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Chapter

Discrimination against Women in Mexico's Three Main Population Groups Integrating Mexican Society

Alicia Puyana Mutis and Cinthia Márquez Moranchel

Abstract

Mexico is a highly unequal country. Among the inequalities that impede the social cohesion of a country, gender inequality is of paramount importance, affecting more than half of the population. Based on the concept of Horizontal Inequality (HI) the chapter analyzes discrimination against women in three population groups comprising the 125.5 million Mexican society: 23 million Indigenous population, the 2.5 Afro-descendant population and the 101 million remaining. Horizontal Inequality explains discrimination for reasons of ethnicity, gender, religion, and language, among others identity facts that are not of free decision and from which there is no group way out. Only individuals can escape from discrimination. It is expressed in different areas of social activity such as politics, economics, justice, social services and culture. To measure the magnitude of gender inequality, using information from *Censo de Población y Vivienda 2020*, a Gender Equality Index is constructed which measures the level of equality or inequality for each of the areas and factors of HI. The study shows the persistence of gender disparities, how generalized and heterogeneous it is. It proves that inequality differs between the ethnic groups and in the intensity of the factors that perpetuate it, with greater depth for indigenous and afro-descendant women and especially in political and economic participation.

Keywords: discrimination, gender inequality, horizontal inequality, Indigenous and Afro-descendant population, Mexico

1. Introduction

This study analyzes inequality affecting the 63 million Mexican women (or 50.1% of the total population) in the three Mexican population groups. The focus of the analysis is to measure women's inequality across all Mexican Societies and in the three and main population groups that conform to it according to the 2020 Population Census. The main interest is put in the discrimination of all women vis a vis men in total population and in each group and less on the characteristics of women discrimination in each. The intention is to reflect on and analyze the causes and consequences of the horizontal inequalities faced by women rather than to analyze them as an effect of the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity. In a strict sense, it

is not an intersectionality analysis although some aspects of interferences are discussed all along with the text. Both HI and interdisciplinary analysis overlap in important aspects and differs in others. Both start from multidimensional approaches, but while the former concentrates on dimensional intersectionality focusing on a global analysis of inequalities between groups as a whole, the latter concentrates on the analysis of those categories which are particularly deprived because of intersectionality [1].

In this study the focal analysis is on the discrimination exercised against women in society, which is reinforced with elements of intersectionality, it is discrimination that is reproduced within each population group. In a country as culturally diverse as Mexico, we consider it relevant to approach gender discrimination in society and the country's ethnic groups, two of them, the Indigenous and Afro-descendant population, objects of discrimination; this analysis has not been sufficiently studied from the perspective of HI [1] and in Mexico, partly because of the difficulties in identifying ethnic groups in the statistics.[1]

Therefore, based on the HI approach, this study analyzes gender discrimination against women in the Indigenous and Afro-descendant populations and for those who do not self-identify as belonging to any of these ethnic groups. It shows the perpetuation of discrimination by the interplay between Mexico's original cultures and the formal and informal institutions brought by the conquerors, maintained and reinforced in the colonial era, and again in the political constitutions of the Latin American republics that gave the vote only to literate men and landowners. The right to vote was not extended to women until well into the twentieth century, later than to Indigenous and Afro-descendant men.

Horizontal inequality, or inequality between social groups that differ in ways such as ethnicity, culture, religion, or gender, is at the root of gender, ethnic, tribal and minority claims, fundamental rights contained in various United Nations agreements,[2] establishing minimum thresholds of equity in necessary goods but allowing a certain inequality in non-essential goods and goods distributed by merit. Horizontal inequality can be used to identify the areas and factors in which these gaps in rights and inequalities prevail between men and women.

Understanding the gender discrimination that affects more than half of the world's population requires accepting the intensity and variety of the factors that determine and perpetuate it. Measuring the inequality experienced by Mexican women implies recognizing both, the breadth and depth of the social gaps existing in the country, the social debt they imply and the profundity of discrimination that often passes for normal or idiosyncratic behavior.

A quantitative exploration was required to measure these gender gaps, so a Gender Equality Index is constructed, which allows estimating gender gaps in various factors and grouping them for each area of HI. An index is then provided for each area of HI to obtain an aggregate index as a global reference for gender inequality and from which it is possible to compare gender inequality between population groups. For so doing the *Censo de Población y Vivienda 2020* (Census of Population and Housing 2020) was used. The Censo is the statistical source in

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[1] The identification of Indigenous people by language began with the 1990 population census; it was not until 2015 that Afro-descendants were identified.

[2] These agreements are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights (1966); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979); Declaration on the Right to Development (the fourth contains the recommendations); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1986) and the 2007 United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Peoples.

