



# Latindadd

Red Latinoamericana por Justicia Económica y Social



## Atlas of vulnerabilities: Women in Latin America and the Caribbean facing the pandemic

### Edited by:

**Latin American Network for Economic and Social Justice - Latindadd**

Jr. Mariscal Miller 2622, Lince, Lima – Perú Phone:

(51)(1)711-1914

[latindadd@latindadd.org](mailto:latindadd@latindadd.org)

[www.latindadd.org](http://www.latindadd.org)

### Elaboration:

Verónica Serafini

### Comments and contributions:

Daniela Berdeja

### Design and layout:

José Luis Mancilla - Latindadd

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## Atlas of Vulnerabilities: Women in Latin America and the Caribbean facing the pandemic

Vulnerability is a universal human condition linked, on the one hand, to an existence that faces suffering, illness, deterioration, dependency, and death; on the other hand, to social sources derived from poverty, violence, marginalization or subordination.

People are interdependent beings and face situations where they can not defend themselves. The sense of justice (or lack of justice) lies in the fact that, due to their vulnerability in any of its forms, people fall below the minimum capacities to secure a dignified life, and cannot make use of opportunities or have obstacles to achieving results.

Human beings, both by virtue of their own bodies, as well as of a life in community and the way in which they construct the sense of their interdependence within popular consciousness, are vulnerable; are exposed to physical illness, injury, disability, and death; and depend on the care of others for long periods of their lives. As social and affective beings, they are emotionally and psychologically vulnerable: to loss and pain, to neglect, abuse and lack of care, to rejection, ostracism and humiliation. As sociopolitical beings, they are vulnerable to exploitation, manipulation, oppression, political violence and abuse of rights. The environment or climate change also make people vulnerable.

The economic context determined by the processes of globalization, privatization and economic liberalization, the volatility of growth, the flexible, precarious and informal labor markets, as well as the lack of coverage and poor quality of basic services constitute structural limitations, as well as the cultural patterns, the invisibility or stigmatization of certain conditions or groups and the social construction of "normality".

This way, vulnerability becomes a bodily, emotional, psychological and affective life condition; while it is universal and constant, it is particular and varies according to context and time.

Despite the relevance of the different types of vulnerabilities in people, they have received little attention from economic policies, unlike the importance that has been given to vulnerabilities at the macro level. A central objective for economic policy has been to minimize those phenomena that generate vulnerability, reduce economic predictability and mitigate their effects.

Macro stability, as a counterpart to a condition of vulnerability, has always been at the center of economic policies. The control of inflation, the reduction of the volatility of the exchange rate, the leverage of the financial system in times of crisis, and the control of the public deficit have always been priorities.

The structural adjustment policies derived from the Washington Consensus and the

“austerity” policies implemented as of 2008 are clear examples of the aforementioned priority, even at the cost of making people's lives more vulnerable. In other words, the objectives of stability and macro predictability were achieved at the cost of higher levels of vulnerability of people, at the micro level.

It is enough to analyze the negative impact that structural adjustment or austerity policies had on social protection policies, one of the main policies aimed at reducing people's risks and vulnerabilities.

During the last 20 years, the economic growth of the Latin American region has been high, placing 85% of the countries as upper middle and high income measured by GDP per person.

Despite this important achievement, inequalities and precarious livelihoods persist for most individuals and families. This Atlas seeks to account for the limitation of indicators related to the growth of production such as GDP or National Income to show living conditions. In this case, the situation of women and gender inequalities are analyzed in particular.

In all the countries of the region, with the exception of Barbados, women are disadvantaged in the labor market, particularly in unemployment. It is interesting to note that this problem affects all countries, regardless of their level of GDP per capita, such as Costa Rica, Uruguay or Honduras.

About a third of Latin American women do not have their own income, which makes them dependent on another person for their entire lives. In El Salvador, Honduras and Ecuador this situation affects 40.9%, 43.5% and 34.40% of women, respectively.

Women are overrepresented in poor households. In 2019, in countries such as the Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Chile, for every 100 men living in poor households, there were more than 130 women in a similar situation.

Note that women's vulnerabilities, regardless of economic performance, persist even in countries that top the list in terms of GDP per capita in the region, such as Uruguay, Chile, and Costa Rica.

