



Internacional de la Educación
América Latina
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SUSTAINING THE FUTURE: EDUCATING AND PROVIDING CARE WITHOUT RESOURCES OR SUPPORT

The impact of the measures taken against the COVID-19 pandemic on female teachers in eight Latin American countries

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Internacional de la Educación
América Latina
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EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL LATIN AMERICA (EILA)

Regional Office, San José, Costa Rica

Telephone **(506) 2234-8404**

Post code **1867-2050**

E-mail **america.latina@ei-ie-al.org**

Web site **www.ei-ie-al.org**

Portal **www.educacionpublica.org**

Observatory **www.observatorioeducacion.org**

STAFF OF THE REGIONAL OFFICE (EILA)

Combertty Rodríguez (Chief Regional Coordinator, EILA)

Gabriela Sancho (Regional Coordinator, EILA)

Gabriel Castro (Regional Coordinator, EILA)

Philological review: **Lucía Zúñiga Solano** | Design: **Estudio Casarli**, Buenos Aires, Argentina

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Foreword

In August 2020, Education International Latin America (EILA) agreed to collaborate with the *Centro Feminista de Información y Acción* (Feminist Center for Information and Action, CEFEMINA) on a project studying the various ways in which the conditions experienced under the pandemic affect women teachers in Latin America. The objective of this is to discover the impacts of the pandemic and the measures adopted by governments in this context on unionized women teachers in El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Colombia, Peru, Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil.

To achieve this, a methodological strategy was defined that included interviews with union leaders, a review of diverse documentation and a survey applied to women teachers working during the pandemic. It was also agreed to include eight countries: three in Central America — Honduras, El Salvador and Costa Rica — and five in the south of the continent — Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina¹. This document is the product of this effort in which not only CEFEMINA and the regional coordination of EILA have participated. The participation of the *Red de Trabajadoras de la Educación* (Network of Women Education Workers), trade unions, federations and confederations affiliated with EILA in these eight countries has been essential to performing this study in conditions as adverse as those that we continue to live under as we work on completing this project.

The findings of this study show many similarities in the eight countries and reflect a common reality: women teachers have upheld the right to education during the pandemic through commitment, will and initiative. Without a doubt, male teachers have shared in making such efforts alongside their female colleagues; nonetheless, the conditions under which women teachers perform their duties are marked not only by the fact of having to respond to the sudden and institutionally improvised change to non-face-to-face classes, but also, as has been the case in general for the rest of the women in Latin America, the need to meet an overwhelming load of care provision in their homes, multiplied by the permanent presence

1 In Peru and Colombia, it was not possible to carry out the survey because of the particular political situation in these countries.

of the whole family under conditions of confinement, with the added challenge of houses not being adequately prepared to serve as places of work and study.

Since the findings are largely shared by the eight countries, conclusions in the executive summary are not presented on a national basis to avoid making this document repetitive, but rather are given in overview, with the information from each country being included in each national report.

The document consists of nine chapters, the first of which is dedicated to the executive summary while the remaining eight chapters consist of the country reports. The executive summary gathers the methodological information and the main findings, structured around the conclusions of the investigation. It also includes a section dedicated to opportunities for trade union action arising from analysis of the information collected.

Each country report begins with general information that allows an understanding of the national context in which the pandemic arose, via information relevant to the objective of the research. A further section analyzes the results of the survey applied to teachers and includes parts of the interviews conducted with union leaders.

We hope that this document will be of great use to education unions, federations and confederations throughout the continent, especially those affiliated to EILA, as well as to the Red de Trabajadoras de la Educación (Network of Women Education Workers). Above all, we hope that this study will serve to assist recognition of the debt the region owes its women teachers and will prevent our societies from returning to normality without memory of what has come before.

**Ana Carcedo, Mirta Kennedy,
Larraitx Lexartza and Alejandra Paniagua.**

CEFEMINA



Executive summary

In August 2020, Education International Latin America (EILA) agreed to collaborate with the Centro Feminista de Información y Acción (Feminist Center for Information and Action, CEFEMINA) on a project studying the various ways in which the conditions experienced under the pandemic affect women teachers in Latin America. The objective agreed upon is:

To identify the impact of the pandemic and the measures adopted by governments in this context on unionized women teachers in El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Colombia, Peru, Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil.

Methodology

To carry out this study, information was collected through documentary analysis, interviews and a survey. The documents analyzed were generated by various sources and include information revealing the contexts from which each country has had to deal with the pandemic, the measures taken by the governments since the start of this crisis, the impact of these measures on the population and the responses that organizations affiliated to EILA have made regarding different aspects pertinent to the objective of this study.

Twelve group interviews were conducted with women leaders from eleven trade union organizations belonging to EILA in the eight countries². Most of those interviewed belong to the Red de Trabajadoras de la Educación (Network of Female Education Workers), which is also part of EILA. In these interviews, in-depth exploration was made of aspects related to the conditions in which women teachers performed their work in this era and the impacts of the measures adopted against the pandemic, in particular in terms of changes in the provision of family care and of violence against women.

² The list of trade union organizations participating in this study can be found in Annex 1.

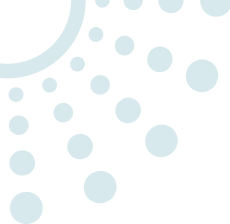
The survey explores these aspects and is aimed at women teachers who taught during the pandemic. The questionnaire was presented to and approved by the participating organizations. Originally in Spanish, it was also translated into Portuguese; in some cases language adjustments were made to improve understanding in particular countries. The survey consisted of a self-administered online questionnaire that was applied separately in each trade union organization. A total of 2,802 teachers from seven trade union organizations affiliated to EILA responded, completing the sample size defined for each case.

The organizations chose the sample such that each would have a composition similar to that of its affiliates in three particular aspects: the area where teaching is undertaken (rural versus urban), public versus private educational institutions, and the educational level at which the respondents work. Where applicable, another criterion was added: the representation of teachers working in Indigenous areas or areas where Indigenous and Afro-descendant populations are concentrated. In Colombia and Peru, the survey could not be applied because conditions to do so did not occur given the difficult political situations that these two countries are going through.

Findings and conclusions

1. The pandemic and the measures taken by governments deepened a preexisting economic crisis in the region and exacerbated historical social and political crises that most of the countries included in this study are experiencing.

In the years leading up to the pandemic, Latin America had been approaching an economic crisis featuring a slowdown in annual growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), among other factors. Between 2014 and 2019, the region's economy (including the Caribbean region) grew on average by only 0.3% annually (ECLAC, 2020). The situation is even more serious in Argentina, a country that since 2018 has undergone a contraction in production due to strong neoliberal



policies during the Macri government. The labor market has also shown signs of deterioration in recent years, particularly since 2015, with rising unemployment rates and worsening employment quality (ECLAC-ILO, 2020).

The measures taken to deal with the pandemic exacerbated this trend, in particular the closure of face-to-face activities considered non-essential, and confinement in the home. The region was not prepared for telework; industries and companies declined sharply and many closed down. ECLAC estimated that the GDP of Latin America and the Caribbean decreased by 7.7% in 2020 (ECLAC, 2020).

Unemployment rose sharply in the first months of the pandemic and, although jobs were subsequently recovered, in some countries the previous situation was not regained. Many governments have been permissive towards companies, allowing them to dismiss or suspend staff without compensation or the guarantee of reinstatement under previously held conditions, as well as shortening working days or making these more flexible. In most countries, these actions lack a regulatory framework and violate labor rights. Preliminary data has led to estimations of an increase in unemployment in 2020 of 2.6% (ECLAC, 2020).

Women are particularly affected by the labor crisis as they are concentrated in sharply affected occupations such as paid domestic work, commerce, restaurants and hospitality. In addition, many women left the workforce to care for their children, who remained at home given the closure of schools. In the second quarter of 2020, in Latin America and the Caribbean 18.1% of the jobs occupied by women were lost compared to the same quarter in 2019. For men, this loss was 15.1%. In the same period, 15.4% of women and 11.8% of men left the labor market (ECLAC, 2020).

The informal sector has been particularly affected by the inability of people to work in the street and to go out to provide and perform services. In addition,

those who are in informal employment face a greater lack of protection, as they do not have access to social security and measures such as severance pay or unemployment benefits. In Latin America, informal employment has a great weight and this sector has been more strongly impacted than that of formal employment. In 2016, 54.3% of women and 52.3% of men in Latin America and the Caribbean were working in the informal sector (ILO, 2018). It is estimated that about half of these jobs are at high risk during the pandemic (56.9% among women and 40% among men) (ECLAC, 2020). In the second quarter of 2020, the informal sector contributed the majority of the jobs lost. In this sense, Brazil, Paraguay and Costa Rica stand out, with 76.8%, 74.3% and 72.5% of the total job loss respectively (ECLAC, 2020).

In short, the measures taken by governments in this crisis deepened trends already deteriorating the labor market, such as high levels of unemployment, the growing precariousness of jobs and the violation of labor rights.

The impact on the population has been immediate. The loss of jobs deprived large sectors of the population of the income on which they depend to live. The social protection measures that governments have adopted have been markedly insufficient towards neutralizing the social impact of the contraction of the labor market. In general, these measures are narrowly targeted and ad hoc in nature, being of limited coverage, of short duration and often having been applied to the same groups already receiving state aid. In any case, in almost all the countries studied, people who lost their jobs have been treated as poor people requiring assistance, not as workers whose rights should be guaranteed. An exception occurred in the measure of partially subsidizing employment in formal enterprises applied in Argentina through the Emergency Assistance to Work and Production Program (ATP by the initials in Spanish), which allowed workers to retain employment (ILO, 2021).

In the period 2002 to 2014, in Latin America and the Caribbean the incidence of poverty and extreme poverty decreased, but in the years prior to the pan-



demographic conditions increased, going from 27.8% to 30.5% and from 7.8% to 11.3% respectively (ECLAC, 2020). Poverty skyrocketed in the pandemic, together with unemployment, and state aid barely managed to cushion this a little. It is estimated that in 2020 poverty in the region rose to 33.7%, while extreme poverty rose to 12.5%. Without state aid these would have reached 37.2% and 15.8% respectively (ECLAC, 2020).

Inequality, which decreased in previous years at the beginning of the millennium, has continued to decline, although more slowly. Between 2002 and 2014, the Gini coefficient for the region decreased by an annual average of 1.1%, while it fell by only 0.5% between 2014 and 2019 (ECLAC, 2020). The measures taken during the pandemic have had the greatest effects on the most vulnerable sectors.

Another crisis that the measures taken during the pandemic have exacerbated is political in nature. ECLAC indicates that “since the end of 2019, the citizens of several countries have expressed their discomfort, discontent and dissatisfaction with the political system and its actors in large protest demonstrations demanding greater social justice” (ECLAC, 2020, p. 14). There is a growing loss of confidence in state institutions and political parties throughout the region. Corruption and the penetration of drug trafficking within state and political classes is becoming increasingly widespread, along with direct attacks on democracy both through open coups (Honduras) and covert ones involving legal falsity (Brazil, Peru and Bolivia). There is growing disrespect for the popular will, which is increasingly resistant to growing restrictions on social organization and social protest, with the open persecution of leaders from all sectors (Colombia).

With the exception of Argentina, the governments of the eight countries included in this study have used the pandemic as a pretext to increase previous levels of control and repression of the population and social organizations, deepening the criminalization of protest and engaging in selective persecution, which in Colombia and Honduras has gone so far as to include the as-

sassination of social leaders. Similarly, some governments have taken advantage of the situation to consolidate their authoritarian aspirations, using the army to impose curfews as well as to persecute and punish the sectors of the population that do not comply with confinement (Honduras, El Salvador and Colombia). In El Salvador, in this period the president succeeded in destroying the separation of powers and establishing himself as the only center of power.

A similar situation has occurred in Honduras, where the pandemic has favored a greater concentration of power on the presidential figure.

Despite this escalation in authoritarianism, control and repression, social organization and resistance continues. In Colombia, the protests that began at the end of 2019 are becoming more strident. In Peru, the previous coup was reversed with the election of a teacher as president. In this country, the sectors that concentrate power are attempting to render the elected government unviable, but the population remains alert and mobilized to defend against this. In Costa Rica, blockades paralyzing transport occur throughout a large part of the territory. In many of these mobilizations, the active participation of unions occurs. Massive demonstrations are being held in Brazil to denounce the Bolsonaro government's management of the pandemic. In Honduras, demonstrations denounced government corruption in the management of the pandemic, its extractivist policies, and the Zones of Employment and Economic Development (ZEDE).

2. Governments have established non-face-to-face education in a hasty, improvised fashion, without counting on the resources necessary for the change and, in many cases, without strategies in place to guarantee the right to education and dignified work.

At the start of the pandemic, one of the first measures taken in all Latin American countries was the closure of schools and the continuation of educational



processes by non-face-to-face means. This decision was made in the context of a region with great limitations in shifting towards modalities involving virtual resources. Digital divides are notable and increase economic barriers of accessibility to education. In 2018, 60% of households and 67% of people in Latin America and the Caribbean had access to internet connectivity. 46% of children between the ages of five and twelve cannot engage in tele-education (ECLAC, 2020a).

One of the most significant digital divides is due to the difference in opportunities existing between rural and urban areas (33% and 66% of households with internet connectivity respectively). The greatest divide, however, is due to differences in household income. In Peru, the proportion of households in the first quintile³ with internet access is 4%, while in the fifth it is 46%. These values are respectively 4% and 48% in El Salvador, 3% and 65% in Paraguay, 22% and 85% in Colombia, 63% and 91% in Brazil, and 58% and 91% in Costa Rica (ECLAC, 2020a).

The use of virtual means for education in times of pandemic means competing at home with the rest of the family for resources essential to continuing with their activities. Residential homes were not designed to have spaces in which to work or study for long hours or full days. Families also do not have computers, tablets, smartphones or individual televisions for each person requiring them. For the lower income sectors, it is common not to have permanent internet service, and instead to acquire telephone connectivity according to each family's means.

Limitations of physical space, furniture, equipment and connectivity are common for teachers and students. The biggest problems have arisen with tablets and computers. With the exception of Brazil and Costa Rica, the lack of this equipment has affected more than half of the households of the teachers

³ The first quintile represents the 20% of the population with the lowest income. The fifth quintile represents the 20% of the population with the highest income.

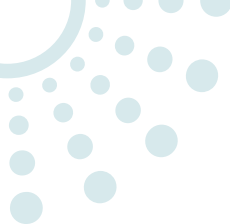
surveyed. The biggest problem occurs in Honduras, affecting 76% of those surveyed. Smartphone availability increased by around 10% in each country, remaining a serious problem in El Salvador and among OTEP-A affiliates in Paraguay (insufficient for 55% and 67.1% respectively).

Internet connectivity was good or very good for less than half of the respondents, except in the case of Costa Rica (57.3%) and Argentina (50.6%). Again, the problem has been greater in Paraguay, a country in which only 39% of UNE-SN teachers and 34.3% of OTEP-A teachers enjoyed this quality of connectivity.

States did not have methodological proposals, pedagogical resources nor materials for the shift to virtual or distance education. Teachers had to fill these gaps with little support from Ministries of Education. In some universities, there was some experience in virtual education, although this was generally used more as a complement than as an integral part of educational processes. Additionally, teachers lacked training in this modality, and the training provided since the pandemic has involved various challenges, including these being offered virtually to people who had little or no training in the use of these means.

Furthermore, states lacked virtual platforms that could be used for teaching. Teachers have generally resorted to using Zoom to teach synchronous classes, WhatsApp to communicate with their students, and non-institutional applications and platforms to send materials. The few universities that had their own platforms at the beginning of the pandemic were unable to use these because they quickly became saturated due to lack of preparation for the high demand they received.

Included among the improvisations were the changing demands of Education Ministries with respect to the activities teachers were required to perform. In some countries, teachers were required to submit reports that they did not previously make, sometimes with changes to the information to include, their periodicity, or their being requested retroactively. This represented a significant addition to teachers' workloads. In El Salvador, at the beginning of April



a protocol was enforced calling on teachers to go to schools to deliver food packages from the School Food and Health Program (PASE by the acronym in Spanish), without providing health protection measures for this despite expecting crowds of people to attend. Union intervention managed to stop this.

The return to face-to-face education generally has been of the same improvised character. This has been announced at different times, and has even been commenced, although in some countries it has later had to be suspended once again due to the lack of appropriate sanitary conditions. In May 2020, EILA prepared a document establishing the conditions required for a return to schools. This document proposed “a common minimum base for the region” that includes dialog with education sector organizations, mechanisms to listen to student proposals, and guaranteed infrastructure conditions providing safe environments with ventilation and access to protective materials (EILA, 2020).

The lack of conditions for non-face-to-face education is even greater among students, especially for those who belong to families subject to multiple challenges, such as having lower incomes, not having physical conditions in their homes to be able to study, who suffer from a lack of equipment and internet connectivity and the loss of employment of all family members. Part of the costs of virtual education went to families, who have had to buy phones and mobile data, as well as educational materials. For some students, continuing their education during the pandemic has not been possible.

Around 70% of the survey respondents in each country considered that the number of students leaving their studies has increased during the pandemic, except in the cases of Costa Rica, where this perception is shared by 51.6%, and Honduras, where it is shared by 82.2%. However, it is not always thought to have greatly increased and, in this regard, perceptions vary significantly. Between 20.8% (Costa Rica) and 51.4% (Brazil) of respondents consider the increase to be large, while between 26.3% (Brazil) and 37.9% (El Salvador) believe it has not been large.

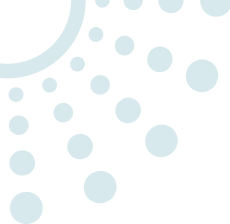
During the pandemic, the measures taken by governments have caused the educational crisis in the continent to become more visible and acute. Non-face-to-face education has increased the expulsion of students from the system by adding new barriers to their retention. The quality of education under improvised modalities created without solid methodological support has deteriorated despite the efforts of teachers. The support received from Ministries of Education and university authorities has varied between countries, although in all countries it has been insufficient due to the lack of preparation and strategies to face the changes. In Paraguay, where conditions for connectivity were a priori adverse, teachers describe a scenario of educational catastrophe leading to families totally giving up the educational year for lost, at least during 2020.

3. A significant part of state shortcomings in ensuring education in times of pandemic have been compensated for by teachers.

In some countries, the state has provided equipment to teachers or offered soft loans for its purchase, but this has not prevented more than 80% of women teachers from paying for the purchase of equipment and internet connectivity from their income; they have frequently done so in proportions between 83.1% in Costa Rica and 94.4% for OTEP-A women teachers in Paraguay. Women teachers have also covered the needs of their students, such as copies of work materials. Between 42.1% in El Salvador and 69.2% in Honduras have frequently done so.

The contributions of women teachers have not been solely economic. They have mainly involved professional commitment and personal efforts, which they have had to draw on to deal with the improvisations of Education Ministries and universities.

The lack of appropriate methodologies for non-face-to-face education has deteriorated student learning opportunities, triggering the need for individual



consultations. Students' parents have also demanded teachers' attention, with these former having been given the task of accompanying the study process of children and adolescents when they have not always had the preparation and the conditions to do so. Given the limitations that many households have faced in providing themselves with equipment and internet connectivity, students and parents have turned to teachers at whatever time they can manage to do so, including late at night. Work days have been extended even longer by the need to prepare classes, create materials and make reports, tasks that have often been done in the evenings after providing students and parents with individual attention. Work overload is the effect of telework most frequently mentioned by the teachers consulted.

As the pandemic has drawn on, countries have attempted a return to face-to-face classes under different modalities, many of which include combining face-to-face and non-face-to-face teaching. Staggered returns are adopted, with smaller groups alternating the days they attend classrooms, or alternatively attendance is enabled only on some days of the week or only for certain groups. Bimodality, in any of its variants, further increases the demands on teachers, since it adds tasks to those already faced.

4. The actions taken by governments during the pandemic have had widespread effects on labor rights, in many countries exacerbating the prior trend towards their deterioration.

The education sector is one of the least affected by the massive layoffs and job losses during the pandemic. The majority of respondents have had job and salary stability. More than 90% in each country (values between 90.3% in El Salvador and 95.5% among members of UNE-SN in Paraguay) have maintained stable employment. During the pandemic, with the exception of those in Honduras, more than 80% of the women teachers have received full teaching salaries in a timely fashion (values between 80.6% among OTEP-A affiliates in

Paraguay and 94.3% in Costa Rica). In Honduras, only 14.1% enjoyed these conditions, while the vast majority, at 82%, received their salary in full although in a delayed fashion. More than 79% have maintained or increased their teaching income (values between 79.9% in Brazil and 95.1% in El Salvador).

This situation, however, may be threatened in the future. The loss of students as a result of the educational crisis and the difficulty of recovering their attendance once face-to-face classes return may become a pretext for reducing the number of teachers.

In any case, having contractual and salary security has not spared teachers and their families from facing strong deterioration in their finances. In general, the purchasing power of the families of the women teachers surveyed is insufficient to supporting their households. Before the pandemic, less than half was at that low point (between 42.2% in Costa Rica and 49.6% in Argentina), except in the case of Brazil, which slightly exceeded half (55.9%). After a year of pandemic, the proportion of households with sufficient income to meet their needs has fallen significantly. This is at 41.5% in Brazil, 38% in Costa Rica, 31.7% in Argentina, 27.9% in El Salvador, 26.4% in Honduras, and 21.3% in Paraguay among members of UNE-SN and 16.9% among members of OTEP-A.

Other labor rights of women teachers have been openly and massively violated during the period of pandemic, as indicated by the participants in this study. More than 86% in each country reported non-compliance with an eight-hour working day established in formal schedules (values between 86.3% in Brazil and 95.5% in Paraguay among UNE-SN affiliates). The right to disconnect is the next most frequently mentioned violated right with percentages above 68% (values between 68.7% in El Salvador and 89.4% in Argentina). The third most frequently cited violated right is that of choosing work modality, with percentages generally higher than 64% in each country (except in Brazil at 43.4%). Disrespect for sick leave and trade union freedoms are mentioned in fourth and fifth place, with differences between countries. The first of these is



at between 19.4% in Costa Rica and 43.4% in Brazil, while reduced trade union freedoms were reported at between 13.9% in El Salvador and 34.6% in Brazil. With exceptions, telework and labor flexibility have been imposed without clear regulations or in a fashion contrary to existing ones, in a way that violates the basic criteria that could make these changes acceptable. In addition, some countries (Costa Rica, Paraguay and Honduras) have not recognized previously established wage increases.

5. Despite teachers' efforts, discourse critical of teachers has been strengthened.

The gaps in education that have become apparent and that have been exacerbated during the pandemic along with state failures in this period have been attributed to teachers, not only because these are the visible face and the first line of contact with families, but, above all, because in many countries the strategies of attacking the rights of the population, and in particular labor rights, have seen public school teachers become the target of systematic attacks.

In Costa Rica, the pandemic has been used to reduce public employment rights. Permanent regulatory changes are being sought at the same time that this sector is being positioned as a source of financing for state expenditure during this period. Teachers have been accused of not working because they stay at home and the Costa Rican state has never communicated the enormous effort they must make to sustain education. Similarly, in Brazil, the public employment sector has been under permanent attack, with labor reforms already implemented seeking to weaken union organization among other objectives.

In Paraguay, social networks comment that "teachers demand their pay in return for doing nothing." One politician openly said, "How much can teachers talk, since they are doing nothing? They don't even have to go out to work." In September 2020 in that country, in the midst of the pandemic the Ley de la

Función Pública y del Servicio Civil (Public Servants and Civil Service Act) was presented, which, among other things, affects job stability and perpetuates the precarious situation of many people working for the public sector under contract, which in practice implies holding a contract for the provision of services.

6. Confinement measures, telework and study from home reveal and exacerbate the preexisting crisis of care provision in the region and reinforce the gender division of labor, with the burden of care work falling on families, and within families, on women.

A common characteristic among the women teachers surveyed is that very few live alone (between 1.7% of those affiliated with UNE-SN in Paraguay and 10.7% in Brazil), with around half or more living with children and adolescents (values between 44.3% in Argentina and 58.4% in El Salvador). In addition, some live in extended families with older adults (between 10.4% in Argentina and 35.2% in El Salvador). Furthermore, in some households there are sick or disabled people (between 2.7% in Argentina and 16.4% in El Salvador). The presence of adult men is not widespread (between 17.7% in Honduras and 54% in Brazil), nor is the presence of other adult women (between 7.2% in Argentina and 35.5% in Brazil).

This composition of women teachers' households indicates that there is significant demand on these for care provision and not many adults to assume this task. In Latin America, the gender division of labor is still deeply entrenched, as is the continued assignment of care tasks primarily to women, even when they hold formal employment.

Confinement during the pandemic together with education and telework have greatly increased the demands for care provision in homes. Dependent persons who were previously cared for during the day in care centers no longer receive said care and instead this must be provided at home. In addition, stu-



dents who previously spent much of the day in educational institutions are now being taught in their homes, while people who worked in different places now remain in the home. With the presence of the whole family in the family residence, domestic tasks not related to direct care, such as preparing food, cleaning, tidying, washing and ironing also skyrocket.

More than 40% of the respondents say that the time they devote to domestic work not including the care of dependent people has increased (between 44.3% in El Salvador and 61.6% among those affiliated to OTEP-A in Paraguay). The time spent caring for dependents has also increased for many (between 27.3% in Brazil and 44% in OTEP-A affiliates in Paraguay). Non-dependent adults have also demanded more attention from female teachers (between 20.8% among UNE-SN members in Paraguay and 31.5% in Brazil). The most significant increase in the demand on women teachers' time has been providing educational support for children and adolescents, which has been experienced by the majority of respondents in all countries (between 50.2% in Costa Rica and 76.2% in Paraguay among members of OTEP-A).

Other adults in the home have increased their time spent doing housework and providing care, although in a much lesser proportion than that of the respondents, with this falling more to other women in the family (between 32.8% in Paraguay of UNE-SN affiliates and 59.3% in Brazil) than adult males (between 23.4% in Paraguay in the households of those affiliated to OTEP-A and 43.3% in Costa Rica).

To respond to this increased demand for care provision in homes, the women teachers surveyed have had to sacrifice time previously spent on themselves. About two out of three have reduced the time spent on recreation (between 60.3% in Honduras and 75.4% in Costa Rica) and a similar proportion has also cut back on time spent on rest during the day (between 59.6% among UNE-SN members in Paraguay and 70.7% in Costa Rica).

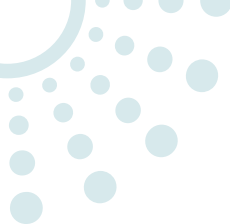
7. The efforts of female teachers to uphold students' rights to education have negatively affected their quality of life and exposed them to increased health risks, including their suffering COVID-19 contagion rates far higher than the official average rates.

The conditions under which women teachers work during the pandemic have a significant impact on their quality of life. Work overload is the most frequently mentioned effect of telework in all countries (values between 46.3% in Paraguay among members of OTEP-A and 73.2% in Brazil). In order to cope with this workload, female teachers are forced to carry out different activities simultaneously, something reported by a range from 34.3% of OTEP-A affiliates in Paraguay to 64.7% of respondents in Brazil. For about one in three, overwork has left no time to rest (values between 20.7% in Paraguay among OTEP-A affiliates and 36.7% of respondents in Brazil). A higher proportion than this mention finding it difficult to separate work and rest times (values between 32% in Paraguay among members of UNE-SN and 63.5% of respondents in Argentina).

The burden of teaching and care provision, as well as the adverse conditions in which they perform both these types of tasks, have affected teachers' physical and emotional health. More than half say they are exhausted, and in some countries, this claim is overwhelmingly common (87.3% in Costa Rica, 73.2% in Brazil). Stress and emotional tension are indicated by 42.5% of UNEP-SN affiliates in Paraguay and 64.3% of respondents in Costa Rica.

As a consequence of this deterioration in quality of life and physical and emotional well-being, the majority of teachers surveyed suffered some health problems in the period, except in Argentina (where 41.8% have experienced this). This is expressed in the remaining countries at values between 51.8% (Costa Rica) and 64% (Paraguay among OTEP-A affiliates).

Included among these health-affecting situations are COVID-19 infections, which were significantly higher than the national rates declared by the states



at the time of the survey. In Paraguay, 32% of OTEP-A affiliates and 25.9% of those belonging to UNE-SN indicated having been infected with the virus (national rate of 6.3%); in Brazil, this number stood at 21.8% (national rate of 8.6%); in Argentina it was 19.6% (national rate 10%); in El Salvador, 13% (national rate 1%); in Costa Rica 8.4% (national rate of 4.1%); and in Honduras it was 19.1% (national rate of 2.6%).

The reason why COVID-19 transmission rates among the women teachers are much higher than national ones may be due in part to the fact that official data reflect high under-registration, something that probably happens in El Salvador, where the union leaders interviewed denounce the unwillingness of the government to give real data, as well as in Honduras, where the Physicians' Association indicates under-registration occurs. However, this situation does not occur in Argentina or Costa Rica, without ruling out the possible occurrence of underreporting, although at not such a high rate. The main reason that can be noted from the information collected is that teachers have been more exposed than the general population to the risk of COVID-19 contagion because some of them have maintained face-to-face activities, whether these are combined or not with non-face-to-face ones. In addition, in order to continue with their teaching duties, many teachers have been forced to travel around to copy and deliver materials, and to visit the homes of their students. They have traveled via public transport without adequate health protection measures and without being considered an at-risk group that should be a priority for vaccination. In some countries, risks have been increased due to government decisions. The negationist attitude of the Bolsonaro administration in Brazil has led this to be one of the countries with the highest rates of contagion and death on the planet. Meanwhile in El Salvador, the Bukele government ordered the arrest of those not complying with confinement orders. These people were then held in groups in places that did not meet sanitary conditions without being tested for contagion.

8. The women teachers share the widespread perception in Latin America that the measures taken during the pandemic have fomented violence against women and the most frequent ways in which the women teachers have experienced this are related to the workplace and virtual activities.

The majority of the teachers interviewed and surveyed agree that confinement measures have fomented violence against women within families (values between 69.3% in members of UNE-SN in Paraguay and 90% in Brazil). The union leaders interviewed say that this is because women and girls have been locked in their homes with aggressors while being isolated from those who can provide them support. In El Salvador, the teachers consulted indicated that the government does not give the real data on violence against women and femicide.

About half of the respondents consider that violence against women during the pandemic has particularly affected women teachers (values between 40.3% in Argentina and 57.3% among OTEP-A affiliates in Paraguay). The two expressions of violence during the pandemic against women teachers that respondents most frequently mention are intimate partner and ex-partner violence (values between 48.2% in El Salvador and 70.6% in Brazil) and virtual harassment (values between 36% among OTEP-A affiliates in Paraguay and 63.5% in Costa Rica). This is followed by workplace harassment (values between 14% in Paraguay and 42.4% in Costa Rica) and sexual violence (values between 7.7% in Paraguay among members of UNE-SN and 28.7% in Brazil).

In the pandemic period, between 20% (in Paraguay among members of UNE-SN) and 40.4% (in Costa Rica) of the women teachers indicated that they have been the target of violence, with the most frequent forms of violence not coinciding with the perceptions previously reported. In all countries, the violence that teachers have experienced most frequently was not perpetrated by partners or ex-partners, but rather took the form of virtual harassment (values between 10.4% in Paraguay among members of UNE-SN and 27.8% in Costa Rica). Workplace harassment is the second most reported expression of violence (values



between 4.8% in Paraguay among UNE-SN affiliates and 14.6% in Costa Rica), while in third place is intimate partner and ex-partner violence (values between 5% in Honduras, Brazil and Argentina, and 10% in Paraguay among OTEP-A affiliates). It is noteworthy that, in all countries, the women teachers reported more frequent violence on behalf of the authorities and the armed agents of the state (1.4% in Brazil and 3.3% in Honduras and Argentina) than by organized crime (less than 2.3%), which seems to corroborate the tendency of some governments to increase repression and militarization during the pandemic.

Except in Argentina, most women teachers who experienced some form of violence did not seek help. In these countries, help was sought by 26% in Honduras, 40.7% in Brazil, while in Argentina the rate was at 52.9%. Among the reasons for not seeking help are victims not considering themselves to need it (values between 35.7% in El Salvador and 51.8% in Argentina, with the exception of Honduras at 18.7%), or considering that no one can help them (between 10.9% in Paraguay among members of UNE-SN and 22.1% in Costa Rica). Other reasons given stand out in some countries, such as in Honduras where 38.5% did not seek help because they do not trust the authorities. In all countries, preexisting barriers (not knowing institutions, not having any nearby, not having economic resources to be able to travel) added to the limitations of confinement (not being able to leave the house because the aggressor is there, not leaving dependent people alone, not being able to circulate), which prevented more than 10% of teachers who experienced violence from seeking help (values between 10.8% in El Salvador and 18.8% in Costa Rica).

People close by and family members were generally the most sought after to request help from (values between 28.6% in Argentina and 56.2% in Honduras). State institutions were less in demand for this purpose (values between 15.6% in Honduras and 33.3% in Paraguay among UNE-SN affiliates). It is worth mentioning that in some countries the women teachers turned to their unions, particularly in Argentina (47.6%) and OTEP-A affiliates in Paraguay (29.4%), the countries in which this was the most used resource.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, there have been specific calls from national organizations and international agencies for states to address the problem of violence against women and girls. The Committee of Experts of MESECVI (Follow-up Mechanism to the Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women) produced a report on the situation of violence against women and girls during the pandemic, including recommendations for the states, which has guided national responses (MESECVI, 2020). The most frequently adopted measures in the countries included in this study aimed at promoting the reporting of crime and the protection of women and girls at risk of violence. Specialized violence courts and services are considered to be essential, the transit of women and girls to seek help has been authorized, and more receptive spaces for support and refuge have been set up. In Argentina, a novel measure was implemented to assist women who could not seek help because they were under the close control of their aggressors: requesting a red face mask in pharmacies is a way to inform the salesperson that help is required.

Opportunities for union action

Education unions and federations, particularly those that are part of EILA, have played an important role during the pandemic in defending the right to education and decent work. Despite the fact that the measures adopted by the governments have made it difficult to organize and mobilize, guilds, unions, federations and confederations have developed alternative strategies to maintain their relationships and activities.

Trade union activism has also taken up virtuality. The unions have maintained contact with their affiliated members, as have federations and confederations with the groups that they form part of. They have issued and published numerous statements; they have taken the pulse of the working conditions and



health of teachers; they have conducted national surveys to identify the conditions of teachers during the pandemic; they have carried out solidarity and support campaigns for the most excluded communities.

Education organizations have been particularly strident in identifying and denouncing situations that affect the right to education, the working conditions of teaching staff, and risks to the health of the educational community, among others. They have formed part of the mobilizations that have remained active during the pandemic. In some countries they have achieved being able to sit down at negotiating tables with the authorities and, in particular, have made proposals on telework and non-face-to-face education. The experiences of this period are particularly valuable, allowing the identification of some opportunities for trade union action, not only for the situation of the pandemic, but also for the period that is to follow it:

- Systematization in each country and dissemination of the contributions made by teachers and the essential role they have played in upholding the right to education despite state ineffectiveness and the adverse conditions. This investigation, together with those carried out in some countries by trade unions, provides abundant information to confront the attacks on the image of teachers that have been launched during the pandemic, as well as to refute the arguments that seek to diminish the labor rights of teaching staff. It provides forceful information that can be disseminated by different means, as appropriate to each country and situation. A regional outreach campaign can also be launched by EILA to serve as an umbrella for national and local actions.

- Systematization of the experiences of union activity, both that which is carried out within the organizations and those of political incidence, with promotion on the regional level of a process of inter-learning for the collective appropriation of this experience. Education organizations have faced enormous challenges in this pandemic, leaving a wealth of experience in a wide range of fields. Learning, in general, has remained within the organization

or at the national level. After a year and a half of pandemic, collecting these experiences and sharing them can have a multiplier effect on the actions of organizations, in particular towards the defense of the education budget and progress towards adequate legislation on telework in the region. This is a task that EILA can promote.

- Promotion within each education trade union and federation of policies of equality and co-responsibility in care work and promotion of the ratification in each country of ILO Convention No. 156 on workers with family responsibilities. The pandemic has revealed the essential nature of care provision and the injustice in the way in which society organizes this. In this period, more than ever families have been left with the responsibility of meeting the care needs of all their members and more than ever this task has been placed on women. This study makes it clear that there is an urgent need for change. The goal must not be to help women to reconcile paid work and housework at home, because this maintains the unfair division of care provision. Rather, emphasis should be made on co-responsibility for care provision between men and women, as well as among families, states, businesses, and communities. This is an appropriate time for education organizations to consider what they can do to promote equality and co-responsibility on an internal level. It is also an opportune time to push for the adoption of ILO Convention No. 156 together with other trade union organizations.

- Promotion within each education union and federation of measures to prevent violence against women and to support teachers experiencing this, while promoting in each country the ratification of ILO Convention No. 190 on violence and harassment. This study shows that unionized teachers expect their organizations to respond to the violence they experience, especially since in the pandemic they have been subjected to workplace violence and cyberbullying (both linked to work and telework) more frequently than other forms of violence. Teachers' proposals are clear: first of all, legal representation for those who experience violence, but also awareness-raising and prevention



campaigns and training within trade union organizations. The campaign launched by EILA at the end of 2021 to promote the ratification of ILO Convention No. 190 on violence and harassment in the workplace allows each trade union organization to strengthen its efforts in this field.

- UNESCO, the OAS' Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and ILO to demand and support their intervention in defense of the right to education and the work of teachers in the region and in each country. These bodies have the opportunity and competence to study the status of these rights, to identify and indicate problems, and to create proposals for states to restore rights and ensure that there are no setbacks to these. The IACHR, at the request of the organizations involved, may authorize hearings to receive national or multi-country reports on particular situations, in this case, on the right to education and respect for the labor rights of teachers.

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ARGENTINA

Women teachers defend education over neoliberal embers

Ana Carcedo

1. Argentina in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic: A weakened state and a society battered by four years of extreme neoliberal policies

1.1 High human development with strong internal inequalities

Argentina is one of the largest and most populous countries in Latin America. It has the second largest total area at 2,780,400 km² (1,073,500 sq mi), and the fourth largest population with 45.2 million inhabitants at the end of 2020⁴. It includes extensive geographical and human diversity with a high urban concentration; the vast majority of the population lives in urban areas (92.5%) with only a small minority residing in rural areas (7.5%)(CEPALSTAT). According to the 2010 census, 47% of the population is concentrated in eight large, agglomerated areas, with 37% in the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires (AMBA by its initials in Spanish). About one million inhabitants are Indigenous or descendants of Native peoples (2.38% of the total population), approximately 150,000 are of African descent (0.37%), and around 1.8 million were born in another country (4.5%) (INDEC online consultation).⁵

Argentina is a decentralized federal state, made up of a national state and 24 autonomous jurisdictions comprising 23 provinces and the City of Buenos Aires, the capital. Its political system is bicameral and presidential. Each jurisdiction has its own constitution and three powers that are autonomous to the national state.

The country has undergone significant demographic changes in recent decades, mainly due to a sustained fall in the fertility rate and an increase in life

⁴ Brazil is larger than Argentina in terms of surface area. Brazil, Mexico and Colombia surpass it in population.

⁵ <https://www.indec.gob.ar/indec/web/Nivel4-Tema-2-41-135>

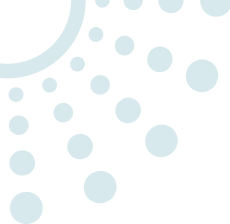
expectancy. It is in the process of advanced demographic transition, with an increasing portion of the population aged 65 and over (11% in 2020), although the younger group remains dominant. 40% of the population is under the age of 25 and 24% is between the ages of five and nineteen. That is, about one in every four people is of an age at which they are expected to be undertaking primary and secondary education (own calculations based on CEPALSTAT online consultation).⁶

Argentina is among the countries with very high human development, with a Human Development Index (HDI) value of 0.845 in 2019. Globally, it ranks 46th according to this indicator, and second in Latin America, only surpassed by Chile, which is in 43rd place with an HDI value of 0.851 (UN, 2020).

This high level of development for the country as a whole is undermined by significant internal inequalities. When adjusting the HDI for inequality, its value drops by 13.7%, representing a reduction to 0.729, which in turn implies a drop of four places in the world ranking. The Inequality-Adjusted Life Expectancy Index drops from 0.872 to 0.797, the Inequality-Adjusted Education Index drops from 0.855 to 0.804 and the Inequality-Adjusted Income Index drops from 0.809 to 0.606 (UN, 2020). As can be seen, inequalities affect income more than they do life expectancy, and affect both of these more than they do education.

Furthermore, women and men do not enjoy the high level of national development equally. The HDI for men in 2019 was 0.84, while for women it was 0.835. This difference in favor of men is not due to life expectancy or the education index, since in both cases these indicators are better for women. The reason for this difference in the HDI lies in income inequality. The Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of the male population is almost twice that of the female one, at US\$27,826 and US\$14,872 respectively. The Gender Inequality Index

⁶ <https://estadisticas.cepal.org/cepalstat/tabulador/ConsultaIntegrada.asp?IdAplicacion=1&id-Tema=1&idIndicador=31&idioma=e>



for the country is 0.328, a value that places it in 75th place. That is to say it drops 19 positions with respect to the order defined by the HDI (UN, 2020).

It should be noted that, as in many Latin American countries, in Argentina there is a consolidated trend towards women having more years of education and attaining higher educational levels than men. In the third quarter of 2019, among the urban population aged 25 and over, 35.2% of women and 30.7% of men had university studies, while men were more present among those with completed secondary school as the highest educational level attained. Despite this, there is strong horizontal segregation by sex in the sectors and career paths in which women and men are trained. Women are more present than men in the humanities and arts (60% of the total), social sciences (59.6%), and medical and health sciences (74.6%), while men make up the majority in the areas of engineering and technology (66.5%) and natural and exact sciences (59.8%) (UN WOMEN, 2020).

The higher educational levels of women do not result in a favorable position in the labor market, which remains discriminatory. The economic participation of women is much lower than that of men (at 49.2% and 70.2% respectively in the third quarter of 2019). In addition, women are particularly affected by the difficulty of accessing employment and the poor quality of jobs available to them. In 2019, the unemployment rate was 10.8% for women compared to 8.9% for men, and informality rates were 36% and 34.2% respectively. The differences in income from work are also notable; among the total employed population the gender gap in income⁷ is at 29%, while among those working in the informal sector it is at 35.6%. The gaps increase when it comes to the lower-income population, in which in the 10% of the population with lowest

⁷ Gender gap. “This is the difference between women and men in relation to a given indicator. It is calculated as the quotient between the results of the indicator for women and men” (INDEC, 2021b). In this case, it represents the percentage of lesser salary received by women than men. Interpretation of this shows that for every 100 pesos that men receive, women receive 29 less, that is, 71 pesos.

incomes, 66.1% are women, while in the 10% of the population with highest incomes, women represent only 35.3% (DNElyG, 2020). In the labor market, horizontal segregations similar to those already mentioned in education occur, with some sectors strongly feminized and others strongly masculinized. Education is one of the areas in which there is a strong presence of women; in 2002 women represented 72.8% of total education workers.

The limitations on equal access to the labor market with the same conditions as men have a negative impact on women's economic autonomy. In 2019, 16.8% of women aged 15 and over did not have their own income, a situation in which 10.6% of men in the same age range found themselves (CEPALSTAT, online consultation).

These inequalities in the labor market and in access to income are largely due to the fact that domestic work in one's own home remains a responsibility assigned socially to women in a disproportionate manner. In the third quarter of 2013, 88.9% of women living in urban areas of at least 2,000 people and who are at least 18 years of age performed these tasks compared to 57.9% of men in the same age range. That is, women spend on average about twice as many hours a day on such tasks as men do, at 6.4 and 3.4 hours respectively (INDEC, 2013). With this workload, women can devote less time than men to paid work, at 15.2 and 33.2 average hours per week respectively. Considering both types of activities, the average weekly working day of women exceeds that of men by more than seven hours (57.7 and 50.5 hours respectively) (CEPALSTAT online consultation). That is, women work more while receiving less economic recompense and social recognition for this work.

With regard to violence against women, since 2009 Argentina has a Comprehensive Protection Law to prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women in the areas in which they are involved in interpersonal relationships (Argentine National Congress, 2009). Furthermore, at the beginning of 2019 the Micaela Law on mandatory gender training for all persons participating in



the three branches of Government was passed (Argentine National Congress, 2019). In the entire year of 2019, the country registered 247 femicides of cis-gender women, and 5 femicides of trans women and transvestites (Argentine Supreme Court of Justice, 2020).

In the field of political participation, the Ley de cupo femenino (Female Quota Law, Congress of the Argentine Nation, 1991) was passed, establishing a minimum of 30% of women in the lists for electoral candidacies. In the following years, this law fomented the approval of similar rules in provinces, political parties, trade unions, universities, professional associations and, in some instances, the private sector. In 2017, the Ley de paridad de género (Gender Parity Law, Congress of the Argentine Nation, 2017) on the lists of candidacies for the national legislature and the Mercosur Parliament was passed.

The last elections held in 2019 placed women in 42% of National Assembly seats and in 39% of Senate seats. Representation is lower at the most local levels. There are women in 33% of the provincial legislatures, 10% of the intendencies and only 8.3% in the provincial governments. The Fernández government has 21% female ministers, the highest female representation in the history of Argentina, which contrasts sharply with 9% in the Macri administration (UN WOMEN, 2020).

In education, the situation of generalized deterioration due to neoliberal policies is compounded by attacks on the labor rights of teachers and on negotiation forums. National Teaching Parity (PND by its initials in Spanish), an achievement made in 2008 by the trade union movement, has been the framework for negotiations on various aspects related to teaching, and not merely labor ones. In the Macri administration, the scope of PND was restricted in such a way “that, although they do not imply its elimination, according to specialists they devoid it of content and cause it to lose strength” (Nasanovsky, 2019, paragraph 1).

In the words of one of the interviewees, the change of government represents:

an opportunity to resume addressing indispensable issues related to the educational agenda [such as] the national teaching parity that we had achieved in 2003 when Ernesto Kirchner won government. The possibility of discussing educational and pedagogical issues exists in that framework, the possibility of discussing gender, human rights and educational inclusion policies and that is what we were doing when the pandemic in Argentina began in March 2020. (Interview with women leaders of CTERA, June 2020)


In public universities, a collective agreement has been reached since 2015 to regulate working conditions in these institutions. However, as indicated by the leaders interviewed, the autonomy enjoyed by each university has become a challenge to ensure that what was agreed upon in that instrument is implemented in practice, coupled with the urgency of taking telework into consideration. The following is stated by the interviewees:

So, from when we achieved [that agreement] up to today, it has required and permanently requires complementary political work, which is union political work, to guarantee the effective implementation of the regulations at the level of each of the universities. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

Getting the universities to agree with the unions regarding on what terms it should be understood that the labor rights of university teaching staff are respected in the situation of remote work. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

The situation in private universities is disadvantageous, both because of the working conditions and because they do not yet have a strong trade union organization. The interviewees state:

What also happens is that in private universities there is practically no unionization [...]. They have difficulty achieving this due to the levels of precarious-



ness and persecution existing in the organization. These are very high in private universities. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

The country suffers a deficit in the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), especially in homes, as required to deal with non-face-to-face education in times of pandemic. In the last quarter of 2019, 60.9% of households (of those included in 31 urban agglomerations) had a computer and 82.9% had internet access. These values decreased slightly in the country's rural areas (59.7% and 81.9% respectively) (INDEC, 2020).

1.2 Facing the pandemic from a weakened and mortgaged state

The pandemic burst onto the scene as Argentina was initiating a change of national government,⁸ which also represented a change from the previous four years of the Macri administration. This was a period characterized by neoliberal policies marked by an increase in state indebtedness and a decrease in social investment, amongst other things.

The policies adopted in the period 2015-2019 affected the national economy. In three of these years, the GDP decreased; in 2018 there was a contraction of 2.5% and in 2019 this was 2.1% (DNElyG, 2020 and ECLAC, 2021a). Inflation skyrocketed in this period. In 2019 it reached 53.8%, the highest in almost three decades (DNElyG, 2020). Among the factors fueling inflation were the violent escalations of service rates decreed by the Macri administration: electricity rates rose between 3400% and 5500%, while gas rates rose between 1300% and 1500% with maximums of 1900% (Giménez, 2021).⁹

The labor market was affected with a significant increase in unemployment, which grew from 7.7% in 2016 to 9.2% in 2019. (INDEC, 2021a). This decrea-

⁸ *The change of government took place on December 10, 2019.*

⁹ *In August 2016 the Supreme Court of Justice annulled the gas tariff increases.*


se in sources of income, together with inflation and cuts in social investment caused the incidence of poverty to increase from 25.7% in 2017 to 35.5% in 2019, while extreme poverty grew from 4.8% to 8% in the same period (ECLAC, 2021b, citing official sources).

On the other hand, the neoliberal measures of the Macri administration on indebtedness compromised the country's present and future, as well as its possibilities for real development by limiting the options of the following administrations that would have to operate while servicing overwhelming public debt. In addition, subsequent governments inherit an Argentina with a strong dependence on external financing and on creditors and bond buyers. In 2019, the gross debt of the central administration was equivalent to 88.8% of the GDP, as compared to 52.6% in 2015 (Argentine Ministry of Economy, 2021). One of the Macri administration's measures was to downgrade the character of the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Health by turning these into Secretariats, as well as reducing resources for these and other areas such as education.

In summary, the new Fernández government inherited a situation of severe economic and social crisis, with weakened institutions and with severe limitations due to previously acquired debt. In these conditions, the government had to face the health emergency after a few short months. The women trade union leaders interviewed noted:

This represents a very serious social situation because the Macri government had left health, education, [and] social assistance defunded. That is, the first emergency was to provide hospitals with critical beds that had been defunded, strengthen health, guarantee the right to health for all Argentines, in our case, to strengthen the issues of education and the education agenda also linked to the pandemic. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

No longer having a Ministry of Health and instead having a Health Secretariat in the Macri government, which was recovered with the national and popularly



elected government, but just when the pandemic gripped us, with the immense engineering that our government had to do so that from something dismantled in terms of public health and education policies, it could bring these back in the middle of the COVID pandemic. (Interview with women leaders of CTERA, June 2020)

Argentina is one of the countries hardest hit by the incidence of COVID-19 and its mortality rates. Contrary to what happened in much of Latin America, in this country there was no decrease in the incidence of COVID-19 by mid-2020. Since the beginning of May of that year, the number of daily infections increased steadily until reaching 18,326 at the end of October. Subsequently, it dropped until the end of the year to rebound in January 2021, by the middle of that month reaching around 11,700 daily infections (Worldometer 2021, online consultation).

On March 3, 2021, a year after the start of the pandemic in Argentina, more than 2.1 million people had been diagnosed with this disease (4.8% of the population) and more than 52,000 had died from this cause (Worldometers, 2021). At that time, Argentina far exceeded the world average in both infection and mortality rates and was among the top twenty countries in both the number of diagnosed cases and the number of deceased.

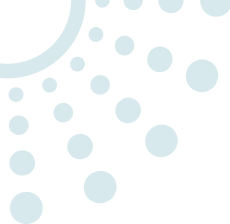
On March 3, 2020, the Fernández administration began to enforce measures.¹⁰ It established a criterion to test only suspected cases of COVID-19 for situations related to trips abroad. Three days later it set maximum prices for food and hygiene products. On March 12, a health emergency was declared and mandatory isolation for 14 days was established for people who contracted the disease, people close to them, people suspected of having it, and people arriving from abroad after passing through “affected areas” [sic]. On March 15, classes were temporarily suspended. On March 16, the entry of non-resident foreigners was prohibited for fifteen days. On March 18 and 19, mandatory

¹⁰ *The most relevant measures taken by the central administration for the purposes of this study are mentioned here. The provinces also passed measures adapted to their particular situations, so the response to the pandemic in Argentina has been more complex than is detailed here.*

quarantine was established for all non-essential activities along with mandatory preventive isolation for all people not engaged in essential activities, which lasted until November 6 (ECLAC COVID-19 Observatory, online consultation).

As of March 16, measures were taken to counteract impacts on families and the productive sector. Included among these were an increase in public investment in infrastructure, financing of housing construction, monetary aid transfers to people affected by income loss, food deliveries, temporary suspension of debt payment, prohibition of cutting off services due to non-payment for some populations, the offer of soft loans for SMEs and key sectors, temporary tax exemption and social security payments for the most affected productive sectors, complementary salaries paid by the National Government for vulnerable companies and SMEs (REPRO and ATP programs), interest-free loans for informal and autonomous activities, a temporary rent freeze and the prohibition of evictions. Job layoffs were prohibited and the temporary suspension of contracts with a payment of at least 75% of net salary was approved (ECLAC COVID-19 observatory online consultation and ECLAC, 2021b).

When on March 19, 2020, the national government declared mandatory quarantine for all non-essential activities, it enabled telework and established this for the public administration. In August 2020, a federal law on telework was approved that established equal rights and obligations for people working under this modality. In addition, it recognized the right to voluntarily change modality except in situations of force majeure with reversibility when the worker so requests, the right to disconnect and the right to negotiate schedules when the worker has dependents in their charge. Laws were enacted to establish that the employer must provide the equipment and the software required, as well as maintenance, repairs and compensation for expenses incurred by the working person, such as internet connectivity and consumption of services for the performance of work in a place other than the workplace (National Congress of Argentina, 2020). The soft loans made available included covering the acquisition of equipment for telework (ECLAC COVID 19 Observatory online consultation).



The suspension of face-to-face classes was extended until the end of the year, during which time the Ministry of Education took measures to facilitate distance teaching in public education. The *Seguimos Educando* (We Continue Teaching) platform was created, providing pedagogical resources, and the national radio and TV stations aired educational programs twice a day. For the return to school, the Consejo Asesor para la *Planificación del Regreso a las Aulas* (Advisory Council for Back-to-School Planning) was established, which was responsible for designing protocols for the resumption of face-to-face classes. The government allocated a line of budget to invest in infrastructure, education and tourism (ECLAC COVID-19 Observatory online consultation).

From early on, the national administration took measures related to care, not only in the field of health and in the face of the pandemic. Campaigns to raise awareness about the care provided within households and to promote co-responsibility were developed; in addition, support was given to families with children, dependent people requiring care, as well as pregnant women. These supports sometimes included monetary aid transfers and in-kind assistance. People with these types of responsibilities were allowed to circulate when they needed to and the absence from work of a parent who must take care of children was justified during the suspension of face-to-face classes. The right to work and the health of domestic workers was also protected. A salary increase was established for these workers, and leave with benefits¹¹ was recognized for those who were over 60 years old, who were pregnant, who belonged to a group suffering higher risks to their health, who had school children in their charge or who worked in a house where there are people in quarantine due to the pandemic (ECLAC COVID-19 Observatory online consultation). The Emergency Family Income (IFE by the initials in Spanish), initially proposed as a once-off monetary transfer, was extended until the month of August, with three payments totaling the equivalent of US\$433. Argentina is one of the Latin American countries with the highest coverage of this type of aid; 8.8 million

¹¹ Paid leave.

people received this, representing 32% of the population between 18 and 65 years old, 56% of whom were women (ECLAC, 2021 b).

With regard to violence against women, at the beginning of the pandemic Argentina established a Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity, newly created by the Fernández administration in December 2019. The will of the government thus joined with the strength of a feminist and women's movement with a long history, strong legitimacy and great capacity for dialog and political advocacy. At the beginning of the pandemic, various measures were taken to facilitate seeking help and protection from violence, as well as reporting this. Included among these measures was maintaining and reinforcing a support telephone line (144), as this was considered an essential service. Complementary channels to line 144 were opened using WhatsApp, an email address and an application for phones was created. The red mask program was implemented in pharmacies¹², a guide to geo-referenced services was promoted, integral protective refuge homes were strengthened, and the Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity's coordination with other State entities and civil society organizations was strengthened. In addition, the reception of allegations of violence by the police at the location of the complainant was promoted, as was the provision of attention by specialized teams. At the same time, women and LGBTIQ people who needed to leave their homes due to the violence they experienced were exempted from compliance with isolation and the prohibition of movement orders (ECLAC COVID-19 Observatory online consultation).

1.3 The negative impacts were worse on sectors that were previously the most unprotected

The measures adopted during the pandemic had similar effects in Argentina to those that occurred in other countries of the region: a drop in production, a contraction of the labor market and an increase in poverty. According to preliminary estimates by ECLAC, Argentina's GDP decreased by 11.5% in 2020,

¹² Requesting a red mask is the way to communicate in pharmacies that help is required due to experiences of violence.



representing one of the strongest declines in the continent¹³ (ECLAC, 2021b). Growth of 7.5% is projected for 2021 (ECLAC-PAHO, 2021).

For the entire working population, the initial blow to the labor market was strong, impacting on all indicators. The participation rate and the employment rate each fell by 10.3% while the unemployment rate increased by 25%. The drop in employment was stronger for some groups of the population. 53% of the jobs lost corresponded to informal jobs,¹⁴ representing a sector in which occupation decreased from 34.5% to 23.8%. The fall in employment among people aged 65 and over was 51.1%, while among those under 29 it fell by 31.9%. Educational levels also made a difference. For those who had completed primary school as the highest educational level attained, employment fell by 30.9%; among those who'd completed secondary school, the drop was of 21.8%; and, for people with higher certification and tertiary education, it fell by 15.5%. A total of 346,481 people ceased contributing towards their pensions, representing a drop of 2.8% (ECLAC, 2021b).

The recovery maintained and, in some cases, widened gender gaps. Comparing the quarter corresponding to the months of April to June 2020 and the same quarter in 2021, the occupation of women decreased by 21.5%, while that of men decreased by 20.5%. (ECLAC, 2021b). In the third quarter of 2021, the activity rate of women was 45.4%, while that of men was 64.5%; unemployment rates were respectively 13% and 10.6%, while those for schedule underemployment were 14.2% and 12.8%. The informality rate was also higher for women than for men, at 29.2% and 28.3% respectively (INDEC, 2021b).

The contraction of the labor market, as these data indicate, more strongly affected the previously most unprotected sectors, which increases poverty levels. The social protection measures implemented by the Argentine State during the pandemic only managed to counteract a minimum part of that effect on the population. Poverty in 2020 was estimated to affect 37% of the population, a figure

¹³ Informality refers to salaried people without retirement provisions.

¹⁴ Informality refers to salaried people without retirement provisions.


that would have grown to 38.8% without state assistance. The effect is more significant when it comes to extreme poverty, which was estimated at 5.4% and which would have risen to 8.1% without state assistance (ECLAC, 2021b).

1.4 Trade union action at a crossroads

Initially the measures adopted by the Fernández administration achieved great consensus and strong support for the new government. Subsequently, as occurred in other countries, neoliberal sectors and the most reluctant in terms of human rights began a campaign questioning the public health measures and discrediting the new government. As indicated in the group interview with women trade union leaders from Argentina, in 2020 and 2021, these sectors called for protest demonstrations and taking control of public streets, knowing that the actors most aware of the risks of the pandemic, in particular the unions, were not going to do the same. This posed a significant challenge to the trade union movement, as indicated in the interviews

That is what the pandemic has represented for the trade union struggle, a limit on some matters due to the issue of public spaces. For us, for the trade union movement, the street is the place where we feel most comfortable in making our demands. No, there was a need to change the form of trade union struggle. That was a huge challenge, that was a difficulty, especially given that there is a dispute with the right wing in Argentina. We are seeing what is happening in Colombia, what is happening in Chile, what is happening in part of Latin America. (Interview with women leaders of CTERA, June 2020)

So, we are discussing what we do to show that we are united, that we have an agenda that we are discussing and that we are thinking about how to solve our issues. And it's quite difficult with social distancing, and using technology is our way of communicating and doing things [...]. It also has a limit. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)



The leaders interviewed affirmed that it requires great creativity to continue with trade union action, not only due to the limitations of the public health measures, but also given the political situation in which they must claim rights from a government they support and that is strongly attacked by the most conservative sectors. The interviewees comment:

We are discussing salary recomposition with a government that we support, asking for resources from a state that we know is defunded, that we know has to respond to our sector, but that also has to respond to sectors that have been much more harmed, not only by the pandemic, but by the previous years. So that obliges us not only to be creative in finding a way to pose our claims effectively, but it also obliges us to engage in strong debates about how to raise these claims. That is somewhat the crossroads we are at right now. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

2. Educating in Argentina in times of pandemic¹⁵

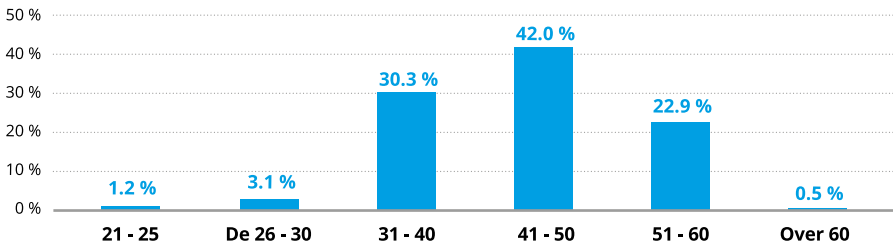
The measures adopted during the pandemic in Argentina, in particular teleworking, confinement, the temporary suspension of non-essential activities and the closure of educational institutions, suddenly disrupted both the world of work and that of homes. All this affected the educational community in multiple ways, especially for women teachers.

¹⁵ This chapter includes information collected in a survey that was applied to women teachers affiliated with CTERA during the months of June and July 2021. It also includes information provided in group interviews with CONADU and CTERA leaders conducted on September 25, 2020, and June 30, 2021, respectively. When women teachers are referred to, this should be understood to mean those who have been consulted by any of these means. As will be seen later, the survey was applied almost entirely to female primary and secondary teachers, so the figures included in this section do not include what was experienced by women teachers working at higher levels.

2.1 The women teachers surveyed have high levels of education

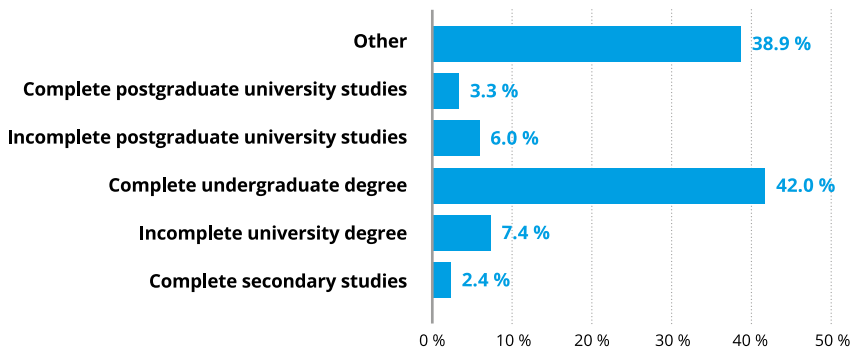
Approximately three out of four of the women teachers surveyed (76.6% of the total) were between the ages of 20 and 50, and slightly more than one in three (35.3%) were under 30. Half had undergraduate university studies, with those who completed these predominating (43.4%) over those who had not completed them (7.9%); 8.6% had postgraduate degrees (5.3% complete and 3.3% incomplete). About one in four had tertiary studies (22.9%) and 14.6% had completed other studies, especially in teaching and diplomas. Only 2.6% had completed only secondary education.

Figure 1. Argentina. 2021, Women teachers by age



Results of the survey carried out on female teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

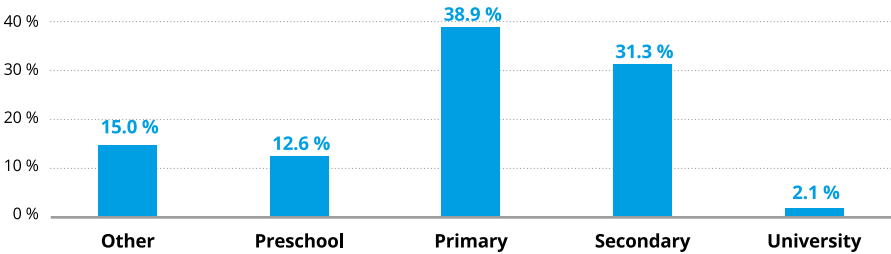
Figure 2. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by educational level



Results of the survey carried out on female teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

Levels of training, in general, exceed those required to work as teachers, since a large majority work at preschool (11.7%), primary (39.6%) and secondary (32.1%) levels. 2.2% work in university education and 14.4% teach at other levels, predominantly non-university tertiary and higher education.

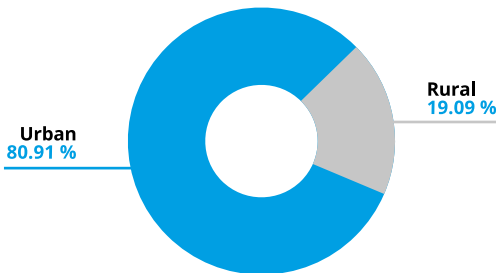
Figure 3. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by the level at which they teach



Results of the survey carried out on female teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

At 81.1%, the vast majority work in institutions located in urban areas, while only 18.9% work in rural areas. This result is reflective of the high urban concentration of Argentina.

Figure 4. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by area where they teach

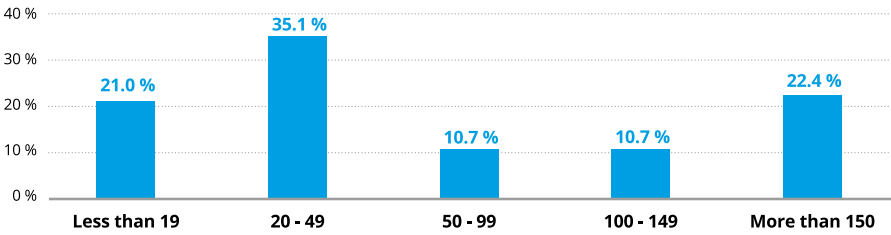


Results of the survey carried out on female teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

The majority of the women teachers surveyed have fewer than 50 students in

their charge, and specifically 20.1% have less than 19 students, while 35.3% have between 20 and 49 students. However, 11.2% have between 50 and 95 students, 10.4% have between 100 and 149 students, and 22.9% have over 150 students. In the latter cases, the high numbers of students in virtual and distance modalities represent a greater workload than they do in the face-to-face modality.

Figure 5. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by the number of students in their charge



Results of the survey carried out on female teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

2.2 The majority of the women teachers live with children and adolescents.

The vast majority of the women teachers surveyed live with other people (93.3%), with the presence of children and adolescents being the most frequent (44.3%). The presence of adult men is noticeably lower (28.6%), as is that of other adult women (7.2%). In just over one in ten households there are elderly people (10.4%) and the presence of people with disabilities and sick people is much lower (1.9% and 0.8%, respectively).

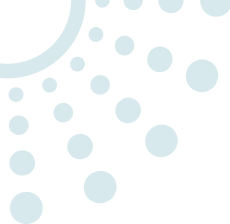
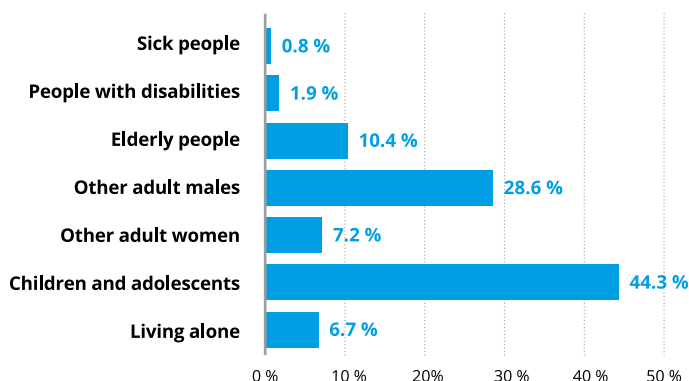


Figure 6. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by the people with whom they live



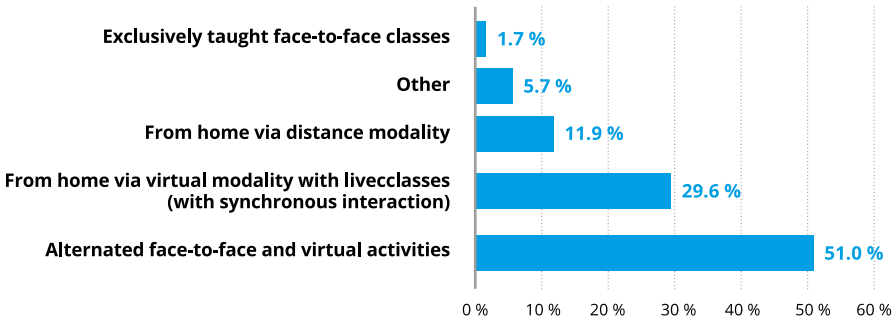
Results of the survey carried out on female teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

Not all households with children and adolescents include other younger adults besides the teacher answering the survey. In these cases, the teachers faced a greater burden of work given the presence of minors in the household all the time, since other external support was not possible due to the health confinement measures. The presence of older adults indicates that there exist non-nuclear households in which in some cases these people require care, and in others, they may act as caregivers for others.

2.3 Working from home without adequate conditions to do so

The vast majority of the surveyed teachers worked from their homes in different modalities during the pandemic. At 51%, just over half alternated face-to-face with virtual activities; 29.6% only had virtual live classes; 11.9% worked in distance mode; only 1.7% carried out activities exclusively in the face-to-face modality; and 5.7% worked under other modalities and combinations of these.

Figure 7. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by work modality during the pandemic




Results of the survey carried out on female teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

As was the case for many other people, the homes of the teachers are not designed to be worked from, nor do they possess the conditions to do so. They are also not apt for the sharing of space and resources required to host the diversity of activities that had to be carried out within them during the pandemic on a permanent basis, as expressed by an interviewee:

And the imposition of classes; no! Our house is very small and I have one child in English classes while the other one is on Zoom with the symbol for literature so they have to read, while we have to be teleworking and I have to teach class so they have to stay quiet. It's crazy. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

Modality changes were sudden and, with exceptions, lacked prior preparation, as manifested in the interviews:

When it still hadn't been decided that school would no longer be face-to-face, this was being discussed on a national level. On a Friday night, the dean passed a resolution before the Supreme Council's Referendum suspending the face-to-face semester, stating classes would be virtual, on a Friday night



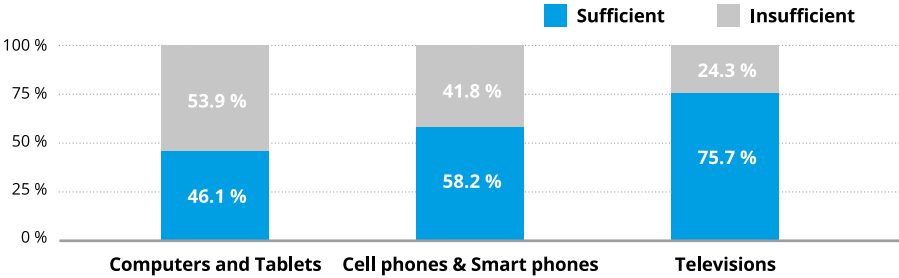
[...]. The semester hadn't even started, and we hadn't even met our students and suddenly we were not going to go into the classroom any more. I think that took us all by surprise, not knowing what to do. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

Educational institutions were not equally prepared for the new situation. In universities, the use of digital resources is usually more frequent than in the early cycles of education, but sometimes there also existed differences within universities, as the women in this study show:

The situations are different in each university, there are different situations in each work sector. I teach at the UBA (University of Buenos Aires), which is a very large university, and even within the university itself there are different situations in different faculties [...]. Some universities already had experience [in virtual teaching], some faculties already had experience in using the virtual campus as support for face-to-face courses, but at least they already had it in place, it was working, while other faculties did not. [...] At least at the UBA each faculty resolved this however they could, without having clear guidelines that were uniform for all faculties, with different working conditions established for each faculty. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

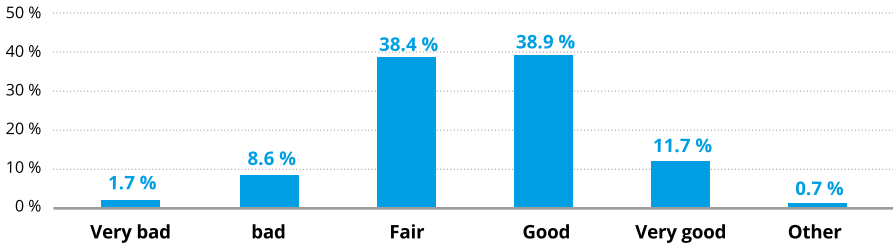
Like all people who perform telework, the women teachers had to share the equipment available at home with family members also working remotely, as well as with children and adolescents studying from home. This represented an unexpected demand for equipment for which not all families were well prepared.

Figure 8. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by availability of equipment for telework and virtual study



In more than half of the teachers’ homes, 53.9% of the total, the number of computers and tablets were insufficient to meet all needs. There were fewer problems with cell phones and smartphones, since 58.2% of respondents considered that these were sufficient. In the case of televisions, the vast majority at 75.7% had this equipment available.

Figure 9. Argentina. 2021. Quality of internet connectivity for working



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

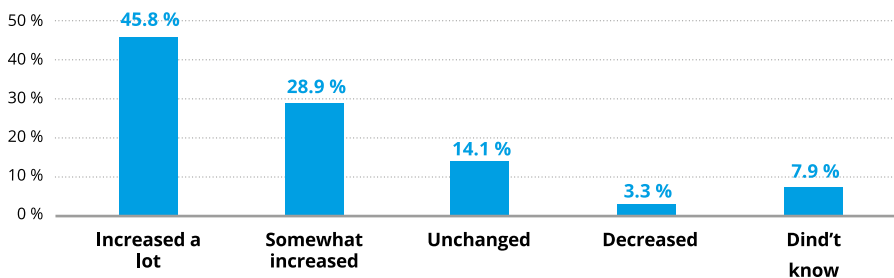
Internet connectivity was not of sufficient quality for everyone either. For 50.6% this service was good or very good, while for 38.4% it was fair and for 10.3% it was bad or very bad. This is stated by one of the participants as follows:

We found that there are many workers who telework from their own cell phones, or from computers that perhaps did not have the best tools. But

then, on the other hand, universities also had experience in virtual courses. My university has several decades of virtual experience already in virtual mode. In some courses, this also implied difficulties accessing the campus not only for students, but also for teachers, who, due to the different trajectories they have had, didn't use to even check their emails. In those cases it was a complex job, and it remains a complex job. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

These limitations affected not only the education sector, but also represented barriers for students, sometimes in ways more severe than was the case for teachers, where their families faced structurally disadvantageous economic and social situations that were aggravated by the measures taken during the pandemic. The result was an increase in the number of students leaving their studies in this period, a situation that 45.8% of the teachers surveyed considered to have increased a lot and 28.9% considered to have increased somewhat.¹⁶ 14.1% considered there were no changes in this regard and 3.3% considered that there were more students than before.

Figure 10. Argentina. 2021. The number of students dropping out of their studies since the beginning of the pandemic



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

¹⁶ These data, as mentioned, collect the opinion of teachers who, for the most part, work in primary and secondary schools. At higher levels, the situation may have been different.

Suddenly changing from the face-to-face to the non-face-to-face modality confronted teachers with new methodologies and the need to develop new resources, capacities and skills. They also required adequate platforms, whereas those already in operation in educational institutions were not prepared for mass use. The interviewees expressed this as follows:

The Academic Secretariat numbers say that only 15% of the university's teachers are training or have been trained in virtual platforms and virtual tools. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

As much as we are already used to it, at first, it was as if there was a lot of upheaval, a lot of anxiety about the novelty, that forced us as workers to rethink our practices not only in terms of means and working conditions, which forced us to rethink how we teach and how we communicate with students. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

Some of us more than others, in general terms, dealt with it and we found ourselves facing the impossibility of making use of this platform, because the platform did not support the work to be done. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

It has been a shock to move to distance education on our planet, where neither the resources nor the tools were available. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

The lack of technological and pedagogical preparation for the use of ICT for teaching was another limitation that affected even universities.

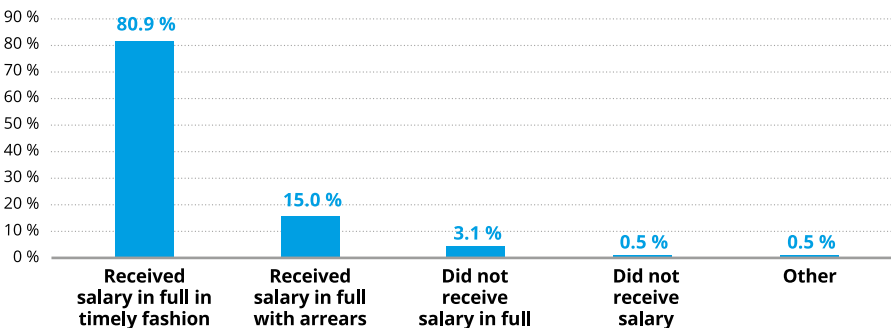
University teaching, due to its characteristics [...] has or has had a greater familiarity with digital tools, but not digital tools for teaching [...]. Normally these have functioned as complementary to face-to-face activities. In

general, university teaching does not occur through virtual channels, and it previously made little use of the tools that, in some way, the universities had been producing, only as auxiliary resources and with a generalized lack of pedagogical preparation for the use of these technologies. So, that [adds] to the material difficulties implied by having to work with these resources themselves, the equipment itself, connectivity itself from a situation of isolation, all of which in many places is shared with other people with whom one lives in isolation, with children and young people not going out to school and also making use of these same tools, the same internet connection and requiring accompaniment, which also unfortunately falls above all on mothers. Added to that situation is the difficulty of not mastering those tools. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

2.4 Job and salary stability during the pandemic

The vast majority of the female teachers surveyed maintained job stability during the pandemic. 91.2% had stable job positions and only 8.8% did not.

Figure 11. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by payment conditions during the pandemic

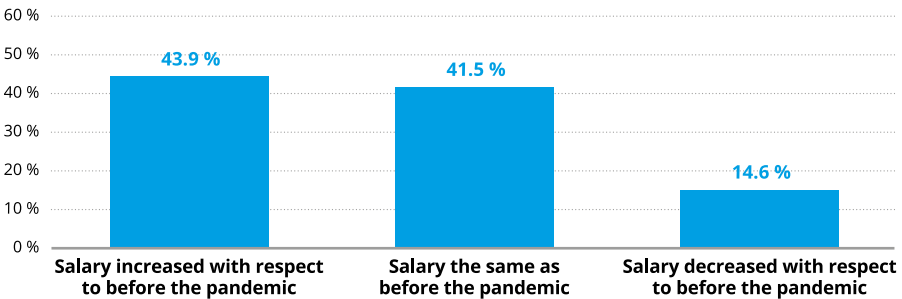


Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

The security of having stable employment was accompanied by salary security. Although the vast majority, at 80.9%, received their full salary in a timely fashion, and 15% received it in full but with arrears, 3.1% did not receive their salaries in full and 0.5% (two teachers) did not receive any salary at all since the beginning of the pandemic up to the time when the survey was conducted in June and July 2021.

Another element of stability was that in most cases their income as teachers did not decrease. Although 14.6% of the respondents found themselves in this situation of reduced income, 41.5% had their income remain the same, while for 43.9%, it increased.

Figure 12. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by changes to teaching income during the pandemic

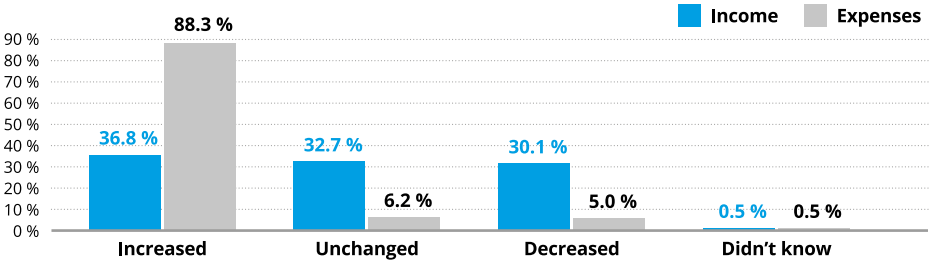


Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

2.5 Family finances worsen during the pandemic

Due to various reasons related to the measures taken during the pandemic, this represented a period of significant changes in family finances. For the most part, the respondents had job and salary stability, but this was not the case for many other people in Argentina who lost their jobs or had their income reduced. This was a situation that some of the teachers' families also experienced. of the teachers' families also experienced. T

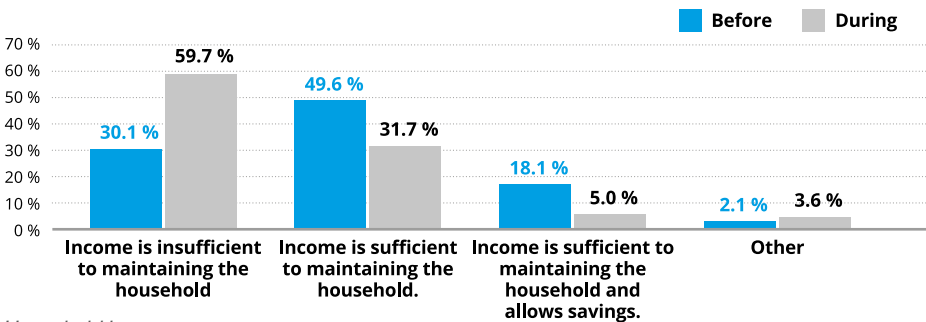
Figure 13. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by changes in household income and expenses since the pandemic began



Source: Survey of women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

Income changed and so did expenses. In the households of 36.8% of the respondents, income increased. For 32.7% they remained the same, and in 30.1% they decreased. These represent similar proportions, about a third in each case. In contrast, at 88.3%, in the vast majority of the households expenses increased, while in only 6.2% did they remain the same, and in 5% they decreased.

Figure 14. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by the sufficiency of income to maintaining their households before and during the pandemic*



* Household income.

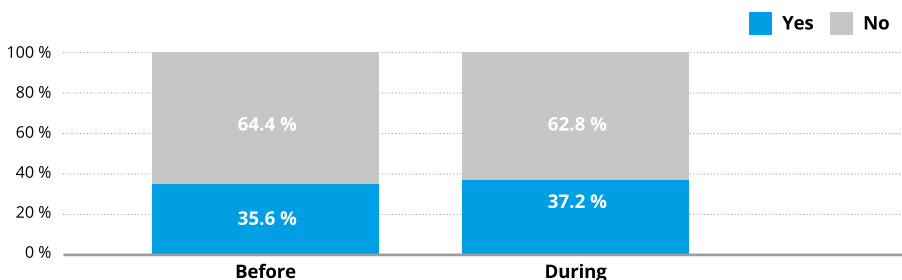
Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

The result of this imbalance between income and expenses was that households in which income was insufficient to support the family increased from one in three to approximately two in three (from 30.1% to 59.7%). The number of households that had sufficient income decreased from about one in two to one

in three (dropping from 49.6% to 31.7%), and the families that previously could add to their savings decreased from about one in six to one in twenty (dropping from 18.1% to 5%).

