

# Women's work. From permit to obligation

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## *Resumen*

El objetivo de este artículo es documentar y explicar las razones que han generado y generalizado la obligatoriedad del trabajo femenino desde dos perspectivas: por una parte, como resultado de la precarización del empleo, en especial, del empleo masculino. Por otra parte, en relación a los cambios sociodemográficos y culturales, en especial, la reducción del tamaño de los hogares, la migración a Estados Unidos, la no formación, la disolución y el acortamiento en la duración de las uniones; procesos que han generado situaciones residenciales imprevistas en los grupos domésticos que han detonado la obligatoriedad del trabajo femenino a largo plazo.

*Palabras clave:* Trabajo femenino, precarización del empleo masculino, cambios sociodemográficos.

## *Abstract*

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The aim of this article is to document and explain the reasons that have generated widespread and compulsory female labor from two perspectives: on one hand, as a result of job precarity, especially of male employment. On the other side, regarding sociodemographic and cultural changes, especially the reduction in the size of households, migration to the United States, the lack of, dissolution and shortening duration of unions; processes that have generated unforeseen situations in domestic residential groups that have triggered mandatory women's work in the long term.

*Key words:* Female work, male job precarity, sociodemographic changes.

**BACKGROUND**

**A**ndrea, a young lady from Los Altos de Jalisco, decided to drop out of high school. The reason of not wanting to study was traditionally accepted in urban popular sectors and rural societies in Mexico. For men, it meant the beginning of their labor lives. It was not so for women, who started helping at home while they found a fiancé, marry and left the parental house forever.

However, things have changed. By leaving school Andrea lost the cash grant she received from the social program Oportunidades; meager, but crucial income at poor households such as hers. Her mother, divorced wife and worker in a sewing workshop, her married brother (whose wife also works) and a single sister, employed as well, asked her to find a job to support herself and contribute to the household's expenses; two brothers living in the U.S. reinforced this argumentation. Andrea said she had applied in a number of places, but she had not been hired. It was so for two months, until her sister found out that Andrea had been accepted in a place, but never attended. This elicited a surly argument from which it was clear for Andrea that she had to work and contribute to the household if she wanted to continue living there. Little after, she was hired in a backpack workshop and agreed the money she would give weekly with her mother, which reestablished the order at the house.

Situations such as Andrea's are common at households in Los Altos de Jalisco. For women work is no longer an option but an obligation. Women become employed or work at all the stages and conditions of their lives: from their youth to old age; single and married women, single mothers, divorced, separated, abandoned women and widows. At present, women are present at every activity, either as employees, managers, proprietors of the activities they create, recreate, invent and reinvent to fit them to their lives' changing circumstances.

This situation is utterly different from the one accounted for in the literature in previous decades. In Mexico, up to the 1970's, the women who worked outside home were those young and single (García, 2010; Rosado, 1990). Back then, it was noticed that paid work outside the household was only a part in feminine lives that concluded with the union or marriage; men banned their daughters and wives from work; women, by and large,

single, had to ask for permission and negotiate their leaving for labor markets in return of giving their parents all of their incomes (García Acosta, 2001; Rosado, 1990). This has changed.

The objective of this article is to document and explain the reasons that have generated and generalized the compulsoriness of feminine labor from two perspectives: on the one side, as a result of the pauperization of employment, especially masculine; on the other, regarding sociodemographic and cultural changes, especially the reduction of the reduction of household size, migration to the U.S., the non-formation, dissolution and shortening of unions, processes that have unforeseen residential situations which have triggered the compulsoriness of long-term feminine work.

The research on which this article is based upon was undertaken in 2014 and 2015 in Los Altos de Jalisco. It implied fieldtrips to the urban and rural areas of various municipalities in the region, while fieldwork included the application of questionnaires, successive interviews and mainly the elaboration of one hundred and twenty life histories of women of different ages, localities, activities and marital and family lives (Arias, Sánchez García and Muñoz Durán, 2015). The subjects of observation, interviews and life histories are women, their trajectories, experiences and reflections. The information for one history required at least three interviews. However, there is also information that came in one or two interviews, which finally did not become life histories. The conversations and interviews were held, in most of the cases, at the households that, on many occasions, was the place of work. The information was gathered in field journals and recordings which were later transcribed to field journals. All information on salaries, labor conditions, opinions and valuations of the jobs and benefits come from the information of the interviews and life histories. In general, wages and benefits—or no benefits—are very similar in all the region. The book *Quehaceres y obras. El trabajo femenino en los Altos de Jalisco* [Tasks and works; feminine labor in Los Altos de Jalisco] by Arias *et al.* (2015) presents, in a summarized manner, 52 life histories of working women from the region.

Quantitative information is based on sociodemographic questionnaires applied by Mexican Migration Project (MMP)<sup>1</sup> in seven locations between the years 2014 and 2015. To compare and contrast, we have used data from the same survey that was applied in three communities of the region in 1988.

1 <http://www.mmp.opr.princeton.edu>

**ON FEMININE LABOR**

In the 1990's, Wolf started a discussion on the characteristics of feminine labor outside the household in traditional societies. Wolf (1990) compared the decision making on working at the households of working women in Java and Taiwan and found a significant difference. Young women in Java worked in factories even against their parents will. In Taiwan, conversely, parents compelled their daughters to work, remain and contribute to the household's economy as long as possible. Among the factors that explained the difference between the contexts there was, in the case of Java, a lengthy tradition of women's economic independence; by contrast, in Taiwan, the patriarchal family and patrilineal residence affected the decisions young women can make regarding their entrance, permanence and labor rights (Wolf, 1990).

At all times Mexican ethnographies have documented the women's persistent labor participation inside and outside the household. However, the conceptualization of feminine labor, with no further questioning, as complementary to masculine occupations and as economic help for the households has prevented accounting for the diversity of situations and the changes experienced in feminine labor in various regions and over time.

All in all, the ethnographic evidence adds to the idea that feminine paid labor was associated, for long time, more with household control than feminine will. We have to bear in mind that labor experience was restricted to single young women, over such short stage they lived with their domestic groups, before joining, which occurred at early ages. The union implied leaving the parental house with no return. The permanence or return of the daughters to the house of origin was not foreseen in the traditional social organization. And this is one of the phenomena that has booming in recent years and has altered the life scenarios of households and women.