**Indicators of Vulnerability in the gender dimension  
2018-2019**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Unemployment gap</b>	<b>Femininity of poverty</b>	<b>Women without own income (%)</b>
Argentina	1.50	115.00	16.80
Barbados	-2.26	----	----
Belice	7.71	----	----
Bolivia	1.00	112.90	31.30
Brazil	3.90	112.60	23.70
Chile	1.20	----	----
Colombia	4.90	116.90	28.60
Costa Rica	5.90	125.90	33.30
Cuba	----	----	----
Dominican Republic	5.40	138.50	18.10
Ecuador	1.40	116.10	34.40
El Salvador	0.40	108.80	40.90
Guatemala	1.10	----	----
Haiti	----	----	----



Honduras	3.90	102.00	43.50
Jamaica	4.11	----	----
Mexico	0.00	110.0	25.50
Nicaragua	----	----	----
Panama	1.80	129.3	24.00
Paraguay	2.90	119.70	27.70
Peru	0.60	113.60	23.10
Trinidad and Tobago	----	----	----
Uruguay	3.40	136.80	13.20
Venezuela	----	----	----

Source: Atlas of Vulnerabilities. On [www.atlasdevulnerabilidades.org](http://www.atlasdevulnerabilidades.org)

Post-COVID-19 economic recovery requires putting people and their well-being at the center of attention. A return to “normality” and looking at GDP as an indicator of recovery will not mean a successful situation, even less so in a context of public deficit, external debt and low and inequitable tax collection, problems that pre-existed the pandemic.

Low tax collections, together with unfair tax structures due to the high weight of indirect taxes, prevented financing the policies that women require to guarantee their rights, especially those of social protection, precisely the most necessary during the pandemic, but they also generated a public deficit that was translated into indebtedness, a situation aggravated by the pandemic.

Recent history has shown that this scenario is extremely risky for women, since the measures to reduce the public deficit and guarantee the sustainability of the debt translated into budget cuts and the retraction of the State. A report published by LATINDADD shows the harmful effects that these measures have had on health services, food security and paid work, among others. The final result has been the loss or precariousness of employment and the increase in unpaid work for women, reducing their economic, social and political opportunities.

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1 [https://www.alainet.org/sites/default/files/alem\\_548.pdf](https://www.alainet.org/sites/default/files/alem_548.pdf)

2 <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1j0JzAEHFynAIX1FioE7GsWvScsfjJ1U9/view>

3 <http://www.latindadd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Mujeres-deuda-y-desigualdad-Final-1.pdf>

**Fiscal indicators of vulnerability with direct effects on women  
2018-2019**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Fiscal balance/GDP</b>	<b>Debt/ GDP</b>	<b>Tax revenue / GDP</b>
Argentina	-3,75	88,80	28,65
Barbados	3,70	118,00	33,15
Belice	-4,51	91,00	32,37
Bolivia	-6,91	40,38	24,70
Brazil	-5,70	74,30	33,10
Chile	-2,86	28,20	20,66
Colombia	-2,45	48,60	19,68
Costa Rica	-6,72	56,50	23,58
Cuba	----	----	42,02
Dominican Republic	-2,12	39,60	13,54
Ecuador	-4,96	48,20	20,11
El Salvador	-1,62	48,78	20,83

Guatemala	-2,24	25,80	13,06
Haiti	----	47,00	----
Honduras	-2,47	48,90	21,90
Jamaica	0,91	92,40	28,55
Mexico	-1,66	36,10	16,47
Nicaragua	0,26	42,29	25,88
Panama	-4,13	46,40	14,06
Paraguay	-2,81	19,60	13,87
Peru	-1,41	24,76	16,62
Trinidad and Tobago	-2,56	61,20	23,69
Uruguay	-2,80	60,80	29,03
Venezuela	----	----	----

Source: Atlas of Vulnerabilities. On [www.atlasdevulnerabilidades.org](http://www.atlasdevulnerabilidades.org)

The economic “success” prior to the pandemic did not contribute enough to the health and social protection systems, as seen during the waves of contagion throughout the region. Nor did it substantially reduce inequalities, including gender. The economic subordination of women persists, as well as their greater incidence in households in a situation of poverty and unemployment.

For this reason, it is necessary to discuss and agree on growth models that have an impact on development and the reduction of inequalities. This debate must take place within the framework of empirical evidence that goes beyond GDP, placing the reduction of vulnerabilities and inequalities at the center.



