

# Mexico's Invisible Women: Why Progress on Gender Equality Masks Deeper Inequalities

In Mexico, women make up more than half of the population (over 64 million people), yet many of their realities remain hidden in official statistics. At first glance, the numbers suggest progress: literacy rates are increasing, legal reforms have advanced, and women are becoming more present in the workforce. Yet a closer look shows that for many women, especially those who have been historically under-resourced, the picture is vastly different.

The lives of these women are shaped by overlapping forms of discrimination that official data often fails to capture. This invisibility is not accidental. It is the result of centuries of cultural, historical, and institutional exclusion. And it continues to have real-world consequences today.

On paper, Mexico's literacy rate for women is around 94 % ([INEGI](#)). But the rate falls dramatically to about 75 % among Indigenous women, whose dropout rates soar because of poverty, child marriage, or teenage pregnancy ([IWGIA](#)). In some Indigenous regions, illiteracy among women still exceeds 40 % ([UNESCO](#)).

Afrodescendant women, who were only officially counted in the INEGI census since 2020, continue to face persistent gaps in school access and completion. Their illiteracy rate is 6.2%, compared with 5.5% among non-Afrodescendant women, and the gap is even larger when compared to men.

Women with disabilities experience even higher exclusion: nearly one in four never enters formal schooling ([UNICEF](#)), often because schools lack inclusive teaching or reasonable accommodations ([OHCHR](#)).

LGBTQ+ women, especially trans women, are also pushed out of education early. Many face bullying, family rejection, or outright denial of enrolment. Without inclusive policies, they are being left invisible in national data and cut off from future opportunities.

More than 17 million women in Mexico dedicate themselves exclusively to unpaid domestic and care work, including childcare, eldercare, cooking, and cleaning. Amounting to an invisible contribution valued at 7.2 trillion pesos, or about 24 % of Mexico's GDP ([INEGI](#)). Yet this

enormous contribution receives no compensation, recognition, or social protection.

Meanwhile, 56% of women are in informal jobs such as street vending, domestic service, or seasonal agricultural labour ([CONEVAL](#)). These roles bring low wages, no contracts, and no labour rights. For Indigenous, Afrodescendant, rural, disabled, and LGBTQ+ women, informal work is often the only option.

When crises hit (for example, the COVID-19 pandemic), these groups are the first to lose their livelihoods. The absence of detailed, disaggregated data means their economic struggles are rarely visible in policy debates, leaving millions trapped in cycles of poverty.

The invisibility of Mexican women is starkest when it comes to violence. In Mexico, 10 women are murdered every day, which equates to one woman being killed approximately every 2 hours and 24 minutes. Femicides account for nearly one in four homicides of women, among the highest rates worldwide ([ONU Mujeres](#)).

Yet even these shocking numbers underestimate the scale. Definitions of femicide vary by state, making data inconsistent. Official statistics are often outdated, and many cases go unreported. Human rights groups and journalists have stepped in, building their databases and uncovering thousands of disappearances that the state of Mexico has failed to count ([Amnistía Internacional](#)).

Underrepresented women face heightened risks. Trans women are frequent targets of hate crimes, often facing sexual violence and murder; specifically, transfemicides, killings motivated by gender identity. But because their experiences are rarely captured in official statistics, their vulnerability is compounded by invisibility. In a country where 94 % of crimes go unreported, and less than 1% are resolved ([Impunidad Cero](#)), across all groups, impunity is staggering. Families searching for justice often face indifference or even hostility from authorities.

The problem is not only that certain women are missing from the data. Their absence actively shapes the policies meant to support them. If the challenges of these women are invisible, then education or health programmes may overlook them entirely. If unpaid care work is not properly measured, it is left unsupported in social policy. This gap between lived reality and official statistics undermines Mexico's promise to "Leave no one behind"/ "Llegamos todas" in its

Sustainable Development Goals ([CONEVAL](#)).

Against this backdrop, feminist movements in Mexico have mobilised to demand visibility and justice. The fourth wave of Mexican feminism, led largely by young women, has brought mass demonstrations, digital activism, and intersectional solidarity. In March 2020, over 80,000 women marched through Mexico City, marking the largest protest in the country's history. The next day, the "Un Día Sin Nosotras" strike showed the huge impact of women's absence. Online, hashtags such as #NiUnaMenos and #MeToo have sparked public action and difficult conversations.

This activism has won important victories in public policy: Supreme Court decisions struck down laws criminalising abortion, the country adopted a feminist foreign policy, and in 2024, history was made with the election of Mexico's first female president ([Gobierno de México](#)). Yet the election of a woman president does not automatically translate into meaningful shifts on the ground. Systemic discrimination still pervades daily existence; countless numbers of women, especially those from under-resourced groups, still face systemic exclusion from schools, jobs, and justice.

The struggle for equality in Mexico requires ensuring that all women, regardless of ethnicity, ability, region, or gender identity, are visible in the data and policies that shape public life. It means collecting better statistics, listening to more diverse voices, and designing inclusive solutions for real needs.

Invisibility is political, as Mexican feminists remind us. Making every woman count is justice. The new wave of activism has brought shadowed issues into public debate and insists that progress must be measured not in averages, but in whether every woman is seen, counted, and valued.

Until then, true equality will remain out of reach, but there is hope. Mexican feminists and activists are rewriting the story, not just for Mexico, but for Latin America.