

SPECIAL SECTION: GENDER AND INNOVATION

The digital era has brought fundamental changes to the organization and performance of work, particularly highlighting the rise of telework and its impact on productivity and the skills required in the labor market. However, these changes have not been equal, and gender inequalities persist. These topics are addressed in the special section 'Gender and Innovation', which is included in this issue of the *Journal of World Economy*, that has been divided into two parts. The first part consists of four papers, published in the current issue, and the second, which will be released in the first issue of 2025. The four articles presented in this first part of the special section explore different aspects of this digital transformation and its relationship with the gender gap, covering the role of diversity in innovation process, adoption of telework, access to technological skills, productivity, and the need for inclusive policies.

GENDER DIVERSITY IN THE INNOVATION PROCESS

The article by Yuri Castillo and Isabel Álvarez, 'The Impact of Gender Diversity on Innovative Performance: Empirical Analysis in the Caribbean Region', emphasizes that including women in Caribbean companies can stimulate innovation and competitiveness. Although female participation in the Caribbean labor market has grown, innovation levels remain low. The research indicates that gender diversity at various organizational levels, not only in leadership positions, promotes an innovative process by incorporating diverse perspectives in strategic and operational phases. The findings suggest that gender diversity has a more significant impact on technological innovation than on non-technological innovation. In the service sector, technological innovations benefit from diversity, while this relationship is less evident in other sectors, which may relate to the Caribbean economy's orientation towards services. This type of innovation, especially in products and services, seems to better leverage gender diversity, underscoring the importance of promoting female inclusion to improve competitiveness.

TELEWORK AS A VEHICLE FOR GENDER EQUALITY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Another article, entitled *Determinants of Telework and Gender Gap*, by Cipriano Quirós and Gloria Duarte, examines how the telework model, accelerated by the pandemic, has influenced the gender gap. Many companies that previously did not practice telework began implementing it widely, though adoption has not been uniform and depends on factors such as sector, organizational structure, and each company's level of digitalization.

This article highlights telework's impact on the working conditions of women, who often bear a disproportionate burden of domestic and caregiving tasks. During the pandemic, women turned to telework more frequently, facilitating their continued employment, albeit not under equal conditions. Women face a "double shift" at home, combining work and family responsibilities, which limits their visibility and access to leadership positions. Telework, therefore, can serve as an inclusion tool for women facing barriers in male-dominated sectors. However, without policies promoting an equitable distribution of household and caregiving tasks, this work model could heighten rather than mitigate gender inequalities.

THE GENDER DIGITAL DIVIDE: SKILLS AND ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

The articles by Diana Suarez, Florencia Fiorentin, and Florencia Barletta, as well as by Bruno Blanco-Varela, Hugo Campo-Romero, and José Manuel Amonedo, examine how digitalization can become a barrier for women, particularly regarding access to technology and digital skills. The incorporation of technology into productive processes holds potential to enhance productivity and working conditions, but unequal access limits the benefits of this digital transformation.

The article by Diana Suarez, Florencia Fiorentin, and Florencia Barletta, entitled 'Forecasting the Gender Wage Gap in Argentina from a Productivity-Based Approach', highlights how the lack of digital skills disproportionately affects women, particularly in sectors where technological competencies are essential for competitiveness. This problem is worsened in sectors where female representation is already low, such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The lack of access to digital training restricts women's employment and career advancement opportunities in these fields, creating a gap that widens as digitalization progresses. Additionally, women are often concentrated in sectors and occupations that have historically been less digitalized, such as education and care services, further hindering their integration into the digital economy.

The article 'STEM and International Trade in a Gender Perspective: The Cases of Brazil, Chile and Mexico' by Bruno Blanco-Varela, Hugo Campo-Romero, and José Manuel Amoedo complements this perspective by indicating that telework and digitalization require specific skills and competencies, and that lacking these skills is a key factor limiting productivity in certain sectors. Investment in digital training is, therefore, essential to close the gender gap in access to quality jobs in the digital economy. However, it is important that

these initiatives adopt an inclusive approach, addressing specific barriers faced by women, such as access to education, family responsibilities, and gender stereotypes.

INCLUSIVE POLICIES AND THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

To address the intersection of telework, digitalization, and the gender gap, the articles emphasize the importance of inclusive policies. Castillo and Álvarez conclude that capacity-building efforts oriented toward innovation and gender equity in the innovation systems of developing economies could enhance social sustainability. This approach would not only increase gender diversity but also promote equity and competitiveness in the global market.

Furthermore, Quirós and Duarte, along with Blanco-Varela and his collaborators, highlight that telework and digitalization can be powerful tools for decentralizing employment, enabling greater participation in rural areas. However, this decentralization requires the state to invest in digital infrastructure and training to reduce the skills gap. In this context, it is crucial to promote equitable access to technology and training so that both men and women can take advantage of the opportunities offered by digitalization.

The article by Quirós and Duarte also underscores the need for policies that prevent telework from perpetuating the double burden on women. Creating an equitable work environment requires policies that regulate telework and promote shared responsibilities at home. Equitable parental leave policies and measures that facilitate the fair distribution of domestic tasks are essential to ensure that the flexibility of telework does not reinforce traditional gender roles. In this regard, public policies should foster a work culture that promotes equal access to professional development opportunities in all sectors.

THE DIGITAL ECONOMY AND GENDER EQUALITY IN THE LONG TERM

The multidimensional perspective of these articles reveals that the innovation process, digitalization, and telework can improve gender equality if structural and cultural barriers are addressed. However, it is necessary to implement policies that ensure equal access to employment, training, and professional development opportunities.

Gender equality in the digital economy benefits not only women but also national competitiveness and economic growth. Integrating women into the digital economy harnesses a valuable resource of talent and skills currently underutilized due to the gender digital divide. Moreover, equality in the workplace can enhance innovation and the quality of products and services, which is essential in an increasingly knowledge-based economy.

In conclusion, the four articles analyzed demonstrate that innovative activities, digitalization and telework represent both an opportunity and a challenge for gender equality, though this transition must be carefully managed to avoid perpetuating inequalities. Inclusive policies, such as promoting equal access to technology and digital training, along with the equitable distribu-

tion of household responsibilities, are essential to ensure that the digital economy is inclusive and fair.

Implementing policies to reduce gender inequalities will benefit not only women but also contribute to a more productive and competitive economy. Collaboration between the public and private sectors is key to addressing the challenges of the digital economy and advancing toward a more equitable society in the era of technology.

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