

McKinsey
& Company

Women Matter Mexico 2022

Lights & shadows of the pandemic

August 2022



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Prologue

This is the second edition of McKinsey & Company's Women Matter Mexico series, undertaken in Mexico with a focus on understanding gender parity. On this occasion, 120 emblematic companies in Mexico and 30 of their subsidiaries in Latin America participated. Together, they employ over one million people, with combined sales equivalent to 35 percent of Mexico's GDP.

This study consists of two articles. In the first article, "**Uneven parity, Women Matter Mexico 2022,**" we conducted an analysis of how the situation of women professionals in Mexico has evolved since the publication of the first study in 2018. Our analysis focused on identifying the practices in companies that have made the most progress. Additionally, given the ongoing context of COVID-19, we conducted a complementary study seeking to understand the possible impact that COVID-19 has had on gender parity. These findings are summarized in the second article, "**Lights and shadows of the pandemic, Women Matter Mexico 2022.**"

We would like to thank all the organizations that were part of this second edition of Women Matter Mexico. Without your cooperation, time, and trust, this study would have been impossible. We hope you participate in our next editions to continue promoting gender equality in Mexico and Latin America.

At McKinsey & Company, we remain committed to deepening and expanding the knowledge and information available on the professional situation of women, and in this way, we hope to contribute to transformations that promote more diverse and inclusive professional environments.

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Lights and shadows of the pandemic

Women Matter Mexico 2022

The impact of COVID-19 on employment in Mexico was much greater for women than for men¹. Beyond the significant drop in labor participation, the pandemic affected several aspects of gender parity. Women bore the brunt of the increased domestic burden caused by the pandemic, including child care. This, coupled with the demands of telecommuting, meant that their rates of worry, exhaustion, and anxiety have also been higher than those of men. In addition, the impact on the mental health of women—primarily, women with children—influenced a higher percentage of women than men to consider slowing down their careers and even abandoning their paid work altogether.

This article focuses on understanding the impact of COVID-19 on women and is part of the Women Matter Mexico 2022 study. Complementary work is included in our article “Uneven Parity, Women Matter Mexico 2022”. The study was based on a survey of employees at 114 companies, with a total sample of ~55,000 people. It also includes data supported by a survey of 120 companies that together employ more than one million people in Mexico and was applied using research tools from our Women Matter studies since 2008.

The study also identified some positive trends in gender parity that have been recorded in the workplace due to changes in the ways people work as a result of COVID-19. However, these trends should be reinforced with concrete actions by companies so that they are not reversed. Before touching on these points, this article will review in greater detail the crisis that the pandemic caused in the world of employed women in Mexico.

¹ National Survey of Occupation and Employment (Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo), INEGI, fourth quarter 2020 and 2021.

1. The pandemic's impact on women

For starters, COVID-19 caused an unprecedented drop in Mexico's labor market, with a disproportionate impact on the participation of women—even more so on women with children. The paralysis of economic activity affected, above all, sectors with high participation of women, such as consumer goods, retail, and hospitality and entertainment. One year into COVID-19, the initial impact in Mexico was almost five times greater for women than for men. Between the first quarter of 2020 and the same period of 2021, 1.7 million people exited the labor market, of which 84 percent were women². The situation was even worse for women with children, who were more likely to leave the labor market during the pandemic³. In the first year of the COVID-19 crisis, 90 percent of women who left the labor force in Mexico had children⁴.

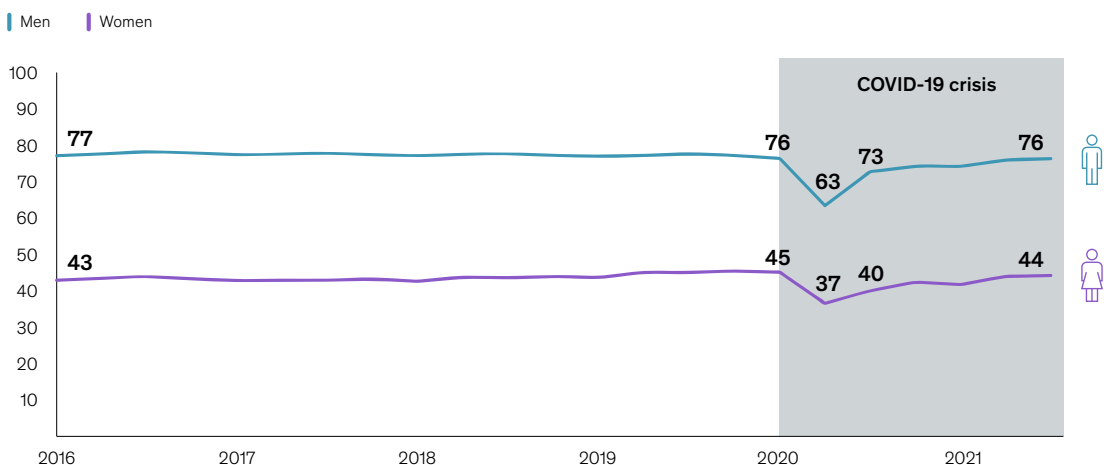
In the first year of the COVID-19 crisis, 90 percent of women who left the labor force in Mexico had children.

The labor market recovered to prepandemic levels by the fourth quarter of 2021, but the pace of recovery for men was twice as fast as for women. From the first to the second quarter of 2020, when the pandemic began, participation rates for both genders recorded their largest drop: from 76 to 63 percent for men, and from 45 to 37 percent for women (Exhibit 1).⁴ By the third quarter of 2020, the rate for men was back at 73 percent, almost the same as its prepandemic level; meanwhile, for women the rate had only returned to 40 percent. For perspective, men's participation recovered almost fully in less than a year, while women's took almost twice as long.

