

Chapter 4

Time poverty, informal work and women's jobs in Mexico

Mexican women and men struggle to secure good quality jobs and achieve work-life balance. Nearly 60% of working women and 50% of working men are in informal jobs. These high rates of informality correspond with lower earnings quality, job and income insecurity, and low levels of social protection, especially for women. Compared to workers in other OECD countries, Mexicans also spend very long hours in paid work. The culture of long paid hours, combined with Mexican women's disproportionate responsibility for unpaid work, reinforces gendered outcomes in the labour market and at home. Fathers, who are more likely to commit to long hours in the workforce, lose out on valuable time with their family and are less able to contribute at home. Women, who typically devote more time to caring for family members, are more likely to scale back or drop out of the workforce entirely. Addressing these challenges will require the combined efforts of government, employers, and families.

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4.1. Introduction

Mexican men and women face challenges in accessing good quality jobs. Informal employment often implies lower earnings quality, income insecurity, and lower levels of social protection, especially for women. The quality of the work environment is also poor when measuring hours worked: Mexicans work longer average hours and have a higher incidence of very long hours than workers in nearly every other OECD country.

At the same time, Mexican women shoulder one of the heaviest burdens of *unpaid* work in the OECD when measuring housework and care for dependent children, elderly family members, and other relatives. Labour market structures and a culture of long *paid* hours combine with the unequal distribution of *unpaid* hours to reinforce gendered outcomes in the labour market and at home. Fathers – who are more likely to spend long hours in paid work – lose out on time with their family, while mothers – who more commonly care for children – are more likely to drop out of the workforce. Time poverty is taking its toll, and addressing these challenges will require a multifaceted approach involving the government, employers, and families.

Main findings

- Informality rates in Mexico remain high. Nearly 60% of female and 50% of male (non-agricultural) workers work informally. Women tend to have lower-quality informal jobs than men, often working in occupations such as street vending and domestic work.
- Gender gaps in informality are directly linked to gender gaps in social protection. 48.5% of prime-age male workers in Mexico report having never paid any social security contributions in their productive lives, compared to 64.6% of women. Men also contribute to social security longer than women.
- Mexicans work much longer hours than their peers in other OECD countries when measuring usual weekly hours worked (45), annual hours worked (2 250), and the share of workers spending over 40 hours per week on the job (nearly 80%). Mexico also has one of the smallest paid annual leave entitlements in the OECD.
- Mexicans have longer commutes to work than workers in many other OECD countries. Inadequate and unsafe public transportation restricts women’s freedom of movement.
- Long work hours do not pay off. Indeed, overly long hours are associated with lower productivity, higher rates of human error and accidents, poor health, and worse family relationships.
- Long paid work hours, combined with women’s disproportionate responsibility for unpaid work, have gendered effects on mothers’ and fathers’ participation in the labour market. In about half of Mexican couples with children, the male partner works over 40 paid hours per week, while the female partner works zero paid hours per week. The second most common work-hour combination is both partners working over 40 hours per week (18.5% of couples).
- These work patterns suggest that many Mexican parents face an “all or nothing” choice in the workforce: either they commit to working very long hours in the labour

market, or they do not work at all. Fathers tend to take on very long hours, at the expense of time with the family, while many mothers opt out entirely.

- In every OECD country, women do more *unpaid* housework and care work than men. Mexican women undertake an especially high share of unpaid labour, shouldering nearly 77% of all unpaid work in their households – a higher percentage than women in most other OECD countries. Spending so much time on unpaid work restricts time women can spend in paid work. Care for children largely falls on women, while eldercare is more gender-balanced.
- Rural women spend even more hours on unpaid work than women in urban areas. This reflects inadequate access to social services and time-saving infrastructure, as well as “traditional” gender roles within the family.

Box 4.1. Key policy recommendations to improve job quality and work-life balance

The following policy recommendations are motivated by the principles outlined in the OECD Gender Recommendation on Employment, Education, and Entrepreneurship (OECD, 2013a) and are elaborated in this chapter:

- Policies to reduce informality for both sexes should focus on four main goals: increase the benefits of formalisation for employees and employers; reduce the costs of formalisation; strengthen enforcement mechanisms; and strengthen the link between contributions and benefits in social protection schemes that are tied to employment.
- Mexico should expand information campaigns that promote formalisation and, at least in the short term, the incorporation of informal workers into existing social protection schemes.
- Public policies and private sector policies should encourage flexible work arrangements and enable mothers and fathers of young children to make short-term use of part-time work. Flexible work arrangements should be offered to both mothers and fathers, in order to help break down the societal expectation that mothers will do the majority of care work.
- Organisations should refocus employee evaluations on output rather than “face time” at the job, to help ensure that men and women are treated fairly.
- All levels of government should expand their efforts to raise societal and workplace awareness of gender stereotypes in order to encourage women and men to share paid and unpaid work more evenly.
- Mexico must continue to invest in institutions, infrastructure, and technology that free women’s time. For example, ease of access to water and time-saving appliances (such as washing machines) in the home can help to reduce women’s unpaid work burden and increase their opportunities outside of the home.

4.2. Reliance on informal jobs causes insecurity for women (and men) in Mexico

Informality in the labour market remains a significant issue for Mexican women and men. Informality has pernicious effects for both employers and employees: informal businesses are typically less productive than formal businesses, informal workers tend to have fewer opportunities for human capital accumulation, and informal jobs are usually of lower quality and less secure than formal ones (OECD, 2015a; OECD, 2016a). Informal jobs also lead to lower tax and social security revenues for the government, and widespread informality can hinder economic growth (OECD, 2016b). Many factors drive informality, and rates vary across Mexican states (Dougherty and Escobar, 2016).

A higher share of women than men are informal workers in Mexico. Estimates from Mexico's national labour force survey (ENOE, *Encuesta Nacional de Ocupacion y Empleo*) find that total informal employment rates, including agricultural workers, were 56.9% of male workers and 58.2% of female workers in the first quarter of 2016.

The gender gap in informality grows when agricultural workers are excluded from the estimates. While the informality rate for male workers falls to 49.7%, for female workers the rate remains very high, at 57.2%. Informality rates have changed little over the past decade: as Figure 2.8 (Chapter 2) illustrates, informality rates for women have fluctuated between a quarterly low of 56.2% and a high of 59.4% since 2005.

Not only are women more likely to work informally, they are also more likely to have low-quality informal jobs. Indeed, there is a "hierarchy of poverty" among different types of informal workers (OECD, 2012). Employers and wage workers tend to fare better in job quality and pay, while own-account, domestic, and family workers usually fare worse. Women tend to work in the second group. In Mexico, informal female workers are concentrated in two types of activity: around half of all women in informal work are concentrated in trade, and about a third work in services other than trade or transportation (ILO and WIEGO, 2013). Home-based work, garment manufacturing, and street vending are common informal occupations in Mexico (*ibid.*).

Domestic work is another typical form of informal activity in Mexico, as it is in the rest of Latin America. Women predominate in providing low-paid cleaning and care services in private homes, and this work is difficult to regulate or formalise: labour inspectors cannot typically enter private homes, domestic workers' hours vary from week to week, and many women have multiple employers (ILO, 2016).

In 2008, there were nearly two million domestic workers employed in Mexico – the second largest number in the region, after Brazil. Women made up more than 90% of all domestic workers in Mexico (ILO, 2013). In 2015, there were 2.3 million domestic workers in Mexico (information provided by the Secretariat of Labour and Social Welfare, STPS). Women are sometimes drawn to informal work because the hours are more compatible with care commitments at home (OECD, 2012), and some workers may prefer to take informal jobs for job flexibility or to avoid taxes and regulation (Maloney, 2004).

Other factors also drive informal work: among all domestic workers in Mexico, for instance, 51% are internal migrants and 43% have a relative who works as a domestic worker, suggesting that networks help drive employment patterns (CONAPRED, 2015). Having a low level of education can also influence the decision to work informally as a domestic worker, as higher-quality paid work options may be limited.

Domestic workers face multiple levels of exploitation. They hold a precarious position in the labour market, care work is undervalued, and workers face discrimination based on gender, class, and often race or ethnicity (du Toit, 2013). Domestic workers earn low average wages (relative to comparably-skilled workers), typically work without labour contracts, and have very little access to social protections like health and pension coverage (Tokman, 2010). A 2014 survey of domestic workers and their employers in six representative federal entities in Mexico found compounding disadvantages: 55% of domestic workers had not completed primary education; 21% were not yet legal working age; and 96% reported having only a verbal employment agreement (CONAPRED, 2015).

Importantly, gender gaps in informality imply gender gaps in social protection. While 48.8% of male workers (aged 15-64) in Mexico report never having paid any social security contributions in their productive lives, the figure is 64.6% of women who have

never contributed (OECD estimates of ENIGH 2014). Among those who have contributed, men contribute longer: men contribute to social security, on average, for 10.6 years in their lives, higher than the 8.7 years of contributions by women and 6.8 years of contributions by women who are mothers (OECD estimates based on ENIGH 2014). These estimates reveal a large share of the working population without access to the full social safety net, although access to cash transfer programmes helps women and men maintain a minimum level of income security for at least part of their lives. Important labour protections such as employment-protected maternity leave are also unenforced and largely unavailable to informal workers.

The case of domestic workers illustrates the lack of social protection for informal workers. Mexico offers domestic workers the opportunity to enrol *voluntary* in social security, so long as they work full-time for a single employer, but this scheme is largely ineffective in formalising these women. Mexico has an abysmal rate of social security coverage for domestic workers: the ILO estimates that 0.1% of domestic workers are enrolled in social security (ILO, 2016), which corresponds with STPS's estimate of 1 000 domestic workers in social security (out of 2.3 million workers). Cross-national evidence finds a negative correlation between voluntary enrolment plans and actual social security coverage, whereas mandatory enrolment is associated with much higher coverage rates. Mandatory enrolment is standard practice throughout much of the world. In Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, and Uruguay – where social security enrolment of domestic workers is mandatory – over 40% of domestic workers are covered by social security (ILO, 2016).

In 2015, Mexico published, printed, and distributed copies of the booklet “Directory of Supports and Services for Domestic Workers” (*Directorio de Apoyos y Servicios para las Trabajadoras del Hogar*). This booklet contains information on federal programmes that this vulnerable group of workers can access, such as the health programme *Seguro Popular*, childcare services *Estancias Infantiles*, and housing and nutrition benefits. Publishing this information in a guidebook is an important step in raising awareness of the benefits that domestic workers can access, but it also illustrates the limited number of resources available to these workers and the patchwork of protections they must navigate. Three thousand copies of the directory were printed and distributed by domestic workers organisations, federal labour offices, and relevant agencies. This falls far short of the approximately two million domestic workers.