Mexico that provides the latest official count of inhabitants in Mexico. It allows identifying the three main population conglomerates: the Indigenous population, the Afro-descendant population and all others.

2. The specificity of gender discrimination

Official recognition of women's political, social, cultural, collective and territorial rights has gained pace along with the institutions and policies created to defend them. Political participation quotas, equal pay for equal work, and incorporation of women into the police and armed forces have been legislated and complied with, and universities have been opened to women. Nevertheless, women face unabated inequality. Even the first initial analyses that apply the concept and methodologies of HI have prioritized other elements such as ethnic, linguistic or religious distinctions over gender. This paper does not intend to fully explain the causes of women's inequality. It aims to only suggest some areas that contribute to it such as religion and elements of classical and neoclassical economic theory, which require a more profound analysis that exceeds the scope of the present research.

One of the causes of pay inequality is differences in labor productivity, although it does not explain the 30% of the wage gap between women and men that is attributed to gender discrimination. Yet theoretical frameworks, concepts and neoclassical economic methods do not enable identification of the mechanisms that explain discrimination in economic policy decision-making. A good part of the gap in pay and other economic variables is due to the formal and informal institutions that, like religion, exist and regulate socio-economic life. This is a complex issue in societies where Catholicism is the predominant religion in ethnic groups. Religion helps support hierarchical androcentric attitudes and practices.

Another driver of gender inequality is the prevailing classical and neoclassical economic theory that idolizes the selfish *economic man* as the core of the economy hides the contribution of women to the advantages of men. Maximizing his profit, he is the Robinson Crusoe, the model hero of individual entrepreneurship. Any subject other than this prototype is merely an accessory that serves the economic man's self-directed interests. The *economic woman*, therefore, is altruistic, selfless, self-sacrificing, free of vice, and born to serve. Since all her decisions and their consequences arise from this natural rationality, her lower social status, income and education can be attributed to the free acceptance of this rationality, not to the rules of the market, a formal institution arising from the capitalist social organization model [2, 3]. This ideology is to be found in the discussion about employment and occupations in Sections 2 and 3.

Neoclassical theory hides processes that perpetuate gender inequalities through the axiomatization of human behavior. Assuming exogenous preferences hides the fact that preferences are induced rather than natural. If society, from childhood to insertion into the labor market, relegates women to certain activities, their preferences are adjusted to the possibilities, it is a prior and subsequent discrimination that results in less labor and political recognition [4]. One of the main contributions of feminist economic theory is its rejection of positivism for which there is no evidence of reality, only proof of the action of natural laws; absolute truths, obtained from supposedly rigorous and objective analyses. One of those absolute truths is the naturally different rationality of women.

For example, neoclassical economics and its facets and ramifications conceive as a historical fact that the economy is divided into the public and private spheres. It is irrefutable that the economic man has always managed the public sphere, which claims that his natural function is to set the agenda that determines power, wealth

and the distribution of income. The function of the home and women is repressed for the sake of this agenda, generating an unequal society [2, 3]. Newer concepts of macroeconomics and growth theory depart from this narrow model, conceiving society and the economy as developing in contexts of environmental and socio-cultural activity, which cannot be ignored if social sustainability is sought. More-over, this development takes place in three spheres that are symbiotically linked: (i) the nuclear sphere—the productive unit—families, homes, and communities that supply and demand goods, services and care; (ii) the business sphere, the sphere of enterprises, including those whose objective goes beyond maximizing profit; and (iii) the public sphere, governments and non-profit welfare organizations such as the UN, the Red Cross, and others. The predominant ideas expressed in these contexts and spheres do not permit discrimination against women to be overcome, since that discrimination " … is deeply wedded to the prevailing power structure and that structure is patriarchal; that is, the orthodox economy expresses patriar-chal power" ([5], p. 3).

3. What is horizontal inequality?

Horizontal inequalities are differences between groups with a shared identity, expressed in four areas that are circularly intertwined: (1) political participation, (2) economic aspects, (3) social aspects, and (4) cultural status. Each of these areas is made up of multiple factors of a different nature mutually affectting each other. Thus, the want of real political participation is manifested in all spheres and powers of government; legal and legislative, the armed forces, and the police. Socioeco-nomic and cultural elements intersect with all forms of property; access to services, education and health, justice, and social recognition; and their particular worldview and rationality. Discrimination in these areas, sustained for generations over the centuries, creates cycles of poverty, from which collective escape is impossible and individual escape is never easy. Eliminating gender discrimination, as well as dis-crimination for other reasons, is not a mere matter of labor insertion or solely economic measures, it requires actions in many other areas, such as education, granting women human rights, the freedom to decide on maternity and equal access to justice, among others.