Exhibit 1

Labor participation rate by gender

%



Source: National Occupation and Employment Survey (Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo), new edition, INEGI; National Occupation and Employment Survey (Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo), INEGI.

² Ibid.

³ "Madres trabajadoras y COVID-19: Efectos de la pandemia en circunstancias de teletrabajo en México" (Working mothers and COVID-19: Effects of the pandemic on teleworking circumstances in Mexico), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), March 2021.

⁴ National Survey of Occupation and Employment (Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo), INEGI, 4th quarter 2020 and 2021.

A better understanding of the extent of the consequences for women requires an analysis of the increase in household burden during the pandemic.

2. Much busier

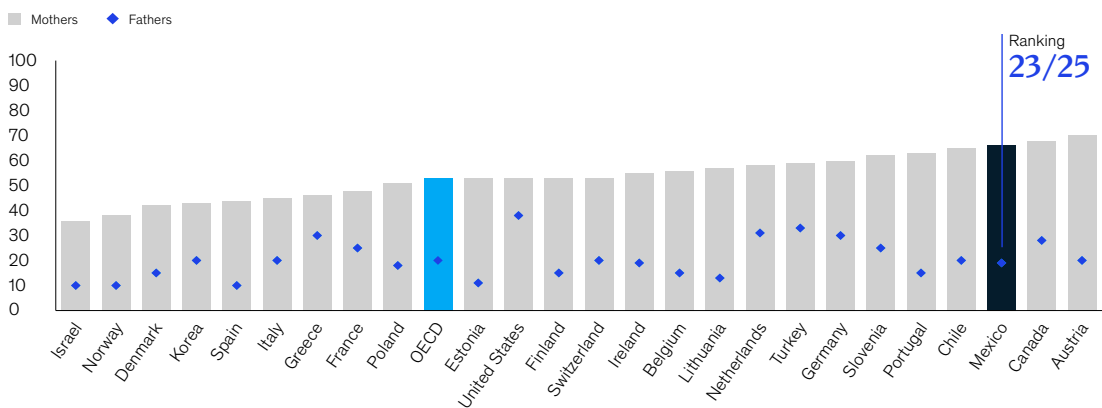
One of the most important consequences of the pandemic was the increased domestic burden. Although this situation undoubtedly affected both genders, the cultural and social context of Mexico and Latin America caused the additional responsibility of family care to fall especially on women. This consequence could explain, at least in part, the decline in their participation in the country's labor market⁵.

According to a study by the Mexican Institute for Competitiveness (Instituto Mexicano para la Competitividad, or IMCO), 56 percent of women consider that the distribution of household chores during the pandemic was greater for them than for their partners. Only 29 percent of men held the same opinion⁵. Also, in an OECD survey in 25 countries, Mexico had the third-largest percentage of employed women with children under 18 and employed partners say they took on most of the housework and child care during the COVID-19 crisis (Exhibit 2)⁶.

Exhibit 2

Employee household burden by gender during COVID-19

% of employees who have at least 1 child under 18 years of age and report being in charge of most of the housework and child care during the pandemic



Source: "Caregiving in crisis: Gender inequality in paid and unpaid work during Covid-19," OECD

Between the first quarter of 2020 and the same period of 2021, 1.7 million people exited the labor market; 84 percent were women.

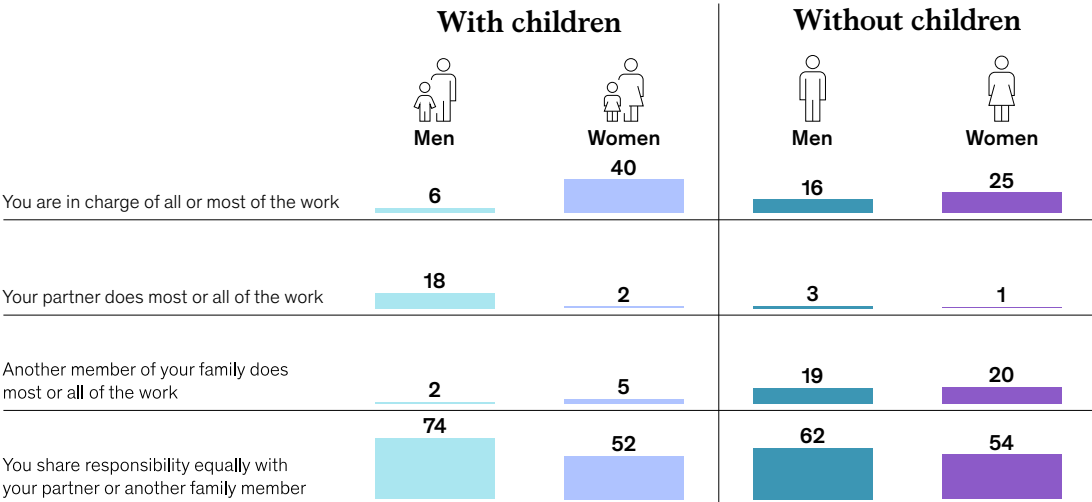
⁵ María Fernanda Avendaño Meouchi et al., IMCO Diagnosis: Women in the post-COVID economy (Diagnóstico IMCO: Mujer en la economía pos-COVID), IMCO, September 2020.

⁶ Caregiving in crisis: Gender inequality in paid and unpaid work during COVID-19, OECD, December 2021.

The market imbalance of men’s and women’s time dedicated to unpaid care work in Mexico existed before the pandemic. Women in Mexico already dedicated three times as much time as men to unpaid care work. According to the 2019 National Time-Use Survey (Encuesta Nacional sobre Uso del Tiempo), women in Mexico performed an average of 30.8 hours of unpaid domestic work for their household per week, while men totaled just 11.6 hours⁷.

