

Women's economic autonomy and international trade: evidence from Latin America and the Caribbean



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**WOMEN AND TRADE TRAINING PROGRAMME
WTO CHAIRS AMERICAS**

MODULE 1

ECLAC

Women's Economic Autonomy and International Trade: Dimensions and Questions for Analysis



Women workers

- Does trade openness lead to improvements or to adversely effects in terms of participation and labor segregation, quality of employment and women's wages?
- Which sectors are expanding or contracting due to a change in trade policy?
- Are gender gaps widening or narrowing?



Women business owners and entrepreneurs

- Does trade openness expand opportunities for women entrepreneurs?
- Are the barriers that women entrepreneurs face to fully participate in international trade addressed?
- Does trade openness contribute to widen or reduce gender gaps?



Women and unpaid and care work

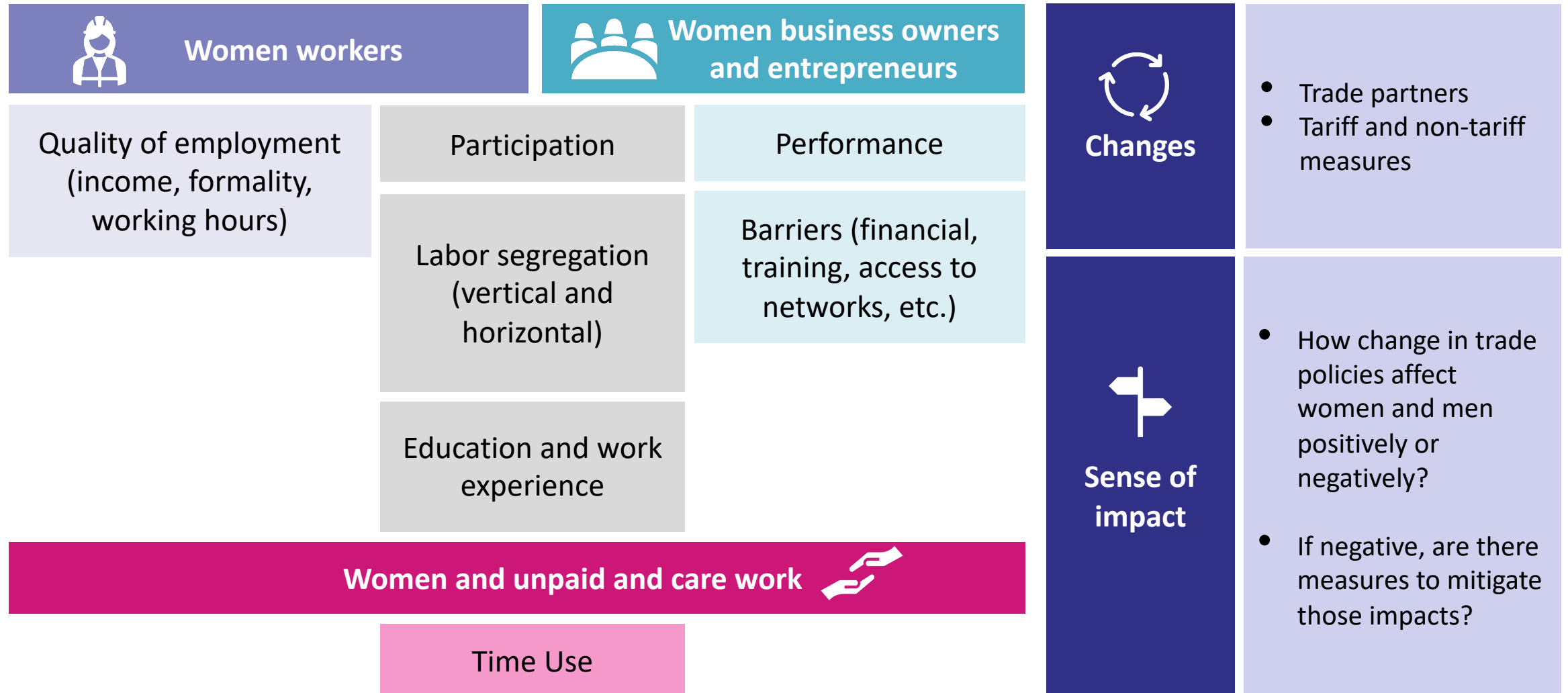
- How does trade openness affect the total workload of men and women?
- How women participating in international trade address the tension between paid and unpaid work?



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Women's Economic Autonomy and International Trade: Dimensions for analysis



COVID-19 crisis deepens the structural challenges to achieve gender equality in the region and threatens women's autonomy

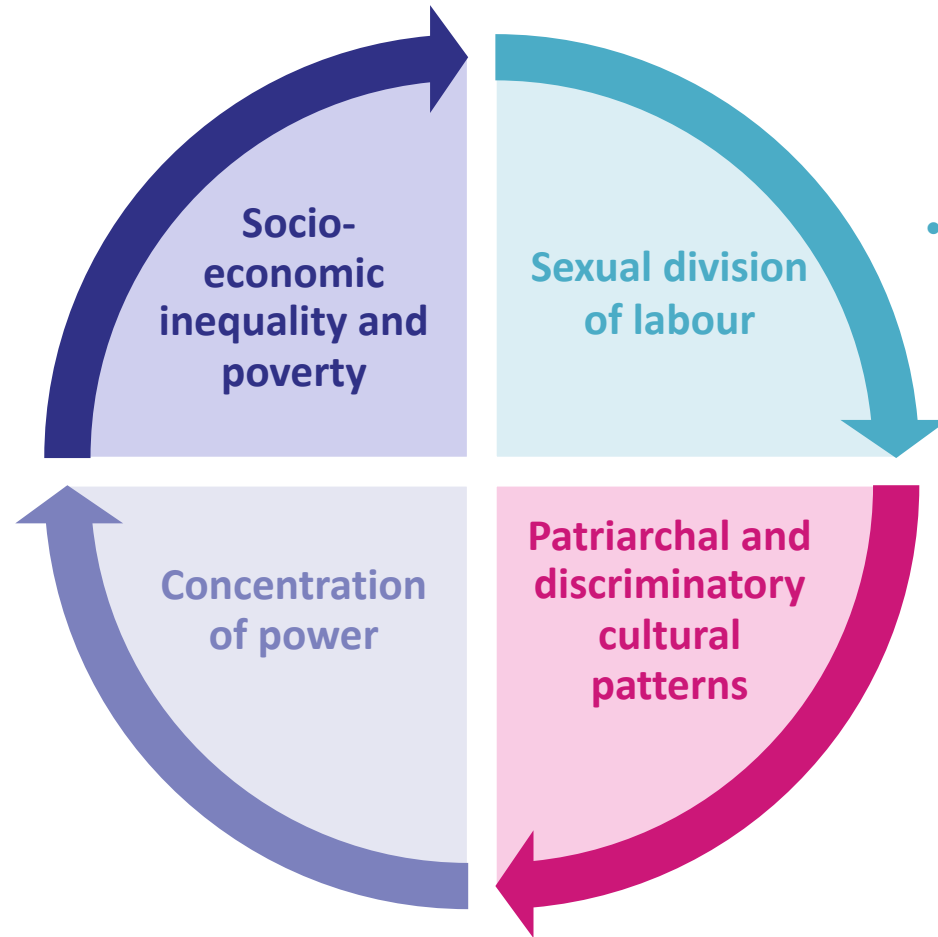
2020

GDP LAC: -6,8%
(LA -6,8 % and
Caribbean -7,7).

Goods exports:
-10%

Goods imports:
-16%

- Women concentrated in low-skilled sectors and MSMEs hardest hit by the crisis as part of low diversified productive structures: risk of lock in path of primarization without investment and structural change.
- 4 in 10 women do not have internet access and can't afford connectivity in a context of digital platforms boom.