Box 4.2. Defining employment in the informal economy

Informal employment is a job-based concept, and encompasses jobs that generally lack basic social protection, legal protection, and employment benefits. Workers may be employed informally by formal enterprises, informal enterprises, and/or households. Workers can be grouped into own-account workers, employers, contributing family workers, employees, and members of producers' co-operatives. Employees are considered to have informal jobs if their employment relationship is, in practice, not subject to national labour legislation, income taxation, social protection or entitlement to certain employment benefits (e.g., advance notice of dismissal, severance pay, paid annual or sick leave) (ILO, 2004).

Employment in the informal sector is a production unit-based concept defined as jobs in unregistered and/or small, unincorporated private enterprises. Such enterprises are not constituted as separate legal entities (and are thus not officially registered) and do not maintain a complete set of accounts.

Policies can combat informality

Mexico has made good efforts to curb informality in recent years, as this section illustrates, but many of these measures have not reached marginalised women. Own-account workers are typically more difficult to formalise than employees in the informal sector, and domestic workers offer a prime example, as 99.9% of Mexican domestic workers are not enrolled in social security (ILO, 2016). No mandatory social security registration exists at the federal level for domestic workers; employers are not incentivised to formalise domestic workers; many domestic workers perform cleaning and caregiving in different homes on different days of the week (complicating formalisation with a single employer); and payment is often made at least partially in-kind (e.g., lodging and meals), rather than in wages only.

Regardless of job categories, policies to reduce informality should focus on four main goals:¹

- ***Increase the benefits of formalisation*** for both workers and employers. At the federal level, Mexico already provides low-wage earners with tax credits to incentivise formal employment. For minimum wage earners, the tax credit is refundable and increased net income by about 17% of earnings in 2013 (OECD, 2015b). This is a relatively large incentive, relative to other countries.

The comprehensive labour reform law of late 2012 contained measures intended to promote formal employment, and included innovative features such as short-term training contracts intended to help job matching. A new fiscal regime for small firms (*Régimen de Incorporación Fiscal*), which took effect in January 2014, offers various benefits aimed at fostering a taxpaying culture, and later fiscal measures subsidised part of social security contributions made by workers and employers, including a 50% subsidy in the first year that decreases to 10% in the tenth year (OECD, 2015c). The upper limit is three times the general minimum wage, thus benefiting lower-income workers (OECD, 2015c).

Other countries, too, have taken action to formalise employment in disadvantaged groups. Recent legislation in Colombia, for example, attempts to ensure that the shift to formal jobs is inclusive: the government offered temporary tax relief on income and payroll taxes to encourage hiring workers from vulnerable groups, including women who had not held a job contract in the previous 12 months (OECD, 2016b). Measures targeted to specific groups also exist in Mexican states, such as the “Employment for Youth” programme in Nuevo León, which provided training scholarships to youths without work experience and paid the first month’s salary to enterprises that hired them. Nearly three-quarters of the programme’s 4 000 graduates found formal jobs (ILO FORLAC, 2014). Measures like these can link the costs to the benefits of formalisation while ensuring the inclusion of disadvantaged groups.

It is also important to ensure adequate public awareness of formalisation programmes in order to promote take-up, as was learned in Brazil (Bosch et al., 2015). In Mexico, for example, there is a widespread lack of knowledge among employers and employees about domestic workers’ legal rights (CONAPRED, 2015).

- ***Reduce the costs of formalisation.*** Steep tax schedules (and high social security contributions) tend to discourage employers from formalising employment, and tight labour regulations can discourage firms from hiring workers formally. Mexico’s

2012 labour reform law attempted to address the latter concern by easing employers' ability to terminate employment without liability in cases of misconduct, among other measures (OECD, 2015c).

Fiscal incentives can play an important role in encouraging private households to formalise domestic workers. Belgium and France, for example, administer service voucher systems that reduce the contribution rate for participating employers. Germany makes some employer contributions income tax-deductible expenses. Some OECD countries have established contributory exemptions for elderly or socioeconomically vulnerable employers, which can help to reduce gaps in public care service delivery (ILO, 2016). Another strategy is to reduce employers' tax rates when domestic work contracts are for full-time employment (ILO, 2016).

Finally, in considering the gendered effects of policy design, it is important to structure dual-earner tax liabilities in such a way that female spouses of male breadwinners are not discouraged from registering.

- **Strengthen enforcement mechanisms.** Labour inspections are an effective way of reducing informality, at least in the short run (McKinsey & Company, 2014), though inspections are best suited to regulate workplaces with employees, not own-account workers. The labour inspection system in Mexico needs sufficient resources to work effectively, including an adequate number of inspectors and an increased effort to eliminate corruption within agencies and among field inspectors (*ibid.*). Government agencies must co-operate with each other in enforcing formality.

Mexico has increased the number of labour inspectors and inspections in recent years. In 2014, the ratio of workers to labour inspectors was high in Mexico, at 50 000 workers per inspector (ILOSTAT, 2016a), in comparison to ILO benchmarks for inspections (10 000 workers per inspector in developed market economies and 20 000 workers per inspector in transition countries (OECD, 2013b). However, this was a noteworthy improvement from 2010, when the ratio was around 100 000 workers per inspector. Similarly, labour inspection visits to workplaces under federal jurisdiction in Mexico increased from 42 502 in 2009 to 139 061 in 2014 (ILOSTAT, 2016b).

- **Ensure a stronger and more reliable link between contributions and benefits in social protection schemes,** in order to improve trust in government and a functional social security system. This should increase workers' motivation to join formal employment. Similarly, social support programmes should eliminate potential incentives for beneficiaries to remain informal and establish incentives for transitioning beneficiaries to productive employment (ILO FORLAC, 2014). Mexico's conditional cash transfer programme *Prospera* is working on strengthening these linkages between contributions and benefits (Chapter 3).

Across countries, mandatory social security registration has incorporated far greater shares of domestic workers into social security programmes than voluntary schemes have. Other OECD countries with higher shares of domestic workers formalised – like Chile (42.3%), France (70%), Italy (42.2%), Spain (63.8%), and Turkey (5.1%) – mandate social security coverage of domestic workers, often with penalties for non-compliance (ILO, 2016). While this certainly does not ensure universal coverage, it is a step in the right direction. Mandatory social security enrolment, accompanied by reliable access to benefits, should be a policy priority for domestic workers in Mexico – most of whom are women.

Mexico's Support and Services Directory for Domestic Workers (*Directorio de Apoyos y Servicios para las Trabajadoras del Hogar*) is an important tool for increasing awareness of the benefits domestic workers can access, as well as how to access those benefits. While Mexico should strengthen its efforts to formalise domestic workers into a more comprehensive social security system, in the short-term it is important to ensure that workers can access existing forms of social protection. The booklet should be updated and printed annually, and more booklets should be printed to better reach the more than 2 million domestic workers and their employers. Mexico should consider broadcasting this information in other media, such as television and radio, to reach women who are illiterate and/or do not have access to the internet or print media.

Box 4.3. Gender gaps in (formal) working years lead to gender gaps in pensions

Gender gaps in pensions exist throughout the OECD and contribute to poverty among elderly women. The number of years worked helps determine retirement income. Across OECD countries, women generally work fewer years than men and are more likely to leave the formal labour force for family-related reasons (e.g. childbirth, parenting, and caring for disabled and elderly relatives). Such career breaks often lower pension entitlements and personal savings.

All OECD countries have set up mandatory or quasi-mandatory pension systems to widen coverage, but countries with high levels of informality, such as Mexico, have lower coverage levels. In Mexico, around 40% of all workers are estimated to contribute to pension systems (OECD, IDB and the World Bank, 2014). Moreover, gender affects the likelihood that a worker contributes: large gender gaps in labour force participation (Chapter 2) and higher rates of informality among female than male workers reduce women's likelihood of contributing to pensions in Mexico. In Mexico, 67% of women are not affiliated with any pension system, compared to, for example, 25% in Chile (OECD, IDB and the World Bank, 2014).

Women in OECD countries who earn the average wage and interrupt their career for five years to care for two young children lose, on average, 4% of their pension income (OECD, 2015d). While pensions are not affected by such a career break in about one-third of OECD countries, the decline in pension entitlements is steepest in Mexico (and Germany) at 11%. Unlike many other OECD countries, in the Mexican pension system there is no specific crediting mechanism for childcare periods (OECD, 2015d).

Moreover, to be entitled to a pension in Mexico at retirement age, the defined-benefit system requires that the individual has not been inactive for more than a fourth of their past contribution period. If these criteria are not met, the worker loses their right to a pension and has to restart contributing. As a result, many workers, especially women, lose their pension rights in the defined-benefit scheme (OECD, 2016c). Women are especially disadvantaged in the event of divorce: while widows can receive the pension of their contributing husband, women often lose social security benefits accumulated by their spouse in the case of divorce (information provided by INMUJERES).

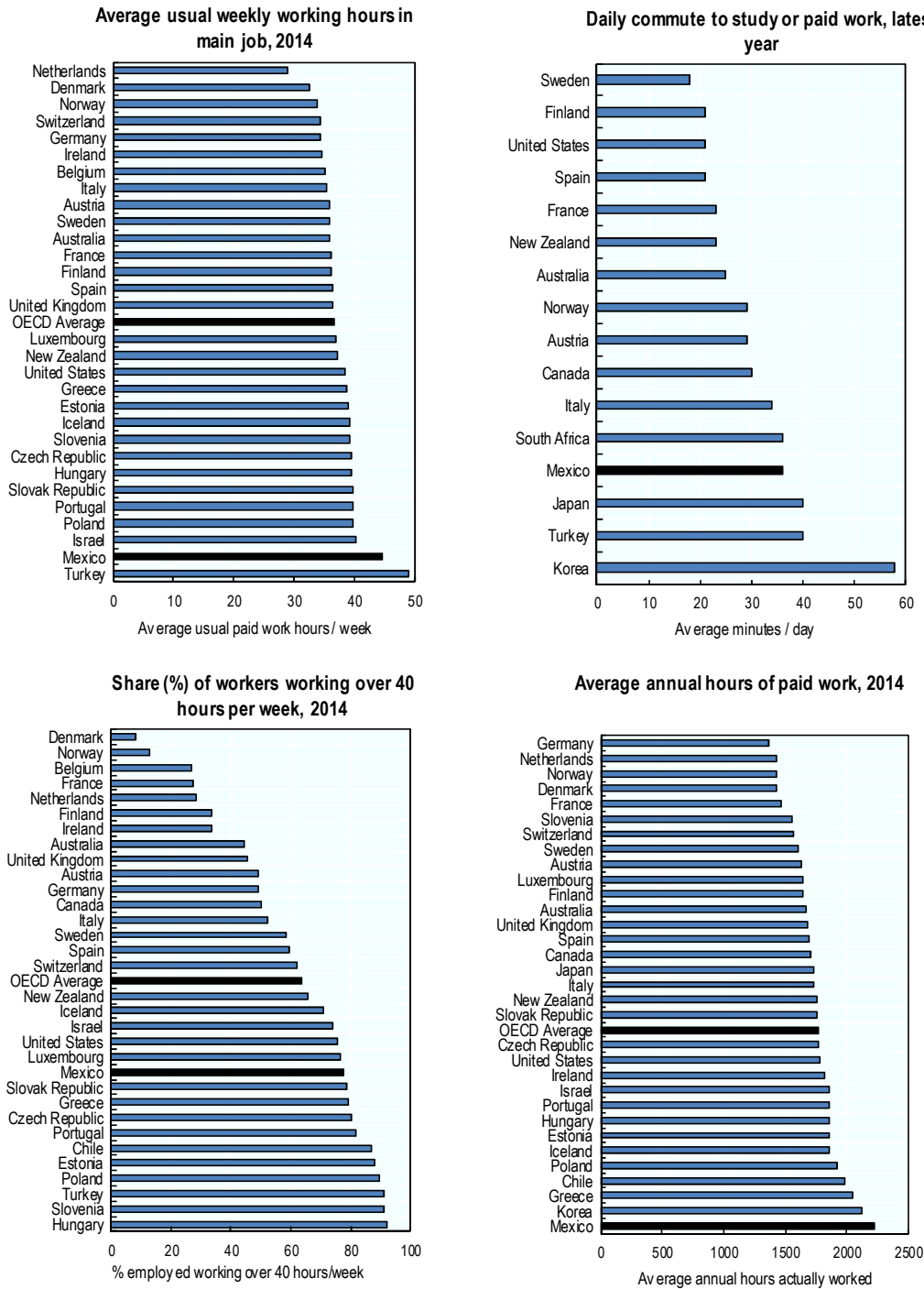
The population aged 65 and over is forecast to more than double across the OECD in the next 50 years, and the largest increase will occur in Mexico (OECD, 2015d). These issues of low coverage and a wide gender gap will thus become increasingly urgent.