3.1 Measuring horizontal inequality

Based on the concept of HI, this work measures gender inequality in the 3 population groups identified with information from the *Censo de Población y Vivienda 2020*.[3] Indigenous population, Afro-descendant[4] communities and the rest.[5]

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[3] The objective of the *Censo de Población y Vivienda 2020* is to produce information on the size, structure and spatial distribution of the population, as well as its main socioeconomic and cultural characteristics, in addition to obtaining the housing count and its characteristics. The periodicity is decennial. The Census used two instruments to collect data on dwellings and their inhabitants: the Basic Questionnaire, with which the exhaustive enumeration was carried out and which consisted of 38 questions; and the Extended Questionnaire, which was carried out in a probabilistic sample of nearly 4 million dwellings, was composed of 103 questions, including those of the Basic Questionnaire [6].

[4] The ethnicity referred to as Afro-descendant throughout the study for brevity encompasses self-identification as Afro-Mexican, Black or Afro-descendant.

[5] For whom it is not possible to identify their ethnic composition.

Once the size of the three social conglomerates and their gender structure was determined, the second step was to construct a gender equality index to identify and measure the gaps that persist and hinder comprehensive progress inequality between men and women within each population group. With the information above, the analysis of the differences in the level of education and employment was carried due to the importance of these two areas during the life span of all women.

3.2 The size of the indigenous and Afro-descendant population by gender

According to the *Censo de Población y Vivienda 2020*,[6] there are 23,229,560 people, or 19.4% of the population, who self-describe as Indigenous and 2,482,098 people who self-describe as Afro-descendants, representing 2% of the total population of the country. The population that does not identify as either Indigenous or Afro-descendant is 100,867,437, or 80.4%. In all three population groups and the total population, women account for a greater proportion by about 2.5% (**Table 1**).

3.3 The gender equality index

Horizontal inequality is multifaceted; analyzing it requires taking into account various dimensions that may account for inequalities between groups. In this work, the axis is gender discrimination within three groups; the Indigenous population, the Afro-descendant community and those who do not self-describe as either of these.

To assign a magnitude to HI, an Gender-Equality Index (GEI) that measures the level of equality between groups has been developed. In this case the index compares men and women in the three population groups of interest. The index is based on the methodology of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), which produces a composite indicator to measure gender equality in the European Union (EU) and each of its member states.

The objective is to measure the disparities between men and women according to the selected set of dimensions, sub-dimensions and their decomposition into individual indicators. The index is adapted to the context and priorities of EU

Concept	Total	Men	Women
Total population	125,515,554	61,142,530	64,373,024
Not self-identified as Indigenous or Afro-descendant	100,867,437	49,153,310	51,714,127
Self-identified as Indigenous	23,229,560	11,280,059	11,949,501
Self-identified as Afro-descendant	2,482,098	1,228,157	1,253,941

[1]*Self-identified as Indigenous is specified for the population aged 3 years and older, the rest from 0 years.*
Source: Authors, based on microdata from the Extended Questionnaire, Censo de Población y Vivienda, 2020.

Table 1.
Ethnic and gender composition of the total Mexican population.[1]

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[6] According to the Extended questionnaire of the *Censo de Población y Vivienda 2020*, in 2020, Mexico's total population amounted to 125.5 million people. The estimates obtained with the data from the Extended questionnaire correspond to inhabited private dwellings and their occupants, therefore, they are lower than the results of the Basic Questionnaire that also includes collective dwellings, the Mexican Foreign Service and the homeless population [6]. It is with the information from the expanded questionnaire that the identification of the three ethnic groups is possible.

policy. In the present study, the dimensions were chosen according to the four dimensions of HI described above; societal, economic, cultural, and political participation, and their interrelationships.

The GEI is a composite indicator that is obtained by applying a multidimensional concept to integrate individual indicators into a single measure [7]. To select the individual indicators, various indicators that have been considered relevant to the measurement of gender equality were reviewed. These included those used by the EIGE, by the World Economic Forum for the development of the Global Gender Gap, and other lists of indicators [8, 9] based on a structure of dimensions and sub-dimensions suitable for addressing gender inequalities.

The list of indicators used for the GEI is presented in **Table 2**. Eleven individual indicators were chosen from among the four dimensions of HI. Data were obtained from the 2020 Census, except for the indicator "people who have not been discriminated against" (percentage of the population aged 18 and over), which was obtained from the *Encuesta Nacional sobre Discriminación (ENADIS)* [10].