The present study reflects this pattern. Forty percent of women with children who participated in our survey say they are fully engaged in household chores, a stark contrast to the 6 percent of men with children who responded the same (Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3
Division of household responsibilities and child care
 % of employees who agree with statement



Forty percent of women with children who participated in our survey say they are fully engaged in household chores and child care; only 6 percent of men with children responded the same.

This intensified during the pandemic, as increased demand for care, a drop in the supply of domestic support services, and the temporary closure of schools and day care centers increased the burden of unpaid work, especially in households with young children. Women were the most affected, according to various studies⁸.

⁷ National Survey of Occupation and Employment (Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo), INEGI, sobre Uso del Tiempo, INEGI, 2019e.

⁸ Human development and COVID-19 in Mexico: Challenges for a sustainable recovery (Desarrollo humano y COVID-19 en México: Desafíos para una recuperación sostenible), UNDP, 2020; Emma Näslund-Hadley et al., Remote initial education and mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic (Educación inicial remota y salud mental durante la pandemia COVID-19), Education Policy Brief 4, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), November 2020; Caregiving in the time of the coronavirus: Why care work must be central to a post-COVID-19 feminist future (Los cuidados en tiempos del Coronavirus: Por qué el trabajo de cuidados debe ser un elemento central para un futuro feminista post COVID-19), OXFAM America, June 2020.

For example, the ENCOVID19 CDMX Survey found that in seven out of ten households in Mexico City, the burden of caring for young children fell on women. In addition, in six out of ten households, mothers were responsible for accompanying children in their classes and homework⁹. For its part, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) reported that 74 percent of mothers in Mexico assumed care of their children's online education, compared with 5 percent of fathers¹⁰.

In our study, employees of both genders perceive, in a similar proportion, that the number of hours they spent on domestic and child-care tasks increased during the COVID-19 crisis. Sixty-seven percent of women and 70 percent of men who participated in our study report increased time spent on household and caregiving responsibilities since the onset of the pandemic. When asked how much additional time they dedicated to these activities, women and men responded they dedicated, respectively, 4.1 and 4.4 more hours per day, on average. In other words, the men surveyed perceive they increased the number of hours dedicated to these tasks in a greater proportion than women. Perception bias may have influenced women to underestimate the number of hours they spent at home, or men to overestimate the number of hours they spent at home (or both together)¹¹.

What effects did the increase in the household chores have on issues such as women's burnout?

3. Much more worn out

Respondents to our survey describe the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis on their mental health. Both genders report being affected, but women who remained in the workforce experienced greater repercussions to their mental health. While all surveyed employees report high levels of stress, women had significantly higher rates of worry, burnout, and anxiety than men.

Seventy percent of employees report feeling worn out, constantly stressed, exhausted, or distressed by the job cuts that occurred as a result of COVID-19. The additional workload and general uncertainty related to the pandemic also contributed to these feelings. The increased stress was observed in high proportions across all industries. Notably, one in five people report feeling that their mental health was at risk.

Both men and women presented many symptoms of stress, but women are likelier than men to report burnout. The highest burnout rates of all respondents are for women in senior positions, starting with senior vice presidents (58 percent), vice presidents (54 percent), and senior managers (50 percent). In addition, 37 percent of managers and 28 percent of women at the entry level report experiencing burnout.

Women in senior positions report the highest burnout rates: 58 percent for senior VPs, 54 percent for VPs, and 50 percent for senior managers.

⁹ Survey to monitor the effects of COVID on the well-being of Mexican households (Encuesta de seguimiento de los efectos del COVID-19 en el bienestar de los hogares mexicanos), Universidad Iberoamericana and UNICEF Mexico, 2020.

¹⁰ Remote initial education and mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020.

¹¹ Perception bias is the tendency to be subjective about or have perception skewed by stereotypes and assumptions.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic differed between those with and without children. The top concern reported by employees without children, with 49 percent of responses, was the need to be connected 24/7 (Exhibit 4). In addition, a lack of boundaries and periods of disconnection resulting from telecommuting, along with constant stress, resulted in one in three childless employees describing themselves as feeling burned out (Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4