In Los Altos de Jalisco, the region of this research, there has been a lengthy and vigorous tradition of feminine activity to generate income, and at once it is a society composed of patriarchal and hierarchical families that managed for long time to control, model and use feminine labor in benefit of the domestic groups of which women were part (Arias *et al.*, 2015).

In the 1970's decade, in Arandas, Jalisco, for example, feminine labor outside the household was restricted to those single, the young women did not make the decision to work autonomously and "they were only allowed to receive a payment if they contribute to the family economy as family-dependent daughters but not as housewives, while men are the breadwinners"

(García, 2001: 157). When they married and since “their husbands did not let them work”, women joined the manufacturing activities at home (Arias and Durand, 1988; García, 2001).

The manufacturing of blown glass baubles in Santa María del Valle, a small rural locality, is an example of how the offer of feminine workers in the region was agreed. The decision whom to hire in the factories was made by the owners of the enterprise, native to the place who had emigrated to Guadalajara and priests and the parents. Without asking the women who would become workers, it was agreed that only maids would be hired, this is to say, single young ladies as long as they were single. If they become married they stopped working (Arias and Durand, 1988). The two examples above give an account of the family control on the modelling and conditions of feminine work.

In any case, with the broadening of the extradomestic labor offer the other possibility pointed out by Wolf (1990) is glimpsed. With the arrival of clothing maquiladoras to the northern communities of Guanajuato “mothers are aware that the marriage of one of their daughters implies losing labor force in the households” (Treviño, 1986: 127). For her part, Wilson (1990) found that in Santiago Tangamandapio, a municipality of Michoacan, the retention of daughters at home also occurred. For Wilson such had been the way to prolong the access and use of cash incomes the daughters obtained from their work threading rebozos from home, an activity that offered plenty of workloads for women at a time at which cash incomes were scarce in the countryside, more so for them.

However, all this has changed. What is noticed today is the end of a time when women asked for permission to engage in paid work outside the household, while the current situation is that they have to work at every stage and condition of their lives. This change has to do with the transformations in the conditions of life, employment and economic organization which has had important consequences for feminine lives and the households they are part or head of.

#### **EMPLOYMENT PAUPERIZATION**

As pointed out, most of the jobs created in Latin America in recent years has been for unskilled workers, with low wages, with no access to benefits, social security or retirement pensions and the labor condition and retributions for women are lower than those for men (García and De Oliveira, 2011).

Indubitably, this has been also the trajectory of feminine labor. As of the 1980's, sociologic and anthropologic research has given an account to the growing incorporation of women into the labor markets opened in rural environments as a result of modernization, commercial opening, the globalization of agricultural activities and the introduction of new activities in the countryside (Arias and Durand, 1988; García, 2010; González and Salles, 1995; Rosado, 1990). It has been pointed out that between 1995 and 2003 there was an increment in paid workers, but especially of women (Pacheco, 2010). García (2010) has documented, for the XX century, the maintenance of masculine labor participation and the systematic increase of feminine rates: 71 in 1979 to 74 in 2006 in the case of men, while for women it moved from 21 to 39 over the same years.

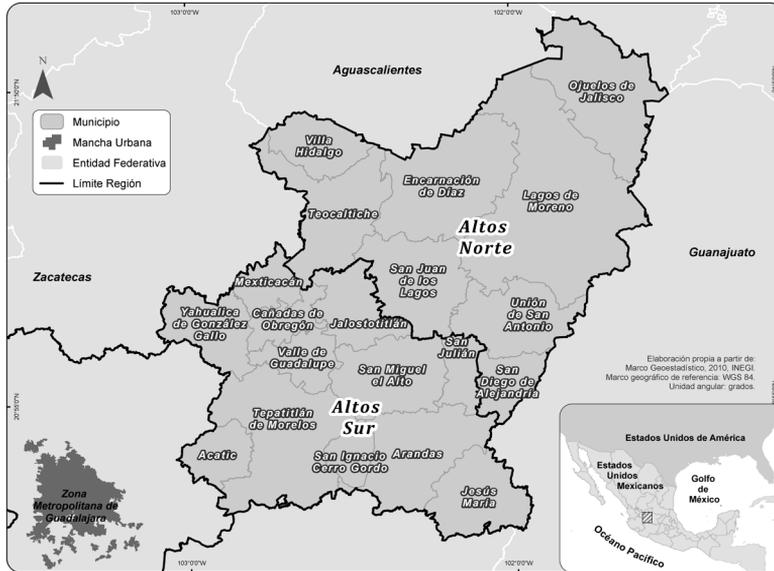
By and large, it was employment framed in traditional gender conditionings of rural women; the occupations that feminized devaluated at the same time (Szasz, 1994). Feminine labor precariousness was noticed in both the sort of jobs and their conditions. Women were required in unskilled jobs, which operated in a broad range of precariousness and equality: low wages, scarce or inexistent benefits, without ascending mobility, with no access to decision making, with wages lower than men's, based on personal and chaining employee-employer agreements, inexistence of instances of defense of labor rights, violation of labor regulations (Carton de Grammont and Lara, 2010). For a long time, feminine labor was associated to notions of instability and precariousness so that their incomes, it was said and reiterated, only worked as a help or complement to masculine incomes (Arias, 2009).

The acceptance of entrepreneurs, society and family of the precariousness of feminine labor was supported on two suppositions: in the first place, that the households could live on a single income; and secondly, that masculine labor was ultimately the one that secured the economic survival of domestic groups, which conferred men the central and undiscussable role of breadwinner. This is not so any longer. It has been verified that nowadays women "combine to a larger extent maternity and labor apart from their domestic activities" (García, 2010: 367) so that they remain for long in paid works.

## **EMPLOYMENT AND JOBS IN LOS ALTOS DE JALISCO**

In administrative terms Los Altos de Jalisco divides in two regions: Altos Norte, comprising eight municipalities, and Altos Sur, twelve (Map 1).

Mapa 1. Los Altos de Jalisco.



Source: own elaboration from Marco Geoestadístico 2010 INEGI.

According to the information from the 2015 Inter-censal survey both accounted for 807 141 inhabitants, which represents a tenth of the population of the state of Jalisco (10.2 percent). Los Altos was traditionally defined by six characteristics: deeply rooted Catholic religiousness and morals that defined the population’s behavior; a society of live-stock and dairy economy based on small and middle scale exploitations; rural settlement in the shape of ranches where people lived and worked; prevalence of private property; centenarian masculine migration to the U.S.; an also centenarian tradition of feminine labor at home, especially, breeding small animals (chickens, pigs), the elaboration of dairy products and sewing, embroidering and knitting of all sorts of garments and items o clothing.