To calculate the GEI, we started with the gender gap (GG) using the formula proposed by the EIGE, which is calculated from the ratio between the value of the indicator for women (X_{it}^{female}) and the average value for men and women (X_{it}^{mean}) of the individual indicator being considered. The values range between 0 and 1, where 0 corresponds to total inequality and 1 total equality. The formula is as follows:

$$1 - \left| \frac{X_{it}^{female}}{X_{it}^{mean}} - 1 \right| \tag{1}$$

Subsequently, the geometric means of the individual indices were obtained for each of the four dimensions of HI:

Dimension	Individual indicator
Societal factors	Persons with a bachelor's degree (percentage of the population aged 15 and older)
	Persons with access to medical services (percentage of the population from 0 years of age)
	Persons with a birth certificate (percentage of the population from 0 years of age)
Labor and economic factors	Persons employed in the formal sector (distribution by gender, aged 15 and older)
	Persons employed full-time (distribution by gender, aged 15 and older)
	Employed persons whose income covers the food and non-food basket (distribution by gender, aged 15 and older)
Political participation	Persons with a high degree of socio-political participation (distribution by gender, aged 15 and older)
	Persons employed in management positions (distribution by gender, aged 15 and older)
	Persons employed in the armed forces (distribution by gender, aged 15 and older)
Cultural factors	Persons who have been discriminated against (percentage of the population aged 18 and older)
	Persons who can read and write (percentage of the population aged 18 and older)

Source: Authors.

Table 2.
Dimensions of horizontal inequality and its indicators.

$$D_k = \sqrt[k]{GG_1 GG_2 \dots}, k = 1, 2, \dots \tag{2}$$

The GEI is obtained by calculating the weighted geometric mean of the indices for each dimension (D). The weighting (α) is the same for each dimension:

$$GEI = \sqrt{D_1^{\alpha 1} D_2^{\alpha 2} D_3^{\alpha 3} D_4^{\alpha 4}} \tag{3}$$

Substituting in Eq. (3), the following is obtained:

$$GEI = \left(\Pi_{i=1}^{n} D_i^{\alpha i} \right)^{\frac{1}{\Sigma \alpha i}} = \left(D_1^{\alpha_1} D_2^{\alpha_2} \dots D_4^{\alpha_4} \right)^{\frac{1}{\alpha 1 + \alpha 2 + \alpha 3 + \alpha 4}} \tag{4}$$

3.4 What does gender equality reveal about gender discrimination in Mexico?

The gender gap values calculated for each of the indicators are shown in **Table 3**. It should be borne in mind that the level of equality between men and women for each category is being assessed within each population group. It can be observed that societal and cultural factors show values closer to one than do economic factors and political participation. This means there is less disparity between men and women in these areas, although certain features are worth noting in each of the dimensions.

The analysis of societal factors indicates that the differences are low between men and women who have access to higher education and health care; some differences favor men, but when these are weighted by the members of each gender in the respective category, it can be seen that the factors affect them both similarly. For enrollment in and access to medical services and registration in the civil registry, the situation is similar, with similar access rates for men and women. There has been an effort on the part of the Mexican government and civil society to make progress in recognizing social guarantees for men and women; although these are

Dimension	Individual indicator	Not self-identified as Indigenous or Afro-descendant	Self-identified as Indigenous	Self-identified as Afro-descendant
Societal factors	Bachelor's degree completed	0.976	0.963	0.967
	Enrolled in health care	0.984	0.979	0.983
	Birth certificate	0.975	0.971	0.990
Labor and economic factors	Formal employment	0.809	0.755	0.775
	Full time	0.741	0.637	0.725
	Food and non-food bask.	0.733	0.653	0.711
Political participation	Political office	0.740	0.609	0.882
	Management position	0.798	0.783	0.746
	Armed forces member	0.156	0.115	0.143
Cultural factors	Nondiscrimination	0.988	0.995	0.793
	Literacy	0.954	0.944	0.986

Source: Authors, based on microdata from the Extended Questionnaire, Censo de Población y Vivienda, 2020, *and main results of the* Encuesta Nacional sobre Discriminación (ENADIS) [10].

Table 3.
Gender gaps by individual indicators of the dimensions of horizontal inequality.

yet sufficient, the gender perspective has been incorporated as a fundamental component of public policy. The results of this study suggest that a similar exercise should be carried out for a previous period, to make a comparison and test this progress over time.

The indicator with the largest gap among labor and economic factors is monthly income to cover the food and non-food basket, calculated by the *Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social (Coneval)*. The calculation was carried out at the individual level to compare income purchasing power between men and women, although family income is normally used. The lower level of income for women and their lower purchasing power is explained by such factors as job segregation[7] and shorter workweeks compared to men. According to various studies [11, 12], job and sector segregation by gender contributes significantly to gender pay gaps and decreases workers' bargaining power. Information from the 2020 Census indicates that while employed women worked an average of 40.8 h a week, men worked an average of 47.7 h, which is also reflected in the gap between men and women who work full time.