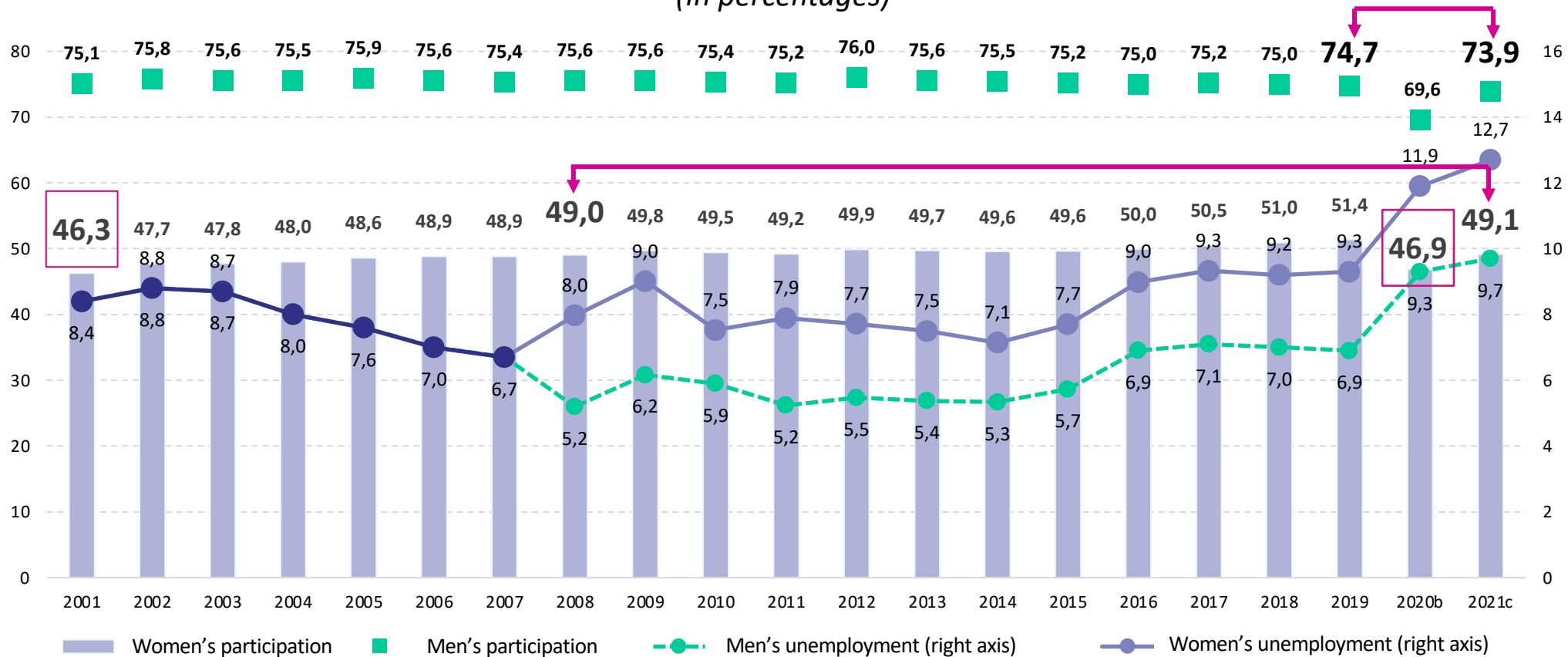
- Women spend triple the amount of time in unpaid care as men: increased burden due to COVID-19.
- Afro-descendent women receive an income equivalent to 57% of that received by non-Afro-descendent men.

They are at the root of the unsustainability of the dominant development style.



Trade is not neutral to the gender inequalities present in the economies: Historical setback and unequal recovery for women and men in labour markets

Latin America and the Caribbean (weighted average of 24 countries^a): evolution of labour participation rate and unemployment rate, by sex, 2003-2021
(In percentages)



2020
18 years of decline in women's participation in the labor market

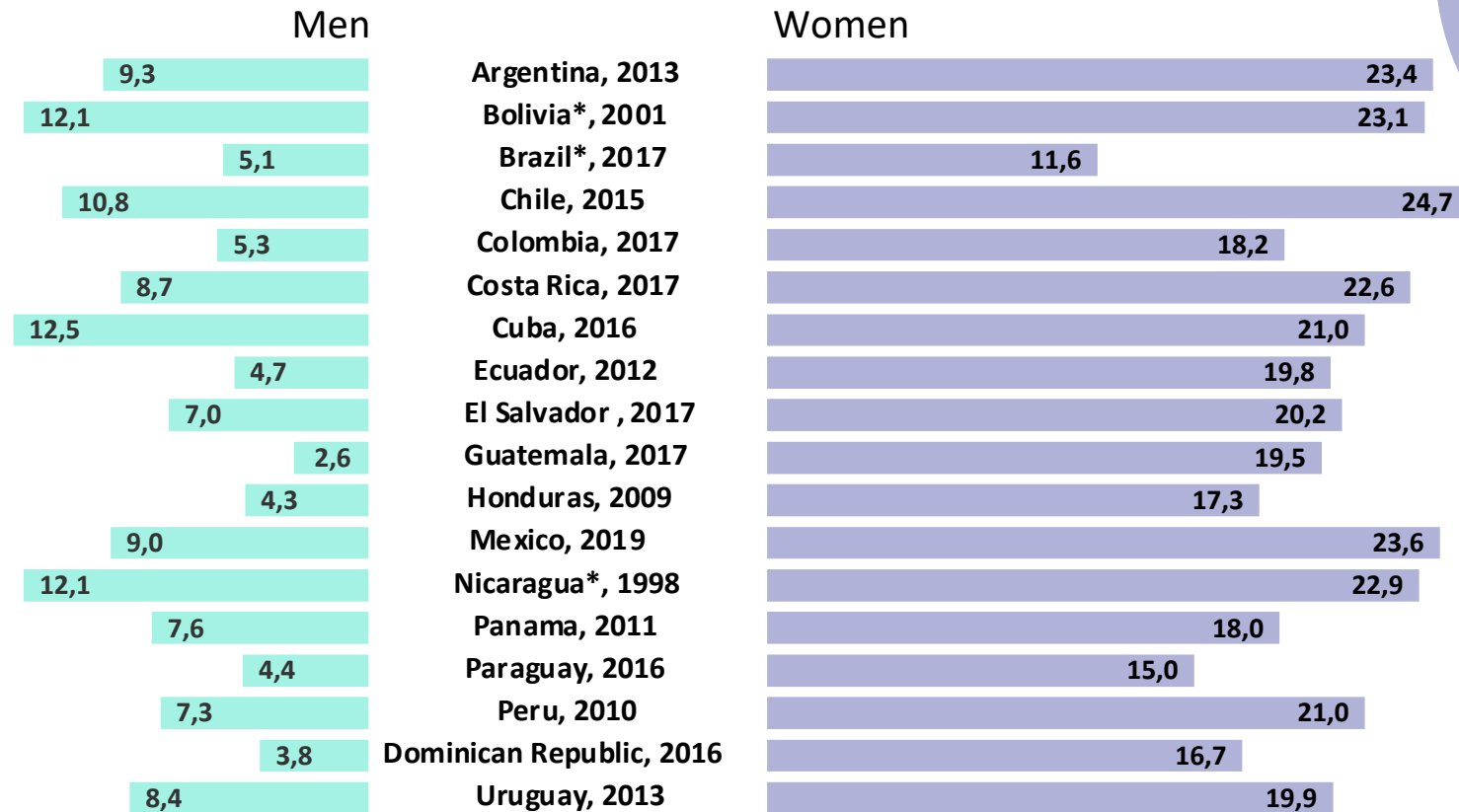
2021
Men return to a labor participation like the one before the crisis, **women at the level of 2008**

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of official figures for the countries and projections. a Weighted average of Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), except for the year 2019 that does not include Venezuela. b Estimates for 2020 were made from the information provided by the following countries: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Dominican Republic and Uruguay. c Projected values for 2021.