Nowadays, it is recognized as a region of agricultural economy that holds the first places at national level in the production of milk, poultry, eggs and pork; with establishments distributed throughout the region in need of many workers owing to the existence of various manufacturing activities in almost all the municipalities; owing to an intensive fragmentation of property; noticeable urbanization and connectivity between municipalities; owing to the cancelation of migration to the United States as

a generalized labor option and the generalization of feminine paid work outside the household. As regards employment in Los Altos, it is maybe an exception in relation to other regions as there is a broad range of job posts for the population.

### Feminine employment

In this context, women from Los Altos have become ceaseless seekers and creators of employment and activities that allow them to obtain cash incomes as regularly as possible for most of the time. They change from one activity to another, but they are neither able nor willing, at least in most of the cases, to stop receiving their own incomes. In the seven localities, surveyed by MMP in 2014 and 2015, women mainly worked in manufacture (25.5 percent) and services (44.3 percent) (table 1).

Table 1. Economically active feminine population, 1988 and 2014-2015

Sector	1988		2014-2015	
	Number	%	Number	%
Agriculture	7	1.7	79	8.4
Manufacture	99	24.6	240	25.5
Services	124	30.8	416	44.3
Administration	30	7.5	76	8.1
Professionals	142	35.3	129	13.7
Total	402	100.0	940	100.0

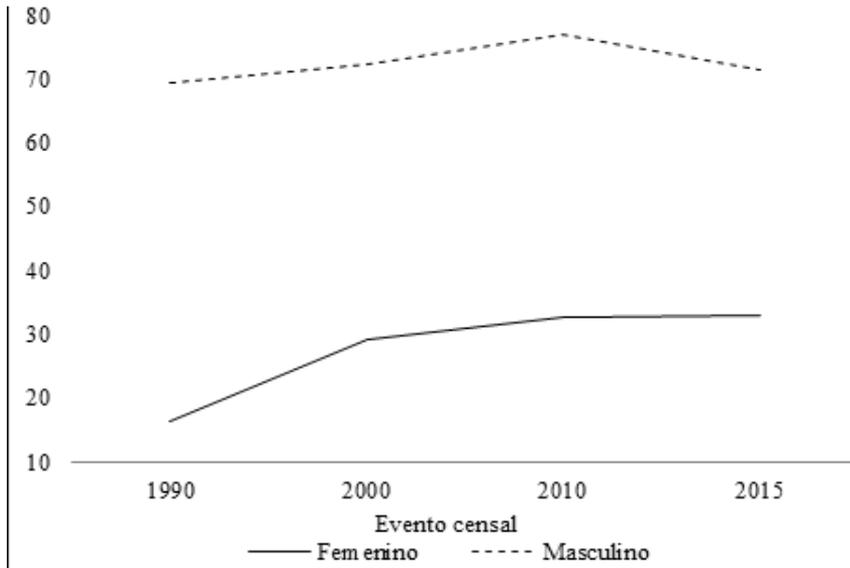
Source: *Mexican Migration Project*, MMP 154. <http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu/home-es.aspx>

The employed feminine population has followed an upward consistent tendency: in 1990 it represented 16.47 percent of the economically active population; in 2000, 29.11 percent; in 2010 it doubled the 1990 proportion recording 32.68 percent; and in 2015, a third of the economically active population: 33.6 percent. By contrast, in the lapse 2010-2015 a diminution of the masculine economically active population is noticed: from 77.15 percent to 71.46 percent (basic tables of the Censuses of Population and Housing for 1990, 2000 and 2010, and the 2015 Inter-censal Survey) (graph 1).

The growth and modernization of pig and chicken farming, associated with the segmentation of productive processes and the dispersion of establishments over the regional geography, required plenty of laborers and

women incorporated to the labor market in pig and egg-producing chicken farms. More than a half (between 60 and 80 percent) of the workers in chicken farms are women and in pig farms they can reach up to a half (40-50 percent) (Arias *et al.*, 2015).

Graph 1. Percentage of economically active population by sex, 1990-2105



Source: own elaboration from Basic tabulations, 1990 XI General Census of Population and Housing, 2000 XII General Census of Population and Housing, 2010 XII General Census of Population and Housing, 2015 Inter-censal Survey, INEGI.

In 2014, Jalisco held the first place in breeding pigs and chicken. The largest breeding of these species concentrates in Los Altos. In 2015, Jalisco's bovine production represented almost a fifth (19.64 percent) of the national production, also almost a fifth (19.27 percent) of pork and egg and chicken, more than a quarter (25.93 percent). Such year there was 18 732 production units, this is to say, chicken farms, and 9 388 pig farms. The companies, many of them large enterprises, have their facilities in various places and offer transport service, this way in one same factory many women from different ranches, towns and cities work together (Arias *et al.*, 2015).

Moreover, in each municipality of the region there are factories and workshops that hire women. The enterprises, scattered over the regional space, are related with agricultural activities; dairy products, mushroom

farms, egg dehydrators, producers of tequila. There are also factories and workshops where various products are made, namely: items of clothing, linen, snacks, cajetas, footwear, ice-cream cones, spoons, sweets, balloons, bottlers, huaraches and backpacks.

At present, women especially under 35 prefer jobs in formal establishments; the most valued in these jobs is the affiliation to Seguro Social (social security and health-care services), and in recent years, loans from Infonavit (housing system) have become important. The appearance of broad real-estate offer and the difficulties posed by the traditional ways to access housing have favored such benefit from formal employment. This way, working women can be now the ones who provide their parents, partners and children with a house.

In 2015, the minimum wage was 66.45 MXN a day, i.e., 398.70 MXN a six-day week. However, minimum wage is no longer a referent in Los Altos. By and large, the workers' wages in factories and clerks in formal establishments fluctuate between 600 and 1 300 MXN a week, this is, twice as much or more than the minimum wage.

