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**Title of the paper: Gender and ethnic labor discrimination in Mexico**

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**Abstract (150 words):**

Discrimination against women impedes social cohesion of the highly unequal Mexican Society. It manifests across the three Mexican ethnic groups: twenty-three million Indigenous population, two and a half millions Afro-descendants and the 101 million remaining. Women's segregation differs between the ethnic groups in scope and intensity, with greater depth for Indigenous and afro-descendant women especially in political and economic participation. The pervasiveness of gender bigotry emerges from the interplay between original cultures and the institutions brought by the conquerors, maintained in the colonial era, and in the political constitutions of all Latin American.

**Paper (2000 words without references)**

**The specificity of gender discrimination**

Mexican women face unabated inequality despite achievements of the last seven decades in the legal recognition of their political, social, cultural, collective and territorial rights, the armed forces and universities open to women and in several Mexican states, abortion has been decriminalized. So why does gender discrimination still fracture Mexican population?

This study will address one of the many features of women inequality: unfairness in employment, evident in wage inequality regularly attributed to gaps in labor productivity

although it does not explain around the 30% of the wage gap due to the institutions that regulate socio-economic life. Yet neoclassical economics theoretical frameworks and methods do not make room for the mechanisms explaining discrimination in economic policy decision-making. Classical and neoclassical economic theory idolizes the selfish *economic man* and hides the contribution of women to the advantages the profit maximizer Robinson Crusoe, the model hero of individual entrepreneurship. To serve the economic man's self-directed interests the *economic woman* has to be altruistic, generous... Since all her decisions and their consequences arise from this natural rationality, her lower social status, income and education can be attributed to the free acceptance of this rationality, not to the rules of the market (May, 2002; Braunstein et al., 2020). If society relegates women to certain activities, their preferences respond to the possibilities; it is a prior discrimination degrading women's labor contribution (England, 1993).

For that, feminist economic theory rejects positivism for which there is no evidence of reality, only proof of the action of natural laws such as the naturally different rationality of women. Neoclassical economics conceive as a historical fact that the division of the economy in public and private spheres. Since the economic man has always managed the public sphere, orthodoxy claims that his natural function is to set the agenda that determines power, wealth and the distribution of income, generating an unequal society (May, 2002; Braunstein et al., 2020).

### **Indigenous and Afro-descendant population by gender**

According to the *Censo de Población y Vivienda 2020*, the ethnic composition of the 125.5 million Mexican population is 19.4 % indigenous persons, 2% of Afro descendants and 80.4% who do not consider themselves Indigenous or Afro-descendant. In all three population groups and in the total population, women account for 2.5% greater proportion (Table 1).

***Table 1. Ethnic and Gender Composition of the total Mexican population***

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

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

## **Employment a driver perpetuating gender prejudices**

Employment is one point in the life's history of discrimination, which begins at birth, continues in food and nourishment, in education and health, in political and legal decision-making processes, and economic activities. It persists in spite policies aimed at eliminating labor discrimination because employers seek to minimize selection processes complexities creating "statistical discrimination or at the discretion of the employers" (ILO, 2003, 2007 and 2011; OECD, 2008). Employers gauge the performance of a job applicant, according to "characteristics that are easy to observe, such as race, sex, gender or age, assuming that members of certain collectives will have below-average performance" (ILO, 2003, p.68).

In Mexico, there is no *direct or formal employment discrimination* enacted by discriminatory laws, but there is *indirect employment discrimination* or "... apparently impartial provisions and practices detrimental to a large number of members of a specific group" (ILO, 2003, p. 22). If due account of the situation of certain social groups or categories of workers and the places where they live, discrimination occurs (ILO, 2003; Ecosoc, 2009; Puyana and Horbath, 2019).

Inequality in the ownership of land, financial resources, education, health, food and place of residence, restrict women's social, political and labor participation and reduces economic growth. Low economic expansion reduces the income of the 80% of the households whose labor income is their larger income (Stewart, 2013; Puyana and Horbath, 2019; Klasen and Lamanna., 2009). Indirect employment discrimination pervades the public and private spheres in various forms that constitute the "glass ceiling" of social and labor gender discrimination (Ecosoc, 2009).