Gender inequality is also manifested in the distribution of time use and limits women's autonomy

Latin America (18 countries): time spent on unpaid housework and care, by sex and type of unpaid work, latest year available (SDG indicator 5.4.1)
(In percentages)



In the region, women spend more than three times as much time on unpaid work as men.



Gender inequality is a structural feature of the region that is reinforced by structural heterogeneity

South America

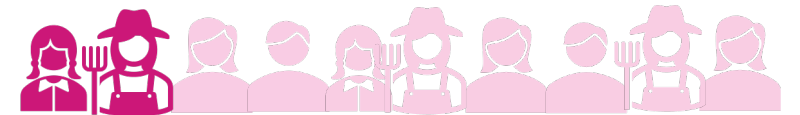
Trade specialization pattern intensive in natural resources generates little employment and to a lesser extent for women



1 out of 10 women are employed in export sectors

Mexico and Central America

Manufacturing for export is more employment-intensive for women, but concentrated in low-tech sectors with persistent wage gaps



2 out of 10 women are employed in export sectors

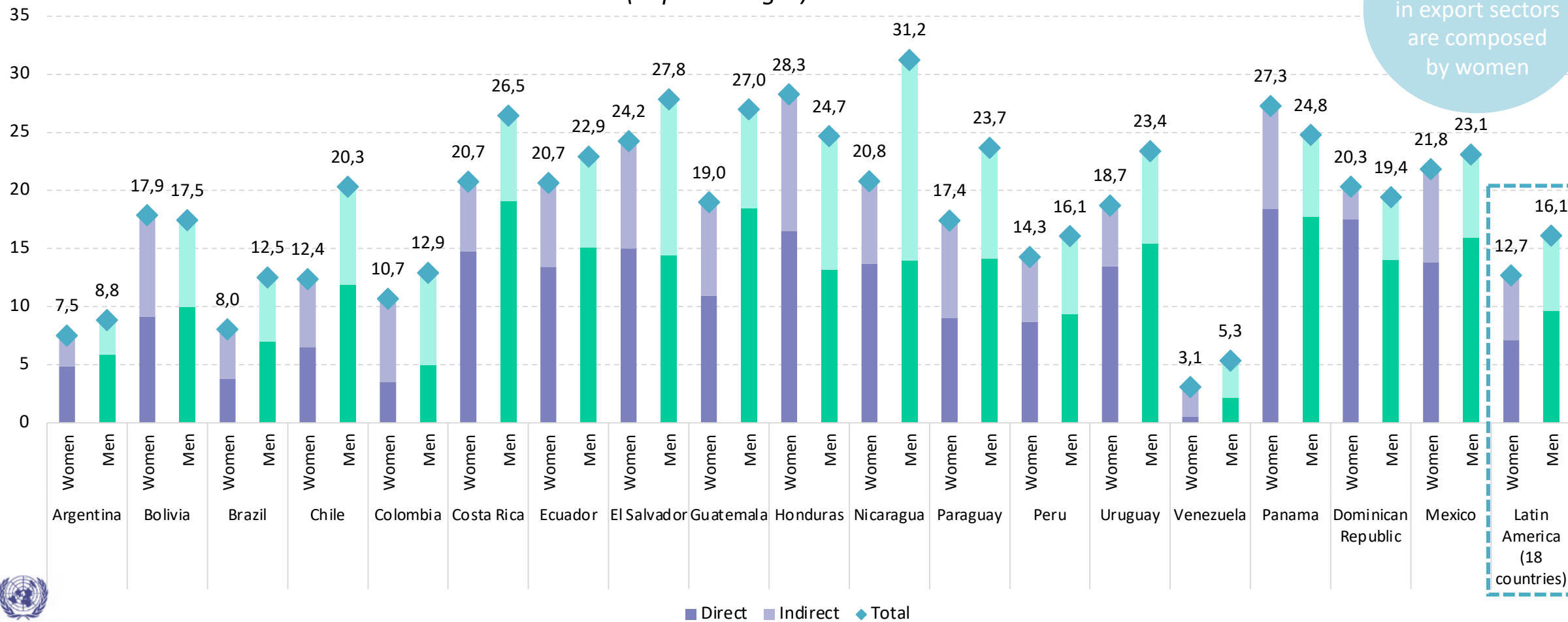
Productive and trade specialization

Labor gender segregation



Trade specialization has effects on the quantity of women's export-related employment

Latin America (18 countries): direct and indirect export-sector employment as a share of total employment, by sex, 2018
(In percentages)



12.7% of women's employment are in export sectors

37.3% of employment in export sectors are composed by women



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) on the basis of the Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG) and output tables of the countries.

South America: participation of women in employment in export sectors

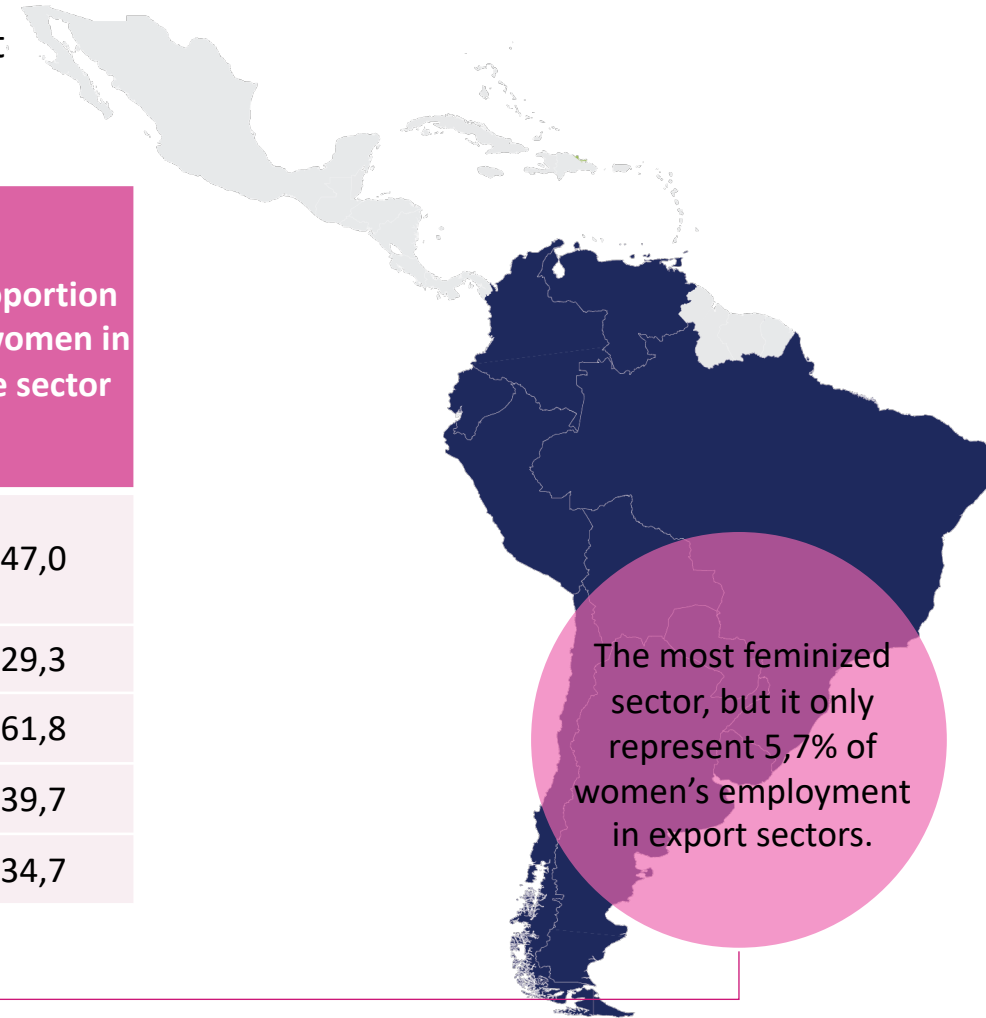
South America (9 countries): employment in export sector by sex, according to selected sectors
(In percentages)