Besides, the wide range of tasks carried out by women, which include the outsourced assembly of various products, trade activities, sales, personal services on their own account or as employees. As a matter of fact, almost a half (44.3 percent) of the women in the surveyed communities in 2101-2015 are engaged in service-related activities (table 1). Although traditional feminine occupations persist, two phenomena are observed: on the one side, the incorporation of women into occupations considered masculine, and on the other, the reinvention or reengineering of trades by women, especially the youngest, to adapt their businesses to fashion and new technologies. They have thus become producers, distributors of various sorts of goods that previously were carried out only by men and have made noticeable innovations as retailers, hairstylists, jeweler, dressmakers, bakers, and nail technicians (Arias *et al.*, 2015); some of them work on their own, while others are employees.

In freelance work incomes are variable, some are usually lower than formal jobs, not necessarily irregular nevertheless, because women are permanently in charge of receiving orders, producing, selling and offering their services. In any case, the lowest incomes fluctuate between 300 and 700 MXN a week, without benefits.

With that in mind, at a household in a ranch, where the father and sons are agricultural day-laborers or builders, it may be the case that the mother receives some cloths from a factory to sew (at-home maquila) and has a grocery store, while the daughters go to work everyday in factories,

farms commercial establishments and services to different localities. Each daughter contributes with some money to the parental house, even though it can be differently: in cash, in-kind, or affording household and unforeseen expenses.

In Los Altos, employment vacancies are filled with workers from the region who commute on a daily basis between cities, town and ranches. The arrival of foreign workers is limited to seasonal agricultural jobs in the municipalities where agave for the tequila distilleries is grown. In the region the problem is not so much lack of employment, but that domestic groups cannot live on a single income. There, as in the whole country, wage stagnation is noticed in masculine and feminine jobs.

### **Masculine employment**

Men in the region traditionally engaged in agricultural activities, especially cattle rearing, as smallholders, sharecroppers and day-laborers. Migration to the United States used to be part of the masculine labor tradition, with which they compensated the limitations of the local labor markets and, on returning, they were able to improve their labor and residential insertion in the region (Durand and Massey, 2003). A migrant day-laborer, with their savings in the United States, would be able to build a house, buying land and livestock, and improve their status as agricultural producer or become one.

However, this is not so any longer. The information on the communities surveyed in 2014-2015 points out that agriculture was the activity in which a slightly less than a third of the masculine population engaged: 31.8 percent. In fact, the main activity of the men who responded the surveys in 2014 and 2015 was manufacture (33.9 percent) and many of them, according to our data, they are basically day-laborers, i.e., seasonal workers (table 2).

What has changed is the relationship of men with the land. At present, the labor category that has extended the most is day-laboring as long-termed masculine labor insertion. Day-laboring is a sort of employment in agricultural tasks, but also in masonry and construction in general, as porters in loading and unloading services, in transport, in temporary but recurrent occupations, in chicken and pig farms. With data from the National Survey on Employment, Pacheco Gómez (2010) has demonstrated that hourly and weekly payments for the agricultural individuals were lower and the proportion of people entitled to social services was much lower than that of those who devoted to non-agricultural occupations.

Table 2. Economically active masculine population, 1988 and 2014-2015

Sector	1988		2014-2015	
	Number	%	Number	%
Agriculture	518	35.0	793	31.8
Manufacture	534	36.1	845	33.9
Services	334	22.6	671	26.9
Administration	36	2.4	47	1.9
Professionals	57	3.9	137	5.5
Total	1 479	100.0	2 493	100.0

Source: *Mexican Migration Project*, MMP 154. <http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu/home-es.aspX>

The expansion of day-laboring has to do with other two processes: changes in the migratory pattern and land tenancy. Up to the 2000's, labor migration toward the U.S., particularly of youths, was one of the main ways, if not the only, to save in order to make investments on the origin communities. However, as of 2005 young people have not been able to work in the United States (Durand and Arias, 2014) which prevented them from saving to secure a viable economic activity or build their house.

As it is known (Massey *et al.*, 1991) the migrants left in view of saving to improve their residential reinsertion into their origin communities, this is, build their own house, commonly in a plot which parents used to give their children when they become married. Thereby, the cost of the house did not affect much the daily incomes or long-term ones. This is not so any more. Nowadays, many couples lack a space where to build a house or the resources to; this has fostered as never before the rest of a house, an expense that young people have had to incorporate into their costs of life.

Adding to the impossibility of migration, there is the situation of the land tenancy that has affected the access of youths to property: on the one side, the intensive fragmentation of property; on the other, the indefinite retention in hands of old people and finally the property of migrants who will neither come back nor sell. At present, the extension of plots for sowing has decreased in such manner that they are not measured in hectares but in *solares*, which are roughly 1 700 m<sup>2</sup>. Owing to any of these three situations young people do not have lands, nor will they inherit them, this is to say, their possibility to have incomes or products from agricultural activities, as it was before, has been cancelled.

Day-laborers perceive a weekly payment of 1 300 MXN, with no benefits and employment is irregular. A day-laborer can have a job for an entire week, but can be unemployed for two or three in a row. In the face of this situation, many men have retaken the custom of breeding backyard animals (fowl, goats, pigs) to sale and so have an income to somewhat compensate the precariousness and seasonality of employment.

With this in mind, day-laboring, which is defined as precarious employment for it is irregular, discontinuous, paid by the day or week and lacks benefits, is currently the offer for masculine jobs in the region. And that is a great change; the labor precariousness, which used to be given to feminine labor and incomes, is nowadays part of the characteristics of masculine employment: seasonality, irregularity, lack of benefits.

At the same time, the change in the migratory pattern between Mexico and the United States (Durand and Massey, 2003) has reduced the arrival of remittances to the region and further deteriorated the possibility that men retain the role of main breadwinners. Sociodemographic changes and tight border control have modified the circular character of Mexican migration so that the possibility of young people to go to work to the United States as illegals is virtually cancelled (Durand and Arias, 2014).

In 1988, in more than a half of the households (64.48 percent) there were members with migratory experience to the United States, but it reduced to a less than a third (30.8 percent) in 2014-2015 (table 3). Although the proportion is still high compared with the national mean, which is about ten percent, the tendency is in any case downward.

As a matter of fact, as of 2010 the proportion of households with migrants reduced in all the municipalities of the region and at once, the proportion of households who received remittances in most of the municipalities. In 2014, in Pegueros, a locality of the municipality of Tepatitlán with lengthy migratory tradition, only 37 out the 68 households with migrants received remittances (Durand and Arias, 2014).