The division of labor about reproductive work in the home by gender leads to differences in time use patterns between men and women [12]. Women who work generally distribute their time between their job and tasks in the home, so either they tend to be employed in jobs that demand fewer hours per week than men's jobs or else they have less free time.[8]

In terms of the gender gap in formal employment, women had higher rates of informal employment than men and hence less access to social security health care services. Among persons with a formal job, 62.9% of the first group (neither Indigenous nor Afro-descendant) are men. In the Indigenous population, the comparable percentage of men is 68.1 and 63.8% in the Afro-descendant community. This is associated with a higher proportion of women than men being self-employed (see **Table 7**), as well as with the higher proportion of women in the tertiary sector; namely, service industries and trade. For the three population groups, the occupations held by women with the highest frequencies are domestic work, sales clerk and shopkeeper.

Political participation is another dimension that shows persistent gender gaps. These gaps point to labor segregation and the obstacles faced by women to increase their participation in higher-ranking and decision-making positions. The biggest gap is seen in the armed forces. Men continue to predominate in the army, navy and air force. It is important to point out the modifications that are being made to incorporate women into military and air force training, which is why it is necessary to continue to make progress in institutional efforts to enable increased representation of women in the armed forces.[9] The distribution by gender still favors men in socio-political participation and managerial positions. It should be noted that the gap between men and women is greater yet for the Indigenous population.

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[7] Job segregation by gender in the labor market refers to different distributions in branches of the economy and occupations by gender (horizontal segregation), and differential participation of men and women in higher-level occupations (vertical segregation).

[8] According to the *ENUT, 2014*, women spent an average of 11.8 h per week on cultural activities, sports, games and hobbies, while men spent 18.5 h; that is, 56.8% more than women.

[9] In 2007, a principle of gender equality in the armed forces was enacted. Out of 39 military schools, 19 admitted women with full participation, including training for roles such as military engineer and pilot. On April 5, 2018, legislators endorsed an Army and Air Force Education Act to apply to both men and women, granting them equal opportunities and treatment.

Dimension	Not self-identified as Indigenous or Afro-descendant	Self-identified as Indigenous	Self-identified as Afro-descendant
Societal factors	0.978	0.971	0.980
Labor and economic factors	0.760	0.680	0.736
Political participation	0.452	0.380	0.454
Cultural factors	0.971	0.969	0.884
Gender equality index	0.756	0.702	0.734

Source: Authors, based on microdata from the Extended Questionnaire, Censo de Población y Vivienda, 2020, *and main results of the* Encuesta Nacional sobre Discriminación (ENADIS) [10].

Table 4.
Gender equality index by the dimension of horizontal inequality.

The literature on occupational and sectoral segregation has shown that differences between men and women are not explained by the predictions of neoclassical theory; it is different investments in men's and women's skills or different preferences (which are considered exogenous) that explain gender differences in employment [12]. These differences are explained and reinforced by the configuration of the education system and the labor market. The lower level of participation of women in managerial positions and political representation cannot be reduced to a matter of preference but rather ascribed to social and institutional limitations.

Cultural factors show a narrower gap between men and women than does employment. However, it is worth noting that it is more difficult to specify indicators for this dimension of HI than for the others examined. The percentage of people who were not discriminated against for at least one reason in the last 12 months before the survey was analyzed [10]. Values close to one mean that the proportion of men who considered that they were not discriminated against is similar to that of women. This does not mean that discrimination was not experienced, but that there is no significant difference between men and women.

Table 4 shows a summary of the indices for each dimension and each population group, from the geometric mean (Eq. (2)) and the gender equality index (Eqs. (3) and (4)). The dimension with the highest gender inequality is political participation, and the dimension with the lowest gender inequality is that relating to social factors. It should be noted that the three groups are very similar. The GEI is lower for the Indigenous population, which indicates wider gender disparities for this group.

The results obtained for Mexico are close to those estimated by the World Economic Forum for the 2020 Global Gender Gap. This index measures differences between men and women in four areas; health, education, economics and politics. According to the 2020 World Economic Forum report, Mexico ranked 25th out of 153 countries, with a value of 0.754. As with the index in this work, a value of one represents perfect equality. The lowest scores—less equality—corresponded to economic participation and opportunity, and the most equality between men and women was found in the areas of education, and health and survival.

4. Two main areas of horizontal inequality: education and employment

From the several areas in which HI manifest, special consideration is given to education and employment, due to the more close links to economic disparities and

differences and as a first step to quantify some basic factors of discrimination. It does not imply that gaps in other fields, such as health, political participation or any other are less relevant.