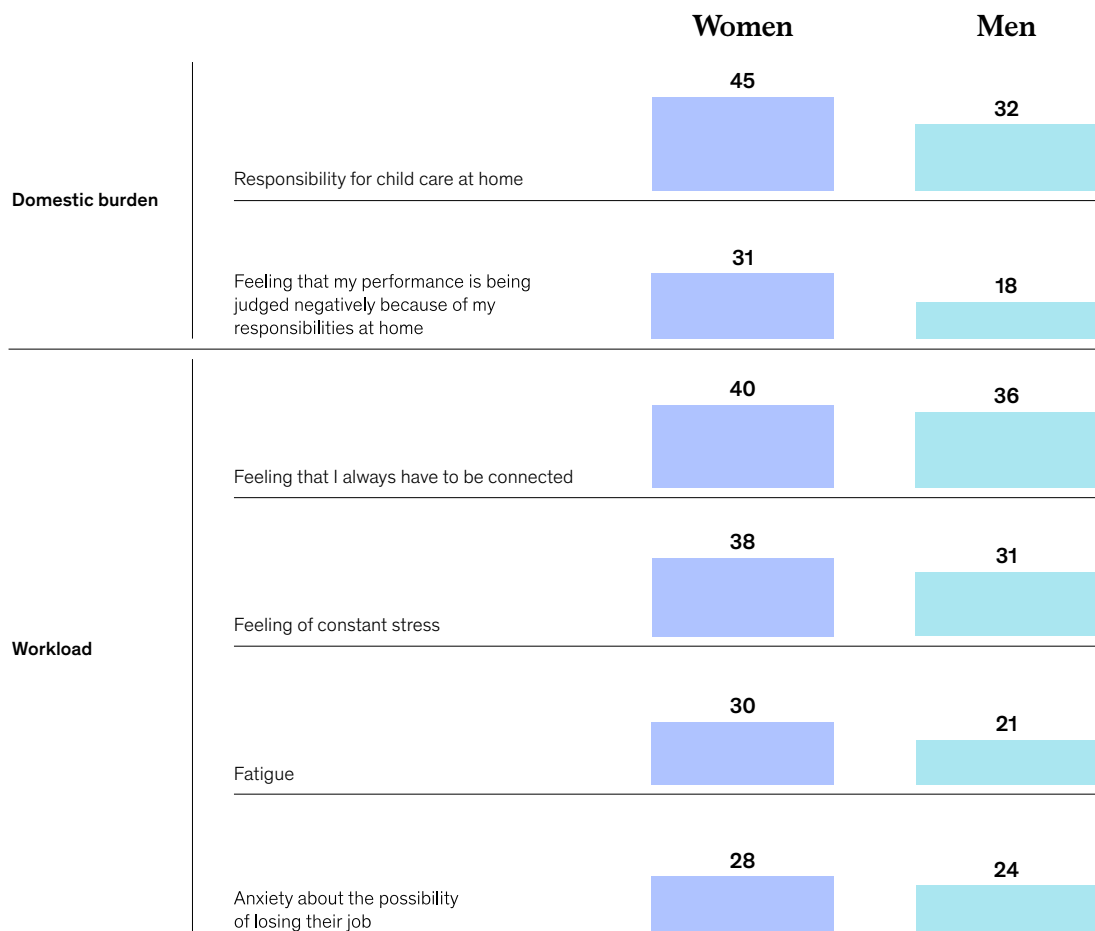
Concerns experienced by childless employees during the COVID-19 crisis
 % of childless employees



Employees with children also report that lack of flexibility and disconnection are concerns, but other factors related to mental health affected this group of employees to a greater degree. The main challenge reported by people with children is the responsibility of caring for and teaching children at home. In this regard, 45 percent of women and 32 percent of men with children report feeling worried about child-care responsibilities (Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5

Concerns experienced by employees with children during the COVID-19 crisis
 % of employees with children



Women with children (31 percent) greatly outnumber men with children (18 percent) in reporting another concern related to the domestic burden: feeling that one’s job performance will be judged negatively because of responsibilities at home. Similarly, more women with children (28 percent) than men with children (24 percent) report anxiety about the possibility of losing their job.

Thirty-one percent of employed women with children, compared with only 18 percent of men with children, say they were concerned that their job performance would be judged negatively because of their increased responsibilities at home.

Together, these concerns influenced how women began to evaluate the future of their careers in the wake of the pandemic, a topic we touch on in the next section.

4. Slowing down or putting the career on hold

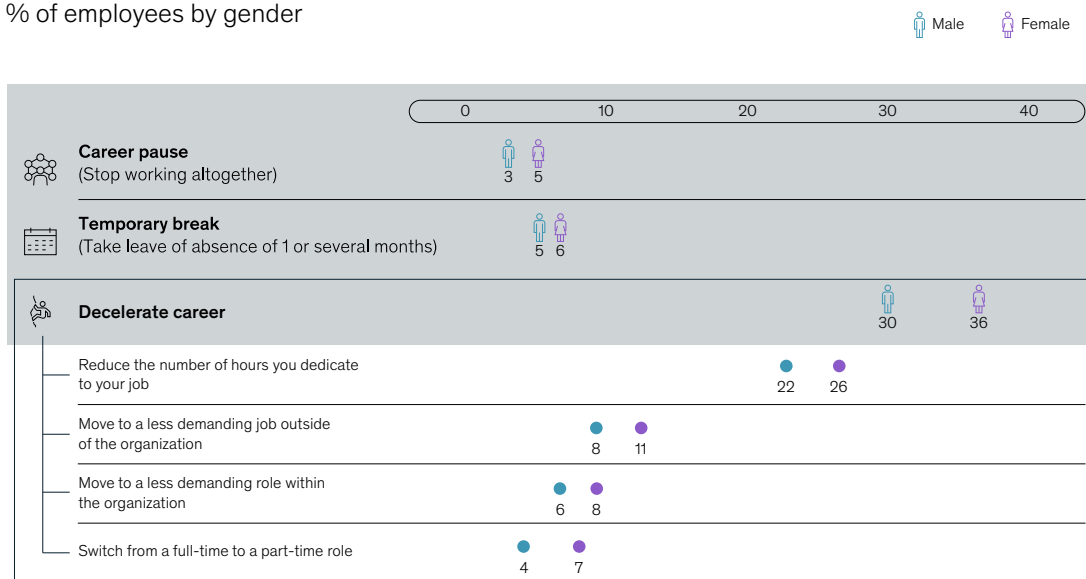
One way people sometimes cope with work-related stress is to ease up on work, so our study analyzed how the increased domestic burden and high levels of stress caused by the pandemic influenced employees' work decisions. Just as women more than men say they adjusted their day-to-day lives to cope with additional responsibilities, a greater proportion of women than men report that they considered slowing down their careers to improve mental health, deal with the extra burden of domestic work, or both.