All in all, domestic groups, families and communities of the regions are learning, for the first time in one hundred years, to live without the income from remittances, which were regularly sent by parents, husbands, sons to their households while they were in the U.S. it is now widely accepted in the region that those in the United States send less money to Mexico: "they have a lot of expenses there on the other side [of the border]", the parents justify. The reduction in the amount and frequency of remittances has put heavier pressure on women so that they contribute to support their parents' households.

Table 3. number of households with migratory experience, 1988 and 2014-2015

Situation	1988		2014-2015	
	Number	%	Number	%
Non-migrant	233	35.52	883	69.2
Migrant	423	64.48	393	30.8
Total	656	100.0	1 276	100.0

Source: *Mexican Migration Project*, MMP 154. <http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu/home-es.aspx>

### The households' economy at present

Changes in the conditions of the employment and wages of women and men have permeated the households; in the current situation, the domestic groups, even with few members, cannot afford essential expenditures with a single income. At the moment, no household, even with three or four members, can live a week on a single income, which in the best of cases amounts to 1 300 MXN.

Low wages and incomes have made that all the members available at a household, men and women, work and contribute economically. Most of a household's women, not only one, works and earns money. Men and women together produce the weekly budget that allows affording the everyday expenses.

It was previously a masculine attribution, women recall, "to let them work", which was a way to control the incomes women used to deliver to their parents and husbands, without arguing about their use. Now, each can, women as well, with relative liberty, decide on the amount, modality and spatiality of their contributions. Most delivers their share in cash, i.e., a weekly amount usually agreed with the mother. Even though, there still exists in-kind contributions, which can be buying groceries, afford household expenses (water, energy, cable TV) or pay for the installments of an appliance. Each can negotiate their contribution, but cannot stop giving. A very common mechanism for single young women to keep household contributions at bay is permanent indebtedness. Over and over, working women participate in *tandas*, an informal saving system, that enable them to counteract the demands made by parents and siblings.

Nowadays, everyone, with more or less reticence, recognize that feminine incomes, from any source, are crucial for the households; without them, they could hardly keep up with a household's expenses. This con-

sensus has had important consequences; parents and spouses cannot prevent them from working and women do not ask for permission. In young couples, explicit agreements are noticed, they continually negotiated to distribute payments, house chores, care of children, investments.

Despite men wanted things were different, they had to accept women work as otherwise there would not be opportunity to survive. For their part, women, especially young ones, are convinced that men are not any longer the only breadwinners; for the oldest, conversely, it is a topic they talk about but only in confidence.

However, generally, women, of every age, are sharply critical regarding the quality of the jobs and incomes their partners and children earn, however they are usually more tolerant with the latter. The most common way to express it is that men cannot support a household and many have become lazy and neglecting. In any case, they say, now women work; a reason they find very annoying.

## **SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC AND CULTURAL CHANGES**

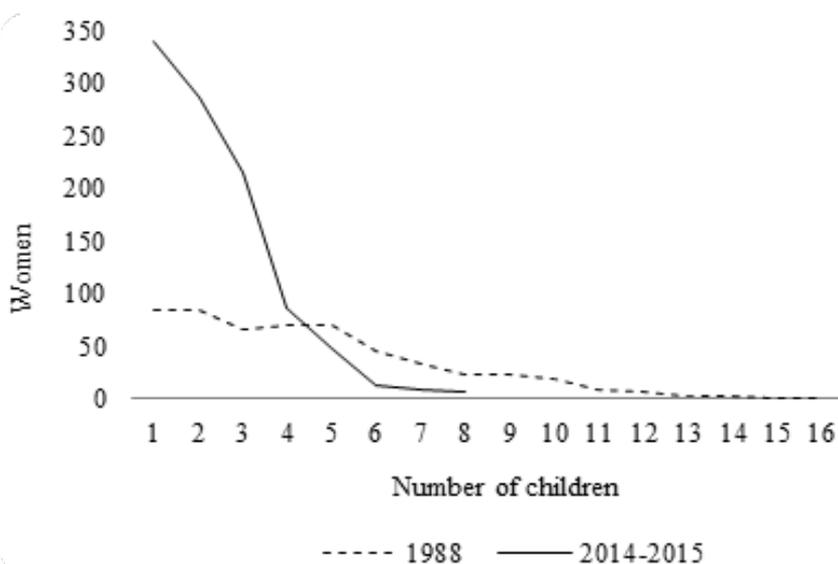
Current households increasingly fewer times fit the traditional model based on the permanence and persistence —voluntary or forced— of marital unions, which was, short time ago, one of the most noticeable characteristics of Mexican households (Quilodrán, 2008). Sociodemographic research has pointed out the numerous and intense changes, associated to the second demographic transition, households have experienced in recent decades: reduction of fertility and mortality have increased life expectancy, population aging, different mortality rates by sex, smaller households; cultural changes have modified marriage rate, among which distinguishable are lengthy singleness of men and women, increase of the age at first union, increase of consensual unions; changes in territorial order intensified by migrations (Cerrutti and Binstock, 2009; García and De Oliveira, 2011; Quilodrán, 2008). Changes in the populations' fertility, mortality and migration indubitably impose reorganizations in the families.

Three changes have been very significant in the region: the reduction of household size, changes in the Mexico-U.S. migratory patterns, and the no-formation, dissolution and shortening of unions. The latter are not associated with widowhood, as it was the case before. Separations and divorces have replaced widowhood as the main cause for the dissolution of unions (Quilodrán, 2010). It is not that there would not be cohabitation, separation of divorces; what has changed is the intensity of the phenomenon (Quilodrán, 2010).

The demographic analyses usually correspond with urban situations or national surveys that do not distinguish between urban and rural domestic groups. All in all, ethnographic evidence of various regions gives an account that in rural contexts and mid-sized cities singleness has also expanded, frequently associated with teenage pregnancy, free union, break-ups of first unions and new unions (Bacon, 2006; Becerril, 2010; Velasco and Contreras, 2011).

Los Altos de Jalisco, in spite of its traditionally catholic reputation, is not free from these demographic changes. On the one side, there has been a dramatic diminution in the number of children the couples have. This is conspicuous change since in this place it was an honor to have “all the children God sends”. The survey made in Pegueros recorded that before 1950 the average children per family was 9.3. Back then, women had between five and fifteen children; however, from 2000 up to the present, the average reduced to 2.2, this is, a similar figure to that of the state of Jalisco, and ever since households record a maximum of five children (Durand and Arias, 2014). In fact, in 2014-2015, most women (83.3 percent) had between one and three children and there were no women with nine or more; an utterly different situation than that in 1988 (graph 2; table 4).