In addition to the fact that for some respondents their income as teachers increased during the pandemic, another source of resources may have come from activities carried out by some family members that did not previously carry these out or that generated more financial gains during the pandemic. In the case of the respondents, those undertaking additional activities to generate income other than teaching increased slightly from 35.6% to 37.2%.

Figure 15. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by performance of activities apart from teaching to generate income before and during the pandemic



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

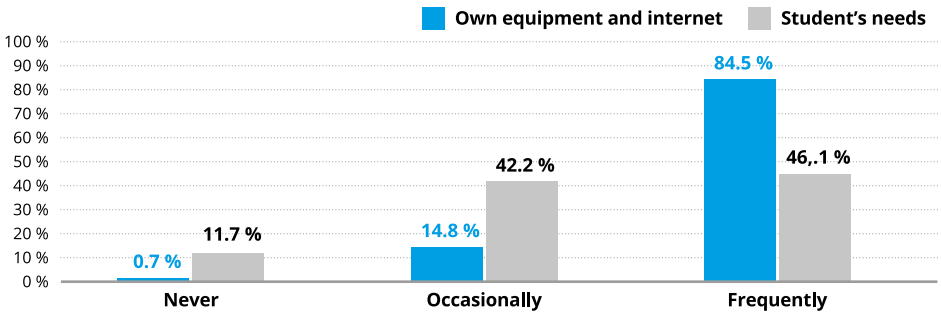
On the other side of the balance sheet, expenses multiplied. One of the reasons for this emphasized by the teachers is the fact that they had to use their income to cover expenses associated with the new work modalities:

Because it was necessary to come up with money from somewhere that sometimes you don't have to be able to pay for connectivity itself. (Interview with women leaders of CTERA, June 2020)

The primary and secondary school teachers surveyed not only covered their own expenses, sometimes they also covered the needs of their students. 84.5% said they frequently allocated part of their resources to acquiring the

equipment required for work and to pay for internet connectivity, 14.8% occasionally did so and only 0.7% never had to do so. When it came to meeting the needs of their students, 46.1% did so frequently, 42.2% occasionally did so and 11.7% never did so.

Figure 16. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by own income spent on equipment, internet and students' needs during the pandemic



Source: Survey of women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

Although in some cases the fact of not going in to the educational institution represented savings in transportation and clothing and footwear expenses, household expenses increase because the whole family was at home all the time. The following is stated by the interviewees:

At the end of the month, you notice a significant expense that occurs from commuting. I live in one city, and I work every day in another city that requires me to travel for an hour every day [...], so, yes, there are much less travel expenses. But the expenditure is made on other things. That is, it is not spent on public transport or food, but food expenditure in my house increased. Usually, none of the four of us who live here have been here, there are always four snacks, and including breakfasts, we all had breakfast, and, well, other expenses increased. That is, economically expenses were reduced, but not so much. I think more than anything else, it has to do with the issue of transport. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

In countries where wages are low, transport represents a very significant part of the salary [...]. By having to stay at home, teachers made a saving, in inverted commas, on transport and clothing because to go to school, no matter how humbly you dress, you have to buy sneakers or shoes, you have to buy something more or less decent, and that is a saving. (Interview with women leaders of CTERA, June 2020)


In addition, we have to pay for connectivity, not to mention food or if there is an older adult or whatever. (Interview with women leaders of CTERA, June 2020)

2.6 Teaching and care work has multiplied

The new non-face-to-face modalities multiplied the hours that teachers must allocate to teaching. Preparing classes, teaching them, and assisting students are some of the activities that demand more time, with new tasks added, such as distributing work guidebooks and other materials house by house in the case of primary and secondary school teachers. In this regard, the participants indicated:

This makes the workload much greater, because it was necessary to plan in a rush, to plan using tools that are not mastered [...]. So clearly the time it takes you to develop your program and impart the classes is not the same when you more or less master the tools as when you don't even understand how to join a meeting. No. That also generates a load of stress and problems in terms of health, right? (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

It must be said that teachers, primary school teachers, high school teachers, have taken on the work of the pandemic not only in education but also in food, on many occasions, traveling to the most distant places, house by house, to deliver schoolwork or materials or the booklets that the National Ministry created. (Interview with women leaders of CTERA, June 2020)



I can make a simple calculation; you would have to work ten hours a week and, above all, in the first semester when I was teaching alone with fifty students, it easily took me four days a week between assembling the material, uploading texts, imparting the class and sometimes dealing with queries. It took more or less, practically three times as long. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

I, in my case, would not say triple, but double. With planning everything again, transposing all the materials. Yes, twice as much. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

In the case of primary and secondary school teachers, their proximity to the population often led them to get involved in activities that transcended formal education.

Traveling long distances to various places in Argentina, going through neighborhoods and lower income sectors providing support for community kitchens, shelters and community canteens, a very, very large task that exceeds working at school, that exceeds the hourly schedule, that exceeds the hours of paid work that we have, which has to do with the conception of union militancy and of education that we have and that we value so much in our female colleagues. (Interview with women leaders of CTERA, June 2020)

In universities, some dynamics have tended to lead towards work overload for some teachers. In this regard, they mention:

In addition to the issue that is repeated a great deal [...] in all universities we also have the structure of faculties with hierarchies, circular letters, deputies, heads of practical work, assistants, and obviously there's an issue there. It's like a pyramid where the bigger, older ones are up the top [...]. There is a generational distance with those of us who are further down the pyramid and the argument was used a lot about age, and that, "I am not used to technology, I don't know how to use Zoom, I don't know how to upload the

materials to the virtual campus.” For those who have the most power in academia, they don’t work, and all that burden fell on the lower levels of the hierarchies, which are younger people and those who know how to use computers, the millennials. Yes. So, that was a big burden, assuming tasks that, in other times, are distributed throughout the entire teaching team and, in this situation, fell on a particular sector. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

Working from home requires many women to add their teaching work to their domestic work, traditionally unilaterally assigned to them, at the same time and in the same place.

Not only does the working day in times of virtuality or distance education end up changing schedules, but also because, in addition, the woman is at home and as well as the work she does with her students, she also ends up being with her children, because we have a very high percentage of women heads of households, and even those who are not take care of their children at the same time. (Interview with women leaders of CTERA, June 2020)

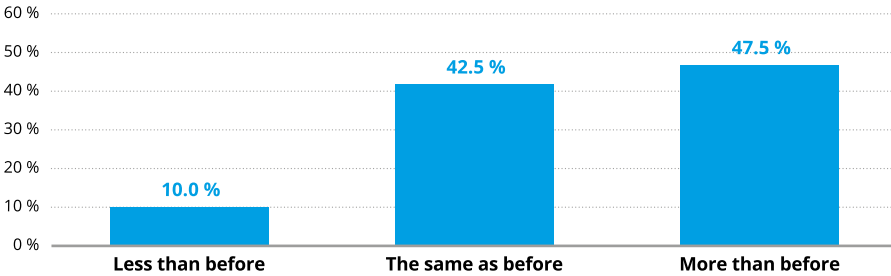
It has to do not only with the issue of guaranteed rights, but even with a culture of maintaining that it is women who have to undertake the tasks of providing care, right? (Interview with women leaders of CTERA, June 2020)

And the imposition of classes, right? Our house is very small and I have one child in English classes while the other one is on Zoom with the symbol for literature is on, so they have to read, while we have to be teleworking and I have to teach class, so they have to stay quiet. It’s crazy. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

The permanent presence of the whole family has also multiplied working hours dedicated to care. At 47.5%, about half of the respondents dedicated more time during the pandemic than before to domestic work not related to the direct care

of people, that is, to cleaning, cooking, washing, ironing, tidying up, etc. 42.5% dedicated the same amount of time as before, and 10% decreased this part of their working day.

Figure 17. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by time dedicated to domestic work* during the pandemic

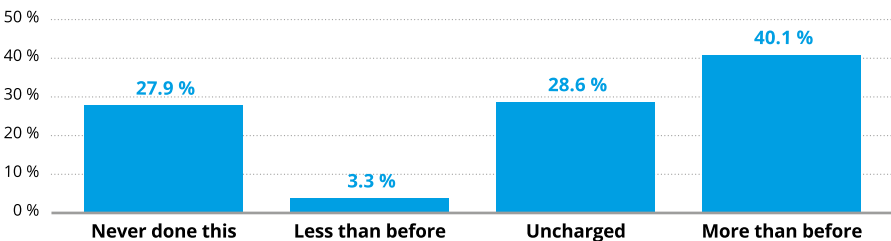


* Not including the direct care of people

Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

For four out of ten (40.1%), the time spent providing attention to dependent people increased, whether these were children, adolescents, sick people, people with disabilities or older adults who required particular care. For 28.6% there was no change in this and only 3.3% indicated that, for them, such work decreased. 27.9% have never cared for dependents.

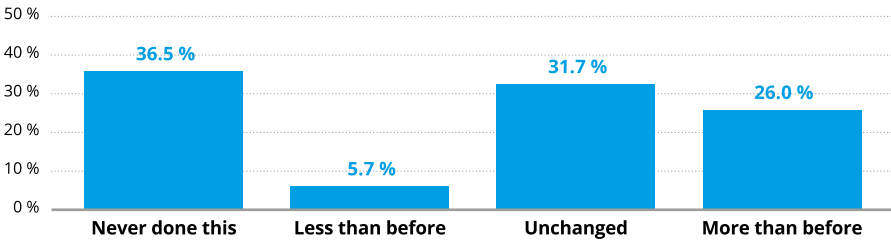
Figure 18. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by the time dedicated to caring for dependent people during the pandemic



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

Care work includes providing care for non-dependent adults when they do not take care of their own needs. Time spent performing such tasks also increased more frequently than it decreased, at 26% and 5.7% respectively. For 31.7%, there were no changes, while 36.5% have never performed such tasks.

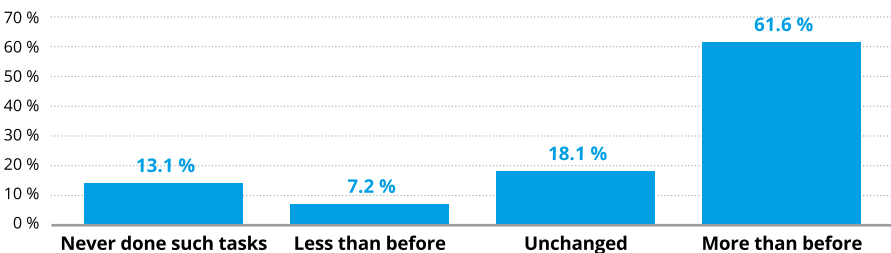
Figure 19. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by time spent providing care for non-dependant people during the pandemic



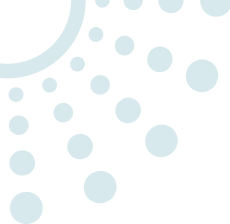
Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

Of all the care tasks, the one that most frequently required an increase in time spent was the provision of academic support for children and adolescents. This was the situation for 61.6% of respondents, while 18.1% had no changes in this respect and 7.2% spent less time at these tasks than previously. 13.1% have never done this type of activity.

Figure 20. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by time spent providing academic support for children and adolescents during the pandemic



Source: Survey of women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

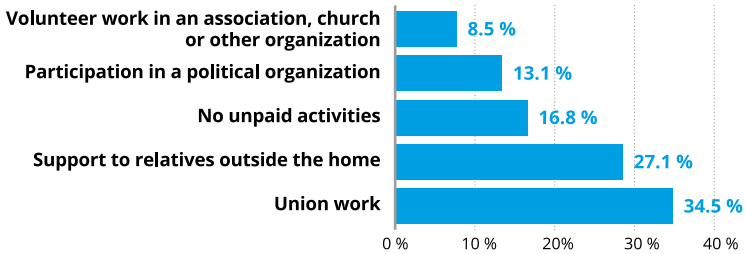


This is a responsibility strongly assumed by women, which demands great physical, intellectual and emotional effort.

I see other couples I am friends with who have children together, but perhaps for school issues support was provided by the mother. And a single person supporting the learning process of several children, I can't even imagine, because it's really hard for me already with my daughter. There is a didactic to it that I at least am unfamiliar with, and I find it very difficult. It involves remembering things that because of having a computer she has forgotten, and it is really difficult to support the process. And at the same time you have such a high level of consciousness that if you don't provide support for that process it becomes interrupted, because the kids also get stuck, they have no enthusiasm. Like you have to really push it, give it a lot of love at that time to accompany learning for it not to be tedious and horrible, since they are in a situation of not seeing their friends, their relatives, not being able to go out to the plaza... (Interview with women leaders from CONADU, September 2020)

The women teachers surveyed and interviewed are also women active in their environments. Despite the overexertion involved in teaching from home along with the increased demand for care work, at 83.2%, many of the women teachers perform other unpaid activities. The most frequent was union work (34.5%), while 27.1% provided support to relatives with whom they did not live. 13.1% were active in political organizations and 8.5% participated in other types of organizations, such as associations, churches, and others.

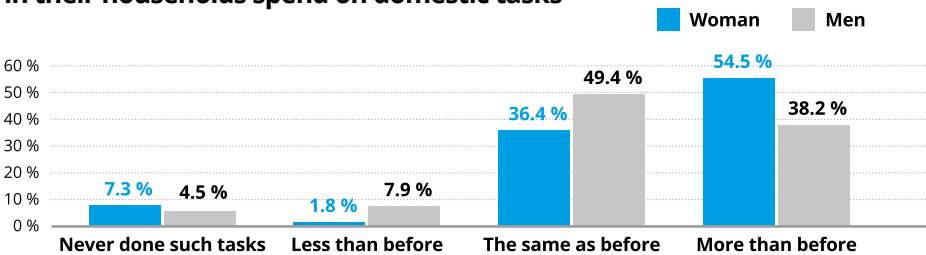
Figure 21. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by unpaid activities they perform



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

For other adults in the household, the demand for domestic work also increased, more frequently for women (in 54.5% of households) than for men (in 38.2%). For approximately half of the adult men there were no changes (49.4%), while 7.9% spent less time at such tasks than before the pandemic and 4.5% had never done so. In the case of adult women, for 36.4% there were no changes in time spent on such tasks, 1.8% allocated less time to them than before and 7.3% had never done so.

Figure 22. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by time that other adult people in their households spend on domestic tasks

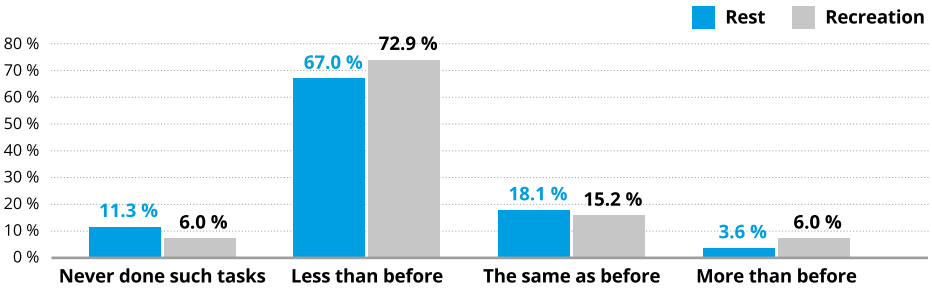


Source: Survey of women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

The overloading of different types of paid and unpaid work as well as the asymmetry in assuming care responsibilities made for longer working days for women teachers, subtracting time from their self-care. During the pandemic, more than two out of three respondents rested less during the day (67%), while about three out of four devoted less time to recreational activities (72.9%). In contrast, 3.6%

spent more time resting than before and 6% spent more time on recreation, while 18.1% and 15.2% spent the same amount of time of these activities respectively.

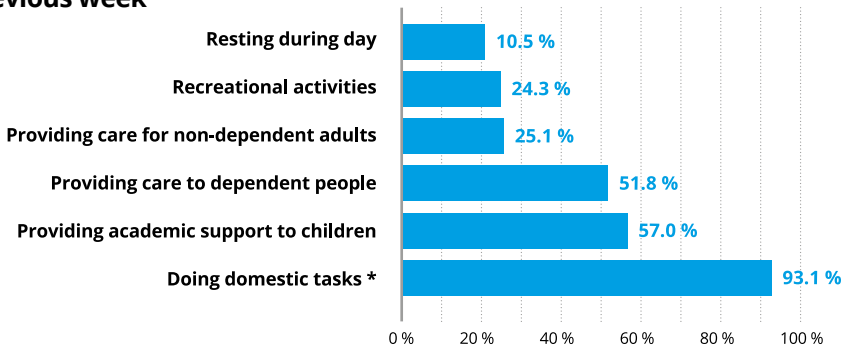
Figure 23. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by time spent on recreation and rest during the day during the pandemic



Source: Survey of women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

The activities carried out in the week preceding the application of the survey confirm that the priorities of the women teachers were focused on the care of the other people in the family. 93.1% performed domestic work not linked to the direct care of people, 57% supported children in their studies, 51.8% took care of dependent people, 25.1% provided care to non-dependent adults, 24.3% performed some recreational activity and 10.5% rested during the day.

Figure 24. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by activities performed in the previous week



* Not including the direct care of people
Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

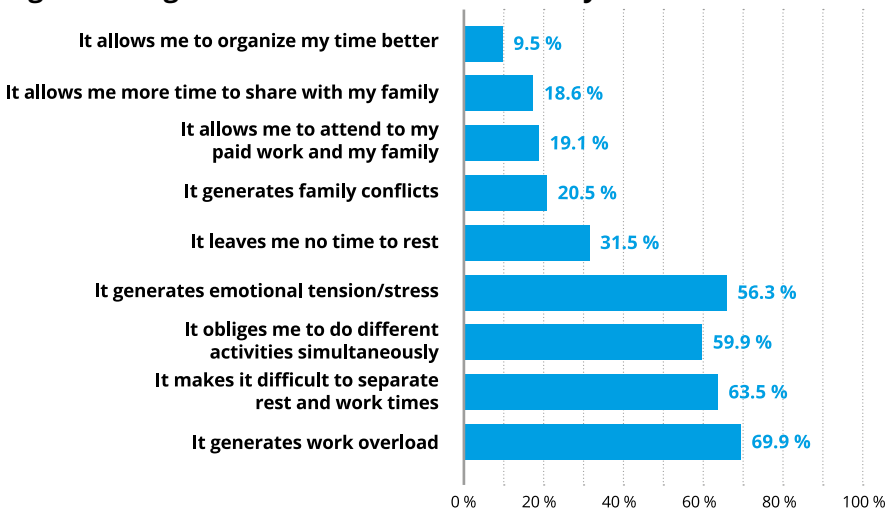
The union leaders highlighted the subjective and emotional dimensions of the overloading of work on the women. This affects not only the women from their profession, but is generalized.

That whole issue is like the sum of all things, the increase of work at home from providing support for educational issues and also the most complex sentimental, emotional accompaniment for the process that children are going through that is not measurable, but we are accompanying young children. There's a huge amount put into that. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

2.7 Working from home: Multiple negative effects and few advantages

For the majority of the women teachers surveyed in this study, the effects of working from home generated problems directly related to their teaching and domestic work and the emotional implications of these. At 69.9%, the most mentioned effect was work overload, followed by difficulty separating work and rest times indicated by 63.5%. Likewise, more than half, at 59.9%, mentioned that it forced them to do different activities at the same time, and 56.3% stated this generated emotional tension or stress.

Figure 25. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by the effects of telework



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.



The following most frequently mentioned impacts continue to be negative: not leaving time to rest (31.5%) and generating family conflict (20.5%). Least mentioned were the positive impacts: being able to attend to paid work and family (19.1%), being able to share more with family (18.6%) and being able to organize time better (9.5%).

The women trade union leaders interviewed explained the complexity of the situation experienced and the contradictions involved in bringing paid work, family care and affect together at the same time and in the same space.

Because childcare is complex to think about, because obviously it is good to share the day to day, to see them in the learning process, accompanying them. There is something very positive about the fact that it is real that during the usual working day, [the father] is the one who is eight or ten hours away from your son or daughter and currently this can be shared. The issue is under what conditions it is shared. For example, I'm in a meeting and they walk behind you, one goes to the toilet, and so on. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

Assuming the educational accompaniment of children has its particular difficulties, which has repercussions on the entire educational community, as manifested in this excerpt:

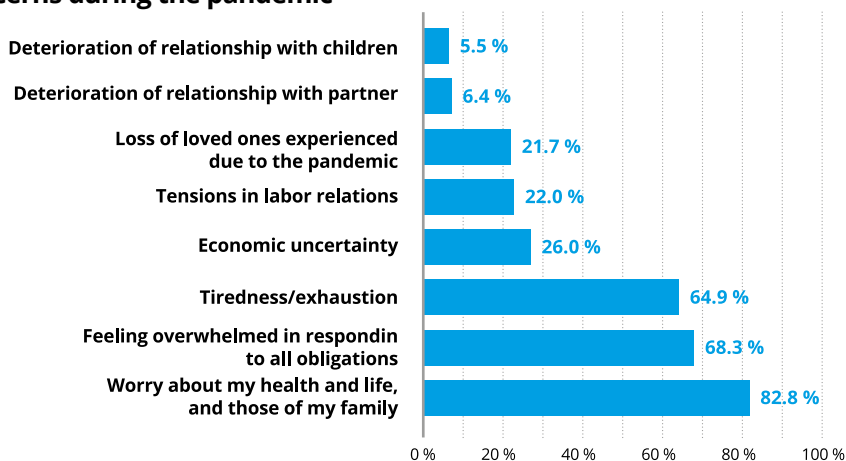
Also, I don't know how quantifiable this is, but, well, anyway, yes, the bond with them is better as long as you have the symbolic tools to accompany that, sharing with other people the accompaniment of the educational trajectory of your children. It implies having a level of patience, extensive knowledge, and not all parents who are complying with isolation requirements with their children have these and, in many homes, what happens is that situations of violence occur more frequently than when there is no isolation. So, although in my particular experience it is positive with respect to the bond with my children, also in the pre-university school where I work, we see that this is not

always the case. And some of the social interaction and being out of the house that the educational institution provides for children has been cut off for several months and there are complex situations, therefore, to take into account. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

The risks to one's health and that of loved ones was the concern most shared by the female teachers, being expressed by 82.8% of these. Approximately seven out of ten mentioned feeling overwhelmed in meeting all their obligations (68.3%) and a slightly smaller percentage spoke of tiredness and exhaustion (64.9%). Other concerns are significantly less common, such as economic uncertainty, which about one in four (26%) indicated suffering from, and tensions in labor relations and the loss of loved ones due to the pandemic, with each of these latter concerns mentioned by about one in five (22% and 21.7% respectively). The aforementioned tensions within households are also expressed, although by less than one in ten.

There are many negative impacts of an improvised work modality that brought few benefits. One of the interviewed union leaders pointed out, "We are tired of telework." Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020).

Figure 26. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by main concerns during the pandemic

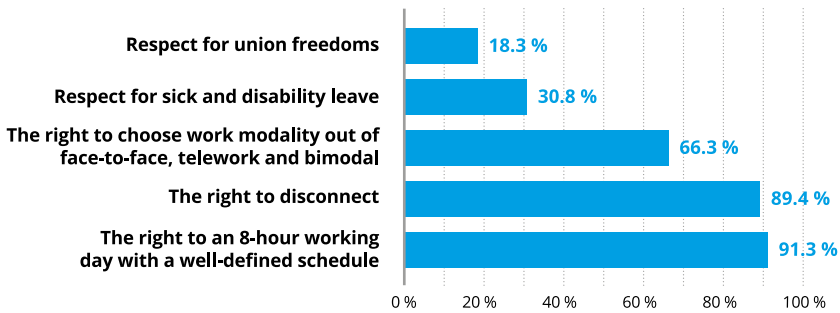


Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.



One of the areas affected by the sudden change to working from home was that of labor rights. All the women teachers surveyed identified at least one of these rights as having been violated during the pandemic. At 91.3%, almost all of them indicated the right to an eight-hour day with a well-defined schedule as having been affected, as was the right to disconnect by a similar proportion (89.4%). For two out of three (66.3%), the right to choose work modality was violated. Disrespect for sick and disability leave (30.8%) and the curtailment of trade union freedoms (18.3%) were indicated as less frequent violations.

Figure 27. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by opinion on rights violated by telework



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

The women union leaders explained acceptance of the adverse conditions for teleworking as being due to the profession's commitment to education.

As a university, we put ourselves in the role of enabling pedagogical continuity and [...] we accepted teleworking conditions that perhaps were not ideal or the best possible ones, but that were taken up with deep conviction and commitment to the students who come to our universities. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

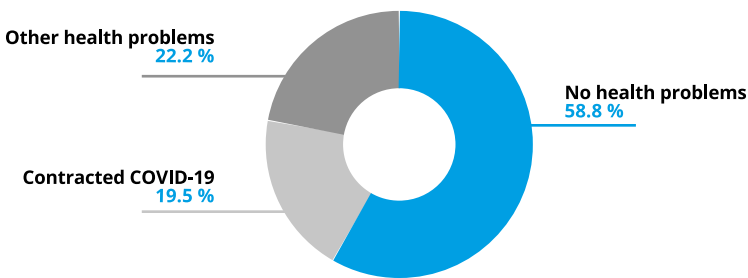
For many women teachers, working from home did not protect them from the health risks posed by the pandemic. The lack of preparation for non-

face-to-face education, especially in primary and secondary schools, often meant visiting students' homes to deliver work materials and food.

As already mentioned, colleagues had to go to distribute family food baskets, because all our work colleagues, let's say a very high percentage of them in CTERA, have been exposed to COVID. I'm not saying as much or in the same way as health workers, but they have been on the front line. (Interview with women leaders of CTERA, June 2020)

19.6% of the respondents became ill with COVID-19. This is a significantly higher incidence than the national rate at the time of answering the survey, which was less than 10%.¹⁷ In addition, another 22.2% suffered from other health problems. Altogether, this represented about half of the teachers who, in some way, had their health impacted upon during the pandemic.

Figure 28. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by effects on health during the pandemic



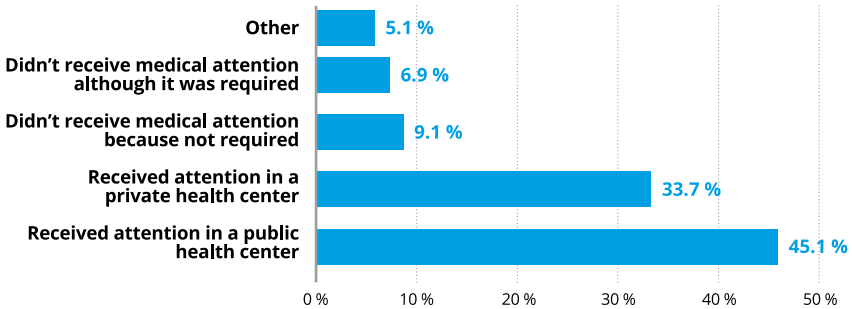
Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

Almost all those affected were treated in the public system (45.1%), while 33.7% were treated in private health centers. 9.1% didn't require health care and 6.9% did not receive any or did not seek it although they required it. 5.1% were treated on an outpatient basis by general practitioners or by telephone consultation.

¹⁷ *These are our own calculations based on the fact that, at the beginning of July 2021, about 4.5 million people with COVID-19 were diagnosed in a population of slightly more than 45 million people.*



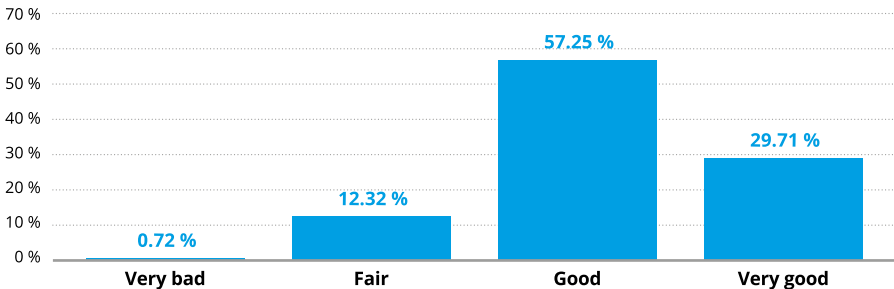
Figure 29. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers with health problems during the pandemic by type of medical attention received



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

The attention received was rated highly by the teachers. For the vast majority, this was good or very good (57.2% and 29.7% respectively), for 12.3% it was fair and only 0.7% considered it very bad.

Figure 30. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers attended for health problems during the pandemic by quality of the attention received



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

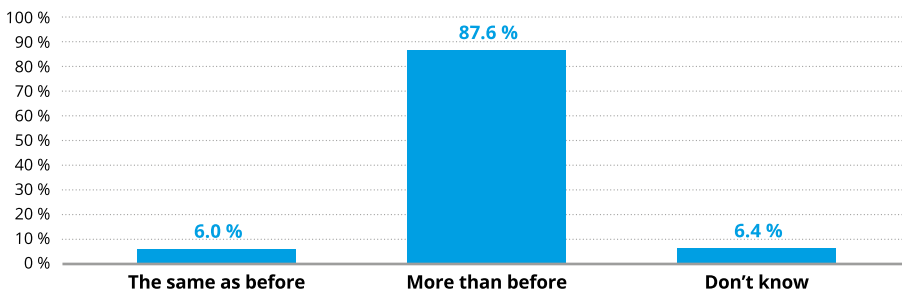
University teachers also faced health risks, and on some occasions the authorities did not respond adequately so the unions had to intervene. This is demonstrated in the following testimony:

We here in Mendoza had a couple of situations where some teachers had been infected with COVID-19 and the university's response was to get the medical certificate falsified, right? Asking them to ask the doctors to diagnose them with another disease in order to give them sick leave. And, otherwise, that being in their homes, they could still work, if they didn't feel unwell. Denying them in the first instance the right to sick leave. There were three situations like this, one after the other. There were also cases of colleagues with very strong symptoms of the disease. Well, there we moved quickly. We made public the response of the University rector's office and the rector made a resolution announcing the steps to request COVID sick leave. But it was the first response of the employer to deny leave and even to say, "If you are at home, you can continue teaching classes even though you are sick." I think the role of our union is important. (Interview with women leaders of CONADU, September 2020)

Working from home gives rise to the risk that this type of abuse affects health, given the assumption that it is enough to sit in front of a computer to continue teaching. In September 2020, a professor at a private university died while teaching a virtual class, after several weeks of continuing on with her work despite the severe symptoms she suffered (Associated Press, September 2020).

2.8 Teleworking facilitates violence against women teachers

The women teachers surveyed shared the concern expressed by different sectors that isolation generates more violence against women. 87.6% believed that, effectively, this violence increased, 6% believed that it had not, while 6.4% did not know.



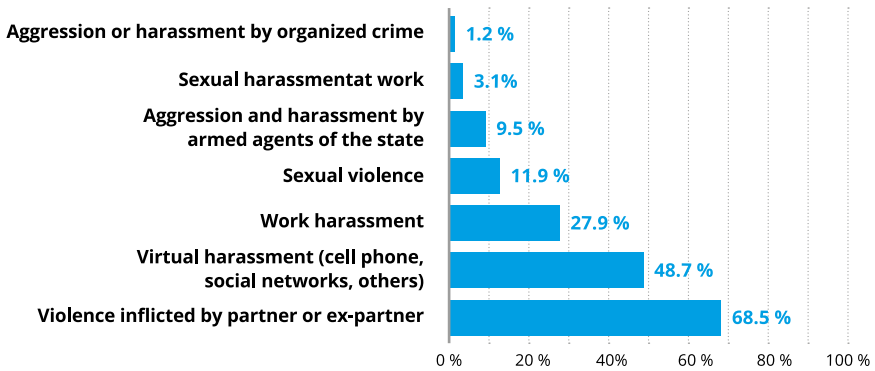
Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.



Although not a majority, at 40.3%, a significant group of respondents considered that this violence particularly affected women teachers, while 16.9% believed that it did not. The largest group was made up of those who did not know, at 42.7%.

Among those who considered that violence against women particularly affects women teachers, the violence most frequently mentioned was that inflicted by a partner or ex-partner (68.5%), although about half (48.7%) mentioned virtual harassment. To a lesser extent, mention was made of workplace harassment (27.9%), sexual violence (11.9%), assaults by armed state agents (9.5%), sexual harassment at work (3.1%) and assaults by organized crime (1.2%).

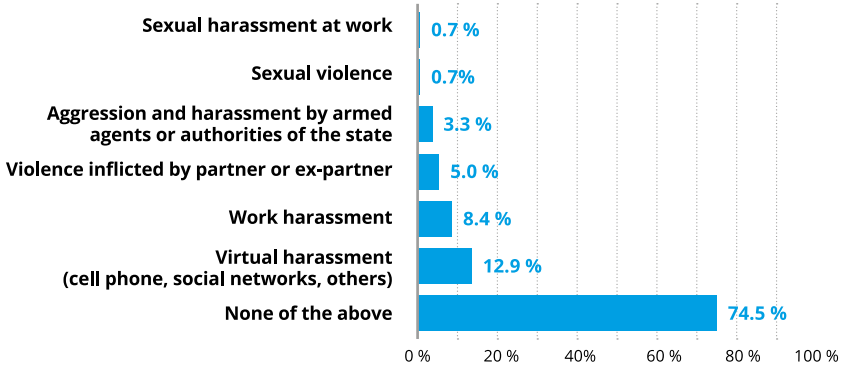
Figure 32. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by type of violence they believed to have increased against



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

Teachers' experiences have been different from these perceptions. The vast majority have not experienced any of these forms of violence (74.5%) and, among those who have, the most frequent experiences were related to telework, these being virtual harassment (12.9% of the total surveyed) and workplace harassment (8.4%). Violence inflicted by the victim's partner or former partner is referred to in third place (5%) with a frequency close to that of aggression from armed officers and state authorities (3.3%). Sexual violence and sexual harassment at work are the least frequent (0.7% each).

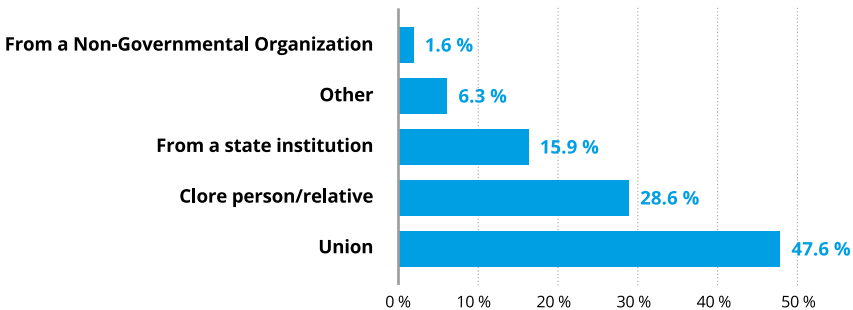
Figure 33. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by type of violence experienced during the pandemic



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

Just over half of those who have experienced some form of violence during the pandemic sought help (52.9%), with the union being the most sought-after support (47.6% of cases seeking help). People who are close and relatives were also a support resource for 28.6%, as were state institutions (15.9%) and NGOs (1.6%). 6.3% sought help from legal and psychology professionals.

Figure 34. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by place where they sought help on experiencing violence during the pandemic

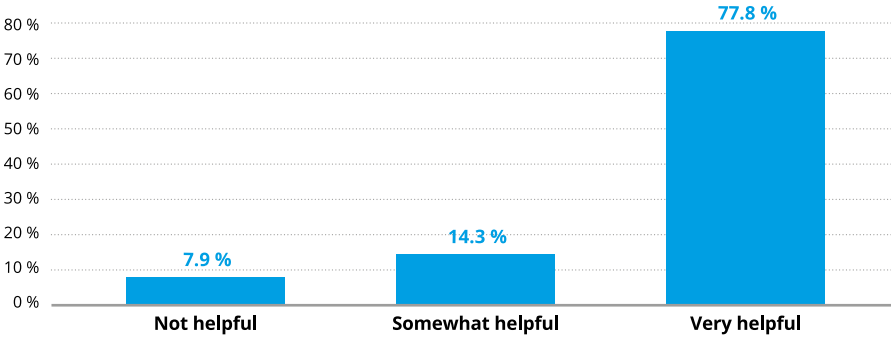


Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

In general, assessment of the help received was good. It helped 77.8% a lot, 14.3% a little, while only 7.9% considered that it did not help at all.



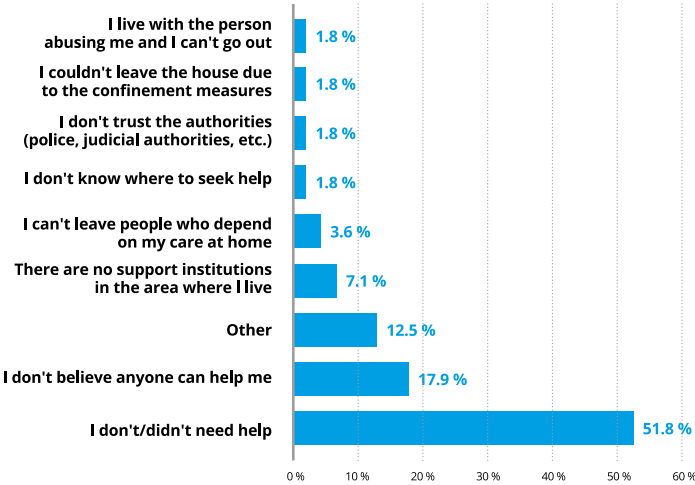
Figure 35. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by evaluation of help received for violence experienced during the pandemic



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

Among those who did not seek help, the most frequently mentioned main reason for this was not needing it, cited by more than half (51.8%). 17.9% believed that no one would have been able to help them and the rest indicated different types of obstacles, such as the lack of local institutions that could help them (7.1%), not being able to leave dependents at home alone (3.6%) and, with the same frequency (1.8%), not knowing where to go to get help, not trusting the authorities, not being able to go out due to confinement measures, and living with the aggressor and therefore not being able to go out. 12.5% resolved the problem by themselves, one of them by blocking a cyberbully.

Figure 36. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by reasons for not requesting help for violence experienced during the pandemic




Source: Survey of women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.

At 95.2%, almost all the female educators considered that the union to which they belong can take measures to prevent violence against women teachers and only 4.8% considered this not to be the case.

Figure 37. Argentina. 2021. Women teachers by type of union actions recommended against violence



Source: Survey of women teachers affiliated with CTERA in June and July 2021.



The most recommended union actions were the provision of free legal representation to women teachers experiencing violence (66.6%), training (55.8%) and information and awareness campaigns within the union (54.9%). Also mentioned were raising awareness about and denouncing violence against women teachers (46.3%), including support measures in collective bargaining (46.1%), and creating and implementing ethical protocols to prevent violence against women within the union (39.1%).

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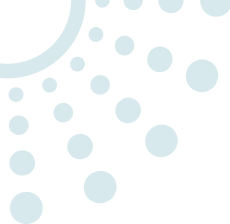
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BRASIL

Against all odds: Teaching in Brazil while confronting the pandemic, fundamentalism and authoritarianism

Larraitz Lexartza

1. General notes on the situation in Brazil

1.1 The profile of Brazil in some key areas

Brazil, with an area of 8,515,770 km² (3,286,482 square miles), is the largest country in Latin America. It shares borders with the majority of South American countries. Specifically, it borders French Guyana, Suriname, Guyana, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina and Uruguay. With a population that in 2020 exceeded 210 million people, it is also the most populous country in the region. At 51.1%, women represent a slightly higher percentage of the population than men do (IBGE, 2021). In addition, 9.3% of the population is of African descent, while 0.4% is Indigenous and 46.5% is Mestizo (IBGE, 2018).¹⁸

Brazil also has the particularity of being the only country in the region whose official language is Portuguese. Although Portuguese is its only officially recognized language, it is a country of significant multilingualism. In fact, at least 210 languages are spoken in Brazil, of which about 170 are Indigenous (Müller de Olivera, 2008).

The country is governed as a federal republic. It is divided into the capital, 26 states and 5,570 municipalities. Both the Federal District and the states and municipalities enjoy autonomy, as provided for by the Constitution. In addition, each state dictates its own constitution and has a governor. Additionally, Brazil has a bicameral system composed of the Chamber of Deputies and the Federal Senate (ECLAC-OIG, 2021).

The country ranks among those considered to have high human development. In 2019, it was ranked 84th globally in the United Nations Human Development Index

¹⁸ *Figures for 2018.*



(HDI), having reached a value of 0.765 for this index (UNDP, 2020). That same year, life expectancy at birth was 75.9 years of age, the average number of years of study was 7.9 and the GDP per capita was US\$14,263. However, there is a large imbalance in the distribution of income. The poorest 40% have access to 10.4% of the total income, while the richest 10% hold 42.5% of the total income (UNDP, 2020).

On the other hand, in 2019, at 17.2%, a significant part of the population lived in poverty, with 4.3% living in extreme poverty (CEPALSTAT, 2021). In addition, poverty affects women to a greater extent than men. In that same year, for every 100 men living in poor households, there were 112.6 women in the same situation (OIG-ECLAC, 2021a).

In the Brazilian economy, the sectors where the majority of working people were employed in 2019 were communal, social and personal services (32.9%), commerce (24.9%), manufacturing (11.5%), and agriculture, fishing and mines (9.7%). However, the distribution of men and women in the different sectors is not homogeneous. While men were distributed largely throughout all sectors, women are concentrated heavily in services: five out of ten women (50.7%) were employed in this sector (ILO, 2019).

Before the pandemic in 2018, approximately one in ten people (11.9%) in Brazil were unemployed. Unemployment also affected women to a greater extent, since in that year female unemployment was at 14% while male unemployment was 10.1%. Unemployment increased significantly between 2015 and 2016, going from 8.5% to 11.5%. Furthermore, from 2016 up to the present time of writing, at no time has unemployment fallen back below 10% (ILO, 2020).

In the years leading up to the pandemic, some indicators warned of an increase in violence against women. This was the case for the rate of homicides of women, which increased in the country by 4.2% in the decade between 2008 and 2018. The increase was particularly significant in Federal Units such as Ceará (278.6%), Roraima (186.8%), Acre (126.6%), Espírito Santo (52.2%), São Paulo

(36.3%) and Paraná (35.1%) (IPEA, 2020). It is worth noting that in 2013, Brazil was the country with the fifth highest rate of homicides of women in the world (Instituto Patrícia Galvão, 2021). According to ECLAC data, the femicide rate had also been increasing in the years prior to the pandemic, going from 1.5% in 2017 to 1.8% in 2018 (CEPALSTAT, 2021a).

In addition, in the case of Brazil, intersectional analysis shows that black women experience violence and are victims of lethal violence to a greater extent than white women. In fact, while femicides of white women decreased by 15% between 2006 and 2015, they increased by 22% for black women (Artigo 19, 2018).

With regard to education, it is important to note that by constitutional mandate in Brazil the education system is established on a national level. This means that there are joint foundations and guidelines that cover educational systems at different levels (federal, state, municipal, etc.) (MEC, 2014). Regarding the development of this system in the decade before the pandemic, the 2014 approval of the National Education Plan (PNE 2014-2024) stands out. This is an ambitious document with the status of law, based on the need to eliminate historical inequalities in the field of education. Consequently, the goals it defines are mainly aimed at eliminating barriers in access to and permanence within the educational system (INEP, MEC, Governo Federal, 2014). Particularly noteworthy among the twenty goals it establishes for the decade are the universalization of preschool education for children aged four to five, the expansion of enrollment coverage for children up to three years of age, and the universalization of permanence in the educational system for the entire population between fifteen and seventeen years of age (INEP, MEC, Governo Federal, 2014). In addition, proposal is made to expand public investment to a minimum of 7% of the national GDP by the fifth year of implementation of the plan and to 10% of the GDP by the end of the decade (INEP, MEC, Governo Federal, 2014).

It is important to note that education sector trade union organizations carried out important work both to promote the approval of the plan and to ensure



that it did not suffer reforms during debate that could undermine the right to education or the rights of workers (CNTE, 2014).

On the other hand, progress reports on the implementation of the PNE published to date show high non-compliance with the goals set (INEP, 2016, 2018 and 2020). This gives evidence of the lack of political will of those who have occupied the federal government in recent years with respect to the commitments acquired through the PNE Act.

Finally, it is important to mention an additional aspect related to the educational gaps that have been magnified during the pandemic: the use of technology and access to the internet. In this sense, before the pandemic Brazil was one of the countries with the highest access to internet connectivity in the region, even for the lowest quintiles. In Latin America, 66.7% of people had access to the internet. Internet access is more limited for the poorest households. While at the regional level, 81% of the highest-income households (5th quintile) have internet access, this is the situation of only 38% of households in the first quintile and 53% of households in the second quintile (ECLAC, 2020).¹⁹ In the case of Brazil, internet access among the poorest households (1st quintile) was 63%—the highest in the region only behind Chile (66%)—while among the richest households (5th quintile) it was at 91% (ECLAC, 2020 and 2020a).

In any case, having access to the internet represents an important economic commitment for the poorest households in Brazil. Payment of the service requires approximately 9% and 3% of the household income of the first and second quintiles respectively. In the case of mobile connectivity, this requires an approximate expenditure equivalent to 12.5% of the income of the first quintile and 6% of the income of the second quintile (ECLAC, 2020). In both cases, costs exceed the reference threshold of 2% of income recommended by the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development to guarantee affordable internet services (ECLAC, 2020).

¹⁹ *Figures correspond to 2018. Regional calculations take into account 12 countries (Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, Mexico, Colombia, Uruguay, Chile, Brazil and Costa Rica).*

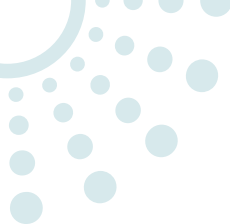
1.2 Beyond the numbers: The political and social context on the arrival of the pandemic

The Brazilian national context has been strongly marked by different socio-political events in the last decade. These are situations that have had significant impacts on the indicators shown in the previous section and they have determined the conditions in which the country has faced the pandemic. Additionally, both in the previous years and during the pandemic, they have also been decisive with respect to the right to education and the rights of the education sector.

The beginning of the millennium saw Brazil undergo significant changes in the political arena. In 2002, the Workers' Party won the elections for the first time. This new government made radical changes to the country's economic and social policies. In this and the subsequent terms in which the party remained in power, social programs were created that contributed to a significant reduction in inequality. In addition, gender and sexuality policies were formulated. In the same line, the Secretariat for Women's Rights and the Secretariat for Human Rights acquired ministerial rank and were endowed with autonomy and their own budget (Kalil, 2020).

Despite the above, this trajectory towards the expansion of social policies to address inequality was abruptly stopped with the coup d'état carried out in 2016 against then-President Dilma Rousseff. The coup strongly shaped Brazil's trajectory in all areas from then to the present, sending the country on a path towards authoritarianism.

A soft coup strategy was applied in the country, along the lines of other such coups carried out in the region in the millennium, such as those of Honduras (2009) and Paraguay (2012). This also represents a "serious warning to current and future governments in the continent that try to expand margins of sovereignty and to increase the distribution of income to the people" (Esquivel, 2016). In this sense, the *Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores em Educação* (Natio-



nal Confederation of Education Workers, CNTE) argues that the coup d'état has had a direct impact on the deterioration of the living conditions of Brazilians. The following was stated by the interviewees:

This coup hit the population hard, and there, from the coup, growth and development stopped and the impoverishment of the population increased. It is obvious that the people end up feeling this much more. (Interview with women leaders of the CNTE in September 2020)

At the time of the coup, the country's first female president ruled. This is not a minor aspect, since it generated a situation conducive to an attack on women's rights.

In the coup in Brazil, a situation arose because the country had a strong woman like Dilma in the presidency. (Interview with women leaders of the CNTE in September 2020)

In this sense, some analyses carried out indicate that the process that ended with the dismissal of the presidency was marked by manifestations of violence against women both in the political sphere and in the media (Gonçalves and Rabelo, 2016).

In the immediate aftermath of the coup, some regulatory reforms were implemented that entailed setbacks in the area of rights. Among these, the 2017 labor reform stands out.²⁰ This is a concrete reform involving the approval of two laws in a strikingly short period of time that modified more than two hundred provisions of the Consolidation of Labor Laws (CLT) and the Temporary Labor Law (Souto and Carbonai, 2021).

In practice, the new regulations favor outsourcing and the creation of precarious contracts. In addition, they facilitate an increase in the working day, limiting union action and weakening access to labor justice, among other aspects (Souto and Carbonai, 2021).

²⁰ *Reforma trabalhista. (Acts No. 13429 and No. 13467)*

The CNTE leaders agreed in pointing out that the labor reform had a significant effect of weakening trade union action, since it attacked union structures in two ways. Firstly, it prevented or limited union financing, and secondly, it deregulated labor relations. Deregulation has led to an increase in precariousness, bias and instability, making it more difficult for workers to join trade unions. In addition, attack through the legislative strategy has been accompanied by a discursive and media strategy with the aim of discrediting the sector, as the interviewees point out:

There is a strong smear campaign against organizations and a very big incentive towards individualism, saying that negotiation has to be direct, so it is not necessary to have a union negotiate for you, a union to represent you. (Interview with women leaders of the CNTE in September 2020)

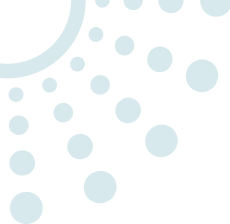
This precariousness affects both the private and public sectors and has particular implications for the education sector, since it allows the hiring of teachers and civil servants by the hour, through intermediaries and only for the time spent teaching (CNTE, 2017).

On the other hand, the labor reform has been harsh on women, who already had a priori more precarious working conditions.

In terms of labor reform, women ended up suffering more, because women are the first to be fired. (Interview with women leaders of the CNTE in September 2020)

The labor reform was additionally accompanied by other types of austerity policies in the economic sphere, also aimed at weakening the state. The Constitutional Amendment that froze public spending for twenty years is an example of this (Kalil, 2020).

This context led to an atypical electoral campaign, marked by polarization in which “the issues of inequality, redistribution policies, job and income gene-



ration, infrastructure investment, education and health were not discussed or proposed” (Kalil, 2020, p. 41). The proposals of the candidate who went on to win the presidential election, Jair Bolsonaro, make good representation of the issues that occupied electoral debate. Prominent among these proposals were the attack on gender ideology, the commitment to austerity and privatization, the easing of regulations for the possession of weapons, the defense of private property and the drastic reduction in the number of Ministries (Kalil, 2020).

Once elected, the new president proceeded to carry out the promised ministerial restructuring by merging different portfolios and creating “super ministries”. This restructuring resulted in the creation of the Ministry of Women, the Family and Human Rights, headed by a fundamentalist pastor (Kalil, 2020). With this background, in the Bolsonaro era what some authors have called “gender anti-politics” has been implemented, mainly directed against women and LGBTBIQ people (Nogueira, 2020). This is a strategy mobilized both from public policy and from discourse, which in practice has implied an increase in violence (Nogueira, 2020).

The CNTE shares this perspective and points out that the government not only does not protect women’s rights, but it actively persecutes them:

In the Bolsonaro government, when Minister Damares took office, she eliminated everything related to the perspective of women’s rights [...]. She did not protect rights, on the contrary, she attacked them. She says that violence, that rape is the fault of women. (Interview with women leaders of the CNTE in September 2020)

The attack on human rights by the Bolsonaro government has not, however, been limited to an attack on the rights of women and the LGBTI population. The Bolsonarist discourse is also harsh on those who defend labor rights. Since those working in the public sector are the ones who have managed to maintain greater organization, they are also the target of most attacks. Prominent are discursive strategies also present in other countries in the region that try to

position rights as privileges. In this case, messages of a religious nature are also added, mixed in with those previously indicated:

Not rights, but abuses, privileges. And that religious thing that the Bolsonaroists use a lot, that we are communists. So, "They are communists, they don't believe in God." (Interview with women leaders of the CNTE in September 2020)

In the specific case of those who work in the education sector, they are additionally accused of indoctrinating children:

In the case of education, we are indoctrinators, we do not believe in God, and we even promote homosexuality, we promote abortion. So, all that conservatism—in fact, it is fundamentalism—is what predominates today and fascism itself is present in Brazil. (Interview with women leaders of CNTE in September 2020)

1.3 The measures adopted in the face of COVID-19 and its impacts

The arrival of the pandemic in Brazil was marked by the bewilderment of citizens before the reactions of the country's highest leaders. The first case of COVID-19 was registered in the country on February 26, 2020 (Sodré, 2020). With the arrival of the first cases, the actions of the Ministry of Health seemed consistent with the recommendations of international bodies such as the WHO and with the results of scientific research based on the experience of other countries that were beginning to be shared. However, the president's position and discourse questioned the ministerial position by downplaying the importance of the virus and delegitimizing the actions proposed to confront it (Sodré, 2020).

In any case, in the first days after the arrival of the virus in Brazil, the Minister of Health at that time recognized the autonomy of states for decision-making regarding people's mobility (Sodré, 2020). Consequently, it was the measures adopted in the states that largely determined the treatment given the pandemic in the country.



CNTE agrees in indicating that the Bolsonaro government placed the population in a position of lack of protection and abandonment:

The pandemic arrived and the government once more took up a perspective that does not represent the population[...]. [The president] saw the pandemic and health as just any old thing, he didn't follow the WHO guidelines, not even those of his own Ministry of Health, and he put the entire population at risk, at risk of losing their lives. (Interview with women leaders from CNTE in September 2020).

The union similarly proposes that there was a clear lack of a coordinated national leadership during the pandemic. It additionally indicated that this is not due to the federal nature of the country, but to the inability of the current executive branch of government to govern and the fundamentalism that defines its actions in different areas:

Brazil has a lack of national coordination. It is not because it is a federal republic that we do not have national coordination, we always had it in the past. It is that under this misgovernment, we do not have a Minister of Education. Since the beginning of the Bolsonaro government, they've been denialists, they deny science. (Interview with women leaders of CNTE in September 2020)

On the other hand, the approach to the pandemic has also been marked by the strong institutional positioning of a false dichotomy between the economy and health (Sodré, 2020). This is a discourse that can be identified in most of the countries in the region, which is committed to the elimination of restrictions on mobility, so as not to generate effects on the economy.

As a result of the absence of clear policies to face the pandemic, Brazil is one of the countries with the worst indicators. As of October 2021, it had accumulated more than 21 million cases and almost 600,000 deaths.²¹ After Peru, at 2789 deaths per million inhabitants, Brazil has the second highest number of deaths in the region (Worldometers, 2021).

²⁰ 598,185 cumulative deaths as of October 5, 2021.

Far from affecting the government, the CNTE considers that, at least during the first months, the pandemic favored it. After almost two years of government in March 2020, Bolsonaro's image was deteriorating. The arrival of COVID-19 additionally placed in evidence the impact of cuts to the health sector and the public sector in recent years. Nonetheless, Bolsonaro managed to increase his popularity:

In March when the pandemic arrived, the Bolsonaro government had a bad image [...]. We—mainly the education union movement—were starting the school year. It started in March in the vast majority of provinces, and a process of mobilization was also underway, and we already had a national day of protest marches around the country organized, and we had growing coordination in this sector in the sense of confronting government policies. The pandemic arrived and dismantled all that [...]. This shows the fragility of the government, of the entire health system, a consequence of the changes of the labor reform, the constitutional amendment that froze investment in public health and everything for twenty years [...], Bolsonaro comes out well, [...] yesterday a national survey came out that showed that Bolsonaro has increased his level of popularity. (Interview with women leaders of CNTE in September 2020)

In the field of education, as in most countries in the region, the closure of schools and the suspension of face-to-face classes was a generalized measure enacted in Brazil on the arrival of the pandemic. According to UNESCO figures, total and partial closures in Brazil have extended over 69 weeks (UNESCO, 2021). However, as evidenced throughout this document, this suspension has not been accompanied by policies supportive of teachers and students. In fact, the lack of direction to counter the pandemic that has prevailed has also been reflected in education:

In most states, due to the lack or absence of a Ministry of Education, or a minister who was in charge in that central role of education, so to speak, state governments had the responsibility and in most of the states no help at all was provided. (Interview with women leaders of CNTE in September 2020)



The return to classrooms has also been carried out in general in a disorderly manner, without clear sanitary measures for the protection of teachers or of students. In this regard, the trade union sector has provided proposals and guidelines for a safe return:

CNTE also has a guideline for the return to schools for all our affiliates [...]. We recommend the creation of committees by provinces [...]. We, as representatives of our workers, do not want to return because the health conditions to do so do not exist. (Interview with women leaders of CNTE in September 2020)

Finally, it is important to note that the pandemic has also served as a scenario to promote more cuts to the public sector and the education sector:

[During the pandemic], there was a reemergence, with popular support, for the reform that is to come, which is administrative reform, which is going to completely change the civil service sector and the provision of services to the population [...]. The tax reform is going to penalize workers even more and promote large capital [...]. The right and the economic forces backed in a big way doing away with the organized sectors of society, social movements and the trade union movement. (Interview with women leaders of CNTE in September 2020)

2. Educating during the pandemic: The experience of women teachers

After the first weeks and months of the pandemic, research efforts were undertaken on both regional and national levels to attempt to account for the impacts that the measures adopted in different areas have had on the population in general and on some population groups in particular. In the field of education, many of these investigations have focused on access to this right during the pandemic. However, there have been fewer efforts aimed at identifying the conditions in which teachers have performed their work. This is not a minor aspect since, as will be seen in this section, much of the responsibility with respect to

guaranteeing the right to education has been transferred to teachers. In practice, they have been essential personnel facing the pandemic and the challenges of teaching with little institutional support.

In order to reveal the impact of the measures adopted on women teachers and the conditions in which they have carried out their work in more depth, between May 10 and June 25 a survey was conducted aimed at women teachers affiliated to CNTE in which 422 teachers participated. This section also includes information collected during a group interview conducted with women CNTE leaders in September 2020.

2.1. The profile of the women teachers

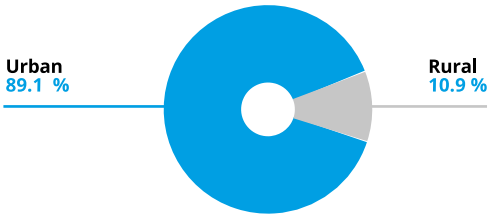
At 46.9%, about half the teachers who participated in the survey were between the ages of 41 and 50. Teachers between the ages of 51 and 60 accounted for 23.2%, and those between the ages of 31 and 40 accounted for 23.9%. Young women were a minority among respondents; 2.4% were between 26 and 30 years old, 0.5% were under 20 and there were none between 21 and 25. Finally, the oldest group, over 60 years of age, accounted for 3.1%.

The high educational level of the women teachers stands out. Among these, the largest group is those who have completed postgraduate studies, representing 39.3% of those responding. An additional 17.5% have commenced postgraduate studies that have not yet been completed. In addition, only 1.2% have not completed a university degree.

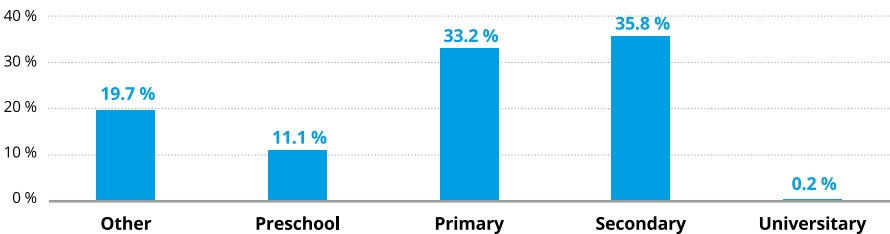
The teachers participating in the survey were mainly concentrated in urban areas. This was the situation of almost nine out of ten (89.1%). Most of the women teachers carried out their work at the secondary and primary levels, at 35.8% and 33.2% respectively. On the other hand, 11.1% worked at the preschool level and 0.2% at the university level. In addition, one in five indicated that they work at levels different from those already mentioned. In most cases, these involved specialization or postgraduate studies.

Figures 1 and 2

Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by area where they teach



Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by educational level at which they teach

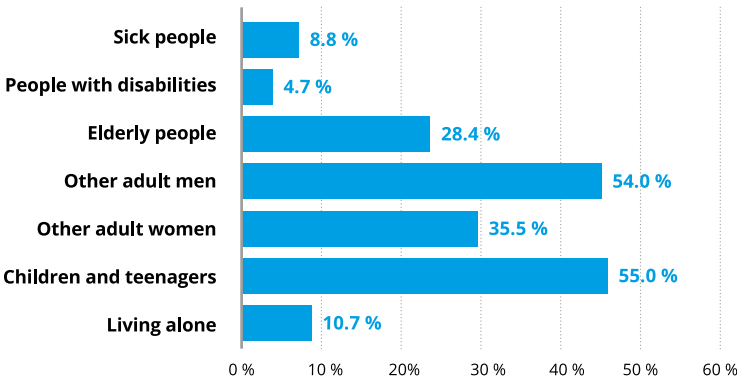


Results of the survey carried out on educators affiliated to CNTE in May and June 2021.

Furthermore, during the pandemic the composition of households was decisive in establishing working conditions. Working from home tends to be more complex when workspace and work equipment must be shared. Thus, for teachers who lived with children and adolescents of study age, it was more likely that the resources and space available were required by several people in the family. In addition, as will be seen in this section, in the case of those living with dependents, there frequently existed an increased workload of care and the need to attend to these needs and work simultaneously.

The households of many of the teachers who responded to the survey had such characteristics. In fact, more than half (55%) lived with children and adolescents. The presence of other people with particular care needs was lesser: 28.4% reported living with elderly people, 8.8% with sick people and 4.7% with people with disabilities. In addition, 54% of female teachers lived with adult men and 35.5% with other adult women. 10.7% reported that they lived alone.

Figure 3 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by people with whom they share a household



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated to CNTE in May and June 2021.

2.2 Work during the pandemic: A strong commitment of women teachers to new teaching modalities for which there is no training, support or resources

As already noted, measures to protect the population from contagion involved the cancellation of in-person classes. In the case of Brazil, the strategies to give continuity to the educational cycle also depended on material conditions, the policies adopted by each state and even by each municipality. Consequently, the wide distribution of women teachers in different teaching modalities is not surprising.

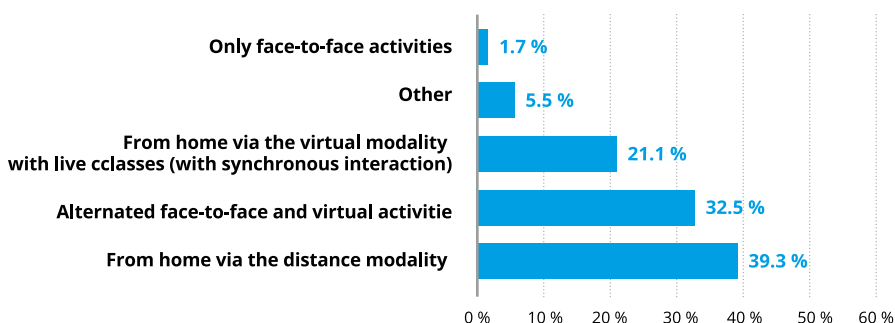
There are many modalities here. There are WhatsApp groups, there are groups using Classroom, using Microsoft, using radios, using television, everything you can imagine that exists in the world. (Interview with women CNTE leaders in September 2020)

It is noteworthy, however, that, unlike other countries in the region, the most reported modality of work in the case of Brazil is that of distance education. This is a unique situation given that, as one of the countries with the greatest connectivity in Latin America, a greater prevalence of virtual modalities could be expected



(Section 1.1). Almost four out of ten teachers (39.3%) reported having worked remotely during the pandemic. 32.5% reported having alternated face-to-face and virtual activities and 21.1% engaged in exclusively virtual activities. Only 1.7% reported having maintained face-to-face classes. On the other hand, 5.5% indicated that they worked using other modalities. The arrangements in such cases varied significantly, but they were based, for the most part, on different combinations and variants of the previously proposed modalities. For example, some proposed continuing with teaching by virtual means, although without synchronous interaction, through messaging platforms such as WhatsApp. There were also situations in which the virtual modality was combined with the distance modality.

Figure 4 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by work modality during the pandemic



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated to CNTE in May and June 2021.

In any case, both the distance and the virtual modalities imply a drastic change in teaching dynamics, for which neither support nor resources were received. CNTE indicated that the transition to new modalities was abrupt and lacked resources providing support and preparation. In fact, a survey carried out by the Confederation shows that 53.6% of teachers working in municipal education networks did not have any training on the use of digital technology. This was the situation for 24.6% of those working in the state education networks (CNTE, 2020).

The transition to the new modalities implemented during the pandemic implied additional complications when the groups of students worked with were large.

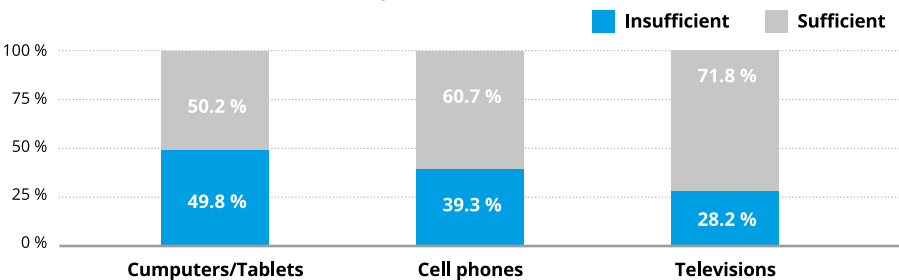
This was the case for most of the teachers answering the survey. 37% reported attending to more than 150 students.

As already noted, during the pandemic, the home became the workplace, and personal and family technological equipment became working tools. This was a situation arising from the state's widespread failure to provide teachers with the necessary resources to carry out their work, and students with that required to be able to keep up with the virtual activities.

In Brazil, we had a total absence of the state when it came to providing that equipment [...], the same thing happened with payment for internet connectivity. (Interview with women leaders of CNTE in September 2020)

Given that more than half of the teachers indicated that they lived with children and adolescents, it is not surprising that almost half (49.8%) also indicated that the computers or tablets available at home were not sufficient. These are devices that had to be shared so that all people could carry out their work and study tasks. Similarly, 39.3% indicated that cell phones were also not sufficient to meeting their requirements. Although these might be less suitable for study or work, such devices in practice were widely used, particularly among those teachers whose work modality was based on messaging applications. Finally, televisions, also featuring in the teaching modalities used in Brazil during the pandemic, were less scarce.

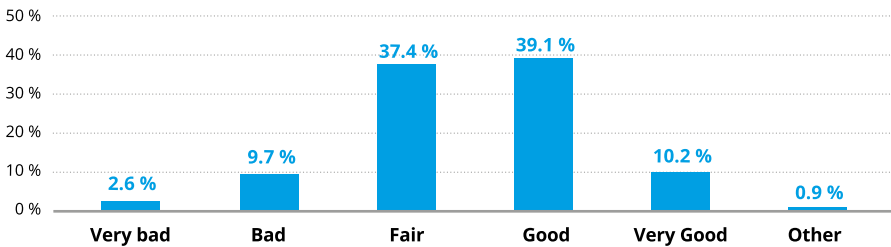
Figure 5 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by availability of equipment for telework and virtual study



Source: Survey of women teachers affiliated with CNTE in May and June 2021.

In Brazil, in addition to having extensive internet access, assessment of connectivity quality was positive. This was the perception of almost half of the teachers, who reported having good (39.1%) or very good (10.2%) connectivity. Those who indicate that they had bad or very bad connectivity represented 12.3%.

Figure 6 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by quality of internet connectivity for work



Source: Survey of women teachers affiliated with CNTE in May and June 2021.

The lack of institutional support led teachers to make investments in equipment and internet connectivity to be able to carry out their work as best they could. Nine out of ten teachers (89.1%) reported having incurred this type of expense frequently during the pandemic. 9.7% reported having made these expenses occasionally, while only 1.2% did not make this type of expense at any time.

CNTE proposed that the situation even led some teachers into debt to be able to acquire the necessary equipment.

We are maintaining internet connectivity, buying computers, buying new cell phones to be able to work [...]. That has also led to financial problems for workers. (Interview with women CNTE leaders in September 2020)

In the same sense, at 59.7%, the majority of teachers indicated that they spent part of their income to cover the needs of their students. This was something that an additional 28.2% reported having done on an occasional basis. Investment in personal equipment and internet connectivity as well as in providing support for students are clear examples of the strong commitment of tea-

chers to their work and to the right to education. In the absence of the state, they took on what their means allowed.

Figure 7 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers who spent their income on equipment or internet to work during the pandemic

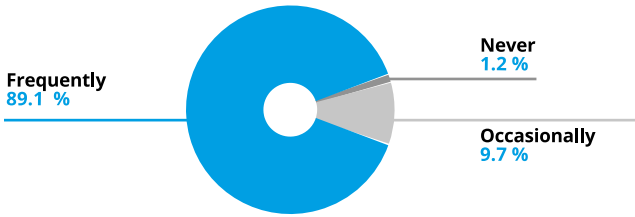
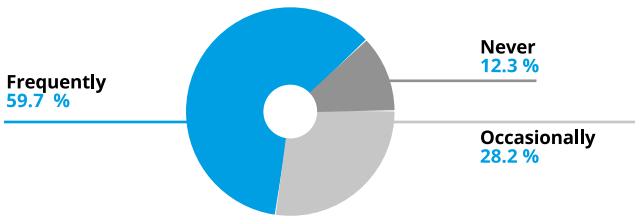


Figure 8 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers who spent their income to provide support for students during the pandemic



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated to CNTE in May and June 2021.

2.3 Impact on the right to education

In the absence of institutional support and resources, the impact on the right to education during the pandemic was significant. Although in Brazil the figures show that before the arrival of COVID-19 a good part of the population had access to the internet, ECLAC figures for 2018 show a significant lack in access to technological devices among students. For that year, 91% of fifteen-year-old students in Brazil had internet access, however, only 59% had a computer, while 43% had some educational software (ECLAC, 2020b). The situation also varied on taking household income into account. In this case, among the lowest-income students (1st quartile), 20% had a desktop computer, 18% had a laptop and 12% had a tablet. Among their higher-income peers (5th quartile),

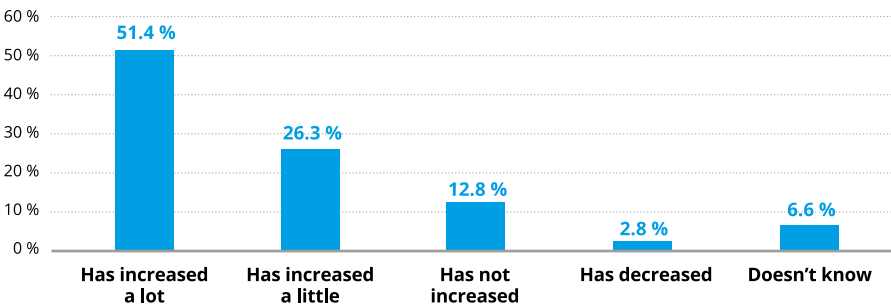
the situation was much more favorable. 57% had a desktop computer, 73% had a laptop and 42% had a tablet (ECLAC, 2020b).

This is a critical situation, although not a new one, since it aggravates the previous crisis existing that expelled thousands of students from the educational system due to lack of adequate conditions. School dropout levels during the pandemic have been a concern for CNTE. The interviewees were aware that the deterioration in study conditions and the lack of commitment on behalf of the institutions could only imply an increase in educational exclusion.

We have pedagogical concerns as well [...]. We have students who are going to drop out, they are not going to show up. Our pedagogical concern is already the loss of some of our students, who unfortunately will move into other situations, such as child labor. (Interview with women CNTE leaders in September 2020)

Likewise, the perception of the teachers responding to the survey pointed in this direction. Among these, five out of ten (51.4%) said that the number of students dropping out of school had increased significantly. In the opinion of an additional 26.3%, dropout levels had somewhat increased.

Figure 9 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by perception of change in the number of students leaving their studies due to the pandemic



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated to CNTE in May and June 2021.

2.4 Contractual relationships and salaries are maintained, but with a downward trend during the pandemic

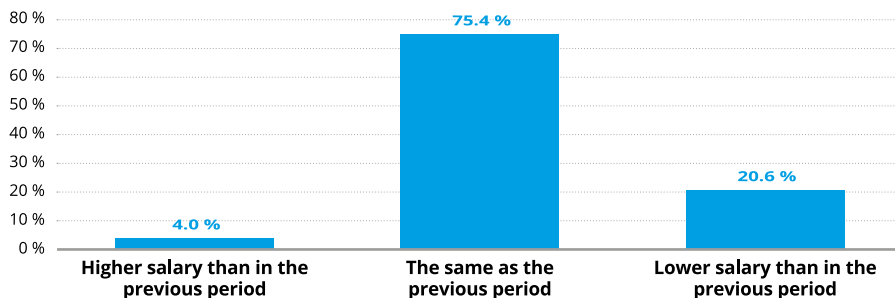
Despite the significant difficulties mentioned above, some of the most basic working conditions such as contracts and salaries in general remained stable. Among the teachers responding to the survey, 90.3% reported that their employment relationship maintained stability. This was not the case for the remaining 9.7%. In this sense, CNTE pointed out that cuts and layoffs were more frequent among those who had temporary contracts in the municipal education system:

So in some municipalities, yes, temporary labor contracts. They were also cut in provinces. (Interview with women leaders of CNTE in September 2020)

With regard to salaries, at 82.2%, the majority of teachers responding to the survey received full remuneration in a timely fashion. Despite this, 9.7% reported having received remuneration in full but with arrears, while 5.5% reported not having received the full payment. In addition, 2.6% reported other incidents, such as lack of inflation adjustments made to their salary, or that some items such as payments destined for transport were discounted.

On the other hand, one in five (20.6%) reported having received a lower salary than in the period before the pandemic. This could mean, in some cases, that although the employment relationship has been maintained and the salary was received in full, there was a deterioration in other working conditions. For example, these could be reductions in working hours or the elimination of salary supplements such as those already mentioned.

Figure 10 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by changes in teaching income during the pandemic



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated to CNTE in May and June 2021.

2.5 Household income suffered due to the widespread increase in household expenses

While the income from their work remained stable for most teachers, income in 36% of their households declined during the pandemic. Incomes remained stable in 33.4%, an also significant proportion of households, and even increased in 29.6% of households.

However, the increase in expenses during the pandemic was widespread. Almost nine out of ten women teachers (87.9%) reported having faced this situation. In addition to the factors already mentioned above such as assuming the costs of the supplies necessary for work or to support students, others are added such as providing financial support for relatives or other people who have lost their source of income. It is thus evident that the stability of employment in this area was key to mitigating the economic impact of the measures taken within the framework of the pandemic in other sectors as well.

In the first two or three months, not so much, but in the fourth month, it's already occurring that more people in the family are losing their income [...]. We have to help relatives, children, grandchildren with our salary. (Interview with women leaders of CNTE in September 2020)

Figure 11 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by level of household Income during the pandemic

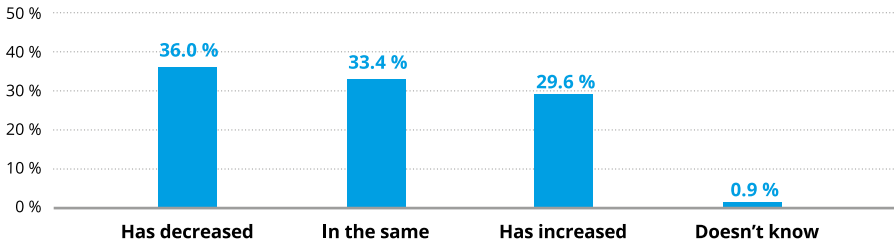
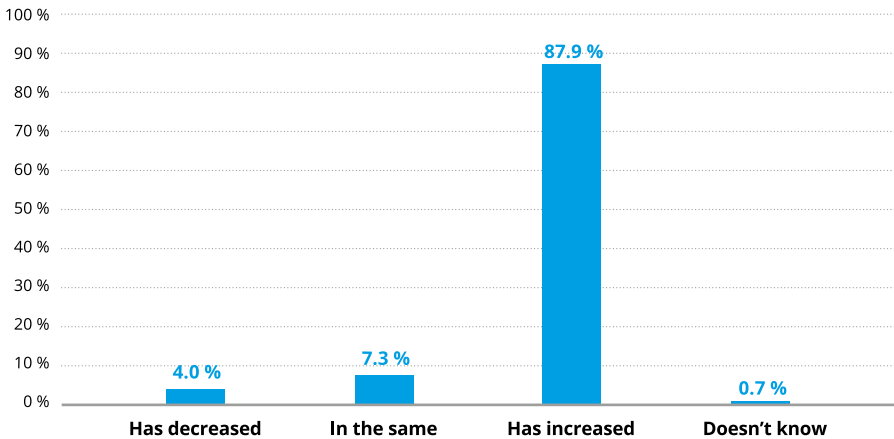


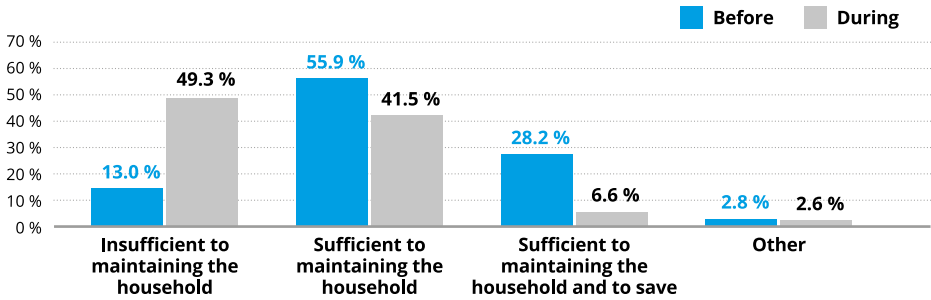
Figure 12 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by level of household expenses during the pandemic



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated to CNTE in May and June 2021.

Consequently, the percentage of female teachers whose family income was insufficient to supporting the household increased dramatically, going from 13% before the pandemic to 49.3% during the pandemic. This was also a situation that negatively affected the possibilities of saving. Before the pandemic, 28.2% of educators indicated that they had enough income to maintain their home and save. However, during the pandemic, this was the situation for only 6.6%.

Figure 13 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by sufficiency of income to maintain household before and during the pandemic



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated to CNTE in May and June 2021.

On the other hand, before the pandemic, 21.3% carried out other activities in addition to teaching in order to generate income. A good part of these had to abandon such complementary activities. During the pandemic, there were 16.4% who reported doing some work additional to teaching.

2.6 Time use during the pandemic: An inordinate overload of paid and unpaid work for women

In the period marked by COVID-19, time use patterns were also reconfigured, placing women with a greater overload of work and responsibilities. The suspension of classes and other care services, as well as the long days of confinement at home meant a significant increase in the burden of unpaid care work, which was mostly assumed by women.

Among the teachers who answered the survey, six out of ten (58.3%) indicated that during the pandemic they did more domestic work. A similar proportion of these workers said that during the same period they had to devote more time to supporting children in their studies.

Figure 14 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by time spent doing domestic work during the pandemic

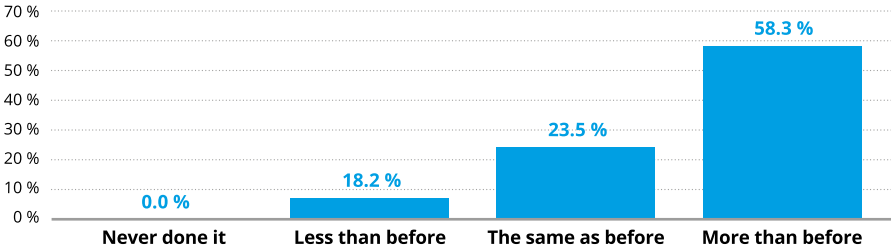
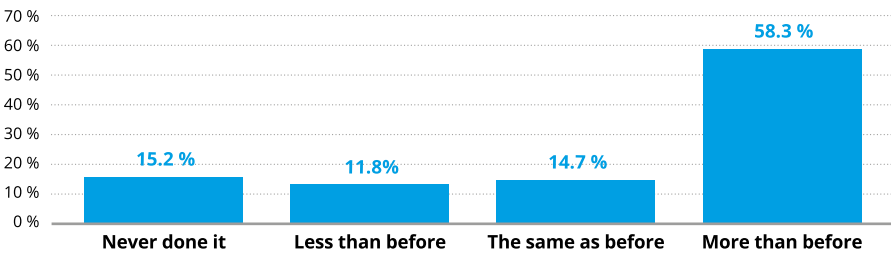


Figure 15 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by time spent supporting children in their studies during the pandemic

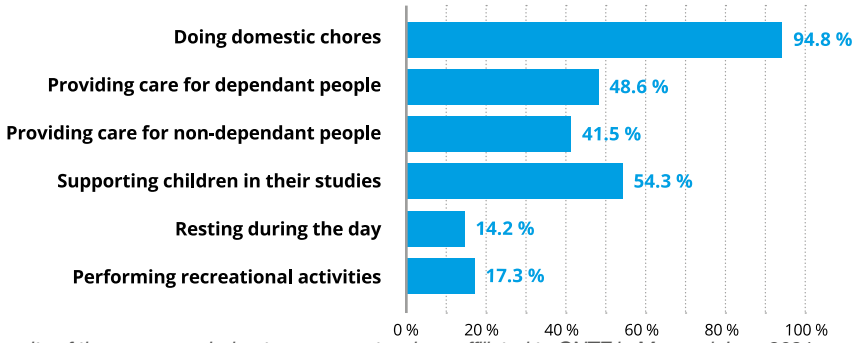


Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated to CNTE in May and June 2021.

When analyzing the unpaid activities assumed by the educators in the week prior to the survey, at 98.4%, it is evident that practically all of these performed household chores. In addition, 54.3% supported children in their studies, 48.6% carried out care work for dependent people, and 41.5% performed care tasks for non-dependent adults. This last aspect is particularly relevant if we consider that these were people who could have assumed undertaking their own care needs and that, this not being the case, thus implied a greater saturation of work for women who were already overloaded.



Figure 16 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by activities performed in the previous week



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated to CNTE in May and June 2021.

Analyzing the domestic and care work undertaken by other adults who live with the women teachers contributes to revealing this situation in greater detail. For the majority of adults living with teachers, the pandemic also meant a greater demand for care and domestic work. This was the situation of 59.3% of adult women present in the homes of the women teachers. The situation varies significantly however when it comes to adult men. For most of these, the pandemic did not influence the domestic and care workload they take on at home. This was the situation for 39% of adult men. In addition, 16.2% worked less than before, while 12.3% did not take on this job before and also did not do so during the pandemic. In summary, the figures show that, far from promoting a fairer distribution of care work between women and men, the pandemic period contributed to deepening the sexual division of labor.