In our survey, 3 percent of men and 5 percent of women say they considered pausing their careers because of COVID-19 (Exhibit 6), this is almost twice for women. Also, 5 percent of men and 6 percent of women considered taking a temporary leave of absence. Of the employees who considered slowing down their careers (36 percent of women and 30 percent of men), most say the way they considered doing so was to reduce the number of hours spent at work. Several mention other options—switching to less demanding roles or jobs and transferring to part-time employment. In all these cases, women are likelier than men to say they considered these possibilities.

Exhibit 6

Career options considered in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis

% of employees by gender



As our survey indicates, these challenges were already and continue to be greater for women with children. Employed women with children at home, both before and one year after the pandemic, have seen a decreased likelihood of keeping a formal job and increased likelihood of staying in an informal one. This could suggest that, in seeking more flexible or less demanding work options in terms of hours, women with children have had to substitute jobs with better health, savings, and retirement benefits, among others, for jobs without such benefits¹².

The COVID-19 pandemic will likely bring about changes in the composition of jobs, including greater job mobility among women than among men. The McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) report "[The future of work after COVID-19](#)" estimates that, in some countries, the increase in required job transitions due to trends influenced by COVID-19 is 3.9 times greater for women than for men. As the economy recovers, women's reentry into the labor market may be further complicated by the need to retrain or find new career paths¹³.

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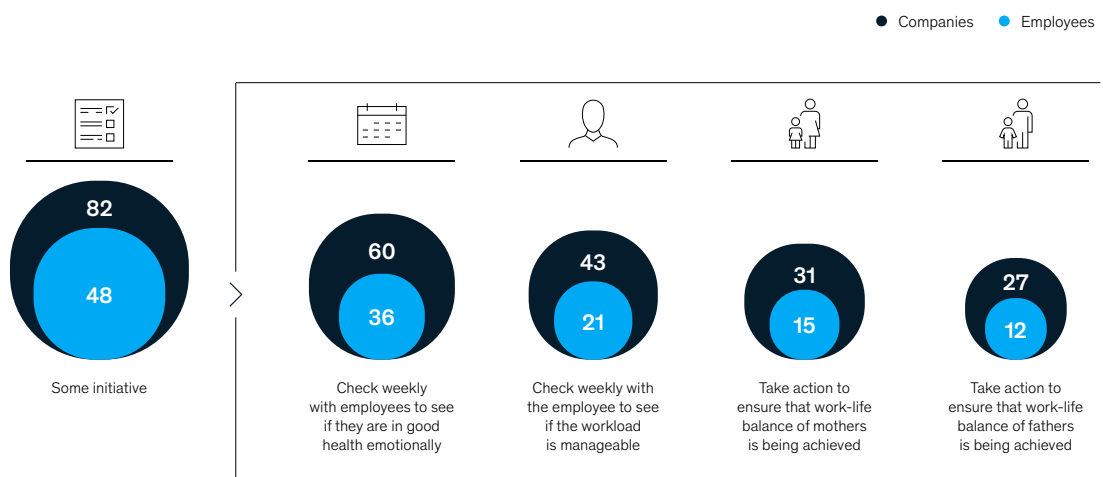
5. Potential lessons in corporate responses

Although 82 percent of the companies that participated in our study say they implemented some initiative to monitor the mental health of their workers, only 48 percent of the employees in these companies perceive that their organization took at least one action to address mental-health issues. (Exhibit 7).

Exhibit 7

Company and employee perception of actions taken in response to the COVID-19 crisis

% of companies and employees reporting that the initiative was taken



¹² Laura Juarez and Paula Villaseñor, Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labor-market outcomes of women with children in Mexico, working paper, 2022.

¹³ For more, see "The future of work after COVID-19," McKinsey Global Institute, February 18, 2021.

Notably, the companies that implemented the most initiatives to counteract the mental-health effects of the pandemic also report the best results in terms of gender parity and the representation of women at senior executive levels. This suggests that the most advanced companies in gender issues had the necessary organizational tools to respond more nimbly. To do so, they deployed sets of initiatives and communication strategies that allowed them to accommodate the needs of their employees more effectively.

Remote working: The starting point

With the onset of the pandemic and accompanying lockdowns, more than 80 percent of companies say they offered employees the alternative of telecommuting. The measure was implemented in all sectors to a greater or lesser extent. In our survey, the industries that made most use of telecommuting are finance and professional services (95 percent), and consumer and retail trade (89 percent). Companies in the healthcare (75 percent) and industrial (68 percent) sectors report lower implementation, due to the on-site presence-based nature of the work (Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 8

Companies offering remote work, by industry
 % of companies saying they give the option to their employees



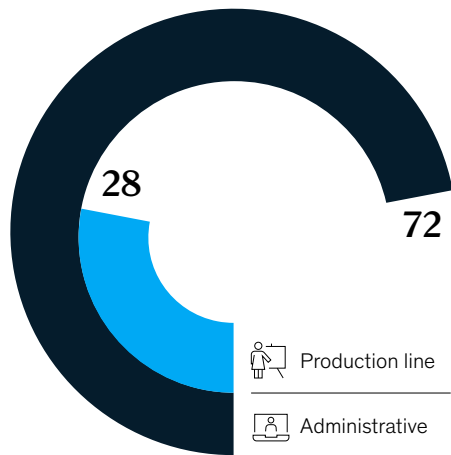
Not all employees were able to opt for the telecommuting scheme, even if their company offered it. Only 40 percent of employees say they worked remotely. This could be because some jobs require workers to be physically present, as in the case of frontline workers, teachers, and nurses. One’s role as a line or staff employee also made a difference: only 28 percent of the line employees say they had the option to work remotely, compared with 72 percent of employees in administrative positions (Exhibit 9)¹⁴.