Graph 2. Number of children per woman, 1988 and 2014-2015



Source: own elaboration from *Mexican Migration Project*, MMP 154.  
<http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu/home-es.aspx>

Table 4. Number of children per women, 1988 and 2014-2015

No. of children	1988		2014-2015	
	Number	%	Number	%
1	85	15.6	340	33.9
2	85	15.6	286	28.5
3	67	12.3	215	21.4
4	71	13	87	8.7
5	70	12.8	48	4.8
6	45	8.2	13	1.3
7	33	6	8	0.8
8	23	4.2	6	0.6
9	24	4.4	0	0
10	20	3.7	0	0
11	8	1.5	0	0
12	7	1.3	0	0
13	3	0.5	0	0
14	3	0.5	0	0
15	1	0.2	0	0
16	1	0.2	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>546</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1 003</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: *Mexican Migration Project*, MMP 154. <http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu/home-es.aspx>

This way, the demographic pressure, which was always one of the main reasons to migrate to the U.S., is no longer a crucial factor in the households' and people's decision making. The households now have fewer members and fewer men as well to participate in agricultural work or with paid work. But additionally, incomes from agricultural activities represent an increasingly smaller proportion of the households' budgets. Hence, the diminution in the number of children in general, as well as agricultural resources and incomes have increased the value of women as generators and contributors of incomes for their households.

The valorization of women at the origin households means a great change in the household dynamic. One has to bear in mind that it represents a leap in the organization system, as in the traditional reproductions system women's marriage was a mechanisms to establish alliances between different domestic groups, families and communities (Good Eshelman, 2003). In indigenous-background societies, women, after marriage, went to live in their husbands' households and their abilities and know-hows became part of their husbands' households. In the case of ranch societies, such as Los Altos, post-marital residence was neo-local, this is to say, independent from the beginning of the union, but in any case women stopped taking part in the activities of their origin households.

In both situations, women did not represent a long term resource for their domestic group. As it was always said: why to spend on women's education if they will leave? The education of women was an expenditure, not an investment or a benefit for their domestic group, from which they will leave soon and forever. In this context it was preferable that young women remained at home, kept a good reputation, learnt and helped in the feminine tasks which were, indeed, a service for the household and guarantee of a better marriage. The sooner they marry, the less expense they represented for their origin households.

But things have changed. As it is known, girls and young ladies receive a monthly grant in cash to study, which represents a constant income for their households. By and large, education is not valued yet, or at least not in all cases, as a way for social and labor mobility for women but the monetary income it represents for their households. Women who study are less released from house chores than their brothers, they should help to look after younger siblings, run errands, tidy their rooms and clothes, do without going to cyber cafés to do homework because of any reason. This way, gender inequality persists: even though the value of feminine education has increased, this does not become a priority and option to train women beyond the immediate income it represents.

In this new context, those who dropped out of school such as Andrea are pressured to find a job. They have to find a way to compensate for the income lost, i.e., they have to earn money. But also those with a degree, whose highest incomes are easily noticed, are subject to pressures to contribute for household expenses and have turned into a permanent source for money for their relatives.

Nowadays, the education of women is the same or even superior to that of men, which represents great change in the region. In 1988, for exam-

ple, the proportion of women who had concluded high school was very small (3.7 percent) compared with 2014-2015: 19.8 percent (table 5). This change places them in a similar position, even advantageous, to that of men in the regional labor markets. According to the information gathered in the communities surveyed in 2014-2015, women of 12 years and older with complete secondary but not high school account for 26.4 percent, while those with complete high school account for 19.8 percent; the proportions for men are 23.6 and 18.3 percent, respectively. The proportion of women in administrative posts and professional activities surpasses men's: 8.1 and 13.7 percent v 1.9 and 5.5, respectively. This represents a great change in a region that privileged labor over schooling, not to mention women's education (table 5).

Table 5. Schooling years by sex, over 6 years of age, 1988 and 2014-2015

	1988		2014-2015	
	Number	%	Number	%
<i>Men's schooling</i>				
No schooling	264	12.1	319	9.2
Incomplete elementary	913	41.9	473	13.7
Complete elementary, incomplete secondary	658	30.2	1217	35.2
Complete secondary, incomplete high school	236	10.8	817	23.6
Complete high school and over	108	5.0	634	18.3
Total	2 179	100.0	3 460	100.0
<i>Women's schooling</i>				
No schooling	313	14.6	284	7.8
Incomplete elementary	887	41.3	509	14.0
Complete elementary, incomplete secondary	615	28.6	1160	32.0
Complete secondary, incomplete high school	252	11.7	956	26.4
Complete high school and over	80	3.7	718	19.8
Total	2 147	100.0	3 627	100.0

Source: *Mexican Migration Project*, MMP 154. <http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu/home-es.aspx>

Men, up to 2005, had the option to leave for the U.S., for which schooling was not a resource that improved their labor situation in such country. This way, young people usually left with complete elementary or secondary. The information on the communities surveyed in 2014-2015 points out that 35.2 percent of men had finished elementary, but not secondary, and 23.6 percent had finished secondary, but not high school (table 5).

It has to be said that educational offer has broadened as of the 1990's decade. And women, who remained in the region, ultimately were the main beneficiaries of the expansion of educational offer. In 2015, out of the 3 984 students of Cualtos Campus of the University of Guadalajara, located in the municipality of Tepatitlán, 2 387 were women and 1 597 were men, this is, 59.9 percent and 40.08 percent, respectively (Leal Moya, 2016). Men prevailed only in engineering, especially those branches related to agricultural activities (table 6).

Table 6. Enrolment by sex in undergraduate courses at Cualtos, 2015-2016

Course	Women	Men	Total
Law (traditional schooling)	120	106	226
Law (distance schooling)	45	30	75
Administration	177	121	298
Dentistry	260	145	405
Public accountancy	185	117	302
Nursing	335	82	417
Nursing leveling	73	18	91
Agro-industrial engineering	48	94	142
Computer engineering	19	113	132
Livestock systems engineering	34	110	144
Veterinary medicine and zootechnics	82	163	245
Medical surgeon and midwife	245	219	464
International business	169	133	302
Nutrition	322	65	387
Psychology	273	81	354
Total	2 387	1 597	3 984

Source: own elaboration based on Leal Moya, 2016.