4.3. Longer hours make for lower job quality

Another key indicator of job quality is the number of hours worked (OECD, 2016d). Across many measures, Mexico is overworked. Mexicans spend more time in paid work than most workers elsewhere in the OECD (Figure 4.1), even though the Constitution stipulates that the working day should not exceed eight hours. At 44.7 hours per week, Mexico has one of the highest rates of average usual weekly working hours in the OECD. This weekly hour estimate is higher than most other middle-income OECD countries, and

higher than the OECD average² of 36.75 hours per week. Importantly, these estimates refer to hours that workers spend on their *main* job, and thus may underestimate the working hours of Mexicans with multiple jobs.

Figure 4.1. Mexico is overworked: Long commutes, long work weeks, and long annual hours



Source: OECD Employment Database (2016), OECD Gender Data Portal (2016).

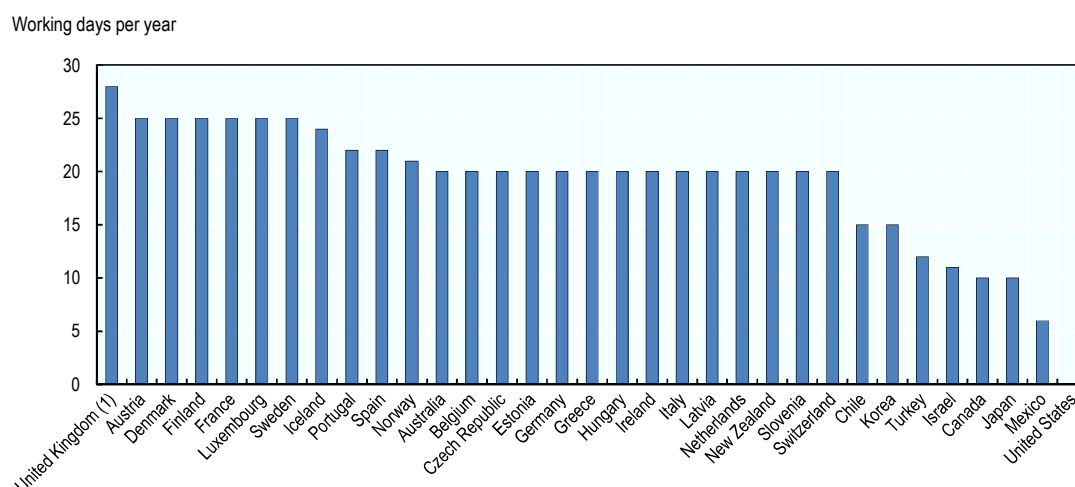
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Mexico is also above the OECD average in the share of workers spending over 40 hours per week on the job. 77.8% of employees in Mexico work more than 40 hours per week, compared to an OECD average of 63.5%. Nearly 15% of Mexican workers work more than 60 hours in a usual week, with the share higher among the self-employed (OECD, 2015b), revealing that the high average working hours are thus not driven by a small segment of the population. Fortunately nearly 75% of Mexicans report having good workplace relationships, considerably higher than the OECD average, which helps to compensate for work-related stress (OECD, 2015a).

Mexicans also work more hours *annually* than workers in all other OECD countries (with available data), and have the second lowest entitlement to paid time off in the OECD. In other words, Mexicans put in long hours nearly every week of the year. Only the United States offers less paid leave than Mexico (the United States offers none). Canada performs slightly better than Mexico and the United States, but overall the North American countries are laggards in the OECD in ensuring that workers have paid time off for necessary rest, recovery, and leisure.

Figure 4.2. North American countries guarantee workers little paid time off

Statutory minimum days of paid annual leave, 2015



Note: Entitlements generally reflect those for full-time, full-year private sector employees, working a five-day week, who have been working for their current employer for one year. In some countries (e.g. Finland, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Poland and Turkey) the statutory minimum annual leave entitlement varies with tenure. In Hungary, the statutory minimum annual leave entitlement increases with age – the entitlement shown reflects the minimum entitlement for workers aged under 25.

1. In the United Kingdom, an employer can choose to count up to eight public holidays as part of a worker's statutory annual paid leave entitlement, effectively reducing the entitlement to paid annual leave to 20 working days.

Source: OECD Family Database (2016).

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Exhausting commutes limit women's paid work options

Long commutes compound long hours on the job. Long commutes take valuable hours from the day, add to work-life conflict, and drive down quality of life. In Mexico, inadequate urban development plans (OECD, 2015c) contributed to poor public transportation services, leading commuters who use public transit to spend more time than they should in buses or metro trains. Inadequate public transit also encourages more

commuters to drive their automobiles to work, thus increasing traffic and car commute times. Spatial segregation of socioeconomic classes means that low-income workers can face especially lengthy commutes, particularly around urban centers like Mexico City.

Many of Mexico's new housing developments did not consider the mobility needs of the new inhabitants, so urban growth in many places has been accompanied by poor access to public transport and other critical urban services (OECD, 2015f). Newer housing developments tend to be located on the outskirts and peripheral neighbourhoods of cities, remote from cities and job centers. Lower-income households tend to trade lower housing prices for higher transport costs; in 2013, new home owners spent on average 14% of their monthly income on transport (*ibid.*).

As Figure 4.1 illustrates, the average Mexican faces one of the longest work commutes in the OECD (when comparing harmonised, cross-national time use data). Mexican workers spend, on average, 36 minutes per day commuting, with significant variation across urban and non-urban commuters and across different urban areas. Among OECD countries with recent time use surveys, only workers in Korea (58 minutes), Turkey (40 minutes), and Japan (40 minutes) have longer commutes than workers in Mexico. In contrast, workers in Spain, the United States, Finland, and Sweden spend 21 minutes or less commuting to work each day.

Poor transportation options can limit women's economic opportunities (World Bank, 2012). In addition to the length of the commute, personal safety in public transportation is an important issue in Mexico. Nearly half (48%) of female users of public transit in Mexico City report having been sexually harassed in transit, according to a recent consumer watchdog survey (*Poder del Consumidor*, 2015). Of those females, 60% were physically accosted. Nationally, 70.9% of women aged 18 and over report feeling insecure when they use public transport (INEGI, 2015a).

“Women-only” cars exist in Mexican metro systems, and women-only seats are reserved in the front of the bus on many bus routes. However, this solution is insufficient in meeting demand, as women-only cars are often overfilled. Spatial separation is not a sufficient long-term solution for ensuring women and girls' safety in transit. Rather, Mexico needs to promote men's respect of women (to prevent harassment in the first place) and improve security in public transit, including the participation of police officers trained in deterring and investigating violence against women and girls. The significant probability of harassment or assault on public transit contributes to women's reluctance to undertake long commutes. Security officers should be better trained in preventing and addressing gender-based violence, and the number of trained security officers in public transit should be increased to ensure that men do not assault female passengers.

Motivated to address violence against women and girls traveling to and from school or work, the Women's Institute of Mexico City (*Instituto de las Mujeres del Distrito Federal*) in 2008 initiated an inter-institutional collaboration promoting women's safety in public transport. The output was to co-ordinate institutional actions across agencies. A range of institutions signed onto the collaboration, including the attorney general of Mexico City, local public security offices, and public transport system administrators (OECD Questionnaire on Gender Equality in Mexican States, 2016). The effects of such programmes are hard to measure, but ensuring the continued participation of stakeholders across government offices is necessary to address the challenges of gender-based violence.

Improving women's security in public transit would have multiple benefits. Not only would it improve women's well-being, their likelihood of engaging in paid work, and the

probability of better job quality (as women would have more geographical areas in which to consider employment), getting more vehicles off the road would also reduce automobile traffic congestion in Mexican cities and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions (USAID, 2012). It may also help to reduce Mexico's road accident mortality rate, which is currently the highest in the OECD and, within Mexico, is much higher for men than women (OECD, 2015e).

Shorter commutes would improve work and leisure time for men *and* women, and could enable a more equal division of labour in the household. In the long term, urban planning that makes public transit routes more accessible, affordable, and safe is a must. In the short term, employers should consider allowing both men and women to have flexible work schedules or the option to work from home, in order to save time commuting.

Longer hours for lower productivity

“Time macho” culture – an English-language term used to describe workplaces where employees aim to be the first and last man standing at the workplace – can be found in organisations throughout the world, including in Mexico. However, the payoff to excessively long hours is not higher productivity. While productivity does increase with hours worked up to a point, considerable research finds that productivity maxes out at around 40 hours per week. After five eight-hour days, productivity plateaus and then decline as workers’ anticipate adding extra hours and produce less in each hour. Their risk of accidents and errors increases, and miscommunication and poor decisions are more likely. Workers’ health suffers, too, which contributes to diminished productivity. Addressing the issue of excessively long hours requires cultural shifts within organisations and adequate public policies protecting workers. The payoffs to companies are significant in the form of greater productivity and a healthier workforce.