Figure 17 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by time other adult women in their household spent on domestic work during the pandemic

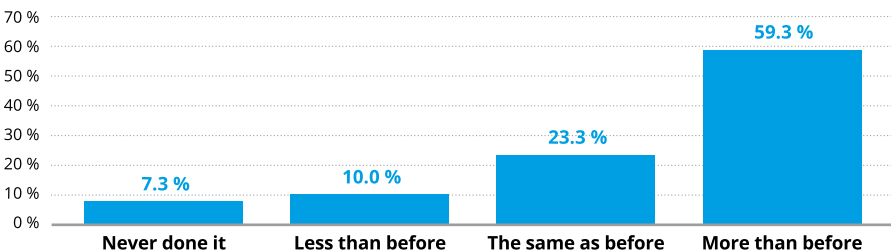
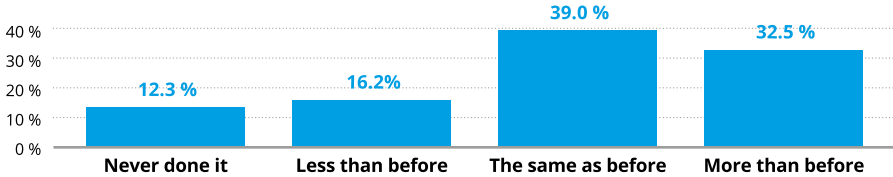


Figure 18 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by time other adult men in their household spent on domestic work during the pandemic



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated to CNTE in May and June 2021.

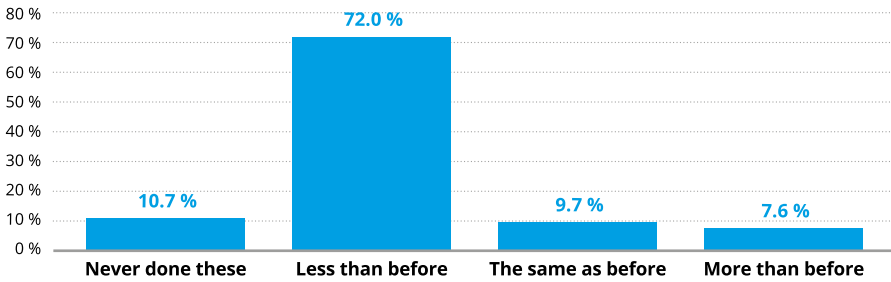
The increased demand for care directly influenced the lack of rest. Consequently, 64.7% of women teachers indicated that during the pandemic they could devote less time to rest during the day than before the pandemic. Only 14.2% indicated that they managed to dedicate the same time that they previously did to rest, while those who were able to rest more than before were a marked minority at 6.4%. In addition, 14.6% of respondents said that neither before nor during the pandemic could they dedicate time to rest during the day.

The overload of work and family responsibilities implied, in addition to limiting rest time, sacrificing time devoted to recreational activities. Thus, at 72%, the vast majority were not able to devote as much time to this type of activity as they could before the pandemic.

The information collected regarding the activities carried out during the week prior to the survey confirms this aspect. Only 14.2% indicated that they were able to rest during the day and 17.3% indicated that they were able to carry out recreational activities.



Figure 19 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by time spent on recreational activities during the pandemic



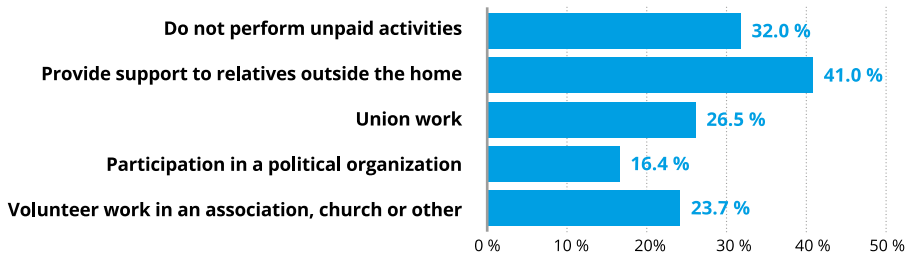
Source: Survey of women teachers affiliated with CNTE in May and June 2021.

CNTE indicated that the pandemic and the new working modalities increased the weight of the double workday for women without there having been any measures to help them avoid overexertion:

Traditionally, it is women who take on more [domestic] tasks [...], they have [...] the challenge of learning to deal with technology from one day to the next, and also inside the house, taking on all the housework and attending to the students and learning to do that. So they have very heavy workdays. (Interview with women leaders of CNTE in September 2020)

On the other hand, added to work and care responsibilities were other types of social and community responsibilities. 68% of women teachers also assumed these types of unpaid commitments. The most frequent activity, carried out by 41%, was to provide support to other relatives who did not live at home. In addition, 26.5% carried out trade union work, 23.7% carried out voluntary activities in associations, churches or other entities, and 16.4% participated in political organizations. Some of the women did more than one of these activities.

Figure 20 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by unpaid activities they perform



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated to CNTE in May and June 2021.

2.7 Impacts of teleworking: Endless working days under the promise of conciliation

In the discussions related to teleworking prior to the pandemic, among the favorable arguments frequently made were those tending to underline the potential benefits for conciliation. It was thought the work-from-home modality would eliminate the difficulties in harmonizing children's schedules with those of working mothers, allowing women to simultaneously respond to work and care responsibilities. The experience during the pandemic, however, showed that this is a complex situation that, in the absence of a fair distribution of care, placed a greater demand for care on women with fewer supports than ever.

In addition, as has been previously indicated, in the context of the pandemic teleworking occurred from one day to the next without adequate regulations established in most countries. In the case of Brazil, at the end of 2020 a draft law was being discussed, but there were no specific regulations in place.

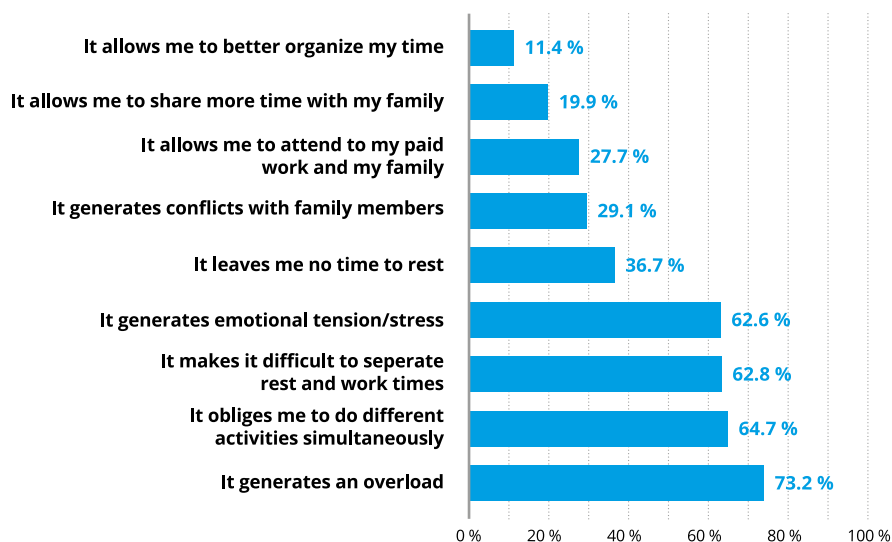
No province has altered rules or laws, they did not regulate teleworking. What you have now is a change of the workday schedule to be at home [...], each state ends up reorganizing according to its situation. But today we have an overload because everyone had to learn to deal with it, there is nothing regulated and the previous rules continue in place, with only the adaptation to a new way of working. (Interview with women CNTE leaders in September 2020)



The opinion of the female teachers regarding the effects of teleworking is clear. The majority of the women workers considered that teleworking involves negative aspects such as the generation of work overload (73.2%), the obligation to perform different activities simultaneously (64.7%), difficulty separating work and rest times (62.8%) and the generation of stress (62.6%). Other negative aspects have less weight, although they are also pointed out by a fair proportion of the women teachers. This was the case for a lack of rest time (36.7%) and the generation of family conflicts (29.1%).

Aspects that could be considered to be positive, however, were chosen to a lesser extent by the teachers. 27.7% indicated that it allowed them to attend to paid work and family, 19.9% that it allowed them to spend more time with family, and 11.4% said that it allowed them to organize their time better.

Figure 21 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by effects of telework

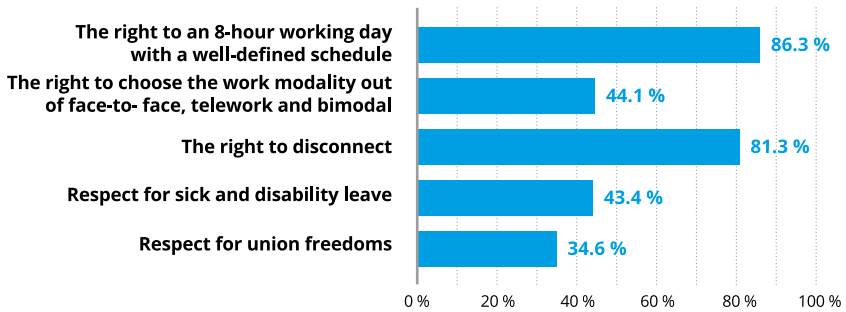


Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated to CNTE in May and June 2021.

The criterion that teleworking negatively affects labor rights was also widespread. 86.3% considered that it affects the right to an eight-hour working day with a we-

Il-defined schedule. In the same vein, 81.3% indicated that it affects the right to disconnect. To a lesser extent, other rights were also affected, such as respect for sick and disability leave (43.4%), the possibility of choosing work modality (44.1%) and respect for trade union freedoms (34.6%).

Figure 22 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by opinion on rights violated by telework



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated to CNTE in May and June 2021.

Indeed, CNTE also suggested that the unlimited extension of the working was one of the main impacts of teleworking in this period.

Being at home [...], we have meetings in the morning or a morning schedule to teach classes and to attend students in the afternoon. We attend to them at night, in the very early morning, before working hours, after working hours. (Interview with women CNTE leaders in September 2020)

Furthermore, in a scenario tending towards the deregulation of labor relations and the elimination of acquired rights, the concern arises that the creation of new regulations for teleworking will be used to advance this anti-rights agenda.

The regulation of this remote work could also involve a problem of loss of rights. According to the government's logic, boom! You can work from home, and then they can cut wages, cut bonuses. (Interview with women CNTE leaders in September 2020)

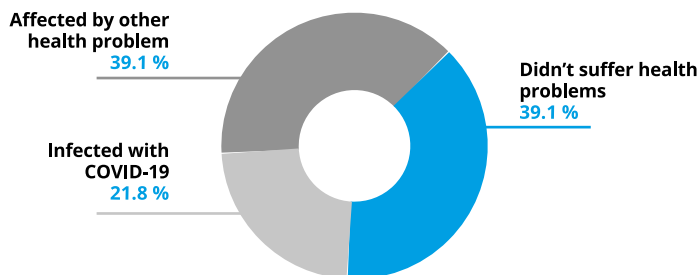
2.8 Health during the pandemic: Higher than national infection rates among teachers

In June 2021, at the time the survey was completed, Brazil reported 8,322,760 cumulative cases of COVID-19 (Ministry of Health, 2021). Given that the country's estimated population is just over 213 million, 8.6% of the population would have thus been infected with this virus. The figures show, however, that the proportion of teachers who have fallen ill with COVID-19 is much higher. This was the case for 21.8% of the respondents.

Although there may be an under-registration of infections in the official figures, the high incidence among teachers could imply the greater exposure to the virus of those working in this sector.

On the other hand, in addition to those who reported having had COVID-19, 39.1% indicated that they had other health problems during the pandemic.

Figure 23 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by effects on health during the pandemic



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated to CNTE in May and June 2021.

Among those who suffered health problems during the pandemic, including both COVID-19 and other problems, the majority reported having received medical attention. It is noteworthy, however, that about half at 48.2% went to private health centers, while 27.6% went to public health centers for this

care. Among the rest, 11.3% indicated that they did not receive medical attention although they required it, and 9.7% indicated that they did not need this support. In addition, 3.1% indicated having sought other options such as combinations of both public and private services.

It is worth noting that the assessment of the care received is generally quite good. 53.8% considered that the service was good and 28.7% rated it as very good. 15.9% considered that the care was fair, while those who considered it bad or very bad represented only 1.5%.

2.9 Health and life, the main concern of women teachers

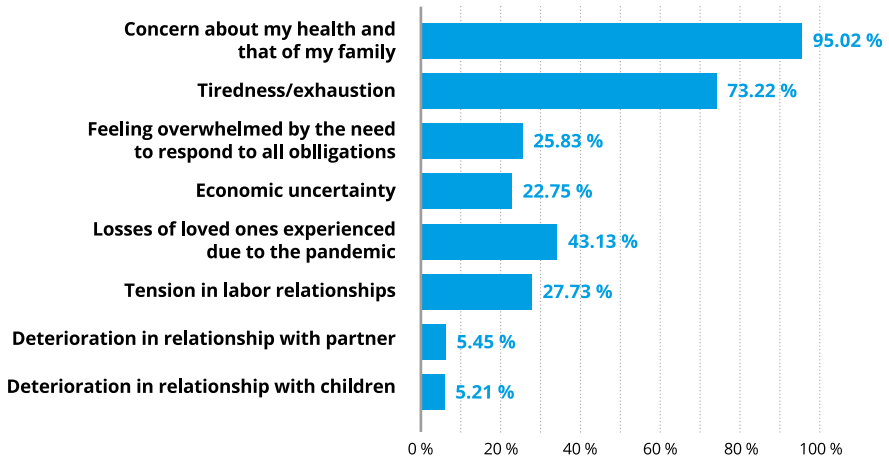
In a context such as the one described in the previous sections, marked by work overload, economic pressure, the impact on rights and health problems, the concerns of female teachers are numerous. At 95%, almost all of them reported feeling concerned about their health, their life and those of their family. There are also many, at 73.2%, who reported feeling concerned about permanent fatigue.

In addition, at 43.1%, a high percentage reported having lost family members or loved ones because of the pandemic.

Other concerns such as tensions in labor relations (27.7%), feeling overwhelmed by not being able to respond to all obligations (25.8%) and economic uncertainty (22.7%) were reported by a smaller proportion of women teachers.



Figure 24 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by concerns during the pandemic



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated to CNTE in May and June 2021.

2.10 After the accession into power of authoritarianism and fundamentalism, the pandemic was a new factor increasing violence against women

As noted in the section on the context in Brazil, violence against women has been on the rise in the country in recent years. After the coup d'état, the weakening of policies for the promotion of women's rights and the coming into power of fundamentalist anti-rights groups generated a scenario that legitimizes violence and weakens protection mechanisms.

The pandemic deepened this adverse scenario. The need to stay at home for greater lengths of time meant for many staying locked up with their aggressors, with little opportunity to seek help. On the other hand, the economic uncertainty and job loss could "generate a feeling of loss of power" (UN-WOMEN, 2020, p. 2), which induced an increase in "the frequency and severity of domestic violence, as well as risk-seeking and abusive behaviors, reflecting a possible increase in sexual harassment online and on the street" (UN-WO-

MEN, 2020, p. 2). To this analysis, CNTE added that the increase in virtuality has also led to an increase in violence in this area. These are manifestations that are often more difficult to identify and against which there are few resources offering protection.

Unfortunately, violence is increasing in domestic spaces, in the home, in the workplace [...]. Social networks also have their forms of violence that are sometimes difficult to even identify. (Interview with women CNTE leaders in September 2020)

The women teachers coincided in pointing out that violence against women increased during the pandemic. This is the perception of nine out of ten of the women answering the survey. At 46.7%, a significant proportion also considered that violence against women particularly affected teachers during the pandemic.

Figure 25 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by perception of change in violence against women during the pandemic

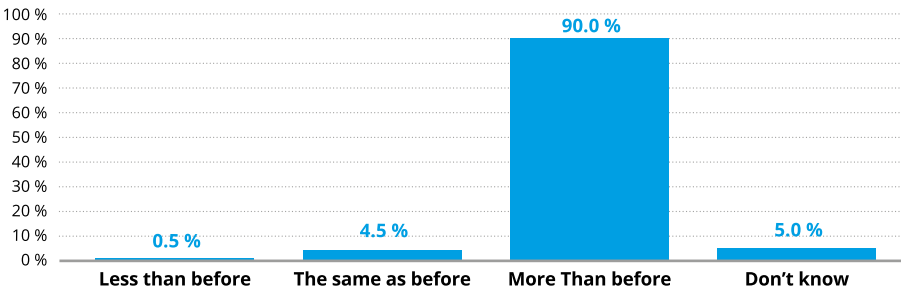
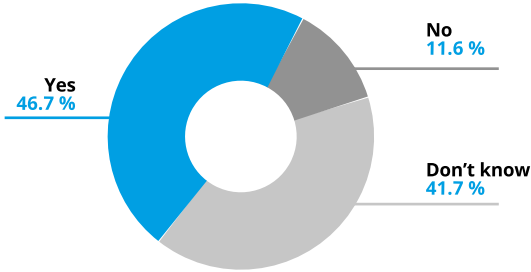


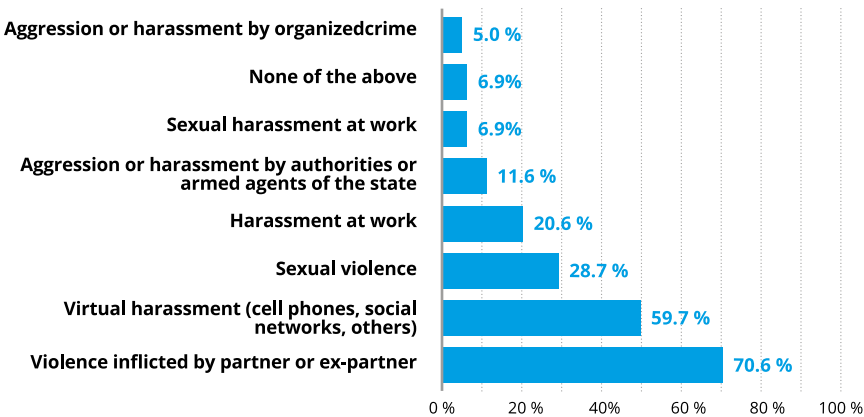
Figure 26 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers that consider that violence against women has particularly affected women teachers during the pandemic



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated to CNTE in May and June 2021.

70.6% considered that intimate partner or ex-partner violence increased. More than half, at 59.7%, indicated that virtual harassment increased. In addition, 28.7% said that sexual violence increased, and 20.6% that workplace harassment increased. Other forms of violence such as aggression and harassment by authorities (11.6%), sexual harassment at work (6.9%) and assault by organized crime (5%) were mentioned to a lesser extent.

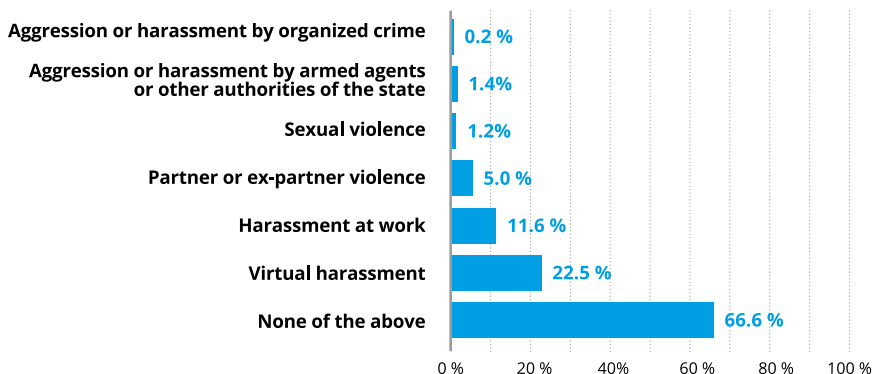
Figure 27 Brasil. 2021. What types of violence against women teachers have increased during the pandemic?



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated to CNTE in May and June 2021.

On investigating the prevalence of violence among the teachers responding to the survey, the most mentioned manifestations did not correspond to the perceptions shown in the previous figure. In this case, 33.4% reported having faced some situation of violence during the pandemic. In this sense, virtual harassment (22.5%) and workplace harassment (11.6%) were the manifestations of violence that the greatest number of female educators reported having experienced. Other forms of violence such as that exercised by partners or ex-partners (5%), violence exercised by State authorities (1.4%) and sexual violence (1.2%) were also present, although to a lesser extent.

Figure 28 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by type of violence experienced during the pandemic

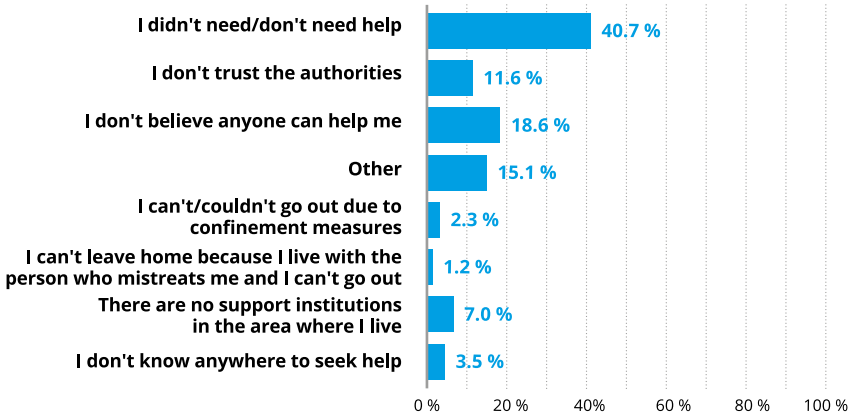


Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated to CNTE in May and June 2021.

Among those who reported having experienced some situation of violence, the majority, 59.3%, said that they did not seek help. Among the reasons for this, 40.7% indicated that they did not need it. In addition, 18.6% said that they did not believe that anyone could provide them with support, while 11.6% said that they did not trust the authorities. Other reasons such as the absence of institutions to request help from in the local area, a lack of information on places to seek support, and the impossibility of leaving home were also mentioned, although to a lesser extent. In addition to the already indicated reasons, 15.1% stated that they did not seek help for other reasons. The causes for this

are varied, but some reasons stand out, such as the fear of losing employment in situations of workplace harassment.

Figure 29 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by reasons for not seeking help for violence experienced during the pandemic



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated to CNTE in May and June 2021.

Among the 33.4% of women teachers who experienced violence, the majority at 42.4% indicated that the support obtained helped them a lot. An additional 33.9% indicated that it helped them somewhat. In addition, 18.6% said that it did not help them and 5.1% said that it worsened the situation.

In this scenario, at 90.3%, the vast majority of teachers responding to the survey considered that the union is able to take action with respect to violence against women teachers. When asked about the most appropriate measures for this, 73.6% recommended providing free legal representation for women teachers who experience violence. Likewise, recommendation was made by many teachers of measures such as information and awareness-raising campaigns (54.3%), the increased visibility and denunciation of violence (54%) and the inclusion of measures related to this area in collective bargaining (48.6%). The creation of protocols and training are also recommended, although to a lesser extent.

Figure 30 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by opinion on union capacity to take measures regarding violence against women teachers

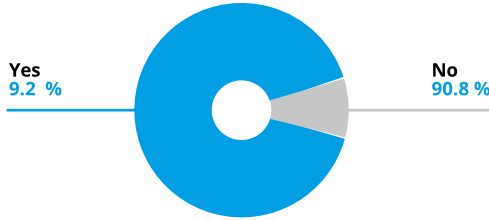
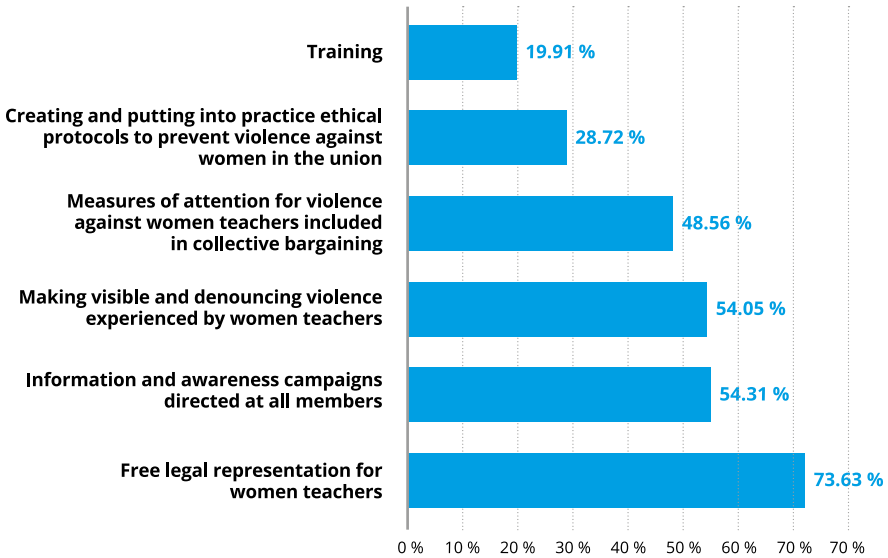


Figure 31 Brazil. 2021. Women teachers by type of union action recommended against violence



Results of the survey carried out on women teachers affiliated to CNTE in May and June 2021.



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COLOMBIA

Education under attack: Teaching, providing care and engaging in social struggle during the pandemic²²

Alejandra Paniagua

1. Inequality and popular discontent during the pandemic

Colombia, located in the south of the American continent, has a continental area of 1,141,748 km² (440,831 sq mi), making it the fifth largest country in Latin America. Its estimated population is 51,266,000, of which 51.2% correspond to women and 48.8% to men (Colombian National Administrative Department of Statistics, DANE). In addition, its population is relatively young, since only 9.1% of Colombian people are over 64 years old. The bulk of the population, at 68.2%, are between 15 and 65 years old (DANE, 2021). The ethnic and cultural diversity of the Colombian nation is another of its characteristic features, since according to the last census the estimated volume of population self-identifying²³ as black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal or Palenquero corresponded to 9.34% of its inhabitants (DANE, 2019).

Since the establishment of the constitution in 1991, this South American country has proclaimed itself as a unitary, decentralized republic, in which the territorial entities enjoy autonomy. Its territorial political organization is divided into five districts (Bogotá, Cartagena, Barranquilla, Santa Marta and Buenaventura), 32 departments and 1,123 municipalities. Internally, each department has a government and, in the case of municipalities, each of these has a local government with its respective mayor's office and powers defined according to the Constituent Assembly. The political-territorial organization described

²² In addition to the measures adopted by the national government, the mayors' offices applied their own territorial provisions, however, in this document the mapping of measures of a national scope have been prioritized due to the objectives of the research. Nonetheless, the management of the emergency throughout the territory was not uniform and featured considerable differences.

²³ The Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (Colombian National Administrative Department of Statistics, DANE) used self-recognition to capture the ethnic belonging of its population in the 2018 National population and housing Census.

condenses the decentralized perspective of the Social State of Law embodied in the new Constituent Assembly (DANE, 2021).


According to the classification of the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI), Colombia has a high level of development. In 2019 it ranked 83rd, with a value of 0.767. For that same year, the life expectancy of Colombian men and women was 77.3 years of age and the gross national income per capita was US\$14,257. The average number of years of schooling of Colombian women and men is 8.5 (UNDP, 2020) and the average schooling rate of people between 15 and 24 years is 98.9%.²⁴ During 2019, the participation rate of the population in economic activity was 62.9%, the employment rate was 56.6% and, finally, the open unemployment rate was 9.9% (ECLAC, 2020a).

Likewise, the World Bank placed Colombia within the group of high-middle income countries due to the annual growth of its gross domestic product (GDP). The available data show that between 2000 and 2012 Colombia maintained sustained growth; although from 2013 to 2015 this tended to decline, in subsequent years it showed a slight recovery. In 2019, the GDP had an annual growth of 3.28%. The registered economic growth, however, coexists with marked inequality. For example, the Gini index for 2019 was 51.3 (World Bank, 2021).

On the other hand, the situation immediately after the arrival of the virus was characterized by a wave of popular protest in opposition to the methodical application of neoliberal policies and regressive fiscal and labor reforms responsible for deepening social inequality and progressively deteriorating the living conditions of the working class in Colombia. This was stated as follows by a participant in the interviews:

This crisis doesn't originate now, it is a structural crisis that originated long ago and, in that sense, the peoples of the world, in Latin America and the education sector, have been mobilizing permanently, resisting and confronting the

²⁴ Data available for the year 2018.



policies of the neoliberal economic model and the capitalist system. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)

Since the third quarter of 2018, both the national and international media have reported various acts of protest throughout the Colombian territory, mainly against tax reform and in favor of the provision of greater resources for education. Popular organizations, workers, pensioners and Indigenous peoples among others participated in protests throughout the national territory under various slogans and repertoires of struggle:

We had great motivation and a permanent presence on the streets, not only of students and teachers, but of the bulk of society, [...] already strong; in fact, the government was already at critical levels of acceptance. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)

During 2019, popular protests continued. Teachers' organizations denounced the intention of the national government to introduce harmful modifications to the pension system and repudiated the policies seeking to criminalize social protest and the repression implemented by the national authorities. Both social organizations and some media outlets evidenced acts of police brutality that went from the arrest of protesters and the closure of borders to the implementation of curfews (BBC News, 2019).

In addition, various sectors expressed their dissatisfaction with the low political commitment of the national government to comply with the provisions of the Peace Agreements.²⁵ Some specialists and social organizations have pointed out the

²⁵ *Disputes over land and problems with the distribution of resources and services in the Colombian countryside have been present throughout the long history of wars in this country. Due to this, the Peace Agreements signed between the armed groups and the national government—in addition to disarmament and demobilization measures for the ex-combatants—had to incorporate a series of commitments to address territorial inequality, problems related to land and rural poverty. However, the economic and social reforms contemplated to address the territories most affected by the armed conflict have advanced at a much slower pace (Kroc Institute, 2020).*

maneuvers of the Duque government to undermine compliance with these agreements and to promote the return to the so-called democratic security policies:

We are coming up to four years since the signing of the agreement in the month of November, and this government is determined to tear the agreements to shreds, to not bring the agreements to fulfillment and to maintain power again with the discourse of war and peace. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)

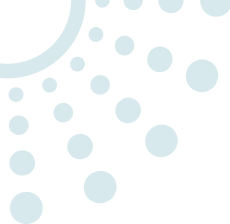
Years ago, the report of Grupo de Memoria Histórica (Historical Memory Group, GMH, 2013)²⁶ documented the authoritarianism of the Colombian political regime expressed in pacts between the elites to guarantee the permanence and alternation in power of the traditional parties, as well as the exclusion of traditional decision-making mechanisms and scenarios of the opposition forces. Recently, the so-called *false positives*²⁷ investigated by the Jurisdiction for Peace revealed political violence against civilians as a systematic form of government in this country. On social violence in Colombia, a union leader explains:

In Colombia, peace is in tatters. Combatants are murdered, but, in addition, it is the only country in the world where the ruling party persecutes, assassinates, and profiles the Colombian teachers. It is very serious that in a country there is concrete persecution with curtailing of academic freedom and educational autonomy. Teachers cannot talk about peace, teachers cannot talk about parties, teachers cannot talk about an alternative model because they are immediately seen as indoctrinating, they must be pursued. So, today, in this country, the trigger is activated to assassinate the Colombian teachers either for their ideas or politically or physically. More than 1200 teachers have been killed so far. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)

The pandemic thus erupted in a country marked not only by deep economic and territorial inequality.

²⁶ This report gathers the results of research done in the post-conflict period to clarify the war.

²⁷ “False positives” is a term used to refer to the killing of civilians during the armed conflict, who are officially registered as combat casualties.



2. For the class that lives from their work, the social and economic cost of the pandemic intensified due to the inadequacy of the measures taken

On March 6, 2020, Colombia joined the countries of the region that entered the containment phase of SARS-COVID-19 after the confirmation of the first case by the Colombian Ministry of Health and Social Protection. Given this announcement, the national government established a set of urgent measures to identify, confirm, isolate, and monitor potential cases of people entering the country from the People's Republic of China, Italy, Spain and France, as well as to establish treatment of confirmed cases (Resolution 380).

Subsequently, on March 12, and with the presence of nine cases detected in the cities of Bogotá, Medellín, Buga and Cartagena, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection declared a state of health emergency throughout the national territory, establishing the first measures of national scope (Resolution 385). Table 1 shows the most important health guidelines of this first containment phase:

Table 1: Containment and public health isolation provisions approved by the Colombian government after the declaration of a national emergency due to COVID-19

Contenido	Norma
Public health recommendations for public and private transport and workplaces.	Resolution 380 of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection
50% capacity in public and private establishments.	
Closure of the land and river border with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, from March 14, 2020, to May 30, 2020.	Presidential Decree 402 of March 13.
Closure of the land and river border with the Republic of Panama, the Republic of Ecuador, the Republic of Peru and the Federal Republic of Brazil until May 30, 2020.	Presidential Decree 412 of March 16.
Mandatory public health preventive isolation measure for people over 70 years of age.	Resolution 464 of March 18.
Closure of leisure and entertainment establishments and commercial premises related to dancing, leisure, entertainment, gambling and betting, as well as prohibition of the sale of alcoholic beverages.	Resolution 453 of March 18, 2020, Ministry of Health Protection and Social Protection.
Readjustment of the academic calendar for preschool, basic and middle education, to resume academic work from April 20, 2020.	Directive 03 of March 20, 2020, Ministry of National Education.
Mandatory preventive isolation of all inhabitants of the Republic of Colombia.	Decreets: 457 of March 22, 531 of April 8, 593 of April 24, 636 of May 06, 2020.
Closure of airports during the emergency, except for the entry of nationals and residents and for humanitarian purposes.	Decree 569 of April 15, 2020.
Public and private sector entities are encouraged to fulfill their functions and obligations under the modalities of teleworking, work at home or other similar modes.	Decree 636 of May 06, 2020.

Source: Own elaboration based on the directives and decrees cited in the table, available online.

The initial set of measures included the appointment of the president of the national government as the head of the Directorate of Public Order during the public health emergency; therefore, the regulations provided thereby were applied immediately and preemptively, even being over and above the provisions of governors and mayors (Presidency of the Republic, Decree 418, 2020). This left without effect public health measures implemented by some municipalities.



According to press reports, this provision generated differences between the national government and the leadership of the mayors and departmental governments, mainly regarding curfew measures and, later, the occupancy of beds in intensive care units. As a result, public confusion was generated, with the exacerbation of tensions between territorial authorities and institutional political centers.²⁸ Nevertheless, the national government maintained and justified the urgency of the public health confinement provisions. The trade union leaders interviewed considered that the public health crisis exacerbated the social control exercised by the national government prior to the arrival of the pandemic under the pretext of countering the speed of contagion.

The confinement and social isolation measures quickly impacted upon employment. According to the ECLAC balance sheet (2020):

The national unemployment rate increased by 5.4% in the rolling quarter from August to October to stand at 15.7%. An even a more pronounced trend in this regard was seen in the 13 main cities, where it reached 18.2%, that is, 7.5% more than in the same period in 2019. In this quarter, the unemployment rate for women was at 20.8%, which was 8.7% higher than that for men. (ECLAC, 2020b)

Likewise, the pandemic exacerbated the structural problems of labor informality in Colombia (ECLAC, 2020). The situation was dramatic for the informal segment of the working class since the public health confinement implied the mandatory confinement of the population in their homes, with this undermining the possibility of informal workers generating an income to meet their basic needs. In the run-up to the pandemic (December 2019 - February 2020), the measurement of informal work showed that “the proportion of informal workers in the 13 cities and metropolitan areas was at 46.7%. For the total of the 23 cities and metropolitan areas it was at 47.9%” (DANE, 2020a). Mobility restrictions therefore affected a significant segment of working people, who saw not only their working conditions degraded (as happened to the formal

²⁸ To exemplify this, see the following press releases: *Tikitakas* (March 18, 2020) and *Semana* (July 1, 2020).

segment due to the application of flexibility measures), but also the possibilities of generating their basic living conditions (Luna and Torres, 2020).

Sex-disaggregated data show that the economic contraction caused by the measures adopted in the pandemic had a disproportionately higher economic cost on women than on men. During that year, about 2.5 million women's jobs were lost, mainly in economic activities associated with care:

Employed women went from 9.2 million in the second quarter of 2019 to 6.7 in the same quarter of 2020; that is, more than 2.5 million women lost their jobs. In percentage terms, the employment rate of women decreased by 27%, while that of men decreased by 18% (Hernández et al., 2020, p. 1).

In ten of the twelve branches of economic activity, the loss of more women's than men's jobs was reported. Of these sectors, before the crisis the two most affected had female participation of greater than 60%. The bulk of the women's jobs lost corresponded to the paid care sector (Hernández et al., 2020) and this had a dual impact for women. Firstly, it implied greater female unemployment and poverty in a country in which 40.7% of the 14,243,223 households surveyed in 2018 were headed by women. As one participant explains:

The situation of women and young people was very serious before the pandemic began. High levels of unemployment, higher than those of adult males, and greater poverty. This situation is going to get worse with the pandemic [...]. But the reality is that Colombia's social and economic crisis had begun before the pandemic; what the pandemic did is simply exacerbate it and make the contradictions even worse. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE)

Secondly, it led to a significantly increased workload for women and an increase in their working hours. As recorded by ECLAC (2020a), the proportion of time spent on unpaid household chores and care prior to the pandemic was 18.2 hours per week for women and 5.2 for men, demonstrating gender



inequality in the use of pre-pandemic time with women already performing 76.2% of all unpaid care work (Hernández et al., 2020). During the pandemic, care activities —essential to life —had to be provided from within homes, further burdening women. In the words of a union leader:

The work done at home has been made invisible, when, in the case of Colombia, this is essentially in favor of the state, because it saves on the raising of children, caring for the sick and the elderly, and the performance of a series of activities without which society cannot survive, but which the state gets free of charge at the expense of the family, but mainly at that of women. And this is particularly serious in Colombia. (Interview participant, 2020)

Inexorably, the pandemic extended and intensified levels of job insecurity and unemployment, such that the national government therefore used its social assistance programs²⁹ to address the impact of the contraction in economic activity caused by the pandemic on households. It also implemented a set of provisions, involving the readjustment of pre-existing programs and social tools and/or the creation of new, exceptional monetary aid transfers (Escaroz et al., 2020).

For example, to address the particular needs of vulnerable population groups, access to basic services was included through the reconnection of public household drinking water and sewerage services to residential households that had had services suspended or cut off (Decree 441). Other measures included: unconditioned extraordinary monetary transfers in favor of the beneficiaries of the Familias en Acción (Families in Action), Protección Social al Adulto Mayor-Colombia Mayor (Social Protection of the Older Adult-Senior Colombia), and Jóvenes en Acción (Youth in Action) programs (Decree 669); VAT refunds for the poorest households (Decrees 419, 458, 535); monetary transfers providing temporary relief to the population in the process of reintegration (Decree 570), for beneficiaries of educational loans (Decree 467), and to families not included in social programs; and, finally, packages from the Colombia está

²⁹ Authorized by declaration of an Economic, Social and Ecological Emergency, Decree 417 of March 17, 2020.

contigo (Colombia is with you) food program and markets for old-age citizens (Government of Colombia, 2021).

Nonetheless, in April 2020, the images of the most impoverished neighborhoods covered in red rags signaling distress and protest—whether with respect to delays in receiving aid or due to lack of coverage — questioned the haste of the state response and emphasized a drastic decrease in the income of these households. In the words of the union organization, “the symbolism of the red rags cries out for food, shelter under which to spend the night, men and women who are absolutely unprotected” (Circular 19 of 2020, FECODE).

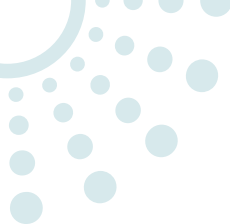
In the same way, companies requested economic support to protect their businesses and interests (Morales, 2021). Included among the relief measures for businesses³⁰ were: the implementation of the flexibility in working hours;³¹ support for companies that presented a decrease in their income due to COVID-19, both for the payment of the first installment of the service premium³² and for their payrolls; authorization of the fragmented payment (in three parts) of the mid-year premium; and lines of credit, among others.

In labor matters, authorization was made for the withdrawal of separation pay by workers whose decrease in monthly incomes was certified by their employers (Decree 448); the incorporation of COVID-19 into the table of occupational diseases (Decree 676); and the implementation of telework (Circular 021). In addition, a solidarity income of US\$41.73 per month was approved for workers suffering suspension of their employment contract or placed on unpaid leave. Despite these measures, the union leaders considered that the bulk of

³⁰ *These relief measures can be consulted in Decrees 770, 639, 667, 805 and 815.*

³¹ *They may be distributed over four (4) days of the week, with a maximum daily schedule of twelve (12) hours, without it being necessary to modify the internal work regulations, by mutual agreement. b) Successive work shifts, as long as the respective shift does not exceed eight (8) hours a day and thirty-six (36) hours a week, without it being necessary to modify the internal work regulations.*

³² *The service premium corresponds to the payment (in two tracts) by the employer of a monthly salary for each year worked.*



these affect “in a greater proportion the rights of teachers and the community in general, that is, they go against workers in general” (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020).

An example of this lies in the controversial approval of Decree 1174 on the creation of a Base Level for Social Protection. Trade union organizations consider this to be the prelude to the approval of casual hourly labor, to the detriment of employment and social security. A woman leader explains with regard to this decree:

They hire people for a number of hours that don't come to the minimum wage and that directly affects social security benefits, especially pensions, because they therefore say, “Well, since the work is paid by the hour, now you don't have to be paid minimum wage.” So that's going to affect one of the features of the pension system, which is the minimum pension. In Colombia, it has been established for years that the minimum pension could not be lower than the legal minimum wage in force. Therefore, with these rules it will be possible to pay less than the minimum wage. In addition, employers are given another prerogative, they are told, “Don't worry, you'll no longer have to contribute as if it were minimum wage, instead you'll be paying by the hour.” And so a system is created that is called the BEPS, and those BEPS consist of the fact that much smaller contributions are going to be made than those being made up to now, and it is not the same general pension system, but rather a parallel system, which is much more unfavorable, in which at the time when certain requirements are met, the worker will be entitled not to a retirement pension equivalent to the minimum wage, but to a tiny subsidy for a short time. So, in practical terms, the social security system is being dealt a blow regarding pensions. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)


Thus, for the class that lives via its work (Antunes, 1995), the social and economic cost of the pandemic intensified due to the inadequacy of the measures adopted. In this regard, a union leader explained:

They are totally aimed at controlling the population and applying all the policies that, in the pre-pandemic era, they had not been able to apply as a result of the resistance of the masses, of mobilization. They are taking advantage of the situation [...]. So far [...] during the pandemic, [...] approximately 170 regulations have been issued, most of them against the Colombian people. 117 million spent on the pandemic, but not for the Colombian people, and they give Avianca [airlines] US\$370 million to give it mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. And the women and the poor on the streets asking for a basic income because they have nothing to eat and no way to pay for public services. Only favoring the financial sector, of course. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)

In addition, the pandemic exposed the precariousness of the health system and the destruction of the public hospital network. Since the 1990s, reformist and privatizing measures have been implemented in this country that allowed the participation of private capital in the social security system through a mixed health system. With Act No. 100 of 1993 (and its reforms) a separation was created between the entities providing services and insurers. To this end, two entity types were created: the EPS (Health Provision Entity), which corresponds to insurers and resource collectors, and the IPS (Health Provision Institutions) such as clinics and public hospitals.³³ The financing of this regime includes the resources coming from employers, contributing workers and the General Participation System (SGP by the initials in Spanish), in addition to other minor sources of state financing.

Union leaders denounce the lack of protection of teachers as a consequence of this hybrid model. On this particular situation, the teachers' organization stated:

³³ *These instances can be both public and private, and in practice, public health insurance (EPS by the initials in Spanish) created their own health service providers (IPS by the initials in Spanish).*



Public teachers are without minimum guarantees for the coverage of risk in the workplace; the contracted companies are not complying; they allege that they are low on resources. There continue to be difficulties with the recognition of work-related accidents, there is delay in assessment of the loss of working capacity, there is no follow-up or prevention campaigns against increasing mental health problems and other diseases of occupational origin. (FECODE Circular 21 of 2020)

In the words of the union leaders, the Colombian teachers “are the only sector of workers in the country that does not have a health and safety system at work, and, taking this to the extreme, a Colombian teacher contracting COVID-19 is not considered to be an occupational disease” (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020).

Along these lines, some analysts consider that the measures adopted in terms of health protection at work have been “insufficient, subordinated to the logic and behavior of occupational risk insurers who did not assume a supportive and committed role with regard to the health and life of affiliated workers, instead superimposing their own economic interests” (Luna & Torres, 2020, p. 5).

In addition to the social and economic costs described in the previous paragraphs, government measures had a political cost for Colombian teachers. As mentioned, from their point of view, the public health crisis was utilized by the government to demobilize collective actions and to exercise its historical social control, hiding the context of the crisis under a bio-political rationale. In the words of an interviewee:

The growth of the organization and the struggle of the masses was in the process of being achieved [...]. Women and young people were made more visible in that great social mobilization, and well, one of the things that hurts the most about this terrible situation in which we have been engaged in recent months is having that social mobilization put on pause at a moment we belie-

ved to be historical, when better results were about to be achieved in what has historically been the struggle. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)

The compulsory public health confinement did not silence social protest, but the confinement and public health isolation measures most definitely constrained social and trade union organizations' repertoires of social action:


We have been gagged and placed in handcuffs, and those face masks not only covered our mouths but also tied up our legs and hands for many months, and this immobility has successfully seen the government authoritatively, that is, has managed to demonstrate the government's most destructive intentions, of further impoverishing the poor, and pursuing the underprivileged and sharing out a little of the economy to the sectors that have helped this government, that is, those who rule the country and those who make the most momentous decisions in the fundamental aspects of society. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)

Colombia's national quarantine ended on August 31, 2020.³⁴ As of September 1, the national government announced³⁵ the phase of selective isolation and individual distancing. Municipalities were classified as being of high, moderate and low levels of contagion according to the behavior of the pandemic. For the first of these, selective and focused isolation was established, while for low and moderate levels these types of measures were prohibited. Likewise, the responsibility for applying biosafety protocols in public spaces was transferred to citizens as the main health measure, which caused the country to be ranked "among the first in the world in contagion and fatality rates due to COVID-19" (Luna and Torres, 2020, p. 5).

In January 2021, faced with a new wave of infections, mandatory health confinement measures were reactivated. Once again, workers in the informal sector

³⁴ However, some municipalities with a lower degree of incidence of the virus lifted their measures as of May, 2020.

³⁵ Decree 1168 of August 20, 2020.



faced the dilemma of choosing between protecting themselves from the virus and isolating themselves at home or generating income to guarantee their basic needs. According to the World Health Organization, between January 3, 2020, and September 21, 2021, 4,941,064 confirmed cases of COVID-19 were reported in Colombia, with 125,895 deaths. On February 17, 2021, the National Vaccination Plan began with a total of 38,002,826 vaccine doses applied (WHO, 2021).

The women union leaders estimated that as of August 12, 2021, more than 2177 teachers and their families had died due to COVID-19. They also identified problems with access to the complete vaccination scheme, specialized medical care and medicines, as well as irregularities in the vaccination process:

The vaccines arrived here late, they were stolen, everything happens here as you suppose they happen in other underdeveloped countries, but here, they really go over the top with it! (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2021) Apart from that, there's also the bad service; I'm currently here in Medellín and I am a witness because I saw it, more than 3000 teachers in a stadium lining up for the vaccine, standing up, humiliated in the sun and the rain. That is, an outrageous mess! Treated like animals, not like formative educators, who felt like they were humiliated. You had to get up early at five in the morning and you got out at four in the afternoon, two in the afternoon for the vaccine. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2021)

Although educators were included in the second group to be vaccinated, from the perspective of the union leaders, this provision was due to the interest of the national government in implementing face-to-face classes.

The attention to the emergency caused the central government's deficit to go from 2.5% of the GDP in 2019 to 8.9% in 2020, due to a significant reduction in tax revenue. For the third quarter of 2020, the economy decreased by 9.0% annually. Mitigating the consequences of the pandemic involved the government investing the equivalent of 2.5% of the GDP and suspending the application of tax regulations.

The recommendation of union leaders was to use “the international reserves of the resources that neoliberalism calls liquidity needs and grant these to SMEs and the most vulnerable and unprotected sectors” (FECODE Circular 18 of 2020). However, faced with an increase in the fiscal deficit and the level of public debt, in this period the national government promoted a tax reform (ECLAC, 2020b).

3. The costs of educating in Colombia during the pandemic

Education in Colombia is a constitutionally guaranteed public right and service (Political Constitution of Colombia, 1991). In terms of public policy, the National Educational Development Plan coordinated by the Ministry of National Education in conjunction with the territorial entities establishes the prioritized strategic lines to be followed in order to comply with constitutional and legal mandates on the provision of educational services. At the local level, educational institutions formulate their own Institutional Educational Projects detailing the actions to be implemented in order to guarantee the right to education. University higher education, on the other hand, has its own normative regulations.

In accordance with current regulations, basic education, which includes primary and secondary education, is compulsory and is structured around a common curriculum of mandatory fundamental areas that comprise a minimum of 80% of the curriculum taught, both in private and public institutions. Middle education is taught at the academic or technical level and, on completing this, students obtain a high school degree that enables them to enter higher education, at any of its levels and courses.

Although the General Education Law promulgated in 1994 formally regulated the scope, objectives and organization of formal, non-formal and informal education in Colombia, this has undergone a series of historical transformations. Statute 2277 was passed in 1979 as a victory of the teaching profession. This was the regulatory framework for the teaching career path until 2002,



when the new statute known as 1278 (Decree 1278) came into force. The new teaching statute varied mechanisms of entry and provisions on retention, promotion, and remuneration for the teaching career, incorporating teacher evaluation into this (Cifuentes, 2014); in addition, it tended towards de-professionalization, ruling out training as a requirement for entry into educational service (Pulido, 2014). Since then, the coexistence of both statutes has fragmented the strength of the teaching profession, introducing a division within the teaching staff:

The bulk of the Colombian teaching profession has an established career path. It's just that, within that career path, we have the two conditions, which are the two statutes that ultimately somehow divided the unity and strength of the teaching profession, because they are different conditions. That is why, even here, people talk about "the 2277s" and "the 1278s". But these days in this most recent stage, we've been overcoming that. The great work of FECODE has been precisely seeking unity, understanding that the problem of the two statutes is not the teachers' problem, but the government's problem, and seeking that precisely today there should be a single statute. So, that is one of the things that we have been working on, there being a single statute, a single teaching career path, the same conditions for all Colombian teachers. (Interview participant, 2020)

To a lesser extent, other teaching regimes operate, which from the perspective of teachers' organizations consolidate even greater levels of precariousness within the Colombian teaching profession:

Contract education also exists, so there is a large sector of the teaching profession that is employed on a temporary basis, there is a sector that is hired on contract by Indigenous councils [...]. They had been demanding their own education, but the government played this very skillfully, so what ended up existing there is practically hiring via contracts and there is a sector of teachers who are under contract located with some non-governmental entities and es-

pecially with the archdiocese, with the church, as part of the church. It is practically like that, it is called "contract education". They are not on a career path, therefore they do not have social benefits. They are teachers who are hired to work in the most distant or remote places in our country, the most distant villages and they have a contract for ten months, without any social benefits. (Interview participant, 2020)

In the case of university higher education, Act 30 of 1992 establishes the normative basis of the higher education system, guaranteeing university autonomy and teaching, learning, research and professorial freedoms. The teaching career is organized into four scales (auxiliary professor, assistant, associate professor and full professor), each with varying degrees of stability in their employment relationship. However, despite the struggle of teachers' organizations to guarantee the stability of teaching staff, forms of recruitment persist that make teaching work at this level of Colombian public education precarious:

There are other ways to have a working relationship with the university, through the figure called a casual professor and the other is the hourly lecture professor. The casual professional is part-time or full-time, but for a limited period; let's say on a fixed term, so, they have a working relationship from January until May, or from September to December, that can be as a casual full-time or part-time professor. But the others, the hourly lecture professors, are the ones who have a working relationship for five hours a week, six hours a week, nine hours a week and there have been or are aberrant situations in the country such as there are professors who are hired for 30 hours a week. When the campus professors have been proposing for a long time, that, in order to have quality teaching staff, there should not be hourly professors teaching for more than a determined number of academic hours, but there are even professors in some universities teaching 30 hours a week. (Personal interview, 2020)



Teachers' organizations have identified a process of the gradual deterioration of their working conditions under the name of educational counter-reform. In the words of one participant, "We called it counter-reform when some governments started saying that it was educational revolution, when it has practically been the intensification of neoliberal politics." (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020). Along the same lines, a trade union leader raises the following practical implications of this process:

It resulted in labor flexibility, that is, the school day was increased. The teacher-student ratio was increased, so, what was not done was to appoint more teachers, but to load up more children onto fewer teachers. Less teaching staff was used in relation to the number of students. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)

The interference of economic interests in the educational field implied both the political-ideological reorientation of educational policies and the gradual weakening of education through the reduction of the budget allocated to it.³⁶ Added to this was a redesign of the conditions and labor relations of the educational sector (Vega, 2011), mainly through modifications in the pension system and the teaching statutes. With regard to this process, a leader clarifies:

In the education sector we have been fighting [...] against the policies of the multilateral banks that, in line with the capitalist system, impose education as being at the service of the economy, that is, education turned into a commodity. The definitive closure of the possibilities of the poor to be trained, educated, allows them to change this society, so it is better that they don't get educated and do not get trained. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)


³⁶ In 2018 in the university higher education sector, teachers' organizations and the student body reached an agreement with the national government holding term for four years to increase the resources allocated to higher education. During the pandemic, teachers' organizations have remained alert to compliance with the agreements and the stability of their teachers after the suspension of face-to-face classes. To expand on this agreement, the government and students reached a historic agreement that increased resources for public higher education by more than 4.5 billion Colombian pesos during the four-year period - Ministry of National Education of Colombia (mineducacion.gov.co).

Given the process described, the union leaders consider that the educational measures introduced with the pandemic exposed the historical abandonment of education in Colombia. As a trade union leader expressed regarding education in her country:

It is not state policy, but government policy. Every government comes and plagiarizes models from outside. So, when we look at the issue in a structural way, we see that the pandemic has a total and definitive impact on state public education and the rights of Colombian teachers. (Participant in an interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)

With the arrival of the pandemic, in the month of March 2020, face-to-face education abruptly began to be organized as a distance system at all levels. The model proposed by the Ministry of Education, broadly speaking, looked upon the provision of educational services in the home for the student population at the levels of preschool, basic, middle and the adult cycles using a strategy that combined: (a) flexibility of the curriculum; (b) the use of printed materials (text books) and mass media (radio and television) for students without internet connectivity; and (c) educational platforms (learning digitally with resources from a variety of media types) and information technologies for students with access to the internet and computers (Minieducación, 2020).

The redirection of the curriculum involved the assignment of new tasks to teachers. For example, teachers were asked to make diagnoses about the conditions of their students based on an analysis of health, educational, socioeconomic, communal, and family variables, etc., for the subsequent definition of educational strategies according to the students' characteristics and stages of development as well as their circumstances. However, they were also delegated care work: For example, in official documentation they are attributed a role of "containment support" and were asked to "offer relief for suffering". In addition, they were encouraged to establish contact with the student body during the holiday period to "motivate them and give them words of encouragement" (Mini-Education, 2020). According to a leader:



The educational measures included, in the first instance, the readjustment of the school calendar. This adjustment maintained the forty weeks of academic work, seven weeks of teacher vacations and five weeks of institutional development established prior to the pandemic; however, it rescheduled these throughout the school year. Teachers thus had to take mandatory vacations despite being confined to their homes under strict public health confinement measures in a scenario of great uncertainty about the epidemiological behavior of the virus and the economy. In the words of one leader, "They stole our holidays." (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)

The measures adopted by the government during the pandemic inexorably transformed the organization of the work process and, therefore the working conditions of teachers changed quickly without the need for profound legal reforms. From the perspective of a union leader, working from home motivated by the need to reduce the spread of COVID-19 differs from telework according to Colombian regulations. Regarding this, she explains:

Telework is not the same as working from home. When it started, everyone was talking about telework and no, this is not telework, it's working from home, because telework has very clear regulations, established for a long time now, and one of the features of telework is that the employer has to practically condition the worker's home. In your home, they have to adapt the place of work, and they have to – the work risk managers have to be on top of that, as to whether the conditions are appropriate or not. (Interview with ASPU union leader, 2020)

On the contrary, in the midst of the crisis, a series of circulars were put out with an impact on education workers, incurring what would previously be considered as tacit violations of teachers' labor rights, given that in transforming the conditions of the educational process itself—through internet connectivity and work from home—the conditions of their work were made even more precarious:

The government, in fact, increased the working hours of teachers, because as this country has no internet connectivity, there is no internet for everyone, the teacher has to teach the class three times: the online class, the WhatsApp class and the class in physical guidebooks. That teacher works ten or twelve hours a day every day of the week to be able to progress with their group; but, if we add to that the government's proposal of alternating modalities, where are we teachers going to go? Working six hours in person in the classroom with a third or a quarter of the students and from there going out and in the afternoon attending to the rest of the students virtually; that teacher will be working twelve or fourteen hours. So, even with that being absolutely against the law, the government is pushing it as a reality. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)

Gone is the scheduled working day because if you wake up at five in the morning, at five in the morning you start to think about what you have to do, and it gets to midnight and you are still working. That is, the working schedule is practically erased, and the demands of many employers have not been very in line with what is happening to workers, but rather the minimum is the same [as before the pandemic] and in the worst cases they are demanding more, but if you are not going in to work, it is that you're not spending on transportation, it's that you... Well, a thousand situations have been presented. (Participant in an interview with a woman leader of the ASPU, 2020)

The teachers assumed the costs of the virtual and distance educational process, since state and contingency supports were not implemented in the face of the new educational provisions. On the lack of support for teachers, a leader explains:

There is no COVID basket [...], other workers have it, which consists of a million pesos for whoever gets infected and has all these difficulties, a special recognition for their sick leave. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)



In the higher education sector, support has varied depending on the development of universities prior to the pandemic. In those of a higher level that have greater resources, the supports provided have been greater. In the words of a leader:

There have been, in the largest ones [...] greater support for both teachers and students, so there have been universities that have given students tablets, they have paid them to expand their internet connectivity, they have contracted connectivity services that benefit them all. But it's not really, well, that's not really common. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)

On another point, the health crisis evidenced the technological divide in Colombia. According to the 2018 census, only 43.4% of Colombians had access to fixed or mobile internet. As one participant explains, during the pandemic, inequality was expressed in access to connectivity and/or conditions to assume the new costs of the virtualization of the school cycle:

22 million Colombians today do not have access to the internet, broadband, they do not have access to connectivity. Only 4% of the municipalities in the country have it. 78% of Colombians have a cell phone, but they don't have the ability to pay for a data package. There is no way to get radio and television in rural areas because there is no electricity. So this leaves that gap exposed. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)

A high percentage of Colombian families are being affected and are having their rights violated, because their right to education is being violated. They don't have connectivity, they don't have electricity, they don't have a tablet or a computer; mainly in rural areas, without leaving aside the city [...], municipalities where, in quotation marks, there is average connectivity. You can see here that the government is washing its hands. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)

The absence of measures to decisively address the digital divide leads to inequality in access to education of the poorest quintiles, while raising fears about the permanent exclusion of children and young people from the public education system. Faced with unequal access to education and precarious working conditions, teachers' organizations asked the national government to declare an educational and pedagogical emergency and to allocate sufficient resources towards education (FECODE Circular 18 of 2020).

In addition, the digital divide transferred to the teachers the responsibility for continuing the educational process without apt conditions to do so, with a high physical and emotional cost:

Virtuality is not the best thing for education. We had to take it as a measure to save the lives of students, teachers and parents, but, in a country as backward as Colombia, where there is no internet connectivity, well, virtuality has become a terrible situation for teachers, but we have to endure it to survive. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)

Morbidity rates increased for Colombian teachers, together with the preexisting conditions that they already had in the pandemic, the comorbidity,³⁷ but, in the pandemic, with the extreme working hours in terms of work schedules without adequate conditions, with the work done by women in their homes, where they had to alternate caring for the sick, attending to families, cooking and working three work shifts a day, but, in addition, their phones, their computers, themselves working in service of the school. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)

On the other hand, the pandemic altered not only the organization of the work process but the relationship between work and family (Luna and Torres, 2020). The primacy of strict mandatory confinement measures resulted in state services ceasing to provide their services and domestic workers losing their jobs. As mentioned in the previous section, sick people and those dependent

³⁷ This refers to the underlying health conditions that aggravate COVID-19 contagion.



on care had to be cared for by their families. The impact on teachers of this setback according to a participant was as follows:

A percentage, let's say, a very significant percentage of homes of teachers paid for or pays for domestic services, either for cleaning or for some care, such as for food preparation. Due to the mandatory confinement, these services could not be contracted. And, in any case, this became added to the workload of women in particular. So, until adjustment was made, the first four months: March, April, May and June were very complicated for women. And this can be perceived, for example, in the very high degree of morbidity due to stress, due to psychological, even mental affectations, and the other situations aggravated due to other kinds of diseases, precisely, from, let's say, derived from stress. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)

A controversial and complex aspect pointed out by the leaders is that the measures have a differentiated impact on women teachers because of the socio-sexual division of labor and the preexisting gender inequalities in this country. For these women, working at home in inadequate conditions and without support meant the overlap of productive and reproductive work:

The option of having people to come in and help with household chores was not possible, because, well, they also had to be confined and they also had to protect themselves in their own homes. So household chores, child care, adult care, all that work was necessary to be dealt with and it all had to be done. In the best of cases [...] there are couples that share this type of work, but that is not the general rule. The general rule imposes these increased workloads on women, so it is not only their profession, but also the household chores, child-care, care of older adults, so there is a tremendous overload that also cyclically affects women's health. (Interview with a woman leader of the ASPU, 2020)

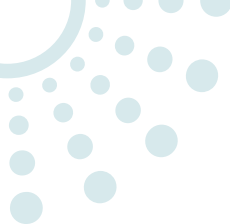
In point of fact, women's and feminist organizations along with some international organizations have proposed that the pandemic further exacerbate

tes the crisis of care and even occludes the possibility of women participating in political spaces due to the burden of unpaid domestic work and care without support:

The issue of the economics of care is very significant, because [...] it presents another additional burden to women that, in the case of Colombia, is very onerous. It seems to me that this is very pertinent to recognize. Suddenly, it is not so, so serious for teachers as for all other women; because teachers, especially metropolitan ones, have the opportunity to get someone to help them at home, but the rest of women, women from working class sectors, who is going to help them? It's up to them to solve all the problems they have. It is a very serious situation that exists and that prevents the political participation of women. Because a teacher who works like they are working now, twelve hours a day on school things and eight hours on household matters, at what time does she participate in union life? Of course, she becomes marginalized, due to the state. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2021)

In the same way, the work overload imposed by the new reality had other direct effects on the use of the teachers' time, undermining opportunities for self-care. As explained by a union leader:

We women are most affected by this topic of virtual education and remote education, or that mess [...] because it sounds very nice when you say virtual, but the issue is that of the virtual there is very little and what comes next, what has been commented on about all the lacks in guarantees the implementation of education and our teaching work, because we are doubling, tripling and even quadrupling our working times. This has been stated by the vast majority of our colleagues who no longer even have moments of rest in the house they used to have. The chance to arrive and organize their time and space for other domestic activities. All this they have to do now quickly in moments that don't allow them to reorganize their activities. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)



In May 2020, the authorities proposed the progressive transition of educational services for preschool, basic, middle and adult cycle levels to the face-to-face modality, through the alternation of home and face-to-face education.³⁸ From the perspective of a union leader, this measure was the executive branch of government's way out in the face of persistent connectivity problems in the Colombian territory, as previously discussed.

Teachers' organizations opposed this alternation due to work overload and the health implications of returning to classrooms in inadequate conditions:

The government says, "Let's alternate." What is alternation? For example, if you have forty students, only convene ten to come in to the classroom, because you can't call in more because of the health conditions. So that teacher at the school attends to ten students. The other thirty are taught virtually. What that is going to do is cause two evils: first, it is going to spread the disease more, the pandemic; and, secondly, it is going to increase the working hours of teachers to unbearable limits. They will never end. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2020)

Thus, starting in July 2020, teachers called for civil disobedience in defense of the life and health of their communities. They deployed various resistance actions against the decision of the national government to implement alternation between virtual and distance education described in the previous section. In parallel, the university student movement waged a campaign to demand zero enrollment in public universities.

On April 28, 2021, a National Strike began in Colombia, one of the largest social struggles in the recent history of this country. According to the majority of the union leaders, social unrest reached its peak with the labor, pension and tax reforms introduced by the national government³⁹ and the lack of measures

³⁸ Ministerial Directive 11.

³⁹ Some examples are Decree 1174 of the Ministry of Work, with which the national government regulated the social protection bottom limit and the Sustainable Solidarity Law, for tax reform.

during the pandemic to counteract the impact of these on the working class (basic income, subsidies for workers, small businesses, etc.). A leader explains:

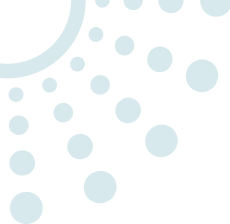
It started with the caravan modality and later it was said that the caravans are not enough, it's time to mobilize on the street and this is how the strike of April 28 was proposed and from there, well, mobilization grew that included more than 900 Colombian municipalities with more than 10,000 mobilizations. That is, there is practically no way to count them, but it was the longest strike in the country's history, I would say, in recent times [...] and, in addition, it extended throughout all the municipalities of Colombia. It was not only in the big cities, it was not only a strike underway in Bogota, Medellin, Cali, but rather, as I say, more than 900 municipalities had mobilizations, had strikes [...]. What was experienced was a disconnect between the students and their guardians⁴⁰ that participated for the forty-odd days of strikes, and in any case, there were many participation modes in the mobilization, but the support for this mobilization was widespread for teachers, guardians, parents, and students in general. That is, it was widespread in all sectors of the country, including us. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2021)

The national government responded with brutality and the use of violence.⁴¹ The teachers' organizations condemned the extreme militarization of the country's cities, the brutal repression exercised, and the warlike treatment given to the protest and social mobilization of the Colombian people, calling for an immediate stop to the massacre of leaders (FECODE, 2020, Circular 25).

On February 26, 2021, the National Unemployment Committee submitted a list of petitions to the national government. However, the negotiation process was not completed until August 7, 2021, after the signing of a list of demands.

⁴⁰ In Colombia reference is made to who is taking care of or acting as guardian to the internal student body.

⁴¹ See the following press releases: *Protestas en Colombia: el riesgo de violencia sexual que corren las mujeres que participan en las manifestaciones* - BBC News Mundo, *Los alarmantes actos de violencia basada en género durante el Paro Nacional en Colombia* | Movimiento por la Paz (mpdl.org) and *Más de 300 ONG le piden al Consejo de DDHH de la ONU que condene la 'brutal represión' de manifestantes en Colombia* (aa.com.tr)



The agreements⁴² signed are directed towards the defense of public education and the vindication of the rights of teachers in this country, not only to reverse the precarious conditions of work and the defunding of public education, but also to demand compliance with previous agreements⁴³ made with teachers' organizations, which under the pretext of the pandemic were breached by the national government.

The school year was reactivated in July 2021 after several months of strike and a negotiation process between the national government and trade union organizations. Since then, in the different territories the poor conditions of the educational institutions and the difficulties in applying biosafety measures in these have been denounced. On the other hand, questions have arisen about the use of funds earmarked for emergency care.

4. Mandatory confinement exacerbated violence against women

As announced by human rights organizations and feminist organizations, the mandatory confinement exacerbated violence against women. The perception of teachers' organizations also points towards the increase in violence against women:

Let's say, we have been suffering a great deal from workplace harassment, work overload [...]. In a survey that we did, [...] last year it showed that 17% of teaching households told us that they were affected according to gender by the effects of the pandemic, that is, that their relationship within the couple, within families, within the conditions that were established, [women teachers who are heads of their household caring for their children, women teachers caring for their parents, couples as such], were affected by the pandemic [...]. Almost 4% said they suffered even physical violence [...] and we had to register the femicide of

⁴² For details on the agreements, see the minutes of the collective agreement available online at https://www.fecode.edu.co/images/comunicados/2021/ACTA_DE_ACUERDO_COLECTIVO_06082021.pdf

⁴³ For example, the salary increase agreed upon to level out the teaching salary with that of other professions, since female teachers receive 28% less than workers in all other professions.

a teacher who, unfortunately [...] lost her life and that of her daughter, and the husband also ended up taking his own life in the department of Putumayo in southern Colombia. And another case that occurred on the Atlantic coast, that in the end we couldn't register as a femicide, because, they said, well, it seemed that it maybe it was one, but maybe it wasn't! Finally, it couldn't be clarified whether it was indeed femicide, but it was the result of violence, and the other teacher who also died, well, these acts of violence were registered. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2021)


A controversial and complex aspect is that, in Colombia, women—mainly women social, communal and trade union leaders—have not only been subjected to violence within their homes, but also to state violence:

Many of our young female leaders, who were there on the front lines, who were leading all these processes, were victims of sexual violence, physical violence. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2021)

In general, during the pandemic, homicides against people who exercised some kind of communal leadership increased. There were 182 deaths⁴⁴ during 2020. To this number, other forms of violence were added, such as threats, attacks, arbitrary detentions, forced displacements and disappearances against people undertaking activities in defense of human rights. In addition, in the midst of the public health crisis, the organization Human Rights Watch (2020) identified alleged measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 imposed by armed groups in 11 of the 32 departments. In this regard, a union leader indicated:

There have already been approximately 60 massacres. On September 9, they murdered a lawyer with electric shocks and then finished assassinating him [...]. He was killed by blows. The people rose up and eleven youths who came out to protest with the people were killed. And, from then on, and since before

⁴⁴ This is the highest figure reached since 2016.



it, there occurred almost 60 massacres in the country; while we protest, they are massacring us. In other words, it is a country that signs for peace, but insists on war. (Interview with women leaders of FECODE, 2021)

However, this social violence has a gender imprint. According to the report presented to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) by a group of social organizations,⁴⁵ the use of sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence was used to suppress social protest. In this way, women experienced a series of violent acts.

In the same vein, the report on the aggressions against human rights defenders in Colombia based on the Defender la Libertad: *Asunto de Todas* Campaign documented at least 250 aggressions against human rights defenders, of which 83 correspond to women defenders, 81 to men, with the remaining 86 records not including gender identification.⁴⁶ This same source determined that, in the case of women, physical violence is accompanied by sexual touching, threats and manifestations of a sexual nature, in such a way that being a woman and a trade unionist carries a risk of suffering violence (Casa de la Mujer et al., 2021). Thus, in Colombia during the pandemic, women leaders face the risk of experiencing specific forms of violence.

⁴⁵ To learn about the findings of this report, consult Casa de la Mujer et al. (2021).

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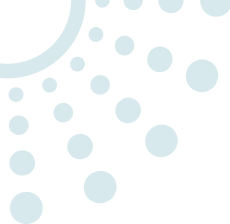
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COSTA RICA

In bicentennial Costa Rica, education becomes precarious

Alejandra Paniagua

1. The most unequal country in Central America confronts COVID-19

Costa Rica, located on the Central American isthmus, has a population of 5,094,000 inhabitants, with an annual growth rate of 0.8% (ECLAC, 2020). Since the 1990s, the country has experienced a slowdown in population growth. This transformation in the structure of the population is due to a sustained decrease in fertility and an increase in life expectancy from birth. Thus, by 2019, people within the age range of 15 to 64 years of age represented 69.5% of the total population, demonstrating the aging process of the population (INEC, 2020c).

The United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) places this country within the very high development group. In 2019, it was ranked 61st, with an HDI value of 0.810. For that same year, the life expectancy of Costa Ricans was 80.3 years, and the gross national income per capita was US\$18,486. The average number of years of schooling of its population is 8.7 (UNDP, 2020) and the literacy rate of people between the ages of 15 and 24 is 99.4 %⁴⁷ (ECLAC, 2020).

However, since mid-2016, Costa Rican economic activity has lost dynamism. The Central Bank of Costa Rica (BCCR) reported that the situation became critical from the second half of 2018, when the government faced serious liquidity difficulties (BCCR, 2020). For that year, debt service accounted for two-thirds of public spending and, at the end of the year, the country faced the largest fiscal deficit in the last three decades (Brenes, 2018). In the year before the pandemic, the country's external debt amounted to 50% of the GDP (ECLAC, 2020).

As documented by the State of the Nation Program (PEN by its initials in Spanish) (2019a), between 2018 and the beginning of 2019, most of the country's

⁴⁷ Data available for the year 2018 in CEPALSTAT Social Profile CRI.


economic and social indicators presented negative behavior: economic growth, the labor market, credit, family income and poverty all showed significant regressions. This evidenced the country's inability to generate job and business opportunities necessary for economic progress and social well-being in the run-up to and immediately during the pandemic (PEN, 2019a).

As a measure to address the lack of liquidity and the fiscal deficit, the executive branch's priority was the approval of a tax reform (Act 9635) that entered into force at the end of 2018. The peculiarity of this reform was that it placed the tax burden on the shoulders of the working class, while protecting the big taxpayers, despite demands made mainly by teachers' unions and social organizations. It also slowed down the growth of the state through the implementation of a fiscal rule⁴⁸ and, at the same time, it reconfigured hiring conditions in the public sector.

With this background, the BCCR projected growth of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the year 2020 at 2.5%. With the arrival of the pandemic, these projections were not fulfilled and the country's economy underwent a drastic change based on the contraction of the world economy and the restriction and confinement measures implemented locally and internationally. At the end of 2020, ECLAC data (2020) reported an annual drop in total GDP of 4.8% for 2020.

Costa Rica is the most unequal country in Central America, and, in the last decade, this economic inequality has increased. In 2019 the Gini coefficient was 0.49 (CEPALSTAT, online consultation). The employed population was mainly located in the other services sector (28.7%), commerce (22.2%) and financial services (12.9%). The participation rate of the population in economic activity for the year 2019 was 62.5%, the occupation rate was 55.2% and the open unemployment rate was 11.8%. The population of urban workers in the informal sector of the labor market corresponded to 36.9% and within this sector,

⁴⁸ As of 2020, Costa Rica applied the fiscal rule restricting public spending based on the evolution of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the burden of the country's debt. This was applied such that institutions were limited in their budget use.



40.9% were women and 33.9% were men. 16.5% of Costa Rican inhabitants lived below the poverty line, with the rural population being the most impoverished (21.7%). The people living in extreme poverty corresponded to 3.4% of Costa Ricans in the period indicated (ECLAC, 2020).

The situation of women was even more dramatic. In the quarter before the pandemic,⁴⁹ women had a higher unemployment rate than men; this was at 25.0% and 14.1% respectively. Male labor force participation was 72.2% and female labor force participation was 49.3%. The percentage of employed persons with respect to the population aged fifteen years and over was 49.5%. The employment rate for males was 62.0% and for females it was 37.0%. The national unemployment rate was 18.5%. Compared to the same quarter the previous year, this showed a statistical increase of 6.3% (INEC, 2020a). The commerce and services sector accounts for the bulk of the female workforce.

In addition to income inequality, women faced violence due to their gender. In Costa Rica, 132 measures of protection under the Law against Domestic Violence are processed on a daily basis, and an average of two femicides are committed per month.⁵⁰ Between 2007 and 2019, 361 violent deaths of women were classified as femicides. In 2019, sixteen femicides were counted. An alarming fact has been the increase since 2017 in the attempts of femicide admitted to the criminal prosecutor's offices, which, in 2019 were recorded at 161.

On the other hand, the sociosexual distribution of work is one of the greatest barriers to equality in societies. In Latin America, women are disproportionately assigned to unpaid domestic and care work. In the region, before the pandemic women spent three times as much time as men on these tasks (ILO-ECLAC, 2020). Costa Rica is no exception to the region, with women being mainly responsible for household chores despite the fact that they have joined the labor market at an accelerated pace in the last fifty years (Jiménez, 2016).

⁴⁹ December 2019 to February 2020.

⁵⁰ Online consultation of the data from the Observatorio de Violencia de Género del Poder Judicial (Observatory of Gender Violence of the Judiciary).

Prior to the pandemic, the National Time Use Survey conducted in 2017 (INEC, 2017) showed that the average social time⁵¹ as well as the average effective time⁵² had significant gaps between men and women. Women devoted 35 hours and 49 minutes to unpaid domestic work activities, while men spent 13 hours and 42 minutes on these activities. Likewise, in “average effective time, women dedicate 22 hours more on average than men per week” on such activities (INEC, 2017).

As evidenced in the previous paragraphs, the position in which Costa Rica found itself on facing the public health emergency was unpromising and, at this adverse juncture characterized by economic slowdown, the contraction of the labor market, fiscal deficit and an impediment to the growth of public spending, the state implemented a set of measures to address the emergency that exacerbated the crisis. In the words of one participant, “COVID-19 is exacerbating a crisis that we already had in this country, which is a fiscal crisis” (Interview with women leaders of the ANDE, 2020).


1.1 The state response during the pandemic exacerbated the preexisting crisis

In January 2020, Costa Rica activated international health epidemiological alert protocols after detection in Wuhan province of the new coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 responsible for the development of the respiratory syndrome known as COVID-19. The Costa Rican health authorities reported the first case on March 6 and, two days later, after an increase in detected cases, they decreed a yellow alert throughout the national territory and implemented the first temporary package of health measures.

By March 15, 2020, the country declared itself in a state of health emergency (Executive Decree 42227-MP-S) after the detection of 35 cases in the provinces of San

⁵¹ Average social time: This refers to the time that society, as a whole, dedicates to a certain activity. The average is calculated with respect to the entire population of the country aged twelve and over (INEC, 2017).

⁵² Average effective time: This is the time declared to be spent by people on a certain activity. It is calculated exclusively including the population that registered having carried out a certain activity and the corresponding time spent (INEC, 2017).



José, Alajuela, Heredia, Guanacaste and Cartago. It also adopted the first set of health containment measures. Among these were the suspension of mass events and public assemblies (Executive Decree 42221-S), of official travel abroad (Directive 0-74S) and the temporary restriction of entry into the national territory of non-resident foreigners by air, sea, land or river (Executive Decree 42238-MGP-S). In addition, sick leave coverage was extended to workers with suspected SARS-CoV2 infection (Agreement 1, session 9084 of the CCSS Board of Directors).

The epidemiological behavior of the virus and the gradual increase in the number of cases detected made the emergency difficult to manage. On the one hand, with the passage of the weeks it became clear that the measures would be required for a much longer time than was initially projected due to the risk of increasing outbreak. As a consequence, discussion emerged about the impact of confinement both on women—thanks to the early warning of international and feminist organizations⁵³—and on impoverished sectors and the labor market, with unemployment rapidly skyrocketing and poverty rates beginning to grow. The National Household Survey carried out in July recorded an increase in poverty of 5.2% (reaching 26.4%) and an increase in extreme poverty of 1.3% (reaching 7.0%) (ENAHO, Online consultation).⁵⁴

Similarly, in the months following the arrival of the virus, the labor market situation reflected the impact of the confinement and restriction of movement measures taken in the country. Data from the second quarter of 2020⁵⁵ compared to the second quarter of 2019 reveal that “the labor force decreased by 182,000 people [...]. Labor participation was 57.6%, registering a decrease of 5.4%. The unemployment rate was 24.0%, an increase of 12.1%. [...]. The occupancy rate was estimated at 43.7%, a decrease of 11.7%” (INEC, 2020b).

⁵³ *At the beginning of April, the Belén do Pará Follow-Up Mechanism (MESECVI), UN-WOMEN and the IACHR called on countries to consider the differential impact of health measures on women and, particularly, on victims of violence. More on this will be discussed later.*

⁵⁴ *See Pobreza por ingresos alcanzó un 26,2 % | INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE ESTADISTICA Y CENSOS (Poverty due to income reached 26.2% | NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STATISTICS AND CENSUSES, inec.cr)*

⁵⁵ *These data correspond to the results provided by the INEC Continuous Employment Survey for the second quarter of 2020 (July to September 2020).*

According to the same source, women were the most affected population group: the unemployment rate of the male population was estimated at 20.0%, while the unemployment rate of the female population was 30.4%. Of the total number of people unemployed due to the pandemic, 282,000 were men and 269,000 women, since most of the affected economic areas featured the significant presence of female labor. For example, 62.3% of people working in activities associated with hotels and restaurants were affected by this crisis and activities related to being hired in households (care, paid domestic work, etc.) decreased by 21.7% (INEC, 2020b). A union leader explains about this particular impact on women:


Something that we at ANDE have analyzed was the situation of women street vendors, lottery vendors, those who sell a little food to maintain their home, who are extremely affected by the confinement, with the health measures and also by the crisis, because there is less money to purchase those products. (Interview with women leaders of the ANDE, Costa Rica, 2020)

One of the business chambers (the UCCAEP)⁵⁶ demanded rescue measures for private enterprise and attacked the public sector.⁵⁷ To this end they requested the reduction of salaries and working hours, as well as the repeal of the payment of the January back-to-school bonus:

Through a virtual press conference, the president of the UCCAEP, Álvaro Sáenz, questioned the way in which the Ministry of Labor was addressing the employment crisis generated by COVID-19 in the country, since Sáenz considered that excessive procedures were required, and their management was very slow. He proposed cutting the hours and salaries of workers in the public sector to meet the needs of unemployed people in the private sector. He denounced that a part of the public sector "is at home doing nothing and yet they are receiving

⁵⁶ Costa Rican Union of Chambers and Associations of the Private Business Sector (UCCAEP by the initials in Spanish).

⁵⁷ To expand on this, see *Cámaras empresariales crearon Grupo de Enlace Sector Privado con Gobierno - UCCAEP, Unión Costarricense de Cámaras y Asociaciones del Sector Empresarial Privado, Costa Rica*



their full salary," an attitude that qualifies as showing little solidarity with those who have lost their jobs. (Alvarado, Cortés and Sáenz, 2020, p.20)

In response to these demands, the executive branch introduced measures in labor, social assistance and fiscal matters. In addition, it agreed with the UC-CAEP on the implementation of the "Hammer and Dance" strategy (CR-Hoy, 2020). This initiative sought the reopening of businesses through employing a "hammer" (more restrictions) in the places and times showing the highest incidence of the virus and a "dance" to make measures more flexible in the areas with the lowest incidence (Ugarte, 2020).

The implementation of aid measures was employed to meet the basic needs of the sectors affected by the pandemic. The main measures of this type served vulnerable populations, mostly pre-pandemic beneficiaries of targeted social assistance policies. Among the most significant of this type of aid were the delivery of groceries to the elderly and children, support for people with disabilities, and subsidies for female-headed households, people with disabilities, senior citizens, and in general family groups in conditions of poverty and extreme poverty. Also provided for was the impediment of the suspension of water supply due to late payment and the reconnection of services suspended prior to the pandemic.

The *Proteger* (Protection) Bonus was the measure employed for the group outside the traditional orbit of state assistance: people affected by the reduction of working hours, the suspension of their employment contracts and/or affected by confinement measures. The bonus consisted of three months' temporary economic subsidy provided to people whose working conditions were affected by the health emergency. According to official data, as of January 2021, a total of 724,330 of these bonuses were issued (MTSS, 2021). Nonetheless, 240,860 people were left without the possibility of receiving this bonus due to the lack of state resources (Núñez, 2021).