4.1 Educational and schooling gaps

Education is a key element for people's development. It confers knowledge, skills and abilities that are necessary although not sufficient to participate effectively in society and the economy [13, 14]. The most damaging gap is illiteracy, as it imparts an enormous personal and social disadvantage that marginalizes, isolates and devalues individuals, even in their social environment [15, 16]. Female illiteracy is higher across society, especially among Indigenous groups. Indigenous female illiteracy is 1.3 times that of Indigenous men, and double that of non-Indigenous and Afro-descendant women. The situation is similar for other educational variables the level of schooling, close to 9 years of accumulated education, is low and shows the greater segregation of the Indigenous population, especially the female population, whose schooling barely corresponds to completed primary school, which in turn is related to lower participation in undergraduate or graduate studies (**Table 5**).

4.2 How does work perpetuate gender inequality

Employment is one point in the life history of discrimination, which begins at birth, continues in food supply and nourishment, in access to education and health care services, in political and legal decision-making processes, or economic activities in which women take part; in other words, everything that constitutes the "traps of inequality," a euphemism in social science jargon. Thus, it is still difficult to identify the reasons why such discrimination persists despite an accumulation of institutionalized policies and actions aimed at eliminating labor discrimination. This, because of the complexity of distinguishing between inequalities based on statistics and the legitimate selection of employees for specific jobs, is observable only when job requirements list non-essential qualities that are mostly found in certain individuals.

Selection processes are complex and there are always doubts about the qualifications of the candidates. Employers seek to minimize these by appealing to discriminatory practices that create "statistical discrimination or at the discretion of the employers" [17–20]. Since it is difficult for employers to accurately gauge the performance of a job applicant, they tend to judge candidates according to "characteristics that are easy to observe, such as race, sex, or age, assuming that members of

Characteristic	Not Indigenous or Afro-descendant			Self-identify as Indigenous			Self-identify as Afro-descendant		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Unable to read and write	6.0%	5.9%	6.1%	12.2%	10.5%	13.9%	7.3%	7.3%	7.3%
Undergraduate or graduate degree	16.8%	17.0%	16.6%	8.9%	9.1%	8.7%	17.3%	17.9%	16.7%
Average total years of schooling	8.9	8.9	8.9	7.1	7.2	7.0	8.8	8.9	8.7

Source: Authors, based on microdata from the Extended Questionnaire, Censo de Población y Vivienda, 2021.

Table 5.
Educational characteristics by ethnic group and gender.

certain collective groups will have below-average performance" ([17], p. 68), as well as preferring people from certain schools, of certain political or religious beliefs, or a particular gender.

In Mexico, although there is no *direct or formal employment discrimination* enacted by discriminatory laws that might express such an ideology as apartheid laws in South Africa did [21], or that would exclude women from certain activities (army, police, firefighters), there is still *indirect employment discrimination* as a result "of apparently impartial provisions and practices that are detrimental to a large number of members of a specific group" ([17], p. 22; [22]). These standards are exclusionary if they do not account for the situation of certain social groups or categories of workers and the places where they live, such as unfavorable conditions for education or health, or less developed road infrastructure in poorer regions or neighborhoods [17].

Labor discrimination is structural; it permeates the entire social order. All working women suffer the effects of economic, social and political factors that restrict their social, political and labor participation; this is a confirmed fact. These restricting factors include inequality in the ownership of assets—land, financial resources, education, health, food and place of residence, constituents of human capital and, due to their relationship with productivity, income and public and private spending. Labor is the largest income component in almost 80% of households. It constitutes demand for households and individuals and aggregate demand and economic growth. Thus, as long as labor discrimination based on gender and ethnicity persists, a vicious circle is created and reproduced; from labor discrimination to low growth, from low labor productivity to reduced labor income, constricted internal demand, little economic growth and stagnant productivity. It has been found that the larger the population that experiences labor discrimination, the more difficult it is to stimulate the economy and reduce inequality [14, 23, 24].

Indirect employment discrimination pervades the public and private spheres in various forms that involve frequent practices of differential treatment of certain people [22] and constitute the "glass ceiling" of social and labor gender discrimination. These are standards that categorize people based on skin color or hair, body shape and gender and limit the social acceptance and employment opportunities of individuals who do not meet the favored criteria. Labor discrimination based on these opinions is prohibited by law, but the practices persist and are not captured in census statistics or surveys. It is unusual for an employer to say openly that they would not hire a person because they are Indigenous, female, or because they do not dress in accordance with social criteria.