Working more, but working worse

Businesses and economists have long sought to find the ideal number of work hours for maximising production. Adam Smith, in *The Wealth of Nations*, predicted that “in every sort of trade, [the] man who works so moderately as to be able to work constantly not only preserves his health the longest, but in the course of the year executes the greatest quantity of works”. By the 1920s, businessmen like Henry Ford were experimenting with various work-hour combinations to maximise productivity. Ford eventually concluded that his workers could produce more in five days than in six, and in eight-hour shifts rather than ten.

Productivity rates decrease after a threshold of hours. Modern econometric evaluations of historical and current worker data confirm that workers can only be productive for a limited number of hours. Even under the exigencies of World War I, British ammunition factory workers’ output rose with hours worked but peaked, on average, at 48 hours per week. After that point, the rate of output decreased (Pencavel, 2014). Workers simply cannot produce output at the same rate for a prolonged period of time.

Why does this happen? Fatigue and stress reduce the ability to function, and employees may produce less per hour if they anticipate having to stay at work longer. An oft-cited study of construction workers on overtime found that, after two months, a work schedule of 60 or more hours per week decreased productivity so much that the delay in completion was greater than that which would have occurred with the same crew on a

40-hour week (Business Roundtable, 1980). In addition to lower worker morale and increased errors, the difficulties in providing materials, tools, equipment, and information at the “faster” rate cause efficiency losses (Thomas and Raynar, 1997).

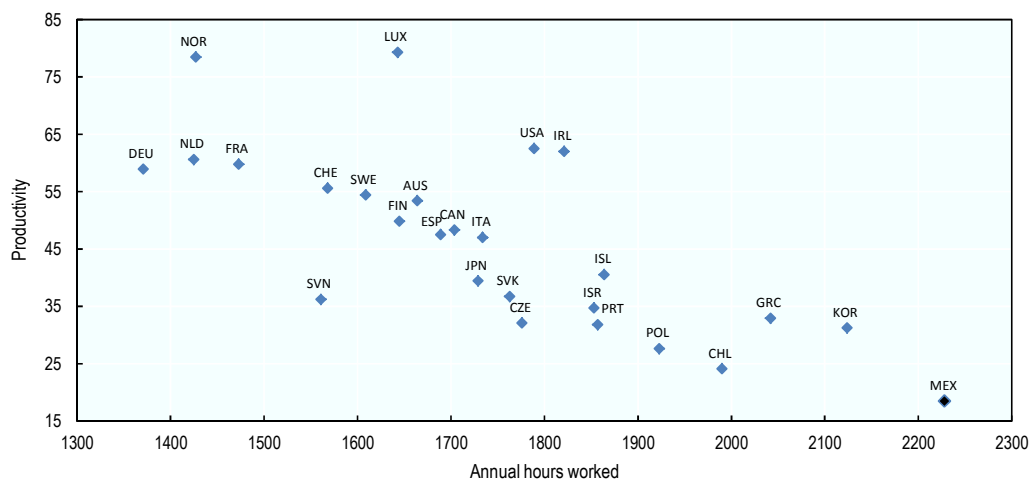
At the aggregate level, long hours are negatively correlated with productivity across countries (Figure 4.3). Plotting hours worked against productivity reveals that Mexican workers put in longer hours for lower productivity than workers in other OECD countries. Some of the most productive countries are those with relatively low average annual hours of work, such as Norway, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg.

Long hours increase the risk of errors, accidents, and injuries across industries (Pencavel, 2014; Dembe et al., 2005). In the medical field, for instance, doctors, nurses, and medical interns make more errors in treating patients (Rogers et al., 2004; Flinn and Armstrong, 2011) and are more likely to be involved in motor vehicle accidents (Barger et al., 2005) after working long shifts. Performance on tasks that require focus and concentration worsens as a function of time, a phenomenon known as “vigilance decrement” (Ariga and Lleras, 2011). Put simply, it is hard to concentrate on a task for a long time.

Workplace decisions and relationships suffer. Long hours contribute to decision fatigue, as making too many decisions throughout the day deteriorates the quality of choices. Workplace intangibles like emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication are also adversely affected by long hours. Overworked employees are more likely to be sleep-deprived (Faber et al., 2015), which, in turn, reduces empathy towards others, weakens impulse control, diminishes the quality of interpersonal relationships, and makes it harder for people to cope with challenges (Killgore et al., 2008).

Figure 4.3. Long hours and low productivity

Scatterplot of actual annual hours worked and GDP per hour of labour, selected countries, 2014



Source: OECD Productivity Database and OECD Employment Database.

Long work hours are also linked to poor physical health, which is bad for workers and for companies interested in retaining healthy employees. One obvious consequence of long work hours is a greater likelihood of workplace accidents, but there are also chronic risks such as increases in coronary heart disease, depressive episodes, and alcoholism

(Virtanen et al., 2012 and 2015). Prolonged exposure to psychological stress, poor eating habits, lack of leisure time, and insufficient sleep take their toll.

Long work hours hurt families and partnerships, as well. Evidence across countries shows that children are negatively affected by their parents' non-standard work schedules, which includes work at night and on weekends. Parents are more likely to be depressed, parenting quality is likely to suffer, children and parents spend less time together, and the home environment is less supportive overall, especially in low-income families (Li et al., 2014).

Long hours persist, despite evidence of their detrimental effects

Given the negative effects of long work hours, why do so many workers across the OECD still spend over 40 hours per week on the job? Both employer and worker behaviour play a role in perpetuating long hours. In many businesses, long work hours are a part of organisational culture and a way for employees to show that they are loyal and "ideal" workers (Cha and Weeden, 2014; Sharone, 2004). For workers with lower incomes or unstable jobs, working additional hours may simply be a financial necessity. Fear of job loss is another key factor.

Employers, in turn, have been slow to realise that additional time in the office does not usually add value. Some research suggests that the wage premium for long hours is actually on the rise (Cha and Weeden, 2014). Leaders and managers in organisations, who likely made time sacrifices to reach their current rank, often have difficulty accepting that work can be done in fewer hours. In some workplaces, "non-compliers" – those employees who opt to take flexible work hours and family leave – may actually be punished via denied promotions, reduced visibility to superiors, or exclusion from important projects. In-office "face time" remains an important metric of evaluating employees, even if it does not correspond with output (Elsbach and Cable, 2012).

Long hours affect both sexes, but have gendered effects. In Mexico, fathers tend to lose time with their families, while mothers often drop out of the workforce entirely. The wage premium to long hours has been identified as a crucial remaining obstacle to gender pay equity (Goldin, 2014). Within the workplace, men and women often break from long hour norms in different ways. In one US consulting firm, for example, researchers found that men pretended to work 60- to 80-hour weeks by strategically timing when to send emails, scheduling phone calls at odd hours, and discreetly taking leave without formal permission. In contrast, female workers were far more likely to make formal requests of reduced hours, and were consequently marginalised within the firm (Reid, 2015).

Diminishing productivity of knowledge workers might be harder to quantify than that of manual workers, but many of the negative effects still exist: long hours contribute to stress, sleep deprivation, disagreements with colleagues, and mistakes on the job. Even software engineers argue that programming errors are more likely to occur (and take longer to fix) after long hours, despite the tech industry's glorification of seemingly endless workdays (Robinson, 2005).

What can be done to prevent overwork?

Work cultures are hard to change, but public policies can help in the form of enforced work hour legislation, the right to request flexible work, and increases in statutory paid leave. The government and employers should also encourage workers to take the leave for which they are eligible. Encouraging fathers to take paternity leave is particularly

important, as fathers' early investment in caregiving has long-term payoffs for fathers, children, and the within-household distribution of labour (Chapter 3). Government can also play an important role in raising employer awareness of the negative effects of overwork. Although the public sector should set a good example by curbing excessive hours, stakeholders in Mexico note that public sector managers largely ignored previous government attempts to end workdays at a reasonable time.

However, for significant change to occur in the work lives of employees, businesses also need to adjust organisational culture and practice. An organisation's overarching goal should be to adjust workplace culture so that managers value prioritisation of tasks, time management, and efficient output over hours in the office. It is important for organisation leaders to recognise that long hours are not necessary for high-quality work and, at a certain point, may run counter to it. Some specific measures employers can take include:

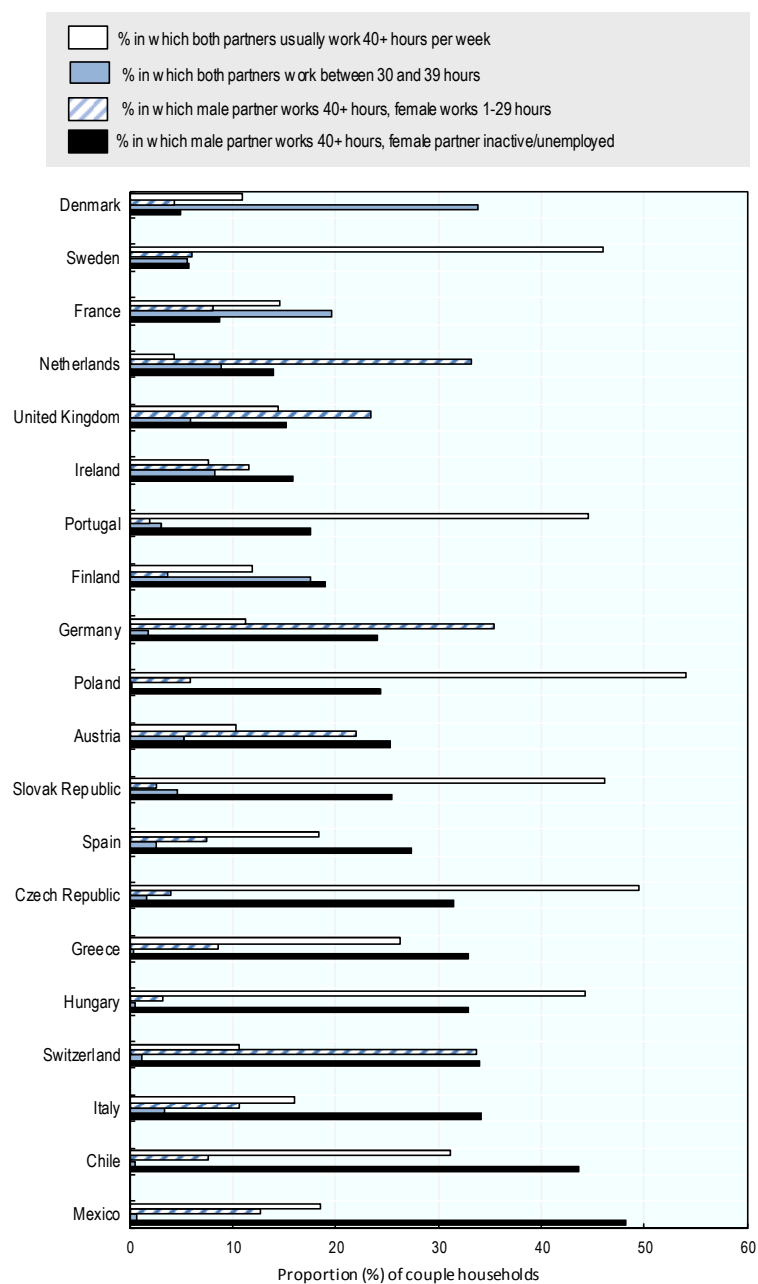
- Weigh objective output more heavily than subjective traits when evaluating employees. Such traits (e.g., co-operativeness) may be unfairly biased by the physical presence of employees, whereas outputs like the number of projects or project quality are arguably more objectively measurable across employees with varied hours in the office (Elsbach and Cable, 2012).
- Keep overtime spells short, as evidence suggests that employees can only work over 40 hours per week for a few weeks before productivity declines.
- Be aware of the effects of overtime. Reconsider scheduling practices and job design, and introduce health protection programmes for employees in jobs that often have overtime hours (Dembe et al., 2005).
- Instituting, publicising, and encouraging flexible work arrangements for both mothers *and* fathers can destigmatise taking time off for family reasons. This can also improve opportunities for women within firms (such as more equal wages and greater women in management) and help the recruitment of a diverse workforce.
- As much as possible, give workers consistent schedules from week to week, so that they can better manage work-life balance. This is especially important for low-income workers, who often struggle to find consistent and reliable childcare when their shifts change erratically.
- Managers should set a good example in working reasonable hours and valuing personal time. Field research in Mexico confirms that employees are reluctant to leave the workplace while their manager is still on-site. Managers play an important role in ensuring that workers feel comfortable ending their workday at a reasonable hour.