¹⁴ Line employees are those whose role and function has a direct impact in the P&L of the company, while administrative employees are those whose function play a support role in the core business of the company

Exhibit 9

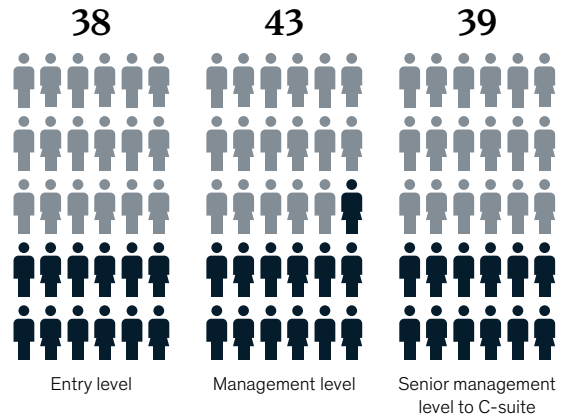
Employee participation in remote work schemes by role type

% of employees who say they participate in any remote scheme



Employees who participated in a remote work scheme by level

% of employees



Even when companies may not be able to adopt traditional remote work models for some roles or in some industries, they can get creative and find other ways of supporting employees more effectively. Examples include checking on employees' emotional state, allowing leaves of absence, and improving their communication of the options that do exist.

Tracking the emotional state

In the wake of the pandemic, 60 percent of the surveyed companies report tracking the emotional state of their employees. In addition, 43 percent say they check weekly to ensure that the workload is manageable. Finally, one in three companies say they took action to ensure that the work-life balance of their employees who are parents was achievable (Exhibit 7).

Leaves of absence

Policies for leaves of absence remain largely unchanged. Less than one-third of the companies (28 percent) say they managed to increase family leave or vacation days, 5 percent reduced workloads, and 72 percent made no changes to leave or vacation policies. In the few companies that did increase leave days, only one in four employees report knowing about this benefit.

Communication

Companies are much more likely to say they take actions than employees are to perceive the actions. For example, in the 43 percent of companies that reported having checked weekly with their employees to see if the workload was manageable, only one of every five employees reported that their company implemented such an initiative. This pattern occurred for almost all the actions that companies report (Exhibit 7). The situation suggests that companies might benefit from reviewing and improving the effectiveness of their communication.

¹⁵ Based on interviews and roundtables with CEOs and executive teams as part of the research done for Women Matter México 2022.

‘When we were forced to work remotely, I saw a very high level of responsibility. People work harder, they don’t waste time, meetings start on time. I have seen an impressive discipline, and those who don’t have it are the fewest. The discipline people have in working [remotely] is a great discovery.’

—CEO of an energy company in Mexico

6. Positive trends in the labor market

The pandemic imposed an enormous disruption on all aspects of life across the world. As employers in Mexico saw the impact on labor market conditions, some adopted practices that helped their people and, as a result, their organizations. Some of these efforts, such as emphasizing flexibility and balance in work patterns, could drive greater gender parity in the medium and long term.

Changes in the general workplace

One fundamental change that has affected workplaces broadly is greater closeness and communication in the workplace. The necessary and accelerated adoption of telecommuting increased connectivity and interactions among employees. During the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, technology enabled virtual meetings with more participants, bringing senior management closer to teams with whom they previously did not interact face-to-face. Also, some organizations created programs to accompany their employees during lockdowns with non-work-related activities, such as virtual summer camps for children and remote classes for them and their families¹⁵.

‘Organizations have learned that having some work flexibility in terms of scheduling is not bad and benefits us all. We have implemented several rules, such as limiting meetings before 8:30 a.m. to critical issues and blocking agendas from 2 to 4 p.m. and after 7 p.m. We have also learned that some flexibility in scheduling is not a bad thing and benefits everyone. Generally, these rules help women more than men, but when a balance is reached, it is no longer a gender issue but one of work discipline.’

—CEO of a company in the financial sector in Mexico

¹⁵ Based on interviews and roundtables with CEOs and executive teams as part of the research done for Women Matter Mexico 2022.

Organizations also shifted evaluations to be based more on results, rather than compliance with schedules. In some companies, telecommuting fostered a relationship of greater trust within the teams, which made it possible to implement evaluation schemes based on results and not on time availability. New leadership styles have emerged in the wake of the pandemic; more holistic, people-focused leadership styles seem to be more valuable¹⁵. Deep and diverse connections that provide social support have been found to be critical elements for well-being and learning, especially during periods of uncertainty and heightened stress. In the context of the pandemic, leaders have witnessed the importance of certain leadership actions that can be taken to foster deeper connections—for example, giving full attention to the person in front, showing vulnerability, showing empathy by taking the other person's perspective into account, and caring for others with compassion.

Changes that drive gender parity

Three of the changes we are seeing can move companies faster toward gender parity. The first such change is an increased awareness of the domestic burden. With the pandemic came a greater appreciation for the importance of balancing work and family life. Remote work gave greater transparency to the weight that domestic responsibilities and child care have in the daily lives of all employees but mainly women.

A second change is men's greater participation in domestic chores and child care. According to the results of our survey, men became more involved in household responsibilities and child care, where applicable. It remains to be seen whether this involvement is maintained or even increased, as would be ideal in terms of gender parity, or whether it regresses to prepandemic levels.

Finally, the pandemic accelerated employers' introduction of flexible work schemes. Companies had to adjust their work arrangements to accommodate the new reality of their employees. The corporate culture tested more flexible schemes that allowed for more equitable parenting. At the beginning of the pandemic, there was uncertainty about the expectations and methods of remote work, but companies gradually implemented unwritten rules so that employees could meet the daily routine of household, school, child care, and other family responsibilities.

