possibility of a regional pattern that may respond to similar social, economic and cultural processes. In particular, there seems to be suggestive cross-country evidence that women living in wealthier households can dedicate more time to paid work and devote less hours to unpaid domestic care activities. This appears to be so more clearly in the case of households with children under 5 years old. Wealthier households, which tend to have fewer children on average, are also more able to access market and/or public-based alternatives for child care. On the other hand there also seems to be significant cross-country evidence that traditional gender roles, particularly the non-involvement of men in domestic and care-related activities prevails in general and throughout the income distribution. In the light of these common patterns, an important role for social policy is provide direct support to poorer families in order to access care services through earmarked transfers and/or through the direct provision of care services, in

order to produce better outcomes not only in terms of the total workload bared by women, but also in facilitating their labor participation and income generation capabilities.

However, it is also important that family policies be designed with these gender imbalances in unpaid work in mind, so that they do not unintentionally aggravate the situation. In the context of Latin America, in recent decades Conditional Cash Transfer programs have been implemented in countries across the region targeting families with children, with the goal of alleviating poverty and advancing human capital development. Yet by placing the responsibility for fulfilling the conditions on women, they have had the unintended consequence of increasing the amount of unpaid work for women in the household (Arriagada and Mathivet, 2007; Gonzalez de la Rocha, 2006).

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Appendix 1. Description of household surveys used in the analysis

Country	Reference period	Name of survey	Institution	Coverage	Coverage used in paper*	Sample size (Pe)
Argentina	October 1990	Encuesta Permanente de Hogares	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INDEC)	Greater Buenos Aires	Greater Buenos Aires	10,000
	October 1999	Encuesta Permanente de Hogares	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INDEC)	Urban	Greater Buenos Aires	89,000
	2010	Encuesta Permanente de Hogares (continua)	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INDEC)	Urban	Greater Buenos Aires	23,000
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	November 1989	Encuesta Integrada de Hogares	Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE)	8 main cities	8 main cities	26,000
	November 1999	Encuesta Continua de Hogares	Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE)	National	8 main cities	13,000
	2007	Encuesta Continua de Hogares	Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE)	National	8 main cities	16,000
Brazil	4 th trimester 1990	Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicilios	Fundacao Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatistica (IBGE)	National	National	30,000
	September 1999	Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicilios	Fundacao Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatistica (IBGE)	National	National	35,000
	September 2009	Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicilios	Fundacao Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatistica (IBGE)	National	National	39,000
Chile	November 1990	Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional (CASEN)	Oficina de Planificación Nacional (ODEPLAN) and Instituto de Economía de la Universidad de Chile	National	National	10,000
	November - December 2000	Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional (CASEN)	Ministerio de Planificación Nacional (MIDEPLAN) and Instituto de Economía de la Universidad de Chile	National	National	25,000
	November - December 2009	Encuesta de Calidad de Vida de los Hogares (CASEN)	Ministerio de Planificación Nacional (MIDEPLAN)/Departamento de Economía de la Universidad de Chile	National	National	24,000
Colombia	December 1991	Encuesta Nacional de Hogares - Fuerza de Trabajo	Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE)	National	National	12,000
	September 1999	Encuesta Nacional de Hogares - Fuerza de Trabajo	Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE)	National	National	15,000
	2010	Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares	Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE)	National	National	82,000
Costa Rica	July 1990	Encuesta de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples	Dirección General de Estadística y Censos (INEC)	National	National	36,000