Selected sectors	Distribution of the employed population in export employment by sex and according to sector		Proportion of women in the sector
	Men	Women	
Services	16,2	25,5	47,0
Agriculture and Livestock	25,4	18,7	29,3
Textiles and clothing	2,0	5,7	61,8
Chemistry and Pharmacy	3,9	4,5	39,7
Vehicles	3,0	2,8	34,7

Concentrates most of the women's employment in export sectors.

Dynamic sectors: there are not job-intensive and men are overrepresented in the sector.

The most feminized sector, but it only represent 5,7% of women's employment in export sectors.

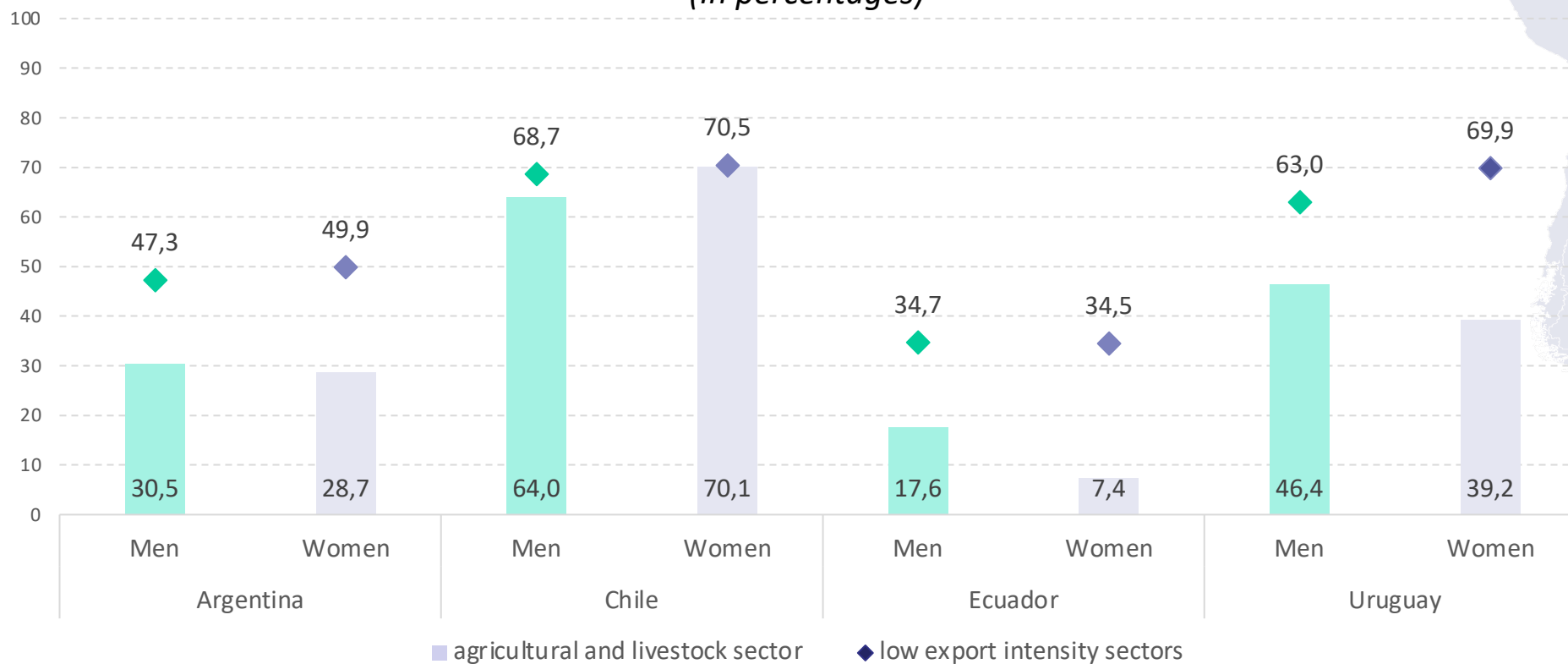


South America: access of social security in agricultural and livestock is lower than in low export intensive sectors

South America

South America (4 countries): proportion of the population that contributes or is affiliated to a social security system in the agricultural and livestock sector and in the total of sectors with low export intensity, by sex, 2018

(In percentages)

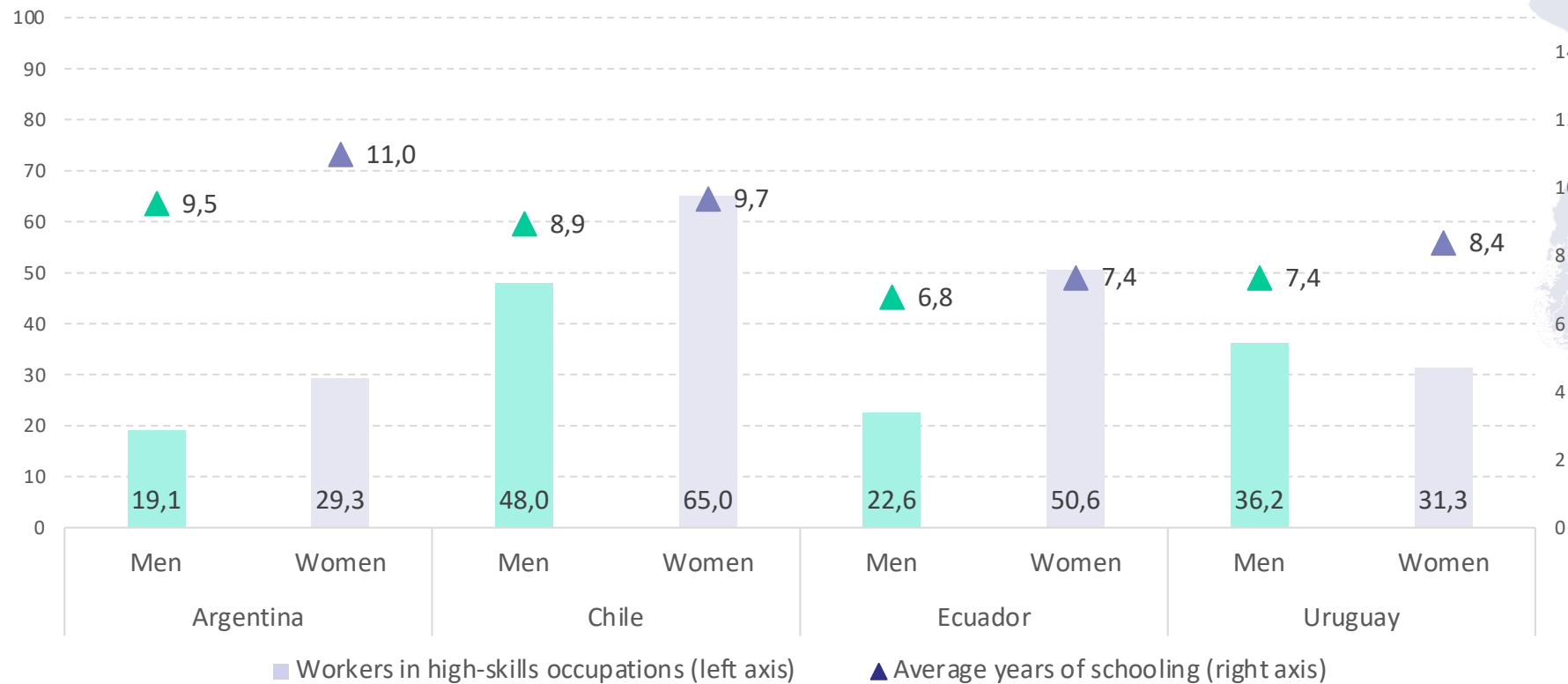


Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), based on information from the Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG) and input-output matrices.