4.4. The demand for long hours reinforces existing gender roles

The culture of long work hours has gendered effects on labour market behaviour. Because women are disproportionately responsible for unpaid childcare and housework, as described below in Section 4.5, it is difficult for women to engage fully in a labour market that expects and rewards long hours on the job. In Mexican families with children, the most common work-hour combination is that in which the male partner works *over 40* paid hours per week while the female partner works *zero* paid hours per week. 48% of Mexican couples with children fall into this category (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4 Mexican mothers spend either very few or very many hours in paid work

Percentage of couples (female partner aged 25 to 45, with at least one child) in different work-hour arrangements, selected countries, most recent year



Note: Usual working hours of the employed for European countries, actual hours worked for Chile and Mexico. Data refer to total hours worked in all jobs, except for Chile where only hours worked in the main job are considered. Percentages do not sum to 100 because some work-hour combinations are omitted from this chart.

Source: OECD estimates based on the Household, Income, and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey 2014, the *Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional (CASEN)* 2013 for Chile, the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) 2012 for European countries, and the *Encuesta Nacional de Ingresos y Gastos de los Hogares (ENIGH)* 2014 for Mexico.

The large number of Mexican couples with this unequal engagement in paid work – in which the male partner works very long hours and the female partner works zero – is uncommon in the OECD.

The male breadwinner model predominates across OECD countries, but in the majority of countries the most common work-hour combinations are 1) both partners working full-time or 2) the male partner working full-time and the female partner working part-time.

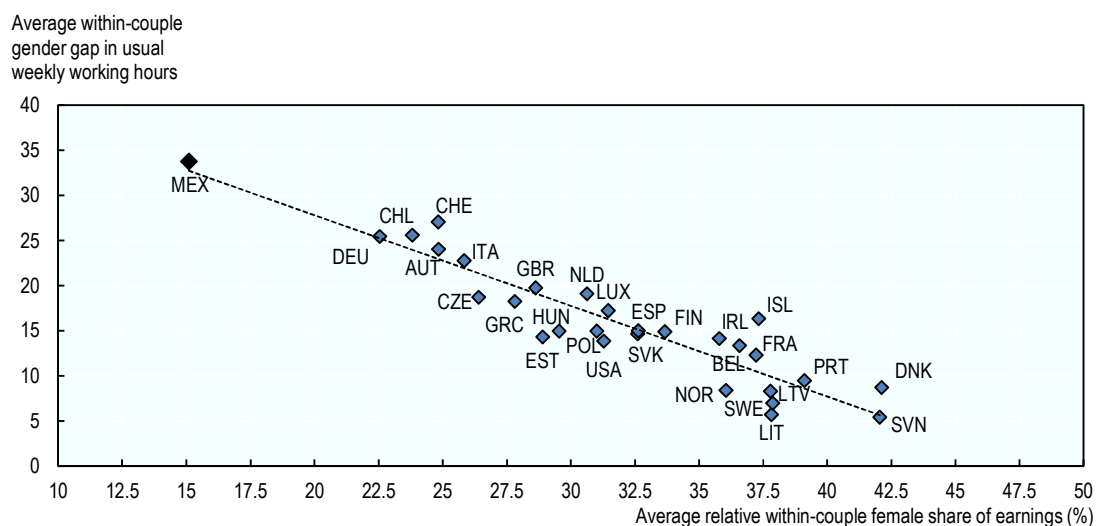
The high share of Mexican households with men working very long hours (and women working zero paid hours) suggests that labour market structures are restricting families' choices. This constraint has negative effects on fathers, who lose valuable time with their families, and negative effects on mothers, who are more likely to leave the labour market to care for children.

The second most common combination in Mexico is both parents working over 40 paid hours per week: 18.5% of couples with children fall in this category. In these households, working mothers face double duty: long hours of paid work followed by intensive hours of unpaid work. (In many higher-income households, however, domestic workers help reduce the unpaid work burden.)

Related to these within-household patterns, the gap between the average usual weekly work hours of Mexican mothers and fathers is the widest in the OECD. Mexican mothers usually work 16.1 hours per week, on average, while Mexican fathers work 49.5 hours. The average earnings gap between coupled mothers and fathers is also the largest in the OECD. (When mothers with zero work hours are excluded from the sample, Mexico's gap remains quite large, but Germany and Switzerland have larger within-parent working hour gaps; see Figure 4.A1.1 in the annex). On average, Mexican mothers in couples contribute just 15% of couples' total earnings.

Figure 4.5. Mothers work the fewest paid hours and contribute least to household earnings in Mexico

Average within-couple gender gap in usual weekly working hours, and average relative within-couple female share of earnings for couples with a female partner aged 25-45 with at least one child, most recent year



Note:

Usual working hours of the (self-)employed for European countries, actual hours worked for Chile and Mexico. Data refer to total hours worked in all jobs, except for Chile where only hours worked in the main job are considered.

Jobless couples where neither partner works (inactive or unemployed) are excluded.

Data refer to the average female share of a couple's total earnings (female partner's earnings divided by male partner's earnings plus female partner's earnings).

Data refer to the average absolute gap in usual weekly working hours between the male member and the female member of a couple (male partner's usual weekly working hours – female partner's usual weekly working hours).

Data for European countries refer to 2010/2, for Chile to 2013, for Mexico to 2014, and for the United States to 2014. The income reference year is 2011 for European countries, 2013 for Chile and 2014 for Mexico and the United States.

Source: OECD calculations based on *Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional (CASEN)* 2013 for Chile, European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) 2012 for European countries, *Encuesta Nacional de Ingresos y Gastos de los Hogares (ENIGH)* 2014 for Mexico, Current Population Survey (CPS) 2014 for the United States.

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4.5. Mexican women spend long hours on valuable unpaid labour

Time is a finite resource. Long hours at home spent cooking, cleaning, and caring for children limit the amount of time women can spend in paid work. Mexican women's disproportionate responsibility for housework and dependent care can deter women from entering full-time jobs and prevent those who do work from advancing in good-quality jobs. Employers, in turn, may discriminate against hiring women of childbearing age due to the risk that they will leave to give birth and/or care for children. The high number of Mexican women asked to take a pregnancy test at the time of hiring – at least prior to the pregnancy test ban in 2012 – starkly illustrates this discrimination (Chapter 3).

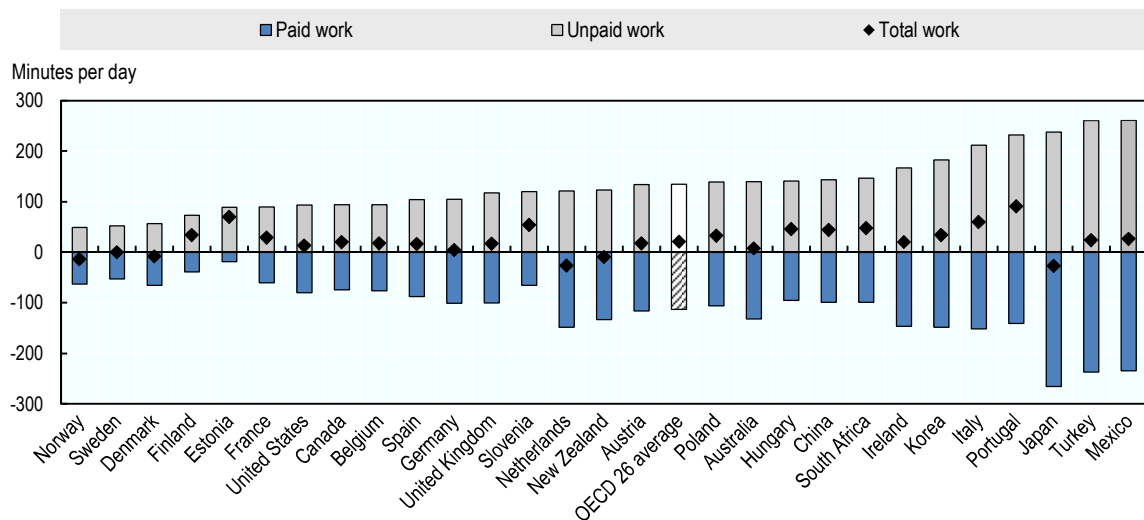
Gender inequality in unpaid work at home is crucial in explaining gender inequality in the labour market. In every OECD country, and throughout the world, women do more unpaid work than men. Women in Mexico face one of the highest burdens of unpaid

labour in the OECD, as they shoulder, on average, nearly 77% of all unpaid housework and childcare in their households (Figure 1.6 in Chapter 1).

The same pattern can be observed when looking at the total amount of time spent on unpaid labour by men and women every day. Mexican women spend more than six hours each day on unpaid childcare and housework, a higher figure than women in most OECD countries, while Mexican men spend less than two hours (Figure 4.5). Across countries, men also tend to have more leisure time than women.

Figure 4.6. Women do more unpaid work than men across OECD countries

Female minus male paid and unpaid working time, in minutes per day, 15-64 year-olds, harmonised survey years



Note: Data for Australia are for 15+ year-olds, for Hungary 15-74 year-olds, and for Sweden 25-64 year-olds. Reference years vary across countries: Australia: 2006; Austria: 2008-09; Belgium: 2005; Canada: 2010; China: 2008; Denmark: 2001; Estonia: 2009-10; Finland: 2009-10; France: 2009; Germany: 2001-02; Hungary: 1999-2000; Italy: 2008-09; Ireland: 2005; Japan: 2011; Korea: 2009; Mexico: 2009; the Netherlands: 2005-06; New Zealand: 2009-10; Norway: 2010; Poland: 2003-04; Portugal: 1999; Slovenia: 2000-01; South Africa: 2010; Spain: 2009-10; Sweden: 2010; Turkey: 2006; the United Kingdom: 2005; and the United States: 2014.

