Journal Essays on Economic Policy (ESPE) - Exploring gender gaps in Colombia

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Without an equitable redistribution of unpaid care work, it will not be possible to close gender gaps in Colombia.

Publication Date: Monday, 16 of March 2026 **Approach**
The article uses an analytical and empirical approach to identify, quantify, and explain gender gaps in Colombia over the life cycle, with a focus on the labor market, education, unpaid care work, social protection, and their macroeconomic effects. It integrates microeconomic and macroeconomic evidence, as well as regional analysis and public policy perspectives.

Contribution
This article shows that gender gaps are not only a social issue but a structural factor that constrains the country's economic development. The analysis links empirical evidence on gender gaps to the challenges of economic and social policy in Colombia and corroborates the central role of unpaid care work as a mechanism that reproduces inequalities. In addition, the study quantifies the macroeconomic benefits associated with closing gender gaps and proposes public policy recommendations aimed at reducing gender inequalities in the country.

Results
The results indicate that, despite the educational and regulatory advances achieved by women in Colombia, significant gender gaps persist, particularly in the labor market. In 2024, the unexplained wage gap stood at around 13%, while the difference in labor force participation reached approximately 20 percentage points (pp), with marked regional heterogeneity. These inequalities are largely driven by the disproportionate allocation of unpaid care work to women, which limits their labor market participation, reduces their earnings, and generates

cumulative effects over the life cycle, particularly in old age through lower pensions. The study also shows that closing gender gaps in labor force participation and wages would have positive macroeconomic effects by increasing employment, productivity, and economic growth, while helping to ease fiscal pressures arising from population aging and the sustainability of social protection systems.

Fuente: https://d1b4gd4m8561gs.cloudfront.net/en/publications-research/espe/exploring-gender-gaps-colombia