Note: South American countries are considered where the agriculture and livestock sector is highly exporting.

South America: women in agriculture and livestock have higher levels of education, and in 3 of 4 countries analyzed, they are more concentrated in high-skills occupations than men

South America (4 countries): Proportion of the population working in high-skills occupations in the Agriculture and livestock sector and average years of schooling, by sex, 2018
(In percentages and years of schooling)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), based on information from the Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG) and input-output matrices.
Note: South American countries are considered where the agriculture and livestock sector is highly exporting.



Central America: participation of women in employment in export sectors

Central America (6 countries) and Dominican Republic: employment in export sectors by sex, according to selected sectors
(In percentages)

Selected sectors	Distribution of the employed population in export employment by sex and according to sector		Proportion of women in the sector
	Men	Women	
Services	23,3	35,5	45,2
Agroindustry	22,5	19,2	31,5
Textiles and clothing	11,1	21,0	50,7
Chemistry and Pharmacy	2,4	3,0	40,5
Machinery and electrical appliances	1,9	1,7	32,7

Concentrates most of the women's employment in export sectors.

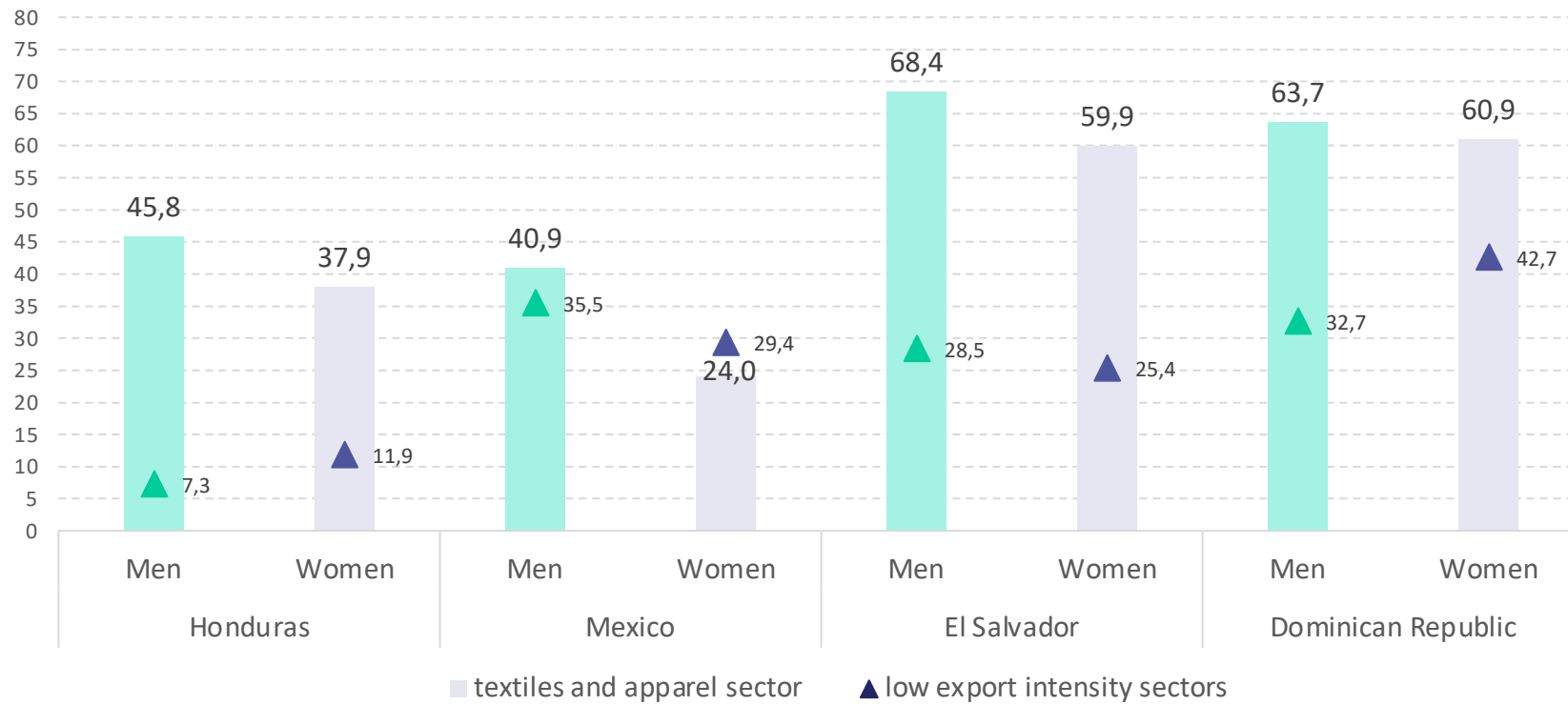
Dynamic sectors: there are not job-intensive but key for transformative recovery

The most feminized sector and the second most important to women's employment in export sectors.



Central America: while access to social security in textiles and apparel exporting sectors is higher than low-export intensive sectors, gender inequalities remain

Central America (2 countries), Dominican Republic and Mexico: proportion of the population that contributes or is affiliated with a social security system in the Textiles and Apparel sector and in the total of the sectors with low export intensity, by sex, 2018
(In percentages)



Fuente: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), based on information from the Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG) and input-output matrices.