Source: OECD Gender Data Portal.

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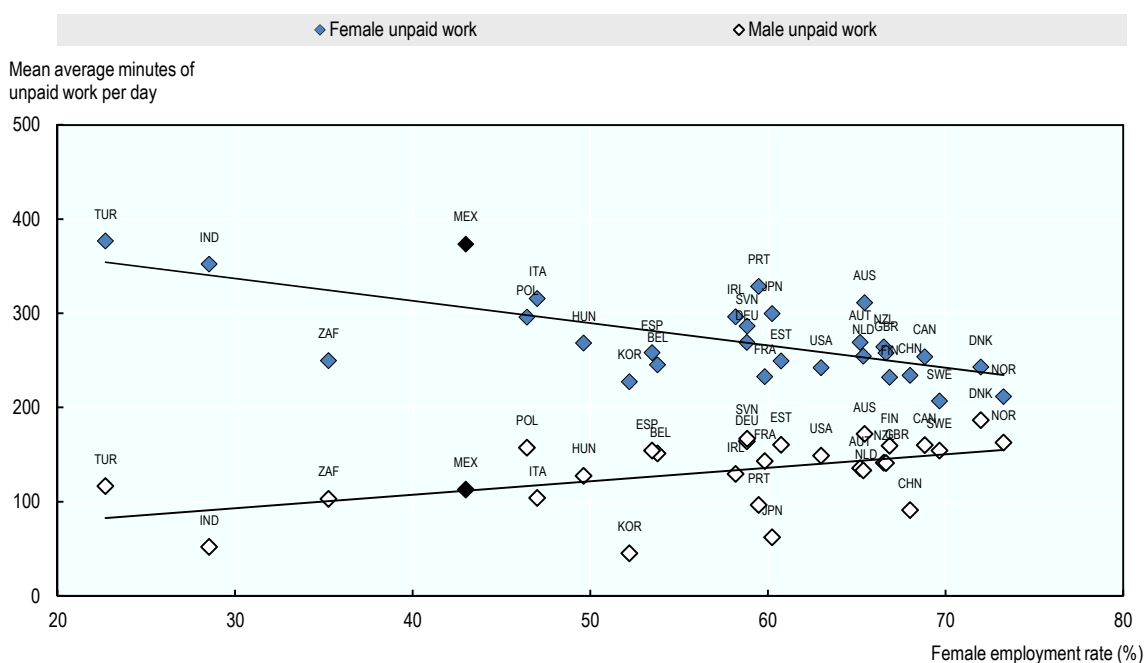
Unpaid labour is valuable. It represents money saved over what a household would have to pay for the same service in the private market. Unpaid work at home increases the overall consumption of goods and services, represents implicit income, and is crucial for enabling the labour force participation of beneficiary household members (Becker, 1965). In rural communities, agricultural production carried out within the household for family consumption has important value (Stiglitz et al., 2007), and consumption and production can be more broadly defined to include the production and rearing of children, as well as maintaining a clean home (Browning et al., 2014). Related to this, OECD research has called for a better incorporation of unpaid work in the estimation of national accounts (Ferrant et al., 2014; Miranda, 2011). The National Institute of Statistics and Geography in Mexico (INEGI) estimates that the economic value of unremunerated domestic and care work was MXN 4.2 billion in 2014 – representing 24.2% of the country's GDP (INEGI, 2015b).

Importantly, women’s disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care activities limits their ability to enter the labour market. Across countries, at the aggregate level, women participate more in the labour market when their male partners take on more (unpaid) housework (Hook, 2006; OECD, 2016e). Women in countries with high female employment rates also spend relatively less time on unpaid work, relative to women in countries with lower female employment rates (Figure 4.6).

The Nordic countries of Norway, Denmark, and Sweden are OECD leaders in promoting the equal sharing of unpaid work. While women in these countries still do more childcare and chores than men, the gender differential in minutes spent on unpaid work is less than one hour each day. The other North American OECD countries also perform better than average in getting men to take on more unpaid work and in promoting women’s labour force participation.

Figure 4.7. Better gender balance in unpaid work correlates with greater equality in labour market

Mean average minutes/day in unpaid work, by gender, and female employment rates (15-64 year-olds)



Note: Data on unpaid work are for 15+ year-olds for Australia, 15-74 year-olds for Hungary, and 25-64 year-olds for Sweden. Reference years vary across countries: Australia: 2006; Austria: 2008-09; Belgium: 2005; Canada: 2010; China: 2008 for unpaid work and 2010 for the female employment rate; Denmark: 2001; Estonia: 2009-10; Finland: 2009-10; France: 2009; Germany: 2001-02; Hungary: 1999-2000; India: 1999 for unpaid work and 2010 for the female employment rate; Italy: 2008-09; Ireland: 2005; Japan: 2011; Korea: 2009; Mexico: 2009; the Netherlands: 2005-06; New Zealand: 2009-10; Norway: 2010; Poland: 2003-04; Portugal: 1999; Slovenia: 2000-01; South Africa: 2010; Spain: 2009-10; Sweden: 2010; Turkey: 2006; the United Kingdom: 2005; and the United States: 2014.

Source: OECD Gender Data Portal and *OECD Employment Database*.

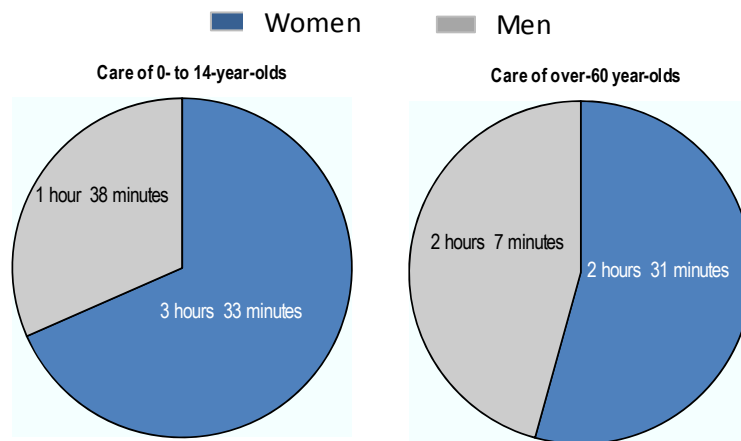
This correlation holds at the household level, as well. In OECD countries, male-breadwinner couples tend to adhere to a more traditional division of paid and unpaid labour: when a male partner works full-time, the female partner predominantly takes on housework and childcare. In dual-earner couples, in contrast, male partners take on a larger share of housework than male breadwinners. Yet even when both partners work

full-time, the division of household labour is rarely a 50-50 split. The female share of unpaid labour in these households varies across countries, for example, from 62%, on average, in Germany to 88%, on average, in Korea (OECD, 2016e). Women generally do less unpaid housework and childcare as their share of household earnings goes up, but the relationship is not linear. There is some evidence from Australia and the United States that high-earning women do more housework in order to conform to gender norms at home, if not in the labour market, an example of so-called “doing gender” behaviour (Bittman, et al., 2003; Bertrand et al., 2015).

In Mexico, the gender gap in unpaid work is particularly wide in childcare activities. 73.7% of women and teenage girls are caregivers to children (under age 15) in their household, compared to only 61.8% of men and teenage boys in Mexico. Among these caregivers, women and teenage girls also put in more hours feeding, bathing, clothing, and watching children: on average, women provide three hours and 33 minutes of care per day to children under age 14 in their household (68.4% of all unpaid childcare hours), compared to 1 hour and 38 minutes of care provided by men and teenage boys. In sum, women spend more than twice as much time as men in unremunerated childcare. While women have some biological advantages in childcare when infants are very young – for instance, in breastfeeding – the persistent gendered division of care labour as a child ages is to some degree a reflection of social norms.

Figure 4.8. Mexican women perform much more childcare, though care for seniors is more balanced

Daily number of hours (and share of total hours) of unpaid care work performed by the population aged 12 and above, conditional on performing some care activities for household members, national average in Mexico, 2014



Note: Population aged 12 and older who perform unpaid care work for household members, in hours and minutes per day.

Source: INEGI *Encuesta Nacional sobre Uso del Tiempo* (ENUT) 2014.

In comparison to women’s disproportionate responsibility for childcare, the gendered distribution of unpaid care for seniors is more balanced, similar to the situation in other OECD countries (OECD, 2016e). Across countries spouses tend to care for each other, whereas women tend to care for parents. The rate of elder caregiving is actually higher for men than women, on average, in Mexico: 10.2% of men and teenage boys provide care to household members aged 60 and above, compared to 9.1% of women and teenage girls. However, women who are caregivers spend more time daily on these tasks. Female

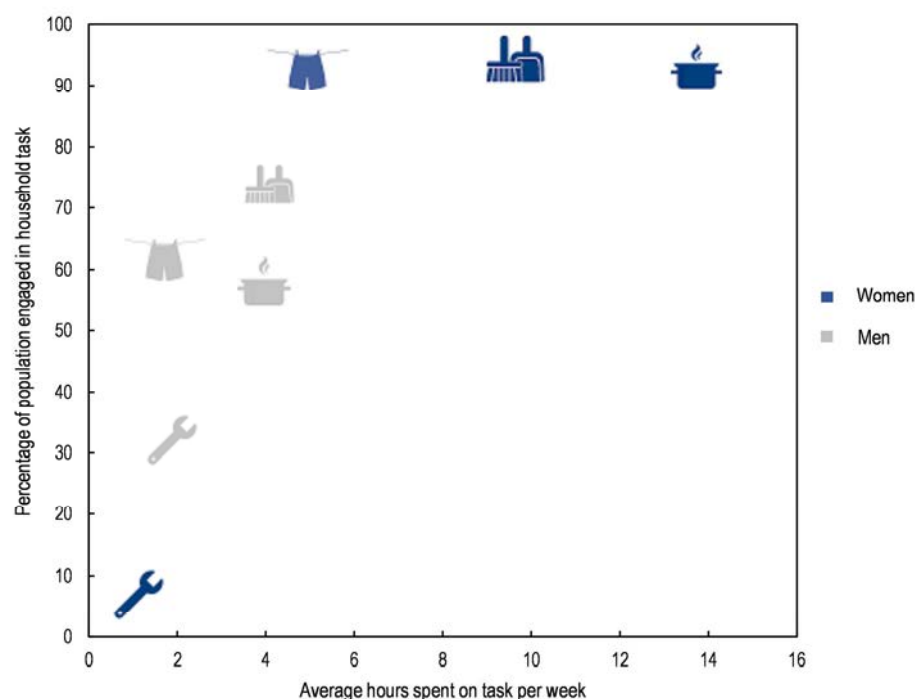
caregivers provide 54.3% of the care for seniors, or 24 minutes more each day than male caregivers.