The government advocated prioritizing these assistance and palliative measures, contrary to the recommendations⁵⁸ of experts and trade union and grassroots organizations to implement a Universal Basic Income, to reduce exemptions to large capital so as to increase tax collection capacity, and to implement measures to protect workers' wages. The harmfulness of this decision, far from attending to the needs of households affected by the pandemic, lay in the fact that, in order to address the social and economic consequences derived from health measures, the government chose to drastically reduce the budgets of most public programs and institutions since it refused to tax large capital.

In addition, it approved a series of measures against public sector workers as a strategy to obtain fresh resources. Among these measures were the elimination of the annuity payment and non-payment of the salary increases corresponding to 2020⁵⁹ (MTSS, 2020):


The executive branch began to draw up a series of measures to contain the deficit of the pandemic and to place this on the shoulders of the working class, including [...] freezing annuity payments and the salary increases of the years 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024. (Interview with women leaders of the ANDE, 2020)

In the field of public education, a labor measure was adopted with particular impact on teachers hired by the Ministry of Education: the suspension of the payment of Lesser Development Index⁶⁰:

⁵⁸ See *Experto asegura que reducir de 5,57% a 1% las exoneraciones permitiría establecer Renta Básica Universal* • *Semanario Universidad*, *La Cepal llama a crear una renta básica como paso previo al ingreso universal – Cambio Político* (cambiolpolitico.com), *Escuela de la UNA propone control de precios y renta básica universal para paliar crisis* (crhoy.com).

⁵⁹ *Measure adopted in Directriz (Directive) No. 42286-MTSS-H-MIDEPLAN*

⁶⁰ See *MEP suspende pago de costoso incentivo por recortes presupuestarios durante pandemia* (crhoy.com) and *APSE y ANDE pondrán recurso de amparo por suspensión de incentivo salarial* | *Sinart* (costoricamedios.cr).



This is a payment that is divided into three parts and paid to teachers who work in high-risk and marginalized urban areas. The argument made was that since teachers were not attending educational institutions, that salary was to be eliminated. (Interview with women leaders of the ANDE, 2020)

The payment of this salary incentive originates from the collective bargaining signed between the trade union organizations and the Ministry of Public Education. Therefore, the unilateral suspension of this payment not only has individual salary repercussions, but also those of a collective nature. Nonetheless, it is not the first time that in Costa Rica there are disputes related to respect for collective agreements signed with workers, as well as the subsequent enactment of laws that attempt to nullify what has been previously agreed upon.

On the other hand, work provisions for private sector workers were presented as the only alternative to preserving their jobs. Act No. 9832 authorizing the reduction of working hours was passed, along with Decree No. 42248-MTSS for the temporary suspension of employment contracts. According to official statistical data, the National Labor Inspection Directorate as of August 2021 received 8,896 requests for a reduction in working hours, of which 90% were approved (8,062). Similarly, 75,361 private sector workers were affected by the suspension of their employment contracts (MTSS, 2020).

In addition, the minimum contribution to the Costa Rican Social Security Fund (CCSS by the initials in Spanish) was reduced by 75% (Junta Directiva, 2020a). This minimum contribution is the base salary for which every employer and worker contributes to health insurance and pensions (even if they pay or receive a lower remuneration). In December 2020, the institution's financial management office projected the approximate cost of applying this measure at €70.722 billion, on combining Health and Pension Insurance. This decision has as a prelude the debt owed by the State to this institution, which, as of September 30, 2020, came to almost €2 trillion (Cordero, 2020).

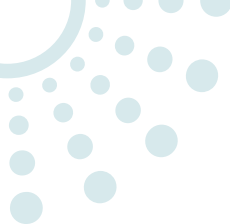
In addition to the labor measures referred to for the private sector, tax relief prerogatives for companies were included, such as a moratorium on Value Added Tax, selective consumption, tariffs and commercial leases and the collection of 50% of the electricity bill for commercial and industrial customers whose monthly consumption was greater than 2,000 kW. To these measures must be added the lack of political will of the executive and legislative powers to create effective alternatives to the crisis that were capable of combating the high levels of tax fraud, evasion and avoidance that were mainly responsible for the fiscal deficit.

Given this, the package of fiscal and labor measures on the one hand reflected the class orientation of the measures applied by the executive branch to manage the pandemic and, on the other, gave continuity to the employment reform process. It should be noted that Costa Rica has solid labor legislation, the product of the historical victories of working people and the reformist pact of the 1940s. However, in recent years, this legislation has been the object of attack by the elites, who are fighting for an easing of these guarantees. A leader explains:

The containment measures of the crisis are on the shoulders of the working class and big capital is not touched, the transversal axes of the crisis, which are tax evasion and avoidance, are not touched. (Interview with women leaders of the ANDE, 2020)

For example, since 2018, Act No. 21182 has been under legislative study. This act proposes the definitive reform of articles 136, 142, 144 and 145 of the Labor Code in order to make the eight-hour day more flexible (Benavides and Delgado, 2018). Likewise, in 2018, the Law on Strengthening Public Finances was approved, in which a chapter on public employment was included and as a complement, in January 2020 the president signed Act No. 9808, known by trade union organizations the Anti-Strike Law.

The crisis and the uncertainty generated by this law thus configured the ideal conditions for the advancement of a labor reform process promoted by the



elites with access to state power. What is new is the speed with which measures were introduced and approved in the context of the pandemic, since in Costa Rica this process has been much slower than in the other countries in the region, although the regressive content and neoliberal orientation of such measures are similar to those applied in other Latin American countries.

In Costa Rica, social conflict and conflict of interests were expressed from the first months of the public health crisis. This evidenced the discontent of sectors of various kinds with the government measures and the economic and social consequences that the pandemic exacerbated. According to the information collected by the *Acciones Colectivas* (Collective Actions) database of the University of Costa Rica's Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales (Institute of Social Research, IIS-UCR), during the first months:

The northern and southern borders were configured as hotbeds of tension after the decision by the authorities to restrict the movement of freight transporters and goods due to the risks of contagion detected. This caused Panamanian and Nicaraguan freight companies to install blockades at different border points as a pressure measure. This and other decisions such as the approval of a bill allowing municipalities not to comply with the provisions of the fiscal rule also generated critical reactions from local business chambers, which have continued pushing their economic agenda throughout the crisis. (Alvarado, Cortés and Sáenz, 2020)

In the month of September 2020, discontent reached its highest point when the executive branch announced its interest in taking out a loan from the International Monetary Fund. Blockades and demonstrations emerged throughout the nation:

A national day of protests organized by Movimiento Rescate Nacional (National Rescue Movement) took place. After the announcement of the proposals including the approval of new taxes that the executive branch was to present

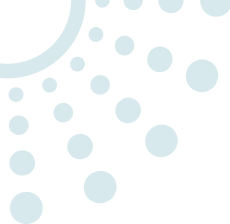
in negotiations with the IMF to obtain a loan for US\$1.75 billion, a wave of negative reactions from different social, economic and political sectors was generated, resulting in street protests. (Alvarado, Cortés and Sáenz, 2020)

It must be pointed out that this was a heterogeneous movement, making diverse and even conflicting demands and statements, but which in general denoted, on the one hand, the social discontent accumulated in progressive sectors after decades of implementation of neoliberal policies responsible for the growing inequality and reconfiguration of the state, and on the other, of the tension between the government and the elites (including between factions within these).

As a measure to contain the social conflict, in October the government temporarily withdrew the agreement with the IMF and convened a forum for multi-sector dialog. After two months of negotiations, the executive's pact with the elites was evident when it announced new negotiations with the IMF and rejected any hint of measures aimed at eliminating the privileges granted to companies or taxing large national taxpayers and large national companies as a measure to finance social programs and reduce the fiscal deficit by up to 2.27%. At the same time, the executive promoted the Public Employment Act in the legislative assembly.

1.2 The pandemic changed the rules of the game for education

The package of measures related to education approved within the framework of the public health crisis introduced new variables in the organization of the work process and in the working conditions of teachers. Among the most important provisions was the nationwide general suspension of lessons for the public and private educational system (MS-DM Resolution-2382-2020/MEP-0537-2020), the temporary virtualization of public and private educational services (Resolution No. MS-DM-2592-2020/MEP-00713-2020), and the extension of the school calendar (Resolution MEP-532-2020).



After the fourteen-day suspension of the 2020 school year, the government decided to continue with this through an educational strategy called *Aprender en casa* (I Learn at Home) (Resolution No. MSDM-2592, MEP, 2020). This organized the educational process under virtual and distance modalities. Teaching staff were requested to: a) improve their technological skills and make use of official digital tools; b) identify the conditions of technological access of the student body; c) design didactic strategies related to the students' situation. In this way, technologically mediated education and telework (Resolution No. 0556-03-2020) were introduced into the teachers' employment relationship.

The new modality of distance and/or virtual education ran into a barrier: teachers and families were not prepared for this change. Access to devices such as cell phones and computers was mediated by socio-economic and territorial factors. Students residing in the geographical areas with the greatest digital divide and located in the most impoverished quintiles faced greater obstacles to remaining linked to the educational process through online resources (ECLAC & UNESCO, 2020).

Since 2016, the *Programa Estado Nación* (State of the Nation Program, PEN) warned of the need to expand and improve internet connectivity because "in 2016, 6088 connections were registered, of which 63.6% have a speed that does not exceed 5 MB" (PEN, 2017). During 2020, this same source detailed the limitations of the educational community for the successful implementation of a distance learning process:

During 2020, 25% of the teaching staff reported that they had unstable or zero internet connectivity, 51% of students had low digital competency according to PISA⁶¹ 2018, and 58% of the families stated that they did not feel prepared to help with the students' learning and tasks. (PEN, 2021)

⁶¹ International Student Assessment Program.

The forecast of the impact of the measures on education is still reserved and will depend on the state's capacity to address technological and connectivity gaps and, along with this, to guarantee the right to education. However, the official balance of the 2020 academic year allowed the governing institution to recognize that a considerable number of students concluded the academic year with low levels of achievement in the acquisition of knowledge (Resolution No. MEP-0065-01-2021/MS-DM-1165-2021).

On December 23, 2020, the first batch of vaccines arrived in the country (9,750 doses). As of September 20, 2021, a total of 5,278,407 doses had been applied to 2,003,946 Costa Ricans; thus, at that date, 38.8% of the population had received the complete vaccination schedule (CCSS, online consultation).⁶² The vaccines come from a contract signed to acquire 6 million doses of the vaccine through three suppliers: Pfizer-BioNTech, AstraZeneca-Oxford and the COVAX initiative of the World Health Organization (Casa Presidencial, 2020). The MEP staff were placed in the fourth group to be vaccinated, except in cases where there was a particular risk factor (MEP, 2021).

In the month of September 2021, health protocols were relaxed in order to save the economy. The measures of vehicular restrictions and capacity limits in public spaces were maintained, as was the mandatory use of face masks in these spaces. As of September 24, 2021, the country reported 521,182 confirmed cases of the disease, 420,204 recovered patients (91%), 6,189 deaths (1.2%), 1,355 hospitalizations and 459 patients in intensive care units (Ministry of Health, 2021).

In the educational field, the Ministry of Education implemented the strategy Regresar (Return) in order to reopen educational institutions under a combined pedagogical model (face-to-face classes and distance classes).

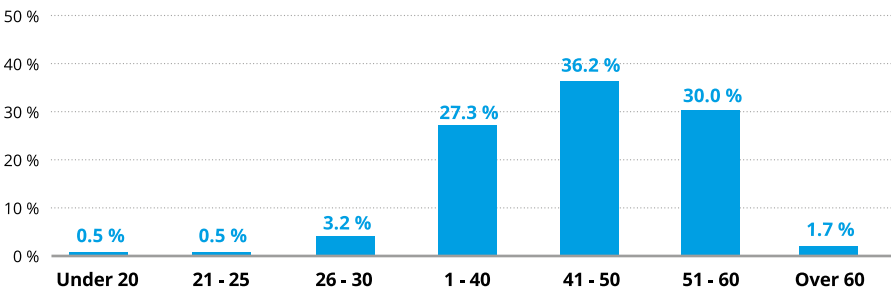
⁶² Data as of September 20, 2021. This can be consulted in real time at COVID-19 CCSS | Vacunación.

2. During the pandemic, education becomes precarious and teachers pay the bill

2.1 Characteristics of the women teachers surveyed

The majority of the women teachers who answered the survey were adults between the ages of 31 and 60. Of these, 27.3% were in the age range between 31 and 40 years of age, 36.2% were between 41 and 50, and 30% were between 51 and 60.

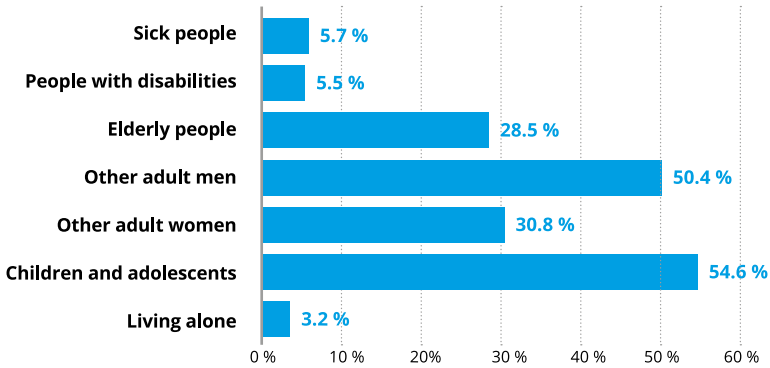
Figure 1. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by age



Results of a survey applied to teachers from the ANDE union in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

Only 3.2% of the women teachers lived alone, while 96.8% of the total shared their households with other people. More than half of them lived with adult men (50.4%) and with children and adolescents (54.6%). Approximately one third (28.5%) lived with elderly people and a similar proportion (30.8%) lived with other adult women. To a lesser extent, the women teachers lived with people with disabilities (5.5%) and sick people (5.7%).

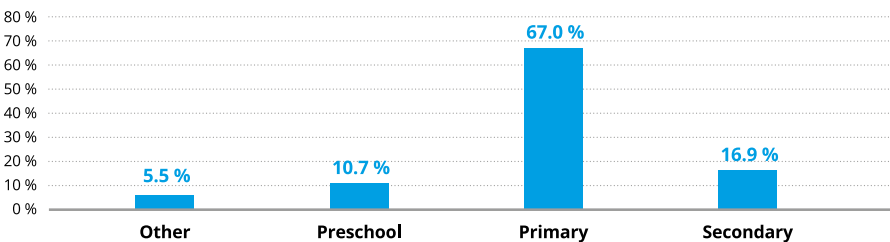
Figure 2. Costa Rica: Women teachers by people with whom they live



Results of a survey applied to teachers from the ANDE union in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

The women teachers worked in both rural and urban areas in a similar proportion. 58.1% worked in urban areas and 41.9% in rural areas. More than half taught lessons in primary school (67%), and to a lesser extent they did so at secondary and preschool levels (16.9% and 10.7% respectively). Thus, a significant group of the teachers take on the challenge of teaching lessons to children between the ages of 7 and 12 years of age.

Figure 3. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by educational level at which they teach

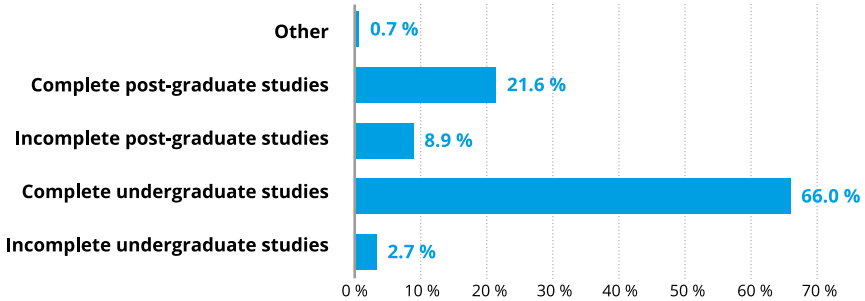


Results of a survey applied to teachers belonging to the ANDE union, Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

The degree of education of the women teachers is high, with 96.5% having completed university studies, of which 66% have a complete undergraduate de-

gree, 8.9% have incomplete postgraduate studies and 21.6% have completed postgraduate studies. Only 2.7% have not completed an undergraduate degree.

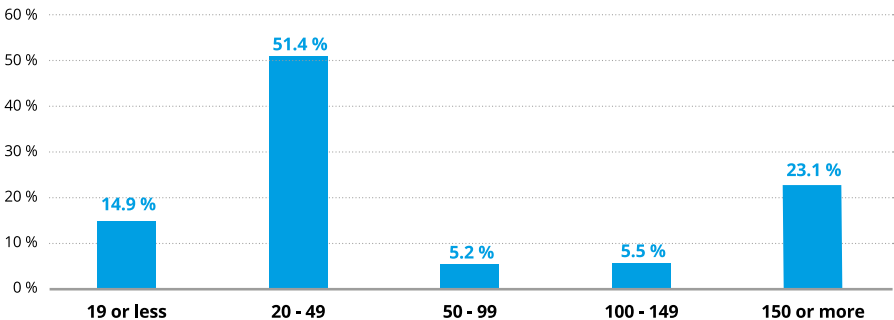
Figure 4 Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by educational level attained



Results of a survey applied to teachers from ANDE union in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

Likewise, just over half of the respondents (51.4%) were responsible for between 20 and 49 students. However, about a quarter (23.1%) taught more than 150 students. A smaller proportion, 14.9%, taught fewer than 19 students, 5.5% taught between 100 and 149 and the remaining 5.5% taught between 100 and 149 students. During the pandemic, the number of students taught is an important factor, since the educational process requires more personalized attention due to the unequal conditions in which students receive classes. Teachers thus had to combine various pedagogical strategies to maintain contact with the student body and give continuity to the educational process.

Figure 5. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by number of students they teach



Source: Survey applied to women teachers from ANDE union in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

2.2 The demands of virtualization of the educational process generated saturation and exhaustion in teachers

The abrupt implementation of virtual and distance education represented a series of technological challenges and an overload of work for the teachers, since they had to design remote activities according to the diverse profile of the students in their charge. As the union leaders have explained, this meant the teachers needed to discard the teaching guides designed for the 2020 academic year after the suspension of face-to-face attendance, and redesign a strategy mediated by technology and/or distance education strategies:

With the virtualization of the school cycle, the materials they had, for example, the anthology or the photocopies no longer worked, so they had to reinvest their time, invest their resources in making pedagogical material that they can transmit over the internet. (Interview with women leaders of the ANDE, 2020)

Likewise, from the point of view of these leaders, the ministerial guidelines were unstable, since at first teachers were asked to apply educational activities and later they were asked to evaluate the student body. A union leader explains:

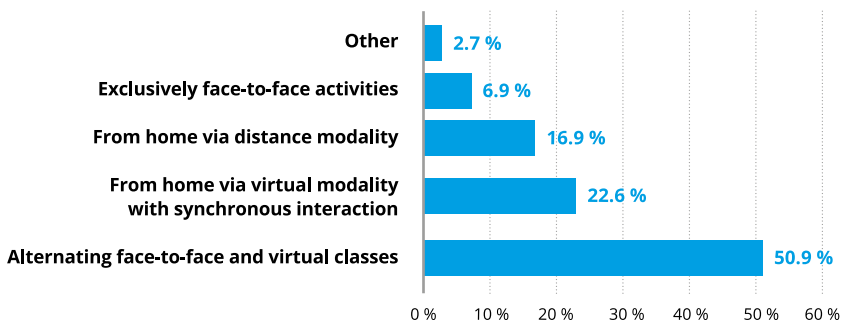
At the moment the announcement was made that the school year was not going to return to face-to-face classes during 2020, they authoritatively changed, to say the least, the character of these evaluations [...], they took on a summative character and it completely changed the evaluation. Now they have objectives, now they have a virtual work schedule, now they have a deadline to be changed to the virtual mode. (Interview with women leaders of the ANDE, 2020)

The change in the ministerial provisions generated saturation and exhaustion in the teachers, since it required them to make contact with the students in their charge to request evidence of work carried out between the months of March and August. A leader explains on this point:

It had a very strong impact [...], one report per student was requested. And, for example, a teacher who in her special subjects teaches 700 students, 1000 students in a school, had to review all the autonomous work guides that they'd told her not to review because [...] they were simply to provide support and render a report. So, they changed the game being played, so to speak, in a very short time and increased the volume of work, since the teachers did not have the tools to cope with such a large responsibility [...]. It was a very significant overload of work, because before you saw the previous work and you evaluated it then at that time. In contrast, now you receive reports from X number of students, you have to reply to them all as received and review their contents, because you can't make a report that you have advanced, intermediate, or poor knowledge if you haven't reviewed the contents of what the student sends you. (Interview with women leaders of the ANDE, 2020).

Half of the teachers surveyed (50.9%) thus alternated between virtual and distance modalities. Likewise, more than a third (39.5%) taught lessons from home, either with synchronous interaction (22.6%) or asynchronous interaction (16.9%). Only 6.9% went in to educational institutions to teach face-to-face classes.

Figure 6 Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by work modality during the pandemic



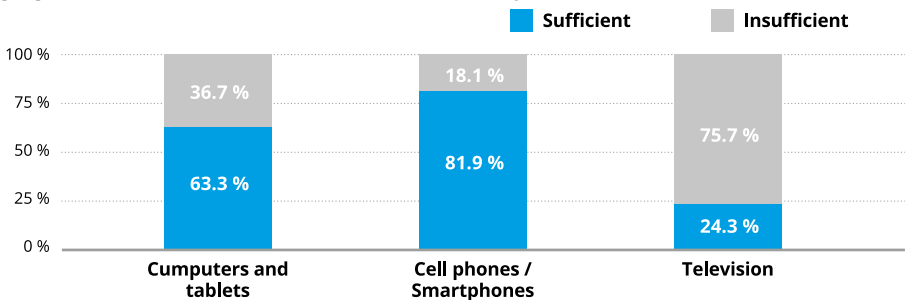
Results of a survey applied to teachers from ANDE union in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

Teleworking, motivated by the need to reduce the spread of COVID-19, meant that households did not have enough time to acquire equipment and

to condition workspaces. In the words of one participant, “It was an order to sit down and work however you can.” Distance and technology-mediated education leads to increased dependence on devices such as smartphones, computers and tablets. Likewise, homes simultaneously became work and study spaces, which implied the shared use of these devices to satisfy both the teleworking demands of adults, and those of the educational processes of children and young people of school age. In the case of the teachers surveyed, more than half resided with children and adolescents, therefore, it is likely that in their homes devices and work and study spaces were shared.

The majority of respondents had access to technological resources in their homes for the performance of work and to complete the educational tasks of their family group. Televisions were the equipment that presented the least problems (81.9% had this equipment), followed by cell phones (75.7%) and computers and tablets (63.3%).

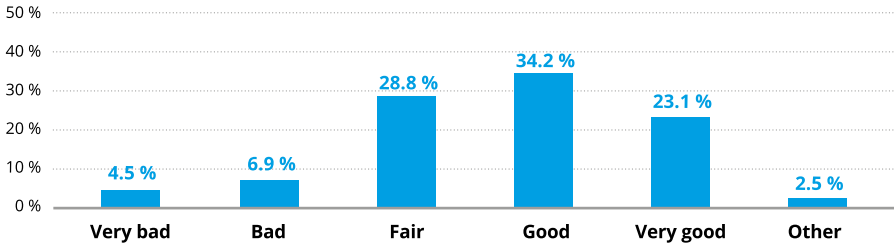
Figure 7. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by availability of equipment for telework and virtual study



Results of a survey applied to women teachers from ANDE union in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

Something similar happened regarding access to connectivity. Only 4.5% considered this as very bad and 6.9% as bad. The remaining group rated the connectivity in their area of residence as fair (28.8%), good (34.2%) and very good (23.1%).

Figure 8. Costa Rica, 2021: Quality of internet connectivity for telework



Results of a survey applied to women teachers from ANDE union in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

An important aspect to note is that access to these devices and internet connections was paid for with the resources of the teachers themselves, since the government did not provide any support measures to cover the costs of virtuality. Teachers thus resorted to their own strategies and family arrangements:

People had to take out loans to manage to buy equipment with greater technological capacity that would allow them to continue the teaching-learning process in this new virtual situation forced by the pandemic, a broader internet bandwidth. (Interview with women leaders of the ANDE, 2020)

It is important to take into account that simultaneous study and work activities at home during the pandemic required increased data consumption and a fixed high-speed internet connection.

The purchase of equipment, payment for electricity, because it is not the same as if you are using the resources of the educational institution as having to use your own internet, your own computer, your own electricity, among others. All this is covered by the teacher. (Interview with women leaders of the ANDE, 2020)

Even though the Ministry of Education provided the alternative for students and teachers to go in to educational institutions and make use of computer

equipment and the internet, this measure was insufficient in the context of technological backwardness such as that which exists in Costa Rica. In 2020, the Statistical Analysis Department of the Ministry of Public Education counted an average of 9.4 students for each device in good condition for use in public educational centers⁶³ (2020). The burden of facing the demands of telework fell on the teachers and on students' families.


Additionally, it was not enough for teachers to have access to devices such as phones, computers and the internet, they also required a good degree of mastery and use of ICT (PEN, 2021). However, during the pandemic "most educators have low levels of technological capabilities [...]. The use of ICT is more for personal [teacher-centered] use and not so much for their pedagogical practices" (PEN, 2021).

Because of this, the teachers made a series of additional efforts and allocated time to train in the use of ICT. They had to plan, review, contact the student body through various channels, teach lessons in different combined modalities (distance and/or virtual classes), issue reports, provide containment and support to the students, among other tasks unrelated to their original appointment. They faced the burden of acquiring digital skills in a short period of time and, at the same time, planning and developing educational processes mediated by technology. On the new educational reality, a union leader explains:

You need to have teaching classes to acquire knowledge, given that it was already difficult in person. All the questions that the kids ask, those who the platform drops out for, those who cannot connect up, those who didn't understand an exercise, so the work multiplied in a way that's really difficult to quantify. (Interview with women leaders of ANDE, 2020)

In addition, from the perspective of a union leader, the mandatory use of official platforms is a form of control of workers in this sector:

⁶³ In the 1st and 2nd cycles of public education.



The use of the platform is mandatory for everyone and all colleagues, and also to check up on their work and, yes, they also explained it to us in the Ministry [...] that for them it was very important in the sense that there was a lot of pressure from Members of Congress in the Legislative Assembly, from the business chambers and the UCCAEP [Costa Rica Union of Private Business Chambers and Associations]. Really, particularly so that salaries would be lowered or eliminated, because people were stuck in their houses. So part of the pressure that teachers are being put under is due the Ministry of Public Education's obligation to corroborate and prove that teachers are working and to justify their salaries. That is another complication that we have had explained to us in various meetings, because, yes, we convene a meeting to discuss the workload once again and these are some of the explanations that they give us. (Participant of an interview conducted with women leaders from ANDE, 2021)

As a union leader pointed out in previous paragraphs, teachers have been subjected to pressure to demonstrate their productivity. As will be seen later, this pressure has impacts of various kinds and takes a toll on teachers.

2.3 The budgets and socio-economic conditions of the households of the teachers surveyed were affected

The forced virtualization process of the school cycle had a socio-economic impact on the homes of the teachers surveyed. The general income of teachers' households remained the same as in the previous period for a third of the teachers (35.5%) and decreased for a similar proportion (35.2%). For the remaining 28.5%, this general income tended to increase.

In the case of teaching income, a high percentage reports that this remained the same (79.2%), as opposed to the 17.6% that indicated a decrease in relation to the period before the pandemic. A lesser number of the women teachers considered that their income increased during the pandemic (3.2%). One of the first measures implemented by the executive branch to contain public spending was a salary

freeze and non-payment of annuity bonuses⁶⁴ in the public sector, therefore, in general the salary of public servants stagnated. In addition, for a group of women teachers, payment of the Lesser Development Index bonus was eliminated.

The public health and labor measures implemented generated loss of jobs and reduction of working hours. Therefore, even though the salary of women teachers remained unchanged for the majority, the general employment situation during the pandemic caused a decrease in general household income. As explained by a union leader:

Although currently the salary of all those belonging to the teaching profession has not been reduced, it has been affected by people forming part of their family nucleus and contributing financially. The responsibility for the maintenance of the family is transferred to the teachers. (Interview with women leaders of the ANDE, 2020).

Figure 9 Costa Rica, 2021: Household income since the beginning of the pandemic

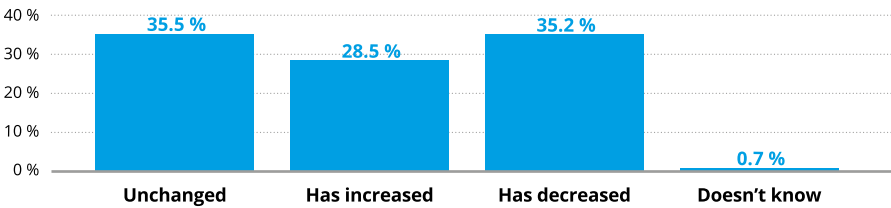
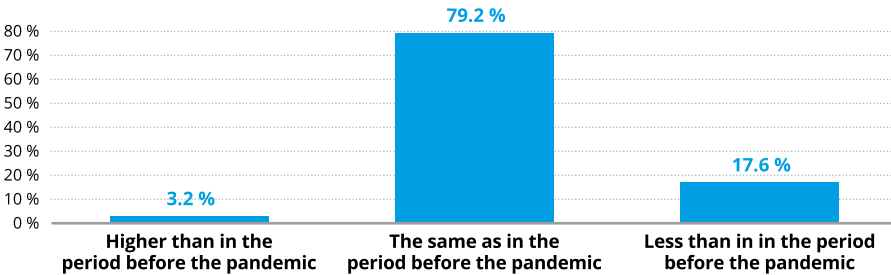


Figure 10 Costa Rica, 2021: Teaching income during the pandemic



Results of a survey applied to women teachers from ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

⁶⁴ The annuity is a salary incentive recognizing the seniority of public servants. As of 2018, 1.92% of the base salary is recognized for each year worked.

At 30.27%, there was no significant variation (-2.23%) with respect to activities additional to teaching carried out before the pandemic and after it, at 28.04%.

Figure 11. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by performance of activities apart from teaching to generate income before the pandemic

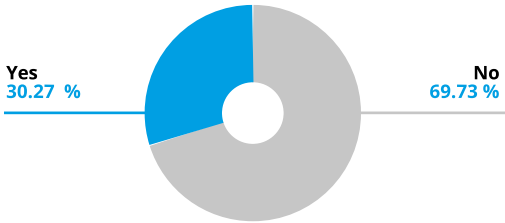
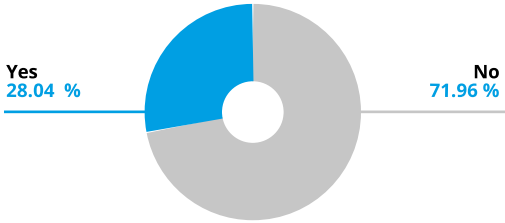


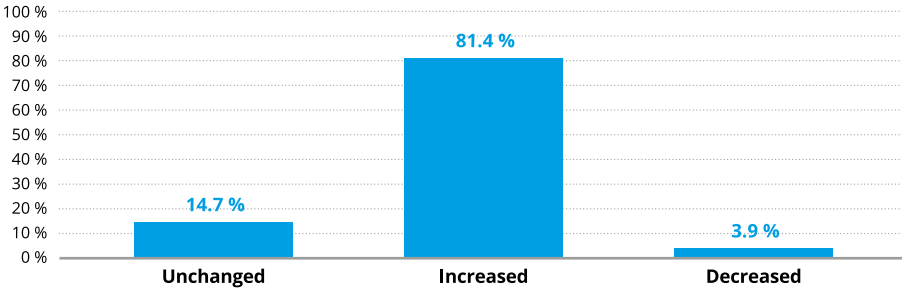
Figure 12. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by performance of activities apart from teaching to generate income during the pandemic



Results of a survey applied to women teachers from ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

The implementation of telework and technology-mediated education had an undeniable economic cost and, therefore, the pandemic increased household expenses. For eight out of ten teachers, expenses increased. For 14.7% the pandemic did not introduce any changes between the two periods, while for 3.9% they decreased.

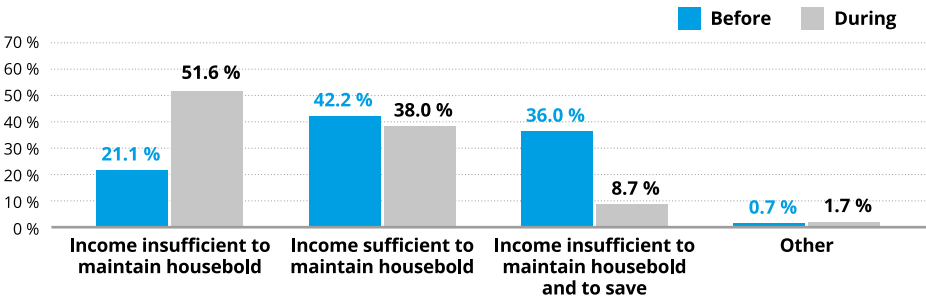
Figure 13. Costa Rica, 2021: Household expenses since the beginning of the pandemic



Results of a survey applied to women teachers from ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

A comparative analysis of the household balance sheets of the respondents before and after the pandemic reveals differences over time. The number of those facing difficulties increased, with this being 21.1% before the pandemic and 51.6% during the pandemic. In the case of those who had sufficient income to support the household before the pandemic, the variation was smaller, going from 42.2% to 38%. Likewise, the saving capacity of households decreased for approximately a quarter of women teachers (27.3% less), going from 36% to 8.7% in this period.

Figure 14. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by sufficiency of income to maintaining household before and during the pandemic*



Results of a survey applied to women teachers from ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

The teachers had to use their own economic resources to cover expenses related to ensuring the continuity of the educational process. A significant percentage of the respondents (83.1%) frequently used their income to cover equipment expen-

ses and/or connectivity payments, 14.6% did so occasionally and only 2.2% never needed to use their income to purchase equipment or internet for work.

In addition to solving their own technological and spatial needs, teachers assumed responsibility for the lack of technological capabilities of students and their families by making use of their time and income to those ends, since state support was tightly focused, palliative and insufficient. 92.8% of the respondents indicated spending their own income to cover the needs of their students, with 56.1% doing so frequently and 34.2% doing so sometimes.

Figure 15. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by own income spent on equipment or internet for work during the pandemic

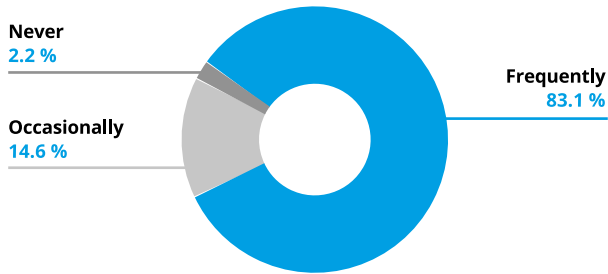
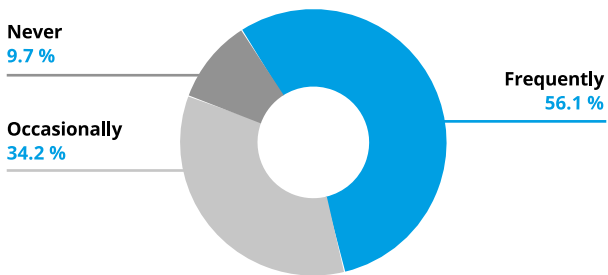


Figure 16. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by own income spent on supporting students' needs during the pandemic



Results of a survey applied to women teachers from ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

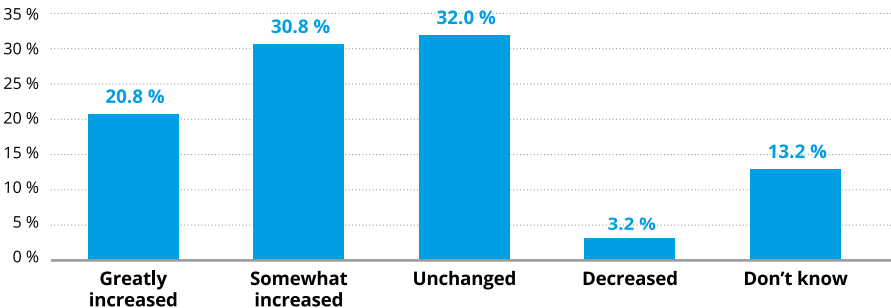
The continuity of the educational process in virtual and distance modalities depended not only on the resources available to the workers, but also on access to good internet connectivity and equipment on behalf of the student

body. According to the MEP classification, during the pandemic students could be divided into four groups in this respect: a) those with internet access and a device at home; b) those with a device and reduced or limited internet access; c) those with technological devices but without internet connectivity; and d) those who did not have technological devices or connectivity (MEP, 2020). In addition, during 2020 a total of 535,000 students lacked connectivity (MEP, 2020) and, for the return to classes in 2021, an estimated 133,274 devices (tablets and computers) were lacking. These digital gaps generated overloads in teaching work, since they implied differentiated pedagogical mediation:

Many teachers, especially primary school teachers [...], have tracked down kids to visit their homes and bring them materials, because there is a large student population that has no possibilities of having technological equipment and an internet bandwidth that would allow them to continue with the educational process. (Interview with women leaders of the ANDE, 2020)

Along these lines, the survey revealed that 20.8% of respondents perceived that the pandemic increased the number of students dropping out of their studies, 30.8% considered that although there was an increase, it was not considerable in relation to previous periods, and about a third (32%) considered that no increase in students dropping out occurred.

Figure 17. Costa Rica, 2021: Students abandoning their studies since the beginning of the pandemic



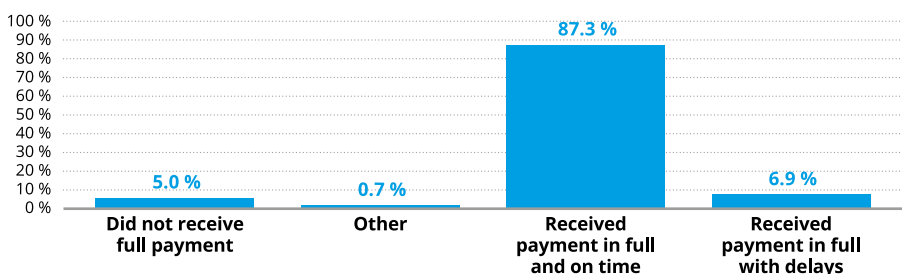
Results of a survey applied to women teachers from ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

At the international level, organizations such as UNICEF projected a school dropout of three million children and adolescents throughout the region and a decrease in school enrollment—mainly for students attending class for the first time—of more than 1.8% (UNICEF, 2020). The pandemic introduced two risks of exclusion: “That students disconnect from teachers and the educational system, and [...] the risk of dropping out due to economic vulnerability and poverty in students’ homes” (PEN, 2021), as this exacerbated preexisting gaps and set back the human right to education.

2.4 Teachers kept their jobs, but other labor rights were disrespected

During the period under study, the employment situation of the women teachers was stable, allowing them to generate income and enjoy the scope of protection typical to the employment relationship (social security, access to social benefits). 93.3% of the research participants considered that, despite the uncertainty of the crisis, their employment contract was stable. Only 6.7% believed that it was not. Similarly, the majority (94.3%) reported receiving their salary in full. 87.3% received this on time and only 6.9% reported late payment. In contrast to this group, 5% of the teachers indicated that they have not received full payment.

Figure 18. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by payment conditions during the pandemic



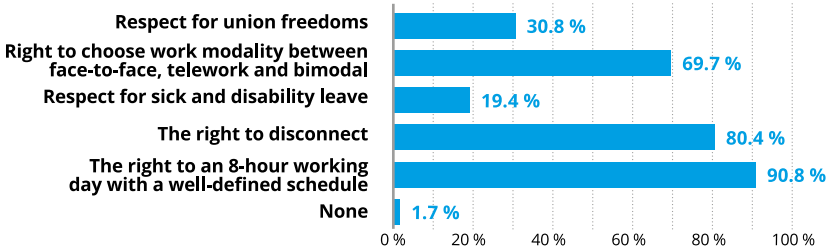
Results of a survey applied to women teachers from ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

Despite this, the continuity of the process during the pandemic had effects in other areas. The right that was most frequently reported as violated was the eight-hour workday (90.8%), followed by the right to disconnect (80.4%) and to choose between face-to-face, telework and bimodal modalities (69.7%). According to the study on socio-occupational conditions and comprehensive health of the teaching population of the Costa Rican Ministry of Public Education (MEP), only 15.4% of teachers worked the eight-hour day for which they were hired (ANDE, 2021). The remaining 84.5% worked more than eight hours a day: 28.5% worked from eight to ten hours, 32.8% from ten to twelve hours and 23.1% worked more than twelve hours. In relation to this, a participant explained:

On behalf of the Ministry of Public Education there is respect for the schedules because the guidelines and training are given during the teachers' working hours. Those who have disrespected it are the principals; they send communiques, try to contact you out-of-hours [...]. Although the Ministry only convene you within your daily schedule, they don't have enough time to comply with all the paperwork they have to do digitally [...]. So, there is indirect disrespect for the work schedule of teachers. (Interview with women leaders of the ANDE, 2020)

In the case of the right to disconnect, technological overexposure in the work environment has implications, since the line separating personal and work life is blurred. In addition, the new organization of work entails the violation of other labor rights. For example, working from home under the terms of the pandemic prevented salary recognition of the extra time worked. Other rights of workers identified by the respondents were disrespect for trade union freedoms (30.8%) and the enjoyment of sick and disability leave (19.4%); these give evidence of setbacks in historical victories.

Figure 19. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by opinion on rights infringed upon by telework



Results of a survey applied to women teachers from ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

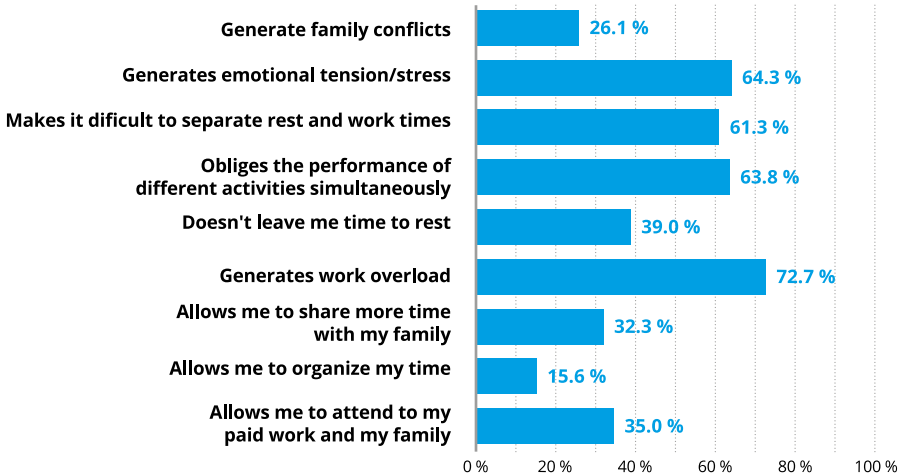
In addition to the above, there is a fear among union leaders of future labor and wage instability. For example, the threat of freezing salaries in the public sector for more than ten years, as established by the fiscal rule that was approved by the Legislative Assembly in 2018:

There is an exhaustion and a desperation that affects the people working in the sector and the trade union organization a great deal in the sense that the executive branch began to draw up a series of measures to contain the deficit caused by the pandemic [...], including placing a tax on the back-to-school bonus, that will be applied in January, freezing annuity bonuses for the years 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024, and freezing wage increases for these same years. So this has led to uncertainty for the people who have to be in isolation, who have to protect themselves and spend the whole day working and who are still working in the early mornings, finishing work on weekends. (Interview with women leaders of ANDE, 2020)

In the perception of the respondents, the negative effects of telework prevail over positive evaluations of it. The most frequently reported effect was work overload (72.7%), followed by emotional tension and stress (64.3%), as well as the obligation to perform different tasks simultaneously (63.8%). Likewise, more than a third of the women teachers (39%) considered that this type of work does not leave them time to rest, and a quarter said that it has generated family conflicts (26.1%). To a lesser extent, respondents reported positive effects: a third considered that this work modality allows them to attend to paid work and their family (35%), share

time with these latter (32.3%) and, to a lesser extent, 15.6% said it allowed them to organize their time better.

Figure 20. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by effects of telework



Results of a survey applied to women teachers from ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

Wage stability in the employment relationship is fundamental to the protection of teachers in times of labor market contraction, however, it is insufficient in a context of work overload and regression in some labor achievements. Finally, a salary is a means for the continuation of life and not an end in itself.

2.5 The pandemic suppressed teachers' rest and recreation time

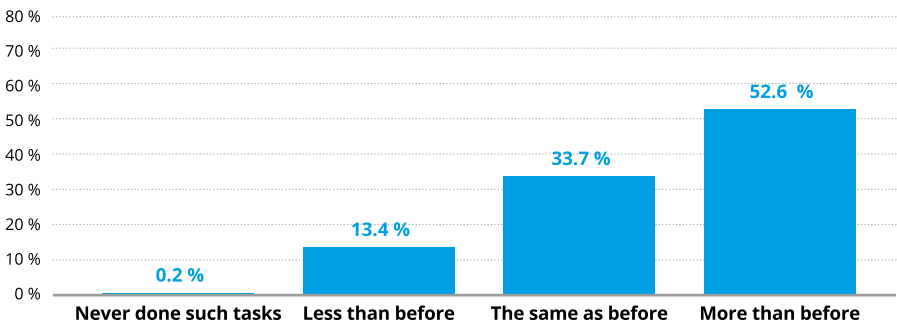
Care provision is fundamental to the sustainability of life. Despite this, in Costa Rica no measures were identified during the pandemic to facilitate co-responsibility for such care. Therefore, presumably this generated an additional overload for the women teachers. In this regard, a union leader suggests:

The use of time is an immense overload of work, not only of their work as teachers, but also of their work as moms and within a relationship. (Interview with women leaders of ANDE, 2020)



In the context of the pandemic, all domestic and care work activities tended to increase. That is, unpaid domestic work activities were overloaded, to a greater extent, on the women teachers. Half of these (52.6%) spent more hours than before the pandemic attending to domestic work. For about a third, the time spent remained the same, and for only 13.4% was it less than before.

Figure 21. Costa Rica, 2024: Women teachers by time spent on domestic tasks* during the pandemic



* Not including the direct care of people

Results of a survey applied to women teachers from ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

The time allocated to the care of dependent people such as children, people with disabilities and the elderly increased for approximately a third of the women teachers (34.5%). For a similar proportion (29.8%), it remained the same, while for only 9.4% was it lessened in comparison to the previous period. In the case of the time spent caring for people who, although not dependent, require care, this increased for a quarter of women (25.6%), remaining the same as the previous period for a third (33.7%) and decreasing for only 8.2%.

⁶⁷ Excludes the tasks of caring for dependent and non-dependent people.

Figure 22. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by time spent providing care for dependent people during the pandemic

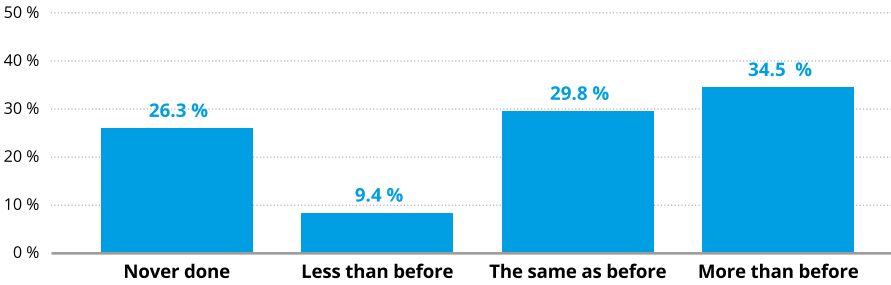
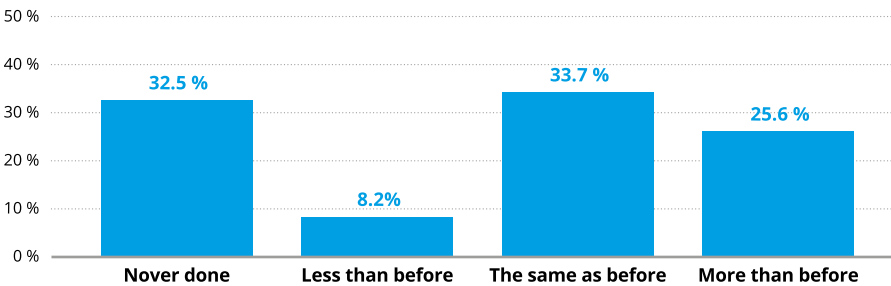


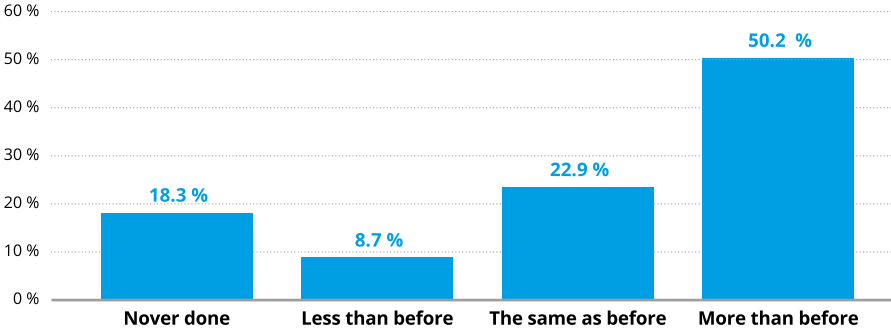
Figure 23. Costa Rica; 2021: Women teachers by time spent providing care for non-dependent people during the pandemic



Results of a survey applied to women teachers affiliated to ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

Another of the many effects pointed out by the teachers is that, in their homes they must assume care for their children while simultaneously providing them accompaniment in school learning. Half of the teachers (50.2%) reported that the time spent providing this type of support increased during the pandemic. For 22.9% it remained the same, while for only 8.7% it tended to decrease. Support for school-age children, as well as completing household chores are the activities in which the teachers most frequently reported an increase in demand for their time during the pandemic.

Figure 24. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by time spent providing academic support for children during the pandemic



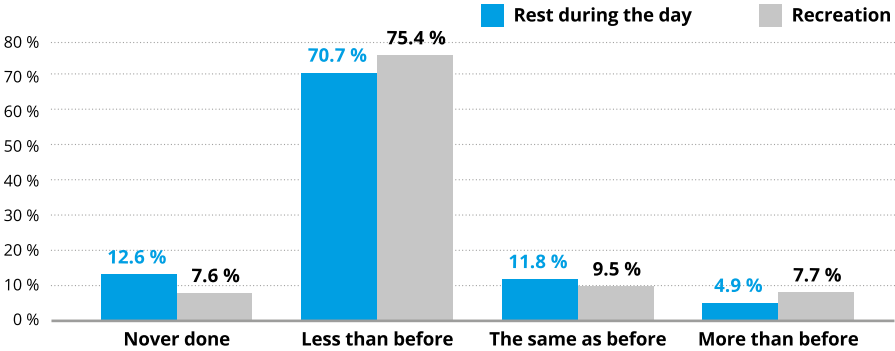
Results of a survey applied to women teachers affiliated to ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

Their extended days of productive work and care required the teachers to sacrifice recreation and rest times. 70.7% of respondents indicated that the time spent on rest lessened during the pandemic and 75.4% reported the same with respect to the time spent on recreational activities.

Thus, all that work overload, plus the double or triple working day makes their quality of life, free time and the use of time very restricted, consuming even more of any free or recreation time they previously had. Because it is not only about the hours hard at it, as is popularly said, but also the hours of reviewing, planning and setting out things to be done, that, depending on the work position of the person, are not recognized within the paid working day. These are additional efforts that each teacher has to make, depending on the work position, like it or not. (Interview with women leaders of ANDE, 2021)

This overload of unpaid work assumed by the women therefore restricts access to self-care activities.

Figure 25. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by time spent on recreational activities and rest during the day during the pandemic



Results of a survey applied to women teachers affiliated to ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

The teachers also lived with other adult women, on whom a greater demand for domestic work similarly fell. For more than half of households (52.1%), the time invested by other adult women in these activities increased during the pandemic, for a third (32.1%) it was the same as before, and only 10% indicated this to have lessened. In the case of men, the pandemic also involved an increase in the time allocated to domestic work: 30% of respondents reported that men spent more time in such tasks than before, 43.3% spent the same amount of time, 11.8% spent time less time at such tasks than previously, and 14.8% have never performed such tasks at all. Nonetheless, the survey data showed that the time spent on this type of activity during the pandemic increased to a greater extent for women.

Figure 26. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by time spent by other adult women in their households on domestic tasks during the pandemic

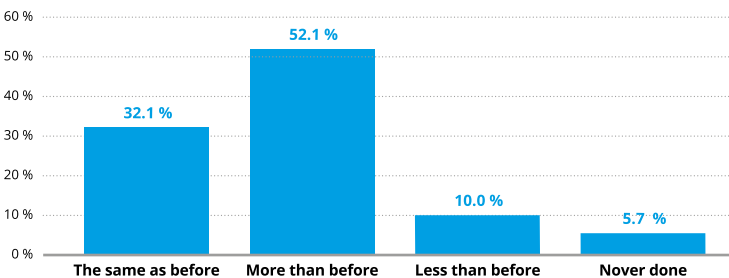
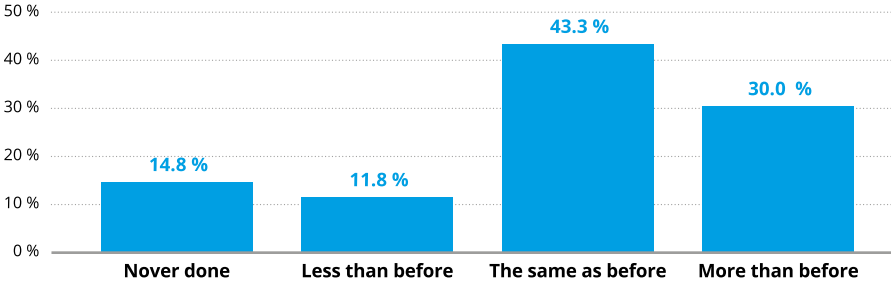


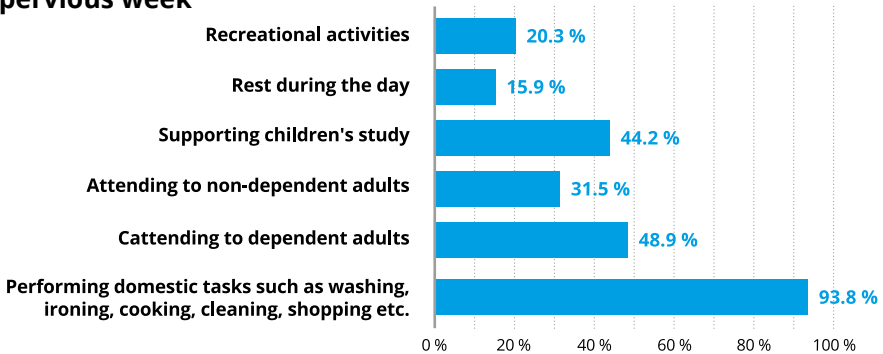
Figure 27. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by time spent by other adult men in their households on domestic tasks during the pandemic



Results of a survey applied to women teachers affiliated to ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

When analyzing the use of time in the previous week, an imbalance between the time allocated to unpaid domestic work and care and rest and recreation activities is observed. Household tasks such as washing, ironing, cooking, cleaning the house, shopping, etc., have the greatest weight (98.3%) in the daily lives of women teachers, followed by the care of dependent people (48.9%), supporting minors with their studies (44.2%) and attending to non-dependent adults (31.5%). Less frequently, the women teachers allocated time for recreational activities (20.3%) and rest (15.9%).

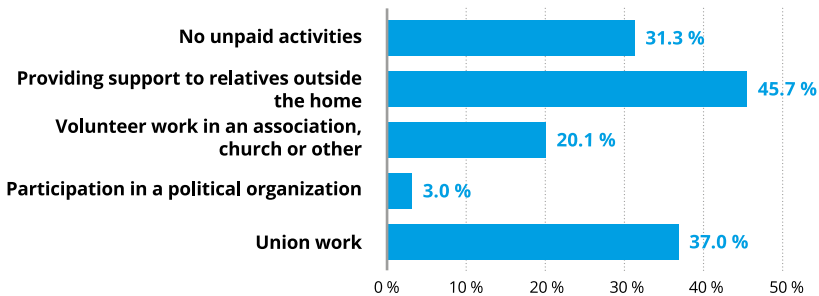
Figure 28. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by activities performed in the pervious week



Results of a survey applied to women teachers affiliated to the ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

Despite the overload of domestic work and care placed on the women teachers, these also invested part of their time in unpaid activities outside the domestic space. The most frequent of these were providing support for relatives outside the home (45.7%), followed by union work (37%) and volunteer work in organizations such as associations or churches (20.1%). Approximately one third of women teachers (31.3%) did not carry out this type of unpaid activity.

Figure 29. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by unpaid activities they performed



Results of a survey applied to women teachers affiliated to the ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

As can be seen, the organization of work during the pandemic led to the fact that women teachers largely had to devote more hours to paid work than before the pandemic while at the same time allocating a greater number of hours to unpaid domestic work.

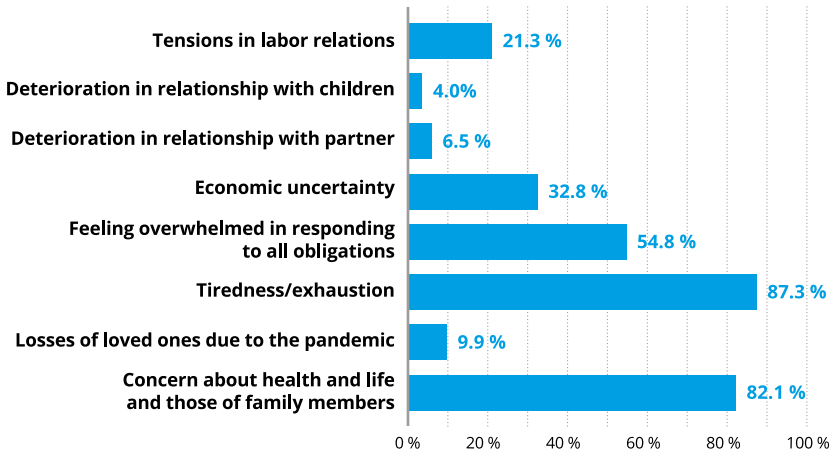
2.6. The health of women teachers during the pandemic has been affected

According to UN-Women (2020), gender differences prevailed in the impact on health during the pandemic as a result of preexisting gender inequalities, aggravated by health confinement and isolation measures. This generated tiredness in women and emotional affectations of various kinds. In the words of a union leader:

It's not just economic aspects, but the wear and tear on health. For example, I have the case of a teacher who went to the INS [National Insurance Institute] for a strained muscle and they told her that it was the employer's obligation, in this case, the Ministry of Public Education, to give her an ergonomic chair. They are not even giving treatment for illnesses that are associated with work. (Interview with women leaders of ANDE, 2020)

According to the results of the survey, the most frequently reported concern of the teachers was feeling tired and exhausted (87.3%). A similar proportion expressed concerns about their health and that of their relatives (82.1%). More than half felt overwhelmed about meeting all their obligations during the pandemic (54.8%) and about a third (32.8%) worried about economic uncertainty. In the labor field, 21.3% of the teachers reported tensions in labor relations. To a lesser extent, they expressed concerns related to family relationships such as losses of loved ones due to COVID-19 (9.9%), deterioration of intimate relationships (6.5%) and deterioration in relationships with their children (4%).

Figure 30. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by main concerns during the pandemic



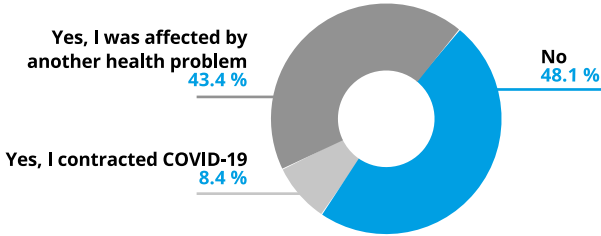
Results of a survey applied to women teachers affiliated to ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

The concern for the life and health of themselves and their families referred to by the teachers occurred in the context of a country that excluded teachers from the priority groups of the official vaccination program against COVID-19. Thus, during the 2021 school year, teachers faced a scenario of fear and uncertainty of contagion when the measures adopted ignored the psychosocial vulnerability of certain groups, including that of teachers.

Economic, technological, and family pressures among others during the pandemic had an impact on the health of the women teachers. 43.4% faced a health condition other than COVID-19 and 8.4% were infected with this virus. In the middle of March 2021, at the time the survey was conducted, Costa Rica reported a cumulative number of 210,447 cases of COVID-19 (Ministry of Health, 2021). With an estimated population of 5,094,000, 4.12% of Costa Ricans would have been infected with the virus. Therefore, the proportion of teachers surveyed who had fallen ill with COVID-19 was twice the overall average.

By the month of May of that year, the national press reported the death of 164 workers in the education sector because of the virus. Of these, 43 were active working people and 122 were pensioners (Muñoz, 2021). Despite the complaints of teachers' organizations and of teachers, the Ministry of Public Education defended the hybrid modality (face-to-face and distance lessons) under the argument of the lack of connectivity of the student body. On May 24, 2021, the epidemiological behavior of the virus forced the MEP to reorganize the school calendar and suspend lessons until June 25. Unfortunately, the survey data reveals that teachers paid with their health for the false dichotomy posited between the right to health and students' rights to education. At the same time the decision was made to exclude teachers from priority vaccination groups, they were asked to partially return to the classrooms.

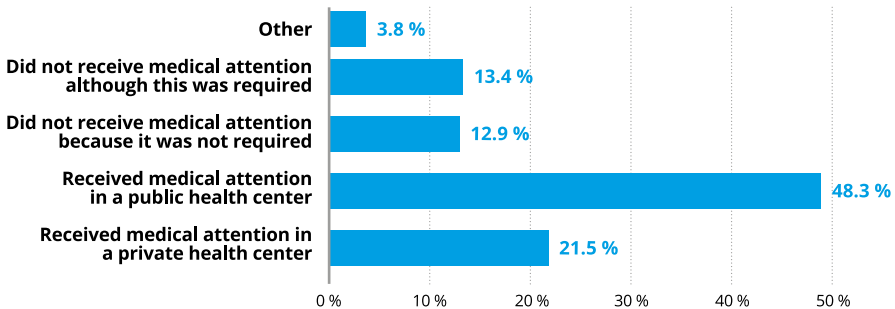
Figure 31. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by effects on health during the pandemic



Results of a survey applied to women teachers affiliated to ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

About half (48.3%) of the women teachers whose health was affected during the pandemic received care in public health centers. 21.5% received private care, 13% did not receive care despite requiring it, and a similar percentage, 12.9%, indicated not requiring medical care. In relation to the quality of the care received, for more than a third (39%) this was good, for the same amount (39%) it was very good, and for a lesser number it was fair (19.9%), while it was bad for 3.4% and very bad for 1.4%.

Figure 32. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers affected by health problems during the pandemic by medical attention received



Results of a survey applied to women teachers affiliated to ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

2.7 Violence has been an area of concern for female teachers

Measures of confinement and restrictions on mobility aggravated violence against women and girls. The isolation of victims with their perpetrators, restrictions on movement, and economic and health concerns had an impact on the intensification of the phenomenon (ECLAC, 2020b). In this captivity, the risk of facing situations of violence skyrocketed for women and girls. The perception shared by the women teachers coincided with that of international organizations. A leader explains:

Due to COVID-19, confinement, work, [and] the new dynamics of social isolation, women are unfortunately forced to share confinement with their aggressors, so that firstly causes us concern because people are in an environment of uncertainty that makes them feel tension more easily and support networks are cut, as I cannot leave my house and do not have that support network that allows me to safeguard myself from the possibility of violence. (Interview with women leaders of ANDE, 2020)

According to the survey data, 80.9% of women teachers considered that violence against women increased during the pandemic. A smaller group of women teachers considered that it remained the same as before (5.5%) or occurred less than before (0.2%). In addition, half (50.9%) considered that violence against women particularly affected their profession, more than a third (38.7%) did not know, while only 10.4% considered that there was no specific affectation.

Figure 33. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by perception of changes in violence against women during the pandemic

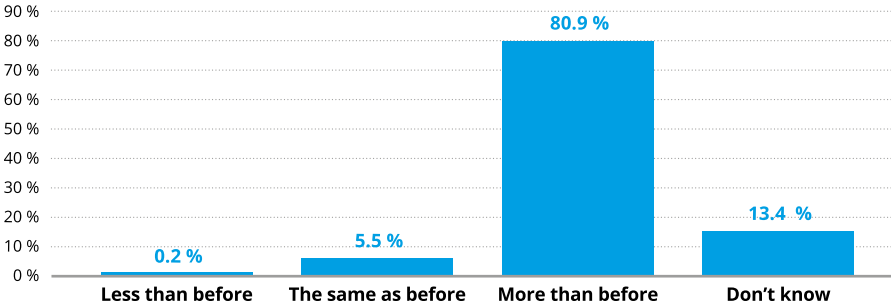
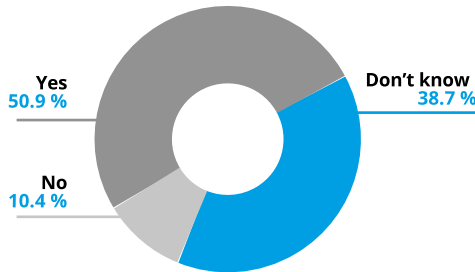


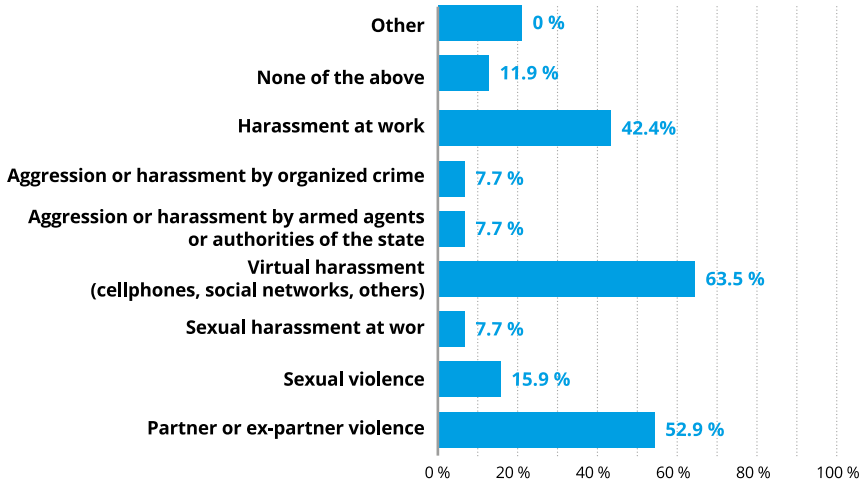
Figure 34. Costa Rica, 2021: Do you consider violence against women has particularly affected women teachers during the pandemic?



Results of a survey applied to women teachers affiliated to ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

When asked about the different forms of violence against women that affect teachers, 63.5% perceived more risk of suffering situations of virtual and internet-based harassment. A slightly lower proportion (52.9%), perceived risk of violence by partners and ex-partners, while 42% mentioned workplace harassment. To a lesser degree, they identified the prevalence of those forms of violence that occur in the public sphere, such as sexual harassment at work and assaults and harassment by agents of the state or by organized crime (7.7% respectively).

Figure 35. Costa Rica, 2021: What types of violence against women teachers do you believe have increased during the pandemic?

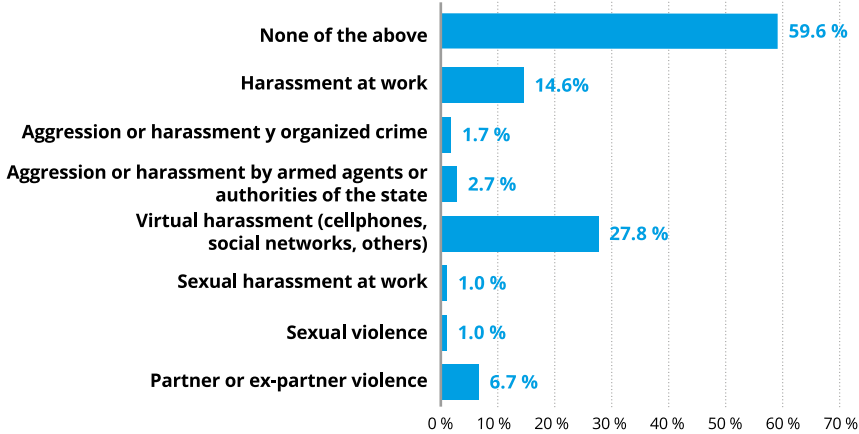


Results of a survey applied to women teachers affiliated to ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

Despite this, when consulted about their personal experiences, these did not coincide with the teachers' perceptions. More than half (59.6%) reported not having experienced any form of violence. Among the group of teachers who did experience violence, virtual harassment (27.8%) and workplace harassment (14.6%) were most common. Violence inflicted by partners or ex-partners was experienced by women teachers to a lesser extent (6.7%). Teachers thus indicated signs of the intensification of cyberbullying during the pandemic.

In this sense, given the circumstances of health confinement and isolation, it is logical that violence related to telework and virtuality and family coexistence are experienced to a greater degree than those occurring in more public spaces, such as sexual harassment at work and sexual violence (1% respectively), assaults or harassment by organized crime or state agents (1.7% and 2.7% respectively).

Figure 36. Costa Rica, 2021. Women teachers by type of violence experienced during the pandemic

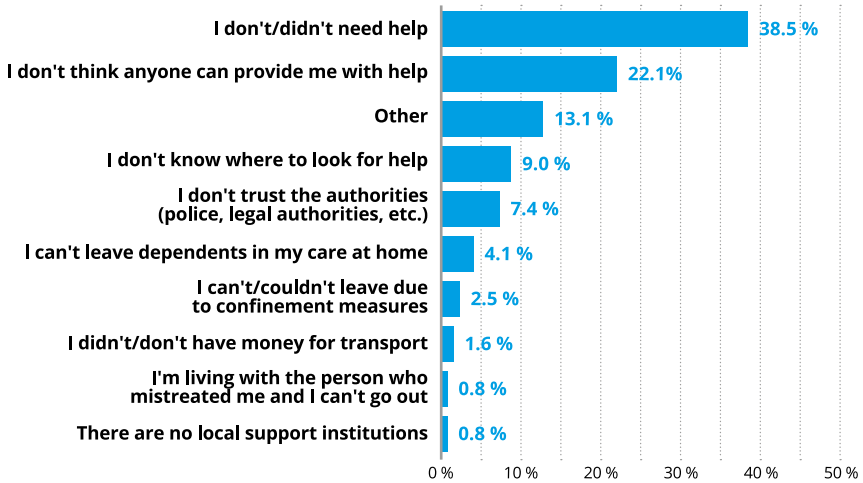


Results of a survey applied between March 12 and April 9, 2021, to women teachers affiliated to ANDE in Costa Rica.

Of the group of women teachers who faced situations of violence, only 11.7% sought some kind of help. 30.23% did not seek any kind of help. When asked about the reasons why this group did not seek help, 22.1% considered that no one could provide it, 9% did not know places where to seek it, and 7.4% did not trust the authorities. For 4.2%, the burden of responsibilities of care provision constituted a barrier, since they could not leave the dependent people in their charge to seek help.

To a lesser extent, the teachers mentioned mobility limitations caused by confinement, lack of transportation or money and living with the offender as barriers to seeking help. An interesting fact is that an additional 13.1% stated that they did not seek help for other reasons. The details in this regard varied greatly, but work overload and the use of other common coping strategies among those who face situations of violence stand out, including negotiation with the offender, denial of the seriousness of the facts, and feelings of helplessness in the face of that which was experienced.

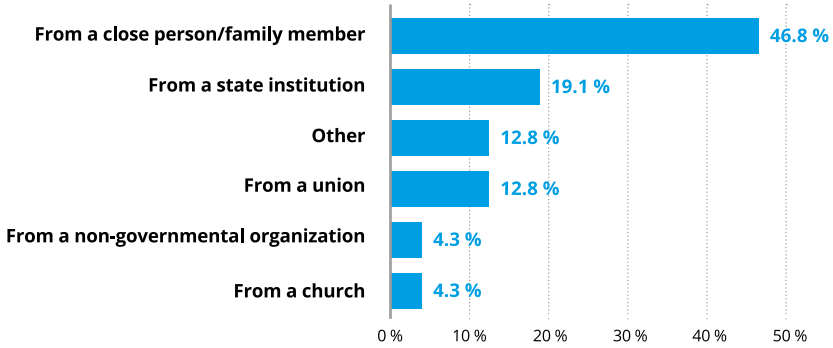
Figure 37. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by reasons for not seeking help for violence experienced during the pandemic



Results of a survey applied to women teachers affiliated to ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

Family and community support networks were the main source of support for teachers who experienced situations of violence and sought some kind of help, with about half turning to a close person or family member, at 46.8%. 19.1% turned to a state institution for support, and 12.8% to the trade union organization. In smaller proportion, the women teachers turned to non-governmental organizations or churches for help (4.3% each). The remaining 12.8% said that they sought help in other places. Notable among these were the search for support in the workplace through principals as well as the psychology staff.

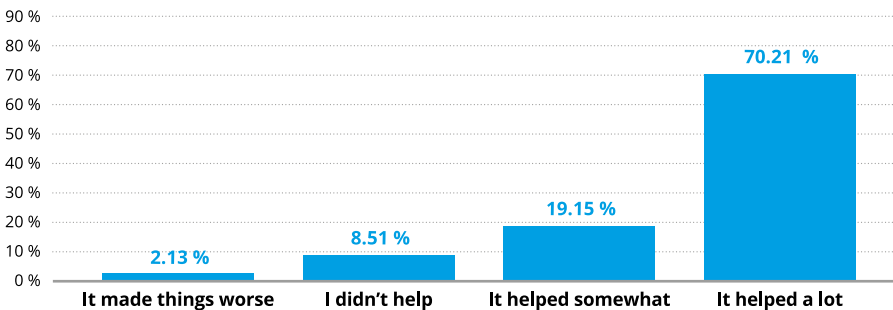
Figure 38. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by where they sought help for violence experienced during the pandemic



Results of a survey applied to women teachers affiliated to ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

The teachers' assessment of the help received was positive. 70.2% of the respondents considered that the help received assisted them a lot. 19.1% thought that it helped them somewhat, 8.5% said that it did not help them, and 2.1% said that it made things worse.

Figure 39. Costa Rica, 2021: Women teachers by assessment of help received for violence experienced during the pandemic

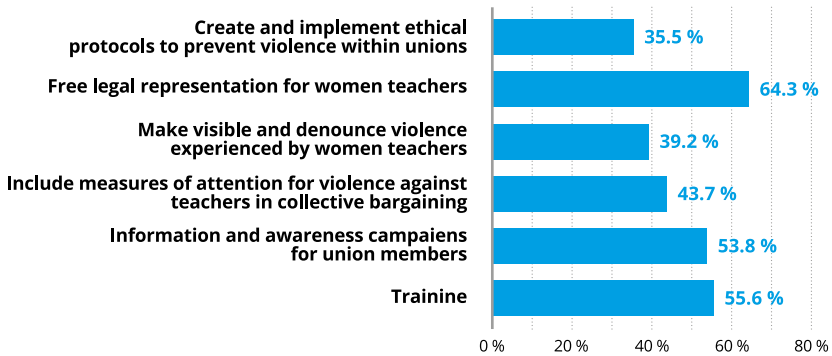


Results of a survey applied to women teachers affiliated to ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

The women teachers surveyed attribute the trade union organization a role in terms of providing support for and raising awareness of violence against women. 88.1% considered that the union to which they belong can take mea-

asures to prevent the violence faced by women teachers, while only 11.9% considered this not to be the case. On inquiring about the type of actions that the trade union organization can undertake, the teachers most often recommended providing free legal representation (64.3%), training (55.6%), and conducting information and awareness-raising campaigns (53.8%). In addition, they mentioned the inclusion of measures of providing support for teachers as part of collective bargaining (39.2%) and and, finally, the creation and implementation of ethical protocols to prevent violence within unions (35.5%).

Figure 40. Women teachers by type of union action they recommend against violence



Results of a survey applied to women teachers affiliated to ANDE in Costa Rica between March 12 and April 9, 2021.

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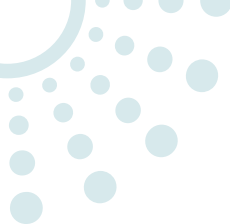
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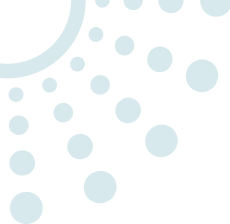
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EL SALVADOR

Educators defending education, health and life in El Salvador during the pandemic: Amid restrictions on mobility, the rise of authoritarianism and an excessive increase in the demand for work

Ana Carcedo

1. El Salvador facing the COVID-19 pandemic: Economic stagnation and strong political changes

1.1 Fragile economic and social conditions with which to face the pandemic

El Salvador is the country with the smallest territorial area in the Central American isthmus. With an area of 21,041 square km (8,124 sq mi) and a population in 2020 of 6,760,000 people, it is also the most densely populated. It is a Republic with a unicameral legislative system, the Congress. It has a central government that exercises administration in the country's fourteen departments.

53% of the population is female and 47% is male. It is a young society in the process of demographic transition, with about two thirds of the population (64.7%) between 15 and 64 years of age, 26.8% under 15, and 8.5% who are 65 years of age and over, representing a dependency ratio of 54%. That is, the theoretically inactive population is about half that of the theoretically active population.⁶⁸ At 72.7%, about three quarters of the population lives in urban areas and 27.3% in rural areas (World Bank, online consultation).

⁶⁸ The dependency ratio is an indicator of potential economic dependence, measuring the population at theoretically inactive ages in relation to the population at theoretically active ages. Calculation: The total population aged 0 to 14, plus the population aged 65 and over, divided by the total population aged 15 to 64, multiplied by 100 (CELADE online consultation). https://celade.cepal.org/redatam/PRYESP/SISPPI/Webhelp/relacion_de_dependencia.htm

El Salvador is considered a country of average human development. In 2019, it was placed in 124th position on the Human Development Index (HDI)⁶⁹ established by the United Nations, with a value for this index of 0.673. For that same year, the life expectancy at birth was 73.3 years of age, the average number of years of schooling was 6.9 and the GDP per capita⁷⁰ was US\$8,359 (UN, 2020).

In Salvadoran society, there is a significant income imbalance. In 2019, the 40% poorest sector of the population held 16% of the total income, while the 20% richest held 47% of the total income (ECLAC, 2021b). However, it is the least unequal society in Central America in terms of monetary income, with a Gini coefficient⁷¹ in 2019 of 41.⁷² 29.2% of the population lives below the poverty line,⁷³ although this percentage has been steadily decreasing since 2002 (CEPALSTAT, online consultation).⁷⁴ When measuring multidimensional poverty,⁷⁵ the percentage decreases to 7.9% with another 9.9% at risk of falling into that condition (UN, 2020).

⁶⁹ Human Development Index (HDI): A composite index that measures the average result in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, education, and a decent standard of living. (UN, 2020)

⁷⁰ GDP. This is defined as the sum of the monetary values of goods and services produced by each company, public administration and household in a country during a given year (BCR, n.d.). GDP per capita is calculated by dividing GDP by the total population.

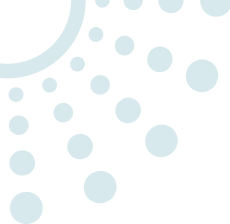
⁷¹ The Gini coefficient: This measures the deviation in the distribution of income among individuals or households in a given country with respect to a distribution reflecting perfect equality. The value 0 corresponds to absolute equality and the value 100 to absolute inequality (UN, 2020).

⁷² The Gini coefficients for other Central American countries were 49 in Costa Rica and Honduras in 2019 and 54 in Guatemala and 49 in Nicaragua in 2014 (online consultation of country profiles on CEPALSTAT).

⁷³ Poverty lines represent the level of income that allows each household to meet the basic needs of all its members. The basic food basket for poverty measurement is built on the basis of a selection of foods that make up the goods required to cover the nutritional needs of the population, taking into account their level of physical activity, consumption habits, and the effective availability of food, as well as prices in each country and geographical area (ECLAC, 2021b).

⁷⁴ https://estadisticas.cepal.org/cepalstat/Perfil_Nacional_Social.html?pais=SLV&idioma=spanish

⁷⁵ Multidimensional poverty: Poverty measurement based on deficiencies in ten indicators related to education, health and quality of life, developed by UNDP for the 2010 Human Development Report.



It is noteworthy that, in terms of multidimensional poverty, the most affected area is that related to education, which contributes to the index more than the standard of living (43.4% and 41.1%, respectively) while both these are more significant than health affectation (15.5%) (UN 2020). In 2018, the literacy rate of people between 14 and 25 years of age was 98%, public spending on education was 3.6% of the GDP, and there were 28 students per teacher in primary school, in addition to 30 per teacher in secondary school (online consultation of the country profile on CEPALSTAT).

In the national economy, commerce and other services predominate. In 2019, 30.6% and 19.6% of employed people worked in these sectors respectively, while 16.4% and 14.9% worked in agriculture and manufacturing respectively. Informality affects 55.5% of people employed in urban areas (CEPALSTAT, online consultation).

The economic and social conditions from which El Salvador had to face the pandemic were fragile, as the International Labor Organization points out. The previous years were of low and decreasing levels of GDP growth, with this reaching 2.3% in 2019 (ILO, 2020).

In Salvadoran society, significant inequalities persist between women and men. The HDI corresponding to women for 2019 was 0.662, lower than the 0.679 corresponding to men (UN, 2020). In 2019, the average years of schooling of women was 6.6, lower than the 7.3 for men, with El Salvador being one of the countries that is not part of the growing regional trend for women to achieve higher educational levels than men. The difference in income is high, with 2019 estimations of women's gross national income per capita at US\$6,471, while for men it was US\$10,501 (UN, 2020).

In 2019, 40.9% of women aged fifteen and over had no income of their own, a situation applicable to only 14.7% of men in the same age group. This is mainly due to the fact that the participation rate in the labor market is noticeably lower for women than for men, at 45.3% and 75.7% respectively. Both women and

men work on average a similar number of hours a week at approximately 58.5, but women on average allocate the majority of this, at 37 hours, to unpaid work at home and 22.5 to paid work. This represents the inverse relationship for men, who devote 41.5 hours per week to paid work and 17 to unpaid domestic work (online consultation of the country profile in CEPALSTAT).⁷⁶


Unlike in the vast majority of countries, unemployment is lower among women (5.4%) than among men (7%) (ILO, 2020). However, the participation of women is, above all, in informal jobs (63.7% of employed women, compared to 48.6%, in the case of men) (online consultation of the country profile on CEPALSTAT), with these being jobs in the low productivity sector. In 2019, 76% of female workers were in this sector, with 18.6% in jobs of medium productivity and 5.4% in the those of high productivity, compared to the respective values for men of 60%, 32.1% and 7.8%. The female poverty index⁷⁷ in 2019 was 108.8 and the extreme poverty rate was 109.5 (CEPALSTAT, online consultation).