Multiple discrimination exists in cultural patterns that, like the racialization of beauty, draw a subtle connection between physical attributes and character and morality, placing an entire community or gender in a lower position on the social scale. To move up the social ladder it is essential to know how to dress, to speak, how to behave, what to eat (Moreno, 2015; May, 2002). Prejudices evident in the statements of a former president of *Comisión de Derechos Humanos* who, in rejecting the request of some Indigenous women for better paid work, advised them to stick to domestic work, making handicrafts, and growing prickly pears (Espinosa, 2016).

Education is a key element for people's development and unequal access to education

impairs effective participation in productive activities. Education figures as the main factor determining labor inclusion (OECD, 2019; Klasen and Lamanna, 2009). The most damaging factor is illiteracy, as it devalues individuals, even in their own social environment (Martínez and Fernández, 2010; Narro and Moctezuma, 2012). In Mexico, indigenous female illiteracy is 1.3 times that of Indigenous men, and double that of non-Indigenous and of Afro-descendant women. A similar situation emerges in the level of schooling and other education indicators leading to a lower participation in undergraduate or graduate studies (Table 2). Therefore, it is no wonder that the female working conditions are extremely unequal.

**Table 2. Educational characteristics by ethnic group and gender**

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

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

The distribution of economic activity by gender shows patterns in the allocation of economic and reproductive labor. The term “reproductive labor” refers to family care-giving and domestic housework, “whose main characteristics are not having remuneration through a salary, that it is an eminently female job and that it remains invisible even to those who carry it out” (Brunet and Santamaría, 2016, p. 67). Reproductive work which classical and neoclassical economic theory considers, non-productive work constitutes the core of gender inequalities (Brunet and Santamaría, 2016; May, 2002 Espino and de los Santos, 2019, p. 5).

The 2020 Mexican Census reveals marked differences by gender, with the higher participation rate, larger proportion of male employee, seeking for a job and so on (Table 3). The larger differences are in the proportion of persons whose main occupation is carrying out household tasks. While 2 per cent of men reported household tasks as their main occupation, the proportion of women is 37 per cent, reaching 45 per cent for Indigenous women. A similar inequality exists in employment status by gender and ethnicity (Table 3): More women are self-employee, or unpaid workers, both associated with a lower demand for women's labor and with work options, especially for Indigenous women.

**Table 3. Employment status and type of job by ethnic group, 12 years and older**  
*Percent by employment status and type of job*

Indicator	Not self-identified as Indigenous or Afro-descendant			Self-identified as Indigenous			Self-identified as Afro-descendant		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
<b>Employment status</b>									
Employed	52.3%	67.1%	38.6%	51.2%	69.0%	34.7%	57.0%	71.6%	42.8%
Looking for work	1.9%	2.9%	0.9%	1.7%	2.8%	0.6%	1.7%	2.5%	0.9%
Homemaker	20.0%	1.5%	37.1%	24.5%	2.0%	45.4%	19.3%	1.8%	36.2%
<b>Type of job</b>									
Paid worker	73.9%	74.1%	73.5%	64.0%	65.1%	62.1%	69.9%	71.4%	67.5%
Supervisor or employer	3.3%	3.7%	2.7%	2.2%	2.3%	2.1%	3.9%	4.1%	3.4%
Self-employed	20.4%	19.9%	21.1%	25.5%	23.7%	28.7%	22.2%	20.5%	25.0%

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

### **Conclusions**

The analysis of this paper confirms the existence discrimination affecting Mexican women or the 56% of the country's population. It spreads within and between the three Mexican population groups: Indigenous population, Afro-descendant community, and the rest of Mexicans despite policies aiming to reduce or to control. Both qualitative and quantitative exploration yield evidence of the existence of gender gaps that persist in each social group in labor participation as well as in the political area and in societal and cultural status.

The persistence of greater women inequality in economic sphere points to a hierarchical social structure that excludes women from all population groups from benefits and opportunities of social and economic development. By doing so, it makes more difficult, if not impossible, to reduce overall inequality.

Like all discrimination, gender bigotry affects the foundations of society and impedes its development, because the larger the disadvantage population is, the more difficult is to speed out economic growth and to reduce income and wealth concentration. Today, women still face structural disadvantages, as they did centuries ago, that are rooted in theoretical conceptions that prevail over economic and rational concepts and fail to recognize women's contribution in all spheres of society. If society does not promote substantive equality that would eliminate gender inequality in all areas, its traditional repressive character would

prevail.

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