Examples of this kind of discrimination can be seen in movies and advertising, which apply selection standards that cannot be used in other sectors, as they would violate anti-discrimination laws. Although movies and advertising are not typical of the world of work, they do display evidence of discrimination and latent social prejudices, and expose the spread and reproduction of social complexes; as such they are an X-ray of society. They are also a domain of ethnic and gender discrimination and an expression of male hierarchy. The world of sports is similar, having systematically discriminated against women's access to certain sports. Where progress has been made (e.g., soccer, wrestling, boxing, tennis, among others), women athletes' income is lower and the sports enjoy little publicity. Puyana and Horbath [23] describe these indirect practices of ethnic discrimination in the labor market in more detail.

Another example of multiple discrimination is given by cultural patterns that, like the racialization of beauty, draw a subtle connection between physical attributes and character and morality, placing an entire community or gender in a lower position on the social scale. To move up the social ladder, money is not enough. It is essential to have class; to know how to dress, speak, how to behave [25]. These

establish relationships of submission and complementarity that encapsulate the lack of respect given to the worldviews of women and of Indigenous peoples [3]. These practices are exposed, for example, in the statements of a legislator and president of *Comisión de Derechos Humanos* who, in rejecting the request of some Indigenous women for better-paid work, advised them to stick to domestic work, making handicrafts, and growing prickly pears [26].[10] Another example was the (informal) proposal that the number of children per family is limited as a condition of eligibility for social programs such as *Cruzada contra el hambre*, or to limit support based on the number of children, as these would encourage larger families [30].

The distribution of economic activity by gender shows patterns in the allocation of economic and reproductive labor. The term "reproductive labor" refers to family care-giving and domestic housework, "whose main characteristics are not having remuneration through a salary (although it could be debated whether or not there is another type of remuneration), that it is an eminently female job and that it remains invisible even to those who carry it out" ([31], p. 67).

Reproductive work, which is relegated to the domestic, non-productive area in classical and neoclassical economic theory [3, 31], constitutes the core of gender inequalities. Yet this is not the result of a choice, but rather of a social allocation that is related to the multiple restrictions faced by women; "these restrictions result from the formal and informal rules that largely determine the behavior patterns, expectations and labor and professional aspirations of men and women, and also structure the operation of labor markets" ([11], p. 5). The 2020 Mexican Census reveals marked differences by gender, with the percentage of employed men in each population group exceeding that of women. The employment rate of Indigenous men is more than double that of women. The proportion of Indigenous men seeking employment was also higher. The higher economic participation of men is also reaffirmed by the greater percentage of men seeking employment. In the case of the first group (neither Indigenous nor Afro-descendant) and of Afro-descendants, these percentages are triple those of women seeking employment, and the in case of the Indigenous community the proportion is 4.7 times as great. The higher rates of economic activity in turn explain the higher percentage of retired and pensioned men (**Table 6**).

Differences between men and women in the distribution of employment status are evident in the percentage of people whose main occupation is that of carrying out household tasks. The percentages are quite different. While 2 or fewer out of every 100 men reported household tasks as their main occupation, for women, the proportion is 37 out of 100. The figures are similar for Afro-descendant women (36 out of 100), and higher for Indigenous women (45 out of 100).[11]

Table 7 shows the distribution of employment and occupational status as a proportion of the number of people who reported their activity. The largest proportion of people in the three groups and by gender is as an employee or worker, although more women than men report that they are self-employed, which is associated with lower demand for women's labor and with work options that allow them to continue reproductive work. Self-employment is a way to deal with the lack of job opportunities, a problem that is more accentuated for Indigenous women.

It is worth highlighting the higher percentage of unpaid workers among Indigenous and Afro-descendant persons. The proportion of Afro-descendants who are

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[10] Hopenhayn and Bello [27], Yanes [28] and Moreno Figueroa [25] and Moreno Figueroa and Saldívar [29] delve into the placement of the Indigenous population in a subordinate position.

[11] According to the results of the *Encuesta sobre Uso del Tiempo (ENUT) 2014*, women dedicated an average of 46.9 h a week to household tasks and caregiving, while men spent an average of 15.7 h.

Employment status	Not self-identified as Indigenous or Afro-descendant (%)			Self-identified as Indigenous (%)			Self-identified as Afro-descendant (%)		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Employed	52.3	67.1	38.6	51.2	69.0	34.7	57.0	71.6	42.8
Looking for work	1.9	2.9	0.9	1.7	2.8	0.6	1.7	2.5	0.9
Pensioner or retired	4.0	5.0	3.1	2.5	3.4	1.7	3.5	4.4	2.6
Student	15.1	15.3	14.8	12.5	12.7	12.3	12.0	11.6	12.3
Homemaker	20.0	1.5	37.1	24.5	2.0	45.4	19.3	1.8	36.2
Unable to work	1.4	1.6	1.2	2.1	2.5	1.7	1.4	1.6	1.2
Unemployed	5.0	6.1	3.9	5.3	7.3	3.5	5.0	6.1	4.0

Source: Authors, based on microdata from the Extended Questionnaire, Censo de Población y Vivienda, 2020.