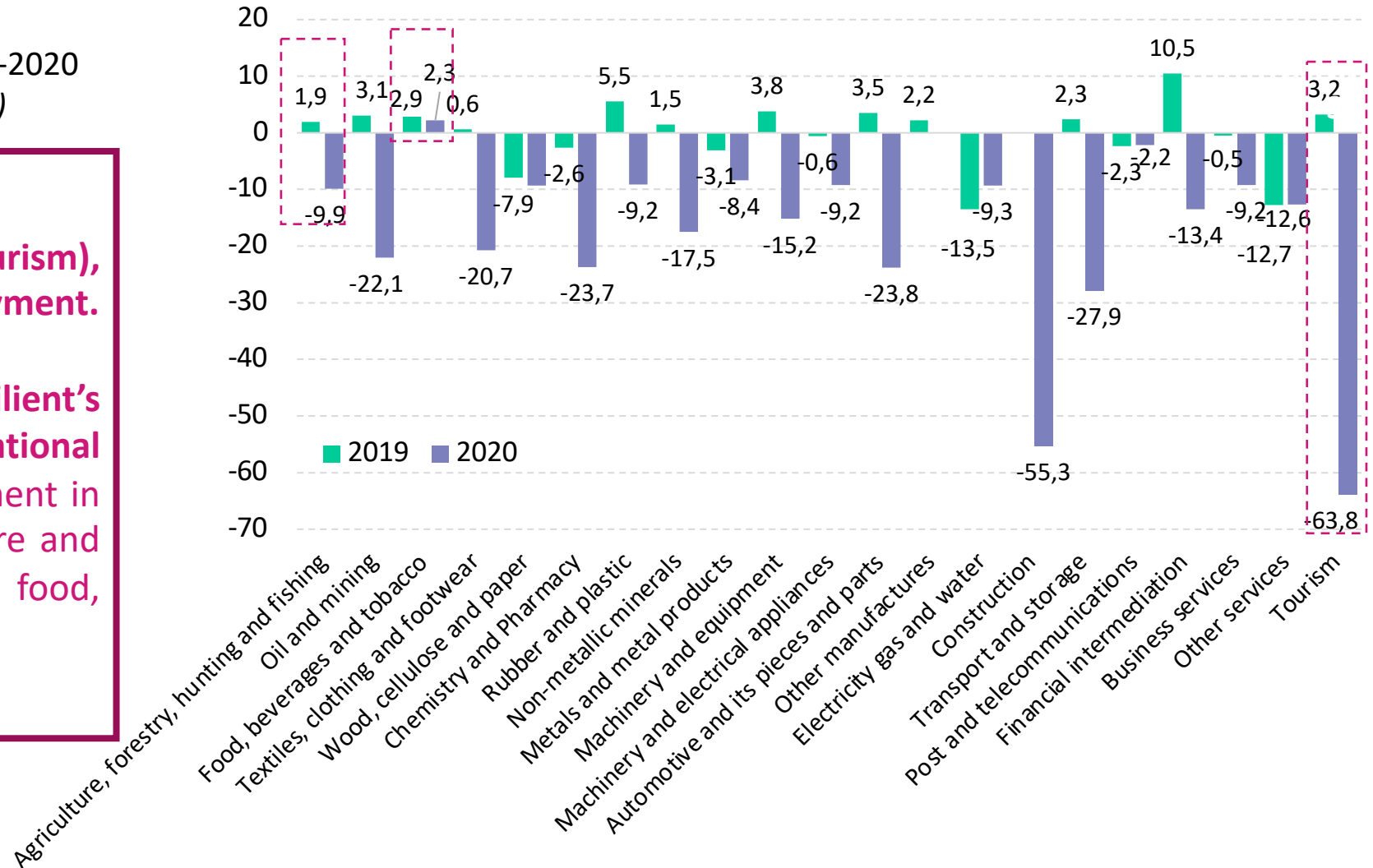
Note: Countries where the Textiles and clothing sector is highly exporter are considered.

As a result of the pandemic at the sectoral level, the exports that suffered the most were: tourism and construction. Agriculture and the food, beverage and tobacco sectors were more resilient

Latin America and the Caribbean: Trade
variation according to main sectors, 2019-2020
(In annual variation rates, In percentages)

In the most affected sector (tourism), women represent 61.5% of employment.

High presence of women in resilient's sectors to the downturn in international trade: 14.8% of women's employment in export sectors are in the agriculture and livestock sector and 15% in the food, beverages and tobacco sector.



Proposals for a transformative recovery with gender equality



Women's participation in productive economic recovery



Inclusive digital transformation



Care economy as a driver and moving towards a Care Society



Fiscal compact for gender equality

New economic, social and fiscal compacts between States, the market and society to promote gender equality and women's rights a central element for a sustainable and transformative recovery



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Trends and recommendations amidst great uncertainty

Trends:

Primarization and increase poverty and inequality

Geopolitical tensions and changes in economic geography

Crisis of multilateralism and asymmetries between countries

Digital economy and cross-border e-commerce

Recommendations:

Diversify the productive structure and export basket in knowledge-intensive sectors and quality employment for women.

Promote **regional productive chains** in key dynamic sectors for sustainability of life with participation of women workers and entrepreneurs (i.e health-care manufacturing, sustainable tourism).

Regional cooperation to avoid the race to the bottom, respect policy space and promote coherence between trade policy and women's rights.

Closing gender gaps regarding **access to resources, markets, technologies and digital skills**. Guarantee women's labor rights in the digital economy.

2021

GDP LAC: +5,9%
(LA 5,9% and Caribbean 4,1%).

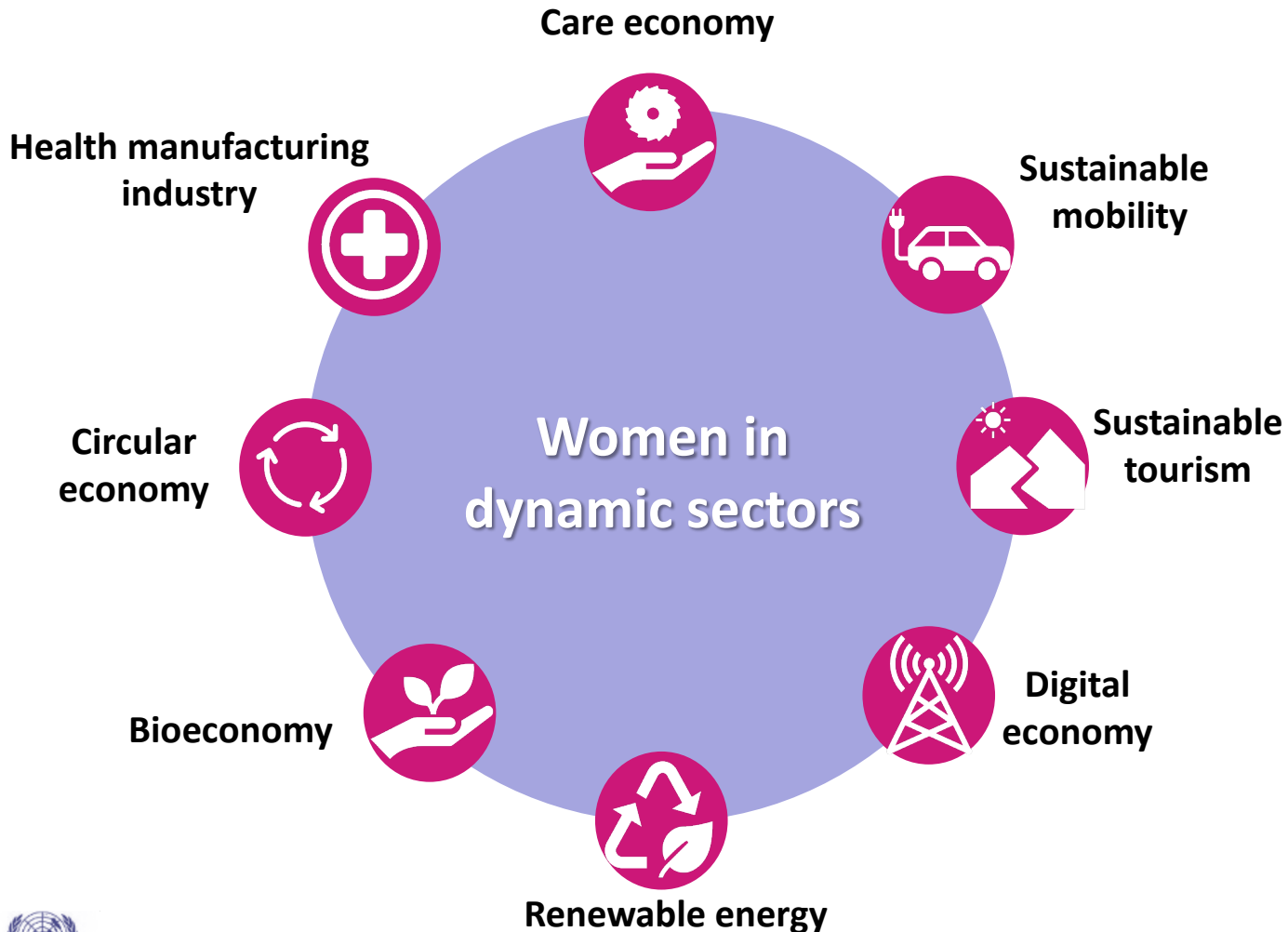
Goods exports:
+24%

Goods imports:
+27%

The 2021's trade expansion was driven by recovery of demand in the US and China for commodities, but which does not promote export diversification.