‘One of the big lessons from the pandemic is flexibility, which is going to be a watershed. Some of the main barriers to women not having the same ease of moving up the hierarchical ladder are office-based work schemes with fixed hours.’

—CEO of a retail company in Mexico

7. Potential actions for achieving parity

Companies' responses to our survey suggest that employers have a strong expectation that flexible work arrangements and more telecommuting can drive better gender parity in the workplace. Ninety percent of the companies surveyed agree that remote work will help them attract and retain more women.

Flexible work arrangements and telecommuting alone may not be enough to incentivize greater gender parity. These changes should be accompanied by companies' adaptation of talent management processes to these new ways of working. We have identified five potential actions:

- 1. Adjust evaluation processes so they do not penalize flexible work schemes.** Fifty-two percent of the companies that participated in our study say they do not have guidelines to prevent penalties in evaluations of employees who participate in flexible programs. This could influence employees to opt out of the different flexibility programs and therefore the initiative may not have the expected results. Companies should adjust their internal processes to better accommodate people who choose to use telecommuting schemes or other options that offer greater flexibility.
- 2. Adopt radical flexibility.** Our study "Married to the job no more: Craving flexibility, parents are quitting to get it" suggests that companies could foster flexible work dynamics—for example, by allowing all employees to reduce their workweeks to 60 percent or temporarily switch to a less demanding role with the understanding that they can return when they are ready. They could even split jobs into parts—allowing job sharing, for example, or hiring someone to do 20 percent of a job one day a week¹⁶.
- 3. Incentivize the use of flexible work schemes regardless of gender.** Inadvertent gender bias in flexible working schemes is likely to have a negative impact on gender parity. Based on our interviews with CEOs and focus groups with executive teams, the flexible programs that work best are those intended for both men and women¹⁷.
- 4. Try to avoid employees being connected 24/7.** In a world with some level of hybrid work schemes, there is a need for companies to establish new rules that clearly delineate schedules for personal space. Companies could encourage work habits that are respectful of their employees' personal and family lives.
- 5. Maintain continuous communication with employees.** Companies should maintain an open channel of communication with their employees to clearly establish the rules of operation in times of uncertainty, effectively convey the initiatives being taken, and have a pulse on the mood of their employees.

The pandemic showed us that it is possible to implement flexible work arrangements, and our study shows that employees expect hybrid work arrangements to be maintained. Eighty percent of women and 73 percent of men say they want to work remotely at least one day per week in the future (Exhibit 10).

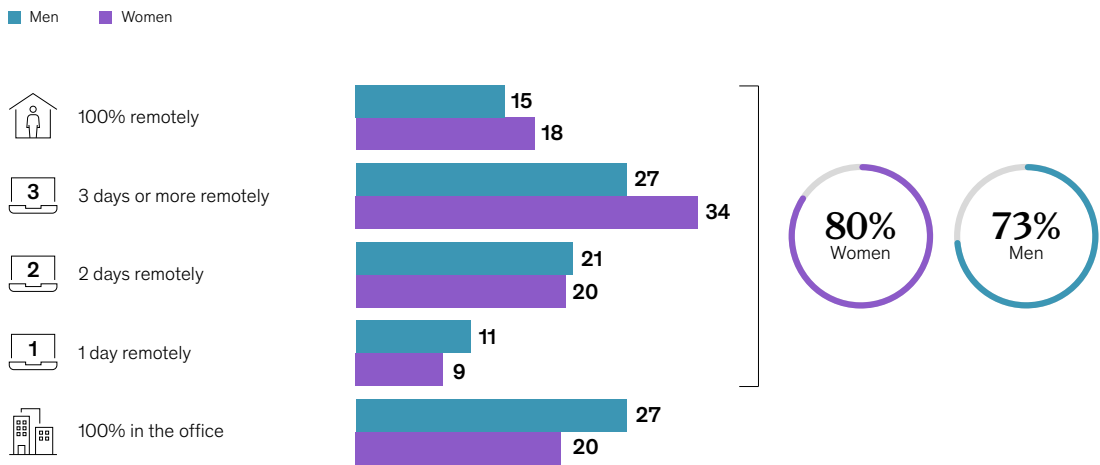
¹⁶ For more, see "Married to the job no more: Craving flexibility, parents are quitting to get it," McKinsey Global Institute, December 2021.

¹⁷ Based on interviews and roundtables with CEOs and executive teams as part of the research done for Women Matter México 2022.

Exhibit 10

Employee preference for on-site presence-based, hybrid, and remote work arrangements

% of employees who selected the option as their ideal way to work after COVID-19 crisis

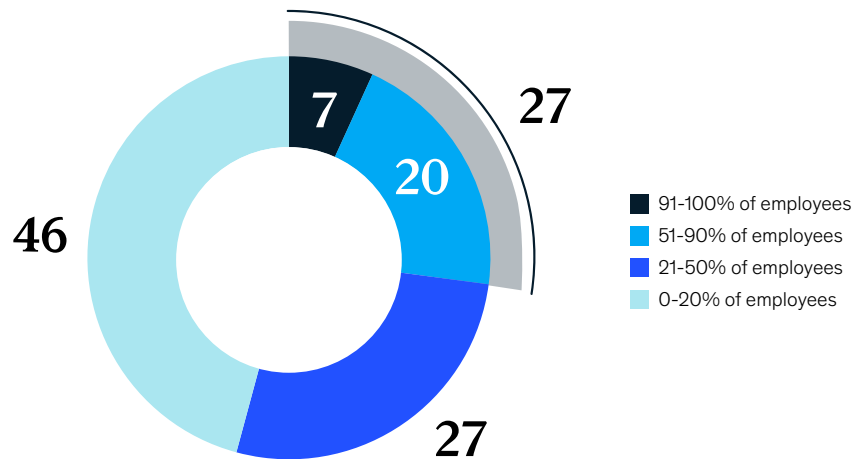


Employers also expect hybrid work arrangements to continue in the future, although to a lesser extent than employees do. Almost one in two companies (46 percent) expect up to 20 percent of their employees to work remotely most of the time. Also, one in four companies (27 percent) expect more than half of their employees to work remotely most of the time (Exhibit 11).