Table 6.
Employment status by ethnic group, 12 years and older. The percent by employment status.

Type of job	Not self-identified as Indigenous or Afro-descendant (%)			Self-identified as Indigenous (%)			Self-identified as Afro-descendant (%)		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
employee or worker	65.6	63.7	68.7	48.6	46.1	53.4	60.2	59.3	61.6
laborer (day laborer or employed laborer)	4.1	6.0	1.0	8.5	11.9	2.4	4.7	6.9	1.2
paid labor helper	4.2	4.4	3.8	6.9	7.1	6.3	5.0	5.2	4.7
supervisor or employer	3.3	3.7	2.7	2.2	2.3	2.1	3.9	4.1	3.4
self-employed	20.4	19.9	21.1	25.5	23.7	28.7	22.2	20.5	25.0
unpaid worker	2.3	2.2	2.6	8.2	8.9	7.0	4.0	4.0	4.0

Source: Authors, based on microdata from the Extended Questionnaire, Censo de Población y Vivienda, 2020.

Table 7.
Type of job by ethnic group, among employed persons. Percentage by type of job.

unpaid is almost double the proportion in the first group (neither Indigenous nor Afro-descendant), and for the Indigenous population, the difference is triple.

5. Conclusions

Gender discrimination was examined through the concept of HI. The analysis confirms the initial expectations: gender discrimination exists despite policies aiming to reduce or to control it. Furthermore, the study shows women's inequality exists within the three self-identified population groups Indigenous population, the Afro-descendant community, and the rest of the Mexicans registered as such in the Population Census 2020. Both qualitative and quantitative exploration yield evidence of the existence of gender gaps that persist and exacerbate each other in each social group, and in each of the dimensions of HI (political participation, economic aspects, societal aspects and cultural status).

Gender discrimination has historical roots, and these run deeper for Indigenous and Afro-descendant women, resulting in slower progress and recognition of their

social and economic participation. A greater gap is identified for Indigenous and Afro-descendant women than for men within the same ethnic groups in terms of education, economic participation and political representation. It should be noted that these disparities are wider in the Indigenous group. The results show that gender discrimination, as a specific type of discrimination, intensifies ethnic discrimination.

The Indigenous and Afro-descendant populations were defined for this study by a self-identification criterion in the *Censo de Población y Vivienda, 2020*. Census information was used to estimate the gender equality index, which measures discrimination in four of the main areas in which discrimination manifests and suggests particular policy actions to address it. Individual indices were estimated for each dimension of gender inequality finding higher inequality economic sphere and in political representation than in cultural and social factors. The persistence of greater women inequality in these spheres' points to a hierarchical social structure that continues to exclude women from all population groups from benefits and opportunities of social and economic development. By doing so, it makes it more difficult, if not impossible, to reduce overall inequality.

It should be noted that the calculation of the gender equality index in this study was conditioned by the availability and structure of the data provided by the 2020 Census and ENADIS [10] (our complementary source to explore differences in discrimination between men and women in each of the ethnic groups). The results suggest that future research in this area should consider increasing the number of individual indicators for each dimension of HI using additional complementary sources. Further studies should also include data for a previous period, to make comparisons with data from the present time. However, the greatest limitation is the information available for the Afro-descendant community.

It is necessary to extend the analysis and understanding of gender discrimination. The importance and relevance of this problem, which affects more than half of the world's population, including Mexico, demand that the intensity and variety of the factors that determine and perpetuate gender discrimination be measured. Like all discrimination, but to a greater degree, gender discrimination affects the foundations of society and impedes its collective and comprehensive development because the larger the discriminated population is, the more difficult it will be to speed out economic growth and and reduce income and wealth concentration. Today, women still face structural disadvantages, as they did centuries ago, that are rooted in theoretical conceptions that prevail over economic and rational concepts and fail to recognize women's essential participation and contribution in all spheres of society. If society does not promote substantive equality that would eliminate all gender inequality in all areas, it will maintain its traditional repressive character.

Acknowledgements

Author details

Alicia Puyana Mutis[1*] and Cinthia Márquez Moranchel[2]

1 FLACSO, Mexico

2 UNAM, Mexico

*Address all correspondence to: apuyana@flacso.edu.mx;
cinthiamm@comunidad.unam.mx

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