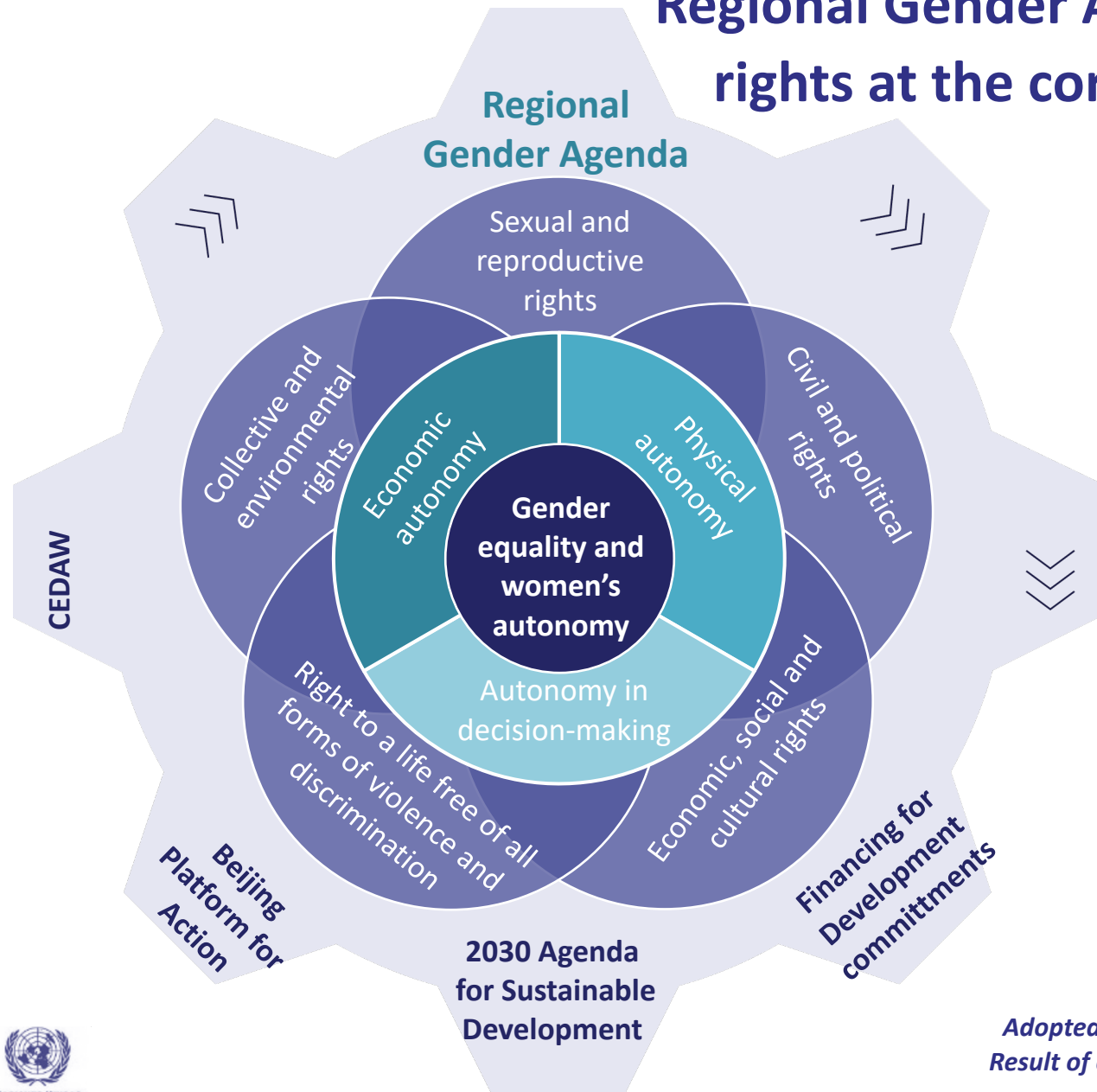
COVID -19

Productive recovery with full economic participation of women in regional and international trade



- **Affirmative actions** to increase the participation of women workers and entrepreneurs in **regional productive chains**
- Escalation in the productive chains with the participation of women in positions of higher hierarchy and income.
- Ensure access to quality financial products and services
- **Invest in the care economy as a strategic and enabling sector for women's autonomy.**

Regional Gender Agenda: women's autonomy and rights at the core of sustainable development



Meeting of the
**Presiding Officers
of the Regional
Conference on Women**
in Latin America and the Caribbean
29–30 September 2021

Governments agreed:

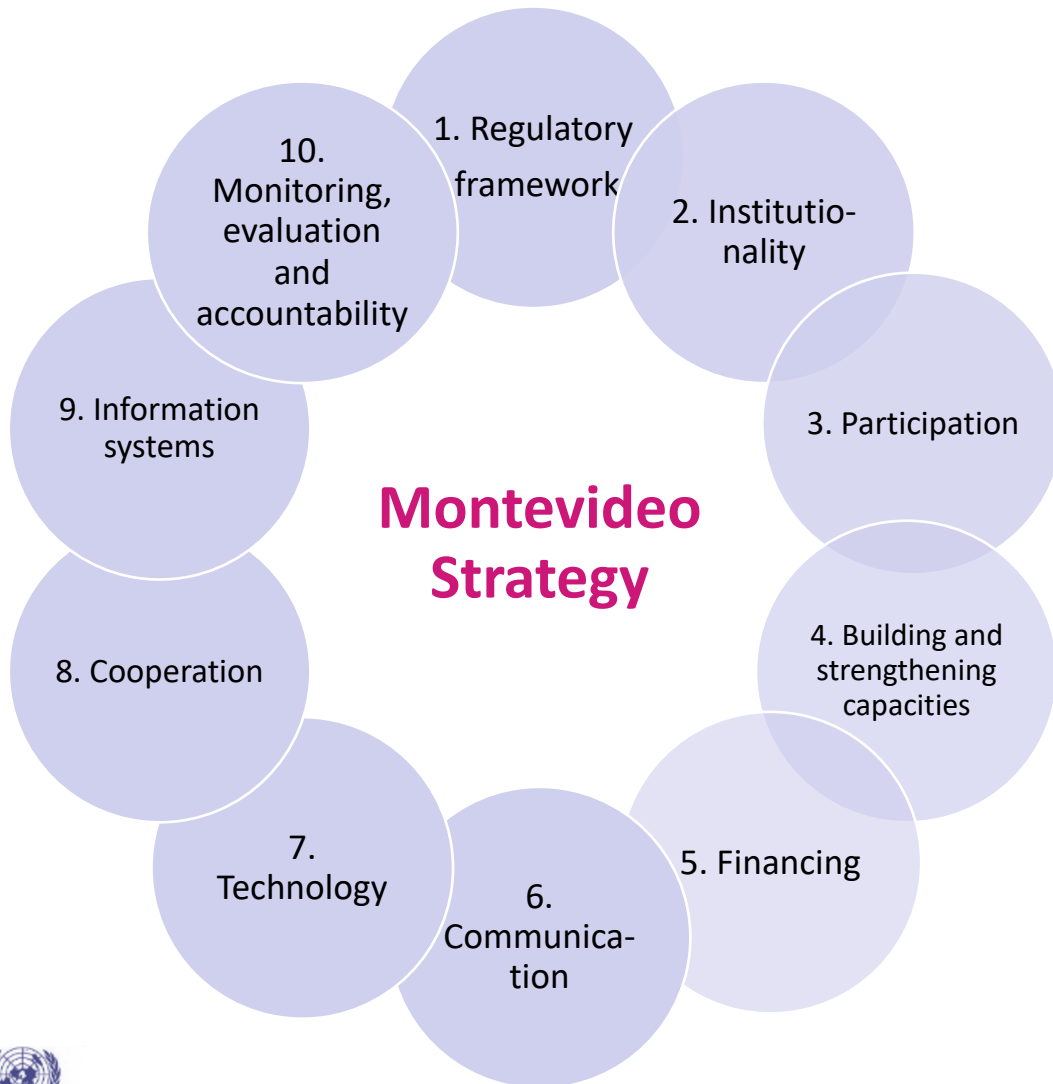
- *Promote* recovery plans with affirmative actions that promote comprehensive systems of care, decent work and the full and **effective participation of women in strategic sectors of the economy for a transformative recovery with gender equality** oriented to the sustainability of life and to transit towards the care society
- XV Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean **“The care society: horizon for a sustainable recovery with gender equality”**.