Violence against women has been identified since the beginning of the millennium as a serious problem in El Salvador. In some years the country has had the highest homicide rate of women in the world, reaching the figure of 14.4 per 100,000 women (Geneva Declaration, 2015). In 2017, the rate of violent deaths of women was⁷⁸ 13.46 per 100,000 women and this dropped to 10.98 per 100,000 women in 2018, both higher than the rate of 10 per 100,000 that is considered to be epidemic levels. Included among these violent deaths are femicides. In 2017, 271 of these were registered, an amount that subsequently decreased to 232 in 2018 and 113 in 2019. This last figure represents a national rate of 3.3 per 100,000 women, surpassed in 2018 only by Honduras (6.2 per 100,000 women) (CEPALSTAT, online consultation and ISDEMU, 2019).

⁷⁶ https://estadisticas.cepal.org/cepalstat/Perfil_Nacional_Social.html?pais=SLV&idioma=spanish

⁷⁷ Female poverty index: The ratio of the poverty rate of women to the poverty rate of men multiplied by 100. A value above 100 indicates that poverty has a higher incidence among women than among men, and a value below 100 indicates the opposite.

⁷⁸ Violent deaths of women include all homicides of women, some but not all of which are femicides.



The Instituto Salvadoreño para el Desarrollo de la Mujer (Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women, ISDEMU) reports that in 2019:

the type of violence that most frequently threatens women in the educational field is sexual violence. In this case, the rate is 16.7% per 100 (sic) women, that is, approximately 1 in 6 has experienced this at some point in their life. (ISDEMU, 2019)

In the field of political participation, the 2020 Congress included 30.9% of women, a proportion similar to the regional average (32.1%). After the legislative elections of 2021, the number of women parliamentarians was reduced from 26 to 23 and their participation decreased to 27.4%. In local government for the period 2018-2021, women occupied only 11% of mayoral positions (UN WOMEN, 2020).

Article 56 of the current Constitution of El Salvador establishes that education shall be compulsory and free of charge when provided by the state as early education (up to four years of age), kindergarten (four to six years of age), primary schooling (from seven to fifteen years of age), secondary schooling (two years in the academic mode and three in the vocational, plus a year, in each case, if night school is attended) and special education (for persons with special educational needs). Although all children and adolescents under the age of eighteen should be enrolled in school, in 2018 the net enrollment rate in the first and second cycles was 82%, in the third cycle this was 57.3%, and in secondary education it was 37.6%. Altogether, in that year, there were close to 1.5 million students (MINEDUCYT, 2019).

Public education is offered by the Ministry of Public Education (MINED), which in June 2018 had 45,206 teachers working in 5,173 educational institutions.⁷⁹ In that same year, there were also 884 private schools at which 12,871 teachers worked. Of the total of 58,077 people making up the teaching staff that covers up to the third cycle, 77.8% work in public schools and 22.2% in private, while 69.2% are women and 30.8% men. It is a highly feminized occupation (MINEDUCYT, 2019).

⁷⁹ Not including special education.


1.2 Dramatic political upheaval after the 2019 elections

On June 1, 2019, a new government was inaugurated in El Salvador, chaired by Nayib Bukele. When the pandemic began, he had been in office for only nine months, a period in which, according to the trade unionists interviewed, he made significant changes in relation to the previous administrations of the FMLN (Farabundo Martí Party for National Liberation). This party governed for the previous ten years with a more social approach, in particular in the field of education.

Prior to this government, as teachers we had excellent benefits during the previous ten years, especially those who enjoyed many privileges in the educational community. Parents, economically, came out very strengthened since the previous government managed to make it a law in the Constitution that the country's children can enjoy having their school packages in schools, a school snack, the uniform package that includes shoes [...]. We, as teachers, had very significant salary increases to give us a little help in meeting the needs that, as teachers, we have in our country. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

The women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio mentioned that other measures of the previous government such as the support provided to agricultural production were beneficial to the entire population in lowering the price of grains and decreasing the cost of the basic food basket. When the health emergency began, prices rose.

El Salvador is a small, poor country. Were we asked how things used to be before? Well, things were not excellent, but with the government we had, we were improving little by little. Social projects were being done, not quickly, but little by little things was moving ahead. But what happened when we got this government? When we changed government, this government came to destroy our country more because it has become so indebted that the political debt we have is very large, where you can see that when paying this debt,



92% will go to interest and 8% to the capital. What does that mean? That the poor are getting poorer and the rich richer, so this is very worrying.

The pandemic has come to make the economic situation of this country more stark, more difficult, especially for the most vulnerable class, our country's proletariat is the hardest hit right now by the pandemic and we are talking about the informal sector that we have in our country. The informal sector has been one of the most affected and, especially, women who are single mothers have suffered more because they have had to expose themselves to risk in times of pandemic, they have been exposed in public during quarantine. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

The Bukele government also represents a significant change in its communication style with the population, strongly relying on social networks. This makes it seem close to the citizenry, although the real channels of influence on government decisions are narrowing and the form of government is increasingly adopting authoritarian overtones, with serious confrontations with the legislative branch and the Supreme Court of Justice. A crisis point in the power dispute with this body occurred on Sunday, February 7, 2020, when by order of Bukele the army invaded Congress to press for the approval of a US\$109 million loan aimed at modernizing the equipment of the National Civil Police (PNC) and the Armed Forces in a territorial control plan to combat criminal organizations.

One of the channels of dialog that is being closed is the negotiation table between the Ministry of Education and the trade union organization for this sector that, in previous governments, managed to successfully influence central aspects of the educational community.

So far we have not been able to sit down with the heads of the Ministry of Education and when we ask to, neither the Minister nor the Deputy Minister attends, but instead they send delegates [...]. We have requested this before the pandemic because previous governments have had negotiating tables

where we asked for everything that we wanted for our fellow teachers, but, unfortunately, with the current Minister we have not been able to hold a negotiating table where she meets with us [...]. We're always insisting, we ask for a hearing, a date, and, unfortunately, we don't get an answer. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

Throughout the pandemic period, and after winning a very comfortable majority in the legislative and municipal elections, Bukele consolidated his control over the three branches of government of the Republic, while openly showing authoritarian traits. This aspect is further developed below.

1.3 Main measures adopted by the State of El Salvador during the COVID-19 pandemic and their impacts

El Salvador is the country in Central America that, according to official figures, has been least hit by the COVID-19 pandemic in health terms, both in terms of incidence and mortality.⁸⁰ On March 23, 2021, a year after the first case of COVID-19 was reported in the country, the number of people diagnosed with the virus amounted to 63,344, while there were 1,986 deaths due to COVID (Government of El Salvador, March 2021)⁸¹ (respective rates of 9,731 per million and 304 per million)⁸² (Worldometer, online consultation).⁸³

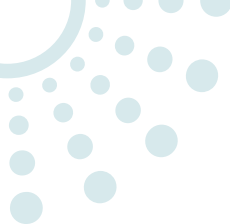
On January 23, 2020, the Bukele administration decreed a health emergency throughout the national territory for an indefinite period and on February 11

⁸⁰ Nicaragua is not included in this comparison because very different figures are reported between the official ones and those of the Observatorio Ciudadano (Citizen's Observatory).

⁸¹ <https://covid19.gob.sv/>

⁸² At the conclusion of this study in October 2021, El Salvador had a rate of 16,494 diagnosed cases per million and 514 deaths per million, maintaining values lower than those corresponding to Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica.

⁸³ At the conclusion of this study in October 2021, El Salvador had a rate of 16,494 diagnosed cases per million and 514 deaths per million, maintaining values lower than those corresponding to Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica.



it established a thirty-day quarantine for all people entering the country by any means. Three days later, it declared a state of national emergency, a state of public calamity and a natural disaster throughout the country. On February 15, it issued a Law temporarily restricting specific constitutional rights in order to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Non-essential activities were prohibited, causing a strong economic and social crisis with contraction of production and the labor market (ECLAC COVID-19 Observatory, online consultation).

The closure of activities and confinement measures negatively impacted upon production and hit the lower income-earning population hard, limiting their options to generate a livelihood. In 2020, a sharp drop in GDP was expected. International remittances and exports, which generate almost equal amounts of foreign exchange (21.2% and 26.9% of the GDP respectively), were also expected to undergo a sharp decrease, along with an intense social impact caused by this contraction since international remittances represent 48% of the income of poor households. The ILO estimated that in El Salvador at the beginning of the pandemic, 51.4% of jobs—around 1.5 million—were at high risk, with a disproportionate impact on women, since these are concentrated in tertiary sector occupations most affected by the measures adopted, in particular those related to commerce, hotels, restaurants and paid domestic work (ILO, 2020).

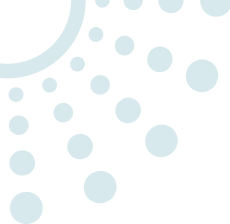
Included among the measures announced by the government of El Salvador are some aimed at decreasing negative effects on income and access to the means of securing the living conditions of the population given the increase in unemployment, such as US\$140 million for wage subsidies for small businesses, fully paid work leave for some groups with health problems or risk factors including pregnancy, US\$300 in cash transfers to 1.5 million families, and the distribution of 2.7 million food and personal hygiene baskets, as well as exemption from the payment of basic services for three months. The government announced that it would allocate US\$360 million to SMEs (ECLAC COVID 19 Observatory, online consultation). For people working remotely, mandatory compensation by the employer for the worker using their own equipment was

established (UNDP Gender Response Tracker, online consultation). The ISDEMU, in partnership with some agencies, carried out humanitarian and emergency support actions for women in conditions of particular need, such as deportees and returnees from the USA, displaced women, women experiencing violence and female prisoners. This included food baskets, hygiene kits and multipurpose cards (ECLAC COVID 19 Observatory, online consultation).

On March 11, the government issued a directive to close educational institutions until April 21, and in August this was made indefinite until the end of the pandemic in the country and indication from the Ministry of Health as to when and how to reopen. As of March, the Ministry of Education made a platform with various resources available to continue with virtual schooling. The government announced in June that 30,000 teachers had graduated from a Google Classroom course, with the delivery of computers to 9,000 of these. For the completion of the end-of-course tests, the government signed agreements with various private communication companies so that the students who are clients of these would have free access to data. The Ministry of Education announced that it would distribute approximately 320,000 food packages for students between June 9 and July 16 (ECLAC COVID-19 Observatory, online consultation).

Educational centers were expected to open at the start of the 2021 academic year, but this was not achieved due to the risk of a new wave of infections, so maintaining non-face-to-face education was proposed. The government announced that it would deliver a computer to each student and the 2021 budget included US\$214.7 million to be allocated to actions to close the digital divide in education (ECLAC COVID-19 Observatory, online consultation).

Violence against women during the pandemic was a major cause for concern. The UN and women's and feminist organizations from the continent emitted warnings in relation to the increased risks of violence and isolation that women and girls could experience in their homes due to the confinement measures, and, along these lines ISDEMU implemented a series of responses. From



mid-April an information campaign for the prevention of violence against women was developed and specialized services were reinforced, including the telephone number 126 and the provision of support staff, as well as a WhatsApp number and e-mail address for queries within a remote care strategy called Ciudad Mujer Te Orienta (Women's Care Guides You). Additionally, care for psychological emergencies caused by the pandemic was offered and a free telephone line, 198, was enabled in partnership with the Supreme Court of Justice for consultation and guidance on violence against women, as well as violence against children, adolescents, and the elderly. This connects to the judicial headquarters to facilitate access to justice (ECLAC COVID-19 Observatory, online consultation).

Another concern shared by ISDEMU and other organizations was the burden of care work on women during the pandemic. In this field, the Ministry of Health established an exception from bans on driving when related to people who needed to travel to provide assistance and care to children, the elderly, sick or disabled people, a measure that at least reduced risks for those who provide care. ISDEMU developed a campaign to make visible the value of care work carried out in one's own home, calling for co-responsibility and the fair distribution of tasks between women and men (ECLAC COVID-19 Observatory, online consultation).

The union leaders interviewed pointed out that the measures announced by the Bukele government to counteract the economic contraction and social impacts were not always fully implemented. They mention, in particular, that the delivery of computers to teachers was conditioned on passing a course on virtual education taught online, which represented a barrier precisely for those who needed this equipment the most, being people who are least familiar with this means of communication.

The Ministry is currently providing teachers with computers, and this is going in stages: [...]. Next they will go to colleagues who do not have illnesses of any

kind to give them their computer, but they also have to meet the requirement of having passed the training on the use of this technology, which is what has most affected colleagues who are already older, who have already been working for 30, 25, some up to 35 years, who were not accustomed to using technology. These colleagues are feeling very worried. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

The set of measures adopted hit the population with less resources hard. A union leader interviewed pointed out that the measures were not adequate:


In the commercial sector, those who were most affected were the small businesses, because the big supermarkets were not closed down. They shut down that man who was taking his basket to the markets. He was not allowed to sell things, the small shops in the cantons were not allowed to open.

Exactly, because they did allow Super Select and Walmart to do trade, right? But the little ones weren't allowed.

All these families who make their living from day to day, who bring sustenance to their homes, they could not go out.

Perhaps the only positive thing was that [the president] took the action, at the start, of closing the borders. It is perhaps the only thing, but from there I haven't seen anything else [...], because, due to the quality of the education and health that we have in the country, really, we don't have good preventive health care. If we don't respond at the time that you're ill, we don't prevent ill health. So that might have been a proposal that he did well, because if the borders are not closed, the epidemic here would have been more massive. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

The closure of educational institutions affected families with the lowest resources in a particular way, by depriving them of access to food that they previously had.



And also many of those kids that went to our school went for the snacks that the previous government provided, where they were given rice, milk, beans and, in my case, vegetables and fruits were provided to the children, and now they don't have this, when sometimes the children asked for a little bit more to take back to their homes and they don't have it, and they live in a state of poverty so that they go for that reason, and they don't have, that is, it has been a situation that is very difficult due to COVID. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

Other negative impacts that government measures had on the population derived from the way in which the executive branch tried to impose its decrees. Ensuring compliance with the confinement orders was entrusted to the army and the police, bodies that have frequently acted abusively and that have violated fundamental rights. This was denounced by Amnesty International in a June 2020 publication:

Authorities have detained more than 2000 people for alleged violation of home quarantine and have held these in “containment centers” that often do not have minimum levels of sanitation and physical distancing. Amnesty International has examined legal documents claiming that some people were detained just for leaving home to buy food or medicine. In addition, the organization has verified audiovisual material that shows the precarious conditions of the containment centers.

The context of COVID-19 has made visible a style of government that, although it seems innovative in its way of operating, basically returns to the repressive and abusive tactics that have been seen so many times in El Salvador's past (AI, 2020).

It is questionable that this form of action by the Bukele government was aimed at containing the pandemic when people detained for disrespecting confinement were concentrated in places without minimum public health protection measures and without carrying out tests to find out if they were carriers of the virus.

The Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice of El Salvador, in response to a habeas corpus lodged by a person detained in these circumstances indicated that:

The aforementioned authorities cannot automatically impose the forced sanitary internment of people who incur in mere non-observance, insubordination or rebellion against the government's disposition to stay at home during the quarantine period. [...] In other words, the President of the Republic, the National Civil Police, the Armed Forces and any other authority is constitutionally prohibited from depriving citizens of freedom in the form of confinement or forced health detention for violating the quarantine order, given that the Legislative Assembly did not issue a formal law establishing such a measure with all of the requirements set forth in the initial draft of this habeas corpus, and repeated in this decision or, as appropriate, if not verified with respect to each of the affected grounds of Article 136 of the Health Code (Constitutional Chamber of El Salvador, 2020).

These are not the only clashes of President Bukele with the other powers of the Republic that occurred during the first year of the pandemic. The confrontations between the executive and the legislative branches escalated again on the occasion of the refusal of the president to sign and publish a law passed by the Legislative Assembly opposed to a presidential decree that intended to extend the quarantine beyond that agreed upon by the two powers. The dispute was finally resolved by the Supreme Court ruling in favor of the legislative body.

While the pandemic continued, the legislative and municipal elections of February 28, 2021, gave a landslide victory to Bukele's party, Nuevas Ideas, which reached an absolute majority in the Assembly with 56 legislators, two thirds of the total of 84. These results marked the end to the previous disputes between the legislative and the executive branches and established the greater control of Bukele in national decisions with less opposition than he had previously encountered.



After a year of exceptional measures, El Salvador continued to experience economic and social impacts. It was the Central American country suffering the greatest economic contraction in the first months of the pandemic, with the impact being strongest and reaching its lowest point in May 2020. At that time, the formal sector lost more than 72,000 jobs, 229 companies ceased exporting, and in April 2020, international remittances decreased by about US\$192 million compared to the same month in 2019 (FUSADES, 2020). Although there was a subsequent recovery, the effects of the measures taken continued throughout the year. The economic reactivation began in June 2020 and, in July of that year it was learned that 3,557 companies stopped contributing to social security in relation to the same month of the previous year (CentralAmericaData.com, 2020).

The preliminary balance for the year 2020 that ECLAC elaborated for El Salvador's economy estimated that the GDP in the year decreased by 8.6%, exports in the first ten months had a year-on-year drop of 15.7%, although in the case of the intermediate maquiladora industry this drop was at 32.3%. Accumulated family remittances from January to October, however, increased by 3.2% compared to the previous year (ECLAC, 2021a).

State aid offset the impacts of the measures adopted, but only in part. Poverty, which in 2019 affected 30.4% of the population, grew in 2020 to include 36.4%, a value lower than the 38% it would have reached without aid transfers. Extreme poverty⁸⁴ went from 5.7% to 8% in one year with aid and, without aid, this would have reached 9.8% (ECLAC 2021b).

The educational community was particularly affected during the pandemic period. Educational processes had to be adapted to non-face-to-face modalities in an improvised fashion and social inequalities were transferred to teaching, both for teachers and for students and their families.⁸⁵


⁸⁴ Extreme poverty line: Value of the basic food basket (ECLAC 2021b).

⁸⁵ These aspects are discussed in more detail in the following section.

Since the start of the pandemic, education unions and in particular ANDES 21 de Junio maintained an active role in defending the quality of education and the conditions teachers. In March 2020, they requested that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MINEDUCYT) not delay the payment of interim teachers and that the teacher performance bonus paid in June and December, on this occasion be paid out in May (ANDES 21, 2020a). In April 2020, they communicated to the MINEDUCYT their support for the change to virtual classes, although they pointed out the lack of tools required for this proposal and requested that the Ministry ensure that in its implementation the entire population be given equal conditions. They also proposed the suspension of the secondary school exit tests (PAES), as well as the requirement of passing these in order to enroll in higher education (ANDES 21 de Junio, 2020b). In April, they reacted to the Ministry's protocol summoning teachers to educational institutions for the distribution of products to the families of students under the School Food and Health Program (PASE for the initials in Spanish), due to this representing a risk to the health of families, students and teachers, as well as to the safety of teachers on violating the confinement order (ANDES 21 de Junio, 2020c). In June, several unions forming part of Education International for Latin America (EILA) delivered the Ministry a document from this entity on the conditions necessary for a safe return to classes (ANDES 21 de Junio, 2020d). In August, they requested the establishment of the traditional salary review procedure, requiring the installation of a negotiation table (ANDES 21 de Junio, 2020e). In March 2021, they requested that MINEDUCYT postpone a return to face-to-face classes to occur two weeks after Easter to avoid the contagion that was expected after the holiday period (ANDES 21 de Junio, 2021).

Union action was not easy. The confinement measures represented an obstacle to the organization and mobilization of the unions. A leader of ANDES 21 de Junio pointed out that for the union sector:

That has been a huge problem that has occurred in the country. Well, we have considered that this pandemic was a very deliberate strategy so that



social organizations and unions could not protest in the face of so much abuse, violations that occurred and that are occurring, at this time of pandemic in the country and perhaps at the Latin American level, on a worldwide level. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

Strategies for maintaining union activity had to change:

We, as the ANDES 21 de Junio organization, have not stopped doing union work since the pandemic began. We have been in communication with virtually all the structures that we have at the national level [...], that has meant that we have done union work via technology, through social media and we have had meetings with our fellow teachers, with the departmental heads, with the National Executive Council and the ANDES 21 de Junio Board, which is the Board that we have as an organization. This has not harmed us, we can say, in making proposals, in pronouncing on the needs we have as teachers in the country, and we have managed since the pandemic began not to neglect the rank and file and to have 100% communication. I think that our colleagues have been very disciplined at the national level because they have been in connection with our general secretary and, through these connections, we have made known all the proposals that as an organization we have taken to the Ministry of Education.

We have not stopped working at any time, and we have made proposal after proposal for the benefit of the educational community and for the benefit of fellow teachers and even parents. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

Before the end of 2020, some mobilizations on the street began. One of these which had wide participation took place on September 23 in support of the mayors who, for four months, had no resources.⁸⁶ In-person protests retook public spaces, which the interviewed leaders saw as a favorable sign.

⁸⁶ <https://historico.elsalvador.com/historico/757240/fondo-para-desarrollo-economico-y-social-de-los-municipios-alcaldias-fodes-protesta.html>

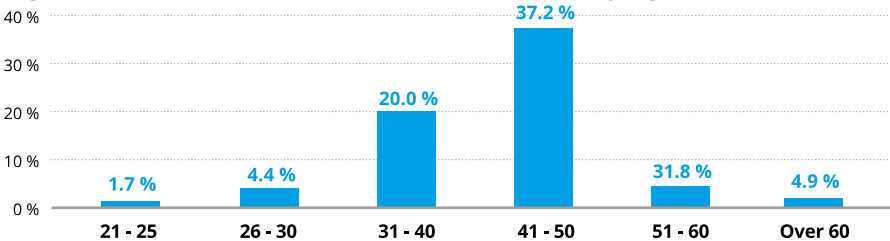
As a union, it is in our favor to start to create a little pressure because if not, they won't listen to us. This government is not going to listen to us because there is no pressure, right? So, with a little pressure... It is a little rebellious towards the government. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

2. Women educate in El Salvador in times of pandemic⁸⁷

2.1. The women teachers surveyed have a high level of education

The majority of the teachers surveyed were young adults, aged between 26 and 50 years of age (61.6%), about one in three (31.8%) were between 51 and 60 and only 6.1% were under 30, while 4.9% are over 60 years of age. They had high levels of education: 74.1% had at least a university degree, among these, 6.6% had complete or incomplete postgraduate degrees. Only 12.2% had incomplete undergraduate studies, 0.5% had completed secondary school as their highest level of education, and 13.2% had some other type of training.

Figure 1. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by age



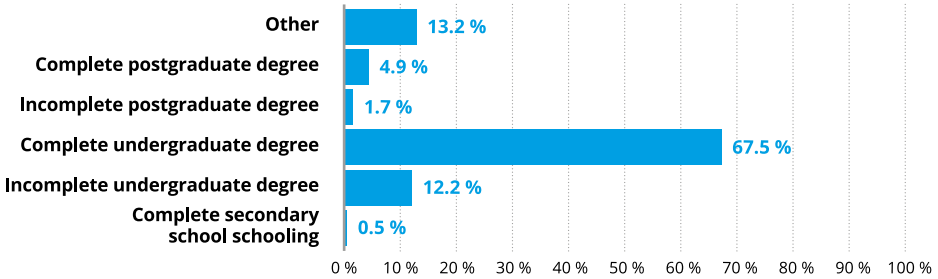
Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio completed in March and April 2021.

The women teachers who practiced teaching in urban areas almost double those who did so in rural areas (62.6% and 37.4%, respectively). Primary

⁸⁷ This chapter includes information collected in a survey that was applied to women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio during the months of March and April 2021, as well as that stated in a virtual group interview with women union leaders held on September 24, 2020. When female teachers are referred to, it should be understood to mean those who have been consulted by any of these means.

school was where the majority of the teachers worked, representing 42.3%, while 28.4% worked in secondary school; these two groups added up to more than 70% of the total. The rest worked in preschool (15.2%) and in other types of teaching (12.5%), with a small minority being university teachers (1.7%).

Figure 2. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by educational level



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio completed in March and April 2021.

Gráfico 3. El Salvador 2021. Educadoras por zona donde ejercen docencia

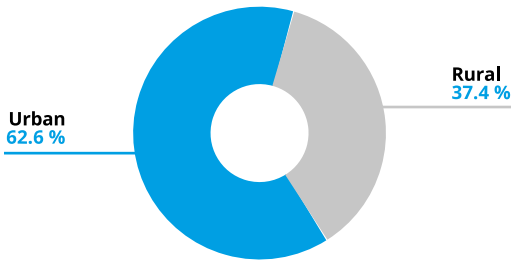
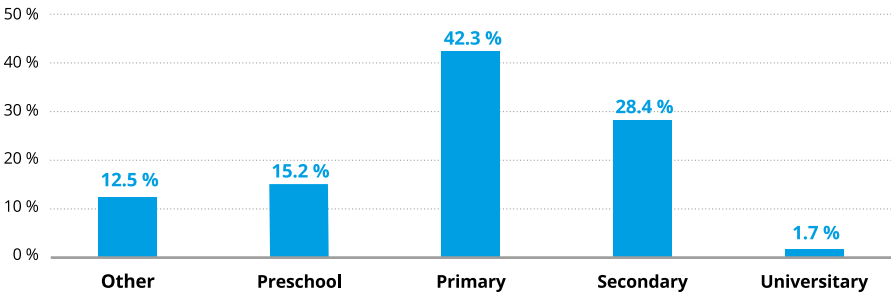


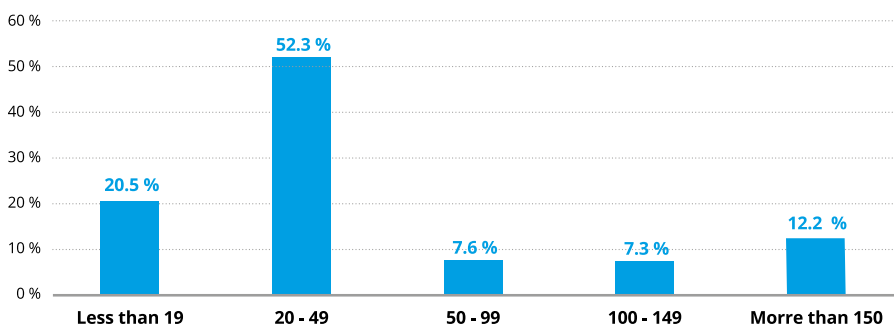
Gráfico 4. El Salvador. 2021. Educadoras por nivel educativo en el que ejercen docencia



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio completed in March and April 2021.

Although the majority of the teachers had between 20 and 49 students (52.3%), a significant group had less than 20 (20.5%), and the rest taught 50 or more. One in eight (12.2%) had more than 150 students and similarly small proportions taught between 50 and 99 students (7.6%) and between 100 and 149 (7.3%).

Figure 5. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by number of students taught



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio completed in March and April 2021.

The number of students taught has particular implications when it comes to non-face-to-face education. This is particularly the case when deliveries of materials were made to students' homes or individual consultations are made via telephone or the internet, measures which were resorted to with some frequency, as will be seen later.

2.2 Most of the teachers lived with children and adolescents

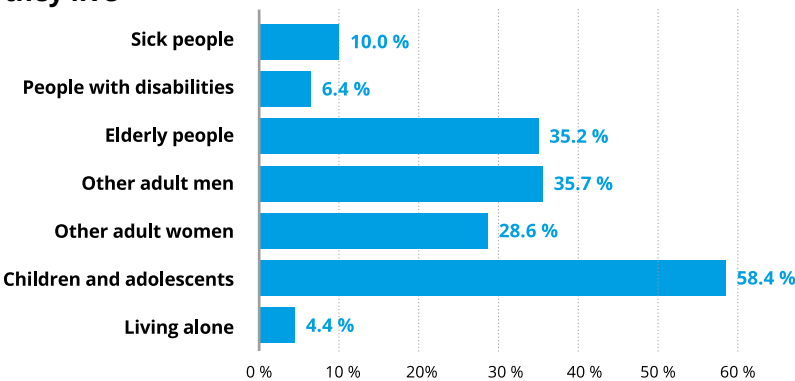
The measures adopted by the Salvadoran government during the pandemic forced the population of this country into a prolonged lockdown at home, and to work from home to the extent that this was possible. Education was one of the activities that was carried out under this modality since classes were suspended as of March 11, 2020.

Homes became the space in which the family shared over 24 hours a day all the activities they previously carried out in different areas with a variety of di-

fferent people. Work and study, activities from the public world that in normal times had their own schedules and spaces outside the home became intertwined with domestic life and the fabric of family relationships.

At 89%, the vast majority of the women teachers surveyed were between 31 and 50 years old. These are ages at which women often have dependent children and living parents. Indeed, more than half of the respondents (58.4%) lived with children or adolescents and just over one in three (35.2%) lived with elderly people. The presence of the latter is similar to that of adult men (35.7%), which indicates a significant quantity of non-nuclear households.⁸⁸

Figure 6. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by the people with whom they live



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio completed in March and April 2021.

It is noteworthy that there was a significant presence of other adult women, with 28.6% of the teachers living with these. Sick people and people with disabilities also formed part of their family nuclei in 10% and 6.4% of households respectively. Only 4.4% of the respondents lived alone.

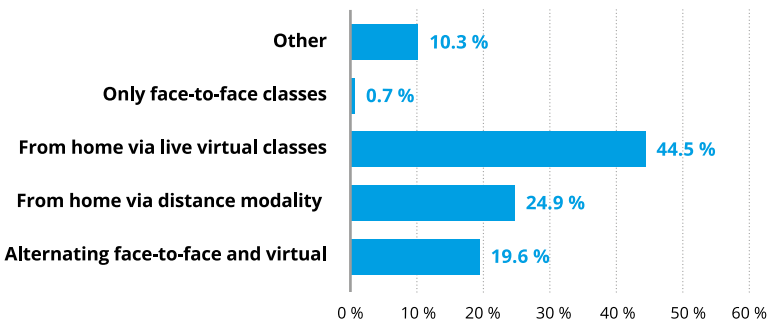
⁸⁸ *Nuclear family: Made up only of parents and their children.*

2.3 Forced into teleworking without adequate conditions

At 89%, the vast majority of the teachers surveyed worked during the pandemic in some non-face-to-face modality, with only 0.7% exclusively maintaining face-to-face activities and 10.3% working in other modalities. The largest group, at almost half (44.5%), was made up of those who worked from home using live virtual classes. A quarter (24.9%) worked from home through distance education and slightly less alternated face-to-face and virtual activities (19.6%).

The 10.3% who indicated another modality included teachers who resorted to different ways of maintaining their educational relationship with students who lacked resources to access platforms with which to attend virtual classes. Among these were included delivering guidebooks house by house and making individual phone calls to explain these, or sending guidebooks and messages via WhatsApp. One of the teachers stated she worked, “Only with WhatsApp, neither my students nor I can afford virtual classes.”

Figure 7. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by work modality during the pandemic



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio completed in March and April 2021.

The abrupt and massive transition to teleworking forced teachers—like many other working people—to take up a work modality for which they lacked the



appropriate conditions. The first difficulties arose in relation to physical space and the equipment necessary for adequate performance.

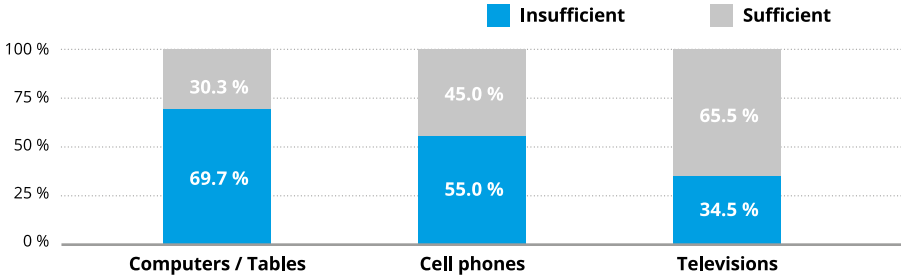
In general, houses do not have private spaces with desks or tables for every person working or studying, so these activities during the pandemic were often performed in the places intended for daily living and family life, such as dining rooms, living rooms and kitchens, thus requiring distribution of the times of use of these spaces, when possible, and when not, the requirement to share these between different people doing different tasks simultaneously. These were inadequate physical spaces in which to work.

Furthermore, each of the non-face-to-face modalities required the use of some equipment, such as telephones, smartphones, televisions, tablets or computers, which frequently had to be shared for work, study or recreational purposes with other people in the home. Nor was it the case that the teachers' families necessarily had the equipment that each family member needed before the pandemic.

The composition of the households analyzed above indicates that, for more than half of the teachers surveyed (58.4%), the space in the home and the equipment for remote work that the family required had to be shared at least with children and adolescents who were studying.⁸⁹ If there were other adults working in the home, the limitations became even more acute.

Televisions were the equipment that presented the least problems, with 65.5% of the teachers indicating that there were sufficient of these and 34.5% indicating that there were not. There were more shortages of smartphones; in this case, more than half (55%) indicated that these were insufficient and only 45% stated that they possessed sufficient of these for their needs. The most problematic situation arose with computers and tablets, with almost seven out of ten (69.7%) indicating that there were insufficient of these for the work and study needs at home.

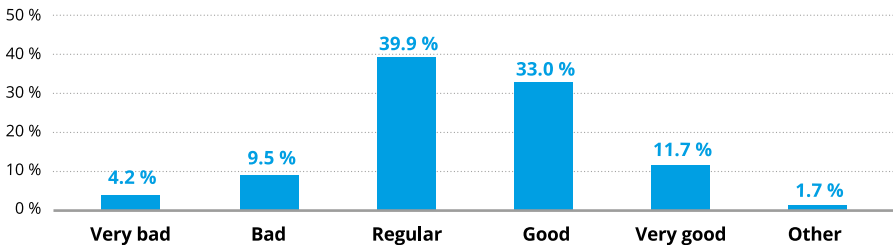
Figure 8. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by availability of equipment for telework and virtual study



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio completed in March and April 2021.

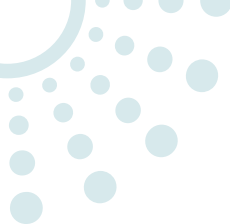
These difficulties due to the lack of equipment were added to by those derived from the quality of internet connectivity. At 53.6%, more than half of the women teachers had problems in this regard, while 39.9% indicated fair quality, 9.5% stated they had bad quality and 4.2% said this was very bad. One third, 33%, indicated good quality and 11.7% indicated having very good quality internet connectivity. It is noteworthy that 1.7% indicated various problems, almost all related to poor connection quality or not having internet at home. These were teachers who connected to the internet through cellphones when they have bandwidth credit, or to whom other people lend connectivity, or who go to their educational institutions to work, but where they also encountered problems.

Figure 9. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by quality of internet connectivity for work



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio completed in March and April 2021.

The union leaders complained about the lack of support from the government



to deal with this new situation. It not only affected the teaching sector, but also the students.

They have demanded work from us, we have to do that work, but they haven't given us the tools required. The government promised that every teacher who trained was going to get a computer, but so far we don't have these. They've reached some places, but perhaps not even 50%. When the government made a commitment, and at the beginning they were talking about giving children the tools required so that they could manage, but this has not been fulfilled either. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

Teleworking requires skills that have not been part of the training or professional experience previously acquired by teachers in El Salvador, in particular for those that work in public education. There was thus also in this sense a lack of adequate conditions for working under this modality. MINEDUCYT provided training during the pandemic, but the same limitations in the use of digital media sometimes represented a barrier to access.

That was another challenge. Not all of us were up to date with the technological tools and that is worrying to our colleagues, although the Ministry may have given us training. But virtual training is not the same as in-person training and not all teachers have managed to assimilate this virtual training on technology. This is going to be another problem because the Ministry is currently providing our colleagues with computers [...], but the requirement is to have passed the course that was provided and, if the teacher doesn't pass, they are not provided with the computer. In other words, the Ministry is setting limitations [...], this is what has most affected the teachers who are already older who have been working for 30, 25, even for some, 35 years, who were not used to using technology. Teachers feel very worried. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

The difficulties due to the shortage of equipment and the poor quality of internet

connectivity had significant consequences on the work, study and quality of life of women teachers and their families. When all the necessary equipment is not available, it is necessary to organize the use of existing equipment by managing these resources according to criteria that are established within each family group. One way to multiply resources was to organize these into different schedules according to criteria. For example, priority was given to synchronous work or study activities with a fixed schedule, such as meetings and classes, and free time was dedicated to other tasks, such as reviewing papers, reports or sending documents and materials.

These arrangements did not guarantee the solution to these problems, they only diminished them, sometimes forcing work schedules that extended into the night or commenced very early in the day. Although this type of situation occurred in many families, for teachers with children and adolescents the situation was aggravated since their virtual class schedules usually coincided with those of their children given that the vast majority of these teachers worked in primary and secondary schools.

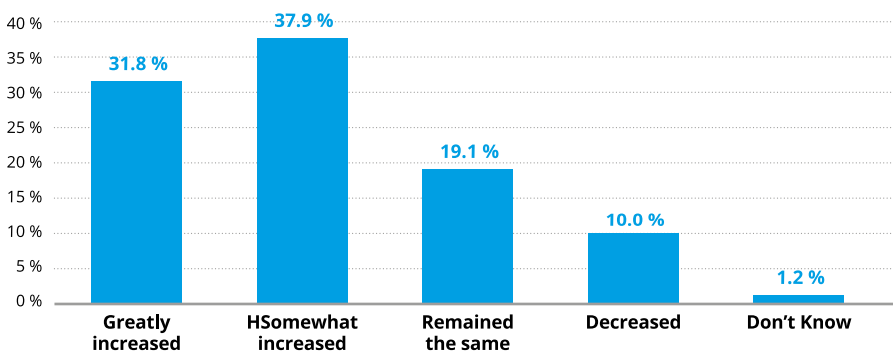
Virtual education affected the entire educational community. For students and their families, the limitations of space, equipment and internet connectivity could become even more critical than they were for teachers. Many families did not have the equipment required, or if they did have some, this was greatly insufficient to the number of people who needed use it. Likewise, they frequently lacked a fixed internet connection, so they needed to buy data to operate from a cell phone. All this represented a material and economic barrier that translated into a sometimes insurmountable digital divide.

They live from day to day, from their daily diet earned from the street market, or from making piñatas so they can manage to get their daily food. So what happens now with this work? They have to buy internet data, it comes to a point where—because we have been in contact with them in the communities—so, they say, “I prefer to feed my children than to be paying for internet data.” The system for them is a plus, but it is something that they still can't assimilate, that they

don't accept, because they barely had a phone to answer calls, or they had a not very smart phone with little capacity and now what happens? Their phone doesn't meet the requirements of their children. Maybe in a household they have just one phone and they can send photos without problems, but what about those households where there are three or four children and, as they say, perhaps even cousins live nearby and their parents don't have phones, so that phone is universal for the whole family. The data they buy [isn't enough] either, because they don't pay for plans. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

This is one of the reasons that led to students dropping out from the educational system. More than two thirds of the teachers surveyed considered that since the beginning of the pandemic the number of students dropping out of their studies had increased. Of these, 37.9% believed that the increase was not large, but 31.8% considered that it was. In contrast, 19.1% believed that there was not an increase in students dropping out, 10% considered that this had decreased and 1.2% did not know.

Figure 10. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by perception of change in number of students abandoning studies due to the pandemic



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio completed in March and April 2021.

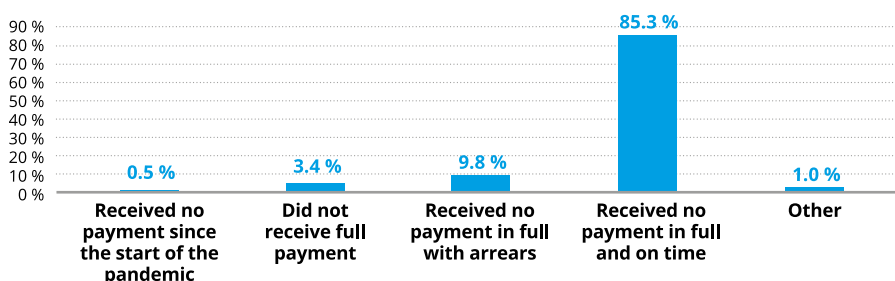
Decreases in the number of students on occasions was very noticeable. According to an interviewed union leader, "In a school where I live, of girls from ten to twelve years old, there were eight and now there are only two left."

2.4 After a year of pandemic, teachers retained job and salary stability

Job and salary stability were two important factors in the context of the pandemic, given that for many people this was a source of great insecurity due to the measures of closing workplaces. This was a problem for teachers in the first year of this unusual situation. At 91.7%, almost all the teachers surveyed had stable work contracts, while only 8.3% did not have these, although they continued working during this period.

Likewise, at 85.3%, a large majority received their salaries on time and in full, while 9.8% received them in full but with arrears, and 3.4% did not receive them in full. It is noteworthy that although at 0.5% this represented a very small percentage, there were teachers who did not receive any payment in the year that elapsed between the start of the pandemic and the completion of the survey.

Figure 11. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by payment conditions during the pandemic

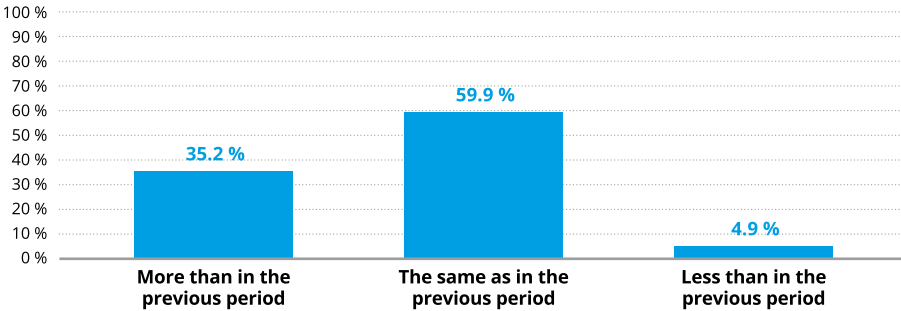


Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

At 59.9%, the majority of the teachers surveyed had their income as teachers remain the same as in the pre-pandemic period. For 35.2% it increased and for 4.9% it decreased.



Figure 12. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by changes in teaching income during the pandemic



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

These figures indicated that, in general, women teachers had job and salary stability as teachers and, in some cases, improvements in these. It was the only area in which the conditions in which teachers performed their work during the pandemic did not worsen.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, there was no guarantee that these conditions will be maintained in the future. One of the threats teachers perceive is that, if the loss of students should continue and become irreversible, this will affect teachers' employment contracts because the government considers that so many teachers are not needed. As a union leader pointed out, "We don't have schedules to work with the children, we have to attend to them at whatever time they say, because, if they drop out, we will be out of work" [emphasis added by the author].

2.5 Family finances deteriorated during the pandemic

The teachers surveyed reported significant changes in household income and expenses produced during the pandemic. Those reporting increases in income doubled those that indicated decreases, at 44.5% and 21.3%, respectively, while 33.7% stated there were no changes. A small group, 0.5%, did not have this information.

Figure 13. El Salvador. Women teachers by level of income with respect to before the pandemic

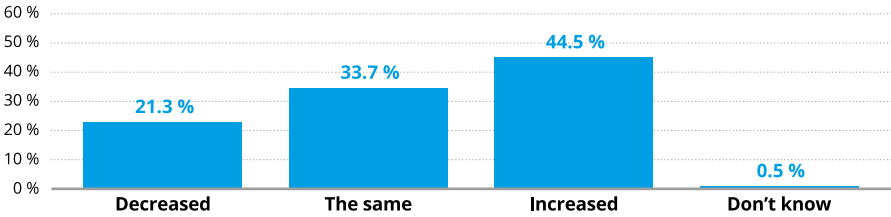
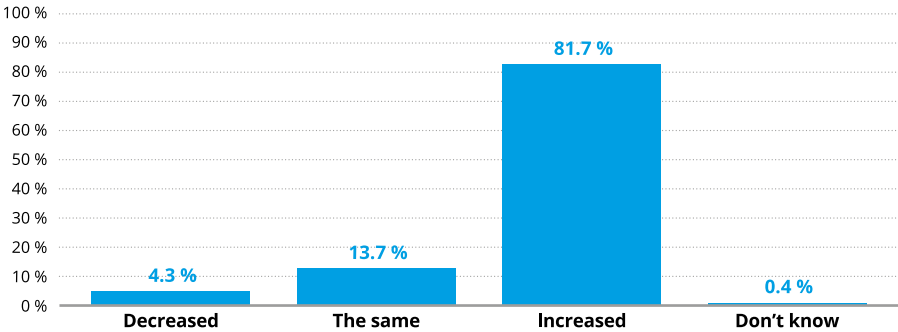


Figure 14. El Salvador. Women teachers by level of expenses during the pandemic

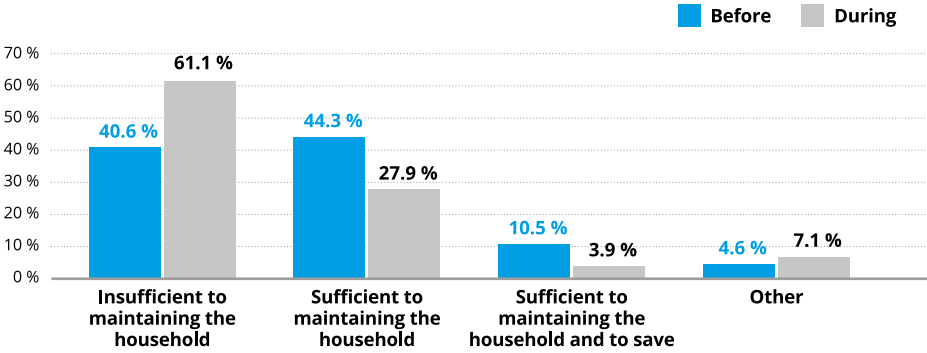


Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

When it comes to expenses, at 81.7%, the vast majority indicated that these increased and only 4.3% that they decreased, while for 13.7% they remained the same. Once again, a very small percentage, 0.4%, reported not having that information.

The number of households in which income during the pandemic increased is noticeably less than those in which expenses also increased, which reflected on the ability of these family incomes to maintain the household.

Figure 15. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by sufficiency of income to maintaining households before and during the pandemic*



* Household income.

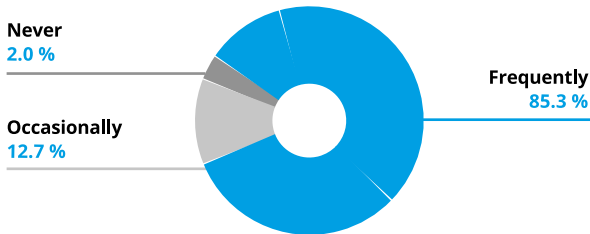
Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

Before the pandemic, at 40.6%, less than half considered that their income was insufficient, while 44.3% considered that it was sufficient, and 10.5% indicated that, in addition to meeting expenses, it allowed them to save. During the pandemic, there was a considerable increase in respondents who considered their income to be insufficient to maintaining the household and, at 61.1%, these formed the majority. At the same time, those who reported that their income was sufficient decreased sharply to 27.9% and those whose households could save also decreased to 3.9%.

The situation was worse for those who did not have job stability. One of these teachers indicated that, "It was not enough. Because I don't have tenure, I had to borrow money to survive, and then my salary goes in loan payments."

Included among the expenses that increased during the pandemic were some related to telework. A large majority at 85.3% frequently had to allocate their own resources to secure the equipment required or to pay for internet connectivity and 12.7% did so occasionally. Only 2% never had to do so.

Figure 16. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers who spent their own income on equipment or internet for work during the pandemic



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

One respondent pointed out that, “Expenses are incurred that are not the responsibility of teachers: high electricity bills, internet payment, copies, printing costs and more.” Union leaders report in detail on this situation:

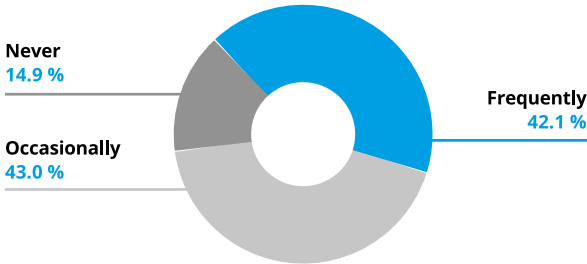
National public teachers are enabling online work because the cost has been borne by us. Each family has arranged to pay for fixed internet bills or internet on phones, paying for a phone line with internet that was not in the family budget. That has come to have an economic impact on our homes as teachers, however, we have done our best to adapt to this circumstance. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

Most of us teachers have had to invest in smartphones, even though, it is true, we have salaries, but we also have expenses in our homes. We already had a budget, and this has come to increase it, so, to buy computers, to buy a phone, to buy a tablet, whatever tools required, because the phones we had started to collapse and how do we go without that tool when we have to be able to always monitor our students? So then, the alternative would be to disconnect completely [...] So, this has come to increase expenses on technology, expenses on buying phonelines, expenses on electricity, expenses on the internet and water and everything. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

Some do not have internet access and have to buy data on a daily basis. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

Colleagues who have had to buy their own computers, colleagues who sometimes have a phone that is not a smartphone [have had to] comply using only WhatsApp. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

Figure 17. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers who have spent their own income to support students* needs during the pandemic



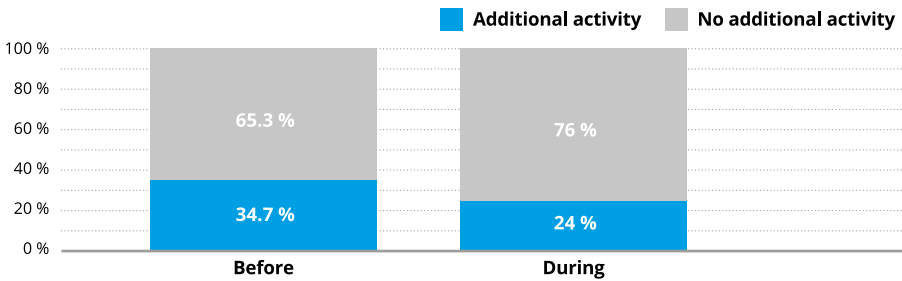
Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

Likewise, a large majority spent their income to cover the needs of their students. This was done frequently by 42.1% and occasionally by 43%, while only 14.9% never did so.

The media that the Ministry of Education has published, in which you can listen to education telecommunications, doesn't exist. So, the teachers, out of their own pockets have even had to buy printing tools, right? A printer for printing and going to drop the work off to the children to see how they can progress. In San Salvador no one, no one has been given guidebooks. As principal I have had to, well, I told you earlier, I have been close with the community in following the measures, and I had to print many guidebooks for various grades and go and deliver them, but the government has not given us anything. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

The deterioration of the financial conditions of the households of some teachers was influenced by the fact that, during the pandemic the set of respondents decreased their practice of engaging in non-educational lucrative activities, which subtracted income that was previously available.

Figure 18. Women teachers by performance of activities other than teaching to generate income before and during the pandemic




Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

Before the pandemic, at 34.7%, just over a third of teachers surveyed carried out some type of additional activity to generate income. With the measures taken during the pandemic, this group was reduced to less than a quarter of the total (24%).

2.6 The number of hours devoted to teaching and care work multiplied

Teleworking represented an overload of teaching work as well as an increase in the time dedicated to it. Due to the lack of appropriate conditions for this modality affecting both the families of the teachers and those of students, not only was the eight-hour day lengthened, but in addition, this extended day lacked scheduling.

So, all this has come to change many conditions, generating a lot of stress too and, related to that, teleworking also adds to our workload. We have stopped keeping to the schedule we had of eight hours at school, now we've had to attend to students on weekends at any time of the day. We are, as we say, 24/7, like our government works. Because the families... We have



to attend to families when they can make a call, when they need to make a query of each teacher about the work in the study guides that are being worked on. We send the guides virtually via WhatsApp and they have to do the work, but when they encounter a difficulty where they don't understand what the task consists of, they call and ask for an explanation. The teacher forwards a video or an audio with a broader explanation about the task to be performed. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

The work has tripled. Before we would leave our home for hours, but now that we stay here [...] the hours have increased because we have a time to start in the morning, but there is no finish time, because the parents, if the teacher is from the morning shift, it is assumed that at twelve midday they would already be off work, but that is a lie. It is three, four, ten at night and parents are sending tasks, because they say, "I've been out selling things, I've been working out how to pay for internet credit." So how is the teacher going to say, "Look, my schedule is already finished"? What do we do? Be understanding; whatever time they can send the tasks is fine, because they have been out in the sun all day, working out how to pay for internet connectivity, so we are 24/7. There is a start time, but not a finish time. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

The work has increased, as my colleague said [...] We are giving more to the students and parents, having more consideration for them because we understand the situation. It is hard for us, and it'll be hard for the parents and students. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

To this demand is added that generated by the Ministry of Education with the request for frequent reports.

And the reports that they are demanding of us on a weekly basis, a monthly basis, at any time it occurs to the Ministry of Education that it needs to know how the work of completing of the educational guidebooks is going, to see how

educational continuity is taking place. So we are making reports. For example, in my case, I am the principal of a school, an educational institution. My teachers, they perform a weekly report on how the day-to-day of their job is going, what it is that each teacher does to help their students to complete these guidebooks and achieve these skills in the students. This is a weekly report by each teacher and I, as principal, make a report on the contribution that I make to each of my teachers to resolve the difficulties that occur in the course of attending to parents, attending to students, so that the work of the students can be supported. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

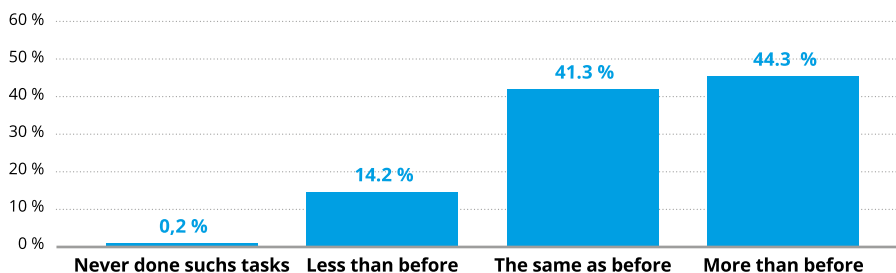
We are dealing with a system that is monitoring our educational work, the work we are doing via the internet. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

Distance education demands personalized dedication from teachers for what could previously be performed collectively in class, especially for those who cannot provide virtual classes. For all of these, but especially for the latter, the number of students was particularly relevant.

Teachers were also enduring an overload of domestic and care work, as shown by the results of the survey applied to women members of ANDES 21 de Junio. At 99.8%, practically all of these performed tasks related to cleaning the home, shopping for and preparing food, washing clothes and others that did not include the direct attention of people. For almost half of the total, 44.3%, these activities demanded more time from the teachers than before the pandemic, for 41.3% there was no change, and for 14.2% this time decreased.



Figure 19. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by time spent on domestic work* during the pandemic

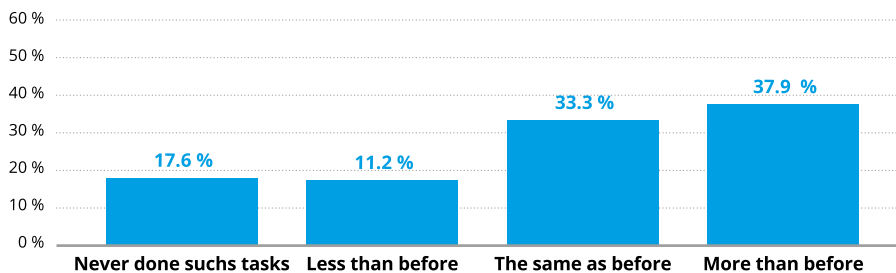


* Excluding the direct care of dependent persons

Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

With regards to caring for dependent people, that is, children, adolescents, sick people, people with disabilities or older adults with some degree of dependence, 82.4% of teachers undertook such tasks during the pandemic. For 37.9%, these activities required more time than before, with only 11.2% indicating that less time was required, while 33.3% stated there were no changes. 17.6% indicated that they have never performed these tasks.

Figure 20. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers y time spent providing care for dependent people during the pandemic

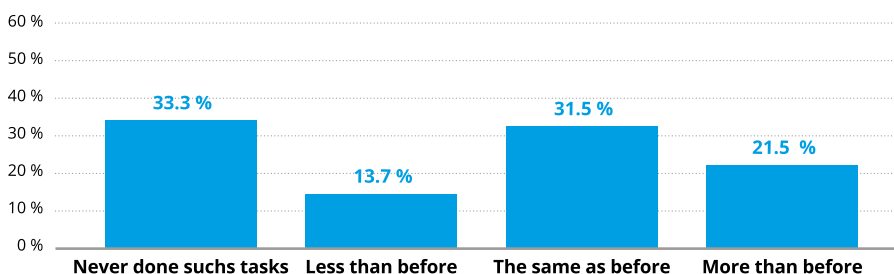


Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

Not only do people with some degree of dependence demand care, so too do non-dependent adults. During the pandemic, two-thirds of the teachers undertook work responding to such demands. For 21.5% of the interviewees, the

time spent on this increased with respect to the period prior to the pandemic, a proportion that almost doubled that corresponding to the teachers who saw this time reduced, at 13.7%. For 31.5% there were no changes in this regard. A third of the total, 33.3%, have never performed such tasks.

Figure 21. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by time spent providing care for non-dependent adults during the pandemic



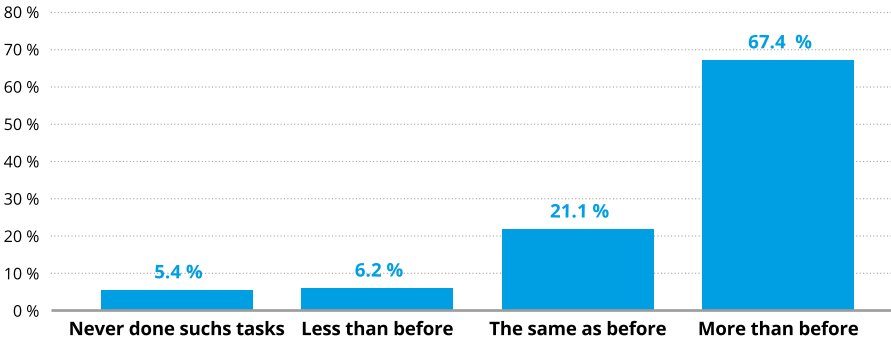
Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

The closure of educational institutions impacted on teachers not only as workers. As it did other families, it also affected them as mothers of children and adolescents who now studied from home in a modality that reduces contact with and accessibility to their teachers. The limitations on education that this implies required that greater support be given at home to the extent that the resources and possibilities to do so exist.

In the case of teachers, within their families it is they who have taken on this task the most. For more than half of the women teachers, the time they have dedicated to supporting children from their families in their studies during the pandemic has increased compared to the previous period (57.4%), while for one in five (21.1%) there was no change, and for only one in sixteen (6.2%) did this time decrease. Only one in twenty (5.4%) have never done such tasks. This is the activity in which teachers most frequently reported an increase in time demand.



Figure 22. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by time spent supporting children and adolescents in their studies during the pandemic



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

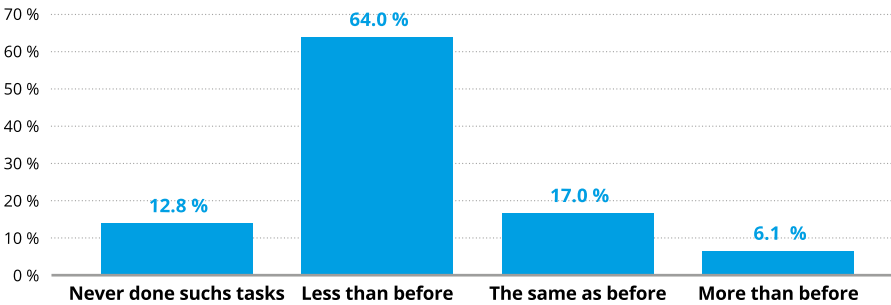
Domestic and care work overlapped in time and space with work performed as teachers.

We are at home, but we are no longer just working for school, we are doing the housework, chores, all that has also increased for us. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

We women have doubled our work or, sometimes, tripled it, because we have to do work for school, for our house, and if we have small children or grandchildren, we have to take care of them too. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

In increasing the need for time devoted to the activities already mentioned, time for themselves decreased, in particular, that intended for their recreation. About two out of three women teachers surveyed decreased the time spent on this type of activities during the pandemic and only 6.1% increased it, while 17% stated there were no changes in this. The remaining 12.8%, that is, one in eight, declared never having done recreational activities.

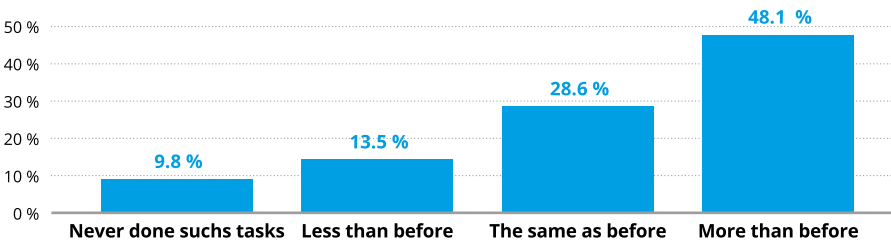
Figure 23. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by time spent on recreational activities during the pandemic



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

Some teachers lived with other adult women. There was also an increased demand for domestic work on these women. At 48.1%, in almost half of the households the time spent by other adult women on these activities within the home increased during the pandemic compared to the 13.5% for whom there was a decrease. In 28.6% of households there were no changes, and in the case of the remaining 9.8%, the other adult women in the family have never done this type of work.

Figure 24. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by time other adult women in the househoeld spend on domestic work during the pandemic

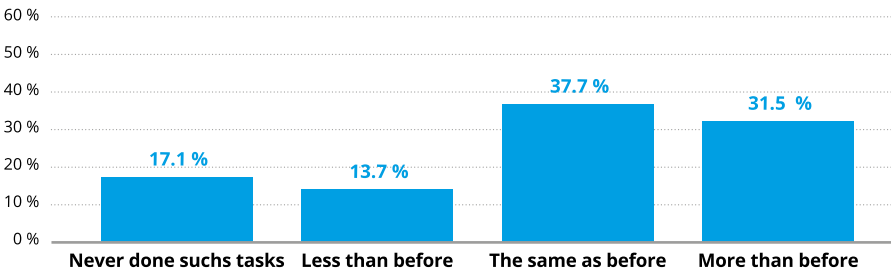


Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

For adult men, too, the pandemic represented more of an increase than a decrease in the time spent on domestic work, although of a noticeably smaller quantity of time than for the women teachers and for other adult women. In

31.5% of the households, men spent more time than before on such tasks, and in 13.7% they spent less, while in 37.7% there were no changes in this area. In the remaining 17.1% of households, adult men have never performed domestic work.

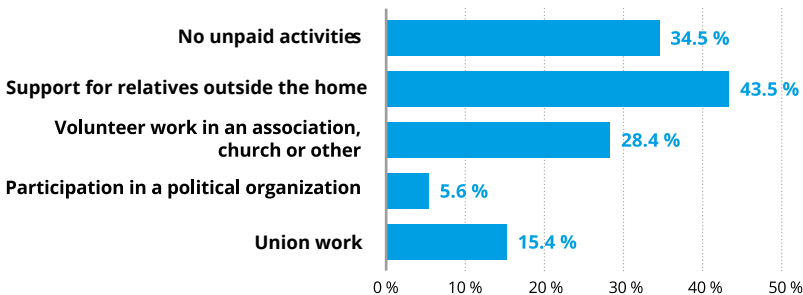
Figure 25. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by time adult men in the household spent on domestic work during the pandemic



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

It is noteworthy that, in addition to teaching and domestic and care work, a large group of women teachers, approximately two-thirds of the total (65.5%), carried out other unpaid activities. The most frequent were those related to supporting relatives with whom they do not live (43.5%) and voluntary work in associations or churches (28.4%). To a lesser extent, they engaged in trade union work (15.4%) and membership in political organizations (5.6%).

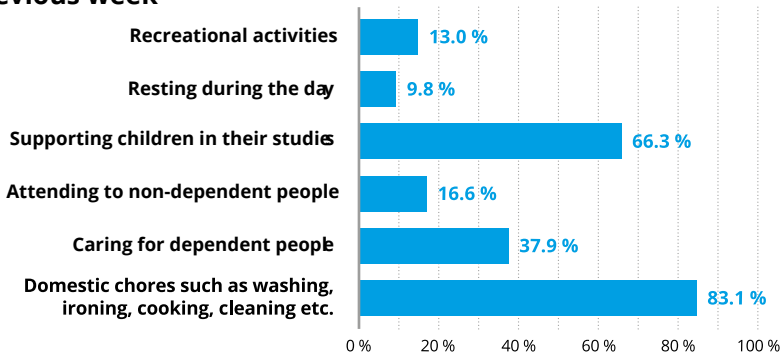
Figure 26. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by unpaid activities they perform



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

When asking the women teachers about the activities carried out the previous week, the imbalance between time dedicated to the care of other people and time spent on selfcare is confirmed. 83.1% performed domestic work that did not involve the direct care of people, 66.3% supported children in their studies, 37.9% took care of dependent people, and 16.6% attended to non-dependent adults. The least mentioned activities were those related to personal recreation at 13%, and rest during the day, which only 9.8% engaged in.

Figure 27. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by activities performed in the previous week



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

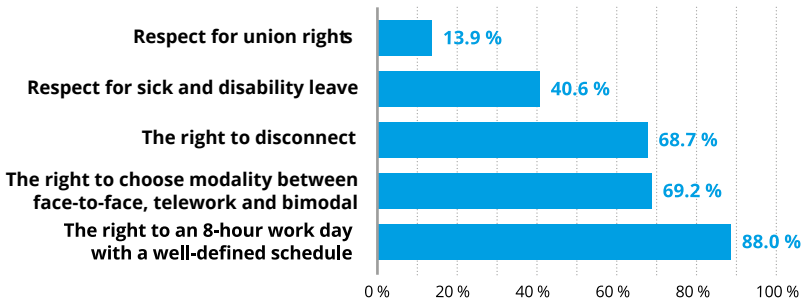
2.7 Telework: Infringement upon labor rights and various affectations for women teachers and their families

Remote work had various impacts on women teachers and their families. One of the most immediate was a change in work dynamics that was imposed by the public administration under conditions in which certain labor rights were violated. All respondents considered that these rights were affected.

The violation that respondents most frequently pointed out, at 88%, was the infringement on the right to an eight-hour day with a well-defined schedule. More than two out of three indicated that the right to choose work modality between face-to-face, teleworking and bimodal work was denied and a similar proportion indicated violation of the right to disconnect (69.2% and 68.7%, respectively).

40.6% mentioned disrespect for sick and disability leave, which is particularly worrying due to the health emergency situation that was being experienced during the pandemic when the protection of the population's health should have been a priority and a necessary state obligation. In the opinion of 13.9% of the teachers surveyed, the right to trade union freedoms was violated.

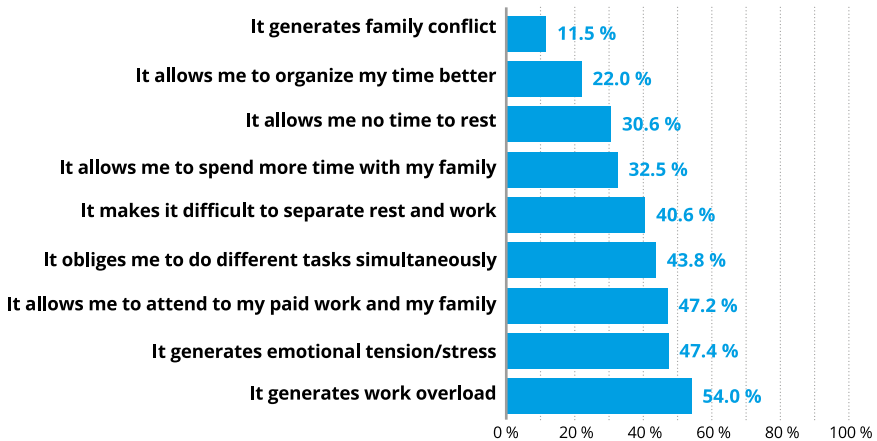
Figure 28. Women teachers by perceptions of rights most infringed upon by telework



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

Long workdays without fixed hours and without being able to disconnect throughout the day required considerable physical and emotional effort from the teachers, which was added to the previously mentioned strain with respect to the increase in demand for domestic work and care during the pandemic. It is not surprising that the effect of teleworking that the teachers most often identified was, "It causes me work overload" (54%), followed by, "It generates emotional conflict/stress" (47.4 %).

Figure 29. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by effects of telework




Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

The third most mentioned effect, at 47.2%, was, “It allows me to take care of my paid job and my family.” In addition, at frequencies still higher than 40% was, “It forces me to do different activities simultaneously” (43.8%), and “It makes it difficult for me to separate rest and work times” (40.6%). For about a third, one effect of note was, “It allows me to share more time with my family” (32.5%), while, “It leaves me no time to rest” was mentioned by 30.6%. For a little over one in five there was another favorable effect because, “It allows me to organize my time better” and finally, 11.5% included, “It causes me family conflict.”

These data show that teleworking in the conditions in which teachers had to carry this out during the pandemic had contradictory effects, with some favorable and others harmful for them and their family relationships. The latter predominate, but the former cannot be ignored since, together, they allow indication of which aspects to strengthen and which to demand improvements for in this modality of work.

The union leaders interviewed identified additional risks that could arise from this imposition of telework on teaching. Among these are the loss of jobs, especially for some particular groups:



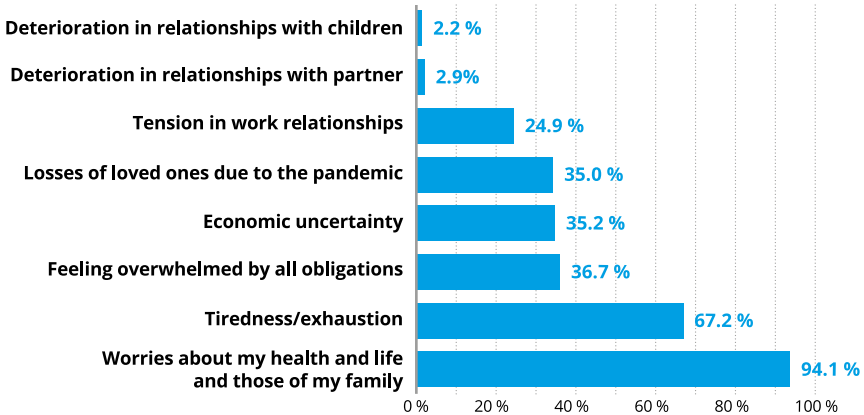
Currently teleworking can affect us if we teachers do not have the requirements that the Ministry is asking for to be able to work. This would be very unfortunate because, with the approval of teleworking, they can eliminate positions, remove many teachers who do not comply with the use of these tools. So, for us as teachers, that is a concern, and our colleagues feels very pressured and that leads them to be in a very tense situation. Some have already served their time of service and are of retirement age, quite a few have already put their documents in to the Ministry of Education and would rather retire. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

In more general terms, living in the conditions established by the Salvadoran State in this pandemic caused various impacts on the women teachers. Almost all of them reported being concerned about the health and life of themselves and their families (94.1%). This dominated over other aspects such as tiredness and exhaustion (67.2%) and feeling overwhelmed about meeting all obligations (36.7%). Additionally, these three things were more frequently mentioned than economic uncertainty, indicated by 35.2%.

It is noteworthy that more than a third of all the women teachers indicated the loss of loved ones during the pandemic (35%), a high proportion at a time when the mortality declared by the state for the entire population was 0.3%.⁹⁰ For one in four, a concern was tensions in labor relations, while the deterioration of family relationships were concerns pointed out by only 2.9% regarding their intimate relationships, and 2.2% regarding children.

⁹⁰ Own calculation that considers about 2000 deaths reported in March and April for an approximate population of 6.5 million.

Figure 30. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by main concerns during the pandemic



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

The proportion of women teachers who have contracted COVID-19 is 13% of those surveyed, significantly higher than the incidence of about 1% reported by the state of El Salvador at the time the survey was applied.⁹¹ This may indicate that those of the teaching profession have been more exposed to contracting the disease.

The Ministry of Education prepared study guidebooks to be taken to the homes of children who did not have computers or phones, but the significant consequence of this was exposing our colleagues in times of pandemic to go find their students and take the guidebooks to them so that they were up to date with their classes. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

The teachers had to risk their lives because the children had neither smartphones nor the simplest phones, where there is no television and where there are no radios either. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

⁹¹ Own calculation taking into account about 65,000 infections reported in March and April for an approximate population of 6.5 million.

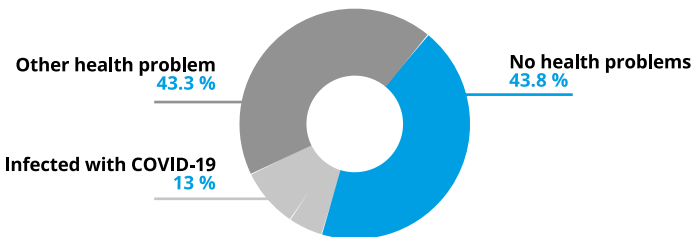


The higher incidence of COVID-19 among women teachers compared to the official rate reported by the Salvadoran government could also be due to the strong under-registration of infections. The trade union leaders interviewed mention this aspect:

A government has not wanted to give the COVID data necessary for [the Ministry of] Health to work on what is needed, but [the Ministry of] Health is working with data that is not correct. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

In addition to those affected by COVID-19, another 43.3% were affected by some other health problem. That is, more than half of the teachers had their health affected in the first year of the pandemic.

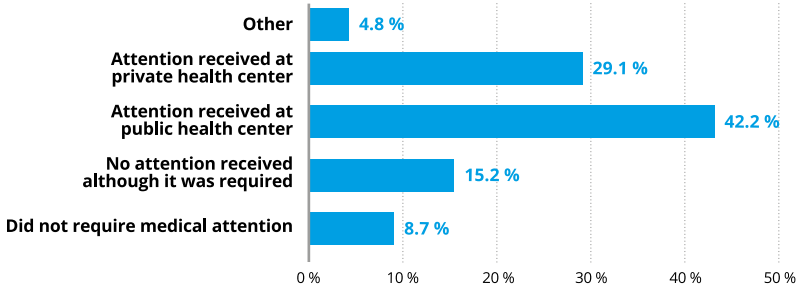
Figure 31. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by impact on health during the pandemic



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

Of those affected, 8.7% did not require medical attention and 15.2% did not receive it although they required it. 42.2% were attended by state health centers and 29.1% by private ones, while 4.8% were attended by other means.

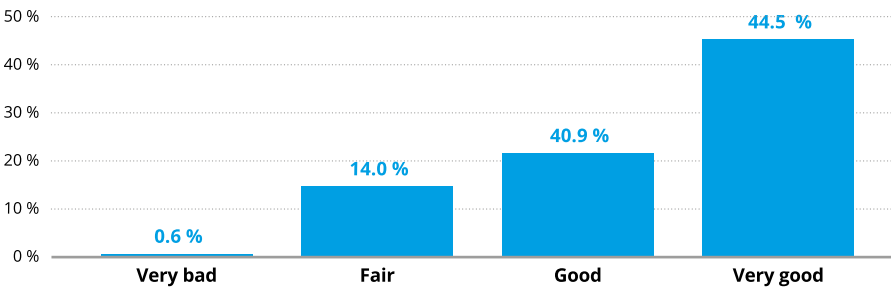
Figure 32. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers with health problems during the pandemic by medical attention received



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

The assessment made of the health care received was, in general, positive. 44.5% considered that it was very good and 40.9% good. 14% considered it to be fair and only 0.6% considered that it was very bad.

Figure 33. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers attended to for health problems during the pandemic by quality of care received



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

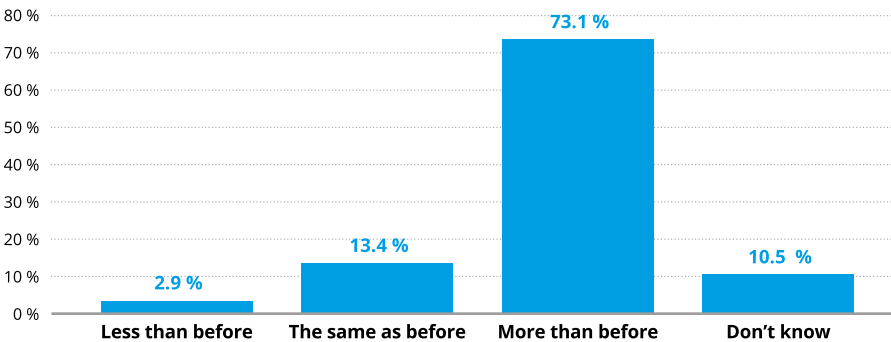
The impacts on the health of students' families also affected their teachers.

And it also comes to affect us as teachers because, in our schools, relatives of our children have died. If we see it on the one hand, that it affects children psychologically and physically, well. Parents, grandparents, close family members of children have died, and that has made our work as teachers more complicated. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

2.8 During the pandemic, women teachers perceived more risk of experiencing violence and forms of this derived from teleworking

Various analyses carried out on the continent suggest that one of the consequences of the measures adopted by governments due to the pandemic was the increase in violence against women, at least in some of its manifestations. This was a widespread perception among the women teachers surveyed, being shared by 73.1% of these. For 13.4%, however, there were no changes, and 2.9% considered the opposite, that such violence decreased, while 10.5% indicated they did not know.

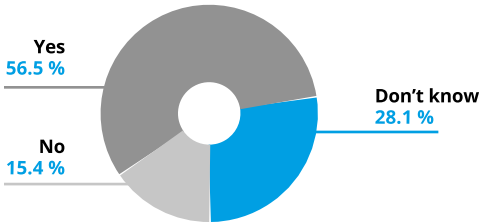
Figure 34. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by perception of changes in violence against women during the pandemic



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

At 56.5%, the majority of the respondents believed that such violence particularly affected women teachers, while a significant group made up of 28.1% stated that they did not know. Only 15.4% believed that it did not particularly affect their profession.

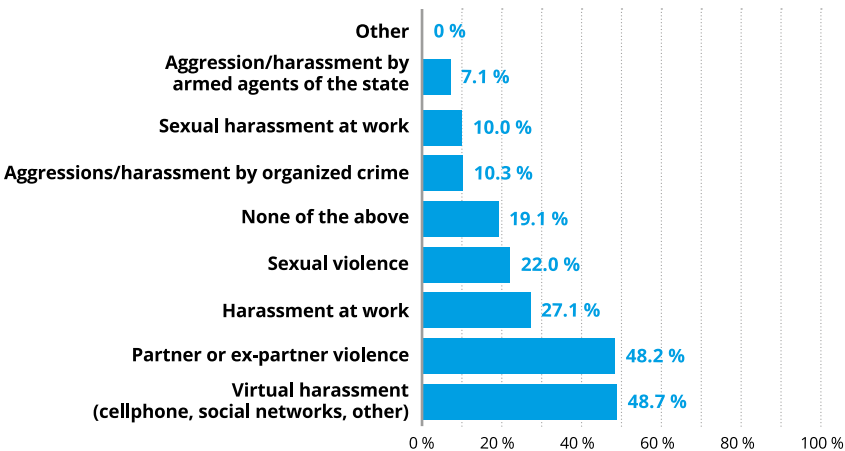
Figure 35. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers who believe that violence against women has particularly affected women teachers during the pandemic



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

Approximately half of the respondents considered that the expressions of violence against women that increased during the pandemic were virtual harassment and that exercised by partners and ex-partners (48.7% and 48.2%, respectively). Less frequently they mentioned workplace harassment (27.1%), sexual violence (22%), assaults and harassment by organized crime (10.3%), sexual harassment at work (10%) and assaults and harassment by authorities or armed agents of the state (7.1%).

Figure 36. El Salvador. 2021. What types of violence against women teachers do you believe have increased during the pandemic?

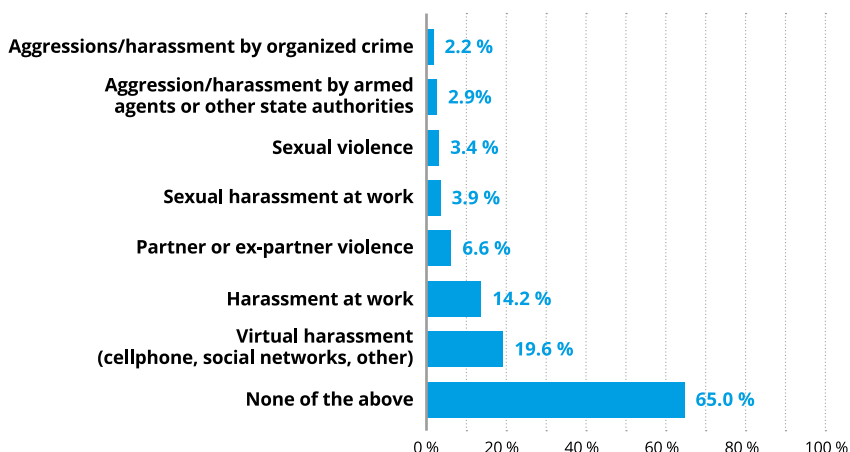


Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.



These perceptions did not coincide with the personal experiences of the women. 35% reported having experienced some form of violence during the pandemic, the most mentioned of which were virtual harassment (19.6%) and workplace harassment (14.2%), and, thirdly, intimate partner or ex-partner violence (6.6%). Sexual violence was experienced by 3.9% in the context of work and 3.4% in other contexts.

Figure 37. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by type of violence experienced during the pandemic



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

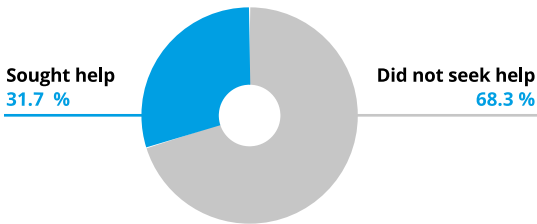
Contrary to what they believed, the women teachers reported experiences indicated that, at least within the profession and group surveyed, the form of violence that increased the most during the pandemic was not necessarily that of a partner violence due to the facilitation of confinement. For these women, teleworking did not prevent violence exercised in the workplace, although favoring virtual violence.

Finally, it is noteworthy that, during the pandemic, more women teachers reported having been the target of violence from the authorities (2.9%) than from organized crime (2.2%). The abusive actions of the authorities were highlighted by the trade union leaders interviewed:

A mandatory quarantine in which many aspects stand out as having been deeply infringed upon for the population, because there was violence, abuse of authority in our country. If you went out on the street, they didn't care that you were a woman, a girl, or a teenager, if they found you outside, they took you to a Confinement Center from which you weren't released until they wanted to let you go. They didn't test you to see if you were positive or negative for COVID. That was an abuse of violation [sic] in this country, especially by the authorities. They did not place you in confinement in a dignified fashion. (Group interview with women leaders of ANDES 21 de Junio)

Faced with the experience of violence, a little less than one in three (31.7%) sought help.