This way, the income of women who study or work has turned essential and there are heavy pressures so that devote to one, the other or both and share their wages with their domestic groups. Unlike in the past, at present parents foster the permanence of their daughters—single or single mothers—and sons at the households, which implies prolonging their contribution to household expenses. Because in the region, a single mother, even though she works, cannot go on live on her own. The accepted ways to leave the paternal household have been migration, marriage, union or pregnancy.

In this context, many young women have understood that in order to be able to work “for themselves and not for others” they have to live with a man or become pregnant. Young women are so pressured to provide an income for their families that they are prone to early marriages and unions, which are the only socially and familiarly accepted ways to leave their domestic groups and use their incomes personally. The birth of a child, even without leaving the household, allows negotiating the monetary contribution, in spite they cannot stop doing it.

This was the case of Edith, when his two brothers married and left the house, she received heavy pressure from her parents to stop studying and start working to “help them”. After two years of arguments, Edith had done neither; instead at 17, she opted to become pregnant from her boyfriend, Armando, 18, and both had to start working: she in a commercial establishment; he as a temporary driver. As Edith’s parents did not “forgive her” and Armando’s do not have space top received them, two spinster aunts who work in the maquila of garments, accepted them a their house, where Edith pays them to take care of the baby while she is at work.

In the regional social imaginary there are still young women who think that pregnancy can help them to start a union, leave the parental household and the labor market, as it was before; this cannot occur at present. In fact, it is increasingly frequent that owing to various reasons single mothers do not establish residential union with the father of the child and do not receive any economic support to raise the child. This situation forces single mothers to remain at the parental household, but where they have to generate an income from them, their children and the households. Early pregnancies without a union usually leads to a phenomena pointed out by Quilodrán (2010): new unions that make room for new domestic units. The young woman who has become a mother at an early age will tend to establish a relation and have more children. Two things can occur, owing

to various reasons, parents intend to retain their grandchild, which secures their daughter's visits and monetary contributions; or else, that the new partner does not accept the child, this way they remain with the grandparents in return of a regular amount of cash.

In 2014, Miriam, 25 years, single mother of a 7-year-old boy, established a consensual union and was pregnant from Mario, her new partner. Mario had not accepted Miriam's son, so he had remained with his grandparents. She worked in a chicken farm in order to have money to visit and support him in the ranch, so she paid her parents and one of her younger sisters. Miriam expected to convince Mario to take her children with them one theirs was born.

For its part, the new migratory pattern, this is to say, establish with a family and a job, long term, indefinite and uncertain to return, of migrants in the U.S. has brought to life or exacerbated situations such as the no-formation and dissolution of unions. At a time when only migrants occasionally return, single women are under pressure to establish a relationship, which spurs early unions and pregnancies.

Traditionally, pregnancy used to trigger the definite return of the migrant or that the woman left the house to meet with him in the United States. This does not occur, this way the young woman turns into a single mother, the bond with the father is broken and she stops receiving money to raise the child and has to work to support the baby and also contribute to the parental household. Pregnancy is nowadays a very unpredictable way to establish long-term unions.

Thus occurred to Lucy, who at 19 years, became pregnant from Elías, her boyfriend, a migrant worker in the U.S.; even though they tried, she was not able to cross the border and join him in Chicago, it was not convenient for Elías to return to Mexico and after two years their relationship broke. Elías began a new relationship in the U.S., stopped sending money to Lucy, who kept working and living in their parents' household. Shortly after, she also began a residential union with a coworker.

For its part, the lengthy separation of couples has weakened the links and commitments of migrants and has favored the establishment of new unions in the origin and destination households. Especially in the destination: many a migrant has established new unions and homes in the United States and stop sending remittances to their wives and children in Mexico.

This was the story of Elisa. After fifteen years of marriage and three children with Jesús, undocumented migrant in the U.S., the union broke after three years over which Jesús was no able to return to visit them, stop

sending remittances and Elisa learnt he had a new stable partner in California. The house where they lived, even if independent, had been build in the plot of Jesús' father, so when it was clear they were separated, Elisa returned to their parents' house, where she had to work more intensively to support her children, contribute with the household and pay one of their sisters-in-law to look after the kids while she worked.

However, the dissolution of unions affects not only the households with migrants. More often than not, couples or individuals, over different stages of their lives, with or without children, decide to separate. In the region, young couples' dissolution seems to be associated with women who had established unions with men with lower education than them, a difference that a few years later becomes a crisis and takes to separations. Quilodrán (2010) had already put forward this possibility as an explanation for the early break-up of unions.

Laura concluded secondary and at 17 she married a bricklayer, who had only finished elementary; he did not let her work and soon after he stopped giving her money, he shouted at her and one day he beat her. At that time, Laura considered she could put up with lacks and even hunger, but not blows" (Arias *et al.*, 2015: 147). When she divorced she returned to her parents so that they helped her with her children. Ever since, Laura started dealing in various products so that she could support herself and her three children, now at an independent house.

At the other end, this is, in the case of older women, even elderly women, separation is usually related to domestic violence, lack of husbands' economic contribution and support to the mother's decision from their adult children.

When Hortensia, 64, and her daughter realized Ramiro, husband and father, respectively, had been stealing from the sewing workshop they had and even had fall into debt at the expense of their work, they decided confidence had been abused, which added to the many years of mistreatment for Hortensia and not supporting the household economically. All their children, those in the U.S., and those who live in the region, supported them when Hortensia decided to divorce from Ramiro and both decided he had to leave the house they had paid to be build. One of the oldest daughters, who lives in a different place, took the father to live with her.

As a matter of fact, the proportion of households headed by women has increased: from 10.1 percent in 1988 to 16.9 percent in 2014-1015. In the case of Los Altos, a region in which Catholicism severely punished divorces, the upward tendency was significant. Traditionally, men used to make

the decision to divorce; in fact, there was heavy pressure so that women did not leave their husbands and they themselves feared to do so (Arias, 2009; Mindek, 2007; Sierra, 2004). Separation simultaneously meant the father's abandonment of the economic and affective responsibility for the children (Mindek, 2007). Economic abandonment had always been a powerful reason so that women preferred to continue in a couple's relationship regardless of the conditions (Arias, 2009).

Owing to various reasons, the number of 'single' women has increased, a category heavily stigmatized in rural societies. An immediate consequence of the separation and abandonment is that women have to leave the husbands' houses, which in most of the cases means to go back to their parents'. This in an unseen scenario for domestic groups as there are no clear rules for women to return their origin households, which has made room for discretionary and conflictive arrangements.