Exhibit 11

What percentage of employees do you expect to be working remotely most of the time in the future?

% of companies responding



As a point of comparison, the McKinsey report “The future of work after COVID-19” estimates that about 20 to 25 percent of the workforce in advanced economies could work from home three to five days a week. This represents four to five times more telecommuting than before the pandemic.

8. Conclusions

The pandemic has forced employees and companies in Mexico to make fundamental shifts. Women have been burdened with complicated challenges, which in some cases may have stifled the progress toward gender parity that had been taking place. A proportion of women abandoned paid work or decided to slow down their professional development to improve their mental health, deal with the extra burden of domestic work, or both. A smaller proportion of men also experienced something similar.

The COVID-19 phenomenon is causing companies and their people to rethink basic arrangements such as where to work, what flexibility to have, how to evaluate staff, and how to induct new talent, among other critical decisions.

Companies should capitalize on the lessons they have learned during the pandemic: flexibility, hybrid work, and effective communication. By designing different working conditions, companies should aim to promote the attraction, retention, promotion, and motivation of talent, particularly women, while capturing efficiencies and control for the business. The benefits will be for everyone and will make it possible to accelerate the capture of the gender parity bonus.



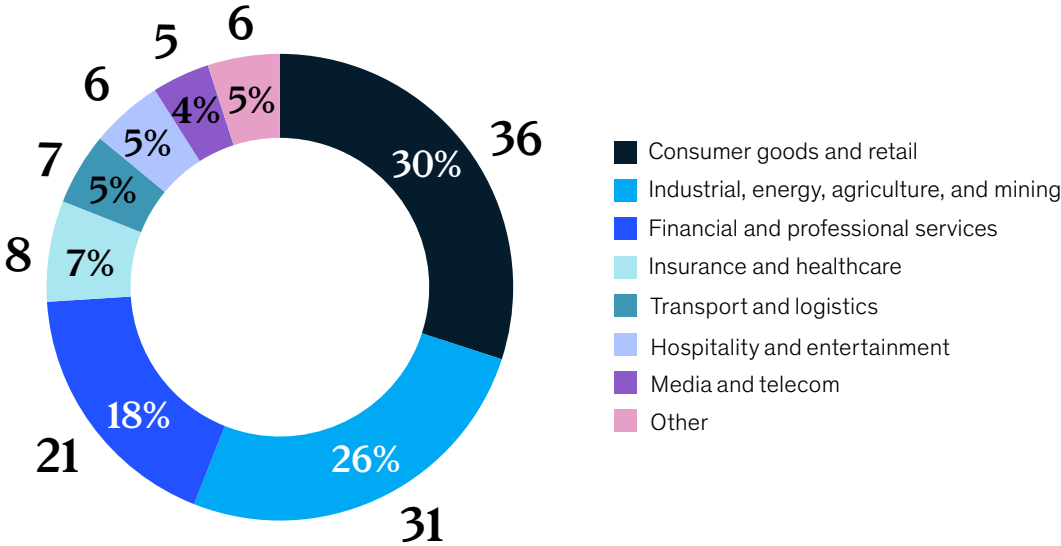
Methodological note

This study gathered data from 120 companies located in Mexico, based on research tools previously applied to Women Matter studies carried out in other countries since 2008. The companies in the study sample represent a diversified set of economic sectors and employ more than 1.1 million employees in Mexico (Exhibit 1). These companies reported 2020 sales that in total equaled about 35 percent of Mexico's GDP.

Exhibit 1

Industry classification of companies in the sample

Number of companies
(% of sample)




Data gathering

Each participating business provided McKinsey & Company Mexico with information on its human resources, including personnel censuses; data on recruitment, promotion, rotation, and salary differences by gender; and information about its HR policies and programs. The information received corresponds to the year 2020; some questions that are aimed at better understanding the effects of COVID-19 also cover 2019.

Participating companies ranked their employees according to their positions at six levels of the organization. They used a standardized method for all organizations, which involved considering the organizational structure, reporting levels, and trajectory of each rank. Companies that lacked one or more of these levels could indicate this when filling in their data. The definitions are as follows:

- 1. Entry level:** employees who carry out specific tasks and participate in one or several teams, including field employees such as cashiers, shopkeepers, and operators
- 2. Managers:** employees who have administrative responsibility over a team

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3. **Senior managers:** managers with responsibility for various teams and a specific function or operating unit
 4. **Vice presidents:** leaders of the organization who report directly to the senior vice presidents
 5. **Senior vice presidents:** senior leaders in the organization with significant responsibility for a function or business unit
 6. **C-suite:** those responsible at the highest level for the operations and profitability of the company, who report directly to the CEO

Along with the survey of businesses, a survey of employees was conducted in 114 of the 120 participating companies. Of the total sample of 54,419 people, 25,631 identified as men (47.1 percent), 28,694 as women (52.7 percent), and 94 (0.2 percent) as nonbinary¹.

Following the surveys, interviews were conducted with CEOs, and discussion panels were held with directors of the participating companies.

¹ For analyses of responses by gender, responses from people identifying as nonbinary were excluded.

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