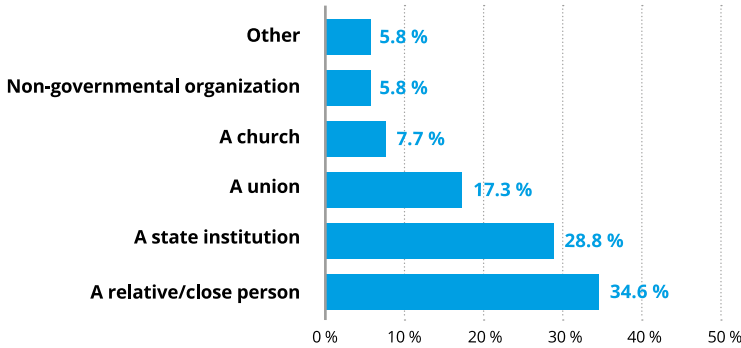
Figure 38. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers who experienced violence during the pandemic



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

People who were close and relatives were most frequently turned to for help by the teachers surveyed, as were, to a lesser extent, state institutions (34.6% and 28.8% respectively). It is noteworthy that the trade union was the third most sought after assistance (17.3%), surpassing churches (7.7%) and non-governmental organizations (5.8%).

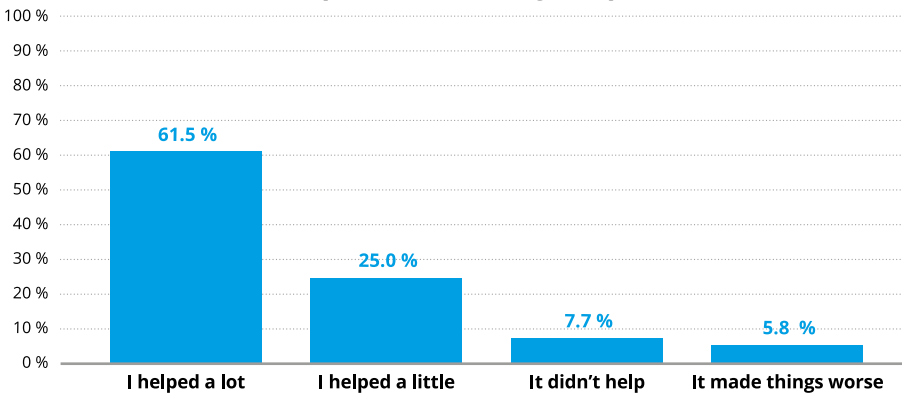
Figure 39. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by where help was sought for violence experienced during the pandemic



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

For the majority, at 61.5%, the responses received helped them a lot, one in four indicated that it helped them a little, while some indicated that it did not help them or that it made things worse (7.7% and 5.8% respectively).

Figure 40. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by assessment of help received for violence experienced during the pandemic

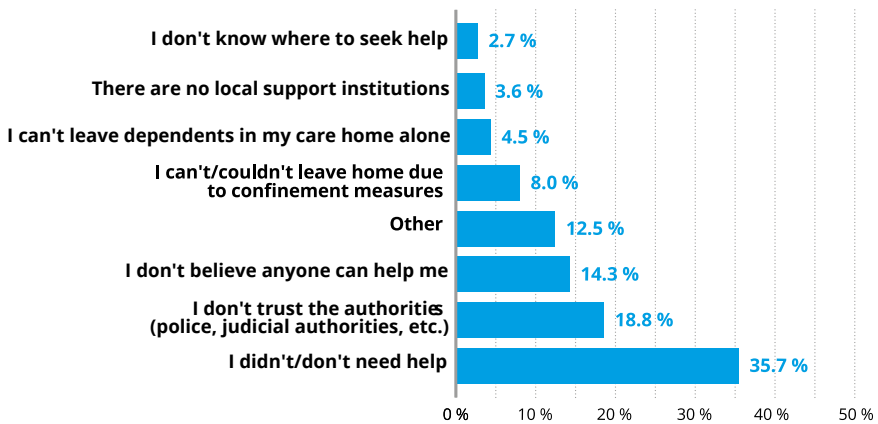


Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

Among those who did not seek help, the most mentioned reason was that they did not need it (35.7%). Distrust of the state authorities discouraged

18.8%, and believing that no one could help stopped another 14.7% from seeking aid. Less frequently, the respondents mentioned accessibility problems regarding places from which to seek support, either for reasons related to the conditions of the pandemic such as confinement measures (8%), the women's care responsibilities (4.5%), lack of local support options (3.6%) or not being familiar with these (2.7%).

Figure 41. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by reasons for not seeking help for violence experienced during the pandemic



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

A large majority of respondents, at 78.2%, believed that ANDES 21 de Junio, the union to which they belong, can take measures to prevent violence against women teachers, although slightly more than one in five thinks this is not the case.

Figure 42. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by opinion on capacity of union to take action with respect to violence against women teachers

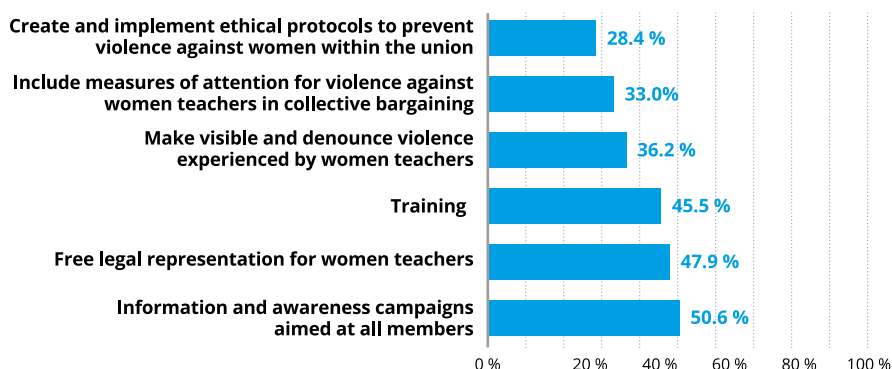


Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.



Among the actions that the union could implement, at 50.6%, the most mentioned was providing information and awareness-raising campaigns aimed at all members. About half, 47.9%, proposed providing free legal representation to teachers who find themselves in such situations.

Figure 43. El Salvador. 2021. Women teachers by type of union actions recommended against violence



Results of a survey of women teachers affiliated with ANDES 21 de Junio in March and April 2021.

Training was another frequently proposed action, at 45.5%. Measures to make visible and denounce the violence experienced by teachers were proposed by 36.2%, while 33% proposed the inclusion of measures to address violence against women teachers in collective bargaining. Finally, creating and implementing ethical protocols to prevent violence against women in the union was supported by 28.4%.

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HONDURAS

In the eye of the storm:

The experience of Honduran women teachers in the pandemic amid disasters, violence and state corruption

Mirta Kennedy

1. The context of the country before the COVID-19 pandemic

1.1 Honduras before the COVID-19 pandemic: Structural crisis

The Republic of Honduras, with an area of 112,492 km² (43,433 sq. mi.), is located in the middle of Central America. With access to both oceans, it has coasts on the Caribbean Sea in the Atlantic Ocean to the north, and on the Gulf of Fonseca in the Pacific Ocean to the south. It has land borders with Nicaragua to the east, Guatemala to the west and El Salvador to the southwest. The country's territory is also made up of an insular department in the Caribbean Sea, Islas de la Bahía and other islands and islets in both oceans. In 2020, the total population was estimated at 9,151,940 inhabitants with a higher proportion of residents in the urban area at 55.3%, and 44.7% residing in rural areas. It is a country of medium population density, with 88 inhabitants per km² (INE, online consultation).

51.4% of the population are females and 48.6% are males. At 53.6%, the female population predominates in the urban area, while more men than women reside in rural areas (51.3%) due to the accentuated rural-urban female emigration. Approximately 10% of the Honduran population belongs to Indigenous and ancestral Indigenous and Garifuna peoples who inhabited the territory before the constitution of the state.⁹² Honduras is a multicultural and multilingual country, with Spanish as the official language.

⁹² Located mainly in rural areas in the northeast are the Pech, Tawahka, and Tolupán. To the east and northeast are the Miskitos. In the northeast are the Nahuas. In the east are the Garífunas. Along the coastal strip of the Caribbean and on the Bay Islands are the Lencas, in the central west are the Chortí, while in the west are the Nahuas.

The country is in a process of demographic transition in which the working-age population aged 15 to 64 has come to represent 63.2% of the total. Those under the age of 15 make up almost a third of the population (31.5%), and people over 64 make up 5.3%. The percentage ratio between those under 15 years of age and those over 64, with respect to the working-age group, is 53.3% (INE, online consultation). For the period from 2015 to 2040, the dependency ratio will be close to and below 60 potentially inactive people per 100 potentially active (Flores, 2016).

The percentage of young people aged 12 to 30 who do not study or work represents 26.1% of that age group (INE, online consultation). The large number of young working-age people that have not been incorporated into the economic model feeds the strong and growing flows of emigrants. This phenomenon became more visible from October 2018, when the first migrant caravan left Honduras to be joined by migrants from other countries in the region. Since then, several caravans were organized and left the country for the United States, crossing Guatemala and Mexico in a strategy for protection while in transit and of collective demand for the right to emigrate. These groups are made up of young and adult people, whole families, and unaccompanied children who are traveling to meet their relatives. These caravans, undertaken in extremely precarious conditions, suffering from all kinds of deficiencies on a route plagued by criminal violence and repression and violence from state agents of the countries along the way when in transit as well as in the destination countries, are an escape valve for the internal conflict in Honduras. On average, three hundred people emigrate from the country every day, while a very close number are deported back again (FOSDEH, 2020).

The increase in emigration is linked to three main expulsion factors. Two of these are the lack of employment and job opportunities required to sustain life, as well as the high incidence of violence that impacts especially on the lower income sectors, on young people and on women in the form of criminal, political, and territorial violence, as well as all forms of violence against



women. The third factor is the effects of climate change, strongly marked by catastrophic events such as tropical storms Eta and Iota, which hit the region in November 2020, as well as by the change in rainfall patterns (the El Niño and La Niña phenomena). 27.2% of the country's territory is comprised by the so-called Corredor Seco (Dry Corridor), characterized by erratic rainfall patterns and prolonged periods of drought. This corridor covers part of the territory, including fourteen of the eighteen departments and 132 of the 298 municipalities. In this area, food shortages have been accentuated by the reduction of basic grain harvests, an increase in agricultural losses due to climatic events and the spread of pests which threatens the subsistence of at least 1.2 million people (Fraga, 2020).

In the last decade, the political context of the country has been characterized by loss of democratic functioning. Since the 2009 coup d'état, life in Honduras has been marked by the succession of governments arising from electoral processes denounced for fraud, the rise of militarism, the linking of the political elite in power with drug trafficking and corruption, the violent repression of continued social protest and the strengthening in power of an authoritarian government with a view to indefinite continuity.

In recent years, the government has also faced accusations of corruption and links to criminal organizations. In 2019, the president's brother, Tony Hernandez, was charged with drug trafficking in the United States. Although no government officials were directly involved in this event, state institutions have yet to acquire the necessary autonomy or capacity to successfully attack criminal networks (InSight Crime, online consultation).⁹³ The current government has had to deal with other corruption scandals, and the country is among one of the most corrupt nations according to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. According to recent data from the Americas Barometer, citizens are less satisfied with democracy and a significant portion of the population considers the government to be corrupt. (Ham, 2020)

⁹³ <https://es.insightcrime.org/noticias-crimen-organizado-honduras/honduras/>

In 2019, 4099 homicides were reported, 365 more than the previous year. Of these, 90.1% of the victims were males and 9.8% were females, with a rate of 44.7 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants. 6.6% of the victims were children (UNAH, 2020). This high incidence is due to the combined action of the high penetration of drug-related activity in the country in the last decade, considered one of the most important centers of drug trafficking in the region, in conjunction with the activity of the Maras criminal gangs (InSight Crime on-line consultation) and political violence, as well as territorial violence linked to the operations of the mining companies in retaliation for the resistance of the population.

Honduras is considered one of the most violent countries in the world for women. Between 2005 and 2019, 6131 homicides of women were registered, which include femicides. The trend continued to grow until 2013, when it reached the highest rate for the period at 14.6 femicides per 100,000 women. In subsequent years, this rate has fluctuated between 11.9 and 8.3 per 100,000 women. In 2019, femicides accounted for 73.3% of the total of 401 intentional violent deaths of women (UNAH, 2020). 95% of these crimes remain in total impunity.

1.2 The state of affairs before the pandemic: Poverty and inequality

Honduras, with a Human Development Index (HDI)⁹⁴ of 0.634 in 2019, is considered to have average human development, ranking 132nd out of 189 countries and territories. The HDI value is below the average for the Latin American and Caribbean region in the same year (0.766). The Inequality-Adjusted Hu-

⁹⁴ "The HDI is a synthetic measure used to assess long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to education and a decent standard of living. The indicator used to measure a long and healthy life is life expectancy. Level of education is measured by the average number of years of schooling received over a lifetime by persons aged 25 and over and by the expected years of schooling of children of school-starting age, which is the total number of years of schooling that a child of that age can expect to receive if the current patterns of age-based enrollment rates are maintained over the child's lifetime. The standard of living is measured by gross national income (GNI) per capita, expressed in 2017 international dollars converted to reflect purchasing power parity (PPP) conversion rates" (UN, 2020).



man Development Index (HDI-D)⁹⁵ falls to 0.472, with the income inequality indicator having the greatest weight in this lower positioning (UN, 2020).

In 2019 the country recorded a life expectancy at birth of 75.3 years of age and an average 6.6 years of schooling. Gross National Income (GNI)⁹⁶ per capita was US\$5,308 for the same year, with marked inequality of distribution, having a Gini index of 0.49. The poorest 40% of the population holds 11.8% of the total national income, while the richest 20% has 57.8% of this (CEPALSTAT, online consultation).⁹⁷

Honduras is one of the countries with the highest poverty rate in the region, which affects more than half of the population. According to official data, the poverty rate in 2019 reached 64.7% of the population, after two decades of the implementation in 2000 of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (INE, online consultation). At the same time, household poverty increased, going from 60% in 2010 to 62% in 2018 (INE, online consultation).

In the last decade, the Honduran economy has been characterized by low growth as compared to the previous decade and high levels of unemployment, given the blows of the 2008-2009 international recession and the 2009 coup d'état. After the coup d'état, an extractivist model and financial speculation

⁹⁵ The 2010 Human Development Report introduced the HDI-D, which takes into account inequality in the three indicators of the HDI by 'discounting' the average value of each indicator according to its level of inequality. The HDI-D, therefore, is basically the HDI once inequalities are discounted. The 'loss' of human development due to inequality is attained through the difference between the HDI and the HDI-D, and can be expressed as a percentage. As inequality increases in a country, so does the loss in human development. Similarly, the coefficient of human inequality is presented as a direct measure of inequality. This is an unweighted average of inequalities in the three indicators.

⁹⁶ GNI per capita is the gross national income divided by the population at mid-year. GNI (formerly GNP) is the sum of the value added by all resident producers plus all taxes on products (minus subsidies) not included in the valuation of the product plus net primary income inflows (remuneration of employees and income from property) from abroad.

⁹⁷ <https://statistics.cepal.org/portal/cepalstat/index.html?lang=es>

were strengthened with little job creation. Economic growth of 6% between 2004-2007 (Pino, 2019) decreased to 3.7% in 2018 and 2.7% in 2019 (World Bank, online consultation). Remittances represented about 20% of the GDP (Central Bank, 2019).

The open unemployment rate for 2018 was 5.1%, with a greater impact on women (7.4% compared to 4.5% for men). However, the most relevant problem is underemployment, both visible⁹⁸ and invisible.⁹⁹ In 2018, the total underemployment rate was estimated at 62.8% with a higher percentage of invisible unemployment (48.6%), which means a deterioration of working conditions, low wages, flexibility and lack of legal protection. In 2018, “invisible underemployment reached 28.3% of public employees, 41.4% of the self-employed, 60.6% of private employees and 80.3% of domestic workers” (Rodríguez et al., 2018).

Honduras has progressed towards the deepening of the neoliberal model, with nine structural adjustment agreements with the IMF made in the last three decades implying the reduction of public spending, cuts and layoffs of public jobs, a freeze on recruitment, reduction of resources for public works, privatization of state-owned enterprises, the freezing of wages in the public sector, the elimination of subsidies to public services, the increase of excise tax, cancellation of subsidies, increased costs for transportation, food, medication, education and other basic goods, while on the other hand maintaining exemptions for large companies (FOSDEH, 2020).

The government’s economic development strategy gives priority to Employment and Economic Development Zones (ZEDES for the initials in Spanish). These are areas outside the sovereignty of the State, with their own laws, tax system, police, immigration and policies relating to customs, health, education, the environment, monetary matters and others (Decree No. 120-2013).

⁹⁸ *Visible unemployment: People working less than thirty-six hours per week.*

⁹⁹ *Invisible unemployment: People with income below the minimum wage in the branch of economic activity working thirty-six hours a week or more.*



2. The measures taken in the face of the pandemic and their impact

2.1 Impacts on health and education

The government of Honduras took early action to prevent COVID-19, although this had no effect on containing the rapid expansion of the pandemic. A national health emergency due to dengue and coronavirus was declared on February 10, 2020, a month before the first cases were detected in the country (PCM-005-2020 No. 35171). In the same month, the Plan for the Containment and Response to Cases of Coronavirus (COVID-19) was presented, with measures for epidemiological monitoring, prevention and information, the provision of health services, and citizen co-responsibility in prevention, with recommendations as to hand washing, the use of alcohol, face masks and social distancing (SESAL, 2020).

On March 10, 2020, the Secretariat of Health (SESAL by the initials in Spanish) confirmed the first two cases of coronavirus. As of May 31 of that same year, there were 5094 cumulative cases of COVID-19 nationwide and, a year later on the same date, this figure was 238,227 with 6353 people having died from this cause (SINAGER, 2021). The Association of Funeral Homes reported that the number of deaths may have amounted to twice as many as those officially registered (EFE Agency, 2021). As of May 2021, deaths per million inhabitants were estimated at 1040.73 according to data published by Datosmacro.com.

As in the rest of the region, the pandemic had a greater incidence in urban areas and in the most urbanized departments, mainly Francisco Morazán and Cortés, where the most populous cities, Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, are located. More cases were registered in men than women, with the virus affecting people of all ages, placing Honduras among the countries with a high proportion of deceased people between 40 and 60 years of age, at 27.4% (Fantin et al., 2021).

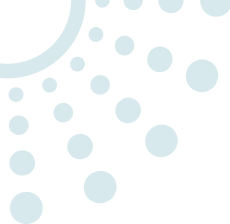
As of March 2020, successive communiqués were continuously issued and decrees announcing measures were approved. Among these, on March 12, a

day after the WHO declared a global pandemic and with six cases of COVID-19 confirmed in the country, the government issued a press release announcing the two-week suspension of activities for preschool, primary and secondary education, the cancellation of public events, the partial closure of borders to people¹⁰⁰, and police operations to prevent hoarding and price increases for hygiene products. In the same statement, the Comisión Permanente de Contingencias (Permanent Contingency Commission, COPECO) was instructed to maintain in operation the Sistema Nacional de Gestión de Riesgos (National Risk Management System, SINAGER) in coordination with the Ministry of Health to combat the pandemic. Since then, SINAGER as coordinated by COPECO has become the protagonist in managing the health emergency at the national level, displacing SESAL.

The National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH) ceased activities and closed the facilities (Regulatory Provisions, March 12, 2020). On March 13 Executive Decree 018-2020 was published, ordering the suspension of preschool, primary and secondary classes, both private and public, throughout the national territory for fourteen days, starting on the same day of publication, which was to be repeatedly extended.

The closure of the educational institutions lasted until October 2020 when these partially reopened. The following year, educational institutions did not open, remote classes continued, and educational institutions closed until July, then partially closed until October (ECLAC-UNESCO, 2021). Without a structured platform belonging to the Ministry of Education for teaching virtual classes, with low connectivity of the student body and without having electronic devices for teachers and students, all the responsibility for sustaining non-face-to-face education fell on the teaching profession.

¹⁰⁰ *Prohibition of the entry of people from Europe, China, Iran, and South Korea by air, land and sea, the home isolation of travelers, citizens, residents, and diplomats entering the country, in addition to compliance with protocols for epidemiological monitoring by the Ministry of Health for people of other nationalities.*



On March 14, 2020, the country was declared on red alert. On March 16, the government published Executive Decree PCM-021-2020 suspending constitutional guarantees¹⁰¹ such as the right to free movement, personal freedom, freedom of association, judicial guarantees, among others. Order was made to cease public and private sector activities, events of all kinds, stopping public transport, closing businesses, micro-enterprises and ceasing self-employed activities, closing shopping centers and establishing the closure of all borders, with a long list of exceptions in addition to activities considered essential.

Article 5 of that decree authorized the Armed Forces, the National Police, the National Directorate of Investigation and Intelligence, the National Inter-Institutional Force and the National Anti-Mafia and Anti-Gang Force to support the Ministry of Health in implementing the emergency and health plans necessary to maintaining public order and health. These were given the power to detain people who were circulating outside the permitted exceptions. Article 6, in fact, states that the authorities must stop any person circulating outside the established exceptions (PCM 21-2020).

The country's health facilities, already in precarious conditions before the pandemic, collapsed quickly with the overflow of cases of COVID-19 and the lack of human and material resources, hospital beds (7 beds per 10,000 inhabitants in 2014, CEPALSTAT, online consultation), respirators and other equipment and supplies, biomedical materials, medicine, ambulances, medical and nursing staff,¹⁰² among others. Hospital emergencies were attended to by medical students at the same time that about 10,000 doctors were unemployed. Health personnel had to buy their own personal protective equipment due to the

¹⁰¹ PCM-021-2020 established the suspension of constitutional guarantees for seven days. As of May 2021, those rights had not been restored, except for the right to free expression.

¹⁰² In 2010, there were 3 doctors per 10,000 inhabitants and in 2013 there were 3 nurses per 10,000 inhabitants (CEPALSTAT, online consultation).

shortage of these in hospitals. A year into the pandemic, 76 doctors had died of COVID-19 according to information from the Medical Practitioners Association (CNN, 2020 and France 24, 2021).

The emergency revealed the low response capacity of the National Health System and especially of the Integrated Health Networks. These were characterized by an insufficient number of human resources (doctors, nurses and health promoters) and a deficient and inadequate distribution of these in primary care, a low percentage of drugs and supplies in health facilities, along with the limited availability of diagnostic and treatment tools and equipment. (UN-Government of Honduras, 2020)

As in most countries in the region, the distribution of vaccines through the COVAX mechanism was slow. In July 2021, less than 2% of the population had received the recommended two doses of this. Vaccination accelerated in the second semester until reaching 30% of the population being double vaccinated in October of that year.

The health emergency created opportunities for corruption to escalate. The outsourcing of acquisitions to INVEST-Honduras (a project execution entity attached to the government's General Coordination Office, with direct purchasing capacity) led to events that were widely documented and denounced by the National Anti-Corruption Council, with very few favorable consequences in terms of justice or punishment of those involved.

Of note were actions highly rejected by the citizenry such as the purchase of seven field hospitals through an intermediary agency, which were no more than lightweight structures without adequate equipment for the care of COVID patients; the purchase of a lot of respirators that did not comply with the required specifications to be used to save the lives of severely ill patients hospitalized in ICU; and the purchase of personal protective equipment and COVID-19 testing equipment as well as medicines at greatly overrated prices, and



which were not distributed in a timely manner in health facilities. Thus, there was a high level of debt assumed by the government in facing the pandemic without obvious effects on the improvement of health care (National Anti-Corruption Council, 2020 and National Anti-Corruption Council, 2021).

The management of the pandemic and the measures taken by the government were highly questioned, both due to their ineffectiveness in curbing the rapid spread of COVID-19 and the high mortality in the country, as well as due to the unscientific approach taken up that gave prominence to the involvement of security forces rather than to the authoritative opinions of the health professions, the scientific community and academia.

2.2 Impact on work and income

The impact of the measures adopted by the government on the economy and the labor market was enormous. It was estimated that in 2020, the GDP decreased by 8%, a higher drop than that experienced in Central America (6.6%) and in Latin America as a whole (7.7%) (ECLAC, 2021). By 2021, national production was expected to increase by 4.9%, not yet reaching pre-pandemic levels (ILO, 2020a). A significant drop in remittances was expected for 2021, when these provide a significant contribution to the Honduran GDP (22%) and family income (30%) (ILO, 2020b).

Without official data on the labor market, all predictions point to significant negative effects. The ILO estimates that 40.2% of all jobs were at high risk at the beginning of the pandemic. It is expected that unemployment will exceed that of 2019 and that services will be particularly affected, especially in commerce, restaurants and hotels. These three sectors employed one million people in 2019, representing one in four workers (ILO, 2020b). It is to be expected that there will be a disproportionate effect on women, since women have a strong presence in these sectors. On the other hand, at the beginning of the pandemic it was estimated that a very low proportion of jobs could be adapted

to telework, at between 7% and 16% (ILO, 2020a).

The measures taken by the Government to partially alleviate the social effects of unemployment were deeply insufficient. Honduras is one of the countries that allocates the least resources to public social spending (less than 8% of the GDP in 2019) (ECLAC, 2021) and it did not make greater efforts in this area during the pandemic. The average monthly amount of assistance transfers was equivalent to 15% of the monetary value of the poverty line and 33% of the extreme poverty line. These contributions did not manage to reduce the incidence of poverty in 2020 (58.6%), nor of extreme poverty (26.1%) as occurred in other countries (ECLAC, 2021).

3. The situation of women teachers in times of COVID-19

In Honduras, as in the rest of the region, the pandemic affected the educational community very significantly. For women teachers, it was particularly difficult. They had to adapt from one day to the next to non-face-to-face classes under quarantine and confinement measures that they were often forced to break in order to practice teaching, while concurrently assuming care tasks at home. They did not have the support of an educational system prepared for these circumstances. They had to face the challenge that the majority of the students did not have access to the tools required to receive online classes such as computers, tablets, stable internet connectivity or even cell phones, especially in rural areas. They were coerced by the educational system authorities, who exerted strong pressure on them to be able to navigate the pandemic with good results to show the international community.

This chapter provides a look at the women teachers' situation during the pandemic, with a particular focus on changes in working conditions, the impact on rights, households, health conditions and violence, among other aspects. Analysis is made of the results of a survey carried out on 383 working women teachers who were affiliated to the Colegio Profesional Superación Magisterial

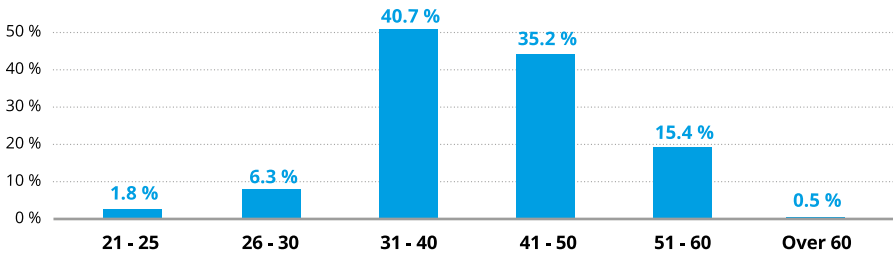


de Honduras (National Professional Teachers Association of Honduras, COLPROSUMAH),¹⁰³ along with the information provided in a group interview of women leaders of this same organization. In what follows, when women teachers are mentioned, this refers to those surveyed.

3.1 Some characteristics of the women teachers surveyed

The women teachers surveyed were, for the most part, adult women between the ages of 31 and 50 (75.9%), followed by the over-50 group (15.9%), while young women aged between 21 and 30 represented 8.1% (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by age

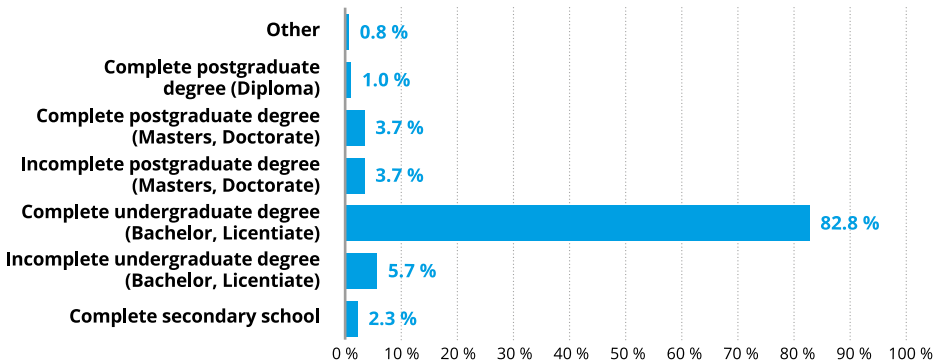


Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May, 2021.

The women teachers surveyed have high levels of education. 82.8% had completed bachelor's or licentiate university degrees, and 8.4% have complete or incomplete university diploma or postgraduate studies. 5.7% have incomplete university studies and 2.3% have complete secondary education as their highest level attained. Some of them (0.8%) have completed other types of studies (Figure 2).

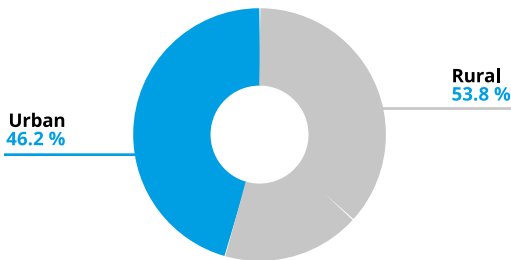
¹⁰³ The survey was conducted between March 12 and May 7, 2021 and the interview was performed in April of the same year.

Figure 2. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by level of education



Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May, 2021.

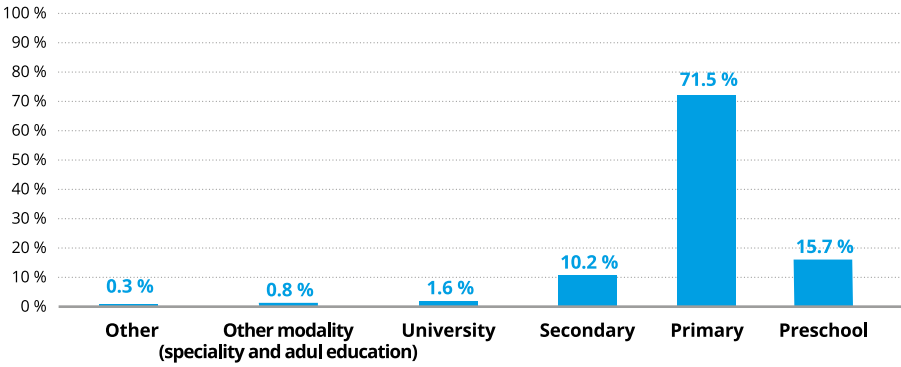
Figure 3. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by area where they teach.



Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May, 2021

Those who practice teaching in rural area outnumber those who do so in urban areas, at 53.8% and 46.2% respectively (Figure 3). They mainly teach at the primary (71.5%), secondary (10.2%) and preschool (15.7%) levels, with very few teaching at the tertiary level (1.6%) or carrying out another type of teaching (1.1%) (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by level at which they teach



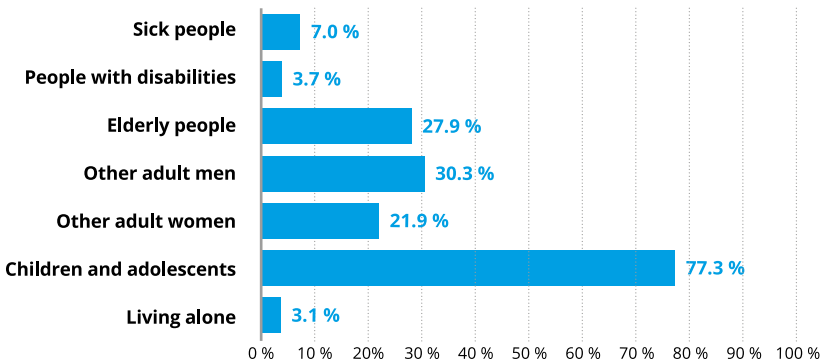
Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May, 2021.

3.2 Families with children and elderly people

97% of the educators lived with other people, most often making up households of children and adolescents, adults and the elderly. Only 3.1% lived alone. It is of note that 77.3% of the family nuclei included children and adolescents, 27.9% included senior citizens,¹⁰⁴ and 10.7% included people with disabilities or who were ill. This family composition implies care needs in the homes that became work centers for the women teachers. One out of three households were shared with adult men and one out of five were shared with other adult women (Figure 5).

¹⁰⁴ In 2020, those aged 65 and over represented 4.97% of the total population. *Datosmacro.com.*

Figure 5. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by the people with whom they live



Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May, 2021.

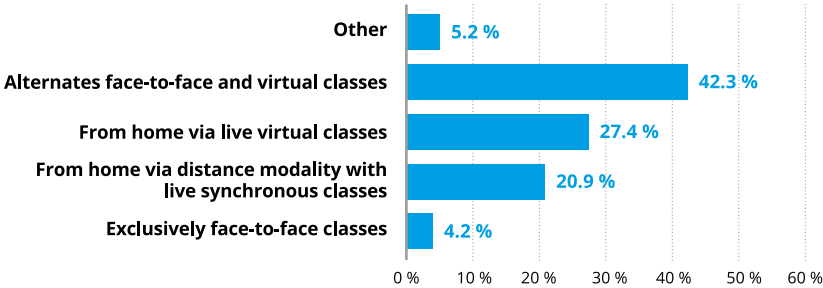
3.3 Degradation of working conditions through telework

During the pandemic, women teachers had to adapt to very different conditions from those of the classroom, completely changing their routines and requiring them to sharpen their imaginations in order to continue teaching in adverse circumstances. They worked under different modalities, with the most frequent being alternation between face-to-face and virtual activities (42.3%), although some said that they carried out only face-to-face activities (4.2%).

27.4% worked only from home under the distance modality, with guidebooks and other printed materials or electronic media, mainly using the WhatsApp network with students who had cell phones. They sent the educational materials to students and received the assignments back, also following up with students' mothers by phone or by meeting up with them. One in five respondents (20.9%) taught live virtual classes with synchronous interaction. Overall, 90.6% of the respondents used internet connectivity to teach classes or to send assignments to their students (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by work modality during the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May, 2021.

Although the educational centers remained officially closed in 2020 and for most of 2021, many of the teachers went in to their institutions to deliver educational materials to their students or their parents or guardians, and to meet with these. In some cases, they distributed such materials directly house by house, or from another location, including from their own houses. Some provided coaching on an individual basis or to small groups of students in educational institutions as the only way to monitor those who did not have a phone or internet access (Group interview with women leaders of COLPROSUMAH, 2021).

These new work modalities had an impact in extending the working day beyond eight hours, in flexibilizing the schedule in which teachers normally worked in the face-to-face modality, and in diversifying the tasks performed given the heterogeneity of the students' situations.

In this context, parental participation, which mainly consisted of that of students' mothers, was essential to providing follow-up for classes. Teachers had to constantly interact with these parents, especially at the primary level, and support them in assisting their children with school activities.

We tell the parents what we are going to work on and we ask for their collaboration, although it is very complicated. Here most people are dedicated to

working a great deal in the country, they are not used to sitting there with their children, to be investigating tasks. We need to enter into communication with the parents, to tell them what to do, the steps to download the application and so on. (Interview with women leaders of COLPROSUMAH, 2021)

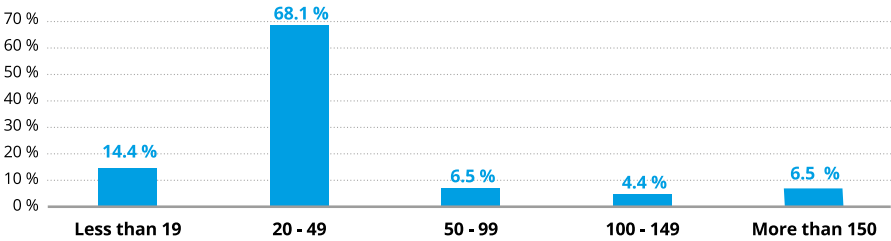
To a large extent, it depended on the family, their economic capacity and on the dedication that responsible adults can provide to support the children in the school system in the context of the pandemic.

I communicate with the students' mothers at night, and they tell me, "Teacher, I'm going to go crazy! My phone is saturated because I have three children at home and they are in different grades, all the tasks come to my phone via WhatsApp." The parents, most of them work, they arrive home late, they arrive home exhausted. So, for example, my way of working is I assign tasks on Mondays and stop by on Wednesdays to pick them up. (Interview with women leaders of COLPROSUMAH, 2021)

The home became the center for the teaching work of 95% of the teachers who worked totally or partially from home. The domestic space became dedicated to multiple simultaneous uses work, study, daily life, recreation, rest. "We have allocated a space in our house to be turned into a classroom" (Interview with women leaders of COLPROSUMAH, 2021). Most of these teachers live with children and adolescents and with other people who need attention and care, such that they teach in conditions where the separation of work life and domestic family daily life has blurred (Interview with women leaders of COLPROSUMAH, 2021).

68.1% of the respondents were responsible for between 20 and 49 students and 17.4% taught very large groups of fifty or more students. 6.5% had more than 150 students. 14.4% gave classes to groups of nineteen or fewer students. (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Honduras. Women teachers by number of students they teach

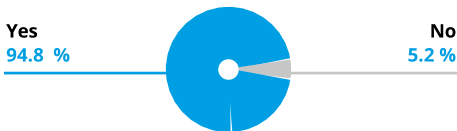


Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May, 2021

The high load of students per teacher represented a strong challenge, given that virtual education was a privilege for few students. Teachers had to adopt the most effective strategies to support their students in the education system, such as direct contact with families via phone and social networks, meetings in schools and distributing materials to homes and from the house of the teacher (Interview with female directors of COLPROSUMAH).

The pandemic represented a threat to the stability of working conditions that had been victories won after many years of intense union struggle. Although the employment contracts of the teachers surveyed remained stable in most cases (94.8%), some of these were affected (5.2%) (Figure 8). In the group interview conducted with women leaders from COLPROSUMAH, it was stated that there had been many layoffs because the Ministry of Education eliminated positions, leaving teachers with interim contracts unemployed.

Figure 8. Honduras. Women teachers by contract stability

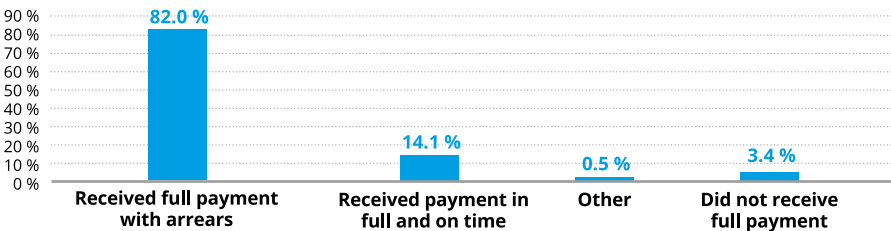


Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May, 2021.

They also pointed out that they felt their job stability was under threat at the beginning of the pandemic when the Ministry of Education made the decision to close educational institutions and suspend classes. They assert that it was thanks to the strong union management of COLPROSUMAH and other professional associations that it was possible to continue teaching classes under distance or teleworking modalities, although this occurred in disadvantageous conditions without the government committing resources to sustain the new costs involved.

With regard to payment (salary and other benefits), 82% of respondents received this in full although with delays, 3.4% did not receive their salaries in full and 14.1% of the respondents received the payment in full and in a timely fashion (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Honduras. 2021. Women teachers by salary payment conditions during the pandemic

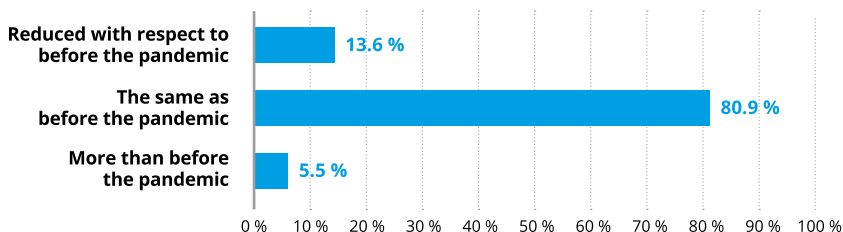


Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May, 2021.

For 80.9%, the income of the women teachers remained the same as in the period before the pandemic. 13.4% said it was reduced, and only 5.5% received higher incomes compared to the pre-pandemic period (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Honduras. 2021. Women teachers by changes in teaching income during the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May, 2021.

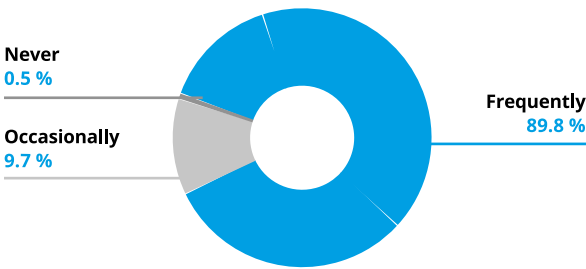
While their income remained the same or decreased, teachers' expenses increased in items related to teaching from their homes. When educational institutions closed in March 2020 and classes by telework began, teacher union rank and file members questioned the government because it was not providing internet connectivity to teaching staff or students to facilitate their connecting up.

That cost effectively fell to the teaching staff and students' families, even when Legislative Decree 60-2020 came into force on July 20, 2020, obliging internet companies to provide this service free of charge to the Ministry of Education, and to teachers and students in the public education system, in order to teach and receive virtual classes during the 2020 school year for the time that face-to-face classes were suspended. This measure was extended over the following year, however in May 2021 such services had not yet been provided beyond internet connectivity in some schools with the support of specific external cooperation projects, according to statements made in the interview performed.

This situation forced teachers to allocate part of their income to materials, equipment, and services to teach at a distance and in virtual modalities, for the purchase of computers, printers, tablets, smart phones, paper, photocopying costs, and internet service, in addition to extra expenses of electricity and having furniture and space in the home for work, plus the cost of private transport for those who needed to travel. Among the respondents, this situa-

tion was widespread. Only 0.5% did not have to incur expenses to be able to teach classes, while 95.5% allocated part of their income to these items. 89.8% frequently spent part of their income on buying equipment or paying for internet connectivity to be able to work from home, and 9.7% did so at least occasionally (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Honduras. 2021. Women teachers who spent their income on equipment or internet to work during the pandemic

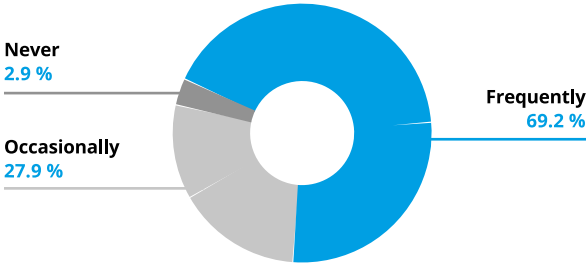


Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May, 2021.

I design all the didactic material with which I am going to work all that month and I give it already printed up to the students' parents. I bought my printer and many of my colleagues working in preschool bought our own printers because we didn't have one. At the beginning of the pandemic, what we did along with several colleagues was to give them a workbook for the children and we communicated with the family through phone calls. (Interview with women leaders of COLPROSUMAH, 2020)

They not only allocated part of their income to their equipment and material needs, but also to those of the students. 69.2% frequently used their own income for this purpose to pay for photocopying, printing materials, and internet data recharges. An additional 27.9% assumed these expenses at least occasionally. Only 2.9% of the respondents did not incur such expenses (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Honduras. 2021. Women teachers who spent their own income on providing for students' needs during the pandemic

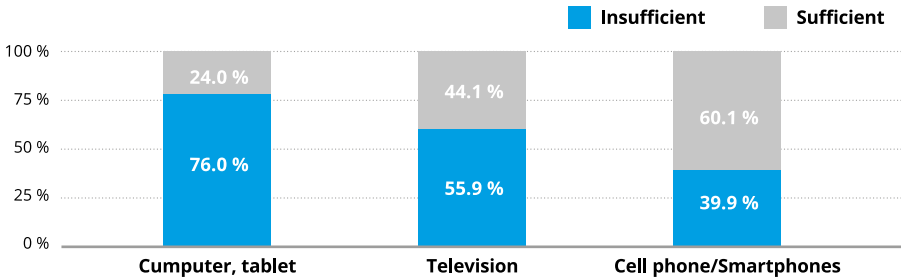


Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May, 2021.

All this caused terrible expenses. Many teachers send internet credit to the children so that they can return the tasks that they are doing [...] Some colleagues have paid for internet in their schools so that when the children want to perform their task, they can go to the school and they'd send them the password. In my case, what I have done is pay a guard because some goods were being stolen from the school. (Group interview, COLPROSUMAH, 2021)

Even when paying for the expenses of equipment and materials to do their work from their own income, most of the respondents did not have enough equipment to adequately perform teaching work in the non-face-to-face modalities. 76% did not have enough computers or tablets and 55.9% of the respondents' homes did not have enough televisions to monitor the classes broadcast over this means. Although the majority had cell phones, more than a third of those surveyed indicated that these were not enough considering all people in the household that required the use of these to work or study (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Honduras. 2021. Women teachers by availability of enough equipment in the home to work and study

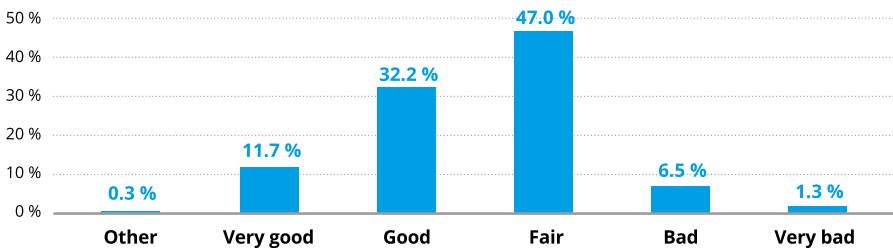


Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.

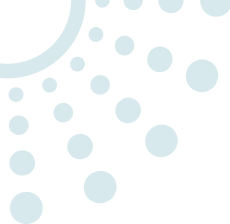
In addition to the previous shortcomings were added connectivity difficulties, with this representing a basic tool required for teaching using virtual modalities to which the vast majority resorted in different ways.

For more than half of the respondents (54.8%) the quality of the internet required to work and study from home was fair, bad or very bad. About a third had good internet quality and only 11.7% had very good internet connectivity (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Honduras. 2021. Women teachers by quality of internet in the home for work and study



Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.



Even when they had internet connectivity, the teachers surveyed were often forced to also use other distance and blended learning modalities because many students did not have such access to the internet. This was true of urban areas, but even more so in the case in rural ones. “We have the problem of connectivity, there are some places where the signal is hard to get, but, even so, we do our best to be able to do the work” (Group interview with women leaders of COLPROSUMAH, 2021).

The most commonly used modality to access the internet was via data purchase for cell phones. Low-income families found it difficult to pay for these services for their children to continue with their classes. Most often they paid for just enough data to download the work guidebooks sent by the teachers via WhatsApp and to return the completed tasks. Students with internet connectivity often provided these materials to others who did not have such access, using the same cell phone to send several tasks back, that is, they shared the service.

In many rural areas where there is no electricity, the children travel to the nearest place with this service to recharge cell phone batteries to continue with their classes. This system has been sustained through the strenuous efforts of the teaching staff and families, the communities that collaborate with them, and the students themselves through their support networks. Although the government exempted families from payment of school and high school enrollment on suspending face-to-face classes, the cost of the internet has become a stumbling block for families and teachers, as well as a factor distancing students from the educational system.

Unfortunately, the government's support has definitely been disastrous. We face the reality experienced by families, where children sometimes have to go to the grocery store that offers internet to download their study tasks. We talk with the mothers on a daily basis and they tell us,


“Teacher, I either buy a small bag of coffee or a pound of sugar, or I purchase internet data for my son to download his homework.” We search for strategies. Often we have to sacrifice ourselves, get dressed, cover up, go out to find our students, expose ourselves [to getting ill]. We download the workbooks month by month and each workbook has more than thirty pages [to be photocopied].

In my case, even though I work here in the city, half of my students don't have cell phones, neither smart ones nor any type at all. It is even more difficult for them to have access to the internet, if they somehow manage to get their food each day. This pandemic has made poverty a little more extreme than it already was, because children went out before the pandemic to beg, but with this pandemic with everyone locked up in their homes, children can no longer go out.

The government is not helping us as teachers at any time to cover expenses. They only send us the monthly booklets, but only by WhatsApp. As teachers we have to print them and deliver them to parents. It is an expense for us, because the government is not providing a budget for it. (Group interview of women leaders of COLPROSUMAH, 2021)

With non-face-to-face classes, the educational system transferred costs that correspond to the state to teachers and families, thus, access to education for the student population of the working classes was worsened and the income and working and living conditions of teachers were affected. All this was without any national strategies being defined, with high degrees of improvisation, leaving it up to the teachers to solve the multiple situations that they were facing both in urban institutions, but especially in rural ones.

The Minister of Education said that they were going to use all possible means to be able to teach these classes (TV, radio, internet, WhatsApp, printed materials), but what about children whose parents go out to work

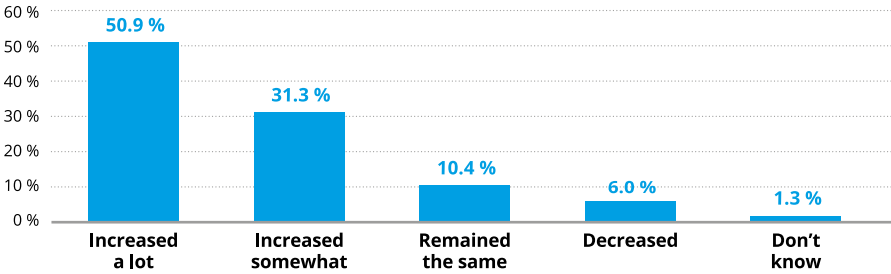


all day? Those children who are left alone in their homes without electricity, without a television, without a radio? It is not a mandatory directive of the Secretariat that teachers have to impart the same classes that are taught on television and the radio. The methodology that teachers are using depend on the creativity of each teacher. (Group interview of women leaders of COLPROSUMAH, 2021)

As a result of so many difficulties, the women teachers were unable to curb the number of students who dropped out of studying due to lack of connectivity or access to a cell phone or a computer, because the family did not have the resources to pay the added costs of the new types of classes, or due to emigration, among other causes. In the interview, it was pointed out that the Ministry of Education was putting pressure on teachers to make efforts to support enrollment without providing the resources and equipment for non-face-to-face classes. Some saw the number of students who were taking their classes reduced to less than even half.

This perception was shared by the teachers surveyed. 82.2% considered that the number of students who dropped out had increased: 50.9% thought that this had increased a lot, and 31.3% considered that it increased somewhat. Only one in ten said that it did not increase and 6.0% considered that there were less students dropping out during the pandemic than before it (Figure 15).

Figure 15, Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by opinion on the number of students abandoning their studies

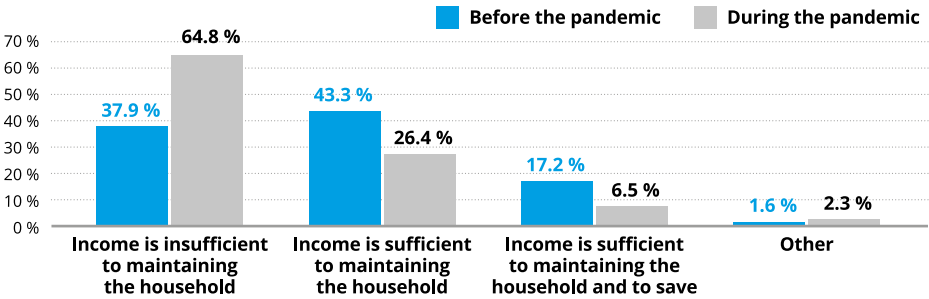


Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May, 2021.

3.4 The deterioration of the economic situation of households

The economic situation of the respondents' households, according to their own assessments, worsened during the pandemic. Households with insufficient income to cover their needs almost doubled and those with savings capacity were reduced to less than half the amount prior to the pandemic. 64.8% of the teachers surveyed considered that during the pandemic their income was insufficient to supporting the household, while 26.4% considered that it was sufficient, and only 6.5% said that it allowed them to save (Figure 16). Regarding the situation prior to the pandemic, just over a third (37.9%) considered that household income was previously insufficient, while for 43.3% it was enough, and 17.2% indicated that previously they could save (Figure 16).

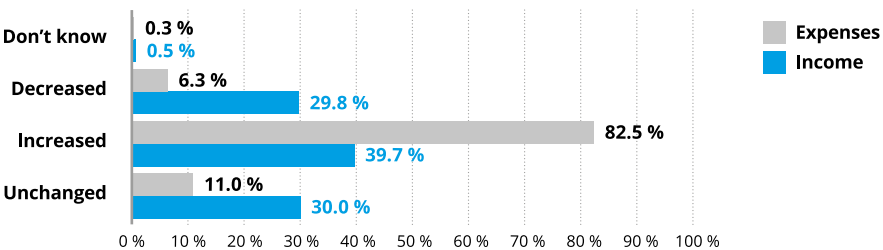
Figure 16. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by assessment of income to maintaining the household before and during the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.

The comparison between the change in income and expenses in the households of the respondents since the pandemic began reveals a disproportionate increase in expenses. For 82.5% of women teachers, their household spending increased, while only 6.3% of them indicated that it was reduced and 11% stated that it remained the same as before the pandemic. While income increased for more than a third of households (39.7%) during the pandemic, in 29.9% of households it decreased and in 30% of households it remained the same as before (Figure 17).

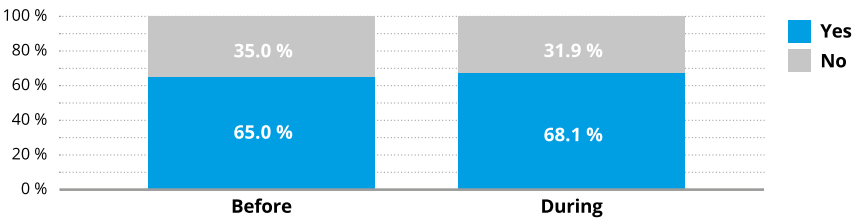
Figure 17. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by changes in income and expenses in the household since the start of the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.

In line with the deteriorating economic situation of households, during the pandemic the percentage of women teachers surveyed who were carrying out additional activities to generate income increased slightly. Before the pandemic, 65.0% had an additional job and, during the pandemic that proportion rose to 68.1% (Figure 18).

Figure 18. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by additional activity to generate Income other than teaching before and after the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.

3.5 Time use: Teaching, domestic and care work overload

The modalities of distance classes and teleworking have impacted on teachers’ workloads. Added to the intensification of the working day and extended hours are domestic work, the tasks of providing care in one’s own home and for other relatives outside the home, along with other activities in which the teachers engage of their own free will. Despite the confinement that put a stop to collective activities in the public sphere, teachers took time to remain active in professional, trade union, political and other organizations, all while adapting to the new situation.

In terms of work, the working day was extended and teaching activities multiplied and diversified. The conditions of students and their families forced teachers to be attentive to receiving tasks and answering the questions of their students or adult guardians via WhatsApp or by phone at any time of the day and well into the night. Many families have a single cell phone that students used to follow up on their clas-

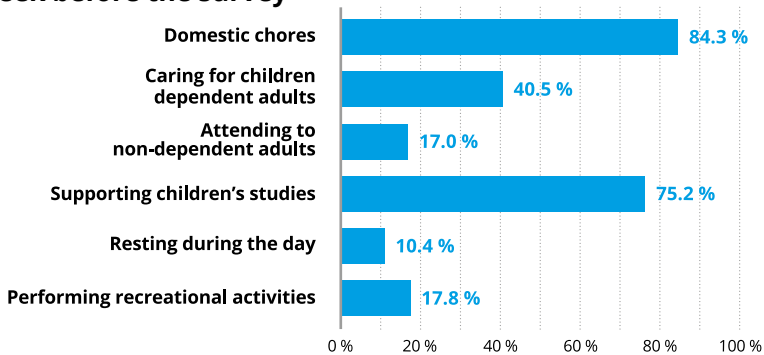
ses when the father or mother returned from work. Only then could they download tasks, complete them and send them back. The teachers remained attentive to queries all day and night. They adapted to the schedules of their students.

One thing that has prevailed is that we don't have working hours. At twelve o'clock at night parents text us, or in the early morning. There is no time off for us to devote to our personal activities. At any time they text us, call us or come to the house. We don't have a time limit. That causes some stress.

Work has tripled in this time of confinement. It is not that it has decreased, because some people think that we are not doing anything. On the contrary, we are under a great deal of stress. (Group interview of women leaders of COLPROSUMAH, 2021).

In addition, hours spent at teaching work, domestic activities and care tasks in their homes occupied a large part of the women teachers' time. The week before the survey, 84.3% had done household chores and 75.2% had supported children in their studies. 40.5% cared for children or dependent people and 17% cared for non-dependent adults. There are relatively few who devoted time to recreation and rest, with 17.8% carrying out some recreational activity and only one in ten resting during the day (Figure 19).

Figure 19. Honduras. 2021. Women teachers by activities performed in the week before the survey

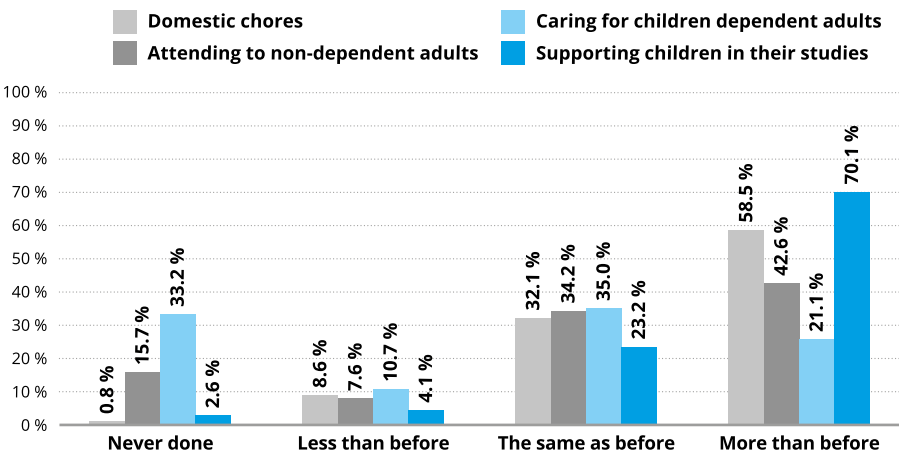


Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.

With the pandemic and home confinement, domestic and care work also increased for most teachers. When comparing the situation during the pandemic to the previous period, more than half of the respondents did more domestic work during than prior to the pandemic (58.5%). They supported children in their studies significantly more than before (70.1%) and devoted more time to caring for children (42.6%), while one in five (21.1%) spent more time than before attending to non-dependent adults.

About a third of the respondents spent the same time as before taking care of children and adults, doing household chores and attending to non-dependent adults, while one in five spent the same time as before in supporting children in their studies. Those who managed to reduce the time they spent on the previous tasks represented 10% or less of the total respondents (Figure 20).

Figure 20. Honduras. 2021. Women teachers by time spent on activities in the home during the pandemic

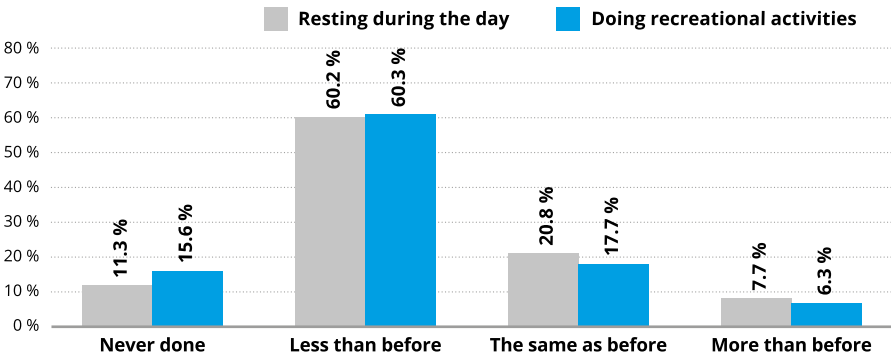


Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.

Being available at all times without the possibility of disconnection affected the teachers, especially in terms of rest time: 60.2% of respondents had less time than before to rest during the day and 60.3% spent less time than before

on recreational activities. Approximately one in five spent the same amount of time on these, while those who devoted more time to these activities represented a small proportion at 7.7% and 6.3% respectively (Figure 21).

Figure 21. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by time spent resting and on recreational activities during the pandemic

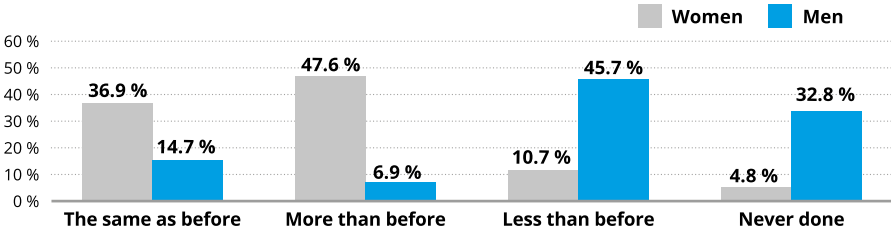


Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.

In the households of the respondents where the women teachers lived with other adult women and men, domestic and care work was shared, although unevenly. 95.2% of other adult women devoted time to domestic work, care and attention to people, whereas 67.2% of adult men devoted time to these activities.

However, while 47.6% of the other adult women living in the households of the respondents during the pandemic spent more time than before and 36.9% spent the same amount of time as before at those tasks, among men, the reverse situation occurs, with 45.7% devoting less time than before to such tasks, 32.8% never having done that kind of work, and only 6.9% dedicating more time to them. Among women, only 4.8% had never performed household, care and attention tasks for others (Figure 22).

Figure 22. Honduras, 2021. Households in which women teachers live with other adult women and men, by time these spent on domestic work, care and attention for people during the pandemic



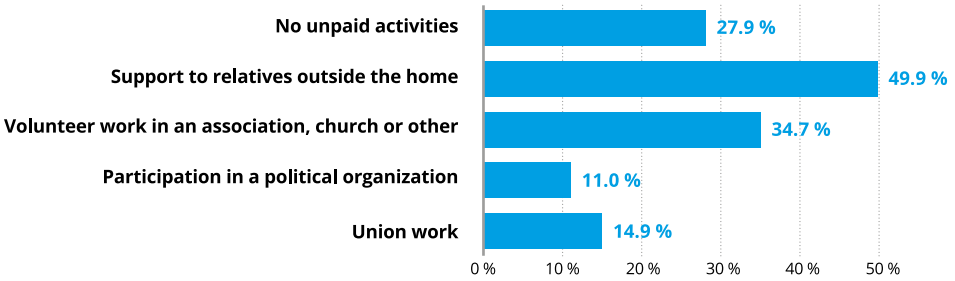
Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.

The survey data are very illustrative of the unequal distribution of domestic and care work between women and men in households. Confinement has not had positive consequences in this aspect of gender relations, with no impact on the increase of male co-responsibility in care, and even having negative impacts on this.

With a long and undefined working day that involved taking on domestic work at home, many of the teachers surveyed participated in other unpaid volunteer activities in professional, union and political organizations as well as in other civil and religious organizations. Half of the respondents also provided support outside the home to relatives, a third did volunteering work in civil associations or with churches, 14.9% participated in trade union activities and 11% were active in political organizations. Of the total respondents, 72.1% were doing at least some unpaid activity. One in four respondents (25.7%) was engaged in two of the above activities and 7.1% were engaged in three to four unpaid activities (Figure 23).



Figure 23. Honduras. 2021. Women teachers by unpaid activities undertaken

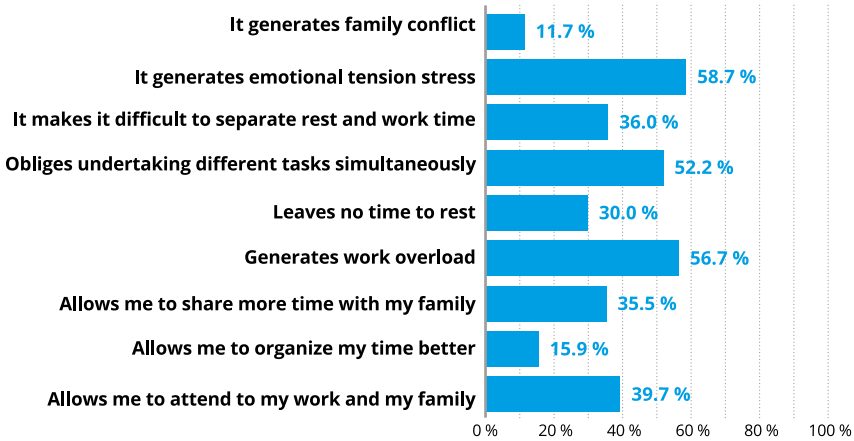


Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.

3.6 The effects of teleworking on the rights of women teachers

Teleworking and other non-face-to-face modalities had more negative than positive effects on the lives of the women teachers. More than half of them considered that this way of working caused them emotional tension and stress (58.7%), forced them to undertake activities simultaneously (52.2%) and generated work overload (56.7%). Other negative effects that the teachers highlighted were the difficulty of separating work and rest time (36%), not having time to rest (30%) and, to a lesser extent, the aggravation of family conflicts (11.7%). Just over a third pointed out positive aspects: it allowed them to attend to their work and family simultaneously (39.7%), to share more time with family (35.5%) and, less frequently, they also said that it allowed them to organize their time better (15.9%) (Figure 24).

Figure 24. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by effects of telework



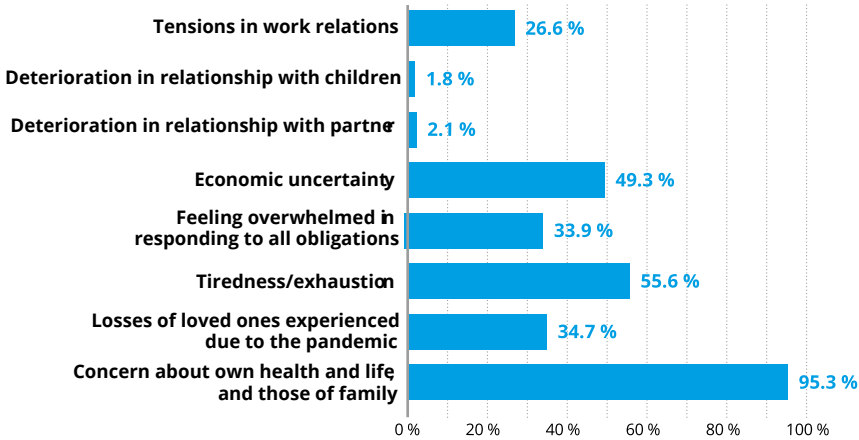
Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.

The pandemic generated a scenario of great concern for teachers due to the health and economic crisis that hit the educational community hard, the high levels of demand and the difficult conditions in which telework and other non-face-to-face modalities were undertaken.

Almost all of the women teachers felt worried about their health and that of their families (95.3%). More than half indicated that they felt tired and exhausted (55.6%). Economic uncertainty also affected almost half of the teachers (49.3%), which is probably related to the stagnant situation of their income and the increase in expenses. For one in four respondents, tensions in labor relations were a major cause for concern. About a third of the respondents were worried about the losses of loved ones they experienced during the pandemic (34.7%) and one in three expressed concern about feeling overwhelmed in responding to all their obligations. Only 3.9% were concerned about the deterioration of relationships with their children and partners, although 11.7% indicated an increase in family conflicts as an effect of working at home (Figure 25).



Figure 25. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by mean concerns during the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.

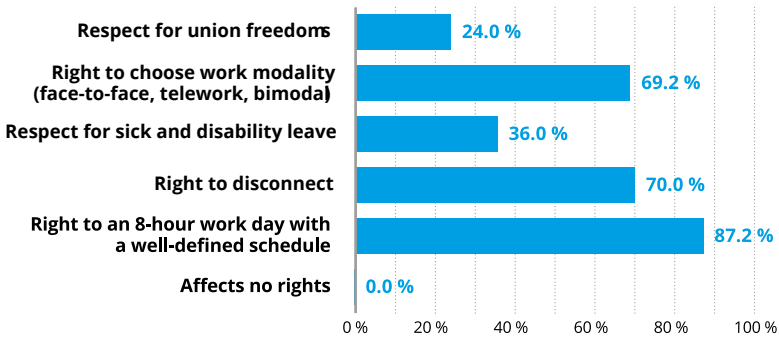
For the respondents, confinement seemed to have been an opportunity to strengthen family relationships, not without stress and conflicts caused by quarantine in conditions under which they are in great demand, and the extensive difficulties they had to overcome in order to teach.

The modalities of teleworking and working at home had an impact on the rights of the women teachers. 87.2% of respondents said teleworking affected the right to the eight-hour working day with a well-established schedule and 70% were affected by the lack of the right to disconnect. As noted before, the teachers worked without schedules and even at night in consideration of the situation of their students and their families.

69.2% felt their right to choose between face-to-face, teleworking or bimodal modalities was adversely affected. More than a third mentioned the right to sickness and disability leave was disrespected (36.0%) and almost one in five respondents considered that the right to trade union freedoms was affected (24.0%) (Figure 26).

This violation of labor rights occurred in a context in which other rights and freedoms were already suspended by decree (PCM-028-2020), such as the limitation of free movement, confinement and restrictions on mobility, the suspension of individual guarantees with a curfew, among others.

Figure 26, Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by rights they consider to have been most effected by telework



Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.

3.7 The impact of the pandemic on the health of women teachers

The costs on the health and life of teachers were high. As indicated in the interview, from March to July 2020, COLPROSUMAH delivered 78 compensation awards to the beneficiaries of teachers who died in that period, with only two of these deaths not due to COVID-19. At the same time, the demands on the institution's subsidy fund for support in case of illness exceeded the available annual resources.

The pandemic disproportionately affected the women respondents. 19.2% said they had contracted COVID-19. The cumulative number of people who contracted this disease nationwide from March 2020 to May 2021 was 333,916, (SINAGER, May 2021),¹⁰⁵ 3.3% of the total population.¹⁰⁶ In the same period,

¹⁰⁵ Data from the Sistema Nacional de Gestión de Riesgos (National Risk Management System, SINAGER). EFE Agency, May 25, 2021.

¹⁰⁶ Estimating a population of approximately 10,010,000 people.



among the women teachers surveyed, the proportion of those who had the disease was six times higher. Teachers had a greater exposure to the pandemic in the same way as did essential workers, that is, those people who had to continue working face-to-face during the pandemic to ensure the functioning of services considered essential (health, basic services, security, financial services, communications, food supply and others).

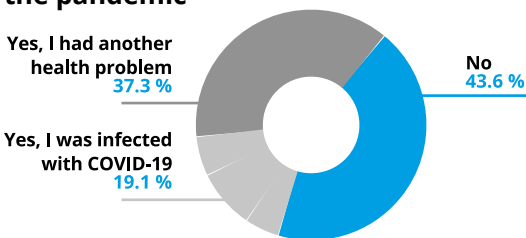
Even with the closure of educational institutions and working from home, many teachers were forced to go out and travel in unsafe conditions to schools or the homes of the students in their charge.

We look for the strategies to get where we need to go in which we often have to sacrifice ourselves, get dressed, cover ourselves up, go out to look for the students, expose ourselves. (Group interview with women leaders of COLPROSUMAH).

We have many colleagues who go to their villages by motorcycle, getting a lift, renting a vehicle, to leave information, to leave copies so that these children can work. On that journey, they get infected and we have had this number of colleagues die. (Group interview with women leaders of COLPROSUMAH).

43.6% of the teachers did not suffer from health problems, while 37.3% of them reported suffering from other health problems during the pandemic (Figure 27).

Figure 27. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by effects to health during the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May, 2021.

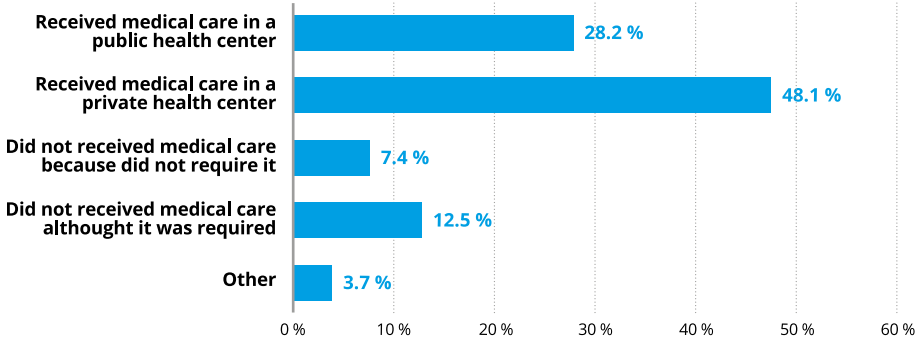
Some have had neuralgia, depression, anxiety, and all of us have been exploited in different ways because we not only deal with our own problems but also the problems of parents and, sometimes, of children, and these can be very painful to us.

It fills us with stress to see that every child, every parent, every house has problems. Often we teachers carry the problems of each household because we have contact with them, because we also play the part of psychologists, of friends to parents. Often they tell us about their economic situation, it is not in our hands to solve the situation for them all. (Group interview with women leaders of COLPROSUMAH).

Of the total respondents who were affected by COVID-19 or another health problem, 48.1% received care in a private health center and 28.2% in a state health center. Although, as teachers, they should receive attention in health service facilities provided by the Honduran Institute of Social Security (IHSS), this institution does not have health services in all departments or in rural areas. In the interview, it was stated that the preferential choice of private care is explained by the fear of exposing oneself to the pandemic in the Social Security and public health establishments, with services saturated by the influx of people with possible COVID-19 symptoms.

Thus, 12.5% did not receive care although they required it, and 7.4% of the teachers who had health problems did not receive medical care because they considered that they did not need it (Figure 28).

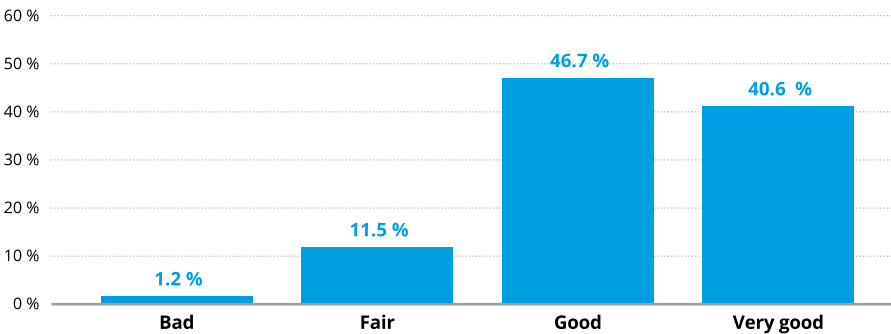
Figure 28. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers with health problems during the pandemic by medical care received



Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.

87.3% of the respondents who received medical care, both in private and in public services, rated the care received as good (46.7%) or very good (40.6%), and 12.7% said it was bad or very bad (Figure 29).

Figure 29. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers who sought medical attention by quality of attention received



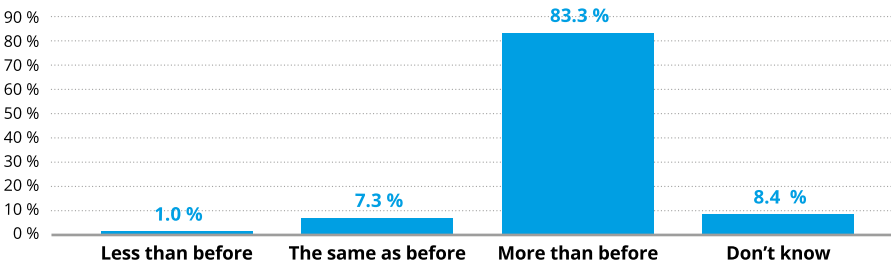
Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.

2.8. Violence against teachers increased during the pandemic

The increase in violence against women was one of the documented effects of the pandemic throughout the region, to the point that UN Women launched the campaign “The pandemic in the shadows: Violence against women during confinement” (UN Women, 2020). Home quarantine favored the increase of all kinds of violence against women and girls, particularly in the domestic sphere. In Honduras in 2020, up to the month of October calls about violence against women and girls on the 911 emergency line increased by almost 10% compared to the previous year (Platforma 25 de noviembre, 2020).

Among the women teachers surveyed, 83.3% had the perception that violence against women increased during the pandemic and only 1% believed that it decreased. The others thought that it was the same as before (7.3%) or did not know (8.4%) (Figure 30).

Figure 30. Honduras. 2021. Women teachers by perception of change in violence against women during the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.

59% of the women teachers considered that violence against women particularly affected female teachers, while 14.9% thought that it did not, and one in four answered that they did not know (Figure 31).

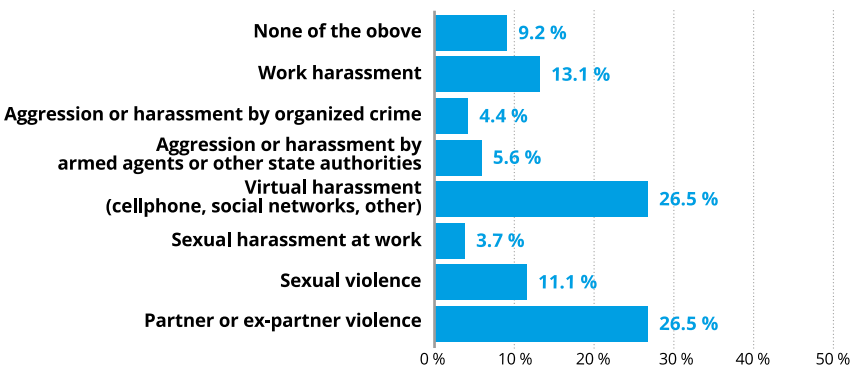
Figure 31. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by perception of violence particularly affecting women teachers



Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.

The types of violence against women teachers that increased during the pandemic according to the respondents were virtual harassment through cell phones and social networks (26.5%) and partner or ex-partner violence (26.5%). 13.1% highlighted workplace harassment, 11.1% sexual violence and, for 5.6%, violence and harassment by armed agents and other state authorities increased. In a smaller proportion, they also mentioned the aggressions of organized crime (4.4%) and sexual harassment at work (3.7%) (Figure 32).

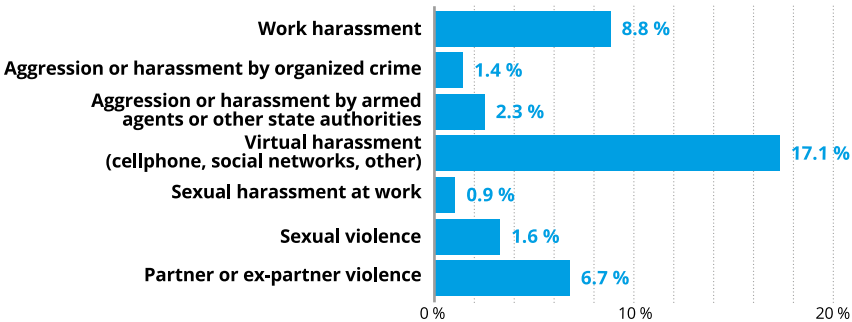
Figure 32. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by type of violence against women teachers they believed to have increased during the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021

With regard to the violence directly experienced by teachers, of the total of respondents, 67.8% did not experience violence during the pandemic. Almost a third of them, at 32.1%, did experience some type of violence, the most frequent of which were virtual harassment in the case of 17.1%, followed by workplace harassment at 8.8%, and intimate partner violence, 6.7% (Figure 33).


Figure 33. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by type of violence they have experienced during the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.

These types of violence are linked to domestic confinement, teleworking and the pressure exerted by some educational authorities in the context of the pandemic, and even by parents, who have been affected by the virtual and remote classroom modalities.

The departmental authorities are putting pressure on us that you have to cover all students enrolled, you have to reach 100%. I have pressure from my boss who tells me, you have to cover 100% of the students enrolled. That mountain of reports that the authorities leave us is incredible. They roll call us, we have to take into account each meeting, everything they are leaving us to do. Sometimes I think they assign tasks that are not so important, but they want to keep us busy, more than what we are already going through. (Group interview women leaders of COLPROSUMAH).



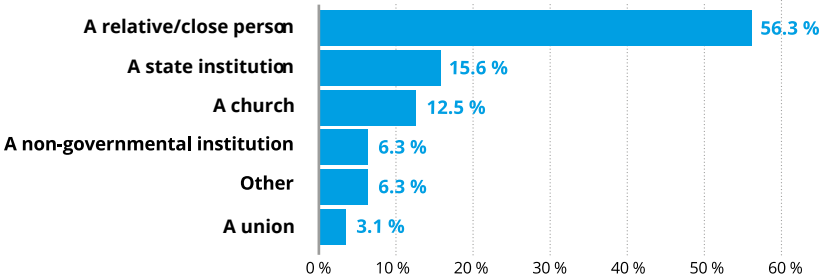
We, as teachers, have also faced the fact that some parents are not aware that this situation is not my fault, it's not their fault, it's not the children's fault. It just came on us all equally, it came as a surprise. So also dealing with one's stress as a professional and having to deal with the stress of the parents because the parent complains to us. [A student's father] was pushing something negative on me, because he thought everything was wrong all the time, he even told me, "I'm going to do a survey here with all the parents to cancel the school year." (Group interview with women leaders of COLPROSUMAH)

Less frequently, some teachers experienced assaults and harassment by armed agents and other state authorities (2.3%), assaults or harassment by organized crime (1.4%), sexual violence (1.6%), and sexual harassment at work (0.9%) (Figure 33). Psychological violence also affected teachers.

There has been a wave of psychological violence against women when they are with their partner for too long, because being inside the house for a woman does not mean being safe. There have been many situations here of colleagues who cannot stand being with their partners, because suddenly they like to drink and alcohol then changes their lives. (Group interview with women leaders of COLPROSUMAH).

Among the respondents who experienced some type of violence, only 26.0% sought some kind of help, the most frequent being from close people or relatives (56.3%). Secondly, but much less frequently, they sought help from state institutions (15.6%), a church (12.5%), a non-governmental organization (6.35%), a trade union or guild (3.1%), and others (6.3%) (Figure 34).

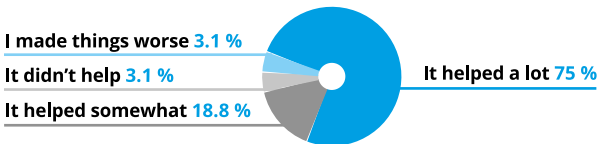
Figure 34. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by where they sought help for violence experienced during the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.