Adopted by ECLAC member States in the sessions of the Regional Conference on Women in LAC. Result of constructive dialogue between Governments, women's and feminists' organizations and movements, and the UN system.





Regional Gender Agenda commitments International Trade



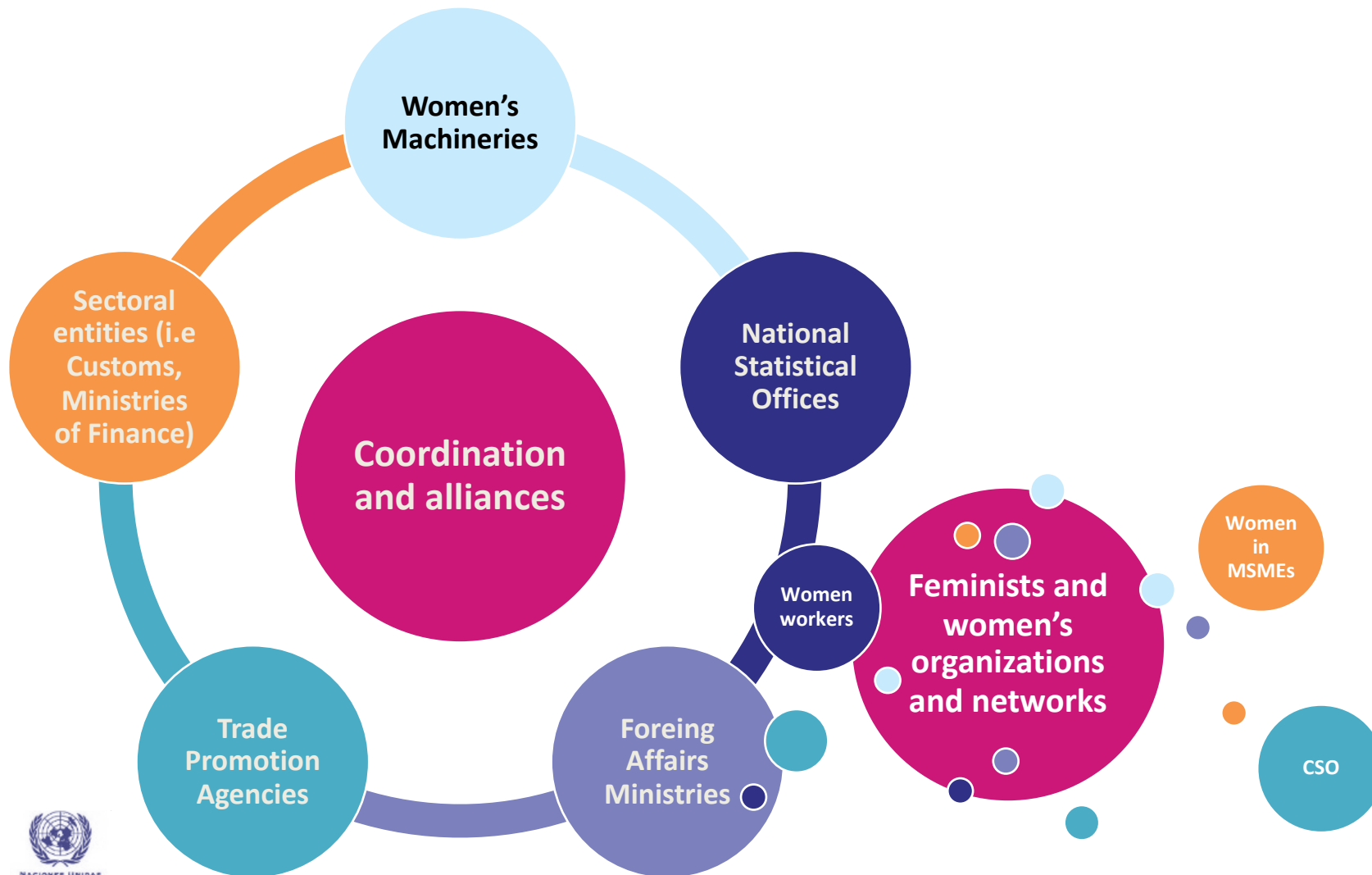
- Promote the generation of quality employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for women in international trade.
- Conducting trade and investment policy assessments from a gender perspective.
- Engage in cooperation frameworks to avoid harmful competition between countries and using gender inequalities as a tradeoff for increasing exports and attracting investment.
- Building a digital market in the region as a public good.



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Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Santiago Commitment

Strengthen data collection and analysis on gender and trade, inter-sectorial coordination, South-South cooperation and accountability mechanisms



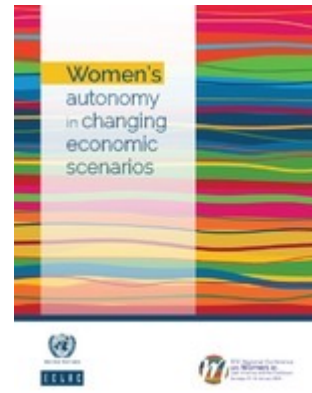
Initiatives

- Technical assistance to Chile and Uruguay in the framework of the Free Trade Agreement's gender chapter
- Technical assistance to El Salvador for the generation of gender and trade statistics
- Regional Alliance for Women's Digitalization

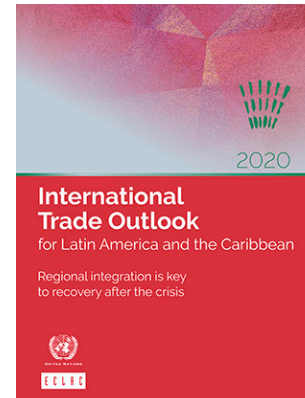
Publications



[The economic autonomy of women in a sustainable recovery with equality](#)



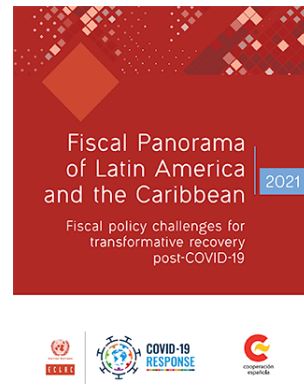
[Women's autonomy in changing economic scenarios](#)



[International Trade Outlook for Latin America and the Caribbean 2021](#)



[The recovery paradox in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)
Growth amid persisting structural problems



[Fiscal Panorama of Latin America and the Caribbean 2021](#)



[International trade: a means to a recovery with gender equality?](#)



Division for Gender Affairs

Gender Equality Observatory

COVID-19 Observatory



Thank you!