The permanence, in the case of single women, or the forced return of those separated or abandoned, to the origin household occurs in a sociocultural context in which women do not have or lose their right to residence, which places them in uneven situations regarding those with the right, who are men, in particular their brothers. Being so, the women's permanence or return to the parents' households have produced three situations.

In the first place, the shaking of traditional residential norms. According to the local patriarchal ways, men, only men, could incorporate women into paternal households, they are the ones that inherit the house and most of the parents' assets. When sisters return or do not leave, they hold a place in the domestic space —physical, symbolical, emotional— that is not theirs, which generates permanent conflicts and tensions between the household members. The woman that returns, who needs at least a room for her and her children, turns into a "burden" that has to thank and repay the favor received by being "taken in".

Secondly, the return of women to their parents' house implies the loss of their children's rights in the domestic groups, where they are not well-received, nor will they receive an inheritance from their fathers' side. This way, the children of women who return to their origin households lose their rights in their fathers' households and they do not have nor acquire them at their mother's.

In the third place, women do not receive economic support from their co-residing relatives for food, clothing, school expenses and everything else. Those who return or stay have to continue or start obtaining incomes

by means of formal paid work or in informal activities inside and outside the household to support their children.

This has to do with other cultural factor related to the responsibility for children in case of divorce. In Mexico, the dissolution of the union —legal or not— means, for virtually all of the cases, that fathers disengage from residential and child-support commitments; such responsibility exclusively falls on the mothers. For working women it is impossible to attend over and over appointments in settlement courts at working hours without results, which makes them drop any charge.

The situation becomes even more complex if the woman has children from more than one union. In this case, men only afford the expenses of the children they procreated, not the other children's. In this scenario, single mothers, separated, divorced and abandoned women who do not receive money nor support from their children's fathers or their new couples are forced to obtain regular incomes to support their children and take up all the tasks and maintenance costs.

In the face of these new scenarios, which are produced in the no-formation and dissolution of unions, women are forced to find out incomes in a long-termed permanent, regular manner, which makes them remain in labor markets, already existing in the region, even though with poor payments, create form so self-employment at their households or outside them.

In all of these cases, women have to solve, by means of their social networks and incomes, child caring while they are gone. Despite it is in the same place, the mother has to pay for the care, either the grandmother, sister, sister-in-law, niece, etc. In the case of migrants, they have to send money regularly to support their children, in addition to save to try as soon as possible a reunification in the recipient places. Child caring in the place of origin has monetarized and the arrangements to do so are usually changing and tense (Arias, 2013). Women who have established new unions have to visit and support her children from previous unions, who frequently have had to remain with their grandparents facing the new partner's denial to receive them.

As regards the situations and tensions generated at the parents' households, women has intensified three strategies to leave the household: on the one side, establishing an independent house with their children. This is possible only when children can go to school on their own. This option, sure, adds the price of housing to regular expenses, which after all is not expensive in the region. Even though they gain independence, they may

not be truly autonomous. The precariousness of their incomes and the need of support to care for their children makes them search—and pay—other women for this service. All in all, those households of mothers and children can live with economic precariousness, but at the same time as they state, have better quality of life than when the spouse was or lived in their parents' house.

The second strategy has been to accept a new union, even ephemeral, that allows them to improve the household incomes—rent, services—and mainly remove the stigma of being single women.

Finally, some women have decided to migrate to cities and metropolitan areas rather close (Aguascalientes, Guadalajara, Leon, Silao) and if possible, to the United States, hoping to improve their economic situation and social status. If they have the right to reunite or have social networks in the U.S., such is the best migratory option

#### **TO SUM UP**

The region of Los Altos de Jalisco has experienced drastic labor, sociodemographic and cultural changes that have modified the resources, strategies and survival mechanisms of domestic groups.

Up to the 1980's decade, there is no evidence in the region that domestic groups retained women as a way to extend their economic contribution as stated by Wolf (1990) for the case of Taiwan, where patriarchal households decided the labor decisions of young women. Although households in Los Altos can be defined as patriarchal, catholic and numerous, the most generalized—and accepted—social and familial alternative was that daughters left the parental house as soon as possible, via union and mainly marriage. Women's departure reduced pressure on the scarce incomes and resources of the households as numerous as these were in the region by the 1970's. However, labor and economic changes have modified such tendency. On the one side, the loss of the meaning of men's being the breadwinners, on the other, the pauperization of masculine labor; finally, it has to be mentioned that minimum wage is no longer a referent for the households' survival. Nowadays, households cannot live on a single wage, leave alone a minimum from a male breadwinner. The domestic groups survive on a combination of wages from men and women.

To this labor scenario add a new series of sociodemographic changes that have fostered the emergence and strengthening of new processes. The reduction in the number of children, the indefinite permanence of children in the U.S. and the reduction in remittances from that country have

increased the weight and value of women as income generators for their households and they are pressured to become contributors and prolong as much as possible their economic contributions to their parental houses.

The tendency to retain or accept the return of women in the households seems to be a recent phenomenon in the region, from the 2000 onward, and is also associated to sociodemographic changes. The no-formation and rupture of unions have led to an unexpected situation, at least in the current magnitude: it has forced the origin households to accept the women's return or permanence.

The women's return and no-departure from their origin houses have increased the participation of feminine labor in the long term. Under the current conditions, single mothers and women who return to their parents' households looking for a place to live, they depend on the support from their domestic groups to care for their children, while they work or migrate, thus they have to waive a significant part of their wage; because of this, they always have to work with the return or indefinite permanence of women in their parents' households, unseen ways of co-residence and co-existence have appeared, especially with bothers and sisters-in-law. In this context, women are urged via their children and moral control, to remain in such households as permanent contributors.

This way, women have to work and generate incomes in a regularly throughout their lives to face three processes: on the one side, the impossibility of the households to live on a single wage; secondly, pauperization of masculine employment has displaced men from their traditional breadwinner role. Finally, the new life conditions that have been triggered by sociodemographic and cultural changes, especially, the dissolution or the no-formation of unions which have placed them in a scenario where work and income generation are essential and permanent.

However, we also have to say that those pressures have had a boomerang effect that has made women look more frequently to find a way to make independent households, establish new unions or leave their communities, migrate to search a new life, once again, from the origin households.

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