	July 2002	Encuesta de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples	Dirección General de Estadística y Censos (INEC)	National	National	44,
	July 2010	Encuesta Nacional de Hogares (ENAHOG)	Dirección General de Estadística y Censos (INEC)	National	National	41,
Ecuador	November 1990	Encuesta periódica de Empleo y Desempleo en el Área Urbana	Instituto Nacional de Empleo (INEM)	Urban	Urban	37,
	December 2002	Encuesta de Empleo, Desempleo y Subempleo en el Área Urbana	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INEC)	Urban	Urban	24,
	December 2010	Encuesta de Empleo, Desempleo y Subempleo en el Área Urbana y Rural	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INEC)	National	Urban	82,
El Salvador	1995	Encuesta de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples	Dirección de Información del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores	National	National	40,
	1999	Encuesta de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples	Dirección General de Estadísticas y Censos (DIGESTYC)	National	National	73,
	2010	Encuesta de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples	Dirección General de Estadísticas y Censos (DIGESTYC)	National	National	85,
Guatemala	April -July 1989	Encuesta Nacional Socio-Demográfica	Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE)	National**	National **	33,
	March 1998- March 1999	Encuesta Nacional de Ingresos y Gastos Familiares	Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE)	National	National	35,
	March - September 2006	Encuesta Nacional se Condiciones de Vida - ENCOVI	Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE)	National	National	68,
Honduras	September 1990	Encuesta Permanente de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples	Dirección General de Estadística y Censos (DGEC)	National	National	46,
	September 1999	Encuesta Permanente de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples	Dirección General de Estadística y Censos (DGEC)	National	National	33,
	May 2010	Encuesta Permanente de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples	Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE)	National	National	32,
Mexico	3 rd trimestre 1989	Encuesta Nacional de Ingreso - Gasto de los Hogares	Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (INEGI)	National	National	56,
	3 rd trimestre 2000	Encuesta Nacional de Ingresos y Gastos de los Hogares	Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (INEGI)	National	National	42,
	August- November 2010	Encuesta Nacional de Ingresos y Gastos de los Hogares	Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (INEGI)	National	National	10,
Nicaragua	February - June 1993	Encuesta Nacional de Hogares Sobre la Medición de Niveles de Vida	Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (INEC)	National	National	24,
	April - July 2001	Encuesta Nacional de Hogares Sobre la Medición de Niveles de Vida	Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (INEC)	National	National	22,
	July - October 2005	Encuesta Nacional de Hogares Sobre la Medición de Niveles de Vida	Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (INEC)	National	National	36,
Panama	August 1991	Encuesta de Hogares	Dirección de Estadística y Censo (DEC)	National	National	38,
	August 1999	Encuesta de Hogares	Dirección de Estadística y Censo (DEC)	National	National	40,
	August 2010	Encuesta de Hogares	Dirección de Estadística y Censo (DEC)	National	National	48,
	June, July and August 1990	Encuesta de Hogares (Mano de obra)	Dirección General de Estadística y Censos (DGEEC)	Asunción and Departament o Central	Asunción and Departamento Central	4,7

Paraguay	September 2000 - August 2001	Encuesta Integrada de Hogares	Dirección General de Estadística, Encuestas y Censos (DGEEC)	National	Asunción and Departamento Central	37,
	October - December 2010	Encuesta Permanente de Hogares	Dirección General de Estadística, Encuestas y Censos (DGEEC)	National	Asunción y Departamento Central	20,
Peru	4 th trimester 1997	Encuesta Nacional de Hogares - Condiciones de Vida y Pobreza	Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI)	National	National	31,
	4 th trimester 1999	Encuesta Nacional de Hogares - Condiciones de Vida y Pobreza	Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI)	National	National	17,
	January - December 2010	Encuesta Nacional de Hogares - Condiciones de Vida y Pobreza	Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI)	National	National	88,
Dominican Republic	April 1997	Encuesta Nacional de Fuerza de Trabajo	Banco Central de la República Dominicana	National	National	15,
	October 2002	Encuesta Nacional de Fuerza de Trabajo	Banco Central de la República Dominicana	National	National	22,
	October 2010	Encuesta Nacional de Fuerza de Trabajo	Banco Central de la República Dominicana	National	National	29,
Uruguay	2 nd semester 1990	Encuesta Nacional de Hogares	Dirección General de Estadística y Censos	Urban	Urban	31,
	1999	Encuesta Continua de Hogares	Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE)	Urban	Urban	57,
	2010	Encuesta Continua de Hogares	Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE)	National	Urban	13,
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	2 nd semester 1990	Encuesta de Hogares por Muestreo	Oficina Central de Estadística e Informática (OCEI)	National	National	31,
	2 nd semester 1999	Encuesta de Hogares por Muestreo	Oficina Central de Estadística e Informática (OCEI)	National	National	77,
	2 nd semester 2010	Encuesta de Hogares por Muestreo	Oficina Central de Estadística e Informática (OCEI)	National	National	15,

* In some cases the coverage of the samples changed between survey years (in all cases, it increased), however, in order to maintain comparability across data sets, we use the initial coverage for all surveys.

** In the case of Guatemala, since the 1989 database provided by the official source omitted children below 10 years of age, the same universe was considered of the two subsequent years used. Although this affects some of the categories of the typology of family (for instance, nuclear and extended households with children below 10 is underrepresented), we preferred to use this universe instead of excluding this country from the analysis.

Appendix 2. Description of Time Use Surveys used in the analysis

Country	Year	Instrument	Reference period	Sample size	Coverage
Colombia	2010	Activities list	Weekly	822,086	National
Costa Rica	2010	Activities list	Weekly	41,184	National
Ecuador	2012	Activities list	Weekly	82,774	National
Guatemala	2006	Activities	Typical day	68,739	National

		list			
Mexico	2007	Activities list	Weekly	107,781	National
Peru	2010	Activities list	Weekly	13,081	National
Uruguay	2009	Activities list	Typical day	8,971	National