The assessment of the help received was positive or very positive for the majority (75% and 18.8% respectively), while 3.1% considered that this did not help them and for another 3.1%, it made things worse (Figure 35).

Figure 35. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by assessment of help received for violence experienced during the pandemic

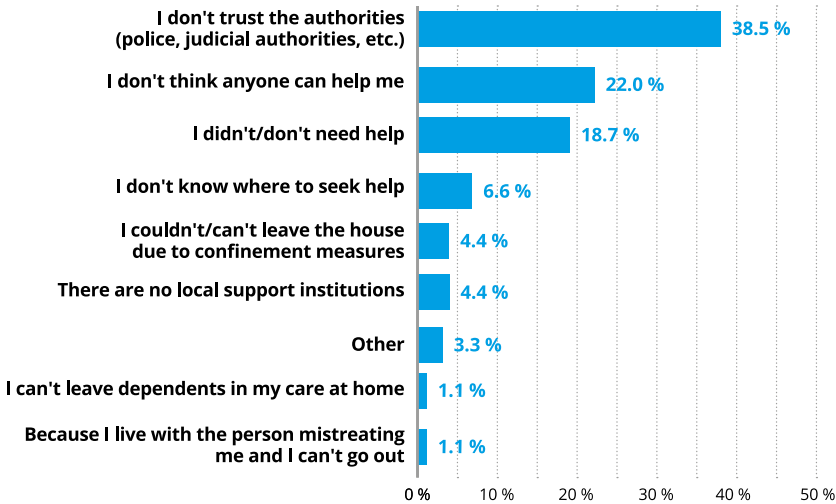


Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.

Among those who did not seek help for the violence experienced, the most frequent reasons they indicated were, in first place, a lack of trust in the authorities (38.5%) and in second place, thinking that no one could provide help (22%). 18.7% stated that they did not require help. Other answers with a lower level of significance were not knowing where to seek help (6.6%), not being able to travel to seek help due to confinement measures, and not having local support institutions (each at 4.4%). Very infrequently, the teachers answered that they did not seek help because they could not leave the people who de-

pend on them alone and because they lived with the aggressor. 3.3% cited other unspecified causes (Figure 36).

Figure 36. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by reasons for not seeking help for violence experienced during the pandemic

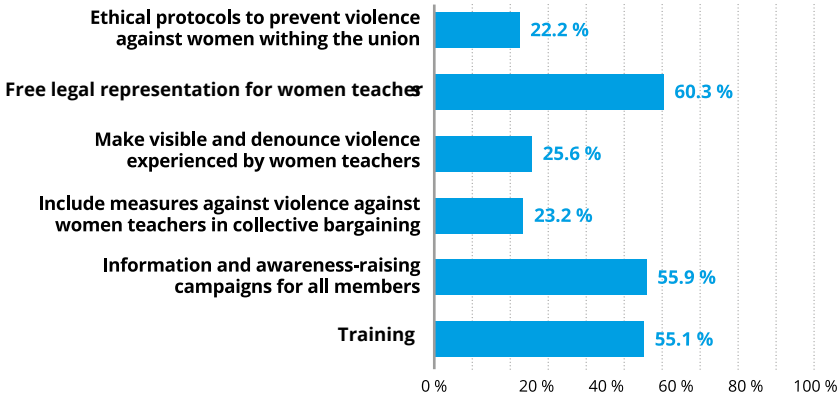


Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.

The vast majority of the women teachers surveyed (74.4%) believed that COLPROSUMAH should take measures regarding violence against women teachers, while 20.6% thought it should not.

Regarding the type of measures to be taken, in first place, 60.3% emphasized that COLPROSUMAH should provide free legal representation to teachers. The other most frequently mentioned measures were the carrying out of information and awareness-raising campaigns aimed at all members (55.9%) and carrying out training on the subject (55.1%). One in four (25.6%) considered the violence experienced by female teachers should be made visible and denounced, and 23.2% indicated that measures to address violence against female teachers should be incorporated into collective bargaining (Figure 37).

Figure 37. Honduras, 2021. Women teachers by type of union actions recommended against violence



Results of a survey carried out on women teachers affiliated with COLPROSUMAH between March and May 2021.

COLPROSUMAH has already made some progress in this issue. The Comité Femenino Nacional (National Women's Committee) conducted a Diploma Course on Violence against Women between 2020 and 2021 aimed at women teachers. In addition, they receive requests for legal help from their associates and channel these to civil organizations that provide services in this field.

We have cases of colleagues who are even receiving psychological help at the moment, who make contact with us, and we refer them to Ecuménicas [a feminist and human rights group], who have a body of psychologists who are supporting us in that regard. (Group interview with women leaders of COLPROSUMAH).



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PARAGUAY

Educating, supplying needs and providing care: The impact of measures taken during the pandemic on education and the rights of women teachers in Paraguay

Larraitz Lexartza

1. General notes on the situation in Paraguay

1.1 The profile of Paraguay in some key areas

In 2020, Paraguay had an estimated population of 7.25 million people. That same year, women represented just under half of the population at 49.6%. The majority of the population, at 62.5%, resided in urban areas (INE, 2021). This country is located in South America, sharing borders with Argentina, Bolivia and Brazil. It has no coastline. One of the particularities of the country is that it has two official languages, Guarani and Spanish. In addition to being one of the official languages, 90% of the country's non-Indigenous people speak Guarani (UN, 2019). This represents the majority of the population, taking into consideration that according to the census carried out in 2012 the Indigenous population was made up of 117,150 people, 1.8% of the total estimated population for that year. (INE, 2019 and INE, 2021).

It is a unitary state with 17 departments and 254 municipalities (Portal Único del Gobierno, 2021). Its political system is bicameral, being composed of the Chamber of Deputies and the Chamber of Senators (Portal Único del Gobierno, 2021a).

The country ranks among those considered to have high human development. In 2019, it was ranked 103rd globally in the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI), with a value of 0.728 (UNDP, 2020). That same year, life expectancy at birth was 74.3 years of age, the average number of years of study of the population was 8.5 and the GDP per capita was US\$12,224. However, there is great imbalance in the distribution of income, showing significant

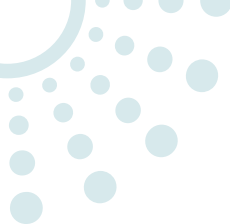
inequality. The poorest 40% of the population holds only 13.9% of the total income, and the Gini coefficient¹⁰⁷ in 2018 was 46.2 (UNDP, 2020).

In 2019, at 23.5%, more than one in five people were living in poverty and 4% lived in extreme poverty. However, in the decade leading up to 2019, the decline in both indicators has been constant, practically being halved. In 2009, poverty reached 41.6% of the population and extreme poverty reached 11.3% (INE, 2021a). On the other hand, poverty affects women to a greater extent than men. In 2019, for every 100 men living in poor households, there were 119.7 women in the same situation (ECLAC-OIG, 2021). In the same sense, it can be highlighted that in the country 27.7% of women over 15 years of age do not have their own income. This contrasts with the situation of men, for whom this is the situation for only 9.9% (ECLAC-OIG, 2021a).

In 2018 before the pandemic, the areas of employment that were most populous were commerce, communal, social and personal services, primary resource production (agriculture, fishing and mining), and, finally, the manufacturing industry. The first three areas provided work for 26%, 24.8% and 20.5% of the employed population respectively, while 11.4% were employed in the manufacturing industry (ILO, 2019). This shows a greater weight of the primary and tertiary sectors in the generation of the country's employment. In addition, women are more concentrated in jobs linked to services. This was the situation for almost seven out of ten women (69.3%), with 39.2% being employed in communal, social and personal services and 30.1% in commerce. Men, on the other hand, are more evenly distributed in all branches, so that no sector has a greater weight than 25% for male employment (ILO, 2019).

On the other hand, in 2019 the unemployment rate in Paraguay was 6.6%. The proportion of unemployed people has been increasing, with specific de-

¹⁰⁷ The Gini coefficient: "This measures the deviation in the distribution of income among individuals or households in a given country with respect to a distribution of perfect equality. The value 0 corresponds to absolute equality and the value 100 corresponds to absolute inequality" (UNDP, 2020, p. 396).



creases in the last decade in 2011, 2012 and 2015. In 2010 it was at 5.7%. In addition, unemployment is higher among women. In 2019, women's unemployment reached 8%, while men's was at 5.5% (ILO, 2020).

With regard to the labor market, the high informality in employment also stands out. In 2019, 63.7% of people employed in non-agricultural activities were in an informal work situation. Women were affected by informality to a greater extent in that same year, with 66.3% of women working in this condition compared to 61.6% of men. However, informality had been declining in the years before the pandemic. Between 2012 and 2019, it decreased by 2.1% (INE, 2021b).

Unpaid care and domestic work overwhelmingly fall to women. This unfair distribution limits their ability to attain employment on equal terms, as well as their time for recreation and rest. According to ECLAC figures for 2016, in Paraguay women with their own income dedicated 28.7 hours a week to unpaid work. The number of hours spent by men with an income on such tasks is less than half that at 12.2 hours. When comparison is made with respect to men without an income who dedicate 21.2 hours a week to unpaid work, a gap is also evident with respect to employed women. This gap increases even more with respect to women without income, since they dedicate 39.2 hours a week to unpaid tasks (ECLAC-OIG, 2021b).

As in most countries in the region, attaining detailed statistical information on violence against women is a challenge in Paraguay. The National Survey on Domestic Violence (urban area) carried out at the end of 2013 provides some information in this regard. In this survey, 4.7% of women reported having experienced physical violence during the previous twelve months. In addition, one in five women (20.8%) reported having experienced psychological violence in the same period (Paraguayan Ministry of Women, 2014). On the other hand, the femicide rate has fluctuated over the last decade. In 2009 there were 1.0 femicides per 100,000 women, while in 2019 there were 1.1. However, in

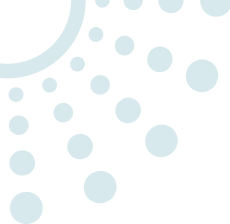
this period, the lowest value of 0.7 was reached in 2015, while the highest of 1.7 occurred in 2018 (CEPALSTAT, 2021). In addition, femicides are concentrated in some specific departments and more frequently occur with young women as the victims. Thus, “between 2016 and 2018, the majority of femicides [...] in Paraguay occurred in the departments of Amambay, Canindeyú and San Pedro. [...] Most of the victims were women between the ages of 20 and 24, followed by women between the ages of 20 and 29” (WB, 2020, p. 14-17).

With regard to education, it is important to emphasize that after the period of dictatorship ended in 1989, the Paraguayan educational system has undergone significant changes. The new National Constitution approved in 1992 “recognized and guaranteed the civil, political and social rights of the population, and established the restructuring of the Paraguayan State to that effect” (Molinier, 2014, p. 17). In the field of education, recognition was made of the right of all people to comprehensive and permanent education, establishing the obligation of basic education comprising of nine grades and setting a “budgetary minimum of 20% for allocation to the Central Administration for Education” (Molinier, 2014, p. 18).

The new constitutional text was the basis for educational reform and for the first General Education Act, No. 1264/1998. It should be noted that the changes included in the reform included aspects of pedagogical-curricular, administrative-institutional and legal fields (Molinier, 2014). Additionally, as a result of the educational reform, “the teaching salary was linked to the legal minimum wage for each work shift” (Molinier, 2014, p. 20).

The education reform mandate regarding education spending was complied with for more than two decades. However, by 2014 and 2015, this was already below the 20% established as the budget allocation for the Central Administration for Education. In both these years it represented 18.5% (Molinier, 2016).

On the other hand, in 2016, the last year for which figures are available, spen-



ding on education represented 4% of the GDP. This percentage is below the regional average for that same year at 5% of the GDP (Hanni, 2019). Trade union organizations coincide in indicating that public investment in education is insufficient. On these lines, in the interviews conducted, it was stated:

The State itself never really invested what is required in teacher training, 7% of the GDP for Education was never met, it is always less. It usually comes to 3.9% but never 7% (Group interview conducted with women from the OTEP-A union in September 2020)

In addition to spending on education, social investment is one of the lowest in the region. In 2018, social spending in Paraguay represented 8.6% of the GDP, an investment that only exceeds those reported by Guatemala (7%), Honduras (8%) and the Dominican Republic (8%) for the same year. It is also located below the average social investment in the South America, which reached 13.2% for that same year (ECLAC, 2019). In this sense, one of the factors that influences the low investment in public spending in general, and in education in particular, is the country's fiscal structure.

Paraguay's tax revenue represented 14% of the GDP in 2017. This is one of the lowest percentages in the region, only above Venezuela and Guatemala (Hanni, 2019). In addition, it has a regressive fiscal structure that:

transfers the economic cost of social coexistence to disadvantaged social sectors [...]. Thus, for example, taxes on income and wealth (direct taxes) levied on the property-owning classes represent a significantly lower burden than taxes on the consumption of goods and services (indirect taxes) levied on the middle and working classes, with a high tax burden. (Ortiz, 2020)

It is important to note that the wage equalization provided for in the educational reform was also not sustained over time, since the adjustments

to the legal minimum wage did not include adjustments of the same degree or excluded teachers' salaries. With regard to the 1990s, this equalization took place in 1992, and the gaps with respect to the legal minimum wage were negative in some years and positive in others. (Molinier, 2014, p. 20)

Another area relevant to understanding the conditions with which the Paraguayan educational system met the arrival of the pandemic has to do with access to technology and the internet. Paraguay is one of the countries in the region with the least internet access. On a regional level, 66.7% of the population and 60% of households have internet access (ECLAC, 2020 and ECLAC, 2020a). In Paraguay, however, the richest households (5th quintile) barely exceed the regional average by 5%. This also contrasts with the situation of the poorest households (1st quintile), among whom only 3% have access to the internet (ECLAC, 2020a). For these households, the cost of a fixed internet connection represents approximately 9% of their income, while that of a mobile connection costs approximately 12% (ECLAC, 2020). Percentages in both cases are well above the “reference threshold of 2% of income recommended by the Commission on Broadband for Sustainable Development to classify an Internet service as affordable” (ECLAC, 2020, p. 4).

1.2 The measures adopted in the face of COVID-19 and their impacts

As in other countries in the region, the arrival of the pandemic in Paraguay implied the taking of measures regarding the health emergency. In the field of mobility, on March 10, 2020, three days after the detection of the first case in the country, the first isolation measures were taken by suspending all “public, private and academic activities for a period of 15 days” (González, Chamorro and Rivas, 2021, p. 6). On March 20, before confirmation of the circulation of the virus, a total quarantine period was decreed that restricted free movement, with some exceptions. These restrictions on mobility were in force until May 3, 2020, at which time “Intelligent Quarantine” began to be implemented, a strategy consisting of a series of phases applied according to the epidemiological situation (González, Chamorro and Rivas, 2021).



On the other hand, the pandemic revealed the weakness in the social protection system in the country. This is a situation derived from the limited social investment and the factors mentioned above. In this sense, the collapse of the health system presented itself as a constant threat in this period. At the beginning of the pandemic, the country had only twenty intensive care beds that could receive cases with serious respiratory problems. In addition to the infrastructure limitations, there were also limitations with respect to medical personnel (Duarte-Recalde and Filártiga-Callizo, 2020). Detection capabilities for the disease were also limited due to the shortage of supplies for this purpose. In this context, complaints also arose regarding job insecurity in the health sector (Duarte-Recalde and Filártiga-Callizo, 2020).

The trade union sector proposed that in fact the lack of institutional investment became particularly noticeable during the pandemic.

We started, well, from the very beginning. In our country, as we well know, there are quite a few difficulties. There was, until now, the issue of social inequality, lack of investment in institutions, lack of training. (Interview conducted with women from the OTEP-A union in September 2020)

In a country in which more than six out of ten working people are informally employed, the whole quarantine had significant economic impacts on the population. According to ECLAC projections, by 2020 poverty was projected to increase by 2.1% with respect to the previous year, going from 19.4% to 21.5% (ECLAC, 2020b). Along the same lines, trade union organizations also proposed that those working in the informal sector suffered greater impacts on their employment and income.

Informal work, those selling items on the streets, when entering quarantine, those were the ones who were most affected, because it was their only income. (Interview conducted with women of the UNE-SN trade union in September 2020)

In addition, among those working in the informal sector, it was perceived that there occurred a particular impact on highly feminized sectors such as paid domestic work.

House cleaners lost their jobs, our mothers—specifically my mother—are maids, they lost their jobs. (Interview conducted with women of the UNE-SN trade union in September 2020)

Many people who were working as house cleaners have lost their jobs and are confined inside their houses. (Interview conducted with women from the OTEP-A union in September 2020)

The data confirm this perception. In Paraguay, employment in paid domestic work decreased in the second quarter of 2020 by 15.5% compared to the same period of the previous year (ECLAC, 2021).

In addition, it is proposed that the economic situation pushed a large part of the population to living in subsistence conditions.

Paraguay has 80% of people engaged in informal work, therefore, they do not have social security, therefore they do not have a fixed salary, and that, of course, makes staying at home not exactly an option, [not] because you don't want to stay home, but because you have to find the way to look for income in order to survive. (Interview conducted with women from the OTEP-A union in September 2020)

Many people are, given that underemployment, looking to subsist, making money however they can, mainly in the area of food and vegetables. A lot of contraband arises from this too. (Interview conducted with women of the UNE-SN trade union in September 2020)



In order to partially alleviate the cessation of productive activities, the government implemented the Ñangareko and Pytyvõ emergency cash transfer programs, which were added to the short-term expansion of other targeted assistance programs (Duarte-Recalde and Filártiga-Callizo, 2020). However, it was indicated that these supports were insufficient.

And, despite the fact that the government tried to help, it was not enough. It did not reach all families, especially not those who really needed it most. (Interview conducted with women of the UNE-SN trade union in September 2020)

On the other hand, highlight can be made of the central role that civil society organizations acquired in providing for the gaps left by the state with respect to social protection. One of the main initiatives in this regard was the “popular pots”, community food kitchens promoted in different parts of the country with the aim of guaranteeing the right to food. These were self-managed solidarity initiatives that successfully provided support to sectors of the population suffering from the greatest social exclusion. The wide repercussions and pressure from social organizations led to the passing of Act No. 6603/2020 “On support and assistance to popular pots (community kitchens) organized throughout the territory of the Republic of Paraguay during the pandemic declared by the World Health Organization due to COVID-19” (Duarte-Recalde and Filártiga-Callizo, 2020). The law commits the state to providing financial support for these initiatives during the pandemic.

When it comes to containment of the precarious economic situation, the salary of civil servants, including those in the education sector, was vital. Having greater salary stability allowed these workers to support people close to them who had lost their jobs or their economic livelihood.

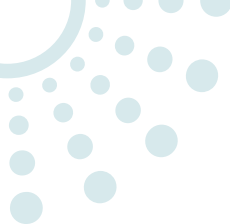
The teacher’s salary was not touched and that also, in many families, helped because, suddenly, if one of the members lost their jobs, this teacher was supporting the family. (Interview conducted with women of the UNE-SN trade union in September 2020)

However, as in other countries in the region, the pandemic also lent itself to attacks on women and public employees, in particular those working in the education sector. As was reported in other countries, their work was questioned, and the overload created by measures adopted during the pandemic was rendered invisible.

Society is also judging that “We don't do anything”, “That teachers get paid”, “That teachers are enjoying themselves at home” and that's what our colleagues hear through social networks. Recently a person [...], a politician, came out and said this clearly, “How much can teachers say, if they do nothing? They don't even have to go out to work!” (Interview conducted with women of the UNE-SN trade union in September 2020)

In this context, the executive branch of government sought to approve reforms that implied significant setbacks in terms of labor rights. Specifically, in September 2020, the Draft Law on Public Functionaries and the Civil Service was presented. This project perpetuated the precarious situation of many people working for the public sector under the modality of hired positions, which, in practice, entails a contract for the provision of services. In addition, it affected job stability, since it increased the period to achieve this from two to four years, also violating the essence of collective bargaining and collective agreements in denying the possibility of extending rights not provided for in the regulations through this route (Aguayo, 2020).

There is a bill to reform a civil service law [...], they call it “a civil career bill”. To a large extent, it is a design of the IDB where they come and say, they tell us, “Let's change!” But instead, they say, “We're going to repeal this law, and we are going to create another law which might somehow, sometimes, have the worker have an assessment made of performance on the basis of production. Whether they can continue with their work or not is another story.” (Interview conducted with women from the OTEP-A union in September 2020)



With regard to violence against women and girls, the restrictions on mobility implied a situation of greater risk and lack of protection for those experiencing this, on being locked up for long periods of time with their aggressors. Some sources mention this situation (Duarte-Recalde and Filártiga-Callizo, 2020). However, there is no quantitative information that can put the situation into perspective.

In the field of education, as in most countries in the region, the closure of schools and the suspension of face-to-face classes was a widespread measure taken in the country on the arrival of the pandemic. According to UNESCO figures, total and partial closures in Paraguay were prolonged over 65 weeks (UNESCO, 2021). However, as is evidenced in sections 2 and 3 of this chapter, this suspension was not accompanied by support policies for teachers and students. In fact, the lack of support led to the undermining of the right to education of children and adolescents and the rights of teachers in Paraguay.

2. Educating during the pandemic: The experience of women teachers in the UNE-SN

In order to get to know more deeply the experience of women teachers during the pandemic, the impact of the measures adopted on them and the conditions in which they carried out their work, a survey aimed at teachers affiliated to UNE-SN was conducted between June and July 2021, in which 375 teachers participated. In addition, this section takes up information collected during a group interview conducted with women leaders of this union during September 2020.

2.1 The profile of the women teachers

At 47.7%, about half of the teachers who participated in the survey were between 41 and 50 years old. The next largest group was those aged 31 to 40 (37.1%). The participation of teachers from other age groups was significantly lower: 6.9% were between 51 and 60 years old, 4.5% were between 26 and 30, and 3.2% were under 25, while 0.05% were over 60.

With regard to educational level, the largest group is those who completed undergraduate university studies, at 55.2%. 10.7% had started undergraduate university studies that had not yet been completed. In addition, 6.1% reported having incomplete graduate studies, 4.8% had complete graduate studies and 1.3% had completed high school as their highest level of education attained. It is significant that at 21.9%, one in five indicated having another educational level linked to training as a teacher.

Furthermore, there is a well-balanced distribution of those teaching in urban and in rural areas. At 53.9%, just over half of the respondents worked in urban areas, while 46.1% worked in rural areas. The educational level at which the largest number of teachers surveyed worked is primary (43.7%), followed by secondary (36.5%). 11.7% indicated working at the preschool level and 8% at other levels such as inclusive education.

Figure 1 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by area where they work

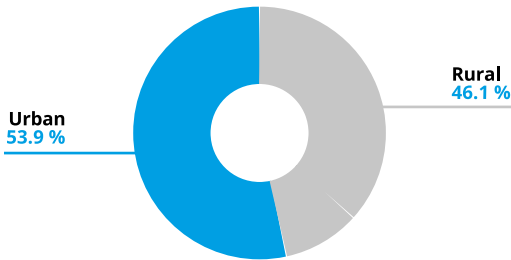
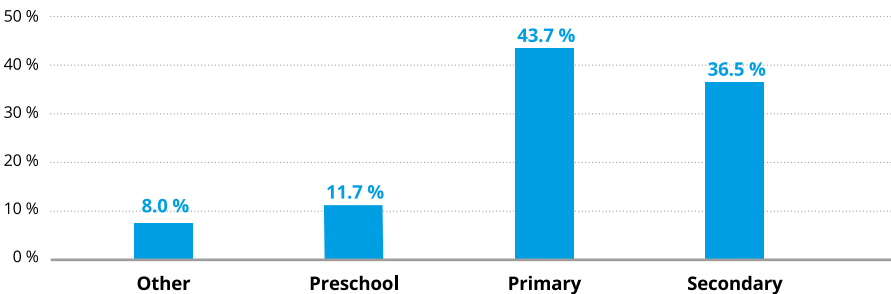


Figure 2 Paraguay. 2021. Women teachers by educational level at which they teach

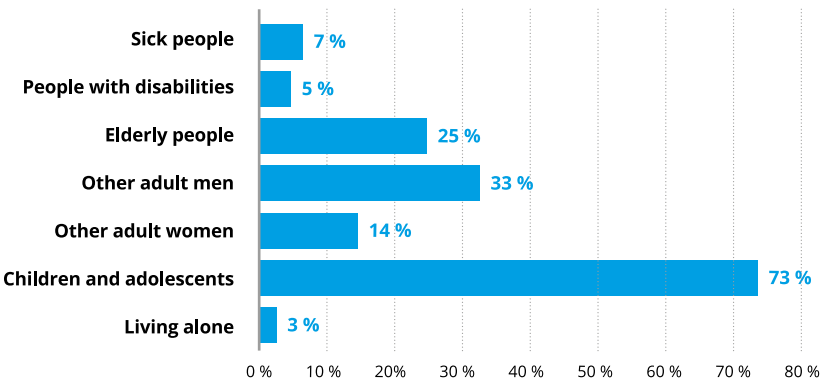


Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.

Women's paid work is determined, in practice, by their family responsibilities. In this regard, working from home during the pandemic added additional difficulties. On the one hand, it posed limitations of space and work equipment since these had to be shared. On the other hand, as will be seen later, the demand for care was multiplied. Consequently, knowing the composition of the women teachers' households is key to understanding their experience during the pandemic.

In the case of the UNE-SN women teachers who responded to the survey, it is notable that more than seven out of ten (73%) lived with children and adolescents. Those who were of study age required equipment, internet connectivity and space to develop their studies, as did the teachers. In addition, they often needed support from adults. Furthermore, the women teachers also reported living with other dependent people such as older adults (25%), sick people (7%), and people with disabilities (5%). In addition, 33% reported living with other adult men and 14% with other adult women.

Figure 3 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by people with whom they live



Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.

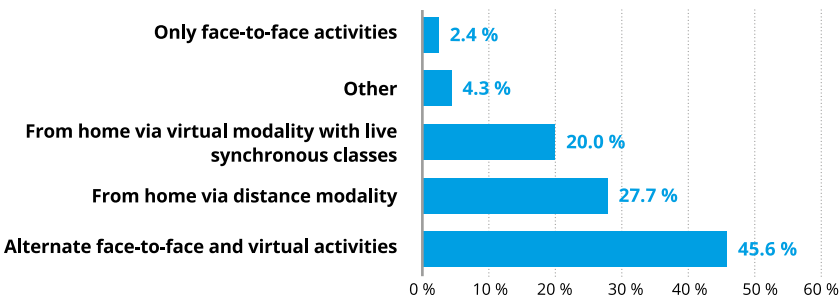
2.2 Teaching modalities during the pandemic

As already noted, the beginning of the pandemic in Paraguay was marked by a total quarantine and the suspension of in-person school activities. This involved an abrupt transition to the virtual modality, for which there was no preparation.

And, in a week, one or two weeks, just virtual education. In a fortnight, just virtual education, and maybe in that time that we had the total quarantine, it turned out to be a little more, because there was mom, dad, grandma, aunt, whatever, all in the house, and at best, I could help. (Interview conducted with women of the UNE-SN trade union in September 2020)

In the case of the UNE-SN women teachers who responded to the survey, almost half (45.6%) indicated that during the pandemic they alternated face-to-face and virtual activities. The second largest group at 27.7% was those who worked remotely. In addition, 20% indicated that they worked only virtually, and 2.4% that they only carried out face-to-face activities. An additional 4.3% indicated having worked under other modalities, among which some stand out, such as hybrid or virtual modes based from the school.

Figure 4 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by work modality during the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.



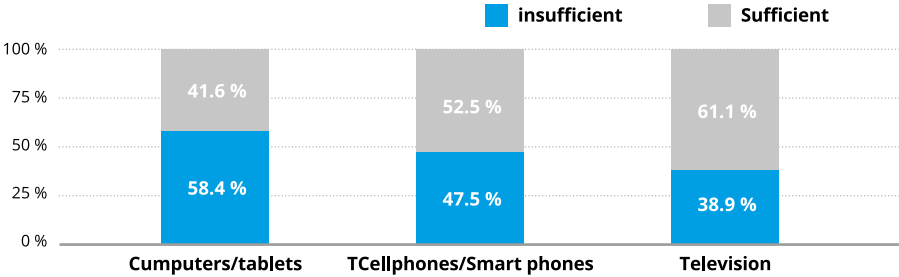
The transition to any of the aforementioned modalities involved a dramatic change in teaching dynamics. It was not a mere change of methodology, but a transition to new media that had not necessarily been available to teachers and their students. In addition, the work became even more complex when the groups of students to be attended to were large. In this sense, in the case of UNE-SN teachers, 34.7% reported having had a group of between 20 and 49 students during the pandemic and 20.5% had groups of 19 or less students. However, there was also a significant group of teachers who reported having large or very large groups. Specifically, 18.7% reported having had more than 150 students in their care, 10.9% reported groups of between 100 and 149 and 15.2% reported groups of between 50 and 99.

UNE-SN also suggested that the transition to the new modalities did not have sufficient support from the state.

Supposedly the Ministry of Education would have to make a platform available for teachers and parents that would be free, but that was not the case, because every time I topped up my balance, it would immediately run out. (Interview conducted with women of the UNE-SN trade union in September 2020)

In this scenario, given that a high percentage of teachers—seven out of ten—lived with children and adolescents, it is not surprising that virtual teaching was marked by the shortage of equipment to carry this out. This shortage manifested in the availability of equipment such as computers or tablets, cell phones and televisions. In this regard, 58.4% of teachers indicated that their homes did not have enough computers or tablets to work and study with during the pandemic. 47.5% indicated the same situation regarding the availability of smart phones. Finally, although the availability of televisions was higher, 4 out of 10 (38.9%) indicated that they did not have enough of these for their needs.

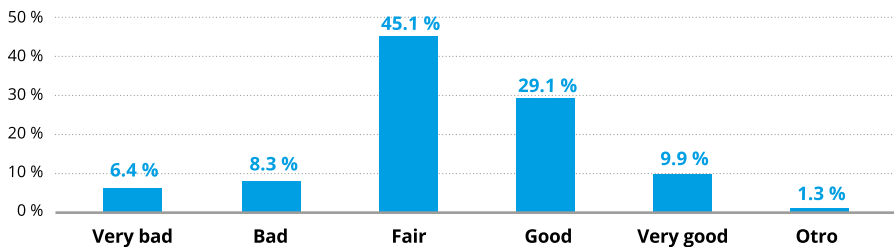
Figure 5 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by availability of equipment for virtual work and study



Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.


On the other hand, as evidenced in section 1 of this chapter, internet access is an important limitation in Paraguay. Consequently, most teachers reported not having an optimal connection with which to undertake their work. At 45.1%, almost half reported having had a fair connection, 8.3% a bad connection and 6.4% a very bad connection. Those who reported having had a good or very good connection were only 29.1% and 9.9% respectively.

Figure 6 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Quality of internet connectivity for work



Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.

UNE-SN indicated that this was a constant that on occasions forced teachers to connect at times of less network saturation, such as in the early morning.



Teachers have to get up at dawn to try to get enough connectivity to download work from the platform and to be able to send it at dawn, sending off the tasks for the children. Because otherwise it is impossible during the day, because the network is already saturated with so many people using it, because the telephone or technological system is not prepared. Networks are not prepared for the amount of people who are using the internet more now. (Interview conducted with women of the UNE-SN trade union in September 2020)

This limitation of resources also affected the students' homes. Consequently, the lack of financial resources to pay for internet connectivity and equipment undermined their right to education. In fact, in this period education could be said to have lost its free character.

In the country's rural areas, we have a lot of problems because of this issue. One, the economic issue to buy internet data. Two, the lack of internet signal in the cities or towns where the students are [...]. Those are problems, and the government does not see them. They believe that it is easy, the economic side. A mother has a cell phone, but it is an obsolete cell phone that doesn't get the information for the tasks, in a way that is lousy, and she has three children, and she does not have the capacity to buy another cell phone, she doesn't have the capacity to buy a tablet or a laptop. (Interview conducted with women of the UNE-SN trade union in September 2020).

Materials for distance education were also not properly taken into account. In this sense, it was proposed that these were not of the required quality and that their distribution was not punctual.

On the one hand, they are of very questionable quality. The booklet, as the colleague said, is not attractive to children, firstly, and secondly, the work is given there, but we know as teachers that this task is the last step in a teaching process [...]. We are going to continue like this. We have connectivity problems,

problems with the booklets that do not arrive on time. (Interview conducted with women of the UNE-SN trade union in September 2020).

In this context, the teachers tried to compensate for the limitations existing by acquiring equipment to undertake their work in the best possible way, even incurring expenses in support of their students. At 93.3%, almost all the teachers responding to the survey indicated that they have often spent part of their income on buying equipment or paying for internet to be able to work. An additional 5.9% indicated that they have done so occasionally. Only 0.8% say that they were never in this situation. In the same way, 65.6% reported having spent their income to cover the needs of students. 28.8% say they did so occasionally.

Figure 7 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers spent their income on equipment or internet connectivity to work during the pandemic

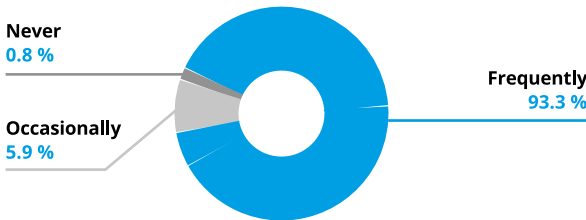
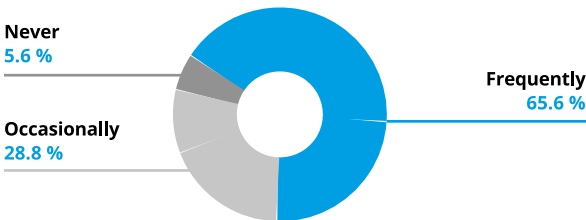


Figure 8 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers who spent their income on supporting students' needs during the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.

The UNE-SN members agreed with this analysis since they were also aware that many teachers had to spend their own income to be able to cope with the demands of their job.

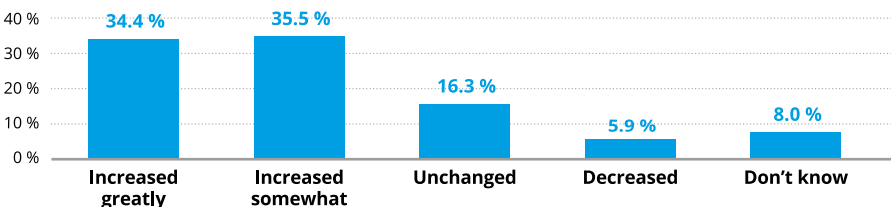
Teachers, from their own salaries, pay that fee, the balance. Many teachers had to connect up Wi-Fi in their homes that was not ready to have it. At best they maybe had to buy a slightly more modern computer [...], each teacher had to manage to acquire a computer, a phone that was slightly more, with more, a little better, to be able to reach their students. (Interview conducted with women of the UNE-SN trade union in September 2020)

2.3 Impact on the right to education

Some of the factors indicated so far point to a significant affectation of the right to education. As already mentioned, during the pandemic education ceased to be free, since in order to keep students in contact with the educational dynamic, a significant economic effort on behalf of families was required. This, moreover, occurred in a context of widespread economic crisis.

This situation may have resulted in the abandonment of studies by children and adolescents. 34.4% of the women teachers responding to the survey considered that the number of students dropping out of school increased greatly during the pandemic. An additional 35.5% considered that it increased somewhat. Meanwhile 16.3% believed that it did not increase and 5.9% considered that it decreased.

Figure 9 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by perception of change in the number of students abandoning studies due to the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.

The criterion of the UNE-SN trade unionists interviewed on this issue is more forceful. They proposed that, in the first year of the pandemic, a significant number of students dropped out of school. The difficulties in maintaining the link to school coupled with the economic needs of families generated a context conducive to this.

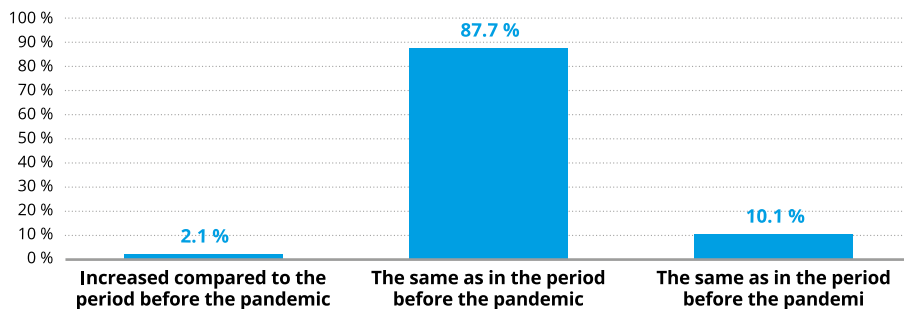
They're fed up and, "You know what? I have already left school." A large percentage of those I converse with from a lower social status state that they have already given up the school year with their children, because they don't feel prepared for their children to undertake the activities asked of them. In addition to that, the families with all this scarcity of resources and low economic level, saying, "My son isn't going to learn anything, I'd rather we just stop and learn properly next year. It's no good for the child to pass the level, pass into the next grade without knowing how to read." (Interview conducted with women of the UNE-SN trade union in September 2020)

2.4 Job stability and salary

At 95.5%, the majority of the women teachers responding to the survey indicated that their working relationship has been stable during the pandemic. In addition, 85.6% reported having received their full salary in a timely fashion in this period. A lower percentage at 8.5% indicated that, despite having received their salary in full, they received it in arrears, while 4.3% indicated that they did not receive it in full. On similar lines, 87.7% indicated that their income as a teacher was similar to that they received before the pandemic, 10.1% that it was reduced and 2.1% that it increased.



Figure 10 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by change in income during the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.

However, in the case of Paraguay, it is important to highlight that in 2020 salary increases for the sector agreed upon in the Teaching Statute were suspended. This statute states that educators have the right to a Basic Professional Salary. To achieve this, salary adjustments that were not made during the pandemic are required. The trade union sector has carried out different actions related to this issue to demand compliance with this right.

Due to the pandemic, the government this year suspended the salary increase we were going to have, which was to be 16% [...]. At the beginning of the pandemic, a law came out, a presidential decree, where all salary increases for 2020 are suspended, and we have worked for the Ministry of Education for our entire our teaching career. That teaching career, in that teaching career you start with a basic professional salary. To reach that basic professional salary we have to get there in 2021, and how would we get there? With an annual 16% [increase] to be able to reach the basic salary in 2021 [...]. So, we are now in that struggle. (Interview conducted with women of the UNE-SN trade union in September 2020)

2.5 Income is maintained, but expenses increased

As has already been pointed out, teachers' incomes were vital to sustaining and supporting those who lost their jobs or the means to generate income in their environment.

Furthermore, UNE-SN indicated that there was a significant increase in the cost of living. There was a widespread rise in prices.

Prices in supermarkets soared. Many say, "No, it didn't increase!" But you realize that it increased because when shopping, you used to take ₡200,000 to go to the supermarket and come out maybe with 5 bags and now you come out with 2 bags. (Interview conducted with women of the UNE-SN trade union in September 2020)

The situation reported by the women teachers surveyed regarding the income of their households during the pandemic varies. 34.1% indicated that, during the pandemic, their income remained the same compared to the previous period, 33.6% said it increased and 31.5% said it decreased. However, the situation is more homogeneous when it comes to expenses. In this case, eight out of ten (80.5%) indicated that expenses increased, 13.6% said they remained the same and only 5.3% indicated that they decreased.

Figure 11 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by household income during the pandemic

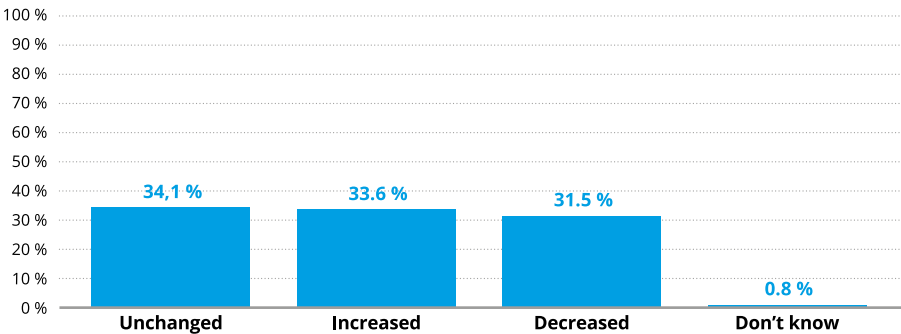
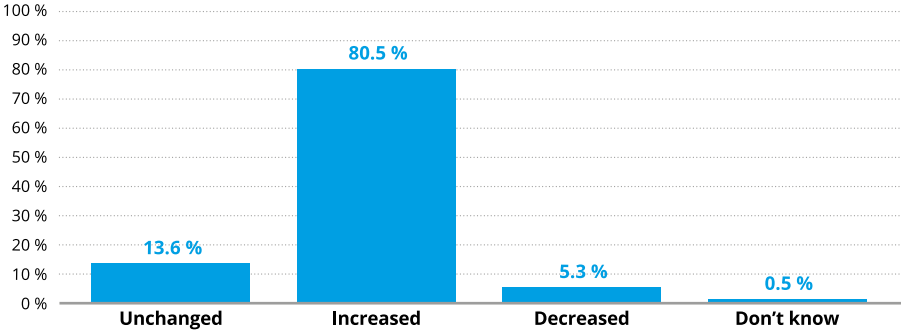




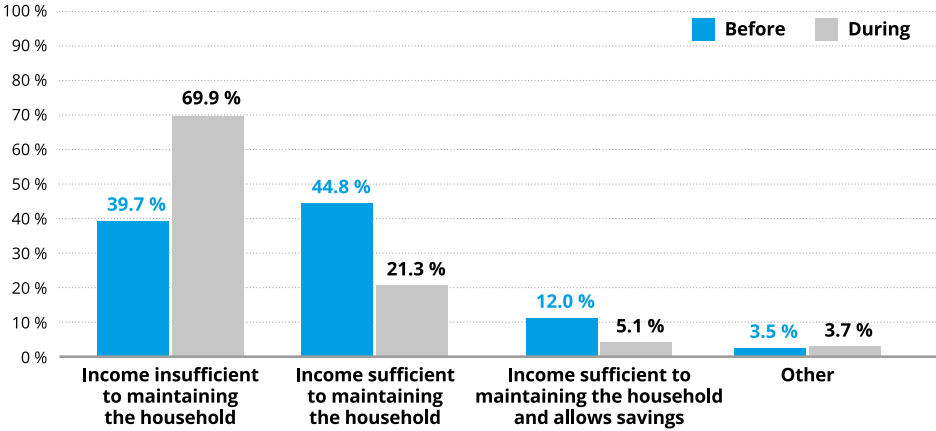
Figure 12 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by household expenses during the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.

This had an important impact on the economic situation of the teachers' households. Before the pandemic, four out of ten (39.7%) had households with insufficient income to meet expenses, however, during the pandemic, this proportion increased to almost seven out of ten (69.9%). Consequently, the percentage of households with sufficient income to support themselves was halved, from 44.8% before the pandemic to 21.3% during the pandemic. The savings capacity of households was also significantly reduced. 12% of households had savings capacity before the pandemic, while during it this went on to represent only 5.1%.

Figure 13 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by sufficiency of income to maintaining household before and during the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.

Finally, it is important to note that before the pandemic, 48.3% of the women teachers carried out other activities in addition to teaching to generate income. During the pandemic, this proportion reduced to 31.5%.

2.6 Use of time during the pandemic

The pandemic implied a significant increase in the demand for care that was assumed mostly by women. This was also the case for the women teachers. Among those answering the survey, more than half, at 57.6%, indicated that, without including the care of people, during the pandemic they took on more domestic work. 28.3% indicated that their domestic workload remained the same, and only 13.3% stated that it was reduced. The largest part, at 38.9%, indicated that the time they devoted to caring for dependents increased during the pandemic, while 35.2% indicated that this remained the same and 8.8% said that it was reduced.

Figure 14 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by time spent on domestic work* during the pandemic

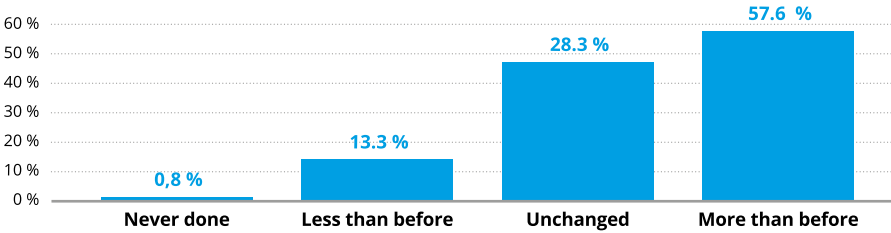
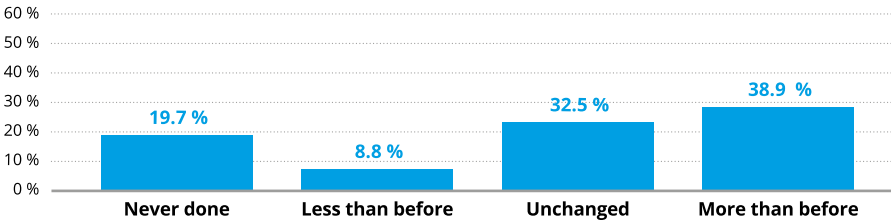


Figure 15 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by time spent attending to dependent people during the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.

Given that seven out of ten teachers live with minors, it is not surprising that a similar proportion, 72.7%, reported devoting more time during the pandemic to supporting children in their studies. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the larger part, at 34.1%, indicated that the time spent caring for non-dependent people increased. These latter are people who could presumably meet their own needs but who, on the contrary, generated even more work overload for the women teachers.

Figure 16 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by time spent attending to non-dependent people during the pandemic

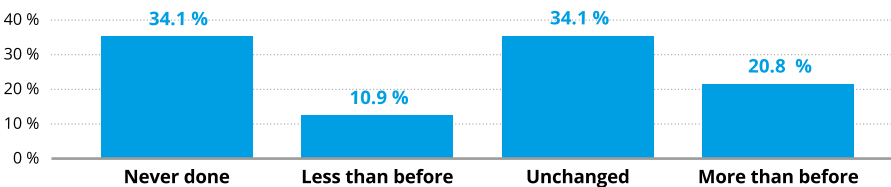
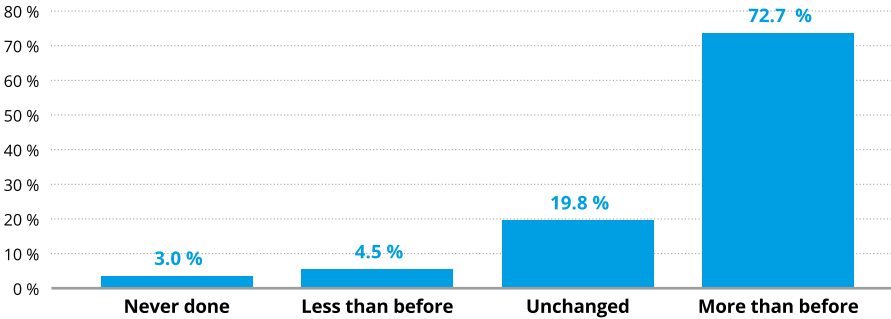


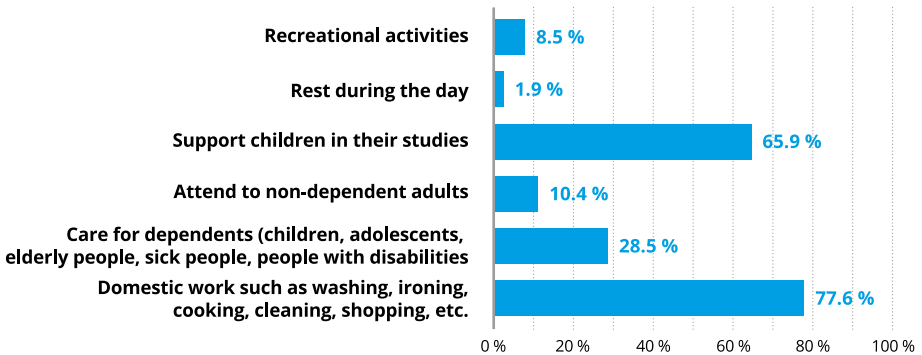
Figure 17 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by time spent supporting children in their studies



Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.

The report on the activities carried out in the week prior to completing the survey is consistent with the above. Here the vast majority, at 77.6%, indicated that they performed domestic work and 65.9% performed tasks to support the study of children. A smaller percentage of 28.5% carried out care work for dependent people, while 10.4% reported having cared for non-dependent adults. It can be emphasized that the increased demand for care limits the possibilities of rest and recreation. Only 8.5% reported having performed recreational tasks and 1.9% were able to rest during the day.

Figure 18 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by activities performed the previous week



Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.

Rest and recreation time was significantly reduced during the pandemic. In this case, six out of ten women (59.6%) answering the survey indicated that their rest time in the day was reduced, while seven out of ten (68.9%) indicated the same situation regarding time spent on recreation.

Figure 19 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by time spent resting during the day during the pandemic

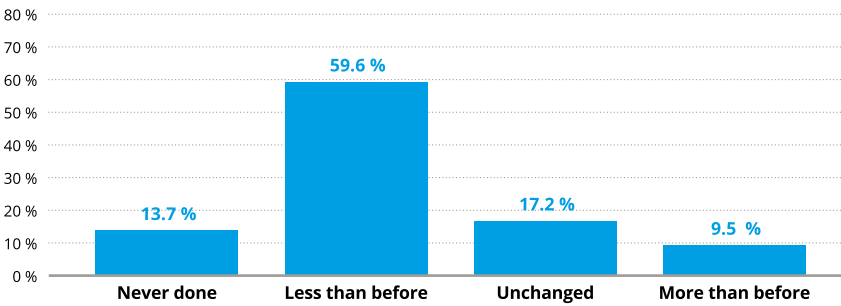
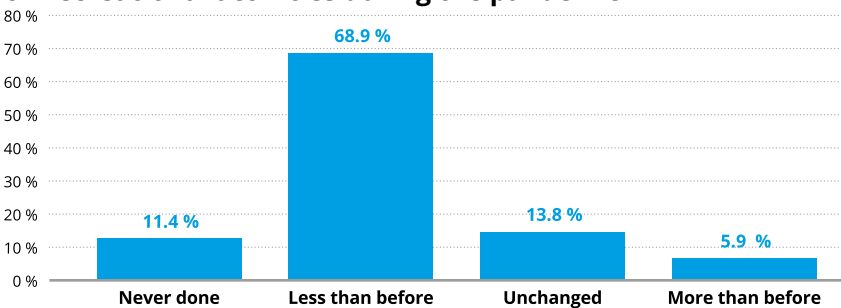


Figure 20 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by time spent on recreational activities during the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.

When comparing the situation of the teachers with that of other adults living in their homes, it is important to point out that the overload was greater for the former. The gap is greater with respect to adult men. In this case, only 29.5% took on more domestic work during the pandemic. With regard to other adult women, it is notable that they have assumed more domestic work to a greater extent than adult men. This was the case for 32.7%. However, there is also a much lower percentage than that of the women teachers in this situation.

Figure 21 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by time other adult women in their household spent on domestic work during the pandemic

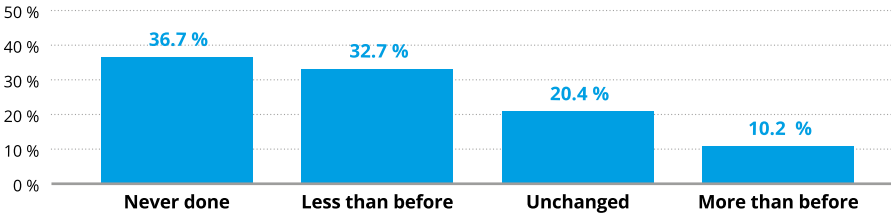
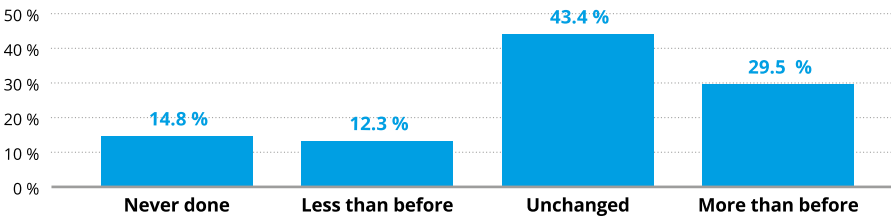


Figure 22 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by time other adult men in their household spent on domestic work during the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.

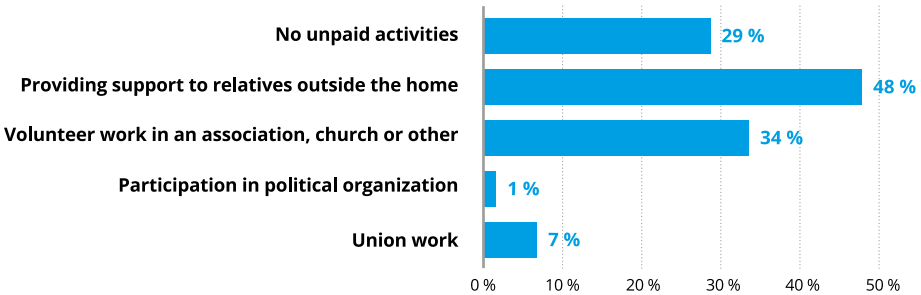
UNE-SN agreed on the analysis regarding an increase in unpaid work for teachers. In fact, the experience of participants in the group interview coincided with the information collected through the survey.

I have to cook, I have to do the chores for the three girls. My husband is there, but it's like he's not there because he goes to work and, then, no, he's the typical husband. That is, he's a good person, but it's normal, fun. So I realized one day, fool, why do I have to change jobs, when it's my house? Cooking, washing the cutlery, folding the clothes, doing the laundry, doing homework with the girls and at night being ready and happy to watch a movie. (Interview conducted with women of the UNE-SN trade union in September 2020)

In addition to domestic work, women teachers took on other unpaid activities important to the wellbeing of society and the family. 48% indicated that they provided support to relatives outside their homes and 34% did volun-

teer work. To a lesser extent, other activities such as trade union work (7%) or membership in political organizations (1%) were mentioned.

Figure 23 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by unpaid activities they perform



Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.

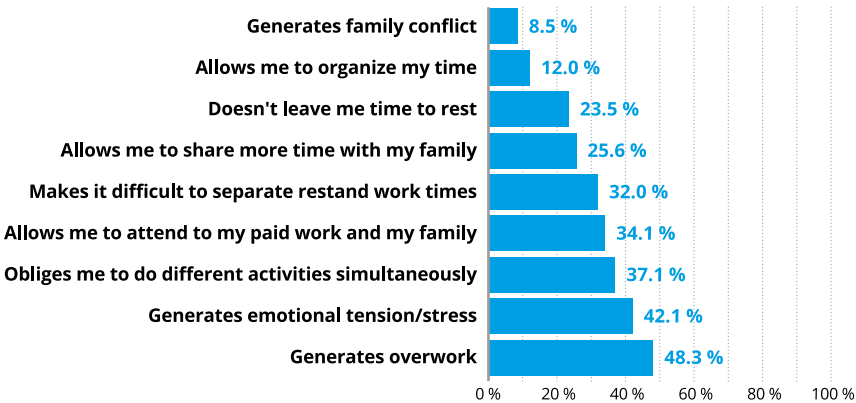
2.7 Impacts of telework

As has already been pointed out, the teleworking modality had different impacts on the women workers. It is often suggested that teleworking can have some positive effects, however, in the case of the UNE-SN teachers responding to the survey, these point out more negative aspects of this work modality. In this sense, 48.3% indicated that it generated work overload, 42.1% that it generated emotional tension and 37.1% that it forced them to perform different tasks simultaneously.

The positive aspect most valued by the teachers was that it allowed them to attend to work and family responsibilities. This was the opinion of 34.1% of the teachers answering the survey. In a similar fashion, 25.6% considered that it allowed them to share more time with their families.

In addition to the already mentioned points, to a lesser extent teleworking was considered to have other negative impacts. 32% said that it made it difficult for them to separate work and rest times, 23.5% that it did not leave them time to rest, and 8.5% that it generated family conflicts.

Figure 24 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by effects of telework

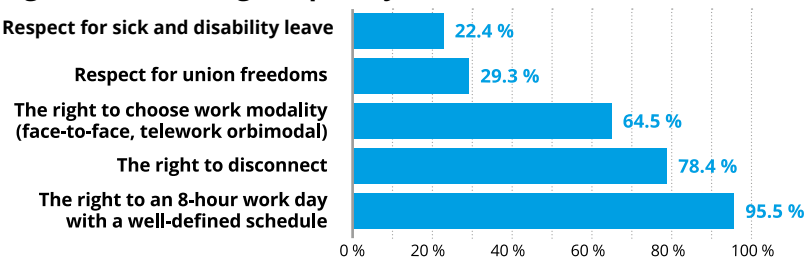


Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.

Furthermore, there was consensus on indicating that teleworking during the pandemic involved the violation of labor rights. Specifically, at 95.5%, almost all the teachers indicated that the right to an eight-hour working day with a well-defined schedule was affected. In addition, almost eight out of ten (78.4%) indicated that the right to disconnect was violated.

More than half, at 64.5%, considered that the right to choose one's work modality was violated. The impact on other rights such as respect for trade union freedoms (29.3%) and the right to sick and disability leave (22.4%) were mentioned to a lesser extent.

Figure 25 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by opinion on rights most infringed upon by telework



Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.



The UNE-SN also indicated that teleworking and teaching modalities during the pandemic impacted on the rights and well-being of teachers. It noted that working time increased, along with stress and tension. The implementation of actions by institutions in this regard was one of the union's demands.

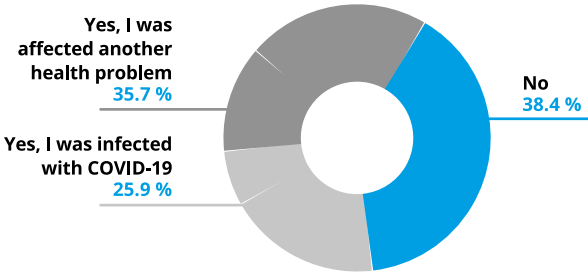
Here, for example [...], we don't have telework regulations. It's twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The Ministry itself [...], because the Ministry clearly says, "Wherever and by whatever means, teachers must fulfill the activities." So, then, there is nothing that defends me as a teacher from having to work on Saturdays, from accepting tasks at ten at night, from not responding to an assignment. Five months after I evaluated the assignment, you can still send it to me. It is exhausting, from every point of view. The Ministry does not protect its teachers, it is not taking emotional care of us. (Interview conducted with women of the UNE-SN trade union in September 2020)

We requested [...] periodic recesses. For example, every two months to take a one-week break because the stress that teachers, parents, and students are under is really felt [...]. We have been working and requesting the Ministry to create that measure, because now that work has become virtual, that has increased the workload of teachers. (Interview conducted with women of the UNE-SN trade union in September 2020)

2.8 Health during the pandemic

At the end of July 2021, a total of 452,388 cases of COVID-19 were reported in Paraguay (Ministry of Health, 2021). Considering that the country has a population of 7.25 million people, this meant that, at that time, 6.2% of the population had been infected with COVID-19. As Figure 25 shows, the contagion rate among teachers was much higher, with 25.9% of those responding to the survey indicating that they had contracted COVID-19. In addition, 35.7% indicated that they were affected by another health problem.

Figure 25 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by health problems during the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.

Among those who had health problems, 13% indicated that they did not require medical attention. Almost half, at 45% received medical care in a public health center, and 29% did so in private health centers. In addition, 11.3% indicated that they did not receive care although they required it, while 1.7% indicated that they resorted to other options such as community health services. The teachers who received medical attention emphasized that the care received was good. 50.9% indicated that the service was good, 31.6% that it was very good and 17.5% that it was fair.

However, UNE-SN pointed out that, although care was received in public health centers, the cost of healthcare for severe COVID-19 could be onerous for educators.

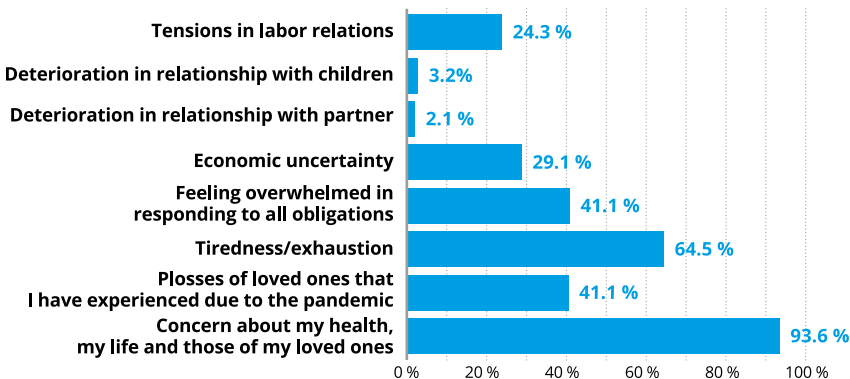
Those who are admitted to intensive care are spending between \$400 a day per treatment bed. I have experience with friends who went into treatment and that is what is being spent, because, no, there just isn't the quantity available that we would need if we all went out to work, if we got infected [...]. That's public healthcare, because if you go into private healthcare, you're going to have to spend like \$10,000 a day. (Interview conducted with women of the UNE-SN trade union in September 2020)

2.9 Concerns during the pandemic

Given the significant health impact that the pandemic had on the women teachers, it is not surprising that their main concern during this period was linked to this area. In this sense, almost all the teachers responding to the survey, at 93.6%, reported having felt concern for their health, their life and those of their families. In addition, 64.5% reported feeling worried about the exhaustion they faced.

On the other hand, a high percentage, at four out of ten (41.1%), also reported having lost people close to them because of the pandemic, and a similar proportion reported feeling overwhelmed in responding to all their obligations. To a lesser extent, other aspects were indicated such as economic uncertainty (29.1%), tensions in labor relations (24.3%) and, for a minority, deterioration in relationships with children (3.2%) and the deterioration in their relationships with their partners (2.1%).

Figure 26 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by main concerns during the pandemic

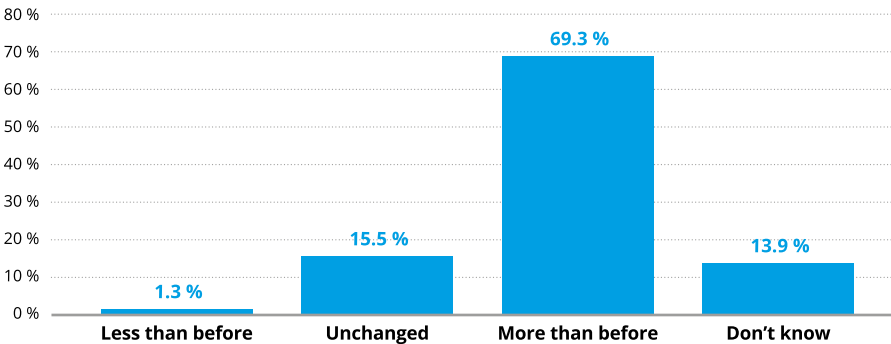


Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.

2.10 Violence against women and teachers during the pandemic

As already noted in section 1 of this chapter, the pandemic generated conditions of increased risk and lack of protection of women from violence. Consequently, the indicators available in many countries in the region show an increase in violence against women in this period. This was also the perception of the UNE-SN teachers who responded to the survey. In this regard, seven out of ten teachers (69.3%) indicated that violence against women increased. Only 15.5% indicated that it remained the same as before the pandemic, and 1.3% that it decreased.

Figure 27 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by perception of change in violence against women during the pandemic



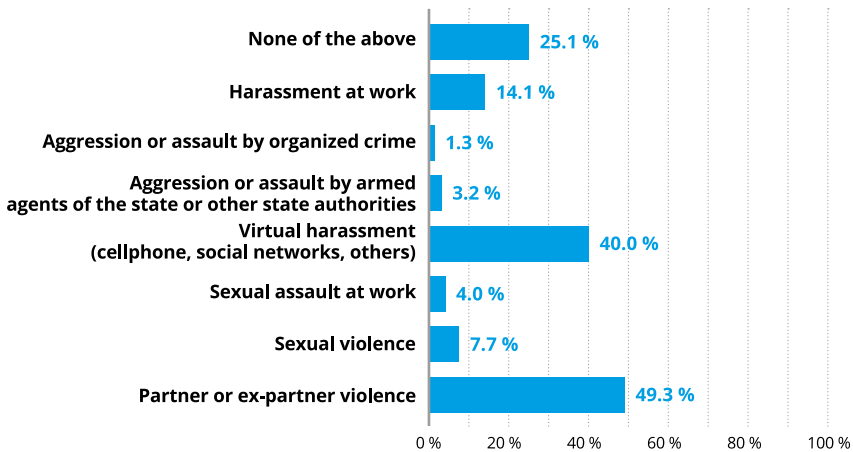
Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.

In the same vein, almost half the respondents (46.9%) considered that violence against women teachers increased. Only 10.1% indicated that it did not increase and the remaining 42.9% indicated that they had no criteria in this regard. Regarding the manifestations of violence, roughly half at 49.3% considered that intimate partner or ex-partner violence increased, 40% considered virtual harassment increased and 14.1% considered that workplace harassment increased. Other manifestations of violence such as sexual violence, sexual harassment at work, assaults by agents of the state and organized crime were mentioned to a lesser extent.

UNE-SN also proposed that violence against women increased.

A few weeks in there were even fellow teachers who lost their lives at the hands of their partners. The violence increased considerably and not only violence, but it went to the extreme. Many women lost their lives and, not only did we see violence against women, but also against children. (Interview conducted with women of the UNE-SN trade union in September 2020)

Figure 28 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by perception of change in violence against women during the pandemic



Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.

Among the teachers responding to the survey, eight out of ten reported not having experienced situations of violence during the pandemic. On the other hand, 10.4% reported having faced virtual harassment, 5.3% reported partner or ex-partner violence, and 4.8% reported experiencing workplace harassment.

Among those who did face some situation of violence, 29.2% sought help and 70.8% did not. In the first group, the majority, at 33.3% sought support from a state institution and 28.6% from a close person. In addition, 9.5% sought support from the trade union, and a similar proportion did so from a church. An additional 19% resorted to other options, among which psychological support stands out.

The help received was generally assessed to have been positive. Specifically, seven out of ten (71.4%) of the teachers receiving support considered that it helped them a lot, 19% considered that it did not help them and 9.5% considered that it helped them somewhat.

On the other hand, those who did not seek help reported not having done so because they did not need it (37.3%), because they considered that no one could provide them with help (19.6%), because no local support institutions existed (15.7%), because they could not leave the house due to caring for dependent people (5.9%), or because they did not trust the authorities (5.9%). Other reasons were also mentioned, although these had less weight.

Finally, it is important to note that nine out of ten women teachers (89.9%) considered that the union has the capacity to take preventive measures against violence. In this sense, suggestion was made of measures such as providing free legal representation to teachers (62%), conducting awareness campaigns (50%), and training (46%). To a lesser extent, but also in a large proportion, recommendation was made of the creation of prevention protocols (34%), the inclusion of measures to address violence in collective bargaining (31%) and increasing the visibility of violence against women teachers (31%).

Figure 29 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by opinion on union capacity to take measures to prevent violence against women teachers

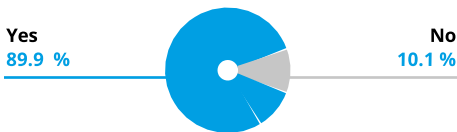
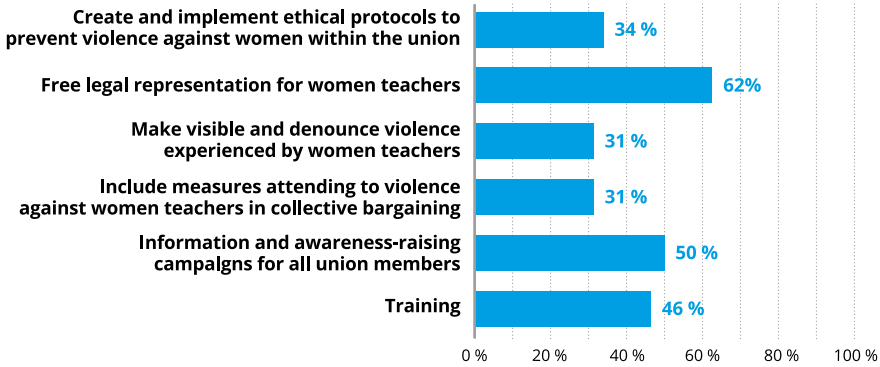




Figure 30 Paraguay. UNE-SN. 2021. Women teachers by type of union action recommended against violence



Results of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 on women teachers affiliated with UNE-SN.

3. Educating during the pandemic: The experience of OTEP-A teachers

In order to understand more deeply the experience of women teachers during the pandemic and the impact of the measures and the conditions under which their work was performed, between June and August 2021 a survey aimed at women teachers affiliated to the OTEP-A union was made, with 391 respondents. Additionally, this section also considers information collected during a group interview conducted with women leaders of this union during September 2020.

3.1 The profile of the women teachers

The OTEP-A women teachers answering the survey were mostly between 31 and 50 years of age. Specifically, 43.7% were between 31 and 40, and 41.3% were between 41 and 50 years of age. In addition, 6.5% were between 51 and 60, and 5.6% were between 26 and 30 years old. Those under the age of 25 and over 60 made up less than 3% of the total.

With regard to educational level, at 54.5%, more than half had completed undergraduate university studies. An additional 13.8% had started university studies

but had not yet completed these. 6.6% reported having completed postgraduate studies and an additional 4.6% indicated having started studies at this level. A minority, at 1.8%, reported having completed high school as their highest educational level attained. In addition, almost two out of ten (18.7%) indicated having other types of studies, among which teacher training stands out.

On the other hand, six out of ten (59.3%) of the teachers answering the survey worked in urban areas, while the remaining ones did so in rural areas. Approximately half of the female teachers (54%) worked at the primary level. The second most frequent level was secondary, with 23% of those answering the survey working at this level. The third most common was the preschool level (14.1%). Very few, at 0.5%, reported working in university education. 8.4% indicated other types of options. For example, some teachers stated that they worked in several of the levels indicated.

Figure 1 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by area where they teach

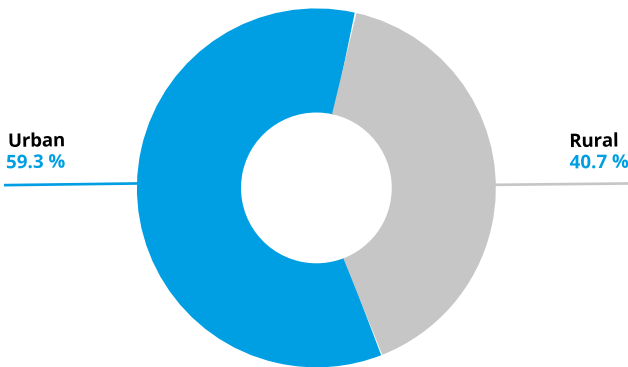
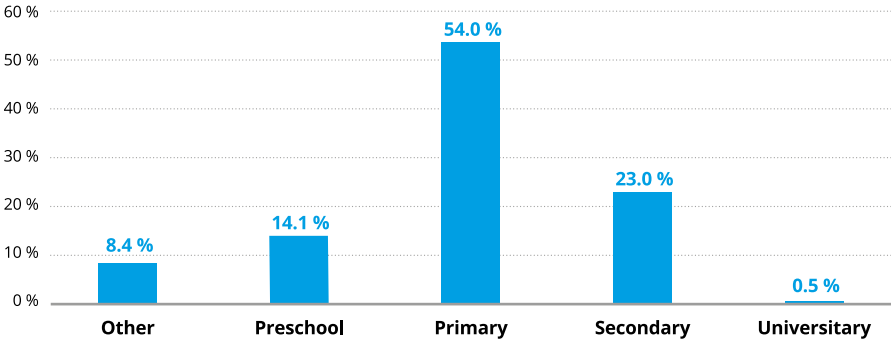


Figure 2 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by educational level at which they teach

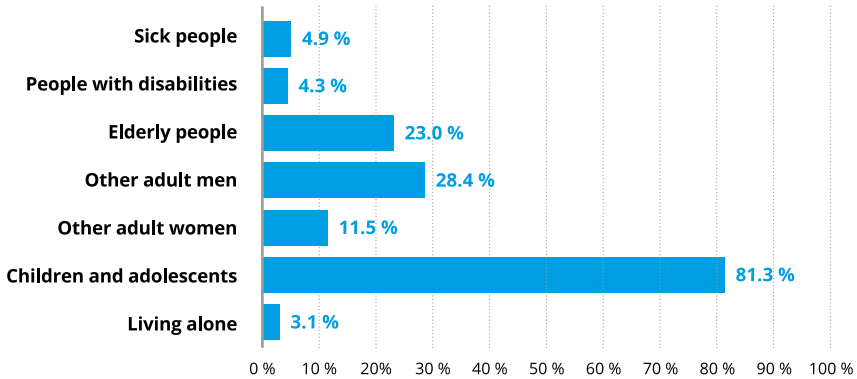


Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

Another relevant aspect regarding the profile of female teachers had to do with the composition of their households. This is a decisive element to understanding their experiences during the pandemic. Working from home reconfigured the demand for care and often meant that work and family responsibilities had to be undertaken simultaneously. As will be seen later, this situation was particularly complex for those who lived with children and adolescents and for those who had other dependents in their care.

In the case of the OTEP-A teachers responding to the survey, it is notable that at 81.3%, approximately eight out of ten lived with children and adolescents. In addition to requiring care and support, school age dependents also required equipment and work space, so increasing the pressure on household resources. Furthermore, the women teachers also reported living with older adults (23%), sick people (4.9%) and people with disabilities (4.3%). In addition, 28.4% reported living with adult men, while 11.5% reported living with other adult women.

Figure 3 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by persons with whom they live



Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

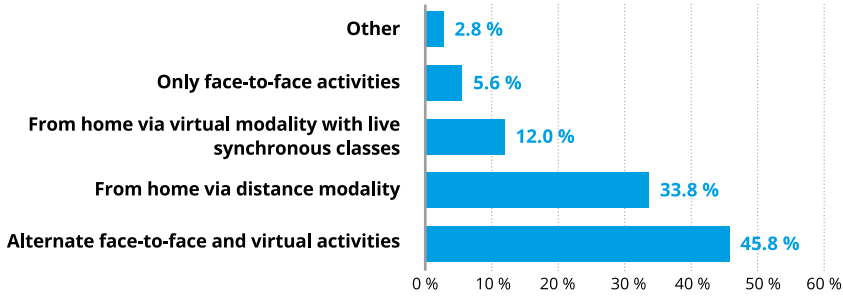
3.2 Teaching modalities during the pandemic

As noted in the first section of this chapter, the beginning of the pandemic in Paraguay was accompanied by a total quarantine. Consequently, face-to-face school activities were suspended. In addition, after the end of the total quarantine, schools remained closed for a time. As in other countries in the region, the suspension of face-to-face classes meant changing almost overnight to new study modalities.

In the case of the OTEP-A teachers responding to the survey, at 45.8%, almost half indicated that during the pandemic they alternated face-to-face and virtual activities. The second largest group was those working remotely (33.8%). In addition, 12% indicated having worked only virtually, while 5.6% indicated only carrying out face-to-face activities. 2.8% said they worked in other modalities, among which are notable the virtual modality based from the school and hybrid modalities.



Figure 4 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by work modality during the pandemic



Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

The abrupt transition to non-attendance involved a drastic change in teaching dynamics. Beyond the methodological change, the transition to new teaching modalities required resources that were not necessarily available to teachers and their students. The work was particularly complex for those working with large groups of students. Among the OTEP-A teachers responding to the survey, 38.1% reported having had a group of between 20 and 49 students during the pandemic, while 24% had 19 or fewer students. However, the percentage of those reporting having had large or very large groups is also significant. Specifically, 17.6% reported having had more than 150 students in their care, 8.4% reported groups of between 100 and 149, and 11.8% reported groups of between 50 and 99.

In addition, institutional support with regard to equipment, resources and training in this period was insufficient. The interviewed OTEP-A affiliates reported:

Many of our colleagues in Paraguay [...] have no command, have zero or little knowledge of digital tools; many of them are being helped by their teenaged children, who are the ones who are somewhat carrying the burden along with their mothers to send and receive students' assignments. The Ministry also proposed virtual training, but unfortunately the Ministry itself did not take

care of that virtual training, it was done with people from elsewhere, from other countries, on the use of Teams. (Interview conducted with women from the OTEP-A union in September 2020)

Thus, OTEP-A pointed out that, regardless of the formally defined modalities, in practice, teaching depended on the resources that each teacher managed to mobilize. Specifically, most interactions with the student body were carried out through messaging applications such as WhatsApp.

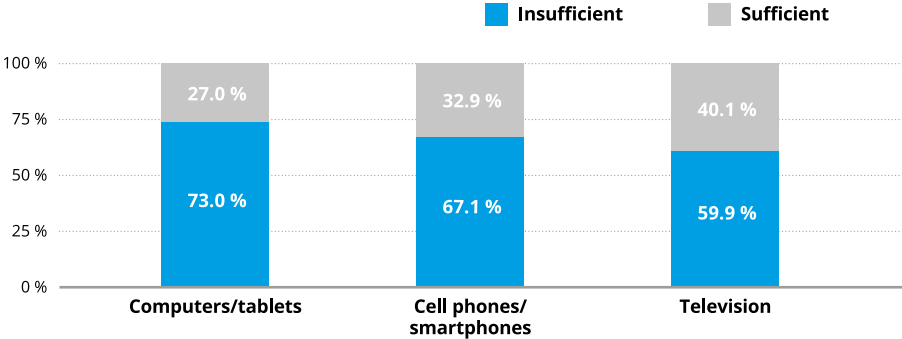
And another issue is that, in this context of pandemic, teachers are the ones who are financially supporting the transfer of activities, because, through this, we are not undertaking a teaching-learning process, that activity is not being carried out in which the teacher can teach. A few do manage it through videos or through voice recordings and so on, but, for the large part, we are mostly left using WhatsApp as a means to send tasks and to do nothing else but that process of complying. (Interview conducted with women from the OTEP-A union in September 2020)

The distance learning modality did not have sufficient resources either. In fact, indication was made that the materials distributed by the Ministry were of poor quality. In addition, no investment was made to produce this type of materials, but rather voluntary collaboration was requested from teachers.

The Ministry of Education and Science sent some booklets that are no more than barely acceptable, that are insufficient for the students, sent due to the pressure that the students themselves exerted, but this did not arrive for all subjects [...]. And the teachers who are preparing the plans are unpaid teachers, they are volunteering. A link for volunteer teachers for the preparation of these lesson plans was launched in March when the quarantine began, with the promise that, under the plan, the name of the teacher who prepared it would appear at the foot of the page. (Interview conducted with women from the OTEP-A union in September 2020)

The teachers responding to the survey also indicated that the availability of devices for study and work in their homes was insufficient. If it is taken into account that there are children and adolescents in the homes of eight out of ten of the teachers responding to the survey, it can be expected that the shortage of this type of resources was widespread, since several people in the family required them. This shortage was particularly marked with regard to equipment such as computers and tablets, cell phones and televisions. In this sense, at 73%, more than seven out of ten teachers indicated that their homes lacked enough computers or tablets. 67.1% indicated the same situation regarding the availability of smartphones. Finally, although the availability of televisions was higher, six out of ten (59.9%) indicated that these were insufficient to their needs.

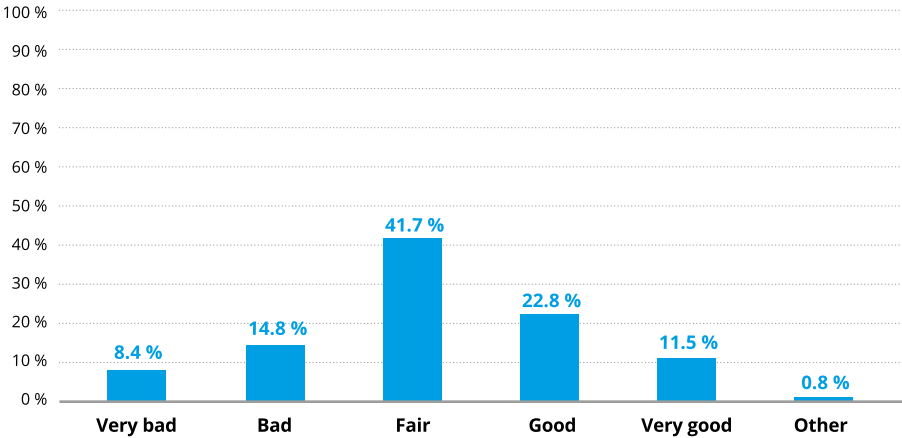
Figure 5 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by availability of equipment for virtual work and study



Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

The precarious access to the internet in Paraguay also affected the conditions in which teachers carried out their work. In this sense, most teachers reported not having optimal internet connectivity to undertake their work. Among those responding to the survey, four out of ten (41.7%) reported having had a fair connection, 14.8% reported a bad connection and 8.4% reported a very bad connection. Those who reported having had a good or very good connection were only 22.8% and 11.5% respectively.

Figure 6 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by quality of internet connectivity



Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

Faced with a shortage of resources, teachers tried to compensate for the existing limitations through the acquisition of new equipment and even by spending their income on supporting their students. At 94.4%, almost all the teachers responding to the survey indicated that they often spent part of their income on buying equipment or paying for internet to be able to work. An additional 4.6% indicated that they did so occasionally. Only 1% said they never were in this situation. In the same way, 64.5% reported having spent their income to cover the needs of students. 31.7% said they did so occasionally.

Figure 7 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers who spent their income on equipment or internet connectivity for work during the pandemic

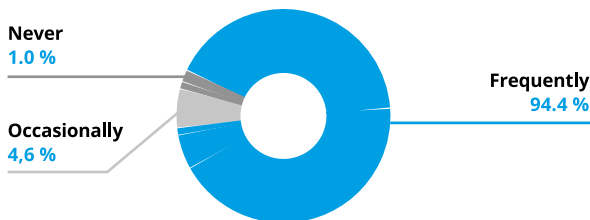
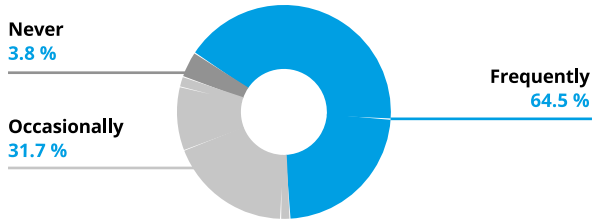


Figure 8 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers who spent their income on supporting students' needs during the pandemic



Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

OTEP-A also proposed that the new teaching modalities involved greater spending both on internet and on the acquisition of new equipment. It indicated that many teachers had to go into debt for this purpose.