Women are also more likely to do cooking, cleaning, and laundry than men, and women spend many more hours on these tasks. Mexican women spend more than three times as many hours as Mexican men preparing food, more than twice as many hours cleaning, and nearly three times as many hours on laundry each week. In contrast, men are more likely than women to do home repairs, and spend almost one more hour per week on this chore.

Figure 4.9 illustrates participation rates and average weekly hours spent on four different types of unpaid housework, sorted by sex. The tasks are food preparation; housecleaning; laundry and care of clothing and shoes; and home maintenance, installations, and minor repairs. 93.3% of women and teenage girls prepare food each week, for an average time of 13.7 hours per week, compared to 58.2% of Mexican men and teenage boys preparing food, for an average time of four hours per week.

Figure 4.9. Far more Mexican women cook and clean than men – and for longer hours

Participation rates and hours spent on unremunerated household cooking, cleaning, laundry, and home maintenance in Mexico, by sex, 2014



Note: Population in Mexico aged 12 and older who perform unpaid work for their household in the following categories: food preparation, housecleaning, cleaning and care of clothing and shoes, and home maintenance, installations, and repairs, in hours per week.

Source: INEGI *Encuesta Nacional sobre Uso del Tiempo* (ENUT) 2014.

INEGI estimates that care work (equal to 8.3% of GDP), food preparation (4.6% of GDP), and cleaning and maintenance of the home (3.9%) are the most economically valuable types of unpaid care work in Mexico (INEGI, 2015b). Women are overwhelmingly responsible for these tasks.

4.6. Rural Mexican women do even more unpaid work

Although women throughout Mexico do more childcare and chores than men, the burden on poor rural women is especially heavy. The relative gender balance in national eldercare estimates, for instance, appears to be driven by more egalitarian behaviour in urban areas. There is significant urban-rural variation in the amount of time spent on eldercare, with rural women providing far more eldercare than urban caregivers (male or female) or rural male caregivers. In urban areas (localities with over 10 000 inhabitants), females spend two hours and 15 minutes each day caring for seniors in their household, compared to two hours and four minutes for male caregivers, on average. In contrast, in rural areas (with under 10 000 inhabitants), women spend three hours each day, on average, caring for seniors in their household. Men in rural areas spend two hours and 14 minutes on care (INEGI ENUT, 2014). One factor influencing the extra time rural women devote to eldercare is insufficient social and health supports for seniors in rural areas, though this is also a problem in some urban areas, as well. Women fill these gaps in social protection. Traditional norms around family roles and social expectations that women will care for their elders (who often live in the same home) also drive unequal sharing of unpaid work in rural areas.

Reflecting uneven economic development in Mexico, many poor households do not have access to time-saving water and sewage infrastructure, technology, and appliances. In 2015, 6% of households did not have water available in their home and had to retrieve water from pipes outside the home, wells, rivers, streams, or from other households. A similar share did not have drainage, with rates as high as 16.3% and 23.5% of households without drainage in Guerrero and Oaxaca, respectively (INEGI, *Encuesta Intercensal*, 2015). The OECD estimates that 72% of low-income³ households in Mexico lack basic sanitary facilities, measured as dwellings without an indoor flushing toilet, compared to fewer than 10% of low-income households in Chile and most other OECD countries (Salvi Del Pero et al., 2016).

Time-saving household appliances like refrigerators and washing machines have historically been important for freeing up women's time, increasing women's autonomy, and enabling women to enter into paid jobs. INMUJERES estimates that having a washing machine in the house saves 1.3 hours of labour each week (INMUJERES data provided to OECD). Yet less than half of rural Mexican households use washing machines: 5.5 million households have washing machines available, and 5.6 million do not, in localities of under 10 000 inhabitants. In contrast, three-quarters of urban households have access to a washing machine (INEGI ENUT, 2014).

Box 4.4. Bargaining within families

Is equal partnership at home a desirable outcome for women and families? Why should policy makers care about men and women having equal opportunities – and obligations – to do housework and paid work?

Motivated by Becker's seminal theory of the division of labour in a family (Becker, 1981 and 1985), scholars have debated intra-household bargaining for decades. In Becker's rational choice model, the family is viewed as having a common preference over a single utility function, and family members participate in a "sexual division of labour". To achieve maximum returns for the family unit, Becker argues, one partner (typically the man) specialises in paid labour, while the other partner (typically the woman) specialises in unpaid household labour. Both partners operate under the assumption that there are increasing returns to human capital with specialisation. While these roles could be reversed, women typically specialise in household labour because of a temporary comparative (biological) advantage in caregiving around childbirth. These initial comparative advantages then turn into long-lasting behaviours because people tend to get better at skills the more they use them. Early socialisation reinforces these gendered roles, Becker argues, as parents try to prepare their children for responsibilities they assume will later benefit their offspring in the marriage market.

While it is easy to dismiss Becker's theory as outdated, it does hold considerable predictive power: across OECD countries, men tend to spend more time in paid work, whereas their female partners tend to spend more time on housework and childcare. Yet these differences have attenuated over time, in part because the sexual division of labour is not necessarily efficient, equitable, or socially desirable.

Sen (1987) is one of many theorists to argue that the sexual division of paid and unpaid labour profoundly influences gender inequality. Systematic biases around who is "earning" income reinforce the inferior economic position of women, even though unpaid labour often makes paid work possible. Furthermore, women's "traditional" roles at home can influence their choices if they do enter the labour market, as they are constrained by their specialised skills and socialisation. When women are able to earn income outside of the home, this income contributes to a family's overall affluence and gives women greater bargaining power over distributional decisions at home.

Motivated by such critiques, economists gradually moved away from "common preferences" models like Becker's and developed bargaining models that attempt to account for divergent preferences within the family, as well as how the within-household distribution of income changes when women earn money (see Lundberg and Pollak (1996) for an overview of this literature). Household bargaining models help illustrate the usefulness of women having their own income and spending less time on unpaid labour.

The debate remains relevant today as policy makers consider whether – and how – to level the playing field for women in paid and unpaid work. Given that women's education now matches or outpaces men's in most OECD countries, and that women and men increasingly "assortatively mate" (i.e., partner with someone who shares their socioeconomic status), there are potentially large losses when a woman stays home. The OECD has conducted extensive research on how women's paid employment positively affects macro-level outcomes like economic growth, socioeconomic equality, and fertility rates (see, for instance, OECD, 2012 and 2015a). The stakes in household bargaining are just as high for the economic and social empowerment of individual women, their partners, and their children (Chapter 1).

4.7. Tackling time poverty to promote gender equality in paid and unpaid work

Social norms and culture are strong drivers of participation in paid and unpaid labour, and they also influence hours spent in the workplace. These factors interact to make life difficult for Mexican parents: when paid work hours are long, women have difficulty participating in the labour market and are more likely to stay home and engage in unpaid care work. Fathers, in turn, put in long hours on the job and have less time with their families.

Under these conditions, the “traditional” division of labour continues. Though younger generations show more progressive attitudes, Mexicans continue to have relatively conservative views of women’s work at home and in the labour market (Chapter 2). Breaking down these patterns will require action on multiple fronts: work culture permitting better work-family balance for mothers *and* fathers, and, importantly, men taking equal responsibility at home for childcare and housework.

While the division of household labour is driven by norms, it can still be influenced by policy and labour markets. Countries with high female employment rates, more gender-egalitarian attitudes, widely accessible and affordable early childhood education and care, and out-of-school-hours childcare supports also have more equal sharing of household labour (OECD, 2016e). These social supports enable parents to outsource some care work and combine their own remunerated work with childrearing. In contrast, economic crises and public fiscal consolidation – including cuts in public sector jobs and family benefits – are often offset by women’s added time devoted to unpaid caregiving, the “safety net of last resort” (ILO, 2016). Insufficient public spending on social programmes in Mexico continues to leave women and families without much assistance to combine paid work with family responsibilities, be it childcare (Chapter 3) or care for other dependents, such as elderly relatives or family members with disabilities.

The following policy suggestions are motivated by the OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Education, Employment, and Entrepreneurship (2013) and the OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life (2015). Paid leave and early childhood education and care are also important work-life balance measures (see Chapter 3).

- ***Encourage flexible work arrangements and the short-term use of part-time work among women and men.*** The private and public sectors have an integral role to play in promoting gender equality and work-life balance. In the workplace, human resource options like flexible work hours, the temporary use of part-time work for family reasons, systems to monitor hours worked, and remote work can help women and men combine family responsibilities with paid work (OECD, 2016e). These provisions are especially relevant in countries with long work hours, like Mexico, where weekly work hours are longer, on average, in formal jobs than informal jobs (OECD calculations of ENIGH, 2015).

Managers should enable (rather than penalise) parents who take leave or request flexible hours to care for family members. Even when fathers do want to play a greater role in caring for their children, it can be difficult to do so in a culture where workplace flexibility around caregiving is frowned upon. It is crucial that both women and men have access to these arrangements. Giving men the option to change their work schedule or reduce their hours levels the playing field, by making men comparably “risky” to employers at the time of hiring, relative to women. More importantly, men also deserve to spend time with their children – including hours in care work. Senior management in all sectors must set a good example by ending the workday at a reasonable hour.

There are obviously costs associated with reduced hours, flexible work arrangements, and paid leave, as employers may have to temporarily replace workers or shift the workload to other employees (Adema et al., 2015). However, work-life balance measures have been found to enhance employee loyalty, productivity, and morale, and employee retention (Chapter 3).

The German Government offers some examples of how to promote equal sharing in paid and unpaid work. Germany has proposed several measures targeting equal sharing – including public incentives for both parents to reduce their work hours when children are young – and has implemented a legal right for both mothers and fathers to reduce working hours for family reasons (OECD, 2016e). Mexico should consider such measures, but do so with the goal of promoting equal take-up between men and women.

The Mexican Secretariat of Labour and Social Welfare (STPS, *Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social*) has sought to encourage companies to improve their employees' work-life balance by offering public recognition of good practice. Since 2006, the STPS has certified companies that are committed to family-friendly workplace policies with the “Family-Friendly Company Distinction” (DEFER, *Distintivo Empresa Familiarmente Responsable*). Workplaces interested in obtaining the certificate must demonstrate good labour practice in three areas: the reconciliation of work and family life, equality of opportunity, and the prevention of workplace violence and sexual harassment (STPS, 2015). In 2015, 431 workplaces were awarded the DEFER, covering 82 696 workers (28 954 of which were women). Although this measure is a light touch, it represents federal recognition of the issue and may encourage more women to apply to these organisations. The 2015 publication of the *Norma Mexicana NMX-R-025-SCFI-2015 en Igualdad Laboral y No Discriminación* (Mexican Standards for Labour Equality and Non-Discrimination) offers guidelines for additional evaluation and certification of equal employment opportunities and anti-discrimination practices in the workplace, as well as compliance with national and international laws on employment discrimination (*Secretaría de Economía de México*, 2015).