Many say that they are getting into debt just to have a phone that can send and receive tasks. They've also had to basically look for internet plans, plans for internet access, because paying for data like we do is not enough. We buy some data for "x" amount and many of them told me, "No, I had to take out an internet plan that is much more powerful and that's going to be the only way I am going to be able to deal with this situation we teachers are required to comply with." (Interview conducted with women from the OTEP-A union in September 2020)

They have to cross rivers, there are inhospitable places and, in the same way, with that concern in itself, of itself, because it is an assumed commitment, a responsibility, you have to make that tremendous effort. Because, on behalf of the MEC [Ministry of Education and Science], the only thing you can actually do is make do. That is, "We offer you the platform, you have everything." (Interview conducted with women from the OTEP-A union in September 2020)

In addition, indication is made that the platform offered by the Ministry of Education and Science to undertake the work, Teams, requires a good internet connec-

tion—which most teachers did not have—and implied an extremely significant additional expense in data purchase for those who connect up via cellphone.

The expense itself is currently higher because you have to have data, WhatsApp doesn't work without recharging your data purchase and the most people work using that system. To use Teams requires three times as much [data] as working with WhatsApp groups because the cost is higher. Using Classroom is also the same thing, you spend much more to do the work, virtual classes, and we are also communicating now by Zoom, by video conference. To maintain that also uses much more data. And, so that it can be more functional, for example, I am now connecting with you through my cell phone, but to make it more functional it requires a computer, and a microphone is required so that at least it comes out a little better. And did the teacher have that before? No, they didn't. Now they have to buy them, they have to go into debt, they have to be taking out loans to be able to secure basic working conditions. (Interview conducted with women from the OTEP-A union in September 2020)

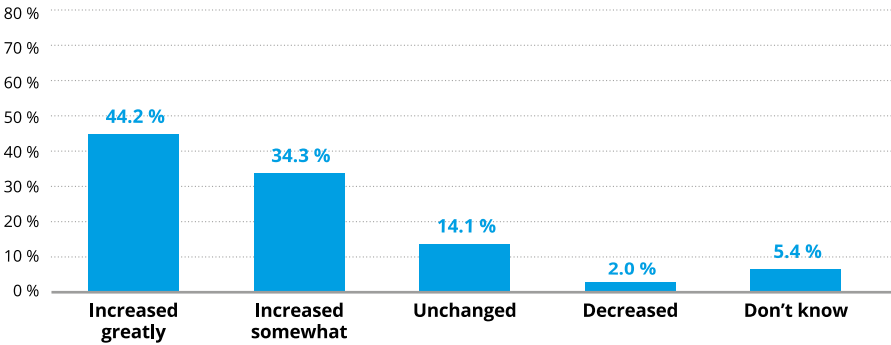
3.3 The impact on the right to education

The difficulties in accessing resources and the internet that teachers faced were similar or greater for students. Connecting up for school required investing in connectivity. As noted in the first section of this chapter, even before the pandemic, internet connectivity represented a significant portion of the income of the poorest households in Paraguay. In addition, in many cases families also lacked adequate equipment.

This is a situation that, in practice, led to the expulsion of students from the educational system. In this regard, 44.2% of the women teachers responding to the survey considered that the number of students dropping out of school increased greatly during the pandemic. In addition, 34.3% considered that it increased somewhat. 14.1% believed that it did not increase, and 2% considered that it decreased.



Figure 9 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by perception of change in the number of students abandoning studies due to the pandemic



Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

This was also a concern for OTEP-A. It asserted that teachers did not find support when trying to keep students involved with educational processes.

These are experiences [...] that make us desperate, specifically this educational issue; what do we do with these students who are not responding? Several students are blocking their teachers, many of the parents are deciding that their children are to repeat the year, drop out academically, in the face of all this. The teachers, in this context, are just powerless to try to find the minimum alternative for this situation, because we are in a context of authorities, because you turn to your principal and the principal has no answers. They turn to their supervisor; the supervisor has no answer. So it is a chain of difficulties and poor working conditions that seems to have no answer to any of the emerging problems that are being endured. (Interview conducted with women from the OTEP-A union in September 2020)

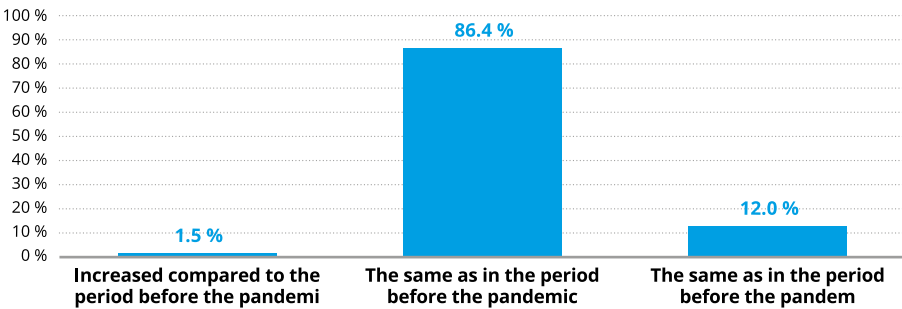
3.4 Job stability and salary

At 91%, the majority of the women teachers responding to the survey indicated that their working relationship has been stable during the pandemic. In addition, 80.6%

reported having received their full salary in a timely fashion. A lower percentage of 11.3% indicated that, despite having received their salaries in full, these were received in arrears, while 6.6% stated that they did not receive their salary in full.

With regard to salary stability, 86.4% indicated that their income as teachers was similar to that they received before the pandemic, 12% that it was reduced, and 1.5% that it had increased.

Figure 10 Paraguay. OTEP-SA. 2021. Women teachers by change in teaching income during the pandemic



Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

Although in general terms salaries were maintained, it must be noted that in the case of Paraguay in 2020 salary increases for the sector agreed upon in the Teaching Statute were suspended. This Statute states that teachers have the right to a Basic Professional Salary. Achieving this minimum requires salary increases over time. However, such increases were not made during the pandemic.

That is, through the emergency law that immediately went out as a result of this health emergency, what was done is that part of what the 2020 budget law established was to disable the salary adjustment that we should have had in the month of July with a 16% gradual salary adjustment towards the basic professional salary. (Interview conducted with women from the OTEP-A union in September 2020)

3.5 Income was maintained, but expenses increased

Although the income from work was maintained, in most cases, household economies suffered during the pandemic. Regarding the household income of teachers responding to the survey, the situation was variable. 31.5% indicated that during the pandemic, income remained the same compared to the previous period, 35% said it increased and 32% said it decreased. However, there was consensus in pointing to an increase in expenses. In this case, almost nine out of ten (87%) indicated that expenses increased, 8.2% said they remained the same, and only 4.3% said they decreased.

Figure 11 Paraguay. OTEP-SA. 2021. Women teachers by household income during the pandemic

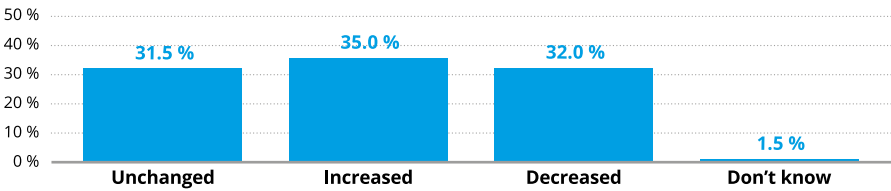
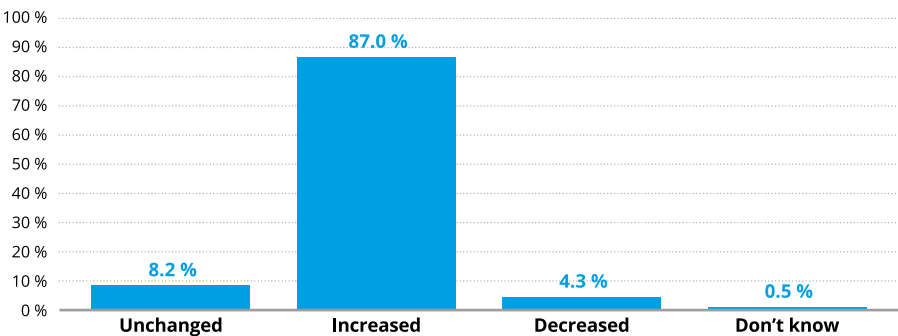


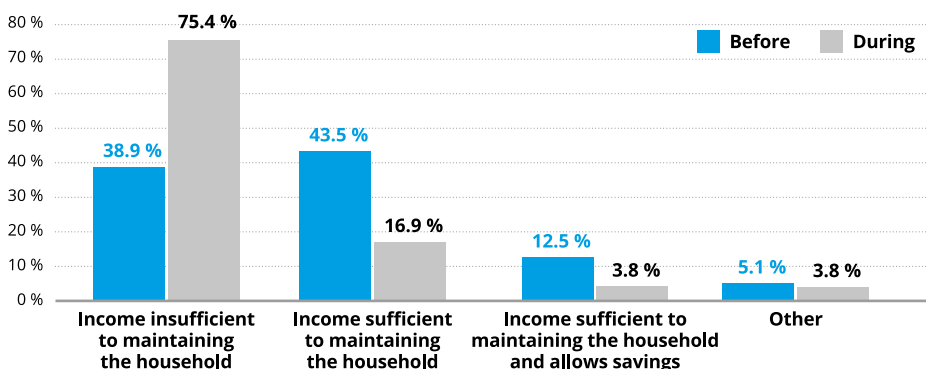
Figure 12 Paraguay, OTEP-SA. 2021. Women teachers by household expenses during the pandemic



Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

The increase in expenses without an equivalent increase in income had a negative impact on the economy of most households. Before the pandemic, four in ten (38.9%) households had insufficient income to meet expenses. However, during the pandemic, this proportion increased to more than seven in ten (75.4%). Consequently, the percentage of households with sufficient income to support themselves fell by more than half, from 43.5% before the pandemic to 16.9% during the pandemic. The savings capacity of households was also significantly reduced. 12.5% of households had savings capacity before the pandemic, while during it this went on to represent only 3.8% of households.

Figure 13 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by sufficiency of income to maintaining household before and during the pandemic



Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

3.6 Use of time during the pandemic

An excessive increase in unpaid care work caused by the increase in the time spent at home, the loss of institutional resources (such as schools and other state services) that contributed to the increased demand for care, and the transfer of children's study to homes was mostly assumed by women. Studies conducted in different countries on a global scale reveal this situation.

This was also reported by the women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A responding to the survey. Among these, more than half, at 61.6%, indicated that during

the pandemic they undertook more domestic work. 30.7% indicated that the time spent on domestic work remained the same, and only 7.7% stated that it was reduced. With regard to the care of dependent people, 44% indicated that the time dedicated to this work also increased, 31.7% indicated that it remained the same, and 6.9% said that it was reduced.

Figure 14 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by time spent on domestic work* during the pandemic

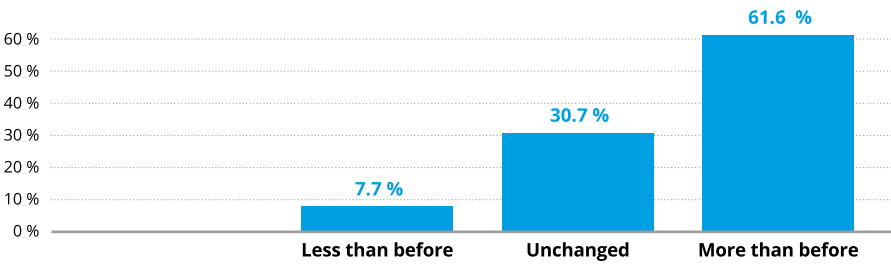
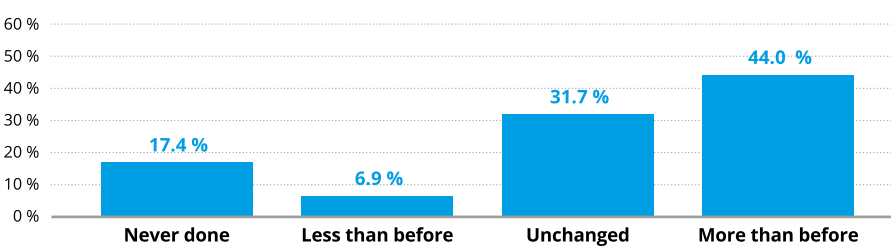


Figure 15 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by time spent attending to dependent people during the pandemic



Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

**Does not include care work.*

On taking into account that eight in ten teachers lived with children and adolescents, it is not surprising that a similar proportion, at 76.2%, indicated that they spent more time during the pandemic supporting minors in their studies. On the other hand, when it comes to caring for adults at home, 22.3% indicated that during the pandemic this increased, 38.9% that it remained the same and 11.3% that it was reduced.

Figure 16 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by time spent attending to non-dependent people during the pandemic

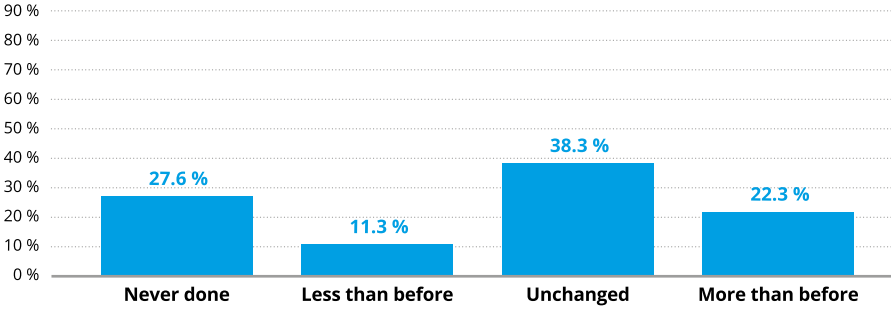
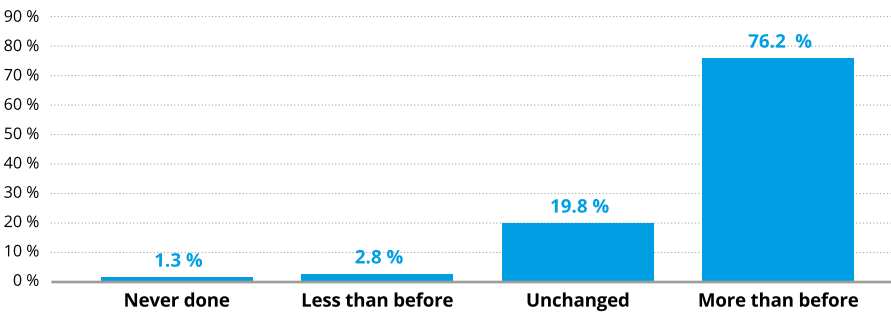


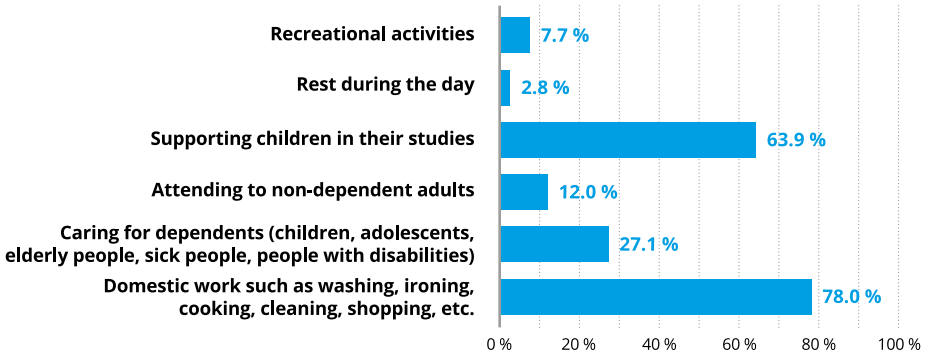
Figure 17 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by time spent supporting children in their studies during the pandemic



Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

The weight of care work is also evident on asking the teachers about the activities they carried out in the week prior to the survey. In this case, at 78%, almost eight in ten indicated that they performed domestic work, while 63.9% stated that they performed tasks to support the study of children. To a lesser extent, the teachers reported having carried out care work for dependent people (27.1%) and having attended to non-dependent adults (12%). The pressure of the high demand for care is evidenced by lack of time for rest and recreation. Only 7.7% reported having performed recreational tasks and only 2.8% said they were able to rest during the day.

Figure 18 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by activities performed the previous week



Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

When asked more specifically about rest and recreation time, it was found that, for the most part, this was reduced during the pandemic. Specifically, more than six in ten women (65.8%) responding to the survey indicated that their rest time during the day was reduced and a similar percentage (65.2%) stated time spent on recreation was reduced.

Figure 19 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by time spent resting during the day during the pandemic

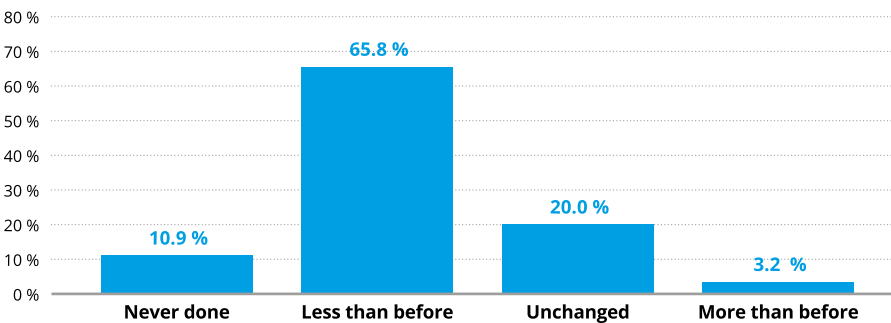
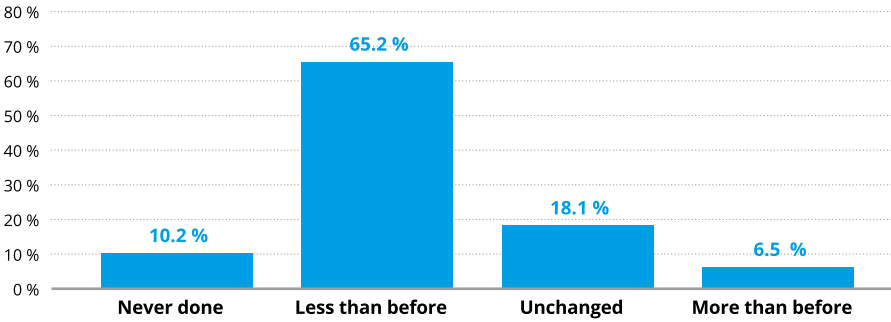


Figure 20 Paraguay OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by time spent on recreational activities during the pandemic



Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

On the other hand, when comparing the care burden assumed by women teachers with that assumed by other adults residing in their homes, there is evidence of a greater overload for the former, particularly with respect to men. Specifically, only 23.4% of adult men living in the homes of the women teachers undertook more domestic work during the pandemic. Other adult women in contrast took on more domestic work to a greater extent. This was the case for 44.8%. However, this also represented a much lower percentage than that of female teachers in this situation.

Figure 21 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by time other adult women in their household spent on domestic work during the pandemic

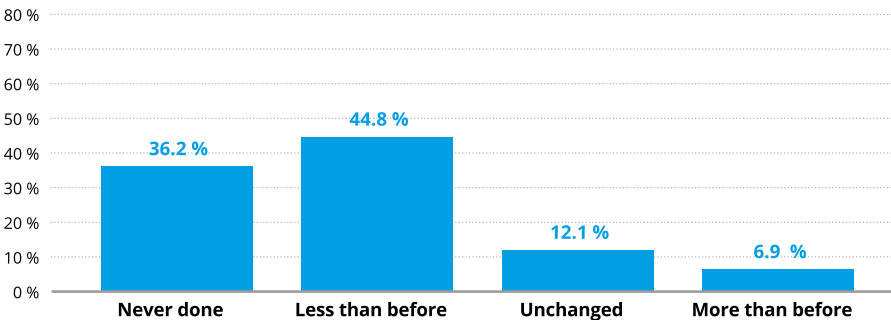
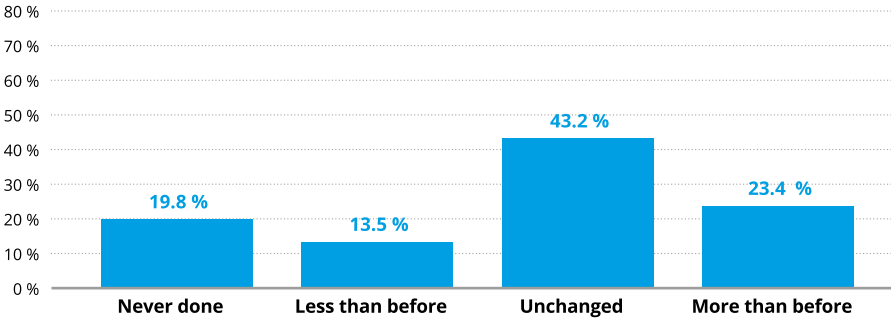


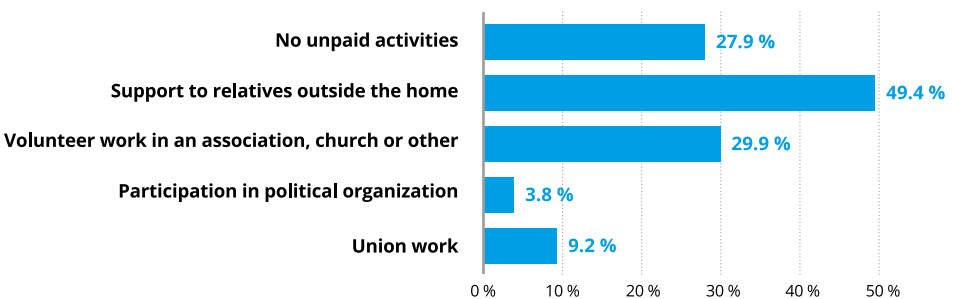
Figure 22 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by time other adult men in their household spent on domestic work during the pandemic



Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

Domestic and care work in their homes was not the only responsibility the women teachers assumed on an unpaid basis. They also carried out other essential family, social and community activities. In this regard, 49.4% indicated that they provided support to relatives outside their home and 29.9% carried out volunteer work. To a lesser extent, other activities such as trade union work (9.2%) and participation in political organizations (3.8%) were mentioned.

Figure 23 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by unpaid activities performed



Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

Otep-A coincided with this estimation, emphasizing that the demand for care increased dramatically for women and women teachers. In this sense, it is proposed that double and triple working days were commonplace.

Our role as teachers, as wives, as mothers, as daughters, as sisters, has become quite difficult, since the workload is practically triple what we were doing. And the Paraguayan state never worried itself, so to speak, about the condition of women, to provide them with tools so that they can occupy better job positions, so they could have someone to help them at home or from home. In practical terms, we women have always been placed in the home to do household chores and no matter how professional you are—I am an education professional—regardless, you have to do things around the house and it's hard. It's hard to have several functions at the same time. (Interview conducted with women from the Otep-A union in September 2020)

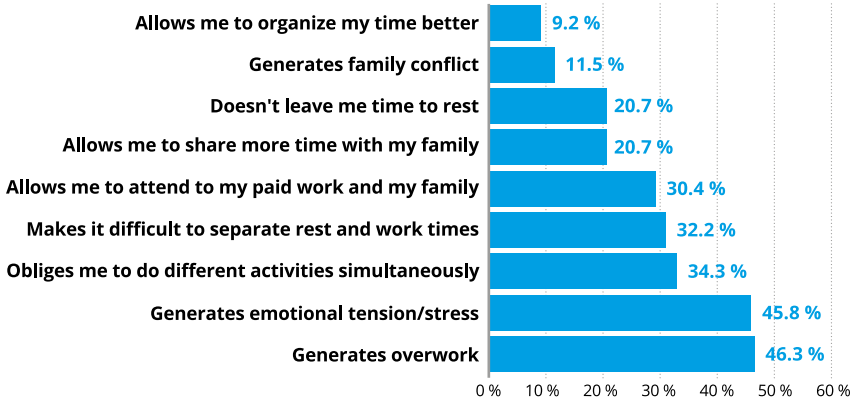
3.7 Impacts of telework

Some elements regarding the impact of teleworking for women teachers have already been mentioned in the different sections of this chapter. The difficulty of maintaining the schedules for which they have been hired and the need to attend to work and family responsibilities at the same time were mentioned immediately on consulting about working conditions during the pandemic. The Otep-A women teachers answering the survey also gave an account of this situation. Specifically, they emphasized the negative aspects of this as outweighing the positive ones. In this sense, 46.3% indicated that telework generated work overload, 45.8% that it caused emotional tensions, 34.3% that it forced them to perform different activities simultaneously, and 32.2% indicated that it made it difficult for them to separate work and rest times.

Although to a lesser extent, some positive impacts were also noted. Among these, the one valued by the most teachers was that it allowed them to attend to work and family responsibilities. This is the opinion of 34.1% of the women

teachers answering the survey. In addition, two in ten, at 20.7%, considered that it allowed them to share more time with the family.

Figure 23 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by effects of telework

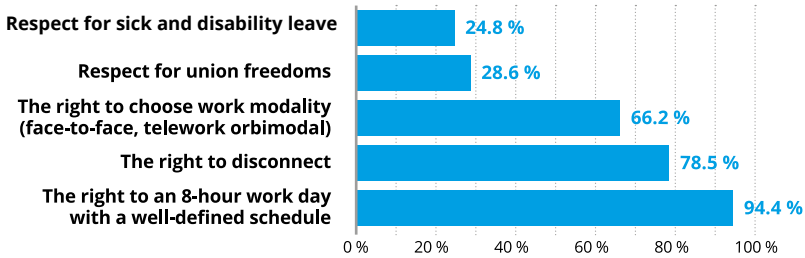


Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

In addition to impacts on a personal level, there were also impacts on labor rights. The women teachers considered that teleworking in the pandemic period negatively affected these. In this sense, at 94.4%, almost all the women teachers responding to the survey indicated that the right to an eight-hour working day with a well-defined schedule was affected. In addition, almost eight in ten (78.5%) indicated that the right to disconnect was violated.

More than half, at 64.5%, considered that the right to choose work modality was infringed upon. The impact on other rights such as respect for trade union freedoms (28.6%) and the right to sickness and disability leave were mentioned to a lesser extent (24.8%).

Figure 24 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by opinion on rights most infringed upon by telework



Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

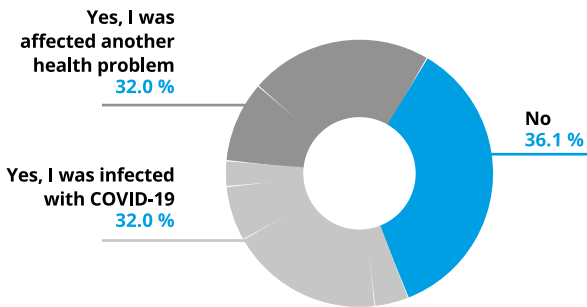
OTEP-A also perceived that teleworking and teaching modalities during the pandemic impacted on the rights and well-being of teachers, with the increase in working hours this entailed.

The issue is that working hours have extended a great deal, since the MEC [Ministry of Education and Science] practically asks us to be flexible with students, there is no fixed schedule from seven in the morning to five in the afternoon as it was in face-to-face hours. It is morning, afternoon, evening and early morning, at any time that students can connect up, they send their homework. So, you have to be there paying attention to your phone or if someone comes by and knocks on the door and brings their homework in physically, or if you have to go and pick it up from school. You have to more or less multiply yourself to fulfill everything your role requires, and in addition to that, is the poor response on the behalf of the students. As I mentioned before, I am in a rural area where students, for the most part, have to work to be able to collaborate with the family economic income to be able to eat, and since we are all in the same situation, staying at home, parents are also at home and many have lost their jobs. (Interview conducted with women from the OTEP-A union in September 2020)

3.8 Health during the pandemic: Higher than national infection rates among teachers

As of mid-August 2021, a total of 458,528 cases of COVID-19 had been reported in Paraguay (Paraguayan Ministry of Health, 2021a). Considering that the country has a population of 7.25 million people, this means that, at that time 6.3% of the population had contracted COVID-19. As Figure 25 shows, the contagion among teachers was much higher, with 32% of those responding to the survey indicating that they became infected with COVID-19. In addition, 32% indicated that they had been affected by other health problems.

Figure 25 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by health problems during the pandemic



Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

In this sense, OTEP-A stated that in order to alleviate limitations of access to the internet and equipment the women teachers frequently resorted to delivering materials to students personally. This implied a greater exposure to the virus and a greater risk of contagion.

There is not enough connectivity, we do not even have a satellite. That is also information I think that helps explain why we have, in addition to the digital divide, very precarious connectivity in Paraguay. And, well, that makes them

place their bodies at risk. Most of the time we have a high percentage of the female population, of women teachers who are mostly our colleagues, who are the ones who have to place their bodies [at risk] to deliver materials even though they might catch the virus. (Interview conducted with women from the OTEP-A union in September 2020)

Among the women teachers who reported having had health problems, 13.6% indicated that they did not need to receive medical attention. At 52.8%, slightly more than half received medical care in a public health center and 21.2% did so in private health centers. In addition, 10.4% reported that they did not receive care although they required it, and 2% reported having resorted to other types of services such as community health options.

In general, those who received medical care considered this to be good. 44.3% indicated that the service was good, 28.6% that it was very good, 26.5% that it was fair, and 0.5% that it was bad.

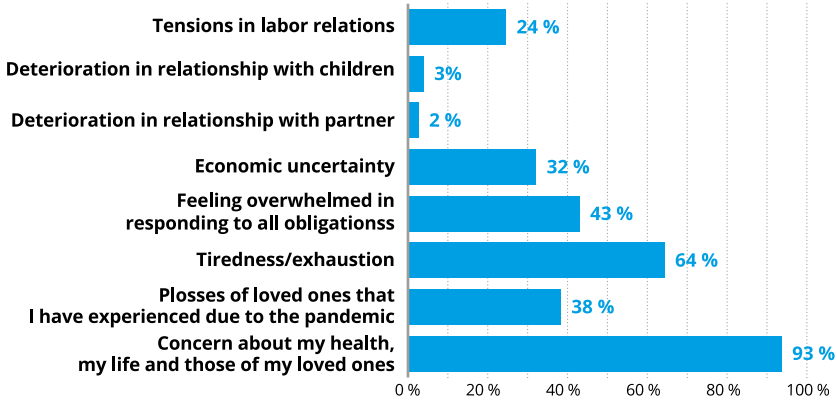
3.9 Health and life, the main concern of female teachers

The previous section reveals that most of the teachers faced health problems during the pandemic. Consequently, it is not surprising that the main concern they reported having felt during this period was related to health. Almost all the female teachers, at 93%, reported feeling worried about their health, their life and those of their family. At 64%, many also expressed concern about the exhaustion they faced.

At 43%, a high proportion also reported feeling overwhelmed in responding to all their obligations and 38% reported having lost close people because of the pandemic.

To a lesser extent, mention was made of other aspects such as economic uncertainty (32%), tensions in labor relations (24%), and for a minority, the deterioration of relationships with children (3%) and with their partners (2%).

Figure 26 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by main concerns during the pandemic



Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

In this regard, OTEP-A indicated that the pandemic also had an impact on the mental health of teachers. It was pointed out that a point of saturation of concerns and problems was reached and that there was no support in the face of this situation.

So, precisely with that over-saturation of problems and more problems, precisely the majority of teachers complain about mental health, a program, or mental and emotional health support for teachers. (Interview conducted with women from the OTEP-A union in September 2020)

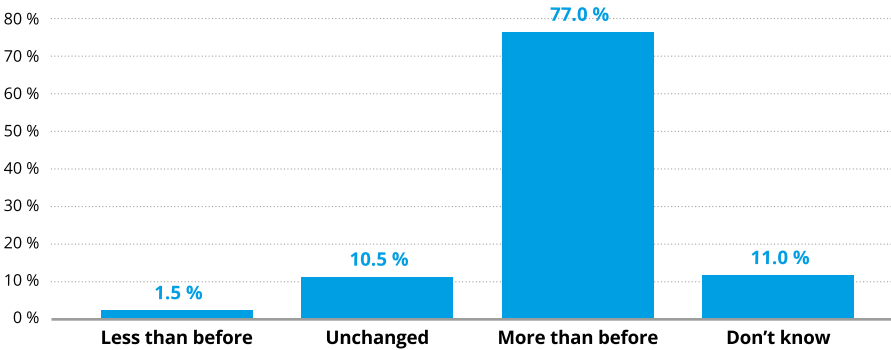
3.10 Violence against women and women teachers during the pandemic

As stated in section 1 of this chapter, the measures adopted during the pandemic led to conditions for an increase in violence against women. The OTEP-A teachers responding to the survey also had this perception. Thus, 77% indicated that they considered that during the pandemic violence against women increased. Only 1.5% considered that it decreased, while 10.5% stated that it was the same as before.

OTEP-A agreed with this perception and pointed out that particularly during the quarantine there was a significant increase in violence.

Behind that comes the mistreatment of children, also for woman teachers in the heart of the household. There is no time to take good care of the children, the husband who becomes nervous, hysterical, who does not understand the situation, but who also demands that household things be done. So it also means that there is more violence against our gender, which unfortunately was seen here in Paraguay, a large increase in this was seen during this quarantine. (Interview conducted with women from the OTEP-A union in September 2020)

Figure 27 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by perception of change in violence against women during the pandemic



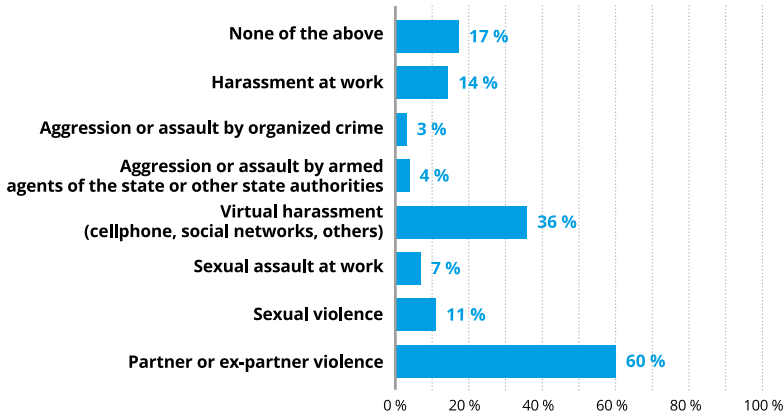
Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

In addition, at 57.3%, more than half the teachers indicated that they perceived that violence against women in their profession also increased. Only 9% said that it did not increase and 33.8% said they did not have information on this.

In this sense, 60% considered that, in the case of women teachers, intimate partner or ex-partner violence increased, 36% indicated that virtual harassment increased, and 14% that workplace harassment increased. Other manifestations

of violence such as sexual violence, sexual harassment at work, assaults by agents of the state or organized crime were mentioned to a lesser extent.

Figure 28 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by perception of types of violence against women that increased during the pandemic



Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.

On the other hand, among the teachers responding to the survey, 73% said they did not experience situations of violence during the pandemic.

Nonetheless, some women teachers did say they faced this type of situation. 14% reported having faced virtual harassment, 10% were victims of partner or ex-partner violence, and 7% were exposed to workplace harassment. Among those who faced such situations of violence, 34.7% sought help and 65.3% did not. It is noteworthy that, in the first group, 29.4% indicated that they had sought support from the union. A similar proportion reported having resorted to the support of a close person. In addition, 20.6% sought support from a state institution, 11.8% did so from a church, and 5.9% from a non-governmental organization.

The help received was valued positively. Thus, 67.6% considered that it helped them a lot, 23.5% considered that it helped them somewhat, 5.9% considered it did not help them, and 2.9% considered that it made the situation worse.

With regard to those who did not seek help, the main reasons reported for not having done so were not requiring it (40.6%), lack of trust in the authorities (23.4%), the perception that no one could help them (10.9%), or a lack of local institutions to provide this (6.3%).

Finally, it is important to note that almost nine out of ten women educators (88.7%) considered that the union has the capacity to take preventive measures against violence. In this sense, recommendation was made of the adoption of measures such as providing free legal representation to teachers (55%), conducting awareness campaigns (50%), and training (49%). To a lesser extent, but also in a large proportion, it was recommended that violence against women teachers be made more visible (31%), that measures to address violence be included in collective bargaining (30%), and that preventative protocols be created (29%).

Figure 29 Paraguay. OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by opinion on union capacity to take mensures to prevent violence

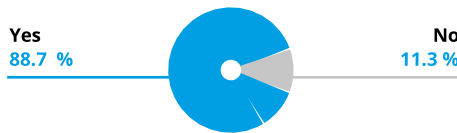
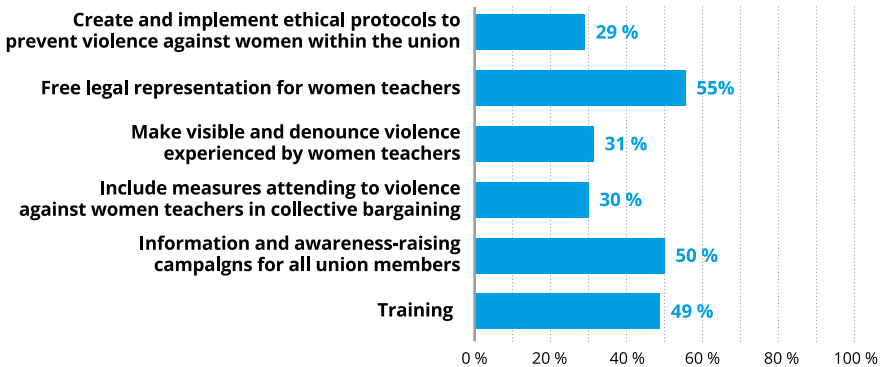


Figure 30 Paraguay, OTEP-A. 2021. Women teachers by type of union action recomended against violence



Results of a survey conducted among women teachers affiliated with OTEP-A in June, July and August 2021.



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PERU

Defending the right to education in the pandemic: The perspective of the women teachers of SUTEP

Mirta Kennedy

1. Peru facing the COVID-19 pandemic: Economic stagnation and political crisis

1.1 Fragile economic and social conditions with which to face the pandemic

Peru has a territorial area of 1,285,000 km² (496,225 sq mi) and a population in 2021 of 33,359,000 inhabitants, of which 50.3% are women and 49.7% men (ECLAC, online consultation).¹⁰⁸ It is a Republic with a unicameral legislative system, the Congress of the Republic of Peru. It is organized into 24 departments and the Province of Callao.

It is a society in a period of demographic change. In 2017, two thirds of the population (66%) was between 15 and 64 years old, 27.1% was under 15 years old, and 6.9% was 65 years old and over, representing a dependency ratio of 50% (INEI, 2017). That is, the theoretically inactive population is half of the theoretically active one.¹⁰⁹ 80.3% of the population lives in urban areas and 19.7% live in rural areas (ECLAC, online consultation). It is a multi-ethnic and multicultural society. It is estimated that in 2017, within Peruvian territory 3,919,314 people over the age of five spoke 47 Indigenous languages (INEI, 2017). In the census carried out in that year, 3.6% of the inhabitants identified themselves as Afro-descendants (CELADE, 2020). In 2019, 31.2% of house-

¹⁰⁸ <https://statistics.cepal.org/portal/cepalstat/dashboard.html?theme=1&lang=es>

¹⁰⁹ Dependency ratio is an indicator of potential economic dependence. It measures the population at "theoretically" inactive ages relative to the population at "theoretically" active ages. Calculation: The total population aged 0 to 14, plus the population aged 65 and over, divided by the total population aged 15 to 64, multiplied by 100 (CELADE online consultation). https://celade.cepal.org/redatam/PRYESP/SISPPI/Webhelp/relacion_de_dependencia.htm

holds were headed by women, a proportion lower than the 35.9% average in Latin America (ECLAC, online consultation).

Peru is classified by the United Nations as a country with high human development. In 2019, it attained 79th position on the Human Development Index (HDI),¹¹⁰ with a value for this index of 0.777. In the world ranking, it fell one place in relation to 2018. In 2019, life expectancy at birth was 79.5 years for women and 74.1 years for men, the average number of years of schooling was 9.7 (UN, 2020) and GDP per capita¹¹¹ was US\$6,489.5 (2010 dollars) (ECLAC, online consultation).

The government's social spending in 2019 was equivalent to 11.5% of the GDP and represented a per capita investment of US\$748 (2010 dollars). Education is the most important item within social spending, receiving 33.6%, while 24% is allocated to social protection and 22.2% to health (ECLAC, 2021).

There are marked inequalities in the country. The Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index is 0.628, representing a loss of 19.2% of the HDI value and implying a drop of eight positions in the world ranking (UN, 2020). One of the inequalities that are experienced in Peru is a significant income imbalance. Between 2010 and 2018, it is estimated that the 40% poorest group of the population held 14.8% of the total gross national income, while the 10% richest held 32.1% (UN, 2020). For 2019 the Gini coefficient was 43. In that year, half of those who were at least eighteen years old expressed that their income was not enough to adequately meet their needs, a proportion that increased by 10% with respect to 2013 (ECLAC, 2021).

¹¹⁰ Human Development Index (HDI): A composite index that measures the average result in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, education, and a decent standard of living (UN, 2020).

¹¹¹GDP. This is defined as the sum of the monetary values of goods and services produced by each company, public administration and household in a country during a given year (BCR, n.d.). GDP per capita is calculated by dividing GDP by the total population.



In 2019, 20.2% of the population lived below the poverty line¹¹² and 2.9% were in a situation of extreme poverty.¹¹³ The incidence of both had been less in previous years (CEPALSTAT, online consultation). When measuring multidimensional poverty, the percentage decreases to 7.4% in 2018 with another 9.6% at risk of being in that condition (UN, 2020). It is noteworthy that, in terms of multidimensional poverty,¹¹⁴ the indicator that is worst impacted is that related to the standard of living, which contributes 53.2% of its value to the index, more than those related to education and health, which represent 31.1% and 15.7% of the value of the index respectively (UN, 2020).

By 2020, the literacy rate of people between 14 and 25 years old was 99.4% and public spending on education was 4.2% of the GDP (online consultation of the country profile in CEPALSTAT).¹¹⁵

Informality affected 59.5% of people employed in urban areas. Of these, the vast majority were unskilled independent workers (38.6% of the total employed), among whom those engaged in commerce and services stand out (28.2% of the total employed) (CEPALSTAT, online consultation).

Mining activities and metal derivatives are extremely important to the economy of Peru, with copper and zinc alone contributing more than 40% of the country's exports. This sector, however, generates a minimum share of jobs, at 1%. The sectors with the highest employment are commerce (27.2% of the

¹¹² Poverty lines represent the level of income that allows each household to meet the basic needs of all its members. The basic food basket for poverty measurement is based a food selection that includes the goods required to cover the nutritional needs of the population, their level of physical activity, and their consumption habits, with the effective availability of food and prices in each country and geographical area taken into account (ECLAC 2021).

¹¹³ When income does not cover the cost of the basic food basket.

¹¹⁴ Multidimensional poverty: Poverty measurement based on deficiencies in ten indicators related to education, health and quality of life, developed by the UNDP for the 2010 Human Development Report.

¹¹⁵ https://estadisticas.cepal.org/cepalstat/Perfil_Nacional_Social.html?pais=PER&idioma=spanish

total), agriculture (25.7%), other services (17.9%) and manufacturing (8.8%) (ECLAC, country profile).

Another of the marked inequalities in Peruvian society is that existing between women and men. The HDI corresponding to women for 2019 is 0.759, lower than the 0.793 corresponding to men (UN, 2020). In 2019, the average years of schooling for women was 9.1, lower than the 10.3 for men. Peru has not yet joined the growing trend in the region for women to achieve higher educational levels than men. Women are also at a great disadvantage in terms of income. In 2019, women had a gross national income per capita of US\$9,889 while that for men was US\$14,647 (UN, 2020).

In 2019, 23.1% of women aged 15 or older had no income of their own, a situation true for only 9.9% of men of the same ages. This is mainly due to the fact that the labor market participation rate is lower for women than for men, at 64.6% and 80.6% respectively (ECLAC, 2021).

This inequality is due, in part, to the fact that women in Peru disproportionately assume domestic work inside their homes. Women devote an average of 39.8 hours a week to these activities, while men devote only 15.7. In contrast, men devoted on average 44.5 hours a week to paid work while women devoted only 22.6 hours to this. Overall, women worked 62.4 hours a week on average while men worked 59.2 (2010 data). Whether women work on a paid basis or men do so on an unpaid one does not significantly alter this imbalance. Women with their own income spend an average of 35.9 hours per week on domestic chores while men with their own income spend 15.3 hours. In contrast, when lacking their own income, the average time spent on household chores is 55.9 hours and 22.3 hours per week respectively (ECLAC, country profile). This shows that the distribution of household chores is not a matter of availability at home, as women who work for pay allocate more time to household work than do men who do not work for pay. Unpaid work in households represented an equivalent of 20.4% of the GDP in 2010 (ECLAC, 2021).



Furthermore, women's employment placement is more difficult and precarious than is men's. In 2019, unemployment was higher for women (3.2%) than for men (2.5%) (ECLAC, 2021). Taken together with the difference in the participation rate, this means that fewer than two out of three women are employed (62.5%) compared to more than three out of four men (78.6%) (ECLAC, 2021). Informal employment is more frequent among women than among men (65.9% and 54% respectively) (CEPALSTAT, online consultation), which not only has immediate implications for work and quality of life, but also has an impact on the future since only 17.6% of employed women contribute to a pension system compared to 23.4% of men (ECLAC, 2021).

Another unfavorable element of the labor market for women is that they earn less for their work than men. This income gap is greater for women with children under the age of fifteen. In 2019, among women urban wage earners aged 20 to 59 working 35 hours a week or more, those who did not have minor children received the equivalent of 93.8% of men's income, while those who had at least one child under the age of five only received 78.1%, a proportion that dropped to 77.2% for those who had at least one child between the ages of six and fourteen (ECLAC, 2021). One of the results of sexist discrimination in the market and the unfair organization of care is that in 2019 for 100 men living in a situation of poverty, there were 113.6 women in the same situation. This proportion has been increasing in recent years (CEPALSTAT, online consultation).

According to official figures, Peru has one of the lowest rates of femicide on the continent. It has never reached 1 per 100,000 women and in 2019 it was at 0.8 per 100,000 women (CEPALSTAT, online consultation). However, the homicide rates of women have increased worryingly in recent years, faster than those of men. Between 2014 and 2018, these rates went from 2.26 per 100,000 women to 3.3 per 100,000 women and from 11.46 per 100,000 men to 12 per 100,000 men, representing increases of 46% and 6.2% respectively (own calculations based on data from the Inter-American Security Observatory of the OAS, online consulta-

tion).¹¹⁶ There is also a rapid increase in the reporting of sexual offenses. In those same years, this rate grew from 29.35 per 100,000 people to 56.89 per 100,000 people (OAS Inter-American Security Observatory, online consultation).

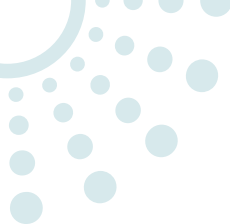
In terms of political participation, in the period 2015 to 2020, the presence of women in Congress was on average 30%, lower than the regional average of 32.1% (UN, 2020). In 2018, women headed only 22.6% of government Ministries and held 21.1% representation in the Supreme Court of Justice. In the same year, women's political participation in local governments was even weaker. They occupied 20.5% of council positions and 2.9% of mayoral positions (ECLAC, national profile). In the 2021 elections, participation in the legislative body decreased to 26.15% (CEPALSTAT, online consultation).

Article 17 of the Constitution of Peru establishes that early, primary and secondary education are mandatory and the state must provide these free of charge. In public universities, education is free for people who have satisfactory performance and do not have the resources to pay for this. Constitutionally, priority is given to education in the allocation of regular resources from the national budget (Democratic Constituent Congress, 1993).

Peru, like other countries in the region, faced the pandemic from a complex and unstable political scenario, which dated back most immediately to 2017. It included, among other events, the resignation of the constitutional president Pedro Pablo Kuczynski in 2018 and tensions between the executive and the legislative branches of government. In September 2019, President Martín Vizcarra, Kuczynski's successor, dissolved the Congress and on November 9, Congress initiated the removal of the presidency due to Vizcarra's moral incapacity, unleashing a wave of protests throughout the country.

A few months later, the pandemic began under the presidency of Manuel Arturo Merino de Lama. In Peru, as has been common in other Latin American

¹¹⁶ <http://www.oas.org/IOS/indicatorsdetails.aspx?lang=es&indicator=18>



countries, the government had great initial support for the measures taken against the pandemic, but this support deteriorated in the following months. In April 2020, 91% of the population supported the government's management, while in August of the same year, only 23% did so. It is the country where this drop in support was the greatest (ECLAC, 2021).

The political crisis accentuated during the pandemic forced Merino de Lama to resign in November 2020 due to the strong protest mobilizations he faced. Francisco Sagasti assumed the presidency until the elections held in July 2021. This electoral contest was won, in the second round, by Pedro Castillo, an educator, who was a leader in SUTEP and who played a prominent role in the teachers' strike of 2017. The conservative sectors of Peru tried to prevent him from governing and the mobilizations of support and rejection of the new administration continued.

1.2 Main measures adopted by the State of Peru during the COVID-19 pandemic and their impacts

Peru received the COVID-19 pandemic in an economic situation that the ILO qualified as vulnerable. Since the new millennium, the country has undergone a period of significant economic expansion and a decrease in unemployment, but the annual GDP growth leveled out as of 2017, and the labor market was also affected. 2019 ended with 697,000 unemployed people out of a workforce of around 17 million people (ILO, 2020).

The first case of COVID-19 infection was detected on March 6, 2020. At the end of the first year of the pandemic, Peru reported an accumulated 1,365,000 people diagnosed with the virus and 127,114 deaths from this cause. At that time, March 2021, the country was experiencing a new wave that was even more severe than the previous ones. In mid-April 2021, there was a peak of infections with a daily average of 8596 people falling ill. At the end of April, daily deaths reached the maximum point, with an average of 974. At the time

of writing this report, the end of October 2021, the country had passed this wave, with daily infections decreasing to less than 850 and deaths to less than 30. The accumulated numbers, up to this point, reflected a contagion rate of 6.56%, not very high compared to the rest of the planet (occupying the 88th position), but very high in deaths at 5.9 per thousand.¹¹⁷ In this indicator, Peru ranks first in the world (Worldometer, online consultation).¹¹⁸

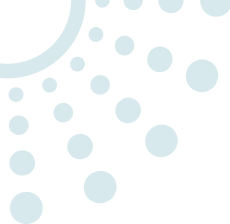
On March 11, 2020, a national health emergency was declared for a period of 90 days and COVID-19 prevention and control measures were established. This included a mandatory fourteen-day home quarantine for all persons entering the national territory from countries with an epidemiological background (Italy, Spain, France, China) (Supreme Decree No. 008-2020-SA).

The initial confinement measures were also adopted early, ten days after the detection of the first case. From March 16, 2020, a decree was made declaring mandatory quarantine for fifteen days (Supreme Decree No. 044-2020-PCM). The exercise of Constitutional Rights relating to personal liberty and security, inviolability of domicile and freedom of assembly and transit were suspended (Art. 3, Supreme Decree No. 044-2020-PCM). In addition, the holding of public events (including religious activities) was prohibited and the closure of public and private establishments (including restaurants) was established, with the exception of those related to basic needs (food, health, fuel).

After these first measures, numerous decrees were issued aimed at all areas affected by the pandemic and the previously approved measures. Among the health measures, resources were allocated to health care, especially in more remote places. Hygiene kits were acquired for state schools and universities,

¹¹⁷ *When compared with other nearby countries, at the end of October Peru had a contagion rate of about half that of Argentina, but more than twice its death rate. In relation to Colombia, the contagion rate was also lower in Peru, but the death rate was more than double that of the former (Worldometer online consultation).*

¹¹⁸ <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/#countries>



resources were transferred to municipalities for the acquisition of basic necessities for their distribution, and in the face of resistance of behalf of the population to preventive measures against the COVID-19 contagion, fines were established (COVID-19 Observatory, online consultation).¹¹⁹

The closure of workplaces considered non-essential and the loss of work in companies and by the self-employed had a great social impact. In order to provide some alleviation for the lack of family income, various measures were taken. The withholding and payment of 10% of the salary of workers affiliated to the private pension system was temporarily suspended and workers were allowed to withdraw part of their Service Time Compensation (CTS) (COVID-19 Observatory, online consultation). Economic aid transfers were made through different programs aimed at the most affected populations, among these families without income, those in rural areas, and those of self-employed workers. 160 soles were provided to 5 million families for the payment of electricity, and the Central Bank created a savings account for all people over eighteen who previously did not have one to be able to receive these bank transfers (COVID-19 Observatory, online consultation).

According to information from the Peruvian Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), among the measures adopted, those linked to public spending represented 4.32% of the GDP (Gamero, 2020). As of August 24, 2020, spending on support for vulnerable families represented 2.5% of the GDP. This included measures such as the Universal Family bonus (1.4%), the Yo me quedo en casa (I stay at home) bonus (0.3%), an electricity bonus (0.1%), a subsidy for workers for suspension of work (0.1%) and a self-employed workers bonus (1%), among others. Additionally, at that same time support for companies and for the economy represented 1.2%. This included measures such as a payroll subsidy (0.1%) and the Arranca Peru economic reactivation program (1%), among others (MEF, 2020). In addition, companies benefited from tax relief measures, consisting mostly of an extension in payment deadlines (MEF, 2021).

¹¹⁹ <https://cepalstat-prod.cepal.org/forms/covid-countrysheet/index.html?country=PER>

Peru has had a teleworking law since 2013. This establishes regulations that were rarely applied before the pandemic. In 2013 it was estimated that 883,117 employed people worked under this modality, representing 5.6% of the total workforce (Congress of the Republic, n.d.). When the health emergency and confinement measures began, working people who could perform telework were still a minority. According to the Institute of Peruvian Studies (IEP by the initials in Spanish), in June 2020, 45% of working people continued working. Of these, 19% did so from home, 17% were authorized to go out to work and 8% went out to work without authorization (IEP, 2020).

On May 21, 2021, Congress approved a new regulation on teleworking, Act No. 5408, which did not meet the minimum standards to guarantee that people working under this modality would have their rights upheld. In particular, it did not oblige the contracting party to provide the work equipment nor to cover other teleworking expenses, and further established that the working day must be the same as that of face-to-face work although the employer can unilaterally exclude workers from this stipulation. Although it mentioned the right to disconnection, it established that a minimum of twelve continuous hours must be covered, such that, in practice, the employer has the right to demand twelve work hours of the employee. In matters of occupational health and safety, the law established that the responsibility for guaranteeing this and the associated costs are the responsibility of the worker (Congress of the Republic of Peru, 2021).

On March 27, 2020, the Peruvian Ministry of Education (MINEDU) announced that the new school year was to begin on April 6 in a non-face-to-face modality through the *Aprendo en casa* (I Learn at Home) program. This was aimed at preschool, primary and secondary education and relied on radio and television companies to disseminate contents, and telecommunications companies to exempt users from paying for the use of mobile data. Other elements were added to the traditional curriculum, such as citizenship and affective aspects (UNESCO, 2020). Implementing this program represented a great challenge sin-



ce, according to the Peruvian National Institute for Statistics and information (INEI by the initials in Spanish), in the second quarter of 2019, only 39.5% of people in the country had access to the internet, a figure that decreased to 5% in rural areas. In addition, only 35.2% of all households had at least one computer. In rural areas, this was the case for only 7.1% of households (INEI, 2019).

On the other hand, to ensure schoolchildren's nutrition, as of April 20, 2020, the Peruvian Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion started the distribution of food under the Qali Warma program, aimed at 3 million students and their families (Presidency of the Council of Ministers, 2020).

Peru is one of the countries in the region with the longest school closures. As of September 2021, only 5,350 of the 111,640 educational centers in the country were open under either blended or face-to-face modalities. At that time, the reopening covered 219,289 children and adolescents in the country. This can be considered a very modest figure considering that the school population exceeded 8 million (UNICEF, 2021).

Among the measures adopted by the state, some stand out in the area of violence against women and girls. Specifically, temporary shelter homes, a telephone hotline, and urgent care services, even itinerant ones, were declared essential services. The Peruvian Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (MIMP by the initials in Spanish) developed and disseminated information and communication materials on preventing and attending to violence against women and other affected family members (COVID-19 Observatory, online consultation).

Peru is the country with the largest drop in GDP in the region in 2020.¹²⁰ A contraction of 13.4% was estimated, significantly higher than the 7.7% that affected the region as a whole (ECLAC, 2021). In 2021, a growth in production

¹²⁰ The country suffering the greatest economic contraction was Venezuela, which in 2020 suffered a reduction in its GDP of 28% (ECLAC, 2021).

of 7.3% was expected (ILO, 2020), which, if achieved, would leave the country's economy still far from pre-pandemic levels. The sectors hardest hit were commerce, industry and construction.

Peru was also the country that, in the first months of the pandemic, suffered the greatest loss of employment in Latin America. In the second quarter of 2020, this indicator suffered a year-on-year drop of 28.1%. At that time, participation had a year-on-year decrease of 26.7% and unemployment increased by 5.2%. Women were more affected than men by the contraction of the labor market. Women's employment decreased by 45.3% while that of men decreased by 34.9%. Losses in employment was also higher in urban areas than in rural areas (49% and 6.5% respectively) (ECLAC, 2021).

The money transfer programs adopted between March and December 2020 had an average monthly value equivalent to 46% of the poverty line and barely exceeded the extreme poverty line (101%). These state aids reduced the incidence of poverty somewhat: In 2020, this was at 21.9% in 2020, while without these transfers it would have reached 26%. The decrease achieved in extreme poverty was greater. This reached 3.5%, whereas without the aid, it would have been more than double at 7.3% (ECLAC, 2021).

2. Facing the challenges of educating in Peru during the pandemic

In Peru, as in the rest of the region, teachers faced very challenging conditions in doing their work in the pandemic scenario. The serious impact of COVID-19 on the country, with very high morbidity and mortality, was combined with a situation of a deficit of state support to cope with the closure of educational institutions and switching to the distance modality, with classes broadcast on television and radio, or accessible via the internet. From communicating in person with the students in their charge, the teachers went on to communicate through WhatsApp messages and, at best, in meetings on internet platforms.



In what follows, some relevant aspects in the experiences of the teachers are analyzed, which were shared in a group interview conducted in September 2020 with women leaders from Peru's SUTEP union, from national and regional levels representing different provinces. Some of these were teaching at the primary and secondary level, while others were on union leave.

2.1 The perspective of the women teachers on the situation of the pandemic in Peru

The teachers interviewed emphasized the economic impacts of the pandemic on the population due to the closure of economic activities and the unemployment this gave rise to, which strongly affected the low-income sectors that were forced to break confinement measures to go out to work to support their homes.

This pandemic has come to devastate, to lead many families with low economic resources to unemployment. Perhaps they have been the most affected. Many people have been unemployed, they have not had enough to eat and, as a result, they have not been able to comply with the disciplinary orders given by the government due to that same need for survival and to bring something home to feed themselves. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

The union leaders pointed out two fundamental concerns of the people: maintaining health and surviving the pandemic, in addition to sustaining the economic situation to be able to bring food to their homes.

The strongest impact was felt on the student population of the middle and lower economic sectors, whose parents were engaged in casual labor and who became unemployed. The sector of non-regulated workers was suspended from their work and they were sent home during the pandemic without a salary. To help support their homes, many young people were forced to stop studying due to the lack of time to follow the classes broadcast on television or the radio.

Although some government entities were delivering groceries to the population, this was not enough given the impact on jobs that were paralyzed or lost through the pandemic. Other entities such as some NGOs and SUTEP have distributed food and medicine and carried out health campaigns. The teachers said that allegations of corruption were made regarding the distribution of food and government aid, because this did not go to those who most needed assistance.


To the ordinary people who really needed it, it has not arrived. Friends and relatives always benefit and have been denounced in the media. I'm telling you that from my region, but at the national level the same thing has been seen. With the aid, it's the same thing, the state has given out the bonds, but who have they been given to? Also to friends and relatives. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

The pandemic has left a high death toll. With the death of their mother or father, students leave classes to go to work and help their families.

The country is going through a serious political crisis that the teachers describe as chaos, in which both the executive and legislative branches have not focused on the two main issues, health and education, but on the upcoming presidential elections. Many unemployed and retired teachers have not received their salaries, while the political elites incur unnecessary expenses on advertising in the media, in the press, as noted in the interview. The education authorities have done nothing to alleviate the sector's problems.

They don't focus on these issues such as health, education, or the salaries they owe teachers, instead they are fighting among themselves and are wasting time and wearing down the people with their lies. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

The pandemic has revealed the weaknesses of the education system. A large part of the student population is not receiving the distance classes. The official



channel TV signal (Channel 2) does not reach all regions in the country. A similar situation happens with the official radio signal (Radio Nacional), affecting students from rural areas who cannot get access to the Aprendo en Casa (I Learn at Home) program. Some private channels also broadcast the classes, but they do not reach the most remote areas. Radio has greater coverage. In some places there is no electricity and internet connectivity is even more limited. In some regions, this is very scarce or of very poor quality.

No government has really cared about doing the job well and caring about these two sectors that are the backbone of a country's development: education and health. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

2.2 Remote work without suitable conditions

The teachers considered that the educational system was not prepared to promote the Aprendo en Casa (I Learn at Home) strategy and that it has been up to them, based on the particular conditions of each teacher and their region, to adapt to the new strategies in order to continue teaching classes.

They have had to catch up with technology to carry out teaching with the new non-face-to-face strategy and to deal with the deficiencies of internet coverage, and even of TV and radio signals, and the lack of even these tools in areas where there is no electricity service.

Unfortunately, we teachers, from where we are, by force, just by force, have had to learn this new strategy and try to cope and move education forward. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

The Ministry of Education planned the transmission of classes at certain times and days on TV and radio for the different grades and levels of primary and secondary schooling according to a schedule, which teachers must follow upon. The teacher's job is to monitor the students watching or listening to the

classes and then to review those contents through WhatsApp. To cover the areas where TV or radio signal does not reach, they send the day's class via WhatsApp on cell phones, but there are areas where the internet signal does not reach either.

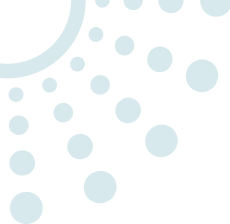
Some teachers use online platforms such as Zoom and Meet, but very few students have access to these. Those who have connectivity can access the Ministry of Education's website to download the classes and complete the activities. The proportion of students with internet access is low. As an example, one of the interviewees pointed out that out of 150 high school students in her charge, only four had internet access. The most widely available medium is radio.

The job of us teachers is to monitor [students'] work, to review the programming that they have seen on TV or heard on the radio, because in many places despite being in the city center, they don't have TV channels that are broadcasting the classes. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

Rural areas face the worst situation. In some regions, almost half of the students do not have the conditions required to follow the classes of the Aprendo en Casa strategy by any means, neither TV, radio, nor internet. Such is the case in Trujillo, one of the most affected areas due to the high mountains where neither internet connectivity nor basic electricity and water services are available. SUTEP has denounced this situation since the form of remote work was implemented.

With this drastic change from the classroom to the home and the need to adopt ways of imparting education in which they were not sufficiently trained, especially the required use of communications and information technology (ICT), the teachers believe that this has been like entering a new era.

They have to deal with deficiencies in both quality and coverage of the connectivity required. They indicated that agreements between the Ministry of



Education and regional governments to expand broadband have not worked.

Faced with this situation, we consider it practically as a new era. An era in which clearly we are experiencing processes that we have never experienced before. First of all, we feel it a little heavy-handed; Why? Because the Ministry of Education never gave us real training on new technology. I mean, it was left out. And for the use of these tools in our country there is deficient broadband corresponding to this technology. That is, the regional governments unfortunately have not assumed the coordination role they had with the Ministry of Education, to concern themselves and expand broadband to allow the work to go ahead, both for teachers, students and even the parents. We were told about a type of remote education that, for us, in Peru, was new. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

Faced with this scenario, teachers had to create their own strategies to continue teaching classes. They left aside the scheduling of classes broadcast by the media and prioritized activities according to the students' situations.

Firstly, scheduling was abandoned, we opted to prioritize some activities according to the reality and the scenario that we were living through at that time. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

In the places that other media do not reach, teachers arrived with study guidebooks. However, working with study guidebooks also has its drawbacks.

For example, where the internet has not reached, some guidebooks have been sent to [students] and parents feel themselves to have a big problem, because they don't know how to interpret the guidebooks, they don't know how to support those students. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

Regarding the contents of the classes, the Ministry of Education has designed

programs to which teachers can make adjustments or complete the information to make this clearer for the students.

[At the beginning] they hired TV hosts, but now, it must be recognized they've now hired guest professors. They are the ones who make the program and broadcast it nationally. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

Our work is practically the reviewing that is done with the students. And well, the evaluation, which we have to do ourselves. But the material is already defined by the government. And it gives us something to think about, because often it is almost not related to our national educational project, that is, in a way it has been disconnected, it seems like it is not going towards the goal. However, as this has caught us all by surprise, we're trying to achieve something. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

According to the teachers, not only has the teaching modality changed, but so has the teacher's role in guiding the education of students under their charge and, even more, the very approach of the contents has changed in such a way that they feel this is moving away from the objectives of the national education project.

The teachers at the beginning of the pandemic were also faced with the fact that the number of students increased, because public schools were receiving an influx of students who had been in private schools whose families could not continue to pay for private education. Therefore, they found themselves teaching a greater number of students than in the previous situation.

The problem is that there is no way to pay, many of those who had their children in private schools are no longer working and the number of students has increased, but the number of teachers has not increased, as it should. And you have to take into account that this remote work is much harder than face-to-face work. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)



However, this extra influx was soon reversed and many students dropped out of classes. This was even more the case in rural areas where families are engaged in working in the fields on their farms and they have less access to TV, radio and internet or may even lack electricity.

But already since April up to this month now, unfortunately a considerable percentage of students are dropping out. They are no longer interested in having to take responsibility for remote classes, because they see it as a waste of time. Students' parents have their own obligations, they are directly dedicated to assuming the responsibilities of the home as well as the work on their farms. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

The same situation is happening in the urban area, where students leave their studies due to the economic problems faced by their families.

There is another problem, that when we call them, when we follow up, because it is our job that no student leaves the classroom, you call them and what do they tell you? "Teacher, I don't have data anymore, I can't log in, I don't have internet, my dad is out of work, my mom is out of work," and that's too heavy an emotional burden.

There are other cases that hurt, for example, a student called me, and told me he is going to drop out so that his little brother can study and he is going to work. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

The teachers feel obliged to pay for students' cell phone data so that they don't miss classes.

We are reaching the extreme that we teachers, we have to pay top-ups of ten soles, five soles, twenty soles for the student, so that they don't miss classes. In my case, I work with students in the fifth grade of high school, imagine if that fifth-year student who is already going to move on to college fails this year. For

them it is really a very heavy weight, emotionally, to have to face this problem. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

Secondary school teachers are faced with the fact that student's adult relatives do not have sufficient academic training to support their children in their studies.

Teachers are overwhelmed by this situation. Many teachers have to do the work of teacher and mother to a family, because, in this Aprendo en Casa program, mom and dad have to assume this role. And unfortunately, in the case of Junín, in Huancayo, despite being in the center of the city and being a very large school, many of the parents only have basic education, so we can't count on them to support their fifth-year children academically. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

The shortage of resources, connectivity difficulties, and the lack of support for studies has led to an increase in the number of students dropping out from classes.

So, it's almost a generalized crisis, for example, for the 125 students I work with, there are already 26 who are in a process of abandoning their studies. I have already done a follow-up. I was able to rescue six. I have already made a report to the authorities so that they are the ones who have to put pressure on the parents. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

The teachers try to maintain the link with the students in their charge and to look for the mechanisms to support them, but many have no way to communicate with them other than by WhatsApp.

We communicate with the students on WhatsApp, basically, and some of them are very lazy, we have to go to Zoom or to Meet. Out of 125 students, 30 or 40 sign in, those who have a cell phone or a computer and the internet, the others can't. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)



2.3 Lack of equipment to teach classes

Among the measures taken, the government announced the provision of tablets and computers for students and teachers, as well as training in their use. The interviewees affirmed that they had not yet received such equipment, nor training in its use.

So far, there is absolutely nothing despite the fact that SUTEP, the union, are pushing for a laptop to be given to every teacher and every student, especially in rural areas. But, unfortunately, none of that has been fulfilled. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

The equipment has not yet been delivered and the teachers feel the pressure from the education authorities to carry out quantitative evaluations, inappropriate to the context, stating that they want to hold teachers directly responsible for this crisis that we are experiencing in this scenario of remote education. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

Connectivity problems affect teachers in their work.

And us too, some of us have children of school or university age, so if we are all connected at the same time in Zoom meetings, we are in serious problems. So, I have to warn them in advance, "It's my time at such-and-such a time." (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

To the extent that students' parents have started to go out to work, communication has become more difficult, because adults take cell phones with them all day and the students do not receive follow-up messages from the teachers. The teachers have also felt pressure from the educational authorities to break the confinement measures and to appear in person to resolve some issues related to distance education.

We saw that they even almost forced us to go to work in person. And since many colleagues are going to deliver the books that we have in school libraries, because the Ministry of Education ordered the delivery of books, worksheets, and groups of teachers have to go to the educational institution, convening parents, with all health protection measures, for the delivery of these texts that the kids require. In some places, where there is no connectivity, the teachers themselves have to go distribute these materials house by house. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)


Teachers are pressured by the education authorities to solve problems in the system and, at the same time, they don't receive the support they require to teach their classes.

That's the situation we're in. We demanded laptops, they offered us tablets for the quintile in the rural area, which have not yet arrived, and we are already coming up to the end of September. We exerted pressure on Congress because we needed data for our students and for the teachers and they also said they are going to give it to us, but look, we are almost at the beginning of October and they haven't given it to us. It turns out that the students don't have it. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

2.4 Impacts of the pandemic on the economy and the health of women teachers

The pandemic has hit the teachers' union hard in economic, social, emotional and political aspects. The teachers interviewed highlighted the stress generated by months of home confinement.

Learning to live practically more than four months all together at home, trying to avoid getting infected with this virus, prioritizing the life and health of each of our family members, the stress itself of each of us living through



this tension, we feel affected in the emotional and social aspects. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

The pandemic has made visible the shortcomings in Peru in the health sector and in the education sector. The teachers' union is made up of 70% women, therefore, the greatest impact fell on women. It has also been hard on the students due to the lack of means to receive classes in non-face-to-face modalities and the limited action of the government in this regard.

The impact on the health of teachers has been very pronounced. In the case of La Libertad, Trujillo, more than 100 teachers died because of COVID-19 and, throughout the country, according to the interviewees, more than 1000 teachers died, mostly men. The interviewees warn that women have also died, that women contract COVID-19 more than men do because they are more exposed to it, and that many, even when sick, had to continue working.

There has been no assessment here by the Ministry of Education, for example, for sick leave. In a country in which health care has collapsed, there was no way, there is no way, really, to certify that you have COVID. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

Supposedly, it's as if we are somehow immune to COVID, because they base it on statistics that more men than women die, so who are the most exposed? We are, the women. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

Among the teaching profession leaders, several of these have suffered losses of very close relatives due to COVID-19, and they themselves have also been affected by the pandemic and have become ill.

Every day we find obituaries on Facebook, about friends' contacts, who are dying, who are getting sick. It is extremely stressful. It totally affects us, in the

face of the indifference of a state that does nothing. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

With the pandemic, the economic situation of teachers has suffered. They consider that the average salary (US\$700) is low in relation to the cost of living, and this is reduced more with discounts; “We live in debt, the remuneration is very low.” To alleviate this situation, many of the teachers were engaged in a second paid activity, which they have not been able to do due to the confinement measures of the pandemic.


All the expenses caused by the modality of distance classes fall on the teachers, even the purchase of cell phone data so that students can follow the classes.

Everything, practically everything, we cover, the expense of internet data. I can even tell you that, out of simple human compassion we have to cover the expenses for data of some of our students so that they don't stop studying. They were only promises, not a single tablet has arrived in the Junín region of Peru. I don't think at the country level either. So, the only thing is that, the union, SUTEP, has decided to pay us for a few megabytes' worth of internet, but that hasn't occurred up until now either. So, we are covering everything with the resources of the teachers we are working with. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

2.5 Work and care overload

Confinement in homes has meant teachers assuming more responsibilities and more work simultaneously on many fronts: teaching, trade union activity, the care of the children confined with them who require attention, support and monitoring of their studies, attention to the family, and domestic work.

Women are leading in our homes, because now we are assuming more responsibilities. We are mothers, teachers, leaders. We have to cover all those spaces,



schedule ourselves and make a schedule to be able to attend to everything. In this pandemic, women have had to take on too much responsibility, more than men, but there we are, pushing ahead and continuing to persevere and giving the necessary guidance to our students, to our parents and, also, as they say, to our leaders. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

This confinement has driven our colleagues to terrible work overload. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

In the situation of confinement, there is no time when teachers can disconnect from their responsibilities and devote themselves to recreation, rest or other interests of their own.

Because before when we went out to face-to-face work, we left the children at home, now we are also caregivers, mothers, etc. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union).

In addition to taking care of their families, women teachers have had to provide emotional support to the students in their charge.

The other problem is that, psychologically, young people, who are at an age when they need freedom due to the very fact of being teenagers, are under a high degree of stress. Every day, teachers receive news that now a student's father has been infected, now a brother has been infected, the student is taking care of him, or that a student's grandmother died. It is a conflict that really burdens teachers greatly. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

Teachers consider themselves to have been exposed to emotional overload in addition to an overload of work and care.

Students are saying to many teachers, "I need a doctor, Miss. Please, do you know a doctor? My dad is unwell, my mom is unwell..." They are not only teachers, they are also the emotional support for their students and families. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)


Because in a way, we also have work in political parties, we have an overload of students, union leadership work, work at home, children, but the pandemic also affects us. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

2.6 Holding leadership positions in the union in times of pandemic

Trade union work represents a huge commitment of great responsibility and high dedication for those occupying leadership positions, carried out in very different conditions to those from before the pandemic. Public action has been replaced by actions over the internet, in the media, and meetings over internet platforms, as well as being available to answer constant phone calls or respond to messages from the organization rank and file.

Today we are doing union work and, as we were saying, we have lunch, we have breakfast next to our computers, because we go from meeting to meeting. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

It's like 24 hours a day for us as leaders are not enough. We stay up late to make press releases, we now have the problem of Ministerial Resolution 326 at the national level and the regional one as well. And we have our social debt, with more than 350 teachers who call us every day asking about payment. Sometimes we stay up until two in the morning doing jobs that we only do out of conviction, because leadership work requires sacrificing yourself. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)



I prefer the face-to-face to being on a machine talking, and we repress ourselves from saying things that we say in person. In person you laugh, you get rid of the stress. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

This work is interwoven with caring for their children, as well as providing support to their studies, doing domestic activities, attending to relatives and completing teaching work, for those teaching classes, among other activities.

I try to share activities with my children. My schedule is to get up early, do all the chores, have breakfast, do cleaning, sit down for at least two hours every morning to follow up on union issues, without enough time, because this is a lot of work suddenly, because I am regional secretary. We are overloaded and we have to deal with the problems of all provinces belonging to my region. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

Working remotely has required them to prepare themselves and to be up to date in the use of technology as leaders, to be informed and aware of the new regulations approved by the Ministry of Education in the context of the pandemic, while maintaining contact with the media, with their union peers and with the rank and file members, in addition to participating in negotiations with the authorities.

I would say that it may seem like a contradiction, that [the pandemic] allows us to be more in contact with the teachers, with the union structure, somehow, to put pressure on each other for the work we have to do to strengthen the union. If we don't put a brake on the government's policies, no one is going to do it. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union) And we, as a union structure, are putting the brakes on several things. We have managed, at this stage of the pandemic, to have the 6% increase for the education budget approved in Congress in the first instance, and we hope that on it's being raised to the other instance it will be ratified. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

We've achieved this in times of pandemic, with different strategies of struggle and pressure, with different strategies of dialog and conversation with the Ministry of Education. Obviously, we haven't achieved everything, but we keep on working, we can't stop the defense of public education, appreciating the work done by each and every one of the teachers, and continuing to be in close contact with the community. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

2.7 The increase in violence against women teachers and female students

The increase in violence against women teachers is another impact of the pandemic.


This issue of violence is not exclusive to the families of our students, it also affects us. As I tell you, a teacher said, I have realized that I am living with the enemy. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

The interviewees point out that violence also affects female students more than before.

Gender violence has increased, even for female students. The Public Ministry, the Prosecutor's Office, have reported that cases of the rape of minors, of students, by their own relatives at home have increased. That is at the level of Peru, that there is an increase in this problem that affects students. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

Violence against women and girls went viral throughout the country like COVID-19, through which the number of victims and survivors has increased.

Today, in Peru, to date, just in the pandemic stage at a general level, there were approximately 2800 missing women. Some are mothers, others are



students. The violence is very severe. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

2.8 Rights violated in the pandemic

The interviewees pointed out other rights are violated in the pandemic, among these, social debt owed for long service payments.

The working day is not being fulfilled. Teachers' work schedules have had to adjust to the schedules of the students in their charge.

Teachers also have to adapt to connect up with their students, to send them WhatsApp messages. They have to seek them out at different times. Some colleagues say sometimes at nine or ten at night they are still talking to their students. It is very difficult. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

Sometimes I've had to answer the phone even at eleven at night, because it is the time that they, the students, have space, time. Because now where I work my students are in a rural area and now that work has started up again, they are working, they've stopped listening to the remote classes and are working in agriculture or in the fields here in our province. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

2.9 Union work in the pandemic

Union work has continued during the pandemic, while adapting to the virtual modality.

In union work, we are all working. How do we do it? From our homes, which are now our trenches, just like for all teachers. To say that we meet in person is a lie, everything is virtual. We have taken the necessary measures and stra-

tegies to sustain this work and continue to lead here in our region. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

Adapting to virtual mode has not been easy, in some areas of the country more than others due to connectivity problems.

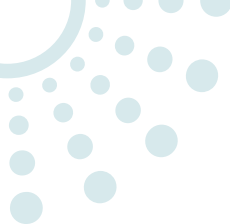
At the union level, it has also been a 360-degree change, because Peru has quite difficult geographical characteristics. A part of the sierra that, in some way, has the privilege of some connectivity, some connectivity... A colleague from the jungle has not been able to participate, because there is absolutely zero connectivity. Sometimes getting a signal is difficult. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

As a trade union organization, we are changing our strategies, seeing other forms of struggle. We are having meetings of [the virtual] type, in which we are also entering that learning process. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

The union has demanded the connectivity and equipment from the government required to be able to hold classes through virtual means.

We have been the first to demand connectivity [from the government]. We have demanded laptops and they came out just paying lip service to the idea, offering laptops, offering data to the teachers. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

SUTEP did not oppose the distance education modality, but they recognized the shortcomings in the use of the new tools. In addition to the low connectivity and lack of access for some of the students to follow the classes in the virtual modality, there is a lack of equipment and training for the teaching staff and the student population, as well as training for students' parents. Especially for mothers, on whom the responsibility is placed for children and



young people to follow the classes and who are expected to give support to students' work.

The union has had a clear position on this. It has informed society so that it is understood that the education crisis is not due to the teachers and that it cannot be solved with a change of educational strategy. They point out that the in-depth analysis of a long-standing crisis is required related to the implementation of educational policies imposed from outside that do not take into account the country's reality.

Because there were the shortcomings [in the management] of these instruments, of these tools, and in training for those of us who had to use them. Even students' parents play a role and they are also trying hard, but they were never trained. There are parents who have no level of education. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

Teachers lack sufficient digital equipment and training in this regard.

What teachers have done is make an effort to assume a responsibility for which the government never prepared us. And now, what do they seek to do in the eyes of society? They want to make us look bad. Saying that the responsibility is only ours. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

The union has had to face the health problems of its members during the pandemic, providing medical assistance and support from its leaders in the face of the difficulty of accessing collapsed health services.

As a trade union organization, we have had to deal with that situation, of many colleagues who have been exposed [to the virus]. In many cases, we've had to get access to doctors, we have had to seek support from our leaders, given the difficulties, so that they can get out of this situation and so that we

don't arrive at the tragedy of a death. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

The union has also vindicated the role of teachers at the front line of risk in the face of the pandemic, with a high death toll of close to 1000 teachers (September 2020).

This first stage of the pandemic in Peru has made us experience even more stress because we saw our leader colleagues who died, acquaintances of us all, and we saw the union obituary... We saw how teachers died and the government didn't say anything, because we are also on the front line, but they don't recognize it. All that stress has been very intense. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)


The union has carried out actions of solidarity in working class neighborhoods and rural areas, including the distribution of solidarity packages and support to neighborhood community kitchens to sustain nutrition.

In these aspects, the union has played a very important role. We have collaborated to support community neighborhood kitchens and the delivery of solidarity packages. The best of the teaching profession has come out. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

Violence against women educators has also been addressed by SUTEP. In May 2020, women teachers had a meeting with the Equity Secretariat during which they addressed the issue of the violence that some were experiencing in their homes.

The union has also been alert to the measures that the government has been taking in the face of the privatization of education.

The government has also taken advantage of this, for example, to draw up regulations that cover up the future privatization of education, in which it autho-



rizes the opening of new agreements to convert public institutions to privately managed ones. So, to that businessperson who comes along, they give them the human resources, they give them the economic resources, they give them the infrastructure, they give them everything. And what does that businessperson invest in? Absolutely nothing. They give them everything so that they perform “good management”.

(Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

SUTEP has carried out advocacy actions in the Congress of the Republic defending the rights of education workers.

We have been struggling in Congress, to modify laws, to demand the permanent appointment of teachers hired under contracts, because there are also unemployed teachers, the bulk of the teaching profession is female, the bulk of unemployment is in the female sector. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

They have denounced that, in the context of the pandemic, no new hires have been made and that gaps have been filled with teachers who held other positions.

On a temporary basis, they said, but it continued until August, which has represented savings for the state, so as not to hire teaching staff. We could say that, at the moment, out of ten teachers, about six have job stability and four are in limbo. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

Although the women teachers perceive the pandemic on a medium-term horizon, they are proposing demands to the educational authorities regarding the return to face-to-face attendance.

On returning to face-to-face classes, we have to demand, through our union, that there be fewer students in the classrooms so that social distancing can be respected, and an increase of teachers must be demanded to take more

responsibility for the students, because they assign us so many students and we are not magicians to be able to attend to all of them. (Group interview conducted with women leaders of the SUTEP union)

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Annex. Participants in the research

Countries	Organizations	Form of participation
El Salvador	ANDES 21 DE JUNIO	Survey Interview
Argentina	CTERA	Survey Interview
Argentina	CONADU	Interview
Honduras	COLPROSUMAH	Survey Interview
Perú	SUTEC	Interview
Costa Rica	ANDE	Survey Interview
Colombia	FECODE	Interview (2)
Colombia	ASPU	Interview
Brazil	CNTE	Survey Interview
Paraguay	UNE-SN	Survey Interview
Paraguay	OTEP-A	Survey Interview



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