The public sector in Mexico City introduced several important work-life balance policies in 2015. In an attempt to reconcile work and family life and encourage gender equality, the Government of Mexico City mandated a maximum 40-hour work-week for public sector workers, as well as early closings on two Fridays of the month in city offices that provide customer services. Working mothers are entitled to an extension of paid childbirth-related leave and a fixed (18:00) end of the workday when children are in school; these measures should be extended to fathers, as well. Both mothers and fathers get priority in scheduling vacation or personal days around school schedules for children younger than upper-secondary school age (*Administración Pública del Distrito Federal*, 2015). Mexico City must ensure that managers follow these rules in practice.

There is, however, a caveat to these measures: some of the child-related benefits are targeted at mothers only, rather than mothers *and* fathers. This perpetuates the expectation by society and employers that mothers will do the majority of care work. Nevertheless, despite inadequately supporting fathers, the public sector model in Mexico City presents an affordable and workable example that could be replicated and improved upon elsewhere.

Work-life balance measures are also important for achieving gender-balance in decision-making positions, which typically require long and unpredictable working hours. The public sector can serve as a role-model employer by mainstreaming work-life balance and family-friendly work practices at the top level of public institutions through measures such as flexi-time, work sharing, teleworking, providing incentives for men to take available care leave, and flexible work

entitlements. Part-time employment solutions, teleworking, and compressed work weeks are not an option within the general employment framework of Mexico's public service. Flexible start times and working hours are sometimes used, but typically only by unionised staff who have this right outlined within their collective bargaining agreement.

- **Raise awareness of gender stereotypes to encourage men and women to share paid and unpaid work more equally.** Changing behaviours is difficult, but governments can influence norms about the division of paid and unpaid labour through data dissemination and awareness-raising. Mexico is a regional and an OECD leader in regularly financing and administering time-use surveys.⁴ This is reflected in the quantity of surveys it has conducted and in its dissemination strategies. Mexico has specialists in INMUJERES who work with academics to analyse time use data collected in representative surveys by INEGI, such as ENUT. Unlike many other countries, Mexico has a mass communication strategy on time use, as well as awareness-raising campaigns highlighting the unpaid work burden women face (Aguirre and Ferrari, 2013).

Although public awareness of time-use issues remains low, the Mexican Government has tried to link results from time-use surveys to public policy, for example by measuring household activities among recipients and non-recipients of *Prospera*. This reflects the line of action in PROIGUALDAD calling for the development of statistical instruments to recognise women's paid and unpaid economic activities, their relation to domestic life and time use, and their impact on the economy, family well-being, society, and government tax revenue (Aguirre and Ferrari, 2013). Government ministries should co-operate with INMUJERES in incorporating the value of time – in unpaid work, paid work, and transportation – into the design of public policies and public employment.

Results from the 2016 OECD Questionnaire on Gender Equality in Mexican States (Chapter 1) reinforce the need to change attitudes at home. The questionnaire sent to Women's Institutes in Federal Entities (*Instancias de las Mujeres en las Entidades Federativas*) asked, "What are the most effective ways to encourage boys' and men's participation in unpaid caregiving activities?" Nine out of ten responding institutes said changing boys' and men's attitudes is an effective way to encourage a more equal division of unpaid work, and seven ranked it as most important (Figure 4.10).

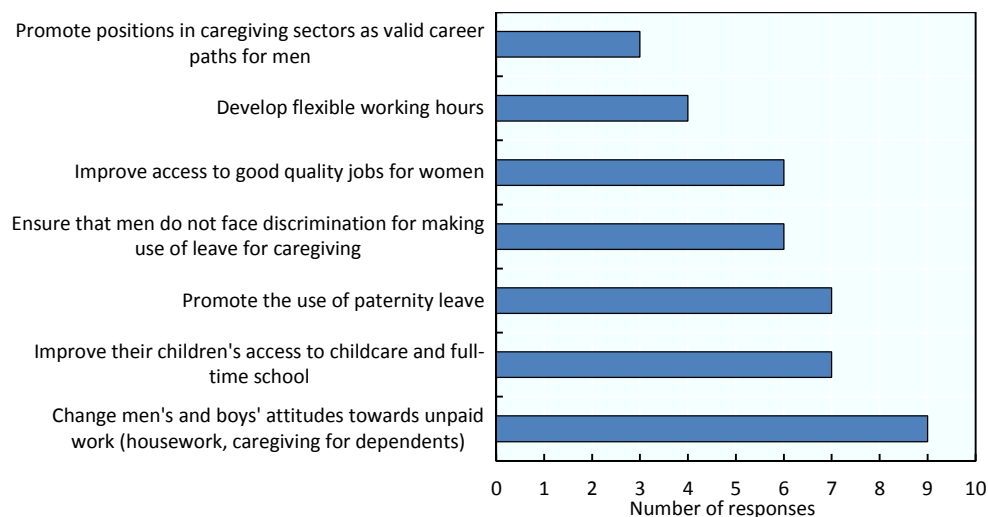
- **Invest in institutions, infrastructure and technology that free women's time.** Long hours spent on unpaid housework are partly related to uneven development. Women spend long hours each week on tasks that would be greatly facilitated with modern infrastructure and appliances, particularly in rural and underprivileged areas. Ensuring that every home in Mexico has access to water and sewage infrastructure would go a long way towards reducing the hours low-income women spend carrying water to their homes every week. Technology like washing machines also reduces housework hours (Section 4.6).

In line with its National Inclusion Strategy (*Estrategia Nacional de Inclusión*), SEDESOL and the Government of the State of Mexico (*Estado de Mexico*) recently delivered more than 38 000 modern gas stoves to Mexican homes that had been cooking with firewood or coal (SEDESOL, 2016). Although the stated purpose of this programme is to improve health, by getting families away from breathing wood or coal smoke, these kinds of measures in underserved communities may also have

pay-offs in reducing unpaid work hours. Future research should investigate the extent to which the introduction of new infrastructure and appliances is associated with a reduction in women’s hours spent on unpaid work and, ideally, an increase women’s hours spent in paid work – a necessary tool for getting families out of poverty.

Figure 4.10. More equal caregiving requires changing men’s attitudes at home

Distribution of state responses to the question, “What are the most effective ways to encourage boys’ and men’s participation in unpaid caregiving activities?”



Note: *Instancias de las Mujeres en las Entidades Federativas* were asked to rank the five most important strategies for encouraging boys’ and men’s participation in unpaid caregiving. Responding states included Ciudad de Mexico, Baja California Sur, Campeche, Durango, Sinaloa, Hidalgo, Puebla, Colima, Jalisco, and Estado de Mexico.

Source: OECD QGEMS (2016).

Measures aimed at keeping children in school longer would also help. This could include improving access to good quality childcare (Chapter 3); increasing the number of hours young children can spend in preschool, as most programmes are currently half-day; introducing after-school programmes for school-age children, as is common practice in Nordic countries; and ensuring that the mandated length of full-day primary and secondary school is respected in practice by all schools and teachers.

All of these measures should be embedded in broader strategies to improve the coverage and efficiency of social protection in Mexico.

Notes

1. For a more comprehensive discussion of measures to reduce informality, see OECD (2015a), OECD (2015b), and OECD (2016a).
2. Measured across countries with available data on “usual” hours worked each week in the main job.
3. Low-income is defined in Salvi Del Pero et al. (2015) as equivalised income below 50% of median household income.
4. Although Mexico has harmonised its time-use surveys with other Latin American countries and runs a relatively frequent time use survey, some issues remain in the retrospective manner in which data are collected, compared to other OECD countries. For a more comprehensive discussion of this issue, see Miranda (2011).

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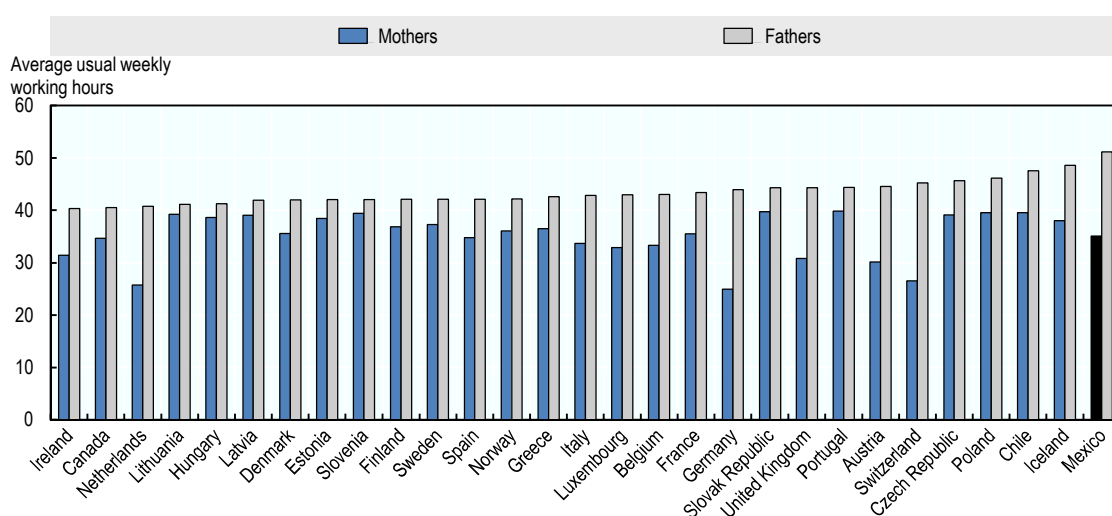
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Annex 4.A1

Distribution of mothers' and fathers' working hours

Figure 4.A1.1. Mexico has a large gender gap in average weekly working hours of mothers and fathers

Average usual weekly working hours of mothers and fathers with at least one child under 15, in couples in which the female partner is aged 25 to 45, 2012



1. Usual working hours of the (self-)employed for European countries, actual hours worked for Chile and Mexico. Data refer to total hours worked in all jobs, except for Chile where only hours worked in the main job are considered.

2. Data for Canada refer to 2011, for Chile to 2013, for Mexico to 2014, and for the United States to 2014.

Source: OECD calculations based on Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID) 2011 for Canada, *Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional* (CASEN) 2013 for Chile, European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU SILC) 2012 for European countries, *Encuesta Nacional de Ingresos y Gastos de los Hogares* (ENIGH) 2014 for Mexico.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933423365>



From:
Building an Inclusive Mexico
Policies and Good Governance for Gender Equality

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264265493-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2017), "Time poverty, informal work and women's jobs in Mexico", in *Building an Inclusive Mexico: Policies and Good Governance for Gender Equality*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264265493